

ExCo Recommendations on SSA Challenge Program Proposal¹

P. Pinstруп-Andersen informed ExCo that SC recommends the first phase of the SSA CP be approved, funded and implemented. It presents a new paradigm for agricultural research in SSA, but it does not permit clear specification of research priorities upfront because priorities would be based on information obtained from data generated in the field during the first phase. The first phase consists of a diagnosis of information collected from three sites and SC proposed this phase be approved for an 18 month period. It suggests the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) to bring back information that SC needs in order to make a recommendation on the subsequent phases. SC will review the work after 12 months while the proponents work an additional six months, at which time the CGIAR will make a final decision. The funding requested for the first phase, which is part of the discussion planned for AGM04, is US\$4.9 million. SC's full commentary on the SSA CP will be available soon.

Before opening the item to discussion, I. Johnson noted that approving the CP for an inception phase has been done before with the Generation CP.

Discussion:

- It was noted that the G8 recently recognized the importance of international organizations such as the CGIAR to help find solutions for development problems, and it is important for the CGIAR to take this opportunity to show its commitment to SSA and generate political support for such activities. However, the CP proposal does not make clear how it would efficiently utilize CGIAR resources and add value to the CGIAR.
- General support was expressed for the innovative nature of the CP, but there are still questions on management issues, the focus on development rather than developing knowledge as such, and it seems to take a long time to develop priorities.
- There are also concerns about how the CP would relate to Systemwide activities, the CGIAR task forces on SSA, the proposed Centers Alliance, and other ongoing activities in Africa (e.g., New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD)); and how they will add value to the CGIAR System as well as help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- Preparatory or inception phases—similar to what was done with the Generation CP—should be done as an exception and not become the norm when approving CPs.
- The CP proposal is not clear on external actors, the role of the private sector and the extent to which the activities are market-driven.
- General support was expressed for moving forward with the diagnostic preparatory phase recommended by SC, but a clear set of outputs should be developed for the 18 month diagnostic phase before it is submitted for approval

¹ Excerpt from Seventh Meeting of the CGIAR Executive Council (September 13-14, 2004) Summary Record of Proceedings, September 24, 2004.

- by the CGIAR. The CP has potential for high benefits but comes with high risk and needs to be carefully considered.
- The SSA CP should undergo a broader discussion by the CGIAR at AGM04.

Conclusions and ExCo recommendations to the CGIAR:

- *SSA regional needs are high; therefore, there is a clear sense of urgency.*
- *ExCo supports the innovation embodied in the CP, but recognizes the risks involved.*
- *There is a need for the SSA CP to demonstrate added value by contributing to efficient utilization of CGIAR resources with clear linkages to other CGIAR activities (e.g., CGIAR task forces on SSA, CP lessons learned, CDC Collective Action Framework, Systemwide Program (SWP)—African Highlands).*
- *ExCo recommends to the CGIAR approval of the SSA CP for an 18 month inception phase incorporating the following three steps:*
 1. *AGM04 discussion to thoroughly enrich SC and ExCo-raised issues.*
 2. *FARA will be requested to respond to the consolidated AGM04 conclusions and recommendations by providing ExCo, every 6 months, a progress report on actions taken to address CGIAR conclusions and recommendations and by providing the SC, 12 months after the start of the inception phase, a detailed report on the pilot sites work plan and priorities. SC will then commission an on-site review and advise ExCo on adequacy of progress made by FARA.*
 3. *ExCo makes a recommendation to the membership on whether or not to continue the SSA CP beyond the inception phase at the end of the 18 month period.*