

COOPERATIVA INTEGRAL AGRÍCOLA MUJERES 4 PINOS



cooperativa
integral agrícola
**mujeres
4pinos**

The “COOPERATIVA INTEGRAL AGRÍCOLA MUJERES 4 PINOS” started in 2002 as a group of 35 female farmers, who were supplying the men’s COOPERATIVA 4 PINOS with baby vegetables¹. Right from the start they encountered difficulties with the men’s cooperative: The men imposed their admission policy and accepted only female relatives of male members (spouses, daughters or granddaughters) as providers. According to the women, they also rejected products in the warehouses without justified reason in order to discourage them. So the women decided to create their own cooperative in 2010 to gain more independence and autonomy.

In 2011 the cooperative joined the Business Linkage Programme² (BLP) from AGEXPORT. AGEXPORT is the biggest association of exporters in Guatemala and one of the main implementing partners of the **AL INVEST IV programme** in Central America. Through the BLP they support access to

markets for groups of micro, small and medium producers in different regions of the country. The aim is to create long-term alliances between small entrepreneurs and producers with national and international buyers. The programme operates with funds from different international agencies, apart from ALINVEST IV, USAID, FIDA, HIVOS and OIKO CREDIT.

AGEXPORT’s BLP made different high level technical assistance services available to the cooperative: The women received training and support for the implementation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), which included the delivery of work overalls and agricultural inputs to prepare demonstration plots and learn practical issues associated with mixing areas, biological beds, written chemicals’ control, hygiene systems, mini storage facilities, facilities for the collection of empty containers, etc...). Workshops on gender (family violence, rights and obligations of women), environmental

1. French bean, yellow bean, blue lake bean, mini carrot, Chinese pea, sweet pea, creole pea, green zucchini, yellow patty pan, green patty pan, corn and radicchio.

2. BLP provides high level technical assistance on market intelligence, technical production, quality and product development, business management, promotion of eco-companies and export manager, among others. Thus it helps to increase their competitiveness in the global market. Main stages of the implementation methodology are: (1) producer’s identification (Selection Committee), (2) Link to market, (3) Potential: baseline and business plan, (4) Investment Plan (approach to funding sources).



EU-CELAC
Summit 2015 Brussels

Business Summit 2015

Brussels, 10th June





management and conservation of natural resources and environmental protection were organised. They received support to design their corporate and commercial image and website. Members participated in technical visits in main events of the sector (exhibitions, trade fairs, congresses) and national and international exhibitions (mainly in the USA). With the support of AGEXPORT, the cooperative received 250,000 USD from the International Fund for Agricultural Development to build their own storage and packing facility which previously had been done in the men's cooperative.

After only 18 months in the programme, the group had grown to 352 associated women that together cultivated 235 acres of land. This corresponds to about 95 hectares.³ They managed to drastically reduce the percentage of rejected products to only 5% of production. COOPERATIVA INTEGRAL AGRÍCOLA MUJERES 4 PINOS became not only the first national women cooperative working on vegetables for export, but even the first cooperative in Latin America to obtain the Global GAP certification. This resulted in an immediate financial improvement as they receive an additional 0.25Q per pound (1Q/0.10€, i.e. 2.5 euro cents). They also had access to new agricultural technology (macro tunnels), and upgraded their commercial knowledge through visits and business meetings to international and national exhibitions (analysis of market trends, knowledge of buyer's requirements, competitiveness, food quality and safety standards, packaging, branding, competence). In 2014, the cooperative generated 2450 permanent jobs with an annual export of 4 million pounds. They work with 450 associated women and have an accountant and agronomists to assist them in the production. The new goals for 2015 are to export 6 million pounds and to export directly with no intermediaries. The fact that AGEXPORT was managing the AL-INVEST

IV programme in Guatemala opened more opportunities for improvement to the cooperative and to the European market⁴.

Lives of the cooperative's members have changed significantly⁵. Their incomes have increased substantially. This in turn has triggered other changes such as their empowerment as farmers and as individuals (raised awareness on women's rights). The cooperative has contributed to the welfare of the women, their families and their community in different fields such as education, health, nutrition and hygiene. It has also prevented emigration and has helped to keep families together. Finally, it has impacted on literacy as one of the requirements to join the cooperative is to engage in their literacy programme. Moreover, literacy is essential to develop the daily tasks in this new context, i.e. written chemical's control, management, etc.

As a consequence of its participation in the AL INVEST IV programme, the capacity of the cooperative is strengthened: better business management including professional staff, improved technical capacity (implementation of Good Agricultural Practices, implementation of new technologies), compliance with the product requirements of the buyer (international standards), investments in productive infrastructure. The living conditions and income generation are also improved. However, new challenges arise that require new kind of support.

Demonstration Effect: thanks to the changes in the lives of its members, their families and communities, more and more women are applying to become members of the cooperative, although the cooperative has already reached its self/established maximum of 450 women. Other groups of women are considering similar endeavours. Moreover, the success of the BLP as tool to promote rural development is being analysed to be implemented through other organisations in Guatemala such as MAGA (Guatemalan Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock) and CACIF (umbrella of the main Guatemalan business organisations). AGEXPORT is also analysing the possibility to implement this model in urban areas and in the industrial sector.

LINKS:

AL INVEST IV

<http://www.al-invest4camc.org/inicio/>

COOPERATIVA INTEGRAL AGRÍCOLA MUJERES 4 PINOS

<http://www.mujerescuatropinos.com>

3. The average farm size in Europe is 14 ha.

4. Within the framework of ALINVEST IV they had several business meetings in the framework of the "FRUIT LOGISTICA 2013" in Germany, where they reached sales agreements for the value of 150.000€ with several European companies. They participated in AGRITRADE 2013 (Guatemala) where they contacted with European buyers. They also received technical assistance through the Innovation Day on the use of plastics in agriculture.

5. The Diagnosis of the Group made by AGEXPORT before entering the programme revealed that most of the women were single or widows, illiterate, up to 5 children each, with serious difficulties to find a job in the agricultural sector, and living in an area dominated by men. On the other hand, on the strengths side, they found out a disciplined and a participatory group, with a working team vision which allowed setting and achieving goals.