



Weekly Digest

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Editor: Garry Cronan
Email: cronan@ica.coop

ICA
15 Route des Morillons
1218 Grand Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland
Tel +41 22 929 8888
Fax +41 22 798 4122
Website : www.ica.coop

Editorial

Welcome to issue twenty-one of the Weekly Digest. This week we highlight the Japanese movements’ commitment to global solidarity. We also report on new co-operative publications and recent meetings held throughout the world. As usual, we would welcome your comments.

Japanese Co-operatives Demonstrate Global Solidarity

Two Japanese members of the ICA, JA Zenchu and the Japanese Consumer Co-operative Union (JCCU) have recently displayed the spirit of global co-operative solidarity.

JA Zenchu recently conducted a nationwide appeal for the victims of the Iranian earthquake in December 2003. This followed the global appeal that the ICA launched. The result of the JA Group’s efforts demonstrates the sense of solidarity which exists within the Japanese movement. Their members, who include farmers and other members of the JA Group’s co-operatives, contributed over 37 Million Japanese yen, almost 337,000 USD.



The ICA President and Director-General were both recently in Iran (*see page 3*). They took advantage of their visit to discuss with representatives of the Iranian co-operative movement how best to ensure that these monies were used to assist agricultural co-operatives recover from the disaster.

Japanese support for international development and relief activities does not stop there. JCCU along with its member co-operatives and their individual members has been conducting a nationwide campaign for the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). From April 2003 to March 2004, donations from Japanese co-operatives totalled 284 million yen, (USD 2.57 million), up 44%.



The focus of much of JCCU’s recent effort has been fund raising for two emergency campaigns - one for earthquake relief in Iran and the other for Iraq. 40 million yen (USD 362,000) was raised for Iran and 70 million yen (USD 633,000) was collected for Iraq.

Several other ICA members have also raised funds for the victims of the Iran earthquake, including Co-operatives UK and Angkasa, Malaysia. The ICA appeal remains open as there is still a great need for assistance to help the Iranian movement rebuild. The top photo shows Mr Isami Miyata, ICA Board member and President of JA Zenchu. The bottom photo shows Japanese consumer co-operatives campaigning for donations.

No Substitute for Face-to-Face Meetings with Members

During the last twelve months the ICA President, Director-General and other senior ICA staff have visited approximately twenty percent of our members. Such visits are very important for an organisation as diverse and geographically spread as the international co-operative movement. It enables the senior officials of the ICA to get first hand experience of the problems and issues of concern to our membership.



The ICA Director-General, Iain Macdonald said, “there is no substitute for these meetings with members in their own office, in their own country. The better we know our members the better we are able to serve them”. He added “the visits can also assist in spreading knowledge and encouraging greater networking among ICA members. We often advise our members about relevant developments in other countries, which they may not have otherwise heard about. We are also able to take advantage of these visits to meet with government representatives. This helps to raise the profile of the national movements with their governments. In some cases these meetings have helped the local movement bring forward planned legislation or other supportive policies”.

Mr Macdonald added, “the most successful visits are often the ones which have a specific focus – ones where we can bring the strength of the international movement to bear in support of the local movement, something members alone are not able to do. This is one of the benefits of ICA membership.” Photo above shows ICA President and Director-General meeting with local dairy co-operative members and Javid Mousavinia from CORC on their recent Iranian visit.

Year of Microcredit – Opportunity for Co-ops

The United Nations have designated 2005 as the *International Year of Microcredit*. The UN has invited Governments, concerned non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the media to join in raising the profile and building the capacity of the microcredit and microfinance sectors. It believes that microcredit can assume a larger role in the global strategy for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the commitment to cut poverty in half by 2015.



The “Year” provides at least two opportunities for interested ICA members to become involved. Firstly, through national co-ordinating committees – twelve have been established already. Secondly, at an international level - the ICA will be working to ensure that the role of co-operatives is highlighted among international agencies and in international forums. The ICA is able to participate fully in these international activities because of its status within the United Nations system. Our position within the UN gives us timely access to information about such initiatives. It also gives us knowledge about appropriate points of access to help promote the co-operative alternative.

A paper setting out the background to the year has just been released. It notes that an estimated 400 to 500 million households globally lacked access to sustainable financial services. Expanding the reach of microfinance was vital for their economic and social development. It points out that at the heart of next year’s *Year of Microcredit* are the institutions that provide microfinance, credit unions, saving and credit co-operatives, savings banks, insurance companies and other community finance institutions. Clearly, from a UN point of view, co-operatives have an important role to play. A copy of the paper can be obtained from <http://www.unCDF.org/english/microfinance/year/>

For more information please contact Maria Elena Chávez Hertig chavez@ica.coop

List of African Co-ops Interested in “Twinning”



A listing of African co-operatives interested in “twinning” with co-operatives from developed countries is now available on Co-operatives UK website www.cooperatives-uk.coop/C2C. ICA Regional Director for East, Central and Southern Africa, Bernard Kadasia raised the possibility of such “twinning” arrangements at the recent UK Co-op Congress. The objective is to find mutually beneficial ways of linking co-operatives in developed countries with co-operatives from developing countries. Although the list was prepared primarily for matching with UK co-ops, it is a good starting point for other ICA members wishing to introduce a similar scheme. It includes coffee grower’s co-ops, savings and credit co-ops, housing co-ops, and a variety of other agricultural marketing co-ops.

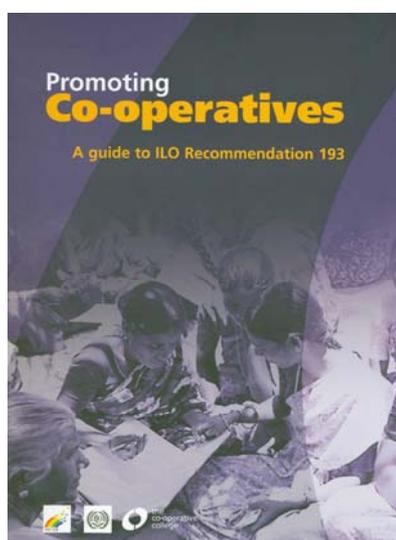
ICA Meets with Representatives of Iranian Co-operatives and Government

ICA President, Ivano Barberini and Director-General Iain Macdonald recently visited Iran. The purpose of the visit was to meet with representatives of member organisations and assist the movement in its discussions and representations to government.

The visit provided an opportunity for the host organisations the Central Organisation for Rural Co-operatives of Iran (CORC) and Central Union of Rural Agricultural Co-operatives of Iran (CURACI) to provide a first hand briefing on the devastation caused by the earthquake last December. In particular, to thank the ICA and its members, (*see front page*), who have given financial assistance to help the movement rebuild.



CORC and CURACI briefed the President and DG on their current activities, particularly their interest in developing international co-operative trading links. Meetings were held with the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Mr Hojati and with the Iranian Minister for Co-operatives, Mr Soofi. At this latter meeting, the ICA was able to give strong support to co-operative organisations’ efforts to build an independent and economically sustainable co-operative movement. During the visit, a briefing was also provided by the ICA’s third Iranian member, the Iranian Chamber of Co-operatives on their co-operative development work particularly in neighbouring Afghanistan and Iraq. The photo above shows, the ICA President and Director-General with the Minister for Agriculture, Mr Hojati, second from right and Mr Cheraghali, Deputy Minister and Chairman of CORC far left.



Training Pack On ILO Recommendation 193 Launched

A new training pack *Promoting Co-operatives: A practical campaign guide to ILO Recommendation 193* was launched at the UK’s Parliament on 6 July 2004. The UK Co-operative College, the ILO and the ICA prepared the training pack under the UK’s Strategic Grants Agreement (SGA); see [Weekly Digest 13](#) for details of this initiative.

Speakers at the launch included the author of the pack, Stirling Smith, ICA’s Director-General Iain Macdonald, and Dame Pauline Green, President of ICA Europe as well as Jürgen Schwettmann, Head of the ILO’s Co-operative Branch. All expressed hope that the pack would be widely used. Gareth Thomas MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, hosted the launch. Previous publications launched under the SGA initiative include a pamphlet on the United Nations MDG’s and one on Fair Trade. Contact enquires@co-op.ac.uk

Global Issues Addressed by ICA President in Presentation to French Co-operators

On 22 June 2004, Ivano Barberini, ICA President, participated in Groupement National de la Coopération (GNC) Annual General Assembly in Paris. GNC is one of ICA's French members.

GNC's annual assembly provides an opportunity for invited representatives of public authorities, economists or co-operators to discuss issues of importance. For some years now, its focus has been international developments. In 2004, the central issue was the increasingly profile being given to co-operatives by international and European institutions e.g. ILO Recommendation 193, the Communication of the European Commission on the Promotion of Co-operative Societies, and the new European Co-operative Statute.

At the invitation of Jean-Claude Detilleux, GNC President and ICA Board member, Ivano Barberini made a presentation on the ICA, its role, structure and activities. Other speakers included Albrecht Mulfinger, European Commission, Head of the Unit in charge of co-operatives, and Gérard Sarracanie, French interministerial delegate for social economy, representing the French government. Ivano Barberini's visit to Paris was also an occasion for French members of the ICA to have a discussion with the ICA President, and for non-members, to have an opportunity to learn more about the ICA. For more information, contact GNC's Secretary-General, Caroline Naett cnaett@entreprises.coop. The top photo shows, from left to right Gérard Sarracanie, Ivano Barberini and Jean-Claude Detilleux.



ICA Participates in Council of Europe's NGO Consultations

The ICA is a member of the [Council of Europe](#) NGO Liaison Committee. The COE is the only international organisation, which gives NGO's participative as well as consultative status. The ICA's European Director, Gabriella Sozanski represents the ICA on the Liaison Committee. Active participation gives the ICA an opportunity to ensure that co-operatives are represented in this European wide institution. Its most recent meeting was held in Strasbourg on 21 June 2004.

The COE is the continent's oldest political organisation, founded in 1949. It groups together 45 countries, including 21 countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The COE is distinct from the 25-nation European Union, but no country has ever joined the Union without first belonging to the Council of Europe. It is headquartered in Strasbourg, France. For more information, please contact Gabriella Sozanski sozanski@ica.coop

Latest News from ICA Banking and Health Organisations

Two of the ICA's nine global sectoral organisations have recently published their latest newsletters. The International Health Co-operative Organisation's (IHCO) newsletter leads with an item about the ICA's Russian member Centrosoyuz. One of Centrosoyuz's main roles in the post-Soviet period has been as a provider of medical services to patients throughout Russia. The second edition of the International Co-operative Banking Associations newsletter is also now available see www.ica.coop/icba/bulletin-2-2004.pdf. As usual, it includes reports from its banking members throughout the world. It also includes a report on the first international meeting of social economy leaders in France in late April early May 2004.

Co-operatives and Trade Unions Join Together to Promote Decent Work

A new ILO paper looks at an initiative involving co-operatives and trade unions. Known as SYNDICOOP, it was developed by the ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and its Co-operative Branch as a joint effort with the ICA, and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Begun in 2002, the effort focused first on workers in the informal economy in Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, with Kenya joining more recently. For more information, see www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/features/04/cooperatives.htm