

ON THE
GRAPEVINE...



FAIRTRADE PROJECT NEWS

MARCH 2022

HEALTH CENTRE CONSTRUCTION NEARS COMPLETION

The construction of Los Pioneros Health Centre is now over 93% completed.

Metal canopies have been added to the main entrance and to the emergency room entrance at the rear of the building.

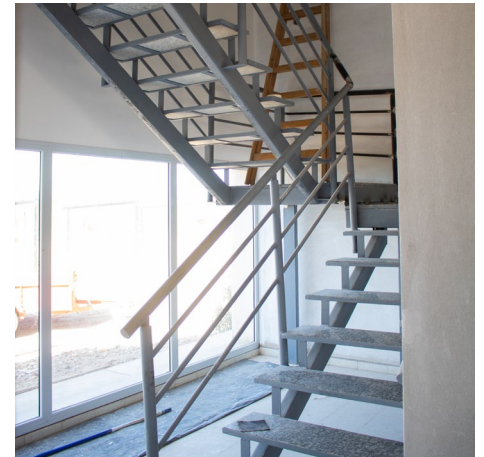
Builders have finished installing the oxygen and compressed air system in the ceiling of the building which will supply the consulting and operating rooms.

Work is currently concentrated on painting both the interior and the exterior of the building, as well as the installation of the electrical and toilet facilities.

Next, the builders will work on undercover parking for medical staff and an entrance gate for the centre.

If everything goes to plan, the construction is expected to be completed by August 2022, however the health centre is not expected to be operational until early 2024.

Please [click here](#) to see the latest advances.



Side view of Los Pioneros Health Centre

LEADING THE WAY

Intrinsic to our co-operative core values is an ecological and ethical approach to farming through sustainable, responsible, and environmentally friendly wine making.

Since first receiving organic certification over 20 years ago, we now have over 1,000 hectares certified as organic, making up over 30% of our total production.

In addition to organic wine making, we have entered the world of biodynamic wines. Something which first started in 2017 with the planting of the first hectares of Malbec and Torrontés Riojano assigned to biodynamic production, and since has grown to include the production of biodynamic certified Merlot, Pinot Gris, Bonarda and Syrah wines.

Biodynamic currently represents 5% of our total production and we have over 130 hectares certified by Demeter for biodynamic production.

Statistics which make La Riojana co-operative Argentina's largest producer of organic and biodynamic wines and therefore one of South America's leading sustainable and responsible wine producers.



LAUNCH OF FIRST BIODYNAMIC WINE RANGE

2022 sees the official launch of Rayo de Luna, La Riojana's first 100% first biodynamic range of wines, which are also 100% Fairtrade certified.

Rayo de Luna is the result of an exciting project which started in July 2017 when we initiated the transition from organic to biodynamic farming with eight hectares planted with Torrontés and Malbec grapes in our Federada vineyards.

Working under biodynamic regulations, we adapted our vineyard activities and treatment

philosophy and switched to a holistic, ecological, and ethical approach to farming, which successfully led to full Demeter certification in 2020 and saw the harvest of our first biodynamic grapes that same year.

Biodynamic management of the vineyards is not only carried out in accordance with the monthly lunar cycle, but it also allows the grapes to take full advantage of the terroir, producing unique characteristics which are then transmitted to the wines.



Newly launched Rayo de Luna Fairtrade Biodynamic Malbec

32ND ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On Saturday 6th November 2021, 186 of our co-operative members from the 6 different departments in La Rioja province gathered in the main bodega in Chilecito to celebrate the co-operative's 32nd Annual General Assembly.

In a climate where participation, respect, fellowship, and democratic spirit prevailed, the members approved the management of the Board of Directors and the tax year ending 31st July 2021, results for which were very positive, despite the complex context experienced during the Covid 19 pandemic.

During the meeting the annual report, financial statements and trustees report were discussed and approved. Counsellor Mariana Bellia presented a report on the activities and investments made with the Fairtrade Premium during the past tax year.

In her detailed presentation, Mariana highlighted the importance of the Fairtrade certification for the co-operative and the need to have the commitment from all its members. Mariana also presented the Assembly with the Fairtrade development plan for 2021 – 2022 which was approved by all those present.

The AGM also saw the election of the Board of Directors and the agreement on the distribution of positions of responsibility. This included the following positions President (Mario Juan González), Vice president (Alfredo Germán Capece), Secretary (José Luis Juárez) and Treasurer (José Luis Bellia).



Mario Juan González, La Riojana President

FAIRTRADE TRACTORS

As part of our Fairtrade investment, in August 2021 we allocated part of the Fairtrade Premium towards the purchase of two new tractors.

The new tractors have been bought so that we can help our smallest members, for example those members with less than 5 hectares each, which make up approximately 80% of our co-operative members.

The idea being each member that uses the tractor is responsible for just half of the tractor driver's hourly salary and the other half is paid for by the Fairtrade Premium.

Introducing this new service is bringing great benefits to our smaller growers, by allowing them to improve the condition of their soil by being able to access tools such as disc harrows, rotavators and brush cutters.

By using these tool attachments in their vineyards, the tractors are not only able to improve soil drainage, therefore making better use of water which is often in scarce supply but they also help reduce the number of weeds and loosen the soil in the vineyards.



OLLY SMITH RECOMMENDS

Well-known, award-winning British wine expert, TV personality and wine columnist Ollly Smith recommended two of our Malbecs in his "Pick of the Bunch" featured in YOU Magazine, Mail on Sunday, published 17th October 2021.

Ollly Smith writes for You in The Mail on Sunday, appears regularly on BBC1s Saturday Kitchen and has his own drinks podcast "A Glass With" with celebrity guests.

Ollly describes our Tilimuqui Fairtrade Organic Malbec 2020 as "a scented splendid red to stock up on" and he describes our Co-op Fairtrade Irresistible Organic Malbec 2019 as an "ace value Fairtrade gem".



Q & A WITH MARISA ACEVEDO, TILIMUQUI SCHOOL'S NEW HEAD

Following the retirement of Luisa Bordon, former head teacher for Colegio Nacional Agrotecnico (CONAG), Marisa Acevedo took over the reins in August 2020 and currently oversees the running of the successful and well-established secondary school in the village of Tilimuqui, whose construction was fully funded by monies raised by the Fairtrade Premium.



Marisa Acevedo, new head for CONAG, Tilimuqui

Q. How long have you been working at CONAG? I could say forever. I started working at the school before it opened in 2010, as one of the people who enrolled the first applicants. Our job was to register applicants using a community room in the village as the school had not been finished yet.

Q. Do you consider yourself a local? Yes, I was born in Nonogasta, a nearby village, and I currently live in Chilecito.

Q. Do you teach at the school? I am a qualified Economics Science teacher, but I do not teach at CONAG.

Q. How has the school impacted education and local community over the last 12 years? It is emotional for me to see the number of pupils growing each year and to see the positive impact the school has had on the village, once a forgotten rural community. In the beginning, many parents who came to Tilimuqui to register their children for the first time told us that they had never visited the village before. Today everyone knows where Tilimuqui is and many people from the village

now also work at the school. We started with just 33 students in 2010 and we expect to have over 545 students when we start our new academic year in February 2022.

Q. Why do parents choose CONAG to educate their children? When we interview the parents, they are very clear on the type of education the school has to offer their children, both inside and outside the classroom. For example, participation in several extracurricular activities such as sports days, regional Olympic games, as well as a range of agricultural tasks out in the field. All of which give our pupils a fully rounded education.

Q. What type of agricultural activities do you carry out? As a school we put a lot of emphasis on organic farming and teach our students how to respect and look after the land. We also teach them about production of olives, grapes, horticultural and fruit trees, as well as looking after birds, rabbits, goats, and sheep.

Q. What are the aspirations of your students? There are varied aspirations. Some students wish to continue their studies at university and others wish to study and work. The comprehensive education offered by the school opens multiple opportunities for their future.

Q. How has the pandemic affected you and the school? It has been a great challenge to educate during a pandemic. In June 2020 we switched to virtual learning which we were able to do efficiently since we had the virtual platform set up by the University of Chilecito. Then after more than one year of teaching virtually, we resumed face to face teaching in August 2021, first for half the classes and finally for all the classes. It was thanks to the University which made all this possible, by taking on the costs of human resources and teaching materials. We hope to emerge stronger than ever from this worldwide crisis.