

**CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH**

**SCIENCE COUNCIL**

**Extracts of the Report of the External Review  
of the Systemwide Program  
on Alternatives to Slash and Burn (ASB)**

**SC Commentary  
ASB Program Response  
Panel Report: Summary and Recommendations**

**SCIENCE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT**

November 2005





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CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
SCIENCE COUNCIL

3 October 2005

Dr Ian Johnson  
CGIAR Chairman  
1776 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006, USA

Dear Ian,

I am pleased to transmit to you the Report of the First External Review of the Systemwide Program on Alternatives to Slash and Burn (ASB), convened by the World Agroforestry Center. The review was commissioned by the Science Council and chaired by William Clark of Harvard University. The two other members of the panel were Arnoldo Contreras and Karl Harmsen. The Panel Report was considered by the Science Council at its 4<sup>th</sup> meeting held at WorldFish Center HQ in Penang in September 2005. The Report was discussed by the Science Council in the presence of Prof. Clark (via Teleconference) and the ASB coordinator, Tom Tomich.

The Report is accompanied by two attachments. The first contains the Science Council commentary, which summarizes the Science Council's views on the Panel Report and on the joint response of the ASB program coordinator, ASB global steering group, and the World Agroforestry Center. The second is the joint response from the ASB program.

The Science Council believes the Panel has produced an innovative and thorough evaluation of the ASB program. It congratulates the ASB program for a positive set of review conclusions in the report. The Program has agreed with all the Panel's recommendations.

I would like to highlight a few key points related to this review:

- The Science Council agrees with the Panel that the ASB program has generated important international public goods-type knowledge. Citation analysis and other objective measures show that ASB results are treated as influential global public goods by research communities specializing in human-environment systems at the tropical forest margins around the world.
- The claims for impact on other kinds of outputs, e.g., action R&D and capacity building, are less well supported. The lack of appropriate mechanisms for tracking and targeting its technology and policy outputs into action and impact make it difficult to evaluate the "on the ground impact" from the ASB work.

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- The review concludes that a major shortcoming of the Program is its inability to mobilize resources to extend its results more widely across the forest margins of the tropics, raising the issue of the appropriate role of the ASB program in the research-to-development continuum. A thorough discussion among CGIAR stakeholders is needed regarding the appropriate location of CGIAR work in the research-development continuum.

I look forward to discussing the Report with ExCo members at its next meeting.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "P. Pinstруп-Andersen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Per Pinstруп-Andersen  
Chair, Science Council

## **SC Commentary on the ASB Review Report**

Dr. William Clark, Panel chair presented to the SC the main findings and recommendations of the external review of the ASB Program via teleconference call and PowerPoint presentation at SC 4. A brief 'preliminary response' to the report was given by Tom Tomich, the ASB Global Coordinator, on behalf of ICRAF, the convening Centre for the ASB. This was followed by discussion amongst the SC members and observers led by Hans Gregersen. Subsequent to the SC presentation and discussion, the ASB program provided a very thorough, thoughtfully written and positive response to the report and the recommendations of the Panel. The Program agreed with all the recommendations and provided some insights on how it will address most of them. Details for implementation remain to be worked out. The SC will be monitoring the implementation of the recommendations in the coming MTPs.

The SC thanks the Panel for an innovative and thorough evaluation of the ASB program. The SC also congratulates the ASB program for a positive set of review conclusions in the evaluation report.

The review report is well written and clear. With respect to the specific ToR of the review, the major conclusions of the Panel are:

- ASB has been highly relevant to the CGIAR's core mission and is pursuing work well aligned with the Science Council's recently articulated System Research Priorities for 2005-2015.
- ASB has created the world's pre-eminent system for use-driven, comparative scientific investigation of human-environment interactions at the forest margin across the pan tropic domain. Citation analysis and other objective measures show that ASB results are treated as influential global public goods by research communities specializing in the ASB domain around the world.
- ASB has developed an effective and efficient governing structure that successfully integrates capabilities and concerns across CGIAR Centers, tropical regions, scales and disciplines. Support from, and integration with, the host Center ICRAF has been exemplary.
- ASB, with help from ICRAF, has been effective in mobilizing a generally increasing level of financial resources to support its work. These resources, however, have been both inadequate in total amount and too imbalanced in allocation between global and regional tasks to enable the Program to realize its full potential. Solving this will require constructive intervention at the level of the SC and CGIAR to improve incentive structures facing Centers across the CGIAR and potential outside collaborators.

- Looking to the future, the Panel concluded that the capacity created by ASB could make a unique contribution to CGIAR and SC goals on integrated land, water and forest management at landscape level. That capacity should be sustained and strengthened.

The Panel has been, in the SC's view, highly innovative in the use of methods to document in both quantitative and qualitative terms the influence and outcomes from the ASB, particularly in the area of knowledge generation, e.g., changing perspectives on 'the problem' and developing tools for analysis ("ASB Matrix"). The claims for impact from other kinds of outputs (Action R&D and capacity building) are less well supported.

The Panel notes that the ASB has created a truly international public good of reliable knowledge regarding the functioning of human-environment systems at the tropical forest margins around the world. It has achieved this by generating comparable, co-located data across its benchmark sites and used its Global Coordinating Office to undertake across-site syntheses. SC regards this as a valuable template to help guide future system priorities and strategies.

The SC recognizes and appreciates the fact that the Panel focused on the management, governance and value added of the overall program itself, rather than on the individual component activities. At the same time, the SC would have liked to have seen more systematic and detailed discussion of information, where available, about on-the-ground impacts of specific technology and policy interventions – and the research results leading up to them. Although the ASB program claims that there has in fact been 'considerable on-the-ground impact from ASB partner interventions', the panel's report, as written, does not provide ample evidence of this. Nor does it provide a sense of what technologies are showing most promise, which do not seem to be moving, and what is in the pipeline. The SC recognizes that the Panel felt this was one of the deficiencies in the ASB in that it had no mechanism for tracking and targeting its technology and policy outputs into action and impact. Without this information the Panel obviously could not undertake systematic impact assessment in the time available.

The report gives ASB high marks on capacity building (p. 62), but also acknowledges the difficulty of measuring the effects of capacity building activities. The report does not provide much evidence for the claim that ASB has been very successful in this area. The ASB response to Recommendation C regarding the need to more explicitly prioritize capacity building for future impacts, indicated that the program has not yet been convinced of the precedence it should accord to this area, and the relative emphasis to be given to training courses *per se*, compared to learning-by-doing collaborative research. The SC appreciates the dilemma facing the ASB in this regard and is hopeful the systemwide training evaluation currently underway by an expert panel may shed some light on these issues.

The Panel raises in several places the issue of the role of the ASB program in the research to development continuum. The issue is raised particularly in the context of the Panel's major conclusion that: *The Program's greatest shortcoming is that it has been unable to*

*secure or mobilize the resources to extend its results to any but a small fraction of the 1.2 billion people across forest margins of the tropics who are still struggling to mitigate their poverty.* In addressing this shortcoming, the Panel avoids taking a stand on the role of the ASB program at the development end of the continuum, stating that this is a broader issue that the CGIAR needs to come to grips within a more general context. The Panel suggests that many of ASB's research and innovation results take a long time to yield impacts and require considerable development investments with benefits materializing in the distant future. Thus, in order to generate the development benefits, consideration needs to be given to the attributes of research results which could be politically appealing and economically attractive to governments or financial institutions, so the necessary complementary development investment takes place. This issue is not limited only to the ASB program, but is more generic. The SC considers that a thorough discussion among CGIAR stakeholders is needed regarding the appropriate location of CGIAR work in the research-development continuum.

The Panel suggests two options for the future of the ASB program. The first option is business as usual, with the ASB progressing along the same path as at present. The second path involves getting more specifically involved in the development end of the research to development continuum. The Panel suggests that the ASB program should make a choice between the two options, informed by where the CGIAR ends up after a thorough debate on the appropriate role for the CGIAR along the research-development continuum. The SC appreciates the Panel's unwillingness to recommend which of the two options the ASB program should choose without having in hand the broader conclusions from a CGIAR wide debate. The SC is planning to examine this important system issue in more depth over the coming months.

The Panel has several explicit recommendations for the CGIAR as a whole. These include:

*Recommendation F: The CGIAR system should help to assure a sustained investment in key coordinating staff that make the ASB a true SWP*

*Recommendation G: The CGIAR system should take steps to improve the incentives for collaboration among centers and programs in activities central to achieving system-wide goals, including joint funding proposals*

The SC takes note of these recommendations, recognizing that making recommendations beyond the program were not part of the TORs for the Panel and that the analysis underlying the recommendations is missing. The tensions among centres resulting from perceived or actual competition and "free-riding" are real, not only in the ASB but across the system. With the formation of the Alliance Executive there may be an opportunity for the SC to work with it and other CGIAR stakeholders to design more effective collaborative funding and incentive mechanisms in support of the new system priorities and further cross-centre collaboration.

The two recommendations relate to more fundamental problems facing the ASB program on raising sufficient funds to support an adequate size program and to the program lacking security in resource availability over time. The argument is that if there is no security of funding, then problems of governance and continuity develop and it becomes

difficult to sustain the research program focused on international public goods. Indeed it is this aspect of the program that has suffered most from funding constraints.

The SC notes that the first three Panel recommendations relate to the need for the program to increase its efforts in tracking its outputs and assessing the impacts of those outputs. Thus, the first three recommendations from the Panel have as the final sentence: “[the ASB program] should develop metrics of the outcomes and impacts actually achieved, and regularly compare these with its objectives.” The SC strongly agrees with this recommendation from the panel, which it obviously feels is very important.

The SC considers that the “results-based management” (RBM) approach used by the Panel in its assessment is appropriate to this exercise. The impact pathway is clearly spelled out and elements decomposed in the context of a succession of components internal to the program elements (input, activity, output) and external to the program elements (uptake, outcome, impact). As such, the SC will be considering seriously the Panel’s Recommendation L suggesting use of this framework in future reviews. The SC acknowledges the Panel’s innovative methods and metrics used, e.g., the “Gold Standard”, methods of tracking and quantifying and triangulation. The SC also takes note of the Panel recommendation that ... *the CGIAR develop and publicize standard comparative metrics and data for use in future RBM assessments of particular programs*, and it agrees with the ASB response that the SC should consider taking on some role in developing such metrics for use across SWPs in future assessments and performance monitoring.

The SC takes note of the fact that the ASB program has a new impact-focused priority setting system that parallels the RBM approach. This is particularly important, given that the Panel feels that:

*the informal priority setting system that served the Program well through its first five years has been increasingly unable to handle emergent tensions in three areas: i) allocation of effort to create scientific knowledge and technical innovation versus effort to move that knowledge and know-how into practice; ii) effort devoted to addressing development goals vs. conservation goals; and iii) effort devoted to providing global public goods versus regional and local ones.”*

The SC also takes note of the fact that the Panel wonders whether the management structures and resources will be in place to make the ASB’s “admirable” new priority setting plan a reality that can overcome the priority setting issues raised above.

The SC notes with interest the Panel’s conclusion that: *one of ASB’s greatest accomplishments may well be its success in functioning as a dynamic learning organization. As effectively as any organization we know, it has used systematic reflection on its own research and experience not only to learn better answers to its original questions, but also to learn better questions to ask.* The SC believes that while the learning character of the organization is highly valuable, the greatest accomplishments should be measured by outputs leading to achieving CGIAR goals.

The SC supports the Panel’s two recommendations related to governance:

*Recommendation H: that ASB should continue the effort to formalize its governance structures that has recently resulted in the publication of a formal “Governance Policy” document... and*

*Recommendation I that ASB and its host Center ICRAF should give strong consideration to creating some form of independent ASB advisory group to assist the program in its realizing its existing commitment to self-reflection and learning...*

The SC agrees that the potential for future impacts is likely to be enhanced by a more pro-active and inclusive approach to those organizations, researchers and users working in the ASB domain, but not formally members of the GSG or part of the ASB consortium. The future emphases on improved communications, dissemination, training and capacity strengthening in this context deserve explicit consideration as the ASB reviews its future priorities and strategies.

The SC also sees the logic of the Panel’s recommendation that the program find a new name that more correctly reflects the program’s evolving focus and domain.





September 26, 2005

Dr. Per Pinstруп-Andersen  
Chair, Science Council  
Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research  
305 Savage Hall  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York, USA 14853-6301

Dear Per,

We are pleased to send to you the responses of the Alternatives to Slash-and-Burn System-wide Programme (ASB) to its recent External Review and Impact Assessment. We have found the Review to be very thorough and thoughtful, and the recommendations provided by the Panel to be both highly relevant and timely.

As you know, the Panel concluded that ASB is closely aligned with the CGIAR's core mission and with the Science Council's recently articulated System Research Priorities for 2005-2015. Moreover, the Panel concluded that the capacity created by ASB could make a unique contribution to CGIAR and SC goals on integrated land, water and forest management at the landscape level, and that this capacity should be sustained and strengthened. We are of course gratified by these observations, but even more so by the Panel's clear and practical recommendations for further improving the efforts and impact of the Programme.

ASB is a very dynamic initiative. It has changed considerably since its inception in response to new iNRM knowledge and insights, garnered both from its own research and that of many others. The Panel's recommendations come at a time when ASB - having recently completed its first decade of work - is looking to the future and seeking to consolidate and build on its unique experience in global, regional and local iNRM research. The Panel's observations and advice will play a central role as the ASB Global Steering Group and the ICRAF-hosted ASB Global Coordination Office evaluate and in some cases revise the Programme's priorities and activities.

The Programme's responses to the Panel's recommendations reflect the views of the ASB Global Steering Group, the Global Coordination Office, and the World Agroforestry Centre. Going forward, we will welcome further discussion with the SC and others interested in the outcomes of this External Review and Impact Assessment.

Sincerely,

**Dennis Garrity**  
Director General  
World Agroforestry  
Center

**Thomas Tomich**  
ASB Global Coordinator

**Bruce Campbell**  
Chair, ASB  
Global Steering  
Group

# **Report of the External Review of the CGIAR's System-wide Programme Alternatives to Slash and Burn (ASB)<sup>1</sup>**

## **Findings and Recommendations (19/09/05)**

### **Comments and Reactions from the ASB Team (23/09/05)**

#### **General Comments**

ASB team members are very appreciative of the tremendous effort put forth by the Review Panel to produce a carefully considered, objective and thorough evaluation of the ASB System-wide Programme. This is the fourth external review of the ASB Programme, but the first sponsored by the CGIAR. We greatly appreciate the Science Council's interest in and support for this timely review. It focuses far more than previous reviews on the Programme's impact – in the words of the Panel, on its “accomplishments and original contributions to the understanding and practice of iNRM in the world's tropical forest margins”.

The members of the ASB Consortium, its Global Steering Group (GSG), and its Global Coordination Office (GCO) have found this review to be particularly useful in stimulating thought and discussion about the impacts of the Programme, the effectiveness of our informal organisational structure, and our future directions. We value the insights and recommendations put forth by the panel and, as we move forward into our second decade, we see this review as a significant benchmark against which we will be able to measure the success of current and future endeavours.

We are particularly pleased with the Panel's comments regarding ASB's relevance to the core mission of the CGIAR and the alignment of its work with the Science Council's System Research Priorities for 2005-2015, especially Priority Area 4A ( Integrated land, water and forest management at the landscape level). We consider the Priority Area 4A work we do in the tropical forest margins to comprise ASB's core competence. As shown in the chart on page 2, our work in the tropical forest margins also relates closely to several other Science Council priorities. We believe that in the forest margins an integrated approach to natural resource management research is central to addressing Priority Area 4D (Agroecological intensification in low/high potential areas) in order to avoid negative environmental spillovers (viz. accelerating deforestation). In addition, we see an integrated approach to NRM research across Priority Area 5 (Policies and institutional innovations)

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<sup>1</sup> **Review Panel:** William Clark (chair), Arnoldo Contreras, Karl Harmsen

as highly beneficial, and we perceive a natural fit between our work in the tropical forest margins on constraints and opportunities and Priority Area 3D (Sustainable income from forests and trees). The matrix below shows the convergence of ASB’s work in the tropical forest margins and Science Council priorities.

**ASB Work in the Tropical Forest Margins  
Relative to 20 Science Council Priority Areas**

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5
Sustaining biodiversity	Genetic improvement	Diversification & high value commodities	Integrated natural resource management	Policies and institutional innovation
1A Conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture	2A Maintaining and enhancing yield of staples	3A Income increases from fruit and vegetables	4A Integrated land water and forest management at landscape level	5A Dynamics of rural poverty
1B Promoting conservation / characterization of UPGR for income	2B Tolerance to abiotic stresses	3B Income increases from livestock	4B Sustaining aquatic ecosystems for food and livelihood	5B Science and technology policy and institutions
1C Conservation of indigenous livestock	2C Enhancing nutritional quality and safety	3C Enhancing incomes through production of fish and aquaculture	4C Improving water productivity	5C Making international and domestic markets work for the poor
1D Conservation of aquatic and animal genetic resources	2D Genetic enhancement of high value species	3D Sustainable income from forests and trees	4D Agro-ecological intensification in low/hi potential areas	5D Rural institutions and their governance

**For the ASB domain (the tropical forest margins):**

ASB partners work in all 20 priority areas, but the emphasis has been on terrestrial rather than aquatic ecosystems.

5 CGIAR partners of ASB work in 17 of the 20 priority areas above (not 1C, 3C, 4B)

	Indicates area (4A) of ASB core competence for tropical forest margins.
	Indicates area (4D) where an integrated approach is essential to avoid negative spillovers.
	Indicates where an integrated approach at the tropical forest margins is particularly beneficial.

The ASB Programme has changed considerably during its first decade, to the point in fact where its name – Alternatives to Slash and Burn – no longer accurately reflects what the Programme is all about. The Review Panel notes the implied narrow focus of our name and in its report describes the evolution of the Programme’s work in the context of what they call the **ASB domain** – “the exploration of options for shaping land use at forest-agriculture interfaces in the humid tropics with a goal of raising productivity and income of rural households without increasing deforestation or undermining essential environmental services.” We welcome this recognition by the Panel of the dynamic nature of the Programme and how its goals, objectives and activities have evolved in light of improved understanding of the root problems that must be addressed in the tropical forest margins.

One thing that has not changed, however, is the flexible, non-bureaucratic organisational configuration that has served the ASB Consortium so well. The Panel notes that ASB’s structure has given rise to a very efficient and equitable way of doing business, and as we move to adopt recommendations from this review, we will want to do so in ways that capitalize on and reinforce that attribute.

Finally, the Review Panel (rightly) focused much of its attention on the global value added of the ASB Consortium – the global public goods produced – and less on impacts at national and local levels. Still, it is at those levels that action impacts happen, and in fact there has been considerable on-the-ground impact from ASB partner interventions. We know these interventions have benefited tens of thousands of forest margin dwellers. We believe the number of beneficiaries is in fact considerably higher. What is important here, however, is that we see significant potential for scaling up our impacts through strategic ASB partnerships. The Panel’s recommendations will help us clarify new and existing partnership priorities and strategic steps as we strive to make a quantum leap in realizing ASB’s potential for impact.

**Recommendation A:** *ASB should extend its strategic planning process to include explicit identification of what knowledge outcomes and impacts it most wants to achieve with which audiences, and should target its activities and resources accordingly. In particular, it should give more careful attention than it has in the past to reaching the broader community of scholars and policy analysts beyond that of its immediate CGIAR/NARS and related clienteles. It should develop metrics of the outcomes and impacts actually achieved, and regularly compare these with its objectives.*

We fully agree with Recommendation A. Our interpretation is that we should adjust our current knowledge output strategy in ways that will help ensure

broader exposure and visibility. This implies explicit consideration of desired knowledge “outcomes.” We need to more clearly identify who we are trying to reach, how we want to affect their thinking, what evidence is going to be persuasive, and how we should convey ASB data and information in order to both more effectively reach our target audiences and engender desired responses from them.

One critical aspect of our revised strategy will be to identify ASB-generated information for possible publication in the highest impact scientific journals. As the Panel correctly notes, many of the journals in which we publish – while readily accessible to core ASB audiences – have relatively less impact in the broader academic community. A second critical aspect to our revised strategy will be to target the delivery of ASB information to different levels of policy makers, opinion leaders and other influential people. Moreover, in the context of our overall communication strategy and in a manner consistent with our multi-level structure, we should develop complementary global, regional and national communication strategies.

As we develop a more refined knowledge output strategy, we will give careful attention to defining our parameters for measuring success – both direct and indirect – and ensure that we document over time how the Programme is doing relative to the objectives it sets for effective communication of ASB data, information and knowledge. These metrics will go well beyond the simple recording of the number of journal articles produced or number of hits on our website and, to the extent possible, document the impacts of the Programme’s knowledge products on key audiences.

Effective communication is the foundation of successful resource mobilization. As we develop our overall communication strategy, we will want to link it (and some of the specific communication initiatives it calls for) to our fund-raising strategy. This linkage should take place in at least two ways. One, ensure that existing donors are kept informed of the impacts that their investments are producing so that they in turn are able to justify their investments to their constituencies. And two, leverage documented impacts with existing donors, as well as with potential new financial supporters, to generate funding for the Programme. Both strategies – or perhaps one unified communications and resource mobilization strategy – will be developed by the GCO for consideration by the GSG during its meeting in 2006.

***Recommendation B:*** *ASB should extend its strategic planning process to include explicit identification of further opportunities in themes, regions and global institutions where action R&D (policies, technologies, practices) is likely to create the greatest impact. The Programme should also link policy research results to elements of governance environments that are key in shaping results on the ground. It should*

*develop metrics of the outcomes and impacts actually achieved, and regularly compare these with its objectives.*

There are two different (though closely related) aspects to this recommendation. The first is that we need to invest more in impact assessment. ASB has been a leader in *ex ante* impact assessments and, more recently, we have been innovative in identifying and mapping iNRM “impact pathways” that link ultimate desired impacts to outcomes and outputs of the Programme. Still, we recognize that ASB is underinvested in impact analyses and agree with the Panel that there is an urgent need to do more of this work.

The Review has generated considerable enthusiasm among ASB partners, especially our NARS partners, for capacity building and methodological development relative to strategic impact assessment. Having said that, we wish to make two observations regarding more comprehensive impact assessment efforts:

- 1) ASB currently lacks the people and the competencies to conduct such analyses in different locations. This has strategic implications for the development of partnerships and capacity building within the Consortium.
- 2) Although big methodological challenges remain, we see the growing interest in this kind of iNRM impact assessment as a significant opportunity to build on work we and others have done in this area.

We believe this is an important area for future work in ASB. The Programme is very well positioned to do strategic research on impact assessment, and methodology development could emerge as a major Programme output in the future. To date, we have not had this as a priority, but as we look to the future, we believe this work has to be among the Programme’s highest priorities.

While ASB should take advantage of its opportunities for comparative, cross site research on policies, technologies and practices, we need to carefully weigh the payoffs of such research and make sure that scientists in other realms have not done or are not already doing this work. In short, we have to explicitly consider what ASB has to add by doing this work compared to simply taking better advantage of the work done by others. Our sense of this is that, in some cases, the Programme will be uniquely placed to conduct such research, but that in others, we will want to avoid duplication.

The second aspect to this recommendation is that ASB should integrate governance considerations when planning its policy work (but not necessarily do research on governance). Writ more largely, we interpret this to be a recommendation for developing a policy outcome strategy and a way to assess it. We agree with this idea. In fact, this is one of two output areas in

ASB's Medium-Term Plan that is not yet funded: strategic research on comparative aspects of natural resource governance.

**Recommendation C:** *ASB should extend its strategic planning process to include explicit prioritization of capacity building goals and intended impacts. In particular, the medium-term (3-5 years) planning mechanism for the capacity building agenda should be further clarified and strengthened in ways that reflect needs of partners at the local and national levels. As demand will almost certainly outstrip supply, this will require a more systematic, Programme-wide assessment of relative strengths and weaknesses in capacities of ASB partner institutions. The Programme should develop metrics of the outcomes and impacts actually achieved, and regularly compare these with its objectives.*

We agree with all facets of this recommendation, but wish to make a few observations. First, our interpretation of Recommendation C is that the ASB Programme needs to develop a capacity building strategy and a way to assess its effectiveness. We see this as both a global and regional recommendation, and in implementing it we would start with global and regional needs assessments and work through to appropriate outputs and desired outcomes. However, we feel that our capacity building strategy must be about more than developing training courses and appropriate training materials.

The past and current ASB capacity building strategy can be stated very simply: link building capacity to addressing real problems. We have developed very fruitful collaborative capacity building relationships with partner institutions and they often have resources specifically dedicated to this work. Thus, as long as we position ourselves to build on those capabilities and to link capacity building with real world problems, the capacity building that needs to be done will be done – by strengthening ASB partners' capacity building efforts and through learning by doing, rather than by creating additional ASB training infrastructure. Still, we believe that ASB could, should it choose to do so, become a leader in the international agricultural research community in clarifying what it really means to strengthen institutions. We note, however, that this would require that we adopt such work as an explicit Programme priority and that adequate human and financial resources be allocated specifically to address it.

**Recommendation D:** *ASB should continue to strengthen its recent efforts to set collective priorities for expenditure of GCO effort in fundraising activities, including setting an appropriate level of GCO support for national and regional fundraising.*

We see this as a legitimate concern, one that arises from the fact that there are many opportunities for national and local fund raising, and relatively few appropriate opportunities for raising funds for global research, coordination and governance. ICRAF senior management have consistently provided

strategic guidance regarding fundraising opportunities for ASB and, when necessary, ICRAF has stepped in as 'donor of last resort' for the ASB Global Coordination Office. ASB is developing a comprehensive fund raising strategy which will give explicit consideration to the roles of the actors operating at different levels within the Programme in conjunction with efforts to address Recommendation G regarding institutional incentives. We anticipate having this strategy articulated as an output of the 2006 GSG meeting.

***Recommendation E:*** *ASB should strengthen collective priority setting for the expenditure of GCO and regional/national coordinator efforts in communicating key ASB findings to key decision- and policy-makers.*

We see Recommendation E as being closely aligned with Recommendation A (or vice versa, depending on your particular orientation), and that these two extremely important recommendations should be addressed together. In both instances, we are looking at the development of information- and knowledge-dissemination strategies that give explicit consideration to intended outcomes (rather than solely outputs) and the designing of processes, procedures and activities that will enhance ASB visibility in a broader context. Taken together, these recommendations call for the development of a targeted dissemination strategy, one that clearly identifies ASB's most important audiences – particularly those outside the immediate Consortium environment – and designs outreach paths and technologies accordingly. Building on ASB's analysis of impact pathways, we feel that our dissemination strategy should also include a component to assess the degree of coincidence between the intended target and actual outreach results, the causes of possible divergence, and provide inputs to the design of our future dissemination agenda. We fully agree with both of these important recommendations and will pursue their implementation as a central outcome of this review.

***Recommendation F:*** *The CGIAR system should help to assure a sustained investment in the key coordinating staff that make the ASB a true SWP. This applies to staff positions in both the Global Coordinating Office and coordinator positions at the regional/national level. Without that staff, the system will not be able to benefit from the capacity that ASB has built over the last decade that now position it to contribute centrally to emerging SC goals. The social capital built up in ASB's coordinator positions over the last decade is now at risk or is actively eroding due to trends in donor support that the ASB Programme, acting alone, is unlikely to be able to reverse.*

We agree with the Panel's assessment in Recommendation F concerning the temporal fragility of the global capacity to conduct multi-scale, multi-dimensional iNRM research in the forest-agriculture margins of the tropical rainforest. We agree with the Panel that the ASB Programme provides a

much-needed framework for the longer term continuity and sustainability of this research. We endorse this recommendation and commend it to the attention of the SC.

The Global Coordination Office and coordinator positions at the regional and national levels are vital to the effectiveness of the ASB Consortium, but only because they provide far more than secretariat functions. Taken together, those involved in coordination lead the global synthesis of international public goods; communicate results to a variety of audiences; support ASB partners' fund-raising efforts and their research and capacity building initiatives; and backstop the Programme's governance. The GCO is more focused on identifying and linking with big ideas, those that are just reaching the international agenda, but the coordinating function at all levels results in the production of public goods that are different from those of individual centres – public goods that in fact no other actors would produce – and through a process of grass roots synthesis we make these public goods available at the global level through the GCO.

We greatly appreciate the Panel's endorsement of the critical importance of the coordinating function within the structure of ASB, but we also wish to stress that staff quality at all levels in the Consortium is exceptionally high, and ensuring that this excellence is maintained over time is absolutely vital. As we move into the future, we will be searching for effective means of assuring the distinction of ASB researchers. We note that the competitive grants system we once had in place was a very effective tool for ensuring staff excellence at national and local levels.

***Recommendation G:** The CGIAR system should take steps to improve the incentives for collaboration among centres and programmes in activities central to achieving system-wide goals, including joint funding proposals. Without an improvement in such incentives SWPs such as ASB are unlikely to be viable in the long term. In taking this step, CGIAR should join other R&D based organisations in recognizing not only the value but also the special vulnerability of the innovation-nurturing “safe spaces” that SWPs such as ASB provide to a variety of IARCs, NARs and other partners that would otherwise be much less likely to engage in original and productive collaborations.*

We agree that an important issue exists about putting in place clear incentives for joint fund raising and truly collaborative planning. As currently structured, there is little incentive for CG centres to cooperate and participate in any system-wide programme, ASB included. At this juncture, however, it is important to note that we do not feel there is a structural problem in the ASB Programme, but rather a “buy-in” challenge. That is, in order to sustain what works in our current governance structure, we need more buy-in from scientists in partner organisations.

Again, the best incentive system we have ever had for encouraging participation in the ASB Programme has been the competitive grants system for our partners, including both IARCs and national partners. We supported our partners' activities and the results were clearly identifiable as ASB products. And as the work was being done, research capacity was built and sustained, and effective governance was achieved. The competitive grants system was our best tool for accomplishing all these things.

ASB is highly attuned to and very successful at creating safe spaces for innovative collaboration by individual scientists. Beyond that, our own internal discussions in the context of the review and those we have had with the Review Panel have greatly helped improve our understanding of the challenges inherent in creating appropriate incentives for institutional collaboration, especially for CGIAR partners.

In our view, all SWPs suffer from the problems addressed in Recommendation G. These are systemic problems that neither ASB nor its CGIAR partners can solve without support and action by the CGIAR, the Science Council, and/or the Directors General.

Having noted all the above, we agree with Recommendation G and have been actively discussing these and related issues with the GSG chair from CIFOR and with ICRAF senior management. Having CIFOR (or any participating CGIAR institution other than ICRAF) chairing the GSG is very helpful in identifying and addressing such inter-institutional issues. The Panel's analysis has sparked a constructive and open discussion among ASB members, which will be followed up with a working group to develop concrete recommendations for action at the next Global Steering Group meeting.

***Recommendation H:*** *ASB should continue the effort to formalize its governance structures that has recently resulted in the publication of a formal "Governance Policy" document. In so doing, it should pay special attention to how the admirably collegial procedures of its Global Steering Group (GSG) can be monitored and if necessary adjusted to assure that decision making is open to input from GCG new members, and from stakeholders in the ASB domain not formally represented on the GSG.*

We agree that explicit consideration should be given to whether and how the Programme's current informal structure will be able to handle strategic planning and management tasks in the future. In our view, one of the key challenges here is continually renewing the human resource (talent) pool of the Consortium. Most of our current leadership came from mid-level career positions. We need a strategy for bringing young scientists along and into leadership positions within the network. We welcome this recommendation, but note that it will require considerable thought and consultation with

stakeholders to identify an effective mechanism that preserves the efficiency of the current governance set up.

**Recommendation I:** *ASB and host Center ICRAF should give strong consideration to creating some form of independent ASB advisory group to assist the programme in realizing its existing commitment to self-reflection and learning. The group should provide a venue to representative scholars and practitioners not directly associated with ASB to be periodically updated on the Programme's work, and to periodically offer input on how ASB is or is not connecting with relevant developments outside of the CGIAR. The existing GSG is (appropriately) too inward looking and narrow in composition to play this role. An ad-hoc decadal review by a Panel such as ours is simply too infrequent to be of much help. Some such advisory group could be complemented by a less frequent use of "internally commissioned external reviews" that have been under discussion elsewhere in the GGIAR.*

We welcome and endorse this very useful recommendation. As we see it, the proposed advisory panel would provide information and guidance to the Global Coordinator, and in character would be similar to mini-ICERs done on a more frequent basis. ASB currently capitalizes on working groups that are formed around specific issues or opportunities, but these are composed of ASB "insiders." We feel it would be valuable to have people from outside coming in with fresh perspectives. The question naturally arises as to how we create a very "light" (non-bureaucratic) mechanism to get this kind of input without undermining our current governance and coordination systems. The Global Coordinator will work with the GSG to develop advisory committee terms of reference and we will implement this recommendation as soon as possible.

**Recommendation J:** *The CGIAR should sustain and strengthen the global and system-wide capacity created by ASB to make a unique contribution to CGIAR and SC goals on integrated land, water and forest management at landscape level. Of the options for implementing this recommendation reviewed by the Panel, that of closing down ASB and devolving its key tasks to existing Centres is not likely to be successful. A stronger case can be made for either of two other options: continue to evolve as it has in the past, integrating as appropriate the recommendations produced by this review; or engage development more directly, establishing substantially tighter collaborations between its research activities on the one hand and organisations and initiatives engaged in implementing and scaling up development action on the other (e.g., the Challenge Programmes). Given current uncertainties over how the SC's new science priorities will evolve and where the "Challenge Programmes" are headed, the Panel does not believe that it has sufficient information to make a clear recommendation in favour of either of these latter options. It does, however, recommend that the process of making the choice about ASB futures should entail an open discussion involving not only existing ASB partners and CGIAR*

*Centres, but also other groups promoting research, conservation and development agendas on the tropical forest margin.*

As clearly recognized in the Panel's report, ASB has demonstrated the ability to change. Our unanimous feeling is that ASB stakeholders need to develop options for "ASB futures" in a fully consultative process that will build commitment and assure ownership of new directions for the programme. In other words, the GSG has no problem with the notion of "evolution" or "reinvention" and is confident that ASB partners can very productively engage in such processes (as they have in the past). The GSG is very appreciative of the Panel's views on alternative futures and especially its insights regarding the broader issues and potential pitfalls related to ASB's future.

We will be engaging in a very careful and thorough process of identifying and evaluating future paths for the ASB Consortium. That said, because of the realities of the marketplace (funding opportunities and the difficulty of securing funding for core activities) it is likely ASB will gravitate toward the third option noted by the Panel in its recommendation – establishing substantially tighter collaborations between its research activities on the one hand and organisations and initiatives engaged in implementing and scaling up development action on the other (e.g., the model proposed for the Rainforest Challenge Programme).

***Recommendation K:*** *Any future evolution of the ASB Programme should shed the "alternatives to slash and burn" label in favour of one more consistent with the Programme's actual scope and important contributions.*

We agree with this recommendation to rebrand ASB and, under the leadership of the GCO, a specific action plan will be developed. For some in the broader scientific community, our name has constituted a barrier to uptake, but we hasten to note that rebranding is clearly a balancing act. The ASB brand comes with some very important "good will" built into it, largely in the form of brand recognition among specialists working in the ASB Domain. We also have some important branded products coming out in the near future. So how we manage this transition is important, and we need to carefully assess the costs and benefits of different rebranding options.

***Recommendation L:*** *The Panel commends to the CGIAR the "Results-based management" (RBM) framework adopted for this Review as one with significant potential for evaluating and assessing programmes in natural resource management. That said, the framework would be more useful to programme managers used ex-ante rather than only ex-post. The greatest difficulty in using the RBM framework has been in addressing the question "compared to what". For CGIAR programmes, the best point of comparison is other CGIAR programmes, but the Panel was frequently*

*frustrated in its work by the lack of data from those programmes that could be used in calibrating the evidence we assembled on ASB. The Panel therefore recommends that the CGIAR develop and publicize standard comparative metrics and data for use in future RBM assessments of particular programmes.*

We welcome this recommendation and note that it is closely linked to suggestions for developing metrics in recommendations A, B and C. We feel that ASB is in a position to play a leadership role in the development of standard comparative metrics in the areas in which it works, and that it makes good sense for the Science Council to explore opportunities to coordinate such work across SWPs – which are of course different from Centres – thereby supporting efforts to develop performance indicators, effective monitoring and evaluation techniques, and impact assessment methods that suit these programmes and networks.



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September 17, 2005

Dr. Per Pinstrup-Andersen  
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Dear Per:

It is my pleasure to transmit to you the final report of the External Review of the Systemwide Programme on Alternatives to Slash and Burn (ASB) convened by ICRAF. As requested in the Terms of Reference established for the Review, the Panel combined an assessment of the impacts of ASB and an evaluation of how the internal operations, management and governance of ASB contributed to those impacts.

The Panel concluded that ASB has been highly relevant to the CGIAR's core mission and is pursuing work well aligned with the Science Council's recently articulated System Research Priorities for 2005-2015.

The Panel concluded the ASB has created the world's pre-eminent system for use-driven, comparative scientific investigation of human-environment interactions at the forest margin across the pan tropic domain. Citation analysis and other objective measures show that ASB results are treated as influential global public goods by research communities specializing in the ASB domain around the world. The Programme has a spotty record, however, in disseminating some of its most important results beyond these specialist communities. This shortfall is likely to be remedied in part by the release this year of several excellent synthesis outputs. It also presents excellent opportunities for high returns on future dissemination investments. ASB results have nonetheless already played a significant role in transforming the way that decision makers think about the factors shaping land use at forest-agriculture interfaces in the humid tropics, and about options for changing those land use patterns.

The Panel concluded that the ASB has developed an effective and efficient governing structure that successfully integrates capabilities and concerns across CGIAR Centers, tropical regions, scales and disciplines. Within that structure, the Panel found that ASB has worked effectively and efficiently in pursuit of its core mission. Support from, and integration with, the host Center ICRAF has been exemplary.

The Panel found that ASB, with help from ICRAF, has been effective in mobilizing a generally increasing level of financial resources to support its work. These resources, however, have been both inadequate in total amount and too imbalanced in allocation between global and regional tasks to enable the Programme to realize its full potential. The Panel considers this funding constraint is unlikely to be resolvable through efforts undertaken within ASB and ICRAF alone, but will require constructive intervention at the level of the SC and CGIAR to improve incentive structures facing Centers across the CGIAR and potential outside collaborators as they consider the option of collaborating with System-Wide Programmes such as ASB.

Looking to the future, the Panel concluded that the capacity created by ASB could make a unique contribution to CGIAR and SC goals on integrated land, water and forest management at landscape level. That capacity should be sustained and strengthened.

The Review on which these conclusions are based was conducted between December 2004 and August 2005. Over this period, members of the Panel visited ASB field sites in Indonesia, Cameroon, and Brazil, as well as the ASB Global Coordination Office in Nairobi. One Panel member attended the December 2004 meeting of the ASB Global Steering Group in Bogor. The Panel also benefited from discussions with a group of ASB regional leaders assembled in Nairobi in June 2005. Through use of these meetings and an electronic collaborative work area run through my office, the Panel developed and applied several new assessment metrics and reached consensus on the report conveyed to you with this letter. The Report addresses all of the Terms of Reference specified by the SC for the Review, though presents its findings in an order determined by the logic of the assessment rather than that of the original TORs.

On behalf of the Panel, I wish to express our particular thanks to the ASB Global Coordination Office, and in particular to its Coordinator Thomas Tomich, for the extraordinary support provided for this Review. We are also grateful for the efforts of those ASB regional and national leaders who took time to meet with us in Nairobi, or to host us in our visits to their sites. Finally, we thank the members of the SC Secretariat who contributed to the Review.

Finally, my Panel colleagues Arnaldo Contreras and Karl Harmsen join me in expressing our appreciation to you and the SC for the opportunity to work together on this Review and for the support provided to it.

Sincerely,

(Signed)

William C. Clark

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

**Evaluation and Impact Assessment of the  
Alternatives to Slash and Burn Programme**

Report of the  
External Review of the Systemwide Programme on  
Alternatives to Slash and Burn  
(ASB)

Review Panel: William Clark (chair), Arnaldo Contreras, Karl Harmsen

September 19, 2005

**Science Council Secretariat**



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## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary Findings

#### Introduction

The CGIAR System Wide Programme on Alternatives to Slash and Burn (ASB) was born out of recommendations agreed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. It has operated as a CGIAR programme since 1994. The Programme has an ecoregional focus on the forest-agriculture margin in the humid tropics, with benchmark sites in the Amazon of Brazil and Peru, the Congo Basin forest of Cameroon, the island of Sumatra in Indonesia, the northern mountains of Thailand, and the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. Its current goal is to “raise productivity and income of rural households in the humid tropics without increasing deforestation or undermining essential environmental services.” It approaches this goal through a strategy of integrated natural resource management (iNRM), emphasizing long-term engagement of researchers with farmers, local communities and policymakers at various levels.

Today, ASB consists of a partnership of over 80 institutions from around the world, including research institutes, NGOs, universities, community organizations, farmers’ groups, and other local, national, and international partners. Its governance is provided by a Global Steering Group (GSG) comprising 6 NARs and 5 IARCs. The governing body was chaired by ICRAF for most of ASB’s history, but since 2004 has been chaired by CIFOR. The convening centre is ICRAF. Coordination is provided by a global coordination office, 3 regional facilitators, and 6 national facilitators provided by partner institutions. The ASB network of partnerships encompasses a complex array of project activities. These have been supported by grants totalling \$64.5M (constant 2004 USD) over the period 1994-2004.

This Review was commissioned in 2004 by CGIAR’s Science Council as an Evaluation and Impact Assessment of ASB. The Review was carried out between late 2004 and mid-2005 by a three member Panel. Members of the Panel visited ASB field sites in Indonesia, Cameroon, and Brazil, as well as the ASB Global Coordination Office in Nairobi. One Panel member attended the December 2004 meeting of the ASB Global Steering Group in Bogor. The Panel also benefited from discussions with a group of ASB regional leaders assembled in Nairobi by the Global Coordination Office in June 2005. A number of other relevant experts from inside and outside the CGIAR system were interviewed by Panel members.

The summary findings and recommendations of this Review are presented in this Chapter. The body of the Review, backed by a number of Appendices, provides the detailed evidence and discussion supporting this summary. An intermediate level of detail is provided by the final “Summary of Findings” section located at the ends of each Chapter.

## **What have been the impacts of ASB?**

*The Panel concludes that the ASB Programme has played a significant role in transforming the way that decision makers think about the factors shaping land use at forest-agriculture interfaces in the humid tropics. In so doing, it has created the world's pre-eminent system for use-driven, comparative scientific investigation of human-environment interactions at the forest margin across the pan tropic domain.*

The uptake of ASB products by independent publishers and by users of the Programme's world wide web site is substantial and, suitably normalized, on a par with or somewhat greater than levels achieved by other CGIAR units. There exists an excess demand for programme leaders to serve as speakers and as participants in high level international committees. The Programme itself embodies a capacity for research and development that is making it an increasingly attractive partner for other institutions. ASB's own training programs are taken up by relatively fewer trainees than seems to be the case for several other CGIAR programmes, but its Lecture Notes are in high demand by outside institutions and individuals.

ASB results are treated as influential outputs by communities specializing in the ASB domain around the world. Particular recognition has been given to its research results in pan-tropical research methods, soil science, the analysis of benefit trade-offs among alternative land uses, and cross-sectoral policy guidance. In the action realm, ASB is widely acknowledged to have contributed directly to the design of innovative policies, legislation and institutions across its pan-tropic domain. On capacity building, the Panel finds concludes that a substantial and significant outcome of ASB's activities over the last decade has been the creation of an important and at least partially replicable capacity for harnessing research to the task of advancing sustainable development in the ASB domain. This positive assessment notwithstanding, the Panel notes that while ASB is known to exist by some people in working in broader fields of development and conservation, its outputs are not widely cited or utilized there as they could and should be as truly global public goods. This shortfall is likely to be remedied in part by the release this year of several excellent synthesis outputs. It also presents excellent opportunities for high returns on future dissemination investments. The same is true for the kind of capacity that ASB has shown it can produce, which remains drastically undersupplied across the pan-tropical domain.

As noted above, the ASB Programme has played a significant role in transforming the way that decision makers think about the factors shaping land use at forest-agriculture interfaces in the humid tropics. It has also helped to change the agendas of researchers, policy analysts and entrepreneurs seeking ways to raise productivity and income of rural households without increasing deforestation or undermining essential environmental services. In so doing, ASB has created the world's pre-eminent system for use-driven, comparative scientific investigation of human-environment interactions at the forest margin across the pan tropic domain. Despite relative weaknesses in certain areas of modeling and institutional analysis, the Programme has set the standard and established a model for integrating natural and social science approaches in response to complex NRM problems. In both international policy circles and at the benchmark sites across the tropics where ASB has had the resources to bring knowledge into action, the

Programme has begun to bring about lasting changes in how resources are allocated and how resource users conduct their use of complex landscapes. The Programme's greatest shortcoming is that it has been unable to secure or mobilize the resources to extend its results to any but a small fraction of the 1.2 billion across forest margins of the tropics people who are still struggling to mitigate their poverty while conserving the natural resources on which their and others' well being depends.

### **How effective and efficient has ASB been in performing its core functions?**

*The Panel concludes that ASB has worked effectively and efficiently in pursuit of its core mission to "raise productivity and income of rural households in the humid tropics without increasing deforestation or undermining essential environmental services"*

The mechanisms employed by ASB in its reflexive approach to goal and strategy (re)definition have been both efficient and equitable. As effectively as any organization known to the Panel, ASB has used systematic reflection on its own research and experience not only to learn better answers to its original questions, but also to learn better questions to ask. In so doing, the Programme has become a progressive driving force for articulating the more complex, realistic and integrated view of human-environment interactions at the tropical forest margins.

While ASB as a Programme has been effective in raising an increasing level of financial resources to support its work, these resources have been both inadequate in total amount and imbalanced in allocation across tasks to enable the Programme to realize its full potential. On the human resource side, the ASB consortium has gathered a team of excellent scientists at all levels, well mixed with regard to discipline, gender and geographic origin. Sustaining this social capital in a maturing programme will be a continuing challenge.

ASB has employed iNRM approaches to produce research-based knowledge relevant to its core mission in highly innovative, effective and efficient ways. Its problem-driven approach, anchored in the needs assessments noted above, has assured the relevance of its activities.

The Panel finds that both the total quantity and the mix of the output products produced by ASB are generally appropriate for the evolving character of the ASB Programme. Regrettably, ASB does not systematically track its outputs related to new technologies and policy reforms, almost certainly contributing to the relatively low impacts of those products that we documented earlier.

### **How well has ASB been managed and governed?**

*The Panel concludes that the ASB has developed a governance and management structure that has been generally effective and efficient in promoting innovative research that successfully integrates capabilities and concerns across CGIAR Centers, tropical regions, scales and disciplines.*

The ASB is governed and managed through a Global Steering Group that serves as a policy and decision making body, and a Global Coordination Office that functions in an executive capacity. The Panel finds that both groups have recruited highly respected and effective individuals. Lines of authority and responsibility are clear, interactions between the two groups are mutually supportive with innovative ideas and suggestions for improvement flowing in both directions.

The Panel finds that the Global Steering Group has evolved to become a reasonably democratic and efficient body that has provided an effective means of self governance and research coordination for Programme researchers while simultaneously building a sense of ownership of the overall Programme among its partners. Articulation and implementation of the GSGs strategic vision has been supported by a Global Coordination Office (GCO) that has made key contributions to the Programme's performance, especially in promoting the standardization of research methods, the promotion of quality published output, the fostering of strategic partnerships, and the synthesis of results. Relationships of the GCO and the ASB Programme generally with the host Center ICRAF have been exemplary.

Despite its many strengths, however, the Panel finds that ASB's governance and management structures have not been as successful as would be desirable in developing mechanisms to assure that strategies for achieving ultimate Programme impacts on the world of action are in place and are regularly revised in light of experience. And the Programme has not dealt adequately with the governance and management challenge of securing multi-Center ownership and shared responsibility for its support.

### **What is the relevance of ASB to the CGIAR, and what are its possible futures?**

*The Panel concludes that the ASB System Wide Programme has been highly relevant to the CGIAR's core mission and is pursuing work well aligned with the Science Council's recently articulated System Research Priorities for 2005-2015. The capacity created by ASB can make a unique contribution to achieving CGIAR and SC emerging goals on integrated land, water and forest management at landscape level. That capacity should be sustained and strengthened.*

The Review Panel finds that the ASB System Wide Programme has transcended the limiting scope of its initial framing to focus not on "alternatives to slash and burn" but rather on "*factors shaping land use at forest-agriculture interfaces in the humid tropics.*" Within this domain ASB has evolved a goal to "raise productivity and income of rural households without increasing deforestation or undermining essential environmental services."

The Panel finds that these emergent goals of the ASB Programme are not only important in themselves, but are also well aligned with CGIAR's historical mission to "achieve sustainable food security and reduce poverty in developing countries through scientific research and research-related activities, ... increasing income and improving livelihoods, without harming the environment" (CGIAR Secretariat, 2004, p.3). The Programme goals also fit squarely within the research priorities recently announced by the CGIAR Science Council, notably Priority 4a on Integrated land, water and forest management at landscape level, which seeks to promote

“improved land use practices (that) contribute to increased and sustained productivity, optimal conservation, reduced conflicts and equitable use of land, water and forest resources in multi-use landscapes” (CGIAR SC, 2005, p. 57).

Against this background of congruent goals, the Panel identified three options for the future of ASB: i) declare victory, completing the current synthesis activities and draw the Programme as a free standing entity to a successful close over a relatively short period of time. Key ongoing themes would be handed off to appropriately enthusiastic Centers than would then specialize on them; ii) continue to evolve as it has in the past, integrating as appropriate the recommendations produced by this review; or iii) engage development more directly, establishing substantially tighter collaborations between its research activities on the one hand and organizations and initiatives engaged in implementing and scaling up development action on the other.

The Panel finds that a strong case has been made for rejecting option (1) declare victory and close. Given the uncertainties (at least to the Panel) over how the SC’s new science priorities will evolve and where the “Challenge Programs” are headed, the Panel does believe that it has sufficient information to make a clear case in favor of either options (2) or (3). An informed choice on ASB’s future will require more clarity about objectives, priorities, and modalities in the environment in which it operates. The process of making that choice would also benefit from an open discussion involving not only existing ASB partners, but also other groups pushing research, conservation and development agendas on the tropical forest margin.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendations to strengthen impacts-based strategic planning**

Recommendation A: ASB should extend its strategic planning process to include explicit identification of what knowledge outcomes and impacts it most wants to achieve with which audiences, and should target its activities and resources accordingly. In particular, it should give more careful attention that it has in the past to reaching the broader community of scholars and policy analysts beyond that of its immediate CGIAR/NARS and related clientele. It should develop metrics of the outcomes and impacts actually achieved, and regularly compare these with its objectives.

Recommendation B: ASB should extend its strategic planning process to include explicit identification of further opportunities in themes, regions and global institutions where action R&D (policies, technologies, practices) is likely to create the greatest impact. The Programme should also link policy research results to elements of governance environments that are key in shaping results on the ground. It should develop metrics of the outcomes and impacts actually achieved, and regularly compare these with its objectives.

Recommendation C: ASB should extend its strategic planning process to include explicit prioritization of capacity building goals and intended impacts. In particular, the medium-term

(3-5 years) planning mechanism for the capacity building agenda should be further clarified and strengthened in ways that reflect needs of partners at the local and national levels. As demand will almost certainly outstrip supply, this will require a more systematic, Programme-wide assessment of relative strengths and weaknesses in capacities of ASB partner institutions. The Programme should develop metrics of the outcomes and impacts actually achieved, and regularly compare these with its objectives.

### **Recommendations to strengthen implementation, management and governance**

Recommendation D: ASB should continue to strengthen its recent efforts to set collective priorities for expenditure of GCO effort in fundraising activities, including setting an appropriate level of GCO support for national and regional fundraising.

Recommendation E: ASB should strengthen collective priority setting for the expenditure of GCO and regional/national coordinator effort in communicating key ASB findings to key decision- and policy makers.

Recommendation F: The CGIAR system should help to assure a sustained investment in key coordinating staff that make the ASB a true SWP. This applies to staff positions in both the Global Coordinating Office and coordinator positions at the regional/national level. Without that staff, the system will not be able to benefit from the capacity that ASB has built over the last decade that now position it to contribute centrally to emerging SC goals. The social capital built up in ASB's coordinator positions over the last decade is now at risk or is actively eroding due to trends in donor support that the ASB Programme, acting alone, is unlikely to be able to reverse.

Recommendation G: The CGIAR system should take steps to improve the incentives for collaboration among centers and programs in activities central to achieving system-wide goals, including joint funding proposals. Without an improvement in such incentives SWPs such as ASB are unlikely to be viable in the long term. In taking this step, CGIAR should join other R&D based organizations in recognizing not only the value but also the special vulnerability of the innovation- nurturing "safe spaces" that SWPs such as ASB provide to a variety of IARCs, NARs and other partners that would otherwise be much less likely to engage in original and productive collaborations.

Recommendation H: ASB should continue the effort to formalize its governance structures that has recently resulted in the publication of a formal "Governance Policy" document. In so doing, it should pay special attention to how the admirably collegial procedures of its Global Steering Group (GSG) can be monitored and if necessary adjusted to assure that decision making is open to input from GSG new members, and from stakeholders in the ASB domain not formally represented on the GSG.

Recommendation I: ASB and its host Center ICRAF should give strong consideration to creating some form of independent ASB advisory group to assist the program in its realizing its existing commitment to self-reflection and learning. The group should provide a venue to representative scholars and practitioners not directly associated with ASB to be periodically updated on the Programme's work, and to periodically offer input on how ASB is or is not

connecting with relevant developments outside of the CGIAR. The existing GSG is (appropriately) too inward looking and narrow in composition to play this role. An ad-hoc decadal review by a Panel such as ours is simply too infrequent to be of much help. Some such advisory group could be complemented by a less frequent use of internally commissioned external reviews” that have been under discussed elsewhere in the GGIAR.

### **Recommendations on the Future:**

Recommendation J: The CGIAR should sustain and strengthen the global and system-wide capacity created by ASB to make a unique contribution to CGIAR and SC goals on integrated land, water and forest management at landscape level. Of the options for implementing this recommendation reviewed by the Panel, that of closing down ASB and devolving its key tasks to existing Centers is not likely to be successful. A stronger case can be made for either of two other options: continue to evolve as it has in the past, integrating as appropriate the recommendations produced by this review; or engage development more directly, establishing substantially tighter collaborations between its research activities on the one hand and organizations and initiatives engaged in implementing and scaling up development action on the other (e.g. the Challenge Programs). Given current uncertainties over how the SC’s new science priorities will evolve and where the “Challenge Programs” are headed, the Panel does not believe that it has sufficient information to make a clear recommendation in favor of either of these latter options. It does, however, recommend that the process of making the choice about ASB futures should entail an open discussion involving not only existing ASB partners and CGIAR Centers, but also other groups promoting research, conservation and development agendas on the tropical forest margin.

Recommendation K: Any future evolution of the ASB Programme should shed the “alternatives to slash and burn” label in favor of one more consistent with the Programme’s actual scope and important contributions.

### **Recommendation for improving assessment:**

Recommendation L: The Panel commends to the CGIAR the “Results based management” (RBM) framework adopted for this Review as one with significant potential for evaluating and assessing programs in natural resource management. That said, the framework would be more useful to program managers used ex-ante rather than only ex-post. The greatest difficulty in using the RBM framework has been in addressing the question “compared to what”. For CGIAR programs, the best point of comparison is other CGIAR programs, but the Panel was frequently frustrated in its work by the lack of data from those programs that could be used in calibrating the evidence we assembled on ASB. The Panel therefore recommends that the CGIAR to develop and publicize standard comparative metrics and data for use in future RBM assessments of particular programs.