

BELIZE

2005 Annual Report

The Contribution of IICA to
the Development of Agriculture
and Rural Communities



INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE

VISION

To transform IICA into a development agency that promotes the sustainable development of agriculture, food security and the prosperity of rural communities in the Americas.

MISSION

To support the efforts of the Member States, to achieve progress and prosperity in the hemisphere through the modernization of the rural sector, the promotion of food security and the development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared, environmentally managed and socially equitable for the peoples of the Americas.

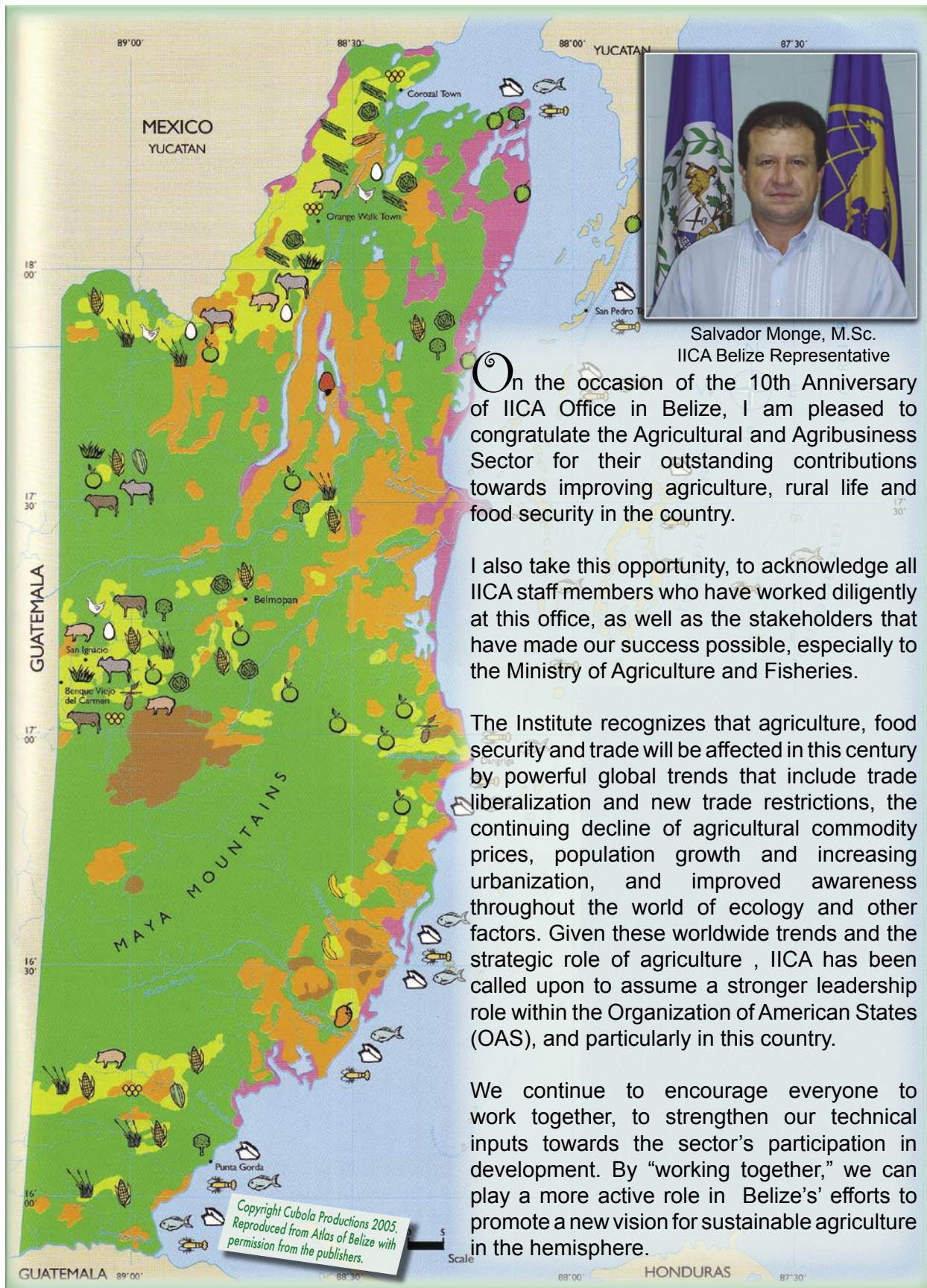


IICA Belize staff

Left to right

FRONT ROW Rosita Martinez, Angelica Velasquez,

BACK ROW Wilmot Garnett, Edwin Martinez, Mr. Salvador Monge, IICA Belize Representative.



Salvador Monge, M.Sc.
IICA Belize Representative

On the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of IICA Office in Belize, I am pleased to congratulate the Agricultural and Agribusiness Sector for their outstanding contributions towards improving agriculture, rural life and food security in the country.

I also take this opportunity, to acknowledge all IICA staff members who have worked diligently at this office, as well as the stakeholders that have made our success possible, especially to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Institute recognizes that agriculture, food security and trade will be affected in this century by powerful global trends that include trade liberalization and new trade restrictions, the continuing decline of agricultural commodity prices, population growth and increasing urbanization, and improved awareness throughout the world of ecology and other factors. Given these worldwide trends and the strategic role of agriculture, IICA has been called upon to assume a stronger leadership role within the Organization of American States (OAS), and particularly in this country.

We continue to encourage everyone to work together, to strengthen our technical inputs towards the sector's participation in development. By "working together," we can play a more active role in Belize's efforts to promote a new vision for sustainable agriculture in the hemisphere.

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1. Introduction

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is the specialized agency of the Inter-American System with a vision to promote sustainable agricultural development, food security and prosperity in the rural communities of the Americas. Since its establishment in 1942 the Institute has evolved through a continuous process of adjustment of its strategies for addressing its new mandates and to respond to the opportunities and challenges related to agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

The IICA Office in Belize, which was established in 1995, continued to implement aspects of the National Technical Cooperation Agenda through the provision of technical and developmental assistance in the Institute's six strategic areas of focus via Policy, Trade and Agribusiness Development; Technology and Innovation; Sustainable Rural Development; Agricultural Health and Food Safety; Education and Training; and Information and Communication. This agenda was prepared using the Institute's model of consultation, dialogue and consensus building with national authorities. This process aims to meet the needs of Member States for technical cooperation that responds to their demands and priorities. Our achievements, summarized in this report, are in keeping with the Institute's mandate for accountability and transparency as outlined by its General Directorate, the Hemispheric Heads of Government and the Bavaro Declaration.

At the very outset tribute must be paid to our many Belizean counterparts in the public and private sectors, who, in spite of other responsibilities, collaborated fully with IICA Belize's technical cooperation activities. Without their participation, dedication and expertise we would have very little to report. Special acknowledgement goes to the Staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA), Belize Agricultural and Health Authority (BAHA), International, Regional Organization on Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA), the Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE), Citrus Research and Education Institute (CREI), Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), University of Belize (UB), Belize Organic Producers Association (BOPA) and the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE). We also express our appreciation to the Sugar Industry Control Board (SICB), The Cane Farmers Association (CFA) and the Belize Sugar Industries (BSI) for the confidence they expressed in our Institute and the opportunity provided to be an active partner in seeking solutions to support the long term viability of their industry. Special appreciation is also extended to our colleagues from headquarters and other national offices whose invaluable support helped to strengthen the level of technical services provided by our office.

The Representative and the staff of this Office are pleased to present the document "The Contribution of IICA to Agriculture and Development of Rural Communities in Belize", which summarizes the results of our technical cooperation in 2005. We

welcome feedback from our partners, which can only help to strengthen our program, as we strive to improve the level of our technical services.

2. Executive Summary

In May 2005 the IICA Office in Belize proudly celebrated 10 years of service towards the development of the agriculture sector in Belize. Since its establishment in 1995, significant contributions were made towards the improvement of the sector. Noteworthy were technical cooperation for the modernization of the national agricultural health services, analysis of the sugar industry and contribution towards the preparation of a plan of action for improving competitiveness, establishment of the foundation for a national organic agriculture program, a study of the poultry sector to assess competitiveness within the context of World Trade Organizations (WTO) regulations, revision and upgrading of the tertiary level agricultural education curriculum and the improvement of the national agricultural technology generation and transfer system. We express sincere gratitude to our collaborating partners for their support and commitment, especially the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and its technical staff. We are committed to building on our accomplishments as we continue to execute our national, regional and hemispheric agendas of modernization of the agricultural sector and contributing towards the well-being of the inhabitants of rural communities in Belize.

Current Status of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu in the Country

In 2004, primary agriculture, including fisheries and the manufacturing of food and beverages remained one of the most important sectors in the economy of Belize, accounting for 22.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and approximately 25% of total labor force. Agriculture also accounted for 65% of foreign exchange earnings from exports during this same period. Although the sector has traditionally relied on export of a narrow range of commodities (citrus, sugar, bananas) through preferential arrangements to markets in the United States, United Kingdom and Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM), the global trend in erosion of these preferences, as a result of WTO regulations, now forces Belize's agriculture to become more competitive and diversified. Noteworthy has been the strategic decision to remain in sugar production and to make the necessary adjustments within the industry to improve competitiveness and efficiency in response to the reforms within the Asian Caribbean Pacific (ACP) sugar regime being implemented by the European Union (EU). Simultaneously, the other traditional commodities of citrus and banana are also implementing programs for improving productivity as part of their strategy to become more competitive on the global market. Significant progress and expansion was also realized in the non-traditional export commodities such as papayas, farmed shrimp and hot peppers, while the country remained self sufficient in basic crops and livestock products for local consumption.

By regional standards, Belize's exports are considered to be relatively diversified. On the other hand, imports have historically been dominated by manufactured goods which have resulted in a notable retail and distribution sector. Noteworthy has been significant growth in the services sector, mainly in tourism and nascent financial services. However, with an economy still predominantly reliant on agriculture, the Government of Belize main policy trust for this sector is continued support for the traditional export commodities in addition to the promotion of non-traditional crops such as soybean and other tropical fruits and vegetables.

The program of the IICA office in Belize was developed through a series of consultation with stakeholders from the public and private sectors and executed in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. This work program is consistent with the Institutional Mandate outlined in IICA's Medium Term Plan 2002-2006, the national policy for Belize's agricultural development 2002-2020 and the national agenda for the IICA office in Belize. Specific accomplishments and results for 2005 are detailed below and arranged by the inter-thematic programs of the institute prioritized in the 2005 plan of operation.

Inter-thematic Programs

a. Environmental Management

Direct technical cooperation in the form of training seminars and field days on farming techniques for nursery and field management in organic cacao production to the TCGA continued in 2005. These activities were conducted to support an expansion program from 200 to 1,500 acres of organic cacao over the next three years. TCGA is comprised of over 800 small organic cacao growers with a guaranteed market for their dried and fermented cacao beans (United Kingdom-Green and Blacks) and receive a fair-trade price. TCGA is the sole internationally certified exporter of organic cacao in Belize and leads the organic export industry at the national level. Support to the BOPA for revision of the draft national organic agriculture legislation also continued in 2005 as this document goes through the final stages of legal review prior to enactment. Through its involvement in BOPA the Institute is assisting with coordinating the promotion for establishment of a local system for certification of organic fruits and vegetables.

Through CATIE and the Belize IICA Office efforts, Belize is now a member of the Mesoamerican Network for Plant Genetic Resources (REMERFI). The focus of this organization is to coordinate information and expertise from inside and outside the region, linking the plant genetic resource sector with other agencies of biodiversity conservation. Belize has benefited from its membership in REMERFI through the participation of a Global Environmental Fund/World Bank regional project regarding Conservation and Sustainable Use of Neotropical Native Crops and Wild Relatives of Crops, which will be executed in 2006.

b. Promoting Food Safety and Agricultural Health

A functional national Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) committee in collaboration with IICA and OIRSA organized and executed the first of a series of national seminar/training involving the private and public sectors on Trade Agreements: Opportunities for Belize. The Ministries of Agriculture from Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize made formal presentations highlighting the agreement on the application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. IICA continue to coordinate and provide logistical support for Belize's participation at the (WTO/SPS) committee meetings held in Geneva in 2005. Belize was one of few countries selected to participate in an advanced training in SPS measures also held in Geneva. The national cacao task force has been actively working towards the eradication of monilia (frosty pod) in southern Belize through improved orchard sanitation, surveillance, and public awareness. IICA continue to provide relevant information to the food safety network and on SPS/trade related issues.

c. Institutional Modernization

Technical support was provided through participation on the National Committee for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development (NCCARD). A national workshop on strategic planning for curriculum review and development was coordinated and facilitated for the Department of Agriculture of the Faculty of Science and Engineering of the University of Belize to support their efforts of revision and strengthening of agricultural education in Belize. Technical support was also provided to the Belize Trade and Investment Development Services (BELTRAIDE) to support institutional strengthening to facilitate and foster a climate of credibility in provision of services to investors, producers and exporters.

d. Developing Human Capital

Technical support was provided through the participation of one government official and one private sector official at the first regional Biotechnology workshop held in Costa Rica. Two members of the national cacao task force and a cacao farmer participated in the first international cacao production and competitiveness workshop held at CATIE.

e. Strengthening Rural Communities

Technical support was provided to the Toledo Cacao Growers Association in effective organic control measures for monilia and improved orchard management practices. Technical support was provided to the Xate producers through revision of a manual covering production to consumer for small diversified producers. A technical analysis regarding the current situation of the Technology Transfer System provided by the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) to the farmers was prepared by this Office.

f. Facilitating Competitiveness and Global Trade

Technical support was provided for the execution of a value chain analysis of the sugar industry in Belize to identify bottlenecks and recommend strategic interventions to make the industry more competitive. This is an ongoing activity with outputs that will be integrated into the preparation of a national strategy for improving the overall competitiveness of the sugar industry as it adjusts to reforms being implemented in the EU-ACP sugar protocol. Contributions were also made for assessment of the need for establishment of a national export promotion center.

g. Other Technical Programs

Technical staff from the office participated in numerous committees and working groups for commodities/topics such as citrus, sugar, tropical fruits, organic agriculture, bio-safety, agricultural health issues and ecological agriculture, making valuable technical inputs towards the overall improvement in Belize's agriculture. The office also installed the Virtual Privacy Network (VPN) communication system which significantly reduced the cost of communication with the network of IICA country offices and headquarters.

Finally, the office had a display booth, showcasing IICA and the technical cooperation programs executed in Belize, at the Annual National Agriculture and Trade Fair in Belmopan held on April 29 to May 1, 2005. In connection with this event, technical assistance was also provided to lead the process of selection of the "Farmers of the Year 2005" which is the highest level of recognition bestowed upon the best performing farmers for the year 2004/2005 and judging of farmers exhibits at the show.

3. The State of Agriculture and Rural Life in Belize in 2005

3.1 Recent performance in the expanded agricultural sector

During 2005 Belize's agriculture sector recorded an overall growth in total exports in comparison to previous years. Available domestic export data for period January to October 2005 indicated significant increases in total export values of 82% and 22% for orange concentrate and papayas respectively when compared with data for the similar period in 2004. During this same period agriculture accounted for 65% and 70% of total domestic export earnings in 2004 and 2005 respectively. Although the export volume for marine products increased over the period, total revenue generated was 16% lower in 2005 as a result of lower world market prices. Total export value for sugar was also 14% lower in 2005 as a result of reduced export volume caused by a severe drought experienced by the industry in 2005. During the period of January to September 2005 the economy grew by 3.1%, inflation was 3.7%, the highest since 1996 and unemployment remained at 11%.

As the proposed date for initiation of the EU price reduction for ACP sugar approaches in 2006, the sugar industry in Belize is taking an aggressive approach for identification of constraints and preparation of a strategic plan for long-term competitiveness of the industry. The reform of the EU sugar protocol proposes a price reduction of 36% which will be phased in between 2006 to 2008. The impact will be a US \$26.1 million dollars loss in foreign exchange for Belize over the phasing-in period and a subsequent sugar revenue loss of US \$10 million per annum.

Positive results from Belize's policy for diversification was clearly reflected in significant increases in non-traditional export earnings of 32%, 65%, 143% and 170% respectively for exports of pepper sauce, fresh oranges, black eye peas and red kidney beans for the period January to October 2005 in comparison to the same period in 2004. The government continues to explore avenues for expansion in the range of goods and services, agro-processing and value adding. Also noteworthy was a 65% increase in export earnings from fish in 2005 when compared with 2004. This is a direct impact of increased export volumes of tilapia, a relatively new industry which is expected to triple its output over the next two to three years based on current expansion plans. The organic cacao industry continues to benefit from a three-year grant financing to support an expansion program from 200 to 1,500 acres of organic cacao. This program which started in 2003 is in its final year of execution. Although drought, monilia infestation and forest fires caused a yield reduction from 32.5 metric tons in 2004 to 23.5 metric tons in 2005, a significant increase in production is projected over the next two years as result of current expansion and rehabilitation initiatives of the TCGA.

3.2 Critical issues in the international and national context

The impact of declining preferential market arrangements and a general decline in world market prices for some traditional and non-traditional exports was clearly evident in 2005. Noteworthy was the decline in export value for marine products, even though export volumes were higher than in 2004. A marginal decline in sugar prices was also experienced in 2005. This trend highlights the need for an acceleration of financial and technical investments to improve efficiency and competitiveness of traditional exports and expansion in non-traditional exports to offset potential foreign exchange that could be lost from impact of global market prices on traditional exports. EU funds are now being invested in the banana industry to improve production systems and infrastructure to enhance productivity. EU grant funds are also being targeted by the sugar industry to finance a strategy for adaptation to the ongoing reform in the EU/ ACP sugar protocol. This strategy will include improved efficiency in the entire sugar value chain (production, transportation, processing, storage, and marketing) along with diversification options within sugar such as burning of bagasse for sale of electrical energy and production of ethanol. Belize has made the strategic decision to remain in sugar production by making the necessary interventions to become competitive at the regional and international level.

The limited size of the local market as a result of its small population size forces Belize to look outwards to the export market to accommodate any expansion in its agricultural productive base. Implementation of CARICOM Single Market and Economy in late 2005 should provide for an increase in future investments and market opportunities for Belize in that region. The establishment of a partial-scope trade agreement between Belize and Guatemala reflects significant progress in exploration of market and trade opportunities with Central America, which offer an attractive option considering its geographic proximity.

Belize remains self sufficient in staple food products such as corn, rice, beans, bananas, plantains, root crops, fruits, poultry, eggs, pork, beef and seafood. Some vegetables such as tomatoes, lettuce, broccoli, carrots, celery and cabbage are generally produced seasonally as a result of the production system and limited research for identification of improved adapted varieties. Although tremendous progress has been made over the past five years in expanding the local production of these vegetables, there are still periods when importation has to be done to accommodate the shortfall of supply on the local market. Although progress has been made in processing of overproduction of seasonal fruits such as mango and pineapple there is still room for expansion in the agro-industrial base for these and other commodities. The livestock industry has also diversified its processing which has resulted in the availability of a wide variety of high quality processed meats on the local market. This industry has benefited significantly by the implementation of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point program by BAHA.

3.3 The status of living conditions in rural communities

The last poverty assessment conducted by the Government of Belize in 2002 indicated estimates that some 33.5% of the population of Belize was poor and that some 10.8% were very poor or indigent. Poverty rates higher than the national average was observed among children and youths. Respective estimates of poverty and indigence of 44.2% and 17.4% for rural areas was higher than the national average and the corresponding estimates for urban areas. The population of Belize remained young with children under 18 years accounting for almost one half of the national population. The average household size was 4.6 persons with rural household size being slightly larger than urban households. The rural poor were less likely to have access to sanitary means of sewage disposal, safe drinking water, electricity, health services and education beyond the primary level.

Belize has made notable progress in basic infrastructure development in the form of major highways and feeder roads, electricity, telecommunication and availability of potable water. A number of social programs are ongoing to address development in the rural areas. The ongoing Social Investment Fund has provided significant funding for education and water and sanitation projects since its establishment in 1996. The Community Initiated Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) Project in southern

Belize which was funded through the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of Belize for approximately US \$4.0 million focused primarily on funding and technical assistance for improvement of infrastructure and production systems for the agriculture sector. The CARD project started in November 1999 ends in 2006. Another rural development project with grant funds of 8 million Euros has been finalized with the EU to address capacity building for poverty alleviation in rural communities in Belize. Execution of this project will commence during the first quarter of 2006.

In 2004 the National Human Development Advisory Committee secured US \$352,000 to support a two-year project that aims to ensure that Belize achieves sustainable human development by fostering a supportive environment for attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. This project includes a participatory approach with stakeholders for development of a well coordinated action plan that will help to ensure sustained human development and to mitigate against reversal of development gains in specific areas such as economic growth, poverty reduction, literacy, health care, environmental protection and gender equity. All these priority areas are of significant importance for improvement of living conditions of rural communities in Belize.

4. Summary of the National Agenda

The national technical cooperation agenda was prepared in consultation with national authorities from the public and private sectors. It is consistent with the national policy for development of the agriculture sector and the Institute's 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan. The agenda has been subjected to continuous modifications to reflect policy adjustments that have been made to accommodate changes and opportunities at the national and global level. This summary of the agenda is outlined within the Institutional Strategic Areas defined in the Medium Term Plan 2002-2006.

a. Trade and Agribusiness Development

- Topic: Trade negotiations and integration
 - Coordinate technical assistance with BELTRAIDE and the MAF to provide information to support compliance with agreements and regulations of the WTO, Free Trade Areas of the Americas (FTAA), Central American Integration System (SICA) and CARICOM.
 - Coordinate and facilitate participation in regional integration initiatives of Regional Council for Agricultural Cooperation/ Central American Agricultural Council (CORECA/CAC) and SICA.

- Topic: Access to international markets
 - Facilitate access to international markets through provision of

information on the international commodities market.

- Topic: Institutional modernization for competitiveness
 - Provide technical support to MAF for preparation and implementation of a medium-term strategic plan for development of Belize's agricultural sector.
 - Provide technical assistance and training for execution of assessment of economic impacts of the citrus and sugar industries.

b. Technology and Innovation

- Topic: Design and Promotion of technology innovation policies
 - Provide technical assistance for policy and technical orientation through participation in the technical committees for the Citrus Research and Education Institute and the Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute.
 - Support the MAF in converting the government owned and operated research station (Central Farm) into a semi-autonomous national research and development institute.
 - Support for the MAF diversification program through provision of technical information and literature on production techniques for selected fruit and root crops.

c. Agricultural Health and Food Safety

- Topic: Modernization of agricultural health and food safety systems
 - Support institutional strengthening of BAHA.
 - Support BAHA in development of national action plan for compliance with SPS agreements of WTO and other international trade commitments.
 - Provide information on SPS requirements for exportation of tropical crops.
- Topic: Food Safety
 - Support the development of local capacity on Codex Alimentarius through participation in regional initiatives on food safety.
 - Support efforts of the Bureau of Standards and BAHA in development of national guidelines for food safety.

d. Sustainable Rural Development

- Topic: Strategies and Policies for rural development
 - Support for production, processing and marketing of organic products.

- Support for establishment of local and international markets for organic products.
- Topic: Development of Management capabilities
 - Support conversion of small producers from conventional to organic production.
 - Promote the participation of women and youth in rural business enterprises.
 - Support for institutional strengthening of the Belize Organic Producers Association that includes preparation of proposals for identification of funds for establishment of infrastructure and development of human capital.
- e. Information and Communication
 - Topic: Standardization and coordination of information infrastructure and systems
 - Provide information on agricultural development technologies and international trade through the Cooperation Agency's document center and web site.
- f. Education and Training
 - Topic: Training on Strategic topics
 - Strengthen capacity of national technicians in the areas of projects, organic agriculture and financial analysis.
 - Support training programs for technicians, teachers and students of agricultural training institutions and facilitate linkages with similar type institutions in the region.
 - Topic: Transformation of the education supply
 - Provide technical assistance for revision and upgrading of curriculum of institutions of higher agricultural education to meet the demands for current and future agricultural technicians.

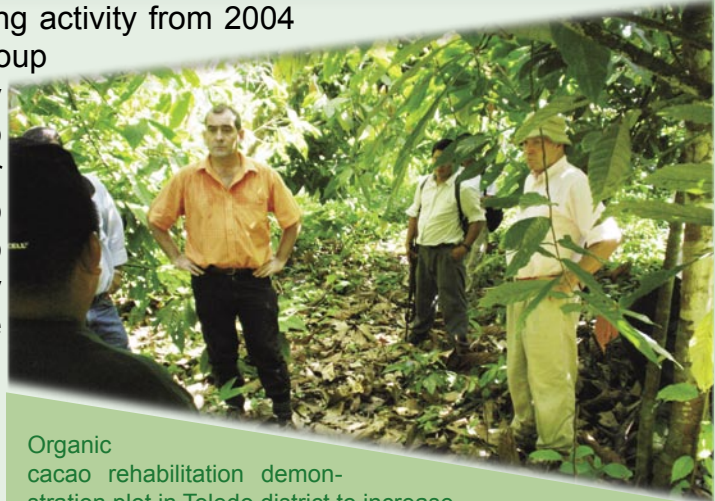
5. Results of Technical Cooperation for 2005

• 5.1 Environmental Management

Through the Belize Organic Producers Association (BOPA) technical support continued for revision of the national organic agriculture legislation as it goes through the process of revision by the Office of the Solicitor General prior to enactment. Also through BOPA training on organic inspection was provided to local technicians in support of a national program for establishment of local markets for locally grown

organic products. This is an ongoing activity from 2004 with a pilot project where a small group of producers are selected to supply organic fruit and vegetables to hotels and restaurants that cater to tourists. Technical assistance to TCGA continued in organic cacao management practices, specifically in field sanitation to reduce the spread of monilia.

- **5.2 Promoting Food Safety and Agricultural Health**



Organic cacao rehabilitation demonstration plot in Toledo district to increase productivity and encourage sustainable land use.

Financial and technical support for participation of a BAHA technician, at the WTO/SPS Committee meetings held in Geneva continued in 2005. The participation of Belize at these meetings has strengthened local knowledge on international sanitary and phytosanitary issues that impact the ability of Belize to participate in international trade and safeguard its borders from the entry of exotic pests and diseases. Benefits from this information were clearly evident through the operation of the national SPS committee, which serves as an advisory body on SPS issues. Belize was represented at the first International Avian Influenza Conference by the Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. This Conference which was held in Brazil was attended by policy makers for the development of a strategy to combat the establishment of pandemic diseases in the region.



Monilia (frosty pod) infected pod showing seed damage and very high spore population.

Authorities from the agricultural health sector continued to realize benefits from information supplied through the ACCESS electronic bulletin.

- **5.3 Institutional Modernization**

A workshop as part of a series of training events on strategic planning and curriculum development was coordinated and facilitated for staff from the Department of Agriculture of the Faculty of Science and Engineering of the University of Belize and Secondary Schools that have strong agriculture components in their curriculum. The objective of the workshop was to apply the methodology for strategic planning to be used as a participatory tool for curriculum review and upgrading, thus making a direct contribution towards improving the quality and relevance of agricultural education in Belize.

- **5.4 Developing Human Capital**

Funding was provided for the participation of two Belizean technicians at the first regional workshop on biotechnology held in San Jose, Costa Rica. This workshop was attended by technicians from the public and private sectors in Central America and provided update information on the trends for use of biotechnology in the region and its implications for improved productivity and management of genetic diversity.

- **5.5 Strengthening Rural Communities**

The Meso-American Regional Fruit Program, a regional program administered by IICA, was launched in Belize in November 2005. Activities included the presentation of a status report on the fruits sector in Belize and a consultation workshop with stakeholders where pineapple, pitahaya, coconuts and cashew were selected as priority crops with potential for development towards commercialization.

The program will proceed with the preparation of a regional project and identification of funds for the development of a regional strategy for expansion and export of fruits in the region.



Members of the cacao task force meeting with officials of Green and Blacks to discuss expansion of the organic cacao industry in Belize.

- **5.6 Facilitating Competitiveness and Global Trade**

Technical support was provided for the execution of a value chain analysis of the sugar industry in Belize utilizing the “Chains and Dialogue for Action” methodology developed by Danilo Herrera and Robin Bourgeois. The analysis aims to identify bottlenecks and recommend strategic interventions to make the industry more competitive. The analysis focused on production systems and

costs, harvesting and transportation systems (field to factory), processing and fobbing (transportation from the factory to the ship). This is an ongoing comprehensive analysis with projection for completion during the first quarter of 2006. Outputs from this analysis will be integrated into the preparation of a national adaptation strategy for improving the overall competitiveness of the sugar industry as it adjusts to reforms being implemented in the EU-ACP sugar protocol. Contributions were also made for assessment of the need for establishment of a national export promotion center. The main recommendation from the assessment is for the institutional strengthening of BELTRAIDE with the addition of an export promotion unit along with capacity building for its staff to manage this unit. This activity will continue in 2006 with the application of the recommendations.



Stakeholders participating in the first workshop/seminar on Trade Agreements-Opportunities for Belize.

The office also participated in a regional project for preparation of an inventory of policies implemented by the countries in Central America that impact on the agriculture sectors. This information will serve as a foundation for preparation of a hemispheric data base of policy information that will be available for the Ministries of Agriculture. The information will facilitate the preparation of comparative studies and design and adjustment of national policies and strategies. It will also help countries to take advantage of successful experiences and enhance the process of regional and hemispheric integration.

A national seminar/workshop "Trade Agreements: Opportunities for Belize" was jointly sponsored by IICA, OIRSA and the Ministry of Agriculture. The seminar was attended by persons from the public and private sector and included presentations from Guatemalan and Mexican technicians who provided information on requirements for exportation of products from Belize to their respective countries. This activity supports the efforts of Belize in seeking and expanding trade opportunities with countries in Central America.

- **5.7 Other Technical Programs**

Technical staff from the office participated in numerous committees and working groups for commodities/topics such as citrus, sugar, cacao, tropical fruits, biosafety, organic agriculture, agricultural research and ecological agriculture, making valuable contribution towards the overall improvement of agriculture in Belize.

The office participated in the National Agriculture and Trade Show 2005 by hosting an

educational display on tropical fruits and root crops grown in Belize, new and improved management practices in the organic cacao industry, and the range of technical services offered by IICA. The display was well received and the public was especially impressed with the diversity of tropical fruits grown in Belize. Technical staff from the office also participated in the selection process for the farmers of the year competitions, judging of crops exhibits at the show, and judging of the Miss Agriculture Pageant.



Farm judging

Belize presented four project proposals to the Agricultural Innovation Project (Red-SICTA) for consideration. IICA will continue to explore other possible sources of funding for national and regional projects.

6. Support provided in the development of National Plans and Strategies (Implementation of Plan Agro 2003-2015)

The IICA Representative held discussions with the Ministerial Delegate for 2005-2006 the process and his respective role in the Summits of the Americas.

The IICA Representative offered to provide any assistance and information they may require in contributing to the hemispheric dialogue to build consensus on the expected outputs of the Ministerial Meeting.

7. Future Opportunities for Cooperation and Development

The importance of agriculture to the economy of Belize makes it a critical sector for continued investments to ensure economic and social stability. IICA has demonstrated its capacity to serve as a platform for stakeholder collaboration and capacity building to increase investment in the agricultural sector. IICA continues to broaden its partnership with other institutions committed to eliminate poverty and improve rural livelihood. Alliances with private sector involvement and investments, along with governmental agencies have proved effective in efficient use of resources, increase IICA leadership role, and accountability to all beneficiaries. IICA has expanded from national agendas to regional and international efforts to address issues of common interest and concerns,

a global approach to achieve tangible results.

The challenges presented in trading in export markets will no doubt force Belize and the other countries in the region to examine the opportunities in the domestic and intra-regional markets; stronger linkages with the food supply chain of the hospitality sectors, and to move towards value-added for high ended niche markets. IICA can provide technical support to countries faced with the sugar crises to develop technological packages for alternative fuel sources, thus increasing diversification within the existing industry for sustainability and increased competitiveness. IICA impartial technical capacity in the use and effects of genetic engineering is readily available to the agricultural sector to assist in the development of national and regional policies. IICA, through its hemispheric network, will continue to support the national institutions in the development of the human capacity for participation in international trade negotiations and compliance with the WTO/SPS and other trade agreement

The cooperation agency in Belize, as part of its normal duties, will continue to explore opportunities for external resources from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies. It will also continue the strategy of strengthening alliances with partner institutions such as CATIE, CARDI, Food and Agriculture Organization, Inter-American Development Bank, Pan American Health Organization, United Nations Development Program, Republic of China/Taiwan Technical Mission and Regional Unit for Technical Assistance for sharing of resources for conducting specific technical cooperation and training activities.

Acronyms

ACP	Asian Caribbean Pacific
BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
BELTRAIDE	Belize Trade and Investment Development Services
BOPA	Belize Organic Producers Association
BSI	Belize Sugar Industries
CAC	Central American Agricultural Council
CARD	Community Initiated Agricultural and Rural Development Project
CARDI	Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CARICOM	Caribbean Common Market
CATIE	Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CFA	Cane Farmers Association
CGA	Citrus Growers Association
CORECA	Regional Council for Agricultural Cooperation
CREI	Citrus Research and Education Institute
EU	European Union
FTAA	Free Trade Areas of the Americas
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
NCCARD	National Committee for Coordination of Agricultural Research And Development
OIRSA	Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health
REMERFI	Meso-American Network for Plant Genetic Resources
RedSICTA	System for Central American Integration for Agricultural Technology
SICA	Central American Integration System
SICB	Sugar Industry Control Board
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
TCGA	Toledo Cacao Growers Association
UB	University of Belize
US	United States
VPN	Virtual Privacy Network
WTO	World Trade Organization

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What is IICA?

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is a specialized agency of the inter-American system. Its purpose is to encourage and support the efforts of its Member States to foster agricultural development and rural well being in their territories.

With more than six decades of institutional life. The Institute is responding to new mandates issued by Heads of States and Government of the Americas, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Ministers of Agriculture of the Americas, to reposition it so that it can meet both the new challenges facing agriculture and the requests for support it receives from its member countries.

As it pursues its vision and mission, the Institute has competitive advantages it can draw on to carry out its new role. It has accumulated a wealth of knowledge regarding agriculture and the rural sector, the diversity of peoples and cultures, and the agro ecological diversity of the hemisphere, all of which are important for crafting creative solutions to a wide variety of problems and challenges.

Its presence in all the Member States gives the Institute the flexibility it needs to move resources between countries and the regions, in order to design and adapt cooperation initiatives intended to address national and regional priorities, facilitate the flow of information and improve the dissemination of best practices.

The Institute has its Headquarters in Costa Rica and Offices in 34 countries in the Americas, as well as an Office for Europe located in Madrid, Spain. The Directorate of Strategic Partnerships works out of the IICA Office in Washington, D.C., IICA office in Spain and IICA office in Miami. The Member States of IICA are: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela.



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