



**AgEcon** SEARCH  
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

*The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library*

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search  
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>  
[aesearch@umn.edu](mailto:aesearch@umn.edu)

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

# A Comparative Analysis of Food-Marketing Cooperatives in Spain and the U.S.

**Dixie Watts Reaves**

Cooperatives are businesses that are owned and controlled by the people who use them. According to the International Labour Conference (2002), “The promotion and strengthening of the identity of cooperatives should be encouraged on the basis of: cooperative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity; as well as ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.”

Cooperatives are fairly prevalent in U.S. agriculture, with nearly 4,000 cooperatives boasting membership of 3.8 million (noting that farmers can be counted more than once if they are members of more than one cooperative). There are more than 2,000 marketing cooperatives, 1,400 farm supply (purchasing) cooperatives, and 470 service cooperatives; approximately one-third of all agricultural products are marketed through cooperatives.

By comparison, cooperatives are far more prevalent in Spanish agriculture and are very

much viewed as a part of society. While Spain is geographically much smaller than the United States, its agricultural sector is served by more than 3,900 cooperatives, with 90% of agricultural producers being members of a cooperative. Forty-two percent of agricultural production in Spain is marketed through cooperatives, including 100% of tobacco, 90% of rice, 80% of wine, 70% of olive oil, 45% of citrus fruit, 35% of fruit, 35% of olives, and 15% of vegetables.

Technical assistance, educational programming, and research can improve a cooperative’s chance of success. Example of organizations that support cooperative development and growth include the USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC), and the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA).