

News from the Field:

Bamnan Catherine Dagu

Peru, Street Vendors of Agricultural Products

Bamnan Catherine Dagu researched the Economics of Technology Change in Vending Agricultural Products in Peru as part of her MSc International Development at the University of Edinburgh.

The objective of the research was to understand how technology is impacting work opportunities and livelihoods of Street Vendors of Agricultural Products (SVAPs) and local waste recyclers, predominantly herbal agricultural foods grown in the Peruvian highlands. The SVAPs or 'Emolienteros' are so called for their jobs as vendors of *emoliente*- beverages made with medicinal plants, sold on the streets of Lima, they provide an important service; that of inexpensive on-the-go breakfast/snacks, rivalled by none in Peru's densely populated capital.



Traditional and modern *carretillas*

As the 3rd largest city in the Americas, Lima presents a huge market for the *emolienteros*, with much potential for growth. They have been able to form a robust labour union, well-structured into associations in the districts in which they function most. This became possible after garnering support from the city council and authorities, which they did not have in previous years. Today, it is considered one of the most prestigious informal sectors in Lima to work in.

Despite their accomplishments, they face threats through competition with the growing number of chain supermarkets in the city. Although the presence of knowledge transfer within their labour unions helps the workers get information about new and improved technology, many lack the access to better technology that help mitigate the risks of losing their livelihoods to the market competition with the increasing dominance of supermarkets. In response, these workers

have set a plan in motion to start an enterprise where they manufacture, package and sell the natural products used in their '*emoliente*'. This would enable mass production at cheaper rates to cater for the increasing demands for their products and services, and puts them at a better position to not lose their market share.

The main technologies used by the '*emoliente*' are mobile carts or '*carretillas*'. Also, freezers to store excess supplies on days they had low purchases. They change from older to better models of *carretillas* to improve their efficiency and productivity. As a result they earn slightly more and some have increased spare time, spent on childcare, family support or on a second job. In this sector, most of the technological change is brought about by the reinvestment of income into newer-generation technology.

Throughout the project, I have consistently acquired not only personal development, but academic and career development as well. I have learned so much through my understanding of the informal economy's link to agricultural technology, improved my skills and experience in the development field through transforming my theoretical knowledge to practical applications.

The project will directly bring benefits to the local community through an understanding of the role of technology in the informal agricultural workers. It has enabled stronger links between local NGOs and the local SVAPs, a relationship that will foster growth of the sector, while also contributing to knowledge and understanding in the UK of development issues in Latin America.