

EDITORIAL

Current situation of potato, opportunities and challenges for Latin America

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Globalization has brought profound changes in the world over the last 3 to 4 decades, and although many are positive, we can conclude that these lead to the concentration of income in a few companies or people, bringing social and economic exclusion of billions of persons. The suitable scenario would be the opposite, which is the prosperity of countries and the balanced distribution of income.

Globalization is irreversible and will continue to bring changes. Will ever the priority change from an economic point of view to a human, animal, or environmental one? How long would be possible to maintain the world peace in such imbalance? Hunger, immigration, war, political instability are increasingly common events in many countries.

When it comes to potatoes, world production is growing steadily. Approximately 20 million hectares are planted annually that produce about 400 million tons. The growth of potato production around world is directly related to food demand, scarcity of arable land and water limitations for irrigation. These factors justify the fact that China and India highly prioritize the potato production. With over 35% of the world's population, these countries do not have many alternatives to feed their populations and are therefore obliged to import food and plant crops in their lands that brings massive production. In comparison with other crop options like garlic, onions, carrots, beets, peanuts, cassava, etc; potato is still the best food option because of its versatility (thousands of forms of consumption) and its consumption is universal (children, adults and the elderly - everyone appreciates).

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Unlike the rest of the world, potato production in most Latin American countries is steadily reducing. The main reason for the reduction is related to the influence and dominance of large multinational companies.

Potato-processing industries in association with the biggest fast food chains are changing the way children and young people in Latin-American countries consumed potatoes, causing that many producers, research institutions and small traders unemployed thousands of people. As Latin-American countries defend the free market, the prosperity of some is prioritized causing poverty and misery of many others. In some of these countries, the prioritization of the economic and social importance of potato production is done and the importation of any potato product is forbidden.

The world's major retailers have taken advantage of globalization and dominate the distribution of just about everything (especially food) in most Latin American countries. As a consequence, hundreds of businesses which once generated income and jobs for many families are bankrupt, while large networks concentrate the income and the profits goes to their home countries. In the case of potatoes, the marketing policy has been extremely harmful - they pay the minimum to producers and sell the most to consumers. The practical result of this wisdom is the reduction of consumption especially of fresh potatoes.

This totally unfavorable scenario for most Latin American countries among many other challenges, are prompting people to act and make aware their rulers to change sides towards the small and medium businesses, providing -in the case of potato- the sustainability of legitimate family farming and generate millions of jobs for “humble” people characterize for their low education background, being middle aged, among others.

Some suggestion for the Latin-American countries rulers are the inclusion of compulsory discipline in schools to teach children (average age 10 years) the social, economic and health importance of consuming potatoes produced in the country, organize professional potato chains through

associations with compulsory taxes, enable the construction of national potato-based industries, join media to encourage the consumption of fresh potatoes and to avoid imports of products that are produce in abundance in the country.

Despite the hidden mechanisms and forces that drive globalization, we ask to the rulers of the Latin -American countries to always defend their people first and we also suggest to ALAP to establish alliances with the objective of providing sustainability and modernization of the Latin American potato chain.