

# Humanizing Food Products Through a Collective of Producers : Rethinking Human Presence Beyond the Individual

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## **Abstract**

Consumers often lack information about who produces the goods they buy. Across three experiments, we examine whether signaling that a food product is made by a “farmer-owned cooperative” humanizes the product and increases perceptions of support and purchase intentions. Study 1 shows that a farmer-owned label enhances perceived human presence and, in turn, helping perceptions and purchase intention. Study 2 demonstrates that this effect is specific to producer collectives : investor-owned claims reduce human presence relative to both farmer-owned and control conditions. Study 3 shows that the humanization effect is robust across cooperative size. Together, the findings reveal that collective ownership can humanize products when the collective is directly involved in production, offering insight for producer-focused communication and practical guidance for cooperative brands.

**Track:** Product and Brand Management