

IICA LEADER: SURINAME IS ONE LEG OF ANIMAL

The Director General of IICA described the IICA Suriname office as one leg of a 34-legged animal. If that leg doesn't work, said Dr. Chelston W.D. Brathwaite, then the whole animal can't function.

These words from him were spoken when he and his wife, Rosanna, met with the IICA Suriname staff along with IICA Regional Director, Dr. Arlington Chesney, in February.

It was the Director General's first visit to the IICA Suriname office, a visit that coincided with the CARICOM conference held in Paramaribo. Brathwaite compared the Inter-American Institute for



IICA Suriname Representative Michelet Mascary welcomes IICA Director General Dr. Chelston W.D. Brathwaite. He is the first Director General to visit IICA Suriname in almost a decade.

Cooperation on Agriculture, headquartered in Costa Rica, to an animal with 34 legs, each leg representing the national IICA offices.

He told the Suriname staff that all 34 legs have to work in coordination.

If one leg is sick, the animal isn't well and other legs could be affected.

That means, according to Brathwaite, for him every office is important, and the representatives have a very onerous and challenging responsibility to see that their leg functions.

Brathwaite said one office is part of the whole, and if the whole isn't functioning, IICA isn't going anywhere.

The Director General said also that reporting to national authorities is the hallmark and foundation of Member States.

He said the whole idea of reporting coincides with the fundamental aspect of accountability, adding people want to know what is being done with their money.

Brathwaite said the model developed by IICA has been looked at by other agencies, and the concept of the national agenda being

Cont'd on Page 5

In this Issue

IICA leader attends CARICOM meeting Page 2

IICA mission team reviews Suriname office Page 3

Abena Switi group gets visit from mission team Page 4

Suralco seeks IICA's help in rehabilitating Moengo mining site Page 6

LVV-EDUCONS project making progress Page 8

IICA HEAD ATTENDS CARICOM MEETING IN PARAMARIBO

The Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) Dr. Chelston W.D. Braithwaite visited Suriname in February to attend the CARICOM meeting.

Braithwaite shared some information with the Head of State and Governments of the CARICOM countries, which had a chance to renew their relationship with IICA.

Braithwaite was accompanied by Dr. Arlington Chesney, Director of Operation for IICA in the Caribbean Region, and Diana Francis, Trade and Negotiation Specialist for the Caribbean.

As Special Guest, Dr. Braithwaite made a presentation in the CARICOM meeting on the Potential, the Real Value and Contribution of Agriculture in the Economy.

In his presentation Braithwaite indicated that the goal of IICA is to promote modern and competitive agriculture in the Americas.

He presented to the Heads of State and Governments a copy of the IICA publication *More Than Food on the Table: Agriculture's True Contribution to the Economy*.

IICA's research has shown that agriculture is a critical component of national development, far more than has been recognized and its growth essential for promoting

economic well being and reducing poverty.

The study indicates that when all of the backward and forward linkages are considered agriculture's contribution is from three to seven times greater than what is reported in national statistics.

According to Braithwaite, efforts that promote hemispheric integration through expanding trade, ensuring food safety, applying science and new technology will generate greater prosperity in the rural communities.

IICA supports all these efforts to expand markets and promote social equity as keys to economic development, as well as for democracy, freedom and political stability in the hemisphere.

Dr. Braithwaite also visited the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Husbandry and Fisheries where he met with The Honorable Minister Geetapersad Gangaram Panday. The two shared ideas on the state of agriculture on the Americas.

The IICA Delegation also held a press conference for the local and international media where the focus was made on the real contribution the agriculture to the economy.



L.R. Dr. Arlington Chesney, Dr. Chelston Braithwaite and IICA Suriname Representative Michelet Mascary

A GLIMPSE OF SURINAME FROM CARICOM

Date of CARICOM
Membership: 4 July 1995

Economic Summary: Agriculture accounts for about 7% of GDP and employs about 15% of the labor force. The main crops are rice, fruit (including bananas) and vegetables.

As the world's eighth largest bauxite producer, in 1998 total world population share was estimated at 3.2%. Alumina and aluminum are crucial to the economy, accounting for more than two-thirds of export earnings.

Manufacturing accounts for about 10% of GDP. Food processing is about 60% of manufacturing activities. This sector includes processing of local agricultural products.

For more about Suriname on CARICOM go to www.caricom.org.

EVALUATORS EXAMINE IICA SURINAME

Two representatives from IICA Headquarters in Costa Rica gave the IICA Suriname office a comprehensive analysis in February of what the office does well and how it can improve.

Dowlat Budhram and Gustavo Quesada reviewed the IICA Suriname office through interviews with staff members, clients and partners and analyses of documents. The evaluation team, known as the Mission, learned some of the following about IICA Suriname:

- IICA is open and approachable
- More advantage needs to be taken of IICA's presence.
- IICA is less bureaucratic compared to other organizations

Some strengths noted of IICA Suriname included its good relationships and contacts, training and information dissemination and adequate office equipment. However, weaknesses also seen included IICA's limited resources, insufficient access to information from Latin countries and few technical capabilities.



IICA Evaluators Dowlat Budhram and Gustavo Quesada listen to Peace Corps volunteers in the Upper Suriname and IICA Suriname Representative Michelet Mascary.

But clients and partners also told the Mission they saw opportunities with IICA. Those included the Inter-American Development Bank's funding for interior projects, working with Peace Corps and the Maroon Women Network helping in marketing cassava bread in Abenastion. The evaluation included a trip to Abenastion (see next page) and Powakka, where the evaluators met with pineapple growers who want to organize into a group.

The Mission made some preliminary conclusions, including that the office needs to improve providing technical cooperation in the agricultural sector and but that work with Stichting EDUCONS on an educational CD has good potential. The Mission made several suggestions, including making IICA more visible to the public.

Since the report, the IICA Suriname staff has teamed up on projects more effectively. This and other changes are expected to produce an office that can better serve agriculture in Suriname.

Brazil Agriculture Team Visits Suriname

The Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) visited Suriname during the first week of March to discuss agriculture cooperation between the two countries.

The Mission, lead by His Excellency Ambassador Laura Barbosa Da Silva Moreira from the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, included a visit to the IICA Suriname office.

There, the IICA Suriname Representative Michelet Mascary discussed the possibility of the team supporting Suriname agriculture and rural life.

"The door is open to a new level and kind of collaboration between Brazil and Suriname in agriculture," he said.

The collaboration would provide another resource for Suriname to tap into when working to improve standards of living and quality of life issues in rural communities.

The Brazil team was joined by the Brazilian Ambassador in Suriname, His Excellency Ricardo Luiz Viana de Carvalho, during its stay in Suriname.

The Minister of Agriculture, His Excellency Geetapersad Gangaram Panday, the Permanent Secretary of this Ministry and staff members and other technical staff had very productive working sessions with the ABC delegation.

EVALUATION TEAM VISITS WITH ABENA SWITI GROUP

A team of two evaluators from IICA Headquarters in Costa Rica visited the Upper Suriname River Basin as part of their evaluation activities of the IICA Suriname office in February.

Dowlat Budhram and Gustavo Quesada made a field visit to the village of Abenaston, a community located in the Sipaliwini district 170km from Paramaribo at the end of the access road to the Upper Suriname River.

The evaluation team's visit was organized around the activities of the Abena Switie group. The group is involved in the production of various products, including cassava crackers, crystallized ginger, peanut brittle and banana chips. The project aims to establish a multi-food processing plant for testing and production of a range of foods for the domestic market. Villagers in Abenaston received training from



IICA previously in various aspects, including farm production and agro-processing. The evaluation team met with the women and other villagers to learn about the technical assistance they received from IICA.

The women told the team they were basically happy with the assistance but also took the opportunity to request IICA offer further support as they are at the beginning to develop their products and contribute to the development of their villa contribute to the development of their village on a consistent basis.

Difficulties are currently being experienced in marketing their product.

Powakka growers establishing "Abarowang"

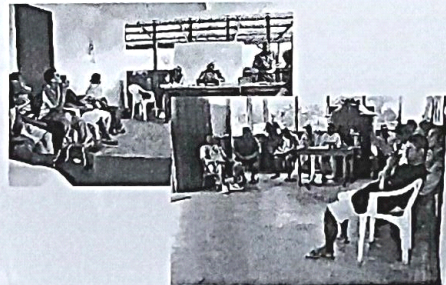
A group of pineapple and watermelon growers in Powakka are in the midst of establishing themselves as a legal organization, called *Abarowang*, which means "one" in the local Amerindian language.

By coming together, the group hopes to export, increase their production, receive better financial support and get more money for their products. The naming of the organization occurred in late April during a visit by IICA technicians to Powakka, an Amerindian village. IICA Suriname is providing technical assistance in establishing *Abarowang*.

IICA Suriname Representative Michelet Mascary told the growers that by organizing they would not only help themselves, but also serve as an example for other producers in Suriname who want to come together as well as growers in other IICA countries. The group members established a provisional board

during the meeting with IICA and have plans to set guidelines for it in the near future, including formulating objectives and managing business.

"To make this dream come true, we need your participation and support," Mascary said. "Even with the board, all of us have to continue to work like one. The board represents, but all the members must do the job they're supposed to do."



Pineapple growers in Powakka attend a meeting with IICA to form *Abarowang*.



A bauxite mining site in Moengo is where Suralco and IICA plan to work together on a rehabilitation project.

Suralco seeks IICA's collaboration to rehabilitate mining sites

Last year, the Suriname Aluminum Company, Suralco, approached IICA Suriname and other institutions about helping them formulate a plan of rehabilitating mining sites in the Moengo area.

Suralco plans to leave the area in 2006, but is committed to rehabilitating the land.

Since Suralco's request, IICA has met with a team of people from other organizations concerned about conservation and the environment that also want to invest time and energy in the project to make sure the land is returned to a sustainable use.

Other organizations interested in the project include:

- World Wildlife Fund
- CI-Suriname
- CELOS
- NIMOS

- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ministry of Planning
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- National Zoological Collection
- Institute of Suriname
- Bauxite Institute
- University of Suriname

Recently, Suralco hosted two fieldtrips of some of the mined out sites to give the interested parties, known as the brainstorming group, an idea of the work involved in mining bauxite.

The mining of bauxite involves clearing a site, stripping it, mining it, landscaping, returning the topsoil, re-vegetating the site and monitoring it by sight to see if the growth continues.

The future of the site involves identifying the different plant species and developing a sustainable monitoring system.

IICA Director General Cont'd from Page 1

agreed on by national leaders is attractive to other agencies. Brathwaite said that method is a strategic new way of doing business. He thinks IICA would succeed as long as that continues. Once there is credibility, he believes then the money will come, and people who want to invest want to do so in credible institutes.

The Institute must grow from the foundation of credibility and trust, the Director General said, adding that it is IICA people's brainpower and commitment that makes IICA what it is. He stated recently he signed to go into affect the Emergency Assistance Program, which is an attempt to support staff when they find themselves in circumstances beyond their control.

For example, in Grenada there were two staff members who lost the roofs of their homes because of a hurricane. A committee decides if IICA professionals and their immediate family members meet the criteria the program requires, which serves to help those with severe illnesses and aren't covered by health insurance. The Emergency Fund could provide benefits to up to \$10,000 U.S. for each person or family.

The Director General says if we didn't have an IICA we would have to create one, and that the concept of the animal with 34 legs is important because there should be horizontal cooperation among them. There is also the potential for two more new legs - one in Miami and another in Spain.

Principles of Organic Farming

Organic farming is based on ecological principles and uses traditional and new methods. Organic farming seeks sustainable productivity and provides weed and pest control, through mutually-dependent life forms, recycling of plant and animal residues, crop selection and rotation, water management, tillage and cultivation. Organic farmers incorporate three principles:

Principle of Interdependency

The farm unit is an ecosystem and change to one part may upset the unit, causing repercus-

sions beyond farm boundaries. For example, high nitrogen soil levels can stimulate heavy weed growth and contaminate groundwater. The farmer addresses this by planting a crop that will utilize the nitrogen, preventing it from leaching into the groundwater and creating a normal balance of soil nutrients.

Principle of Diversity

It is not practical to copy the natural system's diversity. Farmers compromise by crop rotation, maintaining natural habitats and limiting livestock. This diversity offers flexibility, a diverse in-

come and helps prevent pests and diseases.

Principle of Recycling

The farmer uses the natural ecosystem as a model and works towards self-sufficiency by recycling nutrients. Plant and animal residues are returned to the soil to help build biological fertility, thus minimizing the soil purchased. And central to the organic farming principles is a well-balanced, biologically active soil, which provides nutrients for optimum growth and yields, and causes few pest and disease problems.

Source: Canadian Organic Growers

TOMATO EDUCATION PROGRAM SOON TO BE LAUNCHED



A CD-ROM project to educate children about growing vegetables could be launched as early as June by EDUCONS. The project, which involves IICA Suriname and the Ministry of Agriculture, has been more than a year in the works.

The first component of the project is completed and teaches children about tomatoes. Using animation, film and photography, the CD-ROM teaches children about the different kinds of

tomatoes, the history of the tomato and how to prepare for planting the vegetable.

The project, for which IICA is providing much of the funding is being aimed for fourth- and fifth-graders.

School pilot programs could start in Powakka, La Vigilantia, Onverwacht, Moengo, Groningen, Coronie, Meerzorg, Tamanredjo, Lelydorp and Paramaribo.

Other CD-ROMs planned are kouseband, cassava, kapucyner, tayerblad and maize.

Currently tayerblad is in the works by the Ministry, which works on the content. EDUCONS does the design and presentation.



**IICA OFFICE
IN SURINAME**
Letitia Vriesdelaan 11
Paramaribo

Editor-in-chief:
Michelet Mascary
IICA Representative in Suriname

Editor:
Shuva Rahim
Mavis Sabajo

Specialist Advisors:
H. Ormskerk
L. Sampai

P.O.Box 1895
Tel. (597) 410861, 410951,
478187
Fax: (597) 410727
e-mail: iica@sr.net