

# Supporting Rural Youth Leadership In Colombia's Agriculture Sector

Hybrid Webinar  
10h00 - 12h00

Photo Exhibit & Coffee  
15h00 - 17h00

Reception (Invitation only)  
17h15

**Tuesday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
**IICA Canada Office, Ottawa**

*\*In-person and online speakers, with an online audience.  
With live interpretation over Zoom in English and Spanish.*

## Contact Us:

Yessica Garcia Saenz | Administrative Assistant | IICA-Canada



+1 613-620-18-12



yessica.garcia@iica.int

## **Description:**

Who will farm in the in the next 10 years? That should be one of the most critical questions the world should be thinking about. Why? Population keeps growing, and climate change, diseases and political tensions exacerbate the pressure on the agri-food systems daily. Having qualified farmers in the field is a shared challenge both in the Global North and Global South. Rural youth leaving agriculture is a symptom of structural problems and deserves immediate in-depth conversations to connect intergenerational, economic, and social aspects such as access to land, credit, markets, education, and gender roles.

The challenge of farming in some countries in the Global South might have an additional layer: conflict and illegal economies. In Colombia, legal and illegal economies (e.g., illicit crop production and illegal logging) co-exist in rural contexts and rurality; rural youth's future is disputed by schools, families, and illicit enterprises. On one hand, teachers and families aspire for adolescents to overcome poverty and dedication to their education. This usually means leaving the farm and abandoning the rural spaces where they belong and are familiar with. For illegal groups, rural youth represent cheap and accessible labor. And, despite their critical role, rural youth voices are still missing from the sustainable development agenda and related academic research.

A research study was conducted in a small village in rural Colombia, La India for eight months. The research study included a larger photovoice project that engaged 36 rural Colombian teenagers in tangled conversations about their territories, aspirations, and communities. This research study was conducted by Margarita Fontecha, PhD candidate at the University of Guelph, Vanier Scholar, and Arrell Scholar Alumna. Margarita works under Dr. Silvia Sarapura's supervision.

The research seeks to understand the conditions that influence rural youth engagement in legal activities (food production) or illegal economies (logging, mining, or coca production). Researchers engaged with students in long and in-depth conversations while they documented their life experiences, surroundings, and environment from their perspectives. The photos represent their daily activities and realities. For some youth, it was the first time they had a camera in their hands. For all youth, it was the first time an adult told them that their voices, experiences, and knowledge mattered.

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Este webinar representa la mirada de jóvenes rurales de un municipio rural, afectado históricamente por el conflicto y las economías ilegales en Colombia. Durante ocho meses, 36 estudiantes de un colegio rural participaron en un proyecto de fotografía para reflexionar sobre su territorio, las particularidades de su municipio y las dinámicas que los afectan. Desde una mirada crítica, muestran sus problemáticas y oportunidades que permitan o faciliten su inclusión en la agenda de desarrollo territorial. Este proyecto se llevó a cabo para completar los requisitos de tesis en estudios de doctorado de Margarita Fontecha, supervisada por la Profesora Silvia Sarapura Escobar.

# WEBINAR AGENDA

10h00 to 12h00, ET

10h00 - 10h05

## OPENING REMARKS AND HOUSEKEEPING

- **Dr. Jean Charles Le Vallée**, IICA Canada Representative
- **H.E. Carlos Arturo Morales**, Ambassador of Colombia to Canada
- **Dr. Silvia Sarapura**, University of Guelph

10h05 - 10h15

## OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

- **Margarita Fontecha**, Vanier scholar and PhD Candidate in rural studies at the University of Guelph

10h15 - 10h55

## PANEL 1:

### **THE COMPLEX DECISION OF FARM OR NOT TO FARM, THE ROLE OF RURAL YOUTH IN AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS**

(Goal: To explore what conditions influence rural youth to pursue a life course in farming)

Speakers:

- **Alejandro Alzate**, student of photovoice project, Santander, Colombia
- **Chantele Gouliquer**, Canadian Agricultural Youth Council
- **Ángela Penagos**, Director of CEPAL, Colombia Office
- **Antao & Emma, IFAD** ( International Fund for Agricultural Development)
- Moderator: Margarita Fontecha, Vanier scholar and PhD Candidate in rural studies at the University of Guelph.

10h55 - 11h00

## Q&A

**INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE**

Delegation in Canada | 1002 - 130 Albert Street, Ottawa ON K1P 5G4 - Canada

Phone: (+1) 613-230-1044 | e-mail: [iica.ca@iica.int](mailto:iica.ca@iica.int) | <https://iica.int/en/countries/canada> | [@iica\\_canada](https://iica.int/en/countries/canada)

11h00 - 11h10

AN OVERVIEW FROM COLOMBIA'S GOVERNMENT

- (TBA) Government of Colombia

11h10 - 11h50

PANEL 2:

**SUPPORTING RURAL YOUTH IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

(Goal: To discuss how different sectors (government, academia, private companies) can work together and support rural youth)

Speakers:

- **Ryan Gibson**, Professor, University of Guelph.
- **Priscila Zúñiga**, Youth Program Lead, IICA
- **Mackenzie Argent**, Canadian Cattle Young Leaders Program, CCA
  - Moderator: Dr. Silvia Sarapura Escobar. University of Guelph - School of Environmental Design and Rural Development.

11h50 - 11h55

Q&A

11h55 - 12h00

CLOSING REMARKS

- **Dr. Jean Charles Le Vallée**, Country Representative, IICA Canada

# PHOTO EXHIBIT & COFFEE DRAFT AGENDA

15h00 to 17h00, ET

15h00

OPENING OF THE PHOTO EXHIBIT TO THE PUBLIC

15h00 - 17h00

IICA OPEN HOUSE

- Visitors will be able to visit the IICA Canada office and its staff and tour a photo exhibit on rural youth in Colombia.
- Visitors will have the opportunity to meet the photographer and project leader.
- Visitors will also enjoy coffee from Colombia ( IICA Canada).

17h00

PHOTO EXHIBIT'S CLOSURE

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