

International Day of Cooperatives sets stage for long-standing production and consumption

Each year on the first Saturday in July, the international community celebrates the [International Day of Cooperatives](#) – successful businesses that respect the resources they offer. This year, the Day focuses on the theme “Sustainable consumption and production of goods and services.”

Simel Esim, head of the [International Labour Organization’s \(ILO\)](#) Cooperatives Unit, lauded their benefits by sharing stories of how Kenyan producer cooperatives’ coffee has found its way to the shelves of a Denmark coop; biological pineapples from a Togolese youth cooperative are being sold in retail cooperatives across Italy; and consumer cooperatives in East Asia have developed organic and ecolabel products while educating their members on working conditions, reducing food waste and paring down plastic consumption.

Ms. Esim pointed to cooperatives in Northern Sri Lanka that have helped build the resilience of their local communities, saying that she saw firsthand, “the [positive impact](#) of cooperatives’ commitment to sustainable consumption and production.”

“A rapid assessment at the start of the ILO’s Local Empowerment through Economic Development project indicated that cooperatives were the only ‘stable’ structures present in Northern Sri Lanka before, during, and after” the years of civil war, she said.

Cooperatives at both ends of the supply chain have been joining forces to improve product traceability and adopt environmentally-friendly practices – with the ILO working with its constituents to improve the social and environmental footprint of cooperatives around the world.

With “concern for community” as one of their guiding principles, cooperatives have sustainability in their DNA.

For two centuries, they have been building sustainable and resilient societies.

The UN’s Department of Economic and Social Affairs explained that each cooperative yields its own [gains](#):

- Agricultural cooperatives harness sustainable farming practices to maintain land longevity for growing crops;
- Consumer cooperatives not only support sustainable product sourcing but also educate consumers about responsible consumption;
- Housing cooperatives help ensure safe dwellings;
- Utility cooperatives engage in transitioning to cleaner electricity and rural access to energy and water; and

- Worker and social cooperatives aim to provide goods and services in an efficient, planet-friendly way while creating long-term, sustainable jobs.

The 2018 theme aligns perfectly with that of Monday's [2018 High-level Political Forum](#) for Sustainable Development (HLPF): "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies," where the progress of five of [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development's Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) will be assessed.