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**Report by the Director General on his management
during the period 2018-2022**

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Results of the Administration of Manuel Otero as Director General of IICA (2018-2022)

Commitment, implementation, the pandemic, the future, results

In 2017, as the candidate nominated by the Republic of Argentina to assume the office of Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Manuel Otero presented his vision to the member countries of the Institute, as well as the proposals on which he would establish his administration of IICA, in a presentation entitled

“A new hour for agriculture in the Americas”.

While at that time it was impossible to predict what the world would endure in 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the context in 2016 and 2017 foreshadowed greater difficulties, conflicts and challenges for humanity, in which agriculture would play a leading role as part of the solutions required by the global dynamic. The Institute would need to prepare quickly.

Under that slogan, as Director General, Manuel Otero made it his first priority to define the Medium-Term Plan (MTP) for the period encompassing 2018-2022, which was aligned with existing conditions and adapted to the reality of IICA.

From his very first days as the head of the Institute, Otero implemented a management strategy aimed at institutional transformation, one that has endeavored to overcome limitations and difficulties, but that has also understood that the external context holds important opportunities for the agriculture sector of the Americas and, in turn, for a transformed IICA.

During the current administration, the Institute has been on track to become an institute that is: i) oriented to serving its 34 member countries in the Americas, operating under an interactive, multidimensional model aimed at strengthening finances, administration and operation; ii) based on processes that underpin the efficiency and effectiveness of technical cooperation and external fundraising to provide more and better cooperation; iii) supported by knowledge management and partnerships with public and private stakeholders, a dynamic in which IICA listens to what its mandators and partners say before making proposals and taking action; and iv) that promotes dialogue and action on the subregional and multinational levels, recognizing and respecting the agricultural, environmental, economic, social and cultural conditions and uniqueness of each subregion or country.

To achieve this transformation, the Institute is promoting the following renewed functions: i) to stimulate permanent regional and hemispheric dialogue and debate on the present and future of agriculture; ii) to foster international partnerships to address strategic topics on agriculture and the environment; iii) to encourage public-private partnerships and complementarity on topics relevant to agriculture and the rural environment; iv) to promote the dissemination, knowledge and adoption of best practices (political, technological, commercial and environmental, among others) developed in our member countries to benefit the performance of agriculture in the Americas; and v) to support and promote a new

generation of policies for agriculture, the environment and rural development, adapted to the demands of the new hemispheric and world order.

From an operational perspective, the processes of institutional planning, programming and management have been modified and aligned based on the goals established in the following Strategic Statements:

1. To provide technical cooperation of excellence through its network of offices, within the framework of five programs aimed at fostering sustainable agricultural and rural development, following the principles of interdisciplinary and focused work.
2. To evolve towards an integrated and specialized knowledge management platform for the countries, through the use of information and communication technologies in agriculture, capacity building, the dissemination of good practices and lessons learned, communication for development, the promotion of networks, and horizontal cooperation.
3. To develop public-private strategic partnerships and agreements for the benefit of the agriculture sector in the member countries, by implementing projects of common interest based on shared values.
4. To address the needs of regional and interregional cooperation in support of the agriculture sector, in a timely and effective manner.
5. To carry out efficient administrative management based on a process culture, decentralization and results-based continuous improvement.
6. To strengthen the Institute's finances by optimizing operations, utilizing institutional resources in a rational manner, increasing the amount of external resources secured and executing development and investment projects.
7. To foster a conscious leadership style that strengthens staff members' capabilities and collaborative work in a safe and healthy work environment.
8. To modernize the governing bodies by fostering broad public dialogue, transparency and private-sector participation.
9. To drive affirmative institutional actions that foster an inclusive and diverse workforce.
10. To become an IICA with "open doors", that is environmentally responsible and involved in the community.

In the thick of the institutional transformation process, the world and the Institute were taken by surprise by an unprecedented global crisis brought on by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. While IICA has been able to endure thanks to the changes implemented to date and the decisive support of its member countries, the situation has compelled it to accelerate its transformation and to expedite the creation of a new institutional business model in which

the differentiating factor is the Institute's capacity to provide services and technical cooperation products that are timely, relevant, flexible, high-quality and readily accessible, based on: i) the consolidation of technical equipment for knowledge integration; ii) a network of offices across the hemisphere; iii) demonstrated administrative, legal and operational capacity and suitability; and iv) a network of alliances with international programs and organizations.

With this, IICA aspires to achieve a culture of service, of customer relations, of accountability and of continuous assessment of customer satisfaction to satisfy the most demanding of corporate service standards.

In 2022, the Institute will celebrate 80 years of continuous work since its establishment. This milestone represents an excellent opportunity to review and adapt the Institute's mission and vision based on the lessons learned over the last eight decades and to take stock of the experiences gleaned from the global and hemispheric crises that have impacted society (such as the current pandemic), as well as emerging issues (such as the transformation created by digital technologies). This anniversary will also be an opportune moment to propose the necessary institutional changes to reconfigure the role that the agriculture sector of the Americas plays in agrifood systems, and by so doing to reposition and revalue the role of agriculture and farmers, and to promote a socially and environmentally responsible agriculture sector that contributes significantly to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030; that positively utilizes available knowledge and technological development, that fosters the inclusion of youth; and that provides equal opportunities and conditions for women.

The effort has been arduous, and we have had to overcome difficult situations and moments, which is why it is with pride and profound humility that we present the results, achievements and progress made since 2018, thanks to the work of our staff and the decisive support of our member countries, allies and partners that are part of the journey that IICA must take in the upcoming years.

Technical cooperation of excellence

As part of the MTP 2018-2022, an institutional work model was established that prioritizes technical cooperation based on knowledge management and focusing on five programs (Bioeconomy and Production Development; Territorial Development and Family Farming; International Trade and Regional Integration; Climate Change, Natural Resources and Management of Production Risks; and Agricultural Health, Safety and Food Quality) and two cross-cutting issues (Gender and Youth; and Innovation and Technology) that bolster the actions of the Directorate of Technical Cooperation (DTC), through the establishment and consolidation of internal and external collaboration networks, an interdisciplinary approach, and horizontal cooperation that augment and reinforce the Institute's technical critical mass and leadership on strategic issues.

Within the framework of the technical cooperation programs, over 850 actions have been undertaken at the regional, national and hemispheric levels, including the following examples:

- Leadership and promotion of the circular bioeconomy, under the Bioeconomy and Production Development Program, through the development of courses aimed at capacity building in public policy formulation and biobusiness development;
- Capacity development in the countries to assist them in developing strategies to achieve the goals established in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), through the formulation of proposals on agriculture and climate change for the Readiness Program of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) or proposals for the development of sustainable agriculture, under the leadership of the Climate Change, Natural Resources and Management of Production Risks Program;
- The promotion and development of digital agriculture and agriculture 4.0 tools for family farming cooperatives in the hemisphere, through the Territorial Development and Family Farming Program;
- The development of virtual e-commerce methodologies and the organization of highly successful virtual business roundtables, spearheaded by the International Trade and Regional Integration Program; and
- Traditional national capacity building in areas such as health, safety and Codex, among others, through the Agricultural Health, Safety and Food Quality Program, in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

All of these actions were carried out, while bearing in mind the need to ensure the inclusion of women, rural youth and marginalized groups, and under the firm conviction that the approach applied should focus on the strengthening of innovation and technology.

The clearest manifestation of the Institute's strategic positioning and implementation of the slogan that underpins the MTP (*IICA knows who knows*) can be seen in its extremely important hemispheric initiatives, most notably the following:

- The Living Soils of the Americas Program (LiSAm), in collaboration with The Ohio State University and under the esteemed leadership of Dr. Rattan Lal, 2020 World Food Prize laureate, which brings together and involves partners in the public, private, academic and productive sectors to help position agriculture's global contribution to soil carbon sequestration. It is a visible indication that agriculture is part of the solution to climate change and other challenges faced by humanity.
- Mission DAA (Digital Agriculture in Action), which includes various digital agriculture activities that the Institute is promoting (blockchain, the Internet of Things, the Agritech network, etc.). Key among these are digital technical assistance activities that have been implemented in Brazil and Colombia, among other countries

in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), in collaboration with the non-governmental organization, Precision Agriculture for Development (PAD), which is headed by Dr. Michael Kremer, 2019 winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics.

- Various partnerships that are being forged, focusing on topics such as the digital inclusion and insertion of rural populations; the promotion of the inclusion and recognition of rural women; rural youth; technological innovation; and science-based decision-making.
- The launch of the Digital Fabrication Lab for Agriculture, in partnership with Costa Rica's Ministry of Science and Technology. It is a model that is scalable at the hemispheric level, facilitating the inclusion of youth in agriculture, by way of environments that foster creativity and innovation for a sustainable agriculture 4.0.
- Enhanced technical participation in the cooperation mechanisms of which IICA is a part and substantial strengthening of its institutional framework and relevance to address both historic problems, as well as the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Specific high-impact and strategic positioning actions in response to the pandemic, which have enabled the organization to continue offering technical cooperation of excellence in response to adversity. This includes:
 - The establishment of the Advisory Council for Food Security as a forum to analyze, reflect and propose the alternatives, measures and policies required by the agriculture sector and rural environment within the context of the pandemic. The Council is comprised of a group of distinguished leaders, who are recognized worldwide in the sphere of international agricultural cooperation.
 - The development of a number of technical cooperation and information tools for the countries, including: i) the Food Vulnerability Index; ii) the IICA Blog on topics related to the pandemic; and iii) tools and applications for communication, trade and agricultural extension services to support governments and farmers, especially in Central America and the Caribbean.

Finally, with a view to ensuring that the voice of agriculture of the Americas is represented at the United Nations Food Systems Summits 2021, which will be a forum for global discussion, the Institute has undertaken the following actions:

- Organization of extensive discussions on “agrifood systems” and “agriculture and climate change”, in response to the expressed mandate of our member countries and in fulfillment of our role as a Champion of the global Food Systems Summit, to which we were appointed by the United Nations (UN).
- Preparation of a general framework document on the status of agriculture in the Americas and of 11 technical proposals (digital agriculture, cooperatives, bioeconomy, agricultural trade, soil health, gender and youth, agriculture in the Caribbean, research and development, sustainable livestock and tropical agriculture) related to agrifood systems, many of which were developed in conjunction with institutions at the regional

(ACI Americas, CATIE and PROCISUR, inter alia) and international (ICARB, CIRAD, FAO, etc.) levels.

- In conjunction with the above, the hosting of approximately 30 dialogues, forums and independent meetings with government representatives, farmers, companies, academics and other stakeholders from all subregions of the Americas.
- Leadership of a process to develop agreements on agrifood system transformation in the Americas, in collaboration with the 34 member countries, which resulted in the crafting of 16 joint messages that were submitted to the Food Systems Pre-Summit (in Rome, Italy) by the Chair of IICA's Executive Committee and the Director General, along with other ministers and delegations from the countries of the Americas.
- Support for the involvement of the countries' ministers of Agriculture in the national dialogues organized in preparation for the Summit.

Challenges and pending tasks: To develop a technical cooperation portfolio on the following topics: water resource management, observatory or think tank on the new generation of policies, migration, funding for agriculture, intraregional trade and emerging issues on agricultural health and food safety (AHFS).

Knowledge management and horizontal cooperation

Within the framework of the 2018-2022 MTP, the Institute's knowledge management and horizontal cooperation agendas have been strengthened:

Major activities have been undertaken to update IICA's information management platforms; increase the availability of technical content; strengthen the online training and Visiting Professionals and Internship programs; and to reinforce platforms for experience sharing and horizontal cooperation. Specifically, with respect to institutional information management, all platforms were updated with new technical content, most notably the following:

- The AgriPerfiles network was made available to national institutions (and now includes professionals in institutions in various countries of the region).
- The system integrating the IICA and CATIE libraries was updated and indexed in the primary search engines, enabling better access to information, as well as access to high-level databases.
- A project was undertaken to transform the Orton Memorial Library. Close to 11,000 publications of the Institute were incorporated into the library's database, through a joint initiative with Google.

- The institutional repository was updated and indexed in the primary search engines and has increased access to information. It currently boasts approximately 2 million users annually.
- The SIDALC Alliance, a digital platform of libraries specializing in agricultural issues, was updated and continues to accommodate close to 2.5 million users each year.

In so far as the production of technical content is concerned, during the period more than 100 publications were prepared. Moreover, various studies and assessments have been developed in conjunction with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Microsoft and Oxford University, such as:

- Rural Connectivity in Latin America and the Caribbean
- The Digital Rural Gender Divide in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Digital Literacy in Rural Areas: An Indispensable Condition to Bridge the Divide in Latin America and the Caribbean, and
- The Digitalization of Agriculture as a Determining Factor in the Transformation of Food Systems: A Perspective from the Americas.

Most notable in the area of capacity building was the process to update and position the e-learning platform and the development of new training programs, resulting in achievements, such as:

- The positioning of the IICA platform as one of the leading platforms in agricultural content in the hemisphere
- Development of specific activities aimed at technical capacity building in collaboration with government institutions in the countries and strategic partners, such as the Ministry of Agriculture of Brazil and Bayer.
- Delivery of 140 courses to more than 100,000 participants and the issuing of more than 40,000 digital certificates – a record for the Institute.

With respect to experience sharing and the strengthening of horizontal cooperation, notable achievements include:

- The provision of more than 1,000 annual scholarships, through a partnership with the Ibero-American University Foundation (FUNIBER), for individuals in all countries of the region.
- Establishment of a Visiting Professionals and Internship Program that has enabled approximately 150 young professionals from different countries to participate in high-level activities, under the direction of the DTC and other units at Headquarters.

- Closer engagement with our primary partners and horizontal cooperation advocates, such as the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) and the United Nations Office for South-South Collaboration (UNOSSC). This engagement has facilitated a series of activities, such as the food security monitoring report for LAC, with SEGIB, and participation in meetings sponsored by the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund, managed by UNOSSC and the Group of 77 (G-77), to offer support for South-South and triangular cooperation.
- The systematization of IICA’s best practices, through the development of fact sheets documenting the organization’s experiences, which have been included in the institutional repository and on the platforms of partners, such as South-South Galaxy and UNOSSC. This has enabled the identification of initiatives in the countries that have succeeded in tackling problems in the agriculture sector brought on by the pandemic.
- Approval of a triangular cooperation project between countries in the Southern (Argentina and Paraguay) and Andean (Bolivia) regions, aimed at strengthening agricultural health systems and combatting the South American locust, through funding from the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund (the last time that IICA received approval for resources from this fund was 25 years ago, in 1996).

As a result of the implementation of the 2018-2022 MTP, the Center for Knowledge Management and Horizontal Cooperation Services was established, as a support platform for the DTC, the technical cooperation programs, the delegations and regional coordination offices.

Using virtual training resources, the Institute provides training courses and skills certification. It has delivered 75 virtual courses to 52,981 participants in 80 countries and issued 18,637 certificates of competency.

The Administration also spurred the process to systematize institutional best practices, mapping 67 experiences.

The Institute’s technical services and products were catalogued in “IICA’s technical cooperation instruments and tools management” portfolio.

The organization promoted horizontal and triangular cooperation among countries in the hemisphere, holding meetings and establishing linkages and collaborative plans in more than 12 events.

Also noteworthy were the efforts and results obtained in terms of assertive communication, institutional outreach activities and the generation of informational content for the press and for IICA’s social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube), as a result of which:

- The number of mentions of IICA in the media tripled between 2017 and 2020.
- In the aforementioned period, there was a substantial and measurable increase of over ten-fold in potential readership, from less than one million to 11 million annually, as

major communication media players in Latin America and the Caribbean began to routinely publish content produced by the Institute.

- This exposure has been key to projecting IICA’s image and generating a renewed interest in establishing partnerships with the Institute, supporting and also enhancing institutional dynamism and modernization.
- The same upward trend can be seen in the scope of the Institute’s social media presence, which boasted a ten-fold increase in followers and an exponential increase in content posted to these sites. In June alone, 1.3 million people viewed content produced by IICA and posted on these sites.

Through the press and social media, a successful campaign was launched to acknowledge and highlight the role of farmers during the COVID-19 pandemic, dubbed “*Popular music tribute to those who work day to day to put food on our tables*”.

In 2020, at the onset of the pandemic, the IICA General Directorate established its Advisory Committee on Communication for Agriculture and Food Security, comprising ten journalists from eight countries, as well as institutional communication professionals. The members are opinion leaders with a distinguished track record in the agrifood sector, who have also assisted in enhancing the Institute’s reputation, highlighting the important role of agriculture in our societies and focusing attention on agriculture and its logistics and marketing chains.

The greater exposure of the Institute has attracted increased attention from potential stakeholders that are interested in collaborating with the institute, which has also assisted in efforts to mobilize financial resources.

The Institute’s increased visibility can be explained primarily by the increase in IICA-produced content and the consistency of this material, which is disseminated in the market, bearing in mind the language and timelines established by the communication media for the publishing of news material.

It is also due to the caliber of media entities that IICA is now able to attract - organizations with the largest reach and most prestige in LAC.

Strategic partnerships and agreements

The Directorate of External and Institutional Relations (DIREXI) was reestablished and configured and is responsible for designing, coordinating and implementing an ambitious external relations plan for engagement with public and private institutions, international organizations, financial institutions and private companies, among other stakeholders. It has produced the following results:

- Map of strategic alliances with more than 210 partners;

- Agreements with more than 124 public institutions in 39 countries (members and observers);
- 15 agreements with international financial institutions; and
- Agreements and work plans with 16 companies and private organizations and 16 centers of knowledge and of academic excellence.

A new framework for building strategic partnerships was developed, aimed at nurturing, expanding and maintaining the Institute's network of cross-sector partners.

The joint and complementary work relationship with the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) was strengthened, based on the mandates and guidelines established by our member countries, thereby facilitating the development of a work master plan, as well as the establishment of the Joint IICA-CATIE Unit and a fund to bolster the Center's productivity.

The Institute's relationship and cooperation with FONTAGRO was renewed.

The traditional partnership and joint actions with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) were enhanced. Of particular note was the organization of three hemispheric meetings of ministers and secretaries of Agriculture and the undertaking of a number of subregional and national collaborative and complementary actions.

Having completed a rigorous institutional adaptation process, IICA has been accredited to the GCF, enabling it to present proposals for climate resilient projects for the agriculture sector of the Americas.

Efforts are underway to complete work on the pillar requirements for accreditation to the European Union.

The IICA Goodwill Ambassador and IICA Chair programs were established to enhance advocacy and the visibility of the agriculture sector. To date there are 9 IICA Goodwill Ambassadors and 4 IICA Chairs.

Relationships with various international, multilateral and regional organizations were strengthened to support the technical cooperation agenda of the Institute.

Regional and inter-regional cooperation

One of the strategic priorities of the Institute's current Administration has been to strengthen the delegations in the countries and the regional coordination mechanisms. Thus, the regional coordinator role has been reintroduced and a strategy to coordinate the operations and work of the offices in each region (Andean, Caribbean, Central, Northern and Southern) has been established, which is in addition to the extensive work taking place at the inter-regional level.

The Administration has prioritized the delivery of technical cooperation and the provision of administrative and logistical support and assistance to regional integration mechanisms and institutions, while also fostering new opportunities for coordination and integration among agricultural authorities:

- The agreements with the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS) and the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC) have been renewed, ratifying the Institute's commitment to assist and support the functioning of their executive and technical secretariats.
- The agreements and technical cooperation plans with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) have been ratified and extended.
- In collaboration with the Government of Colombia, the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and the FAO, IICA has promoted and supported the establishment of the Andean Agenda for Dialogue and Agricultural Integration.
- Meetings and dialogues have been facilitated with ministries of Agriculture and private stakeholders within the framework of the Pacific Basin Agreement, with five meetings having taken place to date.
- The Institute has participated in and provided support for more than 40 subregional meetings and dialogues with ministers of Agriculture:
 - 14 meetings in Central America and 2 in Mesoamerica,
 - 5 meetings with the Andean countries and 5 with Pacific Basin countries,
 - 7 meetings with ministers of the Caribbean, and
 - 10 meetings with ministers in the Southern Region.
- It has also coordinated and supported—in coordination with the FAO—the organization of three hemispheric meetings of ministers and secretaries of Agriculture, dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the agriculture sector.
- For three consecutive years, a special cooperation fund for the countries of the Caribbean has been established, thereby addressing the priority established in the 2018-2022 MTP, which maintained the need to develop practical projects in conjunction with the authorities and rural communities of these countries.
- A permanent coordination, planning and follow-up mechanism has been set up for the delegations, the regional coordination offices, the DTC, the technical cooperation programs and the Project Management Unit.

- Moreover, 7 hemispheric projects, 19 regional projects, 10 multinational projects and 124 national projects have been implemented.

Efficient administrative management

Guided by the seven principles of administrative management outlined in the MTP (transparency and accountability, decentralization and operational flexibility, budgetary administration, efficient and effective support of technical cooperation activities, timely information, a process culture, a results-based approach), from the outset, this Administration established two organizational priorities:

- Institutional transformation by way of a shift from a hierarchical culture to a process culture that promotes efficiency, alignment, coordination and collective work and that reduces time spent to respond to and address internal and external needs. This has been supported by a clear roadmap aimed at developing a new business model that will equip IICA with a greater capacity for anticipation, ensuring that is more pertinent, productive, relevant and financially sound.
- In conjunction with this transformation, the Institute's regulations and policies have been reviewed and updated, and automated systems have been implemented, as a means of providing tools to boost administrative management efficiency.

The objective has been efficient and effective institutional management, optimizing resources to deliver first-rate technical cooperation services.

The decentralization of operational management by way of multidisciplinary teams has been promoted, based on trust and the empowerment of human capital.

Budgetary allocations have been reviewed and resources reprogrammed, with the establishment of the Single Fund for Technical Cooperation and the Emergency Fund, while prioritizing the demands outlined in the strategic objectives and safeguarding the Institute's cash flow and operations. This allowed our Offices to continue to support the countries' efforts during times of uncertainty.

IICA responded decisively to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, prioritizing the continuation of its cooperation efforts, the health of staff and the cash flow, by streamlining the annual budget by close to USD 7 million.

On the level of planning, IICA has worked in an integrated manner, recognizing the unique characteristics of each country and the need for personalized attention when planning actions or strategies.

Based on the MTP—which is the Institute's strategic plan—10 Strategic Statements have been highlighted, which chart our collective course of action leading up to 2022. On the basis of these Statements, indicators were then identified to enable the organization to measure its progress towards the goals set for 2022, ensuring institutional alignment and the achievement

of first-rate results. These strategic indicators now serve as the basis for the Institute's annual programming exercises and recognition programs.

A rigorous process was conducted to monitor and evaluate projects and units to provide critical input for decision-making regarding the Institute's management strategy and the restructuring of IICA's 16 Delegations. Recently, a risk management system was implemented, which will allow the Institute to respond more proactively to opportunities or challenges affecting its cooperation services and projects.

The institutional network of delegations and offices in the countries was streamlined. Sixteen offices were restructured (Canada, United States, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) and 6 delegations were strengthened (Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, The Bahamas, Saint Lucia and Suriname), in a bid to improve administrative efficiency, relationships and the technical capacity of the Institute in all its member countries, in addition to reinforcing interaction and coordination with the DTC, through the technical cooperation programs and mechanisms; with the Directorate of Corporate Services, through its divisions and network of administrators; and with the Project Management Division.

The evaluation exercises are based on institutional policies and on the recently updated work guidelines, thus ensuring an objective and constructive process aimed at continuous improvement. These dynamics have also incorporated scenario building and the capitalization of experiences, thereby expanding the portfolio of solutions of IICA's technical cooperation services.

The automation of institutional processes has also enabled us to promote the concept of digital agriculture, increasing the use of new digital technologies in the countries. For example, IICA has organized multiple hackathons, generating innovations to address real needs. It has also offered training courses to instruct participants on technology use and inform them about the development of new technologies.

Through digital processes and information and communication technologies, the Institute has boosted its productivity and reduced bureaucracy.

Since 2018, a series of measures and a strategy aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Institute's management indicators has been established, optimizing the allocation and use of resources to provide first-class technical cooperation services. Of particular note are the:

- Rationalization of resources: USD 7 million in savings from the budget, through:
 - A review of the staff structure, particularly at Headquarters;
 - Promotion of a voluntary separation plan at Headquarters and in some of the offices, enabling rationalization of resources to the tune of USD 1.6 million;

- Restructuring of delegations, thus optimizing resource use and resulting in a USD 1.5 million reduction in expenses;
 - Review and adjustment of the fleet of vehicles of the offices and Headquarters, leading to a USD 400,000 rationalization of resources;
 - Negotiation of the rental costs of our offices, achieving savings of USD 210,000 per year;
 - Renegotiation of service contracts, thus optimizing resources by USD 200,000 per year;
 - Use of communication technologies at our meetings and events, thereby slashing expenditure by USD 170,000 per year;
 - Sustainable energy and “zero paper” initiatives, generating savings of USD 150,000 per year; and
 - Rationalization of travel costs, resulting in savings of approximately USD 550,000 per year.
- Decentralization: This was applied in 80 % of the offices, for the approval of externally funded projects.
 - Process culture: Eleven macro-processes were documented, whereas procedures were simplified and reduced by 85 %. This measure is promoting the transformation of the Institute from a hierarchical culture to a process culture that aims for efficiency, by significantly reducing the duration and steps involved in executing tasks, while facilitating alignment, coordination, collaboration and the implementation of automated administrative programs.
 - Budgetary management: A unique and standardized model has been created for all of the Institute’s programming; it is based on indicators and interrelates the 10 Strategic Statements, the National Strategic Action Plan (NSAP), the Regional Strategic Action Plan (RSAP) and the Strategic Action Plan for Headquarters (SAPH). The Administration has implemented a six-month system of budgetary allocation, based on resource availability, execution and on the cash flow of the Institute. Furthermore, to tackle the crisis arising from the pandemic, the Single Fund for Technical Cooperation and the Emergency Fund were created, as a way of facilitating the identification of new sources of projects and external funding and to make more efficient use of institutional resources.
 - Automation: Five new information systems were developed (Acquisition of Goods and Services; External Resource Management; Travel, Communication, Transactions; SUGI Planning and SUGI self-evaluation). The SAP, SUGI and SAPIENS systems were also integrated, by way of intelligence dashboards. All of

these actions are moving us in the direction of IICA 4.0, which will require a digital transformation process. Thus, we are developing digital tools to automate processes and decision-making. One of these is WorkSpace, which has facilitated the integration of our information systems, making it easier for the units to operate with timely information and allowing us to quickly respond to our partners, when they ask: “What is the Institute doing?”

Apart from this institutional transformation that is taking place, the crisis arising from the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled us to review our budgetary allocations and to reallocate institutional resources, through the establishment of the Single Fund for Technical Cooperation and the Institutional Emergency Fund, thereby safeguarding IICA’s cash flow and operations. This decision has allowed our offices and Headquarters to continue supporting our countries, despite the difficulties created by the crisis. Both mechanisms were designed to address and reorient the cooperation agenda in keeping with the priorities of the governments, adhering to the “minimal bureaucracy” principle.

Strengthened institutional finances

Transparency and accountability are the basis of the confidence that our Member States and counterparts have in the Institute. Indeed, since 2018, IICA has achieved a clean (unqualified) opinion on its financial statements, ensuring that all financial information satisfies international rules and procedures.

As part of the institutional austerity approach implemented since the start of this Administration, a strategy to optimize budgetary management and the use of resources has been applied – an imperative during this era of the pandemic. This enabled adjustments in the regular budgetary expenditure, which was reduced from USD 41 million to USD 34 million. All of this was possible thanks to two factors, namely: a) the generation of savings in hiring, services and the acquisitions of goods, through negotiation, renegotiation, internal adjustments and reduced travel; and b) effective management of the corporate budget.

Development and design of a new financial architecture: The IICA business model demonstrated the need to introduce a strategy focused on implementing various adjustments in the financial management of the Institute, namely, to establish a financial architecture that takes into account the fact that the soundness and stability of the Institute’s finances will hinge on the integrated management of innovative technical cooperation, which will also strengthen and enable the Institute to achieve its mission. The new financial architecture will allow IICA to address new technical and administrative needs, including actions for control and monitoring, in areas such as the Program to Accelerate the Mobilization and Execution of External Resources (PACE); accreditation to the GCF and to European Union Pillars 7, 8 and 9; and in relation to income derived from the provision of services, to name a few.

All efforts to optimize resources have been bolstered by the quota contributions of the Member States, which have been making every effort to remain up to date with their obligations to the Institute and have financed the regular budget for the two budgetary exercises approved during the 2018-2022 administration, enabling IICA to continue offering quality technical services to the countries.

The Member States have approved the development and design of a new business model and the restructuring of the institutional financial architecture, which includes the:

- Creation of a Directorate of External Projects;
- Implementation of the PACE program, with incremental goals to capture and execute these types of resources;
- Fine-tuning of institutional monitoring, through 47 business intelligence dashboards;
- Training of more than 100 staff members in leadership and virtual work;
- Establishment of networks and implementation of group initiatives to propose institutional improvements (IICA INNOVA); and
- Development of an institutional portfolio of products that could help to bolster income and institutional sustainability.

Conscious leadership and collective work

Our people are our greatest asset and as such we listened to their opinions in 2019, through an institutional climate and organizational culture survey. This provided a baseline for the development and implementation of performance, training and development strategies and conscious leaderships skills, whose results will be compared to the findings of the survey that will be administered in 2021. An institutional recognition program has also been established, which enables IICA to identify actions and to offer incentives for staff performance, to ensure productivity, efficiency and the financial sustainability of the Institute.

The restructuring of the Human Talent Division was one of the first transformation measures adopted, given that the Institute depends on the capacity and leadership of its people to offer high-quality technical cooperation products and services. As such, in keeping with the principles of conscious leadership, IICA has strengthened the professional competencies in that unit and increased training, capacity-building and collaborative work, resulting in the following achievements:

- Creation of a Conscious Leadership Hub, which already has 125 graduates;
- Application of the Organizational Climate and Culture Survey, which has produced 62 institutional action plans to date;
- Preparation of an institutional competency framework;
- Implementation of a new performance evaluation model;
- Organization of workshops on self-awareness and effective communication, from which 60 people have graduated;

- Hosting of a change management workshop, with 22 participants;
- Hosting of a personal resilience workshop, with 22 participants;
- Application of the DISC assessment methodology for 132 staff members;
- Implementation of the Institutional Recognition Program;
- Annual salary adjustments, tied to cost-of-living indices in 35 countries;
- Analysis and updating of job descriptions for 538 posts;
- Strategic analysis of the organizational structure and amendment of the workforce;
- Preparation and implementation of three institutional policies;
- Design and implementation of the work from home modality, as a rapid and effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Restructuring of the institutional social security and health program; and
- Digitalization of the induction process.

Modernization of the governing bodies

The MTP and the current management model reinforce the spirit of co-responsibility and solidarity that gave rise to IICA. Our governing bodies, the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA) and the Executive Committee (EC), are the entities that oversee the decisions, control and direction of the Institute at the highest level. However, it has become increasingly necessary for these institutional bodies to spearhead technical and political dialogue, interaction and collaborative work among the countries on strategic issues, which is one of the fundamental challenges in the process of transforming the Institute. To that end, the following actions were undertaken:

- IICA has adopted the standard practice to “listen, propose and act”, and as such, the Director General and all staff members are encouraging interaction and direct meetings with ministers, national and international authorities and private sector and civil society representatives. During his administration, the Director General has held more than 350 meetings with that objective in mind, thus reaffirming a commitment to increase dialogue and decision-making with the countries.
- The dimension of the Conference of Ministers of Agriculture of the Americas at the IABA was reintroduced.

- During the Twentieth Regular Meeting of the IABA in 2019, a ministerial forum was held on “Cultivating Tomorrow’s Agriculture Today”, which led to the establishment of important guidelines for IICA’s activity related to digital agriculture, and to achieving a balance between productivity and sustainability, and between health, safety, and agricultural quality for trade.
- The role of the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI) was strengthened. It has become a mechanism to promote and provide follow-up on strategic issues, such as: i) the new IICA business model; and ii) the participation of the Institute as a support organization for the agriculture sector of the Americas, in matters related to the United Nations Food Systems Summit.
- In addition to imposing severe practical limitations for face-to-face work, the pandemic has compelled and shown us how to utilize virtual media more intensively and effectively to hold meetings of various kinds, but particularly those of the governing bodies, the IABA committees and other mechanisms (SACMI, ARC). We have succeeded in conducting all required institutional meetings, both at the time and in the manner prescribed by our rules and regulations (7 virtual meetings).

Diverse and inclusive institution

In keeping with its international status, IICA has distinguished itself as a diverse and multicultural organization, constantly striving for greater equity and inclusiveness, from a gender and youth perspective, both within and outside of the organization. It is also more committed to transparency and efficiency in resource management, more respectful of the environment and is an organization that is more responsible and civic-minded. Thus, we have focused our efforts on developing regulations and policies in line with environmental and social protection measures and with the parameters of transparency and inclusion established by the International Finance Corporation (IFC):

- Institutional Evaluation Policy;
- Information Disclosure Policy;
- Engagement of professional consultancy services;
- Creation of a proposal for a *Grievance Redress Mechanism*;
- IICA Guide to Risk Management;
- Addition of Article 2.15, “Visiting Professionals and Internship Program”, to the Personnel Manual;
- Personal Data Protection Policy;
- Policy on the Protection of Whistleblowers and Witnesses;

- Policy for the Prevention of Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism;
- Policy for the Management of Conflicts of Interest;
- Environmental and Social Sustainability Policy;
- Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy, and
- Policy on Prohibited Practices.

The Human Talent Division has been working on a program to strengthen and empower staff in the area of leadership, emphasizing the participation of the female and younger staff members.

Further afield, IICA has spearheaded important meetings and campaigns to encourage the creation of networks that will ensure that the role of women and youth in agriculture is sufficiently recognized.

There is an explicit effort to continuously promote equal opportunities at work and in the assigning of responsibilities, and to ensure salary parity for staff, regardless of their gender, ethnicity and culture.

An IICA of “open doors”

This is a management philosophy and a vision that the Institute is projecting as a modern-minded organization that promotes youth, innovation and technology, that adopts an interactive and responsible approach with respect to the environment and rural society, and promotes agriculture and rurality as sources of opportunity and progress.

This initiative seeks to consolidate IICA’s role and image as an institution of the Americas, specializing in cooperation for agriculture, rurality, the environment and innovation, and which is also a good neighbor and a true ally of our communities.

The Institute has already made significant headway in a series of projects and actions, such as:

- CIMAG (The Interpretive Center for Tomorrow’s Agriculture): This initiative aims to create an innovative and challenging educational experience—in which agriculture, in all its colors, textures and manifestations, takes center stage—and in so doing to become a benchmark initiative that will attract multiple horizontal cooperation actions to foster the well-being and improved quality of life for rural dwellers in the Americas.
- Fab-Lab: In partnership with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Telecommunications (MICITT) of Costa Rica, IICA established the first Digital Fabrication Laboratory (Fab-Lab), specializing in technological management and innovation for the agriculture sector. It seeks to promote the development and

implementation of digital agriculture, by enhancing digital literacy, building capacities and spurring innovation in the agriculture sector of the Americas.

- **AGROART:** This digital initiative fuses art, education and agriculture to share the creative expressions of LAC artists with a commitment to agriculture and rurality. This Agro and Culture website (agroycultura.iica.int) compiles artwork from renowned artists in the hemisphere, embodying the essence of agricultural activity in the region.
- **Blue Flag ecological program:** IICA has become a part of this program that was established in Costa Rica more than 20 years ago, with the aim of organizing local committees to protect natural resources, to implement actions to combat climate change and to strive for more hygienic and sanitary conditions and improved public health for the country's inhabitants. By participating in this initiative, the Institute is seeking to transform its management model and mitigate the environmental impact of its actions, by moving towards more sustainable consumption patterns. The program confers a free and voluntary award each year.
- **Typical rural house:** This structure was built to evoke rural traditions in the hemisphere, because we must first understand where we have come from to know where we are headed. It is a place for upcoming generations to visit and to reflect.
- **Plaza of Agriculture of the Americas:** IICA and the Municipality of Vásquez de Coronado signed an agreement to build a plaza, designed to integrate the Institute into the community of the canton, via this educational and recreational space. "It will be a symbol of an IICA that is open and linked to the community. We want to highlight the value of farmers' work and our facility should reflect this. We want our headquarters, in the broadest sense, to be the "Home of Agriculture in the Americas".