



## Ontario Natural Food Co-op: Member Profile

Food co-operatives have begun to spring up all over Ontario. With rising prices and an ever growing preference for local food, there has never been a better time to provide nutritious, organic, and locally grown food products to consumers who demand it.

The [Ontario Natural Food Co-op](#) acts as the major distributor for these kind of goods across Ontario.

More specifically, the ONFC is a leader in the distribution of organic and natural foods and eco-friendly house products. Their catalogue lists over 4,500 different products, many of which are category innovators.

They are categorized as a second tier, not-for-profit co-operative and their membership is comprised of natural food retailers, retail food co-ops and buying clubs. *The strength of the ONFC stems from their mission to proactively bring to market natural, organic, and local foods and products within a co-operative membership.*



The co-op's history dates back to 1976, when 11 retail food co-ops and buying clubs formed the Ontario Federation of Food Co-operatives and Clubs Inc. (ONFC's legal name). They began with just one truck that was graciously donated by a group of churches and non-profits, and by the 1980's they were selling to natural food stores that shared the ONFC's common mission of providing quality food.

Today, the co-operative employs 140 staff. In addition, 62% of their sales are to 330 retail members and 5% of sales are to 350 buying clubs. Recently, they have grown into an 110,000 square foot warehouse in Mississauga, Ontario.

The ONFC even owns two food brands which are helping to transform sustainable food systems as we know it. The first is the [Ontario Natural Food Co-op private label](#) which has five categories of products: doughs, proteins, sauerkrauts, canned tomatoes, and frozen vegetables. In addition, the [Black River Juice Company](#), now under ONFC, has been an industry leader in specialty fruit juices for more than 20 years.



Over the past four years, the ONFC has been the primary funder of the [Local Organic Food Co-ops \(LOFC\) network](#), an organization of food and farming co-ops working towards a sustainable food system. They also provide small grants to social change groups through their [Community Development Fund](#) which helps to echo their vision of a sustainable world from seed to plate.

With the ONFC's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary soon approaching in 2016, they have much to anticipate. In the coming years they plan to innovate and amplify their competitive advantage while expanding the frame on what it means to be sustainable. Having recently invested in operational improvements like a new computing system and expansion of their warehouse, they look forward to being able to provide members with even better service in the future.

*\*\* The ONFC has been a Founding Member of On Co-op with voting privileges since 2002 \*\**

