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July 14, 2014

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **Central Co-op Releases Open Letter Urging Eden Foods to Drop Lawsuit Against Affordable Care Act**

**Seattle, WA:** Central Co-op has sent an open letter to the leadership at organic food pioneer Eden Foods. The letter, dated July 11, states that Central Co-op is removing 80 percent of Eden Products from its shelves, and asks that the industry leader reconsider its stance against including birth control in health coverage for employees.

Last year, Eden Foods filed a lawsuit challenging the Affordable Care Act requirement that company health plans for employees include birth control coverage. The company contends that the requirement should be lifted in cases where birth control is contrary to a business owner's religious beliefs. The company lost its case in the lower courts, but Eden Foods came back into the news on July 2 when it was mentioned in the Supreme Court ruling in the *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* case, which was on the same question.

Since this issue re-emerged last week, Central Co-op has been giving careful consideration to its relationship with Eden. In light of the cooperative's governance policies, which include a requirement to include a consideration of social justice in its product evaluation while meeting the needs of its membership, the Co-op has moved to discontinue 80 percent of the Eden products that it has offered up to now. "The decision to let go of so much of this high quality brand is a difficult step and not without its costs," says General Manager, Dan Arnett. "Many of those products were still popular, even though sales of many have slipped over the last year. In light of our core values and purposes as noted in our organizational policies, we cannot ignore this issue or its potential impact on families across the country. In our letter, we strongly urge Eden to reconsider their position, drop their lawsuit, and work to rebuild the trust that has been lost."

Central Co-op has sent this letter to Eden via email and hard copy, and has made it available to the public on its website and through social media outlets.

**About Central Co-op:** Central Co-op is a member-owned natural foods cooperative located at the top of Seattle's Capitol Hill. A complete grocery store dedicated to sustainable practices and the local food economy, Central Co-op features an organic produce department, sustainably raised and harvested meat and seafood, an in-house deli and juice bar, a large selection of bulk goods and herbs, and extensive healthy and wellness section and unique gifts. Open to everyone, seven days a week. More information is available online at [www.centralcoop.coop](http://www.centralcoop.coop)

**Attachment:** An Open Letter to Eden Foods from Central Co-op

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July 11, 2014

Eden Foods, Inc.  
701 Tecumseh Road  
Clinton, Michigan 49236

Dear Eden Foods,

You may not know us, but we are long-time supporters of your company. Central Co-op is a community-owned grocery store located in the heart of Seattle and we have been selling your product for decades. Our cooperative's governance policies provide clear direction to manage our company emphasizing environmental stewardship, financial prudence and a respect for human dignity. These are woven into the fabric of our company at every level. Because of the high quality of your product lines, and your history of innovative, sustainable business practices, your products have always been a core part of our product offering.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's recent ruling in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, Central Co-op has received inquiries from owners and community members regarding your contesting certain parts of the Affordable Care Act. Over the last year, we have even had calls requesting that we boycott your company to protest your stance against offering employees insurance that includes birth control coverage. We have also been the subject of negative press around this issue and while we believe some of it is unfair to your company and to ours, it is indicative of public outrage. We want to let you know that, because of the many ways in which your work has supported our mission over the years, we decided not to join a boycott over this one point of divergence. Your strong stance on product safety and GMO issues precluded a complete severance of our relationship.

We do, however, always encourage our owners and customers to vote with their dollars by supporting companies that they respect. This is what we suggested our community do when outcry arose over your action last year; and recent renewed interest in your case was cause for us to review sales of Eden products and explore what options we might have that equally (or better) reflect our product guidelines. During this review we found that our community has indeed been voting with their dollars and that 80 percent of the Eden products on our shelves have failed to keep up with the sales of competing products. It is clear that your company has lost support from our community and that people are showing preference to other product lines. At the same time, the landscape of the natural foods market has shifted and there are now other suppliers of many products in your niche that meet both our quality standards and our values. We realize that no company is perfect, including ours, and we remain diligent in our evaluation of which products most closely align with our values, and most effectively meet the needs of our community. In our judgment, this decision of yours moves you down the order of consideration among the options available to us.

Though we are not banning Eden products in our store, we recognize that we must shift away from our long-standing confidence in and reliance on your company. In cases where there are equivalent products from comparably respectable companies, we are moving away from your offering. Based on our review, we will be retaining only 20 percent of the Eden products that we have recently stocked.

We support the strengthening and expanding of access to reproductive health care for women and families. We ask that you drop your lawsuit, and reconsider your company's stance and policies. Our cooperative will be following this continuing story closely, and will take future changes into account in our product evaluations.

Sincerely and on the behalf of Central Co-op,

Dan Arnett  
General Manager