

CASE STUDY

Agroindustrial Cooperative Reduced Time Spent Managing Security by 80% With FortiGate Secure SD-WAN

The Alfa Agroindustrial Cooperative was founded in 1967 in Chapecó, Santa Catarina, by 39 farmers who aimed to promote economic development through cooperation. Through mergers and acquisitions, the cooperative expanded to other regions of Santa Catarina, as well as to the states of Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, and Mato Grosso do Sul. Over the years, members of the cooperative have coalesced around food production as a common objective.

With 20,700 associated families, Cooperalfa promotes and markets corn, soy, wheat, beans, pork, poultry, milk, seeds, animal feed, supplements, and the industrialization of wheat, soy, and corn. It also has supermarkets, agricultural stores, and gas stations, with 3,400 employees and sales of around 5 billion reais (about \$970 million) in 2020, up 39% compared to 2019.

“Cooperalfa’s mission is to create value for agribusiness,” says Adir José Pasini, IT infrastructure coordinator at Cooperalfa. “The IT team contributes to this mission by investing time and energy in taking the cooperative’s vision of innovation, integrity, and security even further.”

Modernization Aimed at Improving Network Security

As it expanded its operations, Cooperalfa found that its firewall no longer met its needs. It did not support new security capabilities and lacked the performance required by the business environment. “We were concerned about the security of information and network data traffic, both internally and externally. We didn’t want to leave ourselves open to vulnerabilities,” explains Pasini.

The cooperative also had requirements related to improve management capabilities for network access and control. With their previous solution, the infrastructure team had limited visibility into who was entering or leaving the network, making it challenging to diagnose potential attacks.

“We needed a leading enterprise-class solution to address the growth and development of the cooperative,” Pasini recalls. “We wanted the best product in the market, and after thorough analysis, we realized that Fortinet was the vendor of choice.”

With the planning and supervision support of Fortinet’s local partners, Sercompe and Inova, the cooperative leveraged the FortiAnalyzer automation platform to deploy and configure two FortiGate Next-Generation Firewalls (NGFWs), at its two data centers. Both FortiGate NGFWs were enabled for software-defined wide-area networking (SD-WAN), giving Cooperalfa a Secure SD-WAN solution covering its entire network footprint.



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Details

Customer: Cooperalfa

Industry: Manufacturing

Location: Brazil

Business Impact

- 80% reduction in security management time
- Streamlined deployment and management of security policies
- Greater visibility of security breaches, with faster response and blocking of threats
- Enhanced application performance with Secure SD-WAN

According to Pasini, besides the comprehensive visibility and centralized management enabled by the Fortinet solutions, the IT team was impressed by the experience Fortinet and its partners demonstrated in critical environments and the after-sales support they offered.

“We realized that we would not be alone after installation, that there would be a transfer of knowledge, and that we could always count on local support,” Pasini says. “Cost/benefit was an important factor, as we acquired state-of-the-art solutions with the ability to scale for many years. The solution translates into peace of mind.”

SD-WAN Improves Application Access Performance

The benefits of modernizing the IT environment were immediate. “All the traffic of Cooperalfa’s subsidiaries converge on the headquarters, so the deployment of Secure SD-WAN improved the performance of the applications and the distribution of the load between the four existing links,” Pasini explains. “By eliminating the carrier equipment required for VPNs, connection management and security improved significantly.”

The Fortinet solution also eliminated the policy and firewall management issues that Cooperalfa had with its previous solution. “With Fortinet, in addition to improving equipment reliability, we were also able to streamline the management of the FortiGate NGFWs through the FortiAnalyzer platform,” Pasini says.

The cooperative can now offer greater security to its business units, supermarkets, gas stations, and partners. In the same way, the IT team can manage and implement new security rules throughout the network as needed in an agile and reliable way.

“FortiGate provides us visibility and ease of management that we have never experienced before, and together with FortiAnalyzer, we have an outstanding range of reports,” says Pasini. “The IT team increased its productivity; with fewer interruptions, our team was able to cut the time spent managing security by 80% and can now focus on strategic tasks.”

Intuitive, User-friendly Tools

According to Cooperalfa’s IT analysts, the team was impressed by the tools’ ease of use and administration, which were all very intuitive. The comprehensive visibility of the network management platform, the reduced vulnerability to security breaches, and the rapid response to threats have revolutionized the security of the cooperative’s network.

“We are also very pleased with the shift to FortiGate Secure SD-WAN,” Pasini concludes. “Its performance, high availability, and excellent WAN routing capabilities are going exactly as planned, fully meeting our expectations. Sercompe, Inova, and Fortinet have been essential to the success of the project.”

Cooperalfa plans to deploy FortiGate Secure SD-WAN at its 152 affiliates as part of its next round of technology improvements.

Solutions

- FortiGate Network Firewall
- FortiGate Secure SD-WAN
- FortiAnalyzer

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