

## **Globalization and Rural Food Processing by Andean Women of Peru and Bolivia**

Globalization and market liberalization allow more and larger markets to become accessible. State intervention vanishes to leave private actors free to interact with markets. From the perspective of the **rural sector in Latin America**, this should translate into better market opportunities for agricultural products that generate employment and reduce poverty. However, national production is exposed to more efficient competition; commercialization concentrates in the hands of fewer larger groups; the expansion of foreign consumption habits and preferences affects the performance of traditional products; and changing technology is often not available to rural agents. State reforms resulting from the liberalization process have left the agricultural sector unprotected and have minimized the roles of the Ministries of Agriculture. Institutional gaps appear in areas such as rural financing, basic research and technology transfer. Those with a limited capacity to acquire services because of their low income, geographic restrictions and lack of information are marginalized from the “global market”.

The need to reach competitive markets, combined with the feminization of agriculture and with the traditional role of rural Andean women in food security, fosters the participation of women in economic activities related to food products. Women small producers organize into cooperatives, associations or enterprises. They contribute to local economies, some reach national and export markets. New dynamics arise as a result of their interaction with other actors: participation in the political life of communities (through leadership of organizations), creation of new forms of access to land/water (as micro-level needs conflict with macro-level regulations and traditional patterns), economic partnerships with local governments, new employment options through technical specialization, etc. However, the question remains, is there a role for small producers in the way Latin American countries are “feeding” themselves? How is globalization having an impact on their capacity to progress?

This research project will map the value-chain of food products in 5 specific experiences of economic initiatives by women, which are proving successful in inserting themselves in dynamic markets. It seeks to understand which actors intervene in the chain (women producers, intermediaries, wholesalers, local markets, supermarkets, imports, etc), how they interact, what is the participation of women along the chain and what problems/opportunities they face to improve their participation. This accompanied of an analysis of their social and work situation and of what is needed to build or strengthen existing organizations of women producers. The project is organized to involve multi-disciplinary stakeholders, and to propose public policies and programs by Governments (local and central) and by other organizations (NGOs, foreign cooperation, women associations) to improve the situation of women in rural economic activities. The initiative also links with the Organization and Representation Program of WIEGO, which seeks to strengthen organizations of informal workers and producers.

Three case-studies in Peru and two in Bolivia will be reviewed, using value-chain analysis as a tool. Focus groups, interviews and participating observation are techniques used to collect the desired information. The research team is composed of researchers, NGOs, grassroots organizations and international institutions, in the roles of Principal Researches, Co-researcher, Assistant and Advisors. Workshops at the local level of each case study will share the research plan, and later the results, with stakeholders and seek their commitment to proposed recommendations. The experiences to be reviewed include: processing of grains, fruits, herbs, dehydrated “llama” meat and improved production of garlic, for national and export markets.

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