

Responsible

Retailing:

30

**Years
On**

**co
op**

Now vs. then

1994
57%

UK shoppers are more concerned
about ethical issues vs. five years ago

2004
64%

UK shoppers are more concerned
about ethical issues vs. five years ago

2024
72%

UK shoppers are more concerned
about ethical issues vs. five years ago

The rise of **responsible retailing**

In 1994, Co-op undertook first-of-its-kind research, asking tens of thousands of UK shoppers for their views on the ethics of the food industry.



The message was clear: consumers couldn't count on the food industry to give them the full facts about the goods they were buying. They believed they had the right to know how products were made, what was in them, and their impact on people and the environment.



Now, 30 years on, the consumer landscape looks very different, but shoppers are still hungry for great quality food, produced ethically, with care for people and the planet.



As a food industry we've made a lot of progress, but rightly shoppers are calling on us to do more, with honesty and integrity at the core of our decision making.



In 2024 we engaged with over 10,000 UK consumers to further understand the challenges consumers face when purchasing and consuming food, their household motivations to be more sustainable, and where they want to see the food industry go next.



Co-op member-owners play a critical role in our responsible retailing journey, helping us shape our views on big issues, challenging us to do more and getting involved with opportunities to put new, more sustainable products on our shelves.

Three decades of doing things differently

As a responsible retailer, Co-op has a long history of acting on the issues our member-owners and customers care most about. This approach has led to ambitious commitments, leadership positions and industry firsts across ethics and sustainability.



1994

Co-op surveys 30,000 people across the UK for their views on the ethics of the food industry



1995

Co-op is the first retailer to provide a freephone and freepost address on products to make it easy for consumers to find out more about their products



1997

Co-op's landmark 'Lie of the Label' report identified food product labels were misleading consumers and published a set of retailer guidelines for openness and honesty



1999

Co-op is the only retailer to label wine ingredients, a move that was technically illegal at the time, putting consumers interests before the law



2000

Co-op is the first to launch an own brand Fairtrade product, our Co-operative Milk Chocolate bar, in collaboration with Fairtrade pioneers Divine Chocolate



2004

Co-op brand household, health and beauty products are independently certified by Cruelty Free International, an endorsement of Co-op's strict non-animal testing policies



2017

Co-op make the rest of its own brand fresh meat 100% British, including as ingredients, and in 2018 move all frozen own brand products to 100% British meat



2014

All Co-op brand fresh beef, chicken, ham*, pork sausage, turkey, milk and eggs are 100% British
*excluding continental



2011

We believe healthy products should be accessible to everyone and we committed to ensuring that our reduced and light alternatives are no more expensive than standard equivalents



2008

Co-op launch the first compostable carrier bag, specifically designed to be used as a food waste caddy liner, and in 2021 we rolled these out to all stores



2007

All Co-op brand eggs are free range, and from 2010 eggs used as an ingredient in own brand products are also free range



2021

All Co-op brand packaging is easy to recycle either at kerbside or through Co-op's soft plastics recycling scheme



2022

Co-op make an industry first commitment to source 100% South African wine as Fairtrade, including both own-brand and branded



2024

Co-op celebrates raising £20 million over 15 years for The One Foundation for water, sanitation and hygiene projects globally through sales of own brand water, reaching over 3 million people



2024

Co-op is first UK retailer to move its entire range of fresh cut roses to be 100% Fairtrade, in a major milestone following 100% Fairtrade commitments on Co-op brand chocolate, tea, coffee, bananas, cocoa, and bagged sugar



2024

All Co-op brand fresh chicken is bred with a lower stocking density, giving the birds 20% more space to roam

Top of minds today

Co-op engaged with over 10,000 UK consumers* to understand the importance of ethics and sustainability in purchasing decisions and in the home, and how we can continue to be leaders and pioneers.

Levels of concern over food and drink, where it comes from and how it's produced has seen a sharp increase since 1994.

*Co-op member-owners, Co-op customers, non-Co-op customers and NISA customers

What's driving the concern?



Looking after the planet, being mindful of climate change, recycling, and food waste.



Fairtrade and whether producers are treated and paid fairly.



The importance of buying British, with concerns around animal welfare and pollution.



Plastic waste and packaging, especially single-use plastics and materials ending up in landfill and the ocean.



The health benefits of a product, including the amount of fat, sugar and salt.

Concern is on the rise but consumers now expect businesses to do the right thing and make ethics and sustainability a part of doing business.

Shoppers are taking many factors into consideration when shopping for food and drink

Consumers have a thirst for knowledge and want to know more about where their food comes from, its health benefits, packaging, and provenance.

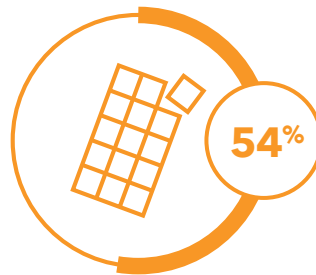
Factors taken into consideration



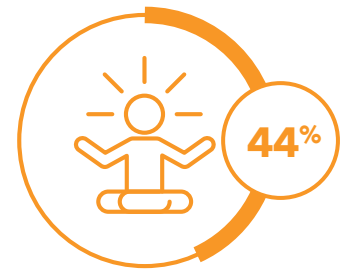
Buying only the food I need to avoid food waste at home



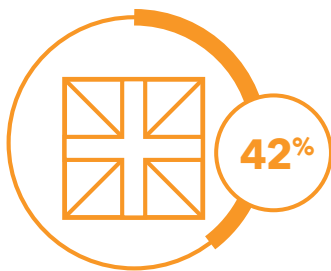
Clear, honest food labelling



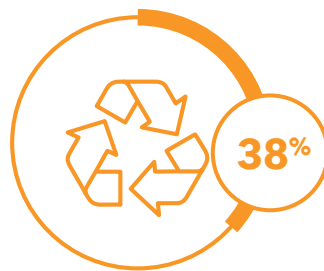
The amount of fat, sugar or salt



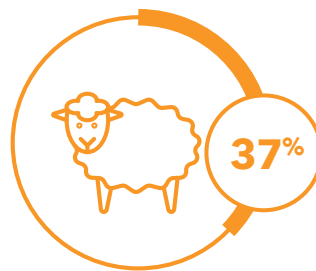
The health benefits of a product



Whether products are British



If a product has recyclable packaging



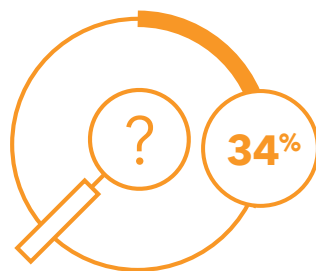
The animal welfare behind the products



The amount of plastic packaging on a product



If products are locally sourced



Where food comes from and how its produced



"I am keen to learn more about shopping ethically and would like to share this information with family members who are less informed. I believe that sustainability is very important in various aspects of life."
Co-op member-owner

% respondents taking factors into consideration when shopping for food and drink.

Spotlight on food waste

Avoiding food waste at home is one of the most important considerations for shoppers right now when purchasing food and drink. The UK is experiencing a cost of living crisis and consumer behaviour is evolving to reduce waste and cost. As the global climate crisis continues, consumers are more passionate about taking action, and reducing food waste at home can have a huge impact, comprising between 8-10% of all global greenhouse gas emissions.

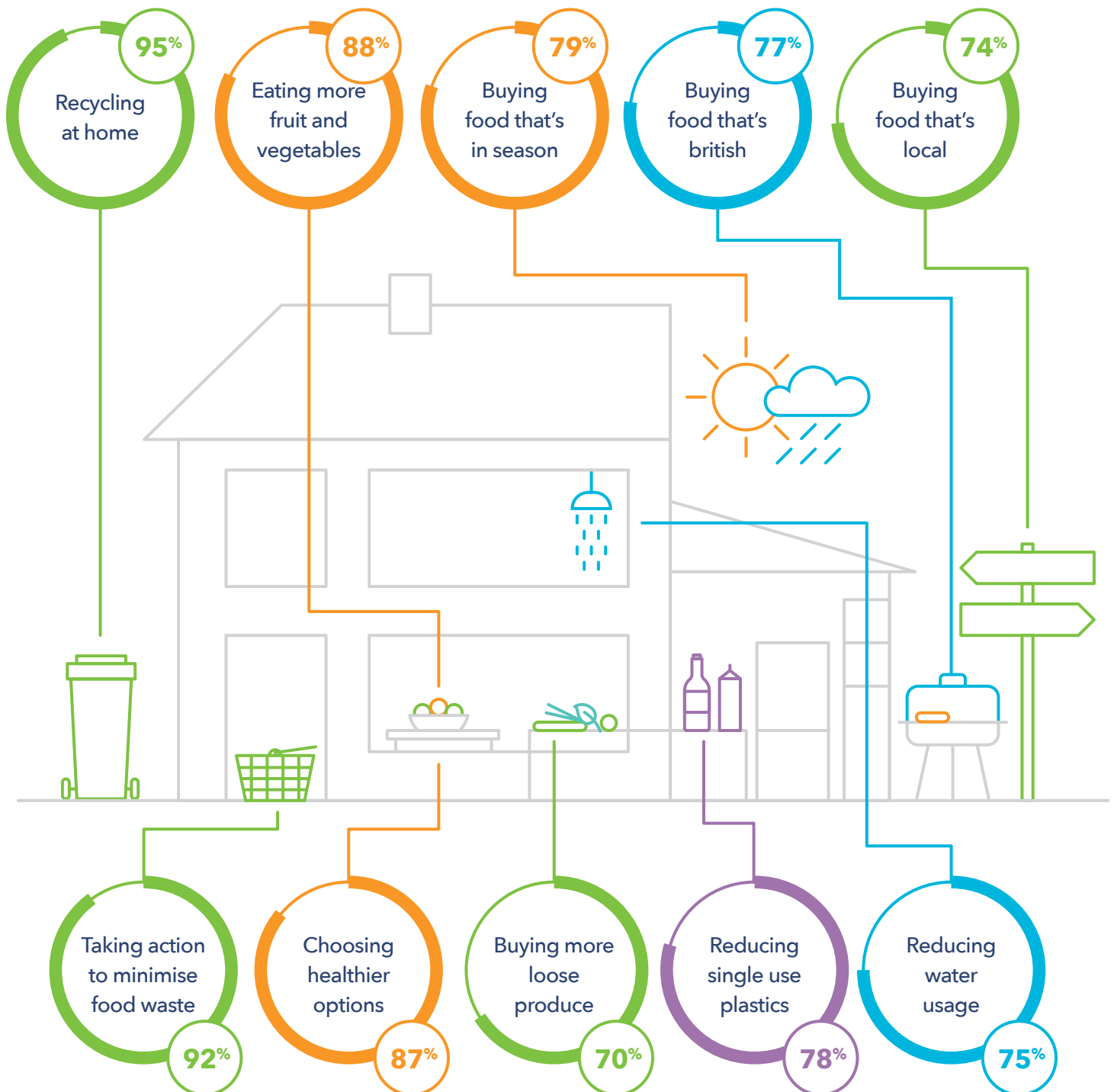


Shoppers are already acting on ethics and sustainability within their homes

Respondents cited recycling at home, minimising food waste and eating more fruit and vegetables as their most common behaviours in households.



Actions already taken in households



% respondents taking actions within the household

Co-op case study

Co-op member-owners have been the driving force behind Co-op's soft plastic recycling scheme, enabling customers from across the UK to recycle soft plastics at their local Co-op store, and in turn help tackle the confusing postcode lottery of soft plastic kerbside collections.



Soft plastics are lightweight plastics that often cannot be placed in recycling points at home such as plastic film lids on soft fruit punnets, plastic crisp packets and chocolate wrappers. Since its launch in 2020, the popularity of the scheme has meant we've increased the number and size of the collection points, collecting more plastic material to recycle.



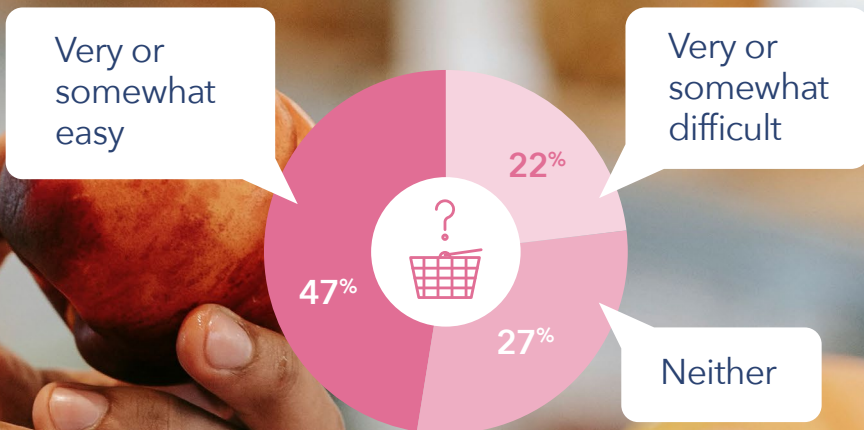
Shopping through the generations

Behaviours differed between the generations, with 60% of young shoppers (age 18-34) willing to pay extra for ethical and sustainable products and are more likely to partake in behaviours such as using reusables or following a plant-based diet. Older shoppers (age 55+) are more concerned about quality and provenance, buying food that's British, local and in season.

Shoppers are keen to find out more about their food and drink products and make sustainable choices while on the go



How easy or difficult is it to make sustainable decisions whilst shopping for groceries?



Information is key to making healthy and sustainable choices, and nearly half of our respondents said it's very or somewhat easy to make sustainable choices.

Honest labelling has always been important for shoppers

Back in 1994 our survey found consumers don't want to be misled with exaggerated claims of 'environmental friendliness' and want labels to be clear and informative. Shoppers continue to demand clear messaging to make healthy and sustainable choices easy.



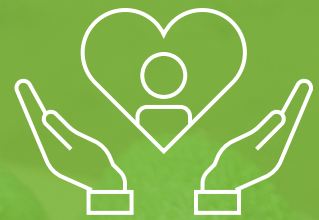
"Co-op makes it easy to shop ethically by providing information on product labels and having an ethical sourcing policy, so it takes little effort to look for ethical products and it's easy to do."

Co-op member-owner

Shopping through the generations

Significantly more likely to find making sustainable decisions easy, younger shoppers are more likely to read all of the label information and are the keenest to find out more. The disparities between age groups lessens when it comes to ease of finding a product in store, which is considered to be important across all generations.

Shoppers are taking health into their own hands



What is motivating shoppers?

Health is the number one motivator for consumers. With greater transparency, product labelling and armed with knowledge of what's good for us, consumers are motivated to shop with health front of mind.



"I care about living a healthy and sustainable life which I would want my family and friends to enjoy too." **Co-op member-owner**

Co-op is committed to inspiring healthy, sustainable diets.

At a time when household budgets are stretched and we all have busy lives, it can sometimes be hard to make healthy meal choices. Co-op is committed to providing accessible and affordable healthy meals, increasing the amount of fruit and vegetables in Co-op brand products and reducing the amount of salt, sugar and calories. Inspiring healthy changes in our communities is paramount and we provide education in store, online and through our Co-op membership activity to encourage healthier swaps.



Co-op has a track record of taking action on health, and back in 1992 Co-op was the first UK retailer to launch customer-friendly nutrition labelling with the Coronary Prevention Group, telling consumers whether a product was high, medium, or low in each major nutrient.

Co-op member-owners leading the way

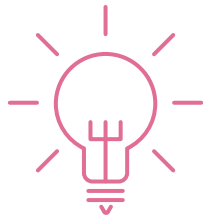
We're one of the world's largest consumer co-operatives and currently over five million member-owners own our business, driving impact on how we serve our communities.



Member-owners have been pivotal in our responsible retailing journey. Whether championing our ethical credentials, challenging us to do more or putting their voice behind campaigns, member-owners have been at the heart of what's been achieved over the past 30 years.

Learn:

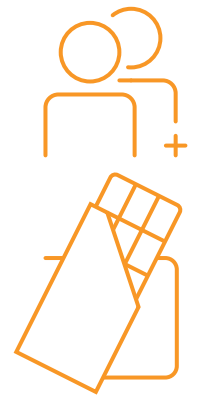
Millions of member-owners have joined in to learn more about responsible retailing issues.



From palm oil myth busting to sourcing seafood sustainably, we're educating member owners so they can feel informed and confident in their shopping choices.

Choose:

Thousands of Co-op member-owners turn their hand to product design.



Helping us create new member-inspired products and packaging with a sustainable twist, voting for their favourite, including Irresistible Fairtrade chocolate bars and pulp packaging for fruit and vegetables.

Shape:

Members own our Co-op and have a voice to shape our strategy.



Thousands got involved to shape our climate commitments, working together to accelerate collective action on climate change.

Take Part:

Member-owners stand up and take part in things that matter to them.



Fairtrade continues to be important to member-owners and every Fairtrade Fortnight they come together to champion Fairtrade in stores and organise their own Fairtrade events.

Now our member-owners are calling on us to help them do even more. 85% of member-owners told us that they would like to play a part in promoting and supporting food ethics.

When asked how they want to take action, member-owners want to learn more about ethics and sustainability issues, share this information with their networks, and to be able to choose responsibly sourced products.



Co-op's Join In programme gives member-owners the opportunity to get involved with their Co-op.

Our responsible retailing fundamentals

We are proud to have strong Co-op brand standards across all our own brand products.

FOR EVERY LITRE SOLD OF OUR OWN BRAND STILL, SPARKLING OR FLAVOURED WATER,

3p is donated to The One Foundation and towards clean water and sanitation projects.

100% OF OUR CO-OP BRAND FRESH & FROZEN MEAT IS BRITISH, INCLUDING WHEN USED AS AN INGREDIENT.

We will only sell fresh meat, poultry and farmed fish from farmers working to approved farm assurance schemes.



We're committed to **SUPPORTING FRESH BRITISH PRODUCE** throughout the seasons.

ALL CO-OP BRAND FRESH CHICKEN IS BRED WITH A LOWER STOCKING DENSITY, GIVING THE BIRDS 20% MORE SPACE.



All our fresh pork supply, sausages, gammon and bacon **ARE 100% OUTDOOR-BRED FROM RSPCA ASSURED FARMS.**



ALL EGGS SOLD IN CO-OP STORES ARE FREE RANGE, including when used as an ingredient in Co-op brand products.



10%

OF CO-OP CHOCOLATE, TEA, COFFEE, BANANAS, ROSES, BAGGED SUGAR, AND COCOA WHEN USED AS AN INGREDIENT IS FAIRTRADE. WE ARE ALSO THE WORLD'S LARGEST SELLER OF FAIRTRADE WINE.



ALL CO-OP BRAND PACKAGING IS EASY TO RECYCLE at home or through film collection points in selected Co-op stores.



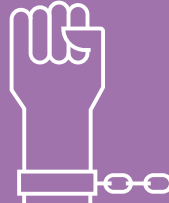
WE WILL NOT SELL BAGGED COMPOST CONTAINING PEAT IN OUR STORES.



OUR ETHICAL TRADE PROGRAMME

champions the best labour standards in our supply chains.

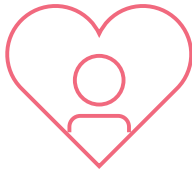
We are working to **TACKLE MODERN SLAVERY** and help victims of modern slavery rebuild their lives.



THERE ARE NO ARTIFICIAL COLOURS, FLAVOURINGS, OR FLAVOUR ENHANCERS in any of our products.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO HELPING CUSTOMERS LEAD HEALTHY LIVES

through the products we sell and the initiatives we are part of.



ALL OUR SEAFOOD IS SOURCED RESPONSIBLY, including both farmed and wild.



We take a responsible approach to **REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF SALT, SUGAR AND CALORIES IN CO-OP BRAND PRODUCTS.**



ALL CO-OP BRANDED COSMETICS & HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS are cruelty-free and Leaping Bunny approved.



We're committed to ensuring 100% of the soy we use will be **DEFORESTATION AND CONVERSION FREE BY 2025.**



WE'RE COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH OUR SUPPLIERS to minimise the risk of pesticide use and encourage the use of Integrated Pest Management.



WE ENSURE THAT THE WOOD AND PAPER USED IN OUR PRODUCTS

comes from a responsible source.



We have an ambitious climate plan, and we are committed to **REACHING NET ZERO GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS ACROSS CO-OP'S VALUE CHAIN BY 2040.**



100%

OF THE PALM OIL WE USE IN CO-OP

brand products is covered by Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) schemes.



Our continuing responsible retailing journey

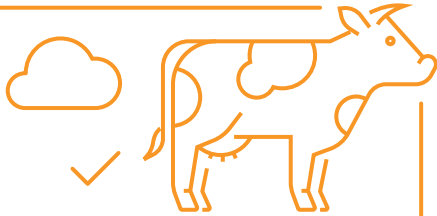
We are reaffirming our commitment to responsible retailing, where, together with our member-owners, we can deliver a **safe, healthy and sustainable food future.**



Co-op driving innovation



Beef Sustainability Pilot:



Recognising that beef has a high carbon footprint, we're collaborating with farmers across the United Kingdom to measure and reduce greenhouse gases. In partnership with our red meat supplier, Dunbia, we take this further with an innovative Beef Sustainability Pilot that rewards beef farmers for reducing their carbon intensity with verifiable actions.

1.5°C aligned Science-Based Targets:



We have committed to new and more ambitious climate targets, in line with the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi) Net-Zero Standard. These new targets are aligned to limiting global temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C and have been validated against the most ambitious designation available through the SBTi process.

Fairtrade Africa's Women's School of Leadership

As part of our commitment to Fairtrade cocoa, we have delivered funding to Fairtrade Africa's Women's School of Leadership programme in Côte d'Ivoire since 2017. The Leadership School helps women maximise their own potential and take on leadership roles in their producer organisations and communities. Participants have created community awareness sessions, established gender committees within their producer organisations, and set up additional income-generating activities.



Climate Justice & Fairtrade:



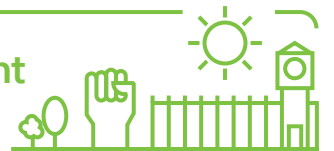
We're pledging our support for producers on the front line of the climate crisis, helping implement climate-smart farming techniques and promoting sustainable production and diversification. Co-op was recognised at the first Fairtrade Global Awards for our commitment to innovate and generate impact to tackle the climate crisis.

Water Security for People & Planet:



Whether it's too much water, too little water, or water that's polluted, water security is an issue impacting communities across the globe today. Co-op has raised £20 million over 15 years for The One Foundation for water, sanitation and hygiene projects globally, reaching over 3 million people. To celebrate Co-op held a parliamentary roundtable to launch Co-op's Water Security for People & Planet Report, highlighting the need for governments to prioritise water security urgently.

Political Engagement & Leadership:



Whilst we're working to reduce our environmental impact, we're advocating for strong political leadership through Co-op's Climate Justice Campaign. Co-op plays a key role bringing together ministers, business and finance leaders from across the economy to ensure that we're meeting our commitments to Net Zero and remain on target.

RSPB Peatland Restoration:



We're restoring hundreds of hectares of peatland in Mid Wales, Shetland and the Scottish Highlands, helping to turn them from a carbon source into a carbon sink and avoiding a huge contribution to climate change. Alongside, the RSPB Nature Neighbourhoods project is helping to bring communities together with local decision makers to make nature and climate action an essential part of future planning.

Shopping for change

30 years on ethics and sustainability concerns have reached an all-time high and shoppers are rightly demanding more from food retailers. They want access to healthy and sustainable products, produced with honesty, integrity, and care for people and the planet.

At Co-op, we make it easy for our customers to shop delicious products that have our robust ethics and sustainability standards baked in.

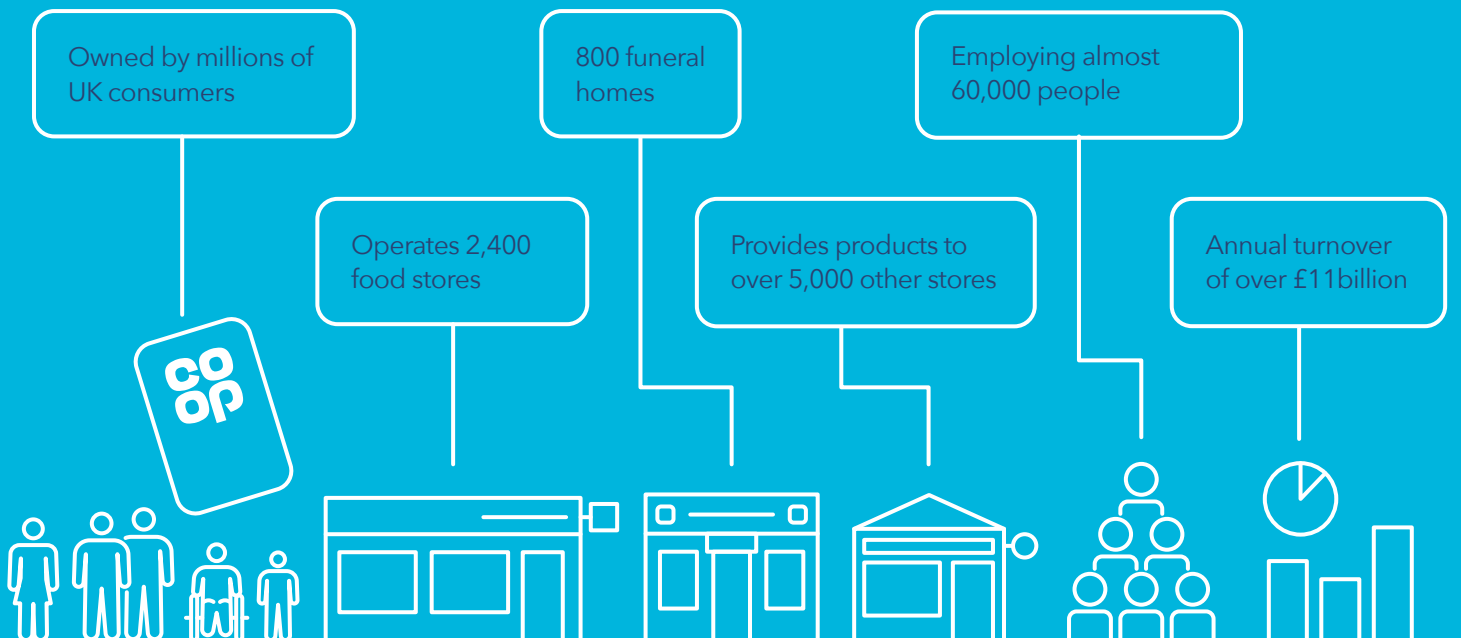
From bunches of Fairtrade bananas to 100% British meat in our own brand sandwiches and ready meals, our Co-op brand standards mean our customers can shop with ease for responsibly sourced, quality products.

We're committed to going even further on our responsible retailing journey, working together with our member-owners to provide opportunities to explore the big issues they care about and helping them take action in their households and communities. Thousands of member-owners have already taken part in shaping our plans and we're using this opportunity to set out how we co-operate for the next 30 years of responsible retailing.

About Co-op

Co-op is one of the world's largest consumer co-operatives with interests across food, funerals, insurance and legal services.

Owned by millions of UK consumers, the Co-op operates over 2,400 food stores, over 800 funeral homes and provides products to over 5,000 other stores, including those run by independent co-operative societies and through its wholesale business, Nisa Retail Limited. Employing almost 60,000 people, the Co-op has an annual turnover of over £11 billion and is a recognised leader for its social goals and community-led programmes. The Co-op exists to meet member-owners needs and stand up for the things they believe in.



www.coop.co.uk