

COOP Switzerland

A profitable ESG business model



Joos Sutter,
Board of Directors Chairperson

Inset centre: Philipp Wyss,
General Manager of Coop Switzerland

Top left: Headquarters buildings,
in Basel (Switzerland)

Top right: A Coop Switzerland vehicle
leaves the distribution centre
to serve the sales units

Middle right: External view of
a Swiss Coop store

Bottom: Grüze Markt, a large shop
in Winterthur (municipality in
the Canton of Zurich, with over
one hundred thousand inhabitants)



ESG?

What are you talking about?

ESG (Environment, Society and Governance) have been on the scene for a while, but only recently have many businesses and corporations started to look into the ramifications of ESG and its possible benefits.

Some detractors see it as 'socialist interference' into a capitalist model, but their arguments are shallow and lack substance. The great majority of businesses that are embracing ESG have indicated in their annual reporting the benefits to society and the environment.



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This article also proves that, by embracing ESG in everything that they do, COOP Switzerland have produced attractive bottom-line results for its employees, management and shareholders alike.

A plethora of activities

Having incorporated social responsibility into their mission statement, COOP Switzerland executives, personnel and participants focus on a daily basis on creating a better environment by adopting sustainable processes and applying solid governance principles to everything that they do.



Here are some examples of what they call 'deeds' (there are over 400 of them) ...

- The COOP **sponsorship of mountain areas** has been campaigning since 1942 for better living and working conditions for people living in mountainous areas of Switzerland. Sourcing of ethically produced goats and pigs from small farmers is but one of such actions.
- A **bee awareness programme** teaches children and adults alike about the urgent need to preserve the bee population for the benefit of agriculture as a whole – Citizens can donate CHF80 (R1 600) per annum for a gift subscription on educational material.
- Their '**Zero waste by 2026**' campaign encourages customers to bring their own bags for shopping and their own containers for products from service counters. This, together with many more ideas, has reduced the use of plastic packaging drastically from their range of products.



Above: Dramatic mass displays draw the customers into and around the huge fruit and vegetable department

Top right: Colour blocking is used extensively in the fresh produce departments, complemented by the wood and green colour of the crates

Centre right: Everyday fruit and vegetables – those who work behind these stalls strive to guarantee freshness and authenticity, as these are the values in which Coop invests its credibility

Bottom right: Display of fruit and vegetables in a Coop Switzerland shop





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- Their vision is that from 2025 they will only procure **fruit and vegetables from Swiss greenhouses** that are heated by 80 percent fossil-free methods and from 2030 it will be 90 percent.
- Their **Organic Bud palm oil policy** follows these guidelines ...
 - Compliance with the strict Bio Suisse guidelines
 - No cultivation on land cleared after 1994
 - No burning of surfaces
 - No synthetic pesticides and fertilizers
 - Compliance with social standards (decent working conditions, ban on child labour, employee co-determination rights, social security for employees)
 - Wherever possible, preference is given to smallholder cooperatives.



- They have pioneered a **dual-purpose chicken** – a new chicken breed has been developed where the female chickens are used for egg production and the males for fattening.
- **Animal welfare** in the production of food is of paramount importance to COOP Switzerland. Sourced mainly from Switzerland and Germany most fresh meat is organically grown and strict animal husbandry protocols are in place.
- **Reduction of the CO2 footprint** by reducing flights, increasing virtual online meetings and use of carsharing and trains when travelling.

Bottom left: A view of the fresh departments within a larger COOP outlet

Top: Bakers at work, open to the scrutiny of the shopper

Centre: Employee serving at the bakery

Below: Bread sold on a self-service basis at the bakery department



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- **Innovation projects** include fairtrade organic cashew nuts (Benin), organic sugar, organic seed breeding for spelt, wheat and tomatoes, Baltic grassland feed, sustainable cocoa (Honduras and Ecuador), sustainable basmati rice (India), sustainable products produced from algae, and many more.
- **Use of sustainable building materials** when building new or refurbishing existing stores. LED lighting is used throughout the group, as well as solar panels. Swiss granite is used on the floors of all supermarkets. Wood is widely used in the décor of all outlets.
- The **company's data centre** was built close to its main Distribution Centre. The heat exchange from the DC is used to cool/heat the data centre, thus reducing their CO₂ emissions by 1 000 tons per annum.
- Imported products have **'By air' stickers** indicating, not only that they have applied the strictest of production processes (as prescribed by Swiss law), but also to make the shopper aware that they are buying a product that has a larger carbon footprint.
- **Home deliveries** to households are conducted by bicycle instead of cars.
- They were the first retailer in the world to use **electric delivery trucks** and now they use **hydrogen-fuelled trucks** for the transport of merchandise. COOP have opened Switzerland's first hydrogen filling station.



Top left: The Swiss embrace the flavours of their Italian neighbours, so much so that they dedicate special space to Italian products in the COOP shops

Top right: Long arrays of cuts characterise the counter of the 'service butcher shop'

Centre: Italian flavours are also represented in the service counters

Below: Cured meats are less popular than cheese but nevertheless occupy significant space

- One day a year is chosen as **'Good Deed Day.'** This year it will be Saturday, May 6. Citizens are called on to do a good deed, such as assist in fund raising, collect data of infirm people, understand nature better with WWF, do a first aid course with the Swiss Red Cross, distribute food (about 16 tons) of good food to poor people throughout Switzerland ... and the list is endless.



We have outlined only a small range of the many actions undertaken by the company, its management and 95 000 employees in 2 600 outlets, as well as by their respective communities.

The end result

Apart from having won many accolades for its sustainability efforts, at the end of the day it is the bottom line that counts.

The COOP produced a turnover of CHF 32 billion (R640 billion) in 2022, a growth of 7,45% over the previous year. Now THAT is a great result for embracing ESG principles in one's business.

Below: Sausage making and other butchery process visible to the shopping public



Above: Swiss cheese specialties, on display merchandised in terms of 'light and dark' varieties

Top right: Cheese inspires the creation of specially dedicated spaces

Centre right: Cheese is huge staple in the Swiss diet and exclusive spaces are designed into every store layout



White and blue colours identify the fish department



Left: Dramatic view of a perfumery' department

Top right: Warm and exclusive environment, reserved for 'wines and spirits'

Bottom right: Beer, in Switzerland, like meat and cheese, takes on particular attractiveness with island displays on wooden flooring.

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Serves: 4
Preparation time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 1 hour

GOLDI, COUNTY FAIR, FESTIVE or MOUNTAIN VALLEY Braai Pack

INGREDIENTS

Chicken:

- 1 Tbsp (15ml) butter
- 1 tsp (5ml) olive oil
- 5 chicken pieces braai pack
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ½ tsp (3ml) thyme leaves, preferably fresh
- 1/3 cup (80ml) red wine
- 340g fig preserve
- ¼ cup (60ml) orange juice
- ¼ cup (60ml) balsamic vinegar
- 3 thyme sprigs

INGREDIENTS

For the salad:

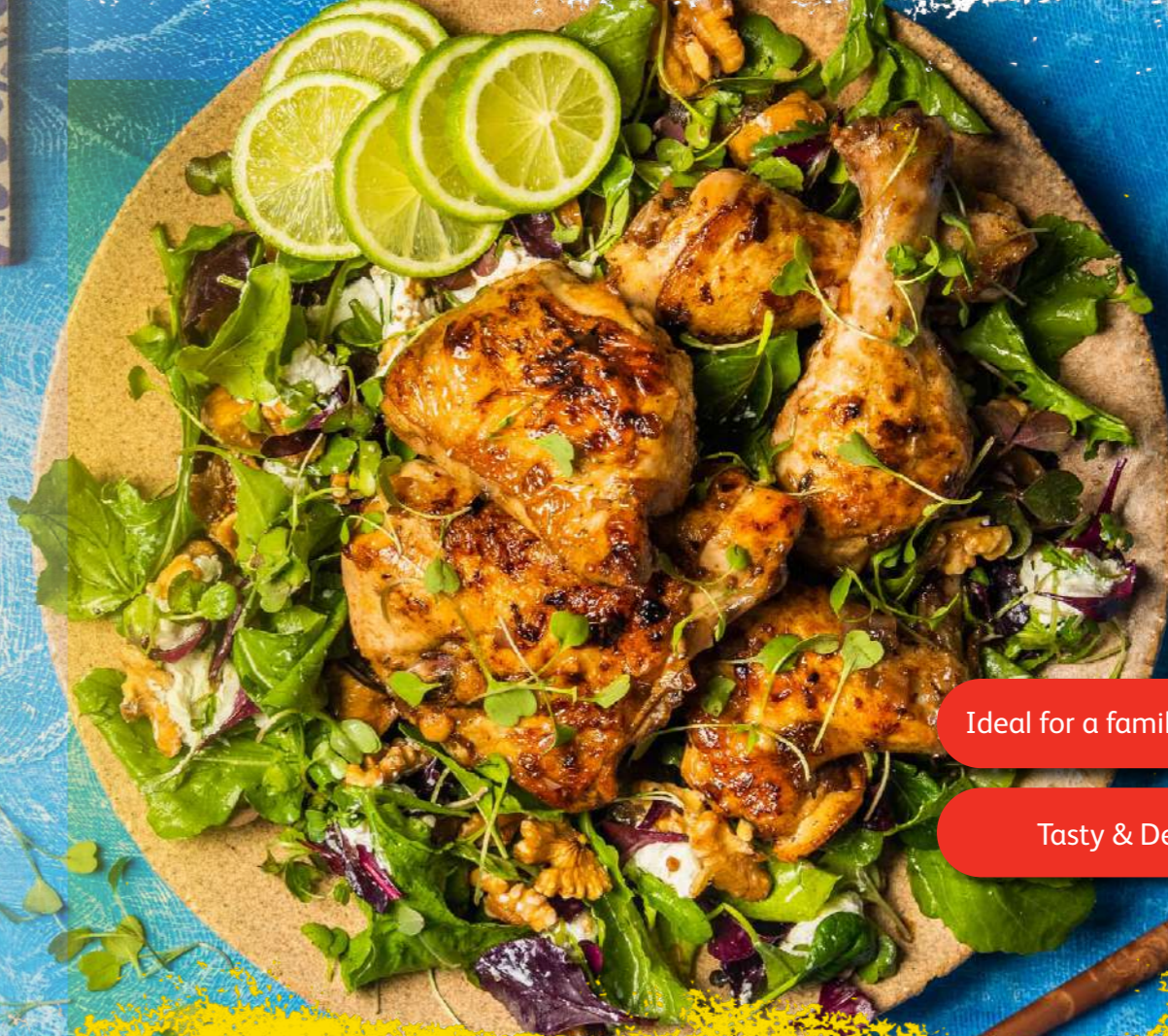
- 50g rocket leaves
- 6 medium-large figs, sliced into wedges
(if figs are not in season, you can use dried figs)
- 100g goats cheese
- 50g toasted walnuts
- 1 Tbsp (15ml) olive oil
- 1 ½ Tbsp (20ml) orange juice
- 1 Tbsp (15ml) balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp (15ml) honey
- Pepper, to taste

BALSAMIC AND FIG ROASTED CHICKEN WITH FIG AND GOATS CHEESE SALAD

Sticky, sweet and utterly satisfying – this is a must-make recipe.

Method:

- Preheat the oven to 180°C.
- Heat the butter and olive oil in a pan. Add the chicken pieces skin side down and allow to render until lightly golden, then remove from the pan.
- Add the onion to the pan and sauté for 4 minutes. Add the garlic and thyme and sauté for a further 3 minutes. Deglaze with the red wine and allow to simmer for 3 minutes.
- Add the fig preserve, orange juice and balsamic vinegar. Simmer for 5 minutes.
- Place the chicken pieces in a casserole dish and pour over the sauce.
- Place the thyme sprigs on top. Cover with a lid or foil and bake in the oven for 45 minutes.
- Remove the lid or foil, and bake for a further 15 minutes, or until cooked.
- In the meantime, prepare the salad – Lay the rocket down in a bowl or platter.
- Top with the fig wedges, crumble over the goat's cheese and scatter over the walnuts.
- Whisk together the olive oil, orange juice, balsamic and honey.
- Just before serving, drizzle over the dressing and season with pepper.



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Serves: 4
Preparation time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 1 hour

GOLDI, COUNTY FAIR, FESTIVE or MOUNTAIN VALLEY Chicken Breast Fillets

INGREDIENTS

Chicken:

- 4 chicken breast fillets
- 1 cup (250ml) plain yoghurt
- 4 cloves garlic, finely minced
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 2 Tbsp (30ml) tomato paste
- 2 tsp (10ml) chilli flakes
- 1 tsp (5ml) cumin powder
- 1 tsp (5ml) coriander powder
- 2 tsp (10ml) paprika
- Salt and milled pepper

- 1 red pepper
- 1 yellow pepper
- 1 Tbsp (15ml) olive oil

INGREDIENTS

For the yoghurt hummus:

- ¼ cup (60ml) full-fat plain yoghurt
- ½ cup (125ml) hummus
- Juice and zest of ½ lemon
- 5g coriander, chopped
- 5g mint, chopped

TURKISH CHICKEN KEBABS WITH YOGHURT HUMMUS

Kebabs are a great way to enjoy chicken fillets.
The Middle Eastern flavours in this version are a worthy update!

Method:

- Slice the chicken into even chunks, about 1.5cm x 1.5cm.
- In a bowl, whisk together the yoghurt, garlic, lemon zest and juice, tomato paste, chilli flakes, cumin, coriander, paprika, and a big pinch of salt and pepper.
- Add the chicken chunks and mix well. Place in the fridge and allow to marinate overnight, or for a minimum of 4 hours.
- While the braai or grill is heating up, place the chicken chunks onto skewers, either 4 large or 8 small.
- While the grill is very hot, brush the peppers with olive oil and place them on the heat to blacken all over.
- Remove the peppers from the heat and place them in a bowl. Cover with clingfilm and allow to steam for 15-30 minutes, then discard the stalk and pips and peel the skin off. Slice the peppers into 1cm wide strips
- Prepare the yoghurt hummus dressing – Mix all the ingredients together. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- Grill the chicken skewers on the grill until nicely charred and cooked through.
- Place each on top of a flatbread. Top with slices of peppers and drizzle over the dressing. Top with picked herbs and a lemon wedge. Serve.



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