



Commemorating IICA's 70th anniversary

Commemoration Ceremony

*National Theater of Costa Rica
October 8, 2012*

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture



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Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). 2013



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Foreword

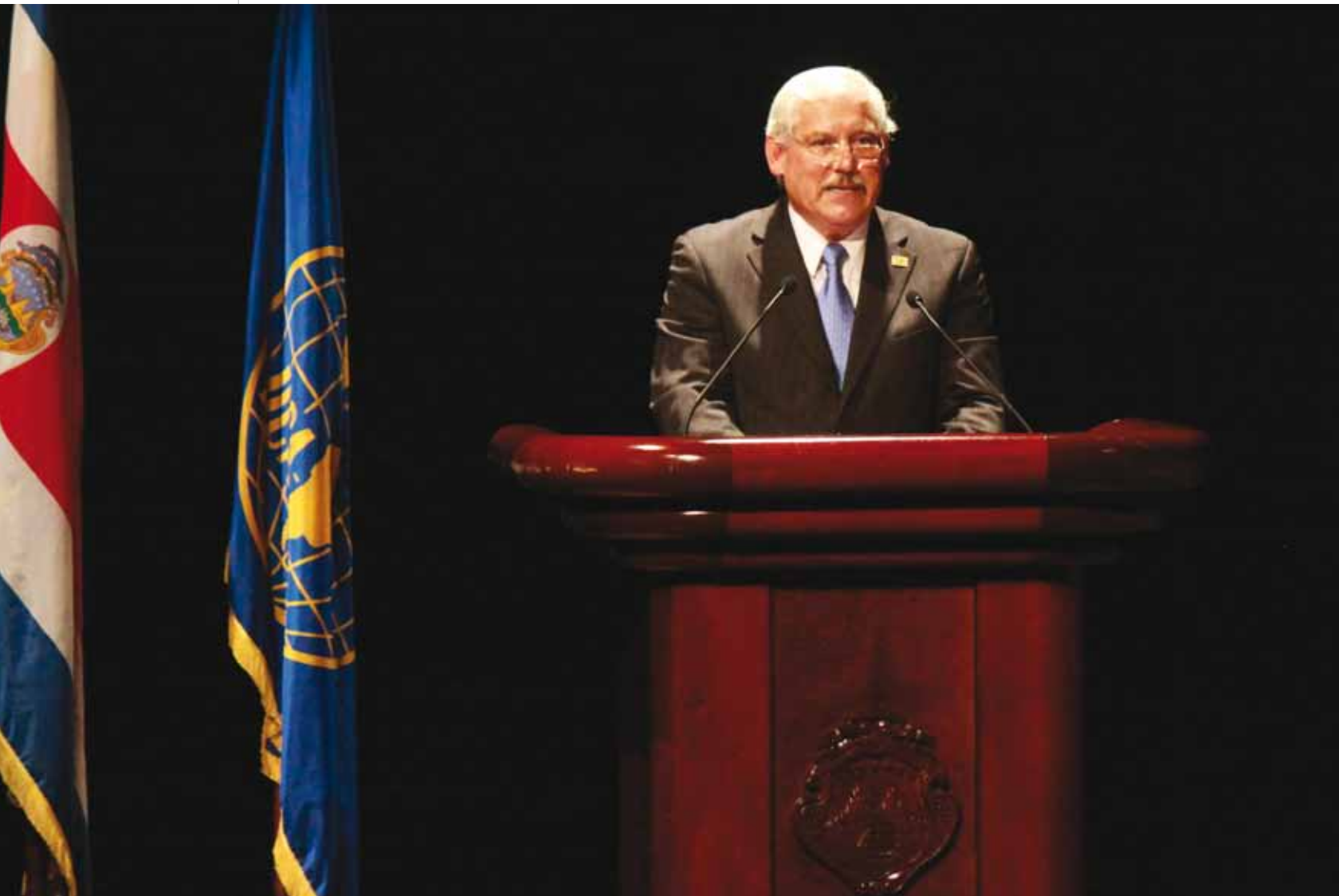
On October 8, 2012, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) celebrated the 70th anniversary of its founding. For seven decades, the organization has worked single-mindedly on behalf of the agricultural sector and the improvement of the living conditions of rural dwellers in the hemisphere.

Costa Rica's National Theater provided the setting for the ceremony. The guests of honor were the President of Costa Rica, Laura Chinchilla, and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Ertharin Cousin, who highlighted the dynamism and modern vision with which the Institute promotes agriculture in its 34 Member States, as a key issue on the countries' development agendas.

The ceremony was attended by delegations from 16 member countries, other special guests, and the entire staff of Headquarters.



Costa Rica's National Theater provided the setting for the ceremony held to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Institute's founding. The special guests in attendance included the President of Costa Rica, Laura Chinchilla, and delegations from a number of Member States.



Víctor M. Villalobos: *“In each country of the Americas we have a presence and a history; and to each one we pledge that we will continue to offer our support for the development of our sector.”*

After 70 years, IICA has a future filled with opportunities

Víctor M. Villalobos

Director General
Inter-American Institute for
Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)¹

“The essence of IICA has not changed: it continues to create and transfer knowledge; to enhance individual capacities through joint action; to serve as a forum for mutual understanding; to show that cooperation among countries is desirable and possible; but above all, to ensure that the agricultural sector is not a passive object, but an active subject in the economic and social development of the countries.”

Thank you President Laura Chinchilla, thank you very much for joining us on this very special occasion.

“Agriculture is an engine that allows a country to develop. We hope that you will continue to support us with assistance ... so that small farmers will be provided with relief.”

These were the words of Jacqueline Morette, a small-scale farmer in Haiti. For seven decades, this has been the inspiration for the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture.

Ms. Laura Chinchilla Miranda,
President of the Republic of Costa Rica,

Mr. Enrique Castillo Barrantes
Minister of Foreign Relations of Costa Rica,

Ms. Gloria Abraham Peralta
Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Costa Rica,

Ms. Ertharin Cousin
Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme,
Ambassadors and Heads of International Missions accredited before the
Government of Costa Rica,

Ministers, Heads of Delegation, Members of the Executive Committee,

Former Ministers of Agriculture and Livestock of Costa Rica,

Ladies and gentleman,

1 Address by Dr. Victor M. Villalobos at the Ceremony to mark the 70th Anniversary of IICA, Costa Rica, National Theater, October 8, 2012.

Sometimes history's coincidences are fortunate ones;

During the last century, at the beginning of the 1940s, Norman Borlaug started the "Green Revolution" in the arid north of Mexico; almost at the same time, but in the humid tropics of Costa Rica, the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences, IICA, was being created.

Also, occasionally, paradoxes are what define the course of events; in an era marked by war worldwide, a tool for peace was being created.

The Institute was created to respond to a particular problem: to ensure the timely provision of raw materials and food. And who would have thought it - this objective remains as valid today as it was then.

For 70 years, IICA has been supporting the countries' efforts to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being; and, although in terms of age it is a young institution, it has an amazing capacity to evolve and find answers to the changing scenarios that the hemisphere has faced over the years.

But the essence of IICA has not changed: it continues to create and transfer knowledge; to enhance individual capacities through joint action; to serve as a forum for mutual understanding; to show that cooperation among countries is desirable and possible; but above all, to ensure that the agricultural sector is not a passive object, but an active subject in the economic and social development of the countries.

The vision of the Vice President of the United States, Henry Wallace, coincided with the generosity of the Costa Rican President, Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia, to plant the seed of hemispheric cooperation in agriculture in Turrialba. Today that seed is a robust tree that has been producing fruit for several generations.

The International Convention that currently governs IICA dates back just over 30 years; we are now an institution dedicated to technical cooperation and to the provision of international public goods.

IICA has matured, just as its member countries have matured.

Today we know that sectoral policies, although very necessary, are not sufficient to resolve the complex challenges facing agriculture; we also know that global scenarios require tasks that exceed national efforts.

Agriculture is key to the development of our countries: to overcoming the poverty that affects millions of people, to mitigating the effects of climate change and environmental degradation and to feeding our growing populations.

In the grasslands, in the mountains, in the tropical forests, but especially in the rural territories of the Americas, there is an enormous potential for agriculture, greater than that of other parts of the planet; we possess a source of sustainability and progress that we should take advantage of.

What do we need to do to achieve this? The Ministers of Agriculture gave us the answer barely a year ago, right here, in San Jose: **we need to innovate**; we need to create a new productive paradigm that will make agriculture more efficient and competitive, more sustainable but, above all, more inclusive.

The IICA of the 21st century, with the generous support of its Member States, is engaged in that task. Our Institute's actions make it possible to mobilize resources around common goals.

As international organizations, we understand that we must be partners in the noble task of providing services to the countries. For this reason we are delighted

and honored by the presence of our friend, Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme.

In this new model there must also be room for the contributions of donor countries, as well as those of private institutions willing to support development, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation or the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, and so many others that have accompanied and assisted us throughout the years.

Thank you all for this shared effort;

Thanks also to the nine Directors General who preceded me in this post for their dedicated and professional work;

Thanks to our international professional personnel and our local staff for their daily efforts, both at Headquarters and in our national Offices;
Thanks to all of them, I can affirm that IICA is an organization with technical capacity, institutional strength and with a future filled with opportunities.

In all the countries of the Americas you can find evidence of the work we have carried out for seven decades. In each one we have a presence and a history; and to each one we pledge that we will continue to offer our support for the development of our sector.

President Laura Chinchilla, thanks to Costa Rica for being the generous host of this Institute, the home of agriculture in the Americas; thanks to the Costa Rican hospitality that has made Coronado a point of reference for hemispheric agriculture.

Today we are celebrating in this beautiful setting of the National Theater, adorned by the presence of you all. We are commemorating this seventieth anniversary

with real pride and with the conviction that we have a promising future to offer Jacqueline in Haiti and millions like her throughout the hemisphere.

In concluding, and because of its relevance, I wish to quote here the beautiful words of the eleventh century humanist, Ibn Abdûn of Seville:

“The prince must order that the greatest incentives be given to agriculture, which should be encouraged, and that farmers be treated with benevolence and protected in their labors. For agriculture is the foundation of civilization, and upon it life itself and its main benefits depend.”

Thank you very much and congratulations to you all.



A large group of friends joined IICA's senior management and other staff in the celebration.



President Laura Chinchilla: *“IICA, drawing on its 70 years of experience, has urged us to opt for innovation, to narrow the longstanding gaps in social equity and get to grips with the uncertain future of a planet that is heating up.*”

The Americas can attest to the positive impact of IICA

Laura Chinchilla Miranda
President of the Republic of Costa Rica¹

“ It was as World War II raged that IICA was created, and the institution has always been possessed of a sense of urgency. The fruits of its work guide our agricultural public policies in the contrasting conditions of our rural milieu, seeking solutions to the most distressing and persistent gaps in social equity, and to the most serious obstacles to greater competitiveness and human development. ”

Dear friends:

Allow me, on behalf of the Government of Costa Rica, all the other governments of the Americas and the peoples of this hemisphere, to express my gratitude to and appreciation for one of the most emblematic institutions of our hemisphere. While all parts of the Americas can attest to the positive impact of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, Costa Rica has been honored by the presence of the Institute's Headquarters. In fact, IICA has stamped the country with its seal of excellence through its dedication to agricultural research and the design of public policies.

It chose Costa Rica for its headquarters due to this country's strategic location, in the pastoral heart of the Americas, and since then, we have had the benefit of its insights on a daily basis. Although it is an inter-American organization, IICA almost forms part of our country's institutional framework, as through the years this land and its people have been privileged recipients of the research and new ideas generated by the Institute. For that reason, as we celebrate this landmark anniversary, it is with a sense of pride and heartfelt affection that I congratulate IICA on its 70 years of existence.

This anniversary is an excellent opportunity for further reflection on the agricultural sector, where the sharpest contrasts and most urgent challenges of our societies are to be found. It was as World War II raged that IICA was created, and the institution has always been possessed of a sense of urgency. The fruits of its work guide our agricultural public policies in the contrasting conditions of our rural milieu, seeking solutions to the most distressing and persistent gaps in social equity, and to the most serious obstacles to greater competitiveness and human development.

The rural environment continues to be the yardstick for measuring our true progress, the litmus test of our integrity as nations and of our collective moral

¹ Address by Ms. Laura Chinchilla, President of the Republic of Costa Rica at the Ceremony to mark the 70th Anniversary of IICA, Costa Rica, National Theater, October 8, 2012.

conscience. All of our traditions have their roots in the Latin American countryside, the source of our social cohesion and collective imaginary. That is why it is so disheartening to cast an eye over our rural milieu, where longstanding economic and social problems and the effects of the failure to increase productivity are being exacerbated by new and unprecedented agricultural challenges that must be tackled quickly and decisively. We know that in barely a generation the global demand for food will increase by 70%, even though little new land will be available for agriculture, having been gobbled up by the unprecedented growth of urban areas. Climate change threatens to wipe out the gains made through the introduction of new agricultural technologies that are increasing crop yields. Biofuels are already competing with food production for the use of the land available, while merely preventing rural poverty from rising further is dependent on policies that governments find themselves increasingly unable to finance.

In Latin American societies, agriculture is one of the sectors that contributes most to increases in average household income, and the income of self-employed agricultural workers is the principal source of income for poor households. This fact shows the serious negative impact that the failure to modernize agriculture continues to have on our societies.

IICA, drawing on its 70 years of experience, has urged us to opt for innovation, to narrow the longstanding gaps in social equity and get to grips with the uncertain future of a planet that is heating up. Our peoples demand innovative and sustainable solutions of us that address every facet of our agricultural and rural problems. That is the most important aspect of IICA's development as an institution: its insistence on the need to focus on comprehensive rather than partial and sectoral responses, because the factors contributing to the situation cannot be compartmentalized. Promoting prosperity in rural communities is a vital component of our efforts to improve agriculture, and one that goes hand in hand with innovation for competitive, sustainable, and inclusive agriculture.

IICA wants us to dare to learn from each other and, in particular, to do things differently if we want to effect real change.

The time has come to address agriculture holistically, as a systemic element of our sociopolitical circumstances. IICA has been echoing the calls of the ministries and governments of our countries for agricultural policies with components that integrate economic, technological, environmental, educational, social, and, of course, fiscal issues. As usual, our deeds have failed to match our words. While we ask our ministries of agriculture to scale up their actions, and we assign them additional tasks, we do not give them sufficient budgetary resources to perform their increasingly complex tasks.

So this continues to be a continent of paradoxes, characterized by a constant contrast between the objectives we set and the inadequate tools with which we attempt to attain them. And it is no longer a question of our failure to understand, but of a lack of political will; we do not lack decisiveness but the determination to find the means to achieve our goals.

It is fair to say, without fear of exaggeration, that it is thanks to IICA that all the countries of the Americas have found important common ground where public policies are concerned. By and large, our countries are promoting production, modernizing rural production systems, and improving their yields and distribution methods, while at the same time supporting farmers and defending the most vulnerable sectors.

In fact, the recent international economic crisis was the acid test for our public policies, and it demonstrated the resilience achieved by agricultural systems in the Americas. The vast majority of our countries passed the test, and are indebted to IICA for the lessons learned from its various multinational research projects in its 34 member countries.

We are familiar with the Institute's record of achievement, the emphasis it has placed on technological innovation, and on agricultural health and food safety. It has consolidated the promotion and sophistication of agribusinesses of all kinds, with ever-increasing value added, while at the same time strengthening national and international marketing channels. IICA has also focused its efforts on improving area-based management, in which rural well-being and food security are viewed as decisive factors in the protection of natural resources and adaptation to and the mitigation of climate change.

In celebrating IICA's 70th anniversary, we are also mindful of our shared concerns and the enormous responsibility we have to address the problems of a planet whose surface is heating up, whose climate is in danger of spiraling out of control, whose land resources are close to exhaustion, and whose food needs are multiplying. With food prices on the rise, 54 million people went hungry in the Americas today.

Agriculture poses so many challenges for our peoples, and our beloved and respected IICA is proof of our collective will to address those challenges. For 70 years, the Institute has been telling us that we need to tackle our shared problems together, and proposing ways of dealing with them. On this anniversary, we have reason to be optimistic and to continue to face our challenges with a can-do spirit.

Thank you very much





Ertharin Cousin: *"At 70 years of age, IICA is among the most energetic and forward-looking agriculture organizations in the world."*

Together We Harvest Success

Ertharin Cousin

Executive Director of the
UN World Food Programme¹

“
At a time when agriculture has returned to the centre of the development agenda, this Institute has successfully leveraged its knowledge and rallied resources, making inclusive agriculture not just a vision for the future, but a reality that is changing the global food security agenda and transforming the lives of the hungry poor.
”

Madam Laura Chinchilla, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, Mr. Víctor Villalobos, Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, IICA staff members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your kind welcome. And thank you for the warm Costa Rican hospitality I have enjoyed since arriving in this beautiful and *full of life* country so truly deserving of its name.

Before I begin, I want to say a few words about our host who has invited me here and who has just provided those gracious welcoming words.

I knew of Director General Villalobos and his work long before I met him. We first met in the days immediately following the Haiti earthquake, when I was U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Rome-based Agencies. In fact, it was only a few weeks after he had taken the lead of this venerable hemispheric agricultural institution.

Through those first encounters I learned that he is a too rare breed, a leader who balances thoughtful reflection with decisive action. The proof was demonstrated on March 12, 2010, when, two months after the earthquake's destruction, 20 tractors rolled across the border from the Dominican Republic and into Haiti to ensure a timely start to the planting season and averting the second disaster of a missed planting season.

I was impressed by Director General Villalobos' diplomatic skill and resolve in rallying four governments to this accelerated task: Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Brazil and the United States – one country seeking urgent help and three neighbors answering that call with timely and practical support – to sow the seeds of recovery and help rebuild a nation suffering from a devastating natural disaster. In times like those, you learn who your friends are; and let me

1 Keynote by Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme, Costa Rica, National Theater. Monday, 8 October 2012.

now clearly say that before, during and after the Haiti emergency, this friendship between WFP and IICA has put down deep roots.

Proud Partnership

So, I am proud to join you today in commemorating this 70th Anniversary of the establishment of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture - IICA as we know it.

I am proud to be here today for three reasons:

- First, at 70 years of age, IICA is among the most energetic and forward-looking agriculture organizations in the world. At a time when agriculture, particularly smallholder agriculture, has returned to the centre of the development agenda, this institute has successfully leveraged its knowledge and rallied resources, making inclusive agriculture not just a vision for the future, but a reality that is changing the global food security agenda and transforming the lives of the hungry poor.
- Second, IICA has been such a good partner to WFP. Through the last four years you have been with us at the forefront of one of our most innovative initiatives, *Purchase for Progress*, or P4P as we call it. This partnership is a model of how farmers, governments, global, regional and country-level organizations can join together, leveraging our competencies to harvest success.
- Third, Latin American countries have made such fantastic progress in recent decades to address the challenges of hunger and poverty. Today, most countries in the region are middle income countries

whose GDP per capita has increased by 25 percent over the past three decades. WFP's Executive Board counts among its members former Latin American aid recipient countries that are now not only supporting their own national food and nutrition assistance programs but these countries are now investing in the emergency response for the most needy.

Challenges

Yet alongside this region's remarkable economic progress lies some of the world's greatest social inequality. Pockets of food insecurity and undernutrition continue to hold back many countries in the region from reaching their full potential. Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru are still faced with significant challenges before achieving food and nutrition security for all of their people. Increased GDP has not necessarily translated into significant reductions in poverty across all communities. As this audience knows all too well, thirty-one percent of the population in the Latin America region continues to live in poverty.

And poverty is expensive. A 2007 study conducted by WFP and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean concluded that the economic impact of childhood stunting can cut more than 10 percent off of a country's Gross Domestic Product.² Another study concludes that children who receive more schooling lead healthier and longer lives, doubling lifetime earnings.³ That is why, in addition to agricultural production-focused initiatives like P4P, WFP puts strong emphasis on school feeding programmes and improved nutrition for pregnant mothers and children under two.

2 The Cost of Hunger Study, http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/liaison_offices/wfp193127.pdf

3 School Feeding: A Sound Investment, <http://www.wfp.org/content/school-feeding-sound-investment>

WFP has a permanent presence in 13 Latin American countries. The countries we assist are affected by chronic undernutrition, recurrent emergencies, volatile food prices and migration – challenges amplified by social inequality, climate change, hunger and lack of access to the right nutritious foods.

Our goal is to support the governments in the region in addressing these problems through innovative and integrated approaches that bring together the expertise and technical capacity of a wide range of partners.

P4P + IICA = Success²

The P4P initiative is the flagship of these efforts. It is being carried forward in four Central American countries – El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. And IICA is a major partner in this initiative.

Just a few hours ago, WFP and IICA signed a new cooperation agreement renewing our commitment to work together in areas of food security, agriculture and rural development, including both P4P and climate change food assistance related initiatives. This new agreement promotes complementarity, better knitting up our activities and funding strategies, avoiding duplication of efforts or disruptive competition for scarce resources.

And we are fortunate to have IICA representation on the WFP P4P Technical Review Panel. IICA lends us expertise worldwide ensuring we complete the P4P initiative's pilot phase with proven models for agricultural and market development that others can readily adopt and scale up.

We also hope to see IICA supporting the growing work WFP is doing with a wide range of regional partners in climate change and food security. This is a critical

problem in this part of the world and we believe IICA could bring a significant contribution in joint efforts to promote the resilience agenda in the Andean region and in the dry corridor of Central America.

Global Shift

It comes as no secret to the people assembled in this room that across the developing world the agriculture sector as a tool for economic growth was abandoned for decades. Government and donor investment in the sector decreased significantly over the past 20 years – particularly so in the area of smallholder agriculture.

But IICA has been a catalyst for change. IICA has advocated strongly with its 34 member states for new government policies to reduce rural poverty and lift the debilitating economic and social consequences of inequality. IICA has pressed for agriculture that is inclusive of small agri-business, small-scale and family agriculture in rural areas. IICA has been and remains a beacon of support for innovation and inclusion in agriculture.

And now the world is listening.

This shift in thinking had been underway earlier, but it accelerated after the 2008 global food crisis. That crisis laid bare the difficulties of assuring food security, nutrition and health for a world population expected to exceed nine billion by 2050. Calls to support smallholder farmers in developing countries to increase productivity, connect to markets and harness agriculture for improved nutrition and health emerged on the international development agenda, prompting global actions and responses.

The G8 meeting at L'Aquila helped focus government resolve; the World Bank's 2008 World Development Report called for renewed emphasis on agriculture as

an engine of poverty reduction and economic growth. These were followed by the FAO High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis – commitments most recently reiterated at the Rio+20 Summit and through UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's Zero Hunger Challenge.

It was in this rapidly accelerating and fast-changing context that WFP decided to use our local purchasing power in support of more sustainable development for food and nutrition systems, and to transform food aid into food assistance, making productive investments in local communities. And that is how P4P got started.

Voices of Success

When we began in September 2008, people told us the basic grain sector in Central America was not profitable and that smallholder farmers faced too many constraints to successfully commercialize good quality maize and beans.

Today, I can proudly tell you that smallholder farmers in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua have sold over US\$24 million of top quality grain to WFP. And not only to us, but to the private sector as well. P4P farmers have sold over 12,000 metric tons of grain to the private sector. In El Salvador, for example, four P4P-assisted farmers' organizations have signed forward contracts to supply 4,000 metric tons of maize to Harisa, a leading agro-business.

Before P4P, these smallholder farmers had no access to formal markets. Their productivity was low because they could not obtain quality inputs, their farming techniques were inadequate, and their post-harvest losses reached as high as 30 percent. If these smallholder farmers managed to harvest any surplus, they

had to sell it at farm-gate to whoever wanted to buy it at whatever price they were given.

I'm going to share with you three examples of the kinds of positive changes we are witnessing in people's lives.

Vilma Romero belongs to the board of directors of the *Los Tabudos* farmers' organization in **El Salvador**. Before 2009, she had to rent out two-thirds of her three hectares to buy inputs required for the remaining third. But through P4P support she qualified for a loan of US\$250 to purchase agricultural inputs and cultivate all of her land. In that planting season she obtained over five metric tons of white maize per hectare, and with this harvest she paid back the loan, selling the surplus to *Los Tabudos*. For the last two growing seasons she hasn't required another loan. And she has bought four metallic silos, enough to secure the surplus production for her family.

José Jesús Arauz, is a smallholder farmer from rural **Nicaragua**. He has been a member the *La Unión* farmers' organization for 18 years. Starting in 2010, he received P4P training on production and productivity techniques, post-harvest handling, commercialization, and access to credit. He was then selected as a community promoter, receiving advanced trainings to show other farmers what he learned. Now he plants earlier in the season and uses the cocoon system to store his grain, reducing post-harvest losses to only 10 percent and ensuring more competitive quality. In 2010, José obtained a US\$500 revolving fund loan for agricultural inputs. The following year, he sold 5.6 metric tons of white maize to WFP at US\$218 per ton and paid off the loan.

Reyna Luz Rodríguez belongs to a farmer's organization from *El Rancho*, **Guatemala**. She receives training on improved agricultural practices, soil sampling, fertilization, pest management and pesticide use, harvest and post-harvest handling – all provided by IICA. WFP provides training to measure the

quality of maize and beans harvested, as well as training in commercialization and gender equality.

I want to add a special mention of Howard G. Buffett – who I know was invited here today but unfortunately could not make it – and to thank him for his vision and commitment to P4P and for having brought it to this region. He, in fact, enabled the strong partnership we have today with IICA.

Reyna credits P4P with giving the women of her community an opportunity to go ahead. She says: *The experience of working as a group has shown me and my colleagues new things that we did not know before and now we can say that we women can do more than we ever imagined.*

Today, Vilma, José, Reyna and other smallholder farmers like them can buy high quality inputs and negotiate fair prices. Their productivity in many cases has doubled! They also achieved unprecedented control over production quality, thanks to the collaboration between IICA and WFP: working together we developed the *Blue Box*, a simple kit that enables farmers to verify the quality of their grain before they sell it. Farmers can now ensure their grain meets required quality standards.

And our shared success is now multiplying exponentially. The Blue Box has been adopted in many other countries. Farmers' organizations have invested in technology and reduced post-harvest losses to the minimum; they have put in place strong governance systems, and improved their financial and accountability skills. They have invested in technology and in developing business plans.

Because of these advances, farmers' organizations can now negotiate with financial institutions to obtain credit for production and commercialization. And they can sell at good prices! Smallholder production of basic grains has become something the skeptics never anticipated: it has become a profitable business.

Harvesting Success

Throughout this transformative process, IICA has been our steadfast ally and the model for further partnership building. WFP works closely with experts from other entities, all of us joining hands to ensure production challenges identified across the entire value chain are getting addressed.

We've built a proven model of success, a model that governments across Central America, Latin America and the world can now apply in growing their own programmes using food assistance purchases to support a more equitable participation in economic life for people in rural areas, while improving livelihoods and saving lives.

The Government of Guatemala has launched its Triangle of Dignity initiative with guidance from P4P. In El Salvador, the *Family Agriculture Policy* that IICA is helping to implement also benefits from P4P experience.

Through these Central American efforts we have proven what can work. Together we have delivered expertise and agricultural innovation that can be used for the greater benefit of the region and the world beyond.

Now we must work together to leverage that hard-won expertise and knowledge – to harvest our success – because this is not a process that any one of us can accomplish alone. In this audience I see representatives of many countries with substantial experience, knowledge and expertise that can benefit other countries both in this region and elsewhere.

No one has more credibility in supporting and advocating for effective models to address hunger than those who have succeeded in doing it themselves. WFP encourages and facilitates the process of sharing these success stories.

That is why we established the Centre of Excellence in Brazil. The Government of Brazil has made extraordinary investments to address hunger and poverty, developing some of the world's most innovative programmes. And the results are unequivocal. By using cash transfers to families, investing in school feeding and supporting family agriculture, Brazil has managed to reduce hunger and poverty by half, well ahead of the 2015 target date set in the Millennium Development Goals.

Brazil's Fome Zero initiative is inspiring governments around the world. WFP is working with the Government of Brazil to share their experience, to guide other countries in developing their own successful programmes.

But our opportunities for horizontal cooperation between countries are not limited to Brazil. We want to invest in a true exchange of experiences and knowledge to further inspire and transform the way we do business.

We need to better align the actions of all interested partners; better alignment between technical agencies and the UN system; and better alignment between governments and donors, to ensure funds are delivering value for money, that they are supporting country-led policies and interventions, and that we are meeting shared goals of increasing incomes, boosting social equality and improving nutrition and creating more food secure families.

More Work to Do

That is the kind of collaboration we must keep working to expand and nurture across all countries in this region. And that is where IICA's seven decades long engagement with the governments of this hemisphere is making and will continue to make a huge difference.

Director General Villalobos, IICA staff, supporters and friends, I congratulate you on reaching this 70th Anniversary. We thank you for your vision, your partnership and for your hard work. We look forward with the highest expectations to our next decades of vitality and partnership – until our common ambition to end hunger is realized.

Thank you.



The incorporation of the music and folklore of several countries of the Americas emphasized the hemispheric nature of the event.

