



# National Farmers Union Youth Curriculum

## Grades 6-8

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**Lesson 1:** Keep COOL, Buy Local ~ lesson plan, 4 hand-outs, 2 *hours*

**Lesson 2\*:** Selling Sustainable Agriculture ~ lesson plan, 3 hand-outs, 1 *hour*

**Lesson 3:** Conversation about Conservation ~ lesson plan, hand-out, 1 *hour, 30 min.*

**Lesson 4\*:** Buy Co-op! ~lesson plan and two hand-outs, 1 *hour*

**Lesson 5:** Plant a Garden ~ lesson plan, gardening activity and song, 2 *hours*

### Optional Activities

*\* Lesson contains a cooperative education component.*

**For more information contact:**

**Laura Johnston Monchuk**

NFU Director of Education

[laura.monchuk@nfu.org](mailto:laura.monchuk@nfu.org)

202.741.9410

[www.nfu.org](http://www.nfu.org)

# Lesson Plan 1: Keep COOL, Buy Local

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**Unit Objective:** Learn about “food miles,” the distance our food goes from farm to table, and how to read food labels for state and country of origin.

**Grades:** 6-12

**Length:** 2 hours: 15 minutes classroom instruction (or in-store initiation), 60 minutes at local grocery store, and 45 minutes to complete worksheets and wrap-up

**Materials Needed:** A U.S. map and a world map or globe; Hand-Outs C, D and E, F

**Preparation Needed:** Call the grocery store manager a few days in advance to set a time to come in and browse the aisles with the youth. Let the manager know you will be conducting a scavenger hunt using food items and ask if the individuals responsible for ordering the fruits, vegetables and meat can be available for questions from the youth.

## **Background:**

Much of the food consumed in the United States originates and travels within a food system that is global, not local, traveling an average of 1,500 miles from farm to plate. That’s about the distance between New York and Dallas, Texas. “Food miles” are the distance a food item travels from the farm to your home. The food miles for items you buy in the grocery store tend to be 27 times higher than the food miles for goods bought from local sources.

A growing percentage of our food is coming from foreign countries. In fact, about 40% of our fruit is produced in foreign countries. However, in grocery stores you may not be able to tell where your food comes from. In the 2002 Farm Bill, Congress passed a law requiring mandatory country-of-origin labeling (or COOL) for agricultural products. Five years later, that law still has not been implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Farmers Union was at the forefront of the fight to pass COOL. Now it is leading the charge for its implementation. Farmers Union believes consumers deserve the right to know where their food comes from and U.S. farmers have the right to distinguish their high quality products from imported ones.

## **Teaching Strategy:**

1. Introduce the concept of the lesson with an overview of the background information above.
2. Talk to students about food labels, bin labels and how they can find where foods are produced and processed. Mention that some foods may not have origin labels. In the United States, origin labeling has been voluntary, but Farmers Union is working to make sure country-of-origin labeling becomes mandatory so that all foods will be labeled to let us know where it is grown, raised and processed.
3. Visit the local grocery store and explain that their mission is to look for country-of-origin food labels and find out where various foods come from. Have them take their worksheets with them and give them time to browse the store and complete Activity Sheet C, the grocery store scavenger hunt.
4. Return to the classroom and discuss the findings of the scavenger hunt. Have them fill out Activity Sheet D as a group project. The students may come back with several responses from the various brands and types of foods.
5. Go over Activity Sheet E and encourage the students to answer the myths with the counter-arguments provided as well as any of their own. Ask if any have their own arguments for COOL that they’d like to share.

**Ideas submitted by:** Amber Hill, Education Director, North Dakota Farmers Union  
1415 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, SE, Jamestown, ND 58401  
701.252.2340 ~ ahill@ndfu.org

Jennifer Luitjens Bahr, Education Director, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union  
5655 S. Yosemite St., Suite 400, Greenwood Village, CO 80111  
303.752.5800 ~ jennifer.luitjens.bahr@rmfu.org

**Sources:** SustainableTable.org, nfu.org and <http://foodsys.cce.cornell.edu/pdfs/foodsypdf>

# Food Detectives

**Step 1:** Locate the following items in the grocery store and read the label. Find out where the food comes from or originates. If you cannot find a label that identifies where the product comes from, ask the store manager, produce manager or butcher.

**Step 2:** What else is on the food label? Health claims? “Best by” date? Is it perishable? Is it processed? What ingredients were added? How must it be stored? Is there any information missing that could help you know where or how it was produced, how it was transported, the path it took, etc.?

1. Ketchup
2. Hamburger
3. Bread
4. Frozen fish
5. Carrots
6. Grapes
7. Pork chops
8. Milk
9. Eggs
10. Apples
11. Chicken
12. Lettuce
13. Oranges
14. Tomatoes

What are your 3 favorite foods? Where do they come from?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Ask the produce manager how he/she determines what types of foods to sell at the store. Also, ask if they give any special consideration to bringing in locally-grown fruits and vegetables and if they generally label them with the country of origin. What did she or he say?



# Food Detectives ~ Group Analysis

1. After visiting the store, mark the two items that traveled the furthest distance to arrive at your grocery store. Mark those two items on the map that your teacher has provided.
2. After everyone has marked their two items, what 2 items traveled the furthest distance?
3. Is this a product that can be grown in your area? Yes or No?
4. Including everyone's work, what items traveled the least distance to the grocery store? List 3-4 items.
5. Could you find labels on everything?
6. Do you think mandatory country-of-origin food labeling is important? Why?
7. What did you observe and learn while at the grocery store?
8. What can you do to help your family buy local?

# COOL Mythbusters!

**Directions:** Write the numbers of the pro-COOL arguments that can answer the myths at right. Write other ideas that you come up with, based on what you have learned.

**Reasons for country-of-origin labels:**

1. COOL allows consumers to choose between U.S. and foreign-produced food.
2. COOL provides U.S. farmers, ranchers and fisherfolk the opportunity to promote and market their products, thereby receiving economic benefits for meeting high health, quality and environmental standards.
3. A large majority of countries that the United States trades with require COOL on their grocery store shelves.
4. Common-sense implementation would have minimal financial or time burden on producers, processors, or retailers.
5. Voluntary COOL has been on the books since 1998, yet packers, processors and retailers refuse to participate. They are unlikely to label products they import or blend with foreign products.
6. Consumers want to know! In a NFU-commissioned national poll, 82% of consumers said they thought food should be labeled with country of origin information, 85% said they would be more inclined to buy food produced in the United States and 81% said they would be willing to pay a few cents more for U.S.-produced food.
7. A coalition of at least 150 agriculture and consumer groups support mandatory country-of-origin labeling and oppose congressional efforts to delay it. Only packers, retailers and importers support repealing mandatory COOL.
8. COOL has been implemented for U.S. wild and farm-raised seafood products and the sky has not fallen!
9. COOL would not prevent diseases like BSE (mad cow), Hepatitis A, or E coli, but it will help maintain the confidence of consumers and U.S. trading partners by differentiating U.S. products from another country's product.

**Myths from the opposition:**

Consumers don't care where their food comes from. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

The agricultural industry supports further delay of the implementation of country-of-origin labeling. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Delaying COOL is necessary to study and understand the law. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Book-keeping will be a burden, particularly for ranchers. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

A voluntary COOL system would work better. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

COOL is a trade barrier and violates international trade agreements. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

COOL would raise costs for ranchers who cannot afford it. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

COOL has nothing to do with food safety. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Financial penalties will be placed upon the producer for mislabeling. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



**Local food is available around the country and most likely there are several outlets close to you at the following locations.**

**Farmer Cooperatives** – Farm and food co-ops are member-owned businesses. They are typically owned by members who pay fees to use co-op services. But, you can generally buy from a co-op even if you aren't a member. Farm cooperatives often allow farmers to share the marketing and processing costs, which allow them to retain a larger part of the food dollar. Visit <http://www.e-cooperatives.com/>, National Farmers Union's online portal to directly locate and buy quality food products, goods and services from hundreds of U.S. agricultural producers and their cooperatives.

**Farmer's Markets** – A Farmer's Market is a place where local farmers come together in one location to sell their produce, flowers, bread, cheese, honey and other homemade products. Check out USDA's web site, [www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/map.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/map.htm), or [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org) to find farmer's markets near you.

**Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA)** – CSA is an arrangement or partnership made between a group of consumers or individuals and a local farm. Consumers may purchase seasonal "shares" at CSA farms, which entitle them to weekly food allowances. Shareholders visit the farm or another pick-up location at a scheduled time each week to get their food. Or, some CSAs make home deliveries. Visit FoodRoutes.org's "Find Good Food" Guide: <http://www.foodroutes.org/localfood> or <http://www.wilson.edu/csasearch/search.asp> to find out more about CSAs and where you can find them in your area.

**Direct marketing** – Some farmers sell produce directly from a farm stand or on-farm market or provide you the opportunity to come by to pick your own. For local "U-Picks" and farm stands, visit FoodRoutes.org's "Find Good Food" Guide: <http://www.foodroutes.org/localfood>.

**Grocery stores and restaurants** – Some grocery stores and restaurants are embracing the benefits of buying local foods. Encourage your local stores to supply food from local farmers, if they don't already.

# Lesson 2: Selling Sustainable Agriculture

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**Unit Objective:** Learn and speak about market concentration and local, sustainable food.

**Grades:** 6-12

**Length:** 1 hour

**Materials Needed:** Hand-Outs G & H, Activity Sheet I, five stop-watches

**Background:**

Where our food comes from and how it is produced is just as important as how it tastes. Today we will learn about how the origin of our food affects our community.

Over time, agriculture has changed. Food production has grown by new technologies, bigger machinery, increased chemical use and changing governmental policies. These changes have allowed for fewer farmers to produce the majority of the food in the United States. When a segment of the market is dominated by only a few large corporations, this is called market concentration.

Local, sustainable agriculture is gathering increased support and acceptance within mainstream agriculture. Not only does sustainable agriculture address many environmental and social concerns, it offers innovative and economically viable opportunities for growers, laborers, consumers, policymakers and others in the food system.

A “local, sustainable food system” consists of the production, processing, sale and consumption of all the food needed for a community. Local, sustainable food systems produce healthy food that is good for the earth and helps our community grow. Sustainability rests on the principle that we must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable agriculture has three main goals: environmental health, economic profitability and social and economic equity. Everyone plays a part of a sustainable food system.

**Teaching Strategy:**

1. Present the first two paragraphs of the background information.
2. Have the students take turns reading Hand-Out G aloud.
3. Encourage discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What impacts do you think market concentration has on the U.S. agriculture industry? Local economies?
  - What advantages might a local, sustainable food system have over a global, industrialized food system?
4. Distribute Hand-Out H and go over some of the reasons that foods from the local, sustainable food system are best.
5. Encourage discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What do you think local family farmers can do to compete with large agribusinesses?
  - What might consumers need to know in order to make informed food decisions?
  - What might we do as consumers to support local, sustainable food systems?
6. Divide the class into five groups or less. Have each of the groups create a television infomercial to sell the public on local, sustainable agriculture and buying local. The students have 20 minutes to work on the presentation and two minutes to present their infomercial. They should use the stop-watches to time themselves during practice to make sure they stay within their two-minute time limit.
7. Have them complete Activity Sheet I, if time allows.

**Ideas submitted by:** Jim Tunheim, Education Director, Minnesota Farmers Union

600 Co. Road D West, Suite 14, St. Paul, MN 55112-3521

651.639.1223 ~ education.director@mfu.org

Jennifer Luitjens Bahr, Education Director, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union

5655 S. Yosemite St., Suite 400, Greenwood Village, CO 80111

303.752.5800 ~ jennifer.luitjens.bahr@rmfu.org

**Sources:** <http://www.nfu.org> and <http://www.oxfamamerica.org>

# Market Concentration

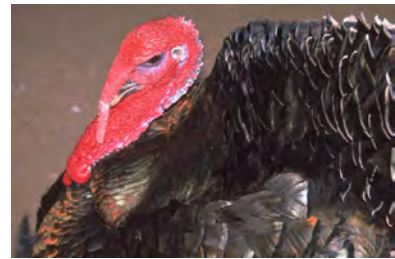
In the last 50 years, the U.S. agricultural sector has undergone a fundamental transformation that has resulted in an industrialized agricultural landscape with centralized corporate ownership of more and more stages of food production. Consolidation of several large agribusiness firms has left a majority of the food supply in the hands of only a few corporations. Many of these agribusinesses are becoming “vertically integrated,” meaning one company owns all of the product stages, from production to retail.

For example, one poultry company may own the feed production, the breeding and hatching of chicks, the grow-out stage and the processing and packaging. Consolidation and vertical integration concentrate the majority of market power with a few companies, and farmers have less ability to exert independence in the marketplace and end up with a smaller percentage of the food dollar.

National Farmers Union has been studying the impacts of agricultural concentration in the last decade. According to these studies, concentration has increased dramatically in every agricultural market *except* for **ethanol**, in which **farmer-owned cooperatives** are flourishing thanks to public policy incentives.

## *Here are the facts:*

- The top four **beef packers**, or processors, controlled **83.5%** of the market in 2005, up from 72% in 1990.
- The top four **pork packers** controlled **64%** of the market in 2005, up dramatically from 40% in 1990.
- **Pork production** is also concentrated so that the top four companies control **49%** of the market. And the top pork production company, Smithfield Foods, is also the top pork packer.
- Four corporations controlled **56%** of **broiler chickens** in 2005, up from 44% in 1990. The number one broiler company, Tyson Foods, is within the top 2 in chicken, pork and beef processing – a large majority of U.S. meat!
- The four largest **turkey processors** control **51%** of the market, up significantly from 33% in 1990.
- The top four **animal feed plants** own **34%** of the market
- The top four **flour mills** control **63%** of the market.
- The top three **soybean crushers** process a whopping **71%** of all soybeans in the country.
- Concentration among the top four **ethanol producers** has **decreased** from 73% in 1987 to **41%** in 2005 and **farmer-owned ethanol plants** accounted for **37.3%** of the total capacity.





# Buy Local Foods!



**TIP:** When looking for fresh, healthy foods, ask yourself, “Where did this food come from?” If you can’t figure out how it got from the farm to your plate, it probably picked up a lot of sugar, salt, fat and chemicals along the way.



“Eat Fresh, Buy Local”  
NFU Curriculum

Source:  
[www.sustainabletable.org](http://www.sustainabletable.org)

Buying locally means buying food that is produced, grown, or raised as close to your home as possible. In the United States, the ingredients for an average meal travel 1,500 miles from the farm to your plate! As a result, food is less fresh, contains fewer nutrients, and requires resource-intensive transportation and packaging. Here are some reasons to buy locally:

- **Fresh, locally-produced food is more nutritious.** Foods transported short distances and kept on shelves for only a short time contain more nutrients and fewer preservatives than foods that travel long distances.
- **Local food may protect your family’s health.** Industrially-produced foods are typically grown with pesticides, chemical fertilizers, antibiotics, and growth hormones. To extend shelf-life, certain foods are also subject to irradiation, a process that may reduce the nutritional value of foods and have uncertain effects on human health. Local foods typically undergo minimal processing and are usually produced without these substances.
- **Local farms help preserve the environment.** Small, local farms are generally more environmentally-friendly than large-scale industrial agriculture operations. Small family farms tend to utilize sustainable farming techniques, often raising natural or organic products without pesticides and other chemicals.
- **Reduced waste in packaging.** Foods produced locally require much less packaging than foods shipped long distances. Buying locally eliminates food packaging from the waste stream, thus conserving resources and reducing the need to build new landfills.
- **Reduced reliance on oil.** A large volume of oil is used to transport food that could be purchased locally. Buying locally decreases transportation and helps America reduce its reliance on foreign oil supplies. Increased usage of fossil fuels in transporting foreign and industrial foods long distances mean increased air pollutants than from local foods.
- **Buying locally helps family farmers.** According to the USDA, the United States has lost 4.7 million farms since 1935. Family farmers are going out of business at a drastic rate, causing rural communities to deteriorate. Local food buying supports family farmers and helps to save this important element of American life.
- **Buying locally supports the local economy.** Money spent in the community stays in the community longer, benefiting local retailers and residents instead of huge industrial agriculture corporations.
- **Preserved local farmland.** The U.S. loses two acres of farmland a minute as cities and suburbs spread and take over the land. Most farms these days are “edge farms” located on the outskirts of urban and suburban population centers. This means they’re in danger of being bought out by developers as they struggle to stay in business. On a positive note, this makes buying local easier for city-dwellers.
- **Local food tastes better!** More chefs and food lovers are discovering that local, fresh foods simply taste better than their industrial counterparts, and are working to preserve local varieties and cook foods that are in-season. Local, naturally raised and fed animal products are noticeably more flavorful. Try them, and you’ll notice the difference!



*Is this  
local?*

## **Why Should I Care Where My Food Comes From?**

1. Why should you care where your food comes from?
2. What is local food?
3. What are some of the reasons we should use a local food system when available?
4. What is market concentration and how does it affect U.S. agriculture?
5. How does buying locally help your community?
6. How is buying locally good for the environment?
7. Does the quality and taste of food differ when using the “Global Food System” as compared to the “Local Food System”? If so, please explain the differences.
8. What can you and your family do to make sure you buy local when possible?
10. Plan a dinner menu based on local fruits, produce and meats that are available in your area.

# Lesson 3: Conversation about Conservation

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**Unit Objective:** Learn the difference between preservation, conservation and indiscriminate use and the farmer's role in conservation. Also explore varying "points of view," to arrive at workable solutions to problems.

**Grades:** 6-8

**Length:** 1 hour, 30 minutes

**Materials Needed:** Hand-Out J, a 12-inch ball with the numbers 1-4 around the ball as if it were a cube; a small tootsie roll for each student; and three small signs: "indiscriminate users," "conservationists," and "preservationists"

## **Background:**

In addition to producing food and fiber on their land, American farmers and ranchers (many of which are Farmers Union members) are also "stewards of the land." This means an important part of their jobs is making decisions about how their land will be used. A wise use of resources is a form of stewardship.

Just as we learned that things may look different depending on where your point of view, there are often different points of view when it comes to farming the land. Remember our tootsie roll groups? (See below.) Preservationists, conservationists and indiscriminate users often have different points of view and differing opinions on how land should be used.

While preservationists may want to save all the trees on the land no matter what, and not use the soil or water for anything; indiscriminate users might decide to cut down all the trees and use up all the water no matter what. Conservationists might want to use the forest by harvesting only some of the trees and planting others so the forest could regenerate itself. And, a conservationist would likely use the water when it is needed and make sure that he or she does not pollute or waste it.

Sometimes a farmer may decide it is better to preserve a part of their land to keep it as it is, without using it. Other times a farmer may decide to completely use the resources in an area, such as clearing out some brush areas to make way for crops. Most of the time, our local farmers take a conservationist's point of view to make sure they are conserving the natural resources such as the soil, water, wildlife habitat, air quality and open spaces. In some parts of the world, farming is done indiscriminately, which can have a negative impact on the environment.

When we buy local produce, we are supporting family farmers who live on, work on and conserve the land in our state.

## **Teaching Strategy:**

1. Divide the class into three groups, with one on the left, one on the right, and one in the middle.
2. Hold the ball in front of your participants and ask the group on the left which number they see. Next, ask the group in front of you what number they see, and so on. Are they sure they see that number? You see a different number. Why, if you are looking at the same object, are we seeing different numbers? Because each of us has a different "point of view." Reveal the numbers around the ball.
3. Now, give each group a name for their group (with a sign): the indiscriminate users, the conservationists and the preservationists.
4. Give each student a tootsie roll. And ask them to not open it until you say.
  - a. Group 1 – Indiscriminate users: These students are to eat the tootsie roll immediately.
  - b. Group 2 -- Conservationists: These students may unwrap the tootsie roll, but they may only lick the candy; they cannot eat it.
  - c. Group 3 -- Preservationists: These students may not unwrap their tootsie roll during this activity.

5. Ask the following questions for group discussion. Like any areas of decision-making there are not right or wrong answers. Students are encouraged to examine all aspects of the situation, make their decision and be able to defend that decision.
  - a. Which group makes the best use of the candy? Why?
  - b. Would it make a difference if we determined the reason for having the candy?
  - c. What if the group had not eaten in three days, would that make a difference?
  - d. Which group would be the wisest group?
  - e. What if the goal was to have the same amount of tootsie rolls a year from now? Which group would have met that goal?
6. Explain how this exercise fits into the theme of the lesson by going over the background information.
7. Make a strong point that when we buy locally, we support these family farmers who live on, work on and conserve the land in our state.
8. Now, we're going to pretend that each of your teams owns a farm. (Hand-Out A) Each of your farms is similar in that each has a stream that runs through it with lots of trees on one side and a little area for planting crops or running animals on the left side. However, your approaches to farming are definitely different.
  - a. Group 1 – You're still indiscriminate users. Learning what you have in this lesson, you'll answer questions about your farm indiscriminately.
  - b. Group 2 – You will answer questions from a conservation perspective.
  - c. Group 3 – You will answer questions about the farm from a preservationist's point of view.
9. Give them a few moments to read the questions on Hand-Out J and discuss them among their group. After a few minutes, ask a representative of the group to share their answers to the following questions:
  - a. **You traditionally farm corn and beans on the left side of the stream. But, the price of corn will be going up this year. If you had more land to farm, you could potentially plant more acres in corn and cash in.** What do you do? Why? Weighing all points of view, what might be the best decision to make? Why?
  - b. **The stream that runs through your farm shows signs of pollution, which your neighbor believes is coming from your cattle that you let walk in and out of the stream.** What do you do? Why? Weighing all points of view, what might be the best decision to make? Why?
  - c. **You read in the *Farmers Union News* that some farmers are keeping some of their land out of production for conservation purposes. The government is giving a little bit of money to farmers who do this, but it's still not enough to cover your costs.** Do you take your land out of production or keep on farming it in order to pay the bills? What do you do? Why? Weighing all points of view what might be the best decision to make? Why?
  - d. **Anything else you would like to do to improve your land?**
  - e. **What have you learned in this process?**
10. Oh, and by the way, the preservationists and conservationists can now eat their tootsie roll!

**Idea submitted by:** Bonnie Geyer, Education Dir., South Dakota Farmers Union Foundation  
 PO Box 1388, Huron, SD 57350  
 (605) 352-6761, Ext. 125 ~ bgeyer@sdfu.org

**With activities from:** Ag in the Classroom, [www.agclassroom.org](http://www.agclassroom.org), and National Farmers Union

# This is Your Farm!

## *What would you do?*



- 1) You traditionally farm corn and beans on the left side of the stream. But, the price of corn will be going up this year. If you had more land to farm, you could potentially plant more acres in corn and cash in. What do you do? Why?
- 2) The stream that runs through your farm shows signs of pollution, which your neighbor believes is coming from your cattle that you let walk in and out of the stream. What do you do? Why?
- 3) You read in the *Farmers Union News* that some farmers are keeping some of their land out of production for conservation purposes. The government is giving a little bit of money to farmers who do this, but it's still not enough to cover your costs. Do you take your land out of production or keep on farming it in order to pay the bills? What do you do? Why?
- 4) What else would you like to do to improve your land?

# Lesson Plan 4: Buy Co-op!

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**Unit Objective:** Learn why the cooperative movement began and how farm cooperatives contribute to the food supply and local economies.

**Grades:** 3-8

**Length:** 1 hour

**Materials Needed:** “How the Cooperative Movement Began,” “What Makes a Co-op a Co-op,” Questions, Dilemmas, scissors and bowl

**Preparation Needed:** Cut the questions and dilemmas into strips to be drawn out of a bowl. (Keep the questions and the dilemmas separated.)

## **Background:**

One way to buy local is to buy through farmer-owned cooperatives. Cooperatives, also called co-ops, are a type of business in which the members own it and share in its costs and profits. Co-ops help family farmers and ranchers add value to the food, fiber and energy that they produce. Cooperatives often allow farmers to share marketing and processing costs, instead of having to bear all of these costs on their own. Co-ops allow farmers to retain ownership of their commodity further into the processing channel, which allows them a larger part of the food dollar. Farmers Union supports agricultural cooperatives and helps farmers form new cooperatives.

## **Teaching Strategy:**

1. Set the lesson up by presenting the background information.
2. How did cooperatives come to be? Have students take turns reading each paragraph of “How the Cooperative Movement Began”
3. Divide the class into groups of four and have each group draw one of the questions. Have the group nominate a leader to present their answer.
4. There are many other types of cooperatives other than farm cooperatives. But all cooperatives have a few basic things in common. So, what makes a co-op a co-op? (Go over the Seven International Principles.)
5. Maintain the groups and have them draw a dilemma from the bowl and devise a cooperative plan that uses the cooperative principles. A new leader should be nominated to present the solution to the class for this exercise.

**Submitted by:** Cathy Statz, Education Director, Wisconsin Farmers Union  
117 West Spring Street, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729  
715.723.5561 ~ [cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

Amber Hill, Education Director, North Dakota Farmers Union  
1415 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, SE, Jamestown, ND 58401  
701.252.2340 ~ [ahill@ndfu.org](mailto:ahill@ndfu.org)

**Adapted from:** “Better Together: Cooperation, The Essence of Cooperatives, A Study Unit for Grades 4 through 10,” Ontario Co-operative Association and Ontario Agri-Food Education, Inc.; lead writer, Kevin Crouse, OAFE Educational Consultant; with financial support of the Trillium Foundation.

# How the Cooperative Movement Began

More than 100 years ago, in the English town of Rochdale, lived some weavers who produced cloth. Merchants in the town began building factories, called mills, where spinning and weaving were done by machines. The mills produced cloth much faster and cheaper than the weavers could. The cloth sold in great quantity, bringing great wealth to the mill owners, but the workers were very poorly paid.

Supplying the mills with wool was very profitable for the rural landlords; so, they began replacing the small farms with grazing land for sheep. As a result, the people who lived and worked on the farm had to move to the cities to look for jobs. So many people came to the cities that there was not enough work for everyone. The factory owners used this as an opportunity to hire women and children who worked for less money than men.

Even children as young as four or five years of age worked in factories. Sometimes they were beaten and were often expected to perform adult tasks. Working hours were long for everyone, up to 16-17 hours a day. The factories were very unhealthy places: poorly lit, smoky, dirty, noisy, and badly ventilated. The combination of poor working conditions, long hours, and poor food undermined the health of working families.

Many factory owners organized general stores, where they sold goods at high prices. They forced the workers to shop there - and fired them if they did not. The store owners mixed cheap substitutes into the food in order to increase their profits. Flour was mixed with lime or broken rice, coffee with chicory, cocoa with brown soil, and tea with dried leaves. False weights and measures were used, but there was nothing the workers could do about it.

The workers and unemployed lived in unhealthy conditions. The houses were badly built, unheated, and in poor repair, often on narrow, dirty streets. Many families had only one room and others lived in dark, damp basements.

In those years there was no regular schooling for everybody and few children learned to read and write. Many children were hungry, thin and sickly, and had to rummage through bins of garbage to look for scraps of food.

As a result of this abuse, people began to hold meetings to discuss ways to improve their situation. Strikes had not succeeded. Then toward the end of 1843, some poor, hungry, unemployed workers and their friends decided upon a solution. They wanted to break their dependence on the factory owners, who controlled production and jobs. They decided that the solution was to open their own factories and shops, and possibly to acquire houses and estates. But to do this they would need money. They began saving, although they were all very poor.

At first only 12 people were able to contribute money regularly, but as time went on, and the plan was talked about at more public meetings, the list of contributors began to grow. Finally, on October 24, 1844, when 29 people had managed to gather together 28 pounds, they were able to register themselves officially as the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers. At last!

Two months later, on December 21, they were able to open their “co-operative shop” on a street called Toad Lane. It was a very small beginning. At first they were only able to sell a few items: flour, sugar, butter, oatmeal and candles. Half of their money was spent fixing their shop, but they didn’t give up, and they didn’t fail. By 1857 they were selling \$100,000 worth of goods a year. And the co-op they started more than 100 years ago is still going strong today.

The major contribution of the Rochdale Pioneers, as the founders have come to be called, is that their leaders developed specific principles for the operation of their business and put them down in writing.

These principles, known as the Rochdale Principles, or Cooperative Principles, became the basis of a worldwide social and economic movement.

One of the most important principles is that cooperatives are organized democratically, with each member having one vote. In an investor-owned corporation, the people who have the most money have the most votes and the most say about what the business does and what happens to the money. The people with less money have fewer shares and votes, and much less power.

In a cooperative, each member has an equal share and one vote when decisions are made. Here it is the individual member, not money, that counts. Therefore, the cooperative is an economic democracy.

*NFU thanks the following groups for providing this resource:*



# Buy Co-op: Questions & Dilemmas

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## Questions:

Why did people move to the city to look for jobs? Can you describe similar examples of where this has happened, or is happening in the United States?

Why did the factory hire children? Is this possible today? Why or why not? What were the working conditions for these children?

Why did the factory hire women? What were the working conditions for women? How were these conditions different from conditions that exist today?

How did the store owners increase their profits? In what ways are consumers protected from this practice today?

## Dilemmas:

Allen's Apple Orchard needs help to harvest their apples. Devise a cooperative plan that will help provide a variety of apple pickers in time for the apple harvest.

Your teacher has a bean bag chair where everyone wants to relax and read. Two students, one of which is hogging the chair, engage in a heated argument. What solution would you suggest?

Your friend's pig farm is bankrupt from low pork prices. She is afraid the farm will be sold and she will have to move. What can you do to help?

Parents in your neighborhood would like to go shopping during the day but there are no baby-sitters available at this time. What kind of co-operative venture could they develop?

You and your friends would really like to purchase a new computer game but none of you have enough money to buy it. How could you cooperate to solve your problem?



# What makes a co-op a co-op?

## *The Seven International Principles of Cooperation*

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The following are Seven International Principles of Cooperation, which act as a code of practice for all cooperative ventures.

**1. Voluntary and Open Membership:**

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

**2. Democratic Member Control:**

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote).

**3. Member Economic Participation:** Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for any of the following purposes: developing their cooperative; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities supported by the membership.

**4. Autonomy and Independence:** Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. Agreements with other organizations must be done in such a way as to preserve autonomous member control.

**5. Education, Training and Information:** Cooperatives provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees so that they can contribute effectively to the development of the cooperative. They inform young people about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

**6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives:** Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, regional, national, and international structures.

**7. Concern for Community:** Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.



*Adapted from "Co-operative Young Leaders"  
Ontario Co-operative Association (formerly CCA, Ontario Region)*

# Lesson Plan 5: Planting a Garden

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- Unit Objective:** Learn how to grow fresh, local foods while practicing cooperation, measurements, following directions and safety procedures.
- Length:** 2 hours
- Grades:** 1-8
- Materials Needed:** --If planting an actual garden outside: gardening shovels, hoe, rake, 2 stakes, tape measurer, 10 feet of string, 1 watering can, 4 ¼ inch rods cut 12 inches in length and 1 package each of corn seeds, green bean seeds, lettuce seeds, and squash seeds.  
--If not feasible to do outside, this can be done in flower pots or flower boxes
- Preparation Needed:** -- Locate an area in which a garden may be planted  
-- Draw a diagram of garden  
-- Brush up on photosynthesis at:  
<http://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/educate/kids/photosyn.htm>  
-- Visit <http://www.bananaslugstringband.com/sound/DirtMML.mp3> to learn the tune to “Dirt Made My Lunch.” (Lyrics follow.)

## Background:

Another way to have fresh, nutritious, local food is to grow your own! Do you or anyone you know have a garden?

People have been gardening for centuries. Native American families in the Woodlands, the East, the Southwest, and the northern Plains planted gardens long before settlers came to America. In fact, the Native Americans showed the settlers how to plant foods such as corn, beans, and squash that saved many of them from starvation.

Can anyone think of anything that we eat that doesn't originate from the soil? What about cheese? Well, cheese is made from milk, which comes from a cow, which eats grass, which grows in dirt. What about eggs? Eggs come from chickens, which eat grain, which is grown in the dirt. The fact is, EVERYTHING we eat comes from dirt!

## Teaching Strategy:

1. Go over the background information and discuss all the things that come from the soil.
2. Teach the song: “Dirt Made My Lunch.”
3. Announce that they will be planting an indoor or outdoor garden. If planting outside, you may divide the class into teams by having them count to five in a circle. (All the ones, will be a team; all the twos will be a team, and so on.) Team 1 students can dig the holes (tools: shovels); Team 2 students can cover the holes (tools: rake & hoe); Team 3 students can plant seeds (material: packages of seeds); Team 4 students can measure row distance and string it out (tools: tape measure, string, and stakes); Team 5 students can water seeds (tool: watering can). *Note: If you have more or less students, you can make adaptations to the teams.*
4. Take students outside with gardening materials, and explain tool safety. Read directions aloud so they can practice following verbal direction and cooperation.
5. Team 4 measure in 12 inches from the corner of one 60” & 48” side of the garden. Place one stake into the ground. Go to the other end of the garden, Team 4, and measure in 12 inches from the other corner and place a stake. Tie string to one stake and stretch it across the garden and tie to the other stake.
6. Team 1, dig ten holes under the string, precisely every six inches.
7. Team 3, count out ten seeds from each package and plant one corn seed into each hole.
8. Team 2, use the rake and hoe to fill dirt into each hole.
9. Team 5, water each seed, being careful not to wash the seeds out of the ground.
10. Move to next row, Team 4, measure 12 inches from the corn and repeat with other seed types.

11. Once all seeds are planted, Team 5, place the rods at the beginning of each row and place the seed package at the end of each row to help us remember which types of seeds have been planted into the rows.
12. When the garden is complete, have the students gather around and explain how the seeds will grow with the aid of photosynthesis, which they may have learned in school. Brush up on the process at: <http://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/educate/kids/photosyn.htm>

**Idea submitted by:** Sonny Harrell, Education Director, Montana Farmers Union  
300 River Drive North, Great Falls, MT 59403  
406.452.6406 ~ [sharrell@montanafarmersunion.com](mailto:sharrell@montanafarmersunion.com)

**Adapted from lesson plan by:** Clinton Burch, [burch7@marshall.edu](mailto:burch7@marshall.edu)

# Dirt Made My Lunch

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Listen to the tune at: <http://www.bananaslugstringband.com/sound/DirtMML.mp3>

## CHORUS:

Dirt made my lunch,  
Dirt made my lunch.  
Thank you Dirt, thanks a bunch,  
For my salad, my sandwich  
My milk and my munch 'cause  
Dirt, you made my lunch.

## VERSE 1:

Dirt is a word that we often use,  
When we're talkin' about the earth beneath our shoes.  
It's a place where plants can sink their toes;  
And in a little while a garden grows.

## CHORUS

## VERSE 2:

A farmer's plow will tickle the ground,  
You know the earth has laughed, when wheat is found.  
The grain is taken and flour is ground,  
For making a sandwich to munch on down.

## CHORUS

## VERSE 3:

A stubby green beard grows upon the land,  
Out of the soil the grass will stand.  
But under hoof it must bow,  
For making milk by way of a cow.

## CHORUS

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The Banana Slug String Band  
P.O. Box 2262, Santa Cruz, CA 95063  
(888) 32-SLUGS, (888) 327-5847 Phone and Fax  
[slugs@bananaslugstringband.com](mailto:slugs@bananaslugstringband.com)



# Optional Activities

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*The following activities could be incorporated at the end of any lesson to fill extra time.*

1. Have youth create posters from the information that they learned today, ultimately answering the question of why it is so important to buy local. Have volunteers share posters with the class.
2. Provide an opportunity for students to present their Lesson 2 infomercials to another audience of adults or young people.
3. Activity Sheet J and/or the farmer visit from Lesson Plan 3, Grades 3-5 Curriculum: Buy Local!
4. Have the students draw a picture of an hourglass and label how they think it illustrates the global food system and market concentration. Have them draw their own illustrations of the global food system or a sustainable food system.
5. Play charades or hangman with new vocabulary words.
6. Check out these great activities and resources from Cornell University's Discovering the Food System Experiential Learning Program for Young and Inquiring Minds: <http://foodsys.cce.cornell.edu/pdfs/foodsys.pdf>
7. Teach some Farmers Union songs.

