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IICA's TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The technical cooperation that the Institute provides to its member countries targets two priority objectives: upgrading the competitiveness of agriculture and improving living conditions in rural areas. In these efforts, information is a strategic input that helps focus the action of such cooperation.

Information generated at the national, regional and hemispheric levels is managed in such a way as to maintain its autonomy and self-sufficiency. It can be integrated by means of a hemispheric network that uses the latest technologies to treat information in new ways and that make virtual forums, interactive dialogues, real-time availability, adding value and a more direct and timely flow of information possible.

This requires a great effort that is already under way at the Institute. Results can be seen on a daily basis as it develops and administers information systems relevant to the Institute's different areas of action, and provides communication and support to facilitate dynamic and faster information management.

At Institute Headquarters, the technical units that serve clients who need specialized information on such topics as trade, rural development, agricultural health, sustainable development have created the infoagro.net system. Its components can be accessed through Internet at the following addresses:

- <http://www.infoagro.net/comercio>
- <http://www.infoagro.net/salud>
- <http://www.infoagro.net/rural>
- <http://www.infoagro.net/codes>

For the area of science and technology, the Regional Forum for Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO) is a mechanism that facilitates discussion and articulation in regard to agricultural research and technology development in the region. It can be accessed at <http://www.iicanet.org/foragro>

In the countries, IICA's Cooperation Agencies (CAs) have provided support to the efforts of the public agricultural sector to establish such systems as "Infoagro Venezuela" (<http://www.infoagro.info.ve>) and "Infoagro Costa Rica" (www.infoagro.co.cr)

At the hemispheric level, IICA is working with national documentation centers to establish of the Agricultural Information and Documentation System for the Americas (SIDALC) and its metabase Agri2000. www.sidalc.net

Strategic alliances have given rise to Agroinfo Americas, an information system developed by IICA, Texas A&M University and Caribbean/Latin American Action (CLAA). www.agroinfo.org

There is also the Ibero-American Directory of Agri-food Trade Associations (DIGA), an initiative of IICA's Center for Integration and Agribusiness Development (CIDAE) with the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI). www.diga.or.cr

To articulate the aforementioned systems and others developed in its 34 Member States, IICA manages the Inter-American Reference Center for Agricultural Information (CRIIA) (www.iicanet.org/criia), which brings together the data bases developed by IICA's staff and specialists in the Member States. CRIIA makes use of new information and communications

technologies to provide support to member countries developing their own national information systems. This is the real reason for being of a hemispheric network serving the information needs of users who are directly or indirectly involved with agriculture in the hemisphere.