

THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Fifteenth Meeting, Rome, 31 January - 4 February, 1977

SOYBEAN RESEARCH
(Unscheduled Item)

TAC SECRETARIAT
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 1977

Proposal for submission to the Technical Advisory Committee
of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
on the establishment of an "International Soybean Research Consortium"

An "ad hoc" informal meeting was convened in FAO, Rome, on 27-28 January 1977 with the purpose of discussing a proposal for the establishment of a "Soybean Research Consortium" among the representatives of research institutions interested and concerned in the research development of soybean. The meeting was attended by the following participants:

- Dr. A. Blumenschein, Executive Director, Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuaria (EMBRAPA), Brazil
- Dr. P. Goldsworthy, Assistant Director, Grain Legume Programme, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Dr. C. Hittle, International Soybean Program (INTSOY) Leader and Agronomist, Sri Lanka.
- Dr. M.C. Saxena, Professor of Agriculture and Coordinator (Soybean), All-India Coordinated Soybean Research Project, Pantnagar, India
- Dr. W.M. Thompson, Director, International Soybean Program (INTSOY), University of Illinois, USA
- Dr. D.F.R. Bommer, Assistant Director-General, Agriculture Department, FAO
- Dr. A. Bozzini, Chief, Crop and Grassland Production Service, AGP Division, FAO
- Dr. H.A. Al-Jibouri, Senior Officer (Field Food Crops), AGP Division, FAO

Part-time (attended the meeting as observers):

- Dr. G. Baird, Associate Director, Research, Technical Assistance Bureau, USAID, Washington, USA
- Dr. R. Cummings, Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee to the Consultative Group on Agricultural Research
- Mr. P. Mahler, Executive Secretary to the Technical Advisory Committee to the Consultative Group on Agricultural Research, FAO
- Mr. B.N. Webster, Deputy Executive Secretary to the Technical Advisory Committee to the Consultative Group on Agricultural Research, FAO

Dr. Bommer welcomed the participants and presented a short résumé of the purpose of the meeting. The participants were also given a summary of the previous discussions of the TAC related to the international soybean research

(Annex 1). After a brief but exhaustive presentation of the activities of the participants in their respective programmes on soybean research, Dr. Bommer introduced a series of "basic elements" for general discussion and consideration (Annex 2). The participants discussed and basically agreed on the "basic elements" content.

The participants discussed different forms of international co-operation and the Consortium idea, including the objectives and the managerial aspects of it and they agreed that a Consortium would be an appropriate international mechanism to solve the problem of fostering soybean research and related training programmes with interested countries. In particular, the following points are suggested for the consideration of TAC:

1. Forms of international cooperation and the Consortium idea

- (a) In the light of TAC's discussions (Annex 1) and the "basic elements for consideration" (Annex 2), the solution envisaged has been to link major existing research programmes to be used as a resource base and to provide a mechanism in which this resource could be made available to cooperate with national institutions and programmes in developing countries.
- (b) The best possible form to reach these objectives seems to be the creation of a Consortium which could provide the links which should be envisaged between major research programmes. It provides enough flexibility on membership, extent of participation in international activities of each member, maintaining at the same time the identity of each individual programme.
- (c) A Consortium type of cooperation would only need a small managerial structure composed of a Secretariat and a Board, and a provision of additional financial resources in order to strengthen on a more continuing basis the international role of the participating institutions.

2. Objectives of the Consortium

- (a) To assist, support and supplement national efforts of developing countries through cooperative research and development programmes to exploit the production potential of soybean for direct and indirect human food utilization as well as the related socio-economic aspects.
- (b) To provide the link of major centres in soybean research, to mobilize world expertise for the objective under point (a).
- (c) To provide the organizational structure for the cooperative arrangements under point (a) and their funding from multinational and national sources.
- (d) The Consortium should engage through its members in activities such as:
 - (i) identification of priority problems to be solved by research in the production, processing, in-country marketing and utilization of soybeans and the stimulation of research in its member institutions as well as in respective cooperating national institutions.
 - (ii) collection, evaluation, maintenance, manipulation and distribution of basic germ plasm and improved plant material for use in national agricultural research, development and production programmes.
 - (iii) identification and evaluation of the place of soybean in the cropping systems and its contribution in soil fertility to other crops.
 - (iv) collection and dissemination of information relevant to all aspects of soybean research and development in developing countries.
 - (v) organization of training activities at various levels for

personnel from developing countries as part of the cooperative arrangements of the Consortium.

3. Managerial structure of the Consortium

- (a) The membership of the Consortium should be limited to institutions fulfilling the following criteria:
- (i) They should provide a substantial research and training source base, relevant for use in developing countries.
 - (ii) They should have a status and a dimension capable of supporting international activities.

The following institutions will be represented in the Consortium in the initial stage: International Soybean Program (INTSOY) of the Universities of Illinois and Puerto Rico, (USA); All India Coordinated Soybean Research Project (AICSRP) of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, (India); National Research Centre of Soybean of Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuaria (EMBRAPA), (Brazil); International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) (Nigeria).

- (b) A Managerial Board should direct and decide on all activities of the Consortium, being responsible for the proposal and execution of the programme. Its Chairman should represent the Consortium before the CGIAR, TAC and other relevant organizations. It should be composed of the Directors or their designates of member institutions and a selected number of experts, but keeping the total number rather small (9 including the chairman). Nominations, functions and terms of reference of the Board must be elaborated.
- (c) An Executive Secretary should prepare the material for discussion and execute the decisions of the Board and perform the day-to-day functions on behalf of the Board. The Secretariat should be staffed by international staff and located at an institution which

can provide the logistics necessary for its international functions. This could be at an international organization such as FAO, at an international research centre such as IITA or at any other of the member institutions provided its international status could be assured. Functions and terms of reference of the Executive Secretary must be elaborated.

The participants are ready to join again in preparing a final proposal if TAC would consider pursuing the matter.

ANNEX 1

The need for international efforts in Soybean research - summary of the discussion of the Technical Advisory Committee

1. The TAC recognized early the high priority which should be accorded to soybean research and welcomed an undertaking given by USAID to examine the possibilities of expanding the ongoing international cooperative programme on soybean of the University of Illinois to the status of an international research resource base or centre, akin to those international centres already in existence.

A proposal to this end was presented to the TAC at its 5th Meeting in January 1973, and discussed in detail at its 6th Meeting in July 1973. The TAC wholeheartedly supported the proposal which in effect sought CGIAR support for the outreach, and not the core activities of INTSOY, and commended the excellence of the technical aspects of the programme proposed. Whilst this left little for the TAC to discuss on technical matters there was a clear consensus that the administrative aspects of the programme, especially a suitable mechanism to handle the international activities, needed considerable further discussion. The Committee finally recommended to the CGIAR that the Secretariat of TAC and CGIAR, USAID and the University of Illinois should initiate discussions aimed at the preparation of a suitable administrative mechanism for subsequent presentation to, and review by, the TAC.

It was reported at the 7th Meeting in February 1974, that considerable efforts by the CGIAR Secretariat had failed to find a solution to the problems created in seeking a means to tap the expertise at Illinois on behalf of the developing countries, as an international undertaking to be financially backed by the CGIAR. The only formula found acceptable to the CGIAR for financing would be for contracts with existing international centres for work to be done at, or through the good offices of, that centre. Several donors had repeatedly stressed that direct support to the University of Illinois would be out of the question. A new proposal, carefully eliminating any such suggestion had been prepared and the Chairman of TAC received the agreement of the Committee to continue his efforts with the CGIAR to facilitate participation of the University of Illinois whenever soybean work was proposed (e.g. at IITA) within the CGIAR

international centres system. The topic therefore remained as "unfinished business" for the Committee for some time.

The question was reopened on the invitation of the Chairman of TAC at its 12th Meeting in February 1976. The increasing importance of soybean suggested that means again be sought to overcome the problems of funding activities based in a developed country on the one hand, and the possible threat to loss of sovereignty over part of a university's own programme on the other hand. Discussion centred on possible organizational approaches, stemming from the earlier proposals, and concentrating on the development of a strong research effort in a truly tropical environment, in which both IITA and Brazil had shown considerable interest. Both could draw on INTSOY as a resource base and could function in an adaptive research and relay capacity with respect to their environment and to adjacent interested centres. The Committee reached a consensus supporting the earlier decision to accord high priority to soybean research, but stressed the need for a comprehensive approach which would also encompass research on development and utilization and not just on production. It was agreed that documentation should be updated in preparation for a subsequent meeting in which INTSOY representatives would be invited to participate.

A new consideration had subsequently been raised by the CGIAR Review Committee's Report which called for a levelling off in the growth of the system. This made it rather important that TAC, in its next substantive discussion on soybeans should reaffirm its priority rating and attempt to determine what aspects of research, if any, could and should be properly submitted to the CGIAR. It was confirmed also that TAC had inclined to favour a research network on soya, from the outset, rather than supporting a new centre or strengthening an existing one.

At the last (14th) Meeting of TAC, the programme presented by INTSOY was seen to have expanded well beyond the considerations of productive research. It was now emphasized that INTSOY offered to its collaborating countries a total production and utilization package, including basic economic studies, processing, marketing and complete use as food or as an industrial raw material. Thus, essentially it offered a development package. Agreements for cooperative research already existed with eleven countries and one international centre (IITA).

TAC's advice on the further development of the programme at the national level, and on the involvement of more advanced developing countries in the further dissemination of technologies would, however, be appreciated by INTSOY.

TAC particularly welcomed the association of INTSOY in research activities with IITA through a Memorandum of Agreement. This went a considerable way to meet the earlier expressed wishes of the TAC, although a need to find continued support for outreach activities was still recognized.

TAC considered two categories of cooperating countries, viz. those where soybean was recognized and needed, and thus, where immediate research work was required; and those where considerable work would be needed to conduct 'popularization' campaigns before following up with a package of production, handling and processing. This second category would require a full development project.

The successful implementation of a programme to introduce, or extend, the use of soyabeans for human consumption would often require local adaptive research and/or technology transfer work, leading to the establishment of village level, or central processing capacity. It might also be necessary to implement programmes to encourage the consumption of soyabean-based foods.

TAC was still anxious therefore to seek a mechanism whereby such interested countries as Brazil in particular, could be associated with further activities in support of soyabean research and especially by the dissemination of results. Methods of ensuring regular contacts between interested countries and organizations, and the proper exchange of research results and other material for wide dissemination also still needed to be discussed.

A suggestion was made by the FAO representative to TAC that a consortium be established between interested organizations such as INTSOY, IITA and EMBRAPA, with the involvement of FAO, to systematize linkages in research activities and to assist the further development of outreach work. TAC supported the idea, however time did not permit full discussion of this suggestion which would, however, remain on TAC's agenda for a future meeting after necessary preparation by the Secretariat and the institutions concerned have been made.

ANNEX 2

Basic elements for consideration

- (i) Successful assistance to developing countries to strengthen or build up their capability in soybean research needs a strong research base which produces results useful for developing countries in the production and utilization of soybean for direct and indirect human consumption.
- (ii) There seems to be no foremost need to newly establish such a research base in form p.e. as a single International Research Centre, because of the existence of well-developed research institutions of which INTSOY, based in the Universities of Illinois and Puerto Rico, is the most prominent one.
- (iii) But other important research programmes have meanwhile been developed in countries such as, in Brazil, EMBRAPA, India, AICSRP, and in the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria.
- (iv) The CGIAR and its Technical Advisory Committee have expressed interest in examining the needs and priorities for an international effort in funding soybean research for developing countries, but they would have to provide funds to an international body with direct responsibility to the CGIAR.