

Processes of Social and Economic Transformation in Trujillo, Colombia, From the Adoption of Organic Agriculture

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Abstract

Although the region of the project is characterized by cultural and biological diversity, in the last few years, the region had underwent social and productive fragmentation due to the development of big properties (limitation of the land use), the presence of army groups (non legal groups), and illicit crops. For that, the Environmental Authority CVC and the San Isidro Foundation, together small farmers associations and an association of victims of the violence, formulated this project during 2003 with the idea to improve the local economy through organic production with a productive and commercial strategy. Finally, the a first phase of project was developed between April 2005 and April 2006 with participation of 122 small farms and 1 communitarian company, alle located in Trujillo, a town 116 kilometers from Cali, the capital of the department of the Valley of Cauca, Colombia.

Materials and methods

This project was participatory. This means that the materials and methods included:

- *Workshops on the work on equipment, social development, and other topics.*
- *Workshops and tours on organic agriculture, farm planning, seeds production, crops handling, food security, and other topics.*
- *Establishment of mini-projects (organic inputs production under communitarian conditions)*
- *Workshops on food processing and food quality*
- *Improvement of processing facilities*
- *Development of a commercial strategy*

All these activities were coordinated by multidisciplinary team and, as well, executed by a local team.

Results

Since its beginnings, the project showed key results for the future and sustainability of the project. Among them we have:

- *The inclusion of 122 families' farmers to processes of conversion in organic agriculture. Then, 92 small farmers and their farms were, voluntary, incorporated in a certification process. Products like coffee, blackberry, exotic flowers, banana, plantain, corn, beans, and pitahaya were certified.*
- *Construction of ten facilities for organic input production under communitarian conditions.*
- *Implementation of an ICS under participatory parameters.*
- *Improvement of the organizational culture of associations.*
- *The acquisition of new equipment and the improvement of old equipment in processing facilities.*
- *Opening of new markets at local, national, and international levels. However, the impact had been low, because the project did not have root capital*

Conclusions

Although the project was finalized in the first semester of 2006, the first stage of the project is in the process of consolidation. This has included the opening of institutional markets to supply drinks to the students of low economic resource,s and the processing and commercialization of a first conventional container.

The project is revolutionizing the productive and economic basis of the region nevertheless, and the lessons learned teaches to us that current production is not sufficient and diverse, and thus the next phase will have to include greater emphasis in the diversification of the production. In addition, it is very necessary to continue fortifying the capacity building of the organizations, among other actions.

Now, we are developing a second phase.

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