



*Inter-American Institute for  
Cooperation on Agriculture*

# Performance Evaluation Missions

*Experiences, Results  
and Lessons Learned  
2002 - 2009*

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and Lessons Learned  
2002 - 2009*



**Directorate of Performance Management and Evaluation (DPME)**

*Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture  
IICA Headquarters, Costa Rica  
April 2010*



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# Acronyms

<b>AAP</b>	Annual Action Plan
<b>CA&amp;E</b>	Committee of Audit and Evaluation
<b>CAF</b>	Committee of Administration and Finance
<b>CECADI</b>	Distance Training Center
<b>CFC</b>	Common Fund for Commodities
<b>DSA</b>	Directorates of Strategic Areas
<b>DECAP</b>	Directorate of Education and Training
<b>DIPRE</b>	Directorate of Programming and Evaluation
<b>DOR</b>	Director of Regional Operations
<b>DORI</b>	Directorate of Regional Operations and Integration
<b>DORI-Caribbean</b>	Directorate of Regional Operations and Integration for the Caribbean Region
<b>DPME</b>	Directorate of Performance Management and Evaluation
<b>DTLKM</b>	Directorate of Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management
<b>EC</b>	Executive Committee
<b>EO</b>	Executive Order
<b>GSP</b>	General Services Personnel
<b>IABA</b>	Inter-American Board of Agriculture
<b>ICP</b>	Individual Contribution Plan
<b>IICA</b>	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
<b>IPP</b>	International Professional Personnel
<b>ISO</b>	International Standards Organization

<b>LPP</b>	Local Professional Personnel
<b>MTP</b>	Medium Term Plan
<b>NTCA</b>	National Technical Cooperation Agenda
<b>OECS</b>	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
<b>OIP</b>	Office Improvement Plan
<b>PBMS</b>	Performance Based Management System
<b>RS</b>	Regional Specialist
<b>SACMI</b>	Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues
<b>SIHCA</b>	Hemispheric System of Training for Agricultural Development
<b>SIRANE</b>	System for the Review, Analysis and Evaluation of Institutional Performance

## Foreword

The Member States, through the Governing Bodies (the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA) and the Executive Committee (EC), as well as the administrative authorities of the Inter-American Institute of Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), have shown much interest in creating a new strategic vision for the Institute in order to transform it into the leading provider of technical cooperation services for agriculture and the development of rural communities in the Americas.

Having defined the new vision, mission, objectives and principles that would guide IICA's work, the Institute's authorities have shown particular interest in implementing a performance audit, monitoring and evaluation system, in order to "...enhance the process of evaluating IICA's technical activities in the field; develop appropriate performance standards and implement measures to evaluate performance, together with adequate corrective actions."<sup>1</sup>

In 2002, IICA established the Directorate of Performance Management and Evaluation (DPME)<sup>2</sup> in order to strengthen its technical capacities in implementing these processes. This Unit considers the internal process of institutional evaluation as an essential tool that contributes to improving performance, institutional alignment and promoting effectiveness in the delivery of the Institute's technical cooperation services and products, in fulfillment of its institutional vision and mission.

This document summarizes the eight years of experience (2002-2009) of the DPME and offers a brief account of its contributions, based on the review and evaluation exercises that were executed.

In preparing this document efforts were made to take full advantage of the data and information gathered from the various review and evaluation exercises implemented. However, given the nature of these exercises, it was not always possible to obtain comparable results and conclusions between Offices on certain issues. This was due to the fact that the methodology and instruments applied have evolved throughout the reference period. Similarly, aspects such

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<sup>1</sup> IICA. *Repositioning IICA to Meet the Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Discussion Document. January 2002. Page 14.*

<sup>2</sup> *Directorate of Performance Management and Evaluation (DPME)*



as the relative scale and emphasis of the work carried out in different Offices did not facilitate comparison and the types of analyses that can be carried out.

Throughout this document reference is made to the “Protocol for Review and Evaluation: Methodology and Procedures,” prepared by the DPME, which contains a detailed description of the methodology and procedures applied in the review and evaluation missions.

**Directorate of Performance Management  
and Evaluation (DPME)**

*April 2010*

# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Since its establishment as the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture in 1980, IICA has been supported by a unit, generally attached to the programming or planning units that was responsible for institutional evaluation.

In 2001, the Special Advisory Commission for Management Issues (SACMI) recommended the establishment of an integrated management system to coordinate the various components of institutional management. Based on this recommendation, IICA created the Directorate of Performance Management and Evaluation (DPME) in March 2002, as part of the implementation of a program of performance audit, follow-up and evaluation that *“...will enhance the process of evaluating IICA’s technical activities in the field; develop appropriate performance standards and implement measures to evaluate performance, together with adequate corrective actions.”*<sup>3</sup> Given the importance of the evaluation process and the Director General’s commitment to this as a mechanism for improving institutional performance, the DPME was directly attached to his Office.

The vision and operational guidelines contained in the 2002-2006 and 2006-2010 Medium Term Plans (MTPs) reaffirm the Institute’s commitment to the values of greater transparency and accountability to its Member States, as regards the results achieved, and to transforming IICA into a knowledge-based institution in order to ensure that its results have a significant impact.

**FIGURE 1** illustrates IICA’s new vision, as described in the MTP 2002-2006. It defines the three aspects of the vision and the institutional goals, supported by a set of principles and values.

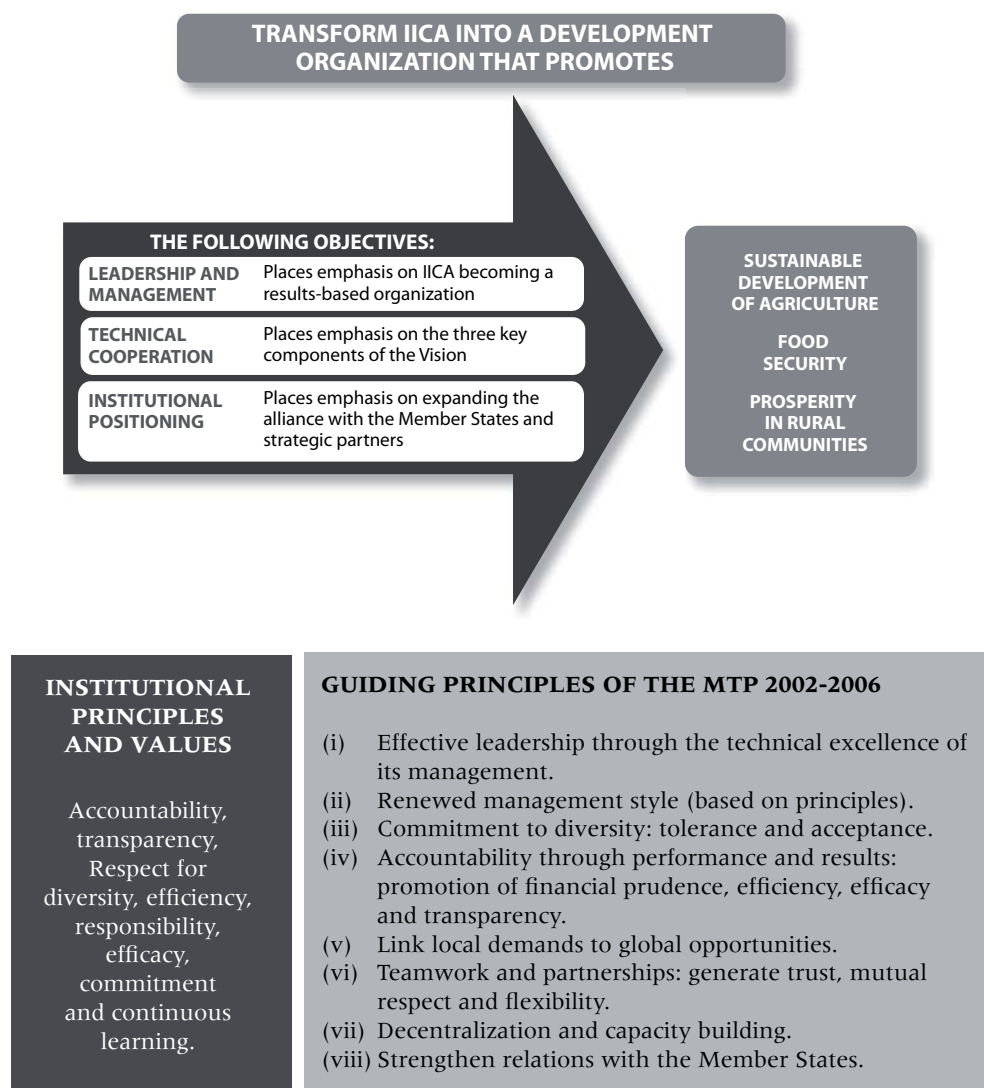
This approach required the implementation of a result-based management strategy aimed at increasing the efficiency and efficacy of IICA’s operations; improving its contributions to the agricultural and rural sectors; facilitating organizational learning; and promoting best institutional practices.

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<sup>3</sup> IICA. *Repositioning IICA to Meet the Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Discussion Document. January 2002. Page 14.*

Measuring results, optimizing the use of resources through appropriate budgetary allocation linked to results and accountability, are essential elements for increasing the Institute's credibility, improving its positioning and enhancing its efforts through the creation of strategic partnerships with international institutions and the public and private sectors.

**FIGURE 1**  
New Vision of IICA and Institutional Objectives<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> IICA. 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan. 2002. Page 34.

IICA. Repositioning IICA to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century. January 2002. Page 9.

In this regard, it is essential to systematically and objectively analyze the efficiency and relevance of the actions implemented (or under implementation) in the Member States, document the experience acquired in their execution, relate their level of success with the impact they have on agriculture and the rural sector and ensure that the proposed goals are being achieved.

The establishment of the DPME as a unit directly attached to the General Directorate contributed to the process of fostering greater accountability, transparency and the transformation of IICA into a results-based institution. As such, the DPME received the mandate to systematically review and evaluate the performance of the units of the General Directorate, in order to achieve five main objectives:

- (a) To improve the management and performance of the IICA Offices and the Units at Headquarters;
- (b) To improve the contribution of IICA to agriculture and the rural sector of the Member States;
- (c) To promote a culture of self-evaluation and accountability;
- (d) To promote and support institutional best practices; and
- (e) To enhance the institutional memory.

The Director General provided guidance to the DPME to focus its efforts on analyzing and reviewing IICA's management and actions in the Member States. Accordingly, eleven institutional areas or dimensions were defined for evaluation by the DPME's missions to the IICA Offices, namely: leadership and management capacity, technical capacity, administrative capacity, capacity to manage external resources, teamwork, application of the institutional regulations, internal communications, institutional image, relations with governmental authorities and agencies, relations with strategic partners and the identification of institutional best practices.

The internal institutional evaluation process was established in 2002 as an essential tool for improving performance, institutional alignment and effectiveness in the delivery of technical cooperation services and products. It entailed a review of the evaluation methodology that was utilized until 2001, which in turn led to a redefinition of the approaches, methods and instruments used, in order to provide a more systematic approach and improve qualitative aspects of the methodology. The aim was to promote institution-building and foster a continuous learning process, and eliminate the practice of evaluations designed to address specific problems and cases.

Thus, the approach developed and applied by the DPME within the Institute was innovative because it transformed the function of institutional

evaluation into a systematic, methodical, continuous and inclusive practice. The current evaluation process includes missions to all the Member States, entails a comprehensive review of all aspects of the management of the Offices and the cooperation activities, and involves the direct participation of representatives of the organizations that are IICA's clients and partners, as well as staff members, through individual interviews.

The conceptual elements used in the design of the new methodology were based on the Performance Management approach, aimed at enhancing the achievement of results at the individual, group and organizational level. This approach responded to the objective of the MTP 2002-2006 to transform IICA into a results-based institution.

## 1.2 Origin and Mandate of the DPME

The institutional evaluation process was modified over the eight-year period, due to new learning experiences and in response to periodic institutional changes in the Administration, changes in the demands and the explicit requests of Members of its Governing Bodies.

Prior to 2002, an evaluation approach known as "Evaluation Workshops on IICA's Performance in the Countries" was applied. These missions to the IICA Country Offices, coordinated by the Directorate of Programming and Evaluation (DIPRE), used a participatory approach to conduct a general assessment of the performance in a given Office, during a specific period. The process included group work and exercises with the staff, plus interviews with clients and other associated organizations to obtain their views and perceptions on the Institute's cooperation services.

From 2002 onwards, the evaluation process was regarded as a basic tool for enhancing IICA's technical capacity and institutional positioning, and proposals were made to improve it and make evaluation a more independent activity. In this context, the administration created the DPME and established the System for the Review, Analysis and Evaluation of Institutional Performance (SIRANE). One of the System's main advantages is that it is far more comprehensive than the previous ones applied by the Institute, inasmuch as the approach of the evaluation process, the information produced and the final recommendations have a much broader and a more complete perspective, particularly related to management and operational aspects of IICA's activities in the countries.

The evaluation system assessed three aspects of performance that must be aligned: corporate, of each unit and individual. It encompasses both the external and the internal dimensions in the delivery of IICA's different technical

cooperation services. At the same time, the questionnaires and interviews were standardized and systematized so that the evaluation is more objective and allows the interviewees to freely express their views about IICA's performance with total confidentiality. Finally, IICA defined responsibilities for monitoring and follow-up of the implementation of the recommendations and results arising from the evaluations, thereby ensuring their application and promoting a continuous process of institutional improvement and learning.

According to Executive Order No. 14/2004, the principal functions of the DPME are:<sup>5</sup>

- (a) To conduct regular analyses and evaluations of the actions executed by the Offices in the Member States and the Units at IICA Headquarters;
- (b) To provide input for the decision-making process of the General Directorate in order to improve institutional performance and accountability;
- (c) To support improvements in the structure and operations of the IICA Offices and Units in line with the priorities and services required;
- (d) To provide managerial support in the Offices with appropriate guidance and inputs to achieve results and improve performance; and
- (e) To provide follow-up on decisions taken in the reviews and evaluations.

The institutional review and evaluation process is based mainly on information gathered in the missions. Depending on the focus of the evaluation, these exercises are classified into four groups, as follows:

- (a) Missions to review, analyze and evaluate IICA's management and actions in the countries.
- (b) Missions to review, analyze and evaluate the management and actions of the Units at IICA Headquarters.
- (c) Missions to evaluate specific projects and issues, upon request to the DPME.
- (d) Missions to follow-up on the implementation of decisions and recommendations generated by the other three types of missions in the system.

These missions enable the DPME to accomplish its objectives and contribute to achieving the institutional objectives,<sup>6</sup> through the application of the evaluation exercises and the methodology.

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<sup>5</sup> Executive Order No. 14/2004 "Building a Results-Based Management Culture at IICA: the Supportive Monitoring, Supervision, Evaluation and Follow-up System," February 16, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> See the "Protocol for Review and Evaluation: Methodology and Procedures". DPME 2010.



## CHAPTER II: DEVELOPMENT OF THE METHODOLOGY, INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES<sup>7</sup>

During its seven years of experience, the DPME revised its evaluation methods and instruments on four occasions, and introduced improvements and innovations to capture and analyze information and to document, implement and follow up on the recommendations made. The methodology applied and the results obtained in the evaluation process are duly documented in the protocols and databases and form part of the institutional memory.

### 2.1 Evaluation Instruments

The evaluation process uses four main instruments for gathering data: a review of documents, questionnaires, interviews and observation in situ. Each of these instruments is described in detail in the Protocol for the Review and Evaluation of IICA's actions in the Member States.

Each instrument complements the information provided by the others, allowing the information gathered to be validated or compared so that, taken as a whole, the three contribute to an objective, uniform and verifiable perspective of institutional performance.

It is important to emphasize that all the actors involved in the Institute's work (IICA staff and consultants, strategic partners, clients, users and beneficiaries) are encouraged to take an active role in the review and evaluation process, in order to enrich and validate the opinions expressed and to be more assertive in making proposals or suggestions for institutional improvements.

Below is a brief description of each of the abovementioned instruments.

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<sup>7</sup> *The aspects mentioned in this chapter are discussed in greater detail and breadth in the "Protocol for Review and Evaluation," with the respective annexes (DPME, 2010)*



### 2.1.1 Document Review

This involves gathering and analyzing all available information and documents in the Units at IICA Headquarters (particularly in the Directorate of Programming, the Directorate of Regional Operations, the Divisions of Budget and Control, Finance and Human Resources, and the Internal Audit), as well as those requested from the country Office prior to the evaluation mission's visit, according to the Terms of Reference. The document review not only facilitates prior analysis of the actions, so as to prioritize any issues that need to be addressed, but also provides official documentary information that can be compared with the actual situation and findings on the ground. Another advantage of this tool is that makes it possible to adapt, in advance, the information-gathering tools (interview guides, questionnaires and agenda of field visits) that will be applied during the mission.

The main documents included in the review are the National Technical Cooperation Agenda (NTCA) of an Office, the Annual Action Plans (AAP), reports on the execution of these plans, actions carried out with external financing and the Office's budget allocation and expenditure reports. As inputs for defining the Mission's Work Program, a list is prepared of the people to be interviewed, derived from information of the main clients and partners sent by the Office, together with a list of the logistical requirements to accomplish the Mission.

### 2.1.2 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is applied to the staff of the Office - International Professional Personnel (IPP), Local Professional Personnel (LPP), General Services Personnel (GSP) and selected consultants. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, an introductory presentation is given to staff members explaining the content and structure of the questionnaire and a brief review of all the questions.

Experience has shown that this instrument encourages staff members to review various important institutional aspects (self-evaluation) and helps them to develop a sense of being an integral part of the process by expressing their opinions on solutions or improvements in their areas of interest.

For the design and updating of the questionnaires, other personnel of the Institute<sup>8</sup> are consulted and asked for their recommendations and suggestions for improving this instrument. Another way of improving the questionnaire has been to include the suggestions made by staff in the Offices evaluated. As a result, the sections and questions covered in the questionnaire were adjusted and modified over time.

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<sup>8</sup> *On the Regional Meetings on Programming, executed in October 2003, some personnel from the Offices of the Caribbean and North Regions were asked for their comments and suggestions about the questionnaire. Comments from other technicians and directors from Headquarters were also received.*

To accompany the information-gathering process, a small data processing system was designed to facilitate the tabulation and presentation of the results, and to provide an overview of the trends, thereby generating more practical and informative management reports. The processing of reviewing and analyzing the questionnaires completed by the personnel begins during the Mission, and continues at IICA Headquarters, where the responses are checked in detail and the correlations between these are analyzed.

### 2.1.3 Internal interviews

Internal interviews were conducted to assess the organizational environment and obtain personal opinions regarding IICA's actions in the country. The questions followed a pre-defined order and are complemented with additional non-structured conversations, as the evaluation exercise progresses. Although the interviews are conducted on an individual basis, the conclusions are reached on the basis of trends or the opinions of the group as a whole.

The information supplied by the personnel to the evaluation team is regarded as being confidential. This confidentiality is intended to generate trust and openness among the staff members so that they can freely express their positions and views on the various issues discussed during the interview, giving transparency and legitimacy to this exercise.

### 2.1.4 External interviews

External interviews are conducted with the principal partner institutions that work, have worked, or have an interest in initiating cooperation actions with IICA (clients, partners and beneficiaries). The individuals interviewed must preferably have direct contact with IICA staff, or else, must be familiar with IICA's work and with the problems and challenges of the sector. The initial list of people to be interviewed is provided by the Office, and is reviewed and complemented by the DPME and the Director of the respective Directorate of Regional Operations and Integration (DORI).

In general, the interviews focused on the experiences of clients and partners with IICA. The main objectives were to validate the information concerning the results achieved by the Office's technical cooperation efforts, assessed the level of satisfaction among IICA's main clients and strategic partners and identified external opportunities as well as limitations that affect the Office's performance. These interviews also addressed issues such as the preparation of the NTCA, the dissemination of the Institute's actions and the annual accountability process.

In the case of government agencies and international institutions that support the development of agriculture and the rural sector, the interviewees were asked about their current and future priorities, as well as the allocation of financial investments, the management of resources for the agricultural sector and the situation of agriculture in general.

### 2.1.5 Observation *in situ*

Over the years, the institutional culture of preparing reports - annual, semestral and general progress or follow-up reports – were changed into an activity aimed at reflecting the success achieved in the execution of technical cooperation activities, in the most positive way possible. However, this process often overlooks details that can be better appreciated by a person from outside the Office, who can contribute in more objective manner.

Observation of the environment in which IICA personnel and their counterparts must perform their work facilitates an understanding of their constraints, as well as of the facilities available to them to achieve the goals established in their work plans and programs. Interviews with staff members enhanced the results obtained by generating a more personal relationship with the interviewees and creating an environment in which they feel more trusting and secure.

Field visits also enabled the evaluators to assess the results described in the reports, compare these with what they observe *in situ* and complement this information with the data gathered at IICA Headquarters and from the individuals interviewed.

## 2.2 The Evaluation Process

The review and evaluation exercise is a dynamic process that must be adapted and refined, according to the circumstances. For this reason, as the DPME gradually improved its skills and experience in conducting the performance evaluation missions during the period 2002-2009, the methodology was adjusted and improved. Modifications were made in terms of the scope and the approach of the evaluation exercise, in the instruments used to gather information, in the composition of the evaluation team, in the duration of the exercise, in the process of preparing the final reports and in monitoring the implementation of the recommendations.

Although the DPME has the responsibility for executing the missions, each phase is carried out in consultation and collaboration with the relevant Units at IICA Headquarters, as well as with the selected Office.

In general, the evaluation process consists of four main phases:

- (a) ***Preparation.*** Basic information is gathered, terms of reference are drafted and a preliminary work plan is prepared. The preparatory activities are coordinated by the DPME and are organized at IICA Headquarters with the assistance of the Office/Unit that is to be evaluated, other support units, and other actors of the system (e.g. the Director of the DORI in the case of the Offices).
- (b) ***Execution and implementation.*** The evaluation team begins by gathering information and opinions in the country where the Office is located, through questionnaires, interviews and field visits. Two meetings are held with all staff members: one at the beginning of the Mission to explain the procedure and scope of the evaluation; and one at the end of the exercise to conduct a preliminary analysis of the principal findings and receive feedback from staff members.
- (c) ***Analysis of the information.*** Upon the Mission's return to Headquarters, all the results are reviewed and analyzed in order to generate the conclusions and recommendations that will be included in the various reports to be submitted.
- (d) ***Preparation of Reports.*** Once the Mission team has gathered the findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from the evaluation process, it prepares the respective reports, shares the results and makes recommendations for improving institutional performance.

The evaluation process and the basic steps that comprise the DPME missions are described in detail in the "Protocol for Review and Evaluation: Methodology and Procedures."

Below is a chronology, in four stages, showing the evolution of the methodology applied by the DPME since April 2002.

### 2.2.1 Stage I (2002 - 2003)

***Missions implemented.*** During this first stage, evaluation missions visited the IICA Offices in Belize (2002), Guatemala, El Salvador, Bolivia, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic (2003). In addition, a mission was organized to the IICA Office in Washington D.C., in the United States of America (2003,) which was of a special nature, given that the main function of this Office is not in providing technical cooperation services like other offices.

***Methodology and instruments used.*** The main purpose of these missions was to provide inputs for the development of the System for the Review, Analysis

and Evaluation of Institutional Performance (SIRANE) and, at the same time, contribute information to improve IICA's performance in the countries.

The instruments used were: a document review, consultations with officials at IICA Headquarters and interviews with personnel in the IICA Offices (internal interviews) and interviews with clients and partners (external interviews). At this stage, it became clear that a questionnaire was needed to facilitate the gathering of specific information.

Emphasis was placed on individual interviews, in order to assess IICA's positioning and the contributions of its cooperation efforts, and to gauge the effectiveness of its management and operations in the country, with the collaboration of IICA Headquarters. In this regard, an important change was made during the period 1998-2001 with the introduction of the evaluation seminars, an approach that focused on group discussions with the Office personnel to assess institutional management and operations.

During this period, the evaluation missions had a duration of one week, on average. The missions that were executed in Bolivia, El Salvador and Guatemala were conceived as follow-up missions to ensure compliance with the recommendations made prior to 2002, during the evaluation seminars. The three missions were done by personnel of the DPME.

The Missions to Belize, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic were envisaged as comprehensive missions to review and analyze IICA's management and actions in those countries and included aspects related to the Offices' technical cooperation and management processes. These missions involved officials of the DPME and of other Units such as Internal Audit and Human Resources. This practice was not continued as it combined the objectives of the performance evaluation missions with those of other Units to the countries. Furthermore, this approach implied a larger investment of the Offices' technical resources, and ran the risk of distracting them excessively from their cooperation tasks.

***Preparation of reports.*** These evaluation missions ended with a meeting with the Representative and another with all the Office personnel. In the first meeting, the discussions focused on the main observations, conclusions and recommendations of the Mission, accompanied by a draft of the text of the presentation that would subsequently be delivered to the Office personnel. This first meeting with the Representative provided an opportunity to make adjustments to the subsequent presentation. At the end of the presentation to the Office's personnel, the staff had an opportunity to provide comments on the report, an activity which basically completed the Mission's visit.

Once the Mission returned to IICA Headquarters, the DPME proceeded to prepare the final report containing the main findings, conclusions and

recommendations of the evaluation process. Initially, this task took a long time due to the scope of issues covered in the reports and the fact that it was difficult to coordinate the report preparation in a timely manner with other IICA personnel that were external to the DPME but participated in the evaluation Missions. Another difficulty was the need to submit a preliminary report to be reviewed and commented on by the Representative and the respective Director of Regional Operations (DOR), who had time constraints to respond in a timely manner also.

Given the nature of some of the findings, and after the experience in Bolivia (2003), the decision was taken by the Director General to prepare a special report called the Management Letter of a confidential nature exclusively for him. This report included a number of critical matters detected during the Mission, in addition to the main conclusions and recommendations, and was submitted, at the latest, two weeks after the Mission had concluded. Its preparation was the responsibility of the Director of the DPME.

That same year, the DPME began to present the Missions' reports to the Committee of Audit and Evaluation (CA&E) in order to coordinate the necessary actions with the various Units at IICA Headquarters, based on the recommendations made. The CA&E was one of the management committees established in January 2003 at IICA Headquarters to review audit and evaluation recommendations, and its meetings were convened and chaired by the Deputy Director General.

The experience acquired from this process led the DPME to include a Matrix of Recommendations in the methodology, summarizing the most relevant information on its findings and recommendations. The application of the Matrix at the end of this stage made the process of discussing and implementing the recommendations more flexible.

***Implementation of recommendations.*** The Office's Representative and the DOR had the responsibility for implementing the recommendations. As the immediate supervisor of operations, the latter was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the recommendations, for which they needed to establish effective coordination with the relevant units at IICA Headquarters, according to each case.

The DOR was a member of the CA&E, the body to which the DPME submitted the recommendations concerning the Office as well as others of a regional and corporate nature. However, the absence of a monitoring mechanism meant that this body was not very effective in overseeing and providing follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations, particularly at the regional and corporate levels.

### 2.2.2 Stage II (2003 - 2004)

***Missions implemented.*** In chronological order, missions were carried out to the following Offices in 2003: Paraguay, the countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines). In 2004, there were evaluation missions of the offices of Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Trinidad & Tobago and to the Permanent Office in Europe in Madrid, Spain. This last mission had special features given that the main role of the Spain's Office is not to provide technical cooperation services directly.

***Methodology and instruments used.*** During this stage, changes were made in the scope and coverage of the missions. New information-gathering tools were applied and the contents of the final reports were modified. After the Mission to Paraguay, a questionnaire was introduced to obtain the opinions of staff members.

The use of a questionnaire was an important innovation, since it made the evaluation exercise more transparent and substantially reduced the time required to conduct individual interviews with staff members. This tool was reviewed by IICA Representatives and other personnel in the design stage and their opinions were taken into consideration. A questionnaire was also prepared for clients and partners; however, tests showed that it was not effective in obtaining the necessary information, so it was not used. Instead, only a guide was applied for the external interviews.

Subsequently, in 2004, a specific questionnaire was designed for consultants and another was developed to obtain information from selected staff members concerning the performance of the Administration Units in the IICA Offices.

Memorandum SC-DG-907 of August 16, 2004, defines the basic areas of institutional competence that reflect the success of an Office and the areas that the DPME should consider in its reports (**See GRAPHIC 1**).

A review of the policy and institutional context was incorporated into the areas reviewed by the missions, along with an assessment of the main trends in the country's agricultural and rural sector. Consequently, the number of interviews was increased to include institutions or organizations linked to agriculture and the rural sector, even though these did not work directly with IICA. This, in turn, made it possible to identify and assess the constraints and opportunities encountered by IICA in each country. However, for budgetary reasons, it became necessary to reduce the duration of the missions at the end of this period, along with the number of interviews with individuals and institutions.

## GRAPHIC 1

### Areas of Focus of DPME's Evaluation Missions

- i.** Leadership (management and vision)
- ii.** Technical competence
- iii.** Administrative competence
- iv.** Teamwork
- v.** Administration and application of institutional regulations
- vi.** Internal communications
- vii.** Institutional image
- viii.** Relations with the Ministry of Agriculture and with the Minister of Agriculture
- ix.** Relations with other ministries and other strategic partners
- x.** Competence in the acquisition and administration of external resources

The scope of the evaluation was expanded to include an assessment of the projects and actions implemented, and the quality of the cooperation products and services. Progress was made in evaluating the level of satisfaction among clients and partners, learning about their perceptions and image of the institution. In addition, IICA's strategic partnerships with other organizations were analyzed in greater detail. For each of these topics, key issues were identified so that the DPME could review these prior to each mission, bearing in mind the characteristics of each Office.

In order to encourage staff members to participate in the exercise in an open and transparent way and to freely express their opinions, the Director General sent out a memorandum to the Representatives and the rest of the personnel in the Office to be evaluated which outlined the purpose of the evaluation and the importance of their involvement in the exercise. This had a very positive effect, as it provided an endorsement from the highest level of management regarding the purposes of the evaluation, thereby creating a better attitude of the Offices towards the exercise and encouraging comments from the staff.

The Mission to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) included personnel from the Office in Trinidad & Tobago. It was a very productive experience, as it closely involved another Office in the process and the staff involved was able to contribute his knowledge to the work of the DPME in the regional context. This Mission also included the Director of Regional Operations



and Integration for the Caribbean Region (DORI- Caribbean), who had previously participated in the Mission to the Dominican Republic.

Given the importance of the DOR's participation, the DPME requested that these officials participate in the final phase of future missions, particularly in meetings with the Representative and the personnel to discuss critical issues and appropriate recommendations.

***Preparation of reports.*** No substantial changes were made with respect to the aspects described in the previous stage. However, the length of the final reports was reduced and the use of a summary matrix of recommendations was improved.

***Implementation of the recommendations.*** The implementation of the recommendations was a weak aspect in the process. One factor that contributed to this weakness was the lack of clearly-defined responsibilities among the various Units and the personnel. However, Executive Order (EO) No. 14/2004 *"Building a results-based management culture in IICA: The supportive monitoring, supervision, evaluation and follow-up system,"* which came into force in February 2004, defined specific tasks for the DPME, the Secretariat of Technical Cooperation, the Internal Audit and the Administrative Support Group within the system.

This EO entrusted the Directors of Operations and the Thematic Areas with the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of recommendations at the regional level, and defined the DPME's responsibilities in the follow-up to implementation of recommendations arising from the evaluation missions.

### 2.2.3 Stage III (2004 - 2006)

***Missions implemented.*** During this period, there were missions to the IICA Offices in Colombia (2004), Suriname, Argentina, Peru, Miami (2005) and Chile (2006). The Mission to the Miami Office evaluated the Inter-American Program for the Promotion of Trade, Agribusiness and Food Safety, based in that Office.

***Methodology and Instruments used.*** During this stage, numerous methodological adjustments were incorporated in the process due to improved learning from previous evaluation experiences. The most important changes introduced during this stage were the guidelines contained in EO No. 16/2005 *"Mechanisms for Validating and Implementing the Recommendations of the Evaluation, Audit and Institutional Support Missions to the Offices"*. This redefined the areas to be assessed by the DPME missions, as shown in **GRAPHIC 1** and entailed a reorganization of the methodology applied, focusing on the following areas:

- (a) implementation of the National Technical Cooperation Agenda;
- (b) management structure of the Office;
- (c) strategies for improving relations with strategic partners;
- (d) management of human resources;
- (e) internal and external communications and promotion of the corporate image;
- (f) application of other institutional standards; and
- (g) application of principles and ethical values.

The CA&E was eliminated and, as a procedure subsequent to the evaluation missions, ad hoc committees were created as a more flexible mechanism to review and approve the recommendations of the evaluation, audit and institutional support missions. These committees are chaired by the DOR of the Region of the Office under review, and include the Internal Auditor, the Director of the DPME, the IICA Representative in the respective country and the Directors or Heads of other Units at IICA Headquarters whose participation is pertinent, based on the recommendations to be implemented.

These committees are responsible for reviewing the recommendations of the missions and reaching a consensus on the actions to be implemented by the Offices, once these have been approved. These actions eventually formed part of the Office Improvement Plan (OIP). The OIP was established as an instrument for implementing and monitoring compliance with all the recommendations arising from the missions.

As a result of the redefinition of the areas for analysis, the instruments were reviewed and updated, but no significant changes were made.

***Preparation of reports.*** The main innovations were the preparation of the OIP and the a reduction in the contents in the reports. This speeded up their preparation and the implementation of recommendations for improving the Office's performance.

The DPME produced a set of recommendations that were submitted to the consideration of the ad hoc committee, which determined the final details of the actions to be implemented by the Office, that included:

- (a) Situation, main problem or finding.
- (b) Suggested method of implementation
- (c) Units at IICA Headquarters that would support the process.

- (d) Expected outcomes.
- (e) Those responsible for implementation.
- (f) Deadline for execution.

The final reports should contain the following sections:

- (a) Introduction.
- (b) Analysis of the opinions of clients and partners.
- (c) Analysis of the opinions and comments of the personnel.
- (d) Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations.

***Implementation of the recommendations.*** The OIP provided a more efficient mechanism for validating the recommendations and its design was an improvement over the Matrix of Recommendations used previously.

Executive Order 16/2005 established that, once the OIP and its respective recommendations had been approved by the Director General, these should be implemented by the personnel responsible. Previously, there had been some doubt over the “obligatory” nature of the implementation, since many of the recommendations were based on opinions and suggestions gathered during visits to the offices, and the Committee of Audit and Evaluation was not fulfilling its role as a “filter.” With the creation of the ad hoc committees led by the DOR and the inclusion of the Representatives in these committees, the process of analysis and consensus-building for the implementation of the recommendations improved notably.

The same EO established that the Representative is responsible for implementing the recommendations made in the OIP, with the supervision and support of the DOR. Any action to be executed by a particular Unit is the responsibility of that Unit’s Director or Head. The DPME and/or the Internal Auditor are responsible for reviewing the satisfactory implementation of the OIP every six months and submitting a progress report to the Director General and to members of the ad hoc committee, based on information provided by the respective DOR.

#### 2.2.4 Stage IV (2007 - 2009)

Missions implemented. During this stage, missions visited the Offices in Guyana, Venezuela, Jamaica (2007), El Salvador, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic (2008), Barbados, Uruguay, Panama and the Bahamas (2009).

Methodology and instruments applied. A particular feature of this was that missions were carried out to a few countries that had previously been visited; this provided a baseline for the monitoring and evaluation of the conclusions and recommendations made in the last mission of the DPME.

The main improvement in the methodology applied was the implementation of the first Protocol for Review and Evaluation, which included two new questionnaires for the Office personnel: the C1 for general personnel and the C2 for professional personnel. Although only one questionnaire had been used in previous missions, it became clear that some staff members – particularly General Services or Administrative personnel – were not required to be involved in aspects of the technical cooperation process, given their responsibilities and areas of competence.

Preparation of reports. As a result of Executive Order No. 16 rev. of October 31, 2007, the OIPs became more useful instruments. Both the DPME and other units involved in the support missions organized an ad hoc committee chaired by the DOR to include discuss the mission's recommendations. Similarly, the Office Representatives were authorized to unilaterally present any recommendations deemed appropriate for inclusion in the OIP of their respective Offices.

A chapter was added to the Final Report focusing exclusively on internal factors, based mainly on the results of questionnaires C1 and C2 and on interviews with staff members. In order to analyze the data, the results obtained from the consultation process were organized into the following topics or “drivers” related to the Office's operations and performance:

- (a) orientation and institutional knowledge
- (b) perceptions on the technical cooperation program
- (c) IICA's image and perceptions
- (d) leadership and management of the Representative
- (e) performance of the Administrative Unit
- (f) work responsibilities
- (g) work environment
- (h) communications among personnel
- (i) Office facilities and
- (j) support for operations

At this stage, a clear distinction was made between the recommendations of the OIP and all other information relevant to the technical, management and administrative aspects of the Offices, which did not necessarily translate into direct recommendations. The recommendations of each DPME Mission to be considered by the ad hoc committee were activities to be implemented in the short or medium term, and by their nature, could be executed immediately with the simple approval of the committee.

Based on the accumulated experience, IICA identified the users of the reports resulting from the evaluation missions and, accordingly, improved their contents to provide more added value and utility. Reports were then prepared with a more comprehensive analysis and a more practical approach to ensure that the Final Report was of real use to the Office personnel who had provided information to the Mission. The reports were structured in such a way as to clearly show the importance of the internal and external factors that formed the basis of the Office's work, and contained all the necessary information to help the staff to improve their individual and collective performance.

Implementation of the recommendations. The Representative, with the supervision and support of the Director of the respective DORI, was responsible for the satisfactory implementation of the OIP's recommendations approved by the ad hoc committee. Monitoring the implementation of the recommendations was not the exclusive responsibility of the DORI. The DPME identified possible recommendations to be included in the OIP and based on these, the ad hoc committee finalized the details of the actions to be carried out, the expected results, the personnel responsible for implementation and the deadline for executing the actions.

## CHAPTER III: ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED DURING 2002-2009

### 3.1 Missions implemented

Since its establishment in 2002, the DPME executed 35 review and evaluation missions to assess institutional performance, as shown in **TABLE 1** below.

**TABLE 1**  
Offices Evaluated by Region, from 2002- 2009

Year	Central	Andean	Southern	Caribbean	Northern
<b>2002</b>	Belize				
<b>2003</b>	Guatemala El Salvador	Bolivia Ecuador	Paraguay	Dominican Republic St. Kitts and Nevis Dominica Antigua and Barbuda St. Lucia St. Vincent and Grenadines Grenada	Washington
<b>2004</b>	Honduras Costa Rica Nicaragua	Colombia		Trinidad & Tobago	Spain (Europe)
<b>2005</b>		Peru	Argentina	Suriname	Miami
<b>2006</b>			Chile		
<b>2007</b>		Venezuela		Guyana Jamaica	
<b>2008</b>	El Salvador	Ecuador		Dominican Republic	
<b>2009</b>	Panama		Uruguay	Barbados Bahamas	

*Note: The evaluations of the Offices in Washington, Spain and Miami were different from those applied in the Offices in the Member States.*

In 2006, evaluation missions also assessed the Directorate of Education and Training (DECAP), the Distance Training Center (CECADI) and the Hemispheric Training System for Agricultural Development (SIHCA) – Venezuela. In 2008, a mid-term evaluation was carried out of the Productive Diversification Project in Mexico and Guatemala that was funded by the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC).

The DPME was assigned four professionals (including the Director) to carry out its work and two persons as support personnel. Given that the approach and work methodology used were designed to encourage self-evaluation and organizational learning, external consultants were not required. However, some evaluation missions involved officials of other IICA Units, though most were carried out by DPME professionals.

In the evaluation missions carried out by the DPME over the period 2002-2009, officials interviewed more than 1,100 people from 500 public and private organizations that are clients or partners of the Institute. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with over 500 IICA staff members and consultants, who were also asked to complete questionnaires (C1 and C2).

The following section describes the activities carried out by the DPME and the results obtained during the period indicated.

### **3.2 Evaluation of IICA's Management and Actions in the Member States**

DPME's staff visited 33 IICA Offices to carry out institutional performance evaluations. The results of these missions were as follows:

- (a)** The Director General and officials of the Institute reviewed and assessed the information obtained on the level of satisfaction of more than 1,000 clients and partners from approximately 500 public, private and international organizations regarding IICA's cooperation activities in the different countries, and heard their suggestions for improving institutional management and services.
- (b)** The Director General authorized specific actions to improve cooperation, management, coordination, communications and other areas of institutional performance, based on the conclusions and recommendations arising from the performance evaluation missions.
- (c)** The IICA Offices implemented the recommendations obtained from the evaluation missions to enhance the institutional image, improve the management of operations, strengthen alliances with clients and partners and improve the results of cooperation activities in the Member States.

- (d) Staff members who took part in the evaluation process had an opportunity to express and discuss internal matters related to institutional management issues and become aware of the benefits of performance evaluation, thereby promoting the development of a culture of self-evaluation and accountability within the institution.
- (e) The IICA Representatives and their staff in the Offices that were evaluated learned about the level of satisfaction of and the opinions of officials from public and private organizations regarding IICA's cooperation services in the country.
- (f) Over 500 officials of the IICA Offices in the Member States learned about the objectives and scope of the new evaluation system, provided their opinions on institutional performance and made suggestions to improve it.
- (g) The IICA Representatives and their staff adopted internal measures to strengthen their work commitments and improve internal relations and the working environment, based on the opinions expressed in the interviews and the questionnaires completed during the evaluation missions.

### **3.3 Advisory Services to the Director General for Decision-making to Improve Institutional Performance**

- (a) The Director General implemented innovations and changes in the allocation and management of institutional resources based on the findings and recommendations arising from the performance evaluation process.
- (b) The Director General reoriented and reinforced the agreements made with the multinational agencies that are the Institute's strategic partners, based on reports prepared by the DPME on the joint actions with those agencies.
- (c) As of 2007, the functions and priorities of the Distance Training Center (CECADI) and the Hemispheric Training System for Agricultural Development (SIHCA) were reorganized and reoriented.
- (d) In 2003, a managerial information system was implemented to improve the preparation of periodic progress reports in compliance with the Institute's annual action plans.



### **3.4 Improvement of the Knowledge Base on Institutional Management and Cooperation Services**

- (a) The Institute's knowledge base has been enriched by the documentation of a series of institutional best practices and successful management experiences, arising from the review and analysis of institutional performance.
- (b) A database has been established in the Institute to record the conclusions and recommendations on IICA's management and actions arising from the evaluation missions carried out by the DPME.
- (c) IICA prepared a Transfer Protocol, which consists of a guide prepared jointly with the Internal Audit that described the procedures to be followed when transferring the responsibilities of the Representatives in the Member States, in order to comply fully with the corresponding regulations and to help safeguard the institutional memory.

### **3.5 Improvement of the Institute's Planning, Execution and Accountability Process**

- (a) The Institute implements monitoring and performance evaluation standards and policies that have improved the process of accountability to Member States and strategic partners.
- (b) The information for decision-making provided by the monitoring and performance evaluation procedures helped to develop strategic partnerships and improve the institutional image and the Institute's cooperation programs.
- (c) IICA established a protocol for the institutional performance evaluation methodology, together with procedures and instruments, which have been updated and improved as a result of seven years of experience in applying them.
- (d) Mechanisms for preparing and monitoring the Office Improvement Plans (OIP) were designed and put into practice to ensure the effective implementation of actions to improve management and the provision of cooperation services.
- (e) A Representatives' Manual was prepared based on the experiences of evaluations. It describes in detail the criteria to be followed by

Representatives in performing their duties in the political, institutional, management and administrative aspects.

- (f) The Director and DPME officials participate in committees and groups established by the Director General to advise him on decisions regarding the allocation of resources, institutional organization and the design and implementation of standards and procedures to improve institutional management and the provision of cooperation services.

### 3.6 Contributions by the DPME to the Institutional Performance Evaluation Process

In the missions carried out, the DPME found that at the beginning of the evaluation exercises a large part of the personnel did not understand the importance and significance of evaluating institutional performance. There was a general sense that this process only served to highlight negative or weak aspects of performance and it was not seen as an effective exercise in self-evaluation and continuous learning, and to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement, and other positive aspects.

The recommendations and instructions arising from the evaluation processes must be complemented with policies and actions that improve institutional management. Similarly, the good practices and experiences obtained from the evaluations must be documented so that these can be shared with the rest of the Institute. In this way, DPME adds value to IICA's management and operations and helps strengthen performance at three levels: the individual or personnel, the Units (offices or Directorates) and the corporate level.

The following section describes DPME's main contributions to the institutional performance evaluation process during the period 2002-2009.

- (a) **Design and application of the Performance Based Management System.** The DPME designed and implemented a new system for evaluating institutional performance known as the Performance Based Management System (PBMS). This approach is systematic, methodical, comprehensive and participatory. It also provides recommendations for improving performance and seeks greater alignment between:
  - (i) Goals and objectives at different levels (MTP, NTCA, AAP);
  - (ii) The work of an Office/Unit with the individual work plans, and
  - (iii) Components of the Institution's organizational structure.

- (b) **Promoting a culture of participation and transparency in the evaluation exercises.** The evaluation process involves the participation of various support Units at IICA Headquarters (Internal Audit, Directorate of Regional Operations and Integration, Directorate of Administration and Finance, Programming, Human Resources, Budget and Control among others), and the collaboration of external actors and of the Office personnel.
- (c) **Developing a culture of self-evaluation and performance evaluation.** Because the methodology involves all the personnel of the Office or Unit in the evaluation process (explanation of the process and the role of the Office personnel, individual interviews with staff members, application of questionnaires and presentation of findings and recommendations), the system promoted the development of a culture of self-evaluation, discussion and performance evaluation, both at the individual level and as a team within an Office or Unit.
- (d) **Soliciting the opinions and reactions of the stakeholders regarding the results and contributions of IICA's actions.** This information provides a comprehensive overview of the performance, relevance, quality and alignment of IICA's cooperation efforts with the priorities of the country and of its agricultural and rural sectors, in particular. The aim is to assess the expectations of the stakeholders, their satisfaction with the services and products provided, IICA's strengths and weaknesses and the Institute's image in the country.
- (e) **Identifying demands, needs and opportunities.** Direct interaction between the Mission and the various actors associated with IICA's work provides a wide range of information about trends and demands within the sector, technical cooperation opportunities, the alignment between the supply and demand for technical cooperation services and the need for an Office to modify its cooperation strategy to meet future challenges.
- (f) **Promoting more efficient use of resources.** The information provided helps identify priority areas for targeting IICA's actions within the country, thereby avoiding the dispersal of resources.
- (g) **Providing information for decision-making.** Two essential outputs of the evaluation exercises are the Management Letter to the Director General and the OIP. These include the necessary actions to be implemented both at IICA Headquarters (corporate level) and in the Offices to improve aspects of performance linked to management and the operational, administrative, strategic and technical aspects.
- (h) **Stakeholders recognize the value of performance evaluation.** The evaluation methodology includes the involvement of key stakeholders in IICA's cooperation efforts in the country. The DPME's experiences

show that these actors have always been willing to offer their insights and comments to improve IICA's performance in the country, and that they recognize that evaluations improve the Institute's accountability and transparency. They also consider that this type of feedback is very important since it provides an opportunity to express views and even to resolve issues that affect one or more aspects of the system. Furthermore, they value this closer relationship much, as opposed to the limited or non-existent links with other cooperation organizations.

- (i) **Opportunity for Representatives to discuss critical issues.** The Mission provides opportunities for Representatives to discuss and share information with the evaluation team on a wide range of strategic, technical, administrative and operational issues. This adds value to the internal self-evaluation and analysis of the Office's internal and external management and to the role performed by the Representatives. The exchange of ideas and opportunities with personnel, clients and partners enables the Office to reorient its strategy, taking into consideration the opinions of the technical and administrative staff.
- (j) **Internal capacity-building for performance evaluation.** The knowledge accumulated and the lessons learned from the experiences to date have enabled IICA to develop a comprehensive knowledge base and intra-institutional capacity for evaluating performance and assessing the impact of this process.
- (k) **Verifying the technical cooperation reports submitted by the Offices.** During the Missions, the DPME verifies the information reported by the Offices regarding the actions executed, the Institute's contributions and the results achieved. This verification method increases the transparency and accountability of IICA's actions.
- (l) **Generating reference information.** The performance evaluations have provided the DPME with valuable data on the management of each Office, which can then be used for comparison purposes in future performance evaluations of those Offices. This is part of an effort by the Institute to generate basic information to support its operations and performance in the countries.
- (m) **The DPME actively participates in each stage of the integrated management system.** Performance evaluation is an integral part of the programming, budgeting, execution, supervision, monitoring and follow-up process. The DPME is a member of the Committee of Administration and Finance (CAF) and of the programming and budget work group. It participates in regional programming meetings and in the review of the NTCA and the PAA. It also works closely with the Directors of Regional Operations and Integration and the Internal Audit.

- (n) **Identification of lessons learned and best institutional practices.** The Institute's accumulated experience in performance evaluation in numerous Offices in the different regions provides valuable information and lessons learned that enable the DPME to identify a set of "best institutional practices," whose application would help improve institutional performance and the achievement of the planned results.

## CHAPTER IV: LESSONS LEARNED

The following lessons that have been learned are based on the experience and observations accumulated by the DPME during the evaluation exercises carried out. Their distinctive features are that, depending on their nature and results, the personnel may consider that these experiences can be replicated in other institutional spheres or alternatively, given the problems or difficulties caused, they should not be considered in other scenarios with similar conditions.

### 4.1 Technical cooperation

- (a) **Concept of Technical cooperation.** The Institute's clients, partners and technicians have a very different view about the nature of technical cooperation. At the institutional level, there is no clear definition of the concept, products and services provided by IICA, which gives rise to different interpretations of what is technical cooperation.
- (b) Most of IICA's clients and partners perceive a **gradual decrease in the number and quality of the Institute's technicians**, which has translated into a weakening of IICA's technical capacity and leadership in different themes related to the agricultural and rural sector. In this sense, the DPME has insisted on the need for Offices to prioritize actions that can make more timely contribution to this sector with its limited resources.
- (c) **The National Technical Cooperation Agenda (NTCA)** is an essential tool for organizing and planning IICA's technical cooperation work in the countries. However, over time it has become ineffective to the point where it is considered as an institutional requisite with little value added for the Office or for its partners. This tool requires more conceptual work and IICA Headquarters must closely monitor its design and implementation so that it becomes an effective guide and strategy for technical cooperation.
- (d) IICA has positioned itself as an **international facilitator and promoter of dialogue**, with the capacity to bring together the main national and international actors to discuss and analyze topics of importance for the sector. IICA also achieved considerable success and credibility in organizing information and education events.

- (e) **The Institute's hemispheric network of Offices and professionals**, together with its strategic partnerships with financial institutions and public and private sector organizations, is recognized as its main institutional strength. IICA's physical presence in the countries and its actions at the regional level are greatly valued. However, the information on IICA's work in some countries is limited and often times, its capacity tends to be over-stated, creating expectations that are not always fulfilled for the interested parties.
- (f) The institutional policy dictates that the Offices should move away from the administration of external resources and focus their efforts on technical cooperation. However, the trend toward **decreasing the administration of external resources** has meant that IICA's presence in strategic themes has declined. IICA has been obliged to offer a technical capacity that in most cases it does not have, and its financial constraints make it difficult to hire capable consultants in the local labor market who are competent to meet expectations.
- (g) The missions have emphasized the importance that IICA Offices secure **external funding sources** for projects in order to achieve a greater impact, given that the Offices' own resources are very limited. The most successful Offices have been those with externally funded projects in which IICA has played a major technical role, since these clearly reflect the added value of the service. By contrast, in cases where IICA has mainly administered external resources, the efforts and results achieved have been lost over time, regardless of their scale and the impact generated during their execution.

## 4.2 Image and Positioning of IICA

- (a) When the IICA Offices execute large-scale projects with external resources, these are often identified by the public as the Institute's own efforts. This is a factor to consider, since their success or failure also affects the institution's failure or success.
- (b) In disseminating the NTCA, the AAP, the Annual Report and the accountability seminars in the Offices there is a risk of creating false expectations of support to the public and private sector in numerous technical areas. These documents do not always reflect the Office's true capacity to respond to future needs. Similarly, in order to improve the institutional image, support is often offered to a broad range of clients, without considering the true implications of consolidating these offers in technical cooperation services.

- (c) In most cases, the results achieved by IICA come from joint efforts with national institutions and international organizations. However, clients and partners in several countries have complained that IICA often “appropriates the results” without giving due recognition and credit to the contributions of other participating institutions and collaborators. This weakens relations and IICA runs the risk of losing opportunities for joint cooperation in future.

### 4.3 Institutional knowledge

- (a) In general, **some personnel has very little information or knowledge about IICA's mission, vision and objectives**, or about various institutional documents such as the Medium Term Plan, the NTCA and the AAP. These concepts and guiding documents serve more as sources of occasional reference than as true guides for IICA's personnel. Most staff members do not consider that these documents reflect their work, and regard them as institutional requisites with little value added for their tasks.
- (b) The knowledge of the personnel regarding the role of the Institute's main governing bodies and key meetings - IABA, the EC, SACMI, the Ministerial Meetings, the Annual Meeting of Representatives and the Regional Programming Meeting – is even more limited.

### 4.4 The Representative

- (a) Experience, technical capacity and knowledge of the characteristics of the country and the region, together with the ability to develop and maintain good relations, are some of the the major attributes required in the **role of a Representative**. Regardless of the size of the Office, it is essential that the Units at IICA Headquarters provide sufficient support, training and orientation to new Representatives. A support and follow-up mechanism should also be established at the regional level. The Representatives' Manual and the Protocol for the Transfer of Representatives represent major efforts to facilitate the orientation process, but these must be continuously updated and improved.
- (b) The Institute should reinstate the policy of periodically rotating Representatives within a fixed period. When a Representative remains in a country for more than 5 years, this tends to produce “wear and tear” that



can eventually weaken relations with clients and partners. Furthermore, a **change of Representative** should not coincide with a change of the Administrator, in order to avoid complicating the transition process and disrupting the operations of the Office. In fact, it is worth considering the implementation of a probationary period (such as that applied to local personnel), in order to assess the appropriateness of the appointment after that period.

- (c) IICA's performance in a country is largely determined by the **individual performance and capability of the Representative**. It is therefore essential to prepare a job profile and improve the processes of selection, induction and continuous training of the Representatives, in order to guarantee the efficacy of the Institute's services and achieve significant results in the countries. To be a good Representative requires strategic vision, technical competence, good political and diplomatic relations, effective management of human resources (a critical factor for success), the ability to create a good working environment and command the respect of the personnel.
- (d) **Meetings of personnel** are an excellent tool for improving internal communications, strengthening teamwork, promoting accountability within the Office, transmitting corporate instructions, discussing institutional documents, improving the working environment and facilitating interaction among all levels in the Office.

## 4.5 Relations within the Institution

- (a) **The Directorates of the Strategic Areas (DSA)<sup>9</sup>, in their respective thematic areas of competence, have not yet managed to coordinate effectively and clearly define the roles of their specialists at all levels: LPP, Regional Specialist (RS), IICA Headquarters, or with respect to other units** (such as the Project Execution Units). As a result, there is a lack of clarity in the institutional actions and in the alignment of the technical personnel within the institutional framework and mandates of IICA. Assigning the topics of the strategic areas into separate units has accentuated the weaknesses in supervision, coordination and communication. This problem exists largely in the Offices, where many LPP have little or no contact with the DSA that they belong.

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<sup>9</sup> Since 2006 they are integrated within the Directorate of Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management (DTLKM).

- (b) Experience has shown that hiring a **local professional to support the RS** enables IICA to be more effective in its actions in the country. It also enables it to monitor regional actions in the thematic areas of the RS that are of main interest to the country.
- (c) Despite the definition of thematic areas, the nature of technical cooperation requires continuous linkages and joint work between these areas. Nevertheless, the evaluations have shown that in most cases **there is no fluid collaboration between the Directorates of Strategic Areas**. Coordination occurs more through individual initiatives, than through formal articulation of the work by the DSA. The creation of the Directorate of Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management (DTLKM) should encourage inter-thematic articulation of the DSA.
- (d) **Situational analysis reports** are regarded as valuable instruments for analysis and decision-making in the public and private sector. However, the periodic preparation of these reports requires a major investment of the Office's human, economic and technical resources. In addition, the national authorities may consider that this task corresponds to the national organizations that generate official data. For this reason, it is necessary to carefully assess the need to produce these types of documents.
- (e) **Certification of administrative processes.** The Offices that have certified some of their administrative processes (e.g. issuing checks) according to the standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001-2000, report that this effort has involved much of the Office's personnel and requires a major investment of time and resources in the administrative unit. ISO certification has a positive impact on the Offices since it "obliges" them to review the certified procedures and, at least, to maintain the approved standards. However, it does not guarantee efficiency, increased oversight or substantial improvements in the processes.
- (f) **Too much information is requested by IICA Headquarters.** A common complaint by the Offices is that IICA Headquarters and the Specialists (regional and hemispheric) of the Institute make constant and repeated requests for information and reports. The Offices claim that they invest a lot of time in preparing reports but do not receive feedback on how these are used. Indeed, different units tend to request the same information at different times. Furthermore, the DPME Missions have noted that there are significant differences between the information reported to IICA Headquarters and the real situation *on the ground* in the Offices.

## 4.6 Office Facilities

The **physical infrastructure, facilities for teamwork and access to transport** are critical elements for Office personnel to perform their tasks effectively. If the building where the Office is located does not have basic facilities, if the staff does not have access to computer equipment or else there are no vehicles available to visit the project areas, this can negatively affect the results of the technical cooperation services provided. On the contrary, when adequate conditions and facilities are in place, the results are more positive.

## 4.7 Relations with Clients and Partners

- (a) Conflicts have arisen when IICA **hires an individual from a public sector institution**, particularly when this institution is a client of the Institute. These situations are further complicated when the individual is assigned as an IICA counterpart to the same institution in which he/she worked. This practice affects IICA's credibility and is seen as a "step backward" in the Institute's technical capacity and not as a good practice.
- (b) Many Representatives reported that the constant changes in key Government personnel results in various problems and difficulties in the Institute's relations and in the execution of the programmed actions (AAP and NTCA). Therefore, as far as possible, the Offices should focus more on medium and long term actions and support the design of the state's policies and strategies for the agricultural-rural sector, rather than responding to the specific demands of the current government's authorities.

## 4.8 Management of Human Resources and Internal Communications

- (a) IICA provides an excellent learning opportunity for its local personnel. However, it is less competitive in terms of salaries and benefits when compared with other similar organizations. Moreover, the **professional development of its personnel is not a high institutional priority**. In this regard, an institutional policy and a formal training plan are clearly needed to upgrade the skills of staff members. The weak salary situation

of local professional and general services personnel in relation to the labor market in most countries is a factor that negatively impacts the working environment of the Offices, and requires particular attention.

- (b) There is a **high turnover of local technical personnel in the Offices**, which increases orientation and training costs, and also affects the institution's technical capacity. At the same time, the number of international technical personnel has been reduced due to budget constraints. Therefore, there is a strong need for an institutional policy to encourage the recruitment and stable employment of local qualified personnel who can deliver good cooperation services.
- (c) In general, personnel perform adequately and are committed to their work, even though they are often burdened with a **heavy work load** and must attend to urgent issues or new demands, which may jeopardize the quality and timeliness of the cooperation services.
- (d) The **training of administrative personnel at IICA's Headquarters** is a measure that has fostered better relations with the Offices and greater efficiency in their work, through the exchange of experiences and constant support in the first few months of employment.
- (e) The **Individual Contribution Plan (ICP)** has not contributed significantly to the work of the personnel. Its current design does not encourage teamwork and in some cases promotes an attitude of minimum effort, rather than the intended focus of individual work. It is important that staff and supervisors understand the utility of this tool, instead of considering it simply as an institutional requirement. The periodic review of the progress made in achieving the proposed objectives through this instrument has gradually declined, and has practically disappeared.
- (f) Maintaining **fluid communications between the Representative, the technical staff and the rest of the personnel** with regard to the regular operations of the Office, both in its internal and external aspects, has been shown to improve the working environment and interpersonal relations, promoting integration and commitment to the activities implemented. A number of informal communication methods have also been tried out in the Offices with good results (e.g. "compulsory" coffee breaks that are used for discussion).
- (g) It has been a common practice to promote **officials with long experience and service to the post of Administrator**. In this case, the designated administrator moves into a position that requires knowledge and skills for managing human resources as well as the Office's external relations. In these situations, it is advisable to provide appropriate training to the new administrators so that they can perform such tasks effectively.

## 4.9 Issues at the Regional and Corporate Levels

- (a) **Regional Programming Meetings** provide an opportunity to coordinate administrative, operational and technical issues. They also promote integration and linkages between strategic areas in the national and regional programming process. This process should provide the Programming Support Group with a comprehensive overview of the Institute's planning, execution and monitoring processes, and also ensures their integration and alignment at the corporate level.
- (b) Management positions carry very important responsibilities. They require individuals that are capable of providing good leadership and guidance to the Office's team, integrates the work of the Office under their responsibilities, and execute the assigned tasks as effectively as possible. It is recommended that the Institute **not appoint the same person in two positions of high responsibility**, since that person will undoubtedly be unable to fully perform the duties and functions of either of the two positions. IICA's experiences have demonstrated this several times. This will ultimately have a negative impact on the Institute's image and actions, and will cause excessive "wear and tear" to the person that has assumed both management posts.

## 4.10 Evaluation Missions and Analysis of the DPME

- (a) The systematic implementation of evaluation missions to Offices has led to their being accepted as a normal practice of institutional management, **promoting a culture of accountability**. The performance evaluation process provides opportunities for exchanging information on the work carried out by partner organizations in the country, identifying potential areas for joint work, sharing experiences and exploring cooperation opportunities with the public and private sectors. The feedback provided by the DPME on the problems detected, findings, experiences and recommendations ensures that the Units at IICA Headquarters have timely information on the current situation in the Offices.
- (b) The direct participation of **other Units in the evaluation process** has expanded the scope of the evaluations and the analysis of specific issues. However, in the subsequent phase of analyzing the information collected and preparing the reports, the DPME's experiences were not as good due to a lack of commitment to the process and inputs from the participating Units.

- (c) The process of **implementing recommendations requires appropriate follow-up and the commitment of the Units responsible** in order to introduce improvements for better performance. Unless those responsible are fully committed to this process, the credibility of the evaluation system is compromised. The Directors of the DORI must ensure close monitoring and follow-up of the relevant Offices and sanctions (or equivalent actions) should be applied in cases of non-compliance with the approved recommendations. In the monitoring process, IICA cannot rely on the “honesty” of the Offices - in some cases the evaluations have found significant differences between the results described in the reports and the cooperation services actually delivered to clients and partners.
- (d) **Clients and partners have reacted positively to systematic performance evaluations** in the Units and Offices. They consider it important that an organization such as IICA should directly consult them and their personnel on their level of satisfaction with the services received and regarding the relations between the Representative and other personnel of the Offices and of the Institute.
- (e) In many Offices there is need to **document experiences** of projects executed by external consultants; this information is vital for the institutional memory and the knowledge base and is often lost in the process. The documenting, recording and distribution of this information would allow Offices to share and replicate experiences. It would also help **identify best practices and successful experiences** in the implementation of cooperation efforts by the IICA Offices, which can be shared with other Offices and Units to improve their performance.
- (f) The information generated in the missions reflects a **lack of adequate understanding by personnel of the basic programming concepts** (expected results, lines of action, activities and products), although these terms are used in many ways in the internal reports and in published documents (e.g. Annual Reports).
- (g) Without the **support of the Director of the DORI** the scope of the evaluation exercises is very limited. Some missions have not received the required support from the DOR in the orientation and execution of the process. Often this role is limited to the political aspects, reflecting that insufficient emphasis is given to supporting technical cooperation efforts in the country and supervising the internal operations of the Office.



## CHAPTER V: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION: LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

The principal purpose for establishing the DPME was to help to transform IICA into a results-based institution. Although important steps have been taken in this regard, many changes are still needed in order to develop a culture of performance management.

Based on the experience of the last four years, some critical areas to be addressed are presented so that IICA can advance toward the goal of performance management based on results.

- (a) **Create a programming framework that defines and activates an evaluation strategy.** To assess IICA's performance and the effectiveness of its actions, a results-oriented framework that establishes measures/indicators of results is required as a planning and management tool. A more open organizational approach is required in which the processes of planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring, performance evaluation, supervision and follow-up share a common basis for defining the results to be achieved. The process must facilitate outputs and results, as well as the expected impacts at the different levels (national, regional and hemispheric), which can be identified and defined in a specific and measurable way.

Despite the fact that evaluation is conceived as an ex-post process, it is really activated through the processes of planning and programs or projects. It is inconceivable to evaluate something that has not been programmed and for which no indicators of success, or goals, or means of verification have been defined in a previous planning process. An evaluation plan, like a global evaluation strategy (information required, methodology and instruments, procedures to follow, etc.), must be considered during the planning stage, to ensure that its results become a true source of information that provides feedback for future planning



processes. In this sense, a plan for the evaluation of IICA's programs and actions should be incorporated at the three main hierarchical levels:

- (i) At the corporate level, when formulating the MTP to monitor and evaluate compliance during and after its execution.
- (ii) At the technical level or at the strategic areas level, when designing specific programs, plans and strategies for each topic or thematic area.
- (iii) At the regional and national level when formulating national and regional cooperation agendas.

Similarly, when formulating the NTCA and AAP, each Office and Strategic Area must specify the methods used for monitoring and assessing performance to achieve the expected results. This mechanism will help create a culture of self-evaluation, giving the Offices a more active role in their own monitoring process and in efforts to improve their performance.

- (b) **Link budget with results.** A results-based institution requires budget allocations to be linked in a measurable and specific way to the actions and expected results. A results-based framework facilitates this linkage. The process of budgeting and resource allocation must include the specific results to be achieved and performance indicators to show efficiency in the use of financial resources. In addition, annual reports should link current expenditures to the results obtained.

In this way, the specific link between funding allocations, current expenditures, results achieved and improvements in performance can be established. As a pilot project, an activity-based costing model can be established to more effectively allocate resources to the various activities, actions or results that we hope to achieve. Accountability of itself does not guarantee efficiency – it is the indicators/measures of performance that can indicate the levels of efficiency.

- (c) **Strengthen monitoring and evaluation.** A results-based framework and efforts to promote a culture of self-review and evaluation, are requirements for establishing an effective institutional monitoring and evaluation system. This would make it possible to gauge progress, over time, in achieving the expected goals and results. Monitoring and evaluation must be strengthened at all levels in IICA to generate information based on the performance measures in each Office and Strategic Area, a critical factor for assessing performance over time.
- (d) **Improvement of the evaluation methodology.** A more rigorous approach is required, with goals, indicators and baselines that really pose an institutional challenge in terms of compliance. It is also necessary to

identify benchmarks (reference points), objectives and the most important contributions, success stories and best institutional practices. However, IICA is lacking in defining substantive performance indicators, both for programs and for projects. As mentioned previously, all benchmarks criteria and parameters for performance evaluation should be defined during the planning process and not during the evaluation process.

**(e) Programmed evaluation exercises must be executed as planned.**

The DPME's experience over the last eight years shows that excellent opportunities to resolve problems in the Offices were missed due to the postponement of evaluation Missions that have been duly scheduled, budgeted and confirmed. This is due, in great measure, to the low priority given to the evaluation process, and to the limited importance attached to this activity in relation to other activities within IICA's operational system. As mentioned previously, the overall programming process should also include the programming of Evaluation Missions for the period in question.

**(f) Improving information-sharing based on the evaluations.** It is essential to improve the dissemination of the information generated by the evaluation exercises. Preparing reports and distributing these to the Directors of various units involved is not sufficient to ensure internal feedback within the Institute. The findings of the evaluations should be submitted regularly to the Director General, to the Cabinet and to other committees, not only as a source of valuable information, but also to highlight and raise critical issues that require policy and management decisions and corrective actions.

A more strategic approach should be adopted in disseminating the information obtained from evaluations (of programs, projects or units). The information should be used as input for conducting other reviews and evaluations in IICA, particularly those related to personnel evaluations, staff promotion, institutional awards and corrective measures in the event of poor performance, etc. A clearly defined system for sharing and discussing information at different levels within IICA and beyond needs to be implemented.

**(g) Improve the mechanisms for implementing recommendations.**

IICA needs to establish a monitoring and follow-up system that guarantees compliance with the recommendations arising from the evaluation exercises. This has been a major weakness and the experience accumulated by the DPME in the last eight years confirms this fact. Despite the numerous good recommendations made and lessons learned, very few were ever implemented. The evaluations will be of little or no use if the relevant, positive and useful recommendations arising from these activities are not implemented or monitored.

A more effective mechanism is required, since evaluation exercises are useful only when the recommendations are adopted and contribute to improved performance. Some aspects to consider are:

- (i) Strengthening the supervision and follow-up of the OIP.
- (ii) Greater involvement and commitment by the Directors of the DORI, the Strategic Areas and support Units at IICA Headquarters.
- (iii) Offer prizes/incentives for the application of new and innovative ways of improving performance.

The planning and design of the evaluation methodology and the dissemination of information resulting from the evaluations should be accomplished through an integrated system involving all internal units with decision-making power (technical, operations, human resources areas, etc.). It is critical that all those involved in the evaluation process (whether as programmers, information sources or decision-makers, etc.) are committed to this task from the outset, and that they know and understand why these exercises are carried out and done in a particular way. This will not only ensure that everyone accepts the results of the evaluations, but will also help develop a culture of institutional evaluation and will facilitate subsequent follow-up, monitoring and feedback processes.

**(h) Institutionalize the performance evaluation process in IICA.**

Evaluation should not only be institutionalized but also should be given the same level of importance and priority as other activities such as planning, programming and budgeting. An international organization that pursues transparency and accountability as competitive institutional advantages must emphasize evaluation as a means of guaranteeing these conditions to its clients, partners and allies. In order to institutionalize this process, IICA's Governing System (primarily IABA) should:

- (i) Determine that the review and evaluation of the MTP shall be carried out periodically and systematically (every two to four years), and that the results shall be reported to the Executive Committee and to the IABA, before the biannual budget and the new MTP are presented and approved.
- (ii) Determine that a permanent body (unit or directorate) responsible for institutional evaluation shall be established, with a sufficient level of autonomy to make recommendations that are binding and to report periodically to the Executive Committee, to the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI) and, of course, to the Director General.

- (i) **IICA should target areas for institutional action.** It is well known, both internally and externally, that IICA faces major cuts in its resources and personnel. This recognition is important because in order to convert IICA into a results-based organization, it is necessary to define its spheres of technical action, reorganize its managerial and technical processes and take full advantage of the experience and technical capacities of its Representatives, Directors of Regional Operations and Specialists.

With this report, the DPME aims to contribute to IICA's institutional development from its own area of action, and also hopes to contribute to the goal of creating a modern, more flexible Institute that is capable of delivering timely technical cooperation services and products to its Member States.

The steps taken so far are important and have required considerable effort, time, dedication and institutional learning. However, it is also recognized that there is much room for improvement in the Institute and timely changes be made, many of which could be introduced in a simple and expeditious manner, but with goodwill. This requires commitment from all the staff members of IICA, in order to move forward together in pursuit of the same objectives, with sufficient humility to address the institutional errors and rectify them, so that greater solidarity and support are fostered to accomplish the mission.

