



Promoting Prosperity in the Rural Communities of the Americas

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NOBEL LAUREATE WARNS OF THE THREATS TO AGRICULTURE DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

*“Climate Change is real - In all likelihood, the primary impact will be on food itself ...
- Dr. Thomas C. Schelling – 2005 Nobel Laureate, Economics*

Washington DC, Wednesday, October 1, 2008 – Members of the Organization of American States’ (OAS) Permanent Council and invited guests today were stimulated by the sobering realities of science based observations by Dr. Thomas C. Schelling, 2005 Nobel Laureate in Economics and Distinguished Professor at the University of Maryland. IICA Deputy Director General, Christopher Hansen, recommended specific actions in light of the threat created by climate change to agriculture and food security in the western hemisphere.

Held during the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture’s (IICA) third Annual ‘IICA Day’ activity at the OAS, Professor Schelling served as keynote speaker and reminded his audience of the dire need to continue additional research on the effects of climate change. He warned, the climate change is real and the most devastating impact of climate change is likely to occur in agriculture. He said, “In all likelihood, the primary impact will be on food itself ... the provision of food, the distribution of food and on the people.”

Most importantly, Schelling warned his audience that the adverse effects of climate change will accrue to the descendents of those living in ‘developing countries.’ He said, “Many of these countries depend on agriculture for a third or half of their gross product while as much as two thirds of the population may depend on agriculture for a living.” Moreover, Schelling emphasized that the need for additional resources to cope with potential consequences of climate change related to health, disease, development, population growth, and food production and distribution should come from the developed countries.

Referring to a video produced by IICA, he reiterated that climate change has been well understood and articulated for over 100 years. Animals and plants are being forced from their surroundings. Glaciers are melting, and the number of devastating droughts and storms are on the rise. Schelling also stated that while the current situation poses a challenge for the countries of the region, it also offers an opportunity to strengthen agriculture in the developing world.

For IICA’s Deputy Director General, Christopher Hansen, climate change and food security are inter-linked. Emphasizing that the food security challenges we face today are not of a short term nature, Hansen called for the need of a new development model. He said, “Complex challenges such as climate change are facing farmers, consumers and policy makers on a global basis.” He continued, “We need a new development model that integrates agriculture and the rural economy into the development agenda... one that recognizes its contribution to food security, energy security,

employment, the preservation of the environment and natural resources, and the provision of social peace and social stability.”

According to IICA, food security must become a central component of development planning and must be linked to agricultural development policies that are part of the National Development Goals and should have 5 components that include:

- a. State policies that support a multidimensional, multi-sectoral focus on agriculture and rural life.
- b. Strategies to increase investment in agricultural research, innovation and technology transfer.
- c. A new agricultural educational curriculum.
- d. Institutional Reform of Ministries of Agriculture.
- e. New Policies on Food Consumption and Nutrition.

As indicated by Hansen, only by implementing long term strategies can the countries of the Western Hemisphere achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty by half 2015. He also emphasized the critical need for the modernization of the rural sector, the strengthening of rural communities, educational systems, health care infrastructure and access to technology and credit so that the poor can step away from poverty.

In closing, IICA’s Assistant Deputy Director General, Director of the Strategic Partnerships and IICA Representative in the United States, David C. Hatch, said now is the time for increased investment in agriculture and Latin America and the Caribbean is the place. He said, “The level of investment in agriculture technology and innovation in the 21st century will play a key role in determining the progress towards eradicating poverty; providing adequate quantities and quality of food; reducing the amount of civil and political unrest in developing countries and generally strengthen the economies at the local and country levels and beyond.”

Hatch concluded by reminding the audience that the return on investment in the western hemisphere could exceed any return elsewhere over the next few generations.

ABOUT IICA

Founded in 1942, 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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