

# HEMISPHERIC PARTNERSHIP FOR FOOD SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AMERICAS

## I. Introduction

The aim of the **Hemispheric Partnership for Food Security and Sustainable Development in the Americas** is to foster collective action by the countries of the region to promote and implement a new generation of policies and to strengthen capacities to facilitate the development of more resilient, inclusive, sustainable, profitable and competitive agriculture sectors and agrifood systems.

**Collective action** will require countries to work together, based on their interests and needs, to find joint solutions to common problems, generate supranational public goods, develop national technopolitical capacities in strategic areas and improve the positioning of the region's agrifood sector at the global level.

The ministries and secretaries of agriculture of the Americas, with the support of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and in collaboration with other international agencies, have been working to **build consensus and define joint actions to strengthen the region's agrifood system transformation process, as a means of ensuring regional and global food security<sup>1</sup> and resolving the global climate crisis**. This political and institutional process has evolved within the framework of the following mandates from the Member States:

- a) [On the Road to the United Nations Food Systems Summit: Key Messages from the Perspective of Agriculture in the Americas](#), September 2021.
- b) [Proposals on Strengthening Collective Action in the Americas to Tackle Food Insecurity and Ensure Sustainable Development](#), Summit of the Americas, Los Angeles, June 2022.
- c) Declarations of the [Summit of the Americas](#). Los Angeles, 9 June 2022. Our Sustainable Green Future.
- d) [Executive Committee Resolutions 685 and 686](#), pursuant to which this governing body of the Institute urged Member States to lend support to the aforementioned proposals.
- e) [IICA Medium-term Plan \(MTP\) for the Period 2022-2026](#), prepared in response to the cooperation needs of the countries and to position agriculture of the Americas and IICA in global discussions.
- f) [Message from the Ministries and Secretariats of Agriculture and Livestock of the Americas to the United Nations Climate Change Conference \(COP27\)](#), presented at the Home of Sustainable Agriculture of the Americas pavilion, which IICA installed with the support of its member countries and various partners, during COP27 in Sharm-El-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022.

## II. Contribution and challenges of agrifood systems in the Americas

**The agrifood systems of the Americas play a strategic role in addressing current global and regional challenges.** Agrifood exports from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) represented 18 % of the world total in 2022, and when combined with exports from the United States and Canada, accounted for a 32% share of total agrifood exports. Humanity will not be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) without the contributions of the Americas to food security and to the

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<sup>1</sup> "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO World Food Conference, 1996). See the background to the concept of food security in (Díaz Bonilla, 2023).

resolution of the climate crisis. Agrifood systems are a central component of the economic and social development of countries in the Americas, as well as a means of guaranteeing a global food and environmental balance, through the use of innovation, science and agrifood technology.

**In contrast to what took place between 1990 and 2014, food insecurity indicators in LAC have worsened since 2014, in particular since 2020.** Various challenges have affected the Americas, such as the macroeconomic crises and climate events that have had an impact on **poverty and food security** and undermined peace and democratic governance; nutrition-related non-communicable diseases; and forced migration and crime in vulnerable rural areas. Vulnerable communities, mainly rural women and net food importing countries, such as those in the Caribbean, have been the most affected by food insecurity. Considering the technological, production and social gaps between and within countries, achieving agricultural growth and the strengthening of agrifood systems will require integrated actions.

**The Americas must reduce its levels of food insecurity, while also providing an effective response to the impacts of climate change.** It will be one of the regions most affected by the new climate conditions; thus, its adaptation and mitigation strategies at the local, national and regional levels must allow it to address the impacts of this phenomenon in a context-specific manner in order to tackle the resulting challenges. On the other hand, increasing agricultural production is no longer enough. It is also critical that we consider its impact on the environment and the nutritional quality of the food it produces. There is an increasingly urgent need to identify new production pathways that assist in resolving the climate crisis and also take into account these aspects. However, the financial landscape is more restrictive than in past years. Investment and financing are essential to capitalize on the opportunities and potential to strengthen the capacity of agrifood system stakeholders in the face of climate challenges.

Several actions will be required to address food insecurity and climate challenges. First of all, the region must adjust its **positioning with respect to climate action**, emphasizing agriculture as part of the solution, while highlighting its need for adaptation and its mitigation potential. Secondly, there will be a need to **revitalize rural areas** and opportunities for rural populations, which will be key to achieving the SDGs. Thirdly, actions that fuel **sustainable increases in production and agricultural productivity** must be pursued, in order to bridge the gaps and ensure adequate availability at the national and global level, in the short, medium and long term. Fourthly, promotion of greater levels of **social inclusion, equity and equality** is imperative, ensuring that no one is left behind and placing particular emphasis on family farming, indigenous peoples, afro-descendant communities, women and rural youth. In the fifth place, a **One Health approach** must be adopted to sustainably balance and guarantee the optimal health of people, animals and ecosystems. Finally, there will be a need to promote the **expansion of international and intraregional trade**, as the appropriate instrument to complement the aforementioned aspects, as well as to ensure the achievement of national objectives and contributions of agrifood systems at the regional and global levels.

Given the complexity and magnitude of these challenges, tackling them exclusively at the national level and with the use of technical tools will not be effective. Success in these areas will call for integrated actions at the technical and political level and a commitment by countries to work together within a strategic framework, such as the **Hemispheric Partnership for Food Security and Sustainable Development in the Americas** that is the topic of this document.

### III. Opportunities for collective action

Within the framework of the Partnership, in addition to the seven hemispheric action programs, IICA is establishing three mechanisms: i) the Public Policy Observatory for Agrifood Systems (OPSAA), ii) the Leadership School for the Transformation of Agrifood Systems of the Americas (ELTA), and iii) the Hemispheric Fund for Agricultural Resilience and Sustainability in the Americas. These three cross-

cutting mechanisms, which will be described in greater detail below, function simultaneously to achieve the objectives of the Partnership, while providing technical support to and broadening the scope of the collective actions.

The **collective action** strategy requires countries to work together to determine solutions to common problems, by complementing national capacities, strengthening regional positioning, joining forces with public, private and civil society actors, and scaling up available resources. This should include sharing experiences and best practices, developing specific leadership capacities and skills, and facilitating actions that stand to make a significant impact, given the magnitude and urgency of the challenges.

There are seven collective actions that are proposed below, which are defined in keeping with **four strategic principles**:

- a) Agrifood systems are not failed systems. Although they do have room for improvement, their performance in recent decades has demonstrated their capacity to rise to the challenges of each era.
- b) Given its importance to national economies, its significant contribution to global food security, through trade, and its endogenous capacity to mitigate climate change, agriculture must be considered as part of the solution.
- c) Science and technology are the great transformational tools of our age and will provide the basis for our solutions.
- d) Farmers will be key players in the transformations to be implemented, given that they are the ones most able to contribute to more sustainable and resilient resource management.

Thus, as mentioned before, the hemispheric consensus will be built on these four principles and will initially revolve around **seven key areas and collective actions**, which correspond or contribute to one or more strategic aspects of food and nutritional security and sustainable development. The specific proposed actions were identified through a series of hemispheric meetings convened by IICA and other strategic partners in 2023, each of which was attended by representatives of the major public and private stakeholders at the national level. These actions constitute a dynamic process undertaken as part of a joint strategy and they will need to be reviewed throughout the course of implementation by IICA's governing bodies – the Executive Committee and the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA). The order in which the proposed key areas and activities are listed does not indicate their relative importance with respect to the objectives of the Partnership.

## 1. The bioeconomy as a strategy that coincides with the 2030 Agenda

The **bioeconomy** is defined as the use of biological resources to sustainably produce goods and services throughout the economy. The bioeconomy revitalizes rural areas, generates new employment and investment opportunities, ensures greater efficiency in production processes and agrifood chain transformation, as well as promotes and diversifies income, while also increasing decarbonization and climate resilience. Thus, it ensures that economic growth is compatible with the SDGs. Given its wealth of biological resources, the Americas has immense potential to drive the bioeconomy as a development model. Although steady progress is being made in the use of biotechnology in agriculture, bioenergy, bioinputs and bioservices, such as biotourism, **the challenge is to consolidate and make full use of these resources as an integral approach to enhance food and environmental security**. In order for the countries of the region to address this challenge as a whole, the following collective actions are being taken:

- a) Launch of the **Latin American Bioeconomy Network**, as a mechanism for knowledge exchange and the creation of partnerships to promote capacity building, technological innovation, public policies, support services and biobusinesses in the region<sup>2</sup>.
- b) Establishment of the **Pan-American Liquid Biofuels Coalition (CPBIO)**, which seeks to promote sustainable production and consumption of liquid biofuels, coordinate effective communication on this issue and ensure adequate representation of the sector in relevant international forums<sup>3</sup>.
- c) Introduction of a **Hemispheric Platform** to promote and foster the adoption and use of **Bioinputs** in the region, through innovation and knowledge management, South-South cooperation and the promotion of more efficient regulatory systems with greater convergence among countries<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. Science, technology and innovation, including digital agriculture

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, science, technology and innovation (STI) contributed to the primary objective of increasing agricultural production in the Americas. Nowadays, new demands are being placed on the STI system, due to climate change and food and nutritional security concerns. STI will play an essential role in addressing these demands and spurring the development of more sustainable, competitive and inclusive agrifood systems. The challenge will be to make better use of opportunities offered by the new frontier of knowledge and existing institutional structures, as well as to increase levels of investment. To this end, the following four collective actions are proposed:

- a) Revision of research priorities, **by identifying new technological public goods** and jointly developing prospective and strategic work and research agendas for national agricultural research institutes (NARIs) and international organizations (such as the CGIAR), as well as global forums.
- b) **Modernization and strengthening of the STI institutional framework**, focusing on operational agility and coordination with the private sector and funding mechanisms, in order to address the magnitude of the challenges.
- c) **The design of effective public policy frameworks** that create an ecosystem that is favorable to the private sector and conducive to the modernization that the agrifood systems of the region require.
- d) Strengthening of existing collaborative mechanisms (such as PROCISUR and PROCINORTE) and implementation of **new reciprocal cooperation platforms** to access cutting-edge technology, drive technology development in the Amazon region and spur innovation in the smaller countries in the tropical region and the Caribbean.

### 2.1. Digitalization of agrifood systems

**Agrifood digitalization** is the incorporation of technologies into production processes, processing, distribution and marketing of agricultural products. The incorporation of digital technologies into agrifood systems enables increased production, greater efficiency, reduced environmental impact, fewer information discrepancies, shorter marketing and distribution channels and improving living and working conditions in rural areas, particularly for young people.

The development of digital technologies will call for the configuration of new innovation and technology development models, as new players come to the fore (for example, AgTechs, incubators, risk capital investment funds, etc.) and the redefining of the role of existing players in science and technology systems. This will lead to the development of a new institutional framework that must be taken into account in developing public policies.

<sup>2</sup> [Conference of the International Consortium of Applied Bioeconomy Research \(ICABR\)](#), 4-7 July 2023, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

<sup>3</sup> [Pan-American Liquid Biofuels Summit](#), 29-30 June 2023, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

<sup>4</sup> [First Pan-American Bioinputs Forum: Perspectives and Opportunities for a Growing Sector](#), 24-25 May 2023, Panama.

Given the potential impact of digitalization in the coming years, IICA introduced Digital Agriculture Week in 2022<sup>5</sup>, for the specific purpose of bringing together public and private digitalization stakeholders to engage in strategic thinking, define an agenda and coordinate actions to drive the development and use of digital solutions. The following collective actions were proposed as a result of discussions during Digital Agriculture Week:

- a) Establishment of an **AgTech Network** among key digitalization stakeholders. The Network began to propose actions for countries to promote the development of digital innovation ecosystems.
- b) Creation of a **Digital Agricultural Policy Platform** to survey and analyze policies to promote the development and adoption of digital technologies, as well as to create opportunities for dialogue and collaboration among countries to implement a new generation of public policies for that purpose.
- c) Development and continuous updating of a **Repository of Digital Solutions and Best Practices for Agrifood Digitalization** to facilitate the identification and adoption of options that are more appropriate for the challenges of farmers in the Americas.

### 3. International and regional trade as a means of bolstering sustainable development and food security

International and regional trade contributes to sustainable development and food security, given that that it helps to balance food surpluses and deficits across countries; increases the quantity, variety and quality of available food; acts a price stabilizer and assists in ensuring the consumption of healthy and safe food, through the application of health standards. It also generates income and employment that contribute to the region's economic and social development. The current challenges are mainly due to the impact of the multiple and successive crises experienced in recent years. These challenges have changed the geopolitics of food. There has also been additional pressure exerted by the climate situation that is threatening the agricultural competitiveness of the region, due to increased production and marketing costs; the introduction of environmental rules, regulations and actions with the potential to restrict trade in the region; as well as the possible restructuring and increase of production subsidies. Collective actions proposed for this area include<sup>6</sup>:

- a) Establishing a **network of agrifood negotiators to the WTO**, spearheaded by IICA and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), to strengthen the multilateral trade system in the face of the new agrifood trade challenges, while fostering greater participation by countries in the region in WTO multilateral forums and promoting common regional negotiating positions that facilitate open, transparent and predictable international trade.
- b) Undertaking **joint efforts among countries** to address the introduction of rules, regulations and actions with the **potential to restrict the agrifood trade** of countries in the region, through coordination with strategic partners to generate evidence, strengthen the capacities of relevant stakeholders and create networks and forums for dialogue.
- c) Contributing to increased **intraregional trade, by making better use of existing trade agreements** and coordinating with mechanisms and other institutions that promote regional integration, such as the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), to make headway in removing non-tariff barriers, increasing regulatory convergence and facilitating trade. The

<sup>5</sup> The proposal was developed on the basis of [Digital Agriculture Week](#)—which IICA has been organizing since 2022—with a view to consolidating this event and the network that has emerged from it.

<sup>6</sup> The proposal was formulated based on conclusions arising from the regional workshop on “Strengthening the Region’s Agrifood Trade to Boost its Contribution to Sustainable Development and Food Security”, organized by IICA, IDB, ECLAC, FAO and IFPRI on 4-5 September 2023 at IICA Headquarters in San Jose.

region must also pursue actions that promote linkages between companies and producer organizations, with special emphasis on small and medium-scale enterprises.

#### 4. Climate action and financing that focuses on agriculture's capacity to overcome challenges

Climate change is the most pressing challenge of our time, particularly given the fact that global mitigation and adaptation actions have fallen far short of the needs indicated by science (IPCC 2023), including in the agricultural sector. There should be a joint effort focused on the climatic commitments agricultural sector in the region, while strengthening the region's institutional capacity to participate in the climatic processes (Like negotiations, prioritization, planning implementation, monitoring, etc.). To this end, and bearing in mind the diversity of production models, it is necessary to ensure local contextualization, effective levels of funding, cooperative mechanisms, science-based trade measures, collaborative innovation and capacity development, among others.

In light of the above, the following collective actions are proposed:

- a) Facilitating **more active and informed participation of the agriculture sector in climate planning and action**. Starting from: i) by supporting and coordinating with climate negotiators focusing on agricultural issues within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and strengthening agriculture's role in achieving the NDCs and the national adaptation plans (NAPs).
- b) Promoting actions to **increase the agriculture sector's access to different types of climate financing**, including private financing, and options such as voluntary carbon markets, green funds, and guarantees, among others, involving capacity building and the development of institutional frameworks with high integrity, transparency, and inclusivity.
- c) **Promoting a greater visibility and participation of agri-food sector of the Americas in the COPs of the UNFCCC** by way of the Home of Sustainable Agriculture of the Americas pavilion.
- d) To promote the **Living Soils of the Americas Program** and the **Hemispheric Initiative on Water and Agriculture** to improve soil health and the integrated management of water.

#### 5. One Health as an agricultural health strategy in agrifood systems

**The One Health** approach is an integrated strategy that seeks to transform agrifood systems to sustainably optimize the health of people, animals and the environment. To be effectively implemented, it requires changes in public policies. **Among the main challenges in adopting this approach** are the need to develop solid strategic partnerships that include the private sector as a key player, as well as to guarantee institutional coordination and governance of the approach in a balanced and inclusive manner.

In view of the above, the collective actions are:

- a) Creation of a **Permanent One Health Working Group in Agrifood Systems**, consisting of representatives of countries in the hemisphere and of the relevant agencies to enable continuous and coordinated collaboration in **operationalization of the "One Health" approach in the Region**.
- b) Promote the systematization of successful experiences, , best practices and lessons learned in the operationalization of the "One Health" approach in the Americas, that serve as models and guidelines for the determinants of success and challenges. At the same time, formulate indicators that allow us to know and quantify aspects related to the implementation of the one-health approach in agri-food systems.
- c) **Focus the work agenda**, joining efforts with other specialized institutions, with special emphasis on **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), food safety, zoonotic diseases and the environment**.



## 6. Family farming and inclusive rural development

In this area, the aim is to make better use of the full potential of family farming (FF) to contribute to the revitalization of rural territories, food security and sustainable development. This requires effective strategies that can overcome the limitations that this sub-sector faces in terms of access to technologies, markets and funding, infrastructure and connectivity. Therefore, there will be a need to promote collaboration among countries to improve policies and public investments, aimed at boosting productivity, competitiveness, sustainability and FF inclusion. The following collective actions are proposed to achieve these objectives:

- a) **Institutionalization of an exchange mechanism**, with representation from key FF stakeholders, aiming to **design and evaluate a new generation of public policies**, as well as the investments and financing needed for their implementation.
- b) Support for the design of **regional initiatives that link the policies and climate actions** of the countries, thereby contributing to the viability of production units in the face of climate-related challenges.
- c) Promotion of FF modernization in the production, management, trading and marketing of its products through a **“Cooperative Skills Center for Digital Transformation”**. This Center will assist associative enterprises and cooperatives to collect strategic information, as well as transmit, systematize and analyze it, as a means of improving the efficiency of services to members.

## 7. Equity and equality

Women and youth are agents of change that can impact current and future agrifood systems, despite the inequalities and gaps that they face, for example the responsibility for unpaid care activities that women shoulder. To make headway in identifying problems and facilitating the involvement of women and youth in the design and implementation of public policies that promote more inclusive and equitable agrifood systems, the following collective actions are proposed:

- a) **Consolidation of the Permanent Forum of Female Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Senior Officials<sup>7</sup> of Agriculture of the Americas** to promote policies and actions that reduce gender gaps and inequalities and facilitate the inclusion of rural women, on an equal footing. The Secretariat of this permanent forum falls under IICA’s Gender Equality and Youth Hemispheric Program.
- b) **Promotion of rural women’s participation in hemispheric and regional conferences to ensure that their rights are taken into account in international agendas**. Possible examples include the Ibero-American Roundtable of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), within the framework of the Declaration for the Rights of All Women, Adolescents and Girls in Rural Settings of the Americas; the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC and UN Women) and the follow-up to the World Conferences on Women (United Nations), among others.
- c) **Strengthening of rural women’s hemispheric platforms and the hemispheric community of rural youth**, in order to generate concrete opportunities for these two groups in agrifood systems, through experience sharing, training and the creation of regional networks.
- d) **The continued strengthening and promotion of actions involving rural youth in the Americas** to enhance their leadership in agricultural initiatives, such as those undertaken as part of IICA of Open Doors (FabLab and CIMAG), as well as other actions with strategic partners that affect

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<sup>7</sup> Pursuant to Resolution 534 “Contribution of Rural Women to Agriculture in the Americas”, a permanent, high-level forum was established with female ministers, deputy ministers and senior officials of the Americas to highlight the role of rural women and to propose policies with a gender perspective to assist in reducing gender gaps and inequalities.

agrifood systems, such as the Next Gen Ag Impact Network (NGIN), Young Americas Business Trust (YABT), I4Nature and 4H, among others.

#### IV. Guidelines for implementation: The role of IICA

Changes on the international scene have demonstrated the essential role of international cooperation in driving collective action among countries on key issues for the Americas and the world. The **Hemispheric Partnership for Food Security and Sustainable Development** is based on an interdisciplinary approach that is seeking to improve the standard of living of individuals working in the agrifood systems of countries in the hemisphere, as well as their ability to contribute to global food and environmental security. Indeed, as mentioned before, the seven proposed areas of focus of the Hemispheric Partnership are aligned with and complement [IICA's seven hemispheric action programs](#); and the programs will provide a practical means of implementing the technical component of the Hemispheric Partnership.

Most notable among these courses of action is the need to promote a new generation of **science-based** public policies to achieve the required transformation. Part of the challenge is to influence the implementation of policies (“ensuring that they do not simply remain on paper”) and to advocate for the effective allocation of public budgets. This will require partnerships with stakeholders involved in the analysis, design, implementation and evaluation of policies, to translate the findings into knowledge. In this sense, it will be essential to work directly with agricultural negotiators on environmental and trade matters, as well as to engage in discussions and work directly with technical units in the ministries and other public agencies responsible for designing and implementing public policies.

To facilitate the implementation of these processes and to bolster the decision-making process, IICA has established and made available to the countries and regional organizations two cross-cutting mechanisms that support and complement all the key areas that have been identified.

The first is the **Public Policy Observatory for Agrifood Systems (OPSAa)**<sup>8</sup> – a platform that fosters the systematization and sharing of experiences and best practices, as well as the promotion of dialogue on policies implemented in the Americas that are considered relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable, as a means of improving and transforming agrifood systems. OPSAa also includes indicators and a series of relevant metrics to enable the monitoring of results and impacts of actions undertaken by the States and regional entities to modernize or improve their agrifood systems. These metrics are displayed visually, using tools such as the “Agrifood Atlas”<sup>9</sup>, which provides an overview of the macroeconomic, commercial, social and environmental contexts of the agrifood systems of the Americas, whether at the country, regional or value chain level.

The second is the **Leadership School for the Transformation of Agrifood Systems (ELTSa)**, which was designed to build capacities in the area of policies and institutional frameworks for the transformation of the agrifood systems of the Americas, through courses aimed at decision-makers and stakeholders in these systems. In particular, the School seeks to disseminate information on the functioning, components and interrelationship among these systems at the global level and within the Americas, emphasizing their multidimensionality, heterogeneity and intersectoral nature, in addition to their weaknesses, challenges and opportunities.

The third element that will further the implementation of the Partnership is the creation of a **Hemispheric Fund for Agricultural Resilience and Sustainability in the Americas**, which would seek to facilitate the participation of smaller countries with less economic clout in collective actions.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://opsaa.iica.int/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://opsaa.iica.int/atlas>



In summary, the **Hemispheric Partnership for Food Security and Sustainable Development in the Americas** is a dynamic and flexible series of collective actions, with the capacity to anticipate and adapt to changes at the national, regional, hemispheric and even global levels. In other words, it is a “living” process and not merely a declaration that will remain on paper.