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Peru: Growers In Principal Coca Production Region Denounce Anti-drug Agreement With U.S.

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On May 20, agricultural workers in the country's major coca production area denounced a new anti-drug agreement with the US, promising to obstruct government efforts to prevent them from producing coca leaf. Lucas Cachay, president of the Peasants Defense Front of San Martin, challenged President Alberto Fujimori in a television interview Sunday to travel to the area to personally debate the new agreement. Cachay said, "We are standing up to fight because this [the treaty] is a declaration of war against San Martin." The economy of San Martin, about 1,000 km. northeast of Lima, is dependent on coca crops, with some 200,000 ha. planted with coca. The agreement with the US does not identify coca growers as criminals in the drug trafficking chain, but proposes developing alternative crops. Cachay said no one from the coca growing community was consulted about the terms or suggestions of the agreement before it was signed by Peruvian officials. (Basic data from AFP, 05/20/91)

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