

ICAO-REDACOOOP Signs MOU on mutual cooperation at 2018 ICAO General Meeting [Contents for Press Release]

The 2018 General Meeting for the International Cooperative Agricultural Organization (ICAO) was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on the 19th of October with the participation of ICAO members, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) Americas Office and REDACOOOP, the network of agricultural cooperatives in the Americas region.

The ICAO, one of the eight sectoral organizations of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) dedicated to the agriculture sector, was established in 1951 and the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (NACF) in Korea has been hosting the Secretariat since 1998. The organization currently has 37 member cooperatives from 29 countries.

Presided by President Kim Byeongwon, he and over 20 members from member cooperatives including OCB Brazil, NAC Norway, JA-Zenchu Japan, IFFCO India, ANGKASA Malaysia, NCC Poland, OR-KOOP Turkey attended the General Meeting.

During the General Meeting, the ICAO Secretariat proposed that in order to secure species diversity, food security and stable agricultural production of farmers, there is a need to issue a Seed Act which stipulates the government's duty to support and protect the seed industry. Based on the ideas and opinions shared, a resolution to call for the protection of the seed industry was prepared and signed by all ICAO members that were present.

Adding on, a Memorandum of Understanding between the ICAO and REDACOOOP was signed to enhance cooperation on developing and supporting the agriculture of the Americas region, educate young farmers and women farmers, strengthen international solidarity and conduct joint research. The MOU was signed by Mr. Yong Khang, Secretary General of the ICAO; Mr. Danilo Salerno, Secretary General of the ICA Americas Office; Mr. Luis Frachia, Coordinator of REDACOOOP. Having gained the opportunity to seek cooperative projects with a network of the agriculture located in the Americas, the MOU is expected to help build a mutually beneficial future for not only farmers but also the agricultural cooperatives in this region.

President Kim also emphasized on the importance of Coop-to-Coop (C2C) business during the meeting, claiming that C2C creates business opportunities and helps achieve mutual development. He reinforced his statement by presenting various C2C projects that the ICAO has been engaging in with its member cooperatives including the case with ACFSMC, China on joint businesses on agri-finance and export of agricultural goods through their online

mall 'China E Coop'; another business case with IFFCO, India on seed exports through its online platform 'e-bazar' and joint capital business for farm machinery export; MOU with ANGKASA, Malaysia on the development of Malaysia's dairy industry through export of cow semen and breeding cows.

Another agenda raised was to increase education and training opportunities among cooperatives and the NACF introduced its Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects that will take place in 2018 and 2019 with the support of the Korean Government. The main theme for the ODA projects are capacity building for agricultural and financial cooperatives, and members were asked to encourage government officials and cooperative members of their countries to join these programs.

The Malaysia palm oil industry and export ban from EU was also dealt with during the meeting. Mr. Kamarudin Ismail, Deputy President of ANGKASA shared information and called for support for better perception towards the palm oil industry. President Kim and other ICAO members acknowledged that this issue will pose difficulty to Malaysian palm oil farmers and agreed that more research and concrete information shall be needed. The members gathered their opinions and requested ANGKASA to conduct co-research with universities and research institutions and based on the results, ICAO shall gather actions for further support.

Meanwhile, the next ICAO Executive Committee meeting has been approved to be held in Oslo, Norway in May 2019 and will address the following issues:

- Status of Agricultural Disaster Relief Insurances of each member country and the extension of its guarantee
- Role of cooperatives in reducing food waste
- The need for tax exemptions for cooperatives that are non-profit organizations, including those of corporate tax and value added tax on agricultural products
- Nurturing small-scale but strong farmers and strengthening their competitiveness
- Strengthening the efficiency of cooperative operation through "economies of scale" and "economies of business scope", and methods in achieving effective integration of cooperatives.

Lastly, ICAO Executive Committee members established a practical action plan to increase farmer's income per household and agreed that solidarity and cooperation among cooperatives in each country should be strengthened in order for cooperatives to act as a main body that contributes to the happiness of farmers worldwide.