



# Brief history of IICA



*The President of Costa Rica, Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia, with United State Vice President Henry Wallace, at the ceremony to lay the cornerstone of the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Science in Turrialba, 1943.*

## An inter-American aspiration

It was during the most critical years of World War II. Europe had lost its hegemony over vast areas of tropical Asia, and was at serious risk of losing others. In the face of such developments, it became necessary to look elsewhere for strategic crops such as rubber (latex), certain fibers, medicinal plants, rice, tea, tropical oilseeds and plants used to produce insecticides, such as rotenone.

The moment was right to realize a dream that had been nurtured since 1910. The Americas were a valid alternative for fostering the development of tropical crops and stock raising, for which it would be necessary to establish research and education systems to address the region's needs.

The efforts to create an institute that would seek to solve the region's problems and foster mutual

understanding among the leaders of agriculture got under way at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, when the Pan-American Union –now the Organization of American States (OAS)– undertook the important task of promoting agricultural development.

## The Institute is founded and takes its first steps

The Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IICA) was founded in 1942, thanks to the vision of people like Henry Wallace, then the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, and Ernesto Molestina, Director General of Agriculture of Ecuador. It was Wallace's idea to create IICA and Molestina who presented the respective resolution. The Institute's headquarters were established in Turrialba, Costa Rica, a region strategically situated between South and North America, with characteristics typical of agriculture in the Americas.

The first IICA field office (which subsequently became the Center for Education and Research) was officially inaugurated in 1943, at a ceremony attended by the President of Costa Rica, Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia, and the Vice President of the United States of America, Henry A. Wallace.



They were accompanied by the Minister of Agriculture of Costa Rica, Mariano Montealegre, and the first Director General of IICA, Earl N. Bressman.

The high caliber of IICA's scientific and academic activities paved the way for its subsequent expansion. In 1944, the first multilateral Convention on IICA was signed, under which its legal status was recognized by different governments in the hemisphere.



## The growth of the Institute

When the OAS was created in 1948, IICA became the specialized agency for agriculture of the Inter-American System, consolidating its work by extending its action to every country in the hemisphere. (This task was completed in the 1990s, when Bahamas joined as a member.)

By 1964, 21 Member States of the OAS has joined IICA.

During the 1970s, IICA carried out a number of specialized multinational programs as part of its strategy of hemispheric and humanist projection. In this period, specific, direct research and education activities were separated from those of a more general nature. This separation was achieved with the establishment of the Tropical Agriculture Research and Education Center (CATIE), in 1973, under the CATIE Contract between the Government of Costa Rica and IICA, which was approved by all the member countries.

A new Convention on IICA was adopted in 1979, redefining the Institute's objectives, adjusting its cooperation actions with the member countries, and creating the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA) as its new governing body. The organization was also renamed, becoming the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture. By that time, membership had climbed to 29 Member States.

IICA assumed a leading role in agricultural development and integration in the western hemisphere. The Institute's advocacy of the need for agricultural modernization won support in Latin America and the Caribbean, against a backdrop of sweeping transformations in international economic policies.

During the 1980s, the Institute coordinated the process of drawing up a hemispheric plan designed to reactivate the agricultural sector. This became known as PLANLAC, the Plan of Joint Action for Agricultural Reactivation in Latin America and the Caribbean. This proposal centered on the modernization of agriculture and initially included a broad portfolio of hemispheric and subregional projects.

During this stage of hemispheric consolidation, the Institute conducted some 38 multinational projects intended to reinvigorate intra- and extra-regional agricultural trade. It also established and consolidated cooperation agreements with donor countries and international organizations interested in solving the agricultural problems facing the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Between 1993 and 2001, IICA's technical cooperation emphasized participation, decentralization and flexibility, focusing on a specific group of topics. In June 2000, the OAS made IICA's governing body, the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the primary ministerial forum in the hemisphere for issues related to agriculture and rural life.

### Stages in the history of IICA

Establishment	(1942-1945)
Consolidation	(1946-1949)
Decentralization	(1950-1959)
Humanistic Projection	(1970-1980)
Reaching Agreement	(1981-1985)
Reactivation of Agriculture	(1986-1993)
Beyond a Sectoral Vision	(1994-2001)
Promoting Prosperity in Rural Communities	(2002-2006)



## Directors General of IICA

Earl N. Bressman,	United States of America,	1942 - 1946
Ralph H. Allee,	United States of America,	1946 - 1960
Armando Samper,	Colombia,	1960 - 1969
Carlos Madrid,	Colombia,	1966 - 1967 ~ 1969 - 1970
José Emilio Araujo,	Brazil,	1970 - 1982
Francisco Morillo,	Venezuela,	1982 - 1986
Martín E. Piñeiro,	Argentina,	1986 - 1994
Carlos E. Aquino,	Dominican Republic,	1994 - 2002
Chelston W.D. Brathwaite,	Barbados,	2002 - 2010
Víctor M. Villalobos,	Mexico,	2010-2014



The Heads of State and Government of the countries of the Americas subsequently ratified the OAS General Assembly's decision at the Third Summit of the Americas. On that occasion, they instructed the ministers and secretaries of agriculture to "promote joint action by all the actors of the agricultural sector to work towards the improvement of agricultural and rural life that enables the implementation of the Plans of Action of the Summits of the Americas," at the IABA meeting scheduled for November 2001, and in cooperation with IICA.

The new dimension given to the IABA adds to its role as the governing body of IICA, by giving it responsibility as the highest-level ministerial meeting of the hemisphere supporting the definition and implementation of actions to promote the sustainable improvement of agriculture and

rural life, in the context of the Summits of the Americas.

Since IICA was created, agriculture in the Americas has been strengthened through hemispheric cooperation.

Today, 34 IICA offices the length and breadth of the hemisphere are working to meet the needs of the countries in areas such as: trade and agribusiness development; sustainable rural development; agricultural health and food safety; technology and innovation; education and training; and information and communication.

Thanks to the efforts undertaken by the nations of the Americas, with IICA support for the last 60 years, the Heads of State and Government today recognize that agriculture and rural life have a key role to play in alleviating poverty and fostering integral development in the countries.

At the start of the twenty-first century, IICA is making a renewed commitment to its Member States, in support of their efforts to bring about the sustainable development of agriculture, food security throughout the hemisphere, and prosperity in the rural communities of the Americas.