



*Apuntes* 86, 171-197  
ISSN: 0252-1865  
eISSN: 2223-1757  
doi: 10.21678/apuntes.86.1231

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Article received on November 2, 2018  
Final version approved for publication on June 18, 2019

## Measuring decent work in self-managed cooperatives: the Costa Rica case

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*Abstract.* Costa Rica has extensive experience in the development of cooperatives, which have occupied an important place in the country's development strategies, generating a significant volume and diversity of initiatives. Historically, cooperatives have had an impact on human development through job creation and reduction of poverty and inequality. On the other hand, the concept of decent work is an integral approach to work and its promotion also means changing the way the global economy works so that its benefits reach more and more people. The objective of this article is to measure the variable of decent work in Costa Rica self-managed cooperatives.

*Keywords:* Cooperative societies; decent job; work measurement; social economy; Costa Rica.

## **Introduction**

The cooperative movement in Costa Rica went from being an initiative of artisans at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to becoming part of the economic life of Costa Rica and providing one of the most important productive forces in the country for almost a century.

The Costa Rica cooperative movement includes 594 cooperatives and 887,335 cooperativists, constituting 21% of the country's population. Twenty-four percent are self-managed and mostly concentrated in the service sector, according to data from the Fourth National Cooperative Census (IV Censo Nacional Cooperativo) carried out in 2012 by the Institute for Cooperative Promotion of Costa Rica (Instituto de Fomento Cooperativo de Costa Rica, INFOCOOP).

The factors that have contributed over time to the sustainability of cooperatives include political stability, social dialogue, respect for human rights, and a rule of law that favors social justice, among others.

According to the ILO (OIT, 2012), Costa Rica is one of the most economically and socially developed Latin American countries. The quality of its institutions, the cultural level of its population, free and compulsory elementary school education, as well as the abolition of the army in 1948, stand out among the political and culture factors that have been fundamental to the country's political and social development. These accomplishments led the ILO to investigate the factors that condition and lead to entrepreneurial development and the creation of jobs in Costa Rica. It found that one of the principal factors contributing to the development of the country was the boom and growth of the cooperative movement (OIT, 2012).

Nevertheless, today more than ever before in the history of cooperatives in Costa Rica it is necessary to provide information about those areas in which these organizations have proven capable and efficient. The cooperative sector is undergoing a difficult period in which it must respond to developments that are potentially damaging to its reputation and demonstrate how cooperatives have had a positive impact in the social, economic, and environmental spheres, such as the provision of decent work.

The term "decent work" was first coined during the 87<sup>th</sup> session of the International Labour Conference in 1999, and defined as:

Productive work that is justly remunerated and that is exercised in conditions of liberty, equality, equity, security and respect for human dignity.<sup>1,2</sup> (OIT, 1999, p. 14)

The ILO document cited above studies four elements of this concept in detail: employment, social protection, the rights of workers, and social dialogue. Employment includes all types of work and has both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Thus, the idea of decent work is valid both for work in the formal economy and for salaried workers in the informal economy, self-employed workers, and domestic workers. The concept includes the existence of sufficient work (possibilities to work), remuneration (monetary and in kind), job security, and healthy working conditions. Social security and income security are also essential components, even when they depend on the capacity and the level of development of each society. The other components are aimed at the reinforcement of workers' social relations: the fundamental right to work (freedom to form unions and the elimination of job discrimination, forced labor, and child labor), and social dialogue, in which workers exercise their right to express their opinions, defend their interests, and initiate negotiations with their employers and government officials regarding matters related to their labor activities (Ghai, 2003, p. 125).

For Rodgers (1995), what makes the concept of decent work different is that it is an integral approach to work, employment, and social progress. To take on these issues requires a balanced and integral vision of social and economic objectives, which includes the promotion of rights, employment, security, and social dialogue. This is not necessarily restricted to the national level, since many of the elements to be tackled are in the arena of the international and global economy (trade, capital flows, production systems that extend beyond borders). Thus, promoting decent work also means modifying the way the global economy operates so that its benefits reach more and more people. Decent work is not only a development objective on the national level, but also a guiding principle for the world economy.

The contribution of decent work to sustainable development is evident in Goal 8 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whose purpose is to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” (United Nations, 2015).

Recently, the ILO (n.d.) summarized the priority of promoting decent work around the world as follows:

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1 All translations from Spanish are by *Apuntes*.

2 Translator's note: English version was not found online.

- Because decent work drives development.
- Because decent work is what people want. A Gallup World poll ranks access to good jobs as the #1 priority.
- Because decent work transforms societies for the better. Decent Work is the foundation for equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development.
- Because the quality of jobs, not just the quantity, is at stake. Everyone is entitled to decent work.

Despite the importance of decent work, the measurement of this variable has historically been—and, for the most part, is currently—measured at the macro level, that is, on the level of countries. There are few studies using measurement on the meso- (organization) or micro- (worker) levels.

It is usually assumed that the cooperative enterprise, because of its social solidarity characteristics, automatically incorporates the “decent work” variable into its policies and procedures. This study questions this generalization and uses meso-level measurement and quantitative and qualitative measurement of the degree of fulfillment of various aspects of decent work in Costa Rica cooperatives, and specifically, self-managed cooperatives.

## 1. Theoretical framework

### The social economy

Cooperatives are organizations that are created around the concept of the social economy. The term “social economy” probably first appeared in the economics literature in 1830. Guerra (2012) states that the term originated in the *Treatise on Social Economy* by Charles Dunoyer (1786-1862), which defended a moral approach to the economy. This author argues that individuals can be free when industry and morality are combined. Until that moment in history, the economy was viewed as connected with the principal characteristics of the Industrial Revolution, in which machines and the market were prioritized over individuals. This *Treatise* by Duyoner is the first important element in the construction of a concept that went on to give individuals significant space amid the aggrieved liberalism of the time, and takes into consideration “the various organizations created by the working classes to satisfy their increasing needs in an associative manner in the context of the strong ascendance of mercantilism” (Guerra, 2012, p. 3).

More recently, Walras (1987) considers the social economy as a crucial part of economic science, as an economic discipline in which social justice is an unavoidable objective of economic activity (Pérez, Etzezarreta & Guridi, 2008). This gives the concept a theoretical position within current

economic sciences, complementing the older use of the term, which had moral (Duyoner) and collectivist (Pecquer) connotations.

Defourny and Develtere (2009) explain that after the resurgence of the concept in the 1970s, social economy was associated with cooperative organizations, mutual organizations, and associations, which were its traditional nucleus. These structures share the goal of bringing together autonomous organizations, whose objective is to offer services to their members or to the community without considering earnings, and which incorporate democratic decision-making processes despite some discrepancies in terms of distribution of benefits (for example, cooperatives permit the distribution of profits in cash to their members, while associations and mutual societies prohibit this practice).

### **The cooperative organization**

The social economy, as an economic and social activity, was historically associated with cooperatives. For López Castellano (2003), the system of values and principles that form the basis of the actions of popular associations, reflected in historical cooperativism, have served as a basis for the modern concept of a social economy, which is structured around three large families of organizations: cooperatives, mutuals, and associations, with the recent addition of foundations.

More contemporary definitions lead us to Martínez (2009), an author who defines cooperatives as being more than economic enterprises: for him, they are also associations of individuals in which “the social proves its worth through the economic no less than the economic is authenticated by the social” (Arizmendiarieta, 1973, p. 62). What is evident is that the entrepreneur in the cooperative is not a capitalist entrepreneur, even though he/she provides the capital. In cooperative enterprises, capital does not vote, the individual does; each individual has one vote and the benefits of the cooperative’s activities are not distributed in proportion to the capital contributed but to the activity carried out:

The fact that these are non-lucrative enterprises does not mean that they do not have a vocation for permanence and continuity. Some refer to service enterprises, which are concerned with doing things well, versus result enterprises, which are concerned with profits. In the final analysis, profits can be considered as the consequence of doing work well and a guarantee that this work will continue to be done in the future. (Martínez, 2009, p. 152)

According to Martínez (2009), cooperatives aim at attaining the values that the International Co-operative Alliance’s revised “Statement on Cooper-

ative Identity” of 1995 divides into two groups. The first includes the values of “self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity” while the second refers to the ethical values of “honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others” (COOP, 1995).

These values lead to seven principles to which cooperatives must adjust their actions and behavior (COOP, 1995):

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training, and Information
6. Cooperation among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

Finally, for the Costa Rica case, studies carried out by the National Institute for the Promotion of Cooperatives (INFOCOOP) show that the cooperative model has had a positive influence on Costa Rica’s economic and social development as well as their welfare, based on variables that have contributed to the democratization of the economy. Historically, cooperatives have respected the dignity of workers, economic and social democratization, and improved welfare on the local, regional, national, and international levels.

### **The self-managed cooperative, or associative work**

For García (2014), “self-management” is understood as a social, economic, and political movement whose method and objective is that the enterprise, the economy, and society in general be led by those who produce and distribute goods and services that are socially generated. Self-management espouses direct and democratic management by workers in the entrepreneurial functions of planning, administration, and execution.

María del Mar Araus (2004) notes that self-management thinking is the synthesis of two great principles: the communitarian principle and the liberal-democratic principles. If we remove the socialist content from self-management, it loses its reason for existence; if we remove its democratic content, we denature it. And it is these two guiding principles that reflect two fundamental anthropological dimensions: the individual instinct and the social instinct.

For Denis Rougemont (in Avron, 1982, p. 8), self-employment is defined as a “[...] principle of management by grassroots communities—municipalities and enterprises, later regions—of the governmental tasks

that correspond to their level. But it is also the permanent exercise of the powers of political decision-making and control of those who execute it.”

In the case of Costa Rica, and according the definition of INFOCOOP,<sup>3</sup> self-managed cooperatives are those in which the members have control of the means of production in their role as owners and, at the same time, workers of the enterprise. Thus, they produce the goods and services and participate in the distribution of the fruits of their labor.

Article 99 of the Law of Cooperative Associations of Costa Rica (Law 4179) describes how self-managed cooperatives operate:

Self-managed cooperatives are those enterprises organized for the production of goods and services, in which their workers manage all the activities of these and directly provide their labor, with the paramount goal of carrying out productive activities and receive, in proportion to their contribution to the work, economic and social benefits. The production units that are intended for the functioning of these, are under the regime of indivisible social ownership. (Law of Cooperative Associations of Costa Rica, Article 99)

In Costa Rica, self-managed cooperatives become creators of new jobs focused primarily on providing opportunities to individuals who have been excluded for various reasons, especially young people and women—the two groups most affected by unemployment. They provide an opportunity for everyone who wants to start a productive project, enter the labor market, and contribute to the economic, social, and organizational development of the country through participative democracy.

### **Decent work**

Today it is generally accepted that just as globalization generates significant benefits for the world economy, it also generates economic and social costs for important productive sectors and for different sectors of the population.

For Rodgers (1995), decent work is a very important variable in the context of organizations and cooperatives around the world. Decent work encapsulates the aspirations of individuals during their working life. It signifies the opportunity for access to a productive job that generates a fair income, job security, and social protection for families; better prospects for personal development and social integration; freedom for individuals

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3 The National Institute for the Promotion of Cooperatives (Instituto Nacional de Fomento Cooperativo, INFOCOOP) is a public institution charged with promoting and developing cooperativism in Costa Rica.

to express their opinions, organize, and participate in decisions that affect their lives; and equal opportunities and treatment for everyone, women and men alike.

Brú, Del Cid and Venema (2003) indicate that decent work is a key factor to achieve fair globalization and reduce poverty. Organizations such as the ILO and the International Co-operative Alliance (COOP) promote programs for the community of work that are based on job creation, workers' rights, social protection, and social dialogue, with general equality as a transversal goal.

As Brú, Del Cid and Venema (2003) point out, various ILO reports provide evidence of the deterioration of working conditions in labor markets, characterized by parallel processes that are mutually reinforcing, including informalization, tertiarization, and precarization of economies practically the whole world over.

On the other hand, Beck (2005) argues that today's society is being constructed around a post-traditional order, in which the individual is subject to the influence of an ever-growing environment that is increasingly global and susceptible to the consequences of remote events and influences just as if they originated nearby. The worker becomes mobile, disassociated from closer horizons, disconnected from a known geography and from the experiences of past generations. Society and, of course, labor is becoming individualized.

Beck (2006) also notes that we are moving from a society of work to a society of risk, where the precarious, the individual, and the imprecise are becoming consolidated. The difference between the industrial society and a risk society lies in the fact that the logic of production and distribution of wealth has been replaced by the logic of production and distribution of risk, the latter being a set of future threats which are dependent on decisions taken in every present moment.

Decent work is defined by the ILO (OIT, 1999, p. 14) as "productive work that is justly remunerated and done in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and respect for human dignity." For this organization, decent work synthesizes the aspirations of individuals during their working life. That is, it signifies the opportunity to opt for productive employment that generates a fair income, security in the workplace, and social protection for families; good perspectives for personal development and social integration; freedom for individuals to express their opinions, to organize, and participate in decisions that affect their lives; and equality of opportunities and treatment for everyone, women and men alike.

The ILO (OIT, 2012) provides a set of indicators to measure decent work. The starting point for the structure of their database of indicators is

the definition of decent work as a concept to describe all work or occupations (salaried work, self-employed, individual, cooperative, etc.) that are productive and justly remunerated; that is, work that produces aggregate value for the wealth of society and generates an adequate income to meet the basic needs of the population. An additional condition of this definition is that any work or occupation be exercised in liberty (that it be chosen freely, avoiding conditions of involuntary labor) and not the result of an imposition or obligation resulting from a condition of slavery or confinement. The definition also requires that the work or occupation be exercised under healthy and safe workplace conditions, with sufficient social protection and socio-economic stability, and respect for human dignity (Brú *et al.*, 2003).

### **Measurement of decent work at the meso- and micro-levels (organization and collaboration)**

It is important to note that most of the research and measurements related to decent work have centered on the macroeconomic level. Indeed, Aponte (2012) notes that this level has occupied the attention of the majority of researchers in recent years, with the result that there are few meso- (organizational) and micro- (worker) level studies. One example of a microeconomic measurement study is the article “A Family of Decent Work Indexes” by Florence Bonnet, José Figueiredo, and Guy Standing (2003a, 2003b), which discusses the measurement of decent work on the level of workers.

Bonnet, Figueiredo, and Standing (2003a, 2003b) analyze the difficulties in obtaining objective measurements, especially on the level of organizations, because “what enterprises or organizations should do is a concept that is difficult to measure, and it is not easy to find indicators of results” (p. 121).

Aponte (2012) notes that for microeconomic levels, the indicators measured are the same as for the macro level, but they are applied to the workplace (meso-level) or to the worker who holds a specific job (micro-level). In this way, and taking into consideration these two levels, decent work is defined as:

At the workplace (meso) level, a decent work environment is one that provides adequate security for workers while fostering the dynamic efficiency of their enterprise. At the individual worker’s (micro) level, decent work consists in having good opportunity for work with adequate levels of all forms of work-related security. (Bonnet *et al.*, 2003a, p. 234)

Based on the abovementioned, the micro-level indicators in the decent work index proposed by Bonnet *et al.* (2003) include the following dimensions:

1. Skills reproduction security dimensions: whether the enterprise provides basic training for workers recently hired, whether there is training to improve performance or when the worker is to be promoted, or whether the enterprises cover the costs of professional training and whether workers apply their knowledge and abilities.
2. Employment security dimension: whether existing contracts guarantee work stability, prior notice of dismissal, procedures for dismissal, regulations for dismissals according to collective contracts in cases when workers believe they should stay in their jobs.
3. Work security dimension: whether there is a safety committee, work-related injury rate, hygienic conditions in the workplace, use of safety equipment, preventive measures implemented.
4. Job security dimension: equal opportunities without discrimination in hiring, promotions, etc.
5. Income security dimension: salary distribution in comparison with the average, workers' perception of income in comparison to those of others on the same level, salary supplements, and other benefits received.
6. Representation security dimension: union recognition, existence of a collective contract, union membership, participation of workers in the profits of the enterprise.

For Aponte (2012), one way of measuring decent work on the meso- and micro-levels is by determining the margins in the different dimensions as suggested by Bonnet *et al.* (2003); that is, if a person has good income security, skills reproduction security, job security, representation security, and work security, it can be said that they have decent work.

## 2. Methodology

First, and taking into account the theoretical framework described above, this study uses the database of indicators of decent work defined by Bonnet *et al.* (2003) on the meso- and micro-level. Five of the six dimensions proposed by these authors were selected for analysis: 1) skills reproduction security, 2) employment security, 3) work security, 4) income security, and 5) job security. The sixth dimension—representation—was not included because in self-managed cooperatives, workers are members and thus have permanent representation.

Based on this information, a survey was prepared for those in charge of human resources at the self-managed cooperatives in order to determine the level of fulfillment of decent work indicators within these organizations, to confirm or reject the different perspectives that influence the fulfillment of

these indicators. The survey instrument (questionnaire) included 24 questions, which included the five indicators under evaluation to determine the decent work variable (see Table 1).

Table 1  
Summary of the questionnaire on decent work

Variable	Dimensions	Measures	Questions
Decent work	Skills reproduction security dimension.	Opportunity. Modality. Financing.	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
	Employment security dimension.	Existence and type of contract. Working day. Seniority. Advancement and Promotion.	P6, P7, P8, P9
	Work security dimension.	Form of coordinating occupational safety. Occurrence of workplace accidents. Use of protective equipment.	P10, P11, P12, P13, P14
	Income security dimension.	Sufficiency. Punctuality.	P15, P16, P17, P18, P20
	Job security dimension.	Equal opportunities. Improvement in work and professional situation.	P19, P21, P22, P23, P24

Source: compiled by the authors, adapted from Aponte (2012).

In the case of this particular research, the population under study (self-managed cooperatives in Costa Rica) includes a total of 111 organizations, registered and active in INFOCOOP and ratified by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, MTSS). In this case, the study was limited to 20 cooperatives, taking into consideration two criteria:

1. The size of the cooperative by number of members.
2. The existence of members and non-members in the cooperative.

As regards size, in the case of Costa Rica, enterprises are divided into micro-, small, and medium-sized according to number of workers, sales, and assets (Regulations of Law 8262, Executive Decree No. 37721). Although this norm stipulates that self-managed cooperatives have at least 12 members, for this pilot project it was considered worthwhile to survey medium-sized enterprises; that is, those with 30 or more members. This is because enterprises of this size usually have a more solid and consolidated

organizational structure, which entails a series of norms and procedures related to the workforce and operations. This ensured that this pilot study could collect all the necessary information, and access the variables necessary for a preliminary evaluation of decent work.

The other important criteria is that the cooperative, in addition to members, had workers who are not members; this enabled the measurement and evaluation of working environments without differentiation by cooperative membership.

The survey was based on the research of Bonnet *et al.* (2003) and Aponte (2007). When calculating the decent work index, survey responses were coded on a quantitative scale (from 4 to 1, where 4 is the highest decent work score and 1 is the lowest). Three bands in the scale of decent work were defined: low, medium, and high. These were calculated by adding up the maximum and minimum number of points in each dimension. The following formula was then applied:

Band: maximum score – minimum score / number of levels desired.

For example, if we take the skills reproduction security dimension on the meso-level (which includes five questions) and add up all the possible answers, the highest possible number of points is 20 and the lowest, 5. Applying the formula above, the result is an interval of 5:

$$20-5 = 15 \quad 15/3 = 5$$

Therefore, the bands in the training dimensions would be as follows:

- Low band in the skills reproduction dimension: 5-10
- Medium band in the skills reproduction dimension: 11-16
- High band in the skills reproduction dimension: 17-20

When the same procedure was applied across the six indicators, the ranges for evaluating the results of this study are as follows (see Table 2):

Table 2  
Bands for evaluating decent work on the meso level at self-managed cooperatives in Costa Rica

Dimension	Low band	Medium band	High band
Skills reproduction security dimension	5-10	11-16	17-20
Employment security dimension	5-9	10-13	14-16
Work security dimension	5-10	11-16	17-20
Income security dimension	4-9	10-15	16-20
Job security dimension	5-10	11-16	17-20
Representation security dimension	2-4	5-7	8
Decent work dimension	26-52	58-83	89-96

Source: compiled by the authors, adapted from Aponte (2012).

Finally, after the survey was administered, the results for each question were added up and an average value was obtained (by dividing the total score by 20 answers). With these results, it was possible to identify the decent work index (low, medium or high band) by dimension.

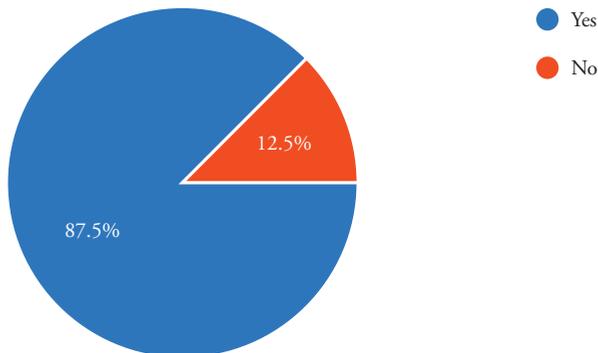
### 3. Analysis of results

The most important results of the study are presented below, divided into the five dimensions that were evaluated:

#### Dimension 1. Skills reproduction

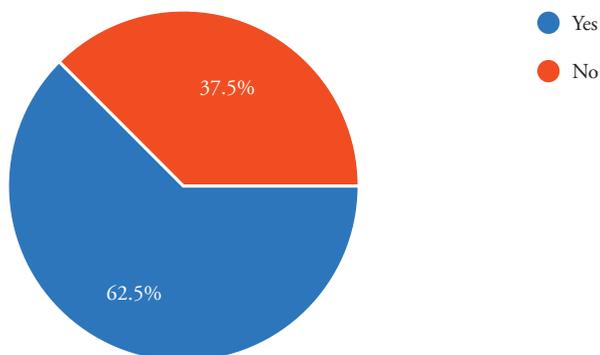
This dimension includes the degree to which the worker is guaranteed training by the cooperative. In addition, it also measures the opportunity for training at the time of hiring or when the new processes or technologies are implemented at cooperatives.

Figure 1  
Does the cooperative provide orientation or training for workers when they first start work at the cooperative?



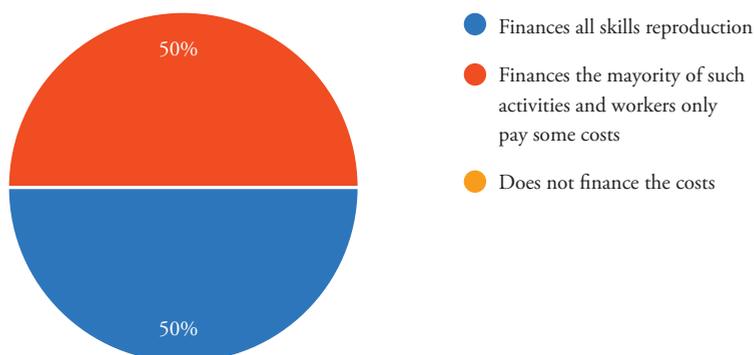
Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 2  
Does the cooperative provide skills reproduction for workers so they can advance within the organization?



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 3  
Financing of skills reproduction activities by the cooperative



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Table 3  
Average values of answers in the skills reproduction dimension

Question number	Average value of answers
P1	3.625
P2	3.625
P3	2.875
P4	2.375
P5	3
Total	15.5

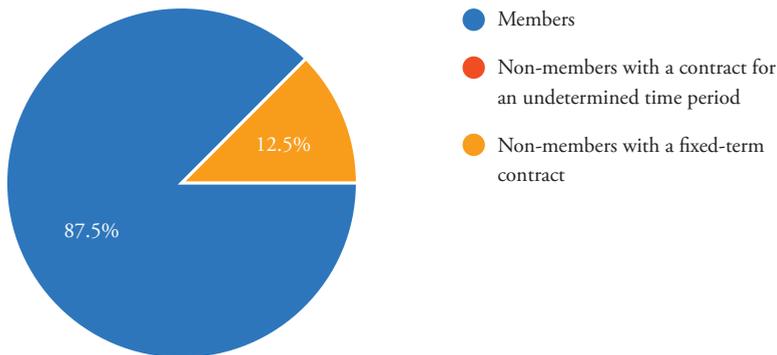
Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Once the 20 surveys were administered, the average value of the answers for this dimension was 15.5. In this case, the results are within the medium band of decent work. The results provided in figures 1–3 indicate that skills reproduction in most cooperatives is fulfilled to a satisfactory level. The result is affected by the variable of financing, which has a low weighting because a significant percentage of workers take on part of the costs, contributing to a score within the medium band for this dimension.

### Dimension 2. Employment security

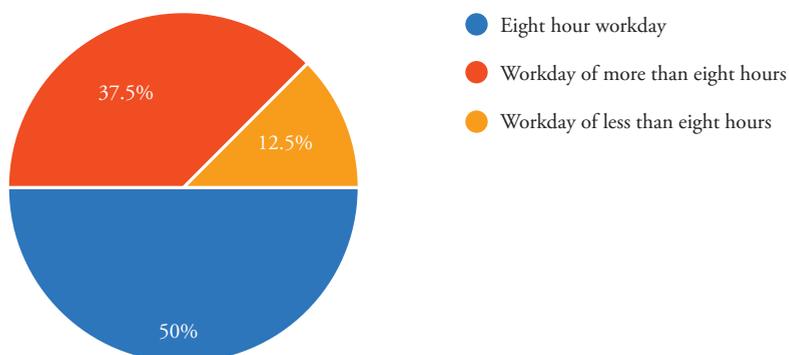
This results of this dimension demonstrate the extent to which certain conditions exist to assure workers of stability in their current job, as shown in figures 4–6. For example, if the majority of workers are members, and when cooperatives also employ non-members, what contractual conditions are in place with regard to their work at the cooperative? Another important factor measured by this dimension is the length of the workday, something that can reveal the existence of exploitation or underemployment, neither of which result in a positive value for the definition of decent work.

Figure 4  
Cooperative membership



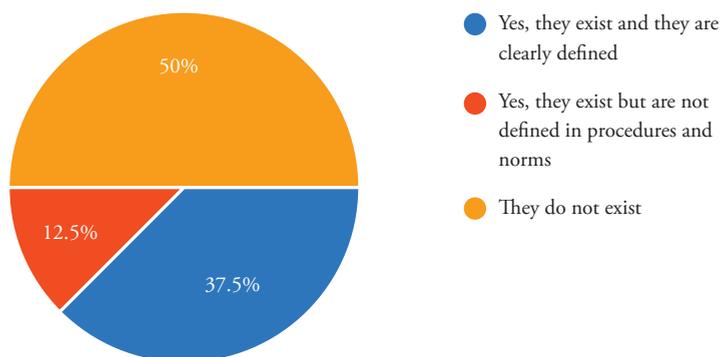
Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 5  
Length of the workday of cooperative workers



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 6  
Are there established procedures and norms for advancement and promotion of workers in the cooperative?



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Table 4  
Average values of answers in the employment security dimension

Question number	Average value of answers
P6	3.75
P7	2.875
P8	3.875
P9	2.375
Total	13

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

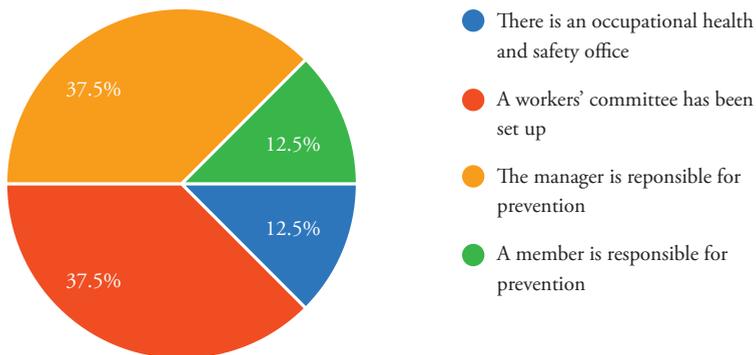
Once the 20 surveys were administered, the final average value of the answers for this dimension was 13. The result of the measurement of the employment security dimension is within the medium band of decent work. The values shown in the preceding figures, which reflect temporary work and workdays of more than eight hours, or less than eight hours, as well as the percentage of workers who have not worked for more than two years at the cooperative, provide an average within the medium band, which is not conducive to cooperatives achieving a high score in the decent work evaluation, even though more than 80% of workers are members in the majority of cooperatives.

### Dimension 3. Work security

The work security dimension measures the degree to which preventive or protective conditions and practices exist which contribute to minimizing workplace risks, accidents, and occupational illnesses.

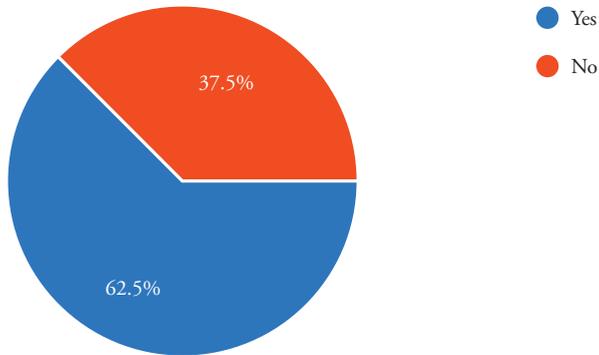
Figure 7

What measures does the cooperative have in place to prevent the risk of accidents or occupational illnesses?



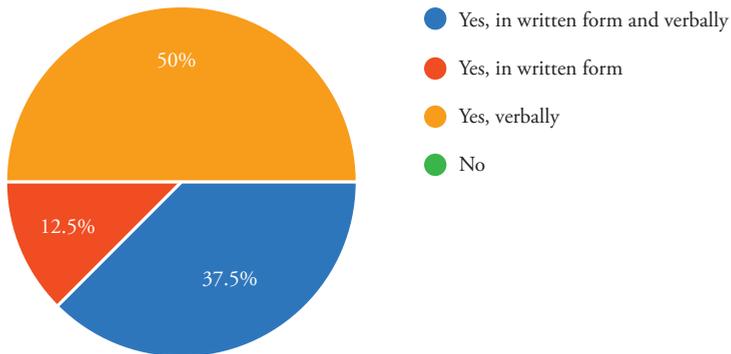
Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 8  
Workers receive occupational health and safety training related to their job or responsibility



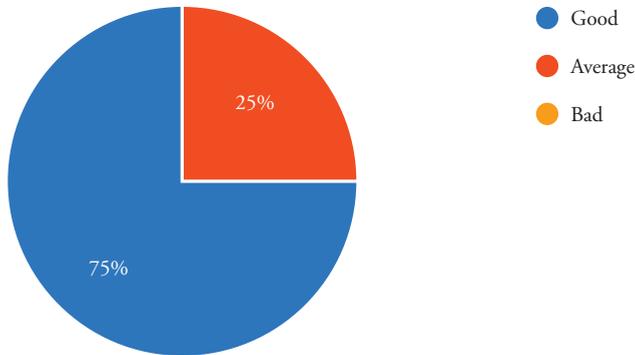
Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 9  
Each worker is informed about the specific risks related to their job or responsibility and the protective and prevention measures that should be taken



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 10  
Work security conditions in cooperatives



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Table 5  
Average values of answers in the work security dimension

Question number	Average value of answers
P10	2.5
P11	2.875
P12	2.875
P13	3
P14	3.5
Total	14.75

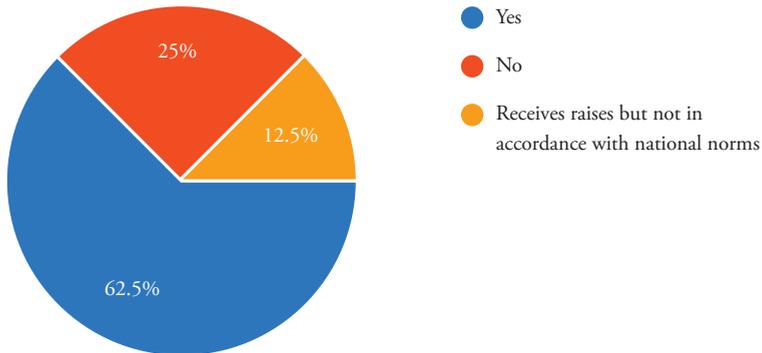
Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Once the 20 surveys were administered, the final average value of the answers for the work security dimension was 14.75, within the medium band of decent work. The results presented in the figures above demonstrate that there are important aspects of occupational worker safety in self-managed cooperatives that need to be addressed and prioritized in order to achieve a high score in the dimension of work security. This is especially true of organizing and delegating responsibility for adequate management of information and processes that guarantee the health and safety of workers, as well the formalization of information related to the risks of each job. Both can have a positive impact on the results of the dimension analyzed in this section.

#### Dimension 4. Income security

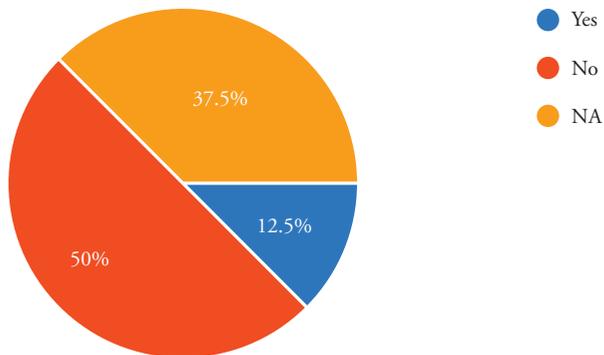
The results presented in this dimension measure wages earned and salary supplements that are paid to workers, as well as the punctuality of payment by cooperatives as shown in figures 11-14.

Figure 11  
Salary increases are provided in accordance with national norms



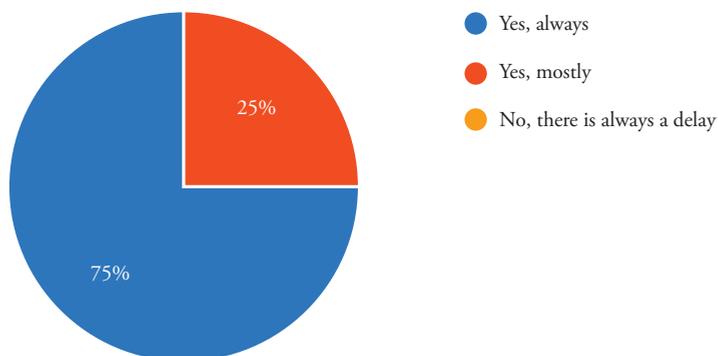
Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 12  
Salary differences exist between members and non-members doing the same work



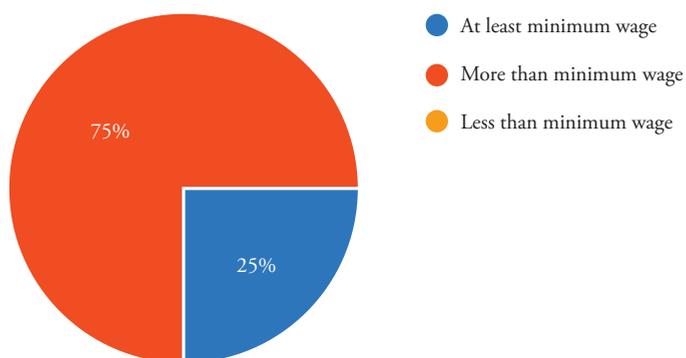
Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 13  
Workers are paid punctually



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 14  
Average salaries of cooperative workers



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Table 6  
Average values of answers related to the income security dimension

Question number	Average value of answers
P15	3.25
P16	3.625
P17	3.75
P18	2
P20	3.75
Total	16.38

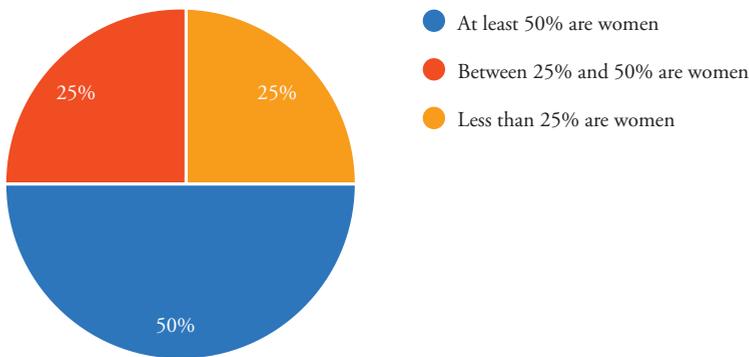
Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

After administering the surveys, the final average value of the answers for the income security question was 16.38. In this case, the result corresponded to a high decent work score. The results demonstrate that self-managed cooperatives satisfactorily fulfill this dimension, which is of great importance for the achievement of greater economic and social equity in society as a whole.

### Dimension 5. Job security

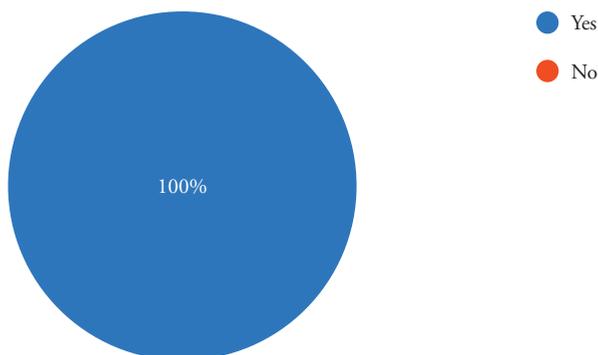
The job security dimension measures aspects related to equality of work opportunities. This dimension measures whether or not there is non-discriminatory treatment of individuals and if policies are in place that promote respect for diversity and healthy coexistence.

Figure 15  
Distribution by gender of cooperative workers



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

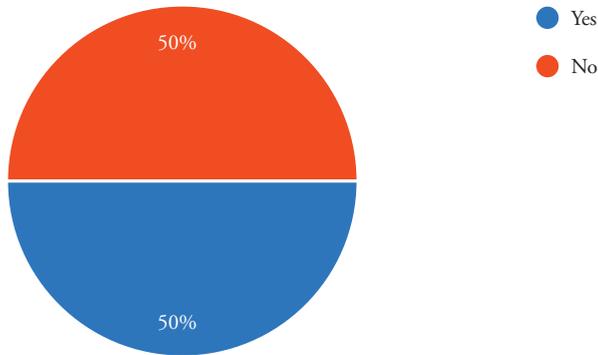
Figure 16  
Equal opportunities for professional development and salary increases for all workers, independent of age, sex, race, or creed



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Figure 17

Does the cooperative have clearly defined policies that promote respect for diversity and healthy coexistence among individuals?



Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

Table 7

Average values of answers in the job security dimension

Question number	Average value of answers
P19	2.75
P21	3.625
P22	4
P23	2.5
P24	2.5
Total	15.375

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data.

When applied to each of the 20 surveys, the final average value was 15.375, within the medium ranking interval of decent work. The analysis of the job security dimension demonstrates that at all Costa Rica self-managed cooperatives, there is respect for the individual when it comes to hiring and professional development. However, in other matters, such as gender equity and the definition of clear policies that promote respect for diversity, there are serious deficiencies that should be significantly improved to achieve a high score in job security.

#### 4. Conclusions

A detailed search of secondary sources and previous research revealed that prior to this study, no measurements of decent work at Costa Rica cooperatives had been carried out. Thus, this research contributes to the

generation of knowledge that is relevant for social economy organizations and cooperatives, since decent work is a variable that should be implicit in the management of these types of organizations.

It is also worth mentioning that most studies and research on decent work around the world only look at the macro variable—that is, studies carried out by governments, ministries of labor, the International Labour Organization, and other similar entities—whose objective is to measure this variable on the country level. There are very few studies that measure decent work on the meso- and micro-levels (organization and worker). Even definitions of meso dimensions such as those employed in this research were limited; Bonnet, Figueiredo, and Standing's "A Family of Decent Work Indexes" (2003a) is the only study that employs them.

The present study seeks to contribute to an understanding of the functioning of the Costa Rica self-managed cooperative model by examining the extent to which these organizations contribute to decent work. To this end, research questions were defined; the principal question was: do Costa Rica self-managed cooperative enterprises contribute to the creation of decent work as defined by the ILO?

Five principal areas or dimensions were identified that define this variable on the meso- and micro-levels: skills reproduction security, employment security, work security, income security, and job security. The representation security dimension was not included because it was not useful when analyzing self-managed cooperatives, since workers are also members. The five dimensions studied include the majority of variables established by the ILO to measure decent work on the meso- and micro-levels.

On the basis of a survey of Costa Rica medium and large self-managed cooperatives as well as a review of secondary materials, the data collected were analyzed for relevant content. Upon analysis of this data, it was found that the selected cooperatives had a medium decent work score. This somewhat surprising, since it was expected that the nature of cooperatives, their philosophy and their history would result in a high index of decent work.

This study demonstrates that some of the cooperatives studied had a low score in certain strategic areas such as, for example, staff training, length of the workday, gender equity, healthy working conditions, remuneration of personnel, occupational safety, and equity of remuneration between members and non-members. It is clear that improvements are necessary in these areas in order to align management and administration of cooperatives with the principals of social economy.

This research hopes to contribute to producing knowledge related to the decent work variable at Costa Rica self-managed cooperatives. This is the

first of many possible steps and sets out a path for future lines of research. For example, studies of traditional cooperatives and social integration cooperatives could be carried out.

Future research could also include micro- (worker) level studies intended to understand workers' perceptions of how effectively their organization provides the necessary conditions for decent work. This is because the opinion of those in charge of human resources or of managers may differ from those of members and workers.

Decent work is considered a differentiating element in the management and administration of modern organizations. Various studies indicate that those managements that have applied the principles of decent work have been more successful and a greater capacity for retaining their human talent. For these reasons, future research could be based on the measurement of decent work at traditional organizations and enterprises, rather than only those within the social economy.

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