



Fortieth Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee of IICA

REPORT OF THE MARKET INFORMATION ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAS  
2019-2020

May, 2020

San Jose, Costa Rica



## Content

I. Background.....	1
II. Executive Committee of MIOA .....	2
III. Results .....	2
1. Promote cooperation among member institutions and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the collection and dissemination of information.....	2
2. Helping to set standards related to terminology, methodology and technology to be used within the network .....	4
3. Facilitate the timely and systematic exchange of market information among member institutions.....	5
IV. Outlook.....	5
V. Acknowledgements .....	5



## I. Background

The Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA) is a cooperation network comprised of Agricultural Market Information Systems (MIS), that is to say, government institutions or those institutions so delegated by the government, whose principle functions and objectives are to collect, process, analyze and disseminate information related to markets and agricultural commodities.

The MIOA is defined as a catalytic body, as in serving to facilitate and support common efforts to achieve the proposed goals of greater cooperation and improved market transparency. These key goals align with the member institutions' needs and concerns as they seek to maximize their own resources, find efficiencies through cooperation, and to harmonize where possible with key neighbors and trading partners. MIOA helps to partner with other national and international cooperation organizations for aligning efforts and serving as a key technical partner.

Established in 2000, the MIOA is currently comprised of 33 countries of the hemisphere. In 2004, IICA was designated as the organization's Technical Secretariat with responsibility for providing technical assistance and financial management. In its role as Technical Secretariat, IICA is also responsible for supporting the implementation of activities and projects by providing technical and strategic support. With its presence in the member countries, IICA oversees the implementation of the agreements of the Executive Committee of MIOA, while serving as the institutional memory. The cooperation agreement signed between the MIOA and IICA was updated in 2018 and extended until December 31, 2021.

The purpose of the MIOA is to facilitate the timely and constant exchange of market information for agricultural products through the achievement of its goals, namely:

- To promote cooperation among its member institutions and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the collection and dissemination of market information.
- To help set standards in aspects related to terminology, methodology and technology within the network.
- To facilitate the timely and systematic exchange of market information between member institutions.
- To act as a channel and facilitate a multiplying effect in order to obtain financial support from international cooperation organizations.

The Executive Committee of the MIOA meets no less than three times a year to propose the organization's strategic orientation and work plan, identifying opportunities for member countries, and setting policies and priorities. Delegates from all of the MIOA member countries typically meet once a year to share new methodologies, identify coming innovations and reaffirm best practices. Regions within MIOA may meet periodically with their Regional Representative on the Executive Committee to ensure that needs are identified and strategies are set for the region,

In 2017, the MIOA's Executive Committee took the decision to create an Advisory Panel on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to advise the Executive Committee and oversee the implementation of technology in the MIS. Panel members hold a face-to-face meeting at least once a year and represent the five regions of the hemisphere.

The year 2020 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of MIOA.



## II. Executive Committee of MIOA

The current MIOA Executive Committee elected for the 2019-2021 period. Regional delegates duly elected their representatives on the Executive Committee, which is constituted as follows:

- Northern Region: Terry Long. AMS-USDA, United States. Chair
- Andean Region: Vacant
- Central Region: Socrates Theoktisto. IMA, Panama.
- Caribbean Region: Robert Saul, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Barbados.
- Southern Region: Pablo Pacheco. Mercado Modelo, Uruguay.

\* The Vice Chair position is currently available.

Due to the current conditions, the Executive Committee has been meeting regularly through videoconference. With the support of the Technical Secretariat, the Committee is following up the impact of the global pandemic through regional conference calls and regular email communication. The Executive Committee is considering and further developing several key project proposals, each looking to strengthen the Agricultural Market Information Systems (MIS) within the countries, the regions and the hemisphere. Part of the emerging focus for the Executive Committee is to develop tools to access market information easily and quickly across all of the member nations.

## III. Results

In relation to the MIOA's objectives, several activities have been implemented in order to strengthen the MIS, and in particular to:

1. **Promote cooperation among member institutions and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the collection and dissemination of information.**
  - **Cooperation activities USDA-FAS**

The Foreign Agricultural Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (FAS-USDA) is a strategic partner of the MIOA. In the context of the FAS/USDA-IICA agreement, five projects were implemented to support the MIS. In addition, 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.

Funding is currently available for the execution of capacity building activities in market intelligence, in coordination with FAS-USAID. These activities focus primarily on the member countries of Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and the Caribbean.

In order to follow up with this activities, MIOA and FAS-USDA are working to coordinate several virtual activities in order to support the member countries. Efforts of this kind are oriented but not limited to the implementation of the GADAS and GATS systems.



- **Capacity building in price collection**

The Agricultural Marketing Service, within the United States Department of Agriculture (AMS-USDA) has facilitated technical specialists to provide training for MIS personnel on methodologies for price collection and market analysis, within the framework of regional and hemispheric meetings promoted by the MIOA. Chile, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras are among the countries that have benefited from these activities.

The Executive Committee, along with the Technical Secretariat, is completing the details of a program to exchange technical specialists, with MIOA support and funding, while the institutions provide the specialists and cover their salary costs during the program. These bilateral exchanges of specialists will not only offer capacity building of basic reporter skills and a direct relationship with their counterparts in another country, but also allow for the multiplier effect, as these institutions can assist other countries and institutions.

- **Panel of ICT Specialists**

In 2017, the MIOA Executive Committee decided to establish an advisory group comprised of experts in topics related to information and communication technologies (ICT) applied to agricultural market information and intelligence. Each region identified an ICT specialist from one of the MIS to join this work team, which also included an IICA specialist. The team is currently considering the implementation of new technologies in the MIS.

On January 2020, the ICT Panel specialists met in the FabLab at IICA Headquarters. The objective of the meeting was to identify new project ideas according to the MIS technological needs or proposed innovative solutions to existing problems. Two main projects, one for advanced data visualization and one providing buyer information for small scale producers, were identified as priorities at this meeting and are being developed by the Technical Secretariat.

The Panel is expected to play a key role in the development of tools for linking all of the MIS, as well as advising in other key technology areas. The Chair of the Panel participates in the Executive Committee meetings as a link to efforts of the Panel and as a technical resource for the Executive Committee.

- **Regional Market Information Network (RRIM, in Spanish)**

The countries of the Central Region have established a Regional Market Information Network (RRIM, in Spanish) that includes the region's MIS and strategic partners such as The Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA, in Spanish) and The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS-Net). Together, they have implemented initiatives such as the Regional Agricultural Markets Intelligence and Monitoring System (SIMMAGRO, in Spanish), which is a platform that provides trade and price information on the region's 40 leading agricultural products. In addition, a Regional Report on Basic Grain Prices is being prepared, explaining price patterns and the factors that affect their performance. The network is also proposing other initiatives to strengthen the MIS in the region.



## **2. Helping to set standards related to terminology, methodology and technology to be used within the network**

- **Assessment of the status of MIS**

Using a methodology developed by the Technical Secretariat, the member nations of MIOA carried out a self-evaluation of MIS related to information technology was carried out. The concept was to both establish a benchmark or baseline of the “now” for the MIS, but also to identify areas of common need or mutual strengths. 26 MIOA countries participated in the self-assessment. The results should help MIOA identify and evaluate where best to apply resources and also be best able to track progress in the evolution of the MIS going forward. These evaluations have shown that each system has their weakness and strengths. By knowing this and sharing the information, it helps facilitate collaboration between the countries and the regions, as the best ideas are identified and plans developed for implementation.

- **Catalogs of agricultural products**

The member countries of CAFTA, together with Panama and the Dominican Republic, have developed a Catalog of Agricultural Products that serves as a collaborative, dynamic and functional tool to integrate, manage and organize information on the 39 products of greatest commercial importance in the region. This online tool is available for consultation by traders, students and other public and private sector stakeholders.

In addition, the Andean, Northern and Southern regions are working to generate information for their catalogs of agricultural products, which will be published on the MIOA’s new Web page. Given the vast number of products and the many countries involved, this will be a long term and ongoing effort by MIOA and the Technical Secretariat to develop a hemispheric product.

- **Education in market information and market intelligence**

A study plan was designed for training professionals in information systems and market intelligence with the support 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.

To complement this effort, the teaching staff participating in the project recommended the development of an online (virtual) course in price analysis for agricultural products. The course is available to technical personnel of MIS, students and private sector stakeholders through IICA’s online education platform. It was developed with the support of CAESPA-IICA, and the staff participating in the first stage include faculty members of the School of Agricultural Economics of the University of Costa Rica, Universidad ISA of the Dominican Republic and specialists of MIOA. The course materials are available in Spanish, English and Portuguese and more than 1000 people have registered from countries within the hemisphere and beyond.



### **3. Facilitate the timely and systematic exchange of market information among member institutions.**

- **MIOA Website**

The new MIOA website was launched on December 2019. This new website integrates the Agricultural Catalog and Dictionary, as well as a repository, news, contact information from the delegates. The website is multilingual and can be reached at: [www.mioa.org](http://www.mioa.org)

During 2020 MIOA plans to integrate a price visualization platform, with updated information from the member countries.

Also, on 2020 MIOA launched its twitter account (@OIMA\_MIOA), with current information about the activities held by the Organization.

#### **IV. Outlook**

In the short and medium term, the MIOA will continue to support the development of technological tools for the collection, analysis and dissemination of agricultural market information, in line with global information management trends. The events related to the global pandemic has shown a clear need for a linkage or shared data to support not only trade development, but also to support strategic decision-making during times of crisis. MIOA's priorities are to support members through innovative ideas and projects, and to promote the exchange of experiences and knowledge that will improve the conditions in which agricultural information sharing and market transparency help support trade and market growth.

MIOA, as a network of information specialists and institutions, is keenly aware of the need to ensure that communication and information sharing is working. Thus, it recently updated its new Web page and is reviewing its communications plan going forward. Two key areas are to better share data easily across the MIS and to improve its profile and its interactions with not only member countries, but also with the authorities and major data users in the countries. Lastly, to seek ways to better educate students in cooperation with universities and to better serve the general public.

#### **V. Acknowledgements**

The Executive Committee of the MIOA is grateful to IICA for the consistent and outstanding support provided by the Technical Secretariat in coordinating and implementing the activities with the organization's member countries. It is also grateful for the guidance that the Secretariat provides, as MIOA seeks to serve many of the same interests and customers as IICA. Further, the transparent administrative and financial management carried out on behalf of MIOA is of great value to both the member countries and the funding partners. Finally, the Executive Committee of MIOA looks to continue this mutually beneficial relationship in support of the transparency of the hemisphere's agricultural markets and to the benefit of our nations.