



Chelston Brathwaite appreciative of support



He will conclude his term as Director General on January 15, 2010.

Speaking at the final meeting of his Cabinet, held on December 9, the Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Chelston W.D. Brathwaite, stated that the Institute was now more ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century and expressed his appreciation for the support he received from the countries and the personnel of the Institute over the years.

“IICA has been renewed and realigned and is now prepared for the future,” he said.

During the meeting, he also noted “We can feel proud of the results we have obtained. It was worth the effort.” At the end of the meeting, the Director of the Inter-American Agribusiness

Program, Miguel Garcia, stated that he was proud to have worked in an administration characterized by honesty and transparency.

Brathwaite attributed the success of his administration to putting the Institute's financial house in order. When he took office in 2002, IICA's budget was frozen and only 22 of its 33 Member made their quota payments. Quota arrearages have dropped from US\$13.5 million in that year to US\$200,000 today. The timely payment of the annual quota of a country can only be interpreted as support for our efforts.

IICA is undergoing a process of transition today. On October 30, Victor M. Villalobos, from Mexico, was elected as the next Director General during the Fifteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), held in Montego Bay, Jamaica.

The Director General-elect, together with a delegation of Mexican officials visited IICA Headquarters in early December to lead the process of transition. They along with IICA staff are ironing out the final details for the inauguration ceremony, which will take place on January 15.

Accomplishments 2002-2010

Brathwaite, from Barbados, has been at the helm of the Institute since January 2002. He was elected for a second term that will conclude on January 15. During his administration, the Institute was successful in convincing the Member States of the need to pay their quota arrearages, resulting in the best financial situation since 1986.

At the beginning of his administration, the external auditors 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. Today, the Institute is financially stable.

Brathwaite, who made transparency and accountability hallmarks of his administration, will deliver a full report on the work of the last eight years to the incoming Director General. The 800 plus page document, written by some 70 IICA staff members, including Directors, Representatives in the countries and technical and administrative personnel, was also delivered to each minister of agriculture on a compact disc during the Week of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas – Jamaica 2009.

The Director General added that changes have been effected in the culture of teamwork, the exchange of information, excellence, equity, learning and leadership.

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.
12. We have promoted a new model for development in which agriculture and rural life are essential elements of integrated and sustainable development.



In Kenya, Director General of IICA calls for new development model

Participants in Conference reflected on the role of universities in meeting effectively and creatively the needs of their countries.

The Director General of IICA, Chelston W.D. Brathwaite, in Nairobi, Kenya, to participate in the Sixth Conference of the Global Consortium of Higher Education and Research for Agriculture (GCHERA), proposed a new model for development that will contribute to ensuring a more even urban-rural balance and lead to more and better investments in the rural milieu.

For Brathwaite, both conditions must exist to ensure social and political stability, promote competitiveness and spur economic growth in agriculture.

The CCHERA, whose theme this year was Food, Health and Energy: Challenges for Sustainable Agriculture was an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge on modern technologies, scientific visions and cultural trends in the training of undergraduate and graduate students around the Globe.

Others agricultural topics discussed were food security, health, sustainability, energy, challenges and profiles of university graduates, and climate change.

The Conference was a platform for higher education in agriculture and gave the agricultural research community an opportunity to commit to working together to meet global challenges.

Regarding the new model for development

The Director General said “Earlier models for development, and even the current ones, have an anti-rural bias; rely on industrialization to modernize the economy; and favor the growth of urban areas.”

Brathwaite, who is from Barbados and has headed the Institute since 2002, stated that a new model for development is urgently needed in order to generate more employment in the agricultural and non-agricultural sector. In addition, he said that efforts to increase productivity and the food supply must be aimed at meeting the needs of consumers and markets.

“There are those who are calling for a new green revolution. However, they must recall the negative aspects of the last one, which excluded small-scale farmers, led to a dependence on pesticides and fertilizers, attached no importance to nutrition and contaminated soils and aquifers,” he noted.

The new model being proposed takes into consideration six basic components for its execution, to wit: the adoption of national policies that will support a multidimensional and multisectoral approach to agriculture and rural life; the development of strategies to increase investment in agricultural research and the promotion of technology innovation and transfer; promotion of new curricula in agricultural sciences; institutional reforms of the Ministries of Agriculture; adoption of new policies on food consumption and nutrition; and the consolidation of a global partnership focused on reducing food insecurity worldwide.

He added that “food security must become a fundamental part of the planning of development and must be linked to agricultural development policies that are part of national development goals.”

Long before the food crisis in 2008, IICA had undertaken a number of efforts to offer short-, medium- and long-term solutions that will help improve the food security situation.



Official projections call for the world population to grow from six to nine billion people by 2050, which means that twice as much food as is now consumed will be required despite the fact that there will be less land on which to produce it.



Director General of IICA attends World Summit on Food Security

Leaders from around the globe met at the Summit on November 16 to 18.

A delegation from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) headed by Director General Chelston Brathwaite and Director of Technical Leadership and Knowledge James French participated in the World Summit on Food Security held at the headquarters of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in Rome, Italy.



The Summit began with a call from the developing countries for the wealthy countries to become involved in efforts to combat poverty.

The objective of the event was to adopt an accord on the essential measures that must be taken to cope with the food crisis. The World Summit, funded by Saudi Arabia, was attended by 60 Heads of State and Government, including Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil, and Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile.

The leaders were unanimous in their approval of a declaration in which they renewed their commitment to eradicate hunger from the face of the earth sustainably and at the earliest possible date.

Countries also agreed to work to reverse the decline in domestic and international funding for agriculture and promote new investment in the sector, to improve governance of global food issues in partnership with relevant stakeholders from the public and private sector, and to proactively face the challenges of climate change to food security.

They adopted a five-point text renewing the intention to reduce by one half the number of people who suffer from hunger before 2015. The document encourages the countries of the G8 to honor their commitment, made in L'Aquila, to donate US\$22 billion over three years.

FAO invited IICA to participate in the Summit as an observer.



Brazilians receive award from IICA

Former Minister of Agriculture Roberto Rodrigues and Roberto Lobato, a sociologist, were honored.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) presented the 2008-2009 Inter-American Awards in the Agricultural Sector on December 10 in Brasilia, Brazil.



Former Minister of Agriculture of Brazil, Roberto Rodrigues, received the Inter-American Agricultural Medal, which acknowledges contributions made to the development of sustainable agriculture and the improvement of rural life in the Americas and other parts of the world.

Rodrigues is a recognized agribusiness leader who, while at the helm of the Ministry, instituted major institutional reforms and promoted new laws related to biotechnology, organic products,

rural insurance and new rules for marketing. He is credited with laying the groundwork for modern agriculture in Brazil.

For his part, Roberto Lobato, a Brazilian sociologist, was given the Inter-American Award for Young Professionals, given to professionals who have distinguished themselves through their professional contributions and who have demonstrated an outstanding willingness to serve, exceptional initiative and dedication in working for agricultural development and the well-being of the rural population.

At its Fifteenth Regular Meeting, which concluded on October 30, the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), comprising mostly ministers of agriculture, selected the winners.

The remaining awards are expected to be presented in the coming days.



Guyana considers offering agricultural insurance

Three-day symposium brought together representatives of the public and private sectors, the World Bank, FAO and IICA.

Given the vulnerability of the agricultural sector, the Ministry of Agriculture of Guyana convened a number of stakeholders to a three-day symposium to discuss a strategy for risk management and the introduction of tools such as harvest insurance.



The event received support from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the World Bank and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

In the judgment of the organizers, the symposium played a key role in bringing together different groups interested in the topic to identify and discuss policies and instruments that might be used within the framework of the strategy.

For Guyana, agriculture is vital, generating one third of GDP and almost one half of all foreign exchange earnings and employing one third of the workforce. The country is the only net food exporter in the Caribbean and, as part of its strategy for reducing poverty, assigns a key role to agriculture and food security.

Nonetheless, the agricultural sector of Guyana is highly vulnerable to external factors related to climate, to the elimination of preferential tariffs for the European Union market and to fluctuations in the prices of raw materials.

During the event, the Minister of Agriculture of Guyana, Robert Persaud, noted that the challenges of food security, climate change and poverty were closely linked.

In his opinion, risk management has become an extremely important issue and requires a wide range of measures, from mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, measures aimed at protecting those most vulnerable, education and training, to the introduction of new and novel financial instruments such as harvest insurance.

Speaking on behalf of IICA, the Director of Operations and Regional Integration for the Caribbean Region, Trevor Murray, explained that in the field of insurance there were new tools which, when used intelligently in combination with sound public policies, can be very effective in managing the risks attributable to climate and climate change.

Murray called for careful analysis and good planning. “Any agricultural insurance project demands time and understanding. It is often said that in agriculture there are no quick fixes,” he said.

In August of this year, an IICA mission headed by Francois Dagenais visited Guyana at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture to offer advice on matters related to agricultural insurance. While there, the mission surveyed public and private sector representatives.

As a result of the mission, the IICA Office in Guyana, with collaboration from the IICA Office in Canada, retained the services of a Canadian to conduct an analysis of the regulatory and legal framework related to agricultural insurance.

The symposium which just concluded in Georgetown, capital of Guyana, was another result of the mission headed by Dagenais.



IICA Office in Uruguay again certified by ISO

ISO 9001 is granted by international certification organization.

The Office of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in Uruguay once again received the ISO 9001:2008 certification from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

This certification was granted following a thorough audit of institutional performance by the Uruguayan Technical Standards Unit (UNIT), which was validated internationally by the Spanish Standardization and Certification Association (AENOR).

The Office was certified for the first time in 2006 and retained its certification in 2007 and 2008.

The audit report identified no “nonconformities,” which means that the Office has a solid and integrated management system whose principal strengths are:

- a) the commitment of the administration and all the personnel,
- b) the monitoring of processes and activities with informatics tools, and
- c) A clear emphasis on the needs of clients.

Five years ago, the Office decided to apply a management approach known as the Continuous Improvement Process (CIP), which is aimed at making technical cooperation services more effective and efficient.

“This approach is based on the application of what is known as the Deming Cycle (plan-do-check-act), a problem-solving process the ultimate goal of which is to create intelligent organizations. Such organizations, rather than attempting to place blame, grow by learning from and capitalizing on their mistakes,” explained IICA Representative Manuel Otero.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) promotes the development of international standards, and is responsible for standardizing product and safety standards in businesses and organizations worldwide.

In applying the CIP, the Office chose to apply the ISO 9001:2008 standard, which calls for a certifiable audit to be conducted in and outside the country.

According to Otero “The fact that the management of our Office has been certified by the ISO verifies that we are giving due consideration to the technical and support processes that have a direct and indirect influence on the cooperation we provide in this country.”

Under the ISO quality management system, all activities must be represented on a process map and carried out correctly to ensure certification.

The same system checks to see that all processes are under control and evaluates the extent to which they are being carried out and the satisfaction of clients. “That is how we detect deviations, opportunities for improvement and needed corrective action,” Otero added.

The Office must also define a policy, objectives and high-quality plans. This ensures that all certified activities respect the laws of the country and comply with IICA rules and procedures. He went on to say “We are in compliance with IICA’s Medium Term Plan, the National and Regional Technical Cooperation Agendas and the Annual Action Plan.”

The level of satisfaction of external and internal clients (institutional partners, Office personnel and staff members at Headquarters) is determined via questionnaires that measure the perception they have of the services provided by the Office. The surveys are conducted every year and are complemented with specific surveys conducted in connection with seminars, workshops and training events.

The quality certification obtained by the Office has led to improved performance thanks to:

- a) **Quality plans** based on priority actions identified in the Annual Action Plan, which make it possible to follow up on implementation of programmed activities.
- b) **An annual record of activities**, prepared using an Excel template, which includes all activities programmed and not programmed. This repository includes agendas, documents, lists of participants, photographs, survey results and any material of interest on specific activities. It helps to simplify the preparation of reports and serves as an institutional memory.
- c) **A weekly schedule of events** which the Office has been using has been using for more than a year and a half to display the activities of the Representative and the technical team in order to keep track of activities.
- d) **The Integrated Management Table (IMT)**, still in the developmental stage, is a useful management tool with strategic indicators and plans of action for monitoring achievement of objectives.
- e) **A strategic partnerships map**, which monitors the status and type of relationship with IICA’s major strategic partners.
- f) **An annual training program**, together with a Knowledge Matrix, identifies personnel training and development needs and makes it possible to plan changes in technology, institutional strategies and orientation for new personnel. Also included in the program are personnel initiatives for professional technical upgrading.

- g) **An opportunities for improvement system**, which Office personnel use to offer individual or group suggestions on actions aimed at the continuous improvement of the system.



First Board of Directors of the Inter-American Commission for Organic Agriculture (ICOA) elected

The Board was elected by representatives of 15 countries of the Americas.

The first Assembly of the Inter-American Commission for Organic Agriculture (ICOA), which was held from November 16 to 20 at the Headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), in Costa Rica, elected its first Board of Directors and set guidelines and policies for its operation.



The meeting was attended by delegations from 15 countries of the Americas, represented by the competent authorities in organic agriculture, who are responsible for interpreting and applying the rules and regulations that govern organic agriculture and its control systems in each country.

The Board of Directors of the ICOA comprises Juan Carlos Ramirez, from Argentina, as President, Elizabeth Ramirez, from Costa Rica, and Rogerio Dias, from Brazil, as members. Octavio

Carrianza, from Mexico, is part of the Board because his country will host the next Assembly.

According to the Technical Secretary a.i. of ICOA, Pedro Cussianovich, in addition to having the opportunity to elect its first Board, important technical issues were discussed regarding the actions of organic agriculture in the Americas.

The delegations discussed the development of local and national markets for organic products, public certification and the certification of non-food organic products.

They also discussed the safety of organic foods, progress in the harmonization of rules and regulations for organic production among countries, and the authorization and registration of permissible inputs for organic production.

Policies on organic agriculture strengthened

During the Assembly, it was agreed to develop and implement mechanisms that will make it possible to operate a system for the management of information and knowledge. Another

agreement reached was to generate a strategy for the institutional strengthening and development of competent authorities in the countries.

The Commission decided to create a Committee on Codex Alimentarius to disseminate information on organic agriculture and adopt joint positions on topics of interest related to the actions of the competent authorities

The ICOA is an inter-American technical body created by the ministers of agriculture of the hemisphere, whose goals are to promote the development of organic agriculture, facilitate trade of organic produce and strengthen the institutional framework in the sector.

This Commission coordinates and promotes the development and harmonization of rules on the production and control of organic products and serves as a body from consultation, liaison and cooperation among the countries of the Americas. It is the first regional body to deal directly with organic agriculture. IICA serves as the Technical Secretariat of the Commission by mandate from the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the governing body of the Institute.

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