

Summary of ExCo 10 Discussion and Recommendations to the CGIAR on ICRAF EPMP¹

The ICRAF EPMP was discussed by SC at its April 2006 meeting. SC Chair P. Pinstrip-Andersen presented the SC commentary, noting at the outset that the EPMP Panel “recognizes the seminal contributions ICRAF has made to defining and advancing the science of agroforestry” and corroborates that “ICRAF is well positioned to address the new CGIAR Priorities.” The SC fully endorses all 15 recommendations made by the Panel and is pleased to note that ICRAF has agreed to 11 of the 15.

The SC concurs with the Panel’s observations/conclusions on the following three major issues: strategic directions and focus, regional distribution of the work being done, and partnerships and capacity building. The Panel expressed concern that “ICRAF is drifting towards development across a vast geographic landscape at the expense of high quality research that is necessary for the science of agroforestry to advance.” There is also a concern that scarce unrestricted funding is spread too thinly on activities in too many field offices (over 30) and that many of those activities do not generate IPGs. While commending ICRAF on its success in forging extensive and innovative partnerships, the SC agrees with the Panel that such partnerships should support, not drive, strategic research programs.

F. Reifschneider presented the CGIAR Secretariat’s comments on governance, management, and financial aspects of the review report. Six of the 15 Panel recommendations are on governance and management. In addition to what the Panel raised on governance, the Secretariat is of the view that board size and frequency of board meetings should have been raised as well.

However, the more serious issues pointed out by the Panel were on general management. They included, among others, deficiencies in managerial and decision making processes, and issues on human resources policies. Some of the Panel’s observations were further highlighted in a confidential letter from the Panel Chair to the SC Chair and CGIAR Director. With the Panel Chair’s authorization, the letter was shared with the Chair of ICRAF’s Board of Trustees. The proposed recommendations in the CGIAR Secretariat commentary had been made following discussion with the BOT Chair.

One positive finding of the review was the sound financial status of the Center. However, like the Panel, the CGIAR Secretariat expressed concern about the risks associated with ICRAF’s high proportion of restricted funding, which is the highest in the System.

Discussion:

- The CGIAR Chairman opened the discussion by drawing ExCo’s attention to the fundamental generic issue highlighted by the ICRAF review, i.e. the question of

¹ Excerpt from Tenth Meeting of the CGIAR Executive Council (May 17-18, 2006) Summary Record of Proceedings, June 8, 2006.

what the CGIAR stands for. Is it for research or for development? He suggested a short thinkpiece on this issue be prepared for discussion at AGM06.

- Members pointed out that the degree of involvement of ICRAF in development/technical assistance work was deemed out of balance relative to its mandate as a research institution. The Center's real comparative advantage should be further explored.
- The discussion emphasized the need for effective partnerships to support and not drive the strategic research programs. While the report noted the breadth and innovativeness of ICRAF's partnerships, there were cautionary comments about these relating to optimal roles and responsibilities.
- There was broad recognition that donors play a key role in driving a Center's agenda more toward the development side of the research-for-development continuum. A good scientific base exists in ICRAF. It would seem that donors' priorities have not enabled ICRAF to make optimal use of this resource. A suggestion was made that perhaps one way for the System to deal with the R/D issue would be to divide centers' operations into two distinct parts—one on research and the other on development.
- There are, however, two sides to the issue of donors' driving a Center's agenda. Centers have a responsibility to decline offers from donors to be involved in what clearly are non-research activities. There is a code of conduct that should govern both sides.
- On the positive side, ICRAF's past and present activities could provide valuable insights into the research-for-development continuum.
- Why do Members have to wait for an EPMR to come up before problems like those found in ICRAF on both programmatic and management areas are diagnosed and addressed?
- The EPMR points out again the importance of good governance in Centers. Can a board that meets only once a year effectively oversee important issues? If there are governance deficiencies or failures, it is difficult to detect management deficiencies or failures.
- The current financial indicators are not necessarily wrong or inappropriate, but they may not present a complete picture. This is one reason why two additional financial indicators have been added to the PM System.
- The report raises Center-specific issues, but it was also noted that the SC workshop on the research-development continuum to be held on May 19, 2006, could add to the discussion of some of the issues raised by this EPMR.
- Members supported recommendations made in the commentary of the CGIAR Secretariat, and agreed that it was necessary to review the management performance earlier, rather than waiting for 12 months as suggested by the SC.

ICRAF Board Chair Eugene Terry and DG Dennis Garrity responded to some of the issues raised by ExCo. In particular, E. Terry noted that the Center fully agrees with the need to take prompt action in putting an operational strategy in place. D. Garrity noted that agroforestry is a relatively new science and the Center has come under pressure to scientifically demonstrate impact on the ground and this has driven the agenda to a certain degree. However, he noted that the Center has operated with a low level of

unrestricted funding for many years, so it is not a deteriorating funding situation but rather one the Center has become accustomed to operating under.

Conclusions and ExCo Recommendations to the CGIAR:

- *ExCo commends the ICRAF EPMR Panel for the incisive report and recommends that the CGIAR endorse the EPMR recommendations.*
- *ExCo welcomed comments from the Center Board Chair and Director General.*
- *ExCo agrees with the SC's recommendation to conduct a follow-up review by May 2007 to assess progress made by the Center on two programmatic aspects: consolidation of its strategic research priorities into a long-term strategic plan and analysis of the likely impacts of the Center's involvement in large development projects.*
- *ExCo also endorses the CGIAR Secretariat's recommendation that:*
 - *ICRAF's BOT be requested to develop and implement a performance improvement plan for the Director General, and if required for his senior leadership team.*
 - *ICRAF BOT, in collaboration with the CGIAR Secretariat, makes an assessment of the progress that has been made, by end of October 2006, through a specific review.*
 - *The review should be completed for discussion at AGM06.*