



Promoting Prosperity in the Rural Communities of the Americas

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**IICA EMPHASIZES IMPORTANCE OF FOOD SECURITY  
TO OAS PERMANENT COUNCIL**

*“IICA is convinced that food security, if not adequately addressed, will become an issue of national security.” – Dr. Chelston Brathwaite, Director General, IICA*



Dr. Chelston Brathwaite, Director General of IICA, delivers the 2008 Annual Report to the OAS Permanent Council.

**Washington, D.C., March 18, 2009**—Dr. Chelston Brathwaite, Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) presented the Institute’s 2008 Annual Report to the Permanent Council of the Organization of the American States (OAS).

Before members of the OAS and key government officials, Brathwaite summarized the challenges and accomplishments of the organization. “We have been working for some time now on how we can help our member countries reduce their food vulnerability and strengthen their capacity to feed their people.” He continued, “We have made food security a central part of our mission, conscious that our democracies are not sustainable if citizens do not have access to food.”

Brathwaite began his overview by emphasizing that the economic and social challenges facing the global economy are increasing in depth and intensity. He said, “The current global economic crisis underscores the urgency of meeting that most basic of human needs: putting food on the table.” Brathwaite also warned that some of the drivers blamed for the food crisis last year, including drought, oil prices, and grain stocks have not disappeared and may cause turbulence in the future. Against this backdrop, the Institute continued to carry out its activities in line with institutional priorities, which include the promotion of food security, agricultural development and environmental sustainability.

Of importance during the year, was IICA’s contribution as a partner in the Summit of the Americas Process by contributing to the inclusion of food security in the *Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain*, as well as assisting the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, other member countries and the OAS Summit Secretariat with the preparations for the Fifth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Americas.

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During the year, IICA focused its efforts on helping its member countries reduce their food vulnerability and strengthen their capacity to feed their people. And in so doing, the Institute called upon its member states to: 1) Supply leaders that recognize that the food and agricultural sector is a strategic sector of their economy; 2) Supply farmers who are entrepreneurs and who recognize that their farm is a business enterprise which requires them to acquire management skills, knowledge and technology in order to become competitive and to make business decisions about investments, the market and prices; 3) Supply political will and leadership to ensure that food security remains a priority in the development agenda of the country.

As a strategic contribution to the future of agriculture of the countries, IICA established its Center for Leadership in Agriculture and Rural Life. This project made it possible for Ministries and Representatives of the private sector, including 80 young professionals and farmers from the 34 Member States to meet at the Institute's headquarters for a week to reflect on hemispheric agricultural concerns.

Of importance is the recently signed an Agreement with the United Nations' World Food Programme to work closely with IICA in the future. The first initiative will benefit Central American low income farmers and rural communities to gain more direct access to markets.

Furthermore, IICA strengthened business capabilities of more than 200 private sector stakeholders through programs such as the "Export Platforms" and seminars helping entrepreneurs prepare marketing plans for agricultural products. Members of more than 15 organizations of small scale entrepreneurs and 25 organizations of 3000 families in Colombia and Mexico enhanced their capacity to market their products.

In the area of agricultural health and food safety, the Institute continued efforts to implement initiatives for the Americas allowing the countries to play an active role in the world of the World Trade Organization/Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (WTO/SPS) Committee in Geneva.

In summary, in 2008, IICA supported member states with more than 570 actions at hemispheric, regional and national levels; published 202 technical documents; organized 85 major technical events; and formulated at least 8 programs and 14 investments projects for our member countries with such institutions as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), FAO and the World Food Programme.

In conclusion, Brathwaite announced that in collaboration with the OAS, a conference on food security will be held later in the year aimed at finding better solutions for development.

## **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.

For additional information on IICA, the 2007 Annual Report and National Reports, please visit <http://www.iica.int/usa>

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