

Infoletter

from the Desk of the Director General

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

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Institutional Affairs

▪ **At the Fifth Summit of the Americas: Heads endorse agriculture as a priority in country strategies**

The 5th Summit of the Americas successfully concluded in Port of Spain, Trinidad on April 17th, with the leaders of the Americas agreeing to move forward towards change and a new, brighter future for the people of the Americas. The deliberations and agreements of the 5th Summit of the Americas provide a strong mandate for the Fifth Hemispheric Ministerial Meeting of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas – which will take place in Montego Bay, Jamaica in October 2009. That meeting is the most important fora for agriculture and rural life in the hemisphere, will carry forward the agreements reached in Port of Spain at the 5th Summit, particularly as they relate to enhancing food security, under the theme “Building Capacity for Enhancing Food Security and Rural Life in the Americas”. The role of IICA in the process of the Summit of the Americas remains clear, as a commitment to working with the leaders in the hemisphere to reposition agriculture and rural life in the development agendas of the member states. The Summit also provided a space for Brathwaite to meet with the other heads of the Joint Summit Working Group institutions and together, on Sunday 19th, in a closed meeting with Senator Hillary Rodham-Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State, as well as with other distinguished personalities from the hemisphere.

▪ **IICA presents report on agriculture as an engine driving development to Fifth Summit**

IICA presented the report “Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean: A fortress in times of crisis...the engine driving development” during the Fifth Summit of the Americas, in Trinidad and Tobago. The four-page document, prepared especially for the meeting, is a summary of a proposal that will be presented to the ministers of agriculture of the hemisphere next October, when they meet in Jamaica. The report holds that now is the time to take the actions and make the investments needed to tap the potential that agriculture and rural territories offer for meeting the challenges of the current global economic crisis and returning to the path of development. According to the report, exporting countries benefited temporarily from the higher prices received for the major agricultural commodities through the middle of 2008, but then saw their production costs rise due to higher prices for inputs. Net importing countries were more vulnerable to those increases, with more consumers and small-scale producers finding themselves in a situation of food insecurity. Despite this outlook, IICA believes that, if managed in a sustainable manner, the natural resources available in the region would make it possible to increase food production, meet the challenges of food security and climate change and help large segments of the population to escape from poverty. This would require the adoption of sound public policies and the existence of institutions capable of tackling this complex, volatile and highly unpredictable international context. The report also calls attention to the need to reassess agricultural production; foster the diversification of crops; produce bioenergy without affecting the food supply; promote a new technological revolution; encourage sustainable development approaches and payment for environmental services; and, improve policies related to the international trade in agrifood products.

▪ **Director General meets with President Alan García and receives prestigious Honoris Causa degree**

During a visit to Lima, Peru, from April 6-8, the Director General of the Institute, Chelston Brathwaite, met with President Alan García and received a Doctor Honoris Causa degree from the La Molina National Agrarian University and was honored by the government of the province of Huaura. During their meeting, García and Brathwaite went over the technical activities that the Institute carries out in Peru under the leadership of its Representative in that country, Freddy Rojas. The Director presented the leader with a copy of the “2008 Annual Report: IICA’s contribution to agriculture and the development of rural communities in Peru.” Following that meeting, Brathwaite also held talks with Prime Minister Yehude Simon, the Minister of Agriculture, Carlos Leyton, and the Representative of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Peru, Ambassador Bertha Santoscotoy. During his visit, Brathwaite also took part in the Annual Accountability Seminar of the IICA Office in Peru, during which a report on the results achieved during 2008 was presented to the national agricultural community.

Regions and countries

▪ IICA inaugurates new office in the Chilean city of Valdivia

At the end of March, Chile's Under Secretary of Agriculture, Reinaldo Ruiz, the Chancellor of the Universidad Austral, Víctor Cubillos, and the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, officially inaugurated IICA's new offices in the Chilean city of Valdivia, Region de los Ríos, south of the capital, Santiago. The President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, sent a letter acknowledging the importance of IICA's work in her country. She recognized that the Institute was endeavoring to "decentralize technical cooperation, promoting the capabilities of the agroforestry sector with a view to transforming the region into an important contributor to the efforts to position Chile as a major agrifood producer." The new offices are situated on the campus of the Universidad Austral.

▪ Agreement will strengthen agricultural innovation and technology in Central America

The Central American Agricultural Technology Integration System (SICTA), IICA and the Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) signed an agreement in March designed to beef up their joint technical cooperation actions. The agreement, which will be in force between 2009 and 2012, is aimed at promoting technological change in the agriculture and forestry sector in Central America, to make it more efficient and modern. Created by the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC), SICTA is the regional body that coordinates the agricultural research agenda of the seven countries of the region. The Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, the Minister of Agriculture of Costa Rica, Javier Flores Galarza, and the Director General of CATIE, José Joaquín Campos, were all present at the signing ceremony.

▪ Inter-American Commission to spearhead Information Portal on Organic Agriculture

The Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (SAGPyA) of Argentina, with cooperation from IICA, is to take the first steps to establish the Information Portal on Organic Agriculture of the Inter-American Commission on Organic Agriculture (CIAO). The new initiative - which is in the design phase - will be used to manage knowledge and information on the subject, and will include the operation of a center for documentary information resources, a distance training center and an electronic market. The portal will draw on the content of the Latin American and Caribbean Agricultural Information and Documentation System (SIDALC) and tap IICA's experience in developing decentralized portals. The aim of both the CIAO - comprised of representatives of 18 countries - and the Institute is to meet the information needs of the scientific community, students, development institutions, entrepreneurs and rural actors interested in the subject.

▪ The Institute concludes study on agricultural science and technology in Latin America

Working with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), IICA concluded the study "Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean: Elements for a Contribution for Sustainable Development," which will be published in a few weeks. This research project analyzes agriculture from the perspective of a social construct and proposes possible types of regionalization and the configuration of a new paradigm so that knowledge, science, and technology have a bigger impact on poverty reduction.

▪ IICA launches website on Caribbean agrotourism

The website www.caribbeanagrotourism.com has been created to facilitate knowledge sharing and promote joint efforts by institutions, organizations and individuals involved in agrotourism. The official launch took place on March 24, during the accountability seminar of the project "Strengthening the tourism sector through the development of linkages with the agricultural sector in the Caribbean," which has been under way for three years. The initiative was implemented by the Organization of American States (OAS) and IICA in Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname.

Coming events

- **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

- **Future of Caribbean Agrotourism bright- thanks to IICA and OAS**

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