



The Fifth Summit of the Americas, which concluded on April 19, afforded the leaders of the participating countries an opportunity to recognize the political diversity that exists in the region, discuss where their countries should be headed and the future of their peoples, and restore a climate of trust among themselves.

While much of the discussion focused on the global financial crisis, the declaration issued at the conclusion of the Summit makes specific reference to agriculture and its role in food security, giving the countries further reason to do more to ensure access to and the availability of food in times of crisis.

With no clear end to the financial crisis in sight, and given the volatility of food prices, our countries must continue to

seek new ways to work together and solve development problems in the hemisphere. It would appear that those times and visions in which the state controlled the market, or in which the market had sole responsibility for the growth of economies, have gone by the wayside. This has forced states, those in the public and private sectors, to step up efforts to strike a balance between these two visions, based on responses and decisions other than those proposed up to now.

Along these lines, the main article in the first issue of *COMUNICA* for 2009 “Food Security in the Americas – the urgent need for a new model for development in the 21st century” by Chelston W.D. Brathwaite, Director General of IICA, underscores the need to think and act differently, recognizing that a multidimensional agricultural sector and the rural economy can contribute to food



and energy security, to the generation of employment, to the preservation of natural resources, to poverty alleviation and to ensuring peace and social stability in our countries.

This frame of reference, put forth by the Director General, encompasses a wide range of topics related to agriculture and rural life in the hemisphere which will be addressed in this and subsequent issues of the magazine. The present issue of **COMUNICA** contains four other articles on: a) the increasing use of instruments such as micro-financing and micro-insurance which, inter alia, help ensure that the poorest of the poor will have the capital they need to engage in agriculture; b) the most recent developments in multilateral negotiations under the WTO, and the hope that their prompt conclusion will lead to greater opportunities for international

agricultural trade; c) measuring the performance of agricultural production in terms of generating employment and alleviating poverty, which points up the urgent need to incorporate price analyses; and d) the Brazilian experience in formulating public policies on rural development with social participation.

Future articles will deal with agribusiness, social protection of highly vulnerable populations, sustainable development, etc., which will confirm our belief in the need to find new ways of working together and to implement a new model for development.

COMUNICA, also available at www.iica.int, hopes to continue fostering the exchange of ideas and experiences of benefit to decision makers interested in agriculture and rural life in the Americas.