



ICA-Japan Training Course for
**“Strengthening Women’s Agricultural Cooperatives
in Rural Areas and Improvement of Farm
Management and Rural Life”**

REPORT OF THE 2ND COURSE



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2nd ICA-Japan Training Course for
"Strengthening Women's Agricultural Cooperatives in Rural
Areas and Improvement of Farm Management and Rural Life"
Thailand-Japan, 29th August to 4th October 2002

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"Strengthening Women's Agricultural Cooperatives
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SECTION I

Background, Implementation, In Thailand, Training Course
of the Programme. Principal Areas of Interest and Subjects Covered.
Thailand-Japan, 29th August to 4th October 2002

SECTION II

Country Status, Reports -
(Indonesia, Malawi, Thailand)

COURSE REPORT

SECTION III

Cooperative Field Study with
(Thailand and Japan)

SECTION IV

Cooperatives Making a Difference
(Thailand and Japan)

SECTION V

Supporting Programmes for the Participants

SECTION VI

Summary of the Course

SECTION VII

Annexes

SECTION VIII

Course Programme

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION-I			
Background, Introduction, Course Objectives, Programme Implementation, Course Participants, Field Study Visits in Thailand, Training Course at IDACA, The Inaugural Session of the Programme, Principal Areas of Emphasis and Subjects Covered.		01
SECTION-II			
Country Status Reports – A Summary of Background Papers (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam).	.....		06
SECTION-III			
Comparative Field Study Visits (Thailand and Japan).	.....	.....	14
SECTION-IV			
Observations Made by the Participants (Thailand and Japan).	.....	.....	20
SECTION-V			
Action Plans Proposed by the Participants	.....	.....	28
SECTION-VI			
Concluding Session	32
SECTION-VII			
List of Participants	34
SECTION-VIII			
Course Programme	36



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COURSE REPORT

SECTION-I

Background, Introduction to the Programme and Course Objectives

Background

Issues relating to women empowerment, equality in society, right to property inheritance and participation in social and economic decision-making have been under active discussion at various national and international platforms. The status of women in rural institutions, especially in agricultural cooperatives, merits special attention since nearly 62% of women are engaged in agriculture and, at the same time, their numerical presence in agricultural cooperatives has risen to some extent. Although they can enter into the normal membership of such institutions, they hardly find a place in their management and hence they remain in the background due to religious, social and traditional impediments. Several factors, which limit the representation of women in the management and decision-making process, have been identified. Cases which restrict their participation, among others, include: women are not considered full-time farmers; women’s role is restricted largely to household chores; they do not get elected to managing committees because of restrictions placed on them by law and their households; and they are not exposed to new technologies and skills.

Women in rural areas also are not able to raise loans to undertake local production and to have an easy access to marketing. There are ample examples to suggest that women, if given proper encouragement and opportunities of participation, have excelled in business, and have the capacity and capability to take appropriate business decisions. Such opportunities are, however, limited in the background of experiences of rural communities in the Asian region. Rural women can effectively participate in decision-making if they are: encouraged to contest elections; explains the avenues of deriving economic and social benefits from cooperatives; form self-help groups; cooperatives provide them with adequate and meaningful marketing facilities; cooperative make use of their intelligence in taking business decision; suitable revisions favouring women are made in the existing laws; political support is given to them; and gender-bias in the policies of cooperatives is removed. Consequently, these women need an all out support from national and international organisations including the governments.

Introduction

The international Cooperative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ICA ROAP), in association with its member organisation in Japan, the Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Japan (JA-Zenchu) and the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA) organised the 2nd ICA-Japan Training Course for "Strengthening Women's Agricultural Cooperatives in Rural Areas and Improvement of Farm Management and Rural Life" in Thailand and Japan.

The Course was organised and held by the ICA at the IDACA premises from 9th September to 4th October 2002. The 10-day component of Comparative Field Study Visits was held in Thailand from 29th August to 8th September 2002 in collaboration with the Cooperative Leagues of Thailand (CLT) and the Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD), Government of Thailand. The programme is funded by the Government of Japan in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF).

The International Cooperative Alliance, presently based in Geneva, Switzerland, an international non-governmental organisation, established in London in 1895, was chosen by the MAFF as the most suitable international organisation to implement the Training Course because of its intimate knowledge and good working relations with the agricultural cooperatives in the region. The ICA has affiliates in 94 countries with 236 national cooperative organisations and four international organisations serving over 800 million individual members. The ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, operating from New Delhi, India, since 1960, serves 51 national level cooperative organisations from 21 countries and the ACCU, and represents 480 million individual cooperative members. Within the United Nations, the ICA enjoys Category-1 Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (UN/ECOSOC).

Course Objectives

The main objective of the Training Course is "to train women leaders in rural areas in developing countries by means of strengthening women's agricultural cooperatives, farm management, and improvement of rural life". The Training Course also provides training for the capacity building of the participants with a view to organise women's associations and study cooperative activities.

Programme Implementation

The Training Course was implemented by the International Cooperative Alliance through its Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific at New Delhi. A Plan of Implementation, which was developed by the ICA in consultation with the IDACA, was formally approved by the MAFF-Japan. The ICA Regional Office, in consultation with the JA-Zenchu and the IDACA, identified the countries to be invited for the 2nd Training Course.

Invitations to sponsor candidates were sent to ICA member organisations in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. Selection of participants was made from out of the nominations made by the ICA member organisations in accordance with the qualifications and procedural norms laid down by the ICA for such training courses. The selected candidates were then provided with appropriate facilities to travel to Thailand and Japan to follow the programme of studies.

The IDACA identified and recruited the resource persons and made arrangements for comparative field study visits in Thailand and Japan. The IDACA also provided the lecture notes and background material on the institutions visited by the participants.

Course Participants

The 2nd Training Course was attended by eight participants, two each from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. A list of participants is attached.

Field Study Visits in Thailand

The 10-day component of Comparative Field Study Visits was held in Thailand from 29th August to 8th September 2002. The field study visits were arranged to agricultural cooperatives and women's groups in Samut Sakhon, Phetchaburi, Maha Sarakam, Khon Kaen, Roi Et and Nakhon Ratchasima provinces. The participants visited the following ten women groups/agricultural coops to observe their activities and to have interaction with the members: (a) Ban Kaset Pattana Cooperative Women's Group, (b) Krathumban Cooperative Women's Group; (c) Hubkapong Cooperative Women's Group; (d) Tah Kham Sammakki Credit Union Cooperative Women's Group; (e) Nong Prong Samakki Water User Cooperative Women's Group; (f) Ban Paeng Cooperative Women's Group; (g) Ban Nongbua Dimi Cooperative Women's Group; (h) Ban Phai Weaving Service Cooperative Limited; (i) Ban Kuema-u Cooperative Women's Group; and (j) Phimai Agricultural Cooperative Limited.

The inaugural session in Bangkok was held on 30th August 2002 which was addressed by Mr. Chavalvut Chainuvati, Director General, Cooperative Promotion Department; Mr. Wit Pratuckchai, Executive Director of CLT; and Mr. Yukio Abe, Manager (Training Department) of IDACA, Japan. Mr. Prem Kumar, Advisor (AMT Project) and Mr. K. Sethu Madhavan, Planning Officer represented the ICA ROAP.

The following lectures were given in Bangkok before proceeding for field visits: (a) "Introduction to Women Group's Activities in Asia" by Ms. Revathi Balakrishnan, Regional Sociologist and Gender Development Officer, FAO ROAP; and (b) Present Situation of Cooperatives and Women's Group in Thailand" by Ms. Komnapa Chaiyawat, Head of Project Section, Planning Division, Cooperative Promotion Department.

Training Course at IDACA

All the eight participants selected for the 2nd Training Course attended the programme for its full duration. The IDACA had developed a course curriculum in consultation with the ICA ROAP, which included class-room lectures on various aspects, handled by the IDACA faculty members and specially-invited guest lecturers, organised field study visits and arranged direct communication with women members and leaders of agricultural cooperatives.

The field study visits were arranged to agricultural cooperatives and women's associations in Chiba, Kanagawa and Kagoshima Prefectures of Japan. In Kanagawa Prefecture it included the JA Isehara and its facilities (direct sale shop, gasoline station and one branch office). In Kagoshima it included Kagoshima Prefectural Union of Agricultural Cooperatives, A-Coop Kagoshima Corporation, Kumiami Fertiliser Inc.,

Courtesy call on Mayor of Ariyake Town, the JA-Aozora and its facilities (visit to processing plant attached to Center of Better Living Activities, farmers house, compost centre, natural enemy virus facility for green tea, egg plant cultivation in hard plastic type green house, strawberry cultivation in green house, ceremonial hall), Exchange meeting with the members of the JA Women's Association, and Exchange programme at a nursery school in Kanoya city, Lecture-cum-practical field study visits assignments were combined to impart necessary knowledge to the participants on the working of women's associations and the general activities of agricultural cooperatives in Japan.

The participants also held group discussions and prepared brief reports on the experiences gained by them. An end-of-the-Course Evaluation session was also held. The day-to-day programme followed by the Training Course is attached.

The Inaugural Session of the Programme

The opening ceremony for the 2nd Training Course for "Strengthening Women's Agricultural Cooperatives in Rural Areas and Improvement of Farm Management and Rural Life" was held on 10th September 2002 in the Conference Hall of the IDACA. The Session was addressed by Mr. Isamu Akiyama, Dy. Director, Technical Cooperation Division, International Affairs Department, General Food Policy Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Government of Japan; Mr. Toru Nakashima, Dy. Manager (Training Department), IDACA; and Mr. K. Sethu Madhavan, Planning Officer, ICA ROAP.

In his inaugural speech Mr. Akiyama said that the Women Leader's Training Course was going on since 1991 and the name of the Training Course has been changed twice. He gave the statistical information about the number of participants trained from different countries in this Training Course so far. He sincerely hoped that upon return of participants to their home countries they will make best effort in applying the knowledge and ideas gained from this training course.

Principal Areas of Emphasis and Subjects Covered

The emphasis during the Training Course was on:

- (a) the methods of organising rural women and the role played by women members and their leaders in the development of the business of agricultural cooperatives;
- (b) the ways of generating income opportunities through familiarising themselves and adopting the 'project approach' as have been prevailing in some of the Asian countries including the work done by the women's associations of the Japanese Agricultural Cooperative Movement; and
- (c) the methods and techniques adopted by various women organisations and groups in generating additional income and business opportunities for themselves through using the goodwill, business operations and networking of their local cooperatives.

The training course emphasised on practical studies and learning. Basic aspects of Japanese agriculture, agricultural cooperative system, detailed introductions to organisation and functioning of agricultural cooperatives in Japan were given. Special topics of interest to women leaders like participation of women in agricultural cooperatives, the role and functioning of women's associations in agricultural

cooperatives in Japan, their role in better-living activities and improving farm households and plans for future development were presented.

Some of the key subjects covered during the Training Course were:

- Culture, Society and Economy of Japan by Mr. Toru Nakashima, Dy. Manager, Training Department, IDACA.
- Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives in Japan by Mr. Toru Nakashima, Dy. Manager, Training Department, IDACA.
- Organisation and Activities of the JA Women's Associations by Ms. Eiko Oshita, Coordinator, Training Department, IDACA.
- Agricultural Cooperative Movement in Japan and Various Approaches to Some Cooperative Development Efforts by Mr. Yukio Abe, Manager, Training Department, IDACA.
- Case Study on Entrepreneurial Activities of Rural Women in Japan by Ms. Kazuko Kano, Senior Technical Advisor, Project Development Department, Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).
- Women Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment by Ms. Noriko Furutani, Researcher, Social Development Department, Global Link Management.
- JA Group's Approach to WTO by Ms. Noriko Tanaka, Joint Senior Manager, International Policy and Strategic Planning Affairs, Agricultural Policy Department, JA-ZENCHU.
- Women Entrepreneurship and Village Revitalisation Activities by Ms. Kazko Yamamoto, Consultant.

During the study visits programme to agricultural cooperatives in Chiba, Kanagawa and Kagoshima Prefectures the participants were able to interact with women leaders and to observe their various activities as carried out by the JA-Women's Associations.

The training course was designed in such a way that the participants, after returning to their respective countries, are able to help organise and strengthen women's associations and other similar groups and make use of experiences of the Japanese Women's Associations of Agricultural Cooperatives. It is also expected that the participants would adopt a systematic 'project approach' in developing their activities in their respective countries and encourage more and more of women to join and support their agricultural cooperatives.

SECTION-II

Country Status Reports - A Summary of the Background Papers

Indonesia

The total land area of Indonesia is about 1.9 million square kilometers. It consists of 5 big islands, namely, Sumatra, Jawa, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Papua. The country has about 17,000 islands, stretching along 3,4 miles. The climate is mostly hot and humid with annual high average temperature between 26 to 28 degree centigrade. It has got two seasons – monsoon and dry season – with unequal dispersal of rain in the region. Fertile lands occur in the western part – Jawa and Sumatra – where paddy can grow easily. The region has got about 400 volcanoes, 100 of which are active. Indonesia is one of the mega diversity areas in the world after Brazil and Zaire. It is also rice in plantation commodities.

Total population of Indonesia is about 201.7 million (female 100.7 million and male 101 million). The population is unevenly distributed, since most of the population lives in Jawa and Bali Islands (61,86%) which consists of only 7% of land area. The total number of population in rural areas is 111.7 million (57%) whereas population in urban area is 87 million (43%).

Agricultural cooperatives in Indonesia are organised in a three-tier structure. The multipurpose cooperatives (KUDs) at the primary level, which are federated into the PUSKUD at the provincial level and these, are affiliated to INKUD at the national level. There are at present 9,064 KUDs and 35,861 other types of cooperatives in Indonesia. The KUD is characterised by its multipurpose business with farmers, fishermen and handicraftsmen as its members. Most activities are anchored on agriculture. The main functions of KUDs are: (a) distribution of farm production inputs and consumer goods; and (b) provision of credit and collection, processing and marketing of produce of members.

KUDs have a membership of 13 million and non-KUDs have a membership of 12.6 million. Main objectives of the KUDs are to consolidate the people, consolidate and rationalise land resources for agricultural production and to provide means of incomes to the people and to use them to maintain national food stocks – mainly rice. Provincial level cooperatives have been formed by the primaries and the provincial level federations have formed the national federation.

Though the KUDs function on a multipurpose basis, their organisational strength is weak both in financial and business terms. Due to weak structural and financial link-up between the KUD, PUSKUD and INKUD, the cooperatives are not able to compete with private traders. There is very little active participation by members. KUDs lack suitable infrastructure for marketing, storage and processing and other value-adding activities. Other supportive services like member education, farm guidance and staff training are very inadequate. Government training facilities are available for cooperative employees through its network of 27 provincial level cooperative training centres and one national level cooperative training centre. Due to the recent economic crises and political changes, the role of the KUD has come under a close scrutiny. Their objectives and activities are being readjusted.

The government as well as the Dewan Koperasi Indonesia (DEKOPIN) share member education and extension services. Private foundations and academies provide formal education in cooperatives. There is an Institute of Cooperative Management (IKOPIN) at the national level and eight cooperative academies in the country.

Status of Women: In Indonesia the progress of women's emancipation through education, political and economic participation is still underway. Women currently play a major role within the families. Stakeholders like women's organisation, women's potential groups, NGO for women's development and the government institutions are actively taking part in increasing women participation in cooperatives. Women's cooperative in Indonesia is the cooperative that has women's members and women's manager. The total number is only 1,455 with 366,194 members. This is only 1.4% of total number of coops -103,077 which has 27,295,893 members.

Many types of women's coops have been developed – saving loan coop, service coop, consumer coop and producer coop (handicraft). Total number of women's population 15 years of age and above is 72,713,218. This number is then divided into 2 categories - economically active (51.78%) and not economically active (48.22%). Government institution in 5 provinces has carried out programmes to develop women's empowerment in local economy. The project has developed 444 business groups in 6 months and fund realisation developed into 143.75% from the previous fund.

Established in 1983 as the auxiliary operational committee of DEKOPIN (Indonesian Cooperative Council), BKWK's previous name was The Women Cooperator Contact Committee. In 1999, after reformation era, BKWK has changed its name as "The Women Cooperator Communication Committee. The programmes and activities of DEKOPIN are carried out by the BKWK. BKWK have a three levels of organisation - district level, provincial level and national level. All three levels have coordinators and consultative characters in order to present the programs and to distribute the aspirations from bottom up to highest level. The members of the board are selected from the participants who attend the 5-year national meeting. This national meeting is usually arranged before DEKOPIN's national meeting and the participants are representatives of women coops in Indonesia.

BKWK has parallel position relationship with other auxiliaries' operational committee in DEKOPIN. BKWK has many obligations and responsible to develop the quality and quantity of women's coops in Indonesia. As an auxiliary committee, BKWK is still depended on DEKOPIN to create its programmes, especially in provisioning budget and facilities. So, until now, BKWK has not completely executed its function and role within the women's cooperative yet. BKWK is still in the stage of empowering the organisation structure of their established organisation in provinces and district levels.

Koperasi Citra Lestari Lawang was founded on 18th December 1989. This very project is a continuation of Puskowanjati sample project, which is called KWPP (Koperasi Wanita Pedagang Pasar) Lawang. By the time it was founded, its members were treated specifically by the sellers of the traditional market in the area of Kecamatan Lawang. The members of this organisation were selling vegetables, soya bean, rice grain, etc. The members were given daily loans, considering the fact that they are workers who earn their wage daily. The membership of the cooperative up to 30th June 2002 was 3,171. The kind of activities that are held by the cooperative are (a) a group meeting once every six months; (b) an ideal education for each members; (c) social activities that are held since 2001.

Malaysia

Malaysia is located in the heart of southeast Asia, slightly north of the equator. It consists of 330,200 sq. km and is divided into two main regions – peninsular Malaysia and east Malaysia. Malaysia has a combined population of 24 million people and it has a multiracial population consisting of Malays, Chinese, Indians and numerous indigenous people. Although Malay language is the official language, English is widely spoken and it is a compulsory subject in all schools. Malaysia enjoys a tropical climate with plenty of sunshine throughout the year. Temperature typically ranges from 22 to 33 degree centigrade and cooler in the highlands. Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy. Major exports are rubber, oil palm and oil palm based products, crude petroleum, liquefied natural gas, etc.

The three main core agricultural activities in Malaysia are the estate sector, the small farm sector and the newly developed land sector. Plantation crops dominate agriculture. Oil palm cultivation has taken strides over rubber and other plantation crops due to its high returns and less labour demands. Livestock production is restricted to pigs and poultry. Local beef production is only 10% of total demand and the dairy industry is very small, but slowly expanding. The contribution of agriculture to national economy, which was 29.1% in 1970-74, dropped to 9.64% in 1995-98. Agricultural policy, development and its future are being governed by National Agricultural Policy (NAP). The land usage for agriculture is expected to go down gradually in the future. Small farmers dominate land holding and the average size varies from 2.4 to 5.6 hectares.

Agricultural cooperatives are involved in various activities, e.g. credit disbursement, marketing, rice milling and processing activities and cooperative education activities. Agricultural cooperatives function under various government agencies. At the end of 1995, 3,554 non-agricultural cooperatives were registered and functioning under the Department of Cooperative Development. Agricultural cooperatives are under the registration and supervision of the Farmers' Organisation Authority (FOA) and Department of Cooperative Development. 1,511 agro-based cooperatives serving a total membership of 316,602 and with a share capital of RM 66.2 million were functioning as of 1994.

The total value added in the agricultural sector has increased by 1.2% a year (1995-2000) though the target was 1.9%. However, oil palm registered a growth rate of 7.9% and exceeded the target. The contribution of agricultural sector to the Gross Domestic Product has declined from 10.3% in 1995 to 8.7% in 2000. Agricultural land use increased from 5.7 million hectares in 1995 to 6 million hectares in 2000. Approximately 430,800 hectares land of rubber and cocoa has been converted into oil palm plantation and other usage.

Status of Women: Women in Malaysia has two roles – as wife/mother and employees or self-employed. Women are highly important contributors to the country's economic and social development. Out of 24 million population 48.9% or 11.4 million are women. 52.4% of the women population are below 24 years old. Although 48% are within the employment age of 15-64, only one third are employed. Flexible hours of working have been given to the women employees by the government in the Employment Act 1998. The rapid expansion of educational facilities and opportunities contribute towards the improvement of their economic participation. Women intake in the universities has increased from 50% in 1995 to 55% in 2000. In 2000, 13.5% women involved in professional and technical employment compared to 12.7% in 1995. Women in the agricultural sector have declined from 16.6% in 1995 to 14.8% in 2000.

The Women are important in Malaysia's labour force and play a crucial role in agricultural development. Women's participation in the agricultural sector has been the highest in rubber, oil palm, and cocoa production. Mostly women in agricultural sector are from the rural area – some are illiterate and lack of confidence and skills. Young women are no longer interested in agricultural sector. They prefer to work in the professional and technical line due to their higher education.

Other activities of women in agriculture are (a) setting up small handicraft cottage industries which utilise local raw materials, traditional skills and craftsmanship; and (b) organise economic projects like batik-making, weaving, silver working, tailoring, sewing, vegetable gardening and poultry rearing. Marketing the handicraft product is a problem faced by the rural women.

Though 40% of the cooperative membership comprise of women, yet women are not seen participating actively in the cooperative movement. Inferiority complex and discrimination of gender are two main factors contribute to this scenario. Lack of capital is also determined as a factor of low level of participation. Communication barrier amongst the women is another factor. The Cooperative Development Department has suggested to the cooperatives to set up a Women's Development Unit in their coops in order to solve the problem of low level participation of women in cooperative leadership. Most of the coops has taken this suggestion positively and some still in search of potential leaders among the women members.

The ANGKASA (National Cooperative Organisation of Malaysia) which was registered on 12th May 1971 is the national apex organisation of all cooperatives in the country and acts as the spokesman of the Movement. The ANGKASA represents the Movement both at the national and international levels. It does not carry out any business activities and mainly concerned with the provision of services and education. ANGKASA works in close collaboration with all government departments and agencies connected with cooperative development in the country and are the lobbying force for coop-related activities.

As on today there are 2,692 cooperative societies which include tertiary, secondary, primary, and school cooperatives, with more than 3 million individuals who are their members. ANGKASA also established ANGKASA Service Bureau (BPA) with the main purpose of providing salary deduction services to cooperatives, clubs, associations and trust funds. BPA now serves more than 847 cooperatives with 1.55 million accounts accounting to more than RM 215.1 million per month. BPA is on line with 14 banks in the country making the transactions easier and faster.

The highest committee known as the National Administrative Committee (NAC) comprising 15 members, administers ANGKASA. It comprises the President, Deputy President, 3 Vice Presidents and 10 Chairmen from the State Liaison Committee and the national assembly is held annually. NAC will appoint a National Executive Committee (NEC) which consists of 8 members from the NAC and three executives. It also appoints several Sub-committees to assist and monitor every division of ANGKASA.

Thailand

Thailand is situated in the heart of south-east Asia. Its religion is Buddhism. There is religious freedom and all faiths are allowed to practice. Thailand has been a democratic constitutional monarchy since 1932. Under the present Constitution, the parliament is a bicameral house composed of appointed senators and elected representatives. The country has a population of 62 million of which around 7 million live in Bangkok. Thailand covers a land area of 513,115 square kilometers and extends about 1,620 km from north to south and 775 km from east to west. The climate is tropical with long hours of sunshine and high humidity.

Thailand is good for agriculture because of its appropriate geographical location with fertile soils and appropriate climate together with continued research and development. It has been listed as the land of plentiful fresh and vegetables for decades. The produces are not only served Thai people themselves but also exported to various countries.

Agriculture has an important role in the national economic growth. It has been a major source of food supply, farm workforce and employment generation. Approximately 57% of the total arable land is used for rice cultivation. Rice farming is the chief occupation of Thai farmers. The average size of farm household is about 10 acres. Thailand's principal exports are agricultural products, which constitute about 55% of the total exports. Rice is the chief export. Other exports include sugar, rubber, corn, frozen and canned sea foods, fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers.

Cooperatives in Thailand were established in 1916 on the basis of the Raiffeisen model – mainly to provide agricultural credit to the farmers. The first Cooperative Societies' Act was promulgated in 1928. Cooperatives are now covered by the new Cooperative Societies' Act of 1999. Cooperatives in Thailand are classified into six types: (i) Agricultural cooperatives which cover agricultural cooperatives as such; (ii) Land settlement cooperatives; (iii) Fisheries cooperatives; (iv) Consumer cooperatives; (v) Thrift and credit cooperatives; and (vi) Service cooperatives. Agricultural cooperatives are established to enable farmer-members to engage in business together, thus helping one another in times of crisis as well as gaining for themselves a better livelihood and a better quality of life.

The objectives of agricultural cooperatives are: (a) to provide loans to members for productive and providential purposes at affordable rates of interest; (b) to encourage thrift among members through savings and deposits; (c) to provide agricultural products as well as daily necessities for sale to members at reasonable costs; (d) to provide good farm production methods and disseminate technical know-how aimed to help members reduce production costs and obtain higher yields; and (e) to enable members to market products together thereby obtain good prices for their produce and maintaining fairness in terms of weights and measures.

Status of Women: Thailand recognises the valuable contribution of women to national development and has taken appropriate measures to promote their full participation on the basis of equality in all sphere of society, in particular, the equality before the law. The Thai Constitution states that "men and women have equal rights". While women in some parts of the world are seeking the political right of voting, the Thai women had their right of voting and competing in the parliamentary elections as universal suffrage for the last 60 years.

Although Thailand has achieved satisfactory progress in the promotion of women's rights, it realises that the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* inequalities still exists. To bridge this gap Thailand is taking all necessary steps to empower women in all spheres of their lives, e.g., the promotion of life-long education and access to full participation in decision-making and sustainable development.

The presence of women in all sectors of the Thai Cooperative Movement is quite prominent. Out of a total staff of 13,508 working with various cooperatives there were 8,040 (60%) women; out of the total membership of 5.2 million of all types of cooperatives, there were 1.6 (31%) million women members; and out of a total number of 40,960 board members there were 3,637 (9%) women board members. Several of the agricultural cooperatives in the country employ women as their managers, as there is a belief that they perform better and do not indulge in unfair means while handling finances and personnel.

To enhance the participation of rural women in cooperatives including agricultural cooperatives, a specialised Women's Committee was formed in 1998 within the CLT organisational structure. The Committee has the benefit of advice from various organisations e.g., Kasetsart University, Cooperative Promotion Department, Cooperative Audit Department, Agricultural Cooperative Federation of Thailand and the CLT. The Committee has prepared a Master Plan to enhance the participation of women in agricultural cooperatives.

Some of the major commitments made in the Master Plan are: encourage women participation in the Cooperative Movement; enhance the development potentials of women in economic development; upgrading the capacities of women in appropriate social and economic development programmes; enlarge roles played by women in gender equality campaign to promote cooperative development in the country; creation of specialised bodies to be responsible on planning network and expand cooperation with women and other interested organisations; establishment of an Information Center for strengthening women participation; undertake research programmes and evaluation to strengthen women's participation; and boost capacities and capabilities of human potential and support for development of women's participation.

The Cooperative League of Thailand (CLT), established in 1968, is the national apex of the Cooperative Movement in the country. It has affiliates of 5,418 cooperatives at all levels serving over 6 million individual cooperators. Other national level federations are the Agricultural Cooperative Federation of Thailand, the Consumer Cooperative Federation of Thailand, the Federation of Savings and Credit Cooperatives of Thailand, and the Bus Service Cooperative Federation of Thailand.

The agricultural cooperatives provide loan to members at affordable rates of interest and encourage thrift through savings and deposits. The main function of agricultural cooperatives is to promote better farm production methods and disseminate technical know how to the members.

In 1915, a year before the first cooperative was introduced to Thailand, the Cooperative Section was established under the Ministry of Finance in responding for cooperative promotion. With an increasing role of cooperatives in the Thai economy, the Cooperative Section was transformed to be Cooperative Department under the Ministry of Commerce in 1920, then being Ministry of Cooperatives in 1952. The re-organisation of the government agencies in 1963, however, was concluded with the abolishment of Ministry of Cooperatives. All previous cooperative duties were transferred to attach with the newly

established Ministry of National Development. Again, since 1972, all cooperative works, except for duties under the Cooperative Auditing Department, were merged together under the new department named as "Cooperative Promotion Department" (CPD) and attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the newly established ministry in substituting for the abolishment of Ministry of National Development.

The CPD promotes and disseminates the cooperative ideology, principles and practices and conducts cooperative researches, advises and helps cooperatives to be self-reliance. It also supervises and guides cooperative operations following laws and regulations. Its major cooperative development schemes are: (a) credit linking project for production and rice marketing services; (b) establishment of central market of cooperatives; (c) integrated farming promotion project in small farm pond project areas; (d) hygienic vegetable production promotion project; (e) cooperative women development; and (f) savings promotion program among cooperatives

Vietnam

Vietnam is a land of some 300,000 square miles, with a coastline of some 2,000 miles and as many as 1,000 rivers, more than 7 million hectares of forests, some 10 million hectares of bared land and hills. Vietnam also possesses diverse natural resources, which have been hardly exploited. It has various minerals, such as bauxite ore, iron ore, tin, coal, precious stone, rare earth, oil and gas. According to 2000 statistics the population of Vietnam is about 80 million. While it has a per capita income estimated at less than 400 US\$, the country has an abundant labour force.

Agriculture plays an important role in the cause of developing the national economy. The total land available for agriculture is 6,994,635 hectares which accounts for 21.12% of the total national land fund. The land holding is 54.66%. The total farm population is 76%. The female farm population is 75% of the total women workers. At present the country meets its domestic demand and exports approximately 4 million tons of rice per year. According to the report from Vietnamese General Department of Statistics, Vietnam ranks the 2nd place of the world after Thailand in rice export in 1998.

Rice is the main product of Vietnamese agricultural sector and plants and cattle can be considered of high economic value. Vietnam is exercising its renovation with strategies to swiftly switch over to modernisation and industrialisation. In the coming years, commodity economy would see further development. Industries and services would see a much higher growth rate in comparison with the agricultural sector. Food production would always be the most important activity in agriculture, as it would help to fulfil the following three targets: (a) to satisfy people's consumption needs in any situation; (b) to ensure sufficient supply of foods for farming stock and raw materials for industries; and (c) to raise food export volume.

Status of Women: Vietnam has a great potential of labourers in which female workers accounted for 50.8% of the total. A number of female workers work in the handicraft and agricultural sector, but in agricultural sector, female labourers accounted for over 75% of the total of women workers in the society. Number of female workers working in the villages accounted for 60%. Some villages take 80% of women in carving, inlay, embroidery and weaving sector. The number of chairwomen, vice chairwomen, and chief accountant with high school and university graduation degrees accounted for 20% only. In fact in Vietnam that is only one organization of and for women, i.e. Vietnam Women Union.

Occupying 50.8% of population and 48% of social labour force, Vietnamese women have presented in almost all sectors of national economy especially their contributions to the education and training, health, agriculture and rural development.

Vietnamese women have the same right to study as men. There is no gender gap in pre-school and primary school. The literacy rate of women accounted for 88%. The average number of school year for women is 5.6 and for men it is 6.7. The average life expectancy of women is 68.6 and for men it is 64.3. The death rate of women decreased from 1.33% in 1997 to 0.9% in 1999. While delivering babies, 95.8% of women is looked after by medical staff. The rate of HIV infected women is decreasing and occupying 13% in 1999.

The role of women's participation in management and leadership has been improved. At present 26.22% of women participate in the national assembly – ranks 9th of 135 countries and the 2nd in Asia-Pacific region. The number of women's participation in the People's Council has been increasing and reached to 22.5% in the city/provincial level and 27% in district level. It is the first time, members of Politburo, Vice President of the State, and Vice President of the National Assembly of Vietnam are women.

In comparison with other developing countries in the world, Vietnam is proud of its achievement on the gender equality and the advancement of women. According to the United Nations report on Human Development 1998, Vietnam ranked 40th of Gender Development Index per person.

With a view to supporting the development of cooperative unions, cooperatives, cooperative groups and household economies in Vietnam and expanding friendship relations with cooperative organisation of member countries in the world and representing cooperative movement in Vietnam, the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA) was founded. The VCA is a non-governmental, socio-economic organisation comprising nearly 15,000 primary cooperatives and unions of cooperatives and its membership is about 8 million.

The main functions of the VCA are the following: (a) to take part in making strategy, plan and program for development of cooperatives; (b) to collect ideas, desires of its members to reflect, propose to the Vietnam government and authorised agencies on issues of policies; (c) to protect lawful rights and benefits of its members; (d) to propagate, encourage individual units, households, small and medium sized units to develop cooperatives; (e) to organise operations of consulting, aiding and providing services for its members on the issues of law, and scientific investment; (f) to organise operations of educating and training, improving abilities for leading cadres of the Alliance, managers and labourers in cooperatives and other members; (g) to join international organisations, non-governmental organisations, develop relationship with organisations in other countries; and (h) to implement other obligations assigned by the Vietnam Government or authorities at all levels.

Being instrument in developing the national economy, the cooperative system has made remarkable progress and qualitative and quantitative achievements. The Vietnam Cooperative Movement has proven quite capable of taking advantage of every opportunity and meeting the challenges posed by the future development of the country. Given sound strategies and vision, Vietnam Cooperative Movement is looking forward with confidence to further achievements in the process of industrialisation and modernisation.

SECTION-III

Comparative Field Study Visits

THAILAND

The participants visited Samut Sakhon, Phetchaburi, Maha Sarakham, Khon Kaen, Roi Et and Nakhon Ratchasima Provinces from 1st to 6th September 2002 to get an opportunity to meet some of the progressive women members and observe their participation in the business operations of their agricultural cooperatives.

Samut Sakhon Province was formerly called "Tha Chin" probably because, in the old days, it had been a trading port dealing with a vast number of Chinese junks. In 1548, a town named "Sakhon Buri" was established at the mouth of the Tha Chin River. It was a centre for recruiting troops from various seaside towns. The name of the town was changed into "Mahachai" when khlong (canal) Mahachai was dug in 1704 to join the Tha Chin River at the town. Later, the town was renamed "Samut Sakhon" by King Rama IV, but the villagers still popularly call it "Mahachai". Samut Sakhon occupies a total area of 872 square kilometers and is administratively divided into 3 districts – Muang Samut Sakhon, Krathum Baen, and Ban Phaeo. It is a major fishing port and also the biggest producer of brine salt. The town is located 28 km from Bangkok along highway no.35 – the Thon Buri-Pak Tho Highway. It is also accessible by train from the Wongwian Yai Railway Station in Bangkok.

Phetchaburi Province, an important royal fort during the Ayutthaya period, now serves as a major stop for sightseeing before continuing down south by road or rail to other beach towns in southern Thailand. The Province is worth visiting for its splendid historical park and ancient temples, wonderful beaches and caves, as well as a great variety of local foods. Phetchaburi occupies an area of 6,225 square kilometers, characterised by tick jungles and mountain ranges lying in the west as a border between Thailand and Myanmar and 80 km long coastline towards the Gulf of Thailand in the east. Phetchaburi is divided into 8 districts (Amphoes).

Maha Sarakham Province is situated in the middle of Isan. Although small in size, the Province is considered to be a regional education centre and it is the site of the ancient Dvaravali city of Nakhon Champa Si. Maha Sarakham is 470 kilometers from Bangkok and has an area of approximately 5,291 square kilometers. The Province is divided into 13 districts.

Khon Kaen is a Province situated right in the centre of the northeast. This is an area where pre-historic communities once thrived and where the first dinosaur fossils were found in Thailand. It has developed into a large and prosperous city of the region with a fascinating cultural heritage. Khon Kaen is 445 kilometers from Bangkok and has an area of about 10,886 square kilometers. It comprises 24 districts.

Roi Et is a Province in the lower northeast. It is the land of Thung Kula Rong Hai that was formerly regarded as a wasteland. However, it is now one of the sources of high quality rices in the country. Roi Et has an area of about 8,299 square kilometers, consisting of 20 districts.

Nakhon Ratchasima or “Khorat” is a large Province on the northeastern plateau and is like the gateway to other provinces in the northeast. It is 259 kilometers from Bangkok and has an area of around 20,494 square kilometers. The Province is rich in Khmer culture and has a long history. It also has beautiful nature, with many forests, mountains, waterfalls, and reservoirs. Furthermore, it is wellknown for a variety of quality handicrafts that visitors can choose from.

Ban Kaset Pattana Coop Women’s Group was established in 1997 and it is affiliated to Ban Paew Agricultural Cooperative. Initially there were 50 members with a capital of 6,400 Baht. The reason for forming this Group was that the price of the agricultural produces at that time was low, and people wanted to have their produces processed to add value. The forming of the Group would ease to be granted the subsidy and the technical contribution from the Cooperative. Later, the cooperative organised the training course for the Group on agricultural produce processing lectured by the experts from Kasetsart University, Bangkok. The fruit processing covers six types of fruits. The Food and Drug Administration certify the quality of the product. In 2001 the Group’s product was selected to take part in “one tambol, one product project” organised by the CPD. In the same year, the Group received the subsidy amounting to 700,000 Baht for reconstructing the office - providing materials 280,000 Baht, and for the revolving fund 420,000 Baht. Presently the Group can produce 4,000 glasses of juice in one month.

Krathumban Cooperative Women’s Group was formed on 20th July 2002 under the Krathumban Agricultural Cooperative Limited. Presently there are 30 members with a current share of 1,500 Baht. The Group was given a subsidy of 80,000 Baht by the Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD). The main products of the Group are bencharong ware, vase, earthen jar with a lid, kettle set and water glass.

Hubkapong Cooperative Women’s Group: It was in 1964 while His Majesty the King paid a visit to his subjects in the districts nearby Hua-Hin, he had found that a Group of 83 families of vegetable growers were facing shortage of land for their farming. Therefore, he accepted this farmer group under his royal patronage. Later on, it came up with the establishment of Hubkapong Land Development project, which has been under the supervision of the Hubkapong Cooperative Demonstration Centre of CPD. The Centre allocated a part of land for crop experimentation. In 1972 their Majesty the King and Queen had initiated to use deteriorated land for sisal cultivation which undergoes all the weather. Her Majesty the Queen introduced the cooperative member housewives of Hubkapong village to utilise sisal fibres for making basketry work products to increase families income and for better living. In 1981 the Queen accepted Hubkapong Cooperative Women Group under her royal patronage called “Hubkapong Sisal Art Cooperative Women Group”.

Tah Kham Sammakki Credit Union Cooperative Women’s Group: In 1926 farmers in Tah Yang district initiated to grow lemon. With fertile land and irrigation system lemon grown in this area had good taste, fragrance and fine skin which was unique. Farmers could earn a lot from lemon till it became a cash crop. In 1997 the price of lemon dropped to the lowest point (3 baht per 100). This did not cover the cost. People tried to solve the problem by growing lemons out of season. That also did not work. Phoe Thong Housewife Group, members of Tah Kham Sammakki Credit Union Coop, had an idea to process lemons to add value of products as instant lemon powder, readymade drinking lemon powder, three taste lemon skin and sour preserved lemon. So they formed this Group and carried out the activities. Currently there are 50 members. In 2001 the Group was selected by CPD to participate in “one tambol, one product” by receiving a subsidy of 900,000 Baht.

Nong Prong Samakki Water User Cooperative Women's Group was formed in 2001 with 26 members at the beginning. The objective were to increase the role of the Group and bargaining power, to increase more members' income, and to add value of remaining materials through processing. The Group got a subsidy from CPD. The Group has got two marketing channels – wholesale for Nong Prong Samakki Agricultural Cooperative, and retail for Jatujak open market in Bangkok. However, the quality of products is not yet certified by any recognised organisation.

Ban Paeng Cooperative Women's Group: Apart from abundant rice, reed is widely grown in Ban Paeng village. Traditionally people woven mat from reed for household use. Later women in the village formed a cooperative housewife's group and made the reed waving with the aim of earning supplementary income out of farming season. In 1992 the Group had only 28 members. When the Group became bigger they formed Ban Paeng Coop Women Group. Currently there are 120 members and the Group has been launching "one tambol, one product" after proposing the project for subsidy from CPD. The initial investment for providing materials in reed weaving was from the saving fund of the members. Later the Group had adapted the existing reed mat style to the easier use. Therefore, Kosum Phisai Agricultural Cooperative lent the Group a sewing machine for connecting small pieces of reed mats to a big one. The finished woven mat would be able to be folded and easily carried. The reed mats and other reed products are distributed to the domestic and foreign markets.

Ban Nongbua Dimi Cooperative Women's Group was officially formed on 1st October 2001 under Tah Pra Credit Union Cooperative Limited. The objectives of the Group were (a) to educate the Group in reed weaving; (b) to increase income of members' families and make the community prosperous; and (c) to reduce unemployment and drug addiction problems. At present there are 30 members in the Group. The Group was selected to join "one tambol, one product" project and received a subsidy of 70,000 Baht from the Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD). Members can individually make reed weaving at their own house, or gather in group at the community hall to collectively make it.

Ban Phai Weaving Service Cooperative was registered as a cooperative in 1992. Currently it has got 208 members. Tie-up weaving silk is a typical occupation of members. This kind of silk is woven from dyed silk threads. Previously the ancestors had done it for household use. At present 80% of woven silk are for sale, the rest 20% are for household use. The types are different to manufacturing techniques such as 2 or 3 line crossing. There are 3 main activities in manufacturing – preparing the vertical threads, preparing horizontal threads, and weaving. Silks are sold in Ban Phai district, Khonkaen province and Bangkok markets.

Ban Kuema-u Cooperative Women's Group: People living in Ban Kuema-u (Nakhon Ratchasima Province) spent their leisure time feeding silkworms and weaving silk cloth tracing the ancestors as traditional wisdom for household use. 48 housewives formed this Group with the initial capital of 5,000 Baht in 2001. Presently the Group has 53 members and still has been improving the style of products till they can make new styles of silk such as corrugated silk cloth and women's shoulder band. Raw materials and labours are easily available in the area. And also silk products have wide ranges of styles and can be produced all year round. Furthermore, the Group initiates to weave cotton, which has a heavy demand in the market. Silk products and cotton can be distributed in domestic and foreign markets.

Phimai Agricultural Cooperative Limited is located at Phimai district (Nakhon Ratchasima Province). It was registered under the Cooperative Societies Act 1968 on 15th November 1974 by merging five cooperatives. As on 31st July 2002 the membership of the cooperative is 9,073 persons divided into 108 Groups in 12 sub-districts (tambol). The cooperative paid the loan to the members with an interest rate of 9.5% per year. As on 31st July 2002 the cooperative paid two types of loans (short-term and medium-term) amounting to 275 million Baht. Total deposit from members in was 75 million Baht. Total purchasing business as on 31st March 2001 was 28.82 million Baht. The marketing business of the cooperative is involved in rice trading. The productivity of the cooperative is increasingly high. The rice mill has continuously been improved from the initial capacity of 24 tons a day to 40 tons a day.

JAPAN

The participants visited Kanagawa Prefecture on 17th September and Kagoshima Prefecture from 24th to 26th September 2002 to get themselves acquainted with the organisational structure and business activities of primary level agricultural cooperatives, and also to observe the organisation and functioning of women's associations. The field visits were carried out under the leadership of Mr. Yukio Abe, Manager (Training Department) of the IDACA. In **Kanagawa Prefecture** the participants visited the JA Isehara and its facilities (direct sale shop, gasoline station and one branch office). In **Kagoshima Prefecture** the participants visited Kagoshima Prefectural Union of Agricultural Cooperatives, A-Coop Kagoshima Corporation, Kumiai Fertiliser Inc., Processing Plant attached to Center of Better Living Activities of Ja Aozora, the JA Aozora (head office), Exchange meeting with the members of the JA Women's Association, Facilities of JA Aozora {computer center, natural enemy virus facility for green tea, egg plant cultivation in hard plastic-type green house, strawberry cultivation in green house and ceremonial hall}, and Exchange programme at a nursery school in Kanoya city. The participants also had the opportunity of having a sightseeing tour of Kagoshima Prefecture.

Isehara City

Isehara city is located in the centre of Kanagawa Prefecture with an area of 55.5 square kilometer. Total population is about 100,000 and total household is 38,000. Since 40 years ago, the region had experienced a fast industrialisation due to establishment of many factories and development of collective housing area. Due to industrialisation of the area, the population has increased sharply. The ratio of farm households in the city is about 3.8%. Main agriculture are paddy cultivation, horticulture (orchard, flowers, vegetables) and livestock (dairy, cattle breeding and poultry).

Agriculture in Isehara

Paddy cultivation, dairy, hog raising and poultry account for 50% of the agricultural production in value. Fruit cultivation like pear, grape, persimmon and orange are also very popular. There are tourist farms along the national highway. Horticulture is also popular farming in the region like strawberry, tomato, and cucumber in green houses. In hibita district where orange is extensively grown, there is an orange grading factory. Flowers like rose, carnation, orchid, etc. are also extensively grown. The total number of farm households is 1,462 and the total area of operation is 997 ha.

JA Isehara

JA Isehara covering the whole area of the Isehara city was formed in 1966 by merging of six small cooperatives. It has vigorously undertaken agricultural development of the region with emphasis on agricultural extension services and long-term agricultural development planning of the area. It has been undertaking several development schemes like 3 year integrated development plans after oil shock crisis in order to protect farming and livelihood of the members. Since 1978 it has taken several initiatives to strengthen the cooperative movement. In the recent years, the region has experienced the wave of urbanisation and the agriculture of the region was transformed greatly changing the farmers to part time farmers. In such a situation, the cooperative has started the 9th three-year Plan of Cooperative Strengthening Movement in 2002. Since 1975 the cooperative has held agricultural festivals every year, which has become very popular festival in the city. The total membership of the cooperative is 6,254 (2,545 regular and 3,709 associate) as on March 2002. There are 23 board of directors and 7 auditors. The total number of staff is 333. The total value of the fixed assets is Yen 4.3 billion. As on April 2002 there were 28 Commodity Groups and 8 Committees functioning in the cooperative.

Agriculture in Kagoshima

Kagoshima Prefecture is located at the southern most tip of Kyusyu Island in south west of Japan, and stretches 272 km east and west and 590 km north and south. It has a total area of 9,166.58 km², ranked 10th in Japan, and small groups and islands. It has two main peninsulas – Satsuma peninsula and Okuma peninsula. The groups of islands stretching west and south have about 27% of the total area of Kagoshima Prefecture. The average annual temperature is 17 to 18 degree centigrade. The climate of Kagoshima is temperate with much rain. The total number of farm households in Kagoshima as of February 2000 is 98,211, and in the last five years it has decreased to 12,696. The total farming population is 292,722 and the number of marking farm household is 65,494. The population consists of 143,230 males and 149,492 females. People are mainly engaged in farming, which is defined as full-time farms and part-time farmers with more agricultural income than non-agricultural income. The total cultivated area is 129,600 ha, of which the area of paddy and upland crops is 41,900 ha as of August 2000.

Agriculture income increased by 5% due to increase of gross agricultural income and the non-agricultural income decreased by 8.4% from the previous year due to fall in income from land rent, interest income and salary. The gross agricultural production in 2000 was 404,800 million yen, a decrease of 5,500 million yen or 1.3% from the previous year, which was attributable to decrease of production of industrial crops, vegetables, fruits and livestock products such as pigs and chicken.

Agricultural Cooperatives in Kagoshima

As of January 2001, the total number of farm households was 95,900, which showed a downward trend of farm households. The number of people engaged in farming, limited to commercial farmers, is 102,000, showing year-by-year decrease; the farm household population was 198,000. The total number of members is 252,391 (154,274 regular and 98,117 associate members), a decrease by 10 from the previous year. Regular members decreased by 3,306 (2.1%) while associate members increased by 3,316 (3.5%). The total number of employees was 7,801.

Deposits and savings have increased slightly, but the loans show no marked fluctuations. In 2001 the deposits were 1,006,176 million yen, while the savings balance was 584,581 million yen and loans balance were 330,031 million yen. Though the new contracts of long-term insurance have increased, the long-term mutual insurance possession amount has fallen below the previous year due to the expiry and midway cancellation.

The marketing business turnover has fallen below the previous year from 172,031 to 159,149 billion yen in spite of the increase in sale of rice. At the same time, sales of other items decreased. The purchasing business turnover was 115,270 billion yen, an increase of 78 billion yen to the previous year.

A-Coop Kagoshima Corporation

A-Coop Kagoshima Corporation was established on 1st August 1998 by JA Group. Earlier it was known as AC Supply Corporation. The paid up capital is 400 million yen. There are 15 directors and 4 auditors as on April 2002. The total number of employees is 1,868 (regular employees – 570, semi-regular employees – 34, part-time workers – 1,264) as on April 2002. The supply turnover for the year 2001 was 46,600 million yen. It has got 68 A-Coop Stores, 12 voluntary member stores (operated by JA), 1 green top and 1 general distribution centre of consumer goods. The organisational structure consists of Chairman, President, Senior Managing Director and Managing Director.

Kumiai Fertiliser Inc.

Ja Kagoshima Prefectural Economic Federation and National Economic Federation have established on 1st May 1980 as Kagoshima Prefecture Kumiai Fertiliser and Feed-stuff Inc. On 6th January 1981 it got registered as Kagoshima Prefecture Kumiai Fertiliser Inc. and started its operation on 10th February 1981. The share capital is 50 million yen, of which JA Kagoshima Prefecture Economic Federation has 40 million yen and the Ja National Economic Federation has 10 million yen. There are 9 Directors, 2 Auditors and 21 employees. The organisational structure consists of Chairman, President, Executive Director and Managing Director. The manufacturing capacity of the company is 6,000 ton per month i.e. 72,000 ton per year of the Bulk Blending (BB) granulated compound fertiliser. It is a very economical fertiliser, saves time and labour to produce it and can be supplied 10% cheaper.

JA-Aozora

The meaning of “Aozora” is “Blue Sky”. The total membership of JA-Aozora was 3,137 {2,644 regular members and 493 associate members) as on May 2001. The number of general representatives is 500 persons. General representative meeting is held every year. It has got 12 board of directors, 1 representative auditor and 3 board of auditors. The total staff strength of JA Aozora at the end of the current year was 86 + 45 temporary employees. The JA-Aozora has got many facilities for its members. It has got nine commodity groups. The business profit for the year 2001 was 61.975 million yen. It has got a current surplus of 61.772 million. The total marketing turnover for the year 2001 was 5,144 million yen, which was 10% less than previous year. The marketing of agricultural products (sweet potato, flowers and cereals) increased while livestock products decreased. Import from China is affecting the farm products of Japan very badly.

SECTION-IV

Observations Made by the Participants

THAILAND

Role of Rural Women in Thailand

Majority of the rural women that we saw in Thailand engaged in various types of agricultural work such as planting crops, food processing, animal husbandry and marketing of agricultural products. Though their role in agriculture is vital for the well-being of their families and community as a whole, rural women in Thailand, nevertheless carry a triple burden in their everyday lives; as wives and mother, as agricultural producers and as community workers. They are the economic providers for their families. Though their workday is longer than men's, they still have high respect for the men as the head of the family. Most rural women in Thailand are shy but hard working.

Education

Most of them have primary education only and enable them to read and write. Due to the lower education level, they have less participation in decision making.

Economic Status

Although they are farmers and work for longer hours, their pay sometimes are not sufficient compared to their work. Most women cannot get financial credit from the financial institutions or the cooperatives because they do not own land or other types of collateral. There is no gender equality in obtaining credits and funds. Often, the husbands only are entitled to get credits and loan.

Women's Group in Agricultural Coops

The Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD) has encouraged the agricultural cooperatives to form Women's Group for the development of women in cooperatives. The objectives of this encouragement are (a) to educate and train the women with the objectives of creating awareness among women on their roles and increase their participation in the cooperatives, (b) to motivate and educate women for better living, and (c) to promote the development of income generating projects for women through co-operatives.

At present, there are 5,651 women's groups in Thailand with 170,000 members. Formation of women's co-operatives is not encouraged due to the women's time constraint, lack of accounting knowledge and management skills.

Government Support

The Government through Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD) has introduced a policy "One Village - One Product". Women's Groups are given the task to produce a product so that they can earn extra income besides their main occupation in the agricultural sector. CPD also gives subsidies to the cooperatives for the revolving fund of women's group activities.

Visits To Agricultural Cooperatives Women's Group

The field study visits were arranged to agricultural cooperatives and women's groups in Samut Sakhon, Phetchaburi, Maha Sarakam, Khon Kaen, Roi Et and Nakhon Ratchasima provinces. The participants visited the following 8 women groups and 2 agricultural coops to observe their activities and to have interaction with the members: (a) Ban Kaset Pattana Cooperative Women's Group, (b) Krathumban Cooperative Women's Group; (c) Hubkapong Cooperative Women's Group; (d) Tah Kham Sammakki Credit Union Cooperative Women's Group; (e) Nong Prong Samakki Water User Cooperative Women's Group; (f) Ban Paeng Cooperative Women's Group; (g) Ban Nongbua Dimi Cooperative Women's Group; (h) Ban Phai Weaving Service Cooperative Limited; (i) Ban Kuema-u Cooperative Women's Group; and (j) Phimai Agricultural Cooperative Limited.

01. Krathumban Cooperative Women's Group

This women's group consists of 30 members and produces ceramic souvenir. They have members specialized in designing the product. Although the women in this women's group are not members of this cooperative (Krathumban Cooperative) but they are allowed to put some savings in. Since it is newly established, the product produce by this group is lack of promotion. Skills on management and accounting are the problems faced by this group. Low contribution of share capital from the members contributes to the existing problems.

Observation

- Their exclusive design (hand-made) allows no competition in the area.
- The product produced is fragile and the risk of breaking/damaging the product is rather high.
- There is no proper showroom to display the product.

02. Ban Kaset Pattana Cooperative Women's Group

The women's group produces herbal juice and lime juice. Juices are from aloe vera, coconut, guava, lime, etc. This group was established 15 years ago when they started with flower production. But it was not successful until they decided to change their product to the production of lime and herbal juice with the help of CPD five years ago.

Observation

- At the premises play ground for the children is provided. The women can work and at the same time can look after their children. The group's concern over the welfare of its member is highly appreciated.
- In return the group has got full commitment and support from the members. Strong commitment from the members helps the group become more stable. Every 5th of the month, the members without fail contribute 50 Baht as their savings. This helps the group to increase its capital.

03. Hubkapong Cooperative Women's Group

The women's group produces handicraft from sisal. The products are hand bags, hats, belts, wallets etc. This activity is one of Queen's projects. So, it has good promotion. The women are given training on how to improve the product. The Hubkapong Cooperative helps to market the products. Even though raw materials are available in the area all year round but the amount is insufficient. Moreover, to develop its business, the group needs to increase production technique and skill of the worker.

Observation

- Since it is Queen's project, concentration on the activity of the women's group is a priority to the Cooperative. This is an advantage to the group to really establish its business.
- Hupkapong Center plays an important role in giving publicity to this Cooperative, in particular to the women's group.

04. Tah Kam Sammakki Credit Union Women's Group

The group was established 16 years ago but reorganized again in 1998. It has 50 members now. They process lemon to add value of product as instant lemon powder, ready made drinking lemon powder, three taste lemon skin and sour preserved lemon. The income of this group is roughly 2,000 to 3,000 Bath per month. It manages to give 10% dividend to its members.

Observation

- There is no proper premise for production and the place is not hygienic.
- The packaging of products is not attractive.
- This product cannot penetrate the local market due to lack of marketing skill.
- Social obligation that the group shows e.g. provide school lunch and discount for temples should be followed by other Cooperatives, especially women's group.

05. Nong Prong Samakki Water User Cooperative Women's Group

The group is newly established in 2001. It produces handicraft from sugar palm tree. The products are exported to Japan. Every household has the machine to produce the handicraft so the shortage of supply is not possible. The products can be delivered to the customers on time with the demand. The group is able to give loan to the members with the interest of 1% per year.

Observation

- The products are made from old sugar palm tree and the supply is not sufficient.
- There is no interest among the members to increase the production and expand the market due to their low self-satisfaction.
- No proper showroom to display the products.
- Production premise should be upgraded.
- Publicity and promotion of products should be expanded not only during trade fair or exhibitions but also to hotels and tourist attractions.

06. Ban Paeng Cooperative Women's Group

This women's group belongs to the Kosum Phisai Agricultural Cooperative. Since reed is widely grown in the area and traditionally housewives woven mat for household use, the women felt that they should form a cooperative to earn extra income for the family. Established in 1981 with 48 people only, now the group has 120 members.

Observation

- Raw material is available all year round so the group has got no problem of insufficiency.
- The group has actually provided some income to the old ladies in the village for their better living.
- The PR person of the group does some research on marketing of product. Such research helps the group to improve their product, especially on colour, quality etc.

07. Ban Nongbua Dimi Cooperative Women's Group

The group is established under the Tah Pra Credit Union Cooperative. During the economic crisis in 1990, the society faced financial problem. The government set a policy to help the community involved. The group collaborated with the local authority to start the activity-mat weaving. 30 women were sent for training to broaden their knowledge on weaving and to create awareness in economic stipulation among the community.

Observation

- The chairperson of the group is male. Therefore, we think may be, that no women in the group is capable of becoming a leader or they are still dependent on the men.
- The women members seem to be so hard working and energetic. Their cooperation among themselves helps them to upgrade their products.

08. Ban Phai Weaving Service Cooperatives Limited

This cooperative was established in 1992 with 208 existing members in four districts. In the beginning, this cooperative was an association that involved in handicraft and health care. Later, the community felt that a cooperative must be set up since tie-up silk is a typical occupation for members. The members produce silk and sell to the cooperative and that established the power of bargaining.

Observation

- The cooperative maintains the traditional ancient style and popular among the Thai's only.
- Most of the colours are dull and not attractive especially to the foreigners and the designs are out dated.
- The group should do some research on foreign market.

09. Ban Kuema-u Cooperative Women's Group

In 2001, 48 housewives set up Ban Kuema-u Cooperative Women's Group with the initial capital of 5,000 Baht. At present, the group has 53 members. The members work with no salary but only sharing of profit. The members have committed saving twice a month approximately 50 to 100 Baht. Every household has silk weaving equipment and every member produces 10 pieces of silk every month. Members also are allowed to apply for emergency loan.

Observation

- The members are very committed and hard working.
- The group set up a motto; 'Be patient, Self reliance, Concern for the community, Intelligent and Compatible' really motivate the members to be independent and hard working. Other women's groups should adopt such a spirit.
- Women seem to be more energetic than men. Their time is fully occupied with their double role as wives and part time workers.

10. Phimai Agricultural Cooperative

Established in 1974 with credit as the first business, this cooperative has 9,073 household with 108 groups, which inclusive of seven women's groups. This cooperative is categorized among the top 10 successful cooperatives in Thailand. Business activities

are credit business, depositing money from members and purchasing business. This cooperative also involves in rice trading and has its own rice mill. The rice is being exported to other countries through a private company (AMWAY).

Observation

- A good management helps this cooperative to sustain their success.
- For the development of its members, the cooperative educates the members with cooperative spirit.
- Scholarships are given to selective member's children and this shows the social obligations of this cooperative towards their members well-being.
- The manager of this cooperative has good managerial and technical skills. Although a woman, she portrays a good leader image towards her subordinates.

JAPAN

Agricultural Cooperative Movement

The process of amalgamation that takes place has led the movement to a stronger foundation. Agricultural activities, though facing difficulties in the country, the movement take a lot of initiatives to tackle the problems wisely without jeopardizing any parties involved.

The establishment of commodity wise groups helps the members to manage the agricultural activities in the challenging situation. Introduction of high-tech farming updates the members with the era of globalization. The modern technology used by the agricultural cooperatives helps the farmers to increase their production and income.

The knowledge is also expanded to the Asian countries through training courses, exchange programs, which sometimes are fully sponsored by the government of Japan. Trainees from this region are brought into Japan to learn the success of the Japanese agriculture system and its management and if possible be implemented in their own countries. 'Sharing of experienced' policy by the Government of Japan is highly appreciated and should be followed by other countries.

Problems

Though the agricultural cooperative movement is strong in Japan but the main problem faced is the aging society. Difficulty in locating successors leads the government and the agriculture movement to finding drastic solutions to solve the matter. Since agriculture land is limited due to the development of other sectors, which have taken some parts of the agriculture land, this problem also should be addressed.

Another problem faced is the import of agricultural products from other countries, which indirectly has caused the drop of price for local agricultural commodities. And this really affects the local agricultural producers especially the agricultural cooperative members.

Process of amalgamation

Amalgamation of primary cooperatives helps the movement becomes stronger especially in competing with the private sector in business activities. By merging the cooperatives through amalgamation process, the formation of subsidiaries by the movement are viable in the competing market since the cooperative law does not bind subsidiaries.

Observation on JA operation

JA as a service oriented organization plays an important role to upgrade the living standard of its members. Thus by providing proper guidance and training through the Farm Guidance Activity help the members to increase the production of agricultural products. Facilities and other raw materials for the agricultural productions to the local farmers are provided at doorsteps and it is up to them to grab the opportunities given by the JA. Looking at the scenario, Japanese people are hard working and appreciate whatever facilities provided to them.

One of the recent campaigns launched is 'Local Produced Product For Local Consumption' has the potential to benefit the local farmers. Through this campaign also, the public awareness on their food consumption can be increased. Services given by the JA range from the cradle to the grave. Members needs and demands are given full attention. Hence, the better living activity carries a mission to develop a healthy and quality life among the people especially the members. Aged people (cooperative members) seem to be enjoying their lives as a result of facilities given by the JA.

Strong support for the Women's Association activities proves that the equality among the gender has been taken into consideration by the movement. Women members in the association are given great opportunities to develop themselves especially in improving their lifestyle. The capital that they have is fully utilized for their own benefits. Prior to this, JA caters the support needed by the Women's Association.

Government support

Realizing the problems faced by the country's agriculture activity the government has introduced the 'Agricultural Town Concept' to the movement. Large scale of agricultural land area (at least 20 ha) can be leased to leading farmers interested in producing agricultural commodities.

Subsidies are given to leading farmers in order to upgrade their production activities. In this manner, the living standard of the farmers increased and will potentially attract the young generation to agriculture. Thus the problem of finding successors in agricultural activities can be solved.

With regards to the above, the Polytechnic of Agriculture and Farmers Junior College have been set up. No doubt the institutions are for those with agricultural background but those with none are also invited.

Encouragement and support given by the government to acknowledge the role of women in agriculture are deeply appreciated. The introduction of Family Management Agreement which enables the women to get green pension is one of the steps the government takes to make the women's work visible in the eyes of the authorities and public and partly to empower women's participation.

Visit to JAs

a. Women's Association under JA Chosei

The activities of this association are mainly on better living. Improvement of lifestyle among the members is the focus. This can be seen through the soap making activity in order to create a clean environment for living.

Mrs. Mineshima, an experienced leader of the Association at Prefecture and National Level contributes to the success of the association. New knowledge and experienced gained from her visits to foreign countries are an advantage to the members. She is the mentor of her Association's members.

b. Green house of Women's Association Member

Ms. Nagashima's management skills and credibility of handling the green house, which produces onion leaves, amazed everybody who knows her. Ms. Nagashima, a successful businesswoman, receives support from JA through the advice given by the farm advisors.

c. JA Isehara

In the process of amalgamation of 5 JAs, JA Isehara amends its by-law by involving the women in the executive planning policy. This initiative proves the JA's appreciation towards the contribution of its women members.

The well management organization of this particular JA can be seen through its 3 Years Reinforcement Plan and 5 Years Agriculture Plan. By having these plans, the aging population problem is looked into by conducting courses at elementary schools in order to educate the children on the benefits of agriculture and the cooperatives. Besides that, youth programs are initiated with the aims of lobbying the price of agriculture products.

At one of its branches, JA Isehara promotes the local produced product for local consumption by having a small store for the local farmers to sell their products. The JA introduces the bar-code system whereby the farmers themselves code in their price on their products. In addition to that, the farmers have to put their names or picture on the price label. This is due to the public awareness on cleanliness and hygienic food and anxiety to know whom the producers are.

d. Kagoshima Prefecture Union

Kagoshima Prefecture leads the producing of livestock in Japan and 2nd in green tea. Due to mountainous landscape, upland crops takes the leading agricultural activities in this prefecture compared to paddy.

In this area number of large-scale agricultural land has increased. However, number of farming household and farmers have decreased due to the main problem of Japan i.e. aging society and abandoned agricultural land.

Kagoshima Prefecture Union takes the initiative to increase the productivity by helping to rationalize the internal management of JAs. Kagoshima Prefecture Union has taken initiative of creating better understanding with the public by having good publicity and public relations activities.

e. A-Coop Kagoshima Corporation

A-Coop Kagoshima Corporation is one of the subsidiaries of Kagoshima Economic Federation and the only distribution center in Kagoshima Prefecture. Establishment of this center by the JAs helps the movement to involve in business activities freely and not bound under the cooperative act. Equipped with computer networking, this center is linked to 68 regular A-Coop stores and 7 small retail shops in Kagoshima.

In this center processing, packaging and distribution of products are centralized. By having the motto of 4S1K (Seiso – cleaning, Sekkyaku – how to take care customers, Sendo – freshness, Shinazoroe – supply of variety products to meet with the needs, and Kakaku – reasonable price) the center tries to provide the best service to the customers.

f. Kumiai Fertilizer Inc.

This fertilizer company is also one of the companies established by the Kagoshima Economic Federation and the second largest fertilizer manufacturer in Japan. Fertilizer with the brand name of BB Fertilizer is introduced to Japan by JA Zen-Noh, which has brought the raw material from the United States.

80% of the fertilizer is organic based. Fertilizer is produced based on the needs of local farmers depending on the soil diagnosis done by this company for the farmers. The fertilizer also is produced based on the kind of crops grown by the local farmers.

g. JA Aozora

JA Aozora has good relation with the local government and work together to improve and increase the agricultural activities and living standard of the local people. By providing better living, they believe it will be an attraction to the young people to come back and stay at their hometown as successors to agricultural activities. Through better living activities, JA Aozora encourages women and old people to actively involve in agricultural activities.

This JA is fortunate to have an ambitious General Manager who introduces the concept of looking problems at positive manner. He tries to view and tackle the problems into the business opportunities.

Women's Association activities get strong support from the JA. Dancing, music and cultural activities, etc. involve mostly aged women in the area. Improvement of lifestyle is the main focus of this association.

h. Farmer's family

Mr. Minamigawa, member of JA Aozora is one of leading farmers for strawberry and melon in the area. He strongly believes that joint marketing is very viable for promoting agricultural products. He acknowledges the farm advisor as an important guidance to promote successful agricultural activities. He gets the subsidy from the government for his strawberry green house and loans from JA.

i. The facilities of JA Aozora

As mentioned earlier in the agricultural cooperative movement, all JAs provide facilities from cradle to grave to the members. In particular, JA Aozora not excluded in providing good facilities to its members. As an example, it has invented natural enemy virus for protection against insects destroying the green tea.

In addition, JA Aozora introduced hard plastic typhoon proof green house to its members. Since this area is always affected by typhoons, introduction of hard plastic typhoon proof green house with computerized system assures the farmer of sustainable income from agricultural activity.

SECTION-V

Action Plans Proposed by the Participants

In view of the experience gained by the participants through class room lectures, field study visits in Thailand and Japan, interaction among themselves, and based upon their own work environment, the participants were able to develop brief outlines of their Action Plans which they would recommend to their organisations after their return to their home countries. These plans were developed through holding group discussions and on the basis of their discussions with their seniors before joining the Training Course.

{1} INDONESIA

The two participants were sponsored by the Dewan Koperasi Indonesia (DEKOPIN). They proposed the following Action Plan:

Ms. Khulsum Hidayati

1. Share the experiences and observations of women's groups in Thailand and Japan also information and knowledge from this Training Course with the board members of "Koperasi Citra Lestari", also with the board member of "PUSKOPWANJATI" (Central Women's Cooperative in East Java that is Provincial Level women's Cooperatives). So, good system, management, improvement and achievement that have been made by the women's groups in both countries can give the idea for activities of women in rural areas specially in areas of East Java.
2. Increase the quality activities of members from improving the human resources to improving the management skill in their business activities through proper training and extension to the members. Moreover, promote cooperation network for member's products market opportunities.
3. Inspired by Ms. Kanno's (JIBC technical Advisor) presentation, one of the next social activities of "Koperasi Citra Lestari" is giving nutritious food during lunch time to selected elementary schools in rural area nearby the cooperative twice per month in the beginning and increase after that. Hopefully in the future the student-parent in that school will consider giving contribution. So, they can have knowledge on the importance of nutritious food.
4. Give the idea for "PUSKOPWANJATI" (Central Women's Cooperative in East Java) activities to increase the number of potential women's groups in East Java and to establish the women's cooperative within that groups.

Ms. Yoshiko Hikariati

1. Prepare database of women's cooperatives in Indonesia, such as, potential organizations, system, management and business conditions. All the data will become the source of action plan of the BKWK (Women Cooperator Communication Committee) in facilitating activities of the women's cooperatives. So, training and extension will give proper need.

2. Training for moderator (extension worker) who has been selected as prospective potential women. The objective of the training is to increase the business sensitivity of participants. So that they can capitalize natural and human resources in their communities into business opportunity, establish the women groups and develop the group through cooperative activity.
3. Monitoring and evaluating the program activities, specially the activities that has already given (number 2) and set up the cooperation network with other related institutions, i.e. Government institutions or Non-Government Organizations for facilitating and assisting the women's group in developing stage. Moreover, sustainable development programme will be the priority for the next BKWK activities.
4. Form the Center of Information for women's cooperatives in terms of cooperation network for sharing knowledge, business activities and other programme among women's cooperatives in Indonesia.

{2} MALAYSIA

The two participants were sponsored by the National Cooperative Organisation of Malaysia (ANGKASA). They proposed the following Action Plan:

Ms. Roszurina Binti Omar

1. Information based on this training will be published in our magazine, which will be distributed to all the cooperatives of ANGKASA members.
2. Experienced and information gained from this training will be presented during the celebration of Rural Women's Day in October 2002 organized by ANGKASA (national level).
3. Strengthen the Women's Development Committee at National and State Level by providing clear objectives and visions for women's development. Issues on women's problems should be determined and plans for the development should be focussed on the issues identified.
4. Statistical data on women's activities in cooperatives will be updated from time to time for future plans.
5. Based on the data, women's needs in cooperatives will be identified and training modules will be designed for the development of women in cooperatives especially in rural areas.
6. Collaborate with other agencies dealing with the women's development in giving education and training especially on entrepreneur's activities, investment, packaging and marketing of product etc.
7. Based on the experience of Women's Group in Japan, 'External Leader' pilot project will be proposed to the Women's Development Committee.
8. Product Promotion Centre, which is newly established in ANGKASA, will be furnished with all information on Women's Group activities for creating networking with other parties concerned.

Ms. Hajjah Norain Binti Harun

1. Information and experience gained will be given to all the board members during the monthly Board Meeting and later pass down to all the members of the cooperative.
2. Seminar, workshop and forums will be organized at primary level cooperative. Through these, all cooperative members and other parties concerned should be equipped with clear objectives, vision and mission of Women's Group in the cooperative. Clear focussed objectives will help to gain support and strengthen the Women's group as well as the cooperative.
3. Establish contacts with the local women's association and if possible create a joint plan for the development of rural women in the area.
4. Courses on Entrepreneurs Activities in Cooperatives will be conducted from time to time to the members without gender segregation.
5. Courses on Public Speaking, Leadership Skills, Starting up a Business, etc. will be conducted from time to time with the help of ANGKASA to the members. By having these courses, self confidence among the women can be build and increased.

{3} THAILAND

The two participants were sponsored by the Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD) and the Cooperative League of Thailand (CLT). They proposed the following Action Plan:

Ms. Thanya Thammakuntipong & Ms. Piyarat Sasikan

1. Provide women with formal and informal education concerning family care and shared responsibilities for family planning.
2. Establish mental health care programmes for women to guarantee their social security.
3. Provide training and accurate information about sustainable agriculture for women as well as men.
4. Promote, support and develop alternative marketing systems for their products.
5. Organise working groups to promote production and marketing of handicrafts.
6. Provide training for women groups to develop their potential and increase more employment opportunities.
7. Support the establishment of women's groups in rural areas to improve women's status.
8. Encourage women to take part in developing and transmitting new technology.
9. Encourage women to take active participation in safeguarding environments.

{4} VIETNAM

The two participants were sponsored by the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA). They proposed the following Action Plan:

Ms. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Cam & Ms. Tran Thi Tuyet

1. To set up the project of credit insurance fund for cooperatives.
2. To increase education and training on management skills, business skills and vocational training in which gender issue is included for women in cooperatives.
 - *To design special training programs such as short term training courses (3 half days) for women in rural areas so that they can take part in the course and take care of the family.*
3. To set up network of support and promotional organizations for women in rural areas so that they can receive the support fully but not overlap.
4. To give suggestion to the National Bank of Agricultural and Rural Development to create good condition for women in cooperatives to approach the loan for job creation and production development.
5. To introduce and share experience and best practices on management skills and business skills, etc. which we have gained from women group in Thailand and Japan and among our colleague and women groups in Vietnam.
6. To detect the shortcomings and irrationalities in Cooperative Law and other policies on cooperatives in Vietnam for better recommendation and settlement such as issues related to the land use in cooperatives, switch of old type cooperatives into new type cooperatives, solution to cooperative members, household assets and debts, operational contents of cooperatives, relationship between local authorities and cooperatives.
7. To make widespread propagation of the activities of Japan and Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia in general and women groups in cooperatives in particular among women and women groups in cooperatives in Vietnam. Therefore, they may understand and have willing to take part in cooperative development.

SECTION-VI

Concluding Session

The 2nd ICA-Japan Training Course for “Strengthening Women’s Agricultural Cooperatives in Rural Areas and Improvement of Farm Management and Rural Life” was organised by the International Cooperative Alliance Regional Office for Asia the Pacific (ICA ROAP) in collaboration with the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA) during 29th August to 4th October 2002 with the funding support of the Government of Japan in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). Eight participants – two each from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam attended the Course. Besides attending the classroom sessions, the participants had an exposure to primary and prefectural level agricultural cooperatives in Kanagawa and Kagoshima Prefectures.

The concluding session of the Training Course was held on Wednesday, 3rd October 2002 with Mr. Isamu Akiyama, Dy. Director, Technical Cooperation Division, International Affairs Department, General Food Policy Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Government of Japan as Chief Guest. Mr. Shigeri Fukamachi, General Secretary of IDACA and Mr. K. Sethu Madhavan, Planning Officer of ICA ROAP addressed the closing session.

At first, **Mr. Akiyama** expressed his satisfaction on the successful completion of the Training Course. He also congratulated the participants on their completing the programme successfully and hoped that the experiences gained by them while in Thailand and Japan would be useful when they return to their countries. He also said that agricultural sector in Japan is facing very serious problems amid the globalisation of economy. He believed such problems might be common in Asian countries because we are in the same monsoon area and we have the same rice culture.

Mr. Shigeri Fukamachi made congratulatory remarks to all participants that the Training Course has been completed satisfactorily without any problems. He also expressed his satisfaction and gratitude that the ICA was able to identify good participants for being able to attend the Course for its full duration and conveyed his thanks to the member organisations for their cooperation. In view of the vital roles women play for the upliftment of agriculture and rural communities in both developing countries as well as in Japan today, the IDACA has been trying to increase the number of women participants and promote their empowerment through training programmes. He was happy to note that this Training Course proved to be quite an eye opening for the participants to learn afresh the ways on rural women empowerment in Japan through cooperatives and also the unique features of the Japanese society which is worthy of studying. He finally requested the participants to make best use of their experiences gained in Japan to develop some institutional supports for women in their own countries.

In his address, **Mr. K. Sethu Madhavan**, congratulated the participants and IDACA for the successful completion of the Training Course. He also expressed the gratitude and appreciation of the ICA to the Japanese Government, especially MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) for the financial support extended in the conduct of this Training Course.

'Certificate of Participation' was awarded to the participants by the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA).

Ms. Roszurina Binti Omar (Malaysia) speaking on behalf of the participants expressed the participants' greatest appreciation to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Government of Japan for providing financial support for this Training Course. How grateful they are to the Government of Japan! She hoped that the MAFF would continue to support this training program in future for the development of women especially the rural women in the developing countries.

She also expressed the gratitude of the Group to the ICA and IDACA for organizing the training course from 29th August to 4th October in Thailand and Japan. No words can describe how grateful they are to have gained such knowledge and experience during this training. The experience and knowledge that they got in Thailand and Japan will be brought back to their countries. They will try to implement whatever, wherever and whenever applicable for the benefit of all especially for the development of rural women in their countries.

In Thailand, the hard working attitude of the Thai women, their small scale business and the commitment they showed towards their families and community has inspired them of doing the same in their countries. Besides, the better living activities of the Japanese Women Association, especially when they saw the aged women in the association enjoying their lives through social activities, have caught them speechless. Japanese women that they visited have taught them indirectly how to value and treasure their lives and appreciate whatever God has given them in this world. They hoped in future IDACA will invite more and more women to enroll in this great, relevant and important course which would educate them physically, mentally and spiritually.

Upon completion of the 2nd ICA-Japan Training Course for "Strengthening Women's Agricultural Cooperatives in Rural Areas and Improvement of Farm Management and Rural Life" the participants left Japan for their home countries on 4th October 2002.

SECTION-VII

List of Participants

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SECTION-VIII

Course Programme

29 th August		Arrival of participants and IDACA/ICA delegates at Bangkok.
30 th August	FN	Orientation & Opening Ceremony. Courtesy call to Cooperative League of Thailand (CLT).
	AN	Courtesy call to Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD).
31 st August		Sightseeing in Bangkok.
1 st & 2 nd Sept.		Field Study Visits to Samut Sakhon & Phetchaburi Provinces.
3 rd Sept.	FN	"Introduction to Women Group's Activities in Asia" by Ms. Revathi Balakrishnan, Regional Sociologist and Gender Development Officer, FAO ROAP.
	AN	"Present Situation of Coops and Women's Group in Thailand" by Ms. Komnapa Chaiyawat, Head of Project Section, Planning Division, CPD.
4 th to 6 th Sept.		Field Study Visits to Maha Sarakham, Khon Kaen, Roi Et and Nakhon Ratchasima Provinces.
7 th Sept.		Return to Bangkok
8 th Sept.		Drafting of report by participants on their observations.
9 th Sept.		Departure for Tokyo Arrival of Participants at IDACA.
10 th Sept.	FN	Orientation & Opening Ceremony
	AN	"Culture, Society and Economy of Japan" by Mr. Toru Nakashima, Dy. Manager (Training Department), IDACA.
11 th Sept.		"Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives in Japan" by Mr. Toru Nakashima, Dy. Manager (Training Department), IDACA.
12 th Sept.	FN	"Organisation and Activities of the JA Women's Associations" by Ms. Eiko Oshita, Coordinator (Training Department), IDACA.
	AN	Move to Chiba Prefecture
13 th Sept.	FN	Exchange meeting with JA Chosei Women's Association.
	AN	Visit to farmer's house (horticulture).

14 th Sept.		Sightseeing in Tokyo (Tokyo Disneyland).
15 th Sept.		Sunday: Free
16 th Sept.		National holiday: Preparation of Group Report on Thailand.
17 th Sept.		Visit to JA Isehara in Kanagawa Prefecture and its Facilities (direct sale shop, gasoline station, and branch office).
18 th Sept.		"Agricultural Cooperative Movement in Japan and various Approaches to some Cooperative Development Efforts" by Mr. Yukio Abe, Manager, Training Department, IDACA.
19 th Sept.		Case Study on "Entrepreneurial Activities of Rural Women in Japan" by Ms. Kazuko Kano, Senior Technical Advisor, Project Development Department, Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).
20 th Sept.		"Women Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment" by Ms. Noriko Furutani, Researcher, Social Development Department, Global Link Management.
21 st Sept.		Saturday: Free
22 nd Sept.		Sunday: Free
23 rd Sept.		Travel to Kagoshima Prefecture.
24 th Sept.	FN	Visit to JA Kagoshima Prefectural Union
	AN	Visit to A-Coop Kagoshima Corporation and Kagoshima Kumiai Fertiliser Inc.
25 th Sept.	FN	* Courtesy call on Mayor of Ariyake Town. * Observation of Processing Plant attached to Center of Better Living Activities. * Visit to JA Aozora (head office).
	AN	Introduction to the activities of Women's Association. Visit to farmer's house (cultivating strawberry, melon and paddy).
26 th Sept.	FN	Observation of facilities of JA Aozora {compost center, natural enemy virus facility for green tea, egg plant cultivation in hard plastic-type green house, strawberry cultivation in green house, and ceremonial hall}.
	AN	Exchange programme at a nursery school in Kanoya city.
27 th Sept.		Sightseeing in Kagoshima Prefecture.
28 th Sept.		Return to Tokyo
29 th Sept.		Sunday: Group Discussion.

30 th Sept.	FN	Preparation of Group Report on Japan.
	AN	Presentation of Group Reports on Thailand and Japan.
1 st October		“JA Group’s Approach to WTO” by Ms. Noriko Tanaka, Joint Senior Manager, International Policy and Strategic Planning Affairs, Agricultural Policy Department, JA-ZENCHU.
2 nd October		<i>“Women Entrepreneurship and Village Revitalisation Activities” by Ms. Kazko Yamamoto, Consultant.</i>
3 rd October	FN	Evaluation and Closing Ceremony.
	AN	Move to Narita
4 th October		Departure of participants from Japan.

FN Session	:	09:30 – 12:00
AN Session	:	13:30 – 16:00



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