



PROJECT NARRATIVE

USDA-IICA Collaboration on Technical Assistance to the Dominican Republic on improving school meal plans with a focus on nutrient dense foods and fresh fruits and vegetables

1. Introduction and background

Under this collaboration, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) would assist the Government of the Dominican Republic (GoDR) in response to their interest expressed to the United States to work on nutritional education, as part of a joint action plan on food security established under the U.S. CARICOM Food Security Working Group.

The Government of the Dominican Republic is actively coordinating among its agencies on improving its school meal plans, focusing on nutrient dense foods and fresh fruits and vegetables. USDA's technical expertise, particularly through its Food and Nutrition Service (USDA/FNS) and its Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA/FAS) is key to provide assistance in that matter.

On July 11, 2023, USDA expressed its interest to collaborate with IICA to provide the aforementioned assistance, thus inviting IICA to apply for funding pursuant to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) USDA-FAS-0700-10.-23-0002. USDA seeks IICA's collaboration chiefly as a **1)** convener and facilitator of meetings with key officials and personnel in the Dominican Republic relevant to the planning and provision of nutritious school meals, and **2)** facilitator of a technical visit to Washington, DC of a small group of relevant officials from the Dominican Republic.

IICA Dominican Republic has a long history of implementing projects and initiatives funded by the government of the United States. For instance, in the last 5 years, IICA has successfully provided technical and administrative cooperation in several initiatives, including the Strengthening of the Surveillance Capacity and Phytosanitary Emergency Response to the Introduction of Cocoa Moniliasis (*Moniliophthora roreri*) in the Dominican Republic; Surveillance and response to swine hemorrhagic fevers (African Swine Fever and Classical Swine Fever) in the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean countries. More recently, IICA Dominican Republic is currently implementing the Swine Indemnity Program for the Eradication of African Swine Fever in the Dominican Republic.

Other USDA-IICA collaboration opportunities in the Dominican Republic include training programs on topics such as phytosanitary surveillance of *Tuta Absoluta* disease in Hispaniola and the Caribbean; regulations and requirements to export fresh products to the United States, an African Swine Fever (ASF) Trilateral Meeting in Costa Rica; which showcases IICA's vast experience in collaborating with USDA to organize and implement technical activities, both nationally and internationally.

2. Objectives

General

To support USDA efforts to provide technical assistance to the Dominican Republic on improving its school meal plans with a focus on nutrient dense foods and fresh fruits and vegetables.



Specific

- To coordinate and participate in a technical assessment and consultation visit by a USDA team led by USDA FNS to the Dominican Republic, to meet with INABIE authorities, and school meals implementers.
- To coordinate a technical visit of INABIE officials to the United States to meet with USDA FNS and potentially visit school feeding operations in Washington, D.C. area., and escort the Dominican Republic delegation in the United States to provide the necessary logistics support.

3. Project description

As established by USDA, the proposed collaboration consists of two main components, which will be described below. In order to delve into the actions that will be implemented to meet the goals under this Collaboration, IICA held a coordination meeting with INABIE authorities, in which some technical and logistical criteria of the school meals process were addressed, which enriches the scope and approach of this proposal.

3.1. A five day in-country technical assessment and consultation visit with counterparts in the Dominican Republic by a USDA team led by USDA FNS

- **Day 1 – Technical “learn and share” meeting** with relevant government officers and school meal program implementers, represented by the National Institute of Student Welfare of the Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic (INABIE), and the GoDR representative of the U.S.-CARICOM food security initiative, whereby INABIE can present their efforts in the implementation of the Dominican Republic School Food Program (PAE), and USDA FNS can share nutrition standards for school meals and meal pattern, sample school menus, school meal program implementation structure, overall nutrition education efforts and USDA’s Spanish nutrition education materials¹ that target school age children, food service workers, and teachers, farm to school activities in the United States. This technical meeting will be facilitated by IICA.

The technical sharing meeting would include officials from the GoDR sharing with USDA their current approach, challenges, experience in implementing the Dominican Republic School Food Program, as well as their experience in using the School Meal Planner (SMP PLUS) software of the World Food Program and acquiring and providing fresh produce and nutrient dense food for school meals, among other topics of interest regarding school meals on which USDA could assist.

- **Day 2 and 3 – Local schools visits**, in coordination with INABIE, to observe school meal preparation, classroom, (schools where intervention is most needed) and local markets where foods are purchased for school meals – to better understand the “infrastructure” of providing school meals, talk to school meal implementers, cooks, parents, etc.

¹ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/es/tn/team-nutrition-recipes>
<https://www.myplate.gov/resources/en-espanol>



Upon approval of this Collaboration, and as discussed with INABIE, a coordination would be arranged to visit schools in urban and rural areas, including schools operating under the regular and extended school day programs, emphasizing schools with on-site cooking facilities to implement the school meal programs (production sites), and schools that operate as a receiver site implementing the school lunch program from meals prepared outside schools, and delivered to the receiver site, meaning that on-site food preparation is not supported, and food is portioned at point of service.

- **Day 4 – Round table/Q&A session**, to draw information from Day 1 to 3 with various GoDR agencies and local implementers to discuss strategies and plans to improve school meal plans and explore ways for relevant government agencies to work together. Discussions will include:
 - Explore ways to incorporate nutrient dense foods into school meal menus,
 - Explore ways to work with parents and communities to encourage healthy food choices,
 - Explore ways to include the community in nutrition education.
 - Explore ways to provide nutrition education as part of the classroom learning,
 - Discussion on future years intervention if, such as creating a Dominican Republic “MyPlate” that illustrates optimal foods, or how the Dominican Republic could potentially participate in USDA learning exchange program.
- **Day 5** – Additional consultations, as needed.

3.1.1. Approach

IICA will:

- Coordinate all in-country logistics and arrangements within the Dominican Republic, including the coordination of meeting location, food, transportation, and other logistics expenses, as needed., to conduct the technical assessment and consultation visit of USDA FNS with INABIE officials.
- Convene and facilitate technical meetings with key officials and personnel in the Dominican Republic relevant to the planning and provision of nutritious school meals, in coordination with INABIE.
- Prepare, in coordination with INABIE and USDA, the coordination of the technical agenda of the five days in-country technical assessment and consultation visit to the Dominican Republic.

USDA will:

- Provide IICA with funds for the implementation of this activity on an advanced basis in a timely manner, according to the envisioned budget for the proposed collaboration.
- Collaborate with IICA and INABIE in the preparation of the technical agenda of the five days in-country technical assessment and consultation.



3.1.2. Deliverables

This five day in-country technical assessment and consultation process will result in an actionable plan for GoDR to collaborate among themselves to improve nutrition education and school meals quality. It will also include suggestions on possible USDA assistance as the GODR progresses in the implementation of their action plan.

3.2. Technical visit of a small group of Dominican Republic officials and school meals implementers to the United States to meet with USDA FNS and potentially visit school feeding operations in Washington, D.C. area.

This visit is envisioned as visit as a 5-day visit (including roundtrip travel) in Washington, D.C. consisting of an exchange of technical and programmatic data and information of USDA FNS officials with around ten INABIE officials from the Dominican Republic, including the areas that intervene in the implementation of School Food Program (PAE), such as nutrition, management, planning, among other areas.

The mission will also include visits to school feeding operations in Washington, D.C., with a focus on how fresh produce and nutrient dense foods are included in the menus.

Officials from USDA FNS, GoDR, USDA FAS, along with IICA would also identify options for future continued collaboration with INABIE, if there is interest.

3.2.1. Approach

IICA will:

- Coordinate all logistics related to the technical visit to the United States, including airline tickets, travel insurance, accommodation, per diem, transportation, and language interpretation if needed.
- Escort the Dominican Republic team to the technical visit to Washington, D.C. and provide all the necessary logistics support to the participants.
- Provide input and collaboration on a technical report following the technical visit to the United States, that could be used both as a stand-alone document on this activity, as well as the foundation for continued collaboration with the Dominican Republic and IICA on this topic if resources are available next fiscal year and such collaboration is desired.

USDA will:

- Provide IICA with funds for the implementation of this activity on an advanced basis in a timely manner, according to the envisioned budget for the proposed collaboration.
- Coordinate, jointly with IICA, the technical agenda of the visit, including the meetings with USDA FNS officials, as well as the visits to school feeding operations.



3.2.2. Deliverables

This technical visit will result in a technical report to be used, both as a stand-alone document on this activity, as well as to identify options for future continued collaboration to improve nutrition education and school meals quality.

As discussed with USDA FNS, another deliverable from this action will be post-dissemination webinar to share the outcomes resulting from this collaboration.

4. Timeframe

The activities under this proposed collaboration shall be accomplished between September and December, upon coordination with USDA-FAS and INABIE, in line with the following proposed timeframe:

Activity	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Technical coordination meetings with FAS and INABIE authorities to implement the activities outlined in this collaboration.				
Logistics coordination to implement the technical assessment and consultation visit to the Dominican Republic and the Technical visit of INABIE officials to the United States.				
Technical assessment and consultation visit by a USDA team led by USDA FNS to the Dominican Republic, to meet with INABIE authorities, and school meals implementers.				
Technical visit of INABIE officials to the United States to meet with USDA FNS and potentially visit school feeding operations in Washington, D.C. area.				
Final technical report of the USDA-IICA Collaboration on Technical Assistance to the Dominican Republic on improving school meal plans with a focus on nutrient dense foods and fresh fruits and vegetables.				

5. Budget

The budget for this proposed collaboration consists of US\$74,604.00, in accordance with the amount allocated by USDA to support programming in the Dominican Republic for collaboration with USDA on technical assistance to the Dominican Republic on improving school meal plans with a focus on nutrient dense foods and fresh fruits and vegetables. A budget table with estimated breakdown costs is attached to this proposal.

6. Points of contact

The following will be responsible for implementing the activities conducted under this proposal:

- Franklin Marin Vargas, IICA Representative in the Dominican Republic, franklin.marin@iica.int, 1 (809) 534-5005
- Gina Rosario Diaz, Technical Coordinator, IICA Dominican Republic, gina.rosario@iica.int, 1 (809) 534-5005



BUDGET PROPOSAL*

USDA-IICA Collaboration on Technical Assistance to the Dominican Republic on improving school meal plans with a focus on nutrient dense foods and fresh fruits and vegetables

USDS\$75,000

Activity	Expense item details	Amount in USDS
Technical assessment and consultation visit by a USDA team led by USDA FNS to the Dominican Republic, to meet with INABIE authorities, and school meals implementers (5 days)	Meeting location rental for the technical “learn and share” meeting	\$ 3,000
	Refreshments related to local schools visit	\$ 2,000
	Round-trip transportation for local schools visit	\$ 2,146
	Meeting location rental for the round table/Q&A session	\$ 5,000
	Logistics expenses	\$ 1,000
	Interpretation	\$ 5,000
	Subtotal	\$ 18,146
Technical visit of INABIE officials to the United States to meet with USDA FNS and potentially visit school feeding operations in Washington, D.C. area. (5 days)	Air travel tickets for 10 Dominican Republic participants	\$ 8,900
	Travel insurance for 10 Dominican Republic participants	\$ 1,000
	Per diem for 10 Dominican Republic participants	\$ 7,084
	Lodging for 10 Dominican Republic participants	\$ 20,000
	Transportation (including airport-hotel-airport) in Washington D.C. and general logistics expenses	\$ 9,250
	Interpretation	\$ 5,000
	Subtotal	\$ 51,234
TOTAL		\$ 69,380
Indirect Recovery Costs (ICR)	This amount includes IICA's Indirect Cost Recovery (ICR), corresponding to 8.1% of the contribution made by USDA.	\$ 5,619.80
FULL AMOUNT		\$ 75,000.00

*Based on estimated amounts, to be confirmed.

Travel Line Itmes	Travel	Contractual	Contractual Line Items
Mtg Location-DR	\$3,000.00	\$5,000.00	Interpretation
Refreshments	\$2,000.00	\$5,000.00	Interpretation
DR Transportation	\$2,146.20		
Mtg Location-DR	\$5,000.00		
Logistics	\$1,000.00		
TRV Tickets-US	\$8,900.00		
TRV Insurance-US	\$1,000.00		
Per Diem	\$7,084.00		
Lodging-US	\$20,000.00		
Transportation	\$9,250.00		
Subtotal	\$59,380.20	\$10,000.00	\$810.00
Total	\$69,380.20		\$4,809.80
ICR [8.01]	\$5,619.80		
FULL AMT	\$75,000.00		