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**CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
SCIENCE COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE CGIAR FROM
THE STANDING PANEL ON IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SPIA)
OF THE SCIENCE COUNCIL**

**SCIENCE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1. MANDATE, COMPOSITION AND MODALITIES OF SPIA	1
2. TOWARDS A SPIA STRATEGY AND OPERATIONAL PLAN: SPIA/IAEG EXPERIENCE TO DATE IN RELATION TO FUTURE NEEDS	2
2.1 Background and Context	2
2.2 System-level Objectives for <i>Ex-post</i> IA	4
2.2 System-level Strategy	5
3. CURRENT STATUS OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES	6
3.1 Impact of the CGIAR on Poverty Alleviation	6
3.2 NRM Research <i>Ex-post</i> IA Study	7
3.3 Training Evaluation and Impact Assessment Study	10
3.4 CGIAR Impact Website (http://impact.cgiar.org)	11
3.5 Donor Demands and Uses for Evidence of Research Impact: The Case of the CGIAR	13
4. NEW INITIATIVES	15
4.1 CGIAR and NARS Research in Africa: Evidence of Impact to date	15
4.2 Towards a Demand-Led <i>Ex-Post</i> Evaluation Strategy for Meeting Internal Learning Needs in the CGIAR	16
4.3 Impact Assessment of Participatory Research Approaches	17
4.4 Towards a Broader Assessment of CGIAR Policy Research Impacts (<i>for 2005</i>)	18
5. INITIATIVES IN THE PIPELINE	20
5.1 Impacts of Farming Systems Research (Exploratory Study)	21
5.2 Developing Improved Understanding of Perceived (but Undocumented) Impacts	21
5.3 CGIAR Research Benefit Diffusion & Impacts in South Asia (Phase I)	21
5.4 CGIAR Agricultural Research Benefit Diffusion & Impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean (Phase I)	21
6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	22

APPENDICES

Appendix I	IAEG/SPIA Published Reports and Other Outputs
Appendix II	Table of Contents for IFPRI book on Agricultural Research and Poverty
Appendix III	Update on Progress by the Panel overseeing the Evaluation and Impact Assessment of Training Activities in CGIAR

SC STANDING PANEL ON IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SPIA) REPORT TO AGM '04

This report to AGM '04 includes, in addition to the usual progress report on SPIA activities and outputs since the last AGM, a draft strategy and operational plan (Section 2) that has been developed over the past year as SPIA's role in the new Science Council (SC) has been focused in consultation with the SC. The draft strategy also reflects upon SPIA's past work with the Centres to improve the relevance, effectiveness and quality of impact assessment in the CGIAR. In so doing, the strategy outlines how collaborative work has helped to address some challenges, and identifies other new opportunities that have emerged. The SPIA portfolio of current and planned activities, i.e., its operational plan, follows from the strategy exercise as a means to address each of the identified key challenges. Comments from participants at AGM '04 on the SPIA strategy and plan would be appreciated.

1. MANDATE, COMPOSITION AND MODALITIES OF SPIA

The mandate of SPIA under the new Science Council remains unchanged, namely to:

- provide CGIAR Members with timely, objective and credible information on the impacts at the System level of past CGIAR outputs in terms of the CGIAR goals;
- provide support to and complement the centres in their *ex-post* impact assessment activities; (this includes facilitating inter-centre impact assessment efforts and providing a forum for exchange of experience from impact studies); and
- provide feedback to CGIAR priority setting, and create synergies by developing links to *ex-ante* assessment and overall planning, monitoring and evaluation functions in the CGIAR.

Members of SPIA are chosen for their independence and impact assessment expertise and familiarity with international agricultural research. The members of the Standing Panel until recently were Ruben Echeverria (Uruguay) and Hermann Waibel (Germany). Dr. Echeverria recently resigned from SPIA to become the CGIAR Science Council's Executive Director. Discussions are under way with a potential replacement. SPIA takes this opportunity to formally thank Dr. Echeverria for his two years of very active service on SPIA.

The Chair of SPIA is Hans Gregersen (USA), who also serves as an *ex-officio* member of the SC. Tim Kelley is the person assigned to SPIA from the SC Secretariat. In addition, SC Secretariat member, Sirkka Immonen, has been working with SPIA on the training impacts study described below, and SPIA consultant, David Raitzer, has been contributing to several SPIA initiatives.

2. TOWARDS A SPIA STRATEGY AND OPERATIONAL PLAN: SPIA/IAEG EXPERIENCE TO DATE IN RELATION TO FUTURE NEEDS

2.1 Background and Context

The organizational history of SPIA now dates back almost a decade, with the formulation of a Task Force on Impact Assessment, which in turn, developed the terms of reference for the Impact Assessment and Evaluation Group (IAEG). At that time, the need for a Systemwide impact assessment entity was strikingly clear, as donor fatigue was setting in and funding was declining in real terms. According to the background document for the workshop held by the Task Force on Impact Assessment,¹ *“the need for more information on the impact of CGIAR activities ... stems from donor requests for public awareness material in support of their resource mobilization efforts.”*² The need for independence, objectivity and credibility of the new entity was stressed by the Task Force and by the donors.

Clearly, *ex-post* impact assessment (IA) was primarily to meet accountability needs, with a secondary emphasis on strategic feedback for priority-setting processes.³ The IAEG’s role was thus to guide, improve, expand and synthesize Centre *ex-post* IA efforts to more comprehensively demonstrate the efficacy of CGIAR research, since *ex-post* IA coverage varied much among Centres and research topics.⁴

The IAEG initially focused primarily on production of syntheses and large scale studies at the System level. Accordingly, IAEG initiated a synthesis and review of Centre *ex-post* IA studies (Cooksy 1997a; 1997b), investigated factors affecting the adoption of CGIAR innovations through case studies at eight Centres (Seechrest et al. 1999), involved eight Centres in a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of breeding research (Evenson and Gollin 2003), supported a literature review of the linkage between agricultural research and poverty (Kerr and Kolavalli 1999) and seven case studies of the poverty impacts of CGIAR research (Adato and Meinzen-Dick, in process), produced two reports on the environmental impacts of CGIAR technologies (Nelson and Maredia 2000; Maredia and Pingali 2001), evaluated the System’s research on integrated pest management (Waibel 2000). (See Appendix I, IAEG/SPIA Publications and other Outputs for complete citations for these publications.) Activities outside of synthesis and the production of new studies included two workshops on IA methods and relevance (IAEG Secretariat 1997; TAC Secretariat 2001), a review of the milestones in CGIAR IA over time (Pingali 2001) and an early effort to package findings in a concise and attractive manner in 1998.

Several areas identified by the Task Force have not, as yet, received enough attention. “Profiling of user needs”, for example, has only recently been broached through systematic efforts, although the two workshops and an international conference on IA in Costa Rica did attempt to interact with donors and elicit their needs. There has not been sufficient activity on repackaging and disseminating existing findings, apart from the “Impacts 1998” brochures. Some of the other areas that now require more attention include: developing/refining methods for “hard to measure” areas of impact, e.g., for policy research; establishing Systemwide

¹ The Task Force on Impact Assessment, commissioned at the request of the Public Awareness and Resource Mobilisation Committee, made the recommendations that resulted in the IAEG’s establishment.

² CGIAR Task Force on Impact Assessment, 1995. Report of the Task Force on Impact Assessment. Washington, DC: CGIAR Secretariat.

³ Ozgediz, S. (1995) “Strengthening Evaluation in the CGIAR: Needs and Options”, 10 March 1995 Draft.

⁴ IAEG’s purview was strictly *ex-post* impact assessment, and not research evaluation in the broadest sense.

impact databases; exercising more “quality control” on impact studies; and attempting to feed IA results into priority-setting procedures.

In the past few years, there have been increasing calls for “learning” from *ex-post* IA, while the original accountability role of IA receives less emphasis in many quarters. SPIA believes and wishes to emphasize that the accountability function of SPIA must be preserved at all costs. At the same time, it is looking for opportunities to add value through learning from these studies. The challenge is to preserve accountability and still emphasize feedback and operational learning to improve the implementation of future research efforts. One particularly distinct outcome of this shift was embodied in the integration of the IAEG into TAC, so as to “...improve synergies with the System’s forward planning and its monitoring and evaluation functions”.⁵ The name was also changed to the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA).

In adopting the revised mandate of SPIA, with greater focus on feedback to priority-setting and research management, as well as continued emphasis on improving impact assessment coverage, quality and dissemination, the following four areas have emerged as key challenges for SPIA to address.

Improving impact assessment relevance

There are areas in the use of *ex-post* assessment for “learning” relevant lessons that require empirical analysis. It is widely recognised that pathways from CGIAR innovations to development goals are complex, involve many complementary inputs, and are characterised by long and uncertain lag times.⁶ Many years usually pass between production of an innovation and its wide diffusion into the fields of large numbers of farmers, and the external environment and research agenda may shift considerably in the mean time. Furthermore, these lags are unpredictable. This creates significant discontinuities between the current agenda and research subject to *ex-post* IA, which strongly affects the relevance of any “lessons,” particularly in terms of forward planning. How *ex-post* IA can contribute to “learning” in this context remains to be defined.

SPIA is exploring ways in which lessons of relevance to researcher decisions may be derived from analyses of impact. For example, the hypothesis that “one potential way in which *ex-post* IAs might be useful in adaptive management and institutional learning may be if they were to focus more on the lessons from failure of research projects and programmes to have impact” will be tested through analysis of decision demands.

The broader context for application of IA findings needs some clarification for accountability as well. It is widely recognised that *ex-post* IAs are useful to donors for resource mobilization, but little systematic effort has been given to discerning precisely the kinds of findings that are of most use and their purposes. (Some attempt was, however, made to elicit this type of information both at the 2000 SPIA workshop in Rome and the international conference on IA in Costa Rica in 2002.) The broader evaluation community has established a body of literature on evaluation use, and has distilled patterns between different

⁵ CGIAR Science Council Secretariat, 2003. Report to the Annual General Meeting of the CGIAR from The Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) of the Science Council. Rome, Italy: FAO.

⁶ Ekboir, J. 2003. Why impact analysis should not be used for research evaluation and what the alternatives are. *Agricultural Systems*. 78(2): 166-184.

types of information and different uses for different decision processes.⁷ In theory, all of SPIA's efforts should be "utilisation focused," and the dearth of information available on user needs may pose a key constraint to improving their satisfaction. At the same time, it is not clear if key audiences have a clear and coherent set of conceptualised demands for impact information. (See below two proposals on how the SPIA hopes to address the issue of understanding better the information needs of users.)

Expanding impact assessment coverage

Impact assessment in the CGIAR has primarily focused on crop genetic improvement programmes. Arguably, this is the most easily attributable research area of the CGIAR portfolio, as secondary sources can often be used for adoption data, and productivity benefits are particularly amenable to plausible quantitative analysis. Research areas such as policy-oriented social-science research and some forms of natural resource management (NRM) research present comparatively more serious attribution challenges. As a result, ex-post IAs of research programmes in these areas have been fewer in number. At the same time, in recent years, areas such as NRM and policy research have become a dominant and growing share of the CGIAR research portfolio. For the CGIAR to remain accountable, ex-post IA will need to focus greater effort upon these expanding research areas.

Improving the quality of impact assessments

The quality and rigour of impact assessment studies varies substantially across the System. In certain cases, studies have been published without adequate attention to transparency or data quality. Simultaneously, the exceptionally high rates of return reported in the impact literature have led to scepticism regarding the plausibility of such estimates from stakeholders as well as from some members of the scientific community. To address these concerns, minimum standards are needed for impact assessment in the CGIAR, so as to ensure that research contributions are attributed in a plausible manner, and that confidence can be placed in the findings. It is only with such confidence that the accountability function of IA can be reasonably fulfilled.

Facilitating dissemination and the use of results

Far too frequently, ex-post IAs are not reaching intended audiences in a readily accessible or useful format. Dissemination is often not adequately pursued, as studies have not been easily accessible in electronic format, or paper copies have not been sent to key decision-makers. Brief summaries of impact studies that may attract more attention from busy stakeholders and members of the public have only rarely been produced. Only with wider and more effective dissemination can the full value of the studies produced be realized.

2.2 System-level Objectives for Ex-post IA

The four key challenges outlined above, which have been identified through input from Members, discussion within the SC and deliberations within SPIA, point to four priority areas, or SPIA objectives, for improving ex-post IA at the System-level:

⁷ Mackay, R. and D. Horton. 2003. Expanding the use of impact assessment and evaluation in agricultural research and development. *Agricultural Systems*. 78(2): 143-165.

1. **Key demands for impact information need to be further defined.** At the present time, there are no operational guidelines for what specific information is required for what purposes by different stakeholders. This need applies at the center as well as member/donor levels. There is a need to identify means to more effectively feed *ex-post* IA information into forward planning activities in the System, and into its monitoring and evaluation of ongoing science and programs.
2. **Impact assessment coverage must be broadened** in order to encompass those impacts associated with other types of research and related activities not sufficiently assessed by Centres and SPIA to date. Examples include NRM research, participatory research, policy research, training and other capacity strengthening activities. Such IAs should focus on impacts related to sustainable poverty alleviation.
3. There is continuing need to **refine and improve impact assessment methods**, particularly in those areas of research where well-defined methods are lacking, such as in policy and NRM research. Methods development would permit, where feasible, a more rigorous treatment in demonstrating causality between agricultural research and alleviating hunger and poverty, and ensuring food security for the poor.
4. It is essential that **impact assessment dissemination practices be improved.** Electronic forms of dissemination and communication must be more effectively applied to ensure that IA studies are widely disseminated. At the same time, development of public awareness products appropriate to busy stakeholders is crucial.

2.2 System-level Strategy

A portfolio of initiatives has been formulated to satisfy the priority objectives identified. The following ongoing or proposed SPIA studies, described more fully in Section 3, illustrate how each objective will be satisfied.

1. To define the key demands for impact information:
 - 1.1 *Understanding Donor Demands for Evidence of Impact (Ongoing)*
 - 1.2 *Defining “Best Bet” Approaches for Learning-oriented Impact Assessment (Planned)*
2. To broaden impact assessment coverage:
 - 2.1 *Towards Expanded and Improved Impact Assessment of CGIAR NRM Research (Ongoing)*
 - 2.2 *Towards Broader Assessment of CGIAR Policy Research Impacts (Planned)*
 - 2.3 *Evaluation and Impact Assessment of the CGIAR’s Training Activities (Jointly with SPME) (Ongoing)*
 - 2.4 *Impacts of Farming Systems Research (Proposed)*
 - 2.5 *Developing Improved Understanding of Perceived but Undocumented Impacts (Proposed)*
3. To refine impact assessment methods:
 - 3.1 *Strategic Guidelines for Impact Assessment in the CGIAR (Ongoing)*

- 3.2 *Follow-up Study of the Impacts of the CGIAR in Africa - Phase I (Planned)*
 3.3 *CGIAR Agricultural Research Benefit Diffusion and Impacts in South Asia - Phase I (Proposed)*
 3.4 *CGIAR Agricultural Research Benefit Diffusion and Impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean - Phase I (Proposed)*

4. *To improve impact assessment dissemination practices:*

- 4.1 *Impact of the CGIAR Website (Ongoing)*
 4.2 *Development of impact assessment briefs (Ongoing).*

What follows is a discussion of on-going and planned SC-endorsed activities being undertaken by SPIA. With the completion of some major initiatives and publications last year (Benefit-Cost Meta-analysis of CGIAR Investments; CGI Impact study by Evenson & Gollin, International IA Conference Proceedings Publications) and with the establishment of the new SC with a firmer budget, SPIA has initiated several long-pending IA studies, described below in Section 4.

3. CURRENT STATUS OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES

3.1 Impact of the CGIAR on Poverty Alleviation

Background

The first phase of this two-phase project, completed in 1999, involved a review and synthesis of the literature on the links between agricultural research and poverty and a workshop to develop methodologies for additional CGIAR impact studies. The second phase, which began in September 2000, focuses on seven case studies involving a range of countries, different CGIAR centres and types of CGIAR research, e.g., in terms of commodity and regional coverage and scale of impact (see Table 1). These studies have two main objectives: (1) to test empirically methods for evaluating the impact of agricultural research on poverty in the context of different agricultural technologies and within different country, social, and institutional settings; and (2) to develop a conceptual framework that CGIAR centres can draw upon for impact assessment work, and that will also serve to guide priority setting and technology design to increase the impacts on poverty. To accomplish these objectives, five of the first seven case studies used the sustainable livelihoods conceptual framework. The other two used econometric analysis of secondary data for China and India.

Table 1. Case studies of impact of agricultural research under the IFPRI/SPIA project

Country	Technology	Case study leader	Lead CGIAR centre
Bangladesh	Modern rice varieties	Mahabub Hussein	IRRI
Bangladesh	Polyculture fishponds	Kelly Hallman	IFPRI
	Improved vegetables		
	Modern rice varieties		
Kenya	Soil Fertility Replenishment	Frank Place	ICRAF
Zimbabwe	Modern maize varieties	John Hoddinott	IFPRI
Mexico	Creolized maize varieties	Mauricio Bellon	CIMMYT
China	Agr. research investments*	Shenggen Fan	IFPRI
India	Agr. research investments*	Shenggen Fan	IFPRI

* Uses econometric analysis of secondary data rather than sustainable livelihoods approach with integrated social and economic impact assessment

At AGM '3 in Nairobi, SPIA sponsored a parallel session to report on the findings of this IFPRI-managed project. It generated considerable interest, particularly from donors. IFPRI had prepared a CD with all case studies plus methodology and synthesis documents for the AGM. Demand for the CDs was so great that supplies were exhausted by the end of 2003, and a further run of the CD had to be ordered. As an indicator that this report is being read and having an influence, the new DFID policy paper on Agriculture⁸ cites the synthesis paper's findings that agricultural research has made a difference, and lists the paper as one of the three key external documents to read.

Recent Progress

As the project nears completion in 2004, the focus is on an outreach strategy that emphasizes a series of presentations at a number of different fora, rather than relying on a single major "end of project workshop." Presentations have been made to a range of academic conferences, CGIAR Centres, and donor organizations. Major highlights include presentations at IDS Sussex Seminar in July 2004, an IFPRI Policy Seminar in May 2004, a presentation to DfID in July 2004, a presentation to USAID Agriculture Sector Council in Feb. 2004, a presentation to USAID natural resources management group in April 2004, and participation in AgREN E-Discussion on the Implications of Rural Livelihood Diversity for Pro-Poor Agricultural Initiatives to publicize the findings of the study (March 2004).

A major output from this study will be a peer reviewed book comprising the complete set of case studies and 'synthesis'. In November, after reviewing the synthesis paper, SPIA suggested using the synthesis as a basis for three new chapters - an introduction and overview, a methods chapter, and a results, analysis & discussion and conclusions chapter, with some further elaboration. Since then, SPIA has been in dialogue with the project leaders, to follow-up on the main synthesis report and the specific elaborations and revisions suggested by SPIA in its commentary. Revisions to the synthesis chapter have recently been completed and the rest of the draft chapters finalized. The book is now under review by two external reviewers chosen by SPIA and reviewers within IFPRI. The table of contents for the book is attached (Appendix II). In addition to the book, an IFPRI Food Policy Report and Food Policy Statement are being prepared based on the overall study, to reach a more general audience. Lessons from the study are being internalized in the work of IFPRI and other centres.

3.2 NRM Research *Ex-post* IA Study

Background

In 2003, the CGIAR Director asked SPIA/iSC to initiate a set of activities that would give donors a better idea of the impacts of their past investments in natural resources management (NRM) research in the CGIAR. While centres have undertaken a number of evaluations of NRM research activities, few have gone beyond a description of outputs and a limited analysis of adoption. The initiative, therefore, is SPIA's response to concerns regarding the dearth of conclusive documented evidence that NRM research is contributing to mission level impacts on a wide scale (cf. World Bank/OED Meta-analysis of the CGIAR, completed in 2002). To generate evidence of NRM research impact, SPIA commissioned five impact case studies associated with the research of five CGIAR Centres. The cases were selected on the basis of the quality of proposals submitted. Two more centres volunteered

⁸ DFID, 2003. Agriculture and poverty reduction: unlocking the potential. London, UK: Department for International Development. 6 p.

cases for inclusion in the overall exercise. A second major focus of the overall study is developing improved methods for assessing NRM research by the centres. A senior consultant for SPIA is providing critical guidance on both aspects of the study, which are described in greater detail below.

Activity 1 of the initiative is concerned with methodology development, as lack of methods is believed to be at least partly responsible for the dearth of documented evidence of impact from NRM research. An expert in the area of NRM epIA, David Zilberman, Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of Berkeley, California, was hired by SPIA to develop a basic background paper on state of the art in NRM epIA. At the same time, the CDC Task Force on INRM was invited to prepare a paper describing the Centres' perspective on appropriate approaches to and methodologies for *ex-post* assessment of the impacts of NRM research done by the Centres. This exercise is aimed strictly at getting the Centres' views on the issues and opportunities and an overview of Centres' experiences to date. The CDC INRM Task Force engaged two consultants, Sam Fujisaka and Douglas White who prepared a first draft of a paper, entitled "*Ex-post* methods to measure NRM research impacts". The paper was revised drawing on material presented at the INRM meeting in Nairobi in October 2003. The Chair of the CDC Task Force submitted the paper to SPIA in April. Both the Zilberman paper and the one from the CDC INRM Task Force will become the centrepieces of a SPIA-facilitated workshop (to be held in May-June 2005) to identify the elements needed to put together strategic, 'best practice' guidelines for conducting impact assessment of NRM research.

Activity 2 involves a set of case study assessments of the impacts of selected centre NRM projects/activities. SPIA is providing the resources and oversight for five centres (CIAT, CIFOR, CIMMYT, ICARDA and World Fish) to undertake credible empirical assessments of the impacts of past NRM research activities in the context of CGIAR mission and goals. Two other centres (IWMI and ICRAF) are participating in the study using their own resources, bringing the total number of cases to seven. The seven centres/case studies are:

Centre	Case Study Title
CIAT	Integrating germplasm, natural resource, and institutional innovations to enhance impact: cassava based cropping systems research in Asia
CIFOR	Assessing the sustainability of forest management: developing criteria and indicators
CIMMYT	Assessing the impact of zero-tillage technology in the irrigated IndoGangetic Plains
ICARDA	<i>Ex post</i> impact assessment of NRM technologies in crop-livestock systems in arid and semi-arid areas
World Fish	Measuring the impact of IWMI's research and interventions on Irrigation Management Transfer
IWMI	Impact of IWMI's research and intervention on irrigation management transfer
ICRAF	Fertilizer tree systems (improved fallows) in southern Africa

SPIA is overseeing the cases much in the same way that it carried out its oversight function in the impact of CGI study. In the NRM impact study, SPIA member, Dr. Hermann Waibel is the lead SPIA member in terms of oversight and interaction with the centres, working closely with the Secretariat and the other SPIA members.

Recent Progress

Centre project leaders submitted their case study workplans with methodological details to SPIA in November. Preliminary feedback was given by SPIA to the each of the project leaders in early December, and later provided the centres with a more comprehensive set of comments on their case-study workplans and methodologies, based on the IA expert's review and SPIA's own comments. Initial progress reports from the Centres were submitted in April and May.

In late June, SPIA member Hermann Waibel hosted a NRM research IA workshop in Hannover which brought together all seven case study leaders, SPIA members and consultants and an IA expert from FAO, Dr. Prabhu Pingali. The purpose of the workshop was to review progress in the case studies, exchange ideas on how to improve the cases, and discuss opportunities for cross-case comparative analysis. During the workshop, study leaders presented the background, objectives, conceptual framework, data and analytical procedures for their cases. Emphasis was on the methodology of data analysis under the given data constraints. In addition to the case study presentations, the workshop included a presentation on concepts and methods by David Zilberman and comments on the presentations and progress reports by Dr. Zilberman and Prabhu Pingali.

Next Steps

SPIA received zero drafts of the ICRAF, CIMMYT, World Fish and ICARDA case study reports prior to the SPIA 26 meeting. Individual SPIA members prepared and discussed written comments on the drafts, which will be collated with the comments of David Zilberman once the remaining cases are received. A progress report will be presented at AGM04 and a major presentation will be scheduled for AGM05.

At the Hannover meeting it was also decided to tentatively accept an offer by the CDC Task Force on Integrated Natural Resource Management to have the final project workshop at the same venue as, and in conjunction with, the INRM Task Force meeting next year. The final workshop would draw on a wider range of stakeholders and relevant expertise on IA including environmental economists, social scientists and some users of NRM impact assessments and aim to: (1) disseminate results (2) summarize, conclude and compare methods and findings, and (3) agree on strategic guidelines for future NRM IA in the CGIAR, based on the methodological paper to be written by David Zilberman, the CDC Task Force paper written for the Centres, and input from the Centre case study experiences.

Beyond the workshop, the group agreed that a final product should be a book that would include: (a) an introduction by SPIA; (b) one or more methodology chapters by David Zilberman and possibly others; (c) the case studies; (d) the CDC Task Force paper by Fujisaka and White; and (e) a select number of other papers. Additional studies may be considered for inclusion in the NRM book, e.g. slash and burn or IPM in the CGIAR. SPIA will prepare a detailed proposal for the book project. Prabhu Pingali will explore the

possibility of having a special session or a pre-conference at IAAE 2006 in Brisbane or at the international farming systems meeting in Rome in 2005.

3.3 Training Evaluation and Impact Assessment Study

Background

The SC (at the time, TAC) initiated the Training Evaluation and Impact Assessment by conducting a desk study to collect information and data from the Centres on strategies, processes, trends, previous impact work and training events. This phase was brought to completion in August 2003. The desk study report and data are intended for internal use by the Panel to provide background information for the main study. The study has been organised jointly by SPIA and SPME.

Due to the transition of TAC into a Science Council, the commitment for the Main Study was made only in 2003. The Main Study is being carried out by a small Panel with Dr. Elliot Stern as Chair and Drs. John Lynam and Lucia de Vaccaro as members. In addition, regional resource persons will be contracted to assist in field surveys. The Terms of Reference for the Panel, approved by the iSC and SPIA also include a proposal for the study design. The Panel had its first planning meeting at FAO in Rome in November 2003.

Recent Progress

The Panel's draft Inception Report was shared with SPIA and the SC at their February meeting. The revised report was shared with all Centre Directors General (DGs), who subsequently nominated/reconfirmed the focal person for the study and provided their comments.

The Panel conducted a pilot field visit to Kenya from May 24 to June 10. It met with directors and scientists dealing with training and capacity strengthening at the CGIAR Centres that have headquarters or offices in Nairobi (ILRI, ICRAF, ICRISAT, CIMMYT, CIP and CIAT) and at organisations (ICIPE, USAID, KARI, KEFRI, University of Nairobi and Egerton University). The Panel Chair also paid a two-day visit to Dar-es-Salaam. Drawing from the consultations and commentaries received on the Inception Report from Centres, the Panel has (i) developed and operationalised methods including procedures, sampling, country/Centre/activity priorities and initial ideas for analysis; (ii) prepared instruments required at an early stage, including questionnaires to Centre researchers, trainees, training officers and research partners; (iii) begun to develop core ideas and 'models' regarding, for example, the factors shaping training priorities, the nature of capacity development in different NARS and ecoregional settings, and the scope and extent of training/education/skill development and learning activities; (iv) identified a range of 'scenarios' within which the study will have to be implemented, so as to validate the proposed design and refine it where necessary; and (v) developed workplans, the allocation of resources, divisions of responsibilities and a preliminary view of the analysis/write-up process. A detailed study update was presented at SC 2 in Rome and can be found in Appendix III.

The Panel's plans are to report on progress through the SC and SPIA at AGM04, collect further data and conduct subsequent field visits during autumn 2004 and spring 2005, complete all data gathering by May 2005 and submit the report to the SC by September 2005. The report and its findings and conclusions will be presented to the Group at AGM'05.

3.4 CGIAR Impact Website (<http://impact.cgiar.org>)

Background

In response to demands expressed by all CGIAR Centres, SPIA has taken the lead in developing a central website for *ex-post* impact assessment (IA) in the System, which can be found at <http://impact.cgiar.org>. SPIA believes that this dynamic central IA website will become a very important resource as many stakeholders have expressed a need for such a mechanism to disseminate IA studies, promote "best practices" in IA, and foster dialogue among IA practitioners, both within the CGIAR and throughout the larger research and development communities. As a main focal point for System impact assessment activities this site is expected to not only improve inter-Centre communication, but also to allow for dissemination to new audiences outside of the traditional CGIAR arena.

Recent Progress

The site's key functions were identified based on CGIAR Centre needs. IA focal points have provided input that directed the site's development. In addition, the FAO Information Services division provided valuable technical assistance for the site's implementation.

The new website has much to offer for both practitioners and external audiences. Many users may find the comprehensive bibliography of all impact assessment studies produced to date by the CGIAR a valuable resource, which can be accessed and explored via several convenient multi-criteria search forms. For audiences looking for a broad overview of impact assessment findings, a public relations briefs section is incorporated. For IA practitioners, there is a link to a "communities of practice" list-serve, a calendar of IA-relevant meetings and copies of methodology-related documents. Centre IA focal points are also able to upload new IA studies and augment the bibliography of IA publications through a simple form interface. In addition, links to other key websites and groups involved in impact assessment of agricultural and related research, as well as a directory of impact assessment practitioners are included.

These functions are implemented through seven major components:

(1) Comprehensive bibliography of CGIAR ex-post impact assessments. The bibliography may be the most important single function of the website, as it serves as a central clearinghouse for impact-related information in the CGIAR. The website dynamically draws from a customised version of the Info-finder database of studies, and includes searches through menu trees for Centre, research category, impact indicators assessed, and years of analysis. Free text searches with Boolean commands allow for queries of the other fields. An advanced search combines these query tools. IA focal points can directly update/add studies to be listed through forms.

(2) Public relations section, including impact assessment briefs. A public relations section has been implemented through an extension of the bibliography database. This allows for brief synopses of studies of interest to the general public to be linked to specific IA studies. A selected number of these briefs appear on the homepage of the site under "Highlights".

(3) Announcements / calendar of events. To help develop ‘communities of practice’ within CGIAR impact assessment and interaction with outside practitioners, a section of the website lists IA-related announcements and upcoming conferences/workshops. A dynamic calendar can be used to explore dates far into the future. Centres will be able to submit additions, as necessary, through the webmaster.

(4) Purpose, approach and methodology documents. So as to foster “best practices” and greater consistency within the System, and to offer resources to practitioners, a section of the site is dedicated to the provision of information concerning IA purposes, approaches, and methodologies. This section has been developed through a literature review, and has been peer-reviewed by recognised experts, so as to ensure the quality of information provided. Key methodological considerations are described herein, and links are provided to useful general methodological resources, as well as papers regarding specific methodological issues.

(5) Impact assessment methodology listserv description and link. There is need for greater dialogue among impact assessment practitioners in the CGIAR, as to facilitate common understanding of important concepts and priorities, harmonize the use of terminology, and exchange insights on past experiences. An email listserv provides a meaningful forum for such exchange, and a page in the website provides details on the list and its operation.

(6) Contact directory of impact assessment practitioners. A contact directory of impact assessment practitioners in the CGIAR System and beyond is incorporated to help foster a community of practice. This contact directory can be edited through forms, and can be queried through free-text searches.

(7) Links to the ex-post impact assessment pages of Centres and partner institutions. The present diverse set of Centre webpage structures makes it difficult for external audiences to locate many of the impact assessment pages of individual IARCs. For this reason, the site includes links to all of the impact assessment pages of IARCs and affiliated Centres. In addition, other ex-post impact assessment related webpages are provided in separate categories. Centres and partners can submit additional links and edits to existing links by way of a form, and these will appear after approval.

Next steps

The number of briefs incorporated in the website will be expanded in collaboration with the Centres. Centres will be asked for submissions of studies to be summarised into briefs in this section or briefs that have already been produced. These briefs will serve as fundamental component of SPIA’s dissemination strategy, since several key Member representatives have expressed strong demands for concise summaries of impact study results.

Centres will also be expected to keep the bibliography updated. SPIA will provide detailed instructions as to how study submission takes place via the site’s forms, after which continued population of the bibliographic database will become a Centre responsibility. SPIA will, however, continue to monitor the site to ensure content quality.

3.5 Donor Demands and Uses for Evidence of Research Impact: The Case of the CGIAR

Background

SPIA is developing a set of strategic guidelines for IA studies in the CGIAR - a need which has long been recognized by CGIAR impact assessment practitioners. Since these guidelines need to be authoritative and help improve IA relevance, they must incorporate the needs of key users, rather than reflect the output of one or two experts working in isolation. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to better understand donor views about the major uses of and demand for ex-post IA work carried out by the CGIAR.

To date, ex-post IA in the CGIAR has been primarily accountability-oriented, with a key audience of donors. This need for demonstration of impact to justify investments has been increasingly articulated and emphasised by CGIAR members. However, there is no clear and consistent linkage between documented impact and resource allocation. Ironically, those research programmes for which impact has been most thoroughly documented (plant breeding) have suffered declining budgets, while those for which there have been very few large-scale impacts assessed (natural resource management) have benefited from rising allocations.

It is not clear what role impact assessment plays in this context, and how impact information is applied. Nor is it evident whether characteristics of studies impede or facilitate the use of impact-related findings. Without such issues being defined, it is difficult to ensure that impact assessments in the CGIAR meet the demands of target audiences and maximise potential value for informing stakeholders and consequently their resource allocation decisions.

In an attempt to understand the demands of accountability audiences for impact assessment, SPIA, in 2003, conducted an email survey of representatives of all 63 Members of the CGIAR. The survey consisted of 11 multiple-choice or rating questions, followed by three optional supplementary questions. These questions focused on identifying those elements of ex post IAs that facilitate study use, and on improving understanding of how impact-related information is applied in donor decisions. Twenty-four responses were received from CGIAR Members, including: ACIAR, ADB, Austria, Belgium, DANIDA, DFID, EIARD, EU, GTZ (2 responses), IADB, IFAD, KARI, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Philippines, Rockefeller, SDC, SIDA, Syngenta, USAID (2 responses), and the World Bank.

The overall pattern of responses received substantiates the value of impact information for accountability purposes. Sixty-two percent of respondents indicated that the primary goal of impact assessment is “to demonstrate that research output is making significant contributions to desired development goals”, while only 12% indicated that the primary goal is internal learning. Impact assessments and external programme and management reviews (EPMRs) were indicated as being the most important sources of information for guiding funding decisions in the System (as compared with CG Annual Reports, IARC Annual Reports, Project Reports, ICERs, ex-ante projections, or output assessments).

However, some patterns of responses were more puzzling, and merit follow-up. For example, of those 16 who answered the optional question regarding whether IAs had been used for substantiating funding decisions, only half indicated that that was indeed the case -

despite the fact that the survey indicated impact assessments were the most useful information source for allocation decisions. Sixty percent of respondents also indicated that the impacts of partners involved in collaborative research should be assessed collectively, but it is unclear whether doing so would affect the pertinence of information to funding decisions regarding individual institutions. “livelihood strategies improved” was the indicator of impact deemed most useful, but “ease with which findings may be understood” was an important factor dictating use (more so than rigor). This seems somewhat contradictory, as analysis of livelihood strategies is likely to provide qualitative information that cannot as easily be summed in singular aggregate statistics as can other approaches, such as rate of return or benefit-cost analyses.

To go beyond these preliminary results, more meaningful interaction with donor representatives is necessary in order to clarify responses and needs, and elucidate more clearly how impact information feeds into funding decisions. Many factors influence funding decisions, and rational consideration of information concerning potential impacts is only one of these. Similarly, documentation of past impacts is only one source of information influencing decision about future allocations. To better understand how ex-post IA information can be used within this complex environment is a substantial challenge and one that must be tackled if impact assessments are to be made more relevant to stakeholder needs.

Recent Progress

A draft report of the findings from the email survey was written up and circulated to SPIA Members and key stakeholders. The report draws preliminary conclusions regarding the comparative utility of information on different impact indicators and how IA results are applied but asserts that additional information is needed to validate and explore the observations made.

To go beyond the preliminary findings, a follow-up telephone interview instrument was developed - primarily to explore in greater depth donor decision making in the context of impact information. The next stage of this study therefore focuses on the following questions:

- To what degree do epIA studies actually inform perceptions of past research impacts and where research impact will be in the future (compared with other sources of information)?
- What influence does epIA have in donor investment decisions (compared with other factors)?
- What kinds of epIA studies actually get read?
- How do epIA findings filter into different types of decisions regarding the agricultural development sector and international agricultural research?
- What kinds of epIA results can donors actually use most effectively?

Klaus Winkel (formerly of DANIDA and with long standing ties to the CGIAR) was asked by SPIA to conduct the donor interviews; and he agreed to contribute to the study. Thus, this study will benefit from his many years of experience as a Member representative, as well as his extensive knowledge of impact assessment. Interviews are being conducted between mid September and mid October and, as of the writing of this report, it is intended that preliminary results will be presented at AGM '04 in Mexico. In addition, a lunch session with donors at AGM04 is being sponsored by the UK Department for International

Development. This session will be used to present and validate the preliminary conclusions stemming from the telephone interviews and the mailback survey.

4. NEW INITIATIVES

4.1 CGIAR and NARS Research in Africa: Evidence of Impact to date

Background

While the impacts of agricultural research done by the CGIAR and its partners in Asia and Latin America have been relatively well documented (e.g., Evenson and Gollin, 2003), clear evidence of impact of CGIAR work in Africa is inadequate. This is not because of lack of research investment. Currently four CGIAR centres, ICRAF, ILRI, WARDA and IITA and one affiliated centre, ICIPE have their headquarters in Africa. The other 11 Centres also have activities in SSA and in total there are some 56 offices of CGIAR Centres throughout the region. It is estimated that the CGIAR has allocated almost 40% of its research and capacity strengthening resources to this region. With such high levels of investment, the need for clear evidence of impact is particularly strong.

At MTM 01, SPIA/TAC presented a synthesis of available information on the contributions of research by the CGIAR and its partners to agricultural development in Africa. The paper was well received, but the review was preliminary, partial, and in many cases relied on anecdotal information for its assessment. To go beyond this narrative summary of actual and potential contributions, a systematic comprehensive inventory and critical review of all available ex-post impact assessments should be compiled. This then sets the stage for subsequent phases, which would attempt to derive a systematic typology for explaining variance in adoption and impact patterns for research outputs with different groups of characteristics, under different combinations of conditions prevalent in the region.

The African continent has recently been the focus of many international agricultural research initiatives, including the emerging SSA Challenge Program, the two recently published iSC desk studies focusing on priority research areas for SSA, the forthcoming Inter-Academy Council Study on S&T Strategies, and the recent CGIAR Initiative on SSA Programme Alignment and Structural Adjustment. Historical perspective is needed to inform the selection of priorities and strategies for these initiatives, by providing a more complete understanding of the types of research and the environments where impacts have been greatest and least. Documenting the impacts of agricultural research in Africa will also provide greater accountability for past investments in the CGIAR and its partners by the donors. The major output from this study will be a rigorous and comprehensive collection, synthesis and assessment of the available evidence on the impacts of new technologies and improved policies as a result of CGIAR and partner agricultural research in sub-Saharan Africa.

Recent Progress

By the conclusion of SPIA 25 two alternative approaches for the study had emerged. After further discussions among SPIA members, a two-phase (rather than three) approach was adopted. The first phase will build on the initial assessment presented at MTM '01, to develop a more systematic and extensive assessment of the impacts of the CGIAR and its partners in achieving the goals of reducing poverty, hunger and malnutrition in Africa. This would be

accomplished primarily through a comprehensive literature inventory that assembles and evaluates evidence of both direct and indirect outcomes along the impact pathway from different types of CGIAR research. To date, more than 200 adoption and ex-post IA studies have been conducted by the IARCs in Africa, but no comprehensive effort has been made so far to synthesize this information. Each of the studies would be classified by category of research activity (germplasm improvement, NRM, policy, training, biodiversity) and type of impact measured (adoption, yield increase, risk reduction, economic surplus generated, income effects, nutrition effects, poverty alleviated, etc.). Each study would then be subjected to critical review for (a) transparency and (b) methods (rigour in demonstrating causality) to assess the study's credibility ((using the approach developed in SPIA's B-C Meta-analysis of the CGIAR). Credible impact estimates included in this exercise could then be subcategorized according to type of research and impact indicator.

The second phase will focus on development of an explanatory typology for adoption and impact potential in the African context.

Discussions among SPIA Members expanded the intended authorship from a single senior consultant supported by a more junior colleague to a three person team headed by a senior consultant, and supported by a colleague of moderate seniority with a less senior third consultant. SPIA has contacted several resource persons and experts on agricultural research in Africa to obtain names of potential candidates for these positions. Currently, SPIA is considering the recommendations received. There also are potentials for collaboration with other groups involved in assessing the impacts of agricultural research and development in Africa.

4.2 Towards a Demand-Led *Ex-Post* Evaluation Strategy for Meeting Internal Learning Needs in the CGIAR

Background

Key stakeholders and CGIAR staff are emphasising the need for impact assessment that not only responds to external investor demands for accountability, but which also satisfies internal demands for "learning" oriented feedback. To help meet these demands, SPIA will pursue an innovative study that will define key issues and opportunities, by employing empirical analysis of the past and potential usefulness of impact-related findings for internal programmatic improvement. To date, no systematic analysis has been performed regarding the kinds of information that researchers can and want to use from evaluation. The results should lead to identification of a set of "best bet" evaluation and impact assessment approaches that generate relevant feedback for input into research operations and management.

The scope for potential application of evaluation findings will be a primary determinant of the potential for learning from any given type of evaluation. Consequently, by identifying those forms of evaluation with the widest scope of potential and past instrumental application, "best bet" approaches for maximising possible learning can be identified.

The identification of past and potential applications for different forms of evaluation will need to be rooted in the demands of researchers/managers (intended evaluation users) and the information considered in different decision processes. This study will explore the factors considered in managerial decisions (such as interests and incentives), and the role of

information among these factors, so as to identify the context for use of information with respect to past research. The characteristics of information utilized regarding past research will be subsequently analysed, and the current sources used for this information will be inventoried. Subsequently, the adequacy of these sources relative to decision needs will be assessed, so as to pinpoint gaps in demanded information. Finally, evaluation methods that can satisfy these information gaps will be identified.

Eliciting the information required for this exercise will require a participatory process that can effectively gather a rich set of information for analysis, at as low an opportunity cost of researcher time as possible. Defining and optimising such a process will not be simple. As an initial step, it is intended to hire a consultant to develop the method for doing so through a short “scoping paper” and to offer suggestions for a draft elicitation instrument.

Thus, to identify the most effective means for *ex-post* IA to inform internal decisions (relative to other *ex-post* evaluation approaches), SPIA will undertake this study with the following objectives:

1. To characterise and explore the current application of information regarding past research outcomes in CGIAR research management decisions, and identify additional information needs.
2. To identify options for selecting and adjusting evaluation methods so that they contribute effectively to research and planning and management

A planned follow-phase may analyse “feedback failures,” through investigation of the use of evaluation findings for research that failed to produce impact after many years of investment, so as to identify the institutional constraints that may inhibit learning.

Recent Progress

SPIA is in the process of refining the intended approach for this study, and has not yet begun approaching intended candidates. An early draft proposal was circulated to Doug Horton (formerly of ISNAR) for comments. In response to comments received, the draft proposal has been revised by the SPIA Chair and Consultant, but has not yet been finalised.

4.3 Impact Assessment of Participatory Research Approaches (Exploratory)

Background

The CGIAR has become increasingly involved in participatory research (PR) approaches, yet insufficient evidence on the impacts of such research in terms of the goals of the CGIAR has been published. A study on participatory methods and its impacts could be useful to clarify the role of participatory approaches in the context of the CGIAR’s global public goods oriented agricultural research. Thus, the overall objective of this study is to document the extent to which participatory approaches have been successful (or otherwise) in enhancing the impact of CGIAR research.

Specific objectives of the study will also include: (i) identifying the types of participatory approaches used by the CGIAR and the extent of their use by the Centres, (ii) assessing the CGIAR’s approaches in the context of participatory approaches developed and used by others (e.g. NGOs) (iii) investigating the cost-effectiveness of participatory

methods for different types of situations (iv) assessing the contribution of participatory research to the achievement of research impact; and (v) considering the implications of the findings in terms of the future role of participatory research in the CGIAR.

Recent Progress

During the SC 1 Meeting (and following discussions with SPME), the SPIA Chair made several key clarifying points about the scope and purpose of the study:

- The assessment extends beyond activities of the CIAT-led Systemwide Programme on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA) and would focus on documenting impacts of PR at the system-level. Virtually all centres are using PR methods to some extent, so this goes beyond a review of PRGA;
- Ideally, comparisons between participatory and conventional approaches would be made and, to the extent possible, this will be undertaken in the study;
- Initially in 2004 the study will focus on definitional issues, determining the scope of PR in the CGIAR, and will involve a synthesis of methods for PR IA prior to launching the impact assessment;
- Thereafter, consideration will be given to conducting a joint SPME/SPIA evaluation/impact assessment study since SPME/SC plans to assess the Systemwide Programme on PRGA next year. (Note: the SPME/SC external review of the PRGA planned for next year would focus exclusively on the PRGA Systemwide Programme. The potential for overlap is obvious, which is why the first part of the SPIA study will be more exploratory, including an inventory of the range and type of PR used within the System.)

SPIA has been in contact with CIAT to inform them of plans for the study and to request pertinent information, e.g., completed ex-post impact assessments of PR. Their response has been very positive and they have provided a long list of IA studies of PR. SPIA members are currently reading through these to assess (a) how much has already been done and how well and therefore whether a Systemwide IA of PR in the CGIAR is still required and, if so, (b) the feasibility of SPIA successfully undertaking such a study - and what added value a SPIA study could bring to what already exists. SPIA will shortly produce a 'scoping paper' in presenting its assessment.

4.4 Towards a Broader Assessment of CGIAR Policy Research Impacts (*for 2005*)

Background

Policy-oriented social science research comprises a growing share of the CGIAR research portfolio, yet it may be the area of System activities with the least compiled evidence of impact. Policy research may have a large impact on sectoral and macro policy decisions taken in LDCs, both affecting agriculture and the environment. It could also have a very potent indirect effect on the adoption and subsequent impact of other CGIAR biological technologies. Impact assessment of policy research in the CGIAR has been mainly confined to IFPRI, which has conducted seven such studies, and has prepared or commissioned a number of methods papers.⁹ Apart IFPRI's work, there have been few attempts to trace other policy research impacts beyond citations or simple indications of use.

⁹ These include:

Policy research is a very comprehensive term, which includes from very basic descriptive research to applied activities resulting in suggested specific courses of action directly disseminated to regulating bodies, investors or development agencies. Hence, it is expected that one of the first components of this activity will be to devise a taxonomy for this research category.

It is presently not possible to determine whether the absence of evidence of impact from CGIAR-conducted policy research is due to lack of attention to this key area or lack of impact *per se*, as estimation of the impacts of policy research poses unique problems of attribution and quantification. With policy outcomes, there is often no objective indicator of innovation source, and there are many simultaneous and complementary sources of information behind policy shifts. Further complicating attribution is the fact that relevant policy innovations with global-public-goods characteristics are rarely directly adoptable by target policymakers. Rather, these innovations diffuse through adaptation into the policy recommendations of other organisations, which then help to inform the decisions of policymakers. Adoption at each of these stages in such a context is far from a binary decision, as use may range from symbolic or selective to strategic. Counterfactual issues are also complicated, as confirmatory results have impacts that are especially difficult to discern.

However, such methodological difficulties do not reduce the need for impact to be demonstrated as the result of policy research, as the CGIAR and its stakeholders demand evidence of impact from their growing level of investment in this arena. This is particularly the case if the potential high positive complementarities between policy and biologically oriented research are taken into consideration (i.e. a sectoral policy shift may increase significantly the impact of another CG biological technology, and a major macro policy shift may impede the viability of several agricultural sub-sectors).

As a result, progress towards a credible set of impact assessment methods for policy research is very much needed. Relevant approaches will probably rely much on qualitative methods for attribution and counterfactual establishment, and in this context, generating credibility will be a key challenge. The following four activities are proposed in the SPIA study:

1. *Devise a taxonomy* to distinguish between different forms of CGIAR policy related research, and compile data on investment trends in policy-oriented social science

Alwang, J. and V. Puhazhendhi. 2002. The Impact of the International Food Policy Research Institute's Research Program on Rural Finance Policies for Food Security for the Poor. Impact Assessment Discussion Paper No. 16. Washington, DC: IFPRI

Babu, S. 2000. Impact of IFPRI's Policy Research on Resource Allocation and Food Security in Bangladesh. Impact Assessment Discussion Paper No. 13. Washington, DC: IFPRI.

Islam, Y. and J.L. Garrett. 1997. IFPRI and the Abolition of the Wheat Flour Ration Shops in Pakistan: A Case-Study on Policymaking and the Use and Impact of Research. Impact Assessment Discussion Paper No. 11. Washington, DC: IFPRI.

Paarlberg, R. 1999. External Impact Assessment of IFPRI's 2020 Vision for Food, Agriculture, and the Environment Initiative. Impact Assessment Discussion Paper No. 11. Washington, DC: IFPRI.

Ryan, J.G. 2003. Evaluating the impact of agricultural projection modeling using the IMPACT framework. *Impact Assessment Discussion Paper No. 8*. Washington, DC: IFPRI

Ryan, J.G. 1999. Assessing the Impact of Policy Research and Capacity Building by IFPRI in Malawi. Impact Assessment Discussion Paper No. 11. Washington, DC: IFPRI.

Ryan, J.G. 1999. Assessing the Impact of Rice Policy Changes in Viet Nam and the Contribution of Policy Research. *Impact Assessment Discussion Paper No. 8*. Washington, DC: IFPRI

research in the system. This activity will help to contextualise assessment of policy research impacts by analysing investment trends in this class of CGIAR activities. In addition, development of a taxonomy for categorising the many diverse forms of CGIAR policy-oriented social-science research will be a necessary precursor to the derivation of credible approaches for addressing the unique challenges of impact assessment for different forms of research within this arena.

2. *Review the methods* employed in the CGIAR's policy research ex-post IAs produced to date by commissioning a mixed panel of recognised experts in impact assessment and donor representatives, the objective being to derive lessons and principles for epIA of policy research at the System level. The review of ex-post cases will not be the first "meta-evaluation" of these efforts. However, by involving outside experts and perhaps some donor representatives insights should be generated as to which methods employed in these cases are credible and convincing to key external audiences. New insights on principles for epIA of social science related policy research may also emerge from this external group.
3. *A small workshop* to discuss the taxonomy of policy research categories identified under Activity 1, the methods, lessons and principles identified in Activity 2, and a set of preliminary case-study profiles in with relevant epIA focal points from relevant Centers, including particularly those associated with Activity 4.
4. Conduct *case-studies* of the largest perceived policy research impacts at the most policy-oriented IARCs. The methodologies applied in the cases should build upon methodological lessons identified in Activity 2. Centres will not submit completed study proposals for funding decisions, but initially only descriptions of the evidence available to support the perception that specific research policy projects have generated significant impacts. A subset will be selected for impact assessment.

Recent Progress (current status)

Although there is considerable interest from donors for a policy research impacts assessment at the System level, the SC agreed with SPIA (at SC 1) that given the preoccupation with other studies and the potential conflict in timing with the ongoing IFPRI EPMR, planning for this study should be deferred until mid 2005.

5. INITIATIVES IN THE PIPELINE

There are four other SPIA studies planned for initiation in 2005 and beyond:

- *Impacts of farming systems research (exploratory study);*
- *Developing improved understanding of perceived (but undocumented) impacts;*
- *CGIAR agricultural research benefit diffusion and impacts in South Asia (Phase I);*
- *CGIAR agricultural research benefit diffusion and Impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean (Phase I).*

These study proposals were presented by the Chair of SPIA to SC during the SC 1 meeting in Aleppo, and are briefly described below. Due to SPIA's current workload, planning for these studies will not begin until 2005.

5.1 Impacts of Farming Systems Research (Exploratory Study)

During the 1970s and 1980s, CGIAR investments in Farming Systems Research (FSR) related activities at the Centres - including workshops and reviews - were considerable. In addition to specific research outputs and technologies developed using the FSR framework, a host of FSR-related concepts emerged, including Farming Systems Analysis (FSA) and On-Farm Research (OFR). FSR was considered a novel approach that emphasized many elements that are common practice today and which underlie methods presently applied in integrated natural resource management (iNRM) research. Although much has been written about FSR, there is to date little documented evidence of the precise effects, diffusion and impacts of the FSR approach. The focus of this exploratory study will be to assess whether an in-depth retrospective assessment of the benefits of FSR is feasible. This study will provide evidence of impact for research that was a core part of the CGIAR program some years ago, but has been largely replaced by what is now called agroecological and INRM research.

5.2 Developing Improved Understanding of Perceived (but Undocumented) Impacts

At present, *ex-post* IA coverage within the CGIAR is highly variable among research areas and Centres, and is chiefly confined to a few selected crop improvement efforts. It is presently unknown whether substantial benefits are perceived to have been generated by research outside of these few activities, or whether impact assessment has captured most benefits resulting from CGIAR research. To test the hypothesis that major perceived impacts have escaped IA coverage, SPIA proposes to conduct a survey of key CGIAR experts and partners, which will identify research activities that have had the largest perceived impacts, according to different topical categories. This assessment is more of an exploratory one, trying to identify new areas for impact assessment based on centre, donor, partner and client perceptions of the impacts of the CGIAR.

5.3 CGIAR Research Benefit Diffusion & Impacts in South Asia (Phase I)

South Asia is the region of the world containing the greatest number of poor people. Despite status as the epicentre of the Green Revolution (GR), it is one of only two regions of the world with rising malnutrition and incidence of hunger. Clearly agricultural research has had highly successful productivity effects in the region, but poverty persists to a degree uncharacteristic of any other regions that benefited strongly from the GR. This study would analyse the poverty-alleviating impacts on different target groups of CGIAR technologies in this context, and would improve understanding of the opportunities for, and impediments to, agricultural technology enhancement as a strategy for poverty alleviation. Phase I is exploratory and would define the key knowledge gaps to be addressed in a more in-depth assessment. Both this study and the one for Latin America and the Caribbean are similar in purpose to the Africa study described earlier and relate to accounting for CGIAR investments in particular regions, both to the donors who fund the research and to regional members and clients in the regions.

5.4 CGIAR Agricultural Research Benefit Diffusion & Impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean (Phase I)

Latin America is not widely perceived as a significant beneficiary of the Green Revolution. Yet, there are a number of documented impacts in the region, and several strong

and efficient NARS have emerged. This study would synthesise the CGIAR's role in generating benefits and enhanced capacity in the region. Phase I is exploratory and would define the key parameters of a more in-depth assessment.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The new SC has confirmed the need which inspired the inauguration of IAEG eight years ago. First, much remains to be learned about demands of the key audiences for IAs. Second, at present, IA coverage is primarily restricted to a few select classes of research, and there is still substantial variation in the prevalence and quality of IAs among Centres. Third, there is, however, significant scope for improving understanding of the implications of the CGIAR's activities for target beneficiaries and the broader external environment, even for those research activities that have well documented impacts. With these confirmed needs in mind, SPIA has embarked on a planning exercise to develop a strategy for the future and a program to implement that strategy. This report has laid out the strategy and proposed plan of action.

Presently, SPIA is attempting to make *ex-post* IA in the CGIAR more demand-driven. The Panel is not only focusing on limited questions related to rigorous methods for particular areas of research, but is also addressing the larger questions of purpose and user demands, through increased interaction with key stakeholders. SPIA continues to make strides towards addressing gaps in IA coverage, by not only directly investigating new topics, but also by establishing the tools and methods that Centres can use to broaden their IA portfolios. To improve the consistency of impact assessment coverage across the System, SPIA is in the process of developing strategic guidelines. SPIA is currently developing a website for *ex-post* impact assessment (IA) in the CGIAR (Section 3.4) in order to establish an effective mechanism for disseminating Centre and System-level IA results, to promote "best practices" in IA, and to foster dialogue among IA practitioners both within the CGIAR and throughout the larger research and development communities.

When considering the Panel's experiences to date, it seems that SPIA's primary comparative advantage lies in its independence, transparency and objectivity within the broader context of an independent Science Council. Accordingly, as SPIA matures, it must preserve and enhance these qualities, so that meaningful guidance can be provided to IA in the System. To do so is not simply a matter of organization. It is also a function of the credibility and relevance behind SPIA's findings and conclusions. Establishing this relevance and credibility cannot come from academic rigour alone, but must also stem from a solid and comprehensive understanding of stakeholder needs, to allow SPIA to guide assessments in such a way that they fully satisfy key stakeholder requirements.

IAEG/SPIA PUBLISHED REPORTS AND OTHER OUTPUTS

(This list includes only those publications directly from IAEG/SPIA and does not include peer reviewed journal articles and the many papers published by Centres-based on work done in SPIA projects.)

Crop Germplasm Improvement Impacts

Evenson, R. and D. Gollin (2003). *Crop Variety Improvement and its Effect on Productivity: The Impact of International Agricultural Research*. 522 pp. Oxon, UK: CABI. [includes eight chapters by CGIAR Centre authors]

Environmental Impacts

Nelson, M. and M. Maredia (2000). *Environmental Impacts of the CGIAR: An Initial Assessment*. 71 pp. TAC Secretariat. Rome, Italy: FAO.

Maredia, M. and P. Pingali (2001). *Environmental Impacts of Productivity-Enhancing Crop Research: A Critical Review*. 36 pp. TAC Secretariat. Rome, Italy: FAO.

IPM Research Impacts

Waibel, H. (2000). *Evaluation of the Impact of Integrated Pest Management Research at the International Agricultural Research Centres*. 95 pp. TAC Secretariat. Rome, Italy: FAO.

Assessment of Impacts of CGIAR Research on Poverty Alleviation

Kerr, J. and S. Kolavalli (1999). *Impact of Agricultural Research on Poverty Alleviation: Conceptual Framework with Illustrations from the Literature*. EPTD Discussion Paper No. 51. Washington D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Meinzen-Dick, R., M. Adato, L. Haddad, P. Hazell. (2003). *Impacts of Agricultural Research on Poverty Reduction: Findings of an Integrated Economic and Social Analysis*. FCND/EPTD Discussion Paper. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Impact Assessment Methodology Related

Cooksy, L. (1997). "CGIAR Methodological Review and Synthesis of Existing Ex Post Impact Assessments. Report #1: A Review of Documents Reporting Effects of International Agricultural Research Centres. IAEG Publication.

Cooksy, L. (1997). "CGIAR Methodological Review and Synthesis of Existing Ex Post Impact Assessments. Report #2: Analysis of Comprehensive Ex Post Studies of Impact of International Agricultural Research Centres. IAEG Publication.

IAEG Secretariat (1997). "Status of Impact Assessment and Evaluation in the CGIAR: Proceedings of the CGIAR Impact Assessment and Evaluation Workshop held at ISNAR, The Hague 15-17 April 1996.

IAEG (1999). *Impact Assessment of Agricultural Research: Context and State of the Art*. Paper presented by the IAEG for the ASARECA/ECART/CTA Workshop on IA of Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (Uganda, November 1999).

TAC Secretariat (2001). “The Future of Impact Assessment in the CGIAR: Needs Constraints and Options” Proceedings of a workshop organized by the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment of the TAC, 3-5 May 2000, Rome, Italy: FAO.

Watson, D.J. (2003). International Conference on “Impacts of Agricultural Research and Development: Why Has Impact Assessment Research Not Made More of a Difference”, Proceedings of a conference organized by the SPIA and CIMMYT, held 4-7 February 2002 in San Jose, Costa Rica. 107 pp. Mexico: CIMMYT.

Adoption Analysis

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IAEG/SPIA Workshops and Conferences

Workshop on the “Status of Impact Assessment and Evaluation in the CGIAR”, held at ISNAR, The Hague 15-17 April 1996.

Attendance: representatives from all 16 CGIAR Centres; national programme representatives from KARI, Indonesia, and Philippines; donor representatives from Germany and Australia; and members of the TAC, IAEG and CGIAR Secretariats.

Workshop on “The Future of Impact Assessment in the CGIAR: Needs Constraints and Options” 3-5 May 2000, FAO, Rome, Italy.

Attendance: CGIAR Centre IA focal points, other CGIAR Centre representatives, IA experts, selected donors, TAC Secretariat, TAC Members, FAO staff.

International Conference on “Impacts of Agricultural Research and Development: Why Has Impact Assessment Research Not Made More of a Difference” held 4-7 February 2002 in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Attendance: IA practitioners from 15 CGIAR Centres, as well as representatives from NARS, public and private universities, multilateral lending organizations, development assistance agencies, NGOs, philanthropic foundations, private corporations, and the media.

**AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND POVERTY:
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS IN SIX COUNTRIES**

by Michelle Adato and Ruth Meinzen-Dick, editors

	Page
FOREWORD by SPIA	
1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW by Michelle Adato, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Lawrence Haddad, Peter Hazell	1
2. STUDYING POVERTY IMPACT USING LIVELIHOODS ANALYSIS AND QUANTITATIVE METHODS: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND RESEARCH METHODS by Michelle Adato, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Lawrence Haddad, Peter Hazell	23
3. RICE RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS AND IMPACTS ON THE POOR: THE BANGLADESH CASE by Mahabub Hossain, David Lewis, Manik L. Bose and Alamgir Chowdhury	70
4. ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF HYV MAIZE IN RESETTLEMENT AREAS OF ZIMBABWE by Michael Bourdillon, Paul Hebinck and John Hoddinott with Bill Kinsey, John Marondo, Netsayi Mudege, Trudy Owens	132
5. AN INTEGRATED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF VEGETABLE AND FISHPOND TECHNOLOGIES ON POVERTY IN RURAL BANGLADESH by Kelly Hallman (Population Council), David Lewis (London School of Economics), and Suraiya Begum (Dhaka University)	189
6. THE IMPACT OF AGROFORESTRY-BASED SOIL FERTILITY REPLENISHMENT PRACTICES ON THE POOR IN WESTERN KENYA by Frank Place, Michelle Adato, Paul Hebinck and Mary Omosa	266
7. THE IMPACT OF IMPROVED MAIZE GERMPLASM ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION: THE CASE OF TUXPEÑO-DERIVED MATERIAL IN MEXICO by Mauricio R. Bellon, Michelle Adato, Javier Becerril, and Dubravka Mindek	334
8. HOW AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AFFECTS URBAN POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: THE CASE OF CHINA by Shenggen Fan, Cheng Fang, and Xiaobo Zhang	396
9. AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND URBAN POVERTY IN INDIA by Shenggen Fan	418
10. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND RURAL POVERTY: THE CASE OF RICE RESEARCH IN INDIA AND CHINA by Shenggen Fan, Connie Chan-Kang, Keming Qian and K. Krishnaiah	440
11. THE IMPACTS OF TECHNOLOGY ON POVERTY: SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS by Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Michelle Adato, Lawrence Haddad, Peter Hazell	475
12. INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING AND CHANGE	519
13. LESSONS ABOUT POVERTY IMPACT ASSESSMENT by Michelle Adato, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Lawrence Haddad, Peter Hazell	539

Update on Progress by the Panel overseeing the Evaluation and Impact Assessment of Training Activities in CGIAR

Scope of this ‘update note’

This is an update note rather than a report. It has been prepared in August 2004 following an intense period of activity by the Panel coordinating the study of CG training and its contribution to NARS capacity development. It is intended to update the Science Council and its standing panels on Impact Assessment (SPIA) and Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME) on progress, decisions and planning to date.

Since the submission of the Inception Report (2nd February, 2004), the Panel has been building on the preparatory work described in that report. In particular:

- Developing and operationalising methods including procedures, sampling, country/Centre/activity priorities and initial ideas for analysis
- Preparing instruments required at an early stage
- Beginning to develop a number of core ideas and ‘models’ regarding, for example, the factors shaping training priorities, the nature of capacity development in different NARS and ecoregional settings and the scope and extent of training/education/skill development and learning activities
- Identifying a range of ‘scenarios’ within which the study will have to be implemented, so as to validate the proposed design and refine it where necessary
- Developing workplans, the allocation of resources, divisions of responsibilities and a preliminary view of the analysis/write-up process.

In order to ‘ground’ the activities of the Panel, members were able to draw on their own experience in different regions and settings, consultation with CGIAR Centres (e.g. responses to the Inception Report) and further interrogation/clarification of information available from the Desk Study. Much of the work of the panel in the early months of 2004 was electronic. In June the Panel reconvened in Kenya which had been chosen because of easy access to CG Centres and the opportunity to visit NARS institutions with different characteristics and strengths. The visit to Kenya and Tanzania was essentially for study design purposes. It allowed the Panel to work together on instruments, workplans and models.

The Panel has now prepared:

- A preliminary set of instruments i.e. four questionnaires for ex-Trainees, CG Researchers, Centre Training Officers and Partners
- A detailed workplan including outline procedures for all study stages
- Criteria for country selection and an initial proposed selection
- Further work on emerging ideas and concepts – e.g. models, frameworks and typologies.

These are each briefly described below, together with issues arising. Fuller documentation is annexed to this update note.

Questionnaires

These questionnaires will be administered to:

- All researchers in all Centres through Centre DGs
- All centre training officers (or equivalent) through focal point nominated by DGs
- All trainees who attended group training in 2003 and as many trainees as possible who received individual training in the period 1993-2003
- Partners drawn from a sample of projects using July '04 MTP information supplemented with information from Centre

Key informants from within the CG system are being asked to comment all questionnaires. The versions sent out for comments are a supplement to this note. Outputs from these questionnaires will be inputs into national case-study and tracking work. Fieldwork in selected countries will also follow-up respondents to increase response rates.

Workplan and procedures

The workplan has been prepared in several formats. Annexed to this note (see Annex 1) is a plan by main task or activity. This also contains labour input estimates for all activities. It has also been prepared in terms of time-phasing and likely individual responsibilities. These various versions inform the GANTT chart also Annexed.

The main fieldwork procedures identified include:

- Interviews with Centre personnel in 6-8 Centre Headquarters and in up to six regional offices/teams depending on NARS visits, and documentary analysis of training reports including internal and external reviews.
- Case studies of outcomes and impacts based on sample type of training and collaborative research that incorporates training and or learning
- Interviews and documentary analysis with the NARS at HQ and operational levels in 7-8 countries
- Follow-up with CG Partners and Trainees

In addition, important gaps that have been identified in existing data-bases reviewed will be updated as far as possible; financial data on training will be analysed for three benchmark years – 1993, 1998, 2003; and a limited literature review will be undertaken of capacity development and evaluation and of training impacts.

NARS/Country selection

The selection NARS/country is based on criteria that include the intensity of previous CG training efforts; inputs from multiple Centres; diversity of NARS across the countries selected (e.g. in terms of resources and capacities); and a diversity of development/ poverty indices. The Panel has nearly completed its selection of 7-8 NARS/countries.

The initial 'nominated' NARS/countries were based on two per each of four regions: Asia, Africa, Latin America and CWANA. The current plan is for a greater emphasis on Africa and a reduced emphasis on CWANA.

Emerging ideas and concepts

Models, frameworks and typologies of training related to capacity development in NARS and NARI have been a key part of the internal conversations among panel members. Most of this thinking has been incorporated into the study design and instruments such as questionnaires and interview checklists. A number of the still tentative models and frameworks are included in Annex 3. They are presented here in order to promote discussion and feedback.