

Agriculture and rural prosperity from the perspective of technological research and innovation in Latin America and the Caribbean:

FORAGRO Position 2010: Executive Summary



*Forum of the Americas for Agricultural
Research and Technology Development*

FORAGRO Executive Committee
March 2010





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Executive Summary

Introduction. The Region has been systematically updating its research priorities through national, sub-regional and hemispheric efforts. Recently, during the 2009 GCARD process, FORAGRO (Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Technological Research and Development), in alliance with GFAR and the support of IICA (Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Cooperation), conducted a revision process of regional priorities and mechanisms to implement them, not only in the hope of submitting the same before GCARD, but also of adjusting and promoting the RDI (Research, Development and Innovation) regional agenda in LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean). The priority subjects described in this document arise from previous prioritization exercises, consultations promoted under the GCARD process with the participation of the six FORAGRO interest groups and a final consolidation by FORAGRO's Executive Committee, at its meeting held in March 2010 at IICA, Costa Rica.

GCARD joining GFAR and CGIAR efforts. There are excellent opportunities for a renewed presence of the CGIAR in LAC and to strengthen relations with GFAR, as was proposed at the V FORAGRO Meeting in Montevideo, 2008. The impact of a greater presence and the increase in investments of CGIAR in LAC could be significant due to its multiplying effect both within the Region and as a contribution of knowledge and technologies to other regions in the world and *vice-versa*. Another aspect is the potential for alliances at a regional level, given the existence of national research and innovation systems and institutions and the relevance of institutions in the region, such as FORAGRO, FONTAGRO (Regional Fund for Agricultural Technology), renown Cooperation Programs, such as the PROCIs: PROCISUR (Cooperative Program for Agrifood and Agro-industrial Technology Development in the Southern Cone), PROCINDINO (Cooperation Program for Agricultural Technology Innovation for the Andean region), PROCITROPICOS (Cooperation Program for Agricultural Research, Development and Innovation in the South American Tropics), SICTA (Central American Agricultural Technology Integration System), PROMECAFE (Regional Cooperation Program for the Technological Development of Coffee Farming in Central America, Panama, Dominican Republic and Jamaica), PROCICARIBE (Caribbean Agricultural Science and Technology Network System) and PROCINORTE (Cooperation Program for Agricultural Research and Technology for the Northern

Region); INIAs (National Agricultural Research Institutes) of Latin America, thematic networks, regional centres such as CATIE (Tropical Agricultural Research and Education Centre) and CARDI (Caribbean Institute for Agricultural Research and Development), International Centres with headquarters in the Region and technical and financial cooperation organizations of developed countries, among others. All of the above constitutes a significant platform for collaborative actions. IICA plays a key role in the technological innovation system of the Region, as an organism for cooperation on agriculture for its Member Countries.

In what regards **CGIAR**, FORAGRO members acknowledge the importance of the changes that will occur in order to contribute to alleviate the issues of poverty and food security in the world, as was evidenced at the V International Meeting of the Forum in Montevideo in 2008. The said renewed presence implies changes in the international system and also a response from the institutions of the LAC Region. The proposal is: i) a larger investment of the CGIAR system in LAC (the current investment in LAC is of around 12% of its budget, while two decades ago the figure was close to 25%). This erosion of resources towards the Region should not only stop but also be reverted in the future; ii) better compatibility of CGIAR and LAC priorities, acknowledging the heterogeneity of the Region and the different ways of exploiting agriculture, particularly paying attention to food security

and within this context, to family agriculture and its relationship with the markets; iii) strengthening of the International Centres with headquarters in the Region in order to see to the challenges and opportunities of tropical agriculture in LAC; iv) renewed alliance mechanisms ruled by trust, the concept of true partners, complementation rather than competition for resources; v) global projects not only on research but also for the application of knowledge by producers and the development of technological innovations in value chains and territories; vi) in what regards Mega-programs –known only vaguely so far-, they have a significant connection with the priority factors of LAC, judging by their subjects, although their attention to agro-forestry, tropical fruits and perennial crops is limited and no inclusion of animal production and fisheries can be appreciated. A Mega-program should focus on family agriculture. FORAGRO would be pleased if a process and a dialogue calendar were fixed with CGIAR to develop a joint work agenda.

Concerning **GFAR**, its great significance for the insertion of the Region in the global context is acknowledged, as it includes diverse public and private actors, and for the promotion of developing alliances to improve the efficacy and efficiency of RDI. GFAR, seen from the perspective of

National Innovation Systems and Regional Forums, must collaborate in this cooperation by facilitating the identification of common subjects for the joint action between Regional Forums for more intense cooperation. GCARD is one of the paths to accomplish this, but not the only one. One goal of GFAR should be the development of a “cooperation culture between continents and/or between regions” with special emphasis on the following aspects: i) consistent mechanisms to share technical and scientific information and facilitate collaborative learning of all the actors involved in the innovation process; ii) exchange of experiences of institutional innovations (technological policies, institutional models for RDI, public-private relationships, funding mechanisms, among others); iii) development of networks for multinational collaborative actions between institutions of the different Regional Forums; iv) support to the formation of world networks for specific research issues, in alliance with CGIAR and the technical cooperation agencies of developed countries; this must be analysed in the light of the experiences of the GFAR “Global Partnership Programs”; v) tend towards a shared vision of agriculture within the global context, from the perspective of GFAR. The Executive Committee of GFAR is a favourable space to implement the above.

LAC Priorities for RDI. As a result of the consultation processes mentioned at the beginning of this summary, the LAC Region has defined seven priority subjects and action areas:

Food and nutritional security: i) To improve the quality of foodstuffs; ii) Reduce losses due to biotic and abiotic factors and post-harvest handling; iii) Improve the access of rural families to food; iv) Ensure increases in the production of basic foodstuffs for the population; v) Give more relevance to urban food systems.

Increase production and productivity: i) Efforts on less attended species as well as on traditional food crops; ii) Better exploitation of productive lands and protection of fragile ecosystems.

Diversification and differentiation of agricultural products and services: i) Development of technologies and innovations for market niches; ii) Appreciation of underutilized species and varieties; iii) Quality labels for family agriculture;

Addressing the challenges of Climate Change: i) Studies for a better understanding of the impacts of climate change on agriculture and the rural environment; ii) Development of technologies for adaptation to climate change; iii) Development of technologies for mitigation of climate change.

Preservation and sustainable management of natural resources: i) Technologies and good practices for the use of soil and water; ii) Use of environmentally friendly practices; iii) Preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; iv) Promotion of agro-ecological production systems.

Development of bio-energy: i) New sources of raw materials; ii) Second and third generation technologies; iii) Incorporation of family agriculture; iv) Development of impact studies.

Promotion of institutional innovations: i) Integrating models for institutional innovation; ii) Ensure capacity development; iii) Inclusion of producers in innovation systems; iv) Development of RDI networks; v) Strengthening of technological innovation systems; vi) Participation of the private sector and of civil society; vii) Investments in RDI and the significance of the relationship between the private and public sectors.

Regarding the **implementation** of the priorities, it is worth mentioning the following mechanisms and strategies:

- To build on the existing successful cooperation experiences in the region: the PROCIs, FONTAGRO, INIAs of Latin America, disciplinary networks, networks per crop and others.
- To promote a better integration between the public and the private sectors at all levels, as well as articulate public-private networks to make progress in the development of policies for innovation.
- To create an institutional framework that will promote a higher participation of the private sector in RDI tasks, especially to strengthen innovation transfer channels.
- To promote mechanisms that allow for the development of shared visions of all the actors of the innovation system.
- To improve the interaction between agricultural research organizations, communities and instances linked to other sectors, promoting dialogue and interaction mechanisms between different disciplinary approaches and knowledge.
- To formalize alliances and mechanisms for the exchange of information and experiences.
- To ensure, within the development of the mechanisms mentioned above, the inclusion of the experiences of indigenous and rural communities.
- To promote mechanisms to facilitate access to new markets and decrease the risk for small- and family-scale agriculture.
- To include family agriculture in food strategies.
- To build capacities of all the actors involved in RDI processes.
- To strengthen consumer organizations and their participation in RDI processes.
- To agree on regulatory frameworks and others for the management of shared resources (water, basins, biodiversity, soils).
- To give more importance to multidisciplinary research, including social sciences and research on the positioning of institutions and interactions between all the interest groups.
- To ratify FORAGRO as the institutional space where to discuss and promote institutional change.

Finally, we reiterate that agriculture and rural life are strategic for the development of LAC and the wellbeing of its peoples. The complexity and magnitude of these challenges and opportunities are powerful reasons for the countries of the Region to intensify their efforts to promote the development of knowledge and technology and intensify their mutual collaboration for agricultural RDI and their relationships with the Global System for Agricultural Research. The LAC Region, through FORAGRO, and therefore through all the members of the LAC Regional System for Technological Innovation, will continue its efforts to promote the implementation of these priorities.



The Vision of FORAGRO on the roadmap for GCARD implementation.

Role of the Regional Forums in the new context of agricultural research for development

- FORAGRO calls attention to the needs for agricultural research for development of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), as expressed in its Positioning Paper. LAC has a strong institutional setting represented in FORAGRO's constituency, which responds to the agreed priorities as well as the immense potential of the Region to contribute to the world's food security. However, LAC is not uniform; it has several regions and countries with abject poverty, malnutrition and degradation of resources, among other severe limitations. Also, it is necessary to reinforce the role and involvement of indigenous communities and small scale farmers in the innovation processes to self-determined development.
- Global priorities should always emerge through transparent dialogue and articulation between the CGIAR, GFAR and the Regional Forums.
- Implementation of the thematic areas requires strengthening of the Regional Forums so they can fulfill their role to link local and national agendas with the global system.
- The GCARD action plan must contemplate the support and participation of the Regional Forum, both in priority setting and resource allocation.
- Active participation of the Regional Forums must be ensured not only for the definition of priorities, but also for overseeing, monitoring and evaluating the process promoted by GCARD.
- FORAGRO is committed to participate actively in the construction of mega programs that, with global participation, respond to the regional research priorities for development of LAC and to work in partnership to ensure their implementation.

FORAGRO reaffirms its commitment to work synergistically with the CGIAR centers, particularly with those headquartered in LAC, through the national agricultural innovation systems