



Cooperative Member & Vendor Application

Thank you for your interest in joining the Gorge Farmer Collective (GFC) - a farmer-owned cooperative!

We aim to streamline our regional food chain in a way that **lets farmers farm**. By pooling our resources together as farmers, ranchers, fishers, and food businesses, we are able to minimize duplication of efforts, increase market access, foster space to lean into niches and specializations, and decrease burnout. We reject the rugged individualist notion that every farmer must fend for themselves - we are stronger together, as a Collective, and we practice that fully through our Cooperative model.

Our history. GFC was born out of the COVID-19 pandemic, as an innovative response to restaurant accounts disappearing overnight, and farmers facing the potential of losing their ability to sell directly through a farmers market environment. In our region, there existed no grassroots local farmer network to overcome this barrier, and so we created one. In spring of 2020, five farms came together to form an online, direct-to-consumer marketplace to ensure we could sell our products, and our customers could maintain access to safe, healthy foods in a time when it mattered most. We have since transitioned from a multi-member LLC to a Cooperative, and have expanded our services to include wholesale distribution and robust food access programs in conjunction with various partner organizations in addition to our original direct-to-consumer marketplace.

Why Cooperatives matter. A co-op is a business model that is equally owned and controlled by the very members whose needs it is created to serve. It is a democratic and community-oriented organization. The members collaborate and manage the business according to their shared priorities, each with a single vote and an equal ownership share. We are an organization **of farmers, for farmers**. Because there is no outside owner to take profit from our work, the costs of doing business can be kept as low as possible, translating to more money in our members' pockets. When income exceeds expenses and capital reserves needs, profits will be distributed among members.

If you're a farmer, rancher, or fisher in the Columbia River Gorge or surrounding areas, you're eligible to apply for Membership. If you're not, don't worry: other regional producers and food businesses may still participate in GFC as non-member Vendors, with full access to our services. We look forward to bringing more of our producer friends aboard this year, to further our Cooperative movement and realize the full potential of what we can achieve when working together.

Benefits:

- A user-friendly online marketplace sales platform, [GorgeFarmers.com](https://www.gorgefarmers.com);
- Streamlined access to direct to consumer, wholesale, and food access program markets throughout the local and broader region;
- Marketing and promotion by GFC of the website and its marketplace, including highlighting farmers, vendors, and products throughout the season;
- Dynamic live inventory management software and extensive sales reporting options;
- Documentation of sales and collection of sales proceeds;
- Disbursement of net sales proceeds to farmers on a weekly basis via bank transfer;
- Robust customer and producer support;
- Potential for group bulk-buying of farm supplies;
- An easy opportunity to give back to the community - GFC will provide transport of aggregate donated product to the food bank weekly, as well as full market price compensation to feed those in need through various food access programs via GFC's contracted relationships..
- Selling prices are set by each individual producer--a true, free-market economy that celebrates the diversity and abundance of the region;
- A regional network of farmers who share equipment, skills, knowledge and camaraderie;
- A collaborative, farmer-led, grassroots approach to growing our local food system, together!

Requirements:

- Hold a current business license.
- Provide proof of business liability insurance, with GFC named as additionally insured.
- Be legally permitted and hold all necessary licenses required to sell products at a wholesale level in both Oregon and Washington (while you own your product the entire way through our aggregation and distribution process, sales through GFC are currently regulated as those of a wholesaler/distributor; we are *not* regulated as direct-to-consumer like a farmers market).
- Represent only your own business, and materially participate in creating, growing or raising the products offered for sale.
- Be able to deliver product on Tuesdays between 8am-5pm, or Wednesdays 8-9:30am to our leased warehouse space in Hood River.
- Comply with current county, state and federal food safety requirements for all product categories, including necessary refrigeration infrastructure for storage of perishable items.
- Attend a Produce Safety Alliance training and/or possess a food safety certification, or commit to doing so within 12 months of admission.
- Abide by all the terms, agreements, policies, and bylaws set forth by the Cooperative.

How it works on the ground:

Producers are in full control of their own inventory and prices on the website. GFC will provide software onboarding guidance and other necessary materials, including [videos from Local Food Marketplace](#). Each producer creates their own profile, adds their own products and corresponding selling units and pricing, and provides their own original (*not stock*) photos for each listed item.

Customers order weekly, year-round, Thursdays to Sundays. You receive a Pick List of what sold each week on Mondays, and deliver sold product to our warehouse in Hood River on Tuesday/Wednesday morning (Read our [aggregation SOP here](#)). Deliveries go out on Wednesdays/Thursday. GFC retains a percentage of sales to cover operating expenses, and issues your net payment the following Monday. You volunteer for one or two work shifts per month, depending on need (read our [work shift SOPs here](#) - the more hands, the lighter the work!)

Direct to Consumer (DTC) Program Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<p>START</p> <p>Period starts at 11am; list availability for the upcoming sales week</p>			<p>Day 1</p> <p>Sales period opens at 8 a.m. - customers begin placing orders</p>	<p>Day 2</p> <p>Ordering</p>	<p>Day 3</p> <p>Ordering</p>	<p>Day 4</p> <p>Ordering</p> <p>Sales period closes at midnight - Pick list emailed to producers</p>
<p>Day 5</p> <p>Detailed pick list directs harvest and packing for the week</p>	<p>Day 6</p> <p>Deliver product to aggregation site 8am - 5pm</p>	<p>Day 7</p> <p>Deliver product to aggregation site 8am - 9:30am (if not delivered on Tuesday)</p> <p>GFC delivers orders throughout the Gorge for customer pickup 4-6pm</p> <p>FINISH</p>				

Wholesale Program Schedule

(Still to be finalized, but tentative schedule below. Allows for one drop for both DTC/wholesale)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<p>START</p> <p>Period starts at 11am; list availability for the upcoming sales week</p>			<p>Day 1</p> <p>Sales period opens at 8 a.m. - customers begin placing orders</p>	<p>Day 2</p> <p>Ordering</p>	<p>Day 3</p> <p>Ordering</p>	<p>Day 4</p> <p>Ordering</p>
<p>Day 5</p> <p>Sales period closes at 10am; Pick list emailed to producers</p>	<p>Day 6</p> <p>Deliver product to aggregation site 8am - 5pm</p>	<p>Day 7</p> <p>Deliver product to aggregation site 8am - 5pm (if not delivered on Tuesday)</p>	<p>Day 8</p> <p>GFC delivers wholesale orders throughout the Gorge</p>			

There are three ways to participate in the Gorge Farmer Collective (GFC)--as a *Cooperative Member*, *Participating Vendor*, or as a *Vendor*. These are contrasted below:

Cooperative Member	Participating Vendor	Vendor
Farmers, ranchers, and fishers only are eligible to apply. Preference based on proximity to the Gorge region and market capacity for new products.	Any non-farming food businesses may apply (foragers, food processors, bakers, etc.)	Any farmer, rancher, fisher, or value-added food business may apply; preference based on proximity and product.
Owens an equal share in the Cooperative, is represented in decision making, entitled to a vote at membership meetings, and eligible to run for a seat on the Board of Directors.	No ownership stake.	No ownership stake.
Membership is acquired through a one-time, \$350 equity investment, refundable upon exiting the Cooperative.	No equity contribution requirement.	No equity contribution requirement.
Annual membership dues: \$45	Annual application fee: \$45	Annual application fee: \$45
20% of gross sales retained by the Co-op to cover operating expenses.	20% of gross sales retained by the Co-op to cover operating expenses.	30% of gross sales retained by the Co-op to cover operating expenses.
Patronage refunds: Members benefit by being a part of future financial growth in the cooperative. When annual net profits exceed operating expenses and capital reserves needs, patronage refunds will be distributed to all Members, in proportion to their use of the platform.	No patronage refund.	No patronage refund.
Commits to 2* work shifts per month, each month your business' products are listed for sale on the site.	Commits to 2* work shifts per month, each month your business' products are listed for sale on the site.	No work shift commitment.

**Required amount of work shifts subject to change depending on need.*



Member & Vendor Application - 2023

[\(link to fill out online here\)](#)

Application Checklist

- Read the accompanying packet in its entirety.
- Fill out the application and email to thecoop@gorgefarmers.com or mail to: PO Box 162 Mosier OR 97040; or [fill out the application online here](#).
- Submit a copy of all licenses required by local, state, and federal agencies for the wholesaling of your products, as well as any certificates you hold (organic, etc.) with your application.
- Pay \$45 application fee via Quickbooks invoice (sent upon receipt of application), or mail check to: PO Box 162 Mosier OR 97040.

Upon acceptance:

- Submit proof of insurance (\$1,000,000 general liability) with Gorge Farmer Collective named as additionally insured.
- If you are approved for Membership, submit your membership investment of \$350 (check or bank transfer).
- Submit a farm/business biography, and photographs to be used in promotional materials.
- Schedule an onboarding session with us to review logistics, inventory software, etc.. Then... welcome to GFC! May we all grow food and community, together.

I am applying as a:

<input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Member <i>(Farmers, ranchers, & fishers only)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Participating Vendor <i>(Non-farming food businesses only)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Vendor <i>(Any producer or food business)</i>
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APPLICANT INFORMATION

Business Name:

Contact Name:

Mailing Address:

Farm Address, if different:

Email:

Phone:

Website:

Social media handles:

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Business Designation: Corp Sole Prop LLC 501(c)3 Other:

Years in business:

Sales Channels: Farmers Market CSA Produce Stand/ on farm pick up Direct to Restaurant
Wholesale distributors Grocery stores Institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.) Other:

For farmers, fishers & ranchers

Do you grow/raise/fish 100% of what you intend to sell through GFC?

Yes No If not, please explain further:

Describe your production practices, and/or animal welfare practices for your farm, ranch, or fishery:

For value-added producers

Describe your sourcing practices for raw ingredients:

Where do you process your products? Please clearly describe how your operation satisfies all applicable regulations, and attach any pertinent certification(s).

If your operation is third-party certified, please tell us for what and by whom, and provide a copy of your certificate.

Organic Transitional Salmon Safe GAP/GHP
 Certified Naturally Grown IPM USDA Inspected WSDA/ODA Inspected Others:

NEW! Because we proudly serve vulnerable populations through our food access (Veggie Rx) programs, as well as institutional purchasers like schools & hospitals who serve vulnerable populations, we now require all produce vendors to attend a Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) training, at minimum. GFC will pay for registration fees on your behalf, and provide a stipend for your time as funding allows. *Waivable if producer has obtained another comparable or superior food safety certification, e.g. GAP*

I have completed a PSA training or hold a food safety certification and will share proof with GFC
 I commit to attending a PSA training or food safety certification course within one calendar year of admittance to GFC

PRODUCT INFORMATION

What kind of farmer or food producer are you? (select all that apply)

Vegetables Fruit Meat Dairy Eggs Fish Value-added Other:

Which GFC market programs do you intend to sell through?

Direct to Consumer Wholesale Food Access / Veggie Rx

Please elaborate on your product list, seasonal availability, and weekly capacity to sell through GFC. Products will be approved on an individual basis, so please be thorough; attach additional pages if necessary. In lieu of indicating your product list in writing below, you may fill out our online [Collaborative Crop Plan](#).

If in the future you wish to sell products not approved via this application, you will need to seek approval from Management before your product is admitted to the website, and provide proof that new products are compliant with federal, state, county, and local jurisdiction requirements and/or licenses required to sell said new products commercially. Please plan ahead and be prepared to allow up to a month for new product approval.



Product Standards & Quality Agreement - 2023

We pride ourselves in offering customers the highest quality, source-identified, honest, and safe local foods in the Gorge, picked and packed to order. The loyalty and satisfaction of our customers, and thus the viability of the Cooperative, depend on *all* our producers meeting the standards outlined in this agreement: keep in mind that the quality and integrity of an individual producer's products reflects on every other producer and the Cooperative as a whole. Additionally, responding to customer complaints takes time and resources which are better used elsewhere. Please read and agree to abide by our quality standards and policies below.

Product Qualifications and Origin

Products sold through GFC must be created, grown, or raised by the first party producer; sale of second farm or business products is prohibited unless otherwise approved by Management / Board of Directors. Products for sale are approved on an individual basis via your application: if you wish to sell products not approved via your original application, you will need to seek approval from Management before your product is admitted to the website. Find our [policy on foraged products here](#).

Food Safety & Licensing Requirements

Product for sale must be stored properly and safely between harvest and pack, in compliance with food safety laws (see: [Food Safety Modernization Act / FSMA](#) for guidelines. We require all produce farmers to obtain a Produce Safety Alliance certificate within one calendar year of admittance to GFC.

NEW! Sales through GFC are regulated at a wholesaler/distributor level, *not* as a direct-to-consumer farmers market. It is the producer's responsibility to ensure that all products are compliant with federal, state, county, and local jurisdiction requirements and/or licenses required to sell all products in a wholesale manner, and shall provide copies of documentation and proof of compliance to GFC. Please direct any questions regarding licensing requirements to your local Oregon or Washington Department of Agriculture agent. Note this means you may need to seek additional licenses in order to sell products such as eggs, baked goods, preserves, dried foods, foraged foods, plant starts, etc. through GFC.

Presentation of Products for Sale

All products listed for sale on the website must include an original photograph (not stock photos) that accurately represents the product. Tips on taking satisfactory product photos can be found [here](#). The quantity unit of the product for sale must be communicated to the customer (e.g. one bunch, ½ lb, dozen, 28oz can, etc.). Products may only claim terms such as "organic" or "naturally grown" if the farm is properly certified as such and provides GFC with a copy of the certificate.

Expectations of Delivered Product

- Washed and cleaned
- Properly ripe
 - Exception: if it is an industry standard that an item requires ripening before eating (storage pears, for example), please include that note in the product description on the website
- Reasonably free of insects, disease, environmental or other damage
- Provided in correct quantities, according to your Pick List
- Properly labeled with farm name, item and quantity, and any other labeling requirements per ODA / WSDA licensing.
- Packaged in a way that preserves product quality during pack, and from aggregation to distribution. Between leaving the warehouse (~10am) and pickup (4-6m), most* products are stored in vented lugs, placed in properly refrigerated trailers, walk-ins, or reach-ins, and transported in a refrigerated truck.
 - *Meat is stored in a cooler with ice packs inside a refrigeration unit, flowers are stored in a bucket of water, and plant starts are stored separately in stackable totes.
 - Note: use of single-use plastic such as clamshells and plastic bags is discouraged unless absolutely necessary to preserve product quality
- Delivered in full and on time. Communicate with Management as soon as possible if you are unable to fulfill your total delivery or cannot deliver on time. Read our [Product Delivery / Pack Day policy here](#).
- Reflective of the image and description of the product as advertised on the website. All products listed for sale must include an original photograph that truthfully represents the product for sale.

Protocol for Responding to Quality Issues & Customer Complaints

In the case that we must credit a customer's account for a product's failure to meet our quality standards, you will not be paid for that item; those funds will be transferred to the customer's account to provide their credit. If it should happen that we must credit a customer for your product, you will be notified in writing. Should the problem recur, you may be asked to submit a written plan outlining actions you will take to avoid the problem in the future, and you will be required to thoroughly re-inspect the product at check-in on pack day. A pattern of problems may result in a temporary or permanent suspension of a producer's access to the Collective's sales platform, after review by Management and/or the Board. Read our [Product Delivery / Pack Day policy here](#).

In the case that product is damaged during aggregation or transport by the fault of the Cooperative (e.g. a tomato is properly packed, but destroyed during transport): you will receive payment for the item; the customer will not be charged for the item; and GFC will assume the cost of crediting the customer's account.

GFC reserves the right to update this Product Quality Policy as need be.

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Cooperative Membership Agreement - 2023

(Applies to Membership applicants only)

Rights as a Member of the Cooperative

As a member of the Cooperative I am entitled to:

- Have one vote at annual and special all-Member meetings, and receive proper notice of meetings;
- Serve on a committee or run for a position on the board of directors;
- Participate in the Cooperative's operations and governance;
- Respectfully and productively raise concerns or issues within the Cooperative;
- Receive information about the Cooperative's financial status and other important processes or decisions (e.g. resolutions); and
- Receive patronage refunds in accordance with my use of the Cooperative, when allowable.

Responsibilities as a Member of the Cooperative

As a member of the Cooperative I have a responsibility to:

- Participate in the governance of the Cooperative through attendance of general meetings, voting on decisions, asking questions, and serving on the Board or committees if so inclined;
- Support the mission, vision, and goals of the Cooperative;
- Adhere to the policies and procedures of the Cooperative (as determined by the Board);
- Support the Cooperative's operations by using its services or contributing to the delivery of services;
- Communicate and interact with my fellow Cooperative Members, Vendors, partner organizations, customers, and any paid/volunteer personnel in a respectful, productive manner in line with our Code of Conduct Agreement;
- Fulfill the allotted amount of work shift duties as determined by the Board or Directors;
- Learn more about the Cooperative's operations and organizational capacity; and
- Support the capitalization of the Cooperative by making an initial equity investment of \$350.

Obligations of the Cooperative to its Members

As a member of the Cooperative, I understand that the Cooperative is obligated to:

- Provide notice of meetings and information on ways that I can participate in the Cooperative's governance;
- Maintain a transparent and efficient system of decision-making that is inclusive of the membership and supportive of the mission and vision of the Cooperative;
- Conduct business, through the board or staff, that is in the best interest of the Cooperative and its Members; and
- Use my financial contribution of \$350 effectively and responsibly, and redeem my initial membership payment in the event I leave the Cooperative.

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Code of Conduct Agreement - 2023

Code of Conduct

As a Member of the Cooperative, I agree to conduct my business regarding and relationship with the Cooperative, the Membership, Vendors, partner organizations, customers, and any paid/volunteer personnel in an ethical, respectful, and productive manner. Instances of harmful behavior including, but not limited to, bullying, harassment, intimidation, discrimination, deceit, slander, or not acting in the best interest of the Cooperative, are deemed unacceptable and counterproductive to the function of our Cooperative. Such actions will be resolved with intervention and/or disciplinary action, as outlined below.

Grievance Submission & Disciplinary Action Protocol: if first-offense, easily resolvable and less-important issues arise between a Member and any other party affiliated with the Cooperative, the Cooperative encourages said parties to attempt to resolve the matter privately and informally before submitting a formal grievance.

If this is not possible, or the matter is a continuing or second offense, the concerned party shall submit a written grievance to the Manager with as much detail of the incident(s) as possible, along with any applicable supporting evidence. (Grievances involving the Manager will be submitted directly to the Board of Directors.) At any stage, the accused party maintains a right to access all information in any grievances submitted against them and the right to present evidence to defend their actions. The Manager (or Board, if the grievance involves the Manager) will gather information from all involved parties and facilitate a conversation among all parties (enlisting the aid of a third party facilitator, if appropriate) in an attempt to resolve the situation with intervention.

For a third offense, or for any offense the Manager deems to require severe and immediate intervention, the grievance and information from all concerned parties will be brought before the Board of Directors for a hearing in which the defending party is encouraged to attend. Previous grievances, related or not, may be considered as evidence in such a hearing to determine appropriate corrective or disciplinary action. The Board may vote by majority to temporarily suspend the Member's access to the Cooperative sales platform, or revoke the Membership of the accused party if necessary. Termination of Membership is a matter not taken lightly, and will be entertained only as a last resort. The Board's decision may include eligibility for terminated Members to re-apply for Membership after a specified waiting period, at the discretion of the Board. Terminated Members will be reimbursed for their initial equity payment upon departure from the Cooperative.

(Termination of a Board member shall adhere to the protocol set forth in Section 7.6 of the Cooperative's bylaws.)

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Non-Compete Agreement - 2023

For our collective business to work, we need our producers to be fully committed. GFC depends on consistency, honesty and cooperation from its members in order to provide competitive, transparent, efficient, and mutually beneficial services. To sustain and expand our sales and distribution systems, GFC and all its enrolled Producers and Buyers are asked to follow certain non-compete guidelines:

- Producers will not seek to create new business relationships with GFC Buyers for sales outside GFC.
- Producers and Buyers with an established history of doing business with each other prior to joining GFC may continue transactions outside of GFC, though they are encouraged to use GFC instead.
- To the extent possible, encourage your new and existing business customers to purchase from you through GFC. This way you can maintain and streamline your direct to consumer, commercial and wholesale accounts, spend less time off the farm, save money, and provide a valuable service to your customers.
- Violations of the above-listed guidelines could erode the value and viability of GFC sales programs and its enrolled Producers and Buyers. Any Producer or Buyer who knowingly violates these guidelines may face termination of GFC membership.

Remember, GFC is *your* business! Diverting sales away from the Collective and rerouting them to your personal business jeopardizes the sales of all your co- business owners, and the Cooperative as a whole.

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