



**International Year  
of Cooperatives**  
Cooperatives Build a Better World

# COOP CONNECT

Edition 2

April 2025



Members of the NEDAC Delegation during the General Assembly and Executive Committee meeting in Kenya: United in purpose, committed to progress  
25 February 2025

**About us:** Network for the Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in Asia and the Pacific (NEDAC) is a regional forum that unites 30 apex cooperative organizations across eight nations. Established in 1991, NEDAC was created on the recommendation of the 1990 International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), Regional Conference of Cooperative Ministers, with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The primary objective is to support agricultural cooperatives in promoting agricultural and rural development.

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- ✔ Key insights from the seminar at the Co-operative University of Kenya.
- ✔ Visit to the Kenyan Cooperatives

## Upcoming Programs: 2025

Don't Miss Out on NEDAC's Upcoming Programmes!

1

**Training Programme**  
on  
**Implementation of Technology in Agriculture (Smart Agriculture)**

**Date: 21-25 April 2025**  
**Venue: Chandigarh, India**

**\*\*For more info: See page -13**

2

**Seminar on**  
**Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in Thailand**

**Venue: Bangkok, Thailand**

**\*\*\*Programs only for Thailand**

3

**Training on**  
**Institutional Development of Agriculture Cooperatives in Asia and the Pacific for Members of NEDAC**  
*in Association with*  
**Asian Confederation of Credit Unions (ACCU), Thailand**

**Date: June 22 – 27, 2025**  
**Venue: The Panitip Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand**

4

**International Collaborative Training Programme by CIRDAP & NEDAC**  
on  
**Start-ups, Technology, Entrepreneurship, Partnership for Vibrant Agri-Cooperatives**

**Date: July 21-23, 2025**  
**Venue: Bangkok, Thailand**

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# Chairman's Message

**Dear Members,**

It is a great honor for me to assume the role of Chairman of NEDAC, and I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all our members for their efforts and remarkable contributions in building a stronger, more dynamic NEDAC. This journey of growth and reinvention is guided by a shared purpose, one that shapes every decision we make and serves as the beacon for our collective efforts.

NEDAC's vision is to enhance and strengthen agricultural cooperatives across Asia and the Pacific, focusing on sustainable development, innovation, and empowerment. The recent General Assembly in Mombasa was a significant event, as it marked the first time NEDAC members visited the African region and learned the nuances of the African Agriculture Coop. The discussions at the Cooperative University of Kenya were insightful, shedding light on the challenges faced by African agro-cooperatives while highlighting the immense potential for collaboration between regions.

As we work towards a sustainable and inclusive cooperative future, our focus must remain on strengthening cooperative governance, embracing technological innovations, and building deeper connections within our networks. This year, as we celebrate the International Year of Cooperatives, let us renew our commitment to cooperation, empowerment, and shared prosperity.

By working together, we can turn challenges into opportunities. The path ahead calls for unity, innovation, and a shared vision.

Let us continue our efforts to build stronger, more resilient cooperatives for the future.

**Best Wishes**

**Mr. Pankaj Kumar Bansal (IAS)**

**Chairman, NEDAC**



## STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURE TOGETHER: NEDAC GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2025 IN MOMBASA, KENYA

The picturesque coastal city of Mombasa, Kenya, became the epicentre of transformative agricultural dialogue as the Network for the Development of Agriculture in Asia and the Pacific (NEDAC) organized its much-anticipated General Assembly (GA) and Executive Committee (ExCom) meeting in 2025.

Under the dynamic leadership of Mr. Pankaj K. Bansal, Chairman of NEDAC and Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Cooperation, Government of India (GOI), the assembly brought together a vibrant community of agricultural leaders, policymakers, and cooperative members from across the Asia-Pacific region.

Key figures included the Director General of CIRDAP, Chairman of IFFCO, Managing Director of HAFED, CEO of NAFSCOB, CEO of NCBL, CE of NFDB, Assistant Secretary of CDA Philippines, President of Mulkanoor Coop, Director of UNATI Coop, ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Director, and the Dy. Vice Chancellor of the Cooperative University of Kenya, among many others.

This year's gathering focused on one core goal: strengthening agricultural programs for a sustainable future. With an ambitious agenda, the discussions centred on advancing cooperative models and fostering cross-border collaboration to overcome challenges facing agriculture today. The tentative program for future activities outlined a roadmap aimed at enhancing food security, boosting farmer welfare, and leveraging technological innovations across member nations.



A landmark moment at the assembly was the signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between NEDAC and both the Cooperative University of Kenya (CUK) and CIRDAP. This collaboration marks a significant step toward meaningful partnerships that will drive innovation, education, and development in agricultural practices, ensuring a brighter future for cooperatives and farming communities across the region.



The assembly also provided a platform for members to share experiences, forge new partnerships, and set a clear vision for continued progress in the agriculture sector. By bringing together key stakeholders, NEDAC's 2025 General Assembly has set the stage for a more cooperative, resilient, and sustainable agricultural future in the Asia-Pacific region.





# NEDAC and CIRDAP Unite to Strengthen Agricultural Cooperatives in Asia and the Pacific

In a landmark event, the Network for Development of Agricultural Cooperatives (NEDAC) and the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) have formalized their partnership by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This collaboration marks a significant commitment to strengthening agricultural cooperatives, boosting food security, rural development, and economic empowerment in the region.

The MoU was signed during the NEDAC General Body and Executive Committee Meeting held in Mombasa, Kenya, attended by key leaders, experts, and delegates from across the Asia-Pacific region. The event served as an ideal platform for discussing the future of agricultural cooperatives and their vital role in fostering sustainable development.

Through this strategic partnership, NEDAC and CIRDAP aim to develop a comprehensive framework to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of agricultural cooperatives across the region. Central to this collaboration is the focus on strengthening cooperatives' communication and visibility, ensuring they become more efficient, resilient, and capable of addressing regional challenges. The partnership will also emphasize the development of cooperative structures and management practices to enhance their sustainability, market access, and overall impact.



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*Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP, expressed his excitement about the partnership, stating:*

*"This collaboration marks a new chapter in our efforts to uplift agricultural communities across Asia and the Pacific. Through shared resources, expertise, and innovative solutions, we can transform agricultural cooperatives into powerful drivers of economic and social development."*





## Empowering Agricultural Cooperatives for Sustainable Rural Development: Seminar at the Co-operative University of Kenya

The Co-operative University of Kenya (CUK) recently hosted a significant seminar titled “Empowering Agricultural Cooperatives for Sustainable Rural Development: Celebrating 2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives with a Cross-Regional Focus.” This event was a pivotal moment for the cooperative movement, bringing together a distinguished group of experts and representatives from the Network for the Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in Asia and the Pacific (NEDAC). It served as a dynamic platform for exploring the role of cooperatives in driving sustainable agriculture and rural development, highlighting the power of collective efforts in transforming agricultural practices across various regions.

The seminar commenced with an engaging guided tour of CUK, which provided the NEDAC members with a deeper understanding of the university's rich academic environment and its commitment to shaping the future of cooperative leadership. The tour offered participants a unique opportunity to explore the university's state-of-the-art facilities, showcasing its dedication to fostering innovation and excellence in cooperative education. This experience allowed attendees to see firsthand how CUK is actively contributing to the development of leaders who will champion the cooperative model in agriculture.

**In his opening address, Acting Vice-Chancellor Prof. Isaac Nyamongo** extended a heartfelt welcome to the seminar's participants, setting the stage for the day's discussions. Prof. Nyamongo emphasized the integral role of cooperatives in economic development, especially in rural areas, where they serve as vital instruments for improving livelihoods.

He pointed out that cooperatives, particularly in agriculture, empower communities by facilitating access to resources, markets, and technology. By working together, he noted, cooperatives can foster both economic growth and social cohesion, driving sustainable agricultural practices that support food security and environmental conservation. His remarks underscored the seminar's goal to promote a shared understanding of how cooperatives can be a powerful tool for achieving sustainable development on a global scale.





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# *A Visionary Keynote on:* **THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVES IN KENYA'S ECONOMIC AGENDA**

*"Cooperatives are a cornerstone of economic development, and in Kenya, they play a crucial role in driving financial inclusion, advancing rural development, and enhancing agricultural productivity. From an Indian perspective, we have witnessed how cooperatives, such as Amul, have transformed our rural economy—empowering communities and improving livelihoods.*

*The Government of India has taken decisive steps to strengthen the cooperative sector, particularly through initiatives like the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), which provides accessible loans and promotes the growth of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). These efforts have been pivotal in fostering sustainable development. Kenya, too, can harness the power of cooperatives to overcome key challenges, boost self-sufficiency, and chart a path toward sustainable growth."*

— *Mr. Pankaj Kumar Banasal (IAS), Chairman, NEDAC*

## **Panel Discussions: Paving the Way for Sustainable Cooperative Development**

The seminar featured a series of engaging panel discussions, each delving into a vital aspect of cooperative growth and sustainability.

**In the first panel**, moderated by Prof. Kennedy Waweru, experts including Mr. Balasubramanian Ganpathy Iyer, Mr. Roeland Monasch, Samuel Omwakwe from Caritas Kakamega, and Joab Osumba from Fineline Consultants, discussed how agricultural cooperatives are reducing hunger, improving rural livelihoods, and promoting sustainable farming practices. The conversation highlighted the deep alignment between cooperatives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), showcasing how social and financial education can empower local communities to achieve long-term success.



## **Strengthening Ties between Asia and Africa for Cooperative Advancement**

**The second session**, led by Prof. Lucy Kiganane, brought together key voices like Mr. Virgilio Rodriguez Lazaga, Mr. Jyoti Saroop, Dr. Moses Gweyi, and Mr. Michael Mutuma to explore opportunities for cross-regional collaboration between Asia and Africa. Through compelling case studies and real-world examples, the panellists shared valuable insights on how cooperative models can be tailored to suit diverse regional contexts, with an emphasis on international knowledge exchange and building resilience within cooperative structures.

## **Policy and Government Engagement: A Key to Scaling Cooperatives**

Following a networking break, the seminar delved into the critical topic of government policies for cooperative growth. Moderated by Dr. Lucy Ngare, this session brought together influential figures such as Mr. Sudhir Mahajan, Mr. P. Chandra Shekara, Commissioner Mr. David Obonyo, and Hon. Diana Kendi, CEC for Trade, Tourism, Culture, and Cooperative Development in Nyeri County. The discussion explored strategies for engaging governments to create cooperative-friendly policies that promote rural development and food security. Case studies from countries with established cooperative frameworks provided actionable insights for policymakers to strengthen cooperative systems at the national and regional levels.



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## Leveraging the International Year of Cooperatives: A Call to Action

The final panel, led by Dr. Moses Gweyi, explored how to leverage the International Year of Cooperatives 2025 to advocate for greater recognition of cooperatives as global agents of change. Panelists, including Mr. Praveen Reddy Aligireddy, Mr. Bhima Subrahmanyam, Mr. Paul Wanjala from KUSCO, and Ms. Monica Chepkirui from the School of Co-operatives and Community Development, outlined strategies to elevate the role of cooperatives in achieving the SDGs. The panelists emphasized the importance of collective action and international collaboration to position cooperatives as central players in the global movement for economic and social transformation.



### A Global Collaboration for a Sustainable Future

This seminar, with its rich diversity of perspectives and expertise, reinforced the power of cooperatives as tools for sustainable rural development. **Bhima Subrahmanyam, Managing Director, NAFSCOB and President, ICBA** presented his views as Panelist on the theme entitled 'Leverage IYC 2025 to amplify the importance of cooperatives in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) in the International Seminar on Empowering Agricultural Cooperatives for Sustainable Rural Development Celebrating the IYC2025 with a cross Regional Focus' organised by NEDAC in Association with Cooperative University of Kenya ( CUK ), ICBA & KUSCCO.







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## ***NEDAC Signs MoU with Cooperative University of Kenya for Collaborative Training & Capability Development***

In a significant development for the agricultural cooperative sector, the Network for the Development of Agriculture in Asia and the Pacific (NEDAC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Cooperative University of Kenya (CUK) to foster collaborative training and capability development. The event also witnessed the signing of a Letter of Intent, marking the beginning of the CUK-NEDAC collaboration. This strategic partnership aims to enhance cooperative development through shared knowledge, training, and capacity-building initiatives.

**Chairman of NEDAC, Mr. Pankaj K. Bansal**, who is also the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Cooperation, shared his excitement about the collaboration, emphasizing the vital role that educational institutions play in the success of cooperatives. He stated, "Educational institutions are the backbone of cooperatives, and this partnership represents the best possible opportunity for our organizations to join hands and create a lasting impact on the agricultural sector. Together, we can build a stronger foundation for cooperative development and agricultural prosperity."

**Prof. Isaac Nyamongo, Dy.Vice Chancellor of the Cooperative University of Kenya**, expressed his enthusiasm about the collaboration, highlighting that the MoU would open doors for impactful cooperation not only in Kenya and Africa but also globally. He stressed the potential of this partnership to create opportunities for meaningful knowledge exchange and support sustainable agricultural practices.

This partnership between NEDAC and the Cooperative University of Kenya marks a pivotal step towards strengthening cooperative development in the agricultural sector. By combining expertise and resources, both organizations are poised to create a lasting impact through comprehensive training and capacity-building initiatives.

This collaboration promises to foster growth and sustainability in the agricultural cooperatives of Asia and the Pacific, ultimately contributing to the empowerment of farmers and agricultural communities across the region.





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# Best Practices

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**Hoshiarpur** is setting a remarkable example for sustainable reforestation with a groundbreaking initiative combining technology, nature, and community empowerment. In an ambitious collaboration between the Forest Department and Unati Cooperative Marketing and Processing Private Limited, drones will soon take to the skies to seed bomb the district's forests, enhancing the region's green cover in a sustainable and innovative way.

## Empowering Communities and Rebuilding Ecosystems

For over a decade, Unati Cooperative has been a pioneer in environmental conservation through its **'Green Mission,'** which includes manufacturing and distributing seed balls to restore degraded landscapes. This year, their efforts have taken flight—literally.

Unati has produced an impressive 10 lakh seed balls, which will be dispersed across Hoshiarpur's forests by drones. These seed balls, crafted from nutrient-rich soil and native plant seeds, will carry the future of biodiversity with them, including harad, baheda, amla, tulsi, and many other herbs, trees, and shrubs that are integral to the local ecosystem.

## A Model for Sustainable Livelihoods

What sets this initiative apart is its holistic approach? While technology takes the lead in expanding forests, it also empowers the local community. The production of seed balls has been a source of livelihood for women self-help groups in Bhatoli and Narangpur villages, providing them with meaningful employment and generating revenue of approximately Rs 5 lakh. The program has turned these women into key contributors to environmental protection, giving them the tools to support their families while helping to restore the environment.

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The drones are capable of carrying between 2,500 and 4,000 seed balls at once, dropping them over large areas during a 15-30 minute flight. The use of drones not only speeds up the reforestation process but also allows for greater efficiency in reaching remote or hard-to-access areas.

**According to Sanjeev Tiwari, Forest Conservator of the North Circle, the Forest Department** and Unati have created a detailed plan to seed bomb the woodlands of Hoshiarpur. Unati will supply the seed balls and drones, while the Forest Department has also prepared seed balls with the help of self-help groups, who are actively participating in the project. Punjab Revenue Minister Brahma Shankar Jimpa recently inaugurated the larger program. Seed bombing has already been successfully carried out in the forests of Nara Dara.

## A Legacy of Sustainability and Hope

**Jyoti Swaroop, the director of Unati Cooperative,** shared that the initiative has been a labor of love for over 20 years. With the manual distribution of over 35-40 lakh seed balls, the target for this year—10 lakh seed balls—feels like a significant milestone. Swaroop emphasized that the seed ball method not only helps in afforestation but also enriches soil, enhances biodiversity, and fosters a sense of community spirit.





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# Cooperative Development Authority, Philippines

## Cl h h t

Since its launch in 2018, the Koop Kapatid Program has ignited a wave of cooperative empowerment across the Philippines, sparking collaboration, growth, and transformation. Spearheaded by the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), this innovative initiative has brought together "Big Brother" cooperatives with their smaller counterparts, the "Small Brothers," to create a powerful network of support and solidarity.

In Central Luzon, the results are undeniable. 28 Big Brother cooperatives have taken 33 smaller cooperatives under their wings, offering crucial mentorship and support. Through this partnership, micro and small cooperatives have gained access to technical, financial, and managerial expertise that has turbocharged their operations, boosted governance, and paved the way for long-term success.

**Ms. Mary Ann C. Estacio, Chairperson of the Silangan Multipurpose Cooperative, shared her experience:** "The Koop Kapatid Program has been incredibly beneficial. With the guidance and mentorship of our Big Brother cooperative, Kapit Bisig Sa Pag-unlad Multipurpose Cooperative, we've grown stronger and more successful."

But it's the real-life success stories that truly highlight the Koop Kapatid Program's potential. Take Valencia Dairy Cooperative (VADCO), for example. Founded in 2011 with an initial capital of only Php 15,000 and 23 members, VADCO has since soared to new heights. Today, with a capital of Php 318,000 and 52 members, VADCO isn't just a business—it's a cornerstone of the local community, driving job creation and funding key development projects like education and infrastructure.

***It's about cooperatives becoming engines of progress, improving lives, and creating lasting impact.***

Through its innovative model of mentorship and collaboration, the Koop Kapatid Program has proven that when cooperatives come together in the spirit of solidarity, they can overcome any challenge, seize every opportunity, and drive communities toward a brighter, more sustainable future.



**Mr. Reynaldo Malaluan, General Manager of BOCOFAMCO in Oriental Mindoro, echoed this sentiment:** "This program is vital for empowering local cooperatives. By pooling our resources and collaborating, we are fostering sustainable growth and creating a cooperative environment where everyone thrives."





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Network for the Development of Agricultural Cooperatives (NEDAC) recently visited Kenya's thriving dairy and coffee cooperatives, marking a significant step toward fostering closer ties between the Asia-Pacific and Africa regions. The delegation explored the innovative practices and strategies that have been instrumental in the growth of Kenya's cooperative sector, particularly within the **GITITU Coffee Growers Cooperative Society, Kibra, and GITHUNGURI Dairy Farmers Cooperative Society (FRESHA), Githunguri.**

During the visit, NEDAC representatives engaged in fruitful discussions with Kenyan cooperative leaders, focusing on the key challenges and opportunities in the agricultural sector. The delegation also exchanged valuable insights on the evolving cooperative models in the Asia-Pacific region, drawing comparisons with Kenya's approach to cooperatives. Topics such as technology adoption, sustainability practices, and market access were at the forefront of discussions, aimed at enhancing the mutual growth of cooperatives in both regions.

The delegation concluded their trip with a visit to GDC SACCO limited/GDC Insurance Agency Limited, Githunguri, where they were warmly welcomed by the COO, Mr. Olenkiti, and the Senior Regional Manager, Mr. Robert Owino. The KUSCCO (KUSCCO is the umbrella body of savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) in Kenya) team shared valuable insights into the dynamics of Kenya's cooperative movement, offering a deeper understanding of the sector's success and challenges. To commemorate the visit and symbolize the growing partnership between the organizations, NEDAC was presented with a commemorative plate, marking a meaningful step toward a stronger future collaboration.





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**Are you ready to revolutionize your farming practices?**

**Take Your Farming to the Next Level with Us!**  
**Unlock the Future of Agriculture: "Implementation of Technology in  
Agriculture"**

**JUL 17 21st - 25th April 2025 | Chandigarh, India**

Overview: This comprehensive Training Programme is designed to provide participants with an in-depth understanding of the most cutting-edge technological advancements in agriculture. Over the course of five days, attendees will be exposed to a wide array of innovative tools, techniques, and technologies that are revolutionizing the agricultural landscape, ensuring better productivity, efficiency, and sustainability for the future of farming.

*Knowledge  
Partners:*



Office of Principal Scientific Advisor  
to the Govt. of India  
Science & Technology Cluster



The programme will cover the following key aspects:

**Emerging Agricultural Technologies:** Participants will gain insight into the latest breakthroughs in agricultural technology, such as precision farming, drones for crop monitoring, smart irrigation systems, genetically modified crops, and automated machinery. These advancements are designed to optimize farm operations, reduce costs, and increase yields.

**Sustainable Agricultural Practices:** A significant focus will be placed on sustainable farming practices that promote environmental stewardship and long-term agricultural productivity. This includes techniques that reduce the use of harmful chemicals, conserve water, and protect biodiversity, all while increasing overall crop yields.

**Data-Driven Agriculture:** Participants will learn how to leverage big data and agricultural analytics to make informed decisions in their farming operations. Topics such as soil health monitoring, climate forecasting, and crop performance tracking will be discussed in detail, showcasing how data can drive more effective farming strategies.

**Practical Implementation of Technology:** Beyond theory, this programme is designed to give participants hands-on experience in using agricultural technologies. Attendees will receive step-by-step guidance on how to integrate and apply these tools in real-world farm settings. Practical sessions will include setting up automated systems, analyzing farm data, and applying the latest techniques to optimize their operations existing operations.

For registration, kindly ensure to complete your registration by 10th April 2025

**Register Now!!!!!!**

**Registration Fee:**

- Sponsored by NEDAC Members: **400 USD** per person (includes Accommodation, Food & Training)
- **150 USD** per person (does not include Accommodation or Food)
- NEDAC Non-Members: **550 USD** per person (includes Accommodation, Food & Training)
- **200 USD** per person (does not include Accommodation or Food) **25% discount for youth & women on all categories.**

**Together, we grow stronger.**

**Scan and Follow us:**



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