

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN ANDEAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES: THE IMPORTANCE OF OPERATIONALIZING THEIR MULTI-DIMENSIONAL DIVERSITY

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Small-holder farmers in the Andes are guardians of agro-biodiversity and invaluable traditional knowledge but are, at the same time, frequently marginalized. Due to that, countless agricultural development projects have been implemented in these mountain communities of the Andes with the goal of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable land management and reducing climate change vulnerability. Although the high socioeconomic and environmental diversity of mountain communities can strongly influence the final outcomes of these projects, those factors are barely considered during the planning, implementation and evaluation phases. Based on farming systems diagnosis, this study identifies the factors that determined the final impacts of one of the most iconic public-private agricultural development projects implemented in the southern Andean communities of Peru. The results show a clear uneven impact within and between communities in terms of capacity building and economic development achieved. The lack of recognition of the different initial levels of economic diversification, communal organization, market access and crop suitability within and between communities at the beginning of the project contributed to this phenomenon. This study demonstrates the importance of conducting ex-ante project appraisals to understand the role of socioeconomic and environmental factors playing at multiple scales that influence mountain communities, including intra, inter-community factors and regional or even national dynamics. The acknowledgment and operationalization of the situational diversity of the Andean mountains are key to ensuring the success of development and sustainability initiatives.

Keywords: *Sustainable land management, impact assessment, mountain development, agriculture, agrobiodiversity, project appraisal*