



## International buying Group / food coop summaries

### Small Scale buying groups

#### **Fat Oat Buying Club, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, USA**

Informal group 13 members, operating for 7 years

#### **High Country Organics, Arizona, US**

[www.highcountryorganics.com](http://www.highcountryorganics.com)

10 – 35 members, started 2006

Organic produce co-op and farmer's market

#### **Ocean City Organic Inc., Maryland, US**

20 members

#### **Wholefoods of Panama City, Panama City, USA**

[www.localharvest.org/food-coops](http://www.localharvest.org/food-coops)

10 people / households, started 2005

An organic food basket club in Panama City, Bay County, Florida. We buy local produce every two weeks for distribution among our members. Basket price is \$50 every 2 weeks for 13-15 items in basket. 1/2 shares available.

### Medium / Large

#### **Dublin Food Coop, Ireland**

[www.dublinfoodcoop](http://www.dublinfoodcoop)

700/1100 members

The coop runs a weekly food market on Saturdays, where stalls provide fresh local and artisan produce, mainly organic, and other products for sustainable living. The Dublin Food Co-op was set up to provide organic food and other products to its owner-members. Established in 1983 by a group of friends who found buying in bulk made financial sense. About 300 volunteers do a two-hour shift every 8 weeks. There is also a small team of part-time and full-time staff who arrange purchases from Irish wholesalers (including payments, as well as checking and receiving goods), who organise the voluntary work rota's and co-ordinate the education programme. The first full-time employee position was created about 3 to 4 years after the project started. Members who join the Help Rota get a discount. These members contribute 2 hours work running the Co-op about every 7 weeks. Dublin Food Co-op is an alternative to commercial profit-oriented business. Surplus funds are used to benefit the members Co-op and to reduce prices. The Co-op sells its own wide range of organic dry foods and other processed organic products. It operates to a set of principles (on website).

#### **Purple Dragon Coop, New Jersey, USA**

[www.purpledragon.com](http://www.purpledragon.com).

900 members, scaling up since 1987

'Supporting small, local, organic farmers'

Purple Dragon Co-op was formed in 1987 to bring natural foods into our area at prices closer to wholesale. In 1989, we began working to improve the availability of exquisitely fresh organic produce for our members. Janit London, designed Purple Dragon's unique format, i.e., a new low-labor co-op model that works for today's busy families.

### **Oklahoma Food Coop, USA**

[www.oklahomafood.coop](http://www.oklahomafood.coop)

As of June 2008, the coop has nearly 2000 members, 125 of them are producers (although not all producers have items to sell every month). We are doing \$61,000 - \$65,000 each month in sales.

We do this via an order delivery system based on the website and a network of members and volunteers across the state. Each month, our producer members post at our website what they have available. The monthly order opens on the 1st day of each month at 8 AM, and closes on the 2nd Thursday of each month at midnight. On the third Thursday of each month, the farmers come to Oklahoma City and the coop's volunteer crew sort everything into customer orders, which then later in the day go out to our 32 pickup sites across the state. We only sell food and non-food products that are made in Oklahoma. We generally have 2600+ different items available each month. 'From our family farms to your family table'

### **Foodshare, Toronto, Canada**

<http://www.foodshare.net>

In January of 1994, we packed forty Good Food Boxes in the basement of our office. In 2003 we distributed 4,000 boxes per month through 200 neighborhood-based drop-offs.

The Good Food Box runs like a large buying club with centralized buying and co-ordination. Twice a month individuals place orders for boxes with volunteer co-ordinators in their neighborhood and receive a box brimming with fresh, tasty produce. Customers pay between \$12 and \$32 for their box, depending on the version that they choose. Each box contains the same mixture of food, though the contents change with each delivery, depending on what is in season and reasonable at the time. FoodShare truck drivers deliver the boxes to the neighborhood drop-offs, where the local volunteer co-ordinators ensure that customers pick-up their boxes. Good Food Box drop-offs (we also call them 'stops') can be front porches, co-ops, social housing, daycares, churches, community centres etc. Volunteer stop coordinators take orders, collect payment and ensure that customers pick up their boxes. Stops can have a delivery once a week, every two weeks or once a month. Everyone can participate. There are over 150 Good Food Box stops across the city. At FoodShare we work on food issues "from field to table" - meaning that we focus on the entire system that puts food on our tables: from the growing, processing and distribution of food to its purchasing, cooking and consumption. We choose Ontario-grown products for the box whenever possible because we want to know where and how our food is produced, to support local farmers and reduce the fossil fuels burned when we import food.

We also operate innovative grassroots projects that promote healthy eating, teach food preparation and cultivation, develop community capacity and create non-market-based forms of food distribution.

### **Organic Buying Club, South Florida, USA**

<http://www.organicbuyingclubsofla.com/>

4000 members

A modern day cooperative type buying club, finding consistently fresh, certified organic produce at reasonable prices at savings always below retail to its members. Based on 'Purple Dragon' model.

Pre-paid bi-weekly mixed variety shares to members at a very fair price. The shares change according to market, season and availability. Everyone in the group gets an equal mixed share of what is ordered for that week. We try to keep our buying within the United States as much as possible to support the efforts of our national organic farmers as well. All our produce is certified through QAI the largest International certifier in the world and all of our produce is exquisitely fresh.

### **Davis Food Coop, USA**

[www.daviscoop.com](http://www.daviscoop.com)

Started in a living room in 1972, the Davis Food Co-op has grown into a full-service grocery store owned and operated by nearly 10,000 local households. The Co-op exists to serve our local members, not some far-off corporation. Think of it as food of the people, by the people and for the people. The Co-op features natural, organic and locally produced foods but we offer a full spectrum of products to serve our entire community. The products we offer are as unique and diverse as our thousands of local owners.

### **The Park Slope Food Coop, Brooklyn, New York,**

<http://www.foodcoop.com>

Founded in 1973 by a small group of committed neighbours who wanted to make healthy, affordable food available to everyone who wanted it. PSFC now has more than 12,000 members, most of whom work once every four weeks in exchange for a 20 – 40% savings on groceries. Only members may shop at the PSFC and membership is open to all. The Coop carries a wide variety of products, including local, organic and conventionally grown produce; pasture-raised and grass-fed meat; free-range, organic and kosher poultry, and much more.

### **Biocoop, France**

[www.biocoop.fr](http://www.biocoop.fr)

10,000+ members, consumer cooperative

Biocoop is a network of organic food shops across France. Started twenty years ago as the first of its kind in France, Biocoop now has 281 outlets in major cities across the country, and an annual turnover of 250 million Euros. The co-operative and community origins of BioCoop have been one of its principal strengths and continue to remain so. Like Seikatsu in Japan, the combination of significant consumer management or ownership combined with close co-operation with producers and with neighbouring regional co-operatives have been major factors of their success in developing the local and national markets. BioCoop offers those interested in establishing a independent organic shop or consumer co-operative an infrastructure which allows the shop to develop a unique image within the context of a quality control system that 'certifies' the outlet as well as the goods. The shop's individual name is given prominence, not BioCoop's, but the charter and the logo is displayed in a prominent position so that all members or customers are aware of the aims and objectives of BioCoop. The network was established in 1986, opening its first store in 1987. On 01 January 2009, there were 315 stores in the network. Over 100 stores have opened in the last five years in the network. Biocoop brings together organic food shops around a common goal: the development of organic farming in a spirit of fairness and cooperation. Leading organic food distribution, as illustrated by Biocoop its fair trade products. More than just a network of traders, Biocoop also wants to influence the choices of society and share its project with other stakeholders: employees, consumers, producers and partners. Annual conferences are held where all policy matters are discussed and which have become major social occasions.

### **Neighbours organic weekly club, Canada**

<http://nowbc.ca>

Neighbours is a network of organic buying clubs operating in the Greater Vancouver area of British Columbia (BC). We are groups of people who live or work close by one another, co-operating to purchase groceries, often directly from local farms, through this website. NOWBC Co-op's primary focus is seasonal local organic foods. Our co-operative was formed to support and promote sustainable farming and food processing here in BC by connecting local food producers with local eaters. We also source fairly traded foods that are not available locally, and earth-friendly household items.

### **GAS – Gruppi di Acquisto Soledale, Italy**

[www.retegas.org](http://www.retegas.org)

3000 members. Started with one group in 1994, now have over 500 groups registered, but estimate the actual number of groups in existence is nearer 1000, involving over 100,000 people.

Groups are set up by friends who decide to buy from local, organic, small-scale producers. They have specific environmental and social objectives – not just about saving the consumer money.

The network for GAS groups aims to exchange information, and disseminate the concept. It consists of a website, a discussion forum, an on-line forum, template documents.

### **Seikatsu Club Consumers' Co-operative Union, Japan**

[www.seikatsuclub.coop/english/](http://www.seikatsuclub.coop/english/)

There are approximately 600 consumer co-operatives with 22,000,000 members in Japan (out of a total population of 127,000,000). From the Hokkaido in the north to Osaka in the south, the Seikatsu Club Consumers' Co-operative Union, (hereafter SC or SCCU) which consists of an association of 30 consumer co-operatives active in 19 administrative divisions (prefectures) of Japan, has altogether about 300,000 members, most of whom are women. In addition, there are 9 associated companies such as a milk factory.

The purpose of the pre-order collective purchase system of the SC is to supply consumer goods whose raw material is known, without excessive expense.

Due to pre-ordering, the members are able to have a well-planned consumer life. Moreover, the producer can supply fresh goods to the consumer, which use no preservatives, because of well-planned production and efficient shipment. The members, who are organized into "Han" (small groups) of several members each, can assure reasonable production and distribution, and can reduce prices. The consumer goods are delivered directly to either the "Han" or the individual through the SC center. In addition, delivery eliminates risks which can occur with overheads and huge stocks of goods.

### **Teikei**

*Sancho* delivery schemes have evolved from 'Teikei' which started 22 years ago. 'Teikei' a 'tie-up' or 'agreement' between farmers and consumers or philosophically translated as "food with a farmers face on it; an alternative/direct distribution system, mutually beneficial, direct relationship between producers and consumers. It is a practical idea but also a dynamic philosophy for a better way of life. Between 500 – 1000 consumer coops associated with organic producers in the 'teikei' relationship across Japan, size of groups vary between 10 families to more than 5,000.