

CGIAR Alliance Office

Newsletter - June 2005

As Chairs of the Centers' Committees (the Committee of Board Chairs and Alliance Executive – formerly the Center Directors Committee), we have observed that the work the Centers do together, including through the System Office units, is growing exponentially in quantum importance and impact, although it does not yet receive the same profile as that which is reported directly by the Centers themselves. We therefore would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the impacts of the ongoing collaborations.

Professor A. Uzo Mokwunye
Chair, Committee of Board Chairs

Dr William D Dar
Chair, Alliance Executive

An Alliance to improve the Centers collective effectiveness in the CGIAR

As reported to all Members at AGM04 and the recent ExCo8 meetings, good progress is being made in forming an Alliance of the 15 Future Harvest Centers of the CGIAR – an Alliance whose task is to strengthen the coherence of the CGIAR System by enhancing Centers' collective action to contribute to the ongoing CGIAR reform programs.

Substantive progress has occurred in creating mechanisms to effectively govern all aspects of collective action.

- The Center Directors-General are now working together as the Alliance Executive.
- The Center Board Chairs are developing the basis for constituting themselves as an Alliance Board to govern the Centers' collective action.
- An Alliance Charter is in draft form, complementing the form of the new CGIAR Charter and covering all important aspects of governance of cross-Center activities including decision-making procedures, a set of guiding principles for collective action, and enforcement modalities.
- On specific actions, the Alliance has made substantial progress on the Sub Saharan Africa 'Quick Wins' it identified in July 2004. Actions such as the sub-regional Medium Term Plans (MTPs) for East and Southern Africa and for Western and Central Africa were endorsed by the eighth meeting of the Executive Council in its response to the recommendations of the Sub Saharan Africa Task Forces. Under the guidance of the Executive Council, the Centers are accelerating development of the MTPs and will be holding a high level consultation with FARA, Sub-Regional Organizations, and NARS in Entebbe, Uganda, on 8 June, 2005.
- The Alliance is in discussion with IFAD, a co-sponsor of the CGIAR, over the possibility of locating the Future Harvest Alliance Office, a unit of the CGIAR System Office and the support office for the Alliance, at its Rome headquarters.

Through these definitive and ongoing actions, the Alliance affirms the willingness of the Centers to achieve needed governance reform, while acknowledging continued reforms are still required to develop highly efficient and effective processes.

Board Orientation Programs attract strong interest among Trustees

Following the two successful CGIAR Board Orientation programs held in 2004, an additional four programs have been held to date in 2005 – two in February at ILRI's Ethiopian campus and two at WorldFish Center in Penang. To date, 88 Board members from all 15 Centers have attended. The programs, with the support of the Secretariat, are being led by the Committee of Board Chairs and the teaching faculty includes experienced CGIAR-hands and experts from the Institute of Directors of the UK. A primary goal of the program is the willingness to be prepared to identify the need for and lead change,

therefore, the CBC and the CGIAR Secretariat will be conducting a high-level Stripe Review of the Governance of CGIAR Boards of Trustees, commencing in late 2005.

World Bank's support for System Wide and Ecoregional Programs Judged a Success

In January, 2005, the Centers compiled an achievements report and a critical assessment of the 10 System Wide and Ecoregional Programs that received strategic World Bank support in 2002-2004. The report focused on the work of the 10 programs and provided background information on all System Wide and Ecoregional Programs. A full copy of the assessment is available from the FHAO (fhao@cgiar.org).

The assessment concluded that the Bank's funding was very successful, with the funds having leveraged many times their total in other donor funds. The Bank's investment strengthened a set of important System Wide Programs that would not necessarily have received the same attention from Centers and other donors if the Bank's equivalent funds had gone directly into the Centers' unrestricted core. The leverage of the strengthened programs increased, evidenced by the fact that most of programs increased their partnerships inside and outside the CGIAR. Several programs are now co-owned by regional organizations. Thus, the Bank's decision to strengthen the System Wide Programs also strengthened the CGIAR as a System. The assessment revealed that the programs were very well connected to other international and CGIAR initiatives, many of which are also supported by the World Bank. Several of the programs supported the implementation of the Challenge Programs.

Millennium Assessment Synthesis Report Issues Stark Warning

On March 23, 2005 the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment released its major Synthesis Report of the State of the World's Ecosystems. The CGIAR was a sponsoring member of the Millennium Assessment and was represented on the Board by Dr. Adel El-Beltagy on behalf of all the Centers. Many Centers' staff contributed as lead and contributing authors and reviewers. The WorldFish Center was host to the main technical support unit of the Assessment. The Report gave ' a stark warning' that 'human activity is putting such strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted'. The report is available on: <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/>

Collaboration across System Office Units on ICT-KM

The System Office (SO) units were established to support specialist collective needs of the CGIAR System, including the Centers. The ICT-KM Program has recently shown how much can be gained by teaming with the expertise and experience in other SO units. In one exercise, ICT-KM built on the success of the e-conferences organized by the Gender & Diversity Program and had an interactive online discussion forum (28 February to 11 March) hosted by G&D's WebCrossing. ICT-KM is documenting the lessons learned from this e-conference. Together with G&D, it will build on the useful documentation already collected by G&D to capture the steps and guidelines for an e-conference using WebCrossing. This document will be made publicly available. In a second example, the Program, in collaboration with the Internal Audit Unit, is restructuring the Disaster Resilience and Data Preservation Project of the ICT-KM 2004 Investment Plan.

Centers Look to Greater Engagement with the Private Sector

Along with the CGIAR Secretariat, the Centers are working with the Private Sector Committee (PSC) as a conduit to the private sector. At the May 2005 meetings of the CBC and the Alliance Executive at WorldFish in Penang, the Alliance approved the "Guidelines for Collaboration with the Private Sector" to be used by all Centers.

With the PSC and the Secretariat, the Centers launched the Science and Know How Exchange Program (SKEP) between Centers and certain companies and are very close to signing the formal Guiding

Regulations for the exchanges. Soon after the signing, we expect that the first exchange will be announced and additional exchanges developed.

The PSC, Secretariat and the Centers are holding a CGIAR-PS high level conference on 29-30 September, 2005 in Washington, D.C. This conference will facilitate dialogue on how the Centers and the Private Sector can engage productively to further the CGIAR mission, having due regard to the public goods nature of the Centers' mandates including liabilities, intellectual property and confidentiality matters. It will involve high level private sector parties and senior Center staff, including several Directors General, and will be preceded by a Centers research workshop on Public Private Partnerships hosted by IFPRI.

Important Genetic Resources Policy Documents Approved

In May, the Alliance Committees considered and approved two key documents prepared by the Centers and the Genetic Resources Policy Committee of the CGIAR for use by Centers managing genebanks with in-trust germplasm collections.

First, the AE and the CBC approved the document covering 'Agreements Between Governing Body and the IARCs and Other Relevant International Institutions' and authorized the Directors General whose Centers have genebanks to sign on behalf of their Centers, following each Boards approval. The aim is to have the Centers working under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Agriculture arrangements as soon as the Treaty receives final approval (expected in February, 2006). This will replace the former agreements signed by the Centers in 1994 with the FAO through the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources.

Second, the Committees approved the document on 'Guiding Principles for the Development of Future Harvest Centres' Policies to Address the Possibility of Unintentional Presence of Transgenes in Ex Situ Collections' as the Alliance guiding principles and requested that relevant Centers then prepare procedures for their specific crops. This policy is a critical document and can be found on the Centers' websites for further information.

This e-news has been prepared by the *Future Harvest Alliance Office, a unit of the CGIAR System Office*