

Chicakh

- Harriet – focuses on the commercialization of amaranth, etc.
- NGO that works with communities in the highlands; discovered amaranth firstly because of the nutrition benefits (more than 10 years ago)
- Chicakh started in 1999 to help with the marketing; Chicakh means "basket" in Quiche, what they use to bring goods to market; 2002 started looking at commercialization; 2003–2004 started selling in urban centers
- people didn't know about amaranth or how to use it when they brought it; developed recipes to distribute
- need standards, what to do with amaranth that doesn't meet the standards
- biggest challenge was getting it registered with the health ministry (new product); had to finance a study to prove that it is nutritious
- stressed diversification again; also having a point of sale available at harvest
- always organic
- they're seeing increase in demand for amaranth nationally/internationally (gluten free)
- generally avoid large orders because lower prices
- don't pay more than 15Q/pound roasted; their price is 25Q per half pound roasted; 50Q per pound roasted; the buyers want it roasted (popped)
- their process: buy amaranth from producers at storage unit after they inspect it for quality; legally they buy it twice even though they are part of the whole process; not sure what price they give to producers, but in seed form (requires cleaning, moisture analysis, toasting/popping, packaging)
- add about 17% in taxes that they pay for operational costs, legal transactions, etc.
- Guatemalans aren't accustomed to paying a premium for local organic foods
- Chicakh takes ~10% for costs of commercializing; can't recall what they pay the producers at the moment but can analyze it
- their customers: families concerned with health, anemic/celiac, mostly Guatemalan clientele (14% foreigners), both low and high income, about 10–15 stores (not very big), don't sell at supermarkets (deliberate decision because they don't have the volume, and because they want to cultivate local consumption), a few restaurants but don't buy enough to notice
- they take on all the risk for the majority of producers; interested in solidarity community
- no exporters, because not enough quantity (challenges of large scale organic production)

- difficult to maintain single crop organic production
- the farmers who grow also consume; easy to include in tortillas, atole, etc.
- need to pop the amaranth before making flour, bad is sorted and made into flour
- the corn/amaranth flour mix (50–50) is preferred because it tastes better and is absorbed better by the body
- there are promoters that check up on the growth
- producers are individual, not in a group (legally); but have informal organization and administrator
- costs
 - 32Q 1 lb amaranth flour
 - 25Q 1/2 lb popped amaranth
 - 22Q 1 lb raw amaranth
 - 32Q for 1 lb amaranth/salpor (special maize) mix flour (price fluctuates with price of salpor)
 - buy from storage unit in raw form for ~7Q/lb
- seed to sale about 4–5 months depending on climate
- why don't more produce? because they need to know how to produce, and you don't always get a yield the first time around
- amaranth is "trendy"
- heritage is an important factor, but families don't have a relationship with amaranth like they have with maize
- they hire transport company to get the amaranth to them; 7 hour trip, once/month, weight is 5–7 quintales per month
- bledo (wild amaranth) makes an easy hybrid with the amaranth they plant, so they plant new seeds; they sell seed to the farmers; 8Q/ounce of seed
- opted to not go for certification because "bad for producer and consumer"; will avoid if at all possible
- taking producers from Guatemala to Japan to show them how to grow amaranth
- not opposed to export, but wary because of uncertainty, risk, etc.
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- ****need to think about vertical integration and perception of organic label (don't want to be certified for perception and cost reasons, but need to be vertically integrated to be able to ensure quality of organic)

Synthesis

- blog post: coffee rust as a reason why diversification is necessary
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