



## **IICA's contribution to the development of biotechnology and biosafety in the hemisphere to achieve a more sustainable agriculture<sup>1</sup>**

**2**018 marks the 15th anniversary of the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CPB). To date, 171 countries have ratified the Cartagena Protocol and have promoted the safe handling, transfer, and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology.

As a sign of the importance of the Cartagena Protocol for countries in the Americas, the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA) entrusted the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA, resolution 386, November 2003) with the development of a plan on agricultural biotechnology and biosafety (B&B) for the hemisphere. For this reason, a working group was created, made up of experts from 14 countries of the Americas and IICA, which as a result generated a “Hemispheric Program” that defined the Institute’s technical cooperation in B&B.

For almost 15 years, IICA has obtained concrete results in B&B represented in: (i) accompaniment and advice to the governments of the member countries in the creation and development of regulatory and institutional frameworks and in the formulation of policies and strategies for B&B; (ii) support for the creation or strengthening of regional B&B initiatives such as the Initiative for Central America in B&B (ICABB), Group 5 of the Southern Agricultural Council (G5-CAS), the Low-level Presence (LLP) Global Initiative (GLI); (iii) support for technical-scientific capacity building processes in B&B in selected countries; (iv) the delivery of objective, clear and transparent information on the benefits

and risks of biotechnology; and (v) support to member countries to participate in negotiations on B&B. All this has been achieved in partnership with universities (from Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, the United States, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela), with various research institutions, with public regulatory agencies and National Commissions of Biosafety, with the private sector and in coordination with the 34 IICA offices.

To date, several are the international workshops and courses that IICA has organized to contribute to capacity building, including those related to the identification of needs and information exchange in the countries (Ecuador, 2005) and in diverse topics such as low-level presence (Argentina, 2012; Costa Rica, 2013), risk assessment (Costa Rica, 2013), biotechnology for regulatory decision-makers in Central America (Costa Rica, 2014), synthetic biology (Costa Rica, 2017), and genome editing (Colombia, 2018). In addition, preparatory meetings (the next in October 2018) have been held for the last six Conference of the Parties (MOP). The MOP9 will be held in Sharm El-Sheikh (Egypt), from November 17 to 29, 2018.

In this way, IICA has contributed to the regulatory development that has led the Western Hemisphere to be the undisputed leader in the use of modern biotechnology. In the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the PCB, a transition from a period of learning to one of consolidation is recognized. From IICA we hope to continue accompanying this process.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pedro J. Rocha S., Ph.D., International Specialist in Biotechnology and Biosafety, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), E-mail: [pedro.rocha@iica.int](mailto:pedro.rocha@iica.int)