



Promoting Prosperity in the Rural Communities of the Americas

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IICA EMPHASIZES IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM AND AGRICULTURE LINK AT CARIBBEAN SUMMIT

“Agro-tourism provides significant opportunities to stimulate entrepreneurship and rural business, and to serve as a vehicle for enhancing lives and livelihoods in rural areas”. - Mrs. Ena Harvey



Mrs. Ena Harvey, IICA Hemispheric Agro-Tourism Specialist addresses audience at First Annual Caribbean Tourism Summit in Washington, DC.

Washington DC, June 23, 2008 – “We have come to an interesting pass today, as the negative impacts of Climate Change and the rising price of fuel have brought us back to basics, back to the need to feed ourselves, and to source food for our tourists by finding creative alternatives to imported food, which is expensive to transport and which carries a heavy carbon footprint.” Those were the words echoed by Mrs. Ena Harvey, Hemispheric Specialist for Agro-tourism for the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, (IICA).

Speaking at a panel discussion, ‘*Creating Opportunity Through Sustainability*,’ at the First Annual Caribbean Tourism Summit in Washington, DC, Mrs. Harvey emphasized the critical importance and need for investment in the sector. She said, “The Focus of agro-tourism linkages has traditionally been placed on

improving the levels of trade between farmers or processors and restaurants...The economic and social impact of these successes can only be sustained by strengthening farmers’ groups and investing in improved production technology (Greenhouse and hydroponics) through which farmers would be better able to control yields; timeliness of supply and quality of specialty fruit and vegetable crops; packhouse; abattoir and storage facilities and cool chain distribution systems.”

IICA’s decision to develop a hemispheric program on Agro-tourism was made on the basis of the significant progress achieved in Agro-tourism linkages with the tourism and hospitality sectors across the Americas since 2003. Travel and tourism have become the largest sector of the global economy, with more than 800 million international tourism arrivals reported in 2005. With this increase in arrivals in the Americas has also come an increase of new sites and attractions in the rural and farm based communities. A new type of entertainment, education and healthy activities for tourists, have been taking place. These activities range from tours of coffee, cocoa, banana and pineapple plantations (Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Costa Rica) to accommodations on farms and in rural districts (USA and Canada), culinary and craft festivals (Panama, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela), and the creation of health and wellness centers using indigenous healing treatments and products (Belize, Jamaica).

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According to Harvey, IICA's Agro-tourism initiative is consistent with national, regional, hemispheric and global visions and can contribute to the competitiveness, sustainability, equity, governance and the reduction of poverty for the Americas. Moreover, IICA strongly believes that agro-tourism offers a win-win opportunity to keep the land in agriculture while generating additional income and diversifying both the agriculture and tourism products. Currently, the Institute is active in agro-tourism projects in Haiti, Jamaica, Guyana, St. Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago, to name a few.

The First Annual Caribbean Tourism Summit stands alone as a significant opportunity for advancement of the Caribbean tourism infrastructure. The Summit hopes to bring together the diverse hospitality and tourism interests of the Caribbean region in efforts to support the growth and success of Caribbean tourism. IICA is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA).

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>.

For additional information on the First Annual Caribbean Tourism Summit, please visit <http://www.actfdc.com>

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