



Report of the
ILO – MATCOM Revision Meeting
ILO Geneva, 23 April 2009

MAIN OUTCOMES	
1.	There is a vivid interest in revising MATCOM from ILO units across the house, ILO/ITC, as well as from organizations such as ICA, Agriterra, etc.
2.	A differentiation between a “Global MATCOM” revision strategy and a “COOP ^{AFRICA} MATCOM revision” strategy was clearly established, the former having a more long term perspective and the latter more an immediate one. A double track approach to the revision process would be taken.
3.	Both the Global and COOP ^{AFRICA} MATCOM revision processes will feature partnership building as a core activity in the revision phase as well as in the implementation strategy for greater ownership, sustainability and outreach.
4.	Target Groups will be broader compared to those for the last MATCOM with the objective to mainstream cooperative management issues in curricula and training programmes of other organizations. In the case of COOP ^{AFRICA} the users will mainly be Centres of Competence.
5.	For the template the idea of creating cooperative sector/type specific toolkits presenting a mosaic of learner-centred and small “ <i>learning tablets</i> ” for combined with generic “ <i>mirco-bites</i> ” that could be used at random, was appreciated.
6.	Data of organizations and experts to be involved in the revision process have been gathered.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this workshop was to (i) refine the vision and strategy for the updating and revision of MATCOM materials; (ii) to come up with a template and (iii) to collect data on potential experts and/or organizations which could be involved in the revision process.

The first part of the workshop set the scene for the discussion around the three main objectives mentioned above with presentations on (a) the cooperative policy context today, (b) the MATCOM revision strategy and methodology as well as on (c) revision criteria. The second and major part of the workshop was more interactive and triggered extensive and useful feedback of the participants¹ through several group and plenary activities².

The report is structured in six short sections. The first of these is the introductory part. Following this a chapter called “Setting the scene” will describe the cooperative policy context today, the COOP^{AFRICA} and MATCOM revision as well as the Revision Criteria. The third section of the report will outline the main points raised during the Group Sessions summarized under the

¹ See Annex I for the list of participants.

² See Annex II for the agenda of the meeting.



following four subsections' headings : “MATCOM as an ILO trademark?”, “What about the implementation strategy?”, “What are the challenges agricultural cooperatives are facing today?” and “ Outcomes of the Plenary Discussion on the Template of the Revised MATCOM”. The fifth part of the report will present some conclusive remarks and the last and sixth section will briefly outline the next steps of the revision process.

2. Setting the scene

2.1. Cooperative Policy Context Today

In the introductory presentation on the cooperative definition and policy, it was highlighted that ILO Recommendation 127 (1966) was the main underpinning tool for the first MATCOM. This recommendation applied to developing countries and governments only and had a strong focus on agricultural cooperatives. The revision process needs to take into account ILO Recommendation 193 (2002), which calls for action by governments, workers' and employers' organizations as well as the cooperative movement from all countries, covering all economic sectors.

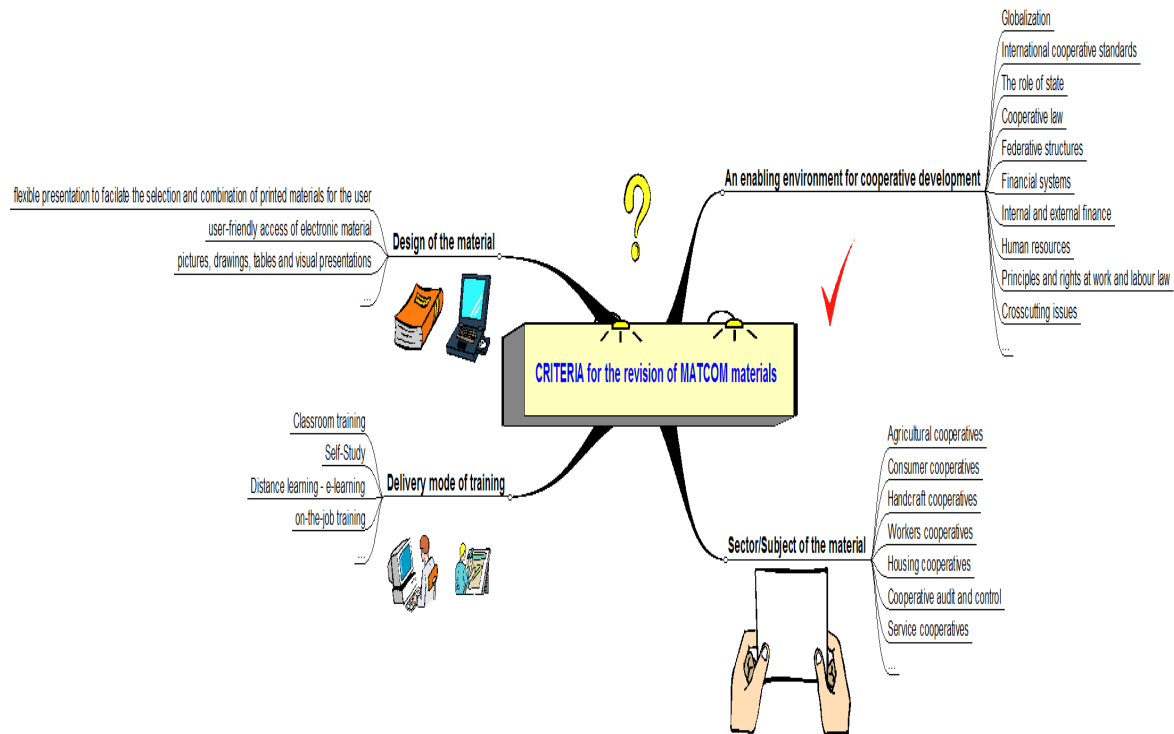
2.2. COOP^{AFRICA} and MATCOM Revision

The MATCOM revision strategy and methodology was introduced through a briefing on related work of COOP^{AFRICA} linking the interest in a revised MATCOM to the objective to strengthen the capacity of Centres of Competence³, which are the intended users of the revised MATCOM material. as part of the ongoing capacity building and provision of support services. The MATCOM review report commissioned by COOP^{AFRICA} concluded that MATCOM is a unique, high-qualitative, standardized and comprehensive training package that should be revised. The need for introducing an up-to-date standardized pedagogical approach as well as new delivery methods have been called for during the COOP^{AFRICA} “Tools Development Workshop”, which took place in Nairobi in August 2008. Both the MATCOM review report and the workshop in Nairobi highlighted the agriculture sector as one of the priorities. This fits well with the renewed attention for rural employment and food security and the current financial and economic crisis.

2.3. Revision Criteria

The third input oriented presentation was on the revision criteria that were developed in the MATCOM review report (2008). The main highlight was that in the actual context of financial crisis, some criteria for the revision of MATCOM materials had become more important. The set of criteria are divided in four categories.

³ Within the framework of COOP^{AFRICA}, Centres of Competence are understood as: support institutions, in particular cooperative organisations (unions, apexes/federations, cooperative colleges, cooperative development centres), and other (trade unions, employers' organisations, NGOs, private business service providers, government departments and parastatal organisations) that have the capability to provide high quality technical support services on cooperative-related issues



The first category, “**An enabling environment for cooperative development**” tries to answer questions like: What is the role of the state related to cooperatives? Do we need extra manuals about federative structure? What about crosscutting issues (gender, environment, consumer protection, HIV/AIDS, etc.)? The second category is “**Sector/Subject of the material**” which refers to the sector specific criteria. For instance for on agricultural cooperatives, materials should be checked on relevance for addressing food shortages resulting from food production and distribution, new production technologies, energy efficient technologies, environmental protection, modern logistics, safety and health issues (also in view of the respective ILO Standards) and various quality standards. Some participants asked about the health sector, the micro credit/financial sector which were not included in those suggested categories. The third category was “**Design of the material**” which took into account that the previous MATCOM materials were new and modern in 1980s, but not anymore. The materials need a big refreshment and have to be adapted for the current needs, such as user-friendliness, electronic presentation and accessibility and more visuals effects. The last category is “**Delivery mode of training**”, which needs to take into account distance learning and e-learning or blended learning for instance, which are educational methods that users may ask for.

3. Group Sessions

3.1 MATCOM, an ILO trademark?

The importance of MATCOM as an ILO trademark or not is because MATCOM still stands for high quality and a global outreach. From this starting point the following questions were discussed:



- Is MATCOM still a trademark in the legal sense?
- Are we promoting a product or knowledge?
- The name of MATCOM
 - a. Maintain the name with a slight change, examples: *New MATCOM*, *MATCOM II* or *MATCOM revised*
 - b. A new name for a fresh start, examples: *MATCOOP* or *MATCOOP +*
- Branding
 - a) How would the new partnership approach relate to the branding of an ILO product with a long ILO history and a given name (MATCOM). Would this encourage a broad-based ownership and identification with the product?
 - b) An ILO MATCOM branding gives credibility to the materials

3.2. What About the Implementation Strategy?

Two main pillars were identified in analyzing the implementation strategy: sustainability and target groups. The discussion thus sought to either validate or discard the previous MATCOM set up by analyzing these two main pillars and the underpinning approaches that were used to achieve them. One of the main lessons of the past on sustainability was that the previous set up of networks of international and national liaison officers turned out to be too costly and thus an unsustainable mechanism. Similarly, the idea of involving other partners apart from COOP^{AFRICA} and the ILO more generally was welcomed both for mobilizing expertise/human resources and financial resources so as to maximize the sustainability potential. The issue of competition vs. partnership was highlighted as a possible obstacle to overcome in setting up this multisource approach for increasing ownership and sustainability of the strategy.

On the question of target groups, the need for knowledge rebuilding regarding cooperatives has been identified as a key driver for the target group identification, which would include not only the cooperative movements, but also support organization such as business schools. The type of target group (including location and access to reliable power supply, and ICT infrastructure, equipment and IT skills) would also define the mode of delivery, which is paper format, people oriented or e-approaches. Following a multi track was seen as the most viable solution.

In terms of the content, the top-down approach which was typical of the previous MATCOM project was rejected in favour of involving the users (identified by some as the intermediary users) as much as possible in the delivery and implementation strategies, although the multiplicity of the users could be a possible drawback in facilitating this participatory and bottom up approach. The use of networks should not be renounced, but enlarged to include representative organizations such as ICA, IFAP as well as support organizations such as Agriterra, etc.

A specific orientation towards a business model approach was also brought up in regards to the sustainability issue. This entailed opting for a more private oriented delivery strategy, whereby issues such a ToT or subcontracting etc would have to be taken into account. Options for making



the revised material commercially distributed were also brought into the discussion as part of the dual objectives of sustainability and cooperative knowledge dissemination.

3.3. What Are The Challenges Agricultural Cooperatives Are Facing Today?

The participants identified and discussed the following challenges:

1. Economic, social and financial environment has changed
 - a. Market access = Competition but also opportunities domestically and internationally
 - b. New Demand → Standards (quality, fair-trade, health, certification...)
 - c. Coordination → new partnerships-linkages needed (info, value-chain, capacity to meet standards)
 - d. Role of private sector/public one (more pro-active)
2. Price volatility (commodity + inputs)
3. Legal framework + International Accounting Standards + formalization
4. Image problem (ideology – communism comparison) → crisis + paradigm change = opportunity? Policy level to be sensitized
5. How to capture opportunities, to respond to challenges
 - a. Comparative advantage of coops
 - b. Viable business model
6. Membership → how to retain it? Gender issues?
7. “La relève” → take-over → lack of professional expertise + governance
8. Food security + sustainability + environment + green
9. HIV-AIDS and other public health issues

Looking at these challenges and the current MATCOM offer for agricultural cooperatives a clear gap was observed. Though most participants acknowledged the importance of including above mentioned aspects in updated and new MATCOM elements, the need for comprehensiveness was also questioned. In other words, should MATCOM cover everything? Would elaboration on all these challenges respond to needs of managers of, for instance, primary cooperatives?



4. Outcomes Of The Plenary Discussion On The Template Of The Revised MATCOM

Designing a template that fits the various users (trainers) and the final audience (managers of cooperatives) needs further reflection. The following issues were discussed:

- Include a small element (or a preface) that would introduce the concept of cooperatives and address the various issues surrounding cooperative development movement worldwide. Reference to literature, a compendium of national laws on cooperatives could be included. An open question remained as to whether to make this available in each MATCOM elements or as a separate independent one.
- Include a user guide to clarify the objectives and application possibilities of the training material and also to enhance professionalism within cooperatives users.
- The introduction of toolboxes consisting of learner-centred smaller texts or bits should be considered as a new pedagogical approach which would also facilitate future revision and enhance sustainability as well. An open question remained on how the generic items would be included if this random toolbox approach was selected.
- As for the learning methods, it is important to keep the revision process in line with the pedagogical needs as well as content relevance in order to have a high quality end product.
- Some participants argued that the trademark and MATCOM logo issue would risk of disappearing if no historical reference to the previous MATCOM was to be systematically included. Others warned for overload.

5. Conclusion

Please see the table summary on the first page of the report for a review of the final outcomes of the report. It should be noted that, the question on the need for conducting a broader market assessment of tools available and in demand in cooperative management on a larger scale, remains one key issue, which could be envisaged to be taken up as part of the longer term Global MATCOM review process. The revision and use of selected manuals for agricultural cooperatives in Africa would serve as a test-case.

6. Next Steps

Following this meeting and the dissemination of this report, a framework note will be shared with all participants of the meeting as well as other interested stakeholders. The note will detail the work of various groups, such as, an advisory committee, drafting committees (composed of content and pedagogical experts) and reading committees.



Annex I **List of Participants**

Name	Organization	Contact
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Annex II Agenda of the ILO - MATCOM revision meeting, 23 April 2009

Time	Activity	Responsible
09:00 – 09:30	Opening MATCOM Knowledge expedition Objectives of the workshop	Hagen Henry Tom Wambeke
09:30 – 10:00	MATCOM revision strategy & methodology Q&A	Carlien van Empel Tom Wambeke
10:00 – 10:30	MATCOM revision criteria Q&A	Gabriele Ullrich Tom Wambeke
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee/ Tea Break – Sharefair : exhibition of the training packages	
11:00 – 12:30	Thematic round table sessions 1. MATCOM, an ILO trademark? 2. What about the delivery strategy? 3. What are the challenges agricultural cooperatives are facing today? Plenary debriefing	Tom Wambeke Gabrielle Ullrich Robin Poppe Roldan Muradian
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 – 15:45	Design of a renewed MATCOM template Group work	Gabriele Ullrich Tom Wambeke
16:00 – 16:45	Involvement of experts and organizations Inventory exercise + discussion	Carlien van Empel Tom Wambeke