



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

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## 10<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Minister's Conference



The 10<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Minister's Conference will be held from April 18 to 21, 2017 in Hanoi, Vietnam. The conferences a joint initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Government of Vietnam, the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA) and ICA-AP. The theme for the conference is: "Visioning Ahead to 2030: Promoting Stronger Partnerships between Government and Co-operative Stakeholders in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." The uniting voice from the Regional Consultations was that the success of co-operatives relies altogether on healthy member-based cooperatives, as well as good governance, but expansion and further advancement must be grounded in communities and further supported by strong and strategic partnerships with respective governments and international and national organizations in the Asia Pacific Region. Partnership is considered crucial in this day and age. To bring about sustained economic democracy, co-operatives must work in partnership with key stakeholders. This is especially true at a time when inequality is deepening in the region despite the gains created by the capitalist system. Co-operatives offer an alternative model to the capitalist system as sustainable enterprises, which values are to be shared and recognized by their multiple stakeholders. The 10<sup>th</sup> Co-operative Ministers' conference will highlight the ways in which cooperatives are contributing to achieving the SDGS; explore ways to strengthen partnerships between Governments and Co-operative Stakeholders; and draw a road map to realizing the potential of co-operatives in sustainable development. The conference will be attended by Ministers in charge of cooperatives, representatives of governments, ICA-AP member organisations, and international development agencies.

## Roadmap to enhance share of cooperative banks in Agricultural Credit



The National Federation of State Cooperative Banks (NAFSCOB) held a one-day National Seminar on the Roadmap to enhance share of Cooperative Banks in Agricultural Credit in Mumbai. The meeting attended was attended by officials from the State and District Cooperative Banks, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the National Cooperative Union of India and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India. The genesis of the road map had its roots in the concern expressed by Mr. Harsh Kumar Banwala, Chairman, NABARD in July 2016 about the declining pre-eminence of cooperative banks in agriculture credit, negative perception of the public about co-operative banks, and capability of cooperative banks in delivering banking services and products driven by technology. Following this observation, an internal committee was constituted comprising of members of State Cooperative Banks to look at the status of cooperative banks, analyze performance, and prepare a road map. The roadmap looks at ways in which cooperative banks can fulfill the governments mandate to double the income of farmers by 2022 by addressing issues related to leadership, human resources, performance and technology. The five-years roadmap calls for action across all levels of the three-tier structure – primary cooperative societies, district cooperative banks, state cooperative banks and national federation. Speaking at the seminar, Dr. Ashish Kumar Bhutani, Joint Secretary asked banks to improve their data collection mechanism and provide constant feedback to the government on the various programs being implemented. Adoption of technology was the constant reference made in the speeches by the ministry, RBI and NABARD. Dr. Bhanwala in his speech mentioned about the commitment of NABARD to cooperative banks but called on them to institute internal reforms in areas of manpower, representation of members, and documentation of good practices; and take advantage of incentives (grants to convert to RuPay card, micro ATMs) provided by the government to improve systems.

## NZ's co-operative economy mapped for the first time



New Zealand's co-operative economy has been comprehensively mapped for the first time, revealing the significance of the sector in terms of revenue, jobs, and membership, as well as obvious differences between New Zealand's and other co-operative economies. The New Zealand Co-operative Economy report finds the co-operative sector contributes revenues of more than \$42.3 billion per annum and New Zealand's Top 30 co-operatives and mutuals are responsible for 1.4 million memberships, employment of 48,500 people, and a revenue to GDP ratio of 17.5 per cent. The report – a collaboration between the sector body, [Cooperative Business New Zealand](#) and researchers from Massey University and the University of Auckland - shows New Zealand's Top 30 co-operatives and mutuals are very strong in agri-food, accounting for 65.2 per cent of revenue, 67.6 per cent of assets, and 82.8 per cent of employment in the co-operative economy. Cooperative Business New Zealand's Chief executive, Craig Presland says "With almost one fifth of New Zealand's GDP being generated by the co-operative sector, and almost 50,000 kiwis employed by co-operatives and mutuals in this country, this confirms the importance of the co-operative business model to New Zealand as a country. The co-operative ethos of working together collaboratively for the common good is part of who we are as New Zealanders, and as our new Prime Minister remarked at an industry forum last year: 'Co-operatives are the business model that has stood the test of time'. We now have the opportunity to extend our research on co-operatives, and advocate even more strongly for them, so that we ensure this enduring and sustainable business model is better understood and more widely utilised across NZ business." <https://nz.coop/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Co-op-report-v9-WEB.pdf>

## **Malaysia in the process of reviewing its Co-operative Law.**

The Malaysian Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism (KPDNKK) announced its plans to review the Co-operative Act, 1993 (Amendment 2007 – Act 502) to enhance the role of co-operatives in the national economy. Professionalism and image building of co-operatives were cited as chief reasons for this review by Minister, Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin. Interestingly, the Minister was quoted saying at the second national co-operatives consultative council meeting late last year “we want to ensure that when they (people) set up a co-operative, they understand why it is set up and the co-operative must be set up only in accordance with their (members’) master plan. We want co-operatives to be set up in line with the needs of the local community”. Appointment of government secretaries accredited by the Malaysian Co-operatives Commission, corporate governance, check on the tenure of board members, co-operative mergers, and tightening the criteria for co-operative credit, were items that are expected to be reviewed in the amendment drive. 90% of the Act will be amended by June 2017 and this will be aimed at consolidation of the co-operative finance sector. During the launch of the development plan for the co-operative financial services sector, in January 2017, the minister proposed to reduce the number of co-operatives by merging smaller coops in the interest of the sustainability of the sector.

## **Government of Iran (conditionally) relieves co-operatives from delayed payment of value added tax.**

In a move to bolster national confidence in the co-operative sector, the head of Iran’s National Tax Administration (NTA), Mr. Kamel Taqavinejad announced that co-operatives will be granted a complete waiver from penalties if they paid their taxes before the end of March 20, 2017. This announcement relieves a number of co-operatives who, among other businesses were penalized for non-payment of taxes within the stipulated time frame. Mr. Bahman Abdollahi, head of Alliance member – Iran Chamber of co-operatives (ICC), believe this ‘co-operatively positive’ policy can be attributed to the development role and responsibility that the co-operative sector in Iran has been accorded. 160,000 cooperatives have been registered in Iran, of which 110,000 are operating in 120 fields of activity, including agriculture, services, housing, transportation and production, among others. Iran aims to increase the contribution of co-operatives from 7% to 25 % under the fifth national five year development plan that ended in 2015. These development plans are devised by the government and ratified by the Iranian parliament every five years and are to provide broad directions on wide ranging economic reforms and social priorities. The head of the NTA is reported to have said during a joint meeting with the ICC, that was attended by heads of various co-operative unions that co-operatives and relevant stakeholders in the co-operative economy will be consulted in the decisions and policy making processes that concern the sector in the country. This does seem to be in line with ILO Recommendation 193. Providing complete relief to co-operatives on delayed tax (VAT) payments is indeed an assertion of the Iranian government’s position to give a ‘shot in

the arm' to the co-operative movement in Iran. *(with input from Alireza Banaeifar, ICC)*

## **ICA-JAPAN Training Course on “Fostering Core Leaders of Agricultural Co-operatives-2016”**

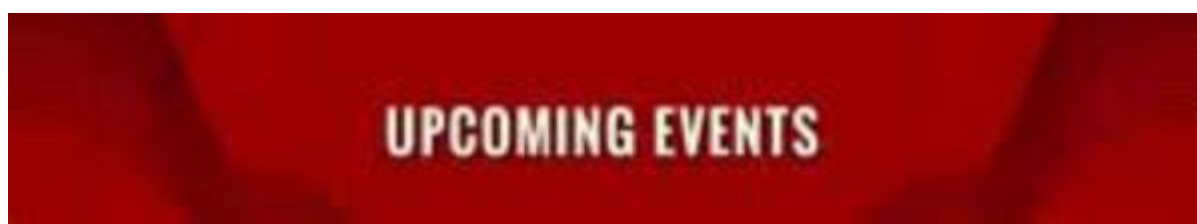
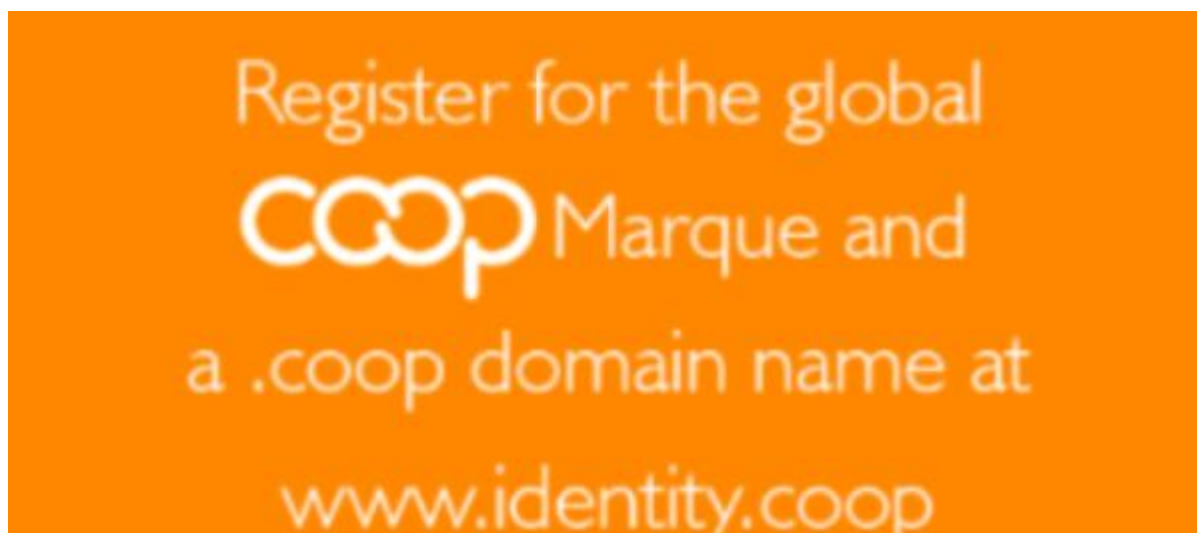
The Training course on “Fostering Core Leaders of Agricultural Co-operatives-2016” will be organized in Thailand and Japan between February 26 and April 11, 2017. The overall objective of the training program is to assist core leaders to play leading roles in agricultural cooperatives and farmers' groups that will contribute to the improvement of agricultural production and income of the farmers. 10 participants will attend the training course from Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal and Vietnam. The training program will be implemented by the ICA-AP with the collaboration of Co-operative League of Thailand, Cooperative Promotion Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Kingdom of Thailand, and Institute for the Development of Agriculture Cooperation in Asia, Tokyo (Japan). The Training Course is being funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Government of Japan.

## **E.U. Section**

### **Sub Regional Co-operative Development Meeting in Jordan**

The ICA-EU partnership on Co-operatives in Development Coordination Unit in Brussels and the US Overseas Development Council jointly organized the global co-operative development meeting on the theme: Co-operatives and International Development: How can Co-operatives and mutuals do more and better together, at the International Summit on Co-operatives 2016. The meeting looked at various development issues and the role of co-operatives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The key areas of deliberation during the meeting were to acknowledge the socioeconomic and geopolitical global trends and challenges, increase coop capacity to act – adapting to the new business reality, expand coop-economic power – sectoral challenges and business opportunities and, to achieve the [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). Following this global meeting, the ICA Asia and Pacific will organize the ‘*sub-regional co-operative development meeting to enhance co-operative to co-operative linkages*’ on 7-8 February in Dead Sea region, Jordan in collaboration with Alliance member - Economic and Social Development Centre of Palestine (ESDC) and the Jordan Co-operative Corporation (JCC). The meeting is to enhance linkages & networking activities of *co-operative organizations active in development* and to develop synergies in the sub region among co-operatives in the areas of business, investment and trade that can result in the socio-economic growth of the individual members and communities, given the equitable nature of co-operative enterprises. The main objectives of the meeting are to create a platform for knowledge exchange among co-operative development organizations, establish trade and business linkages and institute a regional policy monitoring mechanism. The meeting foresees the participation of Alliance members, representatives of governments, international development agencies from Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine,

Saudi Arabia and the UAE.



February, 2017

- Creating Linkages for Co-operative Business and Marketing in Arab Countries – Sub-regional thematic seminar and networking meeting, Jordan, February 7 and 8
- ICA-AP Trade and Business Committee meeting, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, February 20-21
- ICA-MAFF-JAPAN training course on fostering core leaders of agricultural cooperatives in Thailand and Japan, February 26 to April 11, 2017

March, 2017

- ICA-AP Women Committee office bearers meeting and seminar, Kyoto, Japan, March 2017;

April, 2017

- 10<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference, "Visioning Ahead to 2030: Promoting Stronger Partnerships between Government and Co-operative Stakeholders in realizing SDGs." Hanoi, Vietnam, April 18-21

MAY, 2017

- ICA Asia Pacific Meeting on Networking with Civil Society Organizations, Bangkok, Thailand date to be confirmed
- 40<sup>th</sup> year celebrations, NATTCO, Manila, Philippines, May 25

JUNE

- Workshop on Development of Co-operatives in Central Asia, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 29-July 2

JULY, 2017

- Second Asia-Pacific Co-operative Youth Summit, People's Republic of China, date to be confirmed



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