

IICA Calls for ‘Commitment to Public-Private Partnerships in Agriculture Development’ at World Food Prize Symposium



David C. Hatch, IICA Representative in the United States addresses the audience at USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service Side Event during the World Food Prize Symposium.

Des Moines, Iowa – October 13, 2010 –Against the backdrop of the World Food Prize’s Borlaug Dialogue, one of America’s foremost conferences on international agriculture and food policy, David C. Hatch, Representative to the United States for the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) today emphasized that the small-holder farmer is uniquely poised to play a critical role in enhancing the food supply for families and communities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

Hatch, serving as a panelist for the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Side Event at the Symposium underlined the importance of reaching the world’s small holders through public-private partnerships. Small family farms account for nearly 40% of agricultural outputs in Brazil and Mexico and more than 60% in Central America. He said, “We must confront our reality - Sustainable agriculture is not possible without a thriving private sector.” He continued, “Public-private partnerships are absolutely essential for the small farmer.”

The Conference, “Take it to the Farmer”: Reaching the World’s Smallholders,” is currently underway this week in Des Moines, Iowa where global leaders and institutions will focus on the world’s small-scale farmers. The three day dialogue will address themes including innovation and entrepreneurship; challenges affecting small producers and their communities, including energy resources for food production, climate change and water access, and demographic changes among other topics.

According to Hatch, public-private partnership is no stranger to the Institute. “For more than 66 year, IICA has channeled our efforts in collaborative ways to avoid dependency while promoting value efficient chains; creating access to information through modern technologies such as education and extension; providing training in business management practices, good farming practices and addressing land issues, to name just a few.”

Underscoring the successes found in private-public partnerships, Hatch laid emphasis on IICA’s efforts to link farmers to hotels through various initiatives including the recently signed St. Kitts Farmers Cooperatives (SKFC) agreement with Marriott Corporation to provide produce to its hotel on St. Kitts; the Nevis Growers Assn. & Four Seasons Resort; Santoy, Black Bay and Mafoota Farmers (Sandals Chain -Jamaica & St. Lucia); Barbonneau Farmers St. Lucia and Almond Chain (Barbados & St. Lucia) Mt. St. George Farmers, and the UK Travel Foundation & Hilton in Tobago.

With a wide reach of 34 country offices, horizontal cooperation has also been of strategic focus for the Institute in helping its Member States achieve its goals. The ProHuerta family garden food security project in Haiti, a collaboration among Canada, Haiti and Argentina has fed over 60,000 Haitians; consists of over 10,000 gardens with 26 species; involves 1,555 volunteer workers; 23 agronomists and technicians, and after further expansion is expected to benefit 26,400 families in 110 rural communities in five departments over a five-year period. Furthermore, IICA is currently working with more than 475 local agencies in the continuation of the project.

In El Salvador, the Ministry of Agriculture, IICA, various universities, NGO’s and the private sector have focused on agricultural diversification by developing fruit chains for marketable niche fruit products. Efforts resulted in the planting of 8,100 hectares of fruit trees including avocado, lime, cashews, coconut and native species.

Moderated by Patricia Sheikh, Deputy Administrator Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA, additional panel members of the symposium included Bill Guyton President World Cocoa Foundation; Clinton Cuny, Chief Executive Officer, Export Trading Corporation, and Dr. Thomas J. Herlehy Manager, Agricultural Productivity & Competitiveness, Land O’ Lakes International Development.

Underscoring the role of women in agriculture, Hatch stated, “Small farmers, particularly women, should be top priority when it comes to the allocation of funds and capacity building.”

The Borlaug Dialogue is held each year in conjunction with the awarding of the World Food Prize helps and helps to build alliances in the struggle against world hunger and malnutrition. These efforts help to promote health, enhanced nutrition, and safety both at home and abroad.

ABOUT IICA

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture is the specialized agency for agriculture and the rural milieu of the Inter-American System, whose purpose is to provide innovative technical cooperation to the Member States, with a view to achieving their sustainable development in aid of the peoples of the Americas.

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