



## Press Release

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### **IICA CALLS FOR A REVOLUTIONARY MOVE TO FURTHER AGRICULTURE**

*Caribbean Week of Agriculture 2008*

**October 8, 2008 – Kingstown, St. Vincent**–The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture’s (IICA) Director General, Dr. Chelston Brathwaite urged for the building of a more sustainable society that fully incorporates agriculture. He said, “We need to build a more sustainable society with a new development model that incorporates the agricultural sector into the social, economic, environmental and political dimensions of development.”

Brathwaite spoke at the 8<sup>th</sup> Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) at the Richmond Hill Playing Field in Kingstown, St. Vincent. This year, the CWA coincides with the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines’ 5 year schedule for the hosting of a National Agricultural and Agro-based Industrial Exhibition (NAIE), which is being held within the context of transforming the Agriculture sector through value addition. This year’s theme for CWA is ***“Innovative Agriculture and Agro-Industry – Fuel for Sustainable Development.”*** This theme of the CWA/NAIE seeks to highlight the approaches to address the ‘new agriculture’ by using information and technology to foster increased food production and food security.

According to Brathwaite, as a society, the Region has spent money on infrastructure and capacity building for personal security, health, education, commerce and the provision of shelter. However, the provision of food to the vagaries of the market has been left out. This, in his view has contributed to the high levels of poverty we see today. For Brathwaite, among many benefits, the new development model can unleash the talent, energy and the enterprise of the people of the Americas so that the agricultural and rural sectors can compete internationally.

Brathwaite also emphasized the need to exploit the nutritional value of the Region’s tropical crops. Of the 250,000 species of plants in the world, 90,000 of which are in the western hemisphere, the region depends on only 5 as the pillars of nutrition. Traditionally, the Region has depended on the supply of wheat, corn, rice, potato and soya bean as the foundation of daily nutritional requirements. “Since last year, the cost of wheat has increased 130%, the cost of rice by 74%, the cost of soya bean by 87% and the cost of corn by 53%,” he said. For Brathwaite, the time has come to look at products such as cassava, sweet potato, bananas, yams and many others as sources of daily nutritional requirements.

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The Exhibition promises to strengthen the inter-sectoral linkages between agriculture, tourism, culture and informatics and to promote existing opportunities for investments under the public/private sector initiatives of the government.

The CWA is the premier calendar event for the Alliance for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu (the Alliance). As a result, the opening of the exhibit attracted the participation of hemispheric leaders and senior government officials. St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister, the Dr. Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves gave the feature address which was aligned with one of Brathwaite's messages of the need to increase investment in agriculture, modernize the agriculture sector, strengthen rural communities, provide education, health care, access to technology and credit so that the poor can leave poverty.

Other guest speakers during the evening included the Honorable Montgomery Daniel, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Dr. Honorable Christopher Tufton, Chairman of the Alliance and Minister for Agriculture, Jamaica; Dr. Arlington Chesney, Executive Director, CARDI; Dr. Hanjorg Neun, Director of the Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural cooperation (CTA); Irwin Larocque, Assistant Secretary General, CARICOM; and Dr. L. Barbara Graham, Sub Regional Representative, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The CWA concludes on Saturday, October 11.

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