

IICA Spotlights Need for Stronger International Collaboration in Agriculture at USDA Agriculture Outlook Forum

“As part of the solution we are suggesting the need for more effective and efficient institutional models of collaboration to face the challenges for agriculture development.” – David C. Hatch, IICA



IICA's David C. Hatch addresses attendees at USDA's Agricultural Outlook Forum in Arlington, VA

Washington, DC, February 22, 2010 – “We all share the responsibility to work together to combat and eradicate starvation and chronic hunger once and for all.” Those were the words echoed by David C. Hatch, Associate Deputy Director General, Director of the Northern Region, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Representative in the United States of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). Hatch spoke on the Global food Security track panel at this year's USDA's Agriculture Outlook Forum where international experts and representatives from government and non-government organizations, the public and private sectors and academic

institutions assembled to address concerns about sustainable global agriculture. Conference themes centered around health, rural communities, food safety, food security, food price trends and farm incomes, climate change, organics and sustainability, to name a few. Panelists included senior representatives from USDA's Research, Education and Economics Division, USDA's Global Food Security Initiative, Bread for the World and the Wall Street Journal.

According to Hatch, there is a need for international organizations to channel their efforts in collaborative ways to avoid dependency and to create sustainable development. “No matter how well meaning our efforts are, if the recipients become dependent on these efforts than we are sowing the seeds of future failures,” he warned. He also underlined that in order to encourage a much needed institutional commitment, it is imperative for international organizations to adapt and modify their focus based upon the needs of its member countries. Citing examples of recognized establishments such as CARE and the Red Cross, Hatch underscored 3 critical components provided by international outfits: emergency aid, capacity building, and sustainable development.

It is well documented that the problems that plague agricultural and rural development are so broad in scope and of such complexity that the countries can hardly face them with the mere support of one development agency or international institution. IICA's presence in its 34 Member States, its more than 65 years of accumulated experience, and its know-how on agriculture and rural life, are resources public and private national teams can use to provide effective solutions to the principal problems hindering development.

Recognizing this, Hatch recommended that closer collaboration at the local level, similar to Brazil's 'Zero Hunger' initiative, be considered. “We are suggesting a model in which the Minister takes a more pro-active role in selecting and approving key organizations to help address agricultural reconstruction,” he said. “These actions include promoting effective value chains; creating access to information; providing training, affordable credit and risk management tools; and finding creative and innovative ways to attract youth to agriculture.”

Hatch insisted on the need to focus on the small farmer and reiterated that the small farmer, particularly women are part of the solution and not part of the problem. He reminded the audience that more than 80% of the world's farmers are women, and yet they receive less than 5% of all technical assistance in agriculture and own 2% of the land.

In conclusion, Hatch reflected on the devastating catastrophe in Haiti, and suggested that the rural development model, which also addresses urban to rural migration, be considered and that a food security plan be designed and implemented. He explained that the key components to the plan would focus on agriculture investment, Job creation, support infrastructure and help build capacity – all areas in which the international community can work on together in efforts to rebuild Haiti.

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.

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