

THE ORGANIC PRODUCTION

IN BOLIVIA**

The way to an ecological Nation

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The new government of president of Bolivia Evo Morales presents a perspective of great change in many aspects of the lives of Bolivians*. The agricultural sector is included in this shift of thinking and constitutes a pivotal axis in the policy of the new government.

President Evo Morales, government officials, key leaders of social have consistently managed a discourse in favour of organic agriculture, emphasizing the positive benefits for Bolivian's health, the protection of the environment and the opportunity to gain and consolidate access to markets in benefit of smallholder farmer's incomes.

In June 2006 the government presented the **"NATIONAL PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT: DIGNIFIED, SOVEREIGN, PRODUCTIVE AND DEMOCRATIC BOLIVIA, TO LIVE WELL"** and in November of the same year passed the **"Law of REGULATION AND PROMOTION OF ORGANIC FARMING AND NON TIMBER FORESTRY PRODUCTS"** making organic production part of State policy.

At the same time, the government has prioritised a process of land redistribution, affecting millions of hectares, which will be distributed to indigenous communities and peasants, prioritizing and supporting the ecological use of this land (Law 3545), as stated in the law passed in November

Bolivia's geography is comprised of a variety of agroecological climates, a fact that has supported the livelihoods of millenarian cultures throughout the country's history. Presently the country has high indicators of poverty and extreme poverty, occupying the 113th position in the UNDP development index (UNDP 2005) and a scandalous numbers of chronic undernutrition populations (FAO 2006).

2006 the **"LAW OF COMMUNITARIAN RECONDUCCIÓN OF the AGRARIAN REFORM"**.

The afore mentioned development plan emphasises the importance of agroecological practices in creating solutions to many of the problems faced by poor Bolivian farmers, and in addition, it hopes "the development of ecological agriculture associated with the elimination of pesticides and reduction of the use of fertilizers, replacing them with organic products "(PNdD 2006).

The development plan and the new organic production law include a change in the approach to technological innovation for agricultural production, based on "the promotion of investigation, recognising and documenting indigenous production techniques, the appropriation of external technologies and promotion of participatory forms of knowledge sharing, focussing on learning by doing", farmer field schools and "farmer to farmer" knowledge exchange; primarily focussed at small producers and peasants.

It is hoped that these government programmes to support the adoption of ecologically sustainable technologies and in regions where organic agriculture is not possible, producers will be encouraged to enter the transition process. The plan contemplates the involvement of municipal and state governments in developing these programs and/or projects to support organic production, which is now considered top priority. Government's institutions that administer public resources will have to prioritize the acquisition of organic products (Law 3225).

AOPEB (Association of organic producers organizations of Bolivia) an umbrella organization supporting organic producers plays a key role in this process, formulating and actively accompanying the creation of a legal and normative framework, and

maintaining an important presence in all the institutionalization of Bolivian organic agriculture.

The Bolivian organic export market is worth around \$us 25 million with more 12 thousand tons of certified products among them quinoa, coffee, cacao, chestnut, amaranth and soya; a total of 364,100 certified hectares. The main markets are the European Union, the United States of America and Japan, but exports are on the increase to Colombia, Chile, Saudi Arabia and other new markets. Expert at AOPEB predict market growth top the value of \$us 450 million by 2016(IFOAM 2005) (El Deber 2006).

Current production includes new products like onion, peas, broad beans, peanut and others, as well as Andean tubers, grains, fruits and other under exploited crops. The market for organic certificated quinoa is growing with exports of 5 thousand tons, with the perspective of reaching 30 thousand tons in the next four years. The offer of processed organic products includes dehydrated llama meat, quinoa soups and ready to eat quinoa.

The greatest challenge faced by Bolivia's organic agriculture sector is the development of local markets following the policy of the present government, to consolidate an agroecologic alternative and overpower the negative effects of the "green revolution" and of the conventional agriculture (Altieri & Yurjevic1991, Vildoza & Vogl 2006).

"Before our slogan was "Mother country or death", now will be "our planet or death", because we will offer sovereignty and security to humanity, not to make money but to guarantee life" (Evo Morales 2006).

"When we speak of ecological Bolivia we are speaking about sovereignty and human security ; to produce ecological products is not for the money but it is about life, we are speaking about the life of humanity" (Evo Morales 2006)

"Ecological Bolivia is a component of the agrarian revolution. We are proposing an agrarian revolution and the best way to guarantee an ecological Bolivia. It is not only about organic products but also how to conserve our environment" (Evo Morales 2006)

"I am convinced that we only can compete in the international market with organic products, currently cultivated in many different regions from the country. I want publicly to ask some agro businesses in Santa Cruz, to stop the production of GMO's, because with that we are not going to compete in any market" (Evo Morales 2006).

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