



## Institutional Affairs

### ▪ IICA to focus on professional development in 2008

The Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, announced that 2008 will be a year dedicated to training. Externally, emphasis will be placed on developing young agricultural leaders throughout the hemisphere, and internally, on improving the professional qualifications of IICA staff. During a recent visit to the University of London, Brathwaite took the first steps to enable IICA professionals to update their knowledge through distance education programs in areas such as Agribusiness Management, Environment and Sustainable Development. The hope is that it may be possible to implement similar proposals with other well-known universities. In 2008, IICA will open the "Center for Leaders of Agriculture." More, specifically, in March, it will hold the Forum for Young Leaders, to be attended by gifted young leaders from its 34 Member States. During a meeting with the staff at Headquarters, the Director General highlighted several of the principal results achieved in 2007: the Fourth Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life and the Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), held in Guatemala in July; the celebration of the 65th anniversary of IICA during a session of the OAS Permanent Council; the strengthening of relations with the Inter-American Development Bank; and the development of the hemispheric programs on agroenergy, biotechnology, agrotourism and organic agriculture.

### ▪ IICA participates in FAO Conference

IICA participated in the 34th Conference of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), held on November 17-24 in Rome, Italy. At the meeting, Director General Chelston Brathwaite met with the Minister of Agriculture of Canada, Gerry Ritz, to discuss the evaluation of technical capabilities at IICA, the visionary Forum for Leaders of Agriculture, and new policies Canada has adopted that will have an impact in Latin America and the Caribbean. He also met with representatives of the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Brathwaite underscored the need to strengthen strategic cooperation between FAO and IICA and, consequently, reviewed with the Jose Graziano da Silva, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative of FAO for Latin America and the Caribbean, all agreements currently in force between the two organizations.

### ▪ Agroenergy gets a boost from IICA

One of the conclusions reached at the 31st Conference on the Caribbean Basin, held in Miami on December 3-5, was that the countries of Central America and the Caribbean must strengthen their energy sector. Otherwise, progress could slow and they could become less competitive. The roundtable on agroenergy "Balancing food security and biofuels" was moderated by the Director General of IICA, who was invited by the organization Caribbean-Central American Action (CCAA). Global food security and the impact of converting crops such as corn and sugar into biofuels were the focus of the discussions. IICA took advantage of the Conference to present the document "Frequently asked BIOFUEL questions and answers." The event brought together some 600 leaders and entrepreneurs from Central America, the Caribbean and the United States for the purpose of coordinating the best strategies for promoting progress and growth in the region.

### ▪ Model OAS General Assembly held in Costa Rica

More than 150 university students from Costa Rica and El Salvador met on December 7-9 at IICA Headquarters to hold a model General Assembly of the Organization of American States (MOAS). The students put into practice their diplomatic skills and adopted resolutions on 30 of the 92 issues addressed by the last OAS Assembly. The activity was dedicated to the Director General of IICA, who delivered the keynote address "IICA and the development of agriculture and rural life in the Americas." Other participants included the OAS Representative to Costa Rica, Patricio Zuquilanda; the Director of the External Relations Department of the OAS, Irene Klinger; the Director of the School of International Relations of the Universidad Nacional (UNA) of Costa Rica, Alexander Lopez; Associate Dean for Development of the UNA, Leiner Vargas; and the Head of the Diplomatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Costa Rica, Carmen Claramut.

## Regions and countries

### ▪ Agricultural policy endorsed by Central American presidents

The 2008-2017 Central American Agricultural Policy was approved during the 31st Summit of the Heads of State and Government, held on December 12. The endorsement of the policy is a highlight in the process of integration being promoted by the Central American presidents. IICA participated in the technical group that drafted the policy, which was the result of a broad-based process of dialogue involving the public and private sectors and civil society. The Institute also worked with the Regional

Technical Assistance Unit (RUTA) in systematizing the work involved in formulating the policy. The experience was documented so that it might be replicated or serve as an example at the international level.

#### ▪ **IICA technical fora a success**

Two technical fora convened by IICA discussed issues of importance for agriculture throughout the hemisphere. Those invited to the forum “China and India having a profound effect on agrifood trade in the Americas” held at IICA Headquarters on November 15, heard addresses by Mikio Kuwayama, Head of the International Trade Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; World Bank Senior Economist Daniel Lederman; Edith Obschatko, IICA Policy and Trade Specialist in Argentina; and the General Manager of the Foreign Trade Promotion Board (PROCOMER) of Costa Rica, Martin Zuñiga. The speakers at the other forum, “Risks, opportunities and benefits of biotechnology for the countries of the Americas,” held on December 11, were an expert from Grupo Consultores en Economía y Organización, Eduardo Trigo; Professor Greg Traxler, from Auburn University; and the Director of Biotechnology and Biosafety, Assefaw Tewolde.

#### ▪ **Promotion of knowledge management**

As part of IICA’s efforts to promote knowledge management throughout the hemisphere, the IICA Office in Bolivia, the Post Graduate Program in Development of the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz, and the Ministry of Rural and Agricultural Development and Environment of that country, held three meetings on November 7-9 to promote rural development in that nation and discuss ways to strengthen joint efforts among them. The Director of Sustainable Rural Development of IICA, Sergio Sepulveda, and Janette Pacheco, Specialist in Rural Territories in the IICA Office in Peru, addressed the meetings.

#### ▪ **IICA promotes cacao market**

Experts from Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru and Venezuela met in Bucaramanga, Colombia, on November 29-30 to learn of success stories and the latest developments in terms of research and technology development in the area of cacao production. The seminar, which dealt with successful efforts to make cacao production competitive enough to gain a foothold in international markets, was organized by the Colombian Agricultural Research Corporation and IICA. The activity received support from the Cooperative Program on Agricultural Research, Development and Innovation for the South American Tropics (PROCITROPICOS), the Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), the cacao industry and different product and service enterprises. Additionally, large-, medium- and small-scale cacao growers were able to participate in a round of negotiations.

#### ▪ **Cattle health promoted**

One conclusion reached at two seminars on the health of beef cattle health in Ecuador was that the outlook for livestock farming in Ecuador is promising. The seminars, held on November 8-9 in Santo Domingo and Ambato, were sponsored by IICA and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries, with support from national and international organizations such as FAO, PANAFTOSA/PAHO, FEDEGAN, APHIS, etc.

#### ▪ **Proposal on biotechnology and biosafety for Ecuador**

At the request of the government of Ecuador, IICA is promoting the formulation of a national strategy on biotechnology and biosafety. To this end, it has organized meetings with the National Food and Beverage Manufacturers Association and the Ministries of Social Inclusion and Agriculture of the Ecuador. Also, the Institute participated in the “International Congress on Biotechnology,” coordinating the workshop “Identification of Needs and Opportunities in the Area of Agrobiotechnology,” which yielded elements on which to base the strategy requested by the government. The Group on Management of Agrobiotechnology and Biosafety of Ecuador, created as a result of the workshop, will continue to develop the strategy.

### Coming events

- **March 2008.** First Forum/ Program for Young Leaders involved in the Sustainable Development of Agriculture of the Americas in the 21st Century.

### More information

- **China and India having a profound effect on agrifood trade in the Americas**
- **Successful experiences in the use of ICTs for research and innovation in agriculture compiled**