



**Market Information Organization of the Americas
(MIOA)**

**MIOA Progress Report to the
XXXVI Meeting of the Executive Committee of IICA**

**August 23, 2016
San José, Costa Rica**

Introduction

The Market Information Organization of the Americas is a cooperation network comprising Agricultural Marketing Information Systems (MIS), that is, Government institutions, or those delegated by government, whose main functions or objectives are to collect, process, analyze and disseminate information on markets and agricultural products. The MIOA is defined as a catalyst for the common efforts towards achieving the goals that have been established. These objectives have emerged from the needs and concerns of institutions that comprise the network and are meant to be resolved by members' resources as well as contributions from national and international cooperation agencies.

Created in 2000, the MIOA currently consists of 33 countries from the Americas. In 2004, the MIOA designated IICA as the Technical Secretariat entrusted with the responsibility of providing the necessary technical advice. The MIOA Executive Committee meets three times a year. At these meetings proposals are made with respect to the general direction and program of work of the organization. Opportunities for member countries are also identified, and policies and priorities established.

Purpose of the MIOA

The primary purpose of the MIOA is to facilitate timely and consistent exchange of information on markets and agricultural products by fulfilling its objectives, which are to:

- Promote cooperation among member institutions and facilitate an exchange of knowledge and experiences relating to the collection and dissemination of information.
- Help create standards with respect to terminology, methodology and technology for use within the network.
- Facilitate timely and systematic exchange of information on markets and among institution members.
- Act as a contact point for channeling and facilitating a multiplier effect for obtaining financial support from funding agencies.

Achievements of the MIOA

At the Hemispheric Meeting of the IABA in 2011, the MIOA received recognition and support from the Ministers of Agriculture through the Ministerial Declaration: "to support the work of the Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA) by promoting greater collaboration between Member States on innovative measures for collecting, processing, analyzing and disseminating information on markets and agricultural products, fostering greater market transparency and efficiency".

Among the most outstanding achievements of the MIOA, we can highlight promotion of the importance of accurate and timely agricultural market information, as well as the development of professional and personal relationships among market information specialists, which has led to numerous multilateral and bilateral efforts with respect to technical assistance, as well as an exchange of specialists. Another achievement has been the strengthening of the technical and administrative capacity of Information Systems managers in member countries through the development of activities with specialists in a variety of areas, and the formulation of professional and personal relationships among market information specialists in the Americas.

Progress within the MIOA includes the mounting of a Web page with news releases, contact information of delegates from member countries, a link to MIS in the member countries, presentations, and rules of the organization. It also provides a quarterly newsletter that provides information to delegates and associates on activities undertaken by the Organization.

Activities and projects currently being implemented

The MIOA has forged cooperative agreements with AMS-USDA, FAS-USDA and IICA for financing and managing its activities and specific projects in relevant areas aimed at improving information services. The MIOA is currently developing projects on information management and capacity building that will benefit MIS. The projects currently being undertaken are as follows:

Online catalog of major agricultural products (Wiki)

In the first phase, financial support provided by USAID through the Participating Agency Program Agreement (PAPA), enabled the development of a dynamic and operational information system for integrating, managing and organizing important regional agricultural products, for easy and quick access by producers or entities linked to the strategic development of CAFTA countries, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

The second phase of this project will begin in 2017, and will gradually incorporate countries in the Northern, Caribbean, Andean and Southern regions. Implementation will require training of staff in management of the instrument.

Knowledge Management in Market Information Systems

With support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through its Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), and with funding from its Foreign Agricultural Services (FAS), as well as coordination and implementation by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), a document presenting background information on agricultural market information systems (MIS), in a synthesized and user-friendly manner, was prepared. It also included conceptual references to the role of these systems in the public and private decision-

making processes of the countries, good practices and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT).

This document was prepared from a compilation of documents generated by the MIOA since its inception, and with the support of its members who shared their experiences and perspectives for the future. The publication will be made available to the MIS and to the general public in the member countries in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese, in printed format and through the MIOA Web page.

Strengthening private sector links to MIS and evaluation of the Short Message System (SMS).

The objective of this project is to evaluate the programs for dissemination of market information through short message services (SMS) in Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Ecuador and Costa Rica, based on their business model, sustainability, and effectiveness in providing timely and reliable market information to the farmers. This information will then be used to develop strategies and methodologies that will guarantee timely, reliable and transparent dissemination of the information to users in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Evaluation of the SMS systems in the selected countries has already been concluded and systematization of the experiences is currently being carried out. This will allow for the identification of good practices and recommendations for implementing this system in the other member countries of the MIOA.

Technology improvement in Market Information Systems

Given the need for some countries to strengthen their data management and technological capacity, the MIOA is developing a cloud database that will provide adequate storage of market information in the Caribbean and Central regions. Implementation of this project will be accompanied by training in processes for price collection, storage and information management, and in the preparation of reports on prices for market intelligence.

The database is being developed for Antigua, The Bahamas, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Belize, Panama, Barbados and Costa Rica.

Strengthening human resources in the member countries of the MIOA in market information and intelligence

Through this project, a curriculum for educating professionals in market information and intelligence systems is being developed, with the collaboration of higher education centers in the region. The first phase of this project includes participation from the Escola Superior Agricola Luiz de Queiroz in Brazil, University EARTH in Costa Rica, University Zamorano in Honduras, and the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago.

Within the framework of this project, two meetings were held in 2015 in Honduras and Costa Rica to develop the technical content of a curriculum proposal that includes the concept of information from agricultural markets. In 2016, a training workshop was held in Washington DC and Philadelphia, in the United States, to inform the participating professors of aspects of agricultural market information in the USDA, and to provide knowledge relating to price collection as well as the operations of wholesale markets. This workshop provided the professors with basic concepts for developing the curriculum that will be proposed to their respective universities.

The second phase of this project will begin in 2017 and includes seminars, research projects and internships for training professionals in market information and intelligence in universities in the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, and the Dominican Republic.

Future prospects

In the short term, the MIOA will continue to support the development of technology tools for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information from agricultural markets, based on global trends in information management.

With the support of IICA, the MIOA has worked on updating the 2016-2018 Strategic Plan. This plan proposes the following specific objectives:

1. Promote and position the MIS and the MIOA, at the national and regional levels, as tools for improving market intelligence and transparency in the Americas.
2. Strengthen the institutional capacity of the MIS in the member countries of the MIOA.
3. Expand and improve the quality of the services provided by the MIS.
4. Ensure the sustainability of the MIOA

Based on this proposal, a plan of operation is being drafted, which will outline the actions to be carried out over the next two years. Both plans will become effective once they have been approved at the Regular Meeting of the MIOA to be held in Antigua, Guatemala in October 2016, in which delegates from the member countries will participate.

Additionally, the MIOA plans to enhance its Web page with tools for strengthening the capacities of the technical personnel of the MIS in areas such as price collection, data storage, analysis and dissemination of market information.