



Good agricultural practices for resilient agriculture:

an integrated vision

Technical document

To become an engine of development, economic growth and prosperity, agriculture in the Americas must not only surmount a number of challenges, but also take advantage of opportunities. There is no question that the agriculture sector has a key role to play in sustainable development; as the most crosscutting of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is called upon to tackle many of the challenges established in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Promoting the development of the agriculture sector entails, among other things, generating innovative solutions, modernizing political and institutional frameworks, and developing technical capacities in individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. Only then will it be possible to address the complex facets of this challenge with collaborative practices and sustainable solutions that take account of climate change issues.

Although the countries are already more aware of the importance of developing models that increase production and improve competitiveness while taking into account agricultural health, food safety, and environmental protection, they usually adopt a sectoral approach to implementation and work in a fragmented, uncoordinated way. This leads to the duplication of efforts and the establishment of separate requirements, so much so that the producers for whom the models are intended are discouraged from implementing them.

Good agricultural practices (GAP) with an integrative approach are designed to be much more inclusive (e.g., they take family farming into account) and consider the interdependence that exists among the different dimensions of agriculture, such as food safety and health, workers' well-being, and the environment. Maintaining an orientation of this kind makes it possible to contribute to the development of sustainable agriculture more effectively.

Application of good agricultural practices

At the governmental level, GAP are promoted, in particular, by the ministries of agriculture and agencies that report to them, according to their respective sphere of competence and activity. Some institutions focus on food safety, others on plant health protection or the control of pesticide residues, and so on, usually with no overarching vision of GAP and perhaps without verifying the consequences of the agricultural practice on the environment, not to mention the limited complementation of institutional efforts.

Similarly, the units of the ministries of agriculture or other public institutions responsible for efforts to combat climate change usually promote 'friendly' practices without considering their relationship with agricultural health or food safety. Failure to coordinate these areas can lead to duplication and conflicts that limit the impact on practices on agriculture.



The GAP adopted in the private sector tend to have a broader approach. In addition to food safety principles, they may encompass environmental protection, health, the safety and well-being of agricultural workers, as well as animal well-being. Their application, however, is especially important in the export sector, and calls for private certification mechanisms.

Clearly, addressing animal health, plant protection and environmental risks separately is an ineffective strategy. Firstly, because public policies and technical assistance and training aimed at producers are bound to have a fragmented vision of agriculture; and secondly, because the opportunity to join efforts and optimize resources and thus obtain better results is lost (Figure 1).

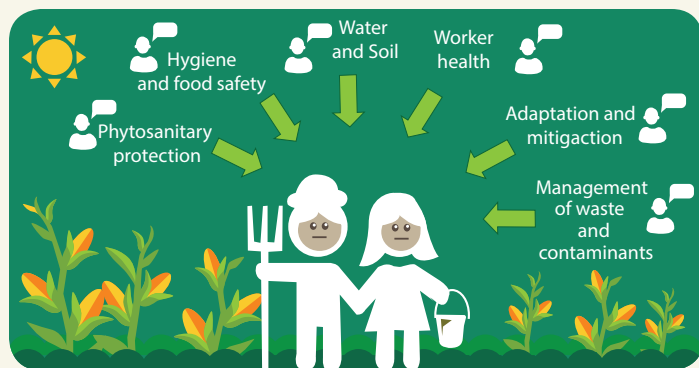


Figure 1. Fragmented handling of risks on the farm.

Towards an integrated approach to good agricultural practices

Adopting an integrative vision of GAP can help attenuate, and even reverse, agriculture's effects on the environment, since the approach addresses plant health protection, food safety, workers' health and environmental protection as parts of a single whole.

This holistic approach matches the actual structure of the productive process and is designed to raise awareness among

producers and governments alike of their respective responsibilities in relation to food production (food security) and environmental protection (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Holistic vision of good agricultural practices.

This vision highlights the contribution that GAP can make to global efforts aimed at climate change adaptation and the promotion of environmental sustainability. Furthermore, with a little communication and marketing, government certification mechanisms can be established that make products more valuable because they are "safe for the environment" or state that "we are working to reduce the impact of climate change." Measures of this kind ensure proper recognition of the enormous efforts of both producers (implementers of the actions) and governments (organizers of the system) to improve practices and create new money-making opportunities for the private sector.

Implementation of good agricultural practices: a shared responsibility

The commitment of the government and producers is required to achieve the widespread adoption of GAP with an integrated approach. The former must be committed to introducing suitable policies and facilitating public goods and services. The latter, for their part, must pledge to implement the practices and be aware that, since they work the land directly, they are

The concept of good agricultural practices refers to the application of the knowledge available for the effective management of animal and plant health and environmental risks in agricultural production, to make it more resilient and sustainable.

in a position to turn food production into not only a more productive activity, but also one that is more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

In implementing GAP, the farmer plays the most important role on the farm. Government agencies, on the other hand, must design the regulatory framework for GAP, verify compliance and, if possible, provide technical assistance and training.

While both the private and public sectors have made a great deal of progress in establishing the criteria and indicators for compliance with GAP, such efforts have focused on verifying the work of farmers as if they alone are responsible for implementing GAP. Little work has been done on government indicators to guide the design and application of national or local GAP programs, and, in particular, to supply the public goods needed to achieve the transformations sought in the countryside.

Like all innovation, the implementation of GAP with an integrative approach takes place in a given socioeconomic context and, to be successful, depends on the existence of certain conditions. These include a country's internal level of development and institutional and regulatory frameworks, access to basic services, the infrastructure put in place to support producers, the resources allocated to technology research and transfer, the supply of knowledge, human capabilities and access to credit.

The challenge for government agencies, then, lies in launching permanent, intensive processes aimed at the implementation of GAP with an integrative approach in which all the actors are actively involved, and united by a shared vision (Figure 3).

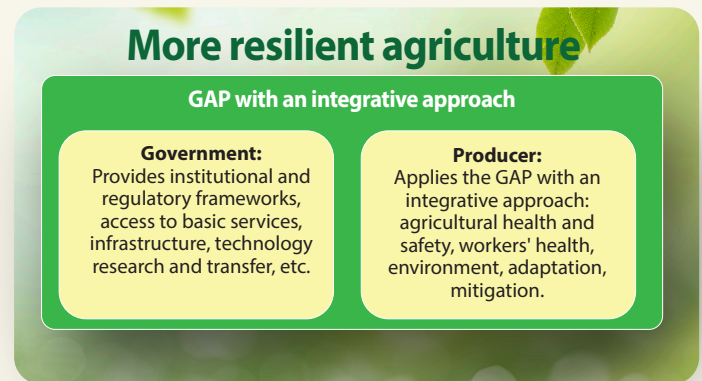


Figure 3. Shared public-private responsibility.

It is in this context that the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) have produced a guide entitled *Buenas prácticas agrícolas para una agricultura más resiliente. Lineamientos para orientar la tarea de productores y gobiernos*, (Good agricultural practices for more resilient agriculture. Guidelines for orienting the task of producers and governments), which deals with the activities of producers and governments, suggests indicators for use in the design of GAP strategies and policies, and lays the methodological groundwork for the further updating and improvement of what is proposed.

In short, the guide is a public good that is being made available to countries bent on achieving an inter-American agriculture sector that is competitive, inclusive, sustainable and capable of feeding this continent and the entire world.



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