

## **Candidate Statement: Barbara Patterson**

It would be an honor to serve on the board of directors for NCBA CLUSA and further enhance the partnership between NCBA CLUSA and the National Farmers Union (NFU) in pursuit of greater success of the cooperative model.

NFU has a long history of cooperative advocacy and development and I was fortunate to get my start with Farmers Union by helping draft a cooperative manual for smart, strategic cooperative development in New England. While my focus at NFU is largely rural in nature, I am excited about the opportunities for cross-sectoral partnerships with NCBA CLUSA and its diverse cooperative membership.

Recognizing the cooperative movement is stronger with more voices at the table, NFU's cooperative activities incorporate the many different types of cooperatives into our educational and development endeavors. Central to NFU's work on cooperatives is developing the next generation of cooperative leaders—both through our youth education programs and our annual College Conference on Cooperatives (CCOC). At NFU's All-States Leadership Camp, young members learn about cooperatives and create a model cooperative "store" where all proceeds go to a charity of their choosing. At the CCOC, students learn about electric, housing, worker and consumer coops, as well as credit unions. Educating the next generation of lawyers, economists, bankers, farmers and consumers will be critical to the sustainability of cooperatives.

NFU and NCBA CLUSA have many shared values, including the goal of developing and advancing cooperatives as a key tool in economic success both domestically and internationally. Additionally, NFU and NCBA CLUSA have complementary efforts on the international stage as NCBA CLUSA launches cooperative enterprises across the globe and NFU works to promote the cooperative model and family farm agriculture through the World Farmers Organization.

My passion for cooperatives stems from my work with New England Farmer Union in developing *Growing a Food System for the Future: A Manual for Co-operative Enterprise Development* and the vast potential cooperatives have to meet many challenges across the globe. Agriculture and rural America are grappling with some immensely trying times. The cooperative model continues to offer solutions, just as it did in NCBA CLUSA's and NFU's early history more than 100 years ago. Some of the biggest policy issues I work on at NFU—such as rural economic development, viability of family farms and food access—find potential solutions in cooperatives. I would be honored to bring NFU's perspectives to NCBA CLUSA's Board of Directors.