

Trias supports potato chain business partner management model development and implementation in producer organisations in Ecuador and Peru

Location: Chimborazo, Tungurahua (Ecuador) and Apurimac (Peru)

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Most local potato producers work individually and have little experience in forming associations or cooperatives. This is the main challenge in the potato sector.

They also face high price fluctuation. Prices can get as low as \$2 per 45 kg, which does not cover production costs nor allows producers to generate utility.

Main private partner Trias South America has been working in Andes for more than 10 years in order to incorporate a business partner vision in potato producer organisations in Ecuador and Peru by developing and implementing the business partner management model.

This methodology allows defining social and business strategies and actions, so producer organisations become totally sustainable from a social, economic and environmental point of view.

Public partners

Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Ecuador (MAG): Initial investment in infrastructure for collection centres and root cellars.

Agricultural research institute of Ecuador (INIAP): Ongoing support in technical training and field research.

International Potato Center (CIP): Ongoing support in research and potato seed projects.

1. Collaboration and institutional support for the potato cooperatives in the Andes

Associativity and organisational strengthening are key items to achieve sustainability in potato producer cooperatives. For this purpose, Trias has developed the business partner management model, which is based on two pillars: partner management and business management. It begins with a participative assessment on social cohesion, organisational and management structure, and a business analysis. Based on the results, a business partner plan is built and several



organisational, production, business and management strategies are implemented.

Trias has applied this model in potato production organisations AGROPAPA Tungurahua and CONPAPA Chimborazo (Ecuador), and COOPAGROS (Peru).

Trias' technical assistance focuses on strengthening producers and technical teams' capacities in productivity, roles and functions, marketing, legal framework, developing internal management tools, creating services for their partners' needs, finding markets, product promotion, and added value.

As a result, organisations now have a clear organisational and business structure, services adapted to their customers' needs, and they collectively sell good quality products with added value, which allows them to access markets with fair and differentiated prices.

2. Quality & healthy potato planting material

In Ecuador, INIAP is responsible for pre-basic, basic and registered seed production. However, it fails to supply annually with the amount of registered seed required for the multiplication of certified seeds at the national level. Therefore, small producers cannot access certified seeds and are forced to recycle the seeds they have, which lowers their quality.



One of the biggest obstacles encountered in AGROPAPA, CONPAPA and COOPAGROS was the poor quality of potato seeds and the lack of access to certified seeds for small producers. To tackle this issue, Trias and CONPAPA Chimborazo invested in a project to multiply basic to registered and certified seeds.

Seed producers choose seeds during the workshop "Overview of potato quality seeds", at Bolívar State University.

As a result, CONPAPA was the first small producer organisation in Ecuador to be legally certified as a potato certified seed multiplier. This allows them to produce and sell seeds to other market sectors, which demonstrates small producers can produce high quality seeds.

Due to a nationwide seed quality issue, Trias and CIP decided to organise a specialisation programme for seed producers. This specialisation programme is endorsed by two Ecuadorian universities: Higher Polytechnic School of Chimborazo and Bolívar State University. They are also supported by Tungurahua city council, INIAP and MAG. These take care of the certified seed multiplier register in order to ensure high quality seed preservation and access.

Small producer organisation AGROPAPA has established itself today as a national reference in high quality seed multiplication. Thanks to AGROPAPA, the current average selling price is \$25 per 45 kg, with a turnover of 250 t/year. They multiply the following seed varieties: Superchola, I-Fripapa, I-Libertad, I-Cecilia, and native varieties Yana Shungo, Puca Shungo, Santa Rosa and Yema de Huevo.

3. Farm management & crop production techniques



In order to improve farm management and potato production techniques, Trias, INIAP, and MAG implement farmer field schools (FFS) as a training methodology and way to validate new technology developed by CIP.

FFS grow pilot plots, where local promoters are trained in new production techniques. They will replicate this gained knowledge in their communities to improve productivity in the potato sector.

Trias, in partnership with INIAP and MAG, invests in technifying farm management through training programmes on integrated pest and disease management (IPDM) in farmer field schools (FFS) and rural leadership training programmes (CDC). This year, 32 seed leaders and 10 experts from public and private institutions have been trained in Chimborazo, Tungurahua and Bolívar (Ecuador).

Due to the tripartite partnership between Trias, producers and private companies Netafim and Plastigama implementation of drip and spray irrigation systems has been co-financed. These systems are suited for small and medium-scale potato production, improving performance (16 t/ha) and potato quality.

4. Sustainable production and improved storage of potatoes

Trias and MAG have co-financed the study, design and implementation of collection centres and semi-technified storage at CONPAPA and AGROPAPA in order to ensure adequate post-harvest technical management, thus having high-quality products for their customers all year round.



Trias has moreover invested in experience-sharing, so local producers and experts can learn first-hand experiences in post-harvest management from Belgian Belgapom and Boerenbond producers. These experiences have been locally adapted and replicated, improving producer post-harvest management. As a result, CONPAPA Chimborazo's cellar was built.

This cellar can store 150 t potatoes and helps them store potatoes for four months with no quality loss. This allows them to overcome price fluctuations and sell potatoes when the price is best.

5. Creating added value

In Ecuador, AGROPAPA Tungurahua and CONPAPA Chimborazo are the only organisations working in marketing and generating added value for potatoes. They analyse each organisation's potential according to their influence areas.

They have the necessary equipment and semi-technified machines to be more competitive with the market's needs, creating jobs for the members of the organisations.



CONPAPA operational staff use a potato washer.

CONPAPA has a potato collection, storage and processing centre. It has semi-technified

machines used to classify, wash and package bulk potatoes. Thanks to these machines, it only takes 8 hours to process 13 t.

AGROPAPA has a potato collection and processing centre. It has semi-technified machines used to produce native potato snacks.

COOPAGROS has a centre and a freezing chamber used for chuño (dehydrated potato) production.

6. Marketing



Producer organisations, Trias, CIP, OFIAGRO, INIAP, MAG, universities and local governments have developed a seed business plan in Ecuador to identify strategies and new certified seed market niches for small and medium producers.

CONPAPA sells Superchola, I-Fripapa, I-Carolina and I-Victoria washed potatoes in 2.5 kg and 4.5 kg mesh bags, 20 kg boxes and potato sacks. They sell 60 t per month in total. Their most important niche markets are fast food chains, supermarkets and agro-industries in Quito and Cuenca.

Besides seeds, AGROPAPA sells 50 t fresh potatoes to fast food establishments, restaurants, supermarkets, agro-industries and pays the producer 2 to 3 more dollars than the benchmark price in the conventional market.