

Knowledge Programme: Small Producer Agency in the Globalized Market, 2009-2011

Regional roundtables, Latin America (Lima and Managua)

5th and 10th of August 2009

Summary

A Knowledge Programme (KP) is being established by Hivos, IIED and a global **learning network** (LN), to map, elicit and integrate knowledge on the dilemmas confronting small-scale producers from the globalisation of markets. A series of regional roundtable meetings is being held in Latin America, Africa and Asia to:

- a) Present the concept of the knowledge programme and its associated learning network, which will drive knowledge generation.
- b) Have an open and frank discussion to validate the contents and premise of the KP.
- c) Elicit interest from potential LN members, with a view to constituting the full global learning network in December 2009.¹

This report is on two roundtable meetings, held in Lima and Managua in August 2009. Roundtable participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds including entrepreneurs, producer organisations, and service sectors.

This summary presents selected key points from the discussion.

- It was appreciated that there are long-standing issues of imbalance in competitiveness between large business and small farmers, and between large and small farms, related to access to markets, finance and technology. There are also newer global challenges of global warming and food security. These external issues go beyond the scope of the nation state and of producers. So, the challenge of building knowledge networks has become more important, but it is also more difficult to create good and effective networks. There is network fatigue in Latin America.
- The effectiveness of networks depends on clarity of mission, objectives, mode of action, and added value, focusing on concrete issues.
- This is an opportunity to “think locally and act globally”. Much is context-specific, to geography and product (exposure to global markets, price trends). And ambitions for “development” differ. But for shared global problems, the network can allow us to globalize innovation with insights and approaches.

¹ At the time of the roundtables held in Latin America, it was envisaged that the full learning network would be established by December 2009.

- It is important that this network seeks a different role for the South. For that, “building agency” are the key words – the capacity that people have to achieve something, similar to empowerment. It means joint development of knowledge, with mechanisms for knowledge to flow back and forward without institutions like IIED and Hivos acting as knowledge filters or brokers. A small (around 15 people), temporary, directed network has to establish a wider “antenna” to reach more than just the 15 individuals or groups.
- There were different opinions on the scope of knowledge production – from comprehensive research integration (a “knowledge encyclopaedia”), to targeted research on limited strategic hot topics (“the unknowns”), with a strategy to identify and prioritize the issues. Alternatively the focus for the network could be on capacity development, improving the skills and abilities of people and institutions from the north and south. Apart from agricultural production and food, and constraints to the entrance of small producers into better markets, we need to start talking now about the role of small producers related to energy, climate change, and payments for environmental services. We need to understand failures as well as success stories.
- Similar meetings are due to be held in Africa and Asia before the end of the year and then, in the first half of 2010, a global meeting in the form of a residential workshop will be organised for all the network members from the three continents to meet. During this workshop, the process of identifying core issues will be completed and ways of working by and between network participants will be established.

Detailed minutes

1. Introduction

A **Knowledge Programme** is being established by Hivos, IIED and a global learning network to map, elicit and integrate knowledge on the dilemmas confronting small-scale producers from the globalisation of markets. It is working with different actors to bring new voices, concepts and insights into the global debate. The Programme thereby seeks to support smallholders and their organisations to position themselves and make effective choices in the face of this complex agenda, and support the development community and businesses in the search for better informed policies and practices. The KP will link up with existing networks and like-minded actors/activities to ensure strong policy impact.

The KP will be built around a **learning network**, linking Latin America, Africa, S/SE Asia and possibly central Asia. This network will comprise women and men – academics, policy makers and practitioners active in this field – who are connected with young farmers and their support and market networks, *and* connected to the worlds of globalisation of agrifood markets. The network mixes the next generation of opinion leaders with actors who are already in positions of influence. The network will study the modalities that can and are being used by the rural poor to take advantage of current market opportunities while circumventing the risks.

The Knowledge Programme started its international activities with roundtable meetings in Lima and Managua, covering South and Central America respectively. The first meeting (5 August 2009) took place in Lima, Peru, with invited participants coming from Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia. The second meeting (10 August 2009) was held in Managua, Nicaragua, with invited participants from Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala and El Salvador. Follow-up interviews were conducted with Claudia Ranaboldo and Jaime Moreno, who were unable to attend the roundtables in person.

Lima meeting participants:

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Lorenzo Castillo	Peru	Junta Nacional del Café	Manager	jnc@juntadelcafe.org.pe
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Lucila Quintana Aceña	Peru	Junta Nacional del Café	Committee Member	lucila_quintana@yahoo.es
Santiago Perry	Colombia	Corporación PBA	Director	sperry@corporacionpba.org
Fausto Jordán	Ecuador	Former Adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture	Consultant	jordan@uio.satnet.net
Luis Galleguillos	Bolivia	Cooperativa El Ceibo	Advisor	elceibocom@accelerate.com
Reinaldo Marconi	Bolivia	FINRURAL Network	Member	gerencia@finrural-bo.org
Bill Vorley	UK	IIED	Head, Sustainable Markets	bill.vorley@iied.org

			Group	
Ethel del Pozo	UK	IIED	Programme Coordinator	Ethel.DelpozoVergnes@iied.org
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Diego Muñoz E.	Bolivia	MAINUMBY	Network Coordinator	ogeid@mainumby.org.bo

Managua meeting participants:

Name	Country	Institution	Position	e-mail
José María Blanco	Costa Rica	BUN-CA	Regional Director	jblanco@bun-ca.org
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2. Summary of the Programme and Objectives of the Meeting

In both meetings, Diego Muñoz gave a short explanation of the Knowledge Programme and the objectives of the meeting.

These two roundtable meetings, in Lima and Managua, had the following objectives:

- a) To present the knowledge programme and learning network
- b) To have an open and frank discussion to validate the contents and premise of the KP
- c) To elicit interest from potential LN members, with a view to constituting the full global learning network in December 2009.

Similar meetings are planned in Africa and Asia in November-December 2009.²

3. Why this programme about small producers and global markets and why now? (Presentation by Bill Vorley, IIED)

3.1 Presentations in Lima and Managua

Globally, farmers with less than 2ha comprise around 85% of global producers. Rates of poverty are high: ¾ of the world's poor are rural smallholders and wage labourers. Small-scale agriculture is back on the agenda, not just because of poverty reduction but because of their role in global food security. Rather than just being labelled as "poor", there are high expectations from small-scale farmers as engines for poverty reduction, food security, economic growth, youth employment, supply for agribusiness, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation, at a time of market globalization.

This market globalization comes in three forms:

1. **Imports into the South.** Competition in domestic markets from higher quality, lower price imports, which can drive change in dietary preferences, eg from potatoes to pasta
2. **Investment into the South.** Investment (domestic and FDI) in retail, wholesale, manufacturing and land can drive "land grabs" and modernisation and restructuring of domestic processing – see www.regoverningmarkets.org
3. **Changes to export markets.** Deregulation of bulk commodities markets can drive price volatility, and directly expose farmers to the vicissitudes of world markets. Commoditization of niche markets (eg organics, fair trade) can reduce opportunities for smallholders to add value.

The turbulent mix of new risks and opportunities – new buyers, new competitors, and new requirements (such standards for safety and "sustainability") – are set against a broader context of climate change, degradation of natural resources, higher strategic value of land / "land grabs", commodity supply and price volatility, new markets (eg carbon, avoided deforestation), and a partial reversal of the trend to trade liberalisation and market deregulation in the wake of the financial crisis.

The debate on how small-scale producers and their organisations can position themselves and make effective choices in the face of this complex agenda is polarised. Stark contrasts are drawn between "market-based development", in which market access is equated with development, and "rights-based development", where market access is equated with dependency. Positions reflect opening assumptions, supported by selective use of data and methodologies. Case studies of successful market inclusion will find "success", and case studies of crisis in the smallholder sector will find "crises."

For smallholders and their organizations to build *agency* in the face of this complex agenda requires knowledge and capacity to organize their interests and take effective action. But it also requires a widening and reshaping of the debate on small-scale production in the face of the globalization of markets – a globalization of insights.

The Knowledge Programme has set out to map, elicit and integrate knowledge on the dilemmas and opportunities confronting small-scale producers in global, regional and national markets. It aims to work with different actors to bring new voices, concepts

² This was the plan at the time of the roundtables held in Latin America.

and insights into the global debate. It thereby seeks to support the development community, policy makers, producer organizations and businesses in their search for better informed policies and practices. This is part of Hivos' new role as 'knowledge integrator' in addressing complex challenges facing Hivos and its partners.

In confronting complex issues, IIED and its partners have a record of building successful peer-to-peer learning networks such as the Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG) and the Capacity Strengthening in Least Developed Countries for Adaptation to Climate Change (CLACC) network. For the KP, the intention is to convene an untypical learning network, spanning Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The network will comprise "policy entrepreneurs" / "knowledge brokers" who are active in the worlds of small farms, markets, policy, active in the space between knowledge and action, grounded, forward-looking critical thinkers, who can bring the range of debates together. The network will be led from Bolivia, using open architecture, for inter-learning, commissioning knowledge development, integration, and influencing.

The proposed plan for the LN is to:

1. Map knowledge and the associated range of opinions on smallholder agriculture and globalized markets, plus assumptions and data that underlie those opinions
2. Agree on common "hotspot" questions, issues and themes where integration of knowledge is needed to
 - develop the capacity of smallholder organisations
 - promote new policies and practices (public & private)
 - improve the level of debate
3. Highlight those "hotspots" with highly accessible case examples (articles, video, etc)
4. Commission and (where appropriate) get involved in production of knowledge on innovations that address the "hotspots", including producer-academia teams
5. Organise learning events, including a "Spring School" in 2010
6. Broker, communicate up (to global debate) and down (to national and local policy processes)

Proposed time line is as follows:³

Aug-Nov 09	Form network
Nov 09 - Mar 10	Develop priority questions
Mar 10	Residential workshop ("Spring School") in Europe
Apr 10	Commission studies
Aug-Nov 10	Review results
Mar 11	Residential workshop: Implications
May-Jul 11	National events

3.2 Questions and comments on the presentation in Lima and Managua

Q. How is the network going to be built and how is it going to work?

The members will give to the network its own shape – an open architecture but globally consistent, convened from Bolivia. It will agree on a "hot list" of issues and working themes. The minimum commitment of time should be that

³ This was the proposed time line when the roundtables were held in Latin America

the members attend the two yearly meetings (one each year of the programme) and can provide inputs on some relevant issues.

Q. Who will be the members of the network? NGOs? Businesses? Producer Organisations? What about the national agendas of the small scale producers' organisations and the need to have appropriate policies?

We are looking for innovative people, new actors who can be the core of the network, women and men from different sectors who can put on the table the difficult issues. Because of that, the selection of the members and the background of our partners is very important. The debate is polarized, and this network has to have a different approach and see which are the most important and critical issues for small producers and their relationship with globalized markets.

Q. What is the result that HIVOS and IIED want with this programme? Which are the objectives that will be measured?

We want to put the network in the hands of a group of innovative people who will build the network. We do not want to dictate outputs and indicators. That is something that the network members have to build and it will be part of the process.

Q. What will be the interaction among the three continents?

The network has to use electronic and modern communication technology to cut down on travel and help members to meet in a different form. The plan is that the network will meet face to face twice, first at a residential [spring/summer] school in Europe in 2010, and again in 2011.

4. Presentations by each participant and their opinions after reading the information sent

4.1 Presentations by Lima participants

Luis Galleguillos (Adviser - Cooperativa El Ceibo, Bolivia)

- 15 years ago, there were three main problems facing small producers: asymmetry in their access to markets, access to finance and access to technology. With globalization, the asymmetry in competitiveness became clearer and with it the asymmetry in access to markets for small producers.
- The presentation of the KP identified many more critical variables for small producers than those identified 15 years ago. The problems of global warming and food security go beyond the scope of the nation state and of producers, so building capacity is now more challenging. Therefore, the challenge of building knowledge networks has become more important, but it is also more difficult to create good and effective networks.
- After many years of working with small producers, there have been some achievements within globalized markets, such as incorporating some groups of small producers into some specific national and international markets. The fight for survival of small enterprises in the markets is still occurring, with producers' organizations or without them; or with programmes like this or without them.
- There is a lot of knowledge that can be shared, so it is important to know what has been done in the past. That knowledge should be improved and enlarged.

- To get a network like this running, people with a high level of commitment are needed, because otherwise the knowledge will have only a political use. Because of that, this type of network cannot be separated from political issues but it also has to look at what people, producers, are doing.
- It is important to communicate success stories, with analysis of why these success stories happened, in a specific part of the world. Then the network could compare and analyze the different success stories.

Carmen Willems (Junta Nacional del Café, Peru)

- Each context is particular, so the network has to take from each case the most outstanding issues. For example, we need to rethink what we mean by “success”. For example, *quality* is not just related to a product, but also to family livelihoods. So quality is a global issue that has to do with livelihoods, technology, organization and policy issues.
- Products are also very specific. The current economic crisis has not yet affected the coffee markets in Peru. So coffee is a product different from others that have been affected, such as alpaca, and those that are not exported at all.
- Issues that could be worked on in this network include organization, gender and generational differences.

Lucila Quintana Acuña (Junta Nacional del Café, Peru)

- My concern is how to work with the entire family in the coffee producers’ organizations and cooperatives. Women are the ones who contribute more to food security.
- The Peruvian government pays no attention to us as small producers. We need markets that are more equitable and flexible, but the government has to help to achieve that.
- Market liberalisation has led to an imbalance between large business and small farmers. In order to be more competitive as a country, we need to improve the integration of small, medium and large producers. To achieve that, the scientific community, politicians and all the other institutions in society have to be involved. There is a restructuring of national and international markets but small-scale producers are still only integrated in the value chain as suppliers and bean pickers, in bad conditions. That’s why in the National Coffee Board (Junta Nacional del Café - JNC) we fight to have producers considered as entrepreneurs. Everybody is important. But this is not understood, so the politicians and the coffee organizations are not working in this direction.
- It is a big challenge to empower producers and their organizations in the value chain. These organizations have to be supported in their relationship with markets, taking into account that markets are becoming more volatile.
- Small producers have a responsibility with regard to global warming. It is said that farmers are responsible for 13 or 14% of carbon emissions, but in my opinion part of the solution is in their hands and that is an important issue to work on. In order to mitigate global warming, resources should be given to small producers in so that they can improve their production technology.
- Young people do not want to stay in the countryside, so something has to be done to change this tendency – attention to product prices, access to markets, and better policies, for example.

Fausto Jordan (Ecuador)

- The network that this programme wants to implement is somehow special. There is no doubt that networks are important; but in order for them to work well, the people involved are the key issue.

- In this case, knowledge is the added value between the knowledge offered by small producers and the offer of the global markets. How will this network work with these two poles?
- The network should work on different issues that need to be integrated. This can happen through the encounter of different organizational forms and systems. To work on this, education systems are very important. In Ecuador young people are very open to learning new things, but the universities are not responding to that need.
- With the new technology and the communication instruments that exist now, universities can play a very important role in a network like this.
- It is important to identify educational issues with a rural development face, and this has to be related to the building of knowledge.
- Another important issue to be considered in this network is access to land and land tenure.
- The idea of knowledge mapping is very interesting, but it is important to put clear limits on it. What knowledge? What for? Why?
- The knowledge in this network should come from small producers. Everybody who is not a small producer in this network must always be willing to listen carefully to what the small producers say. Knowledge does not just come from universities.
- A clear differentiation must be made between food security and food sovereignty. A food security approach can be an excuse for monocropping with intensive use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers. A food sovereignty approach is more environmentally friendly and allows for natural resource management. In this, small producers have an important role to play.
- When we talk about food security, the discussion is about achieving a balance of calories, proteins and vitamins. When we talk about food sovereignty, we are talking about a cleaner form of production that preserves natural resources and builds on smallholders' cultural priorities and practices.
- Rural micro-finance could be also considered as an important issue for the network. Here, the roles played by women are crucial.
- Organised small producers can have a political relationship with local leaders and they can use that to improve the management of local natural resources. So small producers have to influence local leaders. This is another important issue to work on the network.
- The challenge for this network will be to take what is specific and particular – thousands of differences – and turn it into a single line of knowledge and a global policy.

Santiago Perry (Corporación PBA, Colombia)

- Santiago is the Executive Director of PBA Corporation (Corporación para el Desarrollo Participativo y Sostenible de los Pequeños Productores Rurales⁴). Through PBA, Santiago works with small producers on technology transfer and innovation, organization, recovery of traditional knowledge, empowerment and participatory methodologies related to markets. PBA also works through Information and Communication Technology Centres (ICTs) for small producers. In Colombia there are more than 150 centres. PBA also works with international ICT initiatives in Peru and Bolivia, but on a smaller scale. The ICTs are used to develop a global learning process (local networking).
- For him, small producers are researchers and experimenters. PBA Corporation works with small producers on cost analysis, where the local markets are the most important markets.
- PBA does not believe in monocropping by small producers. They are therefore

⁴ www.corporacionpba.org

- working with mixed production related to markets and family consumption.
- Through PBA, small producers sell their produce in different markets, both national and international (organic, fair trade and others). International markets are not necessarily the solution; local markets and family consumption may be highly important.
- Regarding the knowledge and learning network, he believes that networking (locally and internationally) on these issues is very important. One of the most important things to do is to identify success. Some experiences that have been successful in the past can fail because of market changes. Another thing that he considers a challenge in this network is how to work coherently across different actors and cultures. The concept of “development” is not understood in the same way by Colombian indigenous groups on the Atlantic coast and Peruvian indigenous groups near Lake Titicaca.

Reinaldo Marconi (FINRURAL Bolivia)

- Reinaldo Marconi is a member of FINRURAL, an umbrella organisation that seeks to advance the wider interests of leading microfinance organisations in Bolivia, by providing microfinance services in rural areas.⁵
- The viability of smallholder production very much depends on the conditions in which market insertion takes place. There are some successes such as fair trade and some less successful. Reinaldo stressed the importance of strong alignment between access to financial services and access to markets, and alliances between productive and financial sectors for smallholders.
- Two effective mechanisms used by FINRURAL have been a “fund for productive capitalisation” and a “fund for financial entities”.
- To improve the impact of financial services the Rural Finance Forum of Latin America and the Caribbean (FORO-LAC) was established.

4.2 Presentations by Managua participants

Kieran Durnien (FLO Centroamérica, El Salvador)

- Has reservations about networks – much value in principle, but in practice there have not been many concrete results. How to support smallholders is still a huge challenge. “We cannot participate in this network because we work on strategic alliances, but we can think about a shared platform for working on specific issues in the field.”
- Nevertheless, there are some important experiences that could be used, not only as networking instruments but also as concrete actions. The concepts of networking and learning are excellent, but we need to have a clear idea of what we want at the end of the day.
- Kieran has the impression that when we speak about what is happening and what has happened, we are not convinced of the results we have achieved. With regard to fair trade, we are not convinced about what we have done and do not know what the future is for small producers in fair trade.
- We therefore need to set aside individual interests, put our experience into practice and always think of small producers first.

Manuel Amador (Cooperativas Sin Fronteras, Costa Rica)

- Represents Cooperativas Sin Fronteras, working on fair trade and organic markets. Coop. Sin Fronteras links small producers with niche markets in Europe, mainly Italy and France.
- We have small producer partners from Argentina to Mexico and we work with them on fair trade. We sell chocolate, sugar, coffee and other small producers’

⁵ <http://www.finrural-bo.org>

products. There are 12,000 families in Latin America associated with this programme of cooperative selling. Coop. Sin Fronteras is lobbying to create a green label for the organic market in Europe. They are members of the Slow Food Alliance set up with the Brazilian government to develop fair trade markets for cooperatives.

- Coop. Sin Fronteras is also a broker for small producers in environmental service payments and the carbon market, and they are currently undertaking a study on how to reduce carbon emissions. This has an indirect impact on preventing global warming.
- With regard to the programme, “we are tired of networks that don’t go anywhere.”

José Manuel Blanco (BUN-CA, Costa Rica)

- José Manuel Blanco works in an institution part-financed by HIVOS in Costa Rica called BUN-CA (Fundación Red de Energía) www.bun-ca.org
- In his presentation, José Manuel mentioned that south-south networks have been presented as instruments that were going to develop something new, but unfortunately that did not happen. One example is BUN (Biomass Users Network).
- As an institution, we are interested in this programme, but before getting involved, we have some questions for IIED and HIVOS: What is your baseline? Where do we start from?
- To start with a network like this, it is important to understand the actual context and to understand which issues need to be analysed.
- In a small region like Central America, the differences are huge from one country to another. So, how big might the differences be in a world context? Unless you are clear about the country reality, or at least the sub regional reality, you risk making many mistakes.
- A weak understanding of the global context leads to weak public policies. If that happens in this programme, then the knowledge is not going to be useful for small producers.
- The network must not do the work of governments; it has to do complementary work. Governments and states have their responsibilities which they ought to fulfil.
- In Central America there are public policies aimed at small producers (rural and urban), but there are no instruments for supervising and controlling those policies. For instance, artisanal fishing takes place in large areas of Central America. In those areas, the small and medium enterprises do not have appropriate policies and regulations for their activity. The policies are only appropriate to the big companies.
- There is also an absence of regulation in the use of land. In Costa Rica small producers are being displaced by tourism. The local communities who lived by the beach and had artisanal fishing as one of their main economic activities have been moved out. These people are now contracted as cheap labour by the big tourism businesses. So, from being small producers with their own business, they have become low-wage workers in the tourist industry in the same place.
- Natural resources (air, land and water) are also moving from one type of use to another. Perhaps the situation is not as critical in the case of air and land, but it definitely is with water. Without water it is not possible to live. The unregulated use of water has negative effects, especially due to extreme weather events.
- With HIVOS funds, BUN-CA is working on saving energy in more than 50 small hotels. This programme is working well and is saving energy and money for small tourism enterprises. The average number of workers in these hotels is 20 people. So that means that the programme is having an impact on more than 1,000 individuals.

Falguny Gujaray (SIMAS, Nicaragua)

- Falguny is the executive director of local NGO SIMAS (Servicio de Información Mesoamericano sobre Agricultura Sostenible www.simas.org.ni) based in Managua, Nicaragua. The SIMAS vision and mission are:
 - *Mission:* Improve the capacity of rural, women's and young people's organizations, social movements and networks so that they can innovate and work under a more sustainable approach, with the aim of establishing a fairer development in the current context of ecological and economic uncertainty.
 - *Vision:* To be a reference institution in Nicaragua and Central America in the field of knowledge, communication, and influencing on sustainable and fair rural development.
- The issues on which SIMAS works are:
 - Human development with equity
 - Conservation and governance of natural resources
 - Food sovereignty and security
 - Development of rural enterprises
 - Development of local information and communication services
- SIMAS develops information systems with small producers so that they "harvest the knowledge" and after processing they give the information back to communities.
- SIMAS works on learning and policy influencing (public and private). It is not possible to work on policy influencing if learning is not taking place.
- SIMAS is developing different learning and exchange methodologies.
- SIMAS also works with ICTs in Managua and other places using the open access Linux platform.
- SIMAS is very interested in the Knowledge Programme and Learning Network and wants to participate – there are strong synergies with existing networks.

Eduardo Baumeister (INCEDAS, Nicaragua)

- Until now there are very few small producers that have been able to really enter the global market. If the programme wants to establish a knowledge and learning network, it has to start from an absolutely heterogeneous scenario. The network must not "sell" global markets as the way out of poverty for smallholders. People who are looking for alternatives to agriculture or need support require very specific measures. There is therefore a huge diversity of knowledge needs. Small producers who need help and advice to solve their problems require specific assistance.
- If the programme is looking for an exchange of knowledge, this has to be done among people who share some of the same interests but taking into consideration their particular interests.
- There are two problems when one works with small producers: one is the heterogeneity of the problems and the other is the particularity of the issues. The link between the two is the main dilemma in this type of network. The other issue is migration and mobility. In Europe in the 1800s, a large percentage of the population lived in rural areas, but then the majority migrated to urban areas and to other countries. So it seems that the rural population has the tendency to move to other places.
- It is difficult to copy and share knowledge, even between people who have gone to university. It is even more difficult to do it among small farmers.

Alberto Monterroso (Opción/Aj Ticonel, Guatemala)

- Opción is a small institution that tries to have an impact on government policies in Guatemala. We are also part of the export sector (10th largest export company in the country) and negotiate with the Guatemalan government. We advise farmers' organisations to set up businesses with funds provided by a public programme.

As a producers' organization we advise small producers on how to link into public policies related to markets.

- Outside of the “theoretical world” we participate in different markets: we sell vegetables in Guatemala, Central America and some northern countries.
- The year 2008 - 2009 has been a very bad year for small producers, because of the global economic crisis. Due to the crisis, the terms of payment by our clients have changed and that has negatively affected the producers.
- With regard to the programme, we do not need to “preach to the converted.” The programme has to work with the unconverted, and that is not easy.
- Quality is one of the most important issues on which to work with small producers. If small producers want to get into competitive markets, they have to improve the quality of their products.
- Another issue that he proposed to work on in the network is the effect that the economic crisis is having on small producers, and especially how it is affecting trade relationships. There seems to be no loyalty, only unequal trade relationships. In the northern countries, we do not see that people and enterprises have a commitment to people and enterprises from the South. The North demands everything and is not willing to fulfil southern demands. The only commitment that northern companies offer to small producers in the South is that if they put a lot of effort and investment into their production they can *perhaps* get a market for their products. Certification only offers the hope of access to a market. So the only thing that southern producers receive from the North is the hope of getting into those markets. They must wait 90-120 days for payment. One example is the difference between Wal-Mart in the US and Wal-Mart in Central America in terms of its dealings with small producers. The company is developing its own brand in Central America.
- He also mentioned that his company and sector have had a good experience of trading with Costa Rica. They also have important clients in Paris and London. These clients buy products from Kenya worth around one million pounds.
- In his view, it is important not only to work on fair trade but also trade justice. The programme could discuss the risk of relationships between small-scale producers and big business.
- The value of the Programme can be as a paradigm of “think globally and act locally” – an articulation of voices from the South. The main forums for debate are currently dominated by PhDs. This KP would allow different people to be involved in the generation of learning. If we cannot raise the voices of the South, then the value of the network will be limited.

5. The ideas behind the Knowledge and Learning Programme: HIVOS Approach (Marieke Hobbes, HIVOS)⁶

Mission

Hivos - a Dutch non-governmental organisation inspired by humanist values - seeks to contribute to a world in which all citizens – men and women – have equal access to resources and opportunities for development.

Themes

- Human rights & democratisation
- HIV/AIDS
- Art & culture
- Gender, women and development
- ICT & media
- Financial services & enterprise development

⁶ Power Point presentation

- Sustainable production

Main activities

- Advocacy for pro-poor policies, especially in the Netherlands
- Financing and civil society capacity building for poverty alleviation
- Creating knowledge for development: Knowledge programmes

Knowledge Programmes at Hivos

- Civil Society Building
- Promoting Pluralism
- Civil Society in Closed Societies
- Digital natives with a cause?
- Small Producer Agency in the Globalized Market
(www.hivos.net)

A general truth

In order to get anywhere,

- You need to know **where to go**.
- You need to know **how to move**.

So every action is knowledge-based and every development action is knowledge-based.

All development practitioners (civil society organisations, governments, business) work from their knowledge base.

Aim Knowledge Programmes

Knowledge Programmes seek to improve the knowledge base for development policies and CSOs action around the world in order to enhance their effectiveness for sustainable development.

Objectives of the Knowledge Programmes

1. Raise the level of global debate
2. Make a real change for CSOs' (including Hivos') and governmental policies
3. Establish a cooperation between science and practitioners ('knowledge hub')

How to achieve these goals?

- New data and theory: knowledge elicitation/generation
- New compilation, interpretation of data and theory: knowledge integration
- Connection with development action: knowledge effectuation

Knowledge Programmes have a natural emphasis on integration – but not fully or strictly

Hivos' Knowledge Programmes

= building general knowledge for POs, CSOs, development practitioners, policy makers and society, mainly through knowledge integration.

This knowledge should be focused on specific themes (questions), to be selected by practitioners and academics from the South and North.

How?

- Most natural way: join practitioners' knowledge with academic knowledge.
- Join knowledge of all types (e.g. facts, cases, values, objectives, methods, practices)

- Join by way of various working methods

Working methods of knowledge integration

- Short-term: workshops, writeshops ('pressure cooking')
- Mid-term: integration assignments
- Long-term: stepwise process

All these methods are interactive.

Knowledge effectuation (outreach)

Strengthened POs and other CSOs

- Through having been part of KP
- Through learning by KP, e.g. workshops, training.
- Conclusions, manuals, tools, etc. on website etc.
- More knowledgeable governments, business, etc.
- Conferences, workshops
- Policy briefs, lobby, advocacy, website
- More knowledgeable society

6. The knowledge and learning network: how is it going to work? (Diego Muñoz, MAINUMBY)

- A lot of research has been done on issues related to small producers and markets, so this programme should not repeat what has already been done.
- In order to have a mixed and heterogeneous group, the people involved should be a mix of researchers, business people, leaders from small producers organizations, policy-related, NGO-related and others. Each member has to participate in the network under his or her own terms.
- If we consider that there will be approximately 15 core members, and the programme is going to work in three continents, then we will have 4 or 5 members per continent. The selection of the groups will be done on the basis of the issues rather than the country that the groups come from. One group can therefore work in more than one country. 14 or 15 members for a network like this are a small number. Because of that, the members that are going to participate in the network have to be very open minded. These are 15 *people*, not institutions, individuals grounded in local/national realities but making the link with global changes. They have their own networks and are able to mobilize other people to work on a particular theme or issue. If they are not able to write papers, we could commission this work but it will be conducted under the leadership of the network member. Because the 14 or 15 core members will determine the characteristics of the network, it is important to establish minimum criteria to define the profile of the members.
- Some of the criteria that could be considered are that the people or groups should be:
 - members of networks (formal or informal) who are working on issues related to small-scale producers;
 - motivated by the proposal and willing to help coordinate the network and to invest time and effort in its construction;
 - willing to listen and learn from others and share their experiences and knowledge;
 - able to analyse and systematize their work and knowledge, and share it in an organised way with other groups;
 - working closely with small-scale producers, markets, producer organizations and policy influencing; or
 - willing to work using the new technologies for communication and networking.

- Besides these criteria, there are other important issues that need to be considered in setting up the network's groups, such as:
 - Politically, a programme with these characteristics is never neutral. Because of that, this programme must have a strong and clear commitment to small producers, working to ensure that policies empower them and the results help them to find answers to their problems.
 - The network is not going to be composed only of small producers and their organizations, but the main reference and the main concern are going to be small producers and their organizations.
 - In Latin America the political scenario today is very interesting. Many countries and governments are implementing important reforms that will have an impact on the relationship between the State, public policies and small producers. It will be important for the programme to learn from these processes and study the consequences of these changes. This work should be done in countries that have different political systems and governments with different ideologies.
 - Since the programme will work in different continents, in each continent there should be a group or institution that will help the programme with coordination in that region. These institutions could also organise and systematize the learning produced by the programme in the participating countries in that continent.
 - Although there will be international, regional and global meetings, these are very expensive and not exactly the best contribution the programme can make to combating global warming. Because of that, it will be very important to develop creative and appropriate communication systems, based on the accessibility and availability of modern digital communication technology (email, skype, websites, electronic forums, wiki, digital video, DVD, etc.)

7. Discussion after all the presentations

7.1 Meeting in Lima

Key discussion points:

General

- Small producers are an issue that is raised time and again in our societies, where poverty and inequality are part of the problem. In the current global context, small producers can be important actors all over the world. So a good alternative is to empower small producers through knowledge and learning.
- Globalization is a reality that has to be taken into consideration with its pros and cons. Small producers and their viability in the context of globalization are at the core of this network; ideologies are not.

Building an effective network

- In general in Latin America, there is "network fatigue". Effective networks are those that are clear about their **mission, objectives and way of working**. There was discussion on what the objectives of the network are and who the actors are. The network must identify limits to the issues that it will cover.
- One of the network's aims is to **integrate and systematize knowledge** and help the participants to access that information in an effective way. Producers know what their successes and problems are; what they often don't know is where and

how to obtain the information that can provide them with appropriate ways to resolve those problems. But if the network tries to compile a “knowledge encyclopaedia”, which catalogues everything that is out there, the result will be an enormous catalogue where one can get saturated with information.

- A second focus for the network could be on **capacity development, improving the skills and abilities** of people and institutions from the North and from the South. Alternatively, it could focus on identifying emerging **issues**.
- A third approach could be to look “over the fence” in order to identify and work on a limited set of **critical issues of strategic importance** to smallholders and their organisations.
- The Learning Network must **add value** beyond the relationship with IIED and Hivos. There was discussion on what network members’ organizations and the member him/herself will gain by participating in this network.
- There must be clarity about **representation** – who do LN members represent?
- If small producers are important actors in this network, the network has to be able to give them practical information that can be used in their daily activities. To do so, the type of professionals involved is very important. It is essential that **small producers themselves participate on good terms**.
- There must be a two-way **information flow between producers at the grass roots, the network, and the global level**. There was discussion on the mechanisms and pathways that are going to be used, for small producers and their organizations to access information, and to link our ideas and knowledge with reality. One proposal was to map the organizations that could be interested in participating in the network. This would allow participants to access the required information according to their needs.
- The idea is **not to create a permanent institution**, or an institution of representatives of other networks. Neither is it a private sector network. This network is **not being set up for IIED and HIVOS**. It is a network of people from all sectors who see the issues related to small producers and markets in an innovative way. Members will decide how the network should work. This is an unusual opportunity to work for the next two years on issues that members think are important for small producers around the world. The network has to identify the issues and integrate them. The network can integrate what is known on those issues, pinpoint strategic aspects and look for the best way to work on them.
- The network should try to contribute to the **globalization of innovation** and solidarity, offering global insights and approaches to global problems. Under this structure, researchers and research institutions are key actors
- Through this network we could **organise meetings** related to global issues and also specific issues.
- One proposal for the mission, objectives and intervention strategies for this network was as follows: *Mission*: Systematize and facilitate knowledge from the actors involved on issues related to small producers and markets (global and local), trying to link and integrate relationships between peers from the South and the North, in order to influence public policies and promote the exchange of good practice on global innovation and solidarity. *Main Objective*: To promote the systematization and dissemination of knowledge. *Intervention strategies*: an encyclopaedia of knowledge; mapping of the actors; a library of problems; exchange of experiences and knowledge; generation and discussion of public policy proposals; globalization of innovation and solidarity. *Structure*: research institutes; cooperation agencies; self-motivated researchers; producers’

representatives. *Mechanisms*: studies, workshops; round tables; learning visits for producers.

- Where is Mexico? the Caribbean? Brazil?

Potential topics for the Learning Network to address

- Is the network going to work by thematic nodes or regional nodes? Which are the issues that the network will work? The network has to work through issues (thematic nodes) instead of countries. If we define the discussion by region, then the diversity will result in debilitating divisions. But if we define it thematically, then the distances are smaller.
- We need issues that will be **interesting for a number of participants**. Local markets? Regional markets? Environmental services? Carbon markets? The future of fair trade? It is unlikely that everybody involved in the network is going to participate with the same level of interest in all the issues that are being discussed. The network should be an instrument that enables people who share the same interests to get in contact and coordinate, discuss or work on similar issues. The network can be a framework for this.
- Through this network other issues can emerge, such as solidarity markets. Empowerment of small producers is an important issue and this should be done through their organizations. This is something very important for our countries, and it can also contribute to the network.
- **Promoting global experiences and best practices**, eg in rural finance, best practice in smallholder production within globalised markets. Analyse the **good and bad experiences**.
- Something that also could be discussed is the **global economic crisis**. The crisis has already affected Peru, but it has arrived late. What does that mean?
- **Market information and intelligence?** A key question for a network like this is: Are small producers going to receive market information from this network? A network like this is not necessarily a source of market information, but how possible is it to have as one of the network products some information on “market intelligence”?
- Markets today have too many barriers for small producers, so the network should see how it can help small producers to act in those markets. One issue that this network could specialize in is to help small producers **overcome their problems related to their markets**.
- **Public policy?** Does the network want to influence public policies? Do we want a network that contributes to better practice in public policies?
- **Environmental services?** The network must not only systematise information but contribute with new studies, for example on markets for environmental services. In Costa Rica this has so far only benefited the big companies.
- **Single commodity focus?** From what has been discussed, it seems that coffee production is very important. So the network could work on issues related to coffee in Mexico, Peru, Colombia and other Central and South American countries so that this sector could discuss their ideas, perspectives and problems.

7.2 Meeting in Managua

Key discussion points:

General

- In the past we used to say, “Think globally and act locally”. Now things have changed and we have to say, “Think locally and act globally”. This leads us to the possibility of truly listening to the voices of the South – it is important that this network seeks a different role for the South. For that, **building agency** are the key words. For us it refers to the capacity that people have to achieve something. It is a concept similar to empowerment. In a knowledge and learning network, everybody is a creator and everybody is a reviewer because everybody is part of the network. Beware the traditional pattern of knowledge creation → knowledge development, which is apparent in one of the presentations. We talk now about the *joint development* of knowledge, with mechanisms for knowledge to flow back and forward without institutions like IIED and Hivos acting as knowledge filters or dealers.
- Much is known. The network should be about asking what we *don't* know, rather than what we do know. We should have a roadmap of issues that can become “hot”.
- Central America is one of the few regions of the world where more than half of the population lives in rural areas. It is also a region where the ratio of imported food – such as rice and wheat – is highest, and where large retailers such as Wal-Mart are controlling a major share of urban food supply. This very rapid process is part of a whole series of events that are driving a large-scale displacement of local populations, either from their economic activities or from their land. The region is also facing important challenges from CAFTA and other free trade agreements.

Building an effective network

- As a network we need to think about what form participation is going to take. For that, we need to clearly identify the **objectives** of the network. It is important to achieve concrete results.
- The network is a *directed network*, not an open network for everybody. Once the issues are identified and decided, it is possible to start working on those issues. The 14 or 15 people or groups participating should be part of one or more networks themselves. A person or group doesn't have to be a member of the network in order to make their contributions.
- Who will the 15 members or groups that are going to be selected for this network represent? What are the characteristics of the ideal candidate? The people that are going to participate should be creative, alternative thinkers with innovative ideas.
- It is important to bear in mind at all times that Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America have very different ways of working.
- On whose behalf should this network act? Who is the information in the KP useful for?
- Is the programme going to have its own information network? Will it produce periodical publications, perhaps every two months?

- There are big differences between the south of South America, the Andes, Central America and Continental America. Globally, the challenge for this network is to ensure that people from as far afield as, say, Mozambique and Indonesia, want to participate and work on similar issues.
- There are important networks that specialise in the circulation of information such as Info Focus, Info Trend and others. These networks are experienced in running long-term discussions.
- The programme has to establish a wider “antenna” or radiation mechanism to reach more than just the 15 individuals or groups.

Potential topics for the Learning Network to address

- The universe of issues is immense and all are important. Because of that, it is crucial to develop a strategy to identify the issues. Once the issues are identified, they have to be prioritized. This will also require a strategy. After that, it will be possible to identify the partners and how the programme is going to work with them.
- Networks for action would be a very good contribution; were everybody could come together to work on unresolved issues.
- We are mainly talking about production and food, but we need to start talking now about **energy** and the role of small producers on this issue.
- We also need to work on **climate change**. Central America is responsible for 0.1% of global GHG production but has a very high vulnerability to climate change. We are currently designing an environmental service system to measure energy, carbon fixation and greenhouse gas emissions. We can make a valuable contribution on these issues..
- We have to work on the success stories, but also on the failures.
- We also have to analyze which are the elements that **constrain the entrance of small producers into better markets**.
- Perhaps we should think about re-launching **local or regional markets**.
- We must look at the role of the private sector and big business – “inclusive business” vs. relationship *with* big businesses.
- We have to help small producers so that they can have a clear position with regard to **public policies**.
- It is very important to talk about **education**. Today the average age of small farmers around the world is 56. The younger generations are not working in the fields or living in the countryside any more. That is going to be a serious problem in the future.
- If we are able to generate added value on these issues that could be something important for everybody.