

# From niche to volume with integrity and trust

## CASE STUDY FACT SHEET

# Biocoop - France

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Inra-Ecodéveloppement

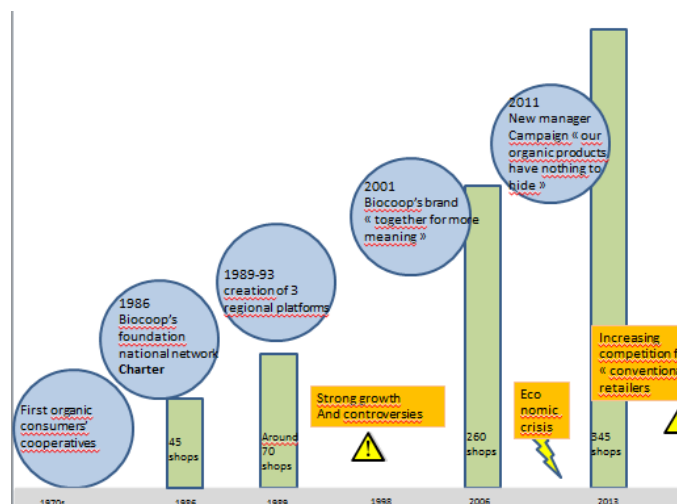
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## Historical development

Biocoop was created in 1986 when 50 consumers cooperatives all over France, many of them operating since the 1970s and involved in organic farming and ecological movements, decided to join in a national organization in order to share some skills and activities. A few emerging organic producers' organizations also joined this network. Soon afterwards Biocoop established its own technical and management teams, and later created its own platforms, brand and other management and business tools. In 2014

Biocoop gathered 345 independent organic shops of different management structures (60% private enterprises, 40% cooperatives) all over France. In 2012 it represented 15% of the French organic market, while its main competitor captured 2.5%. The big retailers all together count for 47% of this market.



## Growth, controversies and re-affirmation of core values

Right from its beginning, Biocoop chose to put forward and formalize its basic values (equity, cooperation, respect of strong social and ecological criteria, transparency and traceability, consumers' sensitization) through a charter which is outlined in 4 detailed conventions (retailing, management, social and ecological conventions). Biocoop's governance has always involved shop managers, producers, employees, and consumers.

Despite this, in the late 1990s and 2000s, Biocoop's strong and fast growth (more than 20% annual growth from 2003 to 2008 for example) led to a strong (internal and external) criticism regarding respect for organic values. Reacting to this, from the years 2000 on, Biocoop tried to re-affirm its foundational values by favouring local producers, reinforcing the voice of producers in the governance of the network,

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**Legal form:**

“Société anonyme” (public limited-liability company)

**Date of foundation:**

1986

**Homepage:**

[www.biocoop.fr](http://www.biocoop.fr)

**Logo:**



**Turnover:**

580M€ in 2013

**Product range:**

food and non-food products  
(books, textiles) and  
activities (catering,  
transport)

**Number of Employees:**

790 employees in 2013

**Google Hits:**

484 000 (15<sup>th</sup> of June 2015)

controlling and accompanying the creation of new shops, and setting up specific ranges of products with controlled margins and prices. Of course controversies continue, which generates new challenges for the network in a climate of increasing competition from the main retailers who continuously expand their organic offerings.

## Supply chain organization

From the early 2000s on, Biocoop started to get involved in the structuring of value chains and in partnerships with national and regional organic producer organizations. In doing so, they increased the presence of local organic products from what the network calls “peasant organic agriculture” in their offerings. In contrast, most shops have incrementally reduced their direct provisioning channels in favour of Biocoop’s regional logistic platforms. In 2008 the network tried to reinforce the links with local producers again. In the southeast region of France, a former shop employee was hired as a “local provisioning referee” in order to help the shops in their partnerships with local producers.

In the fruits and vegetable chain, where we focused our analysis, seasonality and local provisioning have become keywords in the network. Shops have to inform consumers about seasonality – “*out of season, out of our shelves*” is posted where merchandise would be (*right of the picture below*), and a calendar of seasonal products is displayed in the shops and on the website. However, most shops would combine these local partnerships (*center of the picture*) with “conventional” distance sourcing which sometimes allow them to offer “promotions” and lower prices (*bottom left of the picture*).



photo C.Lamine