

Report of the thirteenth Meeting of the CGIAR Private Sector Committee

ICW2000, Washington, USA

October 21-22, 2000

The 13th meeting of the CGIAR's Private Sector Committee (PSC) was held at the World Bank in Washington on October 21-22, in connection with the ICW2000, under the chairmanship of Sam Dryden. Members Claudio Barriga, Badrinarayan Barwale, Robert Horsch and Barry Thomas attended. Wallace Beversdorf, Seizo Sumida and Florence Wambugu could not participate. Sirkka Immonen of TAC Secretariat participated as a resource person for the systemwide review on Plant Breeding Methodologies and served as Secretary. Selcuk Ozgediz, CGIAR Secretariat, attended parts of the meeting to brief the members on the developments since the MTM2000 regarding the future governance and organization of the CGIAR.

The Committee met also with the new CGIAR Chairman, Ian Johnson, and Shawki Barghouti of the World Bank.

Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Interaction with the CGIAR Chairman
3. Overview developments affecting CGIAR's partnerships with Private Sector
4. Future governance and organization of the CGIAR
5. Future role of the PSC
6. Communication outreach to end users
7. Review of the Plant Breeding in the CGIAR
8. PSC report to the CGIAR
9. Other business

1. Introduction

Sam Dryden opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The minutes of the 12th meeting were adopted without changes. The agenda was adopted.

Selcuk Ozgediz gave an overview on developments since MTM2000 on the process of designing a new vision and strategy for the CGIAR and changing its structure and governance. At ICW2000 the group will be expected to decide on some quick wins that could be achieved in the short term and to decide on a "change management team" to carry on the change process. The PSC could give helpful advice, for example, on alternatives for mergers and alliances between Centres in the later stages of the process, as well as on regional priority setting.

2. Interaction with the CGIAR Chairman

Ian Johnson, the new CGIAR Chairman, joined the PSC meeting for an hour. He stated that the future is posing an enormous challenge for the CGIAR, which would have to come up with a fundamentally different way of doing business. He saw analogies with

the corporate world where both consumer and investor power was influencing the way of rethinking business. He reiterated the need for private/public partnerships as a strategic imperative for the benefit of both sectors and the need for the CGIAR to be more business like with clear accountability. He outlined ownership, stewardship and trust as the major elements in the discussion of the CGIAR's future. He specifically mentioned biotechnology as a common issue that both the CGIAR and the private sector must tackle, which requires informing and educating the public, elevating the standards of the debate and strategic thinking on Intellectual Property (IP). He emphasized the importance of intensifying agricultural production to guarantee food security in the future by revisiting the green revolution and/or through biotechnology. The members of the PSC commented on these themes, and it was generally felt that the South would be the major sufferer if the development and application of biotechnology in agriculture would come to a halt as a consequence of activist pressure and public mistrust in the North. It was also considered important that food security in the long run be seen as a technological challenge and not merely as a question of distribution and political effort. There are reliable published estimates on the need for increases in agricultural production, that cannot be reached with the current rate of yield increases. The inter-relatedness of poverty alleviation, food security and income growth was also discussed. Ian Johnson stressed the importance of economic growth on the one hand for food and energy security, and the targeted actions on e.g. small farmers conditions, nutrition and health on the other hand. Ian Johnson also brought up the issue of long term sustainability of agricultural production, which he sees primarily as the concern of the global public sector. There is need for a code of conduct and for public policies to tweak the markets to create the environments for sustainable solutions. In this regards, the dialogue between the public and the private sector must begin and the developing countries must be involved in it.

Sam Dryden brought up other themes, important from the PS's point of view, such as the concept of global public goods, which is a complex issue and may require rethinking, germplasm improvement (GI) in the CGIAR that warrants intense dialogue with the PS, and the increasing importance of proprietary technologies in any GI programs. Does the CGIAR have similar goals with respect to GI as does the PS – such as improvement of quality traits, in addition to yield? Ian Johnson called for a common platform for agricultural development and research for the future.

3. Overview developments affecting CGIAR's partnership with the Private Sector

Shawki Barghouti briefed the members on the World Bank's intention to open a high level policy dialogue on the new agricultural technologies and the global development agenda (GDA), particularly the role of agriculture in poverty alleviation. The WB's own funds are relatively limited for agricultural R&D in developing countries, the share of the public sector in the industrial countries is also declining, and the PS seems to be investing a considerable amount in research. In addition there is a growing trend for PS involvement in many developing countries. Thus a teaming up is desirable for greater impact. There is also concern among the developing countries and in WB on their behalf, that they will be left behind in agricultural development. The issues specifically would include a) involving the PS in the developing country networks, b) linking the PS commodity research with the so called orphan commodity research, c) PS

involvement in securing meaningful use for facilities left from WB-funded projects, and d) IP and information sharing. This meeting is seen as the beginning for a continuing dialogue, which in the future could develop into sub-group discussion on specific country topics.

The PSC considers this dialogue particularly important for discussing the role of the new technologies, also other than biotechnology, as part of the GDA. There was some concern on how to translate the broad agreements into tangible topics for co-operation with developing countries, in which the PS can be engaged. Robert Horsch listed IP and clarity of the process, and infrastructural capacity, e.g. credit, as specific examples of road blocks in PS-developing country collaboration. Which new mechanisms could there be for making technologies, such as genomic information and enabling technologies available to the public sector and in the global level. These mechanisms would supplement the current practices of philanthropic gestures. The PS should look at the broad context for creating new opportunities, while becoming more aware of what its responsibilities are in the long term.

4. Future governance and organization of the CGIAR

At MTM2000 the PSC expressed its support to TAC's recommendation of a regional priority setting process. The advantage would be the opportunity to co-ordinate the CGIAR planning with other initiatives in the region, for instance IICA and FONTAGRO activities in Latin America. Regional priority setting and the associated partner consultation would also require changes in TAC that would have a new regional role. In principal PSC agrees with a model where the overall research agenda would be determined on the basis of regional planning and donor support and the required resources and subsequently the required structure would derive from the research agenda. Such general research agenda would also facilitate discussion about sharing technologies. The question remains, whether donor behavior can be changed and whether the Centres agree to such evolution. With respect to governance, the PSC supports moving towards reduced bureaucracy. The PSC considers advantageous and recommendable to fund research programs that go beyond individual Centre budgets. The PSC recommends that consultants be used to bring a detached perspective to the restructuring needs of the CGIAR Centres. The goal should be to come up with the best structures and operational mechanisms for reaching the ultimate goal, that is serving the poor.

5. Future role of the PSC

The members discussed alternative ways to provide advice to the CGIAR and contribute to its operations. The current mechanism, that was given to the membership, of a Committee with regular meetings and participation in additional events as required, was considered appropriate during the first several years with results in the long term from such interactions, particularly in drawing attention to important areas such as IP and biotechnology. Depending on the outcome of the process of restructuring and regionalized priority setting, ad hoc participation of the PS in consultations and co-operation at the regional level could be fruitful. The PS is, however, involved preferably in germplasm improvement, which is just a part of the CGIAR research agenda.

6. Communication outreach to end users

The PSC discussed the importance of reaching the public to educate it on the importance of GI and the opportunities in the broad range of new technologies for increasing agricultural production. In its previous meeting it had agreed to get in contact with the FIS/ASSINSEL and the Global Crop Protection Federation. The issue of reaching the public needs to be raised also in the policy dialogue with the WB/CG as this is a good opportunity for private/public collaboration with importance to both. The concrete actions are, however, postponed until a decision is reached on the new structure of the GGIAR. There is need to identify and approach the various groups of people that make choices on the markets and need information. Now, that the biotechnology debate has alerted the public to issues of food and its origin, it is prime time to educate people on the broad topic of agriculture and its global relevance.

7. Review of Plant Breeding in the CGIAR

Three members of the Science Partnership Committee (SPC), Sudha Nair, Satohiko Sasaki and Mouin Hamze, together with Manuel Lantin, CGIAR Secretariat, joined the PSC meeting to discuss the systemwide review on Plant Breeding Methodologies of the CGIAR.

Sirkka Immonen introduced the review and its major findings. The report noted that plant breeding in the CGIAR has been successful and has had considerable impact as shown in recent studies. The methodologies used are optimal in general, considering the diverse crops and beneficiaries. The Panel considered that adequate funding of traditional plant breeding is a prerequisite for guaranteeing further success and for benefiting maximally from biotechnological advancements. The Panel saw no immediate opportunities for cost savings through substituting current technologies, but rather that effective incorporation of biotechnological tools requires further investments in research, bioinformatics, implementation of MAS and capacity building. The Panel identified several areas for inter-Centre synergies and recommended greater co-operation between Centres and even consolidation of certain activities related to biotechnology. The Panel recommended that Participatory plant breeding (PPB) should be evaluated as an organic part of the crop breeding programs and an appropriate form of it incorporated when considered effective. The Panel highlighted the issue of IP as something all Centres need to address. Co-operation with advanced institutions, including the Private Sector was recommended, providing that there is clear communication of the nature and conditions to the stakeholders.

The PSC and SPC members commented on several issues including the need for biotechnology research in the CGIAR, dissemination of transgenic crops, PPB and IP. The PSC is interested to know what is the justification in increasing resource allocation to biotechnology research in the CGIAR, particularly in areas where there maybe disadvantageous duplication of efforts with the PS? With respect to transgenics, the members were interested in the types of traits that the Centres are working with. To overcome the obstacles of public perception on the technology and on the associated IP concerns, it was recommended that the CG came up with prototype cases, where the science and IP matters could be handled successfully. With respect to partnerships, the PSC considers it rational to design agreements with the CG on a case by case basis.

Confidentiality between partners should be accepted, at least initially, after which the partnership can be expanded to include more Centres/CG research groups. However, there would be greater clarity and IP could be easier dealt with, if the PS could collaborate with GI programs rather than with individual Centres, particularly as several Centres currently deal with the same species.

The PSC favors central coordination of and accountability for germplasm improvement activities and management of GI budgets in the CGIAR. This would facilitate priority setting and decision making on the research agenda, bring benefits from genomic synteny and broad knowledge across the GI programs and enhance partnerships with the PS.

In conclusion the PSC found the PBM report a thorough one and logical in the way it arrived to the recommendations. The question that follows, is how the System can benefit from this review and how these recommendations can be enforced and implemented.

8. PSC report to the CGIAR

The PSC will provide a written report to the CGIAR, in addition to reporting during the afternoon session on Friday the 27th.

9. Other business

The PSC decided not to set a date or venue for its next meeting, but it tentatively decided to meet between now and MTM2001 in Durban to discuss further developments on the future governance and organization of the CGIAR.