ABSTRACT. To counteract the fragmentation of cooperative development in California, U.S.A., a multi-stage strategy was developed to link capital-intensive agricultural cooperatives with member-intensive consumer cooperatives. The strategy began by identifying issues on which agreements between the two groups could come easily. These included joint sponsorship of a statewide Co-op Month and the initiation of a university Center for Cooperatives. Specific details of the implementation process are discussed.

Cooperation is a worldwide movement that takes different forms in different regions, due to economic, cultural, historical, and political factors. More than 500 million people belong to cooperatives worldwide, and of these 350 million belong to organizations affiliated with the International Cooperative Alliance (Blomqvist, 1984). Despite these large numbers, fragmentation and disunity characterize cooperative development in North America. Consumer cooperatives are divided according to product or service area, agricultural cooperatives remain aloof from consumer cooperatives, and many organizations classified by external criteria as cooperatives do not publicly acknowledge or emphasize their status as cooperatives either to their membership or to the public. Membership statistics for consumer cooperatives in the United States typically include credit unions, memorial societies, and parent-run preschools, although none of these groups use "cooperative" in their title and only rarely in their publications, and there is reason to doubt if members think of the organizations as cooperatives or see themselves as members of co-ops. The fragmentation makes it difficult to compile economic and social statistics on North American cooperatives. In many sectors of the economy, such as retail food, housing, and child care, to name just a few, there are no current and accurate statistics on the number of cooperatives, their membership, or sales and service volume. The absence of this information is a serious impediment to cooperative development. Organizations cannot work together if they do not know that others exist or how to contact them.

Cooperative leaders in California, U.S.A., are concerned about the lack of cohesion and collaboration among cooperatives. Many are aware of the networks of cooperatives operating in other parts of the world. For example, Swedish producer cooperatives are highly integrated both horizontally and vertically, to the extent that they dominate most sub-sectors of the foodprocessing industry. Swedish producer cooperatives also supply farmer members with many or most of their supplies, and collect their members' production as the raw materials for a capital-intensive food processing industry, transporting these materials to factories owned by the cooperatives, where the food is processed into the finished product, to be packaged and transported to cooperative wholesalers (Pestoff, 1983).

Blomqvist (1984) discusses evolving networks of producer, consumer, service, and financial cooperatives in the tradition of the cooperative commonwealth. In Denmark and Norway, cooperative associations began first in the rural areas, and only later spread to the urban population. In Finland the cooperative movement grew almost simultaneously in both rural and urban areas, while in Iceland integrated networks of agricultural and distribution cooperatives developed almost from the outset (Grønmo, Rose, & Stø, 1983). Besides Scandinavia, similar linkages can be found in Iceland, Israel, Japan, and the Basque provinces.

In California, agricultural cooperatives have little to gain economically from an alliance with consumer cooperatives. Unlike the situation in Scandinavia, where linkage to retail food cooperatives might offer expanded domestic markets, the market share of retail food cooperatives in the United States is minuscule. If retail food cooperatives were to give preference to the products of agricultural cooperatives, this would be a symbolic gesture with negligible economic benefits to either side. The advantages of linkage between agricultural and consumer co-ops in California would be in joint training and public relations programs and in advocacy. The farm cooperatives have the support of rural cooperative legislators and consumer cooperatives have the support of urban liberal legislators. If the two sectors could unite on a common front, this would be a very effective alliance at both ends of the political spectrum. The capital-intensive producer cooperatives would be strengthened through alliance with the people-intensive consumer cooperatives and vice versa. The result would be a cooperative movement that was strong economi-