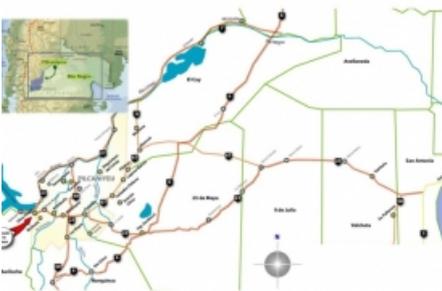
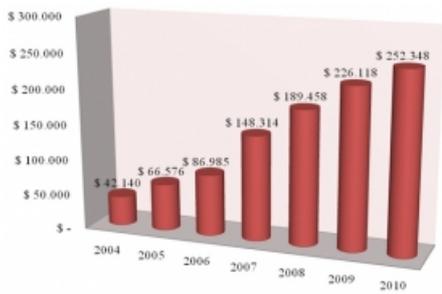


## Rural Development Vision in Patagonia COMMERCIAL SPOT FOR LOCAL PRODUCTION FROM A SOCIAL ECONOMY APPROACH

Argentina  
Roberto Killmeate





**Organization type:**

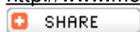
nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

**Budget:**

\$50,000 - \$100,000

**Website:**

<http://www.mercadodelaestepa.com.ar>



- [Community development](#)
- [Conscious consumerism](#)
- [Economic development](#)

- [Fair trade](#)
- [Income generation](#)
- [Poverty alleviation](#)
- [Networking](#)

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

**Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.**

We aim at developing a short productive chain based on the raw material produced in the area (wool), thus reaching productive development that includes regional cultural knowledge from rural communities and participating natives (Mapuches). The final product is incorporated into the commercial circuit of social economy and fair commerce. A fair price is established (each craft worker fixes its product's price) and the sale is carried out in an associative manner in the market "Mercado de la Estepa". When we talk about short productive chain we look for the least vehicular mobility possible, so as to save energy (being more sustainable). We promote that all production be made within the region. As much as possible, we look for local production of food, clothing, etc.

About Project

**Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?**

Features of the rural communities: -Social aspect: Long-distance isolations, roads precariousness and adverse weather conditions, complicating community organization. Lack of access to health and education. -Economic aspect: Economy of Subsistence. They work with livestock and textile art craft production (sheep, goat and guanaco wool products) but they cannot commercialize it due to the lack of access to the formal market. 90% of rural women know how to spin and weave wool. -Cultural aspect: They belong to Mapuche or Creole communities. Art craft production and woman's role are undervalued. -Political aspect: The state's presence in the territory is minimum and there is a lack of regulatory framework that facilitates commerce. -Demographic aspect: The Pilcaniyeu department counts with five thousand inhabitants distributed in rural areas of scarce population and far away from each other. They suffer from high urban-rural migration due to the lack of opportunities in their territory, which generates overpopulation in the cities and rootlessness. -History of the Estepa Market: Since 2003 it works as a commerce spot, with the participation of over three hundred craft workers, 90% of which are women. The structure is based on democratic organization holding community meetings, where actions to be taken are decided upon within the community.

**Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!**

The project came as a response to the lack of commercial spots for textile art craft production from the rural areas of the province. The Estepa Market is an answer to this need, coming from social economy values. The process consists in identifying producers, mainly women, who manage to get involved in the relation with the community thanks to their individual knowledge. Such relation is a key element in commerce that is sustained by the Estepa Market. This means that, even though the product is made thanks to each member's individual knowledge, the sale is done on the basis of association which is what produces social impact in the territory. There are no professional sales women in the spot's commercial circuit.; the very same individual-community producers are the ones in charge of selling the product, generating a direct relation between the producer and the consumer (without intermediaries). As a result, income is generated within rural families and craft women are empowered, strengthening their role in society. As opposed to other organizations, we work with the whole community, strengthening social fabric's ties, within an integrating spot that breaks individualism.

Impact: How does it Work

**Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.**

Identifying groups and communities of craft workers in the lands of the Pilcaniyeu department (located in the Rio Negro province), featured by social and financial isolation, for which it is necessary to create links within each community and the other surrounding communities. Ten communities and over three hundred producers participate in the Estepa Market, in the commercial spot, where the impact is not only measurable in terms of the volume of sold production, but also in terms of the exchange of cultural knowledge among those communities. The change this spot promotes is to do business from the point of social economy, with direct sales between producers and consumers –without intermediaries- and management of projects that favor rural and social development, such as: home improvement, community rooms building, production improvement training, and appreciation of native (Mapuche) cultural knowledge. Sales are carried out in an associative manner, where all the producers take turns to cover the demand: in this way, everyone sells what everyone has. This benefits the spot's economy sustainability, which also retains 10% of each sale (percentage agreed upon by contract among craft workers) to pay for the public utilities.

About You

**Organization:**

Asociación Civil Surcos Patagónicos

About You

**First Name**

Roberto Juan

**Last Name**

Killmeate

**Twitter**

**Facebook Profile**

## About Your Organization

### Organization Name

Asociación Civil Surcos Patagónicos

### Organization Country

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### Country where this project is creating social impact

### How long has your organization been operating?

More than 5 years

### Is the project that you are entering related to this organization?

Yes

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen..

## Innovation

### What stage is your project in?

Operating for more than 5 years

### Share the story of the founder and what inspired the founder to start this project

Bob has dedicated his life to service. He founded PROINCA, a training and rural communities empowerment organization, in order to fight for the lands' titles. After some time, PROINCA evolved and turned into MOCASE, launched by landless countrymen themselves. During the eight years that Bob worked with the movement of landless people, countrymen managed to get titles amounting to 177,000 square kilometers. This experience allowed Bob to understand local problems. He observed how rural producers "worked for land rights, improved productivity and practiced marketing –but they lacked a vision of how to produce a true change in their communities." That is how Bob decided to move to the Patagonia and experience countrymen life, which he wished to support himself.

The first organization form of producers taking part in the market aroused in 1999 at the Dina Huapi's fair. In 2000, Bob and a group of people from different origins and education created Surcos Patagonicos Civil Association, with the purpose of promoting development and commercialization of regional art craft products.

In 2001, the Promotion Commission of Dina Huapi (Comision de Fomento de Dina Huapi) transferred the territory where the market is located to Surcos Patagonicos on bailment. That year started the construction of the building, through donations and collaborations from public entities, companies and organizations.

## Social Impact

### Please describe how your project has been successful and how that success is measured

-Economic aspect: We work with over three hundred producers; fair commerce without intermediaries, sustainability and spot autonomy; monetary income for rural families; access to micro-credits for production improvement. Appreciation and dignifying of art craft work.

-Social aspect: Women empowerment as income generators through their own work; knowledge exchange between craft women from the province and other places; implementation of projects for the benefit of the entire community: first aid clinics, community rooms, home improvement. By generating opportunities in the region, urban-rural migration decreased.

-Cultural aspect: Appreciation of textile art craft production, Mapuche culture and Patagonia's typical product (wool), thus strengthening local culture.

-Political aspect: Acknowledgment of the sector's claims. In 2008, Surcos Patagonicos and the Estepa Market presented a social economy bill through popular initiative before the province's legislature, after gathering 13 thousand signatures, to be discussed by representatives. The bill was presented by the craft women themselves. Province Law 4499 was passed in 2009, which gave a legal framework to craft workers and the State's promotion of commercial association spots, and also developed a nationally recognized process of citizen participation.

### How many people have been impacted by your project?

101-1,000

### How many people could be impacted by your project in the next three years?

1,001-10,000

### How will your project evolve over the next three years?

Thanks to the fact that we could obtain the approval of Law No. 4499, we will create two new markets: 1) Located in the Atlantic Area (Las Grutas), working with fishery and horticultural production, and 2) Located in the Alto Valle Area, working with fruit production.

The dream we project is a development approach from the Patagonia's region, including the provinces of Rio Negro, Chubut and Santa Cruz (in progress in El Calafate), regions that share sheep-wool and guanaco-fur production.

This project aims at innovating on raw materials transformation in elaborated products, thus generating work with value added at origin, based on native cultural traditions (Mapuches and Tehuelches).

## Sustainability

### What barriers might hinder the success of your project and how do you plan to overcome them?

Lack of commercial spots: In order to increase sales and the number of participating communities, it is crucial to have more spots. This will be

solved with Law 4499's application in the Rio Negro's region and with the generation of partnerships within the Patagonia, seeking financing for their construction.

Spot's sustainability: The Estepa Market (Mercado de la Estepa) is a non-profit organization that retains 10% of the sales for building's maintenance. We proved that the demand for autochthonous art craft does exist: In the year 2004 we sold \$42,000 and in 2010 the figure rose to \$250,000 (over USD 60,000).

Distance between communities: We generated assistance for producers through partnerships with different organizations working in the territory. Examples: INTA, the provincial and national governments.

Urban-rural migration: It decreases with the development of opportunities in the territory, generating sales opportunities for local production.

Lack of access to raw materials (wool): We generated a Supplies Charity Fund which provides wool fleeces for craft women. Then they give back the fleece equivalent cost with spun wool (the rest is produced by them). The relation is: 1 wool fleece costs \$30 and they can take over 3 kilos of spun wool from it, which costs between \$100/150 per kilo (between USD 25/40). In this way, there is an exchange of work instead of a monetary exchange, and the money needed to buy more fleeces is recovered from sales. Simultaneously, they sell spun wool and the craft women's own products. The Charity Fund facilitates their access to raw materials, in order to let craft women generate their own production.

Production's quality: It is perfected through training between craft women of the communities, with cultural exchange and socialization of knowledge.

### **Tell us about your partnerships**

Estepa Market-Surcos Patagonicos Partnership

Inter-institutional Agreement between the Estepa Market, Surcos Patagonicos, INTA and Subsecretary of Family Agriculture (Subsecretaria de Agricultura Familiar).

Other local institutions:

INTA: Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (National Institute of Agricultural Technology)

INTI: Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Industrial (National Institute of Industrial Technology)

Argentina's Social Development Ministry

Argentina's Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Ministry: Subsecretariat of Family Agriculture

Vicaría de la Fraternidad del Obispado de Viedma (Viedma's bishopric)

Solidarity Regional Market (San Antonio Oeste)

Arte de Pueblos

Silataj Foundation

Niwok Foundation

Gente Nueva Foundation

Radio Nacional Bariloche

AVINA Foundation

Somuncura Women's Cooperative

Wool-related cooperatives in the area

Legislature of the province of Rio Negro

Provincial ministries: Production and Family, specifically.

Town councils and promotion commissions in the province.

Groups that work with micro-credits along with the Social Development Ministry.

Provincial and national art craft workers organizations.

### **Explain your selections**

The Estepa Market is a spot that financially sustains itself with production sales, retaining 10% of income. The other 90% goes directly to each producer.

The financial support requested is destined to projects management, developed through partnerships, mainly with the state sector, seeking financing and the commitment from the provinces and the country towards the rural population. In our case, we focus on the individual's strengthening through the cultural knowledge of textile art craft work, which was usually not considered a decent job. From this place, we defend the families' dignity and financial sustainability so that they can stay in their territory without needing to migrate, developing work instead of welfare-dependence.

Productive chain closes its cycle with production's direct sale to consuming customers. It is for this reason that it is necessary to increase the number of commercial spots.

Non-financial support is particularly provided by INTA (a national government's entity) which, teamed-up with Surcos Patagonicos, devotes to the assistance and promotion of the territory's communities, with constant improvement and production development.

### **How do you plan to strengthen your project in the next three years?**

The Estepa Market plans to increase production, quality and sales by generating more commercial spots and developing a visibility campaign. Currently, we count with another sales spot in Buenos Aires called Arte de Pueblos (working with two foundations that work on fair commerce with native communities from the North of Argentina).

We will develop two more associative markets in the province of Rio Negro, consolidating the "Mercado Regional Solidario" market (located in the west area, which works similarly to the Estepa market) and building one more in the northern area (Alto Valle, for which there already are partnerships being established with the INTA, producers and different State's entities).

This process is framed within the development of and compliance with Law No. 4499.

At the same time, from the "patagonic" point of view, we are supporting a project that currently boosts the construction of an associative commerce spot in the town of El Calafate (province of Santa Cruz). We expect to articulate soon with art craft workers organizations and institutions in order to build another market in the town of Puerto Madryn (province of Chubut).

### **Challenges**

**Which barriers to employment does your innovation address?**

**Please select up to three in order of relevancy to your project.**

#### **PRIMARY**

Restricted access to new markets

#### **SECONDARY**

Need for regulatory/policy support

### **TERTIARY**

Lack of visibility and investment

**Please describe how your innovation specifically tackles the barriers listed above.**

Implementation of Law No. 4499 will generate associative productive markets, increasing the number of commercial spots for local production. In order to achieve this, we are partnering with town councils through accession to Law No. 4499, together with art craft workers from those towns. Therefore, we implement markets based on fair commerce, within the law's framework that promotes a legal regulation that is suitable for the sector. At the same time, these partnerships and new spots will allow to visualize the rural communities, which will also generate new investments for production (the law compels the State on this).

**Are you trying to scale your organization or initiative?**

**If yes, please check up to three potential pathways in order of relevancy to you.**

### **PRIMARY**

### **SECONDARY**

Leveraged technology

### **TERTIARY**

Influenced other organizations and institutions through the spread of best practices

**Please describe which of your growth activities are current or planned for the immediate future.**

From the law's framework, we will build two other associative markets in the province: one is located in the Atlantic area and is in progress. We will then continue to work in the Patagonia.

Technology development with the incorporation of spinning wheels: this instrument helps the acceleration of wool spinning, reducing necessary work hours and obtaining an improvement in the production and volume of materials obtained (duplicating spun wool's production). This innovation is made through "Fundacion Gente Nueva" foundation, favoring local development.

The work is done by articulating with over twenty organizations in the territory.

**Do you collaborate with any of the following: (Check all that apply)**

Technology providers.

**If yes, how have these collaborations helped your innovation to succeed?**

Spinning wheels' innovation is made through Gente Nueva Foundation, where young people at social risk manufacture them. At the same time, craft women have obtained them through micro-credits (microfinance) provided by the Social Development Ministry. They give back the money on a monthly basis, while they recover the investment through sales at the Estepa Market.

Different projects we generate with producers are financed by governmental entities or foundations, increasing the project productive and social development in the territory.

**Source URL:** <https://www.changemakers.com/economicopportunity/entries/visi-n-de-desarrollo-rural-en-la-patagonia-espacios-de#comment-0>