

Response of IPGRI's Board of Trustees and Management to the report of the Centre's Fifth External Programme and Management Review

1. IPGRI's Board and Management expresses its sincere thanks to the Panel and wishes to place on record its appreciation for the very constructive and analytical approach the Panel took towards its task. The review was comprehensive, forward-looking and addressed the major issues facing the Centre as it moves into a new phase of its existence. The Panel demonstrated an excellent appreciation of the highly complex and rapidly changing environment in which IPGRI operates, and through its recommendations and many valuable suggestions, has contributed substantially to our on-going efforts to position IPGRI for the future.

General Observations

2. We are delighted that the Panel recognizes the importance of IPGRI's mission and that we are "set to remain at the centre of one of the most important efforts mankind is making to ensure the long-term sustainability of the planet". We fully share this perspective.
3. We are very pleased to note the strong endorsement of the Panel for the way IPGRI conducts its business. IPGRI does not operate as a 'conventional' Future Harvest Centre in that it has no fields or laboratories of its own, but seeks to catalyze, promote, support and backstop the work of others. Partnerships are a central feature of IPGRI's programme and we have made substantial progress in institutionalizing our partnership arrangements. We are happy that the Panel conducted a thorough review of this and gave a positive endorsement of our efforts, recognizing the value and effectiveness of operating as an 'honest broker'. The partner survey conducted by the Panel has provided some useful feedback and justifies additional analysis that will undoubtedly help IPGRI to further strengthen its partnerships in the future.
4. We are also very pleased with the Panel's assessment of the quality of our work, and in particular of the science we are conducting. Operating in the way we do, the impression is sometimes created that IPGRI is not involved in research but is in effect purely a technical support organization. While support to the national programmes is our main *raison d'être*, we strongly believe that in order to be effective in this we need to be at the forefront of science. The Panel has cited many examples of where this is the case and indeed noted that IPGRI is "a world leader in its field and its scientists command the respect of their peers". We recognize that maintaining this scientific credibility is essential to our *modus operandi*. Furthermore, many of the difficult problems confronting the conservation of genetic diversity, and its use as a tool for social and economic development, require the application of the very best that science has to offer.
5. We agree with the Panel, that many of IPGRI's management structures and procedures have not kept pace with the rapid growth of the institute, and that

some adjustment is needed to best position IPGRI for the further growth anticipated. The relatively informal structures that served the institute well when we had a staff of about 100 and an annual budget of \$19 million, as was the case at the start of this review period, are less appropriate now that we have nearly 280 staff members in 27 countries and an annual budget approaching \$30 million.

6. We would also like to underscore the point raised by the Panel concerning the negative effects on IPGRI of a declining percentage of our income being unrestricted. While our total budget has increased substantially, unrestricted funding has declined. This has put considerable stress on a number of aspects of IPGRI's work that have traditionally been covered from such sources and for which it is hard to secure restricted support. PGRI joins the Panel in calling on the donor community to bear this in mind when allocating resources to the Centre.
7. With the completion of this external review and the appointment of a new Director General, this is clearly an appropriate time for IPGRI to embark on a new strategic planning exercise. Thus we intend to initiate a process very soon of looking anew at our programme priorities and the strategies by which we address them. This will involve extensive consultations with a large number of partners, from all those stakeholder groups that have a role in helping to set our agenda. The planning exercise will build further upon the Global Plan of Action, which itself was developed through a highly consultative process in which IPGRI was heavily involved. It is intended to complete this exercise by the end of 2004.
8. The report contains a wealth of thoughtful, wise and helpful suggestions. Far too many, in fact, to be able to comment on them all here. However, we have taken stock of these suggestions and have developed a timetable and process for addressing them. In the following paragraphs we confine our comments mainly to the 12 formal recommendations of the report.

Response to the EPMR Recommendations

9. Recommendation 1

We agree with the Panel's recommendation that we not spread our efforts too thinly and identify a number of key topics of critical importance to the conservation and use of genetic diversity on which to focus our research. The process of identifying appropriate topics will be a part of the proposed strategic planning exercise. Priority will be given to those topics that require a holistic approach, and that are of critical importance to resource poor communities and the weaker national programmes.

10. Recommendation 2

IPGRI agrees with this recommendation and will undertake across-region analyses of forest genetic resources data in collaboration with appropriate partners.

11. Recommendation 3

We fully agree with this recommendation and note that the recent appointment of new Directors General at all three institutes - CIFOR, ICRAF

and IPGRI – presents an excellent opportunity to take stock of existing collaborative arrangements and activities and to develop new ones.

12. Recommendation 4

We believe that good progress has been made during the period of the review with integrating INIBAP within IPGRI. Nevertheless, we fully agree with the Panel that more should be done, especially to capture greater synergies between the work of the INIBAP and PGR programmes, both thematically and in the regions. We note all of the Panel's helpful suggestions contained within this recommendation and will take them fully into account as we further address this issue within the context of developing the new strategic plan for the whole of the institute.

13. Recommendation 5

We very much welcome this recommendation. While it was made in the context of our work on *Musa*, we foresee the need for a clear policy and guidelines on GMOs for the whole of IPGRI. We have already played a significant role in helping to shape the Future Harvest Centres' collective position on GMOs, and we intend to continue to do so as this position evolves further. We are currently looking into the implications for genetic resources conservation of GM technology (e.g. the extent of geneflows between different populations) and recognize that our work on *Musa* offers an ideal basis for the further development of our overall policies and strategies regarding GMOs.

14. Recommendation 6

We fully accept this recommendation and are actively trying to secure the necessary resources to support the position of a full time economist at headquarters. In recruiting for this position we will be seeking someone with considerable experience of social as well as economic issues. We also agree with the suggestion of the Panel that we work even more closely with IFPRI in addressing certain key economic issues of importance to our overall work on genetic resources.

15. Recommendation 7

IPGRI agrees with this recommendation, and considers it to be fully in line with our intended future work programme on policy. Advice on genetic resources policies, regulations and legislation is one of the most frequent requests of our national programme partners. Foremost in this are requests for advice on the ITPGRFA and related provisions of the CBD – especially on access and benefit-sharing.

16. Recommendation 8

We agree with this recommendation and will look into ways in which we can most cost-effectively achieve greater inter-regional collaboration. Our intention to have videoconferencing facilities in all our Regional Offices in the near future should contribute positively to our ability to meet this objective.

17. Recommendation 9

We recognize that there is need for a careful assessment of the balance of staff time devoted to leading and participating in research on the one hand, and undertaking fund-raising, project management and technical assistance on the other. This balance will receive attention in the context of the strategic planning exercise.

18. Recommendation 10

We accept this recommendation in principle. While recognizing the need to maintain the critical distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the Board and management, we fully accept that a more formal relationship between the two is needed. We will consider in detail the many helpful sub-recommendations when the Board considers this issue in more depth at its next meeting.

19. Recommendation 11

We agree with the Panel that with the increase in size and complexity of IPGRI, there is a need for more formal planning and decision-making processes. Thus we accept this recommendation in principle. While it will be possible to implement some of the sub-recommendations almost immediately, others will be considered in more detail at the next Board meeting.

20. Recommendation 12

We fully agree that there is an urgent need for extra senior staff time to be devoted to resource mobilization and donor relations. While some short-term solutions should be possible, the details of how IPGRI will implement this recommendation in the longer-term will be addressed in the strategic planning exercise.

Conclusions

21. We note the observations of the panel in the concluding chapter concerning the future of ISNAR. IPGRI stands ready to consider whatever assistance, if any, the Board of ISNAR and the CGIAR as a whole deem appropriate.

22. We appreciate the very positive tone of the whole report, and especially as reflected in the concluding chapter. We are pleased that the Panel considers that IPGRI has a bright future, a view we fully share. Taking into account the Panel's recommendations, with the continued support of our many donors, and in collaboration with our many and diverse partners, it is our firm intention to make this bright future a reality.

Benchaphun Shinawatra Ekasingh
Chair, Board of Trustees

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Director General

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