



## SURINAME LAUNCHES CANROP CHAPTER

**M**ore than 50 people interested in helping improve business for rural Surinamese women are in the beginning steps of launching the local chapter of CANROP. The Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (the "O" represents the female ♀ symbol) will serve as an avenue in which businesswomen can lobby, increase competition, enhance their leadership skills, and much more.

"I take this opportunity to ask the

national authority, the international community and also all men to join efforts with our women, our sisters, our wives to build a better future for Suriname," said Michelet Mascary.

Mascary, Representative for IICA Suriname, made his remarks at a conference hosted by the organization on Oct. 21-22 at Paramaribo's Torarica Hotel, which should lead to the establishment of a country CANROP chapter. The conference, organized by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, was a beginning step in helping improve opportunities for women in the interior.

organizations involved in agricultural and rural enterprises in Suriname are eligible for membership into CANROP. Women from Upper Suriname villages, such as Nieuw Aurora and Kajapati, as well as Amerindian women from Powakka and Bigi Poika attended the two-day conference.

CANROP's objectives are to:

- Establish and maintain a database on small-scale women producers
- Establish and monitor a revolving credit system
- Establish a clearing-house for selected products produced by women
- Disseminate marketing information

Women, women's groups and

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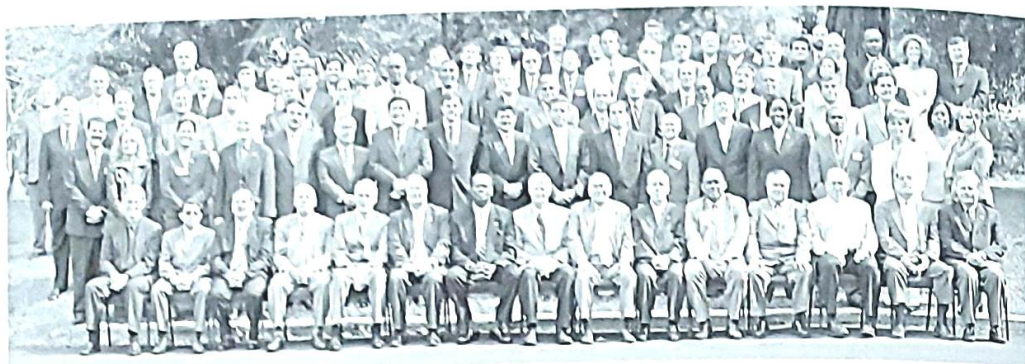
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*L/R: First lady Liesbeth Venetiaan, Michelet Mascary-Representative IICA/SR, Geetapersad Gangaram Panday – Min. of Agriculture, Hesdy Ormskerk – Fruit & Vegetable Specialist of IICA/SR and Romeo van Russel – Min. of Regional Development*



## IICA FAMILY MEETS AT HEADQUARTERS IN COSTA RICA



Country Representatives, Regional Directors and Regional Specialists gather at the recent annual IICA conference in Costa Rica.



Mascary speaks at the IICA conference in Costa Rica.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) organized from August 23 – 31, 2004 at IICA Headquarters in San Jose, Costa Rica, for its annual conference of Representatives. During that week Representatives from the 34 Member States, as well as the Regional Directors and Regional Specialists from all four Regions (Caribbean, Central, Andean Southern and Northern) had the opportunity to meet with other Heads of different Directorates from Headquarters in Costa Rica.

This annual meeting is like a big fair where the Representatives share with their colleagues the ac-

tivities that were carried out in their countries. It is also a place to get more information, adapt and apply positive experiences of other countries.

The most important thing that happens during this week is the availability of all the Representatives to collaborate and help one another. On the Saturday of that week visits were paid to the "Escuela de Agricultura para los Trópicos Húmedos" (EARTH) University of Costa Rica. The EARTH University is a teaching institute with approximately 500 students from more than 50 countries all over the world.

After a successful Internship of four years, they can get the title of "Agricultural Engineer." After a very productive week, the Representatives returned to their countries ready to meet the challenges of the hemisphere.

*Michele Mascary  
IICA Suriname Representative*



**IICA  
leader  
talks  
about  
preparing  
for future**

The future work of our Institute must embrace wider aspects of our contribution to society and to development. To this end, we will: promote dialogue and consensus building among countries, promote monitoring of agriculture and rural life in the hemisphere, promote coordination among international agencies, and provide technical cooperation to ensure competitiveness and global trade, strengthened rural communities and environmental sustainability. We must refocus our initiatives and redouble our efforts, while promoting an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared, environmentally managed and socially equitable for the peoples of the Americas.

Excerpt from IICA Director General Dr. Chelston W.D. Braithwait's speech

## IICA PROMOTES AGRIBUSINESS IN UPPER SURINAME



In 1995 the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture was invited by the Surinamese government to assist efforts to develop the hinterland community.

Together, with the Ministry of Agriculture, and with the support of other agencies, including the Center of Community Development of Moravian Church and the Abenaston Foundation for Development (ASO), an Integrated Rural Development (IRD) Project was initiated in July 1995, aiming at assisting efforts to provide better quality of life for rural communities.

The basic philosophy of the project is to assist hinterland communities by stimulating economic activities.

This is viewed as the most self-sustaining method to foster development and improve the well being of the residents. With respect to the agriculture development component, the project adopted many initiatives, including a subproject called "Development Commercialization of Processed Food Products in 2000."

The project was funded by CARIFORUM Agribusiness Research and Training Fund CARTF and. ASO a partner in the IRD project has been instrumental to obtain the funding required.

The project's primary objectives are to establish a multi-food processing plant for the testing and production of a range of products for the domestic market. The plant would utilize the raw materials produced in Abenaston but will also have the potential to purchase and utilize produce from neighboring villages in the Upper Suriname River Basin.

The processing plant will stimulate economic activity including the demand for raw material. Increased earnings and employment opportunities will contribute to improvements in the quality of life in the village. The plant will also be used as a training center for neighboring villages and act as a catalyst for similar projects in Suriname's interior.

The Caribbean Industrial Resources Institute (CARIRI) was identified by IICA and contracted through ASO to implement the project.

In 2003, 10 women from Abenaston and Pamboko (Upper Suriname River Basin) started the processing of cassava, ginger, bananas and other products in the so-called gangasa in Abenaston. Group members were previously trained in Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana in several aspects of food processing.

IICA and operators of the plant are now conducting an assessment of the activities to have a clear picture of the technical as well as administrative performance of the group.

The most important objective of the assessment is to test the profitability of the activities. IICA is committed to help make this venture successful, especially for cassava crackers.

The assessment report has been finalized and IICA is now discussing the outcome with ASO, the Abenaston foundation, and the groups involved with the production.





## ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL FARMING

### Key to food security and sustainability

Let's face it. There is some confusion regarding types of agriculture. Many times the layman finds himself confronted with names such as: organic farming, bio-dynamic agriculture, agro-forestry, and sustainable agriculture, and mechanised agriculture, often only resulting in confusion.

To bring some clarity in this situation it might be good to first have a closer look at the differences between mechanised / chemical and organic agriculture. In the future we will elaborate on the methods and principles of different kinds of organic and natural farming.

In the littoral of our country mechanised agriculture is the most common. This type of farming is characterised by the use of (often heavy) equipment meant to take over human labour such as soil tilting, sowing, spraying and harvesting. To be able to use such heavy equipment, it is unavoidable to grow large surfaces of one species. This we call a monoculture.

Unfortunately, monocultures quickly result in nutrient depletion and loss of soil fertility, creating the need to add artificial nutrients, mostly under the form of readily available chemical fertilizers.

However, a weakened soil can only bear weakened plants, making them susceptible for all kind of diseases.

To prevent or cure diseases in

mechanised agriculture many chemical agents are used. Typically the name of these agents ends with "icide". Just think about it. Pesticide, herbicide, fungicide and so on. "Icide" is derived from a Latin word meaning "killing."

The disadvantages of mechanised agriculture are the rapid loss of soil fertility, causing the farmer to invest more yearly in chemical fertilizers, and the death of a wide range of living species, alas, including beneficial ones.

If we consider the nutritional value of the products of this kind of farming, then they hardly deserve the description "healthy." Often they contain residues of the chemical sprays and fertilizers used before and after harvest.

Therefore there is a protest from consumers worldwide against products from mechanised agriculture. Consumers, especially in wealthier countries, demand an organic label and severe quality control. And rightly so!

These disadvantages are hardly taken into consideration because in mechanised agriculture the emphasis lays on profit, and profit only. No matter the costs, the organic approach is different.

The main goal of organic farming is to produce healthy products with high nutritional value. This is only possible on healthy soil.

Thus the use of chemical fertiliz-

ers or pesticides, killing micro-organisms and other small creatures is all deemed wrong.

Keeping soil fertility on a high level is the most important task of the organic farmer. Compost and humous soil is used for this purpose. Of course quite often the farmer will have to add nutrition to the soil as well, but in that case preference will be given to animal manure.

For crop protection the organic farmer will first try out natural aids, such as tea from Neem seeds, leaves, or tobacco spray, before reaching for more aggressive means.

All together the organic farmer invests far less in external inputs than his colleague of mechanised agriculture.

As stated earlier, in richer countries (EU and VS) consumers demand an organic label. Such labels are quite expensive to obtain. These costs are often included in the price of the product. Besides that, these countries subsidize mechanical agriculture while organic farmers have to manage on their own. That is why organic products are more expensive in these countries.

The main difference between mechanised / chemical agriculture lies in the fact that organic agriculture tries to produce healthy, nutritious products while keeping account with the life conditions of the farmer and of our environment. Indeed, organic agriculture deserves the nomination of Guardian of Nature!



Participants at the CANROP Workshop

#### Cont d from Page 1

- Organize communication links among national and regional groups
- Organize research and product development
- Promote self-reliance among rural women producers
- Promote training to develop the human resource capacity of rural women producers
- Strengthen links among rural women's groups, and
- Promote and sustain individuals in CANROP

CANROP was first launched in October 1998, in Trinidad and Tobago, a year before wives of heads of state and heads of governments in the Caribbean hosted IICA to discuss common issues facing rural women.

Some of those problems discussed by the participants at the Torarica conference included the high cost of transportation, access to affordable credit and marketing constraints that come with living farther away.

Since October 2003 Suriname has been discussing related issues through the Maroon Women Network. Some of the

achievements of that organization include writing project proposals, establishing a database on rural women producers, improving management skills through training sessions.

Now, Surinamese women are hoping to expand on those successes by jumping on the CANROP bandwagon, which already includes Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. Dominica and St. Kitts and Nevis have plans to join in the near future.

IICA's efforts to support Suriname's chapter of CANROP were reinforced by studies in the Caribbean. According to Mascary, the studies showed that when family investments and capital involve rural women, the quality of life improves for families in the way of better and more food, access to education and access to better health care.

"Since we also know that 85 percent of sons of poor will remain poor, to break this circle, we want to work, invest and support the women in the rural areas who have their knowledge, honesty and integrity to change

life in the rural area," Mascary said in his welcome remarks at the conference. Mascary's sentiments were echoed by the First Lady of the Republic of Suriname, H.E. Liesbeth Venetiaan-Vanenburg, who said the establishment of a Suriname chapter of CANROP should be applauded and encouraged participants to "inhale the information as much as possible."

Also invited to speak were the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries H.E. Geetapersad Gangaram Panday and the Minister of Regional Development H.E. Romeo van Russel.

"I do hope this broad cooperation this workshop strikes will work in such a way that the female producers will truly find themselves represented and they will be encouraged to give support to this network, which is of vital importance," Minister van Russel said. "It is only by doing so that this (network) will function as a valuable counterpart to the government."

By the end of the conference, a team of participants agreed to volunteer their time to organize a working structure to Suriname's CANROP chapter.

They are expected to report back to each other and IICA regarding the progress made in promoting and empowering rural women in six months.

"We are a small country, with a small economy," Mascary said. "We cannot face globalization separately. (Other countries) will not hear us. But facing it together, they will pay attention in what we say."



## CHANGING YOUTH PERCEPTIONS ON AGRICULTURE\*

### Agriculture not limited to farming...

There is an urgent need to change the perception of agriculture on the minds of our youth.

**Agriculture must no longer be seen as "nuff" work with little reward. We have to remove the caricature of the farmer being one with a hoe and fork, working for long hours in the hot sun, (and) returning to a sub-standard home with barely sufficient money to hold body and soul together.**

Additionally, it must be impressed on our youth that agriculture is not limited only to farming, but must now be seen as the entire spectrum of activity responsible for bringing the food from the farm to the table. Careers such as soil science, marketing, irrigation management,

hydroponics, etc. must be seen within the realm of agricultural activity.

Another chief reason for the departure from agriculture...is the relative lapse in embracing modern technologies and techniques to advance the sector. Students often ask "Why is it, that while all spheres of education have embraced new techniques to ensure that the attention and interest of the youth is captured, in agriculture we seem to be preaching the same old stories on how to plant food and raise animals to our students."

### Women: unrecognized and untapped engine!

As it relates to our women, contrary to the popular belief based on an economic bias, I have always understood our Caribbean

societies as being matriarchal. This is even more pronounced today as we see the emergence of more and more single parent families, most of which are headed by our women.

History has shown that it is our mothers who have held the primary responsibility of harnessing the values of our children, and therefore responsible for nurturing our human capital, which lays the platform on which sound economic development can take place.

Changes in the societal landscape of the Caribbean has given rise to the economic empowerment of our women and we know that agriculture holds tremendous potential opportunities for our women, without compromising that needed, loved and appreciated gift of positively shaping future generations.

\*From an October 2003 address in Guyana by Damien Hinds, secretary of the Barbados Agricultural Forum for Youth and Representative of the Caribbean Agricultural Forum for Youth.

specified systems, in complying with stringent, country-specific standards and in getting accredited against a number of different, and sometimes, conflicting standards.

\*Excerpt, written by Diana Francis, was previously published in AgriView newsletter's January-April edition

## TAKING 'OLD' AGRICULTURE INTO 'NEW' FRONTIERS: ORGANICS AND HERBS\*

### Backdrop

Demand for ecologically-friendly, good-for-you foods and beverages has given momentum to world organic and health foods market. In addition, revolutionary advances in production and not limited to 'food.'

### Growing organic

Compliance with standards has become the benchmark for determining competitiveness in the organics market. However, as no universally accepted organic standard exists, exporters of organic products producers face difficulties in implementing

## IICA, PEACE CORPS CONTINUE COLLABORATION

IICA Suriname and the U.S. Peace Corps have maintained a close, productive relationship for the last few years, often in collaboration with other volunteer organizations in the interior. In early August, Peace Corps volunteer Jeffrey Follett, who worked two years out of the IICA Suriname office, returned to the U.S. We take this opportunity to thank Jeff for his service to IICA and the people of Suriname and welcome Shuva Rahim as his successor.

### JEFFREY FOLLETT SAYS "FAREWELL"

It has been two wonderful years since my wife Kristin and I were selected to come to Suriname as Peace Corps volunteers. It's difficult for me to try to describe in words the experience of the past two years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for making our time here so special. It has been a remarkable experience.

Suriname is an absolutely beautiful and amazing place, but I believe that more than anything else it is the people of Suriname that make the country truly unique. In the past two years we have trained 280 agricultural professionals in computer use for distance education, increased knowledge of and access to 10,000 agricultural documents (the Virtual Agricultural Library), produced promotional materials about organic farming, including a 25-minute video, and initiated a project to include agriculture education in the primary schools of Suriname.

When I reflect on the benefits of these projects and the challenges Suriname faces, I try to remember the following quote: "The more challenging the task, the greater the prize for those who dare to undertake it."

Thank you again for all that you have done during our stay in Suriname. Kristin and I wish you all the best in the future.



Jeffrey Follett and Shuva Rahim

### NEW PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER JOINS IICA

Shuva Rahim's joining of IICA Suriname is a first in many ways. She is the first woman Peace Corps volunteer, following Christian Ogle and Jeff Follett. She is also the first journalist with IICA as well as the first foreign-born American.

Shuva was born in Bangladesh and grew up in Davenport, Iowa. She is fluent in Bengali and English. Shuva decided early on to pursue a career in journalism and, after internships at four newspapers during college, graduated with a bachelor's of arts degree from Iowa State University, in Ames, Iowa.

She spent her first year as a reporter in Iowa City, Iowa, where she wrote about education. Then, Shuva moved to Kansas, where she spent two years as a city government reporter for the *Kansas City Star*. In 2001, she started working in Springfield, Ohio, where she was the health care and higher education reporter for the local newspaper.

In addition to writing, Shuva started tutoring with a literacy organization in Kansas, where she taught several adults to read and write in English. She was also a literacy instructor in Ohio, where she tutored an Ethiopian woman and a Korean woman in English.

In June 2003, Shuva served as an online volunteer for the READ Foundation in Islamabad, Pakistan – a rural education and development organization that builds schools and teachers poor children in the rural part of the country. She copy edited promotional materials for the organization for potential donors.

After more than five years in the newspaper business, Shuva decided she wanted to try something different in which she could still make a difference. She applied to the Peace Corps in August 2003 and accepted her invitation to Suriname in April, and arrived in the country with 24 other Americans.

Shuva started with IICA in August. She is continuing on some of Jeff's projects, including working with the Ministry of Agriculture (L.V.V.) and EDUCONS on creating an agricultural CD for primary schoolchildren about growing vegetables.

Shuva, who has aspirations of writing a book someday, plans to serve IICA as a Peace Corps volunteer for the next two years.





## ERADICATION OF CARAMBOLA FRUIT FLY STILL NEEDED IN SURINAME

The carambola fruit fly was first identified in Suriname in 1986 and is a threat to the whole region because of the damage it causes to the fresh fruit and vegetable industry if not eradicated.

The eradication project of this insect has been ongoing since the Dutch Embassy in Suriname agreed to provide funding starting in 1995 with coordination from the International Fund for

Agricultural Development, which defines the fruit fly as one of the most serious of tropical fruit pests. It also attacks mango, guava, the Suriname cherry, cashew, grapefruit, and orange.

Carambola's fruit fly attacks can be controlled by wrapping the fruit. For unwrapped fruits, the female flies lay eggs on them while the fruits are still young. Black spots on green unripe fruits and brown spots or

scorching are indications that the fruits have been attacked, making them unsuitable to eat or for market.

Alies van Sauers, project entomologist, has received training about the fruit fly. This past year, she attended trainings at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil, and in Grenada, where the carambola fruit fly was among one of several pests discussed at a conference on Caribbean fruit flies.

## LVV-EDUCONS CD PROJECT FOR CHILDREN MAKING PROGRESS

Almost a year ago, a project to educate children about growing vegetables was launched that involved IICA Suriname, the Ministry of Agriculture and Stichting EDUCONS.

The project was to create a CD for children about growing vegetables, an interactive tool using animation, film and photography to get youngsters interested in agriculture.

However, tight schedules, other projects and other priorities got in the way of meeting the project's initial completion time frame earlier this year. Now, the work on the \$30,000 project, for which IICA is providing much of the funding, is being jump-started again. The crops planned for the CD are tomato, kouseband, cassava, kapucyner, tayerblad and maize. Currently to-

mato is the portion is near completion while work on the other crops continues.

The CD will also include additional information, such as lessons about soil, seed quality, pests and diseases, ground preparation and food safety.

The CD is due for completion early next year. Afterwards, the Ministry of Education (MINOV) and local educators will receive a presentation for feedback. There will also be a teacher training for the CD.

Fourth- and fifth-graders will be the first to use the CD in a pilot program expected to run from February to July 2005. Pilot programs could start in schools in Powakka, La Vigilantia, Onverwacht, Moengo, Groningen, Coronie, Meerzog, Tamanredjo, Lelydorp and Paramaribo.



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