



## COOPERATIVES IN FIJI

Nature's Way Cooperative conducts a mandatory quarantine treatment of produce. Image credit: NWC

### Contribution of cooperatives to Fiji's economy

- 379 - number of operating cooperatives.
- US\$ 10.2 million (FJ\$ 22.04 million) generated in revenue by cooperatives.
- US\$ 58.6 million (FJ\$ 126.45 million) held in assets by cooperatives.

(All figures as of 2020)

### Did you know?

- The Department of Cooperative Business (DCB), within the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism (MITT), is the regulatory and promotional authority on cooperatives.
- Since 2013, on an average 20 new cooperatives have registered with the DCB each year.
- The National Cooperative Federation (NCF), formed in 2018, is the apex body for cooperatives in Fiji.
- The Cooperative College of Fiji has been developing, promoting and training cooperative staff and members since 1960.
- ICA has two members from Fiji. The members with their year of affiliation are DCB (2019) and Nasinu Land Purchase and Housing Cooperative Ltd. (NLPHCL, 2017).

The cooperative movement in Fiji goes back to the first British colonial laws that were formulated to encourage cooperatives in 1947. During Fiji's struggle for independence, cooperatives became a mark of resistance wherein Fijians resisted colonial control over certain goods. Over the years, the focus of the movement has changed from predominantly agricultural cooperatives to an increasing number of consumer cooperatives that are located mostly in rural and maritime areas. Now, the government provides funds to promote the formation and establishment of cooperatives.

### Types of cooperatives in Fiji

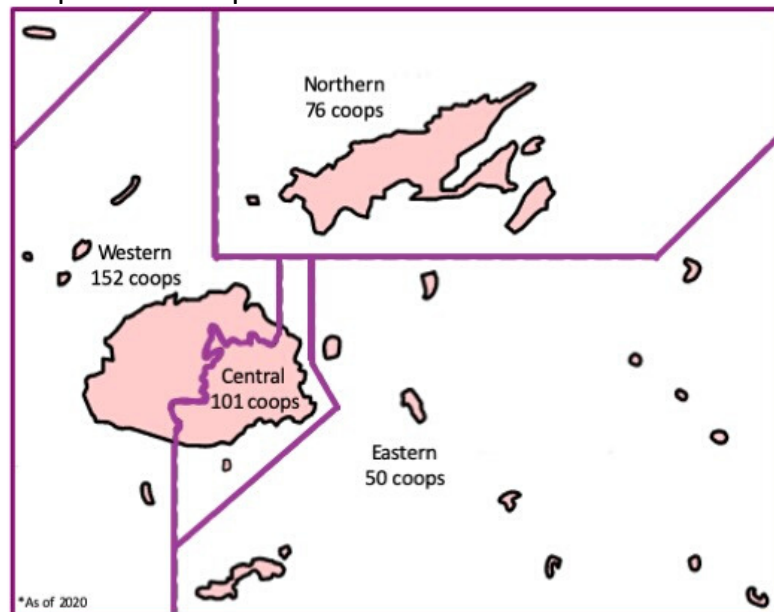
Cooperatives in Fiji are present in the following sectors:

132	Consumer	25	Service
58	Sugar co-op	18	Livestock
49	Thrift	10	Multipurpose
38	Agriculture	9	Eco-tourism
27	Land	13	Others*

\*Includes entertainment, investment, logging etc.

### Geographical presence of cooperatives in Fiji

Cooperatives are present in all four administrative divisions:



## Evolution of the cooperative movement

### → 1900 - 1958

- In the early 20th century, many Fijians were members of agricultural and dairy associations where they pooled finances to buy seeds and other agricultural implements.
- In 1931, the colonial Legislative Council took administrative action to establish a committee to report on agricultural and financial cooperatives. This eventually led to the first regulations in 1947 and creation of the post of the Registrar.
- The Naluna Cooperative Society in Tailevu province, a consumer cooperative, was the first one to register in 1948. Of the 25 cooperatives registered in 1948, 23 were primary producers' marketing societies that engaged in the production and marketing of copra and other agricultural products. Some also operated consumer retail stores and transport services.
- From 1948 to 1958, although the number of cooperatives continued to increase, the lack of training and inefficient management prevented them from developing as successful, self-help, long-term business. Consumer cooperatives, organised mostly by Fijians, also faced competition from private stores.

### → 1960 - 2000

- During the 1960s, the Bula Tale people formed retail cooperatives in southwestern Viti Levu. These were lauded for their efforts to improve their community's standard of living.
- The Cooperative Training Centre (renamed Cooperative College in 2018) was established by the government in 1960 to provide for training and development of cooperatives.
- The International Labour Organisation reported that there were 716 cooperatives with 14,442 members in 1969, just before Fiji gained independence.
- The Fiji Cooperative Union Ltd (FCUL) was established in 1973 as the apex of all cooperatives. Increasing polarisation in the multi-ethnic society deterred the growth of cooperatives for most of the 1970s and 1980s.
- According to an ICA survey in 1996, there were 532 cooperatives, with the majority in agriculture (202), followed by consumer (130), savings and credit (122) and others.
- A 1998 Act established the Coconut Industry Development Authority to promote copra cooperatives.

### → 2001 - Present

- Since 2006, change in laws led to families vacating their farms and a decrease in membership in thrift and credit cooperatives. In 2008, there were 91 registered thrift and credit cooperatives.
- The Cabinet restructured the Cooperative Department in 2010 wherein the Department of Cooperative and Small Businesses was placed under the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MITT).
- The government started working on reviving the cooperative sector in 2011 by drafting a National Cooperative Policy to amend the Cooperative Act and form new capital instruments. They promoted newer cooperatives in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and dealing in exports.
- The forward looking 'Fijian Trade Policy Framework (2015-2025)' recognised the role played by cooperatives in the economic, social, cultural and human capacity spheres. It promoted education cooperatives and also encouraged the re-establishment of the NCF.
- The '5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan' that came out in 2017 promoted policies to strengthen the institutional capacity of cooperatives institutional capacity to and make them sustainable in fields such as agriculture, renewable energy and women's empowerment.
- The 'Target 100' initiative was started by the Fijian government in January 2018 to assist and guide 100 cooperatives across Fiji to be fully compliant with the Cooperatives Act. It also marked the platinum celebration of the cooperative movement in Fiji.

## Law on cooperatives

- **1947:** Cooperative Societies Ordinances No. 11 of 1947 controlled the formation and operation of cooperatives and urged existing cooperatives with at least 10 members to register. The Public Service Commission proposed the appointment of a Registrar and the formation of the Department of Cooperatives under the Ministry of Primary Industries.
- **1996:** Cooperatives Act No. 16 of 1996 repealed all previous laws and updated guidelines on the registration, funds, amalgamation and dissolution of cooperatives. It had provisions for the establishment of the NCF as a national apex and a Cooperative Advisory Board (CAB) to advise the ministry on policies and possible amendments.
- **1999:** The Minister for Commerce, Industry, Cooperatives and Public Enterprise, exercised his rights in the Cooperative Regulations 1999 and expanded on the functioning of the various organs, set up by the previous law, such as the CAB.

## Key highlights of the 1996 Cooperatives Act

- All cooperatives to have the word 'Cooperative' as part of their name and 'Limited' at the end if it had limited liability of members.
- Service cooperatives to carry out at least 51% of trade with their members.
- At least 80% of a worker cooperatives' permanent full-time employees to be members of the cooperative.
- All cooperatives, other than the NCF, to make annual contributions to the Central Cooperative Fund which will be used to strengthen apexes and promote the cooperative movement.
- Defined an apex organisation as a registered cooperative that represented at least 75% of the total cooperatives operating in that particular sector in Fiji.
- Set up a Cooperative Tribunal as a dispute settlement mechanism.
- New cooperatives entitled to eight-year-tax holiday.



## Cooperative landscape of Fiji

Cooperatives in Fiji operate in different sectors across many outer islands and are closely linked with economic and social development. With a 94% increase in the number of cooperatives in the last 40 years, they play an important role in furthering the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the country. The government supports, funds and commissions the creation of new cooperatives as it promotes growth in the local community.

### Promoting industry and infrastructure (SDG 9): Nature's Way Cooperative Fiji Ltd. (NWC)

Established in 1995, to carry out mandatory quarantine treatment of Fijian papayas meant for export, NWC has grown as a thriving agribusiness. It provides treatment, grading, packing and technical services to members who include exporters and primary producers. The exporters purchase papayas, mangoes, breadfruit and eggplants from the producers and NWC treats and packs it for shipping. The cooperative has 300 members (as of 2015) and exported 705,723 kgs worth of produce in 2017.



Image credit: NWC



LWC retail store in Ba.  
Image credit: LWC

### Promoting gender empowerment (SDG 5): Lauwaki Women's Cooperative Ltd. (LWC)

The LWC is consumer and retail cooperative that has been operational since 1972. It runs cooperative retail stores and sells goods at a reasonable price. Its 106 women members and board have been lauded by the DCB for being well organised, profitable and being fully compliant with cooperative laws. The LCW has also diversified into an internet café for school children to use for their assignments and other projects. They had a turnover of US\$ 80,915 (FJ\$ 175,367) in 2018.

### Taking climate action (SDG 13): Drawa Block Forest Communities Cooperative (DBFCC)

In 2011, eight landowning clans, a women's collective and a youth group in northern Fiji came together to form the DBFCC – a legal entity that would conserve 4,120 ha of the tropical rainforest. The land is home to endangered and endemic flora and fauna. The landowners gave up logging rights to manage conservation projects and raise revenue by producing and selling rainforest honey and carbon offsets. They generate 18,800 carbon credits annually and made their first carbon sale in 2018, collecting US\$ 9,551 (FJ\$ 20,700). Their mission is to provide their communities with basic infrastructure and meet development goals. Their conservation efforts were recognised by the 2013 SPREP-SPC award for Excellence in Implementing Island Ecosystem Management Principles.



The forests of the Drawa Block communities.  
Image credit: DBFCC



NLPHCL members being allotted land titles in a historic achievement.  
Image credit: NLPHCL

### Reducing inequalities (SDG 10):

#### Nasinu Land Purchase and Housing Cooperative Ltd. (NLPHCL)

NLPHCL was formed in 1961 to safeguard the interests and rights of the people who were on the verge of being evicted by a new landlord. The people formed a cooperative and bought the 326 acres and two rods of freehold property. Membership grew and today, NLPHCL is the only not-for-profit housing cooperative in the country. The members receive lots/land shares as land ownership via NLPHCL - which is more affordable than buying individually titled land. NLPHCL also develops and sells land in the open market to meet their operational and development costs. They still have around 50% of the original land left to be subdivided and have given the Fijian government 10 acres of freehold land to resettle squatters.



- The OCCUL Pacific Credit Union Technical Congress 2012 held in Fiji, brought together the developed and developing Pacific credit union movements from Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. to share skills and knowledge.
- Fijian representatives co-organised and attended a high-level side-event during the 2016 session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN headquarters in New York. The theme was 'Realising women's economic empowerment in rural areas through cooperative and micro-enterprises.'
- Fijian government officials, cooperators and civil society members were invited to the 2019 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) workshop on building and strengthening the capacity of cooperatives.
- At the 2019 International Cooperatives Trade Fair (IICTF) in India, Fiji won the IICTF Excellence Award in recognition of its exemplary participation at the fair.

## Engagement with ICA-AP

- Fiji hosted the ICA National Consultation-cum Follow-up Workshop on cooperative-government collaborative strategies in 1991.
- In 2008, the ICA Regional Conference on Cooperative Development in South Pacific islands was held in Fiji and attended by 85 delegates from all across Fiji and other ICA members. Fijian delegates also attended and presented at the follow-up forums held in Vanuatu in 2018 and Australia in 2019.
- The 2009 International Conference on 'Enhanced Role of Cooperatives in the Recovery from Economic Crisis', organised by the ICA-AP Committee on Agriculture, was attended by cooperators from Fiji.
- At the Second Asia Pacific Cooperative Registrar's Forum in 2019, the Registrar of Cooperatives made a presentation on 'Increasing employment and entrepreneurship through cooperatives.'

## What are cooperatives?

Cooperatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations.

## Cooperative values

Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

## Cooperative principles

The seven cooperative principles are guidelines by which cooperatives put their values into practice.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training, and Information
6. Cooperation among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

## References

- <https://bit.ly/2qicqNv>
- <https://bit.ly/35YewL9>
- <https://bit.ly/2rbN0yX>
- <http://bit.ly/35ZnqvH>
- <https://bit.ly/2qnWg2l>
- <https://bit.ly/34PzmjB>
- <https://bit.ly/2LjGAEX>
- <https://bit.ly/2Rgby4n>
- <https://bit.ly/2DFBezB>
- <https://bit.ly/36lDpcN>
- <https://bit.ly/2LkCzA4>
- <https://bit.ly/2raTs9l>
- <https://bit.ly/2Re5tT3>
- <https://bit.ly/2r03DAe>
- <https://bit.ly/200f04p>
- <https://bit.ly/33Gm0BG>
- <https://bit.ly/2r2PbVG>
- <https://bit.ly/2Pg70NE>
- <https://bit.ly/20NXl7M>
- <https://bit.ly/384vvr0>
- <https://bit.ly/2P9KroZ>
- <https://bit.ly/384vAVC>
- <https://bit.ly/34Nqqv9>
- <https://bit.ly/2DLllaF>
- <https://bit.ly/2RoA2sx>
- <https://bit.ly/330VAAO>
- <https://bit.ly/36lFR2S>
- <https://bit.ly/2rfXA8b>
- <https://bit.ly/2DHTNmP>
- <https://bit.ly/33NoS2l>
- <https://bit.ly/2Yc0FZk>
- <https://bit.ly/2PdpV6W>
- <https://bit.ly/2rfKs0e>
- <https://bit.ly/2r0wzlk>
- <https://bit.ly/2ONtFgw>
- <https://bit.ly/2LkFGaZ>
- International Cooperative Alliance- Asia and Pacific, *50 Years of International Co-operative Alliance in Asia and Pacific [1960-2010]* Serving Cooperatives, 2010
- J. Schaffer, *Historical Dictionary of the Cooperative Movement*, 1999
- People and Culture in Oceania Vol. 26. *Leaving their Tradition Behind: Development of the Lami Movement in Fiji from 1949 to the 1990s*, N. Niwa, 2010
- The Journal of Polynesian Society Vol. 71, No. 2. *A Review of the Cooperative Movement in Fiji, 1948-58*, S. Singh, 1962

## About International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific

ICA-AP is one of four regional offices of the ICA. Established in 1960 in New Delhi, India, it unites, promotes, and develops cooperatives in the region. ICA-AP's 108 members from 33 countries spans a variety of sectors, including agriculture, credit and banking, consumer, education, fisheries, forestry, housing, and insurance.

## Contact information

ICA-AP: [info@icaap.coop](mailto:info@icaap.coop)



ICAAsiaAndPacific



ICAAPAC



ICAAsiaPacific

DCB: <https://bit.ly/36t8mXO>

NLPHCL: [nasinuland@connect.com.fj](mailto:nasinuland@connect.com.fj)

This publication has been co-funded by the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the ICA-AP and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Created in January 2020