

Authorities in the agricultural sector are satisfied with IICA's work in 2008

In all Member States, the IICA Offices are submitting reports on activities accomplished in 2008.

For Minister Christopher Tufton, his early experience as Minister of Agriculture in Jamaica, was “tremendously benefited” by [his visit to the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture](#) on February, 2009. “It did a lot to help me appreciate the fundamentals of the agriculture sector at the macro and micro level and to learn about the true contribution of agriculture.”

Minister Tufton made these observations during the Institute's Accountability Seminar in Jamaica where he announced the results achieved from IICA technical cooperation in the country during 2008.



During his visit to IICA, the Minister Tufton met with IICA specialists.

As was done in Jamaica, accountability seminars have been held in the various Member States with the main stakeholders in agriculture and rural life: national authorities, representatives of the academic, agricultural and rural sectors, representatives of international organizations and society, in general, in the respective countries.

For example, the Director General of Planning and Rural Development in Venezuela, Manuel Iglesias, felt that “the accomplishments of the IICA Office in Venezuela have shown clearly that the cooperation provided to the various institutions is appropriately focused on the development of our rural areas and the strengthening of agriculture”.

The Vice Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Paraguay, Henry Moriya, maintained that “the type of cooperation offered by IICA, which is demand-based, was the most appropriate for these times”.

The Secretary of Agriculture of Argentina, Carlos Cheppi, acknowledged the contribution IICA had made to technical cooperation in the countries of the Americas and to the major role it had played in building rural development, science and technology, and food security in the Americas.

The accountability seminars “are an especially relevant procedure for an organization like IICA, which is accountable to its Member States and which works with the public funds of the countries”, the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, explained.

The Institute maintains a relationship with Member States based on participation, transparency, and accountability, in accordance with the technical cooperation model promoted by the Brathwaite Administration since 2002.

In addition to reporting on activities accomplished by IICA, these seminars afford an opportunity for updating IICA's cooperation agenda in the country, in specific regard to strategic topics such as the repositioning of agriculture and rural life, the promotion of trade and the competitiveness of agribusiness, the upgrading of the agricultural health and food safety system, the promotion of the development of rural communities based on a territorial approach, the introduction of technology and innovation for the modernization of agriculture and rural life and human capital development.

The series of accountability seminars, which is coming to a close, took off with the presentation of the [2008 Report](#) by the [Director General to the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States](#) (OAS), in Washington, D.C.

For further information, kindly contact:

patricia.leon@iica.int



At the Fifth Summit of the Americas

IICA distributed report on the role of agriculture in driving development

Governments have chosen to adopt short-term measures in response to the current economic crisis. Today, however, it is more important than ever to consider long-term scenarios.



The four-page document, prepared especially for the Summit, summarizes contributions from IICA technical personnel and international consultants.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) presented a document entitled "[Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean: A fortress in times of crisis... the engine driving development](#)" at the Fifth Summit of the Americas, held on April 17-19, in Trinidad and Tobago.

The four-page document, prepared especially for the Summit, summarizes contributions from IICA technical personnel and international consultants. The full version will be presented to the ministers of agriculture of the Americas during the 2009 Week of Agriculture and Rural Life, to be held in Jamaica in October.

The Director General of IICA, Chelston W.D. Brathwaite, who headed the Institute's delegation to the Summit, explains "In the short term, agriculture can lessen the impact of the economic crisis and, in the long term, contribute significantly to development and help solve the problem of food security. For this to happen, the true value of agriculture must be recognized, and that recognition must be translated into greater and more effective investments in the rural milieu."

The report holds that for the countries of Latin American and the Caribbean now is the time to take the actions and make the investments needed to tap the potential agriculture and rural territories offer for meeting the challenges of the current global economic crisis and returning to the path of development.

"Gathering storm clouds threaten to wipe out the progress made during five years in which agriculture performed well in the region and to erase the advances made in combating rural poverty, which will put the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in jeopardy" states the report.

Experts project that the current world population of 6 billion will have risen to 9 billion by 2050 and will require twice as much food, at a time when less land and water will be available for food production.

According to the report, exporting countries benefitted temporarily from the higher prices received for the major agricultural commodities through the middle of 2008, but then saw their production costs rise due to higher prices for inputs. Net importing countries were more vulnerable to these increases, with more consumers and small-scale producers finding themselves in a situation of food insecurity.

Despite this outlook, IICA believes that the natural resources available in the region, if handled in a sustainable manner, will make it possible to increase food production, meet the challenges of food security and climate change and help large segments of the population to escape from poverty. This will require the adoption of sound public

policies and the existence of institutions capable of tackling this complex, volatile and highly unpredictable international context.

The report also calls attention to the need to reassess agricultural production; foster the diversification of crops; produce bioenergy without affecting the food supply; promote a new technological revolution; encourage sustainable development practices and strengthen policies related to the international agrifood trade.

In the opinion of the authors, “Countries have a number of policy instruments at their disposal; how they are designed, applied and managed will vary greatly from country to country depending on specific conditions.”

They recommend taking several conditioning factors into account, such as the fact that agriculture in the different countries and rural territories are heterogeneous and a variety of actors intervene in each; that the institutional framework has been weakened and must be modernized to adapt to the challenges of the current context and the new role of the State and civil society organizations; and that any proposed policies must be highly flexible, given the variety of countries and regions involved.

Preparation of the document distributed in Trinidad and Tobago began in July 2008 at the height of the crisis created by the sharp rise in food prices. IICA convened some 40 experts from around the world to attend a workshop entitled “Contribution of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu to Sustainable Development and Food Security in the New International Context.”

The aim of the workshop was to analyze the role of agriculture and the rural milieu in an international context characterized by rising prices, the energy crisis and climate change. The discussions of the three-day event provided inputs for preparing the proposal to be presented at the Fifth Summit. A small task force will continue to work on the final version to be studied with the ministers in October.

For further information:

rafael.trejos@iica.int



IICA took part in forums held parallel to the Fifth Summit of the Americas

The Civil Society Forum provided an opportunity for social organizations to share experiences and the Private Sector Forum provided a space to promote investments in key sectors.



IICA has been an institutional partner in the summit process since 2001.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) took part in the civil society and private sector forums held prior to [the Fifth Summit of the Americas, which was held 17 -19 April in Trinidad and Tobago.](#)

As an institutional partner in the Summit of the Americas process, the Institute will be playing an active role in the event. The Director General, Chelston Brathwaite, heads the delegation from IICA.

Prior to the main hemispheric meeting, special activities were organized to permit civil society and the private sector to discuss important issues. The Sustainable Rural Development specialist, Melania Portilla, represented IICA at the first of the forums held. The Deputy Director General and Director of Operations and Integration, Christopher Hansen, took part in the second on the Institute’s behalf.

With civil society

The title of the Civil Society Forum, held 14-16 April, was “Social innovation and implementation: citizens in motion.” The aim was to afford civil society organizations an opportunity to share ideas and experiences with an eye to developing projects designed to address the concerns of people in the hemisphere.

During the forum, IICA presented two examples of initiatives that addressed common rural problems in a different way.

The first was Mexico’s National Network of Rural Women (RENAMUR), a civil association comprised of various regional organizations that work with rural women under programs involving microcredit, saving, marketing and productive and human development in several Mexican states. IICA expert Melania Portilla believes that partnerships of this kind make it possible to better distribute the benefits of agricultural enterprises and to create more opportunities for producers and enable them to generate value added.

The second experience concerned 13 organizations, IICA among them, that prepared an agenda to harmonize strategic actions in Central America to support the economic development and entrepreneurship of rural women, through their participation in value chains. This has allowed the organizations concerned to increase the impact of their joint actions by avoiding the duplication of efforts and using their technical, financial and human resources more efficiently.

With the private sector

The Private Sector Forum was held 15-16 April and over 400 leaders from the productive sector and a number of ministers took part.

Entitled “Promoting private-sector led prosperity in the emerging decade: the quest for competitiveness,” the objective of the forum was to promote investments in sectors that are key for economic growth, identify areas for joint work by the public and private sectors and establish a framework for implementing the collaborative initiatives agreed upon.

IICA Deputy Director General Christopher Hansen took advantage of the opportunity to inform the most important leaders of the hemisphere’s productive sector about IICA’s strategies for food security and the promotion of strategic partnerships at the regional, hemispheric and global levels.

For more information, contact:

melania.portilla@iica.int

fabio.jimenez@iica.int



Google, IICA and CATIE join forces to promote agricultural knowledge

Nearly 9000 books have already been digitized.



The collection of books includes unique materials dating from as far back as 1942 and from as recently as this year.

Thanks to new agreements signed by Google, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), people around the world are just a click away from accessing nearly 9000 books on agriculture. And the figure is set to rise to over 20,000 books in the near future.

The texts form part of the collections of the Venezuela Library, at IICA Headquarters, and the Orton Commemorative Library, located on the campus of CATIE. Both are situated in Costa Rica.

The Google/IICA partnership, with CATIE now on board as well, aims to share with the world knowledge and information about agriculture, a sector whose importance the Institute believes needs to be reassessed.

The collection constitutes an important store of knowledge related to topics of global importance such as agricultural and forest policy, agricultural marketing, food health and safety, agricultural and agroforestry technology and innovation, and the environment and natural resources management.

The Institute sent Google a first batch of nearly 3000 books at the end of 2007; a second batch of almost 6000 between March and April 2008; and a further 12,000 books during the first months of 2009.

The documents are original and unique materials. Some date from as far back as 1942, while others were published as recently as this year. The collection represents IICA's entire institutional memory in its 34 Member States, plus publications generated by CATIE since 1974.

IICA is Google's first partner in Latin America to digitize its entire archive, one of the largest in the region. The Web company and the specialized agency of the inter-American system took the first step in 2006, when they incorporated the databases of the Agricultural Information Service of the Americas (SIDALC) into Google's search engine.

Requests for information about agriculture on the www.sidalc.net website increased immediately. "We went from 3000 hits per month to 20,000-40,000 visitors per day," IICA's Head of Documentation and Publications, Federico Sancho, said.

Google's Manager for Strategic Partners, Mark Nelson, explained that "incorporating books into our index allows us to offer our users more relevant information through their searches. Working with partners like IICA has enabled us to advance toward our main objective, which is to organize the world's information so that it is universally accessible and useful."

CATIE's director of graduate studies, Glen Galloway, says that it is a "source of pride" for the Orton Commemorative Library to join forces with a company like Google.

"We greatly appreciate the opportunity to share our institution's technical and scientific knowledge with a global audience. We expect this partnership to generate new contacts and fruitful relationships with representatives of other organizations that work in areas related to agriculture and the environment. This initiative is yet another example of the valuable collaboration between IICA and CATIE to promote sustainable development in the hemisphere," Galloway remarked.

The two organizations view agriculture, rural life and the management and conservation of the natural resources of the Americas as forming part of a global context characterized by globalization and trade liberalization processes that have created opportunities and thrown up challenges for all the actors involved.

For that reason, they believe it is essential - given the crisis in food prices, the global financial crisis and the uncertainty created by climate change - to spread knowledge by means of dissemination processes such as the one made possible by this partnership.

“If all institutions that generate quality information do everything they can to organize their collections and make them available free of charge on the Net, the world will have an unimaginable amount of knowledge. That would mark the difference between those who view information as power and those of us who believe that sharing information is power,” Sancho concluded.

For more information, contact

federico.sancho@iica.int



Director of Agricultural Health of IICA discusses current influenza outbreak with CAS Ministers

The Southern Agricultural Council (CAS) welcomed the Director of Agricultural Health and Food Safety at its sixteenth meeting, held in Paraguay.

The Director of Agricultural Health and Food Safety (AHFS) of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Ricardo Molins, discussed with the Ministers of Agriculture of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia and Paraguay the facts and the myths surrounding the “North American influenza” or human influenza H1N1.

This information was reported by the press service of the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS). Molins participated in the XVth Meeting of the CAS, for which IICA serves as Technical Administrative Secretariat.

During his intervention, Molins explained the genetic composition of the virus: it has a human influenza A segment, which is what allows humans to be their host, a bird flu segment, three segments from various swine flus (North America, Europe, Asia). “It is what the experts call a globalized flu, genetically speaking”, he said.

He said that in his opinion, “it is highly likely that the virus has been going around for some months and that it did not necessarily originate in Mexico”. However, given the fact that the first reported cases were in the northern part of the American hemisphere, the United Nations and the World Health Organization are recommending that we call this flu ‘North American flu’. He recalled that a similar phenomenon had existed in 1918, referred to as the Spanish flu, and in 1979, there was what came to be known as the Hong Kong influenza.

The Director of AHFS of IICA said that the reference to the virus as swine flu had affected the pork meat and pork derivatives market. For example, sales in Mexico had dropped 30 % and several countries had closed their markets to these products, which was causing major losses for producers.

On this note, Molins recalled that the virus was not caught from eating pork, but was transmitted from person to person. He also stressed the importance of taking extreme precaution with regard to biosafety measures and reinforcing the epidemiological surveillance of sanitary services on hog farms.

Finally, Molins recalled that the North American flu had a low mortality rate: whereas the avian flu had a 50 per cent mortality rate, that rate was only 10 per cent in the case of the North American flu.

For further information

ricardo.molins@iica.int

<http://www.iica.int/esp/conocimiento/actualidad/Paginas/InfluenzaH1N1.aspx>



Minister of Uruguay and specialists from IICA discuss the work of the Institute and the challenges for agriculture

The Minister of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries of Uruguay, Ernesto Agazzi, visited IICA Headquarters.



Minister Ernesto Agazzi discussed the work of IICA on Sustainable Rural Development.

The Minister of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries of Uruguay and Chair pro tempore of the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS), Ernesto Agazzi, discussed the work of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) with the members of the Director General's Cabinet on April 24 when he visited the Headquarters of this specialized organization of the Inter-American System.

Minister Agazzi was accompanied by Gonzalo Gonzalez, Director de Regional Operations and Integration for the Southern Region and IICA Representative in Chile. They were welcomed at IICA Headquarters by Francisco Barea, Director of Administration and Finance, who began the meeting with a brief summary of the history, strategic priorities and operating modality of IICA.

Subsequently, the Director of Sustainable Rural Development, Carlos Jara, explained the approach promoted by IICA in the area of sustainable rural development.

“The current crisis makes manifest the importance of rural development because of its capacity to contribute to food security, face up to climate change and improve governance”, the specialist said.

“So far, the paradigm that has guided the efforts of the countries has been combating poverty; we have failed to take advantage of the potential of the rural world, not only in terms of agriculture, but also in terms of all the resources that the territories have”, he added.

Minister Agazzi agreed with this point of view and said that this was certainly a topic of “great importance” in the Ministry of Agriculture of Uruguay.

“Rural development has a major role to play in reducing poverty... and not only rural poverty, but also it can help reduce overall poverty and contribute to food security”, he said.

This is why he felt it was important to promote the organization of farmers and in the territories and make them competitive and efficient.

He also felt it was important to give them agricultural insurance, but in this regard, the approach should be broader. “Insurance should not be conceived as being after the fact, we should think of how we can make farmers more secure through investment or structural decisions so that they don't fall into complicated situations.”

Both Minister Agazzi and the IICA staff present at the meeting also made use of the opportunity to discuss other topics of interest.

For further information, kindly contact:

gonzalo.gonzalez@iica.int



New IICA Representative in Belize

The Uruguayan Gabriel Rodríguez joined the Institute as IICA Representative in Belize on April.



Gabriel Rodríguez.

On April 30, 2009, the renowned agricultural expert Gabriel Rodríguez Marqués took up his post as IICA Representative in Belize

Rodríguez is from Uruguay. He is an Attorney with a specialty in Private and Public Law and holds a PhD in Diplomacy with emphasis in International Relations, both degrees from “Universidad de la República” in Uruguay.

The new Representative has broad experience in both international and commercial negotiations, policy elaboration and execution of programs and projects on food safety. He has also stood out in the area of agro-informatics, in rural development and fishing, and trade.

Rodríguez has worked in as the Field Programme Support Officer for Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Bridgetown-Barbados.

He has served as Assistant FAO Representative in Uruguay, Officer-in-Charge of the FAO Representation in Uruguay, FAO Marketing Information Officer in Panama, Assistant of the Director General of the Department of Law; “Ministerio de Ganadería, Agricultura y Pesca” (MGAP) in Uruguay, Director of the Department of Trade, “Instituto Nacional de Pesca” (MGAP), Uruguay.

Rodríguez is the author of numerous publications, books, technical reports, and other documents related to his field of expertise.

More information

elisa.harrison@iica.int



Workshop on fisheries subsidies held for Central America, the Dominican Republic and Cuba

Specialists took part from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Cuba.

Thirty Central American specialists took part in a workshop on fisheries subsidies held 14-15 April in Costa Rica. The event was organized by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), through the Doha Development Agenda Global Trust Fund.

The specialists who participated in the workshop, which took place at IICA Headquarters, are involved in the management of fisheries resources and responsible for the WTO negotiations. Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Cuba were all represented at the event.

The objective of the activity was to share experiences and information and thereby enable the participants to play a more effective role in the negotiations on rules under the Doha Round, particularly with regard to subsidies for fisheries activities.



WTO trainer Clarisse Morgan.

“The link between the fishing industry and the negotiations for subsidies at the WTO is not always very evident. At this workshop, my role will be to report on what is happening in the negotiations and facilitate an exchange of opinions on how they affect your countries’ interests,” WTO trainer Clarisse Morgan told the specialists at the start of the event.

During the inauguration of the workshop, IICA’s Director of Policies and Trade, Antonio Donizeti, reminded the participants that the Doha Round of negotiations had been stalled since the last ministerial meeting, in July 2008. Nevertheless, he said, the working groups were continuing to meet to reach agreement on different issues under negotiation.

Morgan said the negotiators should view the deadlock in the negotiations as an opportunity to enhance their technical expertise.

Donizeti agreed. “We must be ready for when the negotiations enter the final phase. We hope this event will help to enhance the capabilities of officials and their governments in matters related to the international trade in fisheries products.”

IICA’s Regional Specialist for Policies and Trade for Central America, Juana Galvan, pointed out that fisheries products were one of the region’s most important exports and both small and industrial-scale operations were involved.

The Institute’s Director of Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management, James French, said it was an excellent opportunity to consolidate IICA’s links with the WTO’s Training and Technical Cooperation Institute.

For more information, contact:

henry.benavides@iica.int



Argentina

IICA supports sustainable rural development in Formosa

It will be promoting the implementation of the Formosa 2015 Plan and strategic local development plans.

In the coming months, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) will be working on a number of fronts in the province of Formosa, northwest Argentina. Its areas of work will include fruit and meat production chains, the sustainable development of natural resources, rural development with a territorial approach and the sustainable development of production.

Following two weeks of work, an IICA mission that visited the province, which borders with Paraguay, reached agreement with the Government of Formosa on a program to support the implementation of the Formosa 2015 Plan and strategic local development plans.

The actions will be carried out under IICA’s existing cooperation agreement with the Provincial Agricultural Services Program (PROSAP). The proposed actions will focus on capacity development for human and social capital.

In the Northern Subtropical Region, priority will be given to tropical and subtropical fruit chains. The actions will focus on support for banana and grapefruit production and the promotion of pineapple, papaya and mango. The beef chain will be one of the meat chains to benefit.

The work will also encourage inclusive governability among the different actors in the chains, from primary production through to processing and marketing.

Furthermore, the chains will be articulated with the various dimensions of the territories concerned (namely, the economic-productive, sociocultural, political-institutional and environmental dimensions).

The work of the sustainable development program for the natural resources of Formosa's ecosystems will focus on the management of native forests and forestation and the systematized reforestation of forest plantations, the timber industry and the marketing of forest products, as well as payment for environmental services.

A reference territory in the Northern Subtropical Region will be the scenario for the project aimed at sustainable rural development with a territorial approach, designed to promote prosperity in the economic-productive, political-institutional, sociocultural and environmental dimensions.

This region has a large number of small producers who are well organized at the local level. Their production activities are related to the priorities set in IICA's program of support for Formosa 2015.

The last component of the program that IICA is to undertake in this province is the project for the sustainable development of production in the Western Region. This work will support development actions intended to help strengthen partnerships of producers and capacity development and technology transfer for the management of production activities. It also includes investments in farms and rural roads.

To support the execution of these components, IICA will promote the development of production support services and financial instruments keyed to the innovation and investment initiatives, such as fruit trees, forestation and reforestation.

At the end of April, the IICA Representative, Victor Arrua, will be presenting the Government of Formosa with a proposal setting out IICA's program of integrated support for Formosa 2015.

The Institute will then define the institutional mechanisms and procedures needed to implement its cooperation under the IICA-PROSAP agreement.

For more information, contact

victor.arrua@iica.int



Third series of virtual courses gets under way in Uruguay

Six courses on the agricultural sector will be given between April and December 2009.

For the third year running, the "Uruguay Agrifood for the World" Distance Learning Platform is being used to host a series of short training courses on agricultural subjects. The first course started on 15 April.

The platform was set up under an alliance created in 2006 involving the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and public and private institutions dedicated to the development of agriculture in Uruguay.

International courses for professionals, producers and leaders of organizations and institutes in Spanish-speaking countries are available since 1997. The courses are given via a virtual classroom, from which the educational materials can be downloaded. Forums, assignments and evaluations are all conducted via the platform and students are also able to consult their professors.

Timetable

This year, the Third International Distance Learning Course started with a module on animal well-being, which runs from 15 April to 11 June. It is the third time that this course has been offered.

Between 25 May and 24 July, there will be a course on the training of tutors for distance learning for the rural milieu.

Between 13 July and 11 September, the course will focus on the management of agricultural enterprises (planning, analysis and control).

The subject of the course from 17 August to 16 October will be the technological options available for systems for the production of quality lamb. It will be the second time that this course has been held via the platform.

A course on cattle-breeding systems for meat production will take place between 21 September and on 20 November.

The last course to be held this year will deal with risk management and agricultural insurance. It will take place from 5 October to 4 December.

For more information, contact

cursos@iica.org.uy

http://www.iica.org.uy/online/ed_distancia.asp