



Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and  
Technological Development

## FORAGRO PROGRESS REPORT SUMMARY MAY 2003-DECEMBER 2004

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## Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technological Development FORAGRO

### PROGRESS REPORT SUMMARY May 2003-December 2004<sup>1</sup>

Since the conclusion of the Third International Meeting of FORAGRO, held in April 2002 in Brazil, important progress has been made in complying with the provisions of the Declaration of Brasilia. The purpose of this brief report, prepared by the Technical Secretariat of FORAGRO, which is operated by IICA's Directorate of Technology and Innovation, is to inform members and stakeholders of the Forum of progress made since Brasilia 2002, particularly for the period 2003-September 2004. Also, the FORAGRO web page ([www.iica.int/foragro](http://www.iica.int/foragro)) and that of INFOTEC (Scientific and Technological Information System) (<http://infotec.ws>). INFOTEC is FORAGRO's information service, which works as a web-based information sharing system specialized in S&T information, including research and extension policies. INFOTEC is a system envisioned as service oriented, demand driven and inclusive of all FORAGRO stakeholders, from farmers to research managers and technology policy makers. It contains detailed information, provide institutional links, and the development of a technology market; as well as technology policy documents which stakeholders in the Forum are encouraged to consult.

**New Officers of the FORAGRO Executive Committee.** Dr Reynaldo Perez has been appointed new the Director General of IDIAP and in consequence took office as President of the Executive Committee since September 2004. Dr. David Berroa, ex-Director General of IDIAP-Panama acted as President of FORAGRO until August 2004. The Vice President of FORAGRO on behalf of the public NARIs is Dr. Pedro Bonino, Director of INIA-Uruguay and President of PROCISUR. The following were appointed as Vice Presidents: Dr. Claudio Barriga, in representation of the private sector; Dr. Mario Ahumada (Director, MAELA-Chile), in representation of NGOs; and Dr. Francisco Delgado de la Flor (Chancellor of the La Molina Agricultural University-Peru), in representation of agricultural universities. Jorge Ardila and Enrique Alarcon, of the Directorate of Technology and Innovation of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), headquartered in Costa Rica, continue to operate the Technical Secretariat. INFOTEC is being administrated by Viviana Palmieri

**Results of the Third International Meeting of FORAGRO, held in Brasilia.** The Technical Secretariat prepared and disseminated the proceedings of the meeting, which began to circulate in the second semester of 2003. Also, the individual papers presented at the meeting, and the Declaration of Brasilia 2002, were made available to participants and members through the web sites of both the Forum and INFOTEC. With a view to implementing the provisions of the Declaration, FORAGRO prepared its 2003-2005

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Enrique Alarcón , Jorge Ardila and Viviana Palmieri Technical Secretariat of FORAGRO at the Directorate of Technology and Innovation of IICA. San Jose, Costa Rica. September 2004.

Medium Term Plan and its 2003-2004 Plan of Action (PAF). Both plans were approved by the FORAGRO Executive Committee, to begin implementation of the agreements reached in same.

**FORAGRO Executive Committee.** The Seventh Meeting of the Executive Committee was held in Panama in September 2003. One of the most important decisions reached was the approval of work programs for the execution of hemispheric activities in four priority areas: new biotechnologies; agribusiness, innovation and small-scale agriculture; genetic resources; and natural resource management. Also, discussions were held on what the focus of the Fourth International Meeting should be, in light of the problems and opportunities that exist in the region within the framework of integration and their entry into global markets. The decision was reached to place emphasis on competitiveness and market access for agricultural products; the promotion of the modernization of small-scale agriculture; the strengthening of national research institutions; and making better use of the institutional framework of the Regional Research System of the Americas.

### **Linkages FORAGRO-MEMBERS**

**FORAGRO-PROCI's-FONTAGRO** In an effort to promote closer articulation of the subregional mechanisms known as PROCIs, and FORAGRO, priority hemispheric topics for cooperative action in research were identified, on the basis of the subregional topics and a hemispheric vision of the problems of agriculture in a globalized world. These topics have been disseminated, in particular, in the meetings of the Steering Committees of PROCITROPICOS, PROCISUR, PROCINORTE, SICTA, FONTAGRO and PCCMCA, in pursuit of synergies between these regional actors and FORAGRO in order to implement the 2003-2004 PAF. Also, the Technical Secretariat, at IICA, continued to support the consolidation of the Regional Research System, promoting the most recently created cooperative mechanisms, such as SICTA in Central America, with the signing of a Countries-IICA-CATIE agreement on its operation; PROCICARIBE, by programming a review of its impact and its operating model, with an eye to readjusting it; and PROCINORTE, which received new support and saw its first Executive Secretary, a professional from INIFAP, appointed.

**FORAGRO-Latin American Legislative Sector.** An interesting dynamic has developed between the Secretariats of FORAGRO and the PARLATINO. The President of FORAGRO was invited to the meeting on Trade and Agriculture of the Agricultural Commissions of Legislators in Sao Paulo in April 2003. It was an excellent opportunity to discuss the FORAGRO-PARLATINO agreement, on the basis of a proposal put forth by the Parliamentarian Carlos Recondo, delegate from the Latin American Parliament to the Third International Meeting of FORAGRO, held in Brasilia last year. The Secretariats of Commissions of the Latin America Parliament and of FORAGRO are working on a draft PARLATINO-FORAGRO agreement, to be signed in 2005 on the occasion of the IV International Meeting, which will enable these two regional organizations to strengthen ties and carry out joint activities.

**FORAGRO-GFAR.** Representatives of the public and private institutional framework of LAC that belong to FORAGRO participated in the Second Tri-annual GFAR Conference in DAKAR, entitled *Linking Research and Rural Innovation to Sustainable Development*. Of particular note was the presence of the President of EMBRAPA, also President of FORAGRO at the time, who shared with the members of the Global Forum details on a successful partnership known as LABEX (EMBRAPA Overseas Laboratory). This experience was singled out as an example of a partnership for advancing science between institutions in developing and developed countries. The Proceedings of the Conference in Dakar, the Spanish version, are being distributed.

Also, the FORAGRO and GFAR secretariats met to identify joint actions based on their respective plans of action. Dr. Claudio Barriga, Vice President, represented FORAGRO in the GFAR Business Plan Meeting of Rome in February 2004 and in the Meeting of the International Association of Agricultural Producers in Washington in June 2004 to promote agricultural producers-R&D partnerships as an aim of GFAR and FORAGRO. Also Enrique Alarcón represented the Technical Secretariat of FORAGRO in the Meeting of Executive Secretaries in Rome in May 2004 in which priorities and operations of inter-regional cooperative initiatives were discussed. The development of RAIs, and reciprocal cooperation between continental forums also deserved special mention. Specifically, the execution of joint actions such as public-private partnerships in R&D, development of institutional innovations, biotechnology for development and the creation of information systems were topics identified as of special interest.

The Technical Secretariat of the Forum participated in the Meeting of Secretariats of Regional Forums of the GLOBAL RAIS Project in Rome to prepare a second stage of this project that will include specific regional projects for execution under FORAGRO, with the participation of the actors of the regional research system. Preparations are under way for the participation of FORAGRO in the meetings of the GFAR Steering Committee, the NARS Steering Committee of GFAR and the CGIAR Council Management in Mexico in October 2004. Among other inputs, profiles of FORAGRO projects for participation in the second stage of the GLOBAL RAIS project of GFAR in support of the development and strengthening of information systems will be presented. Also a proposal for Inter-Regional Cooperation on Institutional Innovations has been prepared.; the description is presented after page 8 of the present Report.

The President of FORAGRO, Reynaldo Perez and Enrique Alarcón on behalf of the Technical Secretariat at IICA participated in the NARS Sub Committee and Steering Committee of GFAR in Mexico. FORAGRO presented a proposal for cooperation inter-regions on institutional innovations aimed to strength the capacity of NARS for the organization and management of agricultural research through reciprocal cooperation among continents. Also FORAGRO actively contributed to the formulation of the Second phase of Global Program Partnership Program to be submitted by GFAR to the donor community for financing

**FORAGRO-CGIAR.** The Technical Secretariat of FORAGRO contributed to the Internal Scientific Council of the CGIAR in its efforts to develop the new vision of the

CGIAR system, submitting the think piece entitled *Constraints and priorities in Agriculture from the Technological Perspective in LAC*. This document presents the proposals and the vision of FORAGRO on agriculture and the rural sector from the technological perspective, and the hemispheric priorities for research in LAC. This task is part of the mission of the Forum of influencing the agenda of the international research systems. FORAGRO through PROCITROPICS is supporting the Amazon Initiative on the sustainable management of Natural Resources in alliances with four Centers of the CGIAR: CIFOR, ICRAF, IPGRI, CIAT. An agreement was signed among six countries of the Amazon Basin, IICA and the four Centers to execute action under the initiative

**FORAGRO-NGOs.** MAELA (Latin American Agroecological Movement), under the direction of Dr. Mario Ahumada, also Vice President of FORAGRO, held its Regional Conference in Costa Rica, which was attended by the FORAGRO Secretariat. MAELA, through its President, put forth important proposals at the meeting which are in keeping with the priority subjects of the Forum as expressed in the Declaration of Brasilia. Those proposals are related to the current system of trade and its effect on rural development, food security and sovereignty, the struggle against poverty and the importance of local markets.

**FORAGRO-FONTAGRO.** The Secretariats of FORAGRO and FONTAGRO have been interacting on several activities, including the processes leading to the impact of evaluation and the dissemination of the FONTAGRO projects executed in the first phase of the Fund. Also, on feedback on the priorities under FORAGRO for the purpose of designing a new Medium Term Plan for FONTAGRO. This interaction facilitates the articulation of the agendas and programs of both mechanisms.

**IICA-FORAGRO-World Bank.** IICA, which is also the Technical Secretariat of the Forum, participated in the Plenary of the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) organized by the World Bank in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2004. IICA may be the Management Institution of the Subglobal Assessment in LAC. FORAGRO, because it brings together stakeholders, national public research institutions, private-sector organizations, NGOs, universities, producer associations, research foundations and cooperative regional and hemispheric mechanisms, as well as the international research centers, is a valuable platform for the IAASTD exercise in LAC, scheduled to begin in November 2004-January 2005. Previously, the President of FORAGRO and the Vice President for the NGOs, David Berroa and Mario Ahumada, respectively, in addition to the Technical Secretary of FORAGRO, participated together with other public and private representatives, NGOs, producer associations, in the preparatory meeting of the IASSDT at IICA for Central America in 2003.

The IAASTD will have the Global and Sub Global (Latin-American) design meetings in the first trimester of 2005 to program specific activities in Asia and Costa Rica, respectively.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2003-2004 PAF

The Plan calls for several activities that correspond to the lines of action of the Forum. The following activities stand out:

**Hemispheric Dialogue:** The IV International Meeting of the Forum: *Technological Innovation and Agribusiness priorities: Toward a new Institutional Dimension in the Américas* will take place in Panama in April 2005. The IV Meeting will focus on agriculture and agribusiness from the perspective of research and technology innovation and the institutional transformations needed to achieve the millennium goals. This topic is of particular importance in Latin America and the Caribbean, given the challenges and opportunities that exist in the areas of agricultural development, globalization, regional economic integration, the sustainable use of natural resources and the alleviation of poverty. FORAGRO, as a member of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), has programmed a panel discussion to foster stronger ties with the GFAR and the other regional forums FARA (Sub-Saharan Africa); APPARI (Asia-Pacific region); AARINENA (Near East and North Africa); and EFARD (Europe), through their respective Secretariats. The purpose is to foster the connectivity of the Regional Agricultural Research System of the Americas with the Global Agricultural Research System, within the framework of the Fourth International Meeting of FORAGRO, through a dialogue aimed at: a) providing further information on the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and the respective regional forums, and sharing experiences regarding their development, priority actions and results; b) discussing a program for interregional cooperation, within GFAR (See Figure 1 page 8).

**INFOTEC:** The Scientific and Technological Information System, INFOTEC has continued its work towards the goal set by FORAGRO of improving Ag S&T information flow: i) providing up to date information to the 3180 subscribers, which have grown more than 20% during this 2004; ii) Facilitating information sharing through a platform that promotes participation in all the modules: full-text library, news, events, links, institutions, experts and technology market; iii) enabling communication tools (on-demand e-lists with 10 working at present three e-discussions this year, weekly email bulletins)

During the year 2004 INFOTEC also concluded information gathering for the LAC Directory of Research Institutions (FORAGRO-FAO project); organized an e-discussion on ICT for agriculture technology, as an input for the INFOTEC workshop (with GFAR support within the Global RAIS project) in May, consolidated the INFOTEC work-group with its participants, and participated in the June Global-RAIS meeting in Rome. Currently we are developing project profiles within the three pillars defined for the Global Partnership Programme in ICM for ARD. We are also developing the sub-regional information sharing platforms, to be able to provide each PROCi with this tool.

**Strengthening of FORAGRO and Interregional Articulation:** The Technical Group in Support of the FORAGRO Secretariat (GTAF) was set up, comprising the Executive Secretariats of the PROCIs of the Northern, Andean, Southern, Caribbean, Topical

Amazon and Central (under SICTA) regions, and a specialist from EMBRAPA-Brazil. The group, coordinated by the FORAGRO Technical Secretariat, established its mission and work program in line with the mandates of the Forum to dynamize the 2003-2004 PAF. Part of the work of GTAF is the preparation of the state of the art of the four thematic documents of hemispheric scope to carry out cooperative action in the Region.

**Hemispheric priorities implementation.** Following up on the implementation of regional research priorities, the members of the GTAF programmed the activities to be carried out in connection with the priority topics. In essence, the state of the art of the development of each topic in the region will be established; specific priority multinational actions will be programmed; and the execution of same by multinational consortia will be promoted. The priority topics are: genetic resources, new technologies (agrobiotechnology), natural resource management and agribusiness, innovation and small-scale agriculture. FORAGRO, through its Committee and GTAF, is moving up the implementation of actions in their first phase in order to present the first results at the Fourth International Meeting in Panama as input for the endorsement of regional/hemispheric partnership programs according to the Forum MTP.

**Political presence.** FORAGRO, fulfilling its mission of repositioning research and technology development on national and regional political agendas, was present, in the person of its President, at the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), made up of the ministers of agriculture of 34 countries of the Americas, held in Panama in November. He presented a report with the conclusions of the Third International Meeting of FORAGRO, held in Brasilia, and referred to ways FORAGRO can cooperate with the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action. As a result of this action, the IABA once again supported the Forum and issued a second resolution in support of the Forum (the first was issued in Chile in 1997, asking IICA to support the Technical Secretariat). Resolution 398 states that the ministers welcome the conclusions of the Third International Meeting of the Forum, and encourages the countries and IICA to strengthen their participation in FORAGRO.

**Subregional Cooperative Research Programs (Subregional Fora):** The following is a summary of the most important activities implemented with regard to the mechanisms for reciprocal cooperation on subregional research, under the framework of FORAGRO:

***Andean Region/PROCIANDINO.*** PROCIANDINO was consolidated as a mechanism for horizontal cooperation and technological integration with the implementation of Fourth Agreement (2003-2006) among the countries and IICA. Cooperation in the areas of technology innovation was strengthened through the networks for fruits, vegetables, potatoes, corn, and dual-purpose cattle. The project continued for the observatory of the performance and process of change of national R&D institutions. With ISNAR, progress was made with the public-private partnerships project, systematizing models for financing innovation. The implementation of 12 regional projects sponsored by FONTAGRO was coordinated, and regional workshops were held on experiences involving competitive financing models. The Networks of Agroforestry Systems of Plant Genetic Resources (REDARFIT) were promoted. The work at the regional level got

under way to help strengthen national biotechnology and biosafety capabilities. A total of 21 technical events were held in which 600 professionals participated.

***Amazon Region/PROCITROPICOS.*** The activities continued related to the horizontal transfer of technology and institution building, particularly as regards the institutions that are members of the Program. Emphasis was placed on cutting-edge technologies, through workshops and seminars on the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources, the recovery of degraded areas and the sustainable management of renewable natural resources, technological platforms, and the identification of technological constraints in the production chains of cacao, coffee, oil palm, aquaculture, meat production and dairy farming, and tropical fruits. Support was also provided to technological integration efforts in border regions, and the strengthening of the national technological innovation systems whose work covers Amazonia. An important step was made to support the countries of the basin along the for Centers of the CGIAR, CIAT, CIFOR, ICRAF and IPGRI to create the so called Amazon Initiative aimed to promote the sustainable use of the tropical rain forest through technical change in an equity manner. Eleven international events took place that included nearly 300 scientific papers and the participation of close to 3000 duly registered specialists and producers. These events are summarized on 9 CD-ROMs and in newsletters.

***Central Region/PROMECAFE.*** A new agreement was signed between the countries IICA and CATIE to run the program for two more years until 2006. Challenges are posed on the diversification and new markets niches for the coffee of the Region. Technologies were generated to detect and control coffee diseases and pests such as leaf scorch caused by the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa*, ojo de gallo (*Mycena citricolor*), and coffee leaf rust (*Hemileia vastatrix*), with resistant varieties being developed; and, root parasitic nematodes, defining the harmful species present and contributing a resistant root stock variety (Nemaya). In the field of genetic improvement, with support from CIRAD progress was made in developing new hybrids of Arabica coffee with competitive advantages such high production, excellent quality, resistance to common diseases and the capacity to prevent the entry of CBD. The efforts continue to develop agroforestry systems with coffee, with the participation of CATIE and support from the European Union. Given coffee's critical position in the international market, PROMECAFE continued to support the Network of Tasters in Honduras and El Salvador, to improve the quality of the supply in niches of the coffee market. At the request of the ministers of agriculture of the CAC/CORECA, the Program has been helping to define regional actions to alleviate the crisis, playing a role in the formulation of projects and then providing follow-up with the ICO. A strategic partnership was also established for quality negotiating and technology, and marketing, with the Coffee Quality Institute in the USA.

***Central Region/Support for the SICTA.*** The SICTA–IICA–CATIE cooperation agreement was signed that provides resources for the operation of the SICTA (US\$45,000 per year). At the request of the CAC, a proposal was prepared for the formulation of a Central American policy on technology and diversification. The Agricultural Innovation Network Project (Red SICTA) was formally incorporated into the SICTA structure. It is to be financed by COSUDE and implemented by IICA, with a budget of US\$1.2 million per

year, to support corn, bean, and root crops within the framework of regional integration in the field of technological innovation. The project has a specific component on the strengthening of SICTA. Information was compiled on the main institutions in the region that conduct agricultural research, and a portal was designed for the SICTA linked to INFOTEC's Web page. With regard to the conservation of biodiversity and genetic resources, support was provided to the efforts of IICA Headquarters to submit a project to the World Bank's GEF Fund within the framework of the Central American Network for Plant Genetic Resources (REMERFI). A methodology was designed for the formulation of comprehensive strategies, including organic production efforts in Nicaragua and Guatemala, and papers were presented on the Institute's behalf at events on technological innovation in Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. Also a Regional Strategy on biotechnology is being designed under the framework of SICTA.

***Northern Region/PROCINORTE.*** Implementation of the consolidation stage of PROCINORTE was supported through the appointment of an Executive Secretary contributed by the INIFAP of Mexico, and the establishment of the Secretariat in that country. The PROCINORTE has now a formal Board of Directors too. The Work Plan was also strengthened with emphasis on four NORGEN task forces on phyto-genetic resources, tropical and subtropical fruits, agricultural health research, and cooperation among agricultural libraries. PROCINORTE's links with FORAGRO and the PROCINORTES in the other subregions were also renewed, in the areas of common interest noted above and in order to promote the transfer of technologies and north-south cooperation on cutting-edge topics such as the development of new biotechnologies and biosafety.

***Southern Region/PROCISUR.*** There were three major achievements. Firstly, the new cooperation agreement was executed between IICA and the agricultural research institutes of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Secondly, PROCISUR's strategic role in promoting technological change in agriculture within the regional integration process was reaffirmed, with PROCISUR being formally established as a regional cooperation and coordination mechanism in the field of agrifood and agroindustrial technology and innovation with the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS). Thirdly, a new Executive Secretary of PROCISUR/IICA Regional Specialist in Technology and Innovation was appointed. With regard to technical cooperation activities, networks were created to foster regional innovation in the areas of beef quality and environmental sustainability. A new initiative on climate change was launched. Cooperative projects were also implemented among the countries on technologies for the classification and definition of channels and meat; eco-certification; direct planting; and greenhouse gas mitigation. Coordination continued of eight regional research projects financed by FONTAGRO. The project on mycotoxins in corn and wheat got under way with support from the European Union and in coordination with CIRAD-France; and technical cooperation was coordinated on precision agriculture, and on genetic resources, via the regional network.

Figure 1. Description of the IV International Meeting of FORAGRO Panama 2005

