

## **Background for Agenda Item 4. Structure of the CGIAR**

At its last meeting, the CGIAR Executive Council observed that some of the factors underlying the need for structural change in ISNAR and ICRISAT are symptomatic of broader strategic problems that cut across the CGIAR system. These broader issues are of sufficient importance to require early reflection on the need for action to streamline the CGIAR center structure and to rationalize its investments globally. While the ISNAR and ICRISAT recommendations provide a timely opportunity to revisit the CGIAR in Africa, this should only be an entry point for developing a new vision for broader evolution of the entire system within which changes in the two centers could serve as first steps.

The need for a new vision for evolution of the entire system is driven, among others, by the following:

**Urgent need to reconsider the regional allocation of CGIAR investments.** The first centers of the CGIAR were established to address a crisis situation that loomed in Asia during the 1960s and 1970s. But national research capacity in Asia has strengthened very considerably in the past decade and the locus of hunger is shifting globally. A strategic needs assessment based on ecosystems and regions is now needed to identify those areas of the world where productivity gains have been least and where chronic hunger persists. These are likely to include by-passed areas of CWANA, Latin America and Asia. But it is increasingly clear that the greatest and most urgent need for significantly increased investment in public goods research has shifted to Africa where national research systems remain weak and where the incidence and depth of hunger are growing worse.

**New challenges to commodity-based research orientation.** The highly complex and variable systems that characterize agricultural production in Africa and in other parts of the world raise new challenges for centers whose mandates are commodity-specific. The growing recognition of genomic similarities across crops, and the attendant synergies of addressing common constraints using the tools of cutting edge science, argue for structurally different approaches to crop improvement than are currently being implemented in centers with limited commodity mandates. Similarly, natural resource management and policy issues generally cut across commodities and require a more coherent and integrative approach.

**Increasing complexity of System governance.** The Challenge Programs were intended to respond to the need for more consolidated and complementary cross-commodity and cross-center programming and promote stronger partnerships with stakeholders. The research efficiencies of this model are yet to be realized and assessed as part of the pilot experiments. But what has become clear is that the CPs have added to the complexity of decision making in the CGIAR and require significant transaction costs. A broader and more coherent strategic approach to structural consolidation may well be needed to accompany the implementation of the array of CPs envisaged.

These factors, combined with **increasing funding constraints**, suggest that a new vision is needed for both the global allocation of CGIAR resources as well as for the

number and mandates of CGIAR centers. Simply increasing the number of centers and center programs in Africa is not the best way forward. Rather, structural consolidation and streamlining is necessary to produce more efficient and synergistic research programs. Consolidation is also needed to save overheads, reduce the number of different but co-located center offices, end costly duplication, and eliminate inter-center competition for increasingly scarce resources.

Clearly, the development of a new vision for the CGIAR must also be guided by the results of the on-going CGIAR priority setting exercise. Having donors hold a discussion on where and how the system should evolve during the next decade should provide guidance to the new Science Council in completing its analysis of priorities and strategies.

It is for the above reasons that ExCo recommended to have part of the Business Meeting at AGM03 devoted to discussion of these larger strategic and structural issues and the mechanisms that could be installed to address them. ExCo envisaged that one such mechanism would be a CGIAR task force. It also believed that it would be prudent to solicit broader inputs into defining the mandate and process for such a Task Force.

Finally, it must be stressed that ExCo concluded it was not necessary to await the completion of a broader strategic assessment and planning process in order to move forward on introducing the agreed changes affecting ISNAR and ICRISAT. But it is essential that the direction of these center-specific changes be consistent with a sense of where the system should evolve during this decade. Early discussion of the issue by the donors could help ensure such consistency.