



COMUNIICA reflects on a new development model



Social and technological innovation, the strengthening of agrifood chains and rural tourism are some of the topics addressed in the latest issue of IICA's technical magazine.

The latest issue of COMUNIICA, the technical magazine of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), focuses on a series of perspectives, experiences and viewpoints that could help to shape a new development model for the Americas.

“IICA has been emphatic in calling for a new development model based on the rural economy and agriculture in all its dimensions, to ensure, among other things, the supply of food, sufficient income, dignified employment and the preservation of natural resources, the foreword to COMUNIICA states.

In the latest issue of the magazine, readers can gain an overview of a number of important issues.

The first article, “Social and technological innovations in the new development model in rural territories,” calls for the promotion of new ideas within a framework of participation and solidarity in order to combine processes for the diversification of production with social inclusion policies such as the conservation, restoration and rational use of natural resources.

The article was written by IICA’s Director of Sustainable Rural Development, Carlos Jara.

The second article, “Agrifood chains: a tool for strengthening the institutional framework of the agricultural and rural sector,” is based on work carried out by the Director of Agribusiness Competitiveness, Miguel García, and specialists Iciar Pavez, Hernando Riveros, Daniel Rodríguez, Frank Lam, Joaquín Arias and Danilo Herrera, whose particular areas of expertise are rural agroindustry, agribusiness and trade policies and negotiations.

This article examines the potential of agrifood chains as mechanisms for dialogue and tools for managing competitiveness and decision-making.

Another viewpoint is presented in “The United States Farm Bill and its impact on the WTO agricultural negotiations,” written by IICA’s Regional Specialist in Policies and Trade for the Southern Region, Antonio Donizeti.

The expert says this legislation “could have a negative impact on the Doha Round of the WTO trade negotiations that got under way in 2001 and has yet to be concluded, mainly due to the difficulties involved in reaching a consensus on agricultural issues.”

IICA’s technical magazine also contains an article entitled “Rural Tourism in Uruguay: a growing reality,” which considers the country’s competitive advantages in this field, thanks to its natural and cultural heritage.

The article was written by the President of the Rural Federation of Young People (FRJ) of Uruguay, Maren Mackinnon; Agribusiness Specialist Alejandra Betancur; and Adrián Sánchez, an intern at the IICA Office in Uruguay.

This issue of the magazine also includes an article entitled “From humanitarian aid to food security and income generation in Kwamalasamutu, Suriname.” It concerns one of the largest Amerindian communities in the south of that country, close to the border with Brazil, which was seriously affected by floods in 2008.

The authors are John King, the coordinator of an assistance project implemented by the IICA Office in Suriname and the Red Cross; Andrew Beker, a Peace Corps volunteer; Cromwell Crawford, IICA Representative in Suriname; and Field Assistant Brahma Ramsoedit. They describe their experiences and consider ways of improving the communities’ nutrition and food security in the wake of the devastation caused by extreme weather.

Finally, the article “*You say “palta,” I say “aguacate” and they say “avocado.”* Diversity in the agricultural terminology of the Americas” looks at the standardization of terminology in data retrieval systems.

The Thesaurus Specialist of the USDA’s National Agricultural Library, Lori Finch, and the Coordinator of the library’s AgNIC Secretariat, Melanie Gardner, give an overview of the thesaurus, the tool used to organize terms and express relationships between concepts.

A digital version of COMUNIICA is available at www.iica.int/esp/prensa/comuniica



Program to rebuild Haitian agricultural sector making headway

Director General of IICA highlights initial results of travels of Minister of Agriculture of Haiti.



The government program aimed at rebuilding the agricultural sector of Haiti, prepared in the wake of earthquake of 12 January, is making headway thanks to a visit to Rome? by Minister of Agriculture of Haiti, Joanas Gue; the Minister of Agriculture of the Dominican Republic, Salvador Jimenez; the Director General of IICA, Victor M. Villalobos; and the IICA Representative in Haiti, Alfredo Mena, on February 11-12.

Minister Gue then traveled to Canada, a country that has long been supporting Haiti.

Upon his return to Costa Rica, site of the headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Director General Villalobos explained that the visit to the Italian capital was a strategic step in the efforts of the Minister of Agriculture of Haiti to seek financing for the projects included in the program prepared by his ministry.

Rome, he explained, is the center of operations for many international organizations which will play a key role in implementing the Program to Provide Emergency Support for Food Production in Haiti, in Response to the Hurricanes of the Summer of 2008 and the Earthquake of January 12, 2010, and for the Integration of Displaced Populations.

This program calls for immediate actions in response to the emergency, such as preparing for spring planting, which begins next month, but focuses on medium- and long-term initiatives

aimed at improving food security, generating employment in rural areas and settling 1.5 people who fled flattened cities for the already impoverished countryside.

IICA and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARNDR) of Haiti in preparing a document that spelled out the details of the program. In addition, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has also been working closely with the MARNDR.

Concrete results

The opportunity to present the program to the highest authorities of FAO, FIDA and the World Food Programme (WFP) was one of the most important results of the meeting in Rome and motivated various agencies to participate in the projects to rebuild agriculture in Haiti.

For example, in the coming days, IICA will sign an agreement calling for it to administer a FIDA donation of US\$2.5 million during the immediate emergency period, calculated to last 18 months. These resources will be used to implement food security plans, create jobs in rural areas and provide training for producer associations in the Department of Nippes, in western Haiti.

Also in Rome, in a meeting in which delegates from the United States and Brazil took part, these two nations pledged to provide Minister Gue with US\$500,000 in financing for the preparation of land prior to the planting cycle which begins in March. Both governments have asked IICA to assume responsibility for implementing the corresponding actions under an agreement to be signed soon.

The WFP will also provide support for the next planting season, supplying seeds and fertilizer that will be delivered to different Departments of the island.

The subject of purchasing local products was discussed thoroughly because, for the Haitian government, it is fundamental to prevent food aid from affecting the marketing of domestic production. To this end, it has encouraged the NGOs, the WFP and cooperation agencies to purchase locally grown produce and to sign contracts with farmers for its distribution.

In this regard, IICA has already signed an agreement with the government of Brazil to establish a pilot project in the Department of Nippes to purchase locally grown produce, which will later be expanded to cover the entire island.

Minister Gue will travel to Canada on February 17 to participate in a number of meetings with representatives of governments and cooperation agencies both in Ottawa and Montreal. Canada is long-standing partner of the Ministry of Agriculture and is executing important cooperation projects there, with technical support from IICA.



Director General issues call to support agriculture and rural areas in Haiti

He is accompanying the Minister of Agriculture of Haiti in search of support to rebuild agriculture following the earthquake.

Shortly before parting for Rome in the company of the Minister of Agriculture of Haiti, Joanas Gue, the Director General of IICA, Victor M. Villalobos, issued an urgent call to support the rural development of that nation because “a dollar invested in agriculture and the rural milieu in Haiti will produce a higher yield more rapidly than one invested in any other non-agricultural sector of the country.”



On Wednesday, February 10, Minister Gue will begin a trip to several countries to present the special program prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARNDR) of Haiti, with technical support from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which has an estimated cost of US\$700 million.

Minister Gue and Villalobos were scheduled to meet with the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States, Tom Vilsack, but the meeting had to be cancelled due to inclement weather in the nation’s capital.

The program’s portfolio of projects are intended to address the emergency created by the January 12 earthquake, support food production and integrate displaced populations, estimated to be some 1.5 million people, into rural areas.

Villalobos, who became Director General on January 15 of this year, has attached top priority to this emergency. He appointed a task force which is coordinating actions in support of Haiti from its headquarters in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and is in constant contact with other IICA Offices in Haiti, Washington, Canada and Costa Rica, site of IICA Headquarters, to coordinate actions aimed at supporting agriculture and Haitian small-scale formers.

“At present, all our efforts related to Haiti are focused on supporting the priorities set by Minister Gue and the MARNDR,” he underscored.

Haiti, a unique country

Agriculture and the rural milieu in Haiti have two characteristics that make the country unique, Villalobos said.

According to analyses conducted by IICA, in addition to the fact that 55% of the population lives in rural areas (the largest percentage of all the Americas), and that most of its soil is degraded, the yields for its principal agricultural products are the lowest in the entire region and have not increased since the early 1980s.

While in the United States and Chile the yield per hectare of maize (most important crop in Haiti) is more than 10 tons, in Haiti, it is less than 0.75 tons per hectare (average from 2003 – 2007).

In Villalobos's judgment, inasmuch as agriculture and the rural milieu are a primary source of employment and income for the poorest sectors of the population, investments aimed at increasing yields and improving living conditions for this population will ensure that each dollar invested in agriculture and the rural milieu in Haiti will produce a higher yield than one invested in any other non-agricultural sector of the country.

Voices of Support

Villalobos said he was pleased to learn that a number of authoritative voices from different parts of the world have come out in support of rural development in Haiti and are drawing attention to the multiplier effect of investment in agriculture.

These voices include Alain de Janvry, co-author of the World Bank's World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development. Professor Janvry recently stated that if Haiti is to be rebuilt, development agencies must begin to support subsistence agriculture and treat it as a vitally important production activity.

Robert Zoellick, President of the World Bank, has also said that in order to move from food aid to reconstruction, it is important to promote small-scale agriculture which might eventually even replace food assistance programs.

In recent days, international analyst Andres Oppenheimer echoed a comment made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, Carlos Morales Troncoso, and recommended not committing, during the reconstruction of Haiti "the fatal error of focusing too much on bricks and too little on trees" and here we would add... on food.

For its part, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is beginning to take action. It is developing a project that will channel US\$2.5 million to the Department of Nipe, one of the poorest regions of Haiti, in pursuit of the same goal.

The objective of Minister Glue's trip, said Villalobos, is to draw attention to the importance of investing in a sector that is strategic for the economy and the people of Haiti today and tomorrow.



Minister of Haiti grateful for IICA's support in rebuilding agriculture in his country

Minister highlighted IICA's help in preparing reconstruction projects

Prior to leaving for Rome, where he will meet with officials of international organizations, the Minister of Agriculture of Haiti, Joanas Gue, asked the donor community to support the portfolio of 20 agricultural reactivation projects which the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) prepared and has been promoting in coordination with his Ministry.

In his call for support, Minister Gue was very emphatic in saying that his Ministry needs to implement initiatives such as IICA's, which are consistent with his "Program to Provide Emergency Support for Food Production in Haiti, in Response to the Hurricanes of the Summer of 2008 and the Earthquake of January 12, 2010, and for the Integration of Displaced Populations," prepared with support from FAO and IICA.



The objectives of the program the minister is promoting are to reactivate agriculture, guarantee food security for the population and generate employment for the inhabitants of rural communities and for the 1.5 million people forced to flee to rural areas from large urban centers such as Port au Prince.

In an effort to help promote the projects, the Director General of IICA, Victor Manuel Villalobos, is accompanying Minister Gue on his trip to Rome, where they will meet with officials of a number of international organizations to present the agricultural reactivation actions being proposed for both the short and medium terms.

The Minister also highlighted the importance of IICA's helping to prepare the project profiles "taking into consideration the past experience of IICA in Haiti, its experience in other countries of the Americas and also the experience of the many networks with which the Institute works."

"I want to thank IICA's General Director, Dr. Victor Villalobos, and its personnel, especially those in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Their participation in the preparation of the project profiles, which must be presented to donor organizations as soon as possible, is deeply appreciated. I also want to give special recognition to those countries that have come to the aid of Haiti, and would ask that they provide financing for these projects in the coming months and

beyond, in the hope that their execution will help in solving the problems facing the Haitian people,” he stated.

He also stated that the emergency program being promoted and the IICA projects are aimed at providing direct support to agricultural producers in their efforts to increase food security in Haiti, create jobs and so reduce poverty. They will also help to restore the natural resources of rural areas, which in large part are seriously degraded.

During on his visit to Rome, Gue will meet with representatives of the Italian government, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.



Colombia organizes First International Colloquium on Rural Development with a Territorial Approach

The experiences of civil society, academia and the public institutional framework will be discussed.

From 3-5 March, Colombia will be hosting the First International Colloquium on Rural Development with a Territorial Approach (RDTA), which will endeavor to shed new light on this subject based on the different national and international contributions to the approach made recently.

The colloquium will provide an opportunity to examine this new conceptual and positive approach to rural development based on the experiences and ideas of civil society, academia, the public and private institutional framework, international agencies and cooperation organizations.

The meeting will examine the progress made in this field and endeavor to disseminate methodologies used for RDTA research and contribute new proposals for the formulation of public policies.

This event will be of interest to academics, the productive sector, the national and territorial public institutional framework, and everyone engaged in the study, construction and development of strategies and programs in the agricultural and rural milieu.

The colloquium on RDTA is being promoted by the Research Group on Rural Management and Development of the School of Agronomy of the National University of Colombia (Bogotá Campus), with support from the Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and Cooperation on Agricultural Planning and Technology Transfer.



IICA's online system for consultants is fully operational

The database contains information about professionals interested in working for the Institute.

If you are an independent professional, you can make yourself available for work with IICA through a System for the Registration of Consultants that now forms part of the Institute's website (www.iica.int).

By keying in your personal and professional data, you will automatically become part of the independent human resources of this agency of the Inter-American System specializing in agriculture.

“Independent professionals are an important part of our institution's human resources,” IICA Director General Víctor M. Villalobos stated in a memorandum sent out to all Institute units.

In 2008, IICA's Advisory Committee on Management Issues (SACMI) identified the need for a database of consultants to facilitate the mobilization of the additional technical capacity required to provide an efficient and timely response to the demand for technical cooperation. The new system was developed based on the SACMI's recommendation.

The development of this tool was coordinated by the Directorate of Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management, working with the Informatics and Information Systems Unit and the Division of Human Resources Development.



IICA delivers proposal for development activities in the Argentine province of La Rioja

The provincial governor was delighted to receive the document presented to him by the IICA Representative.

On 11 February, the Governor of the Argentine province of La Rioja, Luis Beder Herrera, received from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) the document detailing a program designed to improve the living standards of goat farmers and their families, and enhance the competitiveness of the goat value-chain in northern and southern Los Llanos.



The Institute's Representative in Argentina, Víctor Arrúa, was responsible for the ceremony, which took place at the Governor's official residence. Mr. Arrúa was accompanied by several IICA specialists. Governor Beder Herrera was joined by the secretaries of livestock, agriculture and industry and investment promotion, and the province's member of Congress. Representatives of the Unit for Rural Change, of Argentina's MAGyP, also took part.

Last year the Governor contacted IICA to explore the possibility of developing an integrated development plan for the goat value-chain in La Rioja. The Institute assigned the task to a hemispheric, regional and national multidisciplinary team of specialists.

Accepting the document, the Governor emphasized that the strategic nature of the proposal made it a policy tool for an important sector in the province, with short-, medium- and long-term actions that would have a positive impact on the quality of life of the inhabitants of Los Llanos.

He thanked IICA for acting swiftly to develop the proposal in coordination with the Provincial Agricultural Services Program (PROSAP) and said he would ask the Minister of the MAGyP to ensure that the Institute supported the formulation of the corresponding feasibility study.

The program

The area that will benefit from the program is among those with the highest proportion of unmet basic needs. Los Llanos is part of the province of La Rioja, in the west-central region of Argentina. It has a surface area of 50,000 square kilometers and a population of over 50,000 people.

The principal economic activity in these arid plains is goat and cattle raising.

The development of the goat chain, in particular, is made all the more difficult by aspects such as environmental degradation with loss of biodiversity; rapidly advancing desertification; extremely limited water resources; a lack of technology; and, organizational underdevelopment.

Other constraints include insufficient herd management, inadequate facilities for efficient sanitary and nutritional management, lack of infrastructure for water management and highly deteriorated pastureland.

Producers depend heavily on middlemen and are largely unaware of consumer preferences, while there is no institutional framework to encourage producers to get organized or leverage in the chain.

To address this situation, the program aims to raise the living standards of goat producers and their families in a sustainable way and enhance the competitiveness of the goat value-chain, adopting an integrating territorial vision.

The program's four components are as follows:

- Institutional modernization and public policies
- Sustainable production, productivity and markets of the goat value-chain
- Strategic partnerships and support for the development of the capabilities of private and civil society organizations
- Sustainable development strategy for the territory of Los Llanos.

The cost of the first stage of the program, spread over three years, is put at US\$23.5 million.

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