

Impact through Innovation

Potato is the principal staple food for Bolivia, providing 30–50% of the total calorie intake of rural highland households and, for many farmers, it is also the main cash crop. Potatoes are grown in hillside production systems in the Altiplano and inter-Andean valleys where poverty is widespread, with calorific deficits estimated at around 40%. Most potato farmers are poor. Many poor people benefit from technological innovation in potato cropping systems.

Since 1995, several RNRRS programmes have supported research projects in potato-based farming systems in Bolivia. These addressed a range of constraints including pests, diseases, weeds and nematodes, as well as drought, poor soils and severe problems of soil erosion. During 2001, CPP initiated a strategy to achieve improve and integrate impact from such projects. Key players, including existing Bolivian research partners and policy makers, DFID (La Paz), CIP and the Swiss funded regional potato project, Papa Andina were brought together for this new phase of RNRRS-supported work. Involvement of stakeholders from the earliest stages ensured a sense of ownership, as well as adequate representation of their views. Outputs will be achieved through the concerted action of Bolivian researchers, CGIAR expertise, and UK-based collaborators, working with poor farmers.

Farmer participatory research (FPR) will validate, adjust and disseminate research outputs, which will be promoted to a range of target groups using information management systems. At the same time, the project will develop, test and institutionalise mechanisms for linking supply with demand for technical innovation by poor farmers,



Hillside agriculture in mid-Andean valleys of Bolivia where potato is the main food and cash crop

using the FPR programme as a test case. The technology needs of farmers will be serviced through implementation of a food chain approach and dialogue with buyers, processors, and other stakeholders in the market.



Making light of the load

The Government of Bolivia is developing a new framework for agricultural research and extension – SIBTA, which provides an innovative model in which four research foundations are responsible for management of competitive grant schemes, research prioritisation and resource capture. DFID, the World Bank and other donors will in future be channelled through SIBTA and its foundations. SIBTA was closely involved in preparation of the RNRRS proposal, ensuring that the project is in concert with the new system, and provides support in a number of key areas including, the development of improved mechanisms to support research prioritisation.

It is increasingly recognised that institutional change is central to technical innovation, and to achieving increased impact from agricultural research. Bolivia is engaged in the development of an alternative and innovative framework for research. This project will contribute to the process of change by piloting an initiative that is multi-disciplinary and cross-programme, which has been developed in partnership with Bolivian researchers, policy-makers and DFID's RLD and Country Programmes, and which will direct research through improved mechanisms for linking supply with the demand for technology innovation by poor producers.

R7462: *The development of integrated management systems for the control of pests and diseases in the potato systems of the Mesothermic Valleys of Bolivia*
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