

PROCINORTE
Minutes of the XXIX Meeting of the Board of Directors
November 12th, 2024
Held Virtually

Background and Objectives

1. Share national developments to inform the PROCINORTE Secretariat.
2. Review current Task Forces activities.
3. Receive updates on current animal health (ASF/CSF) research projects.
4. Identification of areas of potential research between the three countries in 2025.
5. Explore future funding opportunities and sources.

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1. Opening Session

Since Dr. Le Vallée, Executive Secretary, was on mission in Guyana, Dr. Saindon, as President of the Board, chaired the meeting.

2. Approval of Agenda

The agenda tabled was approved by the BoD.

3. Minutes of XXVI Meeting

Minutes of XXVII meeting were accepted by the BoD.



4. Update from each member country

Dr. Saindon invited each country to provide an update on its research or scientific priorities and agendas.

United States

- Dr. Eve shared the main updates from the United States and began with the presidential transition after the election. He commented that with the cabinet change, there will also be changes in priorities as well, but no significant changes. He also mentioned the new biocontrol facilities opening in 2026 that will be very useful in terms of research and training. He also noted his concern about the increase of chemicals found in water and soils, as they represent a health risk and make agricultural production much harder. Finally, he mentioned two important events: 1) the opening of the 19th LTAR Network Site in Minnesota, and 2) the creation of nutritional hubs to provide info and data to the areas that need it most.

Mexico

- For his part, Dr. Rodriguez del Bosque mentioned as part of the updates in Mexico, a national scientific event that is held annually and where agricultural and livestock research is discussed. The last meeting was in Aguascalientes and in 2025 it will be held in San Luis Potosi. He recommends all task forces participate. He then pointed out that the new Secretary of Agriculture, Dr. Berdegú, took INIFAP into consideration to lead different programs, among them: the program for the improvement of rice and milk production in the southeast of Mexico (Campeche and Tabasco) and the bean production program (in Zacatecas, Durango and Nayarit). Finally, he highlighted screwworm disease as a current concern and invited the Animal Health Task Force to hold an activity or meeting on this topic.

Canada

- Dr. Saindon began by mentioning the possibility of elections and a change of government in his country, which could affect priorities in agriculture and livestock issues. He highlighted a call for proposals for research teams. The results will be released in September 2025 and the research will begin in April 2026. This is the fourth consecutive year that they have launched this call. Finally, he noted that the Prime Minister had announced that the 2025 G7 summit will be hosted in Kananaskis, Alberta, along with priority issues for Canada, among which agriculture was not yet included, however.

5. Updates from IICA HQ

Ms. Brenes shared two relevant IICA participations in international events: on the one hand, IICA's participation in the UNFCCC COP29, with the main objective of promoting agriculture as part of the solution to the climate change issue, and on the other hand, IICA's participation in the CBD COP16 on biodiversity, where some of the results were to continue working on bioeconomy, and digital agriculture. In December, Dr Le Vallée, Secretary for PROCINORTE, was assigned as the new IICA Focal Point for the UNCCD and represented IICA at COP16 in Riyadh.

6. Discussion

Dr. Saindon invited questions or comments, and a first discussion was opened on the screwworm when Dr. Eve stated that the USA was very aware of this issue and had been working with Panama for some time to contain it. Mr. Moore told Dr. Rodriguez del Bosque that if the issue was not of current interest to Canada and that the Animal Health Task Force did not decide to address it in its activities for 2025, however, the USA was willing to collaborate bilaterally (Mexico-USA). Dr. Flores, as Animal Health Task Force leader, noted that screwworm was a priority issue in Mexico and that the Animal Health Task Force will explore an opportunity to host some activity on this disease in 2025.

7. Updates from Task Forces

After those comments, Dr. Saindon turned the floor over to the task force leaders for their updates.

- **Soil, Water, and Climate Change**

Dr. Eve talked about the two events that the group held in 2024. The first was an online workshop, in March, with the participation of scientists from 9 countries, presenting models and tools and their impacts, not only in their countries but also on the continent. The event had an audience of more than 200 people. He then referred to the event held in Mexico City, with the participation of 31 scientists in person and 19 online. He highlighted that in this event there were good breakouts, in which opportunities for collaboration were explored and from this, different working groups emerged that have already started to meet to establish collaborations.



He then presented the plans that the task force has for 2025 and that is the collaborative work of four working groups (soil health, water sustainability, geospatial science, synthesizing science) that will be jointly writing scientific papers for publication in a dossier.

- **Plant Health**

Dr. Deep pointed out the two events of Plant Health Task Force: one on International Plant Health Day, May 8th, and a workshop on nematodes with two days of activities August 1-2, the first day open to the public and the second day with a closed meeting between scientists from the three countries. By 2025 the Task Force intends to hold two more events, one of them on biological controls, and perhaps an in-person meeting in Mexico City. An idea arose for the Climate Change and Plant Health Task Forces to do some collaboration, but this will be discussed next year.

- **Animal Health**

Dr. Flores said at the beginning of her presentation that the Animal Health Task Force is relatively new, and she has just assumed the leadership of the group. She introduced her fellow task force members and reported on the three-day event that was held from Mexico City, with a high participation (more than 650 attendees) on HPAI, ASF, and Bovine Tuberculosis. In addition, Dr. Flores mentioned that she attended the Soil, Water and Climate Change Task Force event in August and says it was a productive meeting where they could explore ideas for collaboration.

- **NORGEN**

Dr. Diederichsen also introduced the members of the Genetic Resources Task Force and spoke about activities in 2024, a follow-up to the training provided in 2023 on GRIN Global in collaboration with Colorado State University. He recalled that this training was provided from the USA and that in the follow-up there was only Canadian participation. He mentioned that in 2025, they want to hold two virtual workshops (one of them probably on corn) and that communication between the three members is a bit difficult because of the language barrier (not all speak English).



8. Update from the Secretariat

Dr. Aparicio gave a brief update from the Secretariat. She mentioned that she was gathering the 2024 activity reports and the 2025 work plans from all task forces. She then talked about the new social networks that were to be launched in 2025, along with a redesigned website with plans for better dissemination of PROCINORTE's activities. Finally, she reminded the Board Members that they were to develop a new 5-year strategic plan in 2025.

9. Discussion

After all these presentations, Dr. Saindon opened the floor for more comments and questions. Dr. Flores commented on the difficulty of getting resources for the scientists from the three countries to participate in the in-person meetings and asked for the collaboration of the members of the board. As a result, a discussion was held on PROCINORTE's own budget (from IICA) and the limited resources it has, and everyone suggested trying to find additional funds through collaborators or calls for proposals. Before ending the meeting, Dr. Eve announced that there was a new administrator assigned for the national research program, name to be made public in coming weeks.

10. Closing remarks

Dr. Saindon thanked all the participants for their attendance and closed the meeting.



Annex 1: List of Participants

Board Members

- Dr. Gilles Saindon, Assistant Deputy Minister, Science and Technology Branch, AAFC
- Dr. Marlen Eve, Interim Associate Administrator, National Research Programs, ARS/USDA
- Dr. Luis Ángel Rodríguez del Bosque, Director General, INIFAP

Board Support Members

- Mr. Bob Turnock, Deputy Director, Science Partnerships Division, AAFC
- Mr. Ryan Moore, International Affairs Specialist, ARS/USDA
- Dr. J. Isabel López-Arroyo, Investigador Titular, Entomología, INIFAP
- Ms. Celestina Brenes, Technical Specialist, Bioeconomy and Innovation, IICA

Task Forces Members

- Dr. Marlen Eve, Soil, Water and Climate Change Task Force Leader, USDA
- Dr. Aman Deep, Plant Health Task Force Leader, AAFC
- Dr. Susana Flores, Animal Health Task Force Leader, INIFAP
- Dr. Axel Diederichsen, Genetic Resources Task Force Leader, AAFC

Other Attendees

- Dr. Camino Aparicio, Liaison and Communication Specialist for the IICA Northern Region, IICA Mexico / PROCINORTE Secretariat Coordinator
- Ms. Gloria Ramírez, Office Manager, IICA Canada / PROCINORTE Secretariat
- Ms. Ana Paulina Sánchez, Administrative Assistant, IICA Canada / PROCINORTE Secretariat

