

THE COOPERATIVE AND PARTICIPATIVE SUPERMARKET IN THE CITY OF VALENCIA IN SPAIN

In 2020 [Som Alimentació, the cooperative and participative supermarket](#) created in the city of Valencia (Spain) and managed by a cooperative whose members are at the same time clients and owners, celebrated two years of operation.

Som Alimentació is inspired by the experiences and successes of participatory supermarkets implemented since the 1970s in New York (United States), France and Belgium.

With its own features adapted to the context, the Supermarket emphasizes with its slogan *L'alimentació en mans de la gent* its vocation to be an alternative to large distribution chains. The objective of the cooperative is to implement a new consumption model where consumers and food producers can bet on higher quality, healthier, local and ecological products, offering better prices for all.

The *Som Alimentació* Supermarket, which opened on 19 May 2018, is managed by a cooperative and members participate by paying a monthly fee of 6 euros or offering 4 hours of work per month, while a team of workers manage the day-to-day running of the activities. In this way the Supermarket can offer cheaper prices and create a community of people committed to their own nutrition.

The Supermarket is open to the general public and not only to the members of the cooperative. The shop, with an area of more than 200 square meters, offers more than 1,200 products and is open at working hours from Monday to Saturday. It also functions through an online shop, facilitating ecommerce and delivering orders to consumers in the city of Valencia and other towns.

The shop offers a wide range of products to meet the demand for all basic home purchases, including *food products* (fruit and vegetables, milk and drinks, bread, pasta, rice, cereals, dairy products, eggs and meat, vegetarian and vegan products, processed products and preserves); *hygiene and cosmetic products* (personal hygiene, creams and personal care) and *cleaning products* (for washing machines, house and bathroom).

The criteria for the selection of products are approved by the Supermarket's Governing Council on the proposal of the Suppliers' Team which is open to the participation of the cooperative's members. They must comply with *Som Alimentació's* principles and values, which are set out in the cooperative's Internal Regulations and are approved by the General Assembly of members.

All products are organic, agroecological, artisanal and fair trade. [Through a complex system of established partnerships](#), the Supermarket presents each product with an official seal of quality awarded by an organization that ensures that it meets the



corresponding criteria. For each product a label shows its origin and the production chain. The products identified as agroecological, in addition, show the [Seals of Participative Guarantee following the IFOAM regulations](#). Through these initiatives, the Supermarket creates linkages between producers and certification organizations, opening new perspectives and opportunities to add value to their products in the organic market.

The Supermarket has adopted measures to make the management of its activities sustainable, for example by reducing food, energy and water waste, sending all organic matter to be composted, using 100% renewable energy, that is produced by a local partner cooperative. In addition, in two years the Supermarket has managed to save more than 20,000 plastic bags, by asking each customer to bring its own bags and containers to buy bulk products. By its example and campaigns, it more generally promotes responsible consumption among its members and consumers.

In two years of work, the Supermarket *Som Alimentació* has achieved important results, fulfilling its aspirations to be a viable and efficient alternative to large scale distribution. In particular:

- The Cooperative achieved a broadening of its social base more than significant, from 291 founding members in 2018 to 635 participants in 2020. A broad social base allows a participatory supermarket to reduce the prices of the products, in addition to providing advantages to the producers.
- The Supermarket *Som Alimentació* pays producers, on average, more than twice per product than other local supermarkets.
- 85% of the products are organic and handmade, coming from a short *kilometre zero* commercial chain or from fair trade. The Supermarket has ensured the consumption of more than 50,000 kg of local fruit and vegetables, mainly from the regions of L'Horta de València, La Ribera and El Comtat.
- The Cooperative has supported more than 35 projects of ecological and local production and transformation, considering the producers as part of their community and thus managing to ensure the sale of fresh and quality products in the quantities required by the Supermarket.

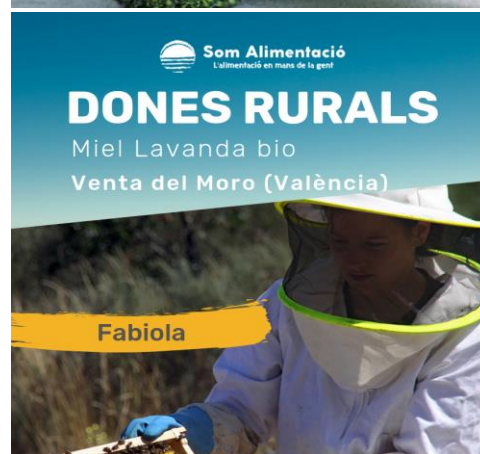
The network of more than 30 participatory supermarkets being implemented in different countries shows the great potential of this innovative way of managing the distribution of food and basic consumers goods. In particular, by favoring short commercial chains in alliance with local producers, these supermarkets represent a very relevant solution to strengthen territorial development processes and reduce the exodus from rural and mountain areas. Furthermore, the continuous increase of members recorded among cooperatives in all current practices demonstrates the great interest of consumers in taking an active role in enjoying higher quality, local, seasonal and organic products.

The management system adopted by the *Som Alimentació* participatory supermarket in Valencia can be replicated in all cities and countries where the cooperative movement is already developed and where cooperatives have access to funds and loans for the initial investments of the projects to implement the structure.

To know more

[Som Alimentació website](#)

[Som Alimentació in Facebook](#)



[Article in valenciabonita.es](http://valenciabonita.es)

[Article in fundaciohortasud.org](http://fundaciohortasud.org)

[Article in cuatro.com](http://cuatro.com)

[Article in cadenaser.com](http://cadenaser.com)

[Article in sostenible.cat](http://sostenible.cat)

[Article in Revista Agroecologia.net](http://Revista Agroecologia.net)

[Article on Participative Supermarkets - El Pais](#)

[Park Slope Food Coop New York website](#)

[La Louve Supermarché Paris website](#)

[Participative Supermarkets Network in France and Belgium](#)

