

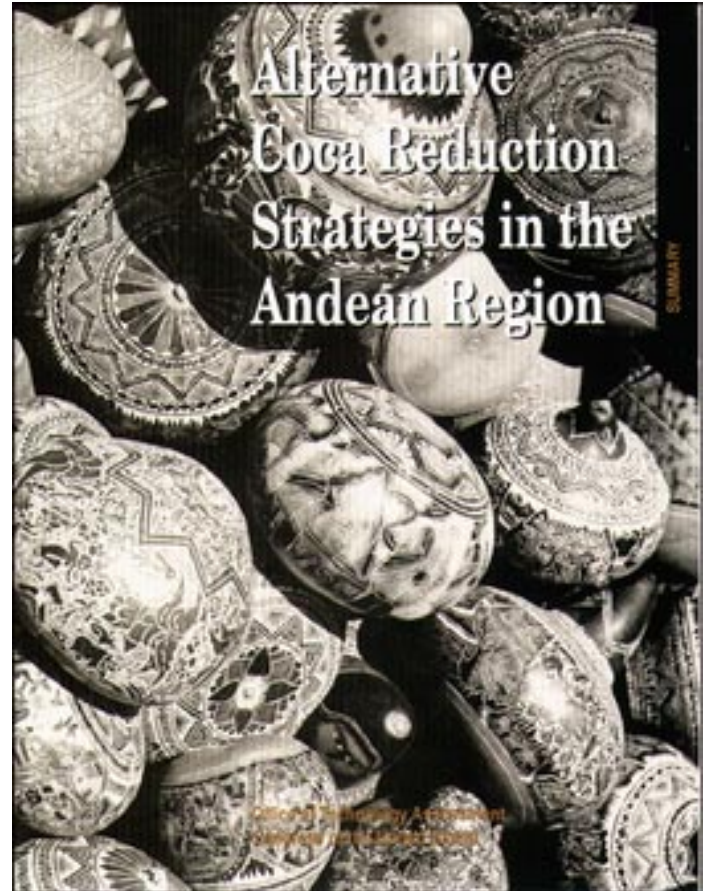
*Alternative Coca Reduction Strategies in the
Andean Region*

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Foreword

Cocaine trafficking and abuse are formidable problems that disrupt social, economic, and political systems. Stopping the flow of cocaine through international black markets has proven impossible despite national commitments and international treaties. Strong demand continues to promote coca production and cocaine processing in supplying nations. This Report identifies opportunities for and constraints to reducing Andean coca production through: 1) improving U.S. alternative development efforts and 2) applying biological control technology (biocontrol) to eradicate illegally produced coca.

Coca has been important in South America for nearly 4,000 years and remains a critical element in traditional Andean culture. Today, coca dominates Andean economies, in part due to long-term social inequities and political and economic unrest. The ecological and cultural complexity of the Andean region precludes simple alternative development or coca eradication approaches. In this unsettled milieu, development assistance activities have promoted alternative agricultural systems incorporating high-value or multipurpose crops. Other interests have proposed that coca eradication is a necessary precursor to successful development. Although biocontrol may yield an undefined level of coca reduction, the technology is unlikely to result in coca eradication.

Several study conclusions have clear policy implications. First, development-oriented strategies for supply reduction have promise, but are unlikely to solve the cocaine problem without concomitant demand reduction efforts. Second, the extent and importance of the coca economy mean that single-sector development alone is insufficient to unseat Andean economic dependence on coca. Finally, the impact of a single organization on coca reduction is likely to be small, thus, coordination of the numerous bilateral and multilateral groups is a critical need.

The following congressional committees requested the Office of Technology Assessment to undertake a study of the potential for improving U.S. efforts to reduce coca production through development activities and biological control methods: the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control; Senator Orrin G. Hatch requested OTA to examine coca eradication by biocontrol. In addition, the House Committee on Agriculture endorsed the study.

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