



Leading Latin American and Caribbean women experts to participate in forum on rural women as panelists

The aim of the activity, due to be held on Thursday, October 7, is to discuss the role of women in agriculture and food security, and to create a common agenda for work on the issue.

San Jose, Costa Rica. October 4, 2010 (IICA). Distinguished Latin American and Caribbean women political leaders will be discussing the contribution of rural women to agriculture and food security in the hemisphere at the Headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), in Costa Rica.

The objective of the activity, scheduled to get under way at 9 a.m. on Thursday, October 7, is to help create a common agenda for cooperation between IICA and its member countries designed to promote the development of rural women and their families, and to enhance their contribution to the progress of the agricultural sector in the short term.

The International Forum *Women in Agriculture: Women's contribution to agriculture and food security in the Americas* will be inaugurated by the President of Costa Rica, Laura Chinchilla. The President will be accompanied by her country's Minister of Agriculture, Gloria Abraham, who will also be moderating one of the panels during the forum.

The panelists and special guests include women senators, ministers and specialists, delegates of international organizations, leaders of organizations of rural women and institutions actively involved in gender equity issues. Government delegates from a large number of countries will also be present, following their participation in the annual meeting of IICA's Executive Committee, which begins on Tuesday, October 5.

Although their true contribution is not recognized, women account for more than 50% of the economically active population in agriculture in the developing countries, and their contribution to food production is especially important.

Experts agree that most of the public policies and instruments that governments have implemented to promote rural women have proven to be insufficient, and, due to the lack of information, women's true contribution to the economy is unknown, while the value of the unpaid work that women perform in the home and in rural communities continues to be systematically ignored.

The objectives of the forum

IICA's Director General, Víctor M. Villalobos, explained that the analyses generated during the international forum would be used to identify actions that will make women's participation more effective and recognize their contribution to agriculture and rural well-being.

“We must contribute to the creation of a common agenda for cooperation between IICA and its member countries, designed to promote the development of women and rural families, and to enhance their contribution to agriculture and food security,” Villalobos said.

The program

Following the inaugural ceremony, the forum will consist of a series of panel discussions. Costa Rica’s Minister of Agriculture will moderate the first panel, entitled “Policies and actions aimed at strengthening the contribution of women to agricultural development and food security.”

IICA’s Deputy Director General, Karen Lezny, will moderate the second panel, which will focus on “Developing capacities to increase the contribution of women to agricultural development and food security in the Americas.”

The panelists include Mexican Beatriz Paredes Rangel, a federal lawmaker who is currently President of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI); the Minister of Rural Development and Land of Bolivia, Nemesia Achacollo Tola; Joanne Massiah, Minister of State of Antigua and Barbuda; and Ana Arocha, President of the Federation of Rural Women of Uruguay.

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