

Summary of ExCo 13 Discussion and Recommendations to the CGIAR on EPMR Meta-analysis EPMR¹

At ExCo 10, ExCo requested the SC and CGIAR Secretariat to undertake a meta-analysis of recently conducted EPMRs to derive lessons learned. During discussion of the item at AGM06, the CGIAR concluded that options to streamline the process of handling EPMR discussion at meetings of SC, ExCo, and AGM should also be considered.

R. Rabbinge presented the following main points from the SC commentary on the EPMR meta-evaluation:

- SC agrees with the panel's conclusion that outsourcing of EPMRs or establishing a separate evaluation group would not make them more independent than they currently are. Outsourcing would also increase the transaction costs.
- On the issues of consistency and comparability of EPMRs, SC thinks that an assessment of the quality of EPMR recommendations should have been included in the report. An assessment of the way EPMRs have reviewed partnerships is also missing.
- SC believes that there is ample scope for Members' involvement in the review process.
- SC considers that the Performance Measurement (PM) System still has weaknesses for being used by EPMRs as evidence of good performance.
- SC agrees with the panel's idea of raising the perspective of EPMRs above just the Center level through the inclusion in the TOR issues of broad relevance for the CGIAR as a System. However, it disagrees with the panel's recommendation to use an innovation systems framework for positioning the Centers strategically in the global system as an alternative to the pursuit of IPGs.

Jason Yauney (CGIAR Secretariat) presented the CGIAR Secretariat's comments and options to streamline the process of handling EPMRs.

- The meta-evaluation emphasized that EPMRs have focused more rigorously on governance, management, and finance issues. The CGIAR Secretariat is pleased with the panel's findings that there has been "an appreciable shift.... in the way EPMRs examined the quality and effectiveness of Center governance and management."
- Governance issues are now more focused on the role of Center Boards in stewardship and oversight.
- On finance issues, the CGIAR Secretariat agrees with the panel that EPMRs should not look at the Centers' increasing reliance on restricted support as a single common issue and its negative impacts on many aspects of management operations; EPMRs should look instead at Centers' ability to control and compensate for it.

¹ Excerpt from Thirteenth Meeting of the CGIAR Executive Council (October 16-17, 2007) Summary Record of Proceedings, November 2, 2007.

- For the purpose of streamlining CGIAR handling of Center EPMRs, the following options were presented for ExCo's consideration:
 - Option 1: No change to current process (i.e. discussion of EPMR reports by SC, ExCo, AGM)
 - Option 2: Discussion of EPMR reports by SC and ExCo (CGIAR delegation of decision making to ExCo with resulting schedule changes)
 - Option 3: Discussion of EPMR reports only by SC (as suggested by the CGIAR EPMR meta-evaluation)

Discussion:

- The panel's findings provide validity to the importance of evaluations in the CGIAR System. A question that must be asked is how EPMRs could support CGIAR Member evaluation of Center programs.
- Appreciation was expressed for the panel's finding that "PM System is improving the rigor of the MTP logframes and that clarity in the description of output targets and outcomes will facilitate the task of future EPMRs."
- A score card of EPMR reports should have been established by the meta-evaluation.
- It would be useful to carry-out a "lessons learned" exercise on EPMRs every five years.
- Centers should also evaluate EPMR panels and the review process as a learning exercise.
- Preference was expressed by most members for Option 2 on CGIAR handling of EPMRs. However, it was also suggested to bring all three options for consideration by the CGIAR at AGM07.
- In addition to problematic EPMRs, there may be cases where ExCo would suggest a very positive EPMR that highlights best practice be discussed at AGM.
- There is need to assess what the contribution of discussion at AGMs have been to the EPMR process.
- A change in the process of handling EPMRs should consider the issue of reduced involvement of non-ExCo CGIAR Members and NARS in decision making.
- It was also suggested that Option 2 be augmented to note that all EPMRs would be sent to all CGIAR Members, and only those EPMRs requiring, in ExCo's judgment, full discussion by the CGIAR would be sent to AGM.
- Centers should also be given the option to request an EPMR be discussed at AGM.
- R. Wang pointed out that one aspect the panel missed was the appropriate interaction between the Science Council and CGIAR Secretariat in the process of preparing commentaries.

Conclusion and ExCo Recommendation to the CGIAR:

- *The EPMR guidelines should be revised, building on the key findings and recommendations of the EPMR meta-evaluation.*
- *Clarity should be made on how the PM System could be used effectively in the conduct of EPMRs.*

- *Formulation of a rating system for EPMRs and conduct of a lessons learned exercise every five years would be useful to further strengthen EPMRs.*
- *ExCo recommends a modified Option 2 in the CGIAR Secretariat's commentary on the process of CGIAR handling of EPMR reports, with the following additions:*
 - 1) *All EPMR reports should be sent to CGIAR Membership including those not requiring full discussion at AGM as determined by ExCo.*
 - 2) *Centers should also be given the option to request an EPMR report be discussed at AGM.*
 - 3) *ExCo should recommend discussion of a particular EPMR at AGM, if ExCo feels the EPMR contains either positive or negative lessons for the System.*
- *The CGIAR Secretariat was requested to revise the option to include these additions for discussion at AGM07.*