

A factsheet

- 1 Read the factsheet. List four products which are produced by the co-operatives discussed.

Co-ops: working for a better future

A co-operative, or co-op, is a farm, business, or other organisation that is owned and run by and for its members, who can be customers, employees or residents. The members have the right to make decisions about the co-op as well as have an equal share of the profits.

Co-operatives are successful around the world.

100 million people are employed globally by co-operatives.

Over 1 billion people worldwide are members of co-operatives.

Over 3 billion people worldwide are dependent on co-ops for their living.



A Turkey

Women have been weaving rugs in Örselli village for a long time, but they have been poorly paid for this skilled work. This situation only grew worse when cheap factory-made rugs came onto the market. Some women lost interest in learning how to weave, threatening the survival of this old tradition. Then in the mid 1980s, a group of women formed a co-operative to help them in the production and marketing of their carpets. Before the co-op, the village's women received around 150 million Turkish lira (\$115) for a carpet that took months to make and cost them around \$80 in materials. Today, the women get their wool and loom from the co-op, which then pays them \$270 for each carpet.

C Morocco

In the desert region of rural southwest Morocco, women have been making argan oil for centuries from the nuts of the rare argan tree. Now, due to hugely increased demand, co-operatives have appeared across the region and are producing the oil for international sale for use in cosmetics and cooking products. The co-ops have given the local women a decent wage, but also the opportunity for onsite schooling for younger children, and literacy and healthcare classes for themselves. When the business makes a profit, members can invest the money in new projects, for example producing couscous, dates, and olive oil.

B Jordan

Established in 2007, the Specific Union for Farmers Productive (the SUFW) is a volunteer union and all of its members are women farmers. Today it has 900 members and it supports 12 different women's co-operatives. It is the first union of its kind in the Arab world. The SUFW offers vital support for women farmers who are trying to set up their own projects, by providing small loans. These projects range from planting gardens with medicinal herbs, water harvesting and land reclamation, to a number of other agricultural activities. The co-op also runs training courses for women farmers to develop skills.

D United Arab Emirates

The Sougha initiative was launched in 2009 to encourage Emirati artisans to make their traditional handicrafts. At the beginning seven women from Ghayathi in Abu Dhabi were involved, but now there are more than 400 workers. The skilled women learn how to use the materials and tools they require and are also trained in running their own small businesses. And the products, which include bags, business cardholders and mobile phone and iPad cases, are for sale online and from different retailers across the UAE. The bags use traditional Sadou patterns, a style of weaving that was traditionally used on blankets, cushions and Bedouin tents. The growth of the project means that craft skills which were in danger of being lost forever have been saved.

2 Read the factsheet again. Match the sentences 1–5 with the co-operatives A–D. Some sentences match more than one of the co-operatives.

Which of the co-operatives ... ?

- 1 provides financial support
- 2 provides training
- 3 has several different co-op sites
- 4 encourages skills that might have disappeared
- 5 provides help for family members

3 Answer the questions about the text.

- 1 Why are co-operatives so important?

- 2 What was the main problem faced by the women weavers of Örselli before they set up the co-op?

- 3 How do the members of the SUFW benefit from the co-operative?

- 4 What happens when the argan oil co-ops in Morocco make a profit?

- 5 Where can you buy the different goods made by the Sougha co-operative?

4 Answer the questions with your own ideas.

- 1 Do you know of any co-operatives in your country? What do they make?

- 2 In what ways is the co-operative business model beneficial to society?

- 3 If you were going to set up a co-operative, what would you make?
