

Market Information Organization of the Americas
(MIOA)

Progress Report to the Executive Committee of IICA

IICA Headquarters

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Introduction

The Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA) is a cooperation network comprised of Agricultural Market Information Systems (MIS) in 33 countries of the hemisphere, whose objective is to facilitate the timely and constant exchange of market information for agricultural products.

The primary purpose of the MIOA is to promote market transparency through timely, systematic exchange of information. As part of this process, the MIOA sets standards and recommendations on the use of common terminologies and methodologies; facilitates technical assistance among its members; and fosters linkages with international organizations to secure technical cooperation.

The MIOA complements national efforts by searching for support and cooperation mechanisms to enable all member institutions to strengthen their systems, acquire a common language, offer and receive assistance through the sharing of experiences, and expand their capacity to generate, process and disseminate information, for the benefit of agricultural stakeholders in their own countries and the Americas in general.

IICA has served as the Technical Secretariat of the MIOA since 2004, and has been responsible for developing projects, providing technical assistance, following up on agreements reached during the various meetings, and managing the organization's funds, pursuant to the guidelines of the Executive Committee of the organization.

Main achievements to date

Achievements related to the management of the MIOA

- The participation of MIS in the MIOA improved: the number of members increased from 18 in 2004, to 33 in 2018.
- A cooperation agreement between IICA and the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) of the USDA was established to bolster the MIOA's technical and management activities.
- Five projects financed by FAS to support the MIS were implemented within the framework of the FAS/USDA-IICA agreement. Additionally, financial leverage from USAID was obtained through the Participating Agency Program Agreement (PAPA), in order to create a Catalog of Agricultural Products in the Central Region.

Achievements related to the technical objectives of the MIOA

- The importance of precise and timely agricultural market information was promoted before IICA's Executive Committee, the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC), universities, and other strategic partners.
- The technical and administrative capabilities of MIS personnel in the different countries were strengthened through the organization of training workshops on methodologies for price collection and analysis, as well as innovation activities carried out within the framework of regional and hemispheric meetings promoted by the MIOA.

- During the 2005-2006 period, the MIS of 19 countries were evaluated, and 24 best practices were identified. The results of this evaluation will be used as a baseline to develop a new self-evaluation process that will be carried out during the second half of 2018.
- The member countries of the CAFTA, as well as Panama and the Dominican Republic, possess a Catalog of Agricultural Products that serves as a collaborative, dynamic and functional tool to integrate, manage and organize information on the 39 most commercially relevant products in the region. The online tool is available for use by traders, students and other public and private stakeholders. The second phase of this project will begin during the second half of 2018 and will gradually incorporate the Northern, Caribbean, Andean and Southern regions. The catalog is available at the following link: <http://catalogo-oima.org>
- Users of MIS in Latin America and the Caribbean improved their access to timely, reliable and transparent information, through the *Short Message System*. An evaluation of SMS systems developed by the MIS of Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Ecuador and Costa Rica allowed for identifying strategies, methodologies and good practices. This project was carried out with support from the Secretariat of Planning and Evaluation (SEPE) of IICA, which identified good practices and issued recommendations for the implementation of this system in other MIOA member countries.
- The technological and data management capabilities of MIS in Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Belize, Barbados and Costa Rica were strengthened through the use of a database developed by the MIOA, which is stored in a cloud service. The implementation of the MIOA database was carried out through training processes led by the Technical Secretariat.
- The member countries of the MIOA gained access to an Android and iOS application that disseminates agricultural prices. This was made possible through a joint effort by IICA, the MIOA, and the General Coordination of the National Information System of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries of Ecuador.
- The definition and implementation of a curriculum geared toward professionals specializing in the areas of market information systems and intelligence allowed for strengthening the market intelligence capabilities of MIOA member countries. The project included the participation of the Luiz de Queiroz College of Agriculture in Brazil, EARTH University in Costa Rica, Zamorano University in Honduras, and the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Trinidad and Tobago. The end result was the implementation of a course in market information at UWI, as well as the inclusion of this topic in Master's courses taught at EARTH University.
- Technical personnel of MIS, students and private stakeholders now have access to a virtual course on the basic analysis of prices for agricultural products. This course was developed with support from CAESPA-IICA, professors who participated in the first phase, the School of Agricultural Economy of the University of Costa Rica, ISA University in the Dominican Republic, and MIOA specialists. The first edition of the virtual course was offered in both Spanish and English during the first semester of 2018; the course will be offered again during the second semester of the year.

Collaborative projects and actions currently underway

- Implementation of the MIOA database of prices for agricultural products: FAS-USDA funding for the project expired in 2017; however, the Technical Secretariat continues to assist countries in implementing and maintaining the database.
- Implementation of the virtual course on basic analysis of agricultural prices: This course, which is geared toward university students, technical personnel of MIS, and the general public, was developed through funding from FAS-USDA. The course will be made available on IICA's virtual campus four times in 2018 (twice in Spanish and twice in English).
- Development of the MIOA's new Web page: Based on a recommendation by the ICT Advisory Panel, the Executive Committee requested that IICA coordinate the development of a new Web page for the organization, which would aim to provide valuable content to MIS in the member countries.
- Assessment of the status of MIS: Using a methodology developed by the Technical Secretariat, a self-evaluation of MIS will be carried out. The results of the evaluation will be compared to the baseline in order to measure the MIOA's impact; identify good practices in the collection, management, analysis and dissemination of market information; and identify opportunities for improvement with support from the MIOA.

Through the Technical Secretariat, the MIOA is working to define a new strategic plan for the 2018-2021 period, as well as preparing project profiles related to the strengthening of technical capabilities for collecting, disseminating and analyzing market information, based on the concerns and requests submitted by the MIS. Together, the MIOA members and the Technical Secretariat are searching for potential partners and funding sources that would allow for implementing the proposed projects. The MIOA will continue to support its members while fostering the development of technological tools for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information, in order to guarantee market transparency in the hemisphere, as well as achieve the common objective of making timely and reliable market information available to producers, intermediaries and consumers.