



INTERNATIONAL
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ICA PRESS RELEASE

ICA calls on the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to save co-operative programme

Geneva, Switzerland, 25 June 2003, for immediate release – The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) addressed the FAO Council on 24 June 2003 to express its concern on the proposed cuts to the 2004-2005 FAO budget that will negatively impact support for the development of farmers' organisations and co-operatives.

ICA Board Member, Stefania Marcone, addressed governmental delegates in Rome (Italy) underlining the need to upgrade rather than reduce FAO's ability to provide technical assistance to support co-operative growth. The budget reductions proposed could lead to the end of any central focal point for co-operatives with FAO by the end of 2004 and compromise on-going activities that support FAO member states and co-operatives in those countries.

ICA reminded delegates of the FAO Council that co-operatives had been recognised in a variety of fora as being effective means for people to find ways to solve their economic and social problems. Citing the World Food Summit Plan of Action, the United Nations Guidelines, the International Labour Organization's Recommendation 193, as well as the European Co-operative Statute, ICA underlined that just at a time when policy makers were finding ways to facilitate co-operative growth, FAO was effectively reducing its capacity in the area of co-operative capacity-building, assistance in restructuring and enhancing co-operative entrepreneurial skills to increase incomes which ultimately would also impact the ability of co-operatives to engage in policy dialogue on issues of food production and food security

ICA reminded FAO that co-operatives could make significant contributions to realising the UN Millennium Development Goals and provided vital statistics showing just how much co-operatives today were already doing.

Co-operatives are a means for people around the world to fight poverty and hunger, create and maintain decent employment especially in rural areas, and enable civil society to engage in ways that enable people to help themselves. ICA is convinced that the FAO must retain if not increase the resources made available to co-operative development in order to fulfill its own aims of fighting poverty and hunger around the world.

ICA calls on its members, development agencies and government authorities to contact the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization expressing their concern over the proposed budget cuts and their impact on co-operative development.¹

See ICA Statement to the FAO Council at www.ica.coop

The International Co-operative Alliance is an independent, non-governmental association which unites, represents and serves co-operatives worldwide. The ICA was founded in London in 1895. Its members are national and international co-operative organisations in all sectors of activity including agriculture, banking, energy, industry, insurance, fisheries, housing, tourism and consumer co-operatives. ICA has more than 200 member organisations from over 100 countries, representing more than 760 million individuals worldwide.

¹ The Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy.