

Join a co-op!

You'll find many reasons to join a cooperative, including:

- Get access to great products and services.
- Be heard. Your voice, your vote and your dollar help shape the co-op.
- Be part of a values-based organization that puts people ahead of profit.
- Share in the financial success of the organization.
- Contribute to a thriving local economy.
- Invest in a business that is locally-owned and democratically-controlled.
- Be part of a strong and proud cooperative tradition.
- Help change the way business is conducted in the U.S. and around the world.

Cooperatives are leaders in building stronger and healthier communities.



What's to love about food co-ops? Food co-ops across the country on average:

- Are the best source for locally-produced food. Co-ops purchase from 157 local farms and producers, compared to an average of 65 for conventional stores.
- Support the local economy. For every \$1,000 spent at a co-op, \$1,604 is generated in the local economy.
- Offer the most organic food. Eighty-two percent of produce sold in co-ops is USDA Certified Organic, compared to just 12% at conventional stores.
- Are great places to work. Co-op employees earn almost a dollar more per hour than their conventional counterparts. Additionally, 68% of co-op employees are eligible for health insurance.
- Care about the environment. Recycling rates at co-ops are through the roof: 96% of cardboard, 81% of plastics, and 74% of food waste is recycled!
- Are energy superstars! Co-ops score 82 out of 100 points on the U.S. government's Energy Star scale. Compare that to the average score for conventional grocers: 50.
- Are part of an international cooperative movement towards a more sustainable global economy. With over \$1.4 billion in annual revenue and over 1.3 million member-owners, food co-ops are making a difference in our world.

Source

Healthy Foods, Healthy Communities:
Measuring the Social and Economic Impact of Food Co-ops, 2012.



StrongerTogether.coop is a consumer website developed by **National Co+op Grocers (NCG)** for our "virtual chain" of over 140 retail food co-ops, operating more than 190 storefronts, nationwide.

StrongerTogether.coop is a place for people to gather on their food journeys. It's a place to find out more about what's in your food, where it comes from, where to find great food, how to prepare it and a whole lot more.

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ALL ABOUT

Co-ops



Provided by your food co-op

www.strongertogether.coop

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What is a co-op? People work together to form cooperatives all over the world.

And there's no limit to what co-ops can do—build homes, purchase products and services, provide childcare, share utilities, even provide funeral services and organize orchestras.

At its most basic, a cooperative, or co-op, is an independent group of people who choose to cooperate for mutual social, economic and cultural benefit. A cooperative business is owned and run by and for its member-owners, who may be consumers, employees, producers, residents or other stakeholders.

Co-ops are values-driven.

Co-ops are owned by the people who use them. A respect for these owners and their values is first and foremost—co-ops listen to what owners say they need and then work to fulfill those needs. Owners vote on big decisions and elect a board of directors to represent their interests.

Co-ops are good for their communities.

In fact, “concern for community” is a cooperative principle. Food co-ops support local economies with their commitment to providing local food and products. They contribute to community causes and many offer affordable classes on different aspects of healthy living. Co-ops support the health of small businesses in communities around the world, too, by buying Fair Trade products and supporting other co-ops.

The more the merrier—and more powerful!

Co-ops purchase, bargain, and effect change on behalf of their members. And the more members in a co-op, the more clout that co-op will have. Every day, for example, natural foods co-ops are helping to increase local and organic food production and protecting the integrity of organic and sustainable agriculture.

As we grow, we're supporting an increasing number of small-scale farmers and producers and even saving farm land from development. In partnership with sustainable agriculture and policy organizations, natural food co-ops are standing up for consumers and growers.



Cooperatives work

Worldwide, over one billion people belong to cooperatives. Co-ops are a vital part of the global economy, buying and selling a surprising variety of products and services. Here are some examples:

- **Credit unions**

Credit unions are member-owned, not-for-profit financial cooperatives that offer many of the same services banks do. Unlike banks, credit unions exist to serve their members, not to make a profit. Earnings are returned to members in the form of lower loan rates, higher interest on deposits and lower fees. As cooperatives, they are democratically-controlled and run by the people who use them.

- **Fair trade worker co-ops**

One of the most revolutionary developments in the food industry has been the advent of worker-owned co-ops in countries without strong labor laws. There are co-ops for coffee, tea, cocoa and fruit production that, owned by the workers, provide fair wages and better working conditions when compared to the low standards within these industries. Food co-ops take special interest in supporting these co-ops in line with Cooperative Principle Six, cooperation among cooperatives.

- **National Co+op Grocers (NCG)**

Co-ops can get together just as individuals do to form co-ops for the benefit of their members. A group of natural food co-ops in the U.S. formed NCG, a co-op to provide business support services such as centralized purchasing contracts for lower cost-of-goods, a national promotions program, Co+op Deals, and an engine for national advocacy work to support causes important to co-op owners, among other services. Our co-op is part of NCG.

Co-op Principles

In addition to our common values, most co-ops share seven basic principles. These principles help co-ops maintain the spirit of cooperation, and they demonstrate how people-oriented cooperatives are at heart:

First Principle:
Voluntary and Open Membership

Second Principle:
Democratic Control

Third Principle:
Member Economic Participation

Fourth Principle:
Autonomy and Independence

Fifth Principle:
Education, Training and Information

Sixth Principle:
Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Seventh Principle:
Concern for Community

To learn more about these principles, visit
The International Cooperative Alliance website at www.ica.coop.

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Global Cooperative Marque