



Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

“BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHANGE”

by

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**Chairman’s Opening Statement
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Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good morning, and welcome to the 2001 Mid-Term Meeting of the CGIAR (MTM01), the first major CGIAR meeting to be held in the Republic of South Africa.

I thank all those from, or associated with, the National Department of Agriculture who have worked so hard with our own Secretariat to organize this meeting. I especially thank Bongiwe Njobe, Director General of the Department of Agriculture, for her invaluable support.

South Africa’s ideas and advice are welcomed and respected across the CGIAR. South Africa is represented on the Oversight Committee, participated in the Third System Review, and has been engaged in the change design and management exercise which is the centerpiece of our meeting. We hope that South Africa will always be a strong and effective voice of the South in the CGIAR.

This meeting is closely linked with South Africa’s “Agricultural Research Week.” We have already experienced South Africa Agricultural Research Day and Sub-Saharan Africa Agricultural Research Day. Both events made it clear that scientists of the national agricultural systems (NARS) in this country and region are working together, and with CGIAR partners, so that African agriculture might make a difference in the lives of the people. We want these types of partnerships to thrive and grow.

We need to work together, as well, to restore agriculture to its rightful place on the international public policy agenda. Next year’s Earth Summit in Johannesburg provides us with an excellent opportunity to do so. I ask our South African colleagues to make every

possible effort to ensure that agriculture, its contribution to development, and its link with environmental protection, receive attention on the Summit agenda. I urge all other CGIAR members, too, to raise this matter within their departments and agencies.

Time for Decisions:

By CGIAR traditions, we have a relatively short business meeting, with three days in which to cover our agenda. How we manage this meeting will demonstrate the strength of our commitment to changing the way we do business.

Our principal focus has to be on reaching decisions for the future, based on the report and recommendations of the Change Design and Management Team (CDMT) that has worked since International Centers Week (ICW2000), with the guidance of a Steering Group, to help us maintain the momentum of change.

I have consulted widely with as many CGIAR members as possible since the CDMT report was issued on April 24. I have met with a number of regional groupings. I have held discussions individually with almost all members. I have held discussions with Center Board Chairs and Center Directors. And I have held discussions with stakeholders.

Our consultations involved a full airing of views and, in some instances, concerns. That process of inclusive and intensive consultation has resulted, I believe, in broad consensus on the following four “first order” issues:

- Adoption of a programmatic approach to CGIAR research, and endorsement of Challenge Programs;
- Approval of an Annual General Meeting, and creation of an Executive Council;
- Transformation of TAC into a Science Council;
- Establishment of a System Office with an integrated communications strategy.

CGIAR members are ready for change. The Centers are committed to change. A number of system-wide initiatives nurtured by the Centers could serve as the basis for challenge programs, for instance. On the four “first order” issues, real progress is possible.

Securing decisions on these four measures must not preclude full discussion of the rest of the CDMT report. But decisions on these four points are an absolute minimum; the first step we must take. If we can reach early decisions on these key recommendations, we can spend as much of the remaining time that we need to discuss how we should follow up our decisions, and how we should prepare for the first annual general meeting.

The CGIAR owes a debt of gratitude to Margaret Catley-Carlson, former president of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), for chairing the CDMT. A personal “thank you,” Maggie, for responding positively to my request. We look forward to hearing from you later today.

The CDMT brought a breadth of knowledge and experience to its task. Conclusions were reached through a highly participatory process. Feedback was requested at each phase of drafting. Electronic communication was widely used, and the CGIAR website served as the CDMT bulletin board. The team heard from cosponsors, members, centers, TAC, organizations such as GFAR and FARA, NGOs, the private sector, and many others. These

views were integrated with those of the CDMT and Steering Group to the fullest extent possible. And the CDMT observed the deadline we gave them. This was a Herculean task, and I especially thank them for their speed.

Please join me in a round of applause, ladies and gentlemen, to recognize and appreciate the efforts of all those who took part in the exercise.

Now we must reach key decisions. We need to reach broad agreement on the architecture of a transformed CGIAR, and move on to set in place, one by one, the building blocks that will coalesce in that transformation.

The Context of Change:

The CGIAR approaches change in an external environment radically different from what it was thirty years ago. Then, the emphasis was almost solely on increasing food supply in developing countries that were perilously close to famine. The Centers met the goals that the times demanded. They continue to be universally recognized for the high quality and broad impact of their work. Their strengths must be protected and enhanced for the future.

Today, the ecological imprint of agriculture is important. Indeed, agricultural productivity will need to go hand-in-hand with ecological responsibility and social acceptability. In order to increase their income, the farmers of tomorrow will not only produce food, but also non-food products and ecological services.

Without much greater effort – international, regional, and national – the world will not be able to meet the international development targets of halving the number of people who live in poverty, halving the number of the hungry, and reversing the loss of environmental resources by 2015. Some 580 million are expected to remain undernourished by 2015 – about 180 million short of the World Food Summit's goal. Similarly, the rate of poverty reduction in 1990-98 was less than one-third of what is required to halve extreme poverty during 1990-2015. It was six times less in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Indeed, Africa must occupy a special place in our efforts.

Nineteen of the world's twenty-five poorest countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Forty percent of the people in this region of 47 countries lack critical minimum levels of life expectancy, literacy and economic provisioning. Thirty-four percent of the population is undernourished.

Since the 1950s, yield increases of staple food crops have more than doubled elsewhere: to 3 tons per hectare in Asia and about 2.6 tons per hectare in Latin America. In Africa, which has been hit hard by droughts, poor soils, and the ravages of war, yield increases of staple food crops in the same period have been around 1 ton per hectare.

Here, as elsewhere, transformed and broad-based agriculture is the gateway to economic growth that, in turn, contributes to poverty alleviation. Growth is an essential precondition for development, and for poor people in most developing countries, agricultural growth is the first step in their ascent to prosperity.

Agriculture, moreover, is a significant link between people and the environment. Some 70 percent of the land that is colonized by human beings is used for agriculture. Agriculture uses 70 percent of the world's fresh water. New techniques already allow water savings of 25

percent. New varieties can increase the savings even more. Farmers have long been the custodians of the biodiversity on which we depend for our very existence. Action in the rural world is an imperative contribution to sustainable management of the environment.

So, agriculture can help to:

- Contribute to economic growth and increase the wealth of the poor;
- Create food security;
- Improve nutrition and health;
- Protect natural resources.

Agricultural transformation is based on science and technology. Research is essential to maintain the flow of knowledge that creates new technologies. So we have to ask ourselves: what kind of CGIAR can meet these needs of today and the future? What is our vision of a fully effective CGIAR?

CGIAR – A Vision of the Future:

The CGIAR System of our vision is much more than the sum of 58 members and sixteen international centers. It is a global community of institutions and people. It is a system both collaborative and competitive, whose impact is local, regional and global. It is committed to diversity at all levels. It protects the core scientific competencies of the Future Harvest Centers that must remain the cornerstone of the CGIAR. It is a pre-eminent creator of global public goods. It responds to the high priority needs of today while, at the same, nurturing the skill and imagination to prepare for the unforeseen needs of tomorrow.

The Future Harvest Centers will provide a cohesive force internally, and will have a well-developed external orientation, and will be capable of working with many partner organizations from developed and developing countries.

The CGIAR will travel comfortably through the value-chain of agricultural research from consumer to farmer to national, regional, and global institutions, and back again, in a two-way relationship.

Stakeholder returns will be as important as shareholder returns. NARS will provide essential stewardship to the CGIAR. Broad-based local, national, and regional for a will under-write the direction, strategy and relevance of CGIAR efforts.

The CGIAR must respond to the expressed needs of the South – at the farmer, local, national, and regional levels. Its research goals and priorities are aligned with the development goals of the international community. It contributes to economic growth through sustainable agricultural development involving productivity gains and ecological responsibility. It is a CGIAR System that can mobilize knowledge, people, and funds on behalf of the poor and vulnerable, and has the agility to decide swiftly and effectively how best its resources should be used.

Next Steps:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We must move forward.

As I said earlier, I would like to reach agreement on a limited number of core elements contained in the CDMT recommendations. These are:

- Adoption of a programmatic approach to CGIAR research, and endorsement of Challenge Programs;
- Approval of an Annual General Meeting, and creation of an Executive Council;
- Transformation of TAC into a Science Council;
- Establishment of a System Office with an integrated communications function.

I have returned to these points, because they are essential building blocks of transformation, on the evolutionary path to reform. Decisions in these four areas are an indispensable minimum, now, if we are to guarantee and enhance the future relevance, impact, and viability of the CGIAR. By acting on these key issues, taking the first step, we can quickly move over the next three days to discuss how best our decisions should be implemented.

With that behind us, we can begin work on the substance and processes of the first meeting of the Executive Council and the first annual general meeting of the CGIAR in October where the next round of decisions for change will be taken. Our decisions today represent a first step towards the new tomorrow of the CGIAR and Future Harvest Centers.

So let us not lose the momentum we have created. Hesitation and its consequences are not an option. Let us be as bold and as decisive as we were when we launched an initiative for change last year. Thank you.

Core Elements of the CDMT Report

1. At ICW2000, the CGIAR asked the CDMT to recommend appropriate changes in the CGIAR System, and to recommend measures for the management of change. In doing so, the following areas were listed as specifically requiring the team's attention:

- Restructuring of the entire CGIAR System;
- Co-coordinating system-wide programmatic activities;
- Streamlined decision-making;
- Provision of common services;
- Reducing center and System overheads in order to transfer more resources to research.

The CDMT's proposals in these areas are:

On **restructuring**, the CDMT recommends: Take an evolutionary approach. Let mergers and other unifying arrangements emerge through experience, and out of real need.

On **co-coordinating system-wide programmatic activities**: adopt a greater, integrating programmatic approach for the activities of the Centers, and the implementation of Challenge Programs to mobilize the capacities of the Centers and their partners.

To **streamline decision-making**: create an Executive Council.

For **efficiency in the provision of common services**: in the first instance, establish a System Office to include the CGIAR Secretariat and an integrated communications function. Other functions could be added, based on needs, the views of the Centers and, above all, costs.

For **reducing overheads and efficiency**: hold a CGIAR annual general meeting, interspersed with meetings of a smaller Executive Council. Other recommendations include the elimination of most committees, and the adoption of an electronic or virtual mode of doing some business.

Beyond and above these specifics, however, is an overall approach of proposing to the CGIAR that it should redefine itself in a contemporary mode: to see itself in terms of outputs and outcomes, to seek alliances in order to extend the potential impact of its important work and address development problems, and to equip itself with internal management arrangements for better System decision making and real follow through.

The CDMT sees its recommendations as a package, with each cluster connected to the others. The report cautions that "a piecemeal approach to the approval of the core elements of change would undoubtedly create many more long term difficulties than it might solve."

2. The core elements on which agreement is sought at MTM01 are described below.

Challenge Programs

Challenge Programs will elevate the relevance of CGIAR-supported research, by utilizing expertise and resources to resolve problems that have local applications but are of universal concern and importance. They might include such issues as:

- an agricultural research initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa;
- adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change on agriculture;
- animal diseases in developing countries;
- functional genomics of crops of concern to the poor;
- water management for agriculture and the environment.

This is only an indicative list. Some of these issues, and the experience of Centers in dealing with them, will be reviewed at MTM. Each Challenge Program will be time bound. It will harness the strengths of several Centers, thus creating synergies that could lead to permanent clusters or mergers. A sensible management approach, providing for collaboration as well as competition among creators and suppliers of knowledge, will produce new and vigorous partnerships involving Centers, NARS, NGOs, and the private sector. The new programs are likely to attract new investors, and necessitate the creative reshaping of existing funding patterns.

Executive Council

Continuing complexities and changes in the external environment demand nimbleness and agility in decision-making. A single annual general meeting will reinforce our desire for streamlined, not cumbersome, decision-making processes. A small but representative Executive Council of up to twenty members would ensure continuity between annual general meetings. The transition Executive Council would consist of members of the Oversight and Finance Committees, with a mandate to arrange for their successors to be in place no later than ICW2001. From that point onwards, members of the Council will, generally, be selected by caucus, to ensure that the Council is fully representative. Members will be rotated. Center Boards, Center Directors, and the Science Council will be *ex-officio* members of the Executive Council. The Executive Council would hold brief meetings, and could function in a virtual mode as well, resulting in a cost-effective re-organization of the CGIAR System's workload. It will draw on the existing resources of the proposed System Office, and could secure additional support from the Centers and the Science Council.

Science Council

A small Science Council that takes over from TAC will be the guardian of the System's science quality and output. The Science Council will ensure that the work of the Centers is based on the best science, has the highest impact, and is subjected to credible peer review. Members of the Science Council will be outstanding in their fields: visionaries whose scientific insights are matched by their understanding of major issues, including development policy, that influence the work of the CGIAR. The Science Council, with the support of a strong secretariat located at FAO, would serve as the hub of global and regional networks of scientific and development experts that could provide topical and timely guidance to the CGIAR and its Executive Council.

System Office:

Key changes in the way we do business will impose new demands on the Secretariat, particularly in terms of backstopping the Executive Council. As well, the CGIAR System needs to develop a unified and vigorous communications and public awareness campaign. These needs can be served by a System Office encompassing the main functions of the CGIAR Secretariat and a new, integrated communications function. The

System's communications and public awareness vision and strategy should be developed and implemented in cooperation with the Centers' public awareness units, taking regional specificity and sensitivities into account.

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