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COMMON MARKET



What is Common Market All About?	1
BELONGING TO THE CO-OP	
How Do I Become a Member of Common Market?	2
How Much Will I Save if I Shop at Common Market?	4
Besides Lower Prices, are there Other Benefits of Being a Common Market Member?	5
BUYING FOOD FROM COMMON MARKET	
What is the Procedure for Buying Food from Common Market?	7
How Do I Pick Up My Food at Common Market?	8
Does Common Market Accept Food Stamps, Welfare Vouchers, or Checks?	8
Is there a Minimum Food Order? Can I Buy in Bulk Quantities? Can I Order More or Less Often than Once a Week?	9
Is Common Market Mostly for Students and Young People?	9
Can Non-Members Shop at Common Market?	9
WORKING AT COMMON MARKET	
What Type of Jobs Fulfill My Work Requirement?	10
Regular Warehouse Jobs	11
Trained Warehouse Jobs	11
At-Home Jobs	11
Committee Work	12
What If I Would Want to do Something that the Co-op isn't Doing Right Now?	14
How is the Work Requirement Enforced?	14
How Can I Change a Work Time that I've Signed Up For?	14
If I Don't Buy Food for a Period of Time, Must I Still Do My Work Jobs?	15
I am the Only Member of My Household who ever Participates in Common Market. Are the Other People in My Household Also Responsible for Paying the Membership Fee and Doing the Work?	15
ABOUT THE FOOD	
Where Does Common Market Get the Food it Sells?	16
Are there some Foods that the Co-op Does Not Carry?	17
Will I Receive All the Food I Order Each Week?	18
DECISION MAKING	
Who Owns the Co-op? Who Makes the Decisions?	19
What Does the Paid Staff Do?	19
Where Does the Mark-Up on Common Market Food Go? How is this Different from the Mark-Up on Supermarket Goods?	20
Does Common Market Make a Profit Above Operating Expenses?	21
A BIT OF HISTORY	
What is a Co-op? When, Why, and How Did they Get Started?	22
What is the History of the Food Co-op Movement in Madison?	24
SOCIAL CHANGE	
Weeds in the Garden	26
What are the Specific Goals of Common Market?	28
In What Ways does Common Market Implement The Social Change Goals?	28



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WHAT IS COMMON MARKET ALL ABOUT?

Common Market is a membership food cooperative which distributes food weekly to people all over Madison. Being a member of Common Market means that you are not only a shopper, but a worker and owner of the cooperative as well. As *shoppers* Common Market's members can buy over 600 food items, including: a full line of fresh fruits and vegetables; many meats, including beef, pork, fish, and poultry; 25 different kinds of natural cheese; all kinds of dairy products; dozens of grains, flours, beans, seeds, nuts, and pastas; a variety of dried fruits; baked goods from eight different bakeries; a multitude of juices; frozen products; canned goods; and spices, teas, coffees, and beer.

As *workers* the members of Common Market are responsible for a certain amount of labor each month to help maintain the co-op. The amount of work required averages about 2 hours per month per adult person.

The members of Common Market are also the *owners*, and as such are encouraged to participate in the decision-making as much as their interest and time allows. Policy decisions such as pricing structure, food policy, use of surplus, and community involvement, are made by the members themselves through committees and the quarterly General Membership meetings.

Belonging to the Co-op

HOW DO I BECOME A MEMBER OF COMMON MARKET?

Membership is open to everyone. Joining Common Market involves carrying out a few basic responsibilities:

- 1) Learn about the practices and policies of Common Market by attending an initial new-member orientation session. The new-member orientation sessions are held once a month for most of the year, and once a week in the fall. Each member of CM is expected to participate in one session, within the first month of membership.
- 2) Form or join an ordering group. An ordering group is composed of two or more households who agree to purchase food together from Common Market. You may find friends, neighbors, or co-workers to form an ordering group. Or you can join an already-existing group. You can do this by using Common Market's "locator file," which is a listing of all the current ordering groups by geographic location. Groups which appear in need of members and/or are geographically-convenient for you may be called to see whether they wish to enlarge.

Once you've formed an ordering group, choose a name for yourselves, using as much creativity as you like. Just to stimulate your imagination, a few of the Common Market notables have been: Zucchini Zealots, Arboretum Artichokes, Hunger Unltd., and Chicken Lips. Or how about something like Selected Vegetables, Associated Grossers, Underground Carrot, or Gluttonous Maximous?

After you've picked a name for your group, you will fill out membership and locator file cards, listing all the adult members of each household. During the course of your group's membership, you should keep these cards

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up-to-date by making the appropriate changes yourself or through a staff person.

- 3) Pay the \$2.50 annual membership fee for each adult person.
- 4) Fulfill the minimum work requirement each month. The minimum work requirement is assigned to each ordering group based on the number of adult members, according to the following breakdown:

Group Size (Number of Adults)	Number of Work Shifts (3-hour shifts per month)
1 adult	1 work shift
2-6 adults	2 work shifts
7-10 adults	3 work shifts
11-20 adults	4 work shifts
20 and over	5 work shifts

The number of required work shifts for the three largest size categories is increased by one for Common Market designated 5-week months (which are always announced in advance).

Besides these basic requirements, members are strongly urged to attend General Membership meetings, to keep informed of the issues, decisions and information generated by the organization, and to have one group member on an active committee (which counts as work credit).





**IF I CAN'T FIND ANYONE TO
BE IN AN ORDERING GROUP,
CAN I JOIN AS A HOUSEHOLD
OR INDIVIDUAL?**

If you are unable to or do not wish to find other people to form an ordering group, you are still *welcome* to join Common Market as a household or individual. An individual is expected to fulfill one 3-hour work shift per month.

HOW MUCH WILL I SAVE IF I SHOP AT COMMON MARKET?

The amount of money you save at Common Market depends upon what sort of food you buy and where you did most of your shopping in the past. CM conducts regular price comparison surveys. The results of these surveys show that CM's prices are lower than the average of the major supermarkets in Madison. CM's prices on bread, grains, cheese, produce, dried fruits, and nuts range from 12-30% cheaper than the average of three major city supermarkets. Spices are 70-80% cheaper (which means they are 500% higher in the supermarkets). On the prices of some packaged and processed items, though, such as canned goods, CM is 7-14% higher than the supermarkets.

It is important to realize that there *will* be certain items in supermarkets that are priced lower than those same items in Common Market. One reason for this is that supermarkets intentionally lower some prices on items such as bananas, broilers, or hamburger in order to attract people. This "savings" to the consumer, though, is cancelled once s/he fills up the shopping cart with other grocery items. Therefore, in order to get a true picture of the price savings at CM, you must compare a good sampling of items in each food category.

The availability of certain kinds of foods is another factor to consider in savings. CM sells many basic, natural, or low-processed foods, some of which are just not available in grocery stores, and others are available only in gourmet or health food stores at extremely high prices. Some examples are: raw cashews, dried peaches, pears, and apricots, bulgar wheat, whole grain breads without preservatives, organic meat, whole wheat pasta, and unrefined oils.

Planning your food needs means savings too. According to a Ralph Nader report, over 50% of foods purchased in grocery stores are the result of impulse buying. With CM's pre-order system, you sit down, figure your needs for the week and order accordingly. You can order more than you need, of course, but the point is that the co-op employs no tricks, gadgets, or other forms of psychological manipulation to push high profit items on you that you don't want or need. Many CM members have stated that the biggest money-saving factor has been the elimination of unneeded food items which supermarkets entice people to buy on impulse.

BESIDES LOWER PRICES, ARE THERE OTHER BENEFITS OF BEING A COMMON MARKET MEMBER?

The most oft-repeated compliment of Common Market is our high food quality. The produce is fresh. During the growing season, it is purchased from local farmers who apply no or few chemicals to the land and crops. Our eggs are fresh—bought directly from local farmers. We carry high quality, natural cheeses which are purchased from small cheese factories, many of which make the cheese to order for the Intra-Community Co-op (ICC)—a wholesale supplier cooperative. CM's minimally-processed grains, flours, pastas, seeds and beans are unmatched in the supermarkets. Some of these products are made to order for the midwest co-op network. CM's natural (no preservatives or sugar) juices and dried fruit can only be found at health food stores at sky-high prices. CM carries a full line of low-chemical beef and pork, both of which are purchased directly from local National Farmers Organization farmers. A few of the other notables include the large number of whole grain and other breads without

preservatives; unrefined, no-preservative oils at very reasonable prices; and a line of excellent quality low-priced spices.

Although the staff and membership Food Committees have emphasized low- or non-processed, minimally-packaged foods, we do carry (and will be adding more) many different canned goods to reduce or eliminate the need for members to shop in supplementary stores.

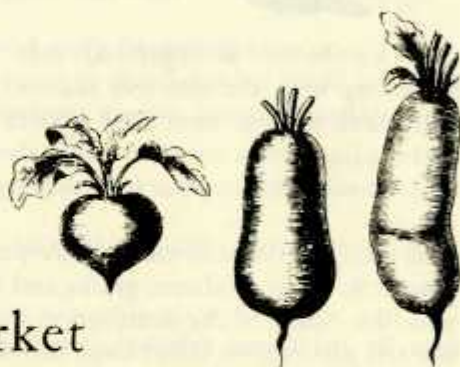
Food sources and products are researched by the Food Committees, and those purchased from ICC, by the ICC purchasing staff. Much attention is given to taste, nutritional value, minimization of additives, and co-op user demand. Member suggestions, favorable responses, and complaints are vitally important elements to maintaining and improving the quality of CM food.

High food quality is possible because co-op people are taking more control over aspects of food procurement, such as where the food comes from and how it gets here; the nature and quantity of packaging and processing of products; the quality and nutritional value of food items; and the manner in which food is distributed.

Besides the benefit of better quality, more nutritional food, CM offers another immeasurable benefit—the opportunity for you to take responsibility and control. How many times have you purchased an item, found it unsatisfactory, tried to complain and nobody would listen? How many times have you had an idea or suggestion to make that would help you, the consumer, find items a little easier, or avoid long lines, etc.? And when you finally got up the courage to voice this complaint or suggestion, nothing changed? The problems we are talking about are a lack of responsibility and a lack of control. We're sure you've experienced frustrating food consumer/supermarket relationships in the past—where you have little or no control over the quality and kinds of food items offered, and the food institutions feel no particular responsibility to listen to you and your food needs. Common Market is offering you an alternative to that—YOU are in control. We weren't kidding when we said that as a member of CM, you are also an owner. If you see something being done

wrong, or have a better idea about how to do it, it is not only your right, but your responsibility to speak up! That's what working together cooperatively is all about—having a voice and sharing in that responsibility of control with others to help meet everyone's primary needs. The experience of participating in cooperative and collective ways of relating to people is in itself a benefit, and, in the long run, has the potential of better fulfilling everyone's needs.

Buying Food from Common Market



WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE FOR BUYING FOOD FROM COMMON MARKET?

Food purchased from Common Market is ordered the week before it is picked up by filling out a food order sheet (often called a price list). On the list, you indicate the amount and type of food you want as well as the day and time you have selected to pick up your food. Available food pick up times accomodate even the most complicated personal schedules.

If your ordering group is made up of several households, you are then responsible for collating the food orders from these various households onto one order sheet. This master sheet should be dropped off or mailed to the CM warehouse by the specified day and time.

You then go to the CM warehouse at 1335 Gilson Street at your pick up time, pick up your food, obtain a food order sheet, sign up for a pick up time for the following week and repeat the cycle.

HOW DO I PICK UP MY FOOD AT COMMON MARKET?



Come to the warehouse at the time you chose the week before. Bring your group's returnable bottles, egg cartons, and boxes for food if you have them—we have a pretty good supply at the warehouse, too—and money for purchasing the food.

The warehouse is organized into food distribution stations, beginning with the check-in station. Here a CM member/worker will check in your returnable bottles and give you deposit credit, make adjustments on your order sheet, and hand you your food order sheet to begin your food pick-up.

The food distribution stations are produce, canned goods, frozen products, dairy products, grains and breads. Proceed in any order you like. Some of the distribution stations have workers and some are self pick-up. In either case, see that items are checked off on your food order sheet as you receive them. You then pay for your food at the cashier station. Before you leave the warehouse, get next week's food order sheets, sign-up for work, and sign-up for a pick-up time for next week.

If you have any questions or suggestions at the warehouse, ask a work coordinator or staff person, both of whom are available on every food distribution shift.



DOES COMMON MARKET ACCEPT FOOD STAMPS, WELFARE VOUCHERS, OR CHECKS?

Yes, Common Market accepts any or all of the above. In order to be eligible for check-writing privileges your group must put down a \$5.00 refundable deposit. This allows anyone in your ordering group to write a check for the amount of purchase.

IS THERE A MINIMUM FOOD ORDER? CAN I BUY IN BULK QUANTITIES? CAN I ORDER MORE OR LESS OFTEN THAN ONCE A WEEK?

There is no required minimum food order. Order as little or as much as you like. We give a 5% discount from list price on grains, cheese or produce purchased by the case or bulk size. Ask a staff person how to order in bulk.

It is not possible to order food more frequently than once a week. As a supplement, you may come to the Saturday "walk-in" sales. You may order less often than once a week, but the monthly work requirement is the same.

IS COMMON MARKET MOSTLY FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

No. Common Market membership includes people of all ages. Everyone owes it to him/herself to eat healthy foods. And working with other people cooperatively is something everyone can enjoy and benefit from.

CM is probably very different from the way you've been buying your food in the past. It will require some changes in your buying and eating habits. It will require taking some responsibility. And it will require sharing responsibility with others.

Sometimes we must step out of familiar patterns and established routines in order to improve our lives and the lives of others. Risk-taking is something we all have to do to change ourselves and to change society!

CAN NON-MEMBERS SHOP AT COMMON MARKET?

Yes. At the end of scheduled member food pick-ups each week, we have a "walk-in" sale of all perishables and frozen goods which we extend to non-members as well as members. Our weekly order sheet carries the day and time information.

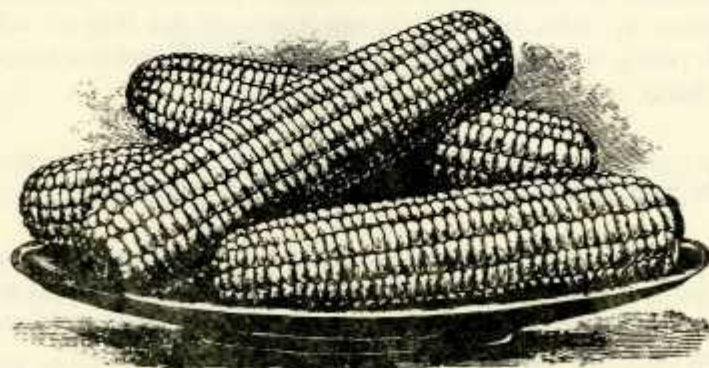
Working at Common Market

WHAT TYPE OF JOBS FULFILL MY WORK REQUIREMENT?

Most of the jobs entail the day-to-day maintenance functions of Common Market—cutting cheese, packaging grains, unloading trucks, stocking shelves, distributing food, totalling and collating food orders, cleaning and taking inventory. Most of these jobs are done at the warehouse. However, any activity which will further the purposes of the co-op can be applied as work credit. We encourage members who have particular skills or interests such as typing, accounting, carpentry, plumbing, community organizing, planning, financial skills, etc. to apply them to the co-op's benefit.

Much of what the co-op is doing or could be doing is entirely the concern of the members. CM encourages members to take initiative in starting committees or any other activity in the co-op. The CM newsletter *Chew-On*, is written and edited by members. A nutrition research project is being undertaken by members also.

Many more valuable activities could be initiated and carried out by members who have the interest. An outreach campaign, a library, a member-education program, or classes in nutrition are some of the possibilities.



REGULAR WAREHOUSE JOBS

If you come to the warehouse to assist with the day-to-day maintenance functions—as most members do—you will find that there are a wide variety of things to do. As mentioned above, we need people to cut cheese, package grains, unload trucks, stock shelves, distribute food, total and collate food orders, clean and take inventory. No advance training is necessary for these jobs. There will be a work coordinator at the warehouse to give “on the job” training. All of the jobs are divided into three-hour shifts of 4-8 people, the schedule for which is posted monthly on the bulletin board at the warehouse.

TRAINED WAREHOUSE JOBS

There are some jobs at the warehouse which require training. These are cashiering and coordinating a work-shift. Neither of these jobs requires previous experience—just let a staff person know if you’re interested.

Work coordinating involves taking the responsibility for running a work shift on a regular basis. The responsibilities include knowing the procedures and job descriptions and being able to explain these to the workers, locating food items, recording the work, and taking care of answering member questions in person or by phone. Many people like work coordinating because it puts them in touch with so many other people and teaches them about the internal workings of the co-op.

The job of cashiering also involves special training. Trained cashiers are responsible for a specific shift, one or two times a month.

AT-HOME JOBS

There are a number of jobs which can be performed at home, which include such tasks as typing, drawing graphs, doing artwork, phoning, etc. If your scheduling doesn’t permit you to work away from home, please ask a staff person about assuming an “at-home” work responsibility.

COMMITTEE WORK

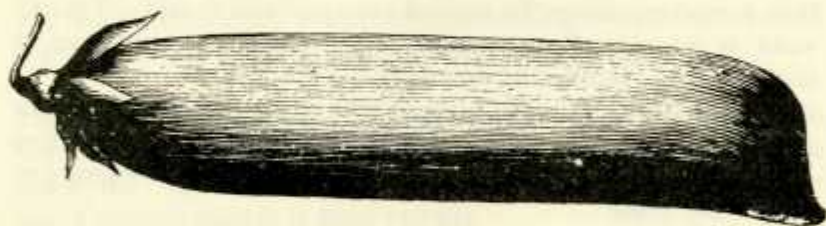
Participation on a Common Market committee counts as a work credit, too. The present existing committees are listed below:

- 1) **Food and Nutrition Committee.** The Food and Nutrition Committee handles suggestions and complaints about the food CM carries, makes decisions about new food items, works to develop overall food policy, and does research on nutritional, political and economic aspects of food for the benefit of CM members and the community. CM members like the Food Committee because of its "quality control" function. Few meetings go by without testing ample samples of new or potential CM foods!
- 2) **Finance Committee.** The Finance Committee prepares an annual budget, does financial analysis and planning for the co-op, conducts price comparison surveys, and carries out the necessary research in preparing proposals to the membership for major financial decisions.
- 3) **Work Committee.** This committee is composed of all the work coordinators, and makes decisions about the procedures and methods of running the warehouse and organizing the work shifts.
- 4) **Transportation Committee.** This committee does not meet as a group, but individual members are responsible for weekly deliveries from various suppliers around town. You must have your own car to serve on this committee. Fringe benefits of this job include such delights as the view of fine Madison scenery and the incredible aroma of a car-full of freshly-baked bread!
- 5) **Strike Liaison Committee.** The Strike Committee implements CM's policy of support for workers on strike and acts as communicator between the strikers and Common Market. CM offers a discount in price,

waiver of membership fee, and waiver of the labor requirement for workers on strike.

- 6) **Newsletter Committee.** CM's newsletter, *Chew On*, is written, edited, typed, laid-out and mimeographed by this committee. *Chew-On* serves as a communicator between members, committees and members, and staff and members. The content includes co-op business, food articles, political analysis, and co-op gossip.
- 7) **Membership Outreach Committee.** This committee seeks to increase CM membership by contacting those not yet familiar with how and why CM works. The committee does this through brochures, general media, exhibits, community gatherings and personal contact.
- 8) **Planning and Coordinating Committee.** The PCC is responsible for the development of policy between the quarterly General Membership meetings. This committee has done such things as update the by-laws, begin a new member orientation program, develop a strike support policy, and carry out a campaign to increase membership participation on committees.

The Planning and Coordinating Committee was created to gain more membership involvement in the decisions and operations of the co-op. This committee is composed of 10-15 members who commit themselves to one year terms. One of the continuing objectives of the PCC is to stimulate more membership involvement in different areas of activity.



WHAT IF I WOULD WANT TO DO SOMETHING THAT THE CO-OP ISN'T DOING RIGHT NOW?

As we stated before, the co-op encourages its members to take initiative in starting their own projects or committees. If you think the co-op should start a library, hold nutrition classes, publish a cook book, prepare a survey, then express your idea! Talk to a staff person, who will help put you in touch with other members of similar skills and interests.

HOW IS THE WORK REQUIREMENT ENFORCED?

Common Market wishes to create an atmosphere of cooperation and participation so that people will feel a part of the co-op, will care about its functioning, and will willingly fulfill the necessary labor. But sometimes, due to schedule conflicts, forgetfulness, or bad planning, Common Market members do not fulfill their work requirement. Since CM could not function in its present form without the labor of its members, we must record and enforce the member-determined work requirements.

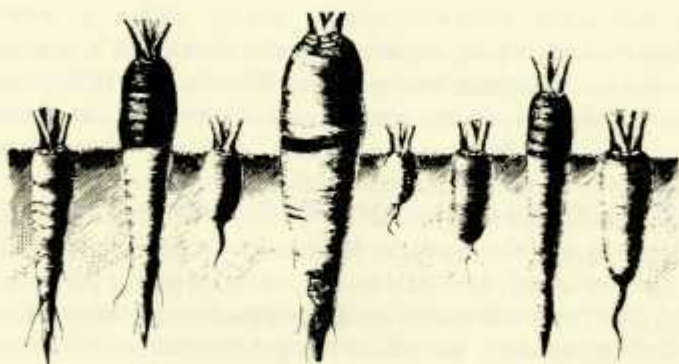
Common Market has a policy of "no work, no food", which means that if you do not sign up for your work or if you sign up and don't show up, your group cannot order food the following week. A group "in arrears" also has the option of working two slots for the one missed and in this way can order food the following week.

HOW CAN I CHANGE A WORK TIME THAT I'VE SIGNED UP FOR?

If you need to change the time of your job, you should call in *one week in advance*. If an emergency arises and you must give us shorter notice, you should do one of the following:

- 1) find someone else in your ordering group to do the job; or
- 2) call the warehouse to find the names of other ordering groups signed up for the following week with whom you can trade.

We emphasize the point that your ordering group is responsible to sign-up for your monthly work requirement one month in advance. Many hours of record-keeping and phone-calling are done each month to get people to sign up for their jobs because groups do not fulfill this responsibility.



IF I DON'T BUY FOOD FOR A PERIOD OF TIME, MUST I STILL DO MY WORK JOBS?

If you do not order food for a month or more, you need not do the work for that period of time. However, *let a staff person know in advance of the time, so that they can plan for it.*

I AM THE ONLY MEMBER OF MY HOUSEHOLD WHO EVER PARTICIPATES IN COMMON MARKET. ARE THE OTHER PEOPLE IN MY HOUSEHOLD ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYING THE MEMBERSHIP FEE AND DOING THE WORK?

Yes. Each adult member of a household who eats the food from Common Market is expected to pay the annual fee and be counted as a work-contributing person for determining the number of work shifts for which an ordering group is held responsible.

The amount of equipment we need and the work we have to do depends upon the amount of food we sell—which in turns depends upon the number of people who are eating it. You might say—Common Market is what you eat.

About the Food

WHERE DOES COMMON MARKET GET THE FOOD IT SELLS?

Common Market buys its grains, nuts, cheese and some canned goods from the Intra-Community Co-op (ICC), a wholesale warehouse and trucking organization (of which CM is a member) for co-ops in Wisconsin and northern Illinois. The ICC purchases cheese, grains, nuts, beans, seeds, and oils directly from producers as much as possible, and in other instances through co-op warehouses or from commercial jobbers. The cheese, for instance, is purchased from about a dozen factories throughout southwestern and northeastern Wisconsin. Dried fruits, made from fruit raised without chemicals and processed without preservatives, are shipped from California via a co-operative trucking operation to ICC. High quality, unrefined oils are contracted on an annual basis. Some products are made especially for the ICC and other co-op warehouses, such as the unique whole wheat pastas, the good old-fashioned natural peanut butter, affectionately named "ICCy-Sticky"; and a delicious, no sugar grape juice.

Another big emphasis in CM food sources is the support of local small farmers. We contract with local farmers and gardeners to purchase produce during the growing season. Much of our meat, including beef, pork, lamb, and veal is bought on the hoof from local farmers. Common Market has developed these links with local farmers to work to our mutual benefit. Farmers and consumers have the common interest of needing more control over food production and distribution, which under the present economic system, is exploiting them both. Farmers are getting low prices for their produce and consumers are paying higher and higher prices for the food products they need. We realize that in order to guarantee ourselves a good food supply in the long run, the farmer is going to have to be paid a price based on cost of production and a "reasonable" living wage. At the same time, we realize that much of the price consumers now pay goes to corporate agribusiness and not to the small farmer. With these things in mind, we are encouraging greater communication and understanding of the mutual problems and concerns between

those who grow the food and all of us who eat the food.

Much of the rest of our food comes from small, local businesses. We purchase our baked products from one cooperative bakery and seven small family businesses. Most of our dairy products come from local, independent dairies.

In general, Common Market buys from cooperative or collective operations and small local producers whenever possible. In other cases, we seek to buy directly from the producer rather than from big processors.

ARE THERE SOME FOODS THAT THE CO-OP DOES NOT CARRY?

Yes. Common Market supports the United Farmworkers' boycott of non-UFW lettuce and grapes. CM has also boycotted other products for political reasons: cashews from Mozambique (before its liberation); American tuna that is caught by porpoise-killing methods; and pears from racist South Africa.

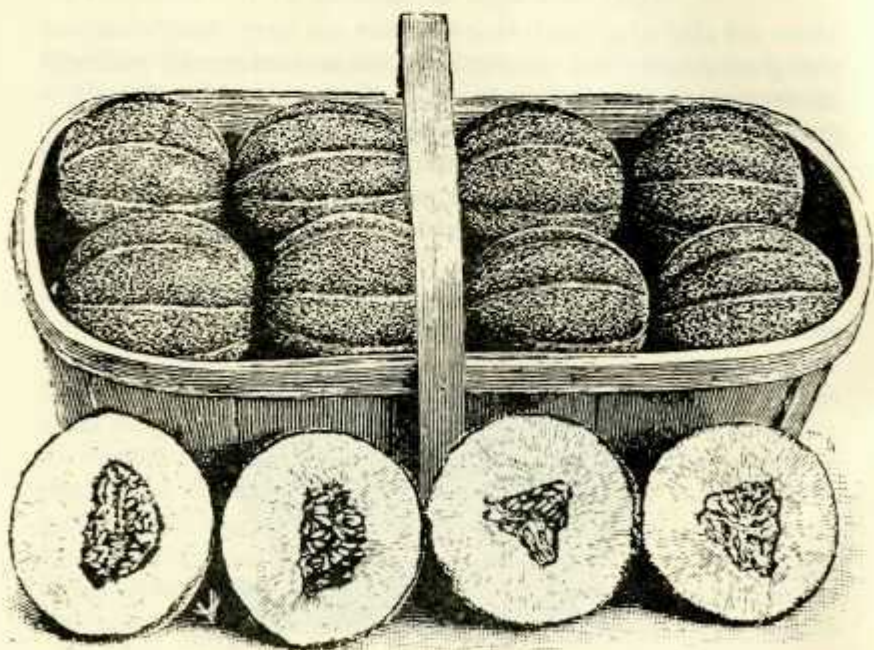
There are also other foods that CM does not carry, mostly because we give priority to minimally-processed, minimally-packaged foods, and one or two brands of a product selected by the staff or Food Committee rather than 20 brands of the same product. It is also CM policy to carry and to actively encourage the growing of food without chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, and in the case of animals, hormones and antibiotics. This is particularly practiced in cases where we have some say over the methods of production, such as in our produce and meat-buying arrangements with local growers.



WILL I RECEIVE ALL THE FOOD I ORDER EACH WEEK?

The Common Market staff tries hard to bring all the food items to you each week. Unfortunately, there are influencing factors beyond our control. Sometimes wholesalers are out of stock. Sometimes a truck breaks down and a delivery is delayed. Sometimes the mushrooms don't grow. Perhaps a milk homogenizer is out of order. Sometimes produce items are not available from the Chicago market due to weather conditions. And sometimes the price is too high or the quality is too low and we choose not to buy. Members sometimes err in totalling the orders or distributing the food, and sometimes the staff makes mistakes.

But, by and large, these factors account for only 10 items out of stock each week, out of a possible 600. We have a good relationship with our suppliers, most of whom understand our need for promptness and accuracy in delivering our orders.



Decision Making

WHO OWNS THE CO-OP? WHO MAKES THE DECISIONS?

Common Market, Ltd., is a non-profit corporation established in early 1971 under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. The corporation owns all of the assets of the co-op, including inventory, equipment and bank account.

The members of CM have ultimate control of the corporation. All major policy decisions are made at open quarterly General Membership meetings. The co-op urges that each ordering group send at least one representative to these meetings. The interim policy decisions are made by the Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC), which is composed of both members and staff. The Planning and Coordinating Committee implements some decisions but brings most of them in proposal form to the general membership. The PCC also functions as the legal board of directors. Policy decisions in the areas of food, finance, newsletter, and membership outreach are made by the member-staffed committees. The day-to-day management decisions are made by the paid staff.

The members (at General Membership meetings or by referendum) have the power to change, over-rule or accept any policy decisions developed by the Planning and Coordinating Committee or staff.

WHAT DOES THE PAID STAFF DO?

The specific job of the staff includes a number of tasks: purchasing the food; managing the inventory; organizing the work shifts, writing job descriptions and training members for all jobs; and planning and implementing innovations as well as maintaining warehouse operations. The staff also prepares the weekly order sheets; pays the bills; keeps the books; prepares financial statements; functions as liaison between committees; and executes general office work.

WHERE DOES THE MARK-UP ON COMMON MARKET FOOD GO? HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM THE MARK-UP ON SUPERMARKET GOODS?

Most of the mark-up on CM food goes toward paying overhead expenses, which includes items such as salaries, heat, rent, electricity, maintenance, and repairs. The difference between the overhead expenses of Common Market and that of a supermarket is one of scale. Far less money goes to "management salaries". CM also pays less for labor because the work of stocking shelves, cutting cheese, packaging foods, unloading trucks, cleaning and cashiering is done by members.

Our building and equipment cost less than a supermarket's building and equipment. CM obtained its coolers, freezers, scales and dollies at auctions—transporting, setting-up, and cleaning them ourselves. Common Market does not have air conditioning, carpeted aisles or Muzak. We have built the shelving, counters and offices ourselves. Members and staff take care of as much repair and maintenance work as talent allows.

Because of CM's pre-order system, far less food is wasted than in the supermarkets. And CM does not "invest" money in manipulative TV commercials, expensive newspaper ads, or merchandizing ploys as supermarkets do.

Because CM sees itself as part of a movement for social change as well as a food store to provide people with good food at reasonable prices, we have set some money priorities outside of overhead expenses. One of these priorities is community and movement work. For instance, we donate food and funds to social change organizations such as the United Farmworkers Support Committee, the Madison Tenant Union, and labor unions such as the Memorial Union Labor Organization (MULO), Madison Teachers Incorporated (MTI), and the Madison Independent Worker's Union (MIWU). Another priority for money is outreach in the community to include more elderly, low income, and minority residents in the co-op.

DOES COMMON MARKET MAKE A PROFIT ABOVE OPERATING EXPENSES?

All businesses, in order to survive, must make a surplus or profit above operating expenses. Profits are needed for equipment purchase, inventory purchase, front-money for expenses, unanticipated expenses, and capital reserves for the future. For this purpose, CM has a "capitalization tax" of 3%, which is added to each group order at the cash register. This money is technically a profit and is used for the necessary business functions described above. Depending upon what the CM membership decides, this "capitalization tax" may be incorporated into the mark-up in the future.

The difference between the profits of Common Market and those of profit-making corporations lies with who controls the profits and to what uses they are put. In profit-making corporations, the purpose of business is to maximize profits, and all decisions are made accordingly. Profits are invested to insure the greatest return, which encourages speculation, investments in human-exploitative enterprises, and expansion and monopolization of markets. Considerations such as desirability and quality of products, responsiveness to consumers, impact on the environment and treatment of workers are secondary or non-existent. The decisions regarding use of profits are controlled by a few top corporate executives, although these profits are produced by the labor of many people.

In CM, the profits are controlled by the same people who produce them—the workers and users. The staff, along with the Finance and Planning and Coordinating Committees work to determine the financial condition, budgeting, and planning for CM. The budget and mark-up to cover the budget must be approved by a General Membership meeting. The uses to which the profits are put are also determined by the general membership.



A Bit of History

WHAT IS A CO-OP? WHEN, WHY, AND HOW DID THEY GET STARTED?

A cooperative is a group of individuals or organizations which controls one or more of the economic institutions which serve them; in short—"user-ownership".

Consumer (or user) cooperatives are not new. The consumer cooperative movement started in early 19th century Britain as an opposing force to the rise of industrialization and capitalism. The first ones developed as a response to the forcing of small farmers from "common lands," which were enclosed and claimed by the wealthy. This movement accompanied and sometimes provided the center for labor union struggles.

One of the earliest co-ops formed at the end of an unsuccessful weavers' strike in 1843. Twenty-seven men and one woman were fired and then blacklisted. Led by the woman, Ann Tweeddale, they formed a collective discussion group called "The Equitable Society of Rochdale Pioneers," which spent much time discussing how their political beliefs could best be put into action. They eventually formulated the "Rochdale Principles," which have since become the basis of organization for a great majority of the co-ops that followed. These principles were: open membership, democratic control based on one member/one vote, no or limited interest on membership capital, equitable refunding or application of surplus, continuous education and cooperation among cooperatives.

The co-op movement took hold in this country in the latter part of the 19th century as an attempt by farmers to gain some collective strength in the market-place by forming farm marketing co-ops. These farmers, which included the Grange and Farmer's Alliance, were part of a wide-spread populist movement to oppose the growing trend of corporate exploitation. Many of these farm co-ops failed, but some survived with the help of government programs.

The farm co-ops set an example for the urban areas. One of the first industrial unions, the Knights of Labor, organized both producer and consumer co-ops. The producer co-ops were intended to give jobs to laid-off striking workers. The co-op stores sold at a discount to union members. Profits made in sales to non-members went into the union strike fund.

A different wave of cooperativism began in the early part of the twentieth century. Immigrant groups, especially Scandinavians, set up consumer co-ops, first in the east and then in the midwest. The Finns of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and northern Michigan set up co-ops along with a multitude of cultural and political institutions including temperance halls, socialist parties, labor unions, and recreational and musical groups. Consumer co-ops were initiated as part of a fight for economic freedom from the mining companies.

The next big wave of consumer co-ops began in the 1920's with the formation of the first gas and oil co-ops. This movement grew and flourished until, in the 30's, consumer co-ops were supplying groceries, clothing, housing, farm supplies, appliances, utilities, insurance, health plans and many other products and services.

Many of these cooperative efforts failed because of lack of capital, credit, and political influence, because of bad management, and because of the abandonment of practices of education and democracy, among other reasons. Whether ultimate "successes" or "failures," all the co-ops faced an uphill battle against the ideologies of competition, individualism and the profit-motive. Many of the co-ops which survived gave into these pressures in order to achieve economic success at the expense of service and product quality, worker satisfaction and safety, and democratic community participation.

The big crunch came in the emotional anti-communist scare of the 50's. Some of the co-ops which survived this era have today turned into large impersonal corporations with top-down management and highly paid executives. Some farm co-ops admit only large growers, or discriminate against poorer members by price adjustments. Some of these co-ops have even entered into joint

ventures with private firms or parcelled out voting power on the basis of each members' selling performance.

These cooperatives bear little resemblance to their British and American origins. It took a "new wave" of cooperatives in the 1960's to re-vitalize the cooperative spirit!



WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE FOOD CO-OP MOVEMENT IN MADISON?

The food co-op movement in Madison grew out of the political activism of the movement to end the Vietnam War in the 1960's. Co-ops were seen, first, as a tool for organizing the community in opposition to the war. They were also seen as a way for people to respond constructively to the worsening trends in the economic system—high prices, the impersonal nature of supermarkets, the absence of nutritious foods and the growing preponderance of junk foods, the wasteful and unecological use of packaging and processing, and the deception of food advertising. People realized that they had very little control over where the food comes from, how it is grown, how it is distributed, how much and how it is packaged and processed, what it tastes like, how nutritious it is, and what it costs. In order to work toward greater control of food procurement, people saw a need for setting up a system of food distribution based on cooperation and providing for people's needs, rather than the prevailing system of competition and maximization of profits.

The first "new wave" co-op food store in Madison was Mifflin St. Community Co-op, founded in 1969. A year later, Mifflin St. people helped the formation of four other co-ops, namely, Common Market, Whole Earth Learning Community, Eagle Heights Consumer's Union, and Sunflower Kitchen. The next co-op to get started was the Intra-Community Co-op (ICC), which was first organized as the trucking co-op for the rest of the Madison co-ops, but gradually became a trucking and warehousing operation for co-ops throughout the state.

Madison today has nine food cooperatives, including six storefronts, one pre-order co-op, one bakery, and one restaurant. There are also a number of small businesses which work with the co-ops and are members of ICC.

ICC today is also the umbrella organization for 40 co-ops and other organizations throughout Wisconsin and northern Illinois, which are commonly known as the ICC co-op network. The network has been growing in leaps and bounds in the last two years. The number of co-ops in the state has doubled in the last 1½ years. The volume of ICC has doubled each year in the last three years. The co-op network continues to grow with the forming of new co-ops in small communities—as far north as Iron Mountain, Michigan, to as far south as DeKalb, Illinois.



There are co-op networks like ours in many parts of the country. The warehouses for these co-op networks buy from and sell to one another, as well as pool their resources and buying power to purchase in big lots from non-co-op producers and distributors. Co-op operated trucks, as well as commercial lines, haul food between the various parts of the country. For example, ICC sells cheese to warehouses in places such as Washington, California, Arizona, Michigan, Ohio, Georgia and Florida, while receiving dried fruits, fresh citrus and almonds from California, grains from Minnesota, beans from Michigan, and rice from Arkansas.

Social Change

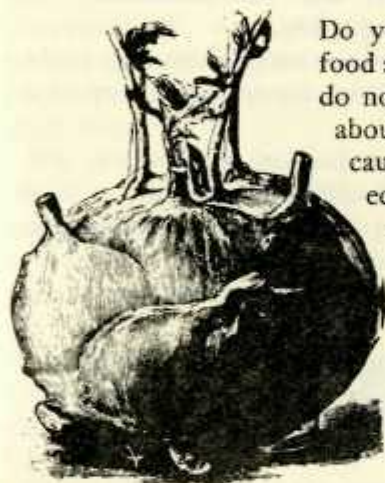
WEEDS IN THE GARDEN

Since World War II, the trend in the American food industry—from agriculture and processing to distribution and marketing—has been toward concentration of ownership and monopolization of markets by ever-growing corporations. Before World War II, our food was produced by independent family farm operations and marketed in small "Mom and Pop" style grocery stores. Today food corporations have displaced small-scale independents all along the production-marketing chain. Very large portions of the food economic system have been taken over by a few mammoth companies.

The growing trend of concentration of power in the food industry is not in the interest of consumers or small farmers. Large corporations have the ability to merge, to own all operations of the production/marketing chain, to invest huge sums of money, and to attract government subsidies. Small farmers have access to none of these tools, and as a result are being squeezed out of the economic picture at a faster and faster rate. We are told that agricultural giantism is more efficient in food production than the family farm. This is a myth. Corporate farming is more efficient in gaining control of the food chain from the field to your pocketbook. Instead of efficiently farming the land, they efficiently pick your wallet. "The chief incentive for farm enlargement beyond the optimum one-man [*sic*] size," said a Department of Agriculture study in 1973, "is not to reduce unit costs of production, but to achieve a larger business, more output, and more total income."

On the other end of the chain, consumers are feeling more and more of the crunch. Increasing costs of processing, packaging, transportation, advertising, and management salaries are being passed on to the consumer. In addition to rising food costs, people are being affected by a deteriorating food supply, increasing amounts of chemicals in food-growing and food-processing, and the development of totally synthetic foods. These practices bring us the rock-hard, colorless and tasteless tomato; the uniform three pound chicken loaded with chemicals and antibiotics, and such "innovations" as hamburger without meat, cheese without milk,

french fries without potatoes, and lemon pie without lemon. Furthermore, these "substitute foods" are pushed on us by a powerful \$4 billion a year advertising industry, which tricks, manipulates and deceives people into "craving" these high-priced, nutritionally-stripped money-makers. Pringles Potato Chips in a stack-pack can may fit more neatly into a nationwide distribution system, but are they worth it considering they cost the consumer \$2.00 a pound, are 40% fat, are loaded with chemicals, and are ecologically unsound in terms of transportation, packaging and processing?



Do you like what's happening to your food supply? The new food co-ops today do not. And we want to do something about it. We believe that the underlying cause of these disastrous trends is the economic system based on production for profit instead of production for human needs. The control over the production and distribution of food should be vested directly with the people affected by the decisions—consumer, workers, and farmers—in the interest of providing for all people's needs, rather than profits

for a few. Food co-ops are an expression of an effort by people to take more control over their lives. We are organized as people-controlled businesses to provide for people's needs. These needs include more nutritious food; food for which less money and energy goes into packaging, processing, transportation, and profits; food which is grown with a minimal use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers; food which is purchased directly from the farmer whose labor and love produces a higher-quality product.

Food co-ops emphasize cooperative participation in the labor of food procurement and distribution; and user and worker democratic participation in policy decisions. Food co-ops are part of a way of getting closer to the actions and decisions of the institutions which serve people in their daily lives.

WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC GOALS OF COMMON MARKET?

According to the by-laws, the principles of Common Market are:

- 1) To educate its members and the community in cooperative principles.
- 2) To transform the nation's economic life from a competitive, profit system to a cooperative system.
- 3) To extend the principles of cooperation to food production.
- 4) To educate its members and the community in nutrition and healthy eating habits.
- 5) To operate a food distribution cooperative to provide its members with food of high nutritional quality on a non-profit basis.
- 6) To try to make food production, distribution, and consumption as ecologically sound as possible.
- 7) To do any other things of use or benefit to the members and the community.
- 8) To further cooperation among cooperatives.



IN WHAT WAYS DOES COMMON MARKET IMPLEMENT THESE SOCIAL CHANGE GOALS?

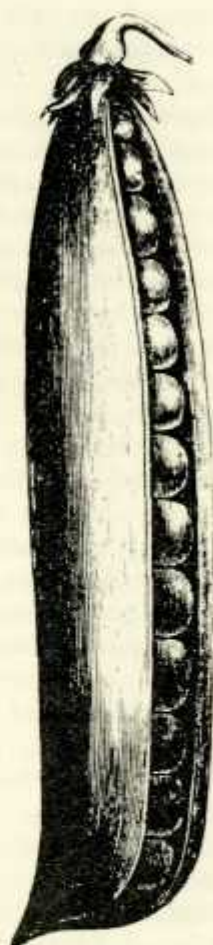
Nutritious food. CM has an emphasis on the selection of nutritionally-sound food. We have selected a full line of fresh produce over processed TV dinners, natural fruit juice over Coca-Cola, and low-processed grains, flours, pastas, beans and seeds over sugar-coated cereals, potato chips and other snack foods. We also carry natural cheese, organic meat, whole grain breads without preservatives, unrefined oils, natural dried fruit, and bean sprouts. Sometimes the CM staff or Food Committee will decide to carry a less nutritional item, such as white bread or bacon, because of membership demand. The practice is then to educate members by providing nutritional information about these items, and further, to recommend alternatives of nutritional merit.

Emphasis on basic, minimally-packaged, minimally-processed foods. CM purchases natural cheese in 40-pound blocks, and grains, flours, seeds, and beans in 100-pound, 50-pound, or 25-pound bulk quantities. Dried fruits, nuts, coffees, teas, and spices are also purchased in bulk. CM members then break these quantities down into family-size units by packaging them into simple paper or plastic bags. Produce is sold out of the cases in which it arrives. CM does not carry ultra-packaged or highly-processed foods, such as packaged dinners, sugar-coated breakfast cereals, soda pop, candies, and other snack foods.

Direct buying from small local farmers. CM has worked to set up buying arrangements with small local farmers in order to reduce the energy costs of transportation and processing, as well as profits going to corporate middlepeople or agribusiness farms. We also want to help small farmers survive and to be able to earn a living at the life-style they like best.

We see direct buying as being beneficial to both farmers and consumers. We try to work out prices with farmers based more closely on cost of production and reflection of labor input. We encourage minimal use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, which deplete the soil, increase the variety and resistance of pests, and harm the health of farm laborers and consumers. We encourage the use of ecologically-sound growing methods, such as biological pest control, crop rotation, interplanting, and the use of natural manures and garbage as fertilizers.

We attempt to educate our members about the superior taste, nutritional value, and freshness of foods grown in this manner, as



opposed to the chemical-intensive, energy-wasting, people-exploiting methods of agribusiness.

Community support. CM budgets a certain amount of money each year for food and dollar contributions to other community organizations who are working for social change. We are supporting the United Farmworkers Support Committee; *Free For All* newspaper; and WORT, Madison's listener-sponsored radio station, among others.

Strike support. CM sees itself as part of a wider struggle of workers and community people working for more control over their lives. As such, CM wishes to ally itself with and support workers on strike. We do this by giving a discount on food prices, a waiver of the membership fee, and a waiver of the labor requirement.

Support of Madison Sustaining Fund (the 2% "chip"). The Madison Sustaining Fund is a cooperative effort by several local groups to 1) serve the present needs of the Madison community, and 2) to work for basic change in this society.

The needs served by the member groups of MSF include: food (Common Market and Langdon Area Grocery Collective), shelter (University Y), health (Near East Side Community Health Center, Health Writers), development of alternative services (Consumers Co-op Garage, Madison Area Community Development Corporation), education (Health Writers, *Free For All*, Center for Conflict Resolution), and organizing for social change (Wisconsin Alliance, Center for Conflict Resolution). The Sustaining Fund allocates money to most of these organizations.

One of the sources of income for the Sustaining Fund is Common Market. CM collects a voluntary 1 or 2% "chip" from members at the cash register, which is paid directly to the Fund.

Democratic decision-making structure. CM is organized to encourage decision-making by the users of the co-op. Policy decisions are made by member-staffed committees in areas of food, finance, membership outreach, and others. Major policy decisions, such as determination and use of net surpluses, pricing



and food policy, and direction in the community are made at quarterly General Membership meetings. The interim policy decisions are handled by the Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC), which is composed of both staff and members. Some of these decisions are implemented and many are presented in proposal form to the General Membership meetings. The day-to-day management decisions are made by the paid staff.

Education. CM attempts to educate its members about co-op operations and the principles of cooperation through newsletters, other written materials, committee work and person-to-person information sessions. We also provide information and opinions about nutrition and the politics and economics of food through the price lists, newsletter, books, and other written materials, as well as through social educational activities such as discussion groups, films, community food fairs, and displays or talks at other community organization functions.

Cooperation with other co-ops. CM belongs to the ICC network of food co-ops in the Wisconsin-northern Illinois region. This network is organized into chapters, the Madison Chapter being one of five. CM participates in monthly meetings of our chapter and has contributed extensively to policy-making within these meetings and the general meetings of the whole network.

CM also cooperates with other co-ops in sharing information about food sources and in joint-purchasing with them. CM works with other co-ops to educate members and the community about cooperatives, nutrition, and the politics and economics of the American profit-making food system.

Member work participation. CM emphasizes the importance of each member contributing to the organization. Without widespread participation, the co-op could not run with such a small staff, and at such low prices. We believe, also, that

participation is a primary tool in self-education. CM is an experience in cooperative and collective work. The experience of working cooperatively instead of competitively with other people is important in the struggle to overcome the attitudes and practices of greed and self-interest, which are the building blocks of a profit-oriented economic and social system. Only if people begin to change their ways of relating to one another can any effective widespread movement for social change occur. CM and other co-ops are a training ground for this change.

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This booklet was completely conceived, written, edited, typeset, laid-out and proofread by members of Common Market. Common Market would like to thank the many people who donated their time, talents and energies to this booklet.

Cover photo credit: State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Drawn by Jules Tavernier. Originally appeared in *Harper's Weekly Supplement*, November 30, 1872, p. 941. Scene is New York, 1872. Washington Market, Thanksgiving time.

Graphics used throughout the text originally appeared in the W. Atlee Burpee & Co. Seed Catalogue, 1885. Thanks to the University of Wisconsin-Extension for bringing them to our attention by using them in a recent gardening publication.



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- Would you like to save money on your food bills?
- Would you like to know what goes into the food you eat?
- Would you like to know how your food is produced? Or where it comes from?
- Would you like some control over the quality and nutritional value of the food you eat?
- Would you like to eat more basic, non-processed foods at working people's prices?
- Would you like to meet, talk with and work with other people who like all these things too?
- Would you like to share in the ownership and decision-making of the place you buy your food from?
- Would you like to feel needed?

THEN READ ALL ABOUT COMMON MARKET