

**IICA IN THE WTO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE WORK PLAN:  
SHORT TERM 2010 AND MEDIUM TERM 2011**

Submission by IICA

The following submission, dated 26 August 2010, is being circulated at the request of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. Agricultural policy and negotiations, and trade in agricultural products are among IICA's ongoing priorities. Since the GATT Uruguay Round and the inclusion of agriculture in the multilateral trade negotiations, IICA has adapted its cooperation activities to the new realities affecting the agriculture sector, and has analysed their impact on the agrifood sector from the political standpoint.

2. The subject took on a new dimension with the launching in November 2003 of a new WTO round of multilateral trade negotiations in Doha, Qatar, known as the Doha Development Agenda, and became a priority for IICA in keeping with its commitment to support competitive and sustainable development of agriculture and the rural environment. Given that trade must serve to foster the development and wellbeing of our populations, especially in rural areas, IICA's concern is that these negotiations should suitably accommodate the objectives and interests of the countries of the region.

3. With a view to expanding IICA's work in this sphere, the Director-General of IICA submitted a request in October 2009 to the Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, seeking observer status for the Institute. The WTO Membership examined the request in March 2010 and the Committee on Agriculture granted IICA ad hoc observer status in its regular meetings.

4. This work plan will accordingly be submitted at the Committee's forthcoming regular meeting in September for circulation to WTO Members.

**II. ACTIVITIES TO BE DEVELOPED**

**A. WITH THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

**1. In the short term (2010)**

5. The following activities are under consideration:

- (a) Coordinated identification of possible areas of cooperation to be envisaged in the work plan for 2011. For example:

- (i) Notification of agricultural policies: The Committee has noted that its work is hampered by delays in the submission of agricultural policy-related notifications in accordance with the requirements and formats adopted in 1995. The Secretariat has accordingly drafted a new Handbook on agriculture notification requirements. This Handbook will have to be circulated in the course of training activities. Members are also examining a series of proposals concerning "good practice" in how to present the information to be notified. IICA could provide support for these initiatives, mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean.
  - (ii) Joint studies: The Committee on Agriculture has an ongoing need to produce technical documents that could be drafted or coordinated by IICA where these relate to IICA's geographical sphere (Latin America and the Caribbean). IICA has experience in preparing this kind of document and could assist the Committee with activities of this nature.
  - (iii) Good practice handbooks: IICA has developed handbooks of good practices for participation in international forums and for the notification of sanitary and phytosanitary measures. IICA could draw up handbooks of this type in coordination with the Committee, to enhance Members' participation in the Committee on Agriculture and improve procedures relating to agriculture notifications.
- (b) Use of the WTO as a showcase for IICA's work: IICA could utilize the WTO's global coverage as a way of making products of special interest to its Members better known. For example, it might request time during the Committee's regular meetings to present and circulate the IICA/FAO/ECLAC joint report on the outlook for agriculture for 2010 (*Situación y Perspectivas de la Agricultura 2010*).

## 2. Medium term (2011)

### 6. Development of the following activities is under consideration:

- (a) Participation by capital-based officials in Agriculture Committee meetings: One medium-term activity is to seek financing to promote the participation of officials from the capitals, and specifically government officials responsible for agriculture-related matters, in the regular meetings and special sessions of the Committee on Agriculture. As a preliminary step, it would be necessary to conduct a diagnostic study of participation by agriculture ministry officials in the Committee and to develop profiles for fundraising projects.
- (b) IICA will be able to support the WTO in its technical cooperation activities directed at ministries of agriculture, at both hemispheric (Inter-American Board of Agriculture) and subregional level (Southern Agricultural Council; Central American Agricultural Council; Caribbean Alliance; other ministerial bodies), or by conveying requests for support from such ministerial forums to the Committee on Agriculture.
- (c) Post-Doha Round training: Once the text on agricultural modalities has been worked out, Members will be seeking training or guidance in preparing their schedules of commitments. The schedules will be drawn up on the basis of the technical parameters established in the document. IICA is following the Doha Round negotiations on Agriculture and from the technical standpoint is ready to provide Members with such technical training or guidance. Considering the potentially

extensive demand for technical guidance, and should the WTO lack sufficient technical staff for the purpose, IICA could provide support for this activity in its geographical sphere (mainly Latin America and the Caribbean).

**B. WITH THE WTO INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION (ITTC)**

**1. Short term (2010)**

7. The following courses of action are under consideration:

- (a) Building up relations with the ITTC: IICA has worked directly with the ITTC in arranging training events on the American continent, which has helped maintain a strategic alliance directed at strengthening the technical cooperation provided by IICA to its Member States.
- (b) For 2010, IICA has undertaken to continue supporting the WTO's trade policy courses for countries belonging to the Latin American Integration Association (October 2010). Moreover, the possibility of jointly organizing activities in 2010 (course on trade and environment, for example) is being examined, given the success of the two workshops on intellectual property and on fisheries subsidies held at IICA Central Headquarters in 2009. IICA has the strength afforded by its presence in the hemisphere, which fosters stronger ties with the WTO.
- (c) Support for the ITTC in developing and implementing the biennial training plan 2010-2011. Having received the ITTC biennial plan, IICA has offered comments based on its knowledge of training requirements in the Latin American and Caribbean region. IICA could spread awareness of this plan and essentially promote greater participation by public experts in the agriculture sector in training activities carried out by the ITTC in the region.

8. Likewise, IICA places at the ITTC's disposal its network of trade and trade negotiation experts, to serve as trainers in future courses in countries of the region.

**2. Medium term (2011)**

9. The WTO has more than 130 reference centres around the world through which it provides information on WTO-related developments and distance learning opportunities. IICA not only has a distance training centre but also has proven technical capacity in this type of activity. WTO policy is to establish reference centres in regional organizations such as IICA to strengthen cooperation with such agencies. Since IICA has observer status in two WTO bodies, it might be feasible to propose setting up a reference centre at IICA's Central Headquarters in San José, Costa Rica, with an emphasis on agriculture, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and international trade. The necessary steps will be taken in 2010 to examine whether this can be brought to fruition.

**III. THE AGRICULTURAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITHIN THE INSTITUTE**

10. The Centre for Strategic and Policy Analysis for Agriculture (CAESPA) will be responsible for relations between IICA and the WTO Secretariat and will be the unit in charge of implementing this work plan. Implementation of the plan forms part of the CAESPA's functions, which are to follow up on implementation-related issues concerning the Agreement on Agriculture and progress in the negotiations, and to build up capacity in administering agreements that emerge from the Doha Round.

11. IICA is represented in 34 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and has an experienced network of experts in agriculture, international trade and trade negotiations, strategically located both in country offices and at Central Headquarters, through whom the technical cooperation activities set out in the work plan will be implemented.

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