



About Co-operative Farming

About the program

Co-operative Farming is a project delivered by the Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM) that will help Australian farmers, fishers and foresters to start, develop or expand a co-operative enterprise. The project will support a range of activities and provide resources including an advice and information hotline, a mentoring program, educational bursaries, business advice and professional services and interactive website with self-help tools and information about co-operatives.

The BCCM is Australia's peak body for co-operative and mutual enterprises. The activities and resources provided through the program are informed by leaders from the industry. BCCM has selected eleven farmers and growers from around the country with the experience of leading successful agricultural co-operatives. These farmers will be working with BCCM throughout the project as mentors and champions for new and aspiring co-operative ventures.

This project will build on the legacy of the Government's Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper initiative 'Farm Co-operatives and Collaboration (Farming Together) Pilot Program. This project was aimed at assisting farmers, fishers and forester to establish farm co-operatives and other collaborative business models.

The project provides:

- An advice and information hotline,
- a mentoring program,
- interactive website with tools, resources and online education modules,
- tailored workshops,
- a 10-episode livestream series (Co-operative Conversations) and
- access to co-operative education through educational bursaries.

You can find out more about the project at <https://coopfarming.coop/>

This project is funded by the Australian Government under the Starting Farm Co-operatives Program.

Working through COVID-19 disruption

The program has been adjusted so that we can deliver it online until social distancing restrictions are over. There will be an interactive website, video conferencing, phone calls and more in lieu of in-person learning in the immediate term. The COVID crisis makes it more important than ever that we strengthen co-operation in our communities, especially among primary producers, who have been hit hard not only by the drought and bushfires, but also the export restrictions resulting from coronavirus.

Project Envoys

Three Project Envoys (covering the 3 regions of Western Australia and NT; South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania; and NSW/ACT and Queensland) have been appointed to lead the industry and community engagement aspects of the Program. Their role will be involved in promoting the co-operative model to farmers and industry groups and listening to farmers to ensure the Project meets their needs.

The Envoys are:

- Simon Lane (ex-Almondco)
- Greg Wall AM (ex-Capricorn)
- Greg McNamara (Norco)

Co-operative Champions

Eight Champions have been appointed to the Co-operative Farming Project. These mentors with a demonstrated track record in running successful agricultural co-operatives will engage with farmers and farm groups through facilitated information sessions and workshops and one-on-one communication to inspire, support and guide them through their co-op formation. Not only will these farm co-operative champions help farmers and fishers to start and grow their co-operative businesses, their work will also contribute to the quality of educational resources developed and long-term capacity building in regional communities.

The Champions are:

- Brett Kelly (Oz Group) - www.ozgroupcoop.com.au
- Stephen Thandi (Oz Group) - www.ozgroupcoop.com.au
- Doriana Mangili (Sweeter Banana Co-operative) www.sweeterbanana.com
- Natalie Browning (CBH Group) www.cbh.com.au
- Basil Lenzo (Geraldton Fisherman's Co-op) brolos.com.au
- Simon Stahl (NCMC) ncmc-co.com.au
- Wally Newman (CBH Group) www.cbh.com.au
- John Seccombe (NCMC) - ncmc-co.com.au

About the *Co-operative Conversations Series*

Co-operative Conversations is a livestream series featuring farmers and producers who are successfully using co-operative farming business models to transform their business and communities.

The ten-episode, fortnightly series will be released on June 17 and run until October 23. It will be available online at <https://coopfarming.coop/episodes/>

Hosted by renowned agricultural journalist Pete Lewis, the series showcases candid conversations and the real-life experiences of Australia's farming frontline. Through a range of interviews and roundtables, primary producers and the businesses they work with will get a closer look at co-operative business models in the face of a challenge or crisis, where the model does and doesn't succeed, and just how relevant and transformational it can be. The series will delve into key issues facing primary producers such as export and trade, access to finance, supply chain resilience and embracing technological innovation.

More information about the series is available here: <https://bccm.coop/co-operative-conversations-new-series-hears-the-real-stories-from-the-farming-frontline/>

Why co-ops?

Australian Agricultural co-ops are 100 per cent owned by Australian farmers. This means they work in the interest of farmers, rather than external shareholders. Co-operatives help to keep Australian farmers independent while improving their access to markets. Farmers in co-operatives can share supply costs, such as transport of goods. The business model also helps to support smaller farmers and fishermen to work together to compete with larger businesses.

Co-ops return profits to the farmers and give them a better deal at the farm gate. This helps those living off the land to preserve their way of life and to keep Australia's regional communities strong.

Australian co-ops are owned by Australians, support Australian food security and provide export income to local farmers, helping to contribute to the national economy.

Fast facts

Co-operatives are active in all parts of Australia's agricultural economy, helping farmers to compete in ways that they could not do alone. There are co-operatives for grain crops, livestock, dairy, horticulture, fishing and forestry. Co-operatives also support agricultural logistics through farm supply co-ops and irrigation mutuals. Across Australia, there are 229 agri-business co-operatives, 189 of which are involved in farming, fishing or forestry and 40 irrigation co-operatives.

These 229 co-operatives comprise almost 20,000 individual members, which are each separate agricultural businesses. They can be a family farm of thousands of hectares, a fisher with one or more vessels or an individual grower member of an irrigation co-operative.

- Co-operatives handle and store 40 per cent of our grain
- Package and export 40 per cent of our blueberries
- Process and market 60 per cent of our almonds
- Process and export most of our Western Rock Lobster fishery
- In dairy and meat processing, co-operatives represent the remaining Australian producer-owned firms

Website, social media and media enquiries

Website: coopfarming.coop **Facebook:** Co-operative Farming **Twitter:** @CoopFarming **Instagram:** @CoopFarming

Media enquiries: Steph Newman media@bccm.coop 0432 290 244

Co-op case studies

- [Co-operative Bulk Handling \(CBH\)](#) is Australia's largest co-operative, owned and controlled by around 4,000 Western Australian grain growers with a turnover above \$4 billion. It connects wheat producers with global markets. The co-operative structure keeps costs low and ensures profits are reinvested to serve the strategic interests of the farmers. CBH Group farmers collectively produce 40% of the annual domestic wheat crop.
- [Norco Co-operative](#), owned by 200 dairy farms and with a turnover of more than \$500 million, produces milk, cheese and other dairy products for the east coast market.
- [The Sweeter Banana Co-operative](#) was formed by a group of West Australian banana growers in 1993. The co-op set about developing a recognisable brand so that Perth consumers could identify and purchase their banana of choice, the Carnarvon Sweeter Banana.
- [Mountain Milk Co-operative](#) is a new farmer-owned co-operative that has been established in Victoria's North East. Founded initially by four farming families, Mountain Milk's purpose is to create value for its members.
- [Oz Group](#) is a soft fruit business, formed in 2001 as a partnership between four Coffs Coast fruit growers. It became a co-operative in 2013 and today has 120 members growing blueberries, raspberries and blackberries on the NSW Coffs Coast.
- [Geraldton Fishermen's Cooperative](#) is owned by Western Australian rock lobster fishers. It supplies premium-quality Western Rock Lobster to customers across the globe.
- [Western Australian Meat Marketing Co-operative Limited \(WAMMCO\)](#) is a fully accredited export meat processing facility located 277km south east of Perth in Katanning.
- [Yolla Producers](#) was established in May 1977 by a handful of farmers from Yolla in North West Tasmania. Yolla is a buyer's group for primary producers which supplies a full range of rural merchandise and supplies.
- [AlmondCo](#) was created as a grower co-operative and still proudly counts more than 85 per cent of all almond growers in Australia as contributing members.
- [Lenswood Apples](#) is a major Australian food producer providing for the storage, packaging and marketing of apples. Established in 1933 by a group of 39 growers, Lenswood initially focused on storage, enabling growers to store more apples to sell in better markets.
- [Marquis Macadamias](#) is wholly owned by over 180 macadamia grower-shareholders in NSW and Queensland. It is the largest and most successful macadamia processor in the world with processing plants in Bundaberg Queensland and Lismore in Northern NSW, together capable of processing 35,000 tonnes of macadamias each year.
- [The Limestone Coast Fishermen's Co-operative Limited \(LCFC\)](#) was formed and registered in South Australia in 2018. The LCFC is a licensed fish processor in South Australia and is an exporter of live Southern Rock Lobster to China.
- [Northern Co-operative Meat Company \(NCMC\)](#) is Australia's largest meat processing co-operative and has been running since 1933. It is 100 per cent owned by its 1,000 members – made up of graziers, pork producers and operators – and it employs more than 900 people across three sites in Casino and Booyong, NSW.
- [Coleambally Irrigation Co-operative Limited \(CICL\)](#) is a member owned co-operative that supplies irrigation and corporate services to its members and customers. CICL is situated in the Murrumbidgee valley in the NSW Riverina. It provides irrigation and drainage services to nearly 500 farms owned by 350 businesses and has 295 members.
- [Genetics Australia Co-operative](#) is Australia's largest artificial breeding supplier, supplying half of the genetics used by Australian dairy farmers.
- [Mahogany Processors Co-op](#), trading as Mahogany NQ, is a new co-operative formed during the Farming Together program that demonstrates the potential for farmers to secure diversified income streams while increasing stored carbon and reducing salt encroachment.