



YOLANDA MORALES GROWING PASSION FRUIT, PERU

Farmers in Vilcahuaura, one of the many areas affected by the agrarian reform in Peru, have introduced innovations in their farms by growing crops that formerly did not exist in the area, casting aside their apathy and informality. This has contributed to the growth of entire families devoted to farming, who for the first time feel that having their own farms pays off. Practical Action and its Technical Enquiry Service contributed to that situation.

Vilcahuaura is a rural town situated in the Huara province of the Huaura district near the well-known town of Huacho, north of Lima. It is noted for its extensive farmland, housing a farming population less than three hours away from the progressive hustle and bustle of the capital city. We went there in search of Yolanda Morales, a beneficiary of the Technical Enquiries Service provided by *Practical Action* through its Spanish language website.

Yolanda Morales is 54 years old, although she does not look it. Her skin is tanned from working in the field and she is now a proud grandmother, but she has the agility and vitality of someone much younger. She wears a cap to protect her from the strong rays of the summer sun and she good-naturedly expressed her regret at not having warned us to bring mosquito repellent. “The mosquitoes will have a feast that will last three days”, she joked.



Indeed, mosquitoes are part of the scenery in Vilcahuara, together with the huge pine trees on the edge of the trail we had to cross over from the bus station in Huacho, where tiny farmers loomed in the distance on the farm owned by Yolanda. She has lived in Huaura all her life and remembers Vilcahuaura since it was the farming estate of the Perez Gallo family. “I was only a child when they were the masters”, she remarked. “That is their house”, she said pointing to a dilapidated colonial style building. “Only one member of the Perez Gallo family lives there now and he has neglected it.”

Yolanda Morales boasts about having gone to the school that was in the estate, remembering that there were horses and tidy cultivated fields where she used to play with members of the Perez Gallo family who were her contemporaries and spent their holidays there. She coined the phrase that everyone that remembers the agrarian reform repeats: “they gave us all the land but did not teach us how to develop it.” That is why there are so many neglected or under-developed farms in Vilcahuaura today. That is also why her instinct and desire to succeed are noteworthy.



That instinct prompted her to innovate. “Here we have always cultivated nothing more than sugar cane and cotton, but one day it occurred to me that perhaps we could work with other products, and then passion fruit appeared.” It was passion fruit that led her to *Practical Action*.

Ready for consultation

Yolanda Morales has three children. A 35 year-old son, a 31 year-old daughter and another 27 year-old daughter. From an early age she instilled in them the desire to succeed that prevented her from becoming “one more of the bunch” in Vilcahuaura. Her eldest son is a prominent business administrator working in Lima and enjoying (or suffering from) the present day modernity. It was his idea to grow passion fruit. “We set up this small plot”, said Yolanda, pointing to a 100 metre plot that appears to be an extension of her large farm. “It occurred to me to do something different here. One day my husband’s friend arrived with some passion fruit juice which the children who worked here enjoyed very much, so it seemed like a good idea.”



However, Yolanda Morales had no idea about the best way to grow passion fruit, so she asked her son to find out from some contact in Lima. He did what all city dwellers now do when they need information: he logged onto the Internet. There he took advantage of the Technical Enquiry Services provided by Practical Action to request the information. “My son contacted Miss Giannina Solari and almost immediately she gave him the instructions”. Thanks to this service, they received all the information they needed, from the type of wire to use for sowing to the kind of insecticide required to eliminate parasites, taking advantage of pollen and crop adaptation techniques.

Yolanda Morales’ son went even further and enquired about avocados as well, a crop they had already grown without much success, and also granadilla, a future plan. The crops began to bear fruit quickly. Avocadoes have adapted well in Yolanda’s farm and are growing without any problem. The fundamental first batch of passion fruit was also positive. “Based on that test, I estimate that by the end of June we will have a significant harvest and will be able to market the passion fruit”. The plan to grown granadillas is in process. The first test has not appeared yet, but Yolanda has faith.

When the agrarian reform was applied in Peru, Vilcahuaura was one of the many areas affected. The Perez Gallo family lost their estate and the extensive farmland they owned was distributed among various families. Because she was an only child, Yolanda Morales inherited the area assigned to her parents and she decided she would take full advantage of it rather than neglect it as many of her fellow countrymen did. Gradually she built up a decent area to cultivate and even though she has always had to deal with abusive merchants and low prices, she managed to get ahead.

stories of change



The owners of the land adjacent to Yolanda Morales' farm have started showing interest in passion fruit. The version of the fruit growing in Yolanda's farm is called "Brazilian passion fruit" and it attracts attention because of its large size. "Everyone comes to ask about this passion fruit, due to the sowing techniques and the ripening time. They will gradually start following my example and this fruit will grow extensively here", said Yolanda. She added that she appreciated the information from the Technical Enquiries Service of Practical Action, as the information she obtained not only helped her but others as well. She said that with the conviction of someone for whom, after forty years, the agrarian reform and its intention to boost peasant farmers has become a reality rather than a bad dream. "The idea is for everyone to benefit from development", concluded Yolanda as she posed for the camera with her passion fruit.

Further Reading

[Passion Fruit Cultivation](#) Practical Action Technical Brief

[Passion Fruit Juice](#) Practical Action Technical Brief

[Passion Fruit Jam](#) Practical Action Technical Brief

This document was written by Gabriel Reaño of Soluciones Prácticas in 2011.

Soluciones Prácticas
 Av Jorge Chávez 275 - Miraflores
 Apartado Postal 18-0620
 Lima 18
 Peru
 Tel: +51 1 4475127 / 4467324 / 4447055
 Fax: +51 1 4466621
 E-mail: info@solucionespracticas.org.pe
 Website: www.solucionespracticas.org.pe

Practical Action is a development charity with a difference. We know the simplest ideas can have the most profound, life-changing effect on poor people across the world. For over 40 years, we have been working closely with some of the world's poorest people - using simple technology to fight poverty and transform their lives for the better. We currently work in 15 countries in Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

stories of change