



# CGIAR Annual General Meeting 2001

BUSINESS MEETING - Washington DC, USA, November 1, 2001

## AGENDA ITEM: 6 – Other Business

Issue(s):

The SPIA Report will be discussed in conjunction with the TAC Chair's Report.

Supporting Document(s):

TAC's Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) Report to AGM 2001.

## PURPOSE OF THIS COMMUNICATION

<input type="checkbox"/>	Information
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Discussion
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decision

## OUTCOME

<input type="checkbox"/>	No further action required
<input type="checkbox"/>	Approved/accepted
<input type="checkbox"/>	Additional information required
<input type="checkbox"/>	Referred to the next meeting
<input type="checkbox"/>	See comments below

## COMMENTS

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CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**TAC's Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)  
Report to AGM 2001**

TAC SECRETARIAT  
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

October 2001

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# TAC's STANDING PANEL ON IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SPIA)

## Report to AGM 2001

### 1. Mandate and Composition of SPIA

At the current time, pending changes resulting from re-definition of the roles and structure of TAC and SPIA (transformed into the new Science Council), the mandate of SPIA is to:

- provide Members with timely, objective and credible information on the impacts at the System level of past CGIAR outputs in terms of the CGIAR goals;
- provide support to and complement the centres in their ex post impact assessment activities;
- provide feedback to CGIAR priority setting, and create synergies by developing links to ex ante assessment and overall planning and evaluation functions in the CGIAR.

Members of SPIA Members Drs. Ruben Echeverria (Peru) and Hermann Waibel (Germany). Alain de Janvry (France) and Lucia Vaccaro (Venezuela) are ex officio members in their capacity as Chairs of SCOPAS/TAC and SCOER/TAC respectively. The Chair is Hans Gregersen (US) who also serves as an ex officio member of TAC.

Tim Kelley replaces Guido Gryseels as the person assigned to SPIA from the TAC Secretariat. In addition, Sirkka Immonen is working with SPIA on the joint TAC/SPIA evaluation of training in the CGIAR and assessment of training impacts.

Dr. Gryseels and the two departing SPIA members, Drs. Tina David and Frans Leeuw will be sorely missed as they made significant and lasting contributions to the work of SPIA.

### 2. Current Status of SPIA Activities

#### 2.1 *SPIA 22, Washington, D.C., 9-10 May, 2001*

The 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting took place at the CGIAR Secretariat in Washington, D.C. In addition to SPIA members, Francisco Reifschneider, Selcuk Ozgediz and Manuel Lantin (CGIAR Secretariat), attended parts of the meeting. Highlights and conclusions from the meeting are reported in the Minutes and are available separately. SPIA 23 dates are pending and will be decided once it is known how the future of System level impact assessment is to be handled in the CGIAR.

#### 2.2 *Training Evaluation and Impact Assessment Study*

This study, undertaken jointly by SPIA and SCOER for TAC, is an evaluation of training as part of capacity strengthening within the System, and assesses the impact of CGIAR centre training of NARS scientists.

A specific proposal for this study, including a desk study and a main phase, was prepared in close collaboration with SCOER. The proposal was modified in the light of discussions at TAC 80 and later revised by the Secretariat based on comments emerging from the SPIA 22 meeting. The study proposal was subsequently sent out to Centre Directors General, CGIAR Members and the Chairmen of five regional associations (LAC-Foragro, WANAAARINENA, CAC Forum on Agricultural Research, FARA and Asia Pacific) for comments and suggestions, particularly with respect to the scope, main questions and intended outputs of the study. Centre and Member feedback was very positive - the study is considered both important and timely. Specific comments were incorporated into a revised draft that was tabled and discussed at TAC81.

Given the uncertain budget situation, TAC and SPIA decided to currently implement only the first phase of the Training Study, a desk study to collect comprehensive data and information on training strategies, processes, and outputs over the last decade. A short-term consultant will be employed for this purpose to analyse the data and information available from centres and to develop a more narrowly focused proposal for the main phase based on that analysis.

This desk study aims to provide a description and analysis useful in addressing the following themes relevant to the main phase:

- the nature and types of training activities in the System;
- an assessment of the ways in which centres currently introduce quality controls, evaluation and follow-up on training activities;
- the extent to which there exists a training strategy in the centres;
- the extent to which NARS participate in setting that strategy and influence training priorities; and
- other questions, as needed, covering the key issues related to past activities and processes used for training activities in the Centres.

Implementation of the main phase of the study - which will ultimately provide recommendations on ways to make the impacts from System training activities more relevant and sustainable in terms of CGIAR goals - hinges critically on the availability of adequate funds within the framework of the future Science Council.

### **2.3 *Impact of the CGIAR on Poverty Alleviation Study***

While the contribution of the CGIAR and national agricultural research centres to food production has been well documented, the extent to which the poor have benefited from the research of the CGIAR is more controversial. Addressing this critical question requires the CGIAR to develop a stronger capacity to undertake poverty impact assessments on a continuing basis, not only to show whether agricultural research is a sound investment for helping the poor, but also for better targeting of research priorities to the changing needs of the poor.

In response to these needs, SPIA requested that IFPRI, on its behalf, develop and coordinate a CGIAR Systemwide project to strengthen capacity for such poverty assessments. This led to a two-phased project. The first phase, completed in 1999, involved a review and synthesis of the literature on the links between agricultural research and poverty, and a workshop to develop methodologies for further CGIAR studies of impact.

The second phase, which began in September 2000, involves 14 case studies planned to cover a wide range of countries and types of CGIAR research. Due to continuing funding constraints, a first “wave” of seven studies was launched in 2000, with the rest to be conducted when full funding is available. However, the first wave of studies is incomplete in that it does not provide sufficient coverage of CGIAR centres or types of research (e.g. commodity and regional coverage, and scale of impact) to underpin a full synthesis report. Including more centres is needed to achieve a CGIAR-wide capacity for undertaking poverty impact assessments.

The second phase of the study has two main objectives: the first is to empirically test methods for evaluating the impact of agricultural research on poverty, in the context of different agricultural technologies and within different country, social and institutional settings. The second is to develop a conceptual framework that CGIAR centres can draw upon in the future for their impact assessment work, as well as at the technology design stage for increasing the magnitude of poverty impact. To accomplish both objectives, five of the first seven case studies are testing and adapting the sustainable livelihoods framework, a conceptual framework for understanding causes of poverty, analysing relationships between multiple and interactive factors at micro, intermediate and macro levels, and prioritizing interventions. Key aspects of this framework include:

- an expanded understanding of poverty and how to measure it;
- an emphasis on vulnerability, to natural phenomenon, market shocks and trends, social conflict - considering not only ‘today’s poor’ but who is threatened with poverty tomorrow and how this shapes livelihood strategies and choices in technology;
- looking beyond aggregated household or head counts to consider the significance of social differentiation by class, ethnic group, gender, and other factors among the poor;
- studying the varied range of livelihood activities and strategies that people pursue, recognizing that people often pursue many different activities simultaneously, including on- and off-farm work;
- examining the physical, natural, financial, human and social capital assets that people combine in pursuit of their livelihood strategies, and the constraints on access to needed assets;
- understanding how the institutional environment at the micro and macro levels influence livelihood strategies and outcomes and the impact of interventions.

Each case study focuses on a set of research questions that are driven by the specifics of the project under study, but which are informed by a sustainable livelihoods conceptual framework and fall within a set of themes that cut across the studies. In the analysis phase the sustainable livelihoods framework will be used to structure the analysis and synthesize across sources of information within each case study, as well as to compare across case studies.

The overall project is managed by Peter Hazell and Lawrence Haddad of IFPRI. There is an international Social Analysis Team led by Ruth Meinzen-Dick and Michelle Adato of IFPRI, with members from the London School of Economics and Wageningen University. Each case study is led by a senior economist at the respective CGIAR centre, working with a senior sociologist from a national research institute or university, as well as a team of junior social scientists for the purpose of capacity building. An External Advisory Committee (EAC)

meets once per year. EAC members include Jere Behrman (University of Pennsylvania); Robert Chambers (IDS, Sussex) and Anthony Bebbington (University of Colorado).

Significant progress was achieved in all Wave 1 case studies in the past year:

- Workshops for the five case studies were held including stakeholders in international and national research centres, government at national and local level, NGOs, and community representatives, to identify and prioritize research questions;
- International and national interdisciplinary research teams were built;
- Research designs were developed that include state-of-the-art panel surveys, household-level qualitative case studies, focus groups, participatory rural appraisal and key informant interviews.
- Quantitative and qualitative fieldwork has been completed in three of the five case studies, and data analyses underway. Fieldwork is underway in the two remaining case studies;
- An annual EAC meeting was held at IFPRI, where research designs and progress were reviewed, and strategies for dissemination of results within the CGIAR and broader international community discussed;
- The China and India case studies, which do not involve new fieldwork, are in the final stage of estimating the attribution of the benefits of technological change to the CGIAR;
- Over the coming year, fieldwork, data analysis, and final reports will be completed for all Wave 1 case studies. All seven reports will then be synthesized into a final project report that draws on key findings and methodological lessons, and proposes a conceptual and methodological framework for future CGIAR impact assessment work.

As the CGIAR becomes increasingly oriented toward a mandate of poverty reduction, this study aims to contribute to an improved understanding within the CGIAR System and national partners, of the relationship between agricultural research and poverty, and ultimately, to enhance the impact of agricultural research on poverty reduction.

A point of current concern is the significant shortfall in funding for the Wave I case studies.

#### **2.4 *Germplasm Improvement Impact Study***

The final report on this project was presented at MTM 01. A book containing the main elements of this SPIA activity will be published by CABI. All eight CGIAR crop centres participated in this study and the three country case studies were later added at the advice of Dr. Evenson, who served as study coordinator. SPIA provided financial support to encourage centre participation. Over the 2½ years that the study ran, progress reports on the results of the study were discussed regularly by IAEG and SPIA, and presented to TAC and to the Group. Tina David served as SPIA focal and contact point for the centres and study coordinators on behalf of SPIA. SPIA thanks Tina David for her continuous involvement in this project.

#### **2.5 *Environmental Impact Study***

This project is completed and the reports are now in the editing stages in preparation for final publication. The main outputs consist of the report prepared by Michael Nelson and Mywish

Maredia on Phase 2 of the Environmental Impact Study (Environmental Impacts of the CGIAR: An Assessment) and the report prepared by Mywish Maredia and Prabhu Pingali on the negative impacts of productivity-enhancing research (Environmental Impacts of Productivity-Enhancing Crop Research: A Critical Review).

The conclusions of the panel relate to the nature and magnitude of both the positive and negative impacts on the environment through application of the technologies developed by the CGIAR and its partners. The panel concludes that environmental impacts cannot be attributed or linked directly to research or outreach activities of the CGIAR. Rather, impacts have to be deduced by implication based on "what if" scenarios considering different counterfactuals and by interpretation based on correlations.

Accordingly, the panel concludes that the main positive environmental benefits associated with improved agriculture based on CGIAR research is less land *in aggregate* having to be converted from its natural state to agricultural uses in order to produce a given output of agricultural crops. Based on a series of assumptions, the Panel concludes that a conservative realistic assessment of land savings associated with application of the various technologies developed by the CGIAR in its seven primary mandate crops, is between 230 and 340 million ha.

Based on a review of aggregate data obtained from FAO, OECD, World Bank and other sources, the Panel concluded that it is not possible to develop aggregate quantitative estimates of negative environmental impacts. The compounding factors accounting for the linkages between research and environmental impacts are too complex and intertwined to sort out, given present analytical methods and available data. Over the past three decades, mostly anecdotal evidence has been assembled to demonstrate degradation of natural resources as a result of intensification and expansion of agriculture. In the case of rice and wheat, environmental problems associated with HYVs have been identified, e.g. pesticides (rice) and fertilizer/irrigation problems (wheat). However, there is little evidence of environmental damage resulting from other CGIAR mandated commodities. Without doubt, some of the Green Revolution technologies set in train some of the negative environmental impacts that are manifest today. However, these are also associated with other causes, such as institutional or policy failure and population pressure. One needs to balance any discussion of potential negative impacts with the CGIAR's response to evidence of renewable natural resource degradation. Thus research on environmentally friendly agricultural technologies and natural resource management by the System and its partners, coupled with land savings associated with improved productivity, likely resulted in significant net positive impacts on the natural resource base when judged against what would have happened without the research.

## **2.6 Workshop on the Future of Impact Assessment in the CGIAR: Needs, Constraints and Options**

TAC/SPIA sponsored and organized this workshop, which took place on 3-5 May 2000 at FAO, Rome. The overall goal of the workshop was to start the process of formulating a set of realistic and operational guidelines for future impact assessments in the CGIAR based on experiences gained from previous CGIAR impact studies and expertise available in the broader evaluation community. A proceedings volume, including summaries of the main sessions, keynote presentations, overview papers and 16 centre presentations can be found in the recently published document (available on the AGM01 document table).

## **2.7 Conference on Impacts of Agricultural Research and Development: Why Has Impact Assessment Research Not Made More of a Difference?**

CIMMYT and SPIA/TAC are jointly organizing an International Conference on Impacts of Agricultural Research and Development, which will take place from 5-7 February 2002 in San José, Costa Rica<sup>1</sup>. The conference will bring together impact assessment professionals with an interest in documenting and measuring the impact of international agricultural research. A major emphasis will be put on methodological aspects, drawing on experiences gained in various centre and SPIA studies. The conference will highlight experiences and case studies of impact measurement in the following areas:

- impact on agricultural productivity;
- impact on equity, poverty, social health, and nutrition;
- impact on the environment; and
- impact on institutions and human capital.

Participants will also describe novel approaches to hard-to-measure impacts in such areas as training, networks, participatory research and policy research

SPIA member Dr. Ruben Echeverria is the focal person for SPIA/TAC on this activity. An ad hoc committee is presently screening the 100+ abstracts of contributed papers for assessing their suitability and grouping related themes. Further details are available on the CIMMYT conference website at [www.cimmyt.org/research/economics/impacts](http://www.cimmyt.org/research/economics/impacts).

## **3. Future Plans**

(SPIA Suggestions on the Future Role and Operation of A CGIAR Impact Assessment Entity in the CGIAR)<sup>2,3</sup>

The CGIAR is making a number of major changes in structure and functions at the System level. Impact assessment is being considered within this context. The changes that are being considered include the appropriate role and location of Systemwide ex post impact assessment (IA) activities within the CGIAR. Whether or not SPIA remains as SPIA is an open question. The appropriate role and future of impact assessment in the CGIAR System was discussed by SPIA members at SPIA 22 in Washington, D.C. Following is the consensus view emerging from that meeting.

<sup>1</sup> Prior to this conference, IFPRI and the DGIS of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands are jointly conducting a two-day policy-oriented social science workshop at the Hague, 12-13 November 2001. The purpose of the workshop is to review recent experiences with the design and conduct of impact assessments of policy-oriented social science research and to initiate a consortium to begin work in 2001 for an initial three-year period. Several SPIA members will attend.

<sup>2</sup> At SPIA22, May 9-10, 2001, in Washington DC, the Director of the CGIAR suggested that such a specific SPIA input would be useful and welcome from the point of view of the group that would consider the details and mechanics of change after MTM01. SPIA members spent considerable time at that meeting discussing the question. Those present during the discussion included Tina David, Alain de Janvry, Ruben Echeverria, Guido Gryseels, Lucia Vaccaro, Hermann Waibel, and Hans Gregersen (chair).

<sup>3</sup> It is stressed that this note represents the view of the members of SPIA, not necessarily those of its parent body, TAC.

### **3.1 The Broader Context**

There always will be a central need and role for impact assessment (IA) activity at the System level. That is not the issue. In fact, the “challenge program” approach to CGIAR research leads one to conclude that IA of System level programmes will become more important. The question is: **What will the System need in the way of impact assessment support in the future, and how can it most effectively and efficiently be organized?**

In joining the previously independent CGIAR Impact Assessment and Evaluation Group (IAEG) with TAC in 2000 (and renaming it SPIA), the CGIAR members clearly signaled their recognition that the ex post impact assessment needs of the System could be met most effectively and efficiently by being coordinated with, and complementary to, the System’s needs for *forward planning of the System’s programmes* (now carried out by TAC/SCOPAS), and for *monitoring and evaluation of existing research* and related activities (now carried out by TAC/SCOER). These three groups now make up the core of TAC’s activities related to assuring the highest quality and relevance of CGIAR science and related activities.

The important synergies between the three key functions and their associated entities within TAC are well known. Thus, while each of these groups has to maintain its independent focus, at the same time each has to interact with and complement the others in order to optimize the effectiveness of, and the overall dynamic relationship between (a) planning the development and use of science in the System, (b) monitoring and controlling the ongoing application of science, and (c) assuring the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of application in terms of the ultimate impacts of application of the outputs in terms of CGIAR goals. (See figure below.)

Moving ahead to optimize the contributions of science to achieving the goals of the System requires an iterative process of successive approximations as new results emerge, as new science evolves, and as the issues are understood better. In this process, planning requires learning from the present progress (through M&E) and from the impacts of past activity. At the same time, evaluation of the relative effectiveness and efficiency of ongoing activity, and assessment of the impacts of past application of science requires a sense of what has happened, what is happening now, and what likely will and should happen in the future, i.e., the context. Thus, close and regular linkages between the three current functions of TAC will still be essential. In fact, SCOER and SPIA currently have several joint studies underway.

### **3.2 Specific Impact Assessment (IA) Needs of the System**

Within this broader context of CGIAR forward planning, monitoring and evaluation of ongoing programmes, and accountability to investors for past use of their resources, it was reasoned that the System needs: (a) evidence of the impacts and expected impacts of its various completed and ongoing research and related activities; (b) impact information useful in understanding appropriate and desirable changes in direction of the System’s programmes in relation to its goals; and (c) mechanisms for strengthening the capacity to do impact assessment in the System’s centres and its partners. Implicit in (b) is acquiring a better understanding of the pathways out of poverty and food insecurity and the direct and indirect means by which successful agricultural research leads to that outcome--case study ex-post impact assessments may sometimes provide new insights into the chain of events leading from research to development impacts. SPIA believes that these needs will continue to be the relevant for the System in the future.

Specifically, SPIA sees a continuing need for four main ex post impact assessment functions at the System level within the CGIAR:

1. **Conducting high quality, independent impact assessments** to provide results of use to (a) investors in justifying their investments; and (b) System management, centres and donors in planning their programmes and investments.
2. **Tracking information** related to the impacts associated with centre and cross-centre activities. This could involve routine data collection; developing, maintaining and managing, in collaboration with the planning and monitoring and evaluation units, and appropriate data base/MIS for the System that would provide annual updates on accomplishments (training, research, etc.) in addition to data on other indicators of relevance in understanding the impacts of the System's outputs and processes.
3. **Developing methodologies, providing training in their use and providing advice and facilitation** for centres as needed, e.g., in terms of setting up programmes and projects in such a way as to make tracking and analysing impacts more feasible, transparent and of high quality.<sup>1</sup> This would include the "certification" of quality of internal IAs and organizing and "certifying" quality of external IAs.
4. **Delivering and facilitating the most effective use of the outputs of the IA entity**, e.g., facilitating centre interaction and learning, development of an effective impact culture in the centres, and providing insights to investors on what is and is not feasible in terms of carrying out IAs for such activities as natural resources management, social science research and capacity strengthening.

### **3.3 Past Activities and Mode of Operation for SPIA.**

Within this overall framework of needs, SPIA has focused so far mostly on major Systemwide impact assessments, although the other functions also have been addressed to some extent. SPIA has assessed so far the impacts of the System's germplasm improvement work (Evenson et al), its impacts on the environment (the Nelson panel), and its IPM activities (Waibel). Ongoing studies are focusing on the CGIAR's impacts on poverty alleviation, and just started is the joint study with SCOER/TAC evaluating and assessing the impacts of the System's capacity strengthening activities. In addition, some activities have been ongoing with centres to help them organize their impact assessment work in a System context (this is one of the explicit goals of SPIA).

SPIA's mode of operation has involved two meetings per year, interaction via email and phone and interaction with outside contractors carrying out its assessments, something which can be done productively, given the small size of SPIA. Contractors for studies have been chosen by SPIA in consultation with TAC, since the merger with TAC. The SPIA Secretariat (joint with TAC) has handled most of the day-to-day needs of the Panels and has supported the various studies contracted out by SPIA.

### **3.4 The Future of SPIA and Impact Assessment Activity in the CGIAR.**

In what follows, we refer to the "new SPIA," although what is presented below is what the Panel feels is needed regardless of how the CGIAR chooses to name the IA entity and where it chooses to house it. We emphasize again, however, the desirability of keeping forward planning, monitoring and evaluation, and ex post impact assessment as closely associated as possible without

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<sup>1</sup> It should be stressed that the implication of this statement is not that the centres are lacking in high-quality impact assessment capacity. Rather, the thinking here is that a central entity can facilitate interaction among centres, gain access with System level resources to expertise needed by all centres, and provide a clearing house for information and documentation of use to all centres. In a sense, this central entity will provide "System level public goods."

losing the necessary independence of the impact assessment unit. In fact, SPIA has ongoing joint projects with TAC's monitoring and evaluation unit (SCOER) and agreed upon joint plans for Systemwide assessments of the Alternatives to Slash and Burn programme (ICRAF as lead centre) and the common action and property rights programme (CAPRI, with IFPRI as lead centre). SPIA/SCOER are working with the lead centres to organize these studies in the most effective and efficient way possible.

Based on a review of past SPIA activity and experience, it is clear that the new SPIA will need to concentrate more on: (a) working with centres in strengthening centre IA capacity and linking activities; (b) programme evaluation that involves inter-centre cooperation and collaboration; (c) working more closely with the System's science monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure that the complementarities between IA and M&E are fully realized; and (d) providing ex post impact assessment outputs that can serve the purposes of planning the new Challenge Programmes and reorienting overall System plans, i.e., work more closely with the forward looking planning activities performed at System level (handled up until now by TAC/SCOPAS).

In addition, based on SPIA's self assessment of its past five years of activity, it is evident to the members that it needs to (e) open up more broadly to the outside evaluation/impact assessment world, including through networking, outsourcing and putting some of its future studies out for bid on a broader, competitive "request for proposal" basis, and (f) develop a more systematic process to assure high quality, independent scientific peer review of its analytical studies and their results.

Within this broader context of reorientation of SPIA activities, the Panel believes that the following themes (not in any order of priority) should be dealt with by SPIA over the next few years:

- More tightly establish and document through case studies the linkages between agricultural research and specific targeted goals of the CGIAR;
- Develop standard approaches and methodologies for conducting IA;
- Help develop IA methods for participatory research/breeding (specific assessments of activities should be done through the partners involved in the activities);
- Continue to study the impacts of the capacity strengthening activities of the System, expanding out from the ongoing assessment of training to other types of capacity strengthening activities in the System;
- Move more into assessment of policy research impacts across the System, working closely with IFPRI and other centres and entities in this activity;
- Do follow-up work on IPM in the System;
- Look at the impacts of the System's biodiversity activities;
- Follow up on the Evenson/Gollin work on GPI, perhaps (a) doing one crop more in depth; (b) looking at more crops; or (c) assessing impacts in one region/country in more detail;
- Expand on the Africa impacts study (presented at Africa Day in Durban during MTM01);
- Look at other regions, following in the spirit of the new, stronger CGIAR focus on regional planning and priority setting;
- Look more in detail at the impacts of the Systems natural resources management activities, agroforestry, forestry, fisheries and livestock research, focusing initially on the development of appropriate methods and processes;
- Work more closely with centres in developing a database and a network of expertise in various aspects of impact assessment.

#### **4. Concluding Comment**

Where ex post impact assessment is housed in the CGIAR is not as important as (1) how it is linked to the System's forward planning and monitoring and evaluation functions, and (2) how its independence, transparency and credibility are maintained. Strong linkages with forward planning and M&E, and independence and credibility to the outside world are essential ingredients for a strong future impact assessment capability within the CGIAR.