

Use of Social Research Methods to Improve the Assignment of Development Resources

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Abstract

By using a simple social research methodology is possible to define the main variables affecting development in greater or lesser degree, and to assign resources efficiently to promote development. The objective of this research was to identify the interrelation between socioeconomic, technologic and geographic variables with the commercial performance of the small producers.

Interviews were arranged with sixty seven producers from one of the most depressed areas in Bolivia. This information was processed and analyzed using SPSS. These studies were reinforced with information from participatory workshops. Four indexes were built for the improved management of variables: technologic index, socioeconomic index, geographic index, and commercial index. Each one groups four or five variables respectively.

Once the studies were performed, it was concluded that a greater or lesser performance regarding commercial aspects is closely linked to a greater or lesser development of technological practices. The producers commercial achievements are not related to improved geographic conditions (access to roads, distance to commercial fairs, etc). Socioeconomic conditions are closely related to the degree of technological improvement reached by the farmers. It should also be emphasized that those farmers working for more than three years with ASAR (NGO implementing activities in the area) show positive changes in technological and socioeconomic issues. However, it was not possible to find a significant relationship between the type of work with ASAR and the degree of development of commercial issues.

Based on these studies, the following conclusion was reached: Given that the opportunity cost for the farmers in this area is so low, and considering the low production volume, it is not relevant for them to lose time transporting their products to far away fairs or along roads in bad condition. It is more relevant for them to have an improved production technology than to have improved road infrastructure. Projects to be implemented by ASAR should last three years at least for them to reach an impact in technological and/or socioeconomic variables

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