

## **IICA urges support of small- and medium-scale farmers**

*IICA and SELA convened a meeting with countries of the hemisphere*

**San Jose, Costa Rica, September 2009 (IICA).** During a meeting convened jointly with SELA, IICA called on delegates from countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to focus their efforts on supporting small- and medium-scale farmers.

The meeting, entitled “Consultation and Coordination Meeting on Food Prices and Food Security,” was held in Caracas, Venezuela, on September 17-18 and afforded the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) an opportunity to put forth proposals on that topic.

IICA recommended focusing efforts and attention on small- and medium-scale farmers because they account for most of the farmers and produce most of the food in the region and have the potential of producing a greater variety of food, while at the same time increasing their incomes.

In the judgment of SELA, it is necessary to increase production if the growth in food prices is to be slowed. This opinion was expressed by the Permanent Secretary of SELA, Ambassador Jose Rivera Banuet, who added that “international food prices are entering a new upward spiral, and the number of people suffering from hunger is on the rise.”

In response to this situation, SELA recommended strengthening food security networks, increasing disaster aid in the region, and stabilizing markets associated with food.

In addition, SELA suggested designing actions that will support the initiatives of the developed countries to limit speculation on international markets, reducing trade barriers, promoting free trade in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, collaborating in the consolidation of the Doha Development Round, encouraging greater investment in research and development and creating a food bank to survive the crisis.

Both IICA and SELA called for efforts to strengthen consultation and coordination mechanisms, which will have positive consequences in the long term and help to improve the quality of life for the population.

According to IICA’s Director of Institutional Modernization, Rafael Trejos, “By 2050, we will need twice as much food, which will have to be produced on less land.”

“Important challenges such as the impact of climate change on agriculture and rural life demand long-term proposals,” he added.

During the meeting, proposals were also presented by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Food Programme, all of which called attention to the negative effect of rising food prices on nutrition, hunger, health and poverty.

The dialogue between IICA and SELA began in May of this year, when the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, held a meeting with the Permanent Secretary of SELA, Jose Rivera.

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