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MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2002 – 2006

FOCUSED ON PEOPLE AND COMMITTED TO THE FUTURE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IICA's Medium Term Plan (MTP) sets out the intended new direction and course of action of the Institute for the 2002-2006 period. The Plan reflects the new mandates from the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Americas as contained in the Summit's Declaration and Action Plan, and the Bavaro Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture, in their first Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life held in the Dominican Republic in 2001. Together, these mandates emphasize the important role of the agricultural and rural sectors in contributing to economic prosperity, hemispheric integration and furthering democracy. They also identify new priorities for these sectors and place particular emphasis on poverty reduction and increasing food security as essential to the strategy for increasing rural prosperity, integrating the rural economy into the national and global economies and better use and management of the natural resource base. Furthermore, the mandates define new institutional arrangements in the Inter-American System and identify the major issues in the hemisphere that this institution should address.

The Plan is divided into *three parts* that comprise a total of five chapters. **Part I** (Chapter I) provides the background and the basis of the Plan. It discusses three major sets of factors that shape and orient the Plan. These include: (i) the key trends in the global, regional and national economies that have profound implications for agriculture and rural life in the Americas; (ii) the situation of agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean; and (iii) the new mandates for IICA. Together, these identify the key challenges and opportunities for the agricultural and rural sector and define the framework for the future direction and strategic actions of the Institute.

Part II (Chapters II and III) discusses the repositioning of the Institute to confront the problems and challenges of the future. In particular, it outlines a new direction for IICA in terms of a new vision and mission for the Institute, consistent with the new mandates. The new direction defines a larger role for IICA within the broader framework of sustainable development, food security and economic prosperity. It reflects a transformation of the Institute into a developmental organization that goes beyond its traditional role of only supplying technical cooperation. Within the broader framework, the Plan outlines three broad goals for the Institute – promoting sustainable agricultural development, enhancing food security and contributing to increased prosperity in the rural communities.

The **second part** also outlines the strategic focus and the priority areas for action in which the Institute will allocate its resources to achieve its vision and mission. IICA's technical cooperation actions will be organized in *six strategic areas*. The areas are: trade and agribusiness development; technology and innovation; agricultural health and food safety; sustainable rural development; information and communication; and education and training. The latter two areas are integral parts of, as well as complementary in their actions to the other four areas.

Part III (Chapters IV and V) presents IICA's strategy to operationalize the Plan. The technical cooperation actions will be executed through technical cooperation agendas at three levels - national, regional and hemispheric. These agendas will be developed in wide consultation with stakeholders and strategic partners at each of these levels. While the national agendas will be the major thrust of the Institute's actions, regional and hemispheric initiatives will be developed based on priority needs and demands.

The third part also discusses several aspects of the Institute's strategy to improve its organizational framework and institutional operations. These include a change in the structure and emphasis on improving efficiency and effectiveness through better corporate governance and management, accountability, financial prudence, team work, upgrading the human resource capacity and implementation of a performance-based management system. In addition, this part of the Plan outlines the Institute's strategy to execute its technical cooperation agendas through joint actions with strategic partners and the development of new alliances. It also identifies institutional mechanisms through which such partnerships and alliances can be developed for achieving the Institute's vision and mission.

PART I

FRAME OF REFERENCE

CHAPTER I

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter provides the background and the basis for IICA's Medium Term Plan (MTP) for the next four years. It identifies the key challenges and opportunities for the agricultural and rural sector of the Americas and provides the framework for the future direction and strategic actions of the Institute.

The MTP is shaped primarily by three major sets of factors. These include: (i) the key trends in the global, regional and national economies that have profound implications for agriculture and rural life; (ii) the situation of agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC); and (iii) the new mandates for IICA.

1.1 Key Trends

1.1.1 Globalization and Free Trade

Globalization has become an accepted fact in the life of the nation state and provides enormous challenges and opportunities to the agricultural and rural sector in the Americas. It has accelerated interdependence among countries and trade liberalization, exposes all nations to economic fluctuations and the adoption of new information and communication technologies as a pre-requisite for their development. It also demands greater dialogue and consensus-building among countries and institutions on strategies to be pursued.

The international conditions that influence agriculture and the rural sector are characterized not only by predominant trends in the world-wide economy, but also by the construction of supranational institutional arrangements that establish new rules for the development of agriculture and its institutional framework. With the emergence of the World Trade Organization (WTO), new norms and regulations govern international trade. These have influenced significant reductions in trade barriers and tariffs; have improved to some degree the access to new markets and established new standards for trade in both goods and services. Furthermore, new international agreements and norms provide challenges related to increasingly, complex technical requirements.

Globalization also entails unique opportunities and risks. Opportunities are created because countries have the possibility to expand their productive base to supply dynamic markets. Risks exist because of the reduction in the degrees of autonomy and freedom that national governments have with policy options to establish corrective mechanisms when there are undesirable economic, social and environmental outcomes. The need for greater knowledge and institutional capabilities to manage these in agriculture has never been greater.

Trade liberalization is also occurring in the context of more open regional agreements, characterized by the proliferation of bilateral and regional free trade arrangements. In this hemisphere, advances in the Summit of the Americas process have established benchmarks to determine the processes and commitments for the construction of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). LAC's agricultural and rural sector will need to adopt more effective strategies if the region is to participate effectively and benefit from the creation of the FTAA and globalization.

1.1.2 Population Trends and Food Supply

Increasing food supply to feed nearly 850 million inhabitants that is expected to double in the next three decades, in the midst of accelerated urbanization and an increasing change in the composition of the population is a major challenge for agriculture in the Americas. Besides an increase in the overall demand for food, there are new demands for foods of a wider product variety, easily prepared, higher quality, improved nutritional value, higher health standards as well as cleaner and environmentally sound production and processing practices. This trend has become more pronounced as LAC countries experience economic growth and become more integrated in the global economy.

On the supply side, food markets have demonstrated a remarkable increase in many new products with higher added value. Significant vertical and horizontal integration has occurred in the food industry, international standardization of processing and a consequent increase in food trade. The LAC region has steadily replaced its traditional production of raw materials with new systems that identify and prioritize new and emerging opportunities in international markets. However, significant reductions in investments in technology research and development have reduced the possibilities for many countries to meet their food consumption needs and to take full advantage of the new market opportunities.

1.1.3 New Agricultural Technologies

Technological change is a major source of economic growth; countries with higher rates of economic development display a greater capacity in the accumulation and use of technology and knowledge. The technological revolution for agriculture in the fields of biotechnology and genetic engineering has generated both challenges and opportunities for farming in the region. Methods of genetic improvement make possible the multiplication of crop yields and improvement in the nutritional and culinary quality of food. While production of genetically modified crops still faces the problem of widespread acceptance by consumers, they offer an important means to combat hunger and alleviate poverty.

At the same time the revolution in information and communications technologies (ICTs) continues to accelerate, providing immense potential for developing agriculture and the rural economy. Much of the production increases, improved productivity and

competitiveness in the industrialized countries in recent years have occurred because of the application of those technologies.

However, the LAC region is generally behind in the development and adoption of many of the new technologies for its agricultural and rural sector. Not only are the region's capabilities at a low stage of development but they are unequally distributed among the countries. These deficiencies, together with the already limited access to basic infrastructure and services, severely affect the possibilities of the low-income, rural population to participate in the digital and global economy.

1.1.4 Environmental Management

Increased urbanization, industrial development and traditional agricultural practices have severely affected the environmental balance. The process of modernizing agriculture has been accompanied by accelerated natural resource degradation, especially soils, water and forests, and increased pollution of these resources from inappropriate agrochemical use.

In LAC approximately 250 million hectares of degraded agricultural soils exist, equivalent to 33% of the total land under production. Increased land degradation is accompanied by a significant percentage of contaminated water sources and by the accelerated loss of biodiversity in numerous ecosystems. Some countries are already facing severe water shortages, not only for agricultural and industrial use, but also for human consumption. Rural-urban migratory patterns continue to prevail as the traditional response to rural poverty and limited economic opportunities in the rural economy. Urban pressures aggravate the problems and force the expansion of the areas cultivated to those that are generally less productive, without serious regard to the processes of degradation and contamination.

Several countries experience high risk due to extreme climatic situations, represented by prolonged droughts, floods and hurricanes. These have increased their frequency and force, inducing considerable damages to the environment that houses poor, rural population and contributing to increased poverty. A major challenge is to address these natural resource and environmental problems, while increasing the food supply to meet the growing demands and reducing poverty.

1.1.5 Poverty and Food Insecurity

While increased emphasis has been placed on the importance of trade and markets as major sources of economic growth, insufficient attention has been given to the problems of increasing poverty and food security. The production levels of basic foods in many nations have fallen and access to food by the poor has not improved. Approximately 40% of the population in the LAC region lives in poverty and 20% are in conditions of extreme poverty. Information on rural areas indicates poverty levels higher than 50% of the total rural population and extreme poverty at about 33%.

More effective development strategies are required if poverty reduction, improved food security and better management of the environment are to be achieved simultaneously. The development of agriculture and increasing prosperity of the rural economy is an important strategy to reduce poverty and improve the nutrition levels and food security, only if better policies are pursued, institutions are strengthened and there are increased investments in the rural economy. Such strategies can generate new market opportunities for the rural economy, with a positive impact on job creation and income generation, while at the same time contributing to improving the situation of women, rural youth and indigenous groups.

1.1.6 National Reforms

The structural adjustment programs undertaken by the LAC countries in the last decades have, in general, reduced budgetary resources for the Ministries of Agriculture, which adversely affected and continue to limit their policymaking and operational capacity. Many services were privatized and there has been a drastic reduction in the size and the capacity of public programs to support agricultural development. This has affected the capacity to produce and manage public goods, as in the case of rural development and agricultural research.

At the same time, globalization places new demands on the public agricultural sector. These include among others, greater harmonization of sectoral policies with macro-policy, the design and application of new regulatory frameworks, the provision of efficient services that are necessary to improve competitiveness, development of strategic alliances at the national, regional and international levels and improved coordination within the new, international institutional framework. While governments will continue to play a lead role in these areas, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and international institutions like IICA will need to play an increasing role as strategic partners in the process.

1.2 Situation of Agriculture in LAC

The situation of agriculture and the rural sector among LAC countries continues to display extreme differences and variations in their structure, growth and positioning to meet the new global, hemispheric and national challenges. Unlike the U.S. and Canada where the sector's growth has been more robust and its preparedness to meet these challenges more advanced, LAC countries experienced much slower progress. After more than a decade of economic reforms and freer trade the performance of LAC's agriculture showed some positive signs, but has not been consistent and satisfactory enough to have major impacts on poverty alleviation and rural prosperity.

The LAC's agricultural production has been expanding, but growth rates on average have been lower than overall economic growth. Total food production per capita grew steadily since 1994, but it has not been sufficient enough for the region as a whole to improve its participation in international trade in relative terms. Food imports continue to increase in many countries despite good performance in food output. Productivity

increased in some countries but has not reflected in higher incomes or improved rural prosperity.

Although some countries are net food importers, the LAC region continues to be a net exporter of food with a trade surplus of 22.9 billion dollars (1999). Nevertheless, the export competitiveness of the region shows signs of deterioration in the international market. In many countries, the competition of food imports with national production continues to reflect unfair competition and protectionism.

1.3 New Mandates for IICA

New mandates were given to IICA for its future work in the Americas, largely by the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Americas, held in Quebec City, Canada, in April 2001 and in the Declaration of Bavaro by the Ministers of Agriculture. The Summit's *Hemispheric Declaration* and *Plan of Action* emphasized the importance of the role of agriculture and rural life for strengthening democracy, creating prosperity and realizing the potential of people.

IICA was recognized in the Summit for its work in the hemisphere and it was assigned a role as partner institution in the *Plan's* follow-up and implementation. This potentially changes two aspects of IICA's current role:

- The *Plan* extends IICA's role beyond that of promoting inter-American dialogue only through the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA). It also calls for IICA's involvement in other dialogues and coordinating groups.
- IICA is also being asked to take on a broader mandate that is beyond a supplier of technical cooperation - one that is more proactive and that brings agricultural, environmental and rural development issues into the larger debate on hemispheric integration and prosperity.

According to the new role assigned to the IABA by the Thirtieth OAS General Assembly meeting in June 2000, the First Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life within the context of the Summit of the Americas process was held in Bavaro, Dominican Republic. In the Bavaro Declaration, the Ministers of Agriculture committed themselves to the mandates of the Third Summit and urged the international institutions that provide cooperation and funding for development and governments, to coordinate their strategies and harmonize technical and financial cooperation for implementation of the Declaration.

The Ministers placed particular emphasis on the need for significant progress in:

Improving food security and reducing rural poverty through ten strategic actions:

- elimination of the anti-agriculture biases in policies and the recognition in such policies of the larger contribution of agriculture to the well-being of society;

- further liberalization of agricultural trade;
- strengthen dialogue and consensus building on strategies;
- develop a new institutional framework conducive to the sustainable development of agriculture and the rural milieu;
- support rural organizations and communities so as to improve their capacity for self-development;
- promote environmentally-friendly agriculture;
- modernization of agriculture and strengthening of services for agri-food production and trade
- prevention and mitigation of natural disasters and sanitary and phytosanitary emergencies;
- increase investment in human capital; and
- reduction of knowledge, information and technology gaps.

PART II

REPOSITIONING IICA FOR THE FUTURE

CHAPTER II

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses the Institute's new vision and mission to confront the problems and challenges of the future that were identified in the previous chapter. It also discusses IICA's new role within the wider framework of the development agenda for the Americas and the principles that will guide the organization to achieve its vision and mission.

2.1 A New Vision and Mission

The challenges to agriculture and the rural sector in the Americas, the mandates of the Summit process and the Bavaro Declaration together provide the general framework for IICA's actions in the future. At the same time, these assign a larger role for the Institute in the hemisphere, one that goes beyond the mere provision of technical cooperation services. While IICA focuses its actions on the agricultural and rural sector, the mandates indicate that these be done within the larger framework of contributing to sustainable development and economic prosperity in the hemisphere. The Institute therefore, needs to reposition itself not only within the agricultural and rural sector, but also within the wider institutional framework that is committed to the common development agenda of the Americas. This repositioning will be done through the construction of a new vision and mission.

Consistent with the above, IICA's vision is:

To transform IICA into a development organization that promotes sustainable agricultural development, food security and prosperity in the rural communities of the Americas.

Its Mission is:

To support the Member States in their pursuit of progress and prosperity in the hemisphere through the modernization of the rural sector, the promotion of food security, and the development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared, environmentally managed, and socially equitable for the peoples of the Americas.

2.2 Components of the Vision

2.2.1 Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Development

Achieving sustainable agricultural development is a common goal of IICA's member countries and a critical component of their development agenda. This requires a vision of agriculture that among others is productive, efficient and competitive, is

environmentally sensitive and it is capable of preserving the social fabric of rural communities for future generations.

However, the challenge of achieving sustainable agricultural development is enormous and multi-dimensional. Not only is the challenge huge, it differs for various types of agriculture within and among countries in the hemisphere. In some countries, some components of agriculture are highly productive but degrade and damage the natural and environmental resource base. At the same time, these co-exist with large areas of subsistent farming and low technology agriculture.

A serious limitation in most countries has been the policy and institutional constraints to support sustainable agricultural development. The lack of adequate policies and a coherent strategy, together with insufficient investment in various areas in the agricultural sector and limited institutional capabilities seriously limit the progress towards achieving sustainable agricultural development. The rural poverty situation and increasing pressures for agriculture to be more competitive in the global economy further compound the situation.

IICA recognizes the complex nature of achieving sustainable agricultural development. In this regard, the Institute will support a multi-pronged effort with its Member States and strategic partners that will contribute to:

- (i) improving the design of policies and strategies;
- (ii) strengthening the institutional framework through institutional modernization;
- (iii) adopting a more holistic and broader approach to agriculture;
- (iv) increasing investments in the agri-food system; and
- (v) increasing education and training on sustainable agriculture.

2.2.2 Promoting Food Security

Food security is understood not so much as a condition of national self-sufficiency, but conditions where human beings have physical and economic access to a safe and nutritional diet to satisfy their food needs and that allows them to live their life in a productive and healthy manner. Overcoming food insecurity is seen in this light as improving access, increasing the food supply, improving its distribution and enhancing food safety.

Food security is a complex matter that requires dynamic collaborative arrangements between a wide variety of stakeholders, including governments, national and international organizations as well as civil society. Limitations in the access to food require a coherent set of policies across various sectors of the economy to overcome the structural impediments of different groups, especially the rural poor. Solutions through public policy must resolve the short-term problems without losing perspective of the longer-term goal of enhancing food security. The role of small farmers and rural women as producers, distributors and users of food for consumption and income generation is central to promoting food security. Availability and distributional issues need public policies and various forms of intervention that among others, facilitate the adoption of

modern production technologies and improve the efficiency of national markets so as to reduce the adverse impacts of agricultural trade.

IICA will contribute to food security in the hemisphere through initiatives to improve agricultural trade and food safety and rural development activities, by coordinating efforts between national, regional and international organizations that support institutional capacity-building at all levels to:

- (i) define and adopt a common conceptual and operational paradigm to address food security problems in a more holistic way;
- (ii) support the modernization of institutions for more effective planning, the design and execution of policies and strategies;
- (iii) increase investments in the rural sector for reducing poverty, expanding food supply and improving its distribution; and
- (iv) promote the development and improvement of national markets, including those of goods, services and capital.

2.2.3 Increasing Rural Prosperity

Economic growth and the improvement of markets should provide benefits to all strata of society so that economic prosperity, human progress and sustainable development can be achieved in a harmonious and balanced manner. It is now evident and clearly recognized that economic growth and the better functioning of markets are not sufficient and that corrective interventions aimed at reducing poverty are essential. Achieving prosperity with equity will require renewed efforts by governments, policy makers and civil society if large sections of the rural economy are to benefit from globalization and the development process.

The problems of exclusion and marginalization affect many people, but particularly indigenous groups, women and youth in rural areas in different ways because of their unique economic and social conditions. Subsistence agriculture is especially prevalent as a livelihood survival strategy, almost always accompanied by extremely limited access to productive assets and support services.

In the farming community, the unequal and limited negotiating and advocacy power of small and medium farmers, some more organized than others in the food commodity chains, does not allow them equal access to the benefits of output expansion and trade. Instead, changes in the policy environment usually generate added vulnerability to these groups and make their survival more precarious, accentuated by natural disasters and sudden, adverse climatic conditions.

Increasing rural prosperity will require a sustained agenda of actions and interventions in the following areas:

- (i) the design of appropriate policies and strategies targeted to the more vulnerable groups in the rural economy;
- (ii) education and training to improve knowledge, skills and abilities that allow effective involvement and participation of marginal groups in agricultural and rural markets;
- (iii) strengthen civil society organizations and promote greater interaction between stakeholders in the food commodity chains to generate common agendas and improve negotiating capacity and advocacy skills;
- (iv) modernize and expand agricultural services to improve productivity;
- (v) develop the institutional capacity of agricultural and rural organizations to increase their efficiency and effectiveness and for joint public-private actions; and
- (vi) increase investments in the rural economy.

IICA recognizes that the task of increasing rural prosperity in the Americas is beyond that of governments alone. The Institute will concentrate its efforts and collaborate with public and private institutions and its strategic partners on those actions that can contribute to a long-lasting impact of alleviating poverty and enhancing the prosperity of rural communities in its Member States.

2.3 Guiding Principles

To achieve its vision and to deliver quality services to its Member States, the future actions of the Institute will be guided by a set of fundamental principles that will have concrete expressions in its internal policies, its relationships with its Member States and strategic partners and its actions at the national, regional and hemispheric levels. These include:

- (i) ***Leadership through excellence.*** The Institute aspires to provide effective leadership and technical excellence in the strategic areas of its work. This will be complemented with the promotion of a new corporate image with hemispheric and global dimensions that stems from stakeholder recognition and their satisfaction of the quality and timeliness of IICA's contribution. Leadership also requires the capacity to listen carefully while engaged in strategic dialogue if consensus building, trust and commitment are to be achieved.
- (ii) ***Management style.*** Adoption of a management style based on principles to align vision, mission, resources, actions, results and performance in a permanent and meaningful way.
- (iii) ***Commitment to diversity.*** Tolerance and recognition of diversity will be embedded in the personal values and institutional behavior, so as to achieve the convergence of heterogeneous demands from a wide variety of stakeholders and supplying services that are customized to their needs. The array of challenges requires that differentiated strategies be designed for each region and each country, in collaboration with national counterparts. Internally, IICA is committed

to respecting the diversity of its human resource base and will convert its multicultural environment into competitive advantages for action.

- (iv) ***Accountability through performance and results.*** Clear and concrete criteria for measuring institutional performance will be introduced to provide accountability, financial prudence, increasing efficiency and effectiveness, transparency and to direct limited resources towards those activities with the greatest potential for impact. Emphasis will be placed on respecting the norms of IICA. Institutional transparency will facilitate strong ties with strategic partners to leverage additional resources needed to address the strategic priorities of Member States that are reflected in this plan.
- (v) ***Link local demands with global opportunities.*** IICA's value added services starts from orienting its actions to the demands of its Member States. In this regard the Institute and its Member States will develop and execute together a national technical cooperation agenda. For this agenda to become effective and produce results, each requires analysis of their viability and utility to determine how to maximize the opportunities provided by the processes of globalization, integration, decentralization and participation.
- (vi) ***Teamwork and partnership.*** IICA must provide the basis to establish relationships that facilitate and develop trust, mutual respect and flexibility, as well as generate incentives for effective multi-disciplinary work teams as a modus operandi, both within the Institute and with its strategic partners. These are the foundations for permanent innovation and creative thinking.
- (vii) ***Decentralization and capacity building.*** Emphasis is placed on decentralization of the Institute to the national level. A new dynamic relationship will be forged between Headquarters, National Offices and key stakeholders that require more effective communication, new institutional arrangements that facilitate and broker resources and capacities to intervene effectively and improve performance. A policy of continuous development of the human resource base will be pursued, if IICA is to provide the necessary leadership and quality of services to its Member States and other clients.
- (viii) ***Relationships with Member States.*** A larger role has already been assigned to the IABA. The Institute will work with its Member States to strengthen the IABA's role in the hemisphere within the Summit of the Americas process, as well as its relationships with them through the Executive Committee and the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI).

2.4 Implications of IICA's New Role

In order to exercise its new role it is imperative that the Institute develops the capacity to visualize the future, anticipate problematic situations, understand their underlying causes and transform them into opportunities that provide concrete benefits to

the Agriculture and Rural Community of the Americas. IICA requires expanded analytical capabilities to comprehend circumstances, the broader development context of agriculture and its trends, and how to support its stakeholders to construct their future for sustained prosperity.

IICA already possesses several comparative advantages that will facilitate its new role in the hemisphere. In its 60 years of experience, it has accumulated a profound knowledge on agriculture and the rural sector, the diversity of peoples and cultures and the agro-ecological diversity that are important for crafting creative solutions to a wide variety of problems and challenges. Its institutional presence in each of the 34 Member States provides it with the necessary leverage and flexibility to mobilize resources between countries and regions to structure and adapt programs and interventions to address national and regional priorities, facilitate information flow and improve the dissemination of best practices.

Nevertheless, the new challenges to the Institute require that it transforms itself in two dimensions: one internal and the other external. Both are directly related to the positioning of agriculture as a key component of the national development agenda, for developing new leadership and supporting its participation in building new institutional arrangements to achieve prosperity and sustainable development. The internal dimension seeks to convert the Institute into an effective development organization. Some reengineering is required at the individual level and in institutional processes to strengthen the required core competencies and to provide strategic insights regarding future trends and opportunities.

The external dimension seeks to link public and private sector leaders of the Agriculture and Rural Community to design and implement an Inter-American strategy that transforms the challenges of the 21st century into concrete opportunities for progress. The new institutional dynamics that will characterize IICA's work transcends its traditional role of providing technical cooperation services and moves towards new forms of leadership: mobilizing resources, coordinating joint initiatives, facilitating dialogue, building consensus and commitment, all with the view of contributing to sustainable agricultural development and to rural prosperity in the Americas.

CHAPTER III

STRATEGIC FOCUS AND PRIORITIES

The priorities for the Institute have two strategic dimensions, both of which are interrelated. The first dimension relates to focusing IICA's actions in priority areas, which are derived from its new mandates. This chapter discusses the first dimension - the strategic areas of action in which the Institute will allocate its resources to achieve its vision and mission. The second dimension has two components, an internal and external. The internal component relates to operational aspects of the Institute's strategy - the execution of technical cooperation actions and improvements in the organizational structure. The external component is the execution of IICA's actions through strategic alliances and partnerships. The components of the second dimension are discussed in Part III of the Plan.

3.1 Strategic Focus

IICA's work will focus on contributing to sustainable agricultural development, enhancing food security and increasing rural prosperity in the Americas. This will be done through the execution of technical cooperation actions that will be organized in *six strategic areas*. The areas are: trade and agribusiness development; technology and innovation; agricultural health and food safety; sustainable rural development; information and communication; and education and training. The latter two areas are integral parts of, as well as complementary in their actions to the other four areas. The specific objectives of each area and its priority lines of action are discussed below.

3.2 Strategic Areas

3.2.1 Trade and Agribusiness Development

Objective

- (i) To support the countries' efforts to upgrade their capacities for designing and analyzing policies in the agri-food system, to foster integration and cooperation for the successful participation of the agricultural and rural sector in domestic and international markets.
- (ii) To support agro-industrial and agri-business development by promoting the incorporation of new technology and business principles to improve the competitiveness of agribusinesses.

Institutional Actions

- (i) Trade and Policies

- (a) Policies on trade and trade negotiations
 - Follow up on the agricultural negotiations of the WTO and FTAA (2002-2005);
 - provide training to negotiators and support staff of the public and private sectors on the various issues related to the Agreement on Agriculture and other WTO and FTAA agreements; and
 - conduct studies on agricultural trade policies and economic integration.

 - (b) Policies and institutional reform
 - Assist countries to adjust their policies to the agreements emanating from the WTO;
 - conduct studies on the success of public policies and provision of services;
 - conduct studies on the impacts of agricultural policies; and
 - develop a methodology for analyzing the contribution of agriculture and the rural sector to national development.
- (ii) Agribusiness and Trade
- (a) Policies and instruments for domestic market development
 - Promote and develop agricultural commodity exchanges;
 - support the creation and strengthening of marketing organizations;
 - promote and develop service enterprises;
 - develop alternatives for financing agricultural production and marketing; and
 - promotion and development of agribusiness with strong commitment to quality and food safety.

 - (b) Improve trade in international markets
 - Serve as a source of information with regard to exports/imports of agricultural products in the hemisphere;
 - provide training to small and medium size enterprises on exporting and in the development and implementation of export business plans;
 - support small and medium size enterprises to position their products in specific markets; and
 - disseminate and support the exchange of successful experiences on agribusiness development.

3.2.2 Technology and Innovation

Objective

Contribute to rural poverty alleviation, improve competitiveness and the efficient use of natural resources by means of supporting the countries in the transformation of their institutional structures for technological innovation and the modernization of their science and technology policies.

Institutional Actions

- (i) Strengthen national capabilities for technological innovation, with special emphasis on:
 - Modernizing public and private institutional structures for research, extension and for the technological development of agri-businesses, from the perspective of the National Innovation Systems as well as from individual organizations.
 - Increasing public and private investments in research and development technology so as to address the new priorities of developing competitive agribusinesses.
 - Promoting human capital development through actions oriented to generating new researchers to address the new challenges.
- (ii) Support the design and implementation of technological innovation policies, linked to the strategic objectives and priorities of the region, with emphasis on:
 - Technical assistance to the countries to harmonize biotechnology and bio-security policies from the perspective of agriculture, and in their preparation for fulfilling and executing international agreements and national programs in those themes.
 - Improving the capabilities for negotiating, acquiring and commercializing new biotechnologies, including intellectual property rights.
- (iii) Support the consolidation process of the Regional Technological Innovation System and the technological gap between the countries, by means of:
 - Supporting hemispheric dialogue and the development of a regional technology innovation and cooperation agenda among the countries through FORAGRO.
 - Supporting the development and consolidation of the Regional Agricultural Technology Fund, FONTAGRO, as a mechanism for funding regional research projects, especially for the diffusion of their experiences and their benefits to the countries.

- Periodic analysis of the performance of agriculture from the perspective of technology, oriented to problem identification and exploiting the opportunities that facilitate the improvement of agriculture's contribution to economic and social development.
 - Supporting articulation and synergy among the different stakeholders of the Regional Technological Innovation System Regional, especially FORAGRO, FONTAGRO, PROCIS, SICTA, CATIE, CARDI and specialized networks for a better exchange of knowledge and technologies in priority areas.
 - Promoting new alliances between national and regional systems, CGIAR Centers, GCIAl, and regional and international centers of excellence centers.
- (iv) Development and management of a hemispheric scientific-technology information system for agricultural and rural development that is orientated to:
- The management and exchange of information and knowledge available to national and regional innovation and research systems in the Americas, in collaboration with other agricultural research systems of the world;
 - Support the organization of national information systems for research and technological development.
 - Technical assistance for the design of policies oriented to reducing the intraregional digital gap with the rest of the world, from the perspective of technology.

3.2.3 Agricultural Health and Food Safety

Objective

To assist Member States in strengthening their animal health, plant health and food safety capabilities in order to compete successfully in national and international markets and contribute to safeguarding consumer health.

Institutional Actions

- (i) Application of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreements of the WTO and FTAA as well as the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards of the international reference organizations (CODEX, OIE and IPPC). Provide information to the countries on the development of said agreements and standards, as well as on important events, and strengthen national and regional capacity in critical disciplines such as equivalence, regionalization, risk assessment, traceability, and harmonization.

- (ii) Enhance agricultural health and food safety systems vis-à-vis market access, interaction with the private sector, technical capacity and human and financial resources. Support the countries' efforts to articulate and develop specific technical assistance regarding regulatory mechanisms, science-based technical capacity and institutional sustainability.
- (iii) Strengthen the ability of the Member States to respond in a timely manner to emergencies and emerging issues in agricultural health and food safety. Assist countries with early recognition of emerging issues that put at risk animal, plant or human health, or that offer new opportunities to enhance the level of competitiveness or access to new markets. Facilitate the provision of limited resources to address unforeseen emergencies.
- (iv) Support food safety strategies and policies in Member States that develop standards and regulations, leadership capacity and technical capability throughout the entire agri-food chain. Adopt initiatives that encompass the agri-food chain, strengthen leadership and political determination, encourage shared responsibility from the producer to the consumer, enhance food safety standards and norms, improve the ability to assess and manage risk, and promote education and information outreach.
- (v) Capture timely and relevant information on the multiple roles of agricultural health and food safety, and generate value added information for different levels of decision makers and technical professionals in the public and private sectors. Provide timely information and support to build alliances in areas of potential impact including production, competitiveness, trade, tourism, bio-security, public health, food security and the environment.

3.2.4 Sustainable Rural Development

Objective

To support the efforts of Member States and strengthen their institutional capabilities for reducing rural poverty, increasing rural prosperity and improving the capacities of rural people to accelerate their own development processes through the sustainable use of natural resources.

Institutional Actions

- (i) Support the design of policies, strategies and investment programs for sustainable rural development (SRD). The priorities will be to:
 - Strengthen technical capabilities to formulate regional and national strategies and holistic policy frameworks that are capable of improving

competitiveness in the rural economy for businesses, employment creation and new sources of income as well as environmental services.

- Design of programs and projects that contribute to poverty reduction and environmental conservation through improved access to physical, financial and social capital, appropriate technology, markets and information.
- Promote new productive activities that generate rural and non-rural employment and income.
- Collaborate in planning and the design of participatory local development.
- Support the sustainable management and use of natural resources.

(ii) Institutional modernization

- Support the development of new institutional arrangements for SRD through capacity building.
- Design and implement specialized training programs to improve technical skills of professionals and technicians.
- Collaborate with educational institutions to disseminate information on the new paradigms and methodologies for sustainable rural development.

(iii) Management of rural territories based on improved natural resource use and management

- Promote a territorial approach to SRD through strengthening programs for local governance, watershed management, community-based organizations and business development that builds on sustainable natural resource use and conservation.
- Strengthen initiatives for clean production practices and environmental services.
- Support the design and operations of natural disaster monitoring systems.

(iv) Information management

- Strengthen information systems for effective SRD, giving rural communities and producer groups improved access to relevant information for economic decision-making, improving production efficiency and access to markets.
- Disseminate information on best practices that make markets more transparent and reduce transaction costs.
- Support the creation of information management centers in regions, municipalities and other localities for groups that historically had little access to these services.

3.2.5 Information and Communication

Objective

Develop processes for the management of information and communication that facilitates cooperation to the countries, projection of the corporate image and the Institute's management and administrative operations.

Institutional Actions

- (i) Coordinate the development of institutional standards for information and communication systems, and promote their use by external and internal users through intranet and extranet.
- (ii) Consolidate the thematic information systems of the Institute to facilitate the other strategic areas of action.
- (iii) Develop a user-friendly and multilingual IICA web site that integrates the institution's information services oriented to the demands of clients.
- (iv) Increase and facilitate the production of printed and digital information of the Institute, including the development of an editorial policy, an IICA library system and the strengthening of the networks of documentation centers and agricultural libraries in the hemisphere.

3.2.6 Education and Training

Objective

To support the efforts of Member States to develop and upgrade human capital and talent for sustainable agricultural development and the improvement of rural life, through training in strategic subject areas, modernization of educational programs, and dialogue on and the integration of agricultural and rural education in the Americas.

Institutional Actions

- (i) Training in strategic subject areas.
Improve the availability of know-how and the skills and abilities of the stakeholders in the agricultural and rural community that are required for creatively managing change and developing modern institutional systems for greater effectiveness. Specific attention will be given to developing specialized knowledge bases founded on competitive advantages in specific countries and regions of Member States through the design, organization and implementation of training programs using innovative methodological approaches.

- (ii) Improve the quality and the relevance of existing educational programs in the academic fields at the national, regional and hemispheric levels.
Support public and private institutions and organizations to modernize their formal and non-formal educational plans and programs. This will facilitate their adjustment to the demands for integrating complex agricultural commodity chains into the global economy, and to the demands of stakeholders in the rural community to address poverty.
- (iii) Support dialogue on and the integration of agricultural and rural education systems.
- (iv) Promote and distribute didactic materials through distance education for responding to the demands of the agricultural and rural sector and agribusinesses.

PART III
OPERATIONALIZING THE PLAN

CHAPTER IV

INSTITUTE'S OPERATIONS

4.1 Technical Cooperation Agendas

IICA's strategic actions will be executed through technical cooperation agendas at three levels - national, regional and hemispheric. These will be the basic strategies of the Institute to address its new mandates and the problems and challenges related to agriculture and rural life in the Americas. In addition, the agendas will be developed as part of the broader development strategy for achieving economic prosperity and hemispheric integration.

The technical cooperation agendas at the national level will be the major focus of IICA's work. They will be prepared through dialogue and discussion with the participation of the public and private sectors in the countries.¹ While these will guide the Institute's actions in each country and will reflect the national priorities, they may also include components of the regional and hemispheric actions that are of special interest to the country. In executing the national agendas, the modus operandi will be to use local expertise and other resources, including developing strategic alliances to execute specific components.

The regional technical cooperation agenda will comprise two major components – the national agendas and the execution of actions that are of a “regional” nature. The latter includes a regional approach to addressing problems that are common to a set of countries, and the Institute's commitment to continue supporting the regional integration processes through existing mechanisms at the regional and sub-regional levels.

The hemispheric agenda will be developed through dialogue with the major stakeholders of the agricultural and rural community in the Americas. It will focus largely on issues and demands that are based on specific mandates and requests such as those emanating from the Summit process, the IABA and other hemispheric forums. It will also include actions related to that are consistent with the new role of the Institute with its strategic partners to execute the broader development agenda of the Americas, and mechanisms to link national and regional actions with hemispheric initiatives.

Once the new priorities have been identified at each level, these will provide the basis for defining projects and actions that are consistent with this Plan. Quota resources will be used as “seed” capital and will be allocated accordingly to execute the agendas. Additional resources to be generated from external sources will complement the quota

¹ The process for preparing the national technical cooperation agendas was initiated in all Member States in the early 2002.

resources, and will be used to leverage other technical cooperation actions at the national, regional or hemispheric levels.

4.2 Corporate Governance and Management

The challenges to provide more efficient and effective services to its Member States and other clients require an effective institutional structure and an integrated management framework. Changes in the environment, new demands on the Institute and modern management together require a closer relationship between the General Directorate and the Member States. Efforts were initiated in this direction with the redefinition of the roles of the IABA and the Executive Committee (EXCOM) in 1999 and the establishment of the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI). The General Directorate will strengthen its relationships with the SACMI to obtain inputs on management issues on a continuing basis for enhancing corporate governance and effective management. In addition, strengthening the existing Regional Fora of Ministers of Agriculture would enrich the deliberations of the IABA and the EXCOM. These Fora are envisioned as valuable mechanisms for consultation and for discussions on issues that are strictly regional in character.

Within the General Directorate, the new administration will consolidate the initiatives started and will strengthen various areas of management. One key aspect is the implementation of a new organizational structure that is flatter and the implementation of an integrated management framework. The new structure will reduce bureaucratic levels, reduce costs and will make the Institute more responsive in service delivery, while the new management framework will link the processes of strategic direction, programming and budget, execution of technical cooperation agendas and evaluation and review of management's performance more effectively. The new structure also includes mechanisms to support better articulation by IICA's professionals on thematic issues, places emphasis on improved methods of teamwork, and the adoption of technology that contributes to greater efficiency and the achievement of technical excellence. The Regional Centers were reformed to forge a closer, more effective working relationship between Headquarters and the Country Offices. At Headquarters, the new structure will facilitate more effective lines of communication for the delegation of authority.

Appropriate internal committees will be formed to facilitate strategic planning, support decision-making, ensure adequate discussion of corporate issues and facilitate the exchange of information. These committees will cover a range of management, administrative and strategic themes for which a constant review and evaluation is necessary for continuous adjustment in the Institute's operations.

4.3 Style of Technical Cooperation

Another key aspect of the new structure will be institutional changes that will contribute to elevating the technical excellence of the Institute and facilitating a more effective style of technical cooperation. One of these is the restructuring of the technical

areas, such that technical cooperation will focus on the strategic areas described earlier. A second is the mobilization of technical capabilities through subject-specific networks in which the Institute's professionals will collaborate with those from other national and international organizations. A third is the facilitating of horizontal cooperation among IICA's Member States, in order to foster solidarity in cooperation, sharing of successful experiences among the countries and capacity building both within IICA and in its Member States.

The new style of technical cooperation will include working together with its Member States and strategic partners to develop national, regional and hemispheric agendas for cooperation. This approach will provide flexibility in the implementation of the Institute's technical work program and focus IICA's efforts on priorities of its Member States while maximizing the use of its limited quota resources. In addition, it will strengthen the role of the stakeholders in decision-making and foster greater ownership of the projects and programs by its Member States.

The new approach will ensure full participation of national authorities in the conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of the technical cooperation actions. It will also seek to maintain a balance between regional and national activities to ensure that the demands at the national level are not compromised by multinational actions that do not respond to actual mandates. The regional initiatives will be organized in a manner to add value and be relevant to national activities. Furthermore, the approach will facilitate the Institute to become a more effective network of hemispheric cooperation where the exchange of information, technology, and experiences continually occurs between countries.

4.4 Financial Prudence and Management of Resources

A key aspect of re-engineering the Institute is to improve financial prudence and management of the Institute's resources. IICA is committed to the principle of financial prudence and this will be promoted throughout the Institute, to ensure that its limited resources are used as efficiently as possible to meet the Institute's objectives. Greater financial prudence will be stressed in all activities undertaken within the context of increased demand for its services and a frozen quota budget. A fundamental aim will be to link the allocation of limited financial resources with the search for technical excellence and greater efficiency. This will require a drastic change in the management and administrative methods and procedures currently in use.

All the Institute's resources will be managed in a responsible manner, in strict compliance with established rules and procedures. Basically, the goal is to manage the resources efficiently and minimize costs. IICA will accelerate its efforts to adopt new technologies to facilitate increased efficiency and effectiveness of management and administrative procedures and cost reduction.

The Institute continues to operate in an environment of limited financial and budgetary resources. The Member States have continuously requested that international agencies be more efficient in the use of their resources. In this regard, IICA's goal is for

its Member States to view their quota contributions as an investment that they can recover through tangible benefits derived from the Institute's technical cooperation services. One operating principle to be adopted in the management and use of financial resources will be that quota funds will be increasingly used as seed capital to leverage additional resources for investment in its Member States. A second will be to develop strategic partnerships in order to complement functions and activities and share responsibilities and costs.

The financial/accounting and administrative operations of the Institute have become much more diverse and complex due to increased management of externally-funded projects and the significant increase in the volume and complexity of various financial aspects of the Institute. In this regard IICA will consistently re-assess and upgrade the capabilities of its financial and administrative systems and procedures, incorporating technological advances and system enhancements as a way of doing business and refining its policies. These initiatives will be consistent with the Institute's re-engineering process and will ensure that its staff is properly trained in order to improve financial management and reporting capabilities on institutional performance.

4.5 Capacity Development

Successful implementation of the MTP ultimately depends on the quality and commitment of the Institute's personnel. Emphasis will be placed on human resource development and capacity building at all levels, not only in terms of technical and professional development, but also to reflect the principles and values that characterize the Institute. Critical issues related to the institutional culture will be addressed to facilitate increased commitment to IICA's vision and strategy, and to the achievement of high ethical standards and productivity.

Staff training in various areas of strategic importance for the Institute's development will be given high priority. An induction and development program will be implemented to improve the capability of IICA's Representatives. The Institute will orient its staff to base their actions on the principles of tolerance, flexibility, accountability and commitment. At the same time, personnel will be exposed and provided with the opportunities for continuous upgrading of their skills. Appropriate support and incentives will be provided to make the staff genuinely multilingual to facilitate IICA's work more effectively in the multilingual and multicultural hemisphere. Furthermore, opportunities will be sought to incorporate more professional women in the affairs of the Institute so as to ensure greater balance from a gender perspective in decision-making and program implementation.

For the Institute to be one of technical excellence, it is critical that its professional staff have the necessary technical capability to understand, interpret and provide the requisite recommendations to its clients on the implications of the changes in the environment. In this regard, IICA will upgrade and strengthen its technical capacity in the core strategic areas to provide the necessary support to its Member States to identify and

analyze the critical issues facing agriculture and the rural sector. In this way, the countries with the support of IICA will be able to structure their cooperation needs that articulate their national agenda within the larger, regional and international framework.

4.6 Results-based Institute

The Institute will transform itself into a results-based organization so that its Member States can perceive the value of the Institute and recognize the benefits they derive from its services. A commitment to results, based on a mechanism of ongoing monitoring and evaluation is essential if IICA is to become an institute of excellence that is respected by its partners and valued by its Member States. In this regard, the internal management structure of the Institute will be strengthened and streamlined in order to enhance the Institute's governance, efficiency, transparency and accountability.

A performance-based management system will be adopted to provide greater accountability of the Institute's actions. A Directorate of Performance Management and Evaluation will be established and it will have the responsibility for continuous monitoring of management performance and evaluating programs and actions at the hemispheric, regional and national levels. The evaluation process for IICA's technical actions in the field will be strengthened; appropriate performance standards will be developed and measures to evaluate performance will be implemented with the appropriate corrective actions. At the national level, stakeholders will be actively involved in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of IICA's technical cooperation agendas to ensure transparency and accountability.

CHAPTER V

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

This chapter provides a discussion on the external dimension of IICA's strategy to execute its national, regional and hemispheric agendas. It focuses on the execution of these agendas through joint actions with strategic partners and the development of new alliances. It also identifies institutional mechanisms through which such partnerships and alliances can be developed for achieving the Institute's vision and mission.

5.1 Commitment to Joint Actions

The recognition given to the importance of agriculture and the rural life in the overall economy in the Quebec Summit mandate and in the ministerial agreements in the Bavaro Declaration provides new challenges for leaders in the sector. It also demands a change in how agriculture is traditionally perceived and developed, including its links to rural economies and rural-urban linkages. Two key questions emerge: how to transform the importance of agriculture as a critical source of national development into concrete actions? How to provide the necessary leadership that provides articulation, generates new resources and facilitates joint actions both internationally and nationally to improve the sustainability and opportunities for rural communities?

An adequate response to the above requires genuine commitment and joint efforts between national and international organizations. Obviously, the support needed to forge development and prosperity transcends the institutional possibilities of individual governments and organizations like IICA. This is evident from the scenarios of how the new global economy will affect agriculture and the rural economy. The scenarios demand a new approach in which among others, strategic alliances and partnerships are essential if there are to be more meaningful dialogue and consensus building among stakeholders and resources mobilized to successfully address the challenges of creating prosperity and reducing poverty. IICA is committed to this approach and will work jointly with existing partners and will forge new alliances for the benefits of its Member States. In this regard, the Institute established a Directorate of Strategic Partnerships located in Washington D.C. to strengthen its alliances and coordinate its actions with various institutional partners.

5.2 A New Institutional Platform

To leverage its limited resources and consolidate the efforts, IICA proposes to build a hemispheric platform for dialogue, strengthen alliances and facilitate investments. To accomplish this new linkages and institutional mechanisms must be developed and sustained that allow knowledge and resources to flow from local and national levels through regional and hemispheric ones and become incorporated in issues of global concern. Building a hemispheric institutional platform capable of addressing these

multiple levels of action provides an opportunity to develop new modalities of technical cooperation that facilitate the participation of different organizations.

The hemispheric platform has four important objectives:

- To link the greater Agricultural and Rural Community to the knowledge-based society on a global scale.
- To orient and augment national and transnational public and private investment flows toward agricultural and rural development.
- To promote IICA as a recognized international organization that commands trust and respect as a strategic partner for contributing to prosperity and hemispheric and global governance.
- To develop new leadership and new institutional arrangements that articulate thematic issues at different levels: national, regional, hemispheric and global.

The Institute will consolidate existing relationships and build new ones with international and national strategic partners through four key institutional actions. These actions constitute the basis of a hemispheric institutional platform in which agriculture and the rural economy are a central part of national development strategies and in the management of international public goods. A brief discussion of each action is provided below.

5.2.1 Development of a Common Knowledge Base

This action requires the construction of a common base of knowledge and information about agricultural and rural development that creates new possibilities and manages the complexities of globalization. Efforts will be directed to creating a knowledge-based network for development.

The wealth of local and indigenous knowledge and the endogenous knowledge systems are recognized as important sources of capital for addressing problems faced by national governments. At the global and hemispheric levels, the Institute will establish strategic partnerships with institutions such as ECLAC, IDB, IFPRI, World Bank, FAO, IFAD, OAS, PAHO and others to generate knowledge and information about agriculture and rural development that are important for policymaking and program development.² National organizations like the ERS of USDA and other national research centers, private enterprises and NGOs are also important sources for knowledge and will be part of IICA's strategic partnerships.

² The Institute has already initiated dialogue with several organizations to revitalize institutional linkages in the new context outlined above.

5.2.2 Joint Actions in Technical Cooperation

It is recognized that producing knowledge in and of itself will not achieve effective development and reduce poverty; concrete actions are required to apply knowledge through technical cooperation activities to generate real benefits for the Member States. A systematic effort is necessary to create an operational network for technical cooperation that facilitates exchange of best practices and develops innovative capacities to address endemic problems and to generate opportunities.

The second action in the platform seeks to foster joint actions in the provision of technical cooperation. Starting from its historic experience, IICA will seek to improve the synergy between knowledge and action in a more systematic and institutionalized fashion. Initial responses of some key partners to consolidate joint actions have so far been positive. For example, IDB is interested in technological innovation and rural development; the Pan-American Health Organization, in animal health, food safety and rural livelihoods; the IACD of the OAS, in distance education and digital connectivity; and the FAO, in trade, agricultural health and food safety, information systems and rural development.

5.2.3 Implementation of the Summit Mandates

The third action recognizes the opportunities created by the Summit of the Americas process and the mandates established in Quebec in 2001. The commitment of the leaders of the nations of the hemisphere in the Third Summit to reduce poverty and promote programs for the improvement of agriculture and rural life provides new opportunities for investments to offset the historic decline in resources allocated to these sectors. The Third Summit Action Plan serves as an overarching guide for determining priorities for institutional resources and creates new possibilities for leveraging additional resources.

IICA will facilitate relationships and new institutional arrangements that envelop hemispheric, regional and national agendas with local realities. At the hemispheric level, IICA will coordinate its efforts with those of the OAS General Secretariat, especially the Executive Secretariat for the Summit Process, as active participants in the Joint Working Group of Institutional Associates to the Summit of the Americas. The central focus of this Joint Working Group is to strengthen collaboration and improve the exchange and flow of information and technical knowledge between the multilateral development banks, Inter-American organizations and national institutions to improve operating efficiency and program effectiveness.³

At regional and national levels, IICA places high priority on the work of regional institutions that promote integration and financing for national and regional initiatives. Support will be provided to these organizations in establishing working and useful

³ The Joint Working Group reports directly to the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) that is composed of national coordinators from the Foreign Affairs Ministries of each country who monitor progress on the implementation of the Summit's action plans.

relationships with national agricultural and foreign affairs representatives to align and enrich the national and regional agendas.

5.2.4 New Leadership and Institutional Arrangements

The fourth action incorporates the other three by providing operational elements to consolidate new leadership and to build an institutional architecture that will respond effectively to the complexities of agriculture and the rural community. Institutionalized forums for fruitful and results-oriented dialogue between leaders of all the stakeholder groups must be inclusive and genuinely participatory. Effective communication between these is critical to building trust and commitment, which are necessary for responding to the urgent problems of agricultural and rural development.

In this regard, IICA the Technical Secretariat of the Ministerial Meetings on Agriculture and Rural Life, within the context of the Summit of the Americas process. The Institute also supports national, regional and hemispheric forums to dialogue on strategies for improving agriculture and rural communities. These institutional spaces need to be consolidated and strengthened - between the ministerial delegates, leaders of agriculture private sector, IICA representatives and the SIRG members.

From the above perspective the Inter-American Dialogue becomes a network of forums, articulating hemispheric, regional, national and thematic forums to share knowledge, experience and explore collaborative arrangements for action. Their inclusive nature will mean greater participation from the private sector, academics and other stakeholders to serve as sources of information, skills and knowledge. IICA will provide technical support to the forums so that concrete results are achieved, consensus is developed between participating stakeholders, and bilateral and multilateral agreements are formalized to link capacities, resources and investments to achieve common objectives.