



## **The WTO-IICA Reference Center begins to deliver results**

The purpose of this note, prepared by the WTO-IICA Reference Center and the Center for Strategic Analysis for Agriculture (CAESPA), is to disseminate the results achieved by the WTO-IICA Reference Center during its first months of operation, and provide details of some of the actions that it plans to implement in the future.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have maintained close ties for approximately a decade. At present, IICA is an Observer Member of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Committee on Agriculture.

As part of their strategic partnership, at the end of June 2012 IICA and the WTO inaugurated the WTO-IICA Reference Center (WTO-IICA RC). The Institute's Center for Strategic Analysis for Agriculture (CAESPA) and the WTO's Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) were tasked with providing a joint space for sharing information and knowledge and offering training, in order to improve the cooperation services that the two institutions provide to their member countries in relation to international trade and agriculture.

The WTO-IICA RC began its activities with two WTO workshops: one on databases and another on the Agreement on Agriculture. The latter was run jointly by WTO and IICA specialists in trade policies, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, and economics. Around 42 public officials from all over the hemisphere took part.

The WTO-IICA RC has so far received printed copies of 31 books and a WTO database from the ITTC. All the books are available to the public in the RC, while the database on the GATT and its legal instruments was installed in the public computers in the Venezuela Library, which houses the Center.

The WTO-IICA RC has produced four bulletins: "The Reference Centers of the WTO," "The publications of the WTO-IICA RC," "WTO Online Courses," and "Basic Glossary of International Trade at the WTO." The last two will be published in November and December 2012, respectively. The bulletins are distributed, in English and Spanish, to IICA's contact networks.

Around 400 leaflets have been printed (in English and Spanish) explaining the work of the WTO, the RCs, and IICA, and the type of services that the Center provides. Posters are also being designed to publicize the RC, for distribution to IICA's 34 member countries.

The WTO-IICA RC has created an email address that IICA staff and the general public can use to submit queries or request information or publications related to the WTO and international agricultural trade. They can also sign up for the Center's bulletins and news about the WTO.

Although the dissemination activities are only just getting under way, the Center has already dealt with 50 inquiries on a range of topics, such as the function and structure of the WTO, the function and usefulness of the

WTO-IICA RC, trade statistics for Latin America and the rest of the world, tariff classification, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, food security, the modernization of production, dispute settlement, the use of databases, and WTO publications. Several users have visited the Center to consult texts such as annual reports and legal instruments; others have requested electronic publications or other types of WTO information resources (videos, for example).

The RC is finalizing the details of its dissemination and training activities for 2013. The actions that the WTO-IICA RC plans to implement in the near future include a Web page, informational visits, strategic partnerships with information centers and other dedicated to education in trade and agricultural matters, the broadening of

contacts, and WTO-IICA joint online and onsite workshops.

IICA's Center for Strategic Analysis for Agriculture (CAESPA) and the WTO-IICA RC are satisfied with the work carried out so far and enthusiastic about what lies ahead. They would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who is contributing to its work by sharing ideas, effort, and experiences. They also wish to express special appreciation to the WTO and the ITTC for all the assistance provided during the Center's first months of operation.

All queries and comments should be sent to Adriana Azofeifa C., IICA Specialist in Trade Policies and Negotiations and Coordinator of the Center, or Nadia Monge H., assistant in the WTO-IICA RC, at [centroreferencia.omc@iica.int](mailto:centroreferencia.omc@iica.int).