

# PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL



**8** DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH



## CASE STUDY:

Activities by members of the Association of Latin American Sugar Producers (UNALA) supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



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End Poverty in all its forms everywhere / UNALA

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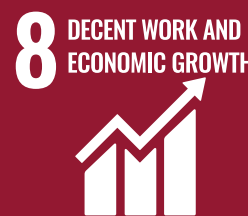
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## **SDG 8. PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL**

**Target 8.1:** Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries

**Target 8.2:** Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors

**Target 8.3:** Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services

**Target 8.4:** Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, with developed countries taking the lead

**Target 8.5:** By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

**Target 8.6:** By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training

**Target 8.7:** Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms

**Target 8.8:** Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment

**Target 8.9:** By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

**Target 8.10:** Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all

**Target 8.a:** Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries

**Target 8.b:** By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization

Source: United Nations, 2015.



1  CAMARA NACIONAL DE LAS INDUSTRIAS  
AZUCARERA Y ALCOHOLERA

2  ASAZGUA  
Asociación de Azucareros de Guatemala

3  Jizucar

4  ESASA  
Empresa de Servicios Azucareros S. A.

5  LAICA

6  cael

7  SECTOR  
AGROINDUSTRIAL  
DE LA CAÑA  
asocaña

8  unica

9  CENTRO  
AZUCARERO  
ARGENTINO

10  empresas  
iansa

11  PERUCAÑA

12  AZUCALPA  
Asociación de Azucareros y Productores de Azúcar

13  FENAZÚCAR

14  ALUR

# THE ASSOCIATION OF LATIN AMERICAN SUGAR PRODUCERS

The Association of Latin American Sugar Producers (UNALA) is a private non-profit organization that brings together the agro-industrial sector of sugarcane and sugar beet of Latin America. The idea of creating UNALA surged in 2017 and it was formally constituted in 2020. It includes representatives from this agroindustry from 14 countries in the region. Its members are strongly committed to the sustainable production of sugar, electricity, and ethanol, among other byproducts. Together, the members of UNALA represent the largest sugar producing and exporting region in the world. UNALA is more than sugar, it is sustainability, energy, and economic development.

UNALA works with all its members to promote:

- Balanced lifestyles and diets
- The efficient and responsible use of natural resources, including water and land
- The production and use of renewable energy
- The use of ethanol as part of diversified energy matrices

According to data published in the Sugar Yearbook 2024 and the Ethanol Yearbook 2024, the countries represented in UNALA produce approximately 30 % of sugar and 30 % of ethanol in the world. Besides generating more than 6.5 million jobs, some of UNALA members also cogenerate renewable electricity and heat from sugarcane biomass, which is key to promote the sustainable development of Latin America.

The members are:

1. National Chamber of the Sugar and Alcohol Industries (CNIAA) - Mexico
2. Association of Sugar Producers of Guatemala (Asazgua/Guatecaña) - Guatemala
3. Distribuidora de Azúcar y Derivados S.A. (DIZUCAR) - El Salvador
4. Empresa de Servicios Azucareros, S.A (ESASA) - Nicaragua
5. Sugarcane Industrial Agricultural League (LAICA) - Costa Rica
6. Sugar Consortium of Industrial Companies (CAEI) – Dominican Republic
7. Association of Colombian Sugar Cane Growers (ASOCAÑA) - Colombia
8. Brazilian Sugarcane Industry and Bioenergy Association (UNICA) – Brazil
9. Centro Azucarero Argentino (CAA) - Argentina
10. Empresas Iansa - Chile
11. Peruvian Association of Agro-Industrial Sugar and Derivatives (PERUCAÑA) - Peru
12. Cane Sugar Industrial Association of Panama (AZUCALPA) - Panama
13. Federación Nacional de Azucareros del Ecuador (FENAZÚCAR) – Ecuador
14. Alcoholes del Uruguay (ALUR) - Uruguay

## Vision

UNALA's vision is to be a sugar agroindustry that works together as a region and that operates sustainably in a global context in which its interests are represented.

## Mission

UNALA's mission is to be the platform that allows the Latin American sugar agroindustry to operate under fair international conditions, in a competitive market while remaining committed to sustainability.

UNALA works to stimulate the continuous improvement of sustainable practices and thus promote low-carbon energy solutions, as well as actions to improve the efficient use of land and water resources. Therefore, its members have renewed different processes of the production chain allowing an increase in efficiency, an improvement in environmental sustainability, a reduction in the use of water in irrigation and an increase in investment for the preservation of biodiversity.

## Objectives

- Facilitate a space for dialogue to promote communication and the development of joint activities that support the sustainable development of member countries in Latin America.
- Represent the Latin American sugarcane and sugar beet sector in regional and multilateral organizations.
- Promote actions, programs and strategies aimed at the sustainable development of the Latin American sugarcane and sugar beet agroindustry.
- Promote the exchange of information and the development of research and technology for the benefit of the sector.

UNALA is committed to advance the objectives and targets of all the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as other global agendas including the Climate Change, Biodiversity and Human Rights agendas. Therefore, UNALA's sustainable development strategy focuses on integrated actions directed to address three key dimensions: people (social), prosperity (economic) and planet (environmental), as the basis for achieving sustainable development.

## People

The sugarcane and sugar beet agroindustry of Latin America is committed to ensure the well-being of its collaborators and the communities that surround their operations. UNALA members generate decent employment,

which translates into better quality of life and more opportunities for development. UNALA members generate a total of more than 6.5 million jobs.

## Prosperity

The sugarcane and sugar beet agroindustry in Latin America, in total, represents the major producer and exporter of sugar in the world. Along its entire value chain, the sugar agroindustry represents economic development for countries. Sugar means opportunities for investments, innovation, and businesses.

The sugarcane agroindustry is also key for national economies due to its contribution to energy matrices including ethanol production for transport and electricity generation from sugarcane biomass.

## Planet

In addition to working on all the issues related to the sustainable production and consumption of sugar, UNALA members work directly addressing many issues related to the efficient use of water and the reduction of contaminating wastewater discharges. Another major priority work area is the production of renewable energy that supports climate change objectives including the production of ethanol as an alternative fuel to fossil-fuels for use in the transportation sector and the cogeneration of electricity and heat using sugarcane residues, including bagasse, for self-consumption and to support national energy grids.

UNALA members also conduct programs and projects specifically designed to address other Sustainable Development Goals including: sustainable consumption and production, poverty eradication, decent jobs, ending hunger through improvements in agriculture productivity, sustainable production systems, inequality reduction, protection of biodiversity and aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, quality education, improvements in health services and industrial processes and promotion of advanced technologies and innovation.

UNALA promotes sustainable development and cooperation of the sugar agroindustry of the region through work in three priority areas:

**Sugar.** Promoting balanced diets that recognize the importance of sugar with four objectives: (1) participate in regulatory processes related to sugar; (2) inform and educate about sugar and substitutes in the diet; (3) show the positive impact of the value chain of the sugar agroindustry; and (4) share knowledge and experiences about the consumption, education and regulation of sugar consumption.

**Sustainability.** Promoting the sustainability of the sugar agroindustry including: (1) sharing and promoting knowledge and experiences about sustainability practices in the social, economic and environmental dimensions; (2) closing the knowledge gaps in issues related to sustainability; (3) participating and creating partnerships with international organizations related to sustainable development; and (4) communicating information about the sustainability practices being implemented by the sugar agroindustry.

**Renewable energy.** Recognizing the importance of increasing the use of renewable energy through activities that: (1) promote the generation of renewable electricity using sugarcane residues; (2) promote the use of ethanol in Latin America; (3) exchange knowledge and experiences in the generation of renewable electricity and the production of ethanol; (4) develop new innovative opportunities for the use of sugarcane and beets; and (5) inform the public about the importance of the sugar agroindustry in the generation of renewable electricity for self-consumption and its contribution to the energy matrices of Latin American countries.

## ► UNALA and the SDG 8

The members of UNALA have multiple initiatives in place that support the objectives of SDG 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Some examples of these important activities include: Employment and Employability Program, Ledesma Sugar Mill, Argentina; the Rural Commitment and Local Economies Revitalization

Program, Asocaña, Colombia; the Yo Te Cuido (I Take Care of You) program, Sugarcane Industrial Agricultural League (LAICA), Costa Rica; the Cultivating Future Program, Sugarcane Industrial Agricultural League (LAICA), Costa Rica; Jobs and Economic Development, Asazgua/Guatecaña, Guatemala; and the Program on the Promotion of Jobs and Micro Enterprises Pánuco Sugar Mill, Tala Sugar Mill, CNIAA, Mexico.



**EMPLOYMENT AND  
EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAM**

# ► EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAM

## Centro Azucarero Argentino (CAA)

### Ledesma Sugar Mill

#### Argentina

## Objectives and Description

The objective of the program is to significantly increase the number of young people and adults developing the necessary skills, particularly technical and professional skills, to access employment, decent work and entrepreneurship. The main action plans conducted by Ledesma Mill to improve the employability of young people in Jujuy's communities include:

**School-Company Program (PEE).** The company promotes professional internships for students from 6 technical and agro-technical schools in five towns near Ledesma's Industrial Complex. It also offers them the opportunity to do their work practices at the company's facilities (factories, laboratories, workshops and fields). The contents and availability of spaces are adapted to bimodality (virtual and in-person classes), and activities related to the development of soft skills in young people are implemented. Students are encouraged to develop sustainable productive projects, offering them tools and knowledge. Since its inception in 2004, approximately 4,270 students have participated in the program, with around 300 students participating each year.

**School Improvement Plan (PME).** Since 2010, the objective of this plan has been to improve the educational and building facility quality of four schools in the city of Libertador General San Martín. The actions carried out include the construction of new classrooms, building improvements, workshops equipment acquisition, technology implementation, pedagogical improvement projects, teachers and students training, the incorporation of new teaching methodologies, language and mathematics teaching to the first and second grades of three schools, School

Guidance Team (EOE) support workshops to strengthen ties between children, parents and adolescents, and support for teachers with program integrated students.

**Skills Training Program (PCO).** In 2015, with the purpose of increasing their job opportunities, the company began training young people in social vulnerability situations. The program covers Libertador General San Martín, Calilegua, Caimancito, Fraile Pintado, Vinalito and El Talar communities. This initiative emerged at the Herminio Arrieta Technical School (ETHA) in response to youth unemployment. Workshops (4-hour shifts) are offered weekly for 2 years, and include home electricity, sanitary installations, welding and blacksmithing, carpentry, motorcycle mechanics, and bamboo cane construction. Annually, through the invitation of civil society organizations in Jujuy working with aboriginal and religious communities, schools, municipalities, public health centers and community centers, the company enrolls 300 young people in this program. Likewise, the communities lacked computer courses and training. Some educational institutions had technology-related study programs but lacked the infrastructure and technical capacity to implement them. In 2021, a partnership was established with the National University of Jujuy,



and the “Diploma in Digital Skills for Employment” was jointly developed. This initiative had 150 students. Currently the program has three centers, distributed in the towns of Libertador General San Martín, Calilegua and El Talar.

Entrepreneurship Program. This is a comprehensive educational project provided by Ledesma since 2022. It is intended to strengthen the learning experience and foster entrepreneurship through the design and execution of a project. It promotes the soft skills and digital capabilities development needed for insertion into the labor market. Its purpose is for students to identify a business opportunity, develop their own undertaking and implement it during the year. The entrepreneurial education project, in its commitment to improve its educational proposal, involves work through Community Relations. In the year 2023, a joint work agenda is undergoing with the Herminio Arrieta Technical School (ETHA), FASTA School Ing. José María Paz and the School of Trades.

By 2023, Ledesma mill’s on-going initiatives intended to provide skills training for access to employment to 6,500 young people (16 years of age and older) in the province of Jujuy.

### **Related Targets**

Ledesma mill’s policies and training programs contribute to Target 8.3 as evidenced by the various training programs supporting young people’s job skills development to enable them access to decent jobs, and encouraging the region’s young population to engage in entrepreneurship by promoting adequate training and growth of micro-, small- and medium-size enterprises; and, Target 8.6 by substantially reducing the proportion of youth without employment, education or training.

### **Challenges**

The main challenges are related to economic and technological issues. The challenge for the PEE is represented by the limited capacity within the factories,

laboratories and Ledesma's fields to receive and support young people and by the lack of a dedicated internship teaching team. The PME confronts not having access to tax credit projects that could enhance investment. The PCO confronts the lack of local opportunities for non-formal educational continuity programs which forces young people to travel 140 km each week for training. Some programs are limited by the lack of internet connection in some areas and the limited availability of computers.

## Lessons learned

An especially important lesson learned has to do with the positive response received from the Jujuy civil organizations, aboriginal and religious communities, schools, municipalities, public health centers and community centers, as their support has been essential for gathering and recruiting young students for the various programs through the years.

Ledesma's training programs for access to employment have become highly valued by the communities. According to the results of the 2023 Survey Study, the programs have a 100 % positive rating, with the highest rating corresponding to the Education and Orientation Program (PEO).

## Results

The program and its initiatives on reducing or eliminating unemployment, focused on developing job's skills at various levels, have been well received by the region's communities.

In the 2022-2023 period, through the Technology, Trade school, School-Company programs and other non-formal employment education programs, 201 young people have been trained.

According to Aprender's 2019 assessment report on 6th grade education, the following are improvements in learning levels:

- At Escuela Técnica Herminio Arrieta (ETHA), 91 % of students achieved a satisfactory/advanced level in language vs. 47 % at the municipality level; and, in mathematics 80 % vs. 21 % at the municipality level; and,
- Resulting from the support to the EOE program, 97 % of the students showed interest in the knowledge taught at school, 80 % feel comfortable attending school and 84 % consider that coexistence at the school is good.

## Interlinkages with other SDGs

Ledesma mill's actions related with SDG 8 bear important interlinkages with SDG 4 on education and learning opportunities as shown by the offering of various quality training programs intended to provide people with important job skills; and, SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals as shown by the agreements and support reached with the communities of the Jujuy province, at governmental and non-governmental levels.

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## ► THE RURAL COMMITMENT AND LOCAL ECONOMIES REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

### ASOCAÑA

Colombia 



### Objectives and Description

The program aims to contribute to the economic reactivation of the region by contributing to the revitalization of local economies, supporting small and medium sized rural businesses which generate income to rural population and increase their quality of life. A second effort was developed which aims at the generation of 1,500 formal jobs in the sugarcane agro-industrial sector. Its beneficiaries receive psychosocial support and skills training, preparing them for the labor force.

The Rural Commitment program bases its revitalization of local economies actions on the implementation of direct social intervention programs in communities influenced by the sugarcane agro-industrial sector. These programs identify and support small and medium-sized rural enterprises, aiming to strengthen their capacities and stimulate the local economy. The strategy centers on the following initiatives:

- Fairs and Markets. Entrepreneurs can sell their products directly to the final consumer.
- Contract farming. The Ministry of Agriculture in partnership with the

Rural Commitment program aims at bringing small and medium-sized producers closer to large and medium-sized consumers.

- Business and Local Supply Fairs. To promote local purchases by the private sector. It seeks the participation of local administrations and the business sector for the promotion of combined business and enterprises.
- Public Policy Approaching. In partnership with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, to align the institutional offer with the needs of the region's entrepreneurs.

- Acceleration, incubation and positioning of entrepreneurship. Permanent training is essential to strengthen ventures and add value to the development and growth of small and medium rural enterprises.
- Inclusion of entrepreneurs in medium and large-sized supply chains of local retailers and industries.

The Rural Commitment program represents an effort to create formal rural jobs, fostering economic development and improving the quality of life for communities associated with the sugarcane sector in Colombia.

## Related Targets

The program's actions, framed within SDG 8 of decent work and economic growth, support: Target 8.3 on promoting development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises; Target 8.5 on achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men; as shown by the entire structure of the program being based on the principles of decent formal rural jobs creation, fostering economic development and improving the quality of life for communities; and Target 8.8 on protection of labor rights and promoting safe and secure working environments for all workers, by the creation of jobs under labor contracts, with benefits, social security, and other extra-legal benefits.

## Challenges

The implementation of the Rural Commitment program encounters several challenges. Some of these include:

- Maintaining a permanent dialogue with the communities and actively listening to its stakeholders have been among the major challenges encountered.
- Transforming rural communities through shifting mindsets, challenging traditional norms, and promoting innovation remain an ongoing challenge.
- The population in many rural areas lack the necessary skills and capacities to fully participate in economic activities.
- Insufficient or inadequate basic infrastructure in rural areas, including roads, electricity, and water supply hinder economic activities, connectivity, and overall development.
- Access to modern technologies is limited in rural regions and represents a challenge.
- Rural depopulation is a persistent challenge as young people migrate to urban centers in search of better opportunities.
- Disparities among different segments of the rural population remain an ongoing challenge.

## Lessons learned

Asocaña's implementation of the rural revitalization program has been relevant to its regions of influence. Some lessons learned during the process include:

- The creation of collaborative spaces has been one of the most important lessons learned. Through these, realities are shared, and joint visions of the territory are identified and developed. These visions, under the principle of respect and reciprocity, make it possible to establish common development scenarios for all the inhabitants, where cooperation and collective well-being are promoted.
- Ongoing communications with the community and permanent dialogue exchange between all stakeholders have proven essential to the program.



- The need for strengthening and promoting human capital requires ongoing priority. Vocational education and skill development need continuous addressing for sustainable rural transformation and economic development.
- Disparities among different segments of the rural population have proven crucial and need continuous focus and addressing.
- Rural depopulation is also another matter that needs important attention.
- Successful implementation of the program requires ensuring collaboration of various stakeholders including local governments, industry associations, NGOs, and communities.

## Results

Significant results and impact on rural communities have been achieved by the program. Some include:

### Rural Commitment:

- Local production has been strengthened by creating opportunities for urban and

rural producers and entrepreneurs to gain visibility and be recognized.

- The program targets 29 municipalities across the departments of Valle, Cauca, and Risaralda.
- Creation of 1,500 jobs under labor contracts, with benefits, social security, and other extra-legal benefits.
- 80% of the program's vacancies have been generated in agricultural and harvesting work in the sugarcane agroindustry, 12 % of the hires have been in factory work and 8 % in administrative positions. 88 % are men and 12 % are women.
- 800 people who applied for these vacancies benefited from psychosocial support programs with the National Learning Service (SENA) and the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICB).
- Between August and December 2021, 773 new hirings were generated by the sugar mills in the 29 prioritized municipalities.

Support for entrepreneurship and revitalization of local economies:

- In 2021, 4 farmers' fairs and markets were held in various municipalities. 75 small and medium rural producers participated and achieved sales of 32 million pesos.
- In 2021, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, 2 Contract Farming workshops were held. More than 85 entrepreneurs and rural producers attended and closed sales for more than 500 million pesos.
- To align the institutional offer with the needs of the entrepreneurs, in partnership with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, an exposition and evaluation workshop on enterprises from various parts of the Cauca River was held.
- Between 2022 y 2023, the program benefited 218 small and medium entrepreneurs that strengthened their business model. They found strategies to reach new markets and approached new digital markets.
- In 2023, 51 small business owners, who are part of this program, entered inclusive supply programs of the sugarcane agroindustry, and an important retail supermarket from the region, included in its displays several products from the benefited enterprises.

- Through the several Fairs and Markets developed by the program during 2022 and 2023, the benefited entrepreneurs accomplished sales up to 800 million pesos, and some close long-term deals for almost 2,500 million pesos.

## Interlinkages with other SDGs

The program's actions related to SDG8 have important interlinkages with: SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 10 on reducing inequality, by providing vocational education, skill development and on-the-job training even for those without studies, regardless of gender and addressing disparities among different segments of the rural population, targeting sustainable rural transformation and economic development; SDG 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, as shown by providing inclusive vocational education and skill training, creating formal rural jobs, fostering economic development and improving the quality of life for communities; and, SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals, by the various successful stakeholder collaboration achieved between local governments, industry associations, NGOs, and communities.

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<https://www.asocana.org/>



## Objectives and Description

The main objective of the program “Yo Te Cuido (I Take Care of You)” is to prevent and raise awareness through concrete actions against any form of child or adolescent labor in the Sugar Cane Sector of Costa Rica. This is part of a regional program working on the prevention of child and adolescent labor in the sugar industry of the Central American Region. It is implemented for 4 months each year simultaneously across all sugar mills and cane-producing regions of the country.

LAICA implements actions to prevent any form of child or adolescent labor within its organization and throughout the Sugarcane Sector of Costa Rica through: 1) internal organizational policies; 2) the “Yo Te Cuido” program; and 3) a network of companies implementing actions against child labor. LAICA works in partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security of Costa Rica, the International Labor Organization (ILO), private companies, and public sector companies.

In June 2024, in Costa Rica as the venue, the Regional Campaign “Prevention of Child Labor in the Central American Sugar Sector coordinated by the Association of Sugar Producers of Central America (AICA) was launched for the third consecutive year under the initiative “Yo Te Cuido.” This was the result of coordinated efforts and the commitment of the six countries in the region to this and other sustainability issues. This program also received the “Change Leader” award from the International Organization of Employers (IOE) of the ILO.

As part of the campaign, materials for implementation, dissemination, and promotion are provided to sugar workers in the region, along with talks, contests, and informational materials. This aims to reach workers in the sector,

sugarcane producers, as well as members of communities in the areas influenced by the sugar industry throughout Central America. LAICA implemented and promoted the campaign with key stakeholders in the sector, such as Boards of Directors of Producer Chambers, FEDECAÑA, Women’s Sugarcane Producer Network, Mills, Sectorial Sustainability Committee, and internally within the organization. Additionally, the campaign materials were distributed to these key stakeholders for replication within their organizations and value chains to achieve a broader reach.

As a result of promoting the campaign, the sector is implementing significant work in training, dissemination, and awareness-raising both at LAICA, in the sugar mills and for small sugarcane producers.

The campaign includes a contest to promote awareness about the issue. It involves creating a short video that would raise awareness about the importance of preventing all forms of child labor. The contest requires one winning video per country, which would then compete with the other countries in the region.

LAICA also led, promoted, and disseminated a video contest within the sugarcane sector in Costa Rica, resulting



in the creation of several videos by the employees, sugar mills, and sugarcane producers from various sugarcane regions of the country. The campaign has a YouTube channel where people can find the winning videos from each country. The campaign also has a website that contains highly relevant information. In addition to legislative topics, visitors can access the ILO course for free training on these issues, which remains active for one more year according to the agreement made with the ILO.

Since 2015, LAICA has been actively participating in the Network of Companies against Child Labor in Costa Rica. This network operates in alliance with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the International Labor Organization (ILO), private companies, and public sector entities. LAICA joined with the aim of coordinating efforts and sharing best practices among its peers. The goal is to raise awareness within each sector represented by these companies and thus contribute to the prevention of child labor in Costa Rica. The network organizes forums and awareness-raising

events to encourage more companies and productive sectors to join and thereby increase efforts to prevent child labor.

As part of joint efforts, LAICA, in partnership and coordination with other Central American countries through AICA (Asociación de Azucareros del Istmo Centroamericano) and with the support of the ILO, developed a Guide of Best Practices against Child Labor in the Sugar Sector of Central America. This document demonstrates and reaffirms the sector's commitment at the Central American level to the prevention and eradication of child labor. It is continuously promoted in the region with the aim of making the sector free of child labor.

## Related Targets

This program supports the objectives of SDG 8, particularly in relation to Target 8.7 on taking measures to eradicate forced labor and to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, as shown by implementing policies, campaigns and actions against any form of child or adolescent labor across all sugar mills and cane producing

regions in Costa Rica, and, Target 8.8 on protecting labor rights and promoting safe and secure working environments, by raising awareness and educating stakeholders about the harmful effects of child labor and its legal implications.

## Challenges

One of the main challenges has been the design and implementation of a comprehensive program for creating awareness against all forms of child labor at the community, national and regional levels. The program must use many diverse types of media tools to be able to reach relevant stakeholders at all the levels including families, workers, business and governmental leaders, etc.

## Lessons learned

A major lesson learned is that the success of this type of program requires the participation of the relevant stakeholders working in partnership to promote and implement actions against child labor. The partnerships need to include national, regional and international organizations as well as private companies, and public sector organizations.

## Results

The latest National Household Survey conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) revealed a

22 % decrease in child labor in Costa Rica, which is an incredibly positive result so far. However, it further commits LAICA because it demonstrates that through the collaboration of various productive sectors, children can be completely removed from any form of labor.

## Interlinkages with other SDGs

The “Yo Te Cuido” Project, in addition to support the objectives of SDG 8, is strongly interrelated to: SDG 16 on providing access to justice for all, and on ending abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children (Target 16.2) since the program directly contributes to raising awareness and taking actions to prevent child labor; and SDG 17 given the numerous partnerships that LAICA has with domestic, regional and international stakeholders and organizations, such as: FEDECAÑA, Women’s Sugarcane Producer Network, Mills, Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the International Labor Organization (ILO), private companies, and public sector entities.

In 2023, AICA received the Changemaker Award by the International Organization of Employers for the campaign’s efforts, which involved the sugar agroindustries of Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.

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## ► CULTIVATING FUTURE PROGRAM LAICA Costa Rica



### Objectives and Description

The Cultivating Future (Cultivando Futuro) Program aims to strengthen the capacities of small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises (SMEs) in the sugarcane sector of Costa Rica in terms of sustainability and business management through awareness, useful tools, workshops, training, technological tools and support. The program was designed in 2017 as part of the international cooperation project AI Invest 5.0 with funding from the European Union.

This design process is implemented in partnership between LAICA and the Business Alliance for Development (AED) and had the support of the Federation of Chambers of Sugarcane Producers (FEDECAÑA), the chambers of sugarcane producers and the sugar mills of the areas selected as strategic partners.

Since 2018, the Program has continued to be implemented by LAICA with its own resources, awaiting greater financial support to achieve greater reach at the national level.

The program is conducted annually, during the non-milling time periods, in one or two of the six sugarcane-producing regions in Costa Rica. It comprises the

following working axes: sustainable development, labor practices, no child and adolescent labor, environmental management, health and occupational safety, associativity (partnerships), finances and technology. Its structure includes four components: generation and transfer of knowledge, technological tools, institutional strengthening, strategies and coordination.

In the absence of cooperation funds, the project operates using its own resources, as agreed upon between the sugar mill companies (ingenios) and the sugarcane producers, following the strategic and prioritized objective for the sector. When intervening in a specific region, the local sugar mill and producers' association are involved to ensure the transfer of the necessary capabilities and knowledge for producers to continue the process independently afterward.

The program's workshops supply sugarcane producers with materials and tools to facilitate the implementation of sustainable sugarcane cultivation practices. Sugar mills receive complete toolkits, saving producers future investment in such resources. The materials and workshops, developed using constructivist theories, enhance adult learning and education.

To address critical needs identified through a national baseline study conducted prior to the project design, specialized technological tools were developed for sugarcane producers. For instance: a tool for managing the accounting of sugarcane cultivation to allow the tracking of expenses and income related to their farms, particularly beneficial for small-scale enterprises lacking formal accounting and record-keeping systems. These efforts are required to reduce the technological gap.

A Cultivating Future App was developed with all necessary modules to support and implement the project: accounting, registration, sugarcane deliverables, support, E-learning, information, sugarcane delivery declarations, sustainability and library. The sustainability department published a detailed manual, explaining each module's functionality and a step-by-step guide for the app's use. These are some of the tools provided to facilitate the application of this program.

The Sustainability Department of LAICA leads and promotes intensive work sessions with groups of producers using techniques and almost personalized support to guarantee learning using constructivist or "learning by doing" methodologies. Its objective is to coordinate efforts and define strategies for the adoption of practical and technological tools by producers and their children, also seeking to promote generational change, a significant risk for the sector.

## Related Targets

The program supports the objectives of SDG 8 on promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth and productive employment, particularly in relation to Target 8.2 on achieving higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological updating and innovation through implementing innovating approaches, accounting and controlling systems, and the "Cultivating Future" mobile application; and, Target 8.3 on promoting policies that support productive activities, job creation, entrepreneurship and innovation, and encouraging the growth of small and medium enterprises, achieved through institutional support, sustainable labor practices, capacity training, technological tools and equal opportunities.



## Challenges

There have been a number of significant challenges faced during the definition and implementation of this project including:

- Creating a program that effectively imparts knowledge on proper accounting, management, data recording, and fosters sustainability awareness has been complex. Integrating sustainability with certifications to ensure complete alignment across all chain links has been a challenging task.
- Securing sufficient financial support to sustain the project in the future.
- Seeking cooperation and partnerships to continue advancing project implementation and improvements in the long run.
- Addressing the generational turnover issue prevalent in the agricultural sector, particularly in the sugarcane industry.
- Overcoming the technology gap to maximize the use of available tools for continuous improvement.
- Encouraging more producers to take advantage of the Cultivating Future App tool, including Sugarcane Accounting, Technical Assistance, and Sugarcane Declaration, among others.
- Reinforcing institutional investments in technological tools, including content generation, application updates, and promotion of tool use in the cane and sugar industry.
- Exploring innovative forms of technical transfer to the productive sector, with technological ownership as a potential starting point.
- The speed of implementation is a major challenge, as it involves 7,000 small sugarcane producers with limited capacity and economic resources, so

the groups that are worked on each year are not sufficient.

- Ultimately, ensuring the sustainability of the sugar sector of Costa Rica.

## Lessons learned

An important lesson learned is that this multipurpose program requires coordinated mechanisms to be established within the sugarcane industry members to maximize resources and sustainable effort expansion. Additionally, it is critical to coordinate activities with public organizations and private institutions to fully utilize all available resources.

Another major lesson is that fostering an entrepreneurial perspective and attitude among all members of the productive sector and reinforcing concepts of business management and practices create long-lasting positive impacts.

## Results

The program has been highly successful as demonstrated by all the improvements and results benefitting Costa Rica's sugarcane producers and mills, including:

- Sustainability capacity and awareness of sugarcane producers have been strengthened.
- Having received national and international recognition, it is considered a model of reference in Latin America, good for securing cooperative funding that promotes industry growth.
- Costa Rica's six sugarcane regions have been significantly impacted by training and supporting nearly 3,000 individuals through over 59,000 hours of different capacity-building activities.
- Digital tools developed for accounting, technical assistance, sustainability,

library, registration, e-learning, indicators, sugarcane deliverable declaration and information.

- Eight capacity-building and follow-up workshops for sugarcane producers are offered across Costa Rica's six regions.
- Important infographics have been produced on sun exposure, protection equipment, no children labor, handling and storage of agrochemicals, and calibration and mixtures.
- Work has been done to close the technological gap with sugarcane producers to provide them with more technical assistance tools and sustainability principles.
- Young people have been attracted to the Cultivando Futuro workshops, which are essential for generational change in the agricultural sector.
- Collaborating very closely with farmers, with schemes like "one-on-one" allows for an exchange of high-quality information that enables the detection of real needs for the pertinent design of strengthening programs or tools.

During the 2019 European Union's "Transforming Lives" competition, with the participation of Eighteen countries and 120 projects and only two winners selected, Costa Rica won the award with "Cultivating Future", a program aimed at strengthening Small and Medium-sized Agricultural Enterprises in the Sugarcane Sector.

## Interlinkages with other SDGs

LAICA's Cultivating Future Program, aligned with SDG 8, is a comprehensive initiative bearing important interlinkages with:

**SDG 5** on Gender Equality. The program promotes gender equality by engaging with all producers, regardless of gender.

**SDG 9** on Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. Upgrading and innovative mechanisms designed to assist SMEs are major components of the program.

**SDG 10** on Reduced Inequalities. Achieved through the program's focus on empowering all workers based on inclusive capacity building, labor practices and associativity.

**SDG 13** on Climate Action. Through its comprehensive structure that supports environmental management and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

**SDG 16.** On Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The program's commitment to social responsibility, including eradication of child labor, women's rights, gender equality, equal work opportunities, strongly supports the creation of peaceful, fair and inclusive societies.

**SDG 17** on Partnerships for the Goals. LAICA has sought the support of various key collaborations for achieving the program's goals including: AED, Sugar mills, FEDECAÑA, the European Union, among others.

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## Objectives and Description

The Guatemalan Sugarcane Agroindustry (Guatecaña) is a strong engine for economic development and job generation in Guatemala. Its activities impact about 90 % of the municipalities of the country. The Sugarcane Agroindustry generates more than \$800 million in foreign exchange annually. Each year it pays more than \$3800 million in wages and salaries. The economic dynamics that are generated by the mills with suppliers in populations located in the area of influence provide additional economic growth. A considerable number of jobs and income go to people in poor and vulnerable communities contributing to poverty reduction objectives. The Guatecaña pays approximately \$30 million in taxes annually.

In Guatemala, the Sugarcane Agroindustry is responsible for the generation of more than 52,000 direct jobs that include cane cutters, industrial workers and experts in science and technology, among others. It also generates 258,000 indirect jobs. The sugar industry touches many labor sectors and provides an opportunity for economic growth and poverty eradication. The industry brings jobs to many rural communities, and the harvest season provides jobs for migrant workers from the northern regions of the country. In addition to jobs, the sugar mills and Fundazúcar implement programs that teach cane cutters the skills they need for personal advancement.

## Related Targets

Jobs and Economic Development generated by the Guatecaña support most of the targets of SDG 8. These targets include: Target 8.1 on sustaining per capita economic growth; Target 8.2 on achieving higher levels of economic productivity; Target 8.3 on promoting development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation and innovation; and Target 8.5 on supporting the achievement of full and productive employment for all women and men.

## Challenges

Given the fact that harvesting activities only last 6 months, an incredibly challenging task is to be able to provide stable jobs in the long-term for seasonal activities within an integrated social framework that supports poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Another major challenge is the coordination of activities with the government given the commitment of the state to attract capital and boost investment projects that will help generate other sources of formal employment.

## Lessons Learned

The experience of the Guatemalan Sugarcane Agroindustry of many decades clearly shows that providing decent and valuable employment is key to achieving the sustainability of sugar production and the necessary economic growth that supports sustainable development.



## Results

The Guatemalan Sugarcane Agroindustry is a major source of job opportunities, economic development and prosperity for the people of Guatemala which is clearly helping to reduce poverty. Its program on Jobs and Economic Development supports the country's poverty eradication objectives and represents a strong engine for sustainable economic growth and productive employment generating over 310,000 direct and indirect jobs. It offers decent and valuable jobs for the wellbeing of the population, while at the same time promoting environmental protection and conservation.

## Interlinkages with other SDGs

There are strong interlinkages between activities by the Guatemalan Sugarcane Agroindustry related to economic growth, productive employment and decent work (SDG 8) and other SDGs. One clear interlinkage is Infrastructure, Industrialization and Innovation (SDG 9) as these activities support economic development and employment. Other major interlinkages are in relation to poverty eradication (SDG 1) since many poor and vulnerable communities benefit from these activities, and sustainable agriculture (SDG 2) since many of the research, development and innovative activities are designed to achieve the sustainable production of sugarcane generating economic growth and decent jobs in agricultural regions. These activities are also related to SDG 17, as multiple partnerships among different stakeholders are required to fully implement the Sugarcane Agroindustry's SDG 8 initiatives.

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# ▶ PROGRAM ON THE PROMOTION OF JOBS AND MICRO ENTERPRISES

## CNIAA

### Pánuco Sugar Mill, Tala Sugar Mill

#### Mexico

## Objectives and Description

The main objective of this program is the creation of alternative jobs that could supplement the income of families in communities, including families of sugar mill workers, located in the area of influence of the sugar agroindustry of Mexico. Additionally, the program promotes the creation of micro enterprises that support economic growth at the local and regional levels. The aim is to improve the quality of life through special activities that could generate jobs particularly in areas of interest to women in the rural sector.

The Pánuco Sugar Mill, in the north of the State of Veracruz, has implemented technical and business trainings for women in the communities surrounding the operations to create micro enterprises. These projects are supported with seed funding, materials, equipment and tools that allow entrepreneurs to start their first businesses. These actions help to eradicate crime activities in young people, too.

The Tala Sugar Mill, in the State of Jalisco, has implemented programs for learning and initiating craft activities since 2016 in areas such as baking, piñatas fabrication, balloon decoration, among others. Over 400 people have benefitted from over 1,000 hours of capacity building activities in these areas.

## Related Targets

The activities of this project support the objectives of SDG 8 on promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. The project is particularly related to Target 8.3 on promoting policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the creation of micro-, small- and medium-sized

enterprises; and Target 8.5 on achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men.

## Challenges

One of the main challenges of this program is trying to expand its implementation in more communities and ensuring its continuity in the future so that more people could benefit from the capacity building activities and from the creation of new and productive enterprises.

## Lessons learned

The main lesson learned is that people have the creativity and the eagerness to learn, work and develop their own enterprises but lack the resources, education and training necessary to make these important economic advances a reality on their own.

## Results

The Pánuco Sugar Mill has implemented capacity development activities that have resulted in the creation of micro enterprises such as: 5 bakeries, 2 esthetics businesses, 2 water purification plants and a sewing workshop. These activities have



benefited over 6,800 people including 99 women entrepreneurs. The activities of the Tala Sugar Mill have benefited over 400 people.

### **Interlinkages with other SDGs**

The program's focus and actions on promoting employment and microenterprises, aligned with the SDG 8 and with strong interlinkages to SDG 1 about ending poverty since the job creation and micro-enterprises initiatives combined with craft-learning programs, as indicated above, provide access to decent work and sustainable livelihoods at local and regional levels which contributes to lift individuals and families out of poverty; SDG 5 on gender equality since the program

plays an important role in advancing gender equality by ensuring equal access to decent jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for women; SDG 10 on reduced inequalities by creating alternative jobs and supporting micro-enterprises to supplement the income of families in communities, regardless of gender, background and lack of resources promoting social inclusion and reducing inequalities; and, SDG 17 on partnerships because of the collaborative efforts between Pánuco Sugar Mill, Tala Sugar Mill, CNIAA, the communities of influence and other stakeholders such as government institutions, private sector and civil society which have been essential for the program to achieve sustained development.



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