

BIO and IICA Enter into Memorandum of Understanding to Promote Agricultural Biotechnology in the Americas

Washington, D.C. (January 24, 2007) – The Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) today entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to cooperate for the continued adoption of agricultural biotechnology in the Americas as part of IICA's Hemispheric Biosafety and Biotechnology Program (HBBP). As part of the Memorandum of Understanding, both organizations will promote agricultural biotechnology initiatives that benefit the Americas around the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the International Plant Protection Convention, and World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements.

“Formalizing the collaborative efforts between BIO and IICA will promote the development of national and regional policies and regulatory frameworks for agricultural biotechnology,” said BIO President and CEO Jim Greenwood. “Today, more than 80 percent of global biotech acreage lies in the Americas — with a total of nine countries in North, Central, and South America growing biotech crops. Today’s signing of the MOU will allow our two organizations to continue to encourage the acceptance of agricultural biotechnology by aiding countries in identifying their unique needs when implementing this technology.”

“Through the Hemispheric Biosafety and Biotechnology Program, IICA has worked to ensure that countries in the Americas are able to implement agricultural biotechnology and to meet international trade and environmental obligations,” said Dr. Jim Butler, Deputy Director General of IICA.



“Today’s signing of the MOU will allow for BIO and IICA to further align their efforts to improve the acceptance and implementation of agricultural biotechnology across the Americas, and make certain that more farmers and consumers will receive the socioeconomic, environmental, and financial benefits associated with biotech crops.”

BIO and IICA have previously cooperated in the promotion of agricultural biotechnology to support the development of an abbreviated system of food safety risk assessment for adventitious presence (AP) and on implementation issues for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

By partnering with regional entities such as the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA) and the Caribbean Tourism Organization, (CTO) IICA is able to identify and address any synergistic concerns between the agriculture sector and tourism industry within in the Americas.

Recognizing the fundamental role of youth and the ‘new agriculture’, the Institute has established a Youth Foundation for Agribusiness and a ‘Forum for Young Leaders’ which will result in a cadre of trained leaders for the sector in the future.

Conference on the Caribbean – A 20/20 Vision

The Conference aims to strengthen the existing relationship between the U.S. and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a 15 Caribbean nation group. It further seeks to develop future relationships and focus on the way forward to achieve developmental objectives for the Caribbean. The event is being held prior to the 2008 implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. That plan calls for one large market of CARICOM’s member states to provide better opportunities to produce and sell Caribbean goods and services to foreign markets while attracting investment to the region.

The 15 CARICOM members are: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

During the 3 days of talks, conference participants will discuss the promotion of Caribbean trade and tourism, competitiveness and investment, and ways to provide better social and economic equity.

Other topics to be addressed include the threat of natural disaster and terrorism to the Caribbean region, job creation for youth in the region, drug smuggling, bringing more stability to Haiti and the strengthening of the Caribbean diaspora communities in the United States, which refers to Caribbean populations who have migrated to the US. This group is of significant importance for CARICOM economies because collectively, they send billions of dollars in remittances home each year.