

Conclusions and Recommendations of Parallel Session II Agenda Item 8 (b). External Review of ISNAR

The CGIAR discussed the External Review of ISNAR in Parallel Session II on May 28, 1997 under the chairmanship of Paul Egger. The Panel Chair, Samuel Paul, presented the findings of the Review team. He noted that significant progress was made by ISNAR over the review period, but that emerging problems in global agricultural research called for a strategic repositioning of ISNAR. He outlined the key directional changes that are needed (defining ISNAR's niche; focussing on capacity building; and, reformulating the Center's strategy.)

The ISNAR Board Chair, Amir Muhammed, noted that ISNAR concurs largely with the Panel's analysis and conclusions and most of its recommendations and has already put in motion a process for implementing them. The Director General, Stein Bie, indicated that a medium-term plan (MTP) will outline a new ISNAR strategy, expected to be completed by ICW97. The TAC Chair, Don Winkelmann, summarized his Committee's views on the review, stressing the need for ISNAR to adopt a more systematic approach to priority setting, and TAC's broad endorsement of the Panel's recommendations. Both TAC and ISNAR noted that one shortcoming of the review was the limited attention it gave to analysis of ISNAR's collaboration with other CGIAR centers and with FAO.

During the ensuing discussion, CGIAR Members made several key observations and suggestions, including the following:

- ISNAR should define its niche clearly. This should involve, among others:
 - strengthening the research base for its services;
 - enhancing knowledge about policy; and,
 - making better use of strategic alliances.
- ISNAR should focus on capacity building. This should involve:
 - moving up in the capacity building ladder;
 - linking research and research-based service with capacity building;
 - strengthening capabilities in capacity building efforts in and close to NARS, particularly in management training; and,
 - align its staffing and skill mix with the new skills it will need.
- ISNAR should operate based on a broad NARS concept. This would require, among others:
 - supporting partnerships; and,
 - facilitating functioning of the regional fora;
- ISNAR should focus on weaker NARS, collaborating with stronger NARS as needed in regional efforts and within the context of a clearly articulated strategy.

Paul Egger concluded the discussion by noting that the sub-committee of the CGIAR assembled in Parallel Session II endorses the External Review's recommendations and is pleased that the Center concurs with them. The sub-committee suggests that, in addition to the comments made by TAC, ISNAR also consider the suggestions listed above during the strategic repositioning of ISNAR.