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Code of Ethics

Cultivating our principles

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), 2016



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Content

Message from The Director General	v
Introduction	vii
I. FRAME OF REFERENCE	1
A. Ethical Framework	1
B. Objective	2
C. Scope	2
D. Applicability and effectiveness	3
II. PROVISIONS OF THE CODE	4
A. Professional responsibility	4
1. Commitment to IICA	4
2. Prevention of discrimination and harassment	4
B. Behavior in specific situations	5
1. Interpersonal relations in the workplace	5
2. Moral affairs	5
3. Actions outside the workplace	5
4. Relationships with suppliers	5
5. Relationships with external authorities	6
6. Relationships with strategic partners	6
C. Conflicts of interest	6
1. Professional relationships with third parties	7
2. Political activity	7
3. Other activities and interests outside IICA	8
4. Service to a government or international agency	8
5. Honors, awards and favors from sources outside IICA	8
6. Privileges, immunities and exemptions of International Professional Personnel	9
D. Use of institutional resources	10
1. Use of goods and resources	10
2. Preservation, use and disclosure of information	10
3. Property rights on work performed	11
E. Fraud	12

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF ETHICS	13
A. The Ethics Committee and the Secretary of the Committee	13
B. The administrative process	13
ANNEX ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS OF THE CODE OF ETHICS	14
A. Inappropriate behavior	14
B. Sanctions and disciplinary measures	14
C. Reporting and notification	15
D. Investigations and the responsibility to cooperate	16
E. Protection for complainants and witnesses	17

Message from The Director General

A successful organization is built on the commitment and good performance of its staff. This is why the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) continuously renews its commitment to high standards of behavior built on the trust that the Member States have placed in it, to fulfill its mandate and achieve a position of leadership.

The shared process of building this commitment is achieved not only by upgrading our technical skills; it also depends on the degree to which both IICA and its staff members are governed by professionalism and the highest ethical standards.

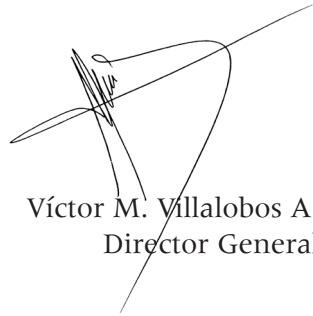
My Administration believes that ethical behavior is the starting point as we shoulder the challenge of integrity; this is why the Institute's principles call for the will and commitment of all staff members, and for the application of modern instruments that will make it possible to ground and guide our decisions and actions.

It is in order to contribute to this noble purpose that we are presenting our "Updated Code of Ethics," which describes the principles that IICA recognizes as fundamental in our actions from the very beginning, as well as the specific current and future behaviors it expects as a basis for our conduct in the organization.

The Code provides a basis for guiding our wills as individuals and as a team in the same direction, so that we can internalize its principles and foster an environment that is humane, equitable, rational, transparent and accountable, in keeping with our mission and vision.

Living an ethical life lends an air of dignity to us as individuals and to our professional activities for the benefit of rural communities in our Member States, and justifies the trust they place in each one of us.

I am sure I enjoy all of the support, enthusiasm and commitment of the staff for achieving our purpose of building a better tomorrow, ever more united by the principles that distinguish all those who are part of this great family we know as IICA.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, positioned above the printed name and title.

Víctor M. Villalobos A.
Director General

Introduction

We are currently faced with a complex, changing environment that calls for new models of behavior. A comprehensive strategy for meeting the new needs and challenges is only possible if we all commit to a process of change. Since it is people who bring about change, we must draw on our beliefs, principles, knowledge and behavior to establish a strong link between us and the Institute's objectives.

Within this context, we are not always sure how best to act in different situations, which may include conflicts of interest. It is for that reason that the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), in keeping with the best management practices, has established mechanisms to guide its employees in managing change and their behavior. Such mechanisms make up IICA's "ethical infrastructure," which includes political commitment, the legal framework, and a code of ethics. The latter mainly performs a guiding and preventive role, although it also supports the Institute's control duties, as it forms part of the rules and regulations.

The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to support IICA and its personnel in situations or conflicts that may affect our development or work performance. The basic principles are designed to guide the consolidation and strengthening of policies, criteria, and the institutional principles as a whole, in such a way as to promote a culture of transparency and legality.

While the Code of Ethics complements the Institute's policies, rules and regulations, it does not address them in detail. Therefore, the absence of a specific provision should not be interpreted as an omission that allows actions that contradict the principles enunciated in this document.¹

In updating the Code of Ethics, both the Administration's vision and contributions made by members of staff were taken into account. Its contents are subject to continuous improvement and will be reviewed periodically, so that the code is a "living" document that evolves through joint efforts and enables us to internalize institutional principles with a view to achieving common objectives.

1 Any matters not addressed in this Code of Ethics will be resolved by the Ethics Committee and by the Director General.



I. FRAME OF REFERENCE

A. Ethical Framework

Certain general factors come into play when we make decisions, such as our personal values, the influence of people who are important in our lives, and codes of conduct that we have learned.

The Code of Ethics is a document about conduct designed to guide us in making decisions pertaining to our lives within the institution, and to help us solve problems and conflicts, but does not provide us with all the answers and actions needed to address situations that arise within the Institute.

Within the institution, such actions are guided by the values that characterize IICA, and which are established in its Medium-term Plan.²

2 IICA (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, CR). 2014. 2014-2018 Medium-term Plan: Agriculture: Opportunity for Development in the Americas. San Jose, CR. p. 16.

B. Objective

The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to provide all staff members³ with a guide to appropriate behaviors in the performance of our duties and decision-making. Its objective is to promote a culture based on lofty ethical principles that emphasizes the moral commitment to channel our everyday actions toward respect for our own rights and the rights of others, and toward good working relations that foster an environment that encourages trust and growth.

C. Scope

The Code provides a frame of reference that complements the policies and regulations contained in the Rules of Procedure of the General Directorate, the Staff Rules, and the Financial Rules. It is not intended to answer all conceivable ethical questions that could arise in our day-to-day working activities, or govern our private conduct, except when it affects our performance, the workplace or the Institute's reputation.

It therefore establishes a set of basic principles and a guide to behavior for specific situations that call for us to apply common sense and good judgment. It deals with more than questions of duty, guiding our actions and allowing us to build on a sound personal and corporate foundation.

It is important to clarify that this Code is not designed to perform control and management functions, which are governed by other instruments.

3 When reference is made to staff members, it refers to all members of the Institute's personnel. Likewise, when reference is made to a staff member using the male pronoun, it should be understood that it also refers to women, unless the context clearly shows that to be inappropriate.

D. Applicability and effectiveness

Compliance with this Code is a moral commitment that everyone that the Institute hires must honor, regardless of duty station, gender, hierarchical level or personnel classification.⁴ Its sphere of application may also extend to anyone associated with IICA whose behavior could affect the Institute's interests because of the nature of their association.

In no case may the application of its provisions run contrary to the laws in effect in the Member States. If that should occur, its content shall be adjusted to the provisions of such laws.

Any behavior contrary to this Code could engender liability in keeping with the Institute's rules and regulations and the provisions in the section on sanctions. Therefore, immediate superiors should promote compliance with the Code and remain on the alert to prevent, detect and respond to any report of inappropriate behavior and to protect staff members who file complaints.

This Code substitutes the Code of Ethics dated June 2003 and will enter into effect once it has been approved by the Director General and published on IICA's Intranet.

4 Refers to the classification of positions of the categories of International Professional Personnel, Local Professional Personnel, General Services Personnel, and Temporary Personnel. The Code applies to consultants only in specific relevant cases.

II. PROVISIONS OF THE CODE



A. Professional responsibility

1. Commitment to IICA

Each and every one of us is responsible for conducting ourselves and performing our duties with professionalism, in keeping with the Institute's rules, the laws of the countries, and customs and sound practices in our field of endeavor.

This commitment is formalized in the "Loyalty Oath" we sign when we take up our post.⁵

2. Prevention of discrimination and harassment

The Institute is committed to providing a workplace free of discrimination or harassment based on any personal trait involving gender, religion, ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or any others covered in the labor laws of the Member States.

5 Article 31 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Directorate and Rule 2.7 of IICA's Staff Rules.

B. Behavior in specific situations

1. Interpersonal relations in the workplace

We must treat our colleagues, regardless of their hierarchical position, with courtesy and respect, and not subject them to physical or verbal harassment or abuse. We must always avoid any behavior that could create an atmosphere of hostility or intimidation, even if it cannot necessarily be classified as harassment or abuse.

2. Moral affairs

We are required to observe this Code so as to safeguard the trust that IICA has placed in us to fulfill the organization's mission. We have a duty to behave appropriately at all times and not compromise the integrity, image or interests of the Institute.

3. Actions outside the workplace

We have an obligation to obey the laws of the Member, Associate and Permanent Observer States of the Institute, and to refrain from any action that could be construed as an abuse of our status as members of staff under the laws of each country or with respect to the privileges and immunities granted by the country in which we are stationed.

4. Relationships with suppliers

We regard requesting or receiving a special incentive from suppliers to achieve their selection, or as a reward for their selection, as illicit behavior. Likewise, staff members must be impartial with suppliers, always seeking the benefit of the Institute and the countries it serves.

5. Relationships with external authorities

We respond to the requests and comments of authorities, seeking to collaborate effectively and respectfully in carrying out our mission, according to the powers vested in us by laws or regulations and respecting the privileges and immunities to which IICA is entitled in the Member States.

6. Relationships with strategic partners

In our relationships with strategic partners, we must abide by the principles set forth in this Code, in order to guarantee compliance with the Institute's rules and procedures, as well as to maintain and safeguard IICA's immunities, privileges and prestige. Similarly, we must respect the ethical principles of our technical partners and allies.

C. Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest is any situation or event in which an Institute staff member intervenes or participates in the performance of his duties that is directly or indirectly related to his own interests, be they financial, social or commercial commitments or business or personal relationships, which could interfere with his ability to make fair, impartial decisions related to his work at IICA.

We must determine ethically whether our personal or private interests comply with this Code's provisions on conflicts of interest. If they do not, we have a duty to inform the Institute's authorities.

The following are some situations that generate conflicts of interest:

1. Professional relationships with third parties

Regardless of the type of activity we carry out, we must protect the integrity of our services and always maintain the objectivity and independence of our decisions and not permit third parties outside the Institute to influence them. We are accountable to IICA and therefore, in carry out our mission, we must remain independent of any influence, guidance, or instruction that could undermine IICA's interests.

2. Political activity

- **Within IICA**

As IICA staff members, we may not participate in the political campaign activities of any candidate for any position, particularly that of Director General or any other senior management position.

- **Outside IICA**

We may not agree to be nominated for an elective public office of a political nature without consulting the Director General first; and if we are, we must resign from IICA.

International Professional Personnel must not participate in any political activities in the countries in which they are stationed. The Director General must be consulted about any exceptions to this rule.

Local personnel may exercise their political rights according to the laws of each country, but in so doing must not receive or request instructions from any government or any authority outside the Institute.

3. Other activities and interests outside IICA

- **Disclosure statement**

If we occupy a position of trust or serve as IICA Representative, we are required to submit an Annual Disclosure Statement (ADS),⁶ pursuant to the Institute's rules. Likewise, prior to accepting or vacating any position of trust or the position of Representative in a given country, we must submit a written statement of our net worth to IICA's senior management.⁷

4. Service to a government or international agency

In the performance of our institutional duties, we may not accept an appointment to a government position. Acceptance of such a position implies that we have resigned from IICA. Authorization from the Director General is required to lend special services to a government or international agency. Nor may we form part of government delegations or request the intervention of government authorities to that end without prior authorization from the Director General.

5. Honors, awards and favors from sources outside IICA

In all cases, we must inform and request authorization from the Director General before accepting honors, awards, prizes or compensation in cash or in kind, favors, gifts, etc., from any government or institution.

6 In compliance with Article 3.5.8 of the Personnel Manual, which also applies to the Director General.

7 In compliance with Article 3.5.9 of the Personnel Manual.

Code of Ethics

Gifts from non-IICA sources for activities or events associated with official duties may only be accepted if:

- The value of the gift does not exceed the equivalent of 10 days' minimum wage in the country where it is received (low-cost promotional items, souvenirs with no commercial value, etc.) and,
- The gift does not compromise, or give the appearance of compromising, the interests or integrity of the Institute.

We may not accept or extend courtesies of any kind that could interfere with objectiveness in fulfilling our official responsibilities or that could compromise, or appear to compromise, the decision-making process in any present or future negotiation. Staff members are prohibited from making, or attempting to make, any negotiation contingent on a gift, special attention or courtesy.

6. Privileges, immunities and exemptions of International Professional Personnel

The privileges, immunities and exemptions accorded to staff members in the category of International Professional Personnel by the Member States are granted in the interests of the Institute, so we should use them in a responsible manner, as provided for in the Personnel Manual.

If we or our dependents are interested in continuing to live in a given country, we must complete all the formalities required to obtain the corresponding visa in a timely fashion and on a personal basis, without involving IICA.

D. Use of institutional resources

1. Use of goods and resources

As employees, we have an obligation to protect and preserve the Institute's property, including any assets assigned to us for the performance of our duties, which must be used pursuant to the corresponding rules and regulations. Such assets include IICA's facilities, name and symbols, office equipment and materials, computer hardware and software, means of communication and data storage systems, official vehicles, etc.

Under no circumstance may we request or order our subordinates or counterparts to carry out work of a personal nature. Nor may we use the Institute's resources or time to tend to personal matters.

2. Preservation, use and disclosure of information

We believe that the procurement and proper use of information is essential for our day-to-day work. Information must therefore be handled and managed responsibly, transparently, safely, and pursuant to the Institute's rules and regulations.

We have an obligation to make proper use of the information we receive and deliver, whether it belongs to IICA or a third party (private or public institutions, financial organizations, donors, etc.), which, because of its public or confidential usefulness, could otherwise result in failure to comply with transparency, intellectual property, and data protection legislation.

We are all responsible for safeguarding the information generated by, or provided to, the Institute. Specifically, as IICA staff members, we must all disclose any information or knowledge generated within the context of our duties, since it forms part of

the institutional memory. The Institute possesses mechanisms for sharing our knowledge in an open and ethical manner, in such a way that, once properly preserved, it can be used fairly and in accordance with the purposes of the cooperation that IICA provides. All employees who leave the Institute are required to hand over the printed or digital information that belongs to IICA.

3. Property rights on work performed

All rights, including copyright and patent rights for any work produced by staff members as part of their official duties, or by any other individual or entity being paid by IICA, or working in cooperation with it, shall be vested in the Institute. IICA personnel may not accept payments from another entity for work produced as part of our official duties.

IICA produces public goods of various kinds. Some of these, such as intellectual property, are covered by creative commons licenses, via which the Institute seeks to guarantee the corresponding attribution, regulate their commercial use, and define their secondary uses. All goods or services subject to intellectual or industrial property rights (patents, utility models, protections, plant and animal health products, software, books, and articles, among others) must be registered in the Institute's name with the corresponding public entities.

IICA's Inter-American Center for Information and Editorial Production for Agriculture (CIIPE) must be notified of all actions that result in protected or protectable goods or services, and the Center will keep a record or file on each one of them. Working with the technical areas, corporate services, and the legal advisor's office, the Center will securely store all legal agreements related to such matters.

E. Fraud

All Institute personnel are committed to preventing, detecting and investigating any act of fraud against the organization. As members of staff, we must be familiar with and apply IICA's Anti-fraud Policy⁸ and report possible instances of noncompliance. The policy applies to all Institute activities and operations.

We have an obligation to report to our senior management any irregularity or suspected irregularity affecting the funds and goods managed by the institution or involving its staff and suppliers, consultants, contractors and/or any other party who has an employer/employee or contractual relationship with the Institute.



III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF ETHICS

This Code is just one of the components of IICA's ethical infrastructure, playing a "guiding" role that is complemented by the other components and areas of responsibility that make up the infrastructure but does not replace them.

A. The Ethics Committee and the Secretary of the Committee

The Ethics Committee will be made up of members of the Institute's staff designated by the Director General, who will advise him and recommend any corrective measures that may be necessary. The Director of the Division of Human Talent Management will serve as the Secretary of the Ethics Committee, coordinating and supporting the Committee's work, and implementing the decisions of the Director General.

B. The administrative process

In addition to this Code and in order to ensure fair, equitable treatment of staff members, provisions will be adopted on the administrative process for handling ethical matters. The Ethics Committee will draw up the guidelines for the process, which will be available for all staff members to consult.

ANNEX ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS OF THE CODE OF ETHICS



The Ethics Committee will be responsible for drafting the guidelines for the administrative process for dealing with ethical matters. The guidelines for compliance with the Code include the following:

A. Inappropriate behavior

IICA will not permit any act of inappropriate behavior, understood to mean the violation of any provision of this Code, Institute rules and regulations, a staff member's employment contract, and the standards of behavior expected of the staff of an international organization.

B. Sanctions and disciplinary measures

Staff members who fail to abide by the provisions of this Code of Ethics to the detriment of the Institute's individual or collective performance, and the relationship with partners, counterparts or suppliers will receive, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct, a sanction ranging from a verbal or written admonition or temporary suspension, to dismissal and determination of legal liability. The above also applies to repeated failure to observe the Institute's policies, rules and procedures.

Sanctions or corrective measures will be set by the Ethics Committee following the established administrative process.

C. Reporting and notification

IICA respects the reporting of any act or suspicion of inappropriate behavior. Anyone who witnesses or is a victim of inappropriate behavior or who needs clarification about the contents and application of this Code should contact the Secretary of the Ethics Committee following the established administrative process, or go through the following channels:

- His/her immediate supervisor.
- The supervisor of the staff member being reported.
- The Secretary of Corporate Services
- The Director General.

Complainants may also forward information received through other persons regarding inappropriate behavior. Notifications may be filed in one of two ways:

- **Openly:** This is when the complainant gives his/her name and presents reliable information in writing concerning the behavior in question, thus making public a declaration of general interest.
- **In confidence:** This is when the complainant gives his/her name, which will not be disclosed without his/her consent, and even then, only to those taking part in the investigation, except in the case of false testimony.

False accusations or misinformation are considered inappropriate behavior and will be sanctioned. The Ethics Committee will not act on anonymous complaints or process them as valid.

Both the Ethics Committee and the Secretary of the Ethics Committee must perform their duties effectively and expeditiously, ensure confidentiality for the entire reporting process, and evaluate complaints assiduously.

The following will be taken into account:

- Whether the complaint was filed in good faith and is consistent with the Code of Ethics
- The relevance of the matter and any support material submitted
- The identity of the accused and his/her interest in the case
- The relevance of applicable laws and procedures
- How similar matters are handled at the national or international level.

D. Investigations and the responsibility to cooperate

The Secretary of the Ethics Committee will be in charge of the investigation when a report is filed and may request support in this process from other in-house units (Management of Human Talent Division, Internal Audit, Legal Unit, the Information and Communication Technology Unit, and others) or specialized external resources (attorneys, investigators, etc.), consulting the Secretary of Corporate Services beforehand.

All staff members have the responsibility to cooperate in the investigation of alleged inappropriate behavior. Any attempt to interfere with the collection of information or the work of investigators is prohibited.

E. Protection for complainants and witnesses

IICA will guarantee protection for complainants and witnesses so that they receive no reprisals for having filed a report on an act of inappropriate behavior. A reprisal is understood as any hostile act against a staff member, whether by a colleague or supervisor, because of the complaint. Any such reprisal will be considered inappropriate behavior.

No staff member shall use his/her position to influence or hinder another staff member from filing a complaint or serving as a witness. Similarly, any staff member who feels that he/she has been the victim of reprisals should contact the Secretary of the Ethics Committee immediately.