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Involving communities in wildlife management in the Andean altiplano through sustainable use of vicuña.

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The vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*), bears a high quality, and potentially high value fleece. Once revered by the Incas, the species was almost exterminated by indiscriminate hunting for its valuable pelt. Since the 1969 Vicuña Convention, numbers have recovered from a low of about 6,000 to a current estimate of 200,000. The success of the conservation effort has had the result that in some areas vicuña are found at relatively high densities, leading local communities to regard the species as a potentially significant source of income. The politics driving institutional approaches to vicuña management differ across the vicuña's range, from state protection of biological resources to devolved rights of local communities to exploit wildlife. This has been an important factor in stimulating development of a number of alternative management systems, ranging in intensity from capture of wild vicuña to vicuña farming in enclosures. Some development programmes aim to ensure equitable distribution of benefits to local communities.

A new EU-funded project, MACS (*Manejo de Camelidos Silvestres*), is developing guidelines for sustainable harvesting of quality textile fibre from the vicuña. An important element of this research is the development of practical tools, know-how and training to allow pastoral communities to exploit vicuña within a framework of positive environmental management. Results are presented on the dynamics of the interactions between environmental, agro-ecological and socio-political processes. The aim is to balance income generation with ecological sustainability and equitable sharing of benefits. This information is used to support policy formulation that facilitates appropriate management given important spatial differences in ecology, rights to resources, cultural attitudes, historical background and ethnicity.