

2020 Food Co-op Impact Report

Food Co-ops Strengthen Communities

What is a food co-op? We're your friendly, democratically controlled, community-owned grocery store. Unlike corporate chains, we're independent and owned by folks in the community who shop here. Everyone is welcome to shop, eat and hang out at the co-op, and if you decide to be an owner you'll get benefits and vote for our board of directors. That democratic process is how owners ensure the co-op stays focused on its community.

While each food co-op is unique and owned by its community, many, like ours, are also members of a national cooperative—National Co+op Grocers (NCG). NCG exists so that food co-ops like ours are successful and the cooperative economy grows in size and scope. We created

NCG to provide the vision, leadership and systems that replicate the capacity of a chain while supporting the autonomy of our local, community-owned businesses.

NCG is democratically controlled by its members in the same way our co-op is—ensuring it reflects and balances the needs and aspirations of our co-op with our peers across the country. Through NCG, co-ops like ours work together to improve the health and wellness of the communities we serve.

This is our national 2020 food co-op impact report—we're honored to share the many ways that food co-ops serve and strengthen communities.



147

1 national purchasing and business services co-op,
147 democratic local food co-ops (including ours!)



1.3M

1.3 million members



38

Local food co-ops operating in 38 states



We're Serious about Keeping It Local

We're serious about local food. Not just because it's delicious but because investing in a local food system increases our community's resiliency in good times and bad. During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, many grocers that rely primarily on national supply chains were unable to keep their shelves stocked. In contrast, many food co-ops were able to keep foods like meat, produce, eggs and milk on the shelf because of our strong relationships with local farmers. In fact, in many states, food co-ops boosted local food inventories to ensure farmers had a market for product that would otherwise be lost.

Nationally, food co-ops continue to work together to support federal policies that ensure small, regional farms thrive. In 2020, NCG advocated to Congress for funds to support small, local farms and producers in COVID-19 relief legislation.

When you shop at the co-op, you're supporting local farmers and producers as well as supply chain transparency. We are committed to empowering local entrepreneurs and small businesses in our area by bringing their products to market and strengthening our local economy.



22%

In 2020, local products were **22%** of the average co-op's sales



185

The average co-op works with **185** local farms and producers



200+

Local food co-ops serve **200+** communities



Making Good Food More Affordable

Who says delicious, healthy food has to be exclusive? Not us. We want to welcome everyone to the table where great food is served. We think that everyone is hungry for delicious, nutritious food that nourishes us, and co-ops are on a mission to make sure that everyone in our communities can get it.

Through NCG, co-ops combine our purchasing power on popular national brands to offer our shoppers lower prices and a broader range of products so they have more choices that fit their budgets and cooking styles.

NCG negotiates promotions with well-known brands as well as new and emerging brands for our Co+op Deals sales program and helps curate a value line of goods called Co+op Basics. These programs help our co-op increase community food security and allow us to dedicate more staff resources to strengthening our local food system.

 **25%**

Co+op Deals save shoppers an average of **25%** on favorite products

 **2000+**

2000+ products on sale every month

Most Co+op Basics groceries bear third-party certifications like USDA Organic, Fair Trade Certified and Certified Humane.



Healthy Food for Everyone

Crisp veggies, sweet fruits, pasture-raised eggs, organic milk, sustainably sourced fish and humanely raised meats—co-ops are a community destination for delicious, fresh food.

But today's economy is out of balance, and many people are struggling to meet basic needs. Food co-ops want everyone to enjoy the pleasures and benefits of healthy food, not just those with economic privilege. We work together through NCG to advocate for increased funding for federal programs like SNAP and WIC, which every year help lift millions of Americans out of poverty, as well as SNAP incentive programs that increase shoppers' money to purchase locally grown fruits and veggies. SNAP incentive programs also benefit local farmers and the local economy, too.

We're also adopting a variety of practices to lower and remove barriers to healthy food, including offering needs-based food discount and co-op ownership programs, and making direct donations to our local food shelves.

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3 of 4

3 out of 4 food co-ops nationwide offer needs-based discount programs for their community



1M

Food co-ops donated more than **1 million** pounds of food in 2020



Good Food Is Just the Beginning

We're passionate about collaborating with our community to make positive change because we know that good food is just the beginning of what we can achieve by working together.

Locally, co-ops support community organizations through initiatives such as register round-up programs, reusable bag credits, food drives and other means of charitable giving. We also support our communities in ways that reflect their unique needs, including offering classes and events that bring our communities together.

Nationally, we help communities organize and open new food co-ops through NCG's Development Co+op and its support of Food Co-op Initiative as well as through its support of other national organizations that promote community economic empowerment through cooperatives.



7.3M

Food co-ops donated over **\$7.3 million** to community organizations in 2020



500,000

\$500,000 donated through NCG



Building a Racially Just Food System

Food co-ops are for everyone, and we're committed to continually learning and growing so we can live up to that statement. We believe that everyone has the capacity, and the responsibility, to effect change.

We are prioritizing racial equity in our work together nationally, collaborating to both measure the diversity in our system and identify ways that we can improve. We are committed to continued collaboration and dialogue to facilitate change. NCG is launching a supplier diversity program to help us identify and increase the number of products from companies owned by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and other underrepresented groups.

Through NCG, food co-ops advocated for federal legislation that would reserve funding for community development and minority depository financial institutions that serve BIPOC communities in COVID-19 relief legislation and asked Congress to provide at least \$25 million for migrant and seasonal farmworkers for pandemic-related emergency supportive services. NCG also endorsed The Justice for Black Farmers Act that would reform discriminatory practices at USDA and create opportunity for a new generation of Black farmers.

2020 Investments for Racial Justice

Agricultural Justice Project

Social Justice Fund provides free Food Justice certification for immigrant- and BIPOC-led farms

Campaign Zero

Accountability and policy advocacy to end police violence

Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund

Food box program connects Black farmers who lost market share during pandemic to families facing food insecurity

Black Visions Collective

Black-led community organizing collective in Minneapolis, Minn.



Products That Make a Difference

Food co-ops connect local farmers with customers, building an economic bridge that benefits rural and urban areas. Through NCG, we also seek out products—like USDA Certified Organic, Fair Trade Certified, Certified B Corp and cooperatively produced products—that reflect a similar commitment to building an inclusive economy that benefits producers, customers and people in between.

USDA Certified Organic products by law cannot be grown using toxic pesticides, synthetic fertilizers or GMO seeds. This means less exposure to chemicals for farmworkers, less pollution in rural communities and cleaner waterways. Food co-ops unite with organic farmers and companies in support of federal policies and strong national organic standards that reflect what customers expect from the label.

Fair Trade Certified products indicate that producers were paid a livable wage, have safe working conditions and are able to invest in community development projects like hospitals, clean drinking water and schools. Fair trade also prohibits child labor.

Products produced by Certified B Corporations and many cooperatives share a triple bottom line that is the hallmark of sustainable businesses: people, planet and profit.

Products as a Percentage of Total Sales*

Product Type	NCG Co-ops	Natural Grocery	Conventional
USDA Certified Organic	47%	32%	3%
Fair Trade Certified	6%	3%	1%
Certified B Corp	9%	8%	2%
Cooperatively Produced	7%	4%	1%

*These figures based on SPINS natural products sales data.

Responding to the Climate Crisis

Food co-ops are working individually and together to reduce our carbon footprint and respond to the climate crisis. We are measuring our greenhouse gas emissions from electricity, fuel use and refrigerant gases and taking steps to reduce them with initiatives such as solar panels, energy efficient lighting and state-of-the-art refrigeration. Nationally, we sponsored the National Co+op Grocers Climate Collaborative awards to recognize companies, co-ops and influencers in the natural and organic industry for taking action on climate.

Because USDA Certified Organic methods build rich soil that is scientifically proven to slow global warming, food co-ops advocate for organic agriculture to be included in

federal climate change policy. In 2020, through NCG, we funded research done by the Organic Farming Research Foundation to inform Congress about the potential organic agriculture holds as a climate change solution.

Since 2012, food co-ops have been working with fair trade farmer co-ops in Peru to offset a portion of greenhouse gas emissions associated with our annual business travel by planting and protecting trees in the Peruvian Amazon. Trees naturally absorb carbon dioxide—a greenhouse gas—from the atmosphere, effectively slowing the rate of climate change. We call it Co+op Forest.



6.7%

Electricity use at the average co-op decreased **6.7%** in 2020



6

NCG sponsored **6** National Co+op Grocers Climate Collaborative awards in 2020



1.8M

1.8 million trees planted and/or protected in Co+op Forest since 2012

Ahmed Rahim and Reem Hassani, brother and sister co-founders of Numi Organic Tea, won 2020 National Co+op Grocers Climate Collaborative awards.



We dedicate this 2020 Food Co-op Impact Report to all co-op staff and essential food system workers.



Grocery Staff Are Heroes



Breonna Williams of Community Co-op Market delivered groceries curbside throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.



About this Content

This content is based on co-op impact metrics and other data collected by National Co+op Grocers (NCG)—a business services cooperative for retail food co-ops located throughout the United States. NCG represents 147 retail food co-ops operating over 200 stores in 38 states.

As part of an ongoing commitment to demonstrate the value of the cooperative business model to local communities, NCG began measuring the social, environmental and economic impacts of food co-ops in 2012.

