

What is the Alliance?



The Alliance is a strategic coalition of the 15 Centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). The aim of the Alliance, formed in 2006, is to enhance the benefits of research for the poor through stronger collective action among Centers and their partners, leading to more effective use of research resources.

What does it do?

The CGIAR invests about US\$500 million per year in research carried out by 2,000 scientists working in 100 countries. The Alliance adds value to their efforts by:

- Facilitating and implementing collective action on major issues
- Providing one entry point for collective action
- Enabling Centers to speak and negotiate authoritatively on central concerns
- Promoting institutional reforms
- Facilitating dialogue between Centers and the CGIAR's 64 Members
- Fostering a collaborative spirit among Centers
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How is it organized?

The Alliance relies on a **board** for oversight; on an **executive** to take decisions for implementation by the Centers, with facilitation from a **chief alliance officer**; and on a **deputy executive**, consisting of a science and a finance committee, to support the implementation of joint initiatives.

What has it accomplished?

The Alliance has generated important benefits for the Centers as well as their partners and other stakeholders, better enabling researchers to tackle complex challenges, making programs more effective, getting action on joint decisions more efficiently and introducing more consistent policies. Following are brief descriptions of key collective initiatives and their outcomes.

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Speaking with one voice: Over the last year or so, the Alliance has produced key papers in close collaboration with others, including a collective vision and proposal for strengthening the CGIAR (called The Way Forward) and a statement of key development challenges over the next decade.

Regional research plans: Plans for collective action in sub-Saharan Africa - one for the eastern and southern regions and another for central and West Africa - have taken shape, featuring flagship projects that address key challenges, such as the need to consolidate research on integrated natural resource management.

CGIAR Challenge Programs: Drawing on lessons learned from current programs, the Alliance coordinated the development of proposals for three new ones. The Alliance played a particularly active role in mobilizing a new partnership with the international scientific community dealing with global environmental change and in co-designing the Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security Challenge Program, which has been approved by the CGIAR's Science Council and Executive Council.

Confronting global food price inflation: In consultation with the Science Council and CGIAR Secretariat, the Alliance produced a plan of action for confronting the global food price crisis, which was presented at a high-level conference organized by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome in June 2008.

Best-bet technologies for African farmers: In collaboration with the World Bank, the Alliance coordinated with Centers the preparation of handy profiles on nearly 50 best-bet technologies that show much promise for boosting agricultural productivity in sub-Saharan Africa.

Climate change initiative: In preparation for the 13th Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, held in Bali, Indonesia in December 2007, the Alliance prepared a description of ongoing Center research that is highly relevant to climate change adaptation and mitigation. This document was used in the launch of an ambitious climate change initiative by the CGIAR chair.

Platforms for collective action: The Alliance is actively engaged in supporting various platforms for collaborative work on diverse themes, including capacity strengthening, bioenergy, agriculture and

health, and the multiple issues addressed by the CGIAR System-Wide and Ecoregional Programs.

Strengthening institutional collaboration: The Alliance is strengthening collaboration with FAO in numerous areas, including climate change, genetic resources (under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture), technology dissemination and others.

Private sector engagement: With the CGIAR Private Sector Committee, the Alliance is implementing a program of scientific exchanges between Centers and private companies, with a view to building trust between them and fostering partnerships that can make research for development more effective.

Collaboration with regional fora: The Alliance has taken steps to strengthen ties with key regional fora by obtaining endorsement of regional research plans from the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and by agreeing to the Montevideo Declaration 2008 of the Forum for Agricultural Research and Development in the Americas (FORAGRO).

CGIAR reform

The Alliance has played a central role in the far-reaching Change Management Initiative begun by the CGIAR last year, contributing to the analysis of alternative governance models and setting out principles to guide the reform process. The proposal that has resulted from this initiative calls for strengthening of the Alliance through the creation of a new legal entity referred to as the Consortium of Centers. The Alliance is thoroughly committed to the reform process and will take the lead during the coming year to bring the Consortium into being. This will entail selecting external, professional board members, drafting a constitution and devising a strategy and framework for the development of mega-programs in close collaboration with partners, and in consultation with donors and an Independent Science and Partnership Committee.

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