

Insight from Challapata, the hotspot of the Bolivian quinoa world

Since the beginning of the season, the market prices for quinoa know only one direction: skywards. We know that the European traders are unhappy about that so we assume that the producers should be very glad about getting US\$ 6.09 for one kilogram of white quinoa that was sold for US\$ 4.69 in September of this year and US\$ 2.34 in the beginning of the season 2013 (April 2013). Our Bolivian informant Pedro Claver confirms that farmers are happy about this development but the general atmosphere is tensed.

The processing and exporting companies in Bolivia are getting strained since prices tend to only rise. This development was explained to be a natural response to the international supply but some businesses even stopped trading with quinoa since prices are still on the rise. Besides the fact that the manual labour is getting more costly, rumors are arising that this behavior is influenced by the big players in the Bolivian quinoa sector, speaking of companies with an export volume of more than 3000 tons per year. Those companies mostly supply the North-American market and are relatively new (about five years) in the market.

Since the international demand for quinoa is seemingly not declining, the features of the grain's origin seem to be getting less important. In comparison to importers some suppliers do not draw a very straight line between organic and conventional quinoa anymore. In companies with a well-established supply system, traceability is not a big issue; it rather concerns speculating companies, that get their quinoa from whichever source.

Until recently, Bolivia had the competitive advantage of being the only supplier of "Quinoa Real". The Royal Quinoa, which even has the denomination of origin can only be grown in the Bolivian Altiplano. But with the world's bulk interest in quinoa, this feature is about to lose its importance.

