

Innovation Facilitators: The Case of Costa Rica

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The role of Government, mainly at the national level, as Innovation Facilitator in Costa Rica is presented in three parts: the country in brief, science, technology and innovation, innovation public policy and programs, a discussion of results and concluding remarks.

1. Costa Rica in brief describes the country characteristics in terms of physical and economic data. The role of government in the promotion socio economic development is centered on the role of foreign direct investments (FDI).
2. FDI, especially in technology based productive sectors, highly dynamic and well inserted into the world market. At the same time that the country stands out as a biodiversity and ecotourism hub in the Americas.
3. The importance of knowledge value added in products and services is stressed in relation to innovation and research and development activities, based on the potential of Costarican human capital.
4. A quick reference is explained to country positioning and benchmark in relation to the Global Competitiveness Index and the Global Innovation Index.
5. A general overview of science, technology and innovation in Costa Rica shows the importance of the STI National Plan, strategic priority areas and the main strategies of implementation.
6. Some concepts on innovation typology and ideas on the knowledge economy lead to a short assessment of the national innovation system, as a foundation for public policy.
7. The innovation facilitator roadmap serves to present some of the main public policy instruments and programs at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Telecommunications, like an annual assessment of the innovation processes at the firm level, by sampling close to 500 companies of different sizes and characteristics.

8. The PROPYME fund as an important matching grants resource is probably the main instrument of public policy, supplemented by the Human Capital Incentives Funds. Data on the users of the fund show the characteristics of the grants for year 2012.
9. Other programs at MICITT of relevance to innovation public policy are described briefly, for example, Innovation from Home as a innovation culture catalyst, Innovation Champions for the social recognition of innovators and entrepreneurs, Innovation Managers School for the training of personnel at the firm level, and the Costa Rica Innovation Website for the articulation of innovation actors.

Concluding remarks

- Costa Rica, its people and government are committed to achieve a transition from an economy of efficient use of resources to an economy of innovation and a society of information and knowledge.
- The main drivers of this transition are an increased foreign direct investment in the last 2 decades, as well as open economy that is inserted into the global market through increased and diversified exports of close to 4300 goods and services to 145 countries.
- Next to the products manufactured and related services, Costa Rica is a hub for ecotourism and biodiversity products and services.
- In the last 25 years Costa Rica doubled the GDP per capita and the forest coverage. This is an example that economic growth based on technological development and environmental sustainability can coexist.
- The national innovation system is constituted by the close interaction of productive sectors, the academia and the government local and national, as facilitators (triple helix concept)
- The most dynamic productive sectors according to innovations clusters are: advanced manufacturing, medical devices and business services based on digital technologies.
- Also with important innovations processes are the export oriented agricultural products and the green technologies and alternative energies, but with a smaller economic impact as compared to the most dynamic clusters.

- For the coordination and implementation of public policy, the Chinchilla Administration has established a Presidential Council for Competitiveness and Innovation.
- One of the most active working groups is related to Human Capital for Competitiveness in order to sustained the attraction of FDI and the local industry linking to the multinational companies in order to strengthen global value chainsCosta Rica is committed to strengthen its **human capital as a key source of attraction** for foreign direct investments.
- Costa Rica is also committed to achieve sustained growth of its human resources, **mainly engineers and scientists.**
- Advanced Manufacturing, Digital Technologies and Medical Devices continue to progress and offer many opportunities for the **creation of quality jobs, and supply chain linkages** to the local small and medium enterprises.
- **Human Capital in bio sciences has been essential** for a country that preserves 25% of its territory, for the sustained development of bio processes and the future of life sciences industry.