The vision for the Latin American Institute of Agroecology (IALA Mesoamerica) in Nicaragua is that of an international peasant university where students from throughout Latin America can come to learn the theory and practice of agroecology. This university will be based upon principles of popular education and peasant-to-peasant methodology, valuing and reclaiming traditional knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation. In alignment with the central principles of the ATC and the La Via Campesina, IALA Mesoamerica will prepare a new generation of youth to create alternative approaches to development, to be resilient against the challenges of climate change, to have productive rural livelihoods, to build gender equity, and to be able to grow culturally appropriate food for local consumption. This training is essential for the survival of peasant peoples and for the survival of the planet.

In 2014, the ATC acquired land in Santo Tomás in the department of Chontales in order for IALA Mesoamerica to become a physical reality. The property includes plentiful acreage for cultivation of vegetables and grains, some existing structures for classes and dormitories, pasture and dwellings for farm animals (such as chickens, pigs, and cows), a forest with tropical wildlife, and a creek for bathing and irrigation. The school will be able to produce the majority of its own food in addition to surplus agricultural products for income-generation. Thus, the land has excellent potential to become the agroecological production and demonstration space that IALA Mesoamerica plans to be. The school and farm will also be a central component of the ATC’s Agroecological Corridor, helping to spread agroecological growing practices and ways of thinking throughout the region through peer-to-peer education.