

# ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

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

## May 2024 Newsletter

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## International Day of Cooperatives 2024



On 6 July 2024, cooperatives around the world will celebrate the International Day of Cooperatives (CoopsDay, IDC) 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".

You can participate in the celebrations using the media pack that includes the logo, key messages, and other digital resources at <https://www.coopsday.coop/>.

To let us know how you are celebrating CoopsDay and to feature your stories on the interactive map, please contact Shivali Sarna, Lead – Communication and Membership Development, ICA-AP at [Shivali.sarna@icaap.coop](mailto:Shivali.sarna@icaap.coop)

## Asia-Pacific Women CEOs in Cooperatives Summit

**coop** International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific

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

**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

VIỆT NAM HỢP TÁC XI HỮU

VIỆT NAM HỢP TÁC XI HỮU

VIỆT NAM HỢP TÁC XI HỮU

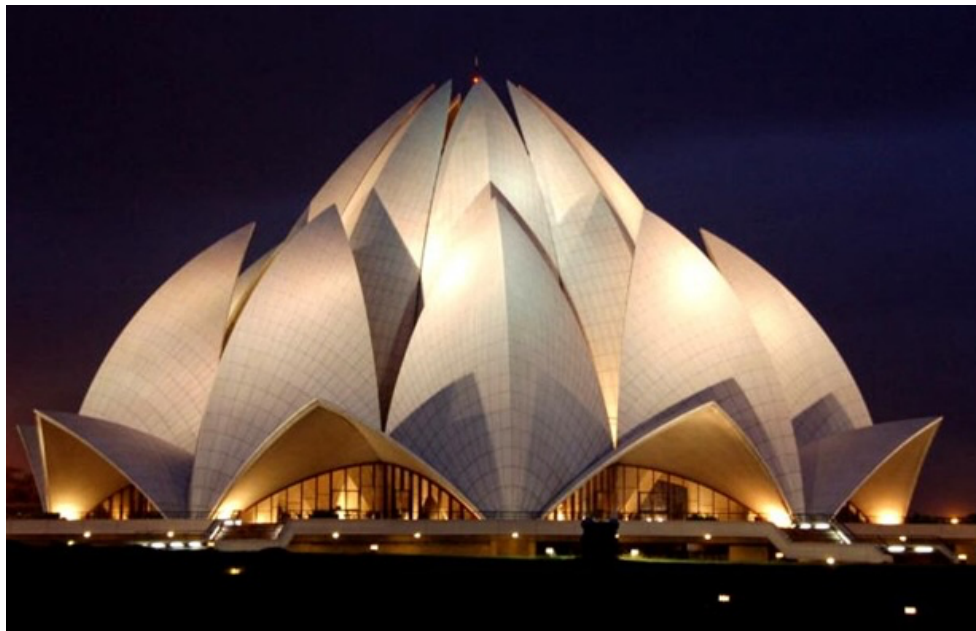
ICA-AP in collaboration with its Committee on Women and Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA) is organizing the Asia-Pacific Women CEOs in Cooperatives Summit on the theme, *'Empowering*

*Leadership: Navigating the Future of Cooperatives with Women at the Helm.* It will be held from July 29-31, 2024 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The Summit will be a unique opportunity for the participants to discuss their specific needs and foster critical dialogue through in-depth thematic sessions, tailor-made training, business insights by practitioners, a stellar line-up of speakers, coop learning visit, and mentorship and networking opportunities.

For all the latest information, stay tuned to <https://icaap.coop/Women-CEOs-in-Cooperative-Summit/>.

ICA Global Conference & General Assembly 2024 – Registration begins on 20 June



The Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative (IFFCO) will host the [ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024 and General Assembly](https://icanewdelhi2024.coop) in New Delhi, India from 25 to 30 November 2024. The event will launch the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives 2025, 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!

Do you know how modern-day cooperation began in India, the land of ancient civilisation, spirituality and diverse cultures? To find out, [click here](#).



# ICA-AP UPDATES

Empowering Communities through Sustainable Agro-Forestry: An Interview with IFFDC's Managing Director, Mr. S.P. Singh



On this World Environment Day, we are celebrating the achievement of our member, the Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative (IFFDC) which became the first Indian Cooperative in the Agro-Forestry sector to get 78,000 Carbon Credits issued by VERRA, US for creating 189 ha forest on wastelands. Read this insightful conversation with Mr. S.P. Singh, Managing Director of IFFDC, to learn about IFFDC's work, carbon credits, and their impact on local communities and sustainable development. [Read more.](#)

ICA Hosts Meet & Greet for Cooperatives in Asia-Pacific





The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) recently hosted a Meet and Greet session with Cooperatives in Asia-Pacific to introduce attendees to the impactful work of the ICA Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP) Regional Office on 28 May 2024. Moderated by Ms. Gretchen Hacquard, Director of Membership at ICA, the session aimed to familiarize participants with the ICA's structure, activities of ICA-AP, benefits of membership, and upcoming events.

Ms. Hacquard kicked off the session with a video showcasing the history and global impact of cooperatives, emphasizing their role in building a better world. She outlined the structure of the ICA, including its regional offices, sectoral organizations, thematic committees, and global events like the upcoming General Assembly in New Delhi, India. She discussed the benefits of ICA membership including participation in global conferences, access to cooperative expertise and resources, advocacy representation, and marketing support. She also provided a detailed membership package for interested parties, encouraging participation in the cooperative movement.

Mr. Balu Iyer, ICA-AP Regional Director, provided insights into the history and current status of the regional office. Established in 1960 in New Delhi, India, the office initially focused on education and training and has evolved into a comprehensive support system for cooperatives across the region. Mr. Iyer said that the regional office is governed by a regional board and operates through nine committees covering various sectors and interests. ICA-AP, as a members-based organization works across four strategic pillars - promoting the cooperative identity, accelerating cooperative growth, strengthening cooperatives as business and development actors, and serving as a knowledge center for the region.

He highlighted several ongoing projects and activities, including training programs, capacity-building initiatives, regional assemblies, cooperative forums, and ministers' conferences. He emphasized the importance of member involvement in committees and showcased knowledge products like Coop Dialogue and country snapshots. Additionally, he encouraged attendees to engage with the regional office through social media channels for updates and information on the work being done.



Mr. Santosh Shukla Kumar, Joint General Manager of International Cooperation at the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative (IFFCO), shared insights into IFFCO's collaboration with ICA and the

benefits of membership. IFFCO, a national-level cooperative in India, focuses on serving farmers and rural communities. Through ICA, it actively supports initiatives like the International Cooperative Entrepreneurship Think Tank (ICETT) and efforts towards sustainable development. IFFCO collaborates with cooperatives from various countries, including Brazil, Argentina, Mauritius, Jordan, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. They engage in projects such as establishing bio-fertilizer plants, providing disaster relief, and promoting agricultural development.

Ms. Sylvia Paraguya, CEO of the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) in the Philippines, highlighted NATCCO's 45-year journey as an ICA member and the support received from the organization. She underscored ICA's role in providing guidance on cooperative principles and values, citing the cooperative difference as a significant advantage in today's business landscape. She highlighted NATCCO's involvement with ICA through the Climate Action Program, which led to the establishment of the NATCCO Resiliency Fund and ongoing climate action initiatives.



Moreover, she expressed gratitude for the numerous training programs facilitated by ICA-AP, which have empowered NATCCO and its member cooperatives. Ms. Paraguya emphasized the importance of active participation in ICA events and committees, showcasing how NATCCO's advocacies align with various ICA initiatives, including gender equality, climate action, and youth empowerment.

The session also covered the eligibility criteria and process for joining ICA, encouraging interested organizations to reach out for further information and assistance.

The participants had the opportunity to ask questions and share their concerns/ suggestions. A question about the lack of attention to cooperatives in the Middle East was asked. Ms. Hacquard and Mr. Iyer highlighted the recent efforts to enhance engagement in the region. They discussed successful initiatives like the ministers' conference in Jordan, which facilitated dialogue and cooperation among Middle Eastern countries.

There were questions about preparations for the upcoming ICA Global Conference in New Delhi. The conference aims to showcase the cooperative movement's impact and potential for prosperity for all.

Key highlights include the official UN launch of the International Year of Cooperatives, with expected addresses from the UN Secretary-General and other high-ranking officials.

Mr. Nasir Mughal shared insights into the cooperative movement in Balochistan, Pakistan, highlighting challenges and successes in cooperative development, particularly in agriculture and SME sectors. He emphasized the need for international cooperation to expand business opportunities for cooperatives in the region.



Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, President of ICA Asia-Pacific, expressed gratitude to the participants and emphasized the benefits of becoming an ICA member. He commended the efforts of the ICA-AP regional office in advancing the cooperative movement, organizing policy events, and facilitating capacity-building initiatives. The closing remarks emphasized the collaborative efforts of ICA in promoting and strengthening cooperatives worldwide.

Overall, the Meet and Greet session provided valuable insights into the work of ICA and highlighted the significant contributions of cooperatives to global development.

[Regional Workshop on Coop-2-Coop Collaboration: Uniting Through Trade and Consumer Networks](#)





The regional workshop held by ICA-AP in collaboration with the Committee on Consumer Cooperation, Committee on Trade & Business, and Saigon Co-op in Vietnam marked a significant milestone in fostering cooperative practices and trade networks within the Asia-Pacific (AP) region. With 30 participants representing 9 countries and 16 organizations, the workshop served as a dynamic platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration in the retail sector. Held from 20 to 24 May 2024 at the Saigon Co-op Head Office in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, the event centred on the theme "Coop-2-Coop Collaboration: Uniting Through Trade and Consumer Networks."

Throughout the workshop, participants engaged in a series of sessions aimed at achieving key objectives, including learning best practices of cooperative trade, identifying and overcoming challenges, studying successful business models, and establishing an international cooperative network. The diverse range of topics included successful models of Co-op to Co-op (C-2-C) trade, strategies employed by Saigon Co-op for success, challenges associated with C-2-C trade, policies contributing to the success of consumer cooperatives, and opportunities for cross-border partnerships.

### **Opening Ceremony and Introduction Sessions**

On 21 May, the workshop commenced with a grand opening ceremony featuring inspirational messages by Mr. Nguyen Anh Duc, CEO of Saigon Co.op, and Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director of ICA-AP, setting the tone for the event. Dr. Abdul Fattah Haji Abdullah and Ms. Jeonghee Kim further emphasized the workshop's significance through live and recorded video messages.



In Session 1, Ms. Wan Azwati Wan Mohamed, Secretary of the ICA-AP Trade & Business Committee, and Ms. Itsumi Hishinuma, Secretary of the ICA-AP Consumer Committee, provided insights into their respective committee's roles and initiatives within cooperative trade and consumer practices. Additionally, a brief overview by a representative of the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA) offered valuable insights into the local cooperative landscape. These presentations laid a solid foundation for collaborative discussions and knowledge exchange throughout the workshop, enhancing participants' understanding of cooperative dynamics within the Asia-Pacific region.

Session 2 focused on the introduction of participants and their organizations providing a platform for breaking the ice and fostering networking opportunities and collaboration.

Session 3, a panel discussion on "Understanding Cooperative Trade Dynamics," moderated by Ms. Noor Azlinn Zahariman from ANGKASA, featured industry experts. Mr. Iyer presented on cooperative trade, focusing on global and regional perspectives. Mr. Todor Ivanov shared insights from a global standpoint. Representatives from Saigon Co.op, Ms. Nguyen Dac Anh Uyen, and Mr. Seng Joo Ng, highlighted Saigon Co-op's journey and successful joint venture. Interactive Q&A sessions followed, facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration among participants.

### **Understanding Cooperative Trade Dynamics**

On 22 May, session 4 on "Collaborative Initiatives among Cooperatives", led by Ms. Wan Azwati aimed to explore best practices of C-2-C trade and cooperation among participant countries' cooperatives. Each organization presented their best practices and cooperative initiatives. Following the presentations, a roundtable discussion was facilitated by Ms. Hishinuma. Participants engaged in constructive dialogue, identifying challenges related to C-2-C trade and brainstormed strategies to overcome them. Key topics included navigating logistical hurdles, fostering trust among cooperatives, and leveraging technology for efficient collaboration. Additionally, participants reflected on their learnings from the workshop and outlined actionable plans for implementing new strategies upon returning to their respective countries.





Additionally, participants had the opportunity to visit various Saigon Co.op stores, gaining practical insights into cooperative practices and retail operations. The visits included prominent locations such as Co-opmart Cong Quynh, Co.opfood Lam Van Ben, Finelife Urban Hill, Co.opXtra Tan Phong, SC Vivo City Shopping Mall, and Cheers Oakwood. These site visits provided participants with firsthand experiences, allowing them to observe successful cooperative models in action and garner inspiration for potential adaptation within their own contexts. Overall, Session 4 and the store visits not only enriched participants' knowledge but also stimulated discussions and collaborations, furthering the workshop's objectives of promoting cooperative practices and fostering cross-border partnerships within the Asia-Pacific region.

#### Visit to Cu Chi tunnels and Sightseeing





On 23 May, participants engaged in a cultural and historical excursion to the renowned Cu Chi tunnels, a significant historical site located in Ho Chi Minh City. This excursion offered participants a unique opportunity to delve into Vietnam's rich history and heritage, exploring the intricate network of underground tunnels used during the Vietnam War. Guided tours provided insights into the ingenuity and resilience of the Vietnamese people during wartime, showcasing the tunnels' strategic significance and the resourcefulness of those who inhabited them. Following that, participants enjoyed a sightseeing tour in the vibrant city center of Ho Chi Minh City. Immersed in the bustling streets and iconic landmarks, participants experienced the dynamic energy and cultural diversity of Vietnam's largest city.

The ICA Regional Workshop in Vietnam was a pivotal moment in advancing cooperative practices and fostering regional collaboration within the Asia-Pacific retail sector. Through insightful sessions, interactive discussions, and experiential learning opportunities such as site visits and cultural excursions, participants gained valuable insights and forged meaningful connections. The establishment of a robust international network of cooperatives sets the stage for ongoing collaboration, knowledge exchange, and mutual support. As participants depart with enriched perspectives and actionable strategies, the impact of this workshop extends beyond its duration, propelling cooperative enterprises towards sustained growth, resilience, and positive community impact in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

### COOP Dialogue 6 Released

We are delighted to launch another edition of COOP Dialogue focusing on the theme Positioning Cooperatives in the Gig and Platform Economy. The 6<sup>th</sup> edition explores how cooperatives can address the challenges of the gig and platform economy through initiatives like SEWA's data cooperatives in India, the Online Micro Sellers Multipurpose Cooperative in the Philippines, and MyCoolClass for online educators. These examples show how cooperatives empower marginalized communities, enhance economic stability, and promote sustainable development. Highlighting the importance of stakeholder engagement, we discuss how effective partnerships with governments, financial institutions, and others are crucial for success. [Read more.](#)

## Member Updates

### MSU – IIT National Multi-Purpose Cooperative from the Philippines Joins ICA



**COOP** International  
Cooperative Alliance  
Asia and Pacific

**We have a New Member!**

**MSU – IIT National Multi-Purpose Cooperative (MSU-IIT NMPC)** from the Philippines joined ICA in May 2024.

Now, we have 109 members from 29 countries in the Asia and Pacific region.

[MSU – IIT National Multi-Purpose Cooperative](#) (MSU-IIT NMPC) from the Philippines joined ICA in May 2024 as a Full Member. They are a primary cooperative offering credit and savings services. Other benefits include insurance, housing, and a coop academy. It was initially a closed-type cooperative only for the Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) but transitioned into an open-type cooperative in 2001. They currently operate 21 branches across Mindanao with 295 employees serving around 30,000 members. They aim to engage in the ICA network and linkages, supporting the common agenda.

We welcome MSU-IIT NMPC to the ICA network!

### NCUI Participates in an International Seminar in Brazil



The Organization of Brazilian Cooperatives (OCB) invited Ms. Savitri Singh, Deputy Chief Executive of the National Cooperative Union of India as one of the speakers at the International Seminar titled “Empowering Futures: Cooperatives at the Forefront of Inclusivity, Resilience & Environmental Stewardship” in Brasilia, held from 14 to 16 May 2024. Dr. Ariel Guarco, ICA President inaugurated the Seminar which saw participation from cooperative leaders, experts, researchers, and senior government officials from 17 countries from Asia Pacific, Europe, Americas, Africa & UNDESA. It highlighted the crucial role played by the cooperatives in fostering a more inclusive, resilient & environmentally responsible future. Ms. Singh shared her insights & experiences on the significance of cooperatives in fortifying supply chains, promoting sustainability and facilitating international collaborations. [Read more.](#)

### NATCCO Elects its New Chairperson



The National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) in the Philippines conducted its 47th General Assembly and election of the new Board of Directors from 3 – 5 May 2024. They elected Mr. Junrey Labatos, the Chairperson of King Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Mindanao as their new Chairperson.

We congratulate Mr. Labatos on his new leadership journey and look forward to working with him!

## CIM Organizes the International Cooperative Conference 2024



The International Cooperative Conference 2024 was held on 29-30 May 2024, focusing on the theme "Shaping Cooperative's Potential Growth in the Era of Disruptive Technology for Inclusive Sustainable Development." The event was organized by the Cooperative Institute of Malaysia (CIM) and featured a series of insightful presentations, panel discussions, and networking opportunities.

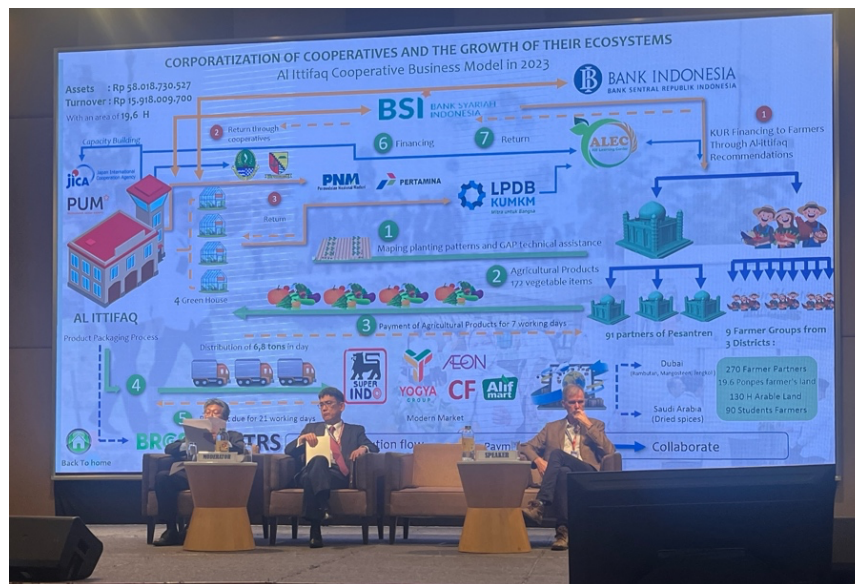
Disruptive technology, as defined by Mr. Clayton M. Christensen, significantly alters industry operations by introducing groundbreaking products or services that create new markets and value networks, ultimately displacing established firms. Technologies such as AI, blockchain, and renewable energy innovations are prime examples. Cooperatives can harness these technologies to enhance productivity, member engagement, and market access.

YB Dato' Ramana Ramakrishnan, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development (MECD) in his opening address underscored the disruptive nature of technology and called on cooperatives to be better prepared and integrate technology in their operations. Cooperatives need to play to their strengths and respond to not only the disruptions in technology but also in addressing inequality, climate change, and the needs of youth and women.

Mr. Edmund Cheong Peck Huang, Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer at Social Security Organization (PERKESO), spoke on "*Leadership in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)*" and said that AI will continue to grow and will be adopted into more sectors to transform lives and improve services to meet public expectations. Work has accelerated with AI advancements and we must adapt to keep pace with it.



The first session focused on *"Harnessing the Power of Cooperative Federation to Build Resilient Communities in the Disruptive Technology Era."* This session was moderated by Datuk Haji Mohamad Ali Hasan from the Malaysian National Cooperative Movement (ANGKASA) and included panelists Haji Damanhuri from Koperasi Ladang Berhad (KLB), Mr. Seungwang Kim from the National Agriculture Cooperative Federation of Korea (NACF), and Mr. Nguyen Dong Hai from Saigon Coop, Vietnam. The second session, titled *"Smart Agriculture for Smart Growth: Cooperative Principle,"* was moderated by Dr. Mohamad Rofi Mohd Noor from Koperasi Belantik Selangor Berhad. Panelists included Mr. Hirofumi Kobayashi from the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA), Japan, Mr. Rohan Clarke from Regen Farmers Mutual, Australia, and Mr. Setia Irawan from Koperasi al-Ittifaq, Indonesia.



The second day started with a special presentation at 9:00 am, titled *"Cooperative Build A Better Future for All,"* moderated by Ustaz Haji Mohd Fazil Bin Masri from Koperasi Co-op Bank Pertama Malaysia Berhad. The presenters were Assoc. Prof. Dr. H. Muhammad Ridha Haykal Amal from the University of Medan Area, Indonesia, discussing *"Connecting Shariah Product to Shape a Sustainable Cooperative Future in the Era of Innovation,"* and Asst. Prof. Abdul Rashid Cherma from the Islamic Cooperative Movement in Thailand, who spoke on *"Origin Development Future Perspectives."* This was followed by a forum session on *"Shaping Co-operatives Potential Growth in The Era of Disruptive Technology for Inclusive Sustainable Development."* This session was moderated by Tan Sri Abu Kassim Mohamed from Koperasi Kebutni Selangor Berhad and included Mr. Azizul Alias, Undersecretary of MECD, Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director ICA-AP, and Mr. Ilham Nasai, Manager Project Management Office Department of Cooperatives Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs of The Republic Indonesia (Kemenkop UKM).

The conference concluded with a closing by Mr. Mohd Zaibn Bin Mat Yunus, Deputy Director General of CIM.

The CIM International Cooperative Conference 2024 successfully highlighted the importance of integrating disruptive technologies within cooperatives to foster sustainable development and enhance the resilience of communities. The event provided a platform for cooperative leaders and stakeholders to share insights, strategies, and innovative practices.

The International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP) highlighted the pivotal role of cooperatives in fostering sustainable development through the adoption of disruptive technologies.

Cooperatives can harness these technologies to enhance productivity, member engagement, and market access. The strengths of integrating disruptive technologies in cooperatives include improved efficiency and productivity through automation and AI, enhanced member engagement via digital tools, and increased market access through online marketplaces. However, these benefits come with challenges, such as high implementation costs, skill gaps, and data security risks. Despite these weaknesses, opportunities abound in accessing new markets, innovating products and services, and leading sustainability initiatives. Yet, cooperatives must navigate threats like market disruption, increased competition, and complex regulatory landscapes.

Inclusivity remains a cornerstone of cooperative values, necessitating development models that prioritize equitable decision-making and profit-sharing amidst technological advancements. Cooperatives must focus on reaching underserved communities and fostering sustainable development.

Renewable energy cooperatives in the USA are investing in smart grid technologies to enhance efficiency. Healthcare cooperatives in Chile and the Philippines utilize telehealth technologies to extend services to remote areas. Dairy cooperatives in India employ robotic milking systems to improve efficiency, while financial cooperatives in Denver leverage blockchain for enhanced transparency. Retail cooperatives in Singapore use augmented reality to transform customer experiences, and housing cooperatives in Ireland integrate smart technologies for energy efficiency.

Cooperatives are positioned as a third force championing sustainability, equity, and community empowerment. By deepening their cooperative identity and leveraging technology, cooperatives can enhance operational efficiency, engage members more effectively, and expand their market reach. Strategies for leveraging disruptive technology include forming partnerships, promoting continuous learning through innovation hubs, investing in member-centric technologies, utilizing data analytics, enhancing training and support, and diversifying services.

The adoption and adaptation of disruptive technologies are crucial for the growth and sustainability of cooperatives. By leveraging these technologies, cooperatives can enhance their operational efficiency, reach wider markets, and contribute significantly to sustainable development.

## Policy & Legal Watch

[WOCCU Calls on G20 to Support Proportional Financial Regulation](#)



*Picture credits: CoopNews*

The World Council of Credit Unions (Woccu) has asked the G20 to support fair financial regulations to boost financial inclusion globally. In a letter to Brazil's G20 Presidency, WOCCU stressed the need for proportional financial rules to reduce inequality and promote inclusive growth. Representing over 83,000 credit unions in 118 countries, WOCCU urged the G20 to include proportional regulation in its 2024 Leaders' Declaration and ensure international bodies coordinate efforts and report progress annually. It highlighted past successes, like the inclusion of proportionality in sustainability disclosures, and emphasized the importance of G20 support for credit unions serving underserved communities. [Read more.](#)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Social and Solidarity Economy for Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia, Bangkok, Thailand – 18-19 June 2024
- UNDESA Capacity Building Workshop: Empowering cooperatives for inclusive economic growth & sustainable development in the Pacific, Fiji - 18-20 June 2024
- Webinar by ICA-AP Committee on Cooperatives in Educational Institutions on *Digital Platforms For and By Youth* – 25 June 2024
- International Day of Cooperatives – 6 July 2024
- Webinar by ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation on *Understanding Cooperative Law Across Different Countries and Sectors - Part-1* – 10 July 2024 (TBC)
- 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
- MBO Council Meeting and Trade Seminar, Kunming, China – 1 to 4 September 2024 (TBC)
- Training Program for Managers of Consumer/ Retail Co-operatives" in Kobe, Japan – 4 to 17 November 2024
- ICA-AP Regional Board Meeting in New Delhi, India – 28 November 2024
- ICA General Assembly in India – 25-30 November 2024