

# Infoletter

from the Desk of the Director General

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

Español

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## Institutional Affairs

### ▪ IICA created “Forum for Leaders in Agriculture”

On the initiative of its Director General, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) created the *Forum for Leaders in Agriculture*. The first participant in that Forum, held from February 1 through 3, was the new Minister of Agriculture of Saint Lucia, Ezechiel Joseph.

The program for the Forum, held at IICA Headquarters in Costa Rica, is especially designed for new ministers of agriculture and other leaders who are interested in a modern vision of agriculture and rural life in the Americas. The agenda included a broad-based dialogue on IICA and its role in the development of the hemisphere; the role of agriculture and agribusiness in development; the challenges and opportunities for agriculture in the XXIst century; and the responsibilities of ministers as members of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture, the highest Governing Body of IICA and as participants in the ministerial meetings on agriculture and rural life in the context of the Summit of the Americas process.

It is anticipated that other new ministers will participate in coming weeks.

### ▪ IICA and IDB strengthen ties

The recent visit to IICA Headquarters by a group of Executive Directors from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) was an opportunity to cement, at the highest levels, ties between the two organizations, in aid of agriculture and rural development in the countries of the Americas, the Director General of IICA said.

The delegation from the IDB comprised Luis Guillermo Echeverri, Executive Director for Colombia and Ecuador; Eugenio Diaz, Director for Argentina and Haiti; and Alvaro Umana, Counselor in Costa Rica and Representative -during the visit- for the Executive Director for Central America. The visitors held fruitful dialogue with IICA's senior management from February 19 through 21.

### ▪ 2007 Week of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas 2007

The Week of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas will be held in Antigua, Guatemala, from July 23 through 27. The Fourth Ministerial Meeting and the Fourteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture will be held as part of that event.

The ceremony to launch that Week was held on February 8 in Guatemala City. It was attended by diplomats, representatives of international organizations and of secretariats in the Office of the President, ministers of state and a broad representation from the business community, including the cooperative movement and civil society, which make up Guatemala's private agricultural sector.

The keynote speaker was the Vice President of Guatemala, Eduardo Stein, who underscored the importance it represented for his country to host the event. He also thanked IICA for supporting the

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process. In turn, the Minister of Agriculture of Guatemala and Chair of the 2006-2007 Hemispheric Ministerial Process, Bernardo Lopez, urged all sectors to work together in defining policies in relevant areas that affect agriculture and rural life in the hemisphere, such as global warming, the opening of trade and the energy situation.

#### ▪ **Promoting agro-biotechnologies in the Americas**

The Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) and IICA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to cooperate for the continued adoption of agricultural biotechnology in the Americas as part of IICA's Hemispheric Biosafety and Biotechnology Program (HBBP).

Both organizations will promote initiatives in agro-biotechnologies that benefit the Americas, such as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the *Codex Alimentarius*, the International Plant Protection Convention, and World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements.

Under the Hemispheric Biosafety and Biotechnology Program, at the end of February, a series of video conferences was organized in conjunction with the International Service for the Acquisition of Agrobiotech Applications (ISAAA) to report on global advances in the area of agricultural biotechnologies. In 2006, for the first time, the worldwide agricultural biotech area exceeded 100 million hectares. From 1996 to date, more than 500 million hectares have been sown, reflecting the increased adoption of biotechnologies worldwide. The Global Development Learning Network lent its support in organizing these video conferences.

#### ▪ **Instruments for preventing Avian Influenza**

In February, the Director General of the Institute distributed audiovisual materials to all of the ministers of agriculture of the hemisphere to support efforts to prevent Avian Influenza.

A video cassette and a radio series targeted small- and medium-scale producers, including those known as backyard farmers, who need to improve their practices in the face of the threat of Avian Influenza or any other transmissible disease on their farms. It will be up to government authorities and the poultry organizations in the countries to decide how best and when to use these communication and training tools, without arousing unfounded or unnecessary fears among producers and consumers

### Coming events

**March 13 and 14.** Meeting of the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues. IICA Headquarters, Costa Rica.

**April 17.** Technical forum on emerging issues: importance of veterinary services, intersectoral action and compensation. IICA Headquarters, Costa Rica.

**May 15 through 17.** XXVII Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee of IICA, IICA Headquarters, Costa Rica.

**July 23 through 27.** Week of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas, Antigua, Guatemala.

### More information

- **Need for research on fostering agricultural development**
- **Creation of "insurance culture" is crucial to the development of agriculture**
- **Minister of Saint Lucia and IICA agree on priority agenda**

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