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To: freifschneider@worldbank.org

Subject: MESSAGE FROM PER PINSTRUP-ANDERSEN - CGIAR System Research
Priorities 2005-2015

Dear Francisco,

As you are aware, the Science Council has prepared the CGIAR System Research Priorities 2005-2015 after a substantial consultative process. Following the ExCo discussion of the June draft of the document, several members wrote to the Science Council, as did others, providing observations and comments. We appreciate the inputs.

In the first week of September, we took the opportunity of the 4th Science Council Meeting in Penang to discuss the document in front of observers, including all the major comments received in some detail. The attached note is provided for information. It identifies the stance of the Science Council on the various issues (as in some cases comments may have resulted from an incorrect reading of the Council's intentions) as well as where changes will be made to the final text for clarification. The revised version of the Priorities document will be presented to the next Meeting of ExCo and to the AGM for endorsement. It will also be apparent that the Science Council is continuing to work on strategic issues to facilitate the practical implementation of the Priorities by Centers and in conjunction with CGIAR stakeholders. We expect this process to commence directly following endorsement of the Priorities, in early 2006.

We look forward to working with colleagues on the process of the implementation of the CGIAR Priorities for research.

Sincerely,

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A Review of Possible Changes to the Text of the CGIAR System Research Priorities 2005-2010 (Draft of June 2005) in the Light of Comments Received.

Following the consideration by ExCo in May 2005 of the CGIAR System Research Priorities 2005-2010 (draft of June 2005) the Science Council (SC) has received a number of written comments from different stakeholders on the document. The Science Council, at its Fourth Meeting, held from the 5th to the 10th of September in Penang, Malaysia, considered the major issues raised in those comments and re-examined the text of the document considering whether; (i) the concern arose about an issue which could be better expressed in the document, in which case changes should be made, (ii) the SC felt that the matter was already adequately discussed in the existing document, or (iii) the concern was an expression of disagreement by a stakeholder with the position of the SC. In the latter case the issue was again debated by SC. Where SC's position was unchanged and the issue was considered to be adequately described the advice to the CGIAR contained in the document remained unchanged. The discussion was aided by the presence of three donor representatives as observers.

In particular, the SC saw no reason to change the “research for development, not development activities *per se*” paradigm that was central to the SC perspective and had guided Priority development. The majority of statements in the existing document were considered to be clear in terms of intent, but in two instances it was considered that extended guidance might be offered by the SC to resolve practical issues at the stage of implementation of the research Priorities. This note summarizes the major questions raised during consultation on the Priorities document and the changes to the Final text of the Priorities document that the SC have agreed will be made. The Priorities document will be submitted in its final, revised form for the consideration and endorsement of the ExCo and the Group. This note will be shared with all those who had provided commentaries on the earlier draft.

The references relate to page numbers in the June 2005 draft of the Priorities document.

Q: What is the role of the CGIAR in product delivery systems and what are the limits of CGIAR responsibility?

A: The SC position on this issue is stated clearly in several places:

- In the second bullet on P79, i.e. “research for development and not development activities as such.”
- In P81, the ninth line under: *What has been omitted?* Gives the example, “..the Priorities propose research on seed delivery systems, but the CGIAR should not itself enter into the development of such delivery systems.” The emphasis is clearly on design rather than development.
- This is reflected in the content of Priority 5C (P75) which emphasizes the role of partner organizations in enhancing the sharing of new knowledge and technologies and enhancing the impact from agricultural research.
- This has been made more explicit in the first statement on P82 in Table 4, which now reads, “activities that provide national infrastructure and provide only local rather than international public goods” are not considered as Priority activities for the CGIAR.

The SC considers that these statements on the difference between research, design and implementation, particularly of delivery systems are clear. However, on P81 because the word

“development” has been confusing for observers, it is intended the sentence be edited to read, **“...the Priorities propose research on seed delivery systems, but the CGIAR should not itself enter into the delivery of such systems.”**

Moreover, the establishment of boundaries to research within these strategic guidelines will be worked out more specifically through program implementation. The evaluation of what is central or peripheral to the intention of the Priorities is being evaluated through the SC’s review of Center (and CP) MTPs and the provision of continuing feedback to Centers.

The SC will consider holding a workshop with stakeholders (particularly the donors) to discuss the research and development continuum, including pathways to delivery, and how distortion of the intention of the Priorities can be prevented.

Q: Capacity building (and is the 80-20 divide realistic?)

A: The Science Council position is clearly stated on Pages 80 and 81. No change to this position is suggested.

The SC is NOT removing or downplaying the importance of capacity building in the CGIAR’s overall portfolio of activities. The Priorities document focuses on what research the system will do. Nevertheless Program-associated capacity building is clearly stated to be part of the 80 % Priority activities.

Other elements of capacity strengthening identified inside the Priorities include assistance to weaker NARS in germplasm enhancement (either directly from the CGIAR or by catalyzing stronger NARS within regions). See second bullet on P80, and Bullet 1 on page 73 in relation to specific goal 5 of 5A, which reads:

“Capacity building in areas such as priority setting (e.g. for commodities in the face of market demand), impact assessment and research management, and policy formulation (which do not necessarily flow from project-associated training)” would also be counted inside the 80%.

On the other hand, repetitive courses, and the design of specific curricula for others are deemed to be of a nature that should be delegated to other providers or pursued by Centers with up to half of the funds outside of the 80%. As an example, Center contributions to the Global Open Agriculture and Food University are considered to be free-standing training activities and their budgets considered within the additional 20%.

[The CGIAR spent approximately 20 % of the total budget (2005) on capacity strengthening of both types – although the allocations to this activity in integrated, multi-disciplinary projects may be somewhat arbitrary at the Center level. It is reasonable to assume that the overall amount of capacity strengthening activities (labeled as program-associated and non-program associated) may still approach a total of 20% of the System’s budget without affecting the 80/20 rule.]

To enhance the clarity of the SC position in the early part of the document, the SC will add the following statement to the penultimate paragraph on P7 (in the *Summary*):

“Capacity building is a key activity to meet the overall goals of the CGIAR. Reflecting the CGIAR’s partnership approach to agricultural research, program-associated capacity building, as well as research on institutional strengthening is considered to fall within the 80% budget allocation. Only the more iterative types of course-related training unrelated to research are considered as falling within the additional 20% of budget allocated for other activities”.

Q: Why not work on Disaster Preparedness?

A: The Science Council is clear on this point: P81 last line of the first paragraph under “*What has been omitted?*” reads, “...acknowledging the humanitarian services provided by CGIAR efforts in times of need and for the rehabilitation of agricultural systems following conflict, country-specific activities having low research content are not prioritized.”

To clarify the SC position further the following statement will be added to the same paragraph:

“Where urgent cases occur that require, for instance, germplasm from the In Trust collections held by the CGIAR, it is of course appropriate that seed be provided to the extent possible. In general there are other agencies with a mandate and experience in disaster relief.”

Q: Definition of international public goods?

A: A generally understood definition is provided in the text (first full paragraph on P22). Interpretation may be required in relation to testing stages for technologies or methods in individual countries. For these to be developed as IPGs the Center or consortium conducting the work must have laid out a plan of action as to how such discrete research outputs will lead to concrete outcomes with more general spillovers. Implicit in the concept therefore is a focus on intent, design and choice of location for IPG research and not just the measurement of countries and outputs.

The SC will continue to work to develop an extended practical definition, which will guide the Priority development from strategies to implementation.

No change to the text is currently recommended.

Q: Why is Nutrition and Human health not a separate priority area?

A: The SC’s stance is that improving human health is one of the overall goals that the Priorities are trying to meet. Like poverty alleviation, this thread runs through much of the work that the CGIAR does. The approach must be that research should be conducted to examine the effects of human disease as a constraint to agricultural productivity, or

ameliorating such effects through improved agricultural practices or technologies. The CGIAR has no comparative advantage in conducting human health research *per se*.

The Science Council has made its point of view clear through the specific example of how this area should best be handled (described in the first paragraph on P84, and in *Figure 2* on P89). In general, the Priorities describe where the CGIAR will place its research effort (and, *de facto*, build up the CGIAR's overall pool of scientific skills). These are then deployable in concert with others (such as the human nutrition and health sectors) to tackle areas clearly within the mandate of the CGIAR, and which are relevant in solving the challenges posed by the MDG. SC advises that it is not necessary that the CGIAR change its own Priorities when the complementary expertise already lies with others.

No change in stance or text is recommended.

Q: Meaning of “a move to corporate donorship”?

A: Only one observer seems to have queried the term. This was both an urging of the SC to the donors, and is a reference to a parallel activity being undertaken by them (the Task Force on Funding System Priorities). It may thus best be treated by a direct response to the donor concerned or a more general statement by the SC/SC Chair to the next ExCo or at the AGM.

No change to the text is suggested.

Q: How do we go about narrowing the scope of work (to create further focus)?

A: It is the opinion of the SC that limiting a lot of development assistance activity, and devolving (over the plan period) increasing amounts of appropriate research to strengthening NARS, will enhance a research focus on the 20 Priorities. Not all of the Priorities will require or obtain funding to a similar level (both because of the nature of the research, but also because the CGIAR is a lead player in some research, but a contributor of specific elements of research to global action plans or efforts in other areas). Not everything identified in the scope of research will have to be done by the CGIAR. Further focus will be developed from the stages yet to come in the implementation of the Priorities with partners. The SC is planning an implementation strategy for the priority research (which will involve Centers, donors and other CGIAR stakeholders), that will be exercised directly following endorsement of the Priorities

Q: Does the move towards more “front-line” research on genetic improvement (and in modeling solutions for NRM etc.) in partnership with upstream providers and NARS mark a departure from CGIAR practice, and if so should this be better spelt out in relation to the long term vision of the CGIAR?

This paraphrases the comment received.

A: The SC Priorities document identifies what will be done and attempts to try to achieve focus, precisely through the sorts of statements identified by the observer. [The paradigm being followed is clearly laid out starting from the section on *Mobilizing new Science* (P84), through *Regional Priorities, New Partnerships* (including working with strong versus weak

NARS), *The private sector, New linkages with ARIs and Catalyzing new solutions* (to mid page 87).]

The answer to the general question may be “No”, in the sense that this is exactly what the CGIAR Centers should have been doing before they moved too far towards development assistance activities. Thus it may be viewed not so much as a new paradigm, but a restatement of an established CGIAR vision.

To aid clarity it is suggested that the following paragraph be inserted as the second paragraph of the Summary (P4):

“The vision for the longer term is one in which the CGIAR is a provider of international public goods through agricultural research aimed at the alleviation of poverty. The CGIAR aims to progressively devolve some current research (particularly aspects of breeding for germplasm enhancement and site-specific natural resource management) to NARS with increasing capacity. Devolution and enhanced delivery to the poor in different localities will be effected through a range of partners. The CGIAR will move towards the solution of the complex system issues undermining moves out of poverty and the success of agriculture in developing countries, supported by genomics research and provision of science-based policy advice. It is clear that the staging of such a strategy will be different in regions where NARS have different strengths. Special attention will be paid to the building of partner capacity in sub-Saharan Africa.”

Q: A science agenda or a “development driven approach”

A: The whole of the *Introduction* of the Priorities document lays out the widely consultative process through which the SC developed Priorities for 2005-2010. Observers seeking fuller consideration of the process and analysis of the CGIAR’s and global contexts are directed to the earlier SC publication “*Report on CGIAR Priorities and Strategies for the Period 2005-2010: Outcomes of the Consultative Process*” as identified in Footnote 2 on page 14 of the text. The issue is then one of interpretation as to the best means FOR THE CGIAR to provide its research expertise to the solution of development problems for which agricultural solutions are relevant. The relations to MDGs are stated. If the question should be interpreted as also applying to the CGIAR’s approach to the limits of delivery and to capacity building, these issues have been discussed above in relation to the document text in these areas.

Implementation

Statements on Implementation of the Priorities were not questioned by observers, however, this was discussed and new thinking by the SC requires the revision and replacement of paragraphs 2 and 3 on P88 from “A first step in this direction...” to “...contract research” with the following:

Developing a strategy for implementation. To provide coherence at the System level the SC proposes engaging CGIAR Centers and stakeholders in the implementation of the Priorities for research directly following their endorsement. The elements of the approach include; (i) reviewing in detail the current allocation of Centers’ efforts and budget to Priority research, (ii) establishing a small working group with representation from CGIAR stakeholder groups to jointly develop the strategy for implementation, (iii)

reviewing the efficacy of current research vehicles for addressing priorities (system-wide programs, Challenge programs, etc), and examining where new vehicles (such as virtual Task Forces) could play a role, (iv) conducting a gap analysis between current CGIAR research and Priority research, (vi), reviewing whether proposed but not yet mobilized research (such as previously developed Challenge Program proposals) meet Priority research requirements or could be developed to do so, and, (vii) development of a CGIAR strategy for gap filling in terms of scientific disciplinary expertise, consortium building and the mobilization of science. The aim should be to enhance the system's efficiency in tackling major strategic objectives, to support the System Priorities through a move towards corporate donorship, to remain focused on international public goods research (rather than development) at Centers and to limit unproductive contract research.

September 26th 2005