

IICA launches materials on avian influenza

The Institute will make these audiovisual training materials on biosafety available to the public and private sectors of its 34 member countries, as support for efforts to prevent avian influenza.

San Jose, February, 2007 (IICA). Juan Galvan has a small poultry farm somewhere in the Americas and has heard that avian influenza may reach his community. Galvan is the main character in a radio series and a videocassette recently launched by Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) to help prevent an eventual outbreak of this transboundary disease in the region.



Gerardo Arce plays the role of Juan Galván. Here, next to Madelaine Martinez (center) and Angie Cervantes in IICA's recording studio.

Both instruments target small- and medium-scale producers, including those with only a few birds in their backyards, who must improve their biosafety practices if they are going to keep their flocks free from avian influenza or any other transmissible disease.

In writing the scripts, Susana Fevrier, an experienced communicator, drew information and ideas from the FAO publication *"Guide to the prevention and control of avian*

flu in small-scale poultry farming in Latin America and the Caribbean."

The member countries of a number of international organizations, including IICA, have asked for support in preventing avian influenza, including actions in the area of risk communication. Highly pathogenic avian influenza, caused by the H5N1 virus, while not yet present in the Americas, has been found in other parts of the world.

In response to requests from its Member States, IICA defined an institutional policy and mapped out strategic actions in avian influenza, one of which is the development of these materials, which it is making available to the governments and poultry organizations in the Americas.

According to Chelston Brathwaite, Director General of IICA, it will be up to government authorities and the poultry organizations in the countries to decide how best and when to use these communication and training tools, without arousing unfounded or unnecessary fears among producers and consumers.

Audiovisual materials for producers

This radio series, entitled *"Mas vale prevenir..." (An ounce of prevention...)*, comprises ten six-minute chapters, in the format of a dramatization. It tells the story of Juan Galvan, a

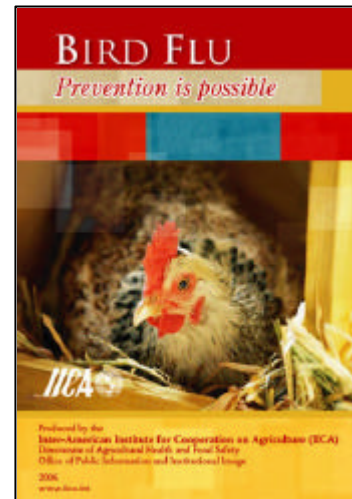
long-time farmer who, when learning of the possibility of an outbreak of avian influenza, decides to follow the advice of agricultural health specialists and take a few easy and inexpensive biosafety measures on his farm.

General information on the disease, the ABCs of preventive measures and the correct response in the face of an outbreak in the country are addressed in the different chapters of the series, which can be broadcast over the radio or used in on-site training activities.

The 10-minute video ***“Bird Flu Prevention is possible”*** explains what the disease is, how to protect the farm (before the virus arrives), safety measures to be implemented and the symptoms sick birds will display. The mini-documentary is accompanied by three television spots also aimed at preventing the transmission of the disease on small poultry farms.

The video, filmed and produced by Costa Rican Luis Gamboa, depicts scenes that could be found in any of our nations. Men and women in indigenous and afro descendent communities show how, with a minimal investment, it is possible to prevent diseases that put not only their small farm, but also human health, at risk.

These materials are the result of the work of a multidisciplinary group headed by IICA’s Deputy Director General and then Acting Director of Agricultural Health and Food Safety, James Butler. The other members of the team were the Institute’s Regional Specialists in Agricultural Health and the journalists at Headquarters, located in Costa Rica.



The specialists contributed their scientific knowledge and the journalists their ability to translate complex concepts into simple ideas. However, the greatest challenge for all of them was to use a language that could be understood in any country and create scenarios that would be familiar to poultry farmers in the Andean region, the Caribbean, Central America and South America.

Recorded at the IICA studio, a group of renowned actors of different nationalities played the different parts in the series. Outstanding among them is the well-known Costa Rican actor Gerardo Arce, who brought the main character to life, creating a Juan Galvan who is believable and succeeds in explaining why, rather than feeling sorry tomorrow, it is better to put a few easy and inexpensive measures from improving overall conditions on the farm into practice today.

A gifted artist from Argentina living in Central America provided the music. Adrian Goizueta gave the series its unique sound, rooted in our folklore but played on modern musical instruments, which is representative of all of our nations, but no one in particular.



The English version of the radio series will be available soon.

For further information, visit the IICA Website on avian influenza: <http://www.iica.int/AvianInfluenza/default.asp> or the Office of Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture in your country.

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