



Intercultural Foods of Our Land Festival



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CONTEXT

Agricultural fairs are the main channels for the retailing of agricultural produce in Costa Rica. They have traditionally been held every Saturday and Sunday throughout the country and 80 fairs are currently held and managed by institutions such as the cantonal agricultural centre, the municipal government or a local development association. The fairs are linked to the national marketing board, on which representatives of farmers, agricultural centres, market administrators and the national production council sit. Under Costa Rica's JP, the fairs were regarded as a venue for intercultural dialogue, a fundamental aspect that culturally enhanced the value of the commercial activity. In that connection, it was proposed that agricultural fairs be viewed as opportunities for cultural enjoyment by society and as a means of boosting the country's agricultural sector economically.

PROCESS

The strategy rested on winning recognition for farmers who sell their produce regularly at fairs, with emphasis on their daily lives, their families, their forms of production and reproduction and the way in which they prepare the food that they produce. Such recognition was embodied in the "Intercultural/Foods of Our Land Festival" (FICONUTI), held in various municipalities as an opportunity for farmers and their families to display their produce, explain their production methods, transport to fairs, culinary use and preparation in the region of origin, times and means of consumption and side dishes. Handicrafts, music and traditional clothing, too, were marketed at the fairs. The first to be surprised by the events were the farmers themselves, when the value of their work and knowledge was acknowledged, and the cultural

exchanges among them were quite substantial. It was then the turn of the public, who came regularly to the fairs and made purchases there, to be surprised at the infinite culinary possibilities inherent in the country's various food identities and the cultures that they represent. The link between cultural roots and healthy eating styles was thus highlighted, imparting economic sustainability to small-scale production and the people's food security.

Results

The "Intercultural/Foods of Our Land Festival" strategy has enhanced the cultural and commercial viability of Costa Rica's agricultural fairs and traditions and has triggered cultural market networks, innovation and the expansion of micro-enterprises. The participating farmers have learnt from experiential exchanges with other farmers and a varied artistic and cultural programme, including cultural revitalization workshops for attendees, has been scheduled for each fair. Owing to the success of this strategy, a new cultural management model has been devised for the agricultural fairs and is now being exported to the country's other fairs.

