



Initiatives in the Galician countryside

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Legal formula	Agricultural cooperative

The experience



This is an initiative launched with the help of CDR Ancares, to improve the conditions of the operations of cattle farms, especially with regard to sale prices. Constituted as agricultural cooperative in 1994, so it already has 20 years of experience. Its partners belong to different municipalities of the mountain of Lugo, in Os Ancares region.

It is an initiative heiress of a community revitalization process, with a philosophy of bottom-up, where the neighbors are protagonists in seeking common solutions to their common problems.

One of their strategies was the inclusion of farms in the Protected Geographical Indicative Tenreira Galega (Galician Veal) and, subsequently, the intercooperation with cattle cooperatives from other regions of Galicia, creating the second degree cooperative Artesáns Gandeiros. Once consolidated the main purpose of marketing, they went rendering other services such as the purchase of inputs or marketing of family farming surpluses (chestnuts, apples, etc.).

The origins

From the year 1990, with the encouragement of teachers and others, it was activated a work of revitalization for the community development with a philosophy of to give the key role to the community through the creation of a Mountain Association.

Under different European programs of local development, they carried out training activities related to improving the management of existing farms. In various meetings, the issue of marketing of the meat was a recurrent theme in a context where it depended of a brokerage with very high margins.

Although technical studies indicated that there were needed much larger farms to make them viable, the livestock farmers insisted on promoting an initiative for joint marketing of their small farms. The legal formula that was considered appropriate was agricultural cooperative, formed in 1994 with 27 partners.



The territory

Cervantes is a mountain municipality with 1563 inhabitants, of which 621 are 65 years old or more, while only 76 people are under 16. The aging index is 575.2.

The main source of income are pensions. In the service sector is where work the largest number of employed persons, followed by the primary sector, where livestock has a specific weight.

This is a very extensive municipality, with 276 km² and 139 population centers, with long distances between many of these populations and basic services. There is no public transport lines and the use of the taxi service has a very high cost in relation to pensions that are perceived.



Impacts

Smart territory

Through a cooperative formula and the organization and courage of the small farms as well as the inter-cooperation with other territories of Galicia, they managed to keep livestock as main economic activity of Os Ancares mountain.

Inclusive territory

The livestock farming is the main source of employment, through family farms in which the woman is gaining increasing prominence.

Sustainable territory

Extensive livestock farming allows the preservation of the traditional landscape, particularly of grasses, complemented with other agriculture and forestry activities. All of them allow to maintain the role of the community in territory custody.