Are potato markets gendered? An analysis of gender networks in the potato marketing chain in the Tiraque watershed, Bolivia

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Outline

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1. The economic problem and its importance

1.1. Access to markets

- Markets determine the rate and pattern of growth

- Markets often fail for the poor when they are unable to access them, or can only access them on very unfavorable terms, due to:
  - High transaction costs, incomplete information, active discrimination (specially women)

- Two key elements in efforts to break the cycle of poverty are:
  - Increase access to information through (ICT)
  - Reduce discrimination against women (gender)
2. **Current intervention to be examined**

**Bolivia**

- In Bolivia the topic of the market integration of farmers has received little attention.

  - **ICT in rural Bolivia:** Among the most important are:
    - Radio
    - Fixed telephone
    - Cell phones

  - **Gender:** Anecdotal information shows that women and men perform different tasks along the potato supply chain
2. **Current intervention to be examined**

**Study area**

- It is comprised of 14 communities, with a population of approximately 3000 inhabitants
  - Cell phones have become the most used communication technology among farmers and in the potato chain
  - Potato markets are perceived to be female dominated
    - Although the widely-held assumptions: Andean societies to be strongly male-dominated
- Primary economic activities: Small-scale agricultural production
- Primary social problems: low levels of income and lack of income-earning alternatives
3. **Objectives**

- Describe the roles, responsibilities, actions and decision-making of small farmers

- Describe the potato marketing chain in the Tiraque region, with a special focus on the role that gender and access to information play within it;
4. Methods: data collection and analysis

- Qualitative data:
  - Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA)
  - Case Studies

- Quantitative data:
  - SANREM Project Baseline Survey = 400 families in 18 communities

Market analysis will be conducted around potato production (most important crop)
5. Major Findings

5.1. Description of the roles, responsibilities and decision-making of small farmers in rural Bolivia

Gender roles and decision making: Division of labor and responsibilities within households including, production and marketing activities is intrinsic to gender in Andean societies.

- Household
- Production
- Marketing
- Access to information

Both go to the market, women are in charge, but men support them
5. Major Findings

5.2. Description of the potato marketing chain in the Tiraque region

![Diagram of potato marketing chain]

- **Farmer 1**
  - Average price: 180 Bs/100 kg

- **Farmer 2**

- **Farmer 3**

- **Farmer 4**

- **Farmer 5**
  - Last sale: 88,000 Kg (6 farmers)

- **Wholesaler**
  - 250 Bs/100 kg

- **Retailers**
  - 250,000 Kg (6 Wholesalers)
  - 2,000 Kg (2 Retailers)
  - 280 Bs/100 kg

- **Urban Markets**

- **Consumers**
  - Supermarkets
  - Restaurants
  - Households
5. Major Findings

5.2. Description of the potato marketing chain in the Tiraque region

- The high participation of women in markets is striking.
- Women predominate in potato marketing, and their relationship with wholesalers, who are also mainly women, reinforces this advantage.

  - Gender has become a key element of potato marketing strategies.
6. Conclusions

- Efforts to improve incomes of potato producers should recognize women’s roles, especially in marketing.
  - Gender plays an important role in access to markets
  - Nevertheless the nature of marketing networks has not changed sufficiently to allow them to have better access to information.
  - Basically the nature of marketing networks can be summarized by the phrase: “among women, there is a better understanding”.

- Cell phones = more access to information = more competitive farmers
  - Its success relies on the strength of farmers’ social networks
    - Larger social networks imply larger and more trustworthy sources of information
Thank you