



Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI)

**Report of the 2024 Regular Meeting of the Special Advisory  
Commission on Management Issues (SACMI)**

San Jose, Costa Rica  
9 May 2024



## Introduction

Pursuant to the provisions of its Statute and Rules of Procedure, and in compliance with Resolution IICA/CE/Res. 580 (XXXIII-O/13), the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI) held its Regular Meeting, via videoconference, on 9 May 2024, starting at 8:46 a.m. (Costa Rica time).

The Technical Secretary spoke briefly about the establishment, objectives and mechanisms of the SACMI. He stressed the importance of the Commission in fostering regular dialogue between the Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Member States regarding the initiatives and administrative, budgetary and strategic issues of the Institute, with a view to building a consensus on these matters prior to meetings of the Executive Committee (EC) and the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA).

He mentioned that the SACMI is comprised of nine Member States: six permanent members—Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, United States and Venezuela—and three members selected for one-year periods, with the members for 2024 being Honduras, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago. Annex 1 includes the list of participants.

## Message from the Director General of IICA

The Director General welcomed the participating delegations, as well as the senior management staff of the Institute and the technical team supporting the meeting. He stressed the importance of SACMI in gaining feedback from the countries regarding IICA's financial, technical and administrative matters.

He gave a brief summary of the most relevant actions that the Institute had undertaken in 2024, namely: a) participation in the Global Forum on Agriculture and Food (GFFA), in Berlin, Germany; b) hosting of the VI Institutional Management Meeting at IICA Headquarters; c) hosting of the fourth edition of the Regional Water Dialogues, held at the Headquarters of the Institute, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); d) presentation of the *Report on the Status and Prospects of the Bioeconomy in Latin America and the Caribbean*, an innovative document prepared in partnership with ten other organizations; e) hosting of a hemispheric meeting on animal health in Paraguay, pursuant to IABA Resolution No. 545; f) organization of the First Meeting of Leaders of Rurality of the Americas, pursuant to IABA Resolution No. 551; g) undertaking of a study to dispel the belief that agrifood systems are failed systems and to improve their positioning at different events; h) organization of a field visit for the Ambassadors of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) in Costa Rica to projects in which IICA is providing cooperation; i) launch of the “Living Soils of Africa” initiative, in the presence of the President of Guyana and authorities from Brazil, among other senior government officials; and j) the hosting of the VI Congress on the Use of Space Technology for Water Management.

The Director General indicated that he had undertaken seven official missions. He also assured the

meeting that the Institute was in a solid financial position, given that the austerity measures it had adopted to rationalize the use of the resources contributed by the countries and the funds mobilized from external resources had enabled it to build up a reserve.

He listed major actions that would feature in IICA's agenda for the latter half of 2024, including: a) conducting activities to comply with the resolution on the Hemispheric Alliance for Food Security and Sustainable Development in the Americas, in particular, with respect to generating public goods; b) participation in COP29 in Azerbaijan, where IICA would install the "Home of Sustainable Agriculture of the Americas" pavilion, with a view to strengthening the role of the agriculture sector in establishing a proper environmental balance; c) the participation of IICA, and specifically the Director of Technical Cooperation, in the Group of Twenty (G20) Summit; and d) the staging of the Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee, slated for 23 -24 July.

Finally, he described the Institute as an active organization capable of achieving more with less and delivering first-class cooperation services, efficiently, in keeping with the demands and priorities of its member countries.

### **Report on the execution of the Program Budget**

The Director of Corporate Services remarked that the Institute's new financial architecture, which facilitated efficient management of the budget, had put the Institute in a sound financial situation. He pointed out that for the fifth consecutive year, the financial statements of the Institute had received a clean and unqualified opinion from the external auditors, who had stated that the organization's resources had been managed in a reasonable and transparent manner.

Furthermore, he pointed out that the draft 2024-2025 Program Budget approved by the IABA in 2023, via Resolution No. 552, amounted to USD 33,074,000 per year, made up of USD 29,574,100 from Member State quota contributions and USD 3,500,000 from projected miscellaneous income. He pointed out that there was no variation in the quota amount vis-à-vis the previous biennium, but that there had been a USD 1,000,000 increase in total miscellaneous resources compared to the previous biennium, given that the miscellaneous income fund had grown due to improvements in the investment process and some increases in investment rates.

Finally, he spoke about the execution of the 2023 Program Budget, with total execution amounting to USD 31,210,381, broken down as follows: a) direct technical cooperation services: 85 %; b) management costs: 5 %; c) general costs and provisions: 8 %; and d) renewal of infrastructure and equipment: 2 %. He underscored the importance of the timely payment of quotas by Member States, to enable the Institute to carry out its planned actions.

### **Report on the collection of quotas**

The Financial Manager presented the report on progress in the collection of quotas from Member States at the close of 2023 and up to 7 May 2024. She referred to article 23 of the Convention on IICA and to Resolution No. 414 of the IABA, "Revised Measures for Collecting Quotas Owed to the Institute," which states that Member States shall contribute to the financial support of the

Institute, through annual quotas established by the IABA, in accordance with the system for calculating quotas of the Organization of American States (OAS).

She explained that quotas were due on the first day of the fiscal year and considered to be overdue as of the first of July of that year.

She stated that at the end of 2023, there were 7 countries that were up to date in their payments, 14 in regular status and 3 in arrears. She also indicated that as at 7 May 2024, a total of USD 19.6 million had been received, with 21 countries being up to date in their payments, 10 in regular status and 3 in arrears.

She explained that, should no additional payments be received by 1 July 2024, there would be 9 countries that would be up to date in their payments, 21 in regular status and 4 in arrears. Finally, she stressed that it was imperative that the Institute receive the expected resources, to enable it to effectively carry out its technical cooperation plans.

### **IICA relations with Colombia and Nicaragua**

The Director General indicated that it would be appropriate for discussions in the SACMI meeting to address the Institute's relationship with Colombia and Nicaragua, in a bid to promote institutional transparency and to enable the representatives of the participating Member States to comment on the matter.

### **Report on the situation in Colombia**

The Technical Secretary read a detailed report providing some background on IICA's situation in Colombia.

It indicated that in 2007 the Government of Colombia had created and implemented the Agro Ingreso Seguro (AIS) program, which IICA had helped to develop and implement, within the framework of the Basic Agreement signed between the Institute and that country in 1968. At the end of 2009, oversight bodies of the Colombian State had launched an investigation that had held various officials and other persons accountable for alleged misuse by various beneficiaries of the resources received through the AIS Program.

It went on to explain that IICA was named in a publication of entities that were being held fiscally responsible, based on a determination by the Comptroller General of the Republic of Colombia. The Comptroller General, which is an autonomous entity, established that IICA should be subject to the administrative jurisdiction of the Colombian State and should pay approximately USD 2.5 million as an administrative sanction for the damage caused. Nonetheless, the Technical Secretary pointed out that the Institute continues to enjoy immunity from the laws of Colombia. He also spoke about the legal, diplomatic and political efforts that IICA had made to find a viable solution, as well as the fact that it had continued to undertake a number of technical cooperation actions in that country, even after this situation had arisen. He also stressed that the governing bodies of the Institute had been kept abreast of the situation.

On the other hand, he revealed that there was an outstanding amount of USD 4,133,100 of quota contributions that Colombia owed to the Institute, which was a legal situation that, pursuant to the Convention on IICA, placed the country at risk of losing its right to vote in the deliberations of the IABA and the Executive Committee.

Finally, he said that IICA and Colombia were in the process of attempting to restore their relationship, with a view to defining a cooperation agenda to benefit the agriculture and rural sector of the country, in response to the petitions of other countries regarding the issue. He emphasized that at that time the Colombian Government had demonstrated a willingness to come to an agreement with the Institute and to resolve the matter with the Comptroller General of the Republic of Colombia. To this end, the Director General would require the support of the Executive Committee, which was slated to meet in July 2024.

The Director General elaborated on the report, remarking that ongoing dialogue with the Minister of Agriculture and authorities of Colombia had been extremely fruitful. He insisted that the situation, which had persisted for fifteen years, should be settled. IICA, he said, should be removed from the list of fiscally responsible entities and the relationship restored, which would allow it to provide full-fledged technical cooperation to the country's institutions and agriculture and rural sector. He explained that the main reason for raising this issue at the SACMI meeting was to respond to comments made by some Member States during the 2023 meetings of the IABA and the Executive Committee. The Director General said he was optimistic that the suggestions of the SACMI members would assist in addressing the situation in an appropriate manner, for subsequent submission to the next Executive Committee meeting, in order that a definitive solution be found.

### **Analysis and comments**

The Representative of Mexico commended the Director General for his report on the activities and events in which he had participated, which she said enriched the actions of the Institute to support the countries and to tackle problems in the various sectors. She underscored the fact that technological innovation should be prioritized in the countries, as a means of achieving maximum productivity in small-scale agriculture.

She remarked that the report on the execution of the Program Budget provided general information but asked that more details be provided at the next Executive Committee meeting and that the figures regarding execution be further disaggregated, especially with respect to technical services, which she believed was the most important budget heading.

On the other hand, she remarked that normalizing IICA's relationship with Colombia and closing the chapter on that issue was a matter of tremendous importance. She expressed support for the matter to be reviewed at the next meeting of the Executive Committee, so that a decision could be made regarding the payment of the penalty imposed by the Comptroller General of the Republic of Colombia.

The Representative of Canada thanked the Director General and his team for organizing the meeting and stressed that his country shared the view that agrifood systems are part of the solution.

In highlighting the uniqueness of the Institute, he acknowledged its important role in bringing about food security in the Americas. With respect to the presentation on the status of quota collections, he shared his concerns about the outstanding quotas and recommended that the matter of payment be addressed at the Executive Committee meeting. Regarding the situation in Colombia, he expressed agreement with the measures that would be taken to normalize the relationship between that country and IICA.

The Representative of the United States echoed the words of thanks for the presentation of the Director General and for the reports on quota payments and the execution of the budget. She announced that her country had scheduled the full payment of its quota by the end of the year. She encouraged the other countries to remain current with their quota payments, as a means of supporting the agriculture sector.

The Representative of Argentina spoke about the Institute's intense level of technical cooperation activity in his country. He informed the meeting about efforts within his Government to honor the country's quota commitments to IICA. He congratulated the Institute for the actions it was taking to restore its relationship with Colombia and pledged his country's support.

The Representative of Honduras commended the Director General for his work and recognized IICA's efforts to solidify its financial situation. She suggested that the proforma invoice from the Institute with respect to quota payments be sent earlier, to allow countries enough time for internal procedures. She requested that more detailed information be provided on the mobilization and execution of resources for externally funded projects. Finally, she expressed support for efforts taking place to resolve the situation in Colombia.

### **Report on the situation in Nicaragua**

The Technical Secretary read out the report explaining in detail IICA's situation in Nicaragua.

He noted that on 19 January 2024, the Government of the Republic of Nicaragua had sent an official letter, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, advising the Director General of the Institute of its decision to denounce the Convention on IICA and to withdraw from the organization, but had provided no explanation for its decision.

He stressed that the Director General had made multiple efforts to establish positive dialogue with the authorities of Nicaragua to urge them to reconsider the decision and to allow the Institute to continue providing technical cooperation for the agriculture and rural sectors of that country, as it had been doing for more than 40 years. Nonetheless, he reported that there had been no response to these overtures.

He mentioned that the IICA Delegation in Nicaragua had ceased all technical cooperation actions, and administrative operations, but that the files, goods, vehicles with diplomatic plates and all the other assets of the office remain at the office facilities.

He underscored the active role that Nicaragua had played in the various governing bodies of the Institute; the participation of its agricultural entities in regional or multi-country projects and the

Director General's desire to normalize the relationship with the Nicaraguan Government. As such, he said that the Director General would continue to exhaust all avenues for discussion with the authorities of that country and would maintain the governing bodies informed of the actions taken.

The Director General admitted that the letter had come as a surprise, given that everything concerning the Institute's relationship with the Government of Nicaragua appeared to be normal. He mentioned that government officials, former Presidents and high-level officials had attempted to mediate and to determine the reason for Nicaragua's decision. While acknowledging that he was aware that Nicaragua had withdrawn from the OAS, he also stressed the importance of IICA's role as a technical cooperation organization with no political affiliation, whose actions had had a positive impact on Nicaraguan farmers and rural areas.

### **Analysis and comments**

The Representative of Mexico enquired how much time would have to pass after Nicaragua's decision to denounce the Convention before its withdrawal from the Institute would become official, under existing regulations.

The Legal Advisor to IICA's Governing Bodies explained that the time period was a year.

The Representative of Mexico felt that it was urgent that the Institute's Member States mobilize efforts, through their embassies, to serve as mediators in re-establishing IICA's relationship with Nicaragua and encouraging it to reverse its decision to denounce the Convention. She proposed that the countries intervene through the ministries of Agriculture and Foreign Affairs. She pledged that Mexico would lend its support, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to any discussion that may be needed.

The Representative of Canada requested that a comprehensive analysis of the topic be carried out at the next Executive Committee meeting. He considered it important for a delegate from Nicaragua to be in attendance to share the reasons for the country's withdrawal from the Institute. This would improve understanding of the decision, prevent speculation and encourage all other member countries to persuade Nicaragua to reconsider its decision.

The Representative of Honduras echoed the remarks of the Representative of Mexico and recommended that the mediation process be channeled through the ministries of Agriculture. She expressed her concern regarding regional dynamics in a future scenario in which Nicaragua was no longer a member country of IICA, emphasizing the importance of joint work carried out in Central America. She mentioned that there were very important issues to be addressed in the region, particularly animal health, food safety and trade relations, among other areas. She pointed out that, at that time, Honduras chaired the Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council (SECAC) and considered that other similar organizations could take part in facilitating dialogue to prevent Nicaragua's withdrawal from the Institute.

The Representative of Argentina supported the proposal by Mexico and Honduras to make available the support of the ministries of Agriculture and Foreign Affairs of their countries. He also



offered the support of his country, via the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS), to contribute to resolving the situation with Nicaragua.

The Director General stated that he was cautiously optimistic about a potential rapprochement, due to some recent developments, including the participation of Nicaragua's Charge d'Affaires in a technical visit that IICA had organized in Costa Rica. He highlighted the importance of countries' support to intervene in the decision taken by Nicaragua. He expressed his hope that, at the next Executive Committee meeting, he would have more information to share regarding progress in reversing the situation.

### **Proposed updates to the Staff Rules**

The Legal Advisor of the governing bodies of the Institute reported that, at the 2023 Regular Meeting of the SACMI, it had been announced that a study was being launched to review the regulations of the General Directorate of IICA governing human talent and financial operations, as an integral part of the institutional transformation process that the Director General was promoting. He added that the Executive Committee and the IABA had expressed their support for the study via resolutions 709 and 555, respectively.

He explained that the amendments to the Staff Rules did not involve the incorporation of any new benefits for personnel, the modification of salary scales or an increase in budgetary costs. He added that the proposal was based on the following six principles: a) incorporation of the provisions set out in Chapter 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Directorate (RPGD) and in the System for the Determination of Remuneration for IICA Personnel (RS); b) simplified and clearer wording; c) reorganization of the chapters and their content; d) incorporation of a gender approach; e) modernization and f) explanations and transparency.

The Director General clarified the fact that the final result of this process would be updated, simplified and adequate Staff Rules, in keeping with the times.

### **Analysis and comments**

The Representative of Mexico expressed her appreciation for progress made in revising the Staff Rules. She recommended that the documents presented be sent to the Member States for a more in-depth review. She suggested that a working group comprised of the countries be established to address the concerns and observations of the Member States. Lastly, she referred to certain aspects of the text of the document which, in her opinion, required further clarification.

The Representative of Honduras expressed some concerns that she considered required further analysis and that could be included in the proposal. She suggested that the concerns of the Member States be shared with the administration for its analysis.

The Director General asked the delegations to send him all their concerns, comments and suggestions regarding the proposal, so that he could analyze them and prepare a more robust proposal for review and approval by the Executive Committee.

### **Close of the meeting**

The Director General thanked the Member States for their active participation and comments and expressed his commitment to analyze the concerns raised. He announced that the next Executive Committee meeting would be held from 23 to 24 July, and that he would commit to presenting a detailed Program Budget and addressing the issue of quota collection.

Regarding the situation with Colombia, he requested support to normalize relations with that country. With respect to Nicaragua, he assured the attendees that he would continue to undertake persistent efforts to encourage the Government of that country to reconsider its decision to withdraw from the Institute.

He celebrated IICA's solid financial standing thanks to improvements in the mobilization of external resources and miscellaneous income. He said that he appreciated the feedback regarding the updates to the Institute's rules and regulations, which would be forwarded to the Executive Committee, as well as the support for each of the topics discussed. Lastly, he reaffirmed the invitation to the Member States to participate in the upcoming meeting of the Executive Committee, during which they would be able to provide input to enable the Institute, as a current organization at the service of the member countries, to continue transforming and strengthening agrifood systems of the Americas.

Having analyzed and discussed the proposed items at length, the Director General of IICA adjourned the meeting at 10:44 a.m. in Costa Rica, on 9 May 2024.

**Annex 1**  
**List of participants**

**Member States of the 2024 SACMI**

**Argentina**

Santiago Bonifacio  
Director Nacional de Cooperación  
y Articulación Internacional  
Secretaría de Bioeconomía

Silvina Inés Rivero  
Técnica  
Dirección de Negociaciones Multilaterales  
Secretaría de Bioeconomía

Virginia Rumbolo  
Técnica Legal  
Subsecretaría de Mercados Agropecuarios  
y Negociaciones Internacionales  
Secretaría de Bioeconomía

**Brazil**

Naim José Pereira da Silva  
Representante da Subsecretaria de  
Orçamento, Planejamento e Administração  
Ministério da Agricultura e Pecuária  
(MAPA)

**Canada**

Daryl Nearing  
Deputy Director  
Multilateral Relations  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

**United States of America**

Aileen Mannix  
Multilateral Affairs, Foreign Agricultural  
Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Donald Willar  
IICA Policy Lead for USDA  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Sara Ripley  
Finance Analyst  
U.S. Department of State

### **Honduras**

Laura Elena Suazo Torres  
Secretaría de Estado de Agricultura y Ganadería  
Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería

### **Mexico**

María de Lourdes Cruz Trinidad  
Coordinadora General de Asuntos  
Internacionales  
Secretaría de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural  
(SADER)

### **Peru**

Renee Janett Pacheco Santos  
Especialista en Cooperación Internacional  
Ministerio de Agricultura y Riego

### **Trinidad and Tobago**

Neela Maharaj  
Director of the Agricultural Planning Division  
Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

## **Non-Member States of the 2024 SACMI**

### **Colombia**

Juan Téllez  
Representante  
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (MRE)

Sergio Peña  
Representante  
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (MRE)