

CGIAR SCIENCE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

Implementation of the CGIAR System Priorities for Research: General considerations and suggestions for the process for selected Priorities

The Science Council of the CGIAR, at its recent Meeting (SC6 held from the 8th to 12th of September at CIAT, Cali, Colombia) discussed the best means for the CGIAR to address the implementation of the System Priorities for research (SPs) endorsed by the Group at AGM 05.

The Science Council's overall aim is the development, within three years, of 20 programs of research on which the CGIAR spends at least 80% of its total budget.

Section 1: The approach

The major considerations in the SC's deliberations and which framed subsequent advice were that:

- That the process should adopt a system perspective towards the implementation of research Priorities.
- That the CGIAR should play to its strengths enlisting the support of other Centers of excellence and placing its research effort within existing global frameworks and initiatives.
- The Centers and existing Challenge Programs have allotted their research project activities to individual SPs (as part of the MTP 2007-09 reporting process). However, whilst this identifies Centers and Programs which wish to contribute activities to individual SPs, the SC finds that a more coordinated, planned and synthetic approach is needed to develop true system-level approaches to SP research.
- In this first round of MTP reporting, some of the budgetary allotments by Centers may be overly dispersed across SPs or mis-allocated. The allocations may have been driven by the current project structure of Centers aimed at general goals, rather than research being designed to meet the specific goals of the SPs. Some of the specific goals described in the Priorities document need further definition. Thus, first estimates of budgetary allocations to SPs at the system level (see Annex 1 of the attached report) are taken as indicative figures for discussion only.

- Approaches to the implementation of SPs will vary according to the SP (as research areas differ in specific goals, scope and type of research, and the number and balance of CGIAR and non-CGIAR partners). This supports the earlier general principle endorsed by ExCo, that a “one size fits all” approach to implementation is not appropriate.
- Thus, the vehicles for each of these coordinated programs of research will vary: some may be Challenge Programs, some will be Systemwide Programs and still others may find expression as virtual Task Forces – the implementation vehicles will depend on the nature of the research.
- To orient and decide on the scope of research within each SP, coordinated **framework plans** should be developed. It is suggested that the original framework plans will be written as complete SWP, CP or Task Force proposals and the work plans and performance reports will be updated annually by the lead Center or coordinating mechanism. Progress towards the declared and jointly agreed program outputs will be traceable in the MTPs of contributing Centers and Programs.
- The development of agreed framework plans per SP will allow a more rational estimation of optimal budgets to complete the described research.
- The Alliance will be instrumental in the planning and implementation process. On the basis of the declarations by Centers and knowledge of current research, the SC has provided suggestions for the means by which the individual framework plans will be developed, which identify, in some cases, Centers or other groups (inside or outside the CGIAR) to lead the process. In other instances the SC has suggested that further analysis is required before planning can start, so that the subsequent process can only be sketched at this time.
- Where possible, the SC urges that the framework plans are developed as soon as possible. It is pointed out however, that (i) planning within consortia of partners takes time to accomplish effectively, and (ii) that for those SPs proposed to develop as Challenge Programs, that the process of Challenge Program endorsement by the current process is likely to take about 14 months.
- It is recognised that the SPs are not single entities and that there are numerous cross links between them. Nevertheless the SC advises that it is preferable to focus first on the development of framework plans in the

first instance (to provide the building blocks of a more programmatic approach to CGIAR research) before entertaining proposals for cross-cutting research at a later stage.

- Further thinking is required on indicators of progress of framework plan development and the implementation of Priority Research. The SC will hope to provide further guidance to the Group on this by AGM 06.

Section 2: Suggestions for the planning of selected SPs

The Science Council has endorsed in principle a comprehensive paper on its suggestions and advice regarding the processes for planning for SP research¹ covering all twenty SPs. To help its deliberations, ExCo's Ad-Hoc Committee on funding the System Priorities has requested an analysis of four contrasting SPs– namely of Priorities 1C, 3A, 4B, 5D². The suggested means for proceeding with the planning for these four SPs is given below:

Priority 1C: Conservation of indigenous livestock

Current position: CIP, ICARDA³, IFPRI, ILRI, IPGRI all contribute to this SP, expecting to commit approximately US\$6.35 million (or slightly over 1% of the total projected system budget in 2007).

It is not expected that the CGIAR will address the various SPs with equivalent resources. However, in the planning for the SPs it was clear that there are opportunities through which the CGIAR's research input could have multiplier effects when coupled with the global initiatives of other agencies. This opportunity was highlighted in a Science Council study on Animal and Fish Genetic Resources. That report confirms that a modest increase in CGIAR resources should be focussed in the area of livestock genetic resources and research should be developed which supports international efforts by the FAO in this field. The consortium should take advantage of the experience of IPGRI in plant genetic resources policy. As a corollary, the Science Council hosted a workshop

¹ "Implementation of the CGIAR System Priorities for Research: Update and suggestions for a consolidated process." Science Council draft report prepared for SC6 (11 September 2006).

² 1C is conservation of indigenous livestock; 3A is research on high-value fruit and vegetables; 4B is sustaining and managing aquatic ecosystems; and 5D is identification of rural development strategies for poverty alleviation.

³The Science Council notes that ICARDA, which participated in the above workshop and follow up, has moved its anticipated outputs for this SP between projects but its budget for this activity in 2007 is unclear.

including the key CGIAR Centers⁴ (see also 1D) and the FAO. As a result, the workshop (which continued under the auspices of the SGRP) has already refined the general areas of research in the light of active global initiatives and will define framework plans for submission to the Science Council by the end of 2006. This is expected to be developed as a Systemwide approach, and the Science Council will work with this group as it develops the framework plan so that the elements of a model plan are incorporated.

The framework plan for 1C should address the following specific goals:

Specific goal 1: Indigenous breeds of livestock are characterized at molecular and phenotypic levels including analysis of genetic relatedness amongst important populations

Specific goal 2: Influence the establishment of policies conducive to the appropriate exchange, use, development and conservation of livestock diversity

Specific goal 3: In situ and ex situ conservation options are assessed and identified

Priority 3A: Increasing income from fruit and vegetables

Current position: CIAT, CIMMYT, CIP, ICARDA, ICRAF, ICRISAT, IFPRI, IITA, IPGRI, IWMI, WARDA, SSA-CP all contribute to this SP, expecting to commit approximately US\$15.5 million (or 3% of the total projected system budget in 2007).

Prior to the endorsement of the System Priorities for research, work on fruit and vegetables was scattered throughout the CGIAR portfolio. The Centers now declare a substantial amount of research anticipated for 2007 and beyond. It is not clear if this amount was previously hidden, or that new research is rapidly being undertaken.

The most immediately relevant of such activities (judged by output targets in 2007) include CIAT's continuation of its long standing interest in tropical fruits in LAC. ICARDA has recognised the value of dry land tree crops such as olive and date palm to livelihoods in the C-WANA region and is already collaborating with AVRDC (as are other some other Centers) on vegetable improvement in line with its project on diversification. ICRAF has research planned on a number of tree products, although portioning the research correctly between this priority and others will be important. ICRISAT is focussed on its Africa garden initiative and establishing best practice for water management to grow high value commodities. IFPRI has socioeconomic research on contract farming; and IPGRI is linking biodiversity and value added industries in a number of crops and has substantial research on *Musa*. The list is not exhaustive but shows the range of approaches.

⁴ When all CGIAR Centers are not present (e.g. IFPRI, CIP in this case) it is expected that their roles are reflected through the major Center with whom they collaborate (e.g. ILRI in this case).

Research in this area responds to the agreed global requirement to enhance incomes of the poor by providing opportunities through diversification of farming practices to include high value fruit and vegetables. Some of the commodities provide for nutritional diversification for producers. This research links to emerging global frameworks (such as the Global Horticultural Initiative convened by AVRDC) and other sources of expertise which lie outside the System. The GHI has already undertaken evaluations of regional priorities. Both global and regional public goods may be obtained through research on adequately prioritised target species for which markets exist or can be established at sufficient scale. Research on markets for specific high value fruit or vegetables commodities should be linked under this SP and could reinforce the stand-alone analyses of markets and producer organisations projected under Priority area 5.

It is extremely important that the System's contributions to this area be identified and rationalised at the outset, according to the CGIAR's comparative advantage in the light of other global initiatives. The Science Council confirms its earlier view (expressed in reference 2) that this SP may be best tackled by a Challenge Program, perhaps even led by one of the external global actors. Discussion and agreement of the scope for Specific goal 1 (below) will help establish the strategic considerations and breadth of the CGIAR approaches. Given the foregoing, the Science Council encourages the coordinated development and submission of a Challenge Program concept note, which should identify the CGIAR's research in a globally relevant program focussed on the provision of IPGs.

The framework plan for priority 3A should address the following specific goals:

Specific goal 1: Identify key species for research and assess their factor and product markets

Specific goal 2: Enhance production of selected fruit and vegetables through improvement of farming systems

Priority 4B: Sustaining and managing aquatic ecosystems for food and livelihoods

Current position: CIP, IFPRI, IWMI, WARDA, WorldFish, Water and Food CP all contribute to this SP, expecting to commit approximately US\$13 million (or between 2 and 3% of the total projected system budget in 2007).

Sustaining aquatic ecosystems and fish production in the face of widespread overfishing and other forms of environmental degradation is a global challenge. For the CGIAR, this Priority falls squarely within the responsibilities of WorldFish, which has growing linkages within the System, particularly with IWMI and the Water and Food Challenge Program. Nevertheless, the bulk of WorldFish's partners in this research area may lie outside the System. The WorldFish MTP for 2007-2009 reveals new thinking on

approaches to small-scale fisheries, which would be central to research on this SP. The Center plans to raise the approach to the level of a “campaign” with international partners. This raises the possibility that 4B may be suitable to approach as a CP after further planning. The Science Council therefore recommends that WorldFish convenes the development of a framework plan for Priority 4B indicating the most appropriate vehicle for addressing the following specific goals:

Specific goal 1: Identification of viable governance and management systems that sustain aquatic ecosystems and increase the sustainable benefits that poor households derive from these ecosystems and their resources

Specific goal 2: Develop tools for biological assessment of aquatic ecosystems and their resources, valuation and management in data poor environments and development of the capacity to use and apply them

Priority 5D: Improving research and development options to reduce rural poverty and vulnerability

Current position: CIAT, CIFOR, CIP, ICARDA, ICRAF, ICRISAT, IFPRI, IITA, ILRI, IPGRI, IRRI, IWMI, WARDA, WorldFish, Generation CP, Water and Food CP, SSA-CP all contribute to this SP, expecting to commit approximately US\$47 million (or 9% of the total projected system budget in 2007).

A large number of Centers and programs have allotted projects or parts of projects against this Priority, leading to a great variety of output targets being attributed to Priority 5D. Many of these appear to be research outputs that would be much more appropriately allotted to other Priorities (natural resource management, germplasm enhancement, or enhancing technology strategies) or to capacity building, networking or producing individual country strategies. It seems therefore that the very high allocation to this Priority (at US\$47 million it would be the single largest Priority based on the Center’s allocations of budget) may result in part from a lack of a clear understanding of the scope of the goals of the Priority and/or to a less than careful description by MTP respondents of which outputs within projects should correctly be allocated to this Priority.

The Science Council believes that this SP requires tighter definition, and the quality of poverty-related research in the CGIAR to be enhanced through interaction with additional, external research inputs. The SC will convene a small workshop (30 persons); equally drawn from CGIAR scientists and global poverty experts, to more closely define the role for CGIAR research in this area. The outcome of the workshop is expected to inform directly the goal and the required research of this SP. It will also provide an initial forum for collaboration with groups outside the CGIAR who will be important collaborators and mentors in future research. It is likely that future, better-

defined allocations to 5D (and probably a reallocation of some misallocated resources) will result in a more modest budgetary allocation also.

Currently, the single specific goal of this Priority is:

Specific goal: To identify agricultural research and development pathways, in order to implement options to reduce rural poverty at global and regional levels

In Summary:

The advice for planning and implementation varies with the scope and scale of the SP.

For 1C the process is based on the continuation of planning amongst a small group of concerned Centers with their partners, the SGRP and FAO.

For 3A a possible Challenge Program is envisaged, with a lead role taken by the Global Horticultural Initiative or perhaps other external partner.

For 4B a possible Challenge Program is envisaged but further planning is required between WorldFish and its global partners to confirm this suggestion.

For 5D, a further refinement of the research goal is needed with international experts. This is expected to greatly reduce the current allocation of Center work to this specific priority.

The Science Council looks forward to working with the Alliance Executive to crystallise these planning steps. The Ad-Hoc Task Force may consider the support that will be required to complete these planning steps in the coming year (2006/7) as well as the direct funding support that will be needed to activate the framework plans and programs once developed.