

My.COOP – MANAGING YOUR AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE

Guide for potential users



Background on My.COOP

Agricultural cooperatives exist in countries all around the world, and they often face similar challenges: ineffective management, lack of market access, inadequate member commitment, and insufficient financial and other relevant services, among others. The information on available opportunities for cooperative members and for those working closely with agricultural cooperatives might be dispersed or unclear.

Managing your agricultural cooperative - My.COOP is a training package and programme on the management of agricultural cooperatives, launched in January 2012 through a partnership. It aims to respond to management challenges faced by agricultural cooperatives. It addresses managerial challenges that many agricultural cooperatives face, and is based on the idea that proper management enables cooperatives to offer high quality, efficient and effective services to their members.

My.COOP builds on the long experience of the ILO's Materials and Techniques for Cooperative Management (MATCOM) Programme (1978-early 1990s). The training package consists of four modules, a trainers' manual and a mobile learning toolkit. In addition, it has an online learning environment and platform (www.agriculture-my.coop) which users, trainers and My.COOP partners can benefit from for networking, learning and sharing, as well as further development of the package.

Introduction to My.COOP Package

My.COOP package

Module 1: Basics of agricultural cooperatives

Why agricultural cooperatives? What are the challenges they face? How are they governed, managed and financed?

Module 2: Cooperative service provision

What are the needs of the members and how to meet them with right services?

Module 3: Supply of farm inputs

What, how and from where to procure inputs? How to store and sell them?

Module 4: Cooperative marketing

What are the necessary marketing services and how to receive market information? How to upgrade the market?

Trainer's manual with a wide range of training activities using a broad range of participatory methodologies

Mobile learning toolkit

Learning activities using the mobile phone to enhance classroom training before, during or after the event

Online platform for trainers and students for debating sharing experiences.

All the contents are available at the My.COOP Platform at www.agriculture-my.coop



My.COOP provides clear and relevant information on how to improve management in agricultural cooperatives with the understanding that even when the problems are often of similar nature, each country and region has their own specificities. Taking such differences into account My.COOP process has been built to allow for adaptations to different country contexts and experiences. The generic English version of My.COOP package can be translated and adapted to a training package which is suitable to respond to the specific challenges in any given country.

My.COOP has been translated into more than ten languages and adapted to over dozen country contexts. These include horticulture in Egypt, entrepreneurship for youth in Colombia and mainstreaming agricultural cooperatives in Nepal. The package is being used by cooperative organizations in three different continents to improve agricultural cooperative management and increase benefits for members, users and communities.

My.COOP language versions

My.COOP is available in the following languages, with other language translations and adaptations on their way:

Arabic, Indonesian Bahasa, Chinese, English, French, Nepali, Sinhala, Spanish, Swahili and Tamil.

My.COOP Partnership

My.COOP is built around a partnership of several international and national organizations. The objectives of the partnership are to:

- Ensure a high quality and worldwide delivery of the My.COOP package and training programmes with the aim of maximizing impact; and
- Support the further development of the My.COOP package and training programmes, amongst others through self-initiated knowledge management and knowledge sharing practices.¹

The partnership is based on the principle of reciprocity, with each partner contributing to the development and quality controls of the package. My.COOP is copyrighted under Creative Commons, allowing for free access to the materials which cannot be copyrighted to any of the partners, even after making changes to it.²

Initiated by the ILO's Cooperatives Unit, the partnership involves: Agriterra, the FAO, the International Training Centre of the ILO, the Royal Tropical Institute and the Wageningen University and Research Centre, among others.³

My.COOP Implementation Process

The process of transferring My.COOP into different local contexts can be divided into the following phases:

The **My.COOP online platform** is a place for sharing and exchanging about challenges and learning on cooperatives, both agricultural and in general. With over 900 registered users, this platform is not only a discussion forum, but offers access to My.COOP materials in different languages, as well as information on those trainers who have completed My.COOP programme (www.agriculture-my.coop).

The platform is also the place where **My.COOP distance learning ToT programme** takes place. This online course is aimed for those with an existing good understanding on cooperatives who wish to train cooperatives on My.COOP. Information on the distance learning programme and the dates of the upcoming online ToTs are available in the My.COOP platform.

My.COOP distance learning ToT programme is normally divided into three months, while the intensive face-to-face My.COOP course lasts about five days. An additional day of visits to agricultural cooperatives can be added extending the face-to-face course to six days (www.agriculture-my.coop).

¹ Further development of My.COOP includes adaptations to different country contexts as well as possible additional modules and contents, on issues such as gender equality, child labour, greening of cooperatives, among others.

² For more information on Creative Commons, see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

³ For more information on My COOP partners, visit their official websites at ILO COOP: www.ilo.org/coop; Agriterra: <http://www.agriterra.org/en>; FAO: <http://www.fao.org/home/en/>; ITC-ILO: <http://www.itcilo.org/en>; Royal Tropical Institute: <http://www.kit.nl/>; Wageningen University and Research Centre: <http://www.wageningenur.nl/en.htm>

⁴ Partnership principles and the full list of partners are available at My.COOP online platform, www.agriculture-my.coop.

Steps in My.COOP Implementation Process

1 Identifying local partners: In order to ensure high quality, it is best to work with local partners such as cooperative federations, cooperative unions, cooperative support organizations, cooperative departments in the relevant government ministries, cooperative colleges or universities with specific knowledge on the national context around agricultural cooperatives. This helps ensure local ownership of the package, allows for better results for broadly relevant, up-to-date, and informative adaptation of My.COOP. It is advisable to sign a partnership agreement outlining the roles and responsibilities of each actor involved. The My.COOP Partnership Principles should be consulted early on in the process and guide the work of partners throughout.³

2 Translation is applicable when the required language version does not yet exist. Translation is generally undertaken from the generic English version to the local language by a certified translator. It is highly advisable for the translator to work closely with representatives of the local partners in order to ensure accurate terminology of the technical contents. In some cases national adaptations can be considered instead of a full translation. For instance for Arabic-speaking countries a generic Arabic translation has been undertaken and it is then being fine-tuned for national specificities of the language, rather than undertaking a full translation.

3a. **Adaptation** of the My.COOP package to reflect national and local reality of agricultural cooperatives in a coherent manner is the next step of the process. This includes adapting the (translated) My.COOP package to reflect the local and national contexts: case studies should be replaced with specific cases from the country; photos may be changed to better illustrate the realities of the country; references to national context, such as legislation, historical context or particular value chains and products of priority importance, can be added; and sections that are especially relevant for a country can be further strengthened.

3b. In some instances an introduction module, a “**Module 0**”, can be developed to complement the existing training package. This module can outline the country context in cooperative policy and legislation, history of cooperative movement in the country, access to finance, as well as more specific managerial challenges etc.

4a. Once the initial adaptation by a consultant or a local partner is completed, **validation through a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop** is undertaken to ensure the general quality of the package. The ToT includes revision of the contents and correct use of language, provision of examples and updating of the case studies. In the validation workshop cooperative stakeholders come together to make the final modifications to the package and to ensure it reflects the realities in the country. Participants can include cooperative organizations, cooperative training institutions and other relevant stakeholders. This workshop further feeds into the adapted package, and its objective is to ensure that the package is ready to be rolled out to wider target audiences. Feedback on the adapted package should be collected, and consequently analysed and incorporated into the finalization of My.COOP.

4b. **Field testing** is an integral part of the process before having the materials ready. The trainers will need to test how the adapted package works in practice, and provide feedback on the contents. Based on these, the final version of My.COOP can be completed.

5 The final package can then be **layout designed**. While the generic English version is available in four separate folders in a hard cover box, there are other, more cost-effective ways of printing the material locally. Besides all the new versions can be made available on My.COOP platform




6 Once the participants have successfully completed the ToT, they receive a certificate, and are accredited to **roll out and deliver** My.COOP training to agricultural cooperatives. My.COOP online platform has a list of trainers who have completed the ToT.



Costs for the translation and adaptation processes vary from one case to another. In designing the budget at least the following need to be considered:

- › Translation fees from English to the local language;
- › Consultant fees to adapt the package to the national context;
- › Organization of a validation workshop (e.g. venue, facilitation, transport and other costs of participants); and
- › Design and printing of the final My.COOP materials.

Highlights of My.COOP Country Adaptations

APPROACH	COUNTRY	CONTEXT	PARTNERS	ACTIVITIES
LED BY A LOCAL ORGANIZATION	Colombia 	The National Service of Learning (SENA) included My.COOP as part of their Young Entrepreneurship Programme.	SENA, National Cooperative University, Confederation of Cooperatives of Colombia (Confecoop).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › My.COOP was adapted into Colombian context. › More than 160 people have been trained on My.Coop within SENA's Young Entrepreneurship Programme.
MULTI-AGENCY APPROACH	Egypt 	Existing Arabic translation was adapted under a joint UN programme "Pro-poor horticulture value chains in Upper Egypt".	UN Joint Programme, government institutions, cooperative institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The package was adapted into the Egyptian context. › It was validated with government and cooperative institutions and cooperative managers in a number of horticultural value chains.
LED BY MY.COOP PARTNER ORGANIZATION	Nepal 	There was a need for good quality training materials for agricultural cooperative management in Nepali language.	Partnership between ILO, Agriterria and Nepal Agriculture Cooperative Central Federation (NACCFL) and Central Tea Cooperative Federation (CTCF).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The package was translated into Nepali language by NACCFL. › The first ToT was held in 2014 for over 20 participants. › Roll out is ongoing, with more than 200 people trained to date.
NATIONAL INSTITUTIONALIZATION	Peru 	My.COOP was included as part of the cooperative strategy of the Ministry of Production, with an aim to build a network of trainers.	Ministry of Production, USAID & ILO Regional Office.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › My.COOP was adapted into Peruvian context. › Close to 40 private trainers were trained, a total of 300 cooperatives were trained in 2015.
LED BY THE ILO	Sri Lanka 	My.COOP was integrated as part of the two phases of ILO's Local Empowerment through Economic Development (LEED) project.	Northern Provincial Department of Cooperative Development, National Institute of Cooperative Development, National Cooperative Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › My.COOP was translated into Sinhalese and Tamil. › National adaptations were made in both languages by a consultant. › 20 government officials working on cooperative development were trained. › My.COOP modules were used to train 20 cooperative societies.

For further information on **My.COOP**, please visit www.agriculture-my.coop and www.ilo.org/coop
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