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Progress Report on Joint IICA/FAO Actions
(October 2002–June 2003)

San José, Costa Rica

1. **General framework for cooperation between IICA and FAO (2002-2003)**

On the occasion of the 27th FAO Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Havana, Cuba, April 23-May 5, 2002, IICA and FAO signed an aide memoire for cooperation between the two organizations during the 2002-2003 period. This document established the general framework for joint cooperation, expressed the satisfaction of the two organizations with the progress achieved to date, and agreed on the relevance of continuing the process of consultation and joint programming of actions, with a view to achieving a greater and more efficient coordination of programs and moving on to the identification of joint activities.

Subsequently, within the framework the IDB-convened meeting on initiatives for food security and rural development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Washington, D.C., on November 11-12, 2002, the Directors General of FAO and IICA met to review the collaboration between the two institutions. On that occasion, they reiterated their commitment to work in coordinated fashion to the benefit of the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

2. **Results of Cooperation: September 2002–May 2003**

Trade and Agribusiness

Within the framework of efforts to coordinate joint IICA-FAO cooperation, a number of possibilities for joint action were proposed. These include supporting the Informal Group of Agricultural Negotiators (GINA), fostering agribusiness development, and working to support PRODAR. The proposals are currently being examined by the two institutions.

The **Informal Group of Agricultural Negotiators** –for which FAO and IICA jointly serve as Technical Secretariat– is in the process of reinitiating its activities after the FTAA Secretariat moved to the city of Puebla, Mexico. To this end, a work plan was prepared, which includes changes in the GINA's working methodology and in the commitments of the two institutions. This document, prepared by IICA, is currently being analyzed by authorities of the FAO Regional Office for Latin America.

With respect to **agribusiness development**, FAO and IICA have responded to an initiative of Peru's Ministry of Agriculture for implementing programs to support the organization of agri-food chains and to foster production alliances. To this end, coordination meetings were held with local FAO consultants and officers of Peru's Ministries of Agriculture and of Production, and a proposal was presented for carrying out complementary activities with the aim of creating synergies.

IICA and FAO contributed to strengthening the capacities of small-scale rural entrepreneurs of Latin America through the establishment of agribusiness ties. In this sphere of activity, they collaborated in preparing and distributing the proceedings of the workshop "Identification of alternatives to improve the capacity of small-scale rural entrepreneurs to participate in Latin American markets," which was held jointly by FAO and IICA in Lima, Peru, on November 12-14, 2002. In follow up to this initiative, an electronic list was created for interested business operators and technicians who participated in the workshop. In addition, a proposal for action based on recommendations made at the event was submitted and is now being considered by the participants on the list. In addition, the case studies are being edited

and a study to unify the results of the events held in this area in 2002 is being prepared. It is expected to be published in the course of the year, in English and in Spanish.

Finally, within the framework of the **Program for the Development of Rural Agroindustry in Latin America and the Caribbean** (PRODAR), FAO and IICA contributed to the conceptual development and implementation of pilot projects that will use a quality differentiation seal that takes into account the special attributes of certain "*campesino* products" produced by rural agroindustries. The two organizations worked together to draft the second version of the base document of the proposal, taking into account the inputs of consultants. It was presented at the Seventh National Congress of Food Science and Technology, held in Bogota in May 2003. In addition, they monitored the pilot project being implemented in Guatemala with funding from PRODAR FOODLINKS and executed by INDAP. They also worked together to design a pilot project in Argentina that will be carried out with the San Juan Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives (FECOAGRO), and presented a proposal for implementing a similar pilot project in Colombia.

Technology and Innovation

IICA and FAO are drawing up an agreement for preparing a directory of research institutions in the Latin American and Caribbean countries. This initiative, which is of great importance for the region, is part of a global effort by FAO to support and strengthen connectivity among the stakeholders of technological research and development in the region. This is fully in line with the objectives and actions of IICA's Area of Technology and Innovation and own work with FORAGRO/INFOTEC.

FAO and IICA professionals participated in meetings organized by the two institutions on the subjects of technological research and development. An example was the meeting on research policy and extension models in LAC, held at IICA Headquarters in Costa Rica in April 2003, which involved the active participation of the FAO office in that country.

In Ecuador, IICA and FAO worked with IPGRI in holding a national meeting to formulate the country report and the global action plan for plant genetic resources. This effort involved 25 national institutions, including the Ministry of Agriculture, INIAP, universities and seed-production companies.

Agricultural Health and Food Safety

IICA's Directorate of Agricultural Health and Food Safety supported FAO in the technical consultation on the assessment of biohazards in food and agriculture, held in January 2003.

At the hemispheric level, the Fruit Fly Eradication Program (RLA5045), conducted jointly by the International Atomic Energy Agency, FAO, IICA and the MoscaMed-USDA-SAGARPA-MAGA program, continues its operations. Currently, the program is engaged in field activities.

The IICA Office in Costa Rica, FAO, and other cooperation organizations provided support and advisory services to the Inter-sectoral Food Safety Commission, a forum comprising 17 public and private entities of the country involved in food safety. This Commission

was created to protect national consumers from food-borne diseases and to improve the access of Costa Rican products to international markets.

In Ecuador, IICA and FAO participated in creating the National Codex Alimentarius Committee, holding a national seminar of members of the Committee, and organizing the Andean Regional Meeting of National Committees.

In Haiti, in late 2002, IICA and FAO technicians worked together with Ministry of Agriculture officials in preparing a strategic plan to combat pink mealy bug, for which they received the active support of APHIS/USDA specialists. In Haiti, the IICA and FAO offices worked to identify common areas of work in the agrifood sector, for which they plan to draw up a working agreement. Joint activities already identified include eradication of classic swine fever and strengthening agricultural health infrastructure.

In Paraguay, March 17, 2003 the two institutions held an international seminar to strengthen animal health and veterinary public health, in coordination with the UNDP, the Paraguayan Chamber of Meat Products and the Rural Association of Paraguay. The seminar was attended by 300 livestock ranchers and meat processors, and included representatives of the animal health services of Uruguay, Argentina and Chile.

Sustainable Rural Development

IICA and FAO continued to strengthen the exchange of information and to articulate technical activities in the area of rural development within the framework of the Inter-agency Group that also includes ECLAC, IFAD, GTZ, IDB, World Bank and USAID.

Inter-institutional cooperation encompasses cooperation activities in various regions and countries. In Central America, IICA and FAO have combined efforts to support the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC) in developing the project "Food Security in Central America; Preparation of a Framework for Policies, a Program and Investment Proposals." This project, financed with a FAO contribution of US\$305,000, is executed by the Joint Secretariat of the Regional Council for Agricultural Cooperation (CORECA) and the CAC, which receives IICA support (both infrastructure and staff). As part of IICA's cooperation, through the Joint CORECA-CAC Secretariat, offices were facilitated for project personnel, a staff member was assigned to coordinate the project, and partial support is provided through specialized counterpart personnel who work with the consultants and with FAO staff.

In Brazil, the IICA and FAO offices are discussing and moving forward to identify forms of joint support for the "Zero Hunger Program" promoted by the administration of the President of Brazil.

In Honduras, after the conclusion of the Hillside Program last year, FAO and IICA have helped to legally establish and strengthen the operations of the National Coordinating Office for Sustainable Hillside Agriculture (CONASEL). This entity has received support from the two institutions since 1996, and serves as the technical secretariat and national consensus-building body on the subject of rural development. A national and a regional forum on rural development are planned for this year, with the support of both organizations.

In Ecuador, IICA and FAO lent support to the joint committee of staff of the Ministries of Agriculture and of Social Welfare for creating the National Interagency Group and for organizing the first National Forum on State Policies for Rural Development. IICA and FAO also participate on the Technical Cooperation, Food Security and Rural Development Board, the objective of which is to coordinate technical cooperation actions to support promulgation of the Law on Food Security and Nutrition.

Education and Training

IICA and FAO have worked together in the area of education for many years, concentrating on actions in support of advanced and intermediate agricultural education in the Americas. In this context, the IICA participated in the workshop "Education for the Rural Population: Targeting the Poor," which was held in Rome, Italy and organized by FAO, and which aimed to visualize the strengthening of rural education. The event was used by IICA to strengthen ties in this area with FAO authorities.

In February of the 2003, FAO representatives participated in a workshop to draw up a Business Plan for the Global Development Learning Network for Agricultural Development (GDLNA), which focuses on IICA's Northern Region. The workshop was organized by IICA and the World Bank, and received support from the IICA Offices in Canada, USA, and Mexico.

In May 2003, IICA explored the possibility of developing digital educational materials with FAO within the framework of the workshop "Content, Development and Implementation of the Information Management Resource Kit Module: Building Electronic Communities and Networks."

Information and Communication

IICA-FAO cooperation in the area of agricultural information management has been strengthened as a priority area of collaboration.

Through IICA's Orton Memorial Library (OML), the IICA/SIDALC program has served as the liaison for efforts to reach a concrete agreement on joint efforts in the region with regard to: a) serving as a regional node for AGRIS; b) AGROVOC agricultural thesaurus in Spanish; c) collaboration for creating an Internet-based integrated library management system; and, d) training activities, evaluation process, and translation of modules of the Information Management Resource Kit developed by FAO.

In follow up to the proposed activities, a representative of WAICENT and the head of the FAO/AGRIS International System visited the OML to analyze and develop possible cooperation agreements between the two institutions. Currently, IICA/OML continues to provide technical assistance and training to national institutions for the adoption of FAO-developed methodologies and tools for the management of information, in particular WebAGRIS.

The ties between the two institutions have fostered participation and the exchange of experiences in the following activities:

IICA/OML participated in the Third Workshop on the Agricultural Ontology Service–AOS," held May 9, 2002 at the University Project of Florida, where the participation of IICA's Agricultural Information and Documentation System of the Americas (SIDALC) in the AOS project was discussed.

A FAO regional information management officer participated in the Second Workshop of SIDALC Coordinators entitled "Promoting Agricultural and Rural Information Services in the Americas," held March 20-21, 2003 at IICA Headquarters. A document describing AGRIS and the strategy for an international information network on agricultural sciences and technology in the framework of WAICENT was presented at the workshop.

IICA/OML participated in a workshop on information and institutional development focusing on source materials for agricultural professionals, held October 15-17, 2002 in Wageningen, the Netherlands and organized by ISNAR, FAO and the Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA). During the workshop, the thematic plan for preparing the fourth FAO training module was analyzed, the objective of which is to improve the effectiveness of the management of information by agricultural institutions.

IICA participated in a training seminar on the development of applications with Websis tools, held November 4-15, 2002 in Warsaw, Poland, which was organized by the Institute for Computer and Information Engineering (ICIE) and sponsored by FAO. On that occasion, the WWW-ISIS/WebAgris tool was analyzed and recommendations were made on the possibility of setting up an integrated system for libraries for cataloguing, procurements, loans and statistics.

IICA participated in a joint FAO-Rockefeller Foundation workshop on virtual communities, which was held in New York in May 2003. This workshop promoted effective management of agricultural information through distance education.

Cooperation in this field was extended to the different countries for creating national and regional capabilities and strengthening the resources of national information networks. For example, in August 2002 a first workshop was held on the management of agricultural bibliographic data bases using WEBAGRIS, organized by the IICA Office in Bolivia, and attended by 16 representatives of 8 libraries of the schools of agronomy and veterinary medicine of public universities. Currently, FAO's Agricultural Documentation Center and its IICA-Bolivian counterpart exchange information, bibliographic materials, experiences in library services and management of the WEBAGRIS system. A second workshop on this subject is planned for June 25-27, 2003.