

SUMMARY OF PARALLEL SESSION I: REVIEW OF CENTER RESEARCH PLANS

The CGIAR reviewed center Medium Term plans in Parallel Session I. Each Center Director General presented a brief introduction, followed by a summary of TAC analysis by a TAC representative and discussion by participants. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the discussions that took place in seven segments.

Session I.1: CIAT and CIP (Chair: Denmark)

CIAT

CIAT's medium-term plan is designed to give continued prominence to the problem of poverty and produce outputs for tropical developing countries worldwide. Research will be carried out through sixteen interdisciplinary projects. CIAT emphasizes partnerships as its primary working strategy. Impact assessment continues to be a part of center management. TAC commended CIAT for remaining a viable center and maintaining critical mass in its pivotal programs despite severe downsizing in recent years. CIAT's MTP has a strong focus on strategic germplasm and natural resources management research.

Discussion

- CIAT's approach to conducting research programs in collaboration with a wide range of partners as a new model of collaboration.
- Effective integration of several themes e.g. biotechnology in crop protection and natural resource management with productivity.
- Gender concerns being addressed through participatory approaches.
- Poverty in Latin America and its relevance to CIAT's MTP
- The breadth of the proposed coverage is a cause for concern whether critical mass can be maintained in all disciplines if the required resources are not forthcoming.

CIP

CIP's medium-term plan is based on the premise that the rural and urban poor should benefit proportionately more from CIP research than other groups. CIP's top research priority related to potato, its largest program, will be to tackle new forms of potato late blight, one of the most important food crop diseases worldwide. CIP will also continue its natural resource management program aimed at mountain environments. CIP will implement its MTP in a collaborative mode to ensure a wide range of partnerships. TAC commended CIP for the high quality of its MTP, the logic and transparency of its priority setting process, and its connection with resource allocation. TAC endorsed CIP's role in the Global Initiative on Late Blight.

Discussion

- CIP's leadership role in global efforts to address the serious challenges posed by late blight.
- Progress made in gaining access to wide genetic diversity through biotechnology represents an important opportunity. Nonetheless, biosafety issues limit widespread use of transgenic techniques.
- The role of the private sector in potato production both in terms of ensuring that the technology reaches the farmers and in terms of providing opportunities for generating cash incomes for them.

Session I.2: CIMMYT and IIMI (Chair: Brazil)

CIMMYT

CIMMYT's medium term plan emphasizes CIMMYT's comparative advantage in contributing to the mobilization of and integration of multidisciplinary approaches to addressing global concerns related to achieving sustainable increases in maize and wheat production and takes advantage of new opportunities in science and science and research methodology. TAC noted that CIMMYT's MTP proposal is based on a transparent priority-setting process and its resource allocations congruent with CGIAR goals. CIMMYT's program proposals are innovative, based on good science, and have good potential for further impact.

Discussion

- CIMMYT's emphasis on engaging in an open dialogue with its partners, and increasing collaboration with a range of partners to maximize results.
- Greater emphasis placed on Africa and on post-harvest issues.
- Need to ensure full cost recovery in projects

IIMI

Recent developments are enabling rapid progress in understanding the real causes and potential solutions to water problems facing the world. There is a paradigm shift in thinking about irrigation and water management. IIMI is contributing to the formulation of, and promoting, a new concept which views irrigation efficiency in the context of water basins. which provides valuable insights in situations where water that is "wasted" by conventional irrigation criteria remains available for safe re-use somewhere else in the same basin, for example by pumping from unpolluted aquifers. TAC noted that IIMI has made good progress and its MTP has the potential to significantly strengthen water resources and irrigation research in the CGIAR by the year 2000.

Discussion

- Water resource management an increasingly important issue
- Relevance of health and environment interactions for IIMI's research
- Priority setting among competing research topics
- Financing of IIMI programs.

Session I.3: ICARDA and IITA (Chair: Germany)

ICARDA

ICARDA's medium-term plan places the highest priority on natural resources management and germplasm enhancement. The most significant change in ICARDA's external environment is a result of the changes taking place in the countries of the former Soviet Union leading ICARDA to include collaboration with and support to NARS of the Central Asian Republics in its MTP. ICARDA also puts special emphasis on on-farm water husbandry and the integration of livestock into farming systems. The gender distribution of research benefits will be part of these assessments. TAC observed that ICARDA's MTP is well conceived and in line with CGIAR goals and priorities. TAC commends ICARDA for its efforts to integrate sustainability concerns in its strategic germplasm research.

Discussion

- Roles and responsibilities between CIMMYT and ICARDA in wheat improvement.
- ICARDA's potential role in Central Asia in context of ICARDA's previous expertise in similar agroecological environments.
- Planning and priority setting process followed by ICARDA

IITA

IITA's medium term plan responds to the worsening problems of food security in Africa by through an ecoregional, holistic and decentralized approach. IITA targets its research and outputs also to reducing drudgery, particularly of women. The plan emphasizes collaboration with partners, farmer participation, integrated pest management and decentralized research operations. TAC underscored the relevance of IITA's work for food security in Africa. TAC pointed out the importance of IITA's research particularly on banana and plantain and cassava for which there are few alternate suppliers.

Discussion

- IITA's role in peri-urban agriculture
- Approaches to address soil fertility concerns
- Investments tradeoffs between improving agriculture in the moist savanna and humid zones
- Livestock-crop integration and IITA/ILRI collaboration
- Breath of IITA activities and its implications for critical mass
- full cost recovery of overhead costs

Session I.4: CIFOR, ICRAF, ILRI (Chair: Colombia)

CIFOR

In its MTP, CIFOR responds to the changing landscape of sustainable tropical forest management and its relationship with people who depend on these forests. The MTP comprises interdisciplinary projects designed to produce generic solutions to high priority issues on the global forestry agenda which CIFOR has contributed in shaping in consultation with the Inter-governmental Panel on Forest, IUFRO and the Convention on Biological Diversity. TAC noted that CIFOR has made good progress already in establishing benchmark sites in Africa and Latin America. CIFOR's commitments to partnership and outsourcing are commendably clear. TAC concludes that CIFOR has made an excellent start and has built a significant constituency amongst forest researchers in the north and the south.

Discussion

- Decentralized decision making on forest issues. Difficulty handing over control from institutions to people.

- Learning from long term intact forests that have been managed by people instead of creating protected areas.
- Profusion of literature from advocacy groups, often purporting myths. Need for scientific analysis by CIFOR.

ICRAF

ICRAF's MTP focuses on boosting the two different functions fulfilled by trees on farm and in landscapes, i.e. products that can be marketed for cash or used domestically, and services that increase crop yields and improve environmental resilience. ICRAF's strategy is to integrate these two functions with policy and institutional improvements to facilitate wide-scale adoption by farmers. TAC is impressed by the dynamism of ICRAF and is in favor of its continued development, but recommends consolidation and demonstration of impact during the MTP period. This is particularly in light of the early research status of the ecosystem approach which, while promising and appropriate, is largely untested as a developmental framework for production agriculture.

Discussion

- Domestication of trees not as breeding trees but as providing superior germplasm and accelerating adoption and promoting better farm level management.
- Regional priorities for ICRAF's research activities in 1998-2000
- Socioeconomic dimensions of ICRAF's policy work and associated resource requirements.

ILRI

ILRI's goal is to improve the productivity of smallholder livestock systems and to protect the natural resources which support these systems. The MTP reflects the development of a global institute which building on existing capacity. Livestock play a critical role in the sustainability and intensification of agricultural productivity in most farming systems. Over 90% of livestock in developing countries are owned by rural smallholders. TAC notes that on the basis of the poverty-weighted congruence share, the CGIAR is still underinvesting in livestock research. TAC observed that recent developments in molecular genetics and genetic engineering allow for new opportunities, especially in its animal health work. Exciting options are now available for breakthroughs in vaccine development both for East Coast Fever and trypanosomiasis.

Discussion

- Linkages between resource allocation and priorities. ILRI is developing methodologies to ensure linkages.
- Shortfall in System-Wide Livestock Program funding.
- ILRI's MTP is based on broad consultations with stakeholders.
- Spending on animal health reduced, but still critical mass to pursue promising vaccine development now going to field trials.

Session I.5: IFPRI, ICLARM (Chair: Egypt)

IFPRI

During the MTP period, the focus of IFPRI's research and outreach activities will be to promote policies to improve food security and nutrition, reduce poverty, reduce pressure on fragile natural resources, and promote sustainable development. IFPRI plans to synthesize results on non-farm rural development and on strategies for poverty alleviation, themes that cut across all of IFPRI's research and outreach objectives. IFPRI has defined its niche and comparative advantage in policy research to ensure complementarity with its partners. TAC

considered IFPRI's MTP proposal to be high quality, well argued, focusing on important research issues, and coherent. TAC encourages the Center to explore more formal approaches to priority setting and resource allocation, as well as impact assessment.

Discussion

- IFPRI developing innovative methodology to quantify impact of socioeconomic research. Accompanied by qualitative assessment. Impact of policies as international public goods difficult to trace re causality of research and action.
- Activities in Central Asia/FSU.
- Priorities in IFPRI's program. Reduced emphasis on trade issues.
- Need for IFPRI's independent advice to policy makers

ICLARM

The growing public disquiet regarding the state of the world's fisheries stems from the alarming rate of depletion of natural stocks, the limitation of global fish catches from natural environments, and the consequences of industrialized fishing in developing countries. The increased importance of aquaculture may counteract the decline in yield from capture fisheries. ICLARM's MTP is designed to generate better management advice and methods to conserve current fish stocks and to provide for their sustainable use, and to develop more efficient technologies for aquaculture so that it can provide the necessary increase in productivity needed to meet growing global fish demand. TAC supported ICLARM's program proposals which were seen to be innovative and with good impact potential.

Discussion

- Relative development of fisheries research as compared with agricultural research;
- Changing distribution of ICLARM's focus between Asia and Africa and West Asia.
- Role of the Egypt facility in ICLARM's research
- Division of responsibilities between the NARS in Egypt and ICLARM
Ex-ante assessment of Impact of ICLARM's activities

Session I.6: IRRI, WARDA (Chair: Japan)

WARDA

WARDA's goal is to strengthen sub-Saharan Africa's technology generation capacity, technology transfer and policy formulation, in order to increase the sustainable productivity of rice-based cropping systems while conserving the natural resource base, contributing to the food security of poor rural and urban households. The ecoregions of the arid and semi-arid tropics, the warm sub-humid tropics and the warm humid tropics are WARDA's primary focus, as it is here that the vast majority of poor rice farmers live.

TAC noted that the MTP provides a convincingly clear indication of WARDA's attempt to integrate the work on productivity improvement with conservation of the natural resource base. WARDA has clearly laid out its strategic research milestones against which research effectiveness can be assessed and problems inhibiting progress can be identified early.

Discussion

- Relevance of molecular biology for WARDA's work and the need to build WARDA capacity.
- Distribution of relevant WARDA products to sub-Saharan Africa
- Relations with private sector
- Women as WARDA's target farmers and its relevance for WARDA's research.

IRRI

The MTP focuses on generating technologies and management practices to produce more rice per unit area, with less water and less pressure on the natural resource base, and to maintain rice as an attractive crop for future generations of farmers. IRRI is emerging as a major facilitator of the global rice research system and considers partnership to be the essence of this MTP, which also highlights the usefulness of the ecosystem-based rice research consortia for interdisciplinary and multilocational research involving multiple partnership. Overall, TAC considers IRRI's MTP to be based on good science, transparent, and with significant potential for further strong impact. TAC recommends that IRRI carefully monitor the attainment of milestones in frontier projects and reconsider its commitments if necessary.

Discussion

- IRRI's project based approach to research planning
- Priorities between rice ecosystems in context of their potential contribution to food production
- Complementarity between new science techniques and traditional breeding and crop management
- Potential for IRRI collaboration in Central Asia

Session I.7: ICRISAT, ISNAR, IPGRI (Chair: Pakistan)

ICRISAT

ICRISAT's MTP has identified four broad areas of research targeted towards developing more productive and efficient agricultural systems in order to reduce poverty, enhance cropping systems diversity, conserve genetic resources, and protect the environment. The MTP proposes a shift of emphasis in the natural resource management to Africa, where soil fertility depletion limits realization of the full genetic potential of ICRISAT's improved germplasm. TAC noted that ICRISAT's MTP proposal was concise and logical, and congruent with CGIAR goals and priorities. The research proposals are innovative, based on good science and have impact potential.

Discussion

- Reallocation from Asia to SSA: Alternative sources of supply of commodity research in Asia exist. Growing private sector activities.
- Rationale for allocation of ICRISAT's research between Africa and Asia.

ISNAR

ISNAR's MTP reaffirms ISNAR's role as a research-based service to assist developing countries improve the performance of their NARS/organizations. Having considered recent developments, including the recommendations of the EPMR and changes in center management, ISNAR intends to submit a revised MTP in due course. ISNAR works closely with other agencies, in particular with IFPRI and FAO, both for its research and service activities. ISNAR is planning an active role in exploring a possible greater involvement of the CGIAR in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. TAC considers that the issue of collaboration should be carefully considered in the forthcoming strategic planning process, and that ISNAR should investigate more systematically the extent to which alternative suppliers could undertake some of its activities, particularly in the service arena.

Discussion

- ISNAR's engagement in biotech research
- Apparent lack of financial support for ISNAR/IFPRI's work on agricultural research indicators.
- Implications of the evolving ISNAR strategy requires for ISNAR skill mix.

IPGRI

The need for conservation of plant genetic resources has been highlighted through several international initiatives since UNCED in 1992.. IPGRI's MTP recognizes the role of plant genetic resources in both poverty alleviation and the protection of natural resources. IPGRI intends to expand its work to promote germplasm evaluation in a number of crops of major importance for poverty alleviation, and to give more attention to protecting the environment, particularly through the expansion of the program on forest genetic resources. TAC notes that IPGRI has doubled its size since 1991 and proposes a budget increase during the MTP period at an average annual rate of 13%. The Committee is concerned that the expansion may lead to a scattering of efforts, and recommends that IPGRI consider 1998-2000 as a period of consolidation.

Discussion

- New crops: cocoa, coffee; work is to be done through networking with existing genebanks and programs;
- IPGRI's work in Europe has been included in MTP; shows small expansion.