

CGIAR Members' Comments on SSA TF Report Options for ESA Global Entity

At ExCo 8, Exco recognized “the need for further discussions and analysis of best options for the East and Southern Africa (ESA) Global Entity, and requests Members to specifically share with ExCo their views on options for discussion at ExCo 9 in October 2005.”

CGIAR Members were asked to share their views on ESA alignment to help guide ExCo's discussions (below, in alphabetical order).

Canada

As previously indicated, we see the Task Forces' Recommendation 4 - "The TFs recommend that the CGIAR commission other task forces to identify programmatic and structural alignment needs and opportunities in the remaining regions" - as a pre-requisite to Recommendation 5iv (Establish, in cooperation with ICRAF and ILRI Boards, a CGIAR global entity in East and Southern Africa, following a corporate model and with ILRI and ICRAF as its initial constituent units.). We believe that, with regards in particular to ILRI and ICRAF, the wider analysis of the other regions may unearth other, more strategic alliances.

However, we see programmatic alignment for the CGIAR in sub-Saharan Africa, around the Regional MTPs and other system-wide efforts, as a sine qua non, immediate requirement for the CGIAR moving forward.

FAO

With reference to your message of 2 September 2005, Action Item 2, CGIAR Member Views on ESA, FAO proposes that the global entity for ESA should parallel in its organization the one already approved for WCA.

The TF had recommended for ESA a ‘corporate model’ with a proactive board of directors and single CEO. Given the distinct differences in mandate between ICRAF and ILRI, this approach would not seem to lend itself to the development of a common MTP for the sub-region as that will require the negotiation/integration of the diverse number of activities carried out by the CGIAR Centres and their NARS/SRO partners in the sub-region. We believe the more collegial approach adopted for WCA (an integrated board plus two DGs, with separate responsibilities, reporting to it) would seem more suitable for ESA. Like the WCA entity, the ESA centre would serve as CGIAR focal point for the sub-region and integrate the inputs of other centres working there (13 centres have offices/research sites in ESA) into a common MTP, ensuring congruence with the priorities of NARS/SROs.

The fundamental problem with the original proposal was not just that the ILRI and ICRAF programmes are far less alike than those of IITA and WARDA, but that the organizational model envisaged appeared to lack the inclusiveness which will be key to developing a common medium term plan. In this context, it is important to consider that in ESA the dominant agro-ecologies and agricultural lead crops (maize, sorghum and pearl millet) are ones for which CIMMYT and ICRISAT have global responsibilities. ExCo might therefore wish to consider whether the DGs of ICRISAT and CIMMYT or their designees should not be third and fourth members of the ESA management team. The same is essentially true for WCA which covers not only the humid and subhumid agro-ecologies with roots and tubers and rice as lead crops, but also the large, semi-arid Sahel where again sorghum and pearl millet are lead agricultural crops, making ICRISAT a logical third partner for planning and management of a common programme.

The Rockefeller Foundation

1. Our overall impression of the report is very favorable. The report accurately captures the priority institutional problems that must be addressed as the CGIAR enters the 21st century:

- multiple levels of overlap in center mandates (commodities, geography, non-commodity disciplinary foci - e.g. policy) that lead to wasteful and non-productive duplication;
- in part due to the overlapping mandates, there are generally competitive relationships between CGIAR centers (and with advanced research institutes as alternative research service providers) for resources -- genuine value-added collaboration is the exception;
- many centers, despite their rhetoric, continue to pursue directive rather than cooperative relationships with NARS;
- there is a general (some exceptions) inability to accurately and honestly assess research success and impact internally and externally, resulting in the lack of an efficient learning culture and self-correcting research processes;
- there is no coherent strategy for the CGIAR in specific regions (e.g. Africa) which is a by-product of the separate competing institutional agenda of the centers; and
- due to donor pressures for immediate impact, CGIAR center activities have continued to expand into down-stream areas in which they have very little comparative advantage and indeed through which they end up displacing potential national partners.

2. We also agree with the report's conclusion that a core cause of these problems is structural, and can only be solved through major structural changes. This conclusion is not new as calls for revisiting the CGIAR's structures of decision making, funding and research implementation go back more than a decade. The calls for reform reflect the general consensus that the current multiplication of centers and the current structure of center mandates is the result of several decades of ad hoc adjustments at the margin to

accommodate changing donor priorities while protecting as much as possible the political, institutional and programmatic interests of established centers.

If the CGIAR were to be created today with an annual budget of \$400 million, it is inconceivable that the current structure would be reproduced. It would almost certainly be:

- focused more strategically on the large global issues that the CGIAR alone is best positioned to address,
- programmatically organized to complement national programs and to build the capacities of national programs to work on more location specific and applied research activities,
- located disproportionately where the unmet needs are greatest, and
- structured to achieve greater internal coherence, efficiency and effectiveness.

But rather than making these programmatic and structural changes, the system has resorted to paths of least resistance that have included the establishment of complicated and costly new modalities for decision-making, funding and coordination under the rubric of systems-wide programs, eco-regional initiatives, and now global challenge programs. While I agree that current CGIAR funding mechanisms have contributed significantly to these problems, changing those funding mechanisms alone will not be sufficient. Radical structural changes are necessary and indeed will in turn help resolve the funding mechanism problems themselves.

3. We endorse the call for consolidating the current CGIAR centers working in Africa into either one pan-African or two regional centers. Indeed, the latter reflects the consensus recommendation of African stakeholders several years ago. There could be significant efficiencies in having a single center with one administrative structure and overall strategic research plan, but two or more physical locations in the sub-regions that could interface with the SROs. Such an integrated single center would also ensure that there is fully efficient sharing and coordination of research across sub-regions on common problems and commodities. We recognize, however, that the single center model would involve greater political push back at least initially, and that these transitional costs would have to be weighed in making a final decision.

4. The report suggests how the two regional centers might be structured, managed and governed, and the process and timeline for implementation. These specific recommendations are a useful point of departure, but the details must be revisited and modified. Our sense is that the Task Force gave far too much weight to, and ended up protecting, the mandates of existing centers based in each sub-region by orienting the new sub-regional entities around those centers. A more strategic approach would have been to:

- begin with the sub-regional commodity and disciplinary priorities generated by national and sub-regional research organizations,

- recognize and respect those activities in which national programs should have comparative advantage,
- focus on those specific research activities of an international public good nature for which CGIAR centers are most efficiently positioned, and
- develop CGIAR programs in those areas, borrowing from the staff and competencies of all centers in the broader CGIAR system.

By not proceeding in this fashion, the resulting recommendations are somewhat illogical. For example, the composition of the proposed Global Center for WCA is based on centers currently headquartered in the sub-region - WARDA and IITA - whereas that for ESA includes not only the two centers based in the sub-region - ILRI and ICRAF - but also ICRISAT. Yet ICRISAT's work on sorghum, millet and groundnut is highly relevant for West Africa, and CIMMYT's work on maize is crucially important in both sub-regions, but especially in East and Southern Africa. In addition, most other centers in the CGIAR have programs in WCA and/or EAS which reflect to varying degrees sub-regional priorities.

Our recommendation is that while the centers currently based in each region can serve as the foundation for initial structural consolidation, the new center or centers must soon emerge with their own institutional identity and composition based on sub-regional strategic programmatic priorities. This means, for example, that if the Science Council strategic planning exercise concludes with a priority for sorghum and millet research in WCA, then the current programs of ICRISAT in that sub-region should become an integral part of that new WCA global center. Similarly, if the SC priorities include maize research in East and Southern Africa, then the current programs of CIMMYT must become integral parts of the ESA global center. Whether this means a secondment of staff, or that the current ICRISAT and CIMMYT staff would become full fledged members of the new centers, depends in part on the decisions to be made for revisiting global structures of the CGIAR system. What is important, however, is that the new regional centers -- working under the overall guidance of the SC and CGIAR Board -- must have control over budget, staff and programming decisions, and not have to negotiate these with centers outside of Africa.

5. Finally, rather than accepting the TF recommendation of completing full implementation of consolidation within 18 months, it would be more prudent to develop a timeline of the key actions to be taken with reasonable estimates of time required, and then let the final time frame emerge from that analysis. One might also wish to remain open to alternative means of implementing Recommendation 5 based on lessons learned from the INIBAP and ISNAR experiences. But the negatives of those earlier experiences should not serve to paralyze meaningful structural reform, but rather to guide how such reform can be most expeditiously and successfully introduced.