



Inter-American Institute for  
Cooperation on Agriculture

# Environmental and Social Sustainability Policy

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## **A. Introduction**

1. This policy sets forth the mission of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) with respect to the environment, society and its contributions to sustainable development; it expresses the Institute's commitment to incorporate environmental and social considerations into its institutional management and technical cooperation activities and provides the foundation for establishing the objectives, the environmental and social performance standards and the Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) that will complement the policy.
2. This document establishes the guidelines, principles and processes through which IICA implements its environmental and social management system in relation to institutional management and the technical cooperation provided to its Member States.
3. The implementation of these guidelines will be determined by, and is subject to, the commitments and strategies defined by the Member States in the context of the binding and voluntary international agreements on environmental and social issues.
4. This policy complements and is reinforced by other related policies applied in the Institute, such as the Code of Ethics, the Gender Policy, the Policy on the Prevention and Resolution of Sexual Harassment and the Labor Policy.

## **B. Purpose**

5. To formalize, through a policy instrument, the determination and commitment assumed by the Institute in recent decades to promote the environmental and social aspects of sustainable development in agriculture and the rural milieu.

## **C. Background**

6. IICA's work reflects its commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and the environment that supports life, agriculture and rural wellbeing. This commitment is expressed in the Institute's Charter as well as in its medium term plans, programs, projects and technical cooperation activities in the countries.
7. During more than 75 years of history, IICA's mission has been to encourage, promote and support its Member States in their efforts to achieve agricultural development and rural wellbeing through international technical cooperation of excellence.

8. IICA remains committed to its vision to create a competitive, inclusive and sustainable agriculture that feeds the hemisphere and the world, while at the same time generating opportunities to reduce hunger and poverty among farmers and rural dwellers.
9. In the context of results-based management, the Institute has adopted a set of environmental and social performance standards (PS) to which projects must adhere, taking into account the main impacts and socio-environmental considerations.
10. Given its nature and mandates, the Institute supports and implements projects with the potential to produce environmental and social benefits, such as the socio-economic benefits generated in the communities involved; where appropriate and feasible, it also tries to ensure that the stakeholders affected by the projects have equitable access to those benefits.
11. By virtue of its principles and values, IICA places special emphasis on agricultural projects of an environmental and social nature in priority areas for the countries, which promote mitigation and adaptation to climate change; and projects that address issues such as desertification, biodiversity, environmental conservation, energy efficiency and optimization of natural resources. Another top priority is to implement agricultural and rural development projects aimed at alleviating poverty, creating decent jobs, reducing social exclusion, providing access to basic services and promoting gender equity, transparency and social development.
12. The Institute promotes resilient agriculture and recognizes the importance of actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change in agriculture and the rural milieu, as a high priority for the American continent.
13. IICA is governed by, and is strongly committed to, the principles of institutional transparency, timely accountability and direct and active participation by stakeholders. It issues regular information, news and reports on the performance of its projects and actions in all their economic, environmental, social, cultural and institutional aspects. It establishes participatory and constructive consensus-building and dialogue processes with partners, allies and beneficiaries of its projects and actions. The Institute also promotes similar practices among its partners, and with the governments of its Member States.

#### **D. Framework of mandates**

14. IICA is the specialized agency of the Inter-American System for agriculture and, in accordance with its Convention, its mission is to encourage, promote and support its Member States in their efforts to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being.

15. The Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), IICA's highest governing body, is comprised of the Member States of IICA. Pursuant to Article 8 of the Convention on IICA, the IABA is responsible for adopting measures related to the policy and action of the Institute; approving the Institute's strategic plan, medium-term plans and policies; issuing political, administrative and technical resolutions; and fostering the Institute's cooperation with organizations, agencies and entities that pursue similar objectives. Moreover, the Member States participate in the Meeting of Ministers, which, by means of a resolution of the OAS, is recognized as the main forum for agriculture of the Americas.
16. The Institute's 2010-2020 Strategic Plan establishes the following as one of its Strategic Objectives: *"Enhancing agriculture's capacity to mitigate the effects of and adapt to climate change and make better use of natural resources."* This calls for the preparation and implementation of environmental sustainability policies for the technical cooperation provided in the 34 Member States.
17. Environmental sustainability and improving the social conditions of the rural population are priorities of IICA's lines of action. For this reason, the Institute's Medium Terms Plans focus primarily on technical cooperation aimed at supporting initiatives that promote the development of a sustainable and resilient agriculture, the rational use of natural resources (especially water and soil) and comprehensive management of agricultural risk.
18. The IABA has issued a number of resolutions granting specific mandates to the Institute with respect to sustainable development, natural resources, growing climate variability and environmental risks associated with agriculture and rural life. The most recent are: i) Resolution 499 of the Eighteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture, held in 2015, which resolved to capitalize on the experiences and lessons learned from the ministerial process associated with Plan AGRO 2003-2015 in defining a sustainable development agenda for agriculture up to 2030, taking into consideration the 17 Goals and 169 Targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, many of which are closely associated with agriculture and rural wellbeing in the countries of the Americas; and ii) Resolution No. 482 on "Strengthening capabilities for managing water resources for agriculture in the Americas," adopted at the Seventeenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture in 2013.

## **E. Scope**

19. This policy is based on the concept of sustainable development (SD) and covers its social and environmental dimensions. In that context, it applies both to the internal activities required for the functioning of all the IICA offices and units in the Americas and Spain, as well as for managing the technical cooperation provided to its Member States, whether

financed with its own resources or with external contributions. The policy is also applicable to the Institute's procurement processes for resources and inputs, activities, products or deliverables, technical cooperation programs and projects and the management of the Institute's buildings and facilities. Therefore, the policy of social and environmental sustainability, in all its aspects, must be applied in all projects implemented by the Institute, as well as in its technical and administrative activities.

For the purposes of this policy, the analyses of the social dimension of technical cooperation should consider all aspects that have an impact on the well-being of communities, including public health, food safety and food security, gender equality, the impact on indigenous populations, the protection of cultural heritage and access to basic services, etc.

The policy is to be implemented by all regular staff of the Institute as well as by external collaborators contracted by IICA for institutional management and technical cooperation.

## **F. Objectives**

20. The Policy objectives are:

- To strengthen the institutional regulatory framework in order to achieve a competitive, sustainable and inclusive agriculture and improve rural wellbeing.
- To establish basic guidelines for the environmental and social sustainability of sustainable development.
- To ensure that institutional management and technical cooperation activities are environmentally and socially sustainable.
- To promote environmental and social sustainability through the establishment of an environmental and social management system (ESMS) that will:
  - Incorporate environmental and social considerations in all its activities;
  - Define, as a strategic objective, efforts to promote projects with major social and environmental benefits;
  - Establish the environmental and social performance standards expected of our partners in joint actions;
  - Define the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders, both internal and external to IICA, in order to achieve results consistent with this policy and the relevant performance standards.
  - Incorporate a structured management of environmental and social risks in the institutional operational processes of planning, technical implementation, administration and monitoring and evaluation.

- Support capacity building efforts in agriculture and the rural milieu to facilitate compliance, at the national, regional and hemispheric levels, with environmental and social commitments, assumed in a differentiated manner by the countries.

## **G. Guidelines**

21. The Institute's work in the area of environmental and social sustainability will be governed by the following general and specific guidelines, which are mandatory.

### **General Guidelines**

22. Based on its vision, the Institute will work to ensure that the principles of sustainable and environmentally sound development are integrated throughout its activities.

In the process for the selection of projects and actions with significant environmental and social impacts, IICA will use as its main guide or reference the Performance Standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the World Bank (WB).

23. The Institute's main functions in relation to environmental and social issues will be: (i) to develop appropriate and efficient measures to avoid or, where this is not possible, to minimize, mitigate or compensate for adverse social and environmental impacts, in accordance with the performance standards adopted; (ii) to identify opportunities that generate additional environmental and social benefits; (iii) to monitor compliance with environmental and social commitments during implementation of its projects; (iv) to monitor compliance with those commitments in projects implemented by its partners; and (v) to support countries in the development of their own environmental and social policies for agriculture and rural development.
24. The Institute will strengthen the impact assessments of projects and actions in which it participates, in order to ensure that these explicitly reflect the systemic aspects of sustainable development and its strategic benefits.
25. IICA will participate in projects with the potential to contribute to the sustainable development of the country or countries in which they are implemented, and which significantly benefit the communities involved in economic, social and environmental terms. To this end, the Institute will establish cooperation processes and strategic partnerships with stakeholders of the agricultural sector in order to add value to its activities, strengthen the environmental sustainability of its actions, contribute to the

generation of results and improve their environmental and social management capabilities.

26. The Institute expects the project managers, particularly the national counterparts, to regularly interact with the communities affected by and involved in the projects, by disseminating information, establishing ongoing consultations and encouraging informed participation, in order to anticipate, assess and resolve any unwanted impacts associated with the projects.
27. In its activities, the Institute will adopt an approach aimed at preventing the inappropriate use of natural resources and will promote the conservation, management and sustainable use of those resources in economic and productive activities of agriculture; it is also committed to ensuring that all its activities and outputs include safeguard measures to protect sensitive habitats and, where possible, improve natural habitats and their biodiversity.
28. Through its projects, activities and expected outputs, the Institute will seek to contribute to the effective implementation of international principles and standards, whether legally binding or voluntary, applied by the Member States, related to the environment, labor, corporate social responsibility and public access to information.
29. The Institute will not support or implement projects that could potentially infringe the obligations assumed by countries under international treaties and agreements related to environmental protection, human rights and sustainable development, as identified during the process of project selection and implementation of proposals.
30. IICA will work in partnership and cooperation with national and international development agencies and financial institutions, both of a bilateral and multilateral nature, with special emphasis on institutions of the Inter-American System and of the United Nations System.
31. Whenever the Institute co-finances or implements projects with other financing and implementing agencies, it will coordinate with these to agree on a common approach to the design or formulation and management of the project, as well as its implementation, monitoring and evaluation requirements.
32. The Institute will participate in policy dialogues and, where appropriate, will provide technical assistance to support governments and other partners in addressing structural or specific issues related to sustainable development.
33. In its internal operations, the Institute will establish good environmental management practices, including energy efficiency and optimization in the use of resources (recycling, saving water and reducing waste).
34. With regard to staff management, IICA will promote equitable opportunities, a balance between work and leisure time and occupational health and safety.



35. The Institute will seek to work with service providers and contractors who apply high environmental and social standards in their work. The Institute will also consider the questions of environmental and social sustainability in the procurement of goods and services for internal use.

## Specific Guidelines

### Technical cooperation in project management

36. IICA's project proposals and activities will be analyzed through a selection process that includes the stages of identification, prioritization, design or formulation, monitoring, evaluation and risk mitigation, in the context of results-based management. In the case of projects identified with significant risks, an additional environmental and social assessment will be carried out to provide the institution with elements to decide on the advisability of its implementation and on the environmental and social issues to be addressed during its negotiation, planning, financing, design or formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
37. By means of an appropriate selection process, IICA will work to ensure that its institutional projects and actions are:
- Socially and environmentally sustainable;
  - Respect the rights of the individuals and communities involved;
  - Are designed and implemented in line with the relevant legal (national laws, international agreements) and technical requirements, and recommended national and international good practices.
  - Promote the resilience of agriculture and its adaptation to and mitigation of growing climate variability.
38. The Institute's environmental and social assessment of proposals will form part of the project cycle, and will include analysis of environmental and social risks and of the opportunities derived from this approach. The scope of the assessment will be determined by the nature and scale of the project or activity, and will be proportional to the potential level of risk and adverse environmental and social impacts. The assessment should ensure that any activities to be supported or implemented by the Institute are executed in line with the Performance Standards (PS).
39. The project executor, if other than IICA, is responsible for ensuring that the necessary due diligence studies are carried out and that information is disseminated in a transparent manner.

40. The environmental and social evaluation of projects conducted by the Institute includes consideration of three elements: (i) the environmental and social impacts and issues associated with the proposed project or activity; (ii) the capacity and commitment of the executor, if other than IICA, to consider those impacts and questions in accordance with this policy and include mitigation measures, if required; and (iii) the role of third parties in ensuring compliance with the policy.
41. The Institute may refuse to support or implement proposed projects citing environmental or social reasons, based on current policies. For example, if a proposed project fails to properly address environmental and social issues and is unable to meet the requirements defined in the Performance Standards of this policy within a period of time considered reasonable by IICA; or when the residual adverse impacts are considered unacceptable.

### **Categorization of projects**

42. The Institute establishes the following categories for its projects based on environmental and social criteria:
  - Category A: The project or activity has the potential to produce significant adverse environmental and/or social effects or impacts, which cannot be clearly determined or identified during the selection phase, and which therefore require a formal and participatory assessment process to be carried out by a group of independent specialists, in conformity with the Performance Standards (PS).
  - Category B: The project or activity has the potential to produce adverse environmental and/or social impacts that are typically very clearly defined and specific to the location where the project is implemented, or are rapidly identified and mitigatable with pre-established measures. Those impacts may be the result of past or current activities. The requirements of due diligence may vary with each project and will be agreed on a case by case basis with the Institute, in accordance with the PS.
  - Category C: The proposed project or activity will probably have minimal or no adverse environmental and social impacts, and therefore will not require environmental and/or social assessments other than that required for IICA to assign a category.

The Institute will assign a category to each project, according to the previously identified level of environmental and social risk.

43. The initial environmental and social assessments will be carried out by a team of specialists designated by IICA, in the event that the information available on the project at the time of categorization is insufficient to determine the appropriate category and the scope of due diligence.

### **Stakeholder participation**

44. The initial environmental and social assessment conducted by IICA will identify the stakeholders potentially affected and/or benefited by the project, in order to obtain information to help determine the possible environmental and social impacts that the project could generate and provide guidance for the consultations that should take place with stakeholders in a broad and culturally appropriate manner, particularly for projects classified as Category A. The Institute should establish a strategy for properly identifying all the interested parties and guaranteeing their effective participation.
45. The documentation presented to the relevant institutional unit of IICA for approval of a project, activity or other instrument of action should include a description of the program, the participation of stakeholders, together with comments and opinions on the project's practices, or on the project's potential impact from the perspective of the stakeholders, and the way in which these issues are or will be addressed by IICA or by the implementing organization. In its decisions, IICA's Programming Committee will take into account the comments and concerns expressed by stakeholders regarding the evaluation of the potential risks and benefits of each project, activity or other instrument of action.

### **Use of Performance Standards**

46. The projects supported or implemented by IICA must adhere to international good practices associated with sustainable development. Accordingly, IICA will adopt a set of Performance Standards (PS) on environmental and social sustainability implemented by international cooperation and financial organizations. These standards, which cover key areas related to environmental and social sustainability and are to be observed in the design, evaluation, approval and implementation of projects, are listed below:
  - PS 1: Assessment and management of environmental and social risks and impacts.
  - PS 2: Labor and working conditions.
  - PS 3: Resource efficiency and pollution prevention and management.
  - PS 4: Community health, safety and security.
  - PS 5: Land acquisition and involuntary resettlement.
  - PS 6: Biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of living natural resources.
  - PS 7: Indigenous peoples.
  - PS 8: Cultural heritage.

PS 9: Financial intermediaries.

PS 10: Dissemination of information and stakeholder participation.

47. The Performance Standards do not replace national laws, but rather complement them.
48. The requirements applicable to the project, activity or other technical cooperation instrument should be considered in light of the Performance Standards, and should be appropriately addressed and incorporated into the project document to be submitted to the pertinent internal body.

## **H. Implementation and organization**

49. IICA will incorporate the relevant environmental and social considerations in its processes for the selection and management of initiatives and technical cooperation projects, in order to contribute to the development of agriculture and rural well-being in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and their targets.
50. These processes will be primarily aimed at:
- Identifying, managing and consolidating technical, political and financial partnerships to address and promote national, regional and global environmental and social issues.
  - Monitoring the evolution of international environmental and social treaties and conventions in order to continuously update the Institute's environmental and social policy.
  - Ensuring appropriate interaction between the unit responsible for environmental and social management and other technical and administrative units involved in the Institute's environmental and social management in its 34 Offices in the countries.
  - Strengthening the capabilities of the Institute's staff to raise the level of knowledge and awareness in the use of tools for managing environmental and social issues.
  - Improving the environmental and social performance of agriculture and the rural milieu in the Member States of IICA, through the implementation of joint projects and the identification of opportunities for mitigating the impacts.
  - Promoting resilient agriculture in order to increase its ability to adapt to growing climate variability.
  - Participating in international discussions on the homologation of environmental and social procedures and guidelines, as well as the study of best practices for the analysis of development and cooperation projects.

51. In order to implement this policy, IICA will establish an appropriate organizational framework and institutional operating mechanism for environmental and social management.

### **I. Reports**

52. IICA has established two mechanisms to receive and respond to reports, which will allow persons to submit and channel their reports or complaints regarding the issues dealt with in this Policy in a confidential manner, namely:

- the official Internet site: [iica.int](http://iica.int), in the REPORTING/ COMPLAINTS section and
- the email address [ec.ce@iica.int](mailto:ec.ce@iica.int).

All reports, complaints, investigations, reports and information in reference to the reported matter shall be examined and analyzed objectively by the Institute's Ethics Committee, which will determine an approach, disciplinary measures and corresponding actions.

If the complainant so requests, he or she will be informed in a timely manner of the processing of the complaint and, if appropriate, of the outcome of the investigation. To this end, the complainant must provide an e-mail address.

### **J. Dissemination of the Policy**

53. This policy will be widely circulated to the staff and other interested parties through IICA's internal and external communications, education and training mechanisms.

## Glossary

**Adaptation to climate change.** Adjustment in natural or human systems to a new or changing environment. Adaptation to climate change refers to adjustments in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli, or their effects, which moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. Various types of adaptation can be distinguished, including anticipatory and reactive adaptation, public and private adaptation, and autonomous and planned adaptation. (Third Assessment Report of the IPCC, 2001). <https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/glossary/tar-ipcc-terms-sp.pdf>

**Climate change.** The term "climate change" means a change of climate attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods. (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change).

**Client.** The term "client" is used throughout the Performance Standards to refer in broad terms to the party responsible for implementing and operating the project that is being financed, or the recipient of the financing, depending on the project structure and type of financing. (International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group, Performance Standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability, 2012).

**Sustainable Development.** Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits, but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth. (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987:29).

**Environmental and social due diligence.** Environmental and social due diligence involves the systematic identification, quantification and assessment/evaluation of environmental and social risks associated with a proposed transaction. This process also helps identify the mitigation measures that are necessary to reduce any environmental and social risk that are detected. Conducting environmental and social due diligence on transactions is a critical component of a financial institution's Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS), and its outcome should be factored in to the decision-making process for proceeding with a transaction. (International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group).

[https://firstforsustainability.org/es/risk-management/managing-environmental-and-social-risk-2\\_2/components-of-an-esms/environmental-and-social-due-diligence/](https://firstforsustainability.org/es/risk-management/managing-environmental-and-social-risk-2_2/components-of-an-esms/environmental-and-social-due-diligence/)

**Gender equity.** A set of measures that serve to compensate for historical disadvantages that prevent men and women from enjoying equal access to the benefits of development and seek to provide equal access to decision-making, opportunities and power. (IICA Gender Policy, 2016). [http://intranet.iica.int/Normativa2/AF\\_politica\\_de\\_genero.pdf](http://intranet.iica.int/Normativa2/AF_politica_de_genero.pdf)

**Environmental Impact Assessment, EIA.** A technical-administrative procedure used to identify, prevent and interpret the environmental and social impacts that may be produced by a project in the event of being implemented, to ensure that the competent administration can accept, reject or modify it. (Environmental and Social Safeguards. Development Bank of Latin America, 2016).

<https://www.caf.com/media/5614351/salvaviduas%20environmental%20y%20social%20caf.pdf>

**Social and environmental impacts.** These refer to any change, potential or actual, to i) the physical, natural or cultural environment and ii) the impacts on the surrounding community and workers, resulting from the business activity to be supported. (International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group, 2012).

**Exclusion list.** A list of excluded activities that will not be financed due to environmental and social implications or other concerns of the organization or its shareholders.

**Environment.** The ensemble of physical, chemical, biological and social components capable of causing direct or indirect effects, in the short or long term, on living beings and human activities. (United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 1972)

**Mitigation of climate change.** An anthropogenic intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases. (Third Evaluation Report of the IPCC, 2001)  
<https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/glossary/tar-ipcc-terms-sp.pdf>

**Environmental and Social Performance Standards.** An international reference for the identification and management of environmental and social risk. These establish criteria for cooperation and financial institutions regarding the environmental and social sustainability requirements to be met by clients/recipients of investment.

**Resilience.** The ability to prevent disasters and crises as well as to anticipate, absorb, accommodate or recover from them in a timely, efficient and sustainable manner. This includes protecting, restoring and improving livelihood systems in the face of threats that impact agriculture, nutrition, food security and food safety.

In other words, resilience is the ability of people, communities or systems that are confronted by disasters or crises to withstand damage and to recover rapidly. Therefore, the aim is to develop the capacities of families, communities and institutions to protect people and

livelihoods through measures to avoid (prevention) or limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse effects of hazards and to prevent these in a reliable and timely manner. (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization - FAO). <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/como-trabajamos/es/>

**Social Responsibility.** An organization's responsibility for the impacts of its decisions and activities (products, services and processes) on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behavior that:

- contributes to sustainable development, including the health and well-being of society;
- takes into account the expectations of stakeholders;
- is in compliance with applicable law and is consistent with international norms of behavior; and
- is integrated throughout the organization and is practiced in its relationships

(ISO 26 000: Guidance on social responsibility)

**Environmental and social risk.** A combination of the probability that certain dangerous events will occur and the severity of the impacts that these cause. (International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group, 2012).

**Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS). Definition and elements.** A set of processes and practices for systematically implementing an institution's policies in order to achieve its objectives. The ESMS incorporates the following elements: i) policy, ii) identification of risks and impacts, iii) management programs, iv) organizational capacity and competency, v) emergency preparedness and response, vi) stakeholder participation, (vii) external communications and complaints mechanism (viii) regular reporting to the affected communities and (ix) monitoring and evaluation. (International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group, 2015).

**Decent work.** Refers to opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. (International Labour Organization). <http://www.oit.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--es/index.htm>



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