

Infoletter

from the Desk of the Director General

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture



March 2008

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Institutional Affairs

▪ Young people from 34 countries set to meet at Hemispheric Forum

Nearly 90 young people from IICA's 34 Member States will be meeting at IICA Headquarters in Costa Rica for the First Forum for Young Leaders of Agriculture from the Americas. The activity is due to take place 24-29 March and the participants will receive training in topics such as value-based leadership, the new challenges facing agriculture, systemic thinking, the use of the Agro-Matrix tool and conflict resolution. During the closing session, on Saturday, 29 March, the young people will seal their commitment to sustainable development and rural life in the hemisphere by issuing the "2008 Declaration of Young Leaders from the Americas." The First Forum will coincide with the inauguration of the Center of Leadership for Agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture, and Livestock of Costa Rica, Javier Flores, and Mario Aldaña, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Guatemala and current chair of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture, will be taking part in the ceremony.

▪ IICA urges greater financing for the agricultural sector

"We are convinced that to reduce poverty and attain the Millennium Development Goals we must invest in agriculture," IICA Director General Chelston Brathwaite said during an activity held in Costa Rica to present and discuss the World Bank's "World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development." Held on 12 March, the activity was the first in the new series of Technical Forums for Agriculture and Rural Life that IICA will be coordinating. Brathwaite went on to say that "the multinational banks and institutions need to invest more in agricultural projects, ministries of agriculture need to institute reforms and we must promote new policies and guidelines for the agricultural sector." The sector is again on the agendas of financial organizations, which largely ignored it for 25 years. "The need to promote agriculture has been a hobby horse of ours for many years; now the World Bank shares our enthusiasm for the subject. We have a partner and we are delighted," the Director General said.

▪ Preparations for Jamaica 2009

Jamaica's Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Christopher Tufton, visited the Institute's Headquarters in February of this year, where IICA's Directorate of Follow-up to the Summit of the Americas Process presented him with a copy of the proposal "On the Road to Jamaica 2009 - Reappraising Agriculture and the Rural Milieu - Enhancing Sustainable Rural Economies." Tufton, who was the first guest to take part in IICA's Forum for Leaders this year, will be hosting the Fifth Ministerial Meeting, Jamaica 2009. The most important hemispheric-level meeting on agriculture, the Ministerial takes place every two years. The document explains the key aspects of the 2008-2009 Ministerial Process and the phases involved.

Ministerial changes

▪ Ernesto Agazzi is Uruguay's new Minister of Agriculture

IICA Director General Chelston Brathwaite congratulated the new Minister of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries of Uruguay, Ernesto Agazzi on his appointment. In a letter to the Minister dated 3 March, Brathwaite reiterated that the Institute was at the service of Uruguay's government and agricultural sector, and invited Agazzi to take part in the Forum for Leaders, a program run by the Center for Leadership in Agriculture designed especially for new ministers and senior sector officials from the western hemisphere. "We want to share the experience we have accumulated over the past 65 years in supporting the agricultural sector," the Director General said in his letter.

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Regions and countries

▪ ISAAA and IICA highlight worldwide impact of agro-biotechnologies

During 2007, the acreage devoted to genetically modified (GM) crops worldwide grew by 12%. This was one of the facts shared during four videoconferences held 11-14 March to update representatives of the public and private sectors, academia and civil society in all corners of the western hemisphere. The activity, entitled "Second Release of Information on the Status of Agro-biotechnologies 2007," was carried out from IICA Headquarters in Costa Rica. The Institute and the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) hosted the event, held to disseminate information about the adoption of biotechnologies by the agricultural sector worldwide. The acreage devoted to GM crops has been growing at double-digit rates every year for the past 12 years, during which the total has risen from 12.3 million to 114.3 million hectares. Two million more farmers planted this type of crop for the first time last year; altogether, 12 million farmers are benefiting from technological improvements to production throughout the world. As many as 11 million of these farmers are small-scale producers.

▪ Progress made in designing strategy for executing Regional Agricultural Policy

Based on action plans from regional and international organizations, the design of the strategy for implementing the Central American Agricultural Policy has been completed. As part of the process, a workshop involving the Institute's regional specialists and other officials was held at IICA Headquarters in Costa Rica in February. The activity was used to identify the measures and tools that IICA will be supporting and define actions, designate the individuals who will be responsible and specify the financing needed to implement and provide follow-up to the policy. The World Bank's Regional Technical Assistance Program for Central America (RUTA) and the Central American Integration System for Agricultural Technology (SICTA) held similar workshops. Printed and electronic versions of the Agricultural Policy have been distributed among a large number of actors in the region and the final version in English is expected to be ready within a few days.

▪ Exporters and officials receive training in Guyana

In February of this year, the Inter-American Program for the Promotion of Agricultural Trade, Agribusiness and Food Safety and the IICA Office in Guyana implemented two training activities in Georgetown, Guyana. On 4 February, a workshop was held for around 100 Guyanese agricultural entrepreneurs and exporters, on the main characteristics of the U.S. market for food products. On 5-6 February, 24 officials from the New Guyana Marketing Corporation (NGMC), the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI) and IICA received training in the same subject. This initiative equipped Guyana's productive sector to implement actions aimed at competing efficiently in the North American market.

Coming events

- **24-29 March 2008.** First Forum for Young Leaders involved in the sustainable development of agriculture in the Americas, IICA Headquarters, San Jose, Costa Rica
- **22-23 April 2008.** Special Meeting of the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI), IICA Headquarters, San Jose, Costa Rica

More information

- **Jamaican Minister interested in reassessing contribution of agriculture**
- **Jamaican Minister visits producers in the north of Costa Rica**
- **Women's true contribution in the rural milieu**

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