

INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR SMALL HOLDER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS: THE MERCOSUR ONION'S INFORMATION NET

Gustavo Matocq
Business Manager,
Programa Social Agropecuario
San Juan, Argentina.
psa@unsj.edu.ar

Esteban Tapella
Former General Coordinator
Programa Social Agropecuario
San Juan, Argentina.
etapella@iname.com

Carlos Cattaneo
Business National Manager
Programa Social Agropecuario
Buenos Aires, Argentina
ccatta@sagyp.mecon.gov.ar

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ABSTRACT

Arrangement of an adequate price's information of agricultural products that are cultivated by small farmers constitute a key element to facilitate commercial operations, improving their incomes. So, it's necessary to develop an agile, dynamical and transparent information mechanism, in order to link producers, buyers, technical, and public organizations, between themselves and others.

These elements were had in account to implement MERCOSUR Onion's Information Net. It was started in 1998 by the Agricultural Social Program (PSA) and INTA in San Juan's province (Argentina). Today, there are more of 20 representative of public and private institutions of various South American countries that participate in it. The main aim of the experience was the articulation of an information net-system which linked the agents who participate in producing and marketing the products, in order to have information to permit every actors knowing at all times the situation of the product's markets.

Ideas, interpretations and conclusions of this document, are author's own, and they aren't necessary Programa Social Agropecuario's criterions

1) Introduction.

Improvement of all aspects linked to the information of markets of the products of the small farmers is a key element to optimize taking of decisions regarding the commercial canalization of the same ones. It's possible to give by this way elements for producers and technicians to work with them to optimize the taking of decisions to operate in more advantageous commercialization channels, or, in their defect, to improve the operative ones in the traditionally used channels.

Particularly important it is the knowledge of the prices that are paid in field to the producers by habitual buyers (wholesalers, middlemen, etc.); this kind of information is very difficult to obtain, and little diffused too, contrary to the prices of the product in wholesalers markets, data that are frequently published in newspapers, specialized publications, either in their traditional form (paper), or more recently, through the respective pages of Internet.

Information that is of utility for the small producer should act like a base of comparison to obtain in the diverse markets elements that becomes a guide in turn for the future planning of the production.

Gathering the information, two obstacles appear: the truthfulness of the same one and the scarce articulation among the sources. Although these provide in many cases of good information, many times we find