

ExCo 15 – Lisbon, Portugal Report from the Alliance of the CGIAR Centres

Change Management Process and Independent Review

Individual Alliance members have continued to be active members of the Change Management Process Working Groups, in consultation with the broader Alliance. The Alliance as a whole also stepped up its engagement in the Change Management Process. It organised various meetings and consultations which produced an Alliance position paper regarding the future CGIAR and provided specific inputs (as an Alliance common position) into the recent stakeholder consultation organised by the Independent Review and the Change Management process and a subsequent CST meeting.

The Alliance initially discussed the new governance models required to re-position the CGIAR along the new lines proposed by Working Group 1, as well as current System bottlenecks and inefficiencies. It derived a set of principles that must drive the change process for it to be successful. These principles were then used to discuss three system governance scenarios and rank them. An Alliance position paper ensued, outlining the principles, the scenarios and the Alliance's preferred scenario. This position paper was circulated to the CST, each of the Working Groups and the Independent Review Panel.

The Alliance subsequently analysed the models advocated by the Independent Review and WG 3. It agreed that a 'hybrid' of these two models would be the best way forward for the System. It thus presented the concept of this 'hybrid' model during the stakeholder consultations organised by the Independent Review and the Change Management process in Los Banos. This 'hybrid' governance model borrows features from WG 3 preferred model (Donor Council, Fund, performance contracting) and from the Independent Review preferred model (Consortium created by the Centres). Such a 'hybrid' model meets the criteria and principles which the Alliance considers are the cornerstone of the success of the reform.

These principles include:

- Success requires a strong commitment to change on all parts of the system, captured by a new 'Compact' between Donors and Centres. The 'Compact' is about building an even stronger Global Research Network at the service of the poor, with a broad range of partners. It is based upon mutual accountability between centres and donors for delivering on agreed outcomes
- The international landscape in agricultural research for development has changed; to play a more significant role in global debates we agree there should be a corporate entity and a central entry point in the System
- There should be clear separation between oversight and management responsibilities within the System, with clarity and enforceability.
- Decision making bodies must be empowered to take binding decisions in their area of competence and have authority to ensure implementation

- The System should have increased efficiency through common services and functions to improve their cost/benefit ratio
- The Centres must be able to undertake long-term research, essential for delivering impact
- The principle of subsidiarity should be respected: innovation can not be centrally planned (not a soap factory)
- The new System should be simpler and less bureaucratic than the current one and should not overly centralize programmatic decision making
- The new System should move toward programmatic funding with accountability based on performance contracts
- Our partnerships, both among the Centres and with a wide range of partners, need further strengthening and we would expect a revitalised GFAR to facilitate this further strengthening, at all levels, including with ARIs and the private sector. There is a strong demand for the Centres to undertake more capacity development, and this also calls for a broad range of partnerships.

The Alliance has committed itself to further specifying and developing the Consortium part of this hybrid model, on the basis of the above principles, by AGM08. We have now agreed about the type of decision-making powers the Consortium Board will have, including the powers it will hold with respect to Centre Boards. We plan to develop, by AGM08, a process for identifying Board members and the terms of reference of the Board of the Consortium, as well as those of the Chair of the Board. We will also provide finalised terms of reference for a professional consultancy to advise the Alliance on the design of an effective Consortium and for the legal incorporation and draft constitution of this Consortium. Our intent is to make specific recommendations to the CST in this respect, in time for AGM09.

Strategic Initiative on Climate Change

As a follow up to the announcement of a strategic initiative on climate change by Kathy Sierra in Bali, the Alliance is now engaged in developing a synthesis of on-going and planned research in agriculture and climate change by Centres and their partners. This synthesis will identify research gaps in the current and planned agenda and will identify ways of filling these gaps, through appropriate partnerships, or other relevant means. A plan of action for ensuring sustainable funding of this on-going climate change work, and for addressing gaps in the agenda will then be developed.

Climate Change Challenge Program

Following ExCo 14 the Climate Change Challenge Program (CCCP) proposal was approved with the caveat that the proponents would consider the comments and recommendation of the Science Council as well as those expressed by ExCo.

The proponents (University of Oxford on behalf of the Earth Systems Science Partnership-ESSP and the Alliance) prepared this response and submitted it to the Science Council in September 08.

The process stipulated in the CCCP proposal for identifying the Chair and members of the Steering Committee of the CP is being implemented. As per this process, the Chair of the Science Advisory Committee of the ESSP and the Chair of the Alliance Executive jointly devised terms of reference for these positions. They each have formally requested nominations for the Chair and Steering Committee members from their respective communities. The selection process is underway, on the basis of the terms of reference for the Chair and Steering Committee members (external personalities who will be joined by one representative from the ESSP and one representative from the Alliance). All members and the Chair are expected to be appointed in the next month or so.

Co-Hort – Challenge Program Proposal on High-Value Crops (Fruit and Vegetables)

A full proposal for Co-Hort – the Challenge Program on High-Value Crops (Fruit and Vegetables) was prepared by AVRDC, the Alliance and partners, following various consultations and meetings. The proposal was submitted to the Science Council by the agreed deadline but it was not positively reviewed by the Science Council.

Regional Plans for collective action in sub-Saharan Africa

The Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) regional plan for collective action has drawn up an inventory of over 80% of the CGIAR's research in the region; the inventory, in an Access database is planned to be launched publicly on the Regional Pan's web page in a fully interactive form by October 2008. All regional researchers will be able to access and edit their data in the data base

The ESA Regional Plan, ASARECA and ReSAKSS have launched an initiative on 'responding to the food price crisis in eastern & southern Africa'. The initiative's output (available at the [Regional Plans' website](#)) has subsequently been discussed at regional forums organized by FAO and the World Bank.

Other accomplishments from the ESA Regional Plan include:

- Formation of a community of practice in support of a single knowledge, research and monitoring platform. The community will develop project proposals and a collaborative program of work.
- Co-sponsorship with AGRA of a conference "Towards priority actions for market development for African farmers" on agricultural market development and pro-poor growth for early 2009.
- Organisation of a workshop on Oct. 13-15, 2008 in Nairobi with Syngenta Foundation support, on "Knowledge, methods and approaches to accelerate the contribution of bio-technology to African agriculture". This workshop has three main objectives – to enhance networking among researchers in the region working in the 'new biosciences', level information asymmetries among them with respect to methods, tools and approaches and explore the potential of greater collective action that would contribute to an acceleration of agricultural productivity in the region.

The Alliance (through the auspices of the Regional Plan in WCA) participated in a CORAF/WECARD sponsored “Survey Validation and Planning Workshop” for the Staple Crops Program (a program under CAADP Pillar IV). Outcomes of the workshop included development of projects and activities for the next five years. Most of the work will be achieved through a competitive grant scheme and through commissioned research projects.

The Regional Plan for Collective Action in WCA initiated a new study on water productivity in which two Ghanaian Institutions, the Inland Valley Consortium, and the Institut d'économie rurale (IER) in Mali are collaborating with three Centres to measure water balance in irrigation, rain fed and upland conditions at the basin level.

Confronting Global Food Price Inflation

Work on global food prices has continued and has taken three forms: a plan of action, work on best bets in sub-Saharan Africa and work on best bets globally.

A Plan of Action: at ExCo's request, the Alliance worked with the Science Council and the CGIAR Secretariat to produce a plan of action for the current food crisis. This plan of action (now available on the [CGIAR website](#)), was presented at the FAO High Level Conference on world food security, climate change and bioenergy (June 2008, Rome) by the Chair of the Alliance Executive, during one of the plenary sessions of the High Level Conference.

The Action Plan proposes as immediate actions for the Alliance to work closely with FAO, IFAD, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and small- and medium-scale agro enterprises to assist national agricultural research and extension systems in stepping up the dissemination of ‘best-bets’, such as higher yielding crop varieties and livestock and fish breeds and more effective and sustainable soil and water management practices and appropriate policies.

In the medium term the Alliance will work with its partners and the FAO, IFAD, United Nations and World Bank in strengthening support for agricultural research and extension systems as well as farmers’ organisations. Other options such as generating more productive crops and animals that show greater resilience in the face of changing climatic conditions and pest and disease pressures; more integrated approaches to achieve sustainable increases in agricultural productivity; equitable policies and institutional arrangements that enable small farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices, will be supported by Alliance research.

In the longer term, the Alliance will apply science, in collaboration with its partners, to combat emerging diseases in crops, livestock, fisheries and tree-based systems; to develop viable alternatives to deforestation, while seeking to intensify agricultural production on land already under cultivation. It will also work to strengthen capacity in the agricultural sciences. Finally, it will work with international partners to secure increased investment in agricultural research and rural infrastructure at the national and international levels.

Best Bets to Boost Crop Yields in sub-Saharan Africa: The Alliance entered into a dialogue with the World Bank to document currently available 'best bet' technologies to boost crop yields in Africa. After a series of consultations, up to ten of each Centre's or system-wide program most promising 'best bets' for boosting crop yields in sub-Saharan Africa have been identified and fully documented. The data collected for each of these 'best bets' have been categorized under specific fields¹ to facilitate integration into an e-database (still under development).

Global best bets for research investments: IFPRI is leading an effort, on behalf of the Alliance, to assess the most promising areas for future research investments in the CGIAR. An economic methodology has been developed to facilitate this assessment. This is work in progress; further specification of the economic model and assessment of the consequences on regional agricultural productivity of changing assumptions about the manner in which best bets are disseminated within different parts of the globe are under discussion.

Collaboration with FARA

A FARA-CGIAR consultation was recently co-organised by the Alliance and FARA to improve collaboration and collective action in sub-Saharan Africa.

The purpose of the consultation was to increase understanding and harmonize research initiatives from FARA and from the Alliance in Africa, with a special focus on those involving collective action. The consultation was also aimed at strengthening partnership and alignment to the overall agenda of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development program (CAADP).

The consultation identified a number of concrete areas (e.g., need to align the work of the Centres with the CAADP frame, need to set up a mechanism to systematically engage the Alliance in more effective roles in the various structures of FARA and CAADP, need to more systematically communicate with FARA and better participate in FARA Forum activities,...) where agreement is needed for progress to be made. The outputs of this consultation will serve to prepare a high level meeting in the first part of 2009, between FARA and the Alliance leadership, to come to a more formal agreement on how the Centres and FARA will be mutually accountable in this new phase of their partnership.

¹ Description; main intended target agro-ecozone for optimal, sustainable performance of the Best Bet; estimated average (not potential) on-farm yield gain in percent, compared to average local current practice in the most appropriate agro-ecozone; location-specificity; most promising countries for the intervention; time frame required to effectively deploy; most effective modes of delivery ; key development and financial resources needed to deploy the Best Bet; research efforts that are needed or recommended to achieve, sustain or enhance the impact of this Best Bet.

Collaboration with FORAGRO

The Alliance had a strong presence at the Fifth International Meeting of FORAGRO, Montevideo 2008 (Institutional innovations for Agriculture with Knowledge in the Americas in the 21st century). The meeting culminated in the DECLARATION OF MONTEVIDEO 2008 which mentioned the CGIAR specifically *“To promote a renewed agenda of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and to specifically coordinate the development of elements for the strategic repositioning of LAC in the CGIAR and new strategic partnerships with the International Centres on priority topics for research and technological innovation that have an impact on agriculture and food security in LAC.”*

The Alliance has been discussing the need to develop regional strategies for the sub-regions where we work and the LAC region is an obvious prime candidate for such a development. The Alliance will hold substantive discussions on this early in 2009.

Performance Measurement

The Alliance has been discussing the performance measurement system (PMS) for a number of months and has prepared a list of concrete recommendations. These recommendations for improving the credibility and usefulness of the system whilst streamlining it was discussed with both the Science Council and the CGIAR Secretariats during two separate recent workshops organised on this topic.

Suggestions for improvement include development and testing of an indicator on research data management as an IPG; rationalization of indicators; streamlining the indicators which measure inputs instead of results produced, being able to report not only full achievement of output targets, but also partial achievement along with options for a commentary on why targets have not/ or have been partially achieved.

The Alliance will continue to work with the Science Council in the coming months in developing specific indicators on data management and capacity building in addition to constructive feedback on the 2009 Performance Measurement Guidelines.

CGMap

EasyMTP is the new system-wide online tool for Medium Term Plan (MTP) reporting. The upload and submission of MTPs on-line went very well and was concluded by the 20 June deadline. The MTP documents have since become available from the download area of CGMap – an application that allows easy access to information on research and research-related activities (as well as the analysis of such information) pertaining to the CGIAR Centres and Challenge Programs over time. The download, search and browse functionalities are now activated, and the ICT-KM team are in the process of developing a "Search Projects" functionality that will rely on both Financial Information System (FIS) and MTP data. The plan is to release the public version of CGMap in September 2008.

System Wide and Ecoregional Programmes (SWEPS)

The Alliance has been discussing the phasing out of some SWEPS on the basis of a set of criteria. It was however concluded that it would be more effective to conduct these discussions within the frame of the governance and funding model which the CGIAR is going to choose at ExCo and at AGM. Indeed, the strengths and weaknesses of some of the SWEPS will differ, depending upon the model used to frame the discussions. The Alliance will finalise its discussions of the SWEPS it proposes to close early in 2009, once the model within which Centre activities take place has been clearly identified.

Agriculture Health and Research Platform (AHRP)

The architecture for the platform has now been established consisting of a core research group (primarily charged with stimulating and forming small task forces to prepare joint agriculture and health research proposals and comprised of around 20 members from CGIAR centres, WHO, FAO with other interested partners); a management team (to manage the global platform activities, comprised of five actively involved Platform members from IFPRI, ILRI, CIP and WHO), and an Advisory Panel to provide periodic technical and strategic advice to the Platform. Initial membership of the Advisory Panel is primarily drawn from health organizations but a more broad-based panel membership is planned.

Following confirmation of the IDRC support for the first major grant to the Platform earlier this year, a call for concept notes was widely disseminated. From the 133 concept notes received, nine full proposals have been requested to cover the three core themes (nutrition, food safety and water). These proposals will be reviewed by an independent review panel, and a collective decision made as to which three to support with funds from the existing IDRC grant by end September. The next issue of ***Ag-Health Update*** will provide details of the three selected research proposals.

In August, an updating of the earlier scoping work on research activities of different CGIAR centres was initiated – this will be made available on the [AHRP website](#) in September.

Data Management

Empirical data from field and laboratory observation are, when connected with secondary information, the raw material of all Alliance research outputs. They are therefore very valuable, yet it has been increasingly recognized that they are looked after in a sometimes casual way. Compared with our financial data we have few standards or recognised good practices of data management, relatively few professional staff responsible, few incentives for good performance and no indicators of success.

The Alliance supported a two-day meeting in June 2008 for those responsible for management of research data in different centres to discuss common problems and solutions. Arising from this meeting and subsequently discussed at the meeting of the Alliance Deputy Executives (Penang, June 2008) were ten principles of research

data management. Data from public funded research are a public good, have value beyond the project/scientist that generated them, and must be made available in usable formats. An action plan was developed with defined responsibilities and timeframes, including the development of a strategic and action paper on data management in the Alliance aimed at identifying what needs to change at system and centres levels and potential impact and methods of including 'data publication' in the CGIAR Performance Measurement System.

The Directors of Research in the Centres have subsequently agreed to develop an indicator on data management as an IPG to be tested for the next PMS and to develop the strategic and action paper on Data Management in the CGIAR for Alliance approval by early 2009.