

Infoletter

from the Desk of the Director General

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture



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Institutional Affairs

▪ **Directors, Representatives in the countries and IICA specialists define work plan for 2009**

The IICA contingent of directors, Representatives in the 34 Member States and regional specialists are meeting at IICA Headquarters in San Jose, Costa Rica, from October 23 through 29. The meeting, known as Representatives' Week, closes IICA's strategic planning period for 2009. This process was conducted from July to September this year. Food security in the Americas and "Good Institutional Practices and Their Importance" are central themes at this gathering. The meeting will address the issue of the challenges facing our countries in the wake of the increase in food prices, taking into account the unique characteristics of each region (Northern, Central, Caribbean, Andean and Southern). This will be followed by an overview of good institutional practices in very diverse areas, in the light of the technical cooperation model introduced by the Institute in 2002 when Director General Chelston Brathwaite assumed office. IICA's cooperation model is based on participation, accountability, consultation and transparency. The dialogue among the Institute's senior executives will revolve around topics such as corporate management, relations with strategic partners, securing resources and communications and the institutional image. During the Week, there will be presentations by distinguished and renowned speakers and special guests.

▪ **Director General at the Caribbean Week of Agriculture**

An IICA delegation attended the Eighth Caribbean Week of Agriculture, the most important agricultural event in the region. IICA's Director General, Chelston Brathwaite, headed the delegation made up of the Director of Regional Operations and Integration, Mariano Olazábal, the Director of Regional Operations for the Caribbean Region, Trevor Murray, the Director of External Financing and Investment Projects of IICA, François Dagenais, Representatives from the Caribbean, regional specialists and other personnel from IICA Headquarters. More than 200 people were invited to participate in this celebration, which brought together Ministers of Agriculture from 12 Caribbean countries. The Eighth Caribbean Week of Agriculture, the central theme of which was "Transforming the agricultural sector through value addition", was held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines from October 6 through 10.

▪ **2005 Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics a special guest for IICA Day at the OAS**

Climate change and the world food crisis were the topics discussed by 2005 Nobel Prize Laureate, Thomas Schelling, and the Deputy Director General of the Institute, Christopher Hansen, during the celebration of IICA Day, at a special meeting of the OAS Permanent Council on October 1 in Washington, D.C. Schelling was a special guest at the celebration at which he explained the "devastating" and "real" consequences of climate change and their repercussions for agriculture. Christopher Hansen spoke of the correlation between climate change and food security and ensured that the challenges facing farmers, consumers and decision-makers are not short-term. At the close of the meeting, the Assistant Deputy Director General of the Institute, David Hatch, underscored the need to increase investment in agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean. Since 2006, IICA Day has been held at the OAS at a special meeting of the OAS Permanent Council.

▪ **Cornell University and University of Ottawa strengthen relations with the Institute**

Director General, Chelston W.D. Brathwaite headed a team from IICA on a visit to the United States and Canada to strengthen relations with Cornell University and the University of Ottawa. At Cornell University – Brathwaite's *alma mater* – they explored areas for cooperation to forge ties, promote rural development, transfer information, technology and expertise between both institutions. The Director de Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management of IICA, James French, gave a talk, explaining the situation in the hemisphere with regard to the agricultural sector and food security. In Ottawa, Brathwaite held working discussions with top-ranking officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-food. He also met with representatives from the Canadian International Development Agency and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, among others. At the University, he gave a lecture on the "Global Crisis in Food Prices: A Perspective from the Americas" to a select audience.

Ministerial changes

The Director General congratulated the new Minister of Rural Development, Agriculture and Environment of Bolivia, Carlos Romero Bonifaz, and offered him support for the formulation and implementation of his country's agenda. Brathwaite also addressed the recently appointed Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development of Haiti, Joanas Gué, to congratulate him on his appointment and to give him assurances that the doors for cooperation between his government and IICA would be kept open. Gué has inherited a huge task where he must face the challenge of helping to reduce hunger and poverty in the poorest country of the Americas. IICA is carrying out a number of projects in Haiti to combat poverty and promote growth in rural communities.

Regions and countries

▪ Heads of State support regional strategy on the environment and health

The Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA), meeting in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, at the Summit on Climate Change and Environment on May 28, 2008, gave their support to the Regional Agro-environmental and Health Strategy and called for the preparation of a plan of action. This Regional Strategy was presented at the XIV meeting of the Network for Decentralization and Municipal Strengthening: "The Municipality of the Future: Facing the Challenges of Sustainable Development". IICA and the Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council lent their technical support for the preparation of this strategy.

▪ Urgent call for strengthening agricultural science and technology in the hemisphere

The findings of an assessment conducted by 400 experts worldwide, 43 of whom are from Latin America and the Caribbean, were publicized through a video conference from Costa Rica. Five of these experts announced the findings of the report on Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) on September 25. This assessment was described by the specialists as "critical", but "fair" at the same time, with regard to the AKST System. The report on LAC is one of five regional reports. The findings of the assessment were presented to decision makers and journalists from Argentina, Mexico, Peru and Dominican Republic and Costa Rica from the Distance Training Center.

▪ Networks and organizations of rural women producers agree on agenda

A technical mission from IICA agreed to a working agenda with networks and organizations of rural women producers for strengthening their micro and small businesses. The Rural Women's Network of Mexico (RENAMUR) and the *Fundación 10 Mil Mujeres por Morelos* took part in this process. A document entitled "Rural Women in the Generation of Production Alternatives in Latin America" was also presented at the Second Congress of Women Entrepreneurs in Acapulco, Guerrero. At the inaugural ceremony of that congress the Representative of the IICA Office in Mexico, Gino Buzzetti, and the Chair of the Foundation, Maricela Sanchez, signed a General Cooperation Agreement.

▪ Activities to alleviate crisis in food prices continue

New regional cooperation initiatives have emerged under the Emergency Plan to increase the production of basic grains in Central America, supported by IICA since it was created in March of this year. This time, these initiatives are a joint venture by the Spanish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, the Inter-American Development Bank, the FAO, Mexico and Brazil. This is how the proposed regional program, "Support for increasing productivity and the quality of food production to contribute to food security in Central America" was prepared and fine tuned. That proposal was approved by the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC) for presentation at the Joint Cooperation Commission, Republic of Taiwan - Countries of the Central American Isthmus.

Coming events

- **23-29 October.** Meeting of IICA Representatives in the countries. IICA Headquarters, San Jose, Costa Rica.

More information

- **Crisis in food prices calls for writing a new chapter in the agrifood sector**

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