

**WTO-IICA  
Reference Center**



# **Annual Report**

June 2012 - June 2013

**Inter - American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)**  
Center for Strategic Analysis for Agriculture (CAESPA)

**WTO-IICA Reference  
Center IICA**



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June 2012 - June 2013

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# Acronyms and abbreviations

ACAD:	Academic
AECID:	Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development
AGEPONI:	Area of Policy Management and International Negotiations
AHFS:	Animal Health and Food Safety
CA:	Central America
CACEX:	Advice Center on Foreign Trade
CACIA:	Costa Rican Chamber of the Food Industry
CADEXCO:	Costa Rican Chamber of Exporters
CAESPA:	Center for Strategic Analysis for Agriculture
CATIE:	Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center
CCCR:	Costa Rican Chamber of Commerce
CICR:	Costa Rican Chamber of Industries
CIGA:	Center for Research on Agroindustrial Management
COL:	Colombia
CRI:	Costa Rica
CNAA:	National Chamber of Agriculture and Agroindustry
COMEX:	Ministry of Foreign Trade
CONARROZ:	National Rice Corporation
CORFOGA:	Livestock Development Corporation
CRIA:	Center for Research and Learning Resources
CTL:	Center for Technical Capabilities and Leadership
ESA:	El Salvador
FAO:	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
GOV:	Governmental
GUA:	Guatemala
IDB:	Inter-American Development Bank
IDEPI:	Institute for Professional Development and Research
ICAP:	Central American Institute of Public Administration
IG:	Intergovernmental
IICA:	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
IICA BAH:	IICA Office in Bahamas

IICA CRI:	IICA Office in Costa Rica
IICA ESA:	IICA Office in El Salvador
IICA HQ:	IICA Headquarters
IICA MIA:	IICA Office in Miami
IICA PAN:	IICA Office in Panama
IICA T&T:	IICA Office in Trinidad and Tobago
ITTC:	Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation
LAG:	Latin America and the Caribbean
LAICA:	Sugar and Sugar Cane League
LDC:	Least Developed Countries
MAG:	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MIDEPLAN:	Ministry of Planning
MREEC:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship
MSS:	Ministry of Health
MTS:	Multilateral Trading System
N/A:	Not available
PAN:	Panama
PRI:	Private Sector
PROCOMER:	Office for the Promotion of Foreign Trade (Costa Rica)
RUTA:	Regional Unit for Technical Assistance
TEC:	Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica
SENASA:	National Animal Health Service
SFE:	State Plant Health Service
SPA:	Spain
UCCAEP:	Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Private Enterprises
UCR:	Universidad de Costa Rica
UIA:	Universidad Internacional de las Américas
UMCA:	Universidad Metropolitana Castro Carazo
UNA:	Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica
UNED:	Universidad Nacional Estatal a Distancia
VEN:	Venezuela
WTO:	World Trade Organization



## Foreword

**T**he Reference Centre (RC) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) based at the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) was inaugurated in June 2012. Since then, the Centre has worked to promote and disseminate its products and services, and to provide technical assistance to IICA's 34 Member States, including the governmental, business and academic sectors and the general public.

This report is divided into three parts. The first describes

the initial efforts to set up and inaugurate the Centre and the activities carried out from June to December 2012; the second deals with the activities and services provided from January to June 2013; while the third provides details of visitors to the Reference Centre and the technical queries processed by the Centre during its first year of operations.

The following report on the work of the Centre therefore spans its first year of operation (June 2012 to June 2013).

**Rafael Trejos Solórzano**

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# Executive summary

## The relationship between IICA and the WTO

The origins of the relationship between IICA and WTO date from more than twenty years ago. Ties between the two organizations were strengthened around ten years ago when IICA became an Observer Member of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), and two years ago when the Institute became an Observer Member of the Committee on Agriculture.

The WTO Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) and IICA then joined forces to promote the creation of a Reference Centre at IICA under the WTO Reference Centre Programme, and to strengthen the technical cooperation services that the two organizations provide to their members.

The WTO Reference Centre at IICA currently offers its services to 34 Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries, especially the region's developing countries. It operates from IICA Headquarters and is administered by CAESPA, the unit in charge of relations between the WTO and IICA.

## The WTO-IICA Reference Centre

The WTO-IICA Reference Centre, like all its counterparts across the globe, deals with all trade-related matters; however, in the Institute's case it specializes in international trade in agricultural products. The fact that it is based at IICA makes it possible to complement its services with the Institute's experience with issues such as climate variability in agriculture, agribusiness, policies, agricultural health and food safety, technological innovation, rural development, etc. Furthermore, the Centre's staff has experience

and training in international trade and in WTO topics, which affords the Reference Center greater flexibility and the possibility of offering more personalized services.

Since its inauguration, the Centre has cultivated strategic relationships and disseminated its services among IICA's internal and external clients. Its achievements include an increase in the demand for its services, such as responding to technical queries, holding informational meetings, attending visitors to the Centre and processing requests for WTO publications and those of the Reference Centre itself (technical bulletins). It has also developed other services, such as tutoring in the use of WTO and IICA databases.

## Internal and external projection of the WTO-IICA Reference Centre

During its first year of operations, the Reference Centre worked closely with the WTO's ITTC on some of the activities related to the inauguration of the Centre, the updating of the collection of WTO publications, the fielding of technical queries and the arrangements for some informational and training activities programmed for the second semester of 2013.

The Reference Centre has adopted the Institute's vision of "A Single IICA," having found complementary aspects of the services offered by IICA's different units and technical cooperation programs. The achievements in this regard include assisting IICA programs to respond to technical queries - for example, the Agricultural Health and Food Safety (AHFS) Program and the Food Security Program; and supporting the efforts of IICA's Venezuela Library to disseminate information about the Centre.

At the same time, the external projection activities carried out by the Reference Centre have led to the development of strategic partnerships with entities in the governmental, academic and business sectors. Furthermore, the Centre has already begun its projection activities (informational meetings, presentations, talks and workshops) in Costa Rica, where both IICA Headquarters and the Reference Centre are located. The external projection activities in other LAC countries are expected to be stepped up in 2014.

## Products and results of the WTO-IICA Reference Centre

### Technical queries

The biggest demand has been for the technical query service. Between June 2012 and June 2013, the Reference Centre dealt with **352 technical queries**. The number rose from 52 in the third quarter of 2012 to 218 in the second quarter of 2013, exceeding **the annual goal of 200 technical queries set for 2013**. The increase in the number of queries in the first semester of 2013 was due to the dissemination campaign carried out.

### Breakdown of technical queries by country and sector

For the purposes of this report, the geographical source of queries refers to both the places where IICA officials are located (at Headquarters and in the Offices in the member countries), and the places where the various sectors of society that need and have used the Reference Centres's services are located (countries). The data on queries received is also broken down by six sectors: governmental, academic, private (business), IICA, intergovernmental and "not available" or N/A.

In general, **most of the demand** for this service during the first year of the Reference Centre's operations **came from Costa Rica (65%)**. **IICA accounted for 25%**, while the remaining 10% came from representatives of the Central American bloc and countries such as Venezuela, El Salvador, Colombia and Spain. "Other countries" (Bahamas, Mexico, Uruguay and Trinidad and Tobago) accounted for less than one percent of queries.

Between June 2012 and June 2013, the **largest number of queries came from the academic sector and IICA** (45% and 25%, respectively). The business sector was also an important source of queries, accounting for 13% of the total. Smaller numbers of queries were received from the governmental and intergovernmental sectors (3% and 5%, respectively).

The variation between semesters was also marked. In **second semester of 2012, most queries were received from IICA (63%)** and academia (33%), with the governmental sector accounting for only 4%. In the first semester of 2013, on the other hand, academia was the single largest source of queries (50%), followed by the

private sector and IICA, with 17% and 13%, respectively. This change may be due to the fact that the dissemination campaign in 2013 included the private and academic sectors.

With respect to the **subject matter of the queries**, all sectors mostly asked about general aspects of the WTO and the WTO-IICA Reference Centre. In particular, **the academic sector** inquired about specific dispute settlement cases; databases on trade; trade and tariff profiles; and preferential agreements and food security. On the other hand, the business sector mostly asked about market access under preferential trade agreements; rules of origin of goods; issues addressed by the Committee on Agriculture and the SPS Committee; and online courses. Most of the queries from the **intergovernmental sector** were about general matters, but inquiries were also received concerning the relationship between trade and development, trade and environment within the WTO, and the technical cooperation programs of IICA and the WTO.

**In the case of IICA**, most queries (80%) came from Headquarters and the remainder from the Offices in Costa Rica, Panama, Miami, Bahamas, El Salvador, and Trinidad and Tobago. The **subjects that IICA** staff asked most about during the period 2012-2013 were trade agreements and agricultural negotiations; tariffs and subsidies; databases; food security and trade; environment and trade; and terminology and legal matters related to the WTO's members.

### Informational meetings

The Reference Centre held informational meetings to publicize its services and distribute its publicity materials. The 2013 dissemination campaign kicked off with the managers of IICA's technical cooperation programs and was then extended to external clients. The Reference Centre **sent 60 notes of introduction** to governmental, academic and business sector entities in Costa Rica in which it requested an opportunity to promote and disseminate its work. This resulted in a **total of 54 dissemination meetings** being held in the first semester of 2013. These activities were targeted directly at the heads of the entities concerned, with a view to their disseminating information about the Centre within their respective institutions. After the meetings, each contact was sent a thank you letter with the electronic material for disseminating the Reference Centre.

In the **governmental sector**, meetings took place with officials of Costa Rican ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG), Ministry of Foreign Trade (COMEX), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship (MREEC), Ministry of Health (MSS), and Ministry of Planning (MIDEPLAN). Other meetings were held with officials and representatives of intergovernmental organizations in Costa Rica, such as the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Regional Unit for Technical Assistance (RUTA) in Central America. The meetings with the **business** or private **sector** involved businesspeople and officials from chambers of commerce and trade promoters in Costa Rica linked to exports in general and activities such as stock raising, rice, sugar, agroindustry and other agricultural activities.

The meetings held with **academia** involved (mostly) universities, as well as public- and private-sector research centers and institutes, mainly Costa Rican but also a number of regional institutions. The entities in question include the Orton Library of the Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), the Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica (TEC) the Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED), the Universidad Internacional de las Américas (UIA), the Universidad Metropolitana Castro Carazo (UMCA), Universidad FUNDEPOS Alma-Mater and the Central American Institute of Public Administration (ICAP).

Staff of the IICA Office in Costa Rica also participated in several informational meetings held in the country.

In order to broaden dissemination of the Centre throughout LAC, the Reference Centre plans to extend the informational meetings to more public and private or business entities in the countries of the region beginning in 2014.

### Visits received

During the period under review, the Reference Centre received **56 visitors** from a number of sectors and countries, although most came from Costa Rica, where it is located. Most visitors from other countries (such as Canada, Venezuela, Guatemala, El Salvador and Panama) visited the Centre as part of their involvement in courses,

internships, consultancies, seminars or technical forums at IICA Headquarters.

**Academics** accounted for the **biggest percentage of visits to the Reference Centre** (45%), both in the second semester of 2012 and in the first semester of 2013. **IICA staff members made up the second largest percentage of visitors** over the course of the year (20%), with the figure rising slightly as the year progressed. The campaign to disseminate information about the Reference Centre and its services in 2014 is expected to lead to an increase in the number of visits and queries.

### Workshops and presentations

The first training activity held by the Reference Centre was a workshop on the WTO database led by Serafino Marchese, Chief of the Training and Capacity Building Section of the WTO's ITTC. **Two more workshops** were then held at CATIE, on the WTO, the WTO-IICA Reference Centre and information resources. The Reference Centre also gave a **presentation** on market access, the WTO and the WTO-IICA Reference Centre at EARTH University. Both institutions are located in Costa Rica, and more training and dissemination activities are planned for the second semester of 2013.

### Technical bulletins

The Reference Centre produces regular technical bulletins. Seven were published during the first year, dealing with topics such as the WTO reference centres, the WTO's technical training resources, FAQ, and a glossary of international trade and the WTO. The link to the page where the bulletins can be read or downloaded is: <http://www.iica.int/Eng/Programs/StrategicAnalysis/Pages/CentroReferenciaOMCIICA.aspx>

### Publicity materials

For the 2013 dissemination campaign, the Reference Centre worked with the Institute's communication, graphic design and printing, and language service units to produce printed and electronic versions of publicity posters and brochures about its work. During the first year, the Reference Centre **distributed**

**around 700 brochures** to IICA Offices and a variety of academic, business and governmental entities.

Publicity material and information about the Reference Centre's services were also disseminated with the collaboration of the staff of IICA's Center for the Promotion of Technical Capabilities and Leadership (CTL) and Venezuela Library, CATIE's Orton Library and the Scholarships Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Government of Costa Rica.

### Informational chat

On April 2, 2013, the Reference Centre participated in a business chat organized by the Advice Center on Foreign Trade (CACEX) of Costa Rica's Office for the Promotion of Foreign Trade (PROCOMER). Targeted at businesspeople in LAC, the objective was to raise awareness of the services offered by the Reference Centre at IICA.

The history of the chat is available at: <http://www.procomer.com/contenido/historial-chat---%C2%BFc%C3%B3mo-aprovechar-los-servicios-que-ofrece-el-centro-de-referencia-de-la-omc--iica.html>

IICA and PROCOMER have entered into a strategic partnership to promote and make use of each other's services.

### Collection of WTO publications

The Reference Centre began operations with a collection of publications supplied by the WTO and others produced by CAESPA. The WTO collection now consists of **181 copies of 41 titles** on general aspects of the WTO and its work; trade and tariff statistics; the WTO Agreement of Agriculture and the SPS Agreement; trade and environment; trade disputes; WTO databases; and trade policy, among others.

### Other products

In the first semester of 2013, in collaboration with the Informatics Unit, a Web page was created for the Reference Centre with the following address:



<http://www.iica.int/Eng/Programs/StrategicAnalysis/Pages/CentroReferenciaOMCIICA.aspx>

This page is used to publish the Reference Centre's technical bulletins, as well as video and audio recordings of the Centre's events. The Reference Centre intends to add other public events and the products of workshops and activities designed to raise the Centre's profile.

During the first year of operations, **15 news alerts** were sent out to a number of users of the IICA's thematic networks and other people interested in specific information related to publications, disputes within the WTO, trade trends, food security, tariff quotas and value chains, among others.

Users can also request in-person or virtual tutoring to learn how to use the WTO databases or to access specific resources that they contain. **Three tutorials** of this kind were held during the first year, for RUTA of Central America, CATIE and the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR).

In addition, the Reference Centre created written tutorials (instructions) to help users who cannot take part in onsite or virtual tutorials on the WTO databases or the IICA Web page. **Four written tutorials** were created on the following subjects: trade policy reviews, the WTO website in general, the ministerial declarations and the IICA Web page.

The information about the WTO and other issues related to agricultural trade is also distributed via email to more than 100 individuals and institutions. The list includes government and IICA officials, students and businesspeople.



# Introduction

## The relationship between IICA and the WTO

The WTO was created in 1995 and is the only international organization that deals with the global rules and standards (agreements) governing trade between nations. The goal of the WTO is to liberalize trade, providing a forum for governments to negotiate trade agreements and resolve trade differences, and applying a system of standards for international trade.

IICA is the organization of the Inter-American System that specializes in providing technical cooperation and expertise for the competitive and sustainable development of agriculture in the Americas and the improvement of the lives of rural dwellers in its member countries.

The fact that IICA and the WTO share common goals led them to develop closer ties. Together, the two organizations work on three main issues: agriculture, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, and international trade. That was one of the reasons why IICA became an Observer Member of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures roughly 10 years ago and of the Committee on Agriculture two years ago.

Technical cooperation is a line of action of both institutions. IICA provides it under six different technical cooperation programs<sup>1</sup> and the WTO through its ITTC. The two agencies regard the production and dissemination of public goods designed to create technical and

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<sup>1</sup> IICA's six overarching technical cooperation programs are: Technological Innovation; Agribusiness and Commercialization; Agricultural Health and Food Safety; Management of Rural Territories; Food Security; and Natural Resources and Climate Change. IICA provides its cooperation services to its 34 member countries.

institutional capabilities as essential for its members' development: IICA in relation to agriculture and the WTO in regard to trade matters.

IICA has a unit called CAESPA that supports the countries in their efforts to develop a State vision for agriculture and aims to equip them with tools for forward and strategic thinking. Trade standards are one of its lines of action; hence, the unit was assigned responsibility for relations between IICA and the WTO.

## The WTO-IICA Reference Centre

The reference centres of the WTO<sup>2</sup>

The Uruguay Round concluded with the signing of the Marrakech Agreement in 1994 and the establishment of the WTO. One of the organization's objectives was to lower customs tariffs and other barriers to trade, with a view to increasing the participation of the least developed countries (LDCs) in the Multilateral Trading System (MTS).

The first reference centres were developed in Africa, to help reduce the gap in knowledge, technology and information between LDCs and developed countries in matters related to the MTS. As time passed and the MTS evolved, the reference centres were extended to the developing countries.

The reference centres are a WTO tool for technical cooperation. Specifically, they are places where physical and virtual information about the organization is kept. Recently, they were also given a training function, facilitating online learning and training in specific WTO issues.

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2. Campos, A (2012). CAESPA Technical Bulletin. "The Reference Centres of the World Trade Organization (WTO)." Available at: <http://www.iica.int/Eng/Programs/StrategicAnalysis/Boletin/2012/n02-The%20Reference%20Centres%20of%20the%20WTO/The%20Reference%20Centres%20of%20the%20WTO.pdf>

These centres help LDCs<sup>3</sup> and developing countries improve their institutional and human capabilities in the area of trade, integrate better into the MTS, exercise their rights as members of the WTO and play a bigger and better role in the multilateral trade negotiations.

There are now more than 100 WTO reference centres in developing countries and LDCs all over the world. In LAC, there are seven national Reference Centres<sup>4</sup> and four regional ones, including the WTO-IICA Reference Centre.

#### The WTO-IICA Reference Centre

Most of IICA's Member States are also members of the WTO. Many of them continue to seek assistance with regard to the agricultural trade negotiations. For its part, the WTO needs to disseminate more widely information about MTS standards and its functions as an organization specializing in international trade.

For several years, the two entities discussed developing a joint space for sharing and disseminating information, and promoting capacity building in relation to international agricultural trade.

Given their needs, nature, functions and work on common issues, IICA and the WTO pooled their technical resources and efforts to create such a space under the WTO Reference Centre Programme, to offer the services of this technical cooperation tool to its members in the Americas.

It should be pointed out that for the past several years CAESPA has been the IICA unit responsible for IICA's relations with the WTO, under the trade standards line of action, and was therefore designated to operate the WTO-IICA Reference Centre. The Reference Centre began operations on June 21, 2012.

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3. Haiti is the only member of IICA that is an LDC. .

4. The national RCs in LAC are located in Argentina, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Guatemala and Panama. This type of centre provides services only to the host country. The regional centres in LAC are based at the headquarters of ALADI, CAN, IICA and OECS. Each organization provides services to its respective member countries.

## Management of the physical and administrative space of the WTO-IICA Reference Centre

In the first six months of 2012, CAESPA and General Directorate of IICA selected and fitted out the office space for the WTO-IICA Reference Centre, and allocated the necessary budget and (financial, physical and human) resources within the Venezuela Library at IICA Headquarters.

The services that the WTO-IICA Reference Centre offers to the governmental, business and academic community of IICA's member countries include guidance on WTO and international agricultural trade issues; access to printed copies of WTO publications; access to WTO information via the Reference Centre's public computers; and workshops, meetings and informational talks.

One year after its creation, the WTO-IICA Reference Centre is delighted to present its first management report to IICA and WTO officials, and to the general public.



# The First Year

## I. Activities during the second semester of 2012

### A. Inauguration of the WTO-IICA Reference Centre

On June 21, 2012, CAESPA inaugurated the Reference Centre at IICA Headquarters. Around 40 people took part in the event, including senior management and technical staff of Costa Rica's COMEX and MAG and the WTO, and staff from IICA Headquarters.

Representatives of the media attended the event, which was covered by the Costa Rican press. Photos and videos of the activity were also posted on the IICA and WTO Web pages.

When it was launched, the Centre offered two specific products:

#### I. Physical and electronic copies of WTO publications

The WTO sent the Reference Centre 176 copies of 31 items (books, videos and databases). The Reference Centre currently has 181 copies of 41 titles, which contain information on the following subjects:

- General aspects of the WTO and its work (structure, nature, operations, etc.)
- Trade and tariff statistics
- Handbook on notification requirements for agriculture
- WTO Agreement on Agriculture and SPS Agreement
- Trends in international trade
- Global value chains
- Legal texts of WTO agreements
- Trade disputes
- WTO databases
- Intellectual property, and
- Trade policy of the member countries.

## 2. Workshop on the WTO's Databases

The day after the inauguration of the Reference Centre, WTO official Mr. Serafino Marchese led the (onsite) “Workshop on the WTO's Databases.” A total of 21 officials took part from IICA Headquarters, the Orton Library and Costa Rica's MAG, MEIC and COMEX.

The main purpose of the workshop was to familiarize the participants with the WTO's different electronic information tools.

## B. The products of the second semester of 2012

During the second semester of 2012, the staff of the Centre focused on defining what services it would provide, publicizing its existence and drawing up a strategy for disseminating information on the Centre. In addition, they responded to a number of technical queries.

Some of the products generated during this initial stage were:

### 1. Responses to technical queries

Responses were provided to 70 technical queries related to agriculture and trade, as detailed in Section B of the third part of this report.

### 2. Publicity materials

Posters and brochures were printed to disseminate information on the services offered by the Reference Centre. The staff the Centre was responsible for the technical content of the materials, which were designed by the Social Communication Unit and printed in the IICA Print Shop. In its first year, some 700 brochures were distributed to the IICA Offices and a number of institutions in the academic, business and governmental sectors.

Publicity material and information about the Reference Centre's services were also disseminated with the collaboration of the staff of IICA's Center for the Promotion of Technical Capabilities and Leadership (CTL) and Venezuela Library, CATIE's Orton Library and the Scholarships Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Government of Costa Rica.

### 3. Technical bulletins

English and Spanish versions of five technical bulletins were published, all of which are available on the Centre's Web page and have been circulated within IICA.

The titles of the bulletins from 2012 were:

- "The Reference Centres of the WTO"
- "Information available from the WTO Regional Reference Centre at IICA"
- "Training courses offered by the WTO"
- "The WTO-IICA Regional Reference Centre begins to deliver results," and
- "Basic glossary of terms commonly used in the WTO."

### 4. Inventory of publications

An important administrative action taken was the preparation of an electronic inventory of publications received from the WTO and of the CAESPA publications housed at the IICA Reference Centre.

### 5. Contacts database

A database containing information on contacts in the governmental, public and business sectors of Costa Rica was created prior to the 2013 dissemination campaign. It also contains the contact information of people who have visited or submitted queries to the Centre and is used to distribute information and invitations to events at the Reference Centre to more than 100 people.

### 6. Statistical database

A database was developed to gather statistics on different aspects of the operation of the Centre, such as visitors welcomed, meetings held, talks delivered, queries submitted and resolved, WTO publications received and other activities, as part of efforts to monitor and ensure transparency in the activities of the Reference Centre.

### 7. Dissemination campaign of 2013

The Reference Centre designed its 2013 dissemination campaign, for Costa Rica, aimed at the governmental, business and academic sectors.







## II. Activities during the first semester of 2013

### A. Internal projection: “Toward a single IICA”

#### 1. Projection in the IICA Offices

In the early months of 2013, a number of brochures and printed and electronic posters were distributed to the 34 IICA Offices. Prior to this, a formal letter was sent to all the IICA Representatives indicating the willingness of the Centre to work with all Institute staff and urging them to enlist the support of the Ministries of Agriculture and other ministries or institutions in disseminating information on and promoting the activities of the Centre.

#### 2. Projection at Headquarters

Meetings were held at Headquarters with the Program managers to announce the creation of the Centre, and publicity materials were handed out to staff from the following areas:

- a. Agricultural Health and Food Safety: This program has participated actively in responding to specific queries on SPS. In addition, joint activities on this topic are being programmed for the second semester of 2013.
- b. Natural Resources and Climate Change: The Centre is organizing a joint activity with this program in conjunction with the “Water Talks.” It will deal with water and its relationship with international trade in agricultural products and the WTO.
- c. Food security: The program responded to a specific query on this topic and has collaborated in the publication of related WTO news item via the Food Security Observatory.
- d. Technological innovation.
- e. Agribusiness and commercialization.
- f. Area-based rural territorial development.
- g. Venezuela Library: The Reference Centre has donated copies of the WTO collection of documents related to agriculture. Staff from

the library participated in the WTO Database Workshop and in the visit by PROCOMER personnel to discuss the information resources it holds.

## B. External projection: Developing partnerships

### I. Informational meetings in Costa Rica

The database of contacts in the sectors of interest (public, private, academic) in Costa Rica, compiled in 2012, was analyzed and updated. As the Reference Centre is located at IICA Headquarters, Costa Rica was selected as the first country in which to hold on-site meetings with interested counterparts.

Some 60 letters were sent to different sectors requesting a short meeting to deliver publicity materials and promote the WTO-IICA Reference Centre.

During the first semester of 2013, the Centre held a **total of 54 dissemination meetings** targeted directly at the heads of the entities concerned, with a view to their disseminating information about the Centre within their respective institutions.

The Reference Centre received support from the IICA Office in Costa Rica in holding informational meetings with several governmental and private-sector entities in Costa Rica.

These include:

#### a. Governmental sector

Meetings were held with staff involved in international affairs and animal and plant health from the following:

- MAG of Costa Rica: a visit to the International Affairs Office
- State Plant Health Service (SFE) of the MAG of Costa Rica
- National Animal Health Service (SENASA) of Costa Rica
- MSS
- COMEX
- MREEC and
- MIDEPLAN.

Meetings were also held with representatives of intergovernmental organizations in Costa Rica, including:

- AECID
- IDB
- FAO and
- RUTA of Central America.

#### **b. Business sector**

Meetings were held with specialists from entities related to foreign trade, trade associations and chambers of commerce such as:

- Livestock Development Corporation (CORFOGA)
- National Rice Corporation (CONARROZ)
- Costa Rican Chamber of Exporters (CADEXCO)
- Costa Rican Chamber of the Food Industry (CACIA)
- Sugar and Sugar Cane League (LAICA)
- PROCOMER
- National Chamber of Agriculture and Agroindustry (CNAA)
- Costa Rican Chamber of Commerce (CCCR)
- Costa Rican Chamber of Industries (CICR)
- Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Private Enterprises (UCCAEP).

These meetings also afforded an opportunity to establish contact with representatives of the dairy, fruit and vegetable, meat, sugar, palm oil, ornamental plant and foliage sectors, etc.

#### **c. Academic Sector**

The meetings held with the academic sector involved (mostly) universities, as well as public- and private-sector research centers and institutes, mainly Costa Rican, but also a number of regional institutions.

Direct contact was made with those in charge of university majors and specializations related to foreign trade, customs, international business, international relations, economics and agriculture and information resources at:

- CATIE: Orton Library
- TEC: School of Administrative Agricultural Engineering and the Center for Research on Agroindustrial Management (CIGA)

- UNED: Business Administration Program with emphasis on International Business
- UIA: School of International Trade and School of International Relations
- UMCA: Degree in Customs and International Business and Degree in Law
- Universidad FUNDEPOS-Alma Mater: Institute for Professional Development and Research (IDEPI) and Office of Dean of Business Administration
- ICAP: Area of Policy Management and International Negotiations (AGEPONI) and Center for Research and Learning Resources (CRIA).

The Reference Centre plans to extend the informational meetings to entities in other LAC countries beginning in 2014.

## 2. Training activities carried out by the Reference Centre

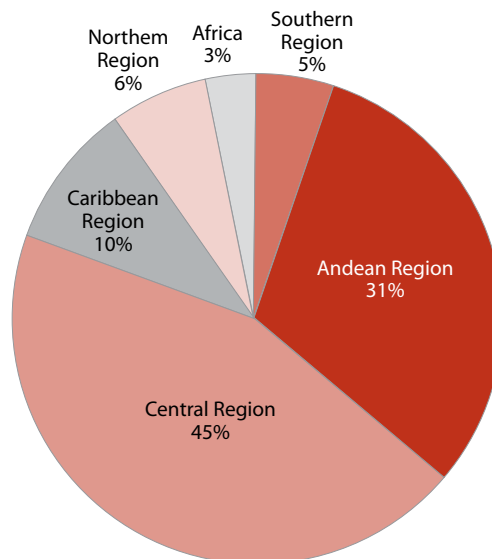
### a. Workshops and presentations of the Reference Centre

During the first semester of this year, the Centre held two workshops and presented a paper on the role of the WTO in international trade, the WTO Reference Centres, and the technical cooperation services related to trade that the WTO and IICA provide through the Reference Centre; events attended by 150 students from LAC and Africa.

More specifically, the largest percentage of participants came from the Central Region (45%), the Andean Region (31%) and the Caribbean Region (10%), and the smallest from the Northern and Southern Regions. (See Chart 1) Costa Rica (given the location of the institutions), Ecuador and Colombia reported the highest percentages of participants.

## Chart 1

### Origin of participants in the workshops at CATIE and the presentation at EARTH, by region, in the first semester of 2013



Source: WTO-IICA Reference Centre, 2013

The two workshops were held at CATIE and the paper was presented at EARTH University. Below are details on these activities:

#### *i. Workshops at CATIE*

Two workshops were held on the WTO and its relationship to the environment and agriculture, as was a session on the technical cooperation services related to trade that the WTO and IICA provide to their member countries through the Centre. Each workshop included one interactive session and one on the WTO databases.

These two activities brought together 52 students from LAC who are pursuing Master's degrees in fields such as Natural Resources Management, Management of Development, Environmental Socioeconomics, Agroforestry and Sustainable Agricultural Systems.

### *ii. Presentation at EARTH*

This activity took place at EARTH University, in Costa Rica, and focused on topics related to the WTO, and access to agricultural markets and its importance for entrepreneurial development.

An additional session was held to provide general information on the technical cooperation related to trade that the WTO and IICA provide and on the services of the WTO-IICA Reference Centre. Some 100 third and fourth year Agricultural Economics Students from LAC and Africa participated. Five of the participants were from Mozambique.

### *iii. Upcoming presentations*

In the first semester of this year, a number of parties have expressed interest in attending presentations during the second semester:

- *Paper on the free specialized services of the WTO-IICA Reference Centre:* During “International Trade Week” at the UIA and at the School of Business Administration of the Universidad Nacional (UNA) in Costa Rica.

## 3. Informational chat

On April 2, 2013, the Reference Centre participated in a business chat organized by the CACEX of Costa Rica’s PROCOMER. Targeted at businesspeople in LAC, the objective was to raise awareness of the services offered by the Reference Centre at IICA.

The chat history may be accessed at: <http://www.procomer.com/contenido/historial-chat---%C2%BFc%C3%B3mo-aprovechar-los-servicios-que-ofrece-el-centro-de-referencia-de-la-omc--iica.html>

The result has been a strategic partnership which encourages the promotion and use of each other’s services. It is projected that in 2014 CACEX will invite the WTO-IICA Reference Centre to participate in more chats and contribute the knowledge it possesses in areas of common interest.

#### 4. Technical bulletins published by the Reference Centre

In the first semester of 2013, the following bulletins were published:<sup>5</sup>

- Activities carried out in the first quarter of 2013 by the WTO Reference Centre at IICA
- WTO-IICA Reference Centre: Twenty frequently asked questions.

#### 5. IICA Web page

With support from the IICA Informatics Unit, a section was created on the IICA Web page to disseminate information on events, talks, workshops or informational bulletins on topics related to the WTO and IICA.

At present, the Web page is used to post bulletins, but plans call for including other products such as video recordings of talks or forums and news items on a regular basis. The link to the page where the bulletins can be read or downloaded is: <http://www.iica.int/Eng/Programs/StrategicAnalysis/Pages/CentroReferenciaOMCIICA.aspx>

#### 6. Tutoring and tutorials

Tutoring sessions are for one person, last one to two hours, and are conducted using the Reference Centre's computers or via videoconference.

Depending on the level of experience of the participant, an overview of the WTO and IICA is provided and all WTO databases are presented. Users can take part in one practical and one theoretical session. Three tutorials of this kind were held this year, for RUTA of Central America, CATIE and the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR).

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5. Activities carried out in the first quarter of 2013 by the WTO Reference Centre at IICA. Available at: [http://www.iica.int/Eng/Programs/StrategicAnalysis/Boletin/2013/N02/N02\\_eng%201%20TRIM%20activities%202013.pdf](http://www.iica.int/Eng/Programs/StrategicAnalysis/Boletin/2013/N02/N02_eng%201%20TRIM%20activities%202013.pdf)  
WTO-IICA Reference Centre IICA, Twenty most frequently asked questions. Available at: [http://www.iica.int/Eng/Programs/StrategicAnalysis/Boletin/2013/N03/N03\\_eng%2020%20FAQs.pdf](http://www.iica.int/Eng/Programs/StrategicAnalysis/Boletin/2013/N03/N03_eng%2020%20FAQs.pdf)



The tutorials take the form of slide shows and are intended for participants who can only access the Reference Centre by email and who wish to learn to use the WTO databases. Last year, four tutorials were conducted on the following topics: trade policy reviews, the WTO website, ministerial declarations and the IICA Web page.

## 7. Dissemination of news of interest

The WTO-IICA Reference Centre receives trade-related news from the WTO, and the staff of the Centre monitors the WTO Web page daily in search of news and publications related to areas of interest for IICA and its member countries.

In 2012-2013, fifteen alerts were issued, notifying users of news related to publications, WTO controversies, trends in trade, food security, tariff quotas, value chains, etc.

## 8. Upcoming technical forums

In the first semester of 2013, the Centre has been in contact with the WTO regarding the possibility of future videoconferences. One of them, which will deal with databases related to international trade, with emphasis on the WTO, will be held in September to coincide with the first anniversary of the WTO-IICA Reference Centre. Guests from the public, private and academic sectors and staff from the IICA Offices in the member countries are expected to participate.



## III. Visitors and technical queries received in 2012-2013

### A. Visitors

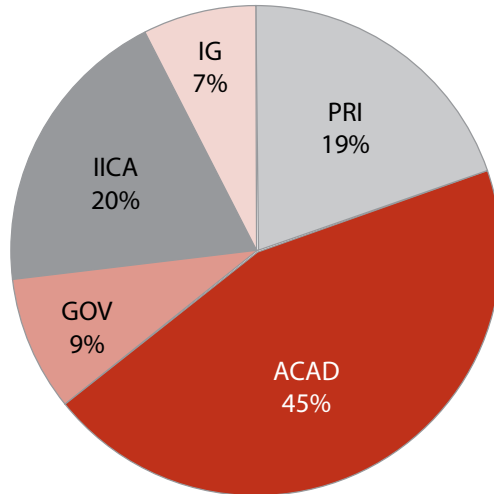
In 2012-2013, the Reference Centre received 56 visitors from a number of sectors and countries, although most came from Costa Rica, where it is located. Most visitors from other countries (Canada, Venezuela, Guatemala, El Salvador and Panama) visited the Centre as part of their involvement in courses, internships, consultancies, seminars or technical forums at IICA Headquarters.

Chart 2 shows the origin (sectors) of visitors during the year. The academic sector accounted for most of the visits to the Reference Centre (45% annually) in both the second semester of 2012 and the first semester of 2013.

IICA staff members made up the second largest percentage of visitors over the course of the year (20%), with the figure rising slightly as the year progressed. The campaign to disseminate information about the RC and its services in 2014 is expected to lead to an increase in the number of visits and queries.

## Chart 2

### Visitors to the WTO-IICA Reference Centre by sector, 2012-2013



Source: WTO-IICA Reference Center, 2013

## B. Technical queries

Since it opened a year ago, the WTO-IICA Reference Centre has received and responded to over 300 technical queries. To understand the role of the Reference Centre in the provision of this service, this report presents administrative and technical aspects related to the queries submitted to the Reference Centre.

### a. Administrative aspects of the queries

#### i. Technical personnel

At present, the Centre is staffed by two specialists in the field of international trade and the WTO who are responsible for receiving and responding to technical queries: Adriana Campos Azofeifa, Specialist in Policies and Trade Negotiations and Coordinator of the Reference Centre,

and Nadia Monge Hernández, her assistant. Both continue to receive training and update their knowledge in topics related to international agricultural trade of interest to IICA.

## ii. Ways of submitting technical queries

- *By email*

In 2012, the e-mail account [centroreferencia.omc@iica.int](mailto:centroreferencia.omc@iica.int) was opened to receive technical queries from the governmental, academic and business sectors. This address is included on all materials related to the WTO-IICA Reference Centre.

The Centre confirms receipt of the query and notifies the sender that it will take five working days to respond. Depending on the quantity and complexity of queries, as well as commitments of the personnel (training, talks, in-house meetings, etc.), this period may be shorter or longer.

- *In person*

The Centre responds to queries from visitors to IICA Headquarters, by appointment (due to work-related commitments and the provision of other services), as well as those received by telephone or videoconference and during visits or informational talks. .

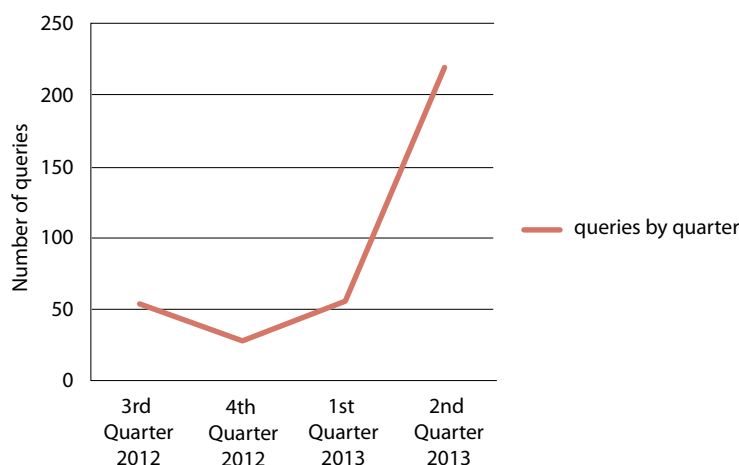
## b. Technical aspects of the queries

Between June 2012 and June 2013, the Reference Centre responded to **352 technical queries**. The number and origin (by country and by sector) varied from one year to the next.

## i. Volume of technical queries

The number of technical queries grew from 52 in the third quarter of 2012, to 218 in the second quarter of 2013. (See Chart 3) This means that the goal of responding to 200 queries by December 2013 was met in the first semester of 2013, and it is projected that the Centre will respond to more queries in the coming months.

**Chart 3**  
**Queries submitted to the WTO-IICA Reference Centre**  
**June 2012-June 2013**



**Source:** WTO-IICA Reference Centre, 2013

The increase in the number of queries for the first semester of 2013 can be attributed to the success of efforts to publicize the Centre.

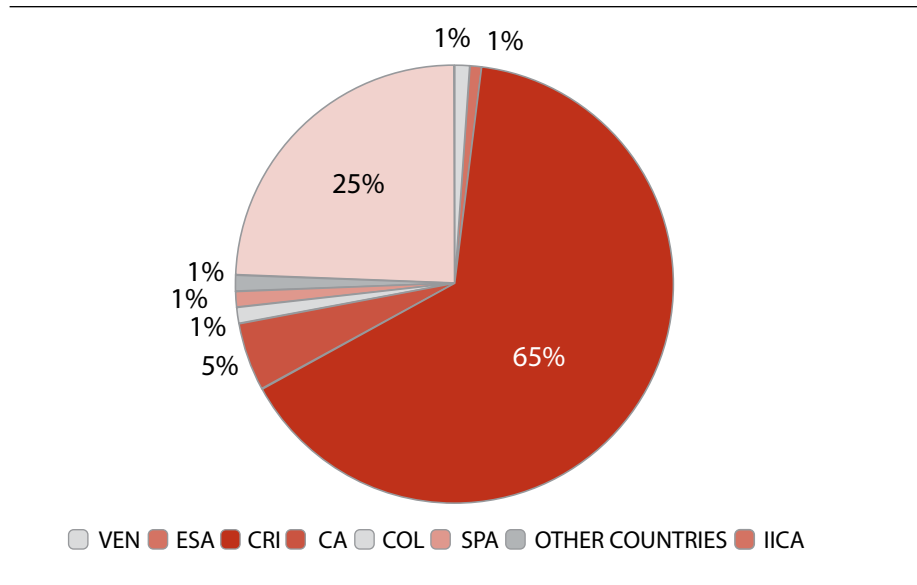
### ii. Geographic origin of the queries

For the purposes of this report, the geographical source of queries refers to both the places where IICA officials are located (at Headquarters and in the Offices in the member countries), and the places where the various sectors of society that need and have used the RC's services are located (countries). The data on queries received is also broken down by six sectors: governmental, academic, private (business), IICA, intergovernmental and "not available" or N/A.

In general, most of the demand for this service during the first year of the Reference Centre's operations came from Costa Rica (65%). IICA accounted for 25%, while the remaining 10% came from representatives of the Central American bloc and countries such as Venezuela, El Salvador, Colombia and Spain. "Other countries"

(Bahamas, Mexico, Uruguay and Trinidad and Tobago) accounted for less than one percent of queries. (See Chart 4)

**Chart 4**  
**Distribution of queries submitted to the WTO-IICA Reference Centre, by geographic origin, 2012-2013**



**Source:** WTO-IICA Reference Centre, 2013

However, the geographic origin of queries varied between the last six months of 2012 and the first six of 2013.

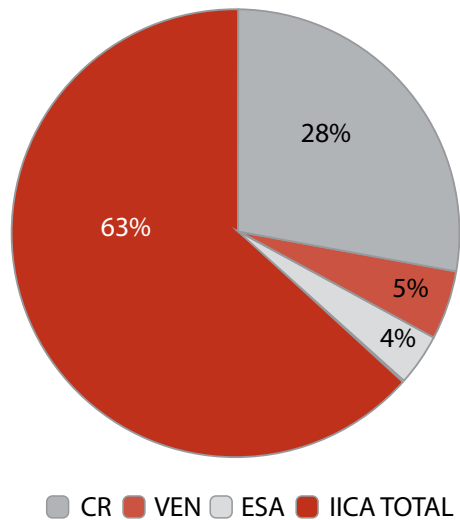
Of the 74 queries received in the second semester of 2012, most came from IICA (63%) and Costa Rica (28%), with only 9% coming from Venezuela and El Salvador. (See Chart 5)

Initial efforts to publicize and disseminate information on the Centre took place at IICA Headquarters, which may explain the greater participation by IICA during this period.

The fact that IICA was the main source of the queries can perhaps be attributed to the fact that most of the activities of 2012 took place within the Institute.

## Chart 5

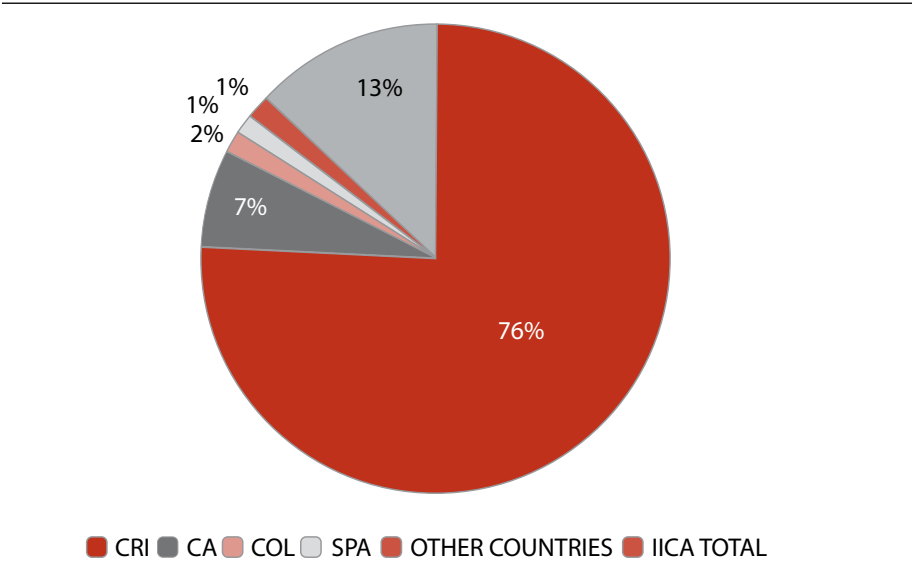
### Distribution of queries submitted to the WTO-IICA Reference Centre, by geographic origin, second semester 2012



Source: WTO-IICA Reference Centre, 2013

In addition, in the first semester of 2013, the proportion of queries originating in IICA fell to 13%, while those from different sectors in Costa Rica increased to 76%. The 11% comprises Central America, Colombia, Spain and “Other countries” (Bahamas, Uruguay, Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago). (See Chart 6).

**Chart 6**  
**Origin of the queries submitted to the WTO-IICA Reference Centre, by geographic origin in the first semester of 2013**



Source: WTO-IICA Reference Centre, 2013

Se considera que la razón por la cual se dio un incremento en la The reason why the participation of Costa Rica increased and that of IICA declined is probably the meetings the Reference Centre held with the different sectors of the country. It is hoped that demand from IICA and other countries will begin to increase in 2014, based on new efforts to publicize and disseminate information on the Centre.



### iii. Origin of queries by sector

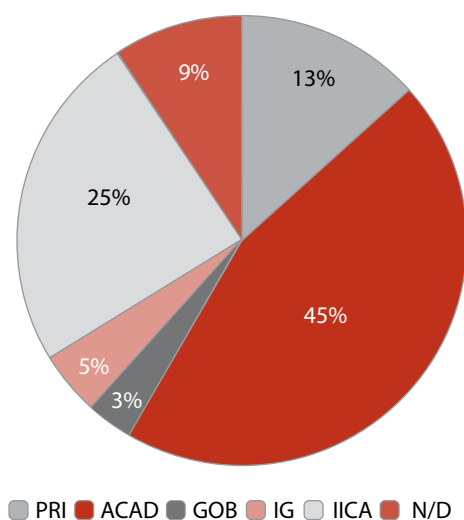
In determining the origin of queries, six sectors were identified:

- Private sector (PRI) (business),
- Academic sector (ACAD) (universities, research institutions, etc.),
- Governmental sector (GOV) (ministries and public institutions),
- Intergovernmental sector (IG) (various organizations and institutions),
- IICA (Headquarters and Offices): even though IICA is an intergovernmental organization, it was placed in a separate category because of its share in the demand for queries, and
- Sector N/A: Queries whose sector of origin was not provided by the user or could not be determined.

Between June 2012 and June 2013, the largest number of queries came from the academic sector and IICA (45% and 25%, respectively). The

#### Chart 7

**Origin of the queries submitted to the WTO-IICA Reference Centre, by sector, from June 2012 to June 2013**



Source: WTO-IICA Reference Centre, 2013

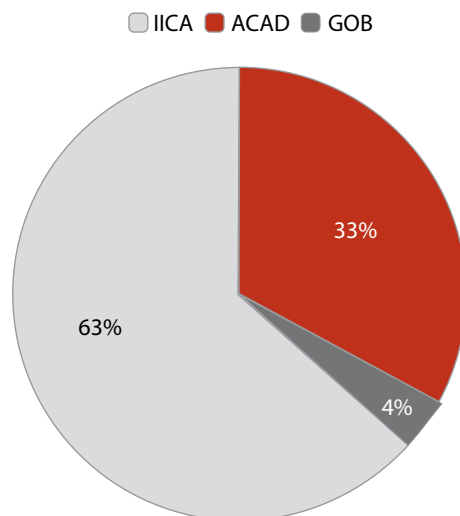
business sector was also an important source of queries, accounting for 13% of the total. Smaller numbers of queries were received from the governmental and intergovernmental sectors (3% and 5%, respectively). (See Chart 7)

As for the origin of the queries, the variation between semesters was also marked. In the second semester of 2012, most queries were received from IICA (63%) and the academic sector (33%), with the governmental sector accounting for only 4%. (See Chart 8)

In the first semester of 2013, the academic sector was the largest source of queries (50%), followed by the private sector and IICA, with 17% and 13%, respectively. This change may be due to the fact that the dissemination campaign in 2013 included the private and academic sectors, both of which demand information and training related to trade and the WTO. (See Chart 9)

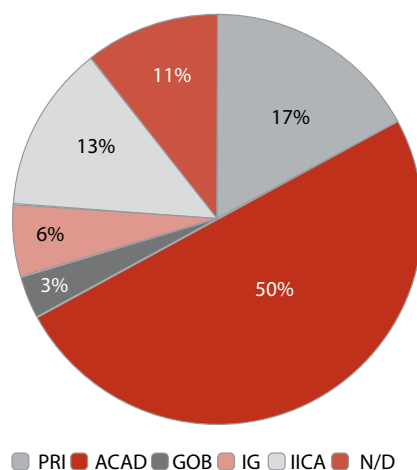
## Chart 8

### Origin of queries, by sector, second semester 2012



Source: WTO-IICA Reference Centre, 2013

**Chart 9**  
**Origin of queries, by sector, first semester 2013**



**Source:** WTO-IICA Reference Centre, 2013

Below are the queries from the six sectors from 2012 to 2013::

*Technical queries from the academic sector*

The number of queries from the academic sector increased from 26 in the second semester of 2012 to 136 in the first semester of 2013.

Most came from students, professors, and researchers in the fields of Economics, International Trade, Customs, International Relations, Public Relations and Law. The educational institutions that submitted the most queries were UCR, UNA, UIA and Universidad Latina de Costa Rica.

The topics most consulted were:

- General information on the WTO: Structure, operation, funding, etc.
- Dispute settlement: cases and panels, operation of the Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO, etc.
- Databases on trade, the WTO and agricultural trade.
- Legal matters related to the WTO and IICA (structure, legal texts).
- Electronic trade.
- General information on trade in services.

- Terminology of international trade.
- Advantages of and misunderstandings regarding the WTO.
- Food security, trade and the WTO.
- The environment and the WTO.
- Trends in international trade.
- Trade and tariff profiles.
- Trade flows (imports and exports) of several products; agricultural products, including fresh and processed fruit.
- Access to markets: tariff and non-tariff barriers (quotas and technical requirements) to export products to the United States, European Union, China, Peru and Singapore.
- Trends and new developments in world trade, the WTO and regional trade.
- Other topics: disputes in the WTO; the environment and trade; subsidies, etc.

#### *Technical queries from the business sector*

In the first semester of 2013, the Centre received 47 technical queries from this sector. The business sector was the third most important source of queries in 2012-2013 (See Chart 7.), but the second most important in the first semester of 2013, submitting even more queries than IICA. (See Chart 9)

Queries have been received from PROCOMER, the CNAA, transnational shippers, the rice sector, the meat sector, the dairy sector, CADEXCO of Costa Rica and from consultants in the environment-agriculture field.

The topics most consulted were:

- Access to the services of the WTO-IICA Reference Centre;
- Access to markets through preferential agreements;
- Rules of origin for goods;
- Technical standards in China and Singapore;
- Topics addressed in the meetings of the WTO Committees on Agriculture and SPS<sup>6</sup> from other countries of Latin America.
- On-line courses.
- The environment and the WTO.

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6. Queries on this topic were received and resolved with support from the Agricultural Health and Food Safety (AHFS) program of IICA.

### *Technical queries from IICA*

IICA personnel were the second most important source of queries in 2012-2013. (See Chart 7) However, its share varied significantly between the second semester of 2012 (main source of queries, with 63% (See Chart 8) and the first semester of 2013, when it accounted for one third of the queries, with 13% (See Chart 9).

All told, most of the requests (80%) came from IICA Headquarters. The remaining queries came from the IICA Offices in Costa Rica, Panama, Miami, Bahamas, El Salvador and Trinidad and Tobago. (See Chart 10)

At Headquarters, queries came from CAESPA, Food Security, Language Services and Natural Resources and Climate Change.

The topics most consulted were:

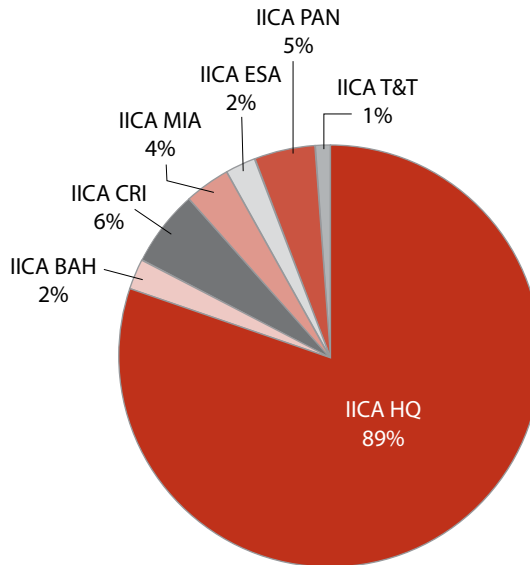
- Trade agreements and agricultural negotiations.
- General information on the WTO-IICA Reference Centre.
- General information on the WTO.
- Tariffs and subsidies.
- Databases.
- Food security and trade.
- Trade-related terminology and the WTO.
- Legal matters related to the members of the WTO.
- The environment, trade and the WTO.

### *Technical queries from the intergovernmental sector*

Queries from the intergovernmental sector were first received in the first semester of 2013 as a result of meetings held with this sector. Queries focused on:

- General information on the WTO.
- General information on the WTO-IICA Reference Centre.
- WTO databases and information resources.
- Relationship trade, the WTO and the environment.
- Relationship trade, the WTO and development.
- Technical cooperation services of the WTO and IICA.

Chart 10  
IICA's share in queries 2012-2013



Source: WTO-IICA Reference Centre, 2013

#### *Technical queries from the governmental sector*

Queries from this sector have focused on general information on the WTO, WTO publications on sanitary and phytosanitary measures, legal texts of the Uruguay Round, information on the Agreement on Agriculture, trade defense mechanisms; training resources from the WTO, and general information on the Reference Centre.

Most queries have come from MAG of Costa Rica, MEIC of Costa Rica, COMEX of Costa Rica, SENASA of the MAG of Costa Rica and the MREEC of Costa Rica.

The Ministry of Financial Affairs of the Bahamas also submitted a query regarding the procedure for joining the WTO and the WTO technical cooperation available for observer members. It should be pointed out that the Bahamas is the only IICA member country that has not joined the WTO.

### *Queries from the N/A sector*

In 2012-2013, 29 queries were received from this sector during the first semester of 2013. They focused on:

- General information on the WTO-IICA Reference Centre.
- WTO information resources.
- Virtual learning in the WTO ;
- Costa Rican trade policy.
- Trade defense mechanisms in the WTO and in Costa Rica.
- Trade flows of goods and services (exports and imports).



## Conclusions

The partnership between the WTO and IICA is the result of more than twelve years of joint efforts in areas related to international agricultural trade such as trade agreements and international negotiations.

The WTO-IICA Reference Centre was created to enable these two organizations to join forces in publicizing their existence and technical cooperation services, and generate public goods (in the areas of training and information) for their member countries.

In its first year, the Centre has provided eight types of technical cooperation services to the IICA community and the business, academic and governmental sectors. The demand for such services has grown as publicity activities have increased and expanded.

Technical queries, visits, informative talks and the distribution of publications have been the services in the greatest demand in 2012-2013, and demand is expected to grow in terms of volume and the sectors involved in 2013-2014.

The 2012-2013 period has been very important in cementing the relationship between IICA and the WTO and in promoting the multilateral trading system in the Americas. In addition, the internal and external partnerships established with AHFS, CATIE, the Venezuela Library and PROCOMER have paved the way for more internal and external partnerships.

The WTO-IICA Reference Centre takes advantage of the opportunities its work creates to integrate the strengths and contributions of other areas, while complementing the work of those areas as it relates to the WTO and international trade. For this reason, the Centre will continue working to ensure that in coming years there will be even



more joint activities between the Reference Centre and other units and programs at IICA.

Thus, the work done so far is evidence of the interdisciplinary nature of international agricultural trade and the technical cooperation services of IICA, and also, of the fact that the Centre is working toward the vision of “a single IICA.”

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