



REPORT TO THE INTER-AMERICAN BOARD OF AGRICULTURE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING IICA'S STRATEGY IN THE AREA OF FOOD SECURITY

From the moment it became apparent that instability in the supply and volatility in the prices of the major foods for human consumption would affect the countries of the Americas, the Institute began to monitor the situation regarding food security in the hemisphere. IICA stated its position on the situation and repeatedly called for the need to make agriculture and food security priorities on the development agendas of the countries. Also, it stated its willingness to collaborate with the Member States in dealing with the situation as effectively as possible, while insisting on the need to formulate and implement strategies and policies aimed at finding solutions to the problem of food security in the countries that will be sustainable in the medium and long terms.

The topic was brought to the attention of the Executive Committee, which, in its Resolution No. 482, instructed IICA to monitor and report on the evolving food security situation, including the determining factors and impacts of same; to provide support and advice to Member States related to food security; and to revise and adjust its national technical cooperation agendas to include this topic.

Strategic lines of action in food security

Based on the 2006-2010 MTP and Executive Committee Resolution No. 482, and following a thorough discussion of the what actions IICA could and could not undertake and where, the participants in Representatives' Week 2008 defined three strategic lines of action on which to focus the Institute's actions at the hemispheric, regional and national levels. These lines of action and their objectives are:

- a. Institutional innovation for a new paradigm of technological change for food production and diversification. Objective: To improve the institutional framework related to agricultural research, "extension" and technological innovation, with a view to increasing the availability and variety of foods produced by small- and medium-scale producers.
- b. Institutional framework and services to better able small- and medium-scale farmers and family agriculture to become involved in the market. Objective: To contribute to increasing the incomes of small- and medium-scale farmers and

those engaged in family agriculture, in order to ensure access to food and help improve the food supply.

- c. Analysis, monitoring and dissemination of policies and information on the state of and outlook for food security. Objective: To monitor and report on the situation in and the outlook for food security in the member countries of IICA, and facilitate hemispheric dialogue on the issue.

For each line of action, a Coordinator was appointed and tasked with drawing up a proposal and with ensuring the all regional and national initiatives are consistent with Institute guidelines in each strategic line. To date, the Institute has comprehensive proposals for each line of action which include strategies, expected results, specific outputs, activities, budgets and strategic partners involved.

The regional programming meetings (first half of 2009) provided an opportunity to present the strategic lines, to provide the Representatives and regional and local specialists with guidance on preparing proposals and projects related to food security, and to adjust the national and regional agendas to respond to emerging needs in the area of food security. As a result, a number of proposals and initiatives were prepared in the regions for all three lines of action, some of which are already being implemented or will be implemented in the coming months; others were beyond the capabilities of the Institute.

Integrated Program: Small- and Medium-scale Agriculture: Technology, Markets, Policies and Institutions

Given the limited resources available, the committee responsible for coordinating and implementing the IICA strategy in the area of food security decided to focus the available human and financial resources on a program integrating the three strategic lines, the conceptual framework of which is “To improve the capabilities of the small- and medium-scale producers and of the existing institutional framework in the member countries of IICA, for the purpose of increasing the availability of food and facilitating access to same.”

This Program is aimed at: a) boosting IICA’s hemispheric leadership in this field; b) focusing support on small- and medium-scale agriculture; c) focusing the Institute’s actions on those areas in which the Institute has advantages and can add value; d) promoting a medium- and long-term vision of food security; e) focusing national, regional and hemispheric actions on a small number of strategic lines, while allowing for specific emphases; and f) coordinating with strategic partners to avoid a duplication of efforts.

The Program focuses on *small- and medium-scale producers* because they account for most of the producers in the region; produce most of the food available on national markets; make up a

highly vulnerable and sensitive segment of the population in which higher food prices have increased the general level of poverty (a setback for efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals); and they produce a multiplier effect in the generation of income in rural areas.

The *principal challenges* the Program is intended to address are: to incorporate the technology required to improve and diversify the output of small- and medium-scale producers; to link them directly and permanently to markets; and to create or develop institutional frameworks and policies aimed specifically at this segment.

The *general objective* of the Program is “To provide the member countries of IICA with technical cooperation in terms of food security policies, as support in developing and strengthening an institutional framework that will be conducive to technological change and the incorporation of small- and medium-scale farmers and rural entrepreneurs, including those engaged in what is known as family agriculture, into markets.”

The *specific objectives* are:

- a. To provide the countries with support in improving the institutional framework related to agricultural research, “extension” and technological innovation, with a view to increasing the availability and variety of foods produced by small- and medium-scale producers;
- b. To contribute to increasing the incomes of small- and medium-scale producers, as a means of ensuring access to food and improving the food supply/availability of food in IICA’s member countries; and
- a. To create the conditions that must exist for the development and strengthening of institutions, the adoption of policies and application of instruments that will create an environment conducive to the development of small- and medium-scale producers and those engaged in family agriculture, as well as their linkage to markets.

The principal *expected results* for 2009-2010 are:

1. The provision of technical cooperation in food security, in support of the member countries, has been consolidated;
2. The situation has been documented: institutional framework, programs, instruments and processes;
3. The common priorities of the countries regarding small- and medium-scale agriculture and its contribution to food security have been defined;
4. The priorities of the countries vis-à-vis capacity building have been established;

5. “Good practices” have been identified;
6. Success stories have been identified: projects, instruments, processes and areas for intervention;
7. Mechanisms for cooperation between countries to transfer good practices and exchange of know-how have been defined;
8. Topics of importance for the countries in the area of policies, instruments, institutions and information have been identified and shared;
9. Programs for cooperation at the three levels of action have been defined and strategic partners have been identified; and
10. Bases for bringing cooperating and donor institutions together to reach agreement on a common agenda have been established.

Activities of the first phase (2009)

- Dissemination of the Integrated Program and IICA’s actions in FS (July 2009)
- Regional workshops: “*The contribution of small- and medium-scale agriculture to FS: reaching agreement on agendas and compiling experiences*” (September 2009)
- Hemispheric Meeting: “*Small-scale agriculture: a pillar of food security in the hemisphere*” (early 2010).

Progress to date

Monitoring and disseminating information on the food security situation

One of the needs identified by the countries is that of having access to relevant and timely information on the evolving food security situation and on policies for addressing it. To meet this need, Food Security was included as a “hot technical topic” on the IICA Website, which presents the Director General’s position on the topic and defines food security from the Institute’s perspective; shares research and analyses conducted by the Institute and the actions carried out by IICA and its strategic partners to address this topic at the hemispheric and regional levels; contains news and international events related to food security; provides links to the websites of other hemispheric and global organizations; and makes available research and documents from organizations and people that offer a variety of perspectives on food security.

Work is under way on the creation of an “Observatory on policies related to and the state of food security,” which will link the efforts of FAO and IICA with those of the CAS and the CAC. The units at Headquarters and the Offices in the countries periodically update the information on food security on their Web pages, and the September edition of *ComuniICA* dedicated three articles to this topic.

The “Campaign to disseminate IICA actions in food security” is under way. The objectives of the campaign are: to position IICA in this field and to ensure that all Institute actions in same are headed in the same direction. Several communication tools intended to help achieve both objectives have been or are being designed. These include a campaign to promote the IICA strategy on food security; the adoption of the graphic line of the campaign; the development of talking points for the Representatives; and an instrument to support fundraising efforts, which contains summaries of project profiles.

Technical cooperation in the countries and regions

When requested, IICA has supported the Member States in the actions they have taken to respond to emergency situations and develop sustainable medium- and long-term strategies and policies for achieving or ensuring an adequate level of food security. In addition, field research has been conducted in five countries (two regions per country) to gauge the true impact of the volatility of prices on farmers’ incomes

Under the Program, the Directorate of Regional Operations and the Offices in the countries are conducting studies and analyses of the food security situation in selected territories. The hope is that in the next few months we will have a document describing the food security situation in each of the regions based on field research, analyses and regional workshops. This document will contain an analysis of the food market, the actions needed to link producers to markets, the existing policies and institutional framework, and a proposal on the most important contributions IICA can make in each of these areas. The document will be an important input for the Hemispheric Workshop “*Small-scale agriculture: a pillar of food security in the hemisphere,*” planned for early 2010.

At the level of regions, the IICA Offices and the institutional apparatus of the Andean Region have collaborated with the MoAs and the research and technology transfer institutions of the region to promote the cultivation of ancestral crops with great potential for contributing to food safety. The objective is to increase the variety of foods produced by vulnerable populations, applying technological advances to native crops. IICA is encouraging small- and medium-scale farmers to participate in government programs that buy food, as a means of increasing their incomes.

In the Southern Region, the Institute is promoting the management of a platform of institutional innovations for technological innovations (NARIs, PROCISUR-IICA); dialogue on “rural extension” from the perspective of knowledge management and incorporation of technology into family agriculture; and the “professionalization” of farmers by helping them to develop the capability to incorporate technology into the different links of production chains. IICA’s goal is to increase the incomes of family farms by having them supply local markets.

In the Caribbean Region, efforts are under way to compile and disseminate information and know-how related to technologies and good agricultural practices which can be assimilated and applied by small- and medium-scale farmers in order to increase productivity and improve food security, especially the use of greenhouses. Another focus of attention is the development and consolidation of commercial ties between farmers and the tourism sector. It is important to mention the direct support provided to Haiti in coordination with other countries and organizations (Prohuerta project).

In the Central Region, the “Regional program for institutional innovation and knowledge management in support of small- and medium-scale agriculture,” which consists of two projects, will be launched. One deals with the development of innovations, capabilities and competencies in technical assistance and extension; and the other with describing the availability and transfer of technology in priority food production chains. Currently, IICA is working with the WFP in the implementation of a regional project aimed at improving the incomes of staple grain producers.

In the Northern Region, IICA is calling on large companies to a more active social role by developing programs through which small- and medium-scale farmers can sell their goods. In addition, a conference will be held at the OAS on the food security situation in the hemisphere and the challenges the countries face in terms of food security.

The search for external resources

The limited resources of IICA are insufficient to obtain more relevant results in the area of food security. Therefore, in addition to allocating internal resources to finance activities related to food security, special emphasis has been placed on the preparation of project proposals and profiles to be used in searching for external resources for the implementation of comprehensive and sustainable projects. This search for resources has been undertaken by the Directorate of External Financing and Investment Projects and by the Offices and the hemispheric and regional technical personnel.

Coordination with other organizations and agencies

Aware that the demands of the countries exceed its possibilities, of the need to avoid a duplication of efforts and of the multiplier effect of joint actions with other organizations, IICA has reached agreement with strategic partners, coordinating with them policies, projects and joint activities at the hemispheric, regional and national levels. The partners with which IICA is already carrying out or is planning to carry out joint actions in the area of food safety include WFP, FAO, ECLAC, World Bank, OAS, USDA, CAS, CAC, ODEPA, FORAGRO, PROCIs,

SICTA, Cornell University, University of Florida, other universities of LAC, INTA-Argentina, NARIs, SICTA, GFAR, members of INFOTEC and numerous national and local organizations.