



*Promoting social business and
environmental opportunities
in Central America and the Dominican
Republic*

SUCCESS CASE

Company: Coonaprosal R.L.
Country: Costa Rica
Year: 2010

THE COMPANY

COONAPROSAL R.L. (Cooperativa Nacional de Productores de Sal – National Cooperative of Salt Producers) is a multiple-service cooperative founded in 1974 by a group of salt producers from the Colorado de Abangares-Guanacaste and Jicaral de Puntarenas zone. It is engaged in the production, industrialization and commercialization of salt and salt products. The company is based on solid cooperative principles, such as Cooperation, Collaboration and Co-partnership and goes by the relevant cooperative institutions' regulations. At present, COONAPROSAL has 128 associates.



Throughout its existence, the cooperative has worked intensively on diversifying its commercialized products, which has led the way to the company's current incursion in the commercialization of products and services such as:

- Shrimp
- Fresh fruits
- Pulp and frozen products
- Savings and credit
- Commercial

COONAPROSAL's main commercialized product, salt, is sold in Costa Rica under the SalSol brand, and currently, it supplies 85% of the local market. Another segment of the product is exported to Central America. Salt is also sold for industrial purposes and for animal foodstuff.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Through the Oikocredit – ICCO – CEGESTI partnership, SMEs of Central America and the Dominican Republic may have access to credit and technical assistance, with the purpose of promoting social and environmental business opportunities through the access to innovative financial resources and technical assistance.

These funds come from SCHOKLAND-SME CA&DR Fund, through the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



MAIN OUTCOMES

Strategic Framework

New approaches were defined within the organization's strategic framework, aimed at the concept of sustainability:

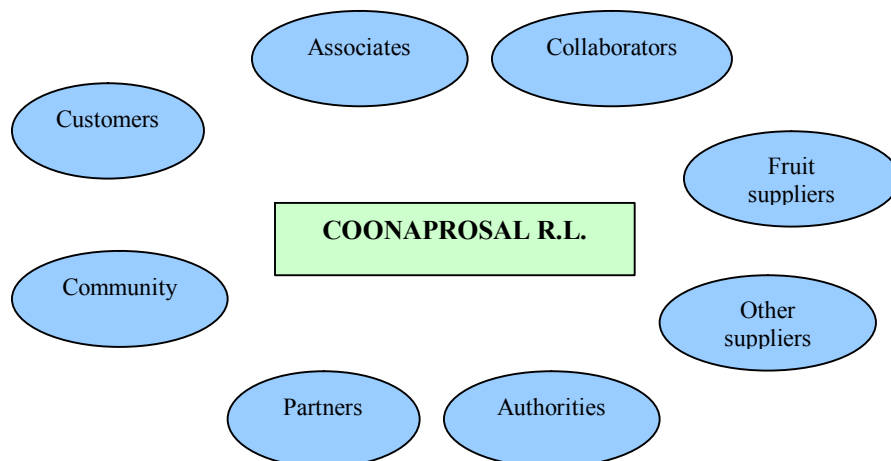
MISSION

"The Cooperativa Nacional de Productores de Sal R.L., is a multiple-service cooperative organization related to the agro-industrial sector, owned by the producers of the zone and dedicated to the industrialization and commercialization of the production of its associates in the activities of salt, tropical fruits, shrimp and the financial and commercial areas, striving for a greater social and economic development of both its members and the people who live in the Cooperative's areas of influence, maintaining sustainable environmental policies in all of its activities to attain these goals".

VISION

"To be a leading cooperative group and a model of sustainable development with international presence, working under the cooperative philosophical principles of justice, fairness, integrity and socio-environmental protection. Being a corporate organization, the COONAPROSAL group will generate financial wealth that will enable the organization to maintain its competitiveness and improve the quality of life of its Associates, Collaborators and its surroundings, while improving the systems and productive processes across the organization's Divisions".



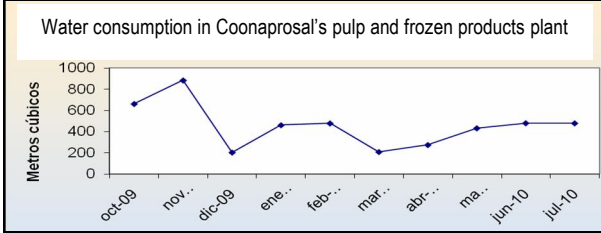

INTEREST GROUPS



ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

For greater efficiency in the use of the organization's resources, different actions were taken to strengthen the area of production.

The company conducted workshops to identify problems in each process area and their causes. For the implementation of measures, priority was given to those aspects that have a greater implication over the plant's production.

Initial Diagnosis	Achieved Improvements
<p>WATER CONSUMPTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High water consumption in the pulp and frozen products production plant.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plant had a compressor cooling system based on water circulation which produced numerous leaks and waste. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction of water consumption in relation to 2009 (saved up to 17.4%). Reduction was achieved mainly through awareness-raising amongst the plant collaborators.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the new system was installed, a mechanism was adapted which collected this water and used it for an irrigation system. This system was used during the summer and reduced water consumption. 
<p>ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High electricity consumption and demand in the plant mainly due to an intensive use of machinery, particularly the fruit freezer tunnel, the cold storage room and the freezing chamber. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The entire staff raised awareness regarding the importance of saving electric power. The machines were changed; therefore, less consumption and higher productivity are expected. Upon completing the construction of the plant and the change of machinery, the topic of reducing energy consumption will be retaken.

SEWAGE

- There was no sewage treatment system, and the highly contaminated wastewater was dumped into a river.



- The water from the plant was not channeled correctly; rainwater and wastewater were not separated either.



- A treatment lagoon system will be built as part of the plant extension.



- The treatment system optimized the channeling of ordinary and processed sewage into the lagoons and these were separated from rainwater.



ORGANIC SOLID WASTE

- When the project began, there was no adequate temporary disposal system for fruit waste.



- A mechanical system was built to take out the fruit waste from the processing area to the transportation truck outside the plant. It operates with a belt system and an endless ring.



- In addition, a research project was conducted aimed at producing compost from pineapple waste, resulting in its formulation (production will begin in 2011).

INORGANIC SOLID WASTE

- There was no adequate inorganic solid waste management to enable the implementation of a program of separation, reutilization and recycling.
- Large amounts of plastic boxes were generated and kept in bad shape, with no possibility of giving them away for recycling purposes.



- Scrap metal also accumulated in the plant's patios, generating contamination and potential Aedes breeding sites.



- Packaging material waste had been incorrectly stored, creating a humidity problem.



- Determination of the types of generated waste and their sources, internal handling, storage, transportation and final disposal lead to the preparation of a management plan applicable in all divisions.
- At present, the company ADIME S.A. is in charge of collecting the recyclable waste.



- Separate modules were built for the Pulp and Frozen Products division, and another one for Fresh Fruits. A module was also constructed for the school of Limonal.







- A new dry and ventilated storage area for packaging materials was constructed, separate from the production area.



- Separate containers were assigned in the administrative offices at Colorado, Salt Refining Plant, Fresh Fruits and Pulps, as well as Frozen Products.

SOCIAL DIMENSION

The organization worked on aspects involving improvement of the employees' working conditions, as well as on the company's presence in the community influenced by its activities.

Initial Diagnosis	Achieved Improvements
COMFORT IN THE WORKPLACE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of space was a serious problem in the Pulps and Frozen Products plant. While production increased at a significant rate, the infrastructure remained unchanged, generating uncomfortable working conditions for the employees. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;">   </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;">   </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plant's extension solved many of the issues related to the lack of space in different areas. The raw material reception area was extended and closed with Saran; now the truck is able to enter and remain isolated from outside to unload the fruit. The process area was also extended. In addition, the belt system for waste materials facilitated the removal of a large amount of boxes from the corridors.
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of a professional in the field of Occupational Health. The plant lacked Hazard identification signs. The stairs leading up to the cold storage room area were in very bad condition and totally detached from the main structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A professional was hired to work on improving the employees' health and safety conditions. Hazards were identified and improvements were implemented with the purpose of controlling these dangers. The stairs were changed and fixed to the floor; antiskid material and handrails were added to the stairs.



- Many of the machinery's pulleys and bridles did not have any covers to prevent possible accidents.



- The very poor conditions of the electric wiring included loose or uncovered cables, broken wall plugs or fixed with tape.



- Inadequate handling, signposting, storage and manipulation of the chemical products in the plant.



- Covers were placed over all of the pulleys, making sure that new equipment included covers and that these would not be removed for maintenance purposes.



- All wall plugs are now protected and the cables are in their respective conduits.



- The chemicals products storeroom was organized, ordered, all of the products were labeled and safety data sheets are available for each product.

- The first-aid kit was in extremely poor conditions; in addition, it was accessed freely and there was no control over the medicines.

- The emergency exits were blocked.



- The extinguishers were insufficient, placed in inadequate places and used for purposes other than the correct ones. In addition, the charge had expired several months before.

- The lettering in the plant was deficient.



- The plant lacked an emergency plan.

- New first-aid kits were purchased for the divisions. The collaborators went through an awareness-building process regarding the importance of making good use of the kit. A person was assigned in each division to be responsible for the kit.

- The emergency exits were restored and the missing signs were posted.



- An inventory was drawn up on the areas requiring extinguishers and the missing ones were acquired. The extinguishers were placed at a comfortable height and were correctly labeled. The company changed the supplier to guarantee their maintenance and charges.

- Lettering was improved throughout the plant.



- Emergency plans were prepared and the personnel were trained for emergency situations.

PRESENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

- Due to its characteristics as a cooperative, COONAPROSAL has a strong presence within the community.

- The topic of environmental projects originating in the different community groups was strengthened through a workshop held with the Colorado and Limonal communities. Afterwards, the workshop was conducted in Jicaral.




- The school of Limonal was involved in the Solid Waste Separation project.



- The Cooperative contributes with the "Water Park" with the Asada of Limonal, through the private donation of the land for its construction, in addition to the land registry for the blueprint and inscription in the Real Estate Record Office; training on waste management; fencing of the property and two days of volunteer work together with the community to plant trees in the place.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The green zone conservation projects are still followed on, with the tree planting, which involves both community members and the organization's employees. 30 hectares (approximately 74 acres) of timber-yielding species were reforested in the Cooperative's farms.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Enterprising Women project has been kept up through training programs, financial support, consultantships and follow-up to small enterprises in the community, in activities such as bale production, beauty parlors, pastry, sewing, grocery sales, among others. • The cooperation with community development organizations was strengthened, such as the Elderly People Group in Jicaral and the Health Area in Colorado. District Environmental Committees were formed in Colorado and shortly in Jicaral. Support is provided to the Elderly People Committee of Colorado for the construction of their Day Center.
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PHRASE OF THE ENTREPRENEUR

“To reinforce the way of managing the Corporate Social Responsibility in Grupo Coonaprosal R.L., with new tools as an added value of the technical assistance project and the funding obtained from Oikocredit to extend the Pulp and Frozen Products Plant. The project was satisfactorily implemented for our interests with the consultancy and training provided by CEGESTI, and it has made a great impact on us, enabling us to revert the negative effects of this time of crisis”.

Carlos Bonilla
General Manager
Coonaprosal R.L.



The image displays five logos arranged in two rows. The top row includes the logo for Coonaprosal R.L. (Cooperativa Nacional de Productores de Sal R.L.), the logo for The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the logo for CEGESTI celebrating its 20th anniversary. The bottom row features the logo for OIKO CREDIT (investing in people) and the logo for icco.