



IICA and OAS to host hemispheric conference on food security

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

Washington, D.C., August 20, 2009 (IICA) - In order to meet the challenges faced by today’s agriculture, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Organization of American States (OAS) are organizing a high level Food Security Conference scheduled for October 1st, 2009 in Washington D.C. The theme of the conference is entitled “Agriculture for Development and Food Security in the Americas.”

In order to address the challenges of food security, we need a new development model that places agriculture as a priority in the development agendas of our countries, IICA’s Director General, Chelston Brathwaite, who is slated to attend that Conference, maintained.

OAS Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Albert Ramdin considers that “the objectives of the conference serve to elevate the vital importance of increasing agriculture development in Latin America and the Caribbean and promoting national food security plans.”

“There is no doubt that food security is a significant issue that must be country-driven and focused at the local and community level,” he said. “We must place food security as a long-term top priority in this Hemisphere, not only to address needs now, but to prevent a worsening situation in the near future,” he warned.

“We hope to bring awareness to the staggering statistics and address the critical needs and solutions for increased investment in agriculture in the Americas,” said IICA’s Associate Deputy Director General, Director of Strategic Partnerships and IICA Representative in the United States, David C. Hatch.

“Government leaders, civic leaders and leaders of the private sector have an enormous responsibility to contribute to alleviating food insecurity,” he added.

Conference organizers also seek to position food security for discussion at the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life in the context of the Summit of the Americas Process, and the Fifteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA) [to be held in Jamaica later this year in October](#). The theme of the Week is entitled: ‘Building Capacity for Enhancing Food Security and Rural Life in the Americas.’

Food security has long been considered a primary goal of sustainable agricultural development. However, more and more people wake up hungry every morning and the long term effects of poor nutrition are staggering. Seventy-five percent of people living in poverty depend on agriculture to survive.

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 they are committed to increase international assistance for agricultural

development to \$20 billion over the next three years. Furthermore, President Obama recently asked Congress to double its commitment to global agricultural production in 2010.

Food security is one of the most urgent issues of our times, for the Americas and for the world as a whole. For example, a recent World Bank 2008 World Development Report makes the case that investments in agriculture are a necessary component to addressing poverty: 'Agriculture alone will not be enough to massively reduce poverty, but poverty reduction will not happen without agriculture.' World Bank estimated that agricultural sector growth positively impacts the incomes of poorest people 2 to 4 times more than the economic growth of other sectors.

Senior officials from international organizations such as: the World Food Programme (WFP); the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); the World Bank; the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); the Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the OAS; the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture; the International Markets Bureau-Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Pan- American Health Organization (PAHO); the University of California-Davis; and the Latin American Agribusiness Development Corporation are confirmed to participate in the event.

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.

For additional information on IICA, please go to: www.iica.int

About the OAS

The Organization of American States (OAS) is the world's oldest regional organization, dating back to the First International Conference of American States, held in Washington, D.C., from October 1889 to April 1890. The OAS is an international organization established in 1948 to achieve an order of peace and justice, promote solidarity, strengthen collaboration, and to defend sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence among its Member States. Today, it comprises the [35 independent States of the Americas](#) and constitutes the principal political, juridical, and social governmental forum in the Hemisphere.

For additional information on the OAS, please go to: www.oas.org

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<http://www.iica.int/Eng/regiones/norte/USA/Pages/FoodSecurityConference.aspx>