

Briefings from the CGIAR Director to ExCo

20 November 2001 ExCo Briefing

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to brief you on actions taken as follow-up to AGM2001 and the first Executive Council meeting. You should have received by now draft summary records of both meetings. To keep you informed of developments, I intend to send you a monthly note to keep you updated of progress and to seek your inputs. This is the first such note and I welcome your suggestions for improvement.

In what follows, I first go over some information items to update you of developments, followed by three items on which we need your inputs.

Information Items

ExCo web site: Please note that we have established a public site for ExCo matters (showing terms-of-reference, membership, agenda and agenda documents and finalized records of meetings).

A private (password-access) site is established for members to archive all ExCo communications (such as this). Please ensure that you use the ExCo list server (cgiar-exco@cgiar.org) for your communications on ExCo matters.

Dates and venue for ExCo2. I suggest you block April 16-17, 2002 for the second ExCo meeting. This will follow the meeting of the Interim Science Council on April 8-12. Venue is still under review. Several offers have been received. We hope to inform you of the selected venue in a week or so.

Regular CP process: A Call for Ideas has been issued on behalf of the ExCo.

Pilot CP process: TAC/SC has sent requests to 10 pilot CP proponents to prepare/submit the material to enable it to conduct the evaluation agreed at ExCo1.

CP web site: We are establishing a dedicated web site on Challenge Programs (http://www.cgiar.org/research/res_cp.html). All CP ideas submitted will be posted, as will information on CPs such as the Call for Ideas, guidelines for CPs, and the CP calendar. Your suggestions for improvement are welcome. .

System Office: The Draft Communication Strategy paper has been put on the Web(http://www.cgiar.org/who/wwa_excodocs.html) and sent by e-mail for comments. I will soon initiate dialogue with each SO component, as agreed by the ExCo.

Timeline chart of ExCo business: A comprehensive and aligned chart is being developed and will be forwarded to you soon.

Action Items

We appreciate your attention to the following items on which we require your inputs:

ExCo committees: As agreed at ExCo1, please indicate your interest to serve on the PC or FC and, if you so wish, suggest non-ExCo members who could serve on these committees. Also, please send to the Secretariat any suggestions you may have on elements for terms-of-reference and procedures for these committees. (Deadline: November 30, 2001)

TAC/SC membership: ExCo recommendations on the membership of the Interim Science Council is being forwarded to the CGIAR for endorsement. ExCo members are asked to suggest potential members and TOR for the Working Group to be created to facilitate establishment of the permanent SC. (Deadline: February 28, 2002)

Venue of AGM2: Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you are interested in hosting the next or one of the following AGMs. So far, we have been contacted by tourism offices/convention bureaus from Dublin, Ireland and Lyon, France.

Cheers,

Francisco

20 December 2001 ExCo Briefing

Dear ExCo Members:

This is my second monthly briefing note to bring you up-to-date with progress on actions agreed to at ExCo1. I will first go over information items, followed by items on which I seek your inputs.

Information Items

1. As I informed you earlier, ExCo2 will be held at ICARDA on April 16-17. Draft agenda and note on administrative arrangements will be sent closer to the meeting date.
2. Timeline chart of ExCo business: I attach a timeline chart for your reference. The chart is being sent as both a Microsoft Project file (in case you have access to this program) (See attached file: CG Reform Program.mpp)and, in case you do not, as two separate .tif files (one for each page): (See attached file: Reform Schedule Page1.tif)(See attached file: Reform Schedule Page2.tif).
3. CPs--Pilot Process: This is on track. All 10 proponents have submitted pre-proposals which are being reviewed by TAC/Interim Science Council.
4. CPs--Regular Process: The early response to the Call for Ideas is not strong (less than 10 ideas submitted so far).This is expected to pick up as the initial deadline (January 15) nears.
5. ExCo Organization: Thanks you for your comments on TORs for the Program and Finance Committees and for your nominations. We are aiming to send you by mid-January a summary of your comments, along with draft TORs and suggested composition of the two committees.
6. Establishing SC: As follow-up to ExCo1, Ian has invited Interim SC members (eleven) to serve during 2002.Joachim von Braun has stepped down because of his appointment as the next IFPRI DG.
7. Organizing System Office: As requested by ExCo, I am initiating a dialogue with the components of the CGIAR System Office. We hope to be able to assemble the principals of each System Office component for a brainstorm session where, with help from outside consultants, we develop a strategic framework for the System Office for discussion at ExCo2.
8. Review of GRPC: We aim to forward you a draft TOR for this review early in 2002, following consultations with IPGRI, and have the review conducted towards mid 2002, with results discussed at ExCo3 (tentatively, early Sept 2002).
9. Other developments: We are in the final stages of appointing a Communications Adviser to head our Communications Team. We are grateful to CDC and CBC chairs for their help in screening candidates. Ian and I have held the first two of planned video (or telephone)

conferences with the DGs and key staff of centers to discuss the CGIAR Reform Program (and other matters of interest to the center staff). The first two conferences were with ISNAR and IPGRI and were well received. We are in dialogue with the CDC about ways of revitalizing System-wide Programs/Initiatives in the light of the emerging Challenge Programs.

Action Items

1. Please send your suggestions for points to include in the TOR of the Working Group ExCo will appoint to prepare a detailed proposal on the TAC-SC transition. We also welcome suggestions on the membership of the Working Group. (Deadline: Feb 28, 2002)
2. I welcome your comments on (a) the usefulness, (b) frequency, and (c) content of briefing letters such as this.

Happy holidays and a peaceful and productive 2002 for all!

Cheers,

Francisco

8 February 2002 ExCo Briefing

Dear ExCo Members:

I write to bring you up-to-date with progress on ExCo business. I will first go over items requiring action by ExCo, followed by the information items. I recognize that this note is longer than my earlier briefings because there are several critical issues requiring ExCo attention.

Action Items (All require response by February 22)

1. CPs--Pilot Process: The ISC has completed its review of the 10 pre-proposals and recommends three CP pre-proposals for full proposal development: (1) Genetic Resources; (2) Water and Food; (3) Biofortified Crops. Emil Javier's cover letter and the ISC report are attached; short concept notes on the ten pre-proposals are posted on the CGIAR web page as well as the full pre-proposals for the three recommended programs. ExCo members may endorse ISC recommendations in full or in part (from pre-proposals recommended by the ISC.)

You will also note from Emil's cover note that the ISC found six other CP pre-proposals highly relevant to CGIAR's goals and recommends them to be considered alongside the new concept notes being submitted as part of the regular CP process. Unless we hear from you otherwise, these six will be included in the assessment of CP concepts as part of the regular process.

Keeping in view our agreed timetable, I would like to suggest the following schedule for arriving at an ExCo consensus on Pilot CPs: -- ExCo members comment on ISC recommendations by February 22 -- CGIAR Secretariat consolidates comments and proposes a draft ExCo decision (by Feb 26) on a no objection basis (objections due by Mar 8) -- ExCo decision is communicated to CGIAR and Centers (Mar 11) -- Funds are disbursed to proponents of winning pre-proposals for full proposal development (Mar 11)

2. Review of GRPC: A draft TOR for this review, prepared in consultation with Geoff Hawtin, DG of IPGRI, is attached for your comments. We welcome also your suggestions of individuals who can conduct this review.

3. ExCo2: This will be held on April 16-17 at ICARDA in Syria, followed by a field visit, on April 18, organized by ICARDA and Syria. A draft agenda for the meeting is attached for your comments. Please contact Mohan Saxena, the focal point identified by ICARDA, (m.saxena@cgiar.org) for questions on logistics.

Information Items

1. ExCo Organization: I am pleased to note that the TORs for the Program and Finance Committees have been endorsed by ExCo members with only minor adjustments, pending consideration of comments expected from FAO (which has indicated that its contribution would be sent on Monday, February 11.) Therefore we are delaying forwarding you the final TORs and Ian Johnson's proposal on membership.

2. *CPS--Regular Process*: The first Call for Ideas has yielded 35 suggestions (excluding the six recommended for inclusion by ISC). ISC plans to complete its review of the first batch of submitted ideas by February 15.

3. *Systemwide Programs/Initiatives*: Hank Fitzhugh, supported by Lukas Brader and in close dialogue with the Center Directors and SWP coordinators, is helping the System Office explore ways of providing stable support to SWPs, since SWPs, as well as Challenge Programs, are critical elements of the CGIAR's programmatic approach. We expect to share his proposals with the ExCo prior to ExCo2.

4. *Establishing SC*: The Interim Science Council (ISC) has been in operation since the beginning of the year. We are still expecting suggestions from you on the membership and the TOR of the Working Group which will be appointed to advise ExCo on the transition to the Science Council. The many useful ideas offered by ExCo members on the composition and appointment process of SC will be forwarded to the WG when it is established.

5. *Organizing System Office*: As requested at ExCo1, a dialogue with the components of the CGIAR System Office was initiated. The principals of each System Office component will gather for a brainstorm session in Washington on March 13-14, where, with help from outside consultants, we will develop a common framework and business plan for the System Office. I will brief you of the outcome of this workshop at ExCo2.

6. *World Bank OED Review of CGIAR*: This "meta evaluation" is in its final stages. We were requested to summarize all actions taken in response to the Third System Review. The draft summary we submitted is attached for your information.

7. *Afghanistan*: A CGIAR-led consortium is being set up to help restore food security and rebuild the agricultural sector in Afghanistan and a first stakeholder meeting was held in Tashkent organized by ICARDA. ICARDA will provide a full briefing at ExCo2.

8. *New staff at the Secretariat*: I am pleased to announce that Ms. Fiona Douglas will be joining the CGIAR Secretariat in March as Communications Adviser, heading our Communications Team. I am grateful to CDC and CBC colleagues who took part in the selection process. Ms. Douglas brings a wealth of experience to the CGIAR, latest as Chief Communications Officer for AusAid in Canberra, Australia.

5 March 2002 ExCo Briefing

Dear Colleagues:

1. Pilot Challenge Programs. ExCo members commented on the iSC recommendations. Views ranged from endorsing only one of the three recommended pilot pre-proposals to endorsing all three. A summary is attached.

There was unanimous support for advancing the Water and Food CP to the full proposal development stage. The full proposal should take into consideration the points made by the iSC and the ExCo members. Two predominant views emerged on the remaining two proposals: (a) advance both as separate proposals; and (b) ask the proponents to merge them into a single proposal, with the biofortification theme as a component of a broader CP on genetic resources. While the genetic resources CP was ranked highest by the iSC, there was apprehension that it was too broad, not targeted towards specific outputs, and, based on non-CGIAR experience, it may not be cost effective. Because the biofortification CP has clearer outputs and a narrower focus within the broader theme of the genetic resources CP, a merger of the two pre-proposals could lead to a more focused and manageable composite CP.

In light of these, ExCo is asked to endorse the following decisions on a no-objection basis (objections, if any, are due by c.o.b. March 15):

Decision 1. The Water and Food CP should be advanced to the full proposal development stage. The full proposal should take into account the points made by the iSC and the members of ExCo. The System Office should identify and make available to the proponents of the CP US\$ 200,000 for developing a full proposal. The full proposal should be ready for review by iSC by July 15, 2002.

Decision 2. The "Genetic Resources" and "Biofortified Crops" CPs should be advanced to the full proposal development stage, on the condition that the proponents should prepare a single, integrated proposal, taking into account the points made by iSC and the members of ExCo. The System Office should identify and make available to the proponents of the combined CP US\$ 400,000 for developing a full proposal. The merged full proposal should be ready for review by iSC by July 15, 2002.

2. Challenge Programs--Regular Process. iSC has completed its assessment of the first batch of CP concept notes that had been submitted (by January 15) as part of the regular process. It has identified 13 concepts around which CPs could be built (out of 41 submissions) and recommends them for pre-proposal development. The cover letter from Emil Javier and the iSC assessment paper are attached for your review. According to the process agreed at ExCo1, CP ideas to be advanced to the pre-proposal development phase require CGIAR approval, following their endorsement (by c.o.b. March 15, 2002).

3. ExCo Committees. I am pleased to note that the initial TORs for the Program and Finance Committees have been endorsed by ExCo with some amendments. The amended texts are attached. Keeping in mind these TORs and the nominations received from ExCo members and

expressions of interest from CGIAR members, the following membership is proposed for the two committees for a two-year period (through December 2003):

Program Committee: China, Colombia, FAO, India, Norway, Philippines, Syria, United States of America

Finance Committee: Canada, France, IFAD, AsDB, Japan, South Africa, UK, World Bank

I hope this is agreeable to all.(Please send comments/objections by March 15.) The next step would be to propose the two slates of names to the CGIAR for its endorsement on a no-objection basis.

4. ExCo2 Revised Draft Agenda is attached. Thank you for your comments on the draft agenda. Thank you also for your comments on the ExCo Working Group on the Science Council. I will report to you on the outcomes in my next briefing.

Cheers, Francisco

19 March 2002 ExCo Briefing

Dear Colleagues:

ExCo is making steady progress in implementing its work program agreed at the first meeting. I note below the status of each item on the ExCo agenda.

Challenge Programs--Pilot Process. ExCo has endorsed, by consensus, the proposed decision to advance the Water and Food CP to full proposal development.

However, there was no clear consensus on how to proceed with the other two CPs recommended by the iSC. Positions ranged from endorsing neither to proceeding with both, even in the light of the middle-ground decision proposal offered on March 5. In order to move the ExCo business forward, and in view of all the comments that have been made on pilot CP proposals (not just in the last round), the following revised decision is offered on the CP proposals on Genetic Resources and Biofortification:

Decision 2 (revised): The "Genetic Resources" and "Biofortified Crops" CPs should both be advanced to the full proposal development stage. Each full proposal should take into account the points made by the iSC and the members of ExCo. The proponents of the two proposals should interact during full proposal development to explore synergies and areas for potential integration. The System Office should identify and make available to the proponents of each CP US\$ 200,000 for developing a full proposal. The full proposals should be ready for review by iSC by July 15, 2002.

Action Needed by ExCo: The revised Decision 2 is proposed for endorsement by ExCo on a no objection basis by cob March 25, 2002.

Challenge Programs--Regular Process. ExCo has endorsed the advancement of the 13 iSC-recommended concept notes to the CGIAR for approval. This will be communicated to the CGIAR shortly. Following review by the CGIAR, proponents will be invited to prepare pre-proposals. According to the current schedule, it is anticipated that CGIAR would consider full proposals from some of these proponents during the first quarter of 2003.

ExCo Committees. ExCo has broadly endorsed the proposed membership of its Program Committee and Finance Committee. Recognizing that ExCo would like to move swiftly and pragmatically with the establishment of these committees, the proposed membership and the TORs of the committees would be forwarded to the CGIAR for its endorsement unless there is objection from ExCo members. As you know inaugural FC and PC meetings had been planned for ExCo2. I suggest that observations made by USAID and GFAR on the organization of ExCo be taken up during discussion of this item at ExCo2.

Action Needed by ExCo: Comments on the proposed procedure, if any, by cob March 25, 2002.

Science Council Working Group. I attach a draft TOR for the SCWG which is based on comments by ExCo members, CGIAR decisions reached at AGM2001, and earlier discussions and decisions of ExCo. For pragmatic reasons, a two-stage process is proposed for the appointment of the WG. Names of potential WG Chair and members identified so far are also listed.

Actions Needed by ExCo: (1) Endorsement of the Draft TOR for the SCWG on a no-objection basis by cob March 25, 2002. (2) Suggestion of additional names to consider for chairmanship or membership of the WG.

Review of GRPC. The draft TOR for the Review of GRPC has been endorsed by ExCo. Useful comments have been received on the review from FAO, GRPC (which met at IRRI in February) and from IPGRI management. The names identified for chairmanship or membership of the review are attached. The Secretariat is exploring their availability and interest. A suggestion has been made to appoint a small "resource person" group from within the CGIAR for interaction with the review panel.

Action Needed by ExCo: Suggestion of additional names to consider for chairmanship or membership of the 2-person review panel.

System Office Workshop. I am pleased to note that representatives of the current components of the CGIAR System Office got together for the first time last week in Washington, D.C. in a two-day workshop facilitated by the McKinsey & Company and the Training Resources Group (TRG). Meryl, Emil and I will share with you the outcome of this workshop at ExCo2.

ExCo2. We have noted members' suggestions on the ExCo2 agenda and will take these into account in the next version. We plan to send you the materials needed for the meeting by April 5, 2002.

ExCo Decision Making. I would like to share with you two lessons we have drawn from our experience of facilitating ExCo's business in a "virtual" mode. First, decision making through consensus requires a clear definition of a "consensus decision". Second, it does not seem to be practical to appoint individuals to panels, committees and working groups through a 21-member committee. I am hoping that at ExCo2 we can find some pragmatic means and/or yardsticks for addressing these two issues.

For Information. I attach an update on the transgenic DNA introgression/maize germplasm matter, which has received considerable attention in recent weeks, including a note from Tim Reeves.

Best wishes,

Francisco

29 March 2002 ExCo Briefing

Dear Colleagues:

A quick update on the items I briefed you on in my last communication (March 19, 2002).

Challenge Programs--Pilot Process. Revised Decision 2 (on Genetic Resources and Biofortified Crops CPs) has been endorsed. The Secretariat has identified funding for full proposal development. iSC has been asked to initiate/guide the proposal development process.

Challenge Programs--Regular Process. The 13 CP concepts have been submitted to the CGIAR for endorsement on a no-objection basis.

ExCo Committees. The TORs and proposed membership of PC and FC have been forwarded to the CGIAR for endorsement, with the recognition that further adjustments might be necessary as we are in a learning process.

Review of GRPC. I am pleased to inform you that Carlos Corea (Chair) and Ian Bevege (Member) have agreed to conduct the review which is now scheduled to take place during June-July 2002, about a month later than originally planned. Manuel Lantin will serve as Secretary. As suggested, a small "resource person group" from within the CGIAR will be appointed for interaction with the review panel.

Science Council Working Group. The draft TOR for the WG has been endorsed by ExCo members, with the modification noted below in connection with Comment #1 from FAO. The additional names suggested by members have been added to the list of potential chair/members.

Observations On FAO's Comments on the TOR for the Science Council WG:

FAO Comment #1: "The texts of AGM'01 Decisions 7, 8, and 9 on the Science Council which you have provided in Attachment 1 of the TOR are not those contained in the Summary Record of Proceedings and Decisions of AGM (November 21, 2001). Please insert the appropriate texts of these decisions."

Observation: Thanks to Jacques for detecting the inadvertent use of an earlier version. The correct version is attached.

FAO Comment #2: "Attachment 2 of the proposed TOR contains the revised Attachment 5 of the Integrated Proposal. This document, to the best of my knowledge, has not been approved by ExCo or the CGIAR and therefore has no official endorsement. Please substitute the original Attachment 5 of the IP."

Observation: The comment raises both a question of process and one of outcome. In terms of process, the steps were as follows:

- (a) The original attachments to the "Integrated Proposal" were closely scrutinized, and discussed at length at AGM01. The Chairman assured the meeting that the

attachments would be modified to reflect fully the consensus views expressed at the meeting.

- (b) The revised attachments, taking into account the comments made and decisions reached at the AGM and at ExCo1, were sent to ExCo members for review and comment on Jan. 23, 2002, along with draft ToRs of the ExCo's Finance and Program Committees.
- (c) Only one comment was received on the attachments (from FAO). In our assessment, revising the attachment along the lines of FAO's suggestions required re-considering the decisions already reached by the CGIAR at AGM01. As no other comments were made, on pragmatic grounds, the attachments are considered to have been broadly endorsed by ExCo.

FAO Comment #3: "The role of the Cosponsors in serving as the Nominating Committee for SC members should be included, as agreed at AGM'01."

Observation: We understand that this provision is already included in Attachment 5, which states: "The Cosponsors, serving as Nominating Committee, would submit a short list to the Executive Council, which in turn would make the final recommendation to the CGIAR."

FAO Comment #4: "The role of the Cosponsors in commenting on the WGSC's report before it is transmitted to ExCo should be inserted, as agreed by ExCo1."

Observation: The Summary Record of ExCo1 states that "the WG should seek the views of cosponsors and take these into account." This is reflected in Point 5 of the proposed TOR.

FAO Comment #5: "Please clarify that ExCo will approve the appointment of the entire WGSC team, as agreed at ExCo1."

Observation: The ExCo1 decision on "Steps to appoint the WG" was as follows:

- (a) ExCo members suggest TOR points and possible members to the CGIAR Director (by February 28);
- (b) CGIAR Director recommends WG composition and TOR based on inputs received (by March 21);
- (c) Following endorsement of ExCo, WG is appointed and begins work (April1).

Although a modified, two stage process has now been broadly endorsed by ExCo, if ExCo wishes, when it is composed, the entire panel will be submitted to ExCo for a final endorsement.

As I suggested in my last note, we should spend some time at ExCo2 discussing how we can most efficiently reach a consensus decision while operating in a "virtual" mode. While I do not wish to burden you with long briefing notes, our commitment to transparency requires providing a full response to all comments.

Cheers,

Francisco