

Almanac of the Future

A STORY OF SUCCESS

Motivational experience No. 9



**The market is the
Neighborhood**

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The production of a small family dairy, the result of a settling process with obstacles, has become the solid foundation of a family existence. After a phase of experimentation in the milk processing and the commercialization of the derivatives, the sale of yogurt in the immediate environment has been prioritized. When the production leaves the farm, it is practically already sold, without reaching the market.



Landscape the family found upon arrival.

The arrival

Raúl Cháves, along with his wife, Viviana, had already went through a lot before taking part in the state-run land reform program and arriving to El Rodeo, municipality of Puerto Gaitan, in the eastern lowlands of Colombia. Raúl and Viviana had bought a piece of land but when they wanted to take possession of the land, it turned out that they had fallen into the trap of a fraudster. This was a bitter hit for the young family who did not know where to go. During this period, they decided to submit a request to the state land reform program to be included in the land distribution.

They remember well the moment when they got the message from the government agency that they would get a piece of land. Raúl and Viviana show on the screen of their Laptop pictures of when they arrived.

The family came to El Rodeo in 2007. Esteban, the son was born weeks before. The land parcels assigned to the families previously belonged to a large cattle hacienda of a drug baron, seized by the state and released for land distribution. The first months were full of uncertainty, as the state authorities held the possibility of relocating the 28 families open. The family began to settle, dig a well and build a temporary house. Little by little, Raul, Viviana and

their two children began to take possession of their plot of 26 ha.

At the beginning, it was almost only grassland and the existing trees could be counted with the fingers of a single hand. With the cistern, water was supplied to the seeded plants and the few animals they had at the beginning. The couple took on the task of planting trees, palm trees, papaya and cassava.

Livestock vocation

Raul had always dreamed of having dairy cows. Thanks to the constant efforts and perseverance of the family, they have moved on. 10 of the 28 families who arrived at the beginning gave up in the first years and left. Viviana says there were times when even food was scarce. Today, after years the desolate pastures have been converted into a farm with a variety of trees, palm trees, orchards, smaller animals and dairy cattle. The production of the farm is diversified and largely guarantees the feeding of the family. But the basis of existence are the 30 heads of cattle. The monetary income generated by the family largely depends on the sale of dairy products.



Digging the well – a step in the future
(Source Raúl Cháves)

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Entrepreneurial spirit

Since the sale of milk was not very lucrative or at least not enough for the family's subsistence, the couple began to try processing the milk. At the beginning, curd was produced and sold; then they switched to cheese production. But revenue, obtained from sales, did not improve much. But since the production of the farm in terms of food guaranteed a good part of the food, not much had to be bought. Raúl and Viviana continued to experiment with different forms of milk processing and finally produced yogurt. They also “trained” themselves online about the yogurt production. For a good time, they produce 20 to 30 liters of yogurt daily, with fruit flavor of the season. Over time they found the optimum point in the elaboration of this milk derivative.

The market is the neighborhood

Every day Raul goes out on the motorcycle carrying the yogurt, packed and stored in a cooling box. Rarely does he have to travel to the village market to

sell the product. They are mainly the neighboring families who exhaust the assortment. Even with more production, Raul doubts that he would have difficulty selling the yogurt directly. With 50 bottles of yogurt it would not take more than two hours to sell. It is a fact that the yogurt is already sold before it leaves the farm, directly from the producer to the consumer, without going through the hands of third parties or being offered in the market. For Raúl, more than work, the sale becomes a complementarity to visit the neighborhood, sharing a while here and chatting there.

The cost of growth or when less is more

Viviana and Raul agree that they are well with the volume of production, although Raúl indicates that he could sell the double calmly. They have also analyzed other possibilities to penetrate more in the market, but this means to obtain a sanitary certificate to fill standards oriented to the industrial production which means a headache for the family; they would also have to label the jars etc. The family prefers to sell their yogurt in a homemade way, without adding other additives and preservatives. They prefer their immediate surroundings and their neighbors as fixed customers and



The couple tells about the beginning in El Rodeo



Raul and Viviana's Neighbors during a meeting.

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Family portrait(Source Raúl Cháves)

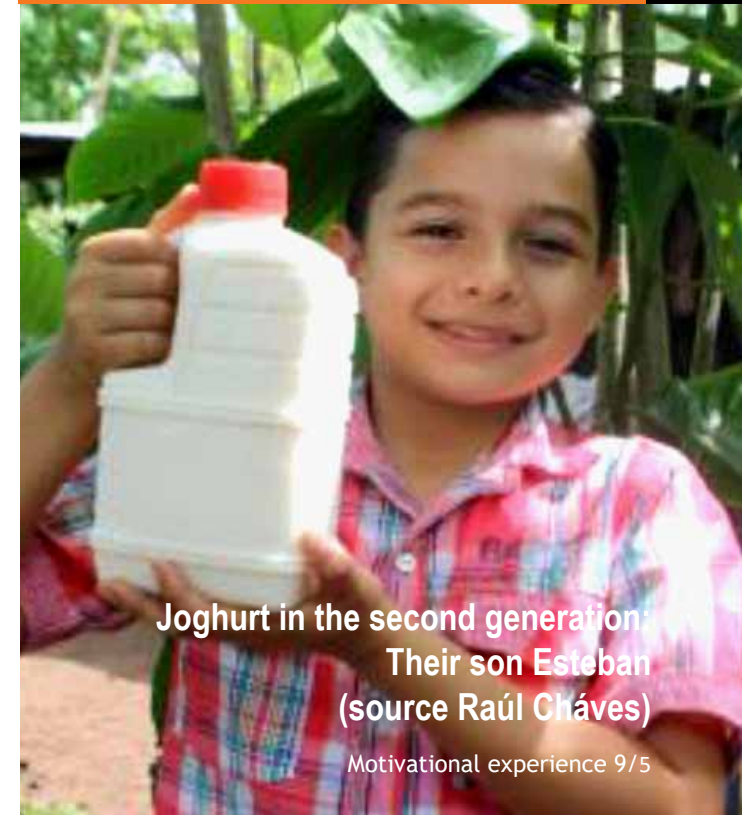
would not want to increase the sale price of the yogurt bottles (a liter of yogurt costs 5000 pesos, equivalent to approximately 2 dollars). Already just by labeling the jars (bar code), they would be forced to raise the price. The family appreciates their life on the farm. Viviana (the daughter) and her younger brother Esteban are happy where they are and would not want to live in the city. Viviana is short on finishing high school and her parents want to give their children the opportunity to enter college. The production and sale of yogurt will allow this to be financed and to meet other

family needs too. Raúl, also his wife Viviana, feel happy about what they do, where they live and perceive that their quality of life is comfortable.

Produce healthy, sell at an affordable price for others and having enough for the economic needs of the family, this is what Raul and Viviana like.

In the process of setting up their farm with agroecological principles they had the support of the Cosmopolitan Foundation. Unlike many projects that work with a focus of induction to speci-

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**Joghurt in the second generation:
Their son Esteban
(source Raúl Cháves)**

Yogurt – Produced without additives for the local market

fic productive sectors, the foundation and its project, supported by Misereor, respected the initiative of each of the families. It is definitely better for everyone to work the item they like most. In this way, the necessary diversification of items is reached and the need of selling to intermediaries or through markets is avoided. It is a viable way for the direct and local sale of the producer to the consumer: the ecological footprint of the marketing is minimal opting for the shorter roads, there is no price increase of the product, guaranteeing an affordable and beneficial price in terms of social coexistence and local development.

As well as the Chaves family, there are several more experiences and there is constant contact between families in the different sectors of the community, both to exchange experiences about agricultural production as well as to analyze new laws relevant to life in the countryside.

Messages to the future

- Be bold in experimentation to find the most suitable production, where the orientation towards quality rather than quantity may be more advantageous
- It is necessary to have a notion of “market”: it is not about thousands of customers they can be by your side without knowing it.

The text, which is based on visits and discussions on site, was created by Jorge Krekeler (adviser Misereor), but initially made consensual with the people visited. Special thanks go to Raúl Chávez and his family as well as Roberto Rodríguez of the Fundación Cosmopolitana.

Almanac to the Future

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