

# It Takes Cooperatives to Build a Regional Food System...

## Farmers, Fishermen, Gardeners, Value-added Food Producers

### Purchasing Co-ops

Use volume to obtain inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, fuel, feed, and so on for their members at a lower cost.

### Equipment Co-ops

Allow members to invest as a group in specialized equipment and share its use.

### Facilities

Shared facilities such as aging caves, storage cellars, shared kitchens, and so on allow small producers to achieve economies of scale.

### Processing

Cooperative processors such as shared fixed or mobile slaughterhouses and cut and wrap facilities prepare meat, poultry and fish for market.

### Value Added Co-ops

Turn commodities into products such as cheeses, breads, packaged vegetables, ready-to-cook fillets, and prepared foods, capturing a larger portion of final revenues.

### Marketing Co-ops

Pool, package, promote, sell and transport members' products and assure quality and health standards.

### Gardens & Farms

Provide their members with an abundance of local food.

## Distribution

Includes warehousing, order aggregation/management, and delivery. Efficient distribution cuts down sharply on costs and environmental impact.

## Credit

Financial services cooperatives such as Farm Credit East dedicate capital for loans, leases and insurance to members and provide business assistance services. Socially responsible investment organizations such as the Cooperative Fund of New England are a way to invest in regional food systems.

## Marketplaces

Farmers markets, covered markets, mobile stalls, retail business incubators, and online tools give buyers and sellers the means to find each other.

## Multi-Stakeholder

Refers to cooperatives formed by more than one group coming together for a common purpose: for example farmers & distributors, workers & consumers, investors & municipalities.

## Consumers

### Food Co-ops

Consumer food co-ops provide member shoppers with groceries at cost and offer a selection that conforms to member preferences. They have been leaders in bringing natural, organic, and fair trade goods to the market and are now leaders in sourcing local foods.

### Buying Clubs

Allow members to pre-order goods, thus benefiting from bulk discounts. Members do the work of breaking down deliveries into individual orders. Buying clubs buy direct from local and regional producers.

### Cooking Clubs

"Co-operEating" through food swaps, dinner co-ops, and shared meals helps cut time spent preparing fresh food by making large amounts less frequently, sharing the work and the food with others.

### CSAs/CSFs

Community-supported agriculture and fisheries engage consumers in sharing the risk of producers in return for regular deliveries of fresh produce or fresh catch.



## Waste/Nutrient Management

Processes for composting, food scrap recovery, anaerobic digestion, recycling, and rendering are conducted by farmer-owned, worker-owned, municipality-owned, and hybrid (multi-stakeholder) cooperatives.

## Independent Grocery Stores

Purchasing associations such as Shurfine and Wakefern (ShopRite brand), owned by independent grocers, provide goods at competitive wholesale prices for their member stores, operate warehouses and distribution centers, process and package their own brands and offer centralized services including advertising, group insurance, and marketing.

## Food Service

Cooperative arrangements among farmers and farm to institution organizations bring local and regional foods to restaurants, schools, universities, hospitals and social agencies. Cooperative workplaces ensure higher standards of preparation and less turnover in the workforce.

## ...Because Values and Structure Matter

How we build a regional food system matters—because we want to **return ownership and control** to local farmers, consumers and communities. The best way to ensure that ownership and control remain local is to create a system with the **values we care about built in** to every aspect of its operation.

We want a food system—and an economy—that:

- ends inequality,
- increases democratic control,
- rewards businesses that serve real needs,
- ensures self-determination,
- respects the environment,
- and makes sustainability a driving force.

Cooperatives incorporate these values into their structure.



COOPERATIVE  
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for Cooperative Business

"A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise."

– "Statement of Cooperative Identity," International Cooperative Alliance

## Cooperatives are Guided by Principles and Values

### Principles

1. Voluntary & Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy & Independence
5. Education, Training & Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

### Values

Solidarity	Self-Help
Honesty	Openness
Self-Responsibility	Democracy
Social Responsibility	Equality
Caring for Others	Equity