



IICA's hemispheric team strengthened

The agenda of Representatives' Week 2007 centered on the topics of leadership and institutional modernization.

On November 1, seven days of training in leadership and institutional modernization came to a close at the Headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). During the week, the Institute's Representatives in the member countries, regional specialists and senior staff took part not only in the training sessions, but also in discussions on IICA's role in meeting the new challenges facing agriculture and rural life in the hemisphere.

The event, entitled Representatives' Week 2007, began on October 25 and brought together participants from many different parts of the hemisphere. The busy agenda included discussions on the challenges facing agriculture, a talk from one of the leading authorities in the world on leadership, and a three-day course taught by faculty of a prestigious business school.

A few days earlier, the World Bank had published its World Development Report, which pointed out that after 25 years agriculture was again playing a major role, and that agriculture and small-scale producers must be placed at the center of the development agenda if poverty was to be reduced. This recognition was a confirmation of what those at the helm of organizations such as IICA have been saying for a long time: that greater attention should be given to agriculture and rural life throughout the hemisphere.

The Director General of the Institute, Chelston Brathwaite, opened the week by acknowledging the progress that has been made in consolidating the cooperation model in place since 2002, and then calling attention to the challenges still ahead: eradication of poverty, climate change, food security, nutrition, trade and control of transboundary diseases.

His introduction was followed by a four-hour talk by leadership guru Stephen Covey, author of the "The seven habits of highly effective people." Next came a three-day course taught by six faculty members of the INCAE Business School.

Covey spoke at length on the qualities of modern leaders, including the ability to listen, show respect, and promote transparency and accountability and, above all, to base his/her actions on principles. He explained all seven habits, but went into greater detail on the eighth, which is to find one's own voice and inspire others to find theirs.

In the INCAE course, participants received training in how to negotiate, analyze political risks, analyze contexts, plan, think positively and manage through leadership.

As part of the leadership-centered agenda, the Director General launched the Program Initiative for Young Leaders of Sustainable Agricultural Development of the Americas in the 21st Century. The Institute's goal, he said, is to promote the development of young leaders with a global vision, to provide them with the opportunity to increase their understanding of global issues, and to contribute to the operation of an inter-American network of young leaders with the ability to effectively transform agriculture in the hemisphere.

On Saturday, October 27, the participants went of a coffee tour. While at Café Britt, a Costa Rican company that provides entertainment while explaining the many steps in bringing coffee from the plantation to the table, they learned about agrotourism, linkages between agriculture and “industries without chimneys,” value added and gourmet coffee.

Acknowledgements

At the conclusion of the Week, the Director General’s Awards for Excellence were handed out. These awards are given in recognition of extraordinary contributions made by individual staff members and teams of staff members in different areas of specialization throughout the hemisphere.

Brathwaite reminded the winners that “success is not necessarily arriving at the summit of a mountain as a final destination. It is continuing upward spiral of progress. It is perpetual growth and so you should continue the process of personal and professional growth.”

In his judgment, IICA has a bright future if its personnel will adopt eight basic values:

Team Work- Open communication- Flexibility in our operations- A positive mentality of abundance- where there are opportunities for everyone. - A culture of urgency in operations- Recognition of superior performance- Ethical conduct in the performance of our duties- Respect for diversity

Important decisions The IICA hemispheric team reached three important decisions during the Week, which were summarized by the Director of Regional Operations and Integration, Mariano Olazabal:

- Promoting a broad-based concept of agriculture and rural life through circulation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan and its Agro-Matrix. The agreement takes into consideration, inter alia, the advisability of using the Agro-Matrix as a framework for organizing our technical cooperation, and the challenge of articulating the Institute’s work with the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements, in accordance with the various realities of each country.
- Reinforcing the formulation of cooperation projects, negotiation of resources and visibility of our work. The decision calls for, among other actions, updating those IICA reference documents related to policies on and guidelines for the formulation of cooperation projects and the negotiation of external resources, and for incorporating into the new IICA Website a section containing information on projects IICA is executing at the hemispheric, regional and national levels.
- Establishing institutional and hemispheric leadership. Leadership will be made a fundamental component of our technical cooperation activities. The hemispheric launch of the Program Initiative for Young Leaders of Sustainable Agricultural Development of the Americas in the 21st Century will be prepared. Efforts will be made to identify external and internal financial resources for the sustainability of the program for young leaders as of 2009.

patricia.leon@iica.int



Stephen Covey visits IICA; speaks about leadership

As the keynote speaker of Representatives’ Week 2007, Covey delivered an inspirational address and invited his audience to acquire the eighth habit of highly effective people “to find your voice and inspire others to find theirs.”

For four hours today, world-renowned expert Stephen Covey spoke on leadership in the 21st century to senior management staff of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), located in Costa Rica.

Covey, who has sold 15 million copies of his acclaimed book “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,” has been named by Time Magazine as one of the most influential men in the world today.

Some 200 people packed the meeting room, and even more listened in over the Internet in the Institute’s 34 member countries and via closed circuit television at IICA Headquarters.

Representatives’ Week 2007 (October 25-November 1) is an annual strategic planning meeting that brings together the Institute’s Representatives, regional specialists and the staff of Headquarters.

The decision to invite Covey ties in perfectly with the theme for the Week: leadership. Continuing with that theme, the INCAE Business School will offer an intensive training course on leadership and institutional modernization from Monday October 29 to Wednesday 31.

Covey held his audience

He never managed to stand behind the podium that had been set up for him, preferring instead to move about the room. He spoke slowly, without raising his voice, and welcomed questions from the audience throughout his presentation.

Referring to the need for leaders to learn how to communicate, he showed the audience a “talking stick” he had been given by a group of American Indians in Canada, symbolic of the first step in effective communication: to know how to listen. Joking with the audience, he added “I can’t imagine why they would give me the name Bald Eagle.”

Throughout his presentation, he kept the cane in his hand as a reminder of his invitation to learn to listen. A leader, he said, learns to find his/her voice and inspires others to find theirs.

For Covey, to learn to listen is more than a skill, it is “oxygen for the heart” that makes it possible to move from a state in which communication is merely the transmission of information, to one of understanding, synergy and transformation.

Agriculture, an important activity

The leadership guru had words of praise for IICA’s work and, knowing that his audience works day in and day out to develop agriculture in the hemisphere, noted that he once worked on a farm. He went on to say that, while some work may be more exciting or financially rewarding, agriculture plays an important role in society.

He explained that he often uses agriculture as a metaphor for his approach to leadership. Agriculture is based on natural laws which are universal and timeless. For him, only leadership that is based on principles, which he equates with natural laws, will be effective.

In agriculture, he added, it is often necessary to think in the long term; no steps may be left out and there are no shortcuts.

He then said “Every great breakthrough is a break with something,” and that quantum improvements can only be made by changing paradigms. Sometimes, he noted, leadership means doing small things that have a big impact. He offered the example of the trim tab of a rudder, which, despite its small size, can change the course of even the largest ocean-going tankers.

Covey pointed to everyday leaders to support his thesis, such as the hot dog vendor in a large city who, in order to provide better service, allows his customers them to pay and then take their own change from a basket. Trust is a powerful thing, he said.

Throughout his presentation, he also referred to more well-known leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize winner and leading proponent of the use of microcredits.

He later delved into the concepts of personal greatness, leadership greatness and organizational greatness.

As regards leadership greatness, he explained that leaders should inspire others to find their own greatness, and be capable of instilling confidence, showing respect, speaking clearly, making amends, achieving results, listening first, encouraging accountability, etc.

IICA Director General Chelston W.D. Brathwaite thanked Covey for reassuring the participants that agriculture is an important activity and that to work in agriculture is a noble undertaking. "You touched the life of each and every one of us today and the principles you shared with us will help us to grow," he said.

patricia.leon@iica.int



IICA bets on young leaders in agriculture

The Director General of the Institute introduced the program for young leaders during Representatives' Week 2007

The Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Chelston Brathwaite, has just launched the Program for Young Leaders involved in the Sustainable Development of Agriculture of the Americas in the 21st Century.

Through this initiative, IICA will promote the development of young leadership with a global perspective and will offer young professionals in agriculture and rural life in the Americas an opportunity to expand their knowledge of global matters. It will further support development of an inter-American network of young leaders capable of effectively transforming agriculture and rural life in the hemisphere.

The new program was introduced during the Institute's annual strategic planning meeting, known as Representatives' Week. That meeting, which started on October 25 and will close on November 1, was attended by IICA Representatives in the 34 Member States, regional specialists and directors from IICA Headquarters.

This year, Representatives' Week revolved around the theme of leadership and institutional modernization. World renowned experts, such as Stephen Covey, participated, as did experts from the INCAE Business School in an intensive workshop.

The program for young people, the Director General explained, is based on four premises:

- One-half of the world's population is under 25 years of age and the investment in young people is vital, if the Millennium Development Goals are to be met.
- We must invest in brilliant young minds to develop leadership for the future.
- Failure to develop young leadership could result in a loss of good talent for the coming generation and a missed opportunity for the best agents for social change.
- The development of young leadership will be a major part of the Institute's future agenda, as it seeks to create and promote a new vision for agriculture and rural life of the Americas.

In launching the program, the Director General asked for the support of the IICA Representatives in the countries: "as an Administration," he said, we are sowing the seeds and the Offices must care for the plants."

Brathwaite gave particulars on how these young people would be selected, the financial needs of the program and preparations for the first forum scheduled for March 2008.

He also heard comments, suggestions and various arguments concerning the important role that young people have to play.

The initiative is part of the Program of Leaders for Agriculture which includes an initiative for new ministers and high-ranking executives in agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

www.iica.int

patricia.leon@iica.int



Director General of IICA bestows awards

Awards for excellence bestowed on people throughout the hemisphere.

In a ceremony filled with emotion and high expectations, the Director General's Awards for Excellence for 2006 were announced this November 1.

The awards ceremony took place during the closing of Representatives' Week, which was held from October 25 to November 1.

The awards, created to recognize creativity, outstanding performance, leadership, and teamwork on the part of Institute staff members, have been given out for the last four years.

To ensure equality of opportunity for all staff members, at Headquarters and in the Offices in the countries, this year awards were handed out in only two categories: awards for teamwork and awards for individual contributions. Staff members who had developed a product, a concept or a process, or generated a project that improved the efficiency, image or operations of the Institute, were the recipients of the awards.

The selection committee comprised three former IICA staff members: Jan Hurwitch, Rodolfo Quiros Guardia and Eduardo Salvado. During the ceremony, Director General Chelston Brathwaite was accompanied by representatives of organizations which sponsor these awards: the President of the OAS Credit Union, Carlos Calderon, and Philippe De Dreuze, of Rutherford International.

Teamwork

The IICA Office in Costa Rica won an award for teamwork in recognition of its successful efforts to launch the Tomato Auction. In 2006, the auction, held three times a week, marketed an average of 10,400 18-kilo crates worth approximately US\$240,000.

The IICA Office in Haiti was also honored for rehabilitating two irrigation systems in Desbarrieres and Zabriko under a project aimed at helping victims of flooding in rural areas of Gonaives, in the department of Artibonito. The irrigation of more than 700 hectares belonging to 1,350 families enabled them not only to plant their crops, but also to increase production.

The IICA Office in Uruguay was recognized for a series of conference it sponsored on national policies and agriculture in the future, with a view enriching the national discourse on this topic by contributing analyses and proposals related to the agricultural country of the 21st century and its role in the changing international context. These conferences were the result of a strategic partnership between IICA, the El Pais newspaper and the SERAGRO agricultural consulting firm.

The IICA Office in Venezuela was acknowledged for the project "Integrated Management of Water Resources for the Endogenous Territorial Development of Yacambu-Quibor," which is the result of a joint effort between IICA and 16 national institutions. Its impact is national in scope and will boost the

contribution that the Yacambu-Quibor territory makes to Venezuela. Of particular note are the proposals dealing with the efficient use of water for food production, within a framework of food security.

In addition to the Offices in the countries, four Directorates at Headquarters were recognized for their teamwork:

- The Directorate of Biotechnology and Biosafety, for showing clear leadership in the design and implementation of the new Hemispheric Biotechnology and Biosafety Program;
- The Directorate of Operations and Integration, for adopting a system of working which, among other things, has helped to more closely link Headquarters and the Offices in the countries;
- The Directorate of Agricultural Health and Food Safety (AHFS) for designing and implementing the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) instrument, for the modernization of veterinary services worldwide; and
- The Directorate of Administration and Finance, for spearheading a number of processes aimed at improving quality, developing personnel, encouraging participatory programming and ensuring administrative efficiency, which led to substantial improvements in the provision of support for the technical cooperation offered by the Institute.

Individual awards

Damaris Chaves, from the Directorate of Human Resources Development at Headquarters, was honored for her dedication, capacity for innovation and tenacity in developing several key instruments used in the management of Institute personnel.

Lizardo de las Casas was acknowledged for his commitment to agriculture and rural life in the Americas. In 2006, and for many years before, he worked tirelessly to consolidate the positioning achieved by both in the Summit of the American process.

Diane Francis, an IICA regional specialist in trade policy and negotiation, was recognized for her application and promotion of the Agro-Matrix, her outstanding technical expertise and her efforts to better understand and increase awareness of the challenges facing the countries of the Caribbean.

An award was bestowed upon Rafael Isidro Quevedo for his efforts to integrate agricultural and rural education in the Andean Region, and for establishing the Andean Federation of Associations of Higher Education in the Agricultural and Related Sciences, with a membership of 135 delegates from five countries of the region.

Another award winner in the individual category was Edith de Obschatko, in recognition of her technical capabilities, dedication and skill in handling institutional relations, and because of her work in addressing critical issues related to the formulation of agricultural policies and the well-being of the rural population.

Ana Yoseth Mata received an individual reward for improving the English language skills of personnel at Headquarters and in the IICA Office in Costa Rica. Thanks to her efforts, 12 local staff members were awarded the Cambridge First Certificate of English in 2006.

Roxana Montero Barrantes was acknowledged for publishing, in English and Spanish, a four-volume set of Institute rules and regulations, including the Convention, the Rules of Procedure, Manuals and Executive Orders, which are now readily available to Institute authorities and personnel and more easily updated. She also conducted a thorough review of all historical and legislative documentation related to the rules governing payment of Member State quotas.

silvia.delgado@iica.int



IICA staff members visit agrotourism enterprise

There they learned more about an innovative approach to coffee cultivation in Costa Rica.

The Representatives of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in its 34 Member States, the Regional Specialists and staff members from Headquarters participated in a four-hour tour of a coffee farm in the mountains of Costa Rica to see firsthand how a successful agrotourism enterprise is operated.

The tour was one of the activities held in connection with Representatives' Week 2007, which took place from October 25 to November 1, and whose agenda centered on the topics of leadership and institutional modernization.

During the tour of the Café Britt farm and facilities, a play is presented which takes the audience through the entire process involved in bringing coffee from the farm to the consumer's cup. By making coffee processing into a tourist attraction, they have succeeded in adding value to a traditional activity.

After the tour, they met with Café Britt General Manager Pablo Vargas, who answered questions and cleared up doubts regarding the profitability of agrotourism vs. agriculture alone, the business model for agrotourism enterprises, publicity, and the role of sustainable development in agrotourism.

Other questions focused on the most important hurdles that must be overcome in securing financing for an activity which, at least in Costa Rica, was a very new and did not fit neatly into the established categories of the loan portfolios of lending institutions.

They were also interested in hearing about the economic model used to encourage small-scale producers to plant organic, certified or gourmet coffee, which require special care.

At the conclusion of the tour, Director General Chelston Brathwaite underscored the importance of understanding that agriculture, in addition to selling products, can "sell experiences" and that agrotourism may be a good option for many producers in the hemisphere.

jorge.suarez@iica.int



COMUNIICA focuses on principal challenges facing agriculture in the hemisphere

IICA's technical journal offers five articles that underscore the need to include emerging issues on the agendas of agricultural and rural institutions.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) recently published the latest edition of its technical journal COMUNIICA, which deals with the main challenges facing agriculture in the hemisphere in light of the new conditions with which development efforts now have to contend, and which demand greater participation and commitment on the part of grassroots organizations.

COMUNIICA is divided into three sections: Perspectives, Experiences and Points of View. In this edition, all five articles appear in Perspectives.

In the article “Agriculture and the new challenges of development,” IICA Specialist Rafael Trejos summarizes the report “State of and Outlook for Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas - 2007: Agriculture and the new challenges of development.”

One conclusion reached by the author is that, in economic and social terms, the hemisphere’s agricultural sector is performing better than it has for 25 years, and that concerns regarding social conditions, the environmental situation and governance in rural territories linger.

Another article “The Peru-U.S. Trade Promotion Agreement: Possible impacts on Peruvian agriculture,” was written by the IICA Director of Policies and Trade, Julio Paz, and Joaquin Arias, Regional Specialist in Trade Policies for the Andean Area.

In it, the authors summarize the most important aspects of the reciprocal opening of agricultural markets between both countries, and examine the impact of the agreement from the global and sectoral perspective and from the point of view of products or agricultural production chains.

The article “Information management for agricultural technology innovation” was written by Viviana Palmieri, IICA Technology and Innovation Specialist, and Lornel Rivas, of the National Agricultural Research Institute of Venezuela.

The authors state that technical information is a key element of any innovation or research process undertaken in the agricultural sector, and that institutions that promote such processes are currently facing a number of challenges in relation to information management.

The Rural Development Specialists in the Brazil Office, Carlos de Miranda and Alberto Renault, are the authors of “Sustainable development and the territorial approach: identities and typologies.”

It deals with a proposed methodology for applying a territorial approach as a strategic dimension of the planning and implementation of public policies.

“The shaping of State policy for agriculture in Paraguay” was written by the technical team of the IICA Office in Paraguay. In the article, the authors suggest beginning a process of reflection, discussion and consensus on the rural development model being sought in that country.

According to the authors, the success of a political pact depends in large part on the participation and commitment of various segments of society and on the leadership of the state institutions responsible for rural development and well-being.

federico.sancho@iica.int



Good Agricultural Practices Encouraged

Fruit growers from El Salvador visited farms in the Guatemalan highlands as part of a horizontal cooperation activity involving the IICA Offices in El Salvador and Guatemala.

The IICA Office in El Salvador recently organized a trip by small-scale fruit growers from that country to the highlands of Guatemala, to observe the application of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs).

From October 17-19, six growers from different parts of El Salvador, accompanied by four specialists, visited farms where small-scale Guatemalan vegetable growers who belong to the group “Pamanzana” apply GAPs, with support from the Comprehensive Agricultural and Environmental Protection Program (PIPAA).

The trip also included a visit to the Association of Exporters (AGEXPORT), where they analyzed the lessons learned from PIPPA, and to the Cuatro Pinos Cooperative in Santiago Sacatepequez, another organized group of growers who export safe vegetables to the United States.

The objective of the trip was to learn what is involved in applying GAPs and how the organization of small-scale production changes when a food safety assurance system is adopted.

Growers of red mombin, avocado and other native fruits were able to see firsthand how to overcome barriers to the importation of their produce. They observed practices such as using recycled plastic to surround their plots of land, recording each application of pesticides, ensuring the proper use of latrines and others, which are monitored by PIPPA specialists and entitle them to place a seal on their produce attesting to its safety.

According to the specialists who accompanied the fruit growers on the trip, aspects of the Guatemalan model could be replicated by the National Fruit Program of El Salvador (MAG-FRUTALES).

The knowledge acquired on the trip will be shared with other groups of growers, processors and marketers, with a view to reaching agreement on the adoption of those GAPs and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) required for certification of the safety of fruits and vegetables from El Salvador.

Priscilla Henriquez, the Specialist in Competitiveness from IICA/El Salvador who was in charge of this activity, said that the visit to Guatemala was conducted as a “trial run” for the project “Design of a System Certifying the Safety of Fruit Exports.”

The project will be implemented by IICA with funding from the National System of Partnerships for Technological Innovation (SINALIT), in coordination with MAG-FRUTALES and fruit and vegetable growers, processors and exporters.

The trip was possible thanks to horizontal cooperation between the IICA Office in Guatemala and the PIPAA.

priscilla.henriquez@iica.int



Link between public policies and social agents analyzed

At the Second International Forum on Territorial Development, Brazil and four other countries shared experiences.

The Second International Forum on Territorial Development, organized by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Standing Forum on Sustainable Rural Development (SRD Forum), and the Government of Bahia and the Ministry of Agricultural Development of Brazil, was held on November 6-8 in the city of Bahia, Brazil.

According to Carlos Miranda, Executive Coordinator of the SRD Forum, the objective was to analyze the strategies, methodologies and institutional management models for linking public policies, government agents and social actors.

The activity brought together representatives of public and private institutions, social movements, research centers, the academic sector, among others.

On this occasion, IICA received support from the Bank of Brazil, and from the Ministries of Environment and National Integration.

Participants learned of experiences in four countries: Spain, France, Portugal and Mexico. This was followed by presentations on the experiences of six states in Brazil in the application of public policies in different territories, and then a plenary session.

In the plenary, faculty members from the post-graduate course on Social Sciences in Development, Agriculture and Society, of the Observatory of Public Policies for Agriculture, presented proposals and recommendations for strengthening the linkage between public policies and social actors, based on the stories, discussions and the perspective of the participating public and private entities.

patricia.porto@iica.int, mcarvalho@seplan.ba.gov.br, rodrigo.germano@iica.int