

Managing Competition Policy

Preamble: commitment to the values of the coop

Commitment to mission & vision statement

Vision

We envision a local food distribution system, which efficiently connects food buyers with food suppliers in the area of Grey Bruce. We envision a local economy that provides meaningful employment, enhances the environment and biodiversity, supports healthy living throughout the entire food chain, and vitalizes a food culture.

Mission

Consumers commit to supporting a local distribution system that provides access to food that is healthy for food buyers, supports a diverse environment, and provides fair wages to farmers and other food suppliers.

Producers commit to be considerate of consumer concerns when producing food, improving their environmental stewardship, in balance with production efficiency to provide food that is accessible to all.

As a community, we recognize that efficient distribution is required to maintain acceptable prices for producers and consumers. We commit to

- balancing the aspirations of consumers, producers, and co-op workers in a respectful manner and based on transparent communication
- Promoting education on food-related issues in the understanding that all parties deserve mutual respect,
- developing mechanisms that improve access to healthy, nutritious food for those who face barriers, due to constraints in mobility, money, time, skills, or awareness.

Commitment to high product quality

Product quality is continuously monitored and the supplier commits to continuous improvement, eventually in collaboration with the co-operative

Commitment to honesty in product claims

This co-op publicizes product distinction attributes (name of the producer, type of production practice) that relies on the honesty of the producer. Any false claims, especially if done with the intention to increase personal profits, will lead to immediate expulsion of the supplier.

Commitment to supporting the co-operative

Every supplier commits to _____ number of hours per year in support of the co-operative. While it is not necessary to contribute these hours in person, any substitute person should be capable of effectively addressing the needs of the coop.

Principles that govern the relationship between suppliers

1. Honoring seniority

The co-operative protects supplier members who have gained seniority.

Producers who have long been part of the coop and rely on the coop for their livelihood will enjoy preferential access to the distribution channel provided by the co-operative. The cooperative is open to accept new supplier members only under the condition that these new members respect and honor seniority at all times, in particular in difficult situations

- of personal difficulties,
- general economic downturn and a contracting market place,
- oversupply with products.

2. Protection against dumping prices

The co-operative protects supplier members against dumping prices.

Protection takes place in cases where new producers enter the market at significantly lower prices that do not reflect production costs, for example because

- the producer does not pay himself or his/her staff a dignity wage,
- prices are maintained through continuous external cash injections,
- prices are only realized through excessive reliance on externally provided investment capital, or
- other significant externalities that are in conflict with the co-ops mission and vision.

3. Encouragement of innovation

As part of its vision, the co-operative supports innovative approaches to production and management.

In order to promote new production methods that address the mission and vision of the coop better than the presently used methods, the cooperative can offer preferential market spaces to develop these techniques and get them ready for markets.

4. Encouragement of a vibrant young ecological farming sector

As part of its vision, the co-operative supports new producers that currently lack effective access to markets.

5. Recognition of fairness amongst all supplier members

Members of all seniority levels recognize that a cooperative can only function if decisions are taken in mutual respect. For example, a member who enjoys a a bumping crop cannot fully displace all other

vendors of the same product based on his seniority alone. Instead, he will seek alternative sales mechanisms while respecting the need for continuity of all members.

Mechanisms to balance these principles

Naturally, the four principles often have some level conflict with each other (for example, providing space for a new producer will always take some market away from more senior producers). The guiding principles are used inform decisions that effect access to the distribution channel (membership and market share) as well as resolving conflicts about pricing.

New memberships or a resolution to an existing conflict are recommended to the board by

- a board member,
- an existing supplier member, or
- a staff person.