



INTER-AMERICAN BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

Eleventh Regular Meeting
Punta Cana, Dominican Republic
26-29 November 2001

IICA/FAO RELATIONS

IICA/JIA/Doc.264(01)
10 October 2001
Original: Spanish

IICA - FAO Relations

In compliance with the resolutions adopted by the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA) and the Executive Committee (EC) – in particular, resolutions N° 259 and N° 291 of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Regular Meetings of the Executive Committee, respectively – IICA reached agreement with the FAO on the programming and implementation of activities that would allow them to develop a synergy and achieve increasing inter-institutional coordination, in support of the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

During the Twenty-first Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee, in July 2001, an Aide-mémoire was signed to update the Notes of Understanding signed in 1994 and 1997, and which is in line with the Aide-mémoire signed in Nassau in June 1998. The latest Aide-mémoire (July 2001) establishes the general frame of reference for cooperation between IICA and the FAO in the years ahead. The following is a description of the actions implemented between 1997 and September 2001, and a summary of the points on which agreement was reached for the implementation of joint activities in the future.

A. Results of the Cooperation

1. Policies and Trade

The main area of joint cooperation concerns the Informal Consultative Group of Agricultural Negotiators (GINA), of which IICA and the FAO exercise the Joint Technical Secretariat. This group was created in September 1998, during the Technical Forum of Agricultural Negotiators that was held in Miami. So far 12 meetings of the GINA have been held, attended by an average of 40-50 agricultural negotiators from all the countries in the hemisphere. In a relaxed atmosphere, at these meetings they discuss the main issues involved in the multilateral negotiations taking place under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). An important outcome has been the creation of the Electronic Forum of the GINA (<http://Infoagro.net/Comercio>) developed by IICA, which allows the negotiators to share information on line. The Forum receives an average of 3000 hits per month.

Various documents and research papers have been presented at the GINA meetings, prepared both by IICA and the FAO. They include: "Institutional models for the agricultural negotiations in the Americas"; "Technical barriers to trade in agricultural products"; "Status of net-food-importing countries in the Americas"; "Evolution and performance of agrifood trade in the Americas 1961-97" (available on CD-ROM); "Progress made by the FTAA countries in fulfilling the commitments assumed under the SPS Agreement of the WTO"; "The negotiating position of the G11 in the WTO agricultural negotiations"; and "Intellectual property and the new biotechnologies from the perspective of agricultural trade."

2. Science, Technology and Natural Resources

Smooth coordination was established between the projects of the Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources (promoted by the FAO) and the Subregional Networks on Plant Genetic Resources (supported by IICA), with the sponsorship of IPGRI. The actions agreed upon include the formulation of projects, the articulation of networks and the preparation of a joint work plan in this area. Through the joint work of IICA and the FAO, progress was made in articulating subregional networks on plant genetic resources (technical resources and joint work program) and meetings were held to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action in LAC (formulation of regional projects).

IICA also took part in the Biannual Conference of REDBIO in 2001 (biotechnology network, conferences on intellectual property and genetic resources and biotechnologies). IICA made two presentations in the main sessions and round tables on the subject of intellectual property and biotechnologies.

In the area of soils and water, IICA and the FAO have been coordinating the organization of national and international workshops. In the specific case of Peru, IICA, the FAO and the National Development Institute of Peru organized a seminar-workshop on water management that was held in March 2000. It focused on administrative and financial self-management and national and international experiences in regard to the issue.

3. Agricultural Health and Food Safety

The joint IICA-FAO cooperation actions have made it possible to get to grips with one of the main problems facing agricultural health and food safety systems (AHFSSs), namely, the low level of development of the institutional structures responsible for monitoring and participating in the international organizations that regulate trade in agrifood products. In order to improve the situation, the FAO implemented program TCP/RLA/0065 "Strengthening the National Committees of the CODEX and implementing the standards of the *Codex Alimentarius*," designed to train trainers. In late September and early October 2001, a subregional workshop was held in Costa Rica entitled "Training of Trainers in Good Practices (GAP and GMP) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP). At this event IICA presented, to some 35 representatives of the Central American countries, the topic of "Constraints to the implementation of safety systems in the region." Thanks to these programs, the target countries will have teams of trainers at their disposal equipped with the skills needed to transfer expertise that will increase their participation in the international organizations and better enable them to tap the advantages that these organizations offer, as well as to promote long-term policies in this field.

In April 2001, the First Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Hemispheric Plan for the Eradication of Classic Swine Fever in the Americas was held in Costa Rica. The FAO and IICA have prepared the project "Control and eradication of the screwworm in Haiti and the Dominican Republic," for which funding is now being sought. A project on rural and periurban vegetable production was also prepared, and consultations with potential donors are ongoing. Joint support was provided to Chile for the modernization of higher veterinary education.

B. Current framework of cooperation

During the Twenty-first Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee, held July 2001 in San Jose, the Director General of IICA, Carlos Aquino, and the Deputy Director General / Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean of the FAO, Gustavo Gordillo de Anda, signed an Aide-mémoire in which they expressed the interest of their respective organizations in continuing and strengthening the process of joint programming and cooperation. To do this, they agreed to strengthen the coordination of programs and identify a new basic program of joint activities.

The two parties acknowledged the progress that had been made and confirmed that there was no need to modify the present framework of cooperation, established in the Aide-mémoire signed in Nassau on June 18, 1998, in which they reiterated the spirit of the Note of Understanding signed by the Deputy Director General of the FAO and the Deputy Director General of IICA on February 4, 1994, and of the Note of Understanding signed on February 25, 1997, in which they expressed their satisfaction at the progress that had been made in the interaction between the two institutions since the signing of the Aide-mémoire, and reaffirmed the principles that were to be applied in selecting joint undertakings. These principles are: the importance of the matter concerned for the development and well-being of the geographic areas covered by the two organizations; the availability of human resources, facilities and financial resources belonging to the two organizations in the geographic areas concerned; the capacity to benefit from related, ongoing activities; and the needs expressed by their member countries.

At the end of the evaluation process, the Deputy Director General / Representative of the FAO and the Director General of IICA agreed to:

1. Designate an official from each organization to serve as a liaison officer. In the case of the FAO it will be Deputy Regional Representative, while for IICA it will be the Manager of the Technical Consortium (CONTEC).
2. Acknowledge the usefulness of continuing the process of consultations and the programming of actions, in order to step up cooperation, achieve greater coordination and identify joint actions aimed at optimizing the use of resources, for the benefit of the member countries of the two institutions.
3. Agree that the process of consultations should be embodied in a Basic Collaboration Program for the short-, medium- and long-term, setting out the priority actions, beneficiary countries, mechanisms to be used, resources to be contributed, and monitoring and evaluation tools.

4. Establish that the priority areas for collaboration in the period between January 2001 and December 2003, in the context of the respective Work Programs and Budget, shall be: International Trade and Trade Negotiations; Animal and Plant Health and Food Safety; Rural Development; Rural Development and Agricultural Information.

Therefore, the 2001-2002 Basic Collaboration Program has been prepared, which will be implemented jointly by the two institutions. In doing so, meetings will be held of the liaison officers and of any technical personnel that may be required.

C. IICA - FAO 2001-2002 Basic Cooperation Program

1. International Trade and Trade Negotiations

The two institutions agreed to provide joint support to the member countries on technical matters related to the international agricultural trade negotiations. They will cooperate in areas such as training, the creation of thinking and the dissemination of issues on the agenda of the FTAA and WTO agricultural negotiations. They will also continue to serve as the Technical Secretariat of the Informal Consultative Group of Agricultural Negotiators of the Americas (GINA) and to support the implementation of its work program.

2. Animal and Plant Health and Food Safety

The two institutions agreed to support and provide follow up to agricultural health and food safety issues in the agricultural trade negotiations. Priority will be given to the food safety regulations on the agenda of the FTAA and WTO agricultural negotiations. They also decided to work together to enhance the AHFSSs' ability to respond to the demands of competitiveness in agricultural trade and the commitments assumed under the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (ASPS). To this end, they will support the implementation of the Plans of Action on the Modernization of Agricultural Health and Food Control Systems in the Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela).

Another focus of action in this area are the efforts to strengthen the Risk Analysis Units responsible for combating the Mediterranean Fruit Fly in Central America. This program will operate within the strategic framework of the RLA5045 program, which is being implemented jointly by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the FAO, IICA and the MoscaMed-USDA-SAGARPA-MAGA program. It entails an evaluation of the AHFSSs in the countries, using a software package developed by IICA and the FAO; and the preparation of an institutional modernization program aimed at strengthening the risk analysis units, in which the private sector will be heavily involved.

The two institutions also decided to implement an information system to support the efforts of the countries to detect emerging diseases as soon as possible (early warning system), by implementing and expanding the TADInfo¹ system within the Inter-American Agricultural Health Network, AGROSALUD, and on the FAO/RLC web site.

3. Agricultural Information

The aim of the joint efforts is to improve and develop the capacity for managing agricultural information in Latin America and the Caribbean. To this end, the work will involve: (i) the identification of specific technical assistance needs vis-à-vis information management in the member countries and the availability of resources; (ii) the identification of the training needed in the field of information management; (iii) the implementation of joint actions to enhance the technical assistance provided to the member countries (the development of content and the dissemination of the range of resources available from WAICENT-RR-WAICENT); and (iv) the formulation and implementation of a plan for the establishment of a Continuing Education Consortium for Agricultural Information Management in LAC.

The next field of cooperation in this area is the implementation and dissemination of the document management component of the RR-WAICENT. This calls for (i) IICA-FAO (AGRIS/CARIS) collaboration to develop the Web-Isis system and tools for AGRIS/CARIS; (ii) the restructuring of, and improvements to, AGROVOC; and (iii) the development of repositories of full-text documents. The two organizations also decided to organize and implement, together, workshops in Web-Agris for the SIDALC's Regional Network of Document Centers, to test the content of the document component.

Another area of cooperation is the implementation and dissemination of the networking component of the RR-WAICENT Virtual Communities, which calls for collaboration in implementing the "Communities" module for the Scientific and Technological Information System for the Agricultural Sector of the Americas (INFOTEC), of the Regional Forum on Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO). Priority will be given to the development of standards, guidelines and tools for managing agricultural information.

With regard to the management of statistical information, there is a consensus between the two institutions that the Inter-American Reference Center for Agro-economic Information (CRIIA) should be converted into a mirror of the FAOSTAT data base, thereby facilitating access to the statistical information of both organizations.

4. Rural Development

There is a consensus between the two institutions on the need to promote productive alliances between institutions to foster the development of rural spaces via the sharing of experiences and videoconferencing.

¹ TADInfo: the Transboundary Animal Disease Information System of the FAO.

As regards Gender and Rural Development, efforts will be made to incorporate women micro- and small-scale entrepreneurs into the Technical Cooperation Network of Institutions and Organizations in Support of Rural Women (RCTIOMR). A study will be carried out on the status of the RCTIOMR and a proposal will be drafted on how to set about updating it. The results of the study will be used to draw up an Initial Work program, followed by the updating of the Data Bank of the Directory of the RCTIOMR (including potential users), the sharing of information with organizations on line, including the production and distribution of an electronic bimonthly newsletter. If the two institutions are able to contribute the resources, a meeting will be held with organizations and institutions that represent rural women and small- and medium-scale enterprises in the region, to discuss the current situation, the challenges it poses and the opportunities it provides.

The two institutions will cooperate in drawing up recommendations for the implementation of policies to foster the incorporation of poor rural youth into production in the countries of the expanded Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Chile), with emphasis on strategies, the institutional framework and intervention methodologies. Training is needed for technicians, professionals and leaders of the public and private sectors involved in policies related to rural development, rural youth and poverty.

Finally, the aim of the cooperation between IICA and the FAO in the area of Rural Development will be to foster the leadership and participation of young people in rural development. To this end, a project profile will be prepared on youth leadership and participation in the rural development process, and joint efforts will be made to secure funding.