



Weekly Digest

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Editorial

Welcome to issue twelve of the Weekly Digest. This week we devoted the issue to reporting on a series of events which have just taken place in Beijing, China -- firstly, the ICA Board and associated meetings and next coverage is given to the first Beijing International Co-operative Trade Fair and Trade Forum. Events such as these are ideal venues to showcase co-operative products and services. They also provide an opportunity to highlight the potential for greater co-operative to co-operative business, particularly at the regional and international level. Next week we return to our regular weekly format. As usual we would welcome your comments on the style and content of the newsletter.

ICA Board Meets in Beijing



The ICA Board met in Beijing from 23-25 April 2004. This is the first of the Board's three meetings for the year. The meeting was hosted by the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Co-operatives (ACFSMC).

The board agenda contained a number of specific issues as well as ongoing business. It included consideration of HIV/AIDS, the proposed global co-operative campaign against poverty, development, communication and international standing initiatives, youth activities, in addition to reports on membership and finance. The board heard reports from ICA President, Ivano Barberini and Director-General, Iain Macdonald on recent activities to promote the ICA. Wide-ranging presentations were also given by other senior ICA staff on initiatives in the areas of international standing, communications, development and the global campaign on poverty. The board strongly endorsed these reports and congratulated those concerned on the progress made. Detailed reports follow on specific issues.



The top photo shows board members, ICA staff plus officials from ACFSMC at the Great Hall of the People. The photo opposite shows Mr Mu Li, ICA Board Vice President (Asia and Pacific), and ACFSMC Vice President, officially welcoming board members to Beijing.

Boards Adopts HIV/AIDS Strategy



The Executive Committee of the ICA Gender Equality Committee which met prior to the Board meeting submitted a proposal to the ICA board for the adoption of a global ICA HIV/AIDS strategy. The proposal, which was unanimously adopted, was presented to the board by ICA Deputy Director General, Maria Elena Chávez Hertig.

The Strategy aims to accelerate a response to the HIV/AIDS epidemics through strengthening prevention and impact mitigation. Implementation would be undertaken at both the global, regional and sectoral levels. It involves five key activities, awareness-raising, capacity building, good practice models, networking and demonstration of ICA political commitment. A full copy of the strategy can be found on the ICA's website www.ica.coop/ica/issues/hiv-aids-strategy.

The above photo shows ICA Board members Stefania Marcone, (Italy) speaking during the debate, along with Gun-Britt Mårtensson, (Sweden) and David Miller (USA). For more information contact chavez@ica.coop

Further Lobbying on IAS 32

The ICA Board meeting received a report from Akiko Yamauchi, (akiko.yamauchi@jccu.co-op.or.jp) photo opposite, from the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) on recent representations to the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB). The JCCU was objecting to the proposed changes to IAS 32 and its likely effect on co-operatives. The Board congratulated the JCCU on their initiatives and encouraged other ICA members to continue to make representations to the IASB.



The ICA and a number of its members have been at the forefront of efforts to convince the IASB of the inappropriateness of the proposed changes and their likely negative effect on the global co-operative movement. The new accounting standard is proposing to reclassify co-operative capital (member's shares) as debt rather than equity. As a consequence of the ICA and its member's representations, the board heard that there is reason for some optimism on this issue. Nevertheless, it is very important for co-operatives, particularly outside of Europe, to continue to make representations to the IASB on this matter. For further information please contact Iain Macdonald iain.macdonald@ica.coop.

Board Approves Accounts and Welcomes Improved Financial Performance



The annual audited ICA accounts for the year 2003 were presented to the board meeting for approval. The ICA's independent Audit and Control Committee which had met just prior to the board meeting had recommended approval of the accounts.

Following discussion the board unanimously endorsed the accounts. It was generally felt that the accounts were reason for confidence with a return to a healthy operating position. However, there was still a need to take a cautionary approach particularly in regard to membership subscriptions which provides the great majority of ICA operating revenue. There is strong link between members paying their proper member subscriptions according to the agreed formula

and the ability of the ICA to adequately service its member's needs while remaining viable in the long term. The issue of membership levies was discussed at both the President's Committee which preceded the board and at the board itself. This issue remains on the agenda of future board meetings. Photo shows Ivano Barberini leading the debate on this issue.

Youth Representative Outlines Plans for the Future



Jo Bibby Scullion, (photo opposite) the youth representative on the Board, presented a report to the Beijing meeting outlining the future direction of the ICA Youth Network. The main focus is on building a sustainable international network. She noted the difficulties experienced in relation to communications and funding. The most important priorities in the coming months were activities during the ICA Regional Assemblies. These provide an opportunity for the promotion of the Youth Network to the broad co-operative movement. Ms Bidy Scullion noted the next step was to develop a strategy for the Network to help inform its development. To assist in the area of communications a future edition of the Weekly Digest, around late July or early

August 2004, will focus exclusively on youth activities.

Ms Bidy Scullion along with ICA Director-General, Iain Macdonald has been invited to be a guest speaker at the ICA Regional Co-operative Youth Seminar 2004 to be held in Kula Lumpur, Malaysia, 5-7 September 2004. The seminar is being organised in collaboration with the ICA Consumer Sub-Committee on University/College Co-operatives for Asia and the Pacific.

ICA Regional Directors Meet

ICA Regional Directors meet at least once a year. On this occasion they met as a group in Beijing on 22 April and again with the Development Committee of the Board on 23 April. These meetings allow the Regional Directors to give detailed reports on their activities. In total, the programmes and member services they deliver are very impressive and deserve to be better known. Copies of the presentations will shortly be available on the ICA's global website.



Fair trade was one of the themes running through the Regional Directors presentations. The ICA Regional Offices are an ideal global network for the promotion of fair trade, linking both producer co-operatives with consumer co-operatives – intersectoral as well as across sectors at regional and global levels. A position that enables them to be a broker for such relationships. The photo above shows the five ICA Regional Directors, from left, Shil Kwan Lee (Asia-Pacific), Ada Suleymane Kibora (West Africa), Gabriella Sozanski (Europe), Bernard Kadasia (East, Central and Southern Africa) and Manuel Mariño (Americas) with Malcolm Hepworth, Chief Operating Officer, Retail, Co-operative Group, UK, who was in Beijing to attend the Trade Fair. The Co-operative Group is currently discussing twinning arrangements with African co-operatives, facilitated in part by the ICA.

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2004 International Cooperative Trade Fair in Beijing, China

Beijing Co-operative Trade Fair a Great Success

A very successful International Co-operative Trade Fair was held on 26-28 April at the China National Agricultural Exhibition Centre in Beijing. Over 400 booths in three pavilions presented 300 domestic co-operatives along with 70 international manufacturers. Apart from the impressive displays of Chinese co-operatives, representatives from Iran, Indonesia, Singapore and Sri Lanka co-operatives also had stalls. Over 144 international buyers attended. Commodities ranged from food, agricultural machineries, home appliances, textiles, office supplies, gift and other small items. The Trade Fair was hosted by ACFSMC and co-sponsored by the Co-op Atlantic of Canada, the Co-operative Group UK and NTUC Fairprice of Singapore with the support of global ICA and its Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ROAP).

Some Scenes from the International Co-operative Trade Fair, Beijing

Photos below show the venue, the official opening, members of the ICA Board and ACFSMC officials and Bob Burlton, Chair Co-operative Group, UK.



Trade Forum showcases Co-operative Success

Innovate, find the competitive edge and serve niche markets. These are the lessons for co-operative success outlined at the Trade Forum organised as part of the Trade Fair. "As competition increases, we are challenged to be better", said Seah Kian Peng, Chair, Singapore National Co-operative Federation in his presentation to the forum. Speakers from Co-op Atlantic of Canada, JCCU and the Co-op Group UK also underlined the need for continued innovation, bold and unique added value to members. This could include responsible retailing and fair trade, seeking local solutions while focusing on core competitive co-operative advantages.



Human resources and IT are also key to improving the competitive edge of co-operatives. Promoting co-operative identity was high on the agenda of successful co-operatives. The ACFSMC, the main sponsor of the Trade Fair, also underlined the key role of the ICA in bringing together co-operatives to exchange information, technology and facilitate identifying trade opportunities among the co-operative network. ICA Regional Director (Asia-Pacific), Shil Kwan Lee and Iain Macdonald, ICA Director-General also noted the existing trading networks within the ICA and encouraged members to seek out co-operative trade especially at the sub-regional and regional levels. Co-operation among co-operatives is a proven successful way of addressing a more competitive market. The Forum was chaired by Robby Tulus, former ICA Regional Director (Asia-Pacific) and Liu Hui, ACFSMC.



Photo shows ICA Director-General, Iain Macdonald talking with Malcolm Hepworth. Bottom photo shows some of the forum delegates.

Copies of the Weekly Digest are archived on the ICA's website www.ica.coop.