

Covid 19 and Cooperatives in Turkey

Information provided by the National Cooperatives Union of Turkey (NCUT)



TÜRKİYE MİLLÎ KOOPERATİFLER BİRLİĞİ
NATIONAL COOPERATIVE UNION OF TURKEY



The cooperative movement that puts the environment and the human at its center has once again demonstrated how important the power of Social Solidarity was during the period of the Covid 19 pandemic. During this pandemic, cooperatives did not hesitate to carry out their duties in all areas where they were active, in the regions and countries where they were present. They reminded once again that services should be focused on human welfare and healthy environment, which takes into account sharing and solidarity with the whole community, especially with partners, rather than the idea of generating priority income.

During the period of the Covid 19 pandemic, cooperatives, like all over the world, tried to fulfill their services and support the work of the state. As of 29 May 2020, the number of Covid 19 patients in Turkey is 162.120 people, the death toll is 4.489 people and the number of patients recovering is 125.963 people. Capacity problems do not appear in hospitals in the country at the moment. Medical supplies are largely sufficient. Even aid is being made to other countries.

However, there is a shortage of supplies in some health centres and there are problems due to policy and application errors in the supply of masks used by the public for individual protection.

Within the scope of the efforts to prevent the Covid 19 pandemic in our country, first of all, the General Assemblies of cooperatives were postponed by the relevant ministries to the end of July. After this date, the co-operative general assemblies were given permission to be held within 3 months.

People under the age of 20 and over 65 who have chronic illnesses and who are among the riskiest groups in the outbreak are prohibited from taking to the streets. Restrictions have been imposed on intercity travel.

This permit has been granted for agricultural areas and some cooperative workplaces. Duty practice has been started in the workplaces except in mandatory cases. The field work of the cooperatives was postponed and arrangements were made in the work spaces due to the application of social distance. Cooperatives have complied with legal measures introduced by the government. Personnel other than compulsory jobs in offices have started to work from homes. They started to make their working systems on the internet whenever possible. Apart from the necessary office services, many studies and meetings have started to be carried out from the houses.

Due to decrease in Covid 19 pandemic, normalization will start in some areas as of June 1, 2020. What cooperative enterprises are doing in Turkey against Covid 19?

Here is a summary of the work against Covid-19 by six cooperative organizations

1. The Central Union of Agricultural Credit Cooperatives announced that it took the following measures to protect its members against Covid-19 and to continue the work of primary cooperatives at the grassroots level: - Until 30.04.2020, all enforcement and bankruptcy proceedings carried out throughout the country have been stopped and new follow-up operations will not be made within this framework, -

By giving flexibility to delays in loan payments, delayed loans will be waited for 180 days instead of 90 days before they are transferred to the follow-up accounts. - Due to the credit debts of our farmers, a force majeure note will be recorded in the Register in the Risk Center. - Principal and interest amounts of the loans, which will expire in April and May, will be postponed for 2 months without interest. ” (www.tarimkredi.org.tr) Pankobirlik (The Sugar-Beet Producers' Co-op Union)

President said "We are giving life to the economy by paying a large amount of sugar-beet money at a time when economic activities are decreasing due to the epidemic. We have supplied ethanol to the market a few days ago. We needed cash for the economy, we also did our job with the beet payment." Pre-harvest financing support was provided to the producer in the 8-10 months period, ranging from October to anchor, from irrigation to harvest, by paying in advance and cash advance payments of 668 million 53 thousand TL by Konya Şeker, which started paying beet money with advance payments without taking delivery of beet. The producer also saved about 92 million financing costs.

2. Bursa Ecza Koop (Pharmacy Co-op of Bursa) summarizes its work on this subject as follows: “Despite the exorbitant price practices especially in demand-oriented products (disinfectant, mask, alcohol, etc.) that emerged in this period, we, as Bursa Pharmacists Cooperative, reduced our warehouse profit to a minimum. Also mask etc. with the measures such as quality control of products, not selling products without UTS, and measurements made with alkometers in disinfectants, we did not allow our member pharmacists to reach poor quality products. For the use of our members and workers who are at the forefront of the fight against the epidemic, 3 free spectacles and 1 face shield are distributed free of charge, and the actions to be taken on an institutional basis will continue to be shared with you, depending on the developments ”. (www.bek.org.tr)
3. Antbirlık (Agricultural Sales Co-ops' Union) in Antalya also participated in the fight against the corona virus: “ANTBİRLİK and Serik Chamber of Agriculture, Mustafa Yavuz launched a campaign to protect against the corona virus epidemic. In the campaign, which was started due to the increase of virus

cases day by day and the people have difficulty in finding masks, an agreement was made with two private companies for the production of 25 thousand surgical masks and 25 thousand disposable gloves were supplied. Masks and gloves produced by two companies that work day and night. Paart of the produced mask started to be distributed to the public with the stand set up in Serik Square. Upon popular demand, President Yavuz increased the number of mask orders to 50 thousand ". <https://www.cnnturk.com/yerel-haberler/antalya/antbirlikten-50-bin-maske-25-bin-eldiven-1502818>

4. Glbirlik (Rose Oil Sales Co-ops' Union), headquartered in Isparta, also participated in the corona virus fight by focusing on the production of cologne: "A new type of corona virus in Turkey (Covid-19) cases has increased the need for cologne even more in recent days. The Union of Rose and Rose Oil Agricultural Sales Cooperatives (GLBİRLİK), which is the union of rose producers in Isparta, has focused its production on rose soap and lemon cologne and liquid soap on the Rosense company. (<https://www.msn.com/tr-tr/haber/gundem/yurt>)
5. The Union of Fisheries Cooperatives (SR-KOOP - www.sur.koop) asked for the following issues to be added to the measures to be taken by the government due to the outbreak of corona virus, in a letter sent to the Presidency:
 - Giving interest-free loans by the public banks to fishermen holding license,
 - Postponing the loan debts of fishermen for one year, including the lease debts of fishermen shelters and electricity, water and social security deductions,
 - Increasing the support paid to fishermen from 1.000 TL to 2.500 TL within the framework of the Communiqu on Supporting Traditional Coastal Fisheries,
 - Postponing tax payments by putting cooperatives under force majeure, extending the duration of the concise declaration and value added tax declarations.
6. ORKkoop Central Union and regional union and cooperatives office work has been arranged in accordance with protection measures according to the opinions and warnings of the Ministry of Health and the authorities expert on Covid 19. Social distance between individuals was taken into account in clerical work in ORKkoop offices. In office work, the practice of working in shifts and working from home has been started. Meetings have started to be held in online and social media. Joint works were carried out with the relevant ministries on the healthiest execution of production in forestry and agricultural production areas.

Although the work of Forestry cooperatives in forests was slowed down to some extent, the necessary health protection measures were taken and production was continued to the extent of the possibilities. Cooperatives

supported the partners in agricultural production and plant and animal production. ORKOOP has temporarily delayed the Professional Certification of partners working in the forest for a period of time as part of the government's measures to combat Covid 19 pandemic. During this time, it continues to work in partnership with the government's professional competence units to prepare for the future against the Covid 19 outbreak and similar problems. (www.oekoop.org.tr)

Women's cooperatives are involved in the production of masks to meet the needs of the people in the regions where they are established. They took part in helping the elderly and disabled in their localities.

Transportation cooperatives are cooperatives that serve the transportation of people and freight in cities. Public buses and taxis according to Covid 19 pandemic combat program warnings, according to the social distance rule, the necessary protection against disease and hygienic cleaning conditions began to make transportation.

Consumption cooperatives have started to implement programs to meet the needs of their partners and the public, and to help the sick and elderly with their food needs. They're probably starting to pay for House orders. They have tried to cover all kinds of cleaning and disinfectant substances in the context of the fight against Covid 19 pandemic.

Social cooperatives try to continue their work on the sick, elderly, disabled and child care issues. Because of the curfew and the closure of schools, co-operatives who provide education are trying to continue their education through the internet.

In particular, agricultural cooperatives continued their work in agricultural production and food production, ensuring the continuation of agricultural activities which were disrupted due to covid 19 pandemic. In this process, agricultural workers have taken measures to ensure the necessary health and working conditions related to their work. They have cooperated closely with the municipalities on this issue. They have developed projects related to the supply of necessary loans to the producers, the postponement of their loans without interest, the supply of inputs, and the marketing of manufactured products. Agricultural and consumption cooperatives have played an effective role in agricultural production and food marketing within the framework of national policies to ensure that the country does not face a problem with food supply and security.