

Foreign Fast Food Harms Peruvian Consumers and Farmers



Lima, June 26 (teleSUR-RHC) Free Trade Agreements are at fault for the unhealthy processed potatoes that Peru is importing and that are taking market space from local small farmers, said a Peruvian analyst on Thursday, adding that the state was not "sovereign."

Fernando Eguren President of the Center for Peruvian Social Studies said that the neoliberal free trade agreements that Peru has signed with the US and other countries has affected the quality of the food. "The proposal was called food security and sovereignty law," he said. "Then there was a reaction from the executive branch to get rid of the word sovereignty. And why? Because one of the main reasons is that Peru has signed so many free trade treaties that the state simply is not sovereign to define its food policy."

Peru has its own original potatoes and the country produces thousands of varieties of this crop. But with the arrival of widely advertised foreign fast food chains the country is now importing 24,000 tons of cheap processed potatoes ready for frying and the amount is growing.

Local Farm worker Benito Gutiérrez explains how imports are hurting local agriculture. "It competes with us because it lowers our prices. But we want the promotion of our products for the consumption in the city and by citizens so that they can get our products and in that manner we can have higher revenues and continue working with more encouragement," he said.

Government's attempts to support small local farmers, who constitute over 90 percent of crop production, have yet to materialized in concrete ways. A law that would establish safeguards for the country's food consumption and give it more independence has stalled in Congress, though it is supported by the small farmers.

But national sovereignty and support for small farmers aren't the only issues that the neoliberal trade agreements bring. According to Eguren, the health of the nation is also at risk with the high consumption of processed fried potatoes. The increase in nine percent of imported potatoes for frying when compared between 2013 to 2014 contrasts with a decrease of 32 percent for worldwide consumption.

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