

# Cooperative Community Development:

## Grassroots Development in an Era of Globalization



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What is a

"Community-Based  
Cooperative"?

# The Community-Based Cooperative (CBC)

Community-based cooperative (CBC): A hybrid organizational form. . .

community-based organization + business cooperative.

Historically rooted in traditional agriculture, service and consumer cooperatives, “poor people’s cooperatives” and civil rights organizations.

Principles include:

- Open membership.
- One person-one vote.
- Limited return on investment.
- Benefits returned according to use.
- Constant education.
- Community-level focus.
- Commitment to social and environmental justice.

# Cooperative Financing: Credit Unions and Revolving Loan Funds

Credit union: A cooperative financial institution (bank) that provides services and loans at low interest rates.

- Democratically organized.
- Members (in place of "customers").



Revolving loan fund: A collaborative "pool" form of lending where each participant is provided the opportunity to access credit and then contributes to the credit fund for others to access.

Within credit unions, most capital is developed by the members.





With assistance from outside funders, revolving loan funds allow cooperatives and credit unions to cover the short-term financial needs of small farmers and their organizations.

# The "Cases"

Beat Four Farm Cooperative  
(Noxubee County, Mississippi).

Mississippi Association of  
Cooperatives (Statewide).

Federation of Southern  
Cooperatives/Land Assistance  
Fund (U.S. Southern Region).



# Beat Four Farm Cooperative

Established in 1973/74.

Membership includes 35 households in Noxubee County, Mississippi.

Majority of members are Black/African American.

Producers are primarily "truck farmers" who specialize in okra and southern peas.

Organizational activities:

- Noxubee County Farmers Market.
- Beat Four Farm Cooperative Youth Project.







The Beat Four Farm Cooperative is also associated with the East Central Federal Credit Union.

# Mississippi Association of Cooperatives

Established in 1972.

State Association of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund.

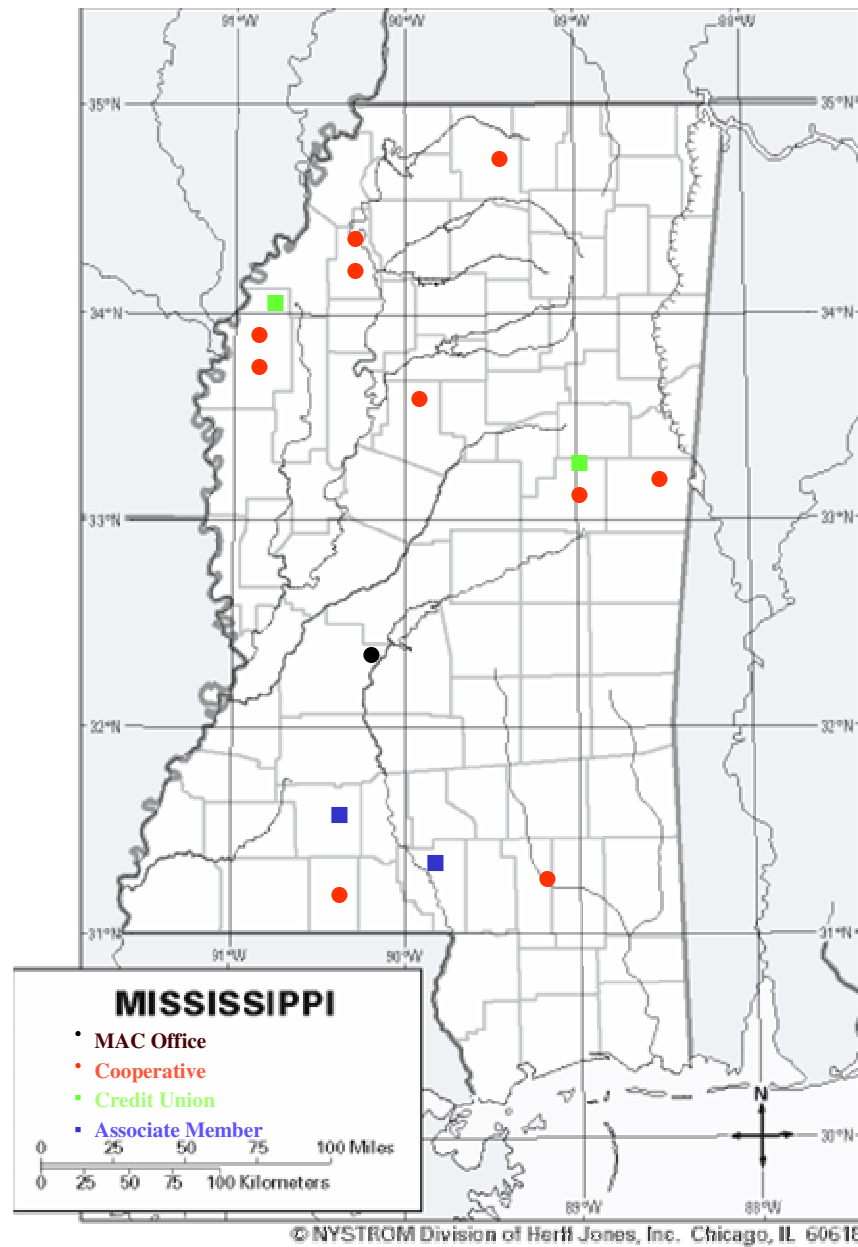
Central office located in Jackson, Mississippi.

Membership includes 10 cooperatives, 2 credit unions and 2 associate organizations.

Organizational activities:

- Training and direct assistance.
- Community development through cooperative enterprise and networking.
- Rural-urban marketing connections.
- Regional community food security.





# Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund

Established in 1967, merged with former Emergency Land Fund in 1985.

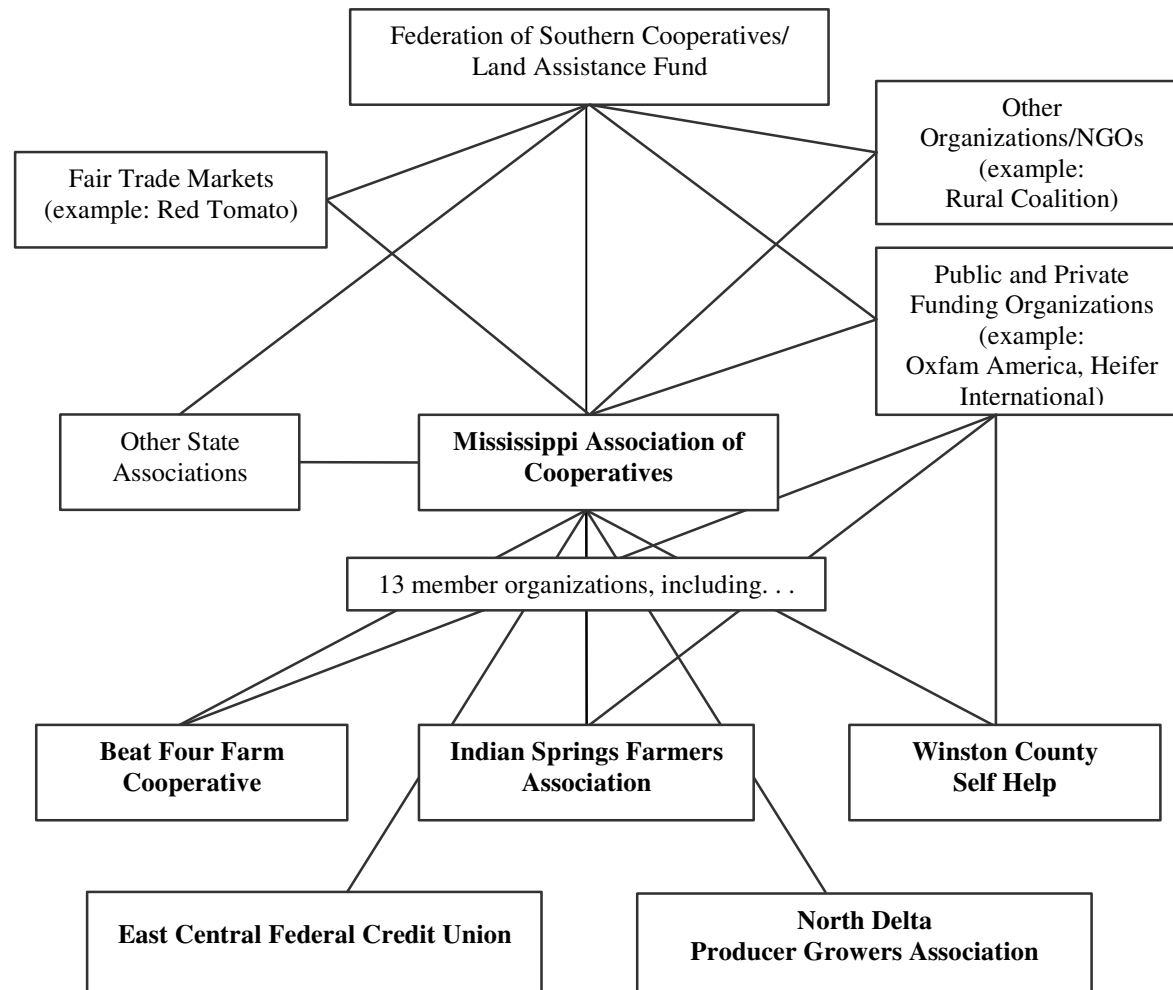
Central office located in East Point, Georgia; Rural Training Center in Epes, Alabama.

Membership includes 58 community-based cooperatives and 17 credit unions. Five states have State Association affiliates.

## Organizational activities:

- Training and direct assistance.
- Community development through cooperative enterprise and networking.
- Rural-urban marketing connections.
- Regional community food security.
- Research and advocacy.

## A Cooperative Network







# Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund & Mississippi Association of Cooperatives

## Developing Cooperative Capacity and Networks:

- Cooperative network development.
- Community food security through farmers markets.
- Fair trade through rural-urban connections.
- Production diversity.





# Farmers Markets



Promote and assist with the development of farmers markets:

- Training.
- Technical assistance.

Regional networking.

Focus on both producer and consumer needs.

Participation in Food Stamps, WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Seniors Nutrition Program.





Crescent City Farmers Market. (New Orleans, Louisiana).



Charleston Farmers Market. (South Carolina).

# Fair Trade Through Rural-Urban Connections



Relationship building between rural producers and urban consumers.

Promote sustainable production practices.

Fair prices to producers (cover cost of production and provide a living wage).

Partners have included churches, No Dope (anti-violence group in Chicago, IL), **Red Tomato**, SuperMarket Cooperative, etc.





## Discussion Points

Long-term organizing tradition.

Struggles for political rights, community development and economic security.

Democratic engagement.

Micro-macro networks.



**Cooperative Community  
Development!**