



Forty-fourth Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee

Report of the First Meeting of Leaders of Rurality of the Americas: Strengthening Rurality through Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Production

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San Jose, Costa Rica
19-20 July 2023

Report of the First Meeting of Leaders of Rurality of the Americas: Strengthening Rurality through Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Production

16 - 20 April 2024

Introduction

Pursuant to Resolution IICA/JIA/Res. 551 (XXII-O/23) of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the first Meeting of Leaders of Rurality of the Americas was held in April 2024 at the Institute's Headquarters. At the invitation of Manuel Otero, Director General of the Institute, 36 participants from 18 countries of the Americas—recipients of the Institute's "Soul of Rurality Award"—attended the event.

Objective

To promote dialogue and experience sharing among the leaders from various regions of the Americas to strengthen the transformation of agriculture and the rural areas of the region.

Participants and countries of origin

1	Patricia Gorza	Argentina
2	Andrea Izzo Capella	Argentina
3	Milagros Paulón	Argentina
4	Alina Ruiz	Argentina
5	José Muñoz	Argentina
6	Daniel Bruno	Argentina
7	Deon Gibson	Bahamas
8	Yessica Yana	Bolivia
9	Trigidia Jiménez	Bolivia
10	Francisca Neri	Brazil
11	Simone Silotti	Brazil
12	Katia Silene Tonkyre	Brazil
13	Bernarda Salazar	Chile
14	Paulina Carrasco	Chile
15	Macarena Valdés	Chile
16	Marco Aceituno	Chile
17	Emilio Sepúlveda	Chile
18	Alfredo Carrasco	Chile
19	Liliana Jiménez Molina	Colombia
20	Sonia Murillo	Costa Rica

21	Yeikol Ortiz Matarrita	Costa Rica
22	Ehyni Rodríguez Cisneros	Costa Rica
23	Joelin Santos	Dominican Republic
24	Lorena Valdez	Ecuador
25	Odette Varela	El Salvador
26	Salomón Celada	El Salvador
27	Elvia Monzón	Guatemala
28	Gustavo Rivas	Guatemala
29	Rosamund Benn	Guyana
30	Eodora Méndez	Honduras
31	Juana García Palomares	Mexico
32	Gabriela Lucas Deecke	Mexico
33	Chito Quintero	Panama
34	Rosalina Jarolin	Paraguay
35	Haydée Anccasi	Peru
36	Ramgopaul Roop	Trinidad and Tobago

Note: For various reasons, some of the Leaders of Rurality from Canada, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States and Uruguay were unable to attend the meeting in person.

Total number of participating leaders: 36

Women: 24

Men: 12

Total number of participating countries: 18

Agenda

16 April

TECHNICAL TOUR	
7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Technical tour of production areas in Turrialba: Hacienda Tayutic, Assukkar S. A., Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) and Nortico Cocoa Farm.

17 April

OPENING	
8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.	Remarks by Manuel Otero, IICA Director General (in person) Remarks by Fernando Mattos, Minister of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries of Uruguay and Chair of the IABA (virtual)

INTRODUCTORY SESSION	PRESENTATIONS BY LEADERS OF RURALITY
8:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.	Presentations by each leader
SESSION 1	CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
10:50 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.	Presentation by Rattan Lal, 2020 World Food Prize laureate (virtual)
11:10 a.m.– 12:00 noon	Discussion among leaders and Rattan Lal
12:00 noon – 12:30 p.m.	Discussion among leaders and individual presentations (continued)
12:40 p.m. - 2:10 p.m.	THEME-BASED LUNCHEON Presentation: Strategy and Sustainability, the Science of Crops (virtual) Ronald Guendel, Vice-President of Smallholder Farming, Bayer Crop Science
SESSION 2	CHALLENGES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT
2:10 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.	Presentation by Álvaro Lario, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (virtual)
2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Discussion among leaders and Álvaro Lario
3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Discussion among leaders and presentations by each person (continued)
EXCHANGE SESSION	
4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.	Presentation of certificates to the Leaders of Rurality
5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Reception in the Institute's lobby

18 April

IICA OF OPEN DOORS	
8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Tour of the Institute's Headquarters
10:30 a.m. - 10:50 a.m.	Break
SESSION 3	CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL AGRICULTURE AND CONNECTIVITY
10:50 a.m. - 11:10 a.m.	Presentation by Sandra Ziegler and Federico Bert (virtual)
11:10 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.	Discussion among leaders and IICA specialists

11:50 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Discussion among leaders and presentations by each person (continued)
1:10 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.	THEME-BASED LUNCHEON Presentation: Financing Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (virtual) Florentino Fernández, Advisor for Mexico and Central America. CAF-Development Bank of Latin America
SESSION 4	CHALLENGES FOR ASSOCIATIVE ENTERPRISES
2:30 p.m. - 2:50 p.m.	Presentation by Roberto Rodrigues, Coordinator of the Agribusiness Center of the São Paulo School of Economics Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV) (virtual)
2:50 p.m. - 3:50 p.m.	Discussion among leaders and Roberto Rodrigues
3:50 p.m. - 4:35 p.m.	Discussion among leaders and presentations by each person (continued)
SESSION 5, FINAL	
4:35 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Session with the Director General of the Institute

19 April

NETWORKING EXCURSION	
7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Hacienda Doka, Alajuela

20 April

NETWORKING EXCURSION	
7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Hacienda La Lucha, Cedral de León Cortés

Conclusions. IICA Director General

One of the main commitments made during the meeting, was to establish a network, with the technical support of the Institute, to drive actions to strengthen rural territories and their people, as well as to prioritize their role as guarantors of food and nutritional security and as custodians of the planet's biodiversity.

The Director General also presented the Leaders of Rurality attending the event in Costa Rica with a draft roadmap and concrete actions arising out of this first meeting. In summary, these actions are as follows:

1. With the support of Roberto Rodrigues, establish a platform to promote associative enterprises and cooperativism.
2. Promote the creation of a family farming seal for the Americas.
3. Establish a network of gene banks of native seeds.
4. Record and disseminate successful experiences in different types of production systems, through documents and audiovisual material, among other elements.
5. Promote the role of rural and agrotechnical schools.
6. Support new extension strategies with affordable tools.
7. Prepare a catalogue of family farming products from the Americas to be promoted at IICA NATURA.
8. Disseminate information on access to funding for rural communities.

The Directorate of Technical Cooperation of the Institute has already begun to implement this roadmap.

Declaration by the Leaders of Rurality of the Americas

1. In a world in which food, nutritional and climate security are a growing cause for concern, and in which production systems are compelled to become more sustainable and inclusive, it is imperative that we recognize and value the decisive contribution of rural areas, their leaders and communities. They devote their knowledge, resources and efforts to guarantee the production of an adequate supply of food in harmony with the environment, and also play an essential role in building safer, more equitable and more resilient societies.

2. Throughout the world, leaders and communities are working tirelessly to identify and surmount the challenges that impede access to healthy supplies in rural areas, organizing food education programs, establishing community gardens, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, spearheading educational activities, revaluing native crops and collaborating with local and international organizations to develop innovative and sustainable solutions.

3. At the invitation of the Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, 24 women and 19 men from 18 countries in the Americas, who were recipients of the organization's "Soul of Rurality" award, gathered at the Institute's Headquarters to celebrate the First Meeting of Leaders of Rurality of the Americas.

4. Within this context, the leaders are reaffirming our commitment and responsibility to continue serving as guarantors of food and nutrition security, advocates of sustainable development and custodians of the planet's biodiversity, pledging to share our successful experiences and to build networks to boost the production potential and rural well-being of the countries of the Americas.

5. We represent all the individuals who produce, plant, reap, create, innovate, teach and unite their communities, and whose influence can be seen in all the food that we eat and in every square of production land, which should be recognized.

6. By sharing our stories and life experiences and drawing on our diversity—which is one of the strengths of our region—we are building a common vision of rurality in the Americas in the future. This vision positions agriculture as part of the solution to challenges in the global agenda, such as climate change and food security, and demands that governments institute public policies that are pro-nature, pro-agriculture and pro-farmer.

7. We commit to sharing successful innovation experiences and sustainable agriculture best practices, particularly those that can improve living conditions in our communities. We also stand ready to work with different stakeholders in the agriculture and rural sectors to reduce development gaps.

8. Among the various issues that we face, environmental concerns and climate change impacts are particularly pressing. We reiterate that agriculture is part of the solution and agree that soil degradation in agricultural land and the need for water management represent a challenge that can be overcome through alternative approaches such as the development of the bioeconomy, the circular economy and bioinputs, as demonstrated by many of the experiences that we have shared.

9. Gender equity is another issue of paramount importance. Therefore, we have made an urgent appeal for women in rural communities to be afforded economic empowerment and their importance in agricultural and rural development activities to be highlighted, as a means of shifting the paradigm with respect to the role of men and women in the countryside. We have proposed that we draw on our various experiences to create a regional agenda on this issue, allowing women to be the protagonists of their own transformation.

10. We would also like to stress the need to encourage young people to remain in or return to rural areas, by providing them with real options for development and nurturing and harnessing their innovative and entrepreneurial spirit, by implementing technologies and strengthening education and training, thereby ensuring generational succession in rural areas.

11. We agree that the incorporation of digital technologies represents one of the most promising opportunities to improve agriculture and rural areas. However, the challenge of rural connectivity must be tackled as a matter of urgency, considering that only 4 in every 10 rural residents have internet access. As such, we must democratize the use of information and communication technologies, by strengthening public policies and linkages with the private sector. We also maintain that technological innovations must be tailored to local realities, to improve our production process and its efficiency.

12. We would like to point out that financing will be the key to maintaining and expanding these initiatives and entrepreneurial activities. Institutions such as IFAD or CAF stand to make a valuable contribution to these efforts, by directing funding to rural communities.

13. We insist that these initiatives must be profitable, generating income and ensuring rural retention, all of which will require planning and the incorporation of a value-added component.

14. We recognize the importance of fostering cooperativism and other forms of association, as a way to unleash the potential of family farming. This will minimize the risks to smallholder farmers and improve their economic mobility, while also increasing their competitiveness and their subsequent access to the market.

15. We are appealing to authorities in the agriculture sector and in the public and private sectors, civil society and parliament, to closely monitor and contribute to activities in the rural areas of the Americas and to redouble efforts to ensure the well-being of these communities.

16. We are urging IICA to continue working to ensure that, through our leaders, the voice of rural communities is heard and the interests of those who live and work in rural areas are taken into account. As rural leaders we trust that we can count on the technical cooperation of the Institute and its partners to sustainably improve production activity.

17. We propose the development and consolidation of a “Network of Rural Leaders of the Americas” in which IICA could serve as the Secretariat. It is crucial to generate a forum for the establishment of linkages and coordination, as this will ensure that successful experiences can be disseminated, capitalized on and applied to our shared realities. In that regard, we endorse and commit to undertaking the series of hemispheric actions that the Director General proposed at the end of the meeting ([click here](#)).

18. We express our gratitude to IICA, and to its Director General, for its initiative to recognize rural leaders of the Americas and its commitment to ensuring that this recognition facilitates linkages with government agencies, civil society and the private sector to gain support for our causes.

19. We believe that IICA’s governing bodies, comprised of the ministers and secretaries of Agriculture of the 34 member countries of the Institute, should be advised of the results of this meeting. With their support, we can generate and expand their opportunities to interact with rural leaders, whose proposals and suggestions should be taken into account in public policymaking.

20. Only through joint work will we succeed in building a future in which food security and environmental sustainability is a reality for all inhabitants of the Americas and the world,

particularly in rural environments, whose preservation is crucial to the well-being of current and future generations.

Together, we can do this!

Press clippings on the meeting

https://iicaint-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/randall_cordero_iica_int/ERxZ76EE11ZFp4dI81fg-4ABSWQr_a6VMqPi_N-o4yvKRA?e=bRSHn9