



Background

Stimulate cooperation between farmers saves or creates new resources. Pooling these resources helps to optimise the farm. This cooperation can take different forms and activate different levers. It helps to make the farm more resilient. Cooperation strengthens the links between actors within a community in a given area.



① General principles of co-operation

Initiating and bringing together several people to work on a project, then managing it to implement it, requires energy, conviction, know-how and interpersonal skills to listen and deal with the expectations of the group as a whole.

From the outset, you need to set aside time to bring a collective project to life, by establishing clear rules of operation and governance. This cooperation can take different forms and cover several areas:

Governance: Bringing together several farms/partners with the same functions/responsibilities (investment, strategy, work) within a single structure (GAEC in France).

To limit expenses - Joint investment: pooling purchases, buying equipment on a joint-ownership basis, setting up a Cooperative for the Use of Equipment.

Technical : joint crop rotation, sharing skills, etc.

Human: helping each other, work, banks, employer groups, etc.



Zoom ① Equipment coop with vehicle & driver

A Cooperative for the use of feeding equipment with driver is a group of farmers in a given area who jointly **invest in feeding equipment** and **delegate** the task to feed cattle to a shared employee.

- Together, the Coop members **set the times** when the machine will visit each farm.

- The farmers **choose the batches of animals** to be fed, as well as the feeding periods.

- The **cost of this delegation** takes into account the size of each farm (expressed by the volume of milk produced, for example), as well as the time spent by the machine on the farm (around €20/1000 l in 2023, in Brittany).

- **Buildings and silos may need to be adapted** to make it easier for the machine to pass through.

Investing in such a Coop may require the use of **high-performance equipment** that is **affordable** and **renewed** more regularly. Coop members are looking **to save time**.

Feeding 70 dairy cows takes on average one hour a day.



Zoom ② Group of employers

Faced with a **need for part-time labour on their farm** and the **cost of employees**, setting up an employers' group (association, cooperative) enables one or more employees **to be shared between several partners' farms**.

- Each employer clearly **defines their needs in terms of time and skills**, then shares these requirements with their neighbours to define the profile of the candidate whom they are looking for.

- Employers **pool their time, financial resources and skills** to hire and manage one or more employees.

- Once recruited, the employers must **organise and plan the employee's workload across all of the farms**.

Shared employment **facilitates regular work**, provides **flexibility** for seasonal activities and helps farmers **to replace themselves** and take some holidays/days off, while **keeping costs under control**. Employees then have several employers (an advantage and a point to watch out for), diversifying their activities and workplaces (source of attractiveness).



Zoom ③ Mutual aid bank to share labour

In a Co-op with a labour bank, farmers invest together in equipment and carry out the work themselves on all farms.

Units are defined and allocated collectively to each task (mutual aid scale) according to the equipment available and the time required. At the end of the year, an **assessment** is made of the activities carried out by each member (units) and **rebalanced**. Each member is **responsible for maintaining** one or more pieces of equipment. The work is often done together, which saves time. **Everyone's time is counted to ensure that the members help each other fairly**.

Maxim/proverb

"Alone, you go faster, but together, we go further!"

More info:

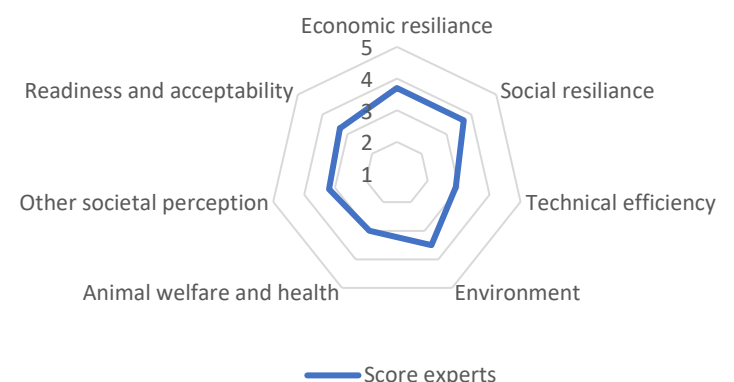
- Site des Cuma : <http://www.cuma.fr/>

- Declic'Travail – ideas to work on labour : <https://declictavail.fr>

- Ideas on the Agricultural Chamber of Normandie website:

<https://normandie.chambres-agriculture.fr/conseils-et-services/gerer-son-exploitation/management-organisation-rh/fiches-solutions/>

Assessment of the method by R4D Experts



Appendix 1

Mutual aid bank

Example of a mutual aid scale

Calculate the cost using mutual aid scales and units

Assessment for labour and use of equipment is measured and expressed in points.

Equipment	Unit/hour	Equipment	Unit/hour
Tractor	2.5	Quad with seed drill	2.5
Trailer platform	1	Pneumatic fork	1 to 6
Plough	2.5	Restraint cage	1/10 calves
Slurry tank	1.5	Livestock carrier	1
Sprayer	1.5	Stubble harrow	1
Mowing machine	2.5	Shredder	1 to 2
Silage harvester	3.5 (empty)	Silage harvester	4.5 (full)

Example of the application of these mutual aid scales

For grass or maize silage activity:

To carry silage = 4.5 units/h	Make-up the silo (packing with tractor) = 4.5 units/h	Make-up the silo (push silage over the silo) = 6 units/h
Workforce : 1 unit	Workforce : 1 unit	Workforce : 1 unit
Tractor : 2.5 units	Tractor : 2.5 units	Tractor : 3 units
Trailer platform : 1 pt	+ Difficulty : 1 unit	+ wear : 2 units

Source – Chambre d'Agriculture de Normandie - 2012