



INTERNATIONAL
CO-OPERATIVE
ALLIANCE

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Message of the International Co-operative Alliance

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14th UN International Day of Cooperatives
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“Confronting Climate Change through Co-operative Enterprise”

Co-operatives are rising to the challenge of climate change at a scale and pace which shows leadership in a number of countries and sectors around the world. While some commit to cutting green house gas emissions, others are striving towards carbon neutrality, and all are working towards economic, social and environmental sustainability. Climate change is after all more than simply an environmental concern; it has an undeniable impact on the economic and social well-being of peoples around the world.

Co-operatives in all sectors are confronting climate change – for example, agricultural and fishery co-operatives are looking at energy usage from production to market, they are looking at their emissions (carbon and nitrogen) seeking to be neutral or indeed have a positive impact they are embarking on green energy production or innovative feed to reduce emissions from livestock production; consumer co-operatives are seeking to reduce their carbon footprints both in-store, but also in terms of their own operations as well as their suppliers, and, they are active in providing education to members and consumers; housing co-operatives are using sustainable construction materials and designing eco-buildings; co-operative banks and credit unions are providing incentives to invest in energy efficient technology through competitive mortgage, consumer and business loans; insurance co-operatives are finding innovative ways to keep premiums down while still being able to cover the changing needs of their members with regard to the increasing risk due to extreme weather patterns and natural disasters linked to climate change; energy co-operatives are striving to provide clean and sustainable energy through wind, solar and bio-fuels; and many other co-operatives are working daily to ensure that they are sustainable enterprises both economically, socially, and environmentally.

A number of co-operatives have taken leadership roles at the international level partnering with the United Nations Environment Programme’s Climate Neutral Network, committing to the UN Global Compact "Caring for Climate" action platform, and many more are active at the national level. Equally, if not more important, however, are the actions taken on a daily basis by large and small co-operatives who are conscious that every effort no matter how small, can contribute to slowing climate change impacts.

These activities however are not new. After all, co-operatives have been active in promoting sustainable development for over 150 years. Because co-operatives are democratically controlled business, operating under values and principles which include social responsibility and caring for their communities, they strive to serve members not solely in economic terms, but also in the larger social, cultural and environmental scope.

Today, the international community is challenged by the food crisis and reconstruction efforts following natural disasters - both of which can at least in part be attributed to climate change.

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Farmers, consumers and communities directly touched by these crises are finding that co-operatives are assisting to the difficult task of adapting to the negative impacts of climate change. Co-operatives can help farmers address the increasing production challenges and provide greater stability of the farming sector while respecting environmental resources. Communities having to rebuild local economies following natural calamities can also seek a self-help option to address their needs through co-operatives, and can count on solidarity based on the principle of co-operation among co-operatives.

Recognising that climate change is one of the most critical global challenges of our time, ICA's membership affirmed at its General Assembly in 2007 its commitment to address the causes of climate change and reduce its impact and real progress has been made. However, increased challenges and stress on the environment continue to grow and so further attention is required by all.

On this International Day of Co-operatives, the ICA calls on co-operators throughout the world to strengthen their activities in promoting sustainable development, celebrate actions that are already contributing substantively to mitigating climate change and work in partnership to ensure that co-operatives make significant contributions in confronting the climate change challenge.

ICA is an independent, non-governmental association which unites, represents and serves co-operatives worldwide. Founded in 1895, ICA has 218 member organisations from 87 countries active in all sectors of the economy. Together these co-operatives represent more than 800 million individuals worldwide.