

AltaMiel: a Sweet Growth

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THE BEGINNINGS

In 2013, following a precarious economic situation, 20-year-old Nicolás Pérez decided to try his luck in the United States and crossed the border. He found a job as a beekeeper in an American company, and five years later, thanks to his hard work, experience, and savings, he decided to return to his hometown, Zapotiltic, a community of less than three thousand two hundred inhabitants, located in the municipality of Tequila in the state of Jalisco. Upon his return he married his junior high sweetheart, Carolina, and he bought some land, five hives, and the necessary equipment to start the business in January 2018, calling it AltaMiel.

Three of his siblings and five cousins worked with him and Carolina. Some time later, María, Carolina's sister, joined the team to help her with all the activities, and all together helped each other to offer the products and services in nearby communities.

Images. Smashicons, Eucalyp and Freepik in Flaticon, 2023.

In June 2018, AltaMiel had been growing with the three services and products they started offering since the beginning:



MULTI-FLOWER HONEY

Nectar collected by bees from many and diverse flowers.



BEEHIVE PRODUCTS

Royal jelly

Soaps



POLLINATION SERVICES



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ALTAMIEL ORGANIZATION CHART

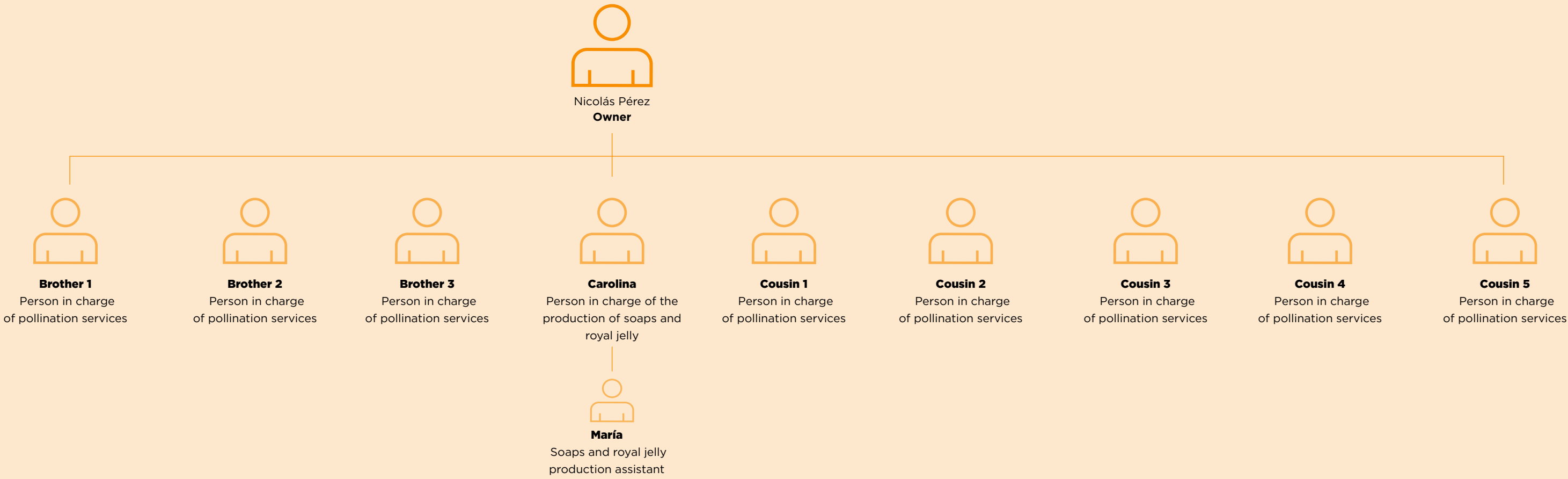


Image. Icongeek26 in Flaticon, 2023.

Source. Own elaboration, 2023.

THE PRODUCTS AND THE COMMERCIALIZATION

The royal jelly and the honey were 100% natural, no preservatives were added. Soaps were handmade with products that did not damage the environment.

All products, honey, royal jelly, and soaps were continuously supplied; there was no stock as all that was produced was sold. Nicolás looked after the cost-efficiency of the all the products and services of AltaMiel, without neglecting quality.

Due to the size of the population, all the products and services were well-known by all the inhabitants. Carolina had a Facebook page and an Instagram account where she would have weekly publications of the soaps and honey. This complemented their WhatsApp notifications.

Image: Wirestock in Freepik, 2023.



AltaMiel's Mission was: "We nurture and take care of people, we protect and safeguard bees, while taking care of the world".

PRODUCTS AND THEIR PRESENTATIONS



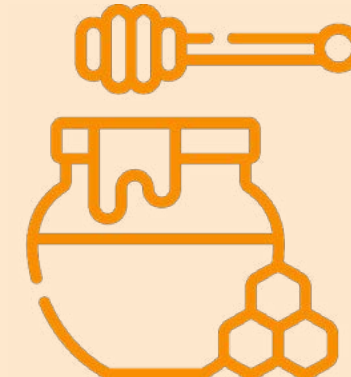
HONEY

- Retail: Transparent jars of $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ liter, with metal lid.
- Wholesale: Five-liter buckets identified with a transparent label with a bee and the name of the company, AltaMiel. On the back there was another label with this information: batch number, business address, and Nicolás' cellphone number which was also used for WhatsApp notifications.
- Nicolás and his siblings were in charge of packaging and commercialization.



SOAPS

- Square, 150 grams.
- Wrapped in transparent plastic with a label equal to the honey's.



ROYAL JELLY

- During harvesting time, it would only be packaged in one presentation:
- 10-gram amber glass jars; the label would be the same and it would only read royal jelly with the business information.
- Carolina and her sister would package the royal jelly and they would also make the soaps. Additionally, they oversaw their distribution in El Salvador.



POLLINATION SERVICES

- They would continuously be offered to farmers of nearby areas.
- Specially for cultures of strawberry, raspberry, blueberry, and blackberry.
- Nicolás' cousins and siblings were in charge of providing these services.

THE HONEYBEE INDUSTRY

In 2019, the Royal Geographical Society of London, and the Earthwatch Institute, declared bees to be the most important animal in the world as they are the only living being that transport no pathogens, so that they do not spread any epidemic (mushrooms, virus, or bacteria) to humans (Forbes, 2019). In this same line, the Apiculture Entrepreneurship Center of the Universidad Mayor of Chile, and the Apiculture Corporation of Chile, conducted some research that revealed that the world agriculture depended 70% on bees, due to their pollination and for being responsible for the reproduction of plants, an equivalent of 35% of produced food (Forbes, 2019).

Image. Atlascompany in Freepik, 2023.



According to Statista (2022), in 2021 Mexico was one of the main countries that exported natural honey in the world, being ranked seventh due to their exports value in that year.

One of the factors that has probably contributed to an increase in the consumption of honey is the healthy life megatrend, identified by Euromonitor (2019). The latter consists of a cultural change in consumption

conducts and patterns, in the pursuit of preventive health, nutrition, and a better lifestyle. This megatrend received a strong drive as of the COVID-19 pandemic with consumers looking for organic products.

THE COMPETITION

Nicolás started sweeping the different sales points of the neighboring towns of El Salvador, the locality where he had the business. Almost all his distributors agreed that there were two direct competitors: Mioldulce and Abeja-Reina. Nevertheless, he got recurrent comments about AltaMiel's delicious flavor, pleasant color, and consistency.

Images. Monkik and Freeplik in Flaticon, 2023.

COMPETITOR PRODUCTS



MIOLDULCE

- Cristal jars of $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ liter.
- 5% lower price than that of AltaMiel
- It was advertised as an economic and handmade product.
- The consistency was slightly more liquid than AltaMiel's.



ABEJA-REINA

- One single presentation, one-liter plastic container.
- A price proportionally higher than AltaMiel's by 5%.
- Its presentation was valued by customers as the lid had a dispenser.

A HEALTHY EXPANSION

Nicolás had gone from having a direct sales point of his business, to 30 in the different places of distribution. However, he still had not offered any of his products in Guadalajara. He had always dreamed of expanding to the state capital but had done no effort.

By the first week of December 2022, the small company already had 50 hives. Despite having positive business numbers, Nicolás saw that the growth from 2021 to 2022 had been symbolic. He called his personnel of confidence, his wife, and siblings, and told them: "I have gone through the numbers, and they are not as favorable as in previous years. I need all of us together to think how to attract more customers in our current sales points, and to knock doors with distributors in Guadalajara to expand there. Check at once the information I found of Mieldulce and Abeja-Reina so we all can be in the same page, let's brainstorm, and make a plan to break into Guadalajara. We must think of what we will do in January 2023. We will work throughout the week. Our goal is to have clarity of what we will do by this Friday. Let's get down to business".

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