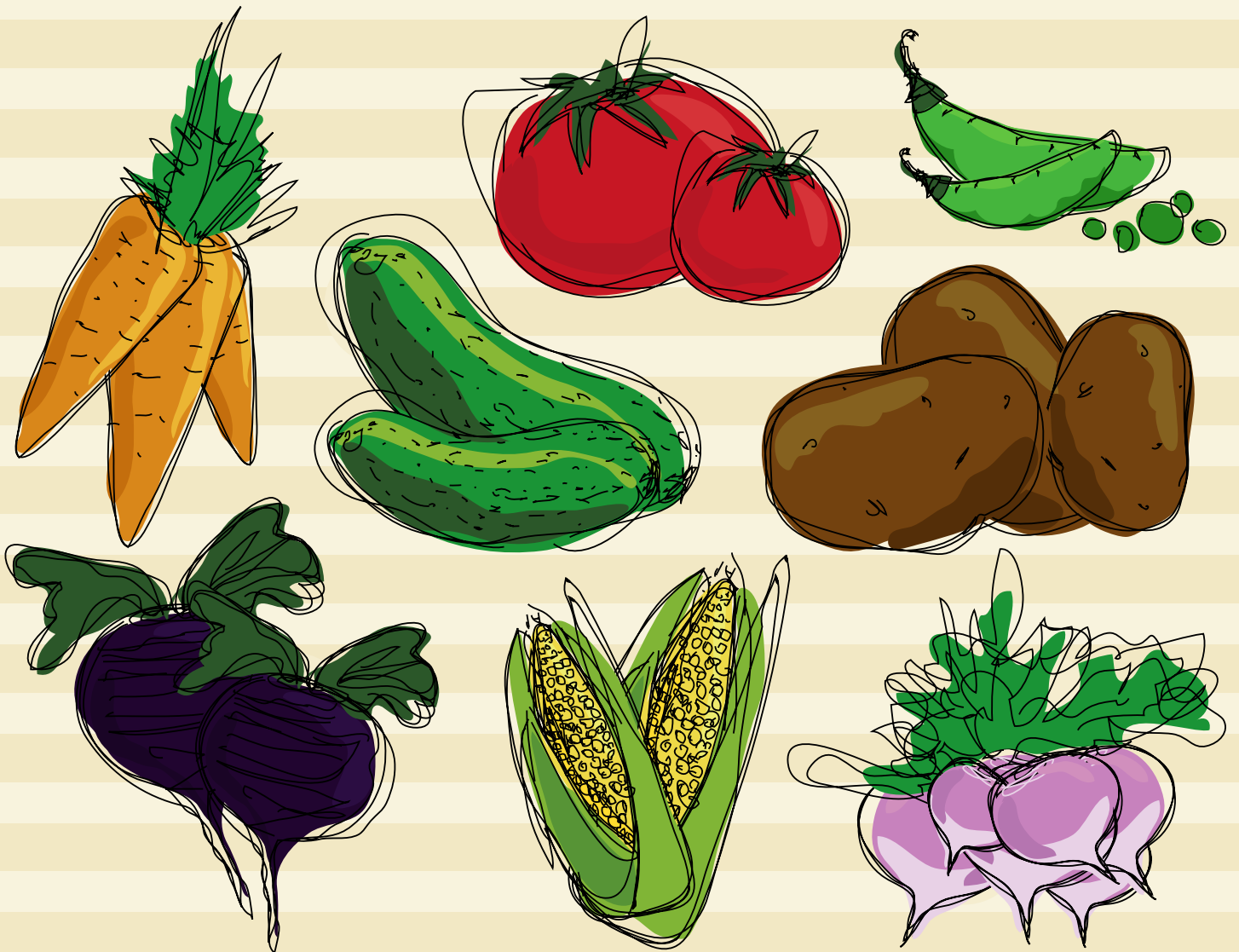




community
food and health

(scotland)

Shared tastes and common values:
food, health, communities
and co-operation in Scotland



Introduction



With 2012 being United Nations International Year of Co-operatives, it seems a fitting time to explore Scotland's past, current and potential future relationship between co-operation, food and health.

It is relevant to **what** many communities are tackling, from obesity to infant nutrition. It is also pertinent to **how** we are being encouraged to work, from asset-based approaches to co-production. Hopefully this publication gives you an introduction to **why** co-operative approaches have had, and continue to have, such an appeal in Scotland.

CFHS was delighted to work with Martin Meteyard on this publication.

Martin has worked in and with co-operatives – most of them dealing with food – for the last 30 years.

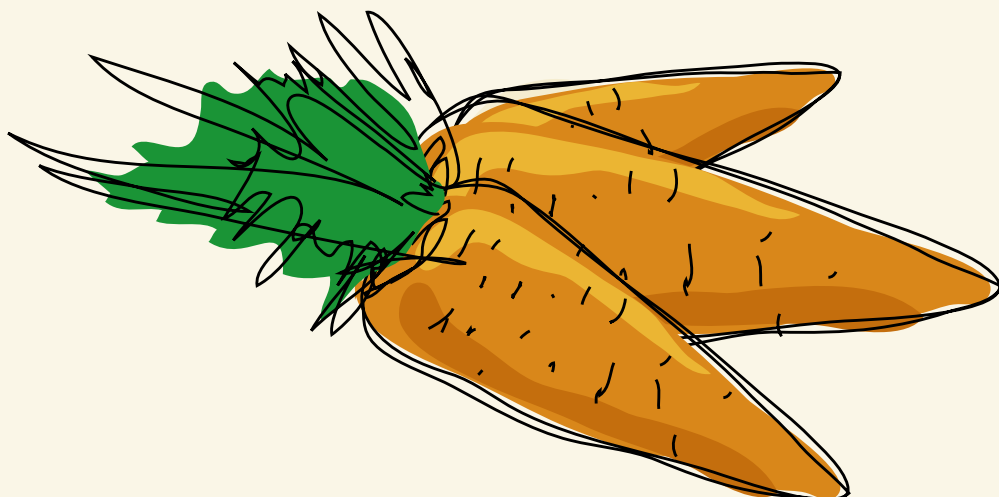
He was an early member of GreenCity Wholefoods worker co-operative in Glasgow, spending almost 15 years there in a variety of positions and eventually becoming general manager.

During that time he also helped to establish several other co-operatives, including Fair Trade co-operative Equal Exchange Trading and Inverness-based wholesaler Highland Wholefoods.

At the end of 1997 Martin left GreenCity to become the Scottish Secretary of CWS (now The Co-operative Group). During that time he served on the advisory group of CFHS (then known as the Scottish Community Diet Project), and also helped to establish the Community Retailing Network to support community-owned shops.

Since 2004 he has worked as a freelance consultant, primarily with co-operatives. He is a specialist advisor with Co-operative Development Scotland, and also manages The Co-operative Enterprise Hub in Scotland.

Martin has been an active supporter of Fair Trade since the mid-1980s, and is Chair of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum. He was Chair of Cafédirect plc from 1998 to 2005, and is currently a Director of Zaytoun CIC, which imports and distributes Fairtrade olive oil and other Palestinian products.



A brief history of co-operatives and food



Co-operation and food production go together naturally. Co-operative cheese-making in the Haut-Jura region of France can be traced back to 1264. Closer to home, the runrig system of agriculture common in Scotland until the 18th century was basically a communal form of land tenure.

Food production is one side of the story, food distribution another. In November 1769 the Fenwick Weavers' Society in Ayrshire agreed "to take what money we have in our Box and buy what Victual may be thought Nesessar to sell for the benefit of our society", in order to provide cheap and wholesome food for their members.

This is generally acknowledged as the start of co-operative food trading, not just in Scotland but the world. Fenwick's example was soon followed by others – not least in Lennoxton, where there has been a co-operative food store in the town ever since the founding of the Lennoxton Friendly Victualling Society in 1812.



Lack of transport and communication limited the growth of the early co-operative societies, but the development of the railways, penny post and telegraph opened up new possibilities. By 1868 the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society (SCWS) had been established, and in partnership with the CWS in England later began to develop some of the first global supply chains (including wheat from Canada, butter from Denmark, palm kernels and cocoa from West Africa, and tea from Ceylon – now Sri Lanka).

In order to provide the best possible produce to their members, both the SCWS and individual societies also invested in land for the growing of cereals, fruit and vegetables. Although this never became a major activity, The Co-operative Group – successor of the combined CWS/SCWS – is still the largest farmer in the UK (managing many other estates as well as its own).

But meanwhile co-operation also held an increasing appeal for many small food producers, who saw the benefits of coming together to process and market their products – as well as purchase inputs. The Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society (SAOS) was formed in 1905 as the federal organisation for these co-operatives and is still going strong today.

Co-operatives – particularly retail societies – began to struggle after World War Two as a new era of prosperity and individual freedom appeared to open up. But as concerns about health started to grow, so new co-operative ventures specialising in 'wholefoods' developed to answer this need. Two of the major distributors of these products in Scotland are worker co-operatives: GreenCity Wholefoods in Glasgow (established 1978) and Highland Wholefoods in Inverness (established 1989).

Co-operatives were also seen as a solution to the threat of depopulation in fragile rural areas as local shops closed. Community co-operatives were actively promoted by the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB) in the late 1970s and 1980s, and a number (such as Eday and Papay in Orkney) are still trading today.

The community co-ops promoted by the HIDB (and others since) benefited from a direct supply arrangement negotiated with the CWS – now The Co-operative Group. The modern day resurgence of the latter, and the growth of co-operatives in other areas of food production and distribution, is now a welcome sign for the future.

Be the change you want to see: food and the co-operative movement today



As outlined in our brief history, co-operatives have played a crucial role in food production and distribution in Scotland over the years – helping to promote food security and access to better quality food.

But there is an opportunity for them to play an even bigger role going forward.

The resurgence of The Co-operative Group has been seen in its takeover of the Somerfield supermarket chain, taking its share of the UK food market to around 8%. Just as importantly, both it and Scotmid (an independent co-op) have pioneered new ethical standards in areas such as Fairtrade.

Agricultural co-operatives have proved a lifeline for small farmers in Scotland in resisting the rise of industrial scale agriculture. Today £1 of every £5 of the country's food and drink output comes from a co-operative.

Marketing co-operatives such as Argyll Food Producers (Food from Argyll) ensure that small local producers can continue to flourish and access wider markets, while distribution of more specialist foodstuffs is provided by GreenCity Wholefoods and Highland Wholefoods co-operatives.

And if it's bread (or fancy cakes) you want, Dunbar Community Bakery Co-op has come up with a model that other communities are now looking at.

Remote rural areas increasingly find that only a community co-operative can ensure that there is still a local shop to supply their food. Enquiries about establishing new co-ops to meet this need are at an all-time high.

And in urban and semi-urban areas there are community food initiatives that often call



themselves co-ops, even if they are not formally structured as such. Some of their umbrella organisations, such as Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE) and Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership, have well-developed supply chains of their own.

Add to this a whole host of other community-based growing and other initiatives (including allotments) and you're not too far off the beginnings of a food economy which is primarily based on meeting need rather than maximising profit. It won't be easy to join up the dots – but it's not impossible either.

International co-op initiatives are starting to take off. The Co-operative Group has recently helped 11,000 tea growers in Kenya to form co-operatives and start producing tea to Fairtrade standards for sale in Co-operative stores.

SAOS, the organisation of farmers' co-ops, is joining with the Manchester-based Co-operative College in a programme to encourage agricultural co-op development in Malawi – partly funded by the Scottish Government.

Maybe all we need to do is bring a little of that co-operation home.

What is a Co-operative?



A co-operative is a business or other organisation owned and controlled by its members on the basis of one member, one vote. Co-operatives work for the mutual benefit of their members, and hence are also often referred to as mutuals.

Co-operatives are a means for people or businesses to access goods and services (or markets) that they could not access individually on such favourable terms – or at all.

Co-operatives most often represent the interests of one key stakeholder group. In the case of retail societies this is consumers, while in agricultural co-operatives it is farmers.

Consortium co-operatives are an increasingly popular way for small businesses to work together, frequently for marketing.

Key stakeholder groups in other forms of co-operative are employees in worker co-operatives, tenants in housing co-ops, and savers in credit unions (which are financial co-operatives).

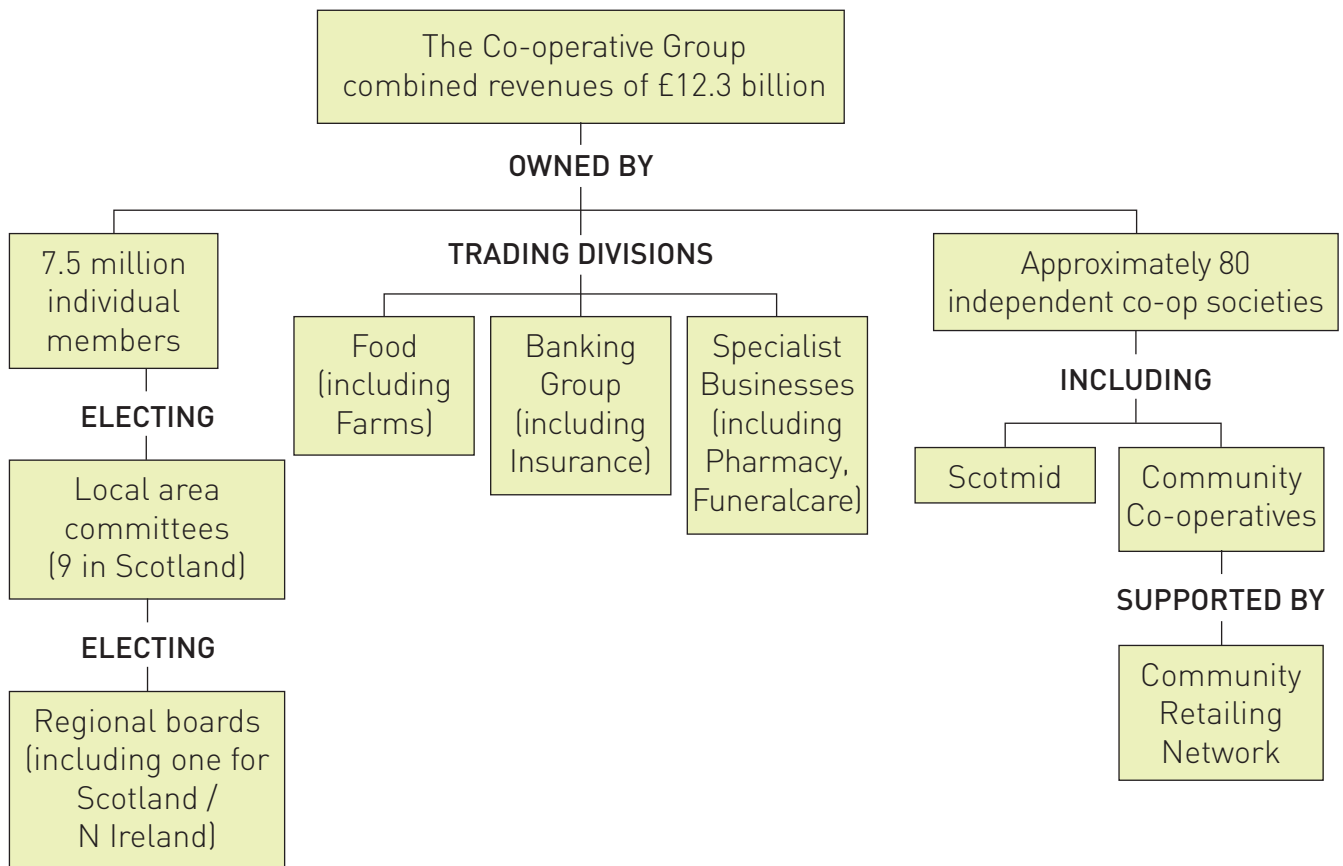
Sometimes members may come from more than one stakeholder group, and this is then known as a multi-stakeholder co-op. The Spanish supermarket chain Eroski (part of the Mondragon Corporation) is equally controlled by consumers and employees.

Community co-operatives are set up to benefit all members of a community (usually defined geographically).

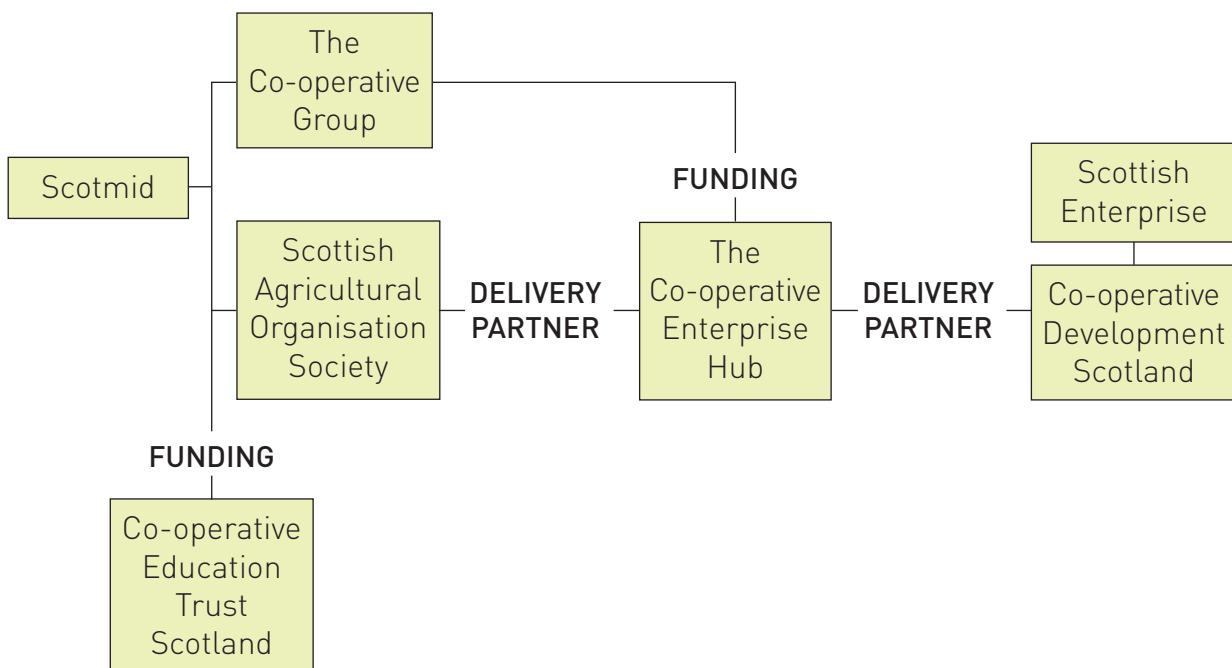
What all co-operatives have in common though (both in Scotland and the rest of the world) is that they adhere to the set of values and principles agreed by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) – as listed on page 8.



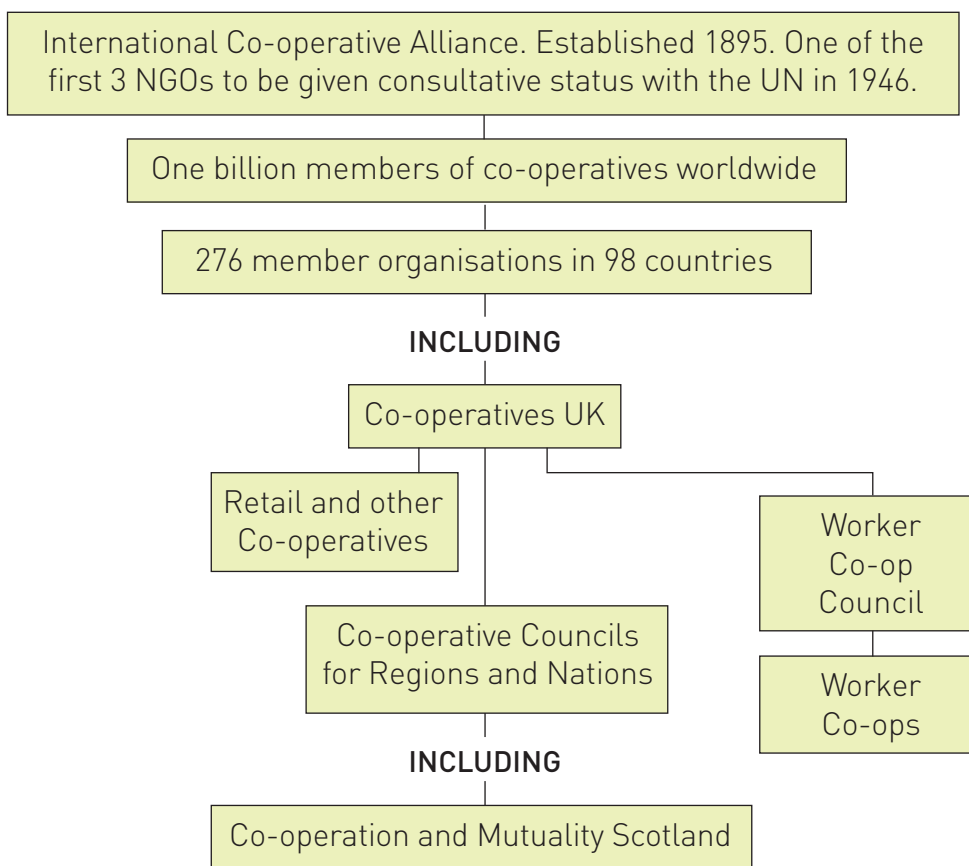
Consumer / Retail Co-ops



Co-operative Education, Development and Support



Representation



The co-operative movement consists of far more than just the organisations above. Also worthy of particular note, along with the contacts in Links and Resources on page 11, are:

Housing co-operatives, ranging from single houses to more than a thousand units. The largest in Scotland are Tenants First in North-East Scotland and West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative in Cambuslang.

Credit unions, which again range from large to small and now cover the whole of Scotland. Credit unions are based on a common bond of community and/or employment. The main representative organisations are the Association of British Credit Unions Limited (ABCUL) and the Scottish League of Credit Unions.

Supporters' trusts now attached to football and a few rugby clubs. These seek representation within club structures (including the Board), in some cases aspiring to part or total ownership of the club. Their representative organisation is Supporters Direct.

Renewable energy co-operatives (wind, hydro, solar), of which the largest are affiliated to the Energy4All support organisation.

The Woodcraft Folk, a co-operative youth organisation.

The Co-operative Party, originally set up in 1917 to protect co-operative interests but now has an electoral arrangement with the Labour Party. A number of Labour MSPs and MPs are sponsored by the Co-operative Party.

Co-operative Councils are a very recent development, but City of Edinburgh Council has recently declared itself a 'Co-operative Council' and others are looking to following suit.

Co-operative values and principles



The following are the co-operative values and principles agreed by the International Co-operative Alliance.

Values

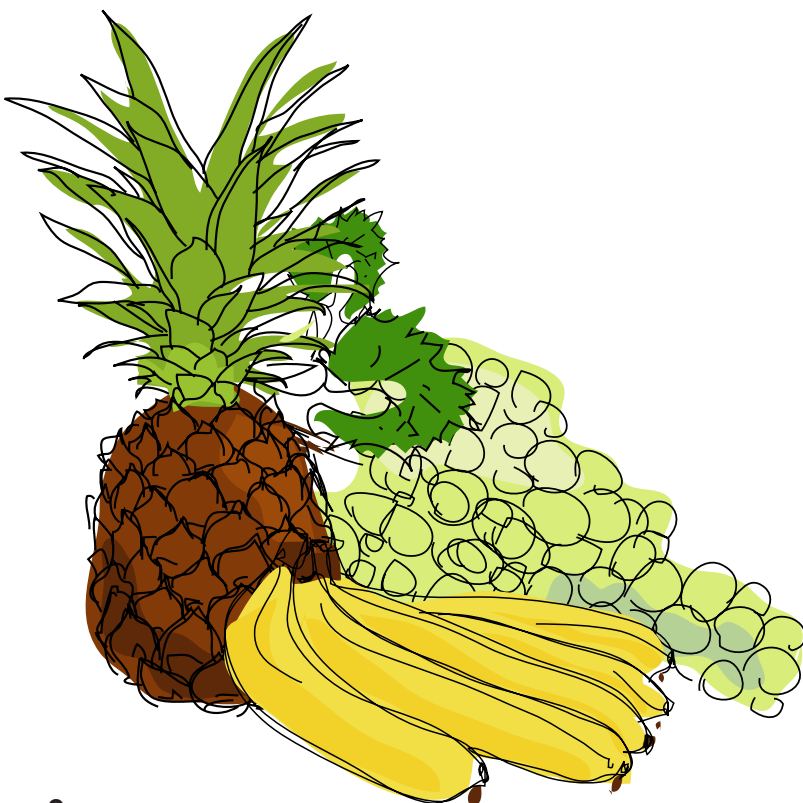
Co-operatives are based on the values of **self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity** and **solidarity**. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Principles

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Co-operation among Co-operatives
7. Concern for Community

The full version can be found at:

<http://2012.coop/en/what-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>



Local: Eday Community Co-op



The Island of Eday in Orkney is situated around 16 miles from Kirkwall – taking an hour and a quarter by the daily ferry or eight minutes by the weekly flight.

The Island is approximately eight miles long and three miles wide and has a population of 150. It has a primary school, youth hostel, pub, heritage centre and tearoom, as well as the community-owned shop, post office and fuel pumps.

Eday Community Co-op was established in 1981 by Eday Community Enterprises Ltd in response to the threatened loss of the island's only shop. Money was raised locally through the sale of £25 shares, and this together with funding from the Highlands and Islands Development Board and Orkney Islands Council enabled the community to buy the business and extend the existing building.

The community shop opened in 1982 and since then its profits have been re-invested to gradually buy new equipment and extend and improve the building. Funding has also been provided through the Council's Rural Shop Scheme.

The shop is supplied primarily by The Co-operative Group on the same terms as its own stores. Ongoing advice and support has been provided by the Community Retailing Network.

As a co-op the shop has a voluntary management committee that oversees things. As a corporate member of The Co-operative Group it is able to order goods directly through the Group's supply chain. As the island is so remote, it would be impossible to get a regular supply of good quality goods at a reasonable cost without this support.

The shop has become a successful business, estimated to account for 90% of islanders' food shopping. It currently employs nine part-time staff, and as well as being valued for its important social role, it has become the cornerstone of the island's viability.

Recently a six-kilowatt wind turbine has been installed behind the shop which helps to reduce energy costs.

Local: Scottish Borders Produce



Scottish Borders Produce is a co-operative formed in 1976 from a merger of two smaller groups of farmers. The co-operative specialises in the growing and processing of vining peas (15 varieties) and broad beans (four varieties).

There are currently 35 farmers in membership from the Scottish Borders and the adjoining counties of East Lothian and North Northumberland. Each member is required to contribute £250 in £1 shares, which is effectively a joining fee. No interest or dividend is paid on shares. Profits or losses are shared by members in proportion to the area supplied to the co-operative.

The members are able to focus on growing the highest quality produce because the rest of the supply chain is taken care of. Even harvesting is carried out by the co-operative using four dedicated viners.

All growers farm within a 30-mile radius of the factory, so the crop can be frozen within 150 minutes from the start of harvesting. The frozen produce is then sold on to UK supermarkets.

The co-operative originally used a freezing plant in Eyemouth owned by Christian Salvesen plc until it closed in 1999. A year later SBP members established their own vegetable freezing factory in Eyemouth run by Eyemouth Freezers Ltd.

The main benefits the growers derive from the co-operative can be summarised as:

- Access to and information about the market
- Support with harvesting
- Their own modern processing facility
- A share of any surplus generated by the co-operative

Global: 'Agricultural Co-operatives: Key to feeding the world'



This was the theme of World Food Day on 16 October 2012.

In his official message, the Director General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, José Graziano da Silva, stated:

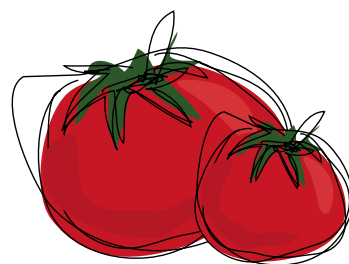
“This theme was chosen to highlight the many, concrete ways in which agricultural co-operatives and producer organisations help to provide food security, generate employment, and lift people out of poverty.

“Every day, small producers around the world continue to face constraints that keep them from reaping the benefits of their labour and contributing to food security not only for themselves but for all through active participation in markets.

“Evidence shows that strong co-operatives and producer organisations are able to overcome these constraints and to mitigate the negative effects of food and other crises.

“Strong producer organisations have helped to fill a void. They have been able to overcome market and policy constraints by providing their members with access to a range of assets and services. They also make it possible for members to voice their concerns and interests – and to play a role in decision and policy making processes.

“It has been said repeatedly that we have the means to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. What is needed is the establishment of an enabling environment that allows small producers to take full advantage of available opportunities. Strong co-operatives and producer organisations are an essential part of that enabling environment.”



Links and resources



The Co-operative Food: www.co-operative.coop/food/ethics

The Co-operative Farms: www.co-operative.coop/farms

Scotmid: www.scotmid.coop

Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society: www.saos.coop

GreenCity Wholefoods: www.greencity.coop

Highland Wholefoods: www.highlandwholefoods.co.uk

Food from Argyll: www.foodfromargyll.com

Dunbar Community Bakery: <http://thebakerydunbar.co.uk>

Equal Exchange Trading: www.equalexchange.co.uk

Community Food Initiatives North East: www.cfine.org

Edinburgh Community Food: www.edinburghcommunityfood.org.uk

Community Food Moray: www.communityfoodmoray.co.uk

Co-operative Education Trust Scotland: www.cets.coop

Co-operative Development Scotland: www.cdscotland.co.uk

The Co-operative Enterprise Hub: www.co-operative.coop/enterprisehub

Community Retailing Network: www.communityretailing.co.uk

The Plunkett Foundation: www.plunkett.co.uk





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