

**CAPE VERDE:
DYNAMICS OF UNICOOP – FOGO**

The Union of Consumer Cooperatives for Fogo Island¹ (*UNICOOP – Fogo*) was formed in 1987. Its chief activity is the sale of food and other staples, agricultural production factors and building materials. Its membership figures are as follows:

Membership:

Grassroots cooperatives which are members of UNICOOP – FOGO	7
Total members	404
Total women	187
Total men	217

Internal organisation:

Its bodies, which work well, are the general meeting, the board of directors and the audit committee. The most recent GM was held in May 2004. Under the articles of association officers are elected for a 3-year term. The Union is governed by direct democracy, and every member has the right to vote.

The Union is affiliated to the National Federation of Consumer Cooperatives in Cape Verde (*Fenacoop*) which in turn is a member of ICA, *OCPLP* and *Fórum Cooperativo* (an association providing support to cooperatives and mutual societies).

The age breakdown of the membership is as follows:

Age range (years)	No. of cooperatives	No. of members
	7	
20-30		69
31-40		74
41-50		107
50 +		154
TOTAL	7	404

- Of these members, 344 are active and 60 non-active.
- 64% of cooperative members have been members for more than 10 years.

The educational level of this Union's members breaks down as follows:

Education	No. of members
Illiterate	117
Literate	149
Members with 4 years' schooling	82
Members with 6 years' schooling	28
Members with more than 6 years' schooling	28

Total indirect beneficiaries: 2 337

¹ This island has an area of 476 km² and a population of 37 409 spread over 3 municipalities, the biggest of which is São Felipe with a population of 27 930. Poverty rate: 12% (percentage of the population living below the poverty line: group whose income is not enough to meet their essential needs).

Turnover (in €):

2002	2003	2004	2005
2 661 298	2 613 776	2 796 526	not yet available

- ❑ Number of permanent staff: 58: (members: 15 non-members: 43)
- ❑ *Unicoop – Fogo* has a total of 16 sales outlets island-wide
- ❑ The monthly salary range is € 100 – € 635
- ❑ Seasonal workers: number averages 40 per month (mainly for loading and unloading merchandise)

Dividends paid: since 1987 *Unicoop – Fogo* has paid a dividend to its members based on the year-end results (surplus). The only year in which no dividend was paid was 2003. For example: a dividend of € 8 978 for the year 2004 was distributed amongst 7 grassroots cooperatives which are members of the Union. This dividend is 30% of the reserved surplus. The remaining 70% was channelled into education and training and investment.

Recent dividends (€):

2002	2003	2004	2005
66 884	no distribution	8 978	no distribution yet

Welfare activities to help members:

- Repair of huts for exceptionally poor members (specific-case measures); roofing of houses;
- Payment of school fees for members' children (annually);
- Purchase of medicines and medical consultations (exceptionally poor members);
- Payment of funeral expenses where necessary. Every member is entitled to a death grant of € 137.

Recognised benefits which encourage people to remain members of cooperatives:

- dividend;
- the advantage of being able to buy on credit (repayment rate);
- cheaper products / policy of special prices for members.

Major attraction: social protection for members through a health mutual.

Government:

Unicoop – Fogo would nevertheless welcome Government input in the following areas:

- Help with training and education of members by the reinstatement of a "light-touch" government department to handle this (it was axed in 2001);
- Return to the Union of property previously seized by the state;
- Definition of a policy on cooperatives identifying, amongst other important aspects, the role of the various partners.

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