

Item 12

AGD/TAC: IAR/80/10
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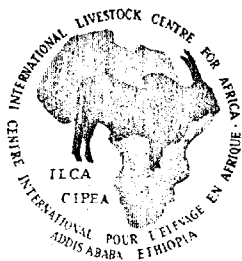
CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

COMMENTS OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES

ON

ILCA MISSION REPORT

TAC Secretariat
January, 1980



ADDIS ABABA ETHIOPIA

Dr R. Cummings
Chairman
CGIAR Technical Advisory Committee
c/o FAO Rome
Italy

20 December 1979

Dear Ralph:

TAC REPORT ON ILCA

On the basis of comments received from ILCA Board and Programme Committee members, and on the authority of the Chairman of the Board, I have pleasure in transmitting the following observations on the report of the second TAC mission to ILCA (document AGD/TAC : IAR/79/8).

1. The Board, Programme Committee and management of ILCA are appreciative of the time that TAC has devoted in its busy itinerary to the programme and status of ILCA, and wishes especially to record its appreciation to the Chairman of TAC who has personally led the group which attended Board and Committee meetings and visited parts of the ILCA programme over the period November 1978 to April 1979.
2. The report that has been prepared as a result of these visits clearly reflects the desire of the TAC mission to be fair and constructive in its assessment of ILCA. In presenting the following comments on the report for the consideration of TAC, the intent is only to improve the accuracy and impact of what is a helpful and, at times, illuminating commentary. The comments are divided between those that relate to the general balance and structure of the report, to errors of fact or interpretation, and to points of clarification.

General Comments

3. The report is well written and structured but is too long to hold the attention of those without a deep interest in ILCA and to bring out the crucial points with maximum impact. In revising the report, it is suggested that the summary be brought to the beginning and as much as possible of the purely descriptive material eliminated or incorporated in annexes.
4. In this connection, one paragraph on the history of ILCA, one on its mandate, and one on the present and previous TAC mission might be regarded as adequate introduction to the main body of the report, which starts with the present section IV. The main text of sections I - III, appropriately amended and edited, might then be relegated to annexes. The present annexes, with the exception of the report of the first TAC mission to ILCA, seem hardly necessary.

5. It would be appropriate to stress at an early stage that the present mission's appreciation of the ILCA programme stemmed predominantly from the environment of Board and Programme Committee meetings, which, though valuable in giving insight into specific issues and matters of concern to the Board and management, is not the best environment to assess the overall strength of the programme and its accomplishments. Not only were field visits restricted in time but they omitted important parts of the field programme.

6. The latter point is relevant to the fact, emphasised further at the 22nd Meeting of TAC in July, 1979, that TAC inclines more favourably to the arid zones and less favourably to the humid zones than do the Board and management of ILCA. So far as the humid zones are concerned, only one member of the TAC group visited the subhumid zone and no one visited the forest belt, where ILCA is working to improve small ruminant production. The TAC mission may wish to retain its words of caution regarding livestock production in the humid zone, but ILCA is enthusiastic concerning its selected field of activity. Moreover the first TAC mission to visit ILCA approved strongly ILCA's decision to diversify its programme out of the arid zones into the zones of higher potential.

7. It is suggested also that, with respect to the terms of reference of the present mission, it should be acknowledged that these were not seen by the management of ILCA before the draft report was first issued.

Errors of Fact or Interpretation

8. Errors of fact are commendably few. Some of the observations that follow are by way of updating and are presented for incorporation at the discretion of TAC.

9. It is wrong to say (para 5) that the ILCA programme and structure were defined at the first two Board meetings. It is better to say that this definition occurred during the succession of Board and Programme Committee meetings 1974 - 1976.

10. The report to the Programme Committee meeting of January 1977 (para 8) was initiated by Professor Tribe (as Resident Representative of the Board) after Dr Pagot left ILCA.

11. Monitoring of the response of livestock development systems to development processes (para 17) was foreseen as an immediate and integral part of the ILCA programme, not as an adjunct to enlarge and validate the research programme.

12. The fact that arid zones research in Ethiopia, with the exception of assistance towards monitoring parts of the Ethiopian rangeland development project, ended in 1977 makes it hardly appropriate to say (para 31) that Ethiopia is a country where three subprogrammes are run concurrently.

13. There was no decision, implicit or explicit, to concentrate monitoring on World Bank financed projects (para 34); the projects that were chosen for their scientific and developmental interest just happened to be World Bank financed projects.

14. The fact that monitoring was restricted to the arid zones (para 37) is a function simply that it is in the arid zones that most livestock development projects have been concentrated.

15. Tables 1 and 2 (page 10) can be updated; ILCA's Financial Controller will provide this information under separate cover.

16. Concerning conferences (para 48), the workshop on small ruminant production, which was to be a joint venture with IEMVT, was abandoned. The symposium on fodder trees and shrubs is rescheduled for April 1980 and the workshop on smallholder dairy development is scheduled for August 1980. The study tour, another joint venture, is now expected to take place in December 1980 and to be combined with a workshop on development monitoring procedures. A new workshop has been introduced, for February 1980, on the design and implementation of pastoral development projects and possibly another, on the methodology of farming systems research, will be held in June 1980.

17. Comments on present organisational structure (para 52) can now more usefully refer to the situation since the Board meeting of April 1979 than to the ideas that were under discussion at that time.

18. The statement that the Centre does not seem to have accepted the concept of monitoring suggested by the first TAC mission (para 54) is true only to the extent that the Centre believes that monitoring has several functions and that, in certain of these functions, its purpose is to guide development. The present paragraph in the TAC report would seem to imply that monitoring is never itself research and serves only to guide research.

19. The comments of the Mali authorities on the draft ILCA report (para 66) are now available; they are rather few and are being incorporated into the draft report.

20. Current research in Mali (para 69-80) has been further refined and was a major item for consideration at the Programme Committee meeting of December 1979. Emphasis is now on social-territorial organisation and the dynamics of the production systems under study, combined with research on increased forage production in favoured sites. Details will appear in the next Programme and Budget document.

21. The footnote to para 82, that the National Research Council of Mali has approved lately the ILCA programme suggests that previously this approval did not exist. The Council has given its approval on each of the previous occasions that it has considered the ILCA programme, since the programme's inception. Most of the pressure to improve interdisciplinarity and programme focus has in fact come from ILCA. It is unclear how these facts can be related to the concerns expressed in para 82. (The specific comment about a 'bi- or tricephalous arrangement' is the result of a second or third hand misunderstanding which is best deleted altogether).

22. The suggestion that highlands work might be extended to a third site in Ethiopia (para 93) is not compatible with the TAC recommendation of July 1979 that there should be no increase in the highland budget for 1980 to allow even the work at the first two sites to be brought to an effective state of development. ILCA regards the latter as having priority over expansion into new sites.

23. The same inconsistency applies also to the report's suggestions for expansion into specific fields of investigation (para 94 and 96).
24. The concluding two sentences of the mission's observations on the humid zone (para 107) are not understood.
25. The programme Committee is not aware that it has concerns about the practical value of the trypanotolerance study (para 127).
26. Everyone agrees that monitoring (as a technique) is a tool to use in studies of production systems; the significant word of the subprogramme entitled monitoring livestock development schemes (para 129) is 'development schemes'. It is the involvement in development schemes that is the characteristic of this part of ILCA's programme, as envisaged in the foundation report.
27. It is noted (e.g. para 129 and 139) that 'subprogramme' has been changed to 'programme' as a descriptor of ILCA's monitoring activities. The former is in fact more correct and therefore need not have been changed.
28. Although para 53 acknowledges that the emphasis in ILCA's monitoring activities at the time of the mission was on selecting methodologies with a view to helping define improved development systems, paras 140-142 (especially 141) imply that ILCA has itself been implementing development monitoring and doing this for purposes of defining improved management systems, which is both wrong and inconsistent.
29. ILCA's involvement in monitoring did not 'grow progressively' (para 147) into an independent subprogramme. It was defined as a subprogramme at the same time as the other subprogrammes were defined. However, it soon became clear to ILCA management that it would be less helpful for ILCA itself to seek to monitor development projects than for ILCA to begin by encouraging and enabling national authorities to start monitoring for themselves, and so cover more projects at less expense to ILCA. The approach suggested in para 148, that ILCA should have started monitoring for itself and should have covered all ecological zones, would only have been possible within the budget allocation if each project was visited (as suggested) every 3 to 5 years. This would have done little to unravel the complexities of development processes, which requires attention to shorter term phenomena that can be determined by the two or three visits per decade needed with the TAC approach even to obtain a first indication of trend in the parameters selected.
30. ILCA does not see itself as a 'third party' between recipient country and financing institution (para 150). Nor has the concentration of inputs been on monitoring the management of projects (para 151). Management is an important factor in development processes, but the greater input by ILCA has been on testing methods for environmental change and animal and ranch performance.
31. Irrespective of the extent to which TAC may wish to amend certain statements regarding ILCA's monitoring activities, it will no doubt be of interest for TAC to evaluate the position as reflected in the next Programme and Budget document. The outcome of methodological work to date will be incorporated in a handbook on monitoring procedures, while

the emphasis in ILCA's own research will be on unravelling and understanding interactions between pastoral production systems and development inputs. In the present climate, this work will be concentrated mostly in Kenya.

32. The ILCA staff does not use the term simulation modelling to encompass all their mathematical modelling (para 172). It would seem from this paragraph and the missions observations (para 174) that the mission did not fully comprehend the role of modelling as seen by ILCA. It is not an intellectual exercise unrelated to the rest of the programme but an essential tool in field work and the extrapolation of results.

33. The publications referred to as containing the results reported in the Maure and Peul monograph (para 180) are unknown to ILCA.

34. The study on mechanisation and animal traction in Africa (para 184) was not started. The results of the Asian survey by ICRISAT were late in being collated and present funding does not allow this study to proceed.

35. There is no contemplated study on the use of phosphate (para 186).

36. The reference to range cartography (para 188) is not understood.

37. The networks envisaged by ILCA include both research networks and information and liaison networks. The comment concerning 'well-designed and coordinated research design' applies presumably exclusively to the first category, of which ILCA has only one (in trypanotolerance).

38. The mission's comments on the organisation of ILCA (paras 193-200) are historical rather than current, but it is for TAC to decide whether or not to update and condense this section.

39. Reference in para 208 to 'this' being outside 'its jurisdiction' is not fully understood.

40. No comments are included here on the summary (paras 211-226) as this should flow from the main text and parts of the main text may be revised.

41. It is suggested that attendance lists and programmes (Annexes I - III) are not directly relevant but, if they are to be included, it may be noted that Mr Pratt is a member (ex officio) of the Board and Programme Committee and should be so listed. Consistency in the spelling of names and designations would also need attention.

Points of Clarification

42. It is not proposed here to deal further with arid zones and monitoring; the observations included above and those forthcoming in the next Programme and Budget Document can be used for information or to update the mission report, as required.

43. It is suggested, however, that if the mission report is to be released to the CGIAR in 1980 then the report will be more useful if it reflects the current situation rather than situations that pertained 12 - 18 months previously.

44. In this regard, it may be appropriate to review statements, not refuted above, that ILCA's research philosophy is more apparent than real (para 25).

45. In revising the report, attention could also be given to the logic of the statement (para 38) that because livestock productivity has not increased markedly in certain areas (including, in the case under reference, tsetse areas) this indicates that constraints are at least as severe as in areas where productivity has increased.

46. The ILCA programme has been under constant review over the past two years and the suggestion (para 83) that an external review of the Mali programme should be undertaken in advance of the Programme Committee has not been acted upon, both because of time and because it is considered necessary that a certain level of interdisciplinarity has to be achieved within the ILCA team and programme concerned before they can respond effectively to an external review. Suggestions of this type that are closely time-related may need amendment in the revision of the report.

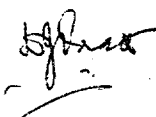
47. It should be understood, though not necessarily reported, that one reason for the success of certain parts of the programme (para 97 and 107) is that they have shared the input of Mr de Haan.

48. Regarding the future focus of the ILCA programme, it is not necessarily correct to allocate priority on an area basis only (para 182) if potential indicates otherwise. Regarding the potential and the constraints of the humid zone (para 203), the general comment included earlier (6 above) is relevant.

It is hoped that these comments are of use to yourself and the mission. If you wish me to be in attendance at the next meeting of TAC in order to elaborate or to participate in discussion on the ILCA programme, please do not hesitate to ask.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely



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