



Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI)

**Report of the 2022 Regular Meeting of the Special Advisory  
Committee Meeting on Management Issues (SACMI)**

San Jose, Costa Rica  
17 May 2022



## **Introduction**

Pursuant to its Statute and Rules of Procedure, and in compliance with Resolution 580 of the Executive Committee, the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI) of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) held its Regular Meeting on 17 May 2022 at 8:37 a.m.(Costa Rica time), via videoconference.

The Technical Secretary briefly explained the origins, objectives and mechanisms of the Commission. He stressed its importance in facilitating regular dialogue between the Director General and the Member States regarding initiatives and administrative, budgetary and strategic issues in IICA's technical cooperation, with the aim of building a consensus on these matters prior to meetings of the Executive Committee (EC) and the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA).

He mentioned that the SACMI is comprised of nine Member States: six permanent members and three selected for one-year periods, on a rotating basis, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Committee and the Statute of the Commission. The permanent Member States are Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, the United States and Venezuela. In 2022, the non-permanent Member States, selected in keeping with the regulations and based on the principle of geographic representation, are Ecuador, El Salvador and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Also in attendance at the meeting were Dominican Republic, Guyana and Paraguay, in their capacity as representatives of regional agricultural bodies and mechanisms of the Central, Caribbean and Southern Regions, respectively. Annex 1 includes a list of participants, by delegation.

The Technical Secretary then proceeded to read out the provisional agenda of the 2022 Regular Meeting, starting with the Message of the Director General, then the Guidelines for IICA's Actions During 2022-2026, and finally, the Report on the Collection of Quotas.

He explained that in the meeting, the Director General would give the floor to members of the SACMI first and later to Member States representing regional agricultural bodies and mechanisms.

## **Message from the Director General**

The Director General welcomed the delegations participating in the 2022 Regular Meeting of the SACMI.

He underscored the importance of the Commission's role as an advisory, discussion and consultation body to an Institute of open doors that is seeking to increase the effectiveness of its technical cooperation, in a bid to improve the standard of living of rural people and the agricultural institutions in the Americas.

He advised the members of the SACMI what a regrettable loss the passing of Dr. Carlos Aquino González had been for the IICA family. Dr Aquino, a Dominican national, served as Director General from 1995 to 2002. Dr. Otero stressed that Don Carlos was one of the forerunners in the process to decentralize the Institute and had promoted the issues of youth and private sector partnerships, as well as a hemispheric vision of technical cooperation.

He then indicated that, given the importance of Resolution IICA/JIA/Res. 533 (XXI-O/21), he would provide an overview of the adjustments to the 2018-2022 Medium-term Plan (MTP) for the benefit of the Member States in attendance.

## **Guidelines for IICA's actions during the 2022-2026 period**

The Director General gave a presentation on the adjustments to the 2018-2022 MTP, as a means of seeking the support and advice of the Member States and with a view to preparing a proposal to present to the Executive Committee meeting in July.

He referred to achievements in implementing the current MTP. First, he explained that the Institute had sought to position itself as a vast knowledge management platform. In this vein, it had undertaken 850 actions and national, subregional and hemispheric projects; operated a virtual campus that had provided training for 100,000 participants; and implemented extremely relevant technical cooperation initiatives, such as the Living Soils of the Americas program, Digital Agriculture in Action and the Program to Digitalize Cooperatives in the Americas.

He also remarked that IICA had managed to consolidate its role as an institution that establishes mechanisms for dialogue to promote consensus and collective action among member countries and other regions. As such, it had spearheaded more than 40 meetings and dialogues between ministers and secretaries of Agriculture. Out of this process, the Institute had developed and agreed on sixteen messages with its Member States in preparation for the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in September 2021. The messages had been presented not only at the IABA meeting that month, but also at the Pre-Summit in July 2021, where IICA participated as a member of the Summit Champions Network. The consensus that the hemisphere had been able to achieve, to present a joint position at the UNFSS, was unprecedented.

Dr. Otero also indicated that IICA's knowledge management platform and mechanisms for dialogue had enabled it to establish a map of 210 strategic partnerships and to improve integration and coordination at the national, subregional, regional and global levels.

He also pointed out that the Institute had managed to streamline its administrative and financial management and to improve its efficiency and effectiveness, by redirecting resources – from operational expenditure and major cooperation actions to administrative processes. As a result, IICA had been accredited to the Green Climate Fund, as well as to the European Union's strategic pillars 7, 8 and 9 for financial management and technical cooperation.

The Director General then spoke to progress made in strengthening human talent, through the introduction of a performance incentive system, as well as training and leadership skills development, aimed at enhancing competencies in the delivery of technical cooperation. Moreover, he explained the renewed business model, which prioritizes institutional capacity building; the consolidation of technical teams; the strengthening of the network of national offices; administrative, legal and operational efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the creation of a network of partnerships with international programs and organizations to optimize resource use.

He then stressed that the Institute had embarked on a major communication drive – attracting more than 10 million users of its technical content; increasing its presence and participation in social media; and by sharing its activities with its partners and increasing its influence, through its Network of Agricultural Communicators and its recognition of excellence in agriculture, through the IICA Goodwill Ambassadors and the IICA Chairs.

Finally, he indicated that the Institute has sought to project itself as a modern, enlightened and open-door organization. For example, it had implemented the Blue Flag Ecological Program at Headquarters and in the local delegations; promoted digital agriculture through the Interpretive Center for Tomorrow's

Agriculture (to demonstrate, disseminate and provide training on new technology applications in agriculture); and introduced the Typical Rural House and the Digital Fabrication Laboratory for Agriculture. The latter is the world's first laboratory of its kind to focus on solutions for the sector. Finally, it had launched the AgroArt Virtual Museum, a forum for cultural expression in rural areas. All of these embody the concept of an IICA of open doors.

The Director General then outlined proposed adjustments to the MTP, as part of actions to improve IICA's response to agricultural needs in the hemisphere. He mentioned five factors that were instrumental in the updating of the existing plan. First, he highlighted growing tension regarding global food security and its implications for the food supply and demand. Second, he pinpointed changes in agriculture's role in the economy and society, for example, through the consolidation of the bioeconomy and the focus on agrifood systems. In the third place, he mentioned the prioritization of climate action in relation to agriculture and agrifood systems, making special mention of the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27). Fourthly, he spoke to accelerated technology innovation, requiring investments and adjustments in institutional frameworks. Finally, he highlighted challenges and opportunities in governance and institutional structures, particularly in relation to the new generation of public policies and "new institutional frameworks". He mentioned four elements contributing to the global situation, namely: 1) the acceleration of price increases for basic commodities, 2) restrictions in agrifood trade, 3) the trade in and price of fertilizer and 4) increases in energy prices.

Given the above, he felt that the Institute must continue to act as a bridge and advocate of collective action in the Americas, by maintaining an open door approach to the world. He announced that in July the organization would host a dialogue with ministers of Agriculture from Africa and a face-to-face meeting between the two regions to safeguard the stability of the sector, as well as the global and regional economies. He emphasized IICA's open door strategy, which establishes joint partnerships and actions to strengthen the knowledge management platform, headed by the Institute in partnership with its Member States.

He presented the technical cooperation proposal that IICA was aiming to implement during the 2022-2026 period. The proposal focuses on delivery of increasingly effective services to the countries and more modern administrative management, by way of seven programs: 1) Climate Action and Agricultural Sustainability, 2) Territorial Development and Family Farming, 3) Gender Equality and Youth, 4) Digitalization of Agrifood Systems, 5) Agricultural Health, Safety and Agrifood Quality, 6) International Trade and Regional Integration and 7) Innovation and the Bioeconomy.

He explained that the proposal would be implemented by mobilizing external resources, complemented by institutional resources. The aim would be to address the challenges facing agriculture in the Americas, based on a model of targeted and interdisciplinary technical cooperation initiatives. Moreover, he mentioned various examples of inter-programmatic approaches and underscored the need to build bridge between countries, subregions and continents. He highlighted the launch of the Living Soils of the Americas initiative, as well as the Institute's participation in the Coalition of Action 4 Soil Health (CA4SH) and the Agricultural Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM).

In the same vein, he mentioned the establishment of two integration bodies, namely: 1) the Public Policy Observatory for Agrifood Systems (OPSAA) – a hub for knowledge exchange and the promotion of a new generation of public policies; and 2) the Coalition for Institutional and Public Policy Capacity Building to Transform Agrifood Systems of the Americas, aimed at fostering skills development and partnerships with centers of excellence throughout the hemisphere and the world. He explained that the viability of both bodies would depend on IICA's ability to establish partnerships with the academic and private sectors.

He outlined achievements by the Directorate of Corporate Services, based on five pillars: 1) integrated administrative decentralization, through the local delegations; 2) an institutional process culture, promoting efficiency, alignment, coordination and collaborative work; 3) strategic development, based on integrated planning, monitoring and evaluation processes; 4) strengthening of human talent to bolster IICA's technical and administrative skills; and 5) financial sustainability, through the reshaping of the Institute's financial architecture, in keeping with the requirements of the business model. He indicated that these pillars had facilitated significant savings of USD 8 million, which the Institute has been able to redirect into cooperation actions. Moreover, in 2023, the aim would be to execute USD 200 million.

He then mentioned the External Relations Strategy, which promotes dialogue and public-private collaboration with leading organizations in the agrifood sector, civil society organizations and centers of excellence, always emphasizing quality over quantity in relationships, so as to increase the Institute's impact on agriculture in the Americas.

The Director General emphasized that the above strategy would hinge on communication that would allow IICA to position itself as an expert in agricultural and rural development, given that governments cannot know what is happening if they are not informed. He advised that social media had enabled the Institute to reach 10 million users and that institutional strategy dictates that all technical and policy achievements must be publicized. To this end, the Institute had established an Advisory Committee on Communication.

He then shared the final reflections of his presentation, emphasizing: 1) food, nutritional and environmental security, as a priority issue on the global agenda; 2) agriculture, as a key instrument for peace, in view of the critical situation in the Northern Triangle of Central America, the island states of the Caribbean and Haiti; and 3) IICA as a leader in agrifood system transformation in the Americas that had adopted a global vision and an open door approach, while serving as a bridge and promotor of collective action. He also pointed out that the Institute was in a position to establish hemispheric partnerships in the areas of the environment, trade, science, innovation and in devising a new generation of public policies, particularly in relation to associative efforts and cooperativism, in support of small farmers.

Finally, he thanked the Member States in advance for supporting the proposed adjustments to the 2018-2022 MTP, stressing that the aim was to establish a clear roadmap and that continuous monitoring would be necessary in order to provide technical cooperation of excellence. Moreover, he announced that on 7 October IICA would celebrate its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary and reflected that its creation in 1942, during the Second World War, had defined its role as an agricultural institution for peace. Thus, in the new climate of global tensions impacting agrifood systems, the Institute was reaffirming its commitment to promoting peace, not only in rural areas, but throughout the hemisphere and the world.

The Technical Secretary then advised that the 2022-2026 MTP would be submitted for the consideration and approval of the Member States for presentation at the next Executive Committee meeting on 19-20 July 2022. At its last Regular Meeting in September 2021, the IABA had authorized the Committee to approve the MTP, pursuant to Resolution IICA/JIA/Res. 533 (XXI-O/21). As such, the MTP document would be made available in due time and form.

### **Analysis and comments by the Member States**

The delegate of Argentina thanked and applauded the Director General for his leadership of IICA and for the relevance of the proposed adjustments to the MTP. He underscored the importance of the Institute as an organization that listens and understands how to represent the interests of the region in terms of strengthening agrifood systems. He emphasized the need for the Americas to come together as a bloc to advocate for the real interests of farmers at COP27 in Egypt.

The delegate of Canada thanked and congratulated Dr. Otero on his productive tenure as Director General of IICA over the previous four years. He highlighted some of the Institute's actions, among them: improving food security in the agriculture sector of the Americas; providing technical cooperation; assisting in the design and implementation of agricultural projects and promoting prosperity in the hemisphere. He thanked the Institute for the opportunity to participate in ministerial meetings on how best to tackle the challenges of the pandemic, as well as in other international fora on living soils and climate change and in IICA's network, to address technology-related issues. Finally, he expressed the view that the adjustments in the MTP would adequately address the current challenges in the sector.

The delegate of the Dominican Republic underscored the importance of the creation of the OPSAa and its ability to be of great benefit to the transformation that was taking place in his country. He then stressed the Institute's role as a bridge and promotor of collective action in the Americas, which he felt would also be extremely helpful to his country, given that it would soon assume the Presidency pro tempore of the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC) and the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA). He also indicated that the Dominican Republic had strengthened its epidemiological surveillance systems to respond to the threats of African swine fever and other diseases. Finally, he invited IICA to the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Dominican Republic and Haiti governing the harmonization of sanitary measures, an event which he hoped would enjoy the presence of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), OIRSA and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The delegate of Mexico greeted the member countries of the advisory body. She thanked and congratulated Dr. Otero for his achievements during 2018-2022, with respect to human talent development, the new business model, strengthening of the Institute's communication strategy and the adoption of a forward-thinking approach in its technical cooperation. She believed that this had been instrumental in the Institute's success in forging a network of strategic partnerships – a tremendous asset in the new context. She expressed support for the adjustments in the MTP, primarily in relation to climate action and its relationship to agrifood systems, the acceleration of technology innovation in agriculture, the challenges and opportunities in the area of governance and the seven programs that would be presented during the upcoming Executive Committee meeting. She suggested that the proposal could be improved by speaking to the issue of regional trade, in particular, with respect to introducing a good information system to monitor food prices and the global supply of fertilizer, as a way to inform decision-making in the countries in the current climate. She stressed that tools, technology, as well as technical, financial and human resources would be required to tackle the short and medium-term challenges. In her view, the situation also called for extensive collaboration among scientific networks to develop strategic partnerships with agricultural research centers throughout the world, as had been proposed, with a view to incorporating new technologies and innovations in the region's agrifood systems.

The delegate of Ecuador extended cordial greetings to the Director General and congratulated him on his presentation on the adjustments to the MTP. He explained that a series of pillars had been established and incorporated into his country's policies, which were in alignment with and stood to be strengthened by the IICA proposal.

The Director General thanked the delegates for their valuable comments and made a commitment to examine their suggestions, with a view to incorporating them into the proposed adjustments to the MTP. He also said that the common denominator in the delegates' suggestions and analysis was food security, and therefore it would have to be emphasized in the proposal in those sections dealing with trade and climate action.

In reference to the COP27 meeting in Egypt in November, the Director General expressed IICA's commitment to repeat the process of dialogue and consensus that resulted in the preparation of the sixteen

messages for the UNFSS. This would enable the region to develop a joint position at the Conference, particularly with respect to the current climate situation. He then informed the delegates that IICA would host a hemispheric dialogue of ministers at the end of May to prepare a document that would reflect a consensus to convey to the world that the region is working assiduously to strengthen the synergy between production and the environment. He also remarked that he had spoken with the Minister of the Environment of Egypt to inform her about these developments. In response, she suggested that the Institute work hand in hand with the network of environmental negotiators. The Minister also urged IICA to develop a critical mass, through this process, as well as proposals to promote sustainable agrifood systems, as a means of positioning the region globally.

Dr. Otero then stressed the importance of the OPSAa's rigorous monitoring of the main variables affecting food security, for example the prices of basic commodities, inputs and fertilizers, among others. Similarly, he highlighted the information program on prices and markets in the Americas, which is available to the countries, as well as technical cooperation actions to address the complex issue of health in agricultural production. He also commented on the importance of the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the Dominican Republic and Haiti and of IICA's development of synergies with organizations such as OIRSA and FAO, to work on issues like these that are critical to the countries.

The Director General reiterated IICA's commitment to continue providing technical support to the CAC Secretariat, while also making special mention of the Institute's role as the Technical Secretariat of the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS) and Secretariat of the Andean Agricultural Forum. He signaled that the time had come for regional integration, as a means of promoting trade and strengthening the network of agricultural research centers. He also highlighted the need to strengthen actions of the Cooperative Program for the Development of Agrifood and Agroindustrial Technology in the Southern Cone (PROCISUR) and the Cooperative Program in Research and Technology for the Northern Region (PROCINORTE); and to relaunch the Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO). Moreover, he pledged IICA's continued assistance to the countries, through its cooperation activities.

### **Report on the collection of quotas**

The Financial Manager presented the report on the status of quota collections from Member States at the close of 2021 and for the current year, as at 15 May 2022, in keeping with the information and documents available in the information system, given the Institute's obligation to keep the Member States informed about this issue.

She referred to Article 23 of the Convention on IICA and to Resolution No. 414 of the IABA, "Revised Measures for Collecting Quotas Owed to the Institute," which states that Member States shall contribute to the financial support of the Institute, through annual quotas established by the IABA, in accordance with the calculation system for OAS quotas.

She indicated that, at the end of 2021, seventeen countries were up to date in their payments; fourteen were in regular status (owing quotas for less than two years); no country had made special payment arrangements and three were in arrears (owing quotas for more than two years). She advised the meeting that as at 15 May of that year, a total of USD 13.4 million had been collected and explained that should no further payments be received by 1 July of 2022, nine countries would be up to date in payments, nineteen would be in regular status and six in arrears. As such, it was critical that the Institute receive the expected resources, in order to execute its technical cooperation plans effectively.



### **Analysis and comments by Member States**

The delegate of the United States thanked the Director General for his presentation on the proposed changes to the MTP and the report on the collection of quotas, while recognizing IICA's success in making effective use of its resources during the pandemic. He indicated that his country was committed to paying the remaining 50% of its quota in September. He urged the Member States to pay their quotas on a timely basis to enable the Institute to continue providing technical cooperation, as this demonstrates the level of well-being of the Institute and its commitment to farmers.

The delegate of Paraguay advised that his country was up to date in its quota payments, but would be delayed in its next payment, which would be due in November 2022.

The Director General thanked the delegates for their show of support for IICA's management and committed to incorporating the suggestions and contributions to the SACMI into the proposed adjustments to the MTP. He also advised them that the draft MTP would be shared with subregional mechanisms, such as the CAC, the CAS, the Caribbean Community and the Andean Regional Forum, to make it a stronger instrument of benefit to the countries.

### **Close of the meeting**

At 10:02 a.m. in Costa Rica, on 16 May 2022, having analyzed and discussed the proposed items at length, the Director General thanked the members of the SACMI and the other participating countries for their presence and adjourned the meeting.

**Annex No. 1**  
**List of participants**

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