

# THE VALUE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE ON HIGH ALTITUDE AGRICULTURE: CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION TECHNIQUES IN PUNO, PERU

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The Peruvian Andean communities, living in high windy plains and on steep mountain slopes, surrounded by snow-capped peaks, are severely suffering from the consequences of climate change. In the region of Puno, the mostly rain-fed community agriculture has to guarantee the food security of over a 1,100,000 people, while facing severe climatic events like extreme cold fronts, frost and hail attacks and extended droughts.



During the 2013-2014 agricultural season, we have followed the agricultural practices of elderly farmers (over 45 yrs) of two quechua speaking communities (Koriñahui and Carmen Alto), located above 3910 m elevation in northern Puno region. We have noted 134 traditional risk-reduction practices related to soil and humidity management that they use in cultivating and conserving 49 varieties of potato and 36 varieties of quinoa.



Our study reveals that in Koriñahui the farmers followed 85% of their traditional practices which helped them to harvest and conserve 80% of potato varieties and 93% of quinoa varieties, meanwhile in Carmen Alto farmers followed 93% of the practices while harvesting 96% of potato and 98% of quinoa varieties. The more they follow the ancient wisdom, the more cultigens they are capable of saving.

*“When hail arrives, we offer him wine, cañihua flour o whatever food our own farm produces, pleading him to go away. Hail, being a person like us, can understand how we feel. If you speak from the bottom of your heart, he listens and leaves or converts to rain, without causing much damage to the plants.” – Pedro Condori, 83 yrs, Koriñahui community.*

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