



Fund

## **Fund Council**

**6<sup>th</sup> Meeting (FC6)—Rome, Italy**

**November 8-9, 2011**

### **Consultants' Note of Submission**

(Working Document - For Discussion Only)

*Document presented for Agenda Item 14:  
CGIAR Policy for Independent External Evaluation*

*Submitted by:*

Consultants - John Markie and Julia Compton

Note of Submission:

**Draft - CGIAR Policy for Independent External Evaluation  
(Independent Evaluation Arrangement - IEA)**  
(for consideration of the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the CGIAR Fund Council Rome 8-9 November 2011)

John Markie and Julia Compton - Consultants

In submitting the attached Policy for the consideration of the Fund Council, the consultants wish to thank all those who contributed to its development, in the reference group, the Centers, the Consortium Board and the Fund Council, as well as the many others who were consulted and provided valuable advice.

Any policy should be implementable, seek to reflect good practice and provide insofar as possible for the needs of all key stakeholders, as well as serving the needs of the primary stakeholder, in this case the Fund Council. Implementability and buy-in is a key consideration when, as in the CGIAR, there is not the unitary structure found in single organizations. In this context, we wish to draw the Fund Council's attention to a number of concerns:

1. **Independent evaluations commissioned by the CRPs, the building blocks of overall CRP evaluation:** Following further consultation with the CRP and Lead Center managements, it has become clear that the framework for developing the sample base for CRP evaluations as a whole cannot always be undertaken in the way envisaged in the first draft of the Policy. Not all the current CRPs have an elaborated monitoring and evaluation framework but several do, although these have been developed separately without common concepts or standards. Several CRPs have emphasised that they intend to maintain these largely internal systems, which they feel better satisfy their decision making and learning needs than would external independent evaluations commissioned by them of a representative sample of activities within the CRP. It should be noted however that internal CGIAR evaluation in the past has been found by many observers, including the recent system wide review, to be of mixed quality and not always extensively used. The proposed overall independent external evaluation of CRPs on a six-year cycle is based to the maximum extent possible on the meta-analysis of a representative sample of independently verified evaluative evidence from the CRPs.
2. With this in mind, the intention of the Policy is to move towards common practice for independent evaluation in the CGIAR for the next cycle of CRPs. The ultimate objective is for CRPs to manage quality evaluation of CRPs that fulfils their own internal management needs, those of key partners and in particular the needs of the Fund Council and Consortium. For the current cycle of CRPs, a twin track system will be applied to achieve the required body of reliable evaluative evidence, making the maximum possible use of other evaluative, peer review, monitoring and audit information, etc. which has been generated for the CRP:
  - a. For those CRPs which accept to apply IEA Standards, independent evaluation of a representative sample of CRP work will be commissioned by the CRP management. These sample evaluations will provide the main building blocks for the evaluation of CRPs as a whole. The sample evaluation coverage will be agreed in a dialogue with the IEA Director

and included in the consolidated evaluation work plan to best serve the decision making and lesson learning needs of researchers, research managers and partners, while also providing the sample for the overall evaluation of the CRP. They should also meet the needs of any donors who continue to require evaluation information on their specific project contributions. The basis of sampling of the CRP for purposes of evaluation will be agreed in the planning process and adjusted if necessary during implementation. It could be by objective, geographical area, type of technology, etc. The policy is to ensure adequacy of sample coverage, usefulness to managers and non-duplication in such evaluations.

- b. For those CRPs maintaining their own internal evaluation systems for this cycle and not commissioning independent evaluations of a representative sample of work in conformity with IEA standards, the maximum use will be made of the information generated by those systems for the overall evaluation of the CRP. A minimum of essential additional studies will also be commissioned by the IEA (budgeted against the CRP) to provide the independent representative sample information base for the evaluation of the CRP as a whole. This will be done flexibly and the extent of the additional work, which may be verified through a preparatory study, will be dependent upon the information available from CRPs internal systems. Management of the additional preparatory studies, which will feed into the evaluation for the CRP as a whole, will be undertaken by the IEA office.
3. **Community of Evaluation Practice:** If there is not to be much unproductive expenditure on evaluation and the Policy is to be successfully implemented, the development of a strong Community of Practice, as emphasised by many Centers, is fundamental and needs to be adequately resourced. In view of the previous indications given by the Fund Council, the Policy provides no financial incentive to CRPs through cost-sharing with the IEA on evaluations. Over and above the development of standards for independent evaluation, the IEA office plays very little role in verifying the quality of terms of reference and providing advice to CRPs in conducting evaluations for CRP sampling. It has no significant role in quality assurance and reporting (commonly part of the terms of reference of evaluation offices). The Community of Evaluation Practice will allow: for mutual agreement and understanding to develop on evaluation standards; for CRPs to obtain technical support from others in developing their internal evaluation capacity where this is currently lacking; and for feed-back from others in a network.
4. **Staffing of the IEA office:** The work of the IEA office necessitates adequate staffing. The office is required to provide for the integrated independent evaluation system, including evaluation work planning, developing sound terms of reference through a consultation process, for the evaluations which it then commissions. It will facilitate the community of practice and publicise evaluation findings for the benefit of all. It will develop the biennial evaluation report which draws together wider judgements from evaluations on CGIAR value added and lessons for the future in the global research and development context (a point emphasised by the ISPC). The minimum staffing requirement has been calculated by the consultants as the Director and three professional staff, including a facilitator for the Community of Practice. In purely practical terms, it is unlikely that the quality of Director required could be attracted in the absence of adequate staffing and resources to undertake the work.

5. **Evaluations of specific questions and themes:** Some members of the Fund Council have indicated that, at least for the immediate future, they wish the provision to be removed from the Policy of the possible evaluation of specific questions, issues and themes. The Policy makes it clear that these are not generally a priority, must meet a widespread demand and have a clear target audience. Demand driven evaluation does have a place, and deletion of this provision would rule out, for example, assigning responsibility to the IEA for the already programmed interim review of the implementation and results of the CGIAR Reform and any urgent issue which the Fund Council required to be evaluated. We have therefore kept this provision in the Policy (section 4.7).

**6. Approval of the Policy and the Timing of Future Actions:**

- a. It is now unlikely that the IEA Director can be in post until the second half of 2012 and the office fully operational before the end of that year. Agreement, if only on an interim basis of the Policy, will provide a clear basis for the recruitment of the IEA Director and establishment of the office. The Consultants have submitted to the Fund Council Office a proposed recruitment process, job description and vacancy announcement and advertisement for the Director IEA.
- b. It is now essential for all CRPs to fully elaborate their evaluation and their monitoring frameworks.
- c. Draft independent evaluation standards have been developed by the consultants and a start has been made on guidance materials. However, further development of these, consultation and finalisation is dependent on Fund Council decisions on basic issues in the Policy. It is requested that the FC extends the term, but not the cost, of the consultancy assignment into next year to facilitate this task.
- d. Immediately on the approval of the Policy, the Consortium and Centers will need a short summary of its immediate action implications, especially for CRPs. The consultants would propose to draft such a summary and provide it to the Consortium.