

PART II

**THE MINISTERIAL PROCESS
“AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
LIFE IN THE AMERICAS”**

Throughout the Ministerial Process “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas,” begun in 2001 in response to the mandates of the Third Summit of the Americas, the Ministers have adopted a number of far-reaching decisions of importance for agriculture and rural life, which are set out in the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements (HMAs) approved in the Ministerial Meetings of 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009 and form part of this document.

This second part of the document provides information that will help to understand the context in which the ministerial process began and how it has evolved, its meetings and its results.

A number of topics are addressed in this document, including the hemispheric political framework that reassessed agriculture and rural life, the Ministerial Process derived from same, the reasons why the process is fundamental if the next step in consolidating the positioning of agriculture and rural life is to be taken, and how to move forward with the unfinished task of ensuring that the HMAs are reflected fully on the development agendas of the countries and the organizations that support them in implementing their strategies.

It concludes by indicating that, if that next step is to be taken, renewed leadership will be needed to develop mechanisms that will enable the different interest groups in agriculture and rural life to work together to build a renewed institutional framework in the countries of the Americas.

The HMAs in context

Over the last decade, efforts to build a more just, secure, prosperous and equitable world in the 21st century through dialogue and consensus building at the global and hemispheric levels have been strengthened. The Millennium Development Goals and their targets for 2015, as well as the mandates and commitments of the Summit of the Americas process, are two significant results of those efforts which have important implications for agriculture and rural communities.

Specifically, the mandates and commitments related to agriculture and rural life derived from the Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec 2001):

- attached greater value to agriculture and rural life by recognizing their importance in the comprehensive development of countries;

- bestowed on the Ministers of Agriculture a leading role in the implementation of the mandates of the Summits process;
- gave rise to the Ministerial Process “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas” and its meetings, as instruments for energizing the Summits process; and
- included IICA as an institutional partner in all stages of that process, along with the OAS, PAHO, IDB, ECLAC and the World Bank.

Working within the context of the Summits process, and engaging in an ongoing broad-based, participatory and transparent ministerial process, the Ministers of Agriculture and their Ministerial Delegates have discussed and built consensus on the HMAs adopted in the Ministerial Meetings “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas” held within the context of the Summit of the Americas process, in Bavaro in 2001, Panama in 2003, Guayaquil in 2005, Guatemala in 2007 and Jamaica in 2009.

What is the Summit of the Americas process?

This process, spearheaded by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas, with the support of the Ministers of Foreign Relations and the National Summit Coordinators, is aimed at moving forward in the formulation and implementation of an inter-American agenda for the development of the Americas. That agenda includes commitments, mandates and concrete actions in areas of strategic importance for the comprehensive and sustainable development of our countries. The Heads of State and Government made the decision to include agriculture and rural life among the strategic issues of the Third Summit of the Americas, given the key role they play in making such development possible.

Five regular Summits (Miami 1994, Santiago 1998, Quebec 2001, Mar del Plata 2005 and Port of Spain 2009) and two special summits (Santa Cruz de la Sierra 1996 and Monterrey 2004) have been held to date. Between Summits, two mechanisms ensure the continuation of the process: (i) the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), which is the hemispheric forum of the Ministers of Foreign Relations (held once a year) and of the National Summit Coordinators (held several times a year) to follow up on the mandates adopted and propose texts for new mandates; and (ii) the Ministerial

Meetings, in which the ministers give direction to the implementation of those mandates through specific ministerial agreements, provide follow-up and propose new mandates.

These two mechanisms are complemented with the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG), which is the hemispheric forum of the international organizations that are partner institutions in all stages of the Summits process.

What led to the reassessment of the value of agriculture and rural life?

Agriculture and rural life were not included among the issues considered strategic for the comprehensive development of our countries at the First Summit of the Americas (Miami 1994). Concern over the implications of this situation moved the Ministers of Agriculture to launch a campaign to ensure the inclusion of both on the agenda of subsequent Summits.

With support from IICA, the Ministers of Agriculture undertook actions aimed at positioning agriculture, convinced of its contribution to improving living conditions in the rural milieu, and its role in strengthening democracy, promoting prosperity, eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development, all of which are key objectives of the Summit process. Their efforts finally bore fruit at the Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec 2001).

What is the political framework for reassessing the value of agriculture and rural life?

The Third Summit marked a historic milestone in efforts to build a renewed institutional framework for agriculture and rural life. On that occasion, the Heads of State and Government acknowledged the important contribution that agriculture and rural life make to combating poverty and promoting sustainable development in their countries, in recognition of agriculture's dual role as a way of life for millions of rural inhabitants and as a strategic sector of the socioeconomic system for generating prosperity.

With this in mind, they instructed to promote:

- **hemispheric joint action** among the stakeholders of the agricultural sector , with a view to brining about sustainable improvements in agriculture and rural life, and
- *medium- and long-term national strategies* for the sustainable improvement of agriculture and rural life, based on a dialogue among government ministers, parliamentarians and representatives of different sectors of civil society.

At the Special Summit (Monterrey, 2004), they pledged to make a sustained effort to improve the living conditions of rural dwellers, by promoting investments and creating an environment that would be conducive to the improvement of agriculture and contribute to social development, rural prosperity and food security. To that end, they endorsed the efforts of the Ministers of Agriculture by defining as a mandate of that Summit the implementation of the **“AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action for Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas,”** which was adopted by the Ministers at their Second Ministerial Meeting (Panama 2003) to implement the **hemispheric joint action** the Heads of State and Government pledged to promote at the Quebec Summit in 2001.

At the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata 2005), they pledged to build an institutional framework based on the coordination of public policies, which would include a comprehensive framework for rural and agricultural development that would promote investment, job creation and rural prosperity. To that end, they adopted as a national commitment **“To support the implementation of the Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil 2005 on Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas (AGRO 2003-2015 Plan).”**

Lastly, at the Fifth Summit of the Americas (Trinidad and Tobago, 2009), whose motto was **Securing Our Citizens’ Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability**, the countries built consensus for the **Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain**, in which agriculture is considered, especially as regards its importance in promoting human prosperity, energy security and environmental sustainability.

Specifically, in paragraph No. 25 of the Declaration, the Heads of State and Government stated that for sustainable development and food security

to be possible it was of the utmost importance to adopt a broad-based, multidimensional and multisectoral approach to thinking and acting in agriculture and the rural milieu.

In addition, they expressed support for efforts aimed at repositioning the priorities of agriculture and the rural milieu in the national strategies, as defined in the HMA – Guatemala 2007, and pledged to strengthen national, regional and hemispheric approaches and strategic actions carried out with support from IICA and other relevant organizations.

The mandates and commitments of these four Summits constitute a policy framework for attaching greater value to agriculture and rural life in the Americas, and give rise to a new ministerial process whose agreements contribute to implementing and updating the mandates of the hemispheric Summits.

What is the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan?

The AGRO 2003-2015 Plan is the shared long-term agenda for promoting the sustainable development of agriculture and the rural milieu.

The Plan was adopted at the Second Ministerial Meeting “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas” (Panama 2003), following a broad-based process of dialogue and negotiation aimed at reaching consensus on national proposals, which were then submitted to the same process at the hemispheric level under the responsibility of the Ministers of Agriculture and their Ministerial Delegates.

The Plan provides a framework for bringing about the changes required to achieve the Shared Vision 2015, and is implemented and updated by the countries through the strategic actions contained in the biennial hemispheric agendas, and the measures for their implementation and follow-up negotiated by the GRICA and defined by the ministers in their Ministerial Meetings.

In the Plan, the Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture:

- Took into consideration for its preparation a renewed way of viewing agriculture and rural life, which is the conceptual framework of the

AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. The **AGRO-Matrix** synthesizes this new concept of agriculture and rural life.

- Adopted the **Shared Vision 2015** for agriculture and rural life. The vision is a characterization of the desired future vis-à-vis the national and international context, rural territories and agricultural production-trade chains.
- Reiterated the commitments they assumed in the Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro, with the **Strategic Objectives** of Rural Prosperity, Food Security, the International and Regional Integration of Agriculture, Agricultural Health and Food Safety, and the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu. The Strategic Objectives make it possible to focus the efforts of the leaders of the Community of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas.
- Pledged to promote, with the stakeholders in agriculture and others involved in the development of agriculture and rural life, the **strategic actions** of the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda, to make progress toward achievement of the Strategic Objectives. This Hemispheric Agenda is the first of six biennial agendas.
- Stated that the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan reflects the member countries' intention of working to achieve the shared vision, acknowledging that the national governments have primary responsibility for implementing the Plan pursuant to their international commitments and agreements. They decided on a number of **measures for Implementation and Follow-up** of the Plan. These included: (i) the preparation of national progress reports on the implementation of the strategic actions of the current hemispheric agenda; (ii) the updating of the agenda for the next five biennia; (iii) a request that international institutions and cooperating governments coordinate their strategies around the implementation of the Plan; and, (iv) efforts to determine appropriate ways of gauging the progress of the Plan.

The AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action has been updated as a result of the HMAs adopted at the Third and Fourth Ministerial Meetings (Guayaquil 2005, Guatemala 2007 and Jamaica 2009).

What are the Ministerial Meetings “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas?”

The decision taken by the Heads of State and Government at the Quebec Summit to recognize and promote hemispheric ministerial meetings as mechanisms for the implementation of their mandates, in particular those on agriculture and rural life, led to the establishment of the *Ministerial Meetings “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas” held in the context of the Summits Process*. They are aimed at addressing the strategic issues and the specific mandates related to agriculture and rural life identified by the Heads of State and Government in their declarations and hemispheric actions plans, and constitute a hemispheric forum for multilateral political dialogue, coordination and cooperation among the 34 member countries of the Inter-American System.

“Ministerial meetings for many issues are the most important operational mechanism for the collective design of sectoral action plans on public policy in the region. This is the most important added value that the Summits of the Americas Process has brought to the OAS and to our countries.”¹

The Ministerial Meetings, which are part of the Ministerial Process “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas,” provide an opportunity to learn of progress in implementing the mandates of the Summits and the HMAs. As such, these hemispheric meetings are part of two complementary and articulated processes: the Summit of the Americas process and the “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas” process. The HMAs adopted at these meetings give continuity to the process of building the Shared Vision 2015 and, at the same time, contribute to the preparation of the new decisions that the Heads of State and Government are required to take.

Thus, the Ministerial Meeting “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas,” the highest-level hemispheric ministerial forum, is the political space in which the Ministers of Agriculture reach agreement by consensus on priorities and strategic actions for improving agriculture and rural life.

The identity of the Ministerial Meeting, underpinned by a continuous ministerial process, is expressed and consolidated with the HMAs. Thanks to

¹ Official Documents from the Summits of the Americas Process from Miami to Quebec City, Volume III. OAS. Quote taken from the Preface presented by Jaime Aparicio Otero, Director of the OAS Summits Office.

this identity as a hemispheric body, the Ministerial Meeting has positioned itself as a key political player that is having a real impact on the Summit of the Americas process.

What are the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements on Agriculture and Rural Life?

They are ministerial decisions on strategic aspects of agriculture and rural life in the Americas that the ministers take by consensus. As international instruments in support of the Summit of the Americas Process, the HMAs document the ministers' determination and commitment to promote **strategic actions** for the sustainable improvement of agriculture and the rural milieu, working with the actors responsible for the development of agriculture and rural life.

The HMAs carry considerable political weight because they are the result of a highly participatory ministerial process, are based on the realities identified in the national proposals and are strengthened with the hemispheric consensus built by the Ministerial Delegates of the 34 member countries of the Inter-American System by means of dialogue and negotiation. That political weight is derived from the governments' pledge to implement and follow up on the HMAs, with a view to updating them and ensuring the continuation of the process required to move toward the Shared Vision 2015, defined by the Ministers of Agriculture in the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

The political weight of the HMAs was reaffirmed when they were adopted as official documents of the Summit of the Americas process, and as inputs for the declarations and plans of action issued by the Heads of State and of Government.

What is the Ministerial Process and how are the HMAs developed?

Development of the HMAs begins in the countries, with a Ministerial Process that encompasses national consultations which yield the proposals that the countries share. Based on these national proposals, the countries enter into dialogue, negotiate and reach a hemispheric consensus on the text of each HMA.

Given the diversity of the countries' interests and views, the Ministerial Process has made it possible to reach a broad consensus on the HMAs. As a result, the HMAs reflect common concerns and issues on which the countries agree, which are of great value for improving agriculture and rural life.

With a view to facilitating hemispheric dialogue and building consensus, since 2001 the Ministerial Process has included two groups of key players who have their respective hemispheric forums and agreements: (i) the Ministerial Delegates of Agriculture and Rural Life and their hemispheric forum, the GRICA; and (ii) the Ministers of Agriculture and their forum, the Ministerial Meeting "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas."

The Delegates coordinate the formulation of national proposals for the HMAs and, meeting as the GRICA, build the hemispheric consensus required for the agreements signed by the ministers in their meetings. They also coordinate the preparation of the national progress reports on the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan and identify the challenges faced in implementing it.

What is the "institutional architecture" that underpins the ministerial process?

For the Ministerial Meetings to be effective in further positioning agriculture and rural life in the Summit process, the Ministers and their Delegates, with support from IICA, conduct the Ministerial Process, which is underpinned by an "institutional architecture" whose key components are of two types: the first four being organizational in nature, and the last two political-conceptual.

- A *national team* comprising a Ministerial Delegate of Agriculture and Rural Life, an Alternate Delegate and a technical support group made up of members of the policy or planning units of the ministries of agriculture. The key duties of this team are: (i) to coordinate implementation of the mandates of the Summits and the HMAs in the respective country; (ii) to prepare the reports on progress and challenges, which are shared with the other Ministerial Delegates; and (iii) to conduct national consultations in order to gather the inputs needed to begin building consensus on new HMAs.
- A *hemispheric forum of Ministerial Delegates*, the GRICA, chaired by the Ministerial Delegate of the host country of the following Ministerial

Meeting, who is accompanied by the Ministerial Delegate of the host country of the last Ministerial Meeting. The Ministerial Delegates, through dialogue and negotiation, build consensus on proposals for new HMAs they submit to the consideration of the Ministers.

- *A Secretariat of the Ministerial Process and its Ministerial Meeting*, provided by IICA, whose main task is to support the national, regional and hemispheric dialogue that: (i) underpins the HMAs; (ii) gives continuity to the Ministerial Process; (iii) facilitates regional integration within the context of the hemispheric process; (iv) facilitates articulation of the Ministerial Process with the Summit of the Americas process; and (v) contributes to further positioning agriculture and rural life on the inter-American agenda. As a contribution to the dialogue, the Secretariat supports the work of the Delegates, the GRICA and the Ministerial Meeting. The Secretariat also serves as the institutional memory of the process “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas,” constantly updating its Web site: www.ica.int/cumbres.
- *A Hemispheric Ministerial Meeting in the context of the Summit process*, which is the forum of Ministers of Agriculture. This forum gives direction to and conducts the hemispheric process and adopts the HMAs which make it possible to continue working toward the Shared Vision 2015. Through the Secretariat, the Chair of the Ministerial Meeting sends some of those HMAs to the Chair of the SIRG and to the Secretariat of the Summit Process of the OAS for consideration by the Heads of State and Government, so that they can make the decisions required to move forward toward the Shared Vision 2015.
- *A strategic framework for agriculture and rural life in the Americas*, comprising the mandates on agriculture and rural life of the Summits and the HMAs, the common thread of which is the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. This HMA, which is a reference point for decision makers, comprises the Shared Vision 2015, the Strategic Objectives, the hemispheric ministerial agendas and the measures for implementing and monitoring same.
- *A renewed concept of agriculture and rural life*, the AGRO-Matrix, which the Ministerial Delegates and the Ministers developed over the span of three Ministerial Meetings (Bavaro 2001, Panama 2003,

Guayaquil 2005) in an attempt to reach agreement on the scope of action of the AGRO Plan.

¿What are the HMAs and what do they define?

In the 2001-2009 Ministerial Process, the four five Ministerial Meetings held to date have yielded the following HMAs:

Jamaica 2009 (Fifth Ministerial Meeting)

- *AGRO 2003-2015 Plan: Hemispheric Ministerial Agreement – Jamaica 2009*

This Agreement comprised two parts: (i) the 2010-2011 Hemispheric Agenda, with 15 strategic actions that complement those adopted in the ministerial meetings held in Panama (2003), Guayaquil (2005) and Guatemala (2007); and (ii) the section “Implementation and Follow-up,” which includes six measures. The Agreement, as a whole, places emphasis on the development of capacities for improving food security and rural life in the Americas.

Guatemala 2007. (Fourth Ministerial Meeting)

- *AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. HMA Guatemala 2007*

The agreement comprises two parts: (i) the 2008-2009 Hemispheric Agenda “*Providing leadership for a holistic approach to agriculture and rural life,*” with 11 strategic actions that complement those adopted in the Ministerial Meetings held in 2003 (Panama) and 2005 (Guayaquil); and (ii) the section Implementation and Follow-up “*Working together for agriculture and rural life in the Americas,*” which includes 6 measures with direct implications for the work in the countries and regions, as well as for the role of the international organizations and the Secretariat of the Ministerial Process.

The Agreement of Guatemala 2007 focuses on how to build a renewed institutional framework for the sustainable development of agriculture and the rural milieu, with the participation of the public, private and social sectors. In this regard, the agreement attaches priority to two

complementary strategic orientations “... the first one, to promote with the agricultural stakeholders a broad-based approach to thinking and acting in agriculture and the rural milieu and, the second one, “working together” to improve agriculture and rural life in the Americas.”

Guayaquil 2005. (Third Ministerial Meeting)

- *AGRO 2003-2015 Plan: Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil on Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas*

The decision to implement the Plan by means of biennial ministerial agendas created the need to keep abreast of progress in the implementation of their strategic actions and, based on the information garnered, to update the Plan. The Agreement reaffirms the ministers’ commitment to the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan and updates it with complementary strategic actions for the 2006-2007 biennium, as well as implementation and follow-up measures. The Agreement places emphasis on the promotion of national policies for agriculture and rural life, and the strengthening of regional integration and international cooperation.

- *Ministerial Agreement on the Implementation and Follow-up of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan in preparation for the Fourth Ministerial Meeting*

Basically, this covers the preparation of the national reports on the progress being made in implementing the Plan and the challenges facing the countries. Based on the reports, the Plan will be updated for the 2008-2009 biennium.

- *Ministerial Agreement on the Information System for Monitoring the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan*

It recognizes the effort initiated by IICA and ECLAC, and supported by FAO, PAHO, UNESCO and the ILO. It calls for further efforts to develop the system.

- *Ministerial Agreement on the Proposal for the Fourth Summit of the Americas*

The Ministers instructed the Chairperson and the Secretariat of the Ministerial Meeting, based on the ministerial proposal, to help

consolidate the positioning of agriculture and rural life within the Summits process.

Panama 2003. (Second Ministerial Meeting)

- *AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action for Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas*

The Ministers' decision to reach consensus on a shared hemispheric agenda, taken at the First Ministerial Meeting, prompted further dialogue and the development of the second HMA.

The Ministers' determination was reflected in the Plan, in the following four complementary components: the Shared Vision 2015; the Strategic Objectives, to focus the efforts; the strategic actions needed to achieve the objectives (the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda); and, the measures for implementing and following up on the Plan.

The Ministers and their Delegates based the preparation of the Plan on a new and broader conception of agriculture and rural life, of great value in developing effective strategies for agriculture, which is summarized in the AGRO-Matrix.

- *Ministerial Agreement on Implementation of and Follow-up to the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan*

Bavaro 2001. (First Ministerial Meeting)

- *Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro for the Improvement of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas*

In the Declaration, the Ministers of Agriculture pledged to promote joint action aimed at improving agriculture and rural life, as called for in the Plan of Action adopted at the Third Summit of the Americas. They stressed the importance of making progress with the efforts related to food security, rural poverty alleviation and the sustainable development of agriculture and the rural milieu, addressing together the issues of competitiveness, equity, environmental sustainability and democratic governance.

What is the AGRO-Matrix and what is it used for?

The AGRO-Matrix synthesizes a new concept of agriculture and rural life and facilitates a comprehensive understanding of both. It recognizes that agriculture and rural life are complex phenomena, with a multiplicity of actors and a diversity of interests that should be taken into account when designing effective strategies and policies aimed at transforming the sector. It is one of the main outcomes of the consensus-building process followed by the Ministerial Delegates in their efforts to support the Ministers of Agriculture in developing the HMAs adopted at the Ministerial Meetings held in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009.

The AGRO-Matrix, used by the Ministerial Delegates as the basis for preparing the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, is the conceptual framework for the sustainable development of agriculture and the rural milieu. There are two aspects that need to be differentiated in the AGRO-Matrix. They are: (i) the two pillars of its structure; and (ii) the three components of the desired situation.

The two pillars of its structure are: a systemic concept of agriculture and rural life, broken down into three categories or operational areas (rural territories, agricultural value chains and the national and international context) and a sustainable development approach consisting of four dimensions or types of actions (production-trade, ecological-environmental, sociocultural-human and political-institutional). The three components of the desired situation needed to attain the Shared Vision 2015 are: the twelve purposes, the seven strategic objectives and the overarching objective, which guide the strategies, policies and actions adopted.

The AGRO-Matrix

Systemic Concept	Rural Territories	Agricultural Production-Trade Chains	National and International Context	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
Sustainable Development Approach				
Production – Trade	I. Promoting competitive rural enterprises	II. Integrating chains and strengthening their competitiveness	III. Promoting on environment conducive to competitive agriculture	Competitiveness
Ecological – Environmental	IV. Being environmentally responsible in the rural areas	V. From farm to table: promoting integrated environmental management	VI. Participating in building and institutional environmental framework	Sustainability
Socialcultural – Human	VII. Quality of life in rural communities: creating know-how and opportunity	VIII. Advancing learning and expertise in the chain	IX. Promoting policies to create capabilities and opportunities for the rural communities	Equity
Political – Institutional	X. Strengthening public and private sector participation and coordinated action between them in the territories	XI. Strengthening dialogue and commitments among actors in the chain	XII. Promoting national policies and regional and hemispheric cooperation for agriculture and rural life	Governance
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	<p>RURAL PROSPERITY – FOOD SECURITY – INTERNATIONAL POSITIONING</p>			<p>OVERREACHING GOAL</p> <p>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL MILIEU</p>

The AGRO-Matrix helps to explain the basic aspects of the complex phenomenon of agriculture and rural life, promotes national, regional and hemispheric strategies, policies and actions to address specific issues and facilitates coordination between different interest groups, in order to develop a new institutional framework for the sustainable development of agriculture and the rural milieu.

The AGRO-Matrix is the ideal tool for understanding and defining the “real” contribution of agriculture and rural life to the development of countries. Its use facilitates the development of a common base of information on agriculture and rural life and on the nature and magnitude of the processes they involve. It also helps to organize the compilation of the opinions and expectations of the multiple actors of agriculture and rural life, and to define and rank objectives and strategic actions, to identify the impact of policies and programs and to measure the progress made in achieving the purposes and strategic objectives and moving toward the Shared Vision 2015.

What is the information system?

At the time they approved the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action in 2003, the Ministers of Agriculture felt the need to propose measures for implementing and following up on same. They stated as much in the HMAs of Panama, Guayaquil and Guatemala.

At the Ministerial Meeting in Guayaquil (2005), the Ministers considered it was necessary to monitor and evaluate the efforts being made via an information system that would cover the following aspects of its implementation:

- the fulfillment of agreements
- the impact of same on improvement of agriculture and rural life
- the opinions and expectations of leaders.

To this end, the Ministers approved the HMA on the Information System for Monitoring the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan (IS). At the Guatemala Ministerial Meeting, the Secretariat of the Ministerial Process reported to the Ministers on progress in implementing that HMA.

The information system (IS) is a ministerial initiative aimed at generating and using up-to-date information to facilitate decision making in the formulation of policies and strategies for the sustainable development of agriculture and the rural milieu. It is based on the integration of three components of information under the AGRO-Matrix. These components are:

- national actions and the challenges the counties face in implementing the AGRO Plan
- performance indicators related to agriculture and rural life
- the expectations of leaders of agriculture and rural life

The development of the IS requires the joint effort of the countries and international organizations. The actions and challenges component is based on the national progress report prepared by the Ministerial Delegate of each country. The performance indicators component is based on work headed by ECLAC, in coordination with IICA, which has received support from other international organizations, primarily FAO and PAHO. The expectations of leaders component is based on the responses obtained in the National Consultation of Leaders of Agriculture and Rural Life conducted by IICA.

The IS provides the stakeholders of agriculture with up-to-date strategic information, organized around a conceptual framework which is based on a comprehensive concept of agriculture and rural life and is always available on the Web site of the Secretariat of the Ministerial Process.

The opportunity and the challenge: how to move forward with the unfinished task of linking the hemispheric and national levels?

The mandates of the Summits and the HMAs are necessary, but not enough to make the Shared Vision 2015 a reality in the countries. They serve as a policy and technical framework for formulating national strategies and policies, ensuring institutional alignment and focusing national efforts and international cooperation. However, to begin working toward the change the HMAs are promoting with the Shared Vision 2015, it is necessary to

emphasize the development of a renewed institutional framework at the national level in their implementation.

The additional step that is required to develop that institutional framework is a renewed leadership that will promote the adoption of an intersectoral strategy calling on the public, private and social sectors to work together, with the coordinated support of international organizations. The goal of that strategy is to consolidate the Ministerial Process “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas” and also to link, in that process, the hemispheric and regional levels with the national level.

The great challenge to be faced in taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the mandates of the Summits and the HMAs can be summed up as follows: it is urgent to pick up the pace toward 2015 with a renewed leadership that will promote, from the countries, the “working together” strategy.

