



Promoting rural prosperity in the Americas

IICA launches innovative center for training leaders in agriculture

Young leaders from 34 countries meet in Costa Rica to participate in the first hemispheric forum on leadership in agriculture.

San Jose, Costa Rica, March 25, 2008 (IICA). The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) inaugurated on March 24 an innovative Center for Leadership in Agriculture, which seeks to provide guidance to new ministers, senior executives and young leaders in agriculture in strategic topics related to agriculture and rural life.

The inaugural ceremony, held at IICA Headquarters, was attended by the Chairman of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture and Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Guatemala, Mario Aldana; the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, Edgar Ugalde; the Director of Agricultural Extension Services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Costa Rica, Nils Solórzano, representing Minister Javier Flores; and the Ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS) in Costa Rica, Patricio Zuquilanda, who represented Secretary General José Miguel Insulza.

Representing IICA were Director General Chelston Brathwaite and the Coordinator of the Center, Hernán Chiriboga.

“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 centre, is not only an investment in the future of agriculture of the Americas but also an investment in the future of humanity in the Americas” said Brathwaite to an audience consisting of members of the diplomatic corps accredited to Costa Rica, young leaders from 34 countries of the hemisphere and IICA staff members.

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.”

The launch of the Leadership Center coincided with the start of the First Forum for Young Leaders involved in the sustainable development of agriculture in the Americas in the XXIst century, in which some 90 youths took part.

Through this initiative, the Institute will promote the development of young leaders with a global vision and give young professionals in agriculture and rural life of the Americas an opportunity to expand their knowledge of global issues.

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.”

The Forum is offering training in topics such as leadership based on values, teamwork, systemic thinking, use of the tool known as Agro-Matrix, and conflict resolution.

The idea is for participants to explore various scenarios for the future of agriculture, production and trade, strengthen their overall vision of agriculture and rural life in the context of a globalized world and share knowledge and lessons learnt with other young leaders.

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

Director General Brathwaite said that the problems of the XXIst century are very different from those of the previous one and facing them requires new instruments, especially leaders capable of acting in scenarios in a constant state of flux.

The Director General emphasized the need to adopt a new vision for agriculture and rural life of the Americas to enable the sector to contribute effectively to meeting the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty by half in the hemisphere by 2015.

“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.

On Saturday, March 29, the young people participating in the forum will seal their commitment in a “2008 Declaration of Young Leaders of the Americas”.

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