

A Message from the President of the Inter-American Development Bank

A vision of Latin America as the world's breadbasket is coming into focus. That is good news for the region's economic growth and for its own efforts to reduce poverty and hunger. And it is great news for global food security.

Latin America has abundant natural resources, including a third of the world's fresh water. It has many farmers with experience and a flair for innovation, as well as institutions and markets that are becoming stronger and more resilient.

The region's export prowess is already being demonstrated in real terms, from the vast grain farms of Brazil to the meat packing plants of Argentina and Uruguay and on to the small coffee plantations of Central America, the asparagus fields of Peru, and the maize fields of Mexico. Despite all this, LAC has merely scratched the surface of its ability to produce food for its own people and for the world at large.

Soybeans to China. Rice to Africa. Coffee and meat to the United States. Specialty fruits and vegetables to supermarkets the world over. The markets are vast and ever expanding, and so is Latin America's potential to satisfy them. But the challenge is much wider than simply producing more food. It is about resolving humanity's greatest challenge of the 21st Century — feeding a rapidly growing global population without expanding farming into environmentally sensitive areas, without diminishing the productive capacity of the land already under cultivation, and without compromising on quality. It is also about inclusion, and particularly about enabling smaller, family farming operations and their rural neighbors to benefit and prosper from a reinvigorated agricultural economy.

With agricultural growth and prosperity comes a chance to address persistent hunger and poverty within the region itself — an opportunity the region cannot afford to squander. At the heart of these challenges is investment — more and smarter investment by governments, by the organizations that support agricultural development, and by the private sector.

Together we need to greatly expand our commitments to agricultural research and focus on getting new skills and new technologies into the hands of farmers. We need to invest in improving rural infrastructure and in creating an enabling environment for a more profitable yet environmentally sustainable agriculture. These investments must be supported by new trade policies that increase farmers' productivity to meet local and global demand.

We can do this. Together we can grow our region and feed our own while we satisfy the world's growing demand for food.



Luis Alberto Moreno