



IICA Urges 'Commitment to Agriculture' at World Food Prize Symposium

Washington, DC – October 15, 2009 – Against the backdrop of the World Food Prize's Borlaug Dialogue, one of America's foremost conferences on international agriculture and food policy, Dr. Chelston Brathwaite, Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) today called for donor countries of the G8 and G20 to increase their investments in the agriculture sector. The Conference, "Food, Agriculture, and National Security in a Globalized World," is currently underway this week in Des Moines, Iowa and comes one month after the passing of its namesake, Dr. Norman E. Borlaug. The 2009 Borlaug Dialogue offers one of the first and most comprehensive looks at how agriculture and food are connected to challenges facing hunger and world security.

During the week, several hundred participants representing more than 65 countries, including leading policymakers and diplomats, CEO's and senior private-sector executives, and experts from academia, research, and the development community are expected to engage in a range of conversations on compelling and critical topics related to international agriculture. The sessions promise to address topics including: threats to agricultural yields as global population rushes to over 9 billion; climate change and ecological challenges; gender's role in food security; and agricultural development in conflict and crisis areas.

Serving on the panel, 'Conversation: Poverty, Hunger, and food Security in Crisis Areas,' and moderated by 2001 World Food Prize Laureate, Per Pinstrup-Andersen, Dr. Brathwaite reminded his audience of the impact of the agricultural sector. "Agriculture is a critical factor for poverty reduction because the majority of the poor live in the rural areas and depend on agriculture for their sustenance," he said. "The multinational development banks and national governments must assign more resources to the agricultural and rural sectors." Additional panel members included Tom Arnold, CEO; Concern Worldwide; Ambassador James Michel, Counselor, U.S. Agency for International Development; Her Excellency Faida Mitifu, Ambassador, The Democratic Republic of Congo and; Frances Stewart, Director, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Oxford University.

Given the challenges of development, commitments to join forces and pursue common objectives with other international organizations have been on the rise. Earlier this year, the global community increased its commitment to ending food insecurity. At the G-8 Summit, leaders of the eight largest countries agreed that food security is an international problem and committed to increase international assistance for agricultural development to \$20 billion over the next three years.

According to Brathwaite, keeping in line with the global community pledge, country-led plans should be high priority. He said, "It is of critical importance for countries to develop their own food security plan and seek to increase their capacity building so that monies are directed to sustainable in-country development of expertise."

Underscoring the role of women in agriculture, he 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 as part of the awarding of the \$250,000 World Food Prize to Dr. Gebisa Ejeta of Ethiopia for developing sorghum hybrids able to withstand drought and the scourge of weeds, thus dramatically enhancing the food supply throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

ABOUT IICA

Established 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. Today, 34 IICA offices the length and breadth of the hemisphere are working to meet the needs of the countries in areas such as: trade and agribusiness development; sustainable rural development; agricultural health and food safety; technology and innovation; education and training; and information and communication.

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