

New book on 'Technological Innovation, Food Sovereignty and Food Security in Bolivia'



More than 80 persons participated in the presentation of a new book, 'Innovación Tecnológica, Soberanía y Seguridad Alimentaria' (Technological Innovation, Food Sovereignty and Food Security). The book was written by Freddy Delgado and Cesar Escobar of AGRUCO at the University Mayor de San Simón (UMSS) in Cochabamba. The ceremony was held on 11 February 2009 in the Vice-presidential office of the government of Bolivia in La Paz. Among the participants were four Vice-ministers and the Ambassador of Switzerland, Marco Rossi.

The invitation to the ceremony was organized by the co-authors of the book, the Vice-ministry of Sciences and Technologies, the Vice-Chancellor of the University Mayor de San Simón (UMSS), the Dean of the Faculty of Agronomic, Forestry and Veterinary Sciences of the UMSS, and the director of the National Institute of Innovation in Agriculture and

Forestry (INIAF).

First Dr. Freddy Delgado summarised the contents of the book. He referred to the critical and constructive analysis of the historical development of different conceptual and institutional approaches to the development of agrarian and technological innovations in Bolivia (IBTA, SIBTA). He showed that their impacts were low to non-existent regarding the sovereignty and security of food production, because they were unilaterally oriented towards linking indigenous food production to a market economy that was not able to guarantee reasonable prices to farmers, impeding them to really cover production costs and basic needs for their livelihood. The attempt to overcome this one-sided policy in order to develop agrarian innovations in the context of a dialogue among scientific, indigenous and popular forms of knowledge was presented as an institutional experience developed by AGRUCO. This experience was developed during the last 15 years with active support from the Centre for Development and Environment, NCCR North-South and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The fact that the new policy, expressed in the 'Bolivian System of Innovation' of the Bolivian Government explicitly prescribes 'knowledge dialogue' as a conceptual and methodological requirement for the transformation of the current curricula and institutional structures of the public Universities represents great potential for further expanding on experience accumulated at the University of Cochabamba.

The Vice-Minister of Sciences and Technology, Dr. Roger Carvajal, mentioned that this publication is an excellent reference for any action or policy that has to be carried out in the near future to reform the public system of agrarian innovation and production, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of scientific and indigenous or popular forms of knowledge. He said: "I am convinced that this book's innovations are an innovation, because the authors propose positions that are highly relevant to the fundamental changes that the country is presently undergoing; it gives a good example for how to reconstruct knowledge and institutions based on sovereignty in the definition of scientific and other forms of knowledge."

The director of the National Institute of Innovation in Agriculture and Forestry (INIAF), Dr. Elba Terceros, considers this book extremely useful because it presents a critical analysis of the potentials and constraints of past and present models of developing agrarian innovations. She added: "This is not only important as such, it also comes just at the right moment because we are now starting to have a state which is obliged to learn and co-construct knowledge and institutions together with indigenous communities and with social and popular movements. This is a document that will guide us in seeing the bad as well as the good things that we have

experienced until today, which is extremely important in constructing the new structures and contents of the INIAF. To see how scientific professionals can establish a dialogue with indigenous communities and become able to respect their own knowledge without pushing aside possible contributions from sciences is a key competence that we need to promote for a new way of organizing agrarian innovations.”



Dr. Marco Rossi, Ambassador of Switzerland, Dra. Rebecca Delgado, Vice-minister of governmental coordination, Dra. Elba Terceros, director of INIAF, Dr. Roger Carvajal, Vice-minister of science and technology, Lic. Walter Lopez, Vice-rector of the University Mayor de San Simon (UMSS) and Dr. Stephan Rist, NCCR North-South, during the book launching ceremony (from left to right).

knowledge. He concluded that the book demonstrates that higher degrees of food sovereignty can best be achieved by aiming at the same time for higher degrees of conceptual and methodological sovereignty, also in the field of innovation development.

The Vice-rector of the University Mayor of San Simon (UMSS), Dr. Walter Lopez, representing the Vice-chancellor, Juan Rios, said that the book clearly shows that it is not only possible to think about changing present forms of producing scientific knowledge in more inclusive ways by establishing a dialogue with indigenous and popular movements that have their own forms of knowledge, but that this be learnt and practiced very successfully as the experience developed by AGRUCO within the UMSS during the 15 years is demonstrating. He especially pointed to the valuable support received during all these years from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern, and the NCCR North-South.

The book can be downloaded free of charge by clicking [here](#).

Dr. Stephan Rist, from the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Bern and the NCCR North-South highlighted that this is the first time anywhere on earth that a transdisciplinary approach to knowledge co-production has been taken up as a basis for reorganizing the entire national University system.

Transdisciplinary thus turns into a cornerstone for constructing an interactive, dynamic and participatory system of innovation that defines its contents and institutional structures on the basis of dialogue between scientific, indigenous and popular