

## THE USE OF COACHING IN THE AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAIN

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Agricultural organizations are faced with continuous processes of change: economic openness, national and international competition between companies, adaptation to new business management models -Corporate Social Responsibility-, changing markets and the need to comply with regulations and certifications. This has led to the generation of a great demand for knowledge, preparation and motivation of the people who work in the organizations and in the agribusiness environment. Organizations are obliged to seek strategies or business techniques that allow them to guarantee survival and increase their levels of competitiveness. Among these techniques the coaching technique is highly positioned. The objective of the research was to analyze the use of coaching in the agricultural value chain as a tool to contribute to rural development. The study analyzed 50 coaching companies in Spain, from which qualitative and quantitative data of agricultural and rural coaching were taken. Moreover, a sample of 22 coached agribusinesses in Spain was characterized in order to obtain a profile of the coaching in the agricultural value chain. Frequency, contingency and significance analysis were used to characterize the performance of coaching in the agricultural value chain. The results show that a business attitude among coaching is needed while the use of a combination of coaching tools could improve the agricultural value chain and rural development. It is necessary to promote the coaching techniques among the agricultural value chain, especially at the first stages of the chain, in order to increase the agricultural businesses competitiveness and to contribute to the rural development.

*Keywords: agribusiness, competitiveness, leadership, motivation, Rural Development*

### INTRODUCTION

Currently, organizations are facing continuous processes of change: economic openness, national and international competition among companies, adaptation to new business management models -Corporate Social Responsibility-, changing markets and the need to comply with regulations and certifications. This has led to the generation of a great demand for knowledge, preparation and motivation of the people who work in the organizations and the agribusiness environment. In view of this, agricultural organizations are obliged to seek strategies or business techniques that allow them to guarantee survival and increase their levels of competitiveness. Among these techniques, the coaching technique is highly positioned, a training tool that includes topics such as leadership, professional development and solving performance problems, involving personality traits and personal experience. Knowing tools, forming groups of leaders and teachers capable of acting in a changing environment, preparing to face the solution of contingencies in companies and offering them knowledge and training within working groups (Baron and Morin, 2009; Biswas-Diener, 2009; Elston and Boniwell, 2011; Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Haan and Duckwoth, 2012; Kombarakaran et al., 2008; Perkins, 2009; Styhre and Josephson, 2007).

The technique of coaching is presented as a novel business strategy that, according to Cook (2000), originates from the different situations of conflict that arise in the organizations to integrate to the market and to face challenges. Coaching benefit the organization by continually improving staff strengths and, therefore, increases staff performance and productivity through awareness of their own potential (Collins and Palmer, 2011; Hill, 2004).

Sans (2012), López and Moreno (2012) explain that the origins of coaching are not precise, assignable to an author or a stream of thought, but that many sciences, disciplines and thinkers come together. There is no single source, not even a "father" of coaching. There is no single definition, although we can relate the most relevant and universally accepted according to the International Coach Federation (ICF, 2017) "Coaching takes as its starting point the current situation and focuses on what the coachee is willing to do to get to where he would like to be in the future, being aware that any outcome depends on the intentions, choices and actions achieved by the coachee and backed by the professional value of the coach and by the application of the method of coaching". For the European Coaching School (2017) the "Coaching is the art of asking questions to help other people through learning in exploring and discovering new beliefs that result in achievement of goals". At this point, it is noted the "Executive coaching" as a collaborative relationship between middle and senior executives, their organization and an executive coach with two objectives: 1) facilitate the learning of the executive and

the organization and 2) the achievement of previously identified results, and the “Professional coaching” as a personalized and confidential training process through a large set of tools that help fill the gap between where a person is now and where they want to be (in the coaching relationship the coach helps personal development by raising awareness, generating responsibility and building self-confidence) (ASESCO, 2017).

Coaching as a discipline is a rise practice both in Europe and the rest of the world, in the last 12 years has proliferated on a global scale (Torres, 2014). Coaching started in Spain in 2000 with the foundation of the Spanish Coaching Association (ASESCO, 2017). In 2004, the International Coach Federation (ICF, 2017) was presented, more prestigious worldwide above all by the number of associates and its certification system, currently has more than 700 members affiliated in Spain. In the case of Spanish organizations, Arsuaga et al. (2009), explain that the level of penetration of coaching in Spanish companies for the year 2008 was 53%, a somewhat higher percentage in relation to the year 2007 that was 44%. At the same time, it complements that the degree of incorporation that coaching has in Spanish companies is 75% for those who have incorporated it less than three years ago; and 6% over 5 years. It also indicates the influence factors that lead organizations to consider the application of coaching, which are related to organizational changes or strategies (53%) and those related to human resource management guidelines or problems. In this sense, it expresses that the factors for which the organizations do not yet apply coaching processes are: they do not believe in the usefulness of coaching (3%), they still do not raise it (47%), they do not have enough information about their utility and application (38%).

Human capital is the main source of the results that are obtained in an organization, since this depends on the vision, the emotions, the motivation, the development and other characteristics of the personnel. This is why “organizational coaching” focuses on all the staff working within it to achieve goals and goals. In this sense, several authors consider coaching as a way to motivate, develop and retain employees in organizations; always aiming to make companies more competitive in the changing market (Evered and Selman, 1989; Joo, 2005; Orth et al., 1987; Sherman and Freas, 2004 cited by Moen and Federici, 2012). In turn, the International Coach Federation (ICF, 2017), establishes a series of benefits of coaching for organizations, which are: to quickly and efficiently consolidate new promotions or changes of assignment, increase the loyalty of internal talent, integrate methodology that multiplies the capacities of the people, innovate in processes or management models and enhance business results. According Musicco (2013) establishes that this discipline opens the way to a new way of leading companies in the realm of a new humanist capitalism. There are many benefits that derive from the implementation of an ethical process in the company and some "surpass the business sphere to enter the human and cultural dimension of a society" by means of the improvement of the work climate; reduce interpersonal conflicts in the organization; reduce staff turnover and absenteeism; retention of talent; the development of creativity and innovation, the development of personal talents; greater self-realization at work; greater motivation and involvement of staff to achieve business goals; a better image of the company in the market also thanks to the positive words of its customers and suppliers; a higher turnover and greater profit, in short: greater productivity. Coaching is useful in organizations to accelerate the development of the competencies of each manager and the groups, stimulate motivation, and improve the work climate and the benefits to achieve new objectives in the phases of organizational change. And for people means having a professional accompanying him to focus on the goals of professional and personal development and the daily realization of the challenges that arise. In turn, Lozano (2008) quoted by Muñoz and Diaz (2014) affirms that coaching is viable and applicable in all aspects of life, and at the organizational level it becomes a technique with the capacity to develop skills and competencies of the executives of the companies, managers, leaders, executives and the rest of the employees as a benefit for the achievement of the objectives and the increase of the competitiveness of the organization.

In this sense, the research focused on the coaching applied at organizational level, associated with the agricultural value chain as a contribution to rural development. The value chain looks at the way in which the agricultural stakeholders along the chain deal with the goods passing through their hands to increase or add to their value at each stage (Peña et al., 2008). This involves all the links in the agricultural chain from production in rural areas to end use or consumption, including commercialisation, distribution and the revenue to producers contributing to rural development (Hansen and Torero, 2008). In this context, value chain analysis is a very useful strategic planning tool for understanding the rural development work in terms of time, space and form. From a methodological point of view, value chain analysis can be qualitative or quantitative (Peña et al., 2008). Qualitative analysis is simply a description of the processes and transactions that take place along the chain. Quantitative analysis makes it possible to see how and how much of the final value of development is generated at each of the distinct stages of the chain. This, in turn, makes it possible to evaluate how that value is shared out among the players including rural areas taking part in the chain (Hansen and Torero, 2008). In this sense, Katona-Kovács and Bóta-Horváth (2012) enhanced the contribution of coaching to rural development causes the process involves stakeholders and teams learning, mentoring and educational components.

The research aims to analyze the use of coaching in the agricultural value chain and its contribution to rural development.

#### **Indicated object**

The objective of the research was to analyze the use of coaching in the agricultural value chain and its contribution to rural development.

The secondary objectives proposed were:

- Analyze the coaching companies performing in the agricultural value chain,
- Characterize agricultural organizations using coaching techniques,
- Study the coaching in the agricultural value chain,

- Link the performance of coaching in the value chain with the impact in the rural development.

## RESEARCH METHODS

In order to analyze the use of coaching in the agricultural value chain, fifty coaching companies in Spain were analyzed. Qualitative and quantitative coaching company data were taken (Table 1). Most of them were founded after year 2000 (78.0%) and half of them have less than 10 employees (52.0%). Most common company format was the private limited company (62%) and half of them were located in Madrid (50.0%) followed by Castilla and Leon region (18.0%). The coaching companies used to coach one or two agricultural organizations and some of them even six of them.

Table 1. Characterization of coaching companies in Spain may 2017, coaching of agricultural organizations and number of agricultural organizations coached

Item	Cases	%	Item	Cases	%
Year foundation	Before 1989	2.0	Coaching services	Training&consultancy	86.0
	1990-2000	20.0		Training	14.0
	2001-2010	52.0	Company format	Private limited company	62.0
	After 2011	26.0		Community limited company	16.0
Type of coaching	Personal&Organization&Others	32.0		Self-employed	10.0
	Organization&Others	20.0		Non profit associations	6.0
	Organization&Executive	18.0		Public limited company	4.0
	Personal&Organization	14.0		Limited liability company	2.0
	Personal&Others	10.0	Number employees	2 to 10	52.0
	Others	2.0		11 to 50	40.0
	Organization&Sports&Others	2.0		51 to 200	8.0
	Personal&Sports&Others	2.0	Agricultural coaching	No	76.0
		Yes		24.0	
Location	Madrid	50.0	N agricultural coach	0	76.0
	Castilla and León	18.0		1	10.0
	Cataluña	14.0		2	8.0
	Andalucía	8.0		3	2.0
	Valencia	4.0		4	2.0
	Aragón	2.0		6	2.0
	Murcia	2.0			
	Navarra	2.0			

The coaching company's data were treated using SPSS v.27.0. software package for statistical analyses. Absolute and relative frequencies and accumulate percentage was obtained. The two-way dependence between the items to be explained, number of agricultural businesses coached, and the explanatory variables of the company data was calculated by means of a chi-squared ( $\chi^2$ ) test of significance between the items. To accept or reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$ , which implies no relation between the variables, the value of the  $\chi^2$  statistic and the respective *p-values* were considered and dependence was determined in the light of the frequencies expected and obtained and the corresponding residues typified and corrected (t.c.r.). Significant dependences with a *p-value* < 0.05 allowed variables to be selected for inclusion in the coaching company analysis. For variables with a *p-value* between 5% and 6% the null hypothesis was tentatively rejected. Such variables were included in later consideration of the coaching company analysis, but with reservations. Then, in a second stage of the study, the agricultural organizations with coaching (22) were characterized. The data were analyzed using SPSS v.27.0. software package for statistical analyses. Absolute and relative frequencies and accumulate percentage was obtained. Then, a contingency analysis was used to characterize the agricultural coached organizations. The characterization of the agricultural coached organizations was used to study the coaching in the agricultural value chain. Finally, it was linked the performance of coaching in the value chain and its contribution to rural development.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A quarter of the coaching companies coach agricultural organizations. They used to advise on coaching (86.0%) and also train employees in coaching (14.0%). They coached on personal coaching, organizational, sports and other type of coaching (Table 1). It was highly probable (*p-value*=0.05) that agricultural organizations were coached by coaching companies created during the nineties or recent foundation. The result has sense due to the increase of coaching during eighties and nineties (Alonso, 2017; Arribas, 2012; ASESCO, 2017; Torres, 2014). On the other hand, it was obtained that it is highly probable that a pair of agricultural organizations were coached by coaching companies created in 1993 (t.c.r.=3.4), 1997 (t.c.r.=2.2) or 1999 (t.c.r.=3.4). It was highly probable that coaching companies founded in 2013 (t.c.r.=4.9) coached up to six agricultural businesses (Table 2). It is concluded that the recent founded coaching companies are approaching rural and holistic value chain coaching agricultural organizations as a potential contribution to rural development.

The results show the foundation of coaching companies is increasing yearly and recent companies are growing coaching in agricultural organizations, although it is noted that its penetration in agricultural value chain is still lower than in another Spanish sectors (Arsuaga et al., 2009).

It was obtained that limited liability coaching companies are strongly probable ( $p$ -value = 0.000) that coached the larger number of agricultural businesses (t.c.r.=7.1). The large coaching companies from 51 to 200 employees, was probable that coach up to three agricultural businesses ( $p$ -value=0.06; t.c.r. = 3.4).

The analysis of the location of the coaching company, revealed that it was probable ( $p$ -value = 0.02) that being in Cataluña coach up to two agricultural businesses (t.c.r.=2.2), being in Castilla and Leon and coach up to four agricultural businesses (t.c.r.=2.2) and being in Navarra and coach up to six agricultural businesses (t.c.r.=7.1) (Table 2). The coaching companies located in rural areas of Navarra and Castilla-Leon in Spain (ASESCO, 2017; Bacás and Salinas, 2012; Torres, 2014) coached a larger number of agricultural organizations which can contribute to rural development. In this sense, coaching companies located in rural areas can coach organizations in the rural, production and primary stage of the agricultural value chain. Although we are in an early stage of coaching the complete value chain some steps forward are taken due to the demonstrated growing of coaching in agricultural organizations. This coaching companies' multidisciplinary approach could include the coaching of all the stakeholders of the value chain. The challenge is to develop specific coaching techniques for agricultural organizations contributing to rural development. In this sense, coaching could motivate, develop and retain stakeholders in rural areas; always aiming to make rural areas more competitive in the changing environment (Moen and Federici, 2012). The rural areas coaching could integrate methodology that multiplies the capacities of the rural stakeholders, innovate in processes or management models and enhance rural areas results (Katona-Kovács and Bóta-Horváth, 2012).

Table 2. Contingency and significance analysis between the number of agricultural businesses coached and location, number of employees and year of founfation. Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) -typified and corrected residues (t.c.r)

Cases		Agricultural businesses coaching						$p$ -value	
		0	1	2	3	4	6		
Company format	Private limited company	Frequency %	46.0	6.0	6.0	2.0	2.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	-0.4	-0.1	0.6	0.8	0.8	-1.3	
	Public limited company	Frequency %	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	-0.9	1.9	-0.4	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	
	Non profit association	Frequency %	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	1.0	-0.6	-0.5	-0.3	-0.3	-0.3	
	Limited liability company	Frequency %	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.00
		t.c.r.	-1.8	-0.3	-0.3	-0.1	-0.1	7.1	
	Self-employed	Frequency %	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	1.3	-0.8	-0.7	-0.3	-0.3	-0.3	
	Community limited	Frequency %	12.0	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	-0.1	0.3	0.5	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	
Employees	2 to 10	Frequency %	42.0	2.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	
		t.c.r.	0.8	-1.5	1.0	-1.1	-1.1	1.0	
	11 to 50	Frequency %	30.0	6.0	2.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.06
		t.c.r.	-0.1	1.0	-0.6	-0.8	1.2	-0.8	
	51 to 200	Frequency %	4.0	2.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	-1.3	1.0	-0.6	3.4	-0.3	-0.3	
Location	Castilla and Leon	Frequency %	14.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	0.1	0.1	-1.0	-0.5	2.2	-0.5	
	Andalucía	Frequency %	6.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	0.0	-0.7	1.3	-0.3	-0.3	-0.3	
	Madrid	Frequency %	38.0	8.0	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	0.0	1.4	-1.0	1.0	-1.0	-1.0	
	Aragon	Frequency %	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	0.6	-0.3	-0.3	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	
	Valencia	Frequency %	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.02
		t.c.r.	0.8	-0.5	-0.4	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	
	Cataluña	Frequency %	10.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	-0.3	-1	2.2	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	
	Murcia	Frequency %	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		t.c.r.	0.6	-0.3	-0.3	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	
	Navarra	Frequency %	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	
		t.c.r.	-1.8	-0.3	-0.3	-0.1	-0.1	7.1	

The characterization of the agricultural organizations using coaching located in rural areas of Navarra and Castilla-León (45.4%) confirms its potential contribution to rural development. The coaching training tool that includes leadership, solves performance problems, forms groups of leaders and teachers capable of acting in the changing rural environment, prepares to face the solution of contingencies of the rural areas could undoubtedly help the development of rural areas (Baron and Morin, 2009; Biswas-Diener, 2009; Elston and Boniwell, 2011; Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Haan and Duckwoth, 2012; Kombarakaran et al., 2008; Perkins, 2009; Styhre and Josephson, 2007).

Nevertheless, it was found most of the coached agricultural organizations belong to secondary or industrial sector in the agricultural value chain of food and beverages (54.5%), restricting the coaching performance to advanced links of the chain. While it is concluded the use of coaching increases along the value chain, it is needed to coach primary

agricultural organizations in order to cover the complete value chain and enhance origin producers that can contribute more to rural development. The coaching in primary stages at rural areas can improve the developing work climate; reduce interpersonal conflicts in rural developing areas; reduce rural population migration; retention of talent; the development of creativity and innovation, the development of personal talents; greater self-realization at rural area; greater motivation and involvement of rural population to achieve rural development and a higher turnover and greater profit for rural area (Muñoz and Diaz, 2014).

The coached agricultural organizations were public or private limited companies (90.9%) over 50 workers (95.5%). According to this it can be anticipated agricultural organizations use coaching on all the staff working to achieve goals and avoid large organizations workers conflicts (Moen and Federici, 2012). Nevertheless, coaching is viable and applicable in all aspects of rural life, and at the organizational level it becomes a technique with the capacity to develop skills and competencies of the stakeholders as a benefit for the achievement of the objectives and the increase of the competitiveness of the rural environment (Muñoz and Diaz, 2014).

It was found that all of the agricultural coached organizations had a webpage and were present on social media as Twitter, Facebook and LikedIn (54.5%). Most of them (86.4%) presented a concern on corporate social responsibility according Musicco (2013) are opening to a new way of manage organizations where coaching is possible (Table 3).

Table 3. Characterization of agricultural businesses coached (22) in 2017 in Spain, in percentage.

Item	Cases	%	Item	Cases	%
Location	Navarra	22.7	Year of foundation	Before 1950	32.0
	Castilla-León	22.7		1950-1970	27.0
	Cataluña	18.2		1971-1990	27.0
	Madrid	18.2		After 1991	14.0
	Andalucía	9.1	Company format	Private limited company	50.0
	La Rioja	4.5		Public limited company	40.9
	País Vasco	4.5		Comunity property	4.5
Activity	Food&beverage	54.5	Cooperative	4.5	
	Food production	31.8	Webpage	Yes	100.0
	Wine and liquors	9.5		Social media	Facebook
	Advisory	4.5	LinkedIn	4.5	
Employees	25-50	4.5	Facebook&LinkedIn	18.2	
	51-200	27.3	Facebook&Twitter	9.1	
	201-500	13.6	Facebook&Twitter&LinkedIn	54.5	
	501-1000	13.6	Corporate social responsibility	Yes	86.4
	1001-5000	31.8		Unknown	13.6
	Over 5001	9.1			

## CONCLUSIONS

The foundation of coaching companies increases year by year and can enhance the competitiveness of the agricultural value chain, despite currently only a quarter of the coaching companies, coached agricultural organizations. It is probable that the coaching companies located in Castilla and Leon, Navarra or Cataluña, recently founded as limited liability companies and with two to ten employees, coached the larger number of agricultural businesses. The agricultural businesses coached show a need to enhance coaching tools in agricultural business to increase the competitiveness and contribute to rural development. While half of coaching companies are located in Madrid the agricultural coached businesses are located in rural areas being necessary to implement coaching in rural areas in order to improve rural development. Coaching tools are mainly used by large, food and beverages companies being necessary to implement the coaching activities among small agricultural organizations in order to improve the competitiveness in the complete value chain. The agricultural coached companies shows a social concern with corporate social responsibility, while use social media and webpage for diffusion. It can be concluded that a business attitude among coaching is needed while a combinations of coaching tools are necessary in the agricultural value chain to improve the competitiveness. It is necessary to promote the coaching techniques among the agricultural businesses in order to increase the agricultural businesses competitiveness and contribute to the rural development.

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