



International Co-operative
Banking Association



International Year
of Cooperatives

The International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA)

ASSESSMENT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AMONG ICBA BANKING MEMBERS: DECEMBER 2024



Global office Address:

The International Cooperative Banking Association - ICBA

International Cooperative Alliance - AISBL - Avenue Milcamps 105 - 1030

Brussels – Belgium, Telephone: +32 (0) 2 743 10 30

Tel.: +91 9820009799, Email: president@icba.coop, Website: <http://www.icba.coop>

ICBA Board Members (As on December 2024)

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1	Subrahmanyam Bhima	President, ICBA Representing National Federation of State Cooperative Banks (NAFSCOB) India
2	Dr (Prof) Hans Groeneveid	Vice-President Nominated by Rabobank, Netherlands
3	Ahmed Mohiuddin	Vice-President National Cooperative Union of Bangladesh (BJSU)
4	Dr. Eng. Mieczysław GRODZKI,	Director Nominated by: National Co-operative Council – NCC Poland
5	K. B. Upreti	Director Nominated by: National Cooperative Bank Limited (NCBL), Nepal
6	Kabir Ayinde-Tukur	Director Nominated by: Cooperative Mortgage Bank Ltd. (CMB), Nigeria
7	Ravinder Rao Konduru	Director Nominated by: National Federation of State Cooperative Banks (NAFSCOB), India

The International Cooperative Banking Association- ICBA

Assessment of Recent Developments Among ICBA Banking Members

December 2024



Research report and data collection commissioned by the ICBA

Hans Groeneveld and Camilla Carabini¹

¹Hans Groeneveld is professor Financial Cooperatives at Tilburg University (j.m.groeneveld@tilburguniversity.edu). Camilla Carabini is a PhD candidate in Anthropology at the University of Milano Bicocca (camilla.carabini@unimib.it). The authors would like to thank Mohammadamin Berenji for his excellent support in collecting data and building the excel file.

ASSESSMENT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AMONG ICBA BANKING MEMBERS DECEMBER 2024

CONTENTS

S.No.	Table of Content	Page
	Foreword – by Dr. Ariel Guarco, President, ICA	3
	Preface – By Dr. Jeroen Douglas, Director General, ICA	4
	Prelude/Acknowledgements – By Bhima Subrahmanyam, President, ICBA	5
1	Executive Summary	6
2	Introduction	7
3	Data Collection and Verification Process	8
4	Analysis of Key Trends and Indicators	9
5	Case Studies of Selected ICBA Members	18
6	Recommendations	24
7	Conclusion	25

List of Charts/Graphs

1	Average annual percentage change of the number of branches	11
2	Average balance sheet growth of ICBA members and national banking systems	12
3	Average deposit growth of ICBA members and national banking systems	13
4	Average loan growth of ICBA members and national banking systems	14
5	Average equity growth of ICBA members and national banking systems	15
6	Average RoA for ICBA members and national banking systems	16
7	Average CI-ratio for ICBA members and national banking systems	17
8	Average capital ratio of ICBA members and national banking systems	18

Appendices

	A - List of ICBA members included in the analysis.	27
	B - Data source per ICBA member and country included in the analysis.	30



**Dr. Ariel Guarco, President,
International Cooperative Alliance**

Global Office:

International Cooperative
Alliance – AISBL
Avenue Milcamps 105
1030 Brussels
Belgium
VAT: BE 0535 539 869
RPM Brussels
T: +32.2.743.10.30
ica@ica.coop
www.ica.coop

Regional Offices:

Africa
Nairobi – Kenya
www.icaafrica.coop

Americas
San José – Costa Rica
www.aciamericas.coop

Asia and Pacific
New Delhi – India
www.icaap.coop

Europe
Brussels – Belgium
www.coopseurope.coop

**Sectoral
Organisations:**

Agriculture (ICAO)
www.icaa.coop

Banking (ICBA)
www.icba.coop

Consumers (CCW)
www.ccw.coop

Fisheries (ICFO)
www.icfo.coop

Health (IHCO)
www.ihco.coop

Housing (CHI)
www.housinginternational.coop

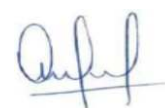
Insurance (ICMIF)
www.icmif.org

**Industry and Services
(CICOPA)**
www.cicopa.coop

FOREWORD

Financial cooperatives have long stood as pillars of resilience, equity, and community-driven progress in the global financial system. Rooted in the cooperative values of self-help, solidarity, and member democracy, they operate with a unique model that prioritizes people over profit and emphasizes the real economic needs of households and businesses. This member-focused approach allows financial cooperatives to deliver not only competitive financial performance but also profound social impact within their communities. The International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA), one of the important sectors of International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) has played a critical role in representing financial cooperatives and their commitment to fostering inclusive and sustainable growth. However, their immense contributions often go unrecognized by policymakers and regulators, limiting their visibility and support in an era marked by economic transition and rising inequalities. To bridge this gap, ICBA, in collaboration with Tilburg University, embarked on an ambitious project to gather and analyze key financial data from its banking members. This initiative seeks to underscore the economic and social impact of financial cooperatives through objective evidence, advocating for greater recognition and support in the broader financial ecosystem. The findings presented in this report entitled **“Tentative assessment of recent developments among its banking members”** highlight the remarkable performance of ICBA member cooperatives over the 2015-2023 period. From membership growth and branch network expansion to balance sheet strength and credit provision, financial cooperatives consistently outperformed their traditional banking counterparts in key indicators. These achievements reflect their commitment to serving real economic needs while maintaining stability and sustainability. Yet the study also uncovers significant challenges, including data gaps and the need for standardized reporting practices. The ICA will support ICBA in addressing these issues to strengthen future data collection initiatives and further amplify the voice of financial cooperatives on the global stage. As we reflect on these findings, we are reminded of the transformative power of cooperation. Financial cooperatives embody the principles of economic democracy and social responsibility, offering a pathway to a more equitable and inclusive financial system. Their success stories, captured in this report, inspire us to deepen our commitment to the cooperative paradigm and ensure that its benefits are recognized and celebrated worldwide. On behalf of the ICA, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the ICBA members and researchers who contributed to this important work. I also place on record my highest appreciation to Mr. Bhima Subrahmanyam, President, ICBA for his continued contribution to ensure strengthening of Cooperative Financial Institutions. Together, let us continue to champion the cooperative spirit, fostering innovation, resilience, and sustainability in an ever-changing world.

**Brussels,
December 2024**



**Dr. Ariel Guarco
President, ICA**



International
Co-operative
Alliance



Jeroen Douglas
Director-General
International Cooperative Alliance

Global Office:

International Cooperative
Alliance – AISBL
Avenue Milcamps 105
1030 Brussels
Belgium
VAT: BE 0535 539 869
RPM Brussels
T: +32.2.743.10.30
ica@ica.coop
www.ica.coop

Regional Offices:

Africa
Nairobi – Kenya
www.icaafrica.coop

Americas
San José – Costa Rica
www.iciamericas.coop

Asia and Pacific
New Delhi – India
www.icaap.coop

Europe
Brussels – Belgium
www.coopseurope.coop

Sectoral Organisations:

Agriculture (ICAO)
www.icaa.coop

Banking (ICBA)
www.icba.coop

Consumers (CCW)
www.ccw.coop

Fisheries (ICFO)
www.icfo.coop

Health (IHCO)
www.ihco.coop

Housing (CHI)
www.housinginternational.
coop

Insurance (ICMIF)
www.icmif.org

Industry and Services
(CICOPA)
www.cicopa.coop

PREFACE

For decades, the cooperative banking sector has championed a unique model that prioritizes member needs and serves as a cornerstone for financial inclusion and community development. However, the true extent of their impact has often been overshadowed by anecdotal evidence.

This report, a collaborative effort between the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and the International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA), represents a significant step forward. By leveraging data analysis on 7 key indicators, we move beyond anecdotal stories and provide our members with a **scientifically grounded understanding** of the resilience and robustness of cooperative banks. Consistent data from ICBA members provide **objective evidence** to strengthen the advocacy efforts of cooperative banks worldwide.

The authors, Prof. Hans Groeneveld from Tilburg University and PhD candidate Camilla Carabini from University of Milan Bicocca have shown the rather impressive performance of ICBA members, including nearly 4% annual membership growth, branch network expansion at three times the rate of other banks, and balance sheet growth of 7.7% annually compared to 5.5% for the overall banking system. Additionally, deposit and loan portfolio growth rates of 8.5% and 7.5%, respectively, demonstrate ICBA members' active role in supporting households and firms. Their ability to maintain a stable return on assets of 1.2% over the period further underscores their financial strength and sustainability.

This report equips ICA members with the data necessary to demonstrate the **superior performance** of the cooperative banking model. Armed with these insights, our members can confidently engage policymakers, regulators, and the broader financial community, pushing for the recognition and support that cooperative banks deserve.

The ICA extend its sincere gratitude to ICBA and in particular to Mr Bhima Subrahmanyam, President, for his vital role in this project. His dedication to data collection and collaboration has significantly advanced our understanding of the unique and impactful role of cooperative banks in the global financial landscape.

Brussels
06-12-2024

Jeroen Douglas
Director-General
International Cooperative Alliance



Bhima Subrahmanyam
President, ICBA

PRELUDE/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA) is one of the eight sectoral associations of International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). ICBA has been rightly conceived to perform as representative of Co-operative Financial Institutions (CFIs) and Cooperative Banks, affiliated, directly or indirectly to ICA. The main objectives of ICBA are a) to facilitate the promotion at the international and regional levels of the distinctive cooperative values of cooperative banks and of the advantages of using them over other banks b) and to facilitate and encourage the exchange of information amongst members on key cooperative banking issues and foster inter-cooperation in the finding of solutions. Tilburg University (TU) presented a project-proposal dated 09 April 2024 to the International Banking Association (ICBA) of the ICA to collect, verify and analyze financial data of Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs) being ICBA-members for at least the last five years (2018-2022/23). The parties agreed that data collection was not an end, but served much broader and multi purposes, that were centered on member value and benefit. ICBA has expressed its intention to publish a concise publication in the UN International Year of Cooperatives 2025, with key figures of its CFI members. This paper would gain if the data for members could be compared with that of other banks in their respective countries. ICA has welcomed the initiative of data collection of CFIs bearing in mind its own aspirations of supporting a robust database of cooperatives worldwide and has expressed its interest in facilitating outreach and coordinating the selection and support as and when required to the third-party consultant ‘

Dr (Prof)Hans Groeneveld is Professor Financial Services Cooperatives in Tilburg School of Economics and Management, Tilburg University, Netherlands. Dr. Hans is also associated with Rabobank and Vice President of ICBA. He is the prime lead of the study report. We express our gratitude for his valuable contributions to the study report. We also extend our thanks to the researchers of Tilburg University associated with the study report.

Ms. Camila Carabini, PhD Student, Cultural & Social Anthropology, University of Milano-Bicocca has been retained as consultant to Work closely with the Prof. Hans Groeneveld, Vice President, ICBA (Project-Lead) on tasks related to the data collection , analysis exercise and in producing outputs linked to the research conducted by the ICBA and the Tilburg University (TU).She has also demonstrated her ability to undertake preparatory work for the Project, particularly contacting and following up with ICBA member organizations. We thank her for her contribution to the present task. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Santosh Kumar, Director (Legislation) ICA who has been in the forefront providing inputs preparatory to entering MOU with Tilburg University, information and offering suggestions /comments/Feedback. Mr. Jeroen Douglas, Director General, ICA encouraged all those connected to ICBA efforts. We also place on record our appreciation to Ms. Antonina Guerrilla, Assistant to the Director-General and Secretary for Statutory Meetings and Ms. Veronica Benet, Director of Finance & Administration and other important functionaries ICA who have directly and or indirectly assisted ICBA in completing the task,

The ICBA shall initiate and encourage worldwide discussion and constructive resolution of the crucial issues that emerges out of the conclusions of the present study and also shall disseminate best practices amongst members and encourage co-operation between them.

December 2024


Bhima Subrahmanyam
President, ICBA

E-Mail : president@icba.coop, bhimas@gmail.com ☐ Cell (+91) 9820009799, Website : www.icba.coop

COOPERATIVES : DEMOCRACY & PEACE

1. Executive Summary

Financial cooperatives possess a unique historical background, distinct business model, and risk profile. Unlike traditional banks, their membership-based governance and deep engagement with local communities enable them to prioritize members' needs and contribute to diversity within the global financial system. However, policymakers and regulators often overlook this contribution, limiting their visibility and recognition.

To address this gap, the ICBA, in collaboration with Tilburg University, launched a project to create a database of key figures from its banking members. This initiative aims to highlight financial cooperatives' social and economic impact through objective data, strengthening their advocacy efforts and ensuring they receive the attention and support they deserve.

Significant data collection challenges were faced during the data collection exercise for the period 2015-2023. Among all facets, a low response rate by ICBA members and the lack of standardized reporting practice suggests a need for more robust communication channels between the ICBA and its members, as well as a clearer understanding of the ICBA's role and the importance of data-sharing initiatives. Additionally, member engagement appears to be an aspect requiring improvement, as low participation limits the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the analysis. Addressing these gaps through better outreach and engagement efforts will be essential for future data collection initiatives. The bottom line is that objective data are of paramount importance for, among other things, increasing the visibility of the value-added, economic, and social impact of banking ICBA members among the public, policymakers, and regulators in a world fraught with fundamental transition and inequality issues.

Despite these limitations, the key finding of this data collection exercise is that ICBA member cooperatives have demonstrated robust growth and resilience across key financial indicators, consistently outperforming other banks in their respective countries.

- **Membership Growth:** Average membership growth among ICBA members reached nearly 4% annually.
- **Branch Expansion:** ICBA members increased their branch networks by an average of 1.3% per year, compared to 0.4% for other banks.
- **Balance Sheet Growth:** ICBA members' balance sheet totals grew at an average annual rate of 7.7%, surpassing the 5.5% growth of total assets within national banking systems.
- **Deposit Growth :** Deposits grew by an average of 8.5% per year among ICBA members, exceeding the 6 % growth rate of the broader banking system.
- **Loan Growth:** ICBA members expanded their loan portfolios at an average annual rate of 7.5 %, supplying more credit to households and firms than other banks.
- **Return on Assets (RoA):** ICBA members achieved an average RoA of 1.2% over the study period, matching the national banking systems' average. This parity illustrates that financial cooperatives can generate sufficient surpluses to support equity accumulation and sustainable growth.
- **Capital ratio:** ICBA members operated with a capital ratio of almost 21 compared to nearly 18 for the entire banking industry.

While these results highlight the strong performance of ICBA members, significant variations in balance sheet and deposit growth exist across different cooperatives. A possible next step could be to go deeper into the backgrounds of - divergent - developments among individual ICBA members. All in all, these findings

underscore the ability of ICBA member cooperatives to deliver financial services that meet real economic needs while maintaining competitive performance within their respective markets. Precisely, these characteristics are also emphatic in the compelling and instructive stories of three ICBA members on five central and existential themes included as case studies.

2. Introduction

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) was founded in 1895 in London, UK. Twenty-seven years later, the sectoral banking association was established: the International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA). A significant reason for creating this new sectoral organization was that financial cooperatives present different organizational structures, engage in unique activities, and have different members' relationships compared to other types of cooperatives. Financial cooperatives played - and still play - a crucial role in enhancing financial inclusion for large sections of the population, and they create access to financial services for agricultural cooperatives and their members. In many regions of the world, lack of access to affordable financial services still deprives people of a fairer and more equitable life.

Within the global financial sector, financial cooperatives not only have a unique historical background but also present a different orientation, business model, and risk profile due to membership-based governance and engagement with the community where they are established. Consequently, financial cooperatives contribute to diversity in the global financial system. However, their contribution to this diversity is quite often overlooked by policymakers and regulators. That is why it is so important for financial cooperatives worldwide to come together and demonstrate their social and economic impact with objective data and facts. ICBA is uniquely positioned to fulfill this advocacy role.

This was precisely why ICBA launched a project in collaboration with Tilburg University to begin building a database of the key figures of its banking members. Being able to analyze data collected over several years allows ICBA to manifest its banking members' added value, economic impact, divergent orientation, and moderate risk profiles to the outside world. The data collection exercise is not an end but serves much broader and multiple purposes. Good-quality, timely, and reliable data enable ICBA and financial cooperatives to showcase their distinctive position, orientation, and characteristics in banking systems for a broad audience around the globe. After all, policymakers and regulators do not just believe in nice stories but want to see "hard" evidence to be convinced. Besides, the data exercise can also help recruit new members and retain existing members by offering valuable insights and added value for ICBA membership.

This report contains the findings and conclusions from this data collection project. It must be said it was a tough delivery. Almost half (45%) of the banking ICBA members were unable and/or unwilling to provide the baseline data. This shows little attention or recognition that it is in their interest to collect and share data on their financial impact with other members. Data analysis and research are the grounding steps to properly bring the importance and relevance of financial cooperatives worldwide to the attention of policymakers and the public.

Having said that, in this report, we will try to paint a general picture based on the data collected. The methodology and approach to the data collection and verification process will be explained in the next section. To the extent possible, we will go into some detail with respect to the actual figures in Chapter 4. To put the analysis in a practical context, we have included in Section 5 three real-life examples of banking ICBA members for illustration and inspiration. Section 6 contains important lessons and recommendations. In the last section, we present the conclusions. As a main observation, we would especially like to emphasize that this report has laid a strong foundation for building a database regarding the financial members of ICBA. Our developed and structured database (and template) is a first step to build on if all ICBA members deem it useful.

3. Data Collection and Verification Process

We undertook a comprehensive data collection process aimed at gathering essential quantitative indicators to analyze the performance and market positioning of cooperative financial institutions that are members of ICBA. We have started by distinguishing among banking and non-banking ICBA members. We considered banking members, i.e., cooperative banks, credit unions, and second-level organizations representing banking institutions. We defined non-banking members as all other cases, like second or third-level organizations of cooperatives in different sectors and regional associations, for instance, the Association of Asian Confederation of Credit Unions (ACCU), the European Association Of Co-operative Banks (EACB) or the national cooperative council in Poland (see Annex 1). We then tried to gather data from the ICBA banking members. This data was categorized into five key areas: Economic Indicators, Profitability Indicators, Capital Solidity Indicators, Other Indicators, and Market Share. Each category was chosen to provide insights into distinct aspects of the institutions' operations, stability, and competitive standing within the domestic market.

In the **Economic Indicators** category, we focused on fundamental metrics such as total assets, customer deposits, loans, net profit after taxes, equity, and leverage ratio. Collecting this data allowed us to evaluate the financial strength and growth trajectory of the institutions. For instance, total assets and total loans reflect the scale of operations, while total deposits indicate trust and penetration among customers. Net profit after taxes and equity figures provide a glimpse into profitability and financial resilience, both critical for sustaining cooperative financial structures over the long term.

Profitability Indicators, such as Return on Assets (ROA), Return on Equity (ROE), Cost-Income ratio, and capital ratio, were included to measure the institutions' efficiency in generating profit from their assets and equity. These indicators help gauge the operational effectiveness and resource allocation, offering a clear view of how well the cooperative model aligns profitability with member and customer benefits. Similarly, **Capital Solidity Indicators** like the total capital ratio are crucial in assessing financial stability and the ability to absorb economic shocks, which is particularly relevant for cooperatives often oriented toward community welfare.

Additional data on the number of full-time equivalent employees, clients, legally independent local or regional cooperative financial institutions, branches, and members will provide a broader context on the scale of operations and membership engagement. These indicators give insight into the reach and scope of the cooperatives' service network and community integration, shedding light on cooperative institutions' unique relationship with local markets and communities.

Lastly, **Market Share indicators**, including market share in deposits, loans, mortgages, and the SME sector, were gathered to evaluate the institutions' position relative to competitors. These indicators reflect the cooperatives' ability to compete within various segments and their relevance in serving underrepresented sectors, such as small and medium-sized enterprises.

Together, these categories of data enable a holistic understanding of cooperative financial institutions, providing a foundation for assessing their performance, community impact, and stability. Once the performance indicators of the ICBA banking members were gathered, the aim was to compare those with the average data from those of all other banks in their home countries. However, this objective turned out to be overly ambitious. We encountered large gaps in the figures of national banking systems. Not only are some banking indicators missing for a particular year in a particular country, but for some countries, banking indicators were not available for any year. This implies that the comparison between figures from ICBA members and data on national banking systems is flawed.

The data collection process faced another significant challenge due to delays and incomplete responses from members. Only 19 out of the 32 banking ICBA members provided all or just a part of the requested data (or had

some required data available in some online database), reflecting engagement issues within the ICBA network that we will address in the Recommendation section. Besides, not all the data required were or could be provided by these 19 ICBA banking members. Therefore, a lot of gaps emerged in the data collection and in the five key areas as discussed above. Finally, the quality of the delivered and/or collected data seems sometimes questionable. In the next Chapter, we will indicate which data collection problems were encountered with the various indicators and which indicators simply cannot be discussed due to lack of sufficient and/or reliable data².

4. Analysis of Key Trends and Indicators

In this chapter, we analyze and discuss the data we were able to collect. When doing so, we will always try to paint as pure a picture as possible, but this is not easy due to many and large data gaps as well as considerable data volatility. Hence, we would like to emphasize in advance that the analysis can only be considered as an initial exploration and rough approximation. In every subsection, we will indicate how many banking members of ICBA are included in the analysis and whether or not data for the financial cooperatives in question are available for all years. Thus, the observant reader correctly concludes that the number of financial cooperatives included may vary by subsection and year. To prevent large ICBA members from dominating the picture, we calculated the unweighted average for each variable (or its percentage change). This means that small and large ICBA members have an equal weight in the analyses and calculations³. Moreover, we have to stress that the quality and quantity of data is insufficient to conduct analyses by region. We will, therefore, look at developments among ICBA members collectively. This, of course, does not do justice to large differences per region and between ICBA members.

Furthermore, we have not been able to collect some indicators and/or sufficiently reliable indicators for enough ICBA members to say anything meaningful and representative about the overall development. This is particularly true for net profits, the leverage ratio, the number of legally independent local or regional cooperative financial institutions, market shares, employment and number of clients. Therefore, we do not present or discuss the indicators below.

We have also put a lot of work into trying to collate comparable variables and indicators for national banking sectors in ICBA members' home countries. To this end, we consulted multiple data sources from renowned institutions like the IMF, OECD, ECB, and World Bank. Unfortunately, this was not successful for all countries and all years in the sample period 2015-2023. Nevertheless, we used all retrieved and available data to approximate the average growth rates of the nominal variables and/or simply used the collected key banking ratios to compute averages for all national banking industries. We then contrasted the averages of these indicators for ICBA members with those of the respective national banking systems whose data we were able to gather. Note that this approach does not yield a perfect comparison (per year) between ICBA members and national banking systems and is consequently not academically sound. However, as mentioned, our calculations and analyses are a first step that will require further refinement in the future.

²As part of this research at the request of ICBA, an excel data file with all the data collected was also compiled and made available to ICBA. Many cells in the worksheets in this file contain the letters NA (= not available) by ICBA member and/or country. At the same time, this inventory of data gaps provides a superb opportunity to entice and urge ICBA banking members to come forward with the requested figures.

³It should be noted that we have included the West Indies as one country. ICBA member CCCU is the umbrella organization of 22 members across 17 Caribbean countries, encompassing 197 credit unions and serving 2.6 million members (2023 figures). Moreover, Agricoops Co-operative Credit Union (ACCU) from Ghana is as yet omitted from the analysis as it just provided data for its first year of existence (2023).

4.1 Membership growth

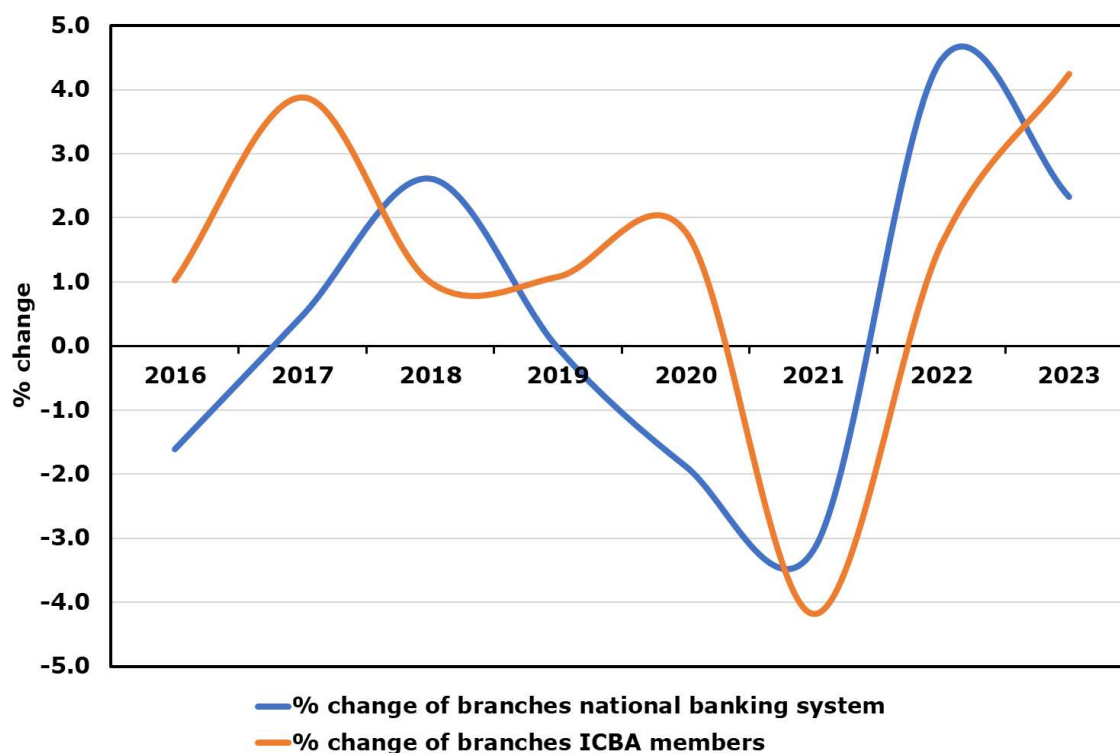
Nine ICBA members from nine different countries delivered data on the number of members, though some did not provide member data for all years in the sample period. This low number of respondents is regrettable because members constitute the legitimacy of cooperatives. Thus, the conclusions to be drawn from membership growth are not representative. Our available figures reveal that the membership base of these ICBA members has increased by an average of almost 7 % per year in the period 2016-2023, but this figure is heavily biased upward by the huge membership surge of one ICBA member in 2017.⁴ Excluding this outlier, average membership growth would have been nearly 4 %. This is obviously still a laudable annual increase, reflecting the attractiveness of these ICBA members in the eyes of customers. Hopefully, other ICBA members will be able to add their membership figures to the database in the near future.

4.2 Branch networks

Ten ICBA members from ten countries provided data on their branch networks for all or some years in the sample period. Using all available data for the period 2015-2023, it appears that ICBA members expanded the number of bank branches by an average of 1.3 % per year (see footnote 3). All other banks increased the number of branches by 0.4 % per year on average. As a result of the economic lockdowns caused by COVID-19, quite a few bank branches were closed in 2021. Physical presence in local communities is often seen as a distinguishing feature of cooperative banks. A follow-up study on this topic by ICBA might be of interest. However, this would require more ICBA members to provide data on their branch networks.

⁴One ICBA member doubled the size of its branch network in 2017. It opened many new branches in various states in 2017, which facilitated access to financial services and increased credit demand. The calculations exclude this 'outlier'.

Chart 1 Average annual percentage change of the number of branches



Source: own calculations based on edited data from 16 ICBA members and 15 national banking sector data from renowned international organizations (OECD, World Bank, ECB, IMF). The sample of ICBA members varies per year due to missing data. Data on ICBA members and national banking sectors in Argentina, Brazil, Ethiopia, and Northern Cyprus have been corrected for extremely high inflation rates.

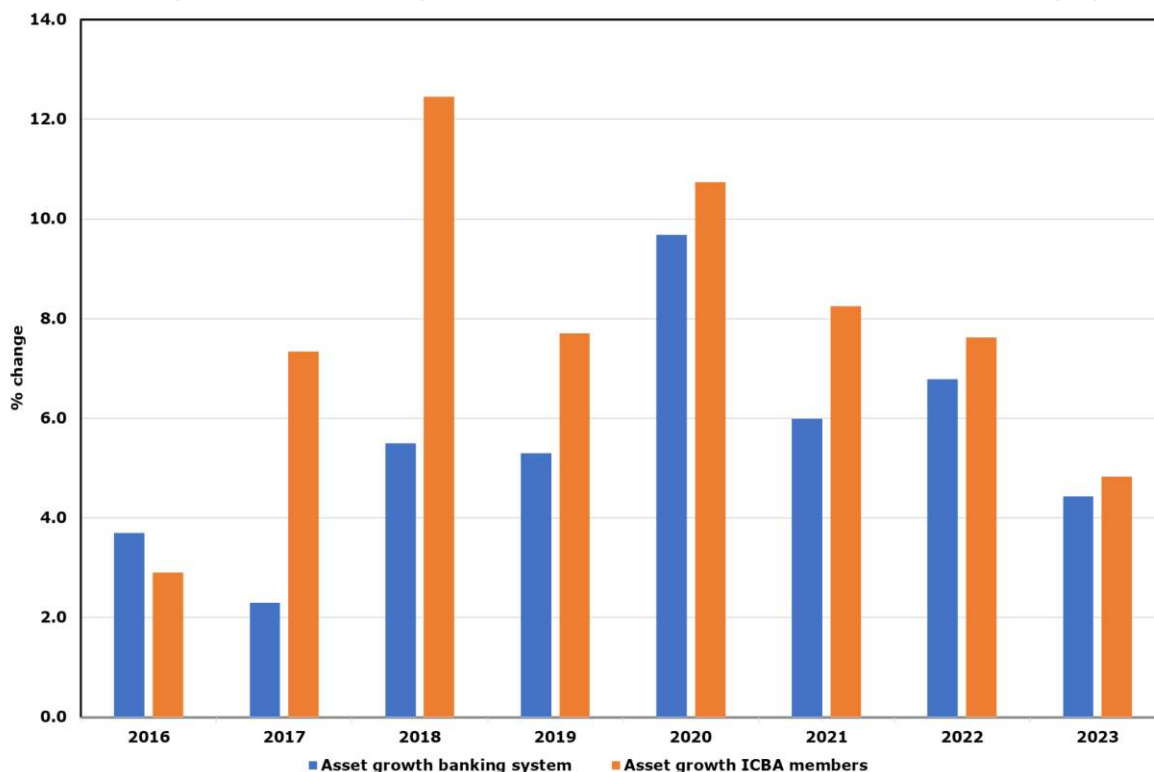
4.3 Balance sheet developments

We were able to collect basic balance sheet data - total assets, loans, and deposits - of 16 banking members of ICBA from 15 different countries for most - but not all - years from 2015 to 2023. Total equity data were available for 13 ICBA members from 13 different countries, but again not for all years. Subsequently, we computed the annual growth rates of these balance sheet data for each ICBA member and its respective country. We then calculated an unweighted average annual growth rate of the balance sheet item for all ICBA members who provided data for the years in question. This way, each ICBA member has an equal weight in the resulting yearly growth rate. We have performed the same calculations based on identical balance sheet items collected for national banking systems, yielding an average yearly growth rate for the collective banking sector in these 15 countries.

Despite flaws and incompleteness of the figures, the tentative conclusion seems justified that ICBA members have, on average, grown faster than all other banks in their respective home countries almost in every year measured by balance sheet totals (Chart 2). Over the entire period, the average balance sheet growth of these ICBA members was around 7.7%, while total assets of the collective banking system grew by an average of 5.5%. However, there are large differences in balance sheet growth among different ICBA members.⁵ For instance, underlying figures show that some ICBA members reported a huge balance sheet growth, while others recorded a drop in their balance sheet total. However, it is beyond the scope of this report to look into developments among individual ICBA members. A possible next step could be to go deeper into the backgrounds of - divergent - developments among individual ICBA members.

⁵For the ICBA member and banking system in Argentina, Brazil, Ethiopia, and Northern-Cyprus, we have adjusted the balance sheet data for skyrocketing inflation rates.

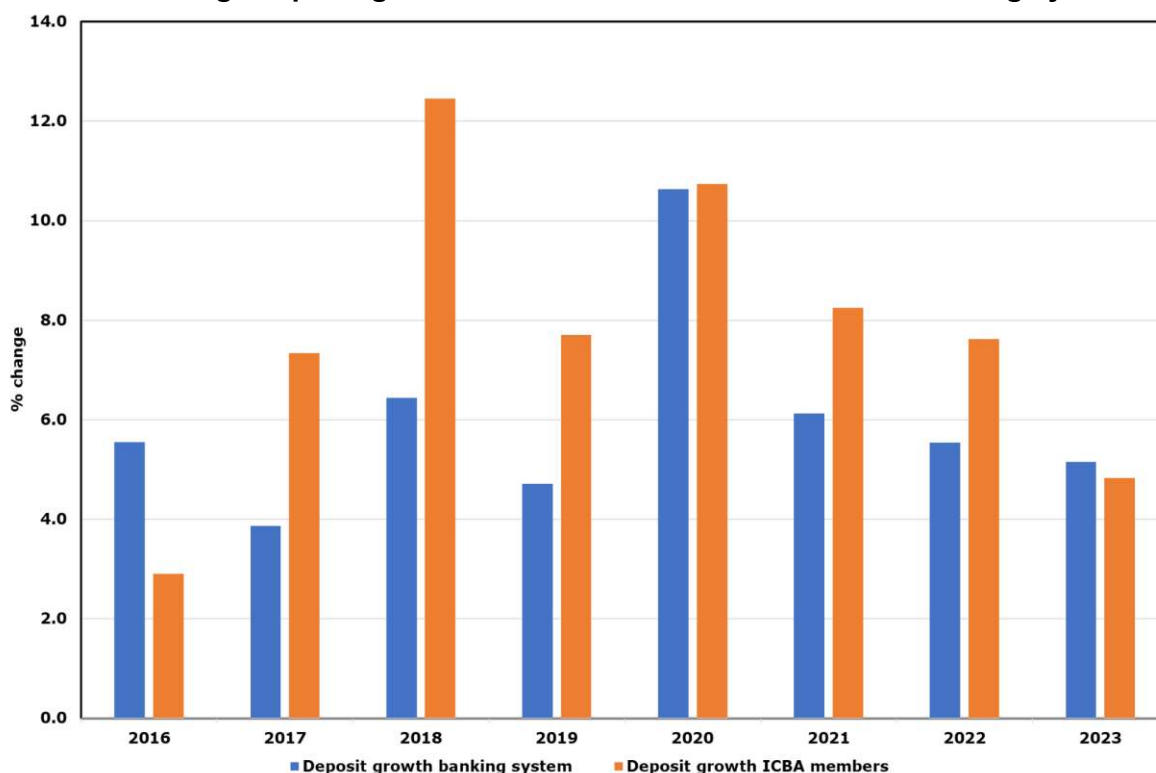
Chart 2 Average balance sheet growth of ICBA members and national banking systems



Source: own calculations based on edited data from 16 ICBA members and 15 national banking sector data from renowned international organizations (OECD, World Bank, ECB, IMF). The sample of ICBA members varies per year due to missing data. Data on ICBA members and national banking sectors in Argentina, Brazil, Ethiopia, and Northern Cyprus have been corrected for extremely high inflation rates.

Chart 3 displays the average expansion of deposits for ICBA members and national banking systems. It appears that deposit growth rates diverged slightly less than those of total assets. Average deposit growth among ICBA members was around 8.5% per year, while the deposit base of the entire banking system grew by an average of approximately 6% per year. Again, there were wide disparities in deposit expansion among ICBA members and national banking systems.

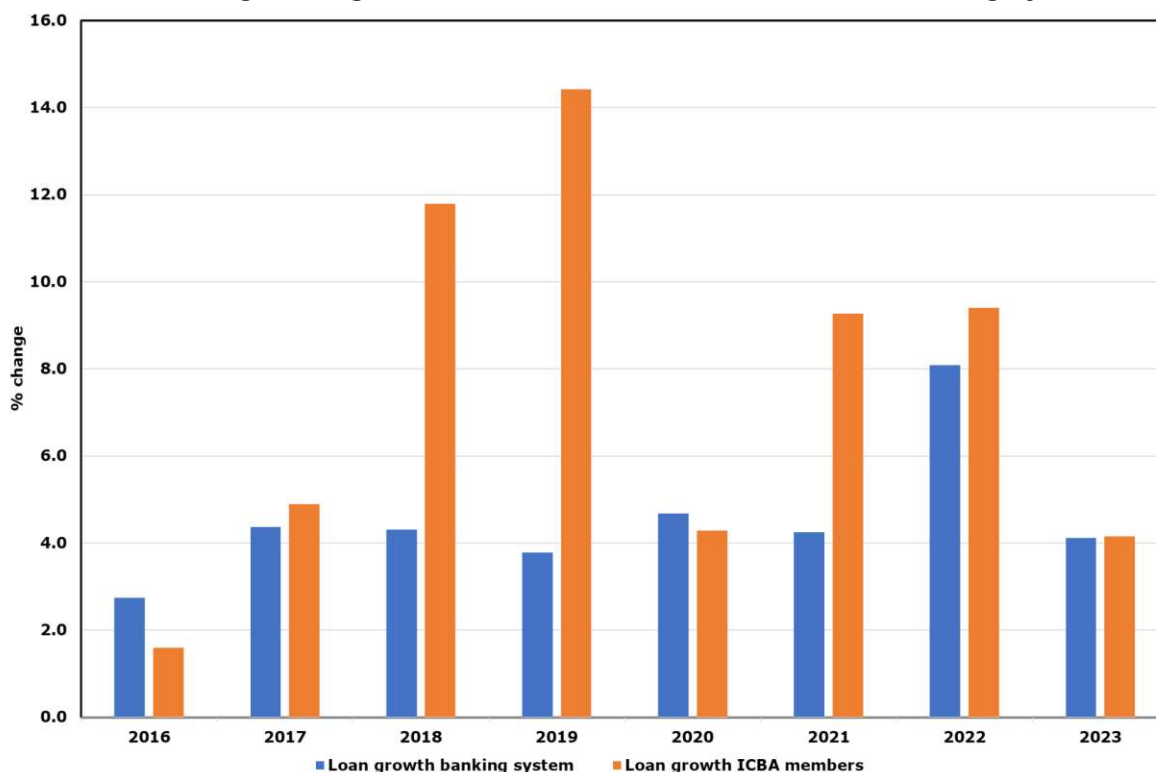
Chart 3 Average deposit growth of ICBA members and national banking systems



Source: own calculations based on edited data from 16 ICBA members and 15 national banking sector data from renowned international organizations (OECD, World Bank, ECB, IMF). The sample of ICBA members varies per year due to missing data. Data on ICBA members and national banking sectors in Argentina, Brazil, Ethiopia, and Northern Cyprus have been corrected for extremely high inflation rates.

The picture looks the same for loan growth, but no firm conclusions can be drawn from this either due to data limitations (Chart 4). Based on our available data, ICBA members' loan portfolios grew at an average annual rate of approximately 7.5%. All banks expanded their outstanding loans by about 4.5% per year. Thus, on average, it can be said with some degree of certainty that ICBA members supplied the real economy, i.e., households and firms, with more new loans.

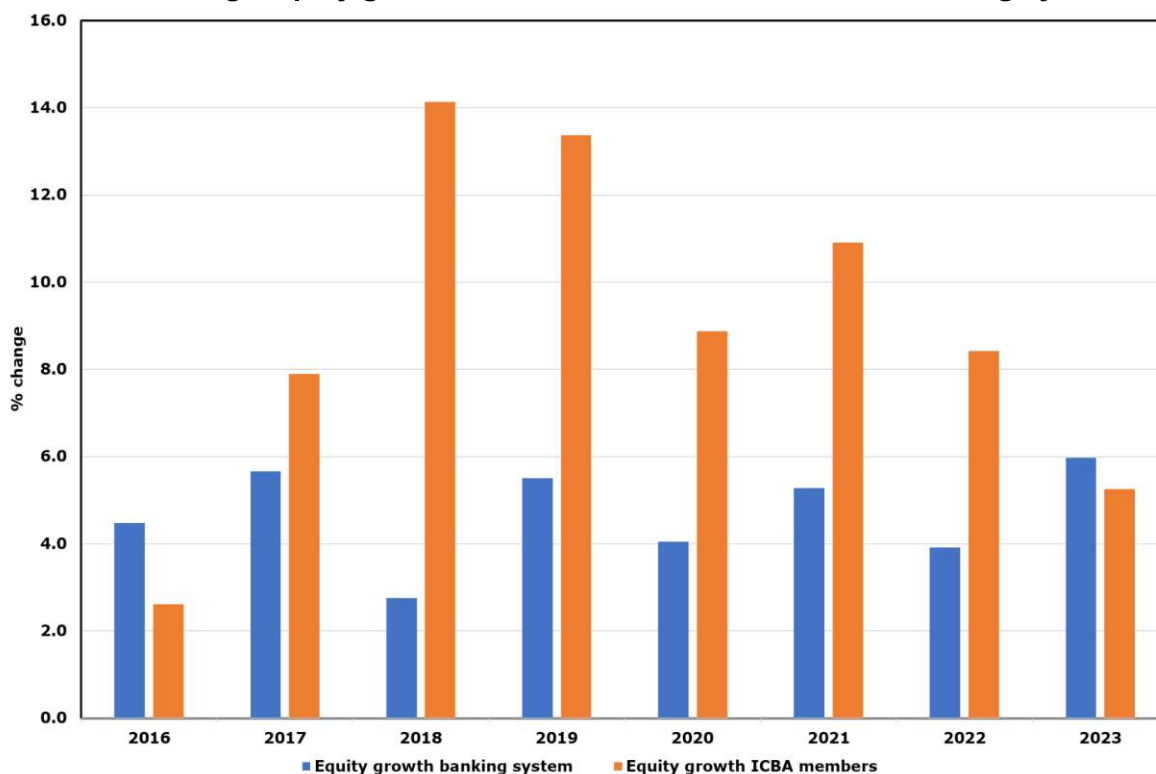
Chart 4 Average loan growth of ICBA members and national banking systems



Source: own calculations based on edited data from 16 ICBA members and 15 national banking sector data from renowned international organizations (OECD, World Bank, ECB, IMF). The sample of ICBA members varies per year due to missing data. Data on ICBA members and national banking sectors in Argentina, Brazil, Ethiopia, and Northern Cyprus have been corrected for extremely high inflation rates.

Chart 5 shows the average annual equity growth of ICBA members and national banking systems. ICBA members seem to have strengthened their equity buffers more than the collective banking system in almost all years. Again, the figures must be interpreted with caution, but they do indicate increased financial solidity and soundness of ICBA members.

Chart 5 Average equity growth of ICBA members and national banking systems



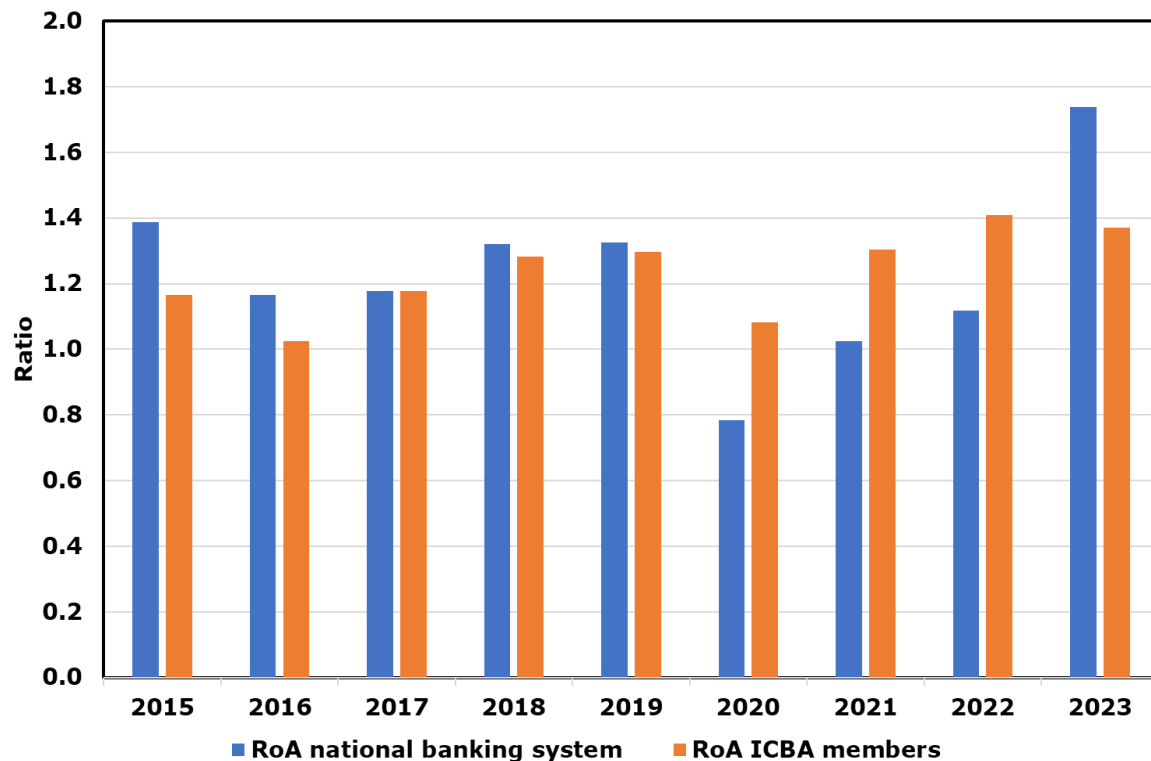
Source: own calculations based on edited data from 13 ICBA members and 13 national banking sector data from renowned international organizations (OECD, World Bank, ECB, IMF). The sample of ICBA members varies per year due to missing data. Data on ICBA members and national banking sectors in Argentina, Brazil, Ethiopia, and Northern Cyprus have been corrected for extremely high inflation rates.

4.4 Financial Ratios

In this section, we pay attention to three key financial ratios in banking: return on assets (RoA) as a proxy for profitability, cost-to-income ratio (CI-ratio) as a measure of efficiency, and the capital ratio as a proxy for financial solidity.

Regarding the RoA, we have collected data for 14 ICBA from 14 countries for almost every year in the sample. This means that these figures are relatively reliable and complete, and the comparison with the national banking systems is also relatively accurate. Interestingly, the average RoA over the entire period for ICBA members is exactly the same as that for national banking systems: 1.2. In individual years, the two figures do not diverge much either (Chart 6). These results illustrate that financial cooperatives are capable of generating sufficient surpluses for equity accumulation and further growth. After all, ICBA members rely primarily on retained earnings to build capital buffers, as required by banking regulation.

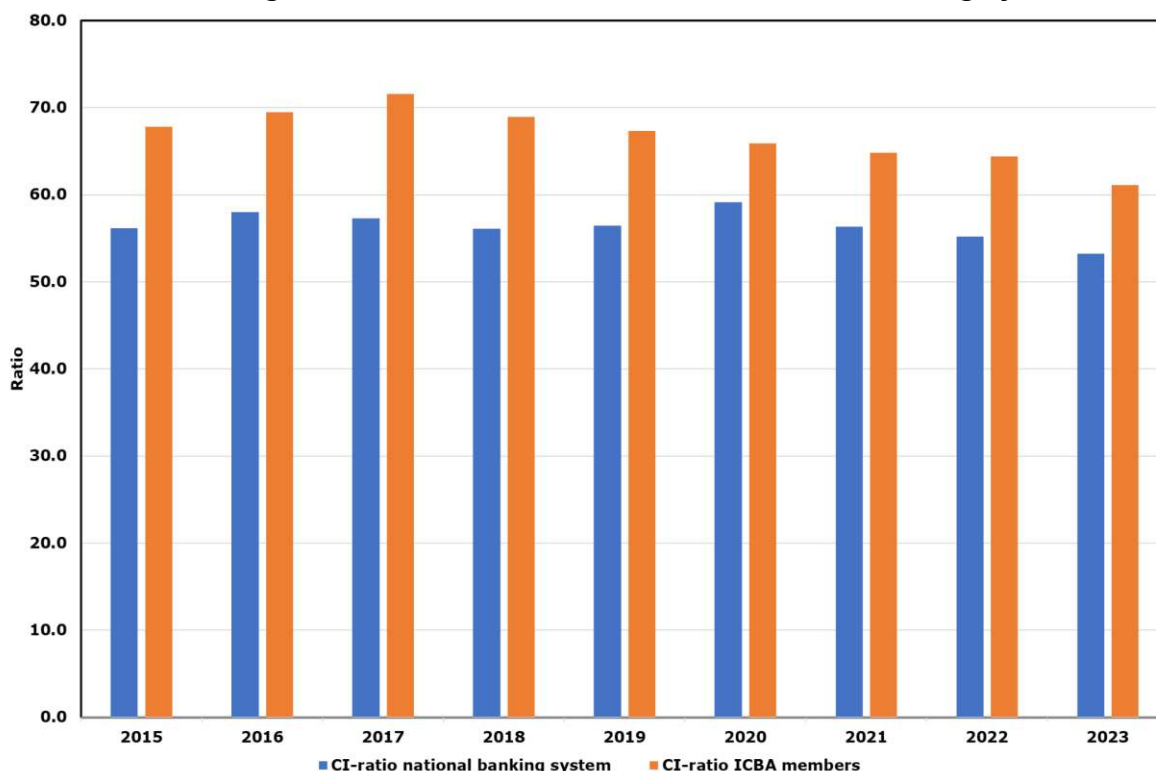
Chart 6 Average RoA for ICBA members and national banking systems



Source: own calculations based on edited data from 14 ICBA members and national banking sector data from renowned international organizations (OECD, World Bank, ECB, IMF). The sample of ICBA members is relatively stable for each year.

Turning to the CI-ratio, we managed to collect data for 13 ICBA members from 13 countries. These figures are also quite complete and thus give a good picture of the trend over the years. It appears that ICBA members operate on average with a significantly higher CI ratio than all other banks, i.e., 67, respectively, 56 (Chart 7). This may signal that ICBA members have adopted different business models and service concepts. They do not seem to pursue maximizing efficiency but are more likely aiming at serving members and customers as well as possible. The CI-ratio is probably much more perceived as a residual item rather than a hard target to satisfy the financial requirements for external equity providers at listed banks, i.e., shareholders. However, this presumption necessitates further research.

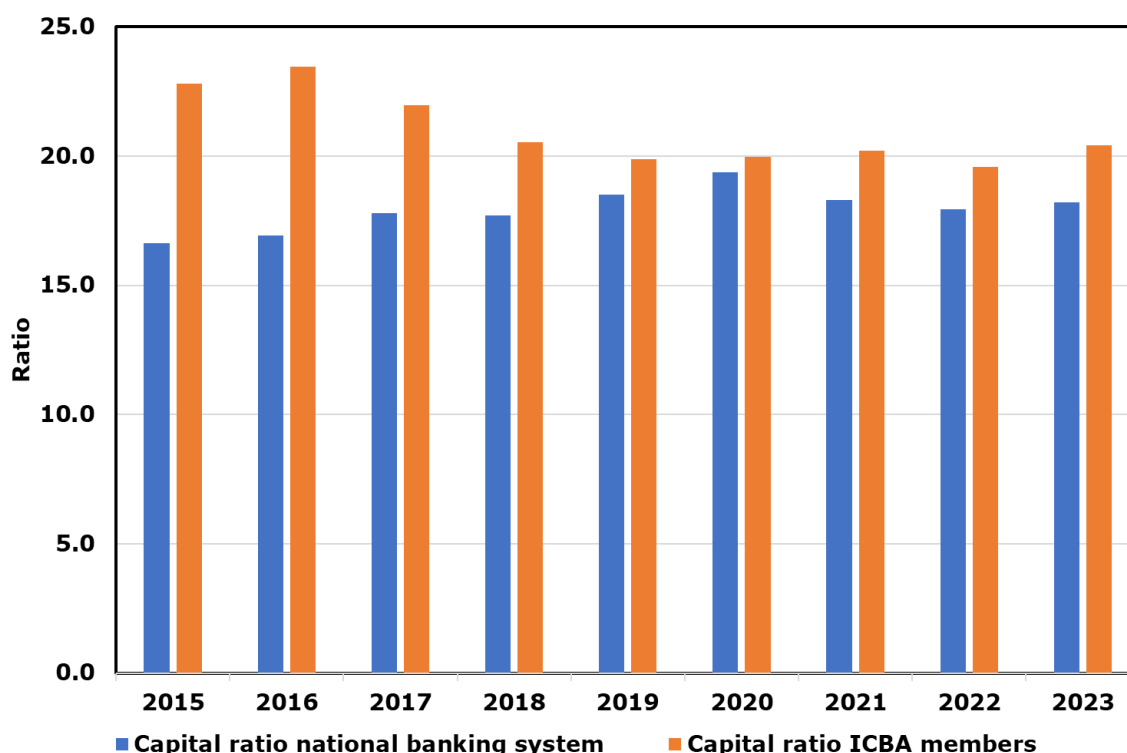
Chart 7 Average CI-ratio for ICBA members and national banking systems



Source: own calculations based on edited data from 13 ICBA members and 13 national banking sector data from renowned international organizations (OECD, World Bank, ECB, IMF). The sample of ICBA members is relatively stable for each year.

The capital ratio plays a crucial role in banking supervision and regulation. Capital buffers are needed to absorb all kinds of shocks. Our database contains capital ratios for 11 ICBA members in 11 countries for almost all years in the sample. On average, the capital ratio of these ICBA members exceeded that of national banking systems by as much as 3 percentage points (Chart 8). ICBA members operated with a ratio of almost 21 compared to almost 18 for the entire banking industry. It is worth noting, however, that the ratios converged at the end of the period.

Chart 8 Average capital ratio of ICBA members and national banking systems



Source: own calculations based on edited data from 11 ICBA members and national banking sector data from renowned international organizations (OECD, World Bank, ECB, IMF). The sample of ICBA members is relatively stable for each year.

5. Case Studies of Selected ICBA Members

This chapter offers three interesting real-world examples to get some concrete stories behind the numbers. It serves as inspiration for other ICBA members and fits into the purpose of learning from each other and sharing knowledge. We chose the same format, structure, and questions for each case study so that identical elements would be addressed, and the stories could be broadly compared. We will touch upon five issues: (i) History and Background, (ii) Mission and Vision, (iii) Special Characteristics, (iv) Membership and Community Involvement, and (v) Opportunities and Challenges. Of course, the answers to these issues differ from case to case, and the importance of the issues also varies between cases. This illustrates the large diversity among ICBA members.

CARIBBEAN CONFEDERATION of CREDIT UNION

History and Background	<p>The spread of cooperative ideas in the Caribbean began in the early 20th century, with the introduction of proto-cooperatives in the form of friendly societies. The idea of credit unions was introduced by missionaries from Canada and the United States in the early 1940s. Jesuit Father John Peter Sullivan in Jamaica and other church leaders played a pivotal role in educating and organizing communities to address their economic and social needs collectively.</p> <p>The region's first credit union, the Clerks Credit Union Limited, was founded in Jamaica in 1941. Around the same time, the Caribbean Credit Union Movement emerged, expanding to Belize in 1944 and later to Guyana and the Eastern Caribbean. The Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions (CCCU) was established on August 17, 1972, in Dominica, succeeding the West Indies Conference of Credit Societies (WICCS). It became the leading trade and development organization for credit unions and other cooperatives in the region.</p> <p>In 2023, the CCCU represents 22 members across 17 Caribbean countries, encompassing 197 credit unions and serving 2.6 million members.</p>
Mission and Vision	<p>The CCCU's vision is to be the leading regional organization empowering Caribbean people through a unified cooperative sector. Its mission is to enhance the Caribbean cooperative movement's economic competitiveness and social well-being.</p> <p>The CCCU operates through two main strategic units: the Trade Association and the Development Foundation. The Trade Association serves as the regional advocate for the cooperative sector, emphasizing its role in Caribbean socio-economic development and integration. Its responsibilities include research, marketing, representation, affiliate relations, policy advocacy, legislation, regulation, training, education, and regional sector growth. The Development Foundation focuses on mobilizing resources for social and community development. It undertakes initiatives in disaster relief, education, youth engagement, and rural development, fostering cooperative-based progress across the region.</p>
Special Characteristics	<p>The importance of an apex organization at the regional level is crucial. Especially in a region that is presented so fragmented in different islands, cooperation among the different islands is essential to improve their strength both at economic, political and social levels. In the Caribbean region, credit union membership penetration is one of the highest in the world. This fact has historical and social roots because the banking sector was never really open to the working class and access to credit was a big problem that has always impeded the majority of the population from investing in their future.</p>
Membership and Community Involvement	<p>The CCCU plays a pivotal role in advocating for the credit union sector at national, regional, and global levels. One notable example occurred in 2024 when regulators in the Cayman Islands proposed a new law imposing fees on credit unions. The local credit union launched a robust campaign to oppose the legislation. By highlighting the unique benefits of credit unions—such as their not-for-profit structure, their role in providing credit access to underserved populations, and the international support for enabling cooperative legislation from organizations like the United Nations—the joint effort of the credit union, CCCU and World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU) successfully persuaded the government to revise the proposed act.</p> <p>In addition to advocacy, the CCCU supports the sector through developmental projects, such as green lending initiatives and integrating credit unions into automated clearing houses within the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union. Legislative amendments facilitated the inclusion of credit unions in these systems, further strengthening their operational capabilities.</p>

	<p>Another core service provided by the CCCU is training, with a strong emphasis on cooperative governance, anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism (AML-CFT) compliance, and risk management. These training programs are underpinned by the cooperative spirit central to the CCCU's mission. All member credit unions are granted free access to this wealth of knowledge, ensuring they remain well-equipped to navigate regulatory and operational challenges while staying true to their cooperative values.</p>
Opportunities and Challenges	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the most significant challenges in recent years, yet it has also highlighted the resilience of credit unions. Despite this, credit unions continue to face ongoing challenges, including competition from commercial banks and unregulated loan providers within individual countries.</p> <p>Technological advancements in the region present additional hurdles, particularly due to the small and dispersed markets that credit unions serve. To address these challenges, the CCCU promotes shared services, such as mobile payment solutions, to help reduce costs and foster collaboration among credit unions. These efforts align with the sixth cooperative principle of "cooperation among cooperatives," reinforcing the cooperative model's values while enabling credit unions to remain competitive in an evolving financial landscape.</p>

CYPRUS TURKISH CO- OPERATIVE CENTRAL BANK LTD. (KOOPBANK)

History and Background	<p>The cooperative movement in Cyprus has deep roots, dating back to the early 20th century. The first cooperatives were founded in 1909, ahead of the official Co-operatives Law, which was enacted in 1914. Initial cooperative development was slow, with only 29 co-operatives established by 1925. However, the introduction of the Ziraat (Agricultural) Bank of Cyprus in 1925 marked a turning point. The Ziraat Bank was tasked with meeting the long-term credit needs of the agricultural sector, and cooperative credit companies were authorized to serve as agents for loan disbursement. This system initially spurred the creation of 175 new co-operatives within four years.</p> <p>Despite this early growth, the relationship between co-operatives and the Ziraat Bank proved ineffective, failing to fully embrace the cooperative model. In response, the government separated the co-operatives from the Ziraat Bank and established the Department of Co-operatives in 1935. This initiative focused on reorganizing co-operatives to be independent, democratic, and financially self-sufficient, a largely successful process. Some co-operatives not only achieved financial independence but also generated surplus resources, leading to the creation of the Co-operative Central Bank in 1938. This new institution helped channel funds from member co-operatives to those in need of loans.</p> <p>Following the independence of Cyprus in 1959, the Department of Co-operatives was split, and the Cyprus Turkish Cooperative Central Bank (Koopbank) was formed to serve the Turkish Cypriot community. Established on 9 September 1959, Koopbank began with 196 founding cooperative members. Over the decades, the bank expanded its services beyond the banking sector to meet the broader needs of the community, including industrial, commercial, and service sectors, solidifying its role as a pillar of the Turkish Cypriot economy.</p> <p>Today, Koopbank stands as one of the largest financial institutions in Northern Cyprus, counting all co-operatives in the region as its members. It is subject to both the Cooperatives Societies Law⁶ and the</p>
-------------------------------	---

⁶Cooperative Societies Law (Cap. 114 and Law 28 of 1959). Retrieved at: www.cylaw.org

	Banking Law. As profit is not its primary objective, the Bank embraces a cooperative culture to promote the principles of cooperation and provide essential banking services to its members across the country.
Mission and Vision	<p>Koopbank's mission is to contribute to the growth and development of Northern Cyprus by offering financial products and services that cater to both individuals and cooperative businesses. The bank is committed to delivering innovative, customized solutions that meet the diverse needs of its customers while supporting the region's economic and social progress.</p> <p>Koopbank's vision is to remain the leading specialist bank in Northern Cyprus, continuously enhancing its service offerings and expanding its role in the local economy. This goal is driven by the bank's cooperative values, which emphasize collaboration, community support, and long-term sustainability.</p>
Special Characteristics	<p>Koopbank's cooperative model sets it apart from other financial institutions in the region. The bank's deep-rooted connections with local communities, particularly in the agricultural and livestock sectors, provide a unique advantage. Over the decades, Koopbank has built strong, long-lasting relationships with cooperatives in rural areas, as well as those established by professional organizations such as teachers, civil servants, and police officers.</p> <p>Koopbank offers tailored financial products for the agricultural sector, including competitive loan packages with low-interest or interest-free options. The bank also provides financial services without requiring guarantor collateral for rural cooperatives, ensuring that even small-scale farmers can access vital resources like seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural machinery under favorable conditions. Additionally, Koopbank acts as an intermediary for public sector incentives in the agriculture and livestock industries, directly channelling government support to those in need.</p> <p>Another unique aspect of Koopbank is its commitment to providing advanced technological services to its member cooperatives. The bank offers innovative solutions (from banking cards to mobile banking) at no cost to its members. Koopbank's mobile wallet application, in particular, allows customers to make payments at merchant locations using QR codes and to conduct online transactions with any other bank or cooperative financial institution. This has enabled smaller cooperatives to access essential financial tools that would otherwise be out of reach, ensuring their competitiveness in an increasingly digital world.</p>
Membership and Community Involvement	<p>Koopbank's membership structure is designed to serve both individual and cooperative members. Cooperative institutions in Northern Cyprus are automatically shareholders of the bank, while individuals who take out loans from Koopbank become members. Non-members can still access services, though they do not enjoy the same benefits as members, such as favorable loan terms or access to the bank's extensive technological infrastructure.</p> <p>The bank's membership is an integral part of its governance, though the structure has evolved over time. Since 1983, following financial difficulties due to shortcomings in governance, the bank has been managed by an appointed board of directors rather than elected representatives. While this has occasionally led to public criticism, it has also ensured the stability and long-term sustainability of the bank, allowing it to navigate financial challenges while remaining true to its cooperative roots. Both Koopbank's member cooperatives and the Central Bank are committed to restoring the bank to its original status. Members are engaged in lobbying activities with the government and the Central Bank is providing support for this initiative.</p> <p>Koopbank's commitment to community engagement is evident in its wide-ranging support for local initiatives. The bank provides financial aid to various charitable organizations, schools, and hospitals; it</p>

	sponsors cultural activities, and it offers scholarships to numerous underprivileged students at all academic levels. Additionally, the bank has a longstanding tradition of supporting young people through its sports programs, notably the Koop Sport Club, which has provided basketball opportunities for over 30 years.
Opportunities and Challenges	<p>Koopbank's cooperative model has proven resilient, especially in times of economic instability. One of the key challenges faced by the bank has been the competition from foreign-owned banks, which have entered the Northern Cyprus market with substantial financial backing. To remain competitive, Koopbank has focused on its core strengths: close relationships with its members, a deep understanding of local needs, and a commitment to providing personalized service.</p> <p>Looking to the future, Koopbank plans to expand its impact by continuing to innovate in the banking sector, particularly in the areas of digital banking and financial inclusion. A key goal for Koopbank in the coming years is to address public concerns about its governance structure. While the appointed board has ensured the bank's stability, the bank is actively working towards implementing best practices in cooperative governance and improving member engagement to strengthen its reputation in the community.</p>

RABOBANK

History and Background	<p>The origins of Rabobank trace back to the late 19th century, during a time of economic hardship for the Dutch agricultural sector. In response to this, communities across the Netherlands began forming local cooperative banks, inspired by the self-help principles of German social reformer Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen. Between 1895 and 1897, the first local cooperative banks (LBs) were established to provide farmers with access to affordable loans, funded primarily by local savings.</p> <p>By 1898, two central organizations were formed to unite these local banks—Raiffeisenbanken and Farmers' Banks (Boerenleenbanken)—and the cooperative banking movement spread rapidly across the country. These banks were governed by their members, who prioritized equity-building and reinvestment in their local communities, ensuring that a significant portion of annual profits was used for local development. This emphasis on reinvestment and community upliftment has been a cornerstone of Rabobank's governance model ever since.</p> <p>Over the decades, Rabobank has adapted to meet the changing needs of society, technology, and the global economy. Key milestones include the bank's decision in the 1960s to serve non-members, the 1972 merger of its central organizations into Rabobank Nederland, the expansion of both domestic and international activities in the 1980s, the abolition of member liability in 1998, and the 2016 merger of all local banks into a unified cooperative with a single banking license.</p> <p>Throughout these changes, one guiding principle has remained: Rabobank is committed to offering financial solutions that address both economic and social challenges, with a particular focus on supporting agricultural communities around the world.</p>
Mission and Vision	<p>Rabobank's mission is encapsulated in the phrase <i>"Growing a better world together."</i> This reflects the cooperative bank's commitment to fostering sustainable growth, not just for its customers but for society as a whole. At the heart of Rabobank's strategy is its dedication to addressing global challenges related to energy, food systems, and sustainability. The bank recognizes that true progress can only be made through collaboration, and it seeks to create value by integrating sustainability into every aspect of its operations.</p> <p>Rabobank's vision revolves around three key ambitions:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To strengthen its leadership position in the Netherlands. 2. To become the global Food & Agri bank of choice. 3. To lead the global vendor finance market. <p>These goals are driven by Rabobank's core cooperative values —customer focus, long-term financial health, and a commitment to building a sustainable future. Through innovation and collaboration, Rabobank aims to empower communities, promote sustainable agriculture, and contribute to the well-being of people around the world.</p>
Special Characteristics	<p>As a cooperative, Rabobank's governance structure and operational approach are distinct from those of other financial institutions. Membership is a cornerstone of the cooperative model, and Rabobank's members play an active role in shaping the bank's strategic direction. Unlike traditional banks, which are primarily driven by shareholder profit, Rabobank focuses on stakeholder value, placing the well-being of its members and the broader community at the forefront of its operations.</p> <p>This cooperative structure fosters a unique internal dynamic where employees are encouraged to engage with local networks and communities. Rabobank's commitment to providing relevant knowledge, networks, and financial solutions ensures that it remains deeply embedded in the fabric of Dutch society and beyond. This emphasis on community involvement and social responsibility distinguishes Rabobank as a truly customer-oriented bank that values both financial stability and societal impact.</p> <p>The bank's focus on retail banking, with its stable income streams and reinvested capital, has helped build a strong foundation for long-term growth. Moreover, Rabobank continues to prioritize its role as a cooperative, ensuring that it remains a trusted partner for its members and customers alike.</p>
Membership and Community Involvement	<p>At the heart of Rabobank's operations is its commitment to member involvement. With approximately 2.3 million members or 25% of its Dutch customers, Rabobank ensures that its cooperative structure remains relevant in today's increasingly digital world. Members are actively engaged in local governance bodies and have a significant say in the bank's strategy through the General Members' Council.</p> <p>Rabobank's cooperative dividend, which represents 3-4% of its annual net results, is a key mechanism for reinvesting in local communities. The majority of this dividend is allocated to local projects and initiatives that benefit communities directly. The remainder supports rural cooperatives in developing and emerging economies via the Rabobank Foundation, underscoring the bank's commitment to fostering sustainable development globally.</p> <p>In addition to financial support, Rabobank offers members access to exclusive knowledge and special discounts, reinforcing the value of membership. As part of its ongoing efforts to adapt to a digitalizing world, Rabobank is focused on enhancing member engagement and ensuring that the cooperative model remains meaningful for future generations. By monitoring its member engagement score, Rabobank continuously evaluates its impact on the community and works to strengthen the bond between the bank and its members.</p> <p>In 2024, Rabobank committed EUR 400 million to helping clients, members, partners, and employees transition to more sustainable practices, demonstrating the bank's belief that meaningful change can only be achieved through collaboration and collective action.</p>
Opportunities and Challenges	<p>The rapidly changing global landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for the banking sector. Rabobank recognizes the need to stay agile in response to macroeconomic shifts, geopolitical</p>

	<p>developments, technological advances, and evolving societal expectations. The bank actively monitors these trends to assess their potential impact on its strategic goals and business model.</p> <p>One of Rabobank's key opportunities lies in its cooperative structure, which provides a unique and trusted connection to millions of individuals and businesses worldwide. This deep connection is especially evident in the bank's focus on the food and agriculture sectors, where it has become the leading partner for sustainable agricultural practices and food systems globally. Rabobank's knowledge, networks, and financial contributions to society differentiate it from other financial institutions and position it to lead the way in supporting sustainable growth.</p> <p>As a cooperative, Rabobank is well-placed to address the global challenges of climate change, economic inequality, and food insecurity. The bank's distinctive approach to banking —focusing on long-term sustainability, community involvement, and global cooperation —positions it as a leader in creating a better, more equitable world for future generations.</p>
--	--

The three case studies—Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions (CCCU), Cyprus Co-operative Central Bank Ltd. (Koopbank), and Rabobank—demonstrate the diversity yet the adaptability of cooperative banking models in different historical, cultural, and geographical contexts. Despite their distinct circumstances, several shared lessons emerge.

Firstly, the cooperative model thrives when it adapts to local needs while leveraging shared values to foster regional or global integration. For example, the importance of regional unity is evident in fragmented territories (CCCU), while tailored solutions have proven crucial for agricultural cooperatives and rural communities (Koopbank). Community involvement emerges as a critical factor, as deep-rooted engagement enhances trust, relevance, and the overall impact of cooperatives, ensuring their sustainability across diverse settings.

Cooperative banking models also play a role in combating financial exclusion, particularly in sectors or regions underserved by traditional banking systems. Moreover, embracing technology strengthens cooperatives' ability to address modern financial needs while enhancing inclusivity and efficiency. Although CCCU faces challenges in this regard, Koopbank's success demonstrates how pooling resources can overcome such obstacles and drive progress.

A key challenge for banking cooperatives lies in ensuring robust member participation in governance, which remains a foundational pillar distinguishing financial cooperatives from mainstream banking institutions. It is essential to highlight good practices and address this issue to maintain the democratic essence of cooperatives while navigating contemporary pressures. Advocacy further emerges as essential for cooperatives, helping them navigate regulatory, economic, and competitive pressures while remaining committed to their foundational mission.

The varied histories and strategies of CCCU, Koopbank, and Rabobank showcase the impact and resilience of cooperative banking. These institutions show that by addressing local needs, tackling financial exclusion, embracing innovation, and maintaining strong community ties, cooperatives can not only survive but thrive in diverse environments.

6. Recommendations

Financial cooperatives have a significant impact on their communities, fostering financial inclusion, economic stability, and member-driven development. As tools for advancing equitable access to financial services, these cooperatives align with the United Nations' emphasis on cooperatives as key drivers of

financial inclusion and sustainable development. However, their potential is often hindered by challenges related to data availability and transparency, limiting a comprehensive analysis of their contributions.

One of the primary challenges in assessing the financial impact of ICBA member has been the lack of complete and standardized financial and operational data. Factors contributing to this include:

- **Overwhelming Membership Numbers:** In countries like India, the sheer number of financial cooperatives creates logistical hurdles for collecting and aggregating data.
- **Limited Organizational Resources:** Smaller or less organized cooperatives may lack the capacity or infrastructure to maintain detailed records or participate in data-sharing initiatives.
- **Insufficient Engagement:** Low member participation in ICBA initiatives, including data-sharing efforts, indicates a need for stronger communication channels and better alignment between ICBA's goals and its members' priorities.
- **Unclear Understanding of Data Importance:** A lack of awareness about how data can be used for research, advocacy, and showcasing the cooperative model's relevance in today's finance-dominated world further hampers data collection efforts.

The unavailability of robust data limits the ability to conduct sector-wide analyses and undermines the cooperative sector's ability to advocate for its distinct financial model. At a time when profit-driven financial institutions increasingly distance themselves from addressing real human needs, the cooperative model stands as a critical alternative. Its emphasis on shared ownership, democratic governance, and service to members' needs must be reinforced through reliable data and evidence of impact.

To address these challenges, the ICBA and its members should consider the following strategies:

1. **Encourage Standardized Data Collection:** Establish clear guidelines and tools for members to collect and report standardized financial and operational data.
2. **Promote Data-Sharing Among Members:** Foster a culture of collaboration where members understand the collective value of sharing data for research, advocacy, and mutual learning.
3. **Enhance Communication and Engagement:** Develop stronger communication channels to explain the importance of data-sharing initiatives and engage members in these efforts more effectively.
4. **Provide Capacity-Building Support:** Offer training, resources, and technical assistance to help smaller or under-resourced banking cooperatives participate in data collection initiatives.
5. **Highlight Cooperative Distinction:** Use available data to reinforce the cooperative sector's unique role in financial inclusion and sustainable development, contrasting it with profit-driven financial systems.

By addressing these gaps, ICBA member cooperatives can strengthen their impact, foster greater visibility of their contributions, and advocate more effectively for the cooperative model in the global financial landscape.

7. Conclusion

Financial cooperatives are a cornerstone of the global banking landscape, offering a community-focused, membership-driven alternative to traditional financial institutions. Their unique governance model and dedication to addressing real economic needs make them essential contributors to financial inclusion, economic stability, and social cohesion. In a world increasingly dominated by profit-driven financial systems, cooperatives provide diversity and resilience, serving as a vital counterbalance.

The findings of this report highlight the impressive performance of ICBA members, including nearly 4% annual membership growth, branch network expansion at three times the rate of other banks, and balance sheet growth of 7.7% annually compared to 5.5% for the overall banking system. Additionally, deposit and loan portfolio growth rates of 8.5% and 7.5%, respectively, demonstrate ICBA members' active role in supporting households and firms. Their ability to maintain a stable return on assets of 1.2% over the period further underscores their financial strength and sustainability.

To fully realize their potential, financial cooperatives must strengthen collaboration and data-sharing efforts. The ICBA network offers a unique platform for this purpose. The absence of standardized and comprehensive data undermines their ability to measure and communicate their collective impact effectively. Addressing these gaps is critical to enhancing their visibility, influencing policymakers, and advocating for the cooperative model's distinct contributions to global financial systems.

The ICBA's initiative to build a global database of key figures is a significant step forward, but its success depends on active engagement and commitment from all members. By prioritizing data transparency, fostering stronger collaboration, and promoting the unique value of the cooperative model, ICBA members can ensure their continued relevance and amplify their transformative impact on the financial landscape. These actions will position financial cooperatives as leaders in fostering a sustainable and inclusive global economy.

Appendix A

List of ICBA members included in the analysis.

Member highlighted in yellow provided less than half of the data requested.

Members highlighted in green provided more than half of the data requested.

Members highlighted in white did not provide any data.

Members highlighted in blue are confederation of cooperatives in different sectors or regional apex organizations.

Members highlighted in orange are non-banking cooperatives

Members highlighted in pink are individual cooperative members who are already represented through a second-level organization listed among the banking members.

BANKING MEMBERS		
Country	ICA Region	Member name
Argentina	AM	Instituto Movilizador De Fondos Cooperativos, Cooperativa Ltda. (IMFC)
Argentina	AM	Banco Credicoop Coop. Ltd. (BCCL)
Bangladesh	AP	Bangladesh Samabaya Bank Ltd (BSBL)
Brazil	AM	Cresol Confederation
Bulgaria	EUR	Central Cooperative Bank Plc (CCB)
Canada	AM	Desjardins / Co-operatives and Mutuels Canada / Coopératives et mutuelles Canada (CMC)
Chile	AM	Coopeuch Ltda. Cooperativa De Ahorro Y Credito
Cyprus	EUR	Cyprus Turkish Cooperative Central Bank Ltd (KoopBank)
Ethiopia	AF	COOPERATIVE BANK OF OROMIA
Ghana	AF	AGRICOOPS CO-OPERATIVE CREDIT UNION

MEMBERS not included in the analysis		
Country	ICA Region	Member name
Bangladesh	AP	Bangladesh Jatiya Samabaya Union (National Cooperative Union of Bangladesh)
Barbados	AM	COOPERATIVE INVESTMENT FUND LTD. (CIFL)
Cameroon	AF	Cameroon Cooperative Alliance
Europe	INT	European Association Of Co-operative Banks (EACB)
France	EUR	Fédération Nationale Du Crédit Agricole / Coop FR
France	EUR	Confédération Nationale Du Crédit Mutuel 6/11
France	EUR	Crédit Coopératif
France	EUR	Federation Nationale Des Caisse D'épargne (FNCE)*
Germany	EUR	DGRV – Deutscher Genossenschafts und Raiffeisenverband E. V.
India	AP	National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI)

Haiti	AM	Union Cooperative Agricultural Credit and Rural of Haiti (UNICAGRIH)
Honduras	AM	Cooperativa de Ahorro y Credito Elga Limitada
India	AP	National Federation of State Cooperative Banks Ltd. (NAFSCOB)
India	AP	Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank Ltd (APCOB)
India	AP	The Karnataka State Cooperative Apex Bank Ltd
India	AP	National Co-operative Agriculture & Rural Development Banks' Federation Ltd. (NAFCARD)
India	AP	Buldana Urban Co-operative Credit Society Ltd. (BUCCS)
Italy	EUR	Federazione Italiana Delle Banche Di Credito Cooperativo (Federcasse)
Jamaica ⁷	AM	Jamaica Co-operative Credit Union League
Japan	AP	The Norinchunkin Bank
Kenya	AF	Co-operative Bank of Kenya Ltd (CBK)
Kenya	AF	Kenya Union Of Savings & Credit Cooperatives Ltd. (KUSCCO)
KOREA	AP	Korean Federation of Community Credit Cooperatives (KFCC)
Nepal	AP	National Cooperative Bank Limited (NCBL)
Nigeria	AF	Cooperative Mortgage Bank Ltd (CMB)

India	AP	The Karnataka State Cooperative Apex Bank Ltd
India	AP	The Telangana State Cooperative Apex Bank Ltd
India	AP	The Delhi State Cooperative Bank Ltd
India	AP	National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)
India	AP	National Federation of Urban Cooperative Banks and Credit Societies Ltd. (NAFCUB)
Iran	AP	Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC)
MALAYSIA	AP	Malasyan National Co-operative Movement (ANGKASA)
Nigeria	AF	Odua Cooperative Conglomerate Limited (OCCL)
Paraguay	AM	Cooperativa Universitaria Ltd.
Philippines	AP	MASS-SPECC Cooperative Development Center
Philippines	AP	ACDI Multipurpose Cooperative (ACDI MPC)
Poland	EUR	National Cooperative Council (NCC)
Somalia	AF	Somali Union Cooperatives Movement (UDHIS)
Thailand	INT	Association of Asian Confederation of Credit Unions (ACCU)
Ukraine	EUR	Central Union of Consumer Societies of Ukraine

⁷ Included within the West Indies - Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions (CCCU)

Philippines	AP	Aurora Integrated Multipurpose Cooperative (AIMCooP)
Philippines	AP	Network Consolidated Cooperative Bank (NCCB)
Philippines	AP	One Cooperative Bank (NCCB)
Sri Lanka	AP	SANASA Federation Ltd in Sri Lanka
The Netherlands	Europe	RABOBANK
Uruguay	AM	ACAC / Confederacion Uruguay de Entidades Cooperativas (CUDECOOP)
USA	AM	National Cooperative Bank (NCB)
West Indies	AM	CARIBBEAN CONFEDERATION OF CREDIT UNIONS (CCCU)

		(UKOOPSPILKA)
--	--	---------------

Appendix B

Data source per ICBA member and country included in the analysis.

Country	Reference	Cooperative bank	Reference
Argentina	IMF	BANCO CREDICOOP COOPERATIVO LTDO	Bank Focus (Moody)
Bangladesh	IMF		
Brazil	IMF	CRESOL	provided by bank
Bulgaria	ECB	Central Cooperative bank	European Association of Cooperative Banks
Canada	Cental bank of Canada	Desjardins	Bank Focus (Moody)
Chile	IMF	COOPERATIVA DE AHORRO Y CREDITO COOPEUCH	provided by bank
Cyprus (North)	N.A	CYPRUS TURKISH COOPERATIVE CENTRAL BANK	provided by bank
Ethiopia	IMF	COOPERATIVE BANK OF OROMIA SC	Bank Focus (Moody)
Ghana	IMF	ACCU	provided by bank
Honduras	IMF		
India	Cental bank of India	Karnataka State	Annual Report of bank
		Andhra Pradesh State	provided by bank
Italy	ECB	BCC Group	European Association of Cooperative Banks
Japan	Japanese Bankers Association	Norinchunkin	provided by bank
Kenya	IMF	CO-OPERATIVE BANK OF KENYA	Bank Focus (Moody)
Korea	IMF	KOREAN FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY CREDIT COOPERATIVE	Bank Focus (Moody)
Nepal	Cental bank of Nepal		
Nigeria	IMF		
Philippines	Cental bank of Philippines		
The Netherlands	ECB	Rabobank	European Association of Cooperative Banks
The USA	IMF	National Cooperative Bank	Bank Focus (Moody)
Uruguay	IMF		
West Indies		CARIBBEAN CONFEDERATION OF CREDIT UNIONS (CCCU)	provided by bank

Important Publications of ICBA

1. The Covid 19 Strategy for Cooperative Banks and Cooperatives
2. Covid-19, Challenges & Cooperatives
3. Current Report: Covid 19 Situation in Sri Lanka & Impact to Members
4. Main Measures Taken In The Context Of Covid-19 At The European Union Level As On 30 April 2020
5. Profile Of Kenya Union of Savings & Credit Co-Operatives Ltd.
6. Profile Of National Cooperative Council of Poland
7. Main Measures Taken In The Context Of Covid-19 At The European Union Level As On 30 April 2020
8. Country Paper Of Bangladesh Samabaya Bank Limited (An Apex Financial Institution in Cooperative Sector) Dhaka, Bangladesh
9. A People-Centered Path for A Second Cooperative Decade - 2020-2030 - Strategic Plan
10. Regulation And Sustainability of Cooperative Banks: A Cross-Country Study
11. Sustainable Development Goals & Objectives Contribution of Cooperative Banks International
12. Co-Operative Banks Engagement to Sustainable Finance
13. ICBA Members Today - Who Are They and How Do They Contribute and Report on Sustainable Development?

Role and objectives of the ICBA

- a) ICBA shall be representative of Co-operative Financial Institutions, hereinafter referred as CFIs and Cooperative Banks(CBs), Credit Unions(CUs) affiliated, directly or indirectly, to the International Co-operative Alliance, hereinafter referred to as ICA.
- b) The ICBA shall initiate and encourage worldwide discussion and constructive resolution of the crucial issues that face CFIs aimed at ensuring their financial stability. It shall disseminate best practices amongst members of Cooperative Banks including their management & Governance based on cooperative democratic principle and encourage co-operation between them.
- c) The ICBA shall provide Research and consultancy inputs to their members and to organize, collect, process and render the information on activity of ICBA and world's co-operative banking subjects in a way to make possible a fast, efficient and active access to these data for ICBA members and other authorized organizations, especially the ICA and other cooperative organizations.
- d) The ICBA shall facilitate the promotion at the international and regional levels of the distinctive cooperative values of cooperative banks and of the advantages of using them over other banks.
- a) The ICBA shall **extend support to ICA Regional** Offices to set up and promote Regional Cooperative Banking Committees hereinafter referred to as “RCBCs”, covering different geographical areas as required by its members to act as a forum for discussion of cooperative banking issues