

ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

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

Oct 2024 Newsletter

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UN Unveils the Official Logo of 2025 International Year of Cooperatives



The United Nations (UN) released the official logo of the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives (IYC2025) last month.

The logo aligns well with the IYC2025 theme, “*Cooperatives Build a Better World*” which highlights how the cooperative model is an essential solution to overcome many global challenges and plays an important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The logo illustrates people around the world connecting with each other to build a better world. It consists of three colours inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals graphic identity: red represents society, blue represents the economy, and green represents the environment. Together, this represents the contributions cooperatives make towards sustainable development.

Any non-UN entity wishing to use the logo must review the [logo guidelines](#) and **apply for approval** to the COPAC Secretariat. The process to get the approval can take one to two weeks after which the entities will receive the link to download the logo. There is no charge to download the logo. All instructions are available [here](#).

The logo is available in all six official languages of the United Nations: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish as well as Hindi. One can also request to translate the logo into additional languages by emailing the Secretariat at copac@copac.coop. Any further questions can be directed to copac@copac.coop or social@un.org.

The official launch of the IYC2025 will be held on 25 November 2024 in New Delhi, India during the [ICA Global Cooperative Conference](#).

ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024



Around two weeks to go for the ICA Global Cooperative Conference (GCC) and General Assembly (GA) 2024 and the preparations are in full swing. It will be held in New Delhi, India, from 25 – 30 November 2024 and is hosted by the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) in close cooperation with the Indian cooperative movement.

The GCC will feature the official launch of the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives (IYC2025), an International Exposition of Cooperatives, a [Coopathon](#), 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. There is still a chance to register for the Conference at <https://icanewdelhi2024.coop/welcome>.

Check out the [website](#) for the latest program and speaker details and all information on logistics.

ICA-AP 17th ICA-AP Regional Assembly



We are pleased to announce that the ICA-AP 17th Regional Assembly and the elections of the new Regional Board will be held in Sri Lanka from November 24 to 28, 2025.

At the last Regional Assembly in November 2023 in Manila, the Philippines, ICA-AP signed an MoU with the National Council of Cooperatives in Sri Lanka (NCCSL) to host the 2025 Regional Assembly and related events.

The event will also see a culmination of activities undertaken by the Regional Office to observe the 2025 UN International Year of Cooperatives.

Stay tuned for more updates!

ICA-AP UPDATES

[18th Asia Pacific Cooperative Research Conference: Cooperatives in the Next Industrial Revolution](#)

The **18th Asia Pacific Cooperative Research Conference** took place from 15 to 18 October 2024 at the **Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIMK)** in Kerala, India. This year's conference, organized as part of the centenary celebrations of the Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society

Ltd. (ULCCS), provided a dynamic forum for researchers, cooperative leaders, and practitioners to share insights on the evolving role of cooperatives in driving social and economic inclusion.

Event Overview

The conference featured an extensive array of sessions, including plenary talks, industry panels, and paper presentations covering a wide range of themes relevant to cooperative development. With 289 paper abstracts submitted, the committee shortlisted 129 and 87 participants submitted full papers. The conference saw record engagement from scholars and experts across the Asia-Pacific region. Key discussions centred around **digital transformation, sustainable development**, and the **future of platform cooperatives**—topics that reflect the growing impact and diversification of cooperative models.

Industry Panels

The event opened with a **ceremony** on 16 October, followed by an industry panel titled “*Empowering Cooperatives Through Digital Transformation: Challenges and Opportunities*.” This panel examined technology’s role in cooperatives, emphasizing efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity. Panelists presented insights into digital adoption, best practices, and policy recommendations to enhance cooperative digitalization.

Another key panel featured two agriculture-focused roundtables exploring sustainable practices. The *Sustainable Agriculture & Agri-tech Roundtable* discussed global best practices in tech adoption, value chain integration, and climate resilience, emphasising cooperatives’ role in food security. The *Kerala-focused Roundtable* targeted local issues in sustainable food security and food safety, considering challenges like fair pricing, climate impacts, and produce aggregation.

Insights from these discussions will inform a *Roadmap for Sustainable Agriculture Development in Kerala*, outlining pilot projects and solutions tailored to Kerala’s unique needs.

Young & Emerging Scholars (YES) Workshop

On 15 October, as a pre-conference event, the **Young & Emerging Scholars (YES) Workshop** provided an interactive platform for young researchers and cooperative entrepreneurs. This workshop, held in collaboration with the **Young Scholars Initiative (YSI)** of iNET, New York, focused on capacity building, innovation, and the role of cooperatives in social enterprise. The event concluded with valuable feedback from industry experts and ample networking opportunities for participants.

2024 Mauritz Bonow Young Scholars



Mr. Stefano Tortorici



Mr. Kanchan Koner

Continuing the annual tradition, the 2024 Mauritz Bonow Young Scholar Awards were announced at the conference. The first prize was awarded to Mr. Stefano Tortorici from Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy, for his insightful paper titled “*Redefining Platform Cooperatives: Identities, Dimensions, and Challenges*.” The second prize went to Mr. Kanchan Koner from The University of Burdwan, India, for

his work on *"Mapping the Research Landscape on Cooperative Marketing in Agriculture: Bibliometric Study."*

A total of 40 full papers were evaluated, emphasizing contributions to cooperative sector knowledge, academic rigor, and robust research methodologies. This award, named after Dr. Mauritz Bonow, former ICA President (1962-1975), honours his commitment to global cooperative education. Dr. Bonow's vision centred on empowering cooperatives through scholarly engagement and training, advocating for the essential role of educated cooperative leaders in fostering a transformative and informed cooperative movement.

Field Trip to Sargaalaya Kerala Arts & Crafts Village

Following the conference's conclusion on 18 October, members of the Research Committee participated in a field visit to the **Sargaalaya Kerala Arts & Crafts Village** in Kozhikode. This initiative, managed by ULCCS, exemplifies the Responsible Tourism Model and supports approximately 100 artisans dedicated to preserving Kerala's traditional crafts. Visiting this site offered a firsthand look at how cooperatives can drive local economic empowerment while safeguarding cultural heritage.

Key Takeaways

Several important insights emerged from the conference:

1. **The Role of Digital Tools** – Digital transformation presents both opportunities and challenges for cooperatives in enhancing operations and member services.
2. **Sustainability in Agriculture** – Cooperatives can play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable agricultural practices that support food security and environmental stewardship.
3. **Engaging Youth in Cooperatives** – Dedicated platforms like the YES Workshop highlight the importance of engaging young scholars in cooperative research and innovation.
4. **Strengthening Cooperative Identity through Governance** – Effective governance and member-driven practices are essential for maintaining the cooperative identity and building public trust.

The Conference underscored the collaborative spirit and resilience of the cooperative movement. As cooperatives continue to address critical development challenges, the knowledge exchanged at this conference will undoubtedly guide future research, policy, and practice within the sector.

ToT on Climate Change and Action on Women Cooperators by ICA-AP Women's Committee

The ICA-AP Women's Committee organized the first ToT on Climate Change and Action for Women Cooperators in Thimphu, Bhutan from 21 to 24 October 2024. The ToT was hosted by ICA member - Department of Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives (DAMC) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MoAL) and was conducted in partnership with the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO, the Philippines).

The Women's Committee, with support from the Japanese Consumer Co-operatives' Union (JCCU), initiated this ToT program in 2022 as part of ICA-AP's ongoing efforts to empower women in cooperatives to lead climate action. In 2022, the Committee, in partnership with NATCCO, developed a manual as a resource tool for the ToT. In 2023, the manual and training methodology were tested in Vietnam, following which, the feedback and suggestions were incorporated in the manual as well as the methodology. This year, Bhutan was chosen for the first ToT due to its high level of environmental

awareness even though it faces serious challenges from climate change. Changes in weather patterns such as extreme temperature in different seasons and erratic rainfall are now common in Bhutan.

A total of 25 women representing government agencies, cooperatives and the private sector participated in the ToT delivered by two resource persons from NATCCO - Ms. Daisybelle M Cabal (Chief Operating Officer) and Ms. Lasalette M Gumban (Head, Advocacy Unit).

The ToT focused on the following:

- **Understanding the link between climate change and cooperative action:** Participants explored how cooperatives can play a vital role in building climate resilience, particularly in vulnerable sectors such as agriculture and rural development.
- **Promoting environmental sustainability:** The training highlighted practices such as sustainable agriculture, resource management, and conservation techniques that could be implemented by cooperatives to mitigate the effects of climate change.
- **Building leadership capacity among women:** The ToT aimed to empower women to take leadership roles, particularly in environmental advocacy and sustainability projects.
- **Practical action planning:** Participants were guided to prepare action plans to address specific climate challenges in their regions, using their cooperative structure as a platform for change.

The training sessions helped deepen the understanding of the trainees on how cooperatives can play a key role in tackling climate challenges, and they were encouraged to develop action plans to continue their efforts post-training. The participants' feedback was positive, and they expressed their eagerness to apply what they had learnt in their respective roles. They found the ToT manual and assessment tools helpful for monitoring and documenting the practices followed by cooperatives and farmer groups.

During the interactive sessions, we learnt about different climate-friendly practices followed in Bhutan at the community level. Some of the practices included waste segregation, refusal to use plastic bags, incorporating the 5R policy, maintaining healthy rivers and the environment by avoiding garbage dumping, etc. These examples will be used in future trainings.

The closing ceremony was attended by MoAL Secretary - Mr. Dasho Thinley Namgyel, ICA-AP Regional Director - Mr. Balu Iyer, officers from DAMC - Ms. Tshering Wangmo, Mr. Namgay Wangdi and Mr. Pema Wangchuk. In his remarks, Mr. Namgyel thanked the ICA-AP Women's Committee for organizing the ToT on climate change in Bhutan and observed that the theme is very relevant to the country. He also expressed his appreciation for selecting women as the recipients of the training and noted that when women are educated, the whole nation gets educated. Mr. Iyer, in his remarks, thanked DAMC for hosting the ToT and selecting a rich pool of trainees who participated actively. He also thanked the resource persons from NATCCO for their invaluable contribution to making the program a success. Ms. Wangmo delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of DAMC. The trainees committed to developing action plans to take forward the knowledge they acquired and promote suitable climate-friendly activities that can be incorporated by cooperatives and farmer groups. The closing ceremony concluded with the awarding of participation certificates to the trainees by Mr. Namgyel.

[ICA-MAFF \(Japan\) Training Course for African Countries](#)

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 (ICA-AP) to implement the Capacity Building Project for Agricultural Cooperative Sector in Asia and Africa (CBC Project in AA) in FY2024 of Japan.

As part of this project, the Training Course on the *Capacity Building of Farmers to Respond to Challenges through Development of Agricultural Cooperatives* in FY-2024 was held in Japan from 13 to 26 October 2024. It was organised in collaboration with the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA). A total of six participants from Cameroon, Eswatini, Malawi, Mauritius, and Tanzania were nominated by the ICA Africa and the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO) to learn the ways farmers are organised into cooperatives in Japan and how to establish and strengthen agricultural businesses.

Before starting the on-site training, participants completed home country assignments from September 28 to October 12, watched pre-recorded videos on Japanese Agricultural Cooperatives (JAs) and drafted action plans for their organisations.

The opening ceremony was held in a hybrid mode on 15 October. Participants heard from Mr. Hirofumi Kobayashi, Executive Director, IDACA, and received encouraging video messages from Mr. Balu Iyer, ICA-AP Regional Director, Dr. Sifa Chiyoge, ICA Africa Regional Director and Mr. Andrea Porro, WFO Secretary General. This was followed by a review of home country assignments.

During the two-week training in Japan, they visited Japanese agricultural cooperatives (JAs) and individual farmers engaged in organic farming, agricultural processing, etc. in Chiba, Gunma, and Tokyo prefectures and the Zen-Noh Research & Development Center to learn about JA operations, farm support, industrialisation, marketing, quality assurance, organic farming, and business management. Classroom sessions covered topics of Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion (SHEP).

Participants also received guidance to develop their action plans, which focused on improving the income of farmers in Africa by increasing production and marketing activities, capacity building of farmers and cooperative leaders, and inclusion of youth and women in agri-businesses.

The training concluded with the presentation of action plans by the participants. A closing ceremony was organised to congratulate and felicitate the participants on the successful completion of the training. It was attended by Mr. Mitsuhiro INAMURA, Director of Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and Exchange and Training Program, Emerging Region Division, Export and International Affairs Bureau, MAFF; Mr. Kobayashi from IDACA, Mr. Porro from WFO, along with program coordinators of IDACA and ICA-AP. Mr. Toshihiko Baba, Senior Executive Director, Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (JA Zenchu), Mr. Iyer, and Dr. Sifa sent video messages. Mr. Valentine Nchinda from Cameroon delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of all participants. The participants were awarded certificates of participation.

[ICA-AP Joins as the Ambassador for the 2024 Philippine SE Roadmap Conference](#)

We are proud to join as an **Ambassador** for the **2024 Philippine Social Enterprise Roadmap Conference**, to be held from 13 to 15 November 2024 in a hybrid mode in Quezon City, the Philippines. The Conference theme, "*Harmonizing Social Enterprise and Social and Solidarity Economy Initiatives for ASEAN's Contribution to the SDGs*", is fundamentally about uniting social enterprises (SEs) within the broader Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) framework.

The Philippine Social Enterprise Roadmap (SE Roadmap) is a systemic, country-level movement launched in 2023. The SE Roadmap provides a blueprint to grow and scale the social enterprise sector through collaboration among key stakeholders, including the academe, cooperatives, MSMEs, corporations, NGOs, and the public sector. This approach not only advances the SE ecosystem through localised efforts but also offers valuable insights into how SSE initiatives can be institutionalised.

The event will showcase the inroads made since the 2023 Philippine SE Roadmap Conference; the cross-sector collaborations that have been forged; and how the SE Roadmap bolsters the democratization of SSE initiatives. The registration to participate online is ongoing until 11 November 2024 on the [official website](#). We encourage our members to register and participate in this conference.

ICA-EU Updates

Strategic Dialogue on Cooperative Development for Rural and Agrifood Systems Transformation in the Near East and North African Region

On 28 October, under the ICA-EU Financial Framework Partnership Agreement 2 (FFPA 2), the ICA-AP Regional Office, in association with FAOs *Near East and North African Region Office (FAO NENA)*, and the ICA Africa organized a virtual “*Strategic Dialogue on Cooperative Development for Rural and Agrifood Systems Transformation in the Near East and North African Region*”. The strategic dialogue, moderated by Ms. May Hani, FAO Senior Programme Officer/ Team Leader Rural Transformation and Inclusive Value Chains, FAO RNE, highlighted that cooperatives can play in transforming rural and agrifood systems in the NENA region.

Keynote speaker Mr. Abdel Fattah Al-Shalabi, Director General, Jordan Cooperative Corporation, highlighted how agricultural cooperatives contribute to food security and their importance in inclusion to national strategies. Dr. Sifa Chiyoge, Regional Director, ICA Africa, outlined the dialogue's core objectives, while Ms. Sara Vicari, FAO RNE International Expert on Agriculture Cooperatives, shared insights from a study on cooperatives' role in achieving food security and sustainable development in NENA. Ms. Monalisa Kashyap, Program Coordination & Advocacy Officer from ICA-AP, presented research on the significance of policy and legal frameworks for agricultural cooperative development.

The roundtable featured speakers from FAO (Ms. *Mohammed Bengoumi, Coordinator of the programme in support to professional organizations FAO SNE*), Lebanon's Ministry of Agriculture (Ms. *Gloria Abou Zeid, Director General of Cooperatives*), Maghrebian and North African Farmers Union (UMNAGRI) (Ms. *Rim Ferchichi, Secretary General*), *Alliance Africa Agricultural Cooperative Organisation* (Mr. *Musa Sibandze, Chair, AAACO*), and International Cooperative Agricultural Organisation (Mr. *Wook Lee, Secretary General, ICAO*), who discussed cooperative success stories, creating an enabling environment for coop development and key topics for the upcoming in-person regional dialogue in January 2025.

The discussion concluded the role of cooperatives as catalysts in transforming agrifood systems and advancing food security and sustainable development. It also underscored that sub-regions across the Asia-Pacific encounter similar challenges in establishing enabling policies and supportive legal frameworks for cooperative growth. This shared landscape calls for cross-border learning, unified strategies, and substantial policy reform to tackle global challenges, including climate change, food security, and economic inequality.

In closing, Mr. Balu Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP, Dr. Chiyoge, and Mr. Jaouad Bahaji, ONCA Ministry of Agriculture, Morocco, shared final remarks. Mr. Bahaji invited participants to the in-person regional dialogue in Morocco, set for January 2025 as part of the International Year of Cooperatives.

Member Updates

Coop Pitch at ULCCS' Centenary Celebrations

The Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society Ltd. (ULCCS), an ICA member from Kerala, India and one of the largest primary cooperatives in the world, is celebrating its 100th year anniversary this year. As part of its ongoing centenary celebrations, ULCCS collaborated with ICA Domus Trust to organise the Coop Pitch 2024 from 16 to 18 October at the Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode (IIMK). The event provided a unique platform for young minds to present their groundbreaking cooperative ideas, all focused on making a positive social impact.

This year's Coop Pitch attracted nearly 50 applicants, with 28 exceptional teams making it to the final rounds. The journey to the competition had been intense, with teams eagerly participating in online training sessions, mentor guidance, and refining their pitches to perfection. Each presentation was a few minutes long but packed with creativity, feasibility, and a clear vision for community empowerment.

The event featured a memorable fire-side chat with Mr. Jaseel CK, Co-Founder of Ignite India and former Ambassador of the Global Cooperative Entrepreneurs (GCE) program, who shared his inspiring journey in social entrepreneurship. Additionally, a panel discussion on Cooperative Entrepreneurship provided thought-provoking insights into the relevance of cooperatives in today's world.

The competition concluded with three winners:

- **1st Prize:** Veera Pengal Munnetra Sangam (VPMS), a women-led auto drivers' cooperative from Chennai, empowering women through economic opportunities and ensuring safe travel options for women and children. The team's inspiring pitch highlighted their dedication to women's empowerment and their success in managing a cooperative for 400 women drivers.
- **2nd Prize:** Raftech Solutions won second prize with their cooperative for seaweed cultivators in Maharashtra, which supports local fisherfolk by creating sustainable livelihoods through seaweed cultivation and product development.
- **3rd Prize:** Craftlink from the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) presented a cooperative model aimed at preserving traditional Etikoppaka wooden crafts and strengthening the bargaining power of artisans.

The presentations demonstrated the adaptability of cooperative models across diverse sectors, reinforcing the potential of cooperatives to address social and economic challenges. Participants also benefited from mentorship provided by 13 on-site mentors and four virtual mentors, who played a crucial role in shaping the ideas and strategies of the young entrepreneurs. The event concluded with a lively networking session, fostering connections and collaboration among participants, judges, and guests from various sectors.

Overall, the Coop Pitch competition demonstrated how youth-led cooperative ideas can spark real change. The energy, dedication, and creativity I witnessed, from the online sessions to the in-person mentoring sessions, were truly inspiring and underscored the importance of fostering these kinds of initiatives.

[IFFDC Plants 10,000+ Saplings Making ICA Conference Carbon Neutral](#)

The Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative (IFFDC), an ICA member and a subsidiary of the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative (IFFCO), hosts of the ICA Global Cooperative Conference, has planted over 10,000 peepal tree saplings to offset emissions generated by the Conference and make this the greenest ICA event yet.

The peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) or sacred fig is a species native to the Indian subcontinent and Indochina that belongs to the fig or mulberry family. They live up to 100 years and are also known for their ability to absorb carbon dioxide. IFFDC has planted saplings in the states of Odisha (2,511), West Bengal (2,700) and Uttar Pradesh (5,500) on community land, along roadsides, on school and temple grounds and around IFFCO plants.

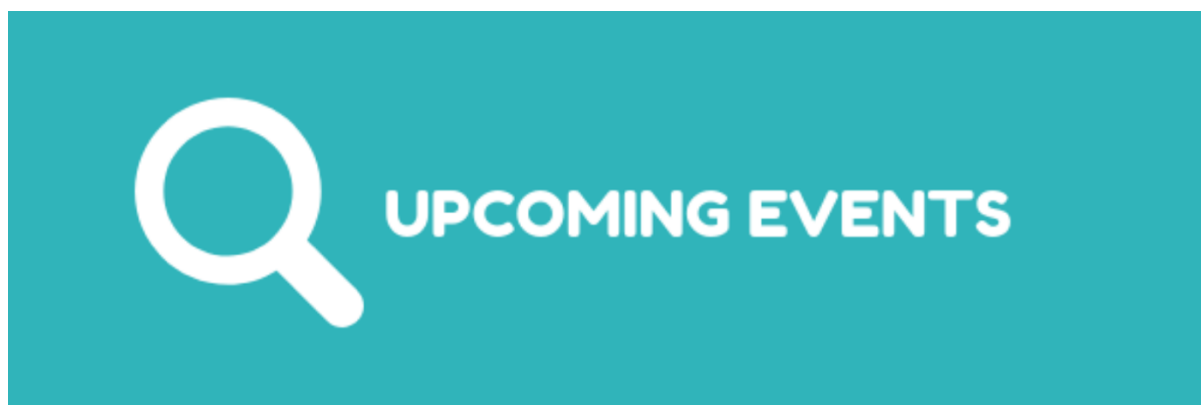
Established in 1993, IFFDC aims to conserve the environment and mitigate climate change through sustainable natural resource management and collective action, while boosting the socioeconomic status of rural poor, tribal communities and women in particular.

[BCCM Launches the Climate Action Progress Report](#)

In November 2022, the Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals (BCCM) launched the Cooperatives and Mutuals Declaration of Climate Action, which aligns with the United Nation's Race to Zero initiative aimed at encouraging climate action worldwide.

Australia is experiencing serious climate issues like higher temperatures and more natural disasters, making it crucial to act quickly. Cooperatives and mutuals (CMEs), which are an important part of Australia's economy, are key players in climate action.

In October 2024, BCCM and Watts Sustainability published the [Climate Action Progress Report](#) highlighting the progress made on the Declaration and encouraged more organisations to join in. More information on this declaration and BCCM's climate action initiatives can be accessed [here](#).



- Training Program for Managers of Consumer/ Retail Co-operatives in Kobe, Japan – 4 to 17 November 2024

- Virtual Capacity Building Training on *Cooperative Governance and Leadership* – 18 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
- Virtual Capacity Building Training on *Good Governance* – 16 December 2024
- Knowledge Sharing & Training Program on *Telling Our Stories, Building Strong Cooperative Brands In the Digital Era* – February 2025 (TBC)
- In-person Regional Dialogue for Cooperative Development in the NENA Region – February 2025 (TBC)
- Virtual Capacity Building Training on *Governance Tools (Manage.COOP)* – 27 February 2025
- 17th ICA-AP Regional Assembly in Sri Lanka – 24 to 28 November, 2025