

Summary of ExCo 10 Discussion and Recommendations to the CGIAR on WorldFish EPMR¹

The WorldFish EPMR was discussed by SC at its April 2006 meeting. P. Pinstруп-Andersen presented the SC commentary. He started with an overall assessment that Members' funds have been well-invested in WorldFish and that the future of the Center is bright, noting that the Center has made significant achievements in its work.

However, he also pointed out that the review Panel raised concerns in three areas: priorities and strategy, science quality and relevance, and focus on SSA. The Panel recommends that the Center should clearly define its research priorities. SC is also concerned that the Center's involvement in a large number of regions may result in reduced research focus. Science quality measured in terms of publications in peer reviewed journal also needs to be improved. The SC also concurs with the Panel's recommendation that WorldFish continue to reduce its involvement in pure development projects. It shares the Panel's concern about the Center's low level of investment in SSA which would not enable it to generate much impact in the region.

Focusing on governance and management issues, N. Datta presented the CGIAR Secretariat's comments, indicating support to the three recommendations made by the Panel. The CGIAR Secretariat is pleased to note that the Center has taken the initiative to restructure the Board and reduce its size, along the lines that are similar to what the Panel has recommended. It also compliments the board for the creation of a governance committee, initiating a facilitated session of evaluation, and deciding to develop a board competency profile. It urges the Center on sharing its experience on governance initiatives with other centers. It also compliments the Center for taking the initiative for closer alignment with IWMI. However, it expresses concern about the high staff attrition rate observed by the Panel.

The CGIAR Secretariat also shares the panel's concern on the methodology used on accounting for indirect costs, and is pleased that the center plans to review its accounting methodology. On the issue of excessive reserves, the CGIAR Secretariat was pleased to know that WorldFish has developed and begun to implement a draw down of reserves as a component of the Center's Investment Plan.

Discussion:

- The EPMR raises some interesting questions on "mode of operation" in relation to collaboration with sister CGIAR Centers, ARIs and NARS partners, as well as how to find the right balance between downstream development activities and being a Center of excellence in research. The issue is similar to that raised in the case of ICRAF.
- WorldFish should take more concrete action on what it would do in SSA.
- There is broad appreciation of what WorldFish has done to restructure its board.

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

- The potential impact of the changes of the structure on the overall board functioning will be followed with keen interest.
- A question was raised with regards to the proposal by the Center to reduce the size of its board and to create a scientific advisory committee, and the necessity to retain a balance of adequate management and scientific expertise on the board.
- The underlying reasons for the high staff attrition rate as reported by the review Panel should be determined, and mitigating measures should be identified.

WorldFish DG Stephen Hall responded to some of the issues raised by ExCo and highlighted some of the Center's future plans with respect to the EPMR recommendations.

Conclusions and ExCo Recommendations to the CGIAR:

- *ExCo agreed with the observations and conclusions made by SC and CGIAR Secretariat, and recommends that the CGIAR endorse the EPMR recommendations.*
- *ExCo commends the Center for being proactive on governance issues and board reforms, and congratulated WorldFish on a positive EPMR.*