



*“The training has been a useful tool in updating knowledge and, as such, it is going to strengthen inspectors’ skills in order to prevent diseases transmitted by food and to guarantee that techniques being carried out meet food safety requirements”.*

Fanny Maradiaga,  
National Agricultural  
University, Honduras

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PG-344

## BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN REGIONAL TRADE THROUGH FOOD INSPECTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

### The safe trade gap

Food inspection improves the safety of fresh or processed foods, which in turn promotes regional and international trade and protects consumer health. In Central America and the Dominican Republic the different food inspection agencies needed to find a way to work closely together to plug potential overlaps or gaps in food safety inspection. The solution was to set up a regional food inspection school to train food inspectors in each country and modernize food inspection techniques, which would help to build greater confidence across the region’s trading partners.

### Partnership approach

An innovative Regional Virtual Food Inspection School (ERVIA) was set up to harmonize and improve food inspection procedures, drawing together strong international partnerships led by IICA. An Academic Council of universities from each of the eight countries developed and rolled out the courses. An International Advisory Group focused on the curriculum and training materials, with representatives from Argentina, Costa Rica, Europe, the US, FAO, OIRSA, PAHO, and other national and international food safety institutions. Food safety control agencies from Ministries of Agriculture and Health formed a Technical Consultative Group to review and approve the curriculum and training methods, working to best meet countries’ needs.

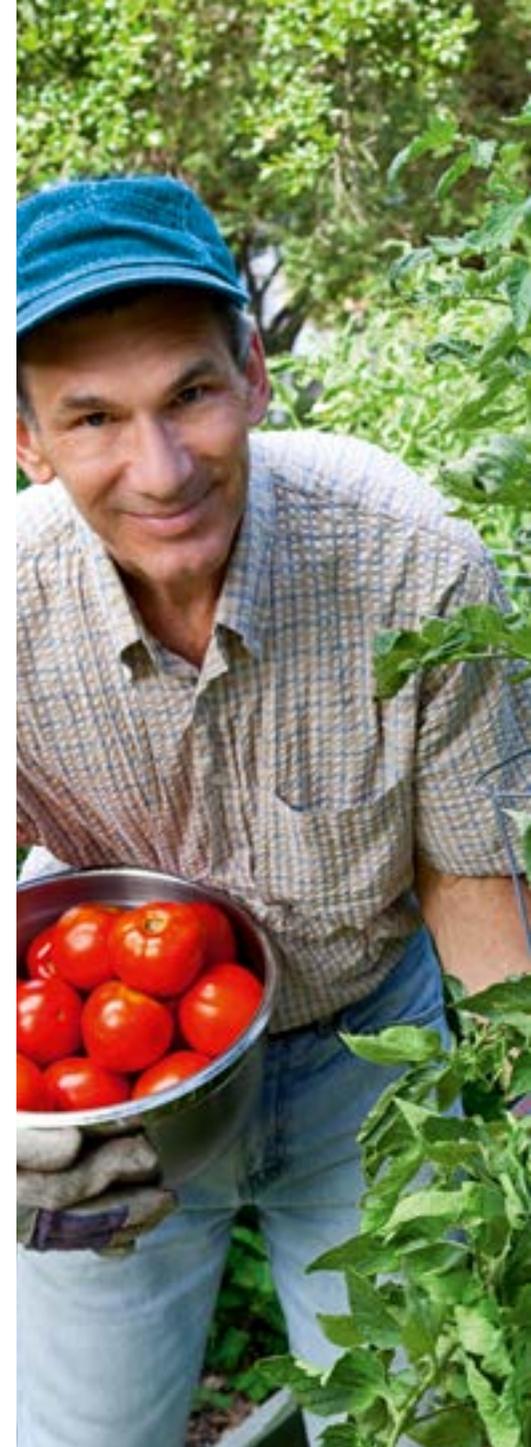
### Results

- Alongside the Virtual Food Inspection School, a virtual training course on food inspection was developed and made available on IICA’s open-source learning platform in Spanish.

- Over 470 inspectors from Central America and the Dominican Republic were successfully trained, creating a cadre of inspectors with the latest skills and knowledge on modern food safety inspection techniques. Small and medium-sized producers also learned about Good Agricultural Practices based on effective inspections during primary production.
- A regional network of academic experts on food inspection was created, and training on food auditing for university partners was made available on IICA’s platform in English and Spanish.

### Sustaining impact

- Standardized food inspection training is building confidence in each country’s application of regional, harmonized regulations among trading partners, helping to facilitate market access for food products.
- According to the final project report, harmonized food inspection procedures across Central America will make it easier to move towards a customs union and positively impact the health of consumers.
- A sustainability proposal developed by the Academic Council and Technical Consultative Group aims to roll out the food inspection training further at both regional and local levels.



#### Beneficiary

Public and private sector in Belize, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama

#### Led by

IICA

#### Time-frame

July 2012 – June 2016

#### STDF funding

US\$977,643 (total project value US\$1,534,294)

