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## Issue 10 - November 2000



The first year in the new century is coming to an end.

The coming year will be full of challenges for ICA and the co-operatives worldwide. ICA's efforts will be focused on promoting an internationally recognised co-operative identity, on representing co-operatives internationally, on supporting co-operative development in the Third World and in countries in transition and on doing co-operative networking.

Important thematic issues in all that ICA does will continue to be; gender equity, youth and environment.

Meanwhile, in this last E-News of the year ( the next issue will be on the Web in February 2001) I take the opportunity to thank all ICA Web-page readers for this year and, on behalf of the International Co-operative Alliance, extend Good Wishes to all in the coming year 2001.

[Karl-Johan Fogelström](#)

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**Korea 2001 - NACF in Korea well prepared!  
Is Kofi Annan coming this time ?**

While many in the ICA world have been working on regional assemblies in Bratislava, Cotonou and Singapore and even more of us on the Rio Cooperativo starting on December 3, preparations for next year's ICA General Assembly (GA) have already escalated.

For more than a year, the International Corporations Office of the National Agricultural Co-operative Federation (NACF), under its dynamic boss, Shil-Kwan Lee, has been working on the GA to be held in Seoul October 12-17 next year. Now there are eight people in Korea working on the preparations. From the beginning of 2001, there will be 15!

Meanwhile, the ICA preparations for the programme have started in Geneva. Karl-Johan Fogelström, director-general, has established a Seoul GA Programme Task Force looking in to the selected keynote speakers. Many names are in the air UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has already been approached in a written invitation.

More details can already be obtained from the ICA web site at [www.coop.org](http://www.coop.org) Please click on "General Assembly" in the upcoming events section.

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## Steps to improve networking in Europe

The European Development Task Force of the ICA is discussing a project on how to improve communication and networking among ICA members in Europe.

The task force is an advisory group, which was set up two years ago with the aim of discussing relevant development issues and suggesting activities and measures to be taken in order to implement the Development Strategy for Europe.

At its meeting in Geneva on November 13 the Development Task Force followed up on the recommendations of its earlier brainstorming session held at the UK Co-operative College.

The task force has identified some key areas where supportive measures should be taken to assist member organisations, which include:

- Education and training
- Strategic management development
- Operational management
- Building networks for transferring expertise and business collaboration

The networking project is conceived to provide a platform for the development of dialogue - a new open method of co-ordination, based on spreading best practice and benchmarking progress against the best in the world - between co-operative enterprises in the member states, the candidate countries of the European Union and all the other countries which have not yet entered into negotiations with the EU.

Before finalizing and launching the project it will be discussed widely with the ICA members so that they approve it and are ready to contribute to its implementation.

A key element of all the programmes is the emphasising of the co-operative advantage and building on the distinct strengths of co-operatives to establish sustainable successful businesses

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## ICA HRD committee to look into approaches for a co-operative virtual learning centre

The ICA Global HRD committee, meeting in Geneva 16-17 November, undertook to explore steps towards creating a co-operative virtual learning centre.

The meeting was held to:

- discuss different options for new approaches to management and leadership development in co-operatives including the use of information technology; and
- to find out what action has to be undertaken together in order to forward co-operative learning for an effective co-operative future.

Specialists of institutions promoting co-operative HRD from Finland, Ireland, Israel, Namibia, Russia, Tanzania, and the UK attended the meeting. Co-operative institutions from other countries expressed their interest in writing, e.g., from Australia, Germany, New Zealand and the United States.

Participants in the meeting committed themselves to supporting the work of the Global HRD Committee through advice and action in launching international virtual co-operative learning for co-operative management and leadership. The first stage would consist in developing and testing a portal website to access existing information and programmes and in exploring improved access to information technologies in less advanced countries. Language-specific subgroups were considered necessary. Information on the details of the envisaged possibilities will be disseminated in due course through as many channels as possible to attract the participation of additional institutions and persons. The developments depend on the existing demand and the interest to invest in co-operative human resource development.

### Background and follow-up

In April 1998, the ICA Board initiated a wide-ranging organizational review designed to analyse the major issues facing co-operatives at the outset of the next century and the most important new tasks for the ICA. Following extensive regional and sectoral consultation, a report was prepared entitled "Global Co-operation in a New Century." This report concluded that one of the five key areas in which the ICA could do more for its members, was to secure the services of high-quality managers, motivated to serve co-operative members. A shortage of the right kind of human resources was highlighted, especially at the highest level of management. The report provided the background for the ICA Board's adoption of a new vision and strategy document "ICA 2005," which was approved by the ICA General Assembly 1999 in Québec. The concept of international management and leadership development was strongly supported by the ICA Board.

Against this background, the ICA has asked its Global HRD Committee to make proposals on how ICA can best implement this recommendation. The Committee, therefore, decided to carry out a survey on the feasibility of new approaches to management and leadership in co-operatives. The HRD

Committee put this idea before a number of ICA bodies. Each of them has expressed its support and interest. After a period of discussion, testing and pilot activities in international virtual co-operative learning, the Global HRD Committee has undertaken to present to the next ICA General Assembly meeting in Seoul, Korea, in October 2001 a detailed proposal on the possibility of creating a global virtual co-operative learning centre.

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**Success! DOT COOP to be available by mid-2001**

Members of ICA and the National Co-operative Business Association (NCBA) will be able to register domains under .coop with Poptel, a co-operative Internet service provider in the UK, by mid-2001.

Though .coop was selected as a top level domain (TLD), alongside .com and .org, on November 16, contract agreements must still be negotiated before domains can be registered.

DOT COOP was one of the seven new Internet domain names approved by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). Selected from 47 applications, the seven winners will enable more website diversity and allow people to more easily identify specific groups on the web.

The seven domains selected include .aero for the aviation industry, .biz for businesses, .coop for the co-operative movement, .info for general information, .museum for museums, .name for individuals and .pro for professional.

ICANN approved DOT COOP over DOT CO-OP, noting that .coop would have more international appeal.

In the next few days, co-ops will be able express their interest or intent to register on a NCBA/Poptel web site. The site is being finalized. Check the ICA website for updates and links to the site.

DOT COOP will improve the co-operative image worldwide enabling co-ops to market their difference, educate the public and attract new members. DOT COOP will make it easier for consumers, producers and others to find the businesses they trust in the global electronic marketplace.

Co-operative organizations outside of ICA and NCBA's membership will be able to apply for registration by 2002.

Please visit <http://www.coop.org/dotcoop.html>

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**FAO reaffirms its support to co-operatives**

ICA President Roberto Rodrigues met the director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Jacques Diouf, in Rome (Italy) on November 10. The visit was to review the progress in implementing the ICA-FAO Memorandum of Understanding, an agreement which set out some key areas for increased collaboration.

The ICA president reported good collaboration at the regional level. He said that these were encouraging as they included not only collaboration at the political level but, more importantly, at the project level where ICA was involved in the design and implementation of activities in Africa, Asia/Pacific and Latin America. "Certainly more could be done and this would be an area where the ICA regional offices would focus their attention now that these good contacts have been established," he added.

A practical approach to improving collaboration between ICA and FAO was what both organizations were aiming at, said Mr. Dough. The ICA-FAO framework agreement opens the possibilities for increased collaboration at international, regional and national levels. How ICA can help in organizing rural communities to have more effective systems through co-operatives must be one of the key areas that together FAO and ICA should address".

He reiterated FAO's political commitment to co-operatives, but proposed that more might be done in helping FAO implement its special programme on food security at the national level. "We need to reach out to rural villages and ensure that together we cut the number of hungry in the world," said Mr. Diouf.

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## Co-operative insurance seminars held in Mongolia

Two seminars on the development of co-operative insurance were held in Ulaanbatar, Mongolia, by AOADSC (Asia & Oceania Association Development Subcommittee) of ICMIF on August 7-8 and 9-10. The seminars were organized in response to a request from the Central Union of Mongolian Consumers Co-operative (CUMCC). A total of 59 delegates from various co-operatives - credit, agricultural, industrial and others - trade unions and governments participated. Aloysius Teo, chairman of AOADSC, from NTUC, (Singapore) and Keiji Kawahara, regional adviser of ICMIF for AOA, from ZENROSAI, (Japan) conducted the seminar.

Topics covered included the basics of co-operative insurance business, the experience of co-operative insurance in Japan and Singapore, and the role of ICMIF.

The seminars ended with a roundtable on the future of the Mongolian co-operative insurance movement.

A resolution taken at the end of the seminars proposed the creation of an insurance committee that will try to raise the necessary funds, 100 million Mongolian tugriks (USD 100,000), to launch a co-operative insurance organization with the expertise and technical support of the AOADSC.

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## Software to help manage co-operative housing

JINI, a software custom-designed to help manage co-operative housing operations, is now available.

JINI fully automates two key areas of co-operative housing operations that can often become an administrative headache:

- ensuring that work requests from members are handled efficiently and their progress tracked so that the member and the maintenance committee can be kept informed on the progress and details of the job; and
- keeping the list of membership applications up to date, sorted and printed out for use by the membership committee, as well as tracking and archiving applications for reference purposes.

Other features fully automated by JINI include:

- generating professionally formatted meeting minutes in MS Word for both the Board of Directors meetings and individual committee meetings;
- an easily maintained database of current members with contact info
- phone number, associate member's info, children's names, etc;
- a phone list generator that automatically compiles a list of members, their unit/apt numbers and telephone numbers; and
- a contractor database that stores and inserts the contractor's information in Work Order files.

JINI is available at an introductory price of CAD 799 (USD 525) until the end of January 2001, after which the regular price of CAD 1,499 (USD 980) will apply.

JINI is being updated and enhanced regularly and all licences come with free updates for a period of two years.

Volume discounts are available for organizations wanting to purchase multiple licences for their members.

More information on JINI as well as a demo version for downloading can be found on: <http://www.quietech.com> (follow the JINI link)

Wayne Davis, a housing co-operator in Vancouver, Canada and a software developer says: "JINI doesn't attempt to do everything - it just takes several key operational chores and handles them well, saving a great deal of time and avoiding the headaches of lost information. A tech support is available from me directly."

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**CWS urges EU to ban all animal byproducts in livestock feed**

CWS (UK) has called for a Europe-wide ban on the feeding of all animal waste to farm animals.

"In the wake of the BSE crisis we and our customers are dismayed at the way the regulations still pick and choose between acceptable and unacceptable feed ingredients like blood and bone meal," says Wendy Wrigley, general manager CWS Retail Brands.

CWS plans to ban the use of all animal byproducts in feed stuffs for Co-op Brand meat and poultry, and most UK producers operate on a voluntary ban on all such byproducts going into feed. However, it says, farmers elsewhere in Europe routinely use some byproducts and policing these practices abroad is difficult without EU regulations. The obvious solution is a total ban applied evenly throughout Europe which, says Ms Wrigley, would eliminate potential safety risks and restore consumer confidence in meat..

Portugal is said to be considering such a policy and is suggesting it to other EU members, while cases of BSE, commonly known as mad cow disease, have just been reported in France.

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## Survey shows Dutch farmers satisfied with their co-operatives

A survey shows that Dutch farmers are very satisfied with their co-operatives. They believe co-operatives are trustworthy, have a democratic decision-making process and have competent board members.

The survey of 300 farmers (members of co-operatives as well as non-members) was carried out by the Dutch National Co-operative Council for Agriculture and Horticulture (NCR) at its annual meeting. The goal of the survey was to find out what the Dutch farmers think of their co-operatives. Four sectors were included in this image survey: the dairy sector, cultivation under glass, livestock industry, and agriculture.

Of the interviewed farmers, 72.3% say that the co-operative has competitive prices. Price leadership is not considered a key issue for the co-operative, with only 36.3% of the opinion that the co-operative determines the market price.

The farmers hold strong views about member meetings. More than 90% of them think that the co-operative organizes informative member meetings. In the dairy sector this score is even higher (96.1%) while of the interviewed non-members 76.9% agree with this statement. The statement that "the co-operative is indispensable for agriculture and horticulture" is supported by 65.7% of the interviewed farmers.

A remarkable conclusion is that 82% of the members agree that co-operatives that also serve the general consumer market should characterize themselves more on behalf of the members. Non-members share this opinion, with 77.8% of them agreeing.

Another interesting fact is that the older the farmer, the more he is convinced that the co-operative has very loyal members. Farmers from 21 to 40 years of age score 58.8% on this topic, and the percentage goes up to 81.5 in the group of members older than 60 years.

To conclude, members who visit the member meetings of their co-operative more often, think more highly of the capability of their board members.

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**Book on community development "From Mondragon to America.." published in Japan.**

Canadian author, Rev. Gregory MacLeod was in Japan this month to launch the Japanese translation of his book "From Mondragon to America - Experiments in Community Economic Development". Published by the prestigious Japan Economic Review, the translated book was launched in conjunction with the conference of the Japan Institute of Cooperative Research, held at Gakugei University, Tokyo, November 25-26.

The Japanese translation confirms the world-wide interest in the growing phenomenon of co-operative community development. "Mondragon" offers a blueprint and working model of sustainable community economic development, enabling local people to revitalize their communities, their lives, and their future through co-operative business development. It is believed to be the wave of the future.

Professor Nakagawa, president of the Japan Institute of Co-operative Research, states: "This book will be advertised in the major Japanese newspapers as the most important book published on community co-operative corporations."

In conjunction with the Japanese book's launch, Dr. MacLeod was guest speaker at the Institute's conference: "Now, Let's Expand and Enlarge Co-operation - 2000".

UCCB Press [www.randburg.com/ca/mondragon.html](http://www.randburg.com/ca/mondragon.html)



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## Finnish co-operative takes steps to increase participation of women in decision-making

Women's opinion about co-operatives and their role in the globalizing world were the topics of a seminar arranged last September by a task force of Finn Co-op Pellervo. The task force was set up in 1999 by Pellervo to consider how the number and participation of women in co-operative decision-making could be improved.

Sirpa Pietikäinen, chair of the board of the World Organization of UN Associations, spoke about world economics and the significance of choices we make in everyday life, and Raija Itkonen, former member of the ICA Board, about the opportunity offered by co-operatives to participate and influence development.

The task force, consisting of seven women co-operators, named itself the Hedvig Group when formed and decided to work "in the spirit of Hedvig" to honour Hedvig Gebhard (1867-1961) who, together with her husband Hannes Gebhard, founder of the Pellervo Society, introduced the co-operative idea into Finland. For Hedvig Gebhard co-operation meant solidarity, equality and working together, in which there was no difference between women and men. She regarded co-operative values as moral principles and considered them to form the basis for economic success and better life.

The first concrete proposal of the task force was to include the promotion of gender equality in the plan of action of Pellervo. This was followed by a resolution passed by the Board of Pellervo in the beginning of this year. The resolution stressed the importance of equality between women and men and urged co-operatives to commit themselves to active advocacy of gender equality.

To make the latent ability of women in co-operatives visible a seminar was organised in April in connection with the Annual Pellervo Day. Sirkka-Liisa Anttila, a Finnish MP and living example of female skills and ability, spoke about her advancement from a Finnish farm to a member of the European Parliament and vice-speaker of the Finnish Parliament. Referring to her long experience of public participation, she pointed out that women in decision-making positions prefer to have things done whereas the primary goal for men is a higher professional status. Women are important guardians of the ethics and morals of everyday life, she said. Safeguarding values like justice, solidarity, human rights and honesty call for strong ethics and morals in today's world dominated to an ever-growing extent by market forces.

The task force promotes the idea of combining know-how based on life experience and explicit expert knowledge. It urges women co-operators to express their ideas and opinions in a column reserved for the purpose in the bi-monthly publication of Pellervo.

A women co-operators' website and a chatting possibility are under preparation.

Work "in the spirit of Hedvig" has met with positive response. A growing interest in the advocacy of gender equality seems to have awakened.



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