



Countries of the Americas concluded the most important meeting of agriculture and rural life

The meeting participants visit the Jamaican agricultural sector and return to their countries committed to implementing strategies that will ensure that the hemisphere's population has food on the table.

The Week of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas - Jamaica 2009, which brought together representatives of 33 countries officially concluded the recent October 30 in Montego Bay with the approval of a number of strategic actions aimed at promoting food security in the hemisphere.

The week's activities were complemented with a field trip to the southern and northern coasts of Jamaica. Participants visited successful agricultural operations.

During the week there were several important meetings, including the Fifth Ministerial Meeting Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas and the Fifteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the governing body of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

On this occasion, the ministers and secretaries of agriculture or heads of delegation adopted the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreement Jamaica 2009, and meeting as the IABA, elected Victor Villalobos from Mexico as Director General for 2010-2014.

The new ministerial agreement follows up on the Guatemala 2007 Agreement and implements the mandates related to agriculture, food security and rural life issued at the Fifth Summit of the Americas, held in July 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

The principal commitments assumed by the countries are set out in strategies aimed at:

- Building national capacity for enhancing food security and rural life;
- Strengthening the positioning of the issues and priorities of agriculture and rural development in the public conscience and national strategies; and,
- Investing more in agriculture and rural development, to promote with the stakeholders of agriculture, a broader way of thinking and acting in agriculture and the rural milieu, and fostering with them the “working together” approach to improving agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

Some of these actions are related to promoting competitive rural enterprises, integrating and strengthening commercial-scale agricultural production chains, promoting a favorable environment, greater environmental accountability in the countryside and the creation of capacities and opportunities in rural communities (see full Ministerial Agreement - Jamaica 2009).

On this occasion, the participants in the Week of Agriculture included high-level political and agricultural leaders from Jamaica and the rest of the hemisphere. The activities were inaugurated officially by the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Bruce Golding, and by his Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Christopher Tufton, who served as Chair.

The Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture of Jamaica, Donovan Stanberry, also played a key role serving as the Chairman of the Group for the Implementation and Coordination of the Agreements on Agriculture and Rural Life of the Summit Process (GRICA), which was responsible for laying the groundwork for the agreement signed in Jamaica.

Also in attendance at the meeting were experts and high-level international officials, such as the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Jose Miguel Insulza, the Secretary General of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Alicia Barcena, the FAO Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, Jose Graziano Da Silva, and the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite.

The participants highlighted the critical role played by the private sector in achieving food security in the nations of the hemisphere. This emerged from the Private Sector Dialogue, which involved outstanding entrepreneurs from the Americas, including the General Manager of the Jamaica National Building Society (JNBS), Earl Jarrett.

The next Week of Agriculture will take place in 2011.



Mexican Victor Villalobos elected Director General of IICA

He will take up his new post on January 15, 2010 and serve a four-year term.



Mexican Victor Villalobos Arámbula was elected Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) for the period 2010-2014. Mr. Villalobos received 30 of the votes cast by the Heads of Delegation that attended the Fifteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the Institute's highest governing body.

Mr. Villalobos, who is 59 years old and a citizen of Mexico, is a distinguished professional specializing in issues

related to agriculture and natural and genetic resources. He has an outstanding record as a professor, a researcher and a governmental and international official.

He has a doctorate in morphogenesis from the University of Alberta in Canada and currently holds the position of Director of International Affairs of the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA) of Mexico.

Mr. Villalobos was elected during the Week of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas, which began on Monday, October 26 and concluded on October 31 in Montego Bay, Jamaica.

Mr. Villalobos will replace Dr. Chelston W.D. Brathwaite, a citizen of Barbados, who has been at the helm of IICA for eight years, having taken office in 2002.



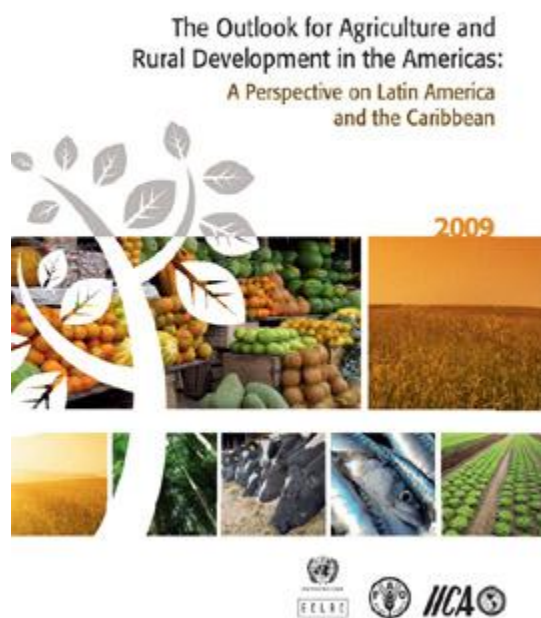
Governments of region must attach priority to and earmark resources for agriculture

ECLAC, FAO and IICA will present the most recent report on agriculture and rural development in the region to the Ministers of Agriculture of the Americas.

Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of the regional economy, but its full potential has never been fully developed. Consequently, governments must modernize their institutional framework, adjust their policies and invest more in this sector.

This is the principal conclusion of the report “The Outlook for Agriculture and Rural Development in the Americas: A Perspective on Latin America and the Caribbean - 2009,” prepared jointly by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

The report was presented on October 28 during the Week of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas, which is being held in Montego Bay, Jamaica. Attending the presentation were Jose Graziano da Silva, Regional Representative of FAO, Alicia Barcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and Chelston W.D. Brathwaite, Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).



This Week brings together delegations from more than 30 countries headed by Ministers of Agriculture of the region. The events of the Week include the Fifth Ministerial Meeting in the context of the Summit of the Americas process and the Fifteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA).

According to the report, in 2008, regional agriculture was responsible for around 5% of GDP on average in 2008, with significant differences among countries, fluctuating from close to 1% in various Caribbean Island states to some 20% or more in countries such as Nicaragua (18.2%), Haiti (20.3%), Paraguay (21.2%), and Guyana (30.2%).

Nonetheless, the rural milieu and expanded agriculture (which takes into account activities directly related to agriculture) contribute much more to development than the agricultural value added reported in official statistics. Since they generate employment and income in the poorest segments of the population, agriculture and the rural milieu play “a major role” in meeting global challenges.

“Latin America has great potential for contributing to food security worldwide given the availability of foods,” says the report.

According to the document, “this is the region that has grown the most over the last 15 years in terms of production and export of agricultural, livestock, forestry and fisheries products.”

Nonetheless, because these factors alone are not enough to reduce domestic poverty and ensure food security or social well-being, the report calls on governments to rethink the current model and to give the sector a more active role.

What are needed are “integrated policies for social protection, food security, rural development, and environmental protection that offer the rural population opportunities to produce more food and obtain more income in a sustainable manner, while at the same time reduce negative environmental effects and social risks.” These recommendations take on greater importance in an environment characterized by the volatility of prices and challenges posed by climate change.

Because of the sector’s linkages to the rest of the economy “it has been demonstrated that one dollar invested in agriculture earns more than one invested in nonfarm sectors,” especially if the investments are aimed at the poorest segments of society. Thus, the main message permeating this document is the need to make more and better investments in the sector.

The report recommends earmarking resources for four priority topics:

- Research on and development and transfer of varieties better adapted to expected changes in climate, irrigation technologies that make more efficient use of water, and environmentally more sustainable production systems;
- Restoration of agrobiodiversity, local production systems and traditional knowledge, and food products to help diversify diets;
- Promotion of healthier eating habits and development of production systems and products with a reduced environmental impact; and
- Financial and non-financial mechanisms for the management of risks related to markets and climate change.

Also in the area of investment, the report recommends supporting young people, because “by giving rural youth hope in the future and breaking the poverty cycle, governments will be doing a favor for future generations.”



IABA grants Inter-American Awards in the Rural Sector

The former Agriculture Minister of Brazil, Roberto Rodrigues, and the Bolivian scientist, Alejandro Bonifacio, share the prestigious Inter-American Agricultural Medal.

The Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), which has just concluded its Fifteenth Regular Meeting in this Jamaican city, conferred the recent October 30 the Inter-American Awards in the Rural Sector for 2008-2009.

These awards recognize outstanding contributions made by citizens and institutions of the Americas to the development of agriculture and the improvement of rural life.

The Inter-American Agricultural Medal is shared by the former Minister of Agriculture of Brazil, Roberto Rodrigues, and by the Bolivian scientist Alejandro Bonifacio.

Mr. Rodrigues is a prominent agricultural business leader. During his term as Minister, he spearheaded comprehensive institutional reforms, promoted new laws on biotechnology, organic products, rural insurance and new marketing standards. He is widely credited with having laid the foundations for a modern agriculture in Brazil.

Mr. Bonifacio, for his part, is a distinguished researcher, whose most important work has been linked to the genetic improvement of quinoa. His tenacity and determination made it possible to recover and develop the germplasm bank currently maintained by the Ministry of Agriculture of Bolivia.



This medal recognizes outstanding contributions to the development of sustainable agriculture and the improvement of rural life in the honorees' own country and, in particular, honors individuals whose contributions have impacted other countries in the Americas or the world. This award, introduced in 1958, is the most prestigious, and consists of a medal, a scroll and a cash prize of US\$10,000.

The Inter-American Award for the Contribution of Women to Rural Development went to Ms. Susana Mejillones, of Bolivia, who will receive a medal, a scroll and US\$5,000. This award is granted to women who have promoted women's participation in rural development and made significant contributions to improving the quality of life in rural communities.

Mejillones has waged a tireless fight for equal opportunities for men and women, and particularly for her country's peasant farmers and indigenous people.

The Inter-American Award for Institutional Contributions to Agricultural and Rural Development went to the Fundación de Comunicaciones, Capacitación y Cultura del Agro (FUCOA), of Chile.

This award is extended to a public or private organization, company, university or NGO of the Member States of IICA, in recognition of its outstanding contribution to the improvement of sustainable agriculture and rural life in one or more countries of the Americas.

FUCOA is renowned for its efforts to preserve the rural campesino culture that represents Chile's national roots and identity.

The winner of the Inter-American Award for Young Professionals was Rodolfo Bezerra of Meneses Lobato da Costa, of Brazil.

This award is bestowed on professionals under the age of 35 who have distinguished themselves for their professional contributions and have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to service, initiative and a vocation to work for the development of sustainable agriculture and the well-being of rural communities.

It consists of a medal, a scroll and a scholarship to participate in IICA's Program for Young Leaders. If the winner has already participated in this course, he will receive a scholarship for US\$10,000 to participate in a similar initiative that will guarantee the development of his leadership skills.

Bezerra is honored for his efforts to promote an entrepreneurial attitude among young people and for his defense of important social causes aimed at improving living conditions for rural youth.

The Inter-American Award for Innovative Rural Producers was awarded to the Federación de Cooperativas NGEN, of Chile.

The prize is awarded to producers (individuals or groups) who have made outstanding contributions, especially in innovations in production, and who represent an example for national producers and those in other countries of the hemisphere. The award consists of a medal, a scroll and US\$ 5,000.

The Federación de Cooperativas NGEN, constituted by 120 Pehuenche women, applies a management model that is unique in the country, in activities such as horticulture under plastic, apiculture, sheep production and harvesting of pine nuts. It seeks to improve the position of women within the community.

In the category of the Inter-American Agricultural Award for Young Professionals, Karen Latoya Tamasa, of Jamaica, and Carol Thompson, of Barbados received an honorable mention.

Tamasa plays an active role in organizing youth groups and encourages other young people to become involved in agriculture. Thompson, for her part, contributes to local development through the production of a species of sheep known as black belly sheep, which are native to the country.

Two distinguished agriculture professionals of the Americas received posthumous awards: Assefaw Tewolde of Mexico and Roberto Villeda Toledo of Honduras.

Tewolde, a distinguished academic and an expert in biotechnology, was the director and founder of IICA's Hemispheric Program in Biotechnology and Biosafety. Villeda Toledo, meanwhile, played a prominent role in agricultural institutions and worked to harmonize Central American policies and promote regional integration from the perspective of agriculture.



Principal Accomplishments Highlighted Director General of IICA Reports to Ministers of Agriculture of the Hemisphere

As the eight years of his administration come to a close, Chelston Brathwaite stated that the Institute today is more ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Addressing delegations from 33 countries, and during an act held this October 29 that was his last accountability before leaving his position, the Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Chelston W.D. Brathwaite, stated “I have kept the promises I made to our Member States eight years ago.”

Brathwaite, a citizen of Barbados, has been at the helm of the Institute since January 2002. He was elected in 2001 by the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the governing body of the Institute, for a four-year term and re-elected for a second term (2006- 2010).

The Fifteenth Regular Meeting of the IABA was held in Montego Bay, Jamaica.



Expressing gratitude for the support of the Member States and the personnel of the Institute, Brathwaite said it was necessary to place the success of his administration in the context of an institution whose budget had been frozen since 1995 and which in 2002 received quota payments from only 22 of its 34 Member States.

That year, he added, the External Auditors and the Audit Review Committee stated that the Institute “lacked economic viability due to the increase in the amount of quotas owed by the Member States.” The report indicated that the deterioration of the finances of the Institute would hinder the achievement of its objectives.

As a result of concrete actions taken by the Administration in cooperation with the Governing Bodies of the Institute, the amount of quota arrearages had been reduced from US\$13.5 million in 2002 to US\$200,000 today.

He added with satisfaction that all the Member States were now in “regular” status and that this was the best payment situation in the Institute since 1986. “The payment of the annual quota by a Member State can only be interpreted as an expression of satisfaction with our work,” stated Brathwaite.

Principal accomplishments

Brathwaite, who has made transparency and accountability hallmarks of his administration, announced that he would deliver to the incoming Director General a full report on the work of the last eight years. The 800 plus page document, written by some 70 IICA staff members, including Directors, Representatives in the countries and technical and administrative personnel, will also be delivered to each minister of agriculture on a compact disc.

In summarizing the most important accomplishments, he listed the following:

1. The Institute is now more financially stable.
2. We have consolidated the Institute as an important partner in the implementation of the mandates derived from the Summits of the Americas.
3. We have strengthened relations with the countries by implementing a new model for technical cooperation, which has generated greater trust in the capacity of the Institute and its leadership in agriculture throughout the hemisphere.
4. We have expanded that technical services provided by the Institute, adding Agrotourism, Organic Agriculture, Agroenergy, Agricultural Insurance, Biotechnology and Biosafety and Horizontal Cooperation.
5. We established an office in Miami to promote Trade, Agribusiness and Food Safety.
6. We established a Centre for Leadership in Agriculture to promote the development of young leaders with a global vision who can help the sector to face the challenges of agriculture and rural life in the future.
7. We have developed new differentiated information instruments aimed at different stakeholder groups in the community of agriculture, which has enabled us to improve the perception of the work of the Institute and promote the strategic importance of agriculture.
8. We have promoted a culture of financial prudence and performance evaluation at the institutional and individual levels, which has led to the adoption of a culture of transparency, responsibility and accountability.
9. We have kept the Institute as a single institution by promoting a single technical message and an appropriate level of institutional articulation.
10. We have strengthened our Offices in the countries as instruments for the delivery of technical cooperation, with methodologies for institutional reengineering when necessary to improve efficiency.
11. We have increased awareness of the true contribution of agriculture to development, underscoring the importance of expanded agriculture, production chains and the importance of intersectoral linkages and the multidimensional concept.



Chelston Brathwaite Appointed Director Emeritus of IICA

IABA acknowledges his role in improving agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

Delegates from 33 countries of the Americas appointed Chelston W.D. Brathwaite Director Emeritus of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

The delegates, mostly ministers of agriculture from the hemisphere, were participating in the Fifteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the highest governing body of the Institute, held during the last week of October.



The IABA underscored “the importance of the Brathwaite administration given its many contributions to the improvement of agriculture and rural life in the Americas, calling particular attention to the effective, efficient and transparent manner in which he conducted the affairs of the Institute.”

Brathwaite, from Barbados, has been at the helm of the Institute since 2002. On January, 15, 2010, his successor, Victor Villalobos Arambula, from Mexico, will take over the General Directorate.

The countries commended him on “a job well done” and expressed appreciation for “the concern, integrity and intelligence with which he had fulfilled the responsibilities conferred on him by the Member States, and for his contributions to repositioning agriculture in the hemisphere.”

They also highlighted “the efforts made to establish IICA as a leader in its area of competence, the modernization of the technical and management systems of the Institute, the implementation of a new model for technical cooperation, involving national authorities and the private sector, and the greater role played by the Institute in the Summit of the Americas process.”

The members of the IABA also stated “Thanks to the integrity, creativity and humanity with which Brathwaite has directed the Institute, the confidence of the Member States has increased and the personnel are more committed to positioning IICA as a leading organization in its area of competence.”

According to Article 15 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Directorate, the IABA may confer to a person who has “served as Director General of the Institute, showing superior technical ability and an outstanding spirit of service.”

Brathwaite, who made transparency and accountability hallmarks of his administration, will present his successor with a full report on the activities of the last eight years. The document, written by some 70 staff members, including Directors, Representatives in the countries and technical and administrative personnel, consists of 800 pages and was delivered to each minister of agriculture on a CD.

“I leave an organization ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century and it gives me great satisfaction to know that I have kept the promises I made to the Member States at the beginning of my administration,” Brathwaite said.

During his career as an international functionary, he has held posts in the United States of America, Italy, Kenya, Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Mexico and Costa Rica. He began his career in 1970 with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and has been with IICA for over 25 years.

He has received a number of honors, including the Companion of Honour from the Government of Barbados, which is the second highest honor bestowed by that country, as well as several honorary degrees, including those bestowed by the National University of Asuncion, Paraguay, and the University of Lima, Peru.



Sufficient food and serious distribution problems exist side-by-side in the region

Thirty-three countries of the Americas are working to formulate strategies that will ensure access to food and improve the life of the rural population.

Delegates from 33 countries, experts and representatives of international organizations participated in the Fifth Ministerial Meeting “Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas,” held in Jamaica, agreed that even though sufficient food is produced in the region to meet the needs of the population, the distribution of and access to that food are plagued with problems.

According to the Minister of Agriculture of Ecuador, Ramon Espinel, “Famine, hunger and malnutrition are not the result of a failure to produce sufficient food. The problem is not one of supply, but rather the limited purchasing power of those who need the food. To feed the world, especially the most underprivileged, they must have access to food.

The Ministers of Agriculture of the Americas met in Montego Bay to attend the Week of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas, which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Bruce Golding, on October 27 and concluded on Saturday, October 31.

The challenges involved in ensuring food security were the focus of attention of the participants, among whom were experts and dignitaries such as the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Jose Miguel Insulza, the Secretary General of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Alicia Barcena, the FAO Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, Jose Graziano Da Silva, and the Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Chelston Brathwaite.

The Minister of Agriculture of Jamaica and Chairman of the event, Christopher Tufton, who chaired the event, called on the participants to reach agreement on those urgent actions needed to improve agriculture and, as a result, the quality of life for the rural population. “We must not allow this meeting to become a talking shop,” he said.

Several speakers have agreed that current levels of food insecurity are proof that the current development model has run its course. Barcena announced the death of the “neo-liberal export model based on commodities, which is now outdated and no longer environmentally sustainable.”

Brathwaite proposed the adoption of a new development model, “a model that will facilitate a better urban-rural balance; a model that will call for greater investment in rural areas, which are essential in ensuring social and political stability; a model that will promote the competitiveness of agriculture and rural economic activities; a model that will create jobs in the rural economy.”

He added “The levels of poverty prevailing in our countries cannot and should not continue. We must modernize our rural sectors, strengthen rural communities and create conditions needed for the poor to fulfill their dreams.”

Barcena underscored the urgent need for of “a long-term vision of development which should be accompanied by public policy measures that reconcile the urgent with the important, and by a strong State.”

“In Latin America and the Caribbean, we must focus our attention on a new rurality because the neo-liberal export model based on commodities, which is now outdated and no longer environmentally sustainable, must become a thing of the past,” she noted.

For Graziano, “The terrible news that hunger is again on the rise and that the estimated number of people suffering from malnutrition exceeds 100 million” forces us to do work more closely together as international organizations to provide more support to the countries.

“We must seize this moment, when agriculture is again on the political agenda at the highest level; now is the time to propose development policies,” he added.

Juan Rodolfo Delgado, Head of the Nicaraguan Delegation, said “Greater cooperation for development equals more open trade.”

The Minister of Agriculture of Suriname, Kermewchend Raghoebarsing, agreed on the need to reduce poverty and build capacities in food security, but also demanded “an international context conducive to achieving the objectives we have discussed here. This is a moral issue.”

Deputy Under Secretary of the United States, Burnham Philbrook, said “Hunger is the moral issue of our time. But it is also an economic issue. It is extraordinarily unwise for a civilization not to adequately and nutritiously feed, and thereby not educate, its children.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, food security is a complex issue with powerful agricultural economies juxtaposed with areas of insufficient agricultural productivity. Hunger and poverty are compounded by high levels of urbanization and skewed income distribution. For the poorest countries, an increase in agricultural productivity and a decrease in post harvest losses are two of the tactics to improving food security and unleashing economic potential,” said the Deputy Under Secretary.

The Minister of Agriculture of Panama, Victor Perez, pointed to the need to increase the profits of small-scale farmers and agreed with the delegate from Colombia, Ventura Emilio Diaz, who advocated taking producers into account when designing policies.

At this Fifth Ministerial Meeting the participants have discussed, from a regional perspective, the situation and public policies related to food security and sustainable development, and the role of the private sector in this process. In addition, several international organizations have offered their perspective on the matter.

The Caribbean perspective was presented by the Director of ECLAC for the Caribbean, Neil Pierre; the Andean perspective by Minister Espinel; the Southern perspective by the National Director of Agricultural Policies of Chile, Ivan Nazif; the Central American perspective by Alberto Mora; and the Northern perspective by Alex McCalla, an emeritus professor from the University of California at Davis.



Inter-American Board of Agriculture donates land for construction of new hospital in Turrialba

The Minister of Agriculture of Costa Rica, Javier Flores, thanked his fellow ministers from the Americas.

The Ministers of Agriculture of the Americas approved the donation of five hectares of land for the construction of new hospital in Turrialba, Costa Rica.

The ministers have been in Jamaica participating in the Week of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas, that finished today, October 31.

The donated land, which belongs to the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), was given in usufruct to the Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Centre (CATIE).

The original request was presented to the Governing Council of CATIE by the Government of Costa Rica. It was brought to the attention of the IICA Executive Committee in July of this year and was finally approved by the IABA at its meeting in Jamaica.

The Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Costa Rica, Javier Flores, thanked his colleagues for approving the request, which will do much to improve the quality of life in Turrialba and the surrounding area.

The IABA made it clear that the land was to be used exclusively for the construction and operation of a hospital or medical centre. The resolution indicates that the land will revert to IICA if the hospital/medical centre is not built and operational within five years of the date on which the rights to the use of the land are transferred.

The Director Generals of IICA and CATIE, Chilton Brathwaite and Jose Joaquin Campos, respectively, noted that both institutions are working on behalf of the development of needy and vulnerable communities in the city of Turrialba is one “A ways of showing that support\, they said, is to donate this land.

Turrialba, located 60 kilometres from the capital of Costa Rica is inextricably linked to agriculture of the Americas. It served as the first home for IICA and is now home to CATIE. The first stone was laid by then Costa Rican president Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia and Vice President Henry Wallace of the United States.

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