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# Diffusion and Adoption of Innovations in Sustainable Agriculture

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A Case Study of a Multinational Farmer  
Exchange Program

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# The Research Partner: Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture (MESA)

- “MESA advances a new generation of agrarian leaders, linking innovations in sustainable agriculture with ancestral knowledge to promote land stewardship, place appropriate production and cultural awareness” ([www.mesaprogram.org](http://www.mesaprogram.org)).



MESA

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# MESA as a case study for understanding the diffusion of innovation, knowledge production and exchange

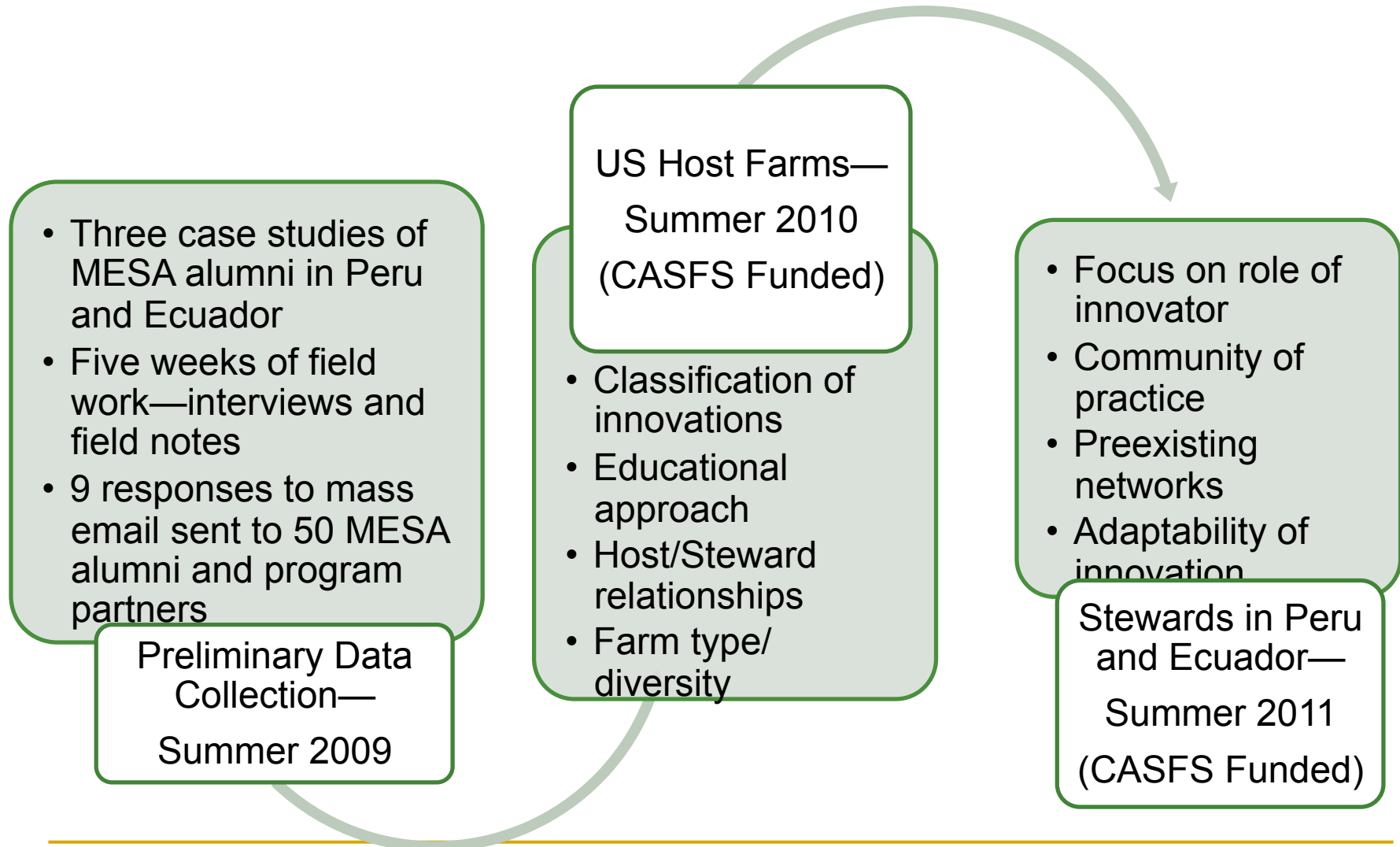
## Research Questions

- What elements of 'sustainable agriculture' as practiced on MESA host farms are most adaptable in foreign contexts, specifically Peru and Ecuador
- In cases where the exchange appears to have had beneficial impacts, what factors best explain this success?

## Research Objectives

- Improve viability of small scale producers through expansion of knowledge and networks related to agroecology
  - Understand role of networks in diffusion of innovations, esp. in an international context
  - Examine ability of sustainable agriculture to be "scaled-up" in an international context
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# Three Phases of Field Work

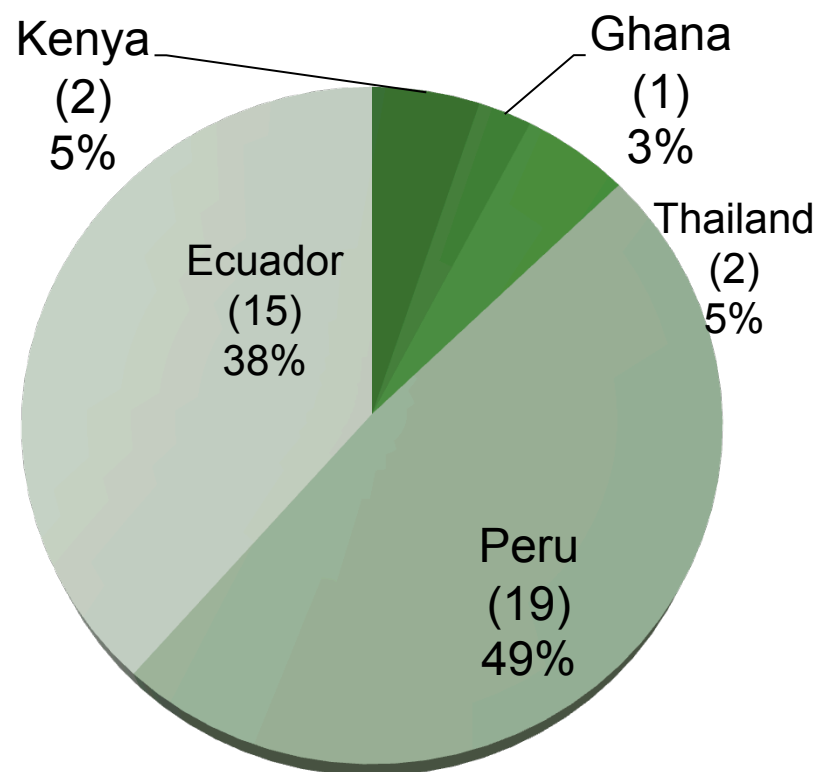


# Domestic Data Collection— Summer 2010

## Hosts and Stewards Visited

- 7 States: California, New Mexico, Arkansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York
- 12 out of 28 active hosts (43%)
- 17 out of 34 S. American stewards in 2010 (50%)
- 25 semi-structured interviews with hosts and stewards

## MESA Stewards 2010 (n=39)



# US Host Farms

- Pike Valley: Lexington, KY
  - Rotational grazing of cows, pigs, and chickens
- Dickinson College Farm:Boiling Springs, PA
  - Educational/market farm connected to the college
- Thanksgiving Farms: Monticello, NY
  - Farm-to-institution that serves people with disabilities
- Earlville Cheese: Hamilton, NY
  - Organic dairy making artisan cheese



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# Preliminary Observations/Analysis

- Agriculture based education
    - Very little formal training. Only one farm offering structured seminars once a week—Dickinson
  - Labor Relations
    - Distinctions between stewards and laborers are sometimes negligible
    - Similarities between social position of American interns and stewards may lead to potentially fruitful relationships
  - Steward/Host relations
    - Most of the placements were satisfactory for both parties, occasionally working extremely well, or not at all
    - Three out of Seventeen stewards received new placements
  - Applicability of innovations
    - Difficult to discern from stewards exactly what they were finding would be most useful in home countries.
    - Diversity of crops, marketing opportunities, agrarian ideology
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