

COMUNICACIÓN BREVE

The Contadero Dairy Association (ASOLACC): Organisational Culture as a Pillar of Sustainable Economic Development

La Asociación de Lácteos Contadero (ASOLACC): La Cultura Organizacional como Pilar del Desarrollo Económico Sustentable

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ABSTRACT

The Contadero Dairy Association (ASOLACC), founded in 2007 in El Contadero, Nariño, brought together some 120 producers with the aim of promoting milk production and collection under good livestock practices. Since its inception, it has cultivated an organisational culture based on collaboration, trust and continuous learning, which has enabled it to face the challenges of the dairy sector and strengthen the sense of community among its members. Leadership was exercised democratically, favouring horizontal and participatory management that encouraged effective communication and consensus-based decision-making. The association prioritised transparency through regular meetings and accountability, fostering an environment of trust. It also promoted continuous learning through technical and business training that improved the productivity and self-esteem of producers. ASOLACC integrated environmental and social sustainability into its practices, encouraging the responsible use of resources and supporting the well-being of rural families. In addition, it valued the cultural identity of the territory, promoting traditional products and strengthening rural pride. Inclusion was also a priority, ensuring the active participation of women, young people and older adults, which ensured generational renewal. In 2024, it faced challenges such as market volatility and climate change, but responded with resilience thanks to its strong organisational culture and strategic management. ASOLACC demonstrated that human and cultural capital can be a driver of social transformation.

Keywords: collaboration; sustainability; leadership; identity; resilience.

RESUMEN

La Asociación de Lácteos Contadero (ASOLACC), fundada en 2007 en El Contadero, Nariño, agrupó a unos 120 productores con el objetivo de promover la producción y acopio de leche bajo buenas prácticas ganaderas. Desde su origen, cultivó una cultura organizacional basada en la colaboración, la confianza y el aprendizaje continuo, lo cual le permitió afrontar los desafíos del sector lácteo y fortalecer el sentido de comunidad entre sus asociados. El liderazgo fue ejercido de forma democrática, favoreciendo una gestión horizontal y participativa que incentivó la comunicación efectiva y la toma de decisiones consensuadas. La asociación priorizó la transparencia mediante reuniones periódicas y rendición de cuentas, fomentando un entorno de confianza. Asimismo, promovió el aprendizaje continuo a través de capacitaciones técnicas y empresariales que mejoraron la productividad y autoestima de los productores. ASOLACC integró la sostenibilidad ambiental y social en sus prácticas, incentivando el uso responsable de recursos y apoyando el bienestar de las familias rurales. Además, valoró la identidad cultural del territorio, impulsando productos tradicionales y fortaleciendo el orgullo campesino. La inclusión también fue una prioridad, garantizando la participación activa de mujeres, jóvenes y adultos mayores, lo cual aseguró la renovación generacional. En 2024, enfrentó retos como la volatilidad del mercado y el cambio climático, pero respondió con

resiliencia gracias a su sólida cultura organizacional y gestión estratégica. ASOLACC demostró que el capital humano y cultural puede ser motor de transformación social.

Palabras clave: colaboración; sostenibilidad; liderazgo; identidad; resiliencia.

BACKGROUND

The Contadero Dairy Association (ASOLACC), founded in 2007 in the village of Yaéz in El Contadero, Nariño, Colombia, is a non-profit organization that brings together approximately 120 milk producers. Its main objective is to promote the production and collection of milk under good farming practices, thus promoting sustainability and economic development in the region.

ASOLACC's organizational culture is strongly focused on collaboration, trust, and continuous learning. These values have been fundamental to meeting the challenges of the dairy sector, enabling the association to adapt to changing market conditions, strengthen unity among its members, and maintain a shared vision of collective development. Since its creation, the association has cultivated a sense of community that integrates its members as beneficiaries and as committed actors in institutional management and growth.

Leadership in ASOLACC is exercised democratically and participatorily through representatives elected from among the producers themselves. This close and horizontal leadership has favored fluid communication, the implementation of consensual decisions, and a culture of genuine commitment. Unlike conventional hierarchical structures, the organization promotes leadership based on service, empathy, and co-responsibility, pillars reinforcing the sense of belonging and strengthening organizational cohesion.

Internal communication is another central component of organizational culture. Through regular meetings, clear accountability, and spaces for permanent dialogue, ASOLACC has built an environment where transparency and equal access to information prevails. This openness has built trust, facilitated shared decision-making, and prevented conflicts arising from misinformation.

A key aspect of organizational growth has been the commitment to continuous learning. The association regularly promotes technical training in good farming practices, hygienic milk handling, product transformation, and business management. This policy of constant training has contributed to improving productivity, increasing the added value of production, and raising the self-esteem of rural producers, giving them tools for active and conscious participation in the market.

Environmental and social sustainability are integral parts of the organizational culture. ASOLACC has promoted the responsible use of natural resources, adequate waste management, conservation of water sources, and harmonizing its productive practices with the ecological environment. This vision is complemented by a commitment to human development: the association works for the well-being of the families involved, the education of young people, and the integration of solidarity values that strengthen the social fabric of the municipality.

Another distinctive feature is how ASOLACC has integrated the territory's cultural identity into its organizational dynamics.

The Accountant is a community with deep peasant roots and a productive tradition marked by family work. This cultural heritage is reflected in the elaboration of traditional dairy products, participation in regional fairs, and the sense of pride that producers feel for their work. Thus, the association promotes economic development and protects and projects its cultural heritage.

ASOLACC has also taken firm steps towards inclusion and equity. The organization has opened spaces for the active participation of women, youth, and older people, generating a diverse, innovative, and constantly renewed organizational model. This inclusion has contributed to more pluralistic decision-making and ensured an effective generational transition in productive and administrative leadership.

During 2024, the association faced relevant challenges such as price volatility, competition from imported products, and the effects of climate change. However, its strong organizational culture enabled it to respond effectively by strengthening institutional alliances, implementing productive projects, and consolidating its internal processes. It promoted spaces for innovation, celebrated collective achievements, and invested in developing human talent, generating organizational resilience and projecting long-term sustainability.

In business administration, ASOLACC has distinguished itself through management based on strategic planning, informed decision-making, and the rigorous use of accounting and control tools. This administrative discipline has been consistent with the values of transparency, efficiency, and accountability that define the organizational culture. Resources are managed with prudence and clarity, strengthening partners' confidence and ensuring the organization's financial stability.

The association has constantly sought to diversify its production. The development of derivatives such as matured cheese has been a successful strategy to add value to the raw material, expand its market presence, and ensure a

more solid and stable source of income. This innovative vision has been accompanied by strategic alliances with public and private entities, facilitating access to technology, infrastructure, and specialized training. ASOLACC projects itself as an organization that has managed to harmonize tradition with innovation, the economy with culture, and production with sustainability. Its organizational culture is not an accessory but the very basis of its management model and its success as an associative enterprise. By focusing on cooperation, equity, transparency, and environmental commitment, ASOLACC has become a benchmark for rural development in the department of Nariño and a replicable example of how organizational culture can be the engine of social transformation. In conclusion, ASOLACC's experience demonstrates that a well-established organizational culture is essential for business success, especially in rural contexts. Thanks to its collaborative approach, the active participation of its members, and administrative management consistent with its values, the association has managed to overcome complex challenges and position itself as a relevant actor in dairy production in southwestern Colombia. Its trajectory shows that human and cultural capital can be as decisive as financial or technological resources in consolidating solid, resilient, and sustainable organizations.

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FINANCING

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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