Independent Science and Partnership Council

21 November 2016

ISPC comments on SC3-02B on "Allocation of 2017 Funding"

Headline comment: ***The ISPC supports the approach taken to the allocation of funds for 2017 as strategic, based on a range of criteria used to assess science quality and relevance (i.e. likelihood of delivering progress towards the SLOs). The ISPC also agrees with the need for a clearer direction on the priority uses for W1 and 2 envisaged by donors.***

1. The criteria used by the ISPC to assess both CRPs and Flagship Phase 2 proposals (submitted 31 July 2016), included the quality of the proposals in terms of Science, Leadership, Theories of Change and Impact Pathways with the latter three criteria being considered to be key to successful progress towards delivery of the SLOs. The comparative advantage of the CGIAR (including its positioning as a unique global agricultural research systems) in the delivery of International Public Goods was also a key criterion in the ISPC's recommendations with respect to the allocation of W1 and 2 funding.
2. The ISPC recognises that some donors would also like to have information on the relative cost-effectiveness and timing of benefits from various types of research investments. However, since the CGIAR has three major objectives, and engages in research related to a wide range of commodities, activities and locations, it is not possible to generate reliable information comparing relative returns to CGIAR research in the short term. It is possible however to build tools to generate better information than we now have, and the ISPC has included such work in its 2017 work plan and budget.
3. One of the strength of the current assessment, monitoring and evaluation (compared to bilateral project projects and programs) approach to funding the portfolio lies in the robust peer-review process undertaken by the ISPC together with the external evaluations managed by the IEA. We find this approach very appropriate, given the complexity of making comparisons on cost effectiveness, and also the high uncertainty of this type of funding, compared with other instruments of donor funding which tend to be more narrowly focussed geographically and topically.
4. The use made of the ISPC reviews as part of the fund allocation take account of our assessments at FP level, but the ISPC also gave assessments at CRP level which we suggest be used in developing monitoring criteria for 2017. The ISPC overall assessments placed 3 CRPs (FTA, Fish, and Livestock) in a category which was considered ready for funding, but in need of closer monitoring during 2017. FTA because of lack of strategic decision-making re allocation between FPs and a new CRP leader, the latter 2 because they had very different programs of research from Phase 1, with FISH also having a new CRP leader. WLE also has a new leader and it too should be subject to closer monitoring.
5. Responsibility for different aspects of monitoring still needs to be agreed in the finalisation of the ToRs for ISPC, IEA and the SMO.