

Agreed by the ICA General Assembly at its meeting on 20 October 2021

Executive Summary

This document provides ICA's new Strategy towards 2030. It has been carefully prepared over a period of two years by the ICA Board with the contribution of several ICA bodies. Initial discussions on a new strategy started in the ICA board in 2018, when the Board considered that there was a large untapped potential for ICA to better serve its members and - by the same token - becoming more relevant for European institutions.

Building on ICA's current strength and potential as well as addressing its weaknesses, this document formulates a "*ICA Strategy towards 2030*". This strategy aims to make ICA highly relevant and visible for its members and committees, and place ICA as a valuable and trusted partner in Europe.

The proposed measures are not a blueprint for ICA till 2030, but rather a number of vital initial steps that have to be taken on the road to make ICA a sustainable and relevant European organisation and partner by 2030. While these initial steps are essential, later further adaptation is likely to be needed. Hence, this is the "*ICA Strategy towards 2030*" and not an ICA 2030 Strategy.

With this document the ICA Board seeks approval of the ICA General Assembly on three topics:

1. The new strategy, with a strong focus on engaging with the EU institutions and other stakeholders in Europe, on communication and on value for members.
2. The new structure of ICA, with two major changes:
 - Tightening the relation between ICA Board and its Standing Committees;
 - A new Board Committee on Europe, chaired by the ICA Secretary General.
3. New membership subscription system to strengthen the secretariat.

The start date of the **ICA Strategy towards 2030** is 1 January 2022, assuming that it is approved at the ICA General Assembly on 20 October 2021. Three years after the start of the implementation, in 2024, the new strategy will be evaluated and amended if considered necessary.

The preparations of this new Strategy have included the work of an ICA Task Force and an ICA Board Subcommittee. Late 2019 the Board decided to establish an ICA Task Force to generate ideas on the renewal of ICA's Strategy, as well as a Board Subcommittee to oversee the work of the Task Force. The ICA Task Force, consisting of six staff of ICA member organisations and chaired by Martin Scholten, wrote four major reports to the ICA Board in 2020 and 2021, each covering different questions asked by the Board Subcommittee overseeing the ICA Task Force. All Task Force reports were presented to and extensively discussed in the ICA Board.

In the May 2021 Board meeting, the ICA Board Subcommittee presented the first ideas on a new strategy to the Board, based on the Task Force reports and its own discussions. Subsequently, the

Board asked its President and Vice-president (Arthur Mol and Hubert Hasenauer) to draft a document entitled “ICA Strategy towards 2030”, which was discussed with the ICA Standing Committees. The final draft was discussed and agreed at the September 2021 meeting of the Board. This new Strategy is sent to the General Assembly, to be held in Leuven on 20 October the day before the ICA Rectors and Deans Forum, for approval.

1. Introduction: the need for change

ICA was established in 1988 as the Interfaculty Committee Agraria (hence its acronym ICA), with the aim of facilitating cooperation between faculties of Agriculture in Europe. It went through a number of name changes before it adopted its current name in 2006: Association for European Life Science Universities. The domain of ICA is the European sustainable circular bioeconomy and society, encompassing agriculture, forestry, marine, food production and consumption, natural resources, the bio-based sector, biodiversity, the protection of the environment, and rural development. The strength of ICA is its open network, representing about 50 higher education institutions from almost all European countries, and a highly valued annual Rectors & Deans Forum.

Although ICA has been relatively stable over the past years, it has the potential to become more relevant for its members and for its (potential) partners in Europe. Key in this potential are the around 50 academic member-institutions throughout Europe, the network of rectors and deans of these member universities, over 50,000 scientists and experts in the field of life sciences, and a number of highly valued and active Board Committees and associated Standing Committees. To tap into this potential, it is crucial to address a number of weaknesses of contemporary ICA:

- The number of members is stagnating and there is potential for much greater membership;
- The value of ICA for its members is limited and not always clear;
- ICA is not seen as an important partner for (increasingly important) EU and other European institutions/networks;
- ICA is not very visible to the EU institutions and a wider group of stakeholders;
- The alignment and collaboration of ICA standing committees with ICA is suboptimal;
- The capacity of the ICA secretariat to support necessary development and strengthening of ICA is too small.

Building on ICA’s current strength and potential as well as addressing its weaknesses, this document formulates a “ICA Strategy towards 2030”. This strategy aims to make ICA highly relevant and visible for its members and committees, and place ICA as a valuable and trusted partner in Europe.

With these aims, for the coming years the following concrete measures are proposed in this document:

1. a reformulation of ICA’s Vision, Mission and Essentials;
2. a specification of roles and benefits of members and membership;
3. ICA’s modus operandi and governance (including its secretariat);
4. membership subscription structure and finances.

The proposed measures are not a blueprint for ICA till 2030, but rather a number of vital initial steps that have to be taken on the road to make ICA a sustainable and relevant European organisation and partner by 2030. While these initial steps are essential, later further adaptation is likely to be needed. Hence, this is the “ICA Strategy towards 2030” and not an ICA 2030 Strategy.

2. Vision, Mission and Essentials

2.1 ICA Vision

ICA's vision: high quality, visible and appreciated European life science universities that jointly play an essential role in transitioning to a European and global sustainable bioeconomy and society.

2.2 ICA Mission

ICA's mission: to strengthen and promote European life science universities by

1. supporting and enhancing their education, research and innovation on sustainable bioeconomy and society;
2. providing them with platforms for cooperation, joint learning, and sharing experiences and understanding;
3. representing and engaging its members with European institutions and networks;
4. making the knowledge and experts of member institutions available for transitioning to a sustainable bioeconomy and society across Europe and globally.

2.3 ICA Essentials

In implementing the vision and mission ICA needs to fulfil seven essentials:

1. The active engagement of ICA members and their scientist to benefit from and contribute to ICA's role in Europe and globally;
2. Maintaining intensive relations with actors in the European arena of science, policy, society and business;
3. The provision of thought leadership¹ in the domain of the European sustainable bioeconomy;
4. A proactive public affairs policy presence in (social) media and in European and EU networks;
5. An effective governance system with a well-resourced and competent secretariat;
6. Strong concerted actions between the ICA Board, the ICA Board Committees, and the ICA Standing Committees;
7. Adequate funding and resources to achieve these essentials.

While all these elements are essential in ICA's Strategy towards 2030, they cannot all be addressed fully at the same time. Below the focus is on a number of the most pressing measures that are needed, as first and conditional steps.

3. ICA membership

3.1 Who ICA members are

No change is foreseen in ICA membership. ICA members are European universities or faculties whose primary interests are in the areas of agriculture, forestry, food production and consumption, the bio-based sector, natural resources, biodiversity, the protection of the environment, and rural development. They represent a wide range of disciplines in life sciences, technology sciences and

¹ Thought leaders are the informed opinion *leaders* and the go-to people in their field of expertise. They are trusted sources who move and inspire people with innovative ideas, turn ideas into reality, and know and show how to replicate their success.

social sciences. These fields and disciplines broadly fall under the label of the sustainable bioeconomy and society.

Research organisations from Europe that work in these areas and from these disciplines can be member of Standing (or other) Committees or associated member of ICA, but cannot be full member of ICA. In that sense, ICA is and remains a university network.

3.2 Enlarge the benefits of ICA membership

ICA is a strategic network of member universities and combines the intellectual power of tens of thousands of scientists working on common challenges with often common goals (the SDGs). This Strategy aims to enlarge the current benefits of ICA membership, to include:

1. ICA provides a forum for members to develop their network, to share experiences, learn from each other;
2. ICA members are part of an organisation that influences European strategy, policies and research funding schemes;
3. ICA members are provided with business intelligence in the areas of agenda setting, research funding calls, thematic initiatives, and access to European networks;
4. ICA provides members with the opportunity for cooperation with each other in the areas of education, research and innovation;
5. ICA provides leadership in promoting innovative education curricula, and other student learning opportunities (e.g. exchange);
6. ICA increases the visibility of its members through ICA events, and web and (social) media channels;
7. ICA enables its members to participate or be represented in European networks that are Standing Committees of ICA (see appendix 1);
8. ICA represents European Life science universities in other international organisations², and keeps contacts with other regional associations³;
9. ICA may support regional or global conferences to enable its members to enlarge their network;
10. ICA may provide any other services to its members, such as reviews/assessments, quality assurance systems, advice regarding trends or changing needs in competencies, skills, employability, study programmes, lifelong learning demands.

While all these member benefits are considered relevant and desirable, it depends on the capacity of the secretariat (see section 5) and the active role of ICA board members (see section 3.3) to what extent all benefits can be fully realized. With limited capacity and scarce resources there is a clear preference for giving more attention to the higher placed benefits in the listing above.

3.3 Role of members in contributing to ICA success

For ICA to succeed it must, among others, have highly engaged members. Members are expected to actively and efficiently engage in ICA, as ICA is built on members' expertise and participation. ICA members are invited and expected to:

1. Participate in and support ICA activities and events;
2. Contribute to ICA decision making through General Assembly participation;

² E.g. GCHERA: Global Confederation of Life Science and Agricultural Universities Associations – a global association which covers 900 universities; GFAR: Global Forum for Agricultural Research

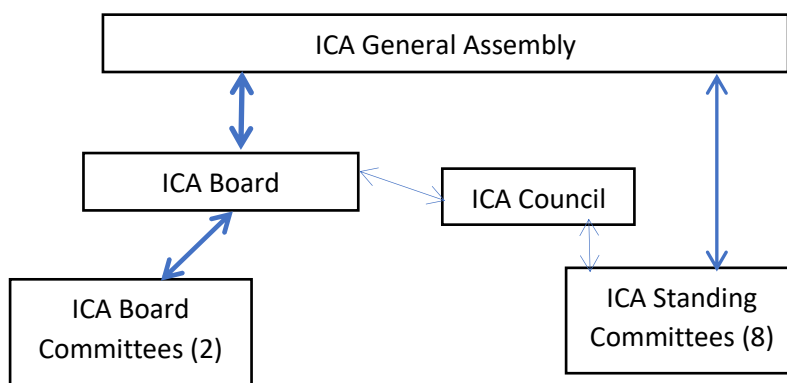
³ E.g. APLU: Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, USA; CFAVM: Canadian Faculties of Agriculture & Veterinary Medicine, Canada; RUFORUM, Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture, Africa; IAUA: Indian Agriculture Universities Association, India; China, etc.

3. Nominate representatives for election to the ICA Board;
4. Contribute to ICA Standing and Board Committees through membership and participation in events – including university staff that do not have senior leadership positions;
5. Contribute to ad-hoc working groups to produce position papers and other thought-leadership documents;
6. Contribute to ICA intelligence services by sharing European or international information that may be of benefit to other ICA members.

4. ICA Governance and modus operandi

The current organizational/governance structure is presented in Figure 1⁴. In the section we outline the main changes, which are less related to the organisational/governance structure of ICA but strongly related to its modus operandi.

Figure 1: Current structure (arrow thickness indicates intensity of relation)



It should be noted that ICA Board Committees act under the direction of the ICA Board and are set and dissolved at the discretion of the ICA Board. ICA Standing Committees, see Annex 1, are autonomous organisations acting under the umbrella of the ICA General Assembly but have their own statutes. The ICA Council provides a forum for the engagement of the ICA Board with the ICA Standing Committees.

4.1 ICA governance and modus operandi

The governing rules and fundamental governance structure of ICA is provided in the ICA Statutes, including the formal responsibilities of its bodies, and is not in need of major change. ICA has a Board with an Executive Committee, a General Assembly, Board Committees (BC), Standing Committees (SC), an ICA Council, ad-hoc committees (such as the Task Force) and a secretariat. The ICA's Working Rules further set out their responsibilities and constituency.

It is especially the modus operandi of the different bodies that has to be reviewed and developed further, to increase the value and relevance of ICA for its member organisations and for EU and European institutions/networks. The new strategy considers a closer collaboration between the ICA Board and the Standing Committees as highly valuable (see below 4.3). Besides that, a new Board

⁴ See also <https://www.ICA-Europe.info/our-organisation>)

committee will be established, existing of active European officers of a number of member organisations and headed by the Secretary General of ICA (see below 4.4).

4.2 ICA Board

ICA Board members are active members who come from different geographical regions within Europe. The constituency of the Board and terms of Board members are regulated in the ICA Statutes and Working Rules. To increase collaboration and alignment between the ICA board and its Standing and Board Committees one Board member will be designated as liaison with every Board and Standing committee. This Board member can thus represent that committee in the Board, ensuring a closer relation and alignment between Board and SC/BC.

4.3 Better aligning Standing Committees

Standing Committees⁵ (see Annex 1) are important bodies for ICA and ICA members (although non-ICA-members can also be member of a SC/BC; see below). Up till now the ICA Council formed the institutional meeting point between ICA Board and Standing Committees but did not function well; hence there was little collaboration between ICA Board and the Standing Committees. Standing Committees have also little interaction with the further ICA organization at the General Assembly.

Closer alliance and concerted action between the ICA Board and its Standing Committees is considered a vital element in the ICA strategy to become more effective in the EU and Europe, and to deliver to members. Such closer alliance and concerted action between Board and SCs can take place within a reactivated online ICA Council or more bilaterally. A closer alliance with ICA gives a Standing Committee:

1. a higher visibility externally through ICA improved websites and social media;
2. attraction of new SC members from within and external to ICA;
3. creation of synergies between ICA SCs for addressing issues in systemic transitions;
4. creation of higher impact potential due to ICA's increased interactions with European/EU institutions;
5. access to European arenas and thematic initiatives through the ICA network;
6. interaction with a competent ICA secretariat to support working at the interface of science to policies and business.

To strengthen alliance and concerted action ICA will discuss with its Standing Committees proposals on:

1. using the ICA name in the work of Standing Committees with European/EU institutions and networks;
2. using the ICA secretariat by the Standing Committees;
3. better visibility of Standing Committees in ICA media and communication strategy (website, social media, etc);
4. Improved linkages between Standing Committees and the ICA Board (bilaterally and/or via the ICA Council).

⁵ ICA's Standing Committees are either subject specific networks within the disciplinary areas represented by ICA or support networks for the development of education, research, internationalisation and innovation. They have their own statutes and board, can have participants that are not member of ICA, but are part of the ICA family.

4.4 Board Committees: a new ICA European committee

Currently, there are two Board Committees⁶. The two Board committees focus on different aspects of innovation in life science higher education.

To further facilitate, coordinate and enhance ICA's work with the European institutions a new Board committee will be established, called the ICA European committee, chaired by the Secretary General of ICA and consisting of active European officers of ICA member institutions. This committee is central in the new strategy as it will develop the activities regarding interactions with European institutions, collect and disseminate EU business intelligence, coordinate/organize lobbying on (setting) the Brussels agenda, identify project opportunities for ICA members, develop ideas for thought pieces, and feed communications. See Annex 1 for the Board Committees.

4.5 Strengthening the secretariat

The current ICA Secretariat ($\pm 0,30$ FTE plus Service Level Agreement with CZU) is in need of further expansion and modernization following the new ICA vision, mission and essentials. The minimum staff capacity of the secretariat is 1.0 FTE (full time equivalent), a more adequate size (given the new strategy and ambitions) is around 2.0 FTE.

The future ICA secretariat is led by the Secretary General of ICA. The secretariat in the new "ICA Strategy towards 2030" will embrace at least the functions of an European officer, a communications officer, and support for finances and membership. The financial situation of ICA determines the size of these functions and whether a Science Officer can be hired in the future.

The secretariat will largely work virtually and has its main tasks around the Rectors & Deans Forum, engaging and interacting with EU and European institutions/networks, communications, and supporting ICA Board, Standing Committees and Board Committees. In the new strategy ICA will have no formal office in Brussels.

4.6 Implementing a communication strategy

The new modus operandi for ICA will include a communication strategy targeted at different audiences (e.g. ICA members, organisations/bodies in the Brussels networks, the wider interested public) and building on what is currently available. Communication relates to (social) media; business intelligence for ICA members on funding calls, EU plans and EU policies; expert opinions and thought leadership; branding in relation to ICA and its Standing Committees and Board Committees. The communication officer will lead the further development and implementation of a communication strategy.

5. ICA membership subscription structure

5.1 Need for increased fees

At the moment ICA has a very modest annual working budget of approximately €50k. It is mainly fed by (low) membership fees, adjusted for inflation two-yearly. At the moment ICA has two categories of annual membership fees, based on size measured by the number of students: €1300 for institutions >1000 students; €650 for institutions ≤ 1000 students. Comparable specialized European university associations (e.g. Cesaer, LERU) have significantly higher budgets (10 to 100 times higher) and higher membership fees (4 to 50 times higher). To increase its relevance for members (directly

⁶ ICA's Board Committees fall directly under the ICA Board, focus on specific areas, but do not have separate statutes.

as well as through engaging more intensively with European institutions and partners), ICA needs a stronger and larger secretariat (see Section 4) and thus the annual budget needs to be increased substantially. An increase in membership fees is required.

As a first step, ICA needs to increase its annual budget to at least €150k. The current secretariat needs to increase from ±0.30 FTE (secretary general) + Service Level Agreement with CZU to at least 1.0 FTE (which covers the following roles: secretary general, European officer, communication officer) + membership and financial support.

5.2 New membership subscription structure

The Table below sets out the new membership subscription structure from 1 January 2022 based on the number of students in the university or faculty(s) relating to the disciplinary foci of ICA. This will provide ICA with a modelled annual budget (with the same group of members) of around €124k, which can be further increased with increased membership.

Table: Annual Membership subscription from 1 January 2022

(between brackets in column 2 estimated number of current members per April 2021)

Members	Annual Membership Subscription
Small (≤ 1000 students)	€1200 (10)
Medium ($1000 < \text{students} \leq 2000$)	€2300 (± 15)
Large ($2000 < \text{students} \leq 5000$)	€3300 (± 14)
Extra large (> 5000 students)	€4200 (± 8)

For institutions who have an Associate Membership of ICA and for institutions coming from countries with a GDP/cap \leq \$9,000 the membership subscription will be 50 percent of the applicable Full Membership subscription (see Annex 2).

The membership application membership subscription made when applying for membership will remain 50% of the lowest membership subscription listed.

5.3 Coming fiscal period 1 January to 31 December 2022

The budget for the fiscal period 1 January till 31 December 2022 is made according to the new membership subscription structure, the new size of the secretariat and a more intensive level of activities. Membership fees (and hopefully increased membership) run for one year, from January 2022 till December 2022. By December 2022 we will have a better assessment in terms of incoming membership fees and other incomes. Increasing expenditures by expanding the secretariat in FTE from early 2022 onwards (first on a one year contract basis) is a reasonable risk, that can - in case of emergency - be covered by calling on ICA's reserves (expected to be around €80k at 31 December 2021).

6. Next steps: approval and evaluation

With this report the Board seeks approval of the General Assembly on three topics:

1. The new strategy, with a strong focus on engaging with the EU institutions and other stakeholders in Europe, on communication and on value for members.
2. The new structure of ICA, with two major changes:
 - Tightening the relation between ICA Board and its Standing Committees;
 - A new Board Committee on Europe, chaired by the ICA Secretary General.

3. New membership subscription system to strengthen the secretariat.

These strategic changes on governance, on a more active role of ICA in the Brussels' arena, on active and beneficial membership and on a revised membership subscription structure are initial - though vital - steps to increase ICA's relevance towards 2030.

After careful implementation of the proposed revisions the ICA Board will assess whether further changes in the development of ICA needs to be taken to live according to ICA's vision, mission and essentials. A period of three years after initial implementation is adequate for such an evaluation and assessment by the board, followed by adaptation if considered necessary.

Annex 1. ICA Standing Committees and Board Committees 2021

Current Standing Committees

Acronym	Name	Year of Establish.	# member organisations		Membership
			#ICA	#Non-ICA	
AGRIMBA	International Network for the MBA Agribusiness and Commerce	1995	10	7	Universities
AGRINATURA	European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge for Development	1989	18	18	Universities and Research organisations
CASEE	Regional Network for Central and South Eastern Europe	2010	7	4	Universities
ERABEE	Network for Education and Research in Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering in Europe	2007	18	17	Universities and Student Organisations
IROICA	International Relations Officers' Network of ICA	1997	>140		Individuals on behalf of their universities/faculties
SYLVA	European Forest Science Academic Network (education focus)	1989	18	17	Forestry Faculties of Universities

I.S.L.E.	Association for Innovation, Teaching and Promoting Sustainable Development in Life, Applied and Social Sciences in Europe and Worldwide	2012	18		Individuals, universities and other organisations
IFA ISEKI	ISEKI Food Association	2005	13	19	Individuals, universities, companies, other organisations

Board Committees

Acronym	Name	Members
ICA-Edu	ICA Network for Innovation in Life Sciences Higher Education	7 Elected Members plus 6 ICA Standing Committee Representatives
ICA-CoP Bio-Edu	ICA Community of Practice for Bioeconomy Education	7 Working Group members, Committee to be elected
ICA Europe	ICA Europe Committee	To be established

Annex 2 European countries with currently GDP/cap ≤ \$9,000 ([in current US\\$, World Bank data](#))

Albania, Belarus, Kosovo, Moldavia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine