

**INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE
COOPERATION AGENCY IN BELIZE
NATIONAL AGENDA 2002**

ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
BELTRAIDE	Belize Trade and Investment Development Service
BCGC	Belize Cashew Growers Cooperative
BOPA	Belize Organic Producers Association
BLP	Belize Livestock Producers Association
BSI	Belize Sugar Industries
BMB	Belize Marketing Board
CA	Cooperation Agency
CARD	Community Initiated Agriculture & Resource Management/Rural Dev. Project
CARDI	Caribbean Research and Development Institute
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CREI	Citrus Research and Development Institute
DFC	Development Finance Corporation
EU	European Union
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
MAFC	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Cooperatives
MSB	Meso-American Biological Corridor
NGO	Non Government Organization
OIRSA	Organismo Internacional Regional de Salud Animal
PAHP	Pan-American Health Organization
ROC	Agricultural Technical Mission Republic of China Taiwan
SFB	Small Farmers and Business Bank
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

1 INTRODUCTION

The Cooperation Agency in Belize has been conducting technical cooperation activities in conjunction with the Minister of Agriculture. In recent years, technical and economic resources have been invested in small projects dealing with Dairy Sector Improvement, techniques for the use of agricultural production using hydroponics in small farms and in rural households and promoting Fruit and Root Crops for Farm Diversification. The Fruit and Root Crops project and a new activity initiated two years ago, Organic Agriculture, have remained as important technical cooperation areas in the AC. Another important technical cooperation activity in supporting the development and modernization of the sugar industry has been executed with support from CEPPI and continues to be an important area of cooperation for the sugar industry in Belize. More recently, and starting last year, technical support was requested for institutional restructuring and modernization of the research and development branch of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The ongoing technical cooperation activities are an important part of the national agenda and new initiatives have been included taken into account the priorities identified from public and private instances, the mandate for the Institute and the availability of operational resources.

2 THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

2.1 Adopted Methodology

The consultative process was devised in two phases: one phase of group meetings with the full participation of personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Cooperatives (MAFC) and its partner organizations. The partner organizations are: the Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the Agricultural Technical Mission of China Taiwan (ROC), the Regional International Organization for Agricultural Health (OIRSA), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) personnel assigned in Belize for Plant Protection measures. Other public organizations present in the meeting were the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), the Community Initiated Agriculture and Resource Management/Rural Development Project (CARD), Belize Marketing Board (BMB) and personnel from the Soybean Project. One of the group meetings took place on occasion of the Annual Agricultural General Meeting convened by the highest hierarchy of the MAFC to review achievements and proposed agendas for the present year. The second group meeting was a Senior Management Meeting of the MAFC convened and chaired by the Minister of Agriculture for planning and coordination of activities between the Ministry's personnel and the partners mentioned above. On both instances the proposed national agenda, objectives and activities within the new strategic and support areas of the Institute for the Cooperation Agency in Belize was presented for consultation.

For the other phase, consultations were made during meetings with public and private officials with particular interests in their special areas of work. Consultations and suggestions on technical assistance were received during the above mentioned meetings from: the Minister, the Chief Executive Officer and the President and Members of the Sugar Board from the Ministry of Labor and Sugar Industry; Forestry Officials from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; the Citrus Research and Extension Institute (CREI) from the Minister of Works, Transportation, Citrus and Bananas.

Consultation with non-government organization and producer organizations were made during the normal working activities of the Cooperation Agency with officials and members of the organizations presented below.

Follow up meetings with officials from the Ministry of Agriculture; the Belize Trade and Investment Development Service, BAHA, OIRSA, USDA, PAHO, the Cacao Growers Association, the Belize Cashew Growers Cooperative, the Citrus Research and Extension Institute, the Sugar Industry Board and the Belize Organic Producer Association have taken place during the month of June.

2.2 Sampling of organizations participating in the consultation process

1. Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperatives and Fisheries
2. Ministry of Labor and Sugar Industry
 - Belize Sugar Board
 - Belize Sugar Industries
3. Ministry of Works, Transportation, Citrus and Bananas
 - Citrus Research and Extension Institute
4. Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
 - Forestry Department
5. Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE)
6. Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA)
7. Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI)
8. University of Belize (UB)
 - College of Agriculture
9. Audubon Society
10. Trees for Belize
11. CARD Project (Community Initiated Agriculture and Resource Management/Rural Development Project)
12. Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (MBC)
13. Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
14. Inter American Development Bank (IDB)
15. USDA-Belize
16. Agricultural Technical Mission Republic of China Taiwan (ROC)
17. Regional International Organization on Agricultural Health (OIRSA)
18. Toledo Cacao Growers Association
19. Belize Organic Producers Association (BOPA)
20. Cashew Growers Cooperative
21. Belize Marketing Board (BMB)

2.3 Subjects considered in the preparation of the Agenda

2.3.1 External Context

Belize is the only English speaking country in Central America. It is small (22,965 km²), ethnically diverse, with a sparsely distributed population of 240,000 with 52% of them being rural inhabitants. Based on a 1996 survey, it was estimated that about 33% of the population remained below the poverty line, most of which live in the southern part of the country. The poor are comprised mostly of indigenous Mayans, refugees and migrant agricultural workers from neighboring Central American Countries, as well as small farmers and manufacturing workers.

The overarching goal of the Government's development agenda is to reduce poverty from about 33% in 1999 to 28% by 2004. The four main pillars of the Government's poverty reduction strategy are:

- ***Enhancing economic growth.*** Especially through diversification in agriculture, tourism, financial services and shrimp farming. The goal is to sustain a real GDP growth of 5% per year but attaining it requires prudent macroeconomic management, in particular sustainable fiscal policy, trade liberalization, broadening the economic base, accelerating land titling and in improving the regulatory framework in critical sector that is conducive for private sector participation.
- ***Improving access to and quality of social services.*** The rural population, particularly in the poorer districts of the southern part of the country, has limited access to basic education, health services, safe water, sanitation, land and housing, and essential transport and communication service. The Government strongly believes in the need for a multi-pronged approach to the problem based on investment in education, health, land development and housing for the low income groups, along with facilitation to micro-credits and reform of safety net programs to improve their efficiency and effectiveness in terms of costs, outreach and targeting.
- ***Modernizing the State and improving Governance.*** The public sector has become large with deteriorating systems of financial control and accountability and fallen standards of quality of public service. The Government has embarked on an ambitious program of political reform and is encouraging more voice for diverse groups to ensure better targeting and effectiveness of social and economic investment and prevent corruption, money laundering and drug trafficking. The Government has also initiated reform of the civil service and is strengthening public institutions, including decentralization to local agencies and communities.
- ***Environmentally Sustainable Development.*** The main sources of growth in Belize-tourism, sugar, bananas, citrus, forestry and aquaculture are based on natural

resources. Using this capital in a sustainable manner is therefore critical. As stated in the 1996 National Environmental Action Plan, inadequate land and waste management water pollution and natural disasters affect the poor. National disaster management is imperative because Belize lies in the hurricane belt and much of the coastal land is below the sea level, thus prone to flooding. Protection of historical sites is crucial for preserving the cultural heritage and the livelihood of the Mayans.

2.3.1.1 Economic Issues.

The GDP reached US\$804.6 million in 2001; the GDP per capita reached US\$ 3,200.00. Real GDP grew by approximately 4.6% in 2001, a decrease in growth when compared to the 10.8% growth in 2000. The slowdown in 2001 was due to damages suffered from natural disasters and the general slowdown in the global economy. The relative contribution of the primary, secondary and service sectors has remained more or less stable during the years at around 22%, 25% and 52%, respectively, according to data published by Minister of Finance, Central Statistics Office, Central Bank of Belize.

The Government has tried to stimulate growth, through high levels of public investment, in particular in essential infrastructure and housing for the relatively poor and making credit available through the Finance Development Corporation. As in 2000, fiscal policy took an expansionary path in 2001 with further efforts by the public sector to boost economic growth through increased outlays. The overall public sector deficit estimated at 5.4% of GDP by the end of in may 2000 escalated to 8% by the end of 2001. The current account deficit at year-end of 2001 stood at US\$ 169.5 million (21.2% of GDP).

According to reports from The World Bank, Belize faces three main risks over the medium term relating to external economic and natural shocks, macroeconomic management, and implementation capacity. First, Belize is likely to experience low growth or even recession during this decade if there is further erosion in the preferential trade arrangements as well as a slow down in the highly competitive tourism industry due to further appreciation of the real exchange rate. Second, fiscal performance may not improve or may even worsen, which could lead to higher external borrowing and difficulties in the availability of foreign exchange and counterpart funds for projects. The large account deficit in the balance of payments, low foreign exchange reserves holding, and recent commercial borrowings by Government coupled with financial sector vulnerabilities pose additional risks. Third, Belize has limited human resources capacity that need to be well managed by the Government so as to maintain its capacity to implement policies and projects.

2.3.1.2 The agriculture sector

The primary sector (agriculture, fisheries and forestry) contributes to more than 21% of GDP and is responsible for 29% of employment. These figures can climb to an estimated 35% of GDP and 41% employment when the manufacture sector is taken into

consideration for the processing of agricultural products according to publications from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Cooperatives.

Belize needs to improve competitiveness in traditional exports and diversify into new exports. Belize faces competitive pressures for all its exports. The preferential prices for bananas, sugar and citrus could continue to decline during this decade. These crops are major contributors to GDP, jobs and foreign exchange earnings. Sugar contributes about 8% of GDP, 5,000 jobs and 20% of foreign exchange earnings; bananas contribution is about 5% of GDP, 6,000 jobs and 16% of foreign exchange earnings and citrus accounts for 6% of GDP, 1,800 jobs equivalent and 19% of export earnings. Diversification has had some success for large farmers investing in aquaculture, especially shrimp farming, papayas and beans (Red Kidney beans) and cowpeas (black eye pea). There is still much to be achieved for the diversification and sustainability of small farmers in spite of efforts carried out by the Ministry in crops such as hot peppers, cassava, organic fruits and vegetables, root crops and aquaculture.

Public responsibility of the agricultural sector is divided into four ministries:

- The Ministry of Works, Transport, Citrus and Bananas Industries
- The Ministry of Labor and Sugar Industries
- The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Cooperatives

The Cooperation Agency official counterpart is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Cooperatives. The Minister of Agriculture is the Belize representative in the Inter-American Board of Agriculture.

The Ministry of Agriculture in Belize faces the great challenge in the diversification and sustainability of small farms, in assisting small farmers in the transition process out of poverty from subsistence farming and into the stream of entrepreneurship. The challenge facing the Ministry of Agriculture is compounded by the factors of ethnics and language. A very important part of the target is comprised of multiethnic and multilingual population including the Maya (11% of the population), the Garifuna (5% of the population) and, since 1980, an estimated 50,000 Central Americans (mostly Guatemalans, Salvadorans and Nicaraguans) immigrants into Belize due to civil strife in their own countries. A large percentage of Central Americans are dedicated to agriculture, others have moved to skilled or unskilled labor opportunities in urban areas.

All farmers, large and small, engaged in the production of citrus, sugar cane or bananas make monetary contributions to a special fund intended for the provision of research and extension in their particular industries. One of the examples is the existence and operation of the Citrus Research and Extension Institute (CREI) operating with citrus growers contributions and geared to provide technical assistance and the production and distribution of high quality germplasm. The Government has been also one of the investors in this special fund as well as investor in the respective funds for the sugar and banana industries.

The Ministry of Agriculture does not receive a special investing fund to tend to small farmers and the proposed target population of small farmers does not have either the resources or the mechanisms to make contribution to a special development fund, thus making more difficult the task for conversion of small farmer subsistence units into environmentally sustainable units of production and income.

In summary, the public responsibility for the agricultural sector is divided into the four ministries mentioned above. The ministries in charge of the export commodities, sugar, bananas and citrus, have other responsibilities under their command. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources is under the responsibility of the Deputy Prime Minister that has many other responsibilities. Even though each ministry may recognize the need and engage in limited initiatives for development of new agricultural export products, the need for a concerted effort on this field is very evident and no coordinating public instance is available to bring together all players in the public and private agricultural sector.

2.3.1.3 Multilateral and Bilateral Donors

External funding come from the following sources: the European Union (EU), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and bilateral donors, in particular the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and Taiwan, China. Funds have been appropriated and are being executed in different development areas such as highways and roads, land and agricultural development, water and sewerage, power development, basic needs, hurricane reconstruction, disaster preparedness and environment. The execution of these funds is providing relief during the transition that must take place from the erosion of the preferential trade arrangements of its main agricultural exports to new and complementary income generating activities in the agriculture sector.

Belize is facing a difficult time in obtaining external sources for development, the high average income per inhabitant exceeding US\$ 3,000/year has been one the most important reasons for declined interest from bilateral donors that closed operation in the country such as the United States Agency for International Development and more recently the European Union. Multilateral donors, IDB and CDB are funding projects in the agricultural sector, one for the institutional strengthening of BAHA and land titling program and the other for promoting developing of rural communities under the CARD project. The BAHA and CARD projects are behind in their execution schedule preventing the donor agencies to give consideration of new initiatives in the sector. This lagging of execution plus the concern about economic issues, namely the public fiscal deficit, the current account deficit of the balance of payments, the low foreign exchange reserves and short term borrowing, do not create a climate suited for additional lending for promoting developing in Belize.

IICA in Belize, as part of its normal duties, has looked into the possibility of obtaining external resources from multilateral and bilateral donor agencies; there is a great and constant challenge for obtaining those resources but progress is being made, especially in the sharing of resources for conducting specific technical cooperation and training activities with national institutions or specific project units. As mentioned above, multilateral donor agencies are taking extreme precautionary measures and time to make sure that any new loans do not create more problems to the economy than the intended benefits. The United States does not provide resources either for development or for disaster relief. The United Kingdom also does not provide resources for agricultural development but for social infrastructure and for national defense. The Agricultural Technical Mission of the Republic of China, Taiwan has their own assistance program for agriculture and their own executioners. Only the European Union has approved a program for diversification support on agriculture, which will come into effect next year with an estimated investment of US\$ 7 million. The CA sees this program as an opportunity to provide technical cooperation and training in strengthening local communities, local producer organizations and the extension service of the Ministry of Agriculture.

2.3.2 Internal Context

The Institute under the present Directorate has initiated a new era of cooperation in the hemisphere. The aim of the cooperation activities must now be correspondent to the mandates received by the Institute in the different stakeholder forums such as the III Summit of the Americas, the Inter-American Board of Agriculture and the ministerial declarations of the Ministries of Agriculture.

The cooperation agency developed the national agenda within the framework of the strategic areas and services defined in the Medium Term Plan 2002-2206 and in consultation with public and private organizations engaged in the agricultural sector.

The participatory process of defining the national agenda has been a real challenge for everyone involved: for the cooperation agency in order to target the limited operational resources and for the national organizations, especially the Ministry of Agriculture for the resolution of many needs in the normal operating activities of the institution and for the facing of emergencies and “urgent” matters confronted on a daily base. The cooperation agency has targeted its activities to those intended for the long-term benefit of the institutional and operational development of the sector.

The execution of activities by the cooperation agency conveys the seal of excellence, transparency, accountability and effectiveness as a normal operating procedure for IICA in Belize.

The cooperation agency has used every possible opportunity to convey to all interested parties, but especially to the personnel of the Ministry of Agriculture, the vision and

mission of IICA existence and have stressed the fact that the Institute deals in providing technical cooperation services to national and private institutions engaged in agricultural development and as such the Institute is not a financial agency. Suggestions are received in the CA for the provision of funding for operational needs or for the execution of projects. This confusion arises from the fact that the cooperation agency in the past had invested resources as start-off initiatives for the Dairy Sector Development in Belize and the Fruit and Root Crops projects developed in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture, due to financial shortcomings, has been unable to fund these initiatives as expected and then the pressure for complete funding was on the cooperation agency. The confusion also exists since other regional or international organizations are able to program and finance specific small projects in agriculture.

Belize, being the only English speaking country in Central America, is in disadvantage for receiving all benefits derived from technical cooperation activities that take place in other countries in the region or from the potential benefits deriving from headquarters or regional activities. Three cases in point:

1. In cases of training events or regional workshops there are limitations for either the language capacity of the participant or for the dissemination of documents if written in Spanish.
2. Publications in Spanish by the Institute or as result of project execution can not be disseminated easily in Belize (the Frutales Program in El Salvador, for instance)
3. Language barriers for some appointed regional specialists might be a strong deterrent for programming and conducting technical cooperation as regional initiatives in Belize.

2.3.3 Priorities defined by national institutions

National Government.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Cooperatives and associated public structures CARD, BMB, BLPA and BELTRAIDE in response to its constraints and opportunities has identified the following priorities:

- Accelerate Diversification of both local and export-oriented agriculture
- Promote market and trade expansion both locally and internationally
- Ensure long-term sustainable productivity and viability by improving and conserving the natural and productive resource base
- Increase efficiency, profitability and competitiveness of the agriculture, fisheries and cooperative sector through research and development
- Improve access to productive resources and services and create economic opportunities for small farmers, women and young farmers, and indigenous people, particularly in poor marginal areas
- Strengthen institutional capacities to provide effective support in marketing and trade, research and extension as well as relevant education and training

The Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment has defined the following priorities:

- Implementation of the Land Administration and Titling Program funded by IDB
- Biodiversity Management
- Further implementation of the management information system

The Ministry of Labor and Sugar Industry, through the enactment of the new *Sugar Industry Control Act* and committed for a real industry reform has proposed the following initiatives to be carried out by special autonomous committees:

- Direct harvesting and delivery, quality control and payments
- Direct activities for the creation of the Sugar Research and Extension Institute
- Strengthening of the Cane Farmers Association
- Seek external funding for reform in the sugar industry

The Ministry of Works, Transportation, Citrus and Bananas has proposed the following initiatives:

Citrus

- Access to low-cost loans for grove rehabilitation
- Additional loan funds for growers refinancing for industry sustainability
- Capacity-building and institutional strengthening of the Citrus Growers Association to meet grower training and grove maintenance needs
- Upgrade of harvesting and fruit hauling services and training of personnel
- Drainage facilities and water management to increase crop production
- Citrus processing upgrade and amalgamation for cost effectiveness
- Facilitation for cottage industries of value added citrus products (wines, liquors, orange jams and jellies)
- Maintenance and enhancement of citrus research

Bananas

- Access to cheaper funding to refinance high interest debt from hurricane recovery costs
- Successful negotiations with Fyffes for a more stable contract arrangement.

BAHA is already receiving technical assistance from a Canadian Firm as part of the project of institutional strengthening financed by IDB. Under the mentioned assistance, its technical cooperation needs are being met. However, according to the members of the Board of Directors, there may be a need for training and capacity building in the immediate future. Priorities are:

- Training on technical and management topics
- Support for quarantine activities especially to contain the Mediterranean Fruit Fly, a constant menace to the maintenance of a Med Fly Free status for Belize

Private Sector

The most influential producers (large as well as small farmers) in the agriculture sector are the ones engaged in the sugarcane, citrus and banana industries, their points of view and priorities have been presented under the initiatives of their respective ministries above. The producer organizations in conjunction with their public counterparts came together for the development of their priorities. These initiatives are contained in the *Medium Term Economic Strategy Program 2003-2005 of the Government of Belize* consulted widely to all interested parties of the private sector in the country and lastly presented to the World Bank in Washington in June of the present year.

Other private sector organizations include two created recently with IICA and MAFC support; these are The Belize Cashew Growers Cooperative and the Belize Organic Producers Association. The cooperation agency has been providing technical assistance to both sub-sectors in cooperation with the MAFC and other private organizations.

The Belize Cashew Growers Cooperative (BCGC) with 75 members receives technical assistance from IICA under the Fruit and Root Crops activities. IICA collaborates with other important providers like the crops, extension and cooperatives services of the MAFC, the Audubon Society, Trees for Belize, the ROC mission on fruit processing, the BMB and credit organizations like the Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and the Small Farmers Bank (SFB). Priorities of the BCGC are:

- Technical and financial resources for building the cashew nut processing plant in land already donated from Government.
- Approval of loans to expand the cultivated area
- Seed provision for increase nursery population of cashew trees
- Training on the use of machinery for nut extracting
- Training on false fruit drying and processing techniques
- Trade support for marketing of cashew nuts and products

The Belize Organic Producers Association, a recently created institution with the collaboration of interested members, the MAFC and as already mentioned, the Cooperation Agency in Belize. BOPA members are: the Toledo Cacao Growers Association which is the only truly organic association internationally certified and already exporting organic cacao to the United Kingdom, the Janus Foundation, CREI; CARD; BAHA; Bureau of Standards, Ministry of Economy; MAFC; Del Oro, a citrus company and IICA. Their priorities are:

- Training and capacity building
- Crop Management practices
- Extension

- Certification procedures and requirements
- Organic Production, processing, packaging and marketing techniques
- Trade opportunities.

Non-Government Organizations and Civil Society

Under this category are included the Audubon Society, Trees for Belize, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor and the Global Environmental Facility Fund (GEF) Unit financed by the World Bank under the United Nations. Civil Society support comes from the CARD project promoting development for 72 indigenous rural communities in the southern part of the country and from the GEF. These organizations have as priorities some of the following:

- Conservation of Protected Areas
- Conservation of Biodiversity and Natural Resources
- Sustainable Development through the use of native forest resources
- Promotion of integrated farming systems to maintain diversity and provision of a wide base of plant resources for maintenance of soil fertility and protection, for the provision of human food and as a resource for wildlife
- Investment for training and sustainable development especially of small communities close to protected areas
- Providing opportunities for sustainable development to rural communities

Universities and Agricultural Schools

The College of Agriculture and the 4-H Agriculture Schools are in a process of establishing and developing their field training units. The College of Agriculture is in a permanent location in Central Farm grounds and the 4-H Agriculture school is in the process of moving from its present location in Belmopan to Central Farm Grounds. Their priorities are:

- Education techniques
- Technical bulletins and publications
- Planning for development

3 THE NATIONAL AGENDA

3.1 Strategic Areas

- **Policy, Trade and Integration**

Goal

Provide Technical Cooperation to the Agricultural Sector for Free Trade and participation in the Global Economy by:

Strategic action 1. Coordinating technical assistance with BELTRAIDE to provide information on trade regulations and agreements emanating from the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Free Trade Association

of the Americas (FTAA), the CARICOM single market and the Central America Integration System (SICA)

Result 1. Technical literature will be distributed to private collaborating institutions and producer associations, as it becomes available from BELTRAIDE

Strategic action 2. Collaborating with MAFC and other public and private organization for their participation in regional integration initiatives (CORECA/SICA/CARICOM)

Result 2. Technical and logistical support will be provided to national or private institutions as requested by institutions dealing with regional integration initiatives

Strategic action 3. Facilitating accesses to international market and trade information on selected commodities to MAFC, other public institutions and producer associations

Result 3. Literature will be produced and/or distributed, on international market and trade on tropical crops, to personnel from the MAFC and private institutions.

Strategic action 4. Contributing to policy development in the Ministry of Sugar Industries

Result 4. Policy paper on the sugar industry produced with support from headquarters

▪ **Agribusiness Development**

Goal:

To help strengthen the export crops and to promote new ones by:

Strategic action 1. Provide technical assistance within the Citrus Research and Extension (CREI)'s Technical Committee

Result 1. One professional from the Cooperation Agency participates as member of CREI's technical committee

Strategic action 2. Provision of technical literature on new crop outlooks as a contribution to diversifying agriculture

Result 2. At least 8 documents are produced or reproduced on new crop outlook for diversification. These are printed and distributed to public and private interested parties.

Strategic action 3. Providing information on sanitary requirements for plant or animal material for export

Result 3. Obtain and distribute sanitary requirement information to interested parties dealing with diversification initiatives. The information will be obtained from regional specialists.

▪ **Agricultural Health and Food Safety**

Goal:

To provide technical assistance on agricultural health, quarantine and food safety to the Belize Agricultural Health Authority and private producers by:

Strategic action 1. Following up and providing assistance for making operational the new quarantine station in Placencia Peninsula

Result 1. Collaboration and follow up with quarantine units in BAHA and USDA to the Placencia station to evaluate effectiveness of the use of the facility for med fly quarantine surveys

Strategic action 2. Assisting BAHA with the development of a National Action Plan to comply with WTO/SPS on Animal Health, Plant Health, Food Safety and Quarantine

Result 2. When convened by BAHA, IICA personnel will participate in the committee for the development of the National Action Plan

Strategic action 3. Collaborating with regional training initiatives on Food Safety and Codex Alimentarius

Result 3. Provision of logistical and technical support for planning and execution of the II CARICOM/CANADA ALLIANCE Workshop on Food Control Systems

▪ **Sustainable Rural Development**

Goal 1:

To support development of fruit and root crops and strengthening of organic agriculture initiatives by:

Strategic action 1. Collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture on the production of propagation material for fruit and root crops for distribution to farmers

Result 1. Maintenance and propagation of cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), plantain (*Musa Sp.*) and Coco-yam (*Xanthosoma saggitifolium*) varieties and fruit trees, cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*), nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*), guava (*Psidium guajava*), Passion fruit (*Passiflora edulis*), Bread Nut (*Autocarpus sp.*), Mangosteen (*Garcinia mangostiana*), soursop (*Annona muricata*), Golden Plum (*Spondias dulcis*), West Indian cherry (*Malpighia glabra*), Surinam Cherries (*Eugenia uniflora*) and Carambola (*Averrhoa sp.*). Provision of planting material and nursery trees to farmers.

Result 1.1. Provision of planting material and nursery trees to farmers

Strategic action 2. Collaborating with MAFC, the Audubon Society, Trees for Belize, DFC and the SFB in promoting the organization of producers, the provision of technical assistance for planning, funding and orchard management to farmers, especially cashew producers

Result 2. IICA chairs the cashew development committee created by the MAFC. The cooperation agency will coordinate technical assistance for planning, design and equipment acquisition for the cashew processing plant. IICA will plan and execute training on orchard management practices and on cashew nut processing.

Strategic action 3. Supporting the recently created Belize Organic Producers Association (BOPA) on initiatives for obtaining external funding to support production, processing and marketing of organic products. This is a collaborative effort between the MAFC, CREI, TCGA, CARD, the Janus Foundation and OIRSA.

Result 3. IICA participates as one of the members of BOPA and the MAFC has nominated the CA as the National Coordinator for the Organic Agriculture initiative. A project proposal document will be presented for obtaining external funding to support BOPA and funding initiatives will be carried out for executing training aimed at promoting organic agriculture.

Strategic action 4. Supporting small farmers for the conversion into organic farmers and participating in trade initiatives for organic products, especially grains. Collaborators are MAFC, BMB, TCGA, CARD, IICA and private investors from the USA. International certifying agencies are participating like Soil Association and Green and Black.

Result 4. The cooperation agency will participate with the institutions mentioned above in designing the strategy for conversion of small farmers into organic producers promote record keeping at the farm level in order to facilitate organic certification.

Goal 2:

To promote women and youth participation on rural entrepreneurial development by:

Strategic action 1. Providing technical assistance and training on organization and small business management

Result 1. Technical assistance and training will be provided to the unit within MAFC in charge of promoting rural entrepreneurial development

Strategic action 2. Collaborating in the production of training material on business management

Result 2. Training material on business management will be produced in collaboration with the person in charge of entrepreneurial development and field tested with rural participants

3.2 Services to the Strategic Areas

- **Training and Support for Education**

Goal:

To strengthen response capacity of some divisions of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Organizations by:

Strategic action 1. Training on project design and implementation for Ministry of Agriculture personnel

Result 1. One workshop will be carried out on project design and implementation for MAFC's personnel in charge of promoting investment in rural communities

Strategic action 2. Training on organic agriculture production

Result 2. One workshop will be carried out on organic agriculture techniques, requirements and trade. The workshop will be presented in collaboration with MAFC, CATIE, CREI and CARD. Attendants will be technicians from the Ministry of Agriculture, CREI and CARD and small producers from different parts of the country

Strategic action 3. Training on methodology for extension

Result 3. One workshops will be conducted on methodology for extension. The workshop will be presented in collaboration with MAFC and CARD. Attendants will be the extension personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture

Strategic action 4. Providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture for the relocation of the National 4-H School from Belmopan into Central Farm

Result 4. IICA personnel participate on the technical committee of the National 4-H School. Technical cooperation will be provided during the planning stages of the relocation

▪ **Communication and Information Management**

Goal:

Provide information related to agricultural development and international trade by:

Strategic action 1. Channeling information on agricultural development from other technical cooperation agencies and from other national and international development agencies in the hemisphere

Result 1. As per specific request from public and private organizations, the Cooperation Agency will channel information on agricultural development from other cooperation agencies or from international centers.

Strategic action 2. Developing the cooperation agency website as an effective way to offer information and linkages with other important agricultural development sites

Result 2. The website for the cooperation agency will be developed with the collaboration of technical personnel from the PAHO representation in Belize

Strategic action 3. Providing technical literature on production techniques on fruit and root crops as a contribution to diversifying agriculture

Result 3. Technical bulletins on production, processing or trade on fruit and root crops will be gathered and distributed to interested parties within the MAFC and private parties

▪ **Technology Innovation**

Goal:

To provide technical assistance for modernizing the Research and Development structures in Belize by:

Strategic action 1. Collaborating with the ministerial task force in the process of converting Central Farm into an autonomous institution

Result 1. IICA is member of the ministerial task force in the restructuring process of Central Farm. A new institutional model will be proposed and a draft version of the Act for legislation approval will be produced. IICA will facilitate the planning and execution of at least three consultative workshops with private sector participation

Strategic action 2. Training and transferring of the technical methodology for determining return on the investment on research for the citrus industries

Result 2. CREI's technical personnel is trained in methodology for determining return on the investment on research; a technical paper is produced on return on investment using the citrus industry as example and a workshop presentation is carried out with the participation of public officials and private sector. **Technical and financial support is needed from the Innovation Technology Service at headquarters to fulfill this result.**

Strategic action 3. Participating as member of the Research and Development Committee for the creation of the Belize Agricultural Research and Development Council, Belize Commodities Secretariat, Ministry of Works

Result 3. IICA will participate as required by the Belize Commodities Secretariat, in meetings conducive to the creation of the Belize Agricultural Research and Development Council.

▪ **Horizontal Cooperation**

Goal:

To serve as a channel for conveying technical cooperation and experiences in agricultural development, agro industry and trade by:

Strategic action 1. Providing technical cooperation and executing collaborative work with Non Government Organizations like the Belize Audubon Society and Trees Belize for the improvement of the livelihood of small farmers and natural resources conservation

Result 1. IICA will conduct collaborative work with NGO's for the improvement of the livelihood of small farmers, especially those located around protected areas like the cashew growers of the Belize district and the Cacao Growers in the District of Toledo.

Strategic action 2. Obtaining technical bulletins and publications on agricultural development from accredited international or national institutions

Result 2. The cooperation agency at the request from interested parties will provide information related to Agricultural specialists or to technical publications on agriculture and Development from international accredited institutions

Strategic action 3. Coordinating the provision of technical assistance on agricultural diversification to farmers in collaboration with international Research Centers abroad and international agencies in the country like CARDI, OIRSA and the Agricultural Technical Mission of the Republic of China to Belize

Result 3. The cooperation agency will conduct collaborative work with the mentioned institutions in the provision of technical assistance geared to small farmers, like the cashew farmers in Belize District of indigenous Maya farmers in the Toledo District

4 Matrix for Strategic Areas Implementation at the National Level

Implementation Instruments	Policy, Trade & Integration	Agribusiness Development	Sustainable Rural Development	Agricultural Health and Food Safety
Training and Education		XX	XXXXXX	X
Information and Communication	X	XXX	XX	
Innovation Technology	XXX	XX	X	
Planning and Institutional Modernization	X		X	X
Horizontal Technical Cooperation		X	XXX	X

5 Projects financed with external resources that may support implementing the National Agenda

The cooperation agency, at the present does not have under its direct responsibility projects financed with external resources. External funding proposals have been produced and submitted to funding agencies during the present year: one, on sustainable development to the Organization of American States through the Minister of Economy; another on Informal Market Research presented to CARD project; another two for small grants have been presented to the Meso-American Biological Corridor and to the Global Environment Facility Fund.

Technical cooperation activities are planned and executed in collaboration with public institutions, especially the MAFC, NGO's, and private or international organizations. For example, technical cooperation activities for promoting the cashew industry have the technical support from the crops, extension and cooperative services of the MAFC. Audubon Society has provided financial support in training and for building the cashew processing plant. The ROC mission, in providing technical and material resources from its food processing unit in testing dehydrating techniques for the false fruit. The national financial institutions are in the process of reviewing credit applications from small cashew farmers for orchard expansion and management.

The Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Unit, through IICA's initiative, has provided the first funding ever to BOPA for carrying out an organic agriculture workshop. Institutions like MAFC, IICA, CARD, CREI, TCGA and CATIE have invested financial resources and personnel for the execution of the workshop.

It is under team effort and sharing of resources that the cooperation agency is receiving support for the execution of the national agenda.

6 Adjustments needed in the Cooperation Agency to implement the National Agenda

The additional funds assigned to the cooperation agency are making possible the programming and budgeting of more technical cooperation or training activities in support of the agricultural development in Belize.

The cooperation agency is in need to receive support (technical and monetary) from specialists either from headquarter divisions or regional specialists for some of the activities specified in the agenda; for example, the continuation of regional initiatives on strengthening technological innovation and on organic agriculture.

Assistance is also needed for responding to national requirements on agricultural policy development, for institutional modernization of the research and development center and for capacity building and training on methodology for determining return on investment in research for the citrus industry.

Lastly, one issue of concern for the cooperation agency is the budgetary impact on the future replacement of transport vehicles. The two units available at the cooperation agency are registering mileage in excess of one hundred thousand miles and will need to be replaced in the near future. Replacing of a transport vehicle may have a diminishing effect on at least 20-25% on the operational budget.

7 Cooperation areas that may be shared with other countries

The following cooperation areas may be shared with other countries:

- Sustainable rural development: this is the strongest area in the cooperation agency; technical cooperation activities are carried out through on Fruit and Root crops, Organic Agriculture and Diversification. The MAFC in cooperation with ROC mission have put into operation a food-processing unit in Central Farm. The facilities could be utilized for training purposes to interested farmer groups from other Central American Countries.
- Agribusiness Development: A team approach has been utilized in order to provide technical assistance for the sustainable development of cashew growers in communities bordering conservation areas. Public institutions and private organization and international organizations are contributing to the support of agribusiness of the cashew producers.

8 Human Resources Available at the Cooperation Agency for the implementation of the Agenda

The cooperation agency has the following personnel:

- One international professional-Representative
- One local professional-Project Coordinator

- One local professional consultant-In charge of the Fruit and Root Crops project
- One local administrative professional as administrator and secretary

9 Conclusions and recommendations

The Government of Belize is conducting a very tight budget execution due to fiscal imbalances and this situation has limited the execution of activities by the Ministry of Agriculture in support of agricultural development.

Shortcomings stemming from Government have limited the expected investment and progress on agricultural activities, like the investment required by the cashew project for the building of the processing facility and the technical support that has been expected from counterparts dealing with the Fruit and Root Crops projects.

The CA invests a sizable portion of its operational budget in the continuation of both the Fruit and Root Crops project and the Organic Project initiative; both activities being priorities defined by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The CA has made every possible effort to concentrate on activities directly related to its mandate, technical cooperation for the strengthening the capability of the Ministry of Agriculture in the delivering of services to farmers. On the other hand, probably due to shortages of personnel, strong suggestions have been received for the direct involving of the CA to design and provide direct technical support services to farmers.

Sources and opportunities for external funding of technical assistance initiatives or project execution are limited, but every effort is being made for sharing of technical capabilities and resources with other national or international institutions for cooperation in the agricultural sector.

Support from the regional specialists may be limited for the small operational budget assigned to the CA, the limited budget that may be assigned to the regional specialists and, in the case of Belize, for the language requirements.

The CA's agenda has been devised for the planning and execution of activities for the support and strengthening of the agricultural sector within the institutional mandate, the ongoing activities identified as priorities by the MAFCA and the priorities identified in the public and private sector.

