



SELF-EVALUATION OF IICA'S PERFORMANCE IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

REPORT

Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago
October 2001





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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction and Objectives

Evaluation is a critical part of IICA's actions. The Institute does periodic evaluations to assess the implementation of its corporate strategy, the contribution and results of its co-operation actions and how these were achieved, constraints affecting such actions and progress on the institutional transformation process. The self-evaluation of IICA's performance in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) was one of these periodic evaluations. Its objectives were to:

- (i) Determine the level of achievement and relevance of the results produced in the country during the period January 1998 to August 2000.
- (ii) Identify critical issues that affect the CA's performance in the country.
- (iii) Identify relevant experiences for improving institutional performance.
- (iv) Foster the development of new attitudes and skills required in the CA for the institutional transformation of IICA as a continuous learning organization.
- (v) Reach agreement on a series of actions to be undertaken to improve the CA's performance in the country.

Four major areas were examined relating to IICA's overall performance in the country for which specific information was collected and analyzed. These included the following:

(i) **Results achieved:** The results achieved in the country (both direct products of the CA's services and the effects of the application thereof by the institutions served) were analyzed. Attention was given to their consistency with national priorities and policies, and to their consistency with IICA's Corporate Strategy and priorities. In addition, the views of executives and technical staff of counterpart organizations regarding the quality, timeliness, usefulness and relevance of the results were considered.

It is important to indicate that the services provided by the CA include both the cooperation actions that it developed on the basis of the resources it administers, and other complementary actions carried out with the support of the Regional Directorate, Headquarters and other IICA units.

(ii) **Critical issues:** The exercise identified the principal constraints affecting the CA's operations and the major challenges and opportunities that can be exploited to improve its performance in the country, both in terms of its own capacity and the setting in which it operates.

- (iii) *Lessons from experience:*** Efforts focused on identifying the main lessons learned on institutional performance, with a view of incorporating adjustments into actions under way or disseminating experiences that can be replicated in other settings, or in present or future circumstances.
- (iv) *Recommendations:*** The evaluation provided the opportunity for all staff to make recommendations on the critical issues examined and for improving the CA's overall performance in the country.

1.2 Methodology

The self-evaluation was done through a series of actions. These include: (a) Preparation for the evaluation at the CA level through staff meetings to discuss the objectives and the process; (b) meetings of the CONPLAC team and the Regional Director and Representative to define the procedures for the evaluation; (c) preparation of a report by the CA on its achievements (d) identification and communication with the key clients and strategic allies in T&T; (e) meetings between the Regional Director, the CONPLAC team and the CA's staff on the agenda for the evaluation exercise; (f) formation of a Core Working Group (CWG) of CA's staff to work with the CONPLAC team; (g) execution of a self-evaluation workshop; (h) interviews with key clients and allies; (i) and a review and internal discussion by the CA's staff and CONPLAC team on the information collected and the overall process of the evaluation.

The CA's staff was informed of the participatory evaluation well in advance of the event. All staff was requested by the Regional Director to be available for the week for full participation in the activity. In addition, all staff was required to read the Corporate Strategy (CS) document and to internalize the Strategy within the CA. A staff meeting was convened in which groups comprising of two staff members led the discussions on different aspects of the Strategy.

Prior to the workshop, the CA prepared a report on IICA's performance in T&T for the period January 1998 to August 2000. This report provided important basic information for the evaluation. It outlined the macro-economic and sectoral context of the country, the institutional setting in the agricultural and rural sector, identification of the main achievements of the CA in the different thematic areas and an assessment of the resource use, management and efficiency of the CA's operations.

The facilitating group (from CONPLAC) met with the Representative to discuss the strategy, organization, operation and critical issues of the CA; methodology and detailed work plan for the self-evaluation workshop; composition of the working groups of CA's staff; and the schedule of interviews with officials from other institutions associated with the CA's co-operation actions. Members of the CWG were selected and a working session was held to discuss the program of activities for the week including a review the secondary information available; develop a shared vision of the objectives and anticipated results; the key issues to be analyzed; the working methodology and techniques to be used; definition of terms and criteria to be used; the sufficiency, quality and appropriateness of the secondary information available; and

requirements for additional information, among others. The meeting also incorporated the need for daily plenary sessions and for the CWG to report back to the entire staff and to facilitate a "buy in" through a process of full participation by the CA's staff. The CWG was selected to reflect representation from the administration and management, technical areas as well as support services. (see Annex 1)

An introductory session was held with all the IICA's managerial, technical, administrative and support staff held to discuss the objectives, expected results, procedures and review of the agenda. An interdisciplinary group comprising the three CONPLAC members and the Regional Director/Representative provided orientation to the workshop. The basic role of the CONPLAC group was to facilitate the process of collecting and analyzing information on the topics indicated in the preceding section. In this session, discussions were also held on:

- Introduction of facilitators and CWG;
- group exercises on staffs' contributions to IICA vision and corporate strategy; and
- group exercises on perceptions and expectations of workshop.

The meeting also agreed that: (a) interviews with clients will be held concurrently with the deliberations of the CWG from days 1 to 4; (b) the response of clients will not be discussed with staff at the end of each day in order that these do not influence the CA's perceptions; and (c) a summary of the clients' perceptions will be reported to all participants in the final session of the workshop.

The self-evaluation of IICA's overall performance in the country was analyzed through a workshop with the staff of the CA and through interviews with clients and allies. The actual reflection and self-evaluation exercise to determine the contributions, limitations, opportunities and recommendations of the CA was conducted by the CWG. The workshop attempted to stimulate an institutional learning process at the CA level in order to encourage effective participation of all staff, promote changes in behavior that reflects a team approach and identify issues and find solutions to the CA's problems through consensus. The sessions included both presentations and discussions in plenary session as well as working in small groups to ensure participation by all the staff.

Within the framework of the CS's three strategic lines of action (SLA), the CWG was required to¹:

- Reflect on the CAs actions over the 1998-2000 period in order to determine its major contributions to sustainable development of agriculture and rural life in Trinidad and Tobago;
- identify the critical issues, the efficiency and constraints affecting the CA's operations and the opportunities which exist to improve its performance and contributions to sustainable development of agriculture and rural life in Trinidad and Tobago; and

¹ The three strategic lines of action in the Corporate Strategy are: the Task of Co-operation; Efficiency in Operations and Anticipating the Future.

- propose measures and recommendations for improving the institutional performance of the CA.

On each item the Group deliberated through a process of “brain storming” which produced various ideas and opinions. These were then discussed and a consensus obtained through a process of 'visualization' using cards. The content of each card was then discussed and cards expressing similar ideas were clustered. Finally one card was written to reflect the consensus of the group. There were also daily de-briefing and feed-back with all staff, daily reflection and evaluation of core group interaction and achievements and regular one on one consultation to incorporate contributions from non-CWG staff. As the week progressed the group referred back to these cards for clarification as new ideas and information were obtained through group discussions and feedback from other staff members. This process ensured that the internal self-evaluation reflected the consensus not only of the Core Group, but also of the majority of the CA's staff.

A major challenge that faced the CWG in its deliberations on the TOR was how to separate the actions of the CaRC from the CA. This issue is a result of the integrated management, financial and operational structure of the CA within the CaRC. Consequently, in all the deliberations, every attempt was made to determine whether the results identified, either in terms of a contribution or limitation, was influenced largely because the CaRC is headquartered in T&T or were they outcomes of the CA's actions.

Concurrent with the workshop, primary information on the CA's work in the country was collected through individual and group interviews from IICA's allies and partners. These included the Ministry of Agriculture, other public sector institutions, national officials responsible for coordinating or participating in the CA's co-operation actions, representatives of private sector organizations and representatives of international and regional organizations (see **Chapter III**).

Once the workshop and the external interviews were completed, a meeting was held in a plenary session of all staff in which the facilitating team and the CWG presented information on the discussions of the working groups and opinions collected from the interviews. The entire group also discussed the proposals of the CA's working groups regarding the results, lessons from experience, constraints, opportunities and measures for improving institutional performance. The opportunity was also given to the CA's management staff to review and comment, and where necessary to amend the findings and recommendations of this report. From these, consensus was reached on the critical issues and the identification of specific measures for improving the CA's performance. It was also agreed that the measures for improving IICA's performance in the country will be implemented under the responsibility of a team from the CA's staff, with support and follow up from the Regional Center.

1.3 Preparation and Organization of the Report

The report was jointly prepared by the CWG from the CA and the Facilitating group from Headquarters. Chapters II and IV in particular were prepared by the CWG. The Facilitating

group prepared Chapters I and III and assisted in reorganizing and editing the draft report submitted by the CWG.

The remainder of the report is organized in three (3) Chapters. The second chapter provides a self-evaluation by the CA's staff on the performance and achievements, constraints and major issues affecting the CA. Chapter III focuses on the results of the interviews with the CA's major clients and strategic allies in T&T. The final chapter provides conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

CHAPTER II

REPORT OF THE CORE WORKING GROUP

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the Core Working Group (CWG) on several areas related to co-operation actions, efficiency in operations, development of human capital, management, upgrading and management of physical assets, programming of operations, performance evaluation, organizational structure and functioning and identification of opportunities for the future. The results presented here reflect the inputs of both the CWG as well as those of other staff members of the CA.

2.2 Co-operation Actions and Anticipating the Future

In discussing these two major issues, the guideline for the CWG was based on the following question - In your opinion, what are the most important achievements and contributions IICA has made in Trinidad and Tobago regarding the following aspects:

- (i) Improving the knowledge base, capabilities and skills in national counterpart organizations in relation to the two thematic foci²;
- (ii) construction of the new institutional framework (rules and organizations for agriculture);
- (iii) contribution to the national dialogue on agriculture and the rural milieu;
- (iv) creation or strengthening of support services for agriculture; and
- (v) other areas.

Figure 1 summarizes the CWG's deliberations on the major contributions of the CA's co-operation services in various strategic areas. These two strategic lines of action relate primarily to addressing the demands of clients. The deliberations were guided by firstly defining the term's "achievements" and "contributions". They were viewed as the changes brought about by co-operation in the capabilities of the organizations and individuals concerned or improvement in the conditions in which they operate. On this basis, a contribution was clearly differentiated from project activities. To qualify, the contribution had to be considered as "major", in terms of effecting an improvement in institutional capabilities and making a direct/indirect impact on sustainable agricultural development and rural life in T&T.

As presented in **Figure 1**, the CWG determined that the CA made major contributions to its task of Co-operation in three major areas over the 1998-2000 period. Specifically, these include:

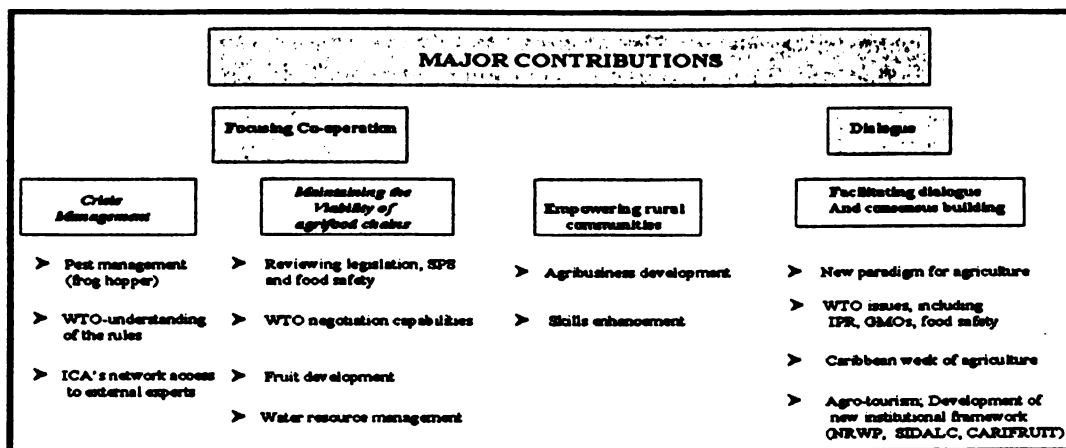
- Crisis Management;
- improving the viability of agri-food systems; and
- empowering rural communities.

² The two foci are: (i) to increase the competitiveness of agriculture within the framework of equity and sustainability; and (ii) improve living conditions and sustainable development in rural areas.

In the area of 'Anticipating the Future' (represented by the box Dialogue in the chart), the CA facilitated dialogue and consensus building at various levels.

The major contributions that were identified were presented to staff in the plenary session and based on the feedback, adjustments were made to the cards in order to improve clarity and understanding. This explains the differences between the cards and the following discussion on the major contributions.

FIGURE 1



(i) Crisis Management

Because of the agricultural sector's vulnerability to external factors, crisis management has become a major issue due to the need to minimize losses and to shorten the recovery period. Generally, because of poor infrastructure, inadequate services and resources (both financial and human), such impacts usually provide a "shock" to the agri-food system through the rapid mobilization of efforts and resources to control and minimize any adverse impacts. Because of IICA's ability to respond speedily and effectively through its in-house technical expertise and access to its extensive institutional network, crisis management was a major contribution of the CA.

In the 1998-2000 period, there were crisis situations which the CA was invited to assist. These included:

- Frog hopper (sugar cane);
- hibiscus pink mealy bug;
- citrus black fly; and
- an initial panic response to the WTO Agreements which was seen as a threat to domestic agriculture.

(ii) Improving the Viability of Agri-food Systems

This area is a major objective of IICA's corporate strategy in the region. The CA has emphasized the importance of defining and promoting viable policies and actions that focus on the continuous upgrading of the capabilities of stakeholders to improve the health, productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of agri-food systems, the natural resource base and the environment. Such actions are consistent with the new approach to the development of agriculture as "going beyond the sectoral approach".

The main areas of the CA's intervention focused on actions related to:

- Strengthening of the agriculture policy and legislative framework;
- understanding of SPS and food safety;
- understanding WTO Agreements and preparations for trade negotiations;
- increasing awareness on the importance of water resource management; and
- development of the fruit sector with a focus on processing and other value-added activities.

In these areas, the CA provided and facilitated opportunities for training and education and access to information.

(iii) Empowering Rural Communities

This area is seen as a prerequisite for ensuring the sustained viability of agri-food systems and improved management of the natural resources and environmental base. In addition, rural poverty is a major issue in this area and is a growing problem in T&T. Efforts to address this problem used a multi-sectoral approach that focused on the economic, social and physical development of rural areas. Within this approach, IICA recognizes the continued importance of agriculture as a base to transform the rural areas and for empowering rural communities.

Through several actions, the CA focused on enhancing the capacities of rural peoples, in particular women and youth, and identifying and developing sustainable small business initiatives as a way of contributing to the empowerment of targeted rural communities. They focused on skills development, organizational strengthening and networking, and included but not limited to:

- Small-scale dairy development;
- skills development in:
 - business management and co-operative practices;
 - proper cultivation, post-harvest and food preservation techniques; and
 - assistance to groups in the identification and establishing of markets for products.

In the area of Anticipating the Future ("Dialogue"), the CA played the role of a catalyst and initiator of dialogue and consensus building among various stakeholders in agriculture.

(iv) Facilitating Dialogue and Consensus Building

This was identified as a major contribution and strength of the CA. Several activities were implemented aimed at: (a) improving people's image and perception of agriculture; (b) promoting "from the gate to the plate" concept of agriculture; (c) promoting linkages with tourism and other key sectors and industries; and (d) sensitizing and building consensus among all stakeholders on issues which impact the agriculture and the rural milieu.

Specific activities implemented which contributed to facilitating dialogue and consensus building included but not limited to:

- Celebration of IICA's 20 years in Trinidad and Tobago;
- First Caribbean Week of Agriculture;
- Lecture Series "Agriculture: Beyond a Sectoral Approach";
- Workshops on WTO Agreements and related issues, including Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and their implications for agriculture;
- Support to networking, such as the national chapter of the Caribbean AgriBusiness Association (CABA), a regional organization supported by IICA for the promotion of agribusiness; the Network of Rural Women Producers (NRWP) to promote sustainable employment in rural areas; and the National Fruit Committee (NFC) for the development of the fruit industry.

2.3 Contribution to 'Efficiency in Operations'

Efficiency in Operations relates to the operation of the CA. The discussions focused on how specific institutional procedures and aspects enhance or constrain organizational effectiveness, administrative efficiency and financial sustainability and management. The guidelines for the CWG were based on the question -"In your opinion, what major improvements have the CA made to increase the efficiency of its operations" and the identification of solutions to address the limitations identified.

The CS, which specified eight (8) areas for improving Efficiency in Operations, was used as the terms of reference for the discussions. **Figure 2** uses one of these eight components – No. 4, Projection of Institutional Image, to identify the specific contributions and to link the proposed recommendations with the limitations identified.

FIGURE 2

IICA Caribbean Agricultural Centre		
Public Relations		
Major Contributions	Limitations (areas for improvement)	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ IICA more visible as an organization Dealing with agriculture in its broadest sense ➤ Newspaper supplements, technical publications ➤ Agriculture Beyond a sectoral approach Seminar series ➤ Cultivating relations with local press ➤ 20th Anniversary Celebrations; First Caribbean Week of Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fragmentation of message to clients ➤ Lack of coordinated marketing and Public relations – no dedicated PR officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Publish one high quality integrated newsletter ➤ Standardise use of corporate logo ➤ Develop closer relations with press

The discussions identified those activities, which enhanced efficiency in operations. Consistent with the definition, the contributions should have induced a significant improvement in efficiency of the CA's operations so as to facilitate more effective delivery of its co-operation services. The difficulties (mentioned earlier) to clearly isolate the CA from the CaRC were most acute in the deliberations.

The discussions were also guided by a clear definition of what is a limitation. It was defined as situations/procedures, etc. existing within the CA which adversely affected efficiency. A limitation was clearly differentiated between the day-to day inconveniences and the realities of the environment, which affect the CA's operations. Below are presented the discussions on this area and the recommendations proposed to address the limitations in each of the eight sub-components, plus an additional one on organizational structure and functioning.

2.3.1 Consolidating the Decentralization Process

The decentralization process provided increased autonomy and decision-making authority to the Regional Centers. The activities aimed at furthering the decentralization process focused on aligning the CaRC with the IICA's 1998-2002 Medium Term Plan - Agriculture Beyond a Sectoral View. In addition, actions were aimed at improving the reporting, communication and information systems and simplify administrative instruments and procedures to facilitate more effective delivery of co-operation services.

The *major contributions* from these actions were largely related to improvements to internal reporting system, specifically:

- redesign of the Results Section of the IS2 quarterly report, an improvement which was subsequently adopted in the other CAs in the Region; and
- testing of a system for monitoring of requests for information from clients and other external interests.

Constraints were also identified. Generally, the process was limited to activities at the Regional Center's level. Despite improvements in the administrative systems these activities were not part of a systematic strategy for institutional alignment and decentralization. Consequently, the reflection and self-evaluation revealed weaknesses in the CA's mechanisms for aligning the broader institutional (IICA) strategy and goals with those of the CA and its proactive participation in the process. Specific constraints in the decentralization process were identified as follows:

- lack of a Corporate Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago;
- lag in implementing actions to achieve institutional alignment;
- untimely use of information provided in reports and delays in feedback (to facilitate adjustments when required);
- lack of clear and unambiguous documented administrative procedures.

2.3.2 External Relations and Strategic Alliances

The CA strengthened external relations and alliances with traditional collaborators while simultaneously forging new alliances with other strategic partners. This was done in order to meet the increasing demands for co-operation services and declining quota resource availability and increasing costs of operations, a significant part of which comprised personnel costs.

Through its efforts to strengthen external relations and alliances, the CA emerged as the initiator of inter-institutional collaboration and co-operation for focusing on actions and assistance to agriculture in the context of the new concept of agriculture. Consequently, the **major contribution** of the CA is that of:

- leading the dialogue and networking among international organizations and other local partners through an ongoing process of consultation and joint actions.

The CA has certain **constraints** in this area. A major factor is that this function resides with the Representative who is also the Caribbean Regional Director. On the one hand, the cost factor is a major consideration for both positions to be occupied by the same person. On the other hand however, given the demands of both positions and the political sensitivities, the CA's work in this area may have been affected. In instances, the CaRC's work may have been given priority over that of the CA, particularly when the Regional Director's attention is required. Although the CA has a Deputy Representative, the individual does not have sufficient authority to deal with matters in this area or appears to be unwilling to use such authority. The result could have

limited the CA's effectiveness to strengthen its alliances at the national level. Particularly, it may not have:

- fully exploited additional opportunities for building strategic relationships; and
- spent sufficient time on activities/mechanisms to further strengthen existing and forge new strategic alliances.

2.3.3 Projection of Institutional Image

Although the CA has been engaged in agricultural development for more than two decades, it continues to be known and familiar only to those individuals and organizations directly engaged in areas mainly related to production. However, this is changing because the external context for agriculture is changing. Furthermore, IICA's successful history of intervention in several areas resulted in an increased awareness of the Institute as providing co-operation services in the sector.

In recent years, the CA undertook a public relations campaign to sensitize the wider public of its existence, its activities and strengths in providing assistance to the sector. As a result, IICA is now more visible as an organization supporting agriculture in a broader sense. Specific actions undertaken to improve its institutional image and which contributed to its improved visibility include:

- having periodic newspaper supplements on agriculture;
- providing technical information (IICA publications) to agricultural and rural libraries system;
- implemented the "Beyond a Sectoral Approach" Seminar Series;
- cultivating relations with the local press;
- having the 20th Anniversary Celebrations of IICA in T&T; and
- hosting the First Caribbean Week of Agriculture.

Despite improvements in the CA's image, the lack of a focussed and sometimes fragmented message to clients appears to be a major **limitation** for consolidating and advancing the gains of an improved corporate image. On the one hand, while major efforts were made to promote a change in the mindset on understanding agriculture, on the other, certain practices contributed to inefficiency of operations and limited cost-effective financial management. Specific limitations identified were:

- possible perception of fragmentation of the CA's message to clients (through specialty newsletters focusing on either policy, agricultural health, or fruit development, etc., which undermine efforts at engendering a change in mindsets); and
- lack of co-ordinated marketing and public relations.

2.3.4 Financial Management and Sustainability

Given declining quota resources and increasing costs, more efficient financial management and enhancing financial sustainability are critical to enhancing the CA's efficiency

in operations. Among the high cost components of the CA are the high fixed costs of personnel, office supplies and communications.

As a first step in to improve financial management, the CA strengthened its accounting procedures, financial accountability and software capabilities. Major actions in this area were the:

- introduction of the SIFO program (which represented an improvement of the previous program used); and
- introduction of internal controls systems (requests for office supplies, overseas telephone calls, etc).

These improvements are necessary but not sufficient for sound financial management and sustainability. The CA continues to be adversely affected which limits effective management and sustainability of financial resources. Specifically, it is constrained by:

- variable but limited success in attracting external funds;
- lack of a comprehensive and fully integrated accounting software package;
- spending of unused quota funds at the end of the year and for special (unprogrammed) events (due to inadequate and short term planning).

2.3.5 Development of Human Capital

IICA is transforming itself into a 'learning organization', and the CA's ability to contribute to this transformation and remain an effective leader in the sector depends on its human capital. The quality, adequacy and relevance of knowledge and skills of its human resources and the internal mechanisms in place to ensure their effective use, management and motivation is a prerequisite to implement the vision/mission of the Institute, as well as to respond to clients' needs. As part of the overall strategy of improving the skill level, the CA undertook actions to upgrade its human capital including language training in Spanish at the elementary, intermediate and advanced levels and support participation in seminars and workshops.

However, there is still much scope for improvement, particularly in three key areas: (i) improving the transparency in recruitment of personnel; (ii) upgrading skills in all relevant areas; and (iii) improvement of the working environment to motivate staff to excel. Specifically, the major **limitations** constraining efficiency were identified as follows:

- hiring procedures for local staff are not sufficiently transparent;
- weak link among program requirements and human resource acquisition;
- inadequate system for identification of training needs;
- skills gap in the use of equipment and in undertaking other tasks.
- limited recognition given to staff for their contribution;
- lack of opportunities for advancement within the organization; and
- lack of equity in managing human resources.

2.3.6 Upgrading and Management of Physical Assets

Given that IICA is a service-oriented institution, the CA's operational efficiency can be greatly enhanced by better access to adequate physical infrastructure, improved information technology and reduced costs of maintenance. Such infrastructure should accommodate both an increase in human capital and upgraded information technology in a manner that does not adversely affect the allocation of funds for co-operation services.

Recognizing its major strength as a source of information and facilitating dialogue, the CA concentrated on upgrading its information infrastructure that included:

- implementation of a local area network, internet connectivity, upgrade of computer hardware and standardization of software and procurement of multimedia facilities; and
- physical separation of the conference/meeting room and library facilities.

However, limitations were identified in two major areas - use and adequacy of current physical assets and access to improved office facilities. Specifically, these include:

- inadequate space for support staff;
- limited parking facilities;
- an outdated policy for dispensing obsolete and non-functional equipment and other assets; and
- inability to obtain office space from the government.

Addressing these issues would contribute to projecting an improved institutional image. Good external and internal physical appearance are important for projecting certain positive impressions of the Institute.

2.3.7 Programming Operations

Since 1996, efforts have been made to improve programming by adopting a "bottom-up" approach that includes consultations with clients and beneficiaries of the CA's actions. These efforts also sought to establish a closer link between programmed activities and the allocation of resources to achieve both improved co-ordination and financial management. These efforts facilitated and encouraged:

- greater participation of clients in the evaluation of the CA's projects and identification of national priorities; and
- the articulation and development of an integrated co-operation program for T&T.

Constraints that hinder efficiency in operations resulted, in part, from the weaknesses in the programming system as well as the dependence of the Caribbean region on quota funds. This makes the region very vulnerable to changes in quota resource availability. The issues that require attention were identified based on the shortcomings in the overall institutional process and those internal to the CA. These include:

- changing guidelines for programming by Head Quarters
- the programming process is not clear;
- programming starts **TOO** late in the year;
- programming is done based on the current human resource base, (as opposed to, if financially and human relations-wise possible, addressing client needs and having the relevant human resource skills for these);
- limited efficiency to identify and respond adequately to the needs of its main client (the Ministry of Agriculture) which results in limited involvement of the Ministry in the CA's program;
- limited team approach to programming;
- inadequate management of work program agreed upon by consensus; and
- lack of an integrated database on clients to facilitate identification of needs and interests and dissemination of relevant information.

2.3.8 Performance Evaluation

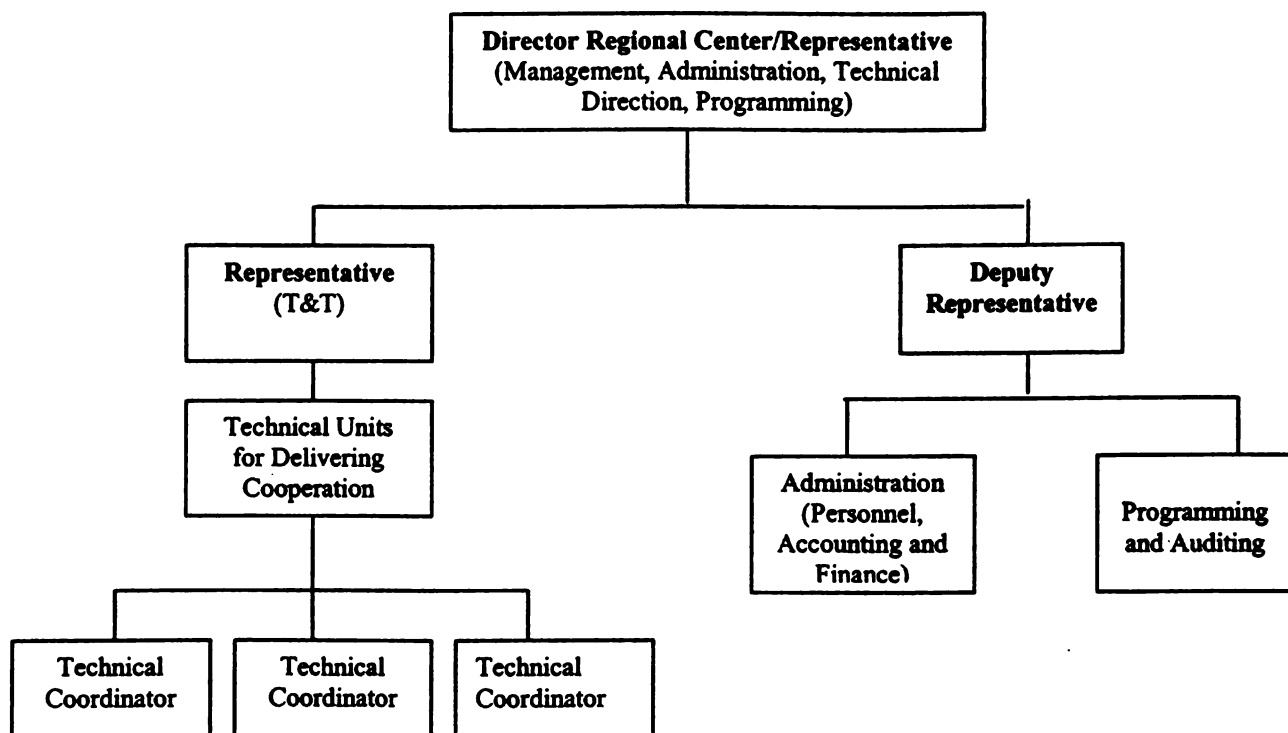
Performance evaluation is important to assess the contributions and limitations of a CA's operations in a country. While project evaluations have been undertaken in the CA for both the regional-based and national projects (involving main clients and collaborators), a similar exercise was not previously done for the CA. This reflection and self-evaluation exercise represents the first performance evaluation of the CA.

2.3.9 Organizational Structure and Functioning

This topic was not specifically identified in any of the CS's eight areas on the theme - Efficiency in Operations. However, the topic was deemed of particular relevance and merited special consideration as part of the self-evaluation. The CWG and the rest of the staff expressed serious concerns regarding the effectiveness of the current management structure and style and the efficacy of management decisions, particularly as it impacted on operational efficiency, staff morale and motivation.

Based on feedback during one debriefing plenary, it was recommended that discussions on the major contributions, limitations and recommendations be guided according to clearly defined concepts of management and non-management. Management was defined as "top management" which includes the Representative and Deputy Representative. The Representative is responsible for the overall management of the CA and providing technical and administrative guidelines that ensure political balance, resource management and consistency with the Institute's Vision. **Figure 3** below shows the organizational structure of the CA in relation to the Directorate of the Regional Center.

FIGURE 3: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE T&T CA



As illustrated in Figure 3, top management comprises the Director/Representative who is ultimately responsible for decision making and providing managerial and administrative guidance and direction for the CA's co-operation. The decision-making process should be guided by meaningful consultation with the Deputy Representative, as well as the respective middle managers in both the technical and administrative areas. As indicated, decision-making should recognize the link between the technical and administrative areas to create an environment that engenders cordial and respectful working relations and efficiency in operations.

The management structure and the decision-making process will directly and indirectly influence the functioning of 'non-management'. While recognizing that each level of human resource within an organization has a managerial function in order to effectively execute and supervise assigned tasks, the term 'non-management' is used to refer to both technical and support personnel within the thematic areas and administrative support staff.

(i) Management

Based on the above, top management is viewed to have the following characteristics which generally guide and facilitate the CA's contributions:

- an understanding of and commitment to IICA's Vision and Mission;
- dedicated and possesses a sound technical knowledge base; and
- ability to make appropriate decisions quickly on critical/urgent matters (provided the issue is brought to his/her direct attention).

The limitations identified were derived from the perception that the management structure as defined above, is not in practice. Over the 1998-2000 period, based on the experiences of staff in undertaking routine office tasks and special events, both the management style and oversight by top management created the following conditions and perceptions among the staff that adversely affected the CA's operational efficiency:

- a less than ideal office environment and personnel relations which led to reluctance by staff to display initiative and identify concerns and facilitate problem solving in an objective manner;
- the existence of a centralized decision making and approval process which could limit opportunities for meaningful consultation and participation in decision-making, limited delegation of responsibility and authority that affect the timeliness of delivery of co-operation services (and limited flexibility and consistency in dealing with personnel matters);
- an apparent partial and unfair management of human resources which results in frequent allocation of work responsibilities in an unequal manner.

(ii) Non-Management

Non-management staff includes all staff members except the Representative and Deputy Representative. Several factors affect non-management personnel including a general lack of motivation, unfair allocation of responsibilities and inefficient management of human resources. These are based on the experiences of staff in undertaking both routine tasks and specific activities. The main issues identified:

- apparent unwillingness amongst some non-management staff to readily accept new ideas and concepts which may have led:
 - arbitrary shifting of responsibilities (based on the nature of task and person making the request);
 - procedures and guidelines are not interpreted in a consistent manner;
 - low motivation which affects commitment and the desire to excel;
- lack of respect for some personnel;
- inadequate planning and scheduling of tasks (which adversely affects ability of support staff to complete tasks within specified timeframe);
- job function viewed as a favour rather than a responsibility which result in some support staff not willing to perform certain tasks; and
- limited ability to effectively execute responsibilities due to lack of adequate equipment.

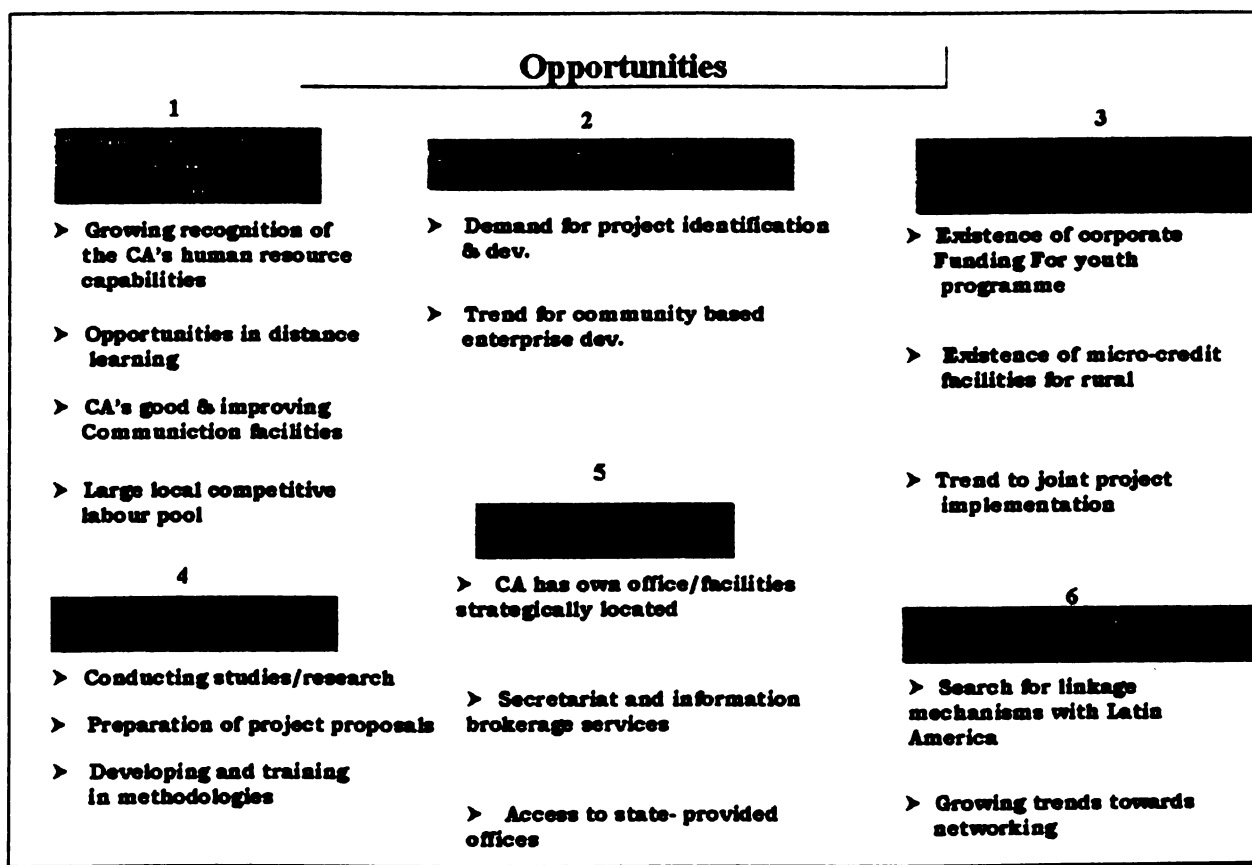
2.4 Identification of Opportunities

Opportunities were defined as existing and emerging needs, demands and openings, etc., in the external environment within which the CA operates. These opportunities may not be easily categorized within IICA's thematic areas or organized according to its lines of co-operation. However, there are several opportunities for the CA to consolidate and strengthen its role in T&T. Six major ones were identified as follows:

- existence of non-traditional market for training and education;
- growing interest in the development of agro-tourism enterprises;
- existence of funds from external agencies to develop specific initiatives;
- demand for consultancy services;
- to be a 'Link & Point of Contact' for non-resident organizations (non-resident international agencies often seek in-country strategic partners); and
- the trend towards greater integration within the Caribbean and with the rest of the hemisphere

Figure 4 presents the results of the CWG on the opportunities that exist for the CA in the areas of providing co-operation services and facilitating dialogue. The discussion also identified the strengths of the CA which could potentially, enable it to take advantage of these opportunities and maintain its corporate image as an organization which makes significant contributions to the development of agriculture and the rural milieu in its broadest sense. However, a more detailed analysis needs to be done on prioritizing the specific areas the CA should take advantage of, and on whether it is competitive or is positioning itself to be competitive to take advantage of these opportunities.

FIGURE 4



CHAPTER III

RESPONSES AND REFLECTIONS BY CLIENTS

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter discusses the responses and reflections provided by clients of IICA in Trinidad and Tobago. A total of fifteen (15) clients were interviewed, comprising institutions, farming/rural development groups and individuals. A list of those interviewed is provided in **Annex 2**. Several questions were asked regarding their perception of the Institute, the quality and reliability of the services provided to them, their overall knowledge of and recommendations they may have for the IICA.

The responses of the clients are grouped in five major categories: (i) their perception of the Institute; (ii) its major strengths; (iii) its main weaknesses; (iv) identification of key issues; and (v) recommendations. These are discussed below.

3.2 Responses and Perceptions

3.2.1 Institutional Image

- a. IICA is viewed as an organization that relates to and is committed to international development in the area of agriculture. Its commitment to the sustainable development of agriculture and rural sector has increased its visibility and enhanced its reputation in the country as well as in the region. Most clients were impressed with IICA's image and feels that it has a good reputation in the region. The opinion is that the Institute has worked to improve its image in the last few years.
- b. The Institute's image as a "Latin club" has changed much in the region due to the employment of local/regional professionals. In this regard, IICA has become more integrated within the institutional framework of the agricultural and rural sector.
- c. IICA is an extremely important partner in the country's agricultural sector. It is a good cooperating institution and its staff is easily accessible. It is also more proactive, less bureaucratic and very responsive to client needs compared to other regional and international institutions. It is perceived as a friendlier organization that is more responsive to the needs of the sector. It has good professional expertise and approachability and its image as an institution for technical assistance and support is good.
- d. IICA has good technical expertise, practical experiences, good communication and links within the region and across the hemisphere. In this regard, it is seen as a very valuable organization as it facilitates linkages between Caribbean countries with the wider region and other countries. It is a good source of information and

access to technical expertise outside the region. Its technical assistance and support to meetings, seminars, etc. for personnel is an invaluable contribution to institutional strengthening.

3.2.2 *Strengths of the Institute*

- a. IICA has a strong regional and international base with strong relationships at the political level and institutional links. It has good organizational capability to bring people and organizations together to discuss common issues and strategies for the agricultural sector. Furthermore, it has good capability in the area of networking, facilitating and collaborative work with a range of institutions, which many national and regional institutions are unable to do.
- b. It has adopted a more comprehensive (holistic) approach to agriculture compared to many institutions, which are still using a narrow one. Its policy and priority setting and planning capabilities are good. Closely related to these are their involvements in very strategic issues, which is forward looking and of good capability to design and manage projects.
- c. The Institute's role as a source of information and its capability to bridge the technical and information gap in the sector is a major area of strength. It is able to tap and access resources regionally and internationally.
- d. Another major strength is IICA's understanding of local problems in the agricultural, and being able to respond and address them effectively.

3.2.3 *Weaknesses*

- a. While the Institute has increased its collaboration with various institutions, collaboration is still weak at the program level.
- b. There is the consensus that IICA's work is positive and significant but it needs to be more focused because its limited resources may affect the sustainability of some actions. The Institute is viewed as trying to do too many things given its limited and declining funding. While it has good skills, its technical staff is too stretched in the numerous activities it executes. This has affected some of the collaborative activities it initiated in previous years and the fulfillment of several expectations.
- c. Most of the individual clients, particularly farmers and small enterprises, have little knowledge of IICA's capabilities and what it can do beyond what it does in the country/region. They have very little information on what IICA does, what it stands for, what are its policies and programs, how these are determined and on its capabilities in the wider hemisphere.
- d. There is a general view by the organizational clients that various networks seem to have ownership by IICA and this may affect their long term effectiveness and

usefulness. For example, CABA may not succeed because it is viewed that CABA belongs to IICA and that the mechanism that is being set up is too bureaucratic. CABA needs to be driven by real private sector interests but recognizes that there is a leadership vacuum in the private sector in this area.

- e. IICA does not manage the business side (private sector interests) of activities very well. The organizational clients would like more private sector focus rather than public policy orientation that is largely for the governments.
- f. Despite the positive views, the Institute is also viewed as a competitor by some institutions in two respects. Firstly, IICA provides similar services like many national institutions. Secondly, IICA competes with local institutions for funding from similar external sources.

3.2.4 Issues

- a. There is concern in the private sector about the agenda of IICA (and other multilateral institutions). This concern arises because the region is being influenced by globalization and all the institutions seem to have their respective agenda on this issue. In addition, there is the feeling that IICA is not transparent enough and there is also the suspicion that its agenda originates from somewhere else rather than from the institution itself.
- b. The diffusion of information by public sector institutions to the private sector is very little or none at all. For this is reason, there is need for more direct interaction between IICA and the private sector.
- c. There is increasing concern in the private sector of IICA's involvement at the political level. IICA has crossed the threshold line from being a purely technical and development assistance agency into the political arena. In this regard, IICA is seen as having too much political influence. This is something that came out of the recent Ministers meeting in Jamaica which showed that there is a vacuum at the policy and decision-making level and IICA took advantage of this situation. The recommendation is that IICA should remain only in the technical areas where it is strong and not in the political area.
- d. CARDI has special concerns about the IICA-CARDI relationship. The view is that IICA's requirements for CARDI to access the resources (under the IICA-CARDI agreement) is too cumbersome and that more efforts should be made for planning and executing joint actions in the region.

3.3 Recommendations

- a. A IICA should play a larger role in the area of information. Given its strategic position in the region and the hemisphere, it should facilitate the diffusing of information on the successes and failures across the region. There is a demand for this type of information because several countries are making the same mistakes in particular areas but these experiences are not shared sufficiently and much of the duplication and mistakes could be avoided if institutions can be brought together to share the experiences.
- b. There are opportunities for IICA to gain greater credibility and respect if it can focus its actions and consolidate its work in fewer areas. This institutional strategy may contribute to more effective sustainable development of the sector in the longer term.
- c. Globalization and free trade is affecting many aspects of the sector and the economy. While IICA has done useful work in this area, more information and training is needed on trade issues, WTO aspects and impacts of globalization.
- d. IICA can make a greater contribution to the private sector by supporting linkages and providing information on similar activities/industry of other Latin countries. At the same time, it should increase its involvement of facilitating more linkages and alliances across the Caribbean region among institutions in the agricultural and rural sector.
- e. There is the view that IICA is a technical assistance organization. As such, it should confine itself to providing technical assistance and support once the decisions are taken at the political level, rather than becoming integrally involved in the political arena. Although this view on the role of IICA regarding its technical and political dimensions of co-operation is not specific for T&T, is important to take it into account so that it does not adversely affect the institutional image projection in the country and in the region. However, it should be recognized that IICA's character includes a political dimension, which often overlaps with its technical work. In addition, IICA's projection of agriculture as "Beyond a Sectoral Approach", requires it to link with others areas and with all stakeholders within each area. Indeed, IICA's creation of the Alliance for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu is a manifestation of this reality.
- f. Regarding the above-mentioned issue, the CWG considered that that perception of the IICA's role in the political arena can be due to an erroneous interpretation – which is that, it has a mandate only for technical co-operation. It is important to point out that its mandate of supporting the inter-American dialogue on agriculture and rural life at various levels has both political and technical dimensions.

- g. The organizational clients indicate that their collaboration should be client rather than IICA driven. There is the perception that the Institute may have another agenda rather than its involvement in just co-operation. Furthermore, IICA should be a facilitator rather than an institution acting as a “middleman” between the organizations and themselves.**
- h. One particular organization indicated that it would like to see IICA working more on longer-term activities and develop strategic and operational components to support projects. IICA could help to secure resources for such activities because it has good capabilities and linkages in this area.**

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Principal Conclusions

- a. Both the CA's staff and IICA's clients indicate that the CA has made an invaluable contribution to T&T's agricultural sector. The reaction of the CA's clients in both the public and private sectors and other regional and international organizations suggests that there is much recognition of the Institute's work in both the country and the wider Caribbean Region. The general perception of IICA is a positive one and the Institute is contributing to agricultural development in the region.
- b. Clients indicated that IICA has several strengths. IICA is viewed as the only institution that provides a broader and longer-term view (beyond the sector) as well as promoting dialogue at various levels on the new challenges to the sector. The Institute is an extremely important partner in the country's agricultural sector. IICA is seen as an important partner in the sector, its staff easily accessible and responsive to client needs compared to other regional and international institutions. IICA has good professional expertise and its overall image is good. The clients also identified weaknesses and issues of concern and made suggestions on improving IICA's service to its clients.
- c. Regarding the task of co-operation, the CA's contributions were made in three major areas - crisis management, improving the viability of agri-food systems and empowering rural communities. In the area of 'Anticipating the Future', the CA facilitated dialogue and consensus building at various levels. To a varying degree, the CA also executed several actions to increase the efficiency of its operations. These include implementation of institutional procedures and training to enhance organizational effectiveness, administrative efficiency and financial sustainability and management. At the same time, several constraints and limitations were identified and recommendations made (see Section 4.2 below) to improve the CA's efficiency.
- d. A major issue of concern to staff is related to management and administration of the CA. In large part, this is due to much overlapping of the work and resource allocation between the Regional Center and the CA. Roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined of staff in the Center and the CA. The Regional Director is also the Representative of the CA and this contributed to the CA being subsumed within the Center. However the Regional Director indicated that this is a deliberate policy to integrate the functions of all of the professionals within the CA and indeed, the CaRC. Nevertheless each person has her/his own terms of Reference and, in most cases, their own budget that is expended in accordance with the guidelines of Institute.

- e. Staff view the role of the Deputy Representing as being very limited, mainly to deal with programming, administrative and financial aspects of the CA's operations. The role does not include inputs into the technical work of the CA which are related to the tasks of co-operation and support to the national dialogue on agriculture and rural life. The Regional Director indicated that this was the role envisaged and agreed upon for the Deputy Representative, taking into consideration the incumbent's qualifications, skills and experience.
- f. There exist situations of conflict between management and non-management personnel. The reactions of staff in the various discussions indicate that the management style and the decision-making process generally affect them. There was much discussion on these issues and the participatory evaluation exercise provided an excellent opportunity to all personnel, not only to identify the problems but also to make recommendations to address them. Although these conflicts have not affected the CA's performance significantly, they remain a threat that could affect the work environment of the CA and its overall performance in the future.
- g. Appointment of personnel and allocation of responsibilities among staff are two of the major issues affecting staff. The general views are that transparency is lacking in hiring personnel, there is little relation between the demands for co-operation of the CA and the personnel hired (in some cases) and some staff are overburdened with responsibilities while others have fewer ones. Nevertheless, the Regional Director pointed out that all hiring has been in keeping with institutional guidelines and the implementation of the vision of the Director General, which in many instances was not easily accepted and/or agreed to by a significant number of staff. This also influenced the allocation of functions. Accordingly, greater effort, especially at this stage of consolidation of the vision's implementation, has to be made to explain and "sell" same.
- h. A country strategy for T&T is lacking. This is perhaps related to combined functions of the CA and the Regional Center and the ensuing dual responsibilities of the Representative and most staff in the office³. However, the lack of a national country strategy may have affected the CA's performance to the extent that its actions are less focused than what it should have been.
- i. The contributions of the staff to the evaluation indicate their recognition of the importance of teamwork and the need to improve this area in the office.

³

It should be pointed out that most CAs in the region do not have a national strategy.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Organizational Structure and Functioning

To improve the organizational structure and its functioning so as to contribute to increasing operational and functioning efficiency of management and 'non-management' staff, the following **recommendations** are made. These complement those suggested for the development of human capital (see below).

- a. This needs to be looked at; based on the change made to structure.
- b. The roles and responsibilities of the Regional Director and the Representative and the Deputy Representative should be explained more explicitly to the staff to provide more clarity on roles and responsibilities and provide an explanation on the inter-linkages between those pertaining to the Center and those of the CA. Within the above context, it is recommended that the Deputy Representative be given more responsibilities in decision-making and a greater degree of autonomy in managing the office or a technical coordinator to be appointed. This is very much needed because of the dual role and many responsibilities of the Representative. It would help to reduce the burden of the Regional Director to deal with the CA's responsibilities as well as those of the Regional Center.
- c. Closely related to the above is the need to distinguish the new roles of staff members as personnel of the CA and of the Regional Center. Recognition was given to the limited resources available and the strategy of greater integration of program activities across the region. Furthermore, there will be overlap of national level responsibilities with those of the region. Consequently, this issue needs to be spelt out explicitly so as to reduce or eliminate perceived conflicting roles which staff members may encounter in their dual capacity as national and regional technicians.
- d. To improve transparency and consistency in decision-making, the process implemented, which must include timely consultation among relevant staff, systematic and effective communication of decisions be clarified.

The following **recommendations**, which should be implemented as a joint exercise between management and "non-management" staff, are made to improve the working environment and perceptions of 'non-management' staff:

- ◆ Implement a more systematic evaluation and feedback mechanism.
- ◆ Implement activities and procedures that engender and encourage mutual respect and understanding among staff.
- ◆ Identify innovative mechanisms for compensating staff for working overtime.
- ◆ Consult end users of equipment before purchases are made.

- ◆ Document both the positive and negative experiences to include in the evaluation process.

4.2.2 Financial Management and Sustainability

The high fixed costs of operations is a constraint for the CA. Efforts should be continued to control costs, rationalize and optimize the use of quota funds and attract external resources. **Recommendations** to achieve greater efficiency in financial management and sustainability are:

- a. Rationalize and optimize the use of quota funds through better accounting management/software packaging and training and establish a functional link between financial programming and management.
- b. Seek more external funds by strengthening strategic alliances and improve negotiation skills, develop innovative proposals for funding and implement strategies for cost sharing, cost recovery and generate income through the sale of advertisements in IICA newsletters/publications, etc.

4.2.3 Upgrading and Management of the Physical Assets

Recognizing that the current office space is limited and that its present layout does not make optimum use of this space, it is **recommended** that:

- a. A review be done of the Institute's policy to dispose of old assets by including staff members in the competitive bidding process and encourage the rapid dispensing of old assets to enhance institutional image and make more effective use of limited space.
- b. Complete the upgrade of library and information services.
- c. Identify potential state-owned sites for CA office facilities.
- d. Make a more determined effort to secure office facilities from the Government.

4.2.4 Programming Operations

While the programming process is clearly defined at the regional and hemispheric levels, it lacks clarity, commitment and co-ordination at the CA's level. To improve programming, the following **recommendations** are proposed:

- a. A continuation of and/or expansion of the process(es) to further ensure a clearer understanding :
 - ◆ the responsibilities and allocation of resources between the Regional Center and the CA.
 - ◆ as to the accountability of the work done by the CA versus the Regional Center.

- ◆ Greater facilitation of the systematic participation of clients in the programming process.
- b. Full integration and continuous updating of a database on clients (and development of profiles for new and prospective clients).
- c. Institutionalize a 'strategic thinking' framework for the programming process.

4.2.5 Development of Human Capital

A general recommendation is for the CA to contract a human resource management firm to design and implement an effective human resource development strategy that should address, but not limited to the specific recommendations as follows:

- a. Design and implement a training program based on anticipated needs and clearly defined criteria guided by:
 - ◆ the international and regional environment, the institutional, regional and (once developed) national corporate strategies;
 - ◆ the demands of clients and for co-operation services;
 - ◆ continuous upgrading of skills; and
 - ◆ a clear definition of roles and responsibilities for each position to also accommodate the effective allocation of emerging tasks which result from the changing environment.
- b. Design and implement a staff motivation program that:
 - ◆ explicitly recognizes, as far as possible, the skills of staff in procurement of services outside of IICA for 'special' tasks and the existing and foreseen workloads of staff and their willingness to accept new roles.
 - ◆ encourages greater equity in the management and utilization of existing human resources;
 - ◆ promotes consultations in the hiring of local staff based on the specific needs and characteristics of the position;
 - ◆ identifies innovative non-monetary and monetary compensation packages;
 - ◆ acknowledges the contribution of staff;
 - ◆ includes an effective and objective 'problem solving'/counseling system; and
 - ◆ ensures equity in remuneration taking into consideration years of experience, skills acquired, and the job content.

4.2.6 Institutional Image

The media is a very effective tool for promoting and projecting an institutional image. In T&T in particular, the mass media (print and electronic) is relatively easily accessible. As a result, a good public image of the CA will likely provide benefits in many areas. These include increasing the general awareness of IICA's work and its role in T&T, improve the possibilities to

secure state support, attract strategic allies and being accepted as a "leader" in support of sustainable agricultural development. **Recommendations** to improve the institutional image include:

- a. Evaluate, taking into consideration, available resources, the sources of funding for the existing technical regional new letters, the universal acceptance of two of them, the possibility of publishing one high quality national newsletter on a consistent basis which reflects/promotes the redefined concept of agriculture (beyond the sectoral view). This newsletter will be for national clients and information dissemination in T&T and will complement the current regional newsletters of the RC.
- b. Standardize the use of the corporate logo.
- c. Continuous strengthening of the working relationship with the mass media.

4.2.7 External Relations and Strategic Alliances

Recognizing the strategic importance of closer collaboration with partners, both in terms of enhancing efficiency of operations and reducing duplication, a **general recommendation** is for the CA to improve and continually evaluate its external relation's strategy. This will require, *inter alia*:

- a. Familiarization (by all staff) with the work – mission, activities, etc. of strategic allies/partners, through, for example, the hosting of 'getting to know' sessions, which will facilitate the identification of common interests and potential areas for collaboration.
- b. Prepare a strategy to enhance strategic relations and exploit potential opportunities.
- c. Prepare a dossier containing a profile of individual organizations (national, regional and international) involved in agriculture development in Trinidad and Tobago.

4.2.8 Consolidate the Decentralization Process

As part of the decentralization process, there was a consensus on the need to improve internal efficiency and co-ordination so as to facilitate more timely response to the demands for co-operation services. To achieve this, particularly taking advantage of the Regional Headquarters being in Trinidad and Tobago, it is recommended that the CA repositions itself strategically to take a more proactive and participatory role in T&T and it should design reporting, communication and information systems which engender synergy between the CA, the CaRC and Headquarters. Specifically, the following are recommended:

- a. In order to consolidate the contributions achieved by the CA and to take advantage of the opportunities in the future, the CA should develop a clear strategy to execute co-operation actions in T&T which is consistent with IICA's Regional and Corporate Strategies. The strategy should emphasize specific actions of co-operation within the

framework of defined institutional priorities. However, this exercise requires the total involvement and commitment of all members of staff.

- b. The CA with the support of the Regional Center should develop systematically information on the national and international environment that affects its performance.
- c. Streamline its various internal administrative procedures to enhance operational efficiency.
- d. Integrate its staff on a continuous basis in strategic planning for institutional re-positioning in the country.

4.2.9 Performance Evaluation

Recognizing the importance of this exercise, it is **recommended** that reflection and self-evaluation be formally incorporated in the programming process of the CA. Using this first reflection and self-evaluation as a base, it is proposed that the CA:

- a. Implement mechanisms to strengthen open dialogue between management and non-management staff and the establishment of procedures to fulfil the commitments to resolve conflicts. The Representative should lead this process by stimulating a more positive attitude of dialogue and commitment with staff to strengthen teamwork and the need to resolve conflicts. However, this exercise requires the total involvement and commitment of all members of staff.
- b. Select a core group to develop and implement a follow-up plan, which clearly identifies the responsibilities and time frames for specific tasks based on the recommendations herein. The group should include one or two members of CWG involved in the evaluation exercise so as provide continuity and follow-up to the process. The core group will be responsible for monitoring the progress in implementation and reporting on it at monthly staff meetings.
- c. Undertakes bi-annual “mini” evaluations coinciding with the reporting system to determine progress.
- d. Executes the next follow-up self-evaluation in 2 years (2003).
- e. Executes a full reflection and self-evaluation in 4 years (2005).

4.2.10 Identification of Opportunities

- a. ***Non-traditional Market for Training & Education***

Given the rapid changes in the external environment within which the T&T’s economy, in general, and its agriculture, in particular, must compete, a high priority has been placed on training and education in all its dimensions. In this new context, agriculture has become more

vulnerable and its development now depends largely on the knowledge base of its stakeholders at all levels. The traditional educational institutions alone can not meet the diverse training and education needs of current and potential agri-food system stakeholders.

A need exists to improve the knowledge base in agriculture and agricultural-related activities, particularly in non-traditional areas and through non-traditional training methods. The T&T environment offers:

- a rapidly developing information and communication technology infrastructure and services;
- growing interests and opportunities in distance learning initiatives; and
- a large competitive labor pool which can be tapped to complement skill resources of the CA.

The CA's ability to take advantage of this opportunity is facilitated by a growing recognition of the CA's human resource capabilities and experience and improved communication facilities and information technology infrastructure. In order to take advantage of the growing market for training and education in non-traditional agriculture, it is recommended that the CA:

- i) Conduct a needs assessment to identify training requirements with emphasis on non-traditional themes.
- ii) Design and implement a strategy to provide and/or facilitate non-traditional training in new, emerging themes in a cost-effective manner.

b. *Expansion in Agro-Tourism Enterprises*

Over the past five years, T&T embarked on an ambitious program to expand the tourism sector. Because of the country's potential in this area and the significant opportunities for developing eco- and agro-tourism ventures, there are increasing interests to develop agro-tourism enterprises.

However, this is a relatively new area for IICA including the CA in the region. Technical expertise in agro-tourism and related fields is limited. In keeping with IICA's concept of agriculture as beyond the sector, the CA adopted a proactive role in promoting dialogue and consensus building in order to foster a new institutional framework to support viable agro-tourism initiatives. Other strengths that the CA can use to increase its role in agro-tourism development include:

- i) its in-house capabilities in providing assistance for project identification and development.
- ii) its experience in initiating and nurturing community-based enterprises.

- iii) Initiation of closer links with all relevant agencies to establish leadership in promoting dialogue and encouraging the development of an enabling institutional framework for agro-tourism development.

c. *Funding by External Agencies for Special Activities*

There is a general trend that funding for agricultural development in the Caribbean region has been declining in both absolute and relative terms since the mid-1990s. This has impacted many international and regional organizations in the region, as well as the Ministries of Agriculture that traditionally relied heavily on externally financed projects. Another trend is the reluctance of international financing institutions (such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Bank) to provide development funds for agriculture through other international agencies (including IICA). In most instances, development funds for agriculture are being channeled directly to government administrators or to target beneficiaries and the use of such funds are for very specific activities. Despite these trends there are favorable opportunities emerging such as:

- corporate funding for youth programs;
- micro-credit funding for rural groups; and
- the willingness of external agencies to execute projects jointly.

It is recommended that the CA develop a strategy to attract external funds that should be an ongoing activity in its work program.

d. *Demand for Consultancy Services*

There is increasing emphasis placed on research to guide the planning and decision-making in both the public sector and private agri-businesses. Experiences in agricultural development in the region show that there continues to be a general lack of analytical information to support these areas. In the new context of agriculture, several issues have emerged, driven by the trade liberalization and negotiations processes and rapid advances in science and technology. Because of the short-term nature of these services, the specialized nature of the research and the limited in-house capacity of governments and the private sector, there is a growing demand for such services. In this regard, the CA has in-house experiences and capability to offer services in the following areas:

- Preparation of project proposals.
- Execute analytical studies/research.
- Development and training in methodologies.

Recognizing that this opportunity provides IICA to both generate income and extend its influence in the sector, it is proposed that the CA give serious consideration to providing such services. In spite of its strengths, a clear determination must be made if the CA can offer such services competitively, given the need to execute its own work program and its limited human resource base. **Recommendations** for this include:

- i) develop clear guidelines on the terms, conditions and financial implications of supplying consulting services.
- ii) develop a strategy to market the CA's capabilities to supply short-term consulting services.
- iii) develop clear guidelines on the CA's role and the extent to which it should "broker"/facilitate the sourcing and acquisition of consultancy services on behalf of its clients (but which does not threaten IICA's continued support to its clients).

e. *To be a 'Link & Point of Contact'*

The absence of many "resident" development assistance institutions and strengthening of regional and hemispheric integration provide opportunities for an increased role of the CA. These two opportunities are discussed simultaneously because of their inter-relationships and areas of synergy. Many non-financing development organizations are becoming increasingly burdened by the costs of establishing and maintaining a presence in the countries. In addition, many organizations indicate the need for closer co-operation and collaboration given increasing regional integration. This trend has eliminated the need to establish a physical presence in each country and the availability of more funds for developmental activities.

Greater integration has introduced the region to new potential partners willing to establish links and offer development assistance to the Caribbean. However, the costs of the infrastructure may be prohibitive to be both operationally efficient and provide meaningful assistance on a consistent basis. As a result, there is a growing need by non-resident, extra-regional organizations to establish a point of contact and/or a link with other institutions located in the country. This contact may be established through either the government, or an experienced organization with capabilities to implement agricultural development activities.

National public and private sector organizations pursuing closer links with the Latin American countries are also seeking a point of contact in the region. The demand is mainly for facilitating increased dialogue and sharing experiences and information with potential partners. The CA is well placed to offer its facilities and services as a point of contact to non-resident international organizations and as a facilitator of dialogue to local organizations due to:

- having the infrastructure, which is strategically located;
- possibility of accessing improved office facilities from the state;
- its membership in a hemispheric-wide network; and
- its experience in providing services for regional agencies and its management and information brokerage capacities.

It is recommended that a detailed analysis be undertaken to determine the benefits to IICA of offering its services as a point of contact/link to manage development assistance of non-resident organizations. Other recommendations to take advantage of these opportunities are the need to:

- i) increase accessibility to the CA as a focal point through various media especially through an effective website.**
- ii) strengthen its public relations.**
- iii) continuously undertake human capital development to ensure that the CA can effectively deliver such services.**

ANNEX 1

IICA'S CORE WORKING GROUP

Cooperation Agency in Trinidad and Tobago

Administration:

- Francilla Stewart Finance
- Josane Corby Secretary
- Naitram Ramnanan Assistant to the Director/Public Relations/Education and Training

Thematic Areas: National

- Marlene Antoine Rural Development
- Wayne Di Chi Agricultural Health
- Willard Phillips Informatics and Policy and Trade

Thematic Areas: Regional

Diana Francis Policy and Trade/Strategic Thinking

Facilitating Group from CONPLAC, Headquarters

- Lizardo de las Casas
- Dowlat Budhram
- Ricardo Caceres

ANNEX 2

CLIENTS INTERVIEWED

1. **Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (MALMR), Management Personnel**
 - Swallay Mohammed, Permanent Secretary
 - Trevor Percival, Permanent Secretary
 - Vernon Douglas, Chief Technical Officer (Ag.)
 - Winston Harper, Director, Animal Production and Health
 - Trevor Murray, Chief Planner

2. **Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, Technical Staff, Research Station, Centeno**
 - Harry Ramlal, Director (Acting) for Research
 - Cynthra Persad, Deputy Director of Research, Crop Production
 - Hugh Wilson, Technical Officer
 - Sherwin Lewis, Agricultural Officer II, Plant Quarantine

3. **Tobago House of Assembly (THA)**
 - Michael Keens-Dumas, Chief Technical Officer, Department of Agriculture

4. **Rural Development Organizations**
 - Network of Rural Women Producers (NRWP)
 - Gia Gaspard-Taylor, Executive Member, Trinidad and Tobago NRWP
 - Rose Rajbansee, President, Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers; President, Trinidad and Tobago Federation of Women Institutes
 - Helena Boucher, Project Coordinator, Women in Progress, Tobago

5. **Producer and Commodity Groups**
 - Bert Manhin, La Vega Estates Ltd. (fruits and horticulture production)
 - Carl Burgess, La Vega Estates Ltd. (fruits and horticulture production)
 - Patrick Sunkow, Entrepreneur, Fresh Start Limited (fruit processing)
 - Kent Villafana, Manager, Coffee and Cocoa Industry Board
 - Paula Pantin, Caribbean AgriBusiness Association (Trinidad and Tobago Chapter) and Caribbean Dairy and Dairy Products Association

- James Medford, Trinidad and Tobago Dairy Farmers' Association
 - Robert Best, Executive Officer, Caribbean Poultry Association
 - Sean Ifill, Manager, Trade Policy, Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce
6. **University of the West Indies**
- Charles McDavid, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources and President of CACHE
 - Carlisle Pemberton, Head, Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension
 - Richard Brathwaite, Senior Lecturer, Food Crop Production
 - Candace Brathwaite, Lecturer, Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension
7. **Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI)**
- Compton Paul, Acting Executive Director
 - Claudette de Freitas, Information Resource Manager
 - Andrew Phillips, Corporate Services Manager
 - Curtis Nero, Project Accountant
8. **European Union, Caribbean Agriculture and Fisheries Programme (CAFP)**
- Esther Bonitatibus, Programme Manager

ACRONYMS

CA	Cooperation Agency
CABA	Caribbean AgriBusiness Association
CaRC	Caribbean Regional Center
CARDI	Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CONPLAC	Consortium for Planning and Coordination
CS	Corporate Strategy
CWG	Core Working Group
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
PR	Public Relations
SLA	Strategic Lines of Action
T & T	Trinidad and Tobago
TC	Technical Cooperation
TOR	Terms of Reference
WTO	World Trade Organization





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