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GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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President Rafael Correa Advances Plans for Biotechnology Research at The Yachay Research Park, “The City of Knowledge”

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Report Highlights:

On October 30, Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa was hosted by U.S. businessman David Murdock on a visit to North Carolina’s research facilities including the North Carolina Research Campus (NCRC). The President’s trip was exploratory and assessed whether the NCRC could be used as a model for the kinds of partnership and research that are envisioned for a research park planned for Ecuador. The planned park has been named “Yachay” or the City of Knowledge.

President Rafael Correa Advances Plans for Biotechnology Research at The Yachay Research Park, “The City of Knowledge”

This visit was “private” in the sense that no meetings were with U.S. federal government officials. According to North Carolina newspapers and the Ecuadorian Presidential press office¹ the visit’s purpose was to scrutinize organization and structure of scientific projects that are currently in progress in different universities sharing space at NCRC. In the city of Kannapolis Rene Ramirez, the head of the National Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (Senescyt), made a presentation to Murdock and his collaborators on the City of Knowledge or “Yachay”, a facility under construction in the northern Ecuadorian province of Imbabura. The plan for the Yachay facility is to stimulate research for Life Sciences, Nanotechnology, ICT, Renewable Energy and Petrochemicals.² The Life Sciences arm will reportedly focus on state-of-the-art biotechnology research. FAS Quito has reported separately on President Correa’s stance against the current language in the nation’s constitution, which bans biotechnology. Correa has insisted that the Constitution does not prohibit biotechnology research but that it requires regulation of it.

President Correa wants to create a research facility in Ecuador with impact on all of South America. The Government of Ecuador has acquired nearly 4000 hectares (roughly 10,000 acres) of land for this project. Some of the land was expropriated amidst landowners’ complaints that they did not receive fair compensation from the government. Yachay’s grounds will be destined to various purposes as follows: agricultural production area (1800 ha), ecological protection zone and archaeological reserve (1300 hectares), Tech Zone (690 hectares), and an urban area of (640 ha) which will house a University Technology Park for Commerce and Business. The urban area will integrate existing towns totaling approximately 160 ha. According to the government Urcuquí was chosen for this project because of its an optimal level of accessibility. The location is 1.5 hours from the new International Airport of Quito. The location was also judged to be suitable for terrain, weather, connectivity, water availability, and other factors such as the establishment of laboratories and high tech research centers. Initial land development was started in March 2012, and it is expected that the first phase of the project will cost of \$ 50 million.

¹ <http://www.salisburypost.com/News/103112-ecuador-president>

http://www.elciudadano.gob.ec/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36864:visita-al-campus-de-investigacion-en-carolina-del-norte-dejo-muchos-aprendizajes&catid=40:actualidad&Itemid=63

http://www.elciudadano.gob.ec/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36838:ecuador-interesado-en-apoyo-de-centro-de-investigacion-de-eeuu-para-desarrollar-bioconocimiento-en-yachay&catid=40:actualidad&Itemid=63

² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fab8oAI2TPA>