



Brussels, 15th of March 2020

World Consumer Rights Day “The Sustainable Consumer”

#SustainableConsumer

TOP CONSUMER CONCERNS:

1. Consumer information
2. Sustainable packaging

CONSUMER CO-OPS:

1. Coop Italy Offers 100% Traceability in Own-Brands
2. The Co-op Group, UK Pledges 100% Own-Brand Recyclability

Every year the global consumer movement celebrates 15 March as the **World Consumer Rights Day**; an occasion to join our voices and address the pressing challenges in the way of maximizing **consumer protection** and **empowerment**.

This year's theme is **“The Sustainable Consumer”** and focuses on the urgent need of **changing consumers' lifestyle** aimed at achieving **true sustainability**. The green transition is the talk of the town, with the EU Commission basing its new mandate (2019-2024) on the European Green Deal, which aims to reconcile economic growth with environmental sustainability and social justice.

Challenges persist and actions must be undertaken to curb disrupting human patterns which lead to **1 million plastic bottles** being sold around the world *every minute*, **5 trillion pieces of plastic** floating in our oceans, and **3.9 billion tonnes** of food consumed, of which one-third is wasted.

It is undeniable - **consumers are vital for the completion of any transition to a more sustainable world**. In retail, the consumer is king. Worldwide, they have been increasing their demand for sustainable products and brands, pushing for systemic changes in global supply chains and a higher emphasis on reuse, recycling and sustainable food consumption along the way. However, they should not be made to carry the load on their shoulders alone. This is why the 2020 World Consumer Rights Day will also address the governments' and businesses' duty in this journey – namely, actions which would make the sustainable choice the easy choice for consumers.

On this occasion, **Todor Ivanov – Euro Coop Secretary General** commented: *“Consumer co-operatives are proud of their long history of protecting the rights and interests of consumers, dating back since the first co-op in 1844. For more than a century, our members were the only national structures advancing the rights of all consumers, not just their individual co-operators. Today, we are happy to be one of the many such organisations, together with BEUC and Consumers International. Being owned by our consumers means the issue of sustainable consumption is at the top of our priorities. Our members invest incredible amount of time, energy and resources in raising awareness of the dire need to change our individual and collective lifestyles. After all, Co-operative Principle V is “Education, training and information”. Our members lead by example in subjecting their own-brands to stringent labelling schemes beyond current legislation and maximum packaging recyclability.”*



Being a co-operative means your responsibility does not end at the cash register. Consumer co-operatives implement the principle of radical transparency and work tirelessly to provide maximum **information** to the consumer via labelling and awareness raising campaigns of different nature on issues such as overconsumption, pollution, health, food waste, and obesity.

Consumers International has identified 5 key trends driving progress towards sustainable consumption:

1. **Clear product information**
2. **Sustainable mobility and ridesharing**
3. **Circular design and sustainable fashion**
4. **Sustainable packaging**
5. **Product durability**

Due to the nature of our business – food retail – product information and sustainable packaging are most relevant. Consumer co-operatives champion both of these fronts and we would like to share some of the success here below.

❖ **Clear Product Information**

✓ **SPAIN: [Eroski Publishes Environmental Declarations of Own-Brands](#)**

Reinforcing its unwavering commitment towards consumers, Eroski promotes a more sustainable diet via full transparent with its products’ nutritional information, becoming the first retailer in Spain to do so.

✓ **ITALY: [Coop Offers 100% Traceability in Own-Brands](#)**

Coop Italy’s website allows consumers to type the name or the code of any of the 4,000+ own-brand product and find out about the origin of its ingredients including the establishment where it was manufactured.

✓ **NETHERLANDS: [Coop PlanetProof Label to Sustainable Dairy Products](#)**

As of 2019, all 300 Coop supermarkets offer dairy products guaranteeing sustainability, animal welfare, and biodiversity standards.

❖ Sustainable Packaging

✓ UNITED KINGDOM: [The Co-op Group Pledges 100% Own-Brand Recyclability](#)

All black plastic packaging is banned, while the non-recyclable plastics will be phased out within 2020, when the largest-ever UK-wide scheme to recycle plastic will be pioneered.

✓ NORWAY: [Coop Targets 25% Cuts in Plastics by 2025](#)

To achieve this, Coop is making its own-brand packaging 100% recyclable, banning all harmful chemicals from its products, and is innovating packaging which extends the natural lifespan of food products, reinforcing its zero food waste vision.

Across the board, consumer co-operatives are champions of sustainability. In **Sweden**, **Coop** has been voted the most sustainable retailer for 2016 and 2018, while its own-brand Änglamark was named in 2019 Sweden's **greenest brand** for the eighth consecutive year. In **Finland**, the **S Group**, the market leader, is operating a programme "**The Best Place to Live**" - a list of 100 acts for the good of society, for the circular economy and against climate change, as well as improving the co-op's operating culture, safeguarding human rights and promoting well-being and health. They aim to become the first retailer in Finland to be carbon neutral by 2025.
