

## SCIENCE COUNCIL OF THE CGIAR

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### Report to ExCo-11

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I am pleased to report that we have just concluded our Sixth Meeting of the Council and that we have made progress in our four main areas of work (Priorities and Strategies, Monitoring and Evaluation, Impact Assessment and Mobilizing Science). Achievements are highlighted below.

### Priorities and Strategies

**Implementation of System Priorities.** The SC discussed at SC6 the best means for the CGIAR to address the implementation of the System Priorities for research (SPs) endorsed by the Group at AGM05. *The Council's overall aim is for the CGIAR to have, by the end of 2007, 20 cohesive research programs on which the system invests at least 80% of its total budget.* The SC has completed a paper on suggestions and advice regarding the processes for planning for SP research (**Annex 1**). An earlier draft has been provided to ExCo's Ad-Hoc Task Force for funding the Priorities which is analyzing four of the SPs in greater detail.

In this year's MTPs reporting, some of the budget allotments by Centers were overly dispersed across SPs or misallocated. Thus, the development of agreed research plans for each SP will allow a more rational estimation of budgets needed to complete the described research. It is suggested that such plans be written as complete proposals (a Center project, a SWEF, a CP, and/or other mechanisms) and that the work plans be updated annually by the lead Center or coordinating mechanism. Progress towards the program outputs will be traceable in the MTPs of contributing Centers and Programs. The Alliance and individual Centers will be instrumental in the planning and implementation process. *The research plans should be developed as soon as possible and completed by mid 2007 in order to start implementation by the end of 2007 and achieve alignment within the remaining year of the 3 year agreed period (end of 2008).* Proposals for cross cutting research among SPs would be dealt with after the preliminary stage.

**Intellectual Property.** As part of an evaluation of "CGIAR Research Strategies for International Public Goods (IPG) in the Context of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)", the SC has previously commissioned three studies on IPR; two desk studies - on interactions with the private sector and means of accessing IP for "humanitarian use" - and a survey (co-commissioned with the Genetic Resources Policy Committee-GRPC) of needs at the Center level. The SC has completed an Overview and Commentary on the three studies which highlights the need for the CGIAR to re-establish guidelines for Centers and CPs for managing and accessing IP (since older guidelines focus almost entirely on germplasm and were developed at the time of renegotiating the International Treaty). To inform the drafting process, associated guidance would be required on stewardship, and a clearer understanding of liability. *The SC recommends that ExCo invites GRPC to draft the CGIAR guidelines* (taking into account other non-germplasm issues in IP) and the SC will explore with the GRPC the best means for developing the background information.

**Ethics.** The Council is currently undertaking a review of ethical issues affecting the CGIAR in two phases. The first has been to conduct a panel study of “Ethics and CGIAR Research”. This study has been recently completed. The second phase is to conduct a further study on “Ethics and the CGIAR Mission” due in July 2007. The Council will send to ExCo commentary on the first study and draft TORs (for comments) for the second study in the near future.

**Genomics.** Arising from the earlier study of system-wide requirements for genetics and genomics research, the CGIAR has re-established the Genomics Task Force to assist planning for more synthetic approaches across the system for the use of new biotechnologies. The first Meeting of the Genomics Task Force (including all relevant Centers and CPs) was held in Sao Paulo last September. *The Council suggests that the Alliance recognizes the Task Force and invest it with the necessary authority to carry out its role on behalf of all the Centers.*

**Food Safety.** The Council will conduct a study of Food Safety focusing on components affecting the participation of small holders in higher value markets for agricultural products and will evaluate the scope of possible research approaches relevant for the CGIAR. A joint workshop on the subject will be conducted with IFPRI in early 2007.

**Animal and Fish Genetic Resources.** The Council has completed its study of Animal and Fish Genetic Resources and earlier in 2006 held a meeting of CGIAR and FAO partners which is expected to contribute to the subsequent development of research plans for the implementation of these two research priorities.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Annual Review of Centers’ and Challenge Programs’ MTPs.**<sup>1</sup> The MTPs for 2007-2009 were in general clearer and more uniform than last year with much improved logframes and, as a new element, descriptions of impact pathways for projects. However, the project portfolios did not show much sign of re-focusing research activities to better address the SPs. The SC recommends that the CGIAR research agenda needs to become more SP-driven to provide sufficient and coherent focus on each priority instead of a set of unrelated projects as illustrated by plans for markets and policy, high value crops, agriculture and health, NRM and research related to climate change shown in Center MTPs. In the logframes, the output targets and impact pathway descriptions still required more specificity to make the achievements measurable and verifiable for performance monitoring. The SC encourages Centers to involve in new areas of research, as an important part of the 20% non-SP research. There is also need to clarify what kind of capacity building Centers do and the scope of free-standing training.

**Update on ESA and WCA Subregional MTPs.** At SC6, the SC discussed the subregional MTPs and noted that they did not reflect all the CGIAR work going on in these regions. The ESA and WCA MTPs appeared to focus only on selected areas of collaboration leaving much work of the Centers out of the plan. The SC feels that a more cohesive and inclusive strategy was needed for the sub-regions and expressed concern that these MTPs might be used to justify local research, distract from SPs, and be the basis for the emergence of multiple CPs/ecoregional programs. The SC expects that a cohesive and comprehensive plan will be developed by the end of the year defining the principles, organization structure and governance mechanism.

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<sup>1</sup> See SC Commentary on MTPs as a separate item on the agenda for this meeting.

**External Review of the Inception Phase of the SSA CP.**<sup>2</sup> The SSACP External Review Panel Report recommends and the SC agrees that there was a lack of research results (after the relatively short 18 month previous inception phase) to really conclude that the proposed concept was worthwhile. The SC was also in agreement with the external review to suggest continuation with a focused research phase to implement research activities agreed during the consultations held during the past 18 months. Several issues are included in the detail commentary to the external review, such as the need to: (i) define what kind of research is needed to prove the IAR4D concept; (ii) keep a brief research phase (until December 2009) focused on such proof of concept and contained into the current 3 pilot sites; (iii) clarify how is the research phase going to be evaluated at the end of its period; and (iv) what would happen if it proves to be successful at the end of such period. There was also consensus that progress should be assessed throughout the annual MTP cycle and that an external review should be organized at the end of the proposed research phase.

**ICARDA Fifth EPMR.**<sup>3</sup> The SC has endorsed all the recommendations of the Panel and emphasized in its commentary that the Center recognize its global mission (in the semi arid systems) and re emphasize its regional mandate to become a world class research institute. The response of ICARDA's Board and Management to the EPMR Report had been very positive, treating the report as useful guidance in the further development of the Center under new management. The major recommendation of the Report was for ICARDA to improve the productivity of dryland agriculture by more research in agronomy and understanding causes of yield gaps as compared to genetic improvements for drought tolerance. Other recommendations related to science quality, participatory plant breeding and research in socioeconomics and NRM. The SC also endorsed the recommendations related to improvement of governance and financial processes at the Center and welcomed the Panel recommendation to hold a CCER on Finance and Management.

**External review of SWEPs.** An external panel is conducting the meta-study of SWEPs and will be completed this month. It will draw conclusions on the success of 17 current SWEPs and factors influencing it, and on the suitability of this modality for implementing System Priorities. It will be circulated with SC commentary to ExCo. The Review of the Systemwide program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA) is ongoing and it is expected to be completed in February 2007. The review includes a literature study of impact assessment of participatory research, which will be developed by SPIA.

**Other ongoing M&E activities:**

- **Ongoing and forthcoming EPMRs.** The external reviews of ILRI and IWMI are ongoing; while the reviews of WARDA, CIAT, IITA and CIP are being planned to start in 2007.
- **Meta-study of EPMRs.** As requested by ExCo-10 a meta study of recent (about 10) EPMRs to identify cross-cutting issues and lessons learned will be conducted in 2007 in collaboration with the CGIAR Secretariat.
- **Challenge Program External Reviews (CPERs).** The SC is finalizing (in collaboration with the CGIAR Secretariat) Terms of Reference and Guidelines that define a set of criteria for conducting External Reviews of CPs. The SC commissioned the CPERs of Harvest Plus,

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<sup>2</sup> See SC commentary on the SSACP External Review as a separate item on the agenda for this meeting.

<sup>3</sup> See SC commentary on the 5<sup>th</sup> EPMR of ICARDA as a separate item on the agenda for this meeting.

Water&Food and Generation CPs.

- **Performance measurement.** The SC will revise the PM instructions in collaboration with the CGIAR Secretariat and in the light of the recent audit report likely to provide important information. There is also need to develop further the SC assessment process and criteria for the Outcome and the EPMR-based indicators. A meeting is being organized during AGM06 with the Alliance Deputy Executive and the CGIAR Secretariat to discuss feed-back on the MTP and PM processes.
- **Implementing the new M&E Process.** The SC has set a timeframe for implementing the new M&E System by the end 2007. The components of the M&E process include MTPs annually reviewed by the SC, the annual PM reporting, and the Center Commissioned External Reviews (CCERs). While the SC has previously put a lot of emphasis in improving the quality and content of the CCERs as independent building blocks for an EPMR, the SC recommends that they be seen more clearly as part of the Center's self-assessment process and thereby the independent EPMRs role to review the self-evaluation process would be strengthened. In 2007, a meta-study of EPMRs in collaboration with the CGIAR Secretariat will be organized.

### **Impact Assessment**

The following studies have been completed and are being published as SC green cover reports with short Impact Briefs being produced for distribution at AGM '06: *IFPRI poverty impacts study, Impacts of CGIAR & partner research in SSA; NRMR impact study; and Impacts of policy oriented research in the CGIAR*. Two books are also in preparation on *poverty impacts* and *NRMR impacts*.

**Policy-oriented research impact assessment (PORIA).** The PORIA scoping study report indicated that a more credible set of studies documenting influence and impact further down the impact pathway is both desirable and feasible. Several options and new approaches were proposed in that context. The main phase will involve IA case studies in cooperation with Centers to document more rigorously the impacts of CG POR. Both supply- and demand-side approaches will be used, non-economic literature reviewed, and historical, political and sociological approaches explored to better capture the complexities of policy making processes.

**South Asia IA.** A final workplan for a background paper and TOR for a senior consultant are being finalized for the South Asia Impact Assessment Study. The study will provide a comprehensive assessment of documented impacts of CG activities in the region. It will assess the direct and indirect pathways of impacts of CG & partner research on different producer and consumer groups resulting from productivity improvements in different commodities. Ultimately, this ex-post impact pathway analysis of the S. Asia region will provide a better understanding of economic and non-economic (health, nutrition, environmental) impacts and the distribution of those benefits to poor and non-poor groups.

**Strategic guidelines for conducting IA.** Following demand from the Centers for guidance about 'best practices' for conducting impact assessment, a revised version of an outline is being circulated to Center staff as a basis for discussion at the IA focal point meeting. The Guidelines address a range of pertinent topics, e.g., user needs, impact pathways, attribution, counterfactuals and transparency, but focus on methods rather than methodologies. It is hoped that this document will have wide ownership across the Centers.

**Demand led epIA and institutional learning.** SPIA will develop a proposal for the study to be conducted in 2007. The study responds to the perceived need for evaluations that meet not only

investor demands for accountability, but also satisfies Center management and scientists' demands for "learning" oriented feedback.

**SPIA strategy.** The SC has asked SPIA to revisit its strategy over the next few years, reviewing its mandate, focus, objectives and selection of studies. This is considered particularly relevant given the changing external environment (e.g., recently introduced PM system), the oft-repeated demand for other types of impact (esp. non-economic), the extent of demand from donors for a system level IA operation, the current capacity for conducting IA at the Centers, and SPIA's current role as a clearing house, or in quality control/enhancing quality.

### **Mobilizing Science**

**Study of CGIAR Centers' partnerships, related to mobilizing science, with selected civil society organizations (CSOs).** The study will document CGIAR Centre-CSO partnerships experience, particularly those with NGOs and producer organizations. It will highlight the importance that such partnerships have for mobilizing science and for achieving the CGIAR mandate, and will identify and disseminate lessons learned from these experiences. A group of experts met on July 6-7, 2006 in Rome, and defined the key questions to be addressed by the study, the methodology to assess partnership performance, and the criteria for selection of six or seven case studies. The study will start this October, and a final report is expected by April 2007.

**Study of CGIAR Centers' approaches to plan for delivery of science.** The study will shed light on how Centers can improve their approaches to plan for delivery, early on in project design. Based on information from Center MTPs, seven Centers and two Challenge Programs with apparently well-defined approaches to plan for the delivery of science have been identified. Finer analysis will be done to select two or three as case studies. The study will characterize how these Centers and Challenge Programs design their impact pathways, including how they identify recommendation domains and end users, design partnership arrangements, and define their potential role as primary or secondary research providers to influence the pathway, and thus help to ensure outcomes and impact. The study will start early in 2007.

**Science for Agricultural Development 2007 (SfAD07).** This is the Science Council's flagship biannual publication. It aims to analyse and share knowledge relevant to the application of science and technology to agricultural production, in order to help shape global perspectives and priorities on agricultural research and its contribution to meeting Millennium Development Goals. SfAD07, to be published on December of 2007, will include a chapter on Science, Technology and Skills, which will also be Chapter 6 of the World Bank's World Development Report 2008 (WDR08). This is a great opportunity for the CGIAR to stretch its audience since the World Bank Report reaches a very broad development community and is the most widely cited report on economic development. There are plans for SfAD07 to also include a section with an in-depth review of Applications of Genomics for the Benefit of the Poor.

**Study of CGIAR Centers' partnerships, related to mobilizing science, with advanced research institutions (ARIs).** The study will assess the status quo of these partnerships, identify the constraints to further collaborations, and propose innovative strategies (other than Challenge Programs) to improve collaborations with ARIs to leverage expertise in areas of science where there is a need in the CGIAR. Planning for this study will begin early 2007.

## **Science Council Secretariat**

We now have a very strong SC Secretariat which effectively supports the SC in the implementation of the Workplan. The SC Secretariat Expert Database has been reformulated as a web interface and planned to be fully operational and accessible to the CGIAR System Office and Centers before the end of 2006. A research-assistant has been jointly appointed in June 2006 by the SC and the CGIAR Secretariats to be based in Rome and carry out joint activities.

## **Conclusion**

I have presented to you the main activities being undertaken by the SC to implement a strategic workplan that covers important issues for the CGIAR. A number of these activities will be reported in more detail as separate items in the agenda. Overall, the SC reports significant progress in its four main areas of work and trusts it will continue to ensure that the CGIAR achieves its mission by focusing on both the quality and relevance of its scientific research. Thank you for your continued support to the Science Council.