



THE PERUVIAN DIET

A NEW FOCUS ON HEALTHY EATING AND FOOD SECURITY

Peru ranks among the world's ten megadiverse countries. That is the country's comparative advantage for economic and social development. Just to mention a few figures, Peru includes 11 natural eco-regions, 84 life zones, a huge biodiversity of flora with some 25,000 species (10% of the world's total). This Andean nation is one of the centers of origin of genetic resources of plants and animals, ranking first in the number of native domesticated species (128 species), and home to a rich genetic diversity in potato and maize crops, two of the world's most important food crops.

It is paradoxical that while conservation of this vast diversity —of which Peru is justly proud— is directly due to the small-scale Peruvian farmers in areas such as Cajamarca, Huanuco, Huancavelica and Cusco, that it is precisely the children of these families who are the most poorly fed.¹

It is likewise troubling to discover that malnutrition is also affecting large sectors of the population, reflected in the increasing rates of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

Peruvian diet: *Come rico, come sano, come peruano* (To eat delicious and healthy, just eat Peruvian)

What are we seeking now? Under the banner of “To eat delicious and healthy, just eat Peruvian” the Peruvian Society of Gastronomy (APEGA), together with several State and private organizations, is proposing a mass communications campaign to promote healthy, tasty and nutritional eating based on iconic Peruvian products that are representative of family farming and artisanal fishing in the different regions of the country.

The campaign focuses on nutritional culinary combinations adapted to the production and culture of each area, with an emphasis on territory, season and fair price. The proposal is along the lines of other, international initiatives such as the Mediterranean Diet and Slow Food, and other fashionable trends in the world that prioritize healthy eating based on fresh, local food.

The Peruvian Diet has its powerful basis in the country's biodiversity, which provides a natural larder of products for Peru's tables that are unique in quality and flavor, and that in the past and today have been the basis for the world's food. Peru's nutritional biodiversity is vast (including potatoes, corn, hot peppers, Andean grains, fish or

¹ According to ENDES, the Demographic and Family Health Survey 2000, the rate of chronic infant malnutrition in Peru is 25.4%, which is equivalent to a quarter of the population of children under five years old. According to the same source, the departments with the highest percentage of chronic malnutrition are Cajamarca, Huanuco, Cusco and Huancavelica, where more than 40 percent of the children suffer from chronic malnutrition.

alpaca, creole ducks and guinea pigs), and known for its contribution to the regional and world's food basket. This has continued in time as a result of the wisdom and hand of the Peruvian farmer who, through ancient engineering such as Andean terraces and irrigation, have helped preserve species that today amaze the world.

'Eat Peruvian' seeks, in a creative and agile mass campaign, to create a groundswell of public opinion, creating awareness in broad sectors of the population, politicians and opinion leaders of the advantages of healthy and nutritional food as the foundation for the well-being of the new generations of Peruvians.

The campaign seeks to promote the development of small-scale production, which is the basic source of food for Peruvians, since two thirds of the food that is eaten at Peruvian tables comes from small-scale farming and artisanal fishing. Small family farming in Peru involves 1.7 million farmers and provides employment to 24 percent of the economically active population. And it not only plays a significant role in supplying food but also contributes to the redistribution of income, the dynamics of production in the regions, and public health.

APEGA has been working with a number of agricultural organizations to forge the Cook and Farmer Alliance. It starts with recognizing that small-scale farmers are the first link in the gastronomic chain.

It is on this premise that Apega has implemented the great food fair Mistura, an annual event that attracts half a million visitors to the Grand Market, brings iconic farmers from different regions of Peru, and every year has awarded the Golden Rocoto to the most prominent among them. Simultaneously, the fair has promoted feature articles in the leading media, introducing the work and contribution of these producers in the field.

The campaign is developing in a favorable context. In recent years we have seen an explosive boom in gastronomy and the rise of Peruvian cuisine that has revaluated regional cuisines and their ingredients. Gastronomy has become the engine for inclusive development, creating business opportunities for small and micro gastronomy entrepreneurs and generating a demand for iconic products from small family farms. It has also become an attractive factor in tourism and a promoter of country image.

From the producer to the consumer

In order to increase the demand of small-scale farm products, APEGA is developing a series of innovative mechanisms to improve sales, within the framework of the Inclusive Gastronomic Agro-Food Chains Project. Among the mechanisms being considered are brand promotion, designations of origin and geographical indications, and the use of new marketing strategies for iconic products; the implementation of an information support system for the commercialization of agriculture and livestock products, as well as implementing pilot farm fairs.

What is APEGA?

Established in 2007, the Peruvian Society of Gastronomy —APEGA— promotes gastronomy as a factor for inclusive and sustainable development and the affirmation of Peru's cultural identity. It groups cooks, culinary training institutes, researchers and professionals in the industry. It promotes public and private multidisciplinary platforms. It organizes the yearly Mistura fair, the most important in Latin America, attracting half a million visitors, while participants include farmers, regional cuisines, pastry chefs and bakers from all over the country, as well as famous international guests.

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