



 cogeca

european agri-cooperatives

The voice of
European
agri-cooperatives



Cogeca has always been and remains the key organisation representing of agri-cooperative interests both in the EU and Europe in general. It has been recognised by the European institutions as the main representative body and indeed the voice of the entire agricultural and fisheries co-operative sector.

Our history

Cogeca was officially founded on 24 September 1959 as the General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in the European Community (later renamed the General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives in the European Union) by six member organisations from the then six Member States.

On 24 September 1962, Cogeca's secretariat joined with that of its sister organisation Copa, which represents European farmers.

Various rounds of EU enlargement have increased Cogeca's membership to a total of 35 members following the enlargements of 2004 and 2007. Today, Cogeca represents some 40,000 agricultural, agri-food, forestry and fishing cooperatives, employing approximately 660,000 people and with a global annual turnover in excess of 300 billion euros.

Since its beginnings, Cogeca has also represented fisheries cooperatives and cooperative ship-owners active in a wide range of areas such as victualling, vessel management and insurance, the fish trade and the marketing and processing of fish.

Our objectives

Cogeca enables agri- and fisheries cooperatives to have their political interests represented at a European level.

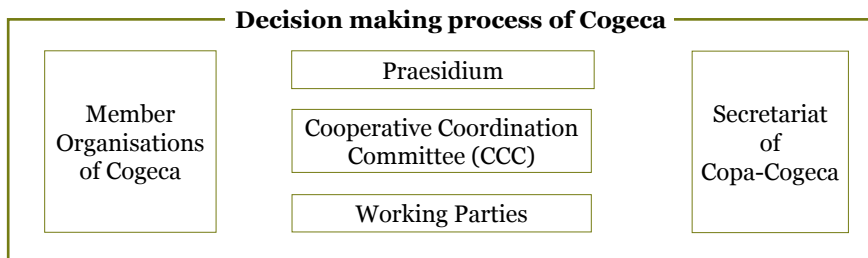
To this end, it has five central objectives:

1. Represent the general and specific interests of European agri-cooperatives in discussions with EU institutions and other socio-economic organisations, contributing to policy-making
2. Promote contacts and cooperation between agri-cooperatives in EU countries
3. Undertake legal, economic, financial, social or other studies of concern to cooperative agricultural and fisheries enterprises
4. Seek solutions of common interest
5. Maintain and develop relations with Copa and any other organisations working in the agricultural, economic or social fields at European and/or global level



Our decision-making process

Cogeca is more than a lobbying organisation, because it is based on fundamentally democratic principles. All our office-holders are elected by the Cogeca bodies and in turn by the members of their organisations.



Praesidium

The Praesidium is Cogeca's highest decision-making body. Its role is to represent Cogeca and set the general policy guidelines for the organisation. It meets around six times per year and brings together the representatives of all member organisations, normally at the President or Director-General level. Praesidium positions are drawn up jointly with Copa whenever they concern the agricultural sector as a whole.

Presidency

The Praesidium elects a President and four Vice-Presidents from amongst its members for a three-year term of office. The President and Vice-Presidents divide up their work on the basis of political dossiers and serve as Cogeca's highest-level representatives.

Cooperative Coordination Committee (CCC)

The CCC is a regular meeting of senior staff from the Cogeca member organisations. It serves as the main forum for discussing and exchanging new information, coordinates action and follows up decisions made by the Praesidium, whose meetings it also prepares.

Working Parties

Cogeca has more than 40 working parties, ranging from specific commodity issues to general questions. They consist of the respective experts from the member organisations. Most working parties are joint Copa-Cogeca bodies, although there is a small number of separate working parties as well (e.g. in fisheries).

Secretariat

The Secretariat assures the smooth and efficient running of the two organisations and implements decisions made by the Copa and Cogeca Praesidia. It has approximately 50 staff members from all around Europe and operates in six working languages: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Polish.



Cooperatives: the power of working together

While cooperation between farmers is nothing new, agri-cooperatives in their modern sense date back to the 19th century. Their role as **farmers' businesses** is unique, since they are simultaneously **owned by farmers** and **operated for them**. They are an extension of farming activity and, through their collective action and investments, gain power for farmers in the food chain and improve their competitive position. In so doing, they enable farmers to achieve results that they otherwise could not, e.g. by creating more value added, using better marketing instruments and making more efficient distribution networks available.

Critically, cooperatives are based on the principles of democratic member control, voluntary and open membership and solidarity. By closely working with and surrounded by nature, they also intrinsically understand the need for environmental sustainability. Agri-cooperatives are some of the leaders in environmentally-friendly production in Europe.

Being located in rural areas, and because their work is always based on the principle of *Concern for Community*, cooperatives are also key players in the field of rural development. They create jobs in rural communities both directly and indirectly, including in disadvantaged, less-favoured areas. As such, they drive economic growth and are key contributors to meeting the goals of the Lisbon Strategy.

Today, over 50% of all agricultural inputs such as fertilisers and plant protection products are provided by cooperatives. Over 60% of all agricultural products are purchased, processed and marketed by them.

Our members

For a full and up-to-date list of Cogeca's members, together with contact information in both Brussels and the Member States, please consult our website.

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