

West Central MN Sustainable Ag Webinar Series

Questions & Answers | 3/25/25

Regional Aggregation Models

Ryan Pesch of Manna Food Coop | Detroit Lakes, MN | <https://mannafoodcoop.com/>

Q: To Ryan and Candace- Can you explain a bit more about how your cooperative membership models differ?

A: We are a Consumer Food co-op, where our membership structure is based on people in the community who directly shop from and support us. Keep in mind that we are essentially a grocery store, however, so you absolutely do not have to be a member to shop with us at the Manna Food Co-op.

Q: Can your producers sell elsewhere or are they tied to only sell at your cooperative?

A: Yes, their producers are welcome to sell their products elsewhere and they are not required to only sell through their co-op.

Bjorn Solberg of Hugh's Gardens LLC | Halstad, MN | <https://www.facebook.com/p/Hughs-Gardens-LLC-100057305326388/>

Q: How do you keep your stored potatoes from spoiling, and is there a percentage of loss expected?

A: We have underground cement storage spaces, nine total, where we store our potatoes. They were originally built in the 1940s, and they have fans at the very bottom of each pile that circulate cool moist air upward through the stored potatoes. That way, if a rotten potato gets in and starts to warm up its surrounding potatoes, the cool air stops the rot from spreading. We keep the temperature of these storage piles around 38 degrees Fahrenheit and use a compressor to maintain 40 degrees or below even during the summer months. Having this storage underground also ensures that the potatoes receive no light, as they must be kept in a dark environment to keep from sprouting. On average with this method, we ideally sell 70% of our potatoes as #1 quality, 20% of them as #2 quality to local food banks, and 5-10% remain as un-sellable quality.

Candace Anderson of Red River Harvest Co-op | Moorhead, MN | <https://www.redriverharvest.com/>

Q: To Ryan and Candace- Can you explain a bit more about how your cooperative membership models differ?

A: Our cooperative structure is a Producer Food Co-op, where our farmers and producers are the direct shareholders in our cooperative. The co-op is open to the public, and is geared much closer to directly supporting our producers rather than being a full-fledged grocery store.

Q: Can your producers sell elsewhere or are they tied to only sell at your cooperative?

A: Yes, their producers are welcome to sell their products elsewhere and they are not required to only sell through their co-op.