

Developing Local Markets with a Participatory Guarantee System Proposal

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Abstract

Almost all the organic-certified production in Peru (97%) is for export, and the main crops are coffee, mango, banana, amaranthus, quinoa, maca, and sesame. On the other hand, there are thousands of small farmers whose main income comes from agriculture and who comply with the organic norms but have neither an organic certificate nor a chance to export. The main target market is the local one, strengthening already-existing strategies and fostering new commercialization spaces.

The debate in Peru was focused on the need to certify for the local market. Can local market experiences be sustainable without an organic guarantee? In a country with high levels of poverty, is it possible to generate a real and constant demand for organic products from all consumers or only from high-income consumers?

The National Association of Organic Farmers of Peru (ANPE Peru) and the Institute of Environment and Development (IDMA) worked separately on a proposal for a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) based on experiences mainly from Brazil. The need for joint work arose and a first strategic alliance on this issue was launched by both ANPE and IDMA.

The experience began with farmers who already had a commercialization strategy, with trading experience, and with the clear need to give an organic guarantee to the consumer. The Bioferia of Huancayo and the Ecological Fair of Huanuco soon turned into a reality, having as their main goal to strengthen the organization of farmers.

PGS is a proposal of a heterogeneous group with a common objective: to gain confidence and credibility with the consumer. The process started with ANPE, IDMA, regional bases of ANPE in Huanuco and Huancayo, and another NGO, CEAR. Governmental organizations have joined the initiative (local and regional governments, health departments, agricultural and educational sectors).

In this process, the consumer is not a mere client. Consumers turn out to be an active and involved stakeholder, visiting organic farms, being supportive to the organization of fairs, training, and advancing the proposal.

Social control is done with a bottom-up approach, from a local nucleus of groups to regional and national ones. These nuclei have representatives of organic farmers, consumers, educational organizations, and governmental organizations, and they create communication bonds within a framework of ethics and shared values. Social control in PGS strengthens organizations of farmers and consumers, addresses production, satisfies demand, mainstreams agroecology in the government, and nurtures institutions.

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