

Poster

How bioprospecting affects Peru and other Andean countries

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Introduction. Since the signing of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1992, its definitions, including that of “national sovereignty,” have become meaningless. Many conferences, forums, panels, and symposiums, including the recent 2007 International Symposium on Medicinal and Nutraceutical Plants, discuss laws governing bioprospecting. Some advocate corporate access to biological materials mostly in rich-resource countries, while others oppose this.

Objectives. To inform what is happening in Peru in relation to bioprospecting and make people aware of its impact.

Methods. Based on literature and the author’s experience.

Results. This paper advocates when possible for restrictions on the exporting of raw plant materials, and for allowing the exporting only of processed materials. In addition, it illustrates how the international rules of access tend to favor business, while indigenous people unexpectedly have to defend their rights. Colonialism inside countries also affects evolving intellectual property laws in Peru. The paper also suggests ways that academic institutions, indigenous groups and national corporations in Peru and elsewhere might take advantage of political leverage, working together to promote their rights, as well as Peru’s interests.

Conclusion. Bioprospecting in many cases is leading to negative impacts in countries and its inhabitants; in addition, the internalized effect of colonialism in Peru pervades the process of making intellectual property laws in Peru. Academic institutions, indigenous groups and national corporations should work as a team for the wellbeing of the country.

Keywords: Biopiracy, living organism, genetic resource, Andean countries, social structure

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