

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Importance of productive units in the rural development of the Guano canton, Ecuador

Importancia de las unidades productivas en el desarrollo rural del cantón Guano, Ecuador

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(Received October 14, 2023; accepted March 31, 2024)

Abstract

Productive systems, in the rural context, acquire importance from a social and economic perspective; their approach as a study phenomenon allows us to observe and identify weaknesses and opportunities in the actions of local productive activity. Thus, the productive system of the Guano canton in Ecuador is a structured set of agricultural, livestock and, to a lesser extent, industrial activities. The research aims to determine the strategies for generating business units in the rural productive activity of the Guano canton, is based on a non-experimental research method, descriptive type, and assumes a qualitative and quantitative approach. The sample was of 244 producers out of a population of 21 851. To obtain data, a survey was applied with dichotomous, structured questions and a Likert scale. The results show that family organization, investment and incentives to the rural productive sector are the strategies that contribute significantly to the establishment of productive units. Consequently, the importance of productive units in the rural development of the Guano canton is relevant.

Keywords: business strategies, productive units, productive activity, rural development, Guano canton.

Resumen

Los sistemas productivos, en el contexto rural, adquieren una importancia desde la perspectiva social y económica; su abordaje como un fenómeno de estudio permite observar e identificar debilidades y oportunidades en el accionar de la actividad productiva local. Así, el sistema productivo del cantón Guano en Ecuador es un conjunto estructurado de actividades agrícolas, pecuarias y, en menor proporción, industrial. La investigación pretende determinar las estrategias de generación de unidades de negocios en la actividad productiva rural del cantón Guano, se apoya en un método de investigación no experimental, de tipo descriptivo, y asume un enfoque cualitativo y cuantitativo. La muestra fue de 244 productores de una población de 21 851. Para la obtención de datos, se aplicó una encuesta con preguntas de tipo dicotómica, estructurada y de escala de Likert. Los resultados reflejan que la organización familiar, la inversión y los incentivos al sector productivo rural son las estrategias que contribuyen de forma significativa en el establecimiento de unidades productivas. En consecuencia, es relevante la importancia de las unidades productivas en el desarrollo rural

del cantón Guano.

Palabras clave: Estrategias de negocios, unidades productivas, actividad productiva, desarrollo rural, cantón Guano.

1. Introduction

The need to generate better economic income and be part of regional development has originated the need to create new productive initiatives or business units in rural areas (Berdegué et al., 2015). The development of rural areas encompasses a set of social, cultural, political and economic phenomena, which directly affect when generating a business (Monin et al., 2014 ; Vercher, 2022). For the creation of these businesses, it is necessary that the participation of the actors and agents of development be driven through the participation of the productive forces through associations or individually (Rudolf and Paulisch, 2010). In rural areas, productive initiatives are centered on agriculture and livestock as the main income-generating activities for families (Ayaviri-Nina, Quispe et al., 2022; Maulu et al., 2021).

The productive system of the rural sector is characterized by the dynamics of agriculture, livestock and small agro-industries constituted in the entrepreneurial network of a smaller scale . Thus, a productive system is the combination of the means of production land, capital and labor force available in the ecosystem , whose purpose is to contribute with a strategy that allows interacting and acting in the market (Galardi et al., 2022; Villena Manzanares et al., 2019). The development of productive activities, in the rural context, differs markedly from those concentrated in the urban environment by the characteristics that possesses (Alif et al., 2020). However, in both cases it is important to design policies and strategies to promote and develop the sector.

In this sense, public policies aimed at the rural productive sector condition, in some way, the development of productive activities. Their impulse and the promotion of associations may be limited, such as the clusters that fail to establish themselves in a visible way , with tenuous actions and the establishment of the strategies that do not respond, in some cases, to local planning and, to a lesser extent, to the needs of producers (Aryal et al., 2018; Steiner and Atterton, 2015) . Likewise, there are experiences where policies have contributed to the development of the rural productive sector, consequently, the benefit for the community and producers is important (Ortiz-Crespo et al., 2021). Strategies oriented to the rural productive sector allow generating competitive advantages in a productive unit; also, they create opportunities for a society to be sustainable in time and to consolidate the positioning of products in the market (Deák and Ferencz, 2016). In summary, the determination of strategies includes establishing the objectives and goals of an organization for a specific term, instituting a business, as well as allocating the necessary economic resources for an effective and sustainable development (Galardi et al., 2022; Vik and McElwee, 2011; Villena Manzanares et al., 2019) . This allocation of resources can be from public or private institutions; the purpose is to strengthen productive units.

This research work aims to determine the strategies for strengthening and generating business units for the rural sector in the Guano canton, Ecuador, considering that this productive sector is one of the pillars in the generation of economic resources in this place. Its activity is centered on wool weaving, cotton, footwear, highlighting agriculture and livestock as the main economic activities that reflect the importance of these productive units in the rural development of the canton. At present, the strategies for strengthening and creating new business units in the canton are unknown, which has motivated the research to focus on this phenomenon, considering the role it plays in the number of business units established, as well as in the provision of products to the population in the rural context.

2. Theoretical aspects

A business unit intends to work independently within the market, but in a dependent manner from the demand side, since its direct relationship is subject to the behaviors of the internal and external markets, as well as to the productive processes, intermediation and the final consumer (Zaręba, 2014). With the changes made within the Ecuadorian rural sector during the last decades, a real transformation has been noticed both in the productive sector and in society (García Pascual, 2007). Rural development should have support from economic development policies in the productive sector, since rural enterprises play an important role in growth and development processes (Delgado Estrada et al., 2020).

The new business units seek to generate changes in the markets through the introduction of products with the implementation of productive development strategies and policies (Oyarvide Ramírez et al., 2020; Crecente et al., 2021); however, there is a lack of coordinated and articulated work in the processes of production and commercialization of products that motivate farmers to improve the cultivation process; added to this, the intermediation makes the commercialization of agricultural products more precarious (Maulu et al., 2021). Finally, business unit generation strategies are known as the set of actions undertaken by a collectivity in an autonomous manner, which regularly shares economic activities to obtain success and profitability in these activities (Bolis et al., 2021; Van Der Stede, 2000; Vik and McElwee, 2011).

2.1 Business generation strategies

Strategy is the process of organizational adaptation involving decision making and evaluation. It seeks to answer basic questions such as why does the organization exist, what does it do, and how does it do it? It functions as a plan that serves as a guide for organizational action over a three-to-five-year period (Möller and Svahn, 2006). To have a strategic vision is to know where you want to go and what are the objectives to be achieved, it is also necessary to have knowledge and understanding of the environment that affects the stated purpose (Novikova, 2021).

In the field of management, strategy is the pattern or plan that integrates the main goals and policies of an organization; at the same time, establishes the coherent actions to be taken. According to this definition, a strategy must be planned based on the goals and objectives of organizations in the long term; it also has to distribute in an appropriate way all the resources and have an action plan that implements all the above (Diez Farhat et al., 2021; Strikwerda, 2014). It means; the strategy is defined as a contest of action in order to ensure that the organization reaches its objectives; on the other hand, access to timely information is indispensable for producers, since it will allow them to be competitive in offering goods and services to the market (Deák and Ferencz, 2016; Möller and Svahn, 2006). Likewise, access to knowledge is the fundamental basis for the improvement of productive processes, as well as economic and social position.

Currently, any company trying to position itself in the markets is in the obligation to seek differentiating factors within the value chain, cost, technology, segmentation (Msamula et al., 2018). From that perspective, the advantage of creating a strategic business unit is to define clearly the appropriate strategies for each project of autonomously (Jiménez-Silva, 2019); in addition, it is possible to analyze all the opportunities for profitability and growth of the organization, the same that will allow the project to be competitive in the market (Rohrbeck, 2012; Rudolf and Paulisch, 2010). Although competitiveness between organizations is established at multiple levels to generate pugnacity for the money that the customer is willing to pay to meet a need, it is also true that the business unit seeks the profitability of each of the projects in which it participates, without affecting the higher general guidelines; therefore, it will contribute in the survival and long-term success of the organization (Aryal et al., 2018; Van Der Stede, 2000).

A strategy should be planned for the long term based on the goals and objectives of the organizations (Diez Farhat et al., 2021). In business, competitive or cooperative sales strategies make companies meet their goals and objectives (Ansari et al., 2006; Kazan et al., 2015). It should be emphasized that there are various types of strategies such as low-cost supplier financing strategies, high-yield heavy asset

investment strategy and continuous growth of R+D investment strategy (Amit and Zott, 2001). All types of strategies that are employed in business have a common purpose which is the growth of the companies nationally as well as internationally (Amit and Zott, 2001).

2.2 Rural productive activity and its importance

Productivity is an economic measure that calculates goods and services; it allows measuring production efficiency by the factor of resources used to obtain the best and maximum output using minimum resources (Maulu et al., 2021; Steiner and Atterton, 2015). In other words, the fewer resources required to produce the same quality, the higher the productivity and efficiency (Strikwerda, 2014; Wei et al., 2021). In another sense, productivity is the efficient use of resources, labor, capital, materials, energy, information, among others, for the production of various goods and services; therefore, provides the possibility of increasing production from the increase of any of the above-mentioned productive factors (Deák and Ferencz, 2016).

Since the 1980s and together with the macroeconomic reforms implemented, rural agricultural development has been one of the most important phenomena in Latin America (Korovkin, 2005). Some countries reinvigorate agricultural production, making all goods have a competitive advantage compared to the rest of the products of the different countries; however, it continues to be the raw material the primary factor of production for Latin American countries (Ayaviri Nina, Cevallos et al., 2022; Korovkin, 2005). Productivity is related to effectiveness and efficiency; productivity is the efficient use of resources, labor, capital, materials, energy, information, among others, in a mode of production of various goods and services (Strikwerda, 2014).

From a general view, productivity is the process of transformation of raw material into a processed or finished product; but productivity goes beyond a definition, since the increase in productivity allows the improvement of the quality of life of the population, transcending in the profitability of each project, which allows the increase in investments, as well as in direct and indirect employment (Bolis et al., 2021; Villena Manzanares et al., 2019). Taking into account the above, productivity for companies is a very important factor as an indicator, because it allows determining economic growth.

It is very important to understand that the economic situation will influence both the demand for products and services, the need for innovation and efficiency (Alrawashdeh et al., 2022; Ortiz-Crespo et al., 2021; Rijswijk et al., 2021; Zaręba, 2014). This helps to understand that one can compete in the market national or international market with a good, service or product that meets the requirements demanded by the customer today (Moyes et al., 2015; Novikova, 2021). Another factor such as macroeconomics allows defining the economic objectives of a country, as it is a tool that all governments have to achieve the objectives of a balanced market, price stability, economic growth, promoting employment and maintaining a sustainable balance of payments (Bolis et al., 2021; Dinu & Popescu, 1900; Storbacka et al., 2012).

In this context, zone 3 of Ecuador meets the characteristics described above, due to its agricultural productivity. In the province of Chimborazo, is the canton Guano, considered as the center of wool weaving crafts, the handmade carpet and its agricultural production. In recent years, it has been a bastion in the development of productive activities that contribute to territorial development.

3. Methodological aspects

The research is based on a non-experimental research method, since it is not intended to manipulate the variables; on the contrary, the phenomenon is studied by means of observation and research instruments. Direct observation and the survey of entrepreneurs in the area, under a significant sample, make the study more relevant. It involves different groups of people, with different profiles, but with a similar characteristic in terms of developing business units in the area of rural productive activity in the canton. The sample is established from a population of 21 851 agricultural producers from nine parishes in Guano canton, with a sample size of 244. A survey was conducted with dichotomous, open, structured and Likert scale questions. For the analysis of the data, used the statistical program SPSS; for hypothesis

testing, applied a linear regression. The main hypothesis H1 was: Family organization, investment and incentives to the sector are the strategies that contribute to the generation of business units in the rural productive activity of the Guano canton.

4. Results

Based on the results obtained from the survey of the rural population, it is established that there is equity with respect to between the male and female genders with 50% of participation for each gender, those who determine that their main activity is centered on rural productive work with 82%. 10.7 % of those surveyed are unemployed, the economic activity of the population is profitable according to 46 %, while 12 % consider themselves indifferent and 2 % disagree with this statement. In addition, they consider that the economic activity is sustainable in time, which allows observing the volume of production that covers the basic needs of each family. It is important to highlight that to achieve profitability they must take investment actions. Forty percent have made an average investment of 2 501 dollars in their economic activities, 33% between 2001 to 2500 dollars, 5% own between 1001-1500 dollars and 11% have invested between 500-1000 dollars, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Investment

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
valid	5 00-1 000	26	10.7	10.7	10.7
	1 001-1 500	12	4.9	4.9	15.6
	1 501-2 000	28	11.5	11.5	27.0
	2 001-2 500	80	32.8	32.8	59.8
	More than 2 501	98	40.2	40.2	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0	

Source: own elaboration.

In order to determine a greater degree of relativity between the variables, the contingency tables are presented, in which two variables that support the subject of the study are related. Table 2 shows the relationship between the two questions asked: 1) Do you consider that your main economic activity is related to the development of the family organization, investment and incentives to the sector? 2) Do you consider that your economic activity is sustainable over time?

Table 2. Development of economic activity

		Do you consider that your economic activity is sustainable over time?					
		Strongly disagree	Disagreement	Indifferent	Agreed	Totally agree	Total
Do you consider that your main economic activity is related to the development of the family organization, investment and incentives to the sector?	Strongly disagree	0 0.0%	2 0.8%	0 0.0%	6 2.5%	3 1.2%	11 4.5%
	Disagreement	0 0.0%	1 0.4%	2 0.8%	2 0.8%	2 0.8%	7 2.9%
	Indifferent	1 0.4%	1 0.4%	6 2.5%	13 5.3%	12 4.9%	33 13.5%
	Agreed	0 0.0%	2 0.8%	6 2.5%	54 22.1%	22 9.0%	84 34.4%
	Totally agree	1 0.4%	2 0.8%	6 2.5%	27 11.1%	73 29.9%	109 44.7%
	Total	2 0.8%	8 3.3%	20 8.2%	102 41.8%	112 45.9%	244 100%

Source: own elaboration.

Of the respondents, 29.9% totally agree that their main economic activity is related to family organization, investment and incentives to the sector; they also totally agree that this activity will be sustainable over time. 4.9% are indifferent to the fact that their main economic activity is related to

the development of the family organization, investment and incentives to the sector; but they totally agree that this activity will be sustainable over time. Thus, economic activity is also related with the following variable: occupation vs. incentive plans for the agricultural sector. See Table 3.

Table 3. Plans in the agricultural sector

		Do you consider that there is a need for plans that provide incentives for the agricultural sector from public institutions?					
		Strongly disagree	Disagreement	Indifferent	Agreed	Totally agree	Total
Occupation	Public employee	2 0.8%	0 0.0%	2 0.8%	7 2.9%	7 2.9%	18 7.4%
	Private employee	3 1.2%	4 1.6%	21 8.6%	84 34.4%	88 36.1%	200 82.0%
	Unemployed	1 0.4%	1 0.4%	6 2.5%	1 0.4%	17 7.0%	26 10.7%
	Total	6 2.5%	5 2.0%	29 11.9%	92 37.7%	112 45.9%	244 100%

Source: own elaboration.

The results show that 36.1% of the respondents working in the private sector totally agree that the government institution should carry out plans or projects that provide incentives for the agricultural sector.

Since H1: family organization, investment and incentives to the sector are the strategies for generating business units that contribute to rural productive activity in the Guano canton, we proceed to test them through a multiple linear regression that presents the following function: $Y(t) = B_0 + B_1 X_1 + B_2 X_2 + B_3 X_3 + \dots + B_n$. Once the equation is established, it is necessary to establish the statistical criterion by which the hypothesis is accepted or rejected. In this case, it is assumed that if the probability is more than 5% (0.05), it is approved. To do this, the variables are coded and grouped in Table 4.

Table 4. Coding of variables

Dependent variable	Variable analyzed	Code
Rural activity	Do you believe that the actions taken by the government institution to promote agricultural markets are sufficient??	AR
Independent variable	Variable analyzed	Code
Family organization	Do you consider that your main economic activity is related to the family organization?	OF
Investment	Do you make permanent investments in your production unit to achieve its sustainability?	INV
Incentives	Do you receive incentives from public or private entities?	IPP

Source: own elaboration.

Regression being:

$$Y(AR) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(OF) + \beta_2(INV) + \beta_3(IPP) \quad (1)$$

Table 5. Summary of the model

Model	R	R square	R squared corrected	Typical error. of the estimate	Sigma
1	0.717	0.515	0.504	0.69685	0.000

Source: own elaboration.

The Table 5 shows results in R of 71.7 % and the degree of dependence in R2 of 51.5 %, which shows that the variables are significantly related. There is a significant relationship between the dependent variable rural productive activity and the independent variables family organization, investment and incentives. However, there is around 30 % of other variables that explain the phenomenon under study.

The sigma value reaches 0.000; therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. In other words, it can be affirmed that family organization, investment and incentives to the sector are the strategies that contribute significantly to the generation of business units in the rural productive activity of the Guano canton.

5. Conclusions

It has been statistically proven that the family organization, investment and incentives to the sector are the strategies that contribute significantly to the generation of business units in the rural productive activity of the Guano canton. The strategies implemented by the producers have special relevance and implications in the productive processes. In the same way, producers consider that they should focus more attention on public institutions to generate strategies that contribute to their purposes. Consequently, the importance of these productive units concentrated in the rural context is that they contribute to the rural development of the canton.

The absence of marketing strategies means that producers do not have a collection center and the sale of their products is organized in an improvised manner. This leads to the lack of a sustained development perspective for local commercialization processes, which also has repercussions on livestock activity, the projection of opening or establishing new markets.

Author Contributions

Alba Isabel Maldonado Núñez: [Conceptualization](#), [Investigation](#). Andrea Micaela Vizueta Romero: [Conceptualization](#), [Investigation](#), [Methodology](#). Dante Ayaviri Nina: [Formal analysis](#), [Writing – original draft](#), [Supervision](#), [Validation](#), [Writing – review & editing](#). Gabith Quispe Fernández: [Formal analysis](#), [Writing – original draft](#), [Visualization](#).

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