



Workshop report July 21 2006

In Riobamba on Friday, July 21 2006, 43 people participated in the first workshop of the Project “Facilitating the entry of small producers into the new agricultural economy conserving the natural resources base: A case study in the Andes”. Eighteen of the participants were farmers belonging to the Consortium of Small Potato Producers (CONPAPA) and the Chimborazo, Quero, and Tungurahua Coordination Platforms, as well as NGOs and public institutions dedicated to rural development, such as CIP, FAO, MAG, and INIAP.

The **purposes** of the workshop were to:

- Present the motivation, concepts, and aims of the project.
- Better understand the relationships between the actors involved in the potato value chain (platforms for shared projects).
- Identify barriers that prevent small farmers from linking to the value chain, as well as the business that has developed around the platforms of the shared project and CONPAPA.
- Analyze the impact of the platforms (value chains) on the environment (agro-diversity, natural resources, etc.) and on human health.

With regard to the methodology, a series of activities were designed to ensure that the workshop’s objectives were achieved:

Introduction:

The introduction sought to create an environment appropriate for group work, which facilitated the presentation of the participating individuals and institutions, and which made it possible to record the various actors’ expectations about the workshop.

Socialization:

The purpose of the second phase was to share the justification, concepts, objectives, and strategy of the CIP-FAO Project with the participants. This was done via a PowerPoint presentation followed by a dialogue between the participants aimed at clarifying the project’s purpose and providing feedback.

Analysis:

This stage of the workshop analyzed the barriers and other factors that facilitate the entrance of small farmers into the market, and the effects of these value chain information processes on the environment and human health. This analysis was conducted through working groups comprised of the various types of participants (farmers linked to the platforms, policy makers, development organizations, and actors from other levels within the potato value chain). These groups were asked to address three thought-provoking questions:

- (i) What barriers prevent farmers from linking with value chains and with platforms?
- (ii) What are the elements that facilitate this type of process?
- (iii) What impact do these market-oriented production processes (platforms) have on the environment and human health?

This stage of the workshop culminated with a discussion during which the various groups shared their work, and the entire conference reached conclusions about the similarities and differences in the visions of the various actors.

Closing:

The workshop organizers took advantage of the closure of the event to inform the participants about the next steps in the process.

The results of the workshop are presented below.

Expectations of the workshop participants

By means of the “*What do I expect?*” group-work technique, the workshop organizers facilitated the participation of the various actors and realized what their expectations were. These are summarized below:

1. Become familiar with the production and commercialization chain; identify opportunities, strengths, weaknesses, and threats to small agricultural producers while conserving the environment and improving the economy.
2. Learn the various points of view regarding the entrance of small producers in the new economy.
3. Acquire more knowledge to strengthen the agricultural practices of small producers with improved technologies.
4. Generate concrete actions to benefit the small potato producers.
5. Learn new strategies regarding rural development interventions.
6. Learn to produce better in order to improve the household’s wellbeing.
7. Seek mechanisms to improve coordination between the various actors.

Recommendations made by the farmers in the workshop to the project

Recommendations regarding the results

- The seasonal nature of potato production means that there are periods of boom and periods of difficulty; the results of the project should advise the country on establishing norms that allow dealing with this type of situation.
- The project should reflect on the limitations faced by the producers in the different stages of the productive chain.

Recommendations regarding the methodology

- It is interesting to have information and knowledge to elaborate policies that benefit small producers.
- To work successfully with the farmers that comprise CONPAPA and to earn the support of the platforms, one must work in three phases that guarantee the participation of the farmers and which allow the farmers to capitalize the results of the research project. These three phases are:
 - Phase I: Socialization among the farmers that belong to CONPAPA and the coordination platforms. During this phase, the farmers must receive information about the project and the project should establish operational agreements for the execution of the activities.

- Phase II: Research and the definition of objectives and production of results and lessons learned
 - Phase III: Dissemination of the research results to the farmers who can capitalize on the knowledge and information generated.
- CONPAPA's and the platforms' monthly meetings should be utilized to inform their members about the project's progress and to establish agreements.
 - Technicians should not be the only ones to participate in the visits, but farmer leaders, who are familiar with the area and who can express farmers' doubts, should also participate.
 - It is important to work with all of the actors who participate in the chain and/or who are involved at the institutional level to obtain all of the different visions.

Linking small farmers to the market and its environmental and social impact. The answers to three questions addressed to the workshop participants

Four groups worked on these topics. Two of the groups included small farmers linked to CONPAPA, the third included representatives from public institutions, and the fourth consisted of various actors involved in the potato production chain. The reflections of these four groups were guided by three thought-provoking questions:

- What barriers impede the entrance of small farmers to the market (value chains, platforms)?
- What elements facilitate the inclusion process?
- What impact do these agro-business processes have on the environment and people?

The conclusions of each group are reported below.

Group 1: FARMERS

Barriers that impede the entrance of farmers into the market:

- Lack of organization
- Lack of knowledge of other markets (traditional)
- Lack of knowledge about production costs
- Lack of knowledge about production quality
- Intermediaries (abuse of prices)
- Lack of information about market prices
- Lack of planning with respect to planting crops

Difficulties in the Coordination Platforms:

- There is insufficient collaboration among farmers that belong to the platform
- Agreements are not fulfilled
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of planning
- Unplanned and disorganized production

Factors that facilitate the insertion of farmers into the market:

- Strengthened organizations
- Better prices
- Secure market
- Planned and organized production
- Cleaner potatoes (safer, as not contaminated)
- Institutional support
- Added value (classification)
- Identification of new markets and sales support
- Training specific to potato production

Impacts on the environment and people:

Negative impacts

Environment	People
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use of just one variety- Abandonment of native varieties- Pollution due to chemical use- Stopped producing other crops (corn, barley, wheat, beans, etc.)- Introduction of potatoes areas inappropriate for their production	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opportunistic- Disinterested- Critical, especially of women- Human contamination by chemicals

Positive impacts

Environment	People
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Soil conservation- Decontaminated soil- Plague control- Efficient use of water for irrigation- Proper management of fertilizers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Seed selection- Improved standard of living (income, health, nutrition)- Stable work- Women's access to training

Contribution made during the discussion:

- Not many community members are part of it; only those that have access to irrigation participate.
- There are approximately 1,500 people participating in the platform.
- Within the platform, there has been a favorable impact on women; the training is more directed at them. Likewise, children have increased access to the formal training.

Group 2: FARMERS

Barriers that impede the entrance of farmers into the market:

- Lack of organization among the producers (egoism) due to the fact that they cannot face the market alone.
- They cannot produce because they do not have water for irrigation (access to productive resources).
- Lack of access to technology to produce quality products.
- Intermediaries control the market and there is no capacity to convince businessmen.
- Municipalities do not allow producers to sell in street markets.
- It is difficult to enter the market because they take away your stand.
- Intermediaries manipulate the market.
- Producers cannot sell directly because there is a lack of transportation.
- No access to technology.
- Due to a lack of technology and unstable production, small producers cannot satisfy market demands.
- Lack of product selection
- Producers do not use certified seed.

Factors that facilitate the entrance of farmers into the market:

- Producers are organized to compete in the market, they plan production (planting and harvest) according to market demand.
- Prohibiting business people from fixing prices and intervene so that producers can define market prices.
- Obtain support from the institutions that comprise the platforms by going to the meetings and informing other producers.
- Be prepared to improve productivity and quality to achieve better market access.
- Acquire good seed to produce quality products.

Impacts on the environment and people:

- Farmers' field schools have trained producers to reduce their use of chemicals and to switch to organic products.
- Farmers' health has improved now that they are not using red label chemicals.
- Emigration has decreased.
- Family incomes have increased.
- Potato sector more organized.
- Better access to technology thanks to the platforms.
- Awareness has been raised among farmers to achieve better production.

Contributions made during the discussion:

- The process should be oriented towards the market.
- It requires an integral vision of the chain and knowledge of each of its links.

Group 3: VARIOUS ACTORS IN THE CHAIN

Barriers that impede the entrance of farmers into the market:

- Variable prices
- Agro-industry with little social consciousness
- Lack of commitment on the part of farmers – they have their good moments and their bad.
- Lack of compensation mechanisms during critical periods.
- Smuggling of contraband potatoes
- Lack of formal agreements, legalized contracts
- Lack of public market policies
- Lack of alternative markets
- Lack of information systems that provide daily prices at the national level.
- Limited support; it is limited to specific intervention areas.

Factors that facilitate the insertion of farmers into the market:

- Support institutions (focus on the agro-food chain).
- Mechanisms and platforms
- Willingness to work with institutions
- Improved income
- Current level of organization favors future action
- Technical knowledge of crops
- Favorable agro-ecological conditions

Impacts on the environment and people:

- Social
 - Income
 - Organization
 - Health
- Environmental
 - Monoculture
 - Decreased varieties
 - Marginal areas: paramos
 - Better use of pesticides

Contributions to the discussion:

- Lack of strong leadership that can push the project.
- There should be a training event about quality control.
- The production process should be improved.
- The majority of production is above 3,000 meters above sea level.
- Including more people in the platforms depends on the potato market
- Implementing more farmer field schools and training more producers creates expectations.
- People need to see the potato chain from a market perspective.
- There are people organized and others that are not; somebody should undertake a deeper analysis of market access.
- Products should be stored to negotiate at more appropriate times.

Group 4: PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Barriers that impede the insertion of farmers into the market:

- Lack of organization, collaboration and cooperation
- Lack of information
- Lack of production planning
- Crop zoning, which depends on farmers.
- Poor post-harvest management; the majority of farmers have poor quality.
- There are no local agricultural policies
- Standardization of weights, sizes, and packaging at the national level.
- Lack of commercialization/business norms
- Absence of varieties in demand by industry
- Bureaucracy in financial processes to assure agreements and projects.
- Lack of other products to enter into markets
- No value added to potatoes
- Lack of systematic focus
- Lack of empowerment of the process by public institutions

Factors that facilitate the insertion of farmers into the market:

- There are organized and legalized groups: CONPAPA and the coordination platforms.
- Planting and harvesting plans
- Better prices
- Farmer training
- Inter-institutional cooperation
- Use of public information

Impacts on the environment and people:

On the environment:

- Decreased pesticide use
- Decrease in potato biodiversity: farmers only work with the Frippa variety
- Overuse and desertification of the soil: monoculture

On people:

- Improved income for the participating farmers
- Farmer participation – as owners – in the potato business
- Training of local farmer promoters

Contributions to the discussion:

- Concrete experience looking at the results that allow farmers to learn and improve their production processes.
- People should focus on the generation of knowledge, which will strengthen these processes.