

**IMPACT ASSESSMENT DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 15**

**SYNTHESIS REPORT OF WORKSHOP ON  
ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF POLICY-  
ORIENTED SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH  
IN SCHEVENINGEN, THE NETHERLANDS  
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**James G. Ryan**

**Director General's Office**

**International Food Policy Research Institute  
2033 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
Tel: (202) 862-5600  
Fax: (202) 467-4439  
Email: [IFPRI@cgiar.org](mailto:IFPRI@cgiar.org)**

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*Discussion Papers contain preliminary material and research results, and are circulated prior to a full peer review in order to stimulate discussion and critical comments. It is expected that most Discussion Papers will eventually be published in some other form, and that their content may also be revised.*



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## ABSTRACT

Economists have engaged for some time in developing methodologies for assessing the economic impact of agricultural research and in undertaking empirical studies to measure this impact. In recent years, they have documented more than 1,800 estimates of rates of return to agricultural research. Economists have paid little attention, however, to how to evaluate the impact of social science research. A symposium conducted by IFPRI in 1997 was one of the first attempts to address this knowledge gap. In November 2001, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IFPRI brought together a group of researchers to follow up on the earlier symposium. Their conclusions fell into two broad categories: how to measure or value the economic impact of policy-oriented social science research and how to enhance the effectiveness of such research in policymaking environments.

A number of lessons emerged from the workshop for donors, governments, and researchers about how to enhance the effectiveness of policy-oriented social science research. Donors and governments should: encourage the development of independent, well-managed, high-quality policy research institutions; improve the linkages between research and policy formulation; and invest in studying the policy processes, training, and promoting economic literacy. Research institutions should: know what impacts donors value; ensure that the impacts of value to donors coincide with those of the people and their governments; make *ex ante* and *ex post* impact evaluation a part of their core business; create incentive and reward systems consistent with the policy objectives of the agencies that commission or make use of research outputs; undertake more multidisciplinary research on evaluating and enhancing impact, including policy processes; build policy epistemic communities involving all stakeholders; and never compromise on quality and objectivity in the quest for impact. Because much remains to be learned about evaluating the impact of policy-oriented social science research, the workshop participants concluded that IFPRI should take the lead in developing a consortium to help improve interdisciplinary methods of assessing impact. The consortium would consist of institutions, donors, and individuals and would work in partnership with developing countries. Institutions could learn from each other about best practices and in the process exploit synergies, thereby increasing effectiveness and reducing the costs of what is an expensive undertaking.



# **SYNTHESIS REPORT OF WORKSHOP ON ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF POLICY-ORIENTED SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) jointly sponsored the workshop, with additional support from The Farm Foundation. It was organized as a follow-up to the symposium on this topic sponsored by IFPRI in April 1997 in Washington, D.C.

The primary goals of this workshop were:

- < to review case studies of impact evaluation of policy-oriented social science research (POSSR) that have been undertaken since the earlier workshop and the progress made in developing assessment methodologies;
- < to assess the value of POSSR and associated information to users and analysts in influencing policy and mobilizing resources to support POSSR; and
- < to determine the value and desirability of creating a consortium of POSSR users and impact assessment analysts to further develop evaluation approaches and methodologies to exploit synergies and economies.

The program for the workshop is attached as Appendix 1, and a list of the 32 participants appears in Appendix 2. Most presentations were in PowerPoint; formal papers were not generally prepared so that participants could focus on key issues in the discussion and working group sessions. It is expected that a number of the presentations eventually will be available as papers in refereed publications. In this synthesis, the presentations are highlighted in sections 2 to 5. This is followed by section 6 on the significant issues that arose in discussions. In section 7, implications for the future are discussed, including the consensus among participants that a consortium should be formed to maintain the momentum of interest on this topic.

## **2. REVIEW OF THE ART AND LESSONS LEARNED**

Workshop participants Pardey and Smith described the economics research "industry" in terms of trends in the numbers and the membership of professional societies involving economists, in both developed and developing countries. Since 1960, the number of societies has been growing significantly, but membership plateaued in the mid-1960s and started to decline in the late 1980s. Currently, there are 354 economics associations worldwide, with 44 of them in developing countries. Pardey and Smith also examined trends in the subject matter of the major professional journals, noting that space devoted to agriculture and natural resources has been

declining, while coverage of manpower, labor, and population has been rising, along with discussion of welfare programs, consumer economics, and urban and regional economics.

Pardey and Smith also summarized the issues involved in measuring the benefits of economics research, including the objectives of impact analysis, identifying its benefits, and *ex ante* versus *ex post* analysis. They pointed out that the major output from economic research is information and that it can result in three types of outcome: "dry wells," "gushers," and "poisoned wells." Assessing the effect of these types of outcomes on welfare is challenging: Impacts on the technical or allocative efficiency of firms, households, and government agencies must be addressed. Are the institutional changes that result legitimate measures of impact? Some impacts are shared by all these sectors and have both market and nonmarket effects. Avoiding the costs of bad outcomes is a legitimate measure of impact, as are policy changes that enhance welfare. In all impact evaluations attribution and "cherry picking" of successful cases to study involve problems, especially when "poisoned wells" result, according to Pardey and Smith. Bayesian approaches<sup>1</sup> are useful, especially in *ex ante* impact assessments. Finally, is the appropriate level of aggregation for impact assessment at the scientist, project, department, institution, or body-of-knowledge level?

Ryan drew lessons from five case studies that were commissioned by IFPRI to assess the impact of its collaborative research and related activities. He discussed nine factors favoring success and impact:

- < Is the research of a high quality, independent, and conducted by an "honest broker"?
- < Is the nature of the research timely and responsive? What is the role of communications and advocacy?
- < Is there a long-term collaboration between IFPRI and partner researchers involving a residential mode for IFPRI staff in priority countries and regions?
- < Is the policy environment conducive to receptiveness and impact?
- < Is the importance of primary and secondary empirical data and simple analysis addressed?
- < Are there frequent trade-offs between immediate impacts and sustainable ones?
- < Were appropriate partners and collaborators selected?
- < Did the project provide for building a consensus for change among stakeholders?
- < Did the project capitalize on the value of IFPRI's cross-country experience?

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<sup>1</sup> Bayesian decision theory provides a framework for placing value on research information that is used by policymakers to update their beliefs concerning various states of the world and the impacts of their policy choices.



Ryan discussed the implications of these lessons for IFPRI's conduct of future impact studies.

### 3. RECENT CASE STUDIES OF IMPACT

Offutt presented a demand-side perspective of the research administrator who must relate to both the legislative and executive arms of government. She indicated that most politicians do not like surprises emanating from research. Research that confirms the conventional wisdom or supports current policies is equally important. We should recognize that policymakers are heterogeneous, with differing shades of opinion and receptivity. A credible body of accumulated evidence from POSSR is required in order to marshal resources for research. Hence, there is value in evaluating the impact of a portfolio of projects rather than individual projects. These could be classified as either confirmatory in nature or representing surprises. The Economic Research Service (ERS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) uses this typology to allocate research resources, and the proportions might change over time depending on the currency of the topic(s). In general, ERS emphasizes research that might surprise rather than reinforce conventional wisdom, as this is perceived to have a greater expected economic value, in spite of politicians' dislike of surprises. It may be preferable for them to be surprised by good, prescient anticipatory research results than by later articles in *The New York Times*. In Bayesian approaches, which ERS has been experimenting with, an issue to consider is: whose prior probabilities of states of nature are the appropriate ones to use? There are problems in averaging priors across respondents.

Norton and Schimmelpfennig described how Bayesian approaches are used to value policy research conducted by ERS on risk management, involving premium rates for revenue insurance, and the appropriate allocation of risk between the public and private sectors in reinsurance. They specified the information required to undertake the Bayesian analysis, including the elicitation of subjective prior and posterior probabilities on the states of nature, and the likelihood that the research information is viewed as credible and objective. Economic surplus estimates are used to reflect the payoffs from alternative actions and states of nature. Policy research provides information that can change the prior probabilities and hence the economic value of the information. The lessons were that around 10 interviews were sufficient (only one or two interviews were required if they were with decisionmakers) and that surprise was of key importance in elicitation. It is reflected by the differences between priors and both action likelihoods and posterior probabilities. The value of research is likely to be higher in Bayesian analysis if one action or state is not highly dominant. Bayesian approaches seem best suited to single policy centers or consensus situations where negotiating behavior is absent, such as in the Uruguay Round and for individual case studies rather than whole research programs.

Maxwell pointed out that the linear model of the influence of policy researchC where the problem is clearly identified, options are laid out for decision, change occurs, and implementation

and evaluation followC does not reflect the real world of policymaking, which he described as "chaos of purposes and accidents." It is important to develop a chronology in impact assessment. Informal workshops involving the actors are useful devices. He cited several human-nutrition case studies using retrospective narratives to illustrate the importance of epistemic communities, street-level bureaucracies, and change coalitions in effecting policy responses. Networking is a key element in moving new research and data to areas of influence and authority. Effectiveness is improved by simplification. Impact assessment is only one aspect of evaluation.

#### 4. DEMAND-SIDE PERSPECTIVES

Seck drew from experiences in Africa to highlight some of the lessons learned. Research must be considered high quality and timely to influence policy. Announcements of policy change are not sufficient if poorly implemented. Research output must be packaged to make it credible and digestible to policymakers. Judicious use of advocacy and the media is appropriate to avoid misrepresentation by others. More of the policy research should be conducted by Africans and not expatriates, and resources should be pooled to save costs.

Amani drew from his experiences mostly in eastern Africa, where policy changes have primarily been driven by the leverage of international financial institutions rather than by policy research *per se*. This is changing as evidenced by the creation of a number of new policy research institutions in the region. Clients of policy research should be defined to include not only governments but also others in the community who are affected by it, such as the poor. The rise of democracy offers a good opportunity to do this. Capacity-building and policy dialogue are important in this process to improve the ability of all stakeholders to be able to understand the information that is generated by policy research. Researchers have a responsibility to ensure these are provided.

Choi pointed out that politics seems to have prevailed over economic policy research in Korea during a period of dynamic change and challenge in the last 20 years. Economists lost credibility in not being able to predict the 1997 financial crisis. In spite of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) imperatives, rice subsidies remain. Researchers are encouraged to choose policies rather than present policy options for decisionmakers. Since 1998 there has been an attempt to make POSSR institutions more accountable. A research council has been established to evaluate 14 POSSR institutions.

Van den Berg pointed out that there was still a lot to learn about methodologies for conducting impact evaluation of POSSR. Even though the Dutch have been in the vanguard of this in the CGIAR, there has been insufficient progress with impact assessment of POSSR on Dutch development policies. Research is needed on how to reduce long lags between the research, the announcement of policies, and policy implementation, and impact assessment is best undertaken over a longer time frame rather than on a shorter project cycle. To be successful,

impact assessment should be built in at the beginning and have baselines by which performance can be gauged. Assessing poverty impacts is especially important but challenging. The attribution problem is real. Also, there is a difference between local impacts and the wider effects on other sectors and on the society.

## 5. THE POLICY PROCESSES

Armbruster described the goals of the Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics (C-FARE) in the United States, its priorities and how it operates. C-FARE was established to create funding opportunities for research and enhance the presence and effectiveness of the agricultural and resource economics profession. It prepares papers, organizes conferences, and provides policy briefings. Its target audiences are decisionmakers, professionals in related scientific disciplines, and economists. C-FARE briefs congressional staff, presents congressional testimony, and supports funding proposals for the USDA.

Sumner's experience with negotiations surrounding the Uruguay Round of trade liberalization was that economic research greatly influenced aspects such as the size and extent of producer subsidy equivalents and the modeling of the likely impacts of liberalization on different countries. The International Agricultural Trade Research Consortium was particularly effective in connecting nongovernment analysts to the negotiating community. Policy research was far less effective in laying a foundation for the Seattle Round. Packaging the information in a manner easily understood by political leaders is imperative. Issues must be addressed as they emerge in negotiations, using models that allow scenarios to be assessed in a matter of hours or minutes. Confidentiality is also critical. There are identifiable roles for academic and government research institutions in the policy process, and IFPRI can be the "poster-child" to convey the correct messages and to better inform the debates. There is a role for economic history studies of the evolution of policy changes. Portraying distributional outcomes is important in influencing change, and Bayesian approaches have some merit in assessing impacts. Economists should avoid being captured by interest groups and should consider including the welfare of both consumers and producers. Mercantilist language of trade negotiations should not cloud economic sense.

Swinnen noted that decisions in the European Union (EU) are made by the Council of Ministers, which represents national governments. To be effective, researchers need to be heard in national capitals and not just in Brussels. The European Commission has no equivalent of the ERS but instead contracts out research to a mix of academic and independent research institutes. The quality of the research varies significantly, and the lack of an institutionalized research capacity in Brussels is a weakness and fosters mercantilist perspectives. Because policymakers in Brussels are vitally interested in the distributional and budgetary impacts, research focusing only on general welfare gains may receive little attention. Timeliness and anticipation are crucial and depend significantly on the accumulated stock of knowledge. There can be a willful misuse of research results and a lot of "noise" in the process. This highlights the importance of policy champions. Researchers should know how their results have been used or misused.

Blandford pointed out that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as an intergovernmental think tank has little negotiating power, but significant agenda-setting power. It has credibility in the European press and was effective in the WTO processes in quantifying the welfare impacts of agricultural subsidies using producer and consumer subsidy equivalents and the effects of liberalization on prices. OECD reports, sanctioned by member governments, helped put domestic policies on the trade agenda. OECD also provided a non-negotiating forum to float reform proposals. OECD primarily utilized existing research and adapted it for its purposes in ways that resonated politically. Peer review was not sacrificed, however, by economists and noneconomists. Simple multi-commodity models were more effective than computable general equilibrium models in educating and informing policymakers. Use of the ERS modeling work was integral to this. Distributional outcomes were more relevant to the negotiations than estimates of the deadweight losses of current and alternative policies, especially the extent of gross transfers to farmers. The OECD has not assessed the impact of its research on trade issues, but it is likely to be many times the cost.

Grindle indicated that political science does not have an overarching paradigm in comparison to economics. Understanding the policy process requires knowledge of the context, the actors and their interests, the institutions involved, and institutional relationships. Research can be influential at the agenda-setting stage in highlighting the problem and helping to frame the debate. Researchers and epistemic communities (epicoms) can also contribute to the policy design process, as politicians often do not know how to proceed at this stage. However, researchers should realize this is a very political and not a technical process, with winners and losers often selected in advance. In policy debate, the process goes public and there is less of a role for researchers. Problems of implementing and sustaining policies are real. Three lessons emerge:

- < The simple arithmetic of winners and losers does not reveal much about policy processes. In developing countries, interest groups do not usually dominate. Inter-ministerial or personalistic dynamics are often more important.
- < Problem-solving, leadership, and strategic action are often more important than electoral rationality and open up a path of possible influence for research.
- < Policy change is not the result of a single choice but a cumulative process.

Zilberman stressed that economic policy researchers must know their clients, many of whom understand little of economics. For this reason, staffers rather than policymakers are often a preferred target for research information. Presentations should emphasize intuition and use of visuals. The limitations of the research should be acknowledged, and the proposals made practical. It is important to portray efficiency and equity impacts. The effectiveness of delivery and outreach will largely determine the rate of return to any policy research; for this reason, media and Internet strategies are crucial. In working with the media, remember that, here, stories are more relevant than numbers. It is also important to identify policy entrepreneurs through

conferences and other means. Dispelling myths is as important as proposing change in an environment where economic literacy is low. Improving the economic literacy of the population will lead to more responsive politicians.

## 6. KEY ISSUES IN MEASURING AND ENHANCING IMPACT

Many issues arose during the discussions after the presentations and in the working groups and plenary sessions of the workshop. These are summarized here under two headings: those that relate mostly to approaches and methodologies for assessing the economic impact of POSSR and those that are relevant in enhancing the influence of POSSR information in policymaking environments.

### **Approaches and Methodologies**

*Scale and scope.* The impact of POSSR can be assessed at the project, program, institution, or body-of-knowledge levels. Most case studies have been at the project level. As one moves up the scale, the scope for using Bayesian approaches becomes more limited as does the ability to attribute policy responses to individual actors or pieces of research. The need for more accountability, which seems to be a major rationale for the increased attention to impact assessment, encourages a focus on the project level and on being able to attribute impacts at the same level. This has moral hazards and degrees of heroism associated with it.

*Time horizon.* Focusing on the project level implies that short-term impacts receive more attention than longer-run impacts, which are a feature of strategic policy research. In this process important indicators of impact will be overlooked.

*Supply- versus demand-side approaches.* Ideally, one would prefer to start an impact assessment from the point at which a major policy initiative occurs and then work backwards from this demand-side outcome towards the supply-side, assessing which institutions and researchers have played a significant role in informing and/or influencing the policy change. Instead, most impact case studies have started at the level of an individual project and have tracked how the research outputs from the supply-side have been used. This has been primarily dictated by the need for attribution; in the process, useful information on how to improve the impact of POSSR may be lost.

*Importance of surprise.* The importance of surprise in enhancing the value of POSSR was acknowledged. Indeed this is the essence of Bayesian approaches to measuring impact. Anticipatory research that alerts policymakers to possible future scenarios and surprises can be highly valuable in reducing the time lag before welfare-enhancing policy changes are made under the new circumstances. However, confirmatory POSSR that reinforces current understanding and policy settings also has obvious value, so that surprise is not necessarily a sine qua non of impact.

*Attribution.* There is a need to better inform investors in POSSR that attribution has its own pitfalls and moral hazards, especially when partnerships and collaboration are an increasing feature of all publicly funded research. Joint impacts are what investors should be concerned about.

*Choice of indicators.* Socioeconomic welfare is an obvious indicator of impact; it is not necessarily equivalent to the welfare of politicians. Distributional outcomes are another indicator. Generally, the consensus is that portraying distributional outcomes in POSSR is more influential than that on deadweight or economic efficiency losses. Often local impacts of POSSR are more influential in changing policies than global estimates. Bibliometric indices offer one measure of science/knowledge impacts. Improved data quality as a result of POSSR can also be a legitimate indicator, as is increasing effective demand for research by policymakers. It is difficult to derive indicators for when POSSR leads to a reinforcement of the status quo rather than resulting in distinct policy changes. Equally, it is difficult to factor into assessments those cases where with hindsight POSSR results in inappropriate policies or "poisoned wells." Bayesian approaches cannot handle such outcomes; however, they are useful when there are positive payoffs and well-defined policy changes by single decisionmakers are being evaluated. There is a need for research on the development of alternative approaches to the Bayesian ones. Assessing the economic value of the time saved in effecting policy changes as a result of POSSR is a valid measure of its impact when there is clear evidence of this from interviews. Historical retrospective narrative is also a valuable technique for more qualitative insights, which are especially valuable when the assessment starts with a demand-side approach. Historians are familiar with this technique and could be helpful.

*Case studies.* A number of organizations are conducting case studies, and several methodological issues continue to arise. One such issue is the appropriate balance between random sampling among projects and programs versus purposive sampling, or "cherry-picking." There are pros and cons of either approach and no clear consensus seems to have emerged. Interviewing and elicitation techniques remain a concern, especially when the selection of interviewees depends to a significant extent on the researcher. It is useful to differentiate among audience types in constructing survey instruments and samples. Ensuring an unbiased sample of interviewees is a problem when one requires at least some familiarity with the POSSR being evaluated. Use of independent peers offers the advantage of objectivity and lends credibility to the impact evaluation, although the costs often mean that only a small sample of projects and programs can be subjected to this type of evaluation. In such instances, "cherry-picking" is more likely to be used.

*Time lags.* There are gaps or time lags at all stages in the policy process: after research generates information and while policies are still being formulated, after policy formulation to when policy changes are announced, and, again, between the time changes are announced and when the policies are implemented. These time lags are good subjects for further research not only by economists but other social scientists as well. Here also anticipatory research can be

especially valuable as it can reduce time lags in "adoption." Research results that miss key policy decisionmaking events are much less useful than those which are available as inputs into them, especially if the research results are not confirmatory in nature. With confirmatory research, it can be difficult to marshal resources to work on issues that at the time do not seem "current." Failing to perform anticipatory research can have a high cost in subsequently wrong policy decisions.

*Ex ante and ex post assessments.* Both aspects deserve attention by institutions concerned with impact assessment. *Ex ante* assessments can be used in a logical framework to gauge the success of POSSR in achieving its objectives as a part of monitoring and evaluation. Even though all projects in a portfolio may not undergo formal independent *ex post* assessment, there is still considerable value in researchers' documenting outputs, outcomes, and policy responses to enable internal learning to occur and hence enhance institutional effectiveness. However, there is no substitute for independent peer-impact evaluation to ensure the credibility and accountability of institutions.

### **Enhancing Impact**

*Communications.* The need to supplement peer-reviewed publications with a well-articulated communications strategy was seen as imperative by participants. Effective oral communications using audiovisual and electronic aids is essential. Training and new incentive systems are needed for economists to convey their messages effectively to a largely economically illiterate public, a key audience. Sometimes conveying novel ideas is more effective than detailed empirical findings. Advocacy is a powerful influence, but researchers must walk a fine line between this and retaining credibility as objective analysts. Champions in the policy arena may be especially helpful. Various audiences must be addressed in order to enhance impact, and a communications strategy is needed at the outset to ensure these are identified and targeted appropriately. There is a need to identify and cultivate epistemic communities and coalitions around desirable policy changes.

*Understanding policy processes.* This is an important ingredient in ensuring that POSSR outputs and outcomes result in appropriate policy responses. Political scientists and sociologists may be able to assist in this. A conducive policy environment is also favorable to the use of policy advice arising from POSSR. However, it may be possible to help create a conducive environment by a well thought-out communications strategy. For international policy research institutions, having staff in a residential mode over an extended period in developing countries offers many advantages over occasional visits, including an ability to build up an understanding of the policy processes and position the research to have maximum effect. It also enables these institutions to respond to emerging policy issues and to be present when major policy decisions are being made, exerting appropriate influence.

*Policy research capacity.* Strengthening the capacity of national institutions in developing countries is vital to sustainable impacts from POSSR. This should be a feature of all collaboration between international and national research agencies. Indeed, policy research, capacity

strengthening, and communications are, in effect, joint products. There may be a trade-off in the short term in immediate impacts in choosing to work in countries where policy research capacity is weak. On the other hand, where capacity is strong and data readily available, the scope for more immediate impacts is greater *a priori*.

*Research outputs.* The ability of POSSR to array the distributional consequences of alternative policy options seems to be the most influential output, even ahead of the size of the efficiency gains. The consequences of special significance in this respect are the impacts on poverty and food security. There is a need for more research on how best to assess and convey such information. Here the sustainable livelihoods approach has promise as a supplement to the more common measures. Another emerging consensus is the value of undertaking primary data gathering, especially at the household level, together with simple statistical analyses to set the stage for later, more sophisticated research, including modeling. The simple statistics can alert policymakers to the issues and also often surprise them and whet their appetite for more detailed research leading to new policy options. Hence, there will be a more conducive environment and greater potential for impact. This may be especially important in transitional economies with poor databases and little exposure to market and household economics.

*Objectivity and quality.* Policymakers seem to respond better to research that emanates from institutions with a reputation for quality, credibility, and objectivity. In an environment where interest groups bring their own research to bear on major policy questions, having independent research information from an institution of standing can help build up a consensus where otherwise it would be difficult. The "honest broker" image for POSSR institutions can hence be of significant value in enhancing the impact of their work.

*Research priorities.* Correctly anticipating the major policy issues of the future is one of the primary ingredients in establishing POSSR priorities. Even though there may be a long-standing policy issue (for example, crop insurance) with large societal benefits from changes, it is moot whether this alone justifies more research if it is judged to be "pushing on a string." Maybe there are higher payoffs to research to reduce societal costs of changes to components of the program (for example, not to add specialty crops to the crop insurance program) rather than continuing research on the bigger question that has a lower probability in spite of a higher value of success.

## **7. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

In this section the implications for donors, government, and national and international research institutions are discussed. These were derived from the working groups that met and in the plenary session at the conclusion of the workshop.

Donors and governments should:



- ! encourage the development of independent, well-managed, quality policy research institutions;
- ! improve the linkages between research and policy formulation; and
- ! invest in studying the policy processes, in training, and in promoting economic literacy.

Research institutions should:

- ! know what impacts donors value as there is no single one, although poverty alleviation is becoming a predominant concern and research quality is regarded as a necessary but not sufficient condition for continuing support;
- ! ensure that the impacts of value to donors coincide with those of the people and their governments;
- ! review their missions to make *ex ante* and *ex post* impact evaluation a part of their core business and regard it as a learning process;
- ! make incentive and reward systems consistent with the policy objectives of the agencies that commission or make use of research outputs;
- ! undertake more multidisciplinary research on evaluating and enhancing impact, including policy processes;
- ! build policy epicoms involving all stakeholders; and
- ! not compromise on quality and objectivity in the quest for impact.

### **Forming a Consortium**

There was a strong consensus among participants that **IFPRI should take the leadership in developing a mechanism (consortium, network, forum) whereby interdisciplinary methods for impact assessment of POSSR in food, agriculture, nutrition, and natural resources can be improved upon, in partnership with developing countries.** This activity might be closely linked with the emerging "Bridging Research and Policy" (BRAP) initiative within the Global Development Network (GDN) and could maintain contact with the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, which has a working group on impact assessment. The International Agricultural Trade Research Consortium (IATRC) could be used as a guide for developing the proposed mechanism, although a number of aspects of this consortium may not be appropriate.

The **goals** of such a mechanism would be to improve methodologies for impact assessment of POSSR and to enhance such impacts, with special reference to developing countries. It is expected that institutions could learn from each other about best practices and in the process exploit synergies, thereby increasing effectiveness and reducing costs.

The **activities** would include:

- ! stimulation of methodological research,
- ! bringing users of POSSR and researchers together to identify research needs and ways of enhancing relevance and impact,
- ! strengthening the capacity for impact assessment,
- ! disseminating the results of methodological research and case studies, and
- ! organizing conferences and workshops.

Consortium membership would be open to research institutions, donors, and individuals in developing and developed countries. It is expected that institutional members would provide resources to sustain the consortium but that the consortium would not be a grant-making body. A possible name could be the Social Science Impact Research Consortium (SSIRC). It would have a convener and a steering committee that would be representative of its members. Participants envisaged a small network or consortium owned by and responsive to developing countries. It was suggested that before a formal decision on forming a consortium (or network or forum), an interim steering committee be constituted by IFPRI to draft a concept note and explore with interested parties the value and desirability of proceeding.

**Appendix 1  
WORKSHOP PROGRAM**

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12**

08:30 B 09:00 Registration

**Session 1C Introduction**

Chair: **Rob van den Berg**  
Rapporteur: **Joachim von Braun**

09:00 B 09:10 Welcome (*K. A. Koekkoek [AD] Director, Cultural Cooperation, Education, and Research Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands*)  
09:10 B 09:20 Background (*Per Pinstруп-Andersen, Director General, IFPRI*)  
09:20 B 09:30 Discussion  
09:30 B 10:10 Valuing Economic Policy Research: A Review of the Art (*Phil Pardey and Vince Smith*)  
10:10 B 10:40 Discussion  
10:40 B 11:10 Coffee/Tea  
11:10 B 11:40 Lessons Learned from IFPRI Impact Studies (*Jim Ryan*)  
11:40 B 12:00 Discussion  
12:00 - 13:30 Lunch

**Session 2C Recent Policy Research Impact Evaluations**

Chair: **Phil Pardey**  
Rapporteur: **Roger Slade**

13:30 B 13:50 Rationale for Studies by Economic Research Service (ERS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA): A Demand-side Perspective (*Susan Offutt*)  
13:50 B 14:00 Discussion  
14:00 B 14:30 Using Bayesian Approaches to Value Policy Research in the ERS of the USDA: Analysts' Perspective (*George Norton and David Schimmelpfennig<sup>2</sup>*)  
14:30 B 14:45 Discussion

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<sup>2</sup> He did not attend but was a joint author in a paper that was presented by his colleague George Norton.

- 14:45 B 15:00 Experience with Retrospective Narratives in Assessing Effects of Human Nutrition Research on Policy: An Analyst's Perspective (*Simon Maxwell*)  
15:00 B 15:15 Discussion  
15:15 B 15:30 Coffee/Tea

**Session 3C Further Demand-side Perspectives**

Chair: **Ashok Gulati**  
Rapporteur: **Howard White**

- 15:30 B 15:45 Influence of Policy Research in West Africa (*Diery Seck*)  
15:45 B 16:00 Influence of Policy Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (*Haidari Amani*)  
16:00 B 16:15 Discussion  
16:30 B 16:45 Influence of Policy Research in Asia (*Jung-Sup Choi*)  
16:45 B 17:00 Experiences with Impact Evaluation in Dutch Development Cooperation (*Rob van den Berg*)  
17:00 B 17:30 Discussion  
18:30 B 21:00 Workshop Dinner

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13**

**Session 4C The Policy Processes**

Chair: **Sherman Robinson**  
Rapporteur: **Robert Paarlberg**

- 08:15 B 08:35 Experience with C-FARE and the U.S. Congress (*Walter Armbruster*)  
08:35 B 08:45 Discussion  
08:45 B 09:00 The Role of Economic Analysis in American Participation in the North American Free Trade Association and the Uruguay Round (*Dan Sumner*)  
09:00 B 09:15 Role of Economic Research in European Union Policy Formulation (*Johan Swinnen*)  
09:15 B 09:30 Role of Economic Research in OECD Trade Policy Formulation (*David Blandford*)  
09:30 B 09:45 Discussion  
09:45 B 10:00 A Political Science Perspective (*Merilee Grindle*)  
10:00 B 10:15 Communicating Policy Research to Policymakers (*David Zilberman*)  
10:15 B 10:30 Discussion  
10:30 B 10:45 Formation of Working Groups  
10:45 B 11:00 Coffee/Tea

**Session 5C Working Groups**

Chairs: **1. Susan Offutt 2. Hans Gregersen 3. Haroon Borat**  
Rapporteurs: **1. Haidari Amani 2. Diery Seck 3. Johan Swinnen**

- 11:00 B 12:30      Three Working Groups Formed to Reach Consensus on Each of the Following:
- Generic Issues in Impact Evaluation of Policy-Oriented Social Science Research*
  - ! Preferred methodological approaches in the future
  - ! How to better reflect demand-side needs and expectations in research priorities and design
  - ! How to enhance future impact
  - Implications for IFPRI*
  - ! Its role in methodological development
  - ! Future strategy in conducting its impact evaluation studies
  - Implications for Donors*
  - ! How can their needs be better met?
  - ! Is there a need for a consortium on impact evaluation?
  - ! If so, who should be involved and how can it be formed?

12:30 B 13:30      Lunch

**Session 5C Working Groups (continued)**

- 13:30 B 14:30      Three Working Groups Continue Their Deliberations  
14:30 B 15:00      Coffee/Tea

**Session 6C Plenary**

Chair: **Per Pinstrup-Andersen**  
Rapporteur: **Jim Ryan**

- 15:00 B 16:00      Presentation and Discussion of Conclusions and Recommendations of the Three Working Groups  
16:00 B 17:00      Final Consensus on Issues and Next Steps  
17:00                  Workshop Closes



**Appendix 2**  
**WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
(1) Professor Haidari Amani	Principal Research Fellow Economic and Social Research Foundation P. O. Box 331226 Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Tel. [225] (22-2) 276-0260/276-0758 Fax [225] (22-2) 276-0062/(811) 324-508 Mobile [225] (811) 323-519 Email: khaidari@hotmail.com / amani@esrf.or.tz
(2) Mr. Walter J. Armbruster	President Farm Foundation 1211 West 22nd Street Suite 216 Oak Brook, IL 60521-2197, USA Office (630) 571-9393 Fax (630) 571-9580 Email: WALT@farmfoundation.org
(3) Mr. Rob van den Berg	Director, Policy and Operations Evaluation (IOB) Ministry of Foreign Affairs P. O. Box 20061 2500-EB The Hague, Netherlands Tel. [31] (70) 348-5890 Email: rd-vanden.berg@minbuza.nl
(4) Dr. Haroon Borhat	Director, Development Policy Research Unit University of Cape Town School of Economics Hiddingh Hall Campus Cape Town 8000, South Africa Tel. [27] (21) 480-7160 Fax [27] (21) 423-2501 Mobile: [27] (82) 412-1587 Email: bhorat@hiddingh.uct.ac.za

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
(5) Professor David Blandford	Head, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Pennsylvania State University 103 Armsby Building University Park, PA 16802, USA Tel. (814) 865-5461 Fax (814) 865-3746 Email: dblandford@psu.edu
(6) Dr. Leen Boer	Head, Research and Communication Division (DCO/OC) Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs P. O. Box 20061 Bezuidenhoutseweg 67 2500-EB The Hague, Netherlands Tel. [31] (70) 348-5330 Fax [31] (70) 348-6436 Email: leen.boer@minbuza.nl
(7) Professor Joachim von Braun	Director, Center for Development Research (ZEF) University of Bonn Walter-Flex-Strasse 3 D-53113 Bonn, Germany Tel. [49] (228) 731-800 Fax [49] (228) 731-869 Email: jvonbraun@uni-bonn.de
(8) Dr. Jung-Sup Choi	Director, Agricultural Commodities and Marketing Department, Korean Rural Economics Institute/Asian Agricultural Association 4-102 Hoigi-dong, Dongdaemun-ku Seoul 130-710, Korea Tel. [82] (2) 3299-4381 Email: jsupchoi@krei.re.kr
(9) Mr. Klaus von Grebmer	Director, Communications Division International Food Policy Research Institute 2033 K Street, NW Washington, DC 20006-1002, USA Tel. (202) 862-5611 Fax (202) 467-4439 Email: k.vongrebmer@cgiar.org



Name	Affiliation
(10) Dr. Hans M. Gregersen	2090 E. Tumble Brook Way Tucson, AZ 85737, USA Tel. (520) 825-7723 Fax (520) 818-9270 Mobile: (520) 241-4571 Email: h.gregersen@cgiar.org
(11) Professor Merilee S. Grindle	Edward S. Mason Professor of International Development The John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University 79 John F. Kennedy Street Cambridge, MA 02138, USA Tel. (617) 495-1872 Fax (617) 495-0527 Email: merilee_grindle@Harvard.edu
(12) Dr. Ashok Gulati	Director, Markets and Structural Studies Division International Food Policy Research Institute 2033 K Street, NW Washington, DC 20006-1002, USA Tel. (202) 862-8196 Fax (202) 467-4439 Email: a.gulati@cgiar.org
(13) Dr. Tim Kelley	TAC Secretariat FAO Viale delle di Caracalla 00100 Rome, Italy Tel. [39] (06) 5705-5442 Fax [39] (06) 5705-5731 Email: t.Kelley@cgiar.or
(14) Professor Dr. Arie Kuyvenhoven	Development Economics Group Department of Social Sciences Wageningen University De Leeuwenborch, Hollandsweg 1 6706-KN Wageningen, Netherlands Tel. [31] (317) 484-360 Fax [31] (317) 484-037 Email: arie.kuyvenhoven@alg.oe.wag-ur.nl

Name	Affiliation
(15) Dr. Simon Maxwell	Director, Overseas Development Institute 111 Westminster Bridge Road London, SE1 7JD United Kingdom Tel. [44] (20) 7922-0300 Fax [44] (20) 7922-0399 Email: s.maxwell@odi.org.uk
(16) Professor George Norton	Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics Virginia Polytechnic and State University 205-B Hutcheson Hall Blacksburg, VA 24061-0401, USA Tel. (540) 231-7731 Fax (540) 231-7417 Email: gnorton@vt.edu
(17) Dr. Susan E. Offutt	Administrator, Economics Research Service United States Department of Agriculture 1800 M Street, NW, Room 4145 Washington, DC 20036-5831, USA Tel. (202) 694-5000 Fax (202) 694-5757 Email: soffutt@ers.usda.gov
(18) Professor Robert Paarlberg	Department of Political Science Wellesley College 106 Central Street Wellesley, MA 02481, USA Tel. (781) 283-2193 Fax (781) 283-3644 Email: rpaarlberg@Wellesley.edu
(19) Dr. Phil Pardey	Senior Research Fellow, EPTD International Food Policy Research Institute 2033 K Street, NW Washington, DC 20006-1002, USA Tel. (202) 862-8156 Fax (202) 467-4439 Email: p.pardey@cgiar.org

Name	Affiliation
(20) Dr. Per Pinstrup-Andersen	Director General International Food Policy Research Institute 2033 K Street, NW Washington, DC 20006-1002, USA Tel. (202) 862-5633 Fax (202) 467-4439 Email: p.pinstrup-andersen@cgiar.org
(21) Dr. Sherman Robinson	Director, Trade and Macroeconomics Division International Food Policy Research Institute 2033 K Street, NW Washington, DC 20006-1002, USA Tel. (202) 862-5604 Fax (202) 467-4439 Email: s.robinson@cgiar.org
(22) Dr. Jim Ryan	Visiting Fellow, Economics Division Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies Australian National University Canberra, Australia Tel. [61] (62) 511-942 Email: ryanjim@cyberone.com.au / jim.ryan@anu.edu.au
(23) Dr. Diery Seck	Executive Director Secretariat for institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA), IDRC B.P. 11007 cd annexe Dakar, Senegal Tel. [221] 864-0000 x 2234 Fax [221] 825-3255 Email: dseck@idrc.org.sn
(24) Dr. Roger Slade	Dince Hill House, Whimble Devon, England EXF 2TP United Kingdom Tel. [44] (1404) 823-018 Fax [44] (1404) 823-518 Email: randgslade@easynet.co.uk

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
(25) Professor Vince Smith	Department of Agricultural Economics and Economics Montana State University-Bozeman 306 Lindfield Hall P. O. Box 170292 Bozeman, MT 59717-0292, USA Tel. (406) 994-5615 Fax (406) 994-4836 Email: uaevs@Montana.edu
(26) Professor Dan Sumner	Frank H. Buck Jr. Professor and Director of the Department of Agricultural Economics UC Agricultural Issues Center University of California, Davis Room 2134, Social Science & Humanities Bldg. Davis, CA 95616, USA Tel. (530) 752-5002 Fax (530) 752-5614 Email: dasumner@ucdavis.edu
(27) Asst. Professor Johan F. M. Swinnen	Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Kardinaal Mercierlaan, 92 B-3001 Leuven, Belgium Tel. [32] (16) 220-931 x 1615/ 321-615 Fax [32] (16) 205-032 Email: jo.swinnen@econ.kuleuven.ac.be
(28) Ir. Klaas G. Tamminga	Senior Expert, Cultural Cooperation, Education, and Research Department Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs P. O. Box 20061 2500-EB The Hague, Netherlands Tel. [31] (70) 348-6254 Fax [31] (70) 348-6436 Email: klaas.tamminga@minbuza.nl

Name	Affiliation
(29) Dr. Jos Verstegen	c/o Zachariasse (LEI, Wageningen) Burgemeester Patijnlaan 19 P. O. Box 29703 NL-2502 LS The Hague, Netherlands Tel. [31] (70) 335-8222 Fax [31] (70) 335-8399 / 361-5624 Email: l.c.zachariasse@lei.wag-ur.nl
(30) Dr. Howard White	Fellow, Institute of Development Studies University of Sussex Brighton, BN1 9RE United Kingdom Tel. [44] (1273) 606-261 / 678-675 Fax [44] (1273) 621-202 / 691-647 Email: h.white@ids.ac.uk
(31) Professor Dr. Vinus Zachariasse	Managing Director LEI Wageningen Burgemeester Patijnlaan 19 P. O. Box 29703 NL-2502 LS The Hague, Netherlands Tel. [31] (70) 335-8222 Fax [31] (70) 335-8399 / 361-5624 Email: l.c.zachariasse@lei.wag-ur.nl
(32) Professor David Zilberman	Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics University of California - Berkeley 207 Giannini Hall Berkeley, CA 94720, USA Tel. (510) 642-6570 Fax (510) 643-8911 Email: zilber@are.Berkeley.edu

Jim Ryan is a visiting fellow in the Economics Division of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies of the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia, and a consultant to IFPRI on impact assessment