

# International Co-operative Alliance



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ICA

## ICA Specialised Bodies

The ICA brings together, at international level, co-operatives of different kinds such as consumer, financial, agricultural, industrial and housing co-operatives. Many of its member organisations who are involved in the same field of activities have established specialised organisations and committees to discuss concerns of common interest, exchange views, and promote collaboration. Such co-operation between ICA members began in 1922 with the founding of the International Co-operative Insurance Federation (ICIF), now called the International Co-operative and Mutual Insurance Federation (ICMIF).

Following the 30th ICA Congress in Tokyo in 1992, these organisations were re-named specialised bodies. Article 24 of the ICA Rules specifies the conditions for their establishment and operation.

### List of Specialised Bodies

#### Specialised Organisations

- ICA Agricultural Committee
- CICOPA (International Committee of Industrial, Artisanal and Service Producers' Co-operatives)
- ICA Consumer Committee
- ICA Fisheries Committee
- ICA Housing Committee
- International Co-operative Banking Association (ICBA)
- International Co-operative Energy Organisation
- ICMIF (International Co-operative and Mutual Insurance Federation)
- INTER-COOP (International Organisation for Consumer Co-operative Distributive Trade)
- TICA (International Co-operative and Associative Tourism Organisation)

#### Specialised Committees

- INCOTEC (International Committee for Training and Education of Co-operators)
- ICA Communications Committee
- ICA Women's Committee
- Co-operative Research, Planning & Development Committee

# ICA Agricultural Committee

This organisation represents agricultural co-operatives from over 30 countries. Agricultural co-operatives account for 36% of the total number of co-operative societies represented by ICA member organisations, and 18% of the total individual membership. These figures clearly indicate the significance of this specialised organisation, which aims:

- to exchange experience on specific activity fields;
- to promote the establishment of agricultural co-operatives in developing countries in order to increase food production;
- to improve the distribution of agricultural products;
- to take concrete action for preserving the environment.

To achieve these goals, the Agricultural Committee works closely with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the General Committee for Agricultural Co-operation in the EEC (COGECA), the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), European Agricultural Confederation (EAC) and other professional groups in the agricultural field.

To promote trade between its member organisations, the Agricultural Committee decided to set up a sub-committee, BECA (The Economic Bureau of the Agricultural Committee), whose objectives are:

- to promote economic relations between the agricultural co-operatives of different countries and between agricultural and consumer co-operatives;
- to examine the potential of, and initiate, inter-co-operative trade;
- to find ways and means of improving the economic potential of co-operatives, especially bearing in mind developing countries;
- to try to ensure that more funds and other forms of assistance from multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies are channelled to co-operatives in developing countries.

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# **CICOPA**

## **(International Committee of Industrial, Artisanal and Service Producers' Co-operatives)**

This specialised organisation is generally known by its French acronym, CICOPA, an abbreviation of "Comité International des Coopératives de Production et de Service Industrielles et Artisanales". Its members are producers' co-operatives from different fields: construction, industrial production, general services, transport, intellectual skills, artisanal activities, etc.

With the recent transformation of the world economy, this type of co-operative is no longer a marginal phenomenon. Numbers have increased in both industrialized and developing countries over the recent years. CICOPA now has a membership of over 79 apex co-operative organisations from 57 countries. There are no complete statistics on individual co-operatives or individual co-operators, but in 1975, CICOPA estimated that there were some 44,000 producers' co-operatives worldwide with six million individual members. In 1983 the figures had grown to 91,000 co-operatives with 23 million members. At the last world conference of CICOPA, held in Paris in February 1988, the number of 50 million individuals seemed to be the most probable, exclusive of China, but the most recent estimates available indicate that the actual figures are nearer 100 million, including co-operators from Asia.

The main target of CICOPA is to foster the creation of national organisations of producers' co-operatives all over the world; to contribute to the development of the already existing organisations; and to promote the development of co-operation in developing countries.

CICOPA aims to establish commercial and other links between producers' co-operatives by exchange of goods and services; education and training especially for managers; exchange of experience; studying issues specific to producers' co-operatives in all countries, and by circulating recommendations for the solution of co-operative problems in the industrial field.

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# ICA Consumer Committee

This specialised body, which was set up by ICA consumer co-operatives, aims to:

- initiate discussions on the crucial problems of co-operative consumer policy;
- communicate information both to ICA members and to organisations outside the co-operative movement;
- give advice on consumer matters to new consumer co-operatives;
- co-operate with other ICA specialised bodies;
- represent co-operative consumer interests to other international co-operative or non co-operative organisations, and collaborate with governmental and non-governmental agencies for consumer affairs;
- publish information on matters of interest to consumers, such as consumer protection, through the press and other media;

The ICA Consumer Committee holds joint meetings with other ICA specialised bodies. A regional committee with similar targets has been set up in Asia in order to promote consumer co-operative development in this region.

The basic philosophy of the Committee was determined in 1969 at the ICA Congress and stipulates that the consumer has a right to a reasonable standard of nutrition, clothing and housing; adequate standards of safety and a healthy environment; unadulterated merchandise at fair prices with reasonable variety and choice; access to information on goods and to education on consumer topics; and that s/he should have an influence in the economy through democratic participation.

These principles were reconfirmed at the Committee's General Assembly in Stockholm in July 1988.

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# ICA Fisheries Committee

This committee was originally founded, in 1966, as a sub-committee of the ICA's Agricultural Committee, but it became an independent body in 1976. The Fisheries Committee has member organisations from more than 20 countries. It considers its main goals to be the following:

- the creation of new co-operative fisheries organisations;
- co-operative training and education by the co-operative movements of advanced countries, including the production of educational material;
- the exchange of technical information and personnel between movements on a regional basis;
- the development of pilot projects;
- the promotion of trade.

In order to promote regional development, the Fisheries Committee has created a Sub-committee for South-East Asia, with a Secretariat in the premises of the ICA Regional Office in New Delhi. This sub-committee comprises the fisheries co-operative organisations of 12 countries.

The Fisheries Committee organizes seminars on fisheries co-operatives every year in two countries where it has members. The main emphasis of the seminar is placed on the development of leadership in the fisheries co-operative sector. Other major activities of the Committee include undertaking, and publishing the results of, surveys or studies on various aspects of the sector, such as on the changes in the European Community's common fisheries policy.

Considering that nearly all developing countries possess coastline, the potential for growth of fisheries co-operatives is great. Therefore, one of the most important objectives of the Fisheries Committee is to provide information to its members and to promote the exchange of experience between co-operatives in different countries.

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# ICA Housing Committee

This Committee was established to promote the development of co-operative housing in all countries, especially developing countries, as an economic and social contribution to the problem of providing shelter.

In order to achieve this goal, the Committee will:

- study the scope of activities of co-operative housing organisations in different countries;
- disseminate books and other information on co-operative housing to those interested in the provision of shelter;
- participate with the ICA in the work of UN agencies and other governmental and non-governmental organisations which deal with the problem of shelter;
- contribute to the implementation of an ICA programme of technical assistance to co-operatives in developing countries;
- encourage the regular exchange of information and personnel between member organizations;
- foster education and training on co-operative housing.

The ICA Housing Committee comprises roughly 40 national organisations. It maintains relations and holds joint meetings with other ICA specialised bodies in order to discuss topics of mutual interest. Several members of the Committee have set up a special organisation which provides valuable help for co-operative housing in developing countries (DESWOS).

The ICA Housing Committee is an active member of the Habitat International Coalition and also works closely with the UN Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT), and with several UN Economic Commissions.

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# International Co-operative Banking Association (ICBA)

The International Co-operative Banking Association was set up by national co-operative banks and commonweal financial organisations:-

- to exchange information;
- to promote co-operation among co-operative banks;
- to promote the development of new co-operative banks through advice and assistance; and
- to research and study subjects of common interest, i.e. capital formation, co-operative values as applied to banking, etc.

Membership is open to all banks and central thrift and credit organisations through one of the six Regional Committees or by direct membership of the Central Executive.

The ICBA Central Executive maintains close contact with the International Liaison Committee for Thrift & Credit Co-operatives (CLICEC) and the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU).

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# ICMIF

## (International Co-operative and Mutual Insurance Federation)

The ICMIF is a voluntary association of co-operative insurance organisations from 41 countries. It includes a development programme which helps co-operative and trade-union movements to develop co-operative insurance services, particularly in developing countries. The Federation also has a re-insurance service which enables co-op insurance societies throughout the world to exchange re-insurance business. The third supporting body of the organisation, Allnations Inc. had mainly concentrated on helping provide loan guarantees required by newly formed insurance co-operatives, but is now assuming a more active role in assisting co-operative insurance facilities.

Co-operative insurance is based on the principles of co-operation. Its major characteristics are:

- The insurance needs of ordinary people are catered for, and any surplus funds created through the insurance programme are applied for the benefit of the policy-holders.
- Co-operative insurance organisations are closely linked to democratic popular movements, including co-operative organisations operating in other fields such as retailing, agriculture, housing, etc.
- Many co-operative insurance organisations are governed by democratic parliamentary structures in which policy-holders, or their representatives, play an important role.
- A co-operative insurance society is a service organisation, maintaining close contact with ordinary people. It is a good medium for the spreading of co-operative aims and promoting the growth of the movement.

Co-operative insurance programmes for life and non-life insurance can be developed to serve the insurance needs of other types of co-operative organisations, trade-unions, other popular movements and the general public.

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# INTER-COOP

## (International Organisation for Consumer Co-operative Distributive Trade)

INTER-COOP was founded in 1971 when two previous committees dealing with trade and exchange of experience were amalgamated. The general aim of INTER-COOP is to promote economic co-operation between its affiliated members and thus to increase the competitive power of the consumer co-operative movement in both national and international markets, resulting in advantages to the consumers. The majority of its economic activities are among West-European member organisations; INTER-COOP has a close relationship with NAF (Nordisk Andelsforbund) and Eurocoop, Brussels. The main activities of INTER-COOP can be summarized as follows:

### **Joint Purchasing**

The promotion of joint purchasing is one of the most important tasks within INTER-COOP. Through mobilizing the combined buying powers of the member organisations, it is possible to achieve important advantages. The collaboration in joint purchasing is carried out by buying groups, each dealing with a special type of commodity. There are specialist buying groups for both food and non-food sectors, and within these two main branches there are further specialised sub-groups.

### **Exchange of Members' Produce**

In order to better utilize the capacity of the member-organisations' production facilities, INTER-COOP organises special "export fairs". This system has proved successful and has led to a considerable increase in the trade of products between the member organisations.

### **Exchange of Know-how**

Member organisations consider the exchange of experience in retailing and distribution as an important aid to problem solving. They have, therefore, created three specific advisory groups dealing with department stores and shopping centres, food stores and warehouses and distribution.

INTER-COOP runs a buying office in Hong Kong and also has joint offices with NAF (Nordisk Andelsforbund) (Denmark), in Valencia (Spain), Hamburg (FRG), Bologna (Italy), Santos (Brazil), Buenos Aires (Argentina), San Francisco (USA) and Budapest (Hungary).

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# TICA

## (International Co-operative and Associative Tourism Organisation)

TICA was founded as a Working Party in Copenhagen in 1976 by a Resolution of the 26th ICA Congress in Paris. In June, 1985 it became one of the Specialised Organisations affiliated to the Alliance.

TICA is comprised of approximately 30 organisations involved in tourism which aim to promote the development of tourism at the national and international level by implementing the following principles:

- To support the development of any organisation which facilitates the opportunity of holiday stay and travel, and offers fair prices and good quality service, to its member organisations;
- To support all measures taken by public authorities at national and international level to aid investment in tourism and to make vacations accessible to the greatest number of people possible;
- To complete tourist information by the accurate and objective advertising of available services;
- To provide information to travellers visiting a country where there is a co-operative movement, including details of co-operative events scheduled during their stay;
- To work towards improving the quality of services offered to tourists;
- To actively collaborate with all international organisations whose objectives are to defend and inform the traveller, in particular with the International Federation of Popular Travel Organisations (IFPTO);
- To develop inter-cooperative relations;
- To help set up tourism co-operatives in member countries of the ICA which are still without such organisations.

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# INCOTEC

## (International Committee for Training and Education of Co-operators)

INCOTEC is a specialised committee of the International Co-operative Alliance. It aims to facilitate and promote the educational activities of the Alliance and its member organisations and is mainly directed to the needs of the developing countries. Its objectives are to:

- advise the authorities of the ICA on matters concerning education and training for co-operators in and from developing countries;
- help member organisations to increase the effectiveness of their training programmes, especially by enabling them to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and expenditure in activities such as the preparation of study materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids, identifying the most important areas for co-operative training, recruiting students for training, the recruitment and training of teaching staff, directing student applicants to suitable courses and follow-up;
- encourage mutual consultation and dialogue among member organisations and their training institutions, with a view to achieving international collaboration in their respective training plans, programmes and activities;
- assist member organisations in facilitating international co-operation in the educational field in any other respect (e.g. in organizing study visits abroad, exchange of experience and documentation, etc.).

Participation in INCOTEC meetings and activities is open to all member organisations of the ICA. ICA affiliates in 32 countries also play an active part in its work. INCOTEC organizes an Education Conference and a General Meeting to coincide with ICA Congresses. Between Congresses it organizes an International Training and Education Forum. The general meeting elects an Executive Committee, comprising a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and six members, which meets at least once a year.

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# ICACC

## (ICA Communications Committee)

The ICACC is a specialised committee of the International Co-operative Alliance. Its objectives are:

- To contribute to the fulfillment of the ICA aims as formulated in the ICA Rules and Standing Orders;
- To improve the professional competence, the effectiveness and understanding of the people charged in their movements with responsibility for co-operative information and relations with the media in the organisations affiliated to the ICA;
- To contribute to the development of the co-operative press;
- To foster contacts among co-operative communicators in order to encourage the exchange of experience and co-operation.

All journalists, editors, publishers, and other communicators employed by ICA member organisations are eligible for membership.

Programme administration costs are covered through a CHF 400.- subscription fee to members, plus "in-kind" support from members whose organisations cannot afford the fee.

All expenses incurred by members attending meetings of the Committee are the responsibility of their organisations. Meetings are held at least once per calendar year.

The programme of activities is designed to complement the ICA communications programme. The current workplan includes: a) input to ICA News; b) promotion of ICA publications; c) updating the Directory of Co-op Press; d) provision of a news service to ICA Congress and statutory meetings; e) a campaign supporting the ICA's 1995 Centenary.

In addition, the Committee undertakes various special projects, such as training courses for co-operative journalists from developing and Eastern and Central European countries, organised in 1991, which depend upon additional funding provided by members and affiliated organisations.

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# ICA Women's Committee

The ICA Women's Committee, which was set up in 1965, promotes equality between women and men in the co-operative movement and society. All ICA member organisations are eligible for membership and there is no membership fee. The Committee now has 59 members representing 36 countries. This wide geographical spread gives opportunities for closer collaboration with the Regional Offices particularly where Human Resource Development (HRD) or Gender Officers have been appointed.

The Women's Committee strives for the self-empowerment and promotion of women through affirmative actions such as: gender awareness training for women and men; training incentive schemes for women; career incentives; recruiting and promotion schemes; mentorship programmes; access to decision-making bodies. In addition to this, the Women's Committee campaigns for de jure and de facto legal rights such as: women's rights to make decisions about their own bodies; rights to inheritance; access to credit; and rights to land ownership.

The Women's Committee's vision of the co-operative movement is of a movement where women and men may utilise their values, capabilities and skills on an equal basis, thus sharing the rights and responsibilities.

These interests are reflected in the Committee's joint activities with other ICA specialised bodies and in training programmes. The Committee has also produced several policy papers among which 'Recommendations on Women in Co-operatives' together with the Agricultural Committee.

The Women's Committee has also collaborated with the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific on laying the foundations for an extensive Gender Programme. In working with the ICA Regional Office for Central America and the Caribbean, the Committee commented on the Phase III of the Women's Programme, comprising eight Central American countries, which is supported by the Norwegian organisation, NRD.

The Committee has collaborated with the Afro-Asian Institute in Tel Aviv on essential training in 'Women and Co-operative Credit' and 'Women in Co-operative Industrial Management'. There are plans for this collaboration to continue. The Women's Committee also arranges open conferences such as 'Women's concern for the environment' in Madrid in 1990 and 'Strategies for women's influence at all levels in the co-operative movement' in Tokyo in 1992. In 1991, the Committee and Eurocoop organised a seminar on 'Consumer co-operatives in the EC internal market' in Brussels.

In the next four years, the Women's Committee will work with the additional themes 'Women and Finances', 'Women and new Technology' and 'Development, Environment and Women Activities'.

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# Co-operative Research Planning and Development Committee

The Research Officers' Group of the ICA was formed at the beginning of the 1950s. A reflection of the widening aspirations of the Committee was in its change of name at the end of the 1970s to Research, Planning and Development. Broadly, the group has tended to lean upon the support of the consumer co-operative movements, especially in Western and Northern Europe, but its membership is worldwide and it has consistently tried to tackle matters which would be of interest and value to all forms of co-operative responsibility. The Committee has lived through a period when a number of its members were facing very real structural and trading problems in the movements which they represented, and this inevitably influenced the way in which the Committee has developed.

The Research Committee holds an annual seminar, plus a study tour in the host country. Representation at these seminars has been from a wide range of countries and movements.

Perhaps the most favourable feature of the Committee has been its friendship and its openness and frankness. Members have been able to discuss mutually their problems and have found that they had experiences in common.

Questions concerning productivity, image, managerial structure, the relationship between the democratic ideal and trading necessities, the emergence of new worker and producer style co-operatives, have all been reviewed both from a practical and theoretical stance. The group enjoys the support not only of co-operators who are working full time for their movements, but also of activists within co-operative research institutes and interested and concerned academics.

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# Development

The ICA has been formally committed since 1957 to supporting co-operatives in the developing world. In this area it has three basic objectives: the establishment and growth of independent, democratic, and viable co-operative organisations; strengthening collaboration between co-operatives of different types and in different countries; and influencing public opinion and governmental authorities in order to create a more favourable climate for co-operative development.

The ICA approved a new strategy for co-operative development in 1986 which focuses its efforts in four major areas: the influencing of government policies and programmes in order to allow co-operatives the freedom to develop as autonomous, independent organisations; the strengthening of national co-operative organisations in order to increase the self-reliance of national movements; the direct sponsorship of special programmes of particular importance to the co-operative movement in such areas as member education, international trade, and the role of women; and an improvement in both the quantity and quality of financial resources made available by governmental and non-governmental organisations to support co-operative development.

The ICA's development programme is coordinated by its Development Section in Geneva. It is implemented by regional offices: for Asia and the Pacific in New Delhi, India; for Eastern, Central and Southern Africa in Moshi, Tanzania; for West Africa in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; for Central America and the Caribbean in San José, Costa Rica; and for South America in Brasília, Brazil. The ICA also has project offices in Australia, Singapore, Kenya, Botswana and Argentina. A large part of the costs of the ICA's Development Programme is provided by its members through their contributions to head office and the regional offices. Financial support for specific programme activities is provided by co-operative movements or governments in many countries, including Sweden, Norway, Canada, Italy, France, the Netherlands and Japan.

The ICA also attempts to coordinate its own activities with other organisations involved in co-operative development through membership in the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Co-operatives (COPAC), direct contacts with national and international organisations, and through the annual meeting of its Development Forum.

Further information on the ICA's Development Programme may be obtained from the Development Section, International Co-operative Alliance, Geneva.

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# Educational Activities

The ICA has a long involvement with Co-operative Education. Initially this was through its International Schools and its Education Department within the Secretariat. Today, the ICA maintains contact with a wide variety of interest groups and networks concerned with co-operative education at national and regional levels, including co-operative colleges.

Arising from the ICA's Category 1 consultative status with the United Nations, it acts as an intermediary through its Development Department, for applying for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural (UNESCO) Travel Grants for members. These are awarded to co-operative education leaders, mainly in developing countries, who then undertake study programmes, arranged by the ICA, in other co-operative movements.

Much of the ICA's direct educational work is accomplished at regional level through the human resource projects carried out by the ICA's Regional Offices.

In 1990, the ICA Executive Committee approved a new ICA Policy on Human Resource Development, designed to guide the work of ICA and its Regional Offices in this field.

INCOTEC - International Committee for Training and Education of Co-operators (formerly AGITCOOP) - was also initiated in 1974. Under its constitution it advises the ICA "on matters concerning education and training for co-operators in and from developing countries".

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# Collaboration With United Nations Organisations

In order to achieve the objectives of the ICA as specified in Article 3 of the ICA Rules, the Secretariat of the Alliance develops collaboration with the United Nations organisations and many other national and international non-governmental organisations which pursue aims of importance to co-operation.

Collaboration between the ICA and the UN started from the creation of the latter organisation in 1945. The ICA was one of three non-governmental organisations to be granted Category 1, the highest consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council at the First Session of the General Assembly on February 14, 1946. Today there are less than 35 NGOs having this status among more than 840 non-governmental organisations. This status provides the ICA with the opportunity to participate at all UN meetings and make its point of view known to the participants.

The ICA is represented in New York and Geneva at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) when topics relevant to co-operatives are being discussed. In addition, the ICA maintains contact with the UN Secretariat in New York, Geneva and Vienna. ICA is also represented at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and other UN agencies and commissions as necessary.

The ICA has a good relationship with the UN and other organisations at the international level. It is also taking the necessary steps to develop collaboration with these organisations at regional and national levels, in order to involve the ICA member-organisations in developing countries in the planning and implementation of co-operative projects undertaken by the UN bodies in collaboration with the governments of the countries concerned.

Several member-organisations undertake to provide representation at United Nations organisations in Rome, Paris and Vienna, and at the ECE Housing Committee in Geneva. ICA also has a Liaison Officer at the ICA Secretariat in Geneva with the responsibility of co-ordinating the activities of the UN representation.

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**Alliance  
Coopérative Internationale**

**Alianza  
Cooperativa Internacional**

