



Contribution of co-operatives to Singapore's economy

- 5% - Contribution of co-operatives to the GDP.
- 83 Co-operatives with over 1.4 million members (25% of Singapore's population).
- US\$ 13 billion held in total assets by co-operatives.

*Figures as of 2018

Did you know?

- The co-operative movement in Singapore is more than 90 years old!
- The earliest co-operatives, formed in 1925, were thrift and loan co-operatives which were organised by public sector employees to serve as financial institutions for their members.
- Co-operatives in Singapore are regulated by the Registry of Co-operative Societies under the Co-operative Societies Act and Co-operative Societies Rules. The Registry falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth.
- Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF) is the apex body of co-operative movement in Singapore and the secretariat to the Central Co-operative Fund (CCF) Committee. CCF aims to further the education, training, research, audit and the general development of the co-operatives in Singapore. SNCF contributed the first S\$ 500,000 to the CCF.
- SNCF represents 99% of co-operative members in Singapore through its affiliated co-operatives.
- SNCF became a member of ICA-AP in 1985.

The co-operative movement in Singapore began in the 1920s as a response to the social and financial needs of the times. Today, co-operatives in Singapore are involved in many sectors, including supermarkets, childcare, eldercare, healthcare, education and training, insurance, financial services, security, food, and hospitality, making positive social and economic impact.

Sectoral presence of co-operatives

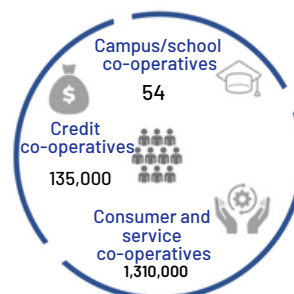
The affiliates under SNCF are categorised into four sectors, namely campus and youth, credit, service and NTUC sectors. Campus and youth sector offers students first-hand experience of running a social enterprise based on co-operative principles and values in secondary schools, junior colleges, polytechnics and universities. Credit co-operatives encourage thrift by accepting deposits from members and assisting members with loans on reasonable terms. Service co-operatives provide a wide range of services including security, travel, and aged care. The NTUC sector formed by the labour movement delivers an integrated suite of services to meet specific needs of people in Singapore at every stage of their lifecycle - pre-schoolers; school-going children; working adults; and senior citizens, as well as the more general needs of residents in Singapore. The Registry of Co-operative Societies groups service and NTUC sectors under the consumer and service sector, while its campus sector excludes the higher learning institutes.

The number of co-operatives under each sector in 2018 as per the Registry's classification are as follows:

56	Consumer and service co-operatives
24	Credit co-operatives
3	Campus/school co-operatives

Members in co-operatives

The number of members in different co-operative sectors are as follows (2018):



Evolution of the co-operative movement

→ 1924-1960

- The concept of co-operatives was introduced in Singapore with the passing of the Straits Settlement Co-operative Societies Ordinance in 1924 by the British colonial authorities.
- Credit co-operatives were the first co-operatives to be registered in 1925. They were established as an alternative source of funds for workers to meet their basic financial needs.
- The World War forced all co-operatives to cease operations.
- The co-operative movement later extended its activities into housing, banking, co-operative stores, shoemaking, production and marketing of agricultural (including fish) products.

→ 1960-2000

- 1969 was the turning point in the co-operative movement when the late Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Goh Keng Swee, then Finance Minister, formulated key plans on founding the co-operative movement to assist common workers.
- Within a span of nine years (1970 to 1979), thirteen co-operatives were established by the National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) and its affiliated unions. The significant contributions made by NTUC co-operatives continue to this day with some becoming Singapore's largest and well-known co-operatives such as NTUC FairPrice, NTUC INCOME, NTUC Health and NTUC First Campus.
- In 1980, SNCF was formed as the apex body of the co-operative movement.
- Several co-operatives were formed to promote employment during this period, such as, the Premier Security (1984), POLWEL (1992), Industrial and Services Co-operative (1989) and Seacare Co-operative (1994).
- In 2000, Singapore Human Resource Institute established the Singapore Professionals' and Executives' Co-operative (SPEC) as a response to the Asian Financial crisis in 1997 to support professionals, managers, executives, businessmen and self-employed people and help them access gainful employment through career re-building services and protection benefits (medical and health insurance).

→ 2000-Present

- SNCF emerged as a responsible institution in the domestic and international co-operative movement through its innovative initiatives, such as road shows, scholarships, photography and comic competitions; and organising business seminars with ICA-AP, such as e-commerce for co-operatives.
- In 2012, NTUC Enterprise Co-operative was set up to align and unite all the NTUC co-operatives and social enterprises to give greater coherence, scale and impact.
- As Singapore faces an ageing population, new co-operatives are being formed to meet the demands of a silver generation such as the Silver Caregivers (2013).
- In 2014, SNCF received an honourable mention in the Mobilisation and Involvement category in the TOP.COOP Contest held in conjunction with the International Summit of Co-operatives in Quebec City, Canada.
- Singapore's 2018 UN Voluntary National Review Report to the High-Level Political Forum recognises the role of SNCF and its members in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Law on co-operatives

1979- The first Co-operative Societies Act provided for the registration and control of co-operative societies, and encouraged co-operative development by the provision of services to co-operatives. It also established the provision of central funding for co-operative development and audits.

2008- The Amendment to the Co-operative Societies Act provided for enhanced co-operative governance and accountability, implementation of risk-focused co-operative regulatory regime, establishment of inter-agency co-operative review team, training to co-operatives, consultations with industry and public on policy recommendations, and removed outdated regulatory provisions. The law also provided for the establishment of grants for new co-operatives for promotion of co-operatives through financial assistance.

2018- This Amendment to the law provides for strengthening the competency and governance standards of co-operative officers, ensures timely intervention by Registrar in the case of distressed or errant co-operatives, and enables co-operative operations.

Key highlights of the 2018 Amendment

- Promotes inclusiveness in the co-operative sector.
- Provides for reduced minimum membership in co-operatives criteria from 10 to 5.
- Removes restriction on the membership of convicted and bankrupt individuals.
- Reduces age limit for management committee from 21 to 18 years.
- Directs the availability of annual report, audited financial statements and audit reports be made to members at least 15 working days in advance from the general meeting.

Co-operative landscape in Singapore

Strongly rooted in acknowledging people and their needs, the co-operative movement in Singapore has grown vastly; from serving the financial needs of workers in the past and present to addressing growing healthcare needs of an ageing society in contemporary times. The movement is vibrant and characterised by responsiveness, innovation and drive. SNCF, as the apex organisation, provides strong institutional support and leadership. Today, Singapore's co-operative movement is focusing on two important strata of society - youth and senior citizens; and its activities cut across the country's diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds.



Promoting co-operative entrepreneurship in universities (SDG 8)

Name: The Co-operative Society of Nanyang Technological University Ltd.
Year of establishment: 2014

The Co-operative Society of the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is NTU's first student-run co-operative with an aim to provide the most affordable products and services without compromising on quality. It operates as a platform for students and staff to engage in multiple social events and projects for the welfare of the university community, from practical down to earth exposure to boardroom responsibilities and downstream execution and management of business with a social good. It also encourages entrepreneurship through student-run initiatives.



Addressing demographic challenges by focussing on good health and wellbeing (SDG 3)

Name: NTUC Health Co-operative Ltd
Year of establishment: 1992

NTUC Health Co-operative, one of Singapore's largest eldercare service providers, offers a comprehensive and integrated suite of quality and affordable health and eldercare services: from senior day care, home care, nursing homes, rehabilitation, and active ageing, to community care services such as senior activity centres and support for vulnerable seniors. NTUC Health also runs a chain of dental clinics. NTUC Health collaborated with NTUC First Campus in 2017 to introduce a structured inter-generational programme to facilitate interaction between pre-schoolers and seniors with the aim to empower seniors by giving them a stronger sense of purpose through mentoring the younger generation, and inculcate in pre-schoolers values of empathy, compassion and respect for the elders.



Promoting social inclusion through cooperatives (SDG 10)

Name: Runninghour Co-operative Ltd.
Year of establishment: 2009

Runninghour Co-operative is an inclusive running club that promotes and provides support to persons with special needs through physical recreation, mainly running. It also provides them opportunities to interact with their peers, ordinary youth and adults to build bonds and enlarge their social networks. The co-operative's business activities include events management, conducting integration workshops for corporations, organising national races and providing fitness instructors for visually challenged students in schools.



What else can you find in Singapore the co-op way?



Istoria Co-operative, a freelancer co-operative comprising of photographers and design artists, developing a creative and sustainable future for themselves.



The Singapore Police Co-operative Society for uniformed personnel in the Singapore Government Service.



Silver Horizon Travel Co-operative was set up by seniors for seniors in 2012 as a platform to build friendships and lead an active life through travel.



SNCF's initiatives such as the Co-op Hot Shots photography competition, Digital Business Challenge, SCOOP Trail, Bicentennial Pop-Art events and setting up of coop clubs help spread awareness about the co-operative movement, especially amongst youth through the medium of photographs. SCOOP Portal, a one-stop information web-platform, provides students and young adults information on various co-operative events, internships and scholarships, amongst others.



Glocalisation of the co-operative movement in Singapore

- Singapore's 2018 Voluntary National Review Report to the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development recognises the role of SNCF and its members in promoting projects related to the implementation of the SDGs. These include, contributing to the provision of healthcare through its network of doctors (SDG 3); facilitating access to education through providing awards, study grants and bursaries to the youth (SDG 4); increasing women's access to economic opportunities (SDG 5); and commitment to ensuring price stabilisation of food supplies (SDG 10).
- Singapore and Vietnam collaborated together to promote inter-co-operative international trade. NTUC FairPrice has joint venture retail stores- Co.opXtra Plus and Cheers in Vietnam with Saigon Co.Op. This partnership is mutually beneficial for both Singapore and Vietnam. Consumers in Singapore benefit from a wider range of Vietnamese products and at lower prices due to economies of scale, while more varieties of products will be offered to Vietnamese consumers at affordable prices. The partnership is expected to result in 50 stores by end of 2019.
- SNCF is closely linked with the international co-operative movement and is an affiliate of the ICA, ASEAN Co-operatives Organisation (1977), the Association of Asian Confederation of Credit Unions (2009), and the World Council of Credit Unions (2010).
- 2012 was declared as the International Year of Co-operatives (IYC) by the United Nations and Singapore showed its support in various areas. For example, NTUC FairPrice CEO Mr. Seah Kian Peng who was a member of the ICA Global Board, was the advisor to the IYC National Committee, and SNCF's CEO Ms. Dolly Goh was one of the three representatives of global co-operative movement to the UN IYC Marketing Committee with ICA. In addition, SNCF also initiated a broad range of activities to commemorate the IYC 2012 and instill a greater sense of solidarity within the co-operative movement as well as raise awareness amongst the general public.

Engagement with ICA-AP

- Singapore was home to the Singapore Business Office from 1999 to 2012. The office was established to draw upon the business expertise in Singapore and to establish business contacts with co-operatives in the region.
- In 2000, Singapore organised the first Asia Pacific Co-operative Forum along with the second ICA Regional Women's Forum.
- Singapore has actively collaborated with ICA-AP in various capacity building programmes from training on co-operative management (1992) to organising trainings in partnership with the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union, and hosting youth related activities.

What are co-operatives?

Co-operatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations.

Co-operative values

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Co-operative principles

The seven co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training, and Information
6. Cooperation among Co-operatives
7. Concern for Community

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About International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific

ICA-AP is one of four regional offices of the ICA. Established in 1960 in New Delhi, India, it unites, promotes, and develops co-operatives in the region. ICA-AP's 105 members from 33 countries spans a variety of sectors, including agriculture, credit and banking, consumer, education, fisheries, forestry, housing, and insurance.

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