



NCG Contributions Report for 2021

Food co-ops have tasked their national business services cooperative, National Co+op Grocers (NCG) with the following advocacy priorities:

- [Cooperative Business](#)
- [Inclusive Economies](#)
- [Racial Equity](#)
- [Food Justice](#)
- [Local Food and Farming](#)
- [Organic Certification](#)
- [Climate Action](#)
- [Environmental Responsibility](#)
- [Engaged Citizens, Vibrant Communities](#)

In addition to federal policy work and operational support for co-ops in these areas, NCG also works to address priorities through direct financial contributions on behalf of food co-ops to complementary organizations that can amplify their influence.

Agricultural Justice Project

Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) administers [Food Justice Certification](#), widely regarded as the most rigorous standard for domestic fair trade. Certification promotes fair wages and benefits for farmworkers, among other social and economic criteria, and helps farmers communicate their values in the marketplace. NCG contributed to AJP's social justice fund, money reserved to provide free certification and technical assistance to farms that meet criteria for certification and demonstrate financial need.

CCMA (U-Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives)

The [CCMA conference](#) is an annual event, held since 1956, that brings together managers, directors and supporters of food cooperatives from throughout the U.S. and features tours, plenary sessions, workshops, breakouts and ample networking sessions. In 2021, NCG increased its sponsorship to assist with the unique challenges of producing an interactive virtual conference.

Columinate

[Columinate](#) is a national consulting cooperative serving mission-driven organizations including food co-ops and others. In 2021, NCG provided financial support for their Cooperative Cafés, which bring together top leadership of food co-ops for a day of strategic conversations designed to build shared understanding of key issues facing food co-ops. NCG's financial support also continued to support Columinate's GM compensation database and its co-op-focused job board.



Co+op Forest

Since 2012, NCG has partnered with nonprofit [PUR Projet](#) to offset carbon emissions generated by staff travel and office utility use for the previous year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NCG's travel and utility use in 2020 was very low but given the urgency of the climate crisis, we chose to fund reforestation at an amount comparable to past years. In 2021, NCG [funded the planting](#) of 3,000 rainforest trees in the Mato Grosso region of Brazil. Planting tropical trees benefits the entire planet, as tropical trees reach maturity quickly, allowing them to store more carbon over their lifetimes. NCG has planted and/or protected 1.8 million trees since 2012, known as "[Co+op Forest](#)."

Cooperative Development Foundation

The [Cooperative Development Foundation](#) is a development nonprofit that promotes self-help and mutual aid in community, economic and social development through cooperative enterprise. Through its funds, fiscal sponsorships and fundraising, CDF makes grants and loans that foster cooperative development in the U.S. and abroad. In 2021, NCG increased its sponsorship given the induction of staff member Karen Zimbelman into the [Cooperative Hall of Fame](#).

Federation of Southern Cooperatives

The U.S. continues to struggle socially and economically with the COVID-19 pandemic and data shows us that the pandemic has so far taken a [higher toll on the Black community](#) than non-Hispanic white adults across a range of outcomes. In response, NCG continued our support of the [Federation of Southern Cooperatives'](#) Land Assistance Fund Food Box Program, an initiative connecting Black farmers in the Southern U.S. with area families that are facing food insecurity.

First Nations Development Institute

NCG's advocacy guidelines acknowledge all people's rights to food sovereignty: nutritious and culturally appropriate foods produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and the right of communities to define their own food and agriculture systems. In 2021, we initiated a partnership with [First Nations Development Institute](#) (FNDI), an Indigenous-led nonprofit that has been fundraising to fund development projects, including those focused on food sovereignty, for indigenous communities in the U.S. since 1980. NCG's donation supports their [Nourishing Native Foods & Health program](#).

Food Co-op Initiative

[Food Co-op Initiative](#) is a nonprofit dedicated to providing targeted resources to help support the number and success of new start-up food co-ops. NCG is a founding member of FCI and has provided annual financial and technical support to FCI for over ten years. In addition to basic organizational funding, NCG contributed to the "This Could Be Ours" publication meant to provide visual inspiration to start-up food co-ops.

International Cooperative Alliance

NCG maintains a direct membership in the [International Cooperative Alliance](#), which works to unite, represent and serve the common interests and goals of cooperatives worldwide with over 1 billion cooperative members. Beyond annual dues, NCG provided sponsorship for the [ICA](#)



[World Cooperative Congress](#) and the [International Cooperative Entrepreneurship Think Tank](#) (ICETT), a group formed to offer strategic thinking on the cooperative business model as a key differentiator for entrepreneurial competitiveness and to strengthen cooperatives' business performance. In addition, NCG contributed to a special appeal by the ICA to raise money for cooperatives in India and Nepal pivoting to deal with extreme emergencies in their local communities caused by the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus.

Land Justice Fund

The [Land Justice Fund](#) is a small regional fund established to help finance establishment of stable access to plots of land that can be used for urban agriculture, especially for people of African ancestry. In 2021, NCG donated in recognition of founder Duron Chavis' contributions to NCG's Spring Meeting.

Mileston Cooperative Association

NCG made contributions to [Mileston Cooperative Association](#), a grassroots network of Black farmers primarily located in Western Holmes County, Mississippi. The association is a member of NCG partner, the [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#). NCG's contributions funded efforts to develop a strategic plan, fund the co-op's youth training program, and determine feasibility of establishing a supply chain connection between the co-op's farmers and NCG food co-ops.

National Black Food and Justice Alliance

The [National Black Food and Justice Alliance](#) (NBFJA) represents hundreds of Black urban and rural farmers, organizers and land stewards in the U.S. working together to protect Black land ownership and food sovereignty. In 2021, NCG contributed in support of NBFJA's [self-determining food economies](#) platform, which includes the utilization of alternative economic models like cooperatives.

National Cooperative Business Association – NCBA/CLUSA International

NCG is an active member in [NCBA CLUSA](#), the national apex association of U.S. cooperatives founded in 1916. NCBA's work is focused on bringing together and advocating for all cooperatives to build a more inclusive economy by empowering people to have a greater say in their futures and more equitable access to economic opportunities. NCG's contribution in 2021 included annual dues as well as sponsorship of NCBA/CLUSA's [Co-op IMPACT conference](#).

National Farm to School Network

Food co-ops' vision for community food security and empowerment is well-aligned with the mission and work of [National Farm to School Network](#) (NFSN), a nonprofit information, advocacy and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing, school gardens and food and agriculture education into schools, early care and education settings. In 2021, NCG continued to support NFSN's call to action to see "100% of communities hold power in a racially just food system by 2025" by sponsoring a series of free, public "coffee chat conversations" on topics related to building equity in our food system on Facebook. They are now available on [NFSN's YouTube channel](#).



National Organic Coalition

Many NCG food co-ops played a vital role in creating a market for organic food and participated in advocating for the federally regulated system of organic certification that exists today. NCG continues this tradition as a [founding member and active participant](#) of the [National Organic Coalition](#), a national alliance of organizations working to provide a “Washington voice” for farmers, ranchers, consumers, environmentalists and industry members involved in organic agriculture. NCG pays annual dues to the organization and in 2021, continued to invest in NOC’s efforts to [improve racial equity](#) in the organic sector.

Neighboring Food Co-op Association

The [Neighboring Food Co-op Association](#) (NFCA) is a regional federation of food co-ops working together toward a shared vision of a thriving regional economy rooted in a healthy, just and sustainable food system and a vibrant community of cooperative enterprise. In 2021, NCG made a sponsorship contribution to NFCA’s Annual Meeting in celebration of its 10th anniversary.

Organic Farming Research Foundation

Even though the market for organic products seems well-established, organic agriculture is disproportionately underfunded compared to conventional, industrial agriculture. Research is important because it helps to grow scientific understanding of the benefits of organic agriculture, leads to improvements in farming methods and provides valuable data that lawmakers can use to inform agricultural and food policy. In 2021, NCG contributed to [Organic Farming Research Foundation](#) (OFRF)’s research grant fund which prioritized funding for research proposals from BIPOC farmers and ranchers as well as early-career (untenured) university researchers.

Organic Trade Association

NCG is a member of the [Organic Trade Association](#), providing an organic industry retailer perspective on behalf of its food co-ops and the communities they serve. OTA is a membership-based organization focused on representing organic manufacturers and producers in Washington, D.C. In addition to paying annual dues, in 2021 NCG contributed to OTA’s new [Diversity and Entrepreneurship Fund](#), GRO Organic [program development](#), continuous improvement and accountability policy work as well as climate change advocacy.

Shared Capital Cooperative

[Shared Capital Cooperative](#) (SCC) is a national community development financial institution (CDFI) loan fund that connects co-ops with capital to build economic democracy. Working with capital invested by the cooperative sector and its allies, SCC provides financing for the expansion and startup of cooperatively owned businesses and housing throughout the United States. NCG contributed in support of the 2021 SCC Annual Meeting.

Up and Coming Conference (Indiana Cooperative Development Center)

The [Up and Coming Conference](#) is an annual event designed to provide technical and networking support for start-up food co-op groups. It is co-sponsored by the [Indiana Cooperative Development Center](#) and [Food Co-op Initiative](#). In 2021, NCG sponsored this event.