

**Forty-First Regular Meeting  
of the Executive Committee**

**REPORT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN  
COMMISSION FOR ORGANIC  
AGRICULTURE**

**2020-2021**

**May 2021**

**San Jose, Costa Rica**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

In 2007, the “First Meeting of Competent Authorities on Organic Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean” was held in the city of Managua, Nicaragua. The meeting was attended by the Competent Control Authorities (CCAs)<sup>1</sup> from 16 countries in the region who resolved to create the Network of Competent Authorities on Organic Agriculture of Latin America and the Caribbean. This network was the first immediate antecedent of the Inter-American Commission for Organic Agriculture (ICOA).

ICOA was established as a Special Commission by the Ministers of Agriculture of the Americas by means of Resolution IICA/CE/Res.484 (XXVIII-O08) entitled “Coordination Mechanisms for the Development of Organic Agriculture in the Americas”, issued by the Twenty-Eighth Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee (EC) of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), held in 2008. At that same meeting, the Ministers of Agriculture entrusted IICA with the responsibility and management of ICOA’s Executive Secretariat (ES) and tasked it with drafting a bylaws proposal in collaboration with the CCAs of the Commission’s Member States. In 2009, in fulfillment of this mandate, the ES/ICOA presented the bylaws proposal to the Twenty-Ninth Regular Meeting of the EC of IICA, which was approved by means of Resolution No. IICA/CE/Res.506 (XXIX-O09) and later ratified by the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA) by means of Resolution No. IICA/JIA/Res. 455 (XV-O09) at its Fifteenth Regular Meeting, thereby creating the first official regional organization dedicated to organic agriculture.

In keeping with Article 29, paragraph 1, of the Bylaws of ICOA, and by means of Agreement No. 2 of the Fifth Regular General Assembly of ICOA held in Santiago, Chile (May of 2013), the Commission approved its Operating Regulations, Article 7 of which establishes that all Member States of ICOA will contribute an annual sum of six thousand US dollars (USD 6,000.00) to finance the annual work plan and administrative activities.

In furtherance of the IABA’s mandate and building on the efforts of IICA and ICOA in previous years, in 2015, the Competent Development Authorities (CDAs)<sup>2</sup> on Organic Agriculture were invited to take part in the Seventh General Assembly of ICOA. This initial group of CDAs signed a founding charter by means of Agreement No. 2 of the General Minutes, contributing to the formulation of the strategic pillars to support the development of organic agriculture in the hemisphere.

With the aim to establish a legal framework to promote cooperation between IICA and ICOA to implement the actions established in the agenda and work plans, in March of 2014, the two institutions signed the 1st Cooperation Agreement. A second agreement was signed for the period encompassing October 2019 to October 2021, in which IICA and ICOA established the new guidelines for cooperation. Over the seven years that IICA has supported ICOA, the Commission has taken actions that have advanced the development of its markets and national organic production control systems, improved the management of information and know-how, and promoted actions and policies to develop and promote organic production.

Today, 19 countries in the Americas are Full Members of ICOA, all of which have organic production control agencies and standards regulating the activity. These include: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Canada has participated in the General Assemblies as an Observer. Currently, Ecuador (Chair), Bolivia, Mexico, Brazil, and the Technical Cooperation Division of IICA (TCD/IICA) sit on ICOA’s Board of Directors (BOD). In 2017 and 2018, Spain and Portugal, respectively, were incorporated into the Commission as

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<sup>1</sup> The Competent Control Authorities (CCAs) on organic agriculture are the individual agencies responsible for ensuring implementation and compliance of the technical standards regulating the activity and for guaranteeing the organic status of the products of their respective countries. Their duties include registering producers, processors, vendors, input producers, inspectors, and agencies that certify organic production, auditing these agencies, and maintaining records on the activity.

<sup>2</sup> The Competent Development Authorities (CDAs) on organic production are the agencies dedicated to the development, promotion, and advancement of the organic sector.

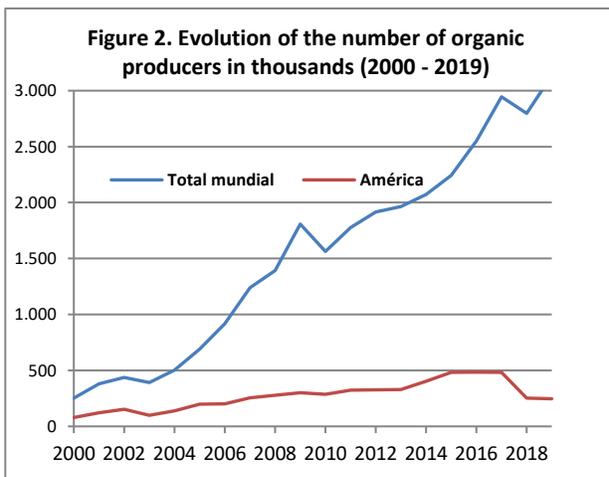
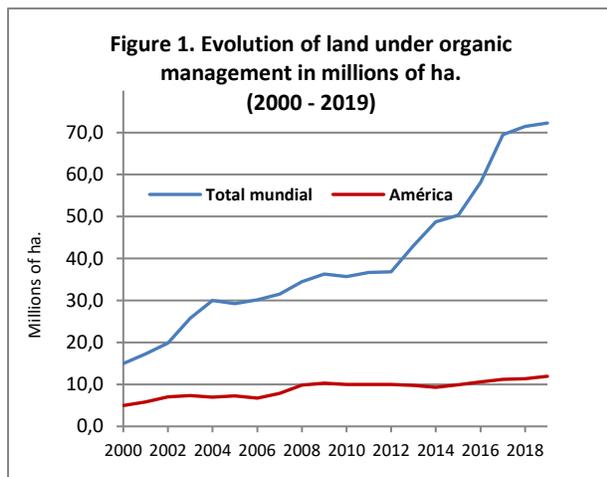
Permanent Observers. Today, ICOA has agreements with key international players in the sector, including: OIRSA, FiBL, IFOAM, and, from the private sector, INTERECO and Ecovalia (Spain).

The new cooperation agreement with IICA, as well as the current needs of ICOA, compelled the Institute to participate as a permanent member of the Commission's Board of Directors. This change was approved at a Special Meeting of ICOA held in July of 2019. This, along with the need to introduce new institutional and organizational changes within ICOA, necessitated a modification of the Bylaws. At its Fortieth Regular Meeting, it was requested that the Executive Committee of IICA task its Director General with arranging the necessary procedures. The request was accepted by means of Resolution No. IICA/CE/Res. 668 (XL-O/20) and so in 2020, the Member States of ICOA, with the support of the Office of the Director General (DG) and IICA's Legal, International Affairs and Protocol Unit, worked to draft the new Bylaws, which were approved by the Countries on February 1, 2021.

In fulfillment of the provisions of Article 3, paragraph m, of its Bylaws, ICOA hereby submits this report to the Executive Committee of IICA at its Forty-First Regular Meeting.

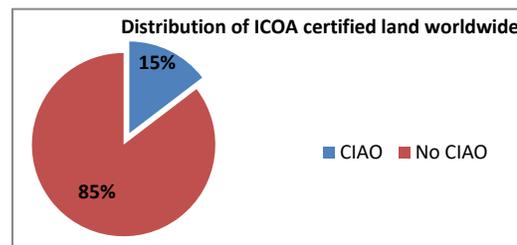
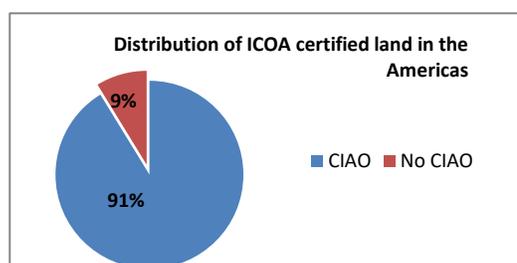
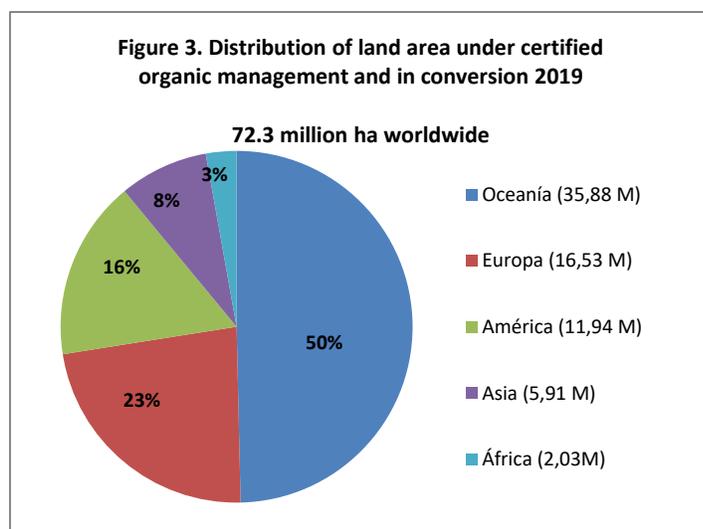
## 2. ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN THE AMERICAS AND THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

According to the annual report *The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics & Emerging Trends 2021* (FiBL-IFOAM<sup>3</sup>, 2021), the upward trend of certified organic land and number of producers worldwide has continued to rise since the beginning of the records in the 90s, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.



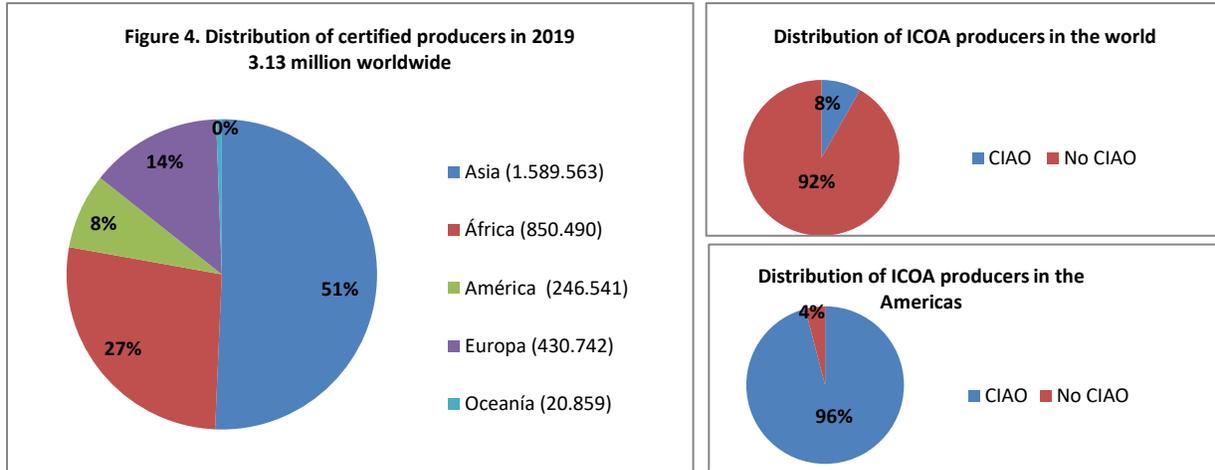
In 2019 (most recent data), close to 72.3 million hectares were registered as certified organic land and land in conversion, representing 1.5% of total productive lands. It is estimated that the activity engages 3.31 million producers, of which approximately 80% are from developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The countries of the Americas possess 11.94 million hectares under organic management, representing 16% of the total land area dedicated to this type of production worldwide. Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) represent 8.29 million hectares, while the United States and Canada possess 3.64 million. ICOA Member States represent 91% of the land area dedicated to organic production in the Americas and 15% of the total land area worldwide (Figure 3).



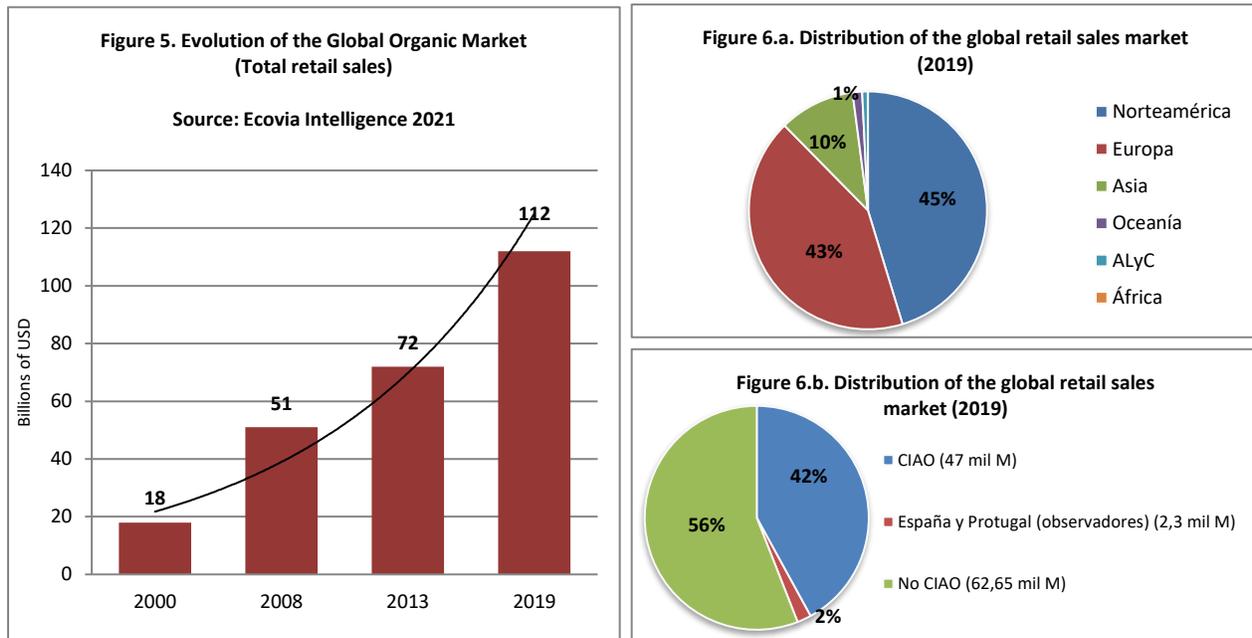
<sup>3</sup> FiBL: Forschungsinstitut für biologischen Landbau (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Switzerland). IFOAM: International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.

Additionally, there are over 246,000 organic producers<sup>4</sup> in the Americas, representing 8% of total producers worldwide. 96% of producers in the Americas are from ICOA Member States (Figure 4).



It is estimated that in 2019, over USD 112 billion were generated in terms of domestic sales,<sup>5</sup> representing a solid year-over-year growth of over 10% (Figure 5).

As of 2019, the United States has the highest sales volume with approximately USD 50 billion, representing, together with Canada, 45% of the global total. They are followed by the European market with 43% (Figure 6.a.)



<sup>4</sup> There are challenges in terms of the number of producers in some countries given that some sources provide information on all producers, including the individual members of producer groups, while others provide information only on certified groups as a whole. The case of Mexico was particularly challenging, where prior to 2020, the data is provided by unofficial sources (certifiers and other organizations) whose criteria differ from the country's Competent Authority. Starting in 2020, the country now reports the number of operators (including individual producers and groups of small producers). This resulted in a significant drop in the number of organic producers in Mexico and Latin America in general. This change in criteria also affected the global number of organic producers: there are almost 150,000 registered producers, or 5 percent fewer than in 2017. However, on the remaining continents, with the exception of Africa, the number of producers has increased.

<sup>5</sup> Ecovia Intelligence

Figure 6.b. shows that 42% of the global market total is contained within ICOA Member States primarily due to the weight of the United States retail market. LAC's domestic market is still emerging and represents approximately 1% of the global total. While there is greater awareness today of sustainable and healthy production, the region maintains a strong profile as a supplier of raw materials to the more developed markets. The exception in the region is Brazil, which shows strong domestic market development as a contribution to food security and family agriculture.

### 3. ICOA FINANCIAL REPORT

ICOA has an annual budget to finance the activities approved by its Assembly and detailed in its annual work plan. These resources are contributed by the Member States. At the Fifth Regular Assembly of ICOA, the representatives of the Member States approved the Commission's Operating Regulations, which establish the following commitments regarding payment of the annual fee:

- Art. 6: ICOA's main resources will come from the fees contributed by the Member States.
- Art. 7: ICOA Member States will contribute USD 6.000,00 annually to finance the annual work plan and administrative activities.
- Art. 10: The fee must be paid within the first quarter of each calendar year and will finance the annual work plan for that calendar year. Implementation of the annual work plan is conditional on the timely payment of this fee and any delay would compel the Board of Directors to rethink the work plan.

In order to regulate certain administrative matters and handling of the annual fee contributed by ICOA Member States, by means of Virtual Meeting Minutes No. 2 in 2014, ICOA's BOD approved the Procedures Handbook to support administration of the resources contributed under the agreement signed with IICA for that purpose.

As of May 19, ICOA's financial balance is shown in **Table 1** below. **Table 2** details the fees contributed by the Member States.

<b>Table 1. REF: T-003719-01-USD / FUND: T3D01 FINANCIAL BALANCE in USD as of April 6, 2021</b>		
<b>ICOA</b>	<b>(+) REGULAR INCOME CONTRIBUTED BY THE COUNTRIES (USD)</b>	<b>(-) PROJECT EXPENSES (USD)</b>
<b>2014</b>	24,000	7,381.57
<b>2015</b>	24,000	6,087.03
<b>2016</b>	65,750.80	23,262.67
<b>2017</b>	42,031.97	23,621.15
<b>2018</b>	66,000	25,949.26
<b>2019</b>	41,515.32	26,622.41
<b>2020</b>	53,944.66	17,013.19
<b>2021</b>	0	2,267.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>317,242.75</b>	<b>132,204.28</b>
<b>BALANCE</b>		<b>USD 185,038.47</b>

**Table 2. CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED as of April 6, 2021**

COUNTRY	FEES (1) 2014-2021	CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED									BALANCE	Years owed (2)	
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total			
Argentina	48,000.00	6,000.00		6,000.00							12,000.00	36,000.00	2016-21
Bolivia	48,000.00										0.00	48,000.00	2014-21
Brazil	48,000.00										0.00	48,000.00	2014-21
Chile (4)	48,000.00				6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	5,356.40			23,356.40	24,643.60	2014-16, 2021
Colombia (6)	48,000.00										0.00	48,000.00	2014-21
Costa Rica (5)	48,000.00										0.00	48,000.00	2014-21
Dominican Republic	48,000.00						11,515.32				11,515.32	36,484.68	2016-21
Ecuador	48,000.00	6,000.00		12,000.00	6,000.00		6,000.00	6,000.00			36,000.00	12,000.00	2019-21
El Salvador	48,000.00										0.00	48,000.00	2014-21
Guatemala	48,000.00					30,000.00		12,000.00			42,000.00	6,000.00	2019-21
Honduras	48,000.00										0.00	48,000.00	2014-21
Mexico	48,000.00		12,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00					30,000.00	18,000.00	2019-21
Nicaragua	48,000.00	6,000.00		17,750.80		6,000.00		12,000.00			41,750.80	6,249.20	2019-21
Panama	48,000.00			12,000.00	12,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00			42,000.00	6,000.00	2020-21
Paraguay	48,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,031.97	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00			42,031.97	5,968.03	2021
Peru	48,000.00										0.00	48,000.00	2014-21
USA (3)	48,000.00	n/a	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00			36,000.00	12,000.00	2021
Uruguay	48,000.00										0.00	48,000.00	2014-21
Venezuela	48,000.00										0.00	48,000.00	2014-21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>912,000.00</b>	<b>24,000.00</b>	<b>24,000.00</b>	<b>65,750.80</b>	<b>42,031.97</b>	<b>66,000.00</b>	<b>41,515.32</b>	<b>53,944.66</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>317,242.75</b>	<b>588,757.25</b>		

(1) Annual fee of USD 6,000.00

(2) The contributions received are applied to the oldest delinquency first.

(3) The United States was incorporated into ICOA in 2015.

(4) At the Tenth General Assembly, Chile informed that its fees are calculated as 2017 and 2016, clarifying that the country cannot pay retroactive fees. The issue is being reviewed by BOD/ICOA.

(5) By means of Letter DSFE-0479-2019 dated June 13, 2019, Costa Rica requested exclusion from the list of debtors given that no agreement exists with ICOA that supports payment of the fee. The issue is being reviewed by BOD/ICOA.

(6) By means of Letter 20201700178971 dated September 14, 2020, Colombia expressed the nonexistence of legal grounds and consent regarding the contribution to ICOA.

#### **4. 2020/21 RESULTS AND ONGOING ACTIONS**

##### **1. INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING OF ICOA**

###### **1. 2nd Special Meeting of ICOA:**

In October of 2020, the Second Special Meeting of ICOA was held virtually due to the inability to hold in-person meetings as a result of the restrictions placed by the Countries in response to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Fourteen Member States were in attendance (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay) and two Permanent Observers (Spain and Portugal). Representatives of Ecovalia, INTERECO, IFOAM, FiBL, FAO, OIRSA, and IOIA were also in attendance.

The Assembly approved the activity report for the period encompassing 2019-2020, as well as the proposed Annual Work Plan for 2020-21. 8. BOD/ICOA Ratification. Moreover, by means of Agreement No. 6 of the Minutes, it was agreed to extend the terms of all BOD/ICOA members until the Twelfth Regular Annual Assembly scheduled for the second half of 2021 in Brasilia, Brazil.

###### **2. Modification of ICOA Bylaws and Operating Regulations [Resolution IICA/CE/Res. 668 (XL-O/20)]:**

At the Tenth General Assembly of ICOA (Cusco, August 2018), the Technical Cooperation Division of IICA informed that the Institute was in the process of reorganizing its technical cooperation mechanisms in order to integrate them into the new Medium-Term Plan (MTP) approved by the EC/IICA. In furtherance thereof, and in the particular case of ICOA, IICA's Technical Cooperation Division informed the General Assembly that as a condition of signing a new IICA-ICOA Agreement, the Commission would need to assume the operating costs of the ES/ICOA, as well as give IICA both a voice and a vote in the decision-making spaces of the BOD/ICOA. These conditions would need to be reflected in the new IICA-ICOA Agreement and new ICOA Bylaws.

In accordance with Article 6, paragraph 2, of the Bylaws of ICOA, on April 8, 2019, the BOD/ICOA convened a Special Meeting of Member States for May 13, 2019, to express the reasons for the modification to ICOA's Bylaws and to submit to a vote the general guidelines for the modification pursuant to Article 13, paragraph 1, of the Bylaws. Upon the conclusion thereof and by means of Letter dated July 3 in Quito, the Chair of the BOD/ICOA informed the Office of the Director General of IICA of the result of the vote, which was in favor of IICA's request.

In view of the foregoing, at its Fortieth Regular Meeting (July 2020), it was requested that the Executive Committee of IICA task its Director General with making the necessary changes to the Bylaws, in collaboration with ICOA Member States, adapting them to the new needs of the countries that comprise the Commission and IICA. The request was accepted by means of Resolution No. IICA/CE/Res. 668 (XL-O/20) and so in 2020, the Member States of ICOA, with the support of the Legal, International Affairs and Protocol Unit, the Secretariat of Governing Bodies, the Office of the Director General, and the Technical Cooperation Division of IICA (by mandate of the Director General), worked together to draft the new Bylaws, which were approved by the Countries on February 1, 2021.

In compliance with the mandate, ICOA puts to the consideration of the Executive Committee at its Forty-First Regular Meeting the proposed Bylaws of ICOA (ANNEX I).

### **3. ICOA 2030 Strategic Plan:**

The Strategic Plan is the product of the collaboration and participation of the countries through their Competent Development and Control Authorities. The purpose of the initiative is plan and guide ICOA's actions based on the goals established and with the view to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The Plan is arranged as follows: 1. Current Situation (which includes important information on organic production in ICOA countries and, for the first time, an ICOA-led survey of statistics on the organic sector); 2. Future Scenario; 3: Vision, Mission, Strategic Objectives, Indicators, and Goals; and 4. Action Plan including the 2020-2025 Medium-Term Plan.

The Strategic Plan was submitted along with ICOA's Report to the EC/IICA in July of 2020 and was approved by means of Resolution IICA/CE/Res. 668 (XL-O/20). Subsequently, at the Second Special Assembly of ICOA, the Member Countries worked to determine seven indicators of achievement along with their respective baselines in 2020 and targets for 2030: (i.) Number of institutionalized areas (Development and Control) in the countries in the region; (ii.) Number of equivalencies, recognitions, and/or agreements in force between the countries in or outside the region; (iii.) Total area in hectares under certified organic management (complete and in conversion) in the region; (iv.) Number of organic operators (primary producers, handlers/processors, and vendors) in the region; (v.) Number of organic handlers/processors in the region; (vi.) Consolidation of the organicity of producer groups and other associative forms (primary and industrial) in the organic sector; and (vii.) Total exports of organic products from the countries in the region (in tons).

### **4. New Agreements with Strategic Partners:**

In addition to the Agreements with key players in the organic sector, including FiBL, IFOAM, Ecovalia, INTERECO, and other organizations, like OIRSA, the following cooperation instruments were signed during the reporting period:

#### **4.1. Framework Agreement for Interinstitutional Cooperation between the Municipal Government of Santa Clara do Sul, Brazil; the Regional Government of Huancavelica, Peru; and IICA**

- The Agreement is intended to further actions to enable joint projects for the purpose of contributing to strengthening the parties and positioning them as benchmarks for the development of organic production; increasing the number of regions incorporated into the organic production system as examples of sustainable social, productive, commercial, and environmental production; and positioning organic agriculture as an innovative production system that contributes to gender and youth inclusion.

The signing of the agreement was followed by 2,234 people across 16 countries in the Americas, as well as Spain, through the different social networking sites and platforms where it was transmitted directly.

#### **4.2. Memorandum of Understanding between Access Agriculture and ICOA**

- Access Agriculture is an independent, international, non-profit organization that serves as a global facilitator for the translation, distribution, and use of high-quality educational videos to help train farmers on organic and ecological agriculture, natural resource management, and markets in developing countries. The parties signed a cooperation agreement to work on common goals through the implementation of projects and actions related to the dissemination, exchange, and promotion of sustainability, the environment, rural development, and certified organic, ecological, and biological production.

## **2. STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF ICOA COUNTRIES**

### **1. ICOA Work Groups**

During the 2020 and 2021 period, ICOA worked on the following work groups:

#### **1.1. Producer Groups and Internal Control Systems:**

- Spearheaded by Peru, a questionnaire was prepared on the costs of Internal Control Systems (ICS). Peru designed an ICS matrix to compare its regulations in terms of requirements and costs with those of other ICOA countries. Information was gathered from Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, and Mexico.
- Two conferences on certification systems for the domestic market were held with the support and particular interest of ICOA's Development group. Bolivia, Mexico, Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, and Peru presented on the characteristics of these systems as Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS).

#### **1.2. Inputs suitable for organic production:**

- Based on the terms of reference defined by Chile, Argentina, and Mexico for creating a consultancy to standardize procedures for evaluating and authorizing inputs in organic production, the BOD/ICOA, along with IICA and within the framework of the South-South Cooperation (G-77, UN), will present a project to the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund to finance the consultancy to draft a document entitled "Recommendations for Standardizing the Evaluation of Inputs Permitted in Organic Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture, and Processing for ICOA Countries".

#### **1.3. Organic integrity:**

- The United States proposed forming a work group for the purpose of exchanging information and best practices on organic integrity management among the ICOA Competent Authorities and examining opportunities for collaboration to strengthen control and enforcement in the region.
- Activation of the group was scheduled for the 2020/21 period under the coordination of the United States.

#### **1.4. Regulation EU 848/2018 and analysis of supplementary documents:**

- With the coordination of Ecuador and the participation of Argentina, Peru, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Paraguay, Chile, Panama, Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Brazil, the countries of ICOA worked on examining the Supplementary Regulations to Regulation EU 848/2018 in order to issue a regional consensus position, particularly on the topic of producer groups. Countries that have already issued individual opinions will share the information to help define ICOA's official position in consideration of Notification 738 of the European Union communicating the entry into force of Regulation 848/2018 in January of 2022.
- Within the framework of this work group, a videoconference was organized at the request of Honduras for support in issuing its opinion. The support was provided by Ecuador.

### 1.5. Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) USDA/NOP:

- The ES/ICOA proposed forming a work group to prepare the comments on the proposed "Strengthening Organic Enforcement" (SOE) Regulations, given that the new regulations would introduce important to changes to topics of interest for ICOA countries, such as the certification of producer groups. Mexico, Argentina, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Peru, and Ecuador responded to the invitation.
- To start, the ES/ICOA drafted a brief document based on Docket Number AMS-NOP-17-0065. The document summarized the proposed Regulations and gave instructions for making comments. It also contained supporting information for a full analysis, including a video with Spanish subtitles on ICOA's YouTube channel and a comparison between the proposed and current Regulations, among others.
- Countries that issued comments individually within the period established by the USDA (10/05) will share them with the ES/ICOA to set the foundation for the Commission's position. Ecuador prepared a detailed document covering the possible implications for the country and text proposals to present to the USDA. It was proposed to use this document as the foundation and for ICOA countries to incorporate their own observations, which would then be sent as the official response of ICOA (while the deadline for sending observations via NOP was October 5, 2020, an extension will be requested so as to continue working on the document and send it as ICOA's official position).

### 1.6. ICOA Competent Development Authorities:

- The Competent Development Authorities Group spearheaded the design of **ICOA's Strategic Plan**.
- After a number of planning sessions intended to strengthen the network of ICOA countries and to make progress in solving the problems that restrict the development of organic agriculture and promote the creation of public development policies, the Group held the "1st Meeting of Competent Development Authorities of ICOA Countries (Virtual)" on September 29-October 1, 2020. The meeting was motivated by the Development Group lead by Argentina (collaborators include Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Brazil, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Paraguay, Panama, and Spain) and included the participation of Ecovalia, INTERECO, FIBL, and IFOAM. The conclusions of the three sessions will be presented to the General Assembly to help form a joint strategy.
- Additionally, two conferences on "**Certification systems for the domestic market**" were held in which Bolivia, Mexico, Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, and Peru presented on the characteristics of these systems as PGSs.

### 1.7. Waste in organic production:

- The work group is coordinated by Chile (SAG) and includes the participation of Honduras (SENASA), Nicaragua (IPSA), Peru (SENASA), Uruguay (DGSA/MGAP), and Mexico (SENASICA/SADER).
- The group's general objectives are to draft a base regulation/procedure handbook/protocol to serve as a reference for the countries on how to proceed with handling waste, including related notifications. The group's Member Countries will analyze the document entitled "GENERAL STANDARD FOR CONTAMINANTS AND TOXINS PRESENT IN FOOD AND FEED" (CODEX STAN 193-1995) as a possible baseline to agree on the common criteria and definitions of "waste", and will research other references to waste in other documents and/or current regulations (IFOAM, USDA/NOP, Reg. 848, etc.).

### **1.8. Organic production promotion law:**

- With the coordination of Argentina (MAGyP) and the participation of Chile (ODEPA/MinAgri), Costa Rica (MAG), Honduras (SENASA), Peru (SENASA, DGA/MIDAGR, and CONAPO), and Mexico (SENASICA/SADER), the work group aims to define general criteria on national and/or regional promotion laws for the purpose of developing similar initiatives in ICOA countries in accordance with the strategies of the individual countries.

## **2. Cooperation with other Institutions:**

### **2.1. Ecovalia:**

- **“Health and Organic Production”** Virtual Webinar Cycle, May 14, 21 and 29.

Three virtual seminars to position organic agriculture to meet consumer demands given the shift in eating habits. The sessions were organized by ICOA, IICA, and Ecovalia, with the participation of international presenters and the cooperation of FiBL, FAO, IFOAM, the Polytechnic University of Valencia, the Regional University Hospital of Málaga, SENASAG (Bolivia), SENASICA (Mexico), AGROCALIDAD (Ecuador), and the Rodale Institute (United States) The three sessions totaled over 66,000 views across the ICOA’s social networking sites.

- **International Refresher Seminar on “Animal Welfare and Phytotherapy in Organic Livestock”**, March 23, 2021.

Organized by IICA, ICOA, and Ecovalia, with the collaboration of the Spanish National Research Council, Spain (CSIC); the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Switzerland (FiBL); and the University of Sevilla, Spain, attached to EEZ-CSIC (Granada). The seminar provided information on the most recent advances based on studies of the effects of phytotherapy on animal health and welfare, addressed the use of animal welfare and veterinary herbal medicine in ecological/organic production, and opened a space for exchange and reflection to address future topics specific to animal welfare, phytotherapy, and ecological/organic animal production. The seminar reached over 14,000 viewers across the different platforms.

- Cooperation and assistance in designing and executing virtual conferences (VCs), including the “1st Meeting of Competent Development Authorities of ICOA Countries (Virtual)”;
- workshops on “Certification Systems for the Domestic Market”;
- VC on “Organic Agriculture: Challenges and Opportunities”;
- and VC on “Waste in Organic Agriculture CIAO - FiBL - MAPA - Ecovalia”.

### **2.2. INTERECO:**

- Technical cooperation and training for ICOA countries on public certification systems.
- Cooperation and assistance in designing and executing VCs, including the “1st Meeting of Competent Development Authorities of ICOA Countries (Virtual)” and workshops on “Certification Systems for the Domestic Market”.

### **2.3. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of Spain:**

- Cooperation and assistance in designing and executing VCs, including the “1st Meeting of Competent Development Authorities of ICOA Countries (Virtual)”;
- workshops on “Certification Systems for the Domestic Market”;
- and VC on “Waste in Organic Agriculture CIAO - FiBL - MAPA - Ecovalia”.

#### 2.4. Organic Food Iberia (OFI):

- ICOA countries were incorporated into OFI with special benefits for their participation in OFI 2020. We collaborated actively in organizing the 2nd edition of OFI, which has been postponed to 2021 in response to the pandemic.

#### 2.5. International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA):

- A training was provided on **remote inspections** by IOIA specialists (06/15/2020) with the participation of 72 public servants from the SNC of 18 ICOA Member States and Observers. An official IOIA-ICOA certificate was awarded.
- **Spanish-language remote inspections website:** Reciprocal cooperation between IOIA and ICOA to launch the Spanish-language organic agriculture remote inspections website. Two public servants from the CCAs of each ICOA Member Country will have exclusive access. IOIA is set to offer another training on the subject.

#### 2.6. FiBL

- **Data collection:** Within the framework of the current Agreement, we collaborated with FiBL to collect data on organic production in ICOA countries. The countries that responded to the invitation were Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic.
- Webinar on “**Waste in Organic Agriculture CIAO - FiBL - MAPA - Ecovalia**” July 15, 2020.

Within the framework of the cooperation agreement between FiBL and ICOA, the topic of waste in organic agriculture was identified as an important issue for ICOA countries. By means of a webinar, it was agreed to share the results of research conducted by FiBL over the past 20 years, as well as the experiences of MAPA, INTERECO, and Ecovalia. The webinar included the participation of the Competent Authorities of ICOA Member States. Outcome: 17 ICOA countries updated their knowledge of the problem of waste in organic agriculture.

### 3. Horizontal Cooperation:

#### 3.1. ICOA-Mexico:

- “**Organic Agriculture: Challenges and Opportunities**” Webinar, July 17, 2020.

Mexico updated their regulations for the organic operation of agriculture. Motivated by this change, it proposed holding a webinar on organic agriculture and invited countries with related standards to share their experiences. ICOA and SENASICA/SADER organized the event and presentations were made by SENASICA (Mexico), SENASA (Argentina), MAPA (Brazil), AGROCALIDAD (Ecuador), the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (Portugal), and Ecovalia (Spain). The Seminar was viewed by 40,000 people across ICOA’s social networks.

#### 3.2. ICOA-Guatemala:

- **1st Virtual Seminar on Organic Agriculture: “Health and Benefits”**, September 7-10, 2020.

At Guatemala’s request, the Department of Organic Agriculture (DOA) of the Directorate of Phytozoogenetics and Native Resources of Guatemala’s Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock

(MAGA), in collaboration with the Taiwan Technical Mission in Guatemala, ICOA, IICA, Ecovalia (Spain), FiBL (Switzerland), Guatemala's National Commission for Ecological Agriculture (CNAE), and the Polytechnic University of Valencia, organized an important regional cycle of four webinars on organic agriculture, which received a total of 50,000 views across the social networking sites.

### 3.3. ICOA/Ecuador-Honduras:

- Within the framework of the work group on **Reg. EU 848/2018** and analysis of supplementary documents, a video conference was held at the request of Honduras to support the country in issuing its observations. The support was provided by Ecuador.

### 3.4. ICOA-Ecuador:

- **Virtual Business Roundtable “Ecuador: Global bioexporter”**, October 5-8, 2020.

The event was organized by the Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade, Investment and Fisheries (MPCEIP) - PROECUADOR through its Trade Offices in Europe, IICA, the National Association of Food and Beverage Manufacturers (ANFAB), and the Autonomous Decentralized Government of the Province of Manabí (GADPM) with the support of AGROCALIDAD, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG), and ICOA.

The purpose of the event was to create a space for trade in the midst of the worldwide travel restrictions placed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to continue positioning the country and its export offering to generate potential contacts in the European market.

The event was transmitted via the social networking sites and included the participation of the highest authorities of the different collaborators. The event had four main parts: 1. INAUGURATION of the Business Roundtable; 2. Live COOKING SHOW with chef Pancho Román; 3. VIRTUAL TASTING of organic products from Ecuador; and 4. "ORGANIC PRODUCTS: HEALTH AND NUTRITION" forum.

During the months of August and September 2020, five coaching sessions were held with the collaboration of MAPA (Spain), Ecovalia, and AGROCALIDAD to prepare the producers for the Business Roundtable event.

- **3rd International Congress on Organic Production in Ecuador**, October 14-16, 2020.

The event was broken down into three sessions: “Consumption, the environment and health”; “Market and social impacts”; and “Innovation in the value chain”. It was intended to increase the consumption of organic products and support organic operators by strengthening their technical and trade capabilities to promote organic production and recognition at the national and international levels.

The third edition was organized by AGROCALIDAD, IICA, and ICOA with the support of GIZ (German Corporation for International Cooperation), Ecovalia, FAO, INIAP, IFOAM, and the Polytechnic University of Valencia.

### 3.5. ICOA/IICA Argentina-Peru (Huancavelica)-Brazil (Santa Clara do Sul):

- **South-South Cooperation** on projects to strengthen and position the regions as models of organic production in accordance with an agreement signed between the three parties that acknowledges the role of subnational governments in promoting organic agriculture.

The “*Santa Clara Mais Saudável*” program of the municipality of Santa Clara do Sul is intended to foster a culture of production and consumption of healthy, pesticide-free foods. For its part, the regional Andean government implemented the “Huancavelica Organic Region” program with the aim to increase Peru’s land area under organic management, reduce the poverty rate, increase producer income, and improve the quality of life of the communities in the region. IICA, through its representatives in Argentina, Brazil, and Peru, and with the cooperation of the Inter-American Commission for Organic Agriculture (ICOA), provided support by identifying success stories to share and will coordinate and facilitate the technical inputs necessary to develop organic activity. Areas of cooperation include certification for international markets, adoption of new technologies, support for participation in Madrid’s Organic Food Iberia 2021, relationships with universities, and introduction of the bio-based economy as a tool to improve productivity and resources use.

### 3.6. ICOA/IICA-Argentina:

- **International Business Roundtable:** IICA in Argentina, at the request of the Argentine Movement for Organic Production (MAPO), is organizing a business roundtable of Argentine organic products for the purpose of increasing the number of products and sales volume in familiar markets and to explore new regional markets. To that end, it is collaborating with the Agency of International Trade and Investment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Argentina, with the support of IICA’s International Trade and Regional Integration Program.
- **Federal Penitentiary Service organic production projects (Colonia Penal de Ezeiza (U.19)):** Based on an original organic garden pilot project conducted in 2019 at Colonia Penal de Ezeiza (U.19) prison, part of the Federal Penitentiary Service, to supply the prison community with safe, risk-free (chemical and/or microbiological), healthy, nutritious, fresh, seasonal, and quality foods, a new project was proposed to supplement and diversify production. This new project, called *Gírgolas Orgánicas y Gusano de Seda (Sericultura)* [organic mushrooms and silk worms (sericulture)], will be considered a work skills development and acquisition initiative for the prison population through activities and training content within the framework of a Social Responsibility program. The institutions involved include the Federal Penitentiary Service, the Agency for Cooperation with the Penitentiary Service (ENCOPE), the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights of the Nation, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, the National Agricultural Technology Institute (INTA), and the National Industrial Technology Institute (INTI). The signing of a Cooperation Agreement between the parties is being coordinated.

## 4. ICOA Website and Social Networks:

- ICOA and its actions were communicated with a wide network of global contacts; traffic to the website increased; we contributed to consumer, press, and producer knowledge of the characteristics of organic products; and collaborated in managing knowledge on organic agriculture.
- Currently, ICOA maintains four social network profiles with:
  - A total of 10,324 followers, representing a 30% increase as compared to the last reporting period;
  - A total of 1,267 posts across the social networks;
  - The live transmission of five virtual events with a total of 168,550 views;
  - The publication of 15 ICOA bulletins entitled “Inforgánica” (January 2020-March 2021); and
  - The periodic publication of 45 pieces of information on organic agriculture on the website, social networks, and Newsletter.
- Reach of the events transmitted by ICOA:

<b>“Health and Organic Production” Seminar, May 14, 21, 29, 2020</b>				
Transmitted via IICA’s Virtual Meeting Room and ICOA’s YouTube channel				
Reach in number of views on social networks	Webinar Total	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube
1 <sup>st</sup> Webinar	21,371	10,492	8,789	2,090
2 <sup>nd</sup> Webinar	19,913	9,738	8,321	1,854
3 <sup>rd</sup> Webinar	20,404	9,841	8,652	1,911
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>61,688</b>	<b>30,071</b>	<b>25,762</b>	<b>5,855</b>

<b>“Organic Agriculture: Challenges and Opportunities”, July 17, 2020</b>	
Transmitted via IICA’s Virtual Meeting Room and ICOA’s YouTube channel	
FACEBOOK	17,873
TWITTER	15,986
YOUTUBE	6,218
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>40,077</b>

<b>1st Virtual Seminar on Organic Agriculture, “Health and Benefits”, September 7-10, 2020</b>				
Transmitted via ICOA’s YouTube channel and MAGA’s Facebook Live				
Reach in number of views on social networks	Session Total	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube
1 <sup>st</sup> Session	13,968	6,534	5,245	2,189
2 <sup>nd</sup> Session	11,403	5,479	4,486	1,438
3 <sup>rd</sup> Session	12,015	5,691	4,789	1,535
4 <sup>th</sup> Session	12,901	5,825	5,022	2,054
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>50,287</b>	<b>23,529</b>	<b>19,542</b>	<b>7,216</b>

<b>Participation in Signing of the Cooperation Framework Agreement between the Municipality of Santa Clara Do Sul, the regional government of Huancavelica, and IICA, March 4, 2021</b>	
Transmitted via ICOA’s YouTube channel	
Facebook	1,236
Twitter	789
YouTube	177
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>2,202</b>

<b>International Refresher Seminar on “Animal Welfare and Phytotherapy in Organic Livestock”, March 23, 2021</b>	
Transmitted via ICOA’s YouTube channel	
Facebook	8,013
Twitter	5,023
YouTube	1,260
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>14,296</b>

### 3. PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

Ever since the WHO pandemic declaration, the population's consumption patterns have shifted towards healthier, safer, and more environmentally responsible foods. All attributes of organic agriculture, this shift has placed added pressure on product demand, which has necessitated strategies to sustain the upward trend and strengthen the sector to boost domestic trade, increase international trade, and benefit producers and consumers in the Americas and the world.

- **Challenges facing organic production in the Americas:**

- ✓ Leverage the upward trend in the consumption of organic products worldwide to achieve a greater share of the international market.
- ✓ Strengthen policies and strategies that support the promotion and development of organic production and its control and development systems, primarily in countries that lack these instruments.
- ✓ Achieve the sustained growth of the local organic market.
- ✓ Increase the number of certified organic hectares and producers in the Americas.

- **Challenges facing ICOA:**

- ✓ Support consolidation of the public institutional framework necessary to leverage the opportunities afforded by the local, regional, and global contexts.
- ✓ Promote a connection between producers and the local, regional, and international markets, where it is increasingly important to meet the requirements and demands of standards and regulations on organic production and trade.
- ✓ Support and encourage the standardization of national regulations on organic production among the countries in the region and the strengthening of national organic production control systems. These are key to being recognized by the leading trade partners and to build assurance and trust in the region's products to facilitate trade and access to global markets.
- ✓ Promote the creation and/or development of active public policies that include awareness raising, producer and consumer training, and the promotion of new domestic market strategies for organic products.
- ✓ Promote initiatives to improve recordkeeping on organic production and the price of organic products.

## **5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Board of Directors of ICOA, through its Chair, wishes to express its gratitude to IICA, its Director General, and its Director of Technical Cooperation for the support provided through its Executive Secretariat, its offices in the Member States, and other levels of the Institute, without which it would not be possible to show the Commission's achievements.

Similarly, ICOA wishes to thank the Ministers and, through them, the Member States, for the support provided in each country during the 2020-2021 reporting period.

We trust that this report will continue to inure to the benefit of the countries of the Americas and of organic producers and their families.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE  
BYLAWS OF THE INTER-AMERICAN  
COMMISSION FOR ORGANIC  
AGRICULTURE (ICOA)

**San Jose, Costa Rica  
June 2021**

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**BYLAWS OF THE  
INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE  
(ICOA)**

**CHAPTER ONE: ORGANIZATION, FUNCTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP**

**Article 1: Nature**

1. The Inter-American Commission for Organic Agriculture (ICOA) is a Special Commission established by the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), in accordance with Article 52 of its Rules of Procedure.
2. The ICOA shall have technical autonomy in the discharge of its functions, within the parameters established in the Convention on the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, these Bylaws and the resolutions of the IABA and the Executive Committee. The ICOA is subordinate and answerable to the Executive Committee and has no legal relationship of authority with IICA.

**Article 2: Structure**

The ICOA shall accomplish its objectives through:

- a. The Assembly of the ICOA;
- b. The Board of Directors (BD/ICOA); and
- c. The Executive Secretariat.

**Article 3: Objectives and Functions**

**Objectives**

The objectives of the ICOA are:

- a. To contribute to the development of organic agriculture in ICOA Member States, serving as a technical body for knowledge management and the sharing and dissemination of appropriate information in a timely manner;
- b. To contribute to the strengthening of the institutional structures of the Competent<sup>1</sup> Authorities for the Control<sup>2</sup> and Development<sup>3</sup> of organic agriculture in the ICOA Member States;
- c. To coordinate and promote the development and harmonization of standards and procedures to stimulate and regulate the production, control and development of and trade in organic foods in the ICOA Member States; and

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<sup>1</sup> The term, Competent Authority, will be used indiscriminately to refer to Competent Authorities for both the Control and the Development of organic agriculture, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>2</sup> Competent Authorities for the Control of Organic Agriculture are those entities that are responsible for regulating and managing activity and guaranteeing the organic status of products.

<sup>3</sup> Competent Authorities for the Development of Organic Production are those entities tasked with the development, promotion and advancement of the organic sector.

- d. To serve as a mechanism for consultation, liaison and reciprocal cooperation among the competent governmental bodies that promote and establish standards for the development and control of organic agriculture in each ICOA Member State.

### **Functions**

The functions of the ICOA are:

- a. To monitor the international environment that impacts organic agriculture in the region, send out alerts to the Member States of the ICOA and advocate for the adoption of positions by the public and private sectors and the building of common regional strategies on topics that are relevant to organic agriculture;
- b. To encourage the organization of workshops, seminars, fora and virtual or face-to-face training sessions on relevant topics to contribute to the strengthening of the Competent Authorities and the overall development of organic agriculture;
- c. To advise and work with the respective Member States of the ICOA in preparing standards to govern organic agriculture and in implementing and consolidating the offices of the Competent Authorities;
- d. To promote horizontal cooperation among the Member States of the ICOA to facilitate the exchange of information and sharing of experiences to bring development levels with regard to organic agriculture more in line with one another;
- e. To gather, compile and share information of interest to the Member States of the ICOA and maintain an up-to-date database on organic agriculture with official information from the offices of the Competent Authorities and other pertinent information of interest to support the decision-making processes of stakeholders in organic agriculture;
- f. To prepare an annual report on the status of organic agriculture in the Americas, based on information which the Competent Authorities of the ICOA shall provide at the request of the Executive Secretariat;
- g. To report on relevant events that affect the development of organic agriculture and that might be of interest to the Member States of the ICOA;
- h. To coordinate activities and establish positions with international multilateral and other cooperation organizations that support activities in aid of organic agriculture, especially in international fora;
- i. To serve as the main advisory body of the Member States of the ICOA and other related entities that so request, on organic agriculture-related topics;
- j. To consider other matters related to inter-American cooperation in the field of organic agriculture entrusted to it by the IICA Executive Committee;
- k. To submit to the IICA Executive Committee an annual report on its activities, which may include recommendations and draft resolutions for its consideration;
- l. To establish liaison and cooperative ties with other similar entities in the Member States of the Inter-American system, so as to achieve mutual objectives; and
- m. To mobilize resources for the execution of its activities, in accordance with Article 24 of these Bylaws.

### **Article 4: Membership**

1. Members of the ICOA may be:
  - a. Full members:

Full members of the ICOA are those Member States of the Inter-American System that have expressed their desire to be a State Party to the Commission, via a letter from their Ministry of Agriculture, and have provided legal assurance, in accordance with their national laws, of their commitment to abide by the financial obligations established in the ICOA Rules of Procedures as well as the Bylaws of the Commission. The ICOA was established through the initiative, promotion and funding of IICA, which provides it with legal, institutional and financial support. Moreover, IICA, pursuant to the ICOA Bylaws, shall be considered a member of the ICOA.

Full Members States of the ICOA may be:

- i. All Member States of the Inter-American System that are members of the Network of Competent Authorities in Organic Agriculture in the Americas, established in Managua, Nicaragua, in August of 2007;
- ii. Other Member States of the Inter-American System that request inclusion in the Commission through their respective Minister of Agriculture, with the approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, via a letter addressed to the BD/ICOA, which much then request the approval of the ICOA Assembly; and
- iii. IICA as a cooperating organization.

b. Permanent observer members:

Other States that are not part of the Inter-American System but that have Competent National Authorities in organic production duly established to develop, control and regulate organic agriculture. These States shall request inclusion in the Commission, through their Ministry of Agriculture or maximum authority, in a letter addressed to the BD/ICOA, which shall then request the approval of the ICOA Assembly.

2. Withdrawal of a full member or permanent observer:

Any full Member State of the ICOA or permanent observer may withdraw from the Commission, by sending a letter to the BD/ICOA, signed by its Minister of Agriculture or maximum authority. The withdrawal shall take effect ninety days following receipt of the letter by the BD/ICOA, during which time the Member State of the ICOA may reconsider its request and cancel it.

## **CHAPTER TWO: ASSEMBLY OF THE ICOA.**

### **Article 5: Purpose and Functions**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Assembly of the ICOA is to serve as an inter-American forum for the Competent Authorities in Organic Agriculture in Member States of the ICOA to exchange views and share experiences, and thereby take appropriate decisions to gear their actions towards fulfilling the established objectives and mandates.

#### **Functions**

The functions of the Assembly of the ICOA are:

- a. To establish policies to achieve the objectives and fulfill the functions established in Article 3 of these Bylaws;
- b. To elect the members of the BD/ICOA;
- c. To approve the Work Plan and Budget of the ICOA prepared and presented by the BD/ICOA;

- d. To propose to the Executive Committee of IICA amendments to these Bylaws for its approval; and
- e. To approve the Rules of Procedure of the ICOA and amendments thereto, if this is considered necessary for the achievement of its objectives and the discharge of its functions.

**Article 6: Venue and Frequency of the Meetings**

1. The ICOA shall hold a Regular Meeting of its Assembly each year. The frequency shall be determined by the Assembly. The venue of this meeting shall be determined at the previous Regular Meeting. If more than one country offers to host the meeting, the decision shall be made by a simple majority vote and in the event of a tie shall be decided by the Chairman of the BD/ICOA. When no country offers to host the meeting, the Annual Regular Meeting shall be held at IICA Headquarters.
2. Should they wish to be considered, member countries offering to host the next meeting of the Assembly should do so no later than two days before the meeting of the Assembly in which the matter will be decided. Interested member countries should prepare a letter, issued and signed by their Ministry of Agriculture, and sent to the Board of Directors of the ICOA, through the Executive Secretariat.
3. The Assembly of the ICOA may hold face-to-face Special Meetings, convened pursuant to the adoption of a resolution by a favorable two-thirds majority vote of Member States in the Assembly, or by correspondence or email, at the request of the BD/ICOA, or at least ten of its Member States. In accordance with Article 17 of these Bylaws, the BD/ICOA shall determine the venue of the Special Meeting, taking into account the offers from Member States to host the meeting and the principle of rotation. When no country offers to host the meeting, the venue of the Assembly shall be IICA Headquarters.
4. Where necessary, the BD/ICOA may convene a virtual meeting of the ICOA Assembly

**Article 7: Participation in the Assembly of the ICOA**

**Representation**

1. Each full member, including IICA, has the right to send a Regular Representative to the Assembly of the ICOA, who shall have the right to participate and to vote. Each Permanent Observer Member State, has the right to send a Regular Representative to the Assembly of the ICOA, who shall have the right to participate but not to vote. In both cases, the delegate may be accompanied by alternate representatives and/or advisors, who must be accredited to the Assembly, through the Executive Secretariat of the ICOA.
2. The Regular Representative of each Member State in the Assembly shall be the official in charge of the duly established Competent Authority for the Control or Development of Organic Agriculture in that State or, in his/her stead, an extremely experienced and recognized staff member of that Authority, who has been designated by the official in charge of the Competent Authority in the Member State.
3. The Director General of IICA, or his/her representative, shall have the right to participate and to vote in the deliberations of the Assembly of the ICOA, in both the plenary sessions and those of the committees and subcommittees. The Director General may not participate in the elections of members to the ICOA Board of Directors, nor in the election of the Chairman of the Board.

### **Observers**

If their participation is requested in writing, sufficiently in advance, the following may be represented by observers at the meetings of the Assembly of the ICOA and shall have the right to participate but not to vote, subject to the decision of the Chair of the Assembly.

- a. Member States of the Inter-American System that are not members of the ICOA, which have asked to participate in the meeting and have received the approval of the BD/ICOA;
- b. Inter-American regional and subregional government entities and organizations involved in organic agriculture;
- c. Specialized bodies and agencies connected with the United Nations and other public international organizations; and
- d. Countries or organizations outside of the Americas with which ICOA has signed collaboration agreements and which, in both parties' opinion, should participate in the Assembly.

### **Guests**

Other persons or institutions, including representatives of civil society, not included in this Article, may attend the meetings of the Assembly of the ICOA as special guests, subject to approval by the BD/ICOA, and in consultation with the government of the host country

### **Article 8: Officers of the Assembly of the ICOA**

1. There shall be a Chair and a Vice Chair of the Assembly of the ICOA. The Chair shall be the Competent Authority in Organic Agriculture in the host country, and the Vice Chair shall be the representative of the Member State that follows the country of the Chair in alphabetical order.
2. In the event that the Assembly is held at IICA Headquarters, the Chairman of the BD/ICOA shall preside in the interim until a Chair is elected by vote.
3. If the Assembly is conducted by virtual means, the Chairman of the Board of Directors will preside over the meeting.

### **Article 9: Agenda**

1. With support from the Executive Secretariat, the BD/ICOA shall prepare the preliminary agenda for each session of the Assembly of the ICOA and shall submit it for the consideration of Member States at least three months prior to the inauguration of the meeting of the Assembly. Member States shall have 30 consecutive days to submit their observations on the preliminary agenda to the Chairman of the BD/ICOA. The BD/ICOA shall prepare the final agenda on the basis of these observations.
2. The agenda thus approved may only be modified or amended during the meeting of the Assembly of the ICOA by a vote of two-thirds of the Member States present.

### **Article 10: Sessions and Meetings**

Each meeting of the Assembly of the ICOA shall consist of the plenary sessions and as many presentations as may be necessary to cover the entire agenda of the meeting.

**Article 11: Committees**

1. The Assembly of the ICOA may establish committees, subcommittees and working groups, as required. The committees may be standing committees or may be for a limited time.
2. The Assembly of the ICOA shall designate coordinators for each committee, subcommittee and working group, who shall be responsible for following up on the work entrusted and presenting reports on the results to the General Assembly.
3. The meetings of the committees, subcommittees and working groups may be virtual or face-to-face, depending on the nature of the work to be accomplished and the availability of resources.
4. Wherever possible, IICA member countries shall provide technical, human and financial resources, etc., to undertake the work entrusted by the Assembly and/or by the BD/ICOA.

**Article 12: Quorum**

1. The quorum of the plenary sessions shall consist of more than one-half of the Member States of the ICOA.
2. The quorum of the committees, subcommittees and working groups of the Assembly of the ICOA shall consist of more than one-half of the Member States sitting on each of those bodies.
3. The presence of the IICA Representative will not count towards the number needed to constitute the quorum.

**Article 13: Voting**

1. The decisions of the Assembly of the ICOA shall be adopted at the plenary sessions, except for special cases when it is necessary to vote by correspondence, or by email, in which case this procedure shall be determined by the Assembly and coordinated by the Executive Secretariat of the ICOA. Each Member State shall have the right to one vote, which the Competent Control and Development Authorities of the Member State should agree on, in the event that both Authorities are taking part in the Commission. The IICA Representative shall have the right to one vote.
2. If no consensus is reached in the deliberations, decisions of the Assembly of the ICOA shall be adopted by a simple majority vote of the Member States present.
3. In the committees, subcommittees and working groups, decisions shall be adopted by a simple majority vote of Member States present.
4. Voting in a meeting of the Assembly, committee, subcommittee or working group, as the case may be, shall not take place unless the requirements with respect to the corresponding quorum have been met and Member States have been duly advised to participate in advance of the meeting.
5. As used in these Bylaws, the term “absolute majority” means over half of all ICOA Member States, whether or not they are present at a meeting of the Assembly. The term “simple majority” means that a topic under debate in any session of a committee, subcommittee or working group has received a favorable vote from the majority of those present at the meeting.
6. If decisions need to be made concerning urgent matters and the Assembly is not in session, the correspondence or email voting procedure may be employed. In such cases, at the written request of the BD/ICOA, presented through its Chairman, or at the request of more than half of the representatives of the Member States, by means of a signed petition, the Executive Secretary shall send all the Member States the information related to the matter in question, including a proposal to resolve the issue. He/ she shall also

ask the Member States to cast their votes and inform them of the deadline for receipt of the votes submitted in writing or by email. Once the deadline has passed, the Executive Secretary shall count the votes, certify the result and inform the Member States of the outcome. The decisions of the Assembly taken using this procedure shall be adopted by an absolute majority vote of the Member States.

### **CHAPTER THREE: THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BD/ICOA)**

#### **Article 14: Membership**

1. The Board of Directors (BD/ICOA) is the governing body of the ICOA and comprises five members:
  - a. Three of the members of the BD/ICOA, shall be elected by direct vote from among the full members of the ICOA.
  - b. The fourth member of the BD/ICOA shall be the representative of the Full Member State that is designated to host the next Regular Meeting of the ICOA Assembly.

In cases in which,

    - i. IICA is the host;
    - ii. no country has been designated by the Assembly to host the next Regular Meeting;
    - iii. the host country of the Assembly meeting is one of the three members elected by direct vote;
    - iv. the host country of the upcoming meeting of the Assembly is an observer state; or
    - v. the next meeting of the Assembly is slated to be virtual with no physical venue,the fourth member shall be elected by a simple majority vote during the Regular Meeting of the Assembly in which the next venue will be decided or by a simple majority vote during a virtual or face-to-face Special Meeting of the Assembly subsequently convened for that purpose.
  - c. IICA, through the Director General, shall appoint the fifth member of the Board of Directors. This fifth member shall not be elected by the Assembly, but shall be appointed by the IICA Director General for three-year periods. This cannot be the same IICA staff member designated to oversee the Executive Secretariat of ICOA.
2. The members of the BD/ICOA elected by direct vote by the Assembly shall serve for a three-year term. One of the members shall be replaced each year at the Regular Meeting of the Assembly.
3. The term of the member of the BD/ICOA who is the representative of the host country of the next Regular Meeting, and the term of the member appointed within the framework of the exceptions indicated in Article 14(1b), shall begin at the end of the Assembly in which his/her country was chosen as the host of the next meeting, or at the end of the Assembly in which the country was elected within the framework of the exceptions outlined in Article 14(1b), respectively, and shall finish at the end of the Assembly hosted by his/her country, or at the end of the Assembly that took place within the framework of the exceptions indicated in Article 14(1b), respectively.
4. The representative of each Member State on the BD/ICOA shall be the official in charge of that State's duly established Competent Authority in Organic Agriculture or, in his/her stead, an extremely-experienced and recognized official in that field, who has been accredited to the BD/ICOA, through the Executive Secretary, by the official in charge of the Competent Authority of the Member State.
5. If, due to some unforeseen event, no Regular Meeting of the Assembly is held during the calendar year, the terms of the members of the BD/ICOA shall be extended until the next Regular Meeting, so that no more than one member is elected at that next Regular Meeting and in subsequent Regular Meetings.

6. If a Member State resigns its membership on the BD/ICOA, the BD/ICOA shall appoint another member to take its place until the next Regular Meeting, when a special election will be held to choose a member to serve out the remainder of the term of the member that resigned. Special elections of this kind shall not be taken into account for the purposes of the application of paragraph 5 of this Article.

**Article 15: Designation of the Board and Election of Officers**

1. The Assembly of the ICOA shall elect the members and officers of the BD/ICOA during its final plenary session, except for the IICA Representative on the ICOA Board of Directors, who shall be appointed by the Director General of the Institute, and who cannot serve as Chairman of the BD/ICOA.
2. Any full member, except IICA, may propose itself as a candidate for membership and/or chairmanship on the Board of Directors, which will require that the delegate of that Country be specifically endorsed for that purpose, by way of credentials or an accreditation letter addressed to the Assembly.

**Article 16: Chairman of the Board of Directors**

The Chairman of the BD/ICOA shall have the following specific responsibilities:

- a. To chair the sessions of the Board of Directors;
- b. To supervise and coordinate the discharge of the functions of the BD/ICOA, especially during the period between its Regular Meetings; and
- c. To represent the ICOA in its dealings with the IABA and the Executive Committee of IICA, and with other organizations that participate in the development of organic agriculture within and outside of the region.

**Article 17: Functions of the Board of Directors**

The functions of the BD/ICOA are as follows:

- a. To carry out the decisions of the Assembly of the ICOA, taking into account the rules governing the operation of the IABA and the Executive Committee of IICA;
- b. To achieve and enforce the objectives specified in Article 3;
- c. To decide the dates of the Regular and Special Meetings of the Assembly of the ICOA and the venue for Special Meetings, and modify the dates and venues of either, as and when necessary;
- d. To prepare the draft agendas of the Regular and Special Meetings of the Assembly of the ICOA and submit them to the members of the ICOA for consideration, through the Executive Secretary, to comply with the provisions of Article 9;
- e. To propose to the Assembly of the ICOA any amendments it deems necessary to these Bylaws and, should any be adopted, to its Rules of Procedure;
- f. To adopt any urgent measures that cannot wait until the next meeting of the Assembly of the ICOA, which shall remain in effect until the Assembly of the ICOA can consider them;
- g. To represent the ICOA, through its Chairman or another member of the BD/ICOA, in international, regional or national meetings or conferences devoted to organic agriculture or collateral activities;

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- h. With the collaboration of the Executive Secretariat, to prepare studies, draft agreements and inter-American treaties and other documents related to organic agriculture in the hemisphere;
- i. To examine and approve the annual report on the activities of the ICOA prepared by its Executive Secretariat;
- j. To present the annual report on the activities of the ICOA to the General Assembly of the ICOA;
- k. To present the annual report on the activities of the ICOA to the Executive Committee;
- l. To create any technical committees and working groups that it deems necessary and establish their work programs;
- m. Within the framework of the objectives of the ICOA, to plan and coordinate the inter-American activities within its purview, related to organic agriculture;
- n. To study and approve the Work Plan of the ICOA and the proposed budget prepared by its Executive Secretariat, ensuring the greatest possible economy, but bearing in mind the ICOA's obligation to achieve satisfactory results in its work programs;
- o. To present the Work Plan and operational budget for consideration and approval by the ICOA at the Regular Meeting of its Assembly;
- p. To oversee implementation of the Work Plan and budget of the ICOA approved by the Assembly.
- q. To administer and leverage financial resources to maintain the organization.
- r. To adequately ensure that members abide by their commitments and pay their quotas.

**Article 18: Meetings and Venue of Meetings of the Board of Directors**

- 1. The BD/ICOA shall hold a Regular Meeting each year—whether face-to-face or virtually—preferably in the country where the Regular Meeting of the Assembly is to take place. The meeting may be held two days before the Regular Meeting of the Assembly.
- 2. The BD/ICOA may hold special face-to-face or virtual meetings when necessary, subject to the availability of resources. The Executive Secretary shall convene special meetings at the request of the Chairman of the BD/ICOA or at the written request of two or more members.

**Article 19: Quorum**

The quorum to convene a meeting of the BD/ICOA shall consist of more than one-half of its members. The participation of the Board member appointed by IICA shall not be taken into account in the quorum count.

**Article 20: Voting**

- 1. In the deliberations of the BD/ICOA, each member shall have one vote and decisions will be adopted by a simple majority vote.
- 2. Voting in a meeting of the BD/ICOA shall not take place unless the corresponding quorum requirements have been met and the members of BD/ICOA were duly notified prior to the meeting.
- 3. If decisions need to be made concerning urgent matters and the BD/ICOA is not in session, the procedure of voting by correspondence or email may be employed. In such cases, at the written request of the Chairman

of the BD/ICOA or at the request of two or more of its members, through a signed petition, the Executive Secretary shall send the members of the BD/ICOA the information related to the matter in question, including a proposal for resolving the issue. He/ she shall also ask the members to cast their votes and inform them of the deadline for receipt of the votes, in writing or by email. Once the deadline has passed, the Executive Secretary shall count the votes, certify the result and inform the members of the BD/ICOA of the outcome.

#### **CHAPTER FOUR: THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT**

##### **Article 21: Objectives and Functions**

1. The Executive Secretariat is the permanent, central, technical, administrative and executive entity of the ICOA. It shall coordinate the technical, administrative and executive services needed to implement the decisions of the Assembly of the ICOA and the BD/ICOA, and shall perform the functions assigned to it by those bodies.
2. The General Directorate of IICA shall serve as the Executive Secretariat of the ICOA, which will be established through the signing of a General Cooperation Agreement between ICOA and IICA. This will enable ICOA to operate in the inter-American sphere and to receive technical and administrative support for its operations, within the scope of the competencies and capacities that IICA may assume.

##### **Article 22: The Executive Secretary of the ICOA**

In consultation with the BD/ICOA, the Director General of IICA shall appoint the Executive Secretary of the ICOA, who shall have the following functions:

- a. To carry out the institutional, technical and administrative tasks entrusted to the Secretariat and to coordinate the administrative services provided by that Secretariat;
- b. To prepare and present an Annual Work Program and budget for the consideration and approval of the BD/ICOA in the first instance, and subsequently for final approval by the Assembly of the ICOA;
- c. To assist in the coordination and collaborate in the execution of the work plans of any working groups established by the Assembly of the ICOA and the BD/ICOA;
- d. To make the preparations for the Regular and Special Meetings of the Assembly of the ICOA and the BD/ICOA;
- e. To verify the credentials of the participants in the Assemblies of the ICOA and the BD/ICOA, and ensure that the minutes and resolutions of the meetings of those bodies meet IICA's requirements in terms of form and style.
- f. To prepare annual reports on the situation of organic agriculture with the information provided by the Competent Authorities that are members of the Commission, and any other data deemed to be pertinent;
- g. To prepare an annual report on the activities carried out by the ICOA.
- h. To perform his/her functions in accordance with the regulations and other rules of IICA and ICOA.
- i. To follow-up on agreements made and commitments undertaken in regular meetings and sessions, special meetings and other sessions convened by the BD/ICOA, the Assembly, the committees, working groups and others bodies.

- j. To propose and/or prepare topics for the annual work of the Commission.
- k. To oversee the administration of the necessary resources to achieve the work plan of the Assembly and/or the BD/ICOA in coordination with IICA, other cooperation organizations, institutions and/or cooperating countries that have similar interests to the ICOA.
- l. To provide, through its status as a legal entity, the framework for the receipt of contributions from ICOA Member States.

**Article 23: Secretariat Services**

In accordance with the funds allocated in IICA's Program Budget, the Director General of IICA shall provide the ICOA with Executive Secretariat services and any other services required to achieve the objectives established in Article 3.

**CHAPTER FIVE: RESOURCES OF THE ICOA.**

**Article 24: Sources of Financing of the ICOA**

The main resources of the ICOA shall come from:

- a. Funds from the annual quotas contributed by Member States to defray expenses for activities approved by the Assembly of the ICOA, the amount and payment schedule of which shall be determined in the Operating Regulations of the ICOA;
- b. Funds from ICOA Member States to defray the expenses of representatives and the activities for which they are responsible;
- c. Funds from IICA to defray expenses for activities related to Article 23 of these Bylaws.
- d. Financial assistance, donations and specific contributions from technical and financial cooperation agencies;
- e. Financial assistance, donations and specific contributions from institutions, individuals and legal entities.
- f. Financial assistance, donations and contributions from the host and other countries to defray the costs of meetings.

These specific funds shall be managed and accounted for pursuant to the Rules of Procedure of the General Directorate and the Financial Rules of IICA.

**Article 25: Other Resources**

The Member States of the ICOA and other institutions may channel and offer other resources, materials, facilities and equipment, and temporarily assign personnel to the Executive Secretariat for internships and to provide professional support services.

**CHAPTER SIX: OFFICIAL AND WORKING LANGUAGES**

**Article 26: Languages**

If sufficient resources are available, and if it proves necessary, interpretation services and translations of pertinent documents shall be provided at the meetings.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: GENERAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO THE BYLAWS AND RULES OF PROCEDURE**

**Article 27: Governing Provisions**

The ICOA shall be governed by the present Bylaws, any Rules of Procedure that may be adopted, and the pertinent resolutions of the IABA and the Executive Committee of IICA

**Article 28: Amendments**

These Bylaws approved by the Executive Committee, pending final approval by the IABA, may only be amended by the IABA or the Executive Committee of IICA, on their own initiative or at the request of the ICOA.

**Article 29: Rules of Procedure of the ICOA**

1. The ICOA may adopt Rules of Procedure, provided that they are consistent with these Bylaws. If Rules of Procedure are adopted, the Executive Secretary shall present them to the Executive Committee of IICA for informational purposes.
2. Procedural issues related to the Assembly, not provided for in these Bylaws or in any Rules of Procedure that may be adopted, shall be resolved by the Assembly. Procedural issues related to the BD/ICOA, not provided for in these Bylaws or in any Rules of Procedure that may be adopted, shall be resolved by the BD/ICOA.

**Article 30: Entry into Force and Duration**

1. These Bylaws shall enter into force on the date of their approval by the Executive Committee, pending final approval by the IABA.
2. The ICOA and its Bylaws shall remain in force for an indefinite period of time and may be abolished by a resolution of the Executive Committee, pending final approval.