



Granix Main Food Plant

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Argentina Food Factory (Alimentos Granix)

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Argentina Food Factory (Alimentos Granix or Granix) is a vegetarian food industry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, located in the territory of the South American Division. Its objective is to promote health through the food industry, starting with the manufacture and commercialization of foods that correspond to the biblical ideal of integral health.¹ The central headquarters of Argentina Food Factory is on General San Martín Avenue, 4625, zip code B1604CDH, Florida Oeste, Vicente López district, Buenos Aires province, Argentine Republic.²

Currently, Granix maintains several branches in operation around the world. In Argentina, some of them are: Casa Central, in Florida, Buenos Aires; Mar del Plata, in province of Buenos Aires; Quilmes, in province of Buenos Aires; Córdoba, in province of Córdoba; General Pico, in province of La Pampa; Mendoza, in province of Mendoza; General Roca, in province of Río Negro; Rosario, in province of Santa Fe; and Tucumán, in province of Tucumán.³

Argentina Food Factory is supported by 1,031 staff members. Among them there are 50 salespeople, 52 merchants, one worker with a ministerial credential, 37 who work with missionary credentials, and three who work with missionary licenses. In addition to these direct staff members, there are also outsourced companies that support the different stages of product production, distribution, and marketing.

Developments that Led to the Establishment of the Institution

The first Adventist work in South America was done under the supervision of the Seventh-day Adventists Board of Foreign Missions in the United States. In the late 19th century, news reached the United States that there were people in Argentina who were interested in learning more about Adventist beliefs. This encouraged the Church to send missionaries to Argentina. The General Conference International Tract and Missionary Society sent out missionaries who were willing to evangelize while supporting themselves by selling Adventist literature.⁴

In December 1891, the first three evangelistic canvassers⁵—Elwin Snyder, Clair Nowlin, and A. B. Stauffer—arrived in Argentina and dedicated themselves to spreading Adventist literature throughout the country. Although they only had English, French, and German literature at first, and they did not speak Spanish, they were determined to fulfill their mission. To this end, Nowlin and Snyder stayed in Buenos Aires among the English-speaking people of the city. Stauffer, who was fluent in German and English, went to visit the German and French-speaking settlers in Santa Fe and Entre Ríos provinces.⁶

With the advancement of the publishing work in Argentina, in March 1893 the General Conference sent Richard B. Craig to South America to take charge of the canvassing work⁷ and book storage while living in Buenos Aires. In August 1894, the Board of Foreign Missions sent Frank Westphal, the first ordained pastor to arrive in South America, and his wife, Mary Thurston, to Argentina. Upon their arrival, the couple was welcomed into the Craigs' home and Westphal began visiting the first Adventist believers in Argentina and organizing the first churches or groups of believers.⁸

The following year Westphal organized the first group of Adventist believers in Buenos Aires with a dozen people. The first leaders of that group were two canvassers—Snyder and Brooking. The group was mostly made up of missionaries working in the area, plus a few interested people.⁹ As the early missionaries disseminated Adventist beliefs, they also sought to make known the healthy Adventist lifestyle. The Adventist pioneers in the Spanish-speaking South American territory learned that health lectures and the promotion of good nutrition

were a good opening way to communicate Adventist beliefs to the community.¹⁰

In 1895 one of the first Adventist missionaries with training in the area of health arrived in Buenos Aires. Olaf (Ole) Oppegard was a nurse and masseur, and he spread Adventist beliefs through the sale of publications and the exercise of his professional training in the health area. He worked mainly in the provinces of Buenos Aires and Entre Ríos.¹¹ Some women, who had arrived in the country as missionaries, gave cooking classes and simple health treatments to the interested population, as well as participating in other community projects in Buenos Aires.¹²

In the pursuit of promoting the health message, in 1897 an advertisement was published in the Adventist newspaper *El Faro (The Lighthouse)* about a coffee made of cereals called *Café Higiénico (Hygienic Coffee)*. This product was prepared in a branch of the Battle Creek Sanitarium known as Compañía de Alimentos del Sanatorio de Battle Creek and located in Buenos Aires. This product was distributed by Olaf Oppegard, and the proposal was that it could be used as a substitute for Brazilian coffee, tea, and the mate herb. In 1901 the first Adventist medical missionaries arrived in that region. Dr. Robert H. Habenicht and his wife, Adela Allen, who was a nurse, brought great interest to the developing Adventist work.¹³

At the beginning of the 20th century, it was suggested that elementary topics of healthy cooking be taught in the Colegio Adventista de Camarero (Diamante School), now named Universidad Adventista del Plata (River Plate Adventist University), in the province of Entre Ríos. Dr. Habenicht emphasized that any promotion related to these topics should be positive and constructive, and not negatively based on prohibitions. The teachers should not speak about food as “this is prohibited,” but rather how “this promotes an improvement in digestion,” or “this helps one to regain strength.” At that time *El Faro* began to publish recipes and information explaining how to produce peanut butter and various ways it could be used.¹⁴

In 1904, Robert H. Habenicht shared with the Adventist believers his desire to start a bakery where whole wheat flour would be used and other healthy products would be produced. Given this required an investment that was not yet possible, the plans were not implemented. However, the work continued to advance and by the end of 1906 a committee was appointed to prepare a cookbook of healthy recipes. A few days later, in early 1907, a product which promoted stomach health was sold under the name *Bromose*.¹⁵

Other developments related to the Adventist health work took place the following year when the missionary nurses, Meda Kerr and Frances Brockmann, wrote some health tips and shared healthy recipes in *La Revista Adventista*.¹⁶ In 1912, a coffee substitute made of cereals was produced at River Plate Academy, now known as River Plate Adventist University, in joint cooperation with River Plate Sanitarium, located a few meters from River Plate Academy.¹⁷

In 1915, Dr. Habenicht’s earlier proposal materialized when a storage building was added to Sanatorio Adventista del Plata, with plans to establish a bakery and health food factory.¹⁸ For the administrative management of this project, the Industrial Society and an industrial board were created in which the leaders of

the Argentine Conference, now Central Argentine Conference, and the South American Union Conference, now Argentina Union Conference, participated.¹⁹

In 1916 the Industrial Society ended its activities and the bakery, which was well known in Buenos Aires, came under the management of River Plate Academy.²⁰ Later, in 1926, the bakery produced breads, cookies, coffee made of cereals, and a breakfast food known as *granola*—all of excellent quality.²¹ The bakery was known for producing, “white bread, whole wheat bread, fruit tarts, coconut tarts, butter sponge cakes, milk cakes, gingerbread tarts, sweet bread, different varieties of cakes, sweet pies, oatmeal, coffee of cereals, vegetable meat etc.”²²

At that time River Plate Academy was in constant industrial development. This expansion allowed the purchase of different machines that were imported from different locations, all in an effort to improve the quality and industrialization of the products. Among the purchases was a machine to make flakes which was brought from England and made it possible to produce *Granose Flakes*. By 1931 diverse canned foods were being produced in the factory. The Buenos Aires Publishing House, now known as South American Spanish Publishing House, printed the product labels.²³

The following year, 1932, Alfredo Ernst found, among a pile of trash, a machine to roll grains, and he put it to work rolling food for animals. The next step was to get the machine to produce wheat flakes. The wheat flake product was called *Trigola* and was sold beginning in 1933. At first the machine was installed in the River Plate Academy bakery, but it was later moved to the tower of the academy, and the production of corn flakes was added. In 1934 Ernst discovered machines that had been used in previous years and he made them run again.²⁴

By the end of the 1935, an attempt was made to register the trademark of the products with the initials of the academy; but it was not possible, so they were registered under the name “Granix.” More machines for the production of cereal flakes were purchased, as well as a roaster to make coffee out of cereals. Other purchases were made the following year. Due to the great demand for products, the leaders of Granix decided to invest in another machine to make flakes.²⁵

Establishment of the Institution

In August 1936 the Austral Union Conference, now known as Argentina Union Conference, authorized a commercial project at River Plate Academy, which at that time was located in Puiggari (formerly called Aldea Camarero), in Diamante, Entre Ríos.²⁶ The project was planned so that healthy foods could be sold to the local population at a time when the academy’s factory was already producing, marketing, and distributing wheat flakes and vegetable protein.²⁷ However, a few weeks after authorization and the beginning of sales, it was decided that the factory should operate as a separate business from the academy.²⁸

In October 1936 a committee met for the first time to deal with the affairs of the Pro-Health Food Factory. The committee decided to invite a technician from the Adventist food factories in Australia or England to help in developing the project in Argentina. If this was not possible, the company in Argentina should send someone to Australia or England to be trained in the task.²⁹ The factory began to operate independently from the academy at the beginning of 1937. Although the factory and the academy operated as separate entities, the factory continued to operate in the River Plate Academy facilities with the same staff and equipment.³⁰

In December 1937 a meeting was held in which it was decided to move the River Plate Academy food factory to Buenos Aires. In addition, the leaders of the Church in Argentina voted that a limited liability company should be formed, that another technician should be sought to implement the future factory projects, and that donations and funds should be requested to begin the task of relocation. With these decisions, the bakery and the factory building returned to River Plate Academy along with the equipment, furniture, and merchandise. Also, in December, the Buenos Aires Publishing House, now known as South American Spanish Publishing House, donated two lots of land to the factory, with a total of 2,017 square meters, on Avenue San Martín, 4625, Florida Oeste, Vicente López District, Buenos Aires Province, Argentine Republic, where Alimentos Granix (Argentina Food Factory) is located today.³¹

In January 1938, George E. Norris was hired, an expert from the food factory in England, and he became the first director of the food factory in Buenos Aires. In March the official name of the company was registered as “Alimentos Granix Sociedad Anónima Comercial e Industrial” (Granix Commercial and Industrial Stock Company).³² The first board of directors of this institution was formed with Walter E. Murray as president, G. E. Emmeneger as vice president, Ner Soto, M. V. Tucker, and W. A. Ernenputsch as members, P. M. Brouchy and Walter Schubert as substitutes for the members, Roger Altman as auditor, and P. H. Barnes as substitute for the auditor.³³

Since then, the mission of the factory has been “to produce and distribute natural and healthy food, generating work and economic resources to fulfill the Christian mission.”³⁴ In April 1938, Alfredo Ernst arrived in Buenos Aires to take over the factory in Florida and to receive George Norris, the London technician. Norris traveled to River Plate Academy with Alfredo Ernst to do food experiments for the new factory. He also provided plans for the construction of an extruder machine to be used at the institution, and later he returned to England.³⁵

In May and June 1938, with the South American Division’s authorization, plans were made for the construction of the factory and for the purchase of equipment. The building was completed in July, with an entrance that had two 30-square-meter rooms and a space for the factory that had 225 square meters of well illuminated and ventilated space. The factory began to operate on July 20 with the production of wheat flakes, rice, corn, biscuits, peanut butter, and honey fractionation. Before the year was out, electricity and water access were added, and a house was rented for the factory staff. In August the transfer of the name “Granix” to the new factory in the town of Florida, Buenos Aires, was completed.³⁶

In order to develop the factory properties, the institution's leaders planned the purchase of a grain roaster, a dryer, and a centrifugal pump, as well as the installation of a rotating furnace. Near the end of 1938 Norris was asked to return to take over as manager of the factory. Accepting the call, he came back to the factory in November and served as manager until the middle of the next decade.³⁷ At first Norris was responsible for around ten staff members.³⁸

History of the Institution

The following years saw great progress, with the launch of new products and promotion in the newspapers of Buenos Aires and other Argentine cities, including in Adventist papers. Exhibitions and product testing were held in various locations and more vendors were added to the factory staff. Despite all these advances, the first years of the institution were financially difficult and the South American Division had to help cover operational expenses so the factory could be debt free.³⁹

From 1940 to 1942 there was a strong economic recession in the region where the institution was located. This led to considering the possibility of selling the factory. In order to improve the financial prospects for the factory, products were exported to Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and other countries in South America, as well as Africa and India. One of the best-selling products was Vegex, which was a plant extract that was sold in Africa and in many places in Argentina. With the blessings of God, there were enough sales to pay off all the debts of the factory.⁴⁰

In 1944 the factory building was modified and expanded, which allowed for the manufacture of new products in the coming years. In the 1960s and 1970s, Granix launched a line of cookies. In the 1960s Sweet Cookies were produced by the factory, and in the 1970s the company increased its participation with this product in the Argentine market by launching "the first lines of Crackers Cookies without Salt, Cookies with Bran Cereal and Soy, in sandwich size." This important entry into the Argentine market made Argentina Food Factory recognized not only for its breakfast cereals, but also for other quality products that tasted good.⁴¹

This growth in the food industry was not only evident at the business level. In the context of the Church, Granix had established itself as an important institution within the mission field of the South American Division. By 1979, Granix and the food factory Superbom (a company similar to Granix in Brazilian territory) had "formed the second largest Adventist food industry in the world."⁴²

On March 23, 1981, Argentina Food Factory inaugurated a vegetarian restaurant located on Florida Pedestrian Street, 165, Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.⁴³ The number of meals served soon reached approximately 4,000 per day. The restaurant took advantage of the great opportunity to teach the Adventist health message to its clients and developed the taste of citizens for the food as well as for the message that was transmitted there.⁴⁴

Over the years the factory expanded its outreach by inaugurating branches in different parts of Buenos Aires and in other provinces. Due to the demand for more products, such as Crackers Cookies, Granix expanded its

production capacity, inaugurating a new production plant in Baradero, Buenos Aires, in 1984. At that time Granix had a fleet of 19 trucks and 56 private delivery vehicles. In 1990 the number of staff reached 600.⁴⁵ On August 5, 1991, the central warehouse and sales offices were inaugurated in the central plant in Florida.⁴⁶

In the new millennium, Argentina Food Factory became one of the main food distribution companies in all of Argentina. In 2007 the institution became “the third largest food factory in the entire Adventist world.” In 2008 Argentina Food Factory proposed the building of a new plant, and the company purchased 40,000 square meters of land in the Parque Industrial de Campana (Campana Industrial Park), province of Buenos Aires. The goal was to transfer the cereal production to the new location, which until then was only carried out in the central plant located in Florida.⁴⁷

In November 2008 the Argentina Food Factory plant in Baradero inaugurated a new line of cookies. This called for an investment from its own resources of approximately US\$2,000,000. Granix thereby increased its production and its participation in the food market, as well as being able to offer more jobs. Prior to November of that year, the institution had produced “three thousand tons of food, of which 1,020 are cereals, 1,030 crackers, and 950 sweet cookies.”⁴⁸ A year later Granix sold about US\$70,000,000 and its exports reached the United States, Canada, and some countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, as well as South America.⁴⁹

On July 27, 2011, after some years of building, Argentina Food Factory inaugurated its third plant in the Parque Industrial de Campana (Campana Industrial Park), where a 10,000 square meter production plant was built. This new factory was equipped with the most modern machines of the time for the manufacture of cereal flakes by the extrusion system—a method that allows the processing of corn grain from different types of flour. Thus, the final product was of better quality. The factory also managed to make better use of inputs and reduced production time, being able to produce 300 tons of cereal per month. To aid in the implementation of this method, machinery was imported from Switzerland.⁵⁰

In 2013 the Argentina Food Factory further expanded its production capacity in the Campana unit. This modern unit brought to the institution a production capacity of around 1,300 tons per month.⁵¹ Then, in 2016, the institution expanded its transportation fleet with the purchase of six trucks for long-distance transportation, which were added to the 15 commercial vehicles labeled with Granix advertising already in existence.⁵²

Today, Argentina Food Factory continues as a well-established Adventist institution among the leading companies producing cereals, cookies, and other natural foods. The company serves a total of around 40,000 clients and the sales are carried out by different branches located throughout the country. These branches are in charge of the commercial and logistical tasks, with the interest of serving their areas of influence. The main products that are sold belong to mass food consumption. They are: cracker cookies (five varieties), cracker cookies with cereal (nine varieties), sweet cookies (12 varieties), biscuits (four varieties), processed cereals (19 varieties), fibers and mueslis (three varieties), and cereal bars (four varieties). The average sales volume is approximately 35 percent in cereals, fibers, mueslis, and bars, and 65 percent in crackers, with cereal and

sweets.⁵³

In April 2020, Argentina Food Factory, perceiving the need to help others in need and those most affected by the pandemic caused by COVID-19, donated more than 55,000 tons of merchandise. Donations reached people through the “ASA (Asistencia Social Adventista [Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Service]) departments of its administrative headquarters ... and the Urban Aid program.” This solidarity action shows that Granix, in its long uninterrupted trajectory as a Christian institution, is attentive to the needs of the population; and thus, the institution continues to seek to fulfill its evangelistic mission.⁵⁴

Historic Role of the Institution

The establishment of the Argentina Food Factory, about half a century after the Adventist message was first preached in Entre Ríos, in the Argentine territory, was the first SDA initiative in South America in the area of healthy food. Since its establishment, this company has been working with the Church’s schools, clinics, and publishing houses, in addition to other denominational institutions, in seeking to fulfill the mission of preaching the gospel to all people.⁵⁵

The establishment of an Adventist food factory in Argentina was of great benefit to the growing Adventist population in Argentina.⁵⁶ In the context of preaching the three angelic messages, it was necessary to include the preaching of health reform and to demonstrate that it is possible to abandon food that is not healthful and replace it with healthy foods.⁵⁷

In 2008 the Granix Restaurant was well positioned among the 9,000 vegetarian establishments worldwide. On a five-point scale, the Adventist restaurant scored more than four points, according to the online guide to vegetarian restaurants prepared by the company *Happy Cow Guide to Restaurants and Health Food Stores*. This indicated that the citizens and visitors to the capital of Argentina (Adventist or not) considered the Adventist restaurant as a place to eat and they recommend it. Free lectures are offered in this restaurant to promote the healthy lifestyle of the population.⁵⁸

Beyond producing healthy foods, Argentina Food Factory participates in social activities. In recent years the factory has made donations to schools, the households of children and the elderly, popular cafeterias, charities, non-governmental organizations, churches of all faiths, the ASA, and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. During 2015 and 2016, an average of 80 tons of food (cereals and cookies) were donated each month.⁵⁹ In addition, Argentina Food Factory also works in cooperation with Ceapé Food Factory of the River Plate Adventist University, Entre Ríos, Argentina.⁶⁰ Through this association, a socially responsible activity is carried out by the “Friendship Train,” which is a group that offers plays in schools, in order to promote values related to nutrition, hygiene, and respect, among others.⁶¹

Outlook

In recent years, Argentina Food Factory has excelled in the Argentine market;⁶² which is according to its vision “to be a pioneering and leading institution in the production of healthy and natural foods, which brings to society a better quality of life.”⁶³ The principles that directed the company from the beginning are well known to society. In 2014 a journalist from a major radio station in Argentina said in a live broadcast that Granix is not a common company that only aims to make a profit. In the seven minutes that he devoted to talking about the company, he declared that Granix’s greatest interest is to make people eat healthier and be closer to God. The journalist added that “Granix claims the Sabbath rest, which is precisely the seventh-day, and believes that Jesus Christ’s return to earth is imminent. Granix’s three factories stop their production one hour a day to pray.”⁶⁴ That recognition in the media is one of many testimonies that Argentina Food Factory has fulfilled its mission.⁶⁵

In the pursuit to continue fulfilling its mission, the leaders understand that it is necessary to continue trusting in God and producing quality products. They also need to continue innovating and investing in more technology and in human resources. All of this is so that more and more people will be reached by the health message and other truths of the Word of God.⁶⁶

The history of the Argentina Food Factory shows that Granix has faced many challenges, including post-war challenges, economic and social crises, and others. However, history also shows that, with God’s blessings, the factory was able to cope with all of these hardships. Most important are trust in God and fidelity to His Word. For more than 80 years, Granix has preached and witnessed Jesus’ love and return through its influence and service in the food industry.

List of General Managers

George E. Norris (1938-1945); René F. Dobantón (1946-1955); Alfredo Bellido (1956-1961); Lucas J. Schulz (1962-1971); Norman Trubey (1971-1975); Emilio Wandersleben (1975-1979); Benjamin Reichel (1979-2007); Marcelo Cerdá (2008-present).⁶⁷

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