

Infoletter

from the Desk of the Director General

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

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July, 2009

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Institutional Affairs

▪ Director General presented his report on eight years of work

Director General Chelston Brathwaite presented a detailed report on IICA's most important achievements over the last eight years during the recent meeting of the Executive Committee, one of the governing bodies of this specialized agency for agriculture. "I want to emphasize that the Administration's achievements are not my personal achievements, rather they are the result of teamwork by the Inter-American Board of Agriculture, the Executive Committee, the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues and the entire staff," Brathwaite said. One of the most important tasks was to reposition agriculture and rural life on the hemispheric agenda. The success achieved is evidenced in the agreements of the Fifth Summit of the Americas - Trinidad and Tobago 2009. At that meeting, the Heads of State and Government signed the Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain, in which they reaffirmed the importance of food security and agriculture and asked IICA to assist in finding solutions to the problems of food security and volatile food prices.

▪ Countries endorse food security strategy

IICA secured the endorsement of the members of the 2009 Executive Committee for the implementation of the "Institutional Technical Cooperation Strategy in Food Security," which focuses on small and medium-scale producers in the Americas. Representatives of 22 countries took part in the Twenty-ninth Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee, held 14-16 July. The meeting was used to advance the preparations for the Week of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas, which will take place 25-31 October in Jamaica. IICA's food security strategy will place emphasis on small and medium-sized producers in the Americas, since they make up the largest single group of farmers and produce a big percentage of the region's food.

▪ Minister of Jamaica invites countries to agricultural summit

The Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries of Jamaica, Christopher Tufton, reiterated his invitation to the countries to participate in the most important meeting for agriculture and rural life in the Americas, which will be taking place in his country from 25-31 October this year. As the host of the Week of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas, via videoconference, Minister Tufton spoke to the delegations of the 22 countries that participated in the meeting of the Executive Committee, which also discussed the draft agenda for the activity in Jamaica. The week's activities will include 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). Minister Tufton is promoting the participation of the private sector in the agricultural summit, whose theme is "Building Capacity for Enhancing Food Security and Rural Life in the Americas." Jamaica will also be the scenario for promoting the implementation of the agreements reached by the Heads of State and Government who participated in the Fifth Summit of the Americas. Furthermore, the IABA will be electing a new Director General of IICA in Jamaica. Two of the candidates for the post, Victor Villalobos, of Mexico, and Mariano Olazabal, of Peru, gave presentations to the Executive Committee on their plans for the period 2010-2014.

▪ IICA's financial health

The Institute has achieved a high level of effectiveness, transparency and prudence in managing its resources, as confirmed by the audited financial reports and the report of the Audit Review Committee - comprised of external auditors - presented to IICA's Executive Committee. Pointing out that practically all the countries were up to date with the payment of their quota contributions, Director General Chelston Brathwaite said, "This can only be interpreted as a sign of satisfaction with the work that IICA carries out under its new technical cooperation model." The Institute's 2010-2011 Program-Budget was also approved during the meeting of the Executive Committee, and a presentation was given on the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the assessment of the institution's technical capabilities.

▪ **Inter-American Commission for Organic Agriculture created**

IICA's Executive Committee approved the bylaws of the Inter-American Commission for Organic Agriculture (CIAO), which will be ratified in October in Jamaica at the next meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the Institute's highest-level governing body. A one-of-a-kind organization in the hemisphere, the Commission aims to become a point of reference and contribute to the development of organic agriculture, and trade in its products, in the countries of the Americas.

▪ **IICA/CATIE strengthen their strategic partnership**

The Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center and IICA reported on the progress of their strategic partnership aimed at capitalizing on the strengths of the two institutions. The IICA Executive Committee discussed the biannual reports of the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and CATIE. The Director General of CARDI, Arlington Chesney, and the Director General of CATIE, Jose Joaquin Campos, both took part in the meeting.

Regions and countries

▪ **Central Americans request that the territorial rural development strategy be incorporated into government plans**

Central American representatives of fifteen Territorial Action Groups, associations of municipal districts and other groups involved in the management of rural territories requested that the region's seven countries include in their government plans the Central American Strategy for Territorial Rural Development (ECADERT), which will be presented to the nations' leaders in December. At a regional consultative meeting held 22-23 July at the IICA Office in Managua, Nicaragua - with specialists from cooperation agencies in attendance - the Central American representatives shared experiences, formulated proposals and applauded the governments' decision to facilitate the participatory preparation of the strategy. They also urged the governments to implement it in partnership with civil society, established a Central American Network of Territorial Action Groups and pledged to ensure the effective implementation of the strategy in the countries and territories.

▪ **Jatropha cultivation promoted as an option for producing renewable fuels**

To promote the production of biodiesel, agricultural research institutions in the hemisphere plan to consolidate the research, development and innovation network for *Jatropha curcas* L. in Latin America and Caribbean (LAC *Jatropha* Network). This network forms part of the Agroenergy Network of the Cooperative Program for Research, Development and Innovation for the South American Tropics (PROCITROPICOS/IICA). Its objective is to promote the partial substitution of fossil fuels with renewable, plant-based fuels, specifically those produced from *jatropha*. *Jatropha* seeds have a high oil content and the plant is perennial (i.e., it does not have to be replanted each year) and is not edible, so food production is not affected if it is grown for fuel. However, other crops can be planted with it so that an energy source and food can be produced on the same plot of land. The network intends to implement a genetic improvement program for *jatropha*, to consolidate banks of *Jatropha curcas* L. germplasm in the region and facilitate the sharing of information, knowledge and best practices generated by research activities. It is expected to take four years to consolidate the network.

Coming events

- **18 - 21 August, 2009.** Representatives' Week, 2009, IICA, Costa Rica.
- **25 - 30 October, 2009.** Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture and Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life, Jamaica.

More information

- **Minister of Agriculture of Jamaica calls for participation in the most important meeting on agriculture in the Americas**

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