

**CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH**

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## Science Council Strategy

At the last ExCo in October 2004, I reported to you on a number of exciting programmatic and personnel developments within the SC and its Secretariat. As you may recall, I also presented the five elements of the SC strategy that would lead us towards a more cohesive and more sharply focused research program of the CGIAR. Let me re-state these five key elements:

1. Identify a small number of key CGIAR System Priorities that focus on problems for which the CGIAR is likely to have the greatest impact;
2. Implement new monitoring and evaluation processes that give more emphasis to self-evaluation and Board accountability;
3. Measure performance in terms of progress towards achieving the goals of the CGIAR, on the basis of Medium-Term Plans (MTPs) and logframes;
4. Improve the quality of Center, Systemwide Program and Challenge Program MTPs and logframes as a basis for better planning and performance appraisal (linked to System Priorities); and
5. Contribute to CGIAR programmatic alignment (linked to the current activities of the two task forces for Sub-Saharan Africa).

I am pleased to report that we have just concluded our Third Meeting of the Council and that we have made significant progress in virtually every one of these five areas. Some notable achievements and milestones are highlighted below.

### ***CGIAR System Priorities: A research portfolio to help achieving the MDGs***

Through an exhaustive Science Council-led process of participatory information gathering, analysis, synthesis, and debate, a set of 20 research priorities for the CGIAR, organized within five priority areas, have been identified by the Council and submitted for your approval. This finalizes a three-year process of hard work in consultation with researchers, CDC, CBC, NARS, CG Members and many others in a highly participatory and transparent process of listening to stakeholders.

Three key criteria were employed to help identify the priorities: (i) the expected impact on poverty alleviation, food security and nutrition, and sustainable management of natural resources; (ii) the international public goods nature of the research; and (iii) the CGIAR's comparative advantage in undertaking research, given alternative sources of supply of the research.

Recent activities to finalize this strategic pillar for the CGIAR have included:

- a final expert consultation on priority areas via stakeholder meetings held at FAO in Jan-Feb (SC members, CG Center scientists and international experts -- approximately 30 participants per meeting) with resulting consolidation into five broad areas and 20 specific research priorities;
- refinements via interactions with the CDDC at ICRISAT in March and following comments received on earlier drafts from CGIAR Centers and a range of other stakeholders;
- SC member visits, briefings and discussions with a range of CG Members and in various forums;
- finalizing the process of identifying system priorities, through consolidation and narrowing of focus, at the SC3 meeting at IWMI during the first week of April.

The following five priority areas for CGIAR research resulted from the priority setting efforts:

1. Sustaining biodiversity for current and future generations;
2. Producing more and better food at lower costs through genetic improvements;
3. Reducing rural poverty through agricultural diversification and emerging opportunities for high-value commodities and products;
4. Poverty alleviation and sustainable management of water, land, and forest resources;
5. Improving policies and facilitating institutional innovation to support sustainable reduction of poverty and hunger.

The SC proposes that 80% of the total CGIAR funding be allocated to research activities within the 20 identified system priority areas; the remaining 20% could be utilized for other activities. The Council encourages Centers to use this to pursue exploratory work on promising strategic areas of research currently outside the system priorities, but it could also be used to support more applied research for development initiatives or for training activities independent of specific system priority research.

As soon as the new priorities are approved by the CGIAR, the SC will advise the centers to begin a 3-year process of adjusting their research portfolio to reflect the system priorities and reflect these adjustments in their MTPs beginning with the MTP to be prepared next year.

***Monitoring and evaluation processes: A more streamlined, cost-effective approach to Center-level monitoring and evaluation***

A new approach to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of CGIAR Centers has been proposed in the policy document “*New Monitoring and Evaluation System for the CGIAR Centers*”. Guidelines to implement forthcoming EPMRs have been made available to ExCo. This process establishes a continuum of evaluations starting from center self-assessment and ending in an external review of center programs and management. Although the standard terms of reference for EPMRs have not changed, the new M&E process relies on high quality center-commissioned external reviews (CCERs). Subsequently, EPMRs will be streamlined so that they build on the CCERs’ assessments. With input from the CBC and others, a set of principles for conducting CCERs are being finalized. We believe that in the future, EPMR panels should be identified on the basis of

their capacity to review priorities and strategies and management and governance issues, relying on the CCERs for more in-depth analysis.

With respect to the planning, organization and implementation of Center EPMRs and System-wide Program reviews:

- Panel reports from the 5<sup>th</sup> CIMMYT and 4<sup>th</sup> IFPRI EPMRs were considered at the SC3 meeting and are part of this meeting agenda;
- Panel report from the external review of the SWP on Alternatives to Slash and Burn will be presented to the Council at SC4 next September;
- Planning of the ICRAF, CIFOR and WorldFish Center EPMRs are underway and expected to be completed by early 2006;
- Planning for three more Center EPMRs (ILRI, IWMI, and ICARDA) to be implemented in 2006 is now beginning.

The SC is looking carefully at each Center EPMR, and with the help of the SC Secretariat will be compiling a comprehensive set of strategic issues from various sources, including the previous EPMR, MTP commentaries, and CCERs of the Center, and from SC members, CGIAR Secretariat, Center Board and Management and CGIAR members.

**Medium Term Plans: Improved guidelines for preparation**

New MTP guidelines have been prepared in collaboration with the CG Secretariat. The deadline for submitting Center and CP MTPs is 15<sup>th</sup> June 2005. SC members will read all MTPs, and Standing Panel members and consultants will assist in the review of specific MTPs as needed. A standard criteria framework, currently under development, will be applied. Three SC members have been assigned to oversee compilation of the Center MTP commentaries to ensure uniformity of the final report. The SC's report on Center and CP MTPs will be presented to ExCo in October. This schedule has only been made possible due to the change in dates of the Annual General Meeting, from late October to early December, thereby allowing the Science Council sufficient time to carry out a high-quality review of the MTPs. We appreciate the support ExCo gave us in this request.

**Planning and performance appraisal: Work on improving performance appraisal by the SC is underway and is now linked to the MTPs and, in the future, to System Priorities.**

During the pilot phase of the performance monitoring (PM) system, the Council, through a task force involving members of SPME and SPIA and SC Secretariat staff, is contributing to improving five PM system elements: output, outcome, impact, quality of research staff, and quality and relevance of programs. The output and outcome indicators will be based on the forthcoming Centers' Medium Term Plans 2006-08 to be reviewed by the Council. Thus, in this pilot year, the SC will examine the reported achievements on outputs and outcomes across the Centers and assess the quality, usefulness and effectiveness of these indicators as a measure of the performance at these levels. The SC, through SPIA, is currently reviewing the inputs from Centers on the two impact indicators and developing a mechanism for rating these. The

proposed indicator on program quality based on EPMR and CCER assessment needs to be further developed among a set of indicators for program quality and relevance. The SC will draw lessons from the pilot year and further develop indicators on research performance for use in 2006, but will not rate Center performance in this pilot year.

***CGIAR programmatic alignment: Finalization of the SSA joint Task Force report***

The CGIAR created two Task Forces (TFs) to propose rationalization of CGIAR operations across the System, starting with Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). TF1 was asked to examine the CGIAR's work in terms of its programmatic coherence, and TF2 to review the strengths and weaknesses of the existing organizational structure of the System. The two TFs decided to work together and prepared a joint report. Although the joint TF on SSA report is not a SC document, the SC chair and a SC member were actively involved, and other SC members have reviewed the final draft document and provided comments and suggestions for improvement. A final report from the TF has been submitted to ExCo. The report contains recommendations that identify opportunities for greater programmatic integration and synergies and organizational adjustments towards increasing effectiveness and efficiency of CGIAR research.

**Science Council Standing Panel Activities**

While the above five elements have been reported separately, I would like to emphasize the interdependent nature of many of these and other SC activities and the fact that all of these important actions should come together to help increase the impact of the CGIAR. The SC's Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation coordinates the work on policy and implementation of external reviews, MTPs and performance measurement.

In addition to the elements discussed before, there are other major activities within the SC related to the work of the other three standing panels, and I would like to report briefly on their progress.<sup>1</sup>

***Standing Panel on Impact Assessment***

The CGIAR *Impact Website* is now fully functional (<http://impact.cgiar.org/>). Work continues on updating and expansion, e.g. producing briefs and translations. Second drafts of the seven completed case studies of the *Impact from CGIAR Research on NRM* have been submitted and are now undergoing external peer-review. A book of the case studies, synthesis and other related chapters will be published at the end of 2005, and highlights of specific case study results will be presented at AGM '05. The *Training Evaluation and Impact Assessment* study is gearing up for extended field visits during May – June in Vietnam, Thailand, Kenya, Malawi, Cameroon, Bolivia and Ecuador. Ex-trainee and partner surveys are on-going. Work has just initiated on

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<sup>1</sup> See Table 2 for a detailed list of the status of all SC activities.

the *Impact of CGIAR and NARS Research in Africa* study (first phase) to collect, synthesize and assess the available evidence on the impacts of new technologies and improved policies as a result of CGIAR and partner agricultural research in SSA. The *Donor Needs and Uses of Evidence of Research Impact* study has just been completed, and a report is expected soon. A major finding of this study is that although *ex-post* IA is not a direct driver of specific funding decisions, the confidence in CGIAR capacity that *ex-post* IA findings impart appears to be of substantial importance for continued support to the System as a whole.

### ***Standing Panel on Mobilizing Science***

*A survey of CGIAR Centers on-going scientific collaboration* was conducted in late 2004 to analyze how the Council could enhance Center collaboration, what are the most effective mechanisms and how to build new scientific partnerships. Preliminary results (from 12 responding Centers) show extensive collaboration in the south and the north across a wide range of types of partners (NARIs, universities, ARIs, NGOs, private sector, etc.) and across different types of research. However, gap filling and more consistent information are required before a summary overview of Center collaboration can be assembled.

*Roster of experts.* To improve the status of the current roster, SPMS is developing a set of criteria (8 broad scientific areas, peer review committee, 6 weighted criteria, 2 stage rosters, specific CV format) to use for vetting candidates.

*Science for Agricultural Development 2005.* The Panel has organized a task force to support the preparation of this new Council-led publication, which we expect to launch at AGM05. A detailed annotated outline for this forthcoming publication has been produced, including the intended audience, the main messages from each chapter and a detailed timeline for the completion of the document. The Panel is finalizing the proposal to commission the main chapters of the study.

*Science Forum at AGM '05.* The Panel is organizing a one-day forum within the CGIAR Annual Meeting (December) to discuss recent trends in world science relevant for agricultural development.

### ***Standing Panel on Priorities and Strategies***

*Study on Animal and Fish Genetic Resources.* A joint report on the state of Animal and Fish genetic resources has been produced, including recommendations regarding opportunities for future CGIAR engagement with the fields of farm animal and fish genetic resources research in the areas of conservation, characterization, information and links to programs of genetic enhancement. Final document including SC commentary is under preparation.

*Biosafety.* The ExCo commentary on the Biosafety study was received in January 2005. A Centers' focal point (from IRRI) will lead a workshop to harmonize a proactive CGIAR approach to biosafety.

*Poverty mapping.* An evaluation of the current prospects of using poverty mapping in support of priority setting has been carried out.

Other on-going and planned activities relate to: *International Public Goods in an era of IPR, Food Safety Consideration in CGIAR Research, and Ethics and Science in the CGIAR.*

### **Science Council and SC Secretariat Staffing and Budget 2004-05 Update**

The SC Workplan and Budget 2004-05 was approved at ExCo-6 in May 2004. The Council and its Panels have been hard at work implementing an ambitious plan. The Secretariat of the SC is being strengthened by filling vacant positions and changing the composition of the support staff during the last quarter of 2004 and in the first semester of 2005. This will help implement a very comprehensive work plan ahead of us. In spite of two new major activities undertaken since the work plan was approved, the Secretariat estimates to end calendar year 2005 with a balanced budget.

#### ***SC Secretariat Professional and Administrative Staffing***

The Secretariat of the SC has been strengthened with the recent recruitment of the Executive Director and the approval at SC2 (September 2004) of a new Staffing Plan that calls for filling staff vacancies, a gradual increase in junior posts and a reduction of administrative positions at the Secretariat.

The current professional staffing in the Secretariat consists of the Executive Director (D-2 post filled in September 2004) and two Senior Officers (P-5 Level). A vacancy announcement to fill a third Senior Officer position that has been vacant for several years was posted in November 2004. The final five short-listed candidates from 150 applications were interviewed in January 2005 and an excellent candidate was identified to fill the post by July 2005. A fourth Senior Officer position has been vacant since July 2004 due to the extended sick leave of the incumbent. As the staff will retire as of 30 June 2005, the Secretariat is posting this vacancy in order to have a new Senior Officer on board by 1 July. Hence, all four Senior professional positions are expected to be in operation by 1 July 2005.

The new SC Staffing Plan approved a total of four Junior Professional positions (P-3 Level). Two of these positions were advertised early in 2005. Nine hundred and fifty applications were received, the selection process is being completed and it is expected that both positions will be filled by late June 2005. Due to budget constraints, the recruitment of two other Junior Professional positions has been postponed to 2006. A junior research assistant was hired (on a six-month renewable basis) early in 2005 to collaborate with several ongoing surveys, database improvement and Web site update.

At the moment the Secretariat is supported by two General Service staff (one at G-6 Level and one at G-5 Level). A Program Assistant post (G-6 Level) that had been vacant for more than five years was filled in February 2005 after a competitive process carried out within FAO during October-December 2004. The incumbent of a Secretarial position (G-5 Level) has been on extended sick leave since January 2005 and the post has been covered with temporary short term assistance. Two Clerk positions (G-4 Level) were abolished effective 1 January 2005 (as approved at SC2).<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, new management and the implementation of a new Staffing Plan are strengthening the Secretariat. However, the combination of extended sick leave of a Senior Officer and a Secretary and the somewhat slow process of redeploying administrative staff within FAO has created additional budget implications.

### *Science Council and SC Secretariat Budget*

The Work Program and Budget 2004-05 for the SC and its Secretariat (approved by ExCo-6 in May 2004) proposed a budget of \$2,814,000 for 2004 and \$3,720,000 for 2005 for a total of \$6,534,000 for the biennium (see "Approved April 2004" columns 2 and 3 of Table 1).

The fourth column of Table 1 shows 2004 contributions of \$2,556,000 (\$1,770,000 from the WB and \$786,000 from FAO<sup>3</sup>) and total expenditures (\$2,529,000). The UNDP contribution for 2004 (\$250,000) did not materialize. As a consequence, several activities were postponed to 2005 and additional savings were implemented in the final quarter of 2004.

The last column of Table 1 shows 2005 expected contributions (\$3,970,000) and expenditures (\$4,005,000).<sup>4</sup> Two major activities have been added to the work plan for 2005: (i) a final expert consultation on CGIAR System Priorities held last January and February in Rome and (ii) the preparation of the first State of World Science for Agriculture document to be launched at the AGM' 05 Science Forum. The estimated cost to cover both key initiatives is \$550,000. To implement both activities within the ExCo approved budget, the Council cancelled and postponed other planned activities. See the current status of all SC activities in Table 2..

In conclusion, we are pleased to report a balanced total budget 2004-05, in accordance with the budget approved by ExCo one year ago.

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<sup>2</sup> However the incumbents are still at the Secretariat waiting to be redeployed within FAO as soon as suitable posts are identified.

<sup>3</sup> FAO's contribution for 2004 (financial transfer within FAO accounts) will materialize in the first semester of 2005. In any case FAO has indirectly contributed to the approved budget during 2004 by covering expenditures for SC, Secretariat and consultants' honoraria, travel and per diem.

<sup>4</sup> For 2005, the World Bank has so far contributed a similar amount as in 2004 (\$1,770,000). It is expected that it will contribute the amount estimated in April 2004 (\$2,684,000) and that UNDP will honour its financial obligations for 2004 and 2005 (for a total of \$500,000) during 2005.

The Science Council will present a full and final report 2004/05 (when all ongoing and planned 2005 activities are finalized) by activity as well as a proposed Work Program and Budget 2006-2007 for consideration of ExCo in October 2005.

## **Conclusion**

We believe we have made significant progress in implementing the five key elements of the Science Council Strategy and we are moving ahead with major activities being carried out by each of the four Standing Panels of the Council.

The Secretariat of the Council is being strengthened but will remain a small and efficient unit in support of the Council's activities. We estimate to finish 2005 with a total balanced budget for the biennium 2004-05.

Let me finish by thanking you again for your continued support to the Science Council. It is an honor for me to be associated with a group that I believe will make a difference in the lives of poor people.

**SCIENCE COUNCIL 2004/2005 BUDGET (US\$ 000) - April 2005**

	Approved April 2004 (1)		2004	Estimate April 2005
	2004	2005		
<b>Contributions</b>				
FAO	785	786	786	786
World Bank	1,779	2,684	1,770 (2)	2,684
UNDP	250	250	0	500 (3)
<i>Total Contributions</i>	<b>2,814</b>	<b>3,720</b>	<b>2,556</b>	<b>3,970</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>				
<b>Council</b>				
Chair and Office	356	356	320	335
SC & SP Members Honoraria	207	207	247	247
SC & SP Travel & Per Diem	162	189	398	450
SC Standing Panel activities:				
Priorities and Strategies (SPPS)	386	278	176	450
Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME)	96	566	76	208
Impact Assessment (SPIA)	422	422	95	307
Mobilizing Science (SPMS)	97	240	0	250
Council-wide activities	20	10	0	0
<i>Sub Total Panel Activities</i>	1,021	1,516	347	1,215
<b>Total Council</b>	<b>1,746</b>	<b>2,268</b>	<b>1,312</b>	<b>2,247</b>
<b>Secretariat - Professional Staff (4)</b>				
Executive Director (D-2)	66	201	87	275
Programme Director (D-1)	0	188	0	0 (5)
Senior Officer (P-5)	168	168	188	197
Senior Officer (P-5)	168	168	188	197
Senior Officer (P-5)	168	168	188	197
Senior Officer (P-5)	0	0	0	95 (6)
Junior Officer (P-3)	0	0	0	78 (7)
Junior Officer (P-3)	0	0	0	78 (7)
<i>Sub-Total Secretariat Professional Staff</i>	570	893	651	1,117
<b>Secretariat - Administrative Staff</b>				
Programme Assistant (G-6)	59	89	0	95
Secretary (G-5)	78	78	92	97
Programme Clerk (G-5)	78	78	88	92

Clerk-Typist (G-4)	68	68	58	61 (8)
Clerk (G-4)	45	68	38	61 (8)
<i>Sub-Total Secretariat Administrative Staff</i>	328	381	276	406
<i>Total Secretariat Personnel</i>	898	1,274	927	1,523
Secretariat Staff Travel & Per Diem	45	53	50	60
Secretariat Consultants and Res. Ass. (hon + trav)	50	50	75	50
Operating Expenses (equipment, telephone, printing, courier, meetings, FAO services) and Miscellaneous	75	75	165	125
<b>Total Secretariat</b>	<b>1,068</b>	<b>1,452</b>	<b>1,217</b>	<b>1,758</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>2,814</b>	<b>3,720</b>	<b>2,529</b>	<b>4,005</b>
<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>-35</b>

**Total 2004/05  
approved April 2004  
6,534**

**Total 2004/05 estimated spent  
6,534**

*Budget Notes:*

- 1) From "Work Programme and Budget for the SC and its Secretariat" (April 2004); approved by ExCo06 (May 2004).
- 2) US\$ 500 of the World Bank 2004 contribution were received in November 2003.
- 3) Assumes UNDP contribution for 2004 and 2005 will materialize during 2005.
- 4) All personnel figures are total post costs including U.N. benefits package.
- 5) Position cancelled by new Staffing Plan approved at SC2.
- 6) Vacant position to be filled by July 2005.
- 7) New position to be filled by July 2005 (Staffing Plan approved at SC2).
- 8) Position cancelled as of January 2005 (Staffing Plan approved at SC2); assumes FAO unable to relocate until July 2005.

**Table 2. Status of SC Standing Panel Activities 2004-2005**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Standing Panel on Priorities and Strategies</b>	
1. Planning System Level Priorities and Strategies	Completed
2. Biosafety Strategic Study	To be completed in 2005
3. Social Research in the CGIAR	To be completed in 2006
4. Food Safety Considerations in CGIAR Research	To be completed in 2006
5. Genomics Research in the CGIAR	To be completed in 2006
6. Ethics and Science in the CGIAR	To be completed in 2005
7. CGIAR Research Strategies for IPG in the Context of IPR	To be completed in 2006
8. Animal and Fish Genetic Resources Conservation	Completed
9. Poverty Mapping	Completed
<b>Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	
1. External Programme and Management Reviews	Ongoing
2. Alternatives to Slash and Burn (jointly with SPIA)	To be completed in 2005
3. Participatory Research & Gender Analysis	Cancelled
4. Social science and policy stripe review, and policy impact assessments	Cancelled
5. Science tracking and analysis in the CGIAR (MTPs)	Ongoing
6. Stripe study on training (jointly with SPIA)	To be completed in 2006
7. Performance Measurement System	New activity
<b>Standing Panel on Impact Assessment</b>	
1. Impact of the CGIAR on Poverty Alleviation	To be completed in 2005
2. Towards Expanded and Improved Impact Assessment of CGIAR	To be completed in 2006
3. Evaluation and Impact Assessment of the CGIAR Training Activities (joint with SPME)	To be completed in 2006
4. Dissemination and Communication Strategy	Ongoing
5. Strategic Guidelines for Impact Assessment in the CGIAR	Cancelled
6. Follow-up Study of the Impacts of the CGIAR in Africa (Phase I)	To be completed in 2005
7. Defining “Best Bet” Approaches for Learning-oriented Impact Assessment	Postponed
8. Understanding Donor Demands for Evidence of Impact	To be completed in 2005
9. Impact Assessment of Participatory Research Approaches	Postponed
10. CGIAR Agricultural Research Benefit Diffusion and Impacts In South Asia (Phase I)	Postponed
11. Impacts of Farming Systems Research	Cancelled

12. Developing Improved of Perceived (but undocumented) Impacts	Postponed
13. CGIAR Agricultural Research Benefit Diffusion and Impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean	Postponed
14. CGIAR Performance Measurement System – Impact Indicators	New activity
15. Alternatives to Slash and Burn Evaluation and Impact Assessment (joint with SPME)	To be completed in 2005
16. Ex-post NRM Research Impacts	To be completed in 2005
17. Development of the CGIAR Impact Website	Ongoing
18. CGIAR and NARS Research in Africa: Evidence of Impact to Date	To be completed in 2005 (Phase I)
19. CGIAR Policy Research Impact Assessment	Postponed
<b>Standing Panel on Mobilizing Science</b>	
1. Development and Implementation of a Mobilizing Science Strategy	Ongoing
2. Survey of key Center ongoing Scientific Collaboration	Ongoing
3. Preparation of the “State of the World Agricultural Science and Technology 2005”	Ongoing
4. Preparation of Science Forum 2005 (@AGM05 December Morocco)	Ongoing