



Tennessee Council of Cooperatives – P.O. Box 609 – Pikeville, Tennessee 37367 – (423) 447-1222

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## **Cooperatives provide billion-dollar boost to state's economy**

*Governor lauds Tennessee's member-owned organizations during Co-op Month in October*

**NASHVILLE** – October is Cooperative Month in Tennessee, and a proclamation signed by Gov. Bill Haslam deeming it as such heaps high praise on the approximately 200 member-owned organizations that employ more than 6,000 individuals, impact our state's economy by more than \$1 billion, and provide a wide array of products and services to member-owners.

"We appreciate Governor Haslam for his support of Tennessee cooperatives," Commissioner of Agriculture Julius Johnson said. "A cooperative system is a powerful example of what can be accomplished when citizens in rural areas come together. Ultimately, the participants aren't the only ones who benefit. Everyone in Tennessee reaps the rewards with increased access to quality goods and services."

Today, more than 75 percent of Tennessee's rural residents are served by a cooperative.

The resolution reads, in part: "Tennessee cooperatives improve the well-being of rural residents and communities across our state by providing electric, internet, and telephone services to homes, farms, and rural businesses; financing for land, assets, and inputs; products and services, including genetics and seed, nutrients and feed, crop protection and health; equipment and fuel for growing and marketing crops and livestock; and insurance for individuals and family businesses, resulting in employment for thousands of Tennesseans."

The proclamation also emphasizes the important partnership with today's farmers "as they work diligently to produce safe, abundant, dependable, and affordable food and fiber for both a rapidly growing world population and an increasingly interconnected proactively health-conscious local consumer."

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The governor's proclamation highlights the Tennessee Council of Cooperatives (TCC), calling it "the state's flagship organization for coordinating, promoting, educating, and extending cooperative development in Tennessee."

TCC's current president, Tennessee Farmers Cooperative Marketing Manager Keith Harrison, said, "Co-ops are a true democracy where membership is voluntary and members have democratic control with each having one vote. They operate not for profit, but for the benefit of their members. Unlike other businesses, they don't exist to make money for their investors but rather to meet the needs of their members as economically as possible. The Tennessee Council of Cooperatives believes the cooperative business model will continue to play a vital role in strengthening our state's rural economy because it mirrors the very best of the American way."

Nationwide, more than 20,000 cooperatives will celebrate October Co-op Month, promoting the advantages of cooperative membership and recognizing the benefits and value co-ops bring to their communities. The observance has been held since 1930.

Visit [tennesseecouncilofcoops.org](http://tennesseecouncilofcoops.org) for more information about Tennessee cooperatives or the TCC and its programs. Visit [ncba.coop/events/co-opmonth](http://ncba.coop/events/co-opmonth) for more information about the national Co-op Month celebration.

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**Photo caption:** Gov. Bill Haslam, front center, presents a proclamation to the Tennessee Council of Cooperatives board of directors and Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) Deputy Commissioner Jai Templeton, front left, proclaiming October as "Cooperative Month" in Tennessee. Joining the governor and Templeton are, front from left, Scott Lewis, Farm Credit Mid-America; Todd Blocker, Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association; and Ryan Betzelberger, TDA. In back are Dennis Fennewald, Tennessee Tech University; Rob Holland, University of Tennessee Center for Profitable Agriculture; Sam Comer, Tennessee State University; and Keith Harrison, Tennessee Farmers Cooperative.