Quinoa Production in the Nor Lípez Province (Bolivia): Gender roles in Export-led Agriculture and Challenges for Research on Rural Employment

Abstract prepared for the Fourth Global Conference on Economic Geography (Oxford):

Gender in Global Value Chain and Global Production Network research

Authors:

TSCHOPP Maurice*, ROMERO ROMAY Daniela**, ZAMORA Elizabeth**, BIERI Sabin*

Key words: Gender, Quinoa, Export-led Agriculture, Rural Employment

Background:

Quinoa is an ancient Andean crop that has been cultivated in Bolivia for thousands of years. Due to spectacular increase in prices since 2004 (from 1000 USD/ton to more than 3000 today), cultivated areas of quinoa have increased tremendously in the last decade in the Nor Lípez region in Bolivia.

This study is part of the FATE project (Feminization, Agrarian Transition and rural Employment), a six-year research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. It investigates export-led agriculture, rural employment, capabilities and asset-building of women and men in four countries (Bolivia, Rwanda, Laos and Nepal).

Abstract (200 words)

The recent increase in prices and production of quinoa have had important effects on the employment structures and livelihoods of rural communities in the Nor Lípez Province (Bolivia). The "quinoa boom" resulted in significant changes in household incomes and in gender roles in the context of increasing market integration. The nature of these changes however is not easy to grasp, as new official narratives on gender and on traditional systems of labour divisions and shared access to land have surfaced since the election of Evo Morales (2006) and the adoption of a new constitution (2009). Furthermore, rural employment is found to be much more diverse than the term suggests.

Women have always participated in the production of quinoa when it was widely considered as a subsistence crop. Our research takes place in the Nor Lípez Province, Bolivia with exploratory studies that were conducted in January and February 2015 in 8 rural communities of quinoa producers. Preliminary results suggest positive effects for local women in that they managed to earn additional income which might have contributed to their empowerment. This article will present both preliminary results, challenges for gender-oriented research in Bolivia and the methodology aiming to capture changes at the individual, the household and the community level through a survey that will be conducted from September to November 2015 in 500 households.

*University of Bern, Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), Faculty of Natural Science
**Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, Postgrado en Ciencias del Desarrollo (CIDES-UMSA)