

First Meeting of the Steering Committee of FORAGRO Buenos Aires, Argentina. 12 April 2018

Introduction

The new Steering Committee (SC) of the Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technological Development (FORAGRO) held its first meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina from April 12 to 13, 2018, during an event that also included a “Workshop to Define FORAGRO’s Needs and Vision.”

The present report, which refers specifically to the SC meeting, summarizes matters addressed as well as agreements reached by the Committee, for the information of FORAGRO’s members, who may subsequently submit any relevant observations.

As part of a process aimed at improving the forum, the SC has replaced FORAGRO’s Executive Committee, as set forth in the FORAGRO Charter approved by the Assembly in 2017.

Participants

- Juan Balbín, Pro Tempore President of FORAGRO, President of the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA) of Argentina
- Barton Clarke, Executive Director of the Caribbean Agricultural Research & Development Institute (CARDI), member of the “Regional Cooperation Mechanisms” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Francisco Moreno, participating on behalf of Raúl Obando, Research and Liaison Coordinator of the National Forestry, Agriculture and Livestock Research Institute (INIFAP) of Mexico and President of the Cooperative Program in Research and Technology for the Northern Region (PROCINORTE), member of the “Regional Cooperation Mechanisms” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Santiago Bertoni, President of the Paraguayan Institute of Agricultural Technology (IPTA) and of the Cooperative Program for Agrifood and Agroindustrial Technology Development in the Southern Cone (PROCISUR), member of the “Regional Cooperation Mechanisms” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Alexandre Amaral, participating on behalf of Celso Moretti, President of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) and of the Cooperative Program for Agricultural Research, Development and Innovation in the South American Tropics (PROCITROPICOS), member of the “Regional Cooperation Mechanisms” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Fernando López, Secretary of Management at the Confederation of Family Farmers’ Organizations of MERCOSUR (COPROFAM), member of the “Production Sector” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Claude Browne, participating on behalf of Pamella Thomas, President of the Team Fresh Produce Cooperative, member of the “Production Sector” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Mario Ordoñez, participating on behalf of Ronald Peters, President of the Regional Cooperative Program for the Technological Development and Modernization of Coffee Production (PROMECAFE), member of the “Production Sector” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC

- Eva Gamboa, participating on behalf of Rodolfo González, Secretary of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, member of the “Civil Society” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Olman Quirós, Dean of the School of Agrifood Sciences of the University of Costa Rica, member of the “Academic institutions” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Armando Bustillo, President of the Regional Fund for Agricultural Technology (FONTAGRO), member of the “Organizations that foster R&D&I” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Francisco Aguirre, Executive Secretary of the Latin American Network for Rural Extension Services (RELASER), member of the “Extension systems and rural advisory services” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Federico Villarreal, Director of Technical Cooperation at the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), participating on behalf of Manuel Otero, Director General of IICA, member of the “IICA” sub-group of FORAGRO’s SC
- Viviana Palmieri, Executive Secretary of FORAGRO

Proceedings of the meeting

The matters addressed and agreements reached based on the agenda approved at the beginning of the meeting are detailed below:

1. Approval of the minutes of the 2017 assembly

The minutes, which were previously sent to the SC members, were approved with the following modifications:

- On page 2, the final statement regarding areas of action should read as follows: “The abovementioned areas of action were consistent with the duties of the Forum as set forth in the Charter, which also indicates that the Forum is responsible for representing the Americas at the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) and any other spaces prioritized by FORAGRO.”
- On page 3, the following text should be added to the paragraph on the new FORAGRO Web page and logo: “regarding which suggestions were made.”

2. Process to fill two vacancies in the SC

The Executive Secretariat (ES) reported that, after finalizing the process defined by the Assembly to select the SC members, two vacancies remained: one representative of the “Production Sector” sub-group, and one representative of the “Civil Society” sub-group. The ES proposed the following steps to fill the vacancies:

- Re-open the call to register as a member of FORAGRO’s Assembly of Members.
- Hold another online nomination process (one to two months later) for Assembly members who form part of SC sub-groups with vacant positions.
- Conduct a voting process within the sub-groups (if there are several candidates) and request final approval from the SC.

The SC members shared their thoughts on how to improve representation of youth, women and the agrifood production sector in FORAGRO. They stated that these groups could be motivated to participate by explicitly including relevant topics in the Committee’s work agendas.



The members agreed to approve the Secretariat's proposal, underscoring the need for a call that encourages youth, women and agricultural producers to participate in the Forum and that highlights the Forum's preference for having regional organizations on the SC.

3. Election of the SC President and Vice President

The Secretariat presented the Charter's guidelines on electing a president and vice president. Given the fact that the rules describing the process in greater detail had not yet been prepared, the SC defined the process to be followed on this specific occasion. Among other things, it was agreed that:

- It was necessary to ensure that a quorum was present.
- The president would be elected first, followed by the vice president.
- In case of a tie, voting would be repeated until one of the candidates obtained a majority of votes.

It was also agreed that the Secretariat would prepare and submit a draft of the abovementioned rules to the SC.

Out of a total of 17 members (including the vacant positions), 12 SC members were present at the meeting, thus exceeding the minimum quorum for voting (more than half of the members) established by the Charter.

The representatives of PROCISUR and of COPROFAM were nominated for president; both candidates accepted their nominations. The voting results were as follows: 7 votes for PROCISUR, 4 votes for COPROFAM, and 1 abstention. Consequently, the representative of PROCISUR, Santiago Bertoni, who is the President of IPTA Paraguay and of PROCISUR, was elected as the President of the FORAGRO Steering Committee and Assembly of Members.

The representatives of COPROFAM and CARDI were nominated for vice president; the former accepted his nomination, while the latter declined his nomination. Despite having only one candidate, a vote was carried out. A total of 11 persons voted in favor of the candidate, while 1 person abstained from voting. The representative of COPROFAM, Fernando López, who is the Executive Secretary of COPROFAM, was elected as Vice President of the SC.

4. Other matters discussed:

4.1. Identification of an online means of communication between SC members in the future

It was agreed that SC members and the Secretariat would primarily communicate and reach agreements via email. To facilitate communication, the participants suggested creating an email list that included all members' email addresses, similar to the email list that the former Executive Committee utilized some years ago.

The participants also agreed to hold virtual meetings via an appropriate platform (such as WebEx) whenever synchronous communication among all SC members was necessary.

4.2. FORAGRO's involvement in hemispheric initiatives in which it is invited to participate

The Secretariat informed the meeting participants that FORAGRO had been invited to participate in Latinnov, an initiative led by the Agricultural Research Center for International Development (CIRAD) and IICA that consists of "an inter-institutional



collaboration platform aimed at strengthening the innovation culture and capabilities of Latin American agricultural stakeholders.”

The SC members agreed that further information on the initiative would be necessary in order to reach a decision, given that it was not clear how the initiative coincided with FORAGRO’s role. The Secretariat agreed to provide further information.

4.3. FORAGRO’s participation in GFAR and other platforms

The SC presented this topic in order to draw attention to FORAGRO’s weak participation in GFAR, compared to other more proactive regional forums. As an example, the SC indicated that no FORAGRO members had participated in GFAR’s most recent assembly. The SC stated that this matter was important given that FORAGRO could strengthen its political leverage and incidence through these global initiatives. It is necessary to develop a strategy to boost FORAGRO’s political incidence at the hemispheric level through a number of platforms, including the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) and the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS), among others.