



IICA and WFP to support low-income farmers in Central America

The initiative will be implemented in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

The World Food Programme (WFP) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) today signed an agreement under which they will help rural communities to implement projects aimed at addressing the challenges posed by food insecurity and climate change.

One initiative to be launched under the agreement is the Purchase for Progress (P4P) project, which calls for using the purchasing power of the WFP to acquire the food produced by low-income farmers and distributing it among the beneficiaries of the WFP's humanitarian aid programs.



The agreement was signed by WFP Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Pedro Medrano, and the Deputy Director General of IICA, Christopher Hansen.

This will help farmers to increase their incomes, consolidate access to markets and become more competitive. For its part, IICA will provide farmers with technical assistance intended to improve the quality and increase the size of their harvests.

Both international agencies agree that support for low-income farmers is vital in combating hunger and poverty. Most of the poor who suffer from hunger (especially women and children) live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

The initiative will be implemented in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua for three years, beginning in 2010. It is estimated that of a total population of 32.8 million in those countries, 6.8 million (20.8%) are undernourished.

The agreement was signed in City of Knowledge by WFP Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Pedro Medrano, and the Deputy Director General of IICA, Christopher Hansen.

According to Medrano, "The poor farmers in the region and their families are suffering the effects of the financial and food crises, and are not prepared for the impacts of climate change."

"We are certain that IICA's many years of experience in agriculture will contribute to making the project a success and will help many poor families to break the cycle of poverty," he added.

Hansen pointed out that the agreement with the WFP was another effort on the part of the Institute to strengthen partnerships at the regional and hemispheric level. "Working together, we can do more to support the most vulnerable groups in several of our member countries. It's a win-win situation," he said.

IICA Director of Operations for the Central Area, Roger Guillen, noted that the P4P project is complemented with a number of food security initiatives being promoted by the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC).

According to Guillen, “The P4P project is a direct and tangible effort to help small-scale famers and their organizations and improve their links to the market.”

The Howard G. Buffet Foundation has donated US\$6 million to support pilot projects in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador, which may be replicated in other countries of the region.

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OAS Assistant Secretary General calls for recognition of food security as a political issue

Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, met with the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, in Costa Rica today.

During a visit to the headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Ambassador Albert Ramdin, said that food security had become a political rather than a technical issue. When people do not have enough food, trouble starts, there are protests and sometimes governments even fall.

Ambassador Ramdin was welcomed by the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, who viewed the visit as an excellent opportunity to reaffirm the ties between the OAS and the Institute.

Ramdin was accompanied by the OAS Representative in Costa Rica, Ambassador Patricio Zuquilanda, and an advisor to the Assistant Secretary General, Carlos Manuel Echeverria.



The Ambassador Albert Ramdin and the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, discussed, among other topics, IICA's role as an institutional partner of the Summit of the Americas process.

At a working lunch, Brathwaite and Ramdin discussed, among other topics, IICA's role as an institutional partner of the Summit of the Americas process, and preparations for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, to be held in April in Trinidad and Tobago.

The ambassador called attention to the fact that a Summit was being held for the first time in a country in the Caribbean. In his judgment, because this will be the first opportunity for many Heads of State and Government to participate in this multilateral process, what will come out of Port of Spain will be a fresh and holistic look at the problems of the hemisphere.

What is needed, he said, is a new vision of the Inter-American System and of how to promote peace and unity in the Americas.

Aware that declarations issued at this type of summit are not enough by themselves, he was confident this one would yield concrete and quantifiable initiatives focused on the day-to-day problems of people in areas such as education, security, poverty, health and food insecurity.

Agriculture and rural life also will be on the agenda of the meeting. In this regard, he recognized the role the Institute has played and the leadership of the Director General in repositioning both.

At the OAS, he said, it pleases us to see that more recognition is being given to IICA's role. Under the leadership of Chelston Brathwaite, the Institute, as the agency specialized in agriculture and in helping the countries to improve their production capacity, is now assuming a more preeminent role in the Inter-American System.

Without a doubt, when it comes to matters involving agriculture, development and rural life, the inter-American institution par excellence is IICA, he added.

For Ambassador Ramdin, there is a need for greater coordination among inter-American institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the OAS, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and IICA because, in his judgment, agriculture and food security no longer refer only to producing food, but also to improving the quality of life for people in rural areas.

In his opinion, young people must feel that there is a future for them in the countryside. If we can make rural areas more attractive and young people can build a future there, rural life will improve.

Prior to his visit to IICA, Ambassador Ramdin met with senior staff of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Tomorrow, he will meet with the President of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Stagno.

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Listen to the complete interview at:

mms://zeus.iica.ac.cr/OnDemand/AudioIICA/2009/Entrevista_Albert_Ramdin_Secretario_General_Adjunto_OEA_2009.wma



At IICA, Ministers of Barbados and Grenada discuss the challenges facing agriculture in their countries

Delegations, headed by the Ministers of Agriculture of Barbados and Grenada, took part in the Forum for Leaders at IICA Headquarters.

The challenges facing agriculture and rural life in Barbados and Grenada, as well as strategies promoted by the Ministers of Agriculture of the two countries, were discussed this 9 February at the Forum for Leaders in Agriculture, organized especially for them by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

The delegations, which will be in Costa Rica until Friday, 13 February, are headed by Senator Haynesley Benn, Minister of Agriculture of Barbados, and Michael Denis Lett, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Grenada.



The dialogue with the directors at IICA gave the Ministers an opportunity to generate input for revising IICA's technical cooperation agenda in their countries.

Minister Benn is accompanied by Charleston Lucas, Deputy Agricultural Officer from the Ministry of Agriculture. Minister Lett is accompanied by the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Gemma Bain-Thomas, and Malachy Dottin, Research Director from that Ministry.

Joseph Peltier and Una May Gordon, IICA Representatives in Barbados and Grenada, respectively, were also included in the visit to IICA Headquarters.

The Forum for Leaders is part of an innovative effort promoted by IICA through its Center for Leadership in Agriculture. It seeks to provide input, through dialogue, for Ministers of Agriculture and senior executives in the agricultural sector in shaping a current vision of agriculture and rural life in the XXIst century.

In opening the discussion, Director General Brathwaite explained the mission and history of the Institute, its structure, governing bodies and other aspects of the work of this specialized agency of the Inter-American System.

Later on, the discussion centered around the global challenges facing any Minister of Agriculture in the XXIst century, including, *inter alia*, poverty, food insecurity, climate change, malnutrition, transboundary diseases and multilateral trade negotiations.

In the opinion of Director General Brathwaite, if the countries recognized the true contribution of agriculture to the economy (in several countries of the hemisphere, nearly 30 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product) if they made the necessary investments in the sector, and if agriculture were to be given priority on the national development agendas, the sector would contribute far more to solving some of the pressing global challenges and improving the level of development in our countries.

Brathwaite, a national of Barbados, then turned to the challenges in the Caribbean. Among these, he mentioned producing sustainable energy; increasing local food production and consumption; and in the face of the loss of preferential markets, continuing to participate in multilateral trade negotiations.

The increasingly violent hurricanes and floods caused by climate change make it imperative for the Caribbean countries to develop agricultural insurance and early prevention systems, said the Director General of IICA.

He went on to explain how the complexity of the agricultural sector and its multiple ties to other sectors (such as tourism, industry, public health) have led to changes in the portfolios of the Ministers of Agriculture “since they are no longer ministers of producers but also ministers of consumers; they must be ministers of agriculture, food and rural development, he maintained.

The Forum was then opened up for the interventions of the Ministers of Agriculture of Barbados and Grenada who explained the strategies they are promoting in their countries to boost this economic sector.

The response of Barbados

Minister Ben insisted that Barbados had viewed the global challenges as an opportunity to reinforce the importance of agriculture. He gave assurances that his portfolio was aware that food security, food safety and sound nutrition were all-important for the country’s development.

He reported that his Ministry was working hard to diversify production and strengthen markets, not only to facilitate the sale of farm produce, but also to motivate hotels, restaurants, supermarkets and other players in the tourism sector to purchase agricultural products.

On the matter of the introduction of new technologies, he said that greenhouses had been established and activities carried out to increase productivity and protect the environment and safeguard sustainable land development. The scientific laboratories were also being improved.

The Minister stressed the efforts under way to interest young people in the agricultural sector.

In concluding his remarks, Minister Ben said that Barbados was aware that no single country could solve the global challenges and that Barbados therefore recognized that collaboration, cooperation and teamwork were necessary in order to surmount the challenges.

Grenada in the face of its devastated agriculture

Minister Lett shared his proposal to promote Grenada’s agriculture, which was devastated by Hurricanes Ivan and Emily in 2004 y 2005, respectively. It has further suffered the effects of rising fuel prices, the dismantling of European Union trade preferences and certain invasive agricultural diseases.

As a result of the destruction caused by climatic phenomena, there is a huge demand for plants and genetic materials, he said. Nurseries had therefore been restored and a plant propagation project (linked to the priority needs of the industry), for which the necessary personnel would be recruited, was in the pipeline.

Minister Lett explained that the importation of meat products accounted for a significant portion of Grenada's purchases abroad. Because of this, a comprehensive plan to develop that subsector was launched on February 18.

The idea is to improve genetically dairy, meat, as well as pork production through artificial insemination, he said. The plan was also to develop small ruminant mammals and birds since poultry production in Grenada only supplied 15 per cent of the country's demand.

In the Minister's opinion, the fisheries sector was also a "potential gold mine". The government was therefore endeavoring to increase the marketing of fish and maintain its export status vis-à-vis the European Union.

The Ministry of Agriculture planned to train agricultural officers, specialists and farmers in the country for the purpose of boosting Grenada's agriculture and ensuring the availability of the requisite human resources and institutional framework to do so. The Minister also reported that mechanisms would be created to facilitate agricultural research.

Another area of focus was food security, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups, and the development of processed agricultural products with high value added to boost small-scale agribusinesses.

On-site learning

As part of their visit to Costa Rica, the Ministers went on a field trip to "La Esperanza" organic farm, the National Horticultural Corporation, the National Learning Institute (INA) and Earth University.

On this field trip, they were able to observe chemical-free production practices, the production of crops in protected environments, nurseries, the production of tissues, etc.

The Forum and the dialogue with the directors at IICA, especially, gave the Ministers an opportunity to generate input for revising IICA's technical cooperation agenda in their countries.

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Director General announces priorities for 2009

To continue promoting the inclusion of agriculture on the agendas of the countries and to facilitate the transition to a new administration figure among the priorities for the coming year.

The Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Chelston Brathwaite, announced priorities for 2009, "a special year for the Institute in that it is the last year of the current administration and the year in which the Director General who will conduct the affairs of the Institute from 2010 to 2014 will be elected."

The Brathwaite administration took office in 2002 and promptly set out to modernize IICA and reposition agriculture as a key sector in the countries of the Americas, adopting a "new model for development in which food security and agricultural development are central elements."

The Institute will continue to pursue this objective in 2009. In a memorandum to all Institute personnel, Brathwaite said "The cooperation we provide to our Member States will focus on food security, environmental sustainability and the territorial approach to rural development."

Efforts will also focus on consolidating the Institute's technical cooperation programs in Biotechnology, Organic Agriculture, Agrotourism, Agricultural Insurance, Rural Agroindustry and Agroenergy.

Regarding the election of the new Director General, Brathwaite stated that the Institute will work to ensure not only that the electoral process is transparent and does not affect ongoing activities, but also that the transition to a new administration goes smoothly.

To this end, the Institute will prepare a corporate report which identifies the major achievements made from 2002-2008, to provide the new administration with information which may be useful in the preparation of the 2010-2014 Medium Term Plan, and will contribute to the preparation of a proposed strategic framework for 2010-2020.

In 2009, as happens every two years, the most important meetings on agriculture and rural life in the hemisphere, the Fifth Ministerial Meeting and the Twenty-fifth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), will take place. On this occasion, they will be held [in Jamaica in October](#).

IICA, in its capacity as the Secretariat of the Ministerial Process and an institutional partner of the Summit Process, is supporting preparations for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, to be held in Trinidad and Tobago in April.

This year the Institute will also continue to promote leadership in the agricultural sector and strengthen its strategic partnerships, the Director General said.

The Second Forum for Young Leaders in Agriculture is being organized for May of this year. At the conclusion of the [First Forum for Young Leaders](#), held in March of last year, some 90 participants pledged to promote the equitable and sustainable growth of agriculture throughout the hemisphere.

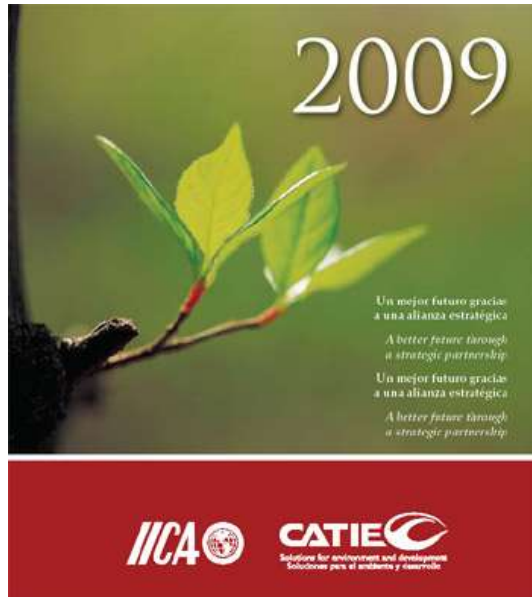
As for strategic partnerships, he added "We will focus our actions on strengthening cooperation and joint efforts, especially with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) and the World Food Program (WFP)."

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IICA and CATIE publish joint calendar

The photographs for the 2009 calendar were taken at CATIE's botanical gardens.



The IICA-CATIE calendar bears witness to the strategic partnership that unites the two organizations.

For the first time, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) have come together to publish a calendar, as clear evidence of their close partnership.

In a letter that is being delivered along with the calendar, the Director Generals of IICA and CATIE, Chelston Brathwaite and Jose Joaquin Campos, respectively, refer to this unprecedented initiative as “a testimonial to our partnership as sister institutions.”

IICA and CATIE share much more than a common origin. Fully aware that the capabilities of both organizations can be enhanced through combined, complementary efforts, they work together to help small- and medium-scale farmers to engage in competitive and sustainable agriculture.

Both institutions also focus their efforts on the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, and improvement in policies and governance that minimize conflicts between the production of food crops and biofuels.

Their commitment to the conservation of biodiversity is manifested in the International Germ Plasm Collections of the CATIE Botanical Gardens in Turrialba, Costa Rica. Established more than 60 years ago, these collections contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of globally important genetic resources that are key to research and genetic improvement for improved agricultural production and adaptation of crops to adverse conditions. Images of some of the tropical crops that make up this huge collection adorn the pages of the calendar.

The genesis of the close association may be traced back to 1942, when then U.S. Vice President Henry Wallace and a number of distinguished professionals from Latin American dared to dream of improving agriculture throughout the hemisphere.

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COMUNIICA draws attention to local experiences in addressing global agricultural challenges

Agricultural insurance, biofuels, innovation in production and linkages with markets are all addressed in the latest edition of COMUNIICA.

The latest edition of COMUNIICA, the technical magazine of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), has articles on experiences related to agricultural insurance, biofuel production and linking farmers to markets.

As stated in the foreword to the magazine, in a context characterized by food insecurity and concern over climate change, “the argument that agriculture should play a more prevalent role is gaining momentum.”

“Failure to come up with new alternatives and instruments and continuing to do the same thing in contexts and scenarios that are vastly different will probably end up in defeat in terms of reaching goals” such as the Millennium Development Goals, it goes on to say.

[The latest edition of COMUNIICA](#) invites readers to learn more about a number of experiences and new approaches to tackling global challenges.

The first article, “[Linking small-scale farmers with markets: An analysis of successful initiatives in Latin America](#),” focuses on the impact of public policies implemented in Colombia, Peru and El Salvador to link small-scale farmers to markets.

Hernando Riveros, Hemispheric Agribusiness Specialist; Margarita Baquero, a consultant with IICA/Ecuador; Miguel Garcia, Director of Agribusiness Competitiveness and Head of the Inter-American Program for the Promotion of Trade, Agribusiness and Food Safety; and Enrique Alarcon, Director of Technology and Innovation, co-authored the article.

“[Agricultural Insurance: a powerful tool for governments and farmers](#)” is the title of the article written by the IICA Representative in the United States, David Hatch, who believes that this is a subject “of great urgency that must be addressed by ministers of production and finance.”

Agricultural insurance, which provides indemnification for economic loss resulting from damage to or loss of crops and animals in the event of adverse natural and other phenomena, helps farmers recover more rapidly from such events.

On the same subject, Carlos Enrique Guanziroli, Associate Professor at the Universidad Federal Fluminense (UFF), and Carlos Americo Basco, IICA Representative in Brazil, wrote an article entitled “[Managing Rural Insurance in Brazil](#).”

The authors present proposals for solving the problems facing the rural insurance system in Brazil, and underscore the need to implement an efficient system of protection against the risks posed by pests and climatic events in Brazil.



The new edition of COMUNIICA addresses experiences related to and tools for facing the challenges of a context characterized by food insecurity and concern over climate change.

“[Paraguay taps its potential for biofuel production](#),” was written by Guillermo Souto, an Agricultural Engineer and Specialist in Agribusiness Development, Information and Communication. The article mentions that strategies could be identified for revitalizing the agricultural sector and mitigating the effects of the energy crisis.

The final article included in the magazine was prepared in house and details the experiences of four projects financed by the Regional Fund for Agricultural Technology (FONTAGRO) aimed at [introducing technological innovations into the cultivation of potatoes](#), a highly nutritional tuber that is among the most adaptable to adverse climatic conditions.

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IICA and Cornell University exchange expertise

Experts in the field of educational technologies visit IICA Headquarters



The Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, welcomed the Cornell delegation to the Distance Training Center.

Senior staff of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and a delegation from Cornell University, located in New York, have shared experiences in the areas of distance education, communities of practice and knowledge management.

Welcoming the visitors, the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, stated that the visit was “a good example of interinstitutional cooperation and a step toward strengthening relations with centers of academic excellence.”

The delegation from Cornell, headed by the Head of Information Technologies for the Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics and for International Programs of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Stefan EINARSON, arrived in Costa Rica on January 27.

The meeting will last until Friday, January 29, and will provide an opportunity to learn about the different educational programs both Cornell and IICA are developing, which will serve as the basis for devising a plan to strengthen capabilities in the development of training programs.

In September of last year, Brathwaite, who earned a Ph.D. from Cornell in 1970, headed an official mission to Cornell, the purpose of which was to explore areas for collaboration aimed at fostering ties, promoting rural development and transferring information, technology and expertise between the institutions.

On that trip Brathwaite was accompanied by the Director of Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management, James French; the Director of Technology and Innovation, Enrique Alarcon; and the Head of the Documentation and Publications Department, Federico Sancho.

Thanks to the 2008 meeting, IICA and Cornell are in the process of signing a cooperation agreement.

For James French, the exchange of expertise “will enable us to improve the technical cooperation services we offer to our 34 Member States.”

IICA’s Distance Training Center (CECADI), which coordinates, promotes and produces virtual courses and events in the interest of creating learning communities, plays a key role in the exchange of knowledge given its active use of information technologies.

According to CECADI Coordinator Jose Ramirez, “We ensure quality and innovation in the management of the technical cooperation both IICA and its strategic partners provide on line and via videoconference.”

IICA’s Center for Leadership in Agriculture also participated actively in the meeting, with a view to developing distance training programs for ministers and young leaders on topics of interest in agriculture today.

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Young people participate in internships thanks to IICA’s Center for Leadership in Agriculture

They are working in other countries to acquire greater knowledge of agriculture.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), through its Center for Leadership in Agriculture, is supporting a number of young leaders who are engaged in internships that will last up to one year.

Coordinator of the Center for Leadership in Agriculture, Hernan Chiriboga, said that the internships, for which participants must live in a country other than their own, make it possible to share life experiences in different cultures, learn a new language and observe first hand a new cultural and agricultural reality.

“These are win-win projects in which the intern learns from the project or from his/her work, and the project benefits from the work and experience of the intern,” he added.



Abidemi Smenk-Ka-Ra, from Trinidad and Tobago (right), an IICA intern, is working with the indigenous population in the Embera Wounnan community in Panama.

Rosalina Godinez and Jose Adrian Sanchez, from Costa Rica; Denise Hodge, from Antigua and Barbuda; Roberto Carlos Martinez, from Nicaragua; Javier Barria, from Panama; and Abidemi Smenk-Ka-Ra, from Trinidad and Tobago, are the first participants in this program.

Denise Hodge, a young leader from the Caribbean interning in Venezuela, developed a research project entitled “Possible effects of higher international prices in the territory of Guanare, in the State of Portuguesa, Venezuela.”

“This is a concrete example of the benefits of the internship program,” Chiriboga said.

Hodge’s research involves documenting major changes in the wholesale and retail prices of different agricultural products, keeping periodic records on products and reviewing basic information such as general characteristics and socioeconomic conditions in that territory.

These internships are one of the most important initiatives of the Center for Leadership in Agriculture, located at IICA Headquarters in San Jose, Costa Rica.

“This is a proactive initiative undertaken to respond to the need to develop leaders with a holistic vision and capable of understanding the megatrends of this new millennium,” Chiriboga concluded.

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Study reveals differences in area of agricultural research and development in countries of Central America

IICA Technology and Innovation specialists formed part of the research team.

A recent study entitled “Agricultural Research and Development in Central America” revealed differences in the total amount of money invested in agricultural research and development (R&D), in sources of funding, in priorities for research, in the makeup of research and development systems and in the educational level of researchers, in those countries.

The study was conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), under the Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI) initiative, with the participation of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). The researchers included David Rodriguez (recently deceased) and Francisco Enciso, an IICA Technology and Innovation specialist.

According to the study, “The lack of arable land per inhabitant constitutes a growing problem in Central America,” making it necessary to obtain a higher yield from crops to feed a growing population and generate greater surpluses in terms of income.



The seven Central American countries employ 903 researchers for agricultural development.

Such a goal could be achieved if more were invested in agricultural R&D and existing capabilities were more effectively used. However, total investment in public agricultural research in Central America was limited between 1981 and 2006, when it invested \$92 million (in 2005 international dollars) in agricultural R&D.

This amount is “very low in comparison with other regions of Latin America, other developing regions and especially, the developed countries,” according to the document, which was based on data collected during 2007 and 2008.

Also, a comparison of the budget for agricultural R&D in the region and the size of its agricultural sector reveals that the countries of Central America invest US\$0.31 for each US\$100 of agricultural production. This level is well below that of other countries in Latin America.

Of the total amount invested in agricultural R&D in the region, Costa Rica and Nicaragua account for one third and one fifth, respectively. At the other end of the spectrum are Guatemala and El Salvador, whose investment in agricultural R&D is among the lowest in the world.

Costa Rica reported the largest increase in investment in this sector (30%) between 1996 and 2006, while Guatemala and El Salvador dropped by more than 40%.

As regards sources of funding, the study shows that they also vary greatly from one country to another. Most agricultural R&D in the region is conducted by governments and institutions of higher education. Nicaragua, for its part, relies mostly on donations.

Researchers and research

According to the study, the seven countries of Central America employ 903 researchers in 63 agencies. Almost half of them work in the public sector, 36% in the higher education sector and 16% in nongovernmental institutions.

At the national level, the disparities among agricultural R&D systems in terms of the number of researchers are evident: whereas Belize has 17 full-time researchers, Costa Rica has 283.

Differences also exist vis-à-vis the educational level of researchers. In El Salvador, only one of every five scientists holds a post-graduate degree, while in Belize, Nicaragua and Costa Rica more than 50% of all researcher have Master's or Doctor's degrees.

At the regional level, only 45% of researchers hold a Master's degree, and a mere 10% a Doctor's degree.

In Central America, research priorities are crops, livestock, natural resources, post-harvest, silviculture and fisheries. Nonetheless, the importance of each varies by country.

The researchers in El Salvador invest most of their time in crops and those in Panama in livestock. Research on fisheries is important in Belize, but the remaining topics receive greater attention in Guatemala.

Looking ahead

With a view to promoting agriculture from a technological perspective, the study recommends overcoming existing limitations in terms of human capacity, infrastructure and levels of investment in R&D, and making decision makers aware of the important role agricultural R&D plays in make this sector more profitable.

In the opinion of the researchers, the region should continue integrating the agricultural R&D systems in each country and at the regional level, and expand the innovation system.

“In view of the common factors that link the countries of Central America, the research conducted in one country is usually of interest to other nations in the region. Also, certain agencies share a regional interest,” the document says.

IICA has promoted such integration by providing technical cooperation and administrative, financial and legal support to the Central American System for Agriculture Technology Integration (SICTA).

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Course on agribusiness to be offered in El Salvador

The course consists of eight 60-hour modules.

Beginning in March of this year, and for a period of eight months, an international course on agribusiness development will be taught in El Salvador. The goal of the course is to provide training in the application of tools and techniques for the management and development of such businesses.

This is an initiative of the post-graduate program of the School of Agricultural Sciences of the University of El Salvador and the Office of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in that country.

The course is aimed at professionals or technicians associated with the development of the agricultural sector in the countries of Central America. It consists of eight modules (one per month), each lasting 60 hours (25 hours on site and 35 via Internet).

The subjects to be addressed include:

1. Policy, economics and competitiveness of chains and rural territories
2. International agrifood trade
3. Markets and business
4. Trade research
5. Marketing
6. Internationalization of businesses
7. Business administration and finance
8. Preparation of a project that will enable participants launch an agribusiness at the national or international level.

At the conclusion of the course, the participants will be able to work as advisors and facilitators of business activities related to agribusiness. In addition, they will learn to analyze changes in markets to implement strategies aimed at marketing agricultural products.

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