

GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

GFAR 2000, DRESDEN

SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

A. SUMMARY

Title

Regional Fund for Agricultural Technology (FONTAGRO) in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

Objectives and Activities

Financed principally by an endowment provided by the countries of the Americas, and managed directly by the same countries, the Regional Fund's overarching goal is to promote the competitiveness of the rural sector in ways that contribute to poverty reduction and the sustainable management of the resource base. Specific approaches being taken by the Fund to support this goal are to:

- ?? Add a permanent flow of new resources for regional agricultural research;
- ?? Accelerate applied research at the national level by supplying public goods-type technologies of cross-country relevance;
- ?? Promote research cooperation and collaboration among organizations at the national and regional levels, and as between the Americas (especially LAC) and international agricultural research organizations; and enhance the innovation, quality, and impact (the economic returns) of research investments through a sharp focus on priority topics, the use of competitive project funding procedures which are fully transparent, and attention to the design of research-related policies and institutional strengthening.

Organization's Background

FONTAGRO has been put together by several stakeholders of the LAC region. The original idea came from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which is the regional bank lending to countries of LAC. The IDB's strategy is actually based on the following policy thrusts: social reforms, spurring sustainable economic growth, modernization of the state and renewed support for integration of the countries of the region. The IDB has been a donor/investor of the CGIAR for more than twenty-five years for those International Centers with research programs of interest for LAC. In the year 1996, the IDB started discussing the idea of FONTAGRO with the Bank's member countries. The basic proposal was to design a mechanism for sustainable funding of agricultural research projects of cross-country interest, with direct participation of the countries of the region in priority setting and funding of projects. Given that the Governors of the IDB are the Ministers of Finance, this group of stakeholders was involved from the very beginning in the discussion of the proposal, along with the Ministers of Agriculture and other public as well as private organizations within the rural sector of each country.

While FONTAGRO is basically a case of partnership among countries and some sponsoring international organizations, there has been as well the need for partnership within each member country. The process of membership has implied bringing together different levels in the public side: Finance, Agriculture and Foreign Relations in some cases, for those countries that require legislative approval to sign in. As well, at the level of executing agencies, the future partners for development and submission of research proposals, there has been interaction among the National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs), Universities and Science and Technology Councils. In itself, this has been a major challenge within each country: mobilizing different institutions in order to create the need for collective actions, to develop political will, and finally to come up with the contributions to the endowment fund.

The second regional organization to join FONTAGRO as sponsor was the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). The Institute is the agency of the Inter-American System specialized in agriculture and rural development in the Americas. IICA also sponsored several subregional programs for cooperative agricultural research known as PROCIs, which have been important partners in promoting FONTAGRO and assisting countries of each subregion in development proposals for the Regional Fund.

Partnership between IDB and IICA for this particular innovative venture is as well worth to mention as an example of collaboration between two agencies of the Inter-American Systems: one for development financing and the other for technical cooperation on agriculture.

Regional Coverage

Although FONTAGRO was originally designed as a mechanism for the LAC region, it is clear now that it ought to be seen as a mechanism for technological integration in the context of the Americas; membership of the U.S. and Canada is actively being pursued. The other potential dimension for FONTAGRO is cooperation among the different regions of the world. While FONTAGRO seeks to develop agricultural technologies as international public goods of relevance for the Americas, there is always ample spillovers from research that represent the ground for collective efforts across regions.

B. STAKEHOLDERS

Beneficiaries

FONTAGRO's direct beneficiaries are its member countries, but since the main products are technologies as intra-regional public goods, the beneficiary will be any country within the region. This may induce to "free-riding", hence the need to make a plea for collective action and solidarity among all the potential members. According to the mandate of the country members, FONTAGRO pursues:

- ?? To increase the ability of the region to meet research challenges through cooperation, especially where the necessary scale of operations and skills are not easily available in just one country.

- ?? To increase the level and ensure sustainability of resources for research, particularly aimed at producing public-good type technologies of regional interest.
- ?? To encourage collaboration among research organizations within the region, between the region, and with others outside the region.
- ?? To promote quality and innovation in research through competitive funding of research projects of cross-country interests in areas defined in the Medium Term Plan 1998-2000.
- ?? To strengthen the participation of the region in decision making in fora where international agricultural research is planned and financed.

Research Partners and Owners

The Fund is set to finance its research grants from the annual income earned by its endowment fund. It allocates resources on a competitive basis according to the procedures laid out in its Manual of Operations. The Manual includes operational criteria for evaluation of proposals, which relate to the objectives of the Fund. In addition to these criteria, decision-making is guided by the following principles:

- ?? **Ownership.** The Fund is owned and directed by its member countries and development organizations contributing to its capital endowment. All subscribing countries from LAC have a basic voice in its decisions, with additional weight in voting conferred by the size of contributions. Besides all the countries of LAC as potential members, four development organizations have joined the Fund as sponsors, providing various types of support: the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC, member as well), the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).
- ?? **Inclusiveness.** Membership is open to all countries and development organizations, which subscribe to its basic principles.
- ?? **Transparency.** The decisions of the Fund are guided by transparent criteria relating to its mission and objectives.
- ?? **Universal Access.** The Fund supports research leading to the production of public goods that are freely available to all, including potential beneficiaries outside membership in the Fund. The Fund may protect the intellectual property arising from its research in order to ensure free and fair use by others.
- ?? **Integration.** Through its activities, the Fund aims to a greater integration of research among countries in the region. Because regional research has not been sufficiently developed, the Fund may engage in limited capacity building where this is needed in order to achieve greater regional collaboration.

?? Quality and Relevance. A formal process for the review of research proposals ensures their scientific quality and relevance to the goals of the Fund. There is no allocation of the Fund's resources to countries, political regions, or areas of investigation.

?? Focus. The Fund focuses on a subset of the agricultural research needs of the region as described in Medium Term Plan 1998-2000.

Organization

The Regional Fund is a cooperative program. It is not a legal entity by its own laws. Two of its sponsors, the IADB and IICA provide FONTAGRO with the needed institutional procedures and legal frame to operate. Member countries can make their contributions to the capital endowment as components of IADB loans related to the rural sector. The IADB has provided grant resources for the initial annual competitions of proposals.

C. PROJECT RESULTS AND IMPACT

Research proposals are developed and submitted to FONTAGRO by research organizations (research institutes, research networks, Universities, NGOs, and private entities) from two or more member countries. Selected projects are implemented by those organizations in partnership within the consortia (formal or informal) sending the proposals.

FONTAGRO and other Agricultural Research Mechanisms

The Regional Fund looks to strengthen existing regional and global agricultural research mechanisms. Regarding the CGIAR, FONTAGRO sees this international system as the global village research base, and involves international centers in consortia with other national and regional entities providing complementary funding for problems of LAC relevance.

Projects Under Execution and Recommended for Funding

See annex table for projects currently under execution from the 1998 Call and those recommended for funding from the 1999 Call. Funding from FONTAGRO leverages resources from the participant institutions in each consortium, through the co-funding of specific items within each budget's proposals.

D. PARTNERSHIP

Created in March 1998, temporarily under the umbrella of the IADB (until the end of 2002), the Fund has been directed by its 13-member Board of Directors and an Executive Secretary (seconded by IICA). Twelve LAC countries (their governments) pledged US\$70 million for FONTAGRO's endowment (US\$15 million have been realized), targeted at US\$200 million (to generate up to US\$15 million annually for competitive research grants of up to three years duration; each project capped at US\$500,000).

A Medium Term Plan 1998-2000 outlining priorities and a Manual of Operations specifying conditions for the acceptance, financing, and monitoring of projects, have been prepared. Two rounds of annual competitions have been launched, 1998 and 1999. From the 1998 call, 12 projects are actually under execution through IICA for a total of US\$3.0 million. Additionally, 12 await funding from the 1999 Call. Strategies for collaboration with the U.S., Canada, and Europe have been developed and launched.

E. CONCLUSION

Consolidation Stage

FONTAGRO's consolidation stage will run until the end of 2002, when the commitments of support from the IADB and IICA could come to an end. Starting year 2003, FONTAGRO's capital endowment is expected to be at least of US\$70 million, providing resources for around US\$4 million annually for project funding and expenses for the Technical Secretariat.

By the end of the consolidation stage, all the countries of LAC are expected to become members, plus the U.S. and Canada, making FONTAGRO a mechanism to promote regional agricultural research in the frame of the Americas.

Future Institutional Organization

At least during its consolidation stage, FONTAGRO is operating as a cooperative program, not as an international legal entity. There are two alternatives for the Regional Fund to endure towards the future. One is that FONTAGRO becomes an integral part of an existing international development organization. The other is to promote an independent legal entity, in the form of an Inter-American agricultural research foundation, for example, with FONTAGRO's members and sponsors as members of the new foundation.

FONTAGRO
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FONTAGRO – 1998 Call for Proposals – Technical Evaluation
(Projects currently under execution)

RANK	Title	FONTAGRO's Grant ¹	CRITERIA			
			Ec-Fin-Soc Impact (Max.: 40 pts.)	Technical Quality (Max.: 30 pts.)	Institutional Capacity (Max.: 20 pts.)	Environn Impa (Max.: 10)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Fusarium wilt in wheat	350.0	34.25	24.25	18.00	
2	Industrial quality in wheat, Southern Cone	350.0	32.25	24.25	19.75	
3	Extension research in LAC	100.0	20.00	28.25	20.00	
4	Poverty and environmental degradation in LA	300.0	26.00	24.00	18.00	
5	IPM in Andean fruit trees	250.0	28.00	22.50	15.00	
6	Maize, genetic resistance against insects	250.0	26.25	25.00	17.75	
7	Development of sweet potatoe products in AL	250.0	28.00	21.75	16.50	
8	Potatoe, industrial uses	250.0	25.25	24.25	18.00	
9	Nothofagus, genetic make up	250.0	22.50	22.00	19.75	
10	Maize, competitive zones	250.0	12.00	27.50	20.00	
11	Papaya, genetic resources	200.0	23.50	21.00	15.00	
12	Globalization and technological scenarios	200.0	30.00	16.75	17.00	

¹ Miles de US\$

FONTAGRO – 1999 Call for Proposals – Technical Evaluation
(Projects recommended for funding)

RANK	PROPOSAL		CRITERIA			
	Title	Amount Requested ¹	Ec-Fin-Soc Impact (Max: 40 pts)	Technical Quality (Max: 30 pts)	Institutional Capacity (Max: 20 pts)	Environ Imp (Max: 10)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Smilax spp in Agroforestry Systems	250.0	32.00	25.75	20.00	
2	Wheat: Durable Resistance to rusts	300.0	33.50	24.75	19.00	
3	Coffee: Variety Improvement	250.0	30.00	24.25	17.25	
4	Beans Andean Region: Variety Improvement	250.0	32.00	24.00	17.00	
5	Oil Palm: Disease Resistance	200.0	36.25	18.00	16.75	
6	Banana and Plantains: Variety Improvement	200.0	28.25	24.00	17.75	
7	Fishing in the Pacific Coastal Region	100.0	31.00	19.00	12.25	
8	IPM in Sigatoka for Plantains	150.0	28.25	21.75	14.25	
9	Potato Moth	200.0	22.50	22.50	20.00	
10	Pyricularia in Rice: Southern Cone	200.0	29.00	20.25	15.00	
11	Agrosilvo and Pasture Systems: Amazonia	200.0	21.00	22.75	16.25	
12	Biological Control in Apple Trees	200.0	21.00	19.50	18.25	

¹ Miles de US\$