

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

Dear Members of the Board of Directors, Supervisory Committee of SPP, and ad hoc Review Commission,

I hereby formally submit my resignation from the Supervisory Board of SPP, effective immediately.

This decision has not been made lightly. During the nearly six years I have served on the committee, I have been deeply committed to the mission and values of the SPP. Cooperative Coffees, being a cooperative organization grounded in the social and participatory economy, fully shares the values embraced by the SPP in its Declaration of Principles and Values. As an organization that seeks to empower small producers, roasters, and consumers through participatory economic structures, we believe in the power of organization, self-management, and democracy to address the power imbalances between the South and the North. Since SPP is an organization that unites and represents more than two-thirds of our suppliers, it is important for Cooperative Coffees to maintain ties and participation in the SPP. It is precisely because of this representation that my participation in the Supervisory Committee (CV) has always vied for its institutional integrity and democratic foundations. However, following the Extraordinary Assembly on May 15 and 16, I realize that my work has yielded few positive results in the face of the challenges of the past year of crisis, and I can no longer justify the time and energy to maintain my participation in the CV while neglecting my duties at Cooperative Coffees during this time.

In my capacity on the Supervisory Committee, I spent many hours trying to generate solutions and proposals to help break out of a negative spiral. With my colleagues on the CV, we tried to advance Percolab's external support for a strategic review process aimed at realigning consensus and redirecting our work. Unfortunately, we did not have the trust and participation of all the actors in this conflict. Despite this, we managed to hold a workshop with a large majority of the Board of Directors and CV present, including our colleagues Carolina Cruz, Miriam Tenorio and Oliveros Alberca. There was an atmosphere of great understanding, constructive spirit, and optimism about the future of the SPP, and for a moment I had hope for positive results and the continuation of this exercise in the Extraordinary Assembly. However, there is no consistency between what we observed in that workshop and what we read days later in the resignation letters from the CACAONICA, El Ceibo, and FAPECAFES BoD colleagues. It wasn't until the external coordination of these resignations (among other missives contrary to the BD's work) by Edison Ramos of Ethiquable was revealed that I was convinced of the political bad faith that sought to sabotage, amputate, and disable this board's work.

One of Percolab's interviewees noted that in SPP there is a "...lack of correspondence between values and structure with practice, leading to the need to redesign the model so that the values match the practice." From Percolab's report, I learned that good governance is a balance of three elements - structure, the culture of interaction among its members, and common values. Today in SPP, our values are not being embodied, and therefore we are letting cynicism and disrespect govern our relations. Decisions have rarely been made by consensus. Assemblies have forced divisive votes, and opposing parties attempt to advance their interests through political machinations. Violence in discourse and behavior has become normalized and there has been a constant violation of the SPP's Principles and Values, with no consequences whatsoever. Meanwhile, the system is falling apart. There is a permanent state of urgency and crisis, leading to the exhaustion of the operational team and directors. Efforts are



directed towards filing complaints or responding to letters, which diminishes the capacity and energy to focus on building SPP.

Every successful collective project must enjoy broad trust and a sense of belonging from its constituents. The feeling of belonging in the SPP is fragile, and trust is almost nonexistent. I had hoped that an extraordinary assembly could present Percolab's diagnosis and initiate a process of collective reflection to heal divisions and begin to rebuild trust. The assembly was supposed to be the culmination of months of work for this purpose, and it was a great personal disappointment of mine not to achieve the planned agenda.

I accept the assembly's decision to take matters into its own hands by appointing a commission to review bylaws and regulations with the aim of expediting an Ordinary Assembly and appointing a new Board of Directors. However, there are core problems in SPP that cannot be ignored. An exercise in reviewing bylaws and regulations, without a process of soul-searching, will only prolong the SPP's failure. This ad hoc review board must advance a strategic planning process taking into account some of Percolab's recommendations in its report. Trust and a sense of belonging among SPP members must be rebuilt by changing its meeting culture. Serious conversations about the financial model must take place, exploring other forms of financing without relying on buyer contributions to avoid the power dynamics that dependency creates. The voice of producers must be strengthened, creating more spaces for open discussion and airing discontent to avoid situations like those that occurred in the months leading up to the EGA. It is crucial that the SPP also reflect on how its values of self-management are embodied and executed and clarify the governance model and decision-making process. The decision-making protocol must align with the organization's values and vision. In all these processes, the SPP must not fear the possibility of letting go of members who are not committed to building a commercial promotion model that is centered on small producers.

I have valued the opportunity to work alongside such a dedicated group of individuals and have learned a lot from the experience. I sincerely hope that the governance issues can be resolved and that the SPP finds success. Despite my best efforts, the enormity of these challenges requires energy and time that I unfortunately no longer have after a year of efforts.

I thank my colleagues on the Supervisory Committee for the opportunity to serve alongside them, for their support, willingness, and dedication to move the work forward. I appreciate all the support and commitment from the Operational Team. I wish the Operational Team, the Board of Directors, the Supervisory Committee, and the new ad hoc review committee much serenity, wisdom, and strength in the months to come.

Sincerely,

Felipe Gurdían Piza
Cooperative Coffees