



Weekly Digest

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Editorial

Welcome to the twenty ninth issue of the Weekly Digest. Members of the international co-operative movement have a rich tradition of learning from each other. This was true at the start of the movement as evidenced by the experience of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen and Alphonse Desjardins who drew on various co-operative traditions and influences to create new and successful models. It is also true today as co-operatives throughout the world learn from each other. Study visits, seminars, publications, websites all help transfer knowledge and experience throughout ICA's vast network of members. We report on several examples in this week's digest. As usual we would welcome your comments on the content and style of the digest. Remember, it's your ICA so let's hear from you!

ICA Meets with International Raiffeisen Union

The ICA President and Director-General both attended the Forum of the International Raiffeisen Union (www.iru.de) held in Berlin on 4 November 2004. Ivano Barberini outlined the role of ICA and encouraged IRU members to join the ICA as well.

The theme of the conference was "Raiffeisen: The Idea of a Successful Corporate Form - Local Roots to Ensure Sustainability in Global Competition". Dr. Franz Fischler outgoing EU Commissioner for Agriculture highlighted in his address the importance of co-operatives and Raiffeisen principles in the agricultural sector. Bent Juel Sorensen, President of the Danish Dairy Co-operatives also detailed challenges facing co-operatives as they sought to compete in the highly competitive and global food market.

ICA Board member Dr. Sisodia from India spoke on co-operatives and the Millennium Development Goals as part of the panel discussion as did Rowan Imperial Zusiga from COLAC and Jürgen Schwettmann from ILO.

Etienne Pflimlin, ICA European Board member, and IRU Vice-President, *see photo above* concluded the conference. He noted how co-operatives needed to operate on a level playing field and called for fair treatment by the governments of Europe, citing the example of Denmark. "The best way for co-operatives to deal with globalisation is to do what comes naturally, namely co-operate with each other", he said.

The attendance of the ICA President and Director-General at the IRU Conference is part of an ongoing series of meetings between the two organisations. Iain Macdonald, ICA Director-General noted the very close historic association between the two international organisations and said there was much to be gained from even closer relations. "This was my first IRU Conference and I came away very impressed he said. I am sure all our members will gain from us co-operating more closely in the future."



Mutual Learning through a C2C Exchange

Seven representatives from the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Co-operatives ([ACFSMC-
www.chinacoop.com](http://www.chinacoop.com)) led by Mr. Zhao Xianren, Vice President of the Board of Directors, visited the Canadian Co-operative Association ([CCA-
www.coopscanada.coop](http://www.coopscanada.coop)) in Ottawa, Canada, on 27 October 2004, followed by co-op visits throughout that week. Their purpose was to strengthen the ongoing partnership between ACFSMC and CCA and to discuss pertinent issues on the role of agricultural co-operatives, government policy, marketing and investment of consumer co-operatives, expansion of co-operative trade based on current joint purchasing experiences and the role of co-operatives in poverty alleviation. With CCA's assistance, ACFSMC recently prepared and introduced new model rules and management measures to strengthen 19,000 specialised rural co-operatives in China.

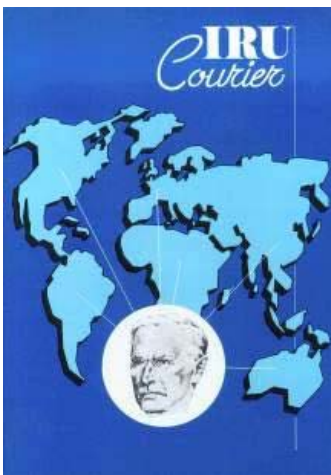


The Executive Director of CCA, Mr. Jean-Yves Lord, and Ms. Jo-Anne Ferguson, Senior Director of Development of CCA received the delegation and together with Mr. Albert Daoust, Manager, Policy/Research Team of the Co-operatives Secretariat (Ministry of Agriculture) made presentations on the current realities and trends of the co-operative movement in Canada.

The group also visited a number of co-operatives in Canada and participated in a luncheon with a group of 15 women from 6 developing countries being hosted by CCA as part of a "women credit union mentorship programme". Kathleen Speake (Asia & East Europe Director), David Shanks (China Program Manager) and Robby Tulus (CCA Advisor) were also members of the team welcoming the ACFSMC delegation. *The photo shows Mr. Zhao Xianren with Jean-Yves Lord and Robby Tulus at the joint luncheon.*

The International Raiffeisen Movement

The International Raiffeisen Union (IRU) is a worldwide voluntary association of national co-operative organisations based on the principles of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen. Raiffeisen's principles of self-help, self-responsibility and self-administration share much with ICA principles. For those interested in the connection between these two sets of co-operative principles see Dr. Hans-Detlef Wülker's (former IRU Secretary-General) paper on the Raiffeisen principles presented at a joint ICA/IRU meeting held in Germany in 1995 (www.iru.de).



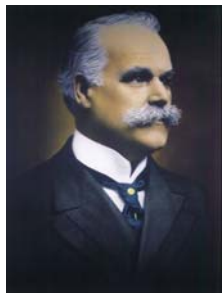
Raiffeisen's ideas have spread throughout the world. IRU estimates that more than 900,000 co-operatives with approximately 500 million members in over 100 countries operate according to Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen's principles.

IRU was founded in 1968 on the 150th anniversary of Raiffeisen's birth. Today it has 73 members in 41 countries. A number of ICA members are also members of the IRU. The IRU maintains close relations with a number of international organisations, including the World Bank, ILO, WOCCU, FAO and of course ICA.

There is a board of directors of eleven from which a presidium is appointed. The current President is Dr. Christian Konrad, President of the Austrian Raiffeisen Federation. There are four Vice-Presidents including Etienne Pflimlin, President of Confédération Nationale du Crédit Mutuel and a current member of ICA European Council. The Secretary-General of IRU is Dr Paul Armbruster, Director of International Relations of the German Co-operative and Raiffeisen Confederation (DGRV). DGRV is also an ICA member.

IRU produces the *IRU-Courier* 3 times a year in English, French, Spanish and German. Copies are available from their website. The most recent issue carries articles on the European Co-operative Statute and the experience of co-operatives in the Czech Republic, Cyprus and South America.

150th anniversary of the birth of Alphonse Desjardins



November 5 was an important date for North American co-operators. It marked the 150th anniversary of the birth of the founder of the caisses populaires, Alphonse Desjardins. He and his wife Dorimène are considered founders of the savings and loan co-operative movement in North America. The anniversary was marked by celebrations in the Québec and Canadian parliaments. A special commemorative plaque will also be unveiled at Complexe Desjardins, in Montréal, in December.

Born in Lévis on 5 November 1854, Alphonse Desjardins founded the first caisse populaire in that city on 6 December 1900. Subsequently, he initiated the creation of more than 140 caisses populaires over 20 years, in addition to having collaborated in the opening of many caisses and the emergence of other co-operative movements in Ontario and the United States.

“Alphonse Desjardins’s work, in just a few decades, completely transformed the socio-economic face of Québec,” said Mr. Alban D’Amours, President and Chief Executive Officer of Desjardins Group. “The vision of this exceptional humanist left a strong imprint on our history and the evolution of Desjardins Group. The values and principles that were the bedrock of its foundation continue to guide the Desjardins Group even today in its development, here and elsewhere in the world. He has left a lasting legacy.” *The photo opposite is of Alphonse Desjardins’ home. The first savings and credit co-operative in North America started here. It is now a centre dedicated to his memory and has been visited by over 178,000 people from 115 countries since it opened in 1982.*



Learning from Other Co-operators

Alphonse Desjardins drew his inspiration from Europe. Caisse populaire is a unique synthesis of four popular savings and credit systems established in Germany, Italy and France: the caisse d’épargne, the Schulze-Delitzsch bank, the Raiffeisen credit co-operative and the Luzzatti popular bank. He also took account of the experience of North American mutual associations and savings banks to define this new type of institution and successfully adapt it to the Canadian context. Desjardins stayed in close contact with many of the founders of the European co-operative movement throughout his life. Having received advice from various international experts, he went on to share his knowledge by organizing the founding of caisses populaires in English-speaking Canada and the United States and by guiding the first sponsors of the American credit union movement. It was also clear to him that the “caisse populaire” concept could be reproduced internationally.



Desjardins Today

Desjardins Group, www.desjardins.ca is today an integrated co-operative financial group. With over 5 million members and clients and overall assets of more than CAD \$100 billion, it is the largest financial institution in Québec and the sixth-largest in Canada. Desjardins has more than 38,000 employees and close to 7,500 elected officers. Its most recent social responsibility report shows that Desjardins gave caisses members CAD \$440 million in patronage allocations and contributed over CAD \$43 million in donations to their local community during 2003!

Tangible Results throughout the World

Desjardins has also been working in developing countries, since 1970. In Burkina Faso, the caisse populaire network now boasts about one hundred caisses offering quality financial services to nearly 400,000 members. Other African countries that have benefited from assistance in setting up their own savings and credit co-operatives include Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Senegal and Tanzania. In Latin America, El Salvador, Haiti and Mexico, Vietnam in Asia, Lithuania and Russia in Central and Eastern Europe have also established co-operative financial systems with Desjardins’ support.

Knowledge Transfer – Learning from the Korean Experience

The ICA – Asia & Pacific, in collaboration with the [National Agricultural Co-operative Federation](#) (NACF) of Korea, organized a study visit of delegates from Bangladesh, Vietnam, India, Philippines, Laos, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Myanmar to agricultural co-operatives in Korea, during 5-10 October 2004. A total of 17 co-operators participated in the exchange.

Mr. Sung-Chul Kim, Agricultural Advisor at ICA Asia-Pacific coordinated the study visit programme under the general supervision of Mr. Shil Kwan Lee, the Regional Director. The programme included visits to the headquarters of NACF to learn how they developed and ran services for their farmer members. Programme participants visited the banking division of NACF and also visited NACF's Consumer Goods Distribution Centre in Giheung. Visits were also made to Kosam Agricultural Co-operative which is an affiliate of NACF and to the Korean Agricultural Co-operative Marketing centre, which is one of marketing facilities of NACF. Visits such as these are one of the main ways co-operative experience is transferred between well established and developing co-operatives. *The photo shows participants visiting NACF's Consumer Goods Distribution Centre.*



ICA President Spells out Strategic Vision



In a recent interview ICA President Ivano Barberini, *photo opposite* outlined his strategic vision for the improvement of the co-operative identity. The interview was conducted by Suzanne Henderson from ACCORD at the recent ICA European Regional Assembly.

Mr. Barberini noted that "co-operative organisations must play a strong role locally and at the same time stay connected globally. They need to have knowledge of both local and global needs. The ICA needs to develop a stronger relationship with its members. We have a responsibility to increase public knowledge of the co-operative movement because although the movement is large and widespread, it's not well known. We need to develop better communication channels. Ethnic centered communications is another challenge. With people not speaking a common language, we need to provide more targeted communications." The full interview is available at www.accord.org.au.

UK Co-op's Sustainability Report Named "World's Best"

Co-operative Financial Services (UK) has beaten off some 2,000 companies from around the globe to take the coveted award for the world's best sustainability report. The biennial benchmark of the world's best sustainability reports, commissioned by the United Nations Environment Programme, ranks CFS' first such report, published in May this year, as number one. This is not the first such win. When the benchmark was published in 2002, the [Co-operative Bank](#) – with its sister company [Co-operative Insurance Society](#) (CIS) makes up CFS – had its Partnership Report also ranked number one.

Coming ICA Events

23-26 November	13th ICA Americas Regional Assembly , Buenos Aires, Argentina
25-26 November	ICA/ILO Conference on ILO Recommendation 193, Ankara, Turkey
30 November	3rd Asia-Pacific Regional Research Conference , Chiangmai, Thailand
30 November	4th ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Women's Forum, Chiangmai, Thailand
2 December	3 rd ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Co-operative Forum, Chiangmai, Thailand
3-6 December	6 th ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly, Chiangmai, Thailand
7-11 December	ICA Board meeting and related events, Nairobi, Kenya

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