INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION PROJECT WITH ANAP: SUPPORTING CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN CUBA'S PRIVATE FARMER CO-OPERATIVES

PROGRESS REPORT - June 5, 2014

Meeting with ANAP Nacional and Escuela Niceto Perez to Receive Feedback on Co-op Index Questions

On Thursday morning June 4th, Mavis Alvarez and I were invited to a meeting with Amado Perez and Vladimir Novas (ANAP Nacional) and Armando Hernandez and Professor Leonardo Iglesias (Escuela Niceto Perez) to review their progress since our February workshops, and in particular their analysis of the Coop Index questions.

OVERVIEW:

We thanked ANAP for fulfilling their commitment to provide the two documents requested by us which were sent in early March (recent changes to marketing arrangements for cooperatives in Artemisia an Mayabeque and Law 95).

Professor Leonardo Inglesias provided us with a comprehensive list of the Coop Index questions we need to focus on to make the index consistent with the Cuban context. Their analysis is divided into five categories, each specifying the questions within that category that we need to focus on. Examples are given for each category:

- 1. Questions that need minor editing corrections or contain terminology or language inconsistent with the conceptual framework of Cuba's cooperative farmer movement.
- 2. Questions which are not fully understood.
- 3. Questions that do not correspond to/are inconsistent with Cuba's political system.
- 4. Questions that appear quite complex and may not be easily understood by CPA members (perhaps need to be expressed differently).
- 5. Questions that do not apply in our case.

By the first week in July, ANAP will provide us with a more detailed commentary on each question. A summary commentary appears below.

NOTE: Please bear in mind when reading this that they were considering only the Spanish translations. In some cases misunderstandings reflect a translation issue....

1. Questions that need minor editing corrections or contain terminology or language inconsistent with the conceptual framework of Cuba's cooperative farmer movement: 1, 10, 12, 17, 23, 24, 34, 54, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, 75, 76, 78, 83, 85, 89, 124, 128, 146, 158.

For example (full analysis of all questions noted above will be provided in early June):

Question 1 uses the term "empleados" (employees) but this is not used in CPA's - members are "trabajadores" or "miembres" or "cooperativistas". (Los empleados transmiten información importante oportunamente a otros trabajadores quienes son afectados por esa información - Employees pass on important information to others (affected by it) on time.)

Question 81 repeats the word "habilidades"... (Han incrementado mis habilidades, conocimientos y habilidades a través de mi trabajo en el último año. *My skills, knowledge and abilities have increased through my work in the past year.*)

Question 96 requires editing. (No hay nadie ajeno a la cooperativa que tiene un impacto sobre las decisiones importantes sobre la dirección de la cooperativa. Nobody outside of our co-op has an impact on important decisions about the direction of the co-op.)

2. Questions which are not fully understood (more information required for Escuela Niceto Perez to analyse/comment):

Question 2: Estoy satisfecho con el proceso de contratación en nuestra cooperativa. *I am satisfied with the hiring process in our co-op.*

Comment: Does this question refer to the contract with the employee or the contract for commercialization of goods? (note: reading both the Spanish and he English, I suspect this is just a translation issue.)

Question 18: Los temas de nuestra cooperativan se comunican en el momento oportuno. *Our co-op issues regular communications in a timely fashion*.

Comment: What "temas"? What is considered "el momento oportuno"?

Question 19: Me siento realizado cuando trabajo en la cooperativa. *I feel fulfilled while working in the co-op*.

Comment: Clarification needed. (We had some discussion on this one at the meeting. While "realizado" is the correct translation of "fulfilled" there may be a better way to phrase this... or we need to explain more fully the reasoning behind this question...)

Question 29. Las sugerencias que he hecho para mejorar el funcionamiento de la cooperativa han sido implementados. Suggestions I made that would improve the operation were implemented.

Comment: The implementation of suggestions depends on the analysis of the suggestion by the collective members. (We need to explain more fully the reasoning behind this question. The sensitivity I suspect comes from the perspective that "not all suggestions may be good ones" or "not all good suggestions may be possible to implement". But as I discussed with Mavis while preparing this report, answering this question as worded is an important diagnostic. If 90% feel their "good" suggestions are implemented that speaks to the responsiveness of the collective to change. Its OK if 10% say no – their "good" suggestions may not be so good. Or they may be "good" but not possible under present economic conditions (e.g. "we need to feed the cows more protein"). If a high percentage of members feel their "good" suggestions are not implemented there is a problem that needs a deeper dive. Speaks to communications also… (e.g. do members have a clear understanding of constraints facing the coop?)

Question 60: En la cooperativa, se valora un sentido de humor. A sense of humor is valued in the co-op.

Comment: (There was no specific comment concerning this question.)

Question 63: La cultura de cooperativismo es una parte importante de las actividades de negocio de nuestra cooperativa. Co-op culture is an important part of doing business for our co-op.

Comment: (There was no specific comment concerning this question.)

Question 91. Tengo pleno acceso a toda la información relevante sobre nuestra cooperativa. I have full access to all relevant information about our co-op.

Comment: What is meant by "relevant information"?

Question 130: Nuestra cooperativa tiene mecanismos para asegurar un proceso de apelación independiente en caso de una decision controvertida. *Our co-op has mechanisms that ensure an independent appeals process in case of controversial decisions*.

Question 139: Nuestra cooperativa tiene previsiones justas para los miembros que se jubilan. *Our co-op makes a fair provision for retiring members*.

Question 147: La gestión de la cooperativa se realiza con una visión clara. *The co-op is managed according to a clear vision*.

Comment: Questions 130, 139, 147 are ambiguous – clarification is needed.

3. Questions that do not correspond to/are inconsistent with Cuba's political system:

Question 6: El gobierno no está directamente involucrado en las decisiones de nuestra cooperativa. Government is not directly involved in our co-op's decision making.

Comment: There exist some limits to decision-making due to the laws and resolutions that regulate aspects of the functioning of the production cooperatives. In Cuba, the Revolutionary Government and ANAP are the principle promoters of the development of the cooperative movement and the farmers.

Questions 93: Los miembros de la cooperativa entienden los requisitos para que el negocia tenga éxito. *Members of the co-op understand the requirements for making the business successful.*

Question 97: En nuestra cooperativa, se cree que la mejor manera de desarrollar nuestro negocio es no ceder en nuestros valores y principios. Our co-op believes that the best way to develop our business is to not compromise on our values and principles.

Question 98: El enfoque de nuestra cooperativa es crear un negocio ecológicamente sostenible. Our co-op is focused on creating an environmentally sustainable business.

Comment: Questions 93, 97 and 98 are based on the concept of the cooperative as a "business" and in Cuba the cooperative is not only a "business".

Question 114: Los valores del cooperativismo nos guían en la entrega de nuestros productos o servicios, para que se distinguen entre los de nuestros rivales que no sean cooperativas. Co-op values make the way we deliver our products / services different from those of non co-op competitors.

Comment: (There is not yet any specific comment related to this question. Mavis suggests "rivales" is too hard a word in this context.)

4. Questions that appear quite complex and may not be easily understood by CPA members (perhaps need to be expressed differently):

Question 77: Soy consciente de los retos estratégicos a los cuales se enfrentan la junta directiva en este momento. *I am aware of the strategic challenges the Board of directors currently face.*

Question 79: Tengo influencia sobre la estrategia de la cooperativa. *I have an impact on the strategy of the co-op.*

Question 83: Es importante para los miembros y empleados que la cooperativa mantenga un negocio sostenible. It is important to members and employees that the co-op maintains a sustainable business.

Comment for Questions 77, 79 and 83: Are sustainable businesses only intended to have good economic results? Are they not interested in being ecologically sustainable?

Question 101: En el momento de tomar decisiones sobre adquisiciones, tengo en cuenta el asunto de comercio ético. *I take into account ethical trade issues in my purchasing decisions*.

Comment: Concept of commercial ethics? (clarification?)

Question 108: Nuestra cooperativa está suficientemente bien organizada como para mantener la viabilidad del negocio. *Our co-op is organized well enough to maintain the business's viability.*

Comment: (There is not yet any specific comment related to this question.)

Question 141: Nuestra cooperativa reconoce que la innovación implica cierto riesgo. *Our co-op recognizes that innovation involves some risk.*

Comment: On the other hand, we must consider what are the possible risks of "innovation.

Question 162: Los miembros del equipo de la dirección administran bien las finanzas de nuestra cooperativa. *Members of the management team are good in managing our co-op's finances*.

Comment: This runs the risk that "good" cooperatives are in accord with this question and "bad" ones are not, nevertheless in the end the ultimate problems may not be related to finances or not only to finances.

5. Questions that do not apply in our case:

Questions 8: El gobierno no está directamente involucrado en las decisiones de nuestra cooperativa. *In case of a financial crisis at the co-op, I would be ready to voluntarily give up a part of my compensation for some time.*

Question14: Tengo influencia sobre la contratación de personal en mi área de trabajo de la cooperativa. *I have influence on hiring in my area of the work / coop.*

Question 15: Nuestra cooperativa promueve la cultura de cooperativismo en la sociedad. *Our co-op promotes co-op culture in society.*

Comment (Questions 8, 14, 15): In Cuba, as we have already said, it is the State and ANAP who provide and promote the cooperative culture in the society (and not only in the countryside).

Question 21: Estoy satisfecho con la calidad de los productos y servicios que se ofrecen a los clientes. *I am satisfied with the quality of products and services offered to customers/clients.*

Comment: Is there not more logic to the question "do the clients value the quality of the products and services offered by the cooperative?"

Question 22: Estaría dispuesto (de acuerdo con mis habilidades) a aumentar mi inversión/participación en la cooperativa si fuera necesario. *I would be willing (according to my ability) to increase my investment in the co-op if needed.*

Comment: In Cuba, the cooperativistas do not invest in the cooperative. (This question is not clearly understood – at the end of each year, by decision of the general assembly, surplus is allocated to monthly salaries received in anticipation, bonuses based on performance, and reinvestment – normally 50% - back in the cooperative.)

Questions 25: Estoy satisfecho con la independencia que tengo en mi trabajo. *There is a friendly atmosphere in the co-op.*

Question 28: Los despidos siempre están justificados. *Dismissals are always justified.*

Comment: (There are not yet any specific comments related to the above questions.)

Question 31: Puedo vivir de mi salario y da también para ahorrar y/o pagar las deudas personales. The pay allows me to cover living expenses, and also to save or pay off debt.

Comment: Given the actual conditions in Cuba and depending on the type of cooperative, it is very unlikely that anyone will respond that they can live on their wages, pay off debts and put money aside for savings.

Questions 42: Tengo la oportunidad de influenciar la decisión sobre cuáles serán las tareas mias. I have the opportunity to influence which tasks I will perform.

Question 49: Estaría dispuesto a sacrificar parte de mi tiempo libre para entender mejor cómo funciona la cooperativa. I would be ready to sacrifice some of my free time to better understand how the co-op works.

Question 57: Tengo influencia sobre la distribución de los excedentes (utilidades) en la cooperativa. I have influence on how surplus (profit) is distributed in the co-op.

Question 59: Tengo una importante participación financiera en la cooperativa. *I have a significant financial stake in the co-op.*

Question 75: Los miembros y los empleados son honestos en sus relaciones comerciales con la cooperativa. *Members and employees are honest in their dealings with the co-op.*

Question 80: Los empleados pueden tomar muchas decisiones importantes sin consultar previamente a sus supervisores. *Employees can make many important decisions without consulting first with their supervisors.*

Question 96: No hay nadie ajeno a la cooperativa que tiene un impacto sobre las decisiones importantes sobre la dirección de la cooperativa. *Nobody outside of our co-op has an impact on important decisions about the direction of the co-op.*

Question 156: Aunque alguien tenga capital o invierte capital en nuestra cooperativa, si no es miembro no puede ser parte de la junta directiva. Nobody from outside of our co-op members sits on the board of directors because they own/invest capital in the co-op.

Question 166: Se tratan con justicia a todos nuestros socios de negocio. *All of our business partners are treated fairly.*

Comment: (There are not yet any specific comments related to the above questions.)