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Peru: World's top silver producer, but what about adding value?

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Beatrice Ciabatti.

Here is a contradictory fact: Peru is the largest producer of silver in the world and yet only one percent of this production remains in the country to create value-added items. Our craftsmen have the ability to produce jewelry and silverware, but the local industry related to silver jewelry and silverware is currently a micro-industry, while still having great potential for development and for providing employment.

The art of working with silver has been one of Peru's characteristics since ancient times. The silverworking techniques have been passed from parents to children from pre-Inca cultures, which is why this craft spreads a fundamental part of the identity and artistic heritage of Peru.

In short, we have a product whose added value lies in its high quality craftsmanship and the fact that it gives rise to the revival of ancient traditions, to be appreciated and valued by a national and international audience. It is a cultural symbol that has the power to make us proud of our culture and we know that self esteem is a powerful engine for development: Loving and identifying with what is ours makes us believe and invest in the future of our country.

It would be good to make silver jewelry the tenth national Peruvian product. It is a product that speaks of a living culture that accompanies great historical culture. This would make Peru's international image stand out even more and would allow us to have a new promotional strategy of great importance to international business and create new opportunities for entrepreneurs in the country.

This initiative could represent an important advance in the generation of added value, but this effort alone will not suffice. The main problem we face is the supply of raw material, whose limitations affect the operation of companies engaged in working with silver. A timely and easily accessible supply would limit the problem of informal provision of material.

The training of artisans is another pillar in the aim of generating higher added value. To achieve this, more training opportunities must be promoted, creating centers of technological innovation in the main silver producing cities, or schools for artisans and designers, as well as regular courses to perfect techniques.

In short, our handmade silver products combine virtuous labor, valuable historical and cultural content and responsible development, resulting in a 100 percent Peruvian product with high added value. The challenge is to make Peru, the largest producer of silver in the world, also the first producer of jewelry and silverware.

Beatrice Ciabatti is head of marketing of Ilarla, Peru's top maker of silver jewelry.

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I believe it is a good step, we have excellent craftsmen in the country, why we can not give them the chance and opportunitie of work our beautiful metal and for them to have a better life.