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The reassessment of agriculture and rural life

From Quebec 2001 to Mar del Plata 2005



Ministerial Meetings "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas"
held within the context of the Summits of the Americas Process

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**Special
Summit
of the Americas**

Monterrey, Mexico 2004

**Heads of State and Government of the Americas
Support for the implementation of the AGRO
2003-2015 Plan of Action**

“We commit to maintain a sustained effort to improve living condition for inhabitants of rural areas, by promoting investment and creating a favorable environment to achieve sustainable improvements in agriculture that will contribute to social development, rural prosperity, and food security. In this context, we support the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action for Agriculture and Rural Life of Americas, adopted at the Second Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life, held in Panama in November 2003”

**Special Summit of the Americas
Monterrey, Mexico 2004
Paragraph 43, Declaration of Nuevo Leon**

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Foreword

The evolution of a strategic and visionary interest

- **The starting point:** Miami 1994
- **The hemispheric effort:** before and after the AGRO 2015 Plan

The Starting point: Miami 1994

Efforts to position agriculture in the Summit of the Americas process began in December of 1994. At that time, a group of Ministers of Agriculture meeting in Miami read the Declaration and Plan of Action of the First Summit of the Americas. They were very surprised to find that agriculture and rural life were not considered strategic issues for the integral development of the countries.

The implications of this presidential message motivated the ministers to launch an effort to include agriculture and rural life on the Inter-American agenda of the highest-level political forum of the Americas. To this end, they requested the Director General of IICA to support their efforts to address that challenge.

From then on, the ministers, with IICA support, adopted as their strategic objective the decision to position agriculture on the Inter-American agenda. They understood that one way to do so was by publicizing agriculture's contributions to improving living conditions in the rural setting and the role of both agriculture and the rural milieu in strengthening democracy, promoting prosperity, eradicating poverty, and fostering sustainable development, all of which are key objectives of the Summit process launched in Miami.

It is this determination that drove renewal by the leaders of agriculture of the mandate to the Director General of IICA, after the Second Summit of the Americas held in Santiago in 1998, to make a hemisphere-wide effort to acknowledge the contribution made by agriculture to development and the purposes of the Summit, and consequently, to promote its inclusion in the documents that the Presidents would supposedly adopt at subsequent Summits.

The hemispheric effort: before and after the AGRO 2015 Plan

This document presents information on how the strategic and visionary interest of the Ministers of Agriculture was translated into

a sustained effort to achieve the positioning of agriculture and rural life in the highest level political forum of the Americas.

This hemispheric effort took place between November 2003 and January 2004. This period is marked by two historic meetings. First, the Ministers of Agriculture, at the Second Ministerial Meeting (Panama 2003), endorsed and validated with their signatures, the work of Ministerial Delegates, which enabled made possible to reach consensus regarding the AGRO 2015 Plan. Then, the Heads of State and Government of the Americas, during the Special Summit held in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2004, gave their political endorsement to the decision of the ministers and agreed to support the implementation of the AGRO 2015 Plan.

In this way, to achieve the political positioning sought by the Ministers of Agriculture, immediately after Miami 1994, the hemispheric effort that this document describes has two reference points: the Summit of the Americas process and the ministerial process “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas.”

In order to be able to explain, succinctly, the origins and evolution of this hemispheric effort, what has been accomplished and what mechanisms have been developed, as well as the efforts under way and the task that lay ahead, the document has been organized in three parts:

- In the **first part**, the focus is on the period between 2001 and 2004, and the most important mandates issued by the Heads of State and Government regarding agriculture and rural life at the two most recent Summits of the Americas are reviewed. Also presented are the ministerial processes of 2001 and 2003, and their respective hemispheric agreements. The institutional framework being developed to give continuity to the ministerial process and link it to the Summit of the Americas process is described. Particular attention is paid to the key role played by the Ministerial Delegates, appointed by the Ministers of Agriculture to represent them in conducting the hemispheric ministerial process.
- The **second part**, centers on the AGRO 2015 Plan, which, since the Second Ministerial Meeting, and even more since the Special Summit of the Americas, is considered to be a strategic

framework for agriculture and rural life in the Americas. The Plan is the common point of reference now available to the Community of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas. The fact that the AGRO 2015 Plan is the result of a broad mobilization of key actors of agriculture, conducted by the Ministerial Delegates, is explained. The four components of the Plan are summarized. Its contribution to moving beyond the traditional concept of agriculture, which led to underestimating its contribution to the development of the countries, is described. How this renewed concept of agriculture and rural life is used as the basis for the scope of action of the Plan and the monitoring activities required to give it continuity, is shown.

- In the **third part**, the efforts under way in preparation for the Third Ministerial Meeting “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas,” and to link it to the Fourth Summit of the Americas, are addressed. Special attention is given to the key role played by the Ministerial Delegates. It concludes with the common challenge facing the countries on the road to the Fourth Summit of the Americas, and the complementary tasks pending at the regional and national levels.



Part I - Positioning agriculture and rural life on the Inter-American agenda

From Quebec 2001 to Monterrey 2004

- **A political framework that reassess the agriculture and rural life of the Americas:** The Mandates of Quebec 2001 and Monterrey 2004
- **The Ministerial Process “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas”:** dialogue, consensus and commitment

A political framework that reassess the agriculture and rural life of the Americas:

The Mandates of Quebec 2001 and Monterrey 2004

The ministers' strategic and visionary interest to position agriculture and the rural life in the highest level hemispheric political forum found fertile ground at the Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec 2001).

Agriculture and rural life in Quebec 2001: two definitions and two mandates calling for their reassessment

The Third Summit was a historical milestone for agriculture and rural life. On that occasion, the Heads of State and Government recognized agriculture and rural life in combating poverty and promoting sustainable development in their countries.

This potential was recognized when defining the **double role of agriculture:**

- (i) as way of life for millions of rural inhabitants; and,
- (ii) as a strategic in the socioeconomic system sector for generating prosperity in the rural areas

To realize this potential, the Plan of Action of the Third Summit contains two mandates from Quebec 2001 for Ministers of Agriculture, one at the hemispheric level and another at the national:

- (i) To promote **hemispheric joint action** among the stakeholders of the agricultural sector with a view to bringing about sustainable improvements in agriculture and rural life that contribute to implementation of the Plans of Action of the Summits of the Americas
- (ii) To promote medium- and long-term **national strategies** for the sustainable improvement of agriculture and rural life, based on a dialogue among government ministers, parliamentarians, and different sectors of civil society

Also, the Heads of State and Government of the Americas designated **IICA as an institutional partner of the Summit of the Americas process**. As such, IICA is responsible for:

- (i) supporting the Ministers of Agriculture in carrying out those two mandates;
- (ii) participating in the mechanism established for following up on two mandates, which is coordinated by the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG - forum of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Summit of the Americas Coordinators); and
- (iii) forming part of the Joint Summit Working Group, coordinated by the Summit of the Americas Secretariat and comprising, originally, the OAS, PAHO, IICA, IDB, ECLAC and the World Bank, expanded later to include the regional banks (CABEI, CAF and CDB) and other U.N. organizations such as the ILO.

Openness and transparency: essential in carrying out the two mandates for the legitimacy of the strategies

In general, the Quebec 2001 mandates reflect a conviction of the need for openness and transparency, mentioned in the Declaration of Quebec City itself, as vital to building public awareness and legitimizing the purposes and tasks of the Summit of the Americas process.

Specifically, both mandates underscore the need to promote dialogue among the actors in the agricultural sector, and particularly, the government, parliament and civil society; as the main vehicle for building consensus and commitment to the strategies for agriculture and rural life (see Declaration of Quebec City, paragraph 32).

Greater public interest and understanding:
agriculture and rural life strategic issues for development

Recognition of the importance of agriculture and rural life and the Quebec 2001 mandates to improve it triggered a new dynamic in the Americas which has kindled interest and an understanding in the public about the

contribution of agriculture and the rural milieu to development. The following, to this reassessment, have contributed to this:

- (i) the ministerial process "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas", with its national dialogues and hemisphere-wide consensus-building, spawned in 2001. That process has given rise to two hemispheric ministerial agreements for the improvement of agriculture and rural life: the Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro and the AGRO 2015 Plan of Action, endorsed by the Presidents at the Special Summit of the Americas (Nuevo Leon, Monterrey, 2004);
- (ii) the growing presence of these strategic issues on the regional agendas of the Presidents and Ministers of Agriculture generated in:
 - the regional meetings of Heads of State and Government in the framework of the Andean Community of Nations; the Caribbean Community, the Central American Integration System, and the Southern Common Market
 - the meetings and regional mechanisms of the Ministers of Agriculture (the Caribbean Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu, the Central American Agricultural Council, the Southern Agricultural Council)
- (iii) up-to-date and innovative information on the importance of agriculture and the rural milieu disseminated through the global and hemispheric reports of international organizations that participate in the Summit of the Americas process

At the request of the Ministers of Agriculture, **IICA** initiated in 2003 studies entitled "More than food on the table: Agriculture's true contribution to the economy." The first report was presented at the Second Ministerial Meeting "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas" held within the context of the Summit of the Americas process. The document focuses on showing the linkages agriculture generates in the economy. Bearing in mind the chain effect produced in the economy by the agricultural sector, the report indicates that the contribution made by agriculture exceeds the traditionally stated estimate based on its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product. Some of the findings of the study are:

- The linkages of agriculture with the rest of the economy are of considerable importance. Agriculture is a major source of inputs for other production activities. In several countries, 74 per cent of primary agricultural output is used as input for related production activities.
- Agriculture is a major source of value added, accounting for 53 cents of every dollar produced.

Responding to a similar concern to reassess the value of the rural milieu, in January 2005 the **World Bank** presented its report *"Beyond the city: The rural contribution to development,"* which provides new information on many important topics, including the contribution of the countryside to development, the magnitude of the rural environment, and the persistent anti-rural bias of policies.

- "Rural" is larger than what official statistics say. For the region in general, the most surprising finding is that the rural population accounts for approximately 42 per cent of the total population versus the official estimate of 24 per cent.
- The contribution of agriculture and related activities to national Latin American and Caribbean development is about twice its GDP share. This means that the relative long-term reduction in the size of the agricultural sector in Latin America and the Caribbean is a sign of strength and is due, at least in part, to the positive effects of agricultural growth on the rest of the economy.
- Regional or territorial policies hold promise to enhance national development, but those applied so far have not reduced Latin American and Caribbean regional disparities. Many and varied are the regional development policies that have been tested in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. These range from fiscal incentives to the promotion of private investment in specific regions, to attempts by the central governments to coordinate an endless number of incentives. The fact that the majority of countries are still struggling with notorious inter-regional disparities in income and employment suggests that experiments with regional development policies in most of the countries, dating back many decades, have not been entirely satisfactory.

- Biases in Latin America and Caribbean public policies thwart rural development. The report gives a thorough analysis of two types of biases that are at odds with the rural economies of the region. The first has to do with rural policies that are unduly focused on the delivery of subsidies to agricultural producers to promote development in rural areas rather than on the delivery of “public goods”. The second has to do with international trade and national government spending in terms of how allocations are distributed between rural and urban economic activities.

The **ECLAC**, in its report “*Social Panorama of Latin America 2004*,” indicated that in the rural areas of Latin America alone, at least 75 million people live below the poverty line, 46 million in extreme poverty. The report also emphasizes that “...*the incidence of poverty and extreme poverty in rural Latin America continues to be higher than in urban areas. Indeed, 62% of the rural population is poor.*”

Also, and very much in the context of the motto for the Fourth Summit of the Americas, the **ILO** focuses the “World Employment Report 2004-2005” on the relationship between job creation, productivity growth and poverty reduction. The report devotes Chapter 3, consisting of more than 55 pages, to explaining why agriculture still matters. The view is that “Agriculture should not be ignored if the focus is on poverty reduction.” Therefore, it goes on to say, it is in the interest of many developing countries to promote the growth of productivity and employment in agriculture, which will require, among other things, measures such as the following at the national and international levels:

- Improving access to markets
- Diversifying production
- Investing in public goods such as water supply, health, education, agricultural research
- Promoting non-agricultural activities

In essence one of the important contributions of the studies has been to demonstrate that the traditional approach backed by official statistics, definitions, and indicators minimizes the true contribution of agriculture and the countryside to development, which has an impact on the policies being promoted and the position afforded to agriculture and rural life.

Agriculture and rural life at Monterrey 2004: a renewed commitment

At their Special Summit Meeting (Monterrey 2004), the Heads of State and Government of the Americas endorsed the agreement reached by the Ministers of Agriculture at their meeting in 2003. They committed to supporting implementation of the AGRO 2015 Plan, conferring on it the nature of a presidential mandate, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Declaration of Nuevo Leon. In it, they renewed their pledged to maintain a sustained effort to improve the living conditions of the rural populations and that sustainable improvements in agriculture should contribute to social development, rural prosperity and food security.

Thus, in Monterrey 2004, the first mandate emanating from the Quebec 2001 materialized with the presidential endorsement of the AGRO 2015 Plan. Then, after ten years, the positioning of agriculture pursued as a goal by the ministers since the Miami Summit in 1994 became a reality.

The ministerial meetings and the SIRG:

key mechanisms of the strategy to position agriculture and rural life

In the Declaration of Quebec City (Third Summit of the Americas), the Heads of State and Government of the Americas stated that the **ministerial meetings** produced significant results in support of Summit mandates. In this regard, they pointed out that they would pursue the continued development of this cooperation because these ministerial meetings are important pillars of hemispheric cooperation (see Declaration of Quebec City, paragraph 29).

Another key mechanism for building the new “institutional architecture” of the Summit process is the Summit Implementation Review Group (**SIRG**), which is made up of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and their National Summit Coordinators.

The strategy followed since 1994 by the Ministers of Agriculture to position agriculture and rural life politically had two principal thrusts:

- (i) In the Summit of the Americas process: to participate in the dialogues with the National Summit Coordinators, within the

framework of SIRG meetings, providing information on the contribution of agriculture and rural life to integral development; and

- (ii) in the hemispheric ministerial process: to support the ministers in positioning the ministerial meetings “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas” within the Summit process.

The Ministerial Process “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas”:

dialogue, consensus and commitment

This political framework resulting from the Quebec 2001 and the Monterrey 2004 mandates spawned a new ministerial process in the context of the Summits of the Americas, a process that culminates in the ministerial meetings, “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas.” The principles of openness and transparency were embodied in this process through broad national, regional and hemisphere-wide dialogue.

A solid response to the first mandate Quebec 2001: the continue hemispheric effort in Bavaro 2001, Panama 2003 and Guayaquil 2005

In 2001, immediately following the Third Summit, the first hemispheric ministerial response occurred. The Ministers of Agriculture, with the support of their ministerial delegates, reached consensus on the “*Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro for the Improvement of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas*” (MDB), which they approved at their first Ministerial Meeting (**Bavaro 2001**).

In that Declaration and pursuant to the decisions of the Heads of State and Government of the Americas, the ministers agreed that it was of key importance that significant progress be made to achieve sustainable development in agriculture and the rural milieu, improve food security,

and reduce rural poverty. They also stated that the sustainable development of agriculture and the rural milieu should be based on the objectives of greater competitiveness, equity, sustainable management of natural resources, and democratic governance (paragraph 7 of the MDB).

To this end, they pledged to reach consensus on a **shared hemispheric agenda** that would be used by their countries to develop future **national and regional plans of action** (paragraph 18 of the MDB).

Moreover, they requested IICA, other partner institutions of the Summit of the Americas process, international financial institutions and cooperating governments to coordinate their support strategies, taking into account the above (paragraph 20 of the MDB).

In 2003, pursuant to their commitments under the MDB and in preparation for the Special Summit of the Americas, the Ministers of Agriculture reaffirmed their commitment by confirming appointment of their ministerial delegates and promoting a broad participatory process that led up to the Second Ministerial Meeting “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas” (**Panama 2003**). During that meeting they adopted the **“AGRO 2003-2015 Plan for Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas”** (AGRO 2015 Plan), in keeping with their commitment to a shared hemispheric agenda.

The ministerial meeting culminated a broad process of consultation, dialogue and consensus-building at the national and hemispheric levels among Ministerial Delegates. One of the key moments was the 2003 meeting of the forum of the ministerial delegates (Group for the Implementation and Coordination of the Agreements on Agriculture and Rural Life (GRICA)), which met in San Jose and Panama to consolidate the hemispheric consensus.

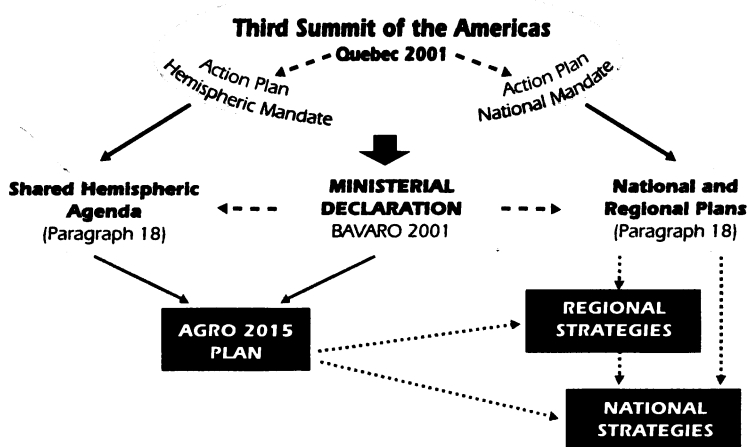
In 2005, the Third Ministerial Meeting provides a new opportunity to review the progress of the AGRO 2015 Plan, update its Hemispheric Agenda for the 2006-2007 period, and approve a proposal to the SIRG to consolidate an enabling environment for the sustainable improvement of agriculture and the rural milieu.

In this way, the first mandate Quebec 2001 (to promote hemispheric joint action), ratified in Monterrey 2004, is being fulfilled through agreements at the hemispheric ministerial meetings.

Progress on the second mandate Quebec

2001: promoting national strategies based on national dialogues and consensus

This mandate is also based and responds to paragraph 18 of the MDB, the Ministers of Agriculture indicated the **regional and national levels** for the implementation of the shared hemispheric agenda (AGRO 2015 Plan).



The **countries** are pursuing national strategies for the improvement of the agricultural sector. As one of the tasks of the 2005 ministerial process, and bearing in mind the timetable for the review of the mandates by the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), the countries prepared reports on national actions to implement the AGRO 2015 Plan, based on their respective national strategies.

Some countries have clearly aligned their strategies with this second mandate Quebec 2001, taking care to design them in a way that shows the key characteristics of the second mandate: dialogue and the involvement of government, parliament, and different stakeholders of civil society. Chile, Honduras and Canada have reported that they have undertaken efforts to develop State policies for agriculture and the rural milieu, while Bolivia, Costa Rica, Peru, and Mexico have reported broad-reaching participatory processes to develop their strategies.

As regards action at the **regional level**, initial steps have been made in some regions to comply with the second mandate Quebec 2001.

The “institutional architecture” being built: key role of the ministerial delegates and the ministerial meetings

The Ministers of Agriculture want to consolidate the positioning achieved in the Summit process. To do so, it is necessary to consolidate the “institutional architecture” currently being developed, which includes:

- (i) appointment of the ministerial delegates for agriculture, who coordinate implementation of the mandates in their respective countries and the preparation of the progress reports,
- (ii) the forum of ministerial delegates (GRICA), which works to build hemispheric consensus on strategic actions and makes proposals to the ministerial meeting and to the National Summit Coordinators for creating and consolidating an enabling environment,
- (iii) the ministerial meeting, which is informed of the progress reports on compliance with the mandates and agreements, and will adopt the strategic actions for the coming biennia, and
- (iv) the Secretariat of the ministerial meetings, exercised by IICA, which supports the ministerial process and facilitates its continued development.

IICA as Secretariat of the ministerial process: a new responsibility since Quebec 2001

At the Third Summit of the Americas, IICA was included by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas as a partner institution of the Summit of the Americas process, together with the OAS, ECLAC, IDB, PAHO, and World Bank. Since then, it has served as Secretariat of the Ministerial Meetings “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas.”

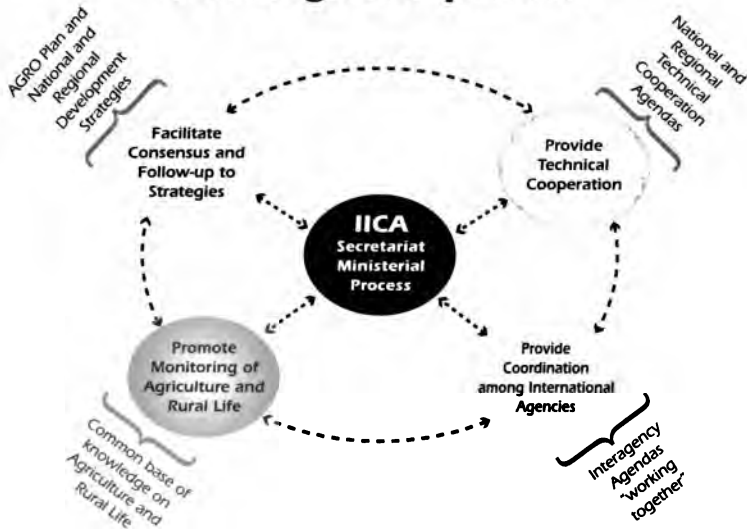
In general IICA has had a dual role to play in support of the implementation of the presidential mandates. On the one hand, in the

ministerial process, promoting broad national, regional and hemispheric dialogue to support ministerial meetings. Also, in the Summit of the Americas process, participating in the OAS-led Summit review and monitoring mechanisms. By these means, it sought to ensure that the positioning attained by agriculture and rural life at the Third Summit was consolidated at the Special Summit.

To help maintain that positioning, IICA promotes efforts to:

- (i) To facilitate the continuation of the ministerial process, which implies:
 - Support the Member States in implementing the mandates, with a renewed style of technical cooperation that begins with consultation with the key stakeholders of agriculture to define jointly the Institute's Technical Cooperation Agendas at the national, regional and hemispheric levels. Those agendas are revised at least once a year for the purpose of bringing them in line with the needs expressed by the countries and in relation to their challenges for implementing the AGRO 2015 Plan.
 - To promote the monitoring of agriculture and rural life and, on the basis of same, to promote reflection and dialogue among the stakeholders of agriculture and rural milieu on the current situation of and outlook for agriculture and rural life.
 - To support the Ministers of Agriculture and the Ministerial Delegates in organizing and holding the ministerial meetings. In this regard, efforts are made to facilitate dialogue among the stakeholders of agriculture and rural life and the building of consensus on hemispheric, regional and national strategies for sustainable improvement in agriculture and rural life. Also, support is provided for the continuation of the ministerial process, facilitating the monitoring of those strategies.
 - Coordinate actions with other international organizations that work to improve agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

4 Strategic Components



(iii) To facilitate articulation of the ministerial process with the Summit of the Americas process, which implies:

- Report to the Summit Implementation Review Group (Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Hemisphere and their National Summit Coordinators) on the countries' progress to implement the presidential mandates, the ministerial process itself, and the Institute's and other international organizations contributions to same.
- Participating in the Joint Summit Working Group, coordinated by the OAS Summit of the Americas Secretariat.
- Maintaining close communication with the OAS Summit of the Americas Secretariat.

As for the 2001 and 2003 ministerial processes, the Institute is supporting the Ministers of Agriculture, Alternate Delegates and technical teams in their work to achieve the results expected for 2005. It will also continue to promote joint action with the partner institutions of the Summit of the Americas process for supporting the countries in implementing and monitoring the AGRO 2015 Plan in the regions and countries.



Part II - A strategic framework for agriculture and rural life in the Americas

AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action for Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas

- **Agreements and commitments for improving agriculture and rural life:** a common point of reference for decision makers
- **A new way of understanding agriculture and rural life:** the conceptual framework of the AGRO 2015 Plan
- **A frame of reference for monitoring the AGRO 2015 Plan:** the Matrix of the AGRO-System

Agreements and commitments for improving agriculture and rural life: a common point of reference for decision makers

At the GRICA 2003 meetings, held in San Jose, Costa Rica, and Panama, the Ministerial Delegates of Agriculture made significant progress toward a hemispheric consensus on the AGRO 2015 Plan.

In a climate of sincere and constructive dialogue, the Delegates drafted a Shared Vision through 2015, set objectives and decided on the strategic actions needed to fulfill the commitment assumed by the Ministers of Agriculture at the First Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas (Bavaro 2001). Their efforts were rewarded when the Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture adopted the AGRO 2015 Plan at the Second Ministerial Meeting. In the Plan, the Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture:

- (i) Adopted the **Shared Vision 2015** for agriculture and rural life. The vision is a characterization of the desired future vis-à-vis the national and international context, rural territories and agricultural production-trade chains.
- (ii) Reiterated the commitments they assumed in the Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro, with the **Strategic Objectives** of Rural Prosperity, Food Security, the International and Regional Integration of Agriculture, Agricultural Health and Food Safety, and the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu. The Strategic Objectives make it possible to focus the efforts of the leaders of the Community of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas.
- (iii) Pledged to promote, with the stakeholders in agriculture and others involved in the development of agriculture and rural life, the strategic actions of the **2003-2005**

Hemispheric Agenda, to make progress toward the goals of Rural Prosperity, Food Security and the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu, as established by the Heads of State and Government at the Third Summit of the Americas. This Hemispheric Agenda is the first of six biennial agendas. It is divided into 12 sections containing a total of 40 strategic actions.

- (iv) Stated that the AGRO 2015 Plan reflects the member countries' intention of working to achieve the shared vision, acknowledging that the national governments have primary responsibility for implementing the Plan pursuant to their international commitments and agreements. They decided on a number of measures for **Implementation and Follow-up** of the Plan. These included: (i) the preparation of national reports on the progress made in implementing the current agenda; (ii) the updating of the agenda for the next five biennia; (iii) a request that international institutions and cooperating governments coordinate their strategies around the implementation of the Plan; and, (iv) efforts to determine appropriate ways of gauging the progress of the Plan.

A new way of understanding agriculture and rural life: the conceptual framework of the AGRO 2015 Plan

The mandates of Quebec 2001 and Monterrey 2004 established a new political frame of reference, which transcends - goes beyond - the traditional conception of agriculture as a primary productive sector of the economy. This calls for a broader conception of agriculture and rural life in line with those strategic orientations.

To develop the Shared Vision 2015 for agriculture and rural life, within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals and

taking into account the aforementioned mandates, the Ministerial Delegates of Agriculture adopted a new conception of agriculture and rural life, which was validated by the Ministers of Agriculture. A definition appears in the second paragraph of the AGRO 2015 Plan.

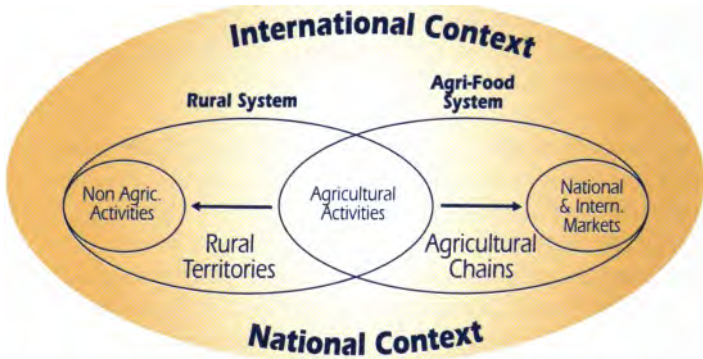
This renewed concept adopted by the ministers of agriculture goes beyond measures aimed at improving the productive and trade-related aspects of agriculture. It considers the rural territories, where productive activities take place; the agricultural production - trade chains, that add value to primary production; and its actions reach out into the national and international context. In doing so, however, it considers other dimensions of the sustainable development approach such as the social, environmental and institutional aspects of those territories, chains, and their national and international context.

As this framework for analysis and action to improve agriculture and rural life is so broad, it calls for a large and varied group of public and private stakeholders to become involved and take action.

Essentially, the conceptual-thematic space for the analysis and definition of the strategic actions that underpin the AGRO 2015 Plan identifies two groups of complementary aspects for characterizing agriculture and rural life:

- The **systemic concept** of agriculture and rural life defines **three categories**: rural territories; agricultural production-trade chains; and national and international context. The first two categories include all stakeholders in agriculture and rural milieu; while the third category includes a set of elements that affect the territories' development and the operation of the chains; and,
- The **sustainable development approach** that identifies the **four dimensions** of development, namely: the production-trade dimension; the ecological-environmental dimension; the sociocultural-human dimension; and, the political-institutional dimension.

**Systemic Concept of Agriculture and Rural Life
(beyond a purely sectoral perspective)**



When the interactions between these two aspects are visualized, they provide us with the conceptual-thematic space identified as the “Matrix of the AGRO-System.”

The Hemispheric Agenda was organized on the basis of the conceptual framework of the AGRO 2015 Plan

CATEGORIES DIMENSIONS	RURAL TERRITORIES	AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION-TRADE CHAINS	NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT
PRODUCTION-TRADE			
ECOLOGICAL-ENVIRONMENTAL			
SOCIO-CULTURAL AND HUMAN			
POLITICAL-INSTITUTIONAL			

12 SECTIONS OF THE HEMISPHERIC AGENDA

The 12 boxes in the matrix help us understand the thinking behind the 12 sections into which the Hemispheric Agenda is organized. The 40 strategic actions of the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda, the first phase of the AGRO 2015 Plan, are distributed among them.

The renewed concept of agriculture and rural life is also important because of its direct link with the strategic objectives of the AGRO 2015 Plan, based on the decisions adopted by the Ministers of Agriculture in the Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro (MDB).



The four dimensions of the sustainable development approach (rows in the Matrix of the AGRO-System) make it possible to identify the current state of, and outlook for, agriculture and rural life in terms of the four sustainable development objectives established in paragraph 7 of the MDB, namely, competitiveness; the sustainability of natural resources; equity; and democratic governance.

The three categories of the systemic concept of agriculture and rural life (columns in the Matrix of the AGRO-System) also help us define the situation of and outlook for agriculture and rural life in terms of the sustainable development objective, in this case in relation to the other two objectives set in the MDB and expanded upon in the AGRO 2015 Plan: rural prosperity, food security and the international integration or positioning of agriculture.

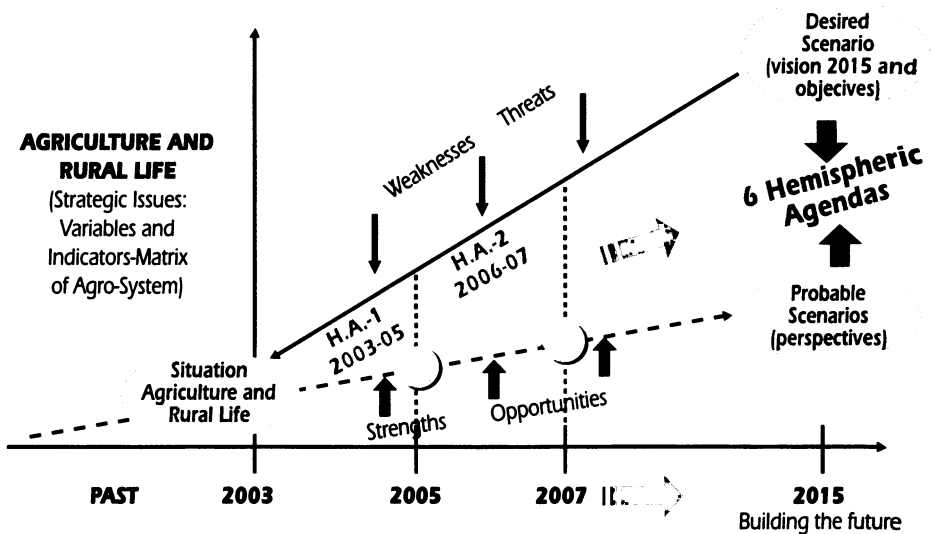
A frame of reference for monitoring the AGRO 2015 Plan:

Plan: the Matrix of the AGRO-System

The implementation of the hemispheric mandates and agreements on agriculture and rural life must be monitored so we know how much progress is being made, how the situation is evolving, what challenges lies ahead and what strategic decisions need to be adopted at the next Ministerial Meeting and the Summit thereafter.

AGRO 2015 Plan of Action

More than a Document, a Learning and Consensus-Building Process



This calls for a conceptual framework that provides uniform criteria for the work of implementing and monitoring the Plan. That frame of reference for monitoring the AGRO 2015 Plan is provided by the "Matrix of the AGRO-System."

The information generated through the implementation and monitoring of the current hemispheric agenda provides input for a process of learning and consensus building on the strategic actions that need to be incorporated into future biennial hemispheric agendas to enable us to make progress toward the Shared Vision 2015.

The Matrix of the AGRO-System also helps to determine appropriate ways of gauging the Plan's progress (paragraph 3 of Component 4. Implementation and Follow-up of the AGRO 2015 Plan). A basic set of indicators is needed to do this effectively. Hence, the matrix is being used as the frame of reference for determining a set of indicators for monitoring the AGRO 2015 Plan. At the request of the Ministers of Agriculture, the international bodies (ECLAC, PAHO, FAO, UNESCO and IICA) are performing this task.

The following table summarizes the use of the Matrix of the AGRO-System as the frame of reference for monitoring the Plan and updating its Hemispheric Agenda. It also shows how the purposes of the 12 sections of the Hemispheric Agenda and the Plan's Strategic Objectives interconnect; in turn, those purposes reflect the 11 paragraphs of the Shared Vision 2015.

Therefore, the following table outlines the "backdrop" for analyzing progress in the implementation of the Plan and guiding the follow-up of same. Also, it will help in developing indicators to be used in making a more "objective" assessment of progress in advancing toward the Shared Vision 2015.

PURPOSES FOR THE 12 SECTIONS OF THE HEMISPHERIC AGENDA AND THEIR COHERENCE WITH THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE AGRO 2015 PLAN

CATEGORIES DIMENSIONS	Rural Territories	Agricultural Production-Trade Chains	National and International Context	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
Production - Trade	I. Promoting competitive rural enterprises	II. Integrating chains and strengthening their competitiveness	III. Promoting an environment conducive to competitive agriculture	→ Competitiveness
Ecological - Environmental	IV. Being environmentally responsible in the rural areas	V. From farm to table: promoting integrated environmental management	VI. Participating in building an institutional environmental framework	→ Sustainability
Sociocultural - human	VII. Quality of life in rural communities: creating know-how and opportunity	VIII. Advancing learning and expertise in the chain	IX. Promoting policies to create capabilities and opportunities for the rural communities	→ Equity
Political - institutional	X. Strengthening public and private sector participation and coordinated action between them in the territories	XI. Strengthening dialogue and commitments among actors in the chain	XII. Promoting State policies and regional and hemispheric cooperation for agriculture and rural life	→ Governance
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	↓ Rural Prosperity	↓ Food Security	↓ International Positioning	↓ SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL MILIEU



Part III - Consolidating the positioning achieved

From Monterrey 2004 to Mar del Plata 2005

- **Progress made by the countries on Monterrey 2004 mandate:** a summary of the Secretariat's report to the SIRG to comply with the AGRO 2015 Plan
- **The 2005 Ministerial Process:** two important milestones, Guayaquil and Mar del Plata
- **The common challenge:** consolidate the positioning of agriculture and rural life at Mar del Plata in 2005 and the national and regional commitment

Progress made by the countries on Monterrey 2004 mandate: a summary of the Secretariat's report to the SIRG to comply with the AGRO 2015 Plan

Priority lines and strategic actions

The national reports highlight a broad range of priority topics as well as actions in the area of production and in the social, environmental and institutional areas. Some of these are summarized briefly below:

■ Credit services and investment promotion

Some impressive efforts have been reported, such as the creation of pre-investment systems in Guatemala; debt realignment in Costa Rica; the establishment of financial and credit services units in Bolivia; the strengthening of lines of credit in Brazil; and the establishment of Development Banks in El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. It has also been reported that financing alternatives and intermediation have been facilitated in Barbados, Belize, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras and Paraguay. Additionally, efforts have been reported to provide efficient agricultural insurance services in El Salvador, Honduras, Saint Lucia and risk management services in Argentina.

Recently, preparation of the 2005-2006 Investment Program of the Agrifood Sector in Honduras concluded, based on the measures prioritized in the 2004 - 2006 Strategic Plan. In this regard, the Government is seeking to obtain funding from national and external sources.

■ Agricultural-production-trade chains

The countries are faced with the process of consolidating agrifood chains. In Ecuador and Mexico, for example, National

Committees for several products that have commercial interest have been established. Guatemala and Nicaragua are giving technical support to production chains. Also, Brazil, Argentina and the Dominican Republic have reported that study programs are under way to strengthen chains. In Barbados and El Salvador, Investment Funds are being allocated to strengthen agricultural-production chains.

Another modality that has emerged has been the creation of National or Regional Committees to generate dialogue among actors in these chains in Barbados and Belize.

Also reported has been the creation of organizations to follow up on the subject of the competitiveness of chains. Brazil has reported the creation of Product-Specific Associations, which deal not only with their specific product, but also financing, agribusiness insurance and international agricultural negotiations.

■ **Trade negotiations and the facilitation of trade**

The countries are showing concern about gaining increased access to markets and are expressing a growing interest in participating in trade negotiations. The participation of national delegations in the negotiations of the WTO, and support from Ministries of Agriculture to ambassadors in agriculture-related topics have been reported. Also of interest has been the participation of countries in groups such as the G20, the Cairns Group and in the agricultural negotiating groups of the FTAA in an effort to create an international environment that is favorable to agriculture.

With regard to a more favorable international framework for trade, the countries have also made regional and national animal and plant health policies a high priority. Noteworthy here are participation in the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS); the creation and follow-up of initiatives such as the SPS Initiative for the Americas and the Food Safety Institute of the Americas; and the coordination of ministries of agriculture and trade in sanitary matters in support of the Central American Customs Union.

Ecuador reports the design and implementation of the international trade policy as a result of the participation of the Ministry of Agriculture in the Foreign Trade and Investment Council (COMEXI).

■ **Environmental management**

Concerns about the environmental impact of agriculture have led to increased environmental responsibility in rural areas and in public and private services in order to improve environmental management. A new institutional framework is also in the making as an effort is made to address these concerns.

The adoption of various management tools to address environmental concerns has been observed on both farms and in other links in the agricultural-production-trade chains.

Colombia, for example, has developed new alternatives for reducing the impact of the use of agrochemicals on the environment and is paving the way to implement and develop protocols for a system of Good Agricultural Practices and Good Animal Management Practices. Similarly, in Honduras, the adoption of environmentally friendly Good Production, Processing and Marketing Practices is being promoted. In Ecuador, also, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock has undertaken preparation of the National Training Plan in areas related to clean production, dissemination of the environmental Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Agricultural Sector and Environmental Management.

At the level of agricultural production chains, Colombia is instituting processes and mechanisms to prevent and control problems and sanitary, biological and chemical risks that affect human health, agricultural production and the environment in an effort to improve the supply of agrifood and agro-industrial products under conditions of high quality, profitability, sustainability, equity and competitiveness. In Costa Rica, the Agro 21 Strategy, promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture establishes for each agricultural production chain sustainable agro-environmental management actions in the various processes or links. In Panama, the National

Environmental Authority (Ministry) participates in the meetings of the national advisory chains.

In terms of the institutional framework, in Bolivia, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture has strengthened coordination of the Ministry of Sustainable Development and the Private Agricultural Sector in an effort to fine-tune environmental policy in the agricultural sector. In Colombia, the Colombian Clean Agriculture Corporation was created with the aim of promoting ecological agricultural projects, good agricultural practices and research projects and the transfer of clean technologies. In Brazil, the Ministry of Agriculture participates in the National Environmental Council, made up of representatives in the public and private sectors, which establishes standards for the application of environmental policies.

■ Individual, institutional and entrepreneurial capabilities

The promotion of rural education is considered a key factor in improving quality of life. Accordingly, programs have been implemented in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia, Honduras and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In Bolivia, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Ecuador, agricultural education is also under review.

Together, the countries are endeavoring to strengthen the technical capability of professionals in the agricultural sector. In Honduras, the National Service on Agricultural Education, Training and Entrepreneurial Development was instituted, and Bolivia reported the implementation of the National Policy on Technical Vocational Training for Rural Development

One of the areas most referred to has been the strengthening of national ability to adhere to international standards governing trade. Noteworthy are the promotion of negotiating capacity and the formulation of policies under way. Several countries like Peru, Paraguay and Honduras are carrying out or negotiating projects with international organizations to develop local negotiating capacity and upgrade their institutions. In this regard, institutions such as the Agro-industrial Markets Unit of the Ministry of Rural and Agricultural

Affairs of Bolivia, for example, have been created, and in Honduras, the Trade Unit of the Secretariat of Agriculture has been upgraded. The United States is promoting several hemispheric cooperation activities to support improvement of national capacity in trade negotiation.

With regard to the management of farms, noteworthy are the initiatives undertaken in El Salvador through the establishment of the Agribusiness Office and the establishment of the Management Centers in Chile to cover rural communities by providing information for the operation of the companies.

■ Mechanisms for dialogue, agreement and commitment

Increased attention is being given to the need to bring the public and private sectors together to formulate strategies aimed at addressing the needs of the inhabitants of rural areas. Examples include the National Dialogue known as "Bolivia Productiva," in Bolivia, which has led to a number of national agreements related to production; the Agricultural Negotiation Groups in Chile and Honduras; and the national consultations conducted in Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Agricultural Negotiating Groups in Chile and Honduras have proven to be very effective mechanisms for reaching agreement on the preparation of strategies. In Honduras, the Group serves as a forum not only for reaching agreements, but also for analyzing the social strategy aimed at alleviating poverty. In Canada, under an initiative known as "The Canadian Rural Partnership", rural communities participate in "Rural Dialogues" on strategies for improving their quality of life and preparing them to face a globalized economy.

In Bolivia and Paraguay, rural communities are becoming involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programs and projects. In Paraguay, examples include projects such as the Agricultural Development Plan of the Department of Ñeembucu and PRODESAL.

As regards the creation of mechanisms for dialogue among the actors of agriculture, National or Regional Dialogues and Agreements on competitiveness at the level of agricultural-production-trade chains are being prepared or implemented in several countries. Two examples of national dialogues are "Bolivia Productiva" and the 22 Negotiating Groups for Dialogue and agreement in Honduras. Also, agreements on competitiveness were worked out in Bolivia, and in Paraguay under the initiative "Paraguay en el Mapa Competitivo del Mundo." In Ecuador, advisory councils were created as mechanisms for information sharing, dialogue and agreement between producers and the State for the solution of short-term and strategic problems related to agriculture and rural life.

■ Strategies for agriculture and the rural milieu

Several countries have adopted or are in the process of approving State policies aimed at improving agriculture and agribusinesses. In Chile, the State policy for agriculture is aimed at creating the conditions needed to develop a profitable and competitive agricultural sector and ensure that small- and medium-scale agriculture enjoys the benefits of sectoral development. In Honduras, the State Policy for the Agrifood Sector and the Rural Milieu for 2004-2021 has been defined.

In Ecuador, policies for the agroindustrial sector are being formulated. In Brazil, policies aimed at the development of agribusinesses have been formulated; and in Bolivia, legislation promoting productivity, competitiveness, small- and medium-scale enterprises, irrigation and sound environmental practices, among other topics, was approved.

The promotion of non-agricultural activities in the rural milieu is an important aspect of such policies. Examples include agricultural funding mechanisms that have been expanded to include non-agricultural activities, and joint strategies for funding agro-tourism and eco-tourism initiatives in the rural milieu. Ecuador, for example, is promoting the development of a framework of policies, strategies and regulations among the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of the

Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture to promote agrotourism and ecotourism. In Brazil, there is the Rural Tourism for Family Agriculture program, the objective of which is to promote the development of rural communities through the implementation of tourism activities.

■ **Regional integration and cooperation**

The regional cooperation mechanisms are being strengthened. Evidence of this is the operation of several regional processes whose institutional framework is under construction.

Thus, regional mechanisms such as the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS) and the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC) are important instruments for the preparation of strategies and policies for agriculture and rural life in those regions. Under the CAS, there are intergovernmental efforts under way involving the member countries, comprising three groups: The Agricultural Policies Network (REDPA), the Informal Group of Agricultural Negotiators (GINA-SUR) and the Animal Health, Plant Health and Food Safety Group, which brings together the agricultural health agencies of the countries of the CAS.

Regional thematic mechanisms are also being strengthened. In the area of innovation and research, the PROCIs, which are regional mechanisms that bring together the agricultural research agencies of the countries, are being strengthened. In the area of information, mechanisms such as the Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA), which links market information specialists throughout the hemisphere, are being promoted.

Another means of promoting regional and hemispheric interaction has been the formulation of regional social policies. One example is the Social Policy of the Andean Community, which is basis for the implementation, in Peru, for example, of the National Food Security Strategy and the National Rural Development Strategy.

In Central America, there are initiatives such as the Regional Project for Food Security in Mesoamerica and the Regional Project to

Reduce the Vulnerability of the Agricultural Sector to Climate Change, which is the responsibility of the Regional Agricultural Cooperation Council.

■ Rural poverty and employment

Important efforts are under way in the countries to achieve equity in rural territories, where the need to alleviate poverty, improve the quality of life of rural inhabitants and generate employment are strategic, priority issues.

As a result, several countries have made the alleviation of poverty a part of their national policies. For example, Peru has a National Plan to Overcome Poverty, and Costa Rica a Plan they call "New Life:" "Overcoming Poverty and Developing Human Capabilities." In Honduras, the Strategy for the Alleviation of Poverty is both a State policy and a commitment on the part of the State. One aspect of the strategy, which refers to the rural milieu, is coordinated by the Secretariat of Agriculture and Livestock with other Secretariats, the private sector and international organizations.

Also, social protection programs or networks are being implemented. For example, there are the Social Protection Program and the Local Development Program (PROLOCAL) in Ecuador, and the social protection networks in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Also, social investment, or poverty alleviation, funds are operating in Barbados and Belize. Other important initiatives are the Agricultural Social Program and the Development of Small-scale Farmers project (PROINDER) in Argentina, and the Land Credit and Poverty Alleviation project in Brazil

As for the creation of employment in rural areas, efforts are under way to facilitate access to resources such as credit in Bolivia, Haiti and Peru; and access to land through mechanisms such as titling in Barbados, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic.

The gender perspective is considered important in reducing poverty. This perspective has been incorporated into different

projects in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Paraguay, and support organizations, such as the National Association of Rural Women Entrepreneurs of Ecuador and networks set up to support women in the Dominican Republic, have been created. Also, gender policies for the agricultural sector have been implemented in El Salvador and Costa Rica.

■ Food Security

Of particular note among the efforts being made to achieve this important Millennium Development Goal are the application or formulation of State Policies on Food and Nutritional Security in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras; the implementation of national food security strategies in Bolivia, Costa Rica and Haiti; and the implementation of special programs in Ecuador, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Paraguay and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In Barbados, a special commission was set up to address this topic.

Efforts aimed at achieving food security are accompanied by policies or programs intended to increase agricultural productivity in Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Saint Lucia; diversify production in El Salvador, St. Lucia and Paraguay; and improve food safety and quality in Argentina and Brazil.

Also, there are programs designed to ensure proper nourishment for vulnerable groups; for example, food assistance programs in Ecuador, and school lunch and food security programs in Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republic.

A process under way

Aware of the SIRG's timetable for reviewing implementation of the mandates contained in the Declaration of Nuevo Leon, IICA, as Secretariat of the Ministerial Meeting "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas," undertook to support the countries' efforts to

publicize the mandate, adjust national strategies to the mandate, and prepare national reports on progress made to fulfill same.

The response was prompt and enthusiastic. The Ministers of Agriculture, through the delegates appointed for the 2005 ministerial process, have used different types of institutional arrangements to prepare their national reports. Thus far in 2005, the Secretariat of the Ministerial Meeting has received national reports from 25 countries.

The work to prepare the reports also generated new and meaningful relationships between the ministries of agriculture and the ministries of foreign affairs, for purposes of coordination and cooperation. Several Ministerial Delegates for Agriculture have worked with their National Summit Coordinators, helping convey a more in-depth understanding of the Summit process in the countries, becoming actively involved with their teams in reviewing specific mandates, and providing information from the ministries and secretariats of agriculture on the work done to comply with same.

The countries' response

In Monterrey 2004, the governments committed to maintaining a sustained effort to improve the living conditions of rural populations by promoting investments and creating an enabling environment for the sustainable improvement of agriculture, so that it will contribute to social development, rural prosperity, and food security.

In response to that mandate, the countries are conducting a range of initiatives for improving the agriculture and rural life, in line with the strategic actions included in the AGRO 2015 Plan. At the national level, their efforts have included studies, proposals, plans and programs, sectoral policies and State policies; at the regional level, they have focused on programs, agreements and policies. Supplementing these efforts, the national reports also show that mechanisms for participation, dialogue, negotiation, and consensus-building on various topics related to the improvement of the agricultural sector have been strengthened.

A broad approach to the mandate

The national reports cover a range of actions that includes efforts to improve rural territories, strengthen agro-production-trade chains, and create a favorable national and international environment for the agriculture and rural life. Overall, national efforts are very comprehensive in nature; initiatives under way address a wide range of areas including production and trade; social, cultural and human issues; ecological and environmental matters; and institution building.

The national reports: valuable tools for monitoring the mandates

The countries have responded generously and are supporting the mechanism to follow up on the Summit process. Their reports constitute input for the review process being carried out by the SIRG. In addition, they ensure the continuity of the ministerial process through the progress report on implementation of the AGRO 2015 Plan of Action, for the effort to update the 2006-2007 Hemispheric Agenda of the Plan, and for the preparation of, and dialogue and consensus building on, a Ministerial Proposal on agriculture and rural life for the Fourth Summit of Americas.

Hemispheric network of national teams

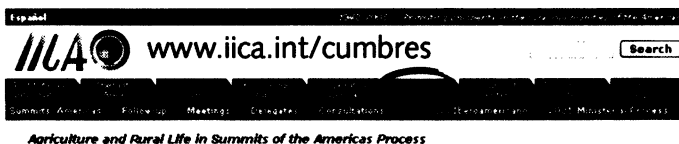
The countries are establishing different types of teams to execute the tasks associated with the ministerial process on agriculture and rural life, one of which is to report on compliance with the mandates to the SIRG and to the Ministerial Meeting.

The teams include the Ministerial Delegate, an Alternate Ministerial Delegate, and professionals in the areas of policies, programs and

statistics, among others. To date, 30 countries have created representative groups for this purpose.

In order to support the network of national teams across the hemisphere, the Secretariat has in operation an electronic system in support of hemispheric dialogue at the Web Site "Agriculture in Summits" www.iica.int/cumbres. Information on the ministerial process, on the Summit of the Americas process and on studies carried out by international organizations in support of the true contribution of agriculture and "rural" to development may also be found there.

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Galvanizing Wills, creating consensus (video)

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The 2005 Ministerial Process: two important milestones, Guayaquil and Mar del Plata

Progress in Implementing the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda: conclusion of the first stage of the AGRO 2015 Plan

The national reports¹ and the progress reports on compliance with the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda of the AGRO 2015 Plan, entrusted by the Ministers to the Ministerial Delegates and their hemispheric forum (GRICA)², are inputs the ministers consider necessary for the process to implement and monitor the Plan, which includes updating the Hemispheric Agenda for the 2006-2007 biennium.

The aforementioned process began in 2004 with the Secretariat's request to the delegates that they coordinate preparation and delivery of their national reports both to the Secretariat and to their respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The response was very positive. Twenty-five countries submitted progress reports on fulfillment of the Hemispheric Agenda. Thirteen of them sent additional reports on the progress made to comply with mandate 43 of the Declaration of Nuevo Leon (Special Summit of the Americas).

On the basis of these 38 national reports, IICA, as a partner institution of the Summit of the Americas process and Secretariat of the Ministerial Meeting, made a presentation last March to the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) on compliance with the mandates of agriculture and rural life.³

The National Summit Coordinators (representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs) considered this country-led effort to be a positive one. This contributes to consolidating the positioning of the

-
1. In compliance with paragraph 1, component 4. Implementation and Follow Up of the AGRO 2015 Plan.
 2. In compliance with operative paragraph 2, Ministerial Resolution 387. Implementation and Follow Up of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.
 3. The Secretariat's presentation to the SIRG last March is summarized in the preceding section of this report entitled "Progress made by the countries on Monterrey 2004 mandate"

improvement of agriculture and rural communities in the highest-level political forum of the hemisphere and ensures that the matter will continue to be addressed at the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata, 4-5 November 2005).

After reviewing the strategic actions promoted in the countries and the purposes of the 12 sections of the Hemispheric Agenda, the Delegates identified the **challenges** that the countries face in improving agriculture and rural life and implementing the AGRO 2015 Plan.

Updating the Hemispheric Agenda for 2006-2007: second stage of the AGRO 2015 Plan

Continuing with the 2005 ministerial process and based on the agreements reached by the ministers, the delegates, with support of the Secretariat, have been called upon to perform the following hemispheric tasks:

- Update, for 2006-2007, the 12 sections of the Hemispheric Agenda.
- Build consensus for the ministerial proposal to the Fourth Summit.

The definition of the challenges, based on the fulfillment of the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda, enables the Delegates to assess the currency of the strategic actions and define complementary actions needed to update the Hemispheric Agenda for 2006-2007.

The common challenge: consolidate the positioning of agriculture and rural life at Mar del Plata in 2005 and the national and regional commitment

We, the Community of Agriculture and Rural Life, made up of the public entities, enterprises, and private sector groups, other organizations of civil society and the international community of the

Americas, share a common challenge: to consolidate the positioning we have achieved as a strategic political resource to promote concrete hemispheric, regional, and national actions in support of the sustainable improvement of agriculture and rural communities.

In the highest-level political forum of the hemisphere: maintain the presence of agriculture and rural life on the inter-American agenda

The Chair of the Fourth Summit, exercised by the Republic of Argentina, identified three key issues for the next meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Americas, November 4 and 5 in Mar del Plata:

- The **motto** of the Fourth Summit, “Creating jobs to confront poverty and strengthen democratic governance”; to which the ministerial process should be aligned.
- The **Declaration** of Mar del Plata; where the political positioning attained by agriculture and rural life at the last two Summits of the Americas should be consolidated.
- The **Plan of Action**; where the political positioning set out in the Declaration should be translated into actions that promote the enabling environment required by agriculture and rural life to continue implementing the AGRO 2015 Plan.

Given the political and thematic framework proposed by the Chair, the Secretariat has suggested:

- That the Ministerial Meeting and its preparatory process focus on creating jobs to reduce poverty and generate rural prosperity. This would respond the directive of the thirty-sixth Meeting of the SIRG, in October 2004.
- That at the next GRICA 2005 meeting (7-8 July 2005, San Jose, Costa Rica), the Ministerial Delegates reach consensus on the ministerial proposal to be submitted to the SIRG, for

consideration in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Fourth Summit of the Americas.

- That the Ministerial Delegates request their Ministries of Foreign Affairs, through the National Summits Coordinators, to include the ministerial proposal on agriculture and rural life in the documents they will present to the Chair of the Fourth Summit for the Declaration of Mar del Plata y its Plan of Action.

With the successful conclusion of the above tasks, the Chair of the Ministerial Meeting and the Secretariat will be able to present the results of this Ministerial Meeting to the Thirty-ninth Meeting of the SIRG, in September of 2005. The purpose of presenting the results is to help consolidate positioning of agriculture and rural life in the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata 2005) thus facilitating compliance with the Monterrey 2004 mandate, contained in paragraph 43 of the Declaration of Nuevo Leon.

The complementary task: regional and national strategies

- (i) In regional mechanisms and forums for integration: to promote regional strategies in support of national needs and efforts.

There are two important steps to consider as strategic tasks. One is the strengthening of the presence of agriculture and rural life on the agenda of the regional meetings of Heads of State and Government. The other is to build consensus regarding regional policies and programs in support to the national priorities and in response the second mandate Quebec 2001 for the implementation of the AGRO 2015 Plan at the regional level (addressed in paragraph 18 of the Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro).

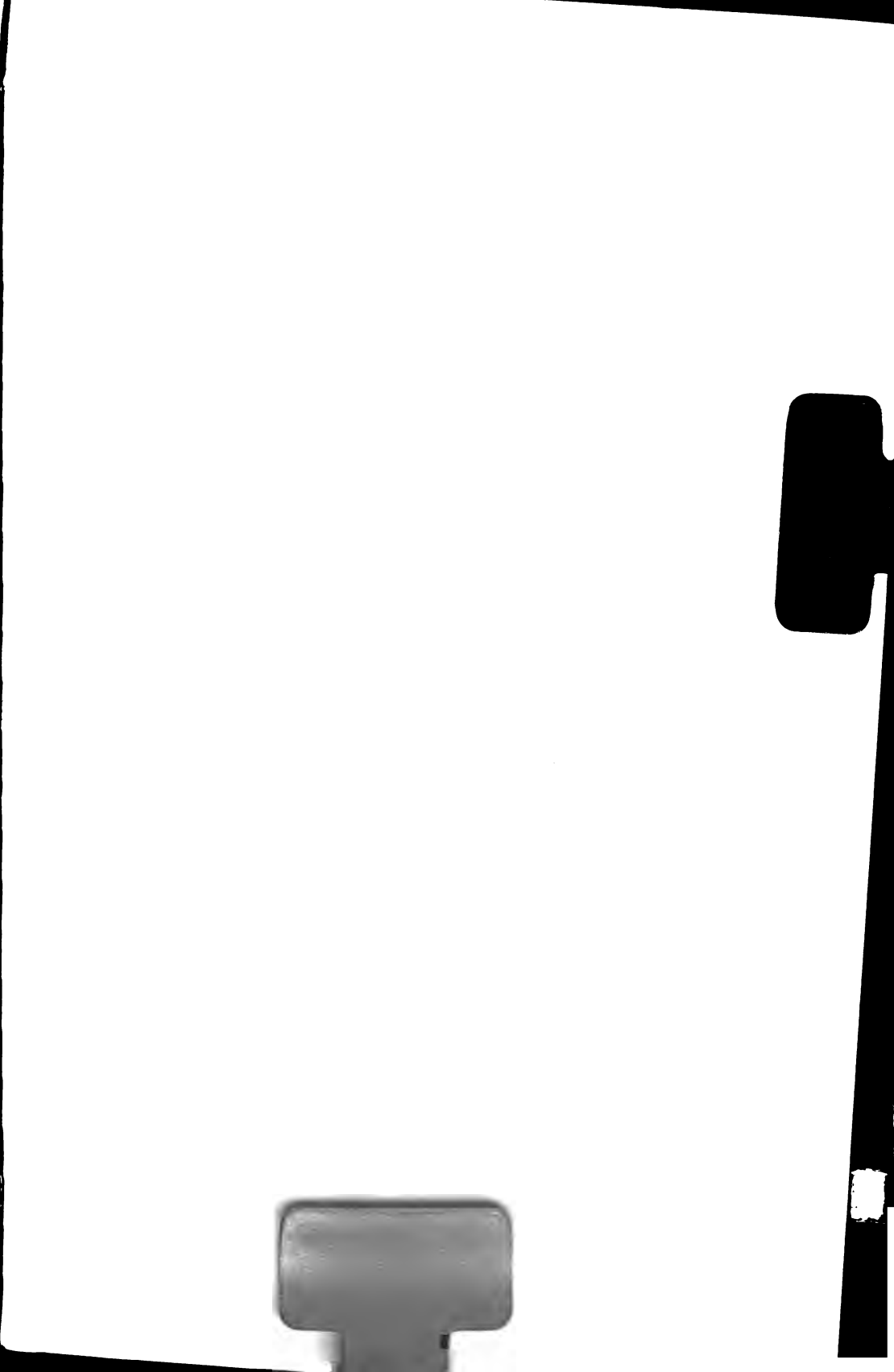
- (ii) At the national level: to capitalize on the positioning achieved, to advance to the formulation of State policies

The recognition of agriculture, the positioning achieved and the policy framework outlined in the second mandate

Quebec 2001 and in the Monterrey 2004 mandate, which derive from those strategic achievements, offer support to key actors in agriculture and rural life improvement. This can be viewed as an opportunity to join wills with other government ministers, legislators, organizations associated with the rural milieu, and the scientific and academic community, to seek resources, build a favorable institutional framework and carry out joint actions to improve agriculture and rural life.

Lastly, the reassessment of agriculture and rural life, and their positioning on the inter-American agenda between 2001 and 2004, has multiple implications for the future of agriculture and rural life in the Americas. The strategic advances achieved to date are grounds for a revitalization of efforts aimed at joint regional and national levels to improve agriculture and rural life. Likewise, such revitalization is necessary for the consolidation, in 2005 and beyond, of the positioning achieved and the implications of same, with a view of advancing toward the Shared Vision 2015.

Such implications are not only technical or strictly agricultural in nature, but rather, range from the political realm to the seemingly simplest aspects of the activities of the citizens of a country, including their perceptions and appreciations. This refers to the needs for a change of mentality; a change on the part of not only the key actors of agriculture, but also society in general, to build a new **“agri-culture”** (new culture for agriculture and rural life).





Ministerial Meetings "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas"
held within the context of the Summits of the Americas Process



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