Report of the 4th Meeting of the Livestock and Fish CGIAR Research Program Science and Partnership Advisory Committee (SPAC), 4-6 September 2014, ILRI, Nairobi Kenya

Participants: Max Rothschild (chair), Andy Peters, Simon Oosting, Mauren Miruka, Rohanna Subasinghe, Martin Webber

www.livestockfish.cgiar.org

September 2014
CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food secure future. The CGIAR Research Program on Livestock and Fish aims to increase the productivity of small-scale livestock and fish systems in sustainable ways, making meat, milk and fish more available and affordable across the developing world. The Program brings together four CGIAR Centers: the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) with a mandate on livestock; WorldFish with a mandate on aquaculture; the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), which works on forages; and the International Center for Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), which works on small ruminants. http://livestockfish.cgiar.org

© 2014

This publication is licensed for use under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 Unported Licence. To view this licence, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/. Unless otherwise noted, you are free to copy, duplicate, or reproduce and distribute, display, or transmit any part of this publication or portions thereof without permission, and to make translations, adaptations, or other derivative works under the following conditions:

**ATTRIBUTION.** The work must be attributed, but not in any way that suggests endorsement by the publisher or the author(s).

**NON-COMMERCIAL.** This work may not be used for commercial purposes.

**SHARE ALIKE.** If this work is altered, transformed, or built upon, the resulting work must be distributed only under the same or similar license to this one.
Executive summary

The SPAC4 meeting covered a number of important issues including the review of science and partnership activities of the Livestock and Fish CGIAR Research Program, new activities and responsibilities assigned under the revised ToR for the SPAC and an update on the CCEE review process and findings. Details of the meeting discussions are provided below. The SPAC noted a number of positive developments. These included: 1) evidence of greater integration among the Flagships, 2) the VCT and SASI Flagship arrangement looks like it will help to define and discipline the value chain research issues and activities, 3) considerable amounts of material were prepared and the agenda was well thought out which facilitated good discussion and subsequent analysis of project progress and 4) new proposals and plans for future activities in 2015-16 are emerging and they begin to deal with past issues and establish better collaborations.

SPAC also observed a number of concerns. These included: 1) limited evidence of accomplishments in some of the Flagships, 2) need for continued emphasis on Research for Development (R4D) and not just basic research or continuation of previous ongoing research, 3) continued reluctance for all Flagships to be integrated with each other and the value chains, 4) Gender considerations, social sciences not well integrated into all the flagships, lack of focus on impact on household and community level impacts, 5. M&E still is not underway- Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation agenda & frameworks not well defined in all of the strategies reviewed, and 6) academic and business partnerships are not well defined and partnerships associated within the value chains (VCs) appear to be limited.

The SPAC also believes that the assignment of new activities and duties for the SPAC under the new ToR would be burdensome and extend beyond the SPAC advisory role. It is advised that the ILRI Board should reconsider these points. A final recommendation is that SPAC be provided at each meeting with 2-page summary reports, to include activities, methods and accomplishments to date on each of the 9 VCs, rather than the voluminous literature provided for this meeting. In general the SPAC concludes that the meeting was quite successful. The hard work and hospitality provided by Jimmy Smith, Tom Randolph, Shirley Tarawali, Stuart Worsley, Pat Rainey and Esther Ndungu have been greatly appreciated. In conclusion, significant progress in the program can be seen and attention to some of the outlined details will likely further insure its success.
Specific Concerns and Weaknesses

1. Review of Flagships
   1.1 General

In the reports provided before, and the presentations made at the SPAC meeting, the new Flagship structure for Livestock and Fish Program was introduced. The original six themes were restructured into the three technical Flagships, Health, Feeds and Forages, and Genetics, while the broader value chain themes were named as System Analysis for Sustainable Innovation (SASI) and Value Chain Transformation and Scaling (VCTS); SASI with an analytical approach, VCTS with an implementation-oriented approach.

In general SPAC senses more fragmentation of the model at the present stage of the program compared to earlier SPAC meetings. Then the theme leaders were explicitly searching for linkages between themes, while now the Flagships seemed to limit themselves to their own expertise. Existing legacy agendas are fitted into the value chain approach, and new initiatives responding to value chain needs are scarce. Documents and presentations provided to SPAC were insufficiently explicit in describing joint activities and information flows amongst Flagships. This does not necessarily mean it is not happening. For example, when asked how field work was done, the Genetics Flagship mentioned joint field research activities with other Flagships, including SASI and VCTS. The Flagships should provide evidence of interaction amongst Flagships at future SPAC meetings, specifically between the technical and value chain oriented ones. From the presentations of Flagships SASI and VCTS it remained unclear as to how they are distinct from each other. There seemed to be considerable overlap, but in part this was because they did not show evidence of activities undertaken and integration with the other flagships. Moreover, SPAC would like to be informed in more detail about progress in the value chains. Documents and presentations merely gave intentions and ambitions for future work, often very generally.

The unavailability of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning tool – already promised for January 2014- is hampering a systematic approach to assess progress. SPAC advises the program to design a simple, but rigorous set of performance indicators complemented by baseline studies and diagnostics studies for each of the value chains.

Though the Flagships put effort on including gender and other socio-economic issues in their objectives, lack of human resources in this field has resulted in restricted real integration in the
SIPs. In addition, SPAC noticed very limited focus on markets, business integration and policy aspects in each of the value chains.
1.2 Responses to questions posed to the Flagship teams by management team and SPAC.

Prior to the meeting four questions were developed by the management group and agreed upon by the SPAC chair to evaluate the presentations of material by each Flagship. A summary of the amount and quality of information provided is given in the table below, with scores of 5 being best and 0 meaning no information provided. A low score may reflect more of what was (not) provided than a lack of progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions / Relative Progress presented</th>
<th>Animal Health</th>
<th>Feed and Forages</th>
<th>Genetics</th>
<th>VC Transformation</th>
<th>SASI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is the Flagship effective in improving livestock potential?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is Flagship research generating innovations that respond to demand within our value chains?</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is Flagship research informed by wider value chain issues, specifically those relating to feed, animal health, market demand, gender and equity and small holder production dynamics</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is Flagship research feeding into scaled potential, likely to be taken up by development partners</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3 SPAC has concerns as to whether the Flagship leaders and staff completely share an understanding of the expected contributions and linkages of the Livestock and Fish Program.

While each SIP and presenter spoke firmly to the value chain context (a positive element), each flagship seems to describe these linkages in its own terms. SPAC doesn’t yet see sufficient evidence of shared vision, synergy, coherence and coordination.

It may be that the linkage factor has to do with the guiding market and business drivers. The relative absence of these factors from the SIPs and the presentations were discussed in the meetings. It may also be that the linkages and synergies require leadership and facilitation from the Value Chain Transformation and SASI Flagships, neither of which SPAC feels is sufficiently articulated at present.
During the presentations and discussions The SPAC frequently highlighted the need to focus Flagship activities on elements of the value chain (not yet clearly defined), so as to explain the program’s activities and ensure that they speak to program’s core objectives.

While there were intimations of this leadership and coordination being provided by at least some of the value chain initiatives, sufficient information in this respect was not provided.

1.4 Overall evidence that the program’s approach is working
For the program to work, the system must include pertinent research being generated at ILRI and other centers, being fed into the value chains (VCs). Results (feedback) from the VCs must also inform the Flagship research teams so that new research is developed to answer issues raised by the VCs. Useful products must be produced that will affect the success of the program. While the program is still in its beginning stages we only saw glimpses of such results. Further integration of activities and results will be needed.

1.5 Staffing shortages – level of work and gaps in expertise
A challenge for any large multi-locational research activity is to have the right expertise in the right locations. Three obvious limitations exist: 1) there is concern that both at the VCs and at ILRI and the other research centers that personnel with expertise in business and market analysis do not exist, 2) at some locations the assignment of pieces of FTE, like 10 % on this project and 15 % on that project, are likely to limit research outputs, and 3) the maintaining of a full complement of gender & social science specialists is a high priority.

2. Partnerships
SPAC, by its very title, should provide advice on partnerships, but this aspect has not had a high profile. Reasons and criteria for specific partnerships on program and on value chain levels have not been elucidated to SPAC. SPAC was also not informed about how effectiveness of partnerships is evaluated. From the documents and presentations SPAC noticed that partnerships are missing in the domains of “fish” and “gender” and that generally the participation of private sector partners is low. SPAC senses that not many new initiatives have come up at the value chain levels, at least no clear evidence of this was provided. Therefore the Livestock and Fish Program should increase efforts on partnerships, specifically in the domains where internal expertise is low i.e. business (model) development, gender and fish.
3. SPAC issues

3.1 Comments on the Proposed Governance Changes and Suggested Revisions to the SPAC Terms of Reference

SPAC has several concerns about the proposals for governance changes and terms of reference. The draft revised ToR propose that the SPAC plays an increased governance role for the program. While it is reasonable that SPAC should identify issues that it perceives as being serious or urgent directly to the MD, board and DG, such issues should be extremely exceptional and infrequent. It is also reasonable that the chair reports once a year directly to the board. Otherwise, SPAC believes its reporting line should be via the program director.

SPAC’s role should be an advisory one, not one of governance. SPAC does not have access to information and investigative resources to play an adequate governance role. It has no implementation authority; which would render a governance role ineffectual. Similarly, SPAC cannot be responsible for recommending budgets to the board. SPAC does not have access to information that is sufficient for it to appreciate the nuances or basis for the budgets, nor the fidelity and stewardship inherent in proposed budgets. SPAC could be requested to question budgets presented and explained to it, and to provide a “no objection” type response to the budget. It is appropriate that SPAC be able to advise and comment on the proposed POWB each year and on the Strategy and Implementation Plan. It is not appropriate that it be asked to approve these items. (The proposal uses the word “endorse”.)

SPAC cannot take on responsibility for evaluating the performance of the program director, although it can be consulted as part of the process. Its direct interactions with the director occur only twice per year, and SPAC has no intimate access to information about the director’s executive, managerial, interpersonal and technical performance. It has no sources of information that are completely independent of the director. The proposal refers to a reporting relationship of the director to SPAC. SPAC should only be expected to advise the director. The director’s formal reporting needs to remain to the ILRI’s director general and the program’s board and its director.

The proposed revised ToR would make the SPAC responsible for establishing (and presumably managing) a subcommittee that is responsible “for the selection of the program director and submission of a nomination to ILRI Board for final approval”. It is reasonable that SPAC appoints one or two participants to participate in any selection committee. But SPAC cannot take responsibility for the process – it lacks detailed information about the full range of responsibilities, interactions and relationships required of the director.
The proposals suggest that SPAC would be responsible for “overseeing” external evaluations of the program’s Flagship Projects or specific sets of activities. Amongst the sub-responsibilities, it is proposed that SPAC have responsibility for “approving the program’s proposed schedule of CRP-Commissioned External Evaluations”. As for other items, SPAC’s role should be limited in this respect to an advisory role.

The suggested revisions would require far more time input by SPAC members, and possible fiduciary responsibility. It might also require a different set of skills and experience for its membership. While recognizing that the honorarium provided to SPAC members is somewhat symbolic, we note that it is well below the members’ daily compensation levels, and would be very much out of line with the additional responsibilities suggested for the SPAC.

The proposed Terms of Reference continue to include SPAC’s role (or that of SPAC’s members) in serving as an expert resource to the program and the senior management team. SPAC observes that there has been little opportunity thus far to serve this responsibility. SPAC suggests that future SPAC meetings include provision for 1-on-1 meetings with Flagship leaders to provide opportunity for more technical engagement.

3.2 Comments on the Proposed Arrangements for Appointment and Terms of SPAC Membership

SPAC has no substantial objection to the proposed process for renewing SPAC. SPAC recognizes that any new member requires time to “get up to speed” with respect to her/his responsibilities and familiarity with the program. Membership would therefore be most effective if for a total period of 4-5 years – implying an initial 2-3 year appointment with possible renewal for 2 years.

The SPAC discussed the best way to balance SPAC membership with concerns of conflict of interest. Given the very extensive nature of partnerships, collaborations and organizational relationships in our field, SPAC believe that it would be impractical and inappropriate to simply use organizational linkage or membership as a criterion for membership eligibility. Conflict of interest should be material in nature, and proposed members should be required to certify that membership would not create a conflict. Members should also excuse themselves from a deliberation if any conflict later becomes evident. In the specific situation, SPAC does not believe that Simon Oosting’s or Imke deBoer’s association with Wageningen, nor Maureen Miruka’s with CARE, will constitute an a priori conflict.

3.3 Information provided to the SPAC

SPAC requests several improvements to the information provided and process of sharing information.
SPAC requires that reports be provided in a timely manner, providing sufficient time for review. We would like to note the vast improvement in the timely provision of reports for the September 2014 meeting. Nonetheless, some documents were provided at the last moment, with no time for the members to properly review. While the Wiki is useful and welcome, documents that are provided to SPAC to review for its meetings should be provided as attachments to an email from the program.

It would be helpful if the Table of Contents of the documentation binder were provided by email in advance of the meetings.

SPAC should receive a briefing note on the progress of each value chain in advance of each meeting. Two-page summary reports are suggested.

The various briefing notes and SIP reports were very useful. The SIP reports should each have had an Executive Summary in future. SPAC realizes that most of the other reports provided by the program were copies of reports prepared by the program for other purposes. SPAC is happy to receive these reports – however, if any of these reports are important for SPAC consideration, they should be accompanied by a brief that includes an executive summary and an “issues statement” that highlights points that are important for SPAC consideration.

In future meetings, SPAC would like to have discussion sessions scheduled with leaders of each flagship. This will allow SPAC to better understand and explore the activities, progress and plans of each Flagship, and to engage in technical discussions for which SPAC members may offer advice and experience.

4 Miscellaneous

4.1 SPAC received limited evidence of the program’s progress towards objectives
SPAC found that the reports and presentations for the most part provided little or no specific evidence of Flagship and Value Chain progress towards program’s objectives. The program should provide such specific information – in short briefings – for future SPAC meetings.

4.2 Rebranding of research teams
The SPAC understands the desire of the CGIAR to properly brand research teams to raise their level of recognition. However the use of the term “Flagship” seems overblown. Another term, such as “Theme” or “Signature activities” seems more appropriate.
4.3 Bureaucracy and reporting associated with SPAC

The SPAC believe that bureaucracy and reporting required of the program to be excessive. These requirements will limit the effective focus on science and partnerships and should be avoided if possible.

4.4 Comments on the Livestock and Fish Program 2015-2016 Extension Proposals

We believe it to be a well written proposal with clear objectives. It is interesting to note the switching from Themes to Flagship Projects, with clear breakdown of Clusters of Activities (CoAs) in the proposal. The linkages between different scientific components of the program shows efforts towards integrating research and development as well as driving towards efficiency in resource use. The enhanced focus on gender issues, VC activities, socio-economic aspects are interesting to note. Although, the proposal does not adequately elaborate how different scientific disciplines complement each other (e.g., fish genetics on livestock genetics, etc.), overall the proposal is well written and objective, thus deserve favorable consideration.

4.5 CCEE review of the Livestock and Fish Program

SPAC received an update on aspects of the review from Doyle Alexander and Keith Child. The lead for the review noted that questionnaires were sent to a number of expert parties. While the responses have the potential to be informative, we have concern that responses may be limited and therefore biased; and the evaluation report should therefore clarify the sources and % respondents from each category. Since “experts’” opinions were sought even though they have no direct connection to the program, SPAC is also concerned that opinions may not be informed, since respondents will be required to read volumes of material to get a complete picture of the program.