

The Co-operative Values and Principles

The Values and Principles embraced by today's worldwide co-operative movement have evolved from the ideals of the early co-operators of the 18th and 19th centuries. They are embodied in the Statement of Co-operative Identity published by the [International Co-operative Alliance](#). The most recent review and reaffirmation took place during 1995.

Co-operative Values

Co-operatives throughout the world share a set of values that give them their distinctive character.

Self-help

In co-operatives, people help each other whilst helping themselves by working together for mutual benefit.

Self-responsibility

Individuals within co-operatives act responsibly and play a full part in the organisation.

Democracy

A co-operative will be structured so that members have control over the organisation – one member, one vote.

Equality

Each member will have equal rights and benefits.

Equity

Members will be treated justly and fairly.

Solidarity

Members will support each other and other co-operatives.

Ethical Values

In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of:

- Honesty
- Openness
- Social responsibility
- Caring for others

Co-operative Principles

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

3. Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at

least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. **Autonomy and Independence**

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5. **Education, Training and Information**

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6. **Co-operation among Co-operatives**

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7. **Concern for Community**

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.