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CRP 4 Consortium Board Approval Letter

(Working Document - For Discussion Only)

*Document presented for Agenda Item 10:
CRP 4 - Agriculture for Nutrition and Health*

Submitted by:

IFPRI



**Consortium Board approval letter for CRP4
“Agriculture for Improved Nutrition and Health”**

May 19, 2011

Dear Inger,

The Consortium Board (CB) of the CGIAR has the pleasure to submit to the Fund Council, for its consideration and approval, the CGIAR Research Programme (CRP) 4, entitled “Agriculture for Improved Nutrition and Health”.

Two urgent needs for the food insecure and for populations affected by agricultural intensification in the developing world are better access to more nutritious and healthy food and better control of the health risks of agricultural intensification. CRP 4 focuses on increasing access by the poor to better food safety, water quality and control of zoonotic, occupational and emerging diseases. These will, in turn, bring about a more sustainable form of agricultural intensification than the one prevailing today. CRP 4 has established linkages and partnerships with two new communities. These are the nutrition community (at a scale not reached before), and the health community. These partnerships are essential for the CRP to adopt a multisectoral approach. Multisectoral approaches, in turn, have been recognized as the most promising to strengthen the role of agriculture in improving human nutrition and health through better access to more nutritious and diversified diets and reducing the potentially negative effects of agricultural intensification.

CRP 4 thus plays a very strategic and unique role in the portfolio of CRPs. We know that producing more food is not sufficient to successfully address the malnutrition and health risks to which poor and vulnerable people are exposed. This CRP addresses these challenging issues through innovative approaches and partnerships. The CB considers that it is very important for the CGIAR to have a CRP that effectively fosters the emergence of a system for agriculture, health and nutrition operating at the intersection of these previously unconnected sectors. Persistent hunger and nutritional deficiencies have a direct impact across Millennium Development Goal targets, reducing child and maternal health, increasing the impact of infectious diseases and educational under-attainment, and contribute to life-long reduction in economic productivity.

The CB acknowledges the great effort made by CRP4 proponents in this revised version dated May 6, 2011 to address the comments provided by the CB and those provided by the four external reviewers (including one on Gender) to the first submission of September 2010.



The starting point for CRP4 is that agricultural practices, interventions, and policies can be better adapted and redesigned to maximize health and nutrition benefits and to reduce health risks. This is fully in keeping with the vision expressed in the CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework. CRP4 works across disciplines and sectors, and does so in an innovative manner. Following comments from the CB, the proponents have revised the conceptual framework of the CRP to explicitly emphasize how the different components fit into the overall strategic focus of the programme. The CB had also asked the proponents to develop objectives at CRP level, as only the components had objectives in the previous version. The proponents have added CRP level objectives and a graph that depicts the overall strategic coherence of the work proposed. The Board had requested the proponents to simplify the components by focusing on fewer challenges. The work proposed in this revised version encompasses four, instead of five components, and the number of challenges to be addressed has been reduced throughout. The CB considers that the **strategic coherence and clarity of objectives are** now very satisfactory.

CRP4 has a strong **delivery focus** and its targeting shows **plausibility of impacts**. The CB had asked the proponents to define their target populations and regional priorities, and to provide more concrete impact pathways. The proponents have now explained that this CRP targets two specific populations: (1) poor, food insecure and malnourished populations; and (2) populations affected by agricultural intensification. As noted in the proposal, rapid agricultural intensification has, in many systems, been accompanied by negative environmental, nutritional, and health effects, including food-borne and zoonotic diseases. At the same time, despite the overall trend toward dynamic change and intensification in developing-country food systems, many areas have been left behind, and people in remote and marginal areas and conflict zones have been particularly disadvantaged. CRP4 will focus particularly on Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia—regions where the severity and depth of the problems, and the large number of people affected, translate to the greatest potential impact. The proponents have re-written the impact pathways section to make it more concrete. The CB is fully satisfied that these various changes have improved the robustness of the proposal.

The **quality of science** of CRP4 can now be better assessed since, although the proposal is wide ranging, it now describes main research questions and methods in each of the research components and subcomponents. The CB finds this additional text convincing. Component 1 focuses on opportunities to improve nutrition along value chains to increase the poor's access to nutritious foods. Component 2 aims to improve the availability, access, and intake of nutrient-rich, biofortified staple foods for the poor. Component 3 addresses food safety issues along the value chain, including the control of zoonotic diseases and the better management of agricultural systems to reduce the risk of human diseases. Component 4 addresses the need for integration among the agriculture, nutrition, and health sectors, at both the program and policy levels.



The **gender mainstreaming** in this proposal is highly appreciated by the CB. There are specific gender-related research questions in the relevant components. The CRP focuses on gender analysis of needs and differential exposure to risks; fostering women's participation in and benefits from agriculture, nutrition, and health programmes; empowering women and increasing their access to assets; promoting equitable intra-household food allocation and consumption for all members; ensuring gender-friendly technology and delivery systems; and building capacity.

Effective partnerships and new partnership practices will be essential for achieving the ambitious research outputs and development outcomes and impacts of this CRP. The **partnership strategy** of CRP4, which aims to create the best conditions for carrying out the research and making full use of the subsequent findings, is clear and credible. This CRP will work with enablers (policymakers and decision-makers), development implementers, value-chain actors, and research partners. CRP4 commits itself to a partnership process that incorporates strategic thinking, systematic processes with partners, innovative behaviors and resources, and implementation of best partnership performance practices.

Following a strong CB recommendation, the updated CRP4 proposal includes non-CGIAR research partners in the Planning and **Management** Committee. They will be also involved in making decisions about research directions and about allocation of funds to different activities and partners in this CRP, to better reflect the global partnership nature of CRP4. Many critics of the CGIAR reform point out that the CRPs are really CGIAR Centers' programmes, in which partners have no voice, but are sub-contracted to do part of the work. The CB therefore reiterates that is important that CRPs provide mechanisms for key partners to have a voice and to contribute to strategic decisions. An Independent Advisory Committee, composed of six members representing scientists and program development experts, will provide advice on research program performance, research priorities and focus, and management and partnership issues.

The CB requested the proponents to clarify, in the revised version, how the HarvestPlus Challenge Programme was going to be integrated in this CRP, in application of the CB's decision that all Challenge Programmes should be integrated into the CRPs. This decision implies that they do *not* continue with their own independent structure and management. The CB acknowledges that different Challenge Programmes may have to be handled differently, but it expects that clear steps are taken to mainstream all Challenge Programmes in the appropriate CRPs. The research of the **Challenge Programme HarvestPlus** has been fully integrated in CRP4, as described in the revised proposal. The CB recommends that during the first year of implementation of the CRP the governance and management structure of HarvestPlus be merged with that of the CRP, to avoid overlaps and unnecessary costs in governance and management.



The initial 3-year **budget** of CRP4 appears to be reasonable, credible and defensible, given the problem being addressed and the partnerships involved. The proponents provide in the updated proposal, upon request from the CB to justify the sums requested, additional narrative on the budget elements, especially salary and partnership costs, capital and indirect costs and shown how they compare with current CGIAR experience. The budget line items are those used across all CRPs.

The CB asked the proponents to elaborate on the **monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system** of this CRP. They redesigned the M&E plan and provided information about its implementation. Indicators for tracking and assessing achievements will be constructed according to the SMART framework—*specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound*—allowing for clear, results-based management of this CRP.

The CB confirms the importance and relevance of this CRP in the current CGIAR reform process. Designing effective means of delivering nutrient-rich foods to vulnerable groups and reducing agriculturally –related disease will contribute to the attainment of one of the four CGIAR system level outcomes. The CB considers that the revised proposal for CRP 4 is of high quality, convincing and that it has the potential to achieve very important and necessary impacts on the health and nutrition status of poor people, especially women and young children.

With my best regards on behalf of the CGIAR Consortium Board,

Carlos Pérez del Castillo