







# Review of the literature on Pastoral Economics and Marketing:

# South America

Report prepared for the World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism, IUCN EARO by Carlos Andaluz Westreicher, Juan Luis Mérega, Gabriel Palmili, Argentina 2006.

# **Table of Contents**

Transhumant pastoralism in South America	1
General features	1
Incas and camelids	2
Current exploitation of camelids in the Central Andes	4
Overview of pastoralism in some South American countries	5
The Central Andes	5
Southern Andes	7
The future	9
Identification of knowledge gaps	9
Bibliography	9
Annotated bibliography	9
General bibliography	15

# Transhumant pastoralism in South America

# **General features**

Pastoralism, the use of extensive grazing in rangelands for livestock production, is one of the

The activity of pastoralists is also important in the Patagonian Andes, in the south of Argentina (north of the Province of Neuquén and south of the Province of Mendoza), in areas and landscapes that, according to their altitude and ecological features, can not be considered as 'puna'. The activities of these pastoralists present some peculiarities and will be further developed in point 2.2.2 of this paper.

All in all, pastoralists activities in South America are present in four countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Perú¹). In Argentina and Chile it occupies marginal areas, and their economic relevance lies in their capacity to activate economic niches (goats in Northern Chile and Southern Argentina; camelids in Northern Argentina). Bolivia and Perú are, for historical, cultural and geographical reasons, in the heart of South American pastoralism and the importance of pastoralist activities is more relevant in both economies.

# Incas and camelids

As it was mentioned above, nowadays pastoralism in the Central Andes Region is directed related to the eco of the indigenous culture (mostly, but not only, Incas) which, in terms, is tightly linked with the breeding of camelids. For these reasons, it is relevant to the purpose of this study to present a brief reference to the characteristics and uses of these animals.

However, it should be keep in mind that pastoralism in South America not only deal with camelids but mainly with goats and sheep, as it will be developed in point 2 of this paper.

The Camelidae family consists of a small family of mammalian animals. There are two members of Old World camels living in Africa and Asia (the Arabian and the Bactrian) and four members of the New World camels living in South America (Ilamas, vicuñas, alpacas and guanacos). The six of them are all very well adapted to their respective environments: the camels in harsh deserts of Africa and Asia; and their South American cousins inhabit the highlands and bush area of South America. Most of these species have been integrated into, and play very important roles in lives of the indigenous people. They have been traditionally used for transport of people and things, hides and fibres for clothing and other textile articles, and in many cases they supply meat and milk products, etc.

Camelids are in the taxonomic order Artiodactylvingcph thi6ky9m

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Incan culture. The meat would then be distributed to the crowds. Llamas were also an integral part of the Inca's workforce. As pack animals they contributed vastly to the building of their irrigation systems, roads, and temples. They were also used to carry loads in the Inca's mines.

Llamas are still used today by the indigenous peoples of South America for packing and transporting goods, fibers, and for meat. Mostly the males are used as pack animal. They usually carry up to fifty pound loads. Stallions can carry up to 35 kilograms for about 25 kilometers (a day's march for a llama). Male pack animals are not sheared. Their heavy wool coat acts as a saddle blanket by cushioning their loads. It has been suggested that the llamas were selectively bred as pack animals leading to a larger stronger animals than their wild parent. The females are sheared, but llama wool is inferior to the alpacas and is often used to make rope. Llamas only allow themselves to be loaded when they are part of a group. Llamas provide meat, wool, hides for sandals, and fat for candles. Their dung can be dried and used for fuel. South American herders use most parts of a llama's carcass.

#### **Alpacas**

Alpaca's roots also go back to the Inca civilization, where they were considered a "prize" Studies indicates that the vicuña was the ancestor of the alpaca, which was domesticated 6 or 7,000 years ago. Their coats make the finest quality wool. Alpaca fibre was woven into robes used by Inca royalty. They also provided food, fuel, clothing, and transportation for this culture in an otherwise extremely hostile environment. Alpacas still thrive in the harsh climates of the Peruvian, Bolivian, Chilean and Argentinean highlands where scorching temperatures in the day plummet to sub-freezing at night. They prefer low humidity and altitudes between 4,000 and 5,200 meters. At lower altitudes, especially bellow 3,400 meters, external parasites such as lice and mange make the wool short and uneven and reduce yields.

Alpacas are small compared to llamas, approximately 90 cm at the withers. Piebald colour patterns are much rarer than in llamas, and alpacas usually have a tuft of hair on their forehead. Their life span is 15 to 25 years. Their weight is in average 90 kilograms.

Annual wool production in adult animals averages 1.3 kilograms. The colours of wool include different tones of white, cream, fawn, tan, grey, brown and black. Some alpacas are of a uniform colour, usually white, but many have piebald coats with patches of different colours. It has a cellular structure similar to hair and is more resilient and much stronger than Merino sheep wool. It is highly sought after in Britain, Europe, and Japan. The 'cria' (young alpaca) fibre is extra fine and lustrous and commands a higher selling price. Their wool quality is only slightly lower than the vicuña. The black coats are usually the heaviest.

In South America, shearing is usually done before the rainy season in November and December. After seven years of age, alpacas are used primarily for meat. In 1972, there were about two million living in Peru and 50,000 in Bolivia.

Alpacas are inexpensive to feed. They have three stomachs which enable them to be very efficient at digesting what they eat. They are more fastidious feeders than llamas, being very earth-friendly by grazing meticulously throughout the pasture. They prefer free range pasture to confinement in a stall or barn. They have sensitive feet and prefer soft, moist ground with tender grasses. They also enjoy pools and puddles for wallowing. A lack of adequate ground moisture is thought to lead to a fatal foot disease and rainless years often lead to higher mortality rates. No special food is required for them except in winter or in late pregnancy when all they need is good quality hay and low protein pellets. Alpacas will spit on one another if sufficiently angered, but will rarely spit on people.

#### Guanacos

Guanacos are the larger of the two wild camelids species. They stand about four feet tall at the shoulder and about 1,5 meters to the top of the head. They have a body length of up to 1,8 meters with an approximately 25cm long tail. They can weigh up to 100 kilograms. Their woolly coat is tawny to brown and their head is usually grey.

Wild guanacos thrive in the plains of northern Peru to southern Patagonia. They often live in the mountains and altiplano areas above 4,000 meters. Usually herds of several females travel with one male; however, leaderless herds of males of up to 200 have been found. The

guanaco can run at speeds up to 25 kilometres per hour and they are also strong swimmers. Their mating season is during August and September. They have a ten to eleven month gestation period. The babies can run soon after birth and are weaned at six to twelve weeks.

#### Vicuñas

Vicuñas are smaller than guanacos and weigh only about 50 kilos. Vicuñas thrive in the mountainous regions of Northern Peru to Northern Chile at altitudes above 4,500 meters. They are up to 90 cm at the shoulder and usually have a light brown coat with a yellow-red bib. They are very social animals. There are male dominated family groups. Non-territorial males form groups of both young and disposed older males. Vicuñas are less easy to tame than the guanaco because they are extremely shy. These animals are less adaptable to different environments. The native people do harvest the wool of these animals. They drive them into an enclosure, shear them, and release them.

# **Current exploitation of camelids in the Central Andes**

The wool of the vicuña is the most valuable commodity in the high Andean plains. So says Nicolás Maidana, a farmer in Cienaguillas, a 'puna' village of 200 people in Jujuy, the most north westerly province in Argentina, which borders both Chile and Bolivia. The local herd of some 900 vicuñas used to be a pest here, he says. They tore down fences, gnawed at the pastures and brought disease to local flocks of llamas. But now, he says, "they are an important resource for us. Once we started capturing and shearing them, we can see an economic return".

He is not alone. In 2003, Maidana and dozens of his fellow farmers in theses wild mountain lands joined in a roundup of vicuña in Argentina. Each animal yields around 250 grams of fine, golden wool. Once cleaned and woven, it fetched up to us\$ 100 in European markets and some probably will end up in coats for sale in Milan and other cities.

The Inca banned the hunting of vicuñas, which had probably been going on in the Andes for at least 10,000 years before their empire was established. The wool was too precious to pass up, so they devised a harvesting technique called the 'chaku'. During this vast communal activity, tens of thousands of people would spill out across the hill sides, forming human chains to round up and corral thousand of vicuñas. Shepherded into enclosures, the vicuña would be sheared of their wool, then released into the wild. Everyone of the millions of vicuña living there could expected to be shorn every two or three years. It was an exquisite exercise in what is called today sustainable management.

With the arrival of the Spanish conquerors, the Inca world collapse and vicuñas began to be hunted with firearms. This lead to the abrupt decline in the numbers of vicuña population. In last three decades of the XX Century, and thanks to a protective legislation, the number of vicuñas began to recover.

There may be as many as 250,000 vicuña in the 'puna' today. More than half are in Perú. Conservation scientist and governments of the vicuña homelands decided that the best way to prevent a breakdown of the conservation strategy was to allow peasants to make money out of living vicuñas. "We decided to bring back the 'chaku' technique from the Incan empire. This gave a chance for local poor communities, which often earn less than us\$ 500 a year, to benefit from the golden fleece", says Cristian Bonacic, an Oxford trained veterinarian.

'Chakus' has also became a tourist attraction. But it may be that economic success will have a negative impact, as the commercial positive results if this activity is encouraging methods of intensifying and privatizing the wool harvest. By degrees, the vicuña is being turned into a farm animal. In Chile they are breeding vicuña in captivity. And here and there in Argentina, these animals are being captured and domesticated on vicuña farms. There are big concern among conservationists about the result of this tendency.

But it is clear that pastoralist activities are strongly linked to wool market. Not only with vicuñas (as it was described in this point) but also with alpaca, sheep and goats (as it will be developed in point 2 of this paper).

Generally speaking, there is a tendency to promote pastoral products in the region. However, these policies present differences in their goals as well in their achievements, and they are not necessarily tailored to pastoral groups but consistent with the new trends in the general

coast, intermontane valleys and the agricultural areas of the 'altiplano'. In many areas, herders set forth trips with llama caravans, often travelling for days or weeks at a time. They carry pastoral products (dried meat, wool, textiles) and purchased products (salt, candles, cooking pots) to agricultural areas, where they barter for grains, tubers, fruits and vegetables.

favoured social property enterprises) and never come to dominate wool-buying as it was originally expected.

Apart from the transhumance in the central and southern zones of Perú, there is also another type of transhumance in the north (Departments of Tumbes, Piura and Lambayeque), related to goat livestock.

livestock in Chile is located in the IV Region. Furthermore, 178 Comunidades Agricolas (which combine communitarian and individual ownership of the land) are located in the Region.

The management of the herds follows a transhumant vertical pattern, including 'campos de veranada' (summer fields) and 'campos de invernada' (winter fields).

In recent years, apart from the use of hair and meat, milk (and the production of cheese) was included

#### Argentina

Argentine occupies the 80% of its territory in activities related to agriculture, livestock and forestry. Cattle is concentrated in the Pampa Region (the richest of the country) with 50% of the 49 millions heads. The 85% of the production are consumed in the country. Sheep livestock is concentrated in the Patagonia, with 60% of the 14 millions heads. Sheep are mainly used for their wool, which are exported (50%). Goat livestock (3,5 millions heads) is characteristic of the arid and semiarid zone. They are bred for their meat, milk, leather and – more recently – for their hair².

In Argentina, livestock activities are mostly carried out according to sedentary patterns. However in the Puna Region (north west of the country) and in the Andean Patagonia (south west of the country) mobile pastoralism is widespread, following traditional habits. In both regions, pastoralists make their living mainly from camelids (only in the north), goat and sheep livestock (less importance have cattle, horses and mules).

Pastoralists live in difficult conditions, with high indicators of poverty and little or no access to social services (health, education, technical assistance). In general, only the family members manage the transhumant activities. However, some herders from the Andean Patagonia might occasionally hire other peasants to take care of the livestock.

Pastoralists adopt transhumant patterns; this is to say they move their cattle periodically, according to the seasons. There are 'campos de veranada' (summer fields) and 'campos de invernada' (winter fields), linked by 'huellas' (tracks). The "campos de veranada" are located in the upper valleys (1200 meters above sea level, in the case of Patagonia; 3000 to 4200 in the case of the Puna). The "campos de invernada" are located in the plateau and lower valleys (800 to 1200 meters above sea level), in the case of Patagonia; or in lowers gorges or valleys (2000 to 2800 meters above sea level), in the case of Puna. In some cases, there are transboundary movements, between Chile and Argentina, and vice versa.

There are no specific policies, institutions or legislations oriented to pastoralism, such as a "pastoral code". However, the are many rules that regulate the movement of livestock.

The lands managed through a pastoralist approach are severely degraded, both in the Puna and the Andean Patagonia. But pastoralist management is not the cause but the consequence of this degradation process.

Mobile patterns of livestock management have their origin in indigenous habits as well as in the ecological conditions of the "campos de invernada", unable to sustain a sedentary management.

The best lands have been assigned to medium and big size produces. As a result, the lands in which pastoral activities are carried out are fragile and very vulnerable to land degradation process. In fact, the implementation of transhumant patterns helps to avoid impairing the situation.

There are many barriers to pastoral land management. The most important is the perpetuation of the myth that nomadic pastoralism is an archaic form of production, aggressive to the environment.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Goats in the Provinces of Neuquén and Mendoza also produce 'cashemere'. Government technical staff and 'crianceros' organizations are developing activities to improve the shearing and commercialization of this fiber. It is estimated that a potential of ronme0 TD 0 0v6 144 0.48 re fB

The educational system, in which the people who provide technical assistance to pastoralists, are shaped, is prepared to deal with "traditional sedentary" management.

Another problem is that public policies tend to be shaped only to sedentary livestock management. Most of the policies targeted to pastoralist groups try to shift them into something different.

It is important to point out that almost the 20% of the heads of goats in Argentina (620,000 out of a total of 3,500,000) are located in the province of Neuquén and managed according to transhumance patterns.

#### The future

It is not easy to asses the future of pastoralism in South America. In fact, the situation varies from country to country, closely related to the importance of this practices in the different societies.

In Perú and Bolivia, where pastoralism has more relative importance, relevance and visibility, the future is more clear and the sector receives the benefits of protective and/or promoting policies. On the other hand, Chile and Argentina, pastoralism has a marginal and "survival" characteristic and if protective policies are not put into practice, a decline of the activity can be foreseen.

# Identification of knowledge gaps

In comparison with similar types of mobile pastoralism in the rest of the world, publications on pastoralism in South America are few and scattered. They mostly follow a historical or anthropological approach. And geographically they are concentrated in the Central Andean region.

When the potential of livestock production within the countries is analyzed, the particularities and contributions of mobile pastoral systems is nor assessed, neither recognized. For example, the importance of wool exports from Perú not always take into consideration the essential roll played by herders of llamas, vicuñas and alpacas. Or, in Chile and Argentina, it is ignored the fact that a significant share of the national production of goats is produced by 'crianceros'.

As a result, it is difficult to estimate the contribution of pastoralism to national economies in South American countries, for example, in terms of percentage of GDP.

In general terms, there is a lack of applied research in the field of pastoralist production systems. As a consequence of the misperception of pastoralists activities, most of the patterns of technical assistance and capacity building are tailored for sedentary systems of agricultural and livestock production.

Finally, there is a general lack of research and studies to asses the impact in pastoral communities and markets of the neo-liberal policies applied in the four countries during the last twenty years. These new policies implied a withdrawn of the intervention of governmental agencies in markets and (in some cases) a reduction in the quality and quantity of technical assistance.

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This paper presents a thorough analysis of the pastoralists in the Province of Neuquén (in the south of Argentina). It describes the regional features and deals with the spatial organization, social structure and economic activities of the 'crianceros' (this is the name by which transhumant pastoralists of Neuquén are known).

Of particular relevance is the analysis of the different types of crianceros, according to the size of their herd.

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This paper presents an analysis of the characteristics of the activities carried on by the 'crianceros', a description of the evolution of land degradation in the area of transhumant activity and a survey on the perception of land degradation from the point of view of the crianceros. Finally, the paper suggests a number of technical solutions, describing their social and economic impact.

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This brief paper gives an outline of the issues that a consistent rural policy should take into consideration: alternative policies to include poor people from rural areas, resignification of natural resources, strengthening of 'crianceros' organizations, government commitment and civil society participation

Bendini, M.; Tsakoumagkos, P.; Nogues, C.. 2004. "Los crianceros trashumantes del Neuquén". En Bendini, M. y Alemany, C. (coordinadores) Crianceros y chacareros en la Patagonia. Cuaderno GESA 5. GESA-UNC-INTA-NCRCRD. Editorial La Colmena. Buenos Aires.

This paper is an updated version of "Bendini, M.; Tsakoumagkos, P.; Destéfano, B. (1994)". In the conclusion, it states:

"Hemos caracterizado a los crianceros como campesinos ganaderos que producen y participan en la exportación de lana, chivitos y corderos, pelo caprino, cueros, en una modalidad trashumante. La participación de estos crianceros en la oferta total de productos caprinos ha sido tradicionalmente significativa, especialmente en el pelo. Sin embargo, la dinámica de los procesos de descentralización y privatización, las políticas sectoriales y fundiarias e inevitables de apropiación territorial selectiva, modifican y ponen en riesgo su sobrevivencia (...).

Los principales problemas a los que se enfrentan los crianceros son: limitaciones de suelos, pastizales y agua; limitaciones institucionales en materia de legalización del acceso a la tierra, dentro de los usos y costumbres propias de las comunidades locales; la pobreza rural y el escaso desarrollo de alternativas económicas para estos productores y sus familias (...).

El desempeño en el largo plazo de los crianceros trashumantes ha podido ser caracterizado como epopeya, ya que lograron persistir frente a enormes dificultades y sin políticas diferenciadoras acordes a estas dificultades."

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The article describes the effect that national policies in Bolivia and Perú had on pastoralists communities and production system.

In the conclusions, the author says that "both in Perú and Bolivia, agrarian reform have had little impact upon production, but have had marked impact upon the organization and structure of marketing (...) Impact of Agrarian Reform has been, in general, negative upon the indigenous pastoral sectors of the high grasslands of both countries".

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The focus of this paper is upon several different approaches taken recently in the Andean high altitude grassland to attempt to increase livestock productivity, with observations relevant to the success and failures of these approaches. The summary of this paper states:

"In the arid lands of Peruvian puna and Bolivian altiplano, four different approaches have been attempted to improve productivity by national development planners: (a) improvement of arid land carrying capacity (by improving water supplies and improving pasturage); (b) improvement of herd animals (by disease control, selective breeding and introduction of new Finally, he attracts the attention to the lack of literature related to Chilean 'crianceros' issues.

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An analysis of the origin and historical evolution (from XVI Century to XIX Century) of agricultural property in the Elqui valley (IV Region, Chile).

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