

Infoletter

from the Desk of the Director General

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

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September 2009

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Institutional Affairs

▪ Young leaders return home with a new vision of agriculture

Addressing some 70 young people from the Americas who were participating in the 2009 Forum for Young Leaders, the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, said "Great accomplishments are not achieved all at once; they are the sum of many small accomplishments." The Forum, an initiative launched by IICA's Center for Leadership in Agriculture in 2008, took place from September 7 to 11. Upon receiving their certificates of participation, the young people reaffirmed their commitment to agriculture and pledged that they would return to their countries and share the knowledge they had acquired, empower young people and work to benefit the sector. The Forum was held at IICA Headquarters in San Jose, Costa Rica, and addressed topics such as value-based leadership, teamwork, systemic thinking, dispute resolution, agroenergy, entrepreneurship and project design and preparation. On Wednesday, Sept. 9, the young leaders took a field trip to EARTH University, where they visited organic agriculture farms operated by the university. The young people stated that they will use popular social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to share information on leadership in agriculture and other topics of interest to the region, which, they assured, will enable them to work together in addressing problems shared by the countries. People interested in joining the groups and participating may visit twitter.com/centroliderazgo or on Facebook search for "Leadership in Agriculture." IICA promotes the development of leaders with a global vision and affords young people whose work is associated with agriculture and rural life in the Americas an opportunity to enhance their understanding of global issues.

▪ IICA mourns the loss of the father of the Green Revolution

IICA joined with the international community in mourning the passing of the renowned agronomist and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Norman Borlaug, on September 12. Borlaug was considered the father of the Green Revolution, which transformed agriculture worldwide in the 1960s and 1970s. "His discoveries contributed greatly to efforts to combat hunger and poverty in the world," stated IICA's Director General, Chelston Brathwaite. He added "His work laid the foundation for encouraging the adoption of a new model for development," one that IICA has been promoting in recent years which goes beyond the green revolution and places agriculture and rural life at the center of the countries development agendas. We want to work with our partners and our Member States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and cut extreme poverty in half by 2015."

Regions and countries

▪ Jamaican Ambassador to the OAS to participate in conference on food security

The Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the Organization of American States (OAS), Ambassador Anthony Johnson, will be one of the moderators at the High-Level Conference "Agriculture for Development and Food Security in the Americas," to be sponsored jointly by IICA and the OAS. Johnson issued an urgent call for the region "to build capacity in the agricultural sector as an important first step in enhancing production and productivity in order to increase food security and incomes in the rural areas." He continued, "Increased investment in the sector must happen now in order for us to achieve these goals." The conference, scheduled for October 1, 2009, in Washington D.C., is intended to serve as a platform for bringing attention to the need and opportunities to invest in agriculture. It is a preparatory activity 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), both of which will be held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in October, and during which food security will be a key topic. The list of participants will include representatives from the World Bank, the Economic

Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); the Latin American Agribusiness Development Corporation (LAAD); and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Other organizations include the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); the Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture; The World Food Program (WFP); the International Markets Bureau-Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO); the University of California-Davis and Texas A&M University.

▪ **Biotechnology increases both yields and profits in agriculture in the Americas**

After being applied for 13 years in different parts of the world, the new agrobiotechnologies are living up to the promise of growing more food on less land, this according to Clive James, Chairman of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA). This world-renowned expert participated on September 9 in the forum "Biotechnological/Genetically Modified Crops Today and the Outlook for the Future," organized by IICA. Research conducted by the ISAAA, said James, revealed that the economic benefit obtained from the application of agrobiotechnology from 1996 to 2007 totaled US\$44 billion. Of that amount, 44% was generated by increased yields and 56% derived from lower production costs. According to James, agrobiotechnology makes it possible to produce more food on less land, which protects soils and water and reduces environmental costs thanks to the use of less pesticide. While recognizing that it is not a panacea, he believes that in a context characterized by greater demand for food, less land available for producing it and uncertainty as to effects of climate change, the use of agrobiotechnologies could help meet these challenges.

▪ **Countries of Andean Region to discuss food security**

The first meeting of the Andean Agricultural Negotiating Group will be held on October 12-13 and afford decision makers in agriculture an opportunity to discuss the food security situation in their countries and matters related to rural extension. The Ministers of Agriculture of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela are expected to participate. The meeting is part of the efforts being undertaken by the Andean Alliance for Dialogue on Agriculture and Rural Life, which is a space for adopting common objectives and improving the well-being of the inhabitants of this region.

▪ **Specialists from Brazil, Spain and Italy meet to discuss ethics and the environment**

On September 4, IICA held the First Seminar on Ethics and Socioenvironmental Responsibility of the Agriculture and Business Sector, which brought together specialists from Brazil, Spain and Italy via videoconference. The discussion focused on the social responsibility of businesses and the ethical commitment to the sustainable development of communities and quality in the provision of services. Participants in the meeting included the Under Secretary of Agriculture for the Federal District, Dilson Resende; the Director of Asa Alimentos, Katia Amorin; and the Executive Director of the Institute on Ethics and Quality in Agriculture of the University of Buenos Aires, Gustavo Secilio.

Coming events

- **October 1, 2009.** Conference "Agriculture for Development and Food Security in the Americas," Washington, D.C.
- **October 25-30.** Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life and the Fifteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture, Montego Bay, Jamaica.

More information

- **Director General honors talent at IICA**
- **IICA's work at hemispheric level in key areas of agriculture honored.**

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