

Vegetable growing in central Chile: Characterization and attitudes of small farmers

LA HORTICULTURA EN LA ZONA CENTRAL DE CHILE: CARACTERIZACIÓN Y ACTITUDES DE LOS PEQUEÑOS AGRICULTORES

Boza, Sofía

Cortés, Maruja

Prieto, Carmen

Muñoz, Tomás

The supply of fresh, high-quality and easily accessible vegetables is essential to improve the diet in Chile. The central zone is the main production area of the country. The objective of this research was to characterize small vegetable growers of the central zone, as well as to determine their attitudes towards their activity. For this, a total of 165 farmers distributed in 10 counties of the O'Higgins Region were surveyed in person. The data obtained were treated by descriptive techniques. The principal results are the following: i) the average age of the farmers surveyed is 52.47 years, ii) 53.34% of them have no formal education or have completed only primary education, iii) there is good access to services and transportation, iv) the productive hectares average is 7.8, but with high dispersion, v) the use of greenhouses, organic farming and hydroponics is very limited, while most workers are not hired on permanent basis, vi) the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) ? except for cell phones- is scarce, vii) innovation focuses on technical-productive aspects, viii) most of the respondents do not associate with other farmers and, their relationship with the public sector is limited; they sell their products through intermediaries and do not keep records of their operations. Regarding their attitudes, the surveyed farmers make a positive evaluation of their work. However, they experience a sense of uncertainty about the future.