



Annual Report **2008**
Belize

IICA's Contribution to
the Development of Agriculture
and Rural Communities



IICA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL COMMUNITIES IN BELIZE

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

MARCH 2009

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INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE (IICA)

WHAT IS IICA?

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is a specialized agency of the Inter-American System, and its purposes are to encourage and support the efforts of its Member States to achieve agricultural development and well-being for rural populations.

With more than six decades of institutional life, the Institute is responding to new mandates issued by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the ministers of agriculture of the Americas, to reposition itself so that it can meet both the new challenges facing agriculture and the requests for support it receives from its member countries. The institute has its headquarters in Costa Rica, and offices in 34 countries of the Americas, an Office in Miami, which is responsible for the Inter-American Program for the Promotion of Agricultural Trade, Agribusiness and Food Safety, as well as an Office for Europe, located in Madrid, Spain. The Directorate for Strategic Partnerships works out of the IICA Office in Washington, D.C.

VISION

To be the leading agricultural institution in the Americas and the partner of choice by virtue of the quality of the technical cooperation it provides in response to the needs of member states, and its contributions to sustainable agricultural development, food security and rural prosperity.

MISSION

IICA is the specialized agency for agriculture and the rural milieu of the Inter-American System, whose purpose is to provide innovative technical cooperation to the Member States, with a view to achieving their sustainable development in aid of the peoples of the Americas.



IICA Belize Staff (from left to right)

Maximiliano Ortega - Specialist in Technology and Innovation

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MESSAGE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE



The Belize Office of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), office in Belize is pleased to present this National Annual Report 2008 to our stakeholders, collaborators/partners and clients throughout Belize and beyond. This report forms a part of our accountability process informing our clients of the activities executed throughout the year.

For Belize, 2008 proved to be a favorable year for the agricultural sector. Even though Tropical Depression 16 devastated the agriculture sector, affected the papaya, citrus, banana, sugar and livestock production areas. Recovery

was swift and the response from the government and the partners in development was efficient and effective.

At IICA we worked as a team to help and to support the agricultural and natural resource sectors that forms the bases of our mission. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to serve the farmers, promoting agricultural innovation and technology, and educating citizens on the importance and role of the agricultural industry in Belize.

The process of transformation on which our institute embarked in 2001 continues and reflects improvements in our approach to provide quality service in a timely manner.

I would like to thank stakeholders for the loyalty they have shown throughout the years, confidence as a strategic partner and the initiative and commitment of our employees who as a team continued the transformation. Strengthening agriculture is an important part of our commitment to build a better Belize by promoting prosperity in rural communities.

The challenges we face are not easy ones, but we will continue to work hard every day to fulfill our mission and keep Belize a safe and prosperous place to live, work, and raise a family.

On behalf of the IICA office staff and myself, I thank you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Salvador Monge Fallas', written over a light-colored background.

Salvador Monge Fallas
Country Representative in Belize

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1 INTRODUCTION

The 2008 Annual Report presents the contributions that the Institution has made towards the development of agriculture and rural life in Belize during 2008. This annual report highlights the new integrated approach system that ensures compliance of the agreed 2009 Annual Action Plan for Belize, complementing the hemispheric and regional work plans. This report is also part of IICA accountability to its stakeholders to ensure dialogue with our stakeholders, maximize both human and financial resources, and improve relations with regional and international strategic partners.

The 2008 cooperation agenda was prepared using the Institute's model of consultation, dialogue and consensus building with stakeholders and addressed the implementation of aspects of the National Technical Cooperation Agenda in the Institute's five priority areas for strategic intervention: (i) promoting trade and the competitiveness of agribusinesses; (ii) strengthening agricultural health and food safety; (iii) promoting the sustainable management of natural resource and the environment; (iv) strengthening of rural communities based on the territorial approach and (v) introducing technology and innovation for the modernization of agriculture and rural life.

We once again take this opportunity to acknowledge our many partners in development, both in the public and private sectors, who were involved in the implementation of IICA Belize's technical cooperation activities.

Special acknowledgement goes to the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA), Belize Agricultural and Health Authority (BAHA), Regional Organization on Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA), the Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE), Citrus Growers Association (CGA), Citrus Research and Education Institute (CREI), Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), Regional Unit for Technical Assistance (RUTA), Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), Cane Farmers Association (CFA), Belize Sugar Industries Limited (BSI), University of Belize (UB), Belize Organic Producers Association (BOPA), Social Investment Fund (SIF), and the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE). Belize Poultry Association (BPA). Special thank you to all our colleagues from headquarters and other national offices, whose invaluable support helped to strengthen the level of technical services provided by our Office.

The Representative and the staff of the IICA Belize Office are pleased to present the document "The Contribution of IICA to Agriculture and Development of Rural Communities in Belize", which highlights the results of our technical cooperation in 2008.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The IICA Director General Dr. Chelston Brathwaite continued to implement the institute's 2006-2010 Medium-Term Plan. The aim of this plan is to transform IICA into a Hemispheric Leader through modern institutional development and implementation of components of the institute's vision for the promotion of sustainable rural development, food safety and security and rural prosperity. The Medium Term Plan clearly defines the guidelines and strategic course of action for the institute during 2006-2010 in the implementation of the national technical cooperation plan for the IICA Belize Office during 2008.

The IICA Office in Belize continued to support the development of the agriculture sector through timely responses to demands for technical assistance from both the public and private sectors. The demands in 2008 continue to reflect the priorities that the agriculture sector agreed to through consensus, which are to ensure competitiveness and sustainability, strategies to offset continued reduction in preferential markets, the expansion of our products into new markets, a national platform to encourage participation and an integrated approach to foster our economic growth.

Our Office continues to be recognized as a major partner in the delivery of technical assistance to both the private and public sectors. The technical program executed in 2008 is a direct result of the demands and adjustments in the sector for ensuring food safety and security, trade and overall development of the sector. It included technical activities with the public sector along with key interventions in support of major private sector industries.

The IICA Office in Belize expresses sincere gratitude to our collaborating partners for their support and commitment, especially the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and its technical staff. We are committed to building on our accomplishments as we continue to execute our national, regional and hemispheric agendas for the modernization of the agricultural sector and contributing towards the well-being of the inhabitants of rural communities in Belize.



2.1 Current Status of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu in the Country

The agriculture sector has been diversified from the traditionally exported citrus, sugar, bananas, and marine products through preferential arrangements. The sector priority included the expansion of non-traditional crops and livestock including aquaculture, vegetables, papayas, honey and organic cacao, cattle and small ruminants. Belize remained self sufficient in basic crops and livestock products for local consumption. Although the Belizean economy has experienced significant growth in the services sector, mainly in tourism and financial services, agriculture is still the pillar of the Belizean economy.

The technical cooperation agenda of the IICA Office in Belize was developed through a series of consultation with stakeholders from the public and private sectors and executed in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Specific accomplishments and results for 2008 are detailed below and arranged by strategic areas and intervention.



2.2 Strategic Areas of Intervention

2.2.1 IICA's Contribution to the Repositioning of Agriculture and Rural Life

IICA reviewed the National Technical Agenda and synchronized it with the revised Belize's Agricultural National Strategy, taking into consideration the priorities for the agriculture sector as outlined by the new government, in accordance with the goals of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of Belize and the private sector.

IICA facilitated numerous CAC-CORECA (Central American Agriculture Council/ Regional Council for Agriculture Cooperation) ministerial meetings to discuss the significant increase in petroleum and inputs affecting the steady increase in food price, its availability and food security. Recommendations included possible regional interventions and local strategies to minimize the impact of increased food cost to citizens.

The Agro-Plan 2003-2015 remains a priority for the Office and support was provided through the establishment of a monitoring & evaluation mechanism for agriculture and rural life in order to identify trends, threats, critical emerging issues and opportunities. The ministerial delegate received logistical assistance to meet national obligation and prepare the required reports on a timely manner.



2.2.2 Promoting Trade and the Competitiveness of Agribusiness

An export platform strategy was developed to identify, train and facilitate potential small and medium size businesses with skills to export new products into the US market. This export platform is a direct result of the export strategy developed by BELTRAIDE using the 2006 Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis conducted by this Office with technical support of the IICA Office in Miami. This export platform is funded by the ROC Taiwan, IICA and BELTRAIDE.

The Office also provided logistical support to participants attending some trade events both local and in the region.



2.2.3 Strengthening Agricultural Health and Food Safety Systems

IICA continued to provide logistical support for Belize's participation at two World Trade Organization/ Sanitary and Phytosanitary (WTO/SPS) committee meetings held in Geneva in 2008. The Ministry of Agriculture received the draft legislation to formalize the national SPS committee which is chaired by the national focal point through BAHA. IICA provided technical and financial support for the Annual SPS Accountability Seminar to ensure stakeholders participation and involvement in the activities of the national SPS committee. Both traceability and HACCAP workshops provided training to both regulatory and industry personnel to better understand and implement these international standards.

2.2.4 Promoting the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment

IICA provided technical support to CATIE and TCGA in the presentation of the First Cacao Symposium highlighting Belize's cacao history, cacao germplasm and future trends. The national cacao task force will make this event an annual activity. The Central American Cacao Project continues with trainings for cacao farmers in plant propagation, germplasm and field sanitation.

2.2.5 Strengthening of Rural Communities Based on the Territorial Approach

IICA continue to support the poverty alleviation project in the village of Dolores, Toledo District (The Dolores Integrated Pilot Project). The MAF leads this project and IICA supports through trainings in improved agronomic practices and agricultural health and food safety activities.

Our office provide a status report on the rural communities of Belize, to be used in the territorial approach system, identifying communities with common needs and abilities, to best receive and utilize resources from the various partners in development.

2.2.6 Introducing Technology and Innovation for the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Life

The National Bio-safety Committee presented the national Bio-safety policy to the cabinet with amendments for enactment. This Bio-safety policy forms part of the national bio-safety framework that will enable Belize to meet the challenges of this modern technology.

Work on the preparation of standards and legislation for organic agriculture also continued in 2008. The Belize Organic Producers Association (BOPA) has two organic vegetables experimental plots funded by the IDB with the goal of establishing protocols, farmer and consumer awareness and marketing.



2.2.7 Other Technical Programs

IICA is represented on the NCCARD technical committee and through the rice task force supported the preparation of a situational analysis of the rice industry in Belize with recommendation on possible interventions to improve the industry.

Through the national fruits and root crops committee pitahaya, pineapple, cashew and coconuts were identified as priority fruits while cocoyam and cassava were identified as having export potential.

The office participated in the selection of the Farmers of the year and had a display booth, showcasing IICA and the technical cooperation programs executed in Belize, at the Annual National Agriculture and Trade Show 2008 in Belmopan.



3 The State of Agriculture and Rural Life in Belize in 2008

3.1 Factors in the National Context

During 2008 Belize's total domestic exports experienced an increase from BZ\$ 507.90 million to BZ\$ 585.17 million as presented in Table 1, with the agriculture sector, including fisheries accounting for approximately 54% (BZ\$ 315.99 million), and though it presented a decrease from 62% in 2007, the value remained the same. This year bananas recovered from the effects of hurricane Dean and exhibited a sharp increase of approximately 58%. Grapefruit Concentrate and orange concentrate continue its decline as world prices remained low, despite an increase in volume. Orange concentrate had a 1.2% decrease in value while grapefruit concentrate had 22.13% decrease.

Marine products still hasn't recovered from the Hurricane Dean damage, shrimp diseases, the closure of a few shrimp farms and poor financial management of fishing cooperatives as mentioned in 2007, and only showed a slight increase of 2.5% to BZ\$ 44.28 million which is still below the 2006 data which was around BZ\$86.02 million. Papaya didn't recover as expected and experienced a further 13.9% decline. Sugar also experienced a further decline of 19% mostly due to a 20% reduction production of sugar.

Petroleum experienced another 62% increase and while Other Value experienced a 24% decrease from last year's figures. Crude petroleum continues to remain the highest export earner and is expected to continue to increase due to global trends. Belize largest export by destination is now the United States followed by Central America.

Belize will need to diversify its export base to include more non-traditional commodities, reduce cost of production to remain competitive, establish niche markets, strengthen and participate in SICA to purchase inputs as a region at reduce cost, increase affordable credit access to producers, increase agro processing to reduce waste and value add and prioritize to increase efficiency and impact in the agriculture sector

As part of the Ministry of Agriculture import substitution program Belize remains self sufficient in most staple food products such as corn, rice, beans, bananas, plantains, root crops, fruits, poultry, eggs, pork, beef, aquaculture and marine products.



Over production of seasonal fruits such as mango, cashew, guava, papaya and pineapple is offset by a steady increase in agro processing, mainly canning and dehydrating.

Vegetables such as tomatoes, lettuce, broccoli, carrots, celery and cabbage are generally produced seasonally as a result of the improvement in irrigation technology and the availability of improved genetic material.

The Ministry of Agriculture maintains a children feeding program that includes the distribution of dehydrated fruits to selected school children. The growing expansion in the tourism industry has created an outlet for locally processed products. The livestock industry has also diversified from the sole marketing of fresh meat cuts to meat processing and export of cattle on the hoof. This has resulted in the availability of a wide variety of high quality processed meats such as hams, sausages and bologna on the local market throughout the year.

Table 1: Major Domestic Exports 2002-2008 (BZ\$ million)

Commodity	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Banana							
Tonne	41.83	73.02	79.43	76.08	72.50	58.93	77.93
Value	33.50	52.58	52.99	51.08	50.59	41.46	65.65
Garments							
Tonne	1.42	1.44	1.77	1.57	1.62	0.76	-
Value	30.44	30.91	37.10	34.56	36.59	18.79	-
Grapefruit Concentrate							
Mil. Gals	0.73	0.77	1.81	1.24	1.25	0.79	0.81
Value	13.95	12.52	23.82	19.31	22.81	16.27	12.67
Marine Products							
Tonne	3.33	7.74	8.34	9.25	7.98	3.08	3.99
Value	70.36	110.16	107.33	85.74	86.02	42.16	44.28
Orange Concentrate							
Mil. Gals	3.62	4.92	6.45	8.40	6.42	4.67	5.68
Value	53.49	66.24	55.49	87.81	86.17	101.17	99.93
Papaya							
Tonne	16.57	25.22	17.14	34.59	34.47	25.24	28.9
Value	16.75	22.82	26.87	31.01	31.01	26.07	22.44
Sugar							
Tonne	104.94	100.15	113.93	79.47	97.85	84.47	67.34
Value	65.98	73.75	81.53	69.90	100.07	88.14	71.38
Other Value	33.44	21.73	29.04	39.20	29.14	31.20	37.88
Petroleum							
Mil. Gals	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	29.98	40.14	48.04
Value					88.54	142.62	230.93
Total	316.67	381.41	410.13	413.27	536.40	507.90	585.17

Source: CSO; Belize

3.2 Changes in Legislation and Policies on Agriculture and the Rural Life

The vision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is to have a transformed/modern sector that is fully competitive, diversified, and sustainable. The mission is to continue as the economic pillar of Belize, ensuring food security, developing the capacity to manage risks associated with hydro-meteorological hazards, generating income and foreign exchange, creating employment and conserving natural resources in order to grow the economy, reduce poverty and empower the local population for sustainable development.

“Continue agriculture as the pillar of the economy”

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in consultation with its partners in development has adjusted the National Agriculture and Fisheries Policy to focus on priority areas the new administration recognized as interventions to expand the sector. The adjustments are highlighted below:

1. Commodity and Trade Policy

Current markets (national and international) shall be maintained and protected and additional markets accessed through negotiations. Trade agreements signed at World Trade Organization (WTO) shall be observed but national food and nutrition security shall take precedence to ensure stability in the supply of healthy food in the country.

2. Farmer Development Policy

Agriculture development covers the entire spectrum of farmers, therefore, all producers are considered important to the economy of Belize. Small farmers are those farmers that have less than 25 acres of land under cultivation and medium size farmers are those that have 25 to 50 acres of land and greater than fifty acres developed are considered large farmers.

“Promote Integrated farming systems and Organic agriculture”

Common to all these producers are the vulnerability to environmental, trade and financial factors such as hazards associated with climate change, costs of inputs, energy, transportation, access to affordable credit and unpredictable markets.

Farmers will be encouraged to diversify production through integrated farming systems to effectively manage and mitigate risks from climate change hazards and as a consequence ensure sustainability of livelihoods, stable income generation and reduce migration from rural to urban areas. Organic farming and its principles will be promoted to reduce production costs, promote integrated farming systems, and encourage access to niche markets.

3. Technology Policy

Competitiveness, enhanced year-round production and quality of agricultural produce are to be promoted through interventions which will reduce production costs, manage soil and soil water efficiently, control environmental variables where possible, and use appropriate forms of energy efficiently. Research and development in crops and livestock relevant to projected climate changes arising from global warming, along with agro-processing will be the main objectives of Central Farm. A seed policy which focuses on the development of indigenous germplasm and produces seed to adequately supply national seed banks at strategic locations throughout the country is an important first step in food security management and disaster preparedness and must form the nucleus of the new R&D programme. Technological packages shall be developed for high yielding and disease and pest resistant plant varieties in crops, vegetables, and fruit trees. Similarly, packages will be developed in: agro-processing in support of value chain development, training and developing a culture of food conservation and storage at the rural community level for use during natural disasters; animal feed production utilizing agro-industrial byproducts/wastes and cultivated high protein forages; and post harvest technology.

*“Liberalizing
monetary and fiscal
policies”*

4. Extension Policy

The national agriculture extension service will be market-demand-driven, results oriented and follow closely a value chain approach to agriculture. It will provide technical assistance, training of farmers, gather data / information, and assist with the mobilization of resources through projects that are consistent with the policies presented in this document. Collaboration and networking with other national and regional agencies providing extension services (NGOs, other governmental departments) will be strengthened. Extension agents will be well trained and fully equipped to address issues in agricultural and rural development with stakeholders.

*“Increase focus on
Research & Development”*

5. Marketing Policy

Cognizant of the fact that Belize has a small domestic market; MAF shall have a marketing intelligence system to assist producers and processors in the marketing of agricultural products countrywide by providing relevant information on production, demand, and supply of products. Coordination with the extension service is of utmost importance in the coordination of production cycles to reduce glut in the market especially in vegetables. Collaboration with BELTRAIDE, Belize Chamber of Commerce, Belize Agroproductive Sector Group and Belize Business Bureau will be improved for the promotion and marketing of products at local and international trade fairs. In addition, collaboration with the Bureau of Standards, Belize Agricultural Health Authority, Pesticides Control Board, and BOPA will be emphasized for the certification

of products in standards, quality, and wholesomeness for human consumption in the domestic and external markets.

The Belize Marketing and Development Corporation (BMDC) shall play a key role in marketing of agricultural products in the domestic market. However, private sector involvement in the marketing of particular products will be encouraged.

“Provide financial assistance at affordable terms and conditions”

Domestic producers will be supported with research and “Green Box” incentives for investing in the sector. The importation of vegetables will be reduced by 95% through improved capacity in post harvest technology, processing, efficiency of production and improvement in quality. Similarly, the importation of certain processed meats and meat products shall be restricted in support of opportunities to boost national production. Large agricultural producers will be encouraged to increase production of grains for the domestic and export markets. Efforts will be made to match producers and processors in each district according to their comparative advantage to ensure markets for products and reduce transportation cost.

6. Input Policy

High costs restrict the use of appropriate levels of inputs on farms, thus reducing productivity and quality of produce. Government shall provide measured incentives to private sector service providers to ensure that all farmers have access to inputs at competitive prices, thus liberalizing monetary and fiscal policies. Another major objective of incentives is to encourage eco-friendly technologies such as solar, wind, biodiesel, irrigation systems, protected covered structures, packaging among others. MAF shall provide seeds for grains, legumes, vegetables, root crops, grasses and forages at affordable costs to farmers through the research station at Central Farm and CARDI. The private sector shall be encouraged to enter into the multiplication of both foundation seed and registered/certified seed and seed processing and marketing. MAF, CARDI, and BAHA should set up a seed certification service for quality control and issuance of phytosanitary certificates. The supply of agricultural machinery, agro-chemicals, feeds, and implements shall remain in the domain of the private sector. The use of organic compost in the production of vegetables shall be promoted strategies.

7. Credit Policy

Financial assistance will be provided to farmers through the Credit Unions and Development Finance Corporation at affordable terms and conditions. Loan conditions will consider crop and livestock cycles as it relates to disbursement of credit. Commercial banks provide limited credits to farmers who meet the loan criteria. Loans will be available for farmers for the production of non-traditional crops, integrated farming systems and commercial crops. Farm insurance shall be implemented to

reduce risk management in crops and livestock production. Integrated farming systems shall be promoted as a means of diversification throughout the country. MAF will liaise with credit unions and DFC to assist farmers in loan applications and approvals.

8. Institutional Policy

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Cooperatives shall be the lead agency in streamlining policies in the agriculture sector. The participation of other institutions in agricultural development should be strengthened with formal linkages. Projects funded by international agencies such as FAO, European Union, Caribbean Development Bank and International Fund for Agricultural Development should be fully integrated into the agricultural priority framework and provided with adequate human and financial resources.

Mobilization and management of partner funds (CAP 111) should be prioritized to ensure effective, efficient and use within specified timeframes. Private sector will be encouraged to provide some of the services presently offered by Government.

9. Agricultural Education Policy

MAF, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, University of Belize (UB) and the National Food and Nutrition Security Commission (NFNSC) shall coordinate training activities at the primary, secondary and tertiary level institutions to ensure that agriculture is truly the cornerstone in achieving agricultural transformation. Training at the technician level should be based on hands-on experience to develop human resources needed in the agriculture sector. Training for both public and private sector personnel should be encouraged in specific areas of needs in technology, research, and animal health.

10. Investment and Incentive Policy

In order to attract investments in the country, MAF will continue to advocate strongly for enabling environment for greater agricultural development and agricultural export. These include among others: duty exemption on selected categories of imports and exemption on income taxes on investments by new or existing enterprises and fiscal incentives. To qualify, small and medium-sized enterprises must be net foreign exchange earners and may benefit once their activities are in one of the following enterprises: agriculture, agro-forestry, agro-processing, fishing, livestock, operation of fish hatcheries, fish farming, aquaculture and eco-friendly technologies.

11. Gender Policy

All Belizeans are entitled to technical and financial assistance in Agriculture and Fisheries from government projects. This includes people involved in the agriculture,

*“Priority given to groups
of men and women
working together”*

fisheries, and cooperative sectors, especially those involved in areas of production, processing, marketing, and training. Priority will be given to groups of men and women working together to achieve a common goal in agriculture and fisheries sectors.

12. Disaster Management

In the event of natural disasters MAF will assist the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) with motor vehicles, equipment, and human resources as much as possible. However, each district agriculture office must have a vehicle at the disposal of the Agriculture Officers who is responsible to provide damage assessment reports at different intervals. Appropriate systems of production will be promoted in order to reduce the risk of damages to crops and livestock. A two year programme of capacity building for institutional personnel, farmers, and rural community workers in disaster risk management and mitigation (DRM) is executed by MAF with support from FAO. In addition to interventions, on a pilot basis, in selected communities to mitigate risks associated with hydro meteorological hazards, the programme will develop a national plan of action for DRM, and provide training in specific areas of methodology for disaster damage and needs assessment. An agriculture insurance policy will be implemented in order for farmers to get financial assistance immediately after a natural disaster.

13. Traditional Export Crops

In order to reduce risks in monoculture crops such as banana, sugar, and citrus, small, and medium size farmers will be assisted to diversify production and improve efficiency of production and productivity. Farmers in each district will be assisted in producing crops that have definite markets such as papaya, hot peppers, and lime. Competitiveness and quality must be in the forefront in improving efficiency of production and productivity.

3.3 Institutional Reforms in Agriculture and the Rural Milieu

The MAF remains the lead ministry in the government to develop and executed policies for the sector, with assistance from its partners in development. Strategies for the implementation of the policy are developed through consensus with all stakeholders to streamline best policy objectives and targets.

Traditionally, diversification programs were geared towards the larger farmers/producers and included the production and expansion of papayas, shrimp aquaculture and Red Kidney beans. Small and medium size farmers are now included to expand the sector through benefits from opportunities for niche crops, using the integrated farming approach to increase employment and livelihood in rural communities across Belize.

The political priorities and commitments of the new government to expand the agricultural sector focuses on creating rural employment, access to low interest credit, innovation and technology transfer and adoption, income generation and diversification using the integrated farming system approach.

3.4 Belize Agricultural Recovery for Farmers affected by Tropical Storm 16

The sector continued to face challenges due to an increase in tropical depressions and hurricanes over the last ten years. The most recent tropical depression (TD 16) made landfall in northern Honduras on Thursday 16th October 2008 causing widespread and intense rainfall across Belize, especially in the southern districts.

More than 109 rural communities and all towns and cities experiences different degrees of flooding, infrastructural damage, economic and social losses. There were four confirmed deaths due to the effects of TD16, which reinforced the need for more stringent polices to conduct land use and urbanization planning.

The agriculture sector suffered heavy losses in the papaya, sugarcane, citrus, non-traditional crops, mechanized and other cash crops, livestock and pastures, farm roads and utilities. The direct total financial losses for crops and livestock amounted to more than \$15 million dollars, with indirect and future losses well over \$20 million dollars.

Mitigation measures included GOB and donor agencies funding seed, money and inputs to farmers to recover and resume as quickly as possible to normal production levels. Many subsistence farmers were severely affected and food insecurity was a reality, until aid arrived. The MAF is today better prepared for such effects and the national food



security commission has implemented measures to ensure the availability of safe food under its food security mandate.

3.5 Agri-food Trade and the Development of Agribusiness

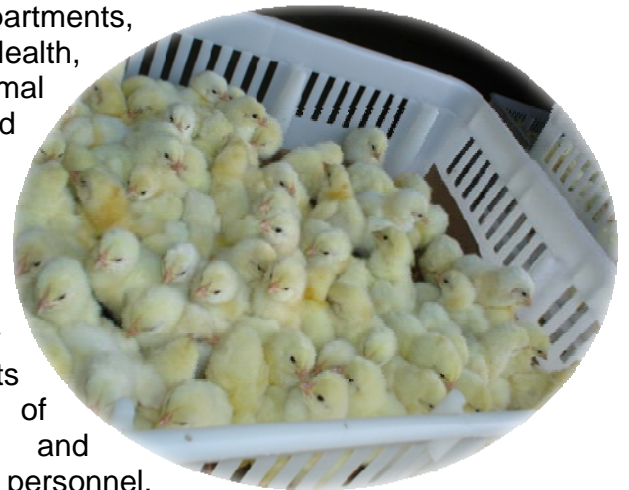
BELTRAIDE prepared business profiles for selected small and medium size businesses to provide a series of training modules for export requirements to introduce new products into the United States markets. This regional project is being funded by the ROC/Taiwan technical mission to Belize, BELTRAIDE and IICA through joint funding and expertise.



For Agricultural Health and Food Safety IICA in collaboration with BAHA conducted several train the trainer workshops to update both regulatory and producers/processors in Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and traceability. International experts provided current procedures and provided manuals to serve as guides. This effort will continue to involve more stakeholders and establish a traceability system for selected products, increasing consumer awareness and confidence, thus expansion in market share.

3.6 Agricultural Health and Food Safety

The Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) is a statutory body that was established by the government in 2000 and provides services through its four departments, Plant Health, Quarantine, Animal Health, and Food Safety. BAHA has international recognition as the competent authority for Belize and its team consists of highly trained and experienced personnel. BAHA facilitates trade through direct dialogue with clients and ensures both current import and export requirements are maintained.



BAHA maintains the focal point for SPS, who provides leadership at the meetings of the WTO/SPS held in Geneva. BAHA professional staff also holds executive positions in the International Plant Protection Convention, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), Codex and Biosafety.

BAHA received assistance from FAO to strengthen Belize *Biosecurity* regulations through the preparation of five draft bills to update BAHA regulations. IICA assisted BAHA in presenting the five draft bills for public consultation to receive comments and recommendation before cabinet enactment.

3.7 Agricultural Innovation and Technology



Through the National Coordinating Committee for Agricultural Research and Development (NCCARD), which represents both public and private sector research institutions, the concept of integrated farming systems (IFS) has become a priority to address issues in rural agriculture in Belize. The IFS approach can increase competitiveness and sustainable thereby contributing to a reduction in poverty, ensuring food security and improving

agricultural health and food Safety in rural communities throughout Belize. The goal is to train technicians and farmers in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the IFS program. On farm demonstration will validate improved practices and increase the transfer and adaptation of the IFS technology throughout the country.

4 Results of the Implementation of the National Technical Cooperation Agenda in Belize during 2008

4.1 IICA's Contribution to the Repositioning of Agriculture and Rural Life

IICA continued to support the implementation of the Agro-Plan 2003-2015 through logistical support and dissemination of relevant information to the Minister and his Delegate. The MAF remains committed to the overall objectives of the Agro-Plan and have participated in all forums to contribute towards its obligations. The Minister and his Delegate also participated at different meetings of CAC/CORECA to address the steady increase in price and availability of safe food in the region.

4.2 Promoting Trade and the Competitiveness of Agribusiness

An export platform committee was created and chaired by BELTRAIDE to identify, train and promote small and medium size business to export new products to the United States market. Small and medium size businesses were identified and business profiles developed to provide a status of the business and it's potential. Personal contact was made and interested parties committed to fully participate in a series of trainings for business modules designed at providing trade requirements necessary to export to the United States. This project is being funded through the ROC/Taiwan Mission to Belize, BELTRAIDE and IICA. This project will also sponsor a trade mission from Belize to visit selected import/export businesses in the United States to develop links and networks to facilitate exports of new products from Belize.

Through IICA a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and one representative from the Sugar Industry participated in a training geared towards strengthening the participant's capacity to engage in trade negotiations so as to better conduct trade activities.

4.3 Strengthening Agricultural Health and Food Safety Systems

IICA continued to provide support to the National SPS Focal Point to participate in two of three international meetings of the WTO/SPS committee in Geneva. IICA is very pleased that the BAHA and the MAF funded the third meeting of the WTO/SPS committee meeting held in Geneva. This demonstrates ownership, commitment and leadership on the part of the national focal point and the national SPS committee to collaborate and develop a sustainable mechanism for Belize to benefit from these meetings. The national focal point and the national SPS committee prepared and presented to cabinet a draft SPS policy to formalize the national SPS committee and its activities.



To continue the dialogue and involvement of the stakeholders, the national focal point and IICA conducted the annual SPS accountability workshop to report to the national authorities and stakeholders on the results of the activities of the SPS meeting held in Geneva, and to reach a consensus on a work plan for 2009. Participants applauded this effort and it was agreed that these forums are productive and provide much needed updates to facilitate trade.



IICA conducted the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) instrument to the Food Safety, SPS and Plant Health services of BAHA. The instrument was presented to stakeholders and comments, recommendation and concerns were discussed and documented. The results of the application of the PVS instruments were used to develop a national SPS strategy for strengthening BAHA capacity as the competent authority in Belize for Food Safety, Plant Health, Quarantine, Animal Health and SPS. In addition, IICA will assist BAHA in developing specific projects identified as priority areas to improve its services to its clients.

4.4 Promoting the Sustainable Management of Natural resources and the Environment



The TCGA continues to benefit from the regional CATIE organic cacao project which will focus on improve orchard management, evaluation and distribution of improved genetic material, farmer organization, and diversity within the farm. The TCGA, Green and Blacks, CATIE and IICA organized and presented the first Cacao Symposium that highlighted the history of cacao in Belize and steady expansion.

The cacao task force received and accepted a situation analysis of the present cacao industry and included the recommendations into the annual work plan. A fund for this analysis was made available through RUTA and the analysis was done by CATIE and local professionals.

4.5 Strengthening Rural Communities Based on the Territorial Approach



IICA in collaboration with MAF and RedSICTA prepared a corn/beans post harvest project for the rural communities of Jalacte and San Vicente in the Toledo district. Presently the farmers are not organized and lack basic agronomic skills, postharvest experience and marketing. The project seeks to address these issue through and organized group with improved

agronomic practices, modern post harvest technologies and better market arrangements.

4.6 Introducing Technology and Innovation for the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Life

The National Bio-safety policy was accepted by cabinet but with modification to the financial sustainability component. This bio-safety policy will form part of a national bio-safety framework that includes this policy, legislation and an administrative mechanism to implement the policy. Draft legislation has been developed and will be presented through a series of public consultations for input and enactment by the legislative body. The Bio-safety committee is chaired by IICA and includes representation from key public and private sector organizations.

The MAF actively participates in regional networks including SICTA and RedSICTA that collaborates with NCCARD. The NCCARD conducted a priority setting exercise to identify areas for research and development. An economic analysis for the rice industry was completed and used to set the policy to improve producer organizations, productivity, quality and price control. NCCARD prepared and presented a draft seed policy for revision and comments by stakeholders to ensure accountability in the seed industry and ensure food security.

The BOPA presented its draft policy to stakeholders for revision and comments. This policy highlights international standards to serve as a guide for organic production in Belize. With financial assistance from IDB, the BOPA implemented several on farm demonstration plots to educate farmers and promote organic production in rural communities. The harvested produce are sold on the local markets and to selected hotels to track consumer preferences and marketability.



After the draft organic policy has been enacted by cabinet, legislation will follow to ensure implementation. The BOPA is developing a training system to train local inspectors that will be recognized by the International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) to inspect and certify locally produced organic products for the local and export markets.



The MAF benefited from the participation of farmers in an integrated farming system training in Costa Rica. The farm visited was Finca la Esperanza and the course was conducted by Armonia Natural. Here Belizean farmers saw first hand, an actual working model of an integrated farm.

5 Results of Inter-agency Cooperation

In 2008 the IDB funded the establishment of four on farm demonstration organic plots to validate agronomic practices, promote organic farming and provide the produce to local markets. This pilot project is being executed by the BOPA and will continue with additional support from IICA and CATIE through training for local inspectors to certify and inspect the organic process, expansion of the organic plots and marketing. The regional Meso-America Fruit Crops project was initiated and Belize will gain through shared experiences in improved agronomic practices, export requirements and plant health protocols. The four priority crops selected for Belize are cashew, pineapple, coconut and pitahaya.



Thru cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) and the Belize Audubon Society (BAS) a training of local technicians and farmers in the construction of low cost Biodigesters for the production of Biogas was carried out. The biodigester will provide gas for cooking, lighting, refrigeration. This unit also produces organic fertilizers thus promoting the use of this technology as part of a farming system geared towards promoting IFS and organic agriculture.



6 Results of Horizontal Technical Cooperation

IICA and the Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association (BSCFA) continued to work together through a number of interventions. IICA was again contracted to develop a Strategic Plan for the Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association. This strategic plan will focus on providing recommendations, interventions, methodologies and specific targets for the BSCFA to achieve a comprehensive reform program for the next five years and by strengthening the social, technical and economic services, infrastructure and assist in the process of economic and social transition of the sugar cane farmers and their association.

7 New Opportunities for Technical Cooperation

There are several new initiatives underway that offer new opportunities for technical cooperation in 2009. Firstly, the MAF commissioned a team to develop Integrated Farming Systems. This approach to sustainable farming is a priority for the MAF, and the technical assistance from IICA will be more focused to meet specific needs of farmers and the rural communities. Secondly, the RedSICTA regional project will co-finance a grains post harvest and food security project in the south of Belize to assist small corn and bean farmers in the border communities. A local market for the corn and beans exist with export potential into neighboring Guatemala and El Salvador. Thirdly, the BOPA is presently executing several organic gardens with the produce being sold in the local markets. With the assistance from IICA and CATIE organic inspectors will be trained to certify the organic produce to ensure consumer confidence for both the local and export markets. Fourthly, IICA will collaborate with the OAS to respond to the request for training in Agro-Eco-Cultural-Tourism to integrate the activities of rural communities, involving more stakeholders and improving prosperity.



8 List of Acronyms

BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
BELTRAIDE	Belize Trade and Investment Development Services
BLPA	Belize Livestock Producers Association
BMDC	Belize Marketing and Development Corporation
BOPA	Belize Organic Producers Association
BPA	Belize Poultry Association
BRDP	Belize Rural Development Project
BSCFA	Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association
BSI	Belize Sugar Industries
CAC/CORECA	Central American Agriculture Council/ Regional Council for Agriculture Cooperation
CARDI	Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CARICOM	Caribbean Common Market
CATIE	Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center
CGA	Citrus Growers Association
CREI	Citrus Research and Education Institute
DRM	Disaster Risk Management and Mitigation
EU	European Union
FAO	Food Agricultural Organization
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFS	Integrated Farming System
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
NCCARD	National Coordinating Committee for Agricultural Research and Development
NEMO	National Emergency Management Organization
NFNSC	National Food and Nutrition Security Commission

NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
OAS	Organization of American States
OIRSA	Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health
PAHO/WHO	Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization
PVS	Performance, Vision and Strategy
RedSICTA	The Agricultural Innovation Network Project
ROC	Republic of China
RUTA	Regional Unit for Technical Assistance
SICA	Central American Integration System
SICB	Sugar Industry Control Board
SICTA	Central American System for Integration of Agricultural Technology
SIF	Social Investment Found
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
SWOT	Strength Weakness Opportunities Threat
TCGA	Toledo Cacao Growers Association
TD16	Tropical Depression 16
UB	University of Belize
USDA/APHIS	United States Department of Agriculture/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
WTO	World Trade Organization

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