MERCOSUR: The transfer of innovation in favor of family farming

About 250 technicians from the agricultural sector in the countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) family farmers, authorities and shared in Asuncion (Paraguay), their experiences in productive, organizational and commercial innovation. Leaders of family farming and specialists see dialogue as a key mechanism to disseminate new knowledge. They are participating leaders of family farming in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador,

Uruguay, Venezuela and Paraguay.

The International Exhibition of Innovative Experiences of Family Agriculture, facilitated dialogue with research and innovation and the creation of alliances with technology service companies.

The event was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) of Paraguay, with support from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Specialized Meeting on Family Agriculture (REAF) of MERCOSUR and the Cooperative Program for Development Agrifood and Agroindustrial Technology in the Southern Cone (PROCISUR).

"This cultural exchange of different types of agriculture enrich the knowledge is as hybridization; a hybrid entity that has performed better than their parents. This exchange provides open more horizons, "said Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Paraguay, Jorge Gattini.

According to the leader of the flagship project of Family Agriculture IICA, Fatima Almada, innovation does not arise in isolation, exclusive of laboratories. "Innovation is also the result of the proximity and interaction between actors and socialize through the exchange of knowledge and dialogue of knowledge," he said.

"We managed to promote social and innovative processes undertaken by organized producers as a result of the implementation of public policies and intervention instruments in the different countries of MERCOSUR," Almada said.

The meeting was attended by representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay, Venezuela and Paraguay. The activity was held in the framework of the REAF, whose President Pro season is exercised by the MAG.

A family producer Paraguay

Genaro Ferreira, representing the Association of Organic Producers (APRO), is dedicated to the fruit-vegetable production and lives with his family in an area 30 kilometers from Asuncion. He participates as a committee representative of producers at the International Experience held in the framework of the XXIV REAF. For 5 years he is the coordinator of APRO. The association was formed in 1999 and has 240 members, who work in four departments within the entire Paraguay. Most producers that integrate the association fulfill the role of entrepreneurs in parallel with the producer. "It's not so easy but we live for 15 years," he stressed.

The association and its development

APRO has three different forms of marketing, a delivery system developed door to door in the center of Asuncion; a system of direct to supermarkets selling medium and large surface and finally installed eco shop, where he offers consumers a variety of fruits and vegetables. The service of the Association is active all year offering from 80 to 100 different kinds of fruits and vegetables. "We are a very recognized nationally and internationally due to the GSP certification (system partition Quality Assurance) association," said Genaro. Also highlighted that have looked much to Brazil and have received much help from that country, " we learned from Brazil and came to apply here, "he said. The APRO also part of the House of organic production and Paraguay have become a great network working in the organic sector.

The generational change in decision-making processes

The lack of opportunities for participation for the young is a universal claim. But how do you make there? The association is renewed every year its members not only level but also at members of the board, "one day I'm doing here and elected by walking". Genaro is convinced that spaces are won with hard work and innovative proposals.

Today, with the issue of certification of products APRO more incentive for producers because the price charged is a 20 and up to 30% more than the normal market price, that closer to producers young people who are in the business a chance to build a project of life in rural areas. "Today with

us are you working children of farmers have also created a space in the statute that says that young people have to go in and old delegating" he said.

While the producers association has grown and developed over the years, have a clear goal: "we in what we are is now starting the process of industrialization of our products, we are already in the process we have started with some items and want. will enter the supermarkets at least ten items. So far our star category is sugar and beans. We have also initiated a process to convert the association into a cooperative because we see that we have more advantages as a group, "he concluded.

Source: IICA. REAF