

CIAT in Transition:

A request for support for planning CIAT's future while preserving and strengthening its programmes

9 March 2008

Executive Summary

CIAT, one of the oldest Centres of the CGIAR, has encountered a number of difficulties in recent years due to a combination of injudicious management decisions and external forces beyond its control. Although a wide range of measures have been instituted to redress the situation, the Centre continues to find itself in a difficult financial situation with a high risk of losing key staff, severe weaknesses in a number of key programme and support areas, and insufficient funds to manage the situation in the most effective way. This all comes at a time when the CGIAR as a whole is going through a process of evaluation and reform.

This proposal seeks to secure the resources needed firstly to carry out an in-depth, participatory strategic planning exercise, involving the full range of CIAT's partners and stakeholders around the world, and secondly to stabilize the situation and ensure that those critical elements of the current research programme that will be needed in the future are not lost, whatever institutional arrangements emerge from the planning process.

CIAT recognizes that it is not 'business as usual'. The planning exercise will take a hard look at the ongoing need for the Centre's programmes and will explore whether some or all of them, might be delivered more efficiently and effectively through alternative institutional arrangements. Determining the Centre's future, however, cannot take place overnight or in a vacuum, and should not be based just on opportunism – a reaction to the current, temporary, financial situation. It needs to be fully embedded within the ongoing discussions of change and reform within the CGIAR system as a whole.

Thus this request is also for additional funds to ensure that the most important elements of CIAT's programmes, widely recognized for their relevance, scientific excellence and positive impact, survive through the period it will take to determine the Centre's institutional future. Funds are thus being sought, in particular, to bridge the contracts of key staff over periods when restricted funds are unavailable, underwrite further staff consolidation, help complete the reconstitution of senior management, maintain critical research and IT infrastructure, stabilize capacity in key programme areas and regenerate relationships with Colombia and other Latin American countries.