



IICA Strategy for

BELIZE

2014-2018



IICA Strategy for Belize 2014 – 2018

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List of Acronyms

BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
BLPA	Belize Livestock Producers Association
CARDI	Caribbean Agricultural Research & Development Institute
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FonTC	Technical Cooperation Fund
FP	Flagship Project
IABA	Inter-American Board of Agriculture
ICS	IICA Country Strategy
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
LAC	Latin American Countries
MNRA	Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture
MTP	Medium Term Plan
NAFP	National Agricultural and Food Policy
PRExt	Externally Funded Projects
RRA	Rapid Response Action
SP	Strategic Plan
TC	Technical Cooperation

1. Introduction

IICA's Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2014-2018 builds on the initiatives developed in its MTP 2010-2014 and develops a new approach including the technical cooperation (TC) model and instruments for providing TC services to its member states. It renews the Institute's commitment to strengthen its technical capabilities in order to address the challenges facing the agricultural and rural sector that were identified in both the current MTP and the Strategic Plan (SP) 2010-2020, as well as the various mandates and commitments made in the last two meetings of the IABA.

The MTP was formulated through a dialogue involving the Institute's different units, a broad process of consultation with the member countries, and a review of the Institute's technical cooperation (TC) model and the instruments for intervention and actions. The mandates and the consultative approach obligate the Institute and its personnel to redouble their efforts in order to execute, together with the member countries and other strategic partners, actions that will address those challenges effectively, utilizing all the opportunities available, and devising innovative solutions to achieve results of excellence that will have an impact and positive transformations in the agricultural sector and the rural areas.

The MTP focuses on achieving concrete and visible results and contributing to various transformations desired by its member states of their agricultural sector through TC actions that are directed towards four specific objectives.

- (i) Improve the productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector.
- (ii) Strengthen agriculture's contribution to the development of rural areas and the well-being of the rural population.
- (iii) Improve agriculture's capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change and make better use of natural resources.
- (iv) Improve agriculture's contribution to food security.

The MTP seeks to strengthen the Institute as a forum for innovation, creativity and enhances its commitment to its responsibilities, its competencies and faculties of technical cooperation in agriculture and promoting rural well-being, all as a part of its mandate as a specialized agency of the Inter-American System. It also establishes the conceptual framework and defines IICA's strategy and its TC instruments to execute the Institute's actions. Four main instruments were designed to meet the demands and needs for TC of the member countries while contributing to the achievement of overall results of the MTP. These instruments are designed with the necessary flexibilities to address specific needs for TC while maintaining the alignment and coherence with the objectives of the MTP. The instruments are:

- (i) Flagship Projects (FP).
- (ii) Externally Funded Projects (PRExt).
- (iii) Rapid Response Actions (RRA).
- (iv) Technical Cooperation Fund (FonTC).

Four Flagship Projects were designed as a set of core actions to achieve the 11 contributions defined in the MTP that are to be funded by IICA's resources for the plan period. Although the Flagship Projects cover broad thematic areas they are designed to encompass a range of issues and challenges to be addressed at the hemispheric, regional and national levels that are related to competitiveness, inclusion and sustainability. The Projects are:

- (i) Productivity and sustainability of family farming for food security and the rural economy (Family Farming).
- (ii) Competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural chains for food security and economic development (Agricultural Chains).
- (iii) Inclusion of Agriculture and Rural Areas (Inclusion).
- (iv) Integrated Environmental Resilience and Risk Management for Agricultural Production (Resilience and Risk Management)

While IICA is an international organization that focuses on providing TC services, a large part of its actions are designed to respond to the specific needs and priorities of its member countries. In this regard, the IICA Country Strategy (ICS) is formulated to address the specific circumstances and challenges at the national level, taking into account the framework and priorities provided by the MTP.

2. Methodology

The approach in designing the IICA Country Strategy (ICS) 2015-2018 for Belize followed the general guidelines for all countries. It involves a series of steps and actions that focus on IICA's TC activities in the country, designed within the framework of the MTP and the government's policies and priorities for the agricultural sector.

In 2013, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture (MNRA) initiated a process of developing a new policy framework for the agricultural sector known as the National Agriculture and Food Policy (NAFP). A series of 17 meetings with stakeholders were held throughout the country in the early part of 2014 and the opportunities and challenges faced by the sector were clearly identified and voiced by the more than 300 private and public stakeholders who participated in these meetings. Members of IICA's staff in Belize attended these meetings and played a key role in the consultation process. The Policy document was recently completed and it is in the process of being ratified at higher levels of the government.

The first step in the design of this Country Strategy was to identify a set of priorities for Belize's agricultural sector based largely on those identified in the NAFP, on discussions with members of the MNRA, and in follow-up discussions with members of target groups in the sector. Following this, the next step was to identify a preliminary list of TC needs in the sector including specific requests of the Ministry and various stakeholder groups. This preliminary list was used as the basis for an analysis which compared the needs against those projects currently executed by IICA or scheduled to

start. The analysis then looked at the TC needs or demands vis-a-vis the Flagship projects of the MTP to determine their alignment and consistency.

Through this process, a draft IICA Country Strategy (ICS) was developed for internal review and approval. Finally, the draft ICS was shared with the MNRA and other stakeholders for review and comments and then adjusted prior to its finalization. The ICS has been designed also to allow for a degree of flexibility so that emerging priorities can be incorporated in the strategy.

3. IICA Country Strategy

3.1 Context Analysis

Belize is a relatively small developing country with a total land area of 8,867 square miles and a population of almost 350,000 persons. It is located on the Caribbean coast of Central America, and it is bordered by Mexico in the north; Guatemala in the west and south; and in the east by the Caribbean Sea. Approximately 38% (2 million acres) of its land area is suitable for agriculture, but only about 15% of this is utilized for farming activities. Most of the farming enterprises are relatively small, of which 24% of the farms have less than 5 acres, 33% between 5 and 20 acres, and 74% of the total farms are below 50 acres (MAF Farm Registry, 2012).

The economy is largely based on traditional export commodities such as sugar, citrus and banana, while tourism has recently become an important contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to data of 2013, the agricultural and food sector is one of the main pillars of the Belizean economy, contributing significantly to GDP (13.06%), formal employment (18%) and more than 60% to informal employment, income generation and food and nutrition security. The sector is also important to macroeconomic growth and development, contributing about 70% of foreign exchange earnings.

The country's main agricultural enterprises and activities can be categorized in three main sub-sectors: (i) a traditional export sector comprising sugar, banana, citrus and marine products; (ii) a traditional small farm sector that produce food mainly for household and local consumption; and (iii) a large-scale commercial sector that is mainly involved in traditional export commodities.

Citrus, sugar and banana are considered major crops though both citrus and sugar have been severely affected by diseases, pests and adverse climatic conditions. The country is self-sufficient in rice, corn, beans, fish, poultry, eggs and beef. Rice, corn, soybeans and sorghum are the principal grains produced and are important for the domestic market. Most of the corn produced is consumed locally with larger amounts being exported in recent years. The principal types of livestock are beef cattle, dairy cattle, poultry, and pigs with a growing interest in sheep. Small amounts of beef-cattle are also exported mainly to Guatemala and Mexico and recent initiatives to improve cattle production and manage pests and diseases could see higher levels of cattle being

exported in the next few years. Vegetables and root crops are important for the domestic and tourism markets. Production costs, however, of the major crops are high as they are heavily dependent on imported inputs. For the most part the non-traditional crops such as root crops and several vegetables are produced using rudimentary methods; improved technologies and good production practices are lacking, resulting in inefficient production systems.

Furthermore, the economy and its agricultural sector face several challenges that include among others: a high level of poverty, estimated at 41.3% in 2009; moderate levels of food insecurity and malnutrition; rapid changes in diets in recent years that result from changing food consumption patterns that contribute to increased levels of obesity and related non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, stroke, heart diseases and cancer; limited diversification of the sector and development of value chain systems; high vulnerability due to risks and limited resilience capacity; and weak public policy, governance mechanisms and inadequate planning.¹

a. International Vision and Hemispheric Trends in Agriculture and Rural Life.

Agriculture has always played a critical role in the development and prosperity of nations, especially for developing countries. In its role as a technical cooperation agency IICA has identified the different challenges associated with agriculture in the region some of which fall within IICA's strategic objectives namely (1) productivity and competitiveness, (2) rural inclusion, (3) adaptation of agriculture to climate change and integrated natural resources management (sustainability), and (4) food and nutritional security. In addition, there is a critical need to address challenges related to management of water and other ecological resources and a need to increase innovation in the sector.

IICA will play a leading role in addressing the four strategic objectives and thus help its member countries to address these challenges, avail themselves of opportunities and overcome the constraints that such challenges may bring. More specifically, the challenges and opportunities in the sector can be categorized into four areas of primary focus, with water and innovation being cross cutting themes.

(i) Productivity and Competitiveness

Globally there is an increasing demand for agricultural products, especially food, with greater nutritional value and of higher quality. These demands come in the face of price volatility, the presence of pests and diseases, climate variability, natural disasters, rights to land and water, an aging rural population and the migration of rural youths to cities. The ever increasing demand for food accompanied by inappropriate cultivation practices have resulted in soil degradation which points to a critical need for innovative technologies that will allow for a more intensive and sustainable use of soil.

Solutions will involve adaptation and validation of technologies to improve yields and increase the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources. Adoption of best

¹ See draft National Agricultural and Food Policy (NAFP) of Belize 2015 – 2030. Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture, July 2015.

agricultural practices will also be needed along the production chain supported by investments by the public and private sector. Stronger institutional frameworks and better governance, and finally sound risk management programs are seen as significant dimensions to improving the productivity and competitiveness of the sector.

(ii) Sustainability and Climate Change

Agriculture in the region has been heavily affected by climate change, resulting in significant losses. Catastrophic climate conditions are increasing in frequency, resulting in drought, flood, frost, and changes in rainfall patterns, hurricanes, landslides and new pests and diseases, all of which jeopardize productivity. With these changes, ancestral knowledge and empirical adaptations on which many farmers rely, are rendered ineffective while conventional agriculture systems and practices have sometimes been blamed for the negative externalities that range from soil erosion to the emission of large quantities of greenhouse gas.

There is a need for the development of new models and innovations for climate change mitigation and adaptation, supported by policies, research, investment, modifications in production systems and improvement of the legal framework. Tools such as integrated risk management for making agricultural activities less vulnerable are important, including new production models that will increase production and have less of an impact on the environment.

(iii) Inclusion

Poverty continues to be a widespread social and economic problem, which tends to primarily affect those who depend on agriculture as their primary economic activity and source of livelihood. The great majority of these people live in rural areas or in indigenous communities. This has led to extensive migration of farmers, especially youths, into other economic activities, further exacerbating the problem on the rural economies.

In addressing this challenge it is essential to create the conditions needed for people to have access to real development opportunities by finding mechanisms through which organized producers in rural territories can enter agricultural chains. Opportunities are needed for small- and medium-scale agriculture, especially family farming, to perform the strategic role of nurturing social inclusion in rural territories, while at the same time making an effective contribution to the food supply and achieving environmental sustainability in the poorest communities. Equity needs to be promoted as well, while recognizing the role of women, youths and the indigenous populations in agriculture and rural territories. Strengthening their participation in the economy by means of interventions will facilitate their rights and provide for empowerment is critical.

(iv) Food and Nutritional Security

Meeting the food and nutritional requirements of the region continues to remain a major challenge for the countries and it is estimated that 47 million persons in LAC suffer

from chronic hunger. Over the past few years, the adverse international economic climate, (market instability and more volatile prices) and the effect of climate change have greatly impacted food security. Poverty and limited income also constrain people's ability to acquire food.

Vulnerability can, however, be reduced if small-scale and family agriculture receive support such as better management and organizational skills, strengthening capacities through improving training activities, promoting participation and access by these farmers in agricultural chains and using the land efficiently for competitive and sustainable agriculture. Consistent public policies and developing common agendas in the countries and encouraging cooperation among everyone concerned while eliminating hunger and improving livelihoods of rural populations is crucial.

(v) Innovation

Agriculture innovation is considered as vitally important to increase productivity and competitiveness of the sector, boost income, reduce poverty and inequality, lessen the environmental impact of the agricultural sector, respond to natural disasters, broaden access to new technologies, adapt to climate change and, consequently, achieve food security and improve the quality of life. Innovation in agriculture is better developed through national agri-food innovation systems, promoting technology transfer under mutually agreed terms, sharing knowledge and promotion of good practices. The challenge for agriculture, therefore, is to strengthen intensive, sustainable processes of innovation with the participation of all stakeholders.

(vi) Integrated Management of Water Resources

The LAC region has abundant water resources but to achieve a more productive and sustainable agriculture sector improvements in the proper management of water resources are necessary. This requires a new type of agricultural system that uses water more responsibly and efficiently. The introduction of covered structures, efficient irrigation systems, and water harvesting are some of the opportunities that can be used for improving water resource management.

b. Challenges and Opportunities for Agriculture in Belize

The characteristics of the economy and its agricultural sector require an integrated, multi-institutional and multi-sectoral approach to address the various challenges and constraints faced by the country. Belize's low population density, dispersed production areas, low production volumes, low productivity, high production costs, a small domestic market and vulnerability to climate change can be viewed as major challenges for the country's agriculture if it is to become more competitive in both domestic and export markets. Nevertheless, there are many opportunities for strategic interventions that can contribute to enhancing food and nutrition security, improving productivity and competitiveness, expand diversification, and facilitate adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change and reducing the sector's vulnerability.

To address the many constraints and challenges of the sector, the Ministry with support from its strategic partners recently drafted the National Agricultural and Food Policy (NAFP) of Belize 2015–2030. The overall goal of the policy is to “engender a conducive environment for the development of an agriculture and food sector that is competitive, diversified and sustainable, that enhances food security and nutrition, and contributes to the achievement of the socio-economic development goals of Belize”.²

The NAFP has five pillars, one of which is a crosscutting theme, and each has specific strategic objectives with their respective policy instruments and measures. The pillars are: (i) Pillar 1 - Enhance sustainable production, productivity and competitiveness; (ii) Pillar 2 - Increase market development, access and penetration; (iii) Pillar 3 - Increase National Food and Nutrition Security and Improved Rural Livelihoods; (iv) Pillar 4 - Enhance sustainable agriculture and risk management; and (v) Pillar 5 – Governance: enhance accountability, transparency and coordination.

The pillars upon which the NAFP seeks to make Belize's agricultural sector more competitive, sustainable, diversified, and enhances its food and nutrition security are consistent and very much aligned with the four strategic objectives of IICA's MTP 2014–2018. Belize's national agricultural policy through consultations with a large number of stakeholders in the agricultural and food sector of the country highlighted many of the same challenges that have been identified in the MTP that are prevalent in Belize and in other countries of the region.

The key thematic areas of focus of the strategy for which various opportunities exist for TC are discussed below.

(i) Competitiveness and Productivity

The competitiveness and productivity of the sector is of key concern for the development of agriculture in Belize. The limitations imposed by the absence of more effective policy measures and strategies, a small domestic market, high costs of production and relatively low productivity are some of the key binding constraints that limit the country's competitiveness in both domestic and external markets. There is also the need to strengthen surveillance systems to address pests and disease challenges while improving quarantine and other SPS measures, strengthen market information systems and market development systems to provide critical information on prices, volumes and other financial information to facilitate decision making. Low farm productivity due to impacts of climate change and low technology levels are seen as some major challenges in the production chain, and improved production practices, pest and disease control and technologies such as irrigation and covered structures and strengthening farmer organizations are viewed as opportunities for improving the sector's productivity and competitiveness.

² See NAFP, p. 11.

(ii) Innovation

The introduction of innovations and strengthening of national innovations systems is seen as a key intervention for improving productivity and competitiveness, adaptation to the challenges of climate change and natural disasters, and consequently achieve food security and improving the quality of life for farming communities. The strengthening of research and technology transfer systems is important and more adoption of improved practices and skills development will enhance the production systems and improve the farming communities. Linking of public-private partnerships, creating synergies, and new models for organizations and business solutions are also important in achieving these goals.

Some solutions will involve adaptation and validation of technologies to improve yields and make the use of natural resources more efficient and sustainable. Adoption of best practices will also be needed along the production chain supported by investments by the public and private sector. Stronger institutional frameworks and better governance, and finally sound risk management programs are seen as significant factors in improving the productivity and competitiveness of the sector.

Innovation is particularly important to reduce the vulnerability of small-scale and family agriculture which is the dominant characteristic of the agricultural sector including export-oriented activities in Belize. Innovation will provide the necessary technology and facilitate a range of support such as better management and organizational skills, strengthening capacities through training and information dissemination, promoting participation and access by these farmers in agricultural chains and using the land efficiently for a more competitive and sustainable agriculture. These will need to be supported by consistent public policies and developing common agendas in the farming communities and promoting cooperation among the key actors and beneficiaries so that the goal of reducing rural poverty and hunger and improving food security and livelihoods of the rural populations can be achieved.

(iii) Sustainability and Climate Change

Over the past years climate change has become a major challenge affecting Belize's agricultural sector, especially small and medium size farmers of traditional as well as non-traditional products. The sector has been heavily affected by catastrophic climate conditions that are increasing in frequency, resulting in drought, flood, frost, and changes in rainfall patterns, hurricanes, landslides and new pests and diseases, all of which jeopardize output, productivity, food availability and rural incomes. Regular floods and extreme dry conditions have resulted in significant losses, particularly for corn, rice, bean and sugarcane farmers who rely on regular weather patterns for their planting and harvesting activities. With these changes, ancestral knowledge and empirical adaptations on which many farmers rely are rendered ineffective while conventional agriculture systems have sometimes been blamed for a range of ecological problems such as soil erosion and water contamination.

Added to these conditions, the unsustainable use of the land resources have led to a serious decline in productivity in small farms. This leads to the need for the introduction of improved and innovative practices to facilitate the country's agriculture to deal with climate changes and better use of the land and water resources. In this regard, it is essential that effective technology transfer services be available for adoption by farmers, accompanied by capacity building activities, increasing the awareness of the impact of climate change and the use of innovations for building resilience at the local level.

There is a need for the development of new models and innovations for climate change mitigation and adaptation, supported by policies, research, investment and modifications in production systems. Tools such as integrated risk management for making agricultural activities less vulnerable are important, including new production models that will increase production and have less of an adverse impact on the environment. The opportunities for collaboration with various institutions in Belize on these challenges are many and IICA is considered one of the key partners through its network and contacts in developing initiatives and providing technical services and information.

(v) Food and Nutrition Security

Food and nutrition security is seen as an overall challenge in the development of the rural population especially among the indigenous communities who depend solely on a few basic staples with low protein sources and whose malnutrition situation is a matter of concern to the government and development agencies. Poverty, production cycles and limited and unstable income also greatly affect the ability of rural communities, particularly the indigenous communities to acquire food and sustain their nutritional status.

The creation of innovative models for family farms and backyard gardening is seen as one of the key interventions that can assist in alleviating this situation. The promotion of school gardening programs and linking rural farmers to markets is also important. In addition, IICA is a member of the National Food and Nutrition Security Commission, a multi-institutional body that has been mandated by the Government to address food and nutrition security issues through policy dialogue and coordination, and the development of integrated strategies.

(v) Inclusion

The incorporation of the rural populations, especially of the indigenous groups that are mainly located in southern Belize that occupy communities that border Guatemala is a major development concern that needs to be addressed. Poverty continues to be a widespread social and economic problem, which tends to primarily affect those who depend on agriculture as their primary economic activity. The majority of those affected live in rural areas or in indigenous communities. This has led to extensive migration of farmers, especially youths, into other economic activities, further exacerbating the problem on the rural economies. Opportunities are needed for small and medium-scale agriculture, especially family farming, to perform the strategic role of enhancing the

welfare and nurturing social inclusion in rural communities, while at the same time making an effective contribution to the food supply and to achieving environmental sustainability in the poorest communities.

Small farmers, including the indigenous farmers, contribute significantly to food security in Belize. Introducing technologies and alternatives for income generation is needed while at the same time ensuring their incorporation into mainstream agriculture. In addition, new technologies, better agricultural practices and training will contribute significantly to reduce post-harvest losses, increased output and reduce the vulnerability of these communities to food shortages and food insecurity. Improved farm incomes will also provide incentives for women and youth to seek agriculture as a viable career opportunity and enhance the quality of life for rural families.

(vi) Natural Resources Management

Belize's economy is heavily natural resources based and the sustainable management of land, water and natural resources is seen as another key element for development of the sector and the country. In the development of strategies, the sustainable and responsible use of natural resources must be a central theme. Innovative models and practices that reduce the adverse impacts on the environment, increasing productivity and sustainability must be central to any development initiative, particularly those that focus on the sustainable development of rural communities.

The broad areas identified above are integral dimensions of IICA's country strategy for Belize. As indicated before, they are consistent with the strategic objectives of IICA's MTP 2014-2018 as its contribution to transformations in the agricultural sector, as well as the policy priorities and the strategic direction of the Government's NAFP 2015–2030. IICA can play a critical role in these areas in Belize, particular because of competitive advantages in the country. These include its knowledge and experiences in the agricultural sector, the strategic alliances that it has developed over the years in Belize, as well as its institutional network within the wider Institute and across the hemisphere.

The Institute can improve the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of its technical cooperation because it has more or less correctly interpreted the issues and challenges and the continuous changes taking place in Belize's agricultural sector, and having a clear understanding of its role and mandate in providing TC services. Through its various interventions, IICA will play a leading role to help Belize to address the sector's challenges and overcome the constraints such challenges may bring.

(vii) Externally Funded Project

In 2012 IICA negotiated a 3-year project with the EU aimed at strengthening the technical capacity of the Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute (SIRDI) to provide more effective technical services aimed at transforming the sugarcane production systems and achieve improvements in productivity and competitiveness. The project is also strengthening capacities to support policies and strategic planning to better integrate

sugarcane producers, sugar manufacturers and producer associations for adopting innovative production systems developed by SIRDI. Key actions have focused on building capacity to plan, program and monitor to facilitate decision-making consistent with the priorities and objectives of the sugar industry.

In addition, the financial and administrative systems of SIRDI are also being strengthened to improve their efficiency and effectiveness to support SIRDI's programs and maximise the use of the limited resources available in the Sugar Industry Development Fund (SIDF). The project will contribute significantly to the improvement in program planning, coordination and monitoring amongst all stakeholders in the sugar industry so as to reduce operational deficiencies. This project is in its final year of execution, coming to an end in December 2015. SIRDI recognizes that it needs to develop a sustainability plan and a sound planning, monitoring and evaluation system before the project terminates so as to ensure its long term viability.

c. Needs/Requests for Technical Cooperation

The table below highlights the major needs and request for technical cooperation THAT were expressed in the various national consultations that were carried out jointly by the Ministry, the FAO and IICA.

No.	Request/Need for Technical Cooperation	Category	Institutional Request	Related Flagship Project	Component	Contribution
Strategic Objective 1 : Competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural chains for food security and economic development						
1	Develop an implementation plan of the National Agriculture and Food Policy (NAFP) and Business Strategy.	Request	MNRA	Agricultural Chains	Policies and institutions	1
2	Review, analysis and strengthen the Ministry's human resources capacity to support delivery of the National Agriculture and Food Policy	Request	MNRA	Agricultural Chains	Policies and institutions	1
3	Support development of a coordinating, monitoring and reporting mechanism on implementation of the NAFP.	Request	MNRA	Agricultural Chains	Policies and institutions	1

No.	Request/Need for Technical Cooperation	Category	Institutional Request	Related Flagship Project	Component	Contribution
4	Review and improve existing legislation and guidelines that govern cooperatives and improve the effectiveness, accountability and transparency to facilitate improved production, trade, and access to markets.	Request	MNRA	Agricultural Chains	Management and agribusiness capabilities	1
5	Strengthening of the MNRA's policy unit in areas of planning, market & information intelligence to facilitate decision making.	Request	MNRA	Agricultural Chains	Market development and access.	2
6	Develop the methodologies on collecting various information and a data base on 25 priority agricultural commodities.	Request	MNRA	Agricultural Chains	Policies and institutions; Market development and access	1
7	Improve the Competitiveness and Resilience of the Belize Cattle Industry	Request	BLPA	Resilience /Agricultural chains	Integrated management / productivity and efficiency	4, 7
Strategic Objective 2: To strengthen agriculture's contribution to the development of rural areas and the well-being of the rural population						
8	Develop a strategy to modernize the National Research and Extension Services of the Ministry and establishment of farmer field schools	Request	MNRA	Agricultural Chains	Productivity and efficiency	2
9	Strengthen the capacities of artisanal producers to improve productivity and competitiveness in selected markets	Need	MNRA	Family Agriculture	Knowledge management	9

No.	Request/Need for Technical Cooperation	Category	Institutional Request	Related Flagship Project	Component	Contribution
10	Build capacities in agro processing	Request	MNRA	Agricultural Chains	Productivity and efficiency	4
11	Strengthen integrated farming systems and family farming for food security in selected rural communities	Request	MNRA	Family Agriculture	Knowledge management	5
Strategic Objective 3: To improve agriculture's capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change and make better use of natural resources						
12	Provide technical support to the MNRA in the management of integrated drainage, irrigation and soil conservation programs including rainwater harvesting.	Need	MNRA	Resilience	Integrated management of natural resources	6
13	Strengthen awareness, knowledge and capacity to adapt production to changing climatic conditions	Need	MNRA	Resilience	Integrated management of natural resources	7
14	Strengthen national capacity to address and respond to current and emerging diseases, pests and other threats.	Request	BAHA	Resilience	Integrated environmental risk management	7
Strategic Objective 4: To improve agriculture's contribution to food security						
15	Support the National Food Security and Nutrition Commission to address and implement policies and strategies	Request	MNRA	Family Agriculture	Differentiated public policies	8
16	Improve production, storage and handling in selected value chains.	Request	MNRA	Agricultural Chains	Productivity and efficiency	9
17	Promote farmer to market linkages for improving of rural	Need	MNRA	Family Agriculture	Market linkages	5

No.	Request/Need for Technical Cooperation	Category	Institutional Request	Related Flagship Project	Component	Contribution
	prosperity, including women and youth.					
18	Build capacity in the implementation of Good Agricultural Practices in product value chains.	Request	MNRA	Agricultural Chains	Productivity and efficiency	5

d. Instruments of Action

The IICA Country Strategy (ICS) for Belize seeks to address a set of constraints and limitations of the agricultural and rural sector, taking into account IICA's MTP, the Government's priorities for the sector as identified in the NAfp, IICA's limited resources and opportunities to provide TC services to the sector. It also takes into consideration the opportunities to collaborate with other strategic partners to make a significant and more sustainable contribution to positive transformations in the sector. It reflects the needs of the agricultural sector and identifies specific lines of actions within the framework of IICA's MTP that the office will work to support the agricultural sector for the next four years.

There are many challenges and demands for technical cooperation and assistance in the sector that need to be addressed. With limited staff and resources, the challenge for IICA is to select from among the many demands, those that can best be addressed effectively over the 2014-2018 period, and for which clear results can be demonstrated. Working within the framework of the four strategic objectives of the MTP and the cross-cutting themes of water and innovation, the Office will provide TC services to support the country in overcoming these challenges.

The ICS also recognizes the rapidly changing dynamics in the regional and international environment that have significant impacts on a small open economy as Belize. In this regard the Strategy has been designed as a reasonably flexible framework within which IICA can address priorities and challenges that are emerging from the changing environment and the policy and strategic responses of the government to these through the implementation of the NAfp.

As a technical cooperation agency IICA provides a supportive role to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture in the implementation of its programs and policies. With its limited resources, it is necessary that IICA focuses on a few actions that create synergy or compliments the Ministry's actions and those of related institutions in the sector. As such the ICS is a stand-alone document that will guide the activities of the Office over the next four years. This document will also facilitate the Office to track results and be held accountable for its actions during the period.

IICA's actions in Belize will focus on **six** thematic areas, a few of which are interrelated and which requires combining actions to address the constraints and

limitations. For example, production and productivity-related constraints that limit competitiveness and induce food insecurity are often related to climate change impacts, natural resource use and management, technology use and agricultural practices for several commodities that are produced by small farmers, particularly indigenous groups and women.

IICA will provide technical and advisory services to address the institutional constraints in the thematic areas through **five** main types of interventions: (a) institutional strengthening of mainly public sector institutions, of which the principal ones are the Ministry, the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) and SIRDI; (b) capacity building of institutions and key actors in the sector through training on key themes and methodologies to address managerial, technical and administrative constraints and bottlenecks that limit institutional effectiveness; (c) Knowledge management that will involve improving methodologies to capture, organize and manage information, dissemination of information and sensitization of stakeholders to increase awareness of strategic issues and facilitate policy making and the development of strategies; (d) dialogue, consensus building and coordination of stakeholders in the sector through participation in various institutional mechanisms such as project management committees, other technical committees and working groups; and (e) project development in which IICA provides technical assistance in the development and also review of project proposals.

The IICA Office in Belize will employ **four** instruments to implement its country strategy. These are discussed below.

(i) Flagship Projects

Components of the Flagship Projects will form the core technical cooperation actions to be executed in the country strategy. It will also be the principal instrument for the delivery of the Institute's proposed 11 contributions in the MTP for addressing the challenges and constraints in the sector and for the transformations required in Belize's agriculture. The IICA office will focus its efforts in the following four flagship projects:

- Productivity and sustainability of family farming for food security and improving the rural economy (Family Farming);
- Competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural chains for food security and economic development (Agricultural Chains);
- Inclusion in Agriculture and Rural Areas (Inclusion);
- Integrated Environmental Resilience and Risk Management for Agricultural Production (Resilience and Risk Management).

(ii) Rapid Response Action (RRA)

Rapid Response Actions are designed to address specific requests that may arise in the country as a result of political and socio-economic changes, environmental emergency or other emerging issue of importance.

(iii) Externally Funded Projects

As the name implies, this instrument will finance projects from external resources and it is designed to complement IICA's resources and enhance the implementation of IICA's MTP. One such project that is being finalized is the regional ECADERT project – a rural development project being implemented in the Belize River Valley which seeks to improve the livelihood of rural farms through the introduction of appropriate technologies and improvement of small stock. This project will end in August 2015.

(iii) Technical Cooperation Fund (FonTC)

This mechanism will be used to finance projects aimed at securing external resources and to mobilize new financial resources that are complementary to the Regular Fund.

4. Follow-Up, Monitoring and Evaluation of the ICS

As stated in the MTP, IICA will focus its work in a results-oriented management approach that includes a planning, monitoring and evaluation system to support the execution of its actions. A special effort will be made in the follow-up and self-evaluation processes to enable the projects, units and personnel of the Office to make the needed adjustments in its plans and activities, and ensure that they make a significant contribution to achieving the objectives and priorities identified in the MTP.³ To achieve the results of its technical cooperation, the office will implement a strategy of continuous monitoring and evaluation of the Flagship Projects (FP), the Rapid Response Actions (RRA), externally funded projects and the FonTC projects, all within the IICA Country Strategy (ICS) framework.

All actions developed in the operations of the Office that are embodied in the present ICS, will be strengthened through: the integration of its technical and administrative services to form a solid TC team; the strengthening of the institutional culture of results-based management; improvement of the monitoring and evaluation processes; and enhancing transparency and accountability in all of its activities.

To execute the new technical cooperation model, the Integrated Institutional Management System (SUGI) will be the principal instrument to facilitate tracking, monitoring and evaluating of IICA's actions in the country. This will be complemented by continuous self-review and assessment within the Office of the projects and actions programmed and executed. Monitoring and evaluation will contribute to a better

³ Pg. 56 2014-2018 MTP

understanding of the progress of the ICS and its contribution to the Institute's priorities, and it will play an important role in accountability, the reporting and transparency of the actions, and identify potential constraints to meet compliance and adjustments required in the different strategies in a spirit of coordination and responsibility.⁴

5. Accountability

IICA is an organization that is committed to accountability to its member states, clients and beneficiaries. The Institute's work is organized conceptually as a chain of outcomes. With this approach, IICA can honor its commitment to accountability and to keeping the Government of Belize and other clients informed of what has actually been achieved compared with what was initially planned.⁵

Reporting on an annual basis to the Office's stakeholders on IICA's achievements has become a standard accountability practice and the Office will seek to improve its accountability as much as possible to the country's stakeholders. In addition, all of the Office's TC actions will be carried out in strict compliance with the Institute's internal regulations and its fundamental values and norms, particularly those related to transparency and accountability.⁶

6. Projects Portfolio

The projects being proposed for the period 2015 to 2018 have been developed with a focus on IICA's strategic objectives, while at the same time taking into consideration the requests and needs identified by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture and other stakeholders. After consultations and discussions with the MNRA and other stakeholders, the IICA office will concentrate its efforts in the following areas:

- (i) Institutional strengthening and capacity building of the MNRA for improved decision-making, policy coordination and strategy development for the agricultural sector. Actions will focus on:
 - a. Translate the National Agricultural and Food Policy into concrete actions that will result in the desired transformations in the Agriculture Sector.
 - b. Improving performance of the MNRA and other key institutions through capacity building and institutional strengthening to facilitate decision-making and for effective management, coordination and follow-up in the implementation of the NAFP.
- (ii) Improving productivity, efficiency and resilience of the agricultural sector. The actions proposed are the following:

⁴ Pg. 53 2014-2018 MTP

⁵ Pg. 16 2014- 2018 MTP

⁶ Pg. 33 2014-2018 MTP

- a. Strategy development of the National Research and Extension Services and establishment of farmer field schools.
 - b. Strengthen awareness, improve knowledge and the capacity to adapt production to changing climatic conditions.
 - c. Strengthen the national capacity to address and respond to current and emerging diseases, pests and other threats.
- (ii) Strengthening the competitiveness of the sector through improved production, reduce post-harvest losses, and better access to markets and market information.
- a. Build the institutional capacity of the MNRA by improving the methodologies to collect, organize and disseminate information to facilitate policy-making and the development of strategies and programs.
 - b. Strengthen the linkages between rural producers and markets through capacity building and dissemination of market information and commercial opportunities.
 - c. Reduce post-harvest losses of rural producer groups through capacity building and introduction of new technologies and practices for food security and improving rural livelihood, including that of women and youth.

Annex 1

MAIN INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE FOUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (SO), IICA'S 11 CONTRIBUTIONS AND THE FOUR FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

CONTRIBUTIONS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Flagship Projects
SO 1: To improve the productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	Agricultural chains Family agriculture
SO 2: To strengthen agriculture's contribution to the development of rural areas and the well-being of the rural population	✓		✓		✓				✓		✓	Inclusion in agriculture and rural territories
SO 3: To improve agriculture's capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change and make better use of natural resources	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	Resilience and integrated risk management
SO 4: To improve agriculture's contribution to food security	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Agricultural chains Inclusion in agriculture and rural territories Resilience and integrated risk management Family agriculture

✓- indicated interrelationships with the 11 contributions defined in the MTP 2014-2018

IICA contributions within the 2014-2018 MTP	
1.	Strengthening the capabilities of the Member States at the national, regional, multinational and hemispheric levels to establish public policies and institutional frameworks in order to make agriculture more productive and competitive, improve management of rural territories, adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change, and promote food and nutritional security.
2.	Implementing, through public and private institutions, technological, institutional and business innovations aimed at boosting the productivity and competitiveness of agriculture and the production of basic foodstuffs of high nutritional quality.
3.	Increasing the capabilities of the public and private sectors to ensure agricultural health and food safety and thereby improve productivity, competitiveness and food security.
4.	Strengthening the business and associative capabilities of the different stakeholders in the agricultural production chains.

- 5. Increasing the capacity for area-based social management³¹ among stakeholders in rural territories, especially those involved in family agriculture, in order to improve food security and rural well-being.
- 6. Enhancing the capabilities of different stakeholders of the agricultural chains and rural territories in the integrated management of water and sustainable use of soil for agriculture.
- 7. Increasing the capacity of public and private institutions to promote and implement measures for adapting agriculture to climate change and mitigating its effects, as well as promoting integrated risk management in agriculture.
- 8. Improving the efficacy and efficiency of food and nutritional security programs in the Member States.
- 9. Ensuring that producers and consumers benefit from a greater use of native species, promising crops and native genetic resources with food potential.
- 10. Improving institutional capacity to address losses of food and raw materials throughout the agricultural chains.
- 11. Strengthening the Member States' capacity for consensus and participation in international forums and other mechanisms for the exchange of knowledge and mobilization of sizable resources for Inter-American agriculture.