

**ICW'98:
TAC CHAIR's REPORT**

Mr. Chairman, colleagues, it is my pleasure to present to you the TAC Chair's report. I will bring the Group up-to-date on the Committee's activities since MTM'98, highlighting progress or accomplishments on TAC strategic studies, monitoring implementation of the System's Research Agenda, refining the logframe and activity classification scheme, completing and planning external reviews, and close with an observation on a review of the Committee's structure .

1. Strategic Issues

Over the course of the last two years—and reinforced by collaboration among Centers, the CGIAR Secretariat, and TAC—significant changes have been made in the CGIAR's management software. The tools are now available to streamline and make more effective the review of Center science. Second, proposals and budgets have been focused in ways such that they are both easier for Centers to implement and for others to assess. Third, the elements are now coming on stream to improve transparency in relating the work of the Centers to the System's goals which, in turn, will improve the CGIAR's ability to monitor progress in activities and projects, to assess impact, and to frame plans consistent with the System's goals. Our collective sense is that these three elements, once fully integrated, will notably expedite TAC, CGIAR Secretariat, and Center efforts to provide the Group with the information it needs for more effective decision-making.

Those commitments behind us, TAC can increase its emphasis on strategic issues. Let me remind you how the TAC is currently dealing with strategic issues. Three approaches have been used: (a) ad hoc panels of experts with little direct involvement by TAC Members—the panels dealing with biotechnology and with intellectual property rights are examples; (b) a combination of ad hoc panels with TAC Members—the marginal lands study is an example; and (c) TAC members in combination with TAC Secretariat staff.

In all cases, TAC Members prepare the terms of reference for the studies, are the final authority in selecting panel members, and prepare commentaries for consideration by the Group. The TAC Secretariat provides administrative, and sometimes technical, inputs to the studies.

Two strategic studies are now underway. One is an analysis of the efficacy of the ecoregional approach as a platform for efficient work in System-wide programs. The second study emerged from TAC's meeting in September 1997. It focuses on IARC relationships with NARS—e.g., are roles appropriately defined, what is the place of extension/diffusion activities, and what should condition the balance between information/education diffusion and information generation? We note that the System invests over 20 percent of its budget in directly strengthening NARS and, even more important, NARS play significant roles in virtually every dimension of the System's work—from planning to execution to impact. At this time, a well-versed consultant is amplifying the terms of

reference of the study. (He attended the ICW'98 sessions on partnerships.) The study itself will involve many specialists, including TAC Members and consultants.

Two other strategic studies are being moved into position, one dealing with the System's portfolio in 2010 and the other, undertaken jointly with the CGIAR Secretariat, dealing with managing partnerships. As a part of the first, and with more general applications to priority setting, we have been engaged in improving our knowledge of the locus and level of poverty. This effort has involved two sets of consultants on GIS, and the Government of Norway in a meeting of some forty specialists—about half of them from CGIAR Centers. GRID-Arendal, one of our consultants, arranged the meeting. It seems evident that we have a long way to go before we can improve much on our current approach to poverty mapping. Many are engaged in the process.

As well, TAC played a role in a collaboration with USAID and the Centers in developing an inventory of Center activities that relate to mitigation and adaptation to Global Climate Change. A TAC Member worked with a USAID-sponsored professional to orient the effort. Our second contribution was that of honest broker between the professional and the Centers. The Centers provided information, the USAID-sponsored professional, among other things, partitioned the inventory into revealing subsets. Over the march, the Centers established a Working Group that will carry on beyond the inventory. TAC will be represented in the Working Group.

2. Monitoring the CGIAR's Research Agenda

TAC's report to the Finance Committee on the 1999 Financing Plans noted broad programmatic congruence between the MTM'98 endorsed plans and the Research Agenda. However, I want to reiterate here TAC's concern about the System's persistent relative underinvestment in the livestock and water sectors, shifting shares in the commodity portfolio compared to endorsed levels, underinvestment in absolute terms in virtually all commodities and Centers, and potentially significant financing gaps faced by several of the smaller Centers. Apart from flagging these issues for Members, TAC has requested that the IIMI and ILRI review panels, respectively, address current projects of all Centers in these areas. Their findings may give TAC a handle on developing a concerted strategy that better aligns the System's work in these areas with Members' apparent programmatic preferences.

3. Logframe

As promised, TAC tabled for discussion at this meeting a proposal for a logical framework (logframe) designed to improve research planning, communication, and impact assessment in the CGIAR. The paper emerged from a series of workshops and consultations convened in 1997-98 under TAC's auspices and with initial financial support from the Government of Germany. It

represents a broad-based consensus of the Centers and other stakeholders who have participated in this effort. In discussion earlier this week the Group endorsed the proposal. As consequences, the CGIAR will move away from an activity/input to a project/output focus, transparency of the linkages of outputs to System goals will be improved, the context for priority setting, resource allocation, and impact assessment will be strengthened, and accountability of Centers to Members and other stakeholders will be enhanced. Given the breadth of participation and interaction in its preparation, TAC proposed to introduce the vocabulary, i.e., the technical terms of the logframe, in the 1999 financing plans and to implement fully its elements in 2000 for planning programs and budgets in 2001. Like all logframes this one, too, will evolve over time.

4. External Reviews

First, let me remind the Group that it has had the opportunity to consider at this meeting the review reports of two EPMRs, those of ICRAF and CIFOR, as well as TAC's commentaries on these reports prepared at TAC 75. I need not, therefore, discuss these items further here.

The EPMRs of ICLARM and ILRI are underway and planning has advanced for the future reviews of IIMI, ICARDA, WARDA, CIAT, IITA, and CIP to be conducted during 1999-2000.

The report of the first external review of the System-wide Genetic Resources Program was also tabled for consideration at this meeting, together with TAC 75's commentary on it. Without entering into further discussion of this item, I would note that TAC's commentary concentrates on the operating aspects of SGRP; attention to the more strategic considerations must await the outcome of discussions of relevant portions of the System Review.

TAC is concerned that external reviews appear to receive less attention by the full Group than has been customary. Recognizing that the CGIAR has decided to streamline its meetings and that the current session rightly gives priority to the System Review, TAC nonetheless emphasizes that EPMRs are virtually the only tool the Group has at its disposal to ensure accountability. We trust that in the future review results will receive consideration by the Group commensurate with their importance to the System's concern for oversight of its activities.

TAC shares the Group's concerns with the evolution of the System-wide programs and laid out a timetable for their review in report to MTM'97. At that time no System-wide program had matured sufficiently to warrant review; it was decided to initiate in late 1998 a review of eight of the nine System-wide programs that are structured around the ecoregional approach. The review is focused on execution of the ecoregional paradigm and mainly addresses the question: How well has the ecoregional approach served the Group's interest in promoting sustainable improvement of productivity by linking strategic and applied research on NRM with that on production systems?

The effort is being led by Ted Henzell, a former TAC member and widely known in the NRM community. The cooperation of Centers, partners, and stakeholders alike will be crucial to the review's success. The results will be reported at ICW'99.

5. Concluding Comments

Finally, a few comments on TAC itself Let me remind you of its terms of reference: assuring the Group about the quality and relevance of Center science; framing recommendations for the Group about priorities and resource allocations; and analyzing strategic options for the Group's consideration. I remind you, too, of the cosponsor's sense that the TAC, should be representative in terms of science (four categories), geography (seven regions), and gender.

As I observed earlier our current modus operandi includes the widespread use of outside experts and TAC Members in various combinations on well-focused themes.

The System Review comments on a new framework for TAC. We welcome the inclusion of this theme in the deliberations of the Consultative Council. We assume discussion will include TAC's terms of reference, its membership profile, and its modus operandi. With a clear sense of its functions, the Group can more effectively decide on TAC's form. Know that the entire TAC and its Secretariat stand ready to contribute to such an effort.