

ABSTRACT
THE FOOD CO-OP POTENTIAL

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Consumer cooperatives are currently of greater interest in the U.S. than at any time in recent history, but the experiences of those recently established have been very mixed. There is a great need for factual information to record those experiences and identify factors and conditions that have led to success or failure. In addition, there are continuing serious deficiencies in the food distribution system that serves the inner-city poor. The article that follows deals with both of these problem areas in examining the role and potential for consumer food cooperatives, with special attention to low-income, urban areas.

Introduction

Consumer cooperatives have grown rapidly in popularity in recent years, their growth attributed to a number of factors. To some consumers, a cooperative is a partial answer to high and rising prices -- especially food prices. For others, a cooperative holds promise for social-political reform. Still others are attracted to cooperatives as a means of regaining a measure of control over forces that influence their individual lives.

What are the future prospects for these cooperatives? Against what socio-economic problems might they be successfully employed? What conditions are favorable for the successful operation of consumer cooperatives, and what are their limitations? These questions are among those that attend this rapid development of consumer cooperatives.