

# Integrated Manure Management: A Window of Opportunity for the Member Countries of SICA

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The challenges to the livestock sector in the countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) are unprecedented. Among these challenges is the transition to sustainable livestock production systems that includes Integral Manure Management (IMM), an ongoing and important task.

Currently, the challenge of promoting public policies and instruments to support a comprehensive approach that transcends the sectoral perspective as well as diverse and innovative alternatives for manure persist. This type of comprehensive approach can link soil improvement, production energy, greenhouse gas emission reductions, public health, and the environment.

Aware of these challenges, the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) has run since 2014 an Opportunity for Practice Change (OPC) in the role of scientific reference center for IMM in the framework of the Coalition for Climate and Clean Air (CCAC). The aim of the OPC is to push forward an IMM policy framework at the regional level to articulate and promote consistency with impact on each of the member states of SICA.

This OPC has contributed to fostering dialogues between stakeholders from different sectors involved in IMM. These dialogues have highlighted the inconsistency of existing public policies and the need to boost efforts and promote an integrated approach to the use of manure as a livestock product.

One product of these dialogues was a document of agreed-upon Policy Guidelines for IMM in the SICA region. This document was approved by the Technical Panel on Climate Change and Integrated Risk Management of the Agricultural Council (CAC) on February 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> 2016 in Honduras, marking an important step in the promotion of IMM actions in the region.

The document provides policy guidance in six strategic areas: (i) Legislation and regulatory frameworks, (ii) Governance and institutional frameworks, (iii) Knowledge Management, (iv) Generation and investment in technology, and (vi) Strengthening entrepreneurship and promoting niche markets. The recommendations urge actors to reconsider manure and view it as an asset that must be managed properly and comprehensively

This document and the process that enabled it to be consolidated has identified key elements to help achieve policy coherence in IMM. These key elements include labor requirements,

synergies between all stakeholders, and the need to join efforts at the regional level to strengthen national-level actions.

The ultimate aim is to convert livestock into an activity that helps to maintain the nutrient cycle, improve physical and chemical characteristics of the soil, and contribute to increased production of renewable energy instead of fossil fuels. In addition, it should generate fewer negative externalities for the environment (soil, water, and air), public health, and biodiversity conservation.

These goals, while ambitious, are possible to achieve if synergies can be created between the relevant sectors. These synergies can promote public-private dialogue about innovation and implementation in public policy based on long-term scientific evidence, and contribute to the development of a sustainable and competitive livestock sector in the region and in each Member State. The document "Policy Guidelines" is an important and transcendent step toward that aim.

In this way, the OPC promoted by CATIE has contributed substantially to overcoming the barrier to a coherent SICA public policy that will energize IMM. This process has also helped to generate a greater awareness about the possibility of IMM in public, private, and academic actors in the member countries of SICA.

This process has recognized that promoting IMM at the regional level could also be a key driver in each of the member countries, implying a real scalability of these initiatives in national decision-making. IMM could thus contribute in a much more robust way to food safety food and nutrition, mitigation, and adaptation to climate change.

CATIE hopes that the results derived from this OPC will allow SICA member countries to streamline and integrate IMM in agricultural production initiatives. It is also hoped that the Policy Guidelines document will come to be considered a key input for the ongoing regional policies that are linked directly or indirectly to IMM.

