



Cooperative experiences among small rural producers in Tangará da Serra - MT

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Abstract

Collective organizations represent an important option to small rural producers face together the difficulties caused by a context of turbulence and intense competition. Despite of its relevance, studies have shown that cooperative organizations have weaknesses in regards to balance the different levels of interest from the partners: the economic, social and political about the practices and management strategies adopted. In this context, the problem arises: To what extent the specific features of cooperative organizations influence in their competitiveness and which are the factors to be considered in the strategic management of these organizations to be competitive while remaining cooperative. This work focuses in cooperative organization of small rural producers in the context of rural settlements in order to analyzing the influences of the organizational environment, the social participation in decisions and the economic and social efficiency of these organizations. It was used a descriptive, qualitative and quantitative methodological approach. Due to be an understudied subject in the State of Mato Grosso was classified as exploratory and supported by a literature review which refers to Cooperatives, Economics, Management and Sociology. The field work demanded structures questionnaires and semi-structured interview routines, informal conversations and non-participant observation in meetings of these organizations. It was found that partners who are preparing to assume management positions in cooperative organizations bring experiences and values accumulated during their existence and these attributes not always are compatible with the principles of cooperation. For analyzed cooperatives achieve economic, social, organizational and administrative advantages it is necessary to overcome the limitations, mainly in organizational, managerial and cooperative education dimensions.

Keywords: Family farming. Cooperative. Management. Strategic.

Introduction

Due to globalization and the high competitiveness, companies find difficulties and great challenges in order to be competitive and stay in the market. In the national agricultural sector, the commercial competition directed by the larger establishments and by the technological intensity influence directly in the food and agricultural products market, which pace at a disadvantage to small producers, also known as family farmers.

In this context, most of the time, these rural producers are discriminated and even excluded from the competitive scene due to the difficulties they have to organize themselves, such as commercialize their production, being these factors determinant to sustainability of small rural enterprises.

These circumstances and features present in Brazilian agrarian activity cause a natural tendency to union and solidarity among producers taking them to the practice of cooperation as a way to overcome the limitations imposed by the economic system in order to add greater value to the production and increase the sustainability of the results in the developed activities.

In this way, the cooperativism is seen as one of the main alternatives to organize the production. Rural producers recognize that the unity of a group is one of the best ways to find the solution to the problems of their productive units. On the other hand, cooperativism awakens in these subjects the values of trust, unity and cohesion, since the elements are indispensable for the achievement the common goals. In this way, collective organizations represent an important option to small rural producers face together the difficulties caused by a context of turbulence and intense competition.

In the context of the family farming, several researches have shown that the cooperative organizations have significant weaknesses in balancing of different levels of interest of their partners: economic, social and political, particularly with regard to the practices and management strategies adopted.

The fragility in management of cooperative organizations has been perceived in the action of university extension in the region of Tangará da Serra MT. In general, the management strategies are obsolete and compromise the performance of rural cooperative organizations. In this way, small producers are discriminated and even excluded from the competitive scenery due the lack of conditions and capacity to innovate, as well as the failure to adapt their realities the managerial tools that are widely disseminated by the science of administration.

The purpose of the debate here is to defend that the strengthening of the competitiveness of rural cooperative organizations depends on a management model that is appropriate to this kind of organization without, however, lacking respect to the principle of cooperativism, which are guidelines to the practice of cooperativism, which, over the years, have been discussed, reformulated and improved in the Congresses of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), which is the world's larger authority of cooperativism. Neither can we advance in this discussion without first recognize that the formation of cooperative thinking was concretized for the world from the Rochdale pioneers, who demonstrated in the practice that the unity of people around a common goal can improve an economic, social and life situation of a community if this is organized under the basis of cooperativism.

Literature Review

The Word cooperation etymologically derives from the Latin verb cooperari, from cum y operari = operate together with someone. It means working together. From this comes the interpretation that to cooperate means to act collectively with others to reach a same goal, that is, work together to the success of a same purpose.

The precise definition of cooperative is made difficult by the very particular economic and juridical aspects in this kind of company. According to the definition proposed by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), the cooperative organization “is an association of people who voluntary unite to satisfy aspirations and economic, social and cultural common needs, through a community owned and democratically generated enterprise”.

These definitions lead us to understand that the cooperative is an Enterprise with special features: it is an association of people who provide services to themselves; it is an association of people and not of capital and the collective action will replace the individual one. Another feature in the cooperative is the double quality of the partners who are, at the same time, owners and also, beneficiaries of the services provided by the cooperative.

De Masy (1980) discusses the subject with a socio-economic focus when he emphasizes the following basic elements of the cooperative organization, as a grouping of people united by a common interest and argues that:

This group develops activities related to the economic progress of its associates through the creation of a permanent company, similar to any economic unit that offers, for example, commercial, banking and agricultural services (DE MASY, 1980. p. 14).

In this situation, it is clear the instrumental character of the cooperative organizations, where is present the technical effort of the collective which works together with the interest for the economic progress of the partners. It is also not a sporadic business alternative, but a business venture where there is a desire for perpetuity or permanence; that is, once the cooperative has been organized by a group of people with common interests and affinities, the economic progress of the agents involved in it, as in any other type of business organization, is expected as a concrete result of its operation.

According to Singer (2003, p.28) the beginning of the global cooperative movement is recorded in the experience happened with a knitters group in Manchester, England. “In November 1843, after a failed strike for better wages, these workers influenced by utopian socialists, proposed an accession list to found a cooperative organization”. From there, they began to collect the little money that they had to constitute a money box with their own and scarce resources and in 1844 they founded a new form of organization, an association of consumption with the name of Friendly Company.

As an organization, they had for basic principle to improve social and human condition of its members, it was defined not only to found a store to supply the partners with food and clothing, but also sought to construct houses to them with prices of cost; to guarantee jobs for unemployed workers or with low wages; to give aid to the other organizations though the organization of production, distribution and associative education and fight the alcoholism with education campaigns.

Thus, based on a spirit of human solidarity, the Rochdale workers provided a reform to that company by demonstrating with their organization that the economic aspect is a simple mean of making possible the modification of the condition of life between the workforce and who control the means of production. The success of this workers' company proved in practice that it was possible to create an alternative of work and income through the union of people and served as a symbol for the expansion of cooperativism throughout the world until today.

Cooperativism in the Brazilian rural environment

The cooperative movement in the Brazilian rural environment, starting in the 1990s, according to Singer (2003, p. 28), comes to be presented in two different formats:

On the one hand, the traditional cooperativism, constituted by the export agriculture practiced by medium and large producers, whose theoretical side was the cooperative enterprise highly influenced by the Green Revolution, with the modernization of the agriculture and an approach in the export; and, on the other hand, there is a cooperativism of popular character that seeks to organize the workers of the family-based agriculture that practiced the rural activity in small areas of land with a maximum of 20 hectares each productive unit, whose theoretical side was based on a solidarity economy.

Small producers are located within rural communities organized by national agrarian credit programs, whose government's central goal is to contribute to the reduction of rural poverty and improve the quality of life through access to the land and the increased income of rural workers with or without land (MDA, 2010, p. 9).

In most of the cases, after the acquisition of land, difficulties arise concerning to the organization of production and workers, because they do not have enough financial and productive resources and see in the collective organization an alternative of create work and incomes to stay in the countryside. Thus, the circumstances and features present in the rural environment cause a natural tendency to unity and solidarity among small rural workers leading to the practice of cooperativism as a way to overcome the limitations imposed by the predominant economic system, diminishing exclusion and increasing the possibilities of production, work and generate family income.

In this new form of organization, identified in the trajectory of cooperativism in Brazil, specialists of the area have denominated it as a self-management phase; according to Souza (2003, p. 39), "there is no separation between the conception and the execution of the work and the means of production are collective".

This situation leads us to understand that there are conceptual and practical differences among rural cooperatives implemented in the traditional models and made up by medium and large producers, and the cooperatives formed by family – based rural producers who deserve a theoretical deepen to understand them better.

Regarding the representation of the cooperatives in the country, Pinho (2004) states that there is an interpretation about Brazilian Cooperatives Organization (BCO), that is the national representation body of the cooperatives and was constituted by the

government, it does not recognize the self-management aspect of these small cooperatives because it considers them as to be unviable. At the same time, small rural cooperatives do not recognize the BCO as their representative because they consider it as inflexible and with actions exclusively focused on cooperatives with production at scale, besides privileging in its organic structure the participation of large rural producers, which are far from reality of the cooperativism practiced by family farmers.

Cooperatives, as societies of people legally constituted to provide services to their partners, differ from other organizations mainly because of the following features:

- They are non-profit companies;
- Partners have a double quality, they are users and owners of the cooperative;
- Equal rights and obligations of cooperative members, each one is entitled to one vote only, regardless of their participation in the share capital;
- Treatment of capital as a factor of production at the service of the partner.

Thus, to adjust the process to constant changes and innovations, Bialoskorski (2012) states that cooperatives must modernize both their productive structure as well as their management model practiced.

Cooperatives, in this way, face up to the need to reconcile the economic activity with a more participative model by their members. This contradiction is characteristic of the cooperative action insert in a market economy and is reflected in a conflict between the directory and the business management of the cooperative (VALADARES, 1995, p. 44).

The process of globalization of the economy, the changes in the economic context and the inevitable increase of competitiveness of businesses demand from the cooperatives adaptation of their doctrinal principles to these new times.

Antoniali (2000) suggests that the cooperatives review their products and services, strategies and management structures, as these are actions that will contribute to increase their effectiveness and competitiveness.

According to Pereira et al (2012, p. 39), in addition of the review of the processes and strategies to a more competitive posture of the cooperative organizations, "it is necessary the adequacy of organizational structures to their goals and the condition of their environment". In other words, organization with rigid and bureaucratic structures are not compatible with the reality of the current context, especially in the case of small rural producers' cooperatives, since this kind of management is no longer enough and successful. In this case, the author focuses on the use of decentralized participatory instruments, which are different, for example, from the General Assembly, the Management Council and the Fiscal Council that are the result of the legal determination and not spontaneous act of participation of the partners.

In my opinion, the organizational structure of the small cooperatives should benefit integration and solidarity among partners. Such condition becomes possible if the cooperative implements strategies of decentralization of authority and division of the responsibilities between leaders and groups of partners. In the practice, this would be done with a formation of nuclei, local commissions or representative councils, whose purpose is to establish a link between members and leaders of the cooperative.

Obviously, in this format, members will be required to have a higher level of cooperative education and daily actions based on cooperative principles.

Bialoskorski (2012, p. 166) emphasizes some factors that were cited as bottlenecks of the cooperative system in a research carried out in different regions by the Brazilian Cooperative Organization: “the lack of a professional management, a rudimentary organization, the lack of integration among cooperatives and a low level of cooperative education of the members.

From a point of view of Oliveira (2006, p. 27), who has an extensive experience in consulting services with traditional cooperatives in different regions of Brazil, the main problems identified in their management are:

The lack or neglect of the cooperative education; the lack of cooperation among cooperatives; the implementation of centralized, inadequate and outdated management models; the fact that the cooperative does not know how to act in front of the competition and the confusion between being, at the same time, the owner and user of it.

Facing the current competitiveness context, the author emphasizes that the tendencies of the management science that benefit the management of cooperatives are related to the concern with the individual, with the processes and with the dynamic of the organization, not only with the structure; the interaction between several management systems of the cooperative; review of management roles; the need of a commitment from the partner to the established results and the development of methodology and specific administrative techniques.

The dynamic of the internal democracy and the organization of work in so-called popular cooperatives also worry to Eid and Chiarello (2009), who identified that, the cooperative worker, when assuming a managerial position, faces a great dilemma:

To keep the cooperative in its condition of provider for the subsistence of its members versus to assume the mission of making the enterprise grow, it must use the management tools used by the companies of capital exclusively dedicated to the competitive market (EID; CHIARELLO, 2009, p. 70).

This same situation is repeated in several other researches about management of cooperatives of agricultural families and is positioned as a great obstacle for the members who assume managerial positions in the same ones. On the one hand, the cooperatives have the need to be economically efficient and to preserve their social purpose and, at the same time, support their actions with the originality proposed by the cooperative movement. On the other hand, they must compete in the market, submitting to the demands imposed by the predominant economic system in terms of efficiency of the organization and the management of their processes.

According to Coraggio (2012), the challenge is to “harmonize the production, achieve the economic results and keep the solidarity within the cooperative”. In contrast, the traditional cooperative organizations, throughout their history, have adopted the most varied management models; however, did not progress in the sense of formalizing a model to the cooperative movement.

Based on theoretical framework previously mentioned, it is verified that the cooperative, regardless of the specialty or segment, is an entity with peculiarities and complexities when compared to other forms of organization. However, this factor does

not represent an impediment for the organization to adopt and make use the strategic tools to become it more competitive in the market where it operates.

Methodology

The research used a descriptive, qualitative and quantitative methodological approach. The research universe corresponded to the organization of rural family workers circumscribed to the cooperative system in the city of Tangará da Serra MT. In order to carry out the survey of the field research sample, a list with information about cooperative production units was requested from de competent official bodies in the city.

For the data collection and primary source information, several visits were made to rural communities where the subject of research were found, during which the members of the directory and associated producers of the cooperatives were interviewed with the aim to find out, on one hand, the level of commitment and harmony among presidents of the cooperatives and their representatives and, on the other hand, the convergent and divergent aspects that approximate or separate them from the cooperative practices. Contact with rural producers began in November 2012.

To deepen the investigation of the object of study and the investigated context, it was sought to make contact with as many producer as possible who live in local settlements and were randomly selected. One hundred and thirty one interviews were conducted with questions that allowed social, economic and cultural profile of the interviewees to be known, as well as their statements about their involvement with associative organizations.

The resource of direct observation was used in order to deepen in the evaluation by observing the people behavior, showing the situations, verifying the way in which the activities are carried out and the way in which the decision are taken by the group.

The following instruments of research were used to collect the data: interviews with previously structured questions and annotations of interviewees' comments and direct observation.

Results

Characterization and Analysis of external context of the Cooperatives Tangará-1, Tangará-2 and Tangará-3.

The study has as an empirical basis the city of Tangará da Serra, which is located in the southeastern region of the state, according to the IBGE (2013); it has 90.252 inhabitants, of whom 81 thousand live in the city. Agriculture is the main economic activity and this region stands out as the eleventh largest economy in the regions of Mato Grosso. Between the years 2010 and 2012 the economy of the region of Tangará da Serra grew at an average rate of 20,5% per year.

Agriculture is an important factor to the development of the city as a whole, since the production generates jobs and income in the countryside, as much in the

larger establishments, which have a production approach toward export, as well as the smaller ones whose main feature is the food supplying at the local and regional market.

Considering the diversity of products grown in the township by the family farmers, it can be observed a low level in the added value in the products, such as fruits and vegetables being sold in bulk, without going through by any kind of processing.

As far as cooperatives of producers of the family agriculture in Tangará da Serra, object of this research, the existence of three unique cooperatives, with geographic locations and different political and market positioning, were verified: the first one is formed by producers settled by the Movement of the Landless (MST); The second one is made up of rural producers benefiting from the National Land Credit Program (PNCF) and the third cooperative consists of a mixture of rural producers from settlements and from traditional communities not linked to any government programs.

All together, these organizations bring together 232 members, and of this population, were interviewed 131 people, being 18 members of the directories and 116 associated, corresponding to 56% of the total of associates. It was requested by the interviewers that, in order to keep the secrecy, the anonymity of the cooperative should be maintained. In this way, it was decided to name them as Cooperative Tangará 01, the one formed in the MST's settlement; Cooperative 02, to that organized by the producers of the PNCF and Cooperative 03, to that constituted by producers from conventional rural communities.

Although these cooperatives are legally constituted, none of them is affiliated to the OCB-MT, which is the legal representative body of the cooperatives in the state of Mato Grosso.

These data are compatible with Bialoskorski's studies (2012), when remind us about the relevance of the cooperative movement in Brazil, but alerts about different positions facing the market and the social issue, where the oldest and traditional cooperatives are organized based on the guidelines of the Brazilian Cooperatives Organization and, on the other hand, are cooperatives organized in the rural context, in poorer areas and in agrarian reform settlement seeking for more space to family producers.

The environment where Cooperatives Tangará-1, Tangará-2 y Tangará-3 operate.

In this analysis sought to understand the main aspects related to the external reality of the studied cooperatives. Thus, opportunities and threats were identified and, at the same time, the alternatives to avoid or usufruct these situations. Opportunities were considered for the cooperatives in situations in which they really have conditions to take advantage considering their current potentialities. In terms of threats, current or future situations were considered that could influence on the activities of the cooperative, or forces beyond control, that, if they are not neutralized, could bring competitive disadvantages.

As for the opportunities of the external environment for the Cooperatives Tangará-1, Tangará-2 and Tangará-3 can be highlighted the following aspects:

a) Economic and social

- The state of Mato Grosso presents an economic dynamism and growth above the national average.

- The agricultural activity is extremely important in the economy of the State of Mato Grosso.

- The familiar agriculture is an important producer of foodstuff for the supply of the domestic market in the state of Mato Grosso.

- 85% of the rural settlements in Tangará da Serra are small properties and small farmsteads (area less than 100 hectares).

- The agriculture is an important factor for the development of the township and the region.

b) Political

- Existence of a Government Program aimed at strengthening of familiar agriculture, the PRONAF.

- The Program for the Sustainable Development of Rural Territories stimulates the formation of productive groups among family farmers, which expands the axis of options for the distribution of the production of the family farmers and their cooperatives.

c) Market

- Fruit and Milk Processing Agro industries are traditional buyers of family farming products.

- Local governments are large buyers of food products for the supply of public organizations.

- Large number of family farmers in the township and rural territory;

d) Social

- Cooperatives are part of the family agriculture that has high participation rates in the regional economy of Mato Grosso.

As for the threats of the external environment for the Cooperatives Tangará-1, Tangará-2 and Tangará-3 can be highlighted the following aspects:

a) Economic and social context

- Strong presence of monoculture as soy, corn and sugar cane in the township and region.

- High poverty rate in rural area due to the large number of small properties in the settlements.

- Poor infrastructure in the communities where the settlements are located (electricity with low voltage capacity, lack of water.)

- Low economic efficiency of family agriculture in Tangará da Serra, precisely because of the lack of articulation among small producers.

b) Political context

- Little government interest in family agriculture projects, with scarce resources and difficult access.

- Inefficiency in the actions of public bodies to guarantee technical assistance to small producers.

c) Market

- Influence of local industry on the productive process of small rural producers.
- In the case of the institutional market, it requires the continuous supply of products, regardless of the time of year
 - Important presence of intermediaries in the linkage of the products of family agriculture with the wholesale market.
 - Agricultural prices below the market average.

d) Organizational

- The lack of Cooperatives of 2nd degree in the township and region.
- The lack of integration network of small rural cooperatives.

The results will show that the organization of the analyzed cooperatives is the result of the implementation of projects to create rural settlements in Tangará da Serra MT, although very different from the application of different policies of large estates.

The Cooperative Tangará-1 received guidance in the phase of its organization from the Movement of the Landless Rural Workers (MST) and the Cooperative Settlement System (SCA).

On the other hand, the Cooperative Tangará-2 received influence from the managers of the Large Estate Credit project and from technicians and owners of the local industry. In this case, the formation of the Cooperative was an initial condition for access to land, to the financial credit of the federal government and together with the fruit processing industry.

The third cooperative, made up of a mixture of rural producers from settlements and traditional communities is linked to government programs, given that since its constitution has received the support and guidance from the Union of Rural Workers. These situations highlight the principle of autonomy and independence, since the cooperative should be an instrument at the service of its partners and not of third parties.

As for the management model, the analyzed cooperatives seek to rely on the vertical model practiced by traditional cooperatives, made up of medium and large producers, whose theoretical side is business cooperativism, in addition to the results of this research suggest that this model has not been enough to stimulate the participation of the partners and to generate satisfactory results in the economic and social aspects of the small rural producers.

The analyzed comments show that the management is perceived in a particular way, according to the organizational culture of each cooperative and by the political influence of the external organisms, reason for which it is proposed the adoption of an organizational structure and a model of decentralized management and compatible with the cultural characteristics of small farmers. This format can be defined as an open system or as a process of "cell division", where the needs of different functions and the technical divisions in the work do not necessarily imply the division and social distancing of the partners.

Another point to be considered is that the successful practice of cooperation can only exist when communication channels guarantee access to information. Without communication there is no democracy and there is no participatory management. Communication basically implies two things: who has the role of passing the infor-

mation and the ones who must receive them, that is, the transmitters and receivers of the messages. In this case, there is an educational work to be developed both on one side and the other. In this regard, the recommendation is that cooperatives implement their educational committees.

In assessing the question of organizational success and the competitiveness of cooperatives of small rural producers, through the analysis of responses given in the interviews and the systematized result of the managerial profile of the current leaders of small rural producers' cooperatives, it was found that lack of training, especially in the management of production and marketing, and little concern with the planning of organizational activities, are crucial factors for the competitiveness of cooperatives of small rural producers.

In only one cooperative analyzed, the use of strategic components was identified as an attempt to orient future actions, although these elements were considered incipient and needing to be re-elaborated under the light of cooperative principles. This is largely attributed to the low level of cooperative education and the lack of preparation of leaders for administrative practice.

Add to that the lack of commitment and strategic vision of the other partners. Despite the technical limitations of the leaders, the cooperatives make use of creativity and improvisation, in the expectation of promoting greater rapprochement between leaders and associates. These actions are carried out informally, randomly, or in any case, making them vulnerable and unattractive.

In adopting the appropriate organizational structures, small cooperatives should seek shared solutions where decision-making is decentralized. This study showed that the application of centralized management models exclusively by the President and without observing the principle of democratic management can lead to administrative problems and inadequate operational results.

In sum, on the one hand, are present the cooperative principles and the interests of their members in general and, on the other hand, the market and competitiveness. The cooperatives Tangará-1, Tangará-2 and Tangará-3 experience more than financial difficulties. They are immersed in a deep ideological insecurity, not constituting in this way, effective forms of participation. This occurs in relation of the characteristics of self-insecurity of the family farmers, labeled by the low level of schooling and by the lack of understanding of the cooperative principles.

Pressed by the competition, by the needs of the associates and by the new demands of the administrative management, the cooperatives seek access to alternative marketing channels to enter into new markets, such as the institutional food market, however, without a more refined analysis of the context where they are included, they fail visualizing the possibilities offered by the external environment.

Contrary to the conventional marketing system, institutional markets require from cooperatives to have relationships that are more lasting with associated producers because the purchase contracts require repetition of product deliveries over a longer period of time and a high level of commitment of those associated with production and the exercise of cooperation.

When faced with the lack of fidelity from their partners, the cooperatives seek alternative ways to satisfy the sales agreements with the institutional buyers, depending on the adopted strategies, away from the principles and practices of cooperativism,

such as purchasing products from not associated producers to comply with signed contracts.

The concrete reality is that the cooperatives of small rural producers struggle to adapt themselves to market dynamics in order to reach a minimum scale required and to make their investments feasible, such as the construction of warehouses, the acquisition of machinery and equipment, the implementation of processing units, etc. Meanwhile, the perception of partners is more immediate and related to their daily difficulties.

It is understood that, with a higher level of collective production, the bargaining power increases, as well as the possibilities of better economic returns and satisfaction of the needs of the associates. With all this, training and knowledge in general, become basic inputs and determinant for the successful insertion of small producers into the market.

The networking suggested by Amato Neto (2005) is seen here as a viable solution for the analyzed cooperatives, as the network goes on to dominate the stages of the production and marketing chain and each integrated cooperative will perform functions according to its essential competence.

In this sense, the principle of inter-cooperation between cooperatives assumes special significance by integrating the productive base associated with similar characteristics.

It is the responsibility of the support entities (professionals in the agricultural sciences and administration, municipal authorities, researchers and university professors) or, at least, they should be in charge of the process, the attribution and responsibility of training, professionalization and implementation of priority actions that promote this network of "family agriculture" cooperatives, with necessary adjustments and adaptation for the desired change. This conclusion began to be evident in the isolated meetings that have been carried out with the analyzed cooperatives, where it was identified that most of the problems that influence the achievement of the objectives established by the cooperatives, in terms of nature, was the structural order and not only the managerial one.

To Kotler (1999), the network organization is a market mechanism to assign people and resources to problems and projects in a decentralized way from a perspective of flexibility and adaptability to the changes in the organizational context. In this sense, the authors point out that the network is characterized by the integration between the formal structure and the multiple forms of social relations in organizations.

Conclusions

It is concluded that the relationships and procedures are determined by the conjuncture of the components of planning and strategies, organization and management, leadership and communication, control and evaluation and, finally, integration and scale.

At the same time, the lack of attention of these components has led to many cooperatives to extinction, either because of technical and economic unfeasibility or because of non-compliance with cooperative principles, which, in this case, makes false

cooperatives arise. In the case of the small rural cooperatives investigated, there are no doubt they are not suitable for shared management and they have weaknesses to survive in accordance with the new and more rigorous standards of efficiency and competition in the competitive market.

Finally, the challenge is to transform these cooperatives into a learning space where their members can develop the capacity to share knowledge, interact harmoniously and energize relationships among family farmers, cooperatives and the productive market.

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