



Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030

Cooperative contributions to SDG 13

This brief is part of the Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030 series produced by the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC). Through a series of 17 briefs, one for each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), COPAC hopes to raise awareness about the significant contributions of cooperative enterprises towards achieving the 2030 Agenda in a sustainable, inclusive and responsible way, and encourage continued support for their efforts.

This brief focuses on SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

About the Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were adopted by world leaders in September 2015 during a historic summit at the United Nations. The SDGs set out a vision for countries to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

For more information, visit www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment.

About cooperatives

Cooperatives are defined as ‘autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise’.¹

All cooperatives subscribe to a set of values and principles that support the social and people-focused nature of their activities. They are operated democratically by their members. Whether customers of the business, users, workers or residents, members have an equal say. Profits generated are either reinvested in the enterprise or returned to the members.

Cooperatives are a powerful economic and social force, present in most countries of the world and in all sectors of the economy. The cooperative movement counts more than a billion members.

¹ International Co-operative Alliance, Statement on the Co-operative Identity (Manchester, 1995). Available from <https://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>



The cooperative difference: cooperatives and climate change

According to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) “Climate change means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods”²

Climate change effects include rising average temperatures, extreme weather events, rising sea levels and temperatures, increasing precipitations and droughts, changes in wildlife populations and habitats, shifting seasons, among others. These risks cause severe impacts on people’s livelihoods globally, particularly in the remote rural areas of developing countries. They disproportionately affect the most disadvantaged groups such as small-scale food producers, especially women, youth, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, who have to cope with extreme weather events and the progressive degradation of natural resources.

In 2015, two agendas were adopted to boost commitment of the international community towards the achievement of sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda, with its 17 SDGs and 169 targets, was adopted by countries during the UN Summit on Sustainable Development, with the aim of achieving sustainable development that leaves no one behind. Furthermore, 2015 also witnessed the adoption of the Paris Agreement, a historic agreement through which the countries engaged in fighting against climate change as well as accelerating and intensifying actions and investment for a sustainable low carbon future.

At COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015, Parties to the UNFCCC reached a landmark agreement to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future. Furthermore, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction was also adopted in 2015 with the aim of catalysing efforts towards the substantial reduction of disaster risks and losses.³ The 2030 Agenda recognizes the UNFCCC as the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change, and that actions promoted by UNFCCC Secretariat will in turn help countries achieve the SDGs. SDG 13 is specifically focused on climate action, with its targets addressing specific issues including among others the need for increasing countries’ resilience to natural disasters, and the need for improving education and awareness raising on climate related issues.

Climate change is a global, multifaceted issue which can be effectively tackled only through complementary and coordinated efforts by all relevant stakeholders. Effective climate change adaptation and mitigation can best be achieved by collective action, which ensures that the complex and multi-layered issues related to climate change are coherently organized to effectively respond to the challenges posed in a specific territory, maximising the results for communities and avoiding individual initiatives that may offset efforts in other areas or sectors.

2. UN. 1992. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf

Experience shows that when farmers get organized and strengthen their collaboration, they can achieve better and more environmentally and socially sustainable results together. Organized farmers can contribute to change in practices and policies, linking local solutions to national and global goals and challenges such as the SDGs and climate change. It is therefore important to recognize the role of collective action to stimulate, promote and articulate new services in many different areas, according to the needs, views and requests of members.³

Cooperatives are collective endeavours that are illustrative of the type of actions required in,⁴ and they are increasingly becoming involved both in climate change adaptation (e.g. mutual insurance for crops; agricultural cooperatives supporting diversification of crops or improved watershed management, etc.) and mitigation (e.g. renewable energy cooperatives, forestry and agroforestry cooperatives).

Cooperatives can be particularly effective in strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity of local communities to natural disasters through awareness raising, training, or adapting new technologies. They can play a key role in boosting the capacities of farmers towards efficient use of the available genetic resources, improved soil fertility and the regeneration of natural resources, thus generating positive externalities and contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

In urban areas, cooperatives of waste pickers exist in waste management systems, particularly in India, Brazil, Colombia and South Africa. They not only provide much needed services for improved waste management and recycling, but also support their members to formalize, and improve their access to occupational safety and health, training, and financial services. Renewable energy cooperatives are gradually gaining ground in Europe harnessing wind and solar power as well as biogases.⁵



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3. FAO and IFAD. 2019. United Nations Decade of Family Farming: Global Action Plan. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4672en/ca4672en.pdf>

4. Sustainability Solutions Group. 2014. A Co-operative Solution to Climate Change. http://www.ssg.coop/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/141205_Co-ops-and-climate-change_v4.pdf

5. ILO 2018 Cooperation in a Changing World of work: Towards a Cooperative Future https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_547459.pdf

How cooperatives contribute to combating climate change and its impact

Deforestation is one of the major contributors to climate change. Côte d'Ivoire has already lost almost a third of its forest cover due to agriculture expansion, illegal and unsustainable logging, and uncontrolled forest fires, among other causes. UIREVI, a cooperative union made up of 42 cooperatives across the entire cocoa and coffee production zone in the country, prioritized the fight against climate change. UIREVI signed two agreements with SODEFOR (Forest Development Society) to allow for the conversion of perennial crops installed by UIREVI farmers into a classified forest. The overall goal is to combat climate change through the creation of community forests by the rural people themselves under the supervision of forest technicians.

In addition, through these two agreements, UIREVI committed to introducing forest seedlings in its members' agricultural parcels for reforestation purposes. It also agreed to stop creating new fields in any classified forest area in Côte d'Ivoire, not to extend the existing plots in classified forests. UIREVI pledged to abandon cultivating plots that are not in production, and not to renew agricultural holdings at the end of the crop cycle.

The Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development Mutual Benefit Association (CARD MBA) is an insurance arm of the CARD Mutually Reinforcing Institutions (MRI) and a Philippine-based member of the International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation (ICMIF). It is a non-stock, non-profit and member-owned association formed to provide life and disability insurance to its members. Currently it covers 20 million lives, with 35 per cent of those living below the poverty line. After the tropical storm Urduja and the typhoon Vinta that hit the Philippines in December 2017, CARD MBA provided relief to over 50,000 members affected by the natural disasters. It set up a new policy the '8-24 strategy' aiming to quickly pay its members' insurance claims between eight and 24 hours after a major incident and the target accomplishment for the Urduja and Vinta incidents was 96.5 per cent.⁶



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6. <https://www.icmif555.org/news/card-mba-provides-relief-over-50000-members-following-natural-disasters-philippines>

A study from the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership indicates mutual microinsurance can strengthen resilience in vulnerable communities recovering from climate-related disasters based on a case study on the role of CARD MBA after the devastating Haiyan Typhoon of 2013.⁷ In 2015, at the COP21 Conference, ICMIF announced the launch of the ICMIF 5-5-5 Mutual Microinsurance Strategy which aims to insure 5 million lives in five countries (Colombia, India, Kenya, the Philippines and Sri Lanka) over a period of five years. The ultimate objective is to support low-income households to get out of poverty and to build resilience in communities against disasters, particularly those related to climate change.⁸

The Swedish Cooperative Union (KF) is the federation of 48 consumer cooperatives, with over three million individual members. KF is the parent company of KF Group where the Coop's grocery retail trade constitutes its core business. Together with primary cooperatives, Coop accounts for 21.4 per cent of the entire Swedish grocery retail sector. KF has prioritized the improvement of energy efficiency and reduction of energy consumption in the group's operations including by: switching refrigerators to those that emit less greenhouse gases (GHGs) and consume less electricity; streamlining logistics and transport of products; choosing renewable electricity for its operations; providing its member cooperatives with consulting services on energy efficiency. In 2012, Coop's logistic branch received 'Energy Efficiency Leader Award of Thermo King' for its dedication to increase transport efficiency. Between 2008 and 2013, it had reduced its GHGs emission by 52 per cent. A number of other retail consumer cooperatives have articulated a comprehensive strategy to address climate change, including Cooperativa Obrera (Argentina), Coop Brazil, Co-operative Group (UK), Coop Denmark, S Group (Finland), Coop Norway, Coop Italy, Consum (Spain), Eroski (Spain), UKOOPSPILKA (Ukraine), JCCU (Japan), and iCOOP Korea.⁹

Rede CataSampa is a network of 22 cooperatives and associations of workers who collect recyclables including plastic, paper, glass, Styrofoam, and waste vegetable oil to make biodiesel and other products. Headquartered in Mogi das Cruzes, the network works in three areas: Sao Paulo City, Alto Tietê and Cabeceiras, and Litoral Paulista. In these regions, the project benefits about 3,000 people indirectly and about 750 recyclable material collectors organized in cooperatives or associations that work in the communities of 11 municipalities. Rede CataSampa has the capacity to process around 500,000 kg of recyclable materials per month and assists the public authorities in reducing the volume of waste that is sent to landfills. The network is part of the National Movement of Recyclable Waste Pickers (MNCR) that brings together over 1,200 waste pickers' cooperatives and associations in Brazil. Cooperative organizations have played key roles in integrating and formalizing the work of waste pickers in recycling value chains and promoting circular economy, particularly in countries and cities where formal waste management systems are underdeveloped.¹⁰



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7. <https://www.icmif55.org/news/cambridge-report-indicates-mutual-microinsurance-delivers-greater-resilience-vulnerable>

8. <https://www.icmif.org/news/icmif-will-partner-commitments-increase-insurance-protection-climate-exposed-countries>

9. Euro Coop and CCW. 2013. Climate Change and Consumer Co-operatives: Taking the Challenge Forward. http://www.eurocoop.coop/uploads/content/docs/4th_Edition_Euro_Coop_Climate_Change_Report.pdf

10. ILO. 2019. Waste Pickers' Cooperatives and Social and Solidarity Economy Organizations. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---coop/documents/publication/wcms_715845.pdf

Want to see more examples of
how cooperatives contribute to SDG 13?
Visit the Coops for 2030 campaign at
www.coopsfor2030.coop

Coop Coffees is a US-based green coffee importing cooperative that partners with small-scale coffee farmers and their exporting cooperatives in the South to promote a fairer, more transparent and sustainable system of coffee trade. In 2017, the cooperative launched its 'Carbon, Climate and Coffee Initiative', a plan for coffee roasters (buyers) to pay a 'voluntary carbon tax' based on their carbon footprint in order to build a fund that directly invests in carbon-sequestering practices and other environmental-service projects of the producer partners. As part of this initiative, the cooperative has also implemented several pilot projects in tracking carbon sequestration in coffee farmer plots in Peru, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, using the Cool Farm Tool that allows farmers to measure the environmental impact of their farming practices and resource management. When certain levels of carbon sequestration is identified in the farmers' plots, the cooperative will pay a 'carbon premium' to the farmers via their respective producer cooperatives to compensate for the environmental services they provide.¹¹



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11. <https://coopcoffees.coop/coop-coffees-launches-the-cool-farm-tool/>



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About COPAC

COPAC is a multi-stakeholder partnership of global public and private institutions that promotes and advances people-centered, self-sustaining cooperative enterprises, guided by the principles of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – in all aspects of its work. The Committee's current members are the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Co-operative Alliance and the World Farmers' Organisation.

For more information, please visit
www.copac.coop.