

## Experiences of the International Cooperative Sin Fronteras (Coop Without Borders, CSF)

Valdés, H.1

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### Abstract

*I will present our international cooperative at the IFOAM Congress in order to show that it is possible for small farmer's organizations to have more success in increasing cooperation with partner organizations in the South and in the North, using new strategies for obtaining better trade conditions in international markets. I would like to present the concept and the experiences of the cooperative after four years of work.*

*Why an international cooperative?*

*International trade is extremely concentrated; eight to ten enterprises control the whole food chain worldwide. These enterprises dominate the markets and decide what kinds of food are produced, define the quality, the price, and the volume of the production. They control the international demand. For increasing their profit, they put as much downward pressure on prices as possible, and to decrease costs, they make the production uniform; biodiversity is declared as enemy of profitability.*

*On the other hand, the producer and their organizations, especially the producers of the South, are not appropriately organized for facing this kind of destructive strategy; they are geographically separated, working mainly with one product, and have limited access to the markets. They do not have a dynamic structure, do not properly understand the international structures, and often they do not produce high quality. In consequence, their access to the international markets is limited. One important strategy for changing this situation is the cooperation among similar interests and to establish strategic relationships with partners in the North. CSF also wants to strengthen the cooperative idea, since we consider it as the most important instrument for small farmers. An individual small or medium size farmer has no other choice.*

*What is the Coop Sin Fronteras (CSF)*

*It is a private organization that promotes the development, growth, and integration of managerial initiatives of producer cooperatives or associations. The work of our member cooperatives is guided by the principles defined by fair trade, IFOAM, and Slow Food, and is approaching the growing organic markets in industrial and in developing countries.*

*CSF is trying to increase the revenues of the families of its member organizations through an efficient commercialization, which is a result of a better management and quality of their products. It is approaching the national, regional, and international markets, offering to the consumer in the most directly way, a wide range of highest quality goods with a unique identity. The goal is to export processed products or to obtain, at least, as much benefit as possible in the producer countries. At present, the main products offered in the international markets are: coffee, cocoa, sugar, orange and mandarin juice, honey, and banana.*