CORA, EUROPE'S LARGEST STRAWBERRY PRODUCER

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Abstract

The development of strawberry growing in the province of Huelva since 1980 has been spectacular, with massive increases in crop area and production, accompanied by the adoption of new technologies such as the introduction of Californian varieties, soil disinfection techniques, plastic protection, refrigeration technology, etc. In a few years this province has become the main strawberry production area in Spain and Europe.

The chief factors in this success include climatic conditions, production techniques, economic circumstances and commercial dynamism based on a variety of strong commercial structures, particularly cooperatives.

The Huelva Coast district, in which the cooperative referred to in this study is situated, enjoys a combination of agri-climatic, economic and social conditions uniquely suited to strawberry growing, such as the quality and acidity of its soils, the scale and topography of the holdings, a lack of other horticultural or industrial alternatives, a tradition that goes back decades, and a strongly entrepreneurial spirit in certain areas, as in Palos de la Frontera.

This village is the home of the Santa María de la Rábida cooperative (CORA), the creation of a man who in performing his duties as the organisation's manager, led it to success and established it as Europe's largest strawberry producer. This study covers the history of the organisation up to the point when he, having managed it from the outset, decided to leave.

INTRODUCTION

When a manager leads a company from zero to the top in European ranking in its sector, there is no doubt that this is a valuable case to study, in order to identify the keys to success. This is the situation presented in this paper, in which Mr. Gutiérrez (the manager) and CORA (the company, specifically a cooperative) are the protagonists, in the context of strawberry producer sector. But in spite of the leader’s achievements, at a certain moment he decides to leave the company, and this represents a real problem for it.

This situation is going to be placed into its context for a better understanding. For this reason what follows is an approach to the history of strawberry growing in Huelva and to the development of cooperativism in this activity.

A map of Spain is included as an appendix, showing the location of the province of Huelva in the southwest of the country, together with a map of this province, which will help to situate the reader.

HISTORY OF STRAWBERRY GROWING IN HUELVA

The earliest recorded evidence of consistently large strawberries being grown in the province of Huelva comes from the sandy area situated between Palos de la Frontera and Mazagón beach, bordering on the municipalities of Moguer and Lucena del Puerto. This land has since proved to be the best suited for this growing, because of its sandy configuration, acid pH level and proximity to the sea. It is moreover the very area where what is known as the Palos strawberry ("Fresón de Palos") was first produced, although there is no certainty about the origins of this variety.

The most widely believed story takes us to Aranjuez, near Madrid. Tradition has it that someone, no-one knows who or when, may have brought cuttings from there of the Madame Mutot variety, which
produces a fruit that is irregular in shape, large, red and scented but is difficult to identify, owing to the type of dryland cultivation to which it has been subjected.

Convincing evidence of its production dates back to the early years of the 20th century. Locals recall, for example, that in 1929, during Seville's Universal Exposition, growers from Palos made a very good spring profit by selling strawberries to exhibition visitors. As well as this exceptional event, however, it was normal at that time for people from Palos to go to Seville to sell their strawberry crop.

What does seem clear is the crop's similarity to the Aranjuez variety. In the post-war period\(^1\), strawberries grown in Palos and bound mainly for Madrid sometimes actually stood in for the Aranjuez crop, owing to a particular commercial situation at certain times in spring when, either because Aranjuez was short of production or because it expected many visitors from Madrid, traders replenished their stocks by purchasing in Madrid strawberries from Palos which they then sold to Sunday excursionists who in their turn took them back to Madrid as a typical product of Aranjuez.

Although the trade generally accepts this origin of the Palos strawberry, the pioneer in the province of Huelva, such is not the case with local historians, who go for other explanations.

Some claim, in the absence of written information or specific references to the source of this crop in Huelva, that it was yet another consequence of British 19th century colonisation, a theory that revolutionises the issue by deriving Huelva's strawberries from a British variety imported to feed the nostalgia of people who came to run the copper mines of Riotinto, in the province of Huelva.

Some local historians draw on the inexhaustible story of the discovery of America and cheerfully include strawberry cuttings among the plants that were brought over from the New World. Other theories go much further back in time to place the local introduction of the crop in periods of Tartessian, Roman or Arab domination, albeit without any firm basis.

The recent history of the Huelva strawberry crop starts in the 1960s with the "Sur Hortícola" experimental plantations (of carnations, asparagus and strawberries) run by Mr. Antonio Medina on the "Las Madres" estate situated within the municipality of Moguer, a short distance from Palos, on the road to Mazagón beach, alongside a lagoon and a peat bog. Mr. Medina then had as yet no clear idea as to what agricultural production to devote the estate to, hence the trial crops, and the only existing possibility, on a sandy soil poor in organic matter, was to use water ultimately derived from the sea but arising directly from lagoon draining to facilitate peat extraction. It was these trials that saw the first appearance here of a strawberry variety called Tioga that was being grown on the “La Mayora” estate at Vélez-Málaga (in the province of Málaga) under Dr. Bimber's management of a Spanish-German consortium whereby Spain provided the trial site and Germany the technicians.

It was with this Californian variety that everything took off. The 1970s saw Palos embarking on a frantic race to grow the Tioga variety, supplied mainly by nurseries set up by Mr. Medina himself (first in the mountains north of Seville and later on the river Duero) and by a firm called Planasa.

This was the period when the “Fresón de Palos” became established in Seville and, above all, in Madrid, whose wholesalers time and again sent the same robust wooden cases, with a lid for every second case and a cord for handling them. For years the same cases travelled from Palos to the respective markets and vice versa.

Strawberry picking began very early in the day, at first light, and ended about 2 p.m., by which time the strawberries had to be in the depots from which they were then taken to Madrid by trucks that arrived in the early hours of next morning at the old Legazpi market where the fruit was sold. There was no picking on Saturdays but it was replaced by Sunday work to cater for the Monday market.

It was at this time that a second truckload started leaving the “Las Madres” estate daily bound to Barcelona, opening up a new market. Exporting to Europe also began and was followed by a revolution in growing techniques, with localised irrigation and the use of black plastic on the ridges and clear plastic to create protective tunnels.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATIVISM

A practice that arose was the formation of "groups" of growers who, informally but regularly, carried out jointly certain tasks such as:

- Making up between them a truckload that they sent to the same wholesalers, from whom they received cases that were distributed among them.
- Joint purchasing of plants from the best nursery.
• Apportioning the payments received, generally via the wholesaler's "representative".

Eventually there arose, in the mid 1970s, an initial core of cooperatives, a form of organisation that was little known and had no local tradition but was ultimately to dominate the sector. The strawberry growing structure in the province of Huelva does in fact comprise small family enterprises or individual growers, the majority of whom have become members of cooperatives or agrarian transformation companies.

One of these "groups" included Mr. Antonio Romero, who discussed with government technicians the desirability of setting up a strawberry cooperative; his previous experience as member of an agricultural cooperative elsewhere had led him to see this as the path to be followed. One of the technicians with whom he discussed the matter, Mr. Limón, took the proposal to his superiors in Huelva, and this is when Mr. Francisco Vidaurreta came on the scene. The ultimate result was the setting up of an ambitious district-wide enterprise (with aspirations to become province-wide) under the name Sociedad Cooperativa Limitada Costa de Huelva, better known as "CoopHuelva", with head office in Palos de la Frontera and activities covering Palos, Moguer and Lucena del Puerto, and a fruit and vegetable depot was built in each of the three towns. The organisation was to be run by a board of 30 members, ten from each depot. Unfortunately, Mr. Antonio Romero (the first chairman of the cooperative) died before the depots opened. Nor did Mr. Limón see them completed, having died in a traffic accident. The manager Mr. Vidaurreta was left on his own facing a divided board and the cooperative only operated for the year 1981, in which the three fruit and vegetable depots together marketed 5,200 tonnes of strawberries, although Palos clearly came out top, owing to its greater volume of production.

The beginning of the 1982 season saw the hiving off of the Palos de la Frontera section, which formed its own local cooperative, CORA.

CORA

CORA (full name Sociedad Cooperativa Andaluza Santa María de La Rábida) was set up on 26 May 1982 as a result, as indicated above, of the hiving off of the then Palos de la Frontera section of the Costa de Huelva cooperative.

Issue no. 63 of the food industry technical magazine “Alimentec”, dated June-July 1988, reported that CORA “has in a short space of time played a leading role in an unprecedented consolidation, based on a meticulous marketing policy covering more than 100 wholesale centres in the home market and distribution by air and land ranging from London to Vienna and from Perpignan to Oslo. At the same time, the whole marketing effort has been backed by a strong advertising campaign concentrating on TV, press, foreign media and the sector’s specialist magazines. The result has been to establish “Fresón de Palos” as the best-known strawberry brand.

“This brilliant performance was recognised by various institutions and bodies, including the award of the 1985 Galeón prize and that of the Andalusia medal presented by the Head of the Government of Andalusia by way of honouring entities which are outstanding because of their exceptional or extraordinary actions, services and merit”.

In a document prepared by its manager, entitled "Dear CORA (an honest letter of impossible and thwarted love)", analysing the 1987 season and making a series of proposals for the future, Mr. José Luis Gutiérrez wrote about shipment by air: “Our DC-8, called Santa Lucía, has become popular, with its scented cargo, at airports in Paris, Cologne, Frankfurt, Linz (near Vienna) and London …, and we received attention from the press and specialist magazines and German TV”.

THE MAIN ARCHITECT: JOSÉ LUIS GUTIÉRREZ

Upon the failure of the Costa de Huelva district-wide cooperative project, which had well-intentioned aims but was ill-defined by the formula used for achieving them, the member who became leader of what had been its Palos de la Frontera section, Mr. Romualdo González, contacted Mr. José Luis Gutiérrez, whom he had known for some time and who was aware of his love for his home town and his relationship with the little world of the strawberry industry.

Mr. Gutiérrez was then working in the city of Huelva with a construction company forming part of a major group of companies, but he had been aware of the incipient strawberry boom from its outset, through having worked at “Sur Hortícola” under Mr. Antonio Medina, his “first boss”, a pioneer in the field who had brought together the best of various technologies, including Californian varieties (greatly superior
in yield and quality to the local ones) and propagation by high-altitude nurseries, Israeli droplet irrigation (replacing spray irrigation, saving water and avoiding certain diseases) and French plasticulture (helping Huelva to produce early in the year).

Mr. Gutiérrez had also been involved in the failed attempt to run a fruit company called “Compañía Frutera del Sur de España, S.A.” in 1969 and 1970.

Despite that disappointment, he decided to lead the new project and found himself facing the 1982 season with the added difficulty of one cooperative falling apart and another not yet created. The financial situation was very awkward owing to the amount of investment put into handling systems, and there was total disorder on the organisational and administrative side.

The situation was relieved by a loan of 500,000 pesetas granted to each member by the Caja Rural de Huelva (a Credit Union) and the running of the organisation began to achieve normality with the first recruitment of administrative staff and the involvement of information media, combined with many hours of hard work. In 1983 a firm was engaged to set up a budgetary and cost accounting system.

Mr. Gutiérrez’s vision was very clear and he firmly believed in it, as he conveyed in all his statements, both oral and written, public and private, making a deep impression both within and outside the organisation. The following appeared in an internal document entitled “Balanced Expansion” on 30 June 1983:

“Cautious analysis of the cooperative’s present situation and the fact that sudden and rapid growth might endanger the consolidation of our present position lead us to propose the present expansion scheme that we consider balanced in that we aim to base growth on the creation of cooperatives that are complementary to or upstream or downstream from our activity, while at the same time we initiate diversification of activities and risks for maximum assurance of their control and management”.

The following diagram illustrates the model of development proposed by Mr. Gutiérrez, who called it “circular integration” of the organisation:
The following table explains the terms used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>CORPORATE OBJECTS</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURSERY</td>
<td>Cost reduction.</td>
<td>Propagation of Californian varieties and supply of plants.</td>
<td>Of utmost importance, owing to present dependence on nursery operators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPORT</td>
<td>Direct management of external trade activities.</td>
<td>Export of agricultural products, preserves and jams. Import of parent plants from California.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSING</td>
<td>Meeting members’ housing needs.</td>
<td>Construction of dwellings for normal abode and field accommodation for use during planting and picking seasons.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATER</td>
<td>Guaranteeing sustenance.</td>
<td>Joint irrigation.</td>
<td>The droplet and drip systems we have set up mean maximum water saving and total utilisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **CANNING** | **Industrialisation.** | Manufacture of jams and preserves based on strawberries, citrus, asparagus etc. | - Better utilisation of surplus strawberry production.  
- Would cater for new crops such as asparagus, citrus etc.  
- Would facilitate CORA’s marketing activity.  
- Would mean moving on from primary agricultural production activity to industrial activity, augmenting cycles of activity. |
| **PLASTICULTURE** | **Diversification.** | Development of plasticulture. Operation of greenhouses on cooperative basis. | Shortage of land within the municipality makes it necessary to consider intensive agriculture based on minimum land use, diversification and early maturity, utilisation of solar energy, etc. |
| **TEACHING** | **Training.** | Continuous training of cooperative members. | We currently have rudimentary teaching in that CORA’s members meet every Saturday evening in groups of 25-30, albeit less for teaching than for informative talks. We have produced a trial information bulletin (“Bitácora”, first issue came out in March 1983) that might become the information vehicle for teaching. |
| **LEISURE ACTIVITIES** | **Education and social work.** | Sporting, holiday and spare time activities. | Use of funds for education and social work, also subventions from various institutions. |
| **CREDIT** | **Financing.** | Financial intermediacy. | Although the final objective is to set up a credit cooperative, a start may be made with a CORA credit section. |
| **CONSULTATION** | **Direct management of the auditing and control of the corporate group.** | Second-level cooperative including other cooperatives and devoted to functions of consultancy, auditing, control and running of the group. | The board would consist of the chairman of the member cooperatives, and the general meeting all members of their boards. If teaching is the group’s training focus, consultancy would be the control and organisational focus of its operation. |
Years of perseverance and dialogue with members and a great deal of effort put into explaining the project resulted in much of it being implemented, as made clear in the letter from the Commission for the Integration of Andalusian Cooperatives with Credit Section to the chairman of the Andalusian Cooperation Council dated 17 June 1994 that unanimously put Mr. José Luis Gutiérrez, CORA’s managing director, forward as candidate for the 1994 Arco Iris prize for the best cooperative achievement. The letter included the following:

“Mr. José Luis Gutiérrez’s work in CORA began as the cooperative came into being. The organisation started with a contribution to its capital of 5,000 pesetas per member and without any land ownership by members. Twelve years later, CORA’s billings in this financial year 1994 will be about 7,500 million pesetas and all its members (about 200) now own their land. Some idea of the rapid growth of the cooperative may be gathered from the fact that its proprietary resources have increased virtually tenfold in less than ten years, from 65 million to 600 million pesetas between 1984 and 1992. CORA today is a cooperative whose main activity of producing and selling strawberries is supplemented by such activities as supply of inputs to members (at cost price and 0% finance), production of packaging, running its own nurseries (in the province of Palencia), leisure activities in the form of holidays and cultural and sporting activities for members throughout the year, housing for members, corporate training and, since two years ago, credit facilities."

“...In other words, CORA’s objective has been to consider all its members’ needs and meet them in the best possible manner. Accordingly, when members calculate their income, they have to include not only that arising from the price received from the cooperative but also the savings accruing to members from less expensive inputs and 0% finance, the savings arising from the cooperative making its own packaging, the savings on house purchase and holidays and the greater income arising from their capital contributions.

“All this has made CORA Spain’s leading strawberry producer, marketing 20% of the strawberries produced in the province of Huelva. The "Fresón de Palos" brand marketed by it is the best-known Spanish brand in Central Europe according to a highly reputable German business magazine. And CORA’s members, formerly landless agricultural workers with no prospects, are now millionaires, which proves that a cooperative is not synonymous with poverty but means better distribution and the main issue is the amount to be distributed."

“...This year Mr. José Luis Gutiérrez is ending his professional involvement in CORA, the cooperative that he has organised, run and raised to the level of a "large enterprise". I do not intend to go into the reasons why, only a few years from retirement age, Mr. Gutiérrez is not continuing; this involves matters internal to the cooperative but I do think that it is incumbent upon me, as one familiar with his career and human qualities, to ask the Andalusian cooperative movement, in the name of the Commission that I chair and in my own name, for public recognition for a person who, with great effort and personal sacrifice, has always put his cooperative and Andalusian cooperatives ahead of his own personal interests, with results that are clear to all.”

Also very significant is the recognition expressed by Mr. Antonio Medina in a personal letter dated 26 May 1994:

“God has seen fit to reward our work, our persistence and what so many viewed as fantasy. The reality is that you have succeeded in creating and running the largest strawberry cooperative in the world".

The following table shows how CORA has developed in terms of strawberry production volume marketed (total and exported) on the basis of management devoted to product quality, "Fresón de Palos" brand differentiation, training (of employees and members) and planning (seasonal and financial).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL PRODUCTION (tonnes)</th>
<th>EXPORT (tonnes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>8,149</td>
<td>1,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>10,549</td>
<td>2,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>14,249</td>
<td>3,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>16,802</td>
<td>7,757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>23,099</td>
<td>10,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>22,037</td>
<td>9,602</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aggressive use of marketing, including public relations\textsuperscript{14}, was another prominent feature of the organisation's management, with advertising campaigns on TV and other media, sponsoring of a yacht that took part in major races, granting of exclusive selling rights in European markets, membership of the national second-level cooperative "Anecoop" (Spain's leading fruit and vegetable exporter), etc.

**A COOPERATIVE PROJECT THAT GOES BEYOND CORA: UNFULFILLED PLANS**

In March 1985, Mr. Gutiérrez contacted the chairmen of his own cooperative and two more in the same sector with the view to trying to convince them of his so-called P.D. (Porcelain Doves) plan, which contemplated setting up three joint purchasing and marketing operations with a view to strengthening "my fragile, beautiful and extraordinary Porcelain Doves\textsuperscript{15}.

On the joint purchasing side, the overwhelming argument of the economies of scale that might accrue from the three "doves" obtaining supplies jointly (involving purchases then costing 1,500 million pesetas) resulted in the launching of a first venture by issuing all potential suppliers with lists of products and purchase quantities and inviting them to bid, with tender submission dates, sealed envelopes, performance guarantees, payment formulae, etc. To avoid suspicion, tender opening ceremonies and awards were conducted on neutral ground at Huelva province's Chamber of Agriculture and were participated in by all three cooperatives. Despite the experiment apparently being successful, it did not continue. It was defeated by individualism, envy and human vanity.

Joint marketing involved not only organising distribution and combating occasional exporters who purchased whole crops in order to speculate at high profit, but also countering Italian wholesalers who at that time used to buy up Spain's strawberries and supply their own market in January, February and March, the most remunerative time of the year, when Italy did not yet have any production of its own, before switching to selling Italian strawberries from April onwards. The "doves", in contrast, were unwilling to lose their autonomy.

Despite this disappointment, Mr. Gutiérrez, loyal to his convictions, persevered and in June 1987 he produced a new plan called P.P., the "Palos Pact", which he put this time to the managing directors of three of the sector's cooperatives (not to the chairmen as in the previous attempt) with the view to overcoming the losses arising from "this anarchic and disorderly competition, which is pendular in intent and dangerous, in all respects, in origin".

He continued: "We are all aware that during the season this area swarms with about a hundred small exporters, who are not producers but export more or less a truckload per day. We know their buying techniques and the kinds of tricks they have to use to attract customers, and the way they mostly buy at above the current prices and speculations they specifically set out to destroy by subsequently converging on the same market and driving prices down. It is reasonable to think that they run serious risks and endanger their customers. We shall not name names, since everyone knows the game. Most of them do not have warehouses in a proper state of health and safety, they generally have no refrigeration and they habitually destabilise the transport market and systematically distort the strawberry market. I think there is no need for more exhaustive analysis of this situation, since we all know its causes and effects and I think that in your reference manuals and text books you will have a full technical treatment examining in depth the phenomenon of concentration of supply, proper distribution proportional to demand, continuity of supplies, in short the marketing of perishable products".

This new plan again failed to make any headway.

**THE LEADER'S DEPARTURE**

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
1989 & 18,952 & 8,528 \\
1990 & 20,850 & 7,298 \\
1991 & 26,916 & 9,421 \\
1992 & 26,713 & 8,815 \\
1993 & 31,613 & 8,535 \\
1994 & 39,663 & 9,123 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Source: CORA.
In 1994 Mr. Gutiérrez decided to leave the cooperative. After many years of struggle, the charismatic leader went; the father decided that his offspring had grown up and could now carry on without him.

Why did the founder leave CORA? His own answer was that there was more than one principal reason, his decision was due to a combination of circumstances.

Mr. Gutiérrez had at the time six years to go before retirement and had begun to feel the weight of the cumulative tiredness arising from so many years of struggle in a cooperative with more than 200 members. His mode of management was based on transparency, information and member participation, as witness the annual publication of financial reports, the participation of members in committees dealing with various aspects of the business, his visits to European markets accompanied by parties of members, his frequent meetings with members to explain his projects, and even the commissioning of external audits that were not even compulsory by law. In this latter connection he told of the surprise caused to the auditors by a manager who on his own initiative asked them to audit his accounts, whereas the normal situation was members asking for auditing because of distrusting the manager.

His tiredness is easier to understand if we consider the idiosyncratic nature of a cooperative and its members. Overcoming the barriers of individualism, mistrust and lack of training of members took a great deal of perseverance, patience and imagination, combined with a passionate enthusiasm for the project in hand. During that stage of his career, José Luis admits having at times felt misunderstood and disappointed, having been on the point of throwing in the towel, but his usual solution was to go for a walk to the municipal sports complex named after his father Juan Gutiérrez, which made him realise that in spite of everything it was worth continuing, since by running CORA he was achieving what his father, whose life was cut short during the Spanish Civil War, could not achieve through politics, namely the prosperity and well-being of many of Palos's people.

He had in fact decisively helped a large number of small growers who lacked economic resources and training to become agricultural entrepreneurs with substantial assets.

The lack of other alternative ways of earning a living made these strawberry producers view the cooperative as their last hope. This need, greater perhaps in Palos than elsewhere, generated strong commitment and identification with the organisation that made it possible to overcome the many obstacles to its progress, following a path that had to be travelled at walking pace and learning "on the hoof". These circumstances combined with a truly unique product, the dimensioning of the cooperative (with a much larger production volume than any other locally) and the ability to make "Fresón de Palos" a highly reputed brand on the Spanish and international markets, creating a demand that encouraged strawberry production rising year by year, may explain the outstanding success of this cooperative experiment.

Mr. Gutiérrez realised, however, that as members became better off their attitude to the cooperative did in many cases begin to change, surely because the need for it was no longer so great, and this created complications: they became more conservative and hence less inclined to explore new ventures, more relaxed and undisciplined from day to day...A few had even left the cooperative and set up on their own: the cooperative taught them, turned them into specialist growers and earned them a great deal of money that they used to set up their own enterprises in the same sector, competing with CORA. This may combine with the previously mentioned tiredness arising from many years spent in the same struggle, the consolidation of this cooperative experiment (despite the unfulfilled projects) and the felt need for a markedly entrepreneurial person to seek new horizons, to explain José Luis's departure.

CORA currently has the sector's largest facilities for its commercial side comprising 8000 m2 of handling areas and 12 coldrooms. Its packaging factory occupies 5,000 m2. In addition to its best-known brand, Fresón de Palos, it has two more, San Jorge and Fesonuba. Other services provided to members are supplies of agricultural products (warehouse section), plants (nurseries section) and gasoil (facilities also include a service station), advice on employment, fiscal and legal matters (administration section), and financing (credit section).

So what next? How will this enterprise get on without its great architect, its charismatic leader? What is the personal profile required of his successor? Someone with similar characteristics or perhaps a manager with other qualities, since the organisation is established and its situation is therefore very different from that inherited by Mr. Gutiérrez?

APPENDIX 1: PRESENT SITUATION OF THE COOPERATIVE
CORA's activity consists in joint marketing of the products (mainly strawberries) provided by its members (who numbered 231 on 31 December 1999) and in supplying them with fertilisers, plants, insecticides, plastic, etc. and with various services, including financial support services.

The cooperative’s activity is based on seven sections (economic units) which conduct complementary activities directed at optimum achievement of the corporate aims stated in its Articles of Association.

The cooperative's strawberry sales in 1999 broke down into 26% exported (mainly to Britain, France, Germany and Italy) and 74% on the Spanish market, which comprises about 100 sales locations.

It has holdings in the following entities:

- Caja Rural Provincial de Huelva (0.01%).
- Anecoop, Sociedad Cooperativa (1.92%).
- Agriespaña, S.A. (9.28%)²⁴.
- Fresas Investigación y Desarrollo, S.A. (1.85%).
- Sociedad Cooperativa Andaluza Ovipor (0.17%).

The 1999 net turnover on the cooperative's ordinary activities broke down as follows:

- Sales of fruit, 81.3%.
- Sales of warehouse products, 12.0%.
- Sales of nursery plants, 5.4%.
- Supply of motor fuels, 0.9%.
- Supply of water to members, 0.3%.
- Other activities, 0.1%.

The trend in recent years has been as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL PRODUCTION (tonnes)</th>
<th>EXPORTS (tonnes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>44,561</td>
<td>10,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>35,676</td>
<td>11,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>44,119</td>
<td>15,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>50,220</td>
<td>18,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>50,687</td>
<td>15,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>44,498</td>
<td>12,811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CORA.

* Total production variability can be explained by the climate. There is no limitation from the Common Agricultural Policy of European Union.

APPENDIX 2: HUELVA STRAWBERRY SECTOR TRENDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>STRAWBERRY GROWING IN THE PROVINCE OF HUELVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AREA (ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>3,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>4,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>4,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>5,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>5,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>6,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>6,453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>6,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>6,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>6,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>7,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>8,267</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Government of Andalusia.

APPENDIX 3: MAP OF SPAIN

APPENDIX 4: MAP OF THE PROVINCE OF HUELVA
The Spanish Civil War took place between 1936 and 1939.

According to the latest official figures available, cooperatives marketed 52% of the province's production in 1996. According to the 1994 survey of Huelva province strawberry producers, 57% of the crop area
and 63% of holdings were cooperativised. It should also be noted that the main strawberry exporters are cooperatives and one of them, CORA, is by volume Europe’s top strawberry producer.

3 Cooperativism prize awarded by regional government.
5 A graduate who continued taking business management courses throughout his career.
6 The result was a highly profitable crop. A study by CORA of the 1992/93 season calculated a net operating margin of 18.9% on sales and 23.2% on total costs.

With a cooperative status also.
8 Awarded by regional government.
9 This policy of self-sufficiency and avoidance of external dependency is clear in the annual report for 1987 which states the following with regard to deep-freezing: “We have for the first time used our own deep-freeze facilities, without external assistance. This has brought us an enormous cost saving resulting in a better price to members. All of our industrial production was deep-frozen”. Deep-freezing was previously done in refrigeration plants at Valencia.
12 In 1991 it was 100th in the ranking of Andalusian enterprises by billing volume (and 4th in the province of Huelva).
13 The following reference to staff appears in the 1988 annual report: “A high percentage of the cooperative’s human resources are also its members or children of its members, which perhaps explains their dedication and devotion to the organisation... There are strong links between the organisation and its human resources”.
14 A great deal of attention was paid to visitors to the cooperative, who were very numerous in those years, given the expectation raised by CORA’s boom, in Spain and elsewhere. Many significant personalities (politicians, entrepreneurs, researchers, etc.) appear on the long list of visitors to the cooperative.
15 This is a metaphor. Porcelain Doves refer to coops.
16 He was therefore 59 at the time.
17 Another product marketed is peaches, although on a much smaller scale.
18 The packaging factory’s activity comprises the purchase of raw materials for making and selling packaging to members for the shipment and marketing of their production. During the 1986/87 season it was provided with a fixed structure and differentiated facilities so as to operate as an autonomous unit within the cooperative, although it had already been performing the same services previously.
19 “Brand strategy varies from country to country. FRESÓN DE PALOS is the brand in Spain and the countermark in Europe. The name SAN JORGE is used for sales in Britain, France, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and Italy. FRESONUBA is the second commercial ring. The TUR brand is sold in Germany in honour of the distributor. Something similar happens in Britain with LISONs. Other names used are BON APETIT, BOUQUET, NADAL and BLACKCAT, brands of the associated Anecoop. Distribution is successful, as CORA’s brands are market leaders in these countries. A recent report from the Fruit Trade Studies Group of the University of Duisburg in Germany, led by Alfred Schwemin, found that FRESÓN DE PALOS was brand no. 16 out of all kinds of fruit and vegetables recognised by Germans; it is also the only Spanish brand that appears in the document” (Díaz, 1994, 77). It should be noted that Germany is the cooperative’s main export market.
20 The function of the warehouse section is to supply agricultural products (plant health products, fertilisers etc.) to members. It has been operating ever since the cooperative was set up.
21 The nurseries section conducts the propagation of strawberry seedlings in the nursery owned by the cooperative, for subsequent supply to members. It started operating during the 1986/87 season, after the purchase of the estate in Palencia province on which it is situated; the same activity has since also been developed on leased estates.
22 The administration section conducts the provision of administrative and management services for all sections of the cooperative. It came into operation as a differentiated unit in 1992.
23 The credit section started in March 1992, with the following purposes:

-To provide members with credit, loans and advances.
- To provide the cooperative with the sums it needs for carrying on and fulfilling its aims according to the articles of association, financing its own operations.
- To accept deposits of funds from the cooperative and its members.

A failed R&D company.

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