

BRAZILIAN AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVE: VINÍCOLA AURORA CASE

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Abstract

Since 1875, Italian immigrants sought for a dream of a better life come true at Southern Brazil, arriving in waves to work on Agriculture. Then, these pioneers, facing enormous difficulties, established the first grape cultivations, and further winemaking at Vineyard Valley. In 1931, sixteen families founded Aurora, an agricultural cooperative to foster winemaking in Brazil. In 2019, almost one century after its foundation, approximately 1,100 families dedicate their lives to the Cooperativa Vinícola Aurora, one the 1,600 agriculture co-operatives in Brazil, and the biggest of winemaking sector. This case investigated the successful agriculture cooperative in Brazil, located at Bento Gonçalves, Rio Grande do Sul state, southern Brazil. Cooperatives abide by Federal Law no 5,764/71, which encompasses thirteen types of cooperatives, from agricultural to infrastructure, among others. The segment is also represented by the Brazilian Cooperatives Organization (Organização das Cooperativas Brasileiras – OCB). In this work, key findings pointed out increasing participation of the agriculture cooperatives in the Brazilian economy. Near 23 percent of cooperatives were agricultural in 2018. History and the importance of the regional development of Aurora were discussed in this research. Finally, discussion, limitations and future recommendations complete the present study.

Keywords: agriculture cooperatives, co-operatives, co-op, coop, Aurora, Brazil

1.INTRODUCTION

The present work investigated the Brazilian Cooperativa Vinícola Aurora, from Bento Gonçalves, Rio Grande do Sul, at Vineyard Valley (*Vale dos Vinhedos*), as the unit of analysis of this descriptive single case study (Yin, 1988). In this work, the term cooperative was adopted throughout the study, since co-op, co-operatives, or coop are also used. They are defined as "autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their conventional economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise" (International Co-operative Alliance, 2018).

In the 1870s, the Brazilian Empire, in the quest for the replacement of slave labor, offered land and conditions to immigrants from several countries, especially Italians, who faced many difficulties and settled in southern Brazil, at Bento Gonçalves, Pinto Bandeira, Garibaldi, and other locations at Vale dos Vinhedos. In 1870, a first road, *Linha Palmeira*, was open to receive 200 first *colonos* (settlers), divided in 100 each side of the road.

In 1875, the first three colonies were founded: (i) *Dona Isabel* (today municipality of Bento Gonçalves), (ii) *Conde D` Eu* (today municipality of Garibaldi), and (iii) *Nova Palmira* (today municipality of Caxias do Sul).

The Italians, escaping from the consequences of the 1871 Italian Unification, such as high rates of unemployment, arrived first in Brazil in 1875. The pioneers received land to work, facing enormous difficulties and challenges. They further organized themselves and some constituted cooperatives, designed to k strengthen their position within the local market.

Regarding the cooperative activity, they are currently protected against state interference or intervention, in Federal Constitution: “cooperatives, are independent of authorization, and state interference in their operation is prohibited.” (Brasil, 1988, Art. 5, paragraph XVIII).

Recommendation 193 from the International Labor Organization (ILO) acknowledges the activities of the cooperative and set parameters to its occupation (ILO, 2002, 2018). Dias & Ramos (2018) observed that cooperatives "share a sense of cooperation and co-participation in the whole stages of the cooperatives' decision-making process" (p. 598). Figure 1 shows the impact of cooperatives in Billion dollars:

Ranking	Organisation	Country	Billion \$
1	Groupe Crédit Agricole	France	49.92
2	BVR	Germany	44.81
3	Groupe Crédit Mutuel	France	31.21
4	Groupe BPCE	France	26.41 4
5	Desjardins Group	Canada	11.85
6	Rabobank Group	Netherlands	10.08
7	Federal Farm Credit Banks Funding Corporation	USA	7.68
8	RZB	Austria	5.72
9	Navy Federal Credit Union	USA	4.06
10	Raiffeisen group S	Switzerland	2.92

Figure 1 Cooperatives worldwide. Source: Dias & Ramos, 2018. Reprinted under permission.

Cooperatives are present in approximately 100 countries, generating near 250 million jobs worldwide. In 2018, there were almost 2.6 million cooperatives registered (ICA, 2018),. It also acknowledges the existence of 13 distinct types of cooperatives, as follows: (a) special; (b) agriculture, banking and financial; (d) agriculture; (e) housing; (f) labor; (h) tourism; (i) production; (j) education; (k) infrastructure; (l) mineral; (m) transportation (ICA, 2018).

Figure 2 shows how cooperatives Cooperatives differ from other types of associations, as in sequence:

Diferentiation parameters	Cooperatives	Associations	Companies
Economic purpose	For economic purposes, but not for profit	Non-profit, with impossibility to perform a commercial function	For-profit
Minimum quantity of members for	20	2	1
Objective	To provide service to the cooperative	To represent the interest of the	profit
Vote	1 member = 1 vote	1 member = 1 vote	the more capital, the greater the voting
Incorporation of the share capital	Quotes	NA	Shares
Transferability of quotes	Can not be transferred to third parties	NA	Can be transferred to third parties

Figure 2: Differences between cooperatives, associations, and companies in Brazil.

Sources: SESCOOP, 2017, Dias & Ramos, 2018.

Founded in 1969, Organização das Cooperativas do Brasil (OCB), is the institution which represents the entire sector of cooperatives (OCB, 2018). According to its standards, agricultural activities are not limited to (a) agro-pastoral, (b) fishing activities, and (c) rural producers (OCB, 2018). According to its standards, there are registered thirteen types of cooperatives: (a) consumption, (b) credit, (c) farming, (d) special (social), (e) housing, (f) infrastructure, (g) mineral, (h) production, (i) health, (j) labor, (k) transportation, (l) educational, and (m) tourism & leisure (OCB, 2018).

This research is also restrained to agricultural cooperatives from winemaking sub-sector, according to Law 5,764, from December 6, 1971 (Brasil, 1971).

Figure 3 shows current 6,887 cooperatives registered at OCB, from which 1,618 are agricultural ones. The overall cooperatives in Brazil comprise 14,267,483 associates and generate 398,110 direct jobs (OCB, 2018).

Activity	Co-operatives	Associates	Employees
Agricultural	1.618	1.017.481	198.654
Consumption	179	2.585.182	12.629
Credit	929	8.941.967	60.237
Educational	270	53.403	3.367
Special	8	321	8
Housing	284	106.659	577
Infraestructure	135	1.006.450	5.692
Mineral	97	23.515	182
Production	239	5.777	2.960
Health	805	238.820	103.015
Labor	943	188.435	943
Transportation	1.357	98.713	9.835
Tourism and Leisure	23	760	11
TOTAL	6.887	14.267.483	398.110

Figure 3: Cooperatives in Brazil. Source: OCB, 2018.

Primary economic activity comprises near six percent of the Brazilian economy (IBGE, 2018), as Figure 4 depicts:

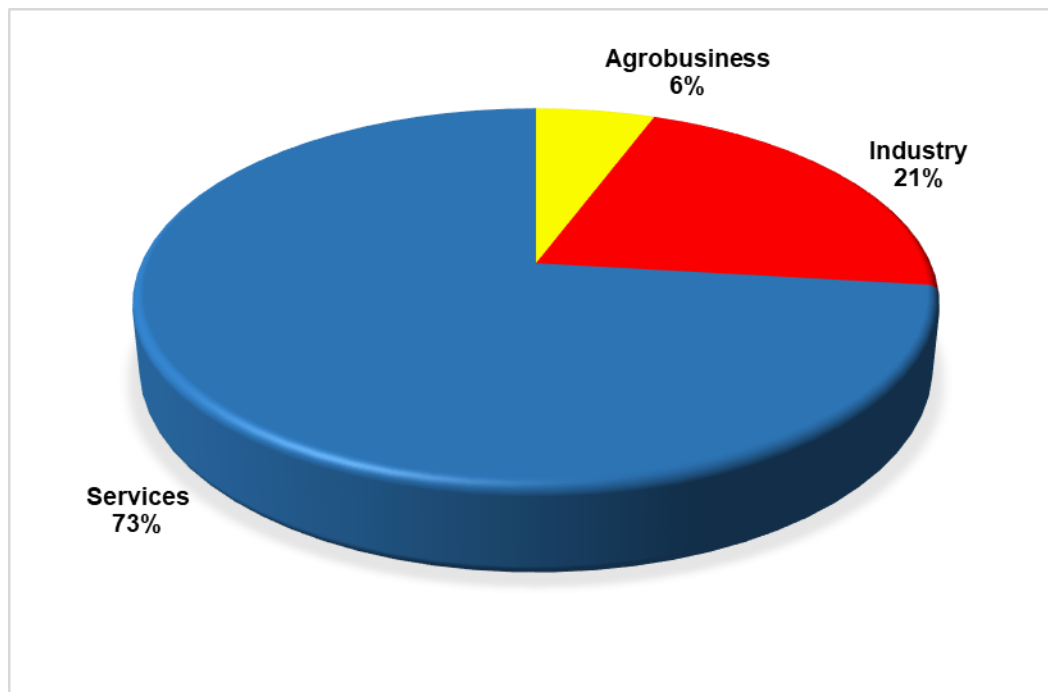


Figure 4 Brazilian Economic activities. Source: IBGE, 2018.

2.METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The present research is a qualitative research, interpretive, single case study descriptive (Yin, 1988). We performed extensive archival research. The unit of analysis is the Brazilian agriculture cooperative Aurora, from the Rio Grande do Sul. This work is limited by (a) Brazilian Federal Constitution, (b) Federal, (c) State Laws, and (d) Resolutions, as well as (e) ICA's standards and (f) ILO's Recommendation 193.

Agricultural Cooperatives in Brazil is limited by Federal Constitution 1988, though the following articles: (a) starting on Art.1, regarding definitions of free initiative and work associations; (b) on Art. 3 observes fundamentals of Republican activities; on (c) Art. 5 encompassed the recognition of cooperative societies; (d) on Art. 146, established cooperatives taxation; (e) on the Art. 170 issued economic activities; (f) on Art. 174, determined cooperatives' state control, regulation and normalization activities; (g) on Art. 187, recognized the agriculture policy comprising cooperatives, and finally (h) Art.192, which established the national financial system to cooperatives.

This study also abides by Law no. 5,764, from December 16, 1971 (Brasil, 1971), which was further augmented by Complementary Law 130/2009 (Brasil, 2009). In 2013, the Pronacoop program was created to foster cooperatives, through Decree 8.163/2013 (Brasil, 2013).

Moreover, the following Laws limit the scope of the present research: the Presidential Provisory Measure 2.168-40/2001 (Brasil, 2001) (Medida Provisória, in Portuguese), "with the objective of organizing, administering and executing the education of professional formation, development and social promotion of the worker in cooperative and of the cooperative" (Dias, Murillo de Oliveira; Ramos, Murilo, 2018); also by Decree 3.017/1999, establishing the Cooperative Learning National Service (Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem do Cooperativismo, in Brazilian Portuguese) (Brasil, 1999). Also, the Brazilian Civil Code, issued in 2002, through Law 10,406/2002 (Brasil, 2002).

Finally, this study is limited to accounting resolutions from CFC - Conselho Federal de Contabilidade, or Federal Accounting Council, designed to harmonize the entire cooperatives sector and unify best practices on accounting:

(a) Accounting Resolution CFC 920/2001 (CFC, 2001) designed to approve the Brazilian Accounting Standard for Cooperative Entities (NBC T 10.8);

(b) Accounting Resolution CFC 1.013/2005 (CFC, 2005) creating the Accounting Council, to organize processes of valuation, all types of changes in the cooperative structure of Financial Statements, through NBC T 10.8 (CFC, 2005).

3. COOPERATIVA VINÍCOLA AURORA

3.1 Background

Cooperativa Vinícola Aurora was founded on February 14, 1931, by 16 families that decided to join efforts and built an agriculture cooperative, at the municipality of Bento Gonçalves, the Rio Grande do Sul State, southern Brazil, as depicted in Figure 5.

In 1932, one year after the foundation, hereafter simply Aurora, reached a production of grapes of 317 tons. In 2018, after the completion of 88 years existence, Aurora accounted more than 1,100 producers associated. The last 20 years registered the largest cooperative of the region, regarding grapes production. Aurora also vinifies their grapes (Aurora, 2019).



Figure 5 Bento Gonçalves, RS. Source: IBGE, 2018

Bento Gonçalves is known as the Brazilian capital of wine. Its coat of arms is depicted in Figure 6, as follows. Note the grapefruit present in the coat of arms, below the symbol of the factory, representing the winemaking industry, as follows:



Figure 6: Bento Gonçalves coat of Arms. Source: Prefeitura de Bento Gonçalves, 2019.

3.2 Bento Gonçalves

Bento Gonçalves was founded in 1875, with the name of colony *Dona Isabel* (to celebrate D. Isabel, daughter of the Brazilian Emperor D. Pedro II). On March 1876, there were 348 lots of land, accounting 790 inhabitants, in which 729 were Italians, representing 92 percent of the total inhabitants at that location (Prefeitura de Bento Gonçalves, 2019).

Then, on October 11, 1890, by the act 474, signed by Candido Costa, the colony of D. Isabel was divided in two: (a) Montenegro, and (b) Bento Gonçalves (both today municipalities which

conserved their names). Bento Gonçalves was named in honor of the hero of the Farroupilha Revolution (1835-1845), Bento Gonçalves da Silva, which separated Brazil from Rio Grande do Sul, for ten years, reunified conflict and Brazilian Imperial army final victory at war. Bento Gonçalves is also a sister city of the following Italian cities: São Rovereto, Nogaredo, Terragnolo, Trambileno e Villa Lagarina (Prefeitura de Bento Gonçalves, 2019).

From 1910 to 1927, Bento Gonçalves has grown significantly: (i) railroads were built to connect localities of Carlos Barbosa, Bento Gonçalves, Garibaldi, among others; (ii) electrical light; (iii) distribution and electrical network; (iv) first hospital, Dr. Bartholomeu Tarchini. In 1950, the total population was 22,500 inhabitants. In 2019 this number jumped to 119,049. The proportion of employed persons concerning the total population was 45.1 percent. (IBGE, 2019).

3.3 Vale dos Vinhedos

Finally, on August 11, 1994, the Municipal Law no. 2,360, the district of Vale dos Vinhedos is created and is formally attached to Bento Gonçalves, after that known as the “Brazilian wine capital” (IBGE, 2019). Vale dos Vinhedos occupies an area of 81,123 km², in which 21,091 km² (26 percent) are vineyards (APROVALE, 2019). Moreover, it is territorially distributed as follows: (a) 60 percent located at Bento Gonçalves; (b) 33 percent at Garibaldi, and (c) 7 percent, Monte Belo do Sul.

Vale dos Vinhedos received in 2002, for the first time in Brazilian history, the geographic denomination, with the label indicating origin Indicação de Procedência (IP) In 2012, received the label Denominação de Origem (DO), roughly equivalent to the European Union classification: table wines and quality wines produced in specified regions, according to their territorial origin (APROVALE,2019).

3.4 Grapes production at Rio Grande do Sul State

In 2018, according to IBRAVIN - Instituto Brasileiro do Vinho (Brazilian Institute of Wine), 663,2 million Kg of grapes were processed in the Rio Grande do Sul state. Two groups of grapes are taken into consideration: (a) *Vitis Lambrusco* or *Vitis americana*, or grapes destined to the production of table wine or juices, in total, 597,7 million kg, representing 90,1 percent of the grapes processed; and (b) *Vitis vinifera*, destined to the production of wines, in total, 65,5 million kg, representing 9,9 percent of the total grapes processed at the Rio Grande do Sul state in 2018 (IBRAVIN, 2019). In 2017, according to IBRAVIN, 16,5 million liters of wines, and 173,7 of table wines (ten times more wine tables than wines), and 17,4 million liters of sparkling wines were commercialized in the Rio Grande do Sul. Brazil imported 125,9 million liters of wines, approximately ten times more imports than national ones (IBRAVIN, 2019). Figure 7 also depicts the whole grapes production in the region from 2001 to 2018, as follows:

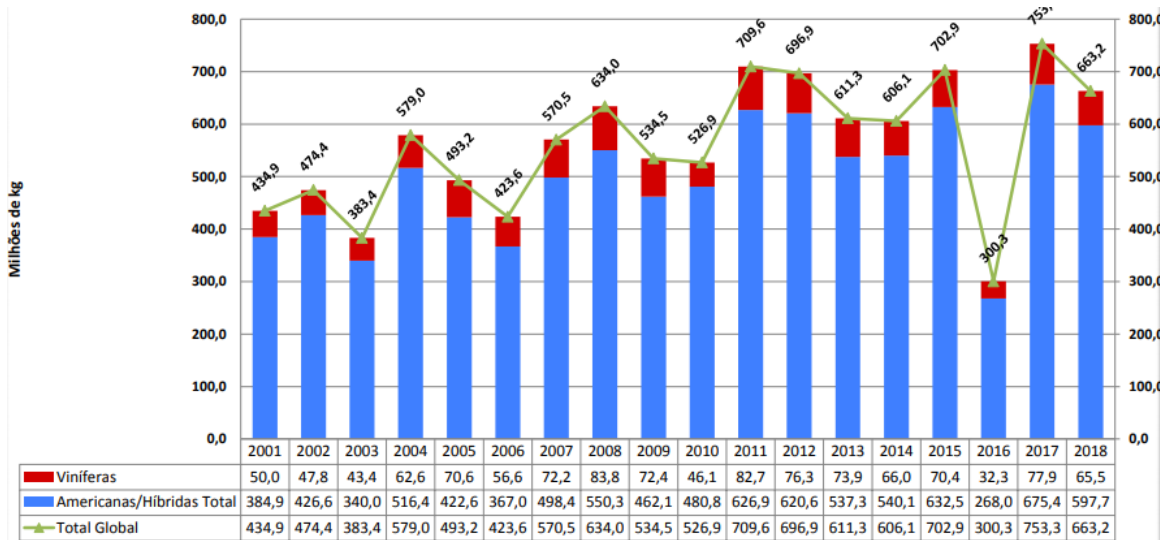


Figure 7 Grapes processed in RS (2001-2018). Source: IBRAVIN, 2019

3.5 Vinícola Aurora activities

Vinícola Aurora is currently the largest producer of grape juice in Brazil, with 37 percent share in 2018 (See Figure 8):



Figure 8 Aurora's grapejuices. Source: Aurora (2019)

Vinícola Aurora commercializes wines and sparkling ones. The grapes cultivated by 1,100 producers associates, are (*vitis vinifera*): (a) Semillon; (b) Merlot; (c) Cabernet Franc; (d) Cabernet Sauvignon; (e) Tannat; (f) Carmenère; (g) Chardonnay; (h) Pinot Noir; (i) Riesling (j) Malbec; (k) Malvasia Bianca; (l) Pinotage; (m) Prosecco; (n) Trebbiano; (o) Moscato; (p) Sauvignon Blanc; (q) Trebbiano. For *vitis lambrusca*, or *vitis americana*: (i) Seibel; (ii) Isabel; (iii) Bordô (Aurora, 2019). The *vitis vinifera* grapes most produced at Vale dos Vinhedos are Pinot noir and Chardonnay (APROVALE, 2019).

Aurora also holds the following brands, or family of products (mostly wines): (a) Aurora; (b) Marcus James; (c) Saint Germain; (d) Conde de Foulcault; (e) Clos de Nobles; (f) Maison de Ville; (g) Country wine; (h) Sangue de Boi (table wine); (i) Prestige; (j) Pequenas Partilhas; grape juices: (k) Casa de Bento; (l) Mosteiro. Finally sparkling (m) keep cooler.

In 2017, Aurora, the largest winemaker in Brazil registered a gross income of BRL 515 million (approximately \$ 140 million). In 2018, BRL 540 million (approximately \$ 146 million), an increase of five percent growth between 2017 and 2018.

The winery received 72 thousand tons of grapes in the 2018 harvest, harvested on the properties of the 1,100 associate producers that form the cooperative (AURORA, 2019).

"Aurora is the largest winery in Brazil and is committed to continuing growing and modernizing," says Hermínio Ficagna, general director of Aurora Winery.

The winery also has a portfolio of thirteen own brands and more than 200 items, as well as third-party brands that it produces for customers. It exports to more than 20 countries and focuses its expansion of foreign sales in 2018 in Asia, with potential for business expansion with China and Japan, as described in the next section (AURORA, 2019).

3.6 Exports

Regarding exports activity, Cooperativa Vinícola Aurora exported 596,244 bottles in 2018, in comparison to 311,866 exported in 2017 (91 percent increase). The most significant growth was in the external sales of the sparkling cooler, with 135,696 bottles exported (324 percent increase). Non-sparkling wines were second only to wine exports last year, totaling 253,774 bottles (109 percent increase). Finally, 137,612 bottles of sparkling wines were exported in 2018 (47 percent more than in 2017). In 2018, two new importing countries were added to Aurora's commercial portfolio: Ireland and Peru, along with the former buyers: Taiwan, the United States (mostly importing the grape juice Casa de Bento), and Paraguay. The biggest importer, since 2015, is China. For 2019, Aurora foresees an increase of 20 percent on exports (SESCOOPRS, 2019).

4. DISCUSSION

This study followed Mladenatz (2003) and, Dias (2018). It aimed at consolidating data from past research and presenting the largest winemaker in Brazil, Cooperativa Vinícola Aurora. This research brought new perspectives about (a) distinct types of cooperatives; (b) Resolution 193 (ILO, 2002); (c) condensed Brazilian Laws, and Resolutions on cooperatives; (e) the presentation of Cooperative Aurora, as the unit of analysis (Yin, 1988). In this particular, this research gathered sparse data and presented the most extensive wine and grape juice maker in Brazil in detail.

The following are critical success factors to the successful case of Cooperativa Aurora, not constrained to:

- (a) Federal protection: Constitution 1988 supports Law 5.746/71, which in turn regulate the cooperative activity, providing legal stability to the sector (Brasil, 1971).
- (b) Cooperatives are successful in Brazil because they foster (i) effective self-help system. Aurora provides specialists in all sectors to assist their associates; (ii) one share, one vote balances the political stability among associates, because gives voice and shares responsibility to all member associates within the Cooperative Aurora; (iii) active participation of all stakeholders involved; (iv) co-joint and more participative decision making process (Dias, 2018; Dias & Navarro, 2017; Dias, Murillo, 2016; Dias et al, 2017).
- (c) Strong representative organization by the sector representative OCB.

This study is helpful to managers in general, students, cooperative professionals, practitioners of all areas, business management students, designed to consolidate new data on the subject under review.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

For further research, it is encouraged to revisit the case on the Cooperativa Aurora, to investigate its performance throughout time and to correlate with the overall economic activity of the sector.

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