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**Changing Monitoring and Evaluation in the
CGIAR System**

(Agenda Item 7)

For Discussion: The attached draft document will be introduced by the SCOER Chair, Dr. Elias Fereres. iSC Members are invited to comment on the document before finalization.

iSC SECRETARIAT
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Since its inception in 1971, the CGIAR System and Centres have developed an elaborate system of monitoring and evaluations, consisting of Centre reviews, inter-Centre thematic or Systemwide programme reviews and System reviews¹. These serve, at least, three critical functions: (i) to reinforce accountability and provide assurances about the high relevance and quality of research; (ii) to identify and recommend required research and research-related programme and management adjustments; and (iii) to provide guidance for strategic and operational planning. The range of review mechanisms has been described elsewhere (see Reference list) and includes the following:

- CGIAR System Reviews undertaken periodically (three since the founding of the CGIAR in 1971) to evaluate the overall performance of the CGIAR System at large;
- External Programme and Management Reviews of Centres (EPMRs) commissioned by the Science Council (SC; previously the Technical Advisory Committee, TAC) every five or six years to evaluate respective Centres' programmes and management;
- Centre Board Commissioned External Reviews (CCERs) commissioned and managed by the Centres themselves, as in-depth evaluations of relevance and quality of science in specific research programmes or assessments of specific areas of operations and management;
- Inter-centre thematic (stripe) reviews, commissioned by the Science Council to evaluate specific high priority themes, e.g., Inter-Centre Roots and Tubers Review; Review of Plant Breeding Methodology;
- Regular External Reviews commissioned by the SC of the established Systemwide Programmes (SWPs), e.g., Systemwide Genetic Resources or Integrated Pest Management Programmes, or on the more recent Challenge Programmes;
- Project reviews (e.g., donors' special project reviews or reports) commissioned and/or conducted by donors at specific intervals in the project life-cycle (typically at the end of the project) or on a periodic basis, e.g., annually;
- Centre managed reviews, i.e., internal mechanisms to ensure science and management quality control (audits, internal project evaluations, annual work-planning meetings, staff performance assessments, etc.).

The scope of analysis of each type of review or evaluation depends on the specific purpose or objective at hand and, indeed, some reviews may be designed to be inputs into the evaluation process of others (CCERs become inputs into EPMRs).

¹ Review, evaluation and assessment are often used interchangeably, and particularly the first two terms. The term 'review' is sometimes used when emphasising the activity itself rather than the output from the activity, for which the term 'evaluation' is frequently referred. (Hence, the expression, "over-reviewed, but under-evaluated"). While this distinction is not always observed here, i.e., reviews and evaluations are sometimes used interchangeably in this document, the term evaluation particularly refers to the independent evaluations to be commissioned by the Science Council. A more subtle distinction is made between review/evaluation and 'assessment', with the latter denoting an analysis which takes on both an *ex-post* and *ex-ante* character, whereas evaluation emphasises more the former. Finally, the term 'impact assessment' refers to an analysis (assessment) of both past and future (expected) impacts.

The CGIAR has established a tradition of external reviews to provide a mechanism of transparency and accountability to the investors (CGIAR Members and others) and other stakeholders of the CGIAR System. Even though review procedures have been revised periodically in the past, the Third System Review (Strong *et al.*, 1998) recommended that the review processes should be streamlined. More recently, it has become evident that a revision of evaluation processes is urgently needed for a number of reasons. First, experience is now available on the extent to which the different external review types (CCERs, EPMRs, SWP Reviews, etc.) may be harmonised and streamlined and made complementary, thus potentially leading to efficiency gains. Second, an increasing proportion of the Centres' research agenda is being funded by targeted projects and, as such, is being reviewed by investors individually. As a result, concerns are expressed frequently indicating that the System is over-reviewed relative to other R&D organisations. Specifically, the major concerns expressed about the current monitoring and evaluation system, as it affects the Centres, include:

- EPMRs have involved long periods of preparation and implementation time. Up to six weeks of intensive effort by panel members is required to conduct the initial and main phases of the review, and significant additional time may be required for background reading and draft preparation. This long commitment effectively reduces the pool of world class scientists available to serve on panels, thus potentially compromising the quality of the review. It also inactivates the Centre under review for an inordinate period. Spending a relatively long period of time at the Centre, and writing the report there, can potentially compromise the panel's objectivity.
- EPMR costs can be high relative to their value to Centres and investors. In particular, opportunity costs for Centre staff and management are extremely high. Furthermore, judging by many Centre responses to the recent reviews, a moderate to high proportion of the panel's recommendations have already started to be implemented by the time the report is presented. One reason is that even after the review is completed, it may take up to a year for the report to be cleared by the Group.
- A major and increasing portion of the Centres' research and related activities are funded by special projects and reviewed as often as annually by the individual investors. These reviews have varying frequencies, formats and data requirements. They therefore take up a substantial amount of scientists' and management's time. One of the original objectives of the EPMRs was to provide an independent, authoritative evaluation of the Centres' research which would satisfy individual investors and make it unnecessary of them to conduct their own reviews. This objective appears not to have been met.
- The introduction of CCERs in the 1990's was expected to lead to a reduction in the size of the EPMR panels and/or time spent on the main review. To date, there has been limited success. This is because of the variable quality of CCERs and other self-assessment mechanisms, and the limited attention given to science quality or impact in many CCERs and other self-assessments.
- Management approaches (related to Board, finance and administration processes) are becoming more uniform across the Centres throughout the System in recent years. Thus, it would now be appropriate and much more efficient to monitor and evaluate management performance across all or groups of Centres rather than to carry out periodic management assessments individually for each Centre, as in EPMRs.

- A five-year cycle of external reviews by the Science Council may not be frequent enough for monitoring a Centre's evolution over time, nor for purposes of detecting and resolving problems at an early enough stage. It is desirable to have a more systematic and continuous process and one that is less traumatic.
- Attempts have been made to improve the coordination between EPMRs, SWP Reviews, and other Reviews. Nevertheless, some Centres continue to have parts of their agenda reviewed for different purposes by different panels in quick succession.

The iSC has analysed and discussed the concerns described above and has developed a number of ideas to generate change in the monitoring and evaluation system of the CGIAR. The objective is to identify the major pillars needed for the design of a new monitoring and evaluation system that will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of existing evaluation processes. One hoped-for outcome is that the new system will satisfy investor requirements and those of other stakeholders, particularly NARS partners, more completely than the traditional EPMR, and thus permit a reduction in the special project reviews and the consequent duplication of effort. Many of the ideas which follow benefited from suggestions from a structured sample of CGIAR stakeholders, including representatives from the Centre Directors Committee, Centre Board Committee, investors and national programmes.

The new approach to evaluation proposed here relies heavily on peer reviews, self-assessment, and on oversight by the Board of Trustees, thus fitting with the approaches followed by most research organizations around the world. If these ideas are accepted by the CGIAR, the specific procedures will have to be worked out by the Science Council and a transition period will be required. The iSC is exploring a transition procedure with the design and implementation of a more concise version of EPMR in the Program Review of ICRISAT which will be submitted to the iSC in June, 2003. Interim Terms of Reference and Guidelines for the ICRISAT review are given in Appendix I.

2 A FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING INDEPENDENT EVALUATION NEEDS FOR THE CGIAR SYSTEM

As part of the process of accounting to investors for resources utilised in the System, as well as planning for the future programme of the CGIAR, there is need for *independent* assessment and evaluation of CGIAR processes, activities, outputs, impacts, and accomplishments. The key to an independent assessment is that it be transparent, objective, and unbiased in terms of selection of subject (programmes and projects) and in process. Consequently, even when major proportions of the Centres' portfolios are made up of special projects reviewed directly by investors, there is still a need for independent evaluation by external reviewers who do not have a vested interest in the activity being evaluated.

The iSC analysed the evolution of the review and evaluation processes in the System and its future needs and reached the following conclusions:

- (a) In order to take advantage of the efficiency and effectiveness gains that are possible in the present evaluation and assessment system, there is a need to build a genuine self-assessment, evaluation and impact culture in the System, including amongst investors, within the SC, the Centres and with each scientist in the Centres. Within such a

culture, a much clearer focus on outputs and impacts within the Centres and in other entities within the System is highly desirable.

- (b) The monitoring and evaluation of the System should be based on the peer review of research proposals and on a comprehensive self-assessment process within Centres and within inter-Centre, Systemwide and Challenge Programmes.
- (c) Additionally, in order to build confidence in the centre self evaluation processes, periodic, external evaluations should be conducted to: (i) regularly monitor and verify the processes and results of the internal reviews and self-assessments; and, (ii) complement the internal processes where necessary.
- (d) While accountability is a main purpose for much of the monitoring and evaluation in the System, an equally important and closely linked purpose is to provide information and feedback for the strategic and operational planning of new areas of emphasis and areas to drop. It is evident that such planning should draw heavily on the self-assessments and impact assessments carried out in the Centres and within the context of the regional fora and other groups focusing on regional research needs and priorities.
- (e) In shifting the focus towards CGIAR outputs and impacts, special care needs to be taken to ensure balance between immediate or short term outputs/impacts and the relevance and quality of science and research that will help ensure the flow of future outputs and impacts.

The different types of monitoring and evaluation operations needed at the System level are:

- Regular monitoring and external evaluation of the Centre's self-assessment processes;
- Regular evaluation and impact assessment (*ex-ante*, *ex-post*) of the Systemwide and Challenge Programmes;
- *Ex-post* and *ex-ante* assessments of themes relevant for strategic planning at the System level;
- Synthesis and subsequent analysis of Systemwide issues emerging from the Science Council's commissioned Centre evaluations, SWP reviews, *ex-post* and *ex-ante* assessments that impact on System performance.

The evaluation and assessment needs for Centres', Systemwide and Challenge Programmes are discussed below, together with a final section that summarises the implications of the proposed changes in monitoring and evaluation for the System as a whole.

3 CENTRE EVALUATION PROCESSES

The proposed new model for the CGIAR Centre review and evaluation process outlined below takes into account two basic premises as follows:

Premise 1: The Board of Trustees (BOT) is the entity responsible for each Centre

The BoT's responsibility is to set policy and oversee all aspects of policy implementation by management, including the self-assessments and evaluation of outputs and impacts.

Premise 2: Investors, beneficiaries, and partners and the CGIAR require assurance of the BOT's performance

A second premise is that those who finance Centres, as well as Centre beneficiaries, partners in the public and private sector and the CGIAR, all wish to have independent assurance that Centre Boards have appropriate mechanisms in place and fulfil their governance and oversight functions satisfactorily. This requires systematic, periodic review of the Boards' performance across the System.

Based on these premises and the increased emphasis on internal self-assessments, the Centre review and evaluation process could proceed as follows:

- With oversight from the BoT, Centre management will design and implement a continuous self-assessment procedure. It will cover the relevance of research and related activities; the quality of science, outputs and impact; and the efficiency and effectiveness of operations, including partnerships. It will depend heavily on independent *ex-ante* and *ex-post* peer reviews. Centres should develop procedures for the peer review of research proposals, making use of the existing expertise in the CGIAR Centres network. They should also develop procedures for the review of specific subject areas and full programme areas. At present, subject matter and programme areas are reviewed by Centres with Centre Board Commissioned External Reviews (CCER's) Guidelines developed by iSC for the design of CCERs to cover programmatic areas of the Centres' activities are given in Appendix II, as one possible set of standards for use.
- Periodically (roughly every 3-5 years), the SC, through its Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation, will carry out an independent External Evaluation of each Centre. It will assess the Centre's processes for setting priorities and strategies, and will evaluate the strategic and medium terms plans (MTPs) in terms of their congruence with the CGIAR's mission, goals and priorities, and capacity for generating international public goods (IPGs). It will then concentrate on evaluating the Centre's *self-assessment processes* for assessing the relevance, quality and impact of research and related activities, and on the efficiency of resource use. It seems highly desirable to keep the governance and
- Management aspects of centre external evaluations closely linked to the assessment of the quality and relevance of science at the centres. The SC streamlined evaluation process will draw heavily on the results of the internal self-assessment including peer reviews, and thus will supplement the Centre-managed process. It may thus be considered to be an 'audit of audit processes' and will be far less costly and time consuming than the EPMRs.

- Centre MTPs will be assessed as a group every 3 years by the SC, to provide the CGIAR with a regular, complete overview of the System's research agenda and apparent gaps, and an evaluation of the overall agenda in the context of the CGIAR's mission and goals, and System priorities and strategies. Information from the SC commissioned external evaluations will feed into this process. The MTPs will then constitute the basic documents against which Centre performance will be evaluated.
- The Centres' achievements would be regularly reported in the common format provided by the CGIAR Logframe, currently adopted by all Centres. This information would be systematically reviewed by the SC in its oversight capacity. The Centres' actual achievement of milestones, outputs and impact each year would be compared with those projected in the MTPs, making judicious allowance for the unpredictability of scientific research. The SC would summarise results in a biennial 'Science Report' to the Group, emphasising scientific breakthroughs and notable achievements, as well as gaps and constraints. This would serve as a benchmark against other relevant scientific institutions and help document progress over the CGIAR System as a whole.
- The audit of Centre management processes or systems (Board, finances, administration) could be carried out periodically by a specialized unit in the System Office responsible for monitoring such management aspects, horizontally across all Centres, and to organise Centre specific audits, only under special circumstances.

It is important to recognise that, if the proposal above is accepted, the transition from the EPMR process to one based more heavily on self-assessments will take time and require careful planning. It will need a sustained effort by the Boards of Trustees and involve, initially, more work by the Centres. This should be compensated by the utility of the information generated by the internally managed reviews, for oversight, management, priority setting, and resource allocation purposes. Guidelines for the self-assessments must be drawn up by the SC in close consultation between the Centres, investors and other interested stakeholders in the System. There will also be the need to establish a System-level information system where Centres' performance information could be accessed.

4 PROGRAMME EVALUATION PROCESSES

Cross-centre programmes, including the Systemwide (SWPs) and Challenge Programmes (CPs), will constitute an increasingly important portion of the CGIAR's research agenda. It is envisaged that the steps in their monitoring and evaluation will be as follows:

- (1) New proposals for SWPs and CPs will be assessed by the SC for their potential contribution to meeting CGIAR goals, the 'added value' of the proposed institutional co-operation, scientific rigour and the comparative advantage of the CGIAR as a participant. The iSC has defined a set of criteria for the evaluation of candidate CPs as a possible set of standards to use (Appendix III).
- (2) The proposals will also be assessed for satisfactory proposed internal self-assessment mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating governance and management, the relevance and quality of science, outputs and impacts. They will also include a sunset clause.

- (3) Once the Programme is launched, a self-assessment mechanism should be operative with oversight from the SC, in a similar fashion to the monitoring process suggested for the Centres. *Ad hoc* evaluations will be commissioned by the SC if necessary.
- (4) At the end of the Programme, the SC will conduct an evaluation according to the pre-defined terms of reference, with special attention to whether it has:
 - (a) achieved the proposed outputs and impact; and,
 - (b) justified programme status by providing additional value above that which could have been achieved by the partners separately.

5 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SYSTEM

The proposed evolution of the CGIAR monitoring and evaluation processes, summarised in Table 1, implies the following:

- Development throughout the System of an ‘evaluation and impact’ culture, one with greater flexibility for adaptation to change through a continuous (rather than every five years) monitoring and evaluation process.
- An external evaluation process overseen by the SC based heavily on internal self-assessment procedures, following established guidelines, with oversight from the Board of Trustees. This will increase, initially at least, the workload of the Centres, SWPs and CPs, but will give them clearer ‘ownership’ of the process, benefit management, and the continuous monitoring should facilitate resource allocation decisions. In many cases, Centres and some SWPs have already in place self-assessment mechanisms that could be quickly adapted and strengthened to meet the future needs.
- An essential requisite for the self-assessment process to work is the need for the Boards to have the commitment and the appropriate mechanisms in place for effective implementation and management of the process.
- Regular independent evaluation of Centre research and research related outputs and processes by External Evaluations commissioned by the SC. External evaluations will be much shorter, cheaper and far less intrusive or disruptive. A wider pool of management and scientific evaluation experts should therefore be available to participate and the reviews will occupy Centre scientists for shorter continuous periods of time.
- Regular assessment of Centre-MTPs. This, together with an analysis of the ongoing SWPs and CPs, will provide an overview and basis for regular, e.g., every three years, discussion by the Group of the System’s overall research agenda.
- Annual independent evaluation of Centre/Programme outputs and impacts, as against MTP proposals. This requires an information system which, though it must be simple and easy to use, still represents an additional cost to the System. It is nevertheless essential for obtaining a regular overall view of the evolving CGIAR research agenda,

research achievements, impacts and gaps, and will provide the basis of the biennial ‘Science Report’ to the Group. Fuller analysis and interpretation of existing information generated by the Centres and Programmes (e.g. Strategic and Medium Term Plans, logframe milestones, outputs and impacts) will benefit the centres and the System as a whole.

- Mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations made in the various assessments and evaluations discussed here, must be explicitly developed by BoT and by the SC.

Table 1 - Monitoring and Evaluation Processes According to Area of Centre Activity

Area	Independent External Evaluation Processes
<p>Governance <i>(Policy and oversight)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessed regularly in the SC External Evaluations (EE), including the self-assessment process.
<p>Relevance of Science <i>(Ex-ante, ex-post impact assessment)</i></p> <p>Quality of Science <i>(Quality/quantity of scientific outputs; timely achievement of project milestones)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment, monitored regularly by the SC • Strategic plans assessed by SC for congruence with CGIAR goals and priorities • MTPs assessed for congruence with Strategic Plans and IPG (by SC and through the EE); • Regular independent evaluations from EE’s commissioned by the SC.

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ICRISAT EPR TORS AND GUIDELINES

Interim

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR EXTERNAL PROGRAMME REVIEW OF ICRISAT²

Objectives and Scope

The EPR seeks to inform CGIAR members that their investment is sound, or recommend measures to make it so. Members of the CGIAR and other stakeholders can be informed whether the Centre is doing its work effectively and efficiently. The EPR is both retrospective and prospective; and help ensure the Centres' excellence, relevance and continued viability, and the coherence of the CGIAR System's research agenda. The review is expected to be strategic in orientation and programmatically as comprehensive as the situation warrants.

The broad objectives of the EPR is to: a) provide CGIAR members with an independent and rigorous assessment of the relevance and quality of research and research-related activities and the contribution of the Centre they are supporting to its goals and those of the CGIAR; and b) to provide the Centre and its collaborators with assessment information that complements or validates their own evaluation efforts, including the CCERs.

The EPR Panel is specifically charged to assess the following:

- a) The Centre's mission, strategy and priorities in the context of the CGIAR's vision, priorities and strategies;
- b) The quality and relevance of the science undertaken, including the effectiveness and potential impact of the Centre's completed and ongoing research;
- c) The effectiveness and efficiency of programme management, including the mechanisms and processes for ensuring quality; and
- d) The accomplishments and impact of the Centre's research and related activities.

The topics expected to be covered by the EPR are listed below.

² These interim ToRs for the External Programme Review (EPR) of ICRISAT are derived from the standard ToRs for External Programme and Management Reviews (EPMR) of CGIAR Centres.

TOPICS TO BE COVERED

A. Mission, Priorities and Strategies

- The continuing appropriateness of the Centre's mission and goals in light of important changes in the Centre and its external environment since the previous external review.
- The policies, priorities and strategies of the Centre, their coherence with the CGIAR's goals (of poverty alleviation, natural resources management, and sustainable food security), and relevance to beneficiaries, especially rural women.
- The appropriateness of the roles of relevant partners in the formulation and implementation of the Centre's strategy and priorities, considering alternative sources of supply and the benefits of partnerships with others.

B. Relevance and Quality of Science

- The relevance and quality of the science practiced at the Centre.
- The effectiveness of the Centre's processes for planning, priority setting, quality management (e.g., CCERs, peer reviews and other relevance and quality assurance mechanisms), and impact assessment.

C. Effectiveness and Efficiency of Research Leadership and Programme Management

- The performance of the Centre's Board in programme oversight, the effectiveness of leadership throughout the Centre, and the suitability of the organization's research culture to its mission.
- The adequacy of the Centre's organizational structure and the mechanisms in place to manage, coordinate and ensure the excellence of the research programmes and related activities.
- The adequacy of resources (financial, human, physical and information) available for planning and implementing Centre's research programmes and the effectiveness and efficiency of their management.
- The effectiveness of the Centre's relationships with relevant research partners and other stakeholders of the CGIAR System.

D. Accomplishments and Impact

- Recent achievements of the Centre in research and research-related areas.
- The effectiveness of the Centre's programmes in terms of their impact and contribution to the achievement of the mission and goals of the Centre and the CGIAR.

GUIDELINES FOR THE EXTERNAL PROGRAMME REVIEWS OF ICRISAT³

INTRODUCTION

1. External Programme Review (EPR) of ICRISAT will be carried out in accordance with the process Guidelines outlined below and the Terms of Reference (ToRs) issued separately. The review is expected to be strategic in orientation and programmatically as comprehensive as the situation warrants. To be credible and acceptable, the review must strive to be objective, transparent and participatory. The reports must be direct, explicit and frank. These principles are observed throughout the review process.
2. Being a member of a review Panel is usually an interesting and rewarding experience. Moreover, Centre management and staff generally welcome the opportunity to discuss with Panel members their achievements, concerns and future plans. A healthy atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration in the interchange of ideas is the key to the success of the review. It helps to ensure that the recommendations of the Panel are realistic, are well understood by the Centre management and staff, and will be willingly, or even enthusiastically, implemented.

GUIDELINES

3. The EPR is expected to maintain high standards of quality and rigor, and be conducted by an independent and objective Panel. The EPR is expected to assess the Centre in terms of its: mission and overall strategy, programme priorities and strategies; relevance and quality of its science; achievements and impact; and effectiveness and efficiency of programme management, as noted in the ToRs.
4. It is inevitable that the conduct of a review requires the collaboration of numerous individuals; as well as a **process** that enables the various participants to collaborate effectively in a complex assessment that has to meet high expectations and tight deadlines. The main **participants** in the EPR are: the EPR Panel Chair and members; the CGIAR Members; the interim Science Council (iSC) and its Secretariat; members of the Centre's Board, management and staff; the Panel's support team of external consultants and resource persons from the iSC Secretariat; and the Centre's many partners at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Roles and Responsibilities

5. **The CGIAR, iSC and the iSC Secretariat.** The CGIAR establishes external review policies for the System, and EPR is conducted on its behalf, in accordance with the ToRs and Guidelines. For each review, CGIAR Members are requested to propose Centre-specific issues for the Panel to consider, and receive the review report. Once the timing of the EPR has been determined, generally according to the 5-yearly schedule, the iSC and its Secretariat are responsible for the coordination and management of the EPR, and they provide guidance

³ These interim Guidelines for the External Programme Review (EPR) of ICRISAT are derived from the standard Guidelines for External Programme and Management Reviews (EPMR) of CGIAR Centres.

on matters of review design and Panel composition, in consultation with the Centre's Board and management.

6. A senior staff member of the iSC Secretariat will serve as a resource person throughout the review process, accompanying the Panel Chair and members during their visits to the Centre and on field visits. The iSC Secretariat resource person also serves as the Panel Secretary. Besides substantive briefings on technical, programme and programme management matters, the resource person assists the Panel on process matters, including the logistical aspects of report preparation and production. However, to help safeguard the EPR Panel's independence and objectivity, the Secretariat resource person is not normally expected to undertake substantive review, analysis or writing responsibilities on behalf of the Panel.

7. **The Panel Chair, Members and Consultants.** The leadership and task management skills of the Panel Chair are obviously critical, as are the expertise and experience of Panel members. The Panel Chair is appointed by the iSC in consultation with the Centre. The Chair's involvement begins early on, when he/she is consulted regarding Panel composition, and briefed by the iSC Chair and the iSC Secretariat about the review process and key issues and concerns regarding the Centre. Once the review is underway, the Chair is responsible for ensuring that the Panel undertakes its assessment and completes the task in accordance with the ToRs and Guidelines for this EPR. Given the magnitude of the task, the complexity of the issues, the fact that many Panel members may be unfamiliar with the CGIAR, the importance of maintaining dialogue with the Centre, and the need to produce a report that reflects the consensus of the Panel, the Chair's task is a demanding one.

8. Because the report should reflect the judgement of the whole Panel, all members of the Panel are expected to contribute to all aspects of the review report. The staff member provided by the iSC Secretariat assists the Panel Chair and members throughout the process, as appropriate. Consultants are also provided to the Panel, as needed, for limited periods of time, for assessment of specialized areas. While these consultants and resource person from the iSC Secretariat (and sometimes an iSC member) support the Panel's efforts as members of a team, ultimately the Panel is responsible for formulating the assessment and recommendations of the EPR report. However, all team members (Panel Chair, members, consultants and resource persons) are expected to safeguard the confidentiality of the review materials and the panel report until the report is discussed by the iSC.

9. **The Centre Board, Management and Staff.** The Centre's Board, management and staff play a crucial role in the conduct of the review. They are heavily involved in planning the review, and subsequently in organizing the review and preparing for the Panel's visits to the Centre and to the field. Once the review is underway, it entails a significant degree of interaction between the EPR Panel and Centre staff, as part of a valuable two-way learning experience. Throughout the process, the collaboration and inputs of Centre management and staff are essential for the review to run smoothly and for the report to be credible and acceptable.

10. **The Centre's Partners.** Representatives of national agricultural research systems (NARS), regional fora, bilateral and multilateral agencies, NGOs and the private sector are important partners of CGIAR Centres, and their input is considered essential for the viability of the EPR review process. As part of the review, representatives of such organizations are consulted for their views on the Centre's long-term strategy, programme priorities and strategies and collaboration. This may be through Panel visits and/or meetings, as well as

through questionnaires or interviews. The Panel may also visit or contact managers and researchers from other CGIAR Centres and other relevant institutions with which the Centre collaborates. Such consultations are valuable as a means of assessing the Centre's role in the CGIAR and in the global context. Given the vast number of collaborators or potential partners of a Centre, such meetings must be limited. Their outcome is considered important, however, and is expected to feed into the Panel's assessment of the Centre.

Panel Composition and Report

11. **Panel Composition.** The review Panel is composed of experts in research and research management areas relevant to the Centre being reviewed who can carry out a comprehensive assessment and give the CGIAR their best judgement about the past performance and future potential of the Centre. The Panel is expected to make an independent assessment based on its own observations and other information available to it, particularly the evidence provided through CCERs (see below).

12. The EPR Panel normally consists of about five members, including the Chair. Panel members are generally selected for their ability to focus on the institution-wide issues relating to the Centre's mission, long-term strategy, research priorities and strategies and programme management and oversight. To ensure adequate coverage of the ToRs, the Panel composition usually meets the following requirements: a) the Chair and at least two Panel members are familiar with the CGIAR; b) at least two Panel members have a technical background relevant to the Centre being reviewed; and c) at least two Panel members have expertise in research organization, management and oversight.

13. **Panel Report.** The EPR report is expected to present an accurate account of the outputs and what is known about the impact of the Centre during the review period. It is expected that in-depth reviews of particular programme or programme management or programme oversight would have been undertaken earlier through CCERs - and would not normally need to be undertaken by the EPR Panel. This enables the EPR Panel to concentrate on the important strategic issues rather than on specialized detailed assessments of each programme, project or activity.

14. Because research in the CGIAR System is a long-term undertaking, the problems the Centre is working on may not have visible outputs until several years. For this reason, the review report is expected to provide convincing evidence on the relevance and quality of the completed and ongoing research, and the efficiency with which the work is conducted, as a surrogate measure of the potential impact of the Centre's current programme of work.

15. Although the EPR report is expected to be comprehensive, the Panel has considerable leeway in deciding on what issues it would focus in depth. The review report highlights the most significant issues faced by the Centre and makes recommendations on how the Centre (or the CGIAR) could address them. It provides assurances and convincing evidence to indicate that other aspects of the Centre's programmes and management (i.e., those not covered by the Panel's report in depth) are effective and efficient. It also comments on the effectiveness of the Centre's internal review system on which the EPR was based, and on how well the Centre has addressed the recommendations of the other reviews commissioned by the Centre.

Integration with Centre Reviews

16. It is expected that some detailed high-quality CCERs would have been completed within 2 or 3 years preceding the main phase of the EPR. The CCERs are undertaken by specialized external consultants, assisted by members of the Centre Board and staff as resource persons (not participants). They are expected to cover at least portions of the Centre's main research programmes (including their relevance, direction, science quality, achievements, and, to the extent possible, impact) as well as aspects of Centre management (including programme governance, research organization and management, financial and human resource allocation for research and its management effectiveness).

17. The Boards would decide which programme related CCER reports are made available, at the time of their completion, to the iSC and its Secretariat. These reports, along with comments from the iSC and Secretariat staff, are made available to the EPR Panel, along with reports of the follow-up actions planned or taken by the Centre's management and Board. Other analytical papers - particularly internal assessments of programme performance and impact - and other background documentation prepared by the Centre are also provided to the Panel, at the discretion of the Centre. The Centre is responsible for providing this information in an easily accessible and usable form, so that the EPR Panel's conclusions can be based on a comprehensive and thorough review of all aspects of the Centre.

18. The CCERs - which are often very detailed and comprehensive - provide essential evaluative information to the EPR Panel on particular aspects of the Centre's programme and management. Their availability in advance of the main phase of the EPR helps create an integrated system of Centre- and CGIAR-commissioned reviews of each Centre, and enables the EPR to be forward-looking and to focus more on strategic, rather than operational, issues.

19. The EPR, then, can serve as a vehicle for analyzing, verifying, and synthesizing the information already available through CCERs and other reviews, and for making this information available to a wider audience outside the Centre. While the Centre's Board and management are responsible for ensuring that the internal evaluation system is sound (in terms of scope, coverage, quality and timeliness), judgements on the adequacy of a Centre's quality assurance system, including the processes for undertaking CCERs and other mechanisms of peer review, are the responsibility of the EPR Panel.

Review Design and Board Assessment Visit

20. Interactions between the Centre Board and the Panel form an essential component of every review, given the Board's important role in the CGIAR System. Hence, early in the process, prior to (or sometimes during) the first visit of the full Panel to the Centre (see below), the Panel Chair along with iSC Secretariat resource person and possibly one other Panel member or consultant **attend a Board meeting**, and interview Trustees concerning Board and Centre matters related to the overall research and programme strategy, programme oversight and management, research and research-related priorities and strategies. This design visit helps ensure the participation of the Board in the planning and design of the upcoming review, including the identification of key issues and concerns of relevance to the EPR.

21. The design visit also provides the Panel Chair and selected members or consultant an opportunity to review any documentation provided to the Board, interact informally with

individual Board members, observe at least one formal meeting of the Board and its committees, and serve as an element in assessing the Board's effectiveness and operations in so far as these apply in assessing the relevance and quality of programmes and the future evolution of the Centre. The preliminary assessment of the Board is made available to the Panel (but not the Centre), and is modified as appropriate during the main phase of the EPR (see below).

22. In assessing Board effectiveness and operations, the Panel takes into account the key legal documents governing the Centre - particularly the Establishment Agreement, the Headquarters Agreement, and the Constitution of the Centre. It also keeps in mind the main provisions of the *Guidelines for CGIAR Boards*, particularly the guideline on the "Role, Responsibilities and Accountability of Centre Boards of Trustees", as they apply to programme oversight, leadership and management.

Panel Appointment and Briefing Phase

23. Following the Panel Chair's visit for discussions with Board members (or sometimes coinciding with it) and the issues identified, the **full Panel will be appointed**. Once appointed, the Panel will receive **briefings from iSC Secretariat staff and Centre management** on the recent developments in the CGIAR and the Centre being reviewed, and on the processes, quality and content of the CCERs made available to the Panel. The Panel will be briefed by the Panel Chair and Secretary in a virtual mode. Subsequently, the Panel will receive a virtual overview briefing on the Centre's current activities and future plans, and further elaboration of the strategic issues to be covered by the review team. The Panel will prepare preliminary drafts of key sections based on an agreed outline of the report which will be completed during the main phase several months later.

24. Briefings in a virtual mode by the iSC Secretariat resource person cover technical and programme management/oversight matters such as the CGIAR's mission, priorities, strategies, programmes and impact assessments as well as management matters including Board's programme governance. These briefings by the iSC Secretariat also cover the CGIAR's expectations regarding the scope and process of the review (as outlined in the TORs and Guidelines for EPR); as well as an overview of programme and programme management issues of relevance to the Centre being reviewed. The resource person from the iSC Secretariat also provide substantive and process-oriented support as requested by the Panel Chair.

25. The Panel then receives briefings, e.g., through documents and PowerPoint presentations shared with the Panel; a structured e-mail conference among Centre senior staff and Panel members; and tele- or videoconferencing, from Centre management and senior staff on the Centre's long-term strategy, research priorities and strategies, programmes, programme (research and research-related) management and research leadership. These briefings focus particularly on the Centre's recent developments and achievements, CCER findings and conclusions, and future plans. In addition, the Panel seeks additional information from other Centre staff, on a selective basis, as needed; and invites Centre staff members during main phase, either individually or in small groups, to voluntarily share their concerns, if any, regarding Centre-wide programme and research management issues.

26. To help ensure that these briefings and discussions are as comprehensive and up-to-date as possible, and to enable the Panel to obtain a comprehensive overview of the

Centre's work, the Centre is expected to provide to the iSC Secretariat and Panel members, in advance, copies of the recent CCERs and other assessments undertaken, as well as other relevant Centre-related documentation (such as the latest Strategy document, Medium Term Plan, and other relevant policy documents or analytical papers prepared by the Centre). For the list of documents generally provided to the Panel by the iSC Secretariat and the Centre, see Attachment I. The Centre should prepare documents specifically for the review, and these should include those indicators of scientific quality as agreed by iSC, Panel Chair and Secretary: e.g., publications, breakthroughs, solutions to problems, new technologies and other products, awards and other recognition of scientists).

27. Once the briefings are completed, the Panel spends few days to prepare preliminary drafts and précis of sections based on the outline of the report agreed by the Panel and the writing responsibilities assigned by the Panel Chair. This ensures that the Panel undertakes a significant amount of preliminary drafting prior to the main phase of the review, and continue its assessment of the key issues and concerns during the period between the briefing phase and the main phase.

Field Visits

28. To help ensure that the EPR Panel's assessments are adequately grounded in the reality of the Centre's circumstances, the Panel members are expected to undertake country field visits, jointly determined by the Centre, Panel Chair and the iSC Secretariat. The field visits cover the major non-headquarters based operations of the Centre, so as to provide a realistic assessment of the Centre's field operations, working conditions, and interactions with NARS and others in the region. These visits by Panel members (as smaller "sub-panels", if necessary) are often few days each, and are undertaken before the main phase of the review.

29. A senior staff member from the Centre normally accompanies the (sub) Panel members on these field/country visits, but does not participate in substantive discussions with country officials or representatives of regional fora. The resource person from the iSC Secretariat helps coordinate the field visits and accompany the Panel members, as requested by the Panel Chair. These visits supplement any surveys of NARS and Centre staff, organized by the resource person from the Secretariat in advance of the main phase.

Main Phase and Report Writing

30. The EPR Panel visits the Centre for a period of about ten days to undertake the **main phase** of the review, and to bring its report to a semi-final draft stage. As noted earlier, the Centre is expected to have made available to the Panel, well in advance of this visit (through the Panel Chair and Secretary), copies of CCER reports and other relevant documents; and the Panel is expected to have completed the field visits and been adequately briefed by the resource person from the iSC Secretariat. The Panel is thus expected to be reasonably well informed about the Centre and be familiar with other detailed evaluations of its specific programmes and activities by the time it undertakes its own assessment of the Centre.

31. The EPR Panel's report is expected to **focus on the four topics covered in the ToRs** - namely, the Centre's: a) mission, strategy and priorities; b) relevance and quality of science; c) effectiveness and efficiency of research leadership and programme management; and d) what is documented about accomplishments and impact. The report is expected to be succinct and written in plain language, focusing on strategic issues. It can, where relevant, propose

forward-looking recommendations on overall direction and priorities (rather than on detailed programme content or operational management). The writing style is expected to be direct, explicit and frank.

32. Since descriptive material and detailed analysis is expected to be kept to a minimum, a report of about 50 pages - with suitable cross-referencing (not summaries) of the CCERs - is expected. However, if the CCERs available to the Panel are inadequate in quality, coverage or depth, the EPR Panel's report is expected to compensate for gaps through its own analysis and assessment.

33. The drafting of the EPR report is completed soon after the main phase visit, and the **final draft chapters are shared** with the Centre management to ensure their accuracy and completeness. The Panel **Chair formally transmits** the document to the iSC Chair. If convenient, the main findings and recommendations of the **final EPR report** are normally expected to be **presented by the Panel Chair to the Centre Board, management and staff.**
Response and Follow-up

34. The **Board and management** of the Centre under review are expected to submit a formal **written response** to the EPR report, addressed to the iSC. Then the iSC **discusses** the report in the presence of the Panel Chair and representatives from the Centre (including the Board Chair and Director General), and **prepares a commentary**, including recommendations for follow-up action by the CGIAR or the Centre. **The EPR report, the Centre's written response, and the iSC commentary are then simultaneously distributed to and considered by ExCo and also posted on the Web where it is available to CGIAR member agencies and all interested stakeholders prior to the formal discussion by the Group at its annual meeting.**

CONCLUSION

35. EPRs provide the CGIAR and other stakeholders very valuable information on the accomplishments and future prospects of each Centre funded by the Group. Because they undertake a comprehensive strategic assessment of all key aspects of the institution, such reports from an independent external Panel can provide much needed assurance to the CGIAR Members - as well as to the Centre's Board, management, staff and partners - about the Centre's direction and its institutional capacity to produce the desired research and research-related results. If significant changes in direction, scope, focus, or mode of work are required, these too can be made on a systematic and periodic basis, based on Board-endorsed EPR recommendations. In any case, the Centre and the System benefit from such reviews.

CENTER COMMISSIONED EXTERNAL REVIEWS (CCERs): GUIDELINES FOR THEIR DESIGN AND EXECUTION⁴

Definition

The term covers external reviews commissioned by the Centers in any area of their business (e.g., a specific research programme, a support service, financial administration, cross-cutting themes, etc). Interim Science Council (iSC) formulates the following guidelines to aid the Centers in the design of their self-assessment processes, as required in the iSC paper entitled Changing Monitoring and Evaluation in the CGIAR System.

Objectives

The primary purpose of the CCERs is to serve as decision making tools for the Center's Board and Management, with the potential to provide more focused and timely inputs than is usually possible from the EPMRs. This is particularly useful in planning, re-assessing and/or redirecting programme focus to ensure continued funding and in addressing new research challenges. A second purpose is to provide inputs 'building blocks' (1) into the evaluation process, so that these can become more streamlined and focused on strategic and crosscutting issues (4).

Not all CCERs are designed to serve both purposes, and indeed they may even be partly incompatible. For example, 'independence' of the reviewers would be a requirement for the second purpose, but not necessarily for the first. However, new evaluation procedures will focus closely on the Centres' self-assessment processes for assessing the relevance, quality, outputs and impact of their research and related activities. CCERs are excellent tools at the Centres' disposal for directly addressing these topics. They are, therefore, expected to be used widely for this purpose, whatever additional ones are commissioned for other reasons. The objective of this note is to set out criteria, which the iSC recommends should be taken into account for the CCERs designed to evaluate research and related activities. The note draws heavily on existing TAC/CGIAR Secretariat documents, both formal and informal.

Experience to Date

Although generally favourable, experience so far with CCERs has been mixed, both with respect to how far they have served the purposes of the Centres themselves and how far they have contributed to the EPMR process. With respect to the latter, deficiencies cited by EPMR review teams and by the Centres include: inappropriate TOR, the lack of involvement of the Boards of Trustees (BoT), weak panel composition, variable quality between programmes within centres, and insufficient treatment of the relevance and quality of research and related activities (5). Part of the reason for these shortcomings is that the two main purposes of the CCERs have sometimes been confounded.

⁴ TAC working paper revised after discussion at TAC 81 in Bogor, Indonesia, September 2001. Revised 23-04-2003.

Criteria for Design, Execution and Follow-up

Involvement of the Board of Trustees: At the outset, it must be emphasized that BoT must be adequately involved in CCERs, as a regular part of their oversight function. Specific areas of intervention are suggested below. In practice, this participation may best be channeled through the respective committee (e.g., Programme) of the Board.

Panels: Panel chair and members should be approved by the BoT. The panel ‘should include the critical professional expertise required for assessing the enterprise under review. The people selected should be leading figures in the fields for which they were selected’ (4). The independence of the panel should be ensured to the extent possible given the internal commissioning process. Panel members with recent connections to the Center should be avoided. The prevailing view is that ‘Board members, but not Center management, could be resource people for the CCER if the Board desires’ (4). In the past, it was ‘strongly advised that Board members should not serve as members of the CCER team’ (3), but in fact Board members may bring particular insights into the topic under review and strengthen their oversight role through participation in them. Centres will therefore take decisions about the composition of the panel bearing in mind the potential conflict between independence on the one hand and expertise and insight on the other, and must expect to be evaluated on the adequacy of their decision and quality of the product in each case. It is self-evident that the quality of the panel is, in general, inversely related to the time allowed between planning and execution. First choice experts are too often already engaged for the dates required. Nine to 12-month planning frames are usually required to ensure first class reviews.

Timing: Earlier guidelines (4) suggested that since the results were expected to feed into the EPMP of a given year, the CCERs should not pre-date the EPMP too much (i.e. be more than 3-5 years old). Under the newly proposed evaluation procedure, the frequency and coverage of CCER’s (and/or other review processes) is one aspect of the quality of the overall internal evaluation procedure which will be assessed periodically by the External Review (replacing the EPMP). This leaves Centres with flexibility and discretion in setting their CCER schedule, according to the dynamics of the enterprise reviewed, the nature of any previous recommendations, and whether alternative review procedures are employed as well.

Terms of Reference: The terms of reference (TOR) of CCERs carried out as part of a Centre's internal evaluation strategy should be approved by the BoT. One of the main criticisms by EPMP panels of the CCERs carried out to date is that the TOR have been insufficiently specific. In programmatic areas, the panel’s assessment of the relevance and quality of science should be required and should be supported as far as possible with objective evidence. The exercise is conceived of not as an end in itself, but as an essential feature of solid planning for the future and for securing necessary financial support.

Under this scenario, the relevance of a Centre’s overall research agenda will be assessed externally as a matter of course at regular intervals by External Review panels and the Science Council). Consideration will be given to the balance of programmes across the Centre's overall portfolio and, particularly, to the process used by the Centre in evaluating the relevance of its own work and setting priorities. Clear links between priorities and resource allocation will be looked for, especially in the case of unrestricted funds, and deviations caused by special project funding will be identified and explained. CCERs used in programmatic areas provide a valuable opportunity to contribute to this aspect of the internal

evaluation and priority setting process, because they allow a specialised team the opportunity to review a specific part of the agenda in detail. It is therefore recommended that the CCER panels should be specifically charged with assessing the relevance of the research under review. The criteria used would include those used generally by the CGIAR⁵, and should be set out in the TOR.

With respect to the quality of research and related activities, TAC reiterates that good science is an essential output for the CGIAR as an international research organisation. It is an indispensable, but not sufficient, requirement for impact. The quality of science at a CGIAR Centre will be evaluated on the basis of a balanced array of different kinds of outputs and impacts.

In this context, conventional indicators of science quality (e.g., publications in refereed journals, science awards) need careful interpretation. Results in some fields are slower to obtain than in others, and inter-disciplinary work may be more difficult to publish. Nevertheless, such indicators provide a quantified, objective basis for opinions and comparisons. At the same time, publication in respected journals is the most immediate and effective way for the Centres to lay claim to the intellectual property of their scientists' research. In addition, a simple analysis of the authorship of publications provides interesting evidence on the nature and effectiveness of partnerships. For example, the proportion of publications in which centre staff, NARS scientists or researchers from advanced institutions are the principle (vs. co-authors) can be quantified to show trends over time. As good research organisations, Centres should have the up-dated databases on quality indicators (e.g., scientists' credentials, citation numbers, awards and publications) available for a wide range of uses. A prerequisite for a high quality evaluation is having high quality documentation as input, and the panel must be able to support their opinion with objective evidence. It is therefore recommended that the TOR of CCERs in programmatic areas should include making an analysis of the quality and quantity of publications (e.g., refereed and other journals, books, symposia proceedings, etc.), awards and other indicators of scientific capacity, over a period of time by scientist/year in the area under review. This kind of analysis provides invaluable information on the health of a research programme, provided it is adequately interpreted and complemented with information on other outputs and impact.

Project outputs (e.g., improved cultivars released and adopted, areas under improved farming practices, reductions in pesticides, software, vaccines) achieved, as specified in the logframes, are being quantified by the Centres themselves as part of good project management. Here again, the exercise is easier to perform in some areas, e.g., germplasm development, than others, e.g., natural resource management and policy. But as the 'outputs and impact culture' of the CGIAR becomes firmly established, analysis of this information should be a minimum essential requirement for CCER panels to support their opinion on the quality of science in the specific context of the goals of the CGIAR.

The steps from outputs to delivery mechanisms and impacts on poverty are far more complex, and attribution of impacts to research as one of many other components of change becomes increasingly difficult. As pointed out in TAC (2001b), the 'output list of the CGIAR is not yet matched by its impacts list' (6). It goes beyond the scope of this note to define how far the quality of the Centres' scientific research should reasonably be judged in terms of its

⁵ The criteria used are contribution to CGIAR goals, the production of international public goods; probability of success; cost effectiveness, alternative sources of supply and comparative advantage.

impact on poverty, especially in parts of the world with severe weaknesses in NARS. We should point out, however, that this is an urgent ongoing task for SPIA and investors themselves. Meanwhile, the excellent discussion on the theme in TAC (2001b) concludes that Centres who do not already have one 'should develop and implement a plan for mainstreaming impact assessment activities' (6). While this theme is being debated and rationalised in greater detail, it is recommended that evaluations of the quality of science must at least assess Centres' outputs as objectively as possible, supporting opinions with quantified data generated by the Centres, and go as far as the specific case allows in assessing impacts.

Recommendations and follow-up: CCER reports are expected to include clear recommendations, duly supported by the evidence discussed by the panel in the text. The Board and Centre Management should make a written response to the recommendations and the follow-up actions monitored by the Board. The response should be made available to the External Review panel.

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ISC CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING CHALLENGE PROGRAM PROPOSALS IN PHASE III OF THE PILOT PROCESS⁶

Using the eight criteria adopted by the Group at AGM '01 for developing the full Challenge Programme proposals, the iSC has formulated the following specific set of indicators to guide the iSC members in systematically and consistently evaluating the full proposals.

To facilitate the application of the criteria, the many ideas/elements enumerated or implied in the original set of criteria were reformatted into two broad categories, namely Relevance and Quality, and Governance and Budget, broken down further into four and three subcategories, respectively.

The two lists of criteria (i.e., the original set and the reformatted set) are consistent with each other but they are not identical. The iSC formulation differs in emphasis from the original set of criteria in three ways:

First, the iSC expects the proponents to make a persuasive case on why and how the expected results can be uniquely obtained through a Challenge Programme as opposed to other CGIAR research channels, namely Systemwide Programmes and Center Core Programmes (Item A.1.c).

Second, the iSC expects to see evidence of consistency with research priorities established by regional research organizations (Item A.1.b).

And third, the iSC expects further elaboration on the Collaborative Arrangements:

- clear evidence that consultations have been held with partners in the regions (Item A.4.b)
- indications of participatory research, use of beneficiaries' knowledge and experiences, and beneficiaries' interest in and ownership of the subject (Item A.4.d)
- transparency in the administration of competitive grants, if any (Item A.4.c)

The above three elements were implied in the original set but the iSC feels very strongly that they need to be highlighted (or made explicit) to reinforce Planks 4 and 5 of the new CGIAR Vision and Strategy which have to do with regional planning and priority setting and with opening up the System to new research and development partners.

⁶ Please note that these guidelines are applicable only to the assessment of proposals in the Pilot Process. Guidelines for the CP Regular process will be proposed at a later date, in particular to accommodate a broader range of submissions, including regional CPs.

The full CP proposal, including a business plan, should not exceed 50 pages in length, excluding appendices. The suggested general outline is as follows

1. Project summary (not to exceed two pages).
2. Table of contents.
3. Project description and business plan.
4. References cited.
5. Budget; current and pending support.
6. Biographical sketches of main participants (Appendix).
7. Facilities, equipment, and other resources (Appendix).

The quality of the proposal will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

A. **RELEVANCE AND QUALITY**

1. Relevance of the expected outputs

- a. The proposed research programme aims at delivering outputs that very significantly enhance the objectives sought by the CGIAR, namely: poverty reduction, food security, and sustainability of resource use.
- b. The proposal shows evidence of consistency with research priorities established by regional research organizations.
- c. The expected results can uniquely be obtained through a Challenge Programme as opposed to the other CGIAR research channels, namely: Systemwide Programmes and Center Core Programmes.
- d. The expected outputs are clearly defined and are achievable within the proposed time frame and budget.

2. Quality of science and qualifications of the research team

- a. The research hypotheses are clearly specified in relation to the proposed challenge, and the proposed research methodology is directly relevant to the outputs sought.
- b. The research is based on state of the arts knowledge in the domain, and the proposal explicitly places itself relative to the most recent advances in the field.
- c. The research itself is likely to lead to important advances in science and knowledge.
- d. The core parties in the programme are the best qualified in terms of research expertise and prior research achievements to carry on the research and deliver the benefits.

3. Strategy for utilizing and applying results

- a. The research proposal is accompanied by an explicit plan for delivery, communication, and dissemination of results and outputs, to maximize benefits to CGIAR stakeholders.
- b. The research proposal addresses not only the fundamental scientific aspects but also the applied and adaptive stages of the research, in a realistic manner, and the uptake of research outputs in order to produce high impact outcomes.

4. Collaborative arrangements and beneficiaries involvement in research

- a. The CP involves at least two CGIAR Centers and at least two NARS from the South. In addition other institutions from the North and South are slated to handle specific programme components or projects; CPs should involve the best institutions from the North and the South that can contribute to solving the problem. The institutions from the North should preferably bring their own resources to the consortium.
- b. The proposal gives clear evidence that consultations have been held with proposed research partners, in particular in the regions of relevance. The synergies, value added and mutual benefits among partners are clear and their commitments in cash and in kind are spelled out.
- c. If competitive grants are to be used, procedures under which this would be done are clearly explained.
- d. Participatory research, use of beneficiaries' knowledge and experiences, and beneficiaries' interest in and ownership of the research subject are outlined and pursued by the CP starting with the planning stage.

B. GOVERNANCE AND BUDGET

1. Governance and management

- a. Governance and management arrangements are defined explicitly in the joint venture agreement and in the Business Plan. They are flexible and adaptable to the specific needs of the CP and the structures are appropriate to the size and nature of the programme.
- b. The CP is to be coordinated by an “independent” manager, operating on behalf of the core parties with clearly defined reporting responsibilities. The Coordinator is to be recruited from a core party or from outside, and appointed for a fixed term under the terms and conditions of an agreed core party.
- c. The arrangements for administrative support (to be provided by one of the core parties) are satisfactory. The Board of each core party is accountable for the input resources and delivery of agreed outputs of that core party.

- d. There are clear lines of accountability and clear institutional arrangements spelling out roles, responsibilities, rules of operation, and conflict resolution in a formal agreement signed off at the appropriate legal level by each core party or CP associate party.
- e. There are clear and satisfactory arrangements for handling legal responsibilities and there is full adherence to the CGIAR's IPR policy.

2. Performance evaluation and impact analysis

- a. Internal peer review mechanisms for quality and relevance and for performance evaluation are present and sound.
- b. Procedures are in place for the continuing monitoring of progress and adjustments of the programme (as needed) in the course of implementation.
- c. Indicators are identified and benchmark information is available to measure project impact.
- d. The CP proposal should include an internal time-bound work plan on the project's progress, specifying stages and milestones, with intermediate deliverable products subject to independent peer reviews.

3. Budget and finance

- a. The business plan outlines a strategy to mobilize new resources (in cash and in kind), considering equity in the relation between benefits and costs of the programme, and the need to balance contributions between North and South.
- b. The proposed budget and its allocation are appropriate.
- c. Preliminary contacts confirm that there is sufficient donor willingness to commit funding for the first 3-5 years of the programme.