

The Near-Unanimous Declaration of America's Food Cooperatives

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the corporate bonds which have connected them with others and to assume among the fruits of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God have endowed them, a decent respect to the opinions of personkind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the establishment of new cooperative business enterprises.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness and that, central to that happiness, is citizen engagement, economic empowerment, access to healthy foods and good health,

That to secure these rights, member-owned, democratically governed Cooperative Business Enterprises are instituted among citizens (Co-op Principle #4), membership is available to all, without discrimination (Co-op Principle #1), deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed (Co-op Principle #2),

That whenever any Form of Corporation becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Cooperative Business Enterprise (Co-op Principle #4), laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness (Co-op Principle #3). Prudence, indeed, will dictate that business enterprises long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that citizens are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such business enterprises, and to provide new business models for their future security (Co-op Principle #4).

Such has been the patient sufferance of these food growers and consumers; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Commerce. The history of the present mega-corporations is a history of high costs, repeated injuries and usurpations to the citizens, all having in direct object the establishment

of an absolute Tyranny over the citizenry and their access to healthy foods. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world (Co-op Principle #5).

We, therefore, the Representatives of the Food Cooperatives of America, in General Congress, Assembled this date, June 15, 2012 in Philadelphia, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good Members of these Cooperatives, solemnly publish and declare, that these united Cooperative Business Enterprises (Co-op Principle #6) are, and of Right ought to be, Free and Independent Business Enterprises (Co-op Principle #4), that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the profit-taking, third-party shareholders of the World (Co-op Principle #4) and that as Free and Independent Cooperative Business Enterprises (Co-op Principle #4), they have full Power to establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent Business Enterprises may of right do (Co-op Principles #4 & #7).

And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor (Co-op Principles #6 & #7).

The 7 Cooperative Principles:

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