

Infoletter

from the Desk of the Director General

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture



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November, 2008

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Institutional Affairs

▪ **During a visit to IICA, the President of Chile acknowledged the importance of strengthening agriculture**

On 29 October, during a visit to IICA Headquarters in San Jose, Costa Rica, the President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, called for efforts to boost agriculture and rural producers "given the crucial contribution they make to the eradication of hunger worldwide." Director General Chelston Brathwaite welcomed the leader, describing her visit as a historic event for the Institute. In her address, the President acknowledged agriculture as a strategic sector that contributes to the economic, social, environmental and political development of the countries. The meeting took place during Representatives' Week, IICA's most important in-house meeting, which involves officials stationed in the 34 Member States. Accompanying President Bachelet was a delegation comprising senior public officials, lawmakers and members of the business community, including her Minister for Economic Affairs, Hugo Lavados, and Chile's Ambassador in Costa Rica, Gonzalo Mendoza. The leader took advantage of the opportunity to chat with the Institute's Chilean officials and gave an address to around 300 people on the challenges facing agriculture in light of the global crisis. Writing in the visitors' book, President Bachelet described IICA as a "very important institution that strives for the prosperity and well-being of the agricultural world and for that reason enjoys the support of Chile and of this President."

▪ **IICA determines strategy for 2009**

Between 23 and 29 October, IICA concluded the annual regional and hemispheric planning process via which it establishes the actions to be implemented and approaches used for its core cooperation activities in the member countries (in this case, for 2009). Two issues dominated the program of the meeting: food security and good institutional practices. Kicking off the discussions, the Director General said that, with the crisis in food prices, "this is the moment to write a new chapter in the agrifood sector." He explained that our countries' development model should make agriculture a key component for alleviating hunger and poverty. The Director of Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management, James French, said that for the Institute "The emphasis on food security is neither new nor merely a response to the current situation. It is consistent with our institutional objectives, serves the needs of the countries and the region, and gives continuity to the resolutions our Executive Committee adopted some months ago." In relation to good institutional practices, the meeting focused on those that will enable IICA to manage its operations more efficiently and improve its technical cooperation activities in aid of the countries.

▪ **IICA support for the efforts of the countries in the area of food security**

The Institute defined its lines of action in the field of food security for 2009. The Institute's work will focus on areas in which it can add value; promote IICA's hemispheric leadership on the subject; promote a medium- and long-term vision; integrate and articulate national, regional and hemispheric actions; coordinate closely with strategic partners; and, concentrate human and financial resources. The strategic lines of work will focus on innovation and institution building and efforts to improve services designed to enhance the capacity of small and medium-scale farmers and family agriculture to integrate into markets. IICA will also promote the analysis, monitoring and dissemination of policies and information dealing with the state of, and outlook for, food security. These strategic lines of action will be included in the Institute's projects and the 2009 Annual Action Plan.

▪ **Director General rewards excellence**

Creativity, outstanding performance, leadership and teamwork were the qualities acknowledged during the presentation of the 2008 Director General's Awards for Excellence to individual officials and teams. Director General Chelston Brathwaite presented the awards to the winners during a ceremony held on 29 October, at the end of Representatives' Week. Individual awards went to rural development specialists Jose Antonio Herrera and Maude Rachelle Chery Pierre-Louis, and agribusiness specialist Daniel Rodriguez. Teamwork awards were presented to the teams involved in the following projects: the design and implementation of the Institute's new Web Portal, the start up in Bolivia of the Opportunity for Support for Cacao Exports in the Andean Countries Program (ACCESO) and the development of the Interactive Virtual Learning Environment Program, known as e-Vida. Representatives of organizations with which

IICA has close ties and the sponsors of the awards also took part in the ceremony: the President of the Credit Union of the Organization of American States (OAS), Carlos Calderon, and the Vice President of Rutherford International Inc., Philippe de Dreuzy.

Ministerial changes

The Director General congratulated the new Minister of Agriculture of Peru, Carlos Federico Leyton Muñoz, and offered the Institute's assistance as a strategic partner in defining and implementing a technical cooperation agenda to meet the country's needs and priorities. Brathwaite invited the Minister to participate in the "Forum for Leaders in Agriculture," to discuss the challenges facing the sector in the 21st century.

Regions and countries

▪ IICA supports strengthening of sanitary and phytosanitary measures

During the October meeting of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Institute submitted a report on the conclusion of the "Initiative for the Americas," under which it had provided support to the member countries since 2002. The delegates of 21 countries thanked IICA for the project and praised the organization for its efforts to promote the States' involvement in the work of the Committee. The Chair of the Committee singled out the program as an example of successful technical cooperation. Over a six-year period, the Initiative made it possible for delegates from the Americas to take part in the Committee's meetings, which are held in Switzerland every four months. It also helped strengthen the institutions in charge of health matters in each country. IICA's Directorate of Agricultural Health and Food Safety (AHFS) is looking at ways of continuing to provide the Member States with support in this field.

▪ IICA takes part in initiative to reduce hunger

IICA took part in the third meeting of the working group of the Iniciativa América Latina y Caribe sin Hambre, an effort being promoted by the countries, cooperation agencies and private companies to reduce hunger in the region. The Government of Argentina and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) organized the activity, which took place 6-7 October in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

▪ Educational material on agriculture distributed among Chilean students

IICA presented the Liceo Carlos Haverbeck, in the Los Ríos region of southern Chile, with a series of books and other educational material for use in workshops on agriculture involving high-school students. By providing information about agriculture in Latin America, the reactivation of the sector, soils, rural development, trade and integration, and other topics, the Institute aims to contribute to the learning process of young people in the region.

▪ Coffee extension workers participate in forum on leadership

IICA's Center for Leadership and the Regional Cooperative Program for Technology Development and the Modernization of Coffee Growing in Central America, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica (PROMECAFE) held a leadership forum involving officials from Costa Rica's Coffee Institute (ICAFE) and Ministry of Agriculture (MAG). Targeted at extension workers from the coffee sector, the activity provided an opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the coffee extension model in Costa Rica and the latest trends in regard to the implementation of extension programs.

Coming events

- **2-4 December.** First Forum of Rural Youth Leaders in Costa Rica. Headquarters.

More information

- **President of Chile underscores the importance of agriculture for development and for eradicating hunger during visit to IICA Headquarters**

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