



Towards Development Challenges for the CGIAR

**A Discussion Paper from
the Alliance of CGIAR Centers**



About this document

This paper represents the collective view of the Alliance of Centers supported by the CGIAR. We offer this as a contribution to the debate on the future vision for the system that forms part of the current change process.

The bottom billion

The international community has highlighted the plight of the world's bottom billion and the Millennium Development Goals reflect a commitment to make measurable improvements in their lives. Sadly, the latest global food outlook by IFPRI¹ concludes that many of the poorest and hungriest remain left behind, despite policies and action that aim to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The stark reality is that, even if we meet the first goal of halving poverty and hunger by 2015, it will still leave at least 800 million people in poverty and 600 million will still be hungry.

The 2008 World Development Report² spells out the key role that rural development and agriculture can play in meeting the Millennium Goals and explains how the problems and context for development differs among regions. Similarly, the FAO's 2006 State of Food Insecurity Report³ cites agricultural growth as critical for reducing hunger. It points out that some 75 percent of the poor in developing countries live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, either directly or indirectly. Around 900 million rural people in the developing world are living on less than \$1 a day. In the poorest of countries, agricultural growth is the driving force of the rural economy and is crucial for income and employment generation. Notwithstanding regional differences, poverty and hunger remain as linked fundamental challenges that underpin under-development in the developing world. They are predominant in both rural and urban areas, and are intimately linked to environmental degradation.

The Partnership for Development

Meeting the MDGs requires contributions from many actors and disciplines. To be effective these must coordinate at local, national, regional and global levels. Here, agricultural research for development plays a critical role.

There is today, an even greater need for a scientific breakthrough in agriculture and food production for the world's population. The sustainable management of the world's natural resource pool and the environmental health of the planet have grown bleaker; human populations and mouths to feed have grown and continue to grow. The protectionism that characterized the 1970's has been replaced by much more open, globalized, economies with trade and markets rather than production driving agricultural development. And new challenges such as widening rural-urban income disparities, expanding demand for food, uncertainty about future food prices, competition for use of food as bio-energy, increasing land and water scarcity, HIV/AIDS and Climate Change have emerged.

We now find ourselves in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment for rural and agricultural development - an environment in which the role of, and scope for, contributions by science and innovation has increased. In 1996 the CGIAR represented 4% of global agricultural research, a contribution that has dwindled in recent years. For the CGIAR to play its part in delivering what science and innovation has to offer, it needs a broad-based cross-disciplinary research focus underpinned by innovative partnerships with other strategic parties. The CGIAR also needs to reassess and re-define how it can best use its resources in combination with those of other parties to achieve development outcomes.

These changes and challenges demand that we clarify the future role of the IARCs on the development landscape. Recent debates on the place the IARCs should occupy on the research to development continuum reflect this need. To move forward effectively the IARCs must articulate a position that is clear and simple. They must answer the basic question of how they will help address the development challenges of the day and how they will develop and maintain productive partnerships with the many other players that now occupy the development landscape.

A sensible starting point for achieving such clarity is a clear statement of which development challenges we intend to focus on. This paper offers our thoughts on this issue. The fact of millions of people who are poor and hungry explains why we must act. The proposed

¹IFPRI 2007 The World Food Situation: New Driving Forces and Required Actions

²The 2008 World Development Report, World Bank, Washington DC

³FAO 2006 State of Food Insecurity Report, FAO, Rome.

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set of development challenges outlined in this paper explains what we should focus on to maximize our impact to help achieve the Millennium Goals. Having agreed these focal areas we then decide how best to organize both within the CGIAR system and with our external partners to meet our chosen targets. We must also focus on influencing the agendas of others to help ensure well targeted investments to meet these development challenges.

What we should focus on: The Development Challenges

Science of the 21st century needs to help meet society's needs and goals in ways that are environmentally sustainable in the long-term. Taking agricultural research as its starting point, the CGIAR must focus on creating and supporting the application of knowledge to achieve this end. To make the most of its investment, it must make strategic choices on where to focus and how to adapt. The over-arching criteria for such choices are 1. They should make best use of our competencies, capacities and potential, 2. They should be the areas where our effort is most likely to have impact, given our competencies and potential 3. They should be consistent with and reflect

the wider global development agenda and goals. Based on these criteria we propose the following overarching goal for our future engagement:

"To achieve sustainable food security, reduce poverty and improve health through agriculture and natural resources."

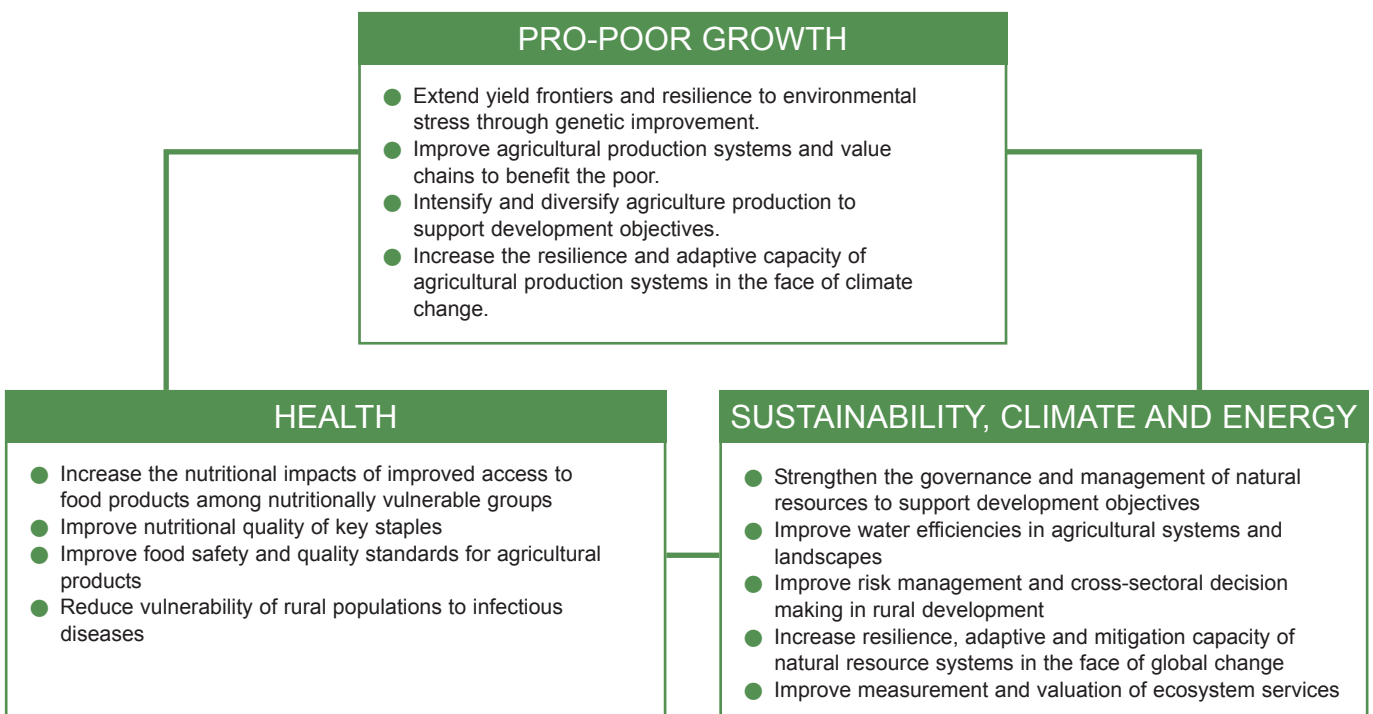
Beneath this headline we offer three inter-linked Development Challenges for consideration by the Change Management Team⁴. These are:

Pro-poor growth: Improve the productivity and the sustainability of developing country agriculture and the food system

Sustainability, climate and energy: Improve the management of natural resources and environmental services for enhancing livelihoods and respond and adapt to climate change and energy scarcity

Health: Improve health and nutrition and reduce the spread of infectious and chronic diseases

The figure below provides examples of the research agenda that should fall underneath each. It is not



⁴NOTE: No doubt the Development Challenge titles could be formulated in various ways that would have greater clarity and meaning for some readers. However, since this is a contribution to stimulate further debate, agonizing over precise wording is not fruitful, especially because the content beneath these headlines remains to be further specified through well structured consultative processes. The headline titles are best arrived at through iterative re-wording as the detail on content is agreed.

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possible in the space available to provide a comprehensive rationale for these choices, but they emerge from a consultative process among Alliance members. They draw on insights and analyses from work commissioned by the Alliance and from work undertaken to support strategic planning in individual centers.

Turning research outcomes into development impacts

A problem the CGIAR faces is that it is difficult to understand the relationships among the multitude of institutions, actors and policies that influence development outcomes. As a result, preferences for particular research investments are advanced independently of the broader more complex context from which development outcomes and impacts emerge. We favour the Development Challenge because it offers a way to build a more complete and integrated picture of both the desired outcomes and impacts and the inter-connected research and other inputs needed to achieve them.

In other domains "road mapping" approaches are used to support such integration. These lay out explicitly the multiple pathways to impact and relationships between them⁵. Developing such "Impact Roadmaps" (akin to impact pathways) for the Development Challenges would be an important next step that would enable an open and knowledgeable debate about the roles of various players within the CG system and beyond. Importantly, this approach can help bring together the different pieces of the puzzle held by 15 individual Centers and their partners and integrate them into a coherent whole.

Given the complexity of delivering development outcomes, one of the strengths of this approach is its flexibility and usefulness in support of both informed public discourse and decision making. In particular, it can better clarify the multiple roles of CG Centers in the wider innovation system. To maximize impact, they must act, not only as partners in knowledge generation, but as relationship and institution builders, as advocates for wise investment and as catalysts for change.

Potential for impact

The justification for our focus must ultimately lie in its potential for impact. What scale of impact could we imagine from organizing ourselves around these

Development Challenges? We suspect it is very large, but we cannot answer with any authority just yet. It is an important question that we must address as we move forward. And we have been challenged to do so:

"Is anyone working on the agricultural and natural resource equivalent of DALYs [Daily Disability Adjusted Life Years] - something that would not only measure the benefit of increased kilos of food, but also estimate the value of public bad avoided, hunger eliminated, children not going blind, women empowered, families lifted over the poverty line, topsoil not clogging up the rivers, natural resource conflicts avoided, families not displaced by flooding or livelihoods improved. Surely with all our combined skill it would be worth a try - anything would be better than watching a senior manager's eyes glaze over as you try and explain the virtues of (for the umpteenth time) the 40 - 80% rate of return to agricultural research projects."

Wadsworth, J. Mobilising Financial Resources for Science, CGIAR Science Forum, Beijing 4th December 2007

Concluding comments

A coherent effort to address these Development Challenges should make a difference to the poor at the global scale. We believe that by explaining our agenda as a set of linked development challenges we will more effectively galvanize action, alignment and co-investment around the major issues that will lead to impact.

Casting action in the context of Development Challenges keeps discussion focused on the problems we need to solve. This is subtly, but importantly, different from a discussion that starts from asking how our research can contribute to impact. It helps us better contemplate changes in our research focus, alternative approaches for achieving impact, including new and better partnerships. It will also help us better identify better institutional arrangements to plan, implement and oversee such a joint agenda.

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⁵Garfinkel M.S., Sarewitz, D. and Porter, A.L. (2006) A Societal Outcomes Map for Health Research Policy. American Journal of Public Health, 96, 441-446.