

Advocacy of Science-based Decision Making in Agricultural Biotechnology¹

Prepared by Pedro J. Rocha, *Ph.D.*

1. Background-Rationale

After the “Seminar on genome editing for regulators in biotechnology from American hemisphere”, which was carried out 4th and 5th April 2018, and after the “Informal government to government meeting”, performed by 6th April, both in Cali-Colombia, several actions were proposed; in particular, those related to information exchange and institutional support.

Regarding information exchange, countries asked IICA to carry out virtual meetings using its current platform to discuss specific issues on genome editing (analysis of Like-Minded Group proposal, review of policy advances, etc.). In addition, it was required that these meetings will have simultaneous translation.

In general, most of countries from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) still require technical support for the implementation of actions regarding biosafety of genetically modified (GM) crops. One of the most important examples of IICA’s contribution to foster international trade has been the technical support given, since 2015, to the bilateral customs union agreement between Guatemala and Honduras. Several concrete actions have been carried out by IICA, for instance:

- The document containing a risk assessment of the GM corn given as a response to the official requirement of the Minister of Agriculture of Guatemala (2015).
- The complete review and proposal of the improved version of the biosafety regulatory framework for Honduras (2016).
- Participation in several training events on biotechnology and biosafety, as joint activities with USDA/FAS Guatemala (2016-2017).
- Technical support in the discussion meetings about a common biosafety regulatory framework for the two countries, between others (2017-2018).

Because of the advances of the working groups, it seems the discussion is entering in the final rounds. However, funding is required to support some of the meetings in both countries.

Based on the previous, IICA is proposing an amendment to the agreement FX17TA-10960J002, between IICA and FAS/USDA, to fund these activities.

¹ This project is covered by the agreement FX17TA-10960J002, signed on September 29, 2017 by Robert Ahern (IICA) and Robert Macke (FAS).



2. Objectives

- Facilitate greater understanding among countries representatives to the Biosafety Protocol of how each of the issues under consideration (including new breeding techniques) will affect national and regional interests.
- Provide American countries with the opportunity to improve their understanding of specific issues and to consider the different technical expert views on genome editing and new breeding techniques, topics that will be discussed at international fora (for instance, GLI, OCDE, FAO, COP-MOP, etc.).
- To support, both technically and financially, the final rounds of the negotiation of the bilateral trade agreement between Guatemala and Honduras.

3. Methodology

3.1. Virtual conferences

Technical aspects

- Program for each session and speakers’ selection will be carried out in a joint manner with officers from USDA-Washington. Here, just a plausible chronogram (including potential dates and hours) is presented. Program will be defined in collaboration with USDA-Washington and contacts from the Like-Minded Group (LMG) of countries.

Logistics

- Four virtual conferences will be organized from May to November 2018.
- Proposed dates will be determined by working with USDA-Washington and contacts in the LMG.
- IICA, in coordination with the LMG secretariat, will send invitations to key officials from ministries/institutions related to biosafety targeting countries involved in the “Informal government to government meeting” in Cali, at least the first virtual conference.
- Participants could connect to these sessions from either IICA’s offices in the countries or any place with Internet connection. We will have possibility to connect 100 points simultaneously.
- In addition, we will have simultaneous translation English-Spanish.
- Conferences will be programmed for maximum three hours each.
- Official languages will be Spanish and English, translation will be available.

3.1.1. Preliminary draft agenda for virtual meetings

Hour (Costa Rica’s time)	Description
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Videoconference 1: tentatively May 24th, 2018	
Topic*:	
8:00 a.m.	Test
8:15 a.m.	Welcome and introductions <i>Pedro Rocha, IICA</i>
8:30 a.m.	*
11:00 a.m.	Final remarks
11:15 a.m.	End of the session
Videoconference 2: tentatively June 21st, 2018	
Topic*:	
8:00 a.m.	Test
8:15 a.m.	Welcome and introductions <i>Pedro Rocha, IICA</i>
8:30 a.m.	*
11:00 a.m.	Final remarks
11:15 a.m.	End of the session
Videoconference 3: tentatively August 23rd, 2018	
Topic*:	
8:00 a.m.	Test
8:15 a.m.	Welcome and introductions <i>Pedro Rocha, IICA</i>
8:30 a.m.	*
11:00 a.m.	Final remarks
11:15 a.m.	End of the session
Videoconference 4: tentatively September 27th, 2018	
Topic*:	
8:00 a.m.	Test
8:15 a.m.	Welcome and introductions <i>Pedro Rocha, IICA</i>
8:30 a.m.	*
11:00 a.m.	Final remarks
11:15 a.m.	End of the session

* Detailed agenda, in terms of topics, speakers and length will be discussed with USDA/FAS.

3.2. Support to final rounds of discussion of the bilateral customs agreement between Guatemala and Honduras

- It is expected to have maximum four additional rounds of negotiation between National Commissions of Biotechnology & Biosafety in Honduras and Guatemala.
- Three officials (maximum) from each country will be funded.
- IICA's technical support will be available based on country's requirements.

3.2.1. Preliminary schedule for discussion rounds

Round	Place	Dates	Number of officers supported
1	Honduras	7 th to 11 th May, 2018	3
2	Guatemala	To be confirmed	3
3	Honduras	To be confirmed	3
4	Guatemala	To be confirmed	3

4. Budget (in USD)

Item	IICA's contribution (in kind)	USDA/FAS contribution (USD)	
		Videoconferences	Bilateral agreement GUA-HON
1. Personnel			
Pedro Rocha, Ph.D. (Technical executor)	9,000	0	0
Administrative support (Temporary position for 6 months, 1000 USD/month, 36% of legal charges)	0	4,080	4,080
Subtotal Personnel	9,000	4,080	4,080
2. Travel and accommodation			
Airplane tickets	0	0	7,109
Travel insurances	0	0	1,206
Accommodation & Per diem	0	0	16,878
Subtotal Travel	0	0	25,193
3. Logistics			
IICA's equipment service (computers, cameras, video beams, screens, and technicians for 4 events * 15 to 25 countries * 3 hours)	200	1,702	0
Translation (including 2 translators and equipment)	0	2,400	0
Financial cost	650	0	0
Subtotal Logistics	850	4,102	0
Sub-Total per event	9,850	8,182	29,273
Net Institutional Rate IICA (approx. 10%)	0	818	2,927
Total per event	9,850	9,000	32,200
Total per contribution	9,850	41,200	

Notes:

- Estimated budget (based on April-2018 values)
- Costs per event and items could be modified. However, limit of 41,200 USD will not be overpassed.

Advocacy of Science-based Decision Making in Agricultural Biotechnology¹

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Harmonization

1. Background-Rationale

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Because of the advances of the working groups, it seems the discussion is entering in the final rounds. However, funding is required to support some of the meetings in both countries.

Based on the previous, IICA is proposing an amendment to the agreement FX17TA-10960J002, between IICA and FAS/USDA, to fund this activity.

2. Objectives

- To support, both technically and financially, the final rounds of the negotiation of the bilateral trade agreement between Guatemala and Honduras.

3. Methodology

3.1. Support to final rounds of discussion of the bilateral customs agreement between Guatemala and Honduras

- It is expected to have maximum four additional rounds of negotiation between National Commissions of Biotechnology & Biosafety in Honduras and Guatemala.

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Preliminary schedule for discussion rounds

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3	Honduras	To be confirmed	3
4	Guatemala	To be confirmed	3

4. Budget (in USD)

Item	IICA's contribution (in kind)	USDA/FAS contribution (USD)
		Bilateral agreement GUA-HON
1. Personnel		
Pedro Rocha, <i>Ph.D.</i> (Technical executor)	6,000	0
Administrative support (Temporary position for 6 months, 1000 USD/month, 36% of legal charges)	0	4,080
Subtotal Personnel	6,000	4,080
2. Travel and accommodation		
Airplane tickets	0	7,109
Travel insurances	0	1,206
Accommodation & Per diem	0	16,878
Subtotal Travel	0	25,193
3. Logistics		
Coffee breaks	0	0
Equipment (computers, cameras, video beam, screen.)	0	0
Translation (including 2 translators and equipment)	0	0
Financial cost	500	0
Subtotal Logistics	500	0
Sub-Total per event	6,500	29,273
Net Institutional Rate IICA (approx. 10%)	0	2,927
Total per event	6,500	32,200
Total per contribution	6,500	32,200

Notes:

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Advocacy of Science-based Decision Making in Agricultural Biotechnology¹

Prepared by Pedro J. Rocha, *Ph.D.*²

Teleconferences

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- Facilitate greater understanding among countries representatives to the Biosafety Protocol of how each of the issues under consideration (including precision breeding techniques) will affect national and regional interests. -With leadership from Like Minded Group countries; especially Argentina and Brazil.
- Provide American countries with the opportunity to improve their understanding of specific issues and to consider the different technical expert views on genome editing and new breeding techniques, topics that will be discussed at international fora (for instance, GLI, OCDE, FAO, COP-MOP, etc.). -With leadership from Like Minded Group countries; especially Argentina and Brazil-.

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² Reviewed and adjusted by Diane Wray-Cahen

Logistics

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4. Budget (in USD)

Item	IICA's contribution (in kind)	USDA/FAS contribution (USD)
		Videoconferences
1. Personnel		
Pedro Rocha, <i>Ph.D.</i> (Technical executor)	3,000	0
Administrative support (Temporary position for 6 months, 1000 USD/month, 36% of legal charges)	0	4,080
Subtotal Personnel	3,000	4,080
2. Travel and accommodation		
<u>Airplane tickets</u>	0	0
<u>Travel insurances</u>	0	0
<u>Accommodation & Per diem</u>	0	0
Subtotal Travel	0	0
3. Logistics		
<u>IICA's equipment service (computers, cameras, video beams, screens, and technicians for 4 events * 15 to 25 countries * 3 hours)</u>	200	1,702
<u>Translation (including 2 translators and equipment)</u>	0	2,400
<u>Financial cost</u>	150	0
Subtotal Logistics	350	4,102
Sub-Total per event	3,350	8,182
<u>Net Institutional Rate IICA (approx. 10%)</u>	0	818
Total per event	3,350	9,000
Total per contribution	3,350	9,000

Notes:

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- Costs per event and items could be modified. However, limit of 9,000 USD will not be overpassed.