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Shaping the CGIAR's Future

Addendum to ICRAF External Review Report

The Report of the Second External Programme and Management Review of the ICRAF was issued on September 15, 1998 as Document Number SDR/TAC:IAR/98/15. Attached are the transmittal letter from the TAC Chair and the CGIAR Executive Secretary to the Chairman of the CGIAR, TAC's Commentary on the Review, and the response of ICRAF's Governing Board and Management to the Review report.

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Donald Winkelmann, Chairman

15th October 1998

Dear Mr. Serageldin,

I have the pleasure of transmitting to you the report of the Second External Programme and Management Review of the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), which was conducted during April and July 1998. The Panel was chaired by Dr. Jochen Heuveldop of Germany

At its 75th Meeting held at CIMMYT, September 1998, TAC discussed the Review Report in the presence of the Panel Chair, the Vice-Chair of Board of Trustees, Dr. Maria de Lourdes Davies de Freitas and the Director-General, Dr. Pedro Sanchez. On the basis of its discussion, TAC prepared a commentary which summarizes its observations and conclusions. The commentary, together with ICRAF's response to the Review Report, is attached to the report. We are pleased that the Board of Trustees and Management are in agreement with most of the recommendations.

The EPMR Panel conducted the Review in a frank and participatory manner and examined how the Centre has continued to transform itself from an information exchange Council into a CGIAR supported research Centre. The Centre emerges from the Review as a strong, and well managed research institution, producing quality outputs. The Review comes at a time when ICRAF's role in agroforestry research is poised to contribute significantly to integrated natural resources management. The extent of ICRAF's partnerships are impressive and opens avenues for mutually beneficial experiences; in this regard TAC is pleased with the analysis and recommendations offered by the Panel.

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The Review was deliberately timed to coincide with that of CIFOR for the purpose of exploring relationships between the two Centres, examining opportunities for collaboration and fostering complementarity and operational effectiveness. In view of the complementarities between CIFOR and ICRAF, the two Panel Reports were considered by TAC in tandem.

Although the Panel sees ICRAF's current evolution as being very promising, the key to the Centre's success in the longer term is implementation of the Panel's recommendation that the Centre develop its research programme in the context of a clearly elaborated vision of the future needs of agroforestry within a holistic natural resources management framework. Specifically, ICRAF should review and update its strategic plans at all levels to ensure a cohesive vision and programme of action. We also recommend that ICRAF and CIFOR undertake a joint strategic planning exercise.

Although the challenges facing ICRAF in the twenty-first century are formidable, we are confident that the Centre has been systematically and adequately prepared to address the issues ahead. Accordingly we are satisfied that ICRAF deserves the continued full support of the CGIAR and partners.

Sincerely yours,

Alexander von der Osten

Alexander von der Osten
Executive Secretary, CGIAR

Donald L. Winkelmann

Donald L. Winkelmann
TAC Chair

TAC COMMENTARY ON THE SECOND ICRAF EXTERNAL PROGRAMME AND MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The report of the Second External Programme and Management Review of ICRAF was discussed at TAC 75 in the presence of the Panel Chair, Dr. Jochen Heuveldop, the Vice-Chair of ICRAF's Board, Dr. Maria de Lourdes de Freitas, and the Director General of ICRAF, Dr. Pedro Sanchez.

TAC expresses its thanks to the Chair and members of the Panel for a constructive, forward-looking and positive assessment of the future role and importance of the Centre. At the same time, the Panel's report clearly highlights the central issues and challenges facing ICRAF.

The Committee is pleased to note that ICRAF has worked hard and diligently at transforming itself into a well managed research institution, and that it has become a major force in research and development in agroforestry.

TAC endorses, in general, the recommendations of the Panel, and notes that ICRAF has responded favourably to nine of the ten, and has already taken steps towards implementing them. TAC encourages wide discussion of the report at the Centre in order to pursue the potential for collective reflections by Centre staff on the messages of the EPMR. TAC offers the following commentary, prepared with inputs from the CGIAR Secretariat, to supplement the Panel's report.

ICRAF's Strategic Plan

TAC agrees with the need for ICRAF to develop its research programme in the context of a clearly elaborated vision of the future needs of agroforestry within a holistic natural resource management framework. The Committee welcomes the Panel recommendation that ICRAF review and update its Strategic Plan, develop both strategic and medium-term plans for each of the Programmes and Regional Offices, and use these as the basis for annual planning. The Committee notes that ICRAF is in the process of decentralizing greater authority and control to the Regional Offices while maintaining cross-regional programmatic linkage through global thematic programmes. However, it shares the Panel's observation that effective support from the Research and Development Divisions at headquarters for the regional activities will be important in ensuring that ICRAF maintains a cohesive vision and "programme of action". In this regard, TAC strongly encourages ICRAF to ensure that its regional strategies will provide the building blocks for updating its Centre-wide strategy.

Quality of Science

TAC appreciates the Panel's detailed review of ICRAF's research management in terms of quality of inputs, problem formulation, methods and implementation, and outputs. The Committee is pleased to note that despite ICRAF's recent rapid growth, the Centre has developed a good strategic research programme. Nevertheless, the Panel has highlighted that ICRAF faces the challenge of ensuring that its strategic research programme keeps in step with the more applied on-farm research. In this regard, TAC strongly supports the Panel's recommendation for an increased effort in research on

propagation and postharvest technologies, because of their high potential contribution to the goals of the System.

TAC noted the Panel's assessment that mechanisms for monitoring programme quality are in place. However, in assessing programme quality, TAC would like to have seen a more explicit discussion on the quality standards of the research *per se* in terms of soundness of theory, use of up-to-date methodology and policy relevance. It is more effective when the quality of science practised is discussed with explicit reference to the state-of-the-art, in terms of the underlying theory and methodology, and whether the methodologies are in step with progress in other comparable advanced research centres. TAC also felt the need for a stronger Panel and ICRAF analysis of the presence and quality of the Centre's sociological research, in view of the major importance of socio-cultural variables, and tenurial, institutional and distributional arrangements, for group-based and smallholder agroforestry. The discussions at TAC 75 emphasized the importance of sociological and economic research and the need to evaluate the contributions of these two areas distinctly rather than collectively as "socioeconomic research". TAC encourages ICRAF to take these elements into account as it further develops its own programme orientation and quality assurance mechanisms and processes. As well, the Committee would have preferred the Panel to identify whether ICRAF has achieved or is on the path of achieving any major scientific product regarded, in terms of its quality, as a major breakthrough.

Impact Assessment

ICRAF expects its activities to have impacts at the global, national, community and farmer levels. The Panel concluded that ICRAF's outputs and achievements are solid and in most part contribute directly to achieving its goals. The Panel found discrete examples of how ICRAF's outputs are beginning to translate into impacts. However, it would have been useful for the Committee to know how ICRAF proposes to measure the intermediate and ultimate impacts of its work at the different levels of aggregation. TAC believes that ICRAF should take a more proactive stance on the matter and pay particular attention to defining its impact assessment strategy.

Partnerships

The extent of ICRAF's partnerships is impressive and TAC is pleased with the analysis offered by the Panel regarding the balance, nature and quality of partnerships with NARS, other CGIAR Centres and other institutions. ICRAF views itself as a partnership-based, development-oriented research institute. Given ICRAF's mandate and future role in integrated natural resources management (INRM), there is no doubt that ICRAF will need to sustain a sizeable level of complex partnering, and the Panel has made two recommendations in this area both of which are endorsed by TAC.

TAC agrees with the Panel that for ICRAF to position itself as a global and regional contributor of agroforestry expertise to INRM research, other CGIAR Centres and international institutions need to be involved as partners. In this regard, TAC notes that ICRAF is the convening Centre for two Systemwide Programmes but also participates in eight other Systemwide Programmes. The Panel did not analyse what benefit ICRAF was deriving from participating in the latter but cautions ICRAF against further commitments to Systemwide Programmes, unless the intended activities fit directly within the framework of ICRAF's strategy and MTP. TAC considers this to be sound advice.

The Panel notes, as in the CIFOR review, that although the formal relations established between ICRAF and CIFOR are cordial, the amount of programmatic cooperation and joint involvement has been less than optimal, considering the potential complementarity of the talents and interests involved. TAC agrees with the Panel's view that ICRAF and CIFOR need to develop the relationships and mechanisms that allow them to complement and supplement each other where possible and share responsibility jointly where their interests overlap. Some five years ago the Directors General of the two Centres undertook a study of their complementarities within the context of the Alternatives to Slash and Burn Programme. Since then, both Centres have established regional presence in which regional research and partnership strategies have yet to be explicitly defined.

TAC recommends that ICRAF and CIFOR undertake a joint strategic planning exercise at the earliest possible date to (a) define opportunities for collaboration; and (b) agree upon a MOU that would ensure complementarity and operational effectiveness.

Development Division

The Panel report points out that ICRAF is evolving into an institution that gives explicit and equal emphasis to the research and development activities needed to ensure that the results are put into use as rapidly as possible. ICRAF has taken several steps to operationalize the research-to-development continuum, including the establishment of the Development Division. The Panel report places a strong emphasis on the need to focus on producing international public goods. With respect to those related to development activities pursued by ICRAF, the Panel has recommended research on dissemination methods and techniques, as well as market development research and strategic planning for value added activities. TAC supports the recommendations that are consistent with the need for ICRAF to avoid being drawn into purely extension type activities, and emphasizes the Institute's potential in evolving policy recommendations for governments. More attention should be paid by ICRAF to the social and institutional strategies that must match technological recommendations in agroforestry. The Committee agrees with the Panel that there is a need to draw on experiences from around the world in these development-oriented activities and to do selected research in the area. This research should also be linked with the carrying out of constraint and needs analysis with partners to define alternative dissemination pathways and approaches.

Governance and Management

The Panel points out that ICRAF's governance and management functions are now more complex, and has recommended that the Board should strengthen its programme oversight by becoming more proactive in setting its agenda as well as institute a formal procedure to schedule and commission Centre Commissioned External Reviews. TAC endorses this recommendation which should improve the effectiveness of the Board in discharging its due diligence functions as well as its communication with management and staff. TAC notes the favourable response of the Board to this recommendation.

29 July 1998

Dr. Donald L. Winkelmann
Chairman
Technical Advisory Committee
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Mr. Alexander von der Osten
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Dear Dr. Winkelmann and Mr. von der Osten.

On behalf of the ICRAF Board of Trustees and Management, we are pleased to respond to the recommendations presented in the Report of the Second External Program and Management Review of the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry.

The review panel's report has highlighted ICRAF's successful evolution from an advocacy council to a strategic research centre with a research agenda and a mode of operation that support the CGIAR's mission and goals. In addition, the panel has provided a valuable analysis and strategic evaluation of crucial program and management issues that will affect the future development of ICRAF. These include: planning and priority setting; positioning within the research and development continuum; program quality, linkages and impact; and governance and management.

The Board and Management highly appreciate the panel's overall positive assessment of ICRAF's research, management and governance performance. We are particularly encouraged by the panel's assessment of the Centre's efforts to enhance research quality and output, as these areas were given high priority by the Board and Management during the past five years. We also note with satisfaction the panel's endorsement with ICRAF's recent strategic decision to position the Centre more explicitly with a research and development continuum.

The report has provided ten recommendations: four relate to planning and priority setting; four pertain to ICRAF's role within the research and development continuum; and two address issues of governance and management. We value the insight of the panel in identifying a clear and concise set of recommendations that will undoubtedly enhance ICRAF's ability to meet challenges and respond to opportunities that lie ahead. Our specific responses to the panel's recommendations are attached.

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You will note that we endorse all but one recommendation. However, we are well aware that significant resources will be required to implement at least five of the endorsed recommendations. As a matter of high priority, ICRAF's Board and Management will deliberate on the ways and means of implementing the recommendations. Our challenge will be to identify the tradeoffs, through a priority setting process, between these new and expanded activities and those in our current agenda. Concurrently, we will actively seek additional resources to support the new activities that have been proposed by the panel.

In addition to our formal response to the ten recommendations, we have taken note of numerous valuable suggestions and observations that were made by the panel. These will be carefully examined by the Board and Management at the next Board Meeting.

The final chapter of the report focuses on "ICRAF into the twenty-first century." The panel has underscored the crucial importance of "trees on farms" in improving the welfare of farmers and rural communities while safeguarding the environment. The panel envisions agroforestry as evolving within a more holistic and integrated natural resource management framework and urges ICRAF and others to forge new and creative partnerships and seek additional resources in order to contribute more effectively to the goals of poverty reduction, food and nutritional security, and environmental enhancement. The Board and Management of ICRAF, without reservation, accept these challenges, and will pursue them with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

Finally, we take this opportunity to formally thank the EPMR panel and the TAC and CGIAR secretariats for their contributions to a rigorous and incisive review.

Sincerely yours,

Pedro Sanchez
Director General

Yemi Katerere
Chair, Board of Trustees

**ICRAF'S RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF ITS
SECOND EXTERNAL
PROGRAMME AND MANAGEMENT REVIEW**

29 July 1998

Recommendation 1: The Panel recommends that ICRAF review and update its 1993 Strategic Plan, develop both strategic and medium-term plans for each of the Programmes and Regional Offices and use these as the basis for annual planning.

Response: ICRAF welcomes this recommendation and will update its strategic overview of the 1998-2000 Medium Term Plan, and include strategic plans for each Division, Region, Programme and Unit.

Recommendation 2: The Panel recommends that ICRAF do a systematic analysis within the year of the factors associated with the successful and unsuccessful operation in the regions that draws out the lessons for an updated set of guidelines for management of the regional programmes.

Response: ICRAF has recognized the importance of systematically analyzing the lessons learnt from operations in the ecoregions where it works. This was discussed between Management and the Board at its April 1998 meeting prior to the EPMR. The issue will be addressed at our Annual Planning Review meeting in September 1998. ICRAF therefore welcomes the recommendation of the Panel to undertake this analysis and will complete it within the year.

Recommendation 3: The Panel recommends that all IRS and senior nationally recruited staff take part in regular training courses on creating working partnerships, of working in teams and on recognizing the influence of personality and of cultural differences in relationships.

Response: This recommendation stresses the importance of working in teams and partnerships, which ICRAF has actively advocated. ICRAF staff, both professional and support, have participated in various courses, workshops and seminars over the past three years dealing with management, leadership, and team work. For example, in January 1998, ICRAF Regional Coordinators, in conjunction with Coordinators from other CGIAR Centres and NARS partners participated in a course on collaborative partnerships. Subsequently, this course was made available to NARS partners in the Southern Africa region. ICRAF endorses the Panel's recommendation and will, in collaboration and discussion with our NARS partners, continue to support training courses and related activities in this area.

Recommendation 4: The Panel recommends that ICRAF further develop the research and training needed in the area of vegetative propagation and nursery management and establishment.

Response: Access to improved germplasm is one of the key constraints in the wide adoption of agroforestry technologies. ICRAF fully concurs with the Panel's findings and will, giving considerations to priority setting and resource constraints, seek to expand these activities in the regions where we are active.

Recommendation 5: The Panel recommends that ICRAF develops an area of identifiable activity and develop greater capacity at headquarters related to research on dissemination methods and techniques within Programme 4

Response: In January 1998 ICRAF established a Development Division with the objectives of facilitating, catalysing, and supporting the dissemination, adoption and impact of agroforestry innovations. We recognize that this objective can only be met through partnership with other organizations that have complementary expertise, resources and geographical access. Yet to be an effective development partner, ICRAF must build on its existing core competency -- agroforestry research -- and acquire in-house capacity and expertise to draw on state-of-the art knowledge on the pathways of dissemination and development and, where necessary, to undertake research on these processes as they relate to agroforestry. Thus, ICRAF welcomes the Panel's recommendation and will pursue it with great vigour.

Recommendation 6: The Panel recommends that ICRAF pursue the establishment of activities and expertise at headquarters in the areas of market development research and strategic planning for value-added activities (including the process of identifying, choosing and developing appropriate post-harvest technologies).

Response: There is a multitude of products from agroforestry trees for which cash value can be enhanced through marketing and commercialization. Tree products can provide added value to farmers and others in the production chain and thereby help reduce rural poverty. ICRAF needs to work with a range of new partners (institutes of food science, new composite materials, the food and pharmaceutical industries, etc.), and acknowledges the Panel's comment that we require in-house expertise to make these links effective. We therefore, concur with this recommendation.

Recommendation 7: The Panel recommends that ICRAF crafts a strategy, operational policies and associated guidelines on partnerships that go beyond its current policy guidelines, and that these new statements be based on the results of a thorough analysis of ICRAF's partnership experience. Special attention should be given to the pathway for NARS strengthening and to ways to handle differences in organizational culture.

Response: ICRAF has and will continue to work in partnerships with other institutions, as collaboration is our primary mode of operation. We therefore fully agree with this recommendation, will expand on the recently concluded partnership survey, and will undertake the analysis required to gain maximum efficiency and effectiveness from our collaborative efforts.

Recommendation 8: The Panel recommends that ICRAF establish a visiting scientist scheme to attract postgraduate researchers and mid-career scientists to work with the Centre's cutting edge scientists.

Response: ICRAF recognizes the value and benefits of visiting scientists, and already has many senior and junior scientists seconded from other organizations or supported directly by ICRAF, as well as post doctoral and postgraduate researchers. We therefore agree in principle with this recommendation and may raise the profile of the scheme, after a cost/benefit analysis of such activities.

Recommendation 9: The Panel recommends that:

a. The Board strengthens its programme oversight by increasing the frequency of Programme Committee meetings, becoming more proactive in setting its agenda and seeking appropriate documentation from management; and

b. The Board institutes a formal procedure to schedule and commission Centre-Commissioned External Reviews and to discuss these, other external review reports and management's responses.

Response to a. The Board Chair and the Chair of the Programme Committee are responsible for setting the agenda of the meetings and request Management to prepare background documents according to the issues on the agenda. The Programme Committee formally meets once a year (November- December) at which time the Programme of Work and Budget is thoroughly discussed with staff. Prior to the April Board Meeting, Board Members visit regions in small groups to discuss programme issues with regional staff, and formally report back to the Board. The Board also discusses programme issues at the April meeting based upon input from the members' field visits and on documents they commission management to prepare (e.g. IPR, the Role of Social Sciences, Partnerships, etc.).

The Programme Committee has developed an improved format to conduct its meetings, which will be implemented at the next meeting. Small groups of Board Members will participate in each of the programme and regional presentations and report back to the Programme Committee as a whole. This will improve the interaction between staff and members of the Programme Committee and allow the Committee to strengthen its oversight responsibilities.

Response to b. The Board and Management fully agree that a formal procedure to schedule, commission, discuss and respond to Centre-Commissioned External Reviews is needed, and fully supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 10: The Panel recommends that Management restrict initial contracts to between three and five years, with the possibility of renewal and without the current ceiling of ten years.

Response: The current ten-year tenure policy originated from an Internally Commissioned External Review of ICRAF's management procedures in 1989. The Board of Trustees approved the recommendation from this review as a ten-year tenure policy in 1990, with immediate effect. The Board reviewed the policy in 1998. The Board,

Management and Staff Associations discussed the issue in detail. The Board, at its April 1998 meeting, endorsed the current policy and approved a procedure whereby staff can prolong their tenure at ICRAF, providing clear criteria and a transparent process for continuation in special circumstances. The Board agreed to monitor the implementation of the policy and review it in two years.

The Board and Management believe that the ten-year ceiling is appropriate for the following reasons:

*A ten-year tenure policy meets the need of ensuring a renewal of the scientific acumen in the Centre;

*The research and development issues that ICRAF deals with are complex and require a longer time frame than are encountered at the more commodity-oriented Centres. It is therefore felt by ICRAF that a ten-year research horizon is entirely appropriate for scientists working in natural resource management involving the use of perennial species.

ICRAF appreciates and accepts the point made by the Panel about flexibility, and at the same time recognizes the importance of an ongoing review of the need for any position in line with the required disciplinary skills. The ICRAF Board and Management will reexamine the issue of length of initial staff contracts for all new international recruitments, while maintaining the ten-year tenure policy.