

# Grower Co-operatives: Forming The Long Road Olive Co-operative



# What is a Co-op?

- Definition: Co-operatives are autonomous associations of individuals united voluntarily to meet common **economic**, **social**, and **cultural** needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled legal enterprise.
- Core Principles:
  - 1) Voluntary and open membership
  - 2) Democratic member control
  - 3) Member economic participation
  - 4) Autonomy and independence
  - 5) Education, training, and information
  - 6) Cooperation among co-operatives, and
  - 7) Concern for community

# Why Co-ops?

- Context: Industrial-scale agriculture often sidelines small-scale producers, creating challenges in competition and sustainability.
- Objective: Advocate for co-operative models to empower growers, ensuring a fair and sustainable food system for producers AND consumers.



# Types of Co-ops

- Non-distributive vs Distributive
- Producer OR Consumer OR Multi stakeholder
- Exist for different purposes – sales, marketing and distribution, bulk purchasing, value adding, labour and resource pooling etc

# Vision

- Goal: Establish an olive production system where small-scale producers thrive through mutual support, shared resources, and democratic governance; and consumers have access to nutritionally dense, fresh, local and culturally appropriate food at a reasonable price.
- Outcome: Economic viability, sustainability, and community well-being for all.

# Core Principles

- Democratic Member Control: Equal voting rights; democratic decision-making.
- Voluntary and Open Membership: Inclusive and diverse membership criteria.
- Member Economic Participation: Equitable contribution and profit distribution.
- Autonomy and Independence: Self-help and independent operations.
- Education and Training: Continuous learning and informed decision-making.
- Cooperation Among Co-operatives: Strengthening the co-operative movement.
- Concern for Community: Sustainable development and ethical practices.

A man with a mustache, wearing a straw hat and a light blue button-down shirt, is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is holding a small coffee cup with a lid in his left hand. He is standing in a coffee plantation, with coffee plants and red coffee cherries visible in the background. The scene is outdoors, and it appears to be raining, as there are water droplets visible in the air and on the leaves.

# Economic Viability

- **Shared Resources:** Distribution of profits and pooling of resources to reduce costs for inputs.
- **Market Power:** New market creation, collective bargaining for better pricing and market access.
- **Value Addition:** Processing and marketing to enhance product value.

# Sustainability

- Environmental Stewardship: Adoption of sustainable farming practices.
- Resilience: Building resilience against market and climate fluctuations.
- Local Sourcing: Reducing food miles, supporting local economies and increasing local food security.



# Community Building

- Mutual Support: Fostering a sense of belonging and support among members.
- Fair Trade: Promoting equitable distribution of profits and fair trade practices.
- Economic Opportunities: Creating jobs and enhancing local economies.

# Innovation and Education

- Production Methods: Innovating in production, marketing, and distribution.
- Continuous Learning: Providing ongoing training and education for members.
- Knowledge Sharing: Encouraging collaboration and sharing of best practices.



# Action Plan

- Formation of Co-operative: The Long Road Olive Co-operative Ltd. Guidance on legal frameworks and steps to establish co-operatives through the Bunya Fund (currently underway)
- Capacity Building: Organising workshops and training sessions for steering committee (currently underway)
- Membership drive: Coming soon!
- Market Access: Developing marketing strategies and direct-to-consumer sales channels.
- Advocacy and Partnerships: Building partnerships and advocating for supportive policies, community engagement etc.

# Future Prospects

- Growth Potential: Relevance in organic farming and sustainable agriculture.
- Innovation: Technology integration to enhance productivity.
- Collaboration: Encouraging new co-operatives and partnerships. Documenting our process as a film for release in October 2025 to create a community “how to” resource.

# Conclusion

No individual is an island; we all need our communities to survive and thrive.

To embrace a food production system where small-scale producers thrive through mutual support, shared resources, and democratic governance, and consumers have access to nutritionally dense, fresh, local and culturally appropriate food at a reasonable price, we must establish small-scale producers co-operatives in every community.

Through collaboration, we can create a sustainable, equitable food system for all, and change the world in the process.

# References

1. Co-operatives National Law (CNL), Australian Government: <https://www.cooperatives.gov.au/>
2. "History of the Co-operative Movement," International Co-operative Alliance: <https://www.ica.coop/>
3. Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES): <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares>
4. "Co-operatives in Australia," Australian Institute of Company Directors: <https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/>