

May 2008

Rice growers will promote a "technological revolution" to confront the world's food crisis

The Latin American rice sector is committed to joining efforts to confront the current world food crisis. It will promote a technological revolution as the only viable solution for meeting regional demand for rice over the long term and for contributing towards supplying the world with one of humanity's staple grains.

The announcement was made in Guayaquil, Ecuador, during the XXIII Meeting of the Administrative Committee of the Latin American Fund for Irrigated Rice (FLAR, its Spanish acronym). The Fund brings together 22 public and private institutions of 15 countries, and their strategic partner, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT, its Spanish acronym).

In the meetings that led to the so-called "Declaration of Guayaquil", the rice growers analyzed the global and regional situation, discussed causes, and proposed three immediate actions for confronting the crisis.

The first is to promote a technological revolution in the rice sector. The second is to join efforts, thereby achieving significant impact through full commitment and dedicating FLAR's broad and inclusive institutional and scientific platforms to achieve that technological revolution.

The third action would be to sustain the revolution by encouraging national and regional systems, both public and private, to substantially increase their investments in research and technology transfer. Such promotion would be achieved by fostering strategic partnerships between the public and private sectors.

The Declaration points out that, for experts, a determining but little emphasized factor in the food crisis is "a technological lag, which has occurred in recent years, especially in developing countries, generating a growing gap between supply and demand".

A major cause of this deterioration in Latin America and the Caribbean has been the drastic reduction of investment in research and development by multilateral donors and local governments in the region.

Rice experts are sure that the Latin American and Caribbean region comprises "one of the few in the world with the capacity for expanding rice production on a large scale, given the extensive availability of land, solar radiation, and water, and the existence of commercial agricultural systems and human resources in the areas of science and business with a capacity for rapid response."

This region would not only supply regional demand but would also export surpluses to rice-deficient regions of the world, indicates the Declaration.

With respect to scientific research, FLAR has a key partner in CIAT, located in Palmira, Colombia.

This partner has already served as a vital support for the Latin American rice sector over the last 4 decades.

"We have a solid research platform; we have new rice varieties that, with adequate crop management, could increase production by 1 or 2 tons per hectare. With that alone, we would be responding to the problem", says Dr César Martínez, geneticist and leader of CIAT's Rice Project.

However, he points out that more action is needed from the countries involved, FLAR's partners, and the donors to close the technological gap that exists among the growers themselves.

"In Colombia, for example, some growers are highly advanced, producing 1 or 2 tons more than the average; others are average, and a third group are below average", explains the researcher. "The same occurs in other countries. Hence, we need to close this gap through technology transfer and the adoption of best farming practices. Thus, we will improve efficiency and be more competitive", he concluded.

CIAT is one of 15 international centers sponsored by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).



Download the [Declaration of Guayaquil](#) (320 kb).

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