



ICA Digest

Issue 61

April/May 2008

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ICA delivers fresh vision

Restructuring on the agenda: Decide your future, urges ICA President



ICA President Ivano Barberini has urged co-operators to help their global peak body, ICA, to decide its future direction at the forthcoming Extraordinary General Assembly on 5-6 June, in Rome.

"We are holding this Assembly to consider the proposals of the board to restructure ICA to ensure it continues to be an effective organization serving members' needs," said Barberini.

"The General Assembly gives ICA members the opportunity to discuss proposed changes to the ICA rules and standing orders, including a new subscription formula, and to decide what further steps need to be taken to ensure that ICA is a viable and unified organisation," he said.

Co-operators should register for the Rome GA immediately to ensure a role in this exciting phase in the evolution of the ICA.

Full details and links on Page 5.



ica

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ROME 2008

ICA addresses climate change

Taking leadership, providing information and building capacity are the central features of a new strategy adopted by the ICA board to implement the 2007 General Assembly resolution, "Climate Change: Our Co-operative Commitment". (cont. page 3)



From the editor's desk



Garry Cronan
editor

Don't miss Garry's new weekly blog, commenting on the latest co-op news and issues reported on icanews.coop

Welcome to the sixty first edition of the *ICA Digest*.

This issue focuses on the restructuring of the ICA. As noted in several of the reports, this represents a watershed moment offering the real prospect of a renewed vision and structure for the organisation into the future.

We carry reports of the forthcoming Extraordinary General Assembly in Rome in June, which will consider these changes. Also featured is the ICA strategy on one of the world's most pressing issues - climate change.

Our regional news has a special report from ICA's Americas region, and an interview with Regional Director, Manuel Mariño.

A key role of the ICA is to give voice to the co-operative movement throughout the world. In this issue we report the representations of our European region, *Co-operatives Europe*, to the European Commission. The Commission is currently examining "so-called" claims about state aid and uncompetitive practices against co-operatives.

Defending, explaining and promoting the co-operative option to major regional or global organisations is part of ICA's core work and is an endless but necessary task. The recent meeting between the World Bank and ICA is an example of this ongoing activity. Success of the co-op option is being realised, as the recent World Bank re-

port on agriculture notes.

This month's co-operative business news includes further details about ICA's *EXPO 2008* in Lisbon, Portugal in October. In other business news we comment on the creation of the world's largest dairy co-operative in the Netherlands. We also report on the latest developments in the creation of a new global online database resource for co-operatives.

As always, we welcome your comments on, or contributions to, the *Digest*.

To contact Garry, e-mail: [Garry Cronan](mailto:Garry.Cronan)

ILO



Rural employment on ILO agenda

A new report, *'The Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction'* to be discussed at the annual meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in late May, demonstrates co-operatives are one of the major institutions present in rural communities. They have a real impact on employment and economic growth.

The report cites a number of successful co-operative initiatives in terms of agricultural production, capacity to provide rural finance, social services, utilities and rural tourism. However, the report makes only one policy recommendation on co-ops, that of "promoting a conducive business-enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, including co-operatives".

To ensure follow-up on co-operative development, ICA members are encouraged to lobby government, national trade unions and employers' organisations (the ILO stakeholders) to ensure that the contribution of co-operatives to rural development is recognised and policies are adopted to assist the growth of co-operative enterprise around the world.

Click here [for the full report](#).



ILO launches micro-insurance innovation

With the aim of providing sustainable insurance products for the poor, ILO is calling for applications for grants and technical assistance for organisations engaged in insurance, or willing to establish micro-insurance products for their clients and/or members. Co-operatives are encouraged to apply.

The Facility is funded by the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation. Information and grant guidelines and application forms, in English, French and Spanish, are available from the ILO

website: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/finance/

Shifting the balance to membership

ICA Director General, Iain Macdonald, explains how restructuring the ICA will improve the balance of power for members and regions, and attract *new members* to a more transparent and relevant organisation.

Elsewhere in this edition you will find more detail about the restructuring and subscription proposals. Suffice to say however, that we have reached something of a watershed in the history of ICA. Ever since I joined, nearly six years ago, and long before that, there have been endless and often fruitless discussions about how ICA can become more modern, professional and meaningful to our members.

At the root of the problem was a fundamentally unfair structure. The subscription formula was based on economic criteria (and similarly the voting system), quite contrary to Co-operative Principles.

The majority of our members, in fact, did not observe the criteria which says it all! By shifting the emphasis to membership, we are immediately using co-operative criteria and improving the balance of power and influence within ICA by spread-

ing it more evenly around the world. At the same time some of our bigger members will no longer have the burden of keeping ICA afloat.

At the end of our most recent, very intensive board meeting, it was unanimously agreed to recommend the new proposals to the Extraordinary General Assembly in Rome on 5-6 June. There was even some light applause!

I have no doubt that there will be teething problems with its implementation but enough safeguards have been injected to keep this to a minimum.



Iain Macdonald with the Managing Director of KRIBHCO, a fertilizer co-operative in India, and Mr Lee, Regional Director of ICA-AP during the DG's January 2008 visit to India.

Particular thanks must go to Alban D'Amours and his team from Desjardins, who have put so much work into this very complicated task.

It will be a challenge to put this new system into practice but I'm sure it will come to be recognised as fairer and simpler allowing us, not least, to attract new members to a more transparent and relevant organisation.

DG's Report



*Iain Macdonald
Director-General*

“... by shifting the emphasis to membership we are immediately using co-operative criteria and improving the balance of power ...”

Read the DG's previous monthly reports:
www.ica.coop/directorpage/

Photo: ancawonka
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/deed.en>

ICA strategy to address climate change

(Cont. from cover ...)

A key initiative of the strategy—the soon to be formed Leadership Council of interested ICA members and experts—will provide advice and guidance, set targets and propose concrete action to be taken by the organisation, members and co-operatives in general.

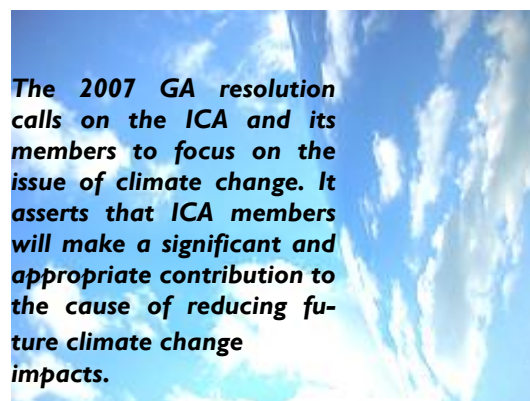
The council will assist ICA to identify partners to raise awareness on the issue and to increase capacity to ad-

dress the challenges of mitigation and adaptation to climate change. A commitment to sharing information on the issue, and also on good practice in co-operative enterprise, forms an integral part of the strategy.

The **2008 International Day of Co-operatives** (5 July) focuses on climate change. Members and ICA will have the opportunity to promote various initiatives.

The strategy will be available on the ICA website soon.

The 2007 GA resolution calls on the ICA and its members to focus on the issue of climate change. It asserts that ICA members will make a significant and appropriate contribution to the cause of reducing future climate change impacts.



IAS

ICA positioning on International Accounting Standards

ICA International Accounting Standards Working Group will develop a global position paper on accounting for co-operative capital and liabilities—fundamental to allow co-operative enterprise to operate effectively in financial markets.

The Working Group was formed by the ICA board to monitor, and propose actions to best address, new accounting standards that impact on co-operatives around the world.

Headed by Jean Claude Detilleux, ICA board member and President, Crédit Coopératif, France, ICA's

IAS Working Group has monitored discussions in the United States, Europe, New Zealand and other countries, where National Accounting Standard boards are implementing new standards and further convergence of US and International Accounting Standards.

Members have been active in educating regulators on the co-operative form and the unforeseen impacts of the proposed approaches to categorizing co-operative shares.

At their recent meeting in April, the IAS WG discussed the Radwan Report to the

European Parliament on international financial reporting standards and the governance of the IASB, as well as three consultation papers on liabilities and equities.

The IAS WG will respond to the three documents, which will be the basis of a global position paper. The WG will monitor the KPMG-financed study on co-operative shares, and provide input on the themes for future papers on co-operative accounting, developed by the Canadian Centre for Excellence in Accounting and Reporting for Cooperatives.

Youth

Youth build co-op futures in a carbon neutral world

A carbon-neutral conference and a book of case studies, demonstrate the many ways young people are building co-operative futures.

The 6th Annual Building Co-operative Futures Youth Conference in Vancouver, Canada, will go carbon neutral and 'live' around the world on 2-3 June.

The stories keep flowing for the second volume of the *Youth Reinventing Co-operatives* book.

Over 25 articles have arrived from Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, India, Nigeria, Spain, UK and the USA.

Submissions of suitable articles are still being accepted including:

- . Case studies of co-ops operated for, and by, young people;
- . Unique programs for young co-op members;
- . Essays on a co-ops-related theme or co-operative thought;
- . Resources that an organisation found useful for developing a co-op or learning about the Movement.

For more information and updates, visit: <http://bcics.uvic.ca/youthzone>, or contact Robin Puga, Coordinator, BC Institute for Co-op Studies. Project email: youthco@uvic.ca

Young co-operators at last year's Building Co-operative Futures Youth Conference.
(Photo: Robin Puga)



Young co-operators from Canada, USA, UK, Pakistan, Argentina and beyond will share best practice in co-ops and sustainability, and discuss how co-ops offer a solution to "ReLocalization", now and in the future.

Contact Sol Kinnis at solbcics@uvic.ca or visit www.bcics.org/content/bcf2008



Ghana youth experience working with co-operatives.
(Photo: Dan Meades)

2008 ICA General Assembly, 5-6 June, Rome

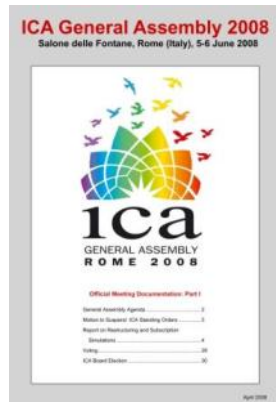
The Extraordinary General Assembly of ICA will be held in Rome on 5-6 June. It is jointly hosted by ICA's three Italian members; Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue (Legacoop), Confederazione delle Cooperative Italiane (CONFCOOPERATIVE), and Associazione Generale Cooperative Italiane (AGCI).

The Assembly is being held primarily to deal with the issues of restructuring and subscription formula on which members have been consulted over the last few months, as well as the ensuing changes to ICA rules, policies, procedures and standing orders.

ICA has sent the first set of official documentation to GA delegates and ICA members, including: Provisional agenda; motion for the suspension of standing orders; restructuring report and subscription simulations; voting information; and ICA board election information.

A vacancy on the board has been created by the retirement of Mr. Dae-Kung Chung of the National Agriculture Co-operative Federation (NACF) of Korea).

Materials are available on the ICA website www.ica.coop/calendar/ga2008/index.html. Updates and additional documents will be posted here.



It is worth noting the ICA board, at its meeting in early April, unanimously approved the recommendations of the ICA Restructuring Working Group (RWG) and asked that they be transmitted to the membership for final consideration by the Extraordinary General Assembly in Rome.

The proposals result from work undertaken since 2006 (when the Working Group was formed) culminating with the recent consultation of ICA membership. They reinforce the idea of a united ICA, clarifying and

strengthening ICA activities at the global, regional and sectoral level, based on a new vision and mission, and the adoption of a four-year Strategic Plan.

Given the timing of the board meeting and the need to incorporate their decisions in the original report, fifteen ICA members requested a suspension of standing orders allowing for later delivery of the official documentation for the Assembly, including the proposed amendments to the ICA rules, policies, procedures and standing orders (necessary if the recommendations on restructuring are adopted). The amendments will be circulated in a subsequent mailing to members.

2008 GA



Ensure your say—Book now!

Maria Elena Chávez Hertig ICA Deputy Director-General said potential delegates should register for the GA as soon as possible: "It is important that participants urgently make their hotel bookings as June is high season for tourism in Rome," she said.

Please note, hotel reservations can only be confirmed upon receipt of full payment.

Download meeting registration and hotel information from the ICA website. www.ica.coop/calendar/ga2008/index.html



Palazzo Taverna

The Assembly will be held at [Salone delle Fontane](#) located at via Ciro il Grande 10, in the EUR area of Rome. A shuttle service will provide transport to the venue from hotels and meeting points. A Gala Dinner will be held at Palazzo Taverna, the ancient home of the Borgia and the Orsini families. Palazzo Taverna was built in the 13th century and referred to by Dante in his literary masterpiece, "The Divine Comedy".

EXPO 2008 ICA Expo 2008 update—hosted buyer program

The organising committee for EXPO 2008 presented its guidelines for promotion on 17 March at ICA head office, Geneva. Strategies include marketing, new website design and CRM tools, as well as guidelines for the Business Forum and several workshops.

ICA's commitment to this global co-operative trade event demonstrates the strength of its belief in the economic potential of co-ops world-wide.

ICA Expo organisers in Geneva with ICA staff



“EXPO 2008 will have a business focus, providing participating countries with the opportunity to promote their successes, and to increase their international exports, sales volume and relationships through strategic alliances and reciprocal advertising,” said Luiz Branco, chair of EXPO 2008.

ICA has committed to expanding the commercial opportunities for Expo exhibitors through its relationship-building programs. ICA encourages the participation of consumer co-ops through the Hosted Buyers Program, which aims to connect purchasing exhibitors from around the globe.

Importantly, the program will allow exhibitors to initiate business meetings with potential buyers from the

moment they register for EXPO 2008.

“We estimate the Fair will host some 1620 meetings with the world's biggest buyers,” said Mr Branco.

For more information, visit the [EXPO website: www.icaexpo.coop](http://www.icaexpo.coop)

World Bank Co-ops vital to pro-poor agricultural development



Photo courtesy of Jeff Heller, NCBA

ICA's board met with World Bank officials in Washington DC to discuss the 2008 World Development Report: "Agriculture for Development", and to identify ways of implementing recommendations on the role of co-ops in fostering agricultural development around the world.

A key finding of the WB report comes from research showing that growth in the agricultural sector is 2-4 times more effective than growth in other sectors, making agriculture a key sector for addressing poverty. The role of producer organisations is significant. The report reflects the rapid growth of co-ops since the early 80s.

The World Bank is recognising institutions such as co-ops, in that they lower market transaction costs and respond to changing needs dictated by the market. Co-ops help establish market power. They have the key ingredients for economic

advancement; common purpose and trust. Thus they are vital to encouraging 'pro-poor' agricultural development.

At the meeting, ICA sought information on how to engage the WB in co-operative development. Around 10% of the WB's project portfolio already involves support for co-operatives. This latest report will raise the visibility of co-operatives among member countries, who are likely to be more 'approachable' in the future.

The WB invited further collaboration with ICA to ensure the implementation of the report.

Investing in women for co-operative success

Gender inequality is bad economics, evidence increasingly shows.

Investing in gender equality is vital to improve economic, social and political conditions and it has a 'multiplier' effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth, according to the

United Nations.

The theme of **International Women's Day 2008** (8 March) focused on the need to invest in gender equality.

Women's empowerment is not only socially responsible but also a necessity for co-operative organisations that

wish to increase their creative and innovative capacity to compete in the global marketplace.

The joint statement of ICA and its Gender Equality Committee can be accessed at: www.ica.coop/gender/index.html

Gender



Regional committee boosts women

Ms Savitri Singh, advisor for the Gender Program of ICA Regional Women's Committee for Asia and the Pacific, said the *Exposure and Networking Program for the Empowerment of Women* provides a meeting ground for Asian women co-operators to share information, success stories and best practice and, most importantly, to help women establish a network for mutual co-operation and business interests across the Asia-Pacific region.

The program is organised by ICA-AP each year in one of the 23 member countries.

Women work co-operatively at Lizzat Papad factory in Pune, India



The 2008 Regional Women's Forum will be held on 2 December in Hanoi, Vietnam.

For information e-mail: savitrisingh@icaroap.coop

Access the ICA-AP Regional Women's Committee newsletter at:

www.icaroap.coop/Publications/periodicals.php?

Turkish conference provides poverty solutions

Deniz Feneri Poverty Research Centre (DEYAM) held the *International Symposium on Poverty* in Istanbul, 1-3 February, with the aim of producing solutions for poverty within the international context.

115 delegates from 20 countries presented 94 papers, including "Economic Policies and Poverty"; "Rural and Urban Poverty" and "Strategies for Struggling with Poverty". A mix of academics and civil society organisations working in this area, blended emergency and practical examples with

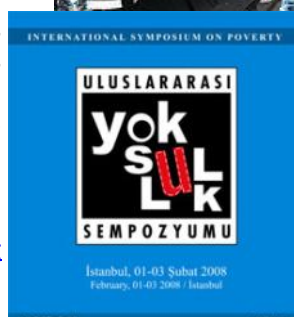
theoretical solutions.

At the local and global level, poverty has reached such a level that solving the problem will require more than Governmental input.

For this reason, DEYAM views the topic as a social issue that requires involvement from civil society.

Conference proceedings will be published.

For more information visit: www.deyam.org and www.yoksulluk.org (in Turkish).



Conferences

Regional News ICA Americas: Special report from the regional office



Manuel Mariño at ICA Americas head office

Manuel Mariño, Regional Director of ICA Americas, reports on a renewed agenda for consolidation, promotion and support of co-operative activity in the Latin American region.

“As an organization, we have aimed to develop strategic alliances that strengthen our services and achieve greater coverage in the region.”

Manuel Mariño

2008 is an exciting juncture for ICA Americas. This year, we intend to position the regional office as the main point of reference for the Co-operative Movement in the Americas, with more prestige and institutional influence in co-operative development across the region.

As an organisation we have aimed to develop strategic alliances that strengthen our services and achieve greater coverage.

It is our objective that ICA Americas becomes the primary source to consult, for information and communication on the Co-operative Movement in the Americas, and to increase our profile with members, organisations, governments and institutions.

We will continue promoting, encouraging and supporting the processes and methods for tackling the cross-cutting issues such as

gender equity and youth involvement in co-operatives, both at the policy level and in daily co-operative activity.

Regarding co-operative legislation, we expect to become the main voice promoting the adoption of the *Cooperative Law Framework* for the Latin American countries, elaborated by ICA Americas, looking forward to the homogenization of criteria, but taking into account the economic and social particularities of each country.

Within the context of the co-operative legislation and governmental policies, we will strengthen the network of Institutes for Promotion, Development, Monitoring and Credit of the Cooperatives in Latin America, in order to continue sharing different models of supervision and monitoring of co-operatives, and to develop and promote policies driven by ICA Americas.

Our program of regional conferences, workshops and seminars will strengthen co-operative integration and management by sharing information, best practice and successful examples of co-operative action.

ICA Americas, recognising the importance of training and education in co-operative development and as organisations of social inclusion, has developed a seminar program on topics ranging from governance and lobbying, youth, gender equity and social balance to technological education and management of co-operatives and organisations in the social economy sector.

Moreover, based on the principle of strengthening the co-operative identity, ICA Americas became, in September 2007, the exclusive representative for the Latin American and Caribbean regions, of the **Dot-coop** domain. In addition to administering the sale of the domain, ICA Americas consults on using the domain and website design.

We will continue to promote ACI digital services, aimed at helping co-ops to optimise their presence on the Internet and to take advantage of the potential that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer.



IDENTIDAD COOPERATIVA

Registre su dominio



y resalte su identidad desde sus direcciones en internet

ICA Americas evaluates its virtual mass media

acidigital



ICA Americas is evaluating its web page www.aciamericas.coop/ to improve the information services that it offers the region and the world-wide co-operative movement.

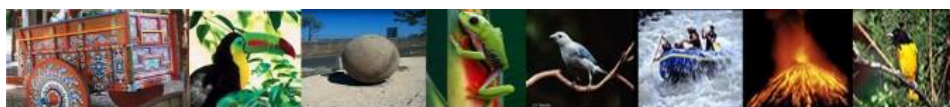
The survey will establish frequency of visits, key interest areas for online users,

quality and availability of information, level of user satisfaction, as well as canvassing suggestions on how to improve the site.

Members can assist by completing the short and friendly survey that can be accessed at: www.aciamericas.coop/encuestas/index.php?sid=93987&newtest=Y

**ICA Americas
Special
Report**

16th annual ICA Americas regional conference

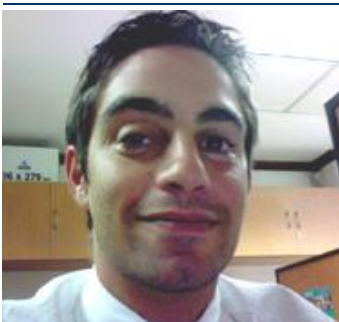


The 16th ICA Americas Regional Conference will be held from 22-25 July in San José, Costa Rica. The theme this year is *Co-operative Social Responsibility and Democratic Life*.

More than 700 delegates are expected to attend.

The conference website is www.aciamericas.coop/CR2008/

(Spanish only)



Meet the translator—Daniel Gracián

Daniel Gracián is our Spanish translator—one of an able team around the world who translate the ICA Digest. Daniel explains how he became involved in the Co-operative Movement.

Daniel: "I was born in the University town of Uppsala in Sweden but I finally settled

in, what to me, was the small, exotic country of Costa Rica. I studied English language from high school level. At the University of Costa Rica, I studied Industrial Engineering. At this time, home and university influences fostered my interest in the Co-operative Movement, which led to my current job.

I work in the finance department of a local credit and savings co-operative called Coopemex R.L. With more than 60,000 members, it is one of the three largest finance co-ops in the country. Through my work in a co-operative that contrib-

utes to the wellbeing of thousands of people, and the great opportunity to collaborate with the ICA as a translator, I have submerged myself in the Co-operative Movement. I remain convinced that in current times, the co-operative approach is one of the best solutions for the social and economic development of countries worldwide. Contact Daniel: dagracian@coopemex.fi.cr

New ICA-Americas office numbers

The new ICA-Americas Office numbers are:
Tel: (506) 2296-098; Fax: (506) 2231-5842
Contact:
info@aciamericas.coop
www.aciamericas.coop

Regional News Europe



Commission's decision may hurt 250,000 co-ops

The European Commission is currently examining 'so-called' claims about state aids and uncompetitive practices against co-operatives. Regrettably, sections of the Commission continue to display the inclination to accept one business form only. The logic of the co-operative system will not be put aside so easily.

Any common approach adopted by the Commission must ensure that competition is *not* reduced through limiting the diversity of entrepreneurial objectives and forms. Cooperatives Europe believes that efforts to undermine the value of the co-operative enterprise busi-

ness model, are short sighted and originate from the misunderstanding of the 'co-operative difference'.

The current legal cases from Spain, Italy and France which are before the European Commission are actions initiated by competing private businesses attempting to challenge the national co-operative laws.

Cooperatives Europe Director, Rainer Schluter, said, "Now more than ever, the future of co-operatives in Europe will depend on the possibility of developing, within the Union, a specific legal framework for co-operatives; a point underlined to Commissioner

Neelie Kroes, during our meeting with her in September 2007."

For more on this review, please click on: www.coopseurope.coop/spip.php?article561.

More Europe news? Visit

www.coopseurope.coop
Or use the [RSS feed:](http://feeds.feedburner.com/CooperativesinEurope)
<http://feeds.feedburner.com/CooperativesinEurope>

Euro Coop signs with CompenCO2 to offset carbon



In line with the commitments taken by its members in the fight against climate change, Euro Coop's Secretariat has decided to co-operate with the joint Belgian NGO initiative, CompenCO2, to offset the carbon emissions induced by the travel of its staff.

Because the reduction of CO2 emissions remains the ultimate objective, Euro Coop considers 'cap and trade' programs as 'last-step' initiatives.

This engagement adds to the valuable and daily work carried out by consumer co-operatives across Europe which have always worked towards a truly sustainable economy and society.

Euro Coop calls on other EU and international organisations to join and strengthen their efforts to curb climate change effects.

Climate change is beyond any doubt one of the greatest challenges for the 21st Century, and a co-operative response is urgently needed at EU and global level.

For further information please see Euro Coop's dedicated webpage on climate change: www.eurocoop.org/change/en/default.asp

Or contact:
Rodrigo Gouveia, Secretary General, Euro Coop.
rgouveia@eurocoop.coop

Rosita Zilli, Policy Officer, Euro Coop
rzilli@eurocoop.coop



Global 300 dairy co-ops create world first

Global 300

On Thursday 10 April the boards of **Friesland Foods** and **Campina**, announced their merger agreement. The two Netherlands dairy co-operatives, ranking no. 45 and 53 in the latest *Global 300* list, had a combined 2007 turnover of EUR 9,107m (USD13,414m), making the new company **number one** in the [world ranking of dairy co-ops](#), and the world's third biggest agrifood co-operative after CHS. FrieslandCampina has 17,000 members in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium and employs 22,000.

The co-op is financed on permanent, interest bearing member bonds that accumulate annually from net results and are made internally tradable upon the member's retirement. It will calculate the milk price as an average of prices in neighboring countries, with a performance based bonus at year end. Any gathering of 100 members will have the right to appeal to the board. Members will vote next on 7 May. For information contact:

o.f.vbeekum@nyenrode.nl

New Zealand dairy co-operative, **Fonterra**, is introducing an online trading platform called globalDairyTrade for its internationally traded commodities—a world first for the global dairy industry. In the first year, around NZ\$1 billion of milk powder is expected to be traded, with volumes growing over time. Once globalDairyTrade is established, Fonterra expects to open it up to its supply partners, and potentially its competitors. This is likely to lead to enhanced price transparency and trading through electronic means in the global dairy market. With that, an international dairy futures or derivatives market, as exists with other commodities such as oil, sugar and coal, may develop.

More:

www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU0804/S00292.htm

Demutualisation Watch

Fonterra is one of six New Zealand co-ops in the *Global 300* list. Fonterra announced on 15 February, that a proposed member vote on a restructuring of the co-

operative will now *not* take place in May 2008 as originally envisaged. [Visit ICA's demutualisation pages](#) for what the Fonterra Chairman had to say and the reaction of the Fonterra Shareholders Council.



“There is something about the dairy industry and co-operatives that has always seemed to go together. If you look at co-operatives in ICA's *Global 300* you notice that agricultural co-ops appear in almost every country represented in the list, with dairy co-ops being dominant within this grouping. However, things are changing in this highly competitive global industry. In some ways this industry is a barometer for where things are going for co-operatives generally.”

From Editor's Blog: More see [Garry Cronan's latest comments on co-operative news \(no.3\)](#)

Global online co-operative database, a step closer

One of the priorities of the *Global 300* program this year is the creation of the first ever global online database of co-operative business enterprises.

“We have been collecting a much wider range of data on the *Global 300* and *Developing 300* co-operatives than we have so far been able to publish,” said *Global 300* Director, Garry Cronan.

“We are keen to get this data into an online platform so it can be shared more widely”.

A number of ‘founding members’ for the new *Global Online Co-operative Database* are being sought. Already three major co-operative organisations have agreed to join.

Tenders for the development of this ‘world class’ global database of financial and CSR data will be called shortly. It is hoped to have the new service up and running by the end of the year.

A range of benefits is available to ‘founding members’ for a one-off contribution. If you are interested, please contact [Garry Cronan](#): cronan@ica.coop

Feature interview

Carolyn Hoover

Carolyn Hoover was confirmed as Chief Executive Officer of dotCooperation LLC at the dotCoop Board of Managers meeting on 31 March, in Washington DC. She has been part of dotCoop since 2001 and has participated in three ICA General Assemblies—in Korea, Colombia and Singapore. **.Coop** is the Internet domain for co-ops and Carolyn manages the world-wide verification process as well as the relationships with the registrars that provide services to **.coop** supporters. Carolyn was responsible for the successful renewal of the **.coop** contract with ICANN in 2007. Here, she discusses how ‘information’ is the backbone to a strong and relevant global Co-operative Movement.



Digest: How did you become involved in the Co-operative Movement, and what does your current work involve?

CH: My first experience with co-ops was growing up on a dairy farm in Virginia, USA. We were members of an electric co-op and a dairy co-op. I remember that the ‘other’ electric company wouldn’t connect us to their line across the road, but then the co-op brought a line across several miles so that we could have power. It really made clear to me the difference co-ops can make—on a very personal level.

I have a background in computer science and my early

programming career was working with associations. So, when I saw the opportunity provided by the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) in 2001, when **.coop** was just being set up, I was very interested in getting involved in a ‘new’ technology area—as well as going back to my roots in more ways than one. Besides that, I had spent the previous five or so years working in customer support, so I was glad to continue using that work experience to supporting those using the **.coop** domain.

It has been exciting to work with people from NCBA and our technical partners in the UK (initially Poptel and now the Midcounties Co-operative Society Ltd.). The policy, legal and technical questions were all tackled and resolved, one-by-one. We were the first of the new sponsored TLDs (top-level-domains) approved in November 2000. We launched **.coop** domain in 2002.

Currently I handle the verification process as well as the liaison issues with ICANN (the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers which supports the technical environment of the Internet) and our registrars. Midcounties provides the technical environment that

supports the **.coop** domain as our registry operator.

Through **.coop** I have the great opportunity to work with co-ops all over the world—whether answering questions on the phone from a new co-op in the UK or the US, or verifying the eligibility of a **.coop** registrant in South Africa or Malta—it’s challenging and inspiring to hear their stories and how they want to help their members and their community. I also work with a diverse Board of Managers, with members from Mexico, France, UK, the US and elsewhere, who all share their insight and expertise to ensure that **.coop** serves the worldwide co-operative community.

Digest: How can a dedicated Internet domain benefit the co-operative sector?

CH: **.Coop** was embraced by co-operatives around the world at the time when ICANN was deciding which of the hundreds of domain applications would be accepted in 2000. It was clear to ICANN that ‘co-operatives’ was a recognisable group that was global, and that the TLDs that existed at the time (.com, .org etc) did not clearly identify the sector. Co-operatives had a specific global body—the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) -

“It really made clear to me the difference co-ops can make—on a very personal level.”

that represented their interests and was also the 'keeper' of the seven Co-operative Principles, which provides a standard definition for 'co-operatives' independent of any specific entity. Finally, research had shown that when people knew what a co-operative was and how it differed from other businesses, they identified with the principles and preferred to do business with a co-operative.

Having a **.coop** domain provides co-ops with a unique identity on the Internet that sets them apart from other types of businesses or organisations. The **.coop** domain allows co-operatives to use their 'co-operative' identity to build membership and customer base and to let people know immediately that the business, or organisation, using this domain is guided by a specific set of principles no matter where they are located in the world.

On a practical note, because the **.coop** domain is relatively new and is restricted to co-operative organisations, there are many more domain names available—previously snapped up by 'cyber-squatters' long ago in other domains such as **.com** or **.org**. Many co-ops have been able to adopt more 'natural' names for their businesses on the Internet, and to avoid paying thousands of dollars for a specific domain name, now available for the normal registration fee in the **.coop** domain.

Digest: What are some of the challenges for the Co-operative Movement globally - how can it renew and go forward?

CH: A primary challenge for co-operatives, and the movement in general, is how to make people more aware of the co-operative business model and the advantages it

offers. This reinforces the value of the **.coop** domain. The co-op form works for successful multi-national businesses as well as for very small worker and producer groups. It works for businesses in industrialised countries as well as rural and agrarian societies. To expand the awareness of co-operatives we need to ensure that people are aware of co-ops at every level - from the individual to the United Nations. Co-ops need to make sure that they stay on top of technological developments that support this awareness. It comes full circle to **.coop**, in my mind. **.Coop** can help support this strengthening by bringing attention to co-operatives on the Internet. The Internet is the 'information frontier' and we need to use as many tools as we can assemble to have our voices heard and to make people aware of this 'better business model'.

Digest: How can the ICA stay relevant and grow stronger? Do you have any thoughts on women in the Co-op Movement. Is there an issue of gender equity?

CH: The ICA needs to focus on global issues of interest to co-operatives and ensure that the voice of co-ops is heard at the international level—with the United Nations, the World Bank and other similar organisations. We need to ensure that the message of the *Global 300* and the various *National 100* lists is promoted by ICA and by the regional groups to strengthen understanding of the value and the opportunities that co-ops

present. Attending the ICA General Assemblies allows one to really understand the potential that co-operatives have to affect issues on a global scale. We need to make the General Assemblies a true 'call to action' for co-ops. Rather than a culmination of the last two years, the GAs should push the agenda for the next two years and give ICA members the tools to make things happen in their local regions, communities and sectors. At every GA there is movement in that direction and we can only hope for more in that regard.

At the last GA in Singapore, I attended the Gender Equity meeting and heard women leaders from around the world discuss the challenges that many of them face. It is not as much of an issue within my industry sector and the organisation that I deal with, but certainly it remains a challenge for women in many areas. The more opportunities that co-ops provide women, the better off they (and their daughters and sons) will be. And this will only work to expand co-ops.

But the key to all of this growth is information. The Internet is information. Tie the two together with **.coop** for co-operatives, and it all comes together.



To contact Carolyn Hoover e-mail: choover@dotcoop.coop

Feature interview (cont.)

“... the key to all of this growth is information...”

Co-op people

New ICA agricultural advisor



Hanho Choi has taken over from Dr. Jin-kook KIM and is working at the ICA head office in Geneva, as an agricultural advisor and sectoral information manager. He is also the Secretary of the ICA Research Committee.

Over the last 10 years Hanho Choi worked for the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (NACF) in Seoul, Korea. He was an economic researcher in the NACF research institute and a senior manager in the NACF international cooperative office.

His endeavours have been mainly related to agriculture, finance and cooperative businesses, as well as organising and coordinating international activities among NGOs and cooperatives. To contact Hanho Choi e-mail: choi@ica.coop

ICA board nominates new Dotcoop manager

Caroline Naett & Jean-Claude Detilleux at the 2007 ICA GA in Singapore



Caroline Naett, Secretary General of the Groupement National de la Coopération of France, is the new ICA appointee to the dotCooperation LLC (DCLLC) board. Caroline was nominated by the ICA

board and confirmed by DCLLC, to replace Jean-Claude Detilleux as the ICA nominated board member on dotCoop. Mr. Detilleux served two successive terms and was not eligible for renewal.

Condolences—Monsieur René Zaegel

It is with great sadness that we bring to the attention of ICA members, the death of Monsieur René Zaegel, former CEO of COOP ALSACE, Member of CES Paris, and the SGCC, who died on 25 March 2008, aged 83, after a long and courageous battle with illness.

Member News

New president for Czech co-operative association



Mr Jan Wiesner was elected President of the board of the Coopera-

tive Association of the Czech Republic at the General Assembly on 26 March, in Prague.

Mr Wiesner is currently President of the Union of Czech and Moravian Production Co-operatives. Mr Zdenek Juracka, President

of the Union of Czech and Moravian Consumer Co-operatives, and Mr Vit Vanicek, President of the Union of Czech and Moravian Housing Co-operatives were elected Vice Presidents of the board.

<http://www.dacr.cz/>

New member from Russia & UAE



The new ICA Membership statistics are 225 member organisations i.e. 217 Members and 8 Associate Members from 88 countries.

ICA has two new members. **The Guild of National Co-operative Societies of Russia (GNCSR)** remitted its first payment on 5 March.

GNCSR is composed of consumer mortgage cooperative societies and a few housing and housing construction co-ops. GNCSR

constructs affordable housing and provides mortgages to the members.

GNCSR has 24,800 members. They have built and purchased 14,450 apartments worth nearly 10 billion roubles (CHF510 m).

On 18 April 2008, **Sharjah Co-operative Society**

(SCS) of the United Arab Emirates became ICA's 225th member. Sharjah Co-operative Society is a consumer co-operative with 209 stores. They have a number of commercial rentals and provide loans. They were created in 1977. The society has 10,442 members and 820 employees.

Institutions of social progress - Charles Gide

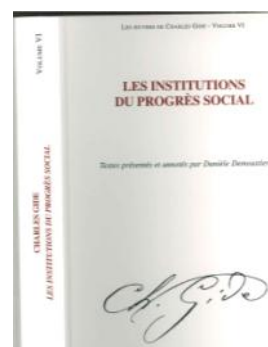


In 1902, amongst a pile of official documents for the 1900 World Fair, a report appeared on social economy

written by Charles Gide (1847–1932), a leading French economist and historian of economic thought. Revised and republished a number of times, it reappeared in 1920 under the title "Institutions of social progress". The facsimile of the 1920 edition provides a fascinating overview of institutions established in the 19th century to treat the

social questions thrown up by the new industrial society. It examines what is social economy, what is its capacity, how its action is articulated within the public and capitalist sectors. The text is presented and annotated by Daniele Demoustier, Lecturer in Economy at the Institute of Political Studies in Grenoble, France.

Communications



Handbook for microinsurance performance

The CGAP Sub-group on Performance Indicators, ADA and BRS have finalised the *Handbook for Performance Indicators in Microinsurance* which is now available in English and will soon be in French and Spanish.

The key principles and indicators that were established during workshops in 2006

and 2007 are applicable to all microinsurance providers, although there may be some differences in performance and interpretation. With the involvement of a diverse group of microinsurers, as well as the CGAP Working Group on Microinsurance, we are assured that a new standard is set for the entire

microinsurance industry.

To access the handbook, click here:

www.microinsurancecentre.org/UI/DocAbstractDetails.aspx?DocID=632

For more information visit:

www.icmif.org

Housing practitioners handbook

The *Housing Practitioners Handbook to Housing Sector Development in Transition Countries*, documents the ideas, methodologies and past successes of more than 60 organisations represented at the *Towards Social Stability and Economic Development* conference. As a clearing house for housing sector development information, the handbook develops the event's multidisciplinary dialogue about concrete strategies for invigorating housing markets and improving the standard of living throughout South-Eastern Europe (SEE). Click here for a copy of the handbook: www.ica.coop/al-housing/articles/136/1/Housing-Practitioners-Handbook-to-Housing-Sector-Development-in-Transition-Countries/Page1.html



What's new from ica.coop?

For a video about a community egg co-operative formed by a group of volunteers, click here: www.icanews.coop/en/node/75511

Why are young people less interested in co-operatives? Are co-operatives central to achieving fair trade? To have your say on ica.coop poll, click here: www.ica.coop/

Read two new publications on co-operatives in Europe - *The Role of Co-operatives in the Social Dialogue in Europe* and *Co-operative Banks - Catalysts for economic and social cohesion in Europe*.

www.ica.coop/al-ica/articles/

Don't miss ICA Director of Communications and Intelligence, Garry Cronan's weekly summary of the most interesting news reports about co-operatives at: icanews.coop.

Three new ICA Contracts

ICA has awarded three communications contracts:

ICA Digest to Sommerson Communications, co-operative media specialists based in Australia.
E: ica.digest@gmail.com
Skype: ica.digest

www.ica.coop to David Griffiths, editor of Australia's co-operative news portal australia.coop.
E: cfv@australia.coop
Web: www.australia.coop

icanews.coop to MC3, a UK-based worker co-operative.
E: contact@mc3.coop
Web: <http://mc3.coop>

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ALLIANCE

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More events:
[Calendar of ICA events
& related co-operative
activity:](#)

Copies of the ICA
Digest are archived
on the ICA's web-
site www.ica.coop

2008 Calendar of ICA events and related co-operative activities

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| 28-29 April 08 | Cooperatives Europe General Assembly - Brussels: www.coopseurope.coop/ |
| 6-7 May 2008 | ICMIF 2008 Communications network, <i>Communicating the Cooperative & Mutual Difference</i> , Quebec City, Canada: www.icmif.org/ |
| 14-16 May 2008 | EMES European Research Network, 3rd Fair Trade International Symposium, Montpellier, France. Call for Papers: www.ftis2008.org/cice2008_en/appel_a_communication |
| 14-16 May, 2008 | Global Microfinance Investment Congress, PlaNet Finance, New York City: www.microfinancecongress.com |
| 22-23 May 2008 | ICMIF 2008 Corporate Governance network seminar, www.icmif.org/events/schedule.asp |
| 30-31 May 2008 | ICA Americas Regional Council meeting, Canada: member@aciamericas.coop |
| 4 June 2008 | ICA Audit & Control Committee and ICA Board meeting, Rome, Italy: ica@ica.coop |
| 5-6 June 2008 | Extra-ordinary ICA General Assembly, Rome Italy: www.ica.coop/calendar/ga2008/index.html |
| 27-29 June 2008 | UK Co-operative Congress, Blackpool, UK: www.cooperatives-uk.coop/Events/congress2008 |
| 3-8 July 2008 | EMES (with Cinefogo and the Pasquale Paoli University of Corsica), "Social enterprises, third sector, social economy, solidarity-based economy: Empirical realities and theoretical debates", International Summer School, Corte (Corsica): www.emes.net/index.php?id=419 |
| 5 July 2008 | International Day of Co-operatives |
| 9-12 July 2008 | <i>Third Sector and Sustainable Social Change: New Frontiers for Research</i> , 8th ISTR International Conference & 2nd EMES-ISTRY European Conference, Barcelona: www.istr.org/ |
| 13-6 July | WOCCU 2008 World Credit Union Conference, Hong Kong: www.woccu.org/events/wcuc |
| 22-25 July 2008 | 16th ICA Americas Regional Conference, San José, Costa Rica: member@aciamericas.coop |
| 22-24 Sept 2008 | CIRIEC Social Economy Conference, "Innovation & management. Responses of public, social & cooperative economy enterprises to major challenges", Seville Spain: www.congresociriec.es/ |
| 16-18 Oct 2008 | ICA Research Conference, "The Role of Co-operatives in Sustaining Development and Fostering Social Responsibility", Riva del Garda (Trento Italy): www.ica.coop/icaccr/2008icaresearchconference.pdf |
| 22-23 Oct 2008 | ICA Board Meeting, Lisbon, Portugal: ica@ica.coop |
| 23-25 Oct 2008 | ICA EXPO 2008, Lisbon, Portugal: luizbranco@icaexpo.coop |
| 5-7 Nov 2008 | Microinsurance Conference 2008, Cartagena, Colombia: www.microinsuranceconference2008.org |
| 8-12 Dec 2008 | ILO Training Centre course: <i>Co-operative Policy and Legislation</i> , Turin, Italy: sme@itcilo.org |