

IICA



Projecting a new institutional image at IICA



General guidelines
for projecting our
institutional image

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I. Introduction



Chelston W. D. Brathwaite
Director General

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture today attaches special importance to information, communication and institutional projection. The promotion of a new global dimension and a new institutional image is one of the cornerstones of this Administration's strategy for attaining its objectives.

As part of the efforts to reposition the Institute, we decided to promote IICA's image as an international development organization that is recognized and respected as a reliable strategic partner that can make a significant contribution to the development of agriculture and the rural milieu in the Americas.

The efforts we undertake and the approach we adopt to our activities in this field are a responsibility we share with all the Offices. Hence, from the start of my Administration, we have endeavored to develop a joint work program and, from Headquarters, provide the support needed to achieve our objective of projecting this image of excellence. The role of each staff member, and, in particular, the Representatives in the Member States, is key to achieving this; and, although our human and financial resources are limited, we must pool efforts and create synergies.

The lines of action proposed for projecting the Institute's image are based on principles such as flexibility, the recognition of diversity and the ability to adapt to the respective national situations. This means that we recognize the differences in the dimensions of the member countries and our Offices, as well as the diversity of cultures and economic, political and social conditions.

Accordingly, we understand that in each country the efforts to project the institution require different approaches and produce different results. However, it is important that there be certain common criteria: the Institute's image should be only one, standardized image, and it should adhere to the same general guidelines.

When IICA projects its own image, it is also projecting the image of agriculture and rural life. We want IICA to be recognized in the hemisphere, and throughout the world, as an agency of excellence. However, we also want the strategic importance of agriculture to be recognized at the political level; in other words, as regards the contribution that the sector makes to the economy (in the broadest sense and not simply as a primary sector), to employment, to exports, to democratic stability, to governance, and to the balance between urban and rural areas.

We are successful to the extent that, as an organization, we carry out our activities in a field that is recognized as being of strategic importance. When IICA promotes its image in different areas and before different target audiences, rural life and agriculture are also better positioned in the priorities of public and private decision-makers.



II. The institutional image

A. What is the “institutional image”?

The institutional image refers to how outsiders perceive the organization, which means that the image is created through communications and the organizational identity. It is not an inherent characteristic of the organization. The institutional image is much more than simply what is visible; it encompasses everything the organization does.

Organizational communication should refer to the identity of the organization, in other words, to a set of stable principles, values and characteristics, and those attributes that the organization decides to make part of its message.

B. Components of the institutional image

The institutional image is comprised of three components:

- The organizational mission (OM)
- The organizational identity (OI)
- The organizational values (OV)

$$\text{Institutional image} = \text{OM} + \text{OI} + \text{OV}$$

Implementing the institutional image entails projecting:

- The vision/mission
- The organizational identity
- The organization’s principles and values

IICA’s vision/mission is defined in the 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan. As regards projecting the institutional image, the three most important objectives are:

- To promote the prosperity of rural communities in the Americas
- To promote food security
- To promote the sustainable development of agriculture

The Institute's actions in the hemisphere are designed to create an institution of excellence, based on the following guiding principles:

- Leadership through excellence
- Management style results - driven
- Commitment to diversity
- Accountability through performance and results
- Link local demands to global opportunities
- Teamwork and partnership
- Decentralization and capacity building
- Relations with the Member States

Equally as important as the principles are the organizational values. We should be guided by the following values:

- Commitment
- Discretion
- Efficiency
- Flexibility
- Integrity
- Loyalty
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Service
- Solidarity
- Transparency

C. Construction of the institutional image

Two basic elements are required to construct an institutional image (II):

- Performance (P₁)
- Publicity (P₂)

$$II = P_1 + P_2$$

It is worth remembering that what is disseminated and what is done must be exactly the same. The organization's words and actions must be consistent. If the Institute is to build an image that is as near as possible to the ideal image, the capacity for self-criticism must exist at all levels, in the interest of continually enhancing that image.

Performance (P_i) is:

- Execution of activities (E)
- Coordination (C) with the appropriate strategic units (internally) and strategic partners (externally)
- Supervision and follow-up (SF)

$$P_i = E + C + SF$$

The Representatives play a strategic role in performance and publicity and, therefore, in the development of the institutional image.

Applying these ideas will help IICA be recognized as an institution of excellence.

III. Objectives of projecting the institutional image

A. The main objective of efforts to project the institutional image

To promote the image of the Institute as an international development agency that is recognized and respected as a reliable strategic partner that can make a major contribution to the development of agriculture and the rural milieu in the Americas.

B. The specific objectives of such efforts

- For IICA to be recognized as an organization that promotes major goals for the hemisphere, such as the sustainable development of agriculture, food security and the prosperity of rural communities in the Americas.
- For IICA to be recognized as an institution of excellence that supports the efforts of the Member States to achieve progress and prosperity in the hemisphere
- To strengthen the Institute's ties with its Member States, so that they are familiar with and use our the services we offer, and play an active part in the new role of the Inter-American

Board of Agriculture, the principal forum for discussing and reaching agreement on strategic policies and priorities aimed at improving agriculture and rural life in the hemisphere (Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life)

- To promote new strategic alliances and strengthen relations with our strategic partners. To achieve a position for IICA as a skilled partner for financial, cooperation and agribusiness organizations which, at different levels and in different thematic or geographical areas, have the same objectives as far as rural communities are concerned.

IV. Twelve keys to projecting the institutional image

Twelve keys are proposed for projecting the institutional image, 12 of IICA's real strong points and around which our communications should be centered:

- A network of offices in 34 countries in the hemisphere
- Technical competence in:
 - Trade Policies and Negotiations
 - Agribusiness Development
 - Technology and Technological Innovation
 - Education and Training
 - Agricultural Health and Food Safety
 - Sustainable Rural Development
- Commitment to hemispheric solidarity, social equity and the alleviation of rural poverty.
- More than 60 years' experience, which enables it to look ahead to the future, in order to meet the challenges and tap the opportunities of the Twenty-first Century.
- Strategic links with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank (WB), the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and other important institutions.
- The ability to enlist the support of and bring together the ministers of agriculture in the hemisphere and other entities in the public and private sectors.
- Commitment to regional and hemispheric integration.

- Commitment to accountability and transparency.
- Respect for diversity.
- Promotion of an integrated approach to rural development.
- Political neutrality.
- Responsiveness, flexibility and efficiency.


These 12 strong points can help us project an image of IICA as an institution of excellence. They will help us build confidence, which is, after all, what lies behind an institutional insignia or seal.



V. Target audiences

The target audiences of efforts to project the institutional image are as follows:

- Senior government officials (Presidents, Ministries of Agriculture, Trade, Rural Development, Foreign Relations, Planning, Economy and Finance, Health, Tourism and Environment).
- Decision makers of national cooperation, financial and research institutions, regional and international non-governmental organizations, and foundations.
- Leaders of producers' and agribusiness organizations.
- Decision makers in academia (chancellors, deans, directors of university schools).
- Non-governmental opinion shapers (writers of articles and editorials, think tanks of firms and organizations, people who, in different ways, shape public opinion).



VI. The role of the Representatives as ambassadors of the "IICA seal"

The Representatives are the ambassadors of the "IICA seal" in their respective countries. They are the highest-level interlocutors with our target audiences. Their actions will determine whether the

Offices actively promote communication and projection, and open channels for internal communication.

Based on these general guidelines for managing the projection of the institution, under the leadership of the Representative each Office must design its own strategy, establishing objectives and actions tailored to the specific conditions of the country concerned.

Our aim at Headquarters is to support them in these tasks, around which synergies must be created.

Given their wide range of responsibilities, we recommend that each Representative appoint a correspondent to work with the Office of Public Information at Headquarters.

This correspondent will be in charge of:

- Distributing the press releases and other items for the media in an efficient and timely fashion.
- Keeping an up-to-date list of journalists.
- Keeping an up-to-date list of target audiences.
- Monitoring the press and sending to Headquarters reports on any items that are published.
- Coordinating with the Office of Public Information requests for support in preparing or distributing materials for the Office.
- Distributing among their co-workers the public information received from Headquarters.

This is not meant to be a new position, but a reassignment of responsibilities for some staff member.

These actions at the country level are intended to make IICA a first-rate source of information for the press, analysts and other shapers of public opinion. The aim is to increase the Institute's credibility based on the excellence and quality of its studies and assessments, the technical quality of the assistance provided in each country, and its proactivity with regard to issues that go beyond agriculture and that stem from the expanded mandate that the hemisphere's leaders have given to IICA.



VII. Support from the Office of Public Information and Institutional Image to the Offices and Representatives

The Office of Public Information and Institutional Image is responsible for projecting the Institute. Its mission is to ensure that IICA is recognized by different target audiences as a technical institution of excellence that supports the efforts of its Member States to modernize the rural sector, promote food security, alleviate rural poverty and promote the sustainable development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared and environmentally friendly.

The Office of Public Information and Institutional Image can support the efforts of the Offices and the Representatives to project IICA's image by:

- Promoting knowledge about the strategic role of agriculture and rural life and IICA's activities in the media (publications in the media).
- Disseminating information about the supply of technical cooperation available in the hemisphere (the Institute's Web portal, brochure, video and other products in printed and electronic formats).
- Disseminating the general guidelines for managing the organization's communication with its target audiences, pursuant to the strategic guidelines in effect at the time (didactic manuals on the subject and advisory assistance via email and the Web portal).
- Improving relations between the Offices and the media (advice on the subject and press releases).
- Generating permanent flows of information targeted at the media (journalistic information center, press releases, monitoring of the press and IICACONNECTION electronic bulletin).
- Drafting communication plans to improve the internal and external communications of the respective Office.
- Meeting the special needs of the Offices with regard to the management of the institution's image (specialized assistance).
- Promoting various communications media for institutional projection (the Institute's Web portal and the IICACONNECTION electronic bulletin).
- Generating communications products for specific target audiences (institutional brochure and video, Infoletter, cd cards, etc.).

ANNEX 1. Principal means of projecting the institutional image

A. The Institute's website

This is undoubtedly the most important vehicle for institutional communication. It is inexpensive and has a global reach.

The Office of the Assistant Deputy Director General has been overseeing a process aimed at renewing and improving our Web portal, to make it a useful tool for sharing knowledge about IICA and its strategic areas of concentration. Every IICA Office has its own page on the institutional Web portal.

B. Electronic newsletters

The objective of the electronic newsletters is to keep the national and international community informed of the Institute's actions and activities, and to promote the sharing of experiences by disseminating information on successful projects. For example, the bilingual IICAConnection newsletter now reaches some 5000 readers in the Americas every fifteen days.

C. Information center for journalists

This center receives, processes and distributes informational or analytical pieces on Institute activities that are of interest to media organizations and international press agencies. The center operates at Headquarters, with two-way communication between the IICA Offices in the countries and Headquarters.

The communications medium used is email. Each Office will send the press releases produced to the media. To do this, they will keep and continually update a list of media organizations and journalists in charge of items related to agriculture, the economy, etc. Each month the Offices will send Public Information clippings of any articles published during the period (press monitoring). The Representatives will receive regular reports on IICA's presence in the media in the hemisphere (by country and by region).

D. Press releases

These are intended to maintain a permanent flow of information to media organizations in each country, including the mass media and specialized media organizations.

F. Other communication products

Posters, brochures, reports, newsletters, videos, radio programs, interactive CDs, macromedia productions, etc.

G. Creation and use of opportunities for publicity in the press

Interviews and editorial articles in the local media.

H. Personal contact with members of the target audiences

It is recommended that the communications media used for projecting the Institute's image be validated and evaluated periodically, to determine their effectiveness and make any improvements that may be needed. By evaluating communications products, it is possible to ensure that the objectives set for them are achieved.

ANNEX 2. Relations with the press

Many actions can be undertaken to maintain a good and effective working relationship with journalists and no one is better placed than the Representatives, who know the countries in which they serve, to determine which activities would best achieve this objective. However, some possible actions are listed below.

- Establish closer ties with journalists and communicators whose field of action is related to agriculture, rural development or economic and trade-related matters.
 - Send them information and publications in which they may be interested.
 - Invite them regularly to attend and cover the Institute's activities.
 - Organize training activities for them or find ways of incorporating them into training activities not intended exclusively for journalists.
 - At least once a year, organize a small social activity for the journalists. During this activity, the outstanding work of some of them could be rewarded with a certificate of recognition.
- Establish closer ties with the heads of the press and dissemination units of ministries of agriculture and other agencies to which services

are provided. If the Office –as is the case in most countries- does not have professional support in this field, these officials can be excellent disseminators of joint activities.

ANNEX 3. Internal communications

Internal communication ensures that the vision, mission and history of the organization are shared by everyone and that the institution's objectives are achieved. Communicating means creating an environment in which people feel comfortable discussing work-related matters honestly and know they will be listened to, and in which information is circulated.

IICA's personnel are also ambassadors who project the Institute's image. Every single staff member influences our target audiences' perception of IICA. Whether it be the way that our telephone operators answer calls, the quality with which our specialists give technical cooperation, the way in which our senior officials treat dignitaries, or the presentation of the letters we send – all these are important.

For IICA officials to represent the organization properly, they must be equipped with mechanisms and resources via internal communication, which permits everyone to know what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Internal communication makes it possible to:

- Promote communication among the staff and a sense of belonging.
- Integrate personal and institutional development.
- Ensure that officials identify with the institution's and the Administration's values.
- Reduce the impact of the rumor mill and sources of internal conflict.
- Help create opportunities for information, participation and the sharing of opinions.

Internal communication depends on the organizational culture (principles, values, habits, rites, signs, etc.) that underpins the concept that the Institute has of itself. This culture is the starting point and the framework for the institution's work, because communication depends on it.

Internal communication tools

A number of communication tools can be used to enhance internal communication (oral, written, audiovisual, digital, etc.). The latest

information and communication technologies create possibilities and offer different ways of doing things.

Some internal communication tools that the Administration has developed focus on the dissemination of information about the internal audience. Various means are used. For example:

- The Director General reports on his activities as part of his policy of accountability. He meets regularly with the staff at Headquarters to share information. He takes advantage of official trips to meet with the staff of the Offices in the countries.
- The new information technologies are used to broadcast certain meetings live, via our Web portal, so that the staff has access to these messages.
- Internal communications are sent to all staff members via email.
- Displays are used for dissemination purposes.

The Offices can also implement other mechanisms in line with their communications needs, such as:

- Letters to the staff
- Orientation materials
- Style manuals
- Brochures
- Institutional publications
- Mailbox
- Open or direct line
- Electronic media (mail, Intranet, distribution lists and discussion forums via Internet)

It is recommended that such mechanisms be evaluated on a regular basis, in order to make any adjustments that may be needed and undertake future actions based on the data obtained. Opinion surveys are the most widely disseminated methods.

The purpose of internal communication is for all staff members to be aware of what IICA is and does, of the priorities set by the Administration, and of the values that we should possess. The Representative can take the lead in this regard, helping to ensure that well-informed staff members, regardless of the position they occupy, are first-rate communicators of the image that we are building together.