The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is uniquely positioned to help further US priorities in areas such as agricultural trade, biotechnology, food safety, animal and plant health, innovation, food security, and economic development throughout the Western Hemisphere.

A growing and healthy global agricultural sector underpins geopolitical stability through its contributions to developing economies, rural livelihoods, and food security. The sector is under increasing pressure to provide sustenance at affordable prices for a growing world population, while contributing to poverty reduction, promoting economic development, and decreasing its impact on the environment. Many countries, particularly those in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), rely on the United States (US) for support in meeting these challenges. The US, in turn, relies on markets in the region to both sell and source agri-food products as well as to embrace science-based policy.

As the United States’ closest neighbor, the LAC region (including Mexico) is an important market for US agricultural exports, which have been increasing steadily at an average of 6% per year over the past decade. The region currently receives almost 25% of all US agricultural exports (2016), much of which are cereals and meats. Conversely, LAC is also an essential supplier of agricultural products for US consumers and agro-processing businesses, providing 36% of the total. Horticultural and tropical products, fish, shellfish, coffee, and wine are of particular importance. The unique and complementary relationship between the US and LAC has important impacts on the growth and sustainability of their food systems, as well as on rural and economic development.

IICA strives to support the interests of all its member countries collectively while also responding to their individual priorities. The Institute both acknowledges and appreciates the leadership role that the United States has taken in supporting IICA’s evolution into the foremost regional agricultural organization that it is today. IICA’s efforts to improve capacities for addressing food safety issues, develop science-based standards, support public policies and institutions, and promote open trade are of benefit to the US agri-food sector.
sector. Some of the positive impacts—and IICA’s contributions—are detailed here.

### Addressing the root causes of instability and migration:
GDP growth generated by agricultural development is up to four times more effective in reducing poverty than growth generated by other sectors. Creating opportunities for rural employment and advancing economic development are key for reducing hunger and poverty and ultimately for increasing rural stability. This in turn helps reduce migration pressures on neighboring countries. IICA’s agricultural development efforts directly address poverty and inequality in LAC, providing enhanced economic opportunities that help to decrease migration and maintain social stability throughout the hemisphere.

- **IICA supported the US-led Food for Progress initiative through capacity building activities in pest and disease management, and implementation of good agricultural practices in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Central America is one of the fastest growing regions for US agricultural exports (152% between 2005-2015). As these countries become more food secure and incomes rise, the markets for US products expand.**

- **In addition, IICA supported improved sustainability and resilience of food systems to environmental risks through concrete actions such as risk mapping in Colombia and Paraguay, updates to emergency plans in Honduras and Costa Rica, development of guidelines for the use of bio-inputs and sanitary risks in Ecuador, and building capacity for agricultural planning in a changing climate. Efforts also included training and outreach to inform agricultural producers of ways to reduce water stress on crops, increase the water retention capacity of soils, and ensure sustained production, especially in areas prone to drought and desertification, such as the Central American Dry Corridor, the small islands of the Caribbean, and the Chaco (Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil).**

### Stimulating economic growth and expanding markets for US products:
Technological assistance provided by IICA increases the production of high quality, safe agricultural products. Greater agricultural production contributes to overall economic development, increased food security, and increased rural well-being, all of which reduce the need for U.S. foreign assistance. Stronger rural economies increase purchasing power and thus demand for products, technologies and services from the US.

- **IICA strengthened the technical capacity of 33 members of the Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA) to provide information on prices and markets to decision makers, agricultural producers, enterprises, and consumers, with the leadership and support of USDA-AMS. Through MIOA, IICA develops technical capacities in Information and Communication Technologies to improve information collection, management, and sharing for the promotion of transparent and efficient agricultural markets across the Americas.**

- **IICA has facilitated international agricultural trade by providing timely information, analysis and support, and by developing capacity in 17 countries for the administration and implementation of free trade agreements, as well as policies enhancing market access (e.g., safeguards, tariffs, trade facilitation, subsidies, and rules of origin, and the rules and regulations of the WTO Agriculture Committee).**

- **IICA facilitated connections between US food importers and supermarket chains, and LAC-based producer organizations and exporting companies to ensure reliable access to fresh and processed agricultural products that contribute to meeting the needs of US consumers and companies (mini vegetables, watermelons, roots and tubers, squash, coffee, and fresh and frozen tropical fruits, among others).**

### Safeguarding US agricultural health and food safety:
Known and emerging pests and diseases pose a serious risk to the production of safe, nutritious foods in the amounts and quality necessary. IICA builds technical capacity in the Americas to prevent, manage, and respond to the risks of foodborne diseases for US consumers, as well as the pests and diseases that affect crop and animal production, in this way mitigating potential health, environmental, and economic impacts. LAC producers are better able to comply with U.S. food safety regulations and ensure that safe, reliable products are imported into the U.S. market. Two key examples of IICA’s work in this key

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area are:

· The training provided to technicians from 15 LAC countries on compliance with the U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), thereby ensuring that exporters to the United States can respond to market demands and deliver safe products to US processors and consumers. In addition, IICA supported the certification of more than 100 LAC food safety professionals as Preventive Controls for Human Food lead instructors.

· Improved national, regional, and hemispheric safeguards for animal and plant health and preparedness for disease outbreaks. Moreover, the development of plant-pest surveillance systems, emergency planning and response for highly pathogenic avian influenza in Mexico, and risk assessment and management for citrus greening received support.

**Promoting science-based standard setting:** IICA's unique position as an honest broker for its member countries provides the US with unparalleled access and opportunities to promote and influence the development and implementation of international standards to govern the transport and trade of agricultural products. Science-based policies facilitate regional trade. In this area, IICA:

- Strengthened institutional capacity in LAC countries to develop and implement science-based sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards, as well as regulatory and oversight mechanisms to address SPS issues. This is accomplished through trainings and by facilitating the participation of representatives from the LAC region in the meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) SPS Committee (15 countries), Codex Alimentarius (25 countries), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC, 30 countries), and the World Animal Health Organization (OIE, 32 countries).

- Fortified regional technical capacity to develop pesticide maximum residue limits (MRLs) based on data collected during a multi-year, multi-country project. This strengthened the use of internationally accepted methods for establishing MRLs and encouraged the harmonization of MRLs in the Americas, thus facilitating trade and enabling greater market access for specialty crops.

- Increased the technical and regulatory capacities of 17 LAC countries to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety consistently with science-based regulatory approaches. IICA, with support from USDA, established the Central American Initiative for Biotechnology and Biosafety (ICABB) as a regional mechanism for discussing the movement and trade of living modified organisms.

- Strengthened institutional capacity in LAC to address low-level presence of genetically modified (GM) crops in internationally traded foods and feed in accordance with agreements of the Cartagena Protocol. It supported the creation and consolidation of the Global Low Level Presence (LLP) initiative, and fostered exchange of information on synthetic biology and new breeding techniques for biosafety regulators to encourage coherent and consistent regulatory approaches, minimize trade disruptions, and reduce barriers to innovation.

- Built stronger capabilities for capacity building in biotechnology risk communication and education in 24 LAC countries, in part to support efforts by the U.S. Soybean Export Council, U.S. Grain Council, Crop Life International, and Seed Association of the Americas to use sound scientific information to improve understanding and public perception of GM technology.

**Facilitating relations with Western Hemisphere countries:** IICA's governing body, the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), serves as a political forum for the ministers of agriculture to address critical and strategic issues at the bilateral, regional, or hemispheric levels. Within the context of the Summit of the Americas, this governance structure promotes and supports positive relations between the United States and its partners in Latin America and the Caribbean. The US has considerable opportunities to leverage IICA's efforts and resources to address regional agricultural issues of national importance, especially through active engagement in all of IICA's governing bodies.

- IICA identifies, analyzes and systematizes good practices and lessons learned in the US and puts them at the disposition of stakeholders in LAC, enabling them to build off of US advances on topics including agricultural outlooks, precision agriculture, food safety protocols, and other emergent issues.
IICA’s Role

- Delivers high quality technical cooperation and expertise to its 34 member countries to help address national and regional challenges for agricultural development in the Americas;
- Provides continuity and serves as an institutional memory for the agricultural sector, given its 75-year presence in the Americas, its knowledge of the context, networks, and what has proven to be effective;
- Cultivates strong local, national, and international collaborative relationships with the public and private sectors as well as civil society, which enables it to convene and coordinate amongst partners to effectively drive progress toward common goals;
- Coordinates or serves as the secretariat of many mechanisms for regional articulation and coordination, such as the Central American Agricultural Council, the Southern Agricultural Council, PROMECAFE, PROCINORTE, FONTAGRO, FORAGRO and others, promoting south-south, north-south, and regional cooperation to accelerate action;
- Encourages the participation of member countries in international fora, so that the public policies and regulations of the member countries are aligned with internationally recognized norms and commitments; and
- Serves as a trusted advisor for the ministries of agriculture and related institutions in the region. The Institute is a neutral broker, helping to compile and disseminate relevant tools, information, and other resources to the different stakeholders in the region.

In the future, IICA will continue to respond to the needs and support the priorities of its Member States, focusing on improving the safety, competitiveness, sustainability, and resilience of the agricultural sector with an emphasis on inclusion, innovation, market-oriented policies, and family agriculture.

IICA Delegation in the US

The IICA Delegation in the US serves as a liaison between US institutions and other IICA offices and partners in the hemisphere. Its office staff identifies opportunities, provides information, makes connections, and delivers solid technical backstopping to facilitate initiatives that benefit the agriculture sector in the Americas. With the support of USDA-FAS, the Delegation facilitated the placement of US citizens as Associate Professional Officers (APOs) in IICA. The IICA Office in the United States of America is in a unique position to support the US in implementing its international agenda for agriculture in the Americas.

About IICA

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is the specialized technical agency of the inter-American system for the promotion of agriculture and rural well-being in the Western Hemisphere. As envisioned in 1942 by its founder, then-US Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace, the Institute has strengthened hemispheric cooperation towards a more competitive, inclusive and sustainable agricultural sector that is able to feed the region and the world. Focusing on agricultural health and food safety, food security, agribusiness and trade, technology and innovation, risk management, sustainable natural resource management, and inclusive rural development, IICA’s permanent presence in each of its 34 Member States gives it an unrivaled advantage to facilitate, inform, and advance improved agricultural policies and practices in the Americas.