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PRESS RELEASE

Ordinances of the French 'Egalim' (National Food Conference) Law: Cooperative farmers are calling for a stop to the planned dismantling of their businesses

Last Friday, the French government tabled a new version of the ordinances resulting from the *law on balancing trade relations in the agricultural sector and on a healthy and sustainable diet*, the 'Egalim' Law.

By systematically likening the cooperative contract to a commercial contract, these texts deny the legal foundations of the agricultural cooperative and call into question its development model. The relationship between a cooperative shareholder and his or her business cannot be likened to a relationship between a supplier and a client.

The cooperative, a pillar of the social and solidarity economy, is a business model that allows farmers to organise themselves collectively to not only produce, process and deliver their products but also to invest and innovate in order to adapt to the markets and consumer expectations. Through the cooperative contract, the farmer is assured of finding an outlet for their production, which the cooperative commits to fully undertaking in the long term.

Strongly linking the notion of abusively low prices to the cooperative contribution contract or replacing the mediator for agricultural cooperation with a commercial relations mediator is an aberration that disrupts the balance of the relationship between the cooperative shareholder and his or her cooperative.

Today, three in four farmers are members of a cooperative. It is thanks to this business model, which belongs to them collectively and which they govern themselves, that they manage to maintain vibrant rural communities across all of their territories. By establishing this direct link between the farmers and the consumers, the cooperative model remains the most consistent and most appropriate for effecting transitions in the agricultural and agri-food world.

To call this into question, at a time when territorial divide has never been so glaring, makes no economic, social or political sense.

"At this time of great national debate, cooperative farmers ask the public authorities to listen to them and to hear what they have to say. There must be room for a diversity of economic models, and in particular for partnerships operating in a spirit of solidarity and democracy, based on a search for competitiveness that involves more than just seeking profit" commented Dominique Chargé, President of Coop de France, the union representing cooperatives.

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Coop de France in brief

President: Dominique Chargé

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Coop de France is the united representation of agricultural cooperative enterprises that plays an indispensable role in the French agricultural, agri-food and agri-industrial economy.

Agricultural cooperatives in numbers:

- 2,400 cooperative enterprises (cooperatives, unions and SICA) and 12,260 CUMA (farming machinery cooperatives)
- A total turnover of 84.4 billion euros (excluding marketing unions)
- 40% of French agri-food turnover
- 1 in 3 food brands are cooperative brands
- More than 190,000 employees
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of farmers are members of at least 1 cooperative
- 550 cooperatives active in organic farming
- 74% of headquarters are located in rural areas
- 93% of cooperative businesses are SMEs or very small businesses.