



ALINSA - Alimentos Integronaturales, S. A. (Alimentos COLPAC) office.

Photo courtesy of Enrique Garcia Portillo.

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## ENRIQUE GARCÍA

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The acronym ALINSA, which means *Alimentos Integronaturales, S.A.*, constitutes the legal name of the Adventist health food brand commercially known as *Alimentos COLPAC* in Mexico.

## Events Leading to the Founding of the Food Company

The food company began and prospered, known to the public as *Alimentos COLPAC*. However, the time came when it was necessary to establish the food company on an appropriate legal basis, so it was registered as ALINSA, *Alimentos Integronaturales, S.A.* ALINSA is only used in the company's legal documents; on the other hand, *Alimentos COLPAC* resonates on the lips of millions of consumers and it is read, seen, and heard in all advertisements done of all products the food company produces. This is the reason why *Alimentos COLPAC* is used in this article.

The development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mexico has many facets, *Alimentos COLPAC* being one of those facets. From the very beginning it was evident that God was working—sometimes in miraculous ways—to aid in its progress, so this organization could contribute to spreading the gospel through the ministry of healthful living.

The story of *Alimentos COLPAC* is strongly linked to the development of Adventist education in Mexico. When the Pacific Agricultural and Industrial School opened in Navojoa, Sonora, Mexico, it was in need of multiple resources in order to grow and develop. It was felt that the resources should not only meet the needs of students, but also represent the principles of Adventist education through providing useful work and generating financial support for the school.

*Alimentos COLPAC* started operations in 1956 as one of the work departments for the Pacific Agricultural and Industrial School when Lorenzo A. Wheeler was in charge of the school.<sup>1</sup> The business was located on campus. The first foods produced by *Alimentos COLPAC* were bakery products such as bread, peanut butter, and derivatives of dehydrated mangos and papaya, which sold well and were even exported to the United States. The person in charge at that time was Harold Norem Smith.<sup>2</sup> The conditions under which the foods were produced were very simple, and the building was equipped with donated and modified equipment adapted to generate the foods. The food was sold to the local community and to school staff, as well as used in the school cafeteria.

In spite of this very humble beginning, the business would become a channel of blessing for the school throughout its development.

## History of the Food Company

The food company developed rapidly because of the dedicated service of people blessed with the ability to create new products. In 1961 a coffee substitute became one of the products; it was called El Bueno and was

made of toasted grain. It was so popular that it was exported to the United States.

The rapid growth of *Alimentos COLPAC* was interrupted by the temporary closure of the school in 1965, when the administrators of the church in Mexico decided to make administrative and financial changes. The school reopened in 1967 under the name Mexican Pacific Academy (*Colegio del Pacífico*—giving the initials COLPAC to the food industry) and under the leadership of Henry Fuss Brayther.

In 1968 Paul and Lorna Allred went to Navojoa Sonora, and they had a marked influence on the development of *Alimentos COLPAC*. They focused on creating an industry that would produce healthy foods through the use of soybean products. The first challenge they faced was the small amount of water in the well on which both the school and the food factory depended. That same year, *Alimentos COLPAC* was also running an automobile repair shop and an electricity business in the town of Navojoa.

In 1970 *Alimentos COLPAC* began to sell a drink called *leche de soya* (soy milk). In 1971 the company acquired its first food extruder, which allowed it to begin the production of texturized soy. The production of these items was a landmark in Mexico. During the 1970s new extruders were brought into the country; and *Alimentos COLPAC* introduced to the Mexican market their trademark products, such as *Tortaleta* and *Nutrisoy* (soybean flour), and the bakery began to produce and sell on a large scale, items such as bran buns, cookies, and small cakes.<sup>3</sup> Part of what made all this possible was the construction of buildings for *Alimentos COLPAC* outside of the school campus and away from the other work departments of the Mexican Pacific Academy. Today these buildings still function as the production center and offices for the food factory in Navojoa, Sonora.

On March 8, 1978, the Inter-American Division created the Inter-American Division Health Food Company. This affected *Alimentos COLPAC* in a major way, as it ceased to be one of the work departments of the Mexican Pacific Academy and instead came under the administration of the Inter-American Division company. This meant that the administrators of the company would now focus all their attention on the development and growth of the three industries run by *Alimentos COLPAC*.

A year prior to this change in administration for *Alimentos COLPAC*, another Adventist industry was preparing to join the Inter-American Division Health Food Company. The Panificadora La Carlota opened up in 1975 as a part of the pro-health efforts of Montemorelos University in Montemorelos, Nuevo León. Dr. Alberto Sánchez led out in the project, and one of its products was soymilk, which was sold within the university community.

A new institution was born in Mexico in 1980. It was called *Alimentos Integronaturales, S. A.* (Whole-grain Natural Foods) and it started canning gluten-based foods, which helped to commercialize the products that *Alimentos COLPAC* made. In 1989 *Alimentos COLPAC* expanded by opening two stores to distribute their products, one in Tijuana, Baja California, and the other in Torreón, Coahuila. This was the beginning of needed commercial growth for *Alimentos COLPAC* and led to a steep upward curve in its development.

During the 1990s there was considerable growth in the ministry of health foods in Mexico. In 1990 construction was begun on a building to house the bakery in Montemorelos. This happened under administration *PALACASA*, which also managed the print shop in Montemorelos and the Superbom restaurant in Monterrey. The construction of the new bakery in Montemorelos made it possible to quickly market the Wendy wholegrain crackers and enable a growth of sales of granola.

In 1992 *Alimentos COLPAC* began to market new products made of texturized soy, namely Filetín and Soya Chorizo. At the same time, the Adventist sanitarium in Australia donated a food extruder which allowed Montemorelos to begin to produce texturized soy. Within a few years Montemorelos was able to export texturized soy to Spain.<sup>4</sup>

By 1995 a factory for texturized soy was established in Acolman, in the state of Mexico, and in 1998 a factory was established in El Salto, Jalisco. These three new factories testified to the success of this product in the Mexican market and made *Alimentos COLPAC* the leader of the health food business because of the portfolio of products that it marketed. During the same decade, a store was opened in Culiacán, in the state of Sinaloa, introducing the sale of powdered soymilk under the brand Soyapac. Also, in this decade, *Alimentos COLPAC* transferred administration of the farm in Navojoa to Pacific Mexican Academy.

In 2000 *Alimentos COLPAC* put a strong emphasis on its marketing sites. It opened stores in Hermosillo, Sonora, and in Celaya, Guanajuato. In 2001 it opened a store in Pichucalco, Chiapas, which established its presence in southeastern Mexico. In 2004 this store was moved to Villahermosa, Tabasco. In 2002 the first store named Soyfarm was opened in Navojoa, Sonora, thus providing a new way to market the products made by *Alimentos COLPAC*.<sup>5</sup>

*Alimentos COLPAC* entered the new millennium with new products for the market. Among these were a toasted grain drink called Kafrik Swiss (2000), the soy drink Soyapac sold in a tetrapak form (2011), and the soy and oatmeal drink SoyKids (2011); there was also a growth of frozen products under the Soi Yah! brand. *Alimentos COLPAC* sought to present a new corporate image and strengthen national distribution of its products through commercial chains, as well as exporting texturized soy to countries such as Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, and Honduras.

One of the most outstanding recent events in the company's history has been its merger with *Panificadora La Carlota*. On January 22, 2018, at a meeting of the board of directors of the Inter-American Division Health Food Company held at the Inter-American Division office, it was voted to merge *Alimentos COLPAC* and *Panificadora La Carlota* (vote 08-001).<sup>6</sup> The agreement was signed by the director of the Inter-American Division Health Food Company, Joel Zukovski, and his assistants, engineer Adolfo Ruiz Salazar, Juan Martín Meza Escobar, and the administrators of the North Mexican Union Conference—Pastor Abner De los Santos (president), Luis Arturo King (secretary), and Arturo Salazar (treasurer). This event consolidated the production and distribution of health foods made by Adventist institutions in Mexico, and it ushered in a new period of growth focused on

strengthening the means of distribution of products, growth of the brand, and an increase in the financial benefits that *Alimentos COLPAC* offered to the Adventist Church. It also has affected significantly the way in which this company interacts with the public, with the purpose of taking the message of hope to many people.

## Historic Role of the Food Company

“Sharing the principles of a healthy lifestyle through education and the production and marketing of products and services...” is how the mission statement for *Alimentos COLPAC* begins. This task has been the standard of operation for the company since its beginning, and it continues to be the standard in all the things it does.

Since its beginning, *Alimentos COLPAC* has been one of the pioneer businesses in Mexico in the production of texturized soy, meat substitutes that are plant-based, and soy drinks which it introduced to the Mexican market, as well as in the distribution of multiple products which aid in achieving a healthy diet. This has been accompanied by an effort throughout Mexico to educate people about a healthy diet through seminars and health food workshops. These have made the business well known and respected, as well as imitated and loved by its public. Modern times have led *Alimentos COLPAC* to advertise through new technologies and social media in its mission to share the principles of healthy diet, both nationally and outside the borders of Mexico.

*Alimentos COLPAC* is not only about food products. Its history shows that this institution has given significant support to the preaching of the gospel; part of its business model calls for it to provide economic support for evangelism and the construction of churches. It has also maintained a strong link with Adventist education in Mexico. As part of its evangelistic mission, *Alimentos COLPAC* uses all of its communication resources to give the message of hope—sharing it on its packaging, its website, and its social media. The company maintains a close relationship and connection with its clients, showing that it is a friendly and trustworthy business. It also makes a special effort to aid in the distribution of Adventist literature. In addition, *Alimentos COLPAC* lives out the love of Christ by providing help in times of crisis and giving aid to those who are vulnerable.

## Perspectives

The 65 years of history of *Alimentos COLPAC* have given it a solid foundation, making it possible to continue to follow its path of growth. Today, more than ever, society seeks businesses that are honest and trustworthy. In the modern world, that tends to be health conscious, *Alimentos COLPAC* has much to offer. It must continue to develop new products that will meet the needs of all groups in society, especially those who are less fortunate. At the same time, it needs to continue opening channels that will allow it to come closer to people in order to educate them about the principles of healthy nutrition; it also needs to find new ways of marketing its products so they can be sold by self-employed persons and in large distribution centers.

History has shown that the institution was able to have several kinds of businesses under its umbrella. At one time or another, it has included a battery factory, a printing press, and a vegetarian restaurant. This variety of businesses sets a good precedent for future development, as in the coming years it would be good to diversify in order to meet the needs of people and in order to fulfill the mission of promoting healthy nutrition and spreading the message of hope that God has for the world.

Currently, through the work of more than 210 people, the operation of four production factories, ten centers of distribution, two stores open to the public, a vegetarian snack, and 150 delivery routes, the company markets its 50 products to a population with diverse needs. In the coming years, this business will be strengthened by efforts to develop new factories, new lines of products, and new methods for marketing them.

Every member of the group of missionaries who work for *Alimentos COLPAC* is totally committed to seeing that the message of healthy nutrition—which gives wellbeing in this life, and also hope for a future life—is taken to all parts of Mexico and outside of its borders. This institution is committed to strengthening, through its business model, other plans that the Adventist Church has for evangelism and education, and sharing the joy of healthy living!

## List of Managers

Managers of Alimentos COLPAC under Pacific Mexican Academy:

Lorenzo A. Wheeler (1955-1957), Juan Gil Rodríguez (1957-1958), Dan W. Palmer (1958-1964), Luis Carlos Ramírez (1964-1965), Henry Fuss Breyther (1967-1969), Horacio Kelly Lucas (1969-1972), Mario Alfredo Collins (1972-1975), Neftalí Rodríguez Reyes (1975-1979).

Managers of Panificadora La Carlota:

Emilio Wandersleben (1979-1985), Raúl Pairo (1985-1987), Juan Martín Meza Escobar (1987-1988), Adolfo Ruíz (1988-1994), Noé Meza (1994-1995), Manuel Rubio (1995-2007).

Managers of Alimentos COLPAC under Inter-American Division Health Food Company:

Josué Ferreira (1979), Filiberto Verduzco Afila (1979-1984), Juan Martín Meza Escobar (1984-1986), Adaías Rivas (1986-1990), Manuel Rubio (1990-1994), Raúl Pairo (1994-1995), Nelson Jerez (1995-2001), Almicar Hernández (2001-2007), Jose E. Flores Laguna (2007-present).

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## SOURCES

Flores Laguna, José Eliasib. Unpublished document from the archives of *Alimentos COLPAC*. Accessed February 2, 2021.

Inter-American Division Health Food Company Board of Directors Minutes. "*Alimentos COLPAC and Panificadora La Carlota Merge.*" January 22, 2018. Accessed February 2, 2021, *Alimentos COLPAC* archives.

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## NOTES

1. María Lourdes Medina Almada, email message to author, December 9, 2019.
2. Elsa Gámez de Dick, interview by Adolfo Ruíz Salazar, August 2020.
3. Paul Alrred, telephone interview by Almicar Hernández and Enrique García from California.
4. José Eliasib Flores Laguna, unpublished document in the archives of *Alimentos COLPAC*.
5. Eleazar Olmedo Carrillo, telephone interview with Enrique García, August 2020.
6. Inter-American Division Health Food Company Board of Directors, "*Alimentos COLPAC and Panificadora La Carlota Merge,*" January 22, 2018, 08-001, accessed February 2, 2021, *Alimentos COLPAC* archives.

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