



Pilot Project for the Study of Agricultural Research Priorities in Meso-America and to Consolidate Strategic Alliances Around Them¹

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1. Recent Background

FORAGRO, as a promoter and facilitator of the R&D Regional Agenda. In the last two years FORAGRO has been promoting the construction of a '*shared vision of agriculture*' in the Latin America and Caribbean region with the aim of setting a regional agenda. One of the specific activities that is being carried out as part of this process is that of identifying and updating sub-regional and regional research priorities.² Setting regional priorities entails a major joint effort by all stakeholders of agricultural R&D, that is carried out with the objective of developing consensus among them on the major research priorities, optimize the use of scarce research resources, more fully exploit the spill-overs of multinational and international research, and decide the areas on which cooperation among stakeholders must concentrate.

The state of regional priorities. The FORAGRO Consultation meeting that took place on May 2-4, 2001 in Mexico under the aegis of INIFAP, IICA, FONTAGRO, GFAR, TAC, CIMMYT, CIAT, and CIP, attended by the representatives of their national, sub-regional and regional organizations and CGIAR centres, examined the recent regional prioritization experiences in the five sub-regions that make up the Latin America and Caribbean region. These presentations offered a wide range of methodological developments and approaches, identifying both the strengths and the weaknesses of these experiences. The most systematic priority-setting process and the most detailed results have been obtained in the *Southern Sub-region* under PROCISUR, that came up with an agenda for technological integration, and in the *Caribbean Sub-region* within the PROCICARIBE/CARDI framework which defined the priority areas and themes beginning with individual countries and then moving outwards to cover the sub-region as a whole.

In the case of the *Andean Region* a significant advance has been made in defining regional research priorities as part of PROCIANDINO's strategic planning process based on the NARIs, and the development of CONDESAN has provided a very interesting initiative that has brought together a consortium of universities and NGOs in the sub-region. The Mexico meeting emphasized the importance of seeking a convergence between these two efforts that complement each other in many ways, and through this process develop a consensus on regional priorities. This will be done through regional workshops with the stakeholders in the Andean region, aimed not only at identifying priorities but also at identifying concrete projects of strategic importance to the region. In the case of the *Tropical Amazon Sub-region and the surrounding ecosystems*,² regional priorities have been identified both for cooperation between institutions and for agricultural research. However, the latter must be spelt out in greater detail following a bottom-up process based on national priorities, emphasizing the importance of conserving the

¹ Preliminary version prepared by the Technical Secretariat of FORAGRO/IICA and the Executive Secretariat of GFAR, based on the conclusions of the Mexico meeting (May 2-3, 2001). We wish to thank Alain de Janvry, Nicolas Mateo, Amir Kassam, Reed Hertford and Gustavo Sain for their contributions.

² For a description of the main activities that have recently been carried out, see: "*Regional Priorities for Agricultural Research in the Americas in the 21st Century: Towards an Interpretation of the Process*"; San José, FORAGRO/IICA/GFAR, February 2001.

vast natural resource base and biodiversity of this sub-region. In this sub-region the interaction between production activities and the agro-ecosystems is vital because of the fragile nature of the land. A methodological proposal will be developed with the participation of the national and international stakeholders, coordinated by PROCITROPICOS.

In the case of the *Meso-American Sub-region* (Central America and Southern Mexico) there are several priority-setting exercises that have taken place, among which three should be mentioned: the regional R&D strategic plan developed by the main sub-regional research institution (CATIE), a priority-setting process carried out by IICA and BID for the sub-region, and the priorities that have been set individually by the international centres of the CGIAR and the various commodity-based research networks working in the region. There is thus a lot of information available, but it is scattered through different efforts. The next step will be to incorporate all of these elements into a cohesive approach that all stakeholders can agree to, and that may thus lead to a more efficient use of the existing resources and institutions.

It is also important to emphasize the fact that several years ago a sub-regional organization was established in Central America, SICTA, that provides an institutional framework in the region but that so far has not been successful in really taking-off. Given the fact that this sub-region is constituted by small countries it is important to have a strong sub-regional organization, taking advantage of the fact that this institution has been strongly supported by the Ministers of Agriculture ever since it was established. For this reason, the participants at the Mexico meeting considered that this project should be formulated in a way that will facilitate the process of involving all stakeholders and beneficiaries, while seeking to strengthen and develop SICTA and foster its take off.

The Mexico meeting was also briefed on the only effort that has so far been made to identify regional priorities at the region-wide level in Latin America and the Caribbean: the Medium Term Plan of FONTAGRO, the Regional Agricultural Technology Fund. The regional priorities identified by FONTAGRO are based on two innovative concepts linked to the analysis of research needs. The first one is the concept of '*megodomains*', defined as geographic areas in the region constituted by relatively homogenous techno-economic spaces; the second one is the concept of '*critical technology families*', which defines strategic technological areas. FONTAGRO is playing two important functions in this process of identifying regional priorities; one is that of strengthening an hemispheric (or regional) space for concerted action among stakeholders; and secondly it is a regional funding mechanism that seeks to mobilize funds from the countries of the region, and thus to increase public investment in this area.

The features of the process. At the Mexico meeting, it was also agreed that the process must adopt a bottom-up approach. In other words, it must be based on the identification of common research needs identified by involving the various stakeholders and the farmers themselves. It was therefore agreed that the process must be participatory, and that all the national and international public and private stakeholders should be involved as much as possible. The importance of this exercise has been clearly increased by the decision recently taken by CGIAR to develop a global research agenda based on a process in which the regional priorities will be taken into consideration as a major input when formulating the priorities of the global agenda.

Balancing subregional achievements. Although all five sub-regions that constitute the region are equally important to FORAGRO, it was decided in Mexico that given the complexities of developing an inter-stakeholder dialogue it was better to do so at the sub-regional level. Furthermore, given the need to reduce the imbalances within the region it is better to concentrate in those sub-regions that confront the greatest needs. On the basis of these considerations it was decided to focus in Meso-America, the Andean Region and the Amazonian low humid tropics and surrounding ecosystems. In terms of the specific input FORAGRO could provide to the CGIAR process, priority was given to concentrate on the implementation of a pilot project for Meso-America, to be followed by a similar one for the Andean countries as soon as possible, through which a valuable experience could be obtained that could be useful to the other sub-

regions as well. The rationale for this decision was that in the first two sub-regions one finds the highest levels of rural poverty and of environmental degradation.

The geographic scope of the pilot project. This proposal presents a pilot project that will concentrate on Meso-America (Southern Mexico and Central America). As pointed out above, the project will be carried out through the existing institutional platform in order to strengthen it, and builds upon the various studies and reports that were presented in Mexico. As part of its priority-setting activities, FORAGRO will continue to work in all five sub-regions, given the fact that they are all equally important and that as a Regional Forum it must work in all sub-regions.

Similar exercises elsewhere in the world. Similar regional prioritization exercises are also being carried out in other regions of the world by regional and/or sub-regional organizations similar to FORAGRO in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Asia/Pacific, the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus. The GFAR and TAC Secretariats are supporting these initiatives, and will facilitate the exchange of experiences, methodologies and approaches among them.

2. A sense of Urgency: The Challenges Facing the Region.

In the globalized world at the dawn of this century Latin America and the Caribbean in general, and Meso-America in particular, are facing a series of challenges the magnitude of which give a clear sense of urgency to these problems. The four main challenges facing the region are:

- (a) **Poverty alleviation:** Combating poverty in Meso-America, particularly in the rural areas, has not been very effective so far. The report on this aspect which was presented at the Mexico meeting, clearly highlights the fact that in recent years the situation has deteriorated, and presents the high rates of poverty facing the countries in Central America.³ Unless their needs are addressed, or employment and income-earning opportunities are created for people in the sub-region, the situation will worsen in the near future with the consequences that this generates in terms of unmet basic needs and vicious circles or spirals of poverty and environmental degradation.
- (b) **Competitiveness and insertion into the hemispheric integration area and into the globalized world and the international markets.** The Quebec Summit of Presidents in April 2001 has opened up clear possibilities as part of the integration process adopted by the countries in the hemisphere, but at the same time it poses the challenge of being able to respond to these new opportunities. This makes it necessary to identify and/or consolidate strategically important commodity chains, that have the capacity of enabling the region to become successfully incorporated into the sphere of international trade which is now emerging.
- (c) **Environment degradation and sustainable development:** The third great challenge is the increasing environmental degradation which is taking place in Central America, which could threaten the sustainable development capacity of the sub-region. The increasing deterioration and depletion of these renewable resources (i.e. water), heightened by natural disasters and climate change, is having the effect of changing the sub-region from being rich in biodiversity, water resources and fertile woodlands, into becoming a region where environmental degradation will become a serious threat to its food production capacity and to the sustainability of the development efforts being made there.

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Reed Hertford: 'Poverty: A Review with emphasis on Meso-America and a Proposal Integrating Agricultural Technology in a Comprehensive Regional Poverty Reduction Strategy'; FORAGRO, Mexico, May 2001. This article forms the basis for a second document by the same author to be published after the Mexico meeting entitled 'Poverty in Meso-America: Trends, Causes and Implications for Agricultural Research'.

- (d) **Inadequacy of policies and institutions to development needs:** A growing inconsistency between policies and institutions on the one hand, and the huge and urgent challenges facing the rural sector, on the other, is drastically reducing the effectiveness of development programs. To deal with the former, there must be an enhanced capacity to access information and a greater ability to properly use impact assessment indicators.

The magnitude of the problems, the speed of the degradation process and the consequences for the Meso-American countries of not dealing with this situation in the immediate future, creates a *sense of urgency* in the sub-region to foster concerted efforts on the part of all the stakeholders involved in this process.

3. The Added-Value of Prioritization and of Regional Concerted Efforts Among Stakeholders

It is almost impossible for any one country or any individual institution to meet the challenges described in the previous section. This being so a critical part in this whole process will be played by *concerted efforts* on the part of all the stakeholders involved in Central America to address the region's critical problems, identified through a process of regional priority identification in order to work out a '*common agenda*'. We refer to this process as one of "concertation".

The added-value of a regional prioritization and concertation process is therefore based on four fundamental factors: (a) the need to develop a capacity within the region to identify the development challenges and opportunities facing the region; (b) the need for *concerted efforts* to be made by of all the stakeholders involved in agricultural research and rural development in the region; (c) the need to develop *critical masses* in research in strategic areas which no institution or country on its own could ever achieve; and (d) the need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure in this field by rationalizing current investment in a limited number of areas and on projects that are critical for the development of the region. Considering the programmes being financed by governments in the region, despite the cutbacks in public funding, and by regional and international programmes (CGIAR), the private sector and the donors working in the region, all this current investment could have a significant impact and achieve what all these efforts are setting out to do, namely, *rationalize this investment* and enhance its effectiveness.

There is another factor which has to be highlighted here: this effort to identify regional priorities is also designed to achieve an important *political goal*, namely, to closely link agricultural research to the main regional development projects (mainstream development efforts) that are being planned or implemented in the Meso-American countries. Thus, it will contribute to putting agriculture and agricultural research back into the regional agenda. For example, there are various initiatives that are emerging as a follow-up to the Summit of the Americas in Quebec, such as the proposals discussed at the recent meeting called *From Puebla to Panama*. In this and other similar meetings, such as those dealing with projects financed by the World Bank, IDB, IFAD and other bilateral donors in the region, the main parameters for such programs (and investments) are being established. Given their relative importance in the region, they do have a major impact on the people in the sub-region, as well as on their well-being and on their income. This pilot project will seek to create a closer linkage between agricultural research efforts and the knowledge they generate, on the one hand, and concrete rural development and investment programmes taking place in the region, on the other. Thus this project seeks to relate agricultural research to mainstream development efforts in the region, seeking to *re-position it in the regional development agenda*. Obviously this is a complex objective that can only be achieved gradually, through a sustained effort over time in this direction (this is not an objective that can be achieved in a few months). Given the time and budget constraints it has, what this pilot project can do is to develop an approach to do so, create awareness on the importance of such an approach, and mobilize the interest of stakeholders to work jointly in this direction through the *regional priority-setting exercise* it will carry out during the duration of the project. Thus it will be an important step forward. In order to make this feasible, this pilot project

must be closely related to other projects being considered in the region, such as the project to establish a '*Central American Foundation*' in this field.

4. The Present Status of Research Prioritization in Central America

The report on the current status of the priorities in the Central America region submitted to the FORAGRO Meeting in Mexico describes the situation in the region as it presently stands.⁴ The Central American countries have set up their regional priorities through various channels, such as the commodity-based cooperative networks. Another example of these channels was the IICA/IDB Project which was implemented in the Nineties. This effort provided data on institutions, capacities and resources, set up data bases with the participation of IFPRI working in close cooperation with CIAT, professionals from INIAS and the Ministries of Agriculture. Other channels are the initiatives that have been implemented through the main sub-regional research institution, CATIE. However, these two regional prioritization efforts have their limitations. The first set priorities for the commodities normally produced in the sub-region, but it did not consider any other opportunities or comparative advantages in Meso-America. Secondly, these exercises were not validated with all the other stakeholders involved in agricultural research and the new rural organizations in the region. Even though they have generated very useful and valuable information, and created an agricultural research vision of the region, it is nevertheless necessary to establish a more complete picture and a consensus that will enable all the stakeholders working in the region to acquire the ownership of the process.

In addition to these regional prioritization initiatives, the Central American Report presented in Mexico on regional priorities (Nicolas Mateo) also included an analysis of the regional priorities that the various international centres of the CGIAR have identified for Central America (CIMMYT, IFPRI, ISNAR, CIAT, CIP, IPGRI). The CGIAR centres are also completing an inventory of research projects being carried out in the region, which will make it possible to improve the coordination between all these centres, and between them and the other agricultural research stakeholders in the region.

At the Mexico Consultation Meeting it was also agreed that the research priorities identified in the sub-region in the past few years must take account of earlier exercises regarding the process which will now be moved forward. But the challenge today is knowing how to open up the range of new production scenarios and opportunities, and a new range of stakeholders. To facilitate this it was agreed that in the Meso-American Report prepared by FORAGRO (by N. Mateo) the analysis carried out so far would be complemented by a '*summary table*' setting out the various priorities as a single whole. Once this has been done, the work that has been carried out so far will also be completed by a revision of the individual priorities of the Meso-American countries. These are the *de facto priorities* which the main stakeholders in Central America have been pursuing over the past few years in this region.

5. The Main Components of the Regional Priorities Project in Central America

This section summarizes the main components of the regional priorities project identified at the Mexico Meeting. It addresses the following points: (a) problems to be solved and general objectives; (b) activities to be implemented; (c) expected outputs; (d) budgetary and organizational aspects, and (e) the implementation schedule (timetable).

5.1 Project Objectives

⁴ Nicolás Mateo: '*Prioridades Regionales de Investigación Agrícola en Mesoamérica: Mitos y Realidades*'; Mexico, FORAGRO, May 2001.

At the Mexico Meeting, the participants agreed that this project should aim to achieve the following development objectives in the region: (a) to contribute towards reducing the high level of rural poverty; (b) to raise the low levels of competitiveness of extended agriculture (namely the agro-industrial chains); (c) to offset the high rate of natural resource degradation, focusing on soil, water and genetic resources, and (d) to foster greater consistency between policies and existing institutions in general, and the demands and urgent challenges facing the agri-food sector.

In order to solve these problems a continual process of consultation and cooperation must be pursued which will achieve short term results (six to eight months) and medium term results. This implies establishing a process for debating and analysing the regional agenda as well as the longer-term priorities, to make it possible not only to formulate priorities but also to monitor the progress that is being made in terms of achieving the objectives being pursued, in a dynamic process.

In order to achieve the above, three *operational objectives* were set for this project:

- a) to better define the regional research priorities, in order to develop a regional research agenda;
- b) to reach a consensus among the research stakeholders in order to secure their commitment to the objectives being pursued, and to carry out concerted actions around the priorities identified (through strategic projects);
- c) to help identify the role of each stakeholder in the regional strategy, including the CGIAR as one of the important actors in the region, and to strengthen the most important sub-regional and regional institutions.

5.2 Expected outputs

The expected outputs of this project can be summarized as follows:

- a) The regional research and technological development priorities for Meso-America will be better formulated and more sharply focused. What is new here is the way in which the various stakeholders are integrated. Even more important than drawing up the list of priorities as such, is the fact of achieving a *consensus* among all the stakeholders working in the region and the need for cooperation in order to achieve the objectives that have been set. One very important part in this process will be the strengthening of SICTA and the involvement of CATIE. It is this interaction between the stakeholders in the region around a jointly agreed/shared agenda that makes the whole process more significant.
- b) The second output from the project will be the strategic frameworks that are formulated in each of the five priority areas which will make it possible to define the main activities to be implemented in each of them, and facilitate their distribution among the stakeholders involved. These strategic frameworks will also make it possible to follow-up the activities as they move forward in terms of the operational objectives that can be set for each one of these priority areas, and the progress made in attaining these objectives (impact assessment).
- c) The third output is particularly important, because it deals with a portfolio of projects of strategic importance to the sub-region in the priority areas mentioned above. These projects will make it possible to convert the regional priorities and the strategic frameworks into specific activities to be implemented by groups or by consortia of research centres and interested stakeholders. The projects will be submitted to different donors and to FONTAGRO for their appraisal. It is here that joint action between FONTAGRO and the donors - bilateral and multilateral - can play a particularly important part in the process under this project, and hence in the later implementation of the research projects.

- d) The fourth output has to do with the design of a CGIAR strategy for Meso-America, which is compatible with the broader framework of regional priorities that emerge from this process. The international centres have sole responsibility for drawing up this strategy, because it is a matter for their corporate programmes and policies and the decisions of the Consultative Group as such. But by doing it in coordination with this process of regional prioritization, all the parties involved will benefit. The international centres can contribute their extremely valuable experience and familiarity with the region to this regional prioritization process, as they did at the meetings in San José and in Mexico. And this forms part of a broader issue: the role of each stakeholder in developing and implementing the regional strategy.

5.3 Activities for implementation

The project considers four main activities: (a) the establishment of a consensus between the stakeholders regarding the research priorities in Meso-America; (b) the development of strategic frameworks in five priority thematic areas that have already been identified through recent prioritization efforts, which will enable the stakeholders to coordinate their activities; (c) the preparation of a portfolio of strategic projects for the region in the high priority areas; and (d) facilitate the development of a CGIAR strategy for Meso-America, working very closely with the CGIAR centres that operate in the region.

- a) **Establishing a consensus between the stakeholders regarding regional priorities:** This will be considered one of the main starting points for the summary prepared for Central America for the Mexico Meeting, which includes various regional priorities (see section 4 of this document) for analysing the agricultural research requirements of Meso-America (Central America). Based on these existing priorities, a process will be implemented in two stages. In the first phase, the current short-term priorities will be adjusted or improved through dialogue between the stakeholders involved. This must be promoted by the project management support group with the Technical Secretariat of the Forum. The purpose of this first phase is to broaden dialogue beyond the bounds of traditional public institutions, Agriculture Ministries and INIAs, in order to incorporate all the stakeholders, particularly the NGOs, agricultural producers, universities and the private sector, who played a particularly active part in the Mexico Meeting. It was also agreed that this process should, as far as possible, be based on the organizations already existing in the region. For the purpose of carrying out this general analysis of regional priorities, great importance was attributed to using two existing organizations. The first institution is CATIE, which has just begun to develop its Strategic Plan 2002-2012, acting on instructions from the Executive Board, of which the first version is expected to be ready at the end of 2001. The second is SICTA, which should be strengthened as a sub-regional organization for establishing cooperation and concerted action between all the agricultural research stakeholders. One important institutional effect of this project will therefore be to strengthen the sub-regional organizations which are playing a key part in the region in research and, in the case of CATIE, in agricultural education as well.

In order to guarantee broad consultation with the stakeholders involved, the project support group will design operational procedures that they consider necessary to underpin this process in consultation with the Advisory Committee. This might involve preparing a questionnaire to be sent to all the stakeholders, and convening a regional seminar at which the results will be analysed. It must be emphasized that the output of this consultation will not only be a set of regional priorities, but a consensus established between the stakeholders to steer all their efforts in the same direction. These stakeholders were present at Mexico and undertook to contribute their experience and their know-how.

- b) **Developing five priority thematic areas for the sub-region:** From the analyses carried out at the Mexico Meeting, five priority areas emerged as being strategically important to the region:

- ◆ Issues relating to rural poverty (e.g. mapping and characterization of rural poverty, production systems of importance to the rural poor, etc.);⁵
- ◆ Sustainable management of natural resources and agro-ecology, and genetic resource management;
- ◆ Increasing the competitiveness of commodity chains, with the capacity to incorporate key products into the international markets;⁶
- ◆ Agricultural development policies and aspects of institutional development (including aspects relating to the “new rural society”);
- ◆ Access to information and the application of IC technologies to agricultural development.

It was felt that the debate on the strategies for the region and concerted efforts by the stakeholders should concentrate on these five priority areas. In each of these areas, a strategic framework will be developed that will make it easier to find complementarity and synergies between the activities of each party involved. The strategic frameworks in each area will therefore make it possible to obtain a much clearer picture of the role of each stakeholder in the region (INIAs, international centres, CATIE, NGOs, private sector, etc.). To facilitate this it was suggested appointing an institution or a leader group for each of these five priority areas, and the possibility of setting up a task force in each area to achieve this, with the participation of the stakeholders. In two of these five areas, a number of initiatives are already being implemented. One of them is to diagnose and identify priorities for post-harvest technology in Latin America and the Caribbean as part of the exercise that FORAGRO and PRODAR/IICA are currently carrying out with the support of GFAR and FAO (GIPHT initiative).⁷ It also concluded that the fifth area (access to information) could be implemented through the work of FORAGRO/INFOTEC/IICA in the Meso-American countries, once again with GFAR's support, where there is already a group which is working on this very issue.

In the analysis and discussion of regional priorities at the Mexico Meeting, a very active part was played by the NGOs, the farmers' associations, the universities and the private sector. In particular, the NGOs expressed their interest in making an active contribution to all three strategic areas (rural poverty alleviation, natural resource/agro-ecology sustainable management, access to information and exploiting local know-how), based on the activities being implemented in Meso-America, the Andean countries and in the other sub-regions in the hemisphere.

- c) **Developing a portfolio of strategic projects and strategic alliances in Meso-America:** There was consensus in the Mexico Meeting said that it is not sufficient to identify regional priorities and develop a strategic framework to facilitate the implementation of concerted actions in the five priority areas mentioned above. In order to move in the direction of relating the priorities to concrete development action, it is indispensable to formulate a portfolio of *Strategic Projects* which meet the priority criteria that have been identified. These strategic research projects and the actions that stem from them, including trying out new and innovative institutional solutions, must reflect three fundamental aspects:

- ◆ They must contribute to achieving the objectives of this project;

⁵ See the paper presented by Reed Hertford mentioned above.

⁶ See the paper presented by Carlos Pomareda: '*Technology and Competitiveness in Central American Agriculture*'; Mexico, FORAGRO, May 2001.

⁷ See '*From Quantity to Quality: A Global Initiative Toward Establishing the Post-Harvest Sector*' Rome, FAO, March 2001. See also '*Aide-Mémoire: Organización de la Consulta Regional en América Latina y el Caribe sobre Fomento a la Innovación en el Campo de la Post-Cosecha*'; FORAGRO/GFAR, March 2001.

- ◆ They must relate to one (or several) of the five priority thematic areas;
- ◆ They must seize on the opportunities that emerge thanks to the hemispheric integration policy recently adopted at Quebec and reflect the guidelines approved at the recent '*From Puebla to Panama*' meeting. The objective being pursued here is that of seeking to relate research and technological development efforts (knowledge generation) to the strategic and investment programmes being adopted for Meso-America.

It is hoped that through the *strategic projects* it will be possible to provide concrete examples to demonstrate how to systematically relate research efforts to development endeavors, taking into account the objectives set out in section 5.1. One of the challenges here will be to show, through concrete examples and/or projects, the close interaction that can be developed between pursuing economic growth through increasing competitiveness in certain commodity chains, whether they are export commodities or under-utilized crops, and the eradication of poverty. The strategic projects to be developed will seek to closely link these two aspects. Here the objective is to achieve *win/win situations* which closely link these two approaches (i.e. economic growth efforts and poverty eradication endeavors), that have hitherto been considered to be *antagonistic or competing objectives*.

- d) **Cooperation with the international centres to identify a CGIAR Strategy for the Region:** The results of the previous three activities will produce useful recommendations and ideas for the development of a *CGIAR Strategy for Meso-America*. As previously pointed out, the formulation of this strategy is a responsibility of the centres and of the CGIAR. But the regional priorities that will be established and the initiatives that emerge from the first two actions will contribute towards the development of a CGIAR Strategy for the region, and to the development of the CGIAR global agenda. It is also hoped that the international centres will be able to cooperate with other stakeholders in the region to implement priority programmes and strategic projects identified as part of this process, to the extent that their mandates and financial resources allow it. The Centres themselves can identify what contribution they are able to make to the priority areas, as part of a coherent CGIAR strategy for the region (Meso-America), especially in the case of the centres with headquarters in the region.

5.4 Organizational and Budgetary Aspects

a) Organizational Aspects:

The organizational structure for the implementation of the project will remain very simple. Essentially, it will comprise a Management and Monitoring Group (MNG) which will be made up of FORAGRO/IICA-Technical Secretariat, CATIE and SICTA (the SNIAs in the sub-region). The project will have a coordinator, to be contracted, who will work at the Technical Secretariat, and a Technical Advisory Committee made up of the main stakeholders who attended the Mexico Meeting, GFAR, the Executive Secretariat of FONTAGRO, TAC and the CIAT and CIMMYT International Centres. While the Management and Monitoring Group and the Technical Advisory Committee are being set up, the Petit Comité which was set up at the brainstorming session in San José in February this year, in preparation for the Mexico Consultation, will continue working and include GFAR. It is expected that the project Coordinator and the Technical Advisory Committee will be given the resources they need to engage consultants and support consultation meetings whenever they are considered necessary for the implementation of the activities described in section 5.3.

b) Budgetary Aspects:

The budget for this project, which will be implemented over six to eight months, depending upon the resources available from regional and international donors, is estimated at US\$ 130,000, broken down as follows:

	US \$ Dollars
a) Project Coordinator, Management Support Group meetings.....	46,000
b) Baseline surveys, data collection.....	30,000
c) Sub-regional consultation workshops.....	30,000
d) Travel expenses for coordinator and consultants.....	18,000
e) Telecommunications.....	3,000
f) Publications.....	3,000
Project Total	US\$ 130,000

The institutions taking part in the project will also provide counterpart resources (professional resources, installations for meetings, logistical support, materials, know-how and information, and facilities for national and regional operations depending upon the character of the institutions or regional and international mechanisms involved).

5.5 Schedule for the short-term implementation of the present project (depending upon funding availability)

This timetable goes from August 2001 to May 2002 (assuming the financial resources can be assured between June and July, 2001):

a) Circulating the proposal to the stakeholders and sponsors	May-June
b) Identifying and negotiating financial resources with donors	June-July
c) Final formulation of the project and the implementation agreement	June-July
d) Coordinating and organizing the work (Management Group and Technical Committee; Appointment of Coordinator)	August
e) Implementation of the project activities (section 5.3)	September-May
f) Identifying sub-regional demands (specific workshops)	Early October
g) Presentation of preliminary results in the GFAR and ICW-2001 meetings	End October
h) Regional Consultation Workshop to Summarize Priorities	March, 2002
i) Presentation final results in FORAGRO and GFAR meetings in May	May, 2002
j) Dissemination and exchange of experiences (region and world) FORAGRO, FONTAGRO, CGIAR/TAC, GFAR, PROCIs, SNIAs	June – September, 2002

In terms of the input into the CGIAR strategic planning process, partial results can be presented at ICW-2001, but more substantial results will not be available until May 2002. Since the MTM meetings will no longer be held, the best way to present this input will be discussed with the CGIAR Secretariat.