

Activities carried out in the first quarter of 2013 by the WTO-IICA Reference Center at IICA

Since its inception in June 2012, the Reference Center (RC) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) at IICA has been involved in an intense campaign to promote and distribute products and services to the official, business and academic sectors of the 34 Member States of IICA.

The objective of this bulletin is to inform readers of the most relevant activities carried out in the first quarter of 2013 and simultaneously, meet the institutional requirements of transparency and accountability

All the IICA Offices in its 34 Member States receive informational material from the WTO-IICA RC.

It must be pointed out, first and foremost, that publicity material was sent to all the IICA offices. This material, containing information on the work of the RC, was sent in

printed and electronic format, to be made available to the staff of the ministries of agriculture, other ministries interested in international trade, business persons, academics and the society in general.

Another activity was the organization of three workshops that the RC

spearheaded in that quarter: two at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) and the third at EARTH University. Topics covered included the role of the WTO in international trade, the WTO Reference Centers and the technical cooperation services for trade that the WTO and IICA provided by the WTO-IICA RC.

More than 50 Masters students from different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) attended the workshops, which were held at CATIE. Among the countries represented were: Costa Rica, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Peru, Honduras, Chile, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Nicaragua.

The WTO-IICA RC organized three workshops, one on the role of the WTO in international trade, another on the WTO Reference Centers, and yet another on the technical cooperation services for trade offered by the WTO and IICA through the WTO-IICA

More than 100 students took part in the activity at EARTH university: 47% from the Central Region, 29% from the Caribbean Region, 9% from the Northern Region and 4% from the Southern Region. The other 5% were students from other continents, notably Africa.

With respect to **visits to the RC**, 18 visitors were received between January and March 2013, including an expert from the IICA Office in El Salvador, two specialists from the Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promotion Agency (PROCOMER), three students pursuing studies in International Trade and Customs, and the Costa Rican Vice-Minister of the Economy, Industry and Commerce.

During the first three months of 2013, the WTO-IICA RC received 18 visitors and processed 54 technical queries.

Additionally, 54 **technical queries** were dealt with, sent in by staff in various IICA Offices, including the Bahamas and El Salvador, and from university students, consultants, business persons, personnel in chambers of commerce and representatives of trade associations, among others. Among the most frequent topics were the following:

- General information on the WTO-IICA RC;
- General information on the WTO;
- Internal assistance and subsidies for exports within the countries;
- Customs technologies;
- Information on the content of WTO publications;
- Relationship between the WTO and the environment;
- Information on the tariff profiles of the countries of Latin America;
- The WTO and food security;
- WTO trade information and data bases;

- Trade protection;
- Information on the content of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture;
- Sanitary and phytosanitary measures¹;
- The content of some chapters of the international trade agreements negotiated by LAC countries;
- Tariff quotas;
- Topics dealt with in the Agriculture Committee of the WTO;
- Rules of origin of goods; and
- Online courses offered by the WTO.

Sending electronic versions of publications related to the WTO was another of the regular activities of the RC during this period. About 34 WTO publications were sent out on topics such as the structure, functions, advantages and myths of the WTO; trade statistics; trade and the environment; climate change and the green economy; explanatory leaflets relating to the Agreement on Agriculture and the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures; legal texts on the Uruguay Round; regional agreements; trade policy terminology and dispute resolution.

Also, during the first quarter of 2013, the WTO-IICA RC **visited 24 institutions in Costa Rica**, in an effort to sensitize them about its services. These include the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG), the Ministry of External Trade (COMEX), the Ministry of External Relations and the Ministry of Planning (MIDEPLAN). Visits were also made to chambers of commerce and trade associations such as the Livestock Promotion Corporation (CORFOGA), the

¹ Queries on this subject were dealt with and resolved by the Agricultural Health and Food Safety Program (AHFS) of IICA.

National Rice Corporation (CONARROZ), the Chamber of Exporters of Costa Rica (CADEXCO), the Costa Rican Food Industry Chamber (CACIA), Sugar and Cane League (LAICA), the Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promotion Agency (PROCOMER) and the National Chamber of Agriculture and Agroindustry (CNAA). Advantage was taken of these visits to establish contact with representatives of the dairy, meat, sugar, coconut, ornamental plants and foliage sectors, among others.

Between January and March 2013, the WTO-IICA RC visited 24 institutions in Costa Rica, with a view to promoting its services.

WTO-IICA RC bulletins and website

The RC is also working towards the production of information bulletins on cooperation/technical assistance activities relating to trade and international regulations for trade between nations.

You can access these bulletins by clicking on the section of the WTO-IICA RC website which is located on the page relating to international trade regulations of the Center for Strategic Analysis for Agriculture (CAESPA)

<http://www.iica.int/Esp/Programas/AnalisisEstrategico/Paginas/Normativacomercial.aspx>

<http://www.iica.int/Esp/Programas/AnalisisEstrategico/Paginas/CentroReferenciaOMCIICA.aspx>

Upcoming events

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica and the CACIA have initiated talks with the WTO-IICA RC, with a view to hosting a workshop at each of these institutions so that more professional staff can be informed about the services offered by the RC.

On the other hand, the RC will participate in a business web chat organized by the Foreign Trade arm of PROCOMER of Costa Rica, so that business persons in LAC who are associated with this institution can get to know the services offered by the RC.

Finally, the RC will continue to visit more institutions in Costa Rica, especially those that deal with the aspect of trade and those to whom the RC can be of assistance. In the future, these visits will extend to other countries in LAC.

One of the upcoming events of the WTO-IICA RC will be a business web chat offered by

If you wish to receive further information, you may contact the Reference Center of the WTO at IICA by electronic mail at centroreferencia.omc@iica.int or by telephone: (506) 2216-0170 y (506) 2216-0358.