

**IICA IN THE WTO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE WORK PLAN II:  
OCTOBER 2011 TO DECEMBER 2012**

Submission by IICA

The following submission, dated 18 October 2011, is being circulated at the request of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. Agricultural policy and negotiations, and trade in agricultural products are among IICA's ongoing priorities. Since the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the inclusion of agriculture in the multilateral trade negotiations, IICA has adapted its cooperation activities to the new realities affecting the agriculture sector, and has analysed their impact on the agrifood sector from the political standpoint.
2. The subject took on a new dimension with the launching in November 2003 of a new WTO round of multilateral trade negotiations in Doha, Qatar, known as the Doha Development Agenda, and became a priority for IICA in keeping with its commitment to support competitive and sustainable development of agriculture and the rural environment. Given that trade must serve to foster the development and wellbeing of our populations, especially in rural areas, IICA's concern is that these negotiations should suitably accommodate the objectives and interests of the countries of the region.
3. With a view to expanding IICA's work in this sphere, the Director-General of IICA submitted a request in October 2009 to the Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, seeking observer status for the Institute. The WTO Membership examined the request in March 2010 and the Committee on Agriculture granted IICA ad hoc observer status in its regular meetings.
4. Accordingly, on 26 August 2010 IICA submitted its Work Plan to the Committee's regular meeting held in September of that year, and it was implemented as proposed until September 2011.
5. In order to ensure the continuity of IICA's commitment, a second Work Plan was prepared. This plan is to be submitted at the forthcoming regular meeting in November 2011 for circulation to WTO Members.

## II. ACTIVITIES TO BE DEVELOPED

### A. WITH THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

#### 6. The following activities are under consideration:

- (a) Coordinated identification of possible areas of cooperation to be envisaged in the work plan for 2012. For example:
  - (i) Notification of agricultural policies: The Committee has noted that its work is hampered by delays in the submission of agricultural policy-related notifications in accordance with the requirements and formats adopted in 1995. The Secretariat has accordingly drafted a new Handbook on agriculture notification requirements. This Handbook will have to be circulated in the course of training activities. Members are also examining a series of proposals concerning "good practice" in how to present the information to be notified. In view of the success of the Regional Workshop on Agriculture Notifications held at IICA Headquarters on 13 and 14 April 2011, IICA could continue to provide support for these initiatives, mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean.
  - (ii) Joint studies: The Committee on Agriculture has an ongoing need to produce technical documents that could be drafted or coordinated by IICA where these relate to IICA's geographical sphere (Latin America and the Caribbean). IICA has experience in preparing this kind of document and could assist the Committee with activities of this nature.
  - (iii) Good practice handbooks: IICA has developed handbooks of good practices for participation in international forums and for the notification of sanitary and phytosanitary measures. IICA could draw up handbooks of this type in coordination with the WTO Secretariat in order to enhance Members' participation in the Committee on Agriculture and improve procedures relating to agriculture notifications.
- (b) Use of the WTO as a showcase for IICA's work: IICA could utilize the WTO's global coverage as a way of making products of special interest to its Members better known. With this in mind, IICA asks to be able to present and circulate the IICA/FAO/ECLAC joint report on the outlook for agriculture for 2010 (*Situación y Perspectivas de la Agricultura 2010*) at the next meeting of the Committee on 17 November 2011, and likewise in the years that follow.
- (c) Carrying on with the preparation of the paper on IICA's contribution to the Marrakesh Decision and Food Security for the regular meetings of the Committee in November. In 2010, IICA prepared a first submission on this subject (G/AG/GEN/93).

#### 7. Development of the following activities is under consideration:

- (a) Participation by capital-based officials in Agriculture Committee meetings: One medium-term activity is to seek financing to promote the participation of officials from the capitals, and specifically government officials responsible for agriculture-related matters, in the regular meetings and special sessions of the Committee on Agriculture. As a preliminary step, it would be necessary to conduct a

diagnostic study of participation by agriculture ministry officials in the Committee and to develop profiles for fundraising projects.

- (b) IICA will be able to support the WTO in its technical cooperation activities directed at ministries of agriculture, at both hemispheric (Inter-American Board of Agriculture) and subregional level (Southern Agricultural Council; Central American Agricultural Council; Caribbean Alliance; other ministerial bodies), or by conveying requests for support from such ministerial forums to the Committee on Agriculture.
- (c) Post-Doha Round training: Once the text on agricultural modalities has been worked out, Members will be seeking training or guidance in preparing their schedules of commitments. The schedules will be drawn up on the basis of the technical parameters established in the document. IICA is following the Doha Round negotiations on Agriculture and from the technical standpoint is ready to provide Members with such technical training or guidance. Considering the potentially extensive demand for technical guidance, and should the WTO lack sufficient technical staff for the purpose, IICA could provide support for this activity in its geographical sphere (mainly Latin America and the Caribbean).

B. WITH THE WTO INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION (ITTC)

8. The following courses of action are under consideration:

- (a) Building up relations with the ITTC: IICA has worked directly with the ITTC in arranging training events on the American continent, which has helped maintain a strategic alliance directed at strengthening the technical cooperation provided by IICA to its Member States.
- (b) For 2011 and 2012, IICA has undertaken to continue supporting the WTO's trade policy course for countries belonging to the Latin American Integration Association (October 2011 and 2012). Moreover, the possibility of jointly organizing activities in 2012 is being examined, given the success of the two workshops on intellectual property and on agriculture notifications held at IICA Headquarters in 2011. IICA has the strength afforded by its presence in the hemisphere, which fosters stronger ties with the WTO.
- (c) IICA offers to cooperate with the WTO Secretariat in implementing the Technical Assistance and Training Plan for the Latin American and Caribbean region. IICA could spread awareness of this plan and essentially promote greater participation by public experts in the agriculture sector in training activities carried out by the ITTC in the region.

9. Likewise, IICA places at the ITTC's disposal its network of trade and trade negotiation experts, to serve as trainers in future courses in countries of the region.

10. The WTO has more than 130 reference centres around the world through which it provides information on WTO-related developments and distance learning opportunities. IICA not only has a distance training centre but also has proven technical capacity in this type of activity. Among the beneficiaries, reference centres could also be set up in regional organizations such as IICA to strengthen cooperation with such agencies. Since IICA has observer status in two WTO bodies, it might be feasible to propose setting up a reference centre at IICA Headquarters in San José, Costa Rica, with an emphasis on agriculture, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and international

trade. The necessary steps will be taken in 2012 to continue to examine whether this can be brought to fruition.

### **III. THE AGRICULTURAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITHIN THE INSTITUTE**

11. IICA's Centre for Strategic Analysis for Agriculture (CAESPA) will be responsible for relations between IICA and the WTO Secretariat and will be the unit in charge of implementing this work plan. Implementation of the plan forms part of the CAESPA's functions, which are to follow up on implementation-related issues concerning the Agreement on Agriculture and progress in the negotiations, and to build up capacity in administering agreements that emerge from the Doha Round.

12. IICA is represented in 34 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and has an experienced network of experts in agriculture, international trade and trade negotiations, strategically located both in country offices and at Central Headquarters, through whom the technical cooperation activities set out in the work plan will be implemented.

13. For further information, please contact:

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