

ExCo Recommendations to the CGIAR on IRRI EPMR¹

ExCo Co-chair A. Aklilu asked I. Johnson to introduce the EPMR and its overall recommendations. Ian Johnson noted that the panel has made 10 recommendations that are relatively straightforward—in that both the Board and the SC has agreed with them. However, there were no specific recommendations on IRRI activities in Africa and this represents a gap in the review. He noted that IRRI's Director General (DG) and Board Chair were invited to attend the ExCo meeting, but were unable to do so because of the overlap with the timing of the IRRI Board meeting.

P. Pinstруп-Andersen noted that SC supports all 10 recommendations of the EPMR, especially the ones on genomics. He noted that IRRI should focus less on upland rice and instead spend added effort on lowland rainfed rice systems, where IRRI has a lot to contribute. Other institutions would be better suited to research on upland rice. The joint commentary from SC and the CGIAR Secretariat recommends that IRRI and WARDA meet and decide on how to move forward on activities in SSA.

Discussion:

- Some members were pleased with the possible expansion of IRRI activities in Africa. It is hoped that IRRI will contribute to an increase in productivity in Africa with partner institutions such as WARDA. The relationship with WARDA specifically should be enhanced, and the decision should be linked with the outcome of the work of the CGIAR task forces on SSA.
- Some members expressed concern about SC's comments that IRRI should not focus on upland rice because they are high poverty areas where the poorest of the poor live and support should be given to these areas. WARDA has experience in upland rainfed rice systems and it believes IRRI has something to offer. The two Centers have had discussions on cooperation and discussions are moving forward for the Centers' activities to be linked. This is a classic case where collaboration will pay off in poverty reduction.
- Upland rice systems are important and shouldn't be neglected, but funds need to be spent where the most benefit can be realized. The funds spent by IRRI on upland rice could better be used in lowland areas to help the most people. Having the most impact on the ground should be the main driver of decision making.
- Significant concern was expressed about some comments in the Executive Summary of the EPMR about the CGIAR and on funding for CPs, i.e., that a significant portion of funds for CPs come from previously expected Center budgets and Center Boards were not consulted about such changes. The comments suggest a sense of entitlement, which is entirely contrary to reality. This is a statement of judgment and not an evaluation and appears to be made not on the basis of evidence, but rather offered as commentary. Such comments do not have an evaluative value and should not be included in an EPMR.

¹ Excerpt from Seventh Meeting of the CGIAR Executive Council (September 13-14, 2004) Summary Record of Proceedings, September 24, 2004.

Conclusions and ExCo Recommendations to the CGIAR:

- *ExCo expressed general agreement with the EPMPR and recommends approval of the EPMPR recommendations by the CGIAR.*
- *Two additional ExCo recommendations for consideration and approval by the CGIAR are:*
 - *IRRI should expand its activities in SSA with the proviso that it work closely with WARDA, the leading rice research institution in SSA.*
 - *IRRI should not abandon research on upland rice, instead it should work with WARDA on a joint activity on this subject.*
- *Panels conducting external reviews should refrain from making judgmental comments that are not evidence-based.*