

CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

SCIENCE COUNCIL

**CGIAR CENTER AND CHALLENGE PROGRAM MEDIUM TERM PLANS 2009-2011**

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SC COMMENTARY AND CENTER & CHALLENGE PROGRAM RESPONSES

SCIENCE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

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## SUMMARY

**AFRICA RICE CENTER (WARDA).** WARDA's project portfolio has changed following a recent EPMP, the SC's previous commentaries and a change in Center management. The strategic planning is on-going but already this MTP has much improved program arrangement and project rationale. Progress is being made in implementing the EPMP recommendations but this is not yet fully reflected in specific Projects and logframes. The approach to IPGs is rational and in general well-articulated but the SC questions the research content of the Inland Valley Consortium SWEF. WARDA and the Alliance should reach a final conclusion about its future. The plans for regional and continent-wide rice policy research with the aim of producing IPGs in long term agricultural and rice sector development strategies in SSA are positive. The different project areas need still to be brought together and the logframes strengthened to improve the MTP. WARDA's plans to enlarge its geographic mandate raises some concern and the SC urges the Center to get its scientific programs in place as the main priority. Research linkages with IRRI, CIAT and IITA should be shown in the MTP. A revised strategic plan due in 2009 is anticipated to address emerging issues such as the rice food crisis in Africa, climate change and the research alignment with IRRI. The SC will examine the WARDA MTP again next year, but believes that it could then move to a periodic assessment schedule.

**BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL.** The Center's Project portfolio is the same as last year and the small changes regarding new and terminated research are clearly explained. The SC's comments on last year's MTP still apply to a large extent: Projects F04-F10 (especially F07-F10) are generally well targeted on areas of the Center's comparative advantage; they have relatively clear outputs and output targets and are relevant to the CGIAR's priorities and mostly IPG oriented. In Projects F01 and F02 the IPG nature of the work is not evident and the SC questions the relevance and the Center's comparative advantage in much of the research activities proposed. The SC has also concerns about Project F03. Training and capacity building are well integrated in each project and contribute towards CGIAR priorities. Although the MTP overview is well-written and the brief Project summaries provide a helpful snap-shot view of the current portfolio, the logframes need to be clearer about the research outputs and how they are to be measured. The MTP is not clear about what exactly are Bioversity's major activities and major expected outputs and how much the Center does viz. a viz. its partners. The breadth and depth of Bioversity's mandate and the research vs. research-related (e.g., facilitation function, advocacy) balance are still open questions. The SC plans to assess the MTP again in full in 2009.

**CIAT.** The MTP revised from last year shows a Center in transition. The research is organized in three Research for Development Challenges (RDCs) that comprise a total of eleven outcome lines. The MTP for the Center Projects in the *People and Agroecosystems* RDC is weak in terms planned research, impact pathways and the IPG nature of expected outputs. The projects seem to contain all the previous activities that might enhance outcomes rather than addressing a few carefully selected constraints to outcomes in particular regional settings. As CIAT prepares a new Strategic Plan it should clearly define its comparative advantage in this RDC. Regarding the systemwide initiatives located within this RDC, the SC reiterates its recommendation that PRGA focus on compiling and assessing the existing ex post impact evidence of the successful participatory plant breeding and then be phased out. The MTP for the *Sharing the Benefits of Agrobiodiversity* RDC shows clear comparative advantage in beans, cassava, forages and rice with good scientific content, focused IPGs, clear pathways and measurable outputs. The TSBF projects (one on crops and one a landscape initiative with focus on soil health) are very well described and conceptualized. The SC will assess the MTP in depth in 2009.

**CIFOR.** The MTP provides a good basis for planning and the SC notes the Center has already implemented many of the EPMP recommendations. A new strategy approved in May 2008 defines new research directions and the Center's strategic positioning over the next 10 years. The current MTP

describes the major steps taken in developing the strategy which appears to be the result of a transparent and systematic priority setting exercise. The SC will not review the MTP 2010–2012 in detail.

**CIMMYT.** The MTP for 2009-2011 presents the same project portfolio as last year with no major changes, but with some refinements and adjustments made as part of “sequential focusing and re-orientating exercise” in line with the Business Plan (2005). The changes include some consolidation of commodity-based projects and regionalization of some activities, e.g. dropping in-house activities on maize functional genomics and maize apomixis molecular biology, and centralizing maize transformation activities in Kenya and maize molecular breeding activities in Africa/Asia. There is a small added component on water and nutrient use efficiency research. The CIMMYT MTP provides a good basis for internal planning and monitoring. The SC endorses the MTP without need of further comments and will not review the MTP 2010-2012 in detail.

**CIP.** The MTP portfolio projects have been renamed to clarify the roles of the research divisions and research projects. The research program shows overall a good fit and improved focus on the CGIAR priority research. The SC agrees with the incorporation of partnership issues into Projects rather than establishing a specific partnership project. The research has a good IPG orientation, partnerships with NARS are very well presented. Capacity building activities are appropriately elaborated in the MTP. There is an unusual rejection and/or delayed responses to some EPMR recommendations. The SC hopes that the issues related to comparative advantage and CGIAR relevance with the three CIP-convened SWEPS be considered by CIP in consultation with the Alliance. The SC will assess CIP’s MTP in detail next year.

**ICARDA.** The MTP portfolio is revised from last year and it reflects the Center’s new strategy and shows good response to the recent EPMR. The research program is now aligned with CGIAR goals and system priorities and the MTP provides a detailed analysis of the alignment by project and output. Development of a strategy for range management is a new area in the MTP. Water management research is strengthened in response to the recent EPMR but the SC suggests more emphasis on studying the specific role of water in explaining the gap between actual yields of crops and the yields expected. Given the commodity-based mandate of this Center (wheat, barley, food legumes and small ruminants), some discussion could have been expected on how the proposed research will help address the current food crisis in the tropical dry areas. The presentation of how IPGs will be generated is much improved. Training and capacity building are particularly well integrated in the projects. In general the output targets are feasible and reasonably ambitious, but some projects need more focus. The MTP now clearly demonstrates the joint ICARDA and CIMMYT project work for wheat improvement in the region. This MTP is a useful planning and monitoring document incorporating the significant changes recommended by the EPMR. The SC will not review ICARDA’s MTP in depth next year.

**ICRISAT.** The MTP Project portfolio is the same as last year. The changes are clearly explained and include completion of several special project activities that appear to have been mostly of development nature; and inclusion of several new projects that show increase in allocation to priority areas on genetic improvement and markets. Training and capacity building efforts are clearly embedded in the Projects. The Desert Margins Program (ICRISAT convened SWEP) is frozen due to funding problems and the SC suggests that ICRISAT in consultation with Alliance bring this SWEP to closure. Projects 1-6 are, in general, quite focused and relevant with IPG orientation, but the SC feels that breeding of open-pollinated crops in Asia could be devolved to NARS in order to focus on more strategic work and on fewer product lines. The SC reiterates its earlier concerns of some research (related to high value crops and INRM) being only locally relevant and of service nature and that a better road map is needed on how location-specific research activities will generate IPGs. The SC

plans to review ICRISAT's MTP in detail next year.

**IFPRI.** The MTP research agenda continues from the previous year. In response to major emerging global challenges, three new projects are emerging on women's control of assets, urban-rural linkages and policies related to recovery from crises. While the SC finds these well justified it suggests that IFPRI carefully consider its comparative advantage on the research related to urban-rural linkages giving greater emphasis to the role of labor markets and skills. The few changes from the previous MTP are clearly flagged and a rationale is provided. The SC endorses it without need of further comments and will not review the MTP 2010 – 2012 in detail.

**IITA.** At the SC's request the Center resubmitted its MTP 2009-2011 and the SC's assessment and Center response will be added when available.

**ILRI.** The MTP Project portfolio remains the same as last year. Adjustments result from an attempt to sharpen the focus of Projects 1 (to address a range of knowledge development and strategic issues confronting pro-poor livestock research) and 4 (more focus on environmentally efficient production options for intensifying crop-livestock systems) in response to the recent EPMR; to expand the Center's efforts in West and southern Africa and in South and South East Asia; to reshape the vaccine program and to close activities in Latin America, seeking to work through other institutes. The SC endorses the MTP and will not review the MTP 2010-2012 in detail.

**IRRI.** The MTP presents the same Project portfolio as last year building on the recent strategic plan for rice research (for 2007-15). Changes or delays in the production of outputs from the previous plans are indicated and explained. The Center has been active in responding to the current crisis in food prices and considering the implications for its research. The MTP also has a good description of the Center's frontier research activities for future improvements of rice utilizing global expertise. The MTP provides a good basis for internal planning and monitoring. The SC endorses the MTP and will not review the MTP 2010-2012 in detail.

**IWMI.** The research portfolio and outputs remain, by and large, unchanged from last year but the new Strategic plan (due in mid-2008) is already anticipated in this MTP. IWMI is developing an integrated research program within the context of its thematic MTP Projects and leading a wider network of research that is carried out in collaboration with a large number of strategic partners under the Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF). The MTP appears highly relevant and focused. The discussion of the upstream policy work and strategic partnerships issues lends itself to better defining IWMI's comparative advantage. The IPG and impact pathway descriptions and the specificity of the output targets are improved but further articulation of a strategic approach to uptake and impact would be useful. Capacity building is well integrated and partners roles are clearly defined. The MTP does not yet include new areas of research but it sets the stage for providing greater focus on more strategic objectives to be implemented along with the new Strategic plan. IWMI has completed—or is in the final stage of completing—its response to the 3<sup>rd</sup> EPMR recommendations. The overall elements of the MTP provide a useful tool for planning and monitoring the research. The SC will not review the MTP in detail next year.

**WORLD AGROFORESTRY CENTER (ICRAF).** The MTP reflects the Center's new Strategy 2008-2015 with a project portfolio comprising of six Global Research Projects (GRP). The succinct Overview explains in generic terms past research phased out and the new directions. Focus is shifted from component research to landscape-level interactions, management, biodiversity conservation and institutions. Overall, the agenda is relevant for the CGIAR's research priorities. The MTP is more strategic and IPG oriented than previously; there is less involvement in development activities. The capacity building component could be strengthened. More attention should go to the vertical

integration of the GRP research from the policy level work through to the on-the-ground work in benchmark sites and landscapes to exploit synergies between GRPs. Research activities on improving tree product marketing for smallholders, coping with climate change and developing policies for environmental services are relevant and well presented. Germplasm on-farm productivity research would benefit from prioritization. Research related to land health should be more demand driven with ICRAF's role assessed much more carefully. Capacity building should be better explained and integrated. ICRAF has made satisfactory progress in responding to the 3<sup>rd</sup> EPMR recommendations. The SC hopes to see more clarity on research focus in the new programs, and will review the MTP 2010-2012 in-depth.

**WORLD FISH CENTER.** The MTP with a consolidated project portfolio presents stabilization in the structural changes over part few years. The MTP provides an excellent description of the role of small scale fisheries and aquaculture in responding to development challenges and the strategy that WorldFish proposes to address them. The work is relevant to the CGIAR research priorities. Training and capacity building could be more explicitly addressed. The description of how IPGs will be generated is mostly generic are clearer plans are needed for IPGs under a "single-location implementation strategy" adopted in the design and execution of several of the activities. WorldFish should invest more on comparative analysis across basins. The outputs and output targets are sufficiently ambitious and impact pathways are improved for arraying desired development outcomes and impacts and the roles of WorldFish and its partners. WorldFish is planning to increase communications and policy linkages to enhance impacts along the pathways or roadmaps, which seems appropriate. With the exception of the review of the "new research structure" which is envisaged to be undertaken in 2009, the Center has completely implemented the recommendations of the last EPMR. The SC will not review the MTP in depth in 2009.

**GENERATION CHALLENGE PROGRAM.** The MTP 2009-2011 reflects the CP's first external review (CPER) and an overhaul of its management structures. The changes, that are not all yet in place in terms of finalizing all output targets for the entire three year period, are aimed at integrating the subprograms and building on previous research results; validating the first outputs and products; and focusing on key crops and selected target environments. The GCP has identified seven "challenge initiatives" to address specific crop/trait/region challenges as recommended by the CPER. The CP is also establishing clear impact indicators for impact evaluation by 2013. The GCP MTP forms good basis for internal planning and monitoring and it shows satisfactory implementation of the CPER's recommendations. The SC endorses the MTP without need of further comments and will not review the MTP 2010-2012 in detail.

**HARVESTPLUS CHALLENGE PROGRAM.** The MTP reflects changes corresponding to the CPER recommendations. The relevance, IPGs, and the comparative advantage are all well articulated. The CP is building up considerable comparative advantage and not just in biofortification but in general breeding and varietal release. The program has targeted specific countries for early release of particular varieties and crops and is building capacity for that to happen. The SC notes that the HarvestPlus CP has morphed into a 15 year program. The SC is concerned of this trend to plan CPs as long-term programs, but accepts that the compelling justifications for adjusting the duration of the CP in order to secure delivery of results for sustainable outcomes. The SC will not review the MTP in detail in 2009.

**WATER AND FOOD CHALLENGE PROGRAM.** Due to the need to readjust the research portfolio for Phase 2 and changes in program governance, the CP will submit its MTP by mid-November 2008.

**SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CHALLENGE PROGRAM.** The MTP reflects a serious and positive response to the previous commentaries and makes a strong case for the need of a "proof of concept" of

the IAR4D, which will produce the key IPG from the CP. It presents a new framework and a feasible plan for producing empirical evidence for IAR4D, which includes a new cross-cutting project that addresses directly these issues through an ambitious set of outputs and output targets. The MTP includes a thorough discussion of significant research activities, and capacity building, which is a key in any IAR4D project, has now been made more explicit by the creation of a post-doc program. The research planning of the SSA-CP has been streamlined with overall oversight transferred to the FARA board. SROs are now more involved in the implementation of the. The document is clear and convincing when it describes the potential impact of research, if and when the proof of concept is produced. The SC will not review the SSA-CP MTP in detail next year.

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## OVERVIEW

### **Why MTPs and why review them?**

The Science Council (SC) is tasked to enhance and promote the quality, relevance and impact of science in the CGIAR. The SC's independent assessment and advice on the Medium Term Plans (MTP) of the Centers and Challenge programs (CPs) is the CGIAR's principle mechanism for the assessment of relevance of research. The SC provides this assessment on behalf of the CGIAR System. The CGIAR follows a forward planning horizon of three years for the implementation of the research agenda. It does this through a rolling MTP where the research agenda is reviewed and adjusted in the context of the CGIAR's priorities and strategies, progress in science and funding opportunities. The "first year" of the rolling MTP presents the annual work plan for which the Centers and CPs seek endorsement and subsequent funding.

The CGIAR research for development is output-focused using a logframe to establish the links from outputs through outcomes to impacts. SC has been working with Centers for four years to transform the MTP into a useful planning tool that a) serves the Centers' own need to aggregate their internal program planning and management into sufficiently large research undertakings that can contribute to the CGIAR's research agenda; b) communicates efficiently the Center's research plan to external audiences, especially the donors; and c) allows transparent monitoring of progress and achievement of output targets. The MTP, including the logframes, has become the central element in the planning of research relevant to the priorities of the CGIAR and for monitoring progress in achieving outputs and outcomes to meet the CGIAR goals. Thus MTPs are both an internal planning and management tool and a means for monitoring progress externally.

The SC reviews the plans for programmatic content and relevance, for significant program changes usually following EPMRs and changes in Strategic plans, for opportunities for synergies among Centers and CPs to improve efficiency and for clarity in planning.

### **Making the MTPs multi functional**

The MTP is evolving as a document that serves three main purposes: It is an internal document linked to internal planning and monitoring that is becoming an asset to the Centers; The MTP is a tool for the Centers to communicate with each other about joint research and planning; The MTPs are easily accessible to the outside world presenting the individual Centers' work and the CGIAR's joint research agenda.

The preparation and submission of the MTPs this year used an online software application "EasyMTP" (the local module) which was developed by the ICT-KM program in collaboration with the Centers (i.e. the main users of the MTPs). This is linked to a central System level database (CGMap) which is being developed at the same time. The new software and central database facilitate the three main purposes for the MTP. Internally the EasyMTP software can facilitate the continuous process of planning, i.e. building on earlier MTPs and linking the MTP data to the Center's internal project management systems. At the System level, CGMap can facilitate analysis of collective components of research on priority research areas thereby facilitating efforts towards further coherence and programmatic planning. It also facilitates the use of the MTP by the Centers and by external reviewers for monitoring of progress.

### **The quality and utility of the MTPs**

There is clearly a broad range of quality amongst the present MTPs. Some Centers have produced very realistic plans that show that they have a very clear view of their niche/comparative advantage – IRRI, IWMI for instance. Some Centers appear to use the MTP as their main research management tool (e.g. IWMI) others see them as a hoop that the SC makes them jump through (IITA). Most of the MTPs

are far too long; Centers should be encouraged to provide more coherent and succinct description of their research; where it is coming from, which previous research results it is building on and how it intends to provide solutions to the problems clearly identified.

*Starting from last year, the SC has identified MTPs that do not require a detailed commentary every year.* In 2007 seven MTPs (CIFOR, CIMMYT, IFPRI, ILRI, IRRI, Generation CP, HarvestPlus) were graduated to a periodic review schedule (every three years unless there are major changes). *This year the SC identified four additional MTPs (ICARDA, IWMI, WorldFish Center, SSA-CP) that will not be reviewed in detail next year.* The remaining Center/CP MTPs are considered to require in-depth review in 2009 due to anticipated changes from EPMR or Strategic planning or due to deficiencies in the MTP (Africa Rice Center, Bioversity, CIAT, CIP, ICRISAT, IITA, World Agroforestry Center, Water&Food CP). The SC plans to continue dialogue to help all Centers and CPs to upgrade their MTPs; there are several that can be used as models.

### **Relevance to CGIAR priority research**

In 2005 the SC reported to ExCo that their analysis of the MTP's (2006-2009) showed that: i) Many of the activities proposed are unlikely to result in IPGs; ii) Too much effort is being spent on development activities of a local nature with little or no research content; iii) A better specification of the pathways from outputs to impact is needed; and iv) More interaction is needed across Centers on several activities undertaken by them such as innovation system, delivery systems and INRM at the landscape level.

*In the SC's view there has been a positive change in the focus of the research since then as seen in the current MTP's.* Most Centers and CPs now provide the rationale for the research and how it will contribute to IPGs. The impact pathways also indicate how associated capacity strengthening, partnerships, advocacy and 'local pilot projects' can enhance outcomes.<sup>1</sup> *There is however a need to pay attention to the following issues:*

a) The "accounting" of contribution to the priorities at individual MTP level does not mean there is a cohesive program to achieve the priority goals (development outcomes). There is no evidence from the current MTP's of collective action in emerging areas. For example, 12 Centers address issues of markets, 8 of innovation systems, 9 of seed systems and 10 of high value crops as seen in the MTPs, but there is no apparent synergy sought among the individual research suppliers. In the SC view there is an urgent need to plan for such development outcomes at a system level developing coherent research programs.

b) In many MTPs the project portfolio reflects a lack of internal priority setting and focus and there is a natural inclination of trying to do too much (for example the list of target traits in most of the crop improvement programmes). The fact that things are important does not mean that the CGIAR necessarily has a comparative advantage in dealing with them. Very few of the MTPs give a clear statement of the hypothesis to be tested by each project; rather they indicate an intention to "engage with a subject area of concern". In the SC view, the Centers need to devolve more to the NARS and focus on fewer output and outcome lines.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This re-focus on IPG research is exemplified in the CP SSA commentary where the SC makes the following observations "The SSA-CP now stresses the 'proof of concept' (of the R4D approach) as the key IPG that will be delivered. The innovations of the PLSs are now a means to an end and are no longer claimed to be the key IPGs (although it is not precluded that they might be eventually). Annex 1 offers a good overview of the thinking that has gone into meeting the 'proof of concept' challenge. The proponents are aware of the shortcomings, but argue convincingly that this approach is doable and verifiable. The SC considers that the proposed approach is plausible".

<sup>2</sup> Regarding focus, two recent EPMRs have provided sound advice; the external review of the GCP recommends that that program focus on the delivery of no more than seven (7) crop/ allele product lines in order to achieve any

c) In 2005 the SC advised ExCo *“as programmes become more broadly defined it is essential that the research priorities and goals are clearly spelled out in the MTP. Along with the integration of research and development the Centers need to provide scientific clarity for international public goods to permit extrapolation of results and out scaling for reaching large impacts across localities and ecosystems. There is a noticeable trend, particularly in these very complex environments where progress in sustainable productivity is difficult to achieve and demonstrate, to focus on institutional processes. It is important that generalizable lessons can be drawn in reasonable time limits for expanding the use of the experiences from local processes.”* The SC flags the need to continue to monitor the IPG nature of outputs from a number of complex programs where there are no clearly defined pathways.

d) Several MTPs are still very long and verbose.

### **Follow through on EPMR recommendations**

Over the last 2years a large number of Centers and CPs have been externally reviewed: Africa Rice, CIAT, CIFOR, CIP, ICARDA, IITA, ILRI, IWMI, WorldAgroforestry Center, WorldFish Center and Water&Food, HarvestPlus and Generation CPs. All of these Centers and CP have reported in their MTPs progress in the implementation of the recommendations endorsed by the CGIAR. The SC’s assessment of this progress is given in the individual center/CP comments.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The SC began a thorough review of the MTPs in 2004. Before then the SC’s predecessor TAC provided a brief commentary with focus mainly on changes from previous MTP. The MTPs then were used only for perfunctory purposes as a means to justify the annual budget. It is not clear how widely they were read. Their quality was inadequate to obtain a clear view of the relevance of the Centers’ research and capacity strengthening activities or how the Center planned to monitor progress toward CGIAR priorities. It also seems that individual scientists did not recognize their work in the MTP, i.e. the linkage to Center’s internal research management did not exist in many cases. At its first meeting, the SC viewed that investors deserved more.

In 2004 the SC improved the guidelines for the MTP process in collaboration with the Centers (ADE). The changes included strong output and outcome orientation in the logframe, leaving out elements relevant to internal project management for those management systems to handle, explicit emphasis on international public goods, preparation of clear impact pathway descriptions, elaboration of partners’ role in research, clear reporting on the implementation of EPMR recommendations, and a stronger Systems orientation. Since then, the SC’s efforts have been directed to improve the content and clarity of these essential MTP components that now form the basic structure of the MTP database.

The SC understands that some Centers find the development of a quality MTP a “burden”; but we hold the view that an efficient system must have in place a plan that forms the basis for management of resources for optimum outputs and for monitoring progress. The majority of Centers now have such a Plan. The SC aims to review these every three years and when there are major changes such as those from an EPMR.

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impact and the EPMR of CIAT advised on the design of regional projects around “outcome lines” where activities would focus on a reduced number of constraints (2-3) to enhance the likelihood of outcomes.

## SC COMMENTARY AND CENTER & CP RESPONSES

### AFRICA RICE CENTER (WARDA)

WARDA's 2009-2011 MTP presents a different portfolio from the 2008-2010 MTP, owing to the changes suggested by the 2007 EPMR and the SC commentaries, as well as to the new management. Furthermore, WARDA is completing a revised strategic plan in 2009, which aims to build on the current and emerging issues such as the rice food crisis in Africa, climate change and the research alignment with IRRI. With the portfolio consolidated from six into four MTP Projects the new structure is presented as being simpler thematically, leaner administratively, and as offering clearer focus on the Center's major research programs than previously. The new MTP Projects are: Project 1: *Bridging genetic diversity and breeding to produce rice genetic resources adapted to changing environments*; Project 2: *Enhancing productivity of rice-based farming while protecting ecosystem services*; Project 3: *Creating windows of opportunity through partnerships, learning and innovation systems*; Project 4: *Rice policy and technology impact on food security and poverty reduction*. WARDA also hosts the Inland Valley Consortium (IVC) SWEF.

The SC considers that this MTP has much improved program arrangement and project rationale. The consolidation from the previous MTP is drastic and comparability to previous MTP is not always easy. The acknowledgement of the continuum of rainfed environments from lowland to upland is good. The Center is acting on the EPMR recommendations but this is not yet fully reflected in specific Projects and logframes. The SC acknowledges the handover of SWIHA to IFPRI. The only obvious omission in the response to the EPMR recommendations seems to be the evidence of the IITA-WARDA alignment.

The contribution of the IVC to research is yet unclear to the SC; the program appears engaged in adaptive work and capacity strengthening. In its assessment of the SWEFs in the Systems context the SC concluded that this program should not be continued as a SWEF, but the strategic research questions relevant to the inland valley ecosystems might merit a different coherent research approach.

The approach to IPGs appears rationale and in general well-articulated. WARDA can produce an array of IPGs in a form of analytical and modeling tools, elite cultivars, as well as production and marketing practices that can be aggregated from the organized cross-site studies for regional and continental distribution. The MTP suggests that WARDA plans to also lead regional and continent-wide rice policy research (in collaboration with IFPRI?) with the aim of producing IPGs in long term agricultural and rice sector development strategies in SSA. This is an important output, which can be even better emphasized in the MTP. Project 3, however, presents a wide range of random activities and appears to have large components of activities at the local level. The narrative justifies them as part of the institutional learning. The description lacks precision (for example: "Econometric tools, sustainable livelihood analysis and other social science methods will be used in learning about social inclusiveness of delivery systems of more tacit technologies (e.g. ICM, seed and post-harvest handling) and institutions shaping rice value chains") and does not provide a convincing characterization of the Project's value. However, Project 3 output targets are clear and measurable. As WARDA is foreseeing a large increase in this Project (from 2 million in 2008 to 4.8 in 2011) it is critical that the IPG and pathways of this work are very clear already at this point. However, the anticipated outcomes could easily arise from strengthened efforts in Projects 1, 2 (technical aspects) and 4 (the broader areas of policy, food security, and poverty reduction).

The presentation on capacity building is much improved. It appears prominently in the text, but explicitly only in Project 3 logframe. Development activities are acknowledged, particularly in Project 3, but not elaborated on. Allocation to non-SP activities such as stand alone training and development

activities (“SP6” on p. 6) should be explicitly shown in Table 1. The SC notes that WARDA is not allocating any funding to new research outside the SPs and the MTP in general lacks in its presentation of exciting new research. Devolution of activities to NARS, NGOs and private partners are not apparent; and while there is undoubtedly a paucity in the capability to take up these responsibilities among the partners, it should be pursued.

The renewed focus in the project rationales has not yet been reflected in all of the logframes. While quality of the output targets has greatly improved from last year, many of them appear unrealistic and lack clarity thus making monitoring of progress difficult (particularly in Project 1 and 2). For example, in the desired output of “rice lines with good grain quality”, promises to deliver “inter-and intra-specific populations and lines with improved yield, resistance to major biotic and abiotic (acidity, salinity, drought, cold, and biotic stresses (blast, BLB, RYMV, AFRGM)” developed in 2009. Such claims are not very realistic in the time frame. Joint output targets with IRRI and CIAT are not explicit (although the new alignment between Centers involved in rice is mentioned) and in many cases links should be shown to similar work done by IRRI. On the likelihood of outcomes and impact, the MTP provides a good analysis of the primary users of the outputs but the impact pathway descriptions lack analysis of constraints to achieving outcomes and impact.

The list of partners and collaborators are appropriate and well-balanced. There seems to be strong regional linkages among NARS and some well-defined strategic alliances with ARIs. The level of description of the roles of the partners varies among the Projects. NARS are not mentioned in P1 and 2, while in P4 are dealt with excellently. The ARI partners’ roles are clearer with the exception of P1, where the description is vague.

The SC feels that WARDA is clearly headed in the right direction following the EPMR but that there has not been sufficient time yet to fill in the details of the overall program. The different project areas need to be brought together so that the MTP becomes a truly coherent plan. Considering this against WARDA’s plans to enlarge its geographic mandate from the current 22 member states raises some concern and the SC urges the Center to get its scientific programs in place as the main priority... The MTP shows positive changes in research planning at strategic level; it however requires more details in order to serve as a useful planning and monitoring tool. The SC recommends that WARDA, on basis of a more rigorous analysis of available background information, assign appropriate weights to the production and development constraints identified that it potentially could address, focus on a few major constraints of regional interest for each rice ecosystem, and better define homogeneous target areas for its research (e.g. through stratification of the biophysical and socio-economic environments). The SC will examine the WARDA MTP again next year, but believes that it could then move to a periodic assessment schedule.

## **AFRICA RICE CENTER (WARDA) RESPONSE**

WARDA is encouraged by the positive and constructive comments of the SC on the Center’s MTP. As the SC has noted, the MTP reflects the fact that the Center is currently in a transition period, working towards a new strategic plan. Below we have written a brief response to the major issues raised.

*The SC considers that this MTP has much improved program arrangement and project rationale. The consolidation from the previous MTP is drastic and comparability to previous MTP is not always easy. The acknowledgement of the continuum of rainfed environments from lowland to upland is good. The Center is acting on the EPMR recommendations but this is not yet fully reflected in specific Projects and logframes. The SC acknowledges the handover of SWIHA to IFPRI. The only obvious omission in the response to the EPMR recommendations seems to be the evidence of the IITA-WARDA alignment.*

WARDA takes notice of the SC’s remark on the necessity for the Center to show more clearly how

EPMR recommendations are being implemented and will work on this aspect for next year's MTP. The IITA-WARDA alignment in Cotonou is administrative in nature. WARDA and IITA are increasing their collaboration in areas like IPM and post-harvest issues, but this is not a programmatic alignment as is being implemented with IRRI, and does, therefore, not have a major impact on the Center's research agenda.

*The contribution of the IVC to research is yet unclear to the SC; the program appears engaged in adaptive work and capacity strengthening. In its assessment of the SWEPs in the Systems context the SC concluded that this program should not be continued as a SWEP, but the strategic research questions relevant to the inland valley ecosystems might merit a different coherent research approach.*

WARDA disagrees with the SC's conclusion that the IVC should not be continued as a SWEP. In the past, the IVC mainly operated through small-grant funding to NARS. We are now in the process of turning the IVC in a highly effective research platform offering opportunities for large collaborative research projects on inland valley development in sub-Saharan Africa, involving a variety of partners, including NARS, ARIs and CG centers. Some of these projects will come on board in 2009. Inland valley systems offer great prospects to stem the current food crisis in Africa.

*The MTP suggests that WARDA plans to also lead regional and continent-wide rice policy research (in collaboration with IFPRI?) with the aim of producing IPGs in long term agricultural and rice sector development strategies in SSA. This is an important output, which can be even better emphasized in the MTP.*

WARDA will collaborate with IFPRI through the IFPR-led Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System project in West Africa, which is supporting the implementation of CAADP. WARDA will place more emphasis on producing IPGs for long term rice sector development strategies in next year's MTP.

*Project 3, however, presents a wide range of random activities and appears to have large components of activities at the local level. ... However, Project 3 output targets are clear and measurable. As WARDA is foreseeing a large increase in this Project (from 2 million in 2008 to 4.8 in 2011) it is critical that the IPG and pathways of this work are very clear already at this point.*

WARDA notes the concerns of the SC and will ensure that the activities, IPGs and pathways of Project 3 are better defined in next year's MTP.

*The SC notes that WARDA is not allocating any funding to new research outside the SPs and the MTP in general lacks in its presentation of exciting new research. Devolution of activities to NARS, NGOs and private partners are not apparent; and while there is undoubtedly a paucity in the capability to take up these responsibilities among the partners, it should be pursued*

This MTP has been assembled by a new management team at WARDA, mostly based on on-going research activities, while simplifying the research structure. The team is in the process of revising the strategic plan with WARDA's partners. New research directions identified in this strategic plan will feature in next year's MTP.

*For example, in the desired output of "rice lines with good grain quality", promises to deliver "inter- and intra-specific populations and lines with improved yield, resistance to major biotic and abiotic (acidity, salinity, drought, cold, and biotic stresses (blast, BLB, RYMV, AFRGM)" developed in 2009. Such claims are not very realistic in the time frame.*

WARDA is not intending to develop lines that have all of these qualities, but rather subsets, with resistance to one or more major stresses, some of which will be available in 2009.

*Joint output targets with IRRI and CIAT are not explicit (although the new alignment between Centers involved in rice is mentioned) and in many cases links should be shown to similar work done by IRRI.*

The research alignment with IRRI is ongoing and was not sufficiently advanced by the time of submission of this MTP.

*The SC feels that WARDA is clearly headed in the right direction following the EPMP but that there has not been sufficient time yet to fill in the details of the overall program. The different project areas need to be brought together so that the MTP becomes a truly coherent plan. Considering this against WARDA's plans to enlarge its geographic mandate from the current 22 member states raises some concern and the SC urges the Center to get its scientific programs in place as the main priority.*

The DDG-Rs of WARDA and IRRI have developed a joint rice research strategy and implementation plan for Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) during their tour in the ESA region from 25<sup>th</sup> August – 5<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

*The SC will examine the WARDA MTP again next year, but believes that it could then move to a periodic assessment schedule*

WARDA will write next year's MTP based on a new strategic plan and will take the SC's observations on the current MTP into account. WARDA is confident that next year's MTP will be of sufficiently clarity to allow the SC to move the Center to a periodic assessment schedule.

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## BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL

The 2009-2011 MTP is a continuation of the MTP 2008-2010 and changes are relatively few with only a limited amount of new and terminated research reported in the current plan. The few changes, mainly in F03, F04 and F09, are adequately explained. The Center estimates that approximately 93% of its resources are allocated to System Priorities. As would be expected the vast majority of this (61%) is focused on SP Area 1, "Sustaining biodiversity for current and future generations", and in particular on SP 1A (staple crops) and 1B (under-utilized crops). It is a pity that although the Center, through the SGRP SWEP it convenes, played a key role in developing a comprehensive Framework Plan for Priority 1A, this collaborative plan of coherent work is not reflected in the MTP.

The MTP overview is well-written and provides a good introduction to project activities and new and terminated research. The brief summaries of each of the ten F-Series Projects are helpful in providing the reader a snap-shot view of the current portfolio. Projects F04-10 and the SGRP project, as indicated by the SC last year, are generally better targeted on areas of the Center's comparative advantage (Projects F07-10 are where Bioversity appears to have a strong comparative advantage, and the SC particularly notes the new research on climate change issues in F09). These projects have relatively clearer outputs and output targets and present better defined impact pathways. They are relevant to the SPs and mostly IPG oriented.

In contrast Projects F01 (*Enhancing the contribution of agricultural biodiversity to human wellbeing*) and F02 (*Productivity, resilience and ecosystem services from community management of diversity in production systems*) the output targets are unclear and not measurable, the IPG nature of the work is not evident, and the impact pathways are poorly described. The SC again questions the relevance and the Center's comparative advantage in much of the research activities in these two Projects, which account for 23% of the total budget of the Center. The SC notes that in response to a similar comment (i.e. lack of comparative advantage to work on pest management) last year the center now classifies work on the use of biodiversity to manage pest and diseases under Output 1 in F02 as "Non-System Priority new research". This is clearly not so; the issue is that such work is undertaken by others in the system and it is not clear that Bioversity has a strong scientific capacity in pest science research. Project F03 (*Managing biodiversity to improve livelihoods in commodity crop-based systems*) is also vague. It appears to undertake what is routine in a crop improvement program, i.e., deployment of genetic resources, use of IPM, capturing nutrient flows in agronomy, etc., and characterizes it in "biodiversity" language and

terms. Since this is the second time the SC raises concerns about F01-03 in its commentary, it is appropriate that the EPMR in 2009 examine the issues carefully.

The narratives of the research planned and logframes sections under each Project tend to be verbose and repetitive and often include imprecise descriptions of outputs and outcomes, e.g., F01 impact pathway description is a re-statement of the project rationale. The lengthy logframes add little to an understanding of what is to be done, or how outputs are to be measured. In short, because of the generic nature of many of the Project descriptions, it is difficult for the reader to achieve a good understanding of what exactly are Bioversity's major activities and major expected outputs. As much of the work presented in the projects, particularly within F01-06, is descriptive and development-oriented, where science appears to play only an incremental role, it raises questions about how much of Bioversity's activities could be classified as 'research'. The breadth and depth of its mandate (IPGRI vs. Bioversity) and the research vs. research-related (e.g., facilitation function, advocacy) balance are still open questions it would seem. In F06, for example, the work is portrayed as research but in fact it appears to be more information exchange and knowledge management. If the latter is what is required, and this is where Bioversity's comparative advantage lies, then this should be explicit.

Training and capacity building are well integrated in each project and contribute towards SPs. There is a potentially important role for Bioversity in capacity building but it is not altogether clear that the Center is thinking critically enough of how to organize itself to do this short of providing knowledge and training. Indeed, major attention should be given to the nature of relationships with national partners so that this could drive the capacity building agenda.

The logframes are not particularly helpful – lots of general 'improvement' type statements, and very little presented as a solid indicator or verifiable. The quality of the output targets varies considerably across and within the Projects. Many targets do not seem achievable in the given time frame, e.g., for F01 and 02: *Practices documented to rehabilitate degraded production systems with agricultural biodiversity (2009)*; *Methods and guidelines developed for assessing contributions of research to poverty alleviation (2010)*. Some targets are simply steps in the research process, e.g., for F04: *Lessons identified and shared for rationalization from the assessment of the service function and use of the International Transit Center (ITC) collection (2008)*; and for F10: *Model studies to explore ways of combining GIS and other diversity assessment and monitoring tools to describe genetic diversity completed (2011)*. F01, Output 3 lists ILAC (Institutional Learning and Change) as an output, yet it is clearly not so, but rather a network/ process that could produce outputs.

Bioversity is a networking institution. The MTP, however, is not clear with respect to partners' roles and their share of the responsibility. The research partners tables in Annex 2 are not very helpful as they give little indication of the nature of the partnership. There is no reference to private sector partners. Bioversity would appear to have an excellent opportunity to manage meta-studies of genetic resources issues with LDC partners in ways that would build capacity – with Bioversity providing the mentoring. Maybe this happens but it is not explicit in the MTP. Within the CGIAR Bioversity participates in the HarvestPlus CP, coordinates one of the sites of the SSA CP and provides research and policy material to the CPWF. Although it no longer coordinates one of the Sub-Programs of the Generation CP, Bioversity's collaboration with the CP continues in several areas of genetic resource management and information sharing. It also participates in many other SWEPs: PRGA, CAC, SP-IPM, CAPRi and the Amazon Initiative. The Center hosts two System Office Units (CAS-IP and ICT-KM) and the inter-Center Initiative on ILAC. Bioversity is to be commended for its coordinating and facilitating role in the SGRP and its active involvement in so many System initiatives.

The SC plans to assess the MTP again in 2009 (MTP 2010-2012) to monitor overall improvements in the planning document.

## BIOVERSITY RESPONSE

It is rewarding to see that most Centers have used the Easy-MTP online tool, which was based on Bioversity's online tool; and a standard structure, which was based on Bioversity's 2008-2010 MTP Report.

We are pleased that the Overview is considered to be well-written and helpful. Paragraph 4 of the Overview provides an explanation for the lack of references to the draft Framework Plans, including for Priority 1A, to which the Centre, through the SGRP, made a key contribution.

The SC commentary considers Projects F04-F10, and the SGRP, to be relevant, well targeted on areas of comparative advantage, to have clear outputs and output targets, and to present well-defined impact pathways. In contrast, it questions the relevance of Projects F01, F02 and F03. These three Projects constitute most of the new research agenda of Bioversity International, and are what distinguishes Bioversity from the old IPGRI. They reflect the content of our 2004 Strategy "Diversity for well-being: making the most of agricultural biodiversity", and our 2007 publication "Bioversity International in Focus". In the case of F03, it represents (with F04) the implementation of recommendation 4 of our 2003 EPMR.

Our comparative advantage in undertaking F01, F02 and F03 is also questioned. Whilst we do have considerable expertise of our own to undertake this work, this is further strengthened by the experience and expertise of our many research partners. We undertake our research in true partnership with our collaborators, and we believe that our combined expertise does indeed give us a comparative advantage for this work. We would also like to emphasize that much of the research in Projects F01, F02 and F03 is unique to Bioversity International, and is certainly not being undertaken by other CG Centers.

Much of our work in these three Projects is necessarily at the household, community and landscape scale. However, these are carefully selected as being widely representative, and once successful models and paradigms have been developed and tested, we have rational plans, through our partners, for up- and out-scaling in order to produce international public goods that will have a significant impact on poor people.

We fully agree that it is appropriate that the 2009 EPMR examines these issues carefully, and we welcome the EPMR as an opportunity to clarify our new research agenda. We hope that the EPMR will not only endorse our new research agenda, but will recognize it as making a crucial and unique contribution towards solving the problems of climate change, food insecurity, poor nutrition, and loss of natural resources (especially local varieties, underutilized species and wild relatives).

The breadth and depth of our mandate, and the proportion of our work that can be classified as research, are questioned by the SC commentary. We hope that, having endorsed our new mandate, the EPMR will recognize that our model of working largely through partners – something that the Change Management Process sees as very positive and a model for the future of the CG System – is in fact the most appropriate, effective and sustainable approach to research. Furthermore, the Change Management Process has also recognized that the CG Centers play many roles, in addition to that of directly undertaking research. These include catalyzing, facilitating, and coordinating research; capacity development; and public awareness. It is pleasing to see that our capacity development efforts are considered to be well integrated with our Projects, and contribute to the System Priorities.

Bioversity's Project logframes are indeed comprehensive. Previously we have been requested to

provide more specific detail in them. However, we will make efforts to make them more concise in future, whilst improving the quality of output targets and impact pathway descriptions.

Bioversity's collaboration with other Centers, SWEPS, Challenge Programmes, System Office Units, and many other research partners, is acknowledged. We will endeavor to describe the roles of our partners more clearly in future, whilst at the same time not increasing the length of our logframes or narratives.

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## CIAT

CIAT is currently undertaking a thorough update of its strategy. The MTP reflects this context –a Center in transition- and presents a revised MTP. The Plan has eleven outcome lines most of which are aggregated under three Research for Development Challenges (RDCs): **People and Agro-Ecosystems** (2 outcome lines, plus PRGA and Amazon Initiative), **Sharing the Benefits of Agro-biodiversity** (5 outcome lines, plus Harvest Plus CP), and two outcome lines used for planning the research of the TSBF Institute.

**People and Agroecosystems (PA) RDC.** The SC finds that for the first three projects in this portfolio (PA1-Linking Smallholder Farmers to Growth Markets, PA2-Agroecosystems Resilience and PA3-Participatory Research and Gender Analysis) the output targets and partners are vaguely defined, pathways analysis for outcomes are not clear, and the way that research is planned around outcome lines provides few examples of clear IPGs. The EPMR recommended that CIAT would engage in a few carefully selected constraints to outcomes in particular regional settings. In the SC view this has not happened; rather it seems that all of the previous activities that might enhance outcomes have been bundled into the projects. The result is a lack of clarity in the IPG outputs and in the pathways. In contrast, the concept of focused outcome lines seems to be well used in the two projects related to TSBF and in the forage work (SBA3 under Agrobiodiversity RDC). The SC suggests that these two projects guide the conceptualization of the first three projects of PA RDC. As CIAT prepares a new Strategic Plan it should clearly define its comparative advantage in this RDC.

**Sharing the Benefits of Agrobiodiversity (SBA) RDC.** The MTP shows a Center with expertise and clear comparative advantage in beans, cassava, forages and rice. These lines represent about 50 % of the total investment in CIAT. The science for these was regarded highly by the EPMR and the MTP descriptions reflect well the scientific content. They show that the projects (SBA1, SBA2, SBA3, SBA4, SBA5) have focused IPGs, clear pathways and by and large, measurable outputs and outcomes of a magnitude that will make a difference. Some are pushing new frontiers of science, as well as of science for development partnerships as is the case of SBA4 (*Improved Rice for Latin America and the Caribbean*) where the CIAT-FLAR regional platform is now largely funded by partners.

The SC notes that, although CIAT and IITA mention that they are working towards implementing the recommendation of the EPMRs of both centers to develop *a common, coordinated cassava research agenda* and work closely to implement their joint agenda in Africa, this is not yet evident in the MTP. Hence, the SC suggests that such research agenda is presented more clearly by both Centers.

**TSBF.** The TSBF Institute has two outcome lines—one focused at the crop (TS1—*Integrated Soil Fertility Management in Africa*) and one at the landscape level (TS2—*Sustainable Land Management in the Tropics*). TS1 is well developed and in its planning could serve as a model for other projects. It focuses on a few constraints to outcomes from what is basically main stream agronomic work for key crop based systems in Africa. It has the potential to lead to a significant increase in basic foods for Africa. Hopefully (although not clear in the MTP) it provides an integration of the agronomic research of the other centers (i.e. IITA for savannah cereal-legume, ICRISAT for millets) while focusing on the main

constraints to outcomes. As such, it is central to the overall CGIAR agenda. The SC compliments the Center for including Figure 2 (pg.164), showing specific focus areas of the ISFM and SLM outcome lines and linkages with other CIAT outcome lines; as well as a clear diagram (pg. 169) of outputs and outcomes; clearly this component has benefited from a systematic approach to planning. That said, this project could address the ever-recurring questions of whether locally-derived inputs can sustain and increase crop yields versus increased dependence on agrochemicals. Without this CIAT accepts implicitly the findings, for example as mentioned in the MTP, of the African Fertilizer Summit, recently held in Nigeria, which aims at increasing fertilizer use from an average of 8 to 50 kg nutrients per ha by 2015. TS1 would seem to have more to add to this simple solution; the MTP notes that there is a wide mix of technologies available of which fertilizer is only one component. Addressing the interactions between components (water, pests and soils) is as important as dealing with the components themselves.

*TS2-Sustainable Land Management in the Tropics* is essentially a landscape initiative with a focus on soil health. It brings in the landscape level perspective, which while often mentioned is rarely operationalized, so in this sense it could be quite unique. It is somewhat written as a forward-looking proposal (“*Addressing land degradation problems effectively requires a focus on the larger agricultural production landscape rather than using the cropping field or the farm as unit of reference*”), suggesting that CIAT as yet does not have a lot of experience in its implementation. Since the overall focus in TSBF is on soil health, it would be wise to be realistic about how much soil health can be addressed on a landscape level. The potential for IPG’s is clear. There are great complementarities between the proposed research under this line and ICRAF research. In the case of TSBF the focus is on fertilizer rather than on trees. Since the real world will have both, the SC sees a great opportunity to link both initiatives and suggests that CIAT (TSBF) and ICRAF develop a common understanding. The SC notes that the current Outcome lines of TSBF do not include horticultural crops.<sup>3</sup> Since these crops are forming a vibrant and growing sector of agricultural production and means of poverty alleviation, and have distinct crop nutrient concerns it may make sense for CIAT to explore that future possibility.

Regarding the *systemwide program on participatory breeding and gender analysis (PRGA)*, the SC recommended that the program’s third and final phase be focused on further compiling and assessing the existing ex post impact evidence of the successful participatory plant breeding (PPB) cases. Including the converging experiences between the PPB and so called conventional breeding particularly for the major rainfed systems. The SC noted the lack of progress in the PRGA to undertake research on gender and recommended phasing out the gender analysis component of the program, replacing it with alternative mechanisms through the Alliance of CGIAR Centers in order to more effectively lead to mainstreaming GA into all CGIAR research. It is not clear in the MTP which actions have been taken by CIAT or by the Alliance in this regard.

The SC notes that the structure of the new *systemwide program Amazon Initiative* have not changed since it was endorsed by the SC. The funds allocated for this rather ambitious program seem inadequate and therefore the proposed research agenda is unrealistic.

The SC expects that, after a new Center strategy is agreed, CIAT will revise its entire MTP for the 2009 submission, which the SC will assess in depth.

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<sup>3</sup> Millet and sorghum-based systems in dry-lands in Sahelian West-Africa, cereal-legume intercropping and rotations in moist-savannas of West, East and Southern Africa, cassava-based systems in humid lowland areas of West and Central Africa, upland rice-based systems in West and Central Africa, with a special focus on New Rice for Africa, banana-based systems in East and Central African highlands, and conservation agriculture in cereal croplands of West, East, and Southern Africa.

## CIAT RESPONSE

CIAT concurs with the SC that it is a center in transition undertaking a thorough update of its strategy at the same time that the CGIAR itself is going through a change process.

CIAT welcomes the SC appreciation of the high quality of science, clear comparative advantage, focused IPGs, and large expected impact from its research on beans, cassava, forages and rice as well as in its tropical soils biology and fertility research.

CIAT sees key elements of the natural resource management research being carried out in the People and Agroecosystems RDC as essential to its ecoregional research in Latin America and the Caribbean, along with its commodity and tropical soil fertility research. CIAT agrees with the EP MR recommendation and the SC that in its new Strategic Plan CIAT must focus on a few carefully selected constraints where it has a comparative advantage. CIAT shares the SC view that this focused agenda must have clear impact pathways and measurable outputs.

CIAT agrees that a common coordinated research agenda on cassava with IITA is important and has to be worked out in more detail.

Finally, consistent with the SC expectation, CIAT plans to present a fundamentally revised MTP in 2009 as a consequence of its current strategic planning exercised and the ongoing CG change process.

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## CIFOR

CIFOR's MTP provides a good basis for planning and the SC notes the Center has already implemented many of the EP MR recommendations. CIFOR's Board of Trustees approved a new strategy in May, 2008 that defines new research directions and the Center's strategic positioning over the next 10 years. The current MTP describes the major steps taken in developing the strategy which appears to be the result of a transparent and systematic priority setting exercise. The MTP stays on the schedule of periodic review. The SC plans to comment on the MTP next year only if changes due to the new Strategic Plan give cause for comment.

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## CIMMYT

CIMMYT MTP for 2009-2011 presents the same project portfolio from last year with no major changes, but with some refinements and adjustments made as part of "sequential focusing and re-orientating exercise" in line with the Business Plan (2005). The current MTP has consolidated commodity-based projects by moving those under Project 1 into Projects 3, 4, 7, and 8. Activities under Project 2 were also regionalized, e.g., by dropping in-house activities on maize functional genomics and maize apomixis molecular biology, and centralizing maize transformation activities in Kenya and maize molecular breeding activities in Africa/Asia. Project 3 saw some significant reduction of activities due to shortage in funding commitments, while Project 8 has now added *water and nutrient use efficiency* to the list of target traits for Output 1.

The CIMMYT MTP presents a research agenda continuing from the previous year, and provides a good basis for internal planning and monitoring. The SC endorses the MTP without need of further comments and will not review the MTP 2010-2012 in detail.

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## CIP

CIP's research agenda presented in MTP 2009-2011 continues the implementation of its vision, guided by its 2006 Strategic Plan. The SC acknowledges the improvements in the Center's research program in this MTP, which shows a good fit and improved focus on the System Priorities. The Center emphasizes that the move to full alignment with the SPs is a gradual process of shifting the distribution of the research contract portfolio towards the new objectives. The changes from previous MTP are clearly presented in the overview and in the Project portfolio and are aimed at improving clarity of output descriptions and focus of output targets. The most notable change is renaming most of the 9 MTP Projects in response to the EP MR recommendation on changing the program structure (which the Center only partially agreed with), and specifically dealing with the roles of the research divisions and research projects. CIP's decision to disassociate MTP Projects from its research divisions is good; it allows divisional staff to work over several Projects and should, as is intended, enhance disciplinary integration. This change has led to renaming of both the Divisions and the MTP Projects. The 2009-2011 portfolio has the following 9 Projects: Project 1: *Partnerships, markets and policies for pro-poor R&D*; Project 2: *Sustaining potato and sweetpotato biodiversity for current and future generations*; Project 3: *Varieties with enhanced resilience, market and nutritional value*; Project 4: *Crop management for sustainable intensification of potato and sweetpotato based cropping systems*; Project 5: *Systems approaches to build adaptive capacity in potato and sweetpotato based systems*; Project 6: *Agriculture and human health*; Project 7: *CONDESAN*; Project 8: *Global Mountain Program*; Project 9: *Urban Harvest*. The Center has attempted to address partnership issues in these Projects, rather than establishing a specific partnership project; for example, Project 1 now better engages research on partnerships through an added output. The SC agrees with the incorporation of partnership issues into Projects.

The implementation of the EP MR Recommendations that CIP fully or partially agreed (and thus were endorsed by ExCo), are at different stages of implementation. The output targets (particularly for Projects 2 and 3) reflect the Recommendations and the updating of the Strategic Plan. The preparation of a business plan will be completed in 2008.

There is, however, an unusual rejection and/or delayed responses to some EP MR recommendations. Most notable are decisions on CIP's role in the Systemwide programs which have been left open pending the outcome of the Change Management Process. CIP continues with all three SWEPS (Global Mountain Program, CONDESAN, Urban Harvest), despite GMP having received a diminished level of support. The SC notes the strongly worded critique by CIP (p. 189) both on the CIP EP MR and on the SC's assessment of the relevance of the current SWEPS. The SC does not see any need to keep decisions about the SWEPS pending over prolonged periods of change and suggests that decision be reached at ExCo15.

In general the MTP is well aligned with the SPs and in most cases outputs are focused on specific SPs. Regarding Project 6, the SC reiterates that the CGIAR should not expand its research to the health sector but link the health aspects of its research closely with the agricultural research. The SC hopes that the new output 1 being developed to map linkages of agricultural interventions to health implications will emphasize the agricultural research perspective. The SC is concerned that for output 2 CIP does not feel it necessary to build competence within the Center, as is suggested by the partner list. The SC does not consider this to be CIP's comparative advantage.

CIP is not investing much in new research areas. The SC does not consider the activities in the Urban Harvest new or exploratory and feels that there is need for the Center to be more strategic and innovative within its core research competence to meet new challenges. The development activities are planned fairly evenly across the coming years (Projects 4, 5 and 7). Although CIP considers its involvement catalytic, the contribution of these investments to the CGIAR mission is questionable and

the SC is concerned that, within Project 4 at least, these costs are rising.

CIP's research over all has a good IPG orientation. In a few cases (e.g. Project 5) CIP could better elaborate how IPGs are derived from the local findings at landscape level. CIP has also addressed the request for improved partnerships with NARS for the creation of IPGs in its new revised Project 4, in response to a request from the SC. The SC questions however, whether the new strategy for seed development (Project 4), despite operation in multiple countries and with multiple partners, will generate an IPG.

Research outputs are in general adequate to well described. The output targets are in general fairly ambitious and clear, although some improvement is still needed in measurability for monitoring purposes; i.e. in some cases more quantitative indicators are needed. Impact pathways are adequate and the constraints and routes to overcome them are mostly elaborated.

The MTP's partnership presentation is strong, both in the selection of appropriate partners at all levels and the clear presentation of the partners' roles. Relationships with NARS are particularly well presented and the route to devolution is well shown. The SC hopes to see more explicit examples of devolution in the next plan (for example regarding seed systems work). Capacity building activities are appropriately elaborated in the MTP.

Reiterating its advice regarding the SWEPS and CIP's research on health, the SC notes that considering CIP's size it may not be wise to have many peripheral activities; it should rather direct its focus to more innovative research in its own mandate area. The SC hopes that the issues related to comparative advantage and CGIAR relevance with the three CIP-convened SWEPS be considered by CIP in consultation with the Alliance. The SC will assess CIP's MTP also next year.

## **CIP RESPONSE**

CIP appreciates the generally positive review of our MTP. We are happy the Science Council recognizes the alignment of our research program with system priorities. CIP emphasizes to our stakeholders that our research program has always been aligned with system priorities, whether or not our MTP adequately expressed it. The SC notes and we agree that our de-coupling of Divisions from MTP projects was a significant research program management decision that will yield clear benefits in the future.

We acknowledge the SC's concern on the delay in decisions on the SWEPS. We remind the SC that CIP's position is that hosting SWEPS is a CGIAR endorsement and we are attuned to the Alliance-recommended process for decisions on the SWEPS after the conclusion of the Change Process. We note that the writing schedule for MTPs place us in the position of declaring our 2009 program early in 2008 and this leaves us out-of-synch with the EPMR recommendation implementation process for an additional year.

We appreciate the SC recognition of our partners and our partnerships. CIP works with and through partners and we are glad that our MTP gives us a space to formally acknowledge our joint execution of our research program.

We accept that the logframe narrative relating to improving seed systems for potato and sweetpotato is not well articulated and needs improving. It is indeed the aim to generate global public goods through developing and testing new rapid multiplication techniques (aeroponics), developing and testing novel global seed quality standards (with FAO) and conceptualizing and testing new models of commercially viable smallholder based seed systems.

We are concerned that the MTP format prevented the reviewers from spotting numerous new research areas including: nutritional trait enhancement, drought tolerance, R gene pyramiding, added value products from native potatoes, reproductive biology, modeling crop response to environments and breeding for weevil resistance.

We have always found the MTP exercise useful for the Center. Back in 2005 the MTP provided us a context with which to change our internal reporting from activity based to output based. This was a positive change and has helped the individual scientists and the center focus on our mission.

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## ICARDA - SC COMMENTARY AND RESPONSE

ICARDA developed a new strategy in 2008 following a change in management and in response to the most recent EPMP. Against this backdrop, the MTP presents a revised portfolio of 8 projects and is broadly in line with the recommendations of the EPMP. The MTP is a good planning document. The research program is aligned with CGIAR goals and system priorities and the MTP provides a detailed analysis of the alignment by project and output.

The Center suggests that 98% of estimated funding for 2009 is allocated to activities within CGIAR priority themes. Whilst the SC agrees with the assessment in general, some output targets seem local public goods only and the CAC-SWEP does not seem to fall fully within priority research.

*RESPONSE: The CAC SWEP covers, in partnership of national programs, the whole research for development continuum to ensure impact at the field and farmers' levels. Beside the input from nine CGIAR Centers, the Program is making very good use of the existing expertise, infrastructure and capacities of national research programs in the region to address problems of common interest to eight countries of the region. Therefore, most of the outputs are regional public goods rather than national or local public goods. The Program addresses 13 out of the 20 System Priorities (SP). This is considered a wide coverage of the SPs, since the Program involves national program partners and three associated advanced research institutes from outside the System namely AVRDC, ICBA and the University of Michigan.*

The MTP contains one clearly new research area: to develop a strategy for range management. In the breeding programs there is overall a good mix of the use of conventional and marker technology. The initiatives with CIMMYT on Ug99 rust are to be commended. However, given the commodity-based mandate of this Center (wheat, barley, food legumes and small ruminants), the SC would have expected some discussion on how the proposed research will help address the current food crisis in the non-tropical dry areas.

*RESPONSE: We have inserted three sentences on page 41 of the MTP document to emphasize that the development of more productive and resilient wheat varieties for the non-tropical dry areas directly addresses the question of food security.*

There is strengthening of the project on water management in line with the EPMP recommendations although it is disappointing that the essence of the EPMP recommendation to model and define the gap between actual yields of crops and the yields expected—if the crops were limited only by water (and not by disease or management)—is not very visible yet.

There is a detailed discussion on the putative IPG attributes in all of the projects, and this MTP has gone a long way to address issues raised earlier by the SC, e.g. by the incorporation of the seed systems work into the crop projects where the research agenda is to generate IPG's addressing seed system constraints and provide alternative solutions. The water improvement research (project 7) has

been structured to encourage the development of IPGs through cross-country studies but there is still little discussion of how they will be integrated.

*RESPONSE: This is addressed on page 169.*

Models are presumably one device although these are not elaborated, and the involvement of ICARDA in the CPWF may assist to scale out and generate IPGs. In general, more cross-country comparisons and syntheses may be required.

*RESPONSE: Cross-country comparisons and syntheses are widely undertaken in the CAC SWEP, e.g. the economic livelihood assessments in five countries in the current project on sustainable land management, the livestock project which undertakes field research and economic assessments in three countries of Central Asia, the PGR policy study in Georgia and Armenia, etc.*

The SC feels that a publication alone is not a sufficient IPG if the IPG attributes are not planned into the research. The plan notes that ICARDA intends to alter or add to the SMTA governing distribution of materials, but the nature of such adjustments is not made clear. The SC urges that changes do not affect the IPG nature of the goods being distributed.

*RESPONSE: The text on page 20 (and also page 8) has been modified to clarify this point.*

Training and capacity building are particularly well integrated in the projects, especially Projects 1 (on conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity), 2 (ICARDA-CIMMYT wheat improvement program) and 7 (on water and land management). The MTP provides the rationale and clear elaboration of the well balance activities contributing to capacity building. The institutional strengthening and training component of the CAC-P SWEP is a major element in this project (Farmer Field School training etc) and would seem to be largely in the category of stand-alone training.

*RESPONSE: CAC SWEP engages in stand-alone training, but also comprehensive training programs and intends to further expand on this. It is closely collaborating with the ZEF Khorezm Project in Uzbekistan, which has an extensive long-term training component (BSc, MS.; PhD and postdocs). In addition ICARDA has just signed a contract with the Georgian State Agrarian University to strengthen collaboration with this only academic capacity building institute for agriculture in Georgia.*

As ICARDA has been a leading institute for participatory plant breeding (PPB) for barley, the SC feels that the Center should rationalize why PPB does not have relevance for all the mandate crops at ICARDA, such as wheat and food legumes. If the experience with barley is different for example regarding releasing varieties that have been developed through PPB or PVS (as indicated in the MTP for food legumes) the Center should address this as a major strategic research issue.

*RESPONSE: ICARDA seeks to find a balance between participatory plant breeding and conventional approaches and this is reflected in the MTP. There are some important differences between crops, however. For example PPB is well suited to barley as the crop is grown in the most marginal environments, where there is a slow turnover of new varieties and, as is the case in many countries, seed distribution relies on an informal system. In contrast, wheat is grown more intensively with institutionalized varietal registration and formalized seed distribution networks, which are better suited to conventional breeding approaches.*

There is a significant shift in the research agenda for Project 4 (food legume improvement research). This includes more emphasis on molecular research, nutritional quality and value-added traits, and inclusion of grass pea for human consumption, and de-emphasis on parental varietal selection and elimination of research on forage legumes. However, the rationale for these changes is not provided.

If this is a reflection of the new Strategic Plan, it is not made clear.

*RESPONSE: The section on page 100 under the heading "Summary of changes from previous MTP" was rewritten.*

Project 6 (on diversification) would seem to be primarily a service to development projects such as the Aga Khan Foundation. Its research foundations require better articulation. This project in particular need better focus.

*RESPONSE: Project 6 focuses on improving production systems (cropping, rangeland, small ruminant and horticulture). It also uses inputs of other ICARDA Projects such as improved varieties, irrigation methods, water harvesting etc., to directly improve on farm production practices. Such research is clearly adaptive research and the results are "by nature" context-related (depends on the specific production environment). The IPG nature emerges from testing strategies, methodologies and concepts across countries and regions. The project will increasingly work on benchmark sites with the other projects in order to assure a better integration and choice of representative research sites. If the project achieves outputs ready to be picked up by such organizations as the Aga Khan Foundation and others, then outcome and impact pathways are guaranteed, which should be in the interest of the CG as achieving impact is a major objective.*

For example, judging by the targets in output 2 (with focus on increasing the productivity and diversifying income generating opportunities by diversifying cropping systems and increasing the end-use value of crop products) the project activities do not sufficiently address the EPMR recommendation on the subject to develop "a strategy for research in horticulture by identifying the subject matter where the return on research investments would be highest in the various agroecologies of the Dry Areas" with focus on a few crops. The SC questions the continuing work on spineless cactus in project 6, as similar results to those planned in the logframe have already been achieved a number of years ago (NRM impact study conducted under the auspices of SPIA). The MTP indicates that ICARDA is using the recommendations of three expert consultations on high value horticultural and vegetable crops; herbal, medicinal and aromatic plants; and small ruminant production systems, and that once finalized, these will lead to a refocus or revised output targets. The SC urges that a strict priority setting exercise will also be used to improve focus on areas where ICARDA has clear comparative advantage.

*RESPONSE: The outcomes of the expert consultations on small ruminants were not finalized when the MTP was elaborated. It is expected that the findings will be fully implemented in next years' MTP planning.*

In project 7, the use of benchmark sites or hubs for the rainfed, irrigated and rangelands in project 7 is commendable and well justified for enhancing research efficacy and the likelihood of impact. These are to be used as focal points for out scaling to similar agro-ecosystems and to integrate NARS in skills enhancement such as GIS and participatory INRM approaches. The catalytic role of these can be important ingredients for the generation of IPGs.

Project 8 on poverty and livelihoods is planned as an umbrella project that relates to most of the other projects. It will be important in output 1 on the determinants of poverty and livelihood strategies to broaden the scope beyond agricultural livelihoods, in recognition of the fact that, even for the poor, it is likely that non-agricultural sources of income are becoming much more significant in total livelihoods than was the case even 10 years ago, as illustrated in the recent SPIA-commissioned study on the post-Green Revolution experience in South Asia. Such trends need to be documented so as to guide agricultural R & D strategies in the region, which is the main aim of this project. At present the project only stresses agricultural pathways out of poverty.

*RESPONSE: Please see modification in page 200 that addresses this point.*

In general the output targets are feasible and reasonably ambitious. In some projects there are too many, leading to a sense that more focus is required. There is a case for identifying only a few crop/allele targets to make a significant difference while maintaining the basic breeding work. In project 4, the output targets are mostly not measurable or verifiable and could have applied over the past 30 years of ICARDA research e.g. identify sources of resistance.

*RESPONSE: These comments have been addressed for Project 4, by inserting additional details and qualifications in the logframe (pages 113 - 127).*

Some output targets are still vague (identification of QTLs in lentil without addressing their utility) and others seem to represent internal milestones (Guidelines for evaluating research priorities for targeting research towards poverty reduction). Also project 6 targets are vague (information databases, strategies analysis, improved management, enhanced understanding, options).

*RESPONSE: Appropriate changes have been made in the document.*

The impact pathways described are plausible for the most part although most often somewhat generic rather than being project-specific. Project 7 and 8 are exceptions; the former involves the effective use of networks as key elements in the impact pathways (output 4) and the benchmarks provide good vehicles along the impact pathways. In general the outcomes and impacts are described in generic terms in the logframes, such that it is not possible to judge the probability of achieving them.

*RESPONSE:*

*In regard to MTP Projects 1-4, these comments have been addressed for Project 4, by inserting additional details and qualifications in the logframe (pages 113 - 127).*

*In regard to MTP Project 8, Please see modification in page 216.*

*In regard to MTP Project CAC SWEP, the outcomes and impacts are in fact described in great detail in the logframe (page 250 and onwards). Numbers of varieties to be released, area covered by novel SLM options, number of workshops and training sessions given are provided.*

The MTP provides a good description of the partners and their roles, although some projects have better descriptions (e.g. projects 2 and 7) than others (e.g. projects 1 and 6).

*RESPONSE: Some additional information has been provided for Project 1 on pages 12 and 13.*

There is a good balance among ARIs, other Centers and the NARS of the region. The roles of Bioversity and ILRI in the relevant research areas should be elaborated; it seems that ILRI and strong NARS have better comparative advantage in developing community-based small ruminant breeding strategies. The flagship is Project 2, which now clearly demonstrates the joint ICARDA and CIMMYT project for wheat improvement in the region. The SWEP for the CAC is by and large a regional adaptive program that produces regional public goods. It would be useful to define a few strategic questions about such products that could be analyzed for develop knowledge of for global use.

*RESPONSE: At face value it may be true that CAC SWEP produces regional public goods. However, its approaches to handling the research-extension continuum in transition countries has definite international public good potential, insofar as other transition countries exist that will require CG support sooner or later (Cuba, North Korea, Albania, some African countries etc.). As the region is struggling with getting to grips with globalization, during the next ten years, there will be little specific products that may provide global benefits. Support is exactly needed to assist with the transformation. The strategic question that will therefore be*

answered as a knowledge input for the CG system as a whole is “How can we ensure smooth transition from former state-controlled to market-oriented economies?” I would like to refer to Wehrheim, Schoeller-Schletter and Martius (2008) for first insights here. [see also: Peter Wehrheim, Anja Schoeller-Schletter, and Christopher Martius (Editors, 2008): *Continuity and change Land and water use reforms in rural Uzbekistan - Socio-economic and legal analyses for the region Khorezm*. Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO). *Studies on the Agricultural and Food Sector in Central and Eastern Europe*, Vol. 43. VI + 203 pp. Download at: [http://www.iamo.de/dok/sr\\_vol43.pdf](http://www.iamo.de/dok/sr_vol43.pdf).

Reference is now made to a temperate rice network and IRRI is no longer a SWEF member. This change requires further explanation; it appears to be the only example of devolution to NARS.

*RESPONSE: As IRRI handed the baton on rice research to the Temperate Rice Research Consortium (TRRC), CAC SWEF is looking forward to TRRC coming forward with suggestions, programs and/or materials. Concerning the devolution to NARS in general, the CAC region is not fully ready for some of the innovations promoted by the CG. Adequate devolution requires preparing the “seed bed”, i.e. extensive training for the next generation to take over the activities.*

ICARDA is involved in the CPWF but the value of the CPWF component is not clear as it appears to be extension of ICARDA’s project on water to another basin.

*RESPONSE: This is addressed on pages 169 and 174.*

It would have been useful for ICARDA to elaborate its alternative plans on research submitted in the OASIS proposal (not approved by ExCo).

*RESPONSE: This is addressed on page 172.*

The SC compliments ICARDA on the development of its new MTP and its response to the recent EPMR. It urges the center to not pursue all possible avenues and to focus.

*RESPONSE:*

*In regard to MTP Projects 1-4 the activities of BIGM in the four projects (1, 2, 3 & 4) are focused and aligned with ICARDA’s strategy.*

*In regard to MTP Project 8, it focuses on specific priority research areas critical for technology development, uptake and its impact on rural livelihoods. Together with relevant institutional and policy research to address major adoption constraints and the development of a more enabling policy environment, Project 8 has presented a well-focused research agenda in full integration with other MTP Projects.*

*These research priority areas are directly addressing relevant system-wide priorities and responding to the EPMR recommendations.*

*In regard to MTP CAC SWEF, it is explained above under the issue of why we believe that covering 13 out of 20 system-wide priorities I to be seen as a wide coverage for the CAC region.*

That said the SC views this MTP as a useful planning and monitoring document incorporating the significant changes recommended by the EPMR and thus the SC will not review ICARDA’s MTP 2010-2012 in depth.

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## ICRISAT

ICRISAT’s MTP 2009-2011 is a continuation of its previous MTPs with the same project portfolio that was first presented in MTP 2007-2009. The most notable changes include i) completion of several special project activities, that appear to have been mostly of development nature: Access to genetic

diversity through scaling up participatory plant breeding (reflecting CCER recommendation); Improved livelihoods in the Sahel through the development and implementation of household level bio-economic support systems; Provision of scientific partnership services for networks in the ASARECA region; Research on ICT-enabled rural extension systems in Afghanistan; and ii) inclusion of several restricted funding projects, for example Improving tropical legume productivity (SSA); Enhancing grain legume productivity (SSA), and the West African Seed Alliance. These new projects show increase in allocation to priority areas on genetic improvement and markets. The SC considers these changes appropriate, and notes that these new activities show enhanced collaboration among Centers. The SC also notes that the Desert Margins Program (Project 8) is frozen. It suggests that, in the light of the SC's recommendations on the SWEPs presented at ExCo14, ICRISAT in consultation with Alliance bring this SWEP to closure and any relevant research be initiated in ICRISAT's core program. In 2009, the Center's investments in SSA are expected to rise to 60% of total investment (4 percentage point increase).

The focus and relevance in the Projects 1-6 is, in general, good and they can be expected to produce IPGs, as was the SC's assessment last year. Nevertheless the research rigor and focus can be improved and progress made easier to monitor, if outputs were more precisely targeted. The research agenda would be strengthened if it were more clearly goal driven than project driven. Much of the rationale and description for the parallel crop improvement projects for ESA and WCA sub-regions are the same and although their focal characteristics are not apparent, keeping these projects separate may operationally make sense. However the SC feels that ICRISAT could do more to devolve breeding on open-pollinated crops in Asia to NARS in order to focus on more strategic work and on fewer product lines. The SC is also not convinced of the relevance of ICRISAT's involvement in market opportunity exploitation for tree products for bio-diesel (Project 7). Research on sweet sorghum continues to be a focus based on the anticipated request from NARS. The MTP provides some economic rationale for justifying this as a potentially promising area of research but the biological assumptions deserve more careful scrutiny. i.e. the assumption on comparative water use between sweet sorghum and sugar cane. Nevertheless other studies<sup>4</sup> indicate the biological potential and thus, as stated by the SC last year, ICRISAT is urged to undertake more solid market assessment studies Project 1 before embarking on a long-term breeding program.

In Project 7 (on high-value crops), in particular, and Project 4 (on staple cereal and legume research in ESA) include activities and outputs with local relevance or of service nature. ICRISAT justifies such activities as "proof of concept". It is also stated that NARS particularly in Africa but also in India demand for certain types of products and services. In this regard, the SC's concerns last year have not been sufficiently addressed in the current MTP; a better road map is needed on how location-specific research activities will generate IPGs in order to screen those activities where ICRISAT ought to be involved in. The SC hopes some assessment from the EPMR in this issue.

The importance of a rigorous assessment of much of the INRM research is underlined by the emerging approach by ICRISAT to participatory impact pathway analysis outlined in Project 9 which states that "a lack of documented evidence (for NRM) does not necessarily mean a lack of impact; rather it is often difficult in the short term to attribute the direct impacts/benefits". The SC is concerned about the lack in analytical procedures to test such new approaches which seem to want to address the criticisms from formal impact studies of a relative lack of demonstrable impacts from NRM, and when there are impacts to document, that they are usually very location-specific.

There is very minor investment on new exploratory research, which is a shortcoming of the agenda.

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<sup>4</sup> A comparative observation on ethanol fuel yield in India for sugarcane and sweet showed that the average ethanol fuel yield of sugarcane is 4000-5000 l/ha/year, while for sweet sorghum it was 5700-6500 l/ha/year. I.E., 30-43% more ethanol than sugarcane (Chaudhari, 2001)

The plan also falls short in explicitly discussing new research areas to address the food crises situation. All activities considered as development are housed in Project 11, which received about 7% of the overall allocation. The SC again reiterates its concern about the relevance (in terms of ICRISAT's comparative advantage) of Project 10 (Virtual Academy for the Semi Arid Tropics) and suggests that the ongoing EPMPR assess the potential of this project to improve the outcomes from ICRISAT research.

Training and capacity building efforts are embedded in Projects with specific output targets clearly defined.

In general the logframes for each of the projects provide sound outputs and output targets for planning and monitoring. The Center is to be commended for the frank update on what targets were not achieved and why. In Projects 2-5 these discussions are particularly good, in Project 9 less so. The MTP presentation and particularly the logframes however seem to have suffered from the new on-line submission process which was piloted this year. There is considerable repetition and unnecessary headings and subheadings in the text. There is some confusion in the logframes with repetitive output (Project 9). The impact pathways are described at Project level and focus on the process and steps towards outcomes, some with very detailed elaboration. These could be enhanced further with some description of the constraining factors or of the capacity development, advocacy etc. needed to enhance the likely outcomes.

In response to last year's commentary from the SC about lack of details on outputs, the MTP has included specific exemplars under each project. These are derived from the Center's internal planning document of activities and milestones related to different outputs. These are very useful for the MTP assessment, and they also reflect the utility of the MTP for internal M&E purposes. The Center also provides a rationale for continuing work which was questioned by the SC in earlier MTPs. This is helpful for a better understanding of the objectives of the project. In some cases the SC continues to have concerns (as stated above) and these are now best examined by an EPMPR.

ICRISAT can be commended for its participation in major funding initiatives, engagement in all current CPs and its leadership in efforts to provide direction in seed policy direction in different regions including the most recent seed initiative.

ICRISAT does not provide long lists of partners like some other Centers, but has given a generic description of partnership for each Project separately identifying a small number of strategic partners. The rationale for the work on hybrids in Asia is particularly clear and helpful. Many of the partnerships reflect stronger alliance with ARIs and Centers and seemingly not as close alliances with national programs. Also in the few NARS alliances, the individual NARS is often not named. Such specificity would be desirable particularly to indicate future potential for devolution. The partners' roles are not clear and not reflected in the logframes or output discussions to indicate their share of the responsibility for results.

The MTP this year has made clear improvements in most areas. A concern remains, however, that science content in the document is not very strong. Given that there remain concerns by the SC in some projects and that the EPMPR is anticipated to make further recommendations on program relevance, the SC plans to review ICRISAT's MTP in detail next year.

## **ICRISAT RESPONSE**

ICRISAT's appreciates the overall positive support to and constructive comments from the Science Council on our 2009-2011 MTP. We have continually enhanced the MTP based on SC commentary and

guidelines, and this year, worked to submit the MTP using the online easyMTP process. We recognized that this was the first year to submit online and like all new systems, a number of problems were faced, but we believe that the new system should enable the Centers, and especially outside stakeholders, better access to the information contained in the Centers' MTPs.

Regarding specific comments by the SC, we would like to provide the following brief notes. The SC noted the freezing of Project 8 due to uncertain funding for DMP and recommended the closing of the SWEP. We fully agree on the SWEP closing and actually recommended that this SWEP not be continued at the AE and ADE levels. We are evaluating the funding and research options for the work conducted under Project 8 and will be making the necessary modifications in next year's MTP.

For many of the comments, the SC rightly indicates that the EPMR that is currently underway at ICRISAT, will be assessing certain key issues, e.g., devolving of breeding of OPVs in Asia, bio-diesel research, market assessment studies for sweet sorghum, VASAT. We also look forward to the comments, suggestions and recommendations of the EPMR in their final report early in 2009.

We agree that there were some problems during the online submission process that resulted in repetition and duplications. We will see that these are appropriately edited in next year's submission. Similarly, the lists of partners will be enhanced as these lists were developed after the MTP had been approved by ICRISAT's Governing Board, which was prior to the distribution of the SC guidelines.

Finally, we will continue to enhance the science content and address the concerns of the SC, as well as issues raised by the on-going EPMR. We will do our best to incorporate these in next year's submission.

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## **IFPRI**

The IFPRI MTP presents a research agenda continuing from the previous year. In response to major emerging global challenges, this year's MTP shows the emergence of three new projects within the structure of nine themes (25 projects): *Strengthening Women's Control of Assets for Better Development Outcomes (Sub-theme 3.3, GRP42)*; *Urban-Rural Linkages and Non-Farm Rural Development (Sub-theme 6.3, GRP36)*; *Policies for Responding to Emergencies and Recovery from Crises (Sub-theme 4.2, GRP41)*.

The justification for and relevance of these new projects for the CGIAR are convincing against the background of the current major global challenges. For the project on urban-rural linkages, IFPRI's comparative advantage needs to be carefully defined, and the role of labor markets and skills should receive greater emphasis. In 2010, the HIV/AIDs and Food Security Project (GRP33) will conclude.

Very few changes in outputs from the previous MTP have been made; but where changes are made they are flagged and a rationale provided. While there are some good examples of impact pathway descriptions for the outputs, most provide too little information about uptake. Also, underlying assumptions or critical factors constraining update are often not spelled out. The listing of partners and their roles is especially helpful and very impressive in terms of the wide range of collaboration. Many projects demonstrate very active collaboration with other CGIAR centers though some seem to be missing important opportunities for collaboration and exchange with similar programs in other centers.

The SC endorses the MTP without need of further comments. The SC will only comment on the MTP next year if there are significant changes.

## **IFPRI RESPONSE**

Thanks for the Science Council's thoughtful comments regarding IFPRI's 2009-11 Medium-Term Plan. For next year's plan, we will clarify IFPRI's comparative advantage on the urban-rural linkages project and improve the information on uptake in the impact pathways sections.

We appreciate the SC's more streamlined review process of this year's submission.

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## **IITA**

At the SC's request the Center resubmitted its MTP 2009-2011 and the SC's assessment and Center response will be added when available.

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## **ILRI**

The ILRI MTP for 2009-2011 presents the same portfolio of five research projects as previously. Adjustments since the previous MTP result from ILRI's attempt to sharpen the focus of Projects 1 and 4; expand its efforts in West and southern Africa and in South and South East Asia and close activities in Latin America, seeking to work through other institutes. ILRI reports on the continuing development and establishment of the Biosciences east and central Africa (BecA) platform. The Center has reshaped its vaccine program in advance of the anticipated CCER of this important area which has been delayed until late 2008.

Project 1 is re-designed to address a range of knowledge development and strategic issues confronting pro-poor livestock research. Attention is drawn to ILRI's apparent bundling together of issues at the output level which may mean that later identification of cause and effect will be difficult to discern and progress less easy to monitor. Following from the advice of the EPMP, ILRI has reformulated the outputs of Project 4 to place more focus on environmentally efficient production options (utilizing and managing land, feed and water resources) for intensifying crop-livestock systems.

These concerns aside, the ILRI MTP presents a research agenda which builds on previous years, seeking to take into account the recommendations of the EPMP (and, for example, taking advantage of opportunities for appropriate interventions and more global relevance through research on transboundary diseases). The SC encourages the center to continue to develop indicators to measure the effects of its knowledge outputs and to assess the tangible impacts of its research on the sector and the poor, and not just in terms of policy briefs for investors. The SC endorses the MTP and will not review the MTP 2010-2012 in detail.

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## **IRRI**

IRRI initiated research in the light of its recent strategic plan for rice research (for 2007-15) in January 2007. Building on this basis, the MTP for 2009-2011 presents the same project portfolio (of seven projects) as last year with marginal changes. IRRI actively participates in 3 Challenge Programs, IRRI's contributions being embedded within the IRRI project activities. The SC finds that the current MTP is in general well and clearly written. There are clearly defined outputs, which are for the most part measurable, and impact pathways which build on IRRI and partner networks. Changes or delays in the production of outputs from the previous plans are indicated and explained. The Center has been active in responding to the current crisis in food prices and considering the implications for its research. The MTP also has a good description of the Center's frontier research activities for future

improvements of rice utilizing global expertise.

The IRRI MTP presents a research agenda continuing from the previous year, and provides a good basis for internal planning and monitoring. The SC thus endorses the MTP without further comments and will not review IRRI's MTP in 2009 in detail. The SC looks forward to the forthcoming EPMP (to be conducted in late 2008/early 2009) to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the current and planned programs for rice research.

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## IWMI

IWMI is still in transition as it moves to develop a new strategic plan (due in mid-2008) to redefine and underpin its Projects in next year's MTP. Therefore the research portfolio and outputs as presented in MTP 2009-2011 are, by and large, unchanged from last year. IWMI's mission is to improve water and land management for food, livelihoods and nature, with the goal of contributing to the CGIAR vision of 'A Food Secure World for All'. It is developing an integrated research program within the context of its thematic MTP Projects and leading a wider network of research that is carried out in collaboration with a large number of strategic partners under the Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF). Like last year's, the 2009-2011 MTP appears highly relevant and focused. The MTP provides a clear analysis of IWMI's comparative advantage in each of the MTP Projects; that is its global focus, which very few other institutes have.

Last year, the SC noted a marked improvement in the 2008-2010 MTP over the previous year, but identified some areas where further improvements might be made, noting the opportunity for such in the context of IWMI's upcoming strategic planning exercise. The Center, in its response, identified five areas that would receive careful attention in the 2009-2011 MTP. These related to re-evaluating MTP Projects 10 (agriculture, water and cities) and 11 (Water management and environment); the upstream nature of policy work in the context of strategic partnerships; articulating the IPG characteristics of outputs; specification of output targets; and, elaboration of impact pathways. The strategic planning process, as of June, 2008, had not been completed and thus not all of the areas identified above are addressed in the current MTP. However, the SC is pleased to note a number of positive responses. For example, the discussion of the upstream policy work and strategic partnerships issues is helpful and lends itself to better defining IWMI's comparative advantage.

The description of IPG in the narratives is clearer than last year; there is a better articulation of impact pathways; and there is improvement in the degree of specificity of the output targets, especially for the new targets that were added to the logframe. While most research has to be regionally/locally based by definition, and certainly problem-driven, solution-focused research is inherently largely regionally specific. This is implicit in a basin approach. Thus the generic nature of localised/regionalised research could be strengthened by a more explicit comparative research framework. Considerable efforts are made to make results internationally available and applicable. For some types of knowledge that may certainly be the case, but much problem/policy focused knowledge will necessarily be context specific. In a more articulated impact pathway/capacity building approach one would expect this is addressed explicitly and a perspective defined on knowledge system development. This is now largely implicit. IWMI may want to articulate a strategic approach to uptake and impact. Explicit strategic analyses, e.g., political feasibility studies, of policy reform/change opportunities in the different basins are not visible in the MTP, nor, for instance, a reading and appropriation of recent assessments of and approaches to trans-disciplinary research and 'boundary work', which would be relevant in this respect. It is stated that regional strategy and planning processes have taken place at basin level, and it would be helpful to know what these are, what these contain, and how these have structured research.

IWMI's MTP approach remains, by default, flavored by rational planning and social engineering. It would benefit IWMI if it could address explicitly the dynamics of the policy processes with which it seeks to engage. The politics of knowledge as a topic of discussion /reflection is absent in the document, e.g., the explicit and implicit assumptions in IWMI's approach to how knowledge impact works. The MTP states that the 'institutions and policy' theme will be strengthened and while that is certainly encouraged, it is not clear how it will actually be framed.

IWMI expects that the new strategic plan will result in substantial changes to the project portfolio. The current MTP, therefore, does not yet include new areas of research. It does however provide information on specific initiatives to be finalized and the rationale for that, and thus sets the stage for providing greater focus on more strategic objectives. Indeed, in 2008 IWMI will place a strong emphasis on finalizing a large number of projects -- including almost 70% of existing projects of various sizes, including 15 CPWF projects. The Center is also working towards concluding a few large core supported areas of research, namely water poverty mapping, global irrigated area mapping, global wetland mapping and water productivity quantification and mapping. The decision to stop the global mapping programs is interesting and the implicit conclusion both that these have reached a point of diminishing returns and that such "broad brush" assessments have limited direct impact on achieving CG targets is noted.

The narrative also provides a frank analysis of why some projects are ending and why some are delayed. "Benchmark catchments" are a strong feature of IWMI's research plan – the concept is presented well and the impact pathways through these benchmark catchments are highly credible. Capacity building logic is strong and compelling. For the most part, the impact pathways are clear and compelling: the figures are helpful. Impacts in the logframes for Projects 8, 10 and 11 are, however, mostly outcomes; only Project 9 presents real impacts but not consistently.

IWMI appears to be thoughtful and selective in forming partnerships. Its comparative advantage analysis is supplemented and reinforced by the analysis of the contributions of its major partners to the Project objectives. The roles are clearly defined (tables are helpful). Partners appear to be highly strategic and of high quality. Further partnerships could be developed in more strongly profiled institutions and policy theme, both at basin level, and internationally. The complementary relations with RAMSAR and Wetlands International look promising. There are a number of areas where IWMI has strengthened inter-center work. This includes a joint program of research with ILRI on livestock and water in mixed crop-livestock systems, a joint program with ICARDA addressing issues related to marginal-quality water resources and salt-affected soils, and continued involvement in alignment of CGIAR's regional activities in SSA. The exact nature of the relationship with the CPWF, however, still does not come through very strongly, nor does the value added of the CP to achievement of IWMI's mission.

IWMI concluded its third EPMR in 2006. The Center has provided a thorough analysis of the status of implementation of EPMR recommendations. With the exception of a few cases, where milestones are still to be defined as part of the strategic planning exercise, IWMI has completed (or is in the final stage of completing) its response to the recommendations. Of particular note to the SC is the effort to improve the scientific outputs of the researchers as part of their overall performance evaluation which also includes their partnership-building skills, their contributions to capacity building and their ability to develop pathways to impact.

The overall elements of the MTP provide a useful tool for planning and monitoring the research. In 2009, the SC will comment on IWMI's MTP only if changes due to the new Strategic Plan give cause for comment.

## IWMI RESPONSE

The Center has acknowledged the SC Commentary.

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## WORLD AGROFORESTRY CENTER

ICRAF's MTP 2009-2011 reflects its new Strategy 2008-2015 and presents a new project portfolio that comprises of six Global Research Projects (GRP). ICRAF has in recent years revised its project portfolio annually consolidating it continuously into fewer projects. This evolution has been influenced by several factors, such as the 3<sup>rd</sup> EPMP recommendations and the strategic planning exercise that has involved consultation with partners and stakeholders. Recasting the GRPs that consolidate the program from previous 9 projects to 6 is a positive change. The MTP Overview is succinct and explains in generic terms six areas where past research is being phased out and there are new directions. The rationale for terminating research seems plausible. Focus will be shifted from component research to landscape-level interactions, management, biodiversity conservation and institutions. From tree- processing, ICRAF is moving to value chain and market issues and policy research has stronger emphasis on global environmental linkages. ICRAF's progress in responding to the 3<sup>rd</sup> EPMP recommendations is satisfactory.

The MTP reports that 86% of ICRAF activities are on SP target and the Center has overall made a lot of progress in defining its agenda that now addresses the SPs well. The SC would like to see more contribution to priority on the work on sustainable agro-ecological intensification (SP 4D on promoting sustainable agro-ecological intensification in low- and high-potential areas). ICRAF has made progress in moving away from a heavy involvement in development activities – the MTP is more strategic and public goods oriented than earlier ones.

Capacity building is not explained or integrated enough through the MTP, although GRP 4 contains a capacity building component. A more formal description of capacity building outputs would be welcome in most GRPs. For example, GRP3 would provide a unique opportunity to link much more closely with local universities to provide degree students the opportunity to do field research. ICRAF has lots of long term field sites – especially through ASB – yet the potential for these to be used as capacity building resources is not presented. Capacity building seems to be seen more as producing knowledge or tools and not in terms on mentoring people working on the ground in real life situations.

In the following the SC offers the specific comments on the new Projects. In general the Council suggests that more attention be paid to the vertical integration from the policy level work through to the on-the-ground work in benchmark sites and landscapes and the synergies between the Projects more clearly recognized and subsequently exploited.

GRP1 (*Domestication, utilization and conservation of superior AF germplasm*) deals with germplasm (with potentially clear IPG nature) and seed systems. The seed system work acknowledged as non-SP but the justification for why ICRAF includes it is weak. It is difficult to assess the relevance of the germplasm work for several reasons: Prioritizing species for focus is necessary, but the process for doing so is not clear in the MTP and identifying these species would seem a sub-project of its own; Research is planned in no less than 28 countries; The constraints to impact seem formidable, and the outputs do not follow from a clear analysis of what can and should be done. For example, the output “improved tree germplasm and associated information developed through appropriate methods” and output target “germplasm of high-value tree species domesticated in partnership with smallholder farmers in two regions” are not realistic and progress cannot be monitored.

GRP2 (*Maximizing on-farm productivity of trees and agroforestry systems*) is productivity oriented and in line with the SPs. The outputs should have more specificity and derive more logically from the narrative. Better targeting is needed by first identifying where production systems are most in need for agroforestry approaches. It is difficult to see how, without component research, know how to improve water-use efficiency or tree management guidelines will be generated. ICRAF's role in the multiple activities being offered is not clear, and it should stay in the upstream part of the research. There are good opportunities for IPGs but the plan for generating them and what they specifically will be should be strengthened.

GPR3 (*Improving tree product marketing for smallholders*) is relevant to the ICRAF mandate and in line with the SPs. Its IPG nature is good but the investment may not be sufficient. The overview succinctly analyses the marketing problems and constraints leading to the planned outputs that are both logical and seem to have been generated in a broad consultation. The IPG outcomes are well presented. Testing on the ground is a strength in this Project. However, the boundary between research and development is somewhat blurred in this program. It seems to reflect too much of a planned approach to rural markets. It underestimates the power of market systems and the entrepreneurial capacity of rural people. The emphasis ought to shift more to understanding the obstacles to the emergence of effective markets – governments and sectoral agencies are often the problem and not the solution.

GRP 4 (*Reducing risks to land health and targeting agroforestry interventions to enhance land productivity and food availability*) deals with surveillance of land. It looks very supply driven and the impact pathways are weak which reduces its credibility. The rationale is simple: we don't know enough and need better tools to assess land health. A state of the art statement for this program would be helpful. One would expect some of the research questions having already been addressed. In cases where this is not so it is important that this research be done at the highest possible level of science to produce the IPGs, that clearly could be gleaned from this kind of research, but whether this is ICRAF's role is questionable. In the absence of clear direct link to agroforestry the rationale for ICRAF to be involved in research such as involved for creating output 1 (Effective land health surveillance methods developed) is not clear, despite ICRAF having worked in the NIR methodology. The activity that far transcends the role of ICRAF and even if successful is unlikely to much relevance to guiding agroforestry interventions. The second output (Land health risks assessed and agroforestry interventions to reduce and reverse land degradation well targeted) is conditional on the first. The output targets seem out of synchrony where achieving some is a condition for attempting others.

GRP5 (*Improving the ability of farmers, ecosystems and governments to cope with climate change*) is well thought out and plausible – it constitutes a helpful evolution of earlier ICRAF work in this field. The field is very crowded and topical and the MTP sets out the ICRAF's comparative advantage well. The Projects linkages with the future Climate Change CP should be shown and ICRAF should build on others' expertise on, for example, policy area. This Project has good potential to produce IPGs; attention however needs to be paid to the fact that many adaptation and mitigation actions may be regional and local

GRP6 (*Developing policies and incentives for multifunctional landscapes with trees that provide environmental services*) is highly topical and relevant to the SPs and likely to generate IPGs. It represents about ¼ of the total ICRAF resources, and therefore the expectations will be commensurate. The logic of the project is convincing and builds on considerable experience that was gained in two earlier ICRAF Projects. The activities proposed are in line with needs and the financial means set for them are reasonable. It reflects the new emphasis on landscape management, ecosystem services and the role of trees in multi-functional landscapes. All the outputs are relevant and firmly within ICRAF's mandate. A good number of IPGs can be expected. The presentation of potential impacts is, however,

lacking.

In the logframes the output targets should be specifically linked to output to facilitate monitoring. The clarity is overall acceptable, but the clarity and measurability of output targets varies. For example output targets in GRP2 (for output 1) and GRP3 are reasonably specific and verifiable, while output targets in GRP 5 lack clarity and could be improved also in GRP6. Some of the output targets (GRP 1, output 2; GRP 3) represent a large investment relative to their research content. Although the outcome statements are appropriate, the impact statements are weak. Impact pathway descriptions are not adequate except in GRPs 5 and 6. Proper impact work should be easily facilitated by ICRAF's long-term benchmark sites to detect for example the impact of high level policy work. There needs to be some indication of impact domains – GRP4 could provide this and GRP6 could include impact assessment.

ICRAF presents an impressive array of partners for all its GRPs and partners' roles are quite clear in GRPs 2-4. However, the nature of the relations with NARS is not adequately presented, which does not necessarily reflect the reality with ICRAF. There is no indication of real meta-research programs that involve NARS partners in genuine collaborative action research. These partners are portrayed more as recipients of knowledge and training. In GRP5 the NARS interaction with ICRAF could really be explained; how and it what roles. The ARI partners are prominent in the descriptions. The SWEPS receive very little attention in this MTP. Surprisingly, ASB has exclusive focus on climate change when it would more appropriately seem to serve a ground truthing role – places where impact could be measured. Its SWEPS nature should be strengthened and complementarity with CIFOR and the Climate Change CP explained.

The SC hopes to see more clarity on research focus in the new programs, i.e. what is being done and the quality of partnerships and on output and impact pathway formulation in the MTP 2010-12 which it will review in-depth.

## **WORLD AGROFORESTRY CENTER RESPONSE**

The World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) greatly appreciated the advice received on our new strategy and medium term research agenda presented during the Science Council's 9<sup>th</sup> meeting in Nairobi in March 2009. We are pleased that the sharpened focus, interdependence of projects, IPG orientation and livelihood-environment nexus have come across more clearly in our latest MTP.

Notwithstanding the high congruence of our MTP to CGIAR Strategic Priorities (86%) we do recognize the difficulties in uniquely assigning work to any single sub-SP. Whilst we accept the recommendation to strengthen SP4D, our interest and investment in this sub-SP should not be assessed solely by indicative budgetary allocations given to one SP considering the overlapping nature of other SPs (e.g. . SP4A and SP4C). At 14% of our SP allocated secured finance to SP4D this investment is also non-trivial.

The suggestion to highlight capacity building more explicitly throughout the MTP is well taken although a formal description at the higher order project output level for each GRP may be difficult. The distinction between capacity building and training in NRM work is also not absolute and our million dollar plus non-SP allocation to mentoring/training is significant.

The specific comments of the Science Council on the new Projects are taken as well intentioned, although we understand we still have some way to go in convincing SC of the peculiarities and impacts of research on perennials and landscape level processes. We agree that seeking greater vertical integration (as well as horizontal integration across disciplines) from the policy level work

through to the on-the-ground work should be more clearly recognized and subsequently exploited. We would welcome the chance to provide greater justification for the less well understood areas (e.g. tree seed system work) although the non-SP work has no avenue for that in the on-line or off-line submission templates of the MTP.

In GRP1, GRP2 and GRP3, points about tree species prioritization do require greater elaboration as does that on water use efficiency and rural tree product markets. We disagree that there is a sharp boundary between research and development though and seek to demonstrate this in our new strategy with the refreshed paradigm of “knowledge to action”. Advice to concentrate on the IPG generation is well taken. GRP4 is perhaps our least understood project by the SC, and we accept a tighter articulation and more explicit links to livelihoods problems would help. Nonetheless, research donors who do understand it are increasing investments to land health assessments and interventions. We are pleased that ICRAF is recognized as a major player in Climate Change by the Science Council, and we acknowledge we must also share more of our policy level work undertaken with UNFCCC to gain awareness and appreciation of our efforts ([http://unfccc.int/essential\\_background/library/items/3599.php?rec=j&preref=500004765#beg](http://unfccc.int/essential_background/library/items/3599.php?rec=j&preref=500004765#beg)). Equally, we acknowledge that sharpening up the impacts for GRP6 is required. Comments on Output Target clarity are similarly well taken.

We look forward to enhanced interactions with the Science Council on our research agenda of the type and nature enjoyed during the SC09 meeting in Nairobi. That we differ in opinion on some conceptual, methodological and interpretative aspects is a healthy state amongst scientists. With the change management processes underway we look forward to more Science Counsel from the system to enable positive transformations of livelihoods and landscapes in the tropics.

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## **WORLD FISH CENTER**

WorldFish Center’s research portfolio continues to be concentrated on two major development challenges: developing resilient small-scale fisheries and sustainable aquaculture development. The Center has regrouped and consolidated the projects in the present MTP from the previous eight to six as a reflection of the matrix management research structure adopted in 2005 and in response to the SC commentary on the MTP 2008-2010 (P1-*Global drivers of change*, P2-*Markets and trade*, P3-*Multi-level and multi-scale governance*, P4-*Improving sustainable aquaculture technologies*, P5-*Aquaculture and the environment*, P6-*Resilience in practice for small-scale fisheries*). There is better integration of projects within each of the major challenges although it is not quite clear where the points of departure are from the previous project portfolio. The Center has over the past six years been in transition and change and can now state: “the basic structure of the Center’s MTP will remain stable until after the next EPMR”.

The MTP provides an excellent description of the role of small scale fisheries (SSF) and aquaculture in responding to development challenges and the strategy that WorldFish proposes to address them. The research projects and outputs contribute particularly to CGIAR research priorities 4B (managing aquatic ecosystems for food and livelihoods) and 3C (enhancing income through increased productivity of fisheries and aquaculture). The research also addresses water productivity (4C) and sustainable agro-ecological intensification (4D) through MTP P1 and P5, and with smaller contribution conservation strategies (1D). The Center has made a conscious effort for its projects and outputs to contribute to policy- and investment-oriented advice.

Each project has an informative narrative which provides the specific rationale and the regional and country foci in a convincing manner. The Center has planned new and promising research, for example under P1. Besides the immediate outputs, this project is likely to provide or open up new

avenues for strategic research and substantial investments in new science, and to benefit the countries in SSA, Asia and the Pacific which are the focus of WorldFish activities. Addressing these challenges will require new science investments, well-conceived, science-based, simultaneous responses on multiple scales, from global and national, to regional and local, and what is envisaged in the present MTP is only the tip of the ice-berg.

The SC is concerned that in the major revision of the MTP, the articulation of the plans for training and capacity building (previously old projects 4 and 8) seems to have suffered. The Center implicitly recognizes the necessity for capacity building in the narratives (e.g. in projects of direct participatory nature) or through distance learning course modules, networks etc. The MTP is not explicit of how these will occur and activities seem to be deferred to a later date. The SC urges the Center to be more concrete in the next MTP.

The narratives on IPGs are mostly generic in content. IPGs will mostly be generated via various publications to advise stakeholders and influence policy. Two projects are more specific: in P1 it is also mentioned that this process will aim to integrate the fisheries sector into mainstream development policy analysis, where it has been traditionally neglected; in P6 global information systems such as ReefBase and FishBase are also seen as a mechanism for production of IPGs. However, several of the products of the present MTP are national and regional public goods and a “single-location implementation strategy” is adopted in the design and execution of several of the activities: for example integrated aquaculture-agriculture in Malawi, water productivity in Egypt and several regional activities (wetlands and floodplain fisheries for example) in several projects. This situation makes generalizations more difficult. Furthermore, there are few indications on the processes for scaling-up and scaling-out of these activities. There is also the dilemma of whether selective case examples will lead to comprehensive guidelines. With comparative analysis across basins, WorldFish would be in an enviable position to enrich international knowledge on the key issues on floodplain fisheries. Better definition of country involvement may elucidate this: for example, if WorldFish and its partners targeted all the lacustrine countries of the Chad Basin a major research output on ‘Strategies for developing a cooperative governance framework’ for such fisheries could result.

The outputs and output targets are sufficiently ambitious both in terms of new science and the use of known science. In view of the strong and varied partnerships and indications of the necessary resources, the outputs and output targets seem feasible, with possibly the exception of P1, a relatively new frontier for WorldFish. In P6 (which otherwise has both clear and measurable output targets), assuming that both freshwater and coastal environments are covered (not indicated), constraints such as limited capacity of new partners may reduce the feasibility of timely delivery of results. Most targets are in general clear enough for tracking progress, but easily measurable (consisting of analyses, assessments, studies, models and reviews etc). Targeting specific regions (in some cases) is commendable.

This MTP has enhanced emphasis on impact pathways. It provides a statement of the Center’s intention to use development impact roadmaps to array desired development outcomes and impacts and to define within this context the roles and responsibilities of WorldFish and its partners. A roadmap (p 7-10) is fleshed out further in each of the project descriptions. Research is being planned on an action basis based on development challenges rather than asking how research leads to impact, which should be a complementary consideration, P1 has a good narrative on the impact pathways involved (with a useful illustration on p 23) but it lacks specificity about institutions or development actors to be involved, and the political strategies and means of engagement to reach the objectives. It is positive that WorldFish is planning to increase communications and policy linkages to enhance impacts along the pathways or roadmaps, which seems appropriate. The impact statements in the logframe are mostly generic and repetitious. However, the Center is planning to systematically

enhance its approach to impact assessment to include explicit impact assessment protocols on all large projects to be in a better position to learn from previous efforts.

All the project narratives reflect the importance of partnerships to conduct research, disseminate the products and enhance achievement of development outcomes. To ensure that it meets its goals, the Center is developing partnerships with strong ARIs leaders in specific subject areas and envisages strengthening its partnership with NGOs and regional and sub-regional bodies. There are encouraging linkages with FAO which will help enhance the Center's influence in global guidelines and better dissemination of its products. The Center's role in research (as a leader or research or otherwise) is indicated, and the tabular presentation of the partners and their roles is clear. P2, where partners work on food safety/product quality, provides a good example. With regard to the few areas where it is a facilitator, it is unclear how this will be achieved. There are continuing project links with IWMI (and IFPRI) the likely implications of the CPWF for WorldFish programs are not clear.

The responses to the last EPMR are detailed in a separate section and indicate that, with the exception of the review of the "new research structure" which is envisaged to be undertaken in 2009, the Center has now completely implemented the recommendations of the last EPMR.

There has been significant improvement in this MTP. The emphasis placed on studying global drivers of change, the importance given to policy and institutions in the context of access issues and on environmental health and services in regard to resilient small-scale fisheries and sustainable aquaculture development, particularly in freshwater environments, is commendable. WorldFish is considered to be moving in the right direction but still needs to improve in a realistic manner the spread/magnitude of its activities and of its NARS partners (particularly in SSA) to be able to deliver products that cover a wide range of different types of development situations strategically.

The SC recommends that WorldFish will add specificity to the key components of the MTP that still are rather generic, in order to improve the MTP for monitoring purposes. The SC will not review the MTP in depth in 2009.

## **WORLD FISH RESPONSE**

The Center welcomes the SC commentary which we found very useful. It highlights areas of progress since the previous MTP but identifies a number of areas where the MTP can be further improved, in particular through further clarification and specificity. We agree with much of this analysis and will work to address these and other issues in future MTPs. Particular attention will be given to the following areas:

- IPGs. The Center recognizes that current narratives on IPGs are generic and we will seek to improve the specificity of these. In doing so we will seek to clarify how we see our work building IPGs from research in specific sites, in particular by learning from comparative analyses across multiple sites.
- Training and capacity building. The MTP has treated training and capacity building as a cross cutting issue and described how we will pursue this systematically. However we will in future improve specificity where possible in each of the MTP projects.
- Impact pathways. In summarizing the impact pathways for each project the MTP has not given specific details of "political strategies and means of engagement" with development actors that are required. We will seek to address this in the next MTP.

- Regional scale of activities. We agree that the Center can improve the regional spread of our activities so as to “cover a wide range of different types of development situations strategically”. This is an ongoing focus, although the speed of doing so will be constrained by availability of funding.

Finally we should like to clarify that the six MTP projects addressing the two Development Challenges are not “a reflection of the Center’s matrix research structure” as suggested by the Commentary. We have organized the MTP into six projects because they make sense independently of our organizational structure, and will be pursued through interdisciplinary research that draws on all three of the Center’s science disciplines and will be active in all six of the regions in which the Center works.

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## **GENERATION (GCP)**

The Generation Challenge Program MTP 2009-2011 has been prepared following its first external review (CPER) and an overhaul of its management structures. The newly established Executive Board (EB), which oversaw the preparation of this MTP, became operational alongside the Program Steering Committee earlier this year. Within the earlier Project structure (five subprograms, SP) the MTP shows changes in response to the recommendations of the CPER. They are aimed at integrating the SPs better; in SP3 (trait capture for crop improvement) building on research previously done on SP1 (genetic diversity) and SP2 (gene discovery); validating the first outputs and products; focusing overall on key crops and selected target environments. To respond to the CPER’s key recommendation on focus, the GCP has identified seven “challenge initiatives” to address specific crop/trait/region challenges. Identifying clear impact indicators at program level (for impact evaluation by 2013) is in progress, with plans to finalize them in 2009. Research planning and monitoring are also being improved.

A significant number of outputs were completed in 2008, and any changes at the output level are explicitly described and justified. The decrease in the overall number of outputs for this MTP seems to indicate GCP’s move towards a sharpened focus in the research portfolio. As in the previous MTPs, delays in some outputs have been reported. While the past delays have been mainly due to the failure of EU funding, the current delays are mostly attributed to administrative (e.g. staff turnover, delay in project start) and other factors. To fully implement the CPER’s recommendations related to focus the CP needs to use its funding tools (competitive and commissioned grants, focus projects) effectively to steer direction and the several new initiatives listed in the MTP seem appropriate. However, the process will take some time and that would explain why many output targets for 2010-11 are still to be determined.

SC was pleased with GCP’s immediate response to many of the CPER’s recommendations. Recommendation 4, that steps are taken to ensure that GCP’s collections will be maintained and distributed beyond the life of the CP, is vital and SC looks forward to seeing the outcome of the upcoming workshop to ‘sensitize’ curators to these needs. However SC hopes that this curation will extend to all of GCP’s germplasm and genomics products beyond just the reference collections.

The GCP MTP forms good basis for internal planning and monitoring and it shows satisfactory implementation of the CPER’s recommendations. The SC endorses the MTP without need of further comments and will not review the MTP 2010-2012 in detail.

## **GCP RESPONSE**

The Challenge Program acknowledged the SC Commentary.

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## **HARVEST PLUS CHALLENGE PROGRAM**

The HarvestPlus Challenge Program MTP 2009-2011 has improved significantly from the 2008-2010 MTP, and is an excellent plan for a first-class program. The MTP reflects changes corresponding to the CPER recommendations.

The relevance, IPGs, and the comparative advantage are all well articulated. H+CP is building up considerable comparative advantage and not just in biofortification but in general breeding and varietal release. The program has targeted specific countries for early release of particular varieties and crops and is building capacity for that to happen. The approach to evaluate marker assisted selection (MAS) holistically through the MAS program is also noteworthy. The SC encourages such effort if the CP decides that the solution involves a single facility across crops (or complete outsourcing) because the same could apply to CGIAR breeding programs in general and new ways of thinking are needed.

The SC notes that the H+CP has morphed into a 15 year program. The SC is concerned of this trend to plan CPs as long-term programs, but accepts that the compelling justifications for adjusting the duration of the CP in order to secure delivery of results for sustainable outcomes. The SC will only comment on the MTP next year if there are significant changes.

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## **WATER AND FOOD CHALLENGE PROGRAM.**

Due to the need to readjust the research portfolio for Phase 2 and the change in program governance, the Challenge Program will submit its MTP by mid-November.

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## **SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CHALLENGE PROGRAM (SSA CP)**

The SSA-CP MTP offers a good overview of the changes made as a result of the external review and the SC's previous MTPs commentaries. The Program has responded seriously and positively to all previous assessments. The SSA CP was set in motion in January 2005. It has undergone several design changes since then. There are three major research questions which the CP has now embraced to try to produce empirical evidence for IAR4D. The SC is pleased to see that this MTP includes a thorough discussion of significant research activities. In addition, capacity building, which is a key in any IAR4D project, has now been made more explicit by the creation of a post-doc program. Also, SROs are now more involved in the implementation of the Pilot Learning Sites (PLS).

The current MTP makes a strong case for the need of a "proof of concept" of the IAR4D. FARA has taken the challenge seriously and has created a framework that has a chance of resolving the issue. The SSA-CP has done so by adding a cross-cutting project to their portfolio that addresses directly the criticism of previous MTPs and the external review of the program. The process has led to some delays in the implementation of the program so that an assessment of the results will now have to wait until 2010. The promised outputs of the new projects are directly relevant to the "proof of concept" challenge. The regional projects become subsidiary to this framework.

The individual regional projects as well as the one overarching project titled "the Meta Analysis Project" are all aligned to CG priorities. Centers appear heavily involved in the SSA CP with several Centers providing leadership to site projects in the three agroecological zones. Other Centers host members of the (cross-site research support) oversight teams involving significant in-kind resource

commitments by these Centers. Training and mentoring of member NARS scientists appears to be a central component of the program, with a deliberate effort taken to involve NARS scientists in each region to be part of the experience and to be participants in all aspects of the program with an eye on sustainability of the newly learned approaches and experiences.

The SSA-CP now stresses the “proof of concept” as the key IPG that will be delivered. The innovations of the PLSs are now a means to an end and are no longer claimed to be the key IPGs (although it is not precluded that they might be eventually). Annex 1 offers a good overview of the thinking that has gone into meeting the “proof of concept” challenge. The proponents are aware of the shortcomings, but argue convincingly that this approach is doable and verifiable. The SC considers that the proposed approach is plausible.

The new “meta analysis project” provides a framework for extracting information and knowledge (experiences) from each of the 36 “innovation platforms” within the three participating PLSs, the results of which are expected to offer IPGs of relevance for wide distribution. It is not clear what the particular sets of indicator variables are that will be analyzed.

The research planning of the SSA-CP has been streamlined, largely along the lines proposed in the external review with overall oversight transferred to the FARA board. SROs have been given regional responsibility of implementation-management. The individual projects at each PLS have supposedly been integrated (although only the East Africa PLS explicitly states so).

The outputs and output targets of the cross-cutting project are well defined. Overall, the outputs and output targets appear ambitious considering that these will be results to be extracted from the experiences comparing an aspect of IAR4D with conventional approaches. The PLS outputs and output targets are less so. However, for the PLSs to make their contribution, the innovation platforms have to be functional, which is the key output defined by the PLSs. All PLSs claim more or less the same outputs and output targets, which well reflects the cohesion that has been brought into the SSA-CP. None of the PLS outputs and output targets refer to the counterfactual sites that are crucial for the cross-cutting project to function. As a result it is unclear who has responsibility for selecting and monitoring these sites. This should be spelled out.

The document is clear and convincing when it describes the potential impact of research, if the SSA-CP can indeed prove that IAR4D tops traditional (linear) programs of agricultural development assistance. The list of participants and partners is impressive and the partnerships take into account the suggestion by the external review to involve more of the private sector. The impact pathways for each of the PLS projects is tied to the Meta Analysis Project which involves analysis of data pooled from each of the PLS projects to offer evidence for the value of IAR4D over conventional research approaches. However, since the specific pathway is not laid out, the expected outputs and outcomes as well as the potential for the research approach and the gains to be made are unknown. If and when deployable outcomes are obtained, there appear to be sufficient road blocks such as “ lack of political will and support, NARS capacity, available local investments, etc “ that may discourage the utility of these outputs. The MTP write up does not suggest if efforts are being exerted to remove those road blocks.

There appears to be well rationalized partnerships among the many Centers (IITA, CIAT, ILRI, WARDA, IFPRI, ICRAF, ICRISAT, IWMI, and Bioversity), ARIs, CSO, and NARS in the so-called cross-site research support team. The Centers have been given lead roles for the sub-project taskforces, and the ARI (IFDC, ICRA, ECART, etc) are designated team members. In addition Farmer Organizations, NGOs, CBOs, NARES, and members of the private sector have been designated as having roles in the IAR4D initiative. It is not clear how all of this is orchestrated to deliver the

anticipated synergy, however.

Given the considerable progress made as is evident in this MTP, the SC does not plan to review the SSA-CP MTP in detail next year.

## **SSA CP RESPONSE**

FARA greatly appreciates the Commentary made by the SC on the 2009-10 MTP submitted for the SSA CP. As rightly indicated in the Commentary, the 2009-10 MTP directly presents a research methodology to rigorously prove the concept of the IAR4D as we have been directed by the SC. The Commentary by the SC shows a deep understanding of our Program and this understanding could only have come through a thorough review of our new MTP.

The Commentary rightly indicated in paragraph 1 that our new MTP included a thorough discussion of significant research activities. This only confirms the fact that the IAR4D approach can indeed serve the whole of the ARD continuum. I also noted the comment in paragraph 3 of the Commentary which is related to the engagement of the CGIAR centers by the SSA CP. This engagement which has been described in the Commentary as “heavy” again underlines another advantage that could be derived from the multistakeholder and multi-institutional nature of the IAR4D concept. The CGIAR is a formidable force in the ARD terrain in Africa and SSA CP appropriately recognizes this strength and engages them accordingly. In addition to the CGIAR however, SSA CP also effectively engages other stakeholders with complementary strength with the whole intention of triggering off innovation and sustaining it. It is our strong belief that partnerships of this nature are necessary to enhance the reach of the CGIAR Centers in Africa.

The concerns in the Commentary concerning the indicators, counterfactuals and impact pathways have been noted with appreciation. However, I wish to assure you that we have developed a robust list of indicators to aid the qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the progress made through the use of the IAR4D approach. These indicators have recently been used for the baseline survey and will be used again in the future to monitor progress. Progress in IAR4D will be measured using the “with and without” and “before and after” data. The former will be captured through comparison with counterfactual sites of two types covering both the cases of non-intervention by research and development agents and those of the conventional practices. The concern about impact pathways and possible “roadblocks” is also such that could be easily taken care of by the IAR4D approach. This is another direct benefit of its multi-institutional nature. A thorough pre-experimental analysis of communities and stakeholders in an IAR4D approach clearly shows agencies that could constitute ‘roadblocks’ such as the ones listed in the Commentary. These agencies are supposed to be effectively engaged in the formation of the Innovation Platform and the Innovation Cluster for IAR4D. The Innovation platform and cluster ensure that all such partners and agencies participate in the achievement of common understanding of the problem, joint analysis and identification of joint strategies, formulation of joint action plans, implementation of joint action plans and institutionalizing of a new way of doing things.

FARA appreciates the thoroughness and the objectivity of the review. We thank the Science Council for the robust interactions we have had this far while we look forward to further interactions as we go on with the proof of the concept of the IAR4D as an alternative approach with a lot of promises for improving outcomes and impact of ARD.