

SCIENCE COUNCIL OF THE CGIAR

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Revisiting SC Business: A Note

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The SC has three major roles to play:

1. Quality control, reviewing, monitoring and continuous upgrading of the work of the CGIAR centers and strengthening and extending their impact assessment capacity.
2. Formulation of CGIAR System science strategy and the prioritization of research activities.
3. Promote the mobilization of the global scientific community in support of CGIAR goals and advice on strategies to strengthen collaboration with knowledge centers and universities in the North and the South.

For each of these roles, SC panels and portfolio holders have been identified. The first role is a continuous activity of vital importance to maintain high standards and to promote excellence. That role is fulfilled by two standing panels: monitoring and evaluation, and impact assessment. The Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME) is composed of two SC members (one chairs the panel) and two panel members. The Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) has a chair (who is an ex-officio SC member) and two panel members. The efforts of these two Panels are aimed at ensuring highest quality performance and relevance of research within the CGIAR System.

The second role is addressed by the current Standing Panel on Priorities and Strategies (SPPS). The third role of the SC is currently addressed by the Standing Panel on Mobilizing Science (SPMS). The SC thinks that in the current step of the evolution of the CGIAR centers and their research agenda this role is of pivotal importance and hence requires more attention. That is to promote better and more extensive scientific partnerships with centers of excellence in the public sector, private sector and civil society; and to mobilize public and private sector investments into international agricultural science for development.

The SC has now being in operations for 4 years and it is wise to consider the possibilities of increasing its efficiency and effectiveness. The mode of operation of the council with active working members has been productive. It is also clear that the SC Secretariat has assembled a solid technical team which has been very effective in implementing Council decisions. Those elements should be maintained in the coming years.

The standing panels as working groups are functioning well for the first core tasks of the SC, that is monitoring and evaluation and impact assessment. The challenges in the other two fields (priorities and strategies and the mobilization of science) require mainstreaming into the SC agenda, more flexibility and full input of all SC members. It is for that reason that the future operation of the SC would continue to include the current Standing Panels for Monitoring and Evaluation and Impact Assessment maintaining their current structure and mode of operation,

and that the functions of the Priorities and Strategies and Mobilization of Science panels would be, starting in 2008, more operationally versatile and mainstreamed to the entire SC.

This constitutes a small internal reorganization and not a change in mandate. Priorities and strategies and mobilization of science issues will be addressed by the SC as a Committee of the Whole. A SC member will continue to be focal point ('portfolio holder') for Priorities and Strategies and another one for Mobilization of Science. And, instead of continuing with the practice of having two Standing Panel members in each theme, the portfolio holders will have the flexibility to call on the expertise of specialists for specific tasks.

The SC notes that the terms of appointment of SC Panel Members have not been yet defined by the CGIAR. Hence, the SC recommends the following text to be added to the CGIAR Charter:

The terms of appointment of SC Panel Members will be of two (2) years, renewable once. SC Panel members will be appointed by the SC Chair in consultation with the Council. Panel members of the SC would not be SC members, and would not be expected to follow or engage in the broader range of SC activity outside the specific remit of their panel.

It is expected that as a result of the proposed changes the Council will operate more effectively (by more member involvement) and also more efficiently (by reducing the transaction costs of two formal panels and increasing versatility).