



Promoting Prosperity in the Rural Communities of the Americas

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**IDB CALLS FOR STRATEGY TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY
AT IICA HOSTED EVENT**

“Policy makers should use the current period of easing food prices as a moment of opportunity in which to identify and agree on the key elements of a global food security strategy” - Dr. Otaviano Canuto, Inter-American Development Bank, (IDB)



Washington, D.C., February, 2009 Dr. Otaviano Canuto, Vice President for Countries of the Inter-American Development Bank, (IDB), recently called for a comprehensive global strategy for global food security, at a reception hosted by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

Before a gathering of Ambassadors, international agriculture development professionals, food security professionals, government officials, and representatives from the public and private sector, Dr. Canuto reminded his audience that the global economic crisis is deep and will be long. He said, “Looking to the medium and longer term, moreover, food prices are poised to rise again.” He continued, “Climate change, energy security and falling water availability – together with competition for land and higher demand resulting from increasing affluence and a growing global population – represent a major challenge for global food security.”

Canuto spoke at a reception held at the Organization of American States’ Museum of the Americas. The event was part of organized activities during the week with key IICA partners, including the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the State Department, the Organization of American States (OAS); USAID, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Food Information Council (IFIC) in Washington. Senior officials from IICA provided brief overviews of the Institute’s work in food security; biotechnology; trade; PROCINORTE, a mechanism to promote the cooperation in research and technology transfer in the Northern Region for competitive and sustainable agricultural development; and the upcoming Agricultural Ministerial meeting hosted by IICA that is scheduled for the week of October 25th in Jamaica.

According to Canuto, even though food prices have eased significantly from earlier record highs, he cautioned policy makers around the world from breathing sighs of relief. He said, “For one thing, even at their somewhat diminished levels, current prices remain acutely problematic for low-income import dependent countries and for poor people all over the world.”

Canuto also forewarned of the risk of a 'food crunch' in the future. The demand for food will rise in coming decades as world population increases towards 9.2 billion in 2050. The World Bank projects that by 2030 worldwide demand for food will increase by 50% and for meat by 85%.

In response to the challenge of food security, Canuto underscored 9 recommendations: 1) Spend more on food and agriculture; 2) Invest in a new green revolution; 3) Make the basics in terms of accessibility; 4) Focus on small farmers; 5) Improve access to social protection; 6) Improve technical assistance on long-term 'security of supply' agreements; 7) Push ahead with developed-country agricultural liberalization; 8) Integrate security of supply into global trade rules and; 9) Agree on a comprehensive global deal on climate change.

Troubled about the increase in food prices, IICA has been evaluating the potential impact of increases in food prices on the agricultural sector of the Americas and its implications for consumers, producers and the rural economy. The Institute believes that a sustained increase in food prices will contribute to higher levels of poverty and poor nutrition in the western hemisphere and will have an impact on countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty by 50% in 2015.

According to David C. Hatch, Associate Deputy Director General, Director of the Strategic Partnerships and IICA Representative in the United States, the welfare of farmers must be priority. He said, "The time has come for the countries of the Americas to review their food security policies and take appropriate steps to design and implement appropriate policies to make agricultural production a priority on the national development agendas." He underlined, "Food security should be a strategic priority for every country. Moreover, technical information to promote good farming practices and sound market based decisions should be more readily available to small farmers so they can become more competitive in the marketplace."

Support for agricultural development and investment in agricultural technology and innovation have been on the decline in the hemisphere since the eighties. However, for the past few years, the global concern of food insecurity has forced governments, scientists, researchers and the general public to once again reexamine the importance of sustainable agriculture. To this end, since 2006, IICA has been assisting its Member States in areas such as trade and agribusiness; agro-energy; agricultural health and food safety; biotechnology; agricultural insurance; agro-tourism; rural agro-industry; and organic agriculture, which all have great relevance for the promotion of food security in the Hemisphere.

ABOUT IICA

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture is the specialized agency for agriculture of the inter-American system. Its mission is to support the Member States in their pursuit of progress and prosperity in the hemisphere through the modernization of the rural sector, promotion of food security, and development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared, environmentally managed, and socially equitable for the people of the Americas.

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