IALA Profile:
Rodolfo Sánchez Bustos Northern Agroecological Institute

The Rodolfo Sánchez Bustos Northern Agroecological Institute in Santa Emilia, located in the department of Matagalpa, is a school primarily for sons and daughters of union members and nearby rural communities to be trained in agronomy, with a special focus on agroecology. The campus is located on a farm that has coffee, cacao, citrus, and medicinal plants production, plus student dormitories, classrooms, and a seed library.

While the school has existed for years to train youth in agronomy, it has more recently begun to focus on agroecology, the necessary agricultural model to achieve food sovereignty and combat climate change. The theme of agroecology has been integrated with more established trainings in coffee production, cooperatives, unions, political theory, gender, and youth. Students have classes on alternate weekends. There are also short courses on topics like soil health, biofertilizers, and natural medicines.

The school was constructed between 1986 and 1987 with the support of Danish trade unions as well as the sweat and muscles of many ATC members, such as Don Félix Zapata, the beloved former director of the school. Over time, the school has had a secondary school, agricultural administration, and community health promoter programs. Countless staff who currently work for the ATC throughout Nicaragua received their training at the school.