



You said, we did

Update on our 2018 AGM motions

Here's our update on our 2018 AGM motions

Here's an update on the motions you voted for last year. More details on these motions and other initiatives are on our website: co-operative.coop



Motion 11 - Plastic Recycling

This AGM is pleased with the leadership position being taken by our Co-op to minimise, in its supply chains and products, the use of plastics evidenced as harmful when diffused into our environment.

We welcome our Co-op's very early support for the plastic bottle deposit return scheme, the work progressing to develop fully biodegradable paper tea bags and the plans to replace with paper straws the plastic straws that we sell, use and attach to soft drinks.

We call upon the Board to maintain our leadership position in identifying and reducing the sources of plastic pollution and maximising the recyclability of packaging, especially plastic packaging, used in the UK and report each year on the detailed progress made to that end.

UPDATE

All Co-op products will have packaging that is easy to recycle

We have now set a date against this target, aiming for all products to have packaging that is easy to recycle by 2023.

80% recyclability by 2020

We are progressing towards this goal and are now at 72.44% by product line.

Seeking better ways to package food and drink that maximise recycling

Our work over the last two years has replaced 2,346 tonnes per annum of virgin or hard to recycle plastics with recyclable or recycled alternatives. These projects can be categorised into six key areas:

1. Removing black and dark coloured pigments from plastic (e.g. sushi bases, apple pies, fruit & veg trays, cookie trays);
2. Replacing virgin plastic with 50% recycled content (e.g. water bottles, edible oils, dilutables);
3. Replacing hard to recycle polymers with recyclable alternatives (e.g. replacing EPS with cardboard on pizza discs, replacing OPP with PE on microwave vegetable bags, replacing CPET in ready meals with paperboard, aluminium and clear PP);
4. Lightweighting projects (e.g. redesign of vegetable steam pot - 15 tonnes, 2L cider preforms - 5 tonnes);
5. Replacing mixed material packaging with mono constructions (e.g. minced beef, sliced cooked meat); and
6. Replacing conventional polymers with biodegradable alternatives (e.g. carrier bags).

Informing our shoppers about the benefits and challenges of recycling

We have published articles in our in-store magazine, held a member voice activity, engaging with over 1,300 members and discussed the issue with members attending the 24 'Join in Live' Council events across the country. We have also published our recipe for sustainability in The Future of Food magazine.

The 2018 AGM proposed that we maintain our market leading position. In addition to the above, we are also proud to be leading the way by:

- Winning the 'CSR Initiative of the Year' at the 2018 UK Packaging Awards.
- Winning 'Green Initiative of the Year' at the Grocer Gold awards.
- Being shortlisted for the IGD sustainable futures award (this award was won by the East of England Co-op for their work on food waste).

Motion 12 - Responsible Advertising

This AGM notes the concern from the United Nations and hate crime experts that some media outlets in the UK are fuelling and legitimising prejudice and an increase in hate crime. The Co-operative Group has responded positively to member concerns on this issue and has introduced an advertising policy to “challenge those views expressed in print which we and many of our members believe are incompatible with our values” and “use our contacts with publishers at every level to make the case for change”.

The Co-operative Group leads the way on meaningful social responsibility policies, including open and honest reporting on impact. We call upon the Board to review the impact of the current advertising policy and report to members: the specific issues publications have been engaged on; the impact of this engagement; and processes by which impact is monitored. If the Board’s review finds it unable to report impact, we ask it to prepare an ethical advertising policy that puts controls in place to ensure adverts do not appear in media that are incompatible with co-operative ethics, values and principles. We ask the Board to report on progress to the AGM in 2019.

What have we done?

BACKGROUND

Our Co-op agreed an advertising policy in June 2017 which was communicated through a blog by the President of the National Members Council. The policy centred on the following three policy principles and relates to all advertising regardless of channel:

- we will not seek to affect the editorial independence of publications or channels;
- we will not undermine the commercial value of our society for our members; and
- we will ensure our values and principles are clear and undiminished regardless of surrounding content.

UPDATE

The 2018 motion asked the Board to review the impact of our policy and to report back to members on engagement, impact and monitoring. We have covered these areas below, as well as updating, where relevant, on the policy principles referred to above.

SPECIFIC ISSUES WE HAVE ENGAGED ON

We have actively engaged these papers on the issues that matter most to our members and, in particular, on our campaigns on slavery, loneliness and Safer Colleagues Safer Communities but also on the work we do in communities. We have also engaged these publications on a wide range of issues which come to the fore because of the ethical and responsible nature of the Co-op as a retail business such as, for example, the issue of plastics and recycling.

THE IMPACT OF THIS ENGAGEMENT AND HOW THIS HAS BEEN MONITORED

We commissioned independent research to assess how far the issues that we have engaged the newspapers on which matter to our members have been covered and, if they have, whether they were covered positively.

This research has shown increased coverage, reach and positive sentiment towards the Co-op in the Daily Mail, the Daily Express and the Sun during 2018 and as a result of our engagement with these titles they are covering in their content more of the issues that our members care about than they were before.

Three of top five messages in terms of reach and volume were about our social purpose - the Co-op as an ethical retailer, as a leading exponent of responsible business and as championing a better way of doing business - with a combined reach of 297m from the 235 items.

This data does not include the Stamp Out Slavery campaign which the Sun Online launched in February and March 2019 including a strong editorial from Steve Murrells on slavery and the public’s role. This campaign is, in the view of many, the most significant UK media campaign yet on slavery in terms of volume and length of time running. Once again, this ground-breaking campaign came directly from engagement with the Sun on the issue of slavery which the Co-op AGM voted to campaign on in May 2017.

COMMERCIAL VALUE

A key element of our policy has been to ensure we protect the value of our Co-op which, as a consumer co-operative, includes commercial value.

We know that these publications are purchased by a significant number of members and customers. Sales of The Daily Express, The Daily Mail and The Sun remain an important revenue source in 2018 with nearly 1 million members buying one of those three titles. In addition, the groceries associated with sales of those newspapers and, more generally with members who buy those newspapers, is also significant.

STOP FUNDING HATE CAMPAIGN

We also note the re-orientation of the Stop Funding Hate campaign itself as set out in November 2018 because *'over the past year we've started to see some big changes...there has been a noticeable drop in the number of anti-migrant and anti-Muslim front pages.'*

CONCLUSION

The policy we put in place in 2017 sought to protect the commercial and social value of the Co-op. During 2018 we have continued to engage with publications to share the co-operative difference and this policy has not only helped us reach more customers with our products and services but also has directly led to engagement with these titles which has seen increased coverage of the issues our members care about including our campaigns and ethics agenda. Therefore, we will retain the existing policy as it stands.



Co-operative Group Limited

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