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The Cooperativa de Provision Apicola COSAR LTDA. is made up of more than 120 small beekeepers in the central-northern province of Santa Fe, Argentina, and due to its cooperative and welcoming spirit, the organization continues to grow. After 15 years of experience in the world’s most demanding markets, exporting bulk honey, COSAR has now diversified its production by developing packaged honey for the local market.

Until now, all of the organization’s honey was sold in bulk, principally exporting to Germany, Japan, the United States, France and Belgium. The development of packaged honey adds value to the product, aiming to assess local production and generate greater recognition from local consumers.

As a cooperative, COSAR has been recognized for the quality of its honey and the process of extracting it, as well as its overall organizational capacity. This has provided confidence and security to clients and consumers around the world. The organization is also Fairtrade certified; though it has been certified since 2008, the Fairtrade values and principles have been a part of COSAR since its inception.
The Fairtrade certification has not only helped with planning and management processes, but it has also strengthened the organization’s technical department and infrastructure, thanks to the Fairtrade Premium. The training and technical assistance provided to members make up the base of the organization and the quality of its honey. In addition, the Premium has contributed to investments made in machinery and installations for the honey processing and packaging plant, key aspects to carrying out the local project.

Regarding said project, organization president Gustavo Bertoldi says: “I believe that producing packaged honey is a very important aspect of diversification that adds value [to the product] and meets the desire of producers to deliver a quality product directly to the final consumer.” The target market in the first stage of the project is Argentina, as the organization believes in the potential of southern markets. “Although it will initially be a small volume, it’s a very interesting niche,” he concludes.

The challenge is not simple, but COSAR counts on the strength of its experienced and dedicated beekeepers that produce a high quality product. In addition, its philosophy of cooperative work and the commitment of its producers, matched with participation, quality and passion are the secret to the success of the cooperative that today proudly demonstrates its development as a Fairtrade organization.

https://coopcosar.com/
The tangible impacts of climate change have already jeopardized agricultural production, and in the particular case of beekeeping, it has resulted in temperature uncertainty and changing humidity; this includes irregular, absent or excess rainfall. These affect the floral cycles and flowers’ phenology, honey production, as well as the physical conditions and health of the beehives.

The bees, and therefore the beekeepers, are suffering a double irregularity because of the climatic instability. For example, some melliferous (honey-producing) blooms appear in their normal periods, while others do not; other blooms may appear much later, for shorter periods or without nectar.

Due to the high dependence that exists between the quality of the environment and the productivity of bees requiring flowers for food (both crops and wild vegetation), beekeepers have become “human sensors,” monitoring the landscape and changes in climatic parameters. As a reaction, producers have implemented certain measures to help reduce problems affecting honey production. Some of these measures include reforestation initiatives, planting melliferous flora in their native regions and providing food for bees (to maintain adequate population during flowering), as well as the mobilization of beehives to areas where blooming is present.

Greenhouse gas concentrations have reached levels never before detected. As a result, sea and land temperatures are ~ 1°C greater than in the pre-industrial era, and rainfall has become more variable and extreme. Although there is awareness around the difficulty that climate change represents for a large part of the population, carbon emissions continue to increase without signs of action.
However, due to the enormous area of pecoreo, or the area of land in which bees search for their food (up to 2,800 hectares), the results of these efforts are unfortunately not enough. In order to work towards climate stability, effort is required from all living beings on this planet, especially in regards to large-scale agreements between nations on climate change.
Today, the local population manages COOPSOL’s apiaries. The beekeepers and members of the organization understand the importance of “added value,” as it is necessary to economically sustain a cooperative.

With only conventional honey, an organization will not see economic differences in favor of the producer, while also maintaining logistical costs, training and technical assistance. Then, COOPSOL sought out another strategy; and based on this idea, began producing organic and Fairtrade honey, as well as mono-floral honey.

By means of this production, COOPSOL created a new brand “Bees for Hope,” aiming to sell honey from France across northern Europe. Bees for Hope is an initiative that emerged from a cooperative effort between the organization and strategic partner, Laurent Marais. As part of the project, both parties have mutually developed a working vision and objective: sustainable trade.

In addition, the small beekeepers share resources, equipment and knowledge to improve yields and increase market influence.

COOPSOL is the first honey provider for Bees for Hope and are involved at all levels of the decision-making process, with a position on the Board of Directors. And finally, the cooperative and the community that produced the honey appear on each jar sold. In this way, beekeepers are empowered to continue producing high quality honey, receiving fair prices and working collaboratively.
With the intention of rescuing an ancestral tradition and providing youth with more options in their community to obtain an income and support their family, in addition to preventing emigration and abandonment of Mayan communities, Educe Sociedad Cooperativa de R.L. (Educe SC) began promoting a youth project in beekeeping.

Educe SC is a Mexican initiative that promotes honey production as a means of improving communities’ quality of life by implementing trade mechanisms around Fairtrade and organic honey.

The project seeks to involve young people that are aware of their access to education and ability to take on initiatives. To achieve this objective, it is necessary to follow up with training, be present in the apiaries, and learn about the processes of hive strengthening; for this reason, senior beekeepers, along with Educe SC, accompany the youth to stay up-to-date with the development of the project and hive maintenance.

As part of this process, sessions take place within the apiary to practice activities and better understand hive reviews, identification of bad practices, the life cycle of bees and divisions. This way, young people that wish to continue beekeeping are identified and later granted with a small credit from the project’s revolving fund to continue their work.
Within the sessions that regularly take place there is also an exchange of experiences, which helps strengthen the youth’s learning and decision-making abilities. As a result, several participants have been considered by their own cooperatives, not only for their production but also because they are able to carry out tasks such as honey collection, registering collection records and assisting senior beekeepers with their records, as many are unable to read or write. This has encouraged other youth to become more involved, participating in events such as the Youth Leadership Camp.

Initially, the main concern of senior beekeepers was who would continue beekeeping in the generations to come. Thanks to the project, they feel contentment working with the youth; from simply accompanying them to hive reviews and carrying water during the harvest, they believe these young people are learning more, and better yet, applying best practices as beginning entrepreneurs.
The Fairtrade Small Producer Organizations (SPO) that produce honey in Latin America are brought together by the Honey Network, one of the product networks that form part of CLAC - the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers.

- **30** Fairtrade Small Producer Organizations
- **4,798** Small-scale beekeepers Fairtrade certified in Latin America
- **6,838 TONS** of Fairtrade honey produced in Latin America
- **235,473** Beehives to produce honey
- **573,912** (USD) in Fairtrade Premium received by certified organizations

**Countries:**
- Mexico
- Guatemala
- Nicaragua
- Chile
- Argentina
- Uruguay
- Brazil

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