



Purchasing Mission & Guidelines

Mission

The Keweenaw Co-op's purchasing mission is to offer our community with a wide selection of nutritious foods and safe products. We value our Owners and customers, our farmers and food producers, our local economy, and our cooperative business partners. Our Owners and customers trust us to be honest in how we evaluate the food and products we put on our shelves. Our goal is to be open and truthful in our product selection process. We have simple guidelines to help us make our decisions and our Buyers are committed to providing the highest quality products through diligence and research.

Guidelines

The Keweenaw Co-op's purchasing guidelines were created using the Global Ends Policy as the guiding force. The Keweenaw Co-op's Global Ends Policy states,

“The Keweenaw Co-op Incorporated exists to sustain the physical and social health of our owners, customers, and community with:

- A Resilient and Ethical food infrastructure;**
- Education, Activism, and Communication;**
- Advantages of a cooperative business model.”**

Using this living policy, The Keweenaw Co-op Buyers Team has developed simple guidelines which strive to achieve the following goals:

- To meet the goals of our Global Ends Policy by sustaining the health of our Owners, customers, and community.
- To provide access to a wide variety of foods to our whole community by offering unique groceries as well as basic staples.
- To provide a product selection which are fair to all and have positive environmental and social impacts.
- To provide our Owners and customers a means to choose for themselves with the option of special ordering products.

The following list of guidelines was developed by the Keweenaw Co-op Buyers Team to influence purchasing decisions. This is a living document that will evolve through time as issues change, but will always stay true to our mission of offering our community safe and healthy products that have positive environmental and social impacts.

The Keweenaw Co-op is committed to prioritizing and selecting products based on the following Guidelines:

Organic & Sustainable Agriculture

The Keweenaw Co-op understands Organic Agricultural Practices promote sustainable growing methods which nurture the soil, crops, animals and humans, creating a beneficial habitat for all living things. We pledge to seek out and prioritize products developed using organic and sustainable methods of agriculture.

Local & Regional

The Keweenaw Co-op is committed to working with our local producers and farmers to establish mutually beneficial relationships, ensuring quality products and creating a sustainable community. Priority will be given to locally produced and manufactured products that align with our Global Ends Policy. Regional products will be given preference when a local option is not available.

- The Keweenaw Co-op classifies “Local” as producers within a 50 mile radius of the Co-op.
- The Keweenaw Co-op classifies “Regional” as producers from the State of Michigan and neighboring states of Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Genetic Modification

The Keweenaw Co-op pledges to educate our shoppers on the issue of Genetic Modification, giving them knowledge and power to vote with their wallets. The Keweenaw Co-op actively labels products that are Non-GMO Project verified and promotes Non-GMO month every October. [Non-GMO Project is a non-profit organization committed to providing consumers with clearly labeled and independently verified non-GMO choices, including testing of at-risk ingredients.]

Whole Foods

The Keweenaw Co-op pledges to provide the highest quality, minimally-processed and packaged goods at the lowest possible prices. Whole or minimally-processed foods are defined as: traditional processes used to make food edible, preserving food, or make food safe for human consumption. Examples of these processes are: smoking, roasting, freezing, drying, fermenting, or those physical processes that do not fundamentally alter the raw product such as separating a whole raw product into component parts such as pressing fruit into juice. [USDA Food Standards and Labeling Policy.]

Non-Irradiated Products

The Keweenaw Co-op is committed to purchasing non-irradiated produce and products.

Fair Trade Certified

The Keweenaw Co-op will prioritize Fair Trade Certification (FTC) when purchasing products from outside the United States. The Keweenaw Co-op recognizes FTC as a minimum standard for internationally traded goods. Buyers will prioritize working with companies exceeding Fair Trade standards and who trade directly with farmers and producers. For products not meeting basic Fair Trade standards, buyers will research and seek out products made with healthy standards of workplace safety. This will be the exception and not the rule and will be done in cases where the product meets a basic need of our owners for which there is no Fair Trade alternative.

Special & Alternative Dietary Needs

The Keweenaw Co-op recognizes the wide range of nutritional and dietary needs in our community; we strive to offer a selection of products which reflect these needs. The Keweenaw Co-op displays signage to indicate products which are gluten free (Grocery), Kosher (Bulk), Organic (Produce), no salt (Bulk), and made with wheat-free ingredients (Deli).

Cooperatives & Ethical Workplaces

In line with cooperative principles, the Keweenaw Co-op will support other cooperative businesses by giving priority to their products when possible. The Keweenaw Co-op will prioritize products from other companies that demonstrate a high level of workplaces standards, worker health and empowerment. In cases where companies have a reputation for poor workplaces conditions, union busting, or engaging in other activities harmful to workers, buyers may pull their products from our shelves or offer a comparable product in its place.

Affordability

The Keweenaw Co-op strives to meet the needs of all community members by making our products as affordable as possible. The Co-op pledges to actively research options to lower our cost of goods while offering products and services that contribute to the Coop's financial health based on our Global Ends Policy and our Owner's needs and requests.

Animal Cruelty

The Keweenaw Co-op will seek to carry animal products where producers and manufacturers have demonstrated efforts to take the dignity of the animal into account when raising and slaughtering. We offer Cage-Free and Free-Range products when available. The Keweenaw Co-op will also seek out products not using unnecessary animal products or engaging in animal testing in the production of supplements and body care products.

Antibiotic Free / Hormone Free

The Keweenaw Co-op strives to offer milk, eggs, and meats raised without the use of hormones, steroids and antibiotics. Growth hormones and antibiotics are prohibited under Organic Farming practices.

Independent Producers

The Keweenaw Co-op recognizes the organic foods industry is rapidly consolidating as it evolves into a national market. This trend poses major risks to the integrity of organic foods, taking economic and political control away from small businesses and the communities in which they operate. The Keweenaw Co-op will strive to carry products from producers and manufacturers independent from the influence of corporate America, giving priority to cooperatives and privately owned small businesses.

Packaging: Environmental Impact

The Keweenaw Co-op aims to reduce our environmental impact by participating in the following activities: promoting fresh produce and bulk products; minimizing our amount of products manufactured with non-recyclable materials; creating opportunities for recycling; promoting the reuse of materials; offering products packaged in returnable/reusable containers; and encouraging our Owners and customers to bring their own containers and bags.

Packaging: Advertising & Information

The Keweenaw Co-op will not carry products with: 1) packaging that makes false or misleading nutritional, environmental, or ingredient claims; 2) whose packaging is deemed exploitive, oppressive or perpetuates harmful stereotypes; 3) predatory advertising, especially advertising to children.

Toxin-Free / Non-Petroleum

The Keweenaw Co-op seeks to provide product choices that are free of substances that are toxic to life and the environment. While screening household and body care products we consider the health of all animals, plant and aquatic life, soil and water systems, and the hazards of production processes. Research, knowledge, and product formulations are constantly evolving; we have committed to continual re-evaluation of our product lines.