



Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

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**Mid-Term Meeting 2001
May 21 - 25
Durban, South Africa**

Charting the CGIAR'S Future – Change Design and Management

Chairman's Letter on Decisions to be Taken

Attached is the Chairman's letter of May 4, 2001 on decisions to be taken at MTM2001.

This item is for: Information Discussion Decision

Proposed Action: None



CGIAR

05/04/2001 06:08 PM

Subject: Message from Ian Johnson

Decisions to be taken at MTM2001

Dear Colleagues:

As we gear up for MTM2001, I hope you have had an opportunity to review the recommendations for change made by the CGIAR Change Design and Management Team (CDMT) in consultation with the Steering Group. Our sincere thanks to the CDMT Chair, members, resource persons, and the Steering Group for an extraordinary effort. The recommendations emerging from this open, participatory reform process will help ensure that the CGIAR is relaunched as an efficient, lean and nimble organization, mobilizing cutting-edge science in service of poor farming communities worldwide.

Complementing the consultations held over the past few months, I have called as many CGIAR Members as possible this week to discuss the recommendations, and I am pleased with the very positive responses. The CDMT presented its recommendations in important clusters, and I want to draw your attention to four key areas that require clear and quick decisions. I am writing to ask for your support on these four action points so that we can reach consensus in Durban and begin the change process immediately after our meeting:

- **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 program.**

Let me elaborate on each one.

Challenge Programs Programs of global and regional importance will elevate the relevance and impact of CGIAR-supported research by utilizing expertise and resources to resolve problems that have local applications but are of universal concern and importance. The Challenge Programs will be based on the core competencies of the Centers and involve a bottom-up planning process. They might include, as pointed out by the CDMT, such issues as an agricultural research initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa, functional genomics of crops of concern to the poor, and adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change on agriculture. Each time bound Program will harness the strengths of Centers and, over time, structural reorganizations could evolve. The Challenge Programs will create new synergies with the strong involvement of NARS, universities, NGOs, the private sector and other partners. The programs are likely to attract new investors, and promote the creative reshaping of existing funding patterns.

Annual General Meeting and Executive Council Continuing complexities and changes in the external environment require an ability to make speedy decisions following policies set at an Annual General Meeting by all shareholders. A small but representative Executive Council, appointed by and reporting to the Consultative Group, will have just that agility. A single annual general meeting will reinforce a streamlined decision-making process. While policy making and strategic decisions will remain the prerogative of the Group as a whole, the Executive Council will ensure that those policies are effectively implemented. The Executive Council will draw on the existing resources of the CG Secretariat, situated in a 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 maximum impact, and is subjected to credible and rigorous peer review. Members of the Science Council will be outstanding experts in their fields, whose scientific insights are matched by their understanding of the major issues that influence the work of the CGIAR, including development policy. The Science Council, with the support of a strong Science Council Secretariat located at FAO, would serve as the hub of global and regional networks of scientific and development experts that would provide top quality scientific advice and guidance in support of our research objectives.

System Office An important step toward a more cohesive CGIAR System is providing common services through a System Office. The System Office can encompass the main functions of the CG Secretariat and a new, integrated communications function. A Systemwide communications strategy should be developed and implemented in cooperation with the Centers' public awareness units, but it must take into account regional specificity and sensitivities.

I hope that I can count on your full support for the four critical decisions outlined in this letter that will be on the table at MTM. The program of reform we have embarked upon will allow the CGIAR to be revitalized for an exciting future, one where hunger and poverty will be reduced and wealth created, and where the environment on which all life depends will be protected for present and future generations. I look forward to working with you, our stakeholders, and our Centers toward this end.

I am attaching a copy of *The Case for Agricultural Research in the 21st Century* by Marc Cohen and Per Pinstrup-Andersen, which helps to provide a context for the CDMT paper that was sent earlier, and is available on our website, www.cgiar.org.

Sincerely,
Ian



IFPRI context paper.doc

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