

*Could the irrigation projects Majes-Siguas II and Paltutire revitalize southern Peru's horticultural export industry?*

Peruvian Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation Juan Manuel Benites has pledged support for the project Majes-Siguas II in southern Peru, which will require an investment of US\$550 million and could enable 38,500 hectares of new farmland.

On a tour of the country's south with President Ollanta Humala, Benites said the project would involve the construction of the Angostura Dam in the Apurímac river basin.

The Angostura water would then be directed to the rivers Colca and Siguas, with the latter involving a management and distribution system that would activate 38,500 hectares of land for agricultural use.

"[It] was always on the agenda (of governments) and it didn't happen, but this government resolved the problem and brought it ahead. We are working hand in hand with the regional Government and the mayors to execute other projects for rural benefit," Benites said in a release.

Benites added his ministry was committed to starting works on the Paltutire Dam in the Tambo Valley, which would require an investment of PEN300 million (US\$89 million) and would be due to start in the coming days.

He said Paltutire would give irrigation access to small growers on 15,000 hectares of new farmland, and also revealed other initiatives in Arequipa such as the Arma River irrigation project which would involve PEN280 million (US\$83 million) and activate 20,000 hectares of new farmland in the Condesuyo region.

Additionally, PEN56 million (US\$16.6 million) has been approved for 18 smaller irrigation projects in the region.

Peru's is currently in the midst of a presidential election campaign with former president Alan Garcia of Humala's left-wing Alianza Popular party trailing right-wing party Fuerza Popular's candidate Keiko Fujimori by more than 11 percentage points in the polls.

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