

Regional Start-up Food Co-op Conference set for May 23

Steering committees, boards of directors, staff and members of emerging and recently opened consumer food co-ops, buying clubs and farmer-owned retail stores in New York and New England gather on Monday May 23, 2011 at The Arts Block, 289 Main Street, Greenfield MA to learn best business and organization practices from established co-ops, cooperative development specialists and financiers. The conference, titled “It Takes Cooperation to Build a Food Co-op,” highlights the participation of co-operatives in building each other’s success and the strength of community food systems.

“Information requests from more than 30 groups who are organizing these kinds of businesses in our region inspired our decision to organize the conference,” explained Noémi Giszpenc, Executive Director of the Cooperative Development Institute. From the fundamentals of building member-ownership to the details of operating a successful co-operative business, the information packed program includes: twelve workshops on key aspects of co-operative development, including finances, membership, governance, management, marketing and more; lunchtime facilitated discussions on topics such as the 2012 International Year of Co-ops, strategies for reaching diverse urban communities, co-op to co-op cooperation and networking, and retirement benefits; roundtable conversations with conference presenters on the unique issues facing each participating co-op; a tour of local Green Fields Market, which is catering the event; and co-operative development exhibits and resource materials.

Sponsors include the Food Co-op Initiative (www.foodcoopinitiative.coop), CDS Consulting Co-op (www.cdsconsulting.coop), the National Cooperative Grocers Association (www.ncga.coop), and the Neighboring Food Co-op Association (www.nfca.coop), with support from the National Cooperative Business Association (www.ncba.coop), Cooperative Fund of New England (www.coopfund.coop), Social(k) (www.socialk.com), Sullivan & Clark, and Law for Food (www.lawforfood.com), as well as from fellow co-ops including Littleton Food Co-op (www.littletoncoop.org), Brattleboro Food Co-op (www.brattleborofoodcoop.com), UMassFive College Credit Union (www.umassfive.org), Equal Exchange (www.equalexchange.coop), Fiddleheads Natural Food Co-op (www.fiddleheadsfood.coop), Troy Community Food Co-op (www.troyfoodcoop.com), River Valley Co-op Market (www.rivervalleymarket.coop), Co-op Food Stores of New Hampshire and Vermont (www.coopfoodstore.coop), Hunger Mountain Co-op (www.hungermountain.com), City Market / Onion River Co-op (www.citymarket.coop) and Franklin Community Co-op (www.greenfieldsmarket.coop). The conference is supported by funding from the USDA Rural Development (www.rurdev.usda.gov).

For more information and to register, go to www.cdi.coop/foodcoopconference.html or ittakescooperation2011.eventbrite.com, or contact info@cdi.coop, 413-665-1271.