

International Trade and Regional Integration Program



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Glossary of acronyms

A

ALA - Latin American Aviculture Association

ALADI - Latin American Integration Association

C

CAN - Andean Community

CARICOM - Caribbean Community

E

EU – European Union

F

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FECALAC - Central American Dairy Federation

FITT - Forum for International Trade Training

I

IICA - Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

L

LAC - Latin America and the Caribbean

M

MIOA - Market Information Organization of the Americas

MTP - Medium-Term Plan

S

SIECA – Secretary of Economic Integration of Central America

SECAC – Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council

W

WTO - World Trade Organization

SUMMARY

In the period from 1960 to 2020, the global food system succeeded in increasing production at the necessary rate to feed a rapidly growing world population. While the population doubled, food production tripled. Although this was due to a considerable increase in productivity, international trade played an important role in ensuring global food access and availability. In 2022 exports from the agrifood sector of the American continent accounted for 32 percent of global food exports, demonstrating the continent's essential role in global food security.

Despite its importance, agrifood trade from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is not without its challenges. In 2022, 87 percent of the region's agrifood exports were concentrated in three markets, a limited number of destinations and export products. Moreover, despite governments' efforts to promote greater economic and political integration among the region's countries, advances in trade aspects have been modest, as seen in the low level of LAC interregional trade, which accounts for 13 percent of agrifood exports.

Furthermore, the tensions generated by crises in recent years, primarily as a result of the war between Russia and Ukraine, have given trade a greater influence on world geopolitics. This new scenario could have impacts on the global agrifood system, as profitability criteria, which used to be the basis of global value chains, may be replaced or complemented by geopolitical criteria. As well as causing changes in trade flows of agrifood products, this situation could have negative effects on competitiveness due to increased costs, on food security and on environmental sustainability due to geographical imbalances between production and consumption, and increase uncertainty over the development of international trade and the multilateral system.

Faced with this scenario, the International Trade and Regional Integration Program of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) provides support to member countries to improve their share in international agrifood products markets and increase regional integration, as a means to increasing economic development and social wellbeing. For this, its actions focus on improving access to markets and implementing trade policy, to promote openness, fluidity and transparency in trade, prevent and reduce unnecessary restrictions to trade, and support nations in identifying and harnessing trade opportunities generated by trade agreements, integration processes and changes in global geopolitics.

Furthermore, in collaboration with diverse international organizations, IICA promotes and executes collective national and regional actions as a foreign policy instrument to position itself and act in coordination in regional and global spheres, especially at a time when the world is facing profound and probably long-lasting geopolitical changes.

Through this set of actions, technical assistance is provided to member countries to meet World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments, to improve their participation in the multilateral trade system, in the promotion of regional integration and in fostering interregional trade, by driving actions to improve access to markets and harness trade opportunities for SMEs and farmers' organizations, through the use of new available technologies. Thus, agrifood trade in the region may strengthen its role in economic development, food security and environmental sustainability in the region and the world.

IICA's Technical Cooperation

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is the specialized agricultural agency of the Inter-American System that supports the efforts of its Member States to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being.

The Institute's operations are aimed at the implementation of three strategic technical cooperation actions:

1. Support the strengthening and transformation of agri-food systems, in accordance with the mandate of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture expressed in resolution 531, in which it endorses the 16 messages presented by the Americas at the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) (IABA 2021).

FAVOR ATENDER EL COMENTARIO DE LA TRADUCTORA.

2. Provide tools and inputs that contribute to the formulation of a new generation of public policies aimed at recognizing the contribution of agriculture in agri-food systems and in solving the climate crisis, as well as addressing science and innovation issues, placing agricultural and livestock producers of all contexts and scales at the center.

3. Support the collective action efforts of member countries in areas linked to their institutional mandate.

To this end, the new Medium-Term Plan (MTP) established the creation of a new integrating body called the Public Policy Observatory for Agrifood Systems. The Observatory conducts cross-cutting actions in all areas of the MTP, and operates in coordination with the Capacity-building Coalition for Food System Transformation.

Furthermore, the programs were adjusted to adequately reflect the emerging issues of the new global scenarios and priorities. IICA currently has the following hemispheric programs:

- Innovation and Bioeconomy
- Territorial Development and Family Farming
- International Trade and Regional Integration
- Agricultural Climate Action and Sustainability
- Agricultural Health, Safety and Agrifood Quality
- Digitalization of Agrifood Systems
- Gender Equality and Youth

Lastly, a set of interdisciplinary technical cooperation initiatives was established to respond to strategic demands in specific inter-programmatic areas, and the need to build bridges between countries, the region and the world, and between the different issues and disciplinary areas. Some very important initiatives under way include Living Soils of the Americas, the Coalition of Action for Soil Health and the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate.¹ Other initiatives that are at discussion or negotiation stage in the sphere of the UNFSS and the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are the Global Methane Pledge, the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, and the Sustainable Productivity Growth Coalition.

Through these changes, the Institute seeks to continue consolidating the vision of an IICA that looks outward to the world from the Americas and that, through its network of national delegations and its various regional and subregional technical cooperation mechanisms, provides member countries with technical cooperation of excellence, offering real solutions to the Ministries of Agriculture of the Americas

Specifically, the International Trade and Regional Integration Program provides technical cooperation to member states to improve their participation in international agricultural markets and increase regional integration to further economic development and wellbeing, and to contribute to the transformation of agrifood systems. The present document describes the program's bases and conceptual orientations.

¹ The Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM for Climate/AIM4C) seeks to address climate change and global hunger, bringing together participants to significantly increase investment and other types of support for climate-smart agriculture and innovation in food systems for five years (2021-2025).

Context

The global agrifood system has succeeded in increasing production at the rate necessary to feed a rapidly growing world population: in the period from 1960 to 2020, while the world population doubled, food production tripled (OECD 2021). Although this was the result of a considerable increase in productivity, international trade played an important role in ensuring access to and the availability of food globally. With data up to 2018 and using the new food balance sheets methodology, it can be determined that 35 percent of food consumed in the world is imported (CAESPA 2021).²

The LAC region has played a central role in the production and export of food, as in the last 20 years the agrifood trade surplus has increased constantly, from \$35 billion in 2000 to almost \$138 billion in 2019. Total agrifood exports increased from \$45 billion to \$193 billion in the same period, while imports grew from \$20 billion to \$55 billion (FAO 2020). This ample trade surplus is an indicator of the importance of the agrifood sector in global trade and also in terms of foreign exchange income and impact on regional employment levels.

In 2022 agrifood sector imports from LAC (17 countries) (IICA 2023)³ accounted for nearly 18 percent of world agrifood product exports. If exports from the USA and Canada are also considered, in the same year the American continent accounted for 32 percent (IICA 2023)⁴ of food exports (IICA 2023)⁵. LAC exports 41.7 percent of the agrifood products it produced (OECD and FAO 2022).

Some of the leading net food producing and exporting countries can be found in the Americas, key suppliers for the “pantries” of the world. According to the index of net exports per capita of food (Arias et al. 2020), these include: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay. In contrast, nations such as Bahamas, Belize, El Salvador, Haiti and Suriname depend to a great extent on agrifood trade to guarantee their food and nutrition security.

² Analysis by the Center of Strategic Analysis for Agriculture with FAOSTAT data.

³ IICA, with data from Trade Data Monitor 2023. LAC (17 countries): Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

⁴ IICA, with data from Trade Data Monitor 2023. Analysis based on 100 countries with trade information updated to December 2022.

⁵ IICA, with data from Trade Data Monitor 2023. Analysis based on 112 countries with trade information updated to December 2021.

To increase its international agrifood trade at extra- and interregional level, in the last two decades LAC has signed over 150 trade agreements and has continued with regional trade integration processes. Trade agreements have become a fundamental strategy in trade policy, as they increase and diversify investment opportunities in a given country and facilitate preferential access for exports of products with added value.

TEXT BOX

Trade agreements in countries of the Americas.

As of June 2022, the member countries of the Institute had 150 trade agreements in force and 12 agreements signed but not yet in force. In addition, there are four customs unions in the Americas: the Andean Community (CAN), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Central American Common Market (SICE) and the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR). At present the countries with the greatest number of trade agreements in force are Chile (32), Peru (19) and Mexico (20), whose partners are mostly countries in the Inter-American System. Specifically, the countries of CARICOM have signed four agreements as a region with countries of Central America, the Dominican Republic and the European Union (EU).

Source: Based on SICE (Foreign Trade Information System) 2022.

Despite the important role of agrifood trade on the continent, it is not exempt from challenges. In 2022, 69.7 percent of its agrifood exports (19 countries) (Arias et al. 2020) were concentrated in the following regions: Asia (including China and Hong Kong), which accounted for 40.7 percent; followed by North America (Canada and the USA only), with 24.7 percent; and the EU, with a share of 10.2 percent. The main destination countries are the USA and China, which in 2022 recorded shares of 18.8 percent and 18 percent, respectively. In this list of destinations, which has remained the same in recent years, Asian countries receive a greater percentage of agrifood exports.

In the analysis of data at subregional level, **export destinations vary by subregion.** Over 50 percent of exports from the South region go to Asia (including China), those from

the North region mostly go to the USA and Asia (excluding China), over 40 percent of exports from the Andean and Central regions go to the USA and the EU, while the main destination of exports from the Caribbean region is the USA, with a share of 47.6 percent (IICA 2023).⁶

Despite the progress of the Americas in global agrifood trade, internal agrifood exports remain limited. An analysis of interregional trade in the continent shows that in 2022 this represented 40.3 percent of exports in the region. The situation is dissimilar in LAC and in the different subregions, as interregional exports in LAC account for 13.4 percent: 7.9 percent in the South region, 9.9 percent in the Andean region, 13.2 percent in the Caribbean region, and 20.2 percent in the Central region.

One important element to highlight is that in the last three years, with the impact of COVID-19, extreme climate events and the war in Ukraine, the continent has shown a positive performance in agrifood trade in terms of total merchandise. This shows the agrifood sector to be one of the main drivers of economic recovery in the hemisphere. According to data on an aggregate of 19 countries in the Americas (IICA 2023)⁷, in 2020 agrifood exports rose 4.3 percent, while total goods exports fell 11.7 percent. This situation changed in 2021, when the post-pandemic recovery began. Agrifood exports continued to grow with a level of 19.5 percent and total goods exports recorded a positive behavior of 25.5 percent compared to the previous year. In 2022, despite the conflict in Ukraine, agrifood exports from the Americas increased 15.5 percent, in comparison with those of 2021, according to the information available from 19 countries of the continent (IICA 2023)⁸. In the case of LAC (17 countries) (IICA 2023)⁹, in recent years agricultural exports have been more resilient, increasing by 20 percent, exceeding total goods export growth, which increased 16.7 percent in 2022. These trends confirm the key role of the Americas and of LAC, not only in the economic recovery, but also in regional and global food security.

An additional element to consider is that the tensions generated by these consecutive crises, primarily by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, mean global geopolitics has a greater influence on trade. This new scenario could impact on the global agrifood

⁶ IICA, with data from Trade Data Monitor 2023.

⁷ IICA, with data from Trade Data Monitor 2023. Continent (19 countries): Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, USA, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

⁸ Idem.

⁹ IICA, with data from Trade Data Monitor 2023. LAC (17 countries): Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Paraguay, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

system, as the criteria of profitability, which were the basis of the creation of global value chains in the past, could be replaced or complemented by geopolitical criteria. This situation, as well as generating changes in trade flows of agrifood products, could have negative effects on competitiveness due to increases in costs, and on food security and environmental sustainability, due to geographical imbalances between production and consumption.

Opportunities and challenges for the hemisphere in the global context

The situation described above raises the possibility of harnessing the region's advantages, namely its natural resources and its productive efficiency to date, to **increase its presence on international markets and broaden regional integration processes**. The overall goal is to contribute to the supply of healthy, nutritious, safe foods for the world produced with appropriate environmental management, in a context of post-COVID recovery, uncertainty over global food security as a result of the conflict in Ukraine, high international prices for primary foods and inputs for farming, and increased global demand for agrifood products between the present and 2050. This increase is the consequence of a growing world population, higher levels of urbanization, the growth of the middle class and the diversification of diets, among other factors (IICA 2021). At the same time, other challenges for the region include the need to diversify production, including agro-industry and trade destinations.

The current international outlook has increased uncertainty over how international trade and the multilateral system will develop. These questions create political conditions that could bring back more protectionist measures, which in turn could have a negative impact for the region. A multilateral, rule-based, transparent trade system that is safer, more stable and predictable, providing an environment of lower risk exposure for agriculture and food security in the Americas, will contribute to addressing insufficient transparency, stability and security in international agricultural markets and will allow the region to fulfil its productive and trade potential.

The challenges currently facing the WTO have been building up for some time. These have limited its capacity to keep up with the challenges of the changing trade situation, the role of emerging countries in the global economy, and technological change. For LAC countries **strengthening the multilateral trade system** is particularly important, in order to fight tariff increases, potential non-tariff barriers arising from the introduction of more restrictive health and environmental requirements and a significant increase in production and export distortions, and in bureaucratic obstacles that limit efficiency and the movement of goods in the international logistic chain.

Regional integration, which has also been a high priority for governments, has led to the creation of numerous institutional frameworks, aimed at achieving greater economic and political integration among countries in the region. Strengthening regional integration is essential, not only because it allows a greater supply of foods and inputs of nearby origin that contribute to minimizing food security risks, but also because it benefits productive chains that foster economic and social development, decreasing the risk from third-market shocks. Despite these efforts, at least in commercial terms, success has been scarce, as seen in the low level of interregional trade. **Strengthening interregional trade** requires advancing in the convergence of technical, sanitary and phytosanitary, and environmental standards, among the different integration initiatives, and implementing actions to improve the facilitation of trade, streamlining customs processes and fostering automation and digitalization of processes and information exchange. Furthermore, work is needed to improve infrastructure, transport and logistics between the region's countries.

To increase international agrifood trade, both extraregionally and inter-regionally, it is vital to **better harness current trade agreements and benefit the establishment of future agreements**. To do so, not only is it necessary to improve their administration, implement complementary agendas to overcome challenges such as the exclusion of products from tariff preferences and share information on the benefits of these agreements, but also to work additionally to **strengthen trade promotion**. This means identifying trade opportunities and market niches, strengthening export capacities in farming companies and organizations in the agrifood sector, including family farming, and connecting supply and demand, while also including new technologies and electronic media and harness the rapid advance of agrifood digitalization.

There is interest from governments, the private sector, consumers and other stakeholders to **promote an agrifood trade that contributes to addressing "new issues" such as environmental goals and the inclusion of gender policies**. In the case of Latin America, this interest has been reflected in international trade policy, in which there are

increasingly more trade agreements containing environmental and gender provisions related to trade. Likewise, private initiatives have proliferated.

Private climate and environmental action, which is a response to the advance of international, regional and national standards not always at the speed demanded by consumers or stakeholders, has some disadvantages in that although private environmental standards are not mandatory, they do not always follow what is established by the WTO, and some can hinder agrifood trade instead of facilitating it. The availability of abundant natural resources in the region, and the implementation of sustainable practices by producers of different subsectors, offers great potential for LAC to take advantage of the growing interest in meeting environmental goals, as long as these initiatives do not generate unjustified barriers to trade to add value and differentiate their products in international markets.

Further, in recent years the inclusion of gender issues in trade agreements has increased, due to the interest shown by LAC countries in fostering policies that drive the participation of women in international trade. Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Mexico are just some of the countries that have taken measures to include gender provisions in their trade agreements; they are also part of the Global Trade and Gender Arrangement, which seeks to promote mutually beneficial trade and gender policies and open new opportunities to increase women's participation in trade, in the context of other efforts that seek to improve gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

Additionally, although market access actions are mostly the result of inter-governmental negotiations, it is often the companies that carry out the export process. For this reason, it is **necessary to drive and broaden spaces of public-private discussion and cooperation**, to guarantee the convergence of interests of both stakeholders and the adequate harnessing of opportunities generated by export markets.



International Trade and Regional Integration Program

In this scenario, the International Trade and Regional Integration Program provides support for member countries to improve their participation in international agrifood product markets and broaden regional integration as a means to increasing economic development and wellbeing and improving agrifood systems.

For this, it concentrates activities in two action lines: 1) improving access to markets and implementing trade policies to promote openness, fluidity and transparency in trade and prevent or reduce trade restrictions; and 2) strengthen the identification and harnessing of trade opportunities generated by trade agreements and integration processes.

To improve access to markets and the implementation of the trade policy to promote openness, fluidity and transparency in trade, and to prevent or reduce trade restrictions, the Program fosters technical cooperation actions to:

- Support countries' effective participation in international forums and strengthen regulatory frameworks governing international and regional trade by identifying best practices, creating networks that benefit the exchange of experiences, developing capacities and mobilizing resources.
- Strengthen multilateral governance through the analysis and dissemination of the WTO's Agriculture Committee's discussions, the generation of information and

reflections to improve member countries' participation in WTO talks and sharing information through the WTO-IICA Reference Center.

- Support the strengthening of coordination and cooperation mechanisms, especially at interregional level, to take better advantage of regional integration to increase international trade opportunities and improve the region's role in international trade negotiation forums.
- Endorse mechanisms that permit greater coordination and cooperation among the region's countries, and regional integration processes.
- Develop the capacities of strategic partners, such as ministries of agriculture, trade, economy and customs, trade unions and associations related to the agrifood sector and export companies to promote trade agreements and improve market access.
- In collaboration with the Agricultural Health, Safety and Agrifood Quality Program, support the standardization, harmonization and updating of sanitary and phytosanitary measures, inputs, varieties of products and requirements, licenses and permits that affect the trade of agricultural products and the development of agribusiness, through the promotion of intersectoral and inter-institutional discussions and regulatory convergence.
- Support the implementation of trade facilitation actions that streamline customs procedures, the automation and digitalization of processes and the exchange of information.
- In collaboration with the Gender Equality and Youth Program, address gender inequalities and bridge gaps through collective actions to insert gender perspectives in international trade to improve women's participation in international markets and broaden regional trade integration inclusively and equally in terms of gender.

Moreover, to identify and harness trade opportunities generated by commercial agreements and integration processes, the following strategic actions are fostered:

- Support countries to define strategies differentiated by market, chain and product, to increase their participation in international trade and efficiently harness trade agreements they have signed and economic integration processes.
- Endorse national trade promotion programs to diversify export markets and products.
- Strengthen farming companies' and organizations' technical capacities to export.
- Provide assistance to farming companies and organizations to comply with market entry requirements and adapt their products to consumers' tastes and preferences.
- Use modern technologies to promote and facilitate trade exchange spaces by organizing online business roundtables, business intelligence platforms, online markets, in-person trade fairs and missions.

- Foster the development of regional agricultural value chains and their linkage to global chains, to improve export market insertion.

Furthermore, the Program promotes the execution of collective actions by countries and regions with shared interests as a foreign policy instrument of particular relevance at a time when the world is facing deep and probably long-lasting geopolitical changes, including the food sector. Such actions are done in collaboration with diverse international organizations to act in coordination at regional and global level.

The set of actions fostered by the Program makes it possible to provide technical assistance to IICA member countries to fulfil WTO commitments, to improve their participation in the multilateral trade system, in the promotion of regional integration and in fostering interregional trade, through actions to improve access to markets and to harness trade opportunities in agricultural SMEs and organizations, through the new technologies available. Thus, agrifood trade in the region will strengthen its role in economic development, regional and global food security, and environmental sustainability.

Work style

For the Institute's International Trade and Regional Integration Program it is essential to have knowledge management networks, for which there is a consultant committee, a Program coordination core team, IICA technical experts, specialists from centers of excellence and research centers, and a community of technical staff who, with extensive research experience, and within the Program's thematic lines and technical areas, make up the international trade and regional integration network.

Strategic partnerships constitute another important element in the Program's action framework, such as those consolidated with renowned institutions, including the Latin American Aviculture Association (ALA), the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the CAN, the Colegio de México (COLMEX), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Central American Dairy Federation (FEALAC), the Forum for International Trade Training (FITT), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA), the WTO, the Executive Secretariat of the Central American

Agricultural Council (SECAC), and the Secretary of Economic Integration of Central America (SIECA).

The networks of specialists, the joint work with strategic allies and the technical and political capacities of the Institute's Delegations in the countries, and their regional coordinating units allow the Program to advance in fulfilling the goals and priorities defined in the current MTP, as the following section shows.

Major successes to date

In **addressing the effects of the multiple crises that the region has faced in recent years**, IICA has spearheaded the provision of technical information, carried out analyses of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine on commercial flows, exchange rates and international prices, and promoted transparency in trade measures applied by member countries during the pandemic. Furthermore, visions, perspectives and reflections were shared with the Institute's technical personnel and recognized international experts on the impact on trade of these countries' agricultural policies in light of such crises.

The Institute has raised awareness of the role of international agrifood trade from LAC in food security and the transformation towards more sustainable agrifood systems, by drawing up strategic documents for the United Nations Food Systems Summit. At this Summit, IICA stressed that "open, transparent and predictable international trade is central to an efficient, global agrifood system and must be governed by multilateral regulations, in order to foster agricultural liberalization and reduce tariff and non-tariff restrictions. It is fundamental that the multilateral system plays an increasingly active role to limit and reduce trade and production distortions and guarantee the adoption and application of science-based sanitary and phytosanitary measures" (IICA 2021). Additionally, recommendations were made for the effective participation of IICA member countries at the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference, the WTO's primary decision-making body.

Along with member countries, the Institute shared the WTO Agriculture Committee's discussions on the implementation of measures that hinder or facilitate agricultural trade in the countries of the Americas and their global partners. In this context the Institute worked with El Salvador to strengthen the capacities of the national

authorities responsible for agricultural notifications, drawing up a roadmap to update pending notifications, which allowed the country to get up to date after ten years of delays in their notifications. Additionally, IICA shared trade news and addressed technical consultations from the public and private academic sector on specific questions of trade policy through the WTO Reference Center in the Institute. The center's social media can be found here:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CentroOMCIICA>
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/centro_omciica
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/centro-de-referencia-omc-iica-004a02187/>

Together with strategic partners, **activities were fostered to favor interregional trade**, including actions with ALADI to foster regulatory convergence actions; with the CAN Secretary General, on the strategic trade and agribusiness line of the Andean Agricultural Agenda; and with the CARICOM Thematic Group of Business Development to address questions of trade facilitation. Furthermore, the Institute worked with the FECALAC to analyze the situation of trade agreements in the Central American region in the dairy sector, and with the ALA to systematize technical information for international trade in the poultry sector required by partner countries.

With key partners such as ALADI, FAO, WTO, SECAC, SIECA and COLMEX, work was done to **strengthen trade policy capacities** with the participation of over 1300 people, including the Introductory Course on International Trade and Agriculture, the Course on International Trade Policy for the Agricultural Sector of the SICA Region, the Regional Course on Online Trade Policy for WTO members in Latin America and the Short Online Course in Trade Policy for Member Countries (ALADI), organized with ALADI and the WTO. In addition, LAC agriculture ministries and other similar agencies received up-to-date information on agricultural trade policy through webinars, technical notes, talks and workshops. Assistance was also provided to improve the management of trade policies and to harness trade agreements in countries like Bolivia.


Additionally, the Institute implemented processes to **strengthen export capacities**, in which around 3500 people from over 20 countries participated, with special mention to the webinar cycles Training for the Internationalization of Agricultural SMEs, carried out with ALADI, and the course Preparing to Export Agrifood Products, carried out with the FITT of Canada. The Institute also supported national initiatives, such as the project International Insertion of Argentine Family Farming Organizations, the application of preparation assessments for exporting in Argentina, and strengthening skills in various Caribbean companies to export to regional markets.

The Institute has promoted **connecting agrifood sector producers with export markets** through business roundtables in which around 3550 companies from 28 countries participated and business options were registered for over \$153 million. Highlights included roundtables organized with FAO, SIECA and SECAC in the Americas, the roundtable held to promote interregional trade in the Caribbean and roundtables for the organic sector in Ecuador. The participation of Caribbean companies was supported at the Caribbean Premier Trade Exhibition and a trade mission of family farming organizations from Argentina and Uruguay. The Institute also supported the identification of trade opportunities for different agricultural products, including flowers from Paraguay, fine and aromatic cocoa from various countries in the region and transformed agrifood products from the Caribbean.

Lastly, **actions were executed with external resources for the traceability of agroexports and the transparency of agricultural markets in the Americas**. This included support, with resources from the Latin American Development Bank, to implement pilot plans to introduce the blockchain platform to support the traceability of sheep meat in Uruguay, table grapes in Peru, coffee in Panama and bananas in Mexico, and to strengthen the information systems of the region's agricultural markets in the MIOA Technical Secretariat. The MIOA's actions are implemented with resources from the US Department of Agriculture, through its Agricultural Trade Service and its Foreign Agricultural Service.

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