

CGIAR Alignment in Eastern and Southern Africa

“Follow up from AGM 2005 on ESA Arrangements”

30 April 2006

The purpose of this note is to provide CGIAR members with a progress report on the SSA Task Force Report follow up (agenda item 5A) from AGM 2005.

At the outset ICRAF and ILRI, two Institutes each with global and very specific mandates, wish to reiterate the position taken by both Boards of Trustees in April 2005 in response to the draft report of the SSA Task Force. Whereas both Institutes support the general thrust of the recommendations regarding CGIAR programmatic alignment in ESA, they insist that an analysis of global CGIAR reform needs to be undertaken before embarking on any major structural alignment in ESA..

More generally, ICRAF and ILRI firmly believe that structural reform, with the objective to respond to new challenges and to ensure more efficient and cost effective research delivery, is to be determined by the System's mission and research priorities. In other words, to tap the real potential of reform, one needs to look at the System as a whole with the objective of pooling functions and research areas rather than simply structures which happen to be at the same location. Reforming the System without an overall vision and plan through a number of regional or even local reform steps will erode the relevance and effectiveness of the CGIAR System, taking it away from its assigned global mandate and mission.

Notwithstanding this position, ICRAF and ILRI in close collaboration with other relevant CG Centres have been at the forefront of defining the concept, scope and instruments for programmatic alignment and exploring systematically possible and desirable measures to consolidate corporate and research support services as well as new governance arrangements in Eastern and Southern Africa. The components that form the basis of CGIAR alignment in ESA are based on extensive consultations with stakeholders and partners throughout the region.

1. Regional MTP and its Governance

The Alliance Executive has asked ILRI along with ICRAF to lead the development of a regional MTP for ESA. Progress on the process was reported to Exco in October 2005 and at AGM in December 2005. A draft MTP has been prepared in the meantime and has been circulated to all CG Centres for comment. The document will be presented to the Science Council by June 15, 2006.

The plan seeks four types of improvement:

1. Better alignment of Center activities around System Priorities and the priorities expressed by national, sub-regional and regional research organizations (FARA, ASARECA, SADC-FANR).
2. Joint program development in areas where international and regional public goods are needed to address critical problems of the region.
3. Common research platforms (scientific facilities, institutional arrangements, access to partners) that raise the productivity of NARS and CG Centers working together.
4. Common research support services and logistical support for Centers where shared services create opportunities for more effective research.

Management and Implementation:

The ESA/MTP is designed as a “network cluster”: a flexible vehicle to promote alignment and joint program development. The network hub will have a focal person and access to the time of specialists able to synthesize, integrate and communicate the work of the Plan. The hub will operate in a distributed manner with contracted or seconded specialists located strategically throughout the region. This should keep transactions costs low and provide a flexible response to opportunities. It does require an up front commitment at inception, but should over time generate savings in common functions.

Governance and Consultation:

The ESA/MTP is built on two principles: 1) simplicity in governance and 2) communication and consultation. The ESA/MTP is recognized as an initiative of the Alliance which assumes responsibility for its content and implementation. It is based on a set of Alliance principles and policies that are collectively observed. As such, the Alliance is proposed as the governing body for the ESA/MTP.

Proposals for aligned research, joint program development and platforms will be reviewed by the Science Council with a particular eye to their fit with System Priorities and criteria. The Alliance is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the ESA/MTP to the Group. The Alliance will ensure a solid process of consultation and advice is followed in the development and implementation of the MTP.

Consultation with partners and stakeholders will take place at every level: project, institute, country and sub-region so that proposals coming forward will be aligned, based on comparative advantage, and produce the expected international and regional public goods. Where Centers are required to fill gaps, projects should include capacity building and a plan for national and regional service providers to take over future support. Donors have a particular role to play in designing and funding programs where this takes place. Given the nature of the Plan, the consultative processes will be flexible to ensure the required scientific and user buy-in. Regional and sub-regional organizations will be integrated in the process.

The Medium Term Plan for Eastern and Southern Africa is being designed as a flexible and incremental programmatic instrument through which Centers and their partners better meet the needs of the region for international and regional public goods and related services.

2. Corporate Service Alignment

ICRAF and ILRI have been developing common **corporate services**. The purpose is to provide better and more efficient services to the two institutes and other CGIAR Centers in the region in achieving their objectives.

The objectives of developing common corporate service are to:

1. Take advantage of economies of scale and efficiencies,
2. Take advantage of possible synergies, improve support structures as a whole and make a more optimal use of resources across the institutes,
3. Improve skill level and expertise across the institutes by learning and sharing
4. Provide better, more up-to-date and more customer-oriented services,
5. Use cutting edge systems and technologies,
6. Pull expertise together that can benefit all Centers
7. Be an experiment for other CG Centers
8. Develop more efficient services which will be appealing to donors.
9. Facilitate cross institutional scientific interactions.

To date there are several areas where implementation has been achieved. These include:

1. Information technology services,

2. Joint tendering and implementation of services e.g. financial software packages, purchasing/procurement, medical insurance coverage for national staff in Kenya staff, general insurance coverage, joint market surveys to determine salary levels, external audit services etc.

A plan has been agreed upon between ICRAF and ILRI to expand the areas where there is potential and clear value added to align more corporate service functions. The priority area that has been identified (including a recommendation in the ICRAF EPMR) is on developing a clearly articulated common human resources strategy. Work is underway to align job classification and compensation philosophy. With these fundamentals in place it will then be easier to put in place other common services in finance and administration.

ICRAF and ILRI are also developing common **research support services**

A Joint Research Methods Group (JRMG) is being established with the overall aim of increasing the effectiveness and quality of CGIAR research in the region. This will be achieved by:

- Providing technical research methods support (biometrics, data management and GIS services) to all relevant CGIAR research teams in the region,
- Designing and evaluating research quality processes,
- Providing research methods support to regional research networks,
- Building capacity in research methods support in NARS in the region.

The JRMG will be managed as a single unit, with common objectives and activities, supporting all CGIAR Centers that choose to join it.

3. Structural/Governance alignment

In the section on the regional MTP we have outlined how the regional process will be managed and governed. In section 2 we have outlined joint corporate services and research support services. Each area which has been identified has a governance mechanism established to manage the function.

In addition ICRAF and ILRI are discussing new governance arrangements between their respective Board of Trustees with the objective to strengthen Inter-Center collaboration in all areas of common interest:

- The appointment of a new shared Board member (note that ICRAF and ILRI already share a common Board member which is the Government of Kenya ex officio member to each Board). The new common Board member would be a CGIAR nominee position.
- Joint meeting (once per annum) of the Executive Committees of both Boards.
- Regular meetings of the Board Chairs and Director's General of both Centers

During the past six months ICRAF and ILRI have considered a range of options for *structural/governance alignment*. We have received input from several independent experts on this issue. The governance issues we have outlined in this report constitute the preferred option which we believe is manageable and will best serve the CG Centres and our partners in the region.

With this work, going far beyond the interest of an individual Institute in adopting a forward looking CGIAR System perspective for Eastern and Southern Africa, we will be able to achieve the desired outcome of bringing more coherence and efficiency into the activities of the CGIAR in ESA. We will also achieve closer working relations between ICRAF and ILRI without compromising the Institutes' integrity. To carry out their respective global mandates, to maintain their scientific excellence and to speak with authority in an international context, ICRAF and ILRI must retain their identity as International Research Institutes and demonstrate competent governance to their stakeholders and partners.

We will continue to keep CGIAR members informed on progress made in improving CGIAR alignment in Eastern and Southern Africa.