

Ecuador.

Around the turn of the 21st Century, farmers interviewed in northern Ecuador listed climate change as the most prominent factor affecting changes in agriculture in the early 21st century. Indeed, glaciers on Mt. Cotacachi that rises above their farms stopped being permanent sometime between 1997 and 2004 based on longitudinal aerial photographs. Since our interest in this project is in how weather, climate and environmental change are interpreted through the demands of daily production activities, this perception of, and concern about, climate change makes this group of people an interesting focus for research on cultural models of nature.

In the Cotacachi area, indigenous and non-indigenous smallholders mainly intercrop corn and pulses, and also grow potatoes, alfalfa for hay, peppers, and squash for household use and sale, a few pigs, cows, sheep and goats, as well as some vegetables and citrus for household use. Up higher on Mt. Cotacachi, people pasture their animals and grow wheat and barley. Just under half of smallholders have access to irrigation for their fields, based on a survey by the local Peasants and Indigenous Association. Farmers are losing some traditional crops, while adding some crops like Cape Gooseberry for making raisins for urban consumption and export, plus quinoa.

The current research involves a single village to the north of the city of Cotacachi in the state of Imbabura in north-central Ecuador. The village stretches westward up the slopes of Mt. Cotacachi from close to the north-flowing Alambi River. The larger canton or county of Cotacachi lies between the two Andean ranges in a valley 2500 km above sea level in north central Ecuador, where average temperatures have historically had a narrow range, yearlong, at 15-20 degrees Celsius. The region was conquered by the Inka, but not much later was conquered and settled by Spaniards in 1544. The city of Cotacachi itself currently has around 9000 residents, and is known for its colonial architecture, its leather crafts, the annual festival Inty Raymi. The area's farm-dotted landscape is a tourist destination that lies between two dormant volcanoes an hour and a half north of Ecuador's capital city Quito.