

BM.7a Media Articles
Alimenta (Swiss food journal)

Peru – a treasure trove

The Expoalimentaria is the largest Latin American trade fair on natural ingredients. To open this fair for the Swiss market, SIPPO organised a buyer mission for 16 entrepreneurs.



The Sacha Inchi (left: the plant; right: the oil) was one of the most popular products of Peruvian origin at the Expoalimentaria. Algarrobo flour is a promising thickening agent.

ROSA AMELIA FIERRO. More than 250 exhibitors from 13 countries took part in the fourth Expoalimentaria, by now the largest Latin American trade fair on natural ingredients. More than 2000 foreign visitors focused on familiar as well as new Peruvian products, well aware of the fact that vast amounts of Peru's natural resources are yet unknown to the international markets. Although Peru covers nearly 1.3 million square kilometres of land, this area only amounts to 0.87 percent of the earth's surface. However, its 84 different ecosystems are home to an exceptional biological diversity holding great potential for the food, cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries. For that reason SIPPO organized a buyer mission to Peru for a delegation of 16 entrepreneurs.

It was the Sacha Inchi (*Plukenetia volubilis* Linneo) that most impressed the SIPPO representatives. The oilseeds of this wild growing rainforest climber had already been used by the indigenous peoples for producing oil and flour. Several recent studies proved that the oleiferous seeds of the "Inca-Peanut" are rich in protein and especially rich in Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids. Peruvians particularly value the flour as an important food supplement. In the face of growing demands, an increasing number of indigenous communities and farmers' associations have started to cultivate Sacha Inchi and its derivatives are already being exported to the US, to Canada and to the EU.

Evaluating a new oil-bearing plant

Agroindustrias Amazónicas is a Peruvian company pioneering the production, processing and marketing of certified organic Sacha Inchi products such as oil, snacks, flour, extracts and capsules. "Maybe we will soon surprise the market with yet another discovery," says José Anaya, the company's founder. By this, he refers to another oil-bearing plant that has not yet been botanically classified. Currently, company experts are asking indigenous people how they use this plant. The seeds taste of almond, consist of 70 percent oil and have an exceptionally high content of Omega-9 fatty acids. "What's more, we were also able to determine strong antibacterial and antimycotic properties," Mr Anaya stresses.

The importance of long-term cooperation

“After this business trip, I will work with two new suppliers,” says Mario Michaud of Flexilab SA, a Genevese company that has been importing Sacha Inchi oil to Switzerland since 2010. “This product passed all the required cantonal laboratory tests and our customers are thrilled,” he adds. Michaud sells the oil as

tionery industry and also for the production of ice-creams, yoghurts and even tofu.

Quinoa flakes, strawberry pulp, maca and purple corn flour, goldenberry concentrate, and Algarroba honey are all items on the long list of foods that were showcased to the SIPPO representatives at the Expoalimentaria. At the actual fair, the mostly European traders were initially introduced to numerous

my co-operation with SIPPO in the future.”

His comments were also reflected by the South African Anthony Posemann. “The organisation of the whole trip, the support, the overall planning and the matchmaking exceeded my highest expectations. SIPPO catered exactly for my needs,” concluded the only non-European entrepreneur of the SIPPO delegation. “I already knew of maca, quinoa and



Syrup made from Algarrobo beans.

The Cocona is an aromatic fruit waiting to be discovered.

a select product for a price of 180 Swiss francs (119.45 GBP) per litre. The Swiss Confederation taxes every 100 kilograms of Sacha Inchi oil with 156.95 Swiss francs (104.15 GBP). “Because Peru is strongly interested in exporting more of this oil to Switzerland, the free trade agreement between both countries should be changed in order to facilitate duty-free import,” Michaud explains. The head of the company who had travelled to Peru several times already, underlines the potential of exotic Peruvian fruits: “This time, I also signed a contract with another company in order to import Lucuma pulp for the Swiss and European markets.” The Lucuma fruit can be utilised in a variety of ways; for example in its use as a flavouring agent within the confec-

kinds of final food products. Afterwards, they were able to witness the manufacture of processed food products in the Lima-based factories of companies like Agroindustrias Osho or Somerex. Finally, they travelled to various Peruvian regions to learn more about the production of the raw ingredients.

Visitors deepen their knowledge

“Besides the opportunity to contact various companies within the framework of the SIPPO programme, we were also free to arrange meetings with other enterprises,” said Koostra Bareld, an entrepreneur from the Netherlands wanting to extend his range of products with mango and pineapple pulp. “The trip was very productive and I will continue

Ccamu Ccamu, and had a general idea of Peruvian biological diversity. Yet I needed to travel to the country itself in order to find out more details,” a satisfied Mr Posemann underlined.

A booming export country

Nearly 2000 Peruvian companies work within agrarian exports, – a number that is growing. Within the next three years, agrarian exports are expected to double, for two main reasons; coastal irrigation projects have led to 145000 hectares (ca. 360000 acres) of new farmland being generated and also Peru has recently signed new trade agreements. The most important export markets are China and the US. Yet even little Switzerland plays an exceptional

role: Within the first half of this year, our country has developed into the third most important export country for Peru. However, it is mainly the mining industry that dominates the export to Switzerland taking up 99.49 percent whereas the agrarian sector only amounts to 0.18 percent. These figures emerged from the Peru-based Swiss Chamber of Industry and Commerce celebrating its 60th anniversary this year.

On the other hand, the growing foreign demand for Peruvian food also has its drawbacks: the supply of the domestic market has deteriorated and prices of fruit and vegetables have risen, consequently making them luxury items for certain parts of the population. Of the 28 million Peruvians, two fifths live in poverty and nearly one million people live below the poverty line.

A nation opposed to GMO

In contrast to Argentina, which almost exclusively exports soy, Peru continues to maintain the diversification of its agrarian products. One of the main reasons is the cult status of its cuisine. The increasingly popular Peruvian cooking is deeply rooted in the diversity and constant accessibility of its ingredients. In the Lima declaration of the 11 September 2011, Peru's most acclaimed chefs expressed their respect for nature, cultural diversity and traditional knowledge. More than half of the country's regions were declared to be free of genetically modified organisms (GMO).

In particular the small farmers of the Andes and Amazonas regions, along with exporters, demanded that the government set limits to the powerful lobbies of GMO-promoting agro-industrial corporations. "As organic farmers, we do not want to have anything to do with genetically modified seeds," stressed Gastón Vizcarra, managing director of Candela, a leading company specialised in exporting organic and fair trade goods.

This was also reflected by Luis Felipe de las Casas, a representative of the company Molinos Asociados that markets the derivatives of the Tara tree: "Because we want to maintain the authenticity of our products we won't allow the import of genetically modified organisms." Similarly, the Sacha Inchi expert



Mario Michaud of the Genevese company Flexilab SA imports the valuable Sacha Inchi oil.

Diana Flores explained: "We Peruvians protect the wealth of our indigenous cultures. We

A bridge between producers and consumers

The Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO) is a mandate of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) within the framework of its economic development cooperation. Part of Switzerland's foreign economic strategy, the programme is conducted by Osec, the official Swiss foreign trade promotion agency. The Swiss Import Promotion Programme connects importers from the European Union, Switzerland and other EFTA countries with suitable suppliers of high-quality products from partner countries.

SIPPO ensures qualified trade contacts are established between SMEs from partner countries and the Swiss and European import economy, by providing information, training and matchmaking services. Close cooperation between SIPPO and local business support organisations, ensures that a consistent and sustainable knowledge transfer for SMEs is guaranteed.

SIPPO's advisory services concentrate on promoting the import of exportable products in certain core business branches such as food, non-food, technical products and tourism. The food sector is further divided into the categories of fruit and vegetables, fish and seafood, natural ingredients, and organic products.

In Peru, SIPPO has been represented by the Swiss Chamber of Industry and Commerce since its foundation. raf

therefore aim to strengthen organic and fair trade."

Food saves forest

In co-operation with other organisations like SIPPO, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO supports PeruBiodiverso, an initiative that promotes the safeguarding of Peruvian endemic biological resources through sustainable production, processing and marketing.

Algarrobos Orgánicos is a company that profits from this initiative. It mainly exports processed products of the Algarrobo tree, in particular to the US. Both the flour and the dark brown, gooey and aromatic Algarrobina syrup are important ingredients of a traditional Peruvian cocktail and are also used in yoghurts, shakes and sweets. In addition to their exceptional organoleptic properties, they are rich in protein (8.11 per 100g) while containing only a little fat (0.77 per 100g).

However, the Algarrobo tree (*Prosopis pallida*), which grows in the northern part of Peru, is endangered. "Ten years ago, the municipality of Tambo Grande still had 25000 hectares [ca. 62000 acres] of Algarrobo forest, now there are only 14000 hectares [less than 35000 acres] left. This is caused by the great demand for charcoal needed for the preparation of the much sought after grilled chicken speciality 'Pollo a la Brasa'. The gastronomy boom is the bane of the Algarrobo forest," objects Carlos Escaraté of the company Algarrobos Orgánicos. The Algarrobo tree suffers from the climate change, too. Until recently, temperatures never dropped below 18 degrees in Tambo Grande. These days even temperatures as low as 10 degrees are recorded. Additionally, the forest decline affects the cultivation of mangos and lemons that grow in the shades of the Algarrobo trees. Therefore, the challenge now lies in stopping de-forestation and intensifying re-forestation. Mr Escaraté points out: "Once the demand for food production grows, the necessity of saving the Algarrobo forests increases, too."