



OAS Permanent Council commemorates 65th anniversary of IICA's founding

Held at OAS Headquarters in Washington, D.C., the event coincided with IICA Day.

With "Realizing the Inter-American Dream of 1942" as its theme, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) celebrated the 65th anniversary of its founding during a special meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS).

On 3 October, the ambassadors to the OAS commended the work of this agency of the Inter-American System specializing in agriculture and rural development. They further recognized the strategic importance of agriculture and rural life in the Americas and their crucial contribution to social and political stability, democracy and the alleviation of poverty.

Argentina's ambassador to the OAS, Rodolfo Gil, chaired the meeting of the Permanent Council and extolled IICA's role in promoting economic development and rural life in its 34 Member States.

The Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, was the first to speak. He reiterated "the importance we at the OAS attach to the Institute, as the main inter-American vehicle to expand the productive capacity of the agricultural sector and to improve rural life."

During the roughly two and a half hours of the special meeting, the members of the Permanent Council and their special guests took advantage of the opportunity to discuss issues that concern the Institute, as well as IICA's responsibilities in the hemisphere.

"Strategic investments and innovations in the agricultural sector are an integral part of a new paradigm for the Americas that places emphasis on the development approach as a whole," Ramdin said.

The Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, began his remarks by thanking the OAS for its support. He then gave an overview of the Institute's history, its main contributions over the last 65 years and the challenges facing agriculture in the hemisphere.

"In our judgment, the countries are faced with serious problems: eradicating poverty and hunger, ensuring the sustainability of the environment and tackling climate change, combating transboundary diseases such as avian influenza, as well as strengthening our economies so they can compete internationally, and solving the problems associated with the high cost of energy and the availability of water," Brathwaite said.

He stressed that "developing leaders in the field of agriculture is important for the future of the sector." Brathwaite invited the members of the Permanent Council to form part of the Institute's initiative known as the Forum for Leaders, the object of which is to promote a "new agriculture" in the Americas.

The Minister of Agriculture of Guatemala, Bernardo Lopez, who hosted the Week of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas 2007 and chaired the meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), outlined the results of the Fourth Ministerial on Agriculture and Rural Life that took place in July of this year and congratulated IICA on its work as the Technical Secretariat of the process.

Minister Lopez stressed the importance of the opportunity the delegates had had to discuss and reach agreement on strategic topics and issues that were critical for the development of agriculture and the rural milieu. “A broader and better understanding of these matters helped us take the new decisions required to update and implement the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, set forth in the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreement Guatemala 2007 that gives continuity to that Plan.”

In his capacity as the chair of the Institute’s highest governing body, Minister Lopez congratulated IICA on its anniversary and pointed up its ability and capacity to modernize its operations and adapt to change.

In his presentation on the State of and Outlook for Agriculture in the Americas, Christopher Hansen, the Assistant Deputy Director General of IICA and the agency’s Representative in the USA, underscored the importance of the Institute being involved in issues such as climate change, agrobiotechnology and agroenergy, and the institution’s actions at the regional level.

“Reaffirming the importance of agriculture, IICA continues to address four overarching challenges: making agriculture competitive, achieving greater equity, making the transition to the paradigm of sustainability and promoting governance from rural territories,” Hansen said.

Following this presentation, the ambassadors commended the Institute on its work.

First to speak was the Ambassador of Paraguay, Manuel Caceres, who congratulated IICA on “its decisive contribution to economic and social development in the hemisphere through the improvement of agriculture and the living conditions of rural communities. All these years, the Institute has assisted and supported the countries in their efforts to meet the changing challenges and needs in the agricultural sector.”

The United States delegate said that IICA had played an important role in improving life in the rural areas of the Americas. “The United States wishes to work with IICA and the Member States for a common purpose,” he affirmed.

The Ambassador of Guatemala, Francisco Villagran de Leon also expressed support for IICA. “We stand ready to support the Institute at any time.”

The OAS Permanent Council decided to formally recognize the initiatives undertaken by IICA over the last 65 years to support the efforts of its Member States to promote the modernization of rural communities.

It unanimously adopted a resolution recognizing the importance of IICA’s technical cooperation tailored to the needs of the Member States and the Institute’s contribution to sustainable agricultural development, food security and rural prosperity.

Speaking on behalf of the Caribbean community (CARICOM), the Ambassador of Barbados, Michael King, said IICA should continue to work on issues such as poverty alleviation, food security, agroenergy and biofuels, and the training of young leaders.

At the end of the meeting, the Deputy Director General, James Butler, thanked the countries of the hemisphere for their many expressions of support, while the Director General called for joint efforts among the inter-American agencies to be strengthened: “We wish to continue working in tandem with you, because only then will we be successful.”

At a reception in the beautiful Hall of the Americas, in the main OAS building, the United States Under Secretary of Agriculture, Mark E. Keenum, proposed a toast to IICA and its anniversary.

patricia.leon@iica.int

alondon@iicawash.org



Director General of IICA encourages Caribbean nations to implement new development model for agriculture

Addressing the 43rd Annual Meeting of the Caribbean Food Crops Society, Chelston Brathwaite underscored the importance of agriculture for those nations.

The Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Chelston Brathwaite, dismissed as a myth the belief that agriculture declines in importance as countries develop, choosing instead to focus on the need to build a “new agriculture.”

Brathwaite delivered the keynote address at 43rd Annual Meeting of the Caribbean Food Crop Society (CFCS), held in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Encouraging the Caribbean nations to adopt a new development model for agriculture, given its great potential as a source of jobs and wealth, Brathwaite offered four reasons why agriculture continues to play a key role in the countries of the Caribbean.

The first refers to the fact that the CARICOM Caribbean has a food export bill of about US\$3.5 billion, and the bill is increasing every year. Next, he mentioned that the Caribbean region is the most food insecure region of the Hemisphere due to its small size.

Furthermore, he said, the agricultural sector contributes more than 25% of the region’s GDP and 40% of its exports, and provides employment for thousands of rural families. Lastly, he noted that the agrifood distribution sector is comprised of over 17,000 companies, employing thousands of people and generating sales of over US\$5.6 billion annually.

According to Brathwaite, it is necessary to begin building the “new agriculture” of the 21st century, an agriculture that can contribute to food security, energy availability, competitiveness, and job creation.

He then mentioned seven areas for intervention in the “new agriculture:” organic agriculture, herbal and medicinal products, agro-energy, agro-biotechnology, food for ethnic markets, agro-tourism, and food production from the Caribbean sea.

He also identified certain actions necessary for the development of the “new agriculture:”

- Promotion of new regional agricultural enterprises • Improvement of regional transport in order to facilitate regional trade in agricultural products.
- Need to engage food importers and the tourism sector in a strategy of incentives to support local food production.
- Strengthening of systems for natural disaster and risk management, and promotion of agricultural insurance systems.
- Promotion of a regional agricultural development fund to finance research, innovation, technology and training in agribusiness.
- Active participation of our embassies and our ambassadors in promoting a Caribbean identity and promoting the Caribbean as a place for investment in agriculture.
- Appreciation of our own products, resources and people.
- Promotion of small businesses in the region to help move our people out of poverty and promote rural prosperity.
- Creation of appropriate incentives for agrotourism. In his concluding remarks, he insisted that the agrifood sector a strategic sector of any economic, given its contribution to food security, environmental sustainability, energy, employment and social equity.

We in the Caribbean, he said, cannot develop to be world class societies if we depend on others to produce what we eat, drink and wear. He then called for a commitment to a new vision for the food and agricultural sector that can

assist in transforming our economies from their state of dependence to one of true independence, and so make the common market and economy a reality for our people.

Food is not only a basic right, but access to food is the most basic requirement for social equity and peace in our world, he asserted.

Chairman of the CFCS Board of Directors, Alberto Beale, opened the annual meeting, and the Minister of Production of Costa Rica, Marco Vargas, offered opening remarks.

Others in attendance were the President of the CFCS 2007 and Rector of EARTH University, Jose Zaglul; the Dean of the School of Agrifood Sciences of the University of Costa Rica, Jose Ramon Molina; and the President of the College of Agricultural Engineers of Costa Rica, Mario Coto.

patricia.leon@iica.int



Region discusses future of biofuels

Senior IICA officials participated in the Second Latin American and Caribbean Biofuels Seminar, convened by OLADE.

The Second Latin American and Caribbean Biofuels Seminar, which brought together some 250 regional and international stakeholders in El Salvador, was held in close collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

The seminar, held on September 26-28, provided an opportunity to show the linkage between agroenergy and the energy, agriculture, environment, technology and finance sectors and to exchange information on the experiences of and progress made by the national biofuel programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, addressing topics such as legal frameworks, the institutional framework, prices, mixtures and food security.

The meeting was inaugurated by the Minister of Economic Affairs of El Salvador, Yolanda Mayorga de Gaviria; Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Mario Salverria; the Executive Secretary of the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE), Alvaro Rios Roca; and the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite.

In their remarks, they all agreed that the objective of the seminar was to provide an opportunity for dialogue and discussion in which authorities and specialists from the Ministries of Energy and of Agriculture and Environment of the region, international organizations, businesses, technology development centers, investors and funding sources could state their positions on the topic of biofuels.

Discussions also focused on assessing the potential of agriculture in the region for producing biofuels and on promoting investment and funding for projects.

IICA was also represented by Assistant Deputy Director General Mario Seixas, who has been coordinating the Institute's Hemispheric Program on Agroenergy and Biofuels, which provides a platform for horizontal technical cooperation in this field.

The activity was organized by OLADE in close collaboration with IICA, and with support from the Ministries of Affairs and Agriculture of El Salvador, the Ministry of Energy and Mines of Brazil, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI).

cindy.hernandez@iica.org.sv



IICA presents report on agro-energy to Inter-American Ethanol Commission

The study presented by Director General Chelston Brathwaite foresees a bright future for countries involved in producing agro-energy.

The Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Chelston Brathwaite, stated that the future looks very bright for all the countries that produce and export bio-fuel, be it ethanol or bio-diesel, and that the development of agro-energy offers an opportunity for countries to position themselves strategically in the international market.

Brathwaite made these statements during a meeting of the Inter-American Ethanol Commission (IEC), where he presented a study on the state of and outlook for ethanol production in the Americas.

In his judgment, all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean could use agro-energy as the focal point for creating a large bloc of renewable energy suppliers in the emerging international agro-energy market.

The IEC is a private-sector body co-chaired by Luis Alberto Moreno, President of the Inter-American Development Bank; Jeb Bush, former Governor of the State of Florida; and Roberto Rodrigues, President of the Agribusiness Board of the Federation of Industries of the State of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

The Commission was created in 2006 to disseminate information on ethanol, facilitate private investment in bio-fuels, and promote the creation of a hemispheric bio-fuel market. Shortly after it was founded, the IEC invited IICA to be one of its strategic allies. The Institute already has a Hemispheric Program on Agro-energy and Bio-fuels, which assists its Member States in addressing issues related to their collective energy security.

Agro-energy Atlas The document Brathwaite presented, “Agro-energy and Bio-fuels Atlas of the Americas - Ethanol,” was prepared by IICA in response to a request from the IEC in January 2007. It is the first in a series of three studies on the state of and outlook for ethanol, bio-diesel and agro-energy production in the hemisphere.

The Atlas is divided into two parts. The first provides an overview of sugar and ethanol production in the Americas, and the second focuses on the status of agro-energy and bio-fuel production, country by country. All the information in the Atlas was provided by the IICA’s Offices in its Member States.

Data is presented on gasoline consumption in the region, the minimum surface area required to produce ethanol, the regulatory frameworks governing production, the use and management of bio-fuels, the research underway to improve sugarcane and ethanol production, the availability of other crops that could be used in ethanol production, the interest that governments and the private sector have shown in promoting ethanol production and use, and the willingness of national institutions to associate themselves with the Inter-American Ethanol Commission.

Attention is called to the progress made by Brazil, the United States and Colombia. These countries are investing heavily in research and development related to new technologies that could make the use of different sources of energy based on bio-mass and industrial and agricultural waste competitive, and lead to a reassessment and repositioning of renewable sources of energy.

He also referred to the efforts under way in Argentina, Costa Rica, Peru, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, Paraguay, Guyana and Jamaica to begin or expand the use and production of ethanol.

Even oil-producing countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador and Mexico are undertaking initiatives aimed at incorporating ethanol into their energy mix.

However, he stated, if agro-energy initiatives are to succeed in the Latin America and the Caribbean countries, some challenges will have to be met. The first is the formulation and application of State policies which place national interests in the area of agro-energy and bio-fuels above sectoral or short-term interests.

In his opinion, it is essential to identify transparent, quantifiable and reliable markets, and to create a commodity futures market and an international bio-fuel market.

He added that innovation and the development of new technologies are two challenges involved in the economically and environmentally sustainable production of bio-fuels.

Some countries will have to decide how much to increase internal production of bio-fuels to replace oil imports, and how they will solve the problems related to competition for the use of land for food and bio-fuel production. In the long term, second-generation bio-fuels may reduce the competition between the production of bio-fuels and food, but intensive research and considerable investment is required.

Lastly, he underscored the need to search for resources and sources of funding. In this effort, governments and international financial institutions must play a key role in helping the new industry to overcome the early barriers to the production and marketing of agro-energy and bio-fuels.

mario.seixas@iica.int



Director General of IICA visits El Salvador

He attended the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the Institute, met with several ministers and participated in the Second Latin American and Caribbean Biofuels Seminar, as well as a number of other activities.

The Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Chelston Brathwaite, was in El Salvador on September 25-27 to participate in the celebration of the Institute's 65th anniversary and other activities.

At the commemorative ceremony, held on September 26 at the Hilton Princess Hotel, IICA Representative in El Salvador Keith Andrews delivered a report on IICA's contribution to the development of agriculture and rural life in that country, in fulfillment of commitments assumed by the Institute under the National Technical Cooperation Agenda.

In his address, the Director General spoke of IICA's role in the hemisphere, the modernization process currently under way in the Institute and the commitments it has made to its 34 Member States.

Also in attendance were members of his cabinet, the diplomatic corps and international missions accredited in the country, as well as representatives of the private sector, academia, trade associations, entities associated with agriculture and rural life, nongovernmental organizations, and others.

Brathwaite, who has been at the helm of the Institute for five years, also met with government officials, including the Ministers of Agriculture and Livestock and of Economic Affairs.

As often happens on his official trips to the member countries, he also met with the staff of the IICA Office in El Salvador.

Brathwaite, accompanied by Assistant Deputy Director General Mario Seixas, participated in the Second Latin American and Caribbean Biofuels Seminar, convened by the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE), in collaboration with IICA, FAO, the Ministry of Energy and Mines of Brazil and the Ministries of Agriculture and Economic Affairs of El Salvador.

The Director General spoke during the inaugural session, and Seixas made a presentation on Agroenergy later in the day.

Under the auspices of the Inter-American Program on Agroenergy and Biofuels, Brathwaite and Seixas have participated in recent meetings such as "Expanding Bioenergy Opportunities in the Caribbean," held in August in

Guyana, and the roundtable on biofuels organized by the Inter-American Ethanol Commission in September in Miami, where they presented the study “Agro-energy and Bio-fuels Atlas of the Americas – Ethanol.”

cindy.hernandez@iica.org.sv



IICA receives educational materials on food safety and health

Specialists warn that the population in general, and in particular school children, should learn more about proper hygiene.

IICA recently received an educational program that will be used to help school children learn about food safety and food-borne diseases and how to prevent them.

On September 17, the Food Safety Institute of the Americas (FSIA), the University of Florida and Miami Dade College delivered the program to the Institute for dissemination via the Directorate of Agricultural Health and Food Safety.

Professors Percival Darby and Roberto Samudio, from Miami Dade College, made a presentation on the program, developed to make young children more aware of what food-borne diseases are and what can be done to prevent them.

The program presents the basic principles of food safety in a learner-friendly format, and uses, among other methodologies, digital animation for more effective communication with the students.

The materials offer information on how food is contaminated and related activities and experiments. The three-hour program is designed for children between 8 and 11.

At the end of each program module, there are activities that will help students to evaluate the knowledge they have acquired and to develop a greater understanding of food health and safety.

The contents of this material have been adopted so that teachers and other personnel can improve hygiene in schools. According to Darby, one of the modules is designed to train preparers and servers how to ensure the safety and wholesomeness of food.

The program contains a number of activities which will help the teachers to reinforce the lessons taught in the classroom. It also includes a practical guide to food safety in school meal programs, for school boards.

Each year, millions of children die from diseases such as diarrhea due to improper handling of foods and contamination of water. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 70% of all cases of diarrhea can be attributed to these causes.

ricardo.molins@iica.int



IICA joins fight against foot and mouth disease in Paraguay

The Institute will participate in a pilot program financed by the United States that will lay the groundwork for other projects aimed at eradicating this disease.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is one of the organizations responsible for implementing an epidemiological surveillance program aimed at eradicating foot and mouth disease in the Chaco region of Paraguay, launched on September 25.

The US\$315,000 program is financed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and will build up the infrastructure of the National Animal Quality and Health Service (SENACSA) in specific areas of the country.

During the launching of the program, letters of understanding were signed that call for SENACSA to execute the program in cooperation with IICA

One objective of the program is to prevent the introduction or spread of the foot and mouth virus through the implementation of coordinated actions in the border region of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay.

According to the U.S. Ambassador in Paraguay, James Cason “Depending on the outcome of this project, the U.S. Government is very interested in working with SENACSA, livestock farmers and IICA to develop other projects that will help Paraguay to eradicate this disease.”

He noted that the USDA’s contribution was equivalent to 20% of the total amount of resources it had earmarked for efforts to combat this disease in South America.

Attending the launching were the IICA Representative in Paraguay, Alex Barril, the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Alfredo Molinas, and the Director of SENACSA Hugo Corrales.

marcela.pappalardo@iica.int



IICA promotes Latin American and Caribbean organic agriculture network

Institute appointed as Secretary pro tempore of the network.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is promoting the creation of the “Network of Agencies Responsible for Regulating Organic Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean,” the main objectives of which are to increase the effectiveness of such agencies and to generate/share information which will contribute to the development of organic production in the countries of the region.

In a meeting held in August in Managua, Nicaragua, attended by representatives of 16 countries of the Caribbean, Central America and South America, IICA was appointed Secretary pro tempore of the network. At that time, the Institute was also asked to develop the network and to seek funding for its implementation.

This virtual network, which will contribute to the management of knowledge, will have a Web portal and a permanent Technical Secretariat that will monitor and address the most important aspects of the operation of these agencies, which are responsible for promoting the development of technical regulations. Eighteen countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have such agencies.

In addition to promoting organic production, the Network will organize discussion fora, contribute to the development of regional positions on key issues, share information with countries and encourage them to acquire relevant knowledge.

The Network is the organic industry’s main institutional structure in LAC. Its Web portal will be its main knowledge management tool and the face of the Network.

Relevance of organic agriculture

The international organic market is valued at US\$33 billion. In 2006, 28% of certified farms worldwide (176,710) were found in LAC, as well as 19% of the land (5,809,321 hectares) planted in such crops.

Most operations in the region are small in scale. However, thanks to their efforts and support from NGOs and other cooperation agencies, organic production levels in LAC are where they are today. Two Commissions of Representatives of the Agencies Responsible for Organic Agriculture have been in operation in the region for three years: one in South America (with seven countries) and another in Central America and the Caribbean (with seven countries).

States have done little to support the activity and there are almost no structures in place to develop it. Information to generate knowledge and support decision-making is produced with private capital and is widely scattered.

pedro.cussianovich@iica.int



IICA 65th Anniversary Painting Competition

The IICA Office in Guyana hosted a Secondary Schools Painting Competition last Saturday, 22 September, 2007 at the IICA's premises, 18 Brickdam, Georgetown, under the theme "The Influence of Global Warming on the Agriculture Sector."

Thirty-two secondary school students from across Guyana participated in the competition.

The competition was judged by a panel of three judges nominated respectively by IICA, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Education.

The best three paintings will be sent to Jamaica where they will be displayed and judged during the Caribbean Week of Agriculture Oct. 8 -13, 2007. The other paintings will be displayed at GuyExpo September 27 – October 1. All participants will be awarded certificates of participation.

The prize giving ceremony will take place during the World Food Day activities at the Guyana School of Agriculture.

iica.gy@iica.int