



## Press release

January 2023

### **A new co-operative building resilience to climate change**

Co-operatives are doing a lot to move towards net zero, but in the meantime people in Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world, are already suffering from flooding, disease, and hunger because of climate change, and it will only get worse over the next decade. Co-operative Climate Action has been launched for people who want to offset their carbon emissions by helping those worst affected in a spirit of co-operation.

The Company is offering Co-offsets that reduce carbon, sustain biodiversity, and have the potential to tackle poverty and support small community businesses., so they can be economically sustainable in the long term. Led by Mark Lewis (ex-Chair of Wooldale Co-operative, now part of Central, and founder director of The Fair Traders Co-operative) the five volunteer co-founders from the UK, France and Malawi have already identified a number of viable projects, established a resource centre in Malawi, and undertaken a pilot planting of 360 giant clumping bamboo plants.

This non-invasive cultivar absorbs more than four times the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> annually than the fastest growing trees and provides a sustainable source of fuel that removes the need to cut down mature trees. Furthermore, it can provide goat fodder, nutritious food, water treatment, erosion control, and replace steel and timber in construction. In Malawi, only a tiny minority have electricity, and gas is unaffordable, so charcoal and firewood are used to cook and boil water. As a result, most mature forests have been devastated.

Rather than planting large commercial plantations, they are collaborating with the Wildlife and Environmental Association of Malawi, who have over three thousand volunteer groups around the country, to establish small community plots. This makes planting and care easier as well as reducing the need for women to carry the fuel long distances as happens at present. Smallholders contribute financially so they value the plants and can repay the cost after three years when harvesting starts. They are setting up a robust measurement, reporting and verification process and will be establishing a co-operative in Malawi to manage the project.

Having started with investment from the founder directors, they are now hoping to expand the planting and implement other projects with funding from the co-operative movement. Individuals or corporates can become members and purchase co-offsets from the website ( [www.coopclimateaction.com](http://www.coopclimateaction.com)) and are encouraged to assist with the development of the business.

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