

# Cooperatives in the EU bioeconomy

First of all, what is a cooperative?

“A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons or organisations united to meet common economic, social, and cultural goals. They achieve their objectives through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” - EU Commission

Moreover, cooperatives are...

1. Open and voluntary associations.
2. Democratic structures.
3. Organisations that abide by equitable and fair values for profit distribution.

Overall, cooperatives have a significant relevance in many EU sectors & industries.

Volume of cooperatives in the EU<sup>1</sup>

**250,000** cooperatives

**163 M** citizens (1/3 of EU population) belong to a cooperative

**5.4 M** employments

Cooperatives market share in primary sectors<sup>2</sup>

Forestry  
**60%** in Sweden  
**31%** in Finland

Agriculture  
**83%** in The Netherlands  
**79%** in Finland  
**55%** in Italy

The agricultural sector - a **key sector for cooperatives**- produces the largest share of the European biomass raw material.

**18%** was the agricultural sector share in bioeconomy turnover from 2008 to 2017<sup>3</sup>

## What are the benefits of cooperatives for the EU agricultural primary sector?<sup>4</sup>



Cooperation can be a **key driving force to deploy the bioeconomy**, effectively integrating primary producers and revitalising rural areas.



Cooperatives ensure the **minimum economies of scale** necessary for setting up certain value chains.



Individual farms make their business model more **profitable, sustainable and resilient** to climate change challenges



Cooperatives catalyse **innovation, R&I, capacity building**, and knowledge transfer



Cooperatives raise **awareness** and deploy the bioeconomy in the context of the local community



Cooperatives attract **public funding**.

(1), (2) European Commission, Cooperatives: [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/social-economy-eu/cooperatives\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/social-economy-eu/cooperatives_en)  
(3) Nowak, A.; Kobińska, A.; Krukowski, A. Significance of Agriculture for Bioeconomy in the Member States of the European Union. Sustainability 2021, 13, 8709. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13168709>  
(4) EU Commission, Workshop: The role of cooperatives and cooperation structures of primary producers for mainstreaming the Bioeconomy 2019

