

SCIENCE COUNCIL OF THE CGIAR

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We have recently concluded our Seventh Meeting of the Council (at ICRISAT) and my first meeting as Council Chair. We have made progress in our main areas of work (Mobilizing Science, Priorities, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Impact Assessment). Some of these activities are highlighted below.

Mobilizing Science for CGIAR goals

The Council is improving the implementation of its mobilizing science mandate by making it more outward looking and focusing its activities toward raising awareness about CGIAR science for development among development decision makers and practitioners, and promoting the mobilization of the global scientific community in support of the CGIAR goals. Part of this effort has been the SC contribution to the forthcoming *World Development Report (WB, 2008)* chapter on “innovating through science and technology” which includes examples from CGIAR research and data on research investments from a paper commissioned by the SC. Also in other chapters of the WDR08 there is explicit use of insight and knowledge from the CGIAR centers.

The *study of CGIAR Centers' partnerships with civil society organizations* (CSOs) initiated in October of 2006 is in its final stages and it's expected to contribute to improving the relevance and success of CGIAR Center–CSO partnerships by documenting the importance of such partnerships for mobilizing science and for achieving the CGIAR mandate. A study related to *CGIAR Centers' partnerships with universities and other advanced research institutions* (ARIs) to start in the second half of 2007 and to be finalized in 2008 will assess the status of CGIAR partnerships with ARIs, identify constraints and propose innovative strategies to further collaborations to mobilize science from outside the CGIAR. The role of the CGIAR centers in international agricultural research is in size modest but has had traditionally considerable impact that should be promoted again, making use of extensive partnerships and networks.

The Council has started planning for the *Science Forum 2007*, which will be held during the CGIAR's AGM07 featuring the best of new science that has significant promise to be harnessed for CGIAR work. This forum will provide opportunities for dialogue, debate and interaction, among experts on selected themes, including CGIAR researchers and young scientists (YPARD).

The SC is also interested in the *system-level implementation of some important recommendations arising from earlier SC-led studies* which affect the context and conduct of

CGIAR science. These recommendations focus on the need for the development of new guidelines at the system level for *Intellectual Property* and for an *Ethics Codex*. The SC will be pleased to work with the GRPC and the Alliance to provide support and assistance as required. Also, the Council will follow with interest the practical alignment of genomics science across the System through the implementation by the Alliance of the recently created *Genomics Task Force*.

Implementing CGIAR Priorities for Research

The Council continues to place major emphasis on its oversight of the implementation of the System Priorities (SPs) for Research. The SC led the system-wide consultative process through which the new SPs were developed with explicit reference to: (i) the need to establish and promote a System view of the research that the CGIAR conducts, (ii) improve the placement and quality of CGIAR science in relation to global activities, international agencies and partners, (iii) increase research focus (of at least 80% of the CGIAR effort), and, restore the emphasis of the CGIAR on the production of international public goods, and (iv) strengthen the impact of agricultural research for development and poverty alleviation.

The 20 SPs, which encompass the agreed research portfolio at the system level, can be viewed as falling into 5 major priority areas. The determination of the 20 SPs was a conscious choice because this is how the CGIAR will staff and deploy resources. Each SP has specific goals (although in many cases these should be further refined through planning meetings). Having specific goals allows in turn the definition of Outputs (and provides the mechanism for focus within the portfolio). However, the SC does not view the SPs as islands, but rather programs with active organic linkages amongst them. This is evidenced by existing ecoregional programs focused on the provision of regional impacts or, potentially, future cross-cutting CPs built on CGIAR comparative advantage and linked to other R&D partners. Indeed an example of how such an approach might be modeled was illustrated in the CGIAR-agreed SP document of December 2005.

There have been several strides made towards the implementation of SPs since the ExCo last met in October 2006. At that meeting the Council provided a background paper describing a possible strategy for the implementation of the SPs. Central to this strategy was the development of *Framework Plans* (FPs). FPs are strategic documents that define the long-term goal of CGIAR research in the area of the respective priority in a global context, the scope of that research and a road map for its systemwide implementation. FPs are expected to be tools for defining focus and enhancing impact and accountability. FPs are expected to be developed within the System, through groups of relevant Centers and Programs, but will describe necessary collaborations with key partners both inside and outside the System. FPs will describe the longer term collective vision that will drive the more detailed research components described in Center and CP MTPs. In particular, this process should inject more focus into the System's collective research program to achieve maximum impact. This will probably be achieved by refining the scope of the Specific Goals within each SP.

More recently, the Council has helped to further the definition of FPs through encouraging planning meetings for SPs **1A** (conservation and characterization of staple crops), **1C** (conservation of indigenous livestock genetic resources), **1D** (conservation of aquatic animal genetic resources) and **5C** (rural institutions and their governance). These can be used as models by the Alliance and groups of Centers in the development of planning for other areas. The process has provided several insights, or likely best practice examples which will also be useful to Centers.

Also relevant is the call for the *second round of CP development*. The Council has reviewed concept notes developed in answer to this call and has provided advice to ExCo as to which ideas should progress to the next stage, where pre-proposals should be developed by different groups of consortia from outside and inside the CGIAR. That advice is predicated in large part on the Council's view of the suitability of the ideas, and the likely partnerships required, to address individual SPs directly, or to contribute to more than one SP through important cross cutting approaches. Pre-proposals are expected to provide much of the information expected in FP.

Concurrently, the *ExCo Ad-Hoc Committee for Funding Priorities* (AHC) has continued its analysis of four SPs (chosen by AHC as they illustrate a range of likely lead entity approaches to SP research) for which the Alliance has provided further, shorter, outline documents, also at this stage called Framework Plans, on **1C** (indigenous livestock genetic resources); **3A** (increasing income from fruit and vegetables); **4B** (sustaining and managing aquatic ecosystems) and **5D** (improving research and development options to reduce rural poverty and vulnerability).

If these three streams are taken together we see that attention is being addressed by the Alliance (of Centers, existing Programs and partners) to several SPs. The following table highlights those priorities for which some form of planning is in train.

Conservation of genetic resources	Genetic Enhancement	High Value Commodities	NRM	Policy
1A	2A	3A	4A	5A
1B	2B	3B	4B	5B
1C	2C	3C	4C	5C
1D	2D	3D	4D	5D

- 1A, a Framework Plan has been developed led by the SGRP and partners.
- 1C, a draft outline is being submitted to the AHC
- 2C, a CP concept note on mycotoxins potentially relates to one specific goal of SP 2C; other biofortification work under this SP is based on the Harvest+ CP.
- 3A, a CP concept note for high value fruit and vegetables has been tendered; and a draft outline (a consolidation of a range of existing work in the CGIAR which is less specifically based on fruit and vegetables), has also been submitted to the AHC.
- 4A, 4D the congruence between the “Oasis” CP concept note and the specific goals of SPs 4A or 4D remains to be demonstrated.
- 4B, a draft outline has been submitted to the AHC.
- 5B, the “SMART” CP concept note has been tendered.
- 5C, a Framework Plan is being developed following an IFPRI workshop (February 07), and a draft outline of this plan has been submitted to the AHC
- 5D, a draft outline has been submitted to the AHC.

The Council recognizes that this is a developing process for the CGIAR, and stands ready to provide further assistance and dialogue as and when required. It will also offer advice to Centers in the reflection of planned research to SPs, and the appropriate definition of Outputs, through its annual review of MTPs.

The Council takes this opportunity to recall that in developing the SP, considerable effort went in attaining focus through the use of the criteria: (i) expected impact on poverty alleviation, food security, and nutrition and sustainable management of natural resources, taking into account the expected probability of success and expected impact if successful; (ii) the degree to which the research provides IPGs; and (iii) the existence of alternative sources of supply of the research and the comparative advantage of the CGIAR in undertaking research. The SC, in its review of new MTPs that are being developed to implement the SP will continue to use these criteria to maintain focus, and increase impact.

As an encouragement for this effort, it will be important that the AHC illustrates, as soon as feasible, whether and how funding will be directed to the support of SPs. The Council looks forward to providing scientific inputs into the overall implementation process and through guidance developed as part of its review processes of Center programs and plans.

The Council reaffirms its earlier suggestions for the CGIAR to have, by the end of 2007, research programs on which the system invests at least 80% of its total budget, in order to achieve programmatic alignment within the 3 year agreed period by the end of 2008.

Monitoring and Evaluating CGIAR Quality of Science

The Council is working for *streamlining the MTP process*. The MTPs are a component of the CGIAR's M&E system by enhancing internal Center and CP planning, with linkage to the Performance Measurement System through to the MTP logframe and by providing input to the external M&E through EPMRs and CPERs. The better the functioning the internal planning and monitoring, the more efficient the System's level planning, monitoring and evaluation. In the last 4 years the SC has placed increasing importance on the MTPs for assessing the research relevance of the Centers. The SC will continue to provide leadership in improving the quality of both the internal and external planning and M&E measures. The main perceived utility of the MTPs to the System is through: (i) SC's strategic assessment of the Centers' contribution to the CGIAR's agenda and goals in the context of the System Priorities; (ii) SC's strategic assessment of the Centers' contribution to producing international public goods; (iii) monitoring the implementation of the EPMR recommendations; and (iv) justification for funding of the CGIAR's annual agenda for the first year of the rolling MTP.

The streamlining of the MTP process needs to improve the MTPs utility at both the Center and CP and the System level. In 2007, the SC will assess all Center and CP MTPs for: (i) the alignment of the Center's portfolio with the FPs developed for individual SPs; (ii) delivery of IPGs; (iii) appropriateness of the scientific approaches; (iv) likelihood of impact in outputs and through impact pathways; and (v) follow-up implementation of agreed upon responses

to recent EPMRs. In the future, MTPs that meet the expectations regarding standard form and clear content would be assessed fully only on a periodic basis (every 3 years); and in those cases only an annual update would be required to check changes in logframes, financial plan, EPMR follow-up when applicable, and highlights of major changes in project portfolio. MTPs that do not meet the expectations will be monitored more thoroughly each year. The annual MTP submission and System's level analysis will be made easier through an on-line MTP application and System database currently under development by System's Office and a few Centers.

The SC is working on the overall *M&E of the System. An EPMR meta-study*, requested by ExCo, is underway and the Council expects its findings (to be discussed at SC8, end of August 2007) to highlight areas that need improvement and ways of streamlining the components in the M&E system. The SC emphasizes that it is unfortunate that the System's M&E mechanisms apparently do not meet the needs of several CGIAR donors that continue organizing separate evaluations of Centers, CPs and programs. The Council hopes that the findings of the EPMR meta-study can be used to improve the dialogue with donors and that clear and collectively used M&E systems for the CGIAR can be agreed on.

The *EPMRs of ILRI and IWMI* have been finalized and are being discussed as a separate agenda item in this meeting. The *EPMRs of WARDA, IITA, CIAT and CIP* are being conducted and reports are expected for SC8 (end of August 2007) thereby bringing the sequence of the EPMRs back to their five-year schedule with all Centers. The SC commissioned the EPMRs of *ICRISAT and Bioversity* for 2008.

The *CPERs of Harvest+ and Water & Food Challenge Programs* are beginning. The CPER of the Generation CP will start towards the end of 2007 and finalized in 2008. The CPs to be reviewed have many challenging issues from which the SC hopefully can draw lessons about the CPs in general. The Council is planning to prepare a lessons-learned paper jointly with the CGIAR Secretariat following the completion of the first two CPERs.

The external review of the *Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA)* systemwide program has been recently completed. The program was established 10 years ago and the Panel judged that during its 2 phases the Program has been productive in its activities on participatory plant breeding (PPB) and through promoting and providing methodological inputs into impact assessment. The Panel did not see much progress in the Program's work on participatory natural resource management (PNRM). Regarding gender analysis (GA), the Program's success has been limited to some Africa work and had not been influential in getting GA mainstreamed broadly in the CGIAR System. The SC has recommended that the Program's work on PPB be continued for a third phase (about 3-5 years) placing priority on further compiling and assessing the existing ex post impact evidence and conducting a comprehensive ex post IA of the successful PPB cases identified by the Panel. This work should clarify where and when PPB is cost effective and where it is not and under which circumstances the products could be considered true IPGs. SC further recommends that the PNRM activities of PRGA be terminated and any relevant work on NRM be fully assumed by the Inter-Center INRM Working Group. The SC does not believe that GA should continue

to be part of the systemwide program where it was narrowly restricted to participatory research only and not very effective. The SC recommends that the CGIAR Centers take full responsibility for mainstreaming gender analysis aspects in the Centers' research programs in the most efficient way for enhancing impact.

A *Meta-Review of the Systemwide and Ecoregional Programs* (SWEPs) was also recently completed. It was hoped that this study would help define how the SWEp modality can contribute to implementing System Priorities and provide analysis of the specific features that have made the programs successful or not. The SC believes that, in general, the report did not accomplish what was originally expected and that the 25 recommendations did not sufficiently help understanding the key questions. The SC will, in consultation with the Alliance, analyze further the situation with the current SWEps in the context of implementing the SPs and considering their role vis-a-vis that of the CPs, drawing useful lessons from the meta-study report. The SC will in this process use evaluations indicated by individual centers and donor driven eco-regional programs.

In the third year of implementation of the *Performance Measurement System* the SC is involved providing assessment for two of the indicators: outcomes and impact. The Council will provide clarity on the limitations and appropriate use of each of the indicators and it will continue to review the indicators seeking a way of clustering some of them to improve their utility in truly reflecting performance. The SC will also design a set of performance indicators for the Challenge Programs modified to fit their specific characteristics, such as their youth and time-bound nature.

Assessing the impacts of CGIAR research

A recently concluded scoping study on *Policy-Oriented Research Impact Assessment (PORIA)* concluded that there was an insufficient number of PORIAs to-date, particularly those that go beyond mere "diffusion" to critically examine "influence" and "impact". It recommended initiating in collaboration with centers a series of case studies to better document influence and impact further down the impact pathway for CG POR. Seven case studies have been selected (Bioversity, CIFOR, ICARDA, IFPRI, ILRI, IRRI and WorldFish) covering a wide range of topics. A 2-day planning workshop was held at IFPRI HQ in late February 2007 to review the methods proposed for documenting influence and impact from POR in each case study and to agree on a timeframe for completing the studies. The final revised reports are expected by October 2007 and selected case studies may be presented at AGM in December 2007.

Strategic Guidelines on Impact Assessment are being prepared in 2007 with the objective of producing a set of principles and best-practice strategies for conducting impact assessment in the CGIAR. The document will be complementary to the other IA manuals being produced by CIP and CIMMYT.

A study on *CGIAR Research Benefit Diffusion and Impacts in South Asia* is being initiated and expected to be completed by September 2007. This study will critically review and

assess the large body of evidence on impacts of agricultural research by the CGIAR and its partners in South Asia and systematically present issues, evidence and impact stories—both positive and negative—so as to map out the research to impact pathways in a comprehensive and credible manner. Impacts will include both those of an economic nature but also non-economic impacts such as on nutrition, health, employment and poverty.

An *Impact Assessment Focal Point meeting* was held in Nairobi in October 2006. The last such meeting was held 6 years ago. Along with Center and CP focal points, other experts in impact assessment and several donor representatives attended and actively discussed: performance monitoring, the PORIA study and the use of non-economic indicators of impact, the role of impact assessment for accountability vs. learning, the Africa meta-analysis study, data sharing especially on poverty issues and enhancing collaboration and communication among the centers.

As part of an expanded diffusion strategy, several *Impact Briefs* including short synopses of key impact assessment findings have been prepared. These are concise (two-four pages in length) and meant to be attractive to external audiences and are accessible through the CGIAR Impact website (<http://impact.cgiar.org/>). Sixteen such impact briefs were distributed at AGM '06 – eight NRM research impact studies, six selected Center impact assessments, and impact assessment of policy research in the CGIAR and CGIAR + NARS research in Sub Saharan Africa.

The Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) is re-visiting its *strategy* in the light of key developments that have taken place over the last several years. Some of the key challenges ahead include: ex-post impact assessments for accountability versus for learning; relationship with the center focal points, and getting the right balance between SPIA's evaluation function and its role as a peer; developing viable non-economic indicators of impact in addition to economic ones; strengthening relations with the evaluation community and other professional bodies to enhance quality and advance methodologies; and enhancing rigor of center impact assessments, testing and validating qualitative indicators from other social sciences, and the disciplinary composition of SPIA. The impact assessment will be expanded with considering effects in other domains, such as natural resource management, eco-regional development and production ecological innovations. That requires an expansion of other disciplines in SPIA.

Conclusion

The activities listed above combine to make a substantial work program that covers many important issues for the CGIAR. A number of new activities will be proposed to ExCo13 (October 2007) as we prepare our new workplan 2008/09. Overall the SC is pleased to report significant progress in all the main areas of its work and it looks forward to contributing further to ensuring the CGIAR achieves its mission by helping to focus on both the quality and relevance of its scientific research.