

# Infoletter

from the Desk of the Director General

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture



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## Institutional Affairs

### ▪ **People and Government of Ecuador honor IICA Director General**

The people and government of Ecuador honored IICA Director General Chelston W. D. Brathwaite during his 27-30 July visit to that country. Brathwaite led the activities held to mark 40 years of IICA's presence in Ecuador. He received the highest honor granted by the country's Confederation of Schools of Agricultural Sciences, the Agricultural Medal of Merit. The councils of several cities presented him with certificates of recognition and the municipality of Quito granted him the title of "Illustrious Guest." The Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries, Walter Poveda, presented Brathwaite with a plaque recognizing the support that the Institute has provided to his ministry over the years.

### ▪ **Countries seek IICA's support on food security**

Delegations from 17 countries took part in the 28th Regular Meeting of IICA's Executive Committee. The global crisis sparked by rising food prices and a report on the strengthening of ties between IICA and CATIE were key elements in the meeting held 22-24 July. On day three, the Committee met at the headquarters of the Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), in the Costa Rican town of Turrialba. A detailed report on the joint work of the two institutions was presented to the Committee at the place where the founder, Henry Wallace, laid the first stone of what would become the headquarters of both IICA and CATIE. The two Directors General, Chelston Brathwaite and Jose Joaquin Campos, described the visit of the Executive Committee as "historic." Both organizations are aware of the importance of creating synergies and making more efficient use of their human and financial resources.

The Executive Committee approved the proposed 2008-2009 Special Program Budget, which will be used to beef up the Institute's technical actions in areas such as agrotourism, horizontal cooperation, agricultural insurance, updating training for leaders and sanitary and phytosanitary measures. The Committee studied IICA's financial statements for 2007 and the report of the external auditors, who, for the fifth consecutive year, gave them their unqualified approval. The meeting also discussed the progress made in enhancing IICA's technical expertise and the status of the 2006-2010 Medium Term Plan and of the preparations for the Fifth Ministerial on Agriculture and Rural Life within the framework of the Summit of the Americas process (Jamaica 2009). Furthermore, the Committee listened to details of IICA's work with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and took decisions aimed at strengthening the institutional framework of the Network of Competent Authorities for Organic Agriculture. Finally, the Institute presented the results achieved by the Center for Leadership in Agriculture.

### ▪ **Calls for joint effort to combat food crisis**

Concerned about food security in Latin America and the Caribbean, the delegations that took part in the meeting of IICA's Executive Committee acknowledged that while the global crisis caused by food prices was a challenge, it was also an opportunity to strengthen agriculture through research, development and technology transfer. A forum led by Institute specialists produced a wide-ranging discussion among the government delegates. The countries are seeking help to deal with the crisis but also want the international cooperation agencies and financial institutions to coordinate their actions, to avoid duplication of effort and save resources.

### ▪ **Ministers from Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas and Dominica take part in Forum for Leaders**

On 21 July, the ministers of agriculture of Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas and Dominica (Joanne Massiah, Lawrence Cartwright and Matthew Walter, respectively) took part in the Forum for Leaders of Agriculture - an IICA program especially designed for new ministers and decision makers from the agricultural sector in the Americas. The ministers discussed with senior IICA officials the challenges that their countries' agricultural sectors face in an increasingly globalized world, as well as the opportunities available to them. The Forum took place at the Institute's Headquarters in Costa Rica. The sessions were complemented with two field trips, to enable the ministers and their delegations to observe a variety of operations first hand, including agriculture in protected environments, organic and hydroponic crops, agrotourism and milk production.

## Ministerial changes

The Director General congratulated the new ministers of agriculture who took up their posts in recent weeks - the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food of Guatemala, Julio Cesar Recinos, the Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food of Argentina, Carlos Cheppi, and the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Grenada, Michael Denis Lett. He reiterated the Institute's support for their efforts to tackle the main challenges facing agriculture in their countries.

## Regions and countries

### ▪ **IICA to present results of workshop on food security at the OAS**

The Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Albert Ramdin, invited IICA to take part in the session of the organization's Permanent Council scheduled for September. The objective will be to present the results of the workshop "Contribution of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu to Sustainable Development and Food Security in the New International Context." This event, which took place last month at the Institute's Headquarters in Costa Rica, was used to discuss the role of agriculture and rural areas in the face of soaring food prices, the energy crisis and climate change. The workshop provided input for the proposal on agriculture and rural life that will be submitted to the next Summit of the Americas (Trinidad and Tobago 2009).

### ▪ **Support from Group of Friends of Haiti sought to deal with food crisis**

Rising oil and food prices have worsened poverty, misery and food security in Haiti. In response, IICA called upon the Group of Friends of Haiti, one of the high-level groups of advisers to the OAS Secretary General, to promote investment in the Caribbean nation. On 28 July, a delegation from the Institute headed by the IICA Representative in Haiti, Alfredo Mena, met with the Group, chaired by the OAS Assistant Secretary General, Albert Ramdin. IICA and Haiti's Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARNDR) are implementing a program entitled "Investing for the future of food security in Haiti."

### ▪ **Forums held to train young leaders of agriculture**

IICA held the First National Forum of Young Agricultural Leaders in the Dominican Republic and the Andean Forum of Young Leaders in Quito, Ecuador. The event in the Caribbean nation involved nearly 80 young people from different institutions, who discussed issues such as food security, leadership, rural development, State policies, rural businesses and information systems. Twenty-five young people from Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela took part in the activity in the Andean country. They discussed possible ways of solving the problems facing food production and rural well-being, and dealing with climate change and its impact on small-scale agriculture. Other items on the agenda were the opportunities available in rural areas using the territorial approach and value-based leadership with techniques for improving teamwork.

## Coming events

- **1 October.** IICA Day, Organization of American States (OAS), Washington D.C.
- **23-29 October.** Meeting of IICA Representatives in the countries. IICA Headquarters, San Jose, Costa Rica.

## More information

- **Looking towards Jamaica 2009**

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