



# 2024 Food Co-op Impact Report

Welcome to the 2024 Food Co-op Impact Report. Use the links above to jump to any section or scroll down to read from beginning to end. We're glad you found yourself here.

# It's Delicious, It's Delightful, It's Democracy

Feeling fed up with “business as usual?” You’re not alone. A growing number of people across the country believe we can do better by each other — joining together through local, democratically governed organizations to meet our everyday needs — like groceries.

Food co-ops are about more than bulk granola and essential oils, we’re about local, democratic ownership, community food security and solidarity with workers across the supply chain. Our stores are open to the public, and anyone can join a food co-op.

Learn how food co-ops are revolutionizing the grocery industry to make it work better for people and planet; and if you want to, [you can join](#) our collective movement towards a just, resilient and regenerative food system that is accessible for all. If you’re already a co-op shopper, thank you for strengthening your community and local food system.



# Building Community Food Security

Every food co-op is locally owned and operated by members of its community, so each store is a unique expression of its place in the world. But it also turns out that our communities share some big goals in common:

- ✓ Nutritious, high-quality foods accessible in every neighborhood
- ✓ Good jobs with benefits, sense of purpose and community
- ✓ Support for federal policies that build local food systems, lift people out of poverty and regenerate our environment

The [food co-op](#) communities across the country that own [National Co+op Grocers](#) (NCG) work together collectively to strengthen our ability to positively impact our food system and grow the cooperative economy in an inclusive and environmentally regenerative manner.



# Cooperation Makes the Difference

Food co-ops don't change their values based on which way the wind blows. We are rooted in our communities and participate in the [international cooperative business movement](#), a business model rooted in cooperative principles and values.

At a food co-op, members own the business and elect their board of directors from among their community every year, ensuring that as their co-op grows and changes it remains true to the values and goals of its community.

NCG is owned by 165 community food co-ops with stores in 240+ communities and growing!

## Cooperative Principles

- Voluntary and open membership
- Democratic member control
- Member economic participation
- Autonomy and independence
- Education, training and information
- Cooperation among cooperatives
- Concern for community
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

## Cooperative Values

- Self-help
- Self-responsibility
- Democracy
- Equality
- Equity
- Solidarity

Source: International Cooperative Alliance, ica.coop

240+ co-op locations in  
**39 states**

**\$9 million**

collectively donated to local community organizations annually by NCG co-ops

**1.3 million**

co-op owners as of 2024

Co-op owners account for

**58% of sales**

# We Are Professionals with Purpose

Feeding a community is essential, important work. Food co-ops are staffed by some of the most knowledgeable, dedicated people in any field. Co-op careers offer a meaningful way to contribute to your community, learn transferable skills and bring your whole self to work.



Food co-ops prioritize the financial security of workers by seeking out ways to offer livable wages, healthcare benefits and retirement savings — even as housing and healthcare costs rise making these goals more challenging. NCG encourages food co-ops in meeting these goals by facilitating programs that help to lower co-ops' operating expenses. Today, half of our community-owned food co-ops pay all staff a livable wage or according to their union contract.

We don't have the budgets that the big box stores do, but we're working to live our values and make decisions that show care for our communities. We aren't perfect, but we are committed to progress.

**100**

people employed by the average food co-op

**54%**

of staff are eligible for healthcare benefits at the average food co-op

**700 hours**

in staff development invested annually by the average co-op

**1 out of 2**

co-ops is measuring staff diversity to reflect the community

# Affordable Food in Every Neighborhood

Food co-ops work together nationally to source the foods our communities want at the lowest prices possible. Look for our Co+op Deals and Co+op Basics programs which compete with national chains' name brand and private label groceries.

We also advocate at the federal level through NCG for increases in federal funding for SNAP, WIC and GusNIP, the federal grant for SNAP Produce Incentive programs. SNAP is the most effective anti-hunger program in the nation with over 41 million people using it to purchase groceries in 2024.

Currently, 77 of NCG's 165 member co-ops are located in parts of the country

designated as having low access to fresh foods and a low median household income by U.S. Department of Agriculture. NCG donates to [Food Co-op Initiative](#), a nonprofit that supports communities working to organize a food co-op in their neighborhood and other organizations supporting co-op development.



## 2,650+

Co+op Deals each week

## 25%

average retail discount on Co+op Deals

## 1 out of 2

food co-ops offers **SNAP\*** double dollars for produce

\*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

## 93%

food co-ops participate in SNAP

# Leaders in Local and Organic Food

Resiliency, interdependence and a thriving local economy — cultivating a strong local food system brings many benefits to a community. Food co-ops invest time, energy and money in building strong relationships with farmers and food producers, and it shows — we sell more local products than any other grocer.

Food co-ops are also leaders in organic sales. We have a higher percentage of sales from organic products than our competition does. Soil-based organic agriculture is a regenerative farming system that builds soil health and increases its ability to capture and hold carbon (as CO<sup>2</sup>) from the atmosphere.

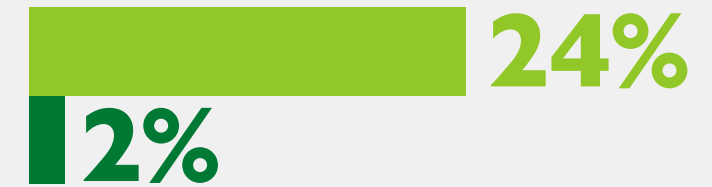
Organic farming is good for bees and butterflies and builds biodiversity by working with the natural food chain to control pests — just how nature balances itself.



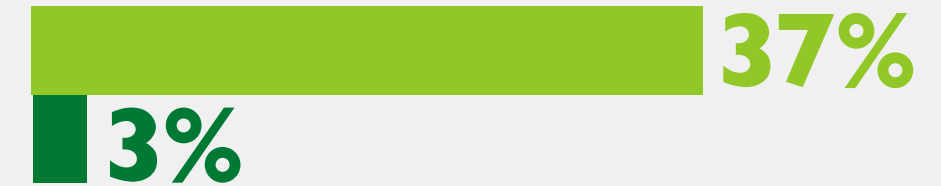
## Co-ops Lead in Local and Organic

- NCG Co-ops
- Conventional Grocers

Local products as percentage of sales



Organic products as percentage of sales



Number of local producers



\*Source NCG member survey data, SPINS natural channel data, FMI Food Retailing Industry Speaks 2023.



# Supporting Food Sovereignty

*Food sovereignty* is the right of individuals and communities to define and control their food system. Because community ownership of local food systems is what co-ops are all about, we support food sovereignty for all communities, especially those whose access to food has been intentionally destroyed and ignored by federal policy.

NCG food co-ops and their shoppers collectively donated more than \$139,000 to North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NĀTIFS), based on sales of Field Day brand groceries at our co-ops

throughout the month of November. NĀTIFS is working to strengthen and grow traditional Indigenous foodways.

Through NCG, food co-ops also donated to support the food justice and food sovereignty efforts of National Black Food and Justice Alliance, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, HEAL Food Alliance, Alianza Nacional de Campesinas (National Alliance of Farmworker Women), Agricultural Justice Project and National Farm to School Network.

## \$139,000

raised for North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems

## \$238,000

donated to organizations led by and for Black and Brown people working towards food justice and food sovereignty.

La Via Campesina defines **food sovereignty** as “The right of Peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”

# Organize

a food co-op. [Learn how →](#)

# Leaders in Socially Responsible Sourcing

Co-ops are committed to promoting products that share [our vision of a food system](#) that upholds the dignity of workers of all kinds and prioritizes their wellbeing.



## Inclusive Trade

Food co-ops' Inclusive Trade program promotes products from companies certified to

be at least 51% owned by people who identify as women, Black, Indigenous, people of color (POC), LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities and veterans. Food co-ops promote more than 100 Inclusive Trade brands.

## B Corp Certification

As a [Certified B Corporation](#), NCG is a leader in the global movement for

an inclusive, equitable and regenerative economy. All B Corporations complete a rigorous social and environmental assessment.



## Cooperatively Owned

Cooperatives are known for their democratic governance and can be worker-, producer-

or consumer-led. All cooperatives follow [international principles](#) that guide holistic decision making.

## Fair Trade Certified

[Fair trade certification](#) verifies that producers are paid a livable wage with safe working conditions and prohibits child labor.

## Products as a Percentage of Total Sales\*

\*These figures based on SPINS natural products sales data.

### Fair Trade Certified

<b>NCG Co-ops</b> .....	<b>6%</b>
Natural Grocery.....	4%
Conventional.....	0.5%

### Certified B Corp

<b>NCG Co-ops</b> .....	<b>9%</b>
Natural Grocery.....	6%
Conventional.....	2%

### Cooperatively Owned

<b>NCG Co-ops</b> .....	<b>5%</b>
Natural Grocery.....	3%
Conventional.....	1%

# Federal and Consumer Advocacy

Co-ops are consumer advocates at a time when transparency can be hard to find. We work within our supply chain and industry and with the federal government to advocate for product labeling, disclosure of potentially harmful ingredients or contaminants, and protections for workers within our supply chain.

NCG participates in direct advocacy to federal offices with organic and cooperative allies to bring co-ops' food system priorities to Congress.

Along with advocates across the country, NCG is tracking and responding to new laws, executive orders and funding cuts that

roll back progress on issues food co-ops support. We are grateful for the alliances we've built with advocacy organizations.

## Advocacy areas:

- ✓ [Cooperative Business](#)
- ✓ [Inclusive Economies](#)
- ✓ [Racial Equity](#)
- ✓ [Food Justice](#)
- ✓ [Local Food and Farming](#)
- ✓ [Organic Certification](#)
- ✓ [Climate Action](#)
- ✓ [Environmental Responsibility](#)
- ✓ [Engaged Citizens, Vibrant Communities](#)



## Advocacy allies:

- [Alianza Nacional de Campesinas](#)
- [Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund](#)
- [HEAL Food Alliance](#)
- [National Black Food and Justice Alliance](#)
- [National Cooperative Business Association](#)
- [National Farm to School Network](#)
- [National Organic Coalition](#)
- [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#)
- [Organic Farming Research Foundation](#)
- [Organic Trade Association](#)

# Responding to the Climate Crisis

Food — how it is grown, produced, transported, used and thrown away — has a huge impact on our climate. Food co-ops work together to reduce our impact on the climate individually and collectively.

NCG has been offsetting carbon emissions from staff travel and office utilities since 2012. In 2024 we welcomed a new offset partner, ReSeed, an innovative organization that funds Indigenous Brazilian farmers who use traditional agricultural methods that sequester carbon and reduce climate change.

Food co-ops promote organic food as a [climate change solution](#) — soil-based

organic farming methods are regenerative and can help to heal environmental depletion and slow climate change.



The Curiau Afro Brazilian Social Carbon Project is funded with support from ReSeed.



## 100%

NCG food co-ops have up-to-date sustainability tracking software and support to set goals and reduce carbon footprint

## 8,293

metric tons CO<sup>2</sup> offset since 2012 through conservation and agroforestry practices in partnership with Indigenous communities

# About this Content

This content is based on the Food Co-op Impact Survey, which is fielded annually to NCG food co-ops, SPINS natural products data, FMI Food Retailing Industry Speaks 2023 Report, and other data collected by National Co+op Grocers (NCG) — a business services cooperative owned by retail food co-ops located throughout the United States. NCG represents 165 retail food co-ops operating 241 stores in 39 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.

