

On the regional level, Canada is an active player in cooperative steps to address environmental issues of fundamental concern, such as health and the environment, trade and the environment, air and water quality, climate variability and change, and the management of chemicals. Canada's support for environmental issues in the Americas focuses on strengthening the capacity of regional institutions and countries to support improved environmental policy, management and regulation, and adaptation to climate change in such sectors as energy, water and sanitation, mining, oil and gas, agriculture and pesticides, and disaster management. Canada spends over CDN\$9 million annually in these areas.

In March 2001 Canada hosted the Meeting of Ministers of the Environment of the Americas. This led to the effective integration of environmental priorities into the Quebec City Summit Plan of Action.

In support of the mandate established at Quebec City, Canada hosted the Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas (HEMA) meeting in Ottawa in March 2002. The meeting agreed to establish a task force of officials from the health and environment sectors throughout the region to move the HEMA initiative forward. Since then, Canada has been working with regional counterparts and representatives from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme to support the work of the HEMA Task Force. The task force is scheduled to meet three times in 2003 to make proposals to Ministers on a follow-up process.

Canada's continued commitment to regional environmental cooperation is evident in its work under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, the Canada-Chile Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, and the Canada-Costa Rica Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, and in its engagement in the World Bank's Clean Air Initiative. The three environmental cooperation agreements are each associated with a free trade agreement, and reflect Canada's commitment to promoting sound environmental management simultaneously with trade liberalization.

Agricultural Management and Rural Development

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is the key ministerial forum for agriculture and rural development in the Hemisphere, and is helping implement the Quebec City Summit Plan of Action in these areas.

A member of IICA since 1972, Canada plays an active role in the Institute by participating in meetings of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture, the Executive Committee and the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues. Canada has also contributed to the re-organization of the Institute and to the development of its medium-term plan, which identifies six strategic areas for cooperation over the 2002-06 period:

- trade and agri-business;
- agricultural health and food safety;
- technology and innovation;
- sustainable rural development;
- information and communication; and
- education and training.

Ongoing cooperation through IICA continues to give Canada invaluable experience within the inter-American system and with IICA's 34 member states. It also provides an opportunity for the sharing of expertise between scientists, the development of stronger trade ties, and cooperative approaches to common problems.



CIDA Photo: Roger LeMoyne