Spain

Mercado Nuestra Señora de África

Market type Covered urban food market; mixed (fresh food, food service, flowers, crafts); self-managed by a vendors' cooperative

Frequency Daily, mornings (6:00–14:00; Sundays 7:00–14:00)





Key Stakeholders

- **Market management**: the vendors' not-for-profit cooperative, with its Governing Board and professional management team, running the market since 1995.
- **Vendors**: about 140–160 stallholders across about 360 stalls (fresh food, bars and restaurants, flowers, crafts).
- **Public authorities**: City Council (management fee, inspections), Cabildo and Canary Government (subsidies for works), and other inspection bodies.
- **Consumers**: local residents of all ages, families, tourists and cruise passengers.
- **Suppliers**: Mercatenerife wholesale market, local farmers, nurseries and importers.

Main products and users

Main products: fresh fruit and vegetables (including local potato varieties), meat, fish, cheese, bakery, prepared food, bars and restaurants, flowers and plants, crafts and souvenirs. Produce is mainly local and regional, alongside goods from mainland Spain and abroad.

Users: daily local shoppers; families drawn by children's activities; schools (20–30 visits a year); neighbourhood associations using the space; tourists and cruise passengers.

Main production / farming system(s)

Local produce comes from small family farms in Tenerife: rain-fed plots in the mid-altitude zones and irrigated plots in the south, much of the work done by hand. Production is mainly conventional. A few vendors sell their own crops or livestock. Plants come roughly half from local nurseries and half from the Netherlands.

Value chain involved (sourcing)

The market relies mainly on resale. Most vendors buy at the farmers' halls of the Mercatenerife wholesale market, some buy whole harvests directly from farms, and only a few are producer-vendors. Intermediaries increasingly take the place of farmers. Quality rests on vendors' selection of produce and long-standing customer trust; origin labelling is rare.

Institutions / Governance setting up market

A municipal market opened in 1944 and run by the City Council until 1995. That year, facing decline and a planned sale, vendors formed a not-for-profit cooperative and took over management. Each member has one vote, all surpluses are reinvested, and the cooperative provides cleaning, maintenance, advisory services, parking and an information app. It pays the City Council a management fee and is regulated by several public bodies.

Location



Challenges

- **Regulation:** rules poorly adapted to the Canary context and to small family businesses. Simultaneous inspections, fire-safety requirements and capacity limits have ended the night events. Management calls for guidance rather than sanctions.
- **Generational renewal:** trades such as butchery, fishmongery and farming are not being continued, and local stallholders are being replaced by newcomers. Management disagrees on the cause: lack of interest, or fiscal and regulatory burdens.
- **Economic viability of vendors:** high self-employment costs and uneven sales between stalls.
- **Collective engagement:** vendors focus on their own stall and leave collective matters to the cooperative.
- **Local production:** declining local supply (potatoes, cheese, livestock), with intermediaries replacing farmers and competition from imports.
- **Building and access:** an 80-year-old building in need of constant repair; parking saturation and crowding at weekends.

ICT-Potential

- Expand the market app and home delivery.
- Digital origin labelling to make local products visible.
- Digital marketing support for vendors, whose use of social media is uneven.

Practice Partners

- Mercado Nuestra Señora de África Vendors' Cooperative
- Universidad de La Laguna (ULL)

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