Colombia

Livelihoods

2013/14

Market access and food security in the central region

This project is part of an initiative supported by Oxfam since 2003 to increase market access and income among smallholder producers in the Central Region of Colombia. Oxfam has worked with the Comité de Interlocución Campesino y Comunal (CICC), the Alianza Campesina y Comunal (AL CAMPO), the Instituto Latinoamericano para una Sociedad y un Derecho Alternativos (ILSA) and the National University of Colombia to establish, support and document learning about alternative marketing channels – especially farmers' markets in the capital city of Bogotá, and in other towns in the region. The aim is to provide rural producers with an forum to sell directly to consumers, therefore supporting producers' livelihoods by increasing their power in markets, while also building understanding and awareness among urban consumers of the issues facing rural producers. This Effectiveness Review attempted to evaluate the initiative's impact only in terms of changes in the market access and livelihoods of producers themselves.

Map of Colombia and its situation within South America. The three areas included in this Effectiveness Review are shown in red. The project also operates in the Capital District of Bogotá and has some participants in an additional three areas, shown in green.

Project date: May 2008 - March 2013

Evaluation: March 2014

Publication: March 2015

Evaluation Method

The review sought to evaluate the project's impact among producers who had participated in the farmers' markets at least once during 2013. A 'quasi-experimental' evaluation design was used whereby data from interviews with those producers, as well as from interviews with other producers who had not had the opportunity to participate in the farmers' markets, were analysed using propensity-score matching and multivariate regression. See the document 'How are effectiveness reviews carried out?' for more information on evaluation design. Full details about the specific evaluation design used in this case are contained in the full report of the Effectiveness Review.

Results

Project outcome	Evidence of positive impact	Commentary
Group participation	YES	Most project participants confirmed that they are members of a local producers' group, and expressed positive views about accountability and decision-making in those groups.
Adoption of new production and marketing practices	YES	The majority of project participants have adopted most of the production and marketing practices encouraged under the project.
Access to new marketing channels	YES	Project participants are selling through a wider range of channels than non-participants, with a much smaller proportion depending on intermediaries.
Increase in prices obtained for sales of products	YES	Suggestive evidence that project participants are receiving higher prices is obtained directly from the agricultural sales data. This is reinforced by the apparent increase in household income brought about by the project.
Increase in overall household income	YES	Household income among project participants (as measured by consumption) is estimated to be 15 to 20 per cent higher than it would have been without the project.
Involvement in advocacy activities	YES	More project participants have an understanding of political issues and have participated in advocacy activities than the non-participants.
Perception and recognition of women's roles	YES	Project participants were more likely than non-participants to express positive opinions on gender roles.

Results apply to all producer households who participated in farmers' markets organised under this project at least once during 2013, were based in municipalities that have been involved in the initiative since at least 2009 and where there were more than 20 active participants. The project's impact on producers in the city of Bogotá was not evaluated. The project's impacts on food security among consumers and on attitudes towards rural producers among consumers in the city were also not assessed.

Going forward

This Effectiveness Review provides clear evidence that new marketing channels, which cut out intermediaries, and the related support provided to producers under this project have led to a significant improvement in household income. The results of the effectiveness review are being incorporated into the final report of a research project that is currently being conducted in Colombia. This evidence will be used in advocacy work to strengthen the case for both for scaling up the farmers' markets in Bogotá and the Central Region, and for encouraging adoption of similar initiatives in other cities. Political support for farmers' markets depends on an analysis of how public funds can most effectively be used to support rural producers, and the effectiveness review provides a basis against which the effectiveness of alternative interventions can be assessed. The advocacy work will be conducted throughout 2014 and the first quarter of 2015 with public actors in the rural and food supply sector in the central region, and publications that detail the results and set out the project phases will be disseminated to a wide audience. Though the project under review made some progress in economically empowering women and broadening their participation in different spaces, the team in Colombia acknowledge there is more to do in recognising the work of women and their contribution to society within the household, communities and citizens in general. Finally, the team in Colombia are keen to resource and incorporate the use of control groups in baselines and in the evaluation of future projects, to increase the precision and strength of results, and quantify the impacts of future interventions.

Photo credit: Rob Fuller/Oxfam