



Co-operative Farming 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 24,000 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.

By the numbers:

- 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

How co-operatives fit into Australian agri-business

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.

Grain co-operatives provide a wide range of services for individual grain farmers. From seed and fertiliser supply to securing the best crop price and shipping to markets, these co-ops are vital to individual farmers. The largest single co-operative in Australia is Co-operative Bulk Handling, which handles and markets grain crops from nearly 4,000 farms.

Livestock co-operatives help farmers to produce some of the best quality meat products in the world. Beef, lamb, pork, chicken and other animals are reared on individual farms and brought to market by the co-operatives. The animals are processed in the co-operative facilities, where they are prepared for shipment to markets across Australia and overseas.

Dairy co-operatives help to ensure that farmers get a fair farm gate price for the milk their herds produce. Milk volumes are combined from individual farms for processing and packaging for markets. Milk, cream and cheese products are manufactured to add value to the raw materials, supplying major supermarkets and overseas markets and returning the profit from this production to the farmer owners.

Fruit and vegetable co-operatives help growers from all parts of Australia to get their produce onto supermarket shelves. All parts of the logistics process from the farm to packaging facilities are conducted by the co-op. Co-operatives also provide scientific support on crop maximising technology, developing new varieties, storage and pest control.

Fishing co-operatives play a significant part in supporting Australia's commercial fishing fleet. Fishers may own just a single vessel but through the co-operative they are able to combine their catch and access processing and marketing services to supply their own fisher owned brands. The co-op helps them to get their produce into global seafood markets.

Forestry co-operatives help individual foresters to process, market and sell their timber and timber products in the global marketplace. Farm forestry tree plantings could become a larger part of the Australian farm landscape. Wood supply from small landholders has a long and successful history in New Zealand and Scandinavia and could be a major positive step for Australian farmers.

Farm supplies co-operatives supply a full range of rural merchandise and supplies to Australian farmers, helping to minimise input costs and secure the supply chain. They have developed their range of services to include agronomist services to advise on livestock production, introducing new technology, crop maximisation and a full service of water trading.

Irrigation co-operatives supply local growers with irrigation water and in many cases also distribute stock and garden water to blocks in the community. These co-ops have often been created from a transfer from Government ownership. A co-operative is an ideal vehicle for ensuring that the business remains true to its purpose of providing efficient and equitable water supplies at the lowest cost possible.

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 programme that demonstrates the potential for farmers to secure diversified income streams while increasing stored carbon and reducing salt encroachment.