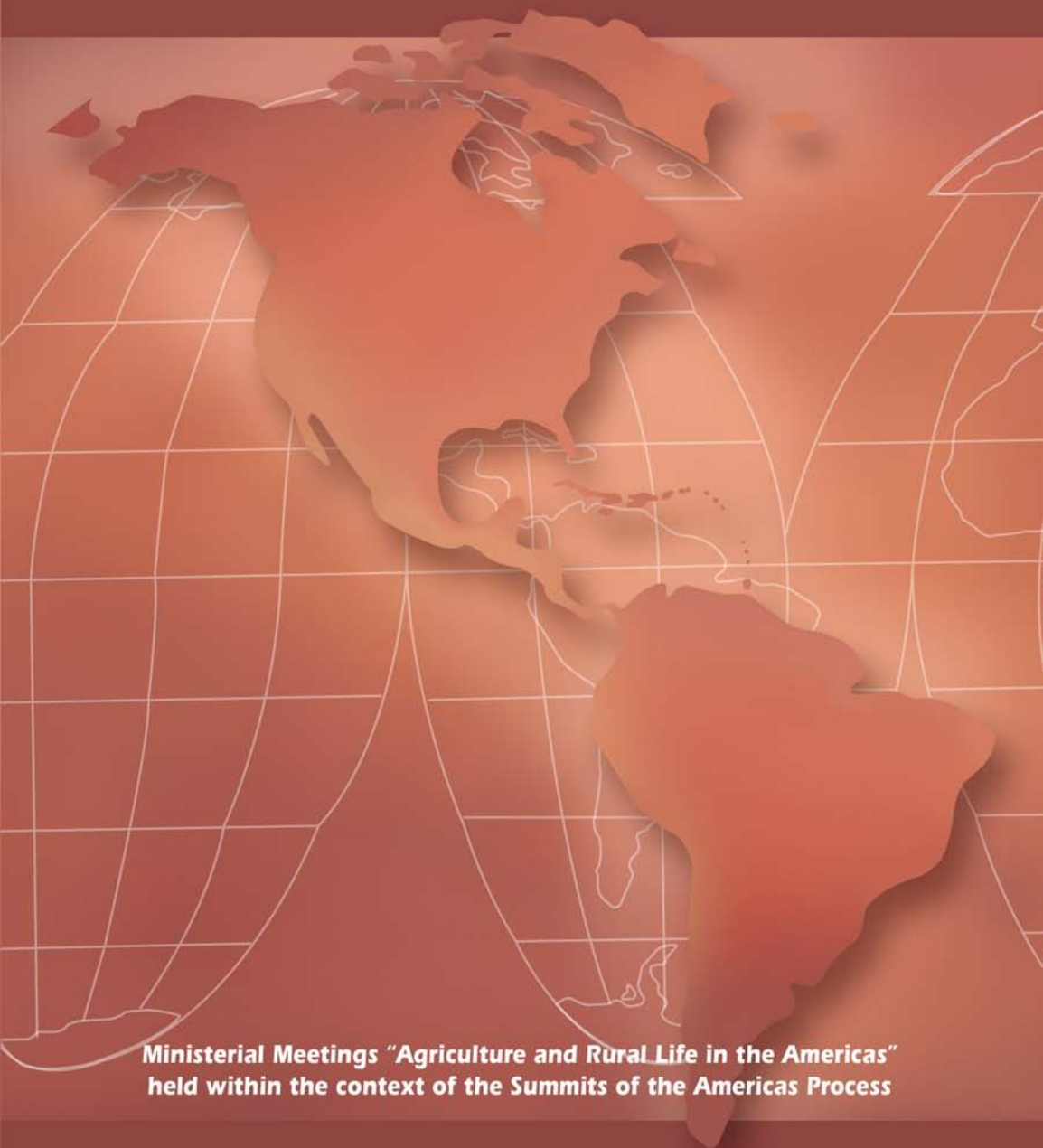


Hemispheric Ministerial Process

# Building Today the Agriculture and Rural Life of 2015

Opportunity for a renewed institutional framework, joint action and cooperation



**Ministerial Meetings "Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas"  
held within the context of the Summits of the Americas Process**



Hemispheric Ministerial Process

# **Building Today the Agriculture and Rural Life of 2015**

**Opportunity for a renewed institutional framework,  
joint action and cooperation**

Report of the Secretariat on the  
“Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas” ministerial process

Revised after the Third Ministerial Meeting  
and the Fourth Summit of the Americas

**November 2005**

**Ministerial Meetings “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Américas”  
Held within the context of the Summits of the Americas Process**

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**“Creating Jobs to Fight Poverty and Strengthen  
Democratic Governance”**

The Heads of State and Government of the Americas advocated growth through job creation and decent work, proposed a renewed institutional framework and supported implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan

*“We are committed to building a more solid and inclusive institutional framework, based on the coordination of economic, labor, and social public policies to contribute to the generation of decent work, which must comprise:*

*A comprehensive framework for rural and agricultural development, to promote investment, job creation, and rural prosperity”*

**Fourth Summit of the Americas, 2005  
Paragraph 55 g), Declaration of Mar del Plata**

**To carry out the above, the Heads of the State and  
Government defined as a national commitment:**

*To support the implementation of the Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil in 2005, Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas (AGRO 2003-2015 Plan).*

**Fourth Summit of the Americas, 2005  
Paragraph 35, Plan of Action**



**“Creating Jobs to Fight Poverty and Strengthen Democratic Governance”**

The Heads of State and Government asked international organizations to continue their support of the implementation and monitoring of the mandates and commitments of the Summits

*“We instruct the members of the Joint Summit Working Group, comprised of the OAS, IDB, Economic Commission for Latin América and the Caribbean (ECLAC), PAHO, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the World Bank, ILO, International Organization for Migration (OIM), Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), under the coordination of the OAS, to continue, through their respective activities and programs, to support the follow-up and implementation of the Declarations and Plans of Action of the Summits of the Americas, and of the Declaration and Plan of Action of Mar del Plata, as well as to assist in the preparations for future summits”*

**Fourth Summit of the Americas, 2005  
Paragraph 75, Declaration of Mar del Plata**

*To request Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and ECLAC to continue with their efforts to develop an information system for the follow-up and evaluation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, and the other members of the Joint Summit Working Group to join in those efforts as a contribution to defining goals and indicators for the mandates of the Summit of the Americas.*

**Fourth Summit of the Americas, 2005  
Paragraph 43, Plan of Action**

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## Foreword

The Ministers of Agriculture, at their Third Ministerial Meeting “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas,” within the context of the Summits of the Americas process, held in Panama in 2003, adopted a shared, long-term agenda for the improvement of agriculture and rural life in the Americas: the **AGRO 2003-2015 Plan**. This important Hemispheric Ministerial Agreement issued in Panamá was endorsed by the Presidents and Prime Ministers in the Declaration of Nuevo Leon, issued at the Special Summit of the Americas (Monterrey 2004).

Aware of the importance of following up on the Plan, the ministers decided that it should be implemented via six biennial agendas, and agreed to prepare national reports on progress in the implementation of each one. Also, they decided that those same reports should be used as the foundation for updating the Hemispheric Agenda for the second period.

At their Third Ministerial Meeting, held in Guayaquil in 2005, the ministers of agriculture renewed their commitment to the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action and approved the Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil, which calls for implementation of the Plan to continue through 2006 and 2007. This agreement was complemented with three more specific Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements (HMAs) that ensure the transition to the third stage of the Plan (2008-2009) and the development of an information system for monitoring and evaluating it. These important HMAs were acknowledged and endorsed by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata 2005).

The Secretariat of the Ministerial Meeting has supported the Ministerial Delegates in the preparation of the progress reports for the 2003-2005 period. Drawing on the reports and the challenges faced by the countries in implementing the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, the Secretariat, at the behest of the ministers, drew up a base document for the hemispheric dialogue on the updating of the Hemispheric Agenda, for application in 2006-2007, and the adoption of measures for implementing and following up on same. This dialogue took place within the context of the 2005 GRICA meetings, held in San Jose (July 7-8) and Guayaquil (August 29).

The purpose of *“Building today the Agriculture and Rural Life of 2015”* is to show progress in the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, to reaffirm the need to continue working harder and faster to improve agriculture and rural communities, and to reveal the new hemispheric dynamic that has emerged as a result of the mandates related to agriculture and rural life from the Summits Process. However, the main purpose is to underscore the opportunity it provides, today and in the near future, for the Community of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas to develop a new institutional framework, undertake joint action and cooperate in building the agriculture and rural life of 2015.

- In the **first part**, the focus is on the period between 2001 and 2004, and the most important mandates issued by the Heads of State and Government regarding agriculture and rural life at the three most recent Summits of the Americas are reviewed. Also presented are the ministerial processes of 2001-2005, and their respective Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements. The institutional framework being developed to give continuity to the ministerial process and link it to the Summit of the Americas process is described. Particular attention is paid to the key role played by the Ministerial Delegates, appointed by the Ministers of Agriculture to represent them in conducting the hemispheric ministerial process.
- The **second part**, centers on the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, which, since the Second Ministerial Meeting, and even more since the Special Summit of the Americas, is considered to be a strategic framework for agriculture and rural life in the Americas. The Plan is the common point of reference now available to the Community of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas. The fact that the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan is the result of a broad mobilization of key actors of agriculture, conducted by the Ministerial Delegates, is explained. Its contribution to moving beyond the traditional concept of agriculture, which led to underestimating its contribution to the development of the countries, is described. How this renewed concept of agriculture and rural life is used as the basis for the scope of action of the Plan and the monitoring activities required to give it continuity, is shown.
- The **third part** refers to AGRO AMERICAS, a new hemispheric dynamic that includes, among other elements, the emergence of new relations for agriculture and rural life in the Americas, and the ministerial process, as

regards implementation of the Ministerial Hemispheric Agenda and the addition of strategic actions to same. Also, it points up the need to integrate into an information system to monitor the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action, the actions carried out in the fulfillment of commitments, the impact of those actions on the performance of agriculture and rural life, and the expectations and perceptions of the leaders of agriculture.

## Principal findings

- The mandates on agriculture and rural life of the Summits have laid the groundwork for the ongoing reassessment of agriculture and rural life, and have generated a ministerial process “Agriculture and Rural Life,” from 2001 to the present.
- The ministerial process has led to hemispheric agreements that, together, provide a strategic framework for action aimed at improving agriculture and rural life in the Americas.
- The ministerial process in the context of the Summits of the Americas has given rise to a hemispheric dynamic AGRO AMERICAS, which is being strengthened.
- The national reports reveal that the countries are making efforts within the framework of the vision, objectives and strategic actions of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.
- The continued execution of national actions and the nature and persistence of the challenges identified, on the one hand, and the identification of new challenges, on the other, indicate that some of the strategic actions in the Plan should be continued and others updated.
- It is necessary to follow up on and evaluate progress toward Vision 2015, via an information system.

**In brief, the challenge and opportunity: to move more quickly together toward 2015.** The mandates of the Summits and the ministerial agreements are necessary, but not enough for change. A decade away from the deadline set for accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals, those commitments must be accompanied by a new institutional framework, joint action and cooperation.



## **Part I - Positioning agriculture and rural life on the Inter-American agenda**

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From Quebec 2001 to Mar del Plata 2005

- **A political framework that reassess the agriculture and rural life of the Americas:** The Mandates of Quebec 2001, Monterrey 2004 and Mar del Plata 2005
- **The Ministerial Process “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas”:** dialogue, consensus and commitment

## **A political framework that reassess the agriculture and rural life of the Americas:**

**The Mandates of Quebec 2001, Monterrey 2004 and Mar del Plata 2005**

The strategic and visionary interest shown by the ministers since 1994, after the conclusion of the First Summit of the Americas, in positioning agriculture and rural life in the highest level hemispheric political forum found fertile ground at the Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec 2001).

### **Agriculture and rural life in Quebec 2001:** two definitions and two mandates calling for their reassessment

The Third Summit was a historical milestone for agriculture and rural life. On that occasion, the Heads of State and Government recognized agriculture and rural life in combating poverty and promoting sustainable development in their countries.

This potential was recognized when defining the double role of agriculture:

- (i) as way of life for millions of rural inhabitants; and,
- (ii) as a strategic in the socioeconomic system sector for generating prosperity in the rural areas

To realize this potential, the Plan of Action of the Third Summit contains two mandates from Quebec 2001 for Ministers of Agriculture, one at the hemispheric level and another at the national:

- (i) To promote hemispheric joint action among the stakeholders of the agricultural sector with a view to bringing about sustainable improvements in agriculture and rural life that contribute to implementation of the Plans of Action of the Summits of the Americas

- (ii) To promote medium- and long-term national strategies for the sustainable improvement of agriculture and rural life, based on a dialogue among government ministers, parliamentarians, and different sectors of civil society

Also, the Heads of State and Government of the Americas designated IICA as an institutional partner of the Summit of the Americas process. As such, IICA is responsible for:

- (i) supporting the ministers of agriculture in carrying out those two mandates;
- (ii) participating in the mechanism established for following up on two mandates, which is coordinated by the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG – forum of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Summit of the Americas Coordinators); and
- (iii) forming part of the Joint Summit Working Group, coordinated by the Summit of the Americas Secretariat and comprising, originally, the OAS, PAHO, IICA, IDB, ECLAC and the World Bank, expanded later to include the regional banks (CABEL, CAF and CDB) and other U.N. organizations such as the ILO.

### **Openness and transparency:** essential in carrying out the two mandates for the legitimacy of the strategies

In general, the Quebec 2001 mandates reflect a conviction of the need for openness and transparency, mentioned in the Declaration of Quebec City itself, as vital to building public awareness and legitimizing the purposes and tasks of the Summit of the Americas process.

Specifically, both mandates underscore the need to promote dialogue among the actors in the agricultural sector, and particularly, the government, parliament and civil society; as the main vehicle for building consensus and commitment to the strategies for agriculture and rural life (see Declaration of Quebec City, paragraph 32).

## Greater public interest and understanding: agriculture and rural life strategic issues for development

Recognition of the importance of agriculture and rural life and the Quebec 2001 mandates to improve it triggered a new dynamic in the Americas which has kindled interest and an understanding in the public about the contribution of agriculture and the rural milieu to development. The following, to this reassessment, have contributed to this:

- (i) the ministerial process “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas”, with its national dialogues and hemisphere-wide consensus-building, spawned in 2001. That process has given rise to two hemispheric ministerial agreements for the improvement of agriculture and rural life: the Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro and the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action, endorsed by the Presidents at the Special Summit of the Americas (Nuevo Leon, Monterrey, 2004);
- (ii) the growing presence of these strategic issues on the regional agendas of the presidents (Andean Community of Nations; the Caribbean Community, the Central American Integration System, and the Southern Common Market) and Ministers of Agriculture (the Caribbean Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu, the Central American Agricultural Council, the Southern Agricultural Council).
- (iii) up-to-date and innovative information on the importance of agriculture and the rural milieu disseminated through the global and hemispheric reports of international organizations that participate in the Summit of the Americas process

In essence one of the important contributions of the studies has been to demonstrate that the traditional approach backed by official statistics, definitions, and indicators minimizes the true contribution of agriculture and the countryside to development, which has an impact

on the policies being promoted and the position afforded to agriculture and rural life.

## **Agriculture and rural life at Monterrey 2004:**

### **AGRO Plan 2003-2015 a framework for action**

At their Special Summit Meeting (Monterrey 2004), the Heads of State and Government of the Americas endorsed the agreement reached by the Ministers of Agriculture at their meeting in 2003. They committed to supporting implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, conferring on it the nature of a presidential mandate, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Declaration of Nuevo Leon. In it, they renewed their pledged to maintain a sustained effort to improve the living conditions of the rural populations and that sustainable improvements in agriculture should contribute to social development, rural prosperity and food security.

Thus, in Monterrey 2004, the first mandate emanating from the Quebec 2001 materialized with the presidential endorsement of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. Then, after ten years, the positioning of agriculture pursued as a goal by the ministers since the Miami Summit in 1994 became a reality.

## **Agriculture and rural life at Mar del Plata 2005:**

### **national commitment**

In both the Declaration and the Plan of Action of the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata 2005), the Heads of State and Government renewed their commitment to improving agriculture and rural life. They pledged to support implementation of the Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil, which the ministers of agriculture approved at the Third Ministerial Meeting as the second stage of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

They pledged to build a strong and inclusive institutional framework based on the coordination of economic, labor and social policies, in

order to contribute to the generation of decent work. In that context, they stated, in paragraph 55 g) of the Declaration of Mar del Plata that a framework for the development of the rural and agricultural sector that will promote investment, job creation and rural prosperity is a key component of the new institutional framework being promoted. In the corresponding Plan of Action (paragraphs 35 and 43), they call for support in the implementation of the Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil and in the development of an information system for monitoring and evaluating the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

### **The ministerial meetings and the SIRG:** key mechanisms of the strategy to position agriculture and rural life

In the Declaration of Quebec City (Third Summit of the Americas), the Heads of State and Government of the Americas stated that the ministerial meetings produced significant results in support of Summit mandates. In this regard, they pointed out that they would pursue the continued development of this cooperation because these ministerial meetings are important pillars of hemispheric cooperation (see Declaration of Quebec City, paragraph 29).

Another key mechanism for building the new “institutional architecture” of the Summit of the Americas process is the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), which is made up of the ministers of foreign affairs and their National Summit Coordinators. This mechanism reaffirmed, in the preparatory sessions for the Fourth Summit, what the Heads of State and Government had said regarding the Ministerial Meetings, paying attention in their deliberations to the formal agreement emerging from the Ministerial Meetings. An example is the case of the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements of the Third Ministerial Meeting, which were incorporated into both the Declaration of Mar del Plata and its Plan of Action.

The strategy followed since 1994 by the Ministers of Agriculture to position agriculture and rural life politically had two principal thrusts:

- (i) In the Summit of the Americas process: to develop links in each country with the National Summits Coordinator; and to seek the political support of the Heads of State and Government for the development of an enabling environment.
- (ii) In a new hemispheric ministerial process: to incorporate the Ministerial Meetings into the framework of the Summits process; and to ensure same are based on prior actions, which include national consultations and the building of hemispheric consensus, coordinated by the Ministerial Delegates.

## **The Ministerial Process**

### **“Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas”:** dialogue, consensus and commitment

The political framework resulting from the Quebec 2001 and the Monterrey 2004 mandates spawned a new ministerial process in the context of the Summits of the Americas, a process that culminates in the ministerial meetings, Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas. The principles of openness and transparency were embodied in this process through broad national, regional and hemisphere-wide dialogue.

### **A solid response to the first mandate**

**Quebec 2001:** the continue hemispheric effort in Bavaro 2001, Panama 2003 and Guayaquil 2005

In 2001, immediately following the Third Summit, the first hemispheric ministerial response occurred. The Ministers of Agriculture, with the support of their ministerial delegates, reached

consensus on the “*Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro for the Improvement of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas*” (MDB), which they approved at their first Ministerial Meeting (Bavaro 2001).

There, they pledged to reach consensus on a *shared hemispheric agenda* that would be used by their countries to develop future *national and regional plans of action* (paragraph 18 of the MDB).

In 2003, pursuant to their commitments under the MDB and in preparation for the Special Summit of the Americas, the Ministers of Agriculture reaffirmed their commitment by confirming appointment of their ministerial delegates and promoting a broad participatory process that led up to the Second Ministerial Meeting “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas” (Panama 2003). During that meeting they adopted the “*AGRO 2003-2015 Plan for Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas*” (AGRO 2015 Plan), in keeping with their commitment to a shared hemispheric agenda.

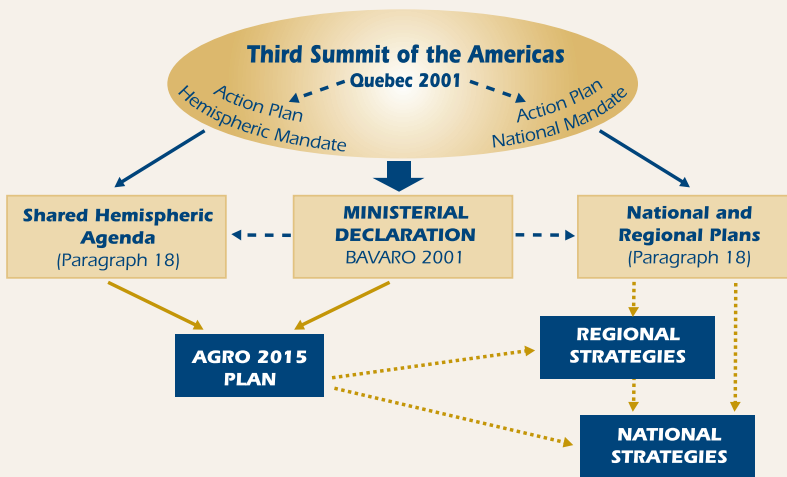
The ministerial meeting culminated a broad process of consultation, dialogue and consensus-building at the national and hemispheric levels among ministerial delegates. One of the key moments was the 2003 meeting of the forum of the ministerial delegates (Group for the Implementation and Coordination of the Agreements on Agriculture and Rural Life (GRICA)), which met in San Jose and Panama to consolidate the hemispheric consensus.

In 2005, the Third Ministerial Meeting reviews the progress of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, updates its Hemispheric Ministerial Agenda on agriculture and rural life for the 2006-2007 period, and approves a proposal to the SIRG to consolidate an enabling environment for the sustainable improvement of agriculture and the rural milieu.

Therefore, that first mandate (Quebec 2001), calling for hemispheric joint action among the actors of agriculture, which was ratified in Monterrey 2004 and renewed in Guayaquil 2005, is being implemented through the seven Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements approved in the three Ministerial Meetings (2001, 2003 and 2005).

## Progress on the second mandate Quebec 2001: promoting national strategies based on national dialogues and consensus

This mandate is also based and responds to paragraph 18 of the MDB, the Ministers of Agriculture indicated the regional and national scope for the implementation of the shared hemispheric agenda (AGRO 2003-2015 Plan).



Some countries have clearly aligned their strategies with this second mandate Quebec 2001, taking care to design them in a way that shows the key characteristics of the second mandate: dialogue and the involvement of government, parliament, and different stakeholders of civil society. Chile, Ecuador, Honduras and Canada have reported that they have undertaken efforts to develop State policies for agriculture and the rural milieu, while Bolivia, Costa Rica, Peru, and Mexico have reported broad-reaching participatory processes to develop their strategies.

As regards action at the regional level, initial steps have been made in some regions to comply with the second mandate Quebec 2001.

## The “institutional architecture” being built: key role of the ministerial delegates and the ministerial meetings

The Ministers of Agriculture want to consolidate the positioning achieved in the Summit process. To do so, it is necessary to consolidate the “institutional architecture” currently being developed, which includes:

- (i) A national team comprising a Ministerial Delegate, an Alternate Delegate and a technical support team with three duties: to coordinate at the country level the implementation of the mandates of the Summits and of the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements; to prepare reports on progress and challenges, which are to be shared with rest of the Ministerial Delegates; and to conduct the national consultations, which provide the inputs needed to begin building consensus on the new Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements.
- (ii) A hemispheric forum of Ministerial Delegates, known as the Group for the Implementation and Coordination of the Agreements on Agriculture and Rural Life of the Summits Process (GRICA), which is co-chaired by the Ministerial Delegate of the host country of the preceding Ministerial Meeting and the Ministerial Delegate of the host country of the following ministerial meeting. This forum is responsible for building consensus on the new Hemispheric Ministerial Meetings, and presents proposals to the Ministerial Meeting and the National Summits Coordinators in order to build and consolidate a favorable environment.
- (iii) A Secretariat, provided by IICA, whose key task is to support the national, regional and hemispheric dialogue that is the basis for the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements; provides for continuation of the ministerial process; and justifies its association with the Summit of the Americas process.

- (iv) A Ministerial Meeting, the forum of ministers of agriculture, which provides guidance for and conducts the process at the regional and hemispheric levels; approves the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements, which provide for the continuation of the process of building the Shared Vision for 2015; and proposes new decisions that are required from the Heads of State and Government.

### **IICA as Secretariat of the ministerial process: a new responsibility since Quebec 2001**

At the Third Summit of the Americas, IICA was included by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas as a partner institution of the Summit of the Americas process, together with the OAS, ECLAC, IDB, PAHO, and World Bank. Since then, it has served as Secretariat of the Ministerial Meetings “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas.”

In general IICA has had a dual role to play in support of the implementation of the presidential mandates. On the one hand, in the ministerial process, promoting broad national, regional and hemispheric dialogue to support ministerial meetings. Also, in the Summit of the Americas process, participating in the OAS-led Summit review and monitoring mechanisms. The goal was to ensure that the positioning of agriculture and rural life achieved in the Third Summit would be renewed in the Special Summit and consolidated in the Fourth Summit.

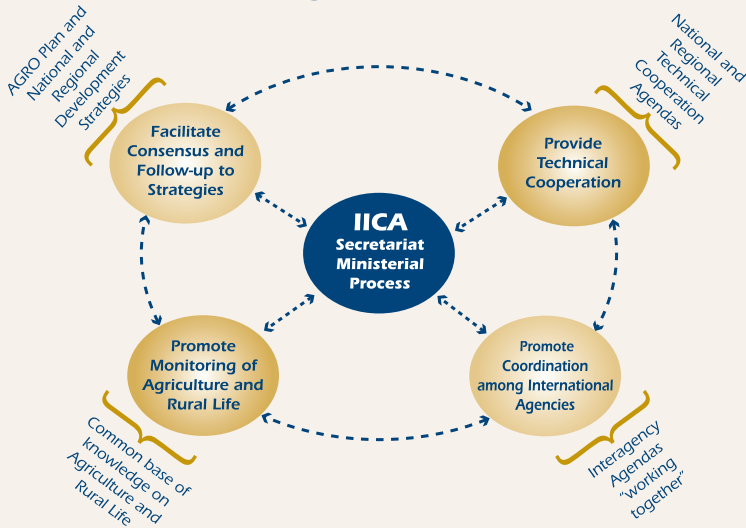
To help maintain that positioning, IICA promotes efforts to:

- (i) To facilitate the continuation of the ministerial process, which implies:
- Support the Member States in implementing the mandates, with a renewed style of technical cooperation that begins with consultation with the key stakeholders of agriculture to define jointly the Institute’s Technical Cooperation Agendas

at the national, regional and hemispheric levels. Those agendas are revised at least once a year for the purpose of bringing them in line with the needs expressed by the countries and in relation to their challenges for implementing the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

- To promote the monitoring of agriculture and rural life and, on the basis of same, to promote reflection and dialogue among the stakeholders of agriculture and rural milieu on the current situation of and outlook for agriculture and rural life.
- To support the Ministers of Agriculture and the Ministerial Delegates in organizing and holding the ministerial meetings. In this regard, efforts are made to facilitate dialogue among the stakeholders of agriculture and rural life and the building of consensus on hemispheric, regional and national strategies for sustainable improvement in agriculture and rural life. Also, support is provided for the continuation of the ministerial process, facilitating the monitoring of those strategies.
- Coordinate actions with other international organizations that work to improve agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

## 4 Strategic Components



- (ii) To facilitate articulation of the ministerial process with the Summit of the Americas process, which implies:
- Report to the Summit Implementation Review Group (ministers of foreign affairs of the hemisphere and their National Summit Coordinators) on the countries' progress to implement the presidential mandates, the ministerial process itself, and the Institute's and other international organizations contributions to same.
  - Participating in the Joint Summit Working Group, coordinated by the OAS Summit of the Americas Secretariat.
  - Maintaining close communication with the OAS Summit of the Americas Secretariat.



## Part II - A strategic framework for agriculture and rural life in the Americas

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

- **Agreements and commitments for improving agriculture and rural life:** a common point of reference for decision makers
- **A new way of understanding agriculture and rural life:** the conceptual framework of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan
- **A frame of reference for monitoring the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan:** the Matrix of the AGRO-System

## Agreements and commitments for improving agriculture and rural life: a common point of reference for decision makers

At the GRICA 2003 meetings, held in San Jose, Costa Rica, and Panama, the Ministerial Delegates of Agriculture made significant progress toward a hemispheric consensus on the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

In a climate of sincere and constructive dialogue, the Delegates drafted a Shared Vision through 2015, set objectives and decided on the strategic actions needed to fulfill the commitment assumed by the Ministers of Agriculture at the First Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas (Bavaro 2001). Their efforts were rewarded when the ministers and secretaries of agriculture adopted the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan at the Second Ministerial Meeting. In the Plan, the Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture:

- (i) 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.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) 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. It is divided into 12 sections containing a total of 40 strategic actions.

- (iv) 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.

At the 2005 GRICA meetings, in July and August in San Jose, Costa Rica, and Guayaquil, Ecuador, respectively, the Ministerial Delegates made significant progress in reaching hemispheric consensus regarding the updating of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan for its second stage (2006-2007).

The Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture, at their Third Ministerial Meeting, adopted four Hemispheric Ministerial Agreements (HMAs) which ensure continued implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015. Those HMAs defined the second Ministerial Hemispheric Agenda for 2006-2007, the mechanisms for regional implementation, for follow-up and for continuation of the process leading up to the Ministerial Meeting in Guatemala in 2007.

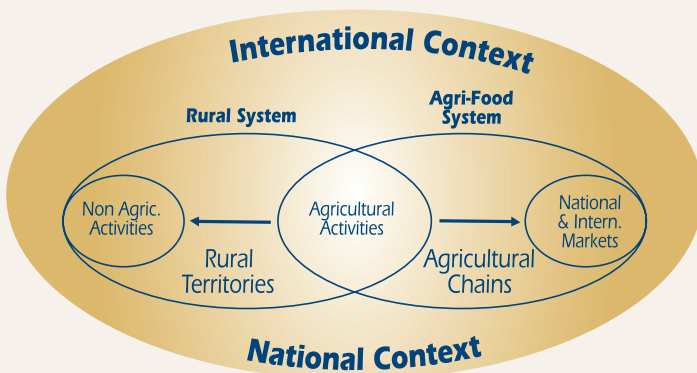
The HMAs were supported by the Heads of State and Government in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata 2005).

# A new way of understanding agriculture and rural life: the conceptual framework of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan

The mandates of Quebec 2001, Monterrey 2004 and Mar del Plata 2005 established a new political frame of reference, which transcends - goes beyond - the traditional conception of agriculture as a primary productive sector of the economy. This calls for a broader conception of agriculture and rural life in line with those strategic orientations.

To develop the Shared Vision 2015 for agriculture and rural life, within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals and taking into account the aforementioned mandates, the ministerial delegates of agriculture adopted a new conception of agriculture and rural life, which was endorsed by the Ministers of Agriculture in their two latest meetings (Panama 2003 and Guayaquil 2005). A definition appears in the second paragraph of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

**Systemic Concept of Agriculture and Rural Life  
(beyond a purely sectoral perspective)**



This renewed concept adopted by the ministers of agriculture goes beyond measures aimed at improving the productive and trade-related aspects of agriculture. It considers the rural territories, where productive activities take place; the agricultural production - trade chains, that add value to primary production; and its actions reach out into the national and international context. In doing so, however, it considers other dimensions of the sustainable development approach such as the social, environmental and institutional aspects of those territories, chains, and their national and international context.

As this framework for analysis and action to improve agriculture and rural life is so broad, it calls for a large and varied group of public and private stakeholders to become involved and take action.

Essentially, the conceptual-thematic space for the analysis and definition of the strategic actions that underpin the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan identifies two groups of complementary aspects for characterizing agriculture and rural life:

- The **systemic concept** of agriculture and rural life defines **three categories**: rural territories; agricultural production-trade chains; and national and international context. The first two categories include all stakeholders in agriculture and rural milieu; while the third category includes a set of elements that affect the territories' development and the operation of the chains; and,
- The **sustainable development approach** that identifies the **four dimensions** of development, namely: the production-trade dimension; the ecological-environmental dimension; the sociocultural-human dimension; and, the political-institutional dimension.

When the interactions between these two aspects are visualized, they provide us with the conceptual-thematic space identified as the Matrix of the AGRO-System.

The Hemispheric Agenda was organized on the basis of the conceptual framework of the AGRO 2003 - 2015 Plan

| CATEGORIES \ DIMENSIONS  | RURAL TERRITORIES | AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION-TRADE CHAINS | NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| PRODUCTION-TRADE         |                   |                                      |                                    |
| ECOLOGICAL-ENVIRONMENTAL |                   |                                      |                                    |
| SOCIO-CULTURAL AND HUMAN |                   |                                      |                                    |
| POLITICAL-INSTITUTIONAL  |                   |                                      |                                    |

12 SECTIONS OF THE HEMISPHERIC AGENDA

The 12 boxes in the matrix help us understand the thinking behind the 12 sections into which the Hemispheric Agenda is organized. The 40 strategic actions of the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Ministerial Agenda, (the first phase of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan) are



distributed among them and the 11 complementary strategic actions of the Ministerial Hemispheric Agenda 2006-2007 (with which the second stage of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan includes 41 strategic actions).

The renewed concept of agriculture and rural life is also important because of its direct link with the strategic objectives of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, based on the decisions adopted by the ministers of agriculture in the Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro (MDB).

The four dimensions of the sustainable development approach (rows in the Matrix of the AGRO-System) make it possible to identify the current state of, and outlook for, agriculture and rural life in terms of the four sustainable development objectives established in paragraph 7 of the MDB, namely, **competitiveness**; the **sustainability** of natural resources; **equity**; and **democratic governance**.

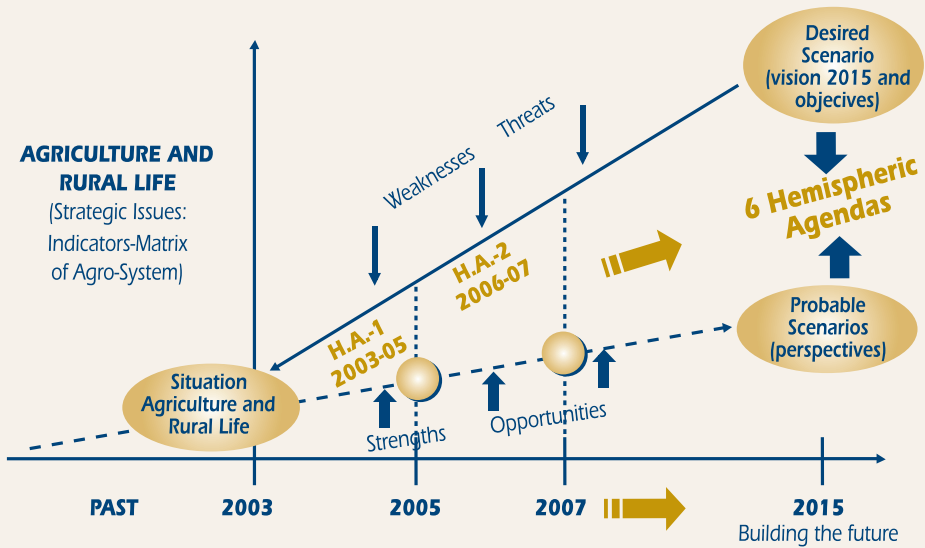
The three categories of the systemic concept of agriculture and rural life (columns in the Matrix of the AGRO-System) also help us define the situation of and outlook for agriculture and rural life in terms of the sustainable development objective, in this case in relation to the other two objectives set in the MDB and expanded upon in the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan: **rural prosperity**, **food security** and the **international integration or positioning** of agriculture.

# A frame of reference for monitoring the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan: the Matrix of the AGRO-System

The implementation of the hemispheric mandates and HMAs on agriculture and life rural must be monitored so we know how much progress is being made, how the situation is evolving, what challenges lies ahead and what strategic decisions need to be adopted at the next Ministerial Meeting and the Summit thereafter.

This calls for a conceptual framework that provides uniform criteria for the work of implementing and monitoring the Plan. That frame of reference for monitoring the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan is provided by the “Matrix of the AGRO-System.”

## AGRO 2015 Plan of Action More than a Document, a Learning and Consensus-Building Process



The information generated through the implementation and monitoring of the current hemispheric ministerial agenda provides input for a process of learning and consensus building on the strategic actions that need to be incorporated into future biennial hemispheric agendas to enable us to make progress toward the Shared Vision 2015.

The Matrix of the AGRO-System also helps us determine appropriate ways of gauging the Plan's progress (paragraph 3 of Component 4. Implementation and Follow-up of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan). A basic set of indicators is needed to do this effectively. This matrix should serve as a frame of reference for the development of an Information System for Monitoring and Evaluating the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, in response to a request from the Ministers of Agriculture at the Third Ministerial Meeting to IICA, ECLAC, PAHO, FAO, UNESCO and ILO (see paragraphs 15 and 16 of the Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil, and the specific Hemispheric Ministerial Agreement on the Information System for Monitoring and Evaluating the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan).

The following table summarizes the use of the Matrix of the AGRO-System as the frame of reference for monitoring and evaluating the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan and updating its Ministerial Hemispheric Agenda. It also shows how the purposes of the 12 sections of the Hemispheric Agenda and the Plan's Strategic Objectives interconnect; in turn, those purposes reflect the 11 aspects of the Shared Vision 2015.

Therefore, the following table outlines the "backdrop" for analyzing progress in the implementation of the Plan and guiding the follow-up of same. Also, it will help in developing indicators to be used in making a more "objective" assessment of progress in advancing toward the Shared Vision 2015.

**PURPOSES FOR THE 12 SECTIONS OF THE HEMISPHERIC AGENDA AND THEIR COHERENCE WITH THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE AGRO 2003-2015 PLAN**

| <b>CATEGORIES</b>                 | <b>Rural Territories</b>  | <b>Agricultural Production-Trade Chains</b>                          | <b>National and International Context</b>   | <b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b>   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| <b>DIMENSIONS</b>                 |   |  |   |   |
| <b>Production - Trade</b>         | I. Promoting competitive rural enterprises  | II. Integrating chains and strengthening their competitiveness       | III. Promoting an environment conducive to competitive agriculture                                    | → <b>Competitiveness</b>  |
| <b>Ecological - Environmental</b> | IV. Being environmentally responsible in the rural areas  | V. From farm to table: promoting integrated environmental management | VI. Participating in building an institutional environmental framework                                | → <b>Sustainability</b>   |
| <b>Sociocultural - human</b>      | 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             | → <b>Equity</b>   |
| <b>Political - institutional</b>  | 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 State policies and regional and hemispheric cooperation for agriculture and rural life | → <b>Governance</b>   |
| <b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b>       | ↓<br><b>Rural Prosperity</b>  | ↓<br><b>International Positioning</b>                                | ↓<br><b>Food Security</b>   | ↓<br><b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL MILIEU</b> |



## **Part III – AGRO AMERICAS:**

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a new hemispheric dynamic

- **Building new relations for the Agriculture of the Americas**
- **The 2005 Ministerial Process:** implementing and updating the Hemispheric Agenda
- **A view from the countries of the first stage of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan**
- **New challenges and complementary actions for 2006-2007**
- **Building the future towards 2015**

The prompt and sustained response by the countries to the mandates for the improvement of Agriculture and Rural Life adopted by the Heads of State at the Summit of Quebec in 2001 and Monterrey in 2004, have given rise to a new set of elements in the agriculture of the Americas.

These complementary and synergetic elements create a new hemispheric dynamic, immersed in a unique process to improve agriculture and rural life in the context of the Summits of the Americas. The effort begun in 2000, during preparations for the Third Summit of the Americas, in response to the interest of the ministers in positioning agriculture in the Summits, has been growing for five years and is expected to continue until 2015. For now, the important results of the Fourth Summit consolidate the positioning achieved in earlier Summits.

In that context, the renewed support of the Heads of State and Government for the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan (Monterrey 2004 and Mar del Plata 2005) is an important feat of that new hemispheric dynamic: **AGRO AMERICAS...for the sustainable improvement of Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas.**

AGRO-AMERICAS is a continuum that goes beyond the hemispheric ministerial agreements, such as the Ministerial Declaration of Bavaro and the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. Some of the main elements of that new AGRO AMERICAS dynamic are:

- **A reality:** the situation of Agriculture and Rural Life at the beginning of the millennium.
- **A political framework:** the mandates of the Summits of 2001, 2004 and 2005.
- **A ministerial process on “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas”** that generates hemispheric ministerial agreements based on consensus such as those in 2001, 2003 and 2005.
- **Ministerial Meetings on “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas”:** moments of synthesis in the ministerial process that has been taking place every two years.

- **Ministerial Delegates and their hemispheric forum GRICA:** representatives of the Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture charged with coordinating the preparation of national reports and building hemispheric consensus.
- **A long-term Plan:** The AGRO 2003-2015 Plan with a Shared Vision to the year 2015, with objectives, strategic actions that are reviewed and updated via biennial agendas and measures for implementation and follow-up.
- **A community in action:** a Community of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas under development, integrating leaders of national and international agricultural organizations linked to the improvement of agriculture and rural life.
- **A sustained momentum:** reflected in the action of the Ministers and their Delegates in an ongoing ministerial process.
- **A resolve to strengthen cooperation:** international organizations “working together” in response to the mandate of the Summits and the request of the Ministers.

This new dynamic has gradually configured an identity and, although there are different realities and situations in the agriculture and rural communities of the Americas, there is also a shared vision and a shared agenda to work towards. AGRO AMERICAS is a force with enormous potential to reinvigorate agriculture. It is an opportunity to renew joint action, cooperation and the construction of a new institutional framework that will facilitate the improvement of agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

## **Building new relations for agriculture in the Americas**

The positioning of agriculture and rural life on the inter-American agenda has generated a political framework for these strategic issues and a ministerial process. These developments have given rise to the emergence of new actors and the creation of a new network of relations for agriculture in the Americas.

### **The Community of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas**

The opportunity to integrate this Community is contained in the mandates of the Third Summit of the Americas, when the Heads of State called for national efforts to *“Promote dialogue involving government ministers, parliamentarians and civil society, in particular organizations linked to rural areas, as well as the scientific and academic communities, with the objective of promoting medium and long-term national strategies towards sustainable improvement in agriculture and rural life”*. In addition, they instructed the Ministers of Agriculture to promote joint action by all stakeholders of the agricultural sector, to work together towards the improvement of agriculture and rural life.

In this way, the Heads of State have underscored the importance of promoting dialogue and joint action among members of the Community of Agriculture and Rural Life, both within the countries and at the hemispheric level. Similarly, they have fostered the leadership of the Ministers of Agriculture and of the Ministerial Meetings on “Agriculture and Rural life in the Americas” in promoting this joint action in the context of a broad participation of all the sectors involved.

The Ministers of Agriculture have responded to that policy decision. Indeed, the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan makes reference to the Community and to joint efforts by the Ministries of Agriculture, the

actors of the agricultural sector and others linked to the development of agriculture and rural life towards the implementation of the 51 strategic actions of the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Ministerial Agenda (40 defined in 2003 and 11 added in 2005).

## **Two complementary processes:** the Ministerial Meetings and the Summits

The Ministerial Process on “Agriculture and Rural life in the Americas” is closely linked to and coordinated with the Summit of the Americas Process, both in terms of the review and implementation of the mandates and in the preparation of proposals for complementary decisions by the Heads of State.

In 2004, the Summit Implementation and Review Group (SIRG) defined the 2004-2005 program to review the implementation of the mandates of the Declaration of Nueva León. Based on that calendar, the Secretariat of the Ministerial Meeting (SMM) proposed, and the countries adopted, a schedule of activities and results for the 2005 ministerial process. The purpose of this synchronicity is, on the one hand, to facilitate the coordination of the work of the Ministerial Delegates, their Hemispheric Forum, GRICA, and the support of IICA and other international institutions; and, on the other hand, to contribute timely inputs from the 2005 ministerial process to the work of the SIRG.

In March of 2005, the SIRG reviewed countries’ progress in fulfilling a set of mandates, among them the paragraph 43 on agriculture and rural life of the Declaration of Nuevo Leon. Bearing in mind the timetable for the review of the mandates by the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), the countries undertook, as one of the tasks of the 2005 ministerial process, the preparation of the reports on national actions to implement the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, based on their respective national strategies. Based on that information, the Secretariat of the Ministerial Meeting submitted a report to the SIRG on the fulfillment of mandate 43.

The work to prepare the reports also generated new and meaningful relationships between the ministries of agriculture and the ministries of foreign affairs, for purposes of coordination and cooperation. Several ministerial delegates for agriculture have worked with their National Summit Coordinators (member of SIRG), helping convey a more in-depth understanding of the Summit process in the countries, becoming actively involved with their teams in reviewing specific mandates, and providing information from the ministries and secretariats of agriculture on the work done to comply with same.

The national reports are a valuable instrument for the follow-up of the Summit mandates. In this regards, the countries have responded generously and are supporting the mechanism to follow up on the Summit process. Their reports constitute input for the review process being carried out by the SIRG. In addition, they ensure the continuity of the ministerial process through the progress report on implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, for the effort to update the 2006-2007 Hemispheric Agenda of the Plan, and for the preparation of, and dialogue and consensus building on, a ministerial proposal on agriculture and rural life for the Fourth Summit of Americas.

IICA's role as the Secretariat of the Ministerial Meeting and the Ministerial Process on "Agriculture and Rural life in the Americas", in the context of the Summit of the Americas Process, has led the institution to forge new relations with the partners of the Summits process and with its follow-up mechanisms.

More specifically, to facilitate the coordination of the ministerial process with the Summit of the Americas process, IICA has:

- (i) Reported to the Summit Implementation Review Group (ministers of foreign affairs of the hemisphere and their National Summit Coordinators) on the countries' progress to implement the presidential mandates, the ministerial process itself, and the Institute's and other international organizations contributions to same.
- (ii) Participated in the Joint Summit Working Group, coordinated by the OAS Summit of the Americas Secretariat.

- (iii) Maintained close communication with the OAS Summit of the Americas Secretariat.

As a final expression of the complementarity of the Ministerial and Summits processes, it was decided that the Third Ministerial Meeting would take place before the SIRG meeting, prior to the Fourth Summit of the Americas, in order to convey the results and proposals of the Ministerial Meeting to the SIRG.

## **The role of the Ministerial Delegates and of GRICA**

The Ministerial Delegates for Agriculture and Rural Life, appointed by the Ministers and their Hemispheric Forum, GRICA, have had an important and decisive role in the ministerial process on “Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas”.

In the national sphere, the Ministerial Delegates have coordinated the preparation of progress reports on the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan and on the challenges faced in its implementation. In performing that task, the Delegates have disseminated the mandates of the Summits and the hemispheric ministerial agreements and have also initiated a review of national strategies in the light of the guidelines of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. These efforts by the Delegates have also involved closer links and joint work with other actors of the agricultural sector and with national sectors, particularly private organizations of different types, public institutions linked to agriculture and, most especially, the National Summit Coordinators and other officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of various countries of the Americas.

Meanwhile, at the hemispheric level, the Delegates meeting in the Hemispheric Forum, in GRICA 2001 and 2003, built consensus around the *“Declaration of Bavaro for the Improvement of*

*Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas*”, “*The AGRO 2003-2015 Plan for Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas*” and, in GRICA 2005, to the process to update the Hemispheric Agenda for the biennium 2006-2007 and adopt measures for the implementation and follow-up of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

The role of the Ministerial Delegates has also been strengthened in its hemispheric dimension, generating new relations within this group and with international organizations. Two experiences that confirm this fact are the participation of representatives of ECLAC, PAHO, ILO, FAO, CATIE, OAS and UNESCO in providing technical support to the Ministerial Delegates, both at GRICA meetings and in the identification of indicators for the follow-up of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

## **Hemispheric network of national teams**

The countries are establishing different types of teams to execute the tasks associated with the ministerial process on agriculture and rural life, one of which is to report on progress in implementing the mandates to the SIRG and to the Ministerial Meeting.

The teams include the ministerial delegate, an alternate ministerial delegate, and professionals in the areas of policies, programs and statistics, among others. To date, 30 countries have created representative groups for this purpose.

In order to support the network of national teams across the hemisphere, the Secretariat has in operation an electronic system in support of hemispheric dialogue at the Web Site “Agriculture in Summits” [www.iica.int/cumbres](http://www.iica.int/cumbres). Information on the ministerial process, on the Summit of the Americas process and on studies carried out by international organizations in support of the true contribution of agriculture and “rural” to development may also be found there.

## The 2005 Ministerial Process: implementing and updating the Hemispheric Agenda

The national progress reports on the implementation of the Agenda<sup>1</sup> are inputs deemed to be necessary by the Ministers in the process of implementing and following up on the Plan, which includes the updating of the Hemispheric Agenda for the 2006-2007 biennium.

That process began in 2004 with a request from the Secretariat of the Ministerial Meeting to the Delegates to coordinate preparation of the national report and its delivery to both the Secretariat and the respective Foreign Ministry. The response was broad-based, twenty-eight countries submitted their report on progress in implementing the Hemispheric Agenda. In addition, 14 countries prepared an additional report on progress in implementing the mandate 43 of the Declaration of Nuevo León, issued at the Special Summit of the Americas.

These country reports on the actions carried out served as the basis for IICA, as a partner in the Summit of the Americas process and Secretariat of the Ministerial Meeting, to make a presentation in March to the Summit Implementation and Review Group (SIRG) on progress in the implementation of the mandates on agriculture and rural life.

This effort, initiated in the countries, was viewed positively by the National Summit Coordinators (representatives of the Foreign Ministries), which will further consolidate the positioning of the improvement of agriculture and rural communities within the maximum political forum of the hemisphere and ensure that the topic will be addressed at the upcoming Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata, November 4 and 5, 2005).

After reviewing the strategic actions promoted in the countries and the purposes of the 12 sections of the Hemispheric Agenda, the Delegates identified the **challenges** that the countries face

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1. Identified in paragraph 1, component 4. Implementation and Follow Up of the AGRO 2003 - 2015 Plan.

in improving agriculture and rural life and implementing the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

As follow-up to the ministerial agreements, the Ministerial Delegates, with the support of the Secretariat, updated the 2006-2007 Hemispheric Agenda: second stage of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. The updating process has three main sources as reference points:

- (i) the 40 strategic actions contained in the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda;
- (ii) the National Reports on implementation of said Agenda and the Executive Summaries on compliance with Mandate 43 of the Declaration of Nuevo Leon; and
- (iii) the reports on challenges identified by the countries in implementing the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan for the twelve sections of the Agenda.

In order to support the Delegates in their task of updating the Agenda, the Secretariat prepared four documents and posted these on the site “Agriculture in Summits” ([www.iica.int/Summits](http://www.iica.int/Summits)), in the section reserved for Ministerial Delegates:

- (i) National actions fulfillment of the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda. First stage of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. National reports organized in keeping with the cells of the AGRO-System Matrix (Paragraph 2 of the Introduction of 2003-2015 AGRO Plan). May 2005.
- (ii) Challenges identified by the countries in implementing the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. Challenges reports organized in keeping with the cells of the AGRO-System Matrix. May 2005.
- (iii) Background Information for the 2005 Hemispheric Dialogue. June 2005.

- (iv) Base Document for the 2005 Hemispheric Dialogue. Complementary strategic actions for updating the Hemispheric Agenda for the 2006-2007 biennium. Implementation and Follow-up. June 2005.

The Base Document was the input that launched the virtual hemispheric dialogue and facilitated consensus-building at the 2005 GRICA Meeting (held on July 7-8, in San Jose, Costa Rica) to update the Hemispheric Agenda.

The definition of the challenges, based on the fulfillment of the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda, enabled Delegates to assess the validity of that Agenda's strategic actions and to build consensus on new complementary actions in the Hemispheric Agenda of the 2006-2007 biennium and measures for its implementation and follow-up.

The Ministerial Delegates of several countries have also had discussions with their respective Foreign Ministries with the aim of consolidating the positioning of agriculture and rural life in the Mar del Plata Declaration and the Plan of Action of the Fourth Summit of the Americas.

## **A view from the countries of the first stage of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan**

For the implementation and follow-up of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action, the Ministers of Agriculture decided that the Plan would be implemented by means of six biennial agendas. The progress

achieved in the implementation of the first Hemispheric Agenda would serve to update the Agenda and would provide a frame of reference for national, regional and hemispheric strategies for the next biennium.

The Hemispheric Agenda consists of a set of strategic actions defined by Ministers for the purpose of making progress in the Strategic Objectives of Rural Prosperity, Food Security and the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu. These Objectives were defined in the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan with the aim of focusing the efforts of the leaders of the Community of Agriculture and Rural Life moving towards the Shared Vision 2015.

In this regards, the countries are conducting a range of initiatives for improving the agriculture and rural life, in line with the strategic actions included in the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. At the national level, their efforts have included studies, proposals, plans and programs, sectoral policies and State policies; at the regional level, they have focused on programs, agreements and policies.

The “glance” at the first stage of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan is based on the information provided by countries in their national reports describing the progress made in implementing the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda and their perceptions of the challenges faced in the implementation of the Plan. This view of countries’ efforts during the first stage of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan includes:

- Priority lines of attention as reflected in the national reports and a brief sample of important experiences in the implementation of strategic actions of the Agenda;
- The continuity of national efforts and validity of the strategic actions; and
- Pioneering and innovative experiences

## Priority lines of attention and strategic actions

The National Reports on the progress made in the implementation of the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda, prepared by the Ministerial Delegates, show the broad range priority areas of attention and strategic actions undertaken by the countries.

Following the conceptual framework of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, the reports describe national efforts for the 12 sections of the Agenda aimed at improve rural territories, strengthen agro-production-trade chains, and create a favorable national and international environment for the agriculture and rural life. Overall, national efforts are very comprehensive in nature; initiatives under way address a wide range of areas including production and trade; social, cultural and human issues; ecological and environmental matters; and institution building.

Although all the priority areas are important, the following areas are especially crucial because of their potential impact on improving agriculture: research, development and technology transfer; International framework for agricultural trade; Micro, small and medium-sized rural enterprises; Adoption of environmentally-friendly practices; Rural poverty and employment; Access to resources and services; Business capacity; Strategies and institutional framework for food security; Mechanisms for dialogue, consensus and strategic action; Regional integration and cooperation; and, State Policies for Agriculture and Rural Life.

Below we present the group of priority areas for the Rural Territories, the Agricultural Production-Trade Chains and the National Environment, arranged according to the purposes they contribute to each of the Strategic Objectives in each dimension of the “Matrix of the AGRO-System”.

## Strategic objective **Competitiveness**:

Priority areas of attention corresponding to the purposes of the Production -Trade Dimension

| CATEGORIES                  | Rural Territories   | Agricultural Production-Trade Chains  | National and International Context   | STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| DIMENSIONS                  |   |   |  |  |
| <b>PRODUCTION - TRADE</b>   | <p>I. Promoting competitive rural enterprises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production and marketing services</li> <li>• Research development and technology transfer</li> <li>• Production and productivity</li> <li>• Infrastructure and investment in the rural milieu</li> </ul> | <p>II. Integrating production chains and strengthening their competitiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidation of production chains</li> <li>• Products based on national raw materials</li> </ul> | <p>III. Promoting an environment conducive to competitive agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International negotiations on agricultural trade</li> <li>• Sanitary and phytosanitary standards</li> <li>• Agribusiness development</li> <li>• Micro, small and medium sized rural businesses and cooperatives</li> <li>• Agricultural research priorities and capabilities</li> </ul> | → <b>COMPETITIVENESS</b>                                     |
| <b>+ other dimensions</b>   | ↓   | ↓   | ↓  | ↓  |
| <b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b> | <b>Rural Prosperity</b><br><b>International Positioning</b> → <b>Food Security</b>  |   |  | <b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIFE</b> |

## Strategic objective Sustainability:

Priority areas of attention corresponding to the purposes of the Ecological – Environmental Dimension

| CATEGORIES                                | Rural Territories  | Agricultural Production-Trade Chains   | National and International Context  | STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES   |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| DIMENSIONS                                |  |  |   |  |
| <b>ECOLOGICAL-ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION</b> | IV. Being environmentally responsible in the rural areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable agriculture</li> <li>• Adoption of environmentally sustainable practices</li> <li>• Economic activities based on sustainable use of natural resources</li> <li>• Prevention and mitigation of natural disasters</li> <li>• Agriculture and biodiversity</li> </ul> | V. From farm to table: promoting integrated environmental management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental management in agriculture</li> <li>• Environmental impact studies</li> </ul> | VI. Participating in building an institutional environmental framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental regulations in agriculture</li> <li>• Organic Agriculture</li> <li>• Public-private sector coordination for environmental management</li> <li>• Agro-meteorological monitoring and prevention of natural disasters</li> </ul> | → SUSTAINABILITY   |
| + other dimensions                        | ↓  | ↓  | ↓   | ↓  |
| <b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b>               | <b>Rural Prosperity</b> <b>Food Security</b> →<br><b>International Positioning</b>   |  |   | <b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIFE</b> |

## Strategic objective Equity:

Priority areas of attention corresponding to the purposes of the Socio-Cultural and Human Dimension

| CATEGORIES                            | Rural Territories  | Agricultural Production-Trade Chains   | National and International Context   | STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES   |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| DIMENSIONS                            |  |  |  |  |
| <b>SOCIO-CULTURAL HUMAN DIMENSION</b> | <p>VII. Quality of life in rural communities: creating know-how and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural poverty and jobs</li> <li>• Social protection to vulnerable rural groups</li> <li>• Agricultural training system and rural education</li> <li>• Access to resources and services</li> </ul> | <p>VIII. Advancing learning and expertise in the chain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business management capacities</li> <li>• Producers organizations</li> </ul> | <p>IX. Promoting policies to create capabilities for the rural communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food security strategies</li> <li>• Women producers and gender perspective</li> <li>• Young people and other age groups</li> <li>• Agricultural and rural training and accreditation of higher agricultural education centers</li> </ul> | → EQUITY   |
| + other dimensions                    | ↓  | ↓  | ↓  | ↓  |
| <b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b>           | <b>Rural Prosperity</b> <b>Food Security</b> →<br><b>International Positioning</b>   |  |  | <b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIFE</b> |



the Agenda and strategic objectives. However, there is clearly a need to strengthen efforts in the area of Agricultural Production-Trade Chains.

Below is a sample of the national efforts identified in the light of the strategic actions of the Hemispheric Agenda and arranged according to each of the 12 sections of the Agenda and the priority areas of attention.

## **I. Promoting competitive rural enterprises**

### **■ Production and marketing services**

Priority is being given to services to support agricultural production and marketing, since these are essential to achieve competitiveness. Among other services, efforts to facilitate access to credit, information and research activities and agricultural extension services are emphasized.

With regard to initiatives to provide rural producers with access to credit, some of these consist of mechanisms to strengthen the agricultural and rural financial system through agricultural funds, trust funds, pre-investment systems, development banks, etc. In Brazil, for example, credit lines for agricultural investment are available through the National Bank for Economic and Social Development and the National Program to Strengthen Family Agriculture, which support food production, forestry projects and rural tourism. In Bolivia, units providing financial and credit services have been created, while in El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Costa Rica the participation of Development Banks is proposed. In Colombia are in place incentive mechanisms for the rural capitalization.

Similarly, innovative credit mechanisms are being implemented in which the micro-financing system has played an important role. Initiatives under way in this direction are the finance networks, rural credit funds, community banks and solidarity groups, for example in Honduras. In Argentina, Honduras, El Salvador and Saint Lucia there

have also been efforts to promote risk management and agricultural insurance mechanisms.

With respect to access to information, there have been major efforts in the planning or implementation of information strategies for the rural sector. In Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Dominican Republic and Surinam, among others, agricultural information centers have been promoted. There is an emphasis on market information systems in the national, regional and hemispheric spheres, for example, the Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA) and the Agricultural Network Information Center. Meanwhile, at the national level, information systems for agribusiness have been established in Honduras and El Salvador, as well as information systems for rural development in Mexico.

### ■ **Research, development and technology transfer**

There is a clear trend towards the facilitation of negotiation and consultation processes between the public and private sectors to define priorities in research, development and technology transfer. Ecuador, Costa Rica and Chile, among other countries, have established mechanisms in the form of national and regional consultation forums and workshops, and have implemented participatory models to prepare national technology transfer plans and projects. In El Salvador, these consultations have led to the creation of alliances and mechanisms to coordinate and consolidate the national research institutions, strengthening their links with the production sectors. In Chile, Argentina and Honduras, the National Research Systems and the National Science and Technology Councils have also been considered as appropriate coordination mechanisms.

### ■ **Production and productivity**

The countries consider that increasing agricultural production and productivity is essential to ensure food security. To this end, strategic

programs are being implemented, such as the productive reconversion programs in El Salvador and Costa Rica, the technification and diversification of small-scale (“campesino”) production in Paraguay and agricultural diversification projects in Saint Lucia, to name a few. Among other aspects, these programs seek to integrate research, carry out work on food groups of strategic interest and promote agricultural health measures and infrastructure.

### ■ **Infrastructure and investment in the rural milieu**

The building of infrastructure, a mechanism that boosts competitiveness in rural territories, has been undertaken through development projects and special programs, mostly through the provision of basic infrastructure such as roads, electrification programs and irrigation systems, among others. Projects of this nature are under way in Belize, El Salvador, Trinidad and Tobago, Bolivia and Guatemala, where investments have been made in building roads, irrigation systems and infrastructure to support production. In general, these projects have other components that complement the infrastructure, aimed at attracting investment to the rural milieu, such as the development of markets, the diversification of production, the generation and transfer of technology, adding value to production, financing and training.

## **II. Integrating production chains and strengthening their competitiveness**

### ■ **Consolidation of production chains**

In many countries of the hemisphere there is clear evidence of the changing role of agriculture in the production processes. There is a transition from a concept of agriculture based merely on primary production to a more comprehensive vision that includes the different links of a chain based on agricultural production. This has led to the strengthening of a form of organization based on agricultural products or commodities and to changes in the

perception of productive and management capacities in the production and agribusiness systems.

This integrationist approach is reflected in the creation of Agrifood Chains, National Commodity System Committees or Advisory Councils for commodities. In Mexico, 45 national commodity or agrifood committees have been constituted. In Ecuador, Advisory Councils for 6 agricultural products of economic importance were established by ministerial decree.

In various commodity groups, this form of organization has generated a modality of negotiation known as Competitiveness Agreements, which bring together product-based production and marketing organizations to carry out joint efforts to benefit all links of the chain. In Bolivia, the Bolivian Competitiveness Agreement was signed for five agrifood chains. In Colombia, a country where Competitiveness Agreements have been actively promoted, new actions and instruments are being implemented to strengthen existing chains, while new national and regional agreements are being developed for agrifood chains identified as promising both in the national and the international markets.

The agrifood chain approach is gathering momentum. In Argentina and the Dominican Republic studies, analysis and negotiations are in progress for their formation and consolidation. There are major efforts to promote this approach through studies based on chain methodologies, studies of existing chains and the provision of technical assistance.

The countries consider that agrifood chains are essential to achieve competitiveness, and therefore strive to provide appropriate infrastructure to ensure their effective operation. Development projects serve to promote the building of infrastructure such as roads, management of water resources and infrastructure for production and marketing. In Canada, for example, the Infrastructure Canada Program is being implemented over a six-year period with the aim of renovating and building rural and urban infrastructure to improve services and enhance the population's quality of life.

### ■ **Products based on national raw materials**

Generating added value and quality in production chains based on national raw materials has become a strategic action with important results. Brazil, Argentina and Colombia have implemented major initiatives in the areas of research, production and regulation of bio-fuels, particularly biodiesel. Other important steps have been the creation of investment funds, research and technical assistance, processes to modernize production chains and promote the use of local raw materials. Examples of this are the competitiveness funds and agricultural and rural development and modernization funds in El Salvador. Brazil supports production chains through research and development of innovative agribusiness systems, while Nicaragua and El Salvador are implementing modernization processes throughout the chain, particularly with the latter country's Project for the Modernization of Agribusiness. Other resources to encourage products based on national raw materials are the national producers' fairs in El Salvador, and the "Consuma lo Nuestro" ("Consume our Own Produce") campaigns in Ecuador.

## **III. Promoting an environment conducive to competitive agriculture**

### ■ **International negotiations on agricultural trade**

In an international context in which countries are immersed in economic integration processes, such as the negotiations on free trade agreements and the development of regional markets, the Ministries of Agriculture have provided technical support through their participation in negotiations on agricultural issues and by informing interested parties of the results of those negotiations.

In this regard, it is important to mention countries' efforts to promote negotiating and policymaking capabilities, with the participation of the Ministries or Secretariats of Agriculture. For

example, Peru, Paraguay and Honduras are negotiating or implementing projects with different institutions of the European Union, the United States and Canada in order to build local capacity in the areas of negotiation and institutional strengthening. Other countries have created institutions to provide support in this area, such as the Agroindustrial Markets Unit of the Ministry of Rural and Agricultural Affairs (MACA) of Bolivia, while in Honduras the Trade Department of the Secretariat of Agriculture has been strengthened.

In the case of El Salvador, Bolivia, Barbados and Argentina, these negotiating capacities have been implemented, in the context of the WTO trade negotiations, with the participation of national delegations of the agricultural sector, which have supported their respective ambassadors in discussions on agricultural competition. Among the issues discussed are those related to internal support, subsidies and non-tariff barriers to trade. Furthermore, in several countries, such as Jamaica, Panama, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Ecuador and El Salvador, the Ministries of Agriculture have served as liaison bodies between the public and private sectors, facilitating participation and providing information on the status of the agricultural negotiations.

With respect to policymaking, Ecuador has designed and implemented an international trade policy through the Ministry of Agriculture's participation in the Council for External Trade and Investment (COMEXI), while Honduras is executing a policy focused on market development and trade negotiations. Guatemala, for its part, has ratified a comprehensive foreign trade policy.

### ■ Sanitary and phytosanitary standards

The countries have assigned a high level of priority to the application of regional and national policies on animal and plant health. Efforts at the regional level include the policies and actions implemented by the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS), the negotiations on health and safety to consolidate the Central

American Customs Union and the initiative to establish the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA).

Various committees operate within CAS, including one responsible for coordinating plant health initiatives, the Permanent Veterinary Committee (CVP) and the Animal and Plant Health Committee of the Southern Cone (COSAVE). Through CAS, different regional initiatives related to animal and plant health are being implemented, including measures to prevent Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE, or mad cow disease), the Regional Foot-and-Mouth Plan and actions to combat cotton weevil, among others.

In Central America, in the context of the Central American Customs Union, efforts are under way to harmonize sanitary and phytosanitary measures, while the Caribbean nations, through CAHFSA, are working to update and harmonize the legislative framework of the CARICOM countries in line with international standards, thereby strengthening their agricultural health and food safety systems.

At the same time, the countries are participating actively in the international forums of the WTO related to the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, as well as in the Codex Alimentarius, the OIE and IPPC. Several countries are currently in the process of establishing - or have already established - National Codex Committees and focal points on sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

At the local level, national agricultural health systems are being strengthened to comply with sanitary and phytosanitary standards. In Paraguay, for example, the National Quality and Animal Health Service (SENACSA) and the National Plant and Seed Quality and Health Service (SENAVE) have been created, while in Bolivia a Committee has been set up to strengthen the National Agricultural Health and Food Safety Service (SENASAG). Argentina, Guatemala and Haiti are working to restructure and strengthen their national agricultural health services with a view to modernizing their structure and improving their efficiency, in order to better control and monitor agricultural health and ensure

that national production complies with international sanitary and phytosanitary standards, and thereby facilitate market access. Colombia has established the Phytosanitary Center of Excellence for the risk analysis studies in trade goods, and in Barbados, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago and St. Kitts and Nevis, efforts are under way to draft the necessary legislation to establish national health systems. In Barbados, for example, a proposal to create the National Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (NAHFSA) is being considered.

### ■ **Agribusiness development**

Economic conditions for the development of agribusiness have been propitiated through four types of actions: the promulgation of laws, the promotion of production organizations and production chains, the implementation of policies and the formulation of specific projects.

Through the promulgation of laws, countries seek to create conditions to facilitate the adaptation and modernization of production systems. Examples of this are the Ley Ovina in Argentina, the Sustainable Agriculture Bill of Barbados and a set of laws approved in Bolivia, aimed at improving agriculture through institutional arrangements and policies to facilitate a more efficient action.

Efforts to develop agricultural organizations and production chains are taking place in the context of national strategies and policies favorable to agriculture. In countries such as Honduras, Costa Rica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the development of organizations serves as a basis for training and building entrepreneurial skills, creating a more propitious environment for promoting jobs, access to resources, improvements in productivity and the development of agriculture.

With respect to policymaking, Chile's State policies have a clear orientation. For agriculture, there are three principal goals: generate conditions for the development of a profitable and competitive agriculture that is open to the markets and inserted in the

international economy; incorporate small and medium-scale agriculture into the benefits of sectoral development; and, contribute to efforts to ensure that the sector uses all its potential and productive resources with environmental, economic and social sustainability. Experiences of this nature are also being implemented in Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where policies have been geared to the development of agribusiness.

In addition, there are various projects and programs that foster favorable conditions for agriculture. Among these we should mention the Project to Strengthen the Agricultural Sector II in Paraguay, which promotes investment in agriculture, livestock and agro-industrial production aimed at small and medium-sized producers; the training of producers at Training Farms; and the improvement of roads and the supply of potable water to rural communities. Another example is the Agricultural Support Services Project in Jamaica, which aims to increase productivity and competitiveness through research, extension and marketing services and agricultural health and food safety systems. In this line we also find the productive reconversion projects implemented in El Salvador and Costa Rica.

#### ■ **Micro, small and medium-sized rural businesses and cooperatives**

The effort to promote micro, small and medium-sized businesses in the rural milieu has received considerable support, which is reflected in numerous business development initiatives, the promotion of micro-enterprises, the implementation of capacity-building programs with impoverished rural populations and in the development of cooperatives.

With respect to business development, in Costa Rica, for example, an Inter-institutional Enterprise Commission has been established with the participation of several Ministries, to define policy guidelines for micro, small and medium-sized rural enterprises. In Guatemala, Ecuador and Colombia mechanisms are being created to facilitate access to credit for groups of producers. Mexico, Colombia

and Haiti, among others, are promoting technical, business and market training for groups of producers. Other initiatives include the establishment of information and advice centers for business management, such as the Agribusiness Centers of Honduras and the Agribusiness Development Centers in El Salvador.

Efforts to foster an entrepreneurial culture and boost business capabilities are being complemented with the development of small enterprises. Examples in this line include the Project for the Support of Rural Micro-enterprises in Colombia, the Program for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in the Dominican Republic, the Rural Change and Minifundio programs in Argentina and credit support mechanisms in Honduras, Colombia and Mexico. In Belize, the Cooperative Program provides training in the management of rural micro enterprises while in Saint Lucia the Small Business Development Unit of the Ministry of Trade promotes micro enterprises.

Services are also being targeted towards the poorest strata of the population and towards different key segments. In Argentina, for example, the Social Agricultural Program and the Provincial Agricultural Services Program include measures to support certain target populations. The Dominican Republic is implementing projects such as the Management Support Program for Agricultural Enterprises of Rural Men and Women and the Micro Credit Program for Rural Women. Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados have specialized programs for young people, aimed at developing their business skills.

At the same time, several countries are promoting associative and cooperative systems through the creation of regulations, the implementation of programs and the development of cooperatives and associative businesses. In Brazil, the regulation and execution of projects focuses on the implementation of Brazil's Cooperative Plan. In this regard, an Inter-ministerial Working Group has been established to follow up on this Plan. In addition, the National Cooperative Fund was established and the following programs are being executed: Promotion and Dissemination of Cooperative Practices, Support and Development of Inter-cooperation, Gender

and Cooperatives, among others. In Paraguay a General Framework for the Regulation and Supervision of Cooperatives has been created, while in Panama cooperatives have been granted legal or corporate status to facilitate their access to property titles and credit.

Support for the development of cooperatives is also expressed in the provision of financial incentives, such as those available in Canada, Colombia, Chile and Ecuador, among others. Several of these countries encourage the organization of farmers and producers by financing projects implemented through associative systems. Cooperatives also receive support through training programs that promote the creation of agricultural production and marketing cooperatives, as in El Salvador. In Canada, the Co-operative Development Initiative promotes this form of organization and investigates new applications for cooperative models, in which agriculture and rural development are priorities.

#### ■ **Agricultural research priorities and capabilities**

Several countries are strengthening their national research and technology generation systems in order to increase research capacity for agriculture. Honduras is seeking funding to strengthen its Science and Technology System and also to implement the National Plan for Generation, Transfer and Training in Agricultural Technology. In Bolivia, institutional strengthening is one of the essential components and activities of the Bolivian Agricultural Technology System (SIBTA), while Belize and St. Vincent and the Grenadines support local research institutions such as the National Coordinating Committee on Agricultural Research and Development, and Costa Rica and Nicaragua support the Agricultural Technology Institutes.

In order to set priorities in agricultural research, efforts are under way to strengthen the interaction between suppliers and consumers of technology. Colombia prioritizes the areas of technology research and development in accordance with the limitations and potential

defined at the level of agricultural chains and other commodities identified regionally, and based on the demands of competitiveness facing the country in the new trade scenario. El Salvador has created the National System of Partnerships for Technology Innovation (SINALIT), a body that promotes the participation and coordination of the main stakeholders involved in the supply of and demand for technology services, and the generation and transfer of technology. In Brazil, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) has forged closer ties with different sectors of Brazilian society, creating councils to contribute to the dialogue on its research plans and priorities.

At regional level, countries are participating in institutional cooperation networks and international research centers, as in the case of CARDI, PROCINORTE, PROCISUR and PROCIANDINO among others. Other networks formed around the issue of technology are those implemented by the Agricultural Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture with 11 countries of the Americas, for the purpose of cooperating on research in areas such as food safety, disease control, sustainable agriculture, conservation of natural resources and agricultural trade.

With regard to biotechnology, among the actions implemented are the design of strategic plans, efforts to promote research and regulation of biotechnology and the implementation of related activities for a greater understanding of this issue. In relation to the strategic plans, Argentina's National Biotechnology Office is currently in the process of preparing the "Strategic Plan 2005-2015 for the development of Agricultural Biotechnology". In Brazil, biotechnology is regarded as an important alternative for large-scale food production in adverse conditions, and as a means to produce medicines and vaccines.

In the area of biotechnology research, Argentina has strengthened its National Advisory Committee on Agricultural Biotechnology (CONABIA), with whose support species of soy, maize and cotton have been approved and released for cultivation on a commercial scale. In this sense, SAGPyA of Argentina has established a

mechanism for approving new biotechnological events, which in all cases means ensuring the safety of consumers, protecting the environment and increasing productivity at farm-level.

Other activities related to biotechnology include participation in discussion forums and bodies to foster a better understanding of the effects of biotechnology and its uses. To this aim, the Biotechnology Network (RedBio) is a mechanism for dissemination and information sharing. Other actions of a regional nature have been implemented in the Caribbean, such as workshops to guide the marketing and standardization of biotechnology. Some countries have implemented other efforts related to biotechnology and trade, promoted by the United States Department of Agriculture.

#### **IV. Being environmentally responsible in the rural areas**

##### **■ Sustainable agriculture**

In an effort to progress towards environment-friendly production methods, countries are adopting an approach to agriculture that takes environmental aspects into consideration. Mexico, for example, has started a “territorial” approach to the management of watersheds, taking these as the central element for the comprehensive management of resources in rural territories. In Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia, Haiti and Costa Rica land use plans are being developed for a better utilization of the resources and characteristics of rural territories.

##### **■ Adoption of environmentally sustainable practices**

The countries are adopting agricultural production practices that pay greater attention to the protection and conservation of natural resources, such as soil, water and biodiversity. These practices are promoted by supporting farmers through the implementation of training programs on the use of good practices, clean production methods, soil and water conservation, management of

agrosilvopastoral systems and organic agriculture. There are notorious experiences of plans and policies to provide investment incentives in areas where such practices are applied, for example in Paraguay with financial incentives for sustainable farming practices, Guatemala with community forest management initiatives and the Dominican Republic with efforts to prevent pollution in the territories, among others. Also important are efforts to provide access to sustainable technologies, such as the Sustainable Development Colleges in Colombia.

#### ■ **Economic activities based on sustainable use of natural resources**

Actions by the countries may be divided into two main areas: promoting agro-tourism and the provision of environmental services through national forestry plans. With respect to the first, countries are strengthening the links between the Ministry of Agriculture and public and private sector organizations concerned with the environment. An example of this is the inter-institutional initiative involving the Ministries of Agriculture, Tourism and the Environment of Ecuador to develop agro-tourism and ecotourism. Brazil is implementing the Rural Tourism and Family Agriculture Program, whose objective is to promote the development of rural communities through the development of tourism activities and Guatemala implements the Peten Sustainable Development Program.

The following elements contribute to the provision of environmental services: the design and implementation of national forestry plans, forestry development funds, laws related to forest management and the explicit recognition of environmental services. In Guatemala, the MAGA's BOSCOM program incorporates rural populations into a community forest management plan, based on incentives for sustainable production. In Costa Rica, the National Forestry Fund (FONAFIFO) is the institutional mechanism that provides economic compensation to farmers for the environmental services provided by their farms.

## ■ **Prevention and mitigation of natural disasters**

Given the widespread concern over the economic and social effects caused by natural disasters, several countries are updating their Emergency Plans and National Strategies to prevent and mitigate their impact. Costa Rica's emergency plans include components such as gathering and processing information on disasters and their relation to risk management, early warning systems for the purposes of mitigation and, in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, the allocation of funds for assisting affected families and producers.

## ■ **Agriculture and biodiversity**

A greater understanding of the relationship between biodiversity and agriculture is emerging thanks to countries' efforts to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), through the so-called Country Studies and other instruments that refer to agriculture. There is interest in ensuring the appropriate management of the wealth of genetic resources and, in this regard, we can mention the establishment of National Information Systems on Biodiversity, the regulation of the use of resources and the preparation of National Biodiversity Strategies.

Some initiatives seek to utilize the links between biodiversity and agriculture to boost production. In Bolivia efforts are under way to characterize genetic resources in order to assess their potential uses for agriculture and agroindustry. In Colombia, a report has been prepared on the status of zoogenetic resources in order to develop national capacity and promote international cooperation to ensure the sustainability of livestock production systems.

At the same time, some Ministries of Agriculture are working to create an institutional framework around the issue of biodiversity. Paraguay is promoting closer links between those bodies responsible for agricultural production and the environmental authorities, particularly with regard to biodiversity. In El Salvador, a report was prepared on ways to

incorporate the benefits of biodiversity into the programs and projects of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

## **V. From farm to table: promoting integrated environmental management**

### **■ Environmental management in agriculture**

The countries are working to promote environment-friendly agricultural production systems to contribute to environmental management in the agricultural production chains. These actions include training on the use of agrochemicals, as in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, and the workshops organized in El Salvador for farmers, agroindustrial producers and marketing groups on how to achieve a cleaner production.

Also important are the national environment and agriculture programs, such as the Sectoral Environmental Plan implemented in Bolivia, and Costa Rica's Program to Promote Sustainable Agricultural Production. Ecuador, for its part, is executing a Program for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, which has helped farmers' organizations to gain access to international niche markets for organic products.

### **■ Environmental impact studies**

An important element in the environmental management of production chains has been the incorporation of environmental impact studies to secure approval and funding for production projects. In Paraguay and Belize, environmental impact studies are being incorporated into the design of agricultural investment plans, while the Ministry of Agriculture of Nicaragua is assessing the environmental impacts of activities carried out by development projects. In addition, several countries are working to expand their legal and institutional frameworks to encourage the application of environmental impact studies for the approval of investment projects in the rural territories.

## **VI. Participating in building an institutional environmental framework**

### **■ Environmental regulations in agriculture**

The countries are supporting the production of healthy and safe foods; similarly, they are creating an institutional framework for the purpose of conserving natural resources. In that context, efforts are under way to update environmental standards that regulate agricultural production. These efforts include reviews of existing regulations in Honduras, the Dominican Republic and Paraguay in order to adapt these to the changing demands of production and marketing. In some countries, this review process has been the result of a joint effort between the Ministries of Agriculture and the Ministries of the Environment and related national authorities. In Brazil, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply forms part of the National Environment Council.

### **■ Organic Agriculture**

In this sphere, actions have focused on two main areas: i) the review, formulation, approval and implementation of legislation on organic agriculture; and ii) the design of national programs on organic agriculture.

Regulations on organic agriculture are at different stages of development in the various countries. Bolivia is in the process of approving a law that regulates and promotes ecological farming and non-timber forest production. In 2003, Brazil approved a law to regulate organic agriculture, while El Salvador promulgated legislation on the production, processing and marketing of organic products. For their part, Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republic are strengthening their respective regulatory frameworks for this modality of production.

Efforts to promote organic farming are reflected in the design of national programs, for example in Argentina, Panama and Brazil, the latter through its Pro Organico Program. In Ecuador the National

Plan for Innovation in Organic Agriculture is being implemented, while Haiti is adopting a national policy on organic agriculture with the participation of farmers, agribusiness associations and exporters.

In this context, certification mechanisms for organic products are being reviewed and promoted. This has contributed to the acceptance of production standards for exports entering the European Union. Thus, several countries are working hard to comply with these requirements to obtain preferential access to that market.

#### ■ **Public – private sector coordination for environmental management**

Public-private sector coordination is reflected in the participation of stakeholders from both sectors in the discussion mechanisms on sustainable development and the environment. Examples of these mechanisms include the Agricultural Committees of Chile and Honduras and the Mixed Forum of Organizations – Public Agricultural Sector in Costa Rica. Similarly, the community participation policy in Haiti and the joint work efforts the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Secretariat of the Environment of Paraguay, are aimed at coordinating actors of the public and private sectors for environmental management.

#### ■ **Agro-meteorological monitoring and prevention of natural disasters**

Given the enormous impact of natural disasters on national economies and rural communities, governments have designed agro-meteorological monitoring strategies for the prevention and mitigation of these phenomena.

There have been major efforts to strengthen the links between meteorological institutes and institutions of the agricultural sector to provide improved information on climatic conditions and their potential effects on production. In this regard, there are initiatives to

disseminate information via the Internet on climatic conditions in the rural territories.

Links are also being strengthened between national meteorological offices and regional and international systems that support an agro-meteorological data network at the hemispheric level. These monitoring mechanisms and early warning systems are an important part of strategies for the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters. Some of these initiatives are associated with CEPREDENAT in Central America, the Disaster Mitigation Facility and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) in countries such as Barbados, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

## **VII. Quality of life in rural communities: creating know-how and opportunities**

### **■ Rural poverty and jobs**

Important efforts are under way in the countries to achieve equity in rural territories, where the need to alleviate poverty, improve the quality of life of rural inhabitants and generate employment are strategic, priority issues. As a result, several countries have made the alleviation of poverty a part of their national policies. For example, Peru has a National Plan to Overcome Poverty, and Costa Rica a plan they call “New Life:” Overcoming poverty and developing human capabilities.” In Honduras, the Strategy for the Alleviation of Poverty is both a State policy and a commitment on the part of the State. One aspect of the strategy, which refers to the rural milieu, is coordinated by the Secretariat of Agriculture and Livestock with other Secretariats, the private sector and international organizations.

As for the creation of employment in rural areas, efforts are under way to facilitate access to resources such as credit in Bolivia, Haiti and Peru; and access to land through mechanisms such as titling in Barbados, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic.

### ■ Social protection to vulnerable rural groups

Social protection programs or networks are being implemented. For example, there are the Social Protection Program and the Local Development Program (PROLOCAL) in Ecuador, and the social protection networks in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Also, social investment, or poverty alleviation, funds are operating in Barbados and Belize. Other important initiatives are the Agricultural Social Program and the Development of Small-scale Farmers project (PROINDER) in Argentina, and the Land Credit and Poverty Alleviation project in Brazil.

### ■ Agricultural training system and rural education

Agricultural technical education in the rural milieu is the focus of a restructuring process and new institutional directives aimed at improving services. In this regard, new technical education programs are being implemented and technical institutes and vocational training centers are being strengthened, such as the National School of Agriculture of El Salvador and the National Farmers Training Institute of Ecuador. With regard to policymaking on agricultural training, Bolivia and Nicaragua have made efforts towards the definition of a national agricultural training strategy. Honduras has designed a national strategy with support from the National Agricultural Education Committees.

The promotion of rural education is considered a key factor in improving quality of life. Accordingly, programs have been implemented in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia, Honduras and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In Bolivia, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Ecuador, agricultural education is also under review. Important synergies have been created between the Ministries of Agriculture and Education to promote education in rural communities, as has occurred in Honduras, Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines in relation to the review of programs and curricula for rural communities. There are examples of literacy programs in the rural milieu in countries such as the Dominican Republic and Saint Lucia, as well as training programs and incentives for teachers to improve their management and teaching skills, for

example in Peru. Other experiences involve the training of low-income rural populations through specific programs to improve productivity and management capacities, such as Brazil's National Education Program on Agrarian Reform. Among other initiatives being implemented are the Rural Schools programs in Ecuador and Bolivia and the Integrated Community Farms in Ecuador, which impart the basics of agricultural education.

#### ■ Access to resources and services

The countries are implementing different initiatives to provide rural communities with access to resources and services. With regard to access to land for production, land distribution policies are being developed and other instruments are being applied in Barbados, Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti and Paraguay such as land markets, land leasing, conflict resolution efforts, property titles, land registries and land funds.

In relation to credit facilities, there is a growing trend towards the provision of financial resources through innovative mechanisms and alternative financial channels to generate development opportunities and combat rural poverty. Micro-finances have become an important instrument in Colombia, Mexico and Ecuador.

Access to information has been strengthened through the establishment of national information systems, such as the Infocentros in El Salvador, the INFOAGRO system in Costa Rica, the National Information System for Sustainable Rural Development in Mexico and other similar initiatives in Bolivia, Guatemala, Colombia and Paraguay.

### **VIII. Advancing learning and expertise in the chain**

#### ■ Business management capacities

Building capacity in business management has become one of the main components of development projects, with the aim of

developing better business management skills, particularly in the productive, technological, financial and marketing aspects. In this area, Panama is executing the Triple C project, aimed at organizing groups of farmers and providing them with the tools to implement community-managed ventures geared to the national market. Paraguay is implementing a program to modernize and diversify small-scale production, Guatemala is executing the Associative Marketing Program, while Barbados, Bolivia, Belize, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are implementing business development programs for producers. In Ecuador, agreements have been reached between the national agricultural authorities and producers' organizations to provide business training to generate productive, economic and social benefits.

Emphasis is being placed on efforts to establish specialized bodies to disseminate market information of interest to agriculture, such as the Agribusiness Offices of El Salvador and the Management Centers in Chile, which provide basic market information and economic analysis on various agricultural commodities.

### ■ Producers' organizations

Organizational and entrepreneurial development of producers is an important component of several national projects. It is considered an essential aspect to help improve the organization of rural micro-enterprises and facilitate their insertion into agricultural production and marketing chains. Panama is implementing the Sustainable Development Project in the Darien Region, which, among other objectives, seeks to strengthen community organizations. In Colombia there are efforts to promote the organization of farmers by means of projects financed through associative systems and strategic alliances. In Nicaragua, international organizations provide assistance to groups of producers in order to improve their organization and facilitate their access to services.

## **IX. Promoting policies to create capabilities and opportunities for the rural communities**

### **■ Food security strategies**

In relation to this important millennium development goal, which is also one of the Strategic Objectives of Plan AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, important progress has been made in the application of state policies on Food Security and Nutrition in Honduras and the approval of legislation on Food Security and Nutrition in Costa Rica. National Food Security Strategies are also being implemented in Bolivia, Costa Rica, Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, together with Special Programs in Ecuador, Nicaragua, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In Panama, the Food Security and Nutrition Program is in operation, while Brazil is implementing the Food Safety and Quality Program. In some countries, nutritional support is being provided to vulnerable groups: in Ecuador through food assistance programs; and in Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republic through school snacks and food security programs.

In some cases, efforts to guarantee food security are accompanied by policies or programs to promote agricultural productivity, such as those in Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Saint Lucia; through the diversification of production, as in El Salvador, St. Lucia and Paraguay; and, through programs to promote food safety and food quality in Argentina and Brazil.

Another way of supporting this thematic area has consisted of the participation of the Ministries or Secretariats of Agriculture in food security committees or dialogue round tables. In Argentina, the Agriculture Ministry participates in the National Food Commission; in Belize, the National Food Security Commission is presided by the Ministry of Agriculture and in Barbados a specific committee was established on this issue. In Ecuador and Haiti food security groups have been set up with the participation of different national and international sectors and organizations.

Food security policies are also being expanded to the regional and hemispheric spheres. Bolivia's food security strategy was designed in the context of the Andean Community of Nations. In the Caribbean, the Caribbean Wide Security Project is being executed with the participation of several countries of this region. The United States has provided technical assistance to support several food security programs in the hemisphere, among them the *Fome Zero* Program (Zero Hunger) in Brazil and the *5 por día* Program in Mexico.

### ■ **Women producers and gender perspective**

The gender perspective is considered important in reducing poverty. This perspective has been incorporated into different projects in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Paraguay, and support organizations, such as the National Association of Rural Women Entrepreneurs of Ecuador and networks set up to support women in the Dominican Republic, have been promoted. Also, gender policies for the agricultural sector have been implemented in El Salvador and Costa Rica.

### ■ **Young people and other age groups**

Employment, education and training programs are being promoted for young people in rural areas as a means to facilitate their access to development and productive opportunities. Some countries are also using this same approach for other age groups, providing educational, literacy and technical training programs.

### ■ **Agricultural and rural training and accreditation of higher agricultural education centers**

Agricultural and rural training has been strengthened through the implementation of national professional training policies or through efforts to improve the quality of agricultural technical education. For example, Bolivia is implementing the National Professional and Technical Training Policy for Rural Development, while Honduras is

executing the National Agricultural Education, Training and Agribusiness Development Service.

As part of the administrative restructuring and academic modernization process under way in agricultural training centers, studies have been conducted on training needs based on demand. By way of example, studies were carried out in Costa Rica on the training needs of farmers and officials of the country's agricultural sector institutions.

## **X. Strengthening public and private sector participation and coordinated action between them in the territories**

### **■ Mechanisms of dialogue, consensus and strategic action**

A major effort has been undertaken to create mechanisms of dialogue between the public-private sectors to design strategies adapted to the needs of rural dwellers. There are various initiatives in this regard, such as the "Bolivia Productiva" National Dialogue, which has resulted in national production agreements, the Agricultural Committees of Chile and Honduras and the national consultations organized in countries such as Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

In Chile and Honduras, the Agriculture Committees have become important mechanisms for building consensus on the design of strategies. In Honduras, these groups are used both for consensus-building purposes and to conduct a social audit of the country's poverty reduction strategy. Bolivia and Paraguay are promoting the incorporation of rural communities into the processes of planning, execution and evaluation of the different programs and projects that they manage through participatory strategies. This approach seeks to ensure that rural populations are more closely involved in discussions concerning the development of their own communities.

Another important aspect is the participation of the Ministries of Agriculture in local development councils in Guatemala and Honduras. To this end, several countries are implementing or planning

decentralization strategies or community empowerment programs, such as Ecuador and Barbados. In Peru, training is provided for rural communities to strengthen grassroots organizations.

## **XI. Strengthening dialogue and commitments between among actors in the chain**

### **■ Institutional frameworks for dialogue and negotiation**

Important mechanisms for discussion and negotiation include the National or Regional Dialogues such as the “Bolivia Productiva” National Dialogue and the Competitiveness Agreements in the production chains in Colombia.

Other mechanisms of interest are the institutional arrangements for monitoring the competitiveness of commercial agricultural production chains, such as Paraguay’s experience with the Competitive Map of the World and the National or Regional Committees for promoting dialogue between the actors of the agrifood chains in Barbados and Belize. In Ecuador, Advisory Councils have been created as mechanisms of information, dialogue and consensus between producers and the State and to resolve strategic and short-term problems in agriculture. In Honduras, the Agricultural Development Council (CODA) is in the process of being reactivated and strengthened. Meanwhile, Brazil has formalized organizations to monitor the competitiveness of agribusiness chains and so-called Thematic Commissions have been created for specific commodities, which include financial services, insurance for agribusiness and international agricultural negotiations.

## **XII. Promoting State Policies and regional and hemispheric cooperation for agriculture and rural life**

### **■ State Policies for Agriculture and Rural Life**

Dialogue processes at the level of territories and agricultural production and marketing chains have, in some cases, occurred in

the context of a growing awareness of the importance of agriculture in countries' economic and social life. This effort has propitiated the planning, validation and implementation of State Policies for Agriculture in some cases. Such policies are of crucial importance given their scope, and contemplate all the elements discussed in the preceding chapters in an integral manner. They also include a degree of long-term planning that makes their implementation and follow-up more effective. Experiences of this nature are found in Chile, with the implementation of the “State Policy for Chilean Agriculture - Period 2000-2010” and in Honduras with the “State Policy for the Agrifood Sector and the Rural Milieu of Honduras, 2004-2021”. In Trinidad and Tobago a national consultation process on development was organized, which culminated with the “Vision 2020” plan, in which agriculture has an important role in the multisectoral work guidelines and subcommittees.

### ■ **Regional integration and cooperation**

The regional cooperation mechanisms are being strengthened. Evidence of this is the operation of several regional processes whose institutional framework is under construction.

Thus, regional mechanisms such as the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS), the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC) and the Caribbean Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu are important instruments for the preparation of strategies and policies for agriculture and rural life in those regions. In the context of the CAS, member countries are engaged in an inter-governmental work process consisting of three groups: the Agricultural Policy Network (REDPA), the Informal Group of Agricultural Negotiators (GINA-SUR) and the Animal and Plant Health and Food Safety Group that brings together the agricultural health institutions of the member countries of CAS.

The Caribbean Alliance is a mechanism involving Ministers of Agriculture and regional organizations working in the fields of research, trade and higher education, agricultural entrepreneurs, rural women and the Wives of the Heads of State and Government

from the Caribbean. At its Third Regular Meeting, Jamaica 2001, Ministers of Agriculture from 14 Caribbean countries adopted a Ministerial Declaration and a Plan of Action, reaffirming their commitment to joint action with all the members of the Community of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Caribbean, and as part of the Hemispheric Community.

Regional thematic mechanisms are also being strengthened. In the area of innovation and research, the PROCIs, which are regional mechanisms that bring together the agricultural research agencies of the countries, are being strengthened. In the area of information, mechanisms such as the Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA), which links market information specialists throughout the hemisphere, are being promoted.

Other means of promoting regional and hemispheric interaction have been efforts to develop regional social policies. One example is the Social Policy of the Andean Community, which has served as the basis for the implementation of the National Food Security Strategy and the National Rural Development Strategy in Peru.

In Central America, there are initiatives such as the Regional Project for Food Security in Mesoamerica and the Regional Project to Reduce the Vulnerability of the Agricultural Sector to Climate Change, which is the responsibility of the Regional Agricultural Cooperation Council (CORECA).

## **Continuity of national efforts and validity of the strategic actions**

Bringing about favorable changes in the situation of agriculture and in the living conditions of rural communities in the Americas is a process that extends beyond a biennium. Two years after the adoption of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, the situation of agriculture and rural life and the challenges that, in 2003, prompted the identification of strategic actions for the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda, remain valid.

Two sources of information - both emanating from the countries - corroborate this assertion, which, although very general and basic, is nevertheless necessary for the process to update the Agenda, as requested by the Ministers.

On the one hand, the national reports on the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan include a large number of projects, programs, policies and strategies that will continue to be executed beyond 2005. Many of these efforts respond to national and regional long-term strategies, such as State policies, sectoral and multisectoral programs specific to a particular issue and, in addition, programs of international, regional or hemispheric scope. The above suggests that national and international efforts, in the context of strategic actions, will continue in the near future.

At the same time, based on an analysis of the national reports on the challenges facing the countries in their efforts to improve agriculture and rural life and implement the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, we may draw two basic conclusions for updating the Hemispheric Agenda. The first is that a great majority of the challenges identified are covered by the strategic actions of the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda. Other challenges identified are not covered by the strategic actions of the first Agenda, and instead, have served to propose and support the identification of new complementary strategic actions and measures for the implementation and follow-up of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

In that sense, the strategic actions adopted by the Ministers in the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda remain valid.

## **The countries' experience:** valuable knowledge for horizontal cooperation

The national reports offer a succinct account of how each country is tackling the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. When taken as a whole, the information contained in these reports provides a valuable store of experiences, many of them of a pioneering and innovative nature.

By looking at the organization of national actions, following the sections of the Hemispheric Agenda and the corresponding strategic actions, may obtain an overview of viable options undertaken in other countries. Below is a selection of experiences in each of the sections of the Hemispheric Agenda.

### **I. Promoting competitive rural enterprises**

- **Argentina:** Provincial Agricultural Services Program (PROSAP)
- **Honduras:** National Program for Sustainable Rural Development (PRONADERS)

### **II. Integrating chains and strengthening their competitiveness**

- **Mexico:** National Committees for Commodities, Product Systems or Agrifood Chains
- **Brazil:** Production of biofuels

### **III. Promoting an environment conducive to competitive agriculture**

- **Brazil:** National Program to Strengthen Family Agriculture
- **El Salvador:** National System of Alliances for Technological Innovation (SINALIT)
- **Colombia:** The Center for Phytosanitary Excellence

### **IV. Being environmentally responsible in the rural areas**

- **Guatemala:** Sustainable Development Program of Peten
- **Canada:** Environmental Farm Plans

### **V. From farm to table: promoting integrated environmental management**

- **Canada:** Value-Chain Round Tables

## **VI. Participating in building an institutional environmental framework**

- **Ecuador:** Environmental Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Agricultural Sector and Environmental Management

## **VII. Quality of life in rural communities: creating know-how and opportunity**

- **Mexico:** Regional Technical Assistance Project on Rural Microfinancing (PATMIR)

## **VIII. Advancing learning and expertise in the chain**

- **Costa Rica:** Program to Promote Sustainable Agricultural Production – Component II Training and Information.
- **Colombia:** Project to support the development of rural micro-enterprises – PADEMER

## **IX. Promoting policies to create capabilities and opportunities for the rural communities**

- **Nicaragua:** Rural Schools (ECAs)

## **X. Strengthening public and private sector participation and coordinated action between them in the territories**

- **Bolivia:** National Dialogue Bolivia Productiva
- **Canada:** Rural Dialogue

## **XI. Strengthening dialogue and commitments among actors in the chain**

- **Mexico:** The Mexican Council for Sustainable Rural Development

## **XII. Promoting National policies and regional and hemispheric cooperation for agriculture and rural life**

- **Chile:** State Policy for Chilean Agriculture Period 2000-2010
- **Honduras:** State Policy for the Agrifood Sector and the Rural Milieu 2004-2021
- **Trinidad and Tobago:** National Consultation - Sector Policy for Food Production and Marine Resources 2001-2005.

These and other experiences provide a store of knowledge and information on the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan and the development of sustainable agriculture and rural communities. Undoubtedly, this is a valuable asset to promote cooperation between countries and the support of international institutions for a renewed approach to cooperation.

## **New challenges and complementary strategic actions for 2006-2007**

### **The evolving emphasis of the Hemispheric Agendas**

Challenges denote the resolve and determination of an individual, organization or community to confront a particular situation; therefore, inherent to these challenges are actions aimed at changing that situation.

In the case of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, the challenges derived from observing the situation of agriculture and rural life at the start

of the millennium and a future vision to 2015 led to the identification of objectives and the Ministers' resolve to undertake strategic actions.

Accordingly, the strategic actions contained in the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda are guidelines identified from proposals coming from more than one country and approved by the Ministers of Agriculture to propel agriculture and rural life in their countries toward the Shared Vision for 2015. The identification of those decisions was the emphasis of the first stage of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan: the 2003-2005 Hemispheric Agenda.

Those strategic actions are in response to the mandates issued by the Heads of State and Government at the Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec 2001) and the Special Summit of the Americas (Monterrey 2004). They are the basis and frame of reference for promoting joint interinstitutional and multisectoral actions, as well as cooperation between countries and from international agencies in support of the implementation of the regional and national strategies.

In 2005, the national reports on progress in the implementation of the Hemispheric Agenda and the Executive Summaries on compliance with Mandate 43 of the Declaration of Nuevo Leon, as well as the challenges identified by the countries confirm the validity of the guidelines taken in 2003, except for some new complementary strategic actions. Above all, they point up the need to emphasize, in this second stage of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan, measures that will make it possible to implement and follow up on the Plan more effectively at the hemispheric, regional and national levels.

## **Thematic areas for strategic complementary actions**

The process to update the Hemispheric Agenda focuses on 7 of its 12 sections. In the case of the other 5 sections, the challenges

identified and covered by the existing Agenda did not suggest adding new complementary actions.

The thematic areas were identified on the basis of several similar proposals of challenges presented by various countries in their national reports. Below are the thematic areas for action, organized according to the sections of the Hemispheric Agenda.

**I. Promoting competitive rural enterprises**

(Rural territories – production/trade dimension)

- Areas of local economic development

**II. Integrating chains and strengthening their competitiveness**

(Agricultural production-trade chains – production/trade dimension)

- Quality management and certification
- Development of products based on the biotechnologies

**III. Promoting an environment conducive to competitive agriculture**

(National and international context – production/trade dimension)

- Generation of energy from alternative sources
- Policies for agroindustry

**VI. Participating in building an institutional environmental framework**

(National and international context - ecological/environmental dimension)

- Environmental services and environmentally sound practices
- Market opportunities for goods and services produced in an environmentally sustainable manner

**IX. Promoting policies to create capabilities and opportunities for the rural communities** (National and international context - sociocultural/human dimension)

- Social responsibility in rural enterprises

**X. Strengthening public and private sector participation and coordinated action between them in the territories** (Rural Territories – political/institutional dimension)

- Integral development of rural territories

**XII.Promoting National policies and regional and hemispheric cooperation for agriculture and rural life** (National and international context – political/institutional dimension)

- National policies
- Interinstitutional and multisectoral work

Taking as a reference point the “Base Document for the Hemispheric Dialogue 2005. Strategic complementary actions for updating the Hemispheric Agenda for the biennium 2006-2007”, prepared by the Secretariat to support the work of GRICA 2005, the Ministerial Delegates developed a consensus for new complementary strategic actions in each of the mentioned thematic areas.

## **Building the future towards 2015**

### **Joint action, cooperation and an institutional framework**

We are ten years away from the future vision created by the Ministers in the Shared Vision 2015. Faced with a situation of agriculture and rural life in which the main challenges remain valid, it is necessary and urgent that those responsible for the improvement of agriculture and rural life undertake a renewed joint action with even greater strength and creativity. Similarly, cooperation efforts should be reinforced with new approaches that take advantage of national experiences and exchanges between countries, with the support of international organizations.

Meanwhile, the institutional framework for the sustainable improvement of agriculture and rural life also demands changes and in this context it is essential that the leaders of agriculture renew their participation in its development.

Joint action, cooperation and an institutional framework, essential elements in building the future towards 2015, are present in the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan and have been strengthened in GRICA 2005 through dialogue and consensus-building on important new strategic complementary actions such as the strengthening of sectoral and multisectoral coordination and the promotion of State policies for agriculture and rural life.

### **Measures for the implementation and follow-up of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan**

During the 2005 meeting of GRICA, the Delegates gave top priority to the updating of the biennial agendas, to the strengthening of regional mechanisms and strategies, to the

support of international organizations and the setting of interagency agendas for the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan and the development of an Information System for its follow-up and evaluation.

## **From the actions carried out to performance and expectations**

Actions carried out, performance and expectations are three components for an information system, which show important advances throughout the ministerial process (2001-2005). The countries are making different types of efforts on the basis of the conceptual framework of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. The information on actions carried out in the fulfillment of commitments is provided by the national progress reports. These show that the Plan's strategic objectives of Rural Prosperity, Food Security and the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Life, will remain valid for a long time. Those objectives are present and receive high priority in the national and regional strategies for the improvement of agriculture and the rural communities of the Americas.

Nevertheless, how much more is needed in terms of public and private efforts, investment, joint work, technology, new productive activities, favorable conditions in the environment, among other important aspects, in order to improve, initiate and strengthen?

A very useful tool in the evaluation of performance would be provided by the goals and indicators for the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan. This information on key indicators is essential for estimating the additional resources needed, adopting complementary strategic decisions and evaluating the progress made in the fulfillment of the mandates on agriculture and rural life of the Summits of the Americas. One important advance in this component is the joint effort coordinated by IICA and ECLAC with the support of FAO, PAHO, UNESCO and OIT in the identification of indicators for the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

Nonetheless, in order to provide a complete picture of the evolution of agriculture and rural life, it is necessary to accompany the information on actions carried out and performance with the expectations and perceptions of the leaders of the Community of Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas. Two mechanisms have been used to gather the opinion of the leaders in the course of the ministerial process launched in 2001: the discussions on strategic issues that took place in the ministerial meetings and in GRICA; and hemispheric consultations, such as those held in 2001 on critical issues and in 2005 on the challenges in the implementation of the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan.

Therefore, it is advisable to consolidate the advances and experiences mentioned in an information system for monitoring and evaluating the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan that integrates the **actions** carried out in the fulfillment of commitments, with the **performance** of agriculture and rural life and the **expectations** and perceptions of the leaders of agriculture.

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