

Infoletter

from the Desk of the Director General

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

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Institutional Affairs

▪ IICA plays an active part in international forums that discuss food security

In recent weeks, the Institute took part in hemispheric and international forums that discussed and sought joint positions on ways of tackling the food crisis. Accompanied by a high-level delegation, Director General Chelston Brathwaite participated in the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), held 1-3 June in Medellín, Colombia, which focused on the situation created by rising prices. From 3-5 June, the Director of Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management, James French, was in Rome to attend FAO's *High-level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy* as IICA's representative. During the OAS General Assembly and the meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), Brathwaite presented IICA's thoughts on the current international situation and reiterated that, as well as adopting short-term measures, the nations need to make agriculture a priority on the domestic development agenda. The delegations from the countries received copies of a document setting out the Institute's position on the food crisis, in which emphasis is placed on the importance of implementing long-term solutions. The document is available at www.iica.int. On his return from Rome, the Director of Technical Leadership said that, while it had been very difficult to reach conclusions (180 countries had taken part in the conference), agriculture had been placed on the global agenda and the delegates had acknowledged the big impact that the food crisis could have on poverty, especially in the developing nations.

▪ Toward Jamaica 2009

Chelston Brathwaite described as "very friendly and positive" the bilateral meeting that IICA's delegation held in Colombia with Jamaica's Junior Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ronald A. Robinson. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the preparations for the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life, due to take place in Jamaica in 2009. The Minister was accompanied by his country's Ambassador to the OAS, Anthony Johnson, and Jamaica's Chargé d'Affaires in Colombia, Elaine Sanchez. The Caribbean country will be hosting both the next ministerial meeting and the regular meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the Institute's highest governing body.

▪ IICA takes part in meeting of the Caribbean Development Bank

IICA Director General Chelston Brathwaite participated, in an observer capacity, in the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), held 26-29 May, in Nova Scotia, Canada. The Bank's governors discussed issues of strategic importance for the Caribbean, such as climate change and its impact on the region. Food security was also one of the key topics on the agenda and the Director General was invited to give a presentation. One of the most important outcomes of the meeting was the Bank's decision to allocate more resources to agriculture in the future.

Regions and countries

▪ Brazil provides cooperation in Haiti, with support from IICA

Brazil and Haiti signed an agricultural technical cooperation agreement on 28 May at the Presidential Palace in Haiti, in which it was specified that IICA would serve as facilitator. Brazilian President Ignacio Lula Da Silva, and his Haitian counterpart, René Preval, were honorary witnesses to the signing of the agreement. Among other things, the document calls for the establishment of banks of seeds for use in producing vegetables, the creation of an experimental station, a food security strategy for 2008-2011 and horizontal technical cooperation between the two countries, for which the Institute will serve as facilitator.

▪ **Call for local efforts to prevent zoonoses**

“Community-based leadership: A new approach to combating zoonotic diseases” was the theme of the Third Technical Forum to be held this year. It took place 3 June at IICA Headquarters in Costa Rica. Zoonotic diseases, those that can be transmitted from animals to humans, are becoming increasingly important worldwide. They have a big economic impact and the community is called upon to play a major role combating and preventing them. The participants in the forum included Michigan State University professors Kevin Walker and Richard Bawden; IICA’s Director of Agricultural Health and Food Safety, Ricardo Molins; and Institute Agricultural Health Specialist Ana Marisa Cordero. IICA organizes forums of this kind to discuss key issues related to the modernization of agriculture in the hemisphere.

▪ **Workshop held on the need for “prepared communities”**

Over 40 people, including representatives of the public and private sectors and civil society, scientists and producers, were invited to take part in a workshop on the importance of preparing communities to prevent and deal with zoonotic diseases. The event was held 27-31 May at the EARTH University, in Costa Rica, and the participants were drawn from all parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. The activity was entitled *“Prepared communities: assuming leadership and acting innovatively in the prevention of diseases transmitted from animals to humans.”* Hosted by the University of Michigan, IICA and EARTH, the objective of the event to encourage interaction and dialogue.

▪ **Jamaicans trained in new agricultural techniques**

From 5-31 May, 13 Jamaican technicians were involved in a course-workshop on new agricultural techniques, during which they received training in production in protected environments and organic agriculture. The activity took place in Costa Rica but formed part of IICA’s cooperation agenda in Jamaica. It marked the continuation of the actions undertaken since the recent visit to IICA Headquarters by the Minister of Agriculture and Lands of Jamaica, Christopher Tufton. The workshop was organized by IICA’s Center for Leadership in Agriculture.

▪ **IICA and OLADE to implement Regional Biofuels Program**

IICA and the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at implementing a Joint Regional Biofuels Program. The idea is to tap the two organizations’ potential and experience and carry out their respective mandates, to help countries in the hemisphere set up or adapt their institutional frameworks for the operation of national biofuels programs, and improve or introduce regulatory frameworks. The memorandum was signed on 28 May, during the Third Latin American and Caribbean Seminar on Biofuels.

▪ **IICA is digitizing its library with Google**

IICA sent Google nearly 9000 original documents that will be digitized and made available online by the end of this year. Previously, the Institute had sent nearly 4000 texts. The Institute’s objective is to share agricultural knowledge and information with all nations and, in particular, its Member States. The IICA library was one of the first to begin digitizing its collection with Google Libraries, a huge virtual catalogue designed to facilitate the search for important books. For more information, visit: <http://books.google.com/googlebooks/library.html>

Coming events

- **8-10 July 2008.** International Workshop of IICA/FAO/ECLAC Experts *“Contribution of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu to Sustainable Development and Food Security in the New International Context.”* IICA Headquarters, San Jose, Costa Rica.
- **22-24 July 2008.** Twenty-eighth Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee, IICA Headquarters, San Jose, Costa Rica

More information

- **Director General advocates food security in the Caribbean**
- **IICA reports on its activities in 2007**

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