



cacao CO-OP PROFILE

ACOPAGRO CO-OP

SMALL FARMER
Grown



Quality and Innovation Manager David Contreras explains ACOPAGRO's post-harvest processing techniques to visitors from a nearby cacao co-operative.

Co-op Data

CO-OP NAME:	Cooperativa Agraria Cacaotera ACOPAGRO
LOCATION:	Perú
FOUNDED IN:	1997
CURRENT GENERAL MANAGER:	Gonzalo Ríos Núñez
CO-OP PRODUCTS:	Cocoa beans, Timber Trees
PRODUCT VOLUMES:	4,500 MT Organic Cocoa Beans annually
CERTIFICATIONS:	USDA Organic, Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, Bio Latina, Bio Suisse Organic, Utz, Ceres
WEBSITE:	www.acopagro.com.pe
SOCIAL MEDIA:	www.facebook.com/acopagro @acopagro #acopagro

Farmer Data

NUMBER OF MEMBERS:	2,000
AVERAGE PRODUCER AGE:	50
GENDER:	1,584 male members, 216 female members
AVERAGE FARM SIZE:	2 hectares
AVERAGE FARM PRODUCTIVITY:	836 kilos of dry cacao per hectare
AVERAGE ANNUAL (NET) INCOME:	\$5,944
PERU MINIMUM WAGE (ANNUAL)	\$3,036

What makes this co-op special?

ACOPAGRO is the largest exporter of organic cacao in Peru, located in the region of San Martin. Less than thirty years ago, this area was dominated by the cultivation of coca, the plant which cocaine is derived from. In San Martin, cacao has not only provided a more secure financial source, but has also been the driving factor in reforestation and environmental responsibility. This dramatic shift in culture and economy is sometimes referred to as the "San Martin Miracle". ACOPAGRO has been a leader in this movement, and one will often find co-op members proudly wearing t-shirts emblazoned with their logo. Many of the sixty-nine communities that form part of the co-operative line the beautiful Huallaga river in the Amazon basin. While these geographical features allow the co-operative to offer different types of cacao with unique characteristics, they certainly complicate logistics! Some of the cacao must even be transported via boat in multi-day journeys down the river.



Relationship between Equal Exchange and Co-op

Commercial Collaboration:

YEARS OF RELATIONSHIP

BETWEEN EE AND CO-OP: Since 2010

EE PRODUCTS: 80g bars, Minis, Chips

VOLUMES PURCHASED IN 2016: 73 metric tons

Non-Commercial Collaboration:

USAID CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:
2010-2018

VISITS TO PERU:

- Chocolate Team: annual visits since 2011
- Visits with Equal Exchange: José David Contreras Monjarás to EE Headquarters in October 2013 and 2017, Northwest Chocolate Festival in November 2015 and 2016, Pamela Esquivel Rios and Gonzalo Rios to Northwest Chocolate Festival in November 2017



Astolfo Sangama's family used to produce sugar cane liquor before farming cacao but "we weren't at peace, we never had a day off, and now we do and we can take part in community activities."



FARMER PROFILES/STORIES



Julio López Dávila

Julio has impressive drive and ingenuity. Relatively new to cacao, Julio is a quick learner. With help from ACOPAGRO, Julio learned about the benefits of varietal selection and irrigation to adapt to climate change. Using pens from a stationary store, he designed his own cost-effective irrigation system. Believing in environmental stewardship, Julio incorporates agroforestry strategies on his farm, intercropping cocoa with native timber trees.



José David Contreras Monjarás

David has been a key member of Equal Exchange's grant team since it began. His leadership as a staff member at ACOPAGRO has transformed the organization and the lives of many of its farmer members. After a visit to Equal Exchange's headquarters in West Bridgewater in 2013, David's message to chocolate consumers is *"behind every bag, there's a concrete story. There's a real person. With [mainstream chocolate brands] it's not important what or who is behind the bag."*



Marta Zatalaya Isuiza

Marta has been an ACOPAGRO member since the early days of the co-op. Her mother and her daughter help with farm activities resulting in three generations of women in agriculture. After attending a model farm session with ACOPAGRO and learning about the benefits of pruning, she applied the same practices to her own farm. Her neighbors laughed at her, thinking that she was going to ruin her plants. Time has proven her foresight, and now the farm is expected to increase in production.

ON PACKAGING:



Julia Aspajo Ramírez
(80g display box)



Mardonio Quiñones Solanes
(milk chocolate caramel crunch)

What makes the relationship between Equal Exchange and this co-op special?

ACOPAGRO was one of the first grant partners that Equal Exchange started working with on the USAID Co-operative Development Program (CDP) back in 2010. Since that time, ACOPAGRO staff and members have consistently shown tremendous leadership and vision. They have taken full advantage of the grant to experiment, explore, innovate and share their knowledge. One of the areas of the grant in which they have truly excelled is quality.

In 2014, the co-op published a guide entitled *Best Practices for Cacao Processing*. This concise and user-friendly guide represents four years of trials and research led by the quality manager and CDP grant manager at ACOPAGRO, David Contreras. David mentored several local university thesis students to investigate temperature curves, pH, and humidity levels during the fermentation and drying processes of the cacao. What they ended up with was a pattern by which they can tailor these processes to their different buyers' needs.

From there, they developed a tasting kit that they offer to potential clients to display the diversity of flavors in their cacao. For the specialty cacao that they are now able to offer, they can charge significant price premiums, and those premiums go back to the communities that the cacao originates from. When the CDP project started, ACOPAGRO received no premiums for quality for their cacao. From 2010 to 2016, quality premiums totaled more than \$140,000.

In 2017, they updated the *Best Practices for Cacao Processing* to include information for all of their technical team members to refer to, not only for guidelines on fermentation and drying of the cacao, but also on how to perform sensory analysis of chocolate liquor samples made in their new, modern quality control laboratory, which they financed with Fair Trade premiums.

Chocolate Products:

80g (non single origin) bars



Chips



Minis



Artemio and Ilmer Sangama of the Nueva Florida community of ACOPAGRO