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Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

Biotechnology and biosafety

Instruments for achieving agricultural competitiveness

A renewed IICA for the new hemispheric dynamic on the 21st Century

IICA

A renewed IICA for the new hemispheric dynamic of the 21st Century

IICA has undergone transformations to become an active player in the new hemispheric dynamic, and contributes, in turn, to the construction of a new institutional framework for agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

Chelston W.D. Brathwaite
Director General of IICA

The heads of state and government made IICA an institutional partner in the Summits Process.

With the start of a new century and a new millennium, the political leaders of countries and organizations have made a determined effort to identify the challenges and adopt commitments related to the future development of humanity. In the last six years they have strengthened the processes of global and hemispheric dialogue and consensus building and have made commitments to build a more just, secure, prosperous and equitable world in the 21st century. The Millennium Development Goals and their Targets for the year 2015, together with the mandates of the Summit of the Americas Process, are significant and effective results of those processes, to which IICA fully adheres and contributes decidedly to their fulfillment.

The mandates and commitments of the Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec 2001): (i) reassessed agriculture and rural life by recognizing their importance for comprehensive development; (ii) propitiated the emergence of the Ministerial Meetings "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas"; and (iii) are influencing the development agendas of countries and the organizations that support them in the achievement of their strategies. Similarly, since the Third Summit of the Americas, IICA has participated as an institutional partner in all stages of the Summit of the Americas Process, together with the OAS, PAHO, IDB, ECLAC and the World Bank.

In this context of challenges, mandates and commitments that have configured the new hemispheric dynamic of agriculture in the Americas since 2001, the Institute embarked upon a process of institutional modernization in 2002, to enable it to provide its Member States with solid support in: (i) the implementation, follow-up and biennial updating of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action for Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas, through a renewed style of cooperation based on national consultations with the key actors of agriculture and on accountability; and (ii) in consolidating the positioning achieved by

agriculture in the highest political forum of the Americas. Thus, IICA has become an active partner in this new hemispheric dynamic that is transforming it, and that, in turn, contributes to its development through its role in the construction of the new institutional framework for agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

The Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata 2005) expressed strong support for the efforts of the ministers of agriculture to improve agriculture and rural life.

Agriculture and rural life: *strategic issues for the comprehensive development of countries*

Positioning agriculture in the Summit of the Americas Process and in the decisions of the Heads of State and Government has been a matter of priority and an issue of strategic and sustained interest to the Ministers of Agriculture since the start of the inter-American process in 1994, and up until the recent Fourth Summit held in Mar del Plata, in November of 2005.

The absence of agriculture and rural life among the strategic issues for countries' comprehensive development discussed at in the First Summit of the Americas, held in Miami, in 1994, and concerns over the possible implications of that this presidential message might have, prompted the Ministers of Agriculture to launch an effort to include these topics in the inter-American agenda of the highest political forum of the Americas. In order to accomplish this task, the Ministers enlisted IICA's support at the very outset.

IICA took up the challenge of positioning agriculture based on the Ministers' conviction of its major contribution to the improvement of living conditions in the rural milieu, and its implications for strengthening democracy, promoting prosperity, eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development - the central objectives of the Summits process initiated in Miami.

The strategic and visionary interest of the Ministers found an appropriate space and the right moment on the occasion of the Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec, 2001). This Summit was a historic landmark for agriculture and rural life. Here, the Heads of State and Government acknowledged the importance of agriculture and rural life in addressing poverty and promoting the sustainable development of their countries.

This potential was recognized by the heads of State and Government in defining the dual role of agriculture:

(i) as the livelihood of millions of rural inhabitants and

(ii) as a strategic sector of the socio-economic system for generating prosperity.

The strategic and visionary interest of the Ministers found an appropriate space and the right moment on the occasion of the Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec, 2001).

A political framework for agriculture and rural life *and IICA*

Having recognized the importance of agriculture in Quebec 2001, the Heads of State and Government agreed to promote a joint hemispheric effort involving all the actors of the agricultural sector aimed at achieving the sustainable improvement of agriculture and rural life, together with medium and long term national strategies for their sustainable improvement, based on a dialogue that would include government

ministers, parliamentarians and different sectors of civil society.

In a complementary manner, IICA was designated as an institutional partner in the Summits Process for the purpose of accompanying countries in the implementation of the mandates, forming part of the follow-up mechanisms and participating in the forums of the Heads of State and Government.

The decision by the Heads of State and Government at the Quebec Summit to recognize and promote the hemispheric Ministerial Meetings as mechanisms for the implementation of their mandates, and take up the challenge of implementing those on agriculture and rural life, led to the establishment of the Ministerial Meetings on "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas", within the framework of the Summit Process.

An "institutional architecture" under construction: the key role of the Ministerial Delegates, the Ministerial Meetings and of IICA

In order to ensure that the Ministerial Meetings "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas" would be effective in consolidating the positioning achieved for agriculture and rural life in the Summits Process, the Ministers of Agriculture and their delegates, with the support of IICA, undertook the task of building an "institutional architecture" whose key components are outlined below:

- *A National Team* consisting of a Ministerial Delegate of Agriculture and Rural Life, an Alternate Delegate and a Technical Support Group made up of members of the policy or planning units of the respective Ministry of Agriculture. The three functions of the national team are: (i) to coordinate implementation of the Summit mandates and the "Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements" within the country; (ii) to prepare progress reports and identify the challenges shared with the rest of the Ministerial Delegates; and (iii) to lead the national consultations in order to provide the necessary inputs to initiate consensus-building initiatives for the new "Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements".

- *A Hemispheric Forum of Ministerial Delegates*, which is the Group for the Implementation and Coordination of the Agreements on Agriculture and Rural Life (GRICA). The Forum is presided by the Ministerial Delegate of the host country of the next Ministerial Meeting, who is accompanied in this task by the Ministerial Delegate of the host country of the previous Ministerial Meeting. Within this hemispheric forum, the Ministerial Delegates work to build consensus, through dialogue and negotiation, on proposals for new "Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements" which are submitted to the Ministerial Meeting. The Ministers, through their National Summit Coordinators, submit some of those agreements to the consideration of the Heads of State and Government to create and consolidate the favorable environment required to advance in the construction of the Shared Vision to 2015 for agriculture and rural life.

- *A Secretariat of the Ministerial Process and its Ministerial Meeting*, a role performed by IICA, whose central task is to support the national, regional and hemispheric dialogue for the purpose of: (i) supporting the implementation of the "Ministerial Hemispheric Agreements", (ii) giving continuity to the Ministerial Process, (iii) facilitating regional integration in the context of the Hemispheric Process, (iv) facilitating the articulation of the Ministerial Process with the higher process of the Americas; and (v) contributing to the consolidation of the positioning of agriculture and rural life on the inter-American presidential agenda.

- *A Hemispheric Ministerial Meeting within the context of the Summit Process*, which is the forum of the Ministers of Agriculture that guides and leads the process in its regional and hemispheric bodies, adopts the "Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements" that give continuity

The AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action was approved at the Second Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life (Panama 2005)

to the process of developing the Shared Vision 2015, and proposes new decisions that are required of the Heads of State and Government.

The AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action: A guiding context and a common point of reference for decision-makers

In the brief and fruitful Hemispheric Ministerial Process that began in 2001, and based on the new "institutional architecture" under construction, the Ministers of Agriculture have defined far-reaching guidelines for agriculture and rural life. These are contained in the following Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements (HMA):

- ***Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro for the Improvement of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas*** (Bavaro 2001). The Declaration expresses the Ministers' commitment to promote joint actions aimed at the improvement of agriculture and rural life, as stated in the Plan of the Third Summit of the Americas. The agreement calls for efforts to make progress on food security, the reduction of rural poverty and the sustainable development of agriculture and the rural milieu, while simultaneously addressing the aspects of competitiveness, equity, environmental sustainability and democratic governance. In essence, it recognizes the need to renew the institutional framework (contexts and mechanisms, as well as institutional spaces for dialogue) in order to contribute to that sustainable development.

- ***The AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action for Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas*** (Panama 2003 and Guayaquil 2005). The Ministers' efforts to build consensus around a shared hemispheric agenda, defined at the First Ministerial Meeting, led to the continuation of the dialogue and to the definition of the second Ministerial Agreement. This initiative was formalized at the Second Ministerial Meeting, the Ministerial Agreement of Panama 2003, in the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action with the following four complementary components: a Shared Vision of Agriculture and Rural Life to 2015; Strategic Objectives for the focalization of efforts; the Hemispheric Agenda 2003-2005, which defines the strategic actions required to advance towards the achievement of those goals and measures for the Plan's implementation and follow-up; and finally, but perhaps one of the most significant contributions, is the renewed concept of agriculture and rural life that defines the Plan's sphere of action. This is one of the most substantive contributions that enable us to understand and transform agriculture and rural life, based on the Shared Vision 2015. This renewed concept recognizes agriculture and rural life as complex phenomena, with a multiplicity of actors and a diversity of interests that should be taken into consideration in the design of effective strategies and policies for their transformation.

  At the Third Meeting, the Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil 2005 reaffirmed the Ministers' commitment to the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan and updated it with complementary strategic actions for the biennium 2006-2007, giving priority to: (i) promoting a National policy for agriculture and rural life, based on public-private and multisectoral coordination, (ii) regional integration in the context of the hemispheric Ministerial Process and (iii) the development of an information system for the follow-up and evaluation of the AGRO Plan.

At the Special Summit of the Americas (Monterrey 2004) and the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata 2005), the Heads of State and Government pledged their firm support to the process to improve agriculture and rural life, led by the Ministers of Agriculture. In both Summits they undertook to make a sustained effort to improve the living conditions of rural populations and, in

At the Special Summit of the Americas (Monterrey 2004) and the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata 2005), the Heads of State and Government pledged their firm support to the process to improve agriculture and rural life, led by the Ministers of Agriculture.

that context, they decided to support the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan as a "national commitment", defined in Paragraph 35 of the Plan of Action of the Fourth Summit.

The above, together with the HMAs adopted by the Ministers in Bavaro 2001, Panama 2003 and Guayaquil 2005, configures a new set of mandates for IICA in the 21st century and provides a political framework to guide the design of national and regional strategies for agriculture and rural life.

The ministers of agriculture are playing a major role in building a new "institutional architecture" in the Americas.

The modernization of IICA: *a dual role to support countries in the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan*

IICA responded swiftly and with full commitment to these new challenges and mandates, initiating an institutional modernization process in 2002, which clearly defined its dual and complementary role: (i) a new role as the Secretariat of the Ministerial Process and of its Ministerial Meeting, within the framework of the Summit Process and (ii) a conventional but renewed role, as the international cooperation organization attuned to the new institutional dynamics of the Americas.

- ***IICA as Secretariat of the Ministerial Process and its Ministerial Meeting "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas" within the context of the Summit Process.*** With the decision by the Heads of State and Government to designate IICA as an institutional partner in the Summit of the Americas Process and to consider the Ministerial Meetings as one of the pillars of the new "institutional architecture" of the Summits Process, the Institute has acted as the Secretariat of the Ministerial Process and its Ministerial Meeting "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas".

In general terms, IICA's work in supporting the implementation of the presidential mandates and the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements, includes three aspects: (i) facilitating the continuity of the Ministerial Process, (ii) facilitating regional integration in the context of the hemispheric Ministerial Process; and (iii) facilitating the coordination of the Ministerial Process with the Summit of the Americas Process.

Facilitating the continuity of the Ministerial Process. In essence, this involves promoting an ongoing comprehensive process of *discussion-dialogue-action-learning* at the national, regional and hemispheric levels, to support the organization and continuity of the Ministerial Meetings. This implies:

- Disseminating the mandates related to agriculture and rural life of the Summits of the Americas and the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements.
- Supporting the Presidency of GRICA in the management of the Ministerial Process.
- Supporting the Ministers of Agriculture and their Ministerial Delegates in the preparation and implementation of the Ministerial Meetings. In this regard, IICA promotes and facilitates dialogue between the different actors of the agricultural sector,

working to build consensus around national proposals that serve as a basis for hemispheric dialogue and consensus-building in the context of GRICA. Likewise, IICA supports the continuity of the Ministerial Process by providing follow-up to the implementation of the Summit mandates and the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements, which serve as inputs for new Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements and proposals for future Summits of the Americas.

- Coordinating, with other international organizations, the support provided to the Ministerial Delegates and to GRICA in the implementation of the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements.

Facilitating regional integration in the context of the hemispheric Ministerial Process. This is essentially the message contained in the chapter on Implementation and Follow-up of the Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil 2005, which updates the AGRO Plan for the second period, 2006-2007. For some time now, the Institute has been acting first as the Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC), subsequently as the Secretariat of the Caribbean Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu and, more recently, as the Secretariat of the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS).

The Hemispheric Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil 2005, in paragraph 13 concerning Implementation and Follow-up, states that this action by Ministers and by the respective Secretariat should contribute to:

- Strengthening the regional meetings of the Ministers of Agriculture.

- Strengthening the regional integration mechanisms of agriculture for consultation, the identification of priorities, the coordination of actions and the adoption of regional policies on issues of common interest.

- Supporting the implementation of national strategies for the improvement of agriculture and the quality of life in rural communities.

Facilitating the articulation of the Ministerial Process with the Summit of the Americas Process, in essence this means participating in the Summit review and follow-up mechanisms under the leadership of the OAS; the aim is to ensure that the positioning of agriculture and rural life achieved at the Third Summit is renewed and consolidated in subsequent Presidential meetings, as occurred at the Special Summit and at the Fourth Summit of the Americas. This implies:

- Informing the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), made up of the Foreign Affaire Ministers of the hemisphere and their National Coordinators, regarding the progress made by countries in the implementation of the presidential mandates related to agriculture and rural life, on the progress of the Ministerial Process, and on the contributions made by the Institute and by other international organizations to support it.

- Participating in the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG), coordinated by the Summit of the Americas Secretariat of the OAS and consisting of ECLAC, IDB, PAHO, the World Bank and, more recently, the ILO and the regional banks (BCIE, CAF and CDB). The JSWG discusses the progress of the Ministerial Process and analyzes possibilities for joint actions in support of the presidential mandates and the ministerial agreements.

- Maintaining close communication links with the Summit of the Americas Secretariat of the OAS.

- Supporting, within each country, increased coordination between the Ministerial Delegate for Agriculture and Rural Life and the National Summit Coordinator in the respective Foreign Ministry.

- ***IICA as an international cooperation organization attuned to the new institutional dynamics of the Americas.*** IICA's modernization process, in alignment with the new institutional dynamics of the Americas, also has three aspects: (i) consolidate the new

cooperation model, (ii) complement this cooperation model with a modern style of institutional management, and (iii) link the IABA to the Ministerial Meeting "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas".

The consolidation of the new cooperation model is based on four strategic approaches: adopting a renewed style of technical cooperation; promoting horizontal cooperation among countries; monitoring agriculture and rural life; and, joint work with international organizations. In essence, this model has emerged from IICA's experience over the last four years, during which time it has implemented cooperation actions in those four strategic areas, as follows:

Providing direct technical cooperation to Member States through a renewed style of technical cooperation, based on consultation and dialogue with the key actors of agriculture to jointly define the Institute's technical cooperation agendas at the national, regional and hemispheric levels. The agendas are reviewed annually with representatives of the key actors of agriculture, for the purposes of accountability and also to align these with the changing needs expressed by countries, bearing in mind the challenges posed by the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

Promoting horizontal cooperation among countries and facilitating the effective exchange of information on experiences and best practices in each one. A distinctive feature of this horizontal cooperation is the discussion and direct transmission of experiences between those responsible for them, and those who address problems, seek solutions and put them into practice.

Promoting the monitoring of agriculture and rural life at the national, regional and hemispheric levels, in order to provide countries with information on the state of and outlook for agriculture and rural life in the Americas, as inputs for making decisions of a strategic nature and those related to the Institute's technical cooperation.

IICA promotes joint efforts with other agencies. In October 2006, Institute authorities met in Costa Rica with the FAO Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, Jose Graziano Da Silva, and the Secretary General of ECLAC, Jose Luis Machinea.

Strengthening inter-agency technical cooperation efforts by coordinating actions with other international organizations linked to the improvement of agriculture and rural life in the Americas. This approach seeks to develop a technical cooperation network to coordinate complementary efforts by international organizations and facilitate capacity building initiatives in the countries, enabling them to address emerging critical issues or attack endemic problems. Some of these joint efforts are being formalized through letters of understanding between international organizations, for example with PAHO, ECLAC and more recently with FAO.

Complementing the new cooperation model with a modern style of institutional management that prioritizes operational efficiency, prudent financial administration, a better use of human resources, the expansion of strategic partnerships or alliances with the public and private sectors and a new relationship with our Member States based on participation, transparency and accountability.

Linking the IABA to the Ministerial Meeting facilitates the alignment of IICA's cooperation work, since it is the Ministers of Agriculture themselves who have defined the new Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements, and who have the mechanisms to guide the Institute's actions, based on the agreements that have been adopted. The strategic guidelines issued by the Ministers shape the Institute's Medium Term Plan. The latest version of this Plan for the period 2006-

it is essential that all the actors of agriculture in the Americas consolidate the political decision made by the Heads of State and the Government and Ministers, so that by "working together" we may develop a renewed leadership and institutional framework to help us advance firmly towards the Shared Vision 2015 of agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

2010 defines the following as priority lines of action for the Institute's technical cooperation efforts: promoting trade and the competitiveness of agribusiness; animal health and food safety; the sustainable management of natural resources and the environment; technology and innovation in agriculture; and promoting the strengthening of rural communities based on a territorial approach.

Building a hemispheric platform to support countries: "Working together" in strategic partnerships with other international organizations

The dual role that characterizes IICA's modernization process implies the need for commitments and coordinated efforts by national and international development organizations that transcend the competencies and possibilities of a single organization. This becomes even more evident if we consider that the future scenarios in which agriculture must operate will be increasingly dominated by a new global economy based on knowledge and information, integration and interconnection in transnational networks.

In response to this situation, the Institute is promoting a platform for hemispheric cooperation to take advantage of the opportunities and meet the challenges derived from the new global economy, through new styles of cooperation involving the participation of different organizations interested in the prosperity of rural communities, including the stakeholders of agriculture.

The first component of the hemispheric platform involves the development of a Common Knowledge Base on Agriculture and Rural Life that takes maximum advantage of existing capacity in the region. This initiative is aimed at developing an information network for agriculture in order to monitor its development and its prospects, and to assess the impact of different strategies.

This effort stems from a recognition that there are local and national organizations with information on existing problems and possible solutions that may complement each other. At the hemispheric and global level there are organizations such as ECLAC and FAO that are repositories of census data and surveys; in addition, the IDB, the World Bank, IFPRI and other organizations, including IICA, carry out studies on agriculture and rural communities in the Americas, establishing secondary databases that can be articulated.

IICA has taken the initiative in proposing to the directors or leaders of several of these organizations formulas to renew their links, in the context of the new reality outlined in this document. In this regard, hemispheric agreements have recently been signed with FAO and ECLAC, together with others of regional scope.

The second component of the hemispheric platform involves forging alliances with strategic partners in order to undertake joint technical cooperation actions to benefit our Member States. The aim is to create a technical cooperation network that would coordinate complementary efforts by international organizations towards building the necessary capacity in the countries to address critical emerging issues or attack endemic problems.

In this regard, and based on its long experience, the Institute is working towards a more systematic, comprehensive and institutionalized approach. IICA has already received a positive response to its call to consolidate joint actions already under execution and begin new initiatives: from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in the areas of information and specific studies; from the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), on animal health and food safety and the prosperity of rural communities; from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), on trade, agricultural health and food safety, and information on agriculture and rural development; from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), in the fields of technological innovation and rural development; from the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), information on rural education; from the International Labor Organization (ILO), information on rural labor; and from CATIE and

CARDI, in the areas of technological innovation and management of natural resources.

IICA is continuing with its efforts to expand those alliances, and in this regard important progress has been made with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

In addition, IICA participates in the Interagency Group for Rural Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, along with IDB, ECLAC, FAO, IFAD, GTZ and USAID. This hemispheric framework facilitates the integration that we are successfully promoting among similar groups in the national sphere.

A challenge and an opportunity: the joint construction of the Shared Vision 2015

IICA provides continuous support to the Ministerial Process for the improvement of agriculture and rural communities, led by the Ministers of Agriculture. In addition, it works to ensure that said process becomes increasingly articulated with the objectives, strategic actions and mechanisms for the implementation and follow-up of the mandates of the Summit of the Americas Process and with the development strategies defined by the countries.

The above reinforces the Institute's conventional actions, whose consolidation will continue based on the new model of cooperation, with its renewed participatory style of technical cooperation so that IICA's technical cooperation initiatives may better respond to the priorities of the countries, both in the national and the regional spheres.

However, it is essential that all the actors of agriculture in the Americas consolidate the political decision made by the Heads of State and the Government and Ministers, so that by "working together" we may develop a renewed leadership and institutional framework to help us advance firmly towards the Shared Vision 2015 of agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

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