



# MAPPING: KEY FIGURES

## NATIONAL REPORT: COSTA RICA

ICA – EU PARTNERSHIP



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## I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This report is part of a Mapping exercise launched by the International Cooperative Alliance and its regional offices, within the framework of a partnership signed with the European Commission for the period 2016-2020. The programme aims to strengthen the cooperative movement and its capacity to promote international development. Other research projects led within this partnership include a worldwide Legal Frameworks Analysis, and several thematic researches on themes of significance for cooperatives.

Responding to challenges and existing knowledge gaps facing the cooperative movement, this research seeks to provide exhaustive information on cooperatives worldwide. This is achieved through a process jointly conducted by the ICA and its four regional offices – Cooperatives of the Americas, Cooperatives Europe, ICA Africa, and ICA Asia-Pacific – using a common methodology. Each office collected the input of ICA members present in the countries within its geographic area, by using the same questionnaire, and completing it with relevant national statistics, in order to obtain an accurate picture of the national situation.

Mapping out cooperatives in each country provides a more precise picture of the cooperative context at national and regional levels, enhances the movement's visibility, networking, partnerships opportunities, as well as advocacy, and empowers cooperators by providing them tools for positive change.

Within this framework, the present report showcases information about the cooperative landscape in Costa Rica.

## i. Historical background

According to the document drafted by the Costa Rican researcher Johnny Mora Alfaro<sup>1</sup>, in 1907 the Cooperative Workers' Society was founded, with artisan members based in San José; which were organized to facilitate the commercialization of basic goods for general consumption and to try to eliminate the role of intermediaries who hoarded profits. Despite the creation of this labor movement, a decade prevailed until the next creation of a cooperative at the national level, in this case, the Sociedad Cooperativa de Consumos, Ahorro y Socorros Mutuos, which was constituted by workers from the Ministry of Development and Public Works workshop in 1917; followed by the creation of nine other cooperatives between 1917 and 1923.

Based on these movements, the Costa Rican State identified cooperative initiatives as a tool for economic and social development, for which it promoted the creation of the Cooperative and Industrial Society and the Constructor Cooperative Society to meet the needs of sensitive areas such as construction and house repairs, construction of bridges, buildings and other public works developed by the State.

Despite the success of these cooperatives in Costa Rica, there was again a period of a decade of cooperative inactivity until 1935, the year in which the cooperative sector of consumption, savings, credit and mutual aid regained importance as a measure to mitigate losses from the effects of the economic crisis of the early 1930s, with the difference that they no longer arise from the confederations of public workers, but from the civilian population in general that seek to satisfy certain specific needs of the time.

In order to promote cooperativism at the national level, in 1968 the National Institute for Cooperative Development (INFOCOOP)<sup>2</sup> was established through Law 4179 on “Cooperative Associations and creation of INFOCOOP and other related regulations”<sup>3</sup>, which is responsible for disseminating, promoting, strengthening, finance and supervise cooperative associations to improve the living conditions of members and strengthen the national democratic culture. In addition, by May 1980, the Legislative Assembly approved law number 6437, which establishes the compulsory nature of the teaching of

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<sup>1</sup> Johnny Mora A. Cooperativismo y Estado: La experiencia costarricense. Instituto de Fomento Cooperativo. Unpublished.

<sup>2</sup> For more information visit [www.infocoop.go.cr/](http://www.infocoop.go.cr/)

<sup>3</sup> Law 4179 on Cooperative Associations and creation of INFOCOOP. (1968). Printed version.

cooperativism in all primary and secondary educational centers of the country, both public and private, and its appropriate integration in all education plans.

## ii. Public national statistics

For a more comprehensive picture of the cooperative movement in Costa Rica, the present section provides key data from the country's public registers as a useful background context to the ICA members' data showcased in Section II of the report.

The following data comes from the Synthesis of the IV National Cooperative Census 2012: State of cooperativism in Costa Rica, carried out by INFOCOOP and the State of the Nation<sup>4</sup>.

### NUMBER OF COOPERATIVES:

In 2012, the country had 594 cooperatives, of which 376 (63.3%) are categorized in the census as adult cooperatives and 218 (36.7%) as school and student cooperatives. In the case of adult cooperatives, 35% are concentrated in the province of San José, followed by Alajuela with 23%, Puntarenas with 16%, Guanacaste and Cartago with 7% and Limón and Cartago 6% for both cases.

### EMPLOYMENT:

The IV National Cooperative Census counted a total of 17 599 direct jobs generated by cooperatives in Costa Rica (63.7% men and 36.3% women).

### COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP:

Through the census, INFOCOOP determined that the number of people associated with the Costa Rican cooperatives was 860 855, representing 21% of the Costa Rican population; of which 57.3% were men and 42.7% women.

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<sup>4</sup> Synthesis of the IV National Cooperative Census 2012. (2012). Available at: [https://www.infocoop.go.cr/sites/default/files/2020-01/censo\\_cooperativo\\_cr2012.pdf](https://www.infocoop.go.cr/sites/default/files/2020-01/censo_cooperativo_cr2012.pdf)

## PRODUCTION VALUE:

Costa Rica does not have exact data on the contribution of cooperatives to the national GDP; However, the 2012 census indicates that cooperatives for adults sold a total of 728 thousand million colones (CRC) for products and services (approximately 1.1 thousand million euros<sup>5</sup>).

### iii. Research methodology

The aim of the mapping research is to collect and make publicly available reliable and up-to-date data to understand what the cooperative movement represents in the targeted country. With this view, the data detailed in the present report has been collected using the methodology detailed below.

The methodological tools include a questionnaire used to collect the data, which was distributed online to the members, as well as a methodological note provided for further guidance. They were built jointly with all ICA regional offices with the support of external experts from the European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises (Euricse) and are applied in a harmonised way in all the target countries.

The classifications used in the research are consistent with the internal system used within the ICA movement (e.g. on membership status and types of cooperative organisations) and with standards increasingly adopted in recent studies and by international organisations like the ILO – e.g. using international classifications of economic activities such as the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) rev. 4, which ensures the comparability of statistics both nationally and internationally, as well as with statistics on other forms of enterprises.

Regarding the target organisations, considering that a worldwide survey has very challenging goals, and while the value of directly collecting data from non-member cooperatives must be recognised, the present Mapping exercise targets cooperative organisations members of the ICA.

Furthermore, in order to complete the ICA members' data, the decision was taken to also look at external sources, to provide additional and more exhaustive cooperative statistics

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<sup>5</sup> Exchange rate in December 2012 from InfoEuro, 1EUR = 647.7CRC

for the country. As a result, the data is collected following two strategies contemporaneously: 1) collecting statistics already available in the country; 2) carrying out a survey targeting ICA cooperative members.

In Costa Rica, the mapping questionnaire was distributed and completed by 3 ICA member organizations. After further follow-up of the surveyed members, the figures provided were compiled to be presented in the next section.

## II. KEY FIGURES

This section presents the results of data collection conducted by ICA members, which is the same as the general estimates for the country provided in the introduction, since the coverage represents 100% of the total number of cooperatives in the country.

Costa Rica has 8 ICA member organizations (7 full members and 1 associate member):

- **Banco Popular y de Desarrollo Comunal (BPDC).** Full member.

On July 11, 1969, the Banco Popular y Desarrollo Comunal was created, through Law 4351, with the objective of promoting development and providing economic protection to the country's workers. The BPDC is a financial conglomerate that serves the needs and expectations of people, companies, institutions, and social organizations. Sector: Finance.

- **Centro de Estudios y Capacitación Cooperativa R.L. (CENECOOP).** Full member.

It is a non-profit cooperative auxiliary body founded in 1982; dedicated and committed to training, education and research for the development of the cooperative movement in a sustainable way in accordance with cooperative values and principles. Sector: Cooperative education.

- **Consejo Nacional de Cooperativas (CONACCOOP).** Full member.

It is a non-state public entity and is the governing body of the Costa Rican cooperative movement, whose purpose responds to the representation and defense of the sector. Consequently, it is a political body, that is, it must dictate the broad guidelines by which cooperativism should be governed. Sector: National integration.

- **Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Ande N° 1 R.L. (Coope Ande N°1 R.L.).**  
Full member.

It began as an idea of several members of the Branch of the National Association of Educators (ANDE) of San José at the beginning of 1965, with the purpose of providing a financial solution to colleagues in the education sector. Sector: Finance.

- **Sociedad de Seguros de Vida del Magisterio Nacional (SSVMN).** Full member.

Since its creation in 1920, the primary function of the Sociedad de Seguros de Vida del Magisterio Nacional has been the administration of mutual life insurance for workers in the Costa Rican public and private education. Sector: Insurance.

- **Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito de los Servidores Públicos, R.L., (COOPESERVIDORES, R.L - CS).** Full member.

In 1957 the cooperative arose to provide credit, personal and solidarity savings, facilitate credits at reasonable rates, and promote cooperative education in employees of the Civil Service Regime. Sector: Finance.

- **Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito de Servidores Judiciales R.L. (COPEJUDICIAL R.L.).** Full member.

En 1981 se funda la Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito del sector del Poder Judicial, y para los familiares de los asociados y personas que laboren en otras Instituciones Públicas, brindando al asociado soluciones financieras y de bienestar social, que contribuyan a mejorar su calidad de vida Sector: Finanzas.

- **Instituto Nacional de Fomento Cooperativo (INFOCOOP).** Associate member.

Founded in 1973, it is the public institution in charge of disseminating, promoting, strengthening, financing, and supervising cooperative associations in Costa Rica. Sector: Promotion entity.

ICA member organizations are directly or indirectly active in the following sectors, in order of the largest number of cooperatives:

- Banking and insurance
- Commerce

- Industry
- Agriculture and food industry
- Education
- Transportation
- Accommodation and food
- Public services
- Administrative services
- ICT's
- Health
- Construction
- Housing
- Professional services
- Others

#### iv. ICA member data

The data collected was provided for the year 2012, in order to present more relevant information due to the scarcity of data for 2017.

#### v. General overview

This section provides an overview of the ICA membership data for Costa Rica. It is displayed in various categories and supported by tables and graphs, for clarity.

Category	Total
Number of cooperatives	376
Number of memberships	860 855
Number of employees	17 599

Overall, ICA members represent 376 cooperatives in the country, with a total number of memberships of 860 855 and a total number of 17 599 employees. User cooperatives,

producer cooperatives, worker cooperatives, and multi-stakeholder cooperatives are all present in Costa Rica.

## vi. Sector overview

The sectors used below correspond to the categories used in the ISIC rev. 4. to classify the economic activities carried out by the organisations concerned. With regards to the turnover, where available, the amount is provided in colones (CRC).

A general overview is provided in the chart below:

Sector	Cooperatives	Employees	Memberships	Turnover <sup>6</sup>
Banking and insurance	83	2 997	628 334	90 167
Commerce	47	1 833	17 417	36 871
Industry	45	5 983	13 827	483 713
Agriculture and food industry	39	1 686	14 637	20 165
Education	39	320	1 341	1 025
Transportation	34	1 503	3 300	8 840
Accommodation and food	17	280	435	1 000
Public services	11	1 064	177 399	52 986
Administrative services	11	404	542	766
ICT's	8	284	677	634
Health	6	584	609	8 000
Construction	3	5	48	12
Housing	2	5	429	85
Professional services	1	14	14	-
Others	30	6 37	1 846	23 757
<b>Total</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>17 599</b>	<b>860 855</b>	<b>728 022</b>

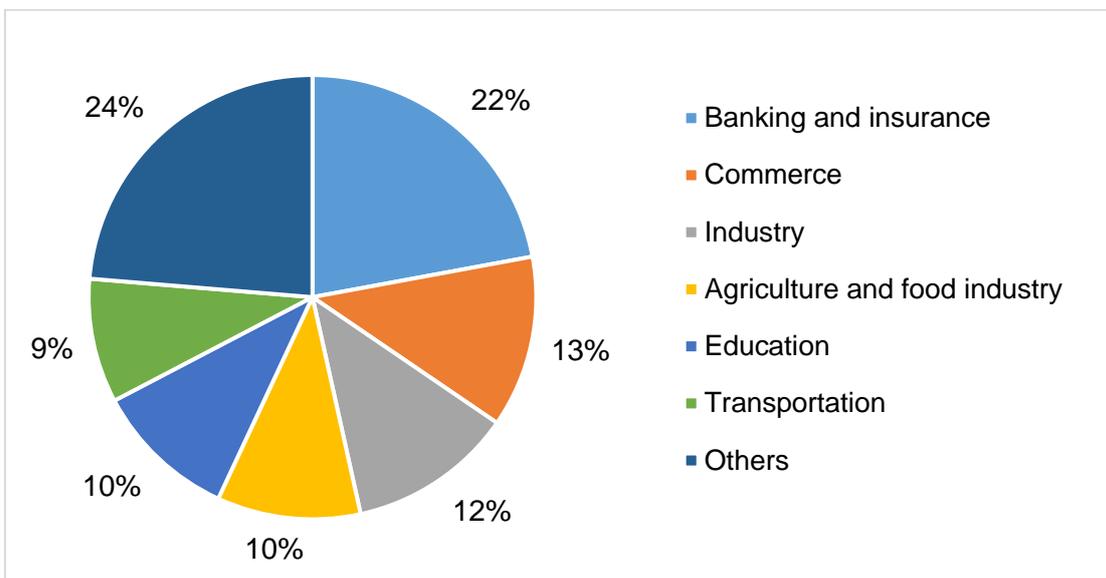
<sup>6</sup> Data in million colones (CRC).

Exchange rate in December 2012 from InfoEuro, 1EUR = 647.7CRC

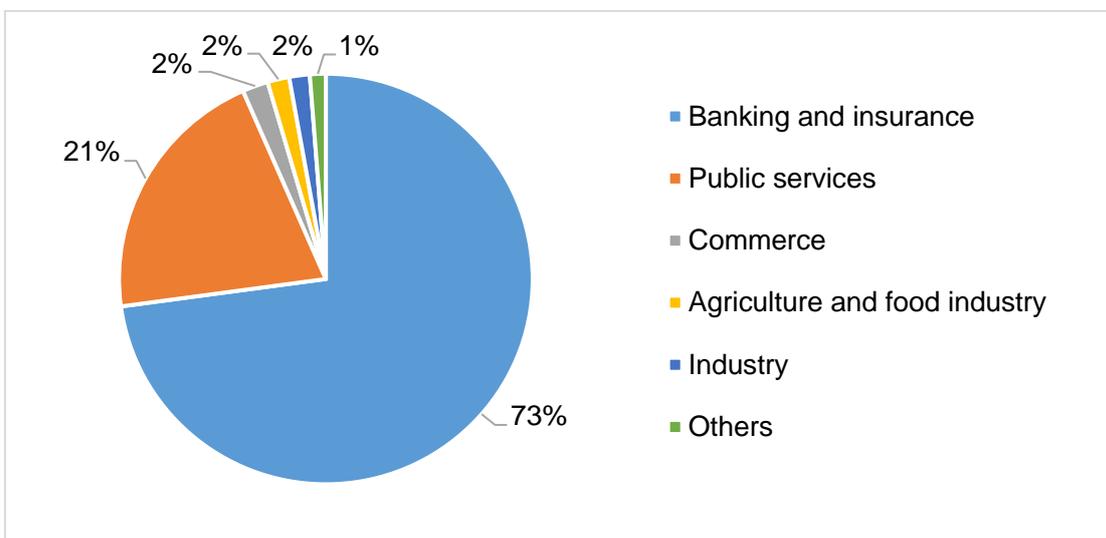
### III. GRAPHS

Specific variables are also detailed in the graphs below when sectorial data was available.

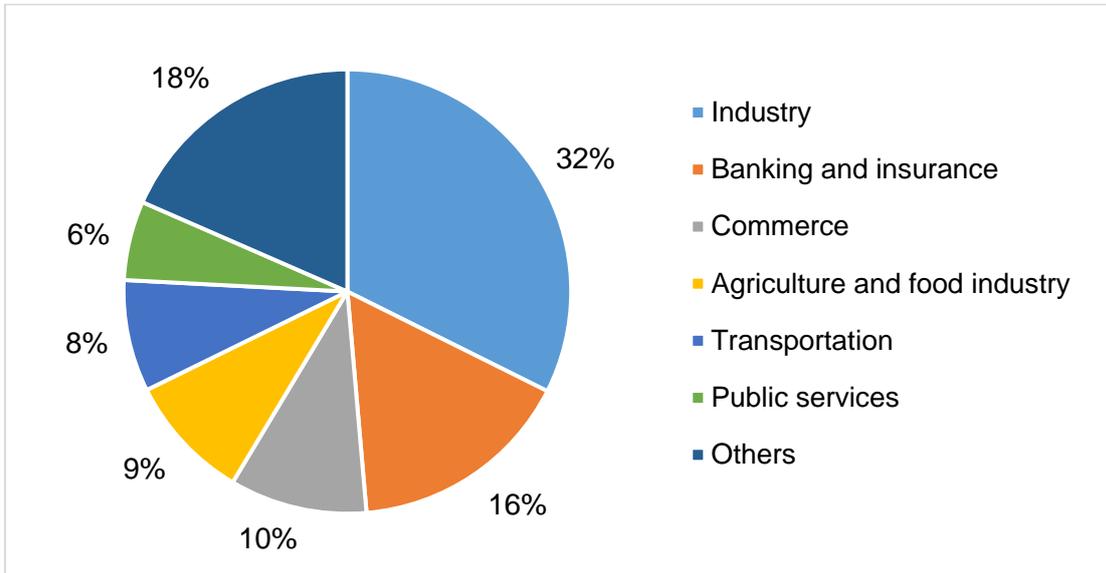
#### vii. Percentage of total cooperatives by sector



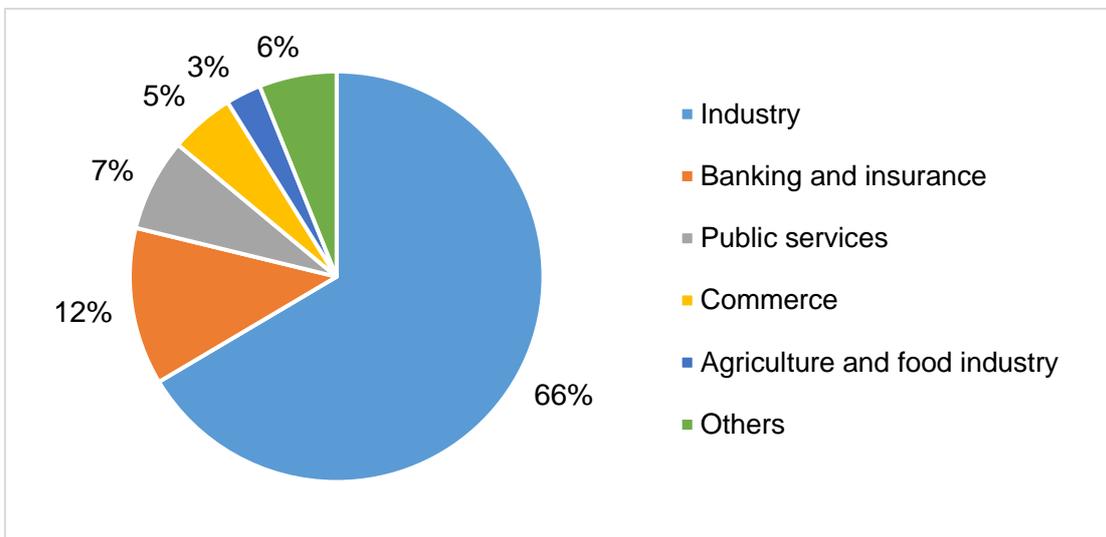
#### viii. Percentage of total memberships by sector



**ix. Percentage of total employees by sector**



**x. Percentage of total turnover by sector**



## IV. ANNEXES

### Sources:

Mora, Johnny. (s.f.). Cooperativismo y Estado: La experiencia costarricense. Instituto de Fomento Cooperativo. Unpublished.

Law 4179, Asociaciones Cooperativas y creación del INFOCOOP. (1968). Gobierno de Costa Rica. Printed version.

Law 6437, Enseñanza obligatoria del cooperativismo. (1980). Gobierno de Costa Rica. Available at: <http://goo.6gl/mrweYY>

INFOCOOP & Estado de la Nación. (2012). Síntesis IV Censo Nacional Cooperativo 2012. Available at: [https://www.infocoop.go.cr/sites/default/files/2020-01/censo\\_cooperativo\\_cr2012.pdf](https://www.infocoop.go.cr/sites/default/files/2020-01/censo_cooperativo_cr2012.pdf)

### Contacts

Further details on the Mapping research and other country reports are available on [www.coops4dev.coop](http://www.coops4dev.coop)

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