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

N. Amaya, J. Alwang and M. Christie



November, 15th 2010

Outline

1. The economic problem and its importance
 2. Current intervention to be examined
 3. Objectives
 4. Methods: data collection and analysis
 5. Major Findings
 6. Conclusions
-

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.

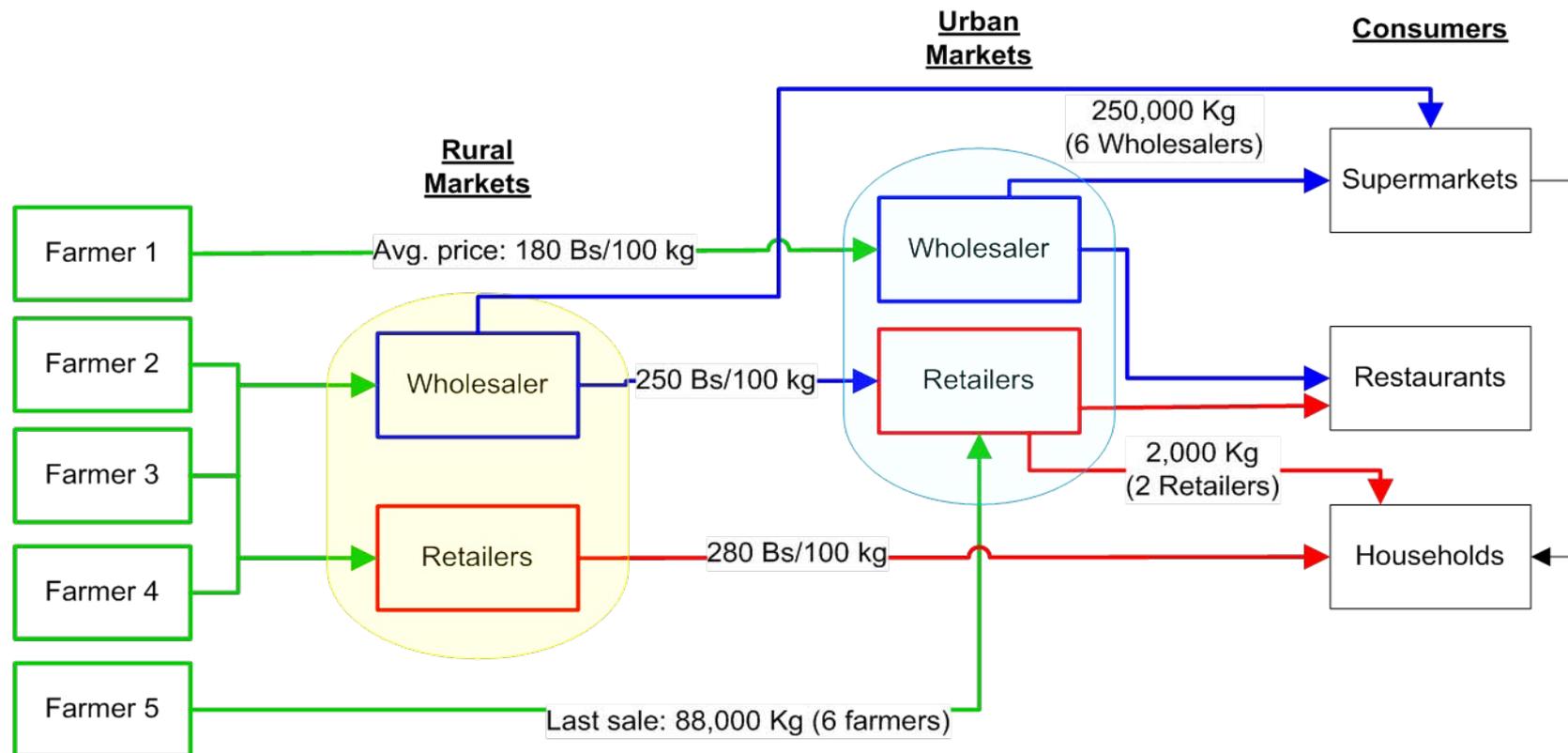
- ❑ Household
- ❑ Production
- ❑ Marketing
- ❑ Access to information



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



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