



Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030

Cooperative contributions to SDG 2

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 2 – ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

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

After a prolonged decline, world hunger and malnutrition appears to be on the rise again. The proportion of undernourished people worldwide increased from 777 million (10.6 per cent) in 2015 to 815 million (11.0 per cent) in 2016. Conflict and extreme weather events linked to climate change are among the key factors causing this reversal in progress.²

Towards ending hunger, smallholders and family farms play a key role, accounting for about 90 per cent of the world's 570 million farms and producing more than 80 per cent of the world's food in value terms.³ More support and investment are needed for these smallholder family farmers who are mostly found in the rural areas and poor and food insecure with limited access to markets and services.

As autonomous businesses that are jointly-owned and democratically-controlled by their members, cooperatives are a tested model that can sustainably support small-scale producers and family farmers to achieve economies of scale and improve their access to markets, financing, information and other resources. Agricultural producers' cooperatives help them raise productivity and incomes including through jointly purchasing inputs, investing on productive assets such as storage and processing facilities, marketing products and organizing skills training. They are also proved to be central to producers' ability to innovate and adopt improved and resilient agricultural practices.⁴

Consumers' cooperatives also contribute to food security and sustainable agriculture at the end of the food supply chains. Driven by the seventh cooperative principle "concern for community" and their members' aspirations, consumers' cooperatives promote purchase of foods produced through environmentally sustainable practices or by socially disadvantaged people including women, youth, and indigenous and tribal peoples.

There is an increasing number of initiatives to promote sustainable and fair food production systems through solidarity between producers and consumers. An example of such initiatives is the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) where a group of consumers establish a long-term and direct partnership with producers of a farm to share the costs and benefits of the produce of the farm. While the organizational modality of the CSA is diverse, cooperatives were one of the pioneers in Europe in the 1970s and have been the key organization in the development of CSA. In 2015, there were approximately 6,300 CSAs operating in Europe, producing food for a million consumers in a sustainable manner.⁵

A good way to understand the cooperative difference is to learn from cooperatives making change happen in their communities. Here are a few examples of their contributions to ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

² UN, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018 (New York, 2018). Available from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2018/the-sustainable-development-goals-report-2018.pdf>

³ FAO, The State of Food and Agriculture: Innovation in Family Farming (Rome, 2014). Available from <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4040e.pdf>

⁴ IFAO, *ibid.*

⁵ European CSA Research Group, Overview of community supported agriculture in Europe (May 2016). Available from <https://urgenci.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Overview-of-Community-Supported-Agriculture-in-Europe.pdf>

From the field: how cooperatives contribute to ending hunger

The Rungeto Farmers Cooperative Society in Kenya was formed in 1996 for coffee processing by the Kiangoi, Karimikui and Kii factories in the Kirinyaga region and currently serves about 1,400 smallholder farmers who grow 745 tonnes of cherry per year in rich volcanic soil. The cooperative also operates a dairy cooling plant and collects over 120,000 litres of milk a month, which helps the farmers diversify their income base. It has committed to increase coffee production and income by 100 per cent and milk production and income by 70% by 2030.⁶

The Coopain Cabana in the District of Cabana, Peru is a cooperative of more than 500 smallholder organic quinoa farmers, over 70 per cent of whom are women. The cooperative pooled the members' resources and invested in production and processing facilities and harvesting and storage systems, which enabled the members to sell the produce directly to final clients at better price without being squeezed by middlemen. The cooperative has obtained organic, fair trade and HACCP certifications and boosted the export of quinoa to various countries. In the region of Cabana where over 25 per cent of women are still illiterate, the cooperative has committed to women empowerment since its creation and increased the number of initiatives that involves women in its activities. The presence of women in the decision-making bodies exceeds 60 per cent.⁷

The Vavuniya North Fruit Growers Cooperative Society in Sri Lanka was formed in 2012 to empower small-scale farmers who are mostly women through production of Red Lady Papayas. The cooperative provides various services to around 350 members including provision of seedlings and animal fences, logistics services for collecting and transporting the produce, technical support on disease prevention, and access to saving schemes. The cooperative also established a joint export venture which in 2016 exported around 1,500 tons of papayas mainly to the Gulf market and earned 120 million Sri Lankan Rupees (≈ US\$ 794,000) worth of sales. In 2017, the cooperative has achieved Fairtrade certification by FLOCERT for the Red Lady Papaya as a first step towards improving access to the EU and US markets.⁸



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⁶ <http://www.interamericacoffee.com/kenya-top-pb-rungeto-karimikui/>

⁷ Trade for Development Centre, "Coopain Cabana: Quinoa conquers the fair trade market". Available from http://www.befair.be/drupal_files/public/all-files/brochure/26_COOPAIN_EN_V1.pdf

⁸ ILO, "Improving livelihoods through cooperatives - ILO LEED project in Northern Sri Lanka" (27 September 2017). Available from https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/news/WCMS_577498/lang-en/index.htm

Want to see more examples of how cooperatives contribute to SDG 2? Visit the Coops for 2030 campaign at www.coopsfor2030.coop

The cooperative “Les Jardins de Cocagne” was set up near Geneva, Switzerland in 1978 by 30 consumers who are interested in food safety and wished to have a direct link with producers, pioneering the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in Europe. Today it has 420 consumer members who regularly purchase its organic produce based on a long-term partnership with producers and also engage in farm works and delivery of the produce. Since 1983, one per cent of its budget has gone to North-South solidarity projects to support farmers’ organizations and rural communities in the Sahel region of Africa.⁹



⁹ <https://www.cocagne.ch/c58/>



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Co-operative
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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.

