



How cooperatives build sustainable and resilient societies?

By their very nature, cooperatives play a triple role:

- As **economic actors** they create opportunities for jobs, livelihoods and income generation
- As **people-centered enterprises** with social goals they contribute to social equity and justice
- As **democratic institutions**, they are controlled by their members, playing a leading role in society and local communities.

12 cooperative stories

Read below **12 examples from different sectors and regions** of the world boosting **SDG12** by highlight how cooperatives can become the **vehicle to ensure sustainable consumption and production of goods and services**.

Consumer cooperatives increasingly support sustainable sourcing for their products and educate consumers about responsible consumption. Consumer Cooperatives Worldwide (CCW) reports how members build sustainable societies through commitments to “UN SDG 12: Sustainable consumption and production”, namely their efforts in achieving a truly circular economy and fighting the plastics challenge. Some examples are **Coop Norway** and **The Co-operative Group** in the UK. In 2016, the plastic caps on Coop Norway’s own-brand organic Ånglamark milk became fully recyclable, whilst the polyethylene used during production comes from biomass from second generation feedstock, rather than petroleum-based sources. The Co-operative Group’s 2020 Strategy aims to make 80% of their private label packaging recyclable. A huge breakthrough was eliminating Amorphous polyethylene terephthalate (aPET) from meat and fish packaging, because it is very difficult to recycle. The newly innovated packaging is more easily recycled. The **Japanese Consumers’ Cooperative Union** has created a 'Co-op Action Plan' for SDGs “dedicating ourselves to the realization of a more human lifestyle and sustainable society under the "Ideal of Japanese



Consumer Co-ops Movement for the 21st Century". This was adopted at the JCCU Annual General Assembly in 1997. The SDGs which aim to leave no one behind are consistent with our philosophy".

Housing cooperatives help ensure safe and affordable dwellings. The **Housing Cooperative Chamarel-les-Barges**, in France is the story of a group of fifteen retirees that decided to live better together. In 2012, they created the cooperative as an intergenerational housing project to allow them to take their aging in hand, in continuity with their personal and professional beliefs: social commitment, associative life, culture and politics, teamwork and cooperation. Another example on how the movement is boosting social justice is the cooperative housing project **Housing cooperatives: Women's representation, Women's empowerment**, in Montreal, Canada. It has been launched to identify systemic barriers women face in cooperative housing and provide tools and resources to equip women in order to take on leadership roles.

Agricultural cooperatives work to maintain the longevity of the land where they grow crops through sustainable farming practices. **COOCENKI** cooperative brings together small scale farmers working in North Kivu province-DR Congo. With current membership of 285 young farmers, they saw it as an opportunity for business development and future prospects. The members came together to help with production and consumption. Those rearing livestock receive feed produced by the farmers who in turn receive manure for their farms making it easier for them to access organic matter for soil fertilization. This is creating a solution to the problem of accessing quality agricultural products, a big challenge for farmers in the DRC. **Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO)** is one of India's biggest cooperative societies which is wholly owned by Indian cooperatives. Founded in 1967 with just 57 cooperatives, they are today an amalgamation of over 36,000 cooperatives with diversified business interests, ranging from general insurance to rural telecoms, in addition to their core business of manufacturing and selling fertilisers. They have pledged to implement reforestation projects on waste lands in 29,419 hectares. They are committed to reducing energy consumption and undertake alternative and renewable energy initiatives, and to achieve self-sufficiency in food production by making high quality fertilisers available to farmers.

Cooperative banks contribute to stability owing to their proximity to their clients. They provide access to finance at a local level, and are widespread, even in remote areas. El Salvador's only insurance cooperative, **Seguros Futuro**, has launched an insurance product that will protect clients from catastrophic events. Agriculture and the small business sector is critical to many South America economies and is exceedingly susceptible to weather-related events. This new product will cover business interruption losses from excessive rainfall, severe drought and earthquakes.



Utility cooperatives are engaged in rural access to energy and water, and many of them are engaged in leading the energy transition to energy democracy. An example of this is **Huinca Bio** in Argentina, that has recently signed an agreement with the government for the supply of electrical energy from renewable sources for the next 20 years. It is the result of a partnership between Federación de Cooperativas Federadas Limitada (FECOFE) and the Cooperative of electric services from Huinca Renancó (CEHR, acronym in Spanish). In this way, the project promoted by a cooperative society will be a pioneer in the production of electrical, thermal, and biofertilizers of high agronomic value, in a bio-gas plant.

Worker and social cooperatives across diverse sectors aim to provide goods and services in an efficient way, while creating long-term, sustainable jobs – and they increasingly do it in a planet-friendly way. A paradigmatic experience comes from Argentina: the worker cooperative **Creando Conciencia** (Creating Awareness), founded in 2005 in the Buenos Aires province, came across the initiative of a group of neighbours who were concerned about the urban management of solid waste. Since its beginning, it has been involved in the collection, sorting and recycling of waste, as well as the design and construction of plastic furniture. The majority of the cooperative founders were unemployed former urban waste pickers who had been hired by large waste collection companies, precariously and for short periods. Through the establishment of the cooperative, they could get stable jobs and capitalise their previous knowledge and commitment to the environment. Today, the cooperative has 50 members, most of them women, and it plays a leading role in the cooperative recycling sector, which has been expanding rapidly in Argentina over the last few years. Another example is the **Quebec Federation of Forestry Cooperatives**, which represents all of the worker cooperatives and social cooperatives active in the forest sector in Quebec. Its 40 cooperatives have 2,700 worker-members and create jobs for approximately 3,500 individuals, generating over US\$250 million in revenue. In areas such as recycling and waste management, worker and social cooperatives have shown that they can combine environmental protection with the provision of decent jobs, even in the most vulnerable sections of the society.

Health cooperatives are showing how they contribute to the health system's sustainability. In Italy, over the past 20 years, the demand for health services has changed significantly due to longer life expectancy and the emergence of new chronic illnesses. However, regional and national policies have been unable to effectively address the new needs arising in society. This has entailed showing the regional differences in the provision of services, that cooperatives are solving, enabling doctors to self-organise collectively and offer solutions close to users' needs. According to the International Health Cooperative Organisation in 2014, there were 6,756 Italian social cooperatives with a turnover of 9,235 million euros and 233,397 employees. It is estimated that they provide services to 5.5 million users in Italy.