

What French national statistics can teach us about changes in the agricultural cooperative sector

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Based on statistical data, this article examines the main changes in agricultural cooperatives in order to understand how growing concentration leads them to change their organisations. Using the national statistical surveys for 1995, 2000 and 2005, our global approach allows us to account for both cooperative businesses and their subsidiaries. The findings highlight the development of cooperative groups with a difference between the food-processing sector and wholesaling. However, the joint subsidiaries and minority shareholdings also reveal the development of new forms of alliances and partnerships, both downstream and upstream in the subsidiaries. These changes raise questions about the ability of the available data to account for these phenomena.

Yes to growth, but how? An examination of mergers of cooperative wine producers in the Languedoc-Roussillon region

Louis-Antoine Saisset and Foued Cheriet

For nearly a century, cooperatives have played an important role in the agricultural and food industry in France. Since the early 1990s, concentration among agricultural cooperatives has markedly increased. The aim of our work is to analyse this process of concentration (through mergers and acquisitions) of agricultural cooperatives. Our empirical work is based on 14 mergers of cooperative wine producers in the Languedoc-Roussillon region between 2004 and 2010. The main findings show that there are different kinds of merger processes. Some mergers are simply an emergency measure to save failing businesses, while others respond to local policies. Lastly, some mergers are based on real strategic planning to achieve synergies between the cooperatives involved.

Cooperation and mergers among nonprofits: Legal and tax considerations

Colas Amblard

One out of every five nonprofits created today is thought to be the result of restructuring. A word that usually strikes fear, restructuring is often synonymous with a reduction of paid staff or fundamental changes in how an organisation is run. What about the nonprofit sector? Have nonprofits also been caught up in the mania for profitability at any price in an increasingly competitive environment? Is there a critical size for these organisations below which their long-term viability is at risk? We try to identify the main reasons why nonprofits have been merging. We then present the various possible forms of cooperation and mergers as well as the existing legal and tax constraints.

Concentration in the nonprofit live-music business: From identity crisis to an alternative proposition for a collaborative platform

Gérôme Guibert and Philippe Eynaud

The live-music sector in France has three main functions: production, distribution and venue management. Within a sector dominated by the private for-profit economy, a nonprofit component in touch with the public has developed alongside the medium-sized concert halls (around 150 to 1000 seats). These hybrid-economy venues, which appeared in the 1980s, are today having to reassess their size in relation to their forms of financing and their objectives. What is the optimal size for these organisations? We first look at the advantages and dangers of increasing the venue size. We then put forward an alternative to concentration through new forms of collective organisations in networks and the GIMIC project for a collaborative platform.

The cooperativist challenge of the Lyonnais printers' union (1864-1999)

Claire Bonici

Often perceived as an innovative alternative to unbridled capitalism, the social and solidarity

economy has its roots in earlier traditions of mutual aid that were revived in the 19th century by groups formed in reaction to the post-revolutionary economic liberalism (mutual-aid societies, cooperatives, trade unions). Given the current interest in the concept, it seems appropriate to consider the background to a development based on the need to organise mutual aid. The history of the Lyonnais printers' union, which was created in March 1864, offers an interesting perspective on the cooperative movement because of the union's

pioneering nature and its longevity in a highly structured trade. It also reveals the challenges that the cooperative movement faced and its ambivalent relationship with the trade union movement. In a competitive capitalist environment, this experience reflects a century of cooperative practices during which the initial hopes and ideas about democratic management came up against governance issues and the constant need to strike the right balance between staying faithful to the movement's ideals and running a business successfully. ●