

**NEIGHBORING FOOD CO-OP ASSOCIATION**



*13<sup>th</sup>  
Annual  
Meeting*

**CO-OPERATION:  
*Our* FOUNDATION**

# Co-operation: Our Foundation

Our Food Co-ops, The United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development, and The Second International Year of Co-ops

*Erbin Crowell, Executive Director, Neighboring Food Co-op Association*



# In Order to...

- Further the Co-operative Identity,
- Pursue public happiness,
- Reorient economy to common good,
- Support regional food production,
- Build stronger food co-ops,
- Achieve our common purpose,
- Support ecological sustainability,
- Build friendship & mutual respect.

## The Middlebury Manifesto

We, the Cooperators of the Connecticut River Valley and nearby regions of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont,

in order to further the ideals of democracy, cooperation, autonomy and education as enshrined in the International Cooperative Principles,

to pursue public as distinct from private happiness,

to reorient the economy from one primarily dedicated to maximizing individual wealth to one calculated to advance the common good,

to promote regional autonomy in food production and other goods essential to human existence,

to strengthen our individual cooperative organizations,

to develop new insights and promote enlightenment about how we might achieve our common purposes,

to act upon our shared concerns about the long term viability of our region and Planet Earth in general as a beautiful and thriving habitat for humans and all other forms of life,

to cultivate the bonds of friendship and mutual respect,

do hereby ordain and establish the *Connecticut Valley Neighboring Co-ops*, an alliance that will

seek and implement opportunities for common commercial activities that would be beneficial to all but inefficient if conducted by individual cooperatives,

share operational and organizational insights that will allow all participating cooperatives to benefit from the work of individual cooperatives,

provide occasions for collective action to build a cooperative economy in our geographic region,

develop leadership and management capacity for our individual cooperatives,

advance the state of knowledge in the fields of economics, finance, the sciences, law, politics, governance, philosophy and the arts, to the extent these disciplines inform our work and shared purposes,

provide a forum for gatherings that will allow us to further our purposes and build human connections, and engender joy, enthusiasm and optimism among all who come into contact with our organization,

and to further these purposes do mutually pledge that we will devote such resources of our cooperatives as are necessary to advance the values and security for which we have come together, and that we personally will dedicate ourselves resolutely to this alliance so that cooperation achieves its potential in our region as a transformative mode of human endeavor.

"If we appear to seek the unattainable, it has been said, then let it be known that we do so to avoid the unattainable."  
—Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society, 1962

"Changing times make it critical to find new and renewed ways of understanding and expressing cooperative approaches to business and society. Such new and renewed understandings are best developed on the basis of a deep comprehension of past and present experience. At the same time, imagination is critical."  
—Brett Fairbairn, Three Strategic Concepts for Cooperatives

"But as public happiness depends, in this country, at least, on the personal character of its inhabitants at large, so the promotion of public happiness must, in a great measure, rest on personal exertions. Men [and women] of every description, who wish the end accomplished, must unite to furnish the means."  
—Timothy Dwight, "The True Means of Establishing Public Happiness," 1795

A viable community is made up of neighbors who cherish and protect what they have in common.  
—Wendell Berry, The Idea of a Local Economy

"Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible."  
—Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 29

We must design a system where doing good is like falling off a log, where the natural, everyday acts of work and life accumulate into a better world as a matter of course, not a matter of conscious striving.  
—Paul Hawken, Ecology of Commerce

The Middlebury Manifesto, 2007

# 2011: NFCA Co-op Incorporated

*A vision of “...a thriving co-operative economy, rooted in a healthy, just and sustainable food system and a vibrant community of co-operative enterprise.”*



Staff Showing Co-op Pride at Monadnock Food Co-op, Keene, NH

# Our Mission

*“...to support the growth, innovation, and shared success of our Member Co-ops through collaboration, education, and partnerships.”*



Urban Greens Co-op Market, Providence, RI, Opened Summer 2019

# 2012: International Year of Co-ops

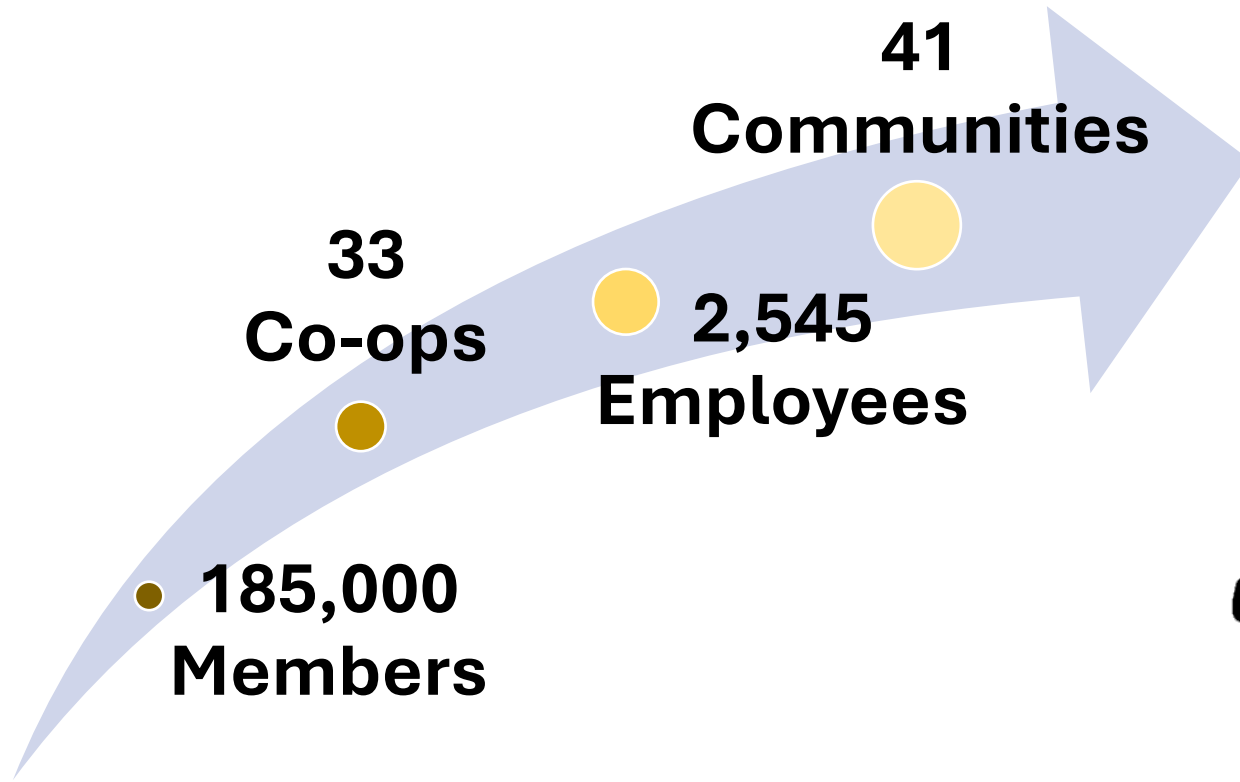
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## Co-ops & UN Millenium Development Goals:

- Poverty Reduction
- Employment Generation
- Social Integration
- Fairness & Globalization
- Sustainability
- Conflict Resolution
- **Food Security**

# A Growing Community...



# ...With Growing Impact



## In 2023, Our Members Generated

- \$443+ Million in Revenue
- \$121 Million in Local Product Sales (25+% of Total Sales)
- \$1.3 Million in Community Donations
- \$3.7 Million Returned to Members in Discounts & Patronage
- \$1.2 Million in Need Based Discounts through 16 Healthy Food Access Programs



# Leveraging Our Collective Resources to...

- **Grow** Awareness of Co-op Difference
- **Collaborate** for Shared Innovation & Success
- **Increase** our Collective Impact for our Communities
- **Enliven** our Democracy & Influence Policy



Urban Greens Co-op Market, Providence, RI, Opened Summer 2019.

# There is No Shortage of Challenges...

- Climate Change
- Corporate Consolidation
- Competitive Pressure
- Technological Change
- Inequality & Inequity
- Food Insecurity
- Global Conflict
- Undermining of Democratic Institutions



# 2025: A Second International Year of Co-ops!

## UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015-2030)

- *Blueprint for “People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership.”*

## Contribution of Co-ops to...

- *Building an Inclusive Economy*
- *Addressing Climate Change*
- *Strengthening Food Security*

## Governments Should...

- *Facilitate Co-op Development*
- *Address Legislative Obstacles*

## Co-ops Should...

- *Increase their Impact, and*
- *Promote their difference!*

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



# “Achieving the 2030 Agenda Through Empowerment of Local Communities”

“We accelerate the SDGs through more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for **Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment, and a Better Life**, leaving no one behind.”

Director-General Qu Dongyu, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



Photo: UN Food & Agriculture Organization:  
<https://www.fao.org/contact-us/en>

# The SDGs Through a Food System Lens



## Better Production

- *Sustainable Agriculture*
- *Family Farms & Small Producers*

## Better Nutrition

- *Food Security*
- *Food Safety*

## Better Environment

- *Responsible Consumption*
- *Climate Smart Systems*

## Better Life

- *Stronger Rural Communities*
- *Inclusive Economy*

# Collective Food Co-op Impact

Better Production	Better Nutrition	Better Environment	Better Life
Local Sourcing	Food for All / Solidarity Funds	Bulk, Reduce Packaging	Co-operative Economics
Organic, Co-op & Fair Trade	Fresh, Local Produce	Reduced Waste & Composting	Good Jobs
Food Safety Collaboration	Nutrition Education	Energy Efficiency & Sustainability	Equality & Equity
Food System Development	SNAP/WIC & Policy Advocacy	Bike / EV Friendly Investments	Inclusive Economy

# Goal: Impact the Food System & Economy

- Cross Sector Collaboration
- Sourcing Initiatives
- New England Farmers Union
- Local Food Safety Collaborative
- Federation of Southern Cooperatives
- **Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership**



# Goal: Co-op Development & Shared Success

- Regional Gatherings
- Peer Groups
- Workshops & Trainings
- Educational Resources
- Legal & Technical Assistance
- Start-Up Support
- **Supporting Small & Rural Food Co-ops**

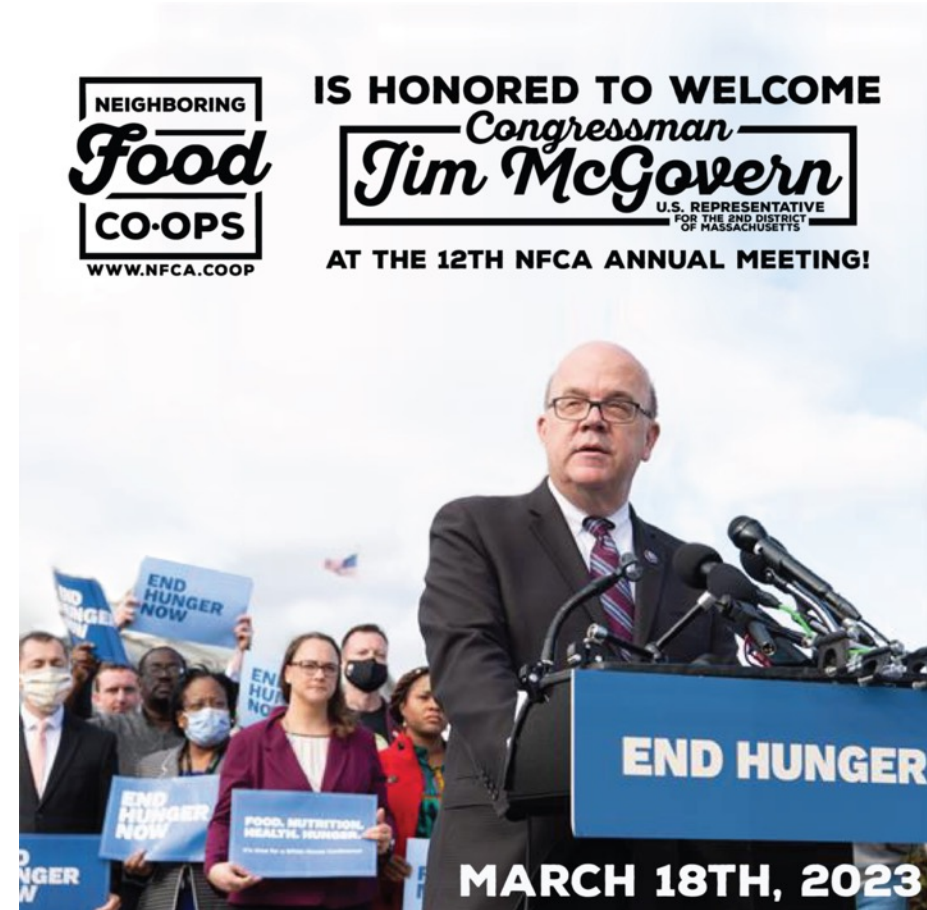


NFCA Peer Training for Cheese Buyers, Brattleboro Food Co-op, 2019



# Goal: Civic Engagement & Policy Advocacy

- Defend Co-op Identity
- Update Co-op Laws
- Voter Registration Day / Co-ops Vote!
- Co-op Identity Advisory Group
- Engaging Policy Makers
- WIC/SNAP Advocacy
- **Policy Advocacy Initiative**



# National Farmers Union Convention, 2024

Special Order of Business:

“NFU was a leader in the promotion of the first international year of Cooperatives in 2012, and we will again demonstrate our leadership in 2025 by promoting the cooperative model and educating our communities and policy makers about the principles, benefits, and impact of cooperatives.

***When cooperatives are successful and remain committed to the cooperative principles, their members, their communities, and our country benefit.”***



New England Delegates to the National Farmers Union Convention, 2024 — Rebecca White (Hanover Co-op Food Stores), Mary Castonguay (Dairy Farmer & Organic Valley Member), Zoe Fox (Agricultural Project Manager with New England Consulting Services) & Roger Noonan, NEFU President.

# Goal: Public Education & Awareness

- Advertising & Press
- Events Outreach
- Co-op Day / Co-op Month
- ICCM at Saint Mary's University
- UMass Co-op Curriculum
- Webinar Series
- Green River Festival
- **Foundation for the Second International Year of Co-ops**



# What Should Our Co-ops Work On, Together?



**49%**

- Healthy Food Access
- Community Partnerships
- Policy Advocacy



**32%**

- Reduced Waste
- Energy Efficiency / Sustainability
- Advocacy & Engagement



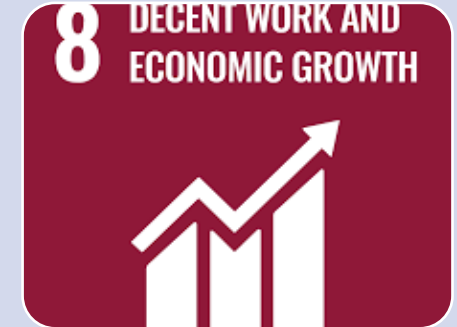
**29%**

- Sourcing for Impact
- Producer Partnerships
- Composting / Recycling



**28%**

- Civic Engagement
- Policy Advocacy
- Economic Democracy



**22%**

- Co-operative Economy
- Good Jobs
- Collaboration for Shared Success

# Laying the Foundation for 2025

## Measuring Our Impact

- Annual Impact Survey

## Telling Our Stories

- Marketing & Educational Tools

## Communicating Our Identity

- Values & Principles (& dotCoop)

## Sharing Successful Strategies

- Peer to Peer Collaboration

## Engaging Policymakers

- Policy Advocacy Initiative



Rutland Area Food Co-op, Rutland, VT

*Save  
the  
Date*  
*March 15, 2025*



**ANNUAL  
MEETING**