



**16 October 2012**

## **PRESS RELEASE: Co-operatives key to feeding a growing population**

Co-operatives are critically important to feed a growing population in an era of increasing global resource scarcity and unequal distribution. This is the message of the Dunsany Declaration, launched today to coincide with World Food Day.

Agricultural co-operatives, whose membership is often mainly small and medium scale farmers, have a huge impact on feeding the world and their importance will grow significantly over the next 50 years as the world faces unprecedented and urgent challenges that require immediate action.

Peter Couchman, Chief Executive of the Plunkett Foundation that co-ordinated the Dunsany Declaration, said "In an increasingly urbanised world, over 3 billion people will continue to live and work in rural areas, while the whole of the global population will be reliant on the rural landscape for resources including food and energy and water. Co-operative approaches enable rural people and rural communities to meet the increasingly urgent challenges facing the world including feeding a growing population while meeting their own everyday needs and improving their own lives."

Peter continued: "World Food Day this year focuses on the role of agricultural co-operatives in feeding the world. Therefore we feel that this is the right time to launch the Dunsany Declaration to both appreciate the role that agricultural co-operatives have in feeding the world today while also outlining the critical role that rural co-operatives in their many forms have in addressing key issues facing the world."

The Dunsany Declaration, a framework for the development of rural co-operatives internationally, was developed by a range of range of participants from individual co-operatives, United Nations agencies, international co-operative agencies, national co-operative support organisations and co-operative sector representatives who together formed the 'Dunsany Group'.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations said: "FAO supports the efforts of the Dunsany Group and the vision for rural co-operative development articulated in the Dunsany Declaration. FAO stands ready to work with other stakeholders to advance this important agenda."

The Dunsany Declaration was launched at an event to celebrate World Food Day at the UK Houses of Parliament for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Agroecology. The Plunkett Foundation is holding a World of Rural Co-operation session at the Co-operatives United World Festival in Manchester on 31<sup>st</sup> October from 11.30-13.00 to present the plan and to encourage wider debate on the Dunsany Declaration for rural co-operative development. If you would like to attend the Co-operatives United event or to sign up individually or organisationally to support the Dunsany Declaration for Rural Co-operative Development please contact [info@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:info@plunkett.co.uk) for further information.

The Plunkett Foundation would like to thank the following organisations for their support for the World of Rural Co-operation International Roundtable Event:

- The International Co-operative Agriculture Organisation
- The Carnegie UK Trust
- Co-operatives UK

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

The **Plunkett Foundation** ([www.plunkett.co.uk](http://www.plunkett.co.uk)) was founded in 1919 by Sir Horace Plunkett, the pioneer of agricultural co-operation in Ireland. Plunkett has a long history of promoting and supporting the development of rural co-operatives internationally. It has achieved this through running various support programmes for new and existing rural co-operatives, undertaking training and educational activity and developing and disseminating knowledge on rural co-operatives internationally. Plunkett is a proud member of the international co-operative movement through membership of the International Co-operative Alliance, the International Co-operative Agricultural Organisation, Co-operatives Europe and Co-operatives UK. Plunkett is based in Oxfordshire, England.

The **World of Rural Co-operation Roundtable Event** ([www.rural2012.coop](http://www.rural2012.coop)): Co-operators from around the world met in Dunsany Castle, Ireland on the 11-12 September in the International Year of Co-operatives to agree a global plan for the development of rural co-operatives. The event was organised by the Plunkett Foundation and held at the family home of Sir Horace Plunkett, the organisation's founder. It brought together a range of participants from individual co-operatives, United Nations agencies, international co-operative agencies, national co-operative support organisations and co-operative sector representatives to form the 'Dunsany Group'. The **Dunsany Group** refers to the following people who attended the World of Rural Co-operation Roundtable Event and signed the Dunsany Declaration in their personal capacity. The group comprised of the following:

Peter Couchman, Plunkett Foundation  
Pauline Green, International Co-operative Alliance  
David Button, Co-operatives UK  
Eve Crowley, Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations  
Fayyad Fayyad, Olive Oil Co-operative Union, Palestine  
Michael Ward, Centre for Co-operative Studies, UCC  
James Graham, Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society  
Colette Lebel, La Co-op fédérée, Quebec  
Martin Lowery, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, USA  
David Cameron, Community Land Scotland  
Seamus O'Donohue, Irish Co-operative Organisation Society  
Simel Esim, International Labour Office  
James J Kennelly, Skidmore College, USA  
Hans van Es, Dutch Produce Association / COGECA  
Ms. Min Su Kim, NACF/ ICAO  
Mike Perry, Plunkett Foundation  
Harriet English, Plunkett Foundation

### **World Food Day – 16 October 2012: Agricultural cooperatives – key to feeding the world**

Agricultural cooperatives are the focus of World Food Day 2012 (<http://www.fao.org/getinvolved/worldfoodday/en/>). The official World Food Day theme, announced each spring by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), gives focus to World Food Day observances and raises awareness and understanding of approaches to ending hunger. “Agricultural cooperatives – key to feeding the world” is the formal wording of the 2012 theme. It has been chosen to highlight the role of cooperatives in improving food security and contributing to the eradication of hunger. Interest in cooperatives and rural organizations is also reflected in the decision of the UN General Assembly to designate 2012 “International Year of Cooperatives.”

### **The United Nations International Year of Co-operatives**

International years are declared by the United Nations to draw attention to and encourage action on major issues. The International Year of Co-operatives ([www.2012.coop](http://www.2012.coop)) is intended to raise public awareness of the invaluable contributions of co-operative enterprises to poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration. The Year will also highlight the strengths of the co-operative business model as an alternative means of doing business and furthering socio-economic development.

The UN's goals for the IYC are to:

- Increase public awareness about co-operatives and their contributions to socio-economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Promote the formation and growth of co-operatives.
- Encourage governments to establish policies, laws and regulations conducive to the formation, growth and stability of co-operatives.

