

CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

SCIENCE COUNCIL

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Report to ExCo-9 (October 2005)
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I am pleased to report that we have just concluded our Fourth Meeting of the Council and that we have made significant progress in every one of our four main areas of work (Priorities and Strategies, Monitoring and Evaluation, Impact Assessment and Mobilizing Science). Some notable achievements are highlighted below. The SC Workplan 2006-2007 being also considered at this meeting (under Item 3.c) presents details for all planned actions by the SC so I refer to that document for such activities.

Priorities and Strategies

A set of 20 *CGIAR System Research Priorities* focusing on problems for which the CGIAR is likely to have the greatest impact has been identified and submitted for your consideration at ExCo-8 (May 2005). Since last May we have received several comments from Members and have made changes in the Priorities document, which is being considered as an agenda item at this meeting (Item 3.a). We believe that this major CGIAR effort should be finalized after all the work done in consultation with researchers, CDC, CBC, NARS, CG Members and many others. As soon as the new priorities are approved by the CGIAR, the Centers will begin a 3-year process of adjusting their research portfolio to reflect the system priorities and reflect these adjustments in their MTPs beginning with those to be prepared by June 2006. I am pleased to report that some Centers have already started to do so in this year's MTP submission.

Other strategic studies being conducted by the SC include: development of a strategy for Genomics Research in the CGIAR, defining opportunities for handling Intellectual Property in the context of International Public Good research, Biosafety, Animal and Fish Genetic Resources, and Ethics and CGIAR Research.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Following the new approach to M&E of CGIAR Centers focusing on a more streamlined, cost-effective approach to Center-level monitoring and evaluation discussed at ExCo-8 several *external reviews* are currently underway:

- Report from the external review of the SWP on Alternatives to Slash and Burn recently completed was considered by the Council at SC4 and it is an agenda item at this meeting (under Item 3.c). The review concludes that ASB has been highly relevant to the CGIAR's core mission and is pursuing work well aligned with the proposed CGIAR System Research Priorities for 2005-2015. ASB has created the world's pre-eminent system for use-driven, comparative scientific investigation of human-environment interactions at the forest margin across the pan tropic domain. Citation analysis and other objective measures show that ASB results are treated as influential global public goods by research communities specializing in the ASB domain around the world. Looking to the future, the Panel concluded that the capacity created by ASB could make a unique contribution to

CGIAR goals on research on integrated land, water and forest management at landscape level.

- A brief follow up review of IRRI upland rice research activities as requested by AGM04 is being organized and will be finished in early 2006.
- A follow up review of CIMMYT EPMR as approved at ExCo-8 is being organized to be conducted by mid 2006.
- A follow up review of the SSA CP as approved at AGM04 will be organized in the first semester of 2006.
- ICRAF, CIFOR and WorldFish Center EPMRs are underway and will be considered by the SC in April 2006, at ExCo-10 (May 2006) and at AGM06.
- Planning for four more Center EPMRs (ILRI, IWMI, ICARDA and CIAT) to be implemented in 2006/07 is now beginning.

Based on the lessons learned during the 2005 cycle of *Medium Term Plan review* (ExCo-9 Item 3.b), the SC will coordinate in collaboration with Centers and the CG Secretariat the improvement of guidelines for preparation of MTPs, specifically focusing on a better definition of research output targets.

During the pilot phase of the *performance measurement* (PM) system, the Council, through a task force involving members of SPME and SPIA and SC Secretariat staff, contributed to drawing lessons on PM system elements (output, outcome, impact, quality of research staff, and quality and relevance of programs). The SC has submitted recommendations for implementing PM in 2006.

Impact Assessment

Seven completed Center case studies that document the *impact of NRM research* in the CGIAR were presented at a joint SPIA-iNRM workshop in June 2005 at IRRI. The case study reports have been externally peer-reviewed, are now undergoing revision and, along with a methodology and SPIA overview chapters, will be published in early 2006 by CABI in a book entitled *Impact from CGIAR Research on NRM*. Highlights of specific case study results, e.g., reduced tillage, integrated aquaculture-agriculture, agro-forestry, irrigation management transfer and others, will be presented at AGM05.

The *Training Evaluation and Impact Assessment* has finished all field visits and a final report is being prepared and is expected by January 2006. The field study has revealed a very large scope for training and learning associated with CGIAR activities and partnerships although despite both enthusiasm and capability to train and enhance learning the incentives in Centers were often missing. The study will provide an analysis of the training components of research including where investments have been best placed and an assessment of the added value.

A study to better understand the *Demands and Uses for Impact-Related Information among Donors* has been completed involving an email survey, follow-up telephone interviews and AGM luncheon session. This study examined issues related to how *ex-post* impact assessments actually inform perceptions of past research impacts and what influence these have on donor

investment decisions. It also provided information on how study results can be used more effectively, e.g., the need for short (glossy) briefs describing in reader-friendly language the main results, with appropriate references.

The first phase of the *Impact of Agricultural Research in Sub-Saharan Africa* study has commenced in 2005 and a rigorous and comprehensive collection, synthesis and assessment is underway of the available evidence on the impacts of new technologies and improved policies from CGIAR and partner agricultural research in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mobilizing Science

A *Survey of CGIAR Center's on-going scientific collaboration* was conducted in 2004-05 in order to discover where SC might offer some assistance to the Centers in identifying good collaboration practices. The SPMS Survey has created a pool of useful information on CGIAR collaborations. We now have a good description of the CGIAR collaboration in terms of the number, location and type of partners. We also know more about the reasons for collaboration (access to expertise and resources, field presence and contacts, dissemination of information and technologies) and how collaborations contribute to the Centers' successful performance (enhanced funding, capacity and networking). Although the CGIAR system has fewer collaborators in the North compared to its high number of partners in the South, collaboration with ARIs and Northern Universities is highly relevant since it provides the Centers with access to critical disciplinary expertise that is often supplementary to the expertise available at the Center. To develop a better understanding of the role partnerships play in achieving CGIAR goals further work should now focus on addressing the following issues: What is the definition of a CGIAR partner? Can typologies help to define the nature of partnerships according to the different activities they undertake? To what extent have the thousands of collaborations identified by the survey contributed to 'mobilizing science' in the CGIAR and how can such partnerships be further encouraged in future?

The preparation of *Science for Agricultural Development 2005*, a new Council-led publication, is underway and expected to be launched at AGM05. The aim of the publication is to enhance knowledge about recent trends, current status and emerging issues related to global agricultural research. It is also intended that it will help shape global perspectives and priorities about agricultural science and technology as well as mobilize the scientific community to contribute to the CGIAR mandate. The chapters will include an introduction with a discussion on the potential contribution of agriculture to the MDGs, followed by chapters on the impact of research on agricultural development with lessons to date, scientific opportunities and the potential for success including the potential of genomics, trends in investment in research and finally a discussion on the implications of the analysis including what the trends mean for agricultural development. This will be the first of the proposed biennial series to be produced by the Science Council with the next report scheduled in the workplan for 2007.

A one-day *Science Forum 2005* within the CGIAR AGM05 to discuss the role scientific research can play in supporting development and poverty reduction with a focus on the new CGIAR priorities is under preparation. The SC and the CGIAR Secretariats have jointly organized five

parallel sessions on the theme *CGIAR Priorities: Science for the Poor*. Each session will consist of an expert presentation on a component of the priority area relevant to the theme of *Science for the Poor* followed by panel comments and an open discussion. The five expert presentations will be on conservation of indigenous livestock; genetic enhancement of selected species to increase income generation; increasing income from fruit and vegetable production; integrated land, water and forest management at landscape level; and improving research and development options to reduce rural poverty and vulnerability. A further two parallel sessions have also been organized on the theme of *Strengthening research-for-development capacities*. These sessions will be on *Local, regional and global science capacity* and *Embedding research in a system of innovation*. A session is also being organized under this theme on *Farmers as research and technology transfer partners*.

Science Council Secretariat

The new management and the implementation of a new Staffing Plan are gradually strengthening the Secretariat. However, the combination of unfilled professional staff positions during the recent past and the extended sick leave of a Senior Officer during 2004 and 2005 have somewhat slowed down the implementation of the 2004-2005 approved workplan. In addition, the slow process of redeploying two administrative staff within FAO combined with the extended sick leave of a G-5 level administrative assistant during most of 2005 have created negative budget and managerial consequences (a full description of the SC Secretariat staffing is available under agenda Item 3.c at this meeting, *SC Workplan & Budget 2006-07*).

The Science Council Secretariat is also collaborating with the other units of the System Office. Current and forthcoming activities include support to the ICT/KM2 Global Public Goods from Data to Food programme, CGIAR Project Manager Interface to access project information across the CGIAR, investment plan for an Electronic Natural Resources Information Center, a Centers Alliance Collaboration website and a Communication strategy for the Science Council.

Conclusion

While the above five elements have been reported separately, I would like to emphasize the interdependent nature of many of these and other SC activities and the fact that all of these important actions should come together to help increase the impact of the CGIAR. A number of activities will be reported as they appear in the ExCo agenda.

Let me finish by thanking you again for your continued support to the Science Council.