

**‘IICA Day’ 2011:  
“The Impact of Youth and Innovation in Agriculture  
in Latin America and the Caribbean”**



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Excellencies,

Good afternoon. It is a great pleasure and honor to be taking place at this roundtable. Thank you very much to IICA for inviting UNESCO to present at this important occasion.

Please receive warm regards from Dr. Jorge Grandi, Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for Science in Latin America and the Caribbean, who is currently attending our General Conference in Paris and was therefore unable to attend.

UNESCO, as you might have heard these days in the news, is the United Nations’ Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Our work is developed in five programme sectors:

1. Education
2. Natural Sciences
3. Social and Human Sciences
4. Culture
5. Communication and Information

UNESCO's mission is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through Education, Science and Culture, in order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law and the human rights.

You might have noted that the 3 themes of our discussion today are not part of our acronym. They are, however, a part of or closely related to our mandate.

1. Youth and Innovation are transversal themes of our work, and
2. Agriculture is one of the fields where some of our actions are aimed to.
3. Let me be more specific, analyzing the components one by one.

Let us discuss innovation first.

During the last two decades, the term innovation has emerged as one of the key concepts of academic, societal and political life. The term can be defined as a “descriptive umbrella notion”.

The “Culture of innovation” is another key notion. It can be described as a series of complex and interrelated economic and governance changes aimed at ensuring systematic and reinforced competitiveness in a global economic environment. UNESCO proposes a flexible mechanism that could on the one hand, help to set up guidelines for national governments, civil society organisations and the private sector, and, on the other hand, enable individuals to deal with innovation processes and the creation of knowledge.

UNESCO addresses the issue through various programs and initiatives among which include:

Our Science Policy Programme has evolved into a programme aimed at establishing standards and supporting countries in the development and implementation of Science, Technology and INNOVATION Policies. The objective is facilitating the integration of a developmental approach into national STI policies, capacity building in science and technology through providing policy advice and exchange of experience and best practices, as well as creating networks of centres of excellence in developing countries as well as supporting the exchange of students, researchers, scientists and technologists among developing countries.

Our Engineering Programme.

The World Science Report.

In terms of Agriculture, one of the most interesting developments has been the concept of “AGRI-CULTURE” (Agri-CULTURAS).

This concept is the result of a collaboration between IICA and UNESCO in 2009, and the report was published in Costa Rica as “Agri-culturas de América Latina y el Caribe: elementos para una contribución al desarrollo sostenible”

The concept of agri-culture, is defined as a holistic system that integrates the relationships between four elements:

- 1) A particular paradigm / worldview
- 2) A political environment, institutional, social and cultural
- 3) A system of knowledge, science and technology for agriculture
- 4) A rural sector, to yield a way to make agriculture

I invite you all to download this report to obtain further information on this.

The third pillar of this presentation is YOUTH.

UNESCO's Youth Programme's aim is to help empower young people, reaching out to them, responding to their expectations and ideas, fostering useful and long-lasting skills, encouraging

- 1) Participation of young women and men in UNESCO and its various networks and partner organizations
- 2) Partnerships between UNESCO and young people's networks and organizations, to solicit and integrate their views and priorities and collaborate with them in setting up projects and programmes in the areas of the Organization's competence
- 3) The integration of youth into the policy agendas of Member States in education, the sciences, culture and communication, in order to create spaces and opportunities for empowering young people and giving recognition, visibility and credibility to their contributions.

On top of the attention given to the three pillars of this talk separately, one should look at the intersections between the topics:

Youth and Innovation:

The Regional Education Innovations Network INNOVEMOS (Red de innovaciones educativas para América Latina y el Caribe, established in 2001, is coordinated by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education and involves 19 countries in the region. It seeks to contribute to improving quality and equality in education in its various modalities and programmes.

Innovation and Agriculture:

The Science Policy Information Platform (SPIN – [spin.unesco.org.uy](http://spin.unesco.org.uy)) was launched in 2010 by the Regional Bureau for Science of UNESCO in Latin America and the Caribbean, as a tool for decision-makers and STI policy experts and provide information on STI Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean.

One of its components is a data base of STI Policy instruments. A quick search shows the availability of STI Policy instruments aimed at the agriculture sector in LAC, totaling some 25 instruments in the various countries. This platform is being updated constantly and constitutes a very valuable source of information for policy makers in this field. I believe this tool could also constitute an opportunity for further collaboration between UNESCO and IICA.

Youth and Agriculture:

**Education for Rural People is the key concept in this area.** A report was jointly prepared by UNESCO-IICA-FAO only a few years ago.

It reinforces the need for improving the situation of education for the rural population considered as the backbone for local development. Education has to be flexible, and evidence-based, with teachers adapt their teaching systems to different realities. A structure that allows the stakeholders, in the rural areas, participate in the production processes and equitable education is central, as is the families' involvement in the development of educational programs.

Having looked at the links between the “pairs” of issues, it comes out clear that Innovation, agriculture and Youth are linked through the concept of Sustainable Development. This is one of the main results of the 7th UNESCO Youth Forum that was held in Paris 17-20 October, finishing less than two weeks ago.

The UNESCO Youth Forum brought together **210 youth delegates from 127 countries and hundreds of civil society observers** to discuss “How Youth drive change”.

The delegates of the Youth Forum have elaborated recommendations about:

- Education
- Youth Participation
- and how we said before Sustainable Development

**Recommendation 1. Education**

- Access to equal public education (especially in rural areas)
- Eliminate all form of discrimination
- Encourage gender equality in acquiring essential life skills
- Fair educational system
- Sport and arts education
- Disasters- risk prevention

The delegates emphasized and called upon the member states the urge:

- to ensure the access to equal public education as a human rights and to ensure free, universal and mandatory education to secondary level especially in rural areas
- to eliminate all forms of discrimination, especially against the most vulnerable segments of society and the necessity to include disasters risk prevention, sport and disaster risk prevention as key elements to prevent violence and to promote culture of peace in the educational system.

1. We urge Member States to ensure access to equal quality public education as a basic human right and to ensure free, universal and mandatory education to secondary level, especially in rural areas;

2. We call upon Member States to eliminate all forms of discrimination, especially against the most vulnerable segments of society, and to promote human rights-based education;

3. We strongly request Member States to ensure women's and girls' empowerment, and also encourage gender equality in acquiring essential life skills, as well as including literacy and sexuality education;

4. We strongly urge Member States to ensure access to quality formal and non-formal education, including informal education, intercultural education, values-based education and civic education, as equal parts of general education;

5. We call upon Member States to ensure a fair educational system, taking into consideration refugee children or children with migration backgrounds and creating possibilities that these children could also succeed in school;

6. We request Member States to recognize sport and arts education as key elements to prevent violence and to promote a culture of peace;

7. We urge Member States to include disaster-risk prevention, management and rehabilitation and environmental protection in education systems;

8. In response to employment challenges, we strongly encourage Member States to expand the scope of education by including entrepreneurial skills and training opportunities, and intergenerational partnerships for youth aligned to rapidly changing labour market needs, particularly in non-traditional fields, such as e-learning.

### **Recommendation 2. Youth Participation**

- Including youth representatives in the General Conference
- International Convention on Youth Rights
- Establish permanent youth representation in all UNESCO National Commissions
- Encourage opportunities to volunteer for young people
- Improving Joint Programmatic Commission on Youth

- Youth should be an integral part of UNESCO's participation in Rio+20
- The delegates request Member States to enhance youth participation in decision-making by: see bullet points
- Convention on Youth Rights work together with Member States
- We request Member States to enhance youth participation in decision-making by:
  - (i) including youth representatives in their delegations to the General Conference, bearing in mind the principles of gender balance and non-discrimination and emphasizing that such youth representatives should be selected through a transparent process that ensures they have a suitable mandate to represent young people in their countries;
  - (ii) requesting the full support of all Member States for the delegates to work together towards writing an International Convention on Youth Rights which describes and protects youth in a time of change;
  - (iii) ensuring that all students at all ages can participate in youth-led student democracy at both local and national levels;
  - (iv) establishing and reinforcing permanent youth representation in all UNESCO National Commissions;
  - (v) creating a youth sub-commission to guarantee the engagement of UNESCO Member States with youth;
  - (vi) promoting awareness of UNESCO's Participation Programme and ensuring that National Commissions prioritize youth access to it;
  - (vii) encouraging and expanding opportunities to volunteer and to join mentorship programmes for young people;
  - (viii) improving coordination amongst youth-led organizations and UNESCO, especially through the Joint Programmatic Commission on Youth;
  - (ix) noting that youth should be an integral part of UNESCO's participation in Rio+20 through innovative ideas towards sustainable lifestyles, policies and programmes.

### **Recommendation 3. Sustainable Development**

- provide training and encourage:
  - Youth-led initiatives promoting green societies
  - Green Jobs

- Youth on better preservation of tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage
- Technical, financial and human support to young
- Prevent:
  - exploitation of children and youth within heritage sites

1. We call upon Member States to provide training and encourage youth-led initiatives promoting green societies, to engage youth in policy development and strategies on mitigation and adaptation, emphasizing the importance of green jobs, reducing fossil fuel dependency and disaster-risk management;

2. We recommend that Member States raise awareness amongst youth on better preservation of tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage;

3. We recommend that Member States prevent the exploitation of children and youth within heritage sites;

4. We call upon Member States to provide technical, human and financial support to youth, especially those who are marginalized and vulnerable, to empower them in order to address their own needs and interests towards social, political and economic development;

5. We strongly request to transform the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development into an institutionalized process beyond 2014, under the auspices of UNESCO.

From The Youth Forum to Rio+20: an opportunity not to be missed, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio +20, Rio de Janeiro, 4-6 June 2012

**Objectives:**

- Securing renewed political commitment to sustainable development.
- Assessing the progress and implementation gaps in meeting already agreed commitments.
- Addressing new and emerging challenges.

Rio+20 offers a unique chance to advance the sustainable development agenda.

- Hosted by Brasil as a 20-year follow-up to the historic 1992 (UNCED) United Nations Conference on Environment and Development that was held in the same city.
- The conference will debate crucial topics related to Sustainable Development such as the institutional framework, green economy, renewed political commitment, progress up to date and implementation gaps. It is therefore crucial that there is a strong youth presence, as has been pointed out in the seventh youth forum.

- The Rio +20 Conference and its preparatory process are crucial opportunity to renew our commitment to sustainable development globally, and for this we aim to promote new goals, considering the progress achieved and assess the gaps can then address the new challenges in line with the recommendations that emerged from past summits on sustainable development.

**Themes:**

- A. Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication (green society)
- B. Institutional framework for sustainable development

**The pillars:**

- Education for a sustainable future
- Mobilizing science for green transformation

**The Major Groups:**

- 9 Major Groups: Business and Industry, Children and Youth, Farmers, Indigenous Peoples, Local Authorities, NGOs, Scientific and Technological Community, Women, Workers and Trade Unions

Conference will focus on two main themes:

- a) be understood as a transition to a green economy (adapted to the national context), which is not only an environmental improvement, but a new paradigm that seeks to alleviate global threats like climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, depletion of natural resources and at the same time promote social and economic welfare.
- b) The scope of a theme such as the 'institutional framework for sustainable development' is potentially vast, as sustainable development is a wide and all-encompassing concept
- intended as a reference to the system of global governance for sustainable development, including the institutions responsible to develop, monitor and implement policies for sustainable development through its three pillars: social, environmental and economic. Following the decision No. 1 of the 26th Governing Council of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP - Nairobi, 21-24 February 2011) the theme of the institutional framework for sustainable development will also include the process of reform of international environmental governance (IEG).
- Sustainable development emphasizes a holistic, equitable and far-sighted approach to decision-making at all levels. It emphasizes not just strong economic performance but intragenerational and intergenerational equity. It rests on integration and a balanced consideration of social, economic and environmental goals and objectives in both public and private decision-making.

- The concept of green economy focuses primarily on the intersection between environment and economy.
- Major Groups: From the very beginning of the first Earth Summit in 1992, people realized that sustainable development could not be achieved by governments alone. It would require the active participation of all sectors of society and all types of people - consumers, workers, business persons, farmers, students, teachers, researchers, activists, indigenous communities, and other communities of interest.
- Agenda 21 formalized nine of these as the overarching categories through which all citizens could participate in the UN activities on achieving sustainable development. These are officially called "Major Groups".

**The messages from UNESCO:** From Green Economies to Green Societies

- Education first motor
- Science must drive the green transition
- Culture is an accelerator
- The green transition will need an information revolution
- A green future must be blue

Emphasis must be given to the empowerment of Youth (with women and indigenous people) in order to ensure inclusive participation in decision-making processes and their important contribution towards achieving sustainable development.

Science, Technology and innovation must drive our pursuit of more equitable and sustainable development.

Agriculture is a dominant concern in a year of famine and rising global food prices, should use the green agriculture to stimulate economic growth and eradicate poverty, raise awareness of the central role that green and sustainable agriculture can play to stimulate economic growth and combat poverty through the sharing of know-how, best practices and lessons learned.

Thank you very much.