

ORIGINAL

Design of strategies for the strengthening of the La Manigua peasant market Florencia - Caquetá

Diseño de estrategias para el fortalecimiento del mercado campesino La Manigua Florencia - Caquetá

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ABSTRACT

The project focused on the La Manigua farmers' market, located in the municipality of Florencia, Caquetá, Colombia. Farmers' markets represent a popular alternative to conventional markets, with the objective of promoting local and sustainable agriculture, as well as reducing the gap between producers and consumers. These markets allow small producers to sell their products directly to the final consumer, eliminating intermediaries and fostering a more direct and equitable relationship. In addition to promoting healthy eating, farmers' markets also seek to promote food education and value local gastronomic culture. Internationally, farmers' markets have gained popularity in countries such as the United States, Peru and Mexico, while in Europe they stand out for promoting the sale of local and artisanal products. In the context of Caquetá, farmers' markets play a crucial role in the agricultural economy, contributing to the preservation of traditional farming methods and promoting sustainable agriculture. The objective of the project was to design a strategy to strengthen producer participation and improve marketing at the La Manigua farmers' market.

Keywords: Farmers' Markets; Sustainable; Healthy Food; Economy; Producers; Consumers.

RESUMEN

El proyecto se centró en el mercado campesino La Manigua, ubicado en el municipio de Florencia, Caquetá, Colombia. Los mercados campesinos representan una alternativa popular a los mercados convencionales, con el objetivo de promover la agricultura local y sostenible, así como reducir la brecha entre productores y consumidores. Estos mercados permiten a los pequeños productores vender sus productos directamente al consumidor final, eliminando intermediarios y fomentando una relación más directa y equitativa. Además de promover una alimentación saludable, los mercados campesinos también buscan fomentar la educación alimentaria y valorar la cultura gastronómica local. A nivel internacional, los mercados campesinos han ganado popularidad en países como Estados Unidos, Perú y México, mientras que en Europa se destacan por promover la venta de productos locales y artesanales. En el contexto de Caquetá, los mercados campesinos desempeñan un papel crucial en la economía agrícola, contribuyendo a la preservación de métodos de cultivo tradicionales y promoviendo la agricultura sostenible. El objetivo del proyecto fue diseñar una estrategia para fortalecer la participación de los productores y mejorar la comercialización en el mercado campesino La Manigua.

Palabras clave: Mercados Campesinos; Sostenible; Alimentación Saludable; Economía; Productores; Consumidores.

INTRODUCTION

Farmers' markets are an increasingly popular alternative to conventional markets. They promote local and sustainable agriculture and seek to shorten the distance between producers and consumers. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), farmers' markets aim to "promote access to fresh and healthy food, boost the local economy, reduce the carbon footprint, and encourage biodiversity conservation."

These markets are mainly made up of small agricultural producers who offer their products directly to the end consumer, bypassing intermediaries and promoting a closer and fairer relationship between producer and consumer. According to Rojas (2019), farmers' markets emerged in Colombia in 2004 as an initiative of several farmers' organizations in the country's center. Since then, they have expanded worldwide, promoting sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation in different regions.

In addition, farmers' markets also promote food education and appreciation of local food culture. As Kingsolver (2007) points out, "Food is our most intimate link to nature and our survival. It connects us to the earth and our ancestors in a way that nothing else can."

In short, farmers' markets represent a viable and sustainable alternative for promoting fairer and more equitable agriculture, encouraging healthy eating, and strengthening ties between producers and consumers.

International level

The international farmers' market refers to a type of market in which local farmers and food producers sell their products directly to consumers without the intermediation of large distributors or supermarkets (Desmarais, 2002).

According to Brown, C., & Miller, S. (2008), farmers' markets have become a trend in the United States. In 1994, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) began collecting information on farmers' markets, which showed a marked increase from 1,755 to 4,385 in 2006. Farmers' markets play an essential role in the US food system, increasing their share and popularity and experiencing significant exponential growth (CEPAL, N. 1984).

According to a USDA report published in 2019, there are an estimated 8,700 farmers' markets in the United States. These traditional activities generate around \$1 billion each year, as they offer a variety of foods and crafts, from fresh agricultural products to baked goods and other local products. Each year, participation in farmers' markets increases as an opportunity or demand for economic income (Vecchio, R. (2009).

One of the shortcomings in the US is the lack of training in food assistance programs and cultural barriers to accessing farmers' markets, which affects marginalized groups with common food security challenges (Rodríguez, 2019). Due to the food system as a whole, there is no participation in projects because of the lack of intervention by planners and policymakers. As a result, there is a general problem in the economy due to the low level of food imports, which is causing a serious problem and growing disunity between producers and the agricultural system, leading to the loss of opportunities for food sovereignty and food security (Lovell, ST, 2010).

Peru's economy and food supply are important, especially for rural and peri-urban areas, due to the fresh, high-quality food they provide. The market has a positive impact through this association or program made up of peasant organizations, allowing the peasant market to sell products directly and indirectly through short trade circuits (CCC); this way, producers and consumers get better prices and higher incomes, strengthening supply and demand. (Gil, 2018)

According to the FAO report published in 2019, Mexico's agriculture sector accounts for around 3 % of the country's GDP and employs around 13 % of the country's workforce. In addition, the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has promoted the creation of markets and tianguis (street markets), thus highlighting the importance of trade in agricultural products and handicrafts by offering fresh products and promoting local and regional agriculture in Mexico.

It should be noted that the producer market refers to the demand for food and handicrafts produced by farmers. These markets are popular in many countries worldwide, including Europe (Maitre-Ekern, E. 2021). In Europe, there are different types of markets aimed at showcasing local products and farmers, to sell organic food, fresh food, and artisanal products, as well as establishing an identity between the seller and the consumer through a short marketing circuit, providing quality directly to the products and contributing to the local economy, thereby promoting sustainability (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations-FAO, 2018).

The short marketing circuit (SMC) in Europe, through the collection of information from Farms selling directly to consumers (2017), aims to help farmers and businesses connect with consumers through local and direct markets. Mediated by the SMC, it provides a direct way to obtain healthy and fresh food, thus supporting the rural economy by providing more value to local producers and sustainable food production (ECLAC, No. 2016).

In Latin America, the peasant market is marketing food (fruit, vegetables, and meat), handicrafts, and other

handmade products. These markets are common in many countries and regions, especially in rural and semi-rural areas, which have gradually grown to supply urban areas. These markets offer a variety of products directly to consumers, thereby creating a connection and a meeting place and sharing local culture and traditions through the sale of regional products and foods (Núñez, J. 2008).

National level

Farmers' markets in Colombia emerged in 2004 as an initiative of farmers' organizations. Their purpose is to bring farmers in each municipality or village into a market to increase their income and improve their quality of life and that of their consumers, contributing to improved food security (Pachón, J. 2021).

Marketing prices at in-person events in farmers' markets aim to represent "fair prices" as long as they are affordable for consumers. In Bogotá, farmers' market prices are adjusted according to the prices of products from Corabastos (Pachón, J. 2021).

According to... González C. et al. (2018) state that consumers prefer to buy at CMs because they are organic, healthier, chemical-free, and contribute to nature. (p.71)

Farmers' markets in Colombia face several problems selling their products, including transportation, low productivity, and crop losses due to external factors such as environmental problems. Other factors include geographical location and consumer culture. (Sánchez V. et al.p.42)

Departmental level

Farmers' markets in Caquetá are of great importance to the agricultural economy. These markets offer a unique opportunity for farmers to sell their products directly to consumers and provide a cultural experience for visitors. The importance of these markets has grown as consumers become more interested in buying local and organic products. In addition to providing a livelihood for farmers, farmers' markets also help preserve traditional farming methods and promote sustainable agriculture. The Government of Caquetá has implemented Decree 001344 of December 18, 2019, to protect and consolidate the peasant, family, and community economy of rural producers, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and other ethnic groups established in the department through short marketing circuits. (ADR, 2019)

Local level

According to Pinilla (2021), four farmers' markets have been established in recent months in the municipality of Florencia, Caquetá. The first is located on the road to Montañita, Caquetá, in the city's center, specifically in the Inmaculada Park, where the La Manigua farmers' market is located. On the road to the municipality of Morelia, you will find the Coopmercasan farmers' market. On the road to Neiva, Huila, opposite Turbay Park, you will find the La Manigua farmers' market.

The MC faces various problems related to family vulnerability and, therefore, participates in different activities. Some difficulties disproportionately affecting rural areas are lack of economic resources, hunger, and nutritional imbalance. Other problems include inadequate soil, the environment, climate change, armed conflict, evictions, and displacement (Zuñiga Ariza, P. A. 2019). Aging is typical in rural areas because young people today are not as interested in the countryside as their ancestors were. One of the main reasons is migration to urban areas, thus losing empirical knowledge of how to practice agriculture in a traditional way, which has led to a decline in the quality of rural life and economic loss, with future generations facing drastic poverty for young people living in rural areas (Heredia, D. K. 2022).

One of the main problems facing the La Manigua peasant market is the lack of training to strengthen sustainable agricultural sales. On the other hand, there is competition from imported products or unfair competition, which means that consumers do not spend money on products from the region. There is also a lack of organization in these activities and a lack of financing, which limits access to resources and transportation for local farmers and producers. Climate change also directly affects the availability of products for the peasant market.

On the other hand, farmers' markets suffer direct consequences, such as the suspension of food sales or the sale price. These factors are prevalent among people who sell food because they do not place an adequate value on it, thus selling products at a low cost and incurring economic losses. Climate change also limits both food production and marketing; this reduces agricultural production and food variety, making it less predictable to grow or harvest crops and creating greater food demand in the region. Climate variation has a significant impact on the supply and prices of producers in farmers' markets. As a result, farmers' market share decreases with each crisis or difficulty that arises, such as unfair competition, changes in consumption patterns, production constraints, and lack of government support.

What are the strategies for strengthening the La Manigua farmers' market in Florencia-Caquetá?

The overall objective of this project is to design a strategy to strengthen participation and improve marketing in the La Manigua farmers' market, located in Florencia, Caquetá.

METHOD

Location and description of the population

The La Manigua farmers' market is located in Colombia, in the department of Caquetá, municipality of Florencia, in the El Centro neighborhood, specifically in La Inmaculada Park.

The population participating in this research will be the families actively participating in this CCC, whether producers or consumers. It should be noted that the La Manigua MC operates outdoors regularly on Fridays and Saturdays and has established itself as a place where producers seek to satisfy consumers while offering high-quality, fresh products at affordable prices for the population. Consumers are generally from different places and ages and participate in this market searching for healthy, sustainable food and a local economic contribution.

Methodological approach

This research was based on the critical social paradigm, in which the participants established a philosophical reference point through methodological questioning and self-reflection (Miranda, B. & Ortiz; B., 2020).

The research was participatory, taking into account the methodological design. Its main objective was to comprehensively analyze the situations present in the study site and their respective actors (Zapata, 2016).

A mixed approach combined information collection instruments that addressed qualitative and quantitative variables. This made it possible to analyze the social, economic, and cultural aspects of the La Manigua peasant market and its impact on the local community.

Characterization of the current situation of the La Manigua peasant market

To gain a detailed understanding of the current situation of the La Manigua peasant market, an interview was conducted with the president of the MC, who participated as a key informant in this research. Various social, productive, and economic variables were addressed during the interview. To ensure accurate documentation, the interview was recorded and subsequently transcribed. The information collected was processed using Atlas ti version 9.0 analysis software. Through this software, visualizations such as word clouds and families were generated, which were used to describe and analyze the data comprehensively and meaningfully.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exploratory analysis - word cloud

The distribution of quality products from small-scale farming has become a highly relevant alternative in today's market. The La Manigua farmers' market is a space where farmers can offer their products directly to consumers, avoiding intermediaries and guaranteeing the freshness and authenticity of the products. This market, through efficient logistics strategies, allows for agile and direct distribution. In this way, a direct connection is established between farmers and consumers, fostering a relationship of trust based on quality and transparency



Figure 1. Word cloud

Deductive analysis - family network

Deductive analysis

The interviewee's narrative allowed us to identify around 50 analysis codes grouped into economy, food, and family productivity codes, as presented below.

Family Economy

The La Manigua farmers’ market in Florencia, Caquetá, is an example of short marketing channels (SMCs). Its operation seeks to shorten the supply chain and eliminate intermediaries between agricultural producers and end consumers.

According to López (2012), SMCs are forms of agri-food trade and circulation without intermediaries between producers and consumers, as direct sales to local markets provide greater profits not only for producers but also for the association of this group.

Markets depend on the interplay of supply and demand, a form of trade based on a capital base for sustainability that also seeks to strengthen the work of the farmers who carry out this activity through competition based on product quality since the ultimate goal of CCCs is to distribute good-quality food products to their consumers (figure 1).

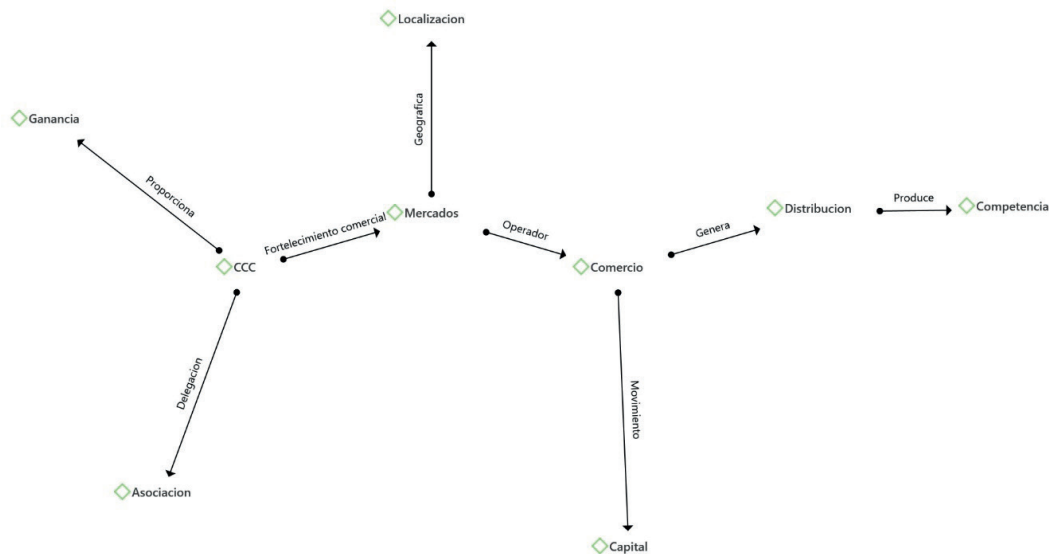


Figure 2. Economy Family

Family Food

For producers at the La Manigua Market, it is a priority to offer consumers a wide variety of high-quality, fresh, and highly nutritious products, where organic is the hallmark. The market’s trademark and identity generate more trust with its customers, which is why it works to guarantee access to food, both in economic and logistical terms (figure 2).

Food through the farmers’ market is the process by which the human body obtains the necessary nutrients from the environment while satisfying intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, and sociocultural needs that are fundamental to whole life (Monzon, 2019).

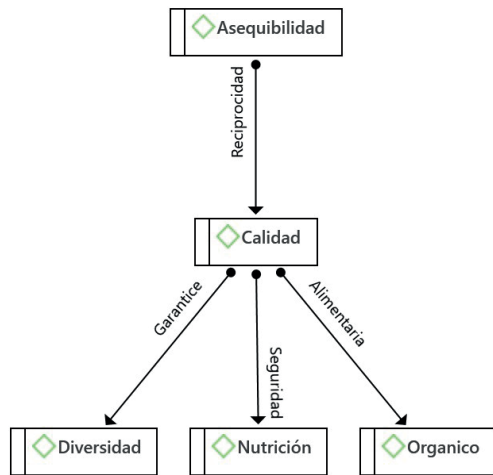


Figure 3. Food Family

Family Productivity

Farmers' markets are a profitable and effective option for farmers, as they allow them to improve their yields and profitability by producing food that meets consumer demand. Efficiency is achieved by establishing efficient production parameters and practices, allowing for more effective management of available resources. In addition, the variability of products in these markets responds to changing consumer preferences, ensuring greater adaptability and satisfaction.

Farmers' markets are a technically clear and specific option that allows farmers to produce efficiently and profitably, respond to demand, and maintain high-performance standards.

The reductionist economic approach requires all countries to follow the same path of Western development without considering cultural aspects beyond the mere accumulation of goods for a good life. This raises questions about lifestyles and consumption. In contrast, local development seeks to take advantage of available conditions to achieve potential, addressing poverty, inequality, and inequity, promoting employment, and ensuring food security (Medina, 1973).

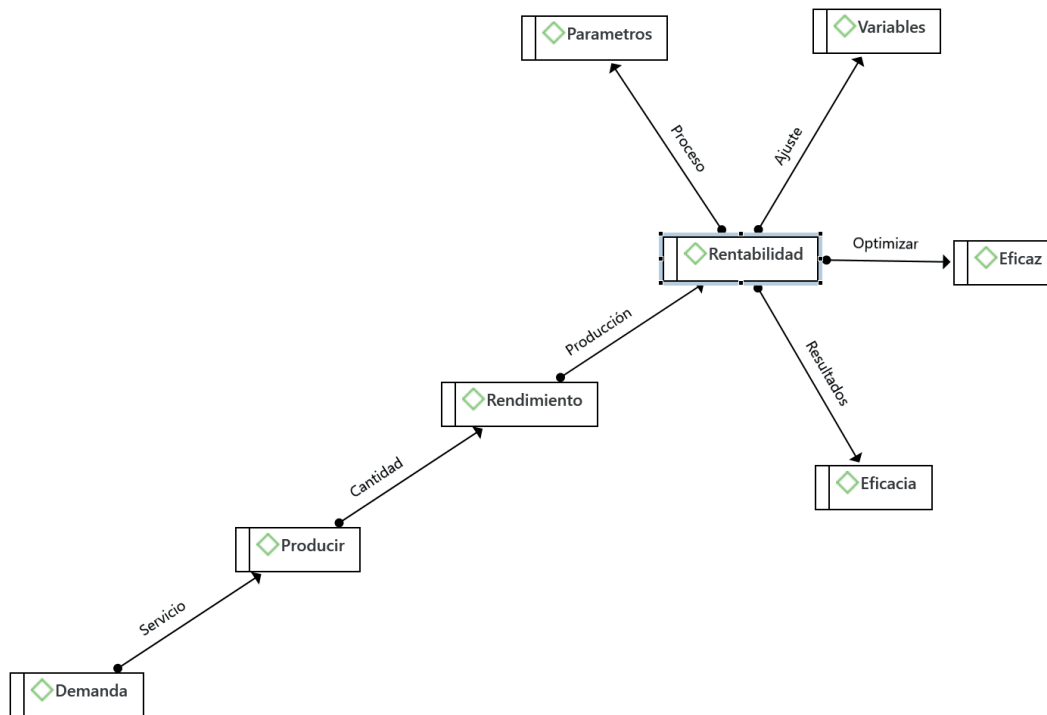


Figure 4. Productivity Family

CONCLUSIONS

Farmers' markets are a viable and sustainable alternative for promoting fairer and more equitable agriculture, strengthening the relationship between producers and consumers. However, challenges and shortcomings also need to be addressed, such as lack of training, cultural barriers, unfair competition, and the impacts of climate change. Greater attention and support from governments and other institutions are needed to strengthen and improve farmers' markets, ensuring their sustainability and contribution to food security and the local economy.

The project in the La Manigua farmers' market seeks to strengthen producer participation and improve marketing. Its aim is to promote local and sustainable agriculture, value the local gastronomic culture, and guarantee healthy food for consumers.

In the department of Caquetá, farmers' markets play a crucial role in the agricultural economy. They preserve traditional farming methods and promote sustainable agriculture. Implementing short marketing circuits has strengthened the region's rural economy.

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