



Working for a Sustainable Future

Northeast Organic Farming Association
Annual Conference, 13th Aug 2010
Amherst, MA

Outline

- **Our Context**
- **What is a Co-op?**
- **Co-ops & Regional Economies**
- **Neighboring Food Co-op Association**
- **Our Vision**
- **Your Ideas & Feedback**

Our Context

- **Crisis of Global Economic System**
- **Unemployment & Inequality**
- **Shifts in Wealth**
- **Diminished Democracy**
- **Corporate Influence**
- **Instability & Change**

Alternative Visions

- **Desire for Economic Alternatives**
- **Local & Regional Economies**
- **Community Democracy**
- **Grassroots Engagement**
- **Change as an Opportunity**

England in the 1800s

- **Dislocation of Local Economies**
- **Dramatic Shifts in Wealth**
- **Concentration of Control**
- **Poor Working Conditions**
- **Limited Democracy**
- **Globalization**

Rochdale Equitable Pioneers



- **Founded 1844**
- **Weavers, Unionists, Activists**
- **Member-Owned Store**
- **Principles for a Movement**

What is a Co-op?

A co-operative 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.

International Co-operative Alliance • www.ica.coop

What is a Co-op?

- Food Co-ops
- Agricultural Co-ops
- Fishing Co-ops
- Artisan Co-ops
- Housing Co-ops
- Housing Co-ops
- Credit Unions
- Utility Co-ops
- Worker Co-ops
- Health & Insurance

Co-op 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**

Co-op Values

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

Co-ops & Regional Economies

- **Community ownership & control**
- **Focus on service, meeting needs before profit**
- **Develop local skills & assets**
- **Ability to assemble limited resources**
- **Regional Economic Efficiencies**
- **Low failure rate & long-lived**
- **Difficult to move or buy-out**
- **Mobilize member, customer and supplier loyalty**
- **Result: more stable food system, infrastructure, employment & services, and economy**

A Co-operative Economy



Rochdale Pioneers, 1844

- **Begin with a Store**
- **Community Ownership**
- **Ethical Purchasing**
- **Generate Shared Capital**
- **Launch New Enterprises**
- **Goal: Co-operative Economy**

Food Co-ops & Innovation

- **Community Ownership**
- **Natural Foods**
- **Organics**
- **Fair Trade**
- **Relocalization**



Neighboring Food Cooperative Association

VERMONT

- **Brattleboro Food Co-op**, Brattleboro
- **Buffalo Mountain Co-op**, Hardwick
- **City Market/Onion River Co-op**, Burlington
- **Hunger Mountain Food Co-op**, Montpelier
- **Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op**, Middlebury
- **Putney Food Co-op**, Putney
- **Rutland Natural Food Market**, Rutland
- **South Royalton Food Co-op**, South Royalton
- **Springfield Food Co-op**, Springfield
- **Upper Valley Food Co-op**, White River Jct

CONNECTICUT

- **Willimantic Food Co-op**, Willimantic

NEW HAMPSHIRE

- **Concord Co-op Market**, Concord
- **Kearsarge Co-op Grocer**, New London
- **Co-op Food Store**, Hanover & Lebanon, NH; White River Jct, VT
- **Littleton Food Co-op**, Littleton

MASSACHUSETTS

- **Berkshire Co-op Market**, Great Barrington
- **Franklin Community Co-op (Green Fields Market)**, Greenfield & **McCusker's Market**, Shelburne Falls
- **Leverett Village Co-op**, Leverett
- **River Valley Market / Northampton Community Food Co-op**, Northampton
- **Wild Oats Market**, Williamstown

Sponsoring Organizations



National Cooperative Grocers Association

Putting it all Together
For Food Co-ops

www.ncga.coop



COOPERATIVE FUND
of New England

Cooperative Fund of New England

Celebrating 35 Years
Growing Co-ops!

www.coopfund.coop

Food Co-ops & Local Economies



Shared Economic Impact

At the end of 2007...

- **17 food co-ops, owned and democratically governed by over 64,000 members. ('09: 20 co-ops with 77,000+ members)**
 - NFCA members account for 7% of the population of host counties
- **Shared Sales of \$161 million ('09: \$180+ million)**
- **Purchased \$33+ million in local products**
 - ...Including \$10 million in fresh farm products, \$18 million in locally-processed foods, and \$5 million in other products.
- **Employed over 1,240 staff ('09: 1,350+)**
 - Together, member co-ops in VT are among the top 25 employers in the state.
- **Paid \$28.6 million in employee wages...**
 - Average wage was 18% higher than the average for other food and beverage stores in the same states.
- **Supported local government through payment of taxes...**
 - Including \$7.3 million in sales, excise and other taxes, \$434,000 paid by employees, and \$500,000 in property taxes.



Vision

**Focus
Areas**

Strategy

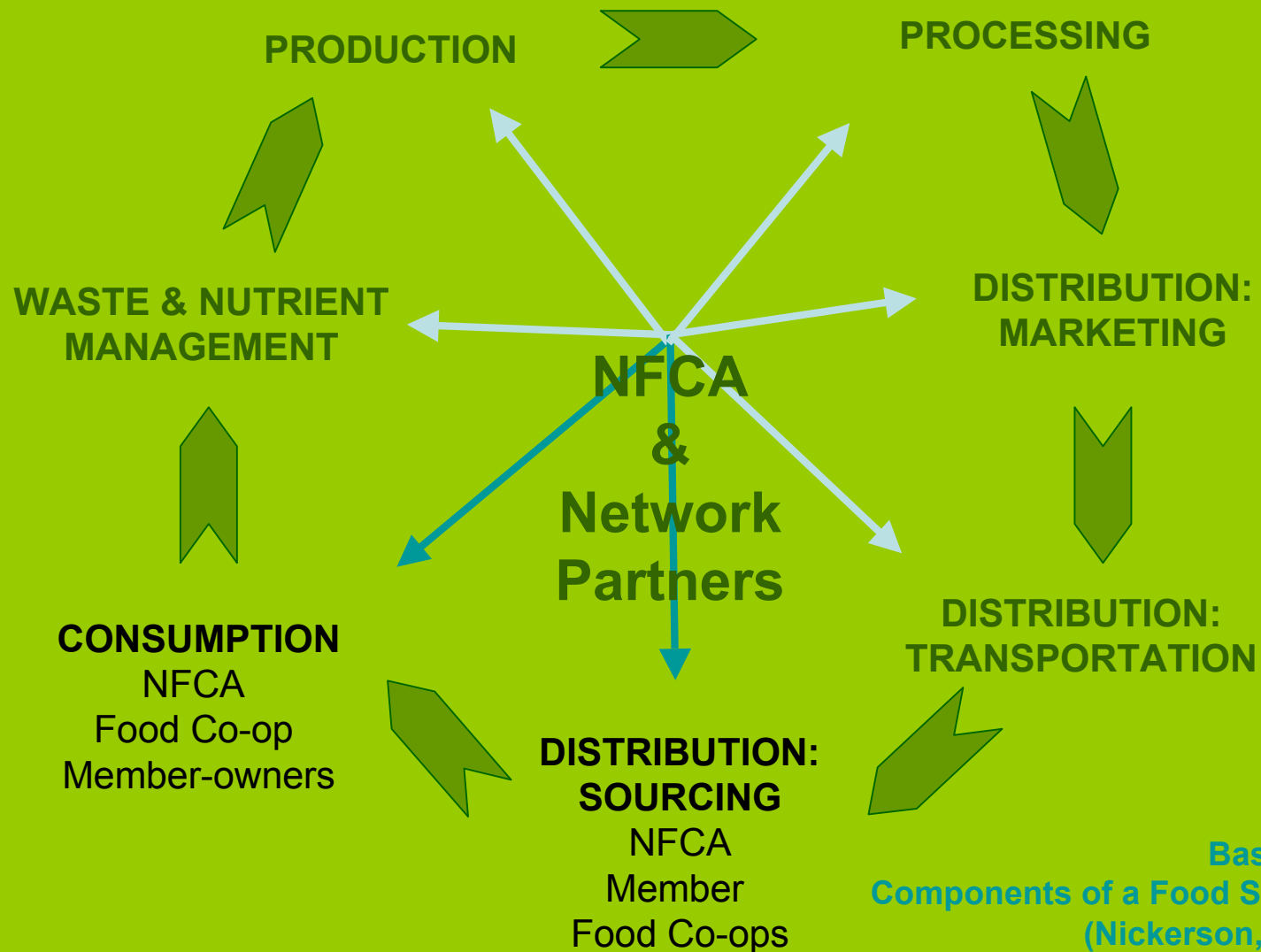
**Thriving
Regional
Economy**

**Collaboration
among
Co-ops**

**Healthy, Just &
Sustainable Food
System**

**Network
Partnerships**

A Healthy Food System



Sourcing

- **Opportunities for Import Substitution**
 - ex: Oats, Frozen Fruits & Vegetables
- **Regional Relationships with Growers**
- **Co-operative Solutions to Infrastructure**
 - ex: Deep Root Organic Co-op
- **Models for Distribution**
 - ex: “Cave to Co-op” Program

Co-operation Among Co-ops

- Measuring Our Impact
- Developing Joint Strategies
- Shared Marketing, Education & Outreach
- Reaching Across Co-op Sectors



Network Partnerships

- **Northeast Organic Farming Association**
 - Regional & State
- **Transition Towns**
- **New England Farmers Union**
 - Dairy Policy Forums, Education, Policy
- **VT Regional Food Centers Collaborative**
- **Center for an Agricultural Economy**
- **Co-op Associations, etc.**



Looking Forward

How can we use our shared resources to building a thriving regional economy, based in a healthy food system and co-operation?

Discussion

- **What are the major obstacles to a thriving regional economy and a healthy food system?**
- **How can co-ops help address these challenges?**
- **How can we engage more people in the co-op movement?**
- **[Your Question Here.]**



**Erbin Crowell, Executive Director
Neighboring Food Co-op Association
erbin@nfca.coop • www.nfca.coop**

**Robyn O'Brien, General Manager
Putney Food Co-op, NFCA Steering Cmte
robcoop@sover.net • www.putneyfood.coop**