

Why is it important to invest in the cultivation of quinoa?

Key messages:

- Quinoa can play an important role in eradicating hunger, malnutrition and poverty. It is a new ally in the fight against hunger and food insecurity.
- Quinoa is a healthy food due to its high nutritional value. It has a high protein content, contains all of the essential amino acids and fatty acids and is rich in minerals and vitamins.
- Quinoa can adapt to different climates and geographical conditions.

Why Quinoa: What are its distinct properties?

- ✓ **Adaptability to climatic conditions.** Different quinoa varieties are known to grow in a temperature range from -4°C to 35°C and from sea level to 4000 meters above sea level.
- ✓ **Hardiness.** Certain quinoa varieties can grow under difficult conditions, as they are drought tolerant and resistant to salinity. Quinoa also grows in both highlands and lowlands, thus proving its versatility as a real climate-smart crop.
- ✓ **Low production costs.**
- ✓ **Environmentally friendly.** Quinoa's great adaptability to climate variability and its efficient use of water make it an excellent alternative crop in the face of climate change.
- ✓ **Nutritional qualities.** Quinoa is a healthy food due to its high nutritional value. What distinguishes quinoa from most other plant foods, except for legumes, is its high protein content (9.1% -14.8%). Quinoa contains all the essential amino acids and is also rich in minerals, vitamins and other nutrients.
- ✓ **Appreciation by NASA.** Quinoa has been recognized by NASA as an ideal crop for inclusion in possible future long-term space missions, when crops would need to be grown on a spacecraft.
- ✓ **Ethical qualities.** In the Andes, production remains family-based and mostly organic, conferring an elevated fair-trade image.

What are the benefits for producers?

- Almost all current quinoa production is in the hands of small farmers and cooperatives.
- Apart from improving their nutrition levels, producers are also able to increase their income levels, sell surplus produce at good prices, and improve their nutrition by consuming a high quality food.
- FAOSTAT reports that, in the period 1992–2010, the cultivated area and total production of quinoa in the main producer countries of Bolivia and Peru almost doubled and tripled respectively. In 2011, combined quinoa production in Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador reached over 100 000 hectares.
- Quinoa cultivation is spreading, and it now occurs in more than 70 countries including Morocco, Kenya, India, France, England, Sweden, Denmark, Holland and Italy.