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IICA Calls for Urgent Action to Empower Rural Youth in Latin America and the

Caribbean

📅 September 13, 2025 💎 IICA

13 September 2025, San José: The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is urging governments, the private sector, and international partners to place rural youth at the center of sustainable development strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The call to action follows demographic shifts across the region, where falling birth and mortality rates coupled with higher life expectancy are creating an aging population. At the same time, rural-to-urban migration continues to intensify, driving inequality and weakening rural communities.



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“Rural youth are leaving because they lack infrastructure, connectivity, quality education, and work opportunities,” said Manuel Otero, Director General of IICA, alongside Jorge Werthein, Special Advisor, and Sandra Ziegler, Consultant. “This exodus drains human capital, disrupts generational succession in agriculture, and threatens food security, while receiving cities struggle with overcrowding and social exclusion.”

According to IICA, reversing these trends requires not stopping migration, but creating real alternatives that make staying in rural areas a desirable choice. This involves:

- Investing in essential services such as transportation, digital connectivity, healthcare, housing, access to land, and quality education.
- Strengthening rural education systems, including secondary and technical programs aligned with 21st-century challenges, incorporating digital knowledge, agricultural innovation, and stronger ties to local productive environments.
- Promoting university engagement as hubs of science, technology, and innovation that connect with rural territories.
- Building agribusiness ecosystems for youth, with policies to expand production, financing, mentorship, and access to land and markets, while ensuring sustainability, gender inclusion, and community participation.
- Engaging the private sector and international cooperation to generate employment, provide resources, and transfer technology.



“Investing in rural youth is investing in social cohesion, food security, and sustainability for the entire region,” added Otero. “They must be recognized as protagonists of the future, with the right to choose where and how they live.”

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IICA emphasized that coordinated policies and partnerships are essential to harness the transformative potential of digital agriculture, biosciences, and innovation while ensuring that rural communities remain vibrant and resilient.

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