



ARE COOPERATIVES AN ANSWER TO THE STAKES OF FAMILY FARMERS?

2ND OF DECEMBER 2014

Maison de l'Agriculture
Chaussée de Namur 47
5030 Gembloux

This seminar is co-organised by the Fédération Wallonne de l'Agriculture, l'Union des Agricultrices Wallonnes, la Fédération des Jeunes Agriculteurs and the Collectif Stratégies Alimentaires in the framework of the International Year of Family Farming



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**LA COOPÉRATION
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INTRODUCTION

The need for cooperation between family farmers is obvious, as it becomes more and more difficult to face the markets against which they have no negotiation power and therefore encounter difficulties to live from their agricultural activities. The cooperatives system, that started more than 150 years ago and is dedicated to cooperation between producers, showed their importance as collective firms that can offer equality, freedom of membership and economic participation to its members.

Cooperatives faced many successes, as well as many failures, although this happens to all types of firms. The principles underlying cooperative firms do not shield them from competition, nor do they exempt them from profitability constraints. Cooperatives probably need to work harder than other types of firms because they need to cope with the need for economic profitability and the duty of equality and equity for all its members.

Throughout history, cooperatives have lived dubious times, used by political regimes that have pressed the producers into service. That happened during communist regimes with planned economy and in many African states who transformed the colonial economy into a cooperative system. In both cases, with this approach, a feeling of mistrust arose amongst the producers against the cooperatives. This feeling was even aggravated when the capacities of these cooperatives collapsed with the end of the communist regimes and the structural adjustment programmes that were applied in the developing countries.

However, in the last years, a renewed interest for cooperatives arose, full of new expectations and questionings. Thousand are created on all continents, whereas other firmly-rooted cooperatives are questioned by their members because they now use management models where profit maximisation is the leitmotiv.

Therefore, keeping its basic principles, can cooperatives still answer the needs of its producers and remain competitive in front of increasingly deregulated and oligopolistic markets? Do they need to be reformed? Do they need specific competitive advantages? Does their governance need to be adapted?

The virtue cooperatives share with professional organisations is that they create a link between producers. This is obviously the first condition for cooperation and solidarity. Indeed agricultural and cooperative professional organisations, although having distinct functions, share a common finality: improving socio-economic conditions of family farmers. They have to take advantage one of another and reinforce their collaboration and cohesion.

PROGRAMME

09h30-10h00	Welcoming participants
10h00-10h15	Introduction – Presenting the objectives and the programme of the seminar Walloon Federation for Agriculture Collectif Stratégies Alimentaires

Session 1	The necessity for economic cooperation between farmers
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10h15-10h35	<i>The necessity for economic cooperation between farmers: the cooperative answer: principles, and historical development of the cooperative system. Current situation of the cooperatives in Europe.</i> Jean-François Sneessens, UCL (Université Catholique de Louvain), Belgium
10h35-10h45	<i>Perspectives on the development of cooperatives in Africa, the colonial period, the independence, the structural adjustments and the recent revival.</i> Mamadou Cissokho, ROPPA (Network of Farmers and Agricultural Producer's Organisations in West Africa), Senegal
10h45-10h55	<i>The stakes of standardizing the juridical status of cooperatives in Africa. An example with the OHADA.</i> Fabrice Larue, FARM Foundation, France
10h55-11h15	Discussion

Session 2	Cooperatives governance
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How can co-operators manage the cooperative tool?

11h15-11h35	<i>How to build good cooperative governance in order for the co-operator to be of central concern, and put the cooperative back into its local roots. This good governance allows reconsidering of the corporate social responsibility of cooperatives firms.</i> Mickaël Poillion, « Prospérité Fermière » Cooperative, France
11h35-11h45	Discussion
11h45-11h55	<i>The interference of the State into the cooperative system questions its independence and its good governance. Could well-trained leaders assure independent governance serving all co-operators?</i> Case study : Burundi Annick Sezibera, CAPAD (Confederation of the Associations of agricultural producers for development), Burundi
11h55-12h05	Discussion
12h05-12h15	<i>In the Belgian Ardennes, the evolution of structuration and restructuring of cooperative societies and their subsidiaries, questions the progressive removal of the producers from their own society of processing and marketing.</i> Christian Baguette, LDA (Ardennes dairy cooperative), Belgium
12h15-12h25	Discussion
12h25-12h35	<i>Does good governance imply the cooperative to make inclusive choices, leaving no co-operator on the fringe of its activities?</i> Case Study : Philippines Antonio Tiaba Badong, Chair of Pecuaría Development Cooperative, Inc. (PDCI), Philippines
12h35-13h00	Discussion

13h00-14h00

Lunch

Session 3

How to conciliate solidarity and profitability?

14h00-14h15

How can cooperatives face big non-cooperative firms on the market? How to manage solidarity and profitability? Do cooperative principles need to be adapted?

Petri Olilla, University of Helsinki, Finland

14h15-14h25

Discussion

14h25-14h35

Based on the Brazilian experience, the cooperative is being questioned on its capacity to serve family farmers while resisting the large commercial groups' pressure.

Marcos Rochinski, FETRAF (National Federation for Family Agriculture Workers), Brazil

14h35-14h45

Discussion

14h45-15h15

Pause

15h15-15h25

Is cooperation between cooperatives possible and can it be a constitutive element of market regulation? Does profitability imply the dilution of cooperative principles and the creation of limited companies?

Case study : Belgium

Daniel Coulonval, FWA (Walloon Federation of Agriculture), Belgium

15h25-15h35

Discussion

15h35-15h45

Between trade unionism, economical entrepreneurship and service provision: what are the respective roles of the farmer's organisations between defending the farms estates and the economic cooperation ?

Case study : Niger

Ayouba Hassane, FUCOPRI (Federation of Rice Producer's Cooperatives), Niger

15h45-16h30

Discussion

Perspectives and conclusion

16h30-17h00

Conclusion