

ICRISAT 2003 EPR RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

1. The Panel recommends that ICRISAT continue to undertake strategic research on genomics and transgenic product development for SAT crops; and together with the other CGIAR Centers and relevant partners, address the pressing issues on intellectual property, biosafety and public acceptance of transgenic crops.

ICRISAT accepts the recommendation, and will continue to ever more vigorously undertake strategic research on genomics and transgenic product development for SAT crops. At the same time, we will expand our research in the biosafety aspects of transgenic crops, and proactively address issues related to public acceptance and IPR of biotechnology products.

2. The panel strongly recommends that ICRISAT should maximize the synergy possible when GT 1 and GT 2 plus their partners work closely together to generate IPGs for the SAT. ICRISAT should rapidly re-build and re-engineer its crop improvement program and further enhance the evolution of the two pronged breeding strategy for Asia and Africa.

We accept the recommendation. The process of integrating activities in GT 1 (Biotechnology) and GT 2 (Crop improvement, Management and Utilization) is already well underway. However, we accept the challenge to create a truly comprehensive genetic resources and enhancement paradigm through systemic multidisciplinary partnerships with NARS and private sector partners in the region. In this way we will fully capture the potential synergy between disciplines and sectors, and hope to serve the differential needs of Asia, Africa and the CGIAR as a whole

3. The panel recommends that ICRISAT phases out GT3 (Water, Soil and Agrodiversity management) research in Asia where it no longer has a comparative advantage, by devolving this research to NARS. These resources should be redeployed in Africa where they should be engaged in addressing some of the major challenges in land, water and agrodiversity research facing the SAT of the continent.

We accept the recommendation and will re-deploy unrestricted funding to strengthen GT 3 activities in SAT Africa in a phased manner that will then better address the major challenges of land, water and agro-diversity research. However, given the availability of opportunities for restricted funding in the area of GT3 activities in Asia, ICRISAT will continue to pursue these simultaneously and create a self-supporting natural resource management team in Asia. In this way, GT3 scientists would continue to contribute to ICRISAT's IGCRM and new science strategies and draw lessons from long-term development programs in Asia to help translate these for impact in Africa.

4. The Panel recommends ICRISAT prioritize its activities in IPM/IDM. Potential projects should be chosen with priority being give to projects that address constraints that are important in Africa and are potentially solvable through IPM and IDM approaches.

ICRISAT agrees with the recommendation and will plan to undertake IPM/IDM research as an integral part of the IGCRM approach to meet the food security needs of smallholder farmers in SAT Africa.

5. The Panel recommends that ICRISAT rationalize the role, scope and objectives in terms of its comparative advantage in conducting research generating IPGs in GT4 (Seed systems). This includes addressing the anticipated problems related to marketing transgenic materials it will produce. The purposes and goals of GT4 will be best served if its activities are strongly anchored into appropriate global themes where interdisciplinarity can be enhanced and resources more efficiently and effectively utilized.

We agree with the recommendation that the work on seed systems should generate further IPGs. ICRISAT agrees that inter-disciplinarity needs to be enhanced and would endeavor to integrate activities, wherever needed.

6. The Panel recommends that GT5 (Enhancing crop-livestock productivity and systems diversification) should transfer assessment of feed quality to GT2 (Crop Improvement, management and utilization) and cease its other activities in Asia. The level of staffing should be increased, and strategic research in Sub-Saharan Africa expanded, particularly in landscape level research on new systems. To ensure coherence in ICRISAT's programmes this theme should be merged with GT3 (Water, soil and agro-biodiversity management).

ICRISAT agrees with recommendation and will transfer the breeding for fodder quantity and quality to GT 2. Component design of IPM/IDM system will remain in GT 2, with system testing of integrated components in GT 3 as recommended. Crop-livestock systems and systems diversification will be subsumed in to an expanded GT 3-- Land, Water and Agro-diversity Management.

7. The Panel recommends more vigorous implementation of the recommendations of the CCER of Socio-economics and Policy Research Programme at ICRISAT, 1996-2001. More social science resources should be re-allocated from GT6 (SAT Futures and Development Pathways) to the other themes under the leadership of non social scientists and the work program of social science should be more sharply focused on strategic assessments and activities that best inform macro and longer run priority setting in ICRISAT.

We agree with the recommendation to more vigorously implement the CCER recommendations for socio-economics and policy research. We are in the process of establishing a critical mass of social scientists in all regions and global themes to undertake strategic research that will generate IPGs, as well as viable partnerships and policy recommendations of strategic importance to SAT agriculture.

However, given the strong support of the interim Science Council, in opposition to a part of this recommendation, we will ensure that a distinct visibility for social science activities at

ICRISAT is maintained. Thus, we would seek to create an appropriate balance between those activities managed under GT6 and the remaining social science activities managed in other global themes under the leadership of non-social scientists.

8. The Panel recommends that ICRISAT should rationalize the role, scope and objectives of the Institute in the distance learning for farmers initiative called the Virtual University for the SAT and provide management with clear guidance on where the limits of ICRISAT's interest lie consistent with its comparative advantage in IPG research. Further, the term University should be replaced with a more appropriate term such as "Virtual Learning Centre for the SAT".

The recommendation is accepted. ICRISAT will further delineate the roles of ICRISAT as a convener, coalition builder, catalyst and content provider in the VUSAT coalition. The recommendation concerning the change of name has already been implemented and VUSAT is now called the 'Virtual Academy for the Semi-Arid Tropics (VASAT).' This change was done to faithfully reflect VASAT's mandate as an information, communication and non-formal distance education coalition for SAT farm communities and their intermediaries.

9. The Panel recommends that ICRISAT should rapidly restructure its programmes and transfer its headquarters, and all programmes except its strategic plant genetic resources enhancement programme to sub-Saharan Africa.

Following the support and endorsement of iSC and ExCo, *ICRISAT accepts the challenge* to find a win-win scenario in enhancing its impact in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. It affirms its commitment to continue shifting core resources to address the needs of sub-Saharan Africa while dynamically responding to the changing needs and profile of its stakeholders in Asia. ICRISAT will immediately establish a task force to study the programmatic restructuring issues.

This task force will be complementary to a counterpart being established by the CG System to conduct a broader study on opportunities for synergies of CGIAR Centers and other actors starting with Africa.

ICRISAT EMR 2003 RECOMMENDATIONS & RESPONSES

CHAPTER 2: BOARD GOVERNANCE

- 1. The Panel recommends that the Center consult with the host country to reduce the number of host country positions on the Board and to ensure that host country nominees can serve full Board terms of appointment.**

We will work to ensure that host country nominees can serve at least one full Board term. We also recognize that the number of host country positions is stated in the ICRISAT's Constitution and Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of India (GOI). The process and implications of implementing this recommendation will therefore require common understanding between ICRISAT and the GOI.

- 2. The Panel recommends that neither the Chair nor Vice-Chair position on the Governing Board be held by a host country member.**

We agree with the recommendation in the case of the Board Chair. The Vice-Chair arrangement is a convention that is not unique to ICRISAT. We remain vigilant to ensure that whatever process is followed does not weaken ICRISAT's partnership and relations with the GOI.

- 3. The Panel recommends that the Board continue to meet twice a year, one meeting at the headquarters site and the other at the African regional sites on a rotational basis.**

We agree with the recommendation.

- 4. The Panel recommends that the new Board members receive a comprehensive indoctrination on Board governance responsibilities in addition to their orientation to the Center's programmes.**

A comprehensive orientation process of new Board members is currently in place. We will make sure that this process is further enhanced. The understanding of the governance responsibilities among Board members will be strengthened.

- 5. The Panel recommends that the entire Board regularly and systematically review and document its own performance (including the Chair's), set performance objectives based on that assessment, and intentionally address on-going Board development, based on the assessment. Committees should be encouraged to do likewise.**

We agree. We will work to improve the existing process.

- 6. The Panel recommends that the Center adopt the practice of an annual “in camera” session to discuss the overall organization performance, without the Director General present.**

This is already being done in the context of the DG’s performance evaluation.

- 7. The Panel recommends that the ICRISAT Board adopt the “model” grievance and appeal process as proposed by the Committee of Board Chairs, including as a final step for IRS staff the right to appeal to the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal in Switzerland (which can be done at minimal cost).**

The model grievance and appeal process proposed by the CBC will be studied and relevant provisions will be adopted. We will study the financial feasibility of adopting the ILO’s Administrative Tribunal as an appeal mechanism at the Institute.

- 8. The Panel recommends that the Finance Committee be disbanded and that its responsibilities for financial planning and oversight be assumed by the Executive Committee and that the oversight of both the external and internal audit functions be assumed by the Audit Committee.**

We agree with the recommendation.

- 9. The Panel recommends that the Technology Exchange Committee be disbanded and its responsibilities be added to the Program Committee. This addition will also ensure that the major programmatic items that should be discussed by the full Board will be taken up at that level.**

We accept the recommendation.

CHAPTER 5: FINANCE

- 10. The Panel recommends that, keeping with existing Board policy, the Board and management commit to a break-even or better budget in the Center’s annual financial planning and operations.**

We follow a balanced budget policy as a guiding principle. Despite the continuing uncertain financial circumstances prevailing in the CGIAR system, the Institute will try its best to maintain a ‘balanced’ reserve position.

CHAPTER 6: HUMAN RESOURCES

- 11. The Panel recommends the introduction of an improved system of performance evaluation for all IRS and SMG, which incorporates elements of the 360-degree system.**

The recommendation is accepted. A review of the Performance Management System has already been started and the 360-degree system is being studied to enrich the performance evaluation process.

CHAPTER 7: FACILITIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- 12. The Panel recommends that benchmarking against *best practice* norms be undertaken for the Facilities and Support Service units.**

The recommendation is accepted.

CHAPTER 8: REVENUE GENERATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

- 13. The Panel recommends that the competencies of the PDMO be reviewed in the light of the Terms of Reference for the Office, and that missing experience and skill sets be added.**

We will undertake a review of PDMO competencies, including the skills required by the contemporary task environment of this office.