

# ON THE GRAPEVINE...



FAIRTRADE PROJECT NEWS

DECEMBER 2023

## LOS PIONEROS HEALTH CENTRE FAIRTRADE PROJECT UPDATE

Since completion of the main building works of Los Pioneros - Roberto Mantovani Health Centre building in June 2022, there has been hard work going on behind the scenes getting the centre ready to welcome its first outpatients in early 2024.

In August 2022, the project saw the creation of Roberto Alejandro Mantovani Foundation (R.A.M.), named after La Riojana's former General Manager. The Foundation has been established as a non-profit entity, which will be responsible for the implementation of the health centre project going forwards and its Executive Committee, made up of 5 members, will be working in tandem with La Rioja Province's Health Department, who, much to our delight, formally agreed in December 2023 to work with us and help oversee the medical provision for the health centre.

In terms of physical works, we have now advanced to the next stage of the project, which involves landscaping and construction of the pavements. After this stage has been completed, we will progress to purchasing and planting trees.



La Rioja's Health Minister (on left) signs agreement with R.A.M. (on right)



Pavements under construction at Los Pioneros Health Centre, Tilimuqui

Once this project is fully operational, the health centre plans to be able to offer medical care to over 10,000 people living in the local region.

## FAIRTRADE INVESTMENT IN SOLAR ENERGY

Based on our ongoing commitment to improve sustainability in every part of the co-operative's production process and as part of our comprehensive energy conversion project, which involves switching over to renewable sources of energy where possible, we have further increased our investment in solar energy.

In addition to the 52 Fairtrade funded solar panels we installed in July 2022 at our Villa Union winery; we installed another 126 Fairtrade funded solar panels in November 2023 in our Ciudadela production plant (where we process our wines and olive oil).

During the harvest, the Ciudadela production plant requires 180kw per hour to process the grape and olive harvest. The new solar panels will help compensate this energy use by producing 60kw per hour.

This is one of the many great examples of how our co-op members have voted to invest the Fairtrade Premium, which we receive from sales of our Fairtrade certified wines and olive oils.



Fairtrade funded solar panels recently installed at La Riojana's Ciudadela production plant, located 15kms from the main winery in Chilecito



## FAIRTRADE AIDS WATER PUMP REPAIRS

For every one of our co-operative growers, having water for their vines is vital for their production. And living in a dry climate, such as La Rioja province, where the average rainfall is 140 mm per year, it means that our vineyards are highly dependent on irrigation and water pumps.

Water pumps themselves are a high-cost investment for our growers and when they break down it can create a serious problem, as they are very expensive to mend.

It was therefore decided that part of the 2023 Fairtrade Premium should go towards funding the repair of broken water pumps, meaning that thanks to Fairtrade we are now able to lend water

pumps to our growers when their pumps break down, as well as repair their broken pumps at no extra cost to them. It is often the case that the pump needs to be replaced or repaired urgently, so being able to offer this form of financial help is invaluable to many of our co-op members.



A co-operative water pump on loan to a grower



Irrigation by water pump in one of our co-op grower's vineyards

## FAIRTRADE FUNDED SCHOOL KITS DONATIONS AND FOOD PARCELS

One of the many positive benefits of being Fairtrade certified is having the opportunity to ease the economic situation for many of those that form part of our large co-operative family. One of the most popular investments over the years has been the Fairtrade funded school kits which are given out to those workers with children or grandchildren in primary or secondary education.

The school kits, which are given out at the beginning of the academic year, contain a variety of tools needed by the children for their education, including rucksacks and age-appropriate stationery such as pencil cases, pens, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, highlighters, rulers, scissors, notepads, glue, and geometry sets.



Fairtrade funded school kits help support people such as Antonia Vargas, one of La Rioja's laboratory workers who has worked for co-operative for thirty years. Her son Ivan studies at the Fairtrade funded secondary school, Colegio Nacional Agrotecnico, in Tilimuqui

Since 2012 we have donated over 4000 school kits to our workers' families and this year for the first time, we also donated 128 Fairtrade funded food parcels (containing a selection of basic food stuff) to those workers who do not have children or grandchildren.



The group of La Rioja workers, photographed in March 2023, having received their Fairtrade funded food parcels and school kits

## FAIRTRADE TRACTOR REPAIRS

This year a portion of the Fairtrade Premium has funded the repair of the two new tractors which were originally purchased in August 2021 using funds from the Fairtrade Premium.

These tractors were bought with the purpose to help La Rioja's smallest growers and allow them to improve the condition of the soil of their vineyards by using different tool attachments such as disc harrows, rotavators and brush cutters. Therefore, enabling our smallest growers to improve the drainage in their vineyards by loosening the soil and reducing the number of weeds.

In addition to this, the tractor service is made affordable for for our smaller co-op members (i.e. those with farms with less than 5 hectares) by making them responsible for just 40% of the tractor driver's hourly salary, with the other 60% being paid by the Fairtrade Premium. Being able to offer this tractor service is vitally important as it is something that benefits the majority of our growers.



Fairtrade funded tractors are used by our smaller growers to make irrigation channels in their vineyards, which help nourish the soil



A large number of farms benefit from the use of these tractors, including this one which belongs to Daniel Casiva, who owns 2 hectares of land in Tilimuqui

## FAIRTRADE REACHES THE HOMES OF OUR CO-OP MEMBERS

At La Rioja we are keen to see the Fairtrade investment benefit as many of our employees and members in as many ways as possible. 2023 saw Fairtrade Premium funds go towards the purchase of several useful kitchen electrical items, as well as vineyard tools, which were raffled to our co-op growers during La Rioja's Annual General Meeting held in October 2023.



## FAIRTRADE SILVER MEDAL SUCCESS FOR LA RIOJANA

La Rioja was thrilled to win top medals for four of its wines at the International Wine Challenge 2023 and Decanter World Wine Awards 2023.

Two of our Malbecs, **Tilimuqui Fairtrade Organic Malbec 2022** and **Co-op Irresistible Fairtrade Organic Malbec 2021** won silver medals at the IWC and were awarded 92 and 90 points respectively. The results for which were announced on 18th May 2023.



Whilst the two dual varietal wines we produce for the Co-op own-label Fairtrade range, **Co-op Fairtrade Torrontés-Chardonnay 2022** (70% Torrontés and 30% Chardonnay white blend) and **Co-op Fairtrade Bonarda-Malbec 2022** (70% Bonarda and 30% Malbec red blend), which currently both retail in the UK for under £7 per bottle, both won silver medals at the DWWA and



were awarded 92 and 90 points respectively. The results for which were announced on 7th June 2023.

Winning Silver Medals in the International Wine Challenge and the Decanter World Wine Awards, two of the world's most influential and prestigious wine competitions is certainly cause for celebration!

## NEW LOOK FOR LA RIOJANA CO-OP



In June 2023, La Rioja launched its new corporate image. The new logo was designed to unify and consolidate the co-operative image as one for both the domestic and export markets and to replace the different logo designs which had co-existed for the different markets before.

The new image was created to give La Rioja the feeling of a modern co-operative, yet at the same time express a sense of origin and tradition.

It is an abstract expression of the unification of wine and the co-operative, using simple symbols within the logo which represent La Rioja's main crops, the Torrontes Riojano grape and the olive, as well as man (representing the co-operative members and workers) and its DNA.

## IN OTHER FAIRTRADE NEWS

### LA RIOJANA HOSTS DELEGATES FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD

In October 2023 we hosted the Annual World Forum of Wine Co-operatives (FMCV) and the International Meeting for Fairtrade Wines from Latin America.

It was our first time hosting the FMCV and we were delighted that our co-op president, Alfredo Capece, was elected President of the FMCV for the 2nd year running. The event itself involved 50 delegates, representing wine co-operatives from all around the world, who spent 3 days with us discussing the main challenges faced by the wine industry today.

Alongside the FMCV, we also hosted the 2nd International Meeting for Fairtrade Wines from Latin America, which involved representatives from CLAC (the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fairtrade Producers and Workers) and from Fairtrade certified wine co-operatives in Chile and Argentina.



Delegates at the FMCV conference in Chilecito



FMCV delegates visit Los Pioneros Health Centre

### WHICH? RECOMMENDS CO-OP IRRESISTIBLE FAIRTRADE MALBEC AS OVERALL BEST BUY RED

Results published 1st December 2023 following a blind wine tasting organised by Which? of the supermarkets' winter red wines priced between £5 and £17 has seen the Co-op Irresistible Fairtrade Organic Malbec 2021, produced by our growers in the Famatina Valley, awarded "Best Buy" and 79%, making it the Overall Best Value Red amongst the supermarket red wine Christmas ranges tasted.



# Which?

OVERALL BEST BUY RED

### NEW BIODYNAMIC SECTION ADDED TO LA RIOJANA'S WEBSITE

We have recently added a new Biodynamic section to our website to give more information on our own Biodynamic story and what it means to Biodynamic.

Our biodynamic story first began in 2017 when we assigned 13 hectares in our Federada vineyard to biodynamic production and 3 years later, in 2020, we harvested our first Demeter-certified biodynamic grapes. Since then, we have expanded our Demeter-certified biodynamic surface area from 13 to over 130 hectares which includes vineyards, olive trees and alfalfa for the sheep. This makes us the winery with the largest surface area certified for biodynamic production in Argentina.

[Click for more info](#)

### 2024 MARKS 30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY FOR FAIRTRADE



In 2024, we will be celebrating along with the rest of the world three decades since the launch of the Fairtrade Mark! This means 30 years of farmers like ours using the power of Fairtrade to drive positive change to their communities.

We are thrilled with the many positive changes we have been able to make to our local communities since receiving Fairtrade certification in 2006 and we look forward to making many more in the years to come.

Please keep an eye on our social media channels



to see the different ways we will be celebrating Fairtrade during this exciting milestone.

Fairtrade Fortnight 2024 will run from Monday 9th September to Sunday 22nd September 2024.

## Q & A WITH JOSE LUIS BELLIA, A MEMBER OF LA RIOJANA CO-OPERATIVE AND ONE OF LA RIOJANA'S LARGEST GROWERS



### Tell us a bit about yourself:

I am married with 4 children and 4 grandchildren. I live in Chilecito and own 80 has, planted with grapes, raisins and olives. The land is jointly owned by myself and my 4 children..

### What is your role at La Riojana co-operative?

I look after finances and have held the role of Treasurer for the co-operative since 2020. I am also a co-op member and sit on the Board of Directors.

### How long have you been a wine producer?

Producing wine is in my genes. My grandparents, who were Sicilian, arrived in Argentina in 1927 and planted vines in San Nicolas, a village close to Chilecito where the main winery is located. My uncle was also a member of the co-operative. I became a member of La Riojana co-operative in 1984. All four of my children are also co-op members. We are a family of farmers, with grape

growing being our main business. I studied Agricultural Engineering at university, and I have dedicated myself to agriculture since the day I graduated.

### Which grape varieties do you grow?

Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Bonarda, Malbec, Torrontes Riojano, Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio. I also grow Ancellotta, an Italian red grape variety. I am one of the first to plant Ancellotta in Argentina.

### Which olive varieties do you grow?

Arauco, Arbequina, Picual and Barnea. They are all organic.

### Are your vineyards organic?

Yes, they are 100% organic and were certified 10 years ago.

### What challenges do you face in the future as a wine producer?

One of the biggest challenges is modernization, being able to incorporate new technology, make farming more efficient and do things in such a way that is mindful of the environment.

### How do you foresee the coming 2024 harvest?

It looks like it is going to be a big harvest and a good one.

### How important is Fairtrade to you and the local community?

Fairtrade is fundamental. It allows you to open doors to different markets and at the same time has a huge impact on harmonious development within the community, by helping the workers feel part of the projects. Fairtrade supports the smaller growers within the co-operative system, and without it, life would be more difficult for them.



José Luis with his youngest son (on the right), also a co-op member

Fairtrade allows us to implement socio-economic and sustainable projects, which provide basic services to the community such as water, education, and healthcare. I am proud to belong to a Fairtrade certified co-operative.

### What do you see as the future for La Riojana? Where do you see the opportunities?

I see the future as very positive indeed. There will be a generational change. Our children are in the driving seat now. La Riojana has an innovative approach and is always thinking of ways to improve. We know that we need to use less and produce better, using more efficient methods. The largest challenge we face however is, with so many people moving away from the rural areas, for our children and grandchildren to want to stay and live here so that they can continue to develop their knowledge and carry on producing. And by doing so, generate more jobs and bring more and better opportunities to the area.

CHANGING  
LIVES FOR  
THE BETTER

