

ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

News from members, ICA-AP activities,
ICA-EU Partnership update & more!

August 2024 Newsletter

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ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024



The ICA Global Cooperative Conference (GCC) and General Assembly (GA) 2024 will be held in New Delhi, India, from 25 – 30 November 2024. It is being hosted by the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) in close cooperation with the wider cooperative movement of India.

The GCC will feature the official launch of the UN International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025, an International Exposition of Cooperatives, the ICA Bodies' Meeting on Deepening the Cooperative Identity, and various Sectoral & Thematic Meetings. The central focus of the Conference will be on celebrating Cooperation among Cooperatives, and its many manifestations in and for the 21st century.

Registration is open at <https://icanewdelhi2024.coop/welcome>. Check out the website for the latest program and speaker details, and all information on logistics.

ICA members can participate in the GA by invitation only. The registration process for this will be separate and as per the communication sent by the ICA Global Office to all members.

18th Asia Pacific Research Conference and Young & Emerging Scholars (YES) Workshop



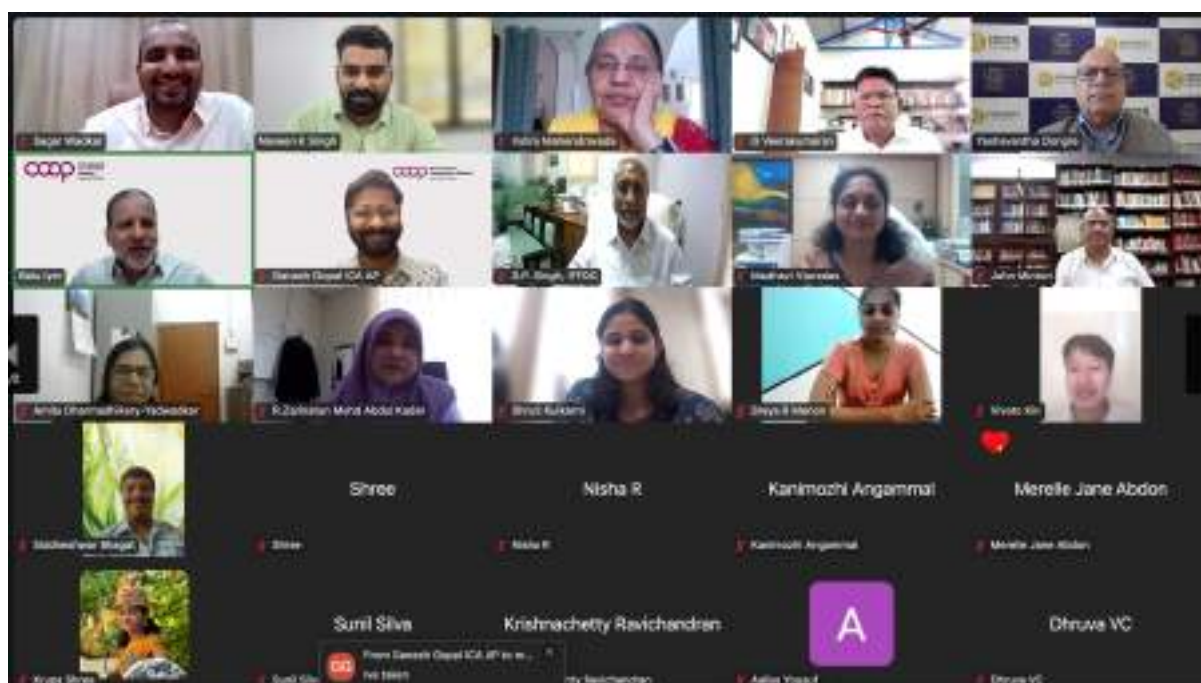
The ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research (CCR) will organize the 18th ICA Asia Pacific Research Conference on 'Cooperatives in the Next Industrial Revolution' in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIM-K) and Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society (ULCCS) Ltd. in Kozhikode, Kerala, India from 15-18 October 2024.

The Conference aims to explore the role of cooperatives in shaping the future of work amidst the ongoing technological advancements and industrial transformations. In an era marked by automation,

digitalization, and globalization, cooperatives emerge as a resilient and sustainable alternative, fostering democratic workplaces, equitable distribution of wealth, and community empowerment. This conference will provide a platform for scholars, practitioners, policymakers, entrepreneurs and activists to exchange insights, share best practices, and chart a collective path forward for cooperatives in the evolving landscape of the Next Industrial Revolution. Stay tuned for program details [here](#).

ICA-AP UPDATES

COOP Colloquium 10 on Harmonizing Cooperative Legal Frameworks: Insights from Indian Cooperative Laws



The ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research (CCR) hosted the 10th Coop Colloquium on 23 August 2024, continuing its efforts to strengthen the academic dialogue amongst researchers on cooperatives across the Asia-Pacific region. This edition focused on the theme of ***"Harmonizing Cooperative Legal Frameworks: Insights from Indian Cooperative Laws,"*** drawing participants from 11 countries across the region and beyond.

The colloquium was both timely and relevant, given India's rich history in the cooperative movement and the legislative developments of the past few years. Prof. Yashvantha Dongre, Committee Chairperson and Vice-Chancellor, of Chanakya University, set the tone for the colloquium with his opening remarks. Drawing from his vast experience in the cooperative sector and academia, he emphasized the critical need for harmonizing cooperative laws across different jurisdictions. Prof. Dongre highlighted how legislative inconsistencies can hinder the growth and efficiency of cooperatives, especially those operating across state or national borders. His remarks laid the foundation for the discussions that followed.



Membership

• Variation in Application Disposal Period

- Time frame for processing membership applications varies **from 30 to 90 days**
- If the application is not processed within the specified period, it is **Deemed to be a Member** automatically.
- While "deemed membership" promotes inclusivity, it has implications about member engagement and the cooperative's overall health.



Dr. Sagar Wadkar, Adviser, National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), as the key speaker of the colloquium provided elaborate details on Indian cooperative laws. His study of the subject provided participants with an understanding of the complexities and challenges within the Indian cooperative legal framework. Dr. Wadkar's presentation covered several key aspects – the historical evolution of cooperative laws in India (from the Colonial era to the present day); analysis of state-specific legislations and their implications for cooperative governance; the impact of recent national-level initiatives, such as the establishment of the Ministry of Cooperation; challenges in harmonizing state and central laws governing cooperatives; comparative analysis of Indian cooperative laws with international best practices and potential pathways for legal reforms to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of cooperatives. Dr. Wadkar's presentation not only educated the participants about the Indian context but also provided valuable insights that could be applied to cooperative legal frameworks in other countries.

Mr. Balu Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP in his reflections contextualized the discussions within the broader framework of ICA-AP's mission and the global cooperative movement. He emphasized the importance of legal frameworks in upholding cooperative principles and values, while also highlighting the need for flexibility in cooperative laws to accommodate diverse cooperative models. Mr. Iyer underscored the critical importance of preserving the cooperative identity through legislative measures, emphasizing that the mere existence of laws is insufficient. He highlighted the necessity for the effective and seamless implementation of these laws to uphold and reinforce cooperative principles and values. He elaborated on the role of ICA-AP in facilitating knowledge exchange and promoting best practices in cooperative legislation. Additionally, Mr. Iyer outlined future directions for research and advocacy in cooperative law harmonization.

The colloquium saw a lively Q&A session and discussions, where attendees from various countries shared their perspectives and experiences. Notable contributions came from participants representing India, Japan, Togo, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. The diverse viewpoints from participants enriched the discourse, offering a global perspective on cooperative legal frameworks.

Key Takeaways

1. The need for a balanced approach in cooperative legislation, ensuring autonomy while maintaining necessary regulatory oversight.
2. The importance of cross-border cooperation in harmonizing cooperative laws, especially within economic blocs.
3. The potential of technology in enhancing cooperative governance and compliance with legal frameworks.
4. The critical role of education and capacity building in ensuring that cooperative members and leaders understand and effectively navigate legal requirements.

Mr. Naveen Kumar Singh, Secretary of ICA-AP CCR moderated the colloquium and acknowledged the contributions of the expert speakers and participants in his vote of thanks. He highlighted the success of the colloquium in facilitating valuable discussions and sharing best practices in cooperative management.

ICA-MAFF (Japan) Training Course on Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture



The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of the Government of Japan has collaborated with the International Cooperative Alliance, through its Asia-Pacific regional office, to implement the “Capacity Building Project for Agriculture Cooperative Sector in Asia and Africa (CBC Project in AA) – in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 of Japan.”

The first training course on "Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture and Improvement of Farmer's Income through Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in FY-2024" was organised by ICA-AP, in Thailand and Japan between 31 July and 28 August 2024.

The objective of the training course was to review and study the roles of farmers' organisations and find new roles to meet "sustainable agriculture." The ICA-AP implemented the training program in collaboration with the Co-operative League of Thailand (CLT) in Bangkok and the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA) in Tokyo (Japan).

The CLT module (Part-I) was inaugurated at the CLT Training Centre, Bangkok, on August 01, 2024. The opening ceremony was attended by Associate Professor Dr. Juthatip Patrawart, Advisor to CLT, Mr. Panthawich Mungsamaksrikul, Executive Director, Ms. Oranuch Kanpai, Dy. Executive Director and in charge of international Affairs, Mrs. Natcha Jansanit, Dy. Executive Director, in charge of Central Administration, Mr. Cha Nin Wat Todkeaw, Dy. Executive Director, in charge of Education and Corporate Community, Mr. Teerut Chuckling, Dy. Executive Director, in charge of Legal Assistance, and other staff members of CLT. Mr Hirofumi Kobayashi, Executive Director, IDACA joined online. From ICA-AP, Mr. A.K. Taneja, Project Coordinator and Mr. Ganesh Gopal, Lead-Entrepreneurship joined the ceremony.



Seven participants from seven countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand) participated in the classroom sessions at CLT's training center and study visits in and around Bangkok. After completing the CLT Module in Thailand, the participants moved to Tokyo on 15 August and studied the Japanese agriculture cooperatives (JAs).

Given the experience gained through classroom lectures, field study visits in Thailand and Japan, group discussions and based upon their work environment, the participants developed brief outlines of their

Action Plans, which they would recommend to their organizations after their return to their respective home countries. Participants presented their draft action plans on the concluding day of the training course.

On 26 August, Mr. Toru Yamano, President of JA-Zench and IDACA paid a visit to the IDACA office and addressed the participants. On 27 August, the closing ceremony was held at IDACA. Mr. Shun SIATO and Ms. Yuzuki UCHIDA, Officer in charge of the ICA-JAPAN Project, MAFF, graced the occasion with their presence. Mr. Kobayashi delivered his closing remarks. Mr. Baba Toshihiko, Sr. Executive Director of JA-Zenchu and Mr. Yuichi Moronaga, Counselor of Emerging Region Division, MAFF sent messages of best wishes at the closing ceremony, which were read and played.

Mr. Taneja presented a brief report of the training course, held in Thailand and Japan. On behalf of the participants, Mr. Pema Wangchuk, a participant from Bhutan, presented a vote of thanks. Mr. Kobayashi distributed the certificates of participation to the participants.

Training Experience – In a Participant's* Words



Bangkok, Thailand: A comprehensive training program on promoting sustainable agriculture took place from August 1-13, 2024, in Thailand. Representatives from seven countries—Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand—participated in the program. The diverse backgrounds of the participants enriched the training experience.

Over the course of the training, participants engaged in both online and offline sessions led by esteemed experts, including Dr. Preecha Sitdhikornkrai and Prof. Hitesh Bhatt. Dr. Sitdhikornkrai's sessions focused on the governance and management of agricultural cooperatives, as well as business development planning. He employed a compelling analogy, comparing farmers to "small fish" and

highlighting the crucial role of cooperatives in organizing farmers into "big fish" with greater bargaining power. Dr. Sitdhikornkrai also shared insights on the New Theory on Agriculture, introduced by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. This theory emphasizes land and water management through a 30:30:30:10 formula, aiming to balance irrigation, rice cultivation, other crop production, and residential use.

Prof. Bhatt's sessions emphasized the importance of creating a SMART action plan. He shared that 32% of projects succeed because they meet the community's needs, stay within budget, and are completed on time. He stressed the need for thorough information gathering to address the root causes of problems. Prof. Bhatt also introduced the AON Network, a tool designed to streamline project planning by illustrating the dependencies and timelines of activities.

Field visits to various cooperatives and government agencies formed a significant part of the training. The first visit took participants to Batik Home on Koh Kret, where they observed the batik-making activities of a Muslim group founded by Khun Ladda Wanyalay in 2004. The cooperative's efforts to produce and market batik products have helped improve the welfare of the local community.

Another visit was to the Cooperative Auditing Department (CAD), a government agency under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives in Thailand. CAD's offices are spread across Thailand and offer various applications to assist cooperatives, such as Smart Manage, Smart Monitor, Smart Member, and Smart Me. These tools are available for free to cooperatives in Thailand, although customization options are also available.



Participants also visited the Agricultural Cooperative Federation of Thailand (ACFT), which operates at multiple levels from local farmers to national federations. The ACFT supports its members through

direct and online sales of products, including a wide variety of rice, and collaborates with private companies for delivery services.

Subsequent visits focused on primary cooperatives, including Dontoom Agricultural Cooperative, Lam Luk Ka Agricultural Cooperative, KU Beef Cooperative, Bangkhontee Agricultural Cooperative, and Banlard Agricultural Cooperative. Each of these cooperatives showcased unique business models and contributions to their members' welfare, ranging from organic banana production to international beef exports.

A notable visit was to Nongkhanang Credit Union Cooperative, which supports its members through various innovative projects such as vegetable and fruit cultivation, tourism management, and energy-saving initiatives.

The training concluded with positive feedback from participants, including Pema Wangchuk from Bhutan, who remarked, "The training program was well coordinated, organized, and systematic. The diversified learning platforms, including the training materials, study visits, and lectures, are easily understandable. We gained a lot of valuable ideas, insightful knowledge, experiences, and exploration from this program on the cooperative movement in Thailand towards successful and sustainable business ventures."

Following the training in Thailand, participants continued their journey to Japan for further studies.

Machida, Japan - A flight of approximately six hours started the participants' journey to learn about agriculture in Japan from August 15-27, 2024. Upon arrival in Japan, the participants met with Mr. Hirofumi Kobayashi, Executive Director, IDACA. He explained the history of IDACA which was founded in July 1963 by Mr. Yasushi Hasumi (President of JA Zenchu). IDACA aims to contribute to improving the income of farmers and the development of agriculture and rural societies in Asia and other regions. Their activities include training for cooperative leaders and research on agriculture in Asia and Africa. Participants were also provided with an orientation program to briefly get to know Japanese culture and the location where they stayed. On the second day, participants presented the draft action plan to get feedback from IDACA and ICA. This activity was carried out online because the typhoon hit several cities in Japan.



To observe agricultural practices in Japan, participants travelled to Yamanashi Prefecture for four days. Participants had the opportunity to visit Katsunuma Herb Garden to see various plants and flowers with interesting aromas. The Herb Garden has a shop and café that sells cosmetics and herbal products from its garden. There was also a visit to the Grapes Packing center which provided an experience of enjoying Japan's best grapes. According to 2020 data, Yamanashi prefecture accounts for 21% of Japan's grapes at 163,400 tons. There are more than 60 types of grapes in Japan and participants tried Kyoho (King of Japanese Grapes) and Shine Muscat (The Master Piece).

On the fifth day, participants visited the JA Fuefuki Grading Center to see the grading process of peaches. According to the information provided, the peach harvest period starts from mid-June to early September. About 500 farmers bring their harvest to this grading center and production can reach 10,000 peaches per day or 3-4 tons in peak seasons. The grading process is done manually and by machine to determine the color, sugar content, and size of the peach. On the same day, participants met the team from JA Rihoku and visited Hosaka Producer's Group and Okada Grape Farm. JA Rihoku Hosaka Producer's Group members practice sustainable agriculture and reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides by 50%.

The next day, participants saw the business run by the Agricultural Cooperative Corporation, Mukawa Farm. This cooperative provides all facilities for rice farmers, such as a Nursery House, Drying and Adjustment Facility, Transplanting Machine, Combine, Tractor, Mini, and Regular Size Truck. Farmers can buy 30-day-old seedlings from them, rent the necessary machinery, and process the rice into 30-kilogram packaged rice. The presence of Mukawa Farm is a solution for farmers who are elderly, where they get convenience with the services offered. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss with Mr. Ikuya Adachi, Senior Executive Director of Yamanashi Prefecture Union, Mr. Akihiko Komiyama, and Mr. Koki Mitsumori from JA Zen-noh Yamanashi. 8 JAs are focusing on several businesses namely

Farm Guidance, Marketing, Purchase, Credit, Mutual Insurance, Welfare, and others. JA Zen-noh Yamanashi introduced a peach processing product called “No Mo Mon”. The raw material of peach comes from Yamanashi Prefecture. In addition to the attractive packaging design, this juice is also very delicious.

Another visit included the JA Minami Alpes Shi - Direct Sales Shop. Participants saw an agricultural shop that provides all the needs of farmers and a supermarket that offers a place for farmers to sell their products. According to the information obtained, the farmers do their packing and determine their prices according to the information provided by JA for comparison.



In addition to JA, participants also saw the Yamanashi local government's support for agriculture through the Yamanashi Fruit Tree Experiment Station, which focuses on grapes, peaches, plums, and cherries. Every three years, they develop new varieties of these fruits. It is said that each prefecture has its experiment station. All information from research is conveyed to farmers through JA and Government Farming Staff.

The Yamanashi field trip concluded with a look at the implementation of 6th industrialization at Nakamichi Agricultural Products Processing and Direct Sales Cooperative. The origin of the cooperative dates back to 2000 when some women opened a morning market using the back of a light truck to sell their agricultural products. Seven years later, the cooperative was formed with 87 members and grew to more than 165 members. The 6th industrialization is done by the farmers' wives through their restaurant business. All the raw materials that are processed come from the members' agricultural products. So, the production, processing, and sales processes are all done by the farmers.

On the eighth day, participants moved to Hadano, Kanagawa Prefecture to see the business run by JA Hadano. The communication that JA Hadano applies to its members is very interesting to learn. Every month on the 26th-27th, all staff except those in the banking business visit farming families to listen to farmers' opinions, deliver orders from farmers, and bring newsletters to update farmers. This activity builds a good relationship between JA Hadano and its members.

The final lesson for the participants came from Yoshihiko Iino, who served as the Former President of JA Youth (National Council of Youth Associations of Agricultural Cooperatives) in 2017. Mr. Iino explained about the bottom-up approach they use to listen to the problems and challenges faced by farmers. They form small groups of 8-10 people and choose their group leaders. The stages of problem solving started from self-help, mutual help to public help.

Before the program ended, the participants had the valuable opportunity of an hour-long meeting with Mr. Toru Yamano, President of IDACA and President of JA Zenchu. He emphasized that protecting and promoting agriculture is a fundamental part of a country's culture. During the Q&A, a participant asked about the strategies that JA Zenchu is undertaking to address ageing in agriculture in Japan. Mr. Yamano revealed their efforts to collect voices in the community and include them in the action plan.

The lessons learned in Japan left a deep impression on the participants for the implementation of action plans and agricultural development in their respective countries. Napaphat Jaroenhotworakun, a representative from Thailand, said that the experience in Japan opened his mind. *"The opportunity to learn about various agricultural practices and techniques provided a wealth of knowledge that I can apply directly to our cooperative. I appreciated the hands-on approach and the opportunity to see successful farming models. The training not only broadened my understanding but also inspired new ideas that I want to implement. The training has equipped me with the skills and knowledge needed to drive innovation and success in our cooperative. I am very grateful for the hospitality and support provided by IDACA staff in Japan, which made this learning journey smooth and memorable."*

*Reported by Ms. Angela Januari, a participant from InkUR Federation in Indonesia

First Asia Pacific Young Farmers Camp and Agrilympics



The First Asia Pacific Young Farmers' Camp and Agrilympics, organized by the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), Pacific Farmer Organizations (PFO), and the International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP), was held from 12 -16 August 2024, at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, Laguna.

"Strengthening Young Farmers' Engagement in Cooperatives and Organizations to Contribute to Safe, Just, and Resilient Food Communities," aimed to raise awareness about agriculture as a viable career and encourage youth participation in the cooperative sector. 120 young farmers from 20 countries including members from the ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC) participated.



The week-long camp kicked off with a vibrant Parade of Nations, celebrating the diversity and unity of young farmers from across the Asia-Pacific region. The lighting of the cauldron, inspired by the Olympic Games, marked the official opening of the camp and set the tone for a week of engaging activities - featured workshops, training sessions, exhibitions, and networking opportunities to support young farmers in sustainable agriculture.



During the opening ceremony, representatives from the government, international organizations, development partners, and delegates from global and regional farmers' organizations delivered their welcome remarks. Atty. Ms. Dulce Bustamante, ICYC Chairperson, highlighted the importance of the International Youth Day which is celebrated to recognize the role of youth in driving sustainable development. This year's theme, "*Youth Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development*" emphasized the involvement of technology in agriculture and the cooperative sector. She added that the Agrilympics aims to empower young farmers through digital education, training, and the adoption of innovative tools like AI and Drones, encouraging sustainable farming practices and enhanced agricultural productivity.

Mr. Balu Iyer, ICA-AP Regional Director, shared a video message highlighting the crucial role of youth in creating sustainable and resilient food systems. He highlighted that the Young Farmers Camp and Agrilympics serve as a platform to address the challenges faced by young farmers, such as low self-esteem, profitability issues, lack of supportive policies, and insecure land ownership. He stressed the importance of targeted events and mentorship to engage and empower young farmers, drive innovation, and secure the future of food security and resilient rural communities.

The Agrilympics was officially opened with an inspirational message by Mr. Hubert Boirard, Farmers' Organizations Adviser, which set the tone for the event. The games that followed were designed on agriculture and sustainability and included "Organized Production," focusing on efficient farming practices; "Coconut Craze," highlighting the importance of value addition; "Marketing Relay," teaching strategic selling techniques; "Climate Change Hurdle," highlighting the challenges posed by environmental changes; and "Advocacy Puzzle," encouraging participants to think critically about agricultural policy and representation.

Day two centred on plenary sessions and World Café break-out discussions. Plenary Session 1 moderated by Ms. Melaia, FPO, focused on the situation of youth in the agriculture sector across the Asia-Pacific region, with key speakers including Ms. Merewalesi Rokosawa, Program Officer at the Pacific Farmers Organisation; Dr. M.D. Harunur Rashid from the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC); and Ms. Esther Penunia, Secretary General of the AFA. Their insights provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities facing by young farmers in the region, setting the stage for discussions and collaborative solutions.

Plenary Session 2, moderated by Mr. Shree Padmanabhan from ICA-AP, delved into enabling policies and good practices for engaging young farmers. This session featured speakers who shared valuable insights on policies and best practices. Director Mr. Remelyn Recoter from the Department of Agriculture - Agriculture Training Institute, discussed policies supporting young farmer engagement; Director Mr. Roy Ribo from the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), presented programs for young coconut farmers; and Mr. Hiro Iio shared the Rinnesha experience. Additionally, Ms. Justine Limocon of LAMAC Multi-purpose Cooperative and Ms. Losalini Qiolevu from the PFO highlighted best practices for engaging young farmers in their respective regions. The session underscored the importance of supportive policies and shared strategies that can inspire young farmers to actively participate in the agriculture sector.

An engaging World Café Break-out session was organized for the participants. There were three topics namely, Cooperatives as a viable model, Institutionalizing young farmers' engagement and Agroecology as a pathway to sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture, assigned for each breakout session. Ms. Sita Hindowar, ICYC member from India, representing the Indian Farmers Fertilisers Cooperative (IFFCO) gave a comprehensive presentation on Cooperatives as a viable model. Sita's video presentation highlighted IFFCO's initiatives towards technology and innovation in the agriculture sector from the region.

During the closing ceremony, it was announced that the next edition of Young Farmers Camp and Agrilympics will be held on the Pacific Island in 2026.

Go Green Campaign 6.0



The ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC), in partnership with the Rotary Club of Imus and the Rotaract Club of Imus, celebrated the sixth edition of the Go Green Campaign (GGC) on 15 August 2024 in the Imus City of the Philippines. GGC aims to empower young leaders in building a sustainable future and promoting green jobs.

Rotary International is one of the largest service organizations in the world with the mission to "provide service to others, promote integrity, and advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through [the] fellowship of business, professional, and community leaders." Rotaract, the youth (18 years and older) arm of Rotary Club, is a global movement of young leaders who are developing innovative solutions to address the world's most pressing challenges. Both have various clubs around with community partner and focus on programs like environmental protection, youth, and community service.

GGC was launched in 2018 with a vision to connect youth with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enhance the cooperative movement's identity as a sustainable model for the environment and society.

Members of the ICYC, Rotary Club of Imus, and Rotaract Club of Imus planted around 30 Banaba saplings along Ragatan Road. The location was specifically chosen by one of the partners, the City Environment and Natural Resources Office, as this road is included in the Strategic Plan of the local government to be developed into a friendly community for all motorists, pedestrians, and the whole community of Anabu I-C. It is a public space wherein future parks, commercial spaces, and other infrastructures will be built — thereby needing balance ecologically. The Banaba saplings, known for their vibrant purple flowers and ecological benefits, were generously provided by the City Agriculture Office of Imus City. The Banaba saplings are expected to grow mid-size after a year and bloom completely within two years. It is also known as the "City Tree" because of its benefits and beauty.

ICYC also encouraged its members, who could not join the campaign in the Philippines, to initiate environmental programs (such as tree planting or clean-up, and seminars) with their cooperatives in their respective countries. As part of the ICYC's ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability, the seventh edition of the GGC will focus on promoting green jobs, creating awareness, and providing opportunities for youth to engage in sustainable employment.

ICA Director General Visits Members in Korea, China, and Japan



The ICA Director General, Mr. Jeroen Douglas, accompanied by Mr. Balu Iyer, ICA-AP Regional Director, made his first visit to meet members in the Republic of Korea, Japan, and China from 24 to 31 August 2024. Mr. Iyer narrates the experience of the visit.

Exploring Cooperative Resilience through Korea

Accompanying Jeroen Douglas, on his first visit to Korea, Japan, and China has been an enlightening experience. Our journey began in Korea, the Land of the Morning Calm, where we were met with a harmonious blend of traditional hospitality and modern innovation.

Korean agricultural cooperatives are currently navigating significant challenges, including an ageing farming population, rural depopulation, the declining economic contribution of agriculture, and fierce competition. Despite these hurdles, they remain steadfast in their mission to strengthen rural communities, promote locally grown products, ensure farmers receive their fair share, and provide consumers with affordable, high-quality goods. These were the focal points of our discussions with Mr. Ho-dong Kang, Chairman of the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (NACF) of Korea, and Mr. Noh Dong-Jin, Chairman of the Korea National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives (KNFFC).



An [article in the Korea JoongAng Daily](#) caught our attention, highlighting how cooperatives are addressing these pressing issues. Our visit to the iCOOP Center in Mangpo 1-dong was particularly fascinating. This center, which hosts their healing center, lifecare lounge, retail store, café, and community space, stands as a testament to iCOOP's commitment to sustainable agriculture and ethical consumption since its establishment in 1998. Today, iCOOP's initiatives, such as Carbon Healing Agriculture and Anticancer Foods, aim to prevent chronic diseases. Their mission, "Bringing Joy to All: Healing People, Cooling the Planet," underscores a deep commitment to environmental sustainability

and human well-being. Chairman Mi-kyung Shun shared insights into their Lifecare Movement, which emphasizes preventive health measures and lifestyle improvements.

Our visits to Hanaro Mart, iCOOP stores, and GIMPO Local Foods store further demonstrated the dedication and pride of Korea's cooperatives in promoting local products that embody safety, trust, care, and community spirit.

A heartfelt "Kamsahamnida" to our members in Korea!

Japan's Cooperative Leadership in the Asia Pacific Region



Japanese cooperatives have long played a leadership role in the Asia Pacific region, excelling in sectors such as agriculture, consumer goods, forestry, and fisheries. Today, they are expanding their influence by playing key roles in social services, worker cooperatives, and beyond. Organizations like JA-Zenchu, the Japanese Consumer Cooperatives' Union (JCCU), and other cooperatives have been at the forefront of supporting the cooperative movement through extensive training programs, exchange visits, and knowledge sharing.

During our two days in Tokyo, it was enlightening to gain perspective on the rich history and evolution of Japanese cooperatives. Their steadfast commitment to cooperative identity and their proactive efforts to seize the opportunity to showcase the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) in 2025 was clearly evident.

A comprehensive proposal, compiled by the national Apex, Japan Cooperative Alliance (JCA) for submission to the ICA, reflects the insights gathered from workshops and events held throughout Japan in 2023. These were generated through 42 workshops and events which were attended by 2,300 cooperative members, executives, and employees. The proposal emphasizes that solving the myriad social challenges we face and building a better society requires the proactive involvement of diverse

individuals and the power of cooperation. It highlights the importance of positioning employees as co-workers in cooperatives, fostering cooperation beyond traditional boundaries, and promoting values such as peace, non-violence, diversity, inclusion, dialogue, and mutual understanding.

On July 9, 2024, leaders from Japanese cooperatives and organizations supporting the objectives of IYC 2025 gathered at the TKP Shinjuku Conference Center in Tokyo for the inaugural meeting of the National Steering Committee for IYC 2025. The committee is dedicated to advancing contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enhancing the understanding and visibility of cooperatives. During this meeting, they confirmed the committee's goals, plans, and structure, setting the stage for active discussions and impactful initiatives leading up to a successful IYC 2025.

We also had an engaging dialogue with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF), as well as the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, discussing the vital work of cooperatives and Japan's significant role in supporting the development of cooperatives across the region.

Scale and Innovation - China's Agricultural Supply and Marketing Cooperatives



In the final leg of a three-nation tour with Jeroen Douglas, we were given an overview of the expansive operations of the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives (ACFSMC). The organization's massive scale and scope are evident in its impressive network of 10,000 distribution centres, 800,000 outlets, and 24,000 business activities, which collectively generate an annual turnover of 6.7 trillion yuan. Additionally, the Farmland Trust, managing 200 million hectares—11% of China's agricultural land—plays a crucial role in the sector.

ACFSMC acts as a bridge between small farmers and large markets, facilitating the flow of agricultural products to urban areas while channeling industrial resources to rural communities. Its projects are

designed to enhance agricultural production and improve farmers' livelihoods. According to Mr. Adili Wubili, Vice President of ACFSMC, *"We understand farmers and aim to achieve scale through our diverse services, targeting a 50% increase in sales over the next decade."*

A visit to the Xinfadi Wholesale Market was particularly revealing. Situated on Beijing's 4th Ring Road, it caters to 90% of the city's needs, handling 16,180,000 tonnes of vegetables, fruits, and livestock annually, with a turnover of \$12.2 billion.

In China, one expects large-scale operations, but the magnitude of these figures truly underscores the remarkable scale of ACFSMC's influence.

ICA-EU Updates

Regional Dialogue with FAO and ICA-Africa



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



International
Cooperative Alliance
Asia and Pacific



International Co-operative
Alliance – Africa
A Region of the International
Co-operative Alliance

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (NENA) in partnership with ICA Africa and ICA-AP are organizing a Regional Dialogue for Cooperative Development in the NENA Region which serves as a follow-up to the Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference held in April 2024 in Jordan.

This collaboration aims to improve the enabling environment for coop development, enhance their capacities to transform food systems and contribute to food security, nutrition, and sustainable development in the region. The FAO and ICA have a longstanding collaboration at global, regional, and country levels, and this initiative represents a further step towards making cooperatives and other forms of collective action key actors in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The Regional Dialogue will focus on two activities – a virtual technical roundtable and an in-person dialogue. The technical roundtable is a preparatory step towards the upcoming in-person Regional Dialogue which is being planned in October 2024. This virtual roundtable will bring together a diverse

group of experts, including representatives from the ministries of NENA countries, FAO Regional and Country Offices, ICA Africa and ICA-AP Regional Offices, as well as other distinguished experts and practitioners from international institutions, national cooperative movements, producer organizations, and NGOs.

The theme of the roundtable is **“Strategic Dialogue on Cooperative Development for Food Security and Rural Transformation in the NENA Region”** and is scheduled for 30 September 2024.

Member Updates

ULCCS Leads Collaborative Rescue Efforts in Wayanad Landslide Crisis



The massive landslides in Chooralmala and Mundakkai, Wayanad, Kerala, India have been among the most disastrous events witnessed recently. The Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society (ULCCS) worked closely with the Indian Army and the Government of Kerala on the rescue mission. They provided the necessary equipment, vehicles, cutting machines, engineers, expert workforce, food, clothing, and other essential resources for the rescue efforts. Read more about their cooperation work during rescue operations [here](#).

Policy & Legal Watch

Singaporean Government Plans Empowering Communities Fund



Picture Credit: SNCF

Singapore's co-operative movement and government are launching a S\$1,000,000 Empowering Communities Fund (ECF) in early 2025 to support initiatives targeting vulnerable communities. Spearheaded by the Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF) and the Registry of Co-operative Societies (RCS), the fund aims to facilitate activities such as health screenings for the elderly and improving recreational spaces for individuals with mobility challenges. Co-op leaders see the fund as a vital tool for sustaining community-focused projects and engaging younger staff with the co-operative mission. [Read more.](#)

Ireland and Vietnam Strengthen Cooperation in Agri-Food Cooperative Development



Picture Credits: Coop News

Vietnam's Department of Cooperative Economy, in collaboration with the Irish Embassy and Sustainable Food Systems Ireland, held a workshop in Hanoi on 30 July 2024 to exchange knowledge on developing agricultural and food cooperatives. The event brought together government officials, agri coop leaders, and Irish experts to share best practices for fostering climate-resilient, value-added agricultural practices. This was in follow-up to a memorandum of understanding signed in June between Ireland and Vietnam to enhance cooperation in business, cooperatives, and food innovation. [Read more.](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Regional Dialogue for Cooperative Development in the NENA Region: Virtual Technical Roundtable – 30 September 2024
- ToT on Climate Change and Action for Women Cooperators in Bhutan – 21 to 24 October 2024
- In-person Regional Dialogue for Cooperative Development in the NENA Region – October 2024
- 18th Asia Pacific Research Conference and Young & Emerging Scholars (YES) Workshop by ICA-AP CCR at Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIM-K) Kerala, India from 15-18 October 2024.

- 2024 ICA-MAFF training course on “Capacity Building of Farmers to Respond to Challenges in Development of Agricultural Cooperatives” in Japan – 13 to 26 October 2024
- Training Program for Managers of Consumer/ Retail Co-operatives in Kobe, Japan – 4 to 17 November 2024
- ICA-AP Regional Board Meeting in New Delhi, India – 28 November 2024
- ICA Global Cooperative Conference and General Assembly in India – 25 to 30 November 2024
- 58th Meeting of ICA-AP Committee on Consumer Cooperation and side events in South Korea – 12 to 15 December 2024