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## **Mid-Term Meeting 1995**

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*Renewal of the CGIAR: From Decisions to Actions*

### **Report of the Task Force on Impact Assessment**

Attached is the report to the CGIAR of the Task Force on Impact Assessment.

## REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### Background

1. At its August and October 1994 meetings, PARC identified the need for more information on the impact of CGIAR's activities, and decided to set up a Task Force with broad representation of the CGIAR (representatives of members, TAC, Centers, and the CGIAR Secretariat).
2. The original terms of reference of the Task Force were focused on increasing and improving impact assessment for public awareness. At ICW94, the CGIAR endorsed the recommendation of the Study Panel on Governance and Finance *"to maintain credible output and performance measures and evaluation systems, and to mount a systemwide effort to develop systematic and continuous processes for impact assessment."* This was further endorsed by the Ministerial-Level Meeting of February 1995 which requested, among others, that the CGIAR *"strengthen the assessment of its performance and impact, and establish an independent evaluation function reporting to the CGIAR as a whole."*
3. Consequently, in November 1994, the terms of reference of the Task Force were broadened to capture those dimensions.
4. The Task Force held two meetings, commissioned a consultant study, and produced interim conclusions. The Task Force benefited from a study on evaluation in the CGIAR, prepared by the Secretariat, and from the CGIAR Chair's communication on the Impact Assessment Group. Finally, it organized a Workshop of the full range of CGIAR stakeholders, first to bring ownership of the function to this wider group, and second to get their input into Task Force conclusions.

### Conclusions of the Task Force

5. The Workshop reinforced Task Force recognition of the need for more impact assessment at both the Center and the Group levels.
6. They endorsed the need for establishing an Impact Assessment Group at the System level whose principal roles would be (a) to stimulate further expansion of impact assessment at the Centers and to stimulate comparability across center efforts so that System level assessment is enhanced; and (b) ensure the generation of comprehensive, up-to-date information on the impact of the CGIAR as a whole, by commissioning impact assessment research to be implemented, in close collaboration with the Centers, TAC and partner institutions.

### Objectivity and Credibility

7. There is consensus that the Impact Assessment Group will need to ensure objectivity, credibility, and high quality in its operations and products and competence of its

members; independence in its governance is important to forestall perceptions of internal influence, yet the main requirement is objectivity.

8. The Impact Assessment Group should be chaired by an eminent person, with the credentials to ensure his or her independence. The Chair should be assisted by a full time staff person whose disciplinary background would complement that of the Chair. It has been suggested that, for example, an economist could be paired with an ecologist. Both individuals would be appointed by the CGIAR.

#### Functions

9. The Task Force concluded that the impact material already available has not yet been accumulated, interpreted and packaged for the diverse clients by public awareness staff. Thus a balance is needed between a greater effort in impact assessment and a greater effort in profiling of user needs and interpretation and packaging of material for marketing. The Task Force also concluded that a balance is required between full econometric modelling of impact and indicators more directly related to CGIAR and donors mission statements and development objectives: poverty, equity and sustainability. In other words, how the system contributes to those it seeks to help.

10. The functions to be implemented at the System level include the interpreting and packaging of existing impact studies, integrating data bases to support impact assessment throughout the CGIAR; stimulate the development of impact methodologies, particularly in the areas of sustainability, institutional development and policy research; assure quality control of impact assessments and their packaged products; and, develop and standardize methods and procedures for using the results from impact assessments for meeting accountability and priority setting requirements.

#### Governance and Institutionalization

11. In view of the number of functions identified above, it was considered that the Impact Assessment Group should mainly operate as a convener and commissioner for the various initiatives. It would operate mainly through the Centers -- in a collegial fashion without compromising the Group's objectivity-- and by outside assistance.

12. At the Workshop, Center representatives strongly endorsed the principle of effective Center collaboration with the Impact Assessment Group. This will allow the Group to capitalize on existing impact assessment capacities in the system. Centers will provide the Group with indispensable data, with detailed know how on the technologies under study as well as the circumstances of their adoption, assure partnership with the NARS, and contribute to the development of methodologies useful at the System level. The Impact Assessment Group will commission external studies, particularly for the analyses of impact of programs and in countries at the System level.

13. The Chair of the Impact Assessment Group will report directly to the CGIAR and submit its proposed program to the Group for approval.

14. The Task Force and the Workshop considered a number of options for structure and linkages.

Agreed elements were:

- An Impact Assessment Group interacting and collaborating strongly with Centers through an inter center working group.
- A sounding board made up of CGIAR members, as users of the products of the IAG, and of external technical specialists to review the feasibility and cost of the proposals.
- In addition, it was felt that the Impact Assessment Group would benefit from a linkage with the CGIAR Secretariat, and more particularly with TAC, as the System level unit responsible for broader evaluation and Group priority setting. Any such link would have to preserve the IAG's objectivity and independence.