



Executive Committee

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PROGRESS WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING OF TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AT IICA

San José, Costa Rica

Report to the Executive Committee on the Status of the Recommendations to Improve Technical Expertise at IICA

Pursuant to the provisions of Resolutions No. 462 and 490 of the Executive Committee and Resolution No. 483 of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture and the directives issued by the Director General to improve technical expertise at IICA, in accordance with those resolutions, the Institute has taken the following measures:

1. Redesigning the human resource base

Pursuant to the recommendation “Redesigning the human resource base”, contained in Section 3.4 of the Report of the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI), adopted by the Executive Committee at its regular meeting in July 2008 (Res. No. 490), IICA has taken the following measures:

a) Development of profiles of professional posts and improvement of recruitment processes

Following the meeting of the Executive Committee in May of 2007, the Administration of IICA took the decision to develop a comprehensive system that would have three main components: the profile of the position; the updated history of the staff member’s service; and an effective mechanism for evaluating the profile of the position and the qualifications and performance of the staff member.

Within the framework of these proposals, instructions were issued to ensure that all new recruitments of international professional (IPP) or local professional personnel (LPP) should be based on profiles of posts that have been previously developed or updated, in which the minimum requirements of academic training, experience and specific characteristics required for the performance of the post have been established.

At the same time, instructions were issued to the Division of Human Resources to institute a process for determining the profiles of all professional posts. As a result of this process, as of February 28, 2009, an inventory of job descriptions has been drawn up, covering 77 per cent of IPP positions and 71 per cent of LPP positions. As of today, 75% of all technical posts have a related job description. An institutional electronic database including information on Institute personnel has now been established and continual updating of this information will thereby be facilitated.

The current Administration has always endeavored to recruit the best professional and technical staff, within the parameters of the salaries and benefits offered by IICA. Since May of 2007, special emphasis has been placed on ensuring that recruitment processes in relation to professional staff adhere strictly to institutional hiring standards and that they are entirely open, transparent and competitive to ensure participation by all professionals who meet the requirements of the position and who wish to compete.

b) Institutional database of consultants

Pursuant to the recommendation contained in the Report of the Advisory Commission regarding the establishment of an institutional database of consultants to facilitate the mobilization of additional technical expertise and to link the databases of the countries, the Institute has designed a consultants' management system, which includes the following components:

- Module 1 of the system (offer of services) has been developed. It consists of a register of consultants by area of competence, areas of specialization, experience, skills, language proficiency, contact information and other relevant aspects. This module includes both consultants who have worked for IICA and those who wish to offer their services.
- Shortly, those interested will be given their personal password and will be able to access this module on the IICA Web site and directly input their offer of services, change it or update the data.
- Module 2 (memory) is in the process of being prepared. It consists of a data base for keeping the register or keeping a record of the consultancy work carried out for IICA.
- Module 3 (evaluation) is being designed and developed. It consists of a database for recording evaluations and critical analyses of consultancies contracted by IICA. The minimum indicators are: quality of the product; delivery capacity; achievement of targeted objectives; degree of compliance with the terms of reference, cost-efficiency ratio; suitability and capacity for teamwork; ability and willingness to impart knowledge; added value and usefulness of the work. The inclusion of recommendations by the evaluator on the advisability of hiring the consultant again and how to proceed with him or her thereafter are provided for.
- The system being developed will allow all Offices, Programs or Units looking for a consultant to input their specific needs and identify appropriate candidates for the job.

c) Estimation of the critical mass required by IICA to fulfill the mandates and commitments of the Institute.

The Directorate of Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management conducted an assessment of technical expertise at the Institute, contrasting it with the technical resources that would be required to adequately carry out the mandates, functions and responsibilities emanating from the 2006-2010 Medium-Term Plan, the particular needs of Member States and the specific Resolutions of the Governing Bodies.

This exercise involved each of the Institute's technical areas of competence across the hemisphere and showed the shortfall of professional personnel at IICA: a minimum of 23

professional posts, 17 of which are IPPs and six of which are LPPs. A matrix with the findings of the assessment has been appended to this report.

2. Document entitled “IICA Technical Cooperation and its Instruments. Basic Concepts”

In accordance with the recommendations contained in the SIDE¹ Report (especially no. 216), intended to systematize and publicize the technical cooperation instruments, in 2008, a proposal entitled “IICA Technical Cooperation and its Instruments was prepared”. The purpose of that proposal was to offer all technical personnel, clients and partners of IICA an agreed explanation of the basic technical cooperation concepts and instruments used by IICA in providing services to the countries.

The document, which defines and explains the basic concepts relating to technical cooperation instruments, is currently in the draft stage for internal discussion. It will shortly be submitted to the Institute’s technical personnel for analysis and feedback.

3. Technical and Logistic Support to the Steering Committee for the Upgrading of Technical Expertise

Resolutions Nos. 447 and 490 of the Executive Committee instruct the Director General to provide such support as may be required by the Steering Committee for the upgrading of technical expertise at IICA, for the implementation of the recommendations of the Executive Committee and for leadership of the process, particularly with regard to preparation of the Strategic Framework and the Strategic Plan of IICA for 2010-2020.

In fulfillment of these resolutions, the Institute provided ongoing technical and logistic support to the Steering Committee, mainly through the Directorate of Technical Leadership and Knowledge Management, for the following activities:

- *Holding of a telephone conference with members of the Steering Committee, in conjunction with the coordinator of the Steering Committee, Dr. Victor Villalobos, to move ahead with measures aimed at improving technical expertise at IICA, as called for in the recommendations of that Steering Committee, which were approved by the Executive Committee in its Resolution No. 490.*
- *Preparation and holding of the meeting of the Steering Committee on December 2, 2008, in Miami, at which the following were defined: the minimum content of the 2010-2020 Strategic Framework and the 2010-2020 Strategic Plan of IICA; the guidelines for their preparation; the minimum requirements that must be met by the consulting firm that would be in charge of their preparation; a proposed schedule; the*

¹ “Cooperation instruments are not well recognized within IICA. As a result, they are not used to their full potential by the Institute” [...]. Therefore a “better understanding of the cooperation instruments among IICA’s clients and among IICA’s own staff is of key importance for making better use of the Institute’s capacity at the hemispheric level”. Source: SIDE Report.

steps to be followed by the Steering Committee; and action to be taken by IICA to ultimately support the Committee.

- *Preparation of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for a consulting firm to prepare the 2010-2020 Strategic Framework and the 2010-2020 Strategic Plan of IICA*, according to the guidelines agreed upon by the Steering Committee at its meeting in Miami on December 2, 2008. These terms of reference were sent to all members of the Steering Committee by e-mail on December 18 and 19, as were the strategy for action agreed upon at the Miami meeting on December 2 and a record of the meeting.
- *Search on the Internet and through consultation, for possible consulting firms that meet the requirements established by the Steering Committee*. After an exhaustive selection process, over 30 companies in the Americas and in Europe were identified as partly meeting the requirements established, even though none of them fully met them.
- Request made on January 8, 2009 to the members of the Steering Committee to recommend possible consulting firms to prepare the 2010-2020 Strategic Framework and Strategic Plan of IICA.
- *Holding of a telephone conference with the members of the Steering Committee* on February 9, 2009, in conjunction with the coordinator of the Steering Committee, Dr. Victor Villalobos, to explain the situation with respect to the possible hiring of a consulting firm. Given the fact that no one firm fully met the requirements and in view of the limited time available, IICA proposed hiring an ad hoc team, to be chosen by the Steering Committee and IICA and consisting of one or two leaders of recognized prestige and two or three professionals to prepare the Strategic Framework for presentation to the IABA. Preparation of the Strategic Plan would be left for the next incoming Director General. The minutes of the meeting were sent to the members of the Steering Committee on February 10, 2009.
- *Preparation of an approximate budget for providing logistic support to the Steering Committee and to cover the cost of hiring the team of experts to prepare the 2010-2020 Strategic Framework of IICA*.
- Holding on February 17, 2009 of a *telephone conference* with the members of the Steering Committee that could be contacted (Argentina, Brazil and USA) to decide on the following steps in the process of identifying and hiring the person who would be responsible for the Strategic Framework of IICA, along with the panel or working group involved in that endeavor.