

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and USDA Explore Areas of Collaboration



IICA's Director General, Dr. Victor Villalobos meets with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack to discuss areas of collaboration.

Washington, DC, April 7, 2011 – The Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Dr. Victor Villalobos, met with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack to discuss areas of future collaboration in food security and agriculture development in the Americas. Since mid-2010 and early months of 2011, global food prices have been steadily rising, in many cases surpassing even the levels reached during the crisis of 2008, thus presenting a challenge not only for farmers, but also for consumers and decision-makers.

To this end, IICA and USDA aim to work together to further expand markets for agricultural products and support international economic development, specifically in support of small and medium-sized farmers. Specific areas of interest in agriculture include food safety, climate change; biotechnology and rural development.

According to IICA's Director General, Dr. Victor Villalobos, hemispheric cooperation is a vital component. "Levels of investment for agriculture development must be increased and coordinated action at the regional level is crucial in meeting the long term demands for food," said Villalobos. "IICA holds a unique and strong position to work closely with the Member States and other international organizations to ensure food security in the rural communities of the Americas," he emphasized.

Villalobos and Vilsack committed to strengthening partner relations by sharing technical expertise; participation in regional and hemispheric activities, such as Ministerial Meetings; outreach opportunities and joint activities.

"IICA was co-founded more than 70 years ago by former Secretary of Agriculture Dr. Henry Wallace, a fellow Iowan," said Vilsack. "IICA's wealth of experience as the specialized agency for agriculture in the Americas is critical to the sustainability of agriculture and to rural economies throughout the Hemisphere."

During the meeting, Villalobos reviewed the key components of IICA's Mid-Term Plan 2011-2014 which focuses on important themes such as agribusiness, helping small farmers gain greater access to markets, and agricultural health and food safety. Follow up discussions were also held on a variety of initiatives of joint IICA-USDA projects related to biotechnology as well as IICA's bi-annual Ministerial Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture to be held in October in IICA's Headquarters in Costa Rica entitled, "Innovation for Competitive and Sustainable Agriculture in the Americas."

Present during the session were Max Holtzman, Special Advisor, Darci Vetter, Deputy Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, USDA John Brewer, Administrator, FAS, USDA; Andrew Burst, Director, Multilateral Affairs Division, Office of Agreements and Scientific Affairs, FAS, USDA; and David C. Hatch, IICA Representative in the United States of America.

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, please visit <http://www.iica.int/usa> or <http://www.iica.int>

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