



Thirty-ninth Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee of IICA

REPORT OF THE MARKET INFORMATION ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAS

2016-2019

July, 2019

San Jose, Costa Rica



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I. Background

The Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA) is a cooperation network comprised of Agricultural Market Information Systems (MIS), that is to say, government institutions or those institutions so delegated by the government, whose principle functions and objectives are to collect, process, analyze and disseminate information related to markets and agricultural commodities.

The MIOA is defined as a catalytic body engaged in common efforts to achieve the proposed goals, which arise from the member institutions' needs and concerns and which they seek to address using their own resources and contributions from national and international cooperation organizations.

Created in the year 2000, the MIOA is currently comprised of 33 countries of the hemisphere. In 2004, IICA was designated as the organization's Technical Secretariat with responsibility for providing technical assistance. In its role as Technical Secretariat, IICA is also responsible for implementing activities and providing technical and strategic support, presence in the member countries, implementation of the agreements of the Executive Committee and keeping the institutional memory. The cooperation agreement signed between the MIOA and IICA was updated in 2018 and extended until December 31, 2021.

The purpose of the MIOA is to facilitate the timely and constant exchange of market information for agricultural products through the achievement of its goals, namely:

- To promote cooperation among its member institutions and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the collection and dissemination of market information.
- To help set standards in aspects related to terminology, methodology and technology within the network.
- To facilitate the timely and systematic exchange of market information between member institutions.
- To act as a channel and facilitate a multiplying effect in order to obtain financial support from international cooperation organizations.

The Executive Committee of the MIOA meets three times a year for the purpose of proposing the organization's strategic orientation and work plan, identifying opportunities for member countries and setting policies and priorities. Delegates from the MIOA's member countries also meet once a year to discuss new methodologies, innovations and good practices.

In 2017, the MIOA's Executive Committee took the decision to create an Advisory Panel on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to advise the Executive Committee and oversee the implementation of technology in the MIS. Panel members hold a face-to-face meeting at least once a year and represent the five regions of the hemisphere.



II. Executive Committee of MIOA

During the Eighteenth Regular Meeting of the MIOA, held on April 9-10, 2019, a new Executive Committee was elected for the 2019-2021 period. On this occasion, 28 of the 33 member countries and three observer organizations participated. Regional delegates duly elected their representatives on the Executive Committee, which is constituted as follows:

- Northern Region: Terry Long. AMS-USDA, United States. Chair
- Andean Region: Jaime Riofrío. MAG, Ecuador. Vice president
- Central Region: Socrates Theoktisto. IMA, Panama.
- Caribbean Region: Colville King. Ministry of Agriculture, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
- Southern Region: Pablo Pacheco. Mercado Modelo, Uruguay.

The Executive Committee will meet for the first time in Washington DC, in July 2019. With the support of the Technical Secretariat, the Committee will discuss project proposals to strengthen the region's Agricultural Market Information Systems (AMIS), review the organization's financial situation and follow up on the activities currently under way.

III. Results

In relation to the MIOA's objectives, several activities have been implemented in order to strengthen the Agricultural Market Information Systems (MIS), and in particular to:

1. **Promote cooperation among member institutions and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the collection and dissemination of information.**
 - **Cooperation activities USDA-FAS**

The Foreign Agricultural Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (FAS-USDA) is a strategic partner of the MIOA. In the context of the FAS/USDA-IICA agreement, five projects were implemented to support the MIS. In addition, financial leverage from USAID was obtained through the Participating Agency Program Agreement (PAPA) in order to create a Catalog of Agricultural Products in the Central Region.

Funding is currently available for the execution of capacity building activities in market intelligence, in coordination with FAS-USAID. These activities focus primarily on the member countries of CAFTA and the Dominican Republic, although the Caribbean countries could be included in the next stage of this process.



- **Capacity building in price collection**

The Agricultural Marketing Service, within the United States Department of Agriculture (AMS-USDA) has facilitated technical specialists to provide training for MIS personnel on methodologies for price collection and market analysis, within the framework of regional and hemispheric meetings promoted by the MIOA. Chile, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras are among the countries that have benefited from these activities.

- **Panel of ICT Specialists**

In 2017, the MIOA Executive Committee decided to establish an advisory group comprised of experts in topics related to information and communication technologies (ICT) applied to agricultural market information and intelligence. Each region identified an ICT specialist from one of the MIS to join this work team, which also included an IICA specialist. The team is currently considering the implementation of new technologies in the MIS.

- **Regional Market Information Network (RMIN)**

In line with the MIOA's efforts, the countries of the Central Region established a Regional Market Information Network (RMIN) that includes the region's MIS and strategic partners such as SECAC, SIECA and Fews-NET. Together, they have implemented initiatives such as the Regional Agricultural Markets Intelligence and Monitoring System (SIMMAGRO), a platform that provides trade and price information on the region's 40 leading agricultural products. In addition, a Regional Report on Basic Grain Prices is being prepared, explaining price patterns and the factors that affect their performance. The network is also proposing other initiatives to strengthen the MIS in the region.

2. Helping to set standards related to terminology, methodology and technology to be used within the network

- **Assessment of the status of MIS**

Using a methodology developed by the Technical Secretariat, a self-evaluation of MIS will be carried out. The result of this evaluation will be compared to a baseline in order to measure the MIOA's impact; identify good practices in the collection, management, analysis and dissemination of market information; and identify opportunities for improvement with the support of the MIOA.

This initiative will follow-up on the MIS evaluation carried out in 19 countries during the 2005-2006 period, in which 24 best practices were identified. The results of this evaluation will be used to update best practices in information management and will serve as a baseline for identifying the needs of the MIS, in order to generate ideas for projects of regional and hemispheric scope.



- **Catalogs of agricultural products**

The member countries of CAFTA, together with Panama and the Dominican Republic, have developed a Catalog of Agricultural Products that serves as a collaborative, dynamic and functional tool to integrate, manage and organize information on the 39 products of greatest commercial importance in the region. This online tool is available for consultation by traders, students and other public and private sector stakeholders.

In addition, the Andean, Northern and Southern regions are working to generate information for their catalogs of agricultural products, which will be published on the MIOA's new Web page.

- **MIOA database**

Specialists of the MIOA network, together with the Technical Secretariat and IICA, have developed a database that is stored in the Cloud, for use by the MIS of Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Granada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Belize, Barbados and Costa Rica. The implementation of the MIOA database was carried out through training processes led by the Technical Secretariat.

- **Education in market information and market intelligence**

A study plan was designed for training professionals in information systems and market intelligence with the support of the Luiz de Queiroz College of Agriculture in Brazil, EARTH University in Costa Rica, Zamorano University in Honduras and the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Trinidad and Tobago. The end result was the implementation of a course in market information at UWI, as well as the inclusion of this topic in Master's courses taught at EARTH University.

To complement this effort, the teaching staff participating in the project recommended the development of an online (virtual) course in price analysis for agricultural products. The course is available to technical personnel of MIS, students and private sector stakeholders through IICA's online education platform. It was developed with the support of CAESPA-IICA, and the staff participating in the first stage include faculty members of the School of Agricultural Economics of the University of Costa Rica, Universidad ISA of the Dominican Republic and specialists of MIOA. This course is available in Spanish and English and more than 600 people have registered from countries within the hemisphere and beyond. The course will be translated into Portuguese on the second semester of 2019.



3. Facilitate the timely and systematic exchange of market information among member institutions.

- **SIMMAGRO**

The Regional Agricultural Markets Intelligence and Monitoring System (SIMMAGRO) was developed by the Regional Market Information Network (RMIN), with the support of the MIOA and FAO. This platform contains trade and price information related to the 40 products of greatest importance to the Central Region. The experience gained from implementing this type of project is being observed by other regions interested in developing their own platforms and price observatories, with the support and coordination of the MIOA.

- **Technologies for disseminating market information**

The experience accumulated in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Uruguay and Trinidad and Tobago in the development of systems for disseminating market information through the Short Message System (SMS) for cell phones has been made available to other MIOA members. Users of MIS in Latin America and the Caribbean have improved their access to timely, reliable and transparent information through the definition of strategies, methodologies and good practices identified during the evaluation of SMS systems developed by the MIS of Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Ecuador and Costa Rica. This project was implemented with support from the Secretariat of Planning and Evaluation (SEPE) of IICA, which identified good practices and recommendations for the implementation of this system in other MIOA member countries.

Similarly, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Ecuador has made available to MIAO members an application for the dissemination of agricultural prices. This tool was developed with support from the MIOA and its implementation in other countries is being analyzed by the MIOA's ICT Panel.



IV. Outlook

In the short and medium term, the MIOA will continue to support the development of technological tools for the collection, analysis and dissemination of agricultural market information, in line with global information management trends.

The results of the current evaluation will enable the MIOA to better meet the needs of its member countries which, in the last 20 years have managed to establish and technically strengthen their MIS. The MIOA's priorities are to support members through innovative ideas and projects, and to promote the exchange of experiences and knowledge that will improve the conditions in which agricultural trade negotiations take place.

Internally, the MIOA is fully aware of the need to update its communications and is now working to develop a new Web page and a communications plan that will improve its interactions with members, with the authorities in the countries, and with students and the general public.

V. Acknowledgements

The Executive Committee of the MIOA is grateful to IICA for the support provided through the Technical Secretariat, in coordinating and implementing the activities with the organization's member countries. It is also grateful for the transparent administrative and financial management carried out on its behalf. Finally, the MIOA hopes to continue this relationship to benefit the transparency of the hemisphere's agricultural markets.