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in the future of agriculture*

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IICA launches innovative Center for training leaders in agriculture

- *Leaders with a global vision who are capable of promoting the repositioning of agriculture and rural life will receive training.*

The leaders of agriculture in the 21st century are faced with new and highly complex challenges. Coping with the changing role of agriculture in development, striking a balance between food security and environmental concerns and finding solutions to the problems of energy security are just a few of these pressing problems. Present-day society requires leaders who are transparent and visionary and who find a healthy balance between work and family life.

To help leaders achieve these goals, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) created the Center for Leadership in Agriculture as a pioneer in its genre and an innovator in its methods.

The Institute's new response to the needs of its 34 Member States is part of a process that took off at the dawn

of the third millennium. Through this process, the Institute has worked closely with the Ministers of Agriculture to restore the strategic role of agriculture that extends beyond its intrinsically vital role in food production and that is a contributing factor in the very survival of democracy and the social and political stability of our societies.

Through this Center, the new Ministers of Agriculture, senior executives in the sector as well as young leaders of the Americas will have a unique opportunity to engage in strategic dialogue on trends that impact agriculture and rural life at the national, regional and global levels. Here, participants will contribute to shaping a more modern vision of agriculture and rural life, share successful experiences and participate in the formulation of new proposals for transforming agricultural institutions.

THE LAUNCH OF THE NEW CENTER

- *With the inauguration of the Center for Leadership in Agriculture, IICA seeks to provide guidance to new ministers of agriculture, senior executives in the sector and young leaders in the Americas in strategic topics related to agriculture and rural life.*



The Deputy Foreign Minister of Costa Rica, Edgar Ugalde, and the Director General of IICA unveil the plaque of the Center for Leadership in Agriculture.

The ceremony inaugurating the Center for Leadership in Agriculture was held on March 24, 2008 at IICA Headquarters. It was attended by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, Edgar Ugalde; the Chairman of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture and Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Guatemala, Mario Aldana; the Director of Agricultural

Extension Services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Costa Rica, Nils Solorzano, representing Minister Javier Flores; and the Ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS) in Costa Rica, Patricio Zuquilanda, who represented Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza.

Representing IICA were Director General Chelston Brathwaite,

the Coordinator of the Center, Hernán Chiriboga, and staff from Headquarters.

Participants meeting in the United States Room at IICA Headquarters included members of the diplomatic corps accredited in Costa Rica and some 90 young people who arrived in Costa Rica from 34 nations of the hemisphere to participate in the First Forum for Young People involved in the sustainable development of agriculture in the Americas in the 21st century.

“We have with us the *crème de la crème* of agricultural leadership in the Americas, professional people who have demonstrated leadership qualities in their countries and we are in the presence of an innovative and entirely proactive proposal in aid of agriculture, the Coordinator of the Center, Hernan Chiriboga said.

“We believe that leadership is the most important human contribution toward creating a world that is more equitable, peaceful and environmentally responsible. The establishment of this center is not only an investment in the future of agriculture of the Americas

Credits

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The inauguration of the Center was attended by officials from the agricultural sector in the Americas, the diplomatic corps accredited in Costa Rica, young leaders and staff members of IICA.

but also an investment in the future of humanity” said Brathwaite, who stood witness to the culmination of an effort which had started months earlier with a small working group that accompanied him.

Ambassador Zuquilanda said that the Center would “give the hemisphere a new opportunity to continue to build a renewed institutional framework and revitalize technical cooperation further to execute the mandates of the governments from the Summits of the Americas and the ministerial agreements.”

In an inspiring speech to the young participants, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, Edgar Ugalde, said: “When I heard that young people from all over the hemisphere would be coming, I was overcome and it took me 47 years back to IICA in Turrialba, when I was seated like you young people from all over the Americas”.

“This experience you are having of participating with other young men and women from so many countries will make an indelible imprint on your lives”, he said. Looking to a sign in the United States Room at IICA Headquarters, Ugalde read: “Promoting prosperity in the rural communities of the Americas.” Engrave this in your hearts and minds. It will give you endless motivation for having come to Costa Rica.”

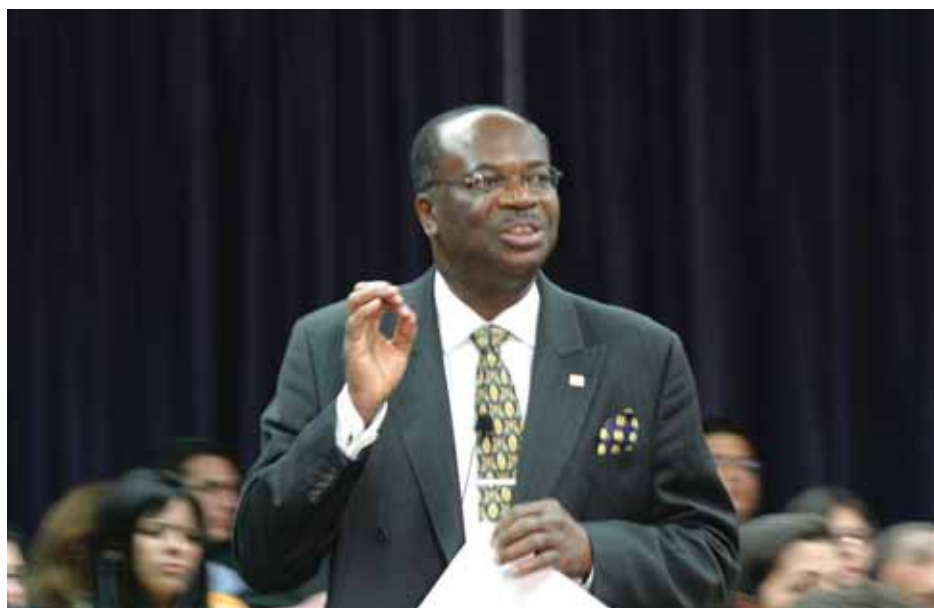
“We must use all our ingenuity to change a pessimistic reality to an optimistic one. We must exercise good leadership so that our countries’ disadvantages become grand regional opportunities and so that agriculture can contribute to development as an economic activity, as a means of livelihood, as a provider of environmental services”, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Guatemala, Mario Aldana, said.

The activities of the Center for Leadership in Agriculture include:

- The Forum for Leaders in Agriculture, aimed at decision makers and newly appointed ministers
- The Forum for Young Leaders in Agriculture, aimed at emerging leaders in agriculture in the Americas
- The Inter-American Network of Young Leaders in Agriculture
- Internships in a foreign country
- A Website and other modern means of communication

LEADERSHIP AND AGRICULTURE

*Chelston W.D. Brathwaite,
Director General, IICA*



As we come to the end of the first decade of the 21st Century, we propose a new vision for agriculture and rural life in the Americas. We are convinced that agriculture can contribute effectively to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty in our hemisphere by 50% by the year 2015. To do so, however, agriculture should be viewed more broadly, as an integrated and systemic sector that transcends the traditional concept of agriculture as a means of primary production.

While society requires the traditional goods produced by agriculture, today, there are other strategic and complementary activities, such as bio-energy production, environmental services, biodiversity, landscaping,

We need leaders with a multisectoral global vision who are capable of striking a balance among the economic, social and environmental dimensions of agriculture, leaders who are ethical, transparent and accountable.

cultural identity, and social and demographic stability. These goods and services, if properly used, have great potential for stimulating the economy as a whole, and rural economies, in particular, creating jobs, reducing poverty, and contributing to the conservation of the environment and biodiversity.

New responsibilities

We insist that this broad view of agriculture brings with it new responsibilities. The first responsibility has to do with energy. Today, agro-energy may be seen as an alternative to help reduce spending on oil and will contribute to preserving the environment and creating jobs.

The second responsibility has to do with food security. Food security in a globalized world poses a serious challenge for the countries of the Americas, which are the only net food-exporting region in the world. Our region, which still has the capacity to expand the amount of arable land, will be of key importance in feeding the more than 7 billion people who will have higher incomes and better living conditions by the year 2015. The challenge here is not only to produce the amount of food that will be needed, but also to ensure the quality of the food which must satisfy the tastes of markets, gain what is now the tenuous confidence of consumers who are increasingly more demanding.

The third responsibility is to contribute to providing rural inhabitants with dignified and gainful employment. Agriculture must contribute to creating more and better jobs in rural territories and be a means of creating prosperity and reducing rural poverty. Accordingly, policies and actions need to be promoted to foster linkages between agriculture and other sectors of the economy.

The fourth responsibility is to reinforce its contribution to social equilibrium, the aim being unequivocally to reduce the gap between rich and poor, and between urban and rural areas. To accomplish this, priority should be placed on increasing public and private investment in rural territories, which would relieve the pressure on cities which attract migratory flows from the countryside.

All of the foregoing will be of little value if we do not strengthen two basic assets that are necessary for overcoming problems in the countryside: social capital and human capital. By this we mean placing basic human needs at the center of the development process.

The fifth responsibility is to contribute to integration among nations. Many of today's problems are multinational in scope and call for multinational solutions.

A global vision

These realities suggest the need for a multisectoral, global vision and integrated policy measures that involve the government, private sector and rural community organizations in a new partnership.

We stand at an important moment in the history of the world, between the industrial society of the past and the information society of tomorrow. To face these challenges, new man-

Food security in a globalized world poses a serious challenge for the countries of the Americas, which are the only net food-exporting region in the world.

agement skills are not enough. We need new leaders: leaders who have a multisectoral, global vision; leaders who are capable of striking a balance among the economic, social and environmental dimensions of

agriculture; leaders who are ethical, transparent and accountable.

At this Center for Leadership in Agriculture, which we have inaugurated at IICA, we shall seek to promote the training of future leaders of agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

We shall promote an environment that fosters an understanding of global changes; we shall seek to interpret the impact of these changes on agriculture and rural life; we shall seek to inspire a new vision for agriculture and rural life that incorporates issues of equity, sustainability, competitiveness and good governance in the Americas.



“We shall seek to promote the training of future leaders of agriculture and rural life in the Americas”: Chelston Brathwaite.

A RESPONSE TO the desire of leaders of the hemisphere



*Ambassador Patricio Zuquilanda Duque,
Representative of the OAS in Costa Rica.*

The Center for Leadership in Agriculture, created by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, will provide an opportunity to build a renewed institutional framework in the hemisphere and give momentum to the execution of mandates of the governments from the Summits of the Americas and the ministerial agreements.

The Ministers of Agriculture, senior executives from the production sector and, especially, young leaders in agricultural society wish to establish fora to foster strategic dialogue on world trends that affect agriculture and rural life. The creation of this Center is a response to this desire.

The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States is

committed to cooperation with this new Center, which will be a highly useful instrument in moving ahead with hemispheric consensus through dialogue and negotiation.

Over the past few years, the Heads of State and Government have heeded the recommendations of IICA and pledged, within the context of the Summits of the Americas, to improve living conditions for the rural population by promoting investment and creating a favorable environment. In so doing, they took into account the fact that agriculture is a way of life for millions of people and that it is also a strategic weapon in the socioeconomic system for generating employment and progress for society. Through this Center, IICA is pledging its contribution to the hemisphere, because it is paving the way for an

inter-American network of young transparent and prescient leaders to analyze the status of and prospects for agriculture, engage in ongoing dialogue on current and emerging issues in rural life. What is more, they will have the leadership strategies and tools to work in unison in aid of the development of sustainable agriculture.

The creation of this Center is a response to this new vision of IICA as it strives to encourage current generations to apply scientific and technological resources to innovative government policy formulation; actively promote investment in aid of the agricultural sector; spearhead and improve activities to ensure food security and promote rural prosperity in all nations.

This is the time and precisely the place to be forthcoming about a stronger relationship between the OAS and IICA. We are interested in increasing the response to the mandates of the governments and, to do so, we must further strengthen ties between the two institutions at the political, technical and operational levels. We must make a reality an Inter-American System where IICA has a more effective role to play and increases its capabilities by sharing responsibilities with the General Secretariat of the OAS as a means of fulfilling its own mandate, building competitive and sustainable agriculture and achieving wellbeing for rural communities.

Taken from the speech by Ambassador Patricio Zuquilanda Duque, Representative of the OAS in Costa Rica, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Center for Leadership in Agriculture.



*Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
of Costa Rica,
Edgar Ugalde Alvarez*

“Young people: promote rural prosperity in the Americas”

Engrave this in your hearts and minds. It will give you endless motivation for having come to Costa Rica to take part in this Forum. Let me make another recommendation: don't waste these days that you are going to spend together exchanging opinions and sharing experiences. This will leave an indelible imprint on you for the rest of your lives.

Make this initiative by the Director General of IICA an opportunity to truly promote prosperity in the rural communities of the Americas. Because the bottom line is: what is the most serious problem we face at this time? It is poverty that is our daily scourge. Therein lie the seeds of insecurity, therein lie the seeds of disharmony; therein lie the seeds of misunderstandings. Therein lies, in the final analysis, the seed that day in, day out, blights our tranquility and peace in our countries.

Taken from the speech by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, Edgar Ugalde Alvarez, during the inauguration of the Center for Leadership in Agriculture.



*Deputy Minister of Agriculture,
Livestock and Food of Guatemala,
Mario Aldana*

Thinking differently in a different century

This new century needs new approaches. Natural resources are being depleted; climate change is upon us; oil prices are at their highest ever; wheat, rice and corn are no exception and the cost of our basic food basket is on the rise; the ranks of the poor swell each day. We are therefore forced to think differently; we must deal with the world differently; we must use all our ingenuity to change a pessimistic reality to an optimistic one; we must exercise good leadership so that our countries' disadvantages become grand regional opportunities and so that agriculture can contribute to development as an economic activity, as a means of livelihood, as a provider of environmental services”.

Taken from the speech by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food of Guatemala, Mario Aldana, who represented his country in his capacity as Chairman of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA).



*Javier Flores Galarza, Minister
of Agriculture of Costa Rica*

Inauguration of Center crowns IICA's efforts

The inauguration of this Center for Leadership in Agriculture is a manifestation of the efforts the Institute has been making in recent years, which have now materialized. The new leader is a motivator, facilitator, team leader, strategist, guide and humble servant. The type of leadership that this perspective suggests is based on four fundamental principles: inspiring confidence to evoke credibility, unleashing talent, clarifying purposes pursued and aligning systems. All of these principles are important in scenarios where change is ongoing and challenges faced require a multisectoral response.

Taken from the speech by the Minister of Agriculture of Costa Rica, Javier Flores G., which was read by the Director of Agricultural Extension, Nils Solorzano.

YOUNG LEADERS



- *The training of young leaders in agriculture is intended to contribute to the Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015.*

The First Forum for Young Leaders involved in the sustainable development of agriculture in the Americas in the 21st century was held from March 24 through 29, 2008 and concluded with a commitment on the part of approximately 90 young people from 34 countries to boost and promote the growth of the agricultural sector throughout the hemisphere.

After intensive days of training in topics related to leadership based on values, teamwork, negotiations, use of

the Agro-Matrix, rural development, etc., the leaders renewed their commitment to agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

“2008 Declaration of Young Leaders of the Americas” is the title of the document that the young leaders discussed for long hours and that includes topics such as the formulation of State policy based on criteria of social inclusion, gender, environmental sustainability, competitiveness and participation.

The young leaders also pledged to identify and circulate information on the sector as a means of providing decision makers in their countries with innovative tools. They further agreed to support commercial enterprises and promote environmental conservation as a means of alleviating the effects of climate change.

“Where are you going? What direction are you taking? From the outset, I want each one of you to ask yourself these questions”, Director

commit to a new vision of agriculture in the hemisphere

The Center promotes the development of an Inter-American Network of Young Leaders, and will give young leaders the opportunity to participate in internships in a foreign country.

General Chelston Brathwaite said. "Now, what is important is what each one of you will do for agriculture in your country", he went on to say. He further urged the young people to be the best of their generation and to build together a world with new opportunities.

Medardo Lizano from El Salvador, and Marcus Leountus Richards from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, were elected to inform the Executive Committee of the results of the Forum. The Executive Committee, a Governing Body of IICA, is slated to meet in Costa Rica from July 22 through 24, 2008.

During the Forum, participants worked with a constructivist methodology based on presentations by specialists, followed by small group analyses and discussions of results in plenary sessions. Participants also discussed successful experiences to promote an exchange of ideas and constant dialogue among participants.

Forum participants visited EARTH University where they were part of a number of activities intended to reinforce teamwork, analyze projects and the model that that University is using for developing leadership qualities among its students.

Shared learning

Intended for emerging leaders in the Americas, the Forum interconnects four components:

- Summary of the status of and prospects for agriculture in the 21st century;
- Strategic dialogues on current and emerging issues for agriculture and rural life in the Americas;
- Leadership strategies and tools; and
- Field trips and internships.



"You are the future of agriculture in the Americas", the Director General of IICA told them.

MORE THAN A PASSION, A COMMITMENT

● *Testimonies recorded after a week of intensive learning and exchange...*

Our goal is to have a 21st century leader, a 21st century agricultural leader; not the leader of the industrial age who was a controlling leader, a dictator. What we want is a facilitator, someone who can unleash talents.

*Jorge Hernán Chiriboga,
Coordinator of the Center for Leadership in Agriculture*

At one time, I thought of leaving agriculture and moving into other areas of life. But, because of the importance of agriculture I have to be there as a leader, a young leader, I have to stand up for agriculture in rural communities in St. Vincent and the Americas.

*Conroy Cassan Huggins,
St. Vincent and the Grenadines*

I came as a Jamaican. And left as a Latin Caribbean. I came as a national. And left as a person from the hemisphere.

*Mark Lee,
Jamaica*

This experience has given us the tools to develop as leaders in our countries simply because we've been given the opportunity to understand how to work with people, how to operate with people, learning to trust, learning to participate, learning to develop people and ourselves. It's an excellent experience.

*Abidemi Smenkh-Ka-Ra,
Trinidad and Tobago*

A major challenge we have begun to recognize is the need for organization. It is time for us to become more organized, to communicate more with one another, to seek more partnerships among all, in pursuit of solutions.

*Rosalina Godínez,
Costa Rica*

Sharing experiences and agreeing on the way forward is the essence of leadership. Remember people are leaders or actors, last week we demonstrated that we are all leaders.

*Richard Rampersaud,
Trinidad and Tobago*

One of the key things that I learned over the last week is that the problems that we are facing in agriculture are almost universal from top to bottom of the Americas and it is so important to have young educated leaders helping to resolve these problems for the future of mankind. Some day the general population will realize just how important farmers are!

*Ian Richardson,
Canada*

DECLARATION

of the First Forum of Young Leaders in Agriculture and the Rural Communities of the Americas

Meeting at the Headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), in San Jose, Costa Rica;

Mindful of the importance of reassessing the value of, and publicizing, the true contribution of agriculture and rural life to the sustainable development of our countries with a view to achieving greater competitiveness, sustainability, equity and good governance;

Acknowledging the need to work jointly with public, private and social stakeholders who interact in rural territories, agricultural value added chains and the national and international setting;

And acknowledging as a resource the cultural, environmental, social and economic diversity of the countries of the Americas and the unique conditions that exist in each of our countries,

As Young Leaders of Agriculture and Rural Communities of the Americas, we renew our commitment to:

1. *Contribute to establishing and reinforcing opportunities and mechanisms for reaching consensus on State policies that incorporate the principles of social inclusion and gender, environmental sustainability, competitiveness and participation;*
2. *Participate in the identification and dissemination of information on the true contribution of agrifood chains and rural territories to the general well-being of societies, so that decision makers can acknowledge the importance of agriculture and rural life in designing public policies;*
3. *Promote innovative commercial agricultural and rural enterprises and thereby contribute to the development of a competitive, innovative, inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurial system;*
4. *Empower young leaders by instilling an awareness of the importance of environmental conservation in mitigating the effects of climate change and promoting sustainable development;*
5. *To enhance leadership in young people based on trust and integrity with a view to promoting respect for cultural identity;*
6. *To recommend that other fora continue to be conducted to assess the work accomplished by leaders in each member country in promoting the repositioning of agriculture and rural life;*
7. *To follow up on the commitments made through the available mechanisms for this purpose.*

IICA promotes LEADERSHIP

To be a specialized center that promotes a new generation of leaders with a global vision, who are capable of creating a modern agricultural sector that contributes to the sustainable development of agriculture, food security and rural prosperity in the Americas, is the mission of the Center for Leadership in Agriculture created by IICA.



1- Through various participatory dynamic activities, participants in the forum learn about teamwork. **2-** Shauna Brandon, from Jamaica, during the Forum for Young Leaders. **3-** The Director of Rural Development of IICA, Carlos Jara, gave an inspirational talk to the young people. **4-** Rachelle Chery-Pierre-Louis, from Haiti, in one of the activities on the EARTH University campus. **5-** Eric Liljenstolpe from the Franklin Covey Co. spoke to the young leaders about value-based leadership. **6-** Conroy Cassan Huggins, from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Damien F. Hinds, from Barbados. **7-** Effective communication and coordination help the group achieve better results. **8-** Juan Ignacio Buffa, from Uruguay, passes the test, thanks to support from his team. **9-** Emmanuel Fenelon, from Haiti, received his certificate of participation in the Forum for Young Leaders from IICA officials. **10-** Young professionals at IICA Headquarters also benefited from the Forum



Forum for Leaders

MINISTER OF SAINT LUCIA AND IICA AGREE ON PRIORITY AGENDA

The Minister of Agriculture of Saint Lucia, Ezechiel Joseph, was the first participant in the Forum for Leaders in Agriculture program, created by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). The first Forum, which was held from February 1 through 3, 2007, provided the backdrop for decision making on priority activities that IICA would support in that Caribbean nation.

The Forum is a two-day program designed especially for new ministers of agriculture and senior executives of the sector interested in an up-to-date vision of agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

Minister Joseph was accompanied by his ministry's Permanent Secretary, Martin Satney, and IICA's Representative in the Eastern Caribbean States, Una May Gordon.

"The Forum gives us a golden opportunity to work with the new leaders of agriculture and rural life in the Americas. Together, we can focus on identifying the challenges, devising new solutions for the countries' agricultural sectors and contributing to the development of a national agenda based on the Government's priorities," Brathwaite said.

The Forum provided an opportunity for discussions on IICA and its role in agricultural development in the hemisphere; the role of agriculture and agribusiness in economic development; the challenges and opportunities for agriculture in the 21st century; and a minister's responsibilities as a member of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture, IICA's highest governing body.

The discussions also paved the way for a new IICA technical cooperation agenda in Saint Lucia. At issue were basic activities described by Joseph as "urgent" for agricultural development in his country.

The visit concluded with a field trip to a community that is approximately 80 kilometers from the Costa Rican capital. During that visit, he observed hydroponic crops and other techniques in protected environments.

Minister Joseph expressed satisfaction with the decisions reached and



The IICA Representative for the Eastern Caribbean States accompanied the Minister on the field trip.

underscored the importance of the Forum for Leaders in Agriculture in promoting ties among the various stakeholders of rural life in the Americas.



The Minister was particularly interested in the subject of State policies.

Minister of Agriculture of Peru visited IICA

His visit in 2006 was a prelude to the Forum for Leaders which was created some time afterwards.

The then Minister of Agriculture of Peru, Juan Jose Salazar Garcia, visited IICA Headquarters in September of 2006.

The Minister, who was accompanied by the Peruvian Ambassador in Costa Rica, Alberto Gutierrez La Madrid, met with the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, other officials and specialists in various strategic areas. That meeting was the point of departure for the establishment of the Forum for Leaders in Agriculture.

The Minister was able to familiarize himself with a range of possible areas for technical support from IICA and showed special interest in government policy formulation in the framework of decentralization being promoted by the Government of President Alan Garcia.

Forum for Leaders

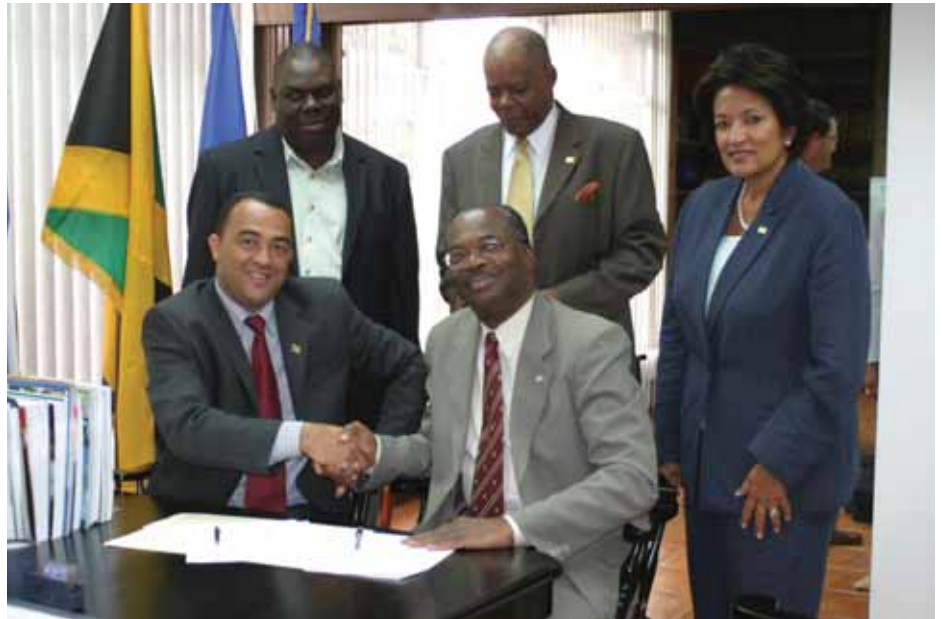
MINISTER OF JAMAICA BETS ON ENHANCING THE VALUE OF AGRICULTURE

The Minister of Agriculture and Lands of Jamaica, Christopher Tufton, asked for IICA's support in determining the true contribution of agriculture to the economy of his country following intensive discussions with senior executives from that inter-American organization on the challenges of agriculture in the 21st century.

From February 19 to 23, Minister Tufton and a small delegation of public officials and agribusiness operators participated in the Forum for Leaders in Agriculture, held at IICA Headquarters.

The Minister and his host, the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, signed an agreement calling for adjustments in the priorities of the technical cooperation agenda being implemented in that nation.

Priority was assigned to topics such as technology exchanges between Costa Rica and Jamaica for the production of cassava in greenhouses, and to the modernization of the structure of the Ministry of Agriculture, with a view to



The IICA Representative in Jamaica, Cynthia Currie, and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture of that country, Donovan Stanberry.

upgrading its management, supervision and evaluation mechanisms.

Minister Tufton also met with his counterpart, Javier Flores, with whom he discussed the agricultural chain approach as it is applied in Costa Rica, and learned of a number of national programs such as the ones on tropical roots, pineapples and protected environments.

with Nicaragua, to visit hydroponic, greenhouse and organic production projects.

The research that the Minister requested of IICA will determine the true contribution of the expanded agricultural sector to the gross domestic product of Jamaica. Since 2002, the Institute has been doing this type of assessment based on a pioneering approach and using a methodology for identifying the forward and backward linkages of agriculture.



This visit served as the first step on the road to Jamaica 2009.

On the last day of their visit, the delegation went on a field trip which took them to Zarcero, Pital and La Fortuna de San Carlos, near the border

Minister Tufton's visit to IICA also served to begin the lead up to two key meetings to be held in Jamaica in 2009: the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life in the context of the Summit of the Americas process, and the Fifteenth Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA).

Center for Leadership trains Jamaicans

According to team leader Webster McPherson, a workshop-course on new agricultural techniques attended by 13 Jamaican interns in Costa Rica was an “educational and inspirational experience.”

The training sessions, held from May 5-31, 2008, were organized by the Center for Leadership in Agriculture as part of the agenda for cooperation between the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and Jamaica.

The participating specialists, agricultural engineers and biologists updated and expanded their knowledge of organic agriculture, hydroponics and agriculture in protected environments. The training was requested by the Minister of Agriculture of Jamaica, Christopher Tufton, while participating in the Forum for Leaders organized by IICA.

According to McPherson, “It was a valuable and enriching experience. We learned about agriculture from an ecological perspective. Not everything that was presented can be applied in Jamaica, but we will select the



Laura Perez delivers the certificate of participation to Webster McPherson.



Hernan Chiriboga, Coordinator of the Center for Leadership in Agriculture, during the closing ceremony.

most important lessons learned and be creative in adapting them to conditions in Jamaica.”

When asked which topics would be most useful for Jamaica, he underscored the agro-ecological approach to pest control, which calls for taking preventive measures only when necessary, rather than applying chemical pesticides as a first resort.

He also referred to the preparation of solutions with nutrients for plants, to the use of plants that repel and attract pests, to “fertigation” (application of fertilizers through irrigation systems) and to the use of local substrates for production rather than imported inputs.

Laura Perez, President of the Green Heart National Gardening Center,

which facilitated the training, explained that the group traveled more than 2000 km in Costa Rica, visiting horticulturists who have adopted different approaches to agriculture, given the challenges posed by food security.

At the closing ceremony of the activity, she said “We set the table for you and invited you to pick out what would be most useful to you in your work in Jamaica. What you do next is your responsibility.”

In this regard, McPherson assured that they will begin the process of systematizing the information compiled in a few weeks and then share it, through training workshops, with the agricultural community in Jamaica.