

National Co+op Grocers Climate Collaborative Awards: Natural Products Companies Taking Climate Action

BY ALLIE MENTZER

More than 700 people packed the house on Climate Day (March 7, 2018) during Natural Products Expo West, the country's largest natural products industry trade show. Many more from around the world joined via livestream. In addition to informative panel presentations about taking bold action to help reverse global warming and a rousing keynote from former Environmental Protection Agency administrator Gina McCarthy, attendees also recognized the eight winners of the inaugural National Co+op Grocers Climate Collaborative Awards.

These awards are designed to inspire the natural products industry to work together to reduce emissions through the Climate Collaborative, which National Co+op Grocers (NCG) helped launch during last year's Expo West. Just one year later, more than 200 companies have made over 700 public commitments to climate action through the Collaborative.

"Our industry's moment to work in close unity to reverse climate change is here, and we applaud the 2018 award winners for leading the way," said Robynn Shrader, chief executive officer at National Co+op Grocers. "NCG is prioritizing efforts to galvanize our industry around slowing global warming, and we are excited to recognize these winning initiatives, which we believe can serve as blueprints that others can use to operate in ways that help protect our climate."

NCG serves in advisory roles for and is a major sponsor of the Climate Collaborative, as well as the sole underwriter of the National Co+op Grocers Climate Collaborative Awards.

"Co-op grocers and the entire natural products industry have long been pioneers advocating for important causes, such as USDA certified organic, GMO labeling, and now addressing climate change," said Erin Callahan, Climate Collaborative director. "We wanted to recognize the innovative business practices that are being used to create positive change. These inaugural awards are just the beginning of what we can expect to see as more companies and individuals step up to be environmental stewards."

Community Food Co-op in Bellingham, Wash., won an Outstanding Company Award for improving energy efficiency in a retail grocery setting and fostering resilient, regenerative farming communities. Among the more than 40 nominees for the award were five additional food co-ops: The Merc Co+op, Monadnock Food Co-op, PCC Community Markets, Wheatville Co-op, and Outpost Natural Foods Co-op, a finalist. All NCG co-ops help make these awards possible through their continued support of climate action as an NCG advocacy priority.



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"We strongly believe that the decisions we make create a ripple effect, so the climate initiatives that the Community Food Co-op chooses to pursue are an integral part of our business structure," said Melissa Elkins, the co-op's sustainability coordinator. "We feel these initiatives are a great way to show respect to our community and the environment." •

Award winners

Awards were given out for being an Outstanding Company or Influencer or for having an Outstanding Value Chain Engagement.

Outstanding company award recipients

- **Alter Eco** for developing a scalable agroforestry model that regenerates farmland and compensates for carbon emissions within its supply chain.
- **Community Food Co-op** (Bellingham, Wash.) for improving energy efficiency in a retail grocery setting and fostering resilient, regenerative farming communities.
- **Organic Valley** for its innovative community solar program that will help Wisconsin increase residents' solar energy use by 15 percent.
- **Veritable Vegetable** for its comprehensive and successful approach to reducing emissions throughout its fleet and warehouses.

Outstanding value-chain engagement award recipients

- **Guayaki** for producing more energy than its operations consume and maintaining a carbon-positive footprint for 22 years and counting.
- **Lotus Foods** for developing a model for—and educating their supply chain and customers about—the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) ecological rice production method.

Outstanding influencer award recipients

- **Albert Straus**, founder of Straus Family Creamery, for his leadership in developing a long-term vision for carbon-positive organic dairy farming, including the first full-scale electric truck powered by cow manure.
- **Clif Bar & Company** for its wide-ranging climate leadership, and particularly for endowing the first domestic land-grant university chairs for organic research and providing renewable energy consulting to supply-chain partners.

To learn more about these winners' stories, see "Climate Awards Offer a Glimpse of the Future of Food" at strongertogether.coop. To find out how natural products companies can participate in the Climate Collaborative, visit climatecollaborative.com/take_action.