

NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROCESSING



There are over 445 natural resources and processing co-operatives in Canada. In this sector, co-ops are found mainly in forestry (136), fishing (104) and manufacturing (193)—namely in publishing and printing.

This type of co-operative was first created in regions where workers wanted to improve their lives while working under harsh conditions. Supported by worker unions, co-operatives have enabled these communities to benefit more from economic growth and the fruits of the labor of these workers.

However, several of these co-operatives were created as successors to existing businesses. In these cases, a company that was considering to discontinue or sell its activities was taken over either by employees or by the community through a co-operative. Business succession using the co-operative model is often seen in situations where the current owner wishes to retire or in the event of closure.

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The power of natural resources and processing co-operatives

Though the Canadian forestry industry as a whole was struggling, 2008 was a record year for one forestry company—Boisaco. Boisaco is owned—in a large part—by a 600-employee worker-shareholder co-op, and they credit their success to the co-operative model. They also credit the co-operative model as the primary reason they avoided bankruptcy 20 years earlier.

This experience mirrors that of La Siembra Fair Trade Co-operative. This co-op was founded by three friends after stints working abroad, where they saw the effects that commercially driven forest management had on the lives of small agricultural producers. They decided to set up a worker co-operative that would transform and sell these products as a means to offer Canadian consumers an alternative to conventional products.



IN NUMBERS¹

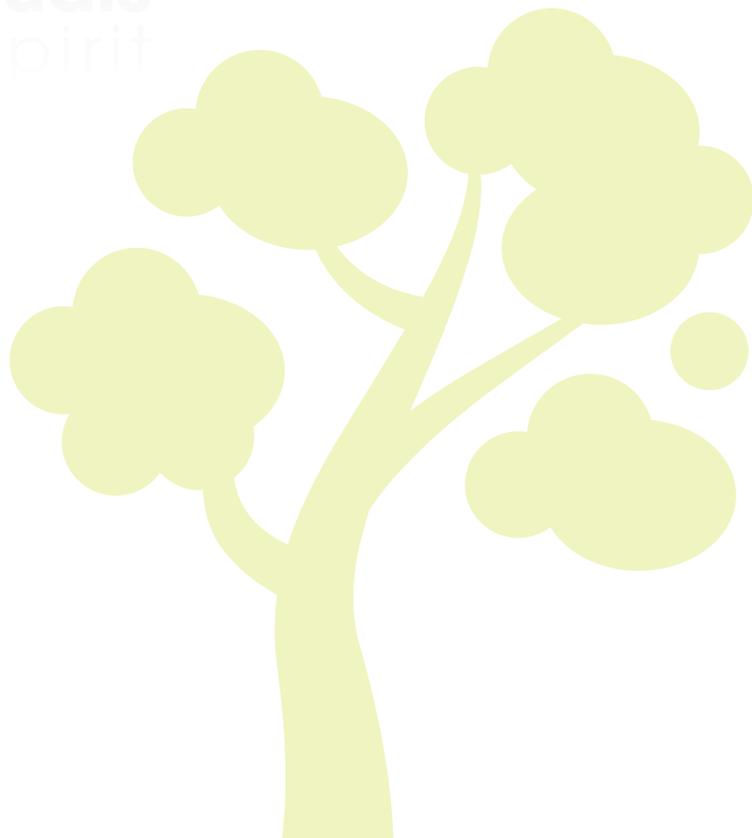
445
CO-OPERATIVES

OVER
8,300
EMPLOYEES

\$458 million
IN SALES

Our member in this sector

The **Fédération québécoise des coopératives forestières** gathers and represents in shared interest areas the totality of forest worker co-operatives, worker-shareholder co-operatives, solidarity co-operatives and producer co-operatives present in the forestry sector of Québec. Its affiliated co-operatives work primarily in reforestation and sustainable management, as well as in biomass infrastructure.



¹ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2012

² Tango RJ consultant, 2012