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PROJECT APPRAISAL REPORT (PAR)

1. PROJECT NO. <u>596-11-140-048</u>	2. PAR FOR PERIOD <u>4/75</u> TO <u>6/76</u>	3. COUNTRY <u>ROCAP</u>	4. PAR SERIAL NO. <u>76-6</u>
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AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND INFORMATION SYSTEM

6. PROJECT DURATION: Began FY <u>75</u> Ends FY <u>78</u>	7. DATE LATEST PRCP <u>4/76</u>	8. DATE LATEST PIP <u>-</u>	9. DATE PRIOR PAR <u>Original</u>
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10. U.S. FUNDING	a. Cumulative Obligation Thru Prior FY: \$ <u>40,000</u>	b. Current FY Estimated Budget: \$ <u>424,000</u>	c. Estimated Budget to completion After Current FY: \$ <u>1,239,000</u>
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11. KEY ACTION AGENTS (Contractor, Participating Agency or Voluntary Agency)

a. NAME	b. CONTRACT, PASA OR VOL. AG. NO.
Interamerican Institute for Agricultural Sciences (IICA)	<u>ROCAP Pro-Ag 76-1</u>
United States Department of Agriculture (PASA)	<u>PASA AG/ROCAP-048-1-76</u>

I. NEW ACTIONS PROPOSED AND REQUESTED AS A RESULT OF THIS EVALUATION

A. ACTION IX			B. LIST OF ACTIONS	C. PROPOSED ACTION COMPLETION DATE
USALD	AID W	HOST		
ROCAP			That continuation of the project as planned be approved.	June 25, 1976
	x		That a new project agreement be executed between ROCAP and IICA.	July, 1976
		x	That Panama's request for participation in the project be approved.	June 25, 1976
	x	x	That the Regional Marketing Authority project be treated as a discrete activity and not incorporated into Project 048.	June 30, 1976

REVISIONS: <input type="checkbox"/> PRP <input type="checkbox"/> PRG <input type="checkbox"/> PRO AG <input type="checkbox"/> PIP <input type="checkbox"/> PIC				E. DATE OF MISSION REVIEW <u>June 16, 1976</u>
PROJECT MANAGER: FIELD NAME, SIGNATURE, INITIAL AND DATE <u>Evaluator: H.L. Braddock</u>		MISSION MANAGER: FIELD NAME, SIGNATURE, INITIALS AND DATE <u>Barry Sidman</u>		

PROJECT APPRAISAL REPORT

Country: ROCAP - Central America Regional

Serial Number: 76-6

Project: 596-11-140-048: Agricultural Research and
Information System

Initial FY of Obligations: FY 1975

Final FY of Obligations: FY 1978

Total Funds Obligated: \$464,000

Project Manager: James Murphrey *JM* (substance)

Co-evaluators: Raymond White *RW* (substance) *JB*
Henry Braddock *H*

Evaluation Officer: Robert Hechtman *RHS*

Acting Director: Barry Sidman *B*

PROJECT EVALUATION
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND INFORMATION SYSTEM
(596-11-140-048)

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Attachments:

- A. Chart: Project organization within IICA
- B. Chart: Regional Agricultural Information Coordination
- C. Participating Regional Organizations
- D. List of Project Documentary Output
- E. IICA Project Evaluation Report
- F. Preproject Study
- G. List of Phase Two Studies

Prepared by ROCAF
June, 1976

1. SUMMARY EVALUATION

The project is on schedule. The phase one objective of mobilizing the constituent elements of a coordinated agricultural research and information system has been achieved. Response to the project by participating countries has been enthusiastic. All Central American countries are actively participating and Panama has requested to be included in the project. IICA has successfully implemented its project agreement with ROCAP for phase one activities and has programmed the necessary resources for continuation of the second year's activities in phase two. Plans for phase two remain unchanged from those described in the PROP. The first year of phase two will focus specifically on training and on-the-job application for regional and national personnel involved in the activities as the basis for implementing the action elements of the program and further improving the data management network. This phase will lay the ground for the third project year in which full implementation, application of methodologies, and institutionalization of developed procedures and methodologies is planned.

ROCAP has provided a single project manager for its three grant agricultural projects thus lending increased coordination and interchange to these related activities.

2. METHODOLOGY

This evaluation was conducted by Raymond White of USAID/Panama and Henry L. Braddock of ROCAP during the period May 25-27, 1976. The evaluators attended the regional conference (see Section 5) held in San José, Costa Rica, during that period and spoke to dozens of the participants in that conference, as well as to the project manager and the USDA technicians (PASA) assisting the project. Valuable contributions were made also by key IICA staff members and IICA's country program directors for Central America.

3. SUMMARY HISTORY OF PROJECT

A. Origins. The roots of this project can be found in

the ROCAP decision in the fall of 1972 to expand its scope of activities in the agricultural sector. In the Spring of 1973 a Rural Development Officer was added to the ROCAP staff. By July of that year he had initiated five studies to identify appropriate agricultural projects for ROCAP support. These ROCAP financed studies, which were conducted in concert with regional Central American organizations, explored the areas of grain stabilization (with SIECA), cost of grains production (SIECA), agricultural diversification (SIECA), bonded warehousing (CABEI) and agricultural information (IICA). The discovered shortage of usable information available to support these studies lent greater immediacy to the need for a project to foster more effective management of agricultural information and to improve the quality of that information. Consequently, the USDA (PASA) officer assisting in the studies of agricultural diversification and agricultural information shifted priorities to concentrate on the latter and to accelerate the planning of an agricultural information project. By the fall of 1974 he had developed a three-year project proposal which was approved in the spring of 1975, with a projected cost of \$1.4 million, concomitantly with the formal conclusion of the ROCAP-IICA study of agricultural information requirements, which had surveyed some one hundred agencies in Central America and had confirmed the felt need and interest in a system to provide uniform, reliable agricultural information.

B. Project Development. A project agreement funded at \$40,000 with IICA was executed at the end of May, 1975, to get the project started. This limited agreement permitted IICA to select and employ a responsible official to head the effort and to begin implementation of the project, and permitted ROCAP to fund the U.S. project manager. In August, 1975, a second agreement was concluded to fund FY 1976 activities at the level of \$424,000. The plan for this first year aimed at creating and/or invigorating the organizational structures required to carry out the project. Preliminary regional committee meetings were held in August, and in September IICA presented the project to the Central American Ministers of Agriculture assembled in San Salvador. By October 1975 IICA's manager had established an office in

San Jose, Costa Rica (where IICA's headquarters is located), and in that month the Regional Interinstitutional Advisory Committee was formed. (In January 1976 the ROCAP project manager moved his office from Guatemala to San Jose to provide close and continuous project support). Between October and December USDA technicians (PASA) on temporary duty assisted IICA's manager in mobilizing the national and regional organizations and in planning and producing the documentation needed to provide guidance for later stages of the project. By January 1976 three full-time USDA technicians (in addition to the project manager) had been assigned to the project. During the first semester of 1976, several meetings were held in each Central American country to stimulate and assist the selection of participating national institutions and to initiate the preparation of national project plans. Simultaneously, the IICA project staff developed a coordinated regional activity schedule for FY 1977 including the publication of twelve manuals to provide uniform guidance for the second phase of the project. Although Panama had not been included in the initial survey leading to the project, Panamanian interest in the project grew and the desire to participate was formalized in a late January request prepared by USAID/Panama. Following an initial survey conducted by IICA (not at project expense) similar to that previously conducted in the other participating countries, ROCAP prepared an amendment to the PROP in April to add Panama to the project at an estimated additional cost of \$303,000 (beginning in FY 1977). At the end of May a general meeting of the project participants was held in San Jose to review and approve the plans for phase two of the project. These plans call for training and application of methodologies in information collection, coding, classifying, storing, processing, analyzing, packaging, and intra/intercountry dissemination leading to the system's regular and permanent operation by the end of the third year.

4. GENERAL EVALUATION

a. Project Rationale. This project reflects the heightened importance given to agricultural development by the

Central American Common Market (CACM) countries and, within that context, to the perceived need for improved agricultural information as a basis for more effective decision making. While agricultural research and information programs have long existed in Central America, the quantity and quality of the products has been uneven and the useful exchange of information nonexistent at worst and haphazard at best. The existing agricultural, ecological, and economic information has not been systematically compiled or analyzed and has thus been of limited relevance for development program planning. Prior to the initiation of this project, little attention had been given to developing a system for coordinating research and information management programs among the CACM countries. In the proposals to restructure the CACM into an economic and social community, agriculture has acquired a higher priority. In 1974 the CACM ministers of agriculture laid the foundation (in the Agreement of San Jose) for regional cooperation in agriculture and specifically designated agricultural research and information as a critical aspect of such cooperation. With a ROCAP grant, the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Sciences (IICA, an element of the Organization of American States) conducted an in-depth study (see Attachment F) to delineate the role of information in rural development and to identify aspects of agricultural information management needing improvement. This study, completed in late 1974, concluded that deficiencies in collection, processing, analysis, transfer, and use of information constituted a major impediment to rural development in Central America. Specific deficiencies cited included lack of adequate methodologies and standards for analysis, limited transfer of useful information, outmoded systems of collection, and inadequate or no procedures for storage and retrieval of information.

b. Project Purpose and Development. ROCAP's Agricultural Research and Information Project was developed to respond to the deficiencies revealed in the IICA study. The project's purpose is to forge a cooperative effort by appropriate regional and national institutions in Central America to upgrade the quality and usefulness of research information and to foster a system for improved agricultural information management.

The project has undertaken to establish mechanisms for intra-regional coordination in the standards, methodologies, and procedures employed in research and in information management. The project also provides for technical assistance to national programs to give planners, researchers, transfer agents, and information managers the uniform technical data needed for planning rural development, specifically including programs targetted on the small farmer. IICA was selected to implement the project in association with a regional advisory committee composed of representatives of all interested regional organizations. The project was organized for a life of three years with total funding estimated at \$1,391,000. It was approved for first year (FY 1976) funding of \$464,000 with subsequent funding to be contingent upon the experience of the first year's activities.

c. Accomplishments to Date. The project has met all goals established for the first year which was envisioned as the first of two phases. Programmed tasks carried out to date include:

1) The mobilization and incorporation for project support of the following groups:

a) The Regional Interinstitutional Advisory Committee to act as a board of governors in reviewing and advising on project activities and in providing coordination among the key regional organizations. Membership on this committee includes SIECA, IICA, CATIE, BCIE, ICAITI, ICAP, INCAP, and OIRSA (see Attachment C for explanation of abbreviations).

b) The Agricultural Research and Extension Committee (permanent committee on plant and animal research) composed of the directors of each of the participating countries' agricultural research services.

c) The Coordinating Committee for the Regional System of Agricultural Information (agricultural information network committee) composed of the directors of the planning agencies in each of the Central American countries.

d) National coordinating groups within each country to provide the necessary coordination among participating elements at the national level.

e) Other groups not initially programmed but which have been mobilized to advise the project in response to project requirements or felt needs including the chiefs of the national agricultural statistics services, the national directors for agricultural sector planning, the national directors of price stabilization agencies, and an internal IICA coordinating committee to provide program support and coordination within IICA.

2) The preparation of plans for:

a) A regional information system: While a regional system may be considered extant, the purpose of this project is to upgrade the quality of activity and performance within that system; thus all planning to date is subsumed under this general heading. IICA's Interamerican Agricultural Documentation and Information Center (CIDIA) constitutes a center for published agricultural information and a base for a future, more dynamic information center with modern memory (data bank) and transfer systems. However, IICA's role in linking national and regional information centers is under review, and that question has been left open pending further experience to be garnered from project activities. Nevertheless, detailed plans for the essential components of a regional information system, wherever the various components may be organizationally lodged, have been prepared.

b) Research information improvement: Detailed guidance on field experiments and presentation of results as well as the conduct of national sample surveys has been prepared and will be the subject of training programs in phase two.

c) Systematic data collection, processing, and analysis.

d) Development of technological packages.

e) Development of market news and crop forecasting information: This includes a model design for systems of market and crop forecasting information; the goal of this sub-activity is to develop appropriate methodologies for production of forecasting and marketing information, and to train the personnel of those agencies responsible for such production.

f) Further studies: Fourteen additional studies needed for project implementation were proposed to the Inter-institutional Advisory Committee at the San Jose Conference in May, and that body individually reviewed and approved the proposals (see Attachment G).

g) Selection of agencies to participate in the project.

3) The preparation of manuals and guides on standards, methodologies, and procedures of standardization: Twelve manuals have been prepared on various aspects of collection, analysis, and presentation of information as well as on related functions critical to project success (see Attachment D). These manuals, which were prepared with some input from the national representatives reflecting their felt needs, were presented to those representatives at the San Jose Conference and will be republished incorporating any additional materials indicated by their review. The manuals will serve as the basic, uniform guidance for subsequent project participation of the Central American countries. Additional manuals and training materials will be prepared as project demands may dictate.

4) The preparation of country work plans: These plans were reviewed at the San Jose Conference. The plans address organizational requirements, the implementation of training programs in the upcoming fiscal year, and identification of research requirements for each country. IICA's North Zone office, which is coordinating project implementation, has prepared an FY 1977 project budget, by country,

incorporating both IICA and projected ROCAP inputs to satisfy project requirements scheduled for the second year of the project.

5) The development of a standardized approach to preparation of technological packages: A separate manual has been prepared on this subject incorporating data being generated by two other ROCAP-supported agricultural projects (Small Farm Cropping Systems and Soil Fertility) to maximize the benefits to be derived from all three projects.

6) The conduct of evaluation of the project: IICA concluded its own evaluation in late May and submitted the results to ROCAP and to the National Coordinating Committees established by the Central American ministers of agriculture (see Attachment E). IICA's documentation of project activity has been meticulous and forms a valuable record of progress and problems in the accomplishment of project goals.

d. Key Actors/Activities

1) IICA.

a) Leadership. IICA has provided exceptional support to this project activity under the guidance of its Director, Jose Emilio Araujo. Following signing of the project agreement, Dr. Araujo directed his organization to give the activity high priority and the IICA contribution has since substantially exceeded the minimum requirement. At the World Congress of Agricultural Documentalists held in Mexico last year, Dr. Araujo chose the Agricultural Information Project as the subject of his presentation. Early this year he personally undertook a visit to Panama to discuss with the GOP its desired participation in the project activity. He attended and made a substantive contribution to the San Jose Conference. He recently authorized two additional full time positions in IICA's 1977 budget for direct support to the activity. (Dr. Araujo, a Brazilian, was recently reelected by IICA's Board of Directors to another six-year term as IICA's Chief, thus the

project should enjoy continuity of interest and support from that direction). Araujo's Assistant for Operations, Malcolm MacDonald, also has played a vital role in the project. He organized and chairs IICA's Internal Coordinating Committee for the Agricultural Information Project. This decision-making committee, including the heads of CIDIA and IICA's North Zone (Central America), has provided essential operational and technical guidance for the project. MacDonald also has provided valuable advice to ROCAP's project manager in working effectively through the IICA bureaucracy as well as assisting in planning in his previous capacity as Assistant Director for Planning. Thus the project has benefited from the personal attention of IICA's senior management.

b) Technical and Administrative Support. A major contribution to the project has been made by Roy Clifford, Deputy Director of IICA's North Zone (headquartered in Guatemala.) Clifford conducted the ROCAP-sponsored study which eventually led to this project and his work was instrumental in the development of an appropriate project design. In conducting the study, Clifford developed the normative model for a functional information system which still serves as the fundamental guide and target for the project (although that model is steadily improved as the project progresses). His identification of the basic variables in socio-economic, marketing, and technological information provided the foundation for the detailed planning later undertaken by the C.A. countries under the project. Equally important was the identification of national information system weaknesses, detailed in the study country by country, since this provided the basis for discussions with the individual agriculture ministers as well as defined the scope of the requirements facing each country. The study also served to strengthen IICA's institutional capability for such work, as evidenced in the later study of Panama's situation which was readily conducted by the experienced IICA team under Clifford's direction. Because of his work on the study, Clifford was selected by IICA management to head the project on an interim basis until a permanent project leader could be found; thus Clifford provided the guidance and initiative during the first three months of the

activity. He has since continued his project contributions in management and programming support of IICA's country representatives throughout Central America. Clifford was succeeded as IICA's project chief by Rogelio Coto, a former IICA official who had most recently been serving as the Executive Secretary of the National Agricultural Policy Commission of the Costa Rican Government and was contracted by IICA to permanently head the project. Coto has developed a firm grasp of the project and has been principally responsible for the day-by-day progress. His performance at the San Jose Conference was impressive, both in his thorough familiarity with all aspects of the project as well as in his deft coordination of the multiple interests represented in that assemblage. Richard Ogle of the North Zone staff has also provided significant assistance during the organizational phase of the project. He made the initial contacts with key officials in each participating country, then made several visits to help set up the action committees at the national level. He also made a major input to the preparation of a manual providing standardized, detailed guidance on national committee organization, operations, and planning methodology. This activity has been followed up on a day to day basis by the IICA country representatives who are one of the keys to the project's success in their role as IICA's catalysts and monitors. Many other IICA staff members as well have made contributions periodically when their particular skills were useful to the project.

2) ROCAP

a) Leadership. In the spring of 1973 ROCAP augmented its staff with a regional agricultural development officer, Donald Fiester, who initiated the studies leading to ROCAP's sponsorship of its current grant project activities in regional agricultural development. Fiester obtained the services of James Murphrey on PASA from USDA to help conduct the studies. Murphrey also helped prepare the PROP for the Ag Info Project and, with its approval in the spring of 1975, was appointed project manager. Since then he has carried the main workload for ROCAP in this activity. Initially working out of Guatemala, Murphrey moved his base to San Jose

in order to work closely with Coto when the latter established IICA's project office there. Murphrey was responsible for identifying and contracting the USDA PASA technicians who have constituted ROCAP's principal technical input to the project. In May of this year Murphrey was designated project manager for the Small Farm Cropping Systems and Soil Fertility projects with a view to establishing close coordination between the three related agricultural projects. The management benefit of this move is clear and is already paying dividends. The additional workload on Murphrey means he has less time to devote to the Agricultural Information Project (although he continues to place the majority of his time and attention there), but this is outweighed by the advantages derived from single management of these activities.

b) Technical Support. To expedite project development, Murphrey arranged for several USDA technicians to visit the activity on short-term PASA's beginning in the fall of 1975. Three of these were brought onto the project full time in early 1976. Since then one has concentrated on data collection (including area frame sampling), another on processing (analysis and packaging), and a third on dissemination. This USDA team has made a major contribution to project development including conducting a series of meetings held in the participating countries to orient the participants on project requirements, maintaining close liaison with and training of IICA technicians working on the project, and preparing a number of the technical manuals which will guide the participants through subsequent project activities. Additionally the short-term services of several other specialists have contributed materially to progress to date. Two assisted in the preparation of methodological guidance in preparing natural resources, environmental, and meteorological inputs to national plans. Another has made a valuable input in preparing guidance on the integration of existing information systems in Central America. These technical specialists, both long and short-term, will continue to be the backbone of ROCAP's direct assistance to the project and will play a vital role as the project matures in the training and implementation phase. Those technicians working on the other ROCAP-sponsored

agricultural projects will also contribute indirectly to this project through the coordinated linkage of the three projects.

3) National Participants.

The key people in this project are those officials at the country level who must acquire and practice the necessary skills if the project is to realize any lasting achievements. Their enthusiastic response to this activity so far augurs well for future prospects. Their alacrity in implementing national plans, participating in scheduled training, putting into practice the technical guidance provided by project staff, and cooperating in regional integration of their agricultural research and information activities will determine how far reaching the impact of the activity will be.

e. The Future.

1) Perspectives. (This project constitutes the first step in the process of transforming Central America's agricultural information system from a static one of comparatively little use to a dynamic one capable of satisfying the growing demands of agricultural development.) The present state of research and information is commonly characterized by disorganization, unreliable research, incompatibility of methods, unfocussed (or no) analysis, ill-considered packaging, and limited availability. The Agricultural Information Project, if it accomplishes its objectives, will bring some fundamental order to the systems within the participating countries and will provide the foundation for a coherent international system within the region. (The success to date augurs well for the project's achievement of its objectives, although varying levels of achievement may be expected from country to country as a function of the relative state of advancement of each country.) For example, the area frame sample, one of the principal tools of information collection promoted by this project, is already in operation in El Salvador whereas Costa Rica has yet to begin frame development and is probably a year or two away from having that survey capability. Additionally,

project accomplishments will likely take different forms in different countries depending on such factors as size and structures of national organizations, extant procedures, and bureaucratic relationships. For example, there will be different answers to questions such as how many information centers -- data banks -- does a country require and which of the multiple functions from collection to dissemination should be performed by a given center.

The project may also create or encounter opportunities not originally envisioned. The establishment of single managerial responsibility for ROCAP's three grant agricultural projects may well permit useful linkages (in development of technological packages, for example) contributing to the ultimate benefits of project activities for farmers and other end users. Similarly, the coordinating bodies mobilized by this project in each country may offer opportunities previously unavailable to the other project activities. And there may yet be other agencies which could usefully be associated with the Agricultural Information activities. SIECA, for example, has a relatively inactive information center which links the Central American countries, and that capability might lend itself to the advancement of information exchange at a later stage of development.

Looking beyond this project, the possibility of linking a Central American agricultural information system to other international systems will be real, once the Central American countries get their houses in order. Linkage with such organizations as the FAO's Agricultural Information System through its Latin American component, AGRINTER; with the UN's socio-economic data system, DEVSIS; or with various US systems such as USDA's national agricultural library, CAIN, would be possible. Mexico's CONOCIT system already provides such linkages and is an example of what the Central American regional system might evolve toward. These longer range possibilities underscore the importance of the Agricultural Information Project and perhaps underlie the enthusiastic response of the project participants. The project has already added impetus to regional integration efforts and will probably

continue to do so (cross-border trade of information apparently encounters less resistance than trade of other products).

2) IICA. The Agricultural Information Project will require IICA to reassess its role in regional information activities. IICA was a Latin American pioneer in this field, but a low priority for the past decade has left its programs relatively static and unresponsive to the full range of current Central American needs. One result of this project will be IICA's own reassessment, a process which will probably extend over the life of the project. At a minimum, IICA may be expected to broaden its regular activities beyond the documentation activities currently carried on by CIDIA at Turrialba, Costa Rica. How far beyond that it may decide to go will be contingent upon a number of factors including how well the project actually succeeds in improving services to the small farmer (a high priority with IICA) and how much of a lasting commitment is made by the participating countries. The significance of IICA's decisions may go beyond the Central American arena insofar as that organization encompasses all Latin America in its scope. IICA previously has institutionalized project activities and the principal argument in favor of this has been the degree to which activities have been responsive to the requirements of the participating countries as perceived by them. By this criterion the project appears to have prospered so far; it will continue to be a key standard by which to measure progress and ultimately success.

5. THE SAN JOSE CONFERENCE, MAY 1976

a. Participants. The San Jose Conference (25-26 May) was a milestone in project development, bringing together the constituent elements of the project and manifesting the success of the organizational (first) phase of the project. In attendance were the Internal Coordinating Committee (composed of IICA representatives for CIDIA and the North Zone, including individual country representatives, under the chairmanship of IICA's Assistant Director General for Operations), the Regional Interinstitutional Advisory Committee (representatives of BCIE, CATIE, ICAITI, ICAP, IICA, INCAP, OIRSA, and

SIECA), the national directors of price stabilization agencies, the national directors of agricultural research and extension, the national directors of census and statistical agencies, the national directors of agricultural sector planning units, the national department chiefs for agricultural statistics, and the coordinating committee for the Regional System of Agricultural Information (with representatives from each Central American country). This listing is suggestive of the amount of organizational effort expended in the project as well as the complexity and concomitant demand for coordination which characterizes this activity.

b. Activities. The conference was chaired by Rogelio Coto Monge, chief of the project for IICA. The morning of the first day was devoted to a general assembly of all (some 60) participants. Mr. Coto opened the session with a review of project objectives. Mr. Lawrence Harrison, Director of ROCAP, stressed the value of the project to Central American integration and noted the significance of the conference both as an opportunity for practical coordination as well as a symbol of regional integration efforts. A report of progress in phase one was presented by IICA's Marta Julia de León. Raúl Sierra Franco, Deputy Secretary General of SIECA, addressed the significance of a regional system for integrating agricultural information to the larger goal of Central American economic integration. José Emilio Araujo, Director General of IICA, reinforced IICA's commitment to the objectives of the project, and Hernan Garron Salazar, Costa Rica's Minister of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, addressed the group as representative of the host country as well as one of the principal project participants. The afternoon and the next morning were devoted to working session; the functional committees met individually to review the activities in each country, share experiences, problems, and lessons learned, receive technical presentations by the IICA project staff and the USDA technicians, and coordinate plans for future activities in phase two of the project. During this time the Regional Advisory Committee met to review past activities in detail, to receive reports of related activities of the various regional organizations, to coordinate policy support for the project, and to

review and approve the project activities proposed for phase two. On the afternoon of the second day all participants assembled for a final plenary session at which the conference work of each functional committee was reviewed and coordinated guidance for phase two presented. On May 27 Mr. Coto and Efrain Morales, Director of IICA's North Zone, took the opportunity of the assembled personnel to hold an internal working session to coordinate forthcoming IICA actions among the IICA staff including individual country representatives. At that session ROCAP's project manager elucidated and stressed the relationships between this project and other ROCAP/USAID sponsored activities in Central America.

c. Import of Conference. The value of the San Jose conference was both symbolic and practical. It provided an opportunity for the technical advisors to work simultaneously with the technical directors from the several Central American countries and thus to provide uniform guidance and instruction on upcoming project requirements. These representatives of the various technical services in each participating country are one of the keys to project success insofar as the success of their efforts will lay the national foundations upon which a workable regional system must be based. The obvious symbolic significance of the conference included the coordinated policy guidance and manifest project support from the assembled representatives of the principal regional organizations. Less apparent but equally significant was the presence of some regional organizations which had been inactive, in some cases for years, and whose presence at the conference reflected an invigoration of regional institutions in response to the interest generated by the project.

6. POINTS OF SPECIFIC INTEREST TO AID/W

a. Interim Report. In approving the proposal for this project, the DAEC directed that, prior to the initiation of phase two of the project, ROCAP submit an interim report including a summary of the findings of the phase one effort and the proposed targets and implementation plan for phase two

(see State Telegram 80427 dated April 9, 1975). This evaluation constitutes the report requested.

b. Marketing Authority. In early 1976 AID/W reviewed a ROCAP proposal to assist the development of a regional agricultural marketing authority. For various reasons (see State telegram 16490 dated January 22, 1976) it was decided that funds for the first year of the Marketing Authority Project would be included in the Agricultural Research and Information Project in the FY 1977 Congressional Presentation (raising the FY 1977 CP level from \$443,000 to \$703,000 by the addition of \$260,000 for the Marketing Authority Project). In the referenced telegram AID/W voiced a concern at having two projects which appeared similar and suggested various ways in which elements of the two projects might be either combined or separated. It was also noted that AID/W's review had raised the question of whether the omission in planning for the Agricultural Information project of a specific institutional authority for crop forecasting and information constituted a weakness in project design. AID/W requested that this question be addressed in the Interim Report along with the question of whether or not the Agricultural Information Project should be expanded to include extra-regional trade considerations (by way of implementing the General System of Preferences). This evaluation finds that:

1) The concept of a Regional Marketing Authority is not integrally related to the activities of the Agricultural Research and Information Project and should not be incorporated as part of that project. The heart of this project is information management. The apparent need for such management is already beginning to generate additional potential demands on the activity to the extent that the project manager must actively resist responding to needs beyond the scope of the project lest the accomplishment of basic objectives be jeopardized. To include an element such as the Marketing Authority would only exacerbate this situation.

This is not to say that the benefits of improved information management would be less useful to a Marketing Authority than to many other activities, but rather that information management is most remuneratively addressed as a discrete activity for project purposes. The crop forecasting and information element included in the Agricultural Information Project is principally an information rather than a marketing function even though the utility of such information for marketing purposes is apparent. The agricultural information project deals with identification, development, and use of methodologies for market news and crop forecasting, as well as the training of personnel in those agencies which might benefit from use of the methodologies. Thus it is recommended that Project 048 be continued as originally conceived, including the activities related to development of methodologies for market and crop forecasting information, and that the Regional Marketing Authority be treated as a discrete project.

2) The development of fixed plans and market information activities is part of phase two. Crop forecasting and market news require a variety of inputs which derive from a range of organizations including those concerned with statistics, marketing, and crop production analysis. The ultimate organizational locations of these functions can be expected to vary from country to country as determined by the responsible government. In some cases the functions now reside in extant agencies legally charged with such responsibilities, although the agency responsible for a particular activity will not always be the same in all countries. For example, in Costa Rica marketing information is provided principally by a special national market committee; in Honduras this information comes from the Ministry of Natural Resources; in Nicaragua from the Central Bank; in El Salvador from the Ministry of Agriculture; and from the Department of Statistics in Guatemala. Other necessary inputs similarly derive from different sources in different countries and, not infrequently, from several sources within one country. A fundamental assumption of the project is that new and improved functions will be developed and implemented through existing institutions and that no direct project efforts will be made to create

new organizations. At the national level, the focal points will most likely be in the Ministries of Agriculture or their equivalents. In phase two, country work groups will assess the range of institutions to identify and refine the roles and responsibilities for them in the areas of crop forecasting and market news. Training will be provided to the appropriate technicians of those agencies which shall play both principal and supportive roles (depending on the assignments of responsibility to their agencies). By mid-1977 it is expected that institutional responsibilities will have been set, and the institutions staffed with a number of trained technicians.

3) The extra-regional trade considerations involved in implementation of the General System of Preferences (GSP) would be more nearly a natural concern of a Marketing Authority than of an information management activity. With the recommended separation of these two discrete functions, there appears no need to modify project 048 to specifically address implementation of GSP (although, again, such implementation might well benefit from improved information management).

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Conclusions

1) The project is on schedule. All phase one goals contained in the PROP have been met without exception. The principal goal of phase one was to mobilize the constituent regional and national elements of a coordinated, systematic agricultural research and information system. This goal has been achieved and was manifest in the May 25-27 general conference in San Jose, Costa Rica, attended by representatives from key agricultural and information institutions of all five Central American countries.

2) Response to the project by participating countries has been enthusiastic. The project has activated some regional committees long dormant and has resulted in the creation of others. All Central American countries are actively participating and Panama has requested to be included in the project.

3) IICA has successfully implemented its project agreement with ROCAP for phase one activities and has programmed the necessary counterpart professional and financial resources for continuation of the second year's activities in phase two. IICA, whose contributions have exceeded projected levels, has demonstrated its capability for implementation of this project as well as its readiness to see the activity through to completion.

4) Targets and plans for phase two remain unchanged from those described in the PROP and projected in the Project Agreement for phase one. They include establishment of a regional agricultural memory system (data bank); the collection, analysis, and indexing of existing technical data for incorporation into the memory system; the preparation of this data in a form most effectively useable by small farmers, researchers and planners; the development of methodologies for crop forecasting and marketing information; and the introduction and application of new research, data collection, and processing techniques and standards. The first year of phase two will focus specifically on training of regional and national personnel involved in the activities as the basis for implementing the action elements of the program and further improving the data management network. This will include short courses, seminars, and workshops for agricultural researchers, planners, and information managers. IICA and ROCAP project staff will organize and insure the conduct of necessary training. With the assistance of project staff, participating national and regional agencies will provide on-the-job training to assist in application of new methodologies and procedures to improve agricultural research and information. This training phase will lay the ground for the third project year in which full implementation and institutionalization of developed procedures and methodologies is planned.

5) ROCAP has provided a single project manager for three related agricultural projects (Small Farm Cropping Systems, 064, and Soil Fertility, 063, in addition to 048) thus lending increased coordination and interchange to these related activities.

6) The concept of a Regional Marketing Authority is not integrally related to the activities of the Agricultural Research and Information Project and should not be incorporated as part of that project. The heart of Project 048 is Information Management. The Crop Forecasting and Information element included in project 048 is properly viewed as principally an information rather than a marketing function even though the ultimate utility of such information for marketing purposes is apparent.

7) The extra-regional trade considerations involved in implementation of the General System of Preferences (GSP) would be more nearly a natural concern of a Regional Agricultural Marketing Authority than of an Information Management Program. With the recommended separation of these two discrete functions, there appears no need to modify project 048 to specifically address implementation of GSP.

b. Recommendations

1) That continuation of the project as planned be approved by AID/W and a new project agreement executed between ROCAP and IICA for Interim Quarter (and subsequently FY 1977) activities.

2) That Panama's request for participation in the project be approved.

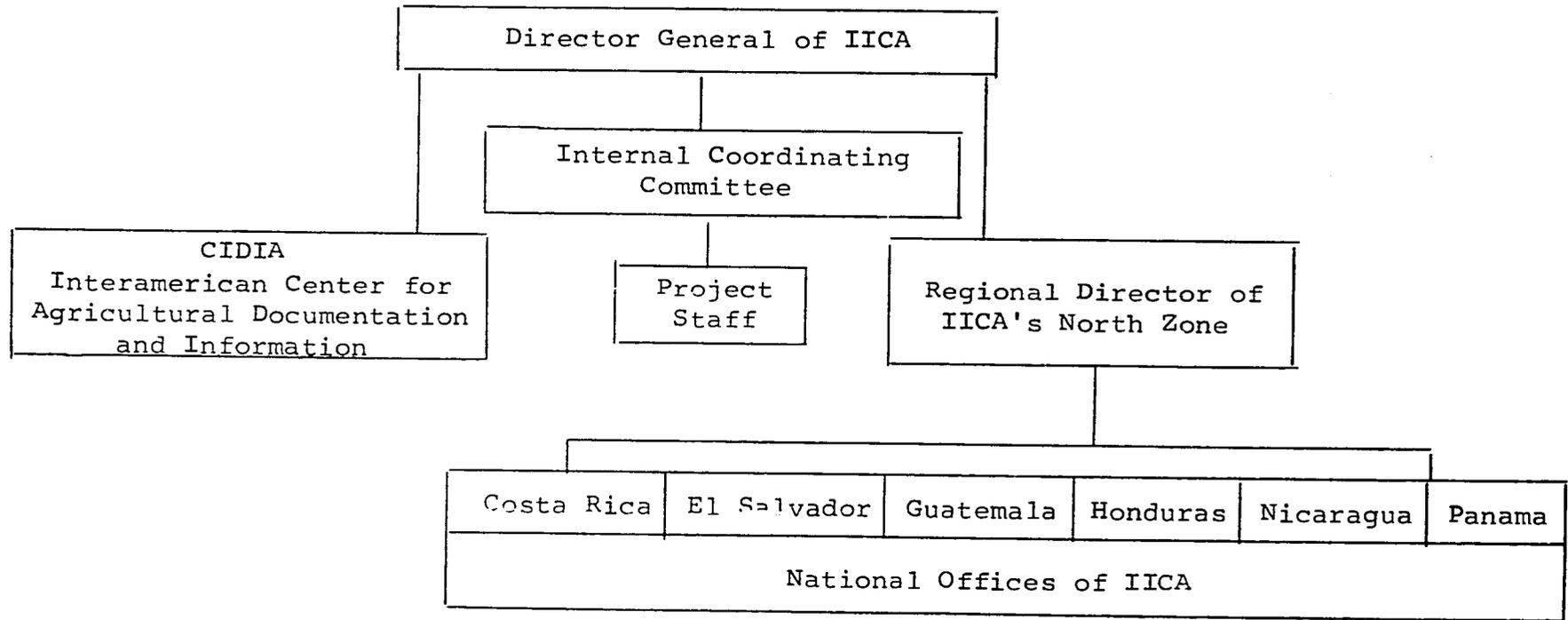
3) That the Regional Marketing Authority Project be treated as a discrete activity and not incorporated into Project 048.

a) That the crop forecasting and market news information element be retained in Project 048.

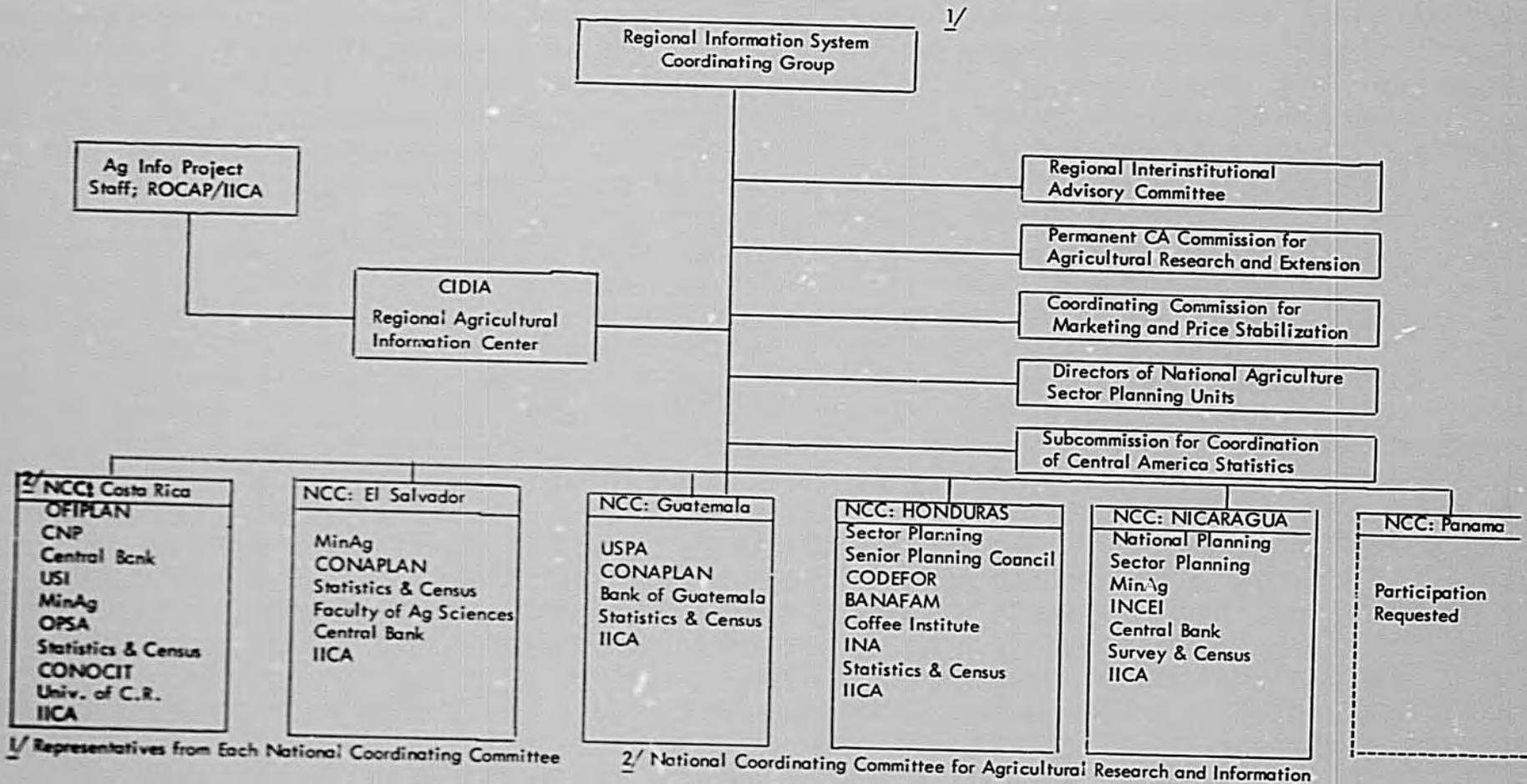
b) That any consideration involving implementation of GSP not be incorporated into Project 048.

ATTACHMENT A

PROJECT ORGANIZATION WITHIN IICA



Regional Agricultural Information Coordination



PARTICIPATING REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- IICA: Instituto Interamericano de Ciencias Agrícolas
(Interamerican Institute for Agricultural Sciences)
- SIECA: Secretaría Permanente de Integración Económica
Centroamericana
(Permanent Secretariat for Central American Economic
Integration)
- CATIE: Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza
(Central American Research and Training Center)
- BCIE: Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica
(Central American Bank for Economic Integration-CABEI)
- INCAP: Instituto de Nutrición de Centro America y Panama
(Nutrition Institute for Central America and Panama)
- ICAITI: Instituto Centroamericano de Investigación y
Tecnología Industrial
(Central American Institute for Industrial Research
and Technology)
- ICAP: Instituto Centroamericano de Administración Pública
(Central American Institute for Public Administration)
- OIRSA: Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria
(International Regional Plant and Animal Health Organi-
zation)

Summary List of Selected Project Documentary Output

- Progress Report No. 1 (March to September 30, 1975).
- Progress Report No. 2 (October 1, 1975 to March 31, 1976).
- Progress Report No. 3 (April 1 to May 20, 1976).
- Manual: Organization, Planning and Operation of the National Coordination Committees.
- Notes on Presentation of Information.
- Booklet: The Analysis of Field Experiments.
- Guide: Diagnosis of a National Information System.
- Manual: Natural Resources and Environment.
- Manual: Establishment of a National Sample Frame.
- Guide: Preparing Technological Information Packages.
- Manual: Design of Information Systems for Market and Agricultural Predictions.
- Manual: Integration of the Information Systems existing in Central America.
- Administering Information Flow: A Guide to Understanding and Organizing the functions of information administration.
- Manual: Improvement in the use of Agricultural Information.
- Manual: Procedures for the Coordinating Committee of the Agricultural Information Regional System.
- Organization Chart: The Central American Agricultural Information System.

- Organization Chart for the development of the project.
- Report: Results of the Central American Agricultural Information Systems Study (Planning).
- Description of the Program for strengthening the Central American Agricultural Information System.
- Bibliography for the IICA Internal Seminar on Central American Agricultural Information Systems (with existing information in the main Guatemalan libraries).
- Summaries of pertinent bibliographies in the library of IICA's Regional Office for the North Zone (including the private libraries of officials of that office.)
- Minutes of the meeting of the regional agencies to organize an Advisory Committee for the Project.
- Minutes of the first meeting on the operations of the Central American Agricultural Information Program (Guatemala, September 24-26, 1975).
- Minutes of the first meeting of the Regional Inter-institutional Advisory Committee of the Central American Agricultural Information program (San Jose, Costa Rica, October 3-4, 1975).
- Organizations selected for the Study of the Agricultural Information Systems in Panama.
- Descriptions of the Central American Agricultural Information Program: Strengthening of the Central American Agricultural Information Systems; and Coordination and Integration of the Central American Agricultural Information System.
- Lists: Members of each national coordinating committee for the project in the Central American countries.
- Pamphlet: General description of the project.

- Memorandum: Suggestions on the preparation of manuals and guides to improve the collection, processing, and dissemination of information.
- Organization, purpose and activities of the project.
- Manual: Organization, planning and operation of the National Coordinating Committees.
- Document: Some characteristics of the Agricultural Information flow in Panama.
- Program for the meeting with directors of the Central American price stabilization organizations, directors of the Central American Agricultural Research and Extension organizations, Central American directors of Statistics and Census, and Directors of sectoral planning of the region's Ministries of Agriculture (San Jose, Costa Rica, May 25-26, 1976).
- Documentation on Methodology for agricultural research and experimentation.
- Special studies proposed within the Central American Agricultural Information Program.

PHASE TWO STUDIES

1. The Technical characteristics of the interconnected agricultural information network existing in the CA region.
2. Compatibility of the coding and storage systems of agricultural information in the Information Centers of the C.A. countries.
3. Alternatives for the increase and improvement of the dissemination of agricultural information through the mass media in the CA Isthmus.
4. The media in each agricultural information area in which the functioning of the Agricultural Information System in the C.A. area should be initiated.
5. Demographic characteristics of the potential rural poor users of agricultural information.
6. Commercial information systems and crop prediction.
7. Socio-economic information required for the improvement of agricultural sector planning.
8. Possible ways of coordinating the agricultural information systems of other countries and regions with the Central American system.
9. Identification of the needs for and the methods of financing professional training of the personnel of the Agricultural Research and Information Systems.
10. Characterization of the Agricultural Research Programs of Central America and identification of priority research areas.
11. IICA's organizational, human and physical resource requirements as the potential center for the Central American Agricultural Information System.

12. The possibilities and procedures for linking the coding and storage systems of AGRINTER, DEVSIS, and PROMECA to the Central American system.
13. The participation of IICA and other international organizations in the agriculture information system of the C.A. area.
14. Existing legislation and regulations governing the generation, processing and dissemination of information in the countries of the region.