



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 five of the Weekly Digest. This week our lead item highlights that the work of ICA in promoting co-operatives is paying off. Governments are recognising how co-operatives can help contribute towards the global goals of poverty reduction and employment creation. We also report on recent co-operative conferences and sadly note the passing of two co-operative leaders. Finally, we report on changes to the ownership and future development of DotCoop. As usual we would welcome your comments.

African Heads of State Give Support to Co-operatives

An Extraordinary Summit of the African Union Heads of State and Government was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on 8-9 September 2004. Its focus was on employment creation and poverty alleviation in Africa.

The appearance of these two economic issues at such an important meeting conveys Africa's desire to set new priorities and focus on poverty reduction through job creation and productive investments. The choice of Ouagadougou as a venue is also significant: Burkina Faso is among the five poorest countries of the world and is almost completely ignored by foreign investors and organizations. Half of its population lives on less than one euro per day.



Juan Somavia, Director General of the International Labour Organization and Ivano Barberini, ICA, President (*pictured above*) were invited to the meeting, along with representatives of the following international organizations: ONU, WORLD BANK, IMF, FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, and ADB. The ICA was the only non-government organisation given formal status at the conference.

In his address to the summit, Ivano Barberini pointed out that "aid given to Africa by developed countries has to be based on self-help approaches and lead to the creation of local productive capacity. It should respect the culture and the dignity of the beneficiaries" He emphasised that the co-operative movement was committed to achieving these goals.

"The real problem of globalization is the inequality in taking part in it" Barberini said. "The co-operative model appears to be the best suited to meet the economic and social challenges of the 21st century, and this is testified by the good examples of co-operative development present in many African countries, Burkina included."

The final communiqué acknowledged the important role co-operatives can play in employment creation and poverty reduction. (*see related item on page 4*).

COOPEXPO Held in Slovakia

The 11th International Co-operative Contract and Sale Exhibition took place in Nitra, Slovakia from 19 – 24 August 2004. Over 90,000 visitors saw products and services from 81 worker co-operatives, including 60 from Slovakia. Co-operatives from the Czech Republic and Poland also participated.

The co-operative exhibition was attended by Mr Gasparovic, President of the Slovak Republic, Mr Hrusovsky, Chair of the National Council of the SR, Mr Bugar, Vice Chair of the Parliament and other high officials of the Slovak government.



A delegation from the Regional Union of Worker Co-operatives, in western France also attended the COOPEXPO. The group was led by Mr. Hubert Durand, President of the regional group. During their stay in Slovakia, French co-operators took part in meetings with representatives of Slovakian producer co-operatives. They also visited worker and agricultural co-operatives to gain a better understanding of the co-operative system in Slovakia. Information was exchanged on co-operative legislation and opportunities for co-operative development in both traditional and less traditional sectors.

The visit of the delegation was organised within the framework of co-operation between the Slovak Union of Producer Co-operatives and ICOSI (French Institute of International Social Co-operation). The SCOPE II funded project (submitted by CECOP- European Confederation of Worker and Social Co-operatives) is focused on supporting co-operative development. *The photo above shows in the foreground, left to right Mr Hrusovsky, Mr. Pavel and Mr. Bugar at the opening of COOPEXPO.*

DotCoop Welcomes Co-op as Registry Operator

The organisation responsible for the global dot coop domain, DotCooperation LLC has welcomed the announcement that the Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society Ltd (OS&G) will take over the Registry Operator business for the .coop TLD. OS&G based in the United Kingdom had completed negotiations with Poptel Limited to purchase the business. OS&G Co-op has also purchased the .coop Registrar business from Poptel.



“We are pleased that OS&G Co-op has taken this important step to increase its commitment to the .coop TLD,” said Charles Snyder, Chairman of the Board of DotCoop and President and CEO of the National Co-operative Bank (US). “Having a co-op with the technical and expertise of OS&G Co-op will provide a renewed basis for continued improvements in the value of the .coop TLD to our co-op registrants and their registrars.”



The purchases by OS&G return the .coop registry and registrar businesses run by Poptel to the co-operative fold. U.K.-based Poptel was a co-operative when it launched the businesses in 2002 but subsequently became investor-owned.

Bob Burlton, Chief Executive of OS&G, and member of ICA’s Consumer Co-op International (CCI) (*photo opposite*) noted “OS&G will be working with dotCoop to investigate new directions for .coop both in marketing and support of the TLD.” Burlton confirmed that Poptel .coop name registrations and services will not be impacted by the transfer and that access to registrants’ .coop accounts will continue from www.domains.coop The ICA has welcomed the move.

Co-operative Movement in Malaysia and Singapore in Great Shape

ICA Director-General, Iain Macdonald recently visited Malaysia and Singapore at the invitation of the local co-operative movements. His verdict, the local co-operative movements are in great shape!

The Director-General gave the closing address at the ICA Regional Co-operative Youth Seminar 2004 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 5-7 September. Mr Macdonald said that the conference reflected real hope for genuine participation by young people in the global movement. A steering committee has been set/3

up to move towards more coordinated youth activities. This committee will also link with the ICA's Global Youth Network. *The photo below shows seminar participants.*



Iain Macdonald then met with officials from ANGKASA and addressed 300 co-operative managers on the subject of "The Co-operative Advantage". He also visited the very successful school co-operatives in the region as well as the National Land Finance Co-operative and the Co-operative College.

In Singapore, the National Co-operative Federation organised a comprehensive tour of Singapore co-operatives as well as the National Trade Union Congress with which the Co-operative Movement of Singapore has very strong links.

Russian Co-operator Celebrates a Milestone



ICA Board member and Chairman of the Council of Centrosojuz of Russian Federation, Mr Valentin Ermakov was recently congratulated on his long service to Russian and international co-operation. The occasion was his 75th birthday.

Mr Ermakov has given more than 50 years of service to promoting and uniting co-operatives. He established the international union of co-operative organisations – League of National Unions of Co-operative Organizations of CIS countries as well as the Association of Co-operative Organizations of Russia which unites 12 types of co-operatives. He has been a tireless campaigner against poverty, unemployment, and the lack of spiritual values in contemporary society. His efforts have been recognised with many awards including the Order of the Red Banner of Labour, the Order of October Revolution, the Order of Merits Before Native Land of the IVth degree.

While visiting Moscow in May 2004 ICA President, Ivano Barberini stated that Centrosojuz is "an important and strong organization, one of the most important and respected members of ICA". In many ways that is Valentin Ermakov's legacy.

New Publication: Yearbook of Spanish Social Economy

ICA member La Confederación Empresarial Española de Economía Social (CEPES) have recently published a new book on the social economy. The yearbook includes general information about the situation of the social economy in Spain (statistics) including extensive coverage of co-operatives. Also specific experiences of Spanish enterprises are shown in order to focus on this sector's role in society. The publication includes contributions from national and international leaders on the social economy in Europe, Latin America. It is available in both English and Spanish. [For more...](#)



African Cooperative Forum

The African Co-operative Forum was held on 2 September 2004 in Ouagadougou. It preceded the African Heads of State Summit discussed on page 1 of the Weekly Digest. The opening ceremony was chaired by Mr. Alain Ludovic Tou, the Burkina Minister of Employment and Youth. The forum was attended by over 500 co-operative leaders and representatives from 9 African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Senegal). Representatives from regional and international institutions (ILO, ISPEC, INADES-FORMATION) also attended. It was a very successful meeting and set the stage for the larger role co-operatives are poised to assume following the African Summit.



Participants deliberated on the topic: “Strategies, roles and contribution of co-operatives in employment creation and poverty reduction in Africa”. Co-operative experiences were presented and discussed highlighting their achievements in the field of job creation and poverty reduction. The participants closed the Forum by making a series of recommendations to African Heads of State and by committing to renew their efforts to make co-operatives a success. *The above photo shows Kibora A. Souleymane (ICA Regional Director), Ousseynou Dieng, ICA Board, the Minister of Employment, the Secretary General of the Minister of Employment and David Thige from the co-operative Bank of Kenya at the opening of the forum.*

Swedish Co-operator Leaves lasting legacy



Sven-Åke Bök, born 1935, passed away suddenly on 4 September 2004. Initially employed by Kooperativa Förbundet, the Swedish Co-operative Union, he went on to become chief editor of the co-operative conceptual paper Kooperatören. In 1975 the co-operative enterprises in Sweden decided to set up Koopi, the Co-operative Institute, to disseminate knowledge about co-operative activities. Sven-Åke Bök became its first Director. He also held the chair of several co-operative committees, among them the Swedish Society for Co-operative Studies and the ICA Research Committee.

At the end of the 1980's he was appointed to preside over a selected group of international co-operators and scientists with the task to revise the declaration on the Co-operative Values and Principles of the ICA. The work led to his book “Co-operative Values in a Changing World”, which was adopted by the ICA Congress in Tokyo 1992 as the basis for the review, leading ultimately to the new principles being adopted in 1995. Sven-Åke Bök was a great co-operator, well known, and therefore infinitely missed by co-operators all around the world.

Founder of World's Largest Fertiliser Co-op passes away

Padmashri Paul Pothen, (*photo opposite*) founding Managing Director of IFFCO passed away on 3 August 2004 at Kochi in Kerala, India, after protracted illness. He was 88. Mr. Pothen, a legend and visionary leader had been instrumental in nurturing the Indian Farmers' Fertilizer Co-operative (IFFCO) – the largest fertilizer co-operative in the world – in its formative years. He also worked for FAO, UNIDO and the World Bank. IFFCO has decided to rename the IFFCO township in Aonla, near Bareilly, India as 'Paul Pothen Nagar' and install his statue in the township to commemorate his valuable services to IFFCO and the co-operative movement. IFFCO has been a member of the ICA for over 20 years.



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