

INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE

BELIZE

VISION

To transform IICA into a development agency that promotes the sustainable development of agriculture, food security and the prosperity of rural communities in the Americas.

MISSION

To support the efforts of the Member States, to achieve progress and prosperity in the hemisphere through the modernization of the rural sector, the promotion of food security and the development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared, environmentally managed and socially equitable for the peoples of the Americas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS – 2004 NATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT

The Contribution of IICA to Agriculture and the Development of Rural Communities in Belize

	Page No.
1. Introduction	2
2. Executive Summary	3
3. The State of Agriculture and Rural Life in Belize in 2004	3
3.1 Recent performance in the expanded agricultural sector	6
3.2 Critical issues in the international and national context	6
3.3 The status of living conditions in rural communities	7
4. Summary of the National Agenda.....	8
5. Results of Technical Cooperation for 2004	10
5.1 Environmental Management.....	10
5.2 Promoting Food Safety and Agricultural Health.....	10
5.3 Institutional Modernization.....	11
5.4 Developing Human Capital.....	12
5.5 Strengthening Rural Communities.....	12
5.6 Facilitating Competitiveness and Global Trade	13
5.7 Other Technical Programs.....	13
6. Support Provided in the Development of National Plans and Strategies.....	14
7. Future Opportunities for Cooperation	14
8. Acronyms	16

1. Introduction

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is the specialized agency of the Inter-American System with a vision to promote sustainable agricultural development, food security and prosperity in the rural communities of the Americas. Since its establishment in 1942 the Institute has evolved through a continuous process of adjustment of its strategies for addressing its new mandates and to respond to the problems and challenges related to agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

The IICA Office in Belize continued to implement aspects of the National Technical Cooperation Agenda through the provision of technical and developmental assistance in the Institute's six strategic areas of focus via Policy, Trade and Agribusiness Development; Technology and Innovation; Sustainable Rural Development; Agricultural Health and Food Safety; Education and Training; and Information and Communication. This agenda was prepared using the Institute's model of consultation, dialogue and consensus building with national authorities. This process aims to meet the needs of Member States for technical cooperation that responds to their demands and priorities. Our achievements are summarized in keeping with the Institute's mandate for accountability and transparency as outlined by its General Directorate, the Hemispheric Heads of Government and the Bavaro Declaration.

At the very outset tribute must be paid to our many Belizean counterparts in the public and private sectors, who, in spite of responsibilities, collaborated fully with IICA Belize's technical cooperation activities. Without their participation, dedication and expertise we would have very little to report. Special acknowledgement goes to the Staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA), Belize Agricultural and Health Authority (BAHA), International, Regional Organization on Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA), the Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE), Citrus Research and Education Institute (CREI), University of Belize and the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE).

The Representative and the staff of this Office are pleased to present the document "The Contribution of IICA to Agriculture and Development of Rural Communities in Belize", which summarizes the results of our technical cooperation in 2004. We welcome feedback from our partners, which can only help to strengthen our program, in a continuous effort to improve the level of our technical services.

2. Executive Summary

Current Status of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu in the Country

Belize is located on the Yucatan Peninsula, bordered on the north by Mexico, to

the west and south by Guatemala and on the east by the Caribbean Sea. The country has an area of 22,965 km² and an ethnically diverse population of 281,000, based on 2003 estimates. Belize gained its independence from Great Britain on September 21, 1981. It boasts the most stable democracy in Central America, with a government that is operated on the principles of Parliamentary Democracy based on the Westminster System. Belize is a member of the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the nonaligned movement, the Organization of American States, the Association of Caribbean States, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Central American Integration System (SICA).

In 2004, primary agriculture, including the manufacturing of food and beverages remained one of the most important sectors in the economy of Belize, accounting for 23% of GDP and 29% of total labor force. Agriculture also accounted for 70% of foreign exchange earnings during this same period. However, the sector has traditionally relied on export of a narrow range of commodities (citrus, sugar, bananas, fish) through preferential arrangements to markets in the United States, European Union and CARICOM. The global trend in erosion of these preferences, as a result of World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations, now forces Belize's agriculture to become more competitive and diversified.

In 2004 per capita GDP stood at US \$3,606.50 Real GDP grew at 4.7% and inflation was at 2.6%, reflecting a high degree of stability. In 2003 unemployment was at 11.6%, which reflected a slight increase from 10.6%, reported in 2002. Poverty is most prevalent in rural communities, primarily in southern Belize, which is attributed to historical underdevelopment along with migration from neighboring countries in Central America, which places tremendous strain on limited health and education services.

The program of the IICA office in Belize was developed in consultation with stakeholders from the public and private sectors and executed in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. This work program is consistent with the Institutional Mandate outlined in IICA's Medium Term Plan 2002-2006, the national policy for Belize's agricultural development and the National Agenda for the IICA office in Belize. Specific accomplishments and results for 2004 are detailed below and arranged by the inter-thematic programs of the institute prioritized in the 2004 Plan of Operation.

Inter-thematic Programs

a. Environmental Management

Direct technical cooperation was provided to the TCGA in the form of training seminars and field days on farming techniques for nursery and field management in organic cacao production. These activities were conducted to support an expansion program from 200 to 1,500 acres of organic cacao over the next three years. TCGA is

comprised of 702 small organic cacao growers with a guaranteed market for their dried and fermented cacao beans (UK-Green and Blacks) and receive a fair-trade price. TCGA is the sole internationally certified exporter of organic cacao in Belize and leads the organic export industry at the national level. Support was also provided to the Belize Organic Producers Association (BOPA) for preparation of the national organic agriculture legislation. Further support is now being provided to carry this document through the final stages of legal review prior to enactment. Through its involvement in BOPA the Institute is coordinating the promotion of a local system for certification of organic fruits and vegetables to be sold to establishments that cater to the tourism sector.

b. Promoting Food Safety and Agricultural Health

Coordination and logistic support was provided for participation of Belize at the World Trade Organization/Sanitary and Phytosanitary (WTO/SPS) Committee meetings held in Geneva in 2004. A national SPS committee was conformed to support efforts to strengthen national agricultural health services. This committee included public and private sector membership. The Performance Vision and Strategy (PVS) Instrument was successfully applied to the livestock/veterinary sector in Belize through a series of consultation with various user groups. The results are being compiled and recommendations will be used to improve the veterinary services in Belize. Through the technical collaboration of CATIE and IICA, monilia (frosty pod) of cacao was positively identified in Belize. Further technical support was provided to conduct a national survey and preparation of an action plan for its eradication. The relevant authorities continued to realize benefits from the information supplied through the ACCESS electronic bulletin.

c. Institutional Modernization

Technical support was provided through participation on the National Committee for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development (NCCARD). This is a newly established committee, which will be setting up commodity specific sub-committees that will define priorities for agricultural research and development at the national level. A national workshop on strategic planning and curriculum development was coordinated and facilitated for the Department of Agriculture of the Faculty of Science and Engineering of the University of Belize to support their efforts of revision and strengthening of agricultural education in Belize.

d. Developing Human Capital

Technical support was provided through the participation of two government officials, one from the MAF and the other from the Central Statistical Office at the first and second Central American Region Workshop on Agricultural Statistics held in Honduras and El Salvador respectively. The Belize focal point for Agricultural Innovation Project (RED-SICTA) attended a regional technical meeting in Nicaragua to understand the project objectives, its desired regional impact and the possibilities for Belize. Belize was also represented at the second international forum on Agro-business of tropical fruits, held in El Salvador.

e. Strengthening Rural Communities

Technical support was provided to the Cashew Producers' Cooperative on processing of cashew nuts and management of their processing facilities. This cooperative is in its first year of operation with processing equipment that was imported from El Salvador through technical assistance provided by IICA. The RED-SICTA project was officially launched in Belize through collaboration with the project implementation unit in Nicaragua.

f. Facilitating Competitiveness and Global Trade

A seminar "Opportunities and Challenges for the Development of Small and Medium-Size Rural Eco-enterprises in a Global World" was hosted by IICA and facilitated by a technician from CATIE. Through the collaboration of IICA, CATIE, TCGA, and MAF a seminar "Current and prospective status of Organic Cacao: The case of Belize" was conducted to support the expansion program of organic cacao in Belize.

g. Other Technical Programs

Technical staff from the office participated in numerous committees and working groups for commodities/topics such as citrus, sugar, tropical fruits, organic agriculture, biosafety and ecological agriculture, making valuable technical inputs towards the overall improvement in Belize's agriculture.

Finally, the office had a display booth, showcasing IICA and the technical cooperation programs executed in Belize, at the annual national agriculture and trade fair in Belmopan held on May 14-16, 2004. In connection with this event, technical assistance was also provided for the process of selection of the "Farmers of the Year 2004" which is the highest level of recognition bestowed upon the best performing farmers for the year 2003/2004.

3. Overview and Analysis of the Agriculture Sector in Belize in 2004

3.1 Recent performance in the expanded agricultural sector

During 2004 Belize's agriculture and fisheries sectors recorded significant expansion in all major categories of exports, namely, sugar, bananas, fisheries, citrus, papayas, red kidney beans, hot peppers, organic cacao and cattle, reflecting its role as one of the most important sectors in the economy. Projected agricultural export earnings in 2004 were US \$225 million in comparison to US \$139 million of exports in 2003. Based on 2004 estimates real GDP growth rate was 4.7% and agriculture contribution to GDP was 23%.

A general decline in global prices for sugar, farmed shrimp, bananas, orange and papayas, has compelled Belize to adopt an aggressive policy for diversification in the range of goods and services and explore avenues for agro-processing and value adding. As a result, major increases in non-traditional exports were recorded in 2004. Leading the way were papaya, hot peppers and red kidney beans with 58%, 42% and 39% increases in export volumes respectively during the first seven months of 2004 in

comparison to 2003. Noteworthy was the new addition of tilapia to aquaculture with export value of US \$ 0.2 million during this same period with projected estimates in excess of US \$0.7 million by the end of 2004. The organic cacao industry rebounded from damages caused by hurricane Iris in 2001 and recorded a total export of 32.5 metric tons which is a significant increase in exports in comparison to 2002 and 2003 data. This industry has also been boosted by the securing of grant financing to support an expansion program from 200 to 1,500 acres of organic cacao over the next three years. The livestock sector also recorded an average growth of 10%, driven by the strong performance of poultry and dairy along with an increase in export of beef to Mexico and Guatemala. Notable expansion was also observed in agro-industries that include the diversification in the citrus industry towards the processing of pineapples for the production of fruit blends and expansion in cottage industries for production of jams and jellies for sale on the local and tourism markets.

3.2 Critical issues in the international and national context

The eminent decline in preferential market arrangements and prices for its traditional exports and a general decline in prices of some of its principal exports on the global market have forced Belize to adopt a policy towards diversification in its production. Although initial success has been experienced with papaya, red kidney beans, cow peas, hot peppers and organic cacao, significant levels of financial and technical investments are yet needed to realize the expansion required to offset potential foreign exchange that could be lost from impact of global market prices on traditional exports.

The limited size of the local market as a result of its small population size forces Belize to look outwards to the export market to accommodate any expansion in its agricultural productive base. Market opportunities in CARICOM and Central America, which offer an attractive option for trade, have not been fully explored. Competitive advantages towards these markets can be enhanced by expansion in its agro-industrial base along with an aggressive policy for negotiation to overcome existing barriers for trade with countries in these regions. Niche markets for tropical fruits and a growing market for organically grown products are also viable options, as people become more health conscious in Europe and North America.

Belize is self sufficient in staple food products such as corn, rice, beans, bananas, plantains, root crops, fruits, poultry, eggs, pork, beef and seafood. Some vegetables such as tomatoes, lettuce, broccoli, carrots, celery and cabbage are generally produced seasonally as a result of the production system and limited research for identification of adaptable varieties. Although tremendous progress has been made over the past five years in expanding the local production of these vegetables, there are still periods when importation has to be done to accommodate the shortfall of supply on the local market. Although significant progress has been made in processing of overproduction of seasonal fruits such as mango and pineapple there is still room for expansion in the agro-industrial base. Also, the local market continues to suffer from consumer preferences for some imported products that can be easily substituted if high quality local products are available at a competitive price.

3.3 The status of living conditions in rural communities

The last poverty study conducted in 1999 indicated that some 33% of the population of Belize was below the poverty line and that poverty was most prevalent in

the southern part of the country. Although significant progress has been made in basic infrastructure development in the form of roads, electricity, telecommunication and availability of potable water there is still some limited access to primary health services, education and economic opportunities in some communities. A number of social programs are ongoing to address this situation, including a rural development project in southern Belize that is being funded through the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Another ongoing rural development program is the Social Investment Fund. More recently, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has provided the Government of Belize with a US \$300,000 grant to update and strengthen its current National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan and to support the implementation of the strategy and action plan up to 2008 based on the United Nation (UN) Millennium Development Goals to reduce poverty by half by 2015. A grant totaling 8 million Euros is currently under discussion with the European Union (EU) to address capacity building for poverty alleviation in rural communities.

Being an agricultural based economy, poverty alleviation in Belize must be an integrated approach between social partners in rural development and the agricultural sector. Hence the need to create strong alliances between the public sector and non-government organizations combined with participation of the stakeholders. Specific issues to be addressed from the standpoint of agriculture include land tenure, affordable financing and markets for agricultural products.

4. Summary of the National Agenda

The national technical cooperation agenda was prepared in consultation with national authorities from the public and private sectors. It is consistent with the national policy for development of the agriculture sector and the Institute's 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan. The agenda has been subjected to continuous modifications to reflect policy adjustments that have been made to accommodate changes and opportunities at the national and global level. This summary of the agenda is outlined within the Institutional Strategic Areas defined in the Medium Term Plan 2002-2006.

a. Policy, Trade and Agribusiness Development

- Trade negotiations and integration
 - Coordinate technical assistance with BELTRAIDE and the MAF to provide information to support compliance with agreements and regulations of the WTO, Free Trade Areas of the Americas (FTAA), SICA and CARICOM.
 - Coordinate and facilitate participation in regional integration initiatives of CORECA/CAC and SICA.
- Access to international markets
 - Facilitate access to international markets through provision of information on the international commodities market.
- Institutional modernization for competitiveness
 - Provide technical support to MAF for preparation and implementation of a medium-term strategic plan for development of Belize's Agricultural Sector.

- Provide technical assistance and training for execution of assessment of economic impacts of the citrus and sugar industries.

b. Technology and Innovation

- Design and Promotion of technology innovation policies
 - Provide technical assistance for policy and technical orientation through participation in the technical committees for the Citrus Research and Education Institute and the Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute.
 - Support the MAF in converting the government owned and operated research station (Central Farm) into a semi-autonomous national research and development institute.
 - Support for the MAF diversification program through provision of technical information and literature on production techniques for selected fruit and root crops.

c. Agricultural Health and Food Safety

- Modernization of Agricultural Health and Food Safety Systems
 - Support institutional strengthening of BAHA.
 - Support BAHA in development of national action plan for compliance with SPS agreements of WTO and other international trade commitments.
 - Provide information on SPS requirements for exportation of tropical crops.
- Food Safety
 - Support the development of local capacity on Codex Alimentarius through participation in regional initiatives on food safety.
 - Support efforts of the Bureau of Standards and BAHA in development of National Guidelines for Food Safety.

d. Sustainable Rural Development

- Strategies and Policies for rural development
 - Support for production, processing and marketing of organic products.
 - Support for establishment of local and international markets for organic products.
- Development of Management Capabilities
 - Support conversion of small producers from conventional to organic production.
 - Promote the participation of women and youth in rural business enterprises.
 - Support for institutional strengthening of the Belize Organic Producers Association that includes preparation of proposals for identification of funds for establishment of infrastructure and development of human capital.

e. Information and Communication

- Standardization and coordination of information infrastructure and systems
 - Provide information on agricultural development technologies and international trade through the National Office Document Center and web site.

f. Education and Training

- Training on Strategic topics
 - Strengthen capacity of national technicians in the areas of projects, organic agriculture and financial analysis.
 - Support training programs for technicians, teachers and students of agricultural training institutions and facilitate linkages with similar type institutions in the region.
- Transformation of the education supply
 - Provide technical assistance for revision and upgrading of curriculum of institutions of higher agricultural education to meet the demands for current and future agricultural technicians.

5. Results of Technical Cooperation for 2004

5.1 Environmental Management

Technical assistance was provided for the development of the National Organic Agriculture Program. Through the Belize Organic Producers Association (BOPA) technical support was provided for revision of the national organic agriculture legislation as it goes through the final stages of revision by the Office of the Solicitor General prior to enactment. This process should be completed within the first quarter of 2005. Through BOPA an initial feasibility was also conducted to determine the potential for establishment of a local market for organic products within the tourism sector. Consultation was conducted with local institutions such as the Belize Tourism Board, BMDC, CGA, TCGA, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries who all responded positively to support the implementation of this program in 2005. Direct technical assistance was provided to TCGA through execution of training seminars and field days on management practices in organic cacao production, with specific emphasis on nursery management, plant nutrition and improvement of genetic material. These activities were conducted to support an expansion program from 200 to 1,500 acres of organic cacao over the next three years. Some 1.5 million cacao seedlings were produced and planted by 700 farmers in Toledo, Stann Creek and Cayo Districts. TCGA leads the organic export industry and is the sole exporter of internationally certified organic cacao beans in Belize.

5.2 Promoting Food Safety and Agricultural Health

Coordination and logistic support was provided for participation of Belize, in the person of a technician from the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) at all three meetings of the WTO/SPS Committee held in Geneva in 2004. Noteworthy was the presentation of a special award to the Belizean delegate by the committee in recognition of her outstanding participation and contributions made at the meetings. This experience has strengthened the local knowledge base on international sanitary and phytosanitary issues that could impact the ability of Belize to participate in international

trade and to safeguard its borders from the entry of exotic pests and diseases. The IICA office was also instrumental in fostering the establishment of a national SPS committee, comprising of technicians from the public and private sectors. This committee serves as an advisory body on critical sanitary and phytosanitary issues that impact food safety and international trade.

The Performance Vision and Strategy (PVS) Instrument was successfully applied to the veterinary/livestock sector through a series of consultations with user groups from the different sectors of the livestock industry, including veterinarians. Results have been compiled and recommendations presented to the stakeholders. This information will be used as a management tool for improvement of the livestock industry using relevant inputs from all stakeholders. The monilia (frosty pod) disease of cacao was positively identified in Belize in 2004 through technical collaboration between IICA and CATIE. A national survey was conducted to determine the distribution of the infestation and a strategic plan of action for its eradication was prepared. Training was also provided to members of TCGA on management practices for control and eradication of monilia. Authorities from the agricultural health sector continued to realize benefits from information supplied through the ACCESS electronic bulletin.

5.3 Institutional Modernization

IICA participated on the newly established NCCARD through which technical input was made for restructuring and improving the mechanisms for agricultural Research and Development in Belize. Sub-committees have been established to address priority issues for the different commodities defined by NCCARD. A national workshop on strategic planning and curriculum development was coordinated and facilitated for staff from the Department of Agriculture of the Faculty of Science and Engineering of the University of Belize and Secondary Schools that have strong agriculture components in their curriculum. The objective of the workshop was to apply the methodology for strategic planning to be used as a participatory tool for curriculum review and upgrading, thus making a direct contribution towards improving the quality and relevance of agricultural education in Belize. Follow-up activities to this workshop will be implemented in 2005.

5.4 Developing Human Capital

Training was provided to two statisticians, one from the Ministry of Agriculture and the other from the Central Statistics Office. Both attended two regional workshops in Honduras and El Salvador on the methodologies for collection analysis and reporting of statistical data. This was to support efforts for strengthening of agricultural statistical units in Central American countries. Two technicians from BELTRAIDE and IICA also participated at the Second Regional Forum on Agro-Business for Tropical Fruits held in El Salvador. This forum facilitated the exchange of information on the production and commercialization of tropical fruits in Central America with strong emphasis on processing and marketing.

5.5 Strengthening Rural Communities

Technical support was provided to the Belize Cashew Producers Cooperative on processing of cashew nuts as they go through their first year of operation since the establishment of the plant in 2003. Specific assistance was provided on the management aspects of the plant. A series of management training sessions were also

provided to the members by the cooperatives department through the collaborative efforts of IICA, BELTRAIDE, Small Farmers and Business Bank, Development Finance Cooperation and MAF. The Agricultural Innovation Project, known as RED SICTA was officially launched in Belize on November 22. This is a regional project that is a joint effort by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and IICA. The project promotes innovation in areas including production, diversification, transformation, marketing and management to small and medium producers of corn, beans, potato, sweet potato and cassava in the seven Central American countries. The main goal of the RED SICTA Project is to increase income of producers thus contributing to reducing poverty and improving the well being of rural communities. This project is being coordinated at the national level through the IICA Office in Belize.

5.6 Facilitating Competitiveness and Global Trade

A national seminar “Opportunities and Challenges for the Development of Small and Medium-Size Rural Eco-enterprises in a Global World” was hosted by IICA and facilitated by a technician from CATIE. This seminar, which was attended by persons from the public and private sector, highlighted the importance eco-enterprises in the rural economy and contribution towards preservation of natural resources and overall sustainable development. This initiative supports the national effort for providing opportunities for rural communities to derive financial from the tremendous expansion in of the local tourism industry.

5.7 Other Technical Programs

Technical staff from the office participated in numerous committees and working groups for commodities/topics such as citrus, sugar, tropical fruits, biosafety, organic agriculture, agricultural research and ecological agriculture, making valuable contribution towards the overall improvement of agriculture in Belize.

Finally, the office participated in the National Agriculture and Trade Show 2004 by hosting an educational display on tropical fruits and root crops grown in Belize, fundamental concepts on organic agriculture, plant propagation techniques and the range of technical services offered by IICA. The display was designed to specifically to educate the youth and general public on the importance of agriculture to Belize’s economic development and the importance of consuming safe and healthy food, most of which is produced locally and readily available.

6. Support provided in the development of National Plans and Strategies (Implementation of AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action for Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas)

The IICA Representative presented to the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture, copies of the following documents:

- ▣ “Support from IICA Representative for the Ministerial Delegate in each country in one of the processes for implementation of the AGRO 2015 PLAN”
- ▣ The “Agro 2003-2015” Plan of Action for the Agriculture and Rural Life of the Americas.

- ▣ The 2002-2006 Medium Term Plan.
- ▣ The Mechanisms for Following Up on the Plan of Action of the Third Summit.
- ▣ General Information to Ministers of Agriculture, the Ministerial Delegates of Agriculture and Institutional Partners of the Summit
- ▣ The 2003 Annual Report of the Contribution of IICA to Agriculture and the Development of Rural Communities in Belize

The IICA Representative held discussions with officials on the need of the designation or confirmation of the ministerial delegate for 2004-2005 process and their respective roles in the Summits of the Americas Process.

The IICA Representative offered to provide any assistance and information they may require in contributing to the hemispheric dialogue to build consensus on the expected outputs of the Second Ministerial Meeting.

7. Future Opportunities for Development

The importance of agriculture to the economy of Belize makes it a critical sector for continued investments to ensure economic and social stability. The investments to improve competitiveness in the citrus, sugar and banana industries offer tremendous opportunities for development and introduction of technological innovation through research and dissemination of information. A key element of the diversification program has been the development and expansion of organic agriculture. This is an area in which IICA has developed significant capacity through experiences generated in Central and South America.

The acceleration of negotiations for the FTAA and other international trade agreements has revealed certain limitations in the national capacity in making strong, organized and effective representation at international trade meetings. IICA, through its hemispheric network, will continue to support the national institutions in the development of the human capacity for participation in international trade negotiations and compliance with the WTO/SPS and other trade agreements.

The challenges presented in trading in export markets will no doubt force Belize and the other countries in the region to examine the opportunities in the domestic and intra-regional markets; stronger linkages with the food supply chain of the hospitality sectors, and to move towards value-added for high ended niche markets.

The Office will work closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in developing projects and programs within the framework of the Strategic Plan for the Agricultural Sector, including the following:

- ▣ Several opportunities have been identified for further development within the Agro-Tourism sphere.
- ▣ Support decision-making related to policies, through research and the preparation of proposals intended to encourage investment in the agricultural sector.
- ▣ Conduct analysis of specific agricultural production systems, in order to identify opportunities for increasing their competitiveness.

☞ Foster links between research and development institutions and agricultural organizations, to improve the setting of priorities and the management of research.

☞ Expansion of rural enterprise development among rural groups.

The support to BOPA, spearheaded by IICA Office, will facilitate the way forward with regards to the dialogue and advocacy needed to influence agricultural policy concerning the production and marketing of organic products.

During 2005, the IICA Office will continue to enhance technical and managerial capacity among the large numbers of small agro-entrepreneurs, particularly within the framework of organizations committed to work in the interest of their members and their communities, to reduce poverty and contribute to national food security.

The cooperation office in Belize, as part of its normal duties, will continue to explore opportunities for external resources from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies. It will also continue the strategy of strengthening alliances with partner institutions such as CATIE, CARDI, FAO, IDB, PAHO, UNDP, ROC Taiwan Technical Mission and RUTA for sharing of resources for conducting specific technical cooperation and training activities.

Acronyms

ACS	Association of Caribbean States
BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
BELTRAIDE	Belize Trade and Investment Development Services
BIARD	Belize Institute for Agricultural Research and Development
BMDG	Belize Marketing and Development Corporation
BOPA	Belize Organic Producers Association
CAC	Central American Agricultural Council
CARDI	Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CARICOM	Caribbean Common Market
CATIE	Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center
CGA	Citrus Growers Association
CORECA	Regional Council for Agricultural Cooperation
CREI	Citrus Research and Education Institute
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FTAA	Free Trade Areas of the Americas
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries

NCCARD	National Coordinating Committee for Agricultural Research and Development
OAS	Organization of American States
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organization
ROC	Republic of China
RUTA	Regional Unit for Technical Assistance
SAQS	Strengthening Agricultural Quarantine Services
SICA	Central American Integration System
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
TCGA	Toledo Cacao Growers Association
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USA	United States of America
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WTO	World Trade Organization