



Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030

Cooperative contributions to SDG 15

*This brief is part of the **Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030** series produced by the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC). Through a series of 17 briefs, one for each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), COPAC hopes to raise awareness about the significant contributions of cooperative enterprises towards achieving the 2030 Agenda in a sustainable, inclusive and responsible way, and encourage continued support for their efforts.*

This brief focuses on SDG 15 – protecting and restoring land resources.

About the Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were adopted by world leaders in September 2015 during a historic summit at the United Nations. The SDGs set out a vision for countries to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

For more information, visit www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment.

About cooperatives

Cooperatives are defined as ‘autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise’.¹

All cooperatives subscribe to a set of values and principles that support the social and people-focused nature of their activities. They are operated democratically by their members. Whether customers of the business, workers or residents, members have an equal say and a share of the profits.

Cooperatives are a powerful economic and social force, present in most countries of the world and in most sectors of the economy. The cooperative movement counts more than a billion members.

¹ International Co-operative Alliance, *Statement on the Co-operative Identity* (Manchester, 1995). Available from <https://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

The cooperative difference

While progress has been made in preserving and sustainably using Earth's terrestrial species and ecosystems, the advancements have been uneven and much work remains to be done in terms of land productivity, biodiversity loss and preserving wildlife.

From 1998 to 2013, roughly one fifth of land surface covered by vegetation showed persistent and declining trends in productivity, with South America and Africa being the most affected regions. Land degradation can lead to desertification in its most advanced stages, if the effects are not reversed. Biodiversity loss continues at an alarming rate due to wildlife poaching and trafficking and the threat of climate change and human activity.²

What is the role of cooperatives in protecting terrestrial species and ecosystems? As enterprises based on values and principles, cooperatives contribute to the sustainable management of natural resources in a variety of ways. They offer a forum for community members to find solutions for environmental change, such as managing the land resources they use responsibly or diversifying their economic activities to embrace green economic ventures.³ Forestry cooperatives, for example, promote the sustainable use of forest ecosystems while securing the livelihoods of their members and workers. With 'concern for community' as one of their founding principles, many cooperatives also invest in ecologically focused work, such as reforestation projects and conservation efforts.

The following cooperatives are contributing to the achievement of SDG 15 in the following ways.

From the field: How cooperatives contribute to life on land

In Argentina, the **Cooperativa Agropecuaria y Artesanal Unión Quebrada y Valles Ltda (Cauqueva)** is preserving indigenous species of crops in the Quebrada de Humahuaca valley in Jujuy Province, Argentina. The members of the cooperative are 109 small-scale farmers, mostly indigenous, with an average agricultural area of 1.5 hectares each. They produce and farm Andean crops, including ancestral crops like potatoes, amaranth, quinoa and maize. These crops have been threatened over the years by increased agricultural standardization and climate change. Cauqueva helps the farmers improve their cultivation of the crops by providing mechanized services for tilling, reproducing and supplying native seeds, offering training and technical assistance and processing and promoting indigenous products. A museum, the *Museo de la Vida Campesina Quebradeña*, and a small restaurant run by the cooperative help communicate the value of traditional crops for the community and to the indigenous farmers' way of life.⁴



Indonesia provides much of the world's teak, and native forests are often clear-cut. The demand for teak can have disastrous effects on the environment and the livelihoods of teak farmers. Due to government restrictions on permits for teak harvesting and transport, most areas have only a few wood buyers, who can then dictate teak prices and oblige individual farmers to sell their products at low prices. To combat these threats, a group of individual farmers from 46 villages partnered with The Forest Trust (TFT) and *Jaringan Untuk Hutan* (JAUH, Network for Forests) in 2003 to form the **Koperasi Hutan Jaya Lestari (KHJL)** in Southeast

² United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General*, E/2017/66 (11 May 2017). Available from <http://undocs.org/E/2017/66>

³ Fredrick O. Wanyama, *Cooperatives and the Sustainable Development Goals: A contribution to the post-2015 development debate* (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2014). Available from http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/publications/WCMS_306072/lang-en/index.htm

⁴ Carla Ranicki, "Saving the Potatoes of the Andes", *Stories.coop*. Available from <http://stories.coop/stories/saving-the-potatoes-of-the-andes/> (27 June 2018).

Want to see more examples of how cooperatives contribute to the SDG 15?

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Sulawesi. With training from these partner organizations in livelihood strategies, community organizing, the technical aspects of forest management and wood processing, along with help to access international wood retailers seeking Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified products, the farmers produce certified sustainable teak for the international furniture market. KHJL received FSC certification in May 2005, with an initial membership of 196 individuals covering 152 hectares, which has grown to 744 members and an area of 750 hectares.⁵

The **Tree Growers' Cooperative Society** (TGCS) programme in India uses the cooperative model to establish tree plantations on village commonlands with active involvement of the local community, in order to achieve India's goal of increasing tree cover in the country. The TGCS members are provided long-term leases for these plantations. In 2007, there were 548 tree growers' cooperatives. In the Ajmer district of Rajasthan, India, interviewed community members noted that the cooperatives are important to preserving village commonlands that serve as refuge for local flora and fauna.⁶



A new initiative in the Santa Cruz Mountains of the United States is organizing landowners into a cooperative that pays them to implement sustainable forestry practices. Supported by the Sempervirens Fund, the **Santa Cruz Mountains Carbon Cooperative** aims to increase the carbon sequestration of local redwoods and reduce wildfire risk. The cooperative generates, verifies and registers measurable carbon credits that can then be sold in the carbon market. These carbon credits are calculated based on an established protocol taking into account each property's unique characteristics and the forest management practices it implemented. The Santa Cruz Mountains Carbon Cooperative plans to sell the carbon credits to private companies at a negotiated price. The pilot project is planned for late 2018.⁷

Effective conservation of Nyungwe National Park in Rwanda requires meeting the needs of the surrounding communities, their abilities to benefit from the park and sustainable use of the national resources inside and outside the park. A set of cooperative enterprises that have both conservation and improved livelihoods elements were established around eco-tourism, including bee-keeping and handicrafts. In the past, wild fires caused by illegal honey harvesting destroyed more than 20 per cent of Nyungwe forest. The 15 beekeeping cooperatives, bringing more than 1,300 beekeepers from the communities around the national park, benefited from a revenue sharing scheme funded through a percentage of the proceeds coming from the national parks.⁸



⁵ Carla Ranicki, "A Source for Sustainable Teak", *Stories.coop*. Available from <http://stories.coop/stories/a-source-for-sustainable-teak/> (27 June 2018).

⁶ Sushil Saigal, Ganga Ram Dahal and Bhaskar Vira, *Cooperation in forestry: Analysis of forestry cooperatives in Rajasthan, India* (CIPOR, 2009). Available from http://www.cifor.org/tenure-reform/data/files/india/site_report/sr_india1.pdf

⁷ <https://sempervirens.org/protect-redwoods/santa-cruz-mountains-carbon-co-op/>

⁸ Peterson Tumwebaze, "Former poachers commit to protect Nyungwe National Park", *The New Times*, 13 January 2017. Available from <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/207042>



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About COPAC

COPAC is a multi-stakeholder partnership of global public and private institutions that promotes and advances people-centered, self-sustaining cooperative enterprises, guided by the principles of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – in all aspects of its work. The Committee's current members are the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Co-operative Alliance and the World Farmers' Organisation.

For more information, please visit
www.copac.coop.