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Review Processes in the CGIAR

Attached is a paper prepared by TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat which describes a proposed review system for the CGIAR. An earlier draft of this paper was distributed to the Group at ICW 1987 for written comments. The present version takes into account the comments received from the members, the board chairpersons and the center directors. Professor Vernon Ruttan's paper entitled "Study of the External Review Processes in the CGIAR" which was discussed by the Group at the 1987 mid-term meeting in Montpellier served as background to the present paper.

This document is for consideration of the Group under Agenda Item 20.

Attachment

Distribution:

CGIAR Members
Center Board Chairpersons
Center Directors
Chairman and Members of TAC
TAC Secretariat
Professor Vernon Ruttan (for information)

Consultative Group On International Agricultural Research

REVIEW PROCESSES IN THE CGIAR SYSTEM

**CGIAR Secretariat
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SUMMARY

This paper outlines the broad features of a review system made up of externally-managed reviews of the centers, internally-managed reviews of the centers, inter-center reviews and System reviews. Its purpose is to propose measures for simplifying the existing review process while improving its quality and relevance, and enhancing the complementarities among different types of review and between the reviews and the System's planning and resource allocation mechanisms.

Reviews constitute an important mechanism for reinforcing accountability at all levels of the System and an essential component of CGIAR's integrated planning process. There are strong horizontal linkages among the System's strategic planning, operational planning and monitoring and control activities, and vertical linkages between these three processes at the center, inter-center and System level.

Guiding principles that should be observed in carrying out reviews are objectivity, transparency, frankness, flexibility, and participation.

Center-Specific Reviews

External reviews of centers should have an EPR and an EMR component. Steps should be taken to avoid duplication and to integrate the work of the two panels more effectively. The interval between external reviews of centers should be five (plus or minus one) years. TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat should streamline the procedures used in conducting EPRs and EMRs.

The EPRs should cover five areas: strategic issues, recent accomplishments and potential for future impact, implementation of operational plans, internal program management processes (jointly with the EMR panel), and linkages with clients and partners. EPRs should be conducted by a small (5-7 person) panel, with its members drawn from as wide a spectrum as possible. A TAC member should serve on an EPR panel as a resource person when TAC considers this necessary.

The focus of the EMRs should be limited to four areas: governance, resource management, program management (jointly with the EPR panel), and the mechanisms for internal review. The EMRs should continue to be conducted by small (2-4 person) teams.

The success of the recommended external review system depends in large measure on the effectiveness of the centers' internal review processes. Given the scarcity of comparative knowledge in this area, there is a need to gather information on the centers' internal review processes.

The donors are urged to limit their reviews to the absolute minimum necessary to meet their legal requirements. Also, the donors are encouraged to make available to the respective centers and TAC a summary of the conclusions of any review they conduct.

Inter-Center Reviews

Planning and review of activities in which more than one center (including non-associated centers) is involved are likely to become more important in the future. Three specific planning and review devices that can be used are: inter-center cooperation (including seminars, workshops, symposia and inter-center studies initiated by the centers), strategic analysis of commodities or issues, and formal inter-center commodity/activity reviews conducted by external panels. For many issues the former two could be good substitutes for formal inter-center reviews.

System-Level Reviews

In the light of the more frequent System-level studies (which have included, among others, the TAC paper on CGIAR strategies and priorities, the impact study and the resource allocation mechanism), the distinctions between System-level planning and reviews of the System are becoming more blurred. There is a need for both, but doing both frequently could lead to a System overload.

A comprehensive review of the System should await the completion of strategy revision. In the interim, there might be a need for ad hoc reviews of the governance of the System and its elements.

A table describing key aspects of the recommended reviews is appended to the paper.

1. PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

This paper outlines the broad features of a proposed review system for the CGIAR. It has been prepared in response to the needs expressed by several components of the CGIAR System, particularly by the donors. It examines critically the existing review system in terms of the quality and relevance of the reviews. It also discusses the complementarities among different types of review and between the reviews and the new planning and resource allocation mechanisms developed in the System.

The proposed review system represents essentially a fine tuning of the current system. No new reviews are suggested. The recommendations focus mainly on ways of improving complementarities and increasing flexibility. An important objective of the paper is to clarify the purposes and rationale for each type of review and outline the broad principles and guidelines to be used during their conduct.

The term review is used in the sense of a formal, retrospective and prospective evaluation of an institution or a collection of activities. The paper's main emphasis is on reviews commissioned by the CGIAR and by TAC. Other monitoring and control activities commissioned by the System or the centers are also described briefly and some suggestions are made for their improvement.

1.1. Role of Reviews in Reinforcing Accountability

The institutions supported by the CGIAR are legally-constituted autonomous bodies, each controlled by a board of trustees. Collectively, the boards of trustees constitute the most important element in the governance of the System. They have the legal responsibility for ensuring the managerial efficiency and financial integrity of the institutions as well as the quality and relevance of the work. In making their decisions, however, the boards have to recognize that each institution is part of a System for which policies are formulated by the Group.

If there were no CGIAR, each institution would be free to determine its own policies. Management would be entirely decentralized and no central administration would be required. The institutions would have to seek all their own funding and each institution could expand or contract according to its ability to attract funding in competition with the others.

The centers are legally accountable to each of their donors for the appropriate use of funds, with the terms of accountability defined by enforceable contracts between the donor and the center. It is primarily the principle of collective funding that requires the institutions to respond to policies determined by the Group. Likewise the donors cannot act entirely in isolation. They must satisfy their constituencies or principals that the funds are being appropriately used. The position was summed up in the Second Review of the CGIAR as follows:

"... a board cannot escape from the reality that it is ultimately dependent for its funding on the collective will of the Group. It should therefore conduct its affairs as if it were accountable to the Group even though its legal status makes no provision for such a relationship. To ignore this responsibility would be to force the Group in the direction of greater central authority...."

This principle of central oversight and decentralized control has been made feasible during the evolution of the System by a complex set of internal and external review processes, which have been introduced for a number of different, but inter-related, purposes. In many ways, reviews serve as a substitute for the lack of formal accountability of the boards to the Group, but they also serve to meet the needs for accountability in a much wider sense. They reassure the beneficiary countries of the objectivity of the aims of the CGIAR and, through their transparency, can contribute to satisfying the public at large that their money is being well spent.

1.2. CGIAR's Planning and Review Process

The CGIAR is currently implementing a form of integrated planning. This process has three main elements: strategic planning, operational planning, and monitoring and control. The process is integrated in the sense that all three elements are linked with each other. Figure 1 illustrates the major components of the process at the center, inter-center, and System level.

1.2.1. Planning at the Center Level

A center's strategic plan provides a broad framework for the long-term goals (10-15 years) of the organization and the course or direction the center intends to follow to achieve these goals. Center strategic plans summarize the strategic choices made and provide the rationale for the allocation of resources to specific programs. Center strategies are normally presented to TAC for comment, not approval. Authority for approval resides with the center's board of trustees.

Implementation of the strategic plan in the short and medium-term is guided by the center's operational plans. Centers prepare a medium-term plan, typically covering a five year period for both program and budget. The plan is based on the approved long-term strategy. In addition, the centers prepare annual work plans and budgets covering individual units and the institution as a whole.

Medium-term operational planning was introduced in order to (1) ensure an in-depth look at each center's program at least once in five years so that decisions could be made commensurate with the research planning horizon; (2) simplify CGIAR's resource allocation process; (3) provide greater funding stability to key activities; and (4) allow comparability of activities across centers. Medium-term program proposals

Fig. 1. Planning and Review Processes in the CGIAR

LEVELS	STRATEGIC	OPERATIONAL	MONITORING AND CONTROL
SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o System strategy and priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Resource allocation mechanism o Operational plans of TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o System reviews o <u>Ad hoc</u> examination of elements of the System o Monitoring the implementation of the Systems's strategy
INTER-CENTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Strategic analysis of commodities, activities and issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Operational plans for inter-center activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Inter-center commodity/activity reviews
CENTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Center strategic plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Medium-term P&Bs o Annual P&Bs o Internal work plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o External reviews o Donor reviews o Oversight by boards o Internal program reviews o Internal management reviews o Scientific quality reviews o Impact assessment o Performance evaluation of individuals and units

are approved by the CGIAR on the recommendation of TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat. This new process lessens the work of reviewing center programs and budgets annually. Annual funding requests need to be examined by TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat only to make sure that they correspond with the five-year approval, except when a center comes forward with a proposed change in its plan during the period covered by the approved program.

The third element of the centers' planning process includes monitoring and control activities. One purpose of these activities is to assess the implementation of strategic and operational plans in order to confirm their continuing appropriateness and trigger changes when necessary.

Most of the center-level monitoring and control activities are managed by the centers themselves. These include oversight by boards, internal program reviews, internal management reviews, internal scientific quality reviews, impact assessments, and performance evaluation of individuals and units.

Periodic external program and management reviews are formal monitoring and control activities commissioned by TAC and the CGIAR. As such, they complement the centers' internal monitoring and control activities, reinforce the accountability of the centers to their donors and clients, and help link the centers' activities to the CGIAR goal and strategy.

1.2.2. Planning at the System Level

The processes of planning and review at the System level are similar to those in use at the centers. The CGIAR moved towards strategic planning with the preparation of the TAC paper on System strategies and priorities approved by the Group in 1986.

Operational planning at the System level consists essentially of: (1) planning the allocation of CGIAR's resources to activities carried out by the centers; and (2) planning the activities of the Group, TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat. As the centers are the main implementing arm of the System, operational planning at the System level is very much derived from the operational plans of all the centers.

System level monitoring and control involves formal System reviews and regular monitoring of the implementation of the System strategy and priorities by TAC.

1.2.3. Planning at the Inter-Center Level

The inter-center level refers to subsets of the activities of the System which cut across several centers. The subsets could relate to commodities (such as rice), activities (training), resources (water), regions (Africa), etc. The inter-center level has been separated from the System level in order to differentiate planning and review

activities that cover the whole System from those that relate to a subset of the System.

Strategic planning at the inter-center level refers mainly to strategic analysis of commodities or issues. These are undertaken on an ad hoc basis, depending on need, and aim at formulation of System strategies on the commodity or issue at hand. These need not be limited to commodities or activities currently supported by the CGIAR.

Operational planning at the inter-center level is also ad hoc, and the specific planning mechanism to be used depends on the issue at hand. Several existing inter-center mechanisms, such as seminars, workshops, studies and other collaborative activities, serve as operational planning tools. These facilitate formulation of action plans to be implemented by the centers concerned.

Monitoring and control at the inter-center level are done through inter-center commodity/activity reviews and TAC's monitoring of the implementation of the System's overall strategy. The centers also play a key role in monitoring the implementation of the inter-center activities they have jointly planned.

1.2.4. Linkages

Planning and review activities in CGIAR are linked with each other both horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, operational plans depend on strategic plans; reviews and other monitoring and control activities assess the implementation of both strategic and operational plans; and updates of strategic plans depend on the results of reviews and other monitoring and control activities. Vertically, center strategic plans both depend on and feed into the System's strategic plan and strategic analyses conducted at the inter-center level. Also, System and inter-center reviews rely heavily on the findings from external reviews of the centers.

1.3. Types of Review Needed

One conclusion that emerges from the above is that there is a need for monitoring and control mechanisms at various levels in the System. The precise form of these mechanisms will depend on the specific needs of the System at a given time. New developments, such as a major expansion of the System or a drastic reduction in funding for the System's activities, might call for different approaches to organization as well as to monitoring and control. Also, since good planning entails a substantial amount of review, increased sophistication in planning in the System might reduce the need for formal reviews.

At the current stage of the System's development there is a continuing need for formal reviews at all three levels i.e., center, inter-center and System. There is also a need to strengthen other monitoring and control mechanisms.

At the level of the centers, the long established tradition of periodically reviewing each center's activities through external panels should continue. Much of the CGIAR's positive reputation stems from its strong external review system. These external reviews reinforce accountability and serve as a useful source for planning at all levels of the System. A number of improvements could be introduced to the present system as outlined in Chapter 2.

At the inter-center level formal reviews have been infrequent. The current trends in the System (towards, among others, greater focus on issues of sustainability and consideration of research on other commodities) are likely to increase the need for inter-center reviews. As there are some trade-offs between center and inter-center reviews, their nature and timing should be examined to ensure complementarity between the two types of review.

At the level of the System, the two previous formal reviews have examined the strengths and weaknesses of its organization and governance, its place in the global effort and the inter-relations among its component parts. A dynamic system such as the CGIAR would benefit from occasional formal reviews, but these need not be conducted on a regular periodic basis.

1.4. Guiding Principles

To be credible and acceptable, all reviews must strive to be objective, transparent and participatory. The reports must be direct, explicit and frank. Clearly the extent to which all these ideals can be met will be dependent on the circumstances of the particular review, but all have to be kept strongly in mind if the advantages of reviews are to be preserved. They have the great advantage over strong central management of being flexible both in purpose and timing. As the main instrument of central oversight, they can be increased or reduced to meet the needs of the System.

Objectivity. If reviews are to serve their intended purposes, those involved must, to the extent possible, approach their tasks, make their assessments and develop their recommendations with total objectivity. Review panels should be composed of individuals who have no conflicts of interest and who are free of bias on matters relating to the reviews. Moreover, the need for objectivity in the review process was recognized by the Group from the outset in establishing the Technical Advisory Committee to provide independent advice on scientific and technical matters. TAC members are appointed in their personal capacities for fixed terms and are expected to exercise their independent judgement, free of influence from members of the Group, centers, and the governments of beneficiary countries.

Transparency. Well-conducted internal reviews are often considered to be more penetrating and critical than external reviews, but suffer from the disadvantage that the internal atmosphere of strong criticism with mutual respect would be lost if the principle of

transparency were introduced, by having outside observers. On the other hand, external reviews, conducted in an atmosphere of transparency, by individuals not involved in the activities, are usually less penetrating and critical, but have the advantage of greater credibility. The two types of review are therefore complementary and both should continue to have a place in the System.

Participation. Reviews should always involve active participation by those who will be affected by the outcome. The views of the clients of the institution being reviewed should be sought systematically by the review panels. Panels should include individuals who have a keen understanding of the needs of the clients.

The institution being reviewed should be given ample opportunity to voice its views on the preliminary conclusions of the panel conducting the review. Obtaining these views prior to the completion of a review could eliminate misunderstandings and some disagreements. A good dialogue between the reviewers and the reviewed during a review would also facilitate implementation of the review team's recommendations, as these would have been formulated with the full participation by and understanding of the representatives of the institution being reviewed.

Frankness. Every effort should be made by the organizers of the reviews and the panels conducting them to ensure the frankness of the reports. The reviews should be conducted in a constructive vein, not for damaging an institution or specific individuals associated with it. If a review panel considers that it should make some recommendations, because of their sensitivity and potentially damaging character, in a confidential, supplementary report, it should feel free to do so. For external reviews, the recipients of such a report would normally include the Board Chairman, the TAC Chairman and the CGIAR Chairman.

Flexibility. Reviews should be seen as an aid to better planning and decision-making, not as bureaucratic exercises to be carried out at constant intervals to produce reports fitting a particular mold. The circumstances of the institution to be reviewed and the decision-making needs of the Group should dictate the timing and the type of review. The views of the institution being reviewed should be taken into account in establishing the timetable, forming the panel, and formulating the review methodology. Every effort should be made to minimize the disruption of the institution's normal activities during the period of the review.

Adherence to these rather basic principles and guidelines can help to ensure the success of the System's review processes.

2. CENTER SPECIFIC REVIEWS

Review processes that are center specific constitute a major part of the CGIAR's review system. Three major categories are involved: (1) formal reviews conducted on behalf of TAC and the CGIAR by external panels, reviews organized by the center, and reviews conducted by or on behalf of individual donors; (2) TAC monitoring the work of each center on a regular basis and the center boards monitoring the implementation of center policies as part of their oversight role; (3) appraising the performance of individuals and units by the centers themselves. The emphasis in this chapter is mainly on the first category.

2.1. External Program and Management Reviews

One of TAC's major responsibilities is to "ensure that external assessments are made of the scientific quality and effectiveness of the activities financed by the Group" (Second Review, p. 72). TAC has discharged this responsibility by commissioning periodic external reviews of center activities. Since 1982, external program reviews (EPRs) commissioned by TAC have been reinforced by external management reviews (EMRs) commissioned by the CGIAR Secretariat. Taken together, these reviews have gone a long way towards satisfying the concerns of the donors and the beneficiary countries, but there is a need to assess whether they could be made more effective and less demanding on the time they require from the centers, the panel members and the donors.

A frequently-raised question is whether merging the EPRs and EMRs would lead to efficiency gains. The Group's view on this question, expressed initially in connection with the discussion of Professor Ruttan's report in 1986 and subsequently through written comments in 1987, was mixed. TAC has discussed this issue in depth, alone and jointly with the CGIAR Secretariat, and reached the following conclusions:

- There is a continuing need to maintain the level of attention placed on management matters in the external reviews of centers.
- External reviews of centers should continue to have an EPR and an EMR component, the EPR commissioned by TAC and the EMR by the CGIAR Secretariat as at present. The two secretariats should coordinate more closely the planning and conduct of the external reviews.
- The EPR and EMR of a center should always be held concurrently, by two small, separate panels. The two panels should work closely, particularly in the formulation of major recommendations.
- There should be two separate, but well integrated reports. The two panels should jointly write a chapter on research

management which should appear in both reports. Also, the summaries of each review should be included in both reports.

- An EMR should continue to be presented to and discussed by TAC and the CGIAR along with the EPR. The TAC commentary to the CGIAR should cover both reports. The CGIAR Secretariat should continue to forward to the Group the work of the EMR panel.
- TAC should give substantial attention to EMR findings. The EMR panel chairman should participate more actively as a resource person in TAC's deliberations on the external reviews.

There are two main reasons for continuing, with the modifications noted above, the present format of having two panels and two complementary reports.

First, having two panels is mainly an organizational question. Given the clearly different nature of the program and management questions addressed by the reviews, it is more efficient to address them by two separate panels than one large panel. In practice, the two panels work as one team in the field. Also, it is more appropriate to address delicate management issues faced at a center with a separate, small panel.

Second, having two separate reports is desirable because they sometimes have different audiences. The management review report has a shorter shelf life and is not distributed as widely as the program review report.

2.2. Frequency of External Reviews

The interval between external reviews of centers should be five (plus or minus one) years. The precise timing would depend on the circumstances of the individual center. Either or both reviews could be triggered outside the regular cycle in several ways. The center board or management or both could ask for an external review. TAC could trigger a review. The CGIAR Secretariat, in consultation with the center concerned, could initiate a special purpose management review (such as the special financial review of WARDA conducted in 1985). The EPRs and EMRs could suggest appropriate timing for the next review. Finally, the Group could ask for an external review of a center.

2.3. EPRs: Their Scope and Panel Composition

The EPRs should cover primarily five areas: strategic issues, recent accomplishments and potential for future impact, implementation of operational plans, internal program management processes, and linkages with clients and partners.

2.3.1. Strategic Focus

EPRs should pay more attention to strategic issues than was formerly the practice. This greater strategic focus has two implications. First, the EPR should assess how well the center has implemented its strategy since the last review. Second, the EPR should examine the continuing appropriateness of the center's strategy, especially in relation to CGIAR's goals and priorities and changing circumstances in developing countries, the environment and in science.

The review can be conducted at any stage of a center's planning cycle, though perhaps best when a center has just revised its strategy. The EPR should focus on the center's strategy-in-use, regardless of whether this is spelled out in a strategic plan. In addition, it should provide views on possible future strategic directions for the center, preferably in close consultation with the center board and management.

2.3.2. Impact

EPRs should assess recent accomplishments and impact, as well as the potential for future impact. This is important for several reasons. First, past accomplishments and impact are key criteria for measuring center performance. Second, given the long gestation periods in agricultural research, periodic reporting of past accomplishments and potential achievements is necessary to keep the donor community and the public at large informed of the value of the center's work. Third, study of the potential future impact of each center would enable TAC and the CGIAR to develop the System's future priorities and strategies more effectively.

EPR panels cannot assess accomplishments and impact unless information on these is available. The centers should carry out a program of impact studies as a part of their own internal review process.

2.3.3. Operational Concerns

The EPRs should comment on the fit between the center's program and the strategic plan, keeping in mind the resource requirements. The EPR could serve as a mechanism for improving the fit between the center's long-term strategy and its program, both as expressed in the approved medium-term program and as implemented. This would facilitate the program review work of TAC and the Group, as the EPR would comment on the implementation of the medium-term program and possible needs for change.

Having the EPRs comment on resource requirements is extremely important. Review teams often have a tendency to recommend changes in programs without fully assessing the resource implications of their recommendations. A requirement to have the panels study the resource implications of their suggestions would improve the self-accountability

of the review panels. The center's financial staff could help review teams in their determination of resource requirements.

2.3.4. Program Management

The EPRs and EMRs should jointly assess the structure and the processes for program management. This assessment should include organizational structure, strategic planning, internal review processes and project management. Particular emphasis should be given to assessing internal review procedures that are in place to evaluate the scientific quality of the research programs. Program management is an area of deliberate overlap between the two reviews, and as already mentioned, the two panels should jointly report on this subject.

2.3.5. Linkages

The EPRs should assess the scope and strength of the center's linkages with national systems, other international centers, and scientific institutions in developed countries. Establishing and nurturing strong partnerships with clients and collaborators enables the organization to improve the fit between itself and its immediate environment. Strong links with an individual national program could make it difficult for a center to reduce its program with that country. However, without a strong partnership, the center would have less insight and understanding of the needs of this client.

Assessment of such linkages by the EPRs should be more strategic. That is, it should examine the extent to which the pattern of existing relationships has enabled the center to implement its strategies better and to accomplish its purpose.

2.3.6. Panel Composition

EPRs should be conducted by small teams (5 to 7 members). Small panels often carry out their work more efficiently than large panels. Small panels are also less costly.

Members should be chosen as much for their competence in strategic analysis as for their disciplinary excellence. Disciplinary excellence is necessary because those at the cutting edge of science are often more able to assess scientific trends and visions. Competence in strategic analysis is necessary because the reviews would place greater emphasis on strategic matters than in the past. International experience and NARS perspective are also highly desirable. These requirements place a significant limitation on the number of persons who could take part in an EPR and increase the TAC's challenge in assembling EPR panels. The alternative is to have larger teams. But as noted above, this should not be seen as a viable option.

Members should be drawn from as wide a spectrum as possible, including the private and the public sectors. The CGIAR is often criticized as a system run primarily by an "old boy network". It is

true that those familiar with the CGIAR culture have an advantage over those unfamiliar with the System when it comes to carrying out special missions in a short period of time. This is particularly true in the management area (see below). Identification of new individuals who can play System-wide roles in the CGIAR should be given priority by TAC and the two Secretariats.

Although there is a strong case for using the expertise of the centers as widely as possible in the System, members of staff have not been called upon to serve as members of external review panels, even of centers with which they have no affiliation. Although objectivity might not be compromised if carefully selected staff members were asked to serve on external review panels, the risk is one that it would be better to avoid. Therefore, center staff should not be members of external review panels of individual centers.

For similar reasons, neither the Chairman of TAC nor the chairmen of boards should participate directly in external review panels, but members of boards have been and could continue to be called upon to do so. Members of boards, are appointed in their personal capacities. Consequently, provided they have no affiliation to the center or centers under review, their participation as members of external review panels would not appear to compromise the principles of externality and objectivity.

As far as members of TAC are concerned, the need for external participation has to be balanced against the need for knowledge and understanding of the priorities and strategies of the System as a whole. While guidance on these issues can be given by staff members of the two secretariats, it is TAC itself that carries responsibility for the outcome of the review. Consequently, TAC considers that it should retain the prerogative of having one of its members serve as a resource person to the panels of external program reviews, whenever the Committee considers this essential.

2.4. EMRs: Their Scope and Panel Composition

The EMRs should focus primarily on four areas: governance, resource management, program management, and the mechanisms for internal management review. The overall purpose would be to assess the center's present and potential future management effectiveness and efficiency.

The EMRs should assess the center's governance structure and the performance of the board of trustees. Considerable work has been done on board performance matters by the CGIAR Secretariat, the center board chairs and several consultants since the start of the EMRs. As a result, more is known about factors influencing board performance than before. The EMRs should test the applicability of available models and further develop a methodology for objective assessment of board effectiveness.

The EMRs should assess the effectiveness and the efficiency of the center's processes for managing on a global basis the financial, human, physical and information resources. Effective management depends in part on the quality and the adequacy of the mechanisms for managing these four resources. Finance, personnel, administration and information have received considerable attention in all the EMRs conducted and the evidence shows that more needs to be done by the centers to improve their existing processes. Management of these resources should be studied by the EMRs on a global basis, meaning that management of outposted staff and off-campus activities should be given adequate attention by the review panels.

The EMRs, in close collaboration with the EPRs, should assess the structure and processes for program management (e.g., organizational structure, strategic and operational planning, internal program review processes and project management). Program management issues generally fall in the grey area between the EPR and the EMR; hence this issue appears among the principal foci of both reviews.

The EMRs should examine the adequacy of the internal management review processes and make suggestions for improving them. There is some need for strengthening the centers' internal mechanisms for management review. These should aim at improving results. The EMRs could assist centers in putting in place internal processes for ensuring effective and efficient management.

In addition to these four primary areas, several of the recent EMRs have explored ways of studying leadership, organizational culture, legal status, and questions of external linkages (host country relationships and public relations). These should continue to receive attention and the EMRs should aim to develop practical methodologies for studying their impact on individual centers.

The EMRs should continue to be conducted by small teams (2-4 members). The EMR teams have often been hard pressed to produce their report during the time available to them. The problem might be solved by having some members of the team spend a longer time at the center prior to the review. EMR panel members recruited from outside the System typically face a steep learning curve about the System and the center. Also, having a background paper on an important management issue faced by the center, prepared by a consultant prior to an EMR, has been shown to facilitate the conduct of the review.

EMR panel members, like their counterparts on EPR panels, should be drawn from as wide a spectrum as possible, including the private and the public sectors, with at least one experienced research manager. The panels should have someone, most likely the chairman, who is thoroughly familiar with the CGIAR and its culture. As noted in the preceding paragraph, management specialists unfamiliar with the CGIAR face considerable difficulty in understanding the operation of the centers in the short period of time available for the reviews. On the other hand, these individuals often have fresh insights, coming from their

experience, which has proved to be extremely useful in addressing problems faced by the centers. Each panel should also have a member, preferably its chairman, with experience in the research business. This becomes less important when the program and management review teams work closely together, as the EPR team often includes at least one person with such experience.

2.5. Streamlining Procedures for Conducting EPRs and EMRs

The principles outlined and recommendations made in this paper are intended to serve as a guide to TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat in revising the terms of reference of the EPRs and EMRs and in developing operational procedures for the reviews. In preparing the operational procedures TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat should seek ways of simplifying the existing methods of obtaining the information necessary to conduct penetrating reviews. With these and other aspects of reviews in mind, TAC has recently appointed a standing committee on review processes.

Development of quantitative indicators of center performance needs closer examination in both the program and the management areas. Greater use of indicators could lower the effort necessary for assessing centers' past performance. They could also facilitate comparisons of center performance.

As already mentioned, preparation of technical background papers by external consultants before a review can simplify the conduct of the review. Moreover, active participation of the center in the review can improve the efficiency of the process in terms of the use of time and the quality of the product.

2.6. Monitoring the Implementation of Review Recommendations

The reports of both the EPRs and the EMRs highlight changes recommended by the panels. Monitoring the implementation of EPR recommendations endorsed by TAC and the CGIAR is a normal responsibility of TAC. The Committee discharges this responsibility through its Center liaison scientists and through its scrutiny of programs and budgets. When necessary, TAC might take additional action, such as by mounting an interim review or by calling for a follow-up report by the chairman of the review panel or by an external consultant.

For management reviews, the responsibility for deciding on the need for follow-up action resides with the CGIAR. The discussion of the report of each EMR by the CGIAR should be concluded with a specific statement of the nature and timing of any action, if required, to monitor the implementation of those recommendations endorsed by the Group.

2.7 Internal Reviews

Internal reviews commissioned by the boards of individual centers have been designed primarily to monitor the quality and relevance of the

work, but they are also important in the process of planning programs and budgets. The clients for such reviews are primarily the centers themselves, but the needs of the beneficiary countries must also be taken into account in carrying out such reviews.

The need for greater objectivity in internal reviews has led center managements to invite outside individuals to participate in them. The reviews might then be more accurately described as "internally managed", rather than "internal". Strategic planning done by the centers contain a large element of review and similar principles apply.

The success of the envisaged review system depends in large measure on the effectiveness of the centers' internal review processes. For example, shifting the focus of the EPRs towards strategic concerns requires that centers have in place a program of impact assessments and program quality reviews. EPRs and EMRs have typically commented on internal review procedures but these procedures have not been studied systematically across centers. There is a need to gather descriptive information in order to gain a better understanding of the existing internal review processes. The survey should aim at describing and illustrating the various approaches to internal review, rather than recommending a particular review system to all centers.

How a center conducts its internal reviews is a matter for its board and management to decide. Suggestions by external review panels could be helpful in introducing improvements to center internal review procedures as the proposed scope of the external reviews includes an assessment of the adequacy of the center's internal review processes.

2.8. Donor Reviews

The comprehensive review system proposed here and the transparency of the process used would provide donors with detailed information on centers' past performance (i.e., accomplishments, impact, effectiveness and efficiency) as well as potential for future performance. This should obviate the need for additional reviews. Donors are therefore urged to limit their reviews to the absolute minimum necessary to meet their legal requirements. Normally, this implies that donor reviews should be concerned with some special projects only.

When they find it necessary to have a review conducted, donors are encouraged to make available a summary of the conclusions to the center and to TAC. When it is possible for a donor to release its review, there would be no need for a separate summary document. However, when a donor finds it impossible to release the review report, the main center-related conclusions should be shared with the System. Without such sharing of information, the center and the System cannot benefit from the insights on center activities obtained by the donors.

3. INTER-CENTER REVIEWS

Various processes have been used in the CGIAR System to plan or review activities in which more than one center is involved. The so-called "stripe analysis" has been applied by TAC to such topics as farming systems research and training. Strategic analysis of commodities or issues across CGIAR and non-associated centers is beginning to be used as a tool for planning at the sub-system level. Similarly, inter-center symposia sponsored by the centers in association with TAC have helped to give direction to the System's effort in specific areas.

The principles outlined for external reviews of centers in the preceding chapters also apply to the study of topics which cut across several centers. With few exceptions, topics involving more than one center have not been covered well in internal or external reviews of individual centers. Inter-center reviews are likely to become more important in the future because of the increasing need for better integration of the activities among CGIAR institutes and between CGIAR and non-associated centers.

3.1. Inter-Center Cooperation

The centers have a long history of cooperation among themselves. Several collaborative arrangements have emerged over the years in such diverse areas as networks, collection and exchange of germplasm, collaborative research, secondment and outposting of staff, salary administration, computer management, public relations, joint publications, joint nurseries, joint training courses, and joint seminars and workshops. As a result, the CGIAR System is rapidly evolving from a loose federation of independent centers into a system with coherent plans and actions. To a large extent this trend has been initiated by the centers themselves and, thus, is fully in line with the basic principle of center autonomy.

The emergence within the System of several inter-center committees (such as the committee of board chairpersons and the center directors' group, with their many sub-committees) has contributed strongly to the increase in collaborative efforts among the centers. The frequent interactions of these committees with TAC and the CGIAR have also led to better integration of the centers' efforts in the direction of the CGIAR goal.

One cooperative device, inter-center workshops and symposia, has in particular proven to be an effective mechanism for focussing on subjects of common concern to the centers and the national systems. Examples include the workshop on farming systems research held at ICRISAT, the workshop on cereal yield variability held in Munich, the workshop on nutrition held at ILCA (all in 1986), and the 1987 IFAD-sponsored consultation on strengthening national systems to assume an international role in specific areas of wheat and rice research. One important advantage of these workshops and symposia over other

collaborative efforts is the opportunity they offer for active participation of national scientists. TAC has also benefitted from participation in fora, as they have enabled TAC members to gain first-hand impressions of the concerns and translate these into implications for the System as a whole. For these reasons, inter-center workshops and symposia should in future continue to be used as a mechanism for addressing technical and methodological subjects of inter-center interest and should provide for active participation of scientists from developing countries.

Another cooperative device, inter-center studies, is being used increasingly for gaining an understanding of issues that cut across several centers. Some are undertaken at the initiative of the center directors (for example, the ISNAR study on inter-center collaboration and the CIAT-led study on seeds). Similarly, the board chairs have initiated several studies on board operations. TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat are also among the originators of some inter-center studies (such as the TAC survey on sustainability-related activities of the centers and the study of external review processes in the CGIAR).

In some cases an inter-center study can be a substitute for review of inter-center activities by an external panel. For this reason, originators of external inter-center reviews should first ascertain if the issue under consideration could be examined equally well through an inter-center study. On occasion, an inter-center study could be conducted prior to an inter-center review, which would facilitate the conduct of the subsequent review.

3.2. Strategic Analysis

Strategic analysis at the inter-center level refers to analytic work undertaken to formulate proposals on long-term CGIAR goals and directions vis-a-vis a particular commodity or issue. Such analyses fall under the broad mandate of TAC and should be undertaken as background to (or follow up from) the strategy for the System. They are included in this chapter only because much of this analysis requires inter-center data collection and comparison. They should also be seen as part of System level strategic planning.

Like inter-center studies conducted by the centers, mentioned above, strategic analysis of commodities or issues can be a low-cost substitute for formal inter-center reviews conducted by external panels (discussed below in Section 3.3). The major differences between the two are:

- Strategic analysis is more forward looking than inter-center reviews and places less emphasis on operational matters. Inter-center reviews place greater emphasis on assessment of past CGIAR efforts and operational considerations.
- Strategic analysis can be conducted using as primary data available information such as center strategic plans, plans

of non-associated centers, socio-economic indicators, etc. Visits to concerned centers may not be necessary. Inter-center reviews also use similar data, but supplement them with information collected by panels during site visits.

TAC is in the process of experimenting with alternative ways of conducting strategic issue or commodity analyses. These are likely to gain importance as the CGIAR begins to explore boundary questions, particularly in connection with the complementarity of efforts of CGIAR and non-associated centers.

3.3. Inter-Center Commodity/Activity Reviews

One of the major concerns of EPRs is the consistency of a center's collective activities with its own strategy and with the System's goals and objectives. The question of the collective efforts of the centers in a given area with the System's goals and strategies, however, falls beyond the scope of center-level external reviews. When imbalances or serious inefficiencies are detected in the collective effort of the centers in a specific area (e.g., in scope of activities, regional thrusts, ecological emphases, consistency and complementarity of strategies, sustainability considerations, etc.), there may be need for commissioning a review of the issue by a panel. Such inter-center commodity/activity reviews ("inter-center review", for short) would be undertaken only when other mechanisms for studying the issue appear to be inappropriate.

The main purpose of inter-center reviews is to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the collective effort of the centers in a given commodity/activity. Therefore, inter-center reviews should be strategic in nature as they should be concerned with both the coherence and reinforcing nature of the strategies among the centers in question and the coherence of the collective effort with the System's strategy.

The principal clients of inter-center reviews are TAC, the CGIAR and the centers concerned. Any of these groups could trigger an inter-center review. Inter-center reviews should not follow a regular schedule like the external reviews of centers. They would, instead, be conducted on an ad hoc basis.

Ideally, an inter-center review should precede the EPR of the center with the global responsibility in the particular commodity or activity of concern. Since inter-center reviews and EPRs have somewhat different purposes, it would be impractical to combine an inter-center review with the EPR of the center with global mandate in that area. There are, however, many advantages in the participation of some members of the inter-center review panel in the respective EPR.

As with the EPRs, inter-center review panels should make provision for sufficient interaction with the managements and boards of all centers concerned with the commodity or activity in question, and with the NARS in the affected regions. The panel should produce a report

with specific conclusions and recommendations on the strategies and activities of each concerned center. The centers in question should be given an opportunity to express their views on the panel's conclusions and recommendations.

Finally, with regard to panel composition, the principles suggested for the external reviews of centers would be equally applicable in inter-center reviews, with one major exception. Staff from the centers not involved with the commodity or activity under review could serve on inter-center review teams, provided that there is an appropriate balance with external members. This would enable the System to make greater use in carrying out inter-center reviews of the talent available in the centers than is the case in conducting center-level external reviews. Inter-center reviews lend themselves more to utilization of staff from other centers in as much as they are highly technical and strategic and not as institution-oriented as the EPRs and the EMRs. The size and composition of inter-center review panels in terms of discipline and background would very much depend on the nature of the commodity or activity being reviewed and on the number of centers involved. In general, the size of the panels would vary between 3 and 5 members.

4. SYSTEM-LEVEL REVIEWS

Reviews of the System are essential to ensure the vitality and continued relevance of the activities supported, as well as the appropriateness of the policies, strategies, procedures and the System's organizational structure. Since the CGIAR was established in 1971 there have been two reviews of the System, the first in 1976 and the second in 1981. Both were comprehensive reviews conducted by an internal committee assisted by a study team of external consultants. In both instances the internal committee was chaired by the Chairman of the Group and the members were nominated by the Chairman from the components of the System and confirmed by the Group. Both reviews were broad-based and tended to concentrate on medium-term issues and concerns.

The precedent of conducting a comprehensive System review at intervals of five years (the first System review was conducted five years after the establishment of the CGIAR and the second five years after the first) was not followed in 1986 because several important System-level issues were being studied through *ad hoc* mechanisms. These included the impact study commissioned in 1984, the budget study launched the same year, and the study of CGIAR priorities and strategies completed by TAC in 1986. Subsequently, TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat began to implement a new, medium-term, resource allocation mechanism, TAC began to examine a number of System-wide issues, the Chairman of the Group initiated an examination of the CGIAR Secretariat, and the Group at its mid-year meeting in Berlin in 1988 began discussing CGIAR's relations with non-associated centers.

The role of System reviews needs to be re-assessed in the light of these developments. Distinctions between System-level planning and reviews of the System are becoming more blurred because planning at the System level often starts with some form of stocktaking, which is a form of review, and reviews often lead to forward-looking recommendations, which is a form of planning. Few would disagree that there is a need for both, but if both were done frequently, there may be dangers of overloading the System with plans and reviews.

4.1. Planning at the System Level

The 1986 TAC study on CGIAR priorities and strategies marks the start of a new era in strategic planning at the System level. TAC sees System level planning as a continuous activity. To play a continuous planning role effectively, TAC, in cooperation with the CGIAR Secretariat, monitors CGIAR's internal and external environment to detect new or forthcoming changes, so that it can recommend shifts in CGIAR's strategy and direction. It also collaborates with other components of the System in updating the System's strategy and contributing to greater integration of efforts.

4.1.1. System Strategy

TAC intends to produce a CGIAR strategy and priorities paper for the Group's consideration about every five years. Preparation of the next strategy and priorities paper will require the conduct of a number of background studies and wide ranging discussions on key aspects of CGIAR's future, e.g., its identity, values, mission, goals and objectives, priorities, organization, relationships, responsibilities, program approaches, and funding prospects.

Most of these background studies would be initiated and coordinated by TAC (such as papers on strategic analyses of commodities and issues described in the preceding chapter). But TAC does not have an exclusive right to think about the future of the System and encourages others to contribute to the debate. For example, the Group frequently discusses aspects of the System's strategy both at its plenary meetings and, occasionally, in small brainstorming groups. Similarly, the group of center directors have been playing a stronger role in formulating views on the System's future. All of these discussions are taken into account by TAC in its continuous revision of the System's strategy.

4.1.2. Integration of Efforts

The integration of efforts both within and among centers of the CGIAR System and, equally important, integrating the CGIAR System's activities with those of its various partners in the global system has been endorsed by the Group as one of eight operational objectives of the CGIAR. This objective relates to three types of integration: within individual centers, among two or more centers, and between the CGIAR center and its partners outside the System.

The integration of efforts within individual centers is primarily the responsibility of the board and management of each center. It is a central objective of the centers' efforts in planning and a subject studied by external and internal reviews.

The integration of efforts among centers, however, is a responsibility shared by the centers and the other components of the System (see Section 3.1). The ultimate aim is to enhance the coherence of the centers' collective efforts with the System's goals, priorities and strategies so that the efficiency and the effectiveness of the entire System could be increased.

The integration of the centers' efforts with those of the various other partners in the global agricultural research and development system is a subject to which the Group and TAC have assigned high priority. TAC, from time to time, provides the Group with an analysis of these linkages.

4.2. Monitoring the Implementation of the System's Strategy and Priorities

TAC's role in monitoring and recommending priorities for the CGIAR is the subject of a paper endorsed by the Group at its 1987 mid-term meeting. Accordingly, TAC would carry the major responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the System's strategy and priorities across the centers. This role of TAC would complement the monitoring role played by each board vis-a-vis the strategies and priorities relating to that center.

TAC would carry out its monitoring responsibilities in most cases through comparative analysis of information provided by the centers in their strategic plans, medium-term program proposals, annual reports and similar documents. In some cases TAC might commission working papers or special studies to compile the background information necessary for its monitoring work. In carrying out such studies, use should be made of the expertise already available within the System. The persons invited to undertake these studies should not be regarded as external reviewers, they should be seen more as resource persons of TAC.

4.3. System Reviews

Any institution with the size, complexity and dynamism of the CGIAR would, on occasion, benefit from a comprehensive examination of its effectiveness and efficiency. The need for such reviews lessens when there are no apparent threats to the System (such as a drastic cut in funding), when the System is undergoing major change, or when there are indications that the System is functioning properly.

A comprehensive review of the System, should therefore await the completion of strategy revision, so that it can focus on assessing the effectiveness of the revised strategy. In the interim, reviews at the System-level could concentrate on the governance of the System and its elements (such as the Group and its chairman, the cosponsors, TAC and the two secretariats).

The experience, understanding and corporate memory within the CGIAR System can rarely be matched by individuals outside it. There are therefore greater costs associated with examination of intra-System concerns by outsiders than by those in the System. However, outsiders often bring fresh perspectives and are often perceived as being more objective.

There is merit in relying heavily on talent within the System in conducting ad hoc reviews of the elements of the System because these individuals often represent the clients of the component being examined. Using this principle seems to have worked well in the examination of the CGIAR Secretariat and could work equally well in the examination of other elements of the System.

In the case of comprehensive reviews of the System, on the other hand, there would be need for greater representation within the review team of the clients and collaborators of the CGIAR than in the cases of ad hoc reviews of the elements of the System.

APPENDIX. SUMMARY OF REVIEWS OF CGIAR ACTIVITIES: DESCRIPTION, PERIODICITY, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	OUTPUT	PERIODICITY	COMMISSIONED BY	UNDERTAKEN BY	REVIEWED BY	IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS	MONITORING OF IMPLEMENTATION
Internally managed center-specific reviews	Internal program reviews, internal management reviews, scientific quality reviews, impact assessments	Conclusions of internal review; annual report; internal management audit reports; scientific quality review reports; special impact studies	Variable	Board/Management of the center	Center staff and/or consultants	Board/management of the center	Center management	Boards of trustees; TAC/CGIAR Secretariat through EPRs and EMRs
Externally managed center-specific reviews	EPRs: Review of program relevance, impact and strategy	EPR report	5 years (plus or minus one)	TAC	Commissioned panel	TAC and CGIAR	Board/Management of the center	TAC
	EMRs: Review of administrative and management effectiveness	EMR report	5 years (plus or minus one)	CGIAR Secretariat	Commissioned panel	TAC and CGIAR	Board/Management of the center	CGIAR; CGIAR Secretariat
Inter-Center reviews	Review of collective efforts of centers	Review report	Variable	TAC, CGIAR Secretariat, centers	Commissioned panel	TAC and CGIAR	Board/Management of concerned centers	TAC; CGIAR Secretariat
System-Level Reviews	Comprehensive system reviews	Review report	Variable	CGIAR	Review Committee/panel	CGIAR	All components of the System	CGIAR
	Ad hoc examination of components of the system	Review report	Variable	CGIAR	Examination/oversight committee or panel	CGIAR	Affected components of the system	CGIAR; TAC; CGIAR Secretariat