

ATSAF - CGIAR++ Junior Scientists Program

Final Report

Name of student: Juan Tomaila Tenazoa

University: Humboldt University Berlin

Supervisor at University: Dr. Michelle Bonatti

International Agricultural Research Center: International Potato Center (CIP)

Country: Peru

Supervisor at IARC: Dr. Stef de Haan

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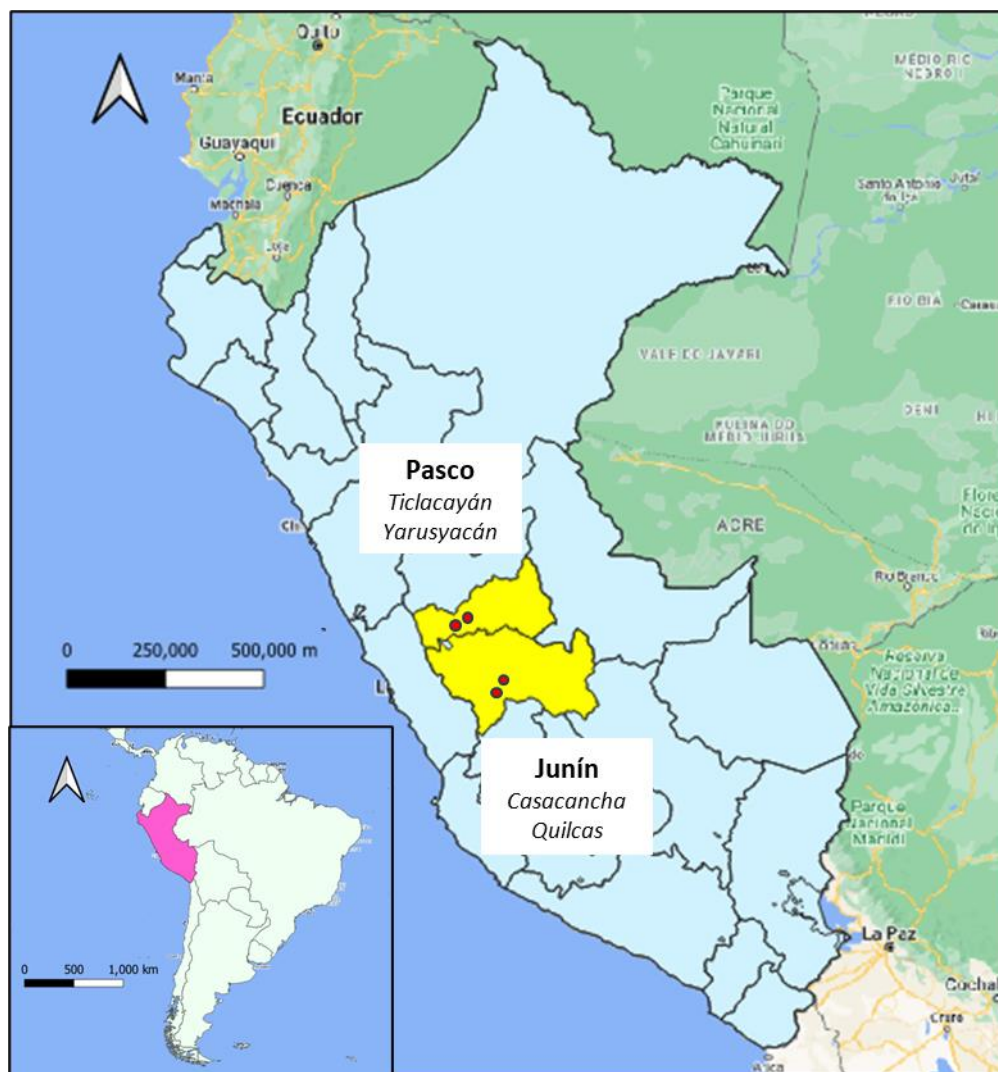
Title: Community Based Governance Assessment in the Peruvian Andes

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The Andes are home to a wide diversity of agricultural species, including a wide variety of potatoes. In Peru the diversity of this tuber is around 3000 native varieties. Those in charge of maintaining this wide diversity on their own initiative are smallholders of the peasant communities in rural areas in the Peruvian Andes. The communities are the basis of the organization of the Andean peoples, which have their own rules of self-regulation and coexistence, also applied to the use of land and agricultural activities. These human groups use ancestral practices for land conservation and preservation of native potato varieties. However, they are also exposed to natural and anthropic difficulties that put at risk the continuity of their group organization and their traditional agricultural activities.

I made a trip to Peru, to collect information in peasant communities, located in the Andes between January and June, in order to: i) evaluate through interviews the type of governance that allows these groups to properly manage their communal agricultural lands where native potatoes are grown, and ii) determine the local agrobiodiversity and native potato crop patterns through the collection of samples of this tuber in plots. Four peasant communities were evaluated: Ticlacayán and Yarusyacán in the province of Pasco, and Quilcas and Casacancha in the province of Junín (Figure N° 1).

Figure N° 1: Location of Peasant Communities in Peru



Source: own elaboration with software QGIS.

Due to demonstrations throughout the Peruvian territory on account of political instability, all the activities scheduled in the work plan prior to the trip had to be rescheduled taking into account the communication and permission to enter the peasant communities.

In January, meetings were held with professionals from the International Potato Center (IPC), and peasant communities in the province of Pasco were visited. In February, there were no activities due to protests throughout the country and roadblocks. Between March and May, workshops and interviews were held in communities in the provinces of Pasco and Junín. In June, native potato samples were collected and the growing areas were georeferenced. Throughout the months of evaluation, constant communication was maintained with the IPC staff, Dr. de Haan and Dr. Bonatti, indicating the progress. All activities are detailed below.

At the beginning of January, I had online and face-to-face meetings with IPC staff to coordinate field activities, such as the methodology for conducting workshops and interviews with the communities. These professionals also provided me with support in the preparation of maps to be used in fieldwork.

During mid-January, at the invitation of Dr. De Haan, I attended a meeting with native potato smallholders in the province of Pasco. The meeting took place as part of a project that the ICP was developing with some peasant communities in that province. This meeting was valuable for establishing contact with the smallholders and getting a first impression of the organization of the peasant communities.



Workshop with native potato smallholders in the city of Pasco

Dr. de Haan pointed out to me that the ideal way to establish formal contact with the communities is through the communal authorities. For this, I visited several peasant communities in the Province of Pasco and through inquiries I obtained the telephone numbers of their communal presidents. I contacted the presidents and explained the purpose of my study and my intention to carry out evaluations in their communities.

They all specified that the next step would be to talk personally; however, most were not available, so I met with the presidents of the peasant communities of Ticlacayán and Yarusyacán. Both presidents expressed interest in the idea of their communities being part of a research study and pointed out that I would have to personally deliver a letter

of introduction, which they would present to the entire community at their next monthly meeting, asking for their opinion and formal authorization.

I communicated the requirement of the community presidents to my supervisor at Humboldt University, Dr. Bonatti, and Dr. de Haan, both gave me ideas for preparing the document, and then they reviewed it. In the following days I visited the communities and met again with the communal presidents of Ticlacayán and Yarusyacán, bringing them the physical letter of introduction. Both presidents told me that they had no scheduled date for their next community meeting, since the community members were supporting and taking part in the protests against the central government.

To address the two communities in the province of Junín, Dr. de Haan put me in contact with staff from the NGO Yanapai. This NGO has been working for several decades jointly on various projects with the IPC. The staff of the NGO Yanapai told me that they had contact with several peasant communities in the province of Junín, but, due to the political instability of the country, members of the communities were traveling to Lima to take part in the demonstrations, and it was not possible to visit them or meet with their authorities to discuss the investigation.

At the beginning of March, the peasant communities in the province of Pasco restarted their activities. The communal presidents of Ticlacayán and Yarusyacán invited me to be part of their following group meetings, and thus I myself would present my project and request the authorization of the community members. In both community meetings there were consultations, and in the end, I obtained the acceptance of both communities. I coordinated with the authorities and community members of both communities the realization of group workshops and individual interviews in the following weeks, to collect the necessary information for the study.



Monthly community meeting in Ticlacayán



Community authorities in Ticlacayán



Peasant drawing potato growing area in Ticlacayán



Workshop in Yarusyacán



Potato growing area in Tíclacayán



Potato growing area in Yarusyacán

After completing the activities in the province of Pasco, I moved to the province of Junín and with the support of the NGO Yanapai, I visited the authorities of several peasant communities, taking printed letters of introduction. Only in two communities, Casacancha and Quilcas, there were positive responses from their authorities. Unlike Pasco, these people indicated that at their next community meeting they would show the letter of introduction and ask for authorization. Later, the authorities contacted the NGO Yanapai to indicate that the communities agreed with the study.

In this way, with the backing of the NGO Yanapai, workshops were organized with the communities to collect information on communal agricultural work. For the interview stage, the staff of the NGO Yanapai were not present.



Workshop in Casacancha
(with NGO Yanapai)



Workshop in Quilcas
(with NGO Yanapai)



Potato growing area in Casacancha



Potato growing area in Quilcas

The activity of collecting native potato samples in the different peasant communities was made in the month of June, coinciding with the harvest phase of the tuber by the smallholders. This task was conducted with the help of the NGO Yanapai, since local helpers had to be hired for the sampling, loading and identification of the native potato varieties.



Potato plots in Quilcas



Smallholders harvesting potatoes in Quilcas



Llamas carrying sacks of potatoes in Quilcas



Varieties of potatoes harvested in Quilcas

The experience of having worked for several months with smallholders in the Peruvian Andes is invaluable. All the information collected will be processed with the help of IPC professionals and will be used to elaborate my master's thesis.