



## **Core Values of the West Michigan CoOperative**

The core values of the West MI Co-Operative are environmental sustainability, support of local economy, and the humane treatment of animals that are raised for food. Each of these values is necessary for the proper operation of this co-operative business.

### **Information for Applicants**

- Producer applications are only accepted from CoOp members.
- Please read the following guidelines carefully, and agree to their terms before filling out the application.
- Your application will be forwarded to the Product Committee, and will be reviewed as it pertains to our guidelines. You may be contacted for more information, and we may request a visit to your farm or business prior to approval. The approval process may take up to **four to six weeks** to complete. Please plan accordingly.
- If your product requires any state or federal licensing, a copy of said document must be furnished before approval. Due to the online nature of our sales, we do not accept producers working under the Cottage Food Law.

### **General Producer Guidelines and Procedures**

- Only members of the West Michigan Co-Operative may buy or sell through our online marketplace.
- The essential business of the cooperative is to provide an internet marketplace and distribution point where willing buyers and sellers who are members of the cooperative can meet. At no time does the Co-Operative ever have title to any of the products. We have no inventory. The products that go through our distribution system are owned either by the producer, or by the customer who purchases "title" to the product from the producer. Any complaints should be brought to the attention of the producer.
- The West MI CoOp collects payment from the customer at time of pickup for all items ordered, including sales tax (where applicable), and surcharge.

- Producers set their own prices and receive the full retail price they set for those products, less the cooperatives' handling fee, (presently set at 5%). Payment to the producers is issued within 14 days of pickup.
- **These procedures are established to benefit the common good of the Co-Operative's members. At present, the Co-Operative administration and management personnel are primarily volunteers. By following these procedures, we minimize the demands on any individual volunteer's time. This is necessary for the long-term sustainability of this business.**

### **Products That May Be Sold Through the WM CoOp**

- Produce, meat, and processed food products sold by WMC producers must have been produced in the nine county region covered by the CoOp: Kent, Ionia, Newaygo, Montcalm, Oceana, Muskegon, Ottawa, Allegan, and Barry. Exceptions could be made for a popular product not grown in Michigan such as coffee, as long as fair-trade and/or organic options are available.
- Producers may not sell any item that they have not produced themselves. It is possible that a non-food item could be considered for sale through the CoOp, on a case-by-case basis.
- To protect the integrity of our marketing system, the cooperative reserves the right to verify the production claims and geographic production location of everything sold through our marketplace.
- West MI CoOp Producers and Vendors must provide product liability insurance against claims related to the manufacture or sale of products, food or other goods to the public. The product liability insurance should be a minimum of \$500,000 per occurrence with an annual aggregate of \$1 million in general liability coverage. Homeowners policies do not cover product liability and are not sufficient for use.

### **Standards for Meat, Poultry, and Egg Producers**

- Genetically Modified foods and products are not allowed, and are discouraged in agricultural feed.
- Absolutely **NO** meat, poultry or egg products from Confined Animal Feeding Operations may be sold through the CoOp, nor may they be used as ingredients in processed foods. Animals may not be treated with bovine growth hormones, nor may routine antibiotics be used in feed. Our assumption is that supermarket meats originate in CAFOs so meat, poultry, or egg products used as ingredients in processed or prepared foods should be

bought directly from West Michigan farmers or aggregators. They do not have to be bought from Co-Operative members, although some members may find this an added benefit to your product.

- All Red meats to be sold through the cooperative and distributed through the WM CoOp must be processed in a USDA plant and the USDA stamp must be clearly visible on the product, not covered by the producer's (or any other) label. Meats processed by custom butchers, whose packages are stamped "Not for Sale" may not be delivered through the CoOp. All poultry and eggs must be processed in an MDA-licensed facility and a copy of the producer's MDA license must be on file at the CoOp.

#### **Standards for Processed and Prepared Foods**

- Processed and prepared foods offered for sale shall be submitted with a complete list of ingredients, with those originating in West MI being noted. The producer should estimate the West MI content of the product.
- Producers shall not include CAFO meats, poultry, or eggs, or derivatives from them as ingredients in their product description.
- Genetically modified animals and plants are not allowed.

#### **Adding Additional Product to Existing Inventory**

- All new products from existing producer members must be reviewed by the producer committee to insure eligibility for sale through the CoOp. The producer is responsible for contacting the Product Committee to add a new type of product to their sales.