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Incoming WTO Director General to be keynote speaker at ICA General Assembly

Regulations for international commerce and trade policy play an important role for the economic and political future of each nation. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the body that is drafting the agreements which are aimed at helping trade flow as freely as possible, achieving gradual liberalisation through negotiation, and setting up an impartial means of settling disputes. [More...](#)

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An Indian Co-operator was awarded the first Rochdale Pioneers Prize

Vergheese Kurien, nominated by the National Co-operative Dairy Federation of India, has been awarded the first Rochdale Pioneers Prize. Mr Kurien will receive a certificate at the ICA General Assembly, in Seoul, Korea, on 17 October. He will also be invited to address the General Assembly.

Mr Kurien has made an invaluable contribution to the dairy sector in India by helping to establish innovative and financially sustainable dairy co-operatives. He was also the "architect" of Operation Flood, the largest dairy development programme in the world. In addition to help establish thousands of co-operatives, he also set up the well-known Institute of Rural Management in Anand.

The jury, which is made up of members of the ICA Board Presidium, received 16 nominations for individuals and co-operative organisations.

[Mats Ahnlund](#)



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Asia-Pacific prepares leaders of tomorrow

The ICA Asia-Pacific Co-operative Youth Seminar was held in Tokyo from 25-27 June. More than 100 young people from 11 countries gathered to discuss on "Leaders toward Co-operation, Leading the New Century". The seminar was inaugurated by the ICA President, Roberto Rodrigues who praised the ICA regional office and the co-operatives in Asia-Pacific for their efforts to promote dialogue between young people and more experienced co-operators. He reminded the participants of his speech in 1997 when he said that "the young today will be the future pillars of our co-operative movement in the 21st century."

In the afternoon, Mr Rodrigues had a round table with young people to discuss the future of co-operatives and how young people can contribute to the development of the movement. He answered questions related to the role of co-operatives in offsetting the effects of globalisation. He also listened to suggestions made by young people on how to better integrate them in the co-operative movement. Finally, he encourages them to always fight for a world of peace and equity for all human beings, stressing that co-operatives provide the most effective institutional framework to channel the creativity of youth and hence address the manifold socio-economic issues impacting them.

Mr Rodrigues' speech was strengthened by the keynote address made by Prof Nakamura Hisashi, Ryuokoku University, Japan on "The Improvement of People's Living through Co-operative Networking". He presented an in-depth analysis of the economic and political situation in the Asia-Pacific region. He finalises his presentation by proposing actions young people should take in each country.

Robby Tulus, the ICA regional director, presented "The Development of Co-operatives in the Asia-Pacific Region in the 21st Century". He gave an overview of the youth employment situation in the region, which is declining. He gave ideas for the creation of employment among youth and emphasised the importance of education and training.

Young people had the opportunity to discuss the following topics: "*To Develop Local Industry and Improve People's Living through Co-operatives*", "*To Develop Campus Co-operative Activities for Active Campuses and Better Communities*", and "*To Make Attractive Co-operatives to Youth and Community*."

On the last day, an evaluation showed strong interest from young people to share and learn with other young people around the world. The participants unanimously agreed that the experiences they had gained from the two days seminar will help them better contribute to their community work, and they requested the set-up of a web site to continue the dialogue.

A set of recommendations will be submitted to the Asia-Pacific board to better implement youth integration to the region. Their experience will be shared with the young people who will gather in Seoul.

The seminar was hosted by the National Federation of University Co-operative Associations (NFUCA), Japan Joint Committee of Co-operatives (JJC), and

Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU).

[Juku Ozawa](#)

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ICA ROECSA opens dialogue with co-operative authorities in Kenya

A task force of seven individuals has been set up to work in consultation with co-operative authorities in Kenya. It will stimulate discussion and action on appropriate policies and initiatives regarding market research, product development, impact assessment and related approaches from a co-operative perspective.

The task force includes representatives from the Department of Co-operative Promotional Services in Kenya, the ICA Regional Office in East, Central and Southern Africa (ROECSA) and the following co-operative organisations: Kenya Union of Savings and Credit Co-operatives, Kenya Rural Sacco Societies Union, Embu Farmers Sacco, Co-operative Bank of Kenya, and Ukulima Sacco. It was established by leaders and managers from the Kenyan financial co-operative sector who attended the one-day workshop on impact assessment in relation to financial service delivery.

The aim of the forum was to familiarise co-operative practitioners in the financial sector with the latest thinking on the subject of impact assessments, their utility and alternative market oriented approaches that increase the quality, development, delivery and assessment of financial services to low income beneficiaries.

Twelve co-operative leaders and managers from the Kenyan co-operative financial sector discussed on the basis of two presentations: "From Impact assessments to Market Research - An overview of conventional and new approaches in the microfinance industry" by Dr. Koenraad Verhagen and "Letting Demand Drive Product Development" by Mr. Graham Wright, Programme Director at Microsave-Africa.

The workshop was held in Nairobi on 2 July and organised by ICA ROECSA.

[Bernard Kadasia](#)

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Intercooperation to support community development

The "Caisse Centrale de Crédit Coopératif" (CCCC), a French co-operative organisation, is assisting in the creation of a Swedish "caisse de crédit solidaire". The new co-operative will bring together groups that support individual entrepreneurs such as young people, women, immigrants or persons who have lost their jobs.

Jean-Claude Détilleux, CEO of CCCC, noted that the co-operative has a social responsibility to help innovators and develop the local community.

Co-operation between France and Sweden started already when "Ekobanken" was created following a French model of micro-finance called NEF. "Ekobanken" gives financial support to private schools, ecological activities, alternative energies and organisations that bring a social added value.

(Source La lettre du GNC, June 2001 – N° 289)

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Coop Norden - a new retail giant

The convenience goods companies of the three Scandinavian co-operative retail and wholesale societies, KF in Sweden, Coop Norge and FDB in Denmark, will be merged into a joint limited company Coop Norden AB, which will commence business as at 1 January 2002.

A final decision was made on June 17 after votes at the Danish and Norwegian Congresses. In Sweden the motion was carried at KF's general meeting on June 8.

The co-operative movements in the three countries will become Scandinavia's biggest player within the convenience goods area with total sales around DKK 100 billion (13,5 billion euro), a market share of 29 % and about 64,000 employees in 3000 shops.

KF comprises the retail chains Gröna Konsum, Obs!, B&W, Robin Hood and Coop Forum.

Coop Norge comprises Coop Prix, Coop Mega, Coop Marked, Coop Obs! together with a number of industrial companies.

FDB in Denmark comprises the retail chains Kvikly, SuperBrugsen, Dagli Brugsen LokalBrugsen, Irma, Fakta and Dansk Kaffeкомпани.

"The decision to form Coop Norden will provide us with greater and better opportunities to create values for the members in the Scandinavian co-operative movements through higher efficiency and enhanced development potential", say the three principal officials (CEO's) Roland Svensson KF, Svein E. Skorstad Coop Norge and Jørgen Clausen FDB in Denmark.

The merger will not comprise the three co-operative societies FDB in Denmark, Coop Norge and KF in Sweden. Each co-operative society will continue to run its member activities for the around 5 million members to be found in all the three countries together.

The highest joint decision-making body in Coop Norden will be the Stämman (general meeting) where the three co-operative societies KF, FDB, Coop Norge are represented by 60 delegates each.

KF will own 42 % of Coop Norden, FDB 38 % and Coop Norge 20 %.

Possible comments to:

FDB's chairman Ebbe Lundgaard + 45 43 86 44 02

VD and CEO of KF Roland Svensson + 46 8 7431710

Principal Official Nils Edvard Olsen + 47 22899500

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SNCF celebrated 20th anniversary

On 7th July 2001, SNCF celebrated its 20th Anniversary concurrent with the festive commemoration of the 79th ICA International Co-operative Day and the 7th UN International Day of Co-operatives. It was held at the popular Neptune Theatre where good fellowship, entertainment and dancing, as well as sumptuous food and drinks, were further highlighted by an impressive presentation of SNCF Honour Awards 2001.

Abdullah Tarmugi, Ministry of Community Development and Sports, was the Guest-of-Honour during the event. Honourable Minister Tarmugi, accompanied by Tan Kian Lian, chairman of SNCF, presented the awards to a number of recipients. The highest award, the Rochdale Medal, was conferred to Dr. Lee Boon Yang, Minister of Manpower of Singapore, who is also chairman of the Board of Trustees of NTUC Income. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Lee, NTUC Income saw its rapid and phenomenal growth, and has earned for itself the status of being one of the leading co-operatives in Singapore. The second Rochdale Medal (Posthumous) was conferred to the late Mr. K. Thomas Samuel, who was a co-founder and former chief executive of SNCF. Two commendation medals and nine certificates of honour were also presented to exemplary and active leaders and senior management staff of co-operatives in Singapore.

Said Tan Kin Lian, SNCF Chairman at the SNCF 20th Anniversary: *“The celebration of the 20th Anniversary marks an important milestone for the Federation. When SNCF was formed in 1980, it had 20 affiliates with 146,000 individual members. Today, we have 75 affiliates with a total membership of 1.4 million. Many of our affiliates have earned their recognition as household names by operating in an efficient and cost effective manner, and by providing a wide range of services and benefits to a large membership base.”*

It was a festive and memorable event. Co-operatives in Singapore have indeed achieved greater heights over the years, and they will increasingly play an important role for the country and beyond, under the innovative leadership of Tan Kin Lian and the creative management of Leow Peng Kui.

[Robby Tulus](#)

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JCCU to resist severe economic conditions in Japan

Reforming the structure of business operations and management, and promoting activities that ensure food safety are two items that will be high on JCCU's agenda for the next two years. These issues were the focal points of discussion of the delegates who attended the 51th annual General Assembly of JCCU. The aim is to be able to withstand the severe economic conditions which Japan is facing nowadays, while ensuring a sense of security in people's lives.

The General Assembly adopted a medium-term plan (2001-2003) for JCCU which would aim at achieving the following: food safety; a sense of security among co-op members; intensifying co-operation at the regional level; active participation in the global community; successful management practices of co-ops; competitive business structures for the future.

This General Assembly was held in conjunction with the celebration of JCCU 50th anniversary. Honourable guests included representatives from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, JA Zenchu, and top co-operative leaders from all over the world. Of particular note is the participation of Lloyd Wilkinson, board member of the International Co-operative Alliance (U.K), and Lim Ho Seng, former CEO of NTUC Fairprice (Singapore).

559 delegates and 97 observers attended this General Assembly. 41 board members and 5 members of the auditing committee were elected. Mr Takemoto will continue to hold the chairmanship of JCCU.

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50th anniversary celebration under the signs of environment, food and agriculture

JCCU's continues the celebration of its 50th anniversary. On 29 June, 350 participants gathered together in Fukuoka for a second symposium. The theme was: "Thinking About Environmental Problems in Daily Life and the Role of Citizens, the Government and the Co-op in the Building of Community Security and Environmental Safety." According to Shiina Makoto, a well-known author, Japanese have become too insensitive to noise and light. He also regretted the fact that Japanese ocean shores and river banks are buried under concrete. Mr Shiina participated in the panel of discussion and presented a paper entitled "Thinking about a Recycling Society from the Point of Our Daily Life. What Shall We Do?" He called on citizens to restore their sensitivity to enable them to enjoy the wind and the movement of the clouds.

A third symposium was organised in Sendai on 4 July. This symposium brought together 500 people who discussed the theme "Today's Food and Agriculture in Japan; Building strong relationship between Food and Agriculture." Mr Hattori, Principal of a famous cookery school, gave a keynote speech on "Cooking and Education on Food for Children." A panel discussion was held under the theme: "Creating a Link between Food and Agriculture." The participants recommended that closer and stronger links between consumers' and producers' co-operatives should be created. This will ensure food safety and protection of the agriculture for the next generation.

JCCU's 50th anniversary celebration will continue throughout the year.

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Japanese consumers' concerns were not met by government

JCCU has just organised a campaign collecting signatures from its members. The signatures will be submitted to the Diet with a request to the government to make amendments to the Food Sanitation Law (ref. ICA e-news issue 1/2001). 13.73 million signatures were collected, and the petition was sent to the Diet. 533 members of parliament supported the petition. Despite the unexpected volume of signatures collected (JCCU's target was 10 million) and the huge support from members of parliament, the petition was sent to the "Discussion Incomplete Category" on 28 June. It did, however, gain the consensus of the house. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare argued that the main concerns put forth in the petition can be addressed under the current law, and that the revision of the basic Food Sanitation Law is not necessary.

JCCU will continue its dialogue with political parties and members of parliament. It will also maintain its campaign and will put pressure on the government to revise the law in the next Diet session. In the meantime, JCCU will explore the possibility of enacting a law through parliamentary initiative.

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