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VISITING PROFESSIONALS TO STRENGTHEN THE TECHNICAL COOPERATION IICA PROVIDES TO ITS MEMBER COUNTRIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Purpose of the Visiting Professionals Initiative	5
II.	Description of the initiative and categories of visiting professionals	5
III.	Criteria and conditions for the selection of candidates to participate in the IICA Visiting Professionals Initiative	7
IV.	Coordination of the Visiting Professionals Initiative within the Institute	7
V.	Selection process	8
VI.	Benefits for participants	10
VII.	Follow-up and evaluation	12
	Annex 1: Contents of the collaboration agreement between IICA and the participant in the Visiting Professionals Initiative	13
	ANNEX 2: Form for requesting technical support	14
	Annex 3: Criteria for selecting applications to provide technical support via the Visiting Professionals Initiative	16

VISITING PROFESSIONALS TO STRENGTHEN THE TECHNICAL COOPERATION IICA PROVIDES TO ITS MEMBER COUNTRIES

The General Directorate is launching the present Visiting Professionals Initiative with a view to benefitting from the insight and input of high-level external professionals in the areas of competence of the Institute, thereby strengthening its capacity to provide technical cooperation to its Member States.

I. Purpose of the Visiting Professionals Initiative

To enhance IICA's technical cooperation by enabling specialists from academic and research institutions, international centers, governmental organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to share knowledge and experience with the Institute that is applicable to efforts intended to promote the competitive and sustainable development of agriculture and improve rural life in the member countries of IICA.

II. Description of the initiative and categories of visiting professionals

A. Description:

Under the Visiting Professionals Initiative, a professional from an academic, scientific or research institution, a governmental organization or a private or non-governmental international organization will collaborate, either in the member countries or at IICA Headquarters, on a program or project being implemented by IICA, and will be incorporated into the Institute's activities.

B. Categories of visiting professionals:

Four categories of visiting professionals have been defined, based on the profile of the professional involved, the nature of the professional visit and the resources that can be allocated to support it.

1. Associate Professional:

For outstanding **professionals** in fields directly related to agriculture and addressed in IICA's 2010-2014 Medium-term Plan (MTP). An Associate Professional may provide his/her services in any IICA member country. This category of professional visit is defined in Chapter III, Article 14, subsection iv, of the Rules of Procedure of the General Directorate, which deals with Associate Personnel.

This category include two types of professional visits: a) short term, from three to twelve months; and b) longer term, which will include professionals contracted as IICA employees, funded mainly with external resources under agreements or special programs of governmental institutions,¹ donors or other organizations.

Professionals accepted for this category will be individuals with experience and a distinguished record in their areas of expertise, selected as the result of searches or requests made by IICA. They will participate directly in an IICA technical cooperation project during the visit, and will receive support from IICA or other external sources.

2. Graduate student:

For **professionals** wishing to prepare their Doctoral dissertation or Master's thesis while collaborating with IICA, and whose area of specialization and research is in keeping with the priority interests and the needs of the Institute. IICA offers graduate students an opportunity to live and work in the Americas while they write their dissertation or thesis; the Institute, in turn, benefits from the graduate students' experience and expertise. The **duration** of the professional visit will be defined jointly with the relevant Technical or Cross-cutting Program, and may take place at IICA Headquarters or in any IICA member country in LAC. The graduate students will work under the supervision of an IICA professional and their responsibilities will be clearly defined. IICA is required to provide the graduate students with the facilities required to carry out their work and conduct research, but not to provide them with financial support.

3. Intern:

For **scientists or students** interested in participating in this initiative, who will have the terms and conditions of their involvement defined on a case by case basis. This category includes university students in the last two years of their undergraduate studies and scientists willing to work as a volunteer on topics that are a matter of priority or interest to the Institute. The visit may take place at Headquarters or in any IICA member country in LAC.

4. Emeritus IICA Professional Personnel:

For retired professionals of the Institute appointed in accordance with Article 16 of Chapter III of the Rules of Procedure of the General Directorate, who, on a voluntary basis, wish to share their knowledge and experience in areas of priority for the Institute. They may provide their services at IICA Headquarters or in any IICA member country.

¹ This category includes professionals of the Associate Professional Officer (APO) Program of the USDA.

III. Criteria and conditions for the selection of candidates to participate in the IICA Visiting Professionals Initiative

The selection criteria are related to the candidate's experience and his/her capacity to contribute to strengthening the technical cooperation IICA provides to its member countries, within the framework of the 2010-2014 MTP, of the projects implemented by IICA's Programs and of the IICA Country Strategies. The selection of candidates will therefore be based on their proposed contribution fulfilling at least one of the following criteria:

1. It is intended to address demands or needs of the countries that IICA must address;
2. It is intended to address demands of a hemispheric or regional nature which the Institute must address, but for which it faces limitations in terms of human resources;
3. It is intended to address emerging or new issues that IICA must address, but for which it faces limitations in terms of qualified technical personnel;
4. It is intended to address specific situations, problems or needs related to emergencies or special projects in which IICA must provide the member countries with support; and
5. It will strengthen the capacity of the Institute to manage technical cooperation.

In addition to falling under at least one of the Strategic Objectives established in the 2010-2014 MTP, the contribution of the professionals participating in the Visiting Professionals Initiative must meet the following conditions:

1. It must be clearly linked to the Lines of Action set forth in the MTP;
2. It must be made in at least one of the areas in which IICA provides technical cooperation; and
3. It must call for the development of new technical cooperation tools or the implementation of one or several of IICA technical cooperation tools.

IV. Coordination of the Visiting Professionals Initiative within the Institute

The coordination of the professional visits and of the processes of monitoring, evaluating and providing/receiving feedback on same will be the responsibility of the *[to be determined]*, which will designate the person responsible for overseeing this initiative

The main functions and responsibilities of the *[to be determined]* vis-à-vis the professional visits are:

1. To receive, prioritize and keep up to date the requests for technical support received from IICA Units (Headquarters and Offices) which could be provided by external professionals in one of the four categories of visiting professionals described herein, and to disseminate this information among potential providers of such cooperation.
2. To receive, prioritize and keep up to date the applications to participate in professional visits that are in line with IICA's present needs and which have the potential of adding

value to IICA's technical cooperation, and to share this information with Units that may be interested.

3. To encourage and promote the participation of professionals or students from those strategic partners with which the Institute has a formal agreement in place. To keep a record of current or potential institutions and organizations that can offer the services of specialists within the framework of the Visiting Professionals Initiative, and whose professional profiles are in keeping with IICA's needs, as defined in the MTP.
4. To ensure that the legal instruments (framework and other types of agreements) between IICA and the partner institutions and organizations that provide specialists are up to date and in force; or, failing this, to promote the signing of such instruments, in coordination with the Secretariat of External Relations, in order to facilitate participation in the Visiting Professionals Initiative.
5. To coordinate with the appropriate institutional bodies (including the Management of Human Talent Division, the DTC, the Directorate of Management and Regional Integration (DMRI), the IICA Country Offices and the Secretariat of External Relations) the actions required to implement this initiative.
6. To provide the logistical support required to ensure the success of the different types of professional visits.
7. To maintain a Web page on the iica.int portal with up-to-date information on the initiative, and on-line forms for submitting applications.
8. To coordinate with the host Units (Headquarters or Offices) the processes of monitoring, evaluating and providing/receiving feedback on the professional visits, as specified in section VII below.

V. Selection process

A. Source of the requests for the provision of technical support via professional visits

- The needs of IICA Units (Headquarters and Offices) interested in receiving support from professionals in the subject areas described in section III. Units interested in welcoming a participant in the Visiting Professionals Initiative must submit a request for technical support, using a specific form to be developed for each type of visit. In the category of "Associate Professional," in which **financial support may be granted**, the request must be fully justified.
- The *[to be determined]* may inform the Units of applications it has received to participate in the initiative, which may make them aware of areas where they can upgrade or expand the services they provide, which had gone undetected until then.

The *[to be determined]* will conduct a pre-selection of the requests for support to ensure that the information provided is complete and is consistent with criteria and conditions set forth in section III, and also to define the profile of the professional and the type of professional visit being requested.

B. Source of applications to participate in professional visits

Applications from professionals interested in taking part in IICA's Visiting Professionals Initiative may be:

- Submitted by an interested individual or institution to *[to be determined]*, using the on-line forms or by some other means; and
- The results of a search, by an IICA Unit, for experts, which would be the source in most cases for associate professionals.

Prospective participants in the initiative must work or collaborate with a scientific, technological or academic institution or organization with which IICA has a cooperation agreement in place, and must provide confirmation of the consent of that institution or organization for them to participate. Professionals not associated with entities such as those listed above, but who can demonstrate their technical capacity and can provide letters of reference from persons known by IICA, may also participate.

In any case, the participant will sign an agreement with IICA, establishing the purpose of the visit, the responsibilities of the participant and of IICA, the unit or program to which the professional will be assigned and the person(s) responsible for supervising him/her. (See Annex 1.)

C. Pre-selection of applications

All applications to participate in the Visiting Professionals Initiative will be pre-selected by the person in charge of the initiative to ensure that they meet the criteria and conditions established in section III and comply with the established time limits. Similarly, each application will be classified by type of visit.

This person will inform the applicant (individual or institution) of the result of the pre-selection process and, if the application meets the established selection criteria, the relevant Units at IICA Headquarters and the Offices that may be interested will be notified.

The *[to be determined]* will compare the applications it has received and prioritized with the requests received from IICA Units (Headquarters and Offices), which provide justification for the participation of external specialists in a professional visit.

D. Decision-making process

In this process, priority will be given to the needs of the Units over the offers to provide services. Regardless of the type of professional visit, it must add value to the technical cooperation that IICA provides to its member countries, and not constitute a burden for the Unit or Program to which the participant will be assigned.

1. For “Associate Professional”

- a) The Directors of the DTC and the DMRI and the Head of the Management of Human Talent Division, or those to whom they have delegated such responsibility, will make a pre-selection of the requests submitted by the interested IICA Units and then prioritize them.
- b) The *[to be determined]* will conduct a search for and a pre-selection of candidates, based on the professional profiles required by the Units. In addition, this pre-selection process will include an on-site or on-line interview intended to determine, to the extent possible, the personal and professional suitability of candidates.
- c) The requests for support judged as eligible by the *[to be determined]* will be sent to the Directors of the DTC and the DMRI and to the Secretary of Corporate Services, who, in consultation with the interested Units, will decide whether to approve or reject the requests, based on the criteria and weightings contained in Annex 3. This group will also determine the benefits that IICA can offer the applicant.
- d) The person in charge of the initiative, who will serve as Technical Secretary of this decision-making group, will notify the interested parties of the decision, and will make the necessary arrangements with the relevant bodies to implement the professional visit.

2. For the other categories of visiting professionals (direct interaction between IICA Units and *[to be determined]* only)

- a) The *[to be determined]* will conduct a search for and pre-selection of candidates with the professional profiles required by the Units. This pre-selection process will include an on-site or on-line interview intended to determine, to the extent possible, the personal and professional suitability of candidates
- b) The interested Units will make a decision on the applications submitted and report on same to the *[to be determined]*, which will then notify the applicant.
- c) If the application is accepted, the *[to be determined]* will make the necessary arrangements with the relevant bodies to grant the benefits stipulated in each case, notwithstanding any that may be granted by the Director General in the category of “Emeritus IICA Professional Personnel.”

VI. Benefits for participants

Depending on the type of professional visit involved, and in order to ensure its success, IICA may offer participants some or all of the following benefits:

A. Associate Professional

- i. Official appointment as an Associate Professional (Associate IICA Specialist), in accordance with existing rules and regulations.
- ii. Round-trip airfare.
- iii. Short-term insurance, if required, which may include health and life insurance.
- iv. Assistance in finding lodging, obtaining a visa and any legal paperwork required to take up residence and provide cooperation in the country of the visit, in keeping with the country's laws and the status enjoyed by IICA as an international organization.
- v. For short-term visits, a stipend of up to US\$1,000 monthly; for longer term visits, the benefits stipulated in the employment contract, including salary, insurance or other benefits offered to IICA employees.
- vi. Inclusion in the Institute's thematic networks, depending on the Program in which the participant is involved.
- vii. Subject to the successful completion of the professional visit, inclusion as an international consultant or expert in the relevant IICA data base.
- viii. Acknowledgement of the participant's collaboration and successful participation in IICA projects and initiatives.
- ix. Provision of office space and supplies, as well as access to Institute services (Internet, e-mail, library and others, based on specific needs).

B. Graduate Student

- i. Assistance in finding lodging, obtaining a visa and any legal paperwork necessary to take up residence and provide cooperation in the country of the visit, in keeping with the country's laws and the status enjoyed by IICA as an international organization.
- ii. Inclusion in the Institute's thematic networks, depending on the Program in which the participant is involved.
- iii. Subject to the successful completion of the professional visit, inclusion as an international consultant or expert in the relevant IICA data base.
- iv. Acknowledgement of the participant's collaboration and successful participation in projects and initiatives of IICA.
- v. Provision of office space and supplies and access to Institute services (Internet, library, e-mail and others, according to specific needs).

C. Intern

- i. Support in finding lodging, obtaining a visa and any legal paperwork necessary to take up residence and work in the country of the visit, according to the country's laws and the status enjoyed by IICA as an international organization.
- ii. Inclusion in the Institute's thematic networks, depending on the Program in which the participant is involved.
- iii. Acknowledgement of the participant's collaboration and successful participation in projects and initiatives of IICA.

- iv. Provision of office facilities and materials and access to Institute services (Internet, library, e-mail and others, according to specific needs).

D. Emeritus IICA Professional Personnel

- i. Support in finding lodging, obtaining a visa and any legal paperwork necessary to take up residence and work in the country of the visit, according to the country's laws and the status enjoyed by IICA as an international organization.
- ii. Inclusion in the Institute's thematic networks, depending on the Program in which the participant is involved.
- iii. Acknowledgement of the participant's collaboration and successful participation in projects and initiatives of IICA.
- iv. Provision of office facilities, stationery and materials and access to Institute services (Internet, library, e-mail and others, according to specific needs).

VII. Follow-up and evaluation

The *[to be determined]* will be responsible for coordinating the process of monitoring, evaluating and providing/receiving feedback on each professional visit. This evaluation is for internal purposes and will be conducted by the host Unit, with the aim of determining whether or not the participant made the expected contribution under the agreed terms. In cases in which the organization or institution of origin of the participant so requires, a report will be prepared and submitted in the format it requires.

Similarly, when appropriate, the Unit hosting the visiting professional may recommend his/her inclusion in the appropriate IICA database, for purposes of future consultancies.

At the end of the professional visit, and for the purposes of quality control, the participant will be asked to submit a technical document resulting from his/her research and activities; or a report on the activities carried out during that period.

The *[to be determined]* will monitor and evaluate all professional visits in order to identify lessons learned, successful experiences and best practices, make necessary adjustments and provide information required for the Directors of the DTC and the DMRI and the Head of the Human Talent Management Division to make decisions.

Annex 1: Contents of the collaboration agreement between IICA and the participant in the Visiting Professionals Initiative

The agreement must specify at least:

- Responsibilities of the parties
- Requirements of the institution or organization of origin of the professional, if any
- Agreement regarding health insurance (if already held or if needed)
- Individual(s) responsible on behalf of IICA
- Contribution to IICA
- Purpose and expected results of the professional visit
- Preparation of final report and formal presentation of results of the participant's collaboration with IICA
- Unit and country where the visiting professional will provide support

[to be determined]

ANNEX 2: Form for requesting technical support

IICA OFFICE, PROGRAM OR UNIT _____

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TECHNICAL COOPERATION REQUIRED (Explain which IICA Program, Office or Unit will be receiving support, and how such support is related to the 2010-2014 MTP, the Strategic Objectives, the lines of action of the Programs and the areas in which the Institute provides technical cooperation. If the support of more than one professional is required, please fill in a separate form for each).

PROFILE OF THE PROFESSIONAL REQUIRED (Specify the academic preparation and experience of the professional required)

RESULTS THE SUPPORT OF THE PROFESSIONAL IS EXPECTED TO GENERATE

LENGTH OF TIME SUPPORT OF THE PROFESSIONAL IS REQUIRED (From 3 months to 1 year)

THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS THAT COULD BE OFFERED TO THE PROFESSIONAL DURING THE VISIT (From logistical support to monthly financial support).

COMMAND OF LANGUAGES:

Language	Speak	Read/Write	Understand
Spanish			
English			
French			
Portuguese			

Note: Degree of command may be: Full (bilingual), Advanced; Intermediate; Limited; or None.

CAN YOU SUGGEST ANY PROFESSIONALS AND/OR INSTITUTIONS OR ORGANIZATIONS THAT COULD FORM PART OF THE VISITING PROFESSIONALS INITIATIVE?

IF NECESSARY, WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE A PORTION OF THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR THE VISIT?

Annex 3: Criteria for selecting applications to provide technical support via the Visiting Professionals Initiative

Eligible applications which comply with the criteria and conditions of the first stage (see section III) move on to the second stage in which a score is assigned to selection criteria. With this score-based ranking, a list of proposals (in order of priority) will be prepared for submission to the appropriate committee for consideration. The criteria for the selection of applications are as follows:

- i. Up to 50 percentage points are assigned when the following criteria are applied:
 - a) Respond to a demand that IICA cannot meet with its own staff;
 - b) Respond to emerging issues requiring technical personnel with knowledge and experience which the Institute currently lacks; and
 - c) The work to be done is related to at least one of the areas in which the Institute provides cooperation and calls for the application or development of instruments aimed at producing public goods.

- ii. Up to 25 percentage points are assigned based on the degree of innovation shown in the proposal. The idea is to prioritize innovative and forward-looking proposals (and avoid doing “more of the same”).

- iii. Up to 25 percentage points are assigned based on the extent to which the proposal can promote the integration of the Institute and strategic partnerships, taking into consideration factors such as teamwork, participating units and partnerships with national counterparts and external partners.

SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS: SCORES AND WEIGHTING

CRITERIA	WEIGHTING (%)	SCORE RANGE	WEIGHTED SCORE RANGE
1. Strengthening IICA’s technical cooperation	50	1-100	0-50
2. Degree of innovation shown in the proposal	25	1-100	0-25
3. Degree of institutional integration	25	1-100	0-25
TOTAL	100	100	0-100