



*Cooperative Program in Agricultural Research and Technology for the Northern Region
Programa Cooperativo en Investigación y Tecnología Agrícola para la Región Norte (PROCINORTE)*

PROCINORTE STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 – 2025

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PURPOSE OF THE PROCINORTE STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

The Cooperative Program in Agricultural Research and Technology for the Northern Region (PROCINORTE) was founded in 1998 by (1) Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (today's Science and Technology Branch, AAFC-STB), (2) the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS), (3) the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales, Agrícolas y Pecuarias (INIFAP) in Mexico, and (4) the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) (see Annex). These institutions agreed to cooperate on public agricultural research and technology agendas of trilateral interest as specified by a non-binding Declaration in 1998. The common goal is to collaborate, convene and cooperate in response to the challenges that represent the new economic and environmental conditions of the region. The Executive Secretariat is led by the IICA Canada office.

This PROCINORTE Strategic Plan:

1. Focuses on public agricultural research priorities shared among Canada, Mexico and the U.S.;
2. Ensures that PROCINORTE continues its catalytic role in sharing knowledge between the national agricultural research organizations from the three member countries (AAFC-STB, USDA-ARS and INIFAP);
3. Creates a platform to mobilize knowledge from the three national agricultural research organizations;
4. Contributes with the participation of IICA, to the dialogue and knowledge sharing among the broader agricultural research, technology and innovation community across the three member countries and the Americas;
5. Aims to foster both regional agricultural and rural development along with food production system resiliency and sustainability.

Vision

The governments of Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. working together, in consensus, and through their national agricultural and agri-food research institutions, to address issues of common interest in support of agriculture in the North American region incorporating science, technology and innovation.

Mission

To foster agriculture-related governmental and stakeholder scientific collaboration through exchange of information, joint activities and capacity building in an effort to:

1. Enhance sector productivity and competitiveness;
2. Improve food safety and plant and animal health;
3. Help adapt to, and mitigate the impact of climate change;
4. Help safeguard natural resources through sustainable development and conservation.

Values

1. Ensure an equal representation of all member countries;
2. Share state of the art science for the benefit of all, and especially farmers;
3. Value the trilateral public agricultural research relationship;
4. Maintain trust among partners, scientific ethics and a transparent culture;
5. Promote good stewardship of natural resources.

Strategic Objectives

1. Share knowledge on agreed priority themes by mobilizing public agricultural sector researchers and scientists, incorporating science relevant to technology, regulation, trade and sustainability;
2. Strengthen mutually supportive research efforts in priority topics relevant to agriculture and food systems;
3. Extend and measure the reach and impact of scientific investigations and contributions;
4. Contribute to the dialogue on regional/hemispheric agricultural science and technology.

PROCINORTE'S STRENGTHS

1. Effectively mobilizes agricultural research networks and expertise between federal technical experts, scientists, and regulators in the three countries and the Americas;
2. Substantially advances trilateral networking, outreach and collaboration on areas of common interest in the Northern Region and the Americas;
3. Strengthens the constituent research organizations that generate science-based solutions to agricultural problems and the participation of public scientists and researchers;
4. Actively facilitates understanding of the diversity of agricultural issues and scientific priorities in the three countries.

THE WAY PROCINORTE WORKS

The structure of PROCINORTE is simple, consisting of a Board of Directors (BOD), Task Forces (TF, model ending in 2021) and an Executive Secretariat (ES). The BOD is PROCINORTE's highest authority, comprised of senior officials from the four member organizations who will convene twice a year. Each member of the BOD is appointed by their organization and continues until they name a replacement. The President of the BOD is selected from the three member country organizations and appointed by consensus among the BOD members for an initial appointment of two years, with a possible extension for a maximum of four years. Although IICA is a member of the board, IICA does not participate in the rotation of the Presidency.

TFs are used as the current mechanism for implementing the trilateral collaboration. Each research institution appoints one highly qualified scientist to each TF. These professionals are senior scientists typically responsible for national programs or who have broad institutional knowledge on a particular topic in their respective areas of expertise. Each is appointed by their organization and serves until they name a replacement. One among them is elected as TF Leader and can be substituted by consensus in their temporary or permanent absence, with the same functions. The BOD can also decide to establish a TF once relevant themes are agreed upon by the three countries. Each year, the BOD reviews each TF and decides whether it should continue to operate.

In addition to appointing a senior official to the BOD, IICA provides in-kind support through having a senior-level staff member serve as the Executive Secretary. Currently, IICA dedicates a proportion of the time of a country representative and delegation staff based in Canada to coordinate PROCINORTE activities. Time and support of the IICA representatives in the three member countries, and the logistics support from the administrators of IICA Delegation in Canada are also provided.

PROCINORTE's mandate is also to provide a solid mechanism for regional collaboration with other regions in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) through outreach to the other cooperative programs in which IICA participates, such as PROCISUR PROMECAFE, and other technical networks. In cases where the cooperation agendas of PROCINORTE and another collaborative mechanism are aligned, joint projects can be executed. PROCINORTE has built an extensive network of scientists and regulators who are willing to collaborate with their counterparts in the South.

Promoting research and innovation is crucial to IICA's mandate to support of its member countries. PROCINORTE is considered as a useful vehicle to contribute to IICA's hemispheric mandate not only in the Northern Region but also in the other LAC countries.

THE WAY FORWARD AND NEW BUSINESS MODEL

PROCINORTE offers a mechanism for trilateral research, convening joint work and events, and sharing knowledge among the three national agricultural research organizations in the Northern Region. For 2021, the central core of the plan is based on four transdisciplinary TFs working in coordinated and harmonized ways to secure PROCINORTE's mission. The task forces include NORGEN (genetic resources), Plant Health, Animal Health, and the new Soil, Water and Climate Change TF.

Like the agriculture sector in the Northern Region it serves, this strategic plan must continue to evolve to respond to the changing needs of its member countries. There might be emerging economic, environmental and social issues related to agriculture in the Region that might require special attention and redirect the Plan. To adapt quickly to emerging priorities of trilateral importance, each year the BOD will agree on a slate of new projects. However, as required, the BOD can further identify new challenges or issues of immediate interest, determine the profile of the team and budget necessary to implement the related trilateral priorities and projects identified, then carried forward. By the nature of PROCINORTE, such teams should consider, but are not limited to, the following profile:

- Trilateral groups;
- Transdisciplinary;
- Broad diversity of knowledge and size through time, to varying degrees depending on the status of the assigned task;
- Integrated by research leaders, with proven capacity to do collaborative work;
- Noticeable problem-solving skills;
- Decision-making capacity to suggest appropriated changes to address lines of research.

For better results, and when necessary, the teams could receive enough and diverse resources to facilitate the analysis of needs and gaps on the collaborative research. Team activities should also include outreach e.g., workshops, symposia, in-field/laboratory visits and work, and training in special issues or areas as previously agreed by the BOD.

Thus, moving forward in 2022, PROCINORTE will enable a nimbler structure without standing Task Forces that are currently in operation until the end of 2021. The BOD will identify priority areas for trilateral activities for which project teams will bring ideas in the form of short concept notes that will be annually and regularly assessed by the Board and then forwarded for project development. Each country will be responsible for creating an internal process to solicit input for trilateral research topics. The applicant(s) apply to the ES for project approval and implementation funds as well as any other source that could co-finance and contribute to the project. A project template will be developed to streamline and standardize proposals. Projects will have a defined scope and time period for completion and will not be limited to the current year or one single year for implementation.

The BOD's role will evolve in this new Plan and will be responsible for agreeing on priorities, bringing forward proposals for joint projects, and implementing the associated activities, including conducting research and sharing scientific knowledge. The ES supports the BOD decisions and liaises with other IICA functions, ensuring proper governance, following up on action plans, managing budget and communications, including knowledge sharing for capacity building throughout LAC, as well as sharing PROCINORTE's research findings and other outputs and products.

ANNEX - PROCINORTE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Agricultural Research Service (ARS/USDA)

ARS is the USDA's chief scientific, in-house research agency. The agency conducts research to develop new scientific knowledge, transfer technology to the private sector to solve technical agricultural problems of broad scope and high national priority, and provide access to scientific information. This research covers a wide range of critical problems affecting American agriculture, ranging from animal and crop protection and production to human nutrition, food safety, and natural resources conservation. ARS employs over 7,000 employees and carries out approximately 800 research projects at over 90 laboratories throughout the Nation and in several foreign countries. The agency includes the National Arboretum and the National Agricultural Library, the Nation's major information resource on food, agriculture, and natural resource sciences.

Science and Technology Branch (AAFC/STB)

The Science and Technology Branch (STB) is part of the federal Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. STB's science activities focus on the application of science to agri-based production systems to support an innovative and competitive sector. STB's approach is based on (1) partnerships with industry and academia, using the Branch's unique strengths - a national presence and problem-solving mission; (2) tailoring STB's approach to sector needs and capacity; and (3) supporting industry science priorities by providing access to internal resources and capacity, leveraged with the Branch's connections to universities and program funding for innovation.

Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales, Agrícolas y Pecuarias (INIFAP)

INIFAP, Mexico's public research center, aims to contribute to sustainable rural development by generating scientific knowledge and innovation that responds to the demands of the agriculture sector. Taking into consideration the different types of producers and agro-ecological conditions, the Institute focuses on the needs and opportunities to develop agri-food chains. The objectives of INIFAP are to (1) plan and execute scientific research and technological development in the agriculture and forestry sectors; (2) promote knowledge and technology transfer; (3) participate in programs and projects for agricultural and forestry development, (4) disseminate the results of scientific research, and (5) provide technical assistance to producers. INIFAP has 77 experimental stations and sites distributed throughout the country, under various agro-ecological zones and mainly in cropping areas of national interest. The institution has also six national centers for disciplinary research and 96 laboratories in diverse disciplines. Maintains 34 research programs; some current research priorities include: maize, beans, sugar cane, honey, dairy production, climate change, soil and water conservation, agricultural value chains, and rural development.

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

IICA is the specialized agency of the Inter-American System for the promotion of agriculture, and rural well-being, focusing on making agriculture competitive and sustainable in the Americas. IICA is governed by the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA) comprised of its 34 member countries that meets biennially. IICA's Medium Term Plan 2018-2022 highlights four strategic objectives: (1) improve the productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector, (2) strengthen agriculture's contribution to the development of rural areas and the well-being of the rural population, (3) improve agriculture's capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change and make better use of natural resources, and (4) improve agriculture's contribution to food security.