IICA’s Contribution to the Sustainable Development of Agriculture, Food Security and Rural Prosperity in the Americas
IICA Office in Guyana

1. Introduction

This 2002-2008 management report on IICA’s actions in Guyana is derived from the National Agenda for Technical Cooperation (NATC) and the Office’s annual action plans (AAPs) and 2002-2008 annual reports. The Institute supported the achievement of the results of the NATC and the AAPs focused on the key strategic areas of the repositioning of agriculture and rural life, agricultural health and food safety (AHFS), sustainable rural development, facilitating competitiveness in agribusiness, and the promotion of technology and innovation. The actions executed included technical support services to the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and its agencies and the private sector (including producers’ groups, processors and exporters); capacity-building through training courses, workshops and seminars; technical support to various agencies and groups through project preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and the dissemination of information, the sensitization of major stakeholders and efforts to create awareness of the implications of global changes in agricultural trade and aspects of agricultural health and food safety.

2. Repositioning of Agriculture and Rural Life in Guyana

The MoA designated its Deputy Permanent Secretary as the IICA Liaison at the Ministry and established a MoA/IICA Technical Committee. This committee has facilitated, among other things, the review of the National Technical Cooperation Agenda, the sharing of information of mutual interest, and efforts to raise awareness of the Jagdeo Initiative and to develop implementation strategies for it.

With the support of IICA, the country has increased its attendance and participation in hemispheric and regional processes, such as meetings of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA), etc., thereby enabling the national authorities to better understand these forums while giving more opportunities for the exchange of information on agriculture and rural life in the Americas.

The country made progress towards assuming its lead role in the repositioning of agriculture by hosting activities aimed at removing the Key Binding Constraints under the Jagdeo Initiative, and IICA made a significant contribution to those efforts by organizing events such as: i) the meetings of the CARICOM Council on Trade and Economic Development.
ii) the Fourth CWA, which included a major agricultural exhibition that brought together regional and local producers, processors and marketers; iii) the Regional Conference on Finance for Agricultural Development, aimed at increasing the flow of finance to agriculture; iv) the High-Level Regional Bio-energy Conference; v) the Regional Investment Forum, in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat; and, vi) the International Beekeeping Congress.

IICA assisted in addressing one of the Key Binding Constraints of the Jagdeo Initiative (i.e., an unorganized private sector) through active promotion and support in establishing four local chapters of the Alliance for Sustainable Development (The Alliance) in the country: the Rural Women’s Network (RAN), the Guyana Agribusiness Association (GABI), the Guyana Forum for Youth in Agriculture (GOYA) and the Caribbean Council for Higher Education in Agriculture (CACHE).

The GOYA has undertaken several initiatives with the assistance of IICA, including membership outreach programs at institutions of higher learning - e.g., the University of Guyana (UG) and the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) - and, in a few rural communities, entrepreneurial activities such as beekeeping, mushroom cultivation, pig rearing and poultry production. IICA also gave technical support to the GOYA in preparing project proposals for financing and with the formation of the GOYA Cooperative Credit Union to enable their members to access financial resources to fund their projects.

The RAN and IICA provided technical support and training to women’s groups in many rural communities, particularly in the area of agro-processing. The RAN is closely linked to the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs (MAA) and has become integrally involved in support programs to women in Amerindian communities in the hinterland of the country.

With the support of IICA, the RAN strengthened institutional ties with the Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP), which resulted in economic and cultural exchanges between Guyanese women and similar groups in Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia and Dominica. IICA also supported the RAN’s participation in the Third Congress of Rural Women in Spain.

3. Results of Technical Cooperation

a. Promoting of Agricultural Health and Food Safety

The emergency preparedness of Guyana for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was tested through simulation exercises organized by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in collaboration with IICA, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the MoA. Because of this, the country now has a contingency plan for HPAI.

The country’s agricultural health and food safety systems were strengthened with support from IICA’s Initiative of the Americas, through participation in the meetings of international organizations such as the World Animal Health Organization (OIE) and CODEX Alimentarius, and under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). The country has now increased its technical capacity to adopt and implement international guidelines and standards for trade in agrifood products.

The Standards and Trade Development Facilitation (STDF) Project and the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS)
Consultation were implemented by IICA in collaboration with the USDA. IICA prepared and submitted the reports to the national authorities for consideration.

Several small rural agro-processors have adopted good manufacturing practices (GMPs) through technical training and support from IICA. One such group is the Pomeroon Women Agro-Processors Association (PWAPA), which has advanced from homemade, handmade products to a more sophisticated small factory facility, complete with a few small machines, a solar dryer and GMPs in place.

IICA collaborated with the USDA/APHIS in providing technical and material support to the MoA’s pest surveillance programs, particularly along the country’s borders. This resulted in the country reducing significantly the prevalence of carambola fruit fly (CFF) and pink hibiscus mealybug (PHMB).

Following the severe floods of 2005 and floods in subsequent years, IICA provided vital veterinary supplies and technical support in the treatment and rehabilitation of livestock.

b. Promoting Trade and the Competitiveness of Agribusinesses

Through IICA’s support for the participation of technicians and officials in international forums, such as WTO-SPS in Geneva, USDA/APHIS meetings in Florida and CaribVET Network, the country has enhanced its experience and technical expertise to treat international trade agreements, public health conventions and negotiations.

The MoA, the Ministry of Tourism, Industry & Commerce (MoTIC) and the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) have accepted the agrotourism inventory and strategy documents produced under the IICA/Organization of American States (OAS) Agrotourism Project; three agrotourism community investment profiles were developed and are being considered for financing - St. Stanislaus College Association Farm (SSCF), North West Organics (NWO) and Lake Capoey Village.

As part of the implementation of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Project, IICA assisted the Tri-Lakes Communities (Mainstay, Capoey and Tapakuma) in the Essequibo Region to become a model for promoting community tourism through the application of linkages among agriculture, heritage, the natural environment and tourism.

Guyana’s accession to the Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA) in 2007 was facilitated by IICA. This has enhanced the capacity of the New Guyana Marketing Corporation (NGMC) to improve its market information systems, thereby enhancing the export trade thrust in non-traditional agricultural commodities.

In 2002, IICA collaborated with the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) in managing the Mabaruma/Hosororo Organic Cocoa Project, which was funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Among the deliverables were: income generation and employment in the identified communities through the rehabilitation of 80 acres of abandoned cocoa fields; planting of 6000 cocoa seedlings; increased yields of cocoa from less than 900 kg (2002) to over 4000 kg (2004); finding market access to a niche European market for the commodity; and the formation of the Mabaruma/Hosororo Organic Cocoa Growers Association (MHOCGA). By the end of the project, cocoa from the area was classified as “organic in transition.”
c. Promoting the Development of Rural Communities Based on a Territorial Approach

Technical assistance provided by IICA for the modification of imported technology used for the processing of cashew nuts at St. Ignatius enhanced the occupational health and safety of the workers in the processing plant.

During 2002-2003, owing to difficulty in marketing coffee, the Wakapoa Coffee Processors Association (WCPA), with assistance from IICA, diversified its activities to include cassava and honey production.

A major feat for IICA was that it prepared and submitted a project entitled “Supporting the Expansion of Income-Generating Activities in Region 2, Lake Communities in Guyana” to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. This project was approved and received funding of US$195,000, making it possible to improve the standard of living of the Amerindian population of the Lake Communities in Region 2 through the sustainable use of community resources. The Tri-Lakes Communities, having experienced a fair measure of success with the implementation of agriculture initiatives, particularly organic pineapple production, diversified their income-generating activities by linking their agriculture, heritage and natural environment as a tourism product. The implementation of an agro-tourism component in the Tri-Lakes Communities resulted in IICA receiving the “Agro-tourism Development Initiative Award” from MoTIC and the GTA in 2008.

In collaboration with agencies such as the Poor Rural Communities Support Services (PRCSS), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the MoA and the NARI, IICA provided technical support to women agro-processors in rural communities, particularly the PWAPA. The training of the PWAPA has assisted in raising their brand profile, thereby creating an increase in demand for their products in the domestic market.

d. Promoting the Introduction of Technology and Innovation in Agriculture

Through assistance and technical support from IICA, the SSCF established a training centre that promotes technology and innovation in agriculture, including a fifteen-acre pasture accommodating a herd of forty dairy cattle; a dairy processing facility to demonstrate modern methods of manufacturing dairy products, including yogurts and cheese; a shaded hydroponics vegetable unit; a humus production unit using vermiculture techniques; and an aquaculture unit to demonstrate integrated production of fish (tilapia) and ducks. The training centre at the SSCF was renamed the Héctor Muñoz Agricultural Training Centre in memory of the late IICA Emeritus Professional who pioneered the initiative.

A leading private-sector microfinance organization in the country, the Institute of Private Enterprise Development (IPED), has adopted biogas and hydroponics technologies that were reintroduced into the country by IICA. IPED is actively promoting the adoption of these technologies among its clients through training programs facilitated by IICA, and through financing and importing plastic digesters, UV plastics and shade material for their clients’ projects.

Several rural women’s groups have adopted modified hydroponics systems after participating in training courses organized by IICA.
With technical and material support from IICA, the Kuru Kuru Training Centre (KKTC), a national technical-vocational training institute, established a hydroponics facility that has made the KKTC self-sufficient in vegetables for its 200 students.

The Ministry of Education (MoEd) has enhanced the technical capacity of 42 teachers of agricultural sciences through the training provided by IICA in vegetable production using hydroponics systems, as well as training of over 400 secondary school students who traverse the coastal regions of the country.

The Government of Guyana (GoG) has recognized that agroenergy has an important role in the country’s future development. IICA assisted the GoG in hosting the High Level Agro-Energy Meeting in Guyana through promotion among Member States. Other partners included the IDB, CTA, CARICOM and UNDP. At that meeting, the GoG declared that the development of biofuels would be aggressively pursued for both export and domestic consumption. An Official Policy on Bio-fuels is currently under development by a Presidential Committee (Working Group on Bio-fuels/Agro-energy) that reports to the Office of the President (OP).

With the support of IICA, a modified vent stack was established at St. Ignatius for processing cashew nuts, resulting in a less hazardous working environment for processors.

Through IICA’s technical assistance and management of the organic cocoa project, the MHOCGA constructed a cocoa drying facility and storage bond in compliance with organic certification requirements.

The Tapakuma Cassava Processors and the PWAPA are using solar dryers, constructed with the support of IICA and the NARI, for processing fruits and cassava.

e. Promoting the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment

Under the W. K. Kellogg Project, IICA promoted and saw the gradual adoption of agroforestry and intercropping techniques, and the formulation and testing of bio-pesticides in the management of Acoushi ants. The project also included community environmental awareness components.

4. Strengthening Relations with Strategic Partners

IICA supported the drive by the Venezuelan Embassy to recruit students for the Simón Bolívar United World Colleges (UWC) of Agriculture in Venezuela. One female candidate was selected from Guyana for the 2005 program.

Four small grants projects funded by the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI) and executed by IICA created income-generating opportunities for four rural community groups. These include a beekeeping project operated by members of the GOYA at Goed Intent, Region 3; a poultry-rearing project run by a farmers’ group at Lima Sands, Region 2; a tilapia (aquaculture) project run by a women’s group at Lake Mainstay, Region 2; and a duck farming project run by an Amerindian group at Santa Rosa, Region 1.
The GoG’s Flood Recovery Programme was enhanced through a Flood Damage Assessment Report generated from a collaborative assessment mission by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC) and IICA after the 2005 flood.

The Institute maintains a letter of understanding with Partners of the Americas (PoA). The two organizations collaborate on a variety of initiatives, including the implementation of the Farmer-to-Farmer Programme in Guyana. The invaluable contributions of the PoA Volunteers supported several IICA activities, including agrotourism, integrated pest management, soil fertility, agribusiness management, irrigation, animal health and agro-processing.

IICA implemented the Guyana component of the OAS-funded Agro-Tourism Linkages Project with the support of the OAS Office in Guyana.

Amazon Caribbean (AMCAR) Guyana Limited has been a valuable private-sector partner, particularly during the implementation of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Project. The organic pineapple export trade was initiated by this company. In addition to being the sole purchaser and exporter of the products of the Tri-Lakes Farmers’ Association (TLFA), AMCAR supplies packaging materials and provides managerial and operational support services to the TLFA.

NARI has been a key partner in the planning and execution of many projects managed by IICA. These include the organic cocoa, Liberica coffee and peanut research projects, training in GAPs and the W. K. Kellogg Project in the Tri-Lakes Communities. IICA collaborated with the MoA, NARI, PoA and SSCF in the implementation of the Guyana Dairy Development Project (GDDP), which was funded by the USAID, between 2002 and 2006. Support was provided in the form of participation in stakeholder consultations, review of reports and other documents, and provision of technical and logistical assistance. An important contribution by IICA to the GDDP was a survey undertaken in 2003 to generate baseline information for the improvement of dairy production in the Moblissa community in Region 10 on behalf of the Linden Economic Advancement Programme (LEAP).

The British High Commission and the DFID provided funding to IICA for the implementation of the organic cocoa and coffee projects in Region 1.

The collaborative effort among IICA, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the GoG and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) resulted in the successful hosting of a High-Level Meeting on Bio-fuels in Guyana in 2007, which will provide access to the Member States of CARICOM to funding from the IDB for bioenergy development.

The collaboration between IICA and the USDA/APHIS has helped to strengthen the technical capacity of the MoA’s technicians in monitoring the country’s borders for plant and animal health risks. The USDA/APHIS provides funding and materials, while IICA provides the technical support.

The country’s two principal tertiary education institutions, UG and GSA, have been important partners for IICA’s programs. The two institutions collaborated with IICA in launching and supporting the Secretariat of the CACHE Chapter of the Alliance in Guyana. Faculty and students of the GSA and UG received support from the Office to participate in the annual Faculty-Student Exchange Programs organized by the CACHE, as well as with the hosting of the program in Guyana in 2008. In addition, IICA hosted internship programs for
undergraduates of UG. Three UG Librarians have completed specialized training programs via the IICA/Centre for Training and Distance Education (CECADI).

IICA conducted a review of agricultural education at the secondary and post-secondary levels in the country and facilitated training in strategic planning, curriculum review and design.

5. Modernization of the Office

The continuous adjustment and implementation of the office improvement plans (OIP) have helped modernize the Office and thereby enhance the satisfaction of clients and staff.

IICA has appointed a sustainable rural development specialist, an information/documentation specialist, a field assistant and administrative personnel to provide a more efficient response to the national priorities identified in the national technical cooperation agenda.

Several items of information and communication technology equipment were procured to facilitate and enhance internal and external communication, information management and documentation, reducing costs in the process.