Cooperatives promote the Andalusian agri-food supply in Canada

Andalusia is the main exporting region of Spain to the North American country, which in 2018 reached record sales, in fact, it constitutes one of the main strategic lines of Agro-food Cooperatives of Andalusia.

The export and internationalization has always been a maxim in the Andalusian agri-food sector and, particularly, in cooperatives. In fact, it constitutes one of the main strategic lines of **Agro-food** Cooperatives of Andalusia, **a federation that brings together more than 93% of the social economy entities dedicated to agricultural and agro-industrial activity in that region.**

Although it has always been a priority, it is even more so in the current context, where the globalized market is continually affected by geopolitical conflicts that turn food products into the main currency. There we have **the Russian veto since 2014; export tariffs on black olives to the United States, since 2017, with the threat of new impositions; and the uncertain future for trade with Great Britain, conditioned on the resolution of Brexit, which is expected to be**

hard.

Meeting with Carlos Gómez García, advisor of the Economic and Commercial Office

Consequently, Agro-food Cooperatives of Andalusia has always defended how important it is to consolidate the markets where it is already present, such as opening new ones, as conflicts such as the United States or Great Britain, which are respectively between the main non-EU and Europeans, can put in serious trouble the economic viability of many companies. As an example, 16 of the 20 most exporting Spanish agri-food cooperatives are from Andalusia, where the turnover for this chapter is about 64% on average, reaching 99% of their turnover in some cases.Moved by this objective, the federation of cooperatives has recently carried out the project 'International trade mission for the promotion of exports', funded by the Ministry of Employment, Training and Autonomous Work of the Junta de Andalucía, under the Program of Support for the Promotion and Development of the Social Economy for Employment. The country chosen by Agro-food Cooperatives for this mission has been Canada given the growth experienced by sales in recent years, which have been favored by the Global Economic and Commercial Agreement between the European Union and Canada, better known as CETA , which entered into force provisionally on September 21, 2017, eliminating, as of that date, the tariffs applied to 98% of the exported European products.

As a result, in 2018, Spanish agri-food exports to Canada reached an all-time high, growing by 13.45% in value, compared to the previous year, to 346 million euros in turnover and ranking eighth among non-EU destinations . With regard to Andalusia, it was the main exporting region of Spain, with just over 23% of total trade, and an accumulated growth of 234% in the last decade. In short, a very interesting market, stable today and with great growth possibilities for Andalusian agrifood companies.

Mission Details

The presidents or directors of the Vicasol (Almería) and El Grupo (Granada) fruit and vegetable cooperatives, of the Ovipor (Huelva) or multisectoral cattle ranchers such as San Sebastián (Sevilla), San Dionisio (Cádiz) and Dcoop (Málaga) were integrated. The federation Agro-food Cooperatives also participated. All of them received prior and subsequent training in international operations management as a complement to meetings and field visits.

Cooperative representatives during one of the work meetings

Once in Canada, and throughout five days, they followed an intense agenda in which at all times they were accompanied and supported by Extenda-Andalusian Agency for Foreign Promotion. They first learned about the Canadian cooperative and agri-food model and established contacts

with potential clients. In addition, the representatives of the Andalusian agri-food cooperativism promoted key sectors such as olive oil, fruits and vegetables, cereals or extensive livestock products, among others.

Specifically, they held meetings with cooperatives, distributors and similar organizations such as Ontario Investment & Trade Center, Ontario Co-op Association (OCA) and Conseil de la Coopération de l'Ontario (CCO). They also visited cooperatives such as the Vineland horticultural, with more than a century of history, whose farmers produce peaches, cherries, grapes and pears; and Norfolk Fruit Grower's Association, with a 12% share of all apples produced in the country.

Andalusian cooperatives know the operation of their Canadian counterpartsnses

On the other hand, they had contact with large Canadian distribution firms, such as Ontario Food Terminal, the most important distribution center in Canada, known as the bag of fruits and vegetables; the Ontario Liquor Control Board (LCBO), a government company that sells and distributes alcoholic beverages throughout the province; Loblaw Companies, the largest retailer in the country, with a 26% market share; Bulk & Burn, retail chain with 265 bulk food outlets; and the St. Lawrence Market public market, an example of a growing trend in Canada that prioritizes local commerce.

Promotion of Andalusian products in Canada

The international trade mission to Canada was completed with a visit to SIAL Canada, one of the main fairs of the sector in North America, which has completed its sixteenth edition this year, as well as with the meeting held with the advisor of the Economic and Commercial Office of the Spanish Embassy in Toronto, Carlos Gómez García, who recommended them to bet on the export of high-end products linked to health and the ecological market, booming trends in the American country.