



“ASOCIACION DE PRODUCTORES DE QUESO DEL MUNICIPIO DE ANORI” (Asproquema) is an organization that has been producing cheese since 2008 in the Anorí municipality in the Antioquia region. It supports 250 smallholder families, 45% belonging to indigenous and Afro-Caribbean communities. Aside from selling cheese, Asproquema has an agricultural input store and a supermarket. Over 60% of Asproquema’s beneficiaries are considered victims of the armed conflict in Colombia, and 20% are women heads of households.

Asproquema benefits 63 indigenous families recognized as Cenú. The Cenú are distributed in six of the 32 departments in Colombia and represent nearly 15% of the indigenous peoples in the country. The Cenú language is considered almost extinct, as only 13% of its population speaks it. Cultural practices revolved around a fluid commercial and economic exchange between the settlements. The dynamics of each regional province entailed food production, textiles, and gold and silver work. Up to this day, trade has been primarily limited to the exchange of goods for personal consumption.

IMPACT OVERVIEW	
Cheese production and commercialization, diversifying the organization’s revenues by developing other business units.	
No. of beneficiaries	250 families
% Women	20%
COMMUNITY	
	<b>Country:</b> Colombia
	<b>Municipalities:</b> Anorí, Antioquia
	<b>Communities:</b> Cenú

The organization started producing cheese in 2008 but began commercializing it in 2015 with “Colombia Responde” support, a credit line for agricultural projects designed by the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation of Colombia. By 2024, Asproquema can produce up to 6 tons of high-quality cheese weekly.

With the profits from the cheese business, Asproquema created a new business unit, an agricultural inputs store, to sell products at cost to the organization's beneficiaries and other small farmers for a small profit. The purpose of this store was to reduce production costs for small farmers.

Due to the success of the cheese business and agricultural inputs store, Asproquema developed a third business unit, a supermarket, in 2022. The supermarket was created to promote employment and support the organization’s sustainability by enabling more services for the beneficiaries with the profits generated. The supermarket is in the central plaza of Anori town.

These three business units generated nearly USD 3M in 2023. Due to the success of its operations and profitability, Asproquema is firm in its commitment to prioritizing services for small farmers over profits, as evidenced by its relatively thin net profit margin (See: Financial Overview). Asproquema provides the following services and benefits to its members:

- Technical assistance to improve cheese production practices and cattle raising and reproduction.
- Improve the cheese processing areas in each farm to comply with sanitation and hygiene protocols.
- Competitive cheese prices for small farmers.
- Subsidies for families in case of environmental disasters or medical incapacity.
- Study allowance for the associates’ children.
- Productive loans.
- Funeral support in case of death of an associate or their children.
- Tertiary road construction to improve the municipality's infrastructure.

Furthermore, Asproquema generates over 40 direct and 20 temporary jobs, of which 75% are youth working in the three business units. Asproquema is committed to supporting youth development, providing employment opportunities, and partly financing the education of the beneficiaries’ children. The organization aims to reduce migration from rural to urban areas and economically develop the region.

Anorí is a municipality whose principal legal economic activity is gold mining. This activity has caused soil degradation, water pollution, and deforestation. Many farmers in the area have given up food crops for the more profitable but dangerous and illegal coca plant production and processing business. This has led to violence, internal displacement, and limited economic development in the region.



The Indigenous peoples and Afro-Caribbean communities that Asproquema supports were constantly threatened by guerrillas who offered them to produce coca plants as a sustainable income alternative. 60% of Asproquema’s small farmers are victims of the armed conflict, and cheese production represents a legal, safe, and sustainable economic activity. The armed conflict made these communities more vulnerable.

The organization meets every two months to make decisions as a group. All its members are equally important, and each vote has the same value. Asproquema has a board in charge of administration and management, but decisions come from the individuals that comprise the association.

Asproquema's primary impact is through cheese commercialization in the region, securing competitive prices for small farmers. All small farmers are dedicated to cheese production. The organization operates on a land extension of 12,000 hectares, with some natural reserves (tropical rainforest) and the communities’ protected territories. On average, each farmer owns 40 hectares, mostly inherited from generation to generation.

Asproquema sells to local clients, the majority of whom have been buying from Asproquema for at least five years:

Client	Percentage of Cheese Revenue	Years of Relationship
Bunga	30%	Two years
Chaky	30%	Five years
Pandapan	40%	Six years

Clients usually pay up to 30 days after receiving the product, and almost none of its clients make advance payments.

The organization is committed to innovating in agroforestry systems to reduce the environmental impact of cattle raising. This allows small farmers to generate income from cheese production while keeping the rest of their land productive for other purposes.

In 2023, Asproquema purchased nearly USD 1.5M in cheese from small farmers, representing an annual income of USD 6,000 per family. A small farmer can produce almost 1,450 cheese kilos annually, and the average price per kilo is USD 4. Each farmer owns approximately 40 cows, generating enough milk to produce nearly 0.8 kilos of cheese daily per cow. Cows can produce milk from eight to ten months yearly, with a maximum of 8 liters daily. A farmer needs 10 liters of milk to produce one kilo of cheese.

Asproquema also helped small farmers commercialize maize and fish, representing almost USD 77,000 in purchases to families in 2023. Only 10% of the beneficiaries own fish ponds and 20% produce maize. Generally, a family can produce up to 5 tons of fish and 30 tons of maize yearly. Maize is also used for animal feed, and waste is repurposed for organic fertilizer.

**Outcome**

<i>Improvement of livelihood</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase income for small farmers and provide benefits to improve their quality of life</li> </ul>
<i>Culture preservation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditions related to agricultural and livestock knowledge, different farming techniques, and relationships with the land and water.</li> </ul>
<i>Environmental preservation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cattle raising under agroforestry systems reduces its environmental impact.</li> </ul>