

## ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

News from members, ICA-AP activities,  
ICA-EU Partnership update & more!

# April 2024 Newsletter

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## Theme for the International Day of Cooperatives 2024 Announced



On 6 July 2024, cooperatives around the world will celebrate the International Day of Cooperatives with the theme "*Cooperatives Build a Better Future for All.*" Cooperatives will have the opportunity to showcase their current and historical contributions to building a sustainable future, accelerating efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030. The theme aligns well with the objectives of the upcoming [UN Summit of the Future](#) whose theme is "*Multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow*". [Read more.](#)

## Asia-Pacific Women CEOs in Cooperatives Summit – Registrations Open

**International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific**

**International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific Committee on Women**

**VIỆT NAM HỢP TÁC VÀ PHÁT TRIỂN**

# Asia-Pacific Women CEOs in Cooperatives Summit

Empowering Leadership: Navigating the Future of Cooperatives with Women at the Helm

**29 - 31 July 2024**

**Hotel Meliá Hanoi, Vietnam**

**secretariat@icaap.coop**

Panel 2—Gender management Women CEOs-s

CONFEDERATION OF CREDIT UNIONS

**REGISTRATIONS ARE OPEN UNTIL 24 MAY 2024.**

ICA-AP in collaboration with its Committee on Women and Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA) is organizing the Asia-Pacific Women CEOs in Cooperatives Summit on the theme, *'Empowering Leadership: Navigating the Future of Cooperatives with Women at the Helm.'* It will be held from July 29-31, 2024 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

If you are a woman leader in a cooperative in the Asia-Pacific region, we invite you to register for the Summit. It offers a unique opportunity to discuss your specific needs, foster critical dialogue, and network across borders and cooperative sectors.

Limited spots only, register here: <https://icaap.coop/Women-CEOs-in-Cooperative-Summit/>

## ICA Signs Memorandum of Understanding with IFFCO to Host the ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024



On 28 April 2024, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative (IFFCO) to hold the [ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024 and General Assembly](#), as well as for the launch of the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives 2025, in New Delhi, India. The MoU was signed by IFFCO Managing Director Dr. U S Awasthi and ICA Director-General Mr. Jeroen Douglas in Jordan on the sidelines of the 11th Asia and Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference.

The ICA Global Conference and General Assembly are set to be held from 25-29 November 2024 under the theme **'Cooperatives Build Prosperity for All'**. It aims to convey the people-centered, purpose-led and shared progress-driven institutions that cooperatives are. Hosted

by IFFCO and the wider Indian cooperative movement, the conference will feature an array of events and activities.

Stay tuned to <https://icanewdelhi2024.coop> to get all the latest updates!

## ICA Meet & Greet for Cooperatives in Asia-Pacific



The International Cooperative Alliance has introduced a "Meet and Greet" initiative to familiarise potential members and cooperatives with itself. These virtual gatherings explore the advantages of ICA membership for cooperatives, methods for joining, the range of services provided by ICA and its regional and sectoral offices, and testimonials from satisfied members. Join us on May 28, 2024, to discover more about the cooperative movement in Asia and the Pacific region. [Register here](#).

## ICA-AP UPDATES

### 11<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference



The 11<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers Conference (APCMC) was held on 28 and 29 April 2024, marking the commencement of a crucial gathering aimed at fostering cooperation, dialogue, and actionable strategies to drive inclusive growth and sustainable development across the Asia Pacific (AP), Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Organized by the International Cooperative Alliance Asia-Pacific (ICA-AP) and hosted by the Jordan Co-operative Corporation and the Ministry of Agriculture, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan the conference brought together key stakeholders from government bodies, cooperative enterprises, civil society organizations, and international agencies. These included high-level Government officials from 17 countries (Egypt, Fiji, India, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Thailand, and UAE), and around 300 cooperative leaders and renowned experts from 28 countries and senior officials from the African-Asian Rural Development Organization, International Labour Organisation, and Food and Agriculture Organization united in their commitment to advancing the cooperative movement for the betterment of communities.

Set against the picturesque backdrop of the Dead Sea in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, this landmark event underscored the significance of cooperative-government partnerships in shaping the socio-economic landscape of the AP and MENA region.

Mr. Abdelfattah Al-Shalabi, Director General of JCC warmly welcomed all to the Conference at the Dead Sea, symbolizing safety and hospitality. He praised Jordanian King Abdullah II's role and highlighted Jordan's efforts to support cooperatives. He noted that the conference aims to discuss government-cooperative partnerships for cooperative resilience, sustainable development, and inclusive growth in Asia Pacific, Middle East, and North Africa. He emphasized Jordan's values of warmth and hospitality, fostering international cooperation.

In his address, Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav welcomed everyone to this historic conference in Jordan, the first in the Middle East, highlighting cooperatives' role in socio-economic development and the need for strong government-cooperative partnerships. He expressed his gratitude for the gracious hospitality extended by the hosts and said the conference aims to foster discussions, analyze partnerships, and strategize for sustainable development in Asia Pacific and MENA regions. He also touched upon the pivotal study undertaken by ICA-AP on enhancing government support for cooperatives. He noted that anticipation is high for the conference to yield actionable resolutions, enrich partnerships and advance towards shared goals of resilience and inclusivity.



His Excellency Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture, Jordan highlighted cooperatives' role in economic growth, youth employment, and women's empowerment. He wished success to all attendees and said that Jordan extends its traditional hospitality with the greeting "Ya Hala".

The conference agenda encompassed various topics including the state of cooperatives in the Asia Pacific, enhancing government-cooperative partnerships, leveraging digitalization for inclusive growth, and promoting gender equality within the cooperative sector. Featuring interactive panel discussions and statements from government officials, it provided participants with ample opportunities to exchange insights, explore synergies, and co-create actionable solutions. The thematic sessions and statements from government officials of Fiji, the Philippines, Nepal, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Iran, Palestine, Morocco, Malaysia, Syria, Kuwait, Libya, Thailand, and Japan touched upon crucial issues like cooperative identity, cooperatives' role in sustainable development, enhancing food security, facilitation of easy credit for communities, affordable healthcare, digitalization, opportunities for youth and women, contribution to national economies, Voluntary National Reviews, among others.

As part of the conference proceedings, a critical study has been commissioned to assess the current landscape of governmental support for cooperatives and identify opportunities for strengthening collaboration between state entities and cooperative enterprises. The research team, led by Dr. Yashvantha Dongre, Chairperson of the ICA-AP Research Committee, presented the outcomes of the study at the Conference. The study examined cooperatives as an alternative form of enterprise, especially in light of resolutions from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations (UN). Recognizing their importance, the UN designated 2025 as the second International Year of Cooperatives. The exploratory study was conducted across eight countries: India, Japan, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal, Korea, and the Philippines. It focused on board perspectives and qualitative content analysis of documents provided by the stakeholders, revealing varying degrees of partnership between cooperatives and governments, with obstacles such as legislative barriers. The findings underscore the win-win nature of partnerships and the need for serious attention to UN resolutions, along with mechanisms for effective collaboration. The team recommended that governments should recognize cooperatives' role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), fostering a culture of consultation in policy-making, and developing clear guidelines for government-cooperative partnerships, with emphasis on areas like healthcare, caregiving, youth, and women's empowerment. Sharing best practices globally was also highlighted for cooperative development.



The declaration endorsed at the 11th APCMC in Jordan on April 29, 2024, underscores the pivotal role of cooperatives in fostering economic growth, job creation, poverty alleviation, social inclusivity, and environmental sustainability across the Asia-Pacific region. Emphasizing the empowerment of individuals and marginalized communities, the declaration highlights the need for collaborative efforts between governments and integrated cooperatives, the promotion of cooperative-friendly policies, and alignment with the SDGs 2030 agenda. It also advocates for the preservation and promotion of the unique identity and business model of cooperatives, as well as enhancing cooperation among governments, cooperatives, and stakeholders to bolster the resilience of cooperatives in the region. The declaration was supported by all Asia-Pacific cooperative ministers present in person. It is now inviting proposals and suggestions from other representatives and is set to be officially adopted during the International Day of Cooperative in July 2024.

The 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC holds profound significance as the first-ever edition to be hosted in the Middle East region, underscoring the growing recognition of cooperative principles as a catalyst for sustainable development and social cohesion.

The ICA-AP sincerely thanks the Ministry of Agriculture and the Jordan Cooperative Corporation for their gracious hospitality and invaluable support in hosting this momentous event.



## ICA-AP Regional Board Meeting Held in Jordan



The ICA-AP held its first regional board meeting of 2024 in Dead Sea, Jordan on the sidelines of the 11th Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference (APCMC) on 27 April.

The August gathering was graced by His Excellency Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Mr. Abdelfattah Al-Shalabi, Director General of Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC), and Dr. Nizar Haddad, Director General of National Agricultural Research Center (NARC). They welcomed all the board delegates to Jordan, the land of stability and reinforced their commitment to ensure that the Conference is held successfully. The meeting was also joined by Dr. Ariel Guarco, ICA President and Mr. Jeroen Douglas, ICA Director General.

Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, ICA-AP President and Chairperson of the meeting welcomed all attendees who had joined in person and online, expressing gratitude for their participation. Board members from India, China, Malaysia, Iran, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines joined in person, those from Nepal, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka joined online, and Australian member didn't join. He highlighted the importance of the 11th APCMC and emphasized the role of cooperatives in peacebuilding amidst geopolitical challenges in the region. He thanked the hosts MoA and JCC for their gracious hosting and arrangements.

The Board approved the agenda and confirmed the minutes of the previous board meeting held in November 2023, in the Philippines. The Chairperson of the ICA-AP Committee on Women and Committee on Youth Cooperation presented a brief update on their activities undertaken so far and plans for the future. The board appreciated the work done by the youth

and women committees. The Women's Committee invited the Board members to participate and interact with the participants of their upcoming Women CEOs in Cooperatives Summit. The Summit is scheduled to be held from 29-31 July 2024 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, ICA-AP Regional Director, reported on several activities including the NGO CSW68 Forum's virtual side event on the Impact of Cooperative Financing on Women's Empowerment in Asia-Pacific, the ICA-AP Trade & Business Committee's Resolution on Streamlining Regional Rice Supply Management, and a forum on Cooperative Principle 6. Additionally, he highlighted ICA-MAFF (Japan) Training Courses, COOP Colloquiums covering topics like managing cooperatives and systems innovation, and COOP Dialogue 5.

Mr. Iyer provided an update on the ICA-EU Framework Partnership Agreement Phase 2, the financial report and projections of ICA-AP and ICA-EU budget, as well as the status of membership and subscription dues in the region. He updated on the ICA recruitment campaign "Meet & Greet the ICA," aimed at familiarizing potential members and cooperatives with the organization. He noted that the ICA-AP event is scheduled for May 28, 2024, which will include an introduction to the ICA and its activities, presentations from the ICA-AP regional office, member testimonials from the region, and Q&A session.

Mr. Iyer presented a plan to celebrate the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) with the theme "Cooperatives Build a Better World." The plan includes showcasing cooperative impact on local and global economies, aligning with the SDGs, raising awareness of cooperative principles and values, strengthening cooperative networks locally and globally, and enhancing member engagement and growth. He also shared an outline of the ICA strategic plan for 2025 to 2030 and the plans for the upcoming ICA General Assembly being organised in India.

The Board agreed that the next regional Board meeting will be held in Hanoi, Vietnam on 29 July 2024.

### ICA-MAFF (Japan) Follow-Up Program Held in Africa



The training courses funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of the Government of Japan, have a significant component of follow-up with ex-participants through visits and surveys. It provides an overview of the participants' progress in implementing their action plans, highlights the challenges they have faced, and offers insights to plan future activities.

In early April 2024, Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director of ICA-AP along with Mr. Hirofumi Kobayashi, Executive Director and Ms. Oshita Eiko from the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA) Japan visited Nairobi on a follow-up mission. These participants had previously attended the training programs, an initiative designed to enhance food security and promote sustainable agricultural practices across the continent. This program is particularly critical as Africa remains a priority region for Japan in its global strategy to foster agricultural development. The training equips participants with knowledge of the development of agricultural cooperatives and underscores the significance of supporting farmers with small landholdings. By visiting agriculture cooperatives and farmers' organizations in Japan, India, and Thailand, the participants get to witness first-hand, the transformative power of these people-centered organizations. During the visit, the ICA-AP-IDACA team held in-depth discussions on the progress of action plans with participants from Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and Mauritius. These interactions provided valuable insights into the practical challenges and successes encountered in implementing these plans.

Read the full article by Mr. Iyer [here](#).

## Webinar on Climate Smart Agriculture



ICA-AP organised a webinar on "Climate Smart Agriculture: Perspectives for the Asia and Pacific region" under the auspices of its newly constituted ICA-AP committee on Agriculture and Environment (ICA-E). The webinar was held on April 25 and provided a platform for stakeholders to delve into the challenges and opportunities surrounding climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and its role in building resilient food systems.

In today's world, climate change and food insecurity loom large as pressing challenges. The global agri-food system, responsible for one-third of all emissions, faces the daunting task of

meeting the demands of a growing population while mitigating environmental impacts. Against this backdrop, CSA emerges as an approach which encompasses a spectrum of practices and technologies tailored to local contexts, aiming to enhance productivity, adapting to climate change, and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. It emphasizes the integration of the SDGs, addressing economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

The webinar sought to foster dialogue on various facets of CSA, including its transformational potential, barriers to adoption, and opportunities for financing. The event attracted a diverse audience comprising cooperative leaders, policymakers, researchers, and development practitioners. The event featured two expert speakers Mr. Takayuki Hagiwara, Country Representative - India, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Dr. S. Naresh Kumar, Head Principal Scientist, Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI).

Mr. Ganesh Gopal, Lead - Entrepreneurship Development, ICA-AP moderated the event and delivered the opening remarks setting the context and outlining the flexible and yet context-reliant approaches for CSA. Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP delivered the welcome remarks and spoke about the need for greater awareness of climate resilient agriculture among cooperatives and collectives working in the region.

The Keynote Address by Mr. Takayuki Hagiwara, touched upon the need for an Agrifood Systems approach which incorporated agrifood industry development, the private sector engagement, involvement of youth, sustainable water use, soil health, farm efficiency, governance, stakeholder collaboration, capacity building, and policy frameworks. Dr. S. Naresh Kumar in his thematic address delved into the scientific aspects of climate change and climate resilient practices. Both the presentations enriched the discussions and underscored the importance of collaborative action in addressing the challenges of climate change and food security.

The webinar's question and answer session witnessed active participation from the audience who raised questions about the approach, depth and requirements for adopting CSA. The webinar concluded with the closing remarks by Mr. SP Singh, Managing Director, Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative (IFFDC)

The webinar served as a catalyst for advancing the agenda of CSA in the Asia-Pacific region. As we navigate the complexities of a changing climate and evolving food systems, cooperation and innovation will be paramount in realizing a sustainable future for all.

#### **About the ICA-AP committee on Agriculture and Environment (ICAE):**

The newly established committee came into existence through the merger of two existing committees of the ICA-AP, namely the erstwhile ICA-AP Committee on Agriculture and the ICA-AP Committee on Forestry.

The 16th Regional Assembly of the ICA Asia and Pacific held on 9th November 2023 in Manila, Philippines ratified the proposal to establish the new Committee on Agriculture and Environment and its Constitution.

## Member Updates

### ULSCC Holds its General Assembly and Elections



The Union of Legitimate Service Contracting Cooperatives our member from the Philippines, held its General Assembly and Elections on 19 April 2024. Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director of ICA-AP congratulated ULSCC acknowledging their active engagement with the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and valuable contributions to committee work, such as CICOPA and ICA-AP Youth Committee. He praised ULSCC for advocating labor rights and ensuring regulatory support for labor service cooperatives. Their commitment to amplifying the voice of labor and upholding cooperative principles is commendable, showing their significant growth over nearly a decade. Mr. Iyer wished the best to all Assembly participants and candidates, expressing confidence in their capability to advance ULSCC's mission.

## ACCU Organized Leadership Bootcamp for NEFSCUN in Nepal



The Association of Asian Confederation of Credit Unions (ACCU), a pan-Asian ICA member organized the 20th Batch of the Leadership Bootcamp, for the Nepal Federation of Savings and Credit Cooperative Unions (NEFSCUN), an ICA member in Nepal, from May 1 to 3, 2024. The Bootcamp convened 26 Board, committee, and senior staff members for an intensive training program aimed at enhancing their leadership skills and capabilities. ACCU acknowledges the pivotal role of leadership in cultivating an environment of innovation and creativity within organizations. Leaders are tasked with empowering their teams to explore unconventional ideas, experiment freely, and view failure as a stepping stone toward eventual success. By nurturing such a culture, leaders can unleash their teams' full potential and drive substantial transformations.

The Leadership Bootcamp, designated as Credit Union Business Solution no. 32, exemplifies ACCU's commitment to leadership development, with plans for further expansion in 2024. The Korean Credit Union Social Contribution Foundation has played a vital role in supporting ACCU's leadership training initiatives across Asia, highlighting the significance of collaborative efforts in advancing leadership development within the region.

## MASS-SPECC Celebrates its 50th General Assembly and 54th Cooperative Leaders Congress



Our member from the Philippines, MASS-SPECC Cooperative Development Center will celebrate their 50th General Assembly and 54th Cooperative Leaders Congress from May 29-30, 2024 with the theme "Cooperating for Inclusive Growth and Community Resilience,". Applauding their commitment to the cooperative movement, Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director of ICA-AP expressed gratitude for MASS-SPECC's involvement with the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and commended their leadership in addressing cooperative issues. He noted that the theme is relevant to the times and emphasized the cooperative model's role in fostering equitable economic systems. He highlighted the importance of resilience and community capacity building, expressed his willingness for continued collaboration with MASS-SPECC and wished them success.

## Policy & Legal Watch

### Co-operative Societies Act Amended in Singapore



Singapore's parliament has approved an amendment to the Co-operative Societies Act of 1979, allowing cooperatives to utilize their reserves for distributing dividends to members or paying honoraria to management committee members.

Under the amendment, cooperatives can use their reserves to distribute dividends to members or pay an honorarium to members of their management committee (board fees), provided the payments are approved by the Registrar of Co-operative Societies (RCS). This decision was followed by a public consultation where cooperatives provided feedback on the proposed changes. The Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF) welcomed the amendment and noted that it will help in stabilizing payouts to members amidst market volatility and rising living costs. [Read more](#).





## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Regional Workshop by ICA-AP Trade and Business Committee, ICA-AP Consumer Committee, and Saigon Co-op in Vietnam – May 2024
- ICA Meet & Greet for Cooperatives in Asia-Pacific – 28 May 2024. [Register here.](#)
- International Day of Cooperatives – 6 July 2024
- ICA-AP Regional Board Meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam – 29 July 2024
- Asia-Pacific Women CEOs in Cooperatives Summit on *'Empowering Leadership: Navigating the Future of Cooperatives with Women at the Helm'* by ICA-AP, ICA-AP Committee on Women and Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA) in Hanoi, Vietnam – 29-31 July 2024
- ICA General Assembly in India – 25-30 November 2024