



**Minutes of the First Face to Face Meeting of
FORAGRO's Assembly of Members
Costa Rica, 8-9 August 2017**

Background

The Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technological Development (FORAGRO) is the hemispheric mechanism for the discussion and mobilization of agreements on research and innovation topics that impact the agrifood sector in the Americas. FORAGRO was established in 1997 by Resolution No. 327 of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), which also tasked IICA with creating a Secretariat to support the Forum. In 2003, through resolution No. 398, the IABA reaffirmed its support for FORAGRO.

In 2015, an external evaluation of FORAGRO was carried out which resulted in a series of recommendations regarding critical aspects of its operation and duties. In response, a restructuring proposal was developed to strengthen FORAGRO in order to make it more effective, sustainable, and inclusive.

The proposal was evaluated at the Sixteenth Meeting of the Executive Committee of FORAGRO, held in Turrialba, Costa Rica in November 2016. General agreement was reached on the vision and mission of a renewed FORAGRO and on the next steps to implement the new model. Participants also agreed to take stock of FORAGRO's achievements as well as of the various agendas in agricultural research, technology development, and innovation of the public sector (as well as the private sector, insofar as possible) in the different countries and regions. This would allow for identifying major topics of common interest to guide the Forum's future activities and prioritize its actions.

The first step towards implementing FORAGRO's new governance model was the constitution of an Assembly of Members with inclusive representation of different stakeholder groups. The Assembly met for the first time at IICA Headquarters in Costa Rica on August 8 and 9, 2017. The objectives of the meeting were:

- 1) to advance the implementation of the new governance model for FORAGRO by installing the Assembly of Members, discussing and approving a Charter, and beginning a process to put in place the proposed new structure; and
- 2) to identify priority focus areas for FORAGRO as well as define next steps to develop a strategic plan to guide the actions of the Forum.

Annex 1 includes the list of participants.



Proceedings of the meeting

Dr. Amadeo Nicora, President of FORAGRO and of the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA) of Argentina, opened the meeting. Dr. Víctor Villalobos, Director of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), followed with some welcoming remarks.

Dr. Nicora provided background information and explained the objectives of the meeting. He then presented the meeting agenda and addressed comments. Dr. María Rodríguez, Executive Secretary (ES) of FORAGRO, read the Minutes of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Executive Committee.

Dr. Rodríguez also presented the Activity Report for 2016-2017 and provided an update on FORAGRO and its relationship with the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Development (GFAR).

Next, Mr. Mario Allegri gave a presentation on FORAGRO's achievements throughout its history. A session on "Agricultural Innovation in the Americas – Major Issues and Priorities" followed. The session included two presentations: (1) a presentation by Dr. Priscila Henríquez, Technical Coordinator of FORAGRO, on research, development, and innovation agendas (R+D+I) at the regional and country levels; and (2) a presentation by consultant Dr. Javier Ekboir, on global trends in agricultural and agroindustrial R+D+I.

Subsequently, an activity was carried out to enable the Assembly to identify priority issues of common interest. To this end, each member was asked to detail four priority issues that should be addressed in discussions regarding FORAGRO. On the second day of the meeting, work groups were created in order to discuss the priority issues of common interest that were identified the previous day. The work groups identified challenges and ways in which FORAGRO could contribute to addressing them through regional and hemispheric collaboration; they also discussed the manner in which FORAGRO could add value through different forms of joint action, and the sustainability with which it resolves challenges.

The participants agreed on the following priority issues: (1) natural resources that support agriculture, particularly biodiversity; (2) technological innovation for environmental, economic and social sustainability; (3) support for innovation in family farming; and (4) capacity-building. Proposed areas of action for FORAGRO included: 1) to serve as a discussion forum; (2) to coordinate actions between organizations as well as between mechanisms; (3) to facilitate the preparation of discussion papers to inform decision-makers of different matters; and (4) to provide public platforms to manage and disseminate knowledge and information. The areas of action identified were consistent with the functions of the Forum approved in the [Charter](#), which also includes representing the Americas in the GFAR process and in other spaces that FORAGRO prioritizes. In Annex 2 is a more detailed description of the discussion process and the agreements reached.



Dr. Carlos Araya, Executive Director of the National Institute for Agricultural Innovation and Technology Transfer (INTA) of Costa Rica, gave a presentation entitled The National System for Agricultural Research and Technology Transfer (SNITTA) in Costa Rica: Example of a Model, Achievements and Challenges.

IICA specialists presented the new FORAGRO Web page and logo, to which suggestions were made.

Lastly, the Assembly discussed next steps in the development of an action plan as part of a prospective analysis, as well as the preparation of FORAGRO's strategic plan.

After the meeting, participants visited the facilities of the Costa Rican Coffee Institute (ICAFE).

Agreements reached at the meeting

- 1. The Assembly unanimously approved the Minutes of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Executive Committee, carried out in 2016.*
- 2. The Assembly approved the Activity Report for 2016-2017.*
- 3. The Assembly approved the [FORAGRO Charter](#).*
- 4. The Assembly approved the mechanism for incorporating new members into FORAGRO.*
- 5. The Assembly agreed to have IICA enter into an agreement with GFAR in order to obtain funding that would allow for launching a process to develop a Strategic Plan for FORAGRO. The members requested that the Steering Committee be responsible for deciding on the content of this plan.*
- 6. The Assembly approved the FORAGRO logo and Web page designs.*
- 7. The Assembly approved the mechanism for nominating and electing the Steering Committee, with a view to ensuring that the authorities would be selected prior to the Nineteenth Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture.*
- 8. The Assembly tasked the Executive Secretary with preparing the Rules of Operation and Definitions to complement the Charter. The document would be submitted to the Steering Committee for approval once it came into office.*



Annex 1. List of Participants

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Annex 2. Activity for prioritization of topics and areas of action (ranking methodology)

During the first day of the meeting, prior to carrying out this activity aimed at identifying priorities, two presentations were offered: (1) a presentation by Priscila Henríquez, which provided a status report on research, development, and innovation agendas (R+D+I) at the regional and country levels; and (2) a presentation by consultant Javier Ekboir on global trends in agricultural and agroindustrial R+D+I. The purpose of these presentations was to provide a context and lay the foundation for the discussions that would follow.

Each Assembly member was asked to identify four priority issues toward which FORAGRO should channel its actions, and to write them down on sticky notes. The FORAGRO Secretary collected the notes at the end of the session and transcribed the participants’ input, which generated a list of 104 entries. The four topics with the greatest number of entries were identified and assigned to different work groups for discussion.

The participants were divided into four work groups, each of which was assigned one of four priority topics, as detailed below:

<p>Group 1: Natural resources that support agriculture, particularly biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genetic resources, access, benefits, inter-institutional cooperation • Underutilized crops • Soil and water 	<p>Group 2: Technological innovation for environmental, economic, and social sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable intensification and transformation • Value-added • Productivity • Sustainable value chains, climate-ready value chains • New technologies • Big data • Inter-institutional cooperation, private sector
<p>Group 3: Support for innovation in family farming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate technologies • Sustainability • Entering into markets • Inclusion, gender • Institutional cooperation, South-South cooperation 	<p>Group 4: Capacity-building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For scientific leadership in the region • At research institutions • For youth • For chain stakeholders • In extension systems • In family farming

The work groups were asked to substantiate the importance of their respective topics, and to propose actions that FORAGRO could carry out in each of the thematic areas in order to add



value. Each group’s discussions were presented in a plenary session.

Overall, each of the working groups reached a consensus in the validation of the topics. The different work groups also agreed on several areas on which the Forum should focus its actions, which are summarized below:

PRIORITY TOPICS			
Natural resources that support agriculture: soil, water, biodiversity	Technological innovation for the environmental, economic, and social sustainability of agriculture	Support for innovation in family farming	Development of capabilities at multiple levels (research institutions, production sector, extension systems, governments, stakeholders)
AREAS OF ACTION THROUGH WHICH FORAGRO CAN ADD VALUE:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to serve as a discussion forum through which stakeholders can debate on important issues • to provide a platform for coordinating actions between organizations as well as between mechanisms (intra and inter-regional cooperation) • to develop discussion papers to inform decision-makers of important matters • to provide platforms for managing and disseminating knowledge and information 			