Community Profile: Santa Julia
The Gloria Quintanilla Cooperative

The community in Santa Julia is part of the municipality El Crucero on the outskirts of Managua. The community consists of around 90 families, and the Gloria Quintanilla cooperative forms a central part of it. The cooperative is comprised of 19 women who use agroecological methods to grow food. Because of climate change and increasingly extreme weather conditions, the community decided to diversify their products, which include bananas, beans, dragon fruit, tomatoes, and lemons. They also grow, process, and sell coffee with “the smell of the women from the countryside”, as the secretary of the cooperative, Lea Moncado, proudly explains.

The Gloria Quintanilla cooperative was founded in 2006 and officially registered as a cooperative in 2010. According to the cooperative’s president, Eloisa García Castro, the cooperative formed out of necessity. Marked by poverty and a dark history of exploitation, women from the community decided to struggle together for their rights and food sovereignty. Food sovereignty, gender equality, and youth empowerment are central aims of the cooperative.

Santa Julia was formerly a farm called Alemania, which was owned by a German. When he returned to Germany during WWII, the land fell into the hands of Somoza, who gave it the name Santa Julia. Under Somoza, the Santa Julia community suffered inhumane living conditions and were made to work on coffee plantations. Around 500 people worked 12 hours a day and lived in shacks, which were property of the farm owner. There were no schools, healthcare, or other basic rights; instead, there was unpaid work and little food. With the revolution, the land was given to the community. They organized to build houses, gain access to water, and learn how to read and write. Therefore, the community greatly appreciates Sandinismo and the Sandinistas. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the neoliberal government tried to reclaim the land, but the community—led by the women—went to Managua to demonstrate for their land rights.

Supported by the ATC, the cooperative advocates the self-empowerment of women and youth through collective workshops. Santa Julia has also welcomed people from all over the world to share their knowledge and to live with members of the community for intercultural exchange. Currently, a big project of the community is to build a well and obtain permanent access to drinking water, which currently only comes once a week. The cooperative engages in projects to raise money to finalize the well.