Networks

Modern organizational models have promoted network-based structures, as they are more suited to complex systems and to the greater flexibility that certain processes require, particularly in relation to knowledge management. The MTP has established the development and strengthening of knowledge networks as one of its priorities. This will be essential to improving institutional management.

IICA's internal human resources network for Technical Cooperation

IICA's network is comprised of international and national technical staff, enabling linkages to be established between different spheres of knowledge and relationships. In the process of creating this structure, a significant change has taken place in terms of the ratio between international and national technical staff. The former accounted for 63% of technical staff in 1993 and now represent 33% of the total.

Source: IICA, Program Budget 2019, 2018

In evaluating their own roles, 47% of the technical staff who were surveyed indicated that they occupied positions with management or coordination responsibilities and only 31% were sectoral specialists. This demonstrates that there is a greater weighting on the management of cooperation actions rather than on more academic technical work, which is a situation that is less conducive to a network-based approach.
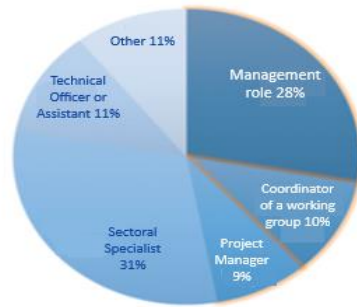
Structure of the IICA technical network

IICA's technical cooperation team includes close to 120 technical staff members, with 40% operating out of Headquarters and the remaining 60% located in the country offices. Each of them is associated with one of the thematic areas. Based on their own assessment, each of them is considered a specialist in a particular area, regardless of how this has been determined, and their activities cuts across various areas.

It must be pointed out that this distribution is not necessarily as a result of a specific allocation plan but is the result of the natural or spontaneous evolution of the human talent system.

Distribution of specialties of technical staff in the IICA Internal Cooperation Network
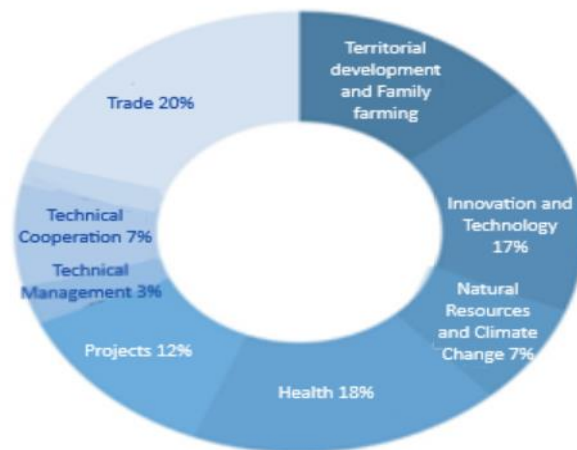
The significance of having a presence throughout the hemisphere

The distribution of technical staff throughout the Hemisphere demonstrates that the network structure covers practically the entire region, although there is a concentration of resources at Headquarters.

IICA's Technical Network has a core group of 48 professionals at Headquarters and 74 others, distributed among 27 countries.
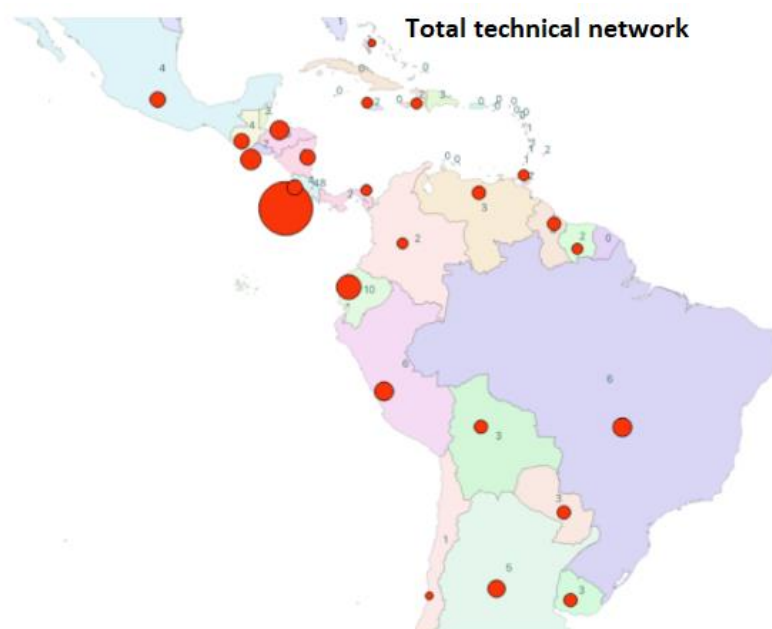
Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Oversight is provided from Costa Rica, which coordinates the structure of the Program divisions.
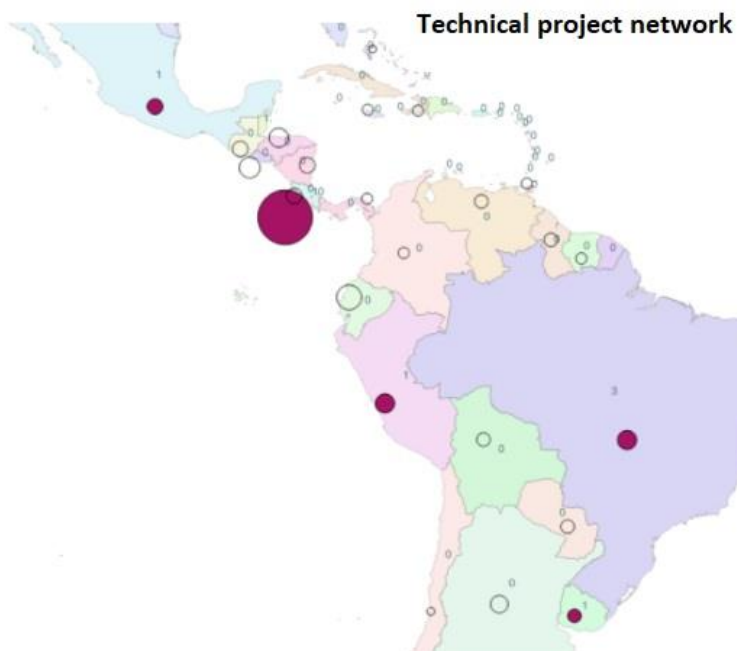

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Each of IICA's areas of specialization is supported by a number of professionals who are equipped to provide cooperation services, and who are distributed throughout the Region. However, this distribution is not based on an explicit strategy.

Technical cooperation network

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Technical project network

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Technical bioeconomy network

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Technical trade network

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Technical network for territorial development & family farming

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Technical network for natural resources

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Technical network for health matters

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Technical network for innovation
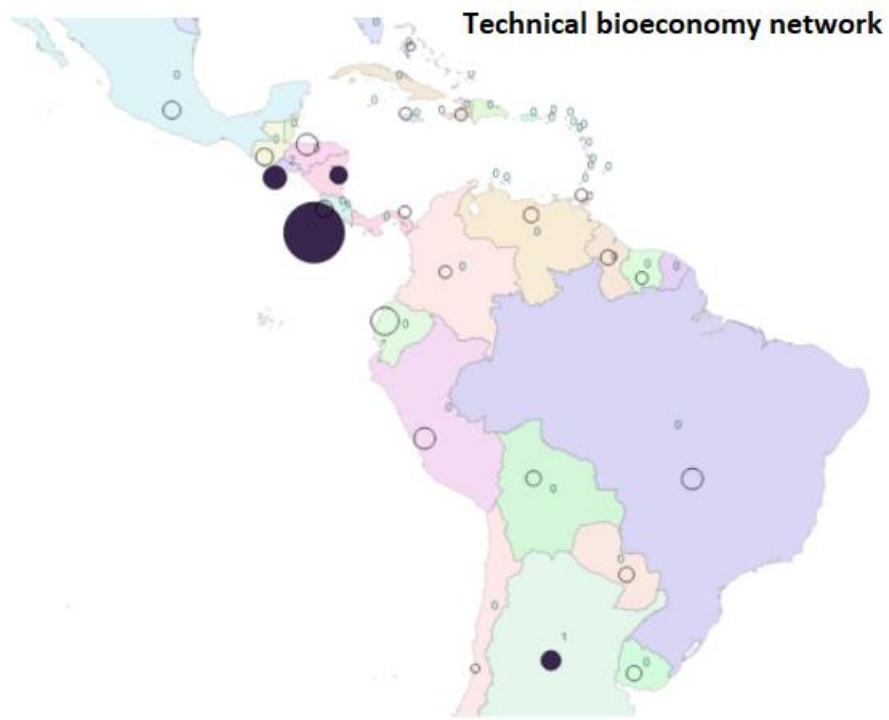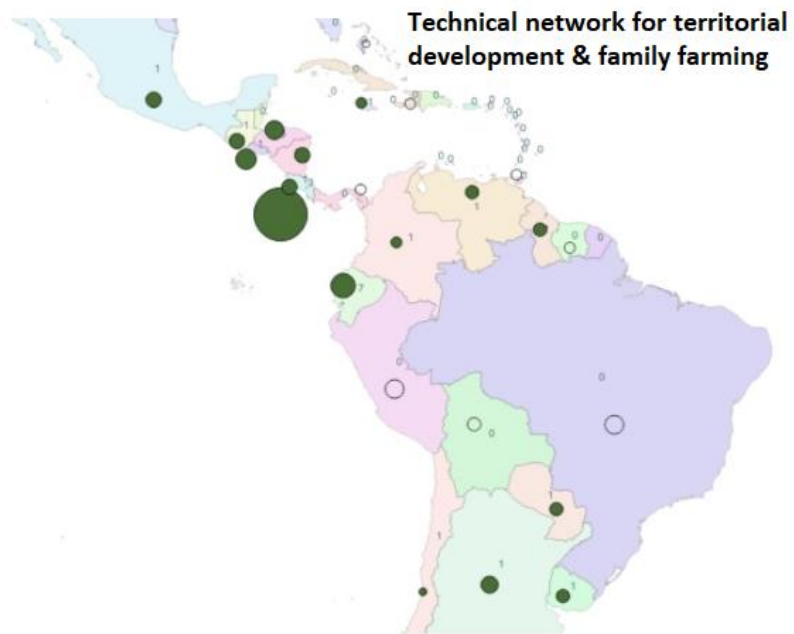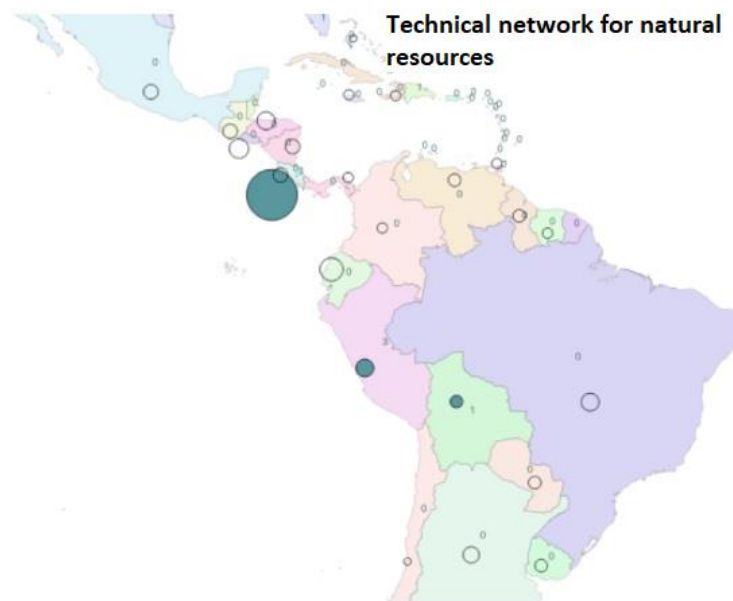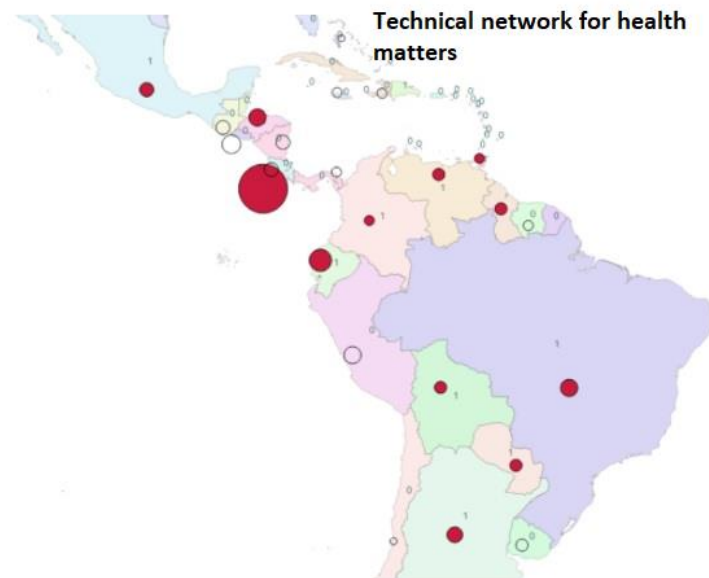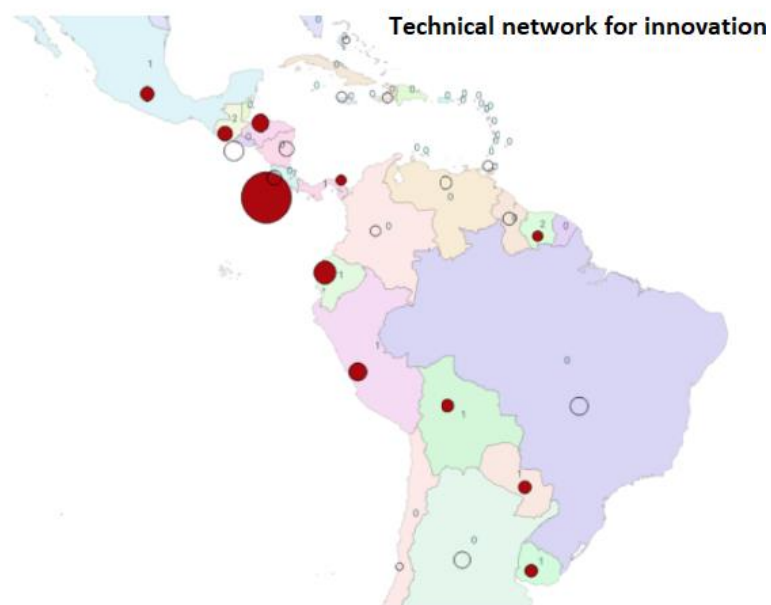
Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

The operations of IICA's Cooperation Network, based on its internal network of technical staff, are complemented by an immediate circle of external advisors and a second circle of external consultants, who are available for projects and specific demands.

The design of the knowledge management network platform also extends to external actors, such as Research Centers and donors in the international development cooperation system– funding agencies and third-party clients of the system.

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Working towards and ambitious Network project

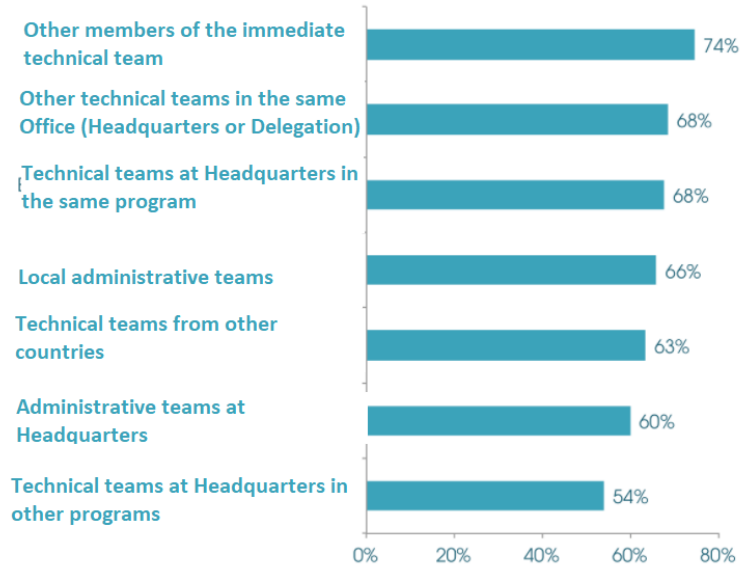*There is significant interaction among technical staff at IICA, but not across the board. One fourth of the technical staff state that they have no relationship with their immediate team. One third of them do not interface with technical staff involved in the same area in other Delegations and one third of them do not interact with technical staff in the same area, based at Headquarters. Furthermore, just a little more than a half of them have established linkages with technical staff in areas other than their own.*

In observing the types of linkages that have been established, it is clear that the technical staff are not operating as a Network. Just 17% of the technical staff stated that they have a long-term agenda with the Programs of Headquarters. Only one tenth of them say that they have integration linkages—long-term agendas—with technical staff in other areas or countries. The most common linkages are short-term or were established only to satisfy a particular collaboration demand.

Internal Relationships between Technical Staff at IICA

Other members of the immediate technical team	74%
Other technical teams in the same Office (Headquarters or Delegation)	68%
Technical teams at Headquarters in the same program	68%
Local administrative teams	66%
Technical teams from other countries	63%
Administrative teams at Headquarters	60%
Technical teams at Headquarters in other programs	54%

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

Types of relationships - IICA's Internal Network

	Integration (joint long-term agendas)	Mutual short-term benefits (temporary partnerships)	Facilitator of strategic relationships (opens doors)	Support (technical, political or financial)
Other members of the immediate technical team	24%	26%	32%	43%
Other technical teams in the same office (Headquarters or Delegation)	14%	21%	32%	39%
Technical teams at Headquarters in the same program	17%	21%	22%	42%
Technical teams at Headquarters in other programs	9%	15%	15%	23%
Technical teams in other countries	10%	20%	20%	24%

- Integration (joint long-term agendas)
- Mutual short-term benefits (temporary partnerships)
- Facilitator of strategic relationships (opens doors)
- Support (technical, political or financial)

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020

The technical Network is an opportunity and strategic institutional capital that has the potential to significantly increase operational effectiveness and productivity, if network operational systems are established that focus on communication processes, synergy, complementarity, integration and collaboration.

IICA's external technical cooperation networks

The external linkages of IICA's technical teams are weak. The greatest level of contact with institutions involved in the cooperation ecosystem in which IICA operates is with other international organizations. Of the technical staff, 72% have established these contacts, but only 41% have linkages with FAO and 21% with ECLAC – two of the organizations with which IICA is most closely associated.
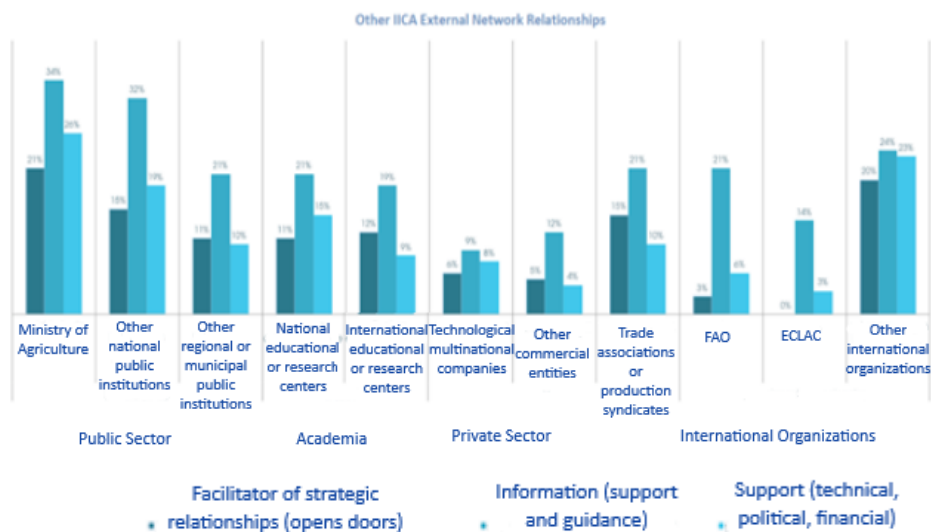
This is followed by contact with Ministries of Agriculture at 62%. Yet, although these linkages are the second most common type of contact, this does not negate the fact that one third of the technical staff do not interact with the Ministries. Less than 60% of technical staff interact with national research centers and just 47% of them interface with international research centers. Relationships with the private sector are limited, with only a quarter of the technical staff having established linkages with companies and nearly one half of them interfacing with industry associations and producer organizations.

However, the indicator that truly demonstrates the weaknesses of IICA's external networks is the low proportion of technical staff who reported that they have established long-term relationships with external actors. Only one quarter of them have this kind of relationship with Ministries of Agriculture, who are the partners and owners of the Institute. The figures are extraordinarily low for contacts with research centers—15% national and 11% international. Similar figures were found for relationships with international organizations and the private sector.

These findings appear to contradict the fact that the General Directorate has signed several collaboration agreements in recent years and has pursued an intense external agenda at the international level. In other words, there is no process of appropriation and development of these agreements among the technical team.

External Relationships of the Technical Staff at IICA

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020
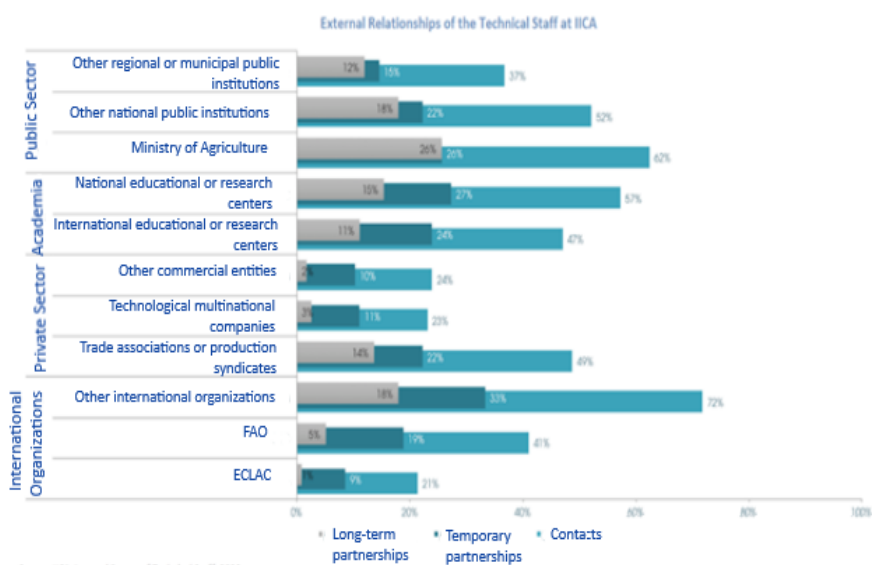
The most common institutional relationships—which continue to be limited—are mainly for support in garnering information.

Other IICA External Network Relationships

Source: IICA, Internal Survey of Technical Staff, 2020