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## **Regional Assistance provide to Costa Rica under USAID Central American Regional Program**

USAID Central America Regional and Mexico (E-CAM) manages a regional Economic Growth program. Given the importance of the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), USAID is funding several activities to help prepare Central American countries for the challenges related to CAFTA-DR implementation.

USAID regional assistance focuses on promoting open, diversified and expanding economies throughout the region. The principal results expected by the end of the program are: increased volume of trade; labor justice modernization and voluntary compliance with labor codes; improved Environmental Enforcement and improved management of critical watersheds.

USAID assistance specific to Costa Rica is being provided in three areas.

### **1) Environment**

- a) USAID is funding the Environmental Protection Agency to work in Costa Rica. Assistance is provided to promote adoption and implementation of the model wastewater regulation, develop regional harmonized regulation on waste water, define and implement national cleaner production policies and strengthen capabilities of documentation centers, Information Technology, infrastructure as well as bibliographic reference data bases.
- b) The Asociación de Organizaciones del Corredor Biológico Talamanca Caribe (CBT) is developing a proposal to better manage watershed within the Panama-Costa Rica transboundary area. The proposal includes the development of sustainable production activities in 75 ha and an additional 500 ha included in the program of Payment for Environmental Services of FONAFIFO, *Fondo Nacional de Financiamiento Forestal*. Also under development are a civil society based environmental monitoring plan; a water resources monitoring plan and exchange of

experiences in the region. These activities will improve the quality of life of the population that live within this watershed. Contacts with the personnel of MINAE, *Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía* in Cahuita are developing activities in coordination in order to implement components of the watershed's business plan.

Activities are also underway with Chiquita, who has operations in Costa Rica, to involve them in the land use planning and conservation of neighboring protected areas of significant biodiversity value.

In addition, the agreement includes the development of local environmental performance guidelines for small-hotel operators in Livingston and Bocas del Toro Archipelago using parts of the Green Globe "A-B-C" approach (Assessment/Benchmarking/Certification) and the Costa Rica ecotourism standard.

## **2) Agriculture**

USAID has provided funding to Costa Rica, through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to train animal health authorities, microbiology laboratories and quality control personnel in setting up a quality control system for their labs. The course included certification processes of ISO 17025 and the documentation needed to meet ISO standards. The course also included one day at the lab to review Costa Rica's experience in implementing the system. In addition, the last day of training provided FSIS and FDA regulations for Salmonella testing and how to properly carry out the test. Costa Rica is now certified on this procedure, and the group visited their laboratory to review the procedure in application.

## **3) Trade and Investment**

USAID is working with SIECA to train customs administration officials on such topics as the Central American System of Tariffs, Customs Code of Central America, risk management, and the customs union process.

USAID is planning to provide additional assistance to Costa Rica through the CAFTA Regional Trade program in:

- Implementation of risk management procedures based on profiles and criteria.
- Implementation of customs procedures to conduct the detailed registration of findings (risk management).

- Implementation of procedures for the electronic submission of manifests.
- Implementation of procedures and controls to monitor in-bond shipments.
- Negotiate data interchange of U.S. in-bond shipment information and adjust CR systems to facilitate usage.
- Development of an appropriate organizational structure, procedures, organizational and compliance guidelines in order for the Rules of Origin Unit of the Costa Rica Customs directorate to efficiently address ROO issues.
- Development of a post-clearance/verification manual.
- Verification that Costa Rica is properly publishing on the internet relevant customs laws, regulations and information regarding administration procedures.
- Conduct time release survey for the clearance of goods and assess the number of signatures and documents to conduct import and export operations.
- Implementation of GEDOEL (**GE**nerador de **DO**cumento **EL**ectronico) (CR Customs upper management has requested to be the first Customs directorate for project implementation).