



**NINETEENTH REGULAR MEETING
OF THE INTER-AMERICAN BOARD OF AGRICULTURE (IABA)**



REPORT 2007-2017

*October 2017
San Jose Costa Rica*

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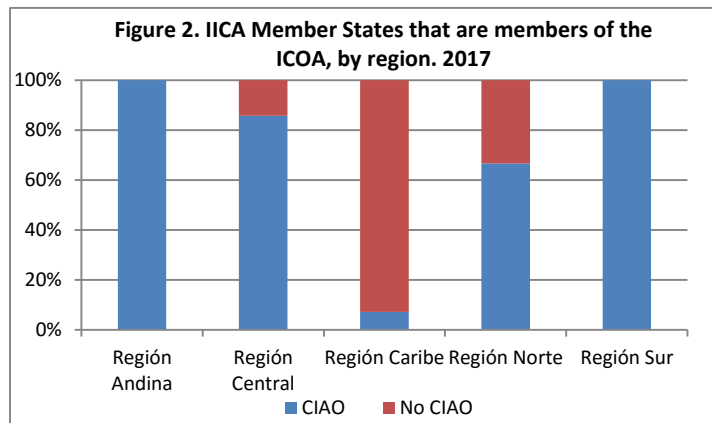
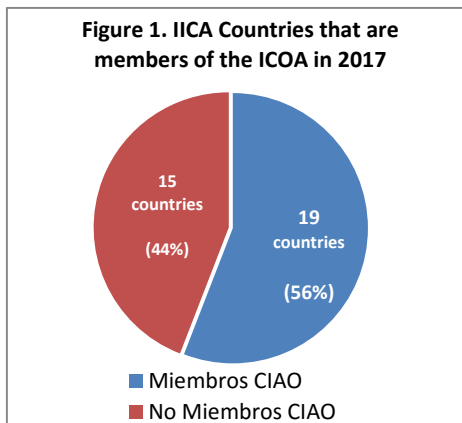
1. Background

The Inter-American Commission on Organic Agriculture (ICOA) was established by the Ministers of Agriculture of the Americas through a Resolution adopted by IICA’s Executive Committee (EC) at its Twenty-eighth Regular Meeting in 2008: IICA/EC/Res. 484 on “Coordination Mechanisms for the Development of Organic Agriculture in the Americas.”

Historical summary

2007	The Hemispheric Organic Agriculture Program (PHAO) of IICA promotes the organization of a meeting between the Competent Authorities on Organic Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The “First Meeting of Competent Authorities on Organic Agriculture of LAC is held in Managua, Nicaragua. Agreement to create the “Network of Competent Authorities on Organic Agriculture of Latin America and the Caribbean.”
2008	The “First Meeting of the Network of Competent Authorities on Organic Agriculture of the Americas” is held in Lima, Peru. The Network of Competent Authorities on Organic Agriculture of the Americas is established as the Inter-American Commission on Organic Agriculture (ICOA), via Resolution IICA/EC/Res. 484 (XXVIII-0/08).
2009	The Bylaws of the Inter-American Commission on Organic Agriculture are approved <i>ad referendum</i> by the Inter-American Board of Agriculture through Resolution IICA/EC/Res. 506 (XXIX-0/09). The First Assembly of the ICOA is held in San Jose, Costa Rica and its first Board of Directors is elected. The Bylaws of the Inter-American Commission on Organic Agriculture are ratified via Resolution IICA/IABA/Res.455 (XV-O/09).
2014	The ICOA and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) sign a Technical and Administrative Cooperation Agreement. The United States becomes a full member of the ICOA.
2015	The Competent Authorities for the Development of Organic Production are formally incorporated into the Commission at the Seventh Regular Meeting of the ICOA Assembly, held in Quito, Ecuador.
2016	The Assembly approves Spain’s incorporation as a Permanent Observer of the ICOA. Ecuador is elected President of the ICOA Board of Directors, following Argentina’s eight-year presidency.

At present, 19 of IICA’s 34 Member States are full members of the ICOA, namely: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela. Spain became a Permanent Observer Member of the Commission in 2017.



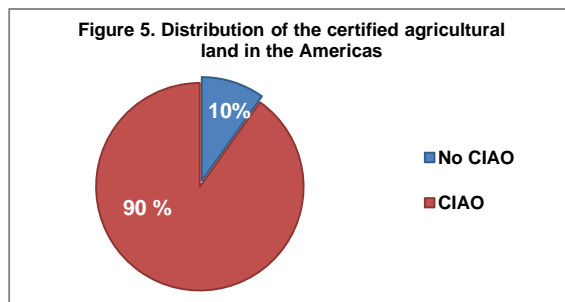
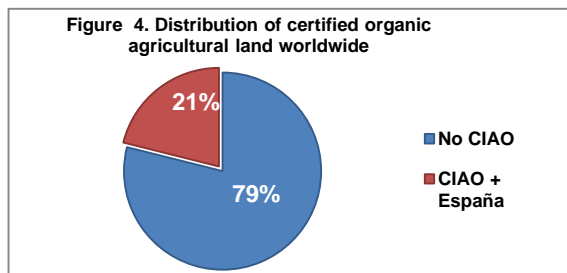
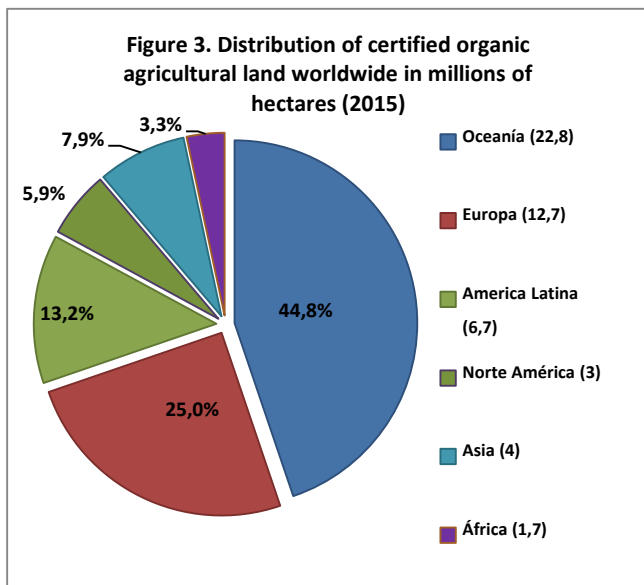
The ICOA Board of Directors (BD) is currently made up of Ecuador (which serves as Chair), the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Peru. The Tenth Regular Meeting of the ICOA in 2018 will be hosted by Peru.

In this document the ICOA aims to outline the contributions of organic agriculture to the competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural production chains and family agriculture, food security and inclusion in rural territories, among many other important benefits. It also aims to present the concrete results achieved during the ten years since its creation.

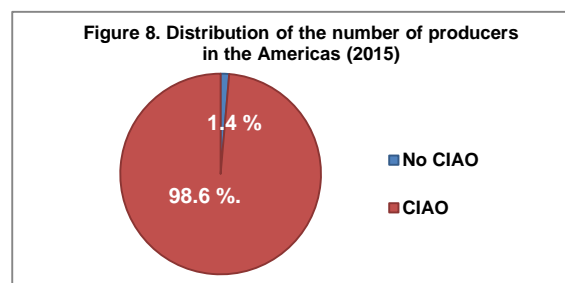
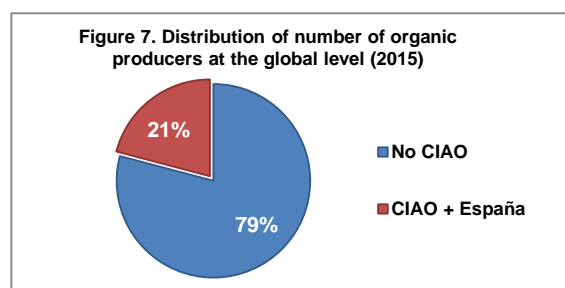
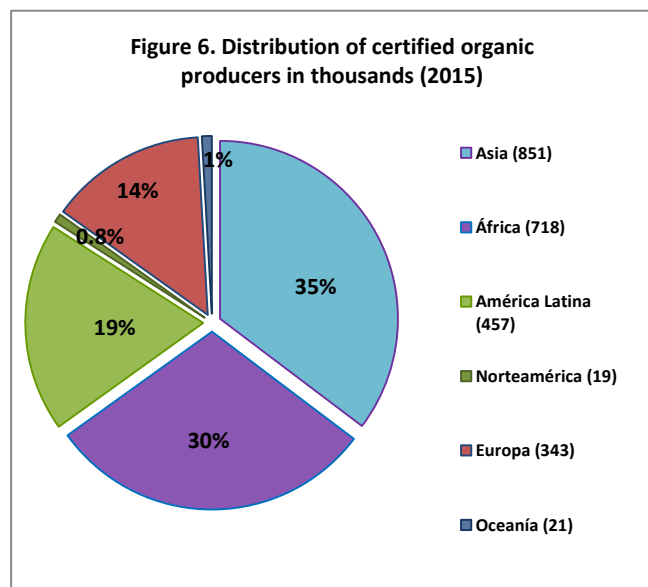
2. Organic Agriculture in the Americas and the Global Context

In most countries of the region, the contributions of organic agriculture to the development of the agriculture sector are associated with sustainable food production, income generation and, to a large extent, with food security and improving the quality of life of the producers engaged in this activity, most of whom are linked to family farming. Organic agriculture has also made undeniable contributions to the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity and to the mitigation of climate change, which are an intrinsic part of this type of production.

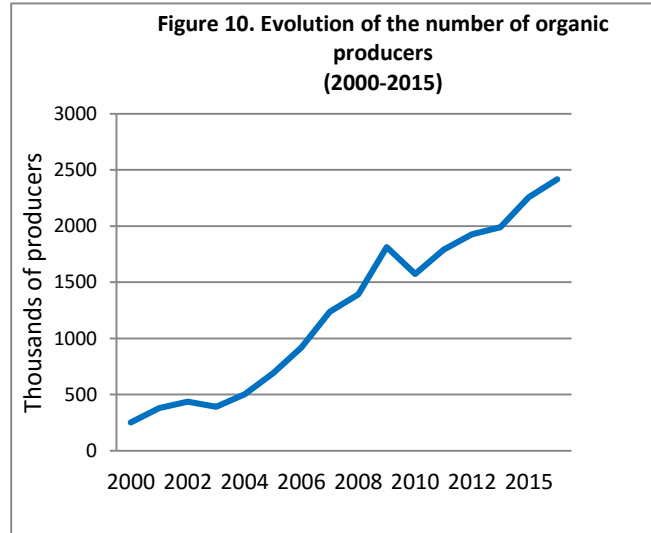
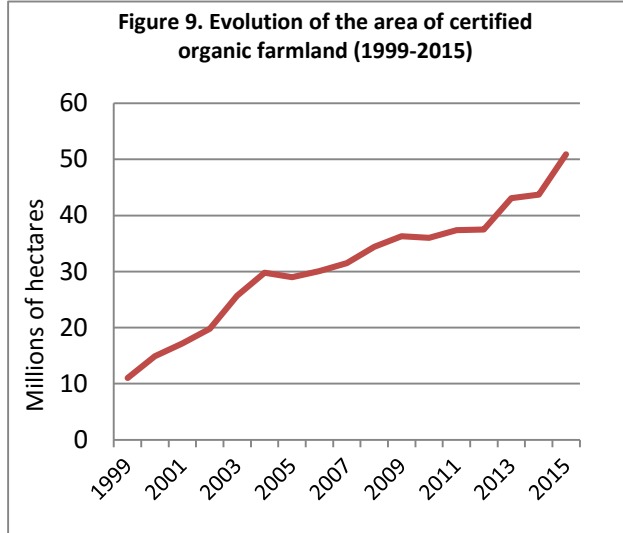
The latest data from the 179 countries that keep records on certified organic production shows that the ICOA member countries account for 90 % of the area under organic production in the Americas, and more than 20% of organic farmland worldwide (Figures 3, 4 and 5).



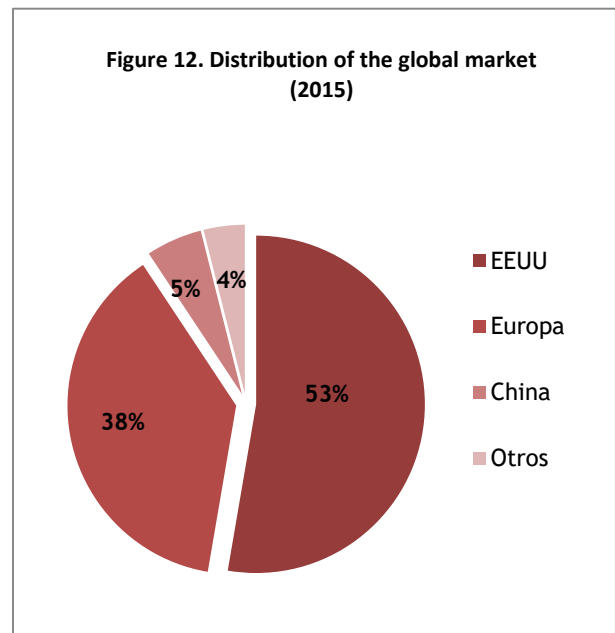
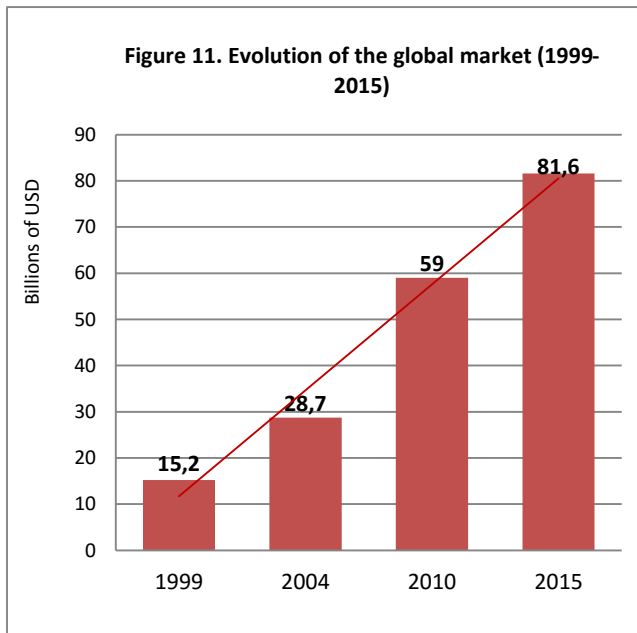
In addition, the hemisphere plus Spain account for nearly 20% of the total of organic producers, who are strongly concentrated in Latin America and the Caribbean (Figures 6, 7 and 8).



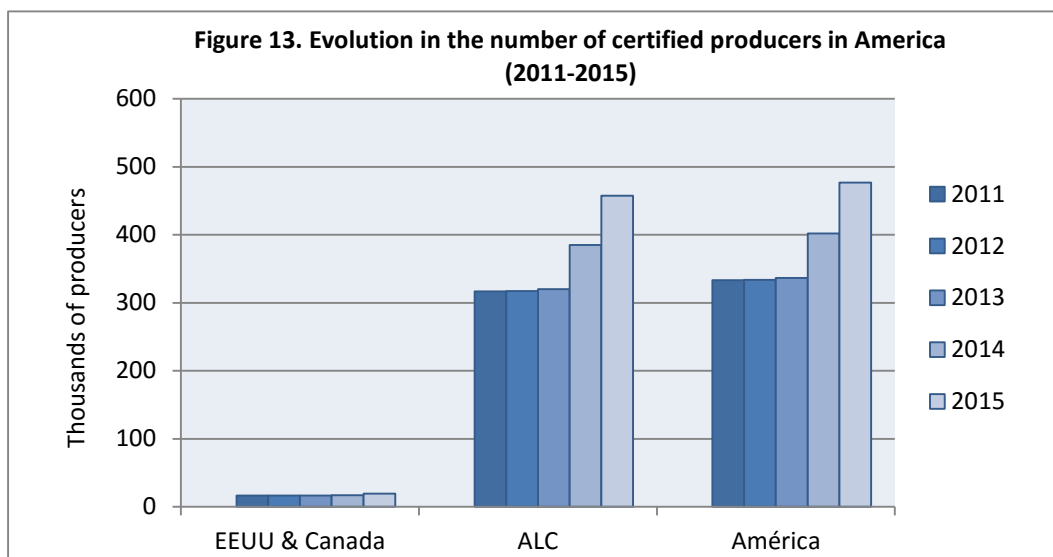
1990s decade, and the area of certified organic land quadrupled between 1999 and 2015, as shown in Figure 9. Even greater was the increase in the number of producers, which rose from approximately 200,000 to 2.4 million (Figure 10).



The market, in turn, has responded with a solid and constant growth, with sales quadrupling between the late 1990s and 2015 (Figure 11). It is important to emphasize that of the 81.6 billion dollars in global sales recorded in 2015, more than half corresponds to the United States market which has grown at a rate of more than 10% since 2012. Thus, it is clear that more than half of the global organic market lies within the sphere of ICOA, with a growth rate higher than that of any other food category. (Figure 12).



It is important to note that in recent years there has been an increase in the number of producers in the hemisphere who dedicate their farms to organic production, as shown in Figure 13.



3. Results achieved by the ICOA and ongoing actions

With reference to the five objectives that were established for the ICOA by the Ministers of Agriculture when it was created through Article N° 3 of the ICOA Bylaw: IICA/EC/Res.506 (XXIX-O/09)¹, the following are the results achieved and activities carried out:

¹ Objectives: 1) To serve as a mechanism for consultation, liaison and reciprocal cooperation with the competent governmental bodies that promote and establish standards for the development and control of organic agriculture in each country of the Americas; 2) To coordinate and promote the development and harmonization of standards and procedures to stimulate and regulate the production, control of and trade in

1) Facilitation of trade in organic products and development of markets²

- **Central American Technical Regulations (RTCA)**

Under the auspices of the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) and the competent agricultural authorities of the States Party, the ICOA countries discussed the Central American Technical Regulations (RTCA) on "Organic Agricultural Products: Requirements for Production, Processing, Marketing, Export, Import and Labeling." A total of five rounds of face-to-face negotiations took place, together with six videoconferences (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama). Agreement was reached on the final RTCA document,³ which was circulated for public consultations in each country.

- **Andean Technical Regulations**

The Secretariat of the Andean Community (CAN) convened a meeting with the organic production authorities of the CAN countries to review the draft Andean Technical Regulations for organic production, including aspects of international standards and the Codex Alimentarius.

- **Equivalence, Harmonization and Bilateral Agreements**

The ICOA has supported processes of equivalence, harmonization and bilateral agreements, specifically:

1. - Equivalence negotiations between Mexico – USA
2. - Recognition of Equivalence and Reciprocity in Organic Standards: Chile - European Union.
3. - Recognition of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS): Chile - Brazil.
4. – Request for Equivalence negotiations: Argentina - USA.

- **Working group on inputs suitable for organic production.**

The ICOA countries formed a special Working Group to establish harmonized procedures for evaluating and approving the use of commercial inputs allowed in organic production.

The aim is to achieve:

1. A harmonized manual for the evaluation of inputs suitable for organic production.
2. A draft manual for the evaluation of inputs for post-harvest and processing of organic products.

organic food in the countries of the Americas; 3) To contribute to the strengthening of the institutional structures of the Competent Authorities for organic agriculture in the countries of the Americas; 4) within the framework of other functions that contribute to the development of organic agriculture, to sponsor, insofar as possible, the development of the activity and its institutional framework; 5) To contribute to the development of and trade in organic products in the countries of the Americas, acting as technical body for knowledge management, socialization and dissemination of relevant and timely information.

² Harmonization of regulations among countries. Preparation of regulations on aspects of organic production that are not regulated. Support for the countries engaged in processes aimed at achieving the recognition and equivalence of their regulations. Support for countries in defining strategies for the development of organic markets.

³ The document in question has been harmonized with the latest versions of the *Codex Alimentarius* standards CAC/GL 32-1999; European Union Regulations (EC) No. 889/2008 and (EC) No. 834/2007; the USDA-AMS National Organic Program (NOP); USDA Organic Standards 7 CFR 205; International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures, ISPM 5; Glossary of Phytosanitary Terms, based on the Organic Agriculture Regulations of the member countries.

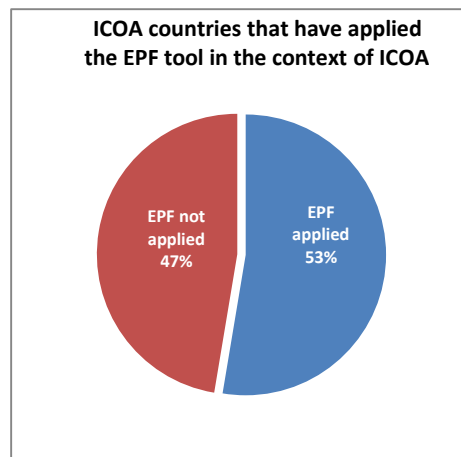
2) Establishment and strengthening of the National Oversight Systems (NOS) for organic production⁴

- **Implementation of the EPF Tool: “Evaluation and Planning for Strengthening the National Oversight Systems for organic production”**

The EPF tool was developed by the ICOA and IICA to facilitate the participatory assessment of the National Oversight System.

This tool was validated and has been successfully applied in: Guatemala, Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Mexico, Bolivia and Ecuador.

The EPF has enabled the stakeholders involved in organic production to assess the status of their National Oversight Systems (NOS) for organic production and, with support from IICA and from the Executive Secretariat of the ICOA, prepare action plans to strengthen the institutions and organizations involved in overseeing organic production at the national level.



- **IICA-ICOA-USDA Agreement “Regional Organic Standard & Equivalency Program”** (Agreement number 58-3148-6-217)

Under the Agreement, the following workshops were designed and implemented:

- “Workshop to Build the Capacity of the National Oversight Systems (NOS) for Organic Production in the Americas” (Santiago, Chile, April 2017) where IICA and the ICOA, with cooperation from Chile’s Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG) and the backing of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), provided training to 17 ICOA member countries in specific areas of the work of NOS, including the accreditation and/or approval of certifiers, certification of organic operations, and compliance with other aspects related to oversight of the organic sector (ISO Standards/ IEC 17.021, 17.065 and 17.011).
- “Workshop to Strengthen Certifiers of Organic Agriculture in Mexico” (Oaxaca, Mexico, June 2017) where the General Directorate of Agrifood Safety, Aquaculture and Fisheries of the National Agrifood Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA) and the ICOA, assisted by IICA and sponsored by the USDA, developed the capabilities of Mexico’s certification bodies in key areas identified through equivalence negotiations that took place between SENASICA and the USDA’s National Organic Program.
- “Capacity Building Workshop for the Competent Oversight Authorities for Organic Agriculture under the NOP Standards” (Costa Rica, October 2017), in which IICA and the International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA), with the support of USDA, will provide training to the ICOA countries in specific areas of the work of NOS, in accordance with the NOP Standards.

- **Horizontal training**

In the context of the ICOA, and with the support of IICA, horizontal (Country-Country) training processes were implemented for officials involved in oversight functions in the member countries.

⁴ Development of methodological instruments for strengthening the NOS. Preparation of proposals for strengthening the NOS in the countries. Support for the establishment of the institutional framework required for oversight.

3) Information and knowledge management⁵

- **ICOA Web page and Social Networks**

The ICOA Web site (<http://ICOArqanic.net/>) and ICOA's monthly newsletter "Inforganica" were comprehensively redesigned to meet the communication needs of organic production stakeholders in the Americas.

As part of the communications strategy which includes the Web page and "Inforganica", the ICOA communications plan for social networks (*Community Managment Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube*) was designed, validated and is in the process of being implemented.

- **Guide to Good Practices in Organic Production**

The following guides to good practice were prepared for organic products:

1. Horticultural production. The text has been drafted and is under consultation prior to approval.
2. Production of tropical fruits and fruit derivatives. The text has been drafted and is being reviewed by the countries for approval and subsequent publication.
3. Production of temperate fruits (citrus and stone fruit and seed). At the drafting stage.

- **Technical Cooperation Agreement: ICOA-INTERECO⁶**

An Agreement was signed in 2017 for the purpose of:

1. Designing joint projects to harmonize legislation on organic/ecological production, in order to promote the harmonization of organic production standards and related activities, such as finding solutions to address existing gaps.
2. Training. Continuous specialized training on topics of oversight and certification of organic production. In order to take advantage of the highly qualified ICOA and INTERECO members in their respective areas of expertise, it was agreed to implement an annual training program, preferably online to optimize resources.
3. Expanding knowledge of public certification systems and other quality assurance systems for organic products and support their implementation where appropriate through:
 - Information and analysis of the possibility of implementing public certification schemes
 - Identification of countries interested in receiving information and analysis of possibility of public certification and PGS.

4) Development of organic production⁷

- **ICOA – Organic Production Development Group**

⁵ Access to information to support and improve decision-making processes. Dissemination of relevant information among stakeholders in organic production

⁶ Chamber of Control Authorities of the Autonomous Communities of Spain

⁷ Design of tools to promote organic production. Design of policy proposals and agendas for development. Support for the establishment of an institutional framework for organic production.

The creation of a network of Competent Development Authorities was agreed during the Seventh Regular Meeting of the ICOA Assembly, a decision that was included in Annex II to the minutes of the meeting. The main areas were identified for the establishment of a common work program. The “Regional Promotion Plan” was designed and validated.

- **Public Certification**

IICA and INTERECO⁸ provided support for the establishment of Public Certification Systems in Panama and the Dominican Republic.

At the request of other countries, and through the partnership with INTERECO, other ICOA members will receive support in establishing Public Certification Systems.

- **Outlook and challenges**

Efforts to strengthen policies and strategies for the promotion and development of organic agriculture and its oversight systems continue to be the backbone of ICOA’s work. The countries must also continue to reinforce their public institutional framework in order to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the local, regional and global context. In doing so, they should focus on linking producers with regional, local and international markets, where it is increasingly important to comply with the rules and standards established to regulate organic production and trade.

The harmonization of national organic production standards among countries of the region and the strengthening of national oversight systems for organic production are two of ICOA’s priority tasks. The goal is to achieve equivalence arrangements with key trading partners and guarantee and create confidence in the region’s products, thereby facilitating trade and access to global markets.

In general terms, the countries of the region have developed organic production in response to trade opportunities in the international market. However, efforts to promote and develop their own domestic markets are a more recent development, and therefore the results have yet to be seen. This calls for active policies such as awareness raising and training for producers and consumers, and the promotion of new market strategies for organic products at the domestic level.

4. Acknowledgements

The ICOA Board of Directors wishes to express its appreciation to the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) for the support provided through the Executive Secretariat, its offices in the Member States and other institutional bodies, without which the ICOA would not have been able to achieve the results described in this report. ICOA also wishes to thank the Ministers of Agriculture and, through them, the Member States, for the support provided by each country to this Commission over the last 10 years.

⁸ Chamber of Inspection Authorities of the Autonomous Communities of Spain.

We are confident that IICA's contributions will continue to be put to excellent use by the ICOA on behalf of the countries of the Americas, the organic producers and their families.