

CGIAR System Review
Center Director's Commentary
May 1997

1. Center directors welcome the planned System Review and the opportunity to comment on its planning and organization.
2. The directors committee views the recent evolution of CGIAR activities, including the program matrix and the development of a broader and more balanced CGIAR constituency, as both necessary and welcome. We trust that the review will provide a careful analysis of how these various efforts can best contribute to CGIAR goals.
3. We believe that the Review should return the CGIAR to its basic values. The System was established to ensure a synergy of donor support, efficiency in program design and implementation, research quality, and a shared monitoring and accountability system that minimizes overheads. We should reaffirm this original commitment, and in particular seek to:
 - Increase unrestricted support to Center programs projects that does require administration and reporting; in addition to that agreed for the CGIAR
 - Increase the support to basic physical plant and operating costs, both of which must be maintained to ensure quality;
 - Strengthen our commitment to a system governance that allows long term program stability.
 - Clarify the centers' responsibilities for technology implementation and the achievement of impact;
 - Increase the attention to the strategic challenges brought by changes in science and the needs of developing countries, a task that Center directors believe is an appropriate one for TAC.
4. Center Directors hope that Review will seek to balance the interests of donors, stakeholder groups, TAC, and the centers. In this respect, the new funding mechanism that allows donors to decide on merit between TAC's recommendations and the potentially different views of the Centers is a welcome development. The removal of funding ceilings that has accompanied the new mechanism has created a surge of initiatives and increased center responsibility for financial well being.

5. A specific item, apparently not covered in the list of suggested briefing papers, is that related to information and communication programs at the system level. The CGIAR may well be increasingly constrained by the lack of an effective public awareness strategy and a managed process for its implementation.
6. Within the context of rapidly-evolving national and international research and development agencies, identify the most effective modus operandi for the CG system.
7. The Review should seek to identify the best organizational structure for the CGIAR and determine how that structure best be managed. In this respect center directors feel that particular attention must also be given to:
 - The role of regional fora and the identification of clearly defined regional responsibilities within the System. Differences in regional research needs should be recognized, as should their implications for the future role of international research.
 - Formal associations with other international agencies, first among which FAO, but also including regional intergovernmental agencies.
 - Interaction with the agencies responsible for the implementation of the UNCED follow up on biodiversity, desertification, forests, and sustainable mountain development to determine an appropriate role for the CGIAR in the implementation of the research components of these initiatives.
8. Center Directors look forward to participating actively in the CGIAR System Review, and are convinced that the Review will identify solutions to important CGIAR challenges, including the lack of funding, rapidly increasing transaction costs, stronger political pressures, and adjustments to new economic and institutional realities.