



CO-OPERATIVE INFORMATION SHEET

Co-operative Shapes and Sizes

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Co-operatives exist in almost every country of the world:

- In Canada, 1 in 3 individuals are members of a co-operative (33%). The Desjardins co-operative movement (savings and credit co-operatives) in Québec has over 5 million members and is the largest employer in the province;
- In Japan, 1 in of every 3 families has at least one member of a co-operative;
- In Singapore, 32% of the population are members of a co-operative; and
- In the United States, 4 in 10 individuals are members of a co-operative (40%).

Co-operatives are significant economic players in national economies:

- In Belgium co-operative pharmacies have a market share of 19.5%;
- In Brazil, co-operatives are responsible for 72% of wheat production, 44% of barely, 43% of soy, 39% of milk, 38% of cotton, 21% of coffee and 16% of maize;
- In Cyprus, the co-operative movement held 30% of the market in banking services, and handled 35% of all marketing of agricultural produce;
- In Finland, co-operative groups were responsible for 74% of meat production, 96% of dairy production; 50% of egg production, 34% of forestry products and handled 34.2% of the total deposits in Finnish banks;
- In the UK, the largest independent travel agency is a co-operative; and
- In France 21,000 co-operatives provide jobs to 700,000 people.

In New South Wales co-operatives had a combined turnover of \$4.45 billion; created net profits of \$95 million; generated \$756 million in export revenue; had net assets of \$1.16 billion; employed over 12,000; and had almost 1.4 million members;

Financial co-operatives are known in Australia as credit unions. There are 150 credit unions that hold more than \$34.8 billion in assets while providing personal banking services to 3.6 million members.

Co-operatives can be found in almost every field of activity.

The following are examples of co-operatives currently providing services to members in Australia: antique collectors; artists; arts & crafts; barristers' services; beef producers; bus and coaches; bush foods and products; bush land regeneration; cane growers; carriers'; coffee growers; community arts centres; community clubs; community food buying; community radio; community services; dairy; education & training; egg producers; employment services; energy; estate agents; family day care centres; fish producers; fruit producers; galleries; gold; golf clubs; gourmet meats; hairdresser buying; harvesting; herbs and spices; historical activities; housing tenants; kindergartens; libraries; liquor supply; marinas; marketing; meals-on-wheels; meat producers; media; medical services; music; native fish; native hardwood; newsagents; olives; packaging; permaculture; pet care; pre school; professional services; publishing; railways; recycling; rural education; sailing clubs; saw-millers; ski lodges; sugar milling; taxis; transport and haulage; water supply; wine consumers; winemakers; women's refuges; wood-turners; labour supply; and youth theatre.

For every challenge, there is a co-operative solution.