

## **Conclusions and Recommendations of Parallel Session II**

### **Agenda Item 4. Evaluation and Impact Assessment in the CGIAR**

The CGIAR discussed evaluation and impact assessment in the CGIAR in Parallel Session II on May 29, 1997 under the chairmanship of Teresa Fogelberg. This session was a follow-up to the presentation of the Impact Assessment and Evaluation Group (IAEG) report by its chair, Jim Peacock, in plenary session on May 27, 1997.

Ms. Fogelberg clarified the purpose of the session as discussing the role and function of the IAEG, its proposed work program, and institutional concerns regarding IAEG's support structure. She gave examples of diverse views expressed on IAEG, including the demands for simple impact information supplied with quick turnaround, the need for building a stronger impact assessment culture within the System, and doing less but more focussed studies.

Roberto Lenton summarized the outcome of the Cosponsors deliberations on IAEG. He contrasted the desire of the CGIAR members for clear information on impact, expressed in as quantitative terms as possible, with the expectation of the centers for IAEG assistance in building an evaluation culture. He noted that as demands far exceeded IAEG's capacity to deliver, measures need to be taken to strengthen the operation. The Cosponsors proposed action in two areas:

1. Strengthening the IAEG and its support structure through:

- proposing the appointment of two new members, one shortly following the MTM and the second at ICW97;
- establishing a small secretariat at UNDP, with one senior staff, supplemented with staff seconded from CGIAR member institutions and the centers; and,
- accepting UNEP's offer to second one of its professional staff for one year starting September 1997.

2. Strengthening consultation between IAEG and TAC (through regular joint meetings), the centers (through regular dialogue with the CDC) and CGIAR members (through annual reporting and discussion--as at MTM97).

Speaking on behalf of the Center Directors Committee, Grant Scobie noted that the centers welcomed the leadership of IAEG and its efforts to date. He pointed to the already existing capacity in the field of impact assessment and evaluation and the large number of evaluation studies conducted by the centers. He drew attention to the methodological complexity of isolating the impact of CGIAR research from the contributions of others. He and several other speakers that followed stressed the importance of planned IAEG studies on the CGIAR's impact on poverty, and on understanding the impact of work on natural resource management. He also stressed the need to link closely *ex-ante* and *ex-post* studies, and for strong interaction with NARS.

A number of key observations and suggestions were made in the ensuing discussion, which included the following:

- There appears to be significant variation in the perceptions and expectations of centers, CGIAR members, and IAEG about impact assessment needs in the CGIAR. This should be overcome through stronger consultative mechanisms, such as the one recommended by the Oversight Committee.
- There is very strong pressure on the CGIAR's member organizations to quickly demonstrate "value for money"--in particular, regarding agriculture's

impact on poverty.

- Several centers have strong track records in impact assessment. The IAEG should utilize and build on this expertise and capability.
- The IAEG was originally conceived as an independent evaluation group. This assumption of independence may need rethinking in the light of internal evaluation capacities within the System. Contrasting this viewpoint is the argument that IAEG should remain and be seen as an independent unit because internally conducted impact studies require external validation to gain in credibility.
- The first list of evaluation experts developed by IAEG has focussed primarily on the U.S., which should be broadened with names from other countries, especially from developing countries.

One member, Jochen de Haas, remarked that, with the impending move of Germany's capital to Berlin, there may be opportunities to host the IAEG Secretariat in Bonn.

Teresa Fogelberg concluded the discussion by outlining the areas where there was strong consensus, which constitute the sub-committee's recommendations to the CGIAR:

1. The work program proposed by IAEG should be broadly endorsed, with the expectation that it would incorporate the suggestions made by the sub-committee. In particular, IAEG should strive to generate impact information faster and express such information in simple terms.
2. The proposals of the Cosponsors should also be endorsed, with the understanding that the UNDP arrangement is a short-term solution. The Cosponsors should continue examining other options and also review the rationale for maintaining strict independence. IAEG's support structure should be strong enough to cater to the needs of both the centers and the System.
3. There is need for more regular substantive consultation between IAEG and TAC, the centers, the Secretariat, and members. The concrete proposals that have been made should be fully explored.
4. Impact assessment in the areas of poverty and natural resource management should be accorded high priority. Also, the IAEG should help develop coherent and compatible databases of impact indicators, in partnership with other institutions.
5. The IAEG should pay greater attention to gender considerations in two ways. First, gender expertise should be available within the IAEG. Second, impact of research on gender relations should be part of the different studies. The CGIAR Gender Program can assist in developing or updating methodologies in this area.
6. The IAEG should provide leadership within the System for the development of coherent and compatible databases of impact indicators, in partnership with other institutions carrying out complementary work.
7. The System Review should examine the future role and effectiveness of IAEG within the CGIAR's governance structure.