



The Regional Agendas for Technical Cooperation

Executive Summary

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The Regional Agendas for Technical Cooperation



Foreword

When I assumed leadership of the General Directorate of IICA, in January 2002, I expressed my firm determination to redefine IICA's role at all levels of action and to spur a principle-centered process of institutional transformation. The aim is to reposition IICA as an institution of excellence, one that is relevant and capable of responding to the challenges and demands involved in bringing about change in agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

Cognizant of the Member States' desire for regional cooperation to respond to their demands and priorities, and as indicated in IICA's Medium Term Plan for the 2002-2006 period, we fostered a broad process of consultation, dialogue and consensus building that resulted in the Regional Technical Cooperation Agendas. These are the instruments through which the Institute implements its technical cooperation at the regional level.

In preparing and implementing the Regional Cooperation Agendas, we have placed special emphasis on ensuring that a clear and direct link exists between the 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan and the Regional Agendas. Moreover, it is of capital important to the Institute to report to the Member States on the results it has achieved in comparison to those it has planned.

This Executive Summary of IICA's Regional Agendas is being submitted to our Member States, strategic partners and stakeholders of agriculture and rural life in the Americas for their consideration of IICA's proposed technical cooperation at the regional level.

Our objective is to open a frank discussion of the cooperation being proposed so that we may be assured that our work programs are consistent with the objectives and interests of the countries and the regions.

Finally, I would like to underscore that the Regional Cooperation Agendas are instruments that should respond to the countries' needs and priorities, which are in constant flux due to changes taking place in the global setting. Therefore, to ensure their relevance and viability, the Regional Agendas will be revised and updated on an ongoing basis.

Chelston W.D. Brathwaite
Director General



The Regional Agendas for Technical Cooperation



Introduction

This document contains a summary of the Regional Technical Cooperation Agendas prepared by the Directorates of Regional Operations in line with the guidelines contained in IICA's 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan (MTP), which states that IICA's actions will be executed in accordance with technical cooperation agendas at the national, regional and hemispheric levels.

The preparation of regional agendas is a result of the decision made by the new Administration to engage in a dialogue to redefine the Institute's role at all levels, including the regional level, and ensuring that its work at the different levels is aligned with the Institute's vision, mission and objectives.

Given its new vision, the Institute has undertaken a process of renovation, redefinition and evaluation at all levels, with a view to ensuring that its work is consistent with the interests and objectives of the countries. It is IICA's intention that national and regional authorities, in both the public and private sectors, participate fully in the definition, implementation and evaluation of the Institute's strategic actions.

IICA's new vision attaches priority to promoting sustainable development, food security and rural prosperity. Consequently, IICA's cooperation actions focus on assisting the countries to formulate and implement the policies they need to achieve these objectives.

The Agendas reflect the interest of the Members States in ensuring that IICA's cooperation actions respond to the needs and priorities of the governments. Bearing this in mind, the current Administration has stressed the need:

- to establish a clear and recognizable link between the MTP and the Agendas; and

- to report, clearly and frequently, to the Member States on what has actually been achieved in relation to what was planned.

Accordingly, the MTP establishes a clear link among the national, regional and hemispheric agendas. Preparation of same constitutes a new approach to technical cooperation in which emphasis is placed on the concepts of partnership, cooperation and demand-driven efforts, and constitutes a key element of the MTP.

The unique nature of each region was taken into account in the preparation of the Agendas, and in this way IICA fulfilled the mandate calling for greater participation by the Member States in the design and implementation of cooperation actions. The Agendas promote transparency, accountability and ongoing dialogue with our stakeholders.

The compendium of the Regional Agendas for Technical Cooperation which is presented for consideration emphasizes IICA's six strategic areas of action:

- Trade and Agribusiness Development
- Technology and Innovation
- Agricultural Health and Food Safety
- Sustainable Rural Development
- Education and Training
- Information and Communication

The document identifies the changes that will be brought about as a result of IICA's cooperation actions, the implications of same, and shows how the strengths of the Institute are matched with issues of importance in the Americas. It also establishes a preliminary list of actions for discussion.



Preparation of the Agendas

Methodology

The preparation, review and adjustment of the Agendas were based on a process of prospective strategic thinking, according to which the future is shaped in the present by key players in the economic, social and political life of the Member States. According to this approach, any action taken (or not taken) has a significant impact on the future.

The process comprised the following steps:

- Selection of institutional objectives
- Identification and prioritization of critical issues
- Definition of expected results and lines of action
- Preparation of the Agendas
- Approval of the Agendas
- Preparation and presentation of the annual report
- Review and periodic updating of the Agendas

This process was coordinated by the Directors of Regional Operations, and involved IICA's Regional Specialists, IICA's Representatives in the Member States, and the units at Headquarters. Every effort was made to encourage the active participation of the key stakeholders involved in IICA's technical cooperation actions at the regional level.

The Regional Specialists are responsible for executing the Agendas, and they do so in close collaboration with the Directorates of Regional Operations, the Directorates of the Strategic Areas, and the IICA Representatives in the Member States.

1.1 Selection of institutional objectives

The Institute's Vision comprises three components, which promote the sustainable development of agriculture, food security and prosperity in rural communities. The MTP defines a set of

institutional objectives for the technical cooperation IICA provides for each component; these should shape IICA's cooperation actions.

Accordingly, taking into consideration the specific characteristics and needs of each region, the first step in preparing the Agendas was to select the institutional objectives that the strategic actions and results set out in the Agendas could be expected to contribute to. The aim is to align IICA's actions with the Institute's priorities and to achieve significant impact in the countries.

1.2 Identification and prioritization of critical issues

Critical issues are the constraints, situations or challenges that hinder achievement of objectives. Critical issues were identified by analyzing agriculture and its setting, the institutional setting, and the Institute's capacities.

The analysis of the agriculture context centered on important changes that have taken place in the setting and that have had an impact on the development of agriculture and the rural milieu; it also examined the evolution and performance of the agrifood sector at the regional level. It addressed issues that can be grouped into categories and relationships covering the following four dimensions: technical-economic, social, ecological-environmental and political-institutional.

The analysis of the institutional context took into account the natural, institutional and legal agents involved in IICA's cooperation actions. It included governments, interest groups, clients and users, sponsors, employees, partners and competitors of IICA. In drawing up the Agendas, every effort was made to take their priorities, expectations and needs into consideration.

Lastly, the analysis of institutional capacities focused on the Institute's principal strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis its technical and administrative functions.



Once identified, the critical issues were prioritized on the basis of the considerations expressed by the Institute's clients.

1.3 Definition of expected results and lines of action

For each of the priority critical issues identified, a number of expected results and the lines of action required to achieve them were defined. During the process to prepare the Agendas, efforts were made to ensure that both the results and actions were in keeping with the interests, needs and priorities of the Institute's clients.

Many of the expected results and lines of action require the participation of more than one of IICA's Thematic Areas. In these cases, the approach will be to articulate actions in order to generate greater impact through interaction and the synergy generated among the different Thematic Areas.

1.4 Preparation of the Agendas

The Directors of Regional Operations wrote draft versions of the Agendas, taking into account the information generated in the preceding steps and following the guidelines established for preparing same. These were submitted to the consideration of the key stakeholders involved in IICA's cooperation actions of regional scope.

1.5 Approval of the Agendas

Once agreement was reached on the proposed Agendas, they were submitted to the Directorate of the Technical Cooperation Secretariat, which forwarded them to the Technical Cooperation Committee for analysis and approval. The Committee proposed modifications which were then included by the Directors of Regional Operations.

1.6 Preparation and presentation of the annual reports

At the end of each year of Agenda implementation, an annual report is to be prepared and delivered to key stakeholders in the region and, preferably, discussed personally with them. This is the responsibility of the Directors of Regional Operations and the respective Representatives in the Member States.

The report is to assess the progress made in achieving the expected results, as well as their contribution to the sustainable development of agriculture, food security and prosperity in rural communities at the regional level.

1.7 Review and periodic updating of the Agendas

The Agendas will be evaluated annually in order to assess the progress made and results achieved, identify problems, document lessons learned, identify changes in needs and priorities at the regional level, and propose any changes that may be needed. The aim is to ensure that the Agendas are up to date and relevant to changing circumstances in agriculture and the rural milieu in the region.

IICA's strategic planning process is dynamic and ongoing. This represents only one stage in a process to establish IICA as a reliable partner for the implementation of agrifood activities in its member countries.

The following chapters summarize the priorities and expected results of IICA's technical cooperation actions of a regional scope. The document should be discussed with stakeholders and within IICA itself, with a view to generating feedback on the effectiveness of the overall approach and the lines of action that have been identified, and to receive specific recommendations for implementing the Agendas.



Andean Regional Agenda

The general setting for the region and for agriculture

The Andean Region is made up of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. With a total land surface of 4.7 million km², the region displays wide geographic and environmental diversity. Within its borders can be found nearly all the climatic zones, from the shores of the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean to the high peaks of the Andes, including tropical jungles, the plains of the Orinoco River and pre-montane formations.

The region is home to a multiethnic, multicultural population of nearly 119 million people. It posts a total GDP of nearly US\$268 billion and a per capita GDP of nearly US\$2,250. These overall figures mask profound gaps among countries, and income distribution in the region as a whole is marked by severe inequalities. This problem, found all over Latin America, is particularly acute in the Andean countries. Indeed, income inequality and the lack of opportunities have repeatedly triggered serious social upheavals and crises of governability in all the countries.

The Andean States have a limited capacity for redistribution. Allocated resources have been insufficient to meet the population's needs for basic health, education and social welfare services. Welfare and health indicators are low in all the countries, including high rates of infant and child malnutrition and generally low rates of education; all this poses a serious obstacle to development and modernization processes.

Over one third of the population inhabits rural areas in all the countries of the region except Venezuela, and approximately two thirds of these live below the poverty line. Nevertheless, most of the countries lack integrated rural development policies or consolidated programs able to unify government efforts at the national, regional and local levels. Although heavy investments are certainly being

made in the rural sector, as a general rule, they are isolated and inconsistent.

The appearance and rapid growth of the drug trade and subversive armed groups have worsened the situation of the rural poor, hindering government development and assistance programs, especially in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. Perhaps the areas most affected by political instability are the border zones, especially where the production of illicit crops predominates.

Despite all these difficulties, agriculture continues to account for more than 11% of the GDP, as attested to by national accounts taken on the average. Around 25% of the economically active population works in activities related directly to agriculture. To these should be added sectoral linkages generally not included in traditional national accounts, but without which it would be impossible to provide fresh and processed foodstuffs for domestic and export markets. These include the service sectors that provide technical assistance, financing and transportation, and that engage in post-harvest activities, food processing, agro-industry, and the distribution and marketing of products of agricultural origin.

The production and marketing of agricultural and agro-industrial goods are the foundation of the economy for Andean countries, with the exception of Venezuela, and the agricultural sector is one of the region's main sources of foreign exchange.

Because the region is home to a broad diversity of agro-ecological zones, it is able to produce an extensive variety of products. The lowlands of the Orinoco and Amazon Rivers are dotted with cereal, legume and oilseed crops and beef cattle. In the high Andes, South American camelids and sheep are an important source of fiber and meat. Highland grain crops (*kiwicha*, *tarwi* and *quinoa*) are important not only for their place in the local diet, but also as exports to the European Union and Canada.



The region has vast potential for producing fruits and vegetables. Ecuador is the world's largest exporter of bananas, and Peru and Colombia have seen substantial growth in a variety of fruit exports. Other Andean fruit crops, such as tree tomato or tamarillo, lulo or naranjilla, granadilla or passion fruit, annonaceae (the cherimoya family) and caricaceae (the papaya family), are able to supply major market niches, both current and potential.

Despite all this, Peru and Venezuela continue to be net food importers.

Political and institutional setting

The Andean countries are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Colombia and Bolivia both belong to the CAIRNS group, and Peru is in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. Colombia and Venezuela have joined with Mexico to form the G-3.

At the regional level, the Andean countries comprise the Andean Community (AC), an economic bloc that pursues a variety of objectives, including the establishment of a customs union by the end of 2003. Bolivia belongs to the AC and is also the additional member ("4+1") of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), making it an important ally to promote integration initiatives toward a free trade area for the countries of the South American continent.

The executive body of the Andean Community is the General Secretariat (SG-AC), which manages the integration process and is headquartered in Lima, Peru. The SG-AC is the major political and economic institution in the region, supporting the countries not only in trade, but also in integration-related matters if the countries so decide, through the different bodies created within the Community. The resolutions of these bodies become supranational binding mandates.

The CA has adopted the Andean Common Agricultural Policy (PACA) and other agricultural policy tools including the Andean Agricultural Health System and the Andean Price Band System, which has been under negotiation with MERCOSUR since 1997. The PACA provides the CA with a framework for decisions on such issues as industrial property rights, plant breeders' rights, and access to plant genetic resources.

The CAN General Secretariat is IICA's counterpart in matters involving the integration process. It is also a recipient of joint actions on collateral issues associated with border-zone development, agricultural health, food safety and alternative development.

The region has a financial support agency, the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), which serves both public and private sectors and is headquartered in Caracas, Venezuela. The CAF channels loan resources from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The CAF, working in tandem with other international agencies, is a source of financial resources for development. To date, it has allocated relatively few funds for agriculture in the region, by comparison with those available to other sectors such as industry, tourism, and the like. Resources for rural and agricultural development come primarily from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and IFAD. These institutions have asked IICA to take part, either directly or through national counterpart agencies, in supporting components of technical cooperation or resource administration.

The countries of the region (with the exception of Venezuela) have a valuable ally in the United States International Development Agency (USAID). It invests in development programs in rural areas, both through direct monetary outlays and by financing food donations. Most of these resources are invested through companies or NGOs.



Another important partner is the German Cooperation Agency GTZ, which is working together with IICA on projects in areas such as appropriate technology for natural resource conservation and management, innovation in alternative development, and information systems.

The Andean countries have adopted the Plan for Andean Cooperation to Fight Illicit Drugs and Related Crimes, with support from AID and other international agencies. The Andean Alternative Development Committee (CADA) was incorporated as a specialized center of the plan to foster an exchange of experiences and undertake joint actions to support alternative development programs.

IICA's capacities

IICA provides leadership in the region in the areas of trade, agri-food chains, agricultural innovation and technology, agricultural health and food safety, rural development and education for the agricultural sector. The Institute is held in high esteem by state agencies and private organizations associated with agriculture and rural life.

In the area of agribusiness, IICA combines its efforts with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to promote small- and medium-scale agricultural enterprises through the Cooperative Rural Agroindustry Development Program for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRODAR).

In technology innovation, the Cooperative Agricultural Research and Technology Transfer Program for the Andean Subregion (PROCIANDINO) coordinates efforts with the national agricultural research institutes (NARIs) and the national agricultural technology research and innovation systems (NARSSs) in the region to ensure that technological innovation and development are meeting the challenges of competition in a globalized market. The Andean countries are also members of the Cooperative Program on Research and Technology Transfer for the South American Tropics

(PROCITROPICOS), a joint effort to promote ecosystem management in the Amazon watershed.

On the education front, IICA coordinates the work of the member countries to develop human resources for agriculture and related sectors through the Hemispheric Training System for Agricultural Development (SIHCA), in a joint effort with the Government of Venezuela.

The consultation process

The Andean Regional Agenda was drafted in accordance with guidelines set out in the IICA 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan. It was also guided by mandates from the Summits of the Americas and instructions from the IABA that urge IICA to extend its efforts beyond the limits of the agricultural and the rural sector and include activities of regional scope that will promote integrated development of the Member States, to the extent that the Institute's capacities allow. Three major sources provided input for this Regional Agenda:

- Needs expressed in the region's National Agendas, especially for multinational actions that bridge two or more Thematic Areas.
- Requests for action to overcome or alleviate situations and problems of regional scope, as identified by IICA's Regional Specialists. These regional and national demands were examined during two in-house workshops held in September and November 2002, leading to consensus.
- Joint actions with strategic partners in the region, in areas of particular interest to IICA.

A number of key stakeholders have been identified, including:

- The General Secretariat of the CA, which will orient regional needs.



- The Ministers of Agriculture of the Andean Region, who meet informally to identify needs and issue requests for IICA cooperation.
- National and international cooperation agencies operating in the region.

Because the region lacks a formal decision-making entity on agriculture, the IICA Representatives and regional specialists maintain close working relations with the Ministers and national authorities. This is critically important for responding effectively to cooperation service requests.

General objective

The objective of the Andean Regional Agenda is to contribute to repositioning agriculture and rural life by developing sustainable agricultural activities and viable rural enterprises. The Agenda seeks development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared, environmentally managed and socially equitable for the people of the Andean Region. In the framework of this general objective, it sets the following specific targets for regional cooperation:

- Direct IICA's actions so as to achieve significant results for agricultural and rural development in the countries of the region by maximizing efficiency, technical excellence and coordination across Thematic Areas.
- Create an intra-institutional operating network to orchestrate cooperation actions at the national, regional, hemispheric and global levels; this will facilitate an exchange of best practices and the development of innovative capacities.
- Support the Summit of the Americas process, initiating and supporting national, regional, and hemispheric forums on strategies and actions to improve agriculture and rural life.

- Promote strategic partnerships with multilateral cooperation and financing agencies and public and private organizations to mobilize resources in order to tackle poverty and create prosperity in rural Andean communities.
- Promote IICA's image as an international development organization, recognized and respected as a reliable strategic partner in actions to promote the development of agriculture and the rural milieu in the region.
- Be accountable to the Member States, engaging in ongoing monitoring and evaluation of its performance in the region.

Critical issues

The greatest problem facing this region is poverty in rural areas, a challenge that brings all the critical issues into play. Consultations with public authorities and private leaders in the region, as well as dialogues with the Institute's own Representatives and regional specialists, have identified the following critical issues:

Developing skills in the Ministries of Agriculture for negotiating and managing trade agreements

Agricultural negotiators in the region need help to develop and reinforce skills for participating successfully in upcoming negotiations, especially for the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). In addition to developing negotiating skills, they urgently need to learn how to administer trade agreements. IICA will help implement the Andean Network of Agricultural Policymakers, and will emphasize training. The Institute will also work to bolster their trade policy units by developing and disseminating methods and educational materials on trade policies and negotiations.



Modernizing agricultural marketing systems

Today's agricultural marketing systems tend to be ineffective and lack transparency. They are failing to carry out their two-fold mission of ensuring greater efficiency in both marketing processes and production resource allocation. IICA's specialists have gained extensive know-how and wide experience in this area, and the Institute intends to place this knowledge at the service of the region. Its plans call for strengthening agricultural commodity exchanges by improving their operating capacity. This entails training commodity exchange agents, developing computerized stock exchange systems, and fostering harmonized quality standards. IICA is also in a position to develop alternative mechanisms for agricultural financing through market mechanisms.

Improving the competitiveness of agricultural commodities

If the region's economic agents are to participate successfully in globalized markets, they must work continually to make their goods and services more competitive. It takes a broad spectrum of interrelated conditions to penetrate a market, stay there, and expand sales. These conditions range from geographic considerations and capital availability to appropriate technologies and human resources. IICA plans to work with the countries in preparing studies on the competitive position of select agricultural commodities from the region and in identifying proposals that will improve their competitiveness.

Developing national technology innovation systems (NTISs)

The NTISs and NARIs in the region are just beginning to develop, unevenly, and their work is not always fully synchronized with the sector's needs. The countries are active on two fronts. First, they are working to modernize policies for organizing and managing technology innovation and biosafety processes in agribusiness.

Second, they are integrating public and private research and technology development capacities. IICA has much to offer in both areas.

Modernizing and strengthening national agricultural health and food safety (AHFS) services

For the Andean countries, the general level of development is directly related to the modernization and strengthening of AHFS systems and services. A properly structured and maintained AHFS system offers benefits to many areas, including primary production, public health, tourism, trade, competitiveness, food security and the environment. For all these reasons, IICA is interested in offering broad support to the countries in this field.

Alleviating rural poverty

The extent and depth of rural poverty in the region is one of the main barriers to integrated economic development, lying at the root of other problems that threaten social stability and good governance. The food insecurity affecting many rural communities, the presence of vulnerable groups (ethnicities, women, rural youth), and the bias of certain economic policies have been heightened by a lack of integrated rural development policies. Other issues of concern are border-zone development and alternative development. IICA is in a position to support the countries in these fields by helping with policy design for sustainable rural development (SRD) using the territorial approach, and developing institutional modernization proposals for SRD.

Curriculum reform for agricultural education and training

The curricula of agricultural education and training programs tend to be out of date. As a result, the region lacks human resources qualified to respond successfully to the conditions of a globalized environment. The countries need support for assessing their



programs, developing new curricula, and establishing systems for mutual accreditation and comparability of their agricultural education. IICA has much valuable experience and know-how to contribute.

Information system in support of rural and agricultural development

Information is a critical issue that cuts across all the others. The region has made impressive efforts to create and maintain information systems on agricultural and rural development, but these systems need to be modernized and strengthened.

Ministerial Forum on Agriculture

Special attention needs to be given to coordinating actions between IICA and the Secretariat of the CA to create a Ministerial Forum on Agriculture with the authority to direct sectoral policies in the region's macroeconomic framework.

Principal actions and expected results, by Thematic Area

Trade and Agribusiness Development

The objective in this area is to support the analysis of agricultural and sectoral policies, the development of skills for the trade negotiations and integration, the strengthening of domestic markets, and efforts to achieve better access to global markets for agricultural enterprises. The expected results are:

- Information system and system for disseminating indicators on the performance of agriculture and food security implemented.
- Studies carried out on the competitiveness of selected agricultural products from the Andean Region, organized in agri-food chains.

- Analysis and evaluation of approaches, concepts and methodologies for managing agri-food chains in the Andean countries. Design of a working agenda to address weaknesses identified and strengthen work in this field.
- Discussion, cataloguing and dissemination of experiences with the strengthening of production chains; Andean workshop on agri-food chains.
- Business and technical people associated with IICA more familiar with the concept of seals of differentiation, including their usefulness and impact on small- and medium-scale rural agribusinesses.
- Technical skills of national public and private sector employees improved on the subject of agricultural negotiations and the administration of trade agreements, with a view to ensure successful participation in negotiations in the framework of the FTAA and WTO.
- Maintenance of the system for disseminating information on the progress of the international agricultural negotiations.
- Agricultural commodity exchanges in the region strengthened: training for commodity exchange brokers and laboratory analysts; process begun to harmonize quality standards.
- Alternative agricultural financing instruments developed.
- Management skills of SMEs diagnosed and launching of the Export Platforms Program under way.

Technology and Innovation

The objective is to increase the participation of PROCITROPICOS and PROCIANDINO, help develop and strengthen the capabilities of NARSs and NARIs in the region, and modernize public and private research policies and infrastructure. The expected results are:



- The NARSs strengthened with external resources for agricultural research and development, through the PROCi mechanisms.
- Policies for organizing and managing technological innovation modernized, through the NARSs and NARIs.
- Knowledge for technological innovation and the consolidation of INFOTEC/FORAGRO mobilized, in a horizontal cooperation effort through the NARSs and the Regional System.
- The Innovation Observatory implemented as an instrument for the design and evaluation of institutional policies in this area.
- Regional harmonization processes implemented in the field of biosafety, biotechnology and intellectual property.
- Instruments developed for creating public/private alliances and consortia on the subject of innovation.
- Technological information and knowledge produced by regional projects disseminated, with assistance from the INFOTEC platform.

Agricultural Health and Food Safety

IICA's objective in this area is to support processes for modernizing and upgrading national AHFS services and systems, aligning them with the needs and demands of the global market. Expected results include:

- Greater internal articulation achieved between the public and private sectors to create a shared vision on AHFS, identify priorities and improve services and access to funding.
- The region's capabilities developed vis-à-vis SPS measures of the WTO and FTAA, and effective participation by the Andean countries in international bodies and activities related to SPS.
- Institutional assessments of the status of AHFS systems, identifying priorities for modernization and upgrading.

- Development of technical skills and management and leadership capabilities in national AHFS systems, making it possible to implement and supervise programs and develop new initiatives.
- More effective participation by the countries in activities of Codex Alimentarius.
- Bilateral AHFS programs strengthened between Peru and Chile, Colombia and Venezuela, and Peru and Ecuador.
- A new stage for the Andean Agricultural Health Forum (2004) developed.

Sustainable Rural Development

IICA's objective is to focus its regional cooperation efforts on territorial management, the management of rural development and indigenous issues. The efforts with respect to *territorial management* will focus on the following aspects:

- Border development, with emphasis on human capital formation;
- Microregional development, including the deployment of territorial laboratories, training and the provision of materials and tools;
- Local development of rural communities, with an inter-thematic approach.

With regard to the *management of rural development*, the regional effort will be aimed at the following elements:

- Support for the countries of the region in defining policies, strategies, institutional structures and instruments for rural development with a territorial approach;
- Implementation of a Regional Forum for National Officials Responsible for Rural Development.



- Creation and promotion of the National Interagency Groups to promote improved living conditions in rural areas without affecting natural resources. The expected results are:

With respect to *indigenous issues*, the Institute will undertake efforts aimed at developing a strategy for addressing the subject, with a corporate vision, in collaboration with the Central and Northern Regions.

Education and Training

The Institute's objective is to support the countries of the region in modernizing and upgrading academic and technical institutions that train human resources for the agricultural sector. IICA cooperation in this field is expected to produce the following results:

- Andean Regional Forum held and attended by representatives from institutions of agricultural education in the countries of the region.
- A workshop conducted on curriculum evaluation and development for teachers engaged in modernizing the schools of agronomy.
- Methodological information compiled to support processes of accreditation and comparability of university programs in the Andean Region.
- Up-to-date agricultural training courses offered over the SIHCA Web site (www.sihca.org).
- Internet/tutorial training opportunities established in an agricultural educational institution that has appropriate computer infrastructure.
- Information on training courses disseminated through the Global Distance Learning Network for Agriculture (GDLNA-WB), by means of a link on the SIHCA Web site.

Information and Communication

IICA plans to organize bibliographic information units into a single-source system at the service of agricultural development in the Andean Region. Expected results are:

- National agricultural and rural information systems strengthened, including the design of programs and strategies for setting them up.
- Support provided to SIDALC.

Principal inter-thematic actions proposed

In accordance with the principles established in the 2002-2006 MTP and the guidelines of the General Directorate, and in consultation with IICA's technicians and specialists in the Andean Region, the Directorate of Operations proposes, in addition to the inter-thematic programs related to the actions of the Institute itself, to sponsor the development of three programs related to the Region: Rural agroindustry (PRODAR); Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Livestock Practices (GLP); and biotechnology and biosafety in the Andean Region. The implementation of these programs calls for efforts by several of the Institute's Strategic Areas at the same time and aims to achieve results that have a major impact on the countries of the Region.

- ***PRODAR and the development of rural agroindustry***

IICA's regional action aims to strengthen PRODAR, a hemispheric project that is markedly inter-thematic, in which strategic partnerships, the articulation of national and regional agendas and work with local players all come together. PRODAR's objective is to promote, support and strengthen rural agroindustry, as well as the environment in which it operates. Efforts will be made to reinforce the national rural agroindustry networks (Redar) and the IICA projects in the region related to this topic, and to articulate the initiatives of entities linked to the program.



- ***Good agricultural and livestock practices***

The regional technical cooperation effort in this field is aimed at developing, disseminating and supporting the adoption of Good Practices (GP) with an integrated vision, taking into account both food safety issues and the preservation of the environment and the social accountability of production, and including agriculture (GAP), livestock (GLP) and manufacturing (GMP).

IICA's aims to support and advise the countries on the regulations and institutional framework needed for the adoption of GP by production, post-harvest, processing and trade systems. Special emphasis will be placed on the development of an information and communication platform that will facilitate education and training for the actors in agrifood chains, including consumers.

- ***Biotechnology and biosafety***

The trade environment of the countries of the region calls for the drafting of biosafety policies aimed at the control, prevention and management of the likely impacts on the environment, ecology and public health of the free circulation of transgenic products.

Therefore, IICA intends to support the quantification and assessment of the region's institutional capabilities in the fields of biosafety and biotechnology, with a view to supporting the development of proposed policies and regulatory processes for the areas of trade, safety and public health. IICA's actions will achieve at least the following results: a proposal for strengthening institutional biosafety capabilities in the Andean Region; a definition of the concept of "Institutional Capabilities (IC)" in biotechnology and biosafety; and the dissemination of the strategies and efforts of each country with regard to biosafety.



Caribbean Regional Agenda

The general setting for the region and for agriculture

The Caribbean region is made up of Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The region is highly diverse, with the 14 countries varying widely in size and levels of socioeconomic development that comprise a crucible of ethnic, linguistic and cultural wealth.

The region's economy is dominated by the service sector, especially banking, finance and tourism. Industry is still incipient, with mining and oil drilling occupying a dominant role in some of the countries. The contribution of agriculture to GDP, not including value generated by agro-industry and other agricultural production linkages, ranges from 3% in Trinidad and Tobago to 31% in Guyana. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy in four countries: Dominica, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica, and the main agricultural products are bananas, sugar, rice (considered traditional goods) and tropical fruits.

The Caribbean also produces dairy, meat and poultry products. As a whole, however, it is a net food importer (mostly meat and grains) owing to conditions inherent in its historical development, shortage of adequate cropland, and insufficient levels of investment in agriculture, food and appropriate technology. The new globalized setting places additional constraints on the sector, and as a result, concerns about food security have recently come to the fore.

The countries of the Caribbean, especially the former British colonies, have in the past enjoyed preferential trade benefits from their former mother countries and from other countries of Europe and North America. However, as a consequence of globalization and the spread of trade agreements based on WTO standards, these

preferential conditions have begun to erode. The region's ability to compete is coming under more intense pressure, and the institutional, physical and human infrastructure is straining to penetrate world markets. These pressures are now degrading the quality of life for people in rural areas, especially in the Windward Islands.

Against this backdrop, the following factors pose serious challenges for the region:

- A declining, irregular economic growth rate.
- Steadily shrinking share of agriculture in the GDP.
- Weak domestic support policies.
- Infrastructure and services inadequate or non-existent for responding to a changing, dynamic environment.
- Supply shortages, especially for the agricultural processing subsector.
- High rates of rural poverty, resulting in unacceptable rural-to-urban migration.
- An aging farm population.

Despite these challenges, the region has many strengths that open new opportunities for development, including:

- Ever-stronger links between agriculture and the more dynamic production sectors, including tourism, mining and manufacturing.
- A widespread understanding that food security is an essential condition for sustainable economic development and good governance.
- Expanding market niches for organic crops and products having more added value (especially under regional trade agreements).
- A new awareness among social and economic agents of the need to join efforts and include more education, information and technology in agri-food activities and businesses.



Political and institutional setting

The countries of the region (with the exception of the Dominican Republic) constitute the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and all are members of CARIFORUM, an entity that supervises relations with the European Union. The administrative structure is headed by the Conference of Heads of Government (CHG), with support from several sectoral ministerial committees. One of these, the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), is made up of the Ministers of Agriculture and Trade. In 1996, the CHG approved the Regional Transformation Programme for Agriculture (RTP) and set up a Committee of Lead Agencies (CLA) to plan and monitor implementation.

The general environment changed radically with the agreements of the Uruguay Round and establishment of the WTO, quickly followed by trade agreements with the European Union, the Dominican Republic and Cuba, and the advent of the Caribbean Common Market. The region then took on the added challenge of administering new agreements with other countries (such as Costa Rica / CARICOM) alongside its negotiations for participation in the FTAA.

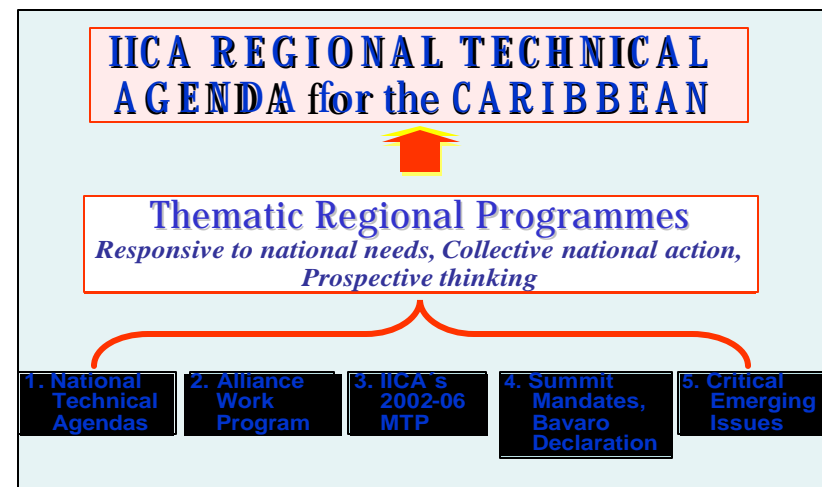
The institutions of the region have been hard pressed to react expeditiously to changes in the institutional and overall environment. In 1998-99, the CHG set up the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM), followed in 2001 by the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ).

Similarly, the Alliance for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu (known as “the Alliance”) was created in 1999 as a forum for the ministries of agriculture, academia, agribusinesses, rural women, researchers and youth. Its main objectives are to build consensus on policies, strategies and programs to reposition agriculture, and to identify and assign responsibilities for implementing the agreed actions.

The consultation process

IICA’s Technical Cooperation Agenda for the Caribbean region is a program that builds synergy by combining the work of the six thematic areas in the region: Trade and Agribusiness Development, Agricultural Health and Food Safety, Technology and Innovation, Sustainable Rural Development, Education and Training, and Information and Communication.

The Regional Agenda was developed as the outcome of a consultation process involving the region’s main stakeholders, both regionally and nationally, taking into account the strategic guidelines of IICA’s Medium-Term Plan, the Work Plan of the Alliance and the National Agendas. The proposal calls for actions that, by their nature and breadth, exceed the national capacity of individual countries, and seeks solutions and results that will have an impact on the most important critical issues identified (see illustration).



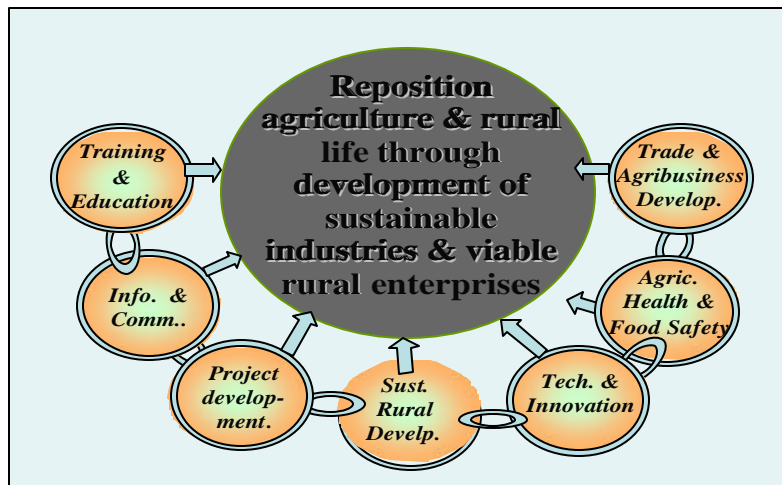


General objective

The objective of the Caribbean Regional Agenda is to contribute to repositioning agriculture and rural life by developing sustainable industries and viable rural enterprises. The Agenda seeks the development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared, environmentally managed and socially equitable for the people of the Region.

The Regional Agenda will pursue specific actions under each of the components of the Institutional Vision described in IICA's 2002-2006 Medium-Term Plan: promoting sustainable agricultural development, food security and rural prosperity.

WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVE



Promoting sustainable agricultural development

IICA's efforts will support the Member States in:

- policy and strategy design;
- institutional strengthening and modernization;

- adopting a regional approach to agriculture;
- increasing investments in the agri-food system; and
- improving education and training for sustainable agriculture.

Promoting food security

IICA will contribute to the countries of the Region in the following areas:

- defining and adopting a common conceptual and operational paradigm for food security;
- modernizing institutions for more effective planning, design and implementation of policies and strategies;
- attracting investments in the rural sector so as to reduce poverty, increase the food supply and improve food distribution; and
- developing and modernizing domestic agricultural markets, including goods, services and capital markets.

Promoting rural prosperity

In this area, IICA will use its capacities to support the Region in:

- designing and implementing appropriate policies and strategies for vulnerable rural groups;
- education and training processes to increase the know-how and practical skills needed by marginalized groups to participate effectively in agricultural and rural markets;
- strengthening civil society organizations and increasing interaction among social stakeholders so as to generate common agendas and improve negotiating skills;
- modernizing and expanding agricultural services; and
- working with agricultural and rural organizations, developing their institutional capacity and enhancing their



influence, effectiveness and capacity to participate in joint public / private actions.

Critical issues

Emphasis on specific agri-food activities

If agriculture and rural life are to be repositioned, a new approach is needed. In a break from the traditional perspective of agricultural production, with its limited sectoral focus, the CLA has decided to adopt an approach covering the entire agri-food chain, centering its efforts on specific agri-food activities. In support of this position, IICA is holding consultations to identify specific activities and rank them by priority. Emphasis will be placed on the following:

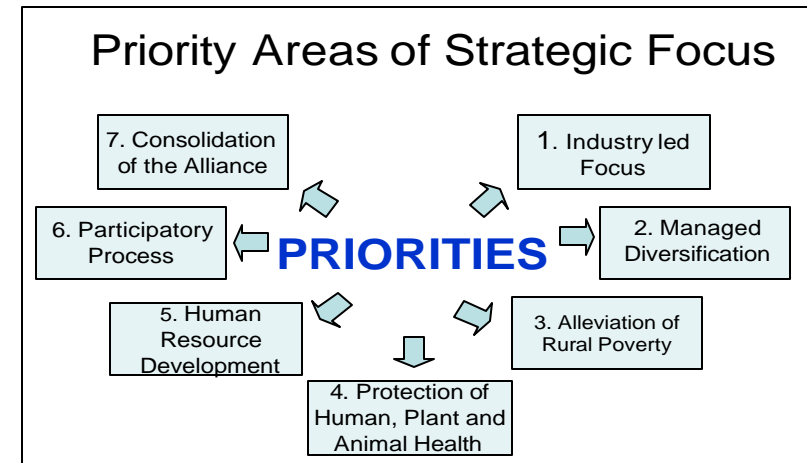
- application of the agri-food chain approach;
- adding value to agri-food activities through appropriate thematic interventions all along the chain;
- promoting intersectoral linkages to ensure national and institutional identification with the process; and
- recognizing the importance of food security and export for the development of sustainable agri-food activities.

Within the above, seven priority Areas of Strategic Focus have been identified:

Industry Led

In an effort to achieve greater success in the implementation of the Regional Transformation Programme (RTP), in 2000/2001 the Committee of Lead Agencies (CLA) decided to adopt an industry specific (as opposed to sectoral) approach. The IICA will adopt this approach and in full consultation with the agricultural stakeholders and the CLA identify and prioritize the industries.

Within this framework the following will be emphasized.



- Recognition of the importance of both food security and export.
- The use of the commodity chain approach and the conduct of industry assessments to industry development with the appropriate thematic interventions throughout the chain.
- The promotion of inter-sectoral linkages to ensure total institutional and country “buy in” to the process.

Management of economic diversification

With the continuing erosion of preferential markets for the region’s traditional crops, farm lands have been abandoned and newly unemployed workers have many unmet needs. It is important to understand that much of the rural population is not involved in agricultural production. In order to improve well-being in rural communities, IICA will support the Caribbean Region in the following tasks:



- promoting diversification to favor the production of goods with high added value;
- engaging the entire rural community in the process of directed diversification, including the entire natural resource base;
- creating economic linkages with agro-ecological tourism;
- promoting and protecting traditional knowledge as a tool to facilitate traditional and commercial management of natural biodiversity.

Alleviation of rural poverty

Given the high rates of poverty in rural areas and heavy migration to cities, emphasis needs to be placed on alleviating poverty in the countryside. On this sensitive issue, the Agenda is oriented toward:

- promoting full integration of women, young people and indigenous groups;
- providing a better understanding of rural poverty and its interrelationships with agriculture by means of data collection and analysis; fostering new policy design for rural development;
- identifying and promoting issues that have an impact on community food security; and
- identifying the ideal combination of types and methods of intervention, and the likelihood that communities will accept them.

Protection of human, animal and plant health

The countries need to adopt agricultural health and food safety (AHFS) measures for many reasons, including to gain access to local and international markets. With the appearance and spread of agricultural pests and diseases in the Caribbean, the countries of the region have developed a new awareness of the need to develop

regional strategies for prevention, early detection and eradication. They also understand clearly the importance of sharing information and skills to address emerging issues that pose a threat to human health and agricultural and livestock production. In this framework, IICA's cooperation activities will focus on the following issues:

- supporting modernization of AHFS systems and developing capacities and skills to implement strategies and policies for prevention;
- identifying and responding to emergency situations;
- developing a legal framework on agricultural health and food safety, consistent with international standards; and
- managing pest and disease eradication and control programs, with a view to identifying and eliminating factors that may threaten the sustainability of AHFS programs.

Human resources development

In order to reposition agriculture, the Caribbean urgently needs more and prepared better human resources. The countries require improved opportunities for education, training and access to information and technology. In the area of education, IICA will support the Caribbean Region in the following:

- completing the Network of Distance Agricultural Education Centers to offer ongoing training to producers and technicians; and
- supporting the Caribbean Council of Higher Education in Agriculture (CACHE) in curriculum improvement, and developing specialized Centers of Excellence whose graduates will be better prepared to take on today's challenges.

Information and Communication

The region has extensive needs for information, and IICA will contribute in the following ways:



- developing and consolidating the SIDALC project;
- developing an appropriate information network as an integral part of the IICA Network; and
- technical publications.

Consolidation of the Alliance

The Alliance, still embryonic, needs to be consolidated. IICA will work with the CARICOM Secretariat to:

- have the Alliance included as an integral institution in the CARICOM framework;
- work with Alliance members to make them self-sustaining (the Forum of Ministers of Agriculture; the Caribbean Agribusiness Association (CABA); the Caribbean Council of Higher Education in Agriculture; the Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers; PROCICARIBE; and the Caribbean Agricultural Forum for Youth); and
- promote the development and consolidation of national chapters of the Alliance.

A participatory process

The Regional Cooperation Agenda will succeed only if the public and private sectors and rural communities become involved. A broad-based participatory process to this end will include:

- working inside the public sector to promote cooperation;
- strengthening the private sector through organization and integration;
- promoting dialogue and cooperation between the public and private sectors;
- enhancing inter-institutional cooperation in the organizational, technical and financial spheres; and
- making better use of IICA's human resources and infrastructure in the hemisphere.

Expected results within Priority Area of Strategic Focus

Industry Led approach to Agricultural/Rural Transformation

Expected Results

- Importance of both food security and export agriculture recognized.
- Commodity chain approach to industry development with the appropriate thematic interventions throughout the chain promoted and utilized.
- Selected Industry profiles completed, industry competitiveness determined and individual enterprises being reengineered.
- Inter-sectoral linkages to ensure total institutional and country “buy in” to the process promoted.
- CARDI and PROCICARIBE with its key networks strengthened.
- The Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery strengthened through development of options

Managed Economic Diversification

Expected Results

- Diversification strategy implemented through the development/ commercialization of value added products within traditional commodities and the utilization of the available rural spaces.
- Economic agro-and eco-tourism linkages operational and supported by a functional Agro tourism linkages Centre based in Barbados.
- Traditional knowledge protected and utilized to facilitate commercial and sustainable use of the natural biodiversity



and development of products, such as, nutraceuticals, particularly herbal products, and handicraft.

Alleviation of Rural Poverty

Expected Results

- Member States reviewing, analyzing and reformulating their existing economic environmental, technological, etc. strategies policies and programmes to facilitate investment, technology innovation, and viable rural industries.
- Issues relative to community food security as a component of national food security determined and identified.
- Relationship between the rural poor and their contribution to national, rural and community development understood.
- Relationships between acceptance/rejection of interventions and characteristics of groups understood and used for planning purposes.
- Lessons learnt from the use of the concept of rural territories in two indigenous communities.
- Project documents for the operationalisation of viable rural enterprises completed
- Increased availability and access to knowledge, skills, processes, for stakeholders and agroentrepreneurs through various mechanisms, particularly Distance Learning Programmes.
- Commercialization of products produced by selected rural microenterprises.
- Selected disadvantaged rural groups of women, youth and indigenous peoples more economically independent and better integrated into the economy.

Strengthen the Capacity to Protect Human, Plant and Animal Health.

Expected Results

- National Agricultural Health and Food Safety Systems developed/strengthened and operational.
- Agreement on the establishment of the proposed Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency and its subsequent operationalisation.
- Institutional capacities and capacities of the private and public sector (singly and collectively) to identify and respond to emergencies and emerging situations strengthened.
- Agriculture Health and Food Safety Legislation and standards rationalized, harmonized and strengthened.

Human Resource Development

Expected Results

- Selected farmers, technicians and managers and other agroentrepreneurs more aware of the technological and other requirements for the repositioning of agriculture.
- Restructured curricula being taught in at least two members of CACHE so as to produce a graduate more suited for the 21st Century.
- Capacity of IICA Staff enhanced to deliver technical cooperation programmes
- Regional capacity and capability in the Preparation and Implementation of the Project Cycle and Strategic Planning Enhanced.



Participatory Process

Expected Results

- Increased involvement of rural communities in the national, regional and hemispheric dialogue.
- Improved public/public, private/private and public/private/civil society sector dialogue and coordination.
- Greater inter-institutional collaborations at the organizational, technical financial and implementation levels.
- More effective intra-IICA consultation and coordination with improved relationship with Strategic Partners.
- Continuous improvement of IICA's image in the Caribbean.

Consolidation of the “Alliance”

Expected Results

- The Alliance recognized as an integral entity within the CARICOM/CARIFORUM framework.
- Increased involvement of major agricultural organizations in the operations of the Alliance.
- Constituent members of the Alliance, e.g., CABA, CACHE, strengthened.
- Local Chapters of the Alliance, CABA, CACHE, CAFY, CNRWP and PROCICARIBE and the Regional Agricultural Policy Network developed/strengthened, functional and approaching self-sustainability.



Central Regional Agenda

The general setting for the region and for agriculture

The Central Region comprises the seven countries of the Central American Isthmus: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. They are small countries from the territorial, population and economic standpoints. The total area measures 520,154 km² and total population is 38 million inhabitants, of whom 51% live in rural areas. In 2001, the regional GDP was approximately US\$70 billion and per capita GDP was US\$1,646, with notable differences between countries and considerable inequalities in income distribution within each country.

Geographic location, coasts on both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, and the configuration of an isthmus give Central America three exceptional characteristics:

- a) it has the possibility of serving as an economic bridge between the most important trading blocs of the world;
- b) it has privileged biodiversity assets (7% of the biodiversity of the planet); and
- c) it has a high potential for crop and forest production throughout the year for a broad range of tropical products, which can be directed to different markets in the world.

At the same time, however, its geographic location and geomorphology make Central America a region subject to many natural hazards, primarily those of hydrologic origin (hurricanes, floods, landslides, droughts).

Central America is a region with considerable agricultural potential, favored as it is by its privileged geographic position, tropical climate, abundant natural resources, rich soils, water resources, forests and marine resources. As a result, the Central

American countries have historically based their development on the agricultural sector, agribusiness and related activities.

In 2001, the added value of the agricultural sector in total GDP ranged between 7.8% in Panama and 30% in Nicaragua. Nevertheless, this share is much greater when including the linkages of the agro-production chains for coffee, banana, sugar, oils, flours, concentrates, fruit trees, meat, dairy products, fisheries, and aquiculture, among others. The extended agricultural sector, which includes primary activities and the manufacture of food, beverages and tobacco products, results in relative shares in GDP ranging from 14% in Panama to 43% in Nicaragua.

The agricultural sector is an important source of foreign exchange. Its contribution to the total value of exported goods was 35% in 2001. The agricultural trade balance is positive: in 2001 agricultural exports totaled some US\$5 billion and exceeded sectoral imports by US\$1.9 billion. Only El Salvador reported a deficit of US\$382 million in this balance.

The agricultural sector is also an important source of income and employment: from 16% (Costa Rica and Panama) to 43% (Nicaragua) of the active population of the region earns its livelihood in agricultural activities.

Another characteristic of the Central American region is the high incidence of poverty, affecting some 60% of the total population. Poverty affects 22% of the rural population in Costa Rica, 42% in Panama, 65% in El Salvador, 70% in Guatemala, 77% in Nicaragua and 86% in Honduras.

Despite the efforts of the governments, international cooperation agencies and the private sector, both individually and collectively, the great opportunities for well-being associated with the wealth of the Central American countryside have not reversed the growth of rural poverty and food insecurity in the region.



Political and institutional setting

Agriculture appears at the highest level on the political agenda in the region, and has occupied an important place among the topics addressed in 2002 during the meetings of presidents. For example, within the framework of efforts to create the Central American Customs Union, the Presidents of the five Central American countries (CA-5) requested, in March 2002, preparation of a Central American Agricultural Policy. At the Fifth Summit of the Tuxtla Dialogue and Consensus Mechanism (Merida, Mexico, June 2002), the Presidents of Central America and Mexico also agreed to endorse the request of the CORECA Council that “within the framework of the Puebla-Panama Plan, rural and agricultural development be given the importance it deserves, given the dietary and income needs of the population, both rural and urban.”

Furthermore, during the Twenty-second Regular Meeting of Central American Presidents (December 2002, Costa Rica), a strategic framework was approved for addressing the situation of food and nutritional insecurity caused by the widespread drought and climate change, and in particular the Agricultural Plan of Action to address climate change, prepared by CAC at the request of the presidents.

The countries of the isthmus make up the Central American Integration System (SICA), an institutional framework for the coordination of efforts and initiatives fostering regional integration in the environmental, cultural, economic, political and social sectors. Belize is also a member of the CARICOM. In the subsystem of economic integration, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua are actively involved in creating a Customs Union, which is expected to enter into force in December 2003.

With regard to external trade relations, this group of countries is involved in an unprecedented process of bilateral, hemispheric and multilateral negotiations. One of the most important

of these are the negotiations for a free trade agreement with the United States, the principal trading partner of the region. Other important trade agreements have also been signed with Mexico, Chile, and Canada, and the countries are also participating in the WTO and the FTAA.

The region’s trade negotiations with the United States were launched in January 2003 and are expected to conclude this same year. In addition, initiatives are under way to initiate negotiation of an Economic Complementarity Agreement with the European Union in 2004. Panama is negotiating a free trade agreement to forge closer trade ties with the five countries of the Customs Union.

There are two Councils of Ministers in the region: the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC) and the Regional Council for Agricultural Cooperation (CORECA which includes the Central American countries, Mexico and the Dominican Republic). Both ministerial forums generate requests for technical cooperation from IICA in regard to four areas: a) the CAC’s Regional Agenda; b) the Puebla–Panama Plan; c) the Customs Union and the Free Trade Treaty between Central America and the United States; and d) the intersectoral regional forums in which the Ministers of Agriculture take part (Agriculture and the Environment; Agriculture and the Economy; Agriculture and Health). The technical cooperation related to each of these areas is summarized in the following paragraphs.

a) *The CAC’s Regional Agenda.* In October 2001, the CAC Council of Ministers approved a medium-term Regional Agenda to consolidate the integration and cooperation process in the agricultural sector, which calls for actions in seven areas of work: Regional clusters and competitiveness; Trade policy and international negotiations; Agricultural health and safety; Management of technological innovation; Agricultural environmental management; Reducing the vulnerability of the agricultural sector to natural threats; and Rural development.



b) *Incorporation of the agricultural sector into the Puebla–Panama Plan (PPP)*. This proposal was promoted by CORECA and approved by the Heads of State and Government of Central America and Mexico during the Fifth Summit of the Tuxtla Dialogue and Consensus Mechanism (Merida, Mexico, June 2002), placing special emphasis on: Food and nutritional security; Strengthening and integration of regional markets and agribusinesses; Fisheries development and reorganization; Technological innovation and development; and Strengthening of agricultural health, safety and quality.

Along with CABEI, IDB, ECLAC, FAO and INCAE, IICA was made a member of the Technical Sub-commission on Agricultural and Rural Development created by the Executive Commission of the PPP to support the preparation of the Mesoamerican projects of the Agricultural and Rural Development component.

c) *Central American Customs Union and negotiations for the Central America – United States Free Trade Treaty*. In February 2003, the CAC established the Ad-hoc Commission of the Ministers of Agriculture of the CA-5,¹ to deal with matters related to the subject. This Ad-hoc Commission coordinates its activities with the regional private sector organizations, led by the Central American Federation of Agricultural and Agroindustrial Chambers (FECAGRO). The CAC Council of Ministers decided that the CORECA-CAC Secretariat should also provide the support required for the operation of this Ministerial Commission.

To prepare a Central American agricultural policy within the framework of the Customs Union, the CAC Council of Ministers defined four areas of work: Trade policy; Technology and diversification; Agricultural health and food safety; and Food security and support and information measures.

¹ The CA-5 is composed of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

d) *Intersectoral Councils of Ministers of Agriculture and other Sectoral Forums under the aegis of the SICA*. Efforts to promote greater development and integration of the agricultural sector call increasingly for a series of coordinated actions involving the institutional structure of the agricultural sector and that of other sectors, such the economy, environment and health. In view of this, the CAC Council of Ministers has begun a series of intersectoral meetings with the ministers responsible for economic integration (Economy and Foreign Trade) and the Ministers of the Environment and Natural Resources of Central America.

In the last case, the CAC and the CCAD have established a joint work agenda and made concrete requests for support from IICA with regard to the: a) Proposed Model Regulatory Framework on Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) for Central America; b) Proposed regional agro-biotechnology strategy for Central America; c) Proposed regional strategy for the integrated water resource management; and, d) Proposed Joint Plan of Action of the agricultural and environmental components of the Mesoamerican Sustainable Development Initiative (IMDS).

Other specialized agencies working in some of IICA's priority subject areas are the International Regional Organization for Agricultural Health (OIRSA) and the Central American Institute of Business Administration (INCAE). Both are potential partners for strengthening IICA's action in the region and, in case of INCAE, a proposal for joint action has already been submitted to CORECA on the subject of clusters and agro-production chains.

A partner that has strengthened its operations in the region is FAO, with which IICA has a cooperation agreement. FAO is part of RUTA and supports CORECA and CAC with the regional project "*Food Security in Central America: Preparation of an Orienting Framework of Policies, a Program, and Investment Proposals.*" FAO has expressed an interest in working regionally in other subject areas.



The consultation process

The process to prepare the Central Regional Agenda takes into account the guidelines contained in IICA's 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan, which establishes that IICA's actions will be carried out by means of national, regional and hemispheric technical cooperation agendas.

Taken into account also were the mandates of the Summits of the Americas and the guidelines set by the IABA urging IICA to include regional activities to promote integral development in the Member States, in line with the Institute's possibilities.

General objective

The purpose of the Central Region Agenda is to establish a framework for action in the medium-term, for addressing problems shared by the seven countries of the region and for supporting the process of integration, based on an analysis of regional demands and the identification and prioritization of critical issues.

Critical issues

Critical issues were determined through a comprehensive diagnosis of the situation of agriculture in the Central American context, an analysis of the institutional environment, and an assessment of IICA's capacity to act in the region. The following critical issues were identified:

Poverty and food insecurity

At the outset of the 1990s, food insecurity in the region affected some 4.9 million people; by the end of the decade, that figure had grown to 7.1 million. During that period, the percentage of the total population affected by this problem grew from 17% to 20%.

This situation has been aggravated by the crisis in coffee prices: between 1998 and 2001, Central American revenues fell by some US\$250 million; in 2001 alone the losses amounted to approximately 1.1 percent of the GDP of the region and included the loss of 170,000 jobs. Consequently, it will be difficult to reach the world goal of diminishing food insecurity by 50% in 2015 in the Central American countries, unless there is an important change in current policies and programs.

It is therefore of the utmost urgency to focus more attention on the problem of poverty and food insecurity, and thought should be given to developing sources of employment and income through greater investments in strategic areas that increase food availability, stability of supplies, and access to same.

The trade negotiations agenda

Central America faces a complex and varied agenda of trade negotiations that are especially important for agri-food trade, in light of the relatively heavy weight of agricultural exports (35% of the value of exported goods) and the implications of trade opening for local production. Trade negotiations are being conducted simultaneously at the bilateral, hemispheric, and multilateral levels, and efforts continue to strengthen the process of economic integration.

At present, four Central American countries are involved in trade negotiations with Canada; five are negotiating a free trade agreement with the United States (the principal export market and most important source of direct foreign investment). These two negotiations represent a new stage for the countries of the region, as they are negotiating with developed countries for the first time, in situations marked by major asymmetries between the parties. Cooperation agendas are being included in the agreements.



Central America has also negotiated or is negotiating free trade agreements with Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Chile and Panama. Under some of these agreements, many agricultural products (sensitive products) have been excluded from the tariff reduction program, while others (coffee, banana and sugar) have experienced dynamic performance in export markets.

In the hemispheric (FTAA) and multilateral (WTO) contexts, the Central American countries are involved in global trade negotiations with the inclusion of agriculture. The results of these negotiations will intensify agricultural policy reform and trade liberalization.

In this regard, it is worth emphasizing that good negotiations must consider the problems of sensitive sectors and create new opportunities for agricultural exports. However, this will be insufficient unless there is parallel support for the administration of trade agreements, and mechanisms are developed for promoting international trade.

In addition to the need for a comprehensive trade policy, the agricultural public sector should strengthen critical capacities that contribute to increasing the competitiveness of agriculture, especially as regards through the inclusion of new technologies in production processes; the application of good agricultural and manufacturing practices; the application of practices to effectively prevent and mitigate the impact of natural phenomena; the strengthening of AHFS systems; and the development of instruments for mitigating the possible adverse effects of trade liberalization on populations associated with sensitive products.

Agricultural health and food safety (AHFS)

In the past, the traditional role of AHFS programs was to prevent or control, primarily at the farm level, diseases and pests that reduce productivity and earnings. In recent years, however, new

requirements have arisen as a result of trade liberalization, which require an expanded role for these programs.

The Central American region has a privileged sanitary status, but the intensity of intraregional and international trade, tourism and new consumer demands for suitable products and processes are challenges that require a strengthening of AHFS systems.

The economic policies to reduce State functions debilitated some countries' response capabilities in this field. Nonetheless, some efforts are under way in the region to strengthen AHFS and to harmonize procedures. In the current environment, the importance of strengthening the role of AHFS is indisputable, not only in its traditional role of protecting national and regional agricultural resources, but also because of its impact in the areas of trade and competitiveness, public health, food security, tourism and the environment.

Vulnerability to natural hazards

The region is subject to a wide range of natural hazards, especially those of hydrologic origin (hurricanes, floods, landslides, droughts), and which tend to have a severe impact on agriculture and the rural environment. Extreme hydrologic events associated with climatic variability and change have been responsible for the loss of lives, repeated capital depletion of production sectors, significant economic loss, and deteriorated living conditions.

Recently, the 1997-98 and 2002-03 episodes of the El Niño phenomenon and a shortage of rainfall in 2001 (not associated with climatic change) caused prolonged droughts in the Pacific coast area. About 60% of the economic damages caused by the droughts were concentrated in the agricultural sector. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch caused the death of 9,214 people and directly affected more than one million Central Americans. Economic losses exceeded US\$6 billion, practically half of which were attributed to the agriculture sector. In the year 2000, Hurricane Keith caused significant losses in Belize.



Sustainable management of natural resources

The destruction of the natural resource base, one of the region's most important assets, continues in Central America. The rate of natural resource degradation has led the region to be regarded as one of the "critical" sites for biodiversity conservation in the world.

The effects of this phenomenon on the water supply are of concern for the long term. Despite the fact that the region has an apparent abundance of water resources, water distribution is not uniform among the population. Nearly 70% of the water supply is found on Caribbean coast, while a similar proportion of the population is concentrated on the Pacific coast. In the region, there is an area that is prone to droughts (the Central American Drought Corridor); this area also has the greater population density.

With regard to water resource management, the region lacks adequate institutional framework, and authority and responsibilities are scattered; investment in potable water supply systems, wastewater treatment and water resource protection are insufficient and inefficiently used.

Irrigation must be modernized, for which investments are needed. The greater aquifers are threatened or affected by pollution, and the principal sources of potable water and surface water are rapidly deteriorating. In addition, the lesser aquifers are at risk due to overexploitation, which is causing saline infiltration in those located in coastal areas. Associated with the above, hydroelectric power supply may become a serious problem in the medium and long terms if devastated water basins begin to lose their capacity to retain water.

Technological lag in the agricultural sector

Several Central American countries have a valuable tradition of research and extension, which has resulted in increases in the yields of various crops. However, the countries are currently limited

in their ability to increase their agro-technological capabilities, mainly as a result of cutbacks in public sector funding.

The foregoing is a concern for modern agriculture, where technology is one of the most important factors for competitiveness because of its capacity to increase productivity and improve crop quality. In addition to playing a key role in competitiveness, technology can contribute to alleviating rural poverty and reducing environmental degradation.

The situation in Central America contrasts with the rapid technology development in industrialized countries, where genetic engineering, precision agriculture, information and telecommunications systems, among others, have been incorporated into agricultural production. As a result, the technological gap is widening for a large number of crops. Within the framework of economic and trade opening, this will lead to a loss of competitiveness in the region for key products for domestic consumption and export.

Due to the foregoing, regional capabilities for technological innovation must be strengthened through the modernization of the public and private institutional frameworks for research, technology development and extension associated with the strategic objectives and priorities of the Central American region. In addition, given the geographical proximity of countries that share major agro-ecological territories and similar technological problems, it is advisable to strengthen cooperation and integration for the development and adaptation of technologies with a view to reducing the technological gap between Central America and its competitors in the hemisphere and the rest of the world.

In addition, the Convention on Biodiversity, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, trade negotiations, and the regional integration process have a direct and immediate impact on technology development in the agricultural sector. It is therefore urgent to develop policies and legal frameworks on intellectual



property rights, access to plant genetic resources and biosafety. Given this situation, and bearing in mind the trend toward regional integration and market opening, harmonization of these elements at the regional level is an important objective.

Human resource development

The development and strengthening of human capital and talent, through education, training and access to information, is a critical issue for the Central American countries as a whole, and for agriculture and the rural sector in particular, if they are to be able to address the challenges and tap the opportunities offered in the international environment for overcoming underdevelopment in the region.

The regional institutional platform needs to be strengthened in the Central Region, to improve the access of the agricultural and rural community to information. Thus, formal and information educational plans and programs in the region must be modernized, making them accessible to a high percentage of the key stakeholders of agriculture and the rural community, expanding the learning environment with the use of new educational technologies based on informatics, telecommunications, television and radio.

In rural areas there is also a need to link training with employment policies, create new opportunities for education and technical training, and prepare and disseminate educational informatics programs tailored to the needs of the Central American countries.

Principal expected results, by critical issue

IICA’s agenda for technical cooperation in the Central Region sets out the results expected for the 2002-2006 period as well as the actions that will be carried out in support of the countries of the Central American Isthmus to address each of the critical issues described above.

◆ **Poverty and food insecurity in the rural environment**

Line of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<p><i>Strengthen alliances and coordinate actions with regional and cooperating agencies in the area of food security</i> Key actors: CAC, SISCA, INCAP, CABEL, FEMICA, FAO, PAHO, WFP</p>	<p>Network of alliances among regional organizations, agencies and donor organizations, aiming to increase and optimize regional actions in order to reduce food insecurity, with IICA participation and support.</p>
<p><i>Promote a Regional Food Security Program</i> Key actors: FAO, IDB, WORLD BANK, CABEL, EUROPEAN UNION, USAID, CAC, SISCA, INCAP, OIRSA, CEPREDENAC, CCAD</p>	<p>The Central American countries have a framework of policies, a plan of action, and an investment program for reducing vulnerability to food insecurity.</p>
<p><i>Support the design of policies, strategies and instruments, and institutional modernization for sustainable rural development (SRD)</i> Key actors: MAGs, Central American vice presidents, organizations of indigenous people, women and youths, municipalities, FEMICA, CCAD, RUTA, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Health, MARNs, INCAP, CABEL, SISCA, Interagency Group for SRD.</p>	<p>The capacities of public institutions strengthened for formulating and executing policies and instruments for sustainable rural development</p>



◆ **Participation in negotiations and implementation of international trade agreements**

Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<p><i>Institution building of the CAC, the ministries of agriculture and private sector organizations</i></p> <p>Key actors: CAC, MAGs, regional organizations of the agriculture sector (FEDAVICAC, FECALCAC, FECAGRO, AICA, FECAPABA, FECAGRAB, FECARROZ, among others)</p>	<p>Capacity of the public and private agricultural sectors strengthened for participating in negotiations and for administering international trade agreements.</p>
<p><i>Develop instruments for improving the position of Central American agribusinesses in local, regional and international markets</i></p> <p>Key actors: Employees of the agricultural public sector, agricultural commodity exchanges of Central America, agri-food sector organizations, agri-business operators and producers</p>	<p>Capacity of Central American agribusinesses strengthened for competing in local, regional and international markets.</p>

◆ **Vulnerability to natural hazards**

Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<p><i>Design regional disaster reduction plans</i></p> <p>Key actors: CEPREDENAC, CAC, CRRH, ECLAC, MAGs, National Emergency Commissions</p>	<p>Capacity of Central American agricultural sector strengthened and integrated for defining policies and strategies to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters.</p>
<p><i>Promote the development of the agricultural insurance market</i></p> <p>Key actors: CEPREDENAC, CAC, SISCA, CRRH, CABEI</p>	<p>Development of national and regional agricultural insurance markets promoted, as well as financial measures for mitigating negative climatic impact.</p>

Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<p><i>Obtain, adapt, and disseminate prognoses of regional climatic and ocean behavior</i></p> <p>Key actors: CRRH, MAGs, CAC, SERIO</p>	<p>Ministries of Agriculture and agriculture sector as a whole receive reports on prognosis of regional climatic and ocean behavior.</p>

◆ **Sustainable management of natural resources**

Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<p><i>Prepare a regional strategy for integrated water management</i></p> <p>Key actors: CRRH, CABEI, CATIE, GWP, CCAD, CAC</p>	<p>Inter-sectoral council of Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers of Environment receive support for developing policies, strategies and joint activities within the framework of SICA.</p>
<p><i>Exchange experiences with payment for environmental services</i></p> <p>Key actors: CCAD, MAG and MINAE of Costa Rica, CATIE, RUTA</p>	
<p><i>Promote the conservation and sustainable use of the plant genetic resources native to the Central American region</i></p> <p>Key actors: CAC, CCAD, IPGRI, CATIE, GTZ, REMERFI, Ministries of Agriculture, Ministries of Environment</p>	
<p><i>Promote organic agriculture</i></p> <p>Key actors: Ministries of Agriculture, Ministries of Environment, CAC, CCAD, organizations of organic producers</p>	



◆ **Agricultural health and food safety**

Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<p><i>Modernize agricultural health and food safety systems (AHFS)</i> Key actors: MAGs, OIRSA, PAHO, private sector organizations.</p>	<p>National agricultural health and food safety services performing better and offering higher quality services.</p>
<p><i>Strengthen health risk assessment vis-à-vis trade in agricultural products</i> Key actors: MAGs, AHFS-Colombia, USDA-DAS, USDA-APHIS, USAID</p>	
<p><i>Upgrade management and institutional coordination capacities</i> Key actors: MAGs, country missions to the WTO</p>	<p>Central American countries receive support and participate more actively in monitoring the meetings of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (CSPSM).</p>
<p><i>Improve the quality, health and safety of beef products</i> Key actors: MAGs, private sector organizations, ILRI, CIAT, FAO.</p>	<p>Central American beef cattle sector strengthened with regard to quality, safety and trade.</p>

◆ **Lag in technology development and adoption**

Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<p><i>Strengthen regional capabilities for integration in technological innovation</i> Key actors: SICTA, CAC, CATIE, ISNAR, COSUDE, national agricultural technology innovation systems, CGIAR, FORAGRO, PROMECAFE.</p>	<p>Central American Integration System for Agricultural Technology (SICTA) reactivated and strengthened.</p>

Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<p><i>Develop and manage a hemispheric scientific and technological information system for agriculture and rural development</i> Key actors: National agricultural research institutions, universities, technical institutes, international organizations, networks</p>	<p>The Central American agricultural sector has access to a scientific and technological information system (INFOTEC).</p>
<p><i>Design model regional regulations for the use of modified living organisms (MLOs) in agriculture</i> Key actors: CAC, OIRSA, CATIE, CCAD, MAGs, SAGARPA, Ministries of Health, MARNs</p>	<p>Central American region strengthened and integrated with regard to standards and procedures, strategies, and technical capability vis-à-vis biosafety and agro-biotechnology</p>
<p><i>Promote a regional strategy on agro-biotechnology</i> Key actors: CAC, OIRSA, CATIE, CCAD, MAGs, SAGARPA, MARNs, CIAT, CIMMYT, FAO, FORAGRO, private enterprises, universities</p>	
<p><i>Strengthen national capabilities in biosafety</i> Key actors: CAC, OIRSA, CATIE, CCAD, MAGs, SAGARPA, MARNs, CIAT, CIMMYT, FAO, private enterprise, universities</p>	

◆ **Human resources development**

Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<p><i>Modernize educational programs and increase the availability of knowledge, capacities and skills for key actors of the agricultural and rural sector</i> Key actors: administrators, technicians, producers, agro-entrepreneurs, Schools of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine, Ministries</p>	<p>The Central American countries have modern educational and training programs on subjects of strategic importance for preparing the skilled human resources needed</p>



Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
of Agriculture, Environment and Education, professional schools, research and extension institutions, associations of producers, associations of agricultural and agroindustrial chambers	for agriculture and rural development.
Strengthening National Agricultural and Rural Information Systems Key actors: National Bibliographic Information Units	The Agricultural and Rural Community of Central America has more access to better information, through the strengthening of national agricultural and rural information systems and their participation in a hemispheric system

Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<i>Modernize and strengthen the institutional capabilities of the MAGs</i> Key actors: MAGs, CORECA, agricultural trade associations	Ministries of Agriculture of the CORECA region make institutional transformations for adapting to changes in the national and international settings surrounding the agricultural sector.

◆ **Coordination of regional demands**

Lines of action/ strategic actions/ key actors	Expected results
<i>Strengthen regional forums of ministers</i> Key actors: CORECA, CAC, Ministers of Agriculture (CA-5), MAG officers responsible for regional matters, SICA.	The capacity of CORECA and CAC has been strengthened institutionally for analyzing, making decisions, executing and monitoring regional agreements.
<i>Strengthen the technical capabilities of the MAGs for formulating proposals and implementing regional agreements</i> Key actors: CAC, MAG officers responsible for regional matters	
<i>Design investment proposals for agriculture and rural development</i> Key actors: PPP Inter-institutional Technical Sub-commission (IICA, INCAE, FAO, ECLAC, IDB and CABEI), network of permanent liaisons of the Ministries of Agriculture with the PPP and	Ministries of Agriculture receive support for including the agriculture and rural development component in the Puebla-Panama Plan (PPP).



Northern Regional Agenda

Introduction

Canada, Mexico and the United States of America make up IICA's Northern Region Center (NRC) and the Tri-national Council on Agriculture and are all committed to the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA). The IICA Office in the United States (Washington, D.C.) serves as the overall coordinating office. The three countries stand at a unique level of advancement in their economic and technological development. Together they are engaged in the major sub-regional integration effort (NAFTA) which is of great importance to them and to the other IICA Member States in the hemisphere, especially as part of the process to create the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA).

Agriculture and its related agribusiness components are an extremely important component of the economy of all three Member States of the Northern Region. Total farmland in the region totals more than 1.1 billion acres with over 6.6 million farms. The table below indicates the figures for each of the countries in the region.

As a group, the Member States that make up the Northern Region represent the largest exporters of food in the world. They also are the largest food importers in the Western Hemisphere.

The countries of the region produce basic foodstuffs and more sophisticated processed foods and products. They possess highly qualified technical expertise, innovative technology, advanced scientific capabilities and vast consumer markets.

They play an extremely important role in IICA's general strategy and are indispensable partners in information exchange and horizontal cooperation with other countries of the hemisphere. In this context, the IICA office in Washington acts as regional coordinator.

Northern Region: Performance of the Agri-Food Sector Selected years

	Canada	Mexico	USA
Item			
Primary agric. production / GDP, % (d) ²	1.8% ^d	4.9% ^d	1.4% ^d
All food sector & fiber share, GDP,% (b) ³	n/d	n/d	13.3 ^b
% of land use: arable land (d) ⁴	5% ^a	12% ^b	19% ^b
Total census farms	276 548 ^a	4 407 880 ^b	2 057 910 ^b
Total land on census farms, mill. ha (idem)	68 056 ^a	23 354 ^b	391 881 ^b
Total agricultural exports, billion US\$	14.7 ^d	6.9 ^d	48.29 ^d
Total agricultural imports, billion US\$ (d)	10.99 ^d	5.8 ^d	37.86 ^d

(a) 1996 (b) 1997 (c) 1998 (d) 1999

The consultation process

The Regional Agenda has been in development over the last five years through ongoing consultation with key participants of the three member countries, public and private. This process has produced a strategic action and operating plan that adds value to the existing relationships and activities already in place among its members.

- A Northern Regional Council (NRC) was established in 2000 made up of Member State representatives and IICA staff to develop and monitor programs and activities for the region. Consensus was reached on the mission and vision of IICA for the Northern Region, and it was agreed that IICA's foremost responsibility was to facilitate integration among the three countries of North America and to serve as a

² IMF Website

³ USDA/ERS/Food & Rural Economics Division. Rural Conditions and Trends. Vol. 9, No. 3. It is important to note that although a tremendous amount of data exists on GDP percentage of agricultural sector, there is no equivalent set of data that represents the overall percentage of GDP of the agri-food sector (from farm to table) of all three countries. Only specific commodity information exists.

⁴ Statistics Canada, Mexico Ministry of Finance, ERS Website.



conduit for the exchange of information with IICA Headquarters. Emphasis was placed on the need to continue to identify priority topics for common action by the three countries, and to continue to define their areas of interest so that they may participate more fully as partners in IICA. Since these functions are essential, the group now functions under a new name: the Tri-National Council or Group. There will be more stewardship by the Member States in providing substance and continuity for more effective dialogue and joint implementation of policy initiatives and the development of cooperation and professional exchanges.

- PROCINORTE, a regional cooperative program on agricultural research and technology transfer was initiated with specialized task forces dealing with library and information services, genetic resources, plant and animal health, and tropical and subtropical fruits. Each task force has a country designated as the lead, and support is provided by the relevant IICA Office. In 2000, PROCINORTE was endorsed by its Member States with the signing of a declaration to work together to promote the integration of a regional research network and to facilitate its integration with the other regional research networks, and with the hemispheric network FORAGRO. It also confirmed establishment of the PROCINORTE Umbrella Task Force to guide the policy and operations of that program.
- The Libraries and Information Services task force made substantial progress in completing its two year action plan and incorporating the three countries into IICA's hemispheric initiative to strengthen the Agricultural Information and Documentation System for the Americas (SIDALC). The Antonio Narro Autonomous Agrarian University (UAAAN) was designated as the official depository for Canadian and U.S. publications and documents in Mexico. Training and software has been provided to connect Mexican agricultural

libraries to the United States and Canada. Finally, work was begun to strengthen the Mexican Network of Agricultural Libraries.

- The Genetic Resources task force was established and defined its action plan for 2002-2003. The focus of its efforts is to: (1) reconcile existing national collections; (2) support training and education; (3) share information; (4) foster integration with other networks in the hemisphere; and (5) develop joint projects.
- In March 2000, the Member States of the NRC approved the development of the Regional Forum on Agricultural Health and Food Safety among the three countries of the region. A steering committee was established to guide the process and the first forum was held in December 2000 in Miami, concurrently with the Caribbean/Latin American Action (C/LAA) conference.
- In the area of rural development, NRC Member States agreed to conduct the First Dialogue on Rural Development in order to discuss issues of common interest. The governments of Mexico and Canada are particularly interested in the topic of rural development.

The consultation process continued in 2003 with the fifth meeting of the Northern Regional Council held in Mexico City on February 11. At this meeting, representatives of the Member States agreed to the following:

- that the overall thrust of regional programs should be to foster dialogue among the countries of the Americas and to incorporate a hemispheric element into programs and activities;
- to continue the Agricultural Health and Food Safety Forum since this topic is of high priority to the three countries;



- that the specific task force on Animal and Plant Health Research, under the PROCINORTE Umbrella, requires more consultation to define how to address this issue;
- to continue the Rural Development Dialogue as a regional initiative; and
- to reaffirm their endorsement of the PROCINORTE initiative, including the specific task forces on Agricultural Libraries and Information; Genetic Resources; and Tropical and Subtropical Fruits.

During the next two years, ongoing activities will be continued and strengthened and a series of new endeavors will be undertaken to respond to the emerging priorities of the Tri-national Council.

Institutional capacity and critical priorities

The Northern Regional Agenda seeks to articulate the needs of the three North American countries within the framework of IICA's 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan. Joint cooperation actions of the three countries is carried out through the creation and operation of the Tri-National Council as a consultative and participatory mechanism made up of the three countries. The consensus reached on the goals and priorities for the region and the definition of regional initiatives of common interest to the three countries is a result of the inter-American dialogue carried out at the regional level.

Strengthening the capacity of the Tri-national Council to implement regional initiatives will be a focus of IICA's activity, and will be based on a process-oriented policymaking approach that encourages participation, partnership and concrete actions that provide sound results. The strategy for 2002-2003 will be implemented taking into account the corporate strategy developed by the Director General to better focus and consolidate activities. This corporate strategy is framed by IICA's strategic vision:

- to promote sustainable development
- to improve food security
- to increase rural prosperity.

The Institute will take on a more ambitious technical agenda as it transforms itself into a development agency that provides a more comprehensive approach to problems related to agriculture and rural development, one that is founded on a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to natural resources, human talent and public policy. The Tri-National Council will meet in the second semester of 2003 to finalize the priorities of the programs and their budgets.

Institutional objectives: the interests of the Northern Region countries and their relation to IICA's mandates

IICA is an important partner of the countries of the Northern Region. The Institute provides a unique mechanism in the hemisphere with its 34 Offices in the countries for supporting agricultural development throughout the Americas. It also provides a hemispheric forum for advancing the inter-American dialogue on agriculture and related issues. IICA supports several hemispheric initiatives of critical importance to Canada, Mexico and the USA, a description as follows:

Summit Mandates:

The Declaration and Plan of Action approved at the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec highlights IICA's role in supporting the implementation of its mandates, particularly vis-à-vis "Agriculture Management and Rural Development." In compliance with this mandate, IICA will support the Ministers of Agriculture of the hemisphere in their efforts to promote the involvement of all related stakeholders in carrying out activities leading to the improvement of agriculture and rural life. IICA will also play a significant role in the promotion of dialogue and coordination among



the agencies of the Inter-American System in order to ensure effective implementation of the mandates.

IICA will continue to enhance hemispheric integration by supporting dialogue on agricultural related issues (from farm to table) and building common understanding on principles that will guide hemispheric and world agricultural production, trade and sustainable development. Examples include the transformation of IICA's Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA) into the Ministerial Forum of the Americas for Agriculture, approved by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in June 2000; the creation and consolidation of the Regional Forum on Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO); and the creation and development of the Tri-National Council on Agriculture, which represents a new phase of reorganization and strategic definition.

Free Trade in the Americas and throughout the world

Trade and agribusiness make up one of six strategic areas of IICA's cooperation, for which it provides inputs on agricultural and food policy, builds institutional capacities to negotiate trade agreements, and develops information systems to facilitate the negotiation process. In this area, special attention is given to the Informal Consultative Group of Agricultural Negotiators of the Americas (GINA), for which IICA and FAO share the technical secretariat and work together to design and operate key electronic forums to facilitate dialogue and information exchange among the members of the group (<http://infoagro.net/comercio>).

Sustainable development and environmental protection

IICA provides cooperation services to its Member States and assists in implementing the mandates of the Bolivian Summit to improve sustainable development capabilities. IICA's programs will address water and its implications for agricultural development as well as the need to share technologies in these areas. IICA also plays

a critical role in providing information on the rural sector for the OAS Secretary General's report to comply with the recommendations issued at the Summit. IICA also participates in the Inter-Agency Group on the Bolivia Summit Follow-up, the Inter-American Committee for Natural Disasters Reduction (IACNDR), and the Inter-American Water Resources Network (IWRN).

Education and training

IICA sees human development as a key strategic area for developing competitive agriculture and improving rural living conditions. A training component is built into all development projects. The organization is also involved in strengthening the educational capacity of Member States. Building infrastructure throughout the hemisphere for a distance learning network is also an important contribution for increasing learning opportunities. IICA has been involved in several important initiatives such as the creation of the Inter-American System of Standing Forums for Discussion on the Integration of Agricultural and Rural Education in the Americas. The Northern Region Center sponsored the First bi-regional Caribbean/Northern Region Workshop on Education in 1999, and has initiated an agreement with the World Bank to make IICA's Distance Training Center in Costa Rica part of the Bank's Global Network. IICA will continue to give high priority to all types of educational activities.

Improving living standards in rural areas

IICA's work in this area covers a broad spectrum of activities, and has a strong focus on small- and medium-scale farmers, rural women and rural youth. The aim is to contribute to increasing economic opportunities for the rural poor, with a view to stemming the flow of migration not only into urban areas but also into other countries. In addition, dealing with the loss of small-scale family farms and the implication of their loss to the rural



environment is a key political issue in all of IICA's member countries.

IICA was instrumental in creating the Inter-Agency Working Group on Rural Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, for which a formal agreement was signed in New Orleans during the IDB Board meeting. In this agreement, the signatories (IICA, IDB, FAO, IFAD, ECLAC AND GTZ) agree to work together to improve rural development in the hemisphere, strengthen institutional coordination and develop partnership interventions. The World Bank and USAID have also joined this inter-agency group, which is a unique platform for improving coordination and developing collaborative efforts to promote agricultural and rural development in the hemisphere.

Agricultural health and food safety

IICA promotes the use of biological controls and non-toxic methods to control pests, increase food safety, and protect workers and consumers while also assisting efforts to make agriculture more productive and profitable. In many instances, agricultural health battles fought outside the Northern Region countries benefit agriculture in the region. IICA has developed a hemispheric strategy on food safety for implementation in its member countries. It provides key training in the subject and runs workshops to educate and bring influence to bear in this process. A regional forum has been established on agricultural health and food safety issues of interest to IICA's Member States, and the first round of its CERES Leadership Training Series for Food Safety is nearing completion.

In conclusion, IICA is an important institution for agricultural development in the Americas and for the countries of the Northern Region. It is strategically positioned to capitalize on the expertise, capabilities, and technical innovation of these three countries, for promoting integration among them and with other regions of the Americas. It also facilitates cooperation in the

forementioned areas, which are of special interest to its Member States.

Lines of Action and Expected Results

The plan of action for the North American countries, through the Tri-national Council, includes this action plan for the region as well as the plans for the IICA Offices in the three countries, which have been submitted separately. National action plans have been developed after substantial discussion and collaboration with Member States and IICA Headquarters. Following is a description of the key actions proposed to the Tri-national Council for 2002-2003 and the results to be achieved.

Action 1: Strengthen the process of regional integration with regard to policymaking and program development

Goal: Strengthen policy coherence and tri-national dialogue on agriculture and rural development in North America through support to the Tri-National Council, facilitating effective communication among the three Member States and with IICA Headquarters, as well as policy instruments that support integration.

Long-term impact: Ensure the participation of the three Member States as full partners of IICA and strengthen the regional and hemispheric integration process by identifying and supporting the implementation of cooperative activities for strengthening agricultural and rural development in all the countries.

Approach: As coordinator for regional activities, the Washington Office will serve as liaison with the Council for developing activities based on the terms of reference approved for the Council at the July 1998 meeting. It will maintain open and frequent communication with all members of the Council, using a variety of mechanisms to request their advice, provide information and resolve issues. With the support of IICA's specialists, the coordinating office staff will



develop and implement key regional programs and provide follow up and technical support to hemispheric initiatives.

Expected Results:

- Strategic and operating plan for 2002-2003 approved by the Tri-National Council
- Operating plan fully implemented for the period
- Tri-National Council informed of IICA's hemispheric and other regional initiatives.
- Tri-National Council recommendations on IICA institutional issues presented to the Director General.
- New areas for regional integration identified for developing strategic and operating plans in coming years.
- Strategies developed for coordinating actions with other regions in areas of mutual interest

Action 2: Increase the effectiveness of PROCINORTE as a mechanism to improve agricultural competitiveness

Goal: To implement a Cooperative Program on Agricultural Research and Technology for the Northern Region and promote cooperation with other regional and hemispheric networks including the PROCIs and FORAGRO.

Long-term impact: Improve agricultural competitiveness by improving cooperation in research, information and technology.

Approach: The coordinating office will support the three ongoing task forces and create an additional task force made up of specialists from Member States and IICA. Each task force will define the concept, nature and objectives of its program, identify the specific areas for potential cooperation, and develop action plans and budgetary requirements. The coordinating office will monitor activities and support one meeting a year for each of the approved task forces. When appropriate, activities will focus on gaining

access to other networks, such as PROCITROPICOS and EMBRAPA. In the area of libraries and information services, the coordinating office will focus on integrating themes and activities with those of IICA's Directorate of Information and Communication.

- PROCINORTE Umbrella Group:** Its goals are to define priority actions common to the three countries in the research area, in order to identify key players and issues, assist in the development of a proper mechanism for addressing the issue, and integrate PROCINORTE with the hemispheric research networks and FORAGRO.
- Library and Information Services Initiative Task Force:** Its goal is to support the agricultural sector of the region by improving access to relevant information and supporting regional and hemispheric information networks.
- Genetic Resources Task Force:** Its goals are to strengthen communication linkages among the countries, provide a forum for addressing emerging issues, and facilitate relations with other regional networks.
- Tropical and Subtropical Fruits Task Force:** Its goals are to facilitate among the countries a better understanding of fresh subtropical foods, predict the shelf life of same, and provide and exchange data on species, regions and capability for processing and preservation.

PROCINORTE Umbrella Group

Expected Results:

- Fifth meeting of the group.
- Establishment of the fourth working group under PROCINORTE.
- Implementation of action plan for PROCINORTE and review of results.
- Further integration of PROCINORTE with other regional research mechanisms and hemispheric networks.



Library and Information Services Initiative Task Force

Expected Results:

- Seventh meeting of the task force
- Implementation and review of results of action plan
- Substantial advancement in the development of the Mexican agricultural library network
- Further integration of the Northern Region Libraries into SIDALC

Genetic Resources Task Force

Expected Results:

- Fourth meeting of the task force
- Implementation and review of results of action plan
- Integration with other regional and hemispheric genetic resources networks

Action 3: Improve regional coordination of agricultural health and food safety

Goal: To promote and facilitate cooperation among the three countries of the region and monitor key activities related to agricultural health and food safety within the framework of trade among the countries of the Northern Region; to disseminate this information as appropriate; and to assist in the harmonization of standards throughout the hemisphere.

Long-term impact: Strengthen agriculture trade and benefit consumers through agricultural health and food safety.

Approach: The coordinating office will work closely with its Member States to establish an ongoing dialogue on relevant issues in this area. Staff will keep current with the many new initiatives and changes taking place in the countries of this region. As necessary, information will be disseminated and comments will be collected and submitted to the relevant agencies. Assistance will be provided for

securing the participation of speakers for seminars and workshops in the hemisphere on this subject, and the office will provide coordination and financial support for seminars and workshops on food safety and standards harmonization. In addition to coordinating with IICA's Directorate of Agricultural Health and Food Safety, the coordinating office will explore alliances with IICA's partners, such as PAHO.

Expected Results:

- Third meeting of the Steering Committee of the Agricultural Health/Food Safety Forum
- Forums held on the following topics: current agricultural practices under scrutiny; traceability; interpretation of preferential and special treatment of developing countries under SPS
- Follow-up for Third Equivalence Symposium with MERCOSUR countries
- Participation in INFAL initiative as member of its advisory committee
- Maintain up-to-date information on the web on regulations and policy guidelines for U.S. imports
- Food safety activities monitored and information disseminated, as appropriate.

Action 4: Support policy innovations in sustainable rural development programs

Goal: To promote and facilitate knowledge and information exchanges among the three North American countries with a view to improving rural policymaking, and support cooperation between IICA and the international community (including public and private institutions) for applying more holistic and multi-disciplinary approaches to sustainable rural development and environmental conservation.



Long-term impact: Improve the socio-economic situation and well-being in rural areas throughout North America and the hemisphere.

Approach: Working very closely with its three Member States, the coordinating office will continue to promote dialogue on rural issues of interest to the countries and cooperate with the three countries in policy implementation. The rural development dialogue among the countries of the Northern Region will look to develop synergy with the themes and activities advanced by IICA's Directorate of Rural Development. The IICA Offices in the region will continue working with the Strategic Area of Sustainable Rural Development to formulate an institutional vision, determine action priorities and foster dialogue as it relates to rural poverty reduction, gender, youth, indigenous groups and environmental conservation. The tri-national program will consider as a potential priority the new Zocalo program being developed as a new IICA rural development agenda in Mexico.

Expected Results:

- Dialogue promoted on specific regional issues related to rural development, in conjunction with public and private sector organizations in the North American countries.
- Support provided for the discussions and proposals prepared for establishment of new policy instruments.
- Support provided for implementing IICA's resolution on gender in the region.



Southern Region Agenda

The general setting for the Region and for agriculture

The Southern Region comprises Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, which, together, cover some 12,611,086 km² and have a combined population of 228.5 million (1999), approximately 18% of which lives in rural areas. These countries occupy 11% of the Earth's land surface, account for 4% of the world's population, are home to 35% of the population of the Americas and 60% of the population of LAC.

The GDP of the Region was over US\$1 trillion in 1999, 6.5% of which was the agricultural GDP. That same year, the Region accounted for some 4.5% of trade worldwide and, although the per capita GDP was US\$4,786.98, there were marked differences and gaps in the distribution of income among and within countries. National development has been very unequal in these countries, in part due to historical reasons and economies of scale. For example, together Brazil and Argentina account for 80% of the territory and population of the Region, and 90% of the GDP.

After a strong economic performance in the 1990s, the economies of the Region began to show signs of stagnation or recession in 1999; economic growth rates were negative in Argentina and Uruguay, and were below 1% in Paraguay and Brazil. Per capita income in the four MERCOSUR countries began to decline in 1999, and was showing no sign of recovery as recently as 2002. This notwithstanding, in 2003, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay reported relatively high Human Development Indices (HDI) (34th, 43rd and 40th place on a list of 175 countries, respectively), while Brazil and Paraguay find themselves in 64th and 84th place on the list, respectively.

As regards the agricultural sector, the Region has become the world's leading meat producer and exporter thanks to increased production of corn and soy beans. Brazil is the second largest

producer of chicken in the world, and pork production is also on the rise. The principal constraints on the livestock sector are sanitary problems that affect beef production and exports, and the use of low-cost forage.

In addition to meat, the Region is a leading exporter of grains, soy, dairy products, fruits and wines. Argentina supplies wheat to the other countries in the Region and to many other countries around the globe. As a matter of fact, the Region has increased the supply of grains by some 60% in the last 10 years, making it a world food reserve. In recent years, Brazil has become an important producer of tropical and subtropical crops.

Argentina, Uruguay and Chile have increased productivity considerably mainly as a result of technological innovation, and Brazil and Paraguay have brought new lands into production and are moving forward in making use of new technologies. As a whole, the Region is making a major effort to create a new agricultural export structure.

One of the major concerns in the Region is the technological gap between commercial-scale farms and subsistence farms, which translates into a greater mass of rural poor. Despite this, efforts to join the links in the agrifood chain are making production in the region increasingly competitive.

The political and institutional setting

The countries of the Region comprise the expanded MERCOSUR. Established in 1991 as a regional integration agreement aimed at creating a common market, MERCOSUR has been operating since 1995 as an imperfect Customs Union in which member countries have opened up their markets to one another, eliminated tariff and para-tariff barriers to reciprocal trade, and adopted a common external tariff vis-à-vis non-member countries. The tariff reduction process has accelerated since 1995; at present, the average tariff is 10% (4% in Chile).



The Customs Union is in the implementation stage, since some products traded among the four countries will continue to pay declining tariffs for a while longer. In addition, a group of specific products on the so-called Lists of Exceptions to the Common External Tariff receive special treatment.

In June 1996, an agreement was signed with Chile to foster cooperation and economic and physical integration, with a view to contributing to the creation of a greater economic bloc to facilitate the free trade of goods and services and the unrestricted movement of the factors of production. In February 1997, an agreement was signed with Bolivia for establishing a free trade zone between MERCOSUR and that country within a 10-year period. Both Chile and Bolivia receive “four-plus-one” treatment, which means that the two countries can participate in technical aspects of the agreement, although they do not form part of the political structure.

Establishment of MERCOSUR has been slow and this has hindered trade possibilities with countries outside the region. In addition to macroeconomic disequilibria in the countries, agricultural health problems such as foot-and-mouth disease have arisen. Efforts to control this disease, which has had a noticeable impact on meat trade in the Region, have cost more than US\$150 million annually.

MERCOSUR has decision-making bodies, forums and meetings for analysis. Within the framework of MERCOSUR, negotiations are conducted at the following levels:

- ***The Council of the Common Market***

This forum, which is the governing body of MERCOSUR, meets semi-annually. It is responsible for the political conduct of the integration process, as well as for decision making to ensure attainment of the objectives stipulated in the Treaty of Asuncion, and for establishing the common market.

- ***The Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture***

Its objective is to propose to the MERCOSUR council, through the Common Market Group (CMG), measures needed to harmonize the agricultural policies of the States party to the agreement. Also, it directs the work of Sub-Group 8 (Agricultural Policy) which, among other things, is responsible for harmonizing regulations on trade, agricultural inputs and animal and plant health issues. Operating under it, are:

- The Animal Health and Plant Health Commissions, both with Standing Working Groups (SWG)
- The Seeds Commission
- Several ad hoc commissions: Viticulture, plant health products, animal genetics. (The work of the ad hoc commission on fertilizers, additives and inoculants, and the ad hoc commission on animal feed, was suspended.)

Each commission and standing working group focuses on a specific issue. Once agreement has been reached, the matter is forwarded to the respective sub-group. If the sub-group is in agreement, it makes a recommendation to the GMC, which then may issue a resolution that is binding on the four countries. If necessary, the countries then propose the corresponding regulations or legislation. Measures considered to be of great importance must be approved by the Council of the Common Market.

- ***The Administrative Secretariat of MERCOSUR***

The Administrative Secretariat is the coordinating and information sharing body, which is headquartered in Uruguay. As of 2002, a Technical Secretariat was incorporated to conduct the processes of the Common Market.

- ***The Southern Agricultural Council (CAS)***

The Ministers of Agriculture of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile created the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS) in July 2002



during their meeting in Buenos Aires. The objective of the CAS is to facilitate regional cooperation and integration.

Discussions on agricultural topics were transferred to this new body and have focused on negotiations related to tariffs and sanitary issues (in which Chile did not participate). At present, the CAS serves as a forum for dialogue and consultation among the ministers of the Region, including Bolivia, regarding problems of common interest to the agricultural sector associated with the challenges posed by globalization.

In March 2003, the Minister of Agriculture signed the CAS Charter. The Council's main functions are:

- o To assess policies and programs that promote the development of the agricultural sector, and act as a standing body for consultation, advisory services and the exchange of experiences.
- o To assess the progress of agricultural trade negotiations and coordinate positions for multilateral negotiation forums.
- o To assess the sanitary and phytosanitary situation in the region, and coordinate actions to combat and eradicate plant and animal pests and diseases.
- o To coordinate positions in international standard-setting forums, including: the Codex Alimentarius Commission, OIE and the IPPC Phytosanitary Measures Commission.
- o To formulate a human resource development strategy for the agricultural sector.
- o To conduct and coordinate relations between the public and private sectors with a view to promoting agricultural development.
- o To develop regional emergency response mechanisms.
- o To promote rural development.

The groups, ad hoc committees and mechanisms needed for implementing the regional agenda will also be created. To this end,

the Standing Veterinary Committee was established, whose Charter was signed in Washington.

Regional demand

The aforementioned mechanisms channel the demand for cooperation in the Southern Region. In addition to these mechanisms, IICA has commitments with other regional organizations, such as the national agricultural research institutes (NARIs) that make up PROCISUR and the plant protection organizations that make up COSAVE, among others.

Most of the demand for technical cooperation in the region, in IICA's fields of competence, is channeled through the CAS, as described below:

- Trade: Demand is addressed by the Informal Group of Agricultural Negotiators (GINA) and the Network of Regional Agricultural Policy Institutions.
- Technology and Innovation: Demand is handled through PROCISUR and PROCITROPICOS, the latter of which focuses on the Amazon Basin.
- Agricultural Health and Food Safety (AHFS): Demand is handled in coordination with the Plant Protection Committee (COSAVE), and the recently created Standing Veterinary Committee for the Southern Region.
- Sustainable Rural Development (SRD): Demand is generated in the Inter-Agency Group for SRD and, in collaboration with IFAD, a regional project is being prepared on policies and strategies for SRD based on a territorial approach.
- Education and Training: Demand focuses on collaboration with the Forum of University Deans, which promotes the accreditation of schools of agronomy, the regional post-



graduate program on trade and integration, and the training of researchers for regional innovation centers.

- **Information and Communication:** Demand is channeled through SIDALC and through the promotion of national and regional information systems on topics of strategic importance. Post-graduate programs in food safety are promoted with the Forum of Veterinarian Deans.

The consultation process

In the process to prepare the Southern Regional Agenda, the guidelines contained in IICA's 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan were taken into account, as were the mandates of the Summits of the Americas and the directives issued by the IABA. The latter urge IICA, to the extent possible, to extend its work beyond the confines of agriculture and the rural sector, and include activities of regional scope for promoting comprehensive development in its Member States. In preparing the Regional Agenda, three principal inputs were considered:

- The needs set out in the National Agendas.
- The needs identified by IICA's Regional Specialists that call for efforts to solve or alleviate regional situations and problems.
- The joint actions with institutional partners in the region, in which IICA has a particular interest.

The key players involved in implementing IICA's regional agenda are the CAS, the Ministers of Agriculture and the private institutions of the region and international organizations working in the agricultural sector in the region. The CAS is the chief vehicle for channeling requests for technical cooperation to IICA.

General Objective

The objective of the Southern Regional Agenda is to contribute significantly to the development of agriculture and rural life in the region. The agenda promotes the development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared, environmentally managed and socially equitable for the countries of the Southern Region. Within the framework of this general objective, the following specific objectives have been established for cooperation in the Region:

- To achieve significant results for agricultural and rural development in the countries of the Southern Region, through greater efficiency of operations and technical excellence.
- To promote the development and strengthening of strategic partnerships with multilateral cooperation and funding organizations, with a view to securing resources to be used in creating prosperity and reducing poverty in rural communities.
- To improve teamwork between Headquarters and the Region, and the articulation of IICA professionals around thematic issues.
- To promote the image of the Institute as an international cooperation agency and as a reliable strategic partner that contributes to the development of agriculture and rural life in the Americas.
- To encourage IICA's participation as a partner institution in the Summit of the Americas process and foster compliance with the agreements of the IABA and the EC.
- To promote the accountability and transparency of the cooperation initiatives in the Member States.



Critical issues

The topics addressed by the Ministers within the CAS are the principal critical issues facing agricultural and rural development in the Region. They include:

Agricultural health and food safety

The region is one of the leading producers of meat in the world. If the countries are to seize opportunities offered on the world market, they must do more to control agricultural pests and diseases, and exercise greater care in processing products and transporting them to markets.

Alleviating rural poverty

Falling incomes in the countries of the Region (except Chile) have made efforts to combat rural poverty a priority, along with the search for alternatives for sustainable rural development.

Institutional transformation

The transformation of the functions of public sector institutions, and new relations with private sector organizations, are also a priority.

Information and know-how

A critical issue in the Region is the increased demand for the information and know-how needed to take advantage of market opportunities. The regional institutional platform must be strengthened in order to link the community of agriculture and rural life to the “society of knowledge.” In addition, it is necessary to develop a new style of leadership and create institutional arrangements that articulate thematic issues at the national, regional, hemispheric and global levels.

Human resources development

There is a need to increase the number of skilled human resources working in the agricultural sector, as well as the relevance and quality of their training.

Agribusiness / Technology and Innovation

There is less regional demand for cooperation in these areas, although they are beginning to play a greater role in agricultural and rural development. In these areas, efforts are still needed to harmonize certain policies and some trade strategies for dealing with non-member countries.

Principal actions and expected results, by Strategic Area

Trade and Agribusiness Development

In this area, the objective of IICA’s actions in the Region is to meet the demand for technical cooperation on topics including: agricultural policy design, training for specialists in international trade and agricultural trade negotiations, dissemination of results of multilateral negotiations (WTO and FTAA), development of domestic markets and new financial instruments for the sector and support for export promotion programs.

Expected results:

- The Regional Network for Cooperation on Agricultural Policy Analysis in the Countries of the Expanded MERCOSUR in operation
- Export development programs promoted.
- The GINA (network of agricultural negotiators) for the Southern Region in operation.
- Regional technical forums, seminars and workshops held on negotiating scenarios and strategies for the incorporation of specific agrifood chains into international markets.



- Regional and multinational joint actions facilitated, aimed at positioning specific commodities.
- Information disseminated on joint technical studies and events and their implementation.
- Information generated and disseminated on MERCOSUR, the Administrative and Technical Secretariat and the SGT-8 (Agriculture).

Technology and Innovation

The objective in this area is to promote integration of the agrifood and agroindustrial innovation system, and to respond to the technological needs of regional and national agribusinesses. This action is complemented by the work of PROCISUR and PROCITROPICOS.

Expected results:

- Regional Technological Platforms (PTRs) and the program for action on environmental sustainability, quality in the beef chain and functional genomics implemented
- The mechanism for coordinating the three PTRs implemented in 2002 established
- Portfolio of externally funded projects monitored: FONTAGRO (8); European Union (1); BMZ/ISNAR (1)
- National capabilities and technical exchanges at the regional level strengthened, on the subjects of genetic resources, natural resources and institutional change.
- Model consolidated for the sustainable management of the process of technological prospecting, and the monitoring of opportunities, capabilities and financing.

Agricultural Health and Food Safety (AHFS)

IICA's actions are intended to promote mutual recognition of sanitary and phytosanitary equivalence of products and processes or between AHFS services in the Southern Cone and their trading

partners, to consolidate modernization and integration in the expanded MERCOSUR, as well as compliance with commitments assumed under the WTO's SPS Agreement and the FTAA.

Expected results:

- COSAVE structured to promote recognition of AHFS equivalence, to help achieve modern services and regional integration.
- Support provided to the Standing Veterinary Committee for its work at the international level.
- A permanent electronic information updated and operated by IICA.
- Regulatory, institutional and technical modernization of AHFS services in the Southern Cone countries promoted, with the goal of achieving a 25% improvement over the current situation by 2006.
- Equivalence for products and government AHFS services recognized by the expanded MERCOSUR countries, and for products with FTAA countries and other trading partners.
- Partnerships with MERCOSUR, APHIS/USDA, PAHO and FAO strengthened.

Sustainable Rural Development

IICA's objective is to support the IICA Offices in the Southern Region in their work with the governments to design policies and strategies for sustainable rural development and for reducing rural poverty.

Expected results:

- Database on SRD programs and projects in operation. All the Representatives in the region have online access. This database will enable the Offices to enhance their technical cooperation capabilities in the area of SRD.



- Database on specialists in specific SRD topics and rural poverty alleviation in operation. All the Representatives in the region have online access. This will enable the Offices to be aware of and offer top-quality specialized technical cooperation, keyed to the SRD needs of each country.

- A regional network and national networks of information units established.

Education and Training

IICA will work to upgrade the quality and relevance of higher agricultural and rural education, at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, focusing on the evaluation and accreditation of courses, and the strengthening of postgraduate programs and agricultural research.

Expected results:

- The Southern Region system for the external evaluation and accreditation of agronomy courses established.
- Regional master's degree program in policy and international trade established.
- Regional program for training new researchers established.

Information and Communication

The objective of the Institute's regional actions in this area is to organize bibliographic information units (both digitalized and not digitalized) into a single-source system to serve agricultural development in the Southern Region. To this end, efforts will be undertaken to promote national agricultural and rural information systems and the national networks belonging to SIDALC, and specialized electronic newsletters will be distributed.

Expected results:

- A study characterizing and describing the information units in the region carried out.
- Events held to promote national agricultural information systems