

Summary of ExCo 11 Discussion and Recommendations to the CGIAR on SSA CP¹

P. Pinstrup-Andersen informed ExCo of the conclusions of the SSA CP external review. The SC agreed with the review panel recommendations, and particularly on the lack of an acceptable research plan. There is a need for establishing a counterfactual that tests the SSA CP's approach to agricultural innovation as compared to other approaches, in order to allow an informed decision on the continuation of the CP at the end of the three years. He added that the SSA Challenge Program needed outside expertise, especially to put in place a monitoring and evaluation system. SC recommended continuation of the SSA CP for another three years for proof of its concept.

Discussion:

- Concern was expressed at the lack of research progress by the CP on the IAR4D concept.
- The CP should be given additional time without undue pressure to further develop the research program.
- The progress made in the development of the partnership that supports the IAR4D innovation system concept and the regional relevance of the CP means that the CP still deserves support. Yet, the existing design flows highlight a need for a more careful scrutiny.
- Concern was expressed about the lack of focus on science. One member pointed out that the inception phase did not give enough time to the CP to show results, and that the competitive grants system was not the best methodology for this CP.
- EIARD commented that SSA CP capacity remains an issue. The CP requires involvement of cutting-edge scientific skills that are often under represented in agricultural research for development, i.e. the human sciences in the broad sense. It also requires interdisciplinary, managerial and communication skills. SSA CP should undergo, with support from the SC and specialists, an in-depth evaluation of the current and needed skills in order to identify gaps that should be filled, in particular by Europe, and acquired through training.
- The methodology and the criteria to be used to assess the progress made by the SSA CP need to be spelled out. SSA CP should develop, with the support of the SC and specialists, a multi-sites research program on the IAR4D processes. It could be implemented through commissioned research and targeted calls for proposals.
- Critical milestones need to be set in place by the CP, in order for members to properly assess progress and ensure future support.
- The System needs to show that there are consequences to failure as well as success. Lack of acceptable progress should trigger a closure.

¹ Excerpt from Eleventh Meeting of the CGIAR Executive Council (October 17-18, 2000) Summary Record of Proceedings, October 30, 2006.

Conclusions and Recommendations to the CGIAR on SSA CP:

- *ExCo recommends the CGIAR to request FARA to develop an action plan that addresses the concerns raised by ExCo members and the Science Council on the findings of the inception phase review. ExCo feels that the accountability and the ownership of the program must remain with FARA, and that the measures that have been requested as part of the action plan are conducive to strengthening FARA's capacity to successfully implement SSA CP, and its future activities.*
- *Furthermore, as elements of the action plan, FARA is requested to:*
 - a) *present critical milestones for the three year post inception phase;*
 - b) *undertake an evaluation of its existing skills gap (with a special emphasis on methodologies and criteria to be used to evaluate the IAR4D concept), that needs to be filled by the most appropriate providers with a view to strengthening the present capacity. As critical elements of this capacity strengthening exercise FARA is requested to focus on M&E as well as on capacity building of regional partners involved in the implementation of activities.*
 - c) *adjust the financial proposal for years 2007-09 to reflect the scaling back of the activities to three pilot sites from the proposed nine, and*
 - d) *develop a research program that has clear cross-site linkages.*
- *ExCo also recommends to membership that the Science Council play an advisory role in helping FARA identify the type of expertise that is required to increase the capacity of the institution, as highlighted above.*
- *ExCo recommends that the CGIAR reviews progress achieved by SSA CP until December 2007 at AGM07 against the critical milestones and indicators that were requested as part of the action plan. In order to avoid burdening FARA with excessive reporting to the CGIAR, ExCo further recommends that the action plan is accepted as the SSA CP MTP for the period 2007-2009.*
- *Finally, ExCo recommends to the CGIAR that the action plan be presented to ExCo for review and approval, following pertinent inputs from the Science Council and the CGIAR Secretariat, if required.*