



**Thematic Group on  
Rural Development  
and Food Security**  
Established: 1993

**Membership**

**UN:** FAO; IFAD; UNDCP; UNDP; UNICEF, WFP; World Bank

**Government:** Commission for the Promotion of Exports; Inter-ministerial Commission for Social Affairs; Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Fisheries; Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Human Development; Ministry of the Presidency; Ministry of Health; National Council for Food and Nutrition; National Programme for Food; Secretariat for International Technical Cooperation.

**NGOs:** Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE); German Agro Action (GAA); International Potato Centre (CIP); National Agricultural University of La Molina; Peruvian Centre for Social Studies; Rural Coordination

**Donors:** European Union (EU); German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ); Inter-American Bank for Development (IADB); Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA); Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI); Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); United States Agency for International Development (USAID); Embassies of Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands

**Past activities:** Information exchange and dissemination on the development of the border between Ecuador and Peru; the improvement in capacities to forecast and evaluate El Niño through natural disaster prevention strategies; and poverty alleviation through private sector and entrepreneurial partnerships.

# Peru



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## Prioritizing the cultivation and use of traditional Andean crops

The Thematic Group in Peru is helping to conceive a common strategy to rehabilitate Andean agriculture which offers real hope for the poor and marginalized in the country.

An estimated 50 percent of the population (10.5 million) lives in poverty in Peru and it became clear to the Thematic Group that identifying the means to fight poverty was of paramount importance. Through a series of meetings over the last six years of its existence, the Group has amassed a body of knowledge and a realization that promoting the cultivation and use of traditional Andean crops offers real hope to food-insecure and impoverished rural populations.

The Andean region is one of the major centres of origin of crop plants in the world, home to such crops as

potato and maize which make a significant contribution to global food security. However, the Andes also contains a wealth of relatively unknown and underexploited crops and genetic resources – a rich resource that has tremendous potential for agriculture, food security and commerce.

It was in 1996 that the Group first brought together representatives of growers' associations, NGOs, civil society, government and the scientific community for a presentation on 'The Promotion and Use of Andean Crops' and debated their potential uses in Peruvian agriculture. In response to a request from the Ministry of Agriculture, an associate researcher from the country's International Potato Centre (CIP) was invited to a Group meeting in May 1999 and delivered a

**// It is necessary to carry out a poverty alleviation strategy through an assessment of Andean crops.**

J. M. ABBES, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EU AND MEMBER OF THE THEMATIC GROUP





presentation which highlighted the importance of devising a strategy on Andean crops and discussed concepts for a national strategy for their reassessment. This presentation also included analysis of the various marketing possibilities for Andean crops, which was inspired by a study conducted by staff working on a joint project of the Association of Exporters and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). This stimulated Group interest in the issue of transforming Andean crops – that is, turning their raw material into industrial by-products for commercial use.

As a result of this meeting, the Ministry of Agriculture underlined its commitment to developing a national strategy for the use of Andean crops as a means of improving food security and as an essential part of the country's follow-up to the World Food Summit. The areas pinpointed for activities were to be the departments of Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Apurimac. These areas are situated in the Altiplano of the central Andes and remain the heartland of the Andean indigenous peoples who suffer from high levels of poverty and malnutrition.

In response, the Thematic Group in Peru has formed a working sub-group – comprised of CIP, EU, the Peruvian Centre for Social Studies (CEPES) and FAO – to develop a project proposal for the Ministry of Agriculture. This project would cover the production, consumption, processing, and educational aspects of promoting traditional Andean crops and would consider intermediate support activities between producer and the market. The Group has subsequently worked together with relevant government ministers on devising guidelines for an FAO Trust Fund project entitled: 'The Promotion of

#### the Production and Consumption of Indigenous Crops in Support of Food Security in Huancavelica'

Although these projects have yet to begin implementation due to changes in the political climate, the commitment to implement strategies that promote Andean crops is still high amongst development partners and the Government. In order to sustain momentum, the Thematic Group's next meetings will focus discussion on a review of a recent publication on the urban consumption of traditional Andean crops, which contains valuable recommendations on the consumption of oca, quinoa, haba (broadbean), kiwicha and olluca.

## The multiple uses of Andean crops

Most Andean crops – roots, tubers, grains and leguminous plants – are grown by the poor and are an invaluable source of food, nutrition and income. They include grains (quinoa, amaranth); leguminous plants (beans, lupins); roots (arracacha, yacón, chagos, potato, sweet potato); and tubers (olluca, oca).

Promoting the cultivation and use of these crops makes sense: many Andean crops can grow well at high altitudes in harsh conditions, with low inputs, and in soil that cannot support other crops. To the rural poor many Andean crops provide ready supplies of food that is rich in nutrition, low in starch and high in energy, as well as having important medicinal properties. These foods from the mountains can also be used commercially for local diets and traditions and are a source of raw materials for a range of industrial products – for example, oca can be used as starch.

