



**International
Co-operative
Alliance**
Asia and Pacific



We wish you all a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year! 2016 promises to be an exciting year as there are a number of important events planned throughout the year. The year starts off with the 3rd Women's Conference in Philippines in February; mid-year, the 10th Minister's Conference in Indonesia; and the 12th Regional Assembly and 9th Cooperative Forum in India in November. The Regional Assembly will witness the election of a new Board to serve the Asia Pacific region. Following the Regional Consultations in Jakarta and Kathmandu, the regional office will work during the year to strengthen association with the ASEAN and SAARC Secretariats to promote regional engagement. The Malaysia Business Office (MBO) will build on the initiatives started last year in the areas of Fairtrade and Halal certification. The Regional Office will continue to host the ICA-MAFF, Japan training course and carry out seminars and workshops in collaboration with ANGKASA, ACFSMC, JCCU and NACF.

South Asia Cooperatives Regional Consultation

The two-day Regional Consultation of South Asia Cooperatives was held on December 14 and 15 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The opening ceremony was attended among others, by the Honourable Chitra Bahadur KC, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for

Co-operatives and Poverty Alleviation, Nepal and Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General, SAARC; while the closing ceremony was graced by Mr. Bishnu Prasad Paudel, Finance Minister, Government of Nepal and Dr. Yuba Raj Khatiwada, Vice-chairperson National Planning Commission. The Regional Consultation discussed in earnest the issues relating to the Sustainable Development Goals, in association with the ICA Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade, with more focus on five thematic issues, Food Sovereignty, New Co-operative Approaches (Innovation), Co-operatives and the Transition from the Informal into the Formal economy, Regional and Global engagement of Co-operatives, as well as Enabling Environment. Country presentations by six participating countries in the South Asia Region, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, were followed by group discussions. Among the recommendations included cluster based approach in an effort to mitigate the migration from rural to urban areas; skill development undertaken in a manner that results in the actual establishment and development of sound co-operatives; provision of "Start-up Funds", not "subsidies", to stimulate and generate members' contributions to the development of their own co-operative; strong and direct linkages built and developed between producers and consumers co-operatives, in an effort to stabilize pricing, to strengthen value chains and to establish sound co-operative branding; existing public-cooperative partnership strengthened, and new ones built, on an equal basis to channel government programs in a responsible, transparent and effective manner; promotion and establishment of broad-based engagement of cooperatives with multiple stakeholders, including the media, parliamentarians, international organizations, NGOs etc., in order to broaden the scope and involvement of co-operatives in the public domain nationally, regionally, as well as internationally; and the development of new co-operative legislation to be more responsive to contemporary issues and amenable to new co-operative approaches

2015 China – Europe Business Summit

The first China-Europe Cooperatives business summit was held in Shanghai on December 9 and 10. The Summit was organized to provide the opportunity for cooperative leaders from China and Europe to hear about the business potential and explore opportunities for engagement through direct face-to-face meetings. The 20 Chinese cooperatives representatives from Guangdong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Chongqing and Beijing provinces were engaged in retail and wholesale trade, import and export food, beverages, fertilizers, and farm equipment. The European side was represented by 26 participants from 20 cooperative federations from Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Israel, Italy, and UK. Mr. Li Chunsheng, Vice President of the ICA-AP region explained the importance of trade for China and that the "One Belt, One Road" linking Asia and Europe presented an opportunity for the development of cross-border trade e-commerce. Mr. Petar Stefanov, Global Board member, heading the European delegation spoke of the importance of the Summit in strengthening linkages between the two important regions. The presentations from both sides revealed the opportunities that exist for trade in a variety of areas such as food, beverages, agriculture inputs, and farm machinery.

Opportunities to improve Value Chain through Fair Trade and Halal Certification

The MBO organized a seminar to explore opportunities to improve value chain through Fair Trade and Halal Certification in Kuala Lumpur on December 2 and 3, 2015. The seminar was hosted by ANGKASA (Malaysian National Co-operative Movement), the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU), and the National Agricultural Co-operative Federation (NACF), Korea and attended by 40 participants from 12 countries - China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka Singapore and Vietnam. The seminar had presentations from experts in the field, experience-sharing by cooperatives involved in the activities, and field visits. Mr. Erwin Novianto provided an overview of Fair Trade International, the premium that fair trade products commanded, and the opportunities for cooperatives. Ms. Han Geumee, traced the history of iCoop's association with fair trade since 2007 and about their partnership with 17 producer organizations from 12 countries. Ms Elizabeth Dellina, from Panay Fairtrade Center Philippines spoke about their cooperative's association with iCOOP Korea in sourcing products such as mascobado sugar, ginger, and banana. Mr. Jamie Rammie, from the Halal Development Corporation (HDC), presented an overview of the \$1.5 trillion Halal market and HDC's role in promoting halal business. Mr. Mohd Naim Aziz, explained the

requirements of JAKIM (Malaysian Halal certification) and its recognition in over 63 countries. Mr. Rushdi Siddiqui, Co-founder and CEO of Zilzar gave a comprehensive overview of Zilzar, the leading e-Halal (e) commerce platform. Mr. Kim Moon from NACF spoke about the importance they were attaching to halal products and their target to export \$200 million by 2020.

Capacity Building of women coop members in India

The Punjab Institute of Co-operative Training Limited (PICT) organised a “Training Program on Women Empowerment – a Cooperative Corridor” on 20th October 2015 at the PICT training hall in Chandigarh, India. The participants were women assistant registrars, cooperative inspectors, members of cooperatives and self-help groups. The objectives of the program were to help the participants have a good understanding of gender issues and self help concept and to enable participants to improve their capacity and competence to organise sustainable self help groups and cooperatives in the state. Dr. S.K. Batish, Managing Director of PICT delivered the welcome address and Mrs. Nisha Rana, Additional Registrar of Cooperative Societies gave an overview of women empowerment through cooperatives and self help groups in the state of Punjab. Mr. Arunjit Singh Miglani, Registrar of Cooperative Societies of Punjab state was the Chief Guest. Mrs Savitri Singh, Advisor Gender Program and Communication, ICA AP, invited as a special guest and resource person to conduct the training gave an introduction of the ICA and its work for sustainable cooperative development in the Asia Pacific-region focusing on the Indian Cooperative Movement.

Punjab is one of the *agriculturally successful* states in India and women enjoy the reputation of being hard working and contribute to the largely agrarian economy. In spite of economic well being, gender discrimination is rampant here and there is limited mobility for women to explore newer areas of livelihood or in the expansion of existing businesses. However, the cooperative department in Punjab has shown support towards women’s economic endeavours and their development through cooperatives. Ms. Singh shared stories from cooperatives in various countries and encouraged participants to share their own stories with others. A few participants informed the group about their access to markets in Delhi and that, they had been regularly participating at national and international trade fairs.

49th ICA Committee on Consumer Co-operation for AP and Seminar in Kuala Lumpur

The 49th ICA Committee on Consumer Cooperation for Asia and Pacific meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on December 1, 2015. 8 Committee members and 11 observers from 9 countries who attended the committee meeting. The meeting started with an opening addresses by Mr. Amano Haruyoshi, chairperson of the committee; Mr. Haji Nasir Khan Yahaya, CEO, ANGKASA; and Mr. Balu Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP. Ms. Nishimoto Yuki secretary of the committee, reported the Activity Report since last meeting in Bali 2014 and the activity plan for 2016. The committee members made presentations of their recent activities and business results, which were followed by active discussions. The next committee meeting is scheduled to be held in New Delhi, India, in conjunction to the Regional Assembly in November, 2016.

In conjunction with the meeting, a seminar on Consumer Protection was organised. Ms. Indrani Thuraisingham, Head of Consumers International (CI) Office for Asia Pacific, made a presentation on “The Problems among Consumers in Asia and Pacific”. CI, an independent organization advocates for the global voice for consumers and to protect and empower consumers everywhere. CI focuses their activities in four strategic areas - Financial Services; Consumers in the Digital Age; Consumer Justice and Protection; and Food Safety, Security and Nutrition”. Among the issues touched upon were obesity caused by increasing consumption of fast food and their inappropriate promotion by global fast food corporations; and the haze caused by slash and burn methods in the Indonesian forests. It is important that consumers

take action and express their opinion while choosing products. Ms Hisa Anan, former Secretary General of Consumer Affairs Agency, Government of Japan, gave a lecture on, "The issues among Consumers' Policy in Japan – Realize the consumer civil society by power of Co-op!" Her presentation included a report on recent consumer issues in Japan, such as internet shopping, dishonest businesses targeting senior citizens and people with difficulties, and relief systems for consumer-protection. She explained that in its back ground, there is an "isolation" of individuals and the need to realize the "Consumer Civil Society" through communication of "Advising each other", "Learning with each other" and "Helping each other", in the community.

UPCOMING EVENTS

1. 3rd Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Cooperative Meeting, Kuwait, January 5-7, 2016.
2. Fostering Core Leaders of Agriculture Cooperatives, Japan February 1 to April 9, 2016.
3. Third Regional Conference on Status of Women in Cooperatives, Philippines, February 9 – 12, 2016 [Click here](#) to know more.

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