

Infoletter

from the Desk of the Director General

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture



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February, 2009

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Institutional Affairs

▪ The Assistant Secretary General of the OAS meets with IICA's Director General

During a visit to the Headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Ambassador Albert Ramdin, insisted that food security should be recognized as a political, rather than a technical, issue. If people do not have enough food, then you have problems, protest and governments even fall, he said. For the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, the visit was an excellent opportunity to reaffirm the ties that exist with the OAS. The diplomat was accompanied by the Representative of the OAS in Costa Rica, Ambassador Patricio Zuquilanda, and his Advisor, Carlos Manuel Echeverría. During the meeting, IICA's participation in the Summit of the Americas Process, in which IICA is an institutional partner, and the preparations for the Fifth Summit of the Americas were discussed. That Summit is to take place in Trinidad and Tobago in April. Agriculture and rural life figure on the agenda for this hemispheric meeting. In this regard, Ambassador Ramdin recognized the Institute's role and the leadership of IICA's Director General in repositioning agriculture as a key item on the hemispheric agenda. Under Chelston Brathwaite's leadership, he said, the Institute has played a more prominent role in the Inter-American System. Without a doubt, when it comes to matters involving agriculture, development and rural life, the inter-American institution par excellence is IICA, he added.

▪ At IICA, Ministers of Barbados and Grenada make an appeal to reassess the importance of agriculture in the Caribbean

The Minister of Agriculture of Barbados, Senator Haynesley Benn, and the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Grenada, Michael Denis Lett, recognized the need to reassess the importance of agriculture in the Caribbean at the highest political level. During a Forum for Leaders in Agriculture, organized especially for them by the Institute, the Ministers discussed strategies they promote in their countries to face the global challenges, which go beyond the simple production of food. The Forum, which was held from February 9 through 13 at IICA Headquarters, was attended by technical and administrative personnel from the Institute, headed by the Director General. Dr. Brathwaite opened up the discussions with an overview of the development challenges faced at a time of deep crisis worldwide and made a forceful appeal for the countries to place agriculture on the development agendas of the countries. Insofar as the Caribbean was concerned, he advocated a close tie between agriculture and tourism and an increase in the production of those foods consumed by visitors. "If the tourists arrive on the same plane as the vegetables or meats, what good does it do the Caribbean farmer?" he exclaimed. Taking part in the Forum were the Deputy Agricultural Officer from the Ministry of Agriculture of Barbados, Charleston Lucas; the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Agriculture of Grenada, Gemma Bain-Thomas, and the Director of Research from this Ministry, Malachy Dottin. The Forum of Leaders is part of an innovative effort promoted by IICA through its Center for Leadership in Agriculture.

▪ Organization of the Week of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas proceeds

Senior representatives of the Government of Jamaica and officials from IICA met from February 1 through 4 in that Caribbean island to move forward with preparations for the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life in the context of the Summit of the Americas Process and the Fifteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the highest Governing Body of IICA. The Ministers of Agriculture of the Hemisphere will attend the two events in October coming, in Montego Bay. During the visit to Jamaica, the group from the Institute gave a workshop in which they shared particulars regarding the Ministerial Process and explained how it relates to the Fifth Summit of the Americas (Trinidad and Tobago, 2009) as well as the key topics to be discussed by the Inter-American Board.

▪ New edition of COMUNIICA

Experiences in linking farmers to markets, productive innovation, agricultural insurance and biofuels are topics covered in the latest edition of the Institute's technical magazine, COMUNIICA. As stated in the foreword to the magazine, in a context characterized by food insecurity and concern over climate change, "the argument that agriculture should play a more prevalent role is gaining momentum." The magazine is

in circulation in 34 Member States of the Institute. The electronic version of the magazine may be accessed at www.iica.int/COMUNIICA.

Ministerial changes

The Director General congratulated the new Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Colombia, Andres Fernandez Acosta, and the recently appointed Minister of Rural Development and Lands of Bolivia, Julia Ramos Sanchez. Chelston Brathwaite offered IICA as a strategic ally for the definition and implementation of a technical cooperation agenda that is tailored to the needs and political reality of their respective countries. He also invited them to the Forum for Leaders in Agriculture which offers strategic dialogue on the challenges facing agriculture in the XXIst century.

Regions and countries

▪ **University of Chile and IICA sign cooperation agreement**

The Representative of the IICA Office in Chile, Gonzalo Gonzalez, and the Chancellor of the University of Santiago, Chile (USACH), Juan Manuel Zolezzi, signed a cooperation agreement with a view to preparing jointly projects in agriculture and in topics such as food security. The main objectives covered under this agreement are to enter into mutual cooperation in areas such as teaching, research and publications and to contribute to the development of the agricultural and forestry sectors. The Assistant Secretary of Agriculture of Chile, Reinaldo Ruiz, was witness to the agreement. The agreement was originally promoted by the School of Administration and Economy of USACH. The agreement is already bearing fruit: three students pursuing a career in Public Administration at the University of Chile are exercising their profession at the IICA Office in Montevideo, Uruguay.

▪ **PROCINORTE defines strategic plan for 2009**

The Tenth Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of PROCINORTE, Cooperative Program in Agricultural Research and Technology, which facilitates cooperation activities of mutual interest for Canada, Mexico and the United States of America, took place in Mexico on January 28 and 29. There, they defined the strategic plan, plan of operations and management plan that will guide the work in 2009. During the meeting, Mario Romulo Pareja, who serves as Technical Coordinator for the Northern Region of IICA, was elected new Executive Secretary of the Program.

▪ **IICA gives ongoing support to CAS**

IICA supported the organization of the Fifteenth Regular Meeting of the Southern Agricultural Council, held from December 4-5, 2008. Participants included the Ministers of Agriculture of Uruguay and Brazil, Ernesto Agazzi and Reinhold Stephanes, respectively. The following persons participated in their capacity as representatives of the Ministries: Argentina, Rubén Patrouilleau; Bolivia, Teresa Morales, Chile, Reinaldo Ruiz, and Paraguay, Hugo Halley Merlo. The CAS is the regional ministerial forum for consultation and coordination which seeks to revitalize, promote and expand efforts to meet the new challenges to agriculture in those countries. IICA serves as Technical Administrative Secretariat of CAS.

▪ **Dialogue on regional Mercosur- European Union policies**

The International Congress on Regional Policy Management of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the European Union was held in Brazil at the beginning of December last for the purpose of discussing regional policies, exchanging experiences and implementing cooperation instruments. The activity was organized by the Ministry of National Integration of Brazil and IICA. The Representative of the IICA Office in that country, Carlos Americo Basco, was responsible for inaugurating the event. Government representatives and representatives from international organizations attended the event.

Coming events

- **1 – 2 April 2009.** Meeting of the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI), IICA Headquarters, San Jose, Costa Rica.
- **14 - 16 July 2009.** XXIX Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee of IICA.
- **18 - 21 August 2009.** Representatives' Week 2009, IICA Headquarters, San Jose, Costa Rica.
- **25 - 30 October 2009.** Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture and the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life, Jamaica.

More information

- **Assistant Secretary General of the OAS calls for recognition of food security as a political issue**

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