



**Society for  
Co-operative Studies Ireland  
Membership News  
February 2023**

Dear all,

Here are some of the latest updates related to co-operative activities across Ireland and further afield that might be of interest. Any information or further insights from members related to the legislative matters highlighted below would be greatly appreciated.

If people have any items for the next newsletter, please let me know.

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An update on the **General Scheme of the Co-operative Societies Bill**. More information on that is available here: <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/legislation/general-scheme-co-operative-societies-bill-2022.html>

The *Irish Times* reported an update on the progress of the legislation reporting that it could **boost the Irish co-operative sector by €9.7 billion**. The piece some differences in opinion over the contents of the legislation and features some comments from our president, Bridget Carroll, on the issue of an **asset lock**. The article also touches upon the fact that **worker co-operatives have not been legally designated** in the new legislation: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/2023/02/15/long-awaited-historic-bill-could-boost-97bn-co-op-sector/> If members have any views or comments on the matter that they would like circulated then please do get in touch.

Meanwhile, as I write, in the UK, the **Co-operative, Mutuals, and Friendly Societies Bill, 2022-23** is being currently debated and is expected to pass through the House of Commons today as it possesses cross-party support. The proposed bill seeks to create restrictions that co-ops can use to lock in their assets. Last month I reported that the legislation will apply to Northern Ireland, as per the published parliamentary briefing: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9647/CBP-9647.pdf> However, I have heard conflicting things on that matter so if any readers can shed light on that issue it would be greatly appreciated.

A new **open-access publication** has been released focused on the issue of co-operative governance. ***Humanistic Governance in Democratic Organizations: The Co-operative Difference*** has been published by Springer edited by Sonja Novković,

Karen Miner, and Cian McMahon. It is available to download here and will surely be of interest to many members: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-17403-2>

In the Irish agricultural sector, the return to enhancing the presence of co-operatives within the sector is being negotiated at various levels. **Kerry Group** are in negotiations with the **Kerry Co-op** to take a 60% stake in its legacy dairy business according to the *Irish Times*. <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/2023/02/05/seen-heard-kerry-revives-co-op-talks-over-dairy-deal/>

Also, in a recent development emerging out of a meeting of farmers in Athlone, there are early plans afoot to create a new co-operative organisation to enable farmers to purchase goods at a scale that will deliver savings. The farmer quoted in the piece states that the intention is “to build it from the bottom up. We hope to get across Ireland with **a new co-operative that cannot be corrupted**. That would be the greater picture.” <https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/farmers-to-push-ahead-with-new-group-after-athlone-meeting/>

In forestry news, the **Forestry Owners' Co-operative Society** have put forward their concerns about **Coillte's** plans to offload land to favoured investment funds. The *Southern Star* reports on the meeting in more detail here: <https://www.southernstar.ie/farming/foresters-demand-u-turn-in-coilltes-farcical-plans-with-investment-fund-4257025>

These developments in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis highlight a resurgence of interest in some of the old methods once again. Moreover, they suggest that there are ample opportunities for co-operatives to provide answers to issues facing many people across Ireland, and further afield.