

## BEES COOP

# THE SELF-MANAGED SUPERMARKET IN BRUSSELS

In September 2017 has opened in the Schaerbeek neighborhood of Brussels (Belgium) the [BEES Coop](#), a cooperative and not-for-profit supermarket owned by its members.

Inspired by the experience of the [Park Slope Food Coop](#) in Brooklyn (New York, United States), the Bees-coop originated by a group of young people wishing to create an alternative to mass food distribution and to environmental and ethical problems it causes.

Today the supermarket counts 1.400 members and it's currently [organising a communication campaign](#) and meetings to commit people to participate. Adopting a management model based on the direct contribution of the members, a broad social base of the cooperative makes it possible to achieve in practice the objective of reducing costs, in addition to expanding the impact of the project.

In the BEES Coop each co-operator member becomes at the same time:

- An owner of the supermarket. Each co-operator becomes owner of the cooperative taking decisions on the organisation and the orientations of his supermarket. In order to promote the wider accessibility, several levels of possible subscriptions are foreseen.
- A worker of the supermarket. The co-operator commits himself to work 3 hours per month at the supermarket, accomplishing the majority of the tasks (purchases, logistics, supplying, etc.) that allows the cooperative to reduce costs.
- A client of the supermarket. The market is only open to co-operators and provides all high quality and low priced food products that are usually available in a normal supermarket: groceries, fresh food and bread, as well as soap, maintenance, cleaning and hygiene products.

The BEES Coop promotes fair trade products, created with processes that are attentive to rights and environmental sustainability. In its purchases, the supermarket gives priority to local producers, organic and seasonal products. The cooperative BEES Coop establishes a close association with the producers, in a short commercial chain. It aims to reduce food waste and wraps by promoting bulk food.

Thanks to the work provided by the members, the hire of salaried personnel is limited and the supermarket sells its products at prices of 20% lower, without damaging the suppliers and reinvesting benefits in their activities.



In BEES Coop the members participate in assemblies to define operational guidelines (values, products, prices, management) with a democratic decision-making process. The wide range of tasks necessary for the management of the supermarket is distributed in several different working groups: financial investigations, communication, management of purchasing groups, management of premises, product research, labelling, delivery, services associated with the market, etc. An open coordination unit concentrates all information.

With this management approach and by sharing the cooperative's values, the BEES Coop supermarket represents a social innovation with a huge impact, providing the following benefits to the community:

- Access to sustainable food for people;
- Local economy growth by creating long-term partnerships with local producers;
- Creation of a convivial area that strengthens social cohesion;
- Building up a fair price policy: the most accessible price to all consumers while appropriately paying the producer for his work;
- Adoption of a transparency policy regarding the availability of products, as well as the functioning of the supermarket;
- Raising awareness among the general public of nowadays consuming habits and their consequences on health, ecology, economy, etc.;
- Reduction of food waste and overwrap by promoting sales of bulk food;
- Support to the cooperative model and social innovation through an *open source* spread of the developed tools and knowledge.

In the web site of BEES Coop information about the more important aspects of this innovative supermarket is available, either to participate to its functioning and to replicate the experience in different contexts. In Charleroi, another town in Belgium, the [Cooperative Coopeco](#) is already implementing a supermarket with similar operational approach.

In fact, the managing system adopted by the BEES Coop supermarket can be adopted in all countries where the cooperative movement is already developed and accepted by the population. The commitment of members to work directly for 3 consecutive hours per month at the supermarket is compatible with the work commitments of most people and the registration fees to the cooperative are low enough to promote the widest participation.

#### To know more

[BEES Coop](#)

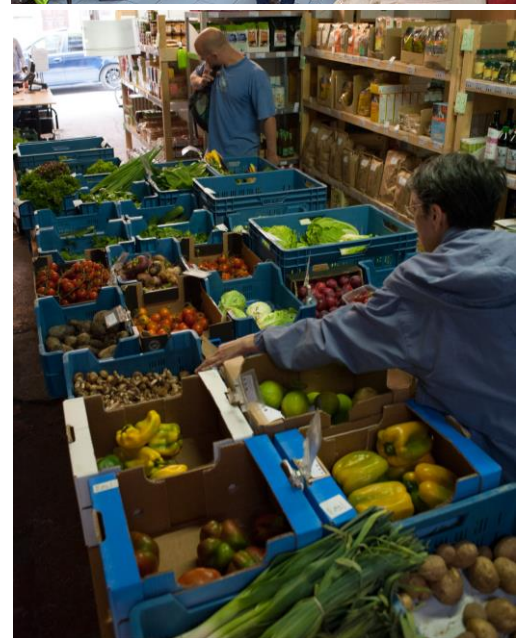
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