

# COOMAP NEWS

It's heard that cooperativism is capable of empowering small growers. One of the reasons why people say that is because of the gain of bargaining power due to joint purchases, that is, when hundreds of small growers need the same products, their co-op is able to get lower prices due to the huge quantity to be bought. And that's what we are going to talk about now: our inputs joint purchases event. We call it:

## **Bolsão de Insumos da COOMAP!**



Bolsão in Portuguese means a big group of joint things and since growers need fertilizers for their crops every year, COOMAP organizes an event that lasts only one day, normally in July or August, when growers have the opportunity of purchasing fertilizers, seeds and other inputs they are going to need for their crops right after the harvest, which is at its peak when this event takes place. You might be thinking: oh great... most of the co-ops in Brazil do it! What's the big news? Yeah, you are right... but there is much more involved in our event.

### **Let me explain to you:**

First of all, only members can buy inputs at our event, after all before it happens we have soil samples taken at each of our members farms and they are taken to a lab. With lab results at hand, technicians make prescriptions with the exact amount of fertilizer that our members need and nothing else... needless to say, as we have already mentioned in one of our previous editions, that our technicians do not sell anything and that neither them nor salespeople at our store are commissioned. Well, back to the point... during our Bolsão, each grower has his/her list of what he/she should buy. We mean should because one buys only what he/she wants to. During the event, which starts at 8:00 am and ends only after the last member has made his/her order, our members buy all of the inputs they are going to need until the next harvest at prices that in general are 7 to 10% lower than market

prices and they can pay all of it with coffee from the next harvest, that means easy and cheap credit to them! But once more you might think: How come that COOMAP, a very small co-op, might have cheaper prices than huge co-ops and other inputs retailers? The answer lies in the following aspects:

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1. When closing deals, we pay orders in advance, which allows us to get extra discounts and play harder during negotiations with our suppliers;
2. Since we are a small and well managed co-op, our maintenance cost, including staff, is much lower than other co-ops and because of that our margin on these products is considerably lower.
3. Our team pays lots of attention to fertilizers market, currency and some other aspects that might interfere on the price of inputs so that we purchase everything for this event at the most appropriate moment. That's why we only announce this event 3 or 4 days before it is due and in order to broadcast it all of our technicians visit each member to let them know about our event.

Our Bolsão is on its 13th edition and every year more and more members attend it. As years go by, we see that it has a very positive impact on our member's lives because it means that their crops are always in good health, what increases yields per hectare, even during moments when prices are not so sustainable, like now. This is a key advantage to them, after all when growers are in a tight financial situation there is a trend among them to reduce fertilization.

Thus we are proud to say that our event for joint purchase of inputs is one more way of allowing our members to take care of their crops in a sustainable way, which will result in a fair life to them and their families.





# GROWER OF THE MONTH:

**How many people are necessary to handle a 40-hectare farm? 20..., 30..., maybe 40? Well, not when it comes to Mr. Silva... He takes care of a 40-hectare farm by himself... and he says that he's still got some spare time... Wow! What is his secret? Let's find it out!**

Edgar Goulart da Silva is a hefty, outgoing and easy-smiling 65-year-old grower, who's been married with Mrs. Jucélia for 38 years and is the proud father of 2 girls, one of them is a nutritionist and the other is a doctor. Like most of our growers, he had a very humble beginning, that is, he used to work for other farmers as a daily basis employee. However, he did something different: while working as a rural worker, he also rented some land in order to plant coffee on. Thus He was able to make some extra Money every year and after 3 crops doing that he finally could afford buying his first piece of land and planting 10.000 coffee trees on in it. Nowadays he's got 40 hectares of land, which produce about 32 bags per hectares

He's able to take care of everything because of the machines he's got, including tractors, we say it in the plural because he's still got his first tractor, although it is just a reminder of his early days.



## Family succession

Since he's not a teenager anymore, he's already started preparing his succession by teaching his daughter, the nutritionist one, how to take care of the family farm so that she manages everything in the future.

## Gratefulness

When talking about the co-op, he says he's really grateful to it because in the past he used to use only one kind of fertilizer and after he got technical assistance from COOMAP team, what included soil analysis, he realized that he could improve yields per hectare and have a more sustainable life. That's the main reason for him always putting into practice all of his technician's recommendations.

He even said that if it weren't for COOMAP he would have achieved everything he did. One of the main reasons for him to say that is COOMAP's BOLSÃO DE INSUMOS, the event described above.

He says that in these occasions member's coffee has a much better price than regular market, what allows them to buy all of the fertilizers they need with less coffee (Reminder: in Brazil, inputs are normally purchased with coffee as currency and not money). Something else he's also grateful for are the future sales of coffee, which they receive in advance and have really low rates, in comparison with market rates. Through them he was able to build brand new concrete patios, where he dries all of his production. Finally, he says that Fairtrade Certification has made everything better, including coffee price, member's lives and even the co-op facilities, which provides growers a great support for their activities.



**You see how much it is possible to achieve with lots of hard work, efficient technical assistance and fair commercial practices? Mr. Silva a role model of a grower! We are really proud to have him as one of our members... Oh, we almost forgot to say that he's also a surrogate member of COOMAP fiscal council! Yeah, Mr. Silva is really great... in size, workforce, consciousness and participation!**

**See you next month!**