

# FOOD CO-OPERATIVES



LIFESTYLE

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### WHY?

Increasing numbers of churches are setting up food co-operatives. Through these home-grown initiatives, people can get reasonably priced good food and have more control over the source.

A food co-op is simply where people get together to buy food in bulk and redistribute it amongst their members at a fair price. Sometimes these are an extension of a food bank (see longer reads) and sometimes an opportunity for members to access both Fairtrade and organic food at affordable prices.

Community run shops, a development of food co-operative models, are springing up around the UK, enabling people to access ethical products locally.

### HOW?

Setting up a food co-operative will take a bit of planning as you'll need to think through who you are targeting, how the administration will work, where the food will be stored and whether you will include other products. Sustainweb produces a toolkit with an extensive menu of resources including all-important information about the legal requirements: <https://www.sustainweb.org/foodcoopstoolkit/>

Find out about the co-operative movement. Co-operatives are people-centred enterprises driven by communal values not just a profit motive.

The UK's 'Co-op' shop has been around for decades and like all co-operatives has shared ownership: <https://www.co-operative.coop/about-us/what-is-a-coop>

Investigate ethical and organic wholesalers through a web search. There are several wholesale distributors and some who run membership schemes for individuals to join:

<https://www.infinityfoodswholesale.coop/>

<https://www.suma.coop/>



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<https://www.zerowastebulkfoods.co.uk/>

<https://www.goodclub.co.uk/how-zero-waste-works>

*Please note: Eco Church cannot recommend suppliers. These have been included simply as an indication of those available.*

### LONGER READS & OTHER RESOURCES

It's not just food that can be shared through co-ops. Bike repairs, community shops, education and even football clubs. Might you or your church start, or participate in, one in another sector? <https://www.uk.coop/directory>

Food banks have become a lifeline to many families in the 2020s with the arrival of coronavirus (COVID-19). They collect in-date, non-perishable food which they sort and store to distribute. Professionals and local councils identify people in need and provide them with vouchers to access the food bank. The food bank model, used by the Trussell Trust, was inspired by a verse from Matthew's gospel: 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was in prison and you visited me.' (Matthew 25:35-36): <https://www.trusselltrust.org/>

### CASE STUDIES

When the local fruit and vegetable shop faced closure way back in 1997, Downs Baptist Church in Brighton took it over. The shop offers healthy food but is also a place to connect within the community where people can visit, talk and be listened to: <https://downsbaptistchurch.org/community/greengrocers/>

St Barnabas Church in Oldham were prompted to create a 'food pantry' style food co-op during the Covid-19 pandemic to support local people in making healthy food choices. See the separate case study.