

From: The Secretariat

July 28, 1998

Report of the 15th Meeting of the CGIAR Oversight Committee

Attached is a copy of the report of the 15th Oversight Committee meeting held at the Naoum Plaza Hotel in Brasilia on May 23, 24 and 27, 1998. Also attached, as annex to the report, is a note summarizing the Oversight Committee's comments on the preliminary findings of the CGIAR System Review Panel.

Distribution:

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Technical Advisory Committee - Chair, Members, and Secretariat

Impact Assessment Evaluation Group - Chair, Members, Secretariat

Genetic Resources Policy Committee

NGO Committee

Private Sector Committee

Committee of Board Chairs

Center Directors Committee

Executive Secretary, System Review Panel

Report of the 15th Meeting of the CGIAR Oversight Committee

The CGIAR Oversight Committee (OC) held its 15th meeting at the Naoum Plaza Hotel in Brasilia on 23, 24 and 27 May 1998 in conjunction with the CGIAR's 1998 Mid-Term Meeting. Participating in the meeting were: Andrew Bennett (Chair), Mervat Badawi, Teresa Fogelberg, John Lewis and Selçuk Özgediz (Secretary). Apologies were received from Fernando Chaparro and William Dar. The OC interacted with the System-wide Review Panel on 24 May and with Alexander von der Osten on 27 May.

The OC agenda consisted of the following items:

- 1. Center Governance*
- 2. System Governance*
- 3. Biotechnology and Intellectual Property*
- 4. System Review*
- 5. ICW and 1998/1999 Programme of Work*
- 6. Membership and Rotation*
- 7. Any other business*

1. CENTRE GOVERNANCE

a. EPMRs

The OC noted the positive conclusions and management responses on the EPMRs of IRRI, IFPRI, and CIMMYT. It agrees that IFPRI has an important and unique role to play in the field of policy debate both within the CGIAR and more widely.

The OC noted that the review of CIFOR was on going and looked forward to a briefing during MTM on the impact of recent events in Indonesia on the staff and working of the Centre.

b. Finance

The OC noted that some of the Centers continued to have recurrent funding problems. It looked to the Finance Committee to consider the requests from the Centers; however if resources could not be found then it must be for the Centers to adjust their plans and programs accordingly. Forward planning should be carried out in the context of realistic funding projections, particularly as pressures on development assistance and the World Bank's contributions continue. The OC was disturbed to hear rumors that the Bank had asked for a study of an 'exit strategy' for Bank support to the System. The OC hopes that these uncertainties can be dispelled.

c. Other issues

The OC welcomed ICRISAT's 'new vision' and progress report by the Director General of ICRISAT. It noted that the future prospects for ICRISAT looked good.

The OC welcomed also the new ISNAR Strategy and the positive comment and response it had received.

The OC noted that, in the international recruitment of senior staff at the Centers and in the appointments to the Boards, centers were giving due regard to management, leadership, negotiating and political skills, as well as to the important issues of technical competence, developing country perspectives and gender considerations. High quality leadership at the Centers will continue to be essential to enable them to cope with change and the broadening customer base. In the filling of top positions at a center the Boards should ensure the maintenance of high quality leadership.

2. SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

a. IAEG

The OC considers that the establishment of a fully functioning system for the continuous and credible assessment of the impact of the work of the Centers and the CGIAR is a matter of the highest priority. Demonstrating impact will be an important part of ensuring future support and funding for the System.

The OC was concerned that the discussions on impact assessment at ICW 1997 ended inconclusively and on an unsatisfactory note. The OC recalls that it sought and was given the assurances of the Cosponsors that the staffing of the IAEG would be treated as a matter of the highest priority. It notes that while a full time secretary has been identified, for bureaucratic reasons, is not yet in post. However the OC was pleased to note that the Panel is now complete.

The OC was pleased that consideration of the IAEG report was moved forward in the MTM agenda to allow adequate time to hear and to discuss progress. It welcomed the briefing and looks forward to seeing copies of impact statements prepared by the IAEG.

The OC continues to believe that the CGIAR needs an overall performance assessment system that incorporates the role of TAC in agenda setting and establishing priorities for the System; the work of the Centers in setting performance indicators and monitoring progress, and the ex-post evaluation carried out by IAEG. The OC will consider how the CGIAR might establish such an overall performance assessment and impact system at its next meeting.

The OC requests that the System Review Panel to provide some advice on how CGIAR might best establish a continuum between its strategic agenda setting and performance assessment and facilitate efficient integration of planning, monitoring and evaluation functions.

b. TAC

1. THE OC UNDERSTANDS THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE SERIOUS STAFF SHORTAGES IN THE TAC SECRETARIAT. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT TAC, THE INDEPENDENT SOURCE OF ADVICE TO THE SYSTEM, IS ALWAYS IN A POSITION TO RESPOND TO THE REQUESTS MADE BY THE SYSTEM. **THE OC URGES THE COSPONSORS TO ENSURE CONTINUITY AND IMPARTIALITY IN THE STAFFING OF THE TAC SECRETARIAT, PARTICULARLY DURING THE PERIOD OF THE SYSTEM REVIEW.**

2. 3. BIOTECHNOLOGY AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The OC welcomes the reports of the Panels and the ample opportunity given to discussing them in Plenary and in break out sessions. It does not intend to comment here on the outcome, but welcomes the Chairman's initiative in trying to move forward to a conclusion.

The OC endorses the renewed understanding that Centers are the legal entities in the System. They are the obvious levels at which many of the issues raised on intellectual property should be handled and negotiated. The country members of the CGIAR are inevitably bound by their national policies on many of these issues, ongoing negotiations and the international agreements their governments have signed and ratified. Responsible, uniform and transparent behavior by the Centers will be most helpful but may need to be adapted in the light of codes and agreements reached in the future. The OC urges that a steady eye be kept on the costs and benefits of these activities to the CGIAR and to the communities and people we seek to help.

The OC asks the CGIAR Secretariat to seek the views of the World Bank’s legal advisers on whether there is any liability on the members of the CGIAR for the conduct of the Centers or any other part of the CGIAR system.

The genetics work of the CGIAR is important, but it reflects only part of its activities. The CGIAR must not neglect its work in other areas, in particular on natural resource management, improving policies, and capacity building. The CGIAR has devoted significant time to discussion of biotechnology concerns during its last three meetings. Further discussions on this topic should not be at the expense of covering other critical aspects of the CGIAR’s work.

4. SYSTEM REVIEW

The OC was most grateful for the progress report of, presentations by and interactions with the Review Panel. It had the opportunity to express its initial reactions at the Plenary Session on 26th May. The Committee’s detailed commentary (which was shared with the Panel) is set out in the Annex to this report.

The OC wishes to re-emphasize the following points:

- The importance of poverty alleviation in the Mission Statement.
- The importance also of a people focus.
- The need to define the strategies of the CGIAR in terms of outcomes and intended impacts.
- The need to focus on the positioning and comparative advantage of the CGIAR and the IARCs.
- The need to consider the value added and contribution of all the committees.
- The need for balance between the genetic, NRM, policy, information and capacity building activities.
- The role of partnerships in all that we do.
- The need to improve the efficiency, impact and influence of the CGIAR.
- What should the CGIAR stop doing or reduce.

The OC wishes the Panel well and encourages it to produce the report before ICW so that it can be considered by members before they reach Washington to attend the ICW.

Finally, the OC suggests that the Chairman should convene an ‘ad hoc’ Chairman’s Group, comprising a representative group of stakeholders (e.g., the committee chairs) in early October to review the draft report and to develop a series of ‘proposals and propositions’ for ICW to consider.

5. ICW 1998 and PROGRAMME OF WORK

The OC welcomes the invitation from the Chairman to work with the Secretariat to find ways to streamline and prioritize the agenda and structure of future CGIAR meetings. In carrying out this task the members of the OC would welcome the views of other members and the Centers.

The OC discussed the structure of ICW 1998 with the Executive Secretary of the CGIAR on 28 May. There was agreement that the focus of ICW should be on considering the outcomes of the System Review and the way forward. The Secretariat will also give some thought to ways and the best format by which full discussion of the Review might be achieved. It will be important for all stakeholders, particularly the Centers, to be involved. The suggestion is that the morning sessions should be devoted to the Review and the afternoon sessions to parallel events and the other business of ICW.

6. ROTATION OF MEMBERSHIP

At the 14th meeting of the OC held during ICW 1997 the members agreed that the existing membership of the OC should be maintained until the System Review Panel completes its task and the CGIAR decides on the way forward. The OC asked its Secretary to circulate a list showing the tenure of OC members. The OC will also start to identify potential new members from the various constituencies of the CGIAR, for discussion at its next meeting in Washington.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The 16th meeting of the OC will be held in Washington, D.C. on October 24-25 and, if necessary, during ICW98 (scheduled for October 26-30.)

Drafted by Andrew Bennett

CGIAR Secretariat
June 18, 1998

**Oversight Committee Comments on the
Preliminary Findings of the System Review
Brasilia - 24 May 1998**

Introduction

The OC welcomes the paper and the opportunity to comment.

OC has stressed all along that the review process should be

- **Objective**
- **Transparent**
- **Participatory and consultative**
- **Inclusive of external and internal views**

OC hopes that the Review would be:

- **Forward looking**
- **Strategic, looking at the positioning of the System and Centers**
- **Enhance efficiency**
- **Improve impact**
- **Increase influence of the system on policies and development**

The OC notes that the process has been open and consultative. The paper is a useful synthesis of ideas and opinions but has obviously not started to present conclusions. The Committee offers the following comments and observations for consideration by the Review Panel.

General Comment

The paper is long and informative on science and the genetic resources issues. This is welcome. It is not so strong on the people and poverty dimension, NRM, partnerships and support to NARS.

Mission

Regarding the mission statement, the OC feels that it is **important to move the poverty and food security objectives to the front**. The OC offers the following statement of the CGIAR's mission for consideration by the Review Panel:

Contribute to poverty alleviation and food security through research that promotes sustainable agricultural development and natural resource

management. This mission to be achieved through research leadership, partnerships, policy dialogue, capacity building and networking aimed at improving access to knowledge by poor people.

Coverage of Issues Identified by the OC

There are some areas where the paper does not address adequately issues previously raised by the OC and which the OC continues to see as important:

- **A clear VISION of the positioning of the CGIAR and the Centers in the Regional and Global System.**
- **The pros and cons of creating sub-communities**
- **Regionalizing and spacing of meetings**
- **Reducing fixed costs**
- **Increasing accountability to external agreements, e.g., the MEAs, WTO, Codes, etc.**
- **Delaying and greater devolution to Boards and to Centers**
- **Innovative ways of increasing and improving impact and the measurement thereof, on poverty and food security**
- **Management of change**
- **New financing systems and modalities**

Some Further Observations and Suggestions

- Strengthen throughout the paper the references to people and poor people in particular.
- Ensure the balance between the genetic resources, NRM, knowledge systems and partnership functions.
- In the consideration of governance emphasize measures that will increase impact, increase efficiency and influence of the CGIAR.
- It might be better to recast the activities as objectives and outcomes, e.g.:
 - Availability of improved genetic materials to poor people
 - Better, more sustainable NRM systems
 - Improved access by poor people to information.
- Partnerships should be seen as a valuable tool to improve the efficiency and impact of the CGIAR
- *Major Accomplishments and Assets*

Add reference to environmental achievements of the NRM policies and programs
Add reference to participation/social sciences, particularly involving NARS

- ***New Challenges and Opportunities***

Add reference to water and the Desertification Convention.

- ***Science and Strategy***

Agree strongly with 10-15 year perspective

Emphasize the need to **improve** the functioning of the global knowledge system and the positioning of the CGIAR

- ***Pillars*** – Are these necessary? They appear to duplicate the “areas of focus.”

- ***Three areas of focus***

These should be recast as purpose or outcome statements.

It is important to emphasize the policy and influencing functions of the CGIAR as well as the ‘technology’ functions.

What are the institutional and partnership arrangements/implications appropriate to these objectives?

Replace “technology management” with “knowledge systems”—i.e., strengthen the **knowledge systems in developing countries**. Also, include references to NARS and networks.

- **IPR and Biotechnology/Biosafety**—These will need to be up-dated in the light of discussions and conclusions in Brasilia and consideration of existing codes (e.g., the UNEP code of conduct.)

- **NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**—THIS SECTION SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED AND RELATED MORE TO THE REGIONAL STRATEGIES MENTIONED BELOW, WHERE THE PEOPLE AND GEOPOLITICAL ISSUES ARE MORE EASILY ADDRESSED AND INTREGRATED.

- **Water**—Important to include water and role of CGIAR in respect to GWP and other similar organizations.

- **Civil Society**—This should be included in the list of partners.
- **Ecoregional Approaches**
 - Need more analysis of why they do not seem to be working
 - Conceptual frameworks and institutional arrangements and implications (e.g., people and political dimensions) should be examined.
 - How does the CGIAR create incentives and efficient coordination mechanisms?
- **System-wide Programs and Initiatives**—There is no mention. Why are they not working well?
- **International Agreements and Conventions**—This section needs to include reference to livestock and fisheries, and how the CGIAR might link to them. (NB. There is no forest convention.)
- **Regional Strategies**—OC sees these as very important as the needs and priorities of each of the regions are different and diversifying. The role of the Systems and IARCs will also be different in the regions and sub-regions. The structure, coordination and representation in each region may be changing. More regional meetings may be the best way forward. Are there other fora/means by which these regional agenda might be set, and carried forward?
- **Governance** —
 - Pleased to see that OC paper has been useful.
 - OC would like to see an analytical framework for assessing the ‘value added’ of the different elements in the governance and committee structure in respect to its Mission and the need for accountability.
 - OC does not subscribe to the ‘status quo’ option. It is attracted by features of the modified and executive models. There is a need for some form of Chairman’s committee to advise and guide the Chairman. The constituency committees have different purposes but the CGIAR requires some means of handling trade-offs and building consensus and ownership across the system.
- **Efficiency/Effectiveness**—Hope the review can move away from a list of ideas to some concrete recommendations or criteria for assessing measures.
- **Review Report**—OC suggests that the Review team should avoid trying to be too detailed and prescriptive in its report. Suggestions:
 - Stick to broad strategic issues and avoid getting drawn into tactics
 - Be clear on positioning and role issues
 - Be clear on when the Review is making **recommendations or suggestions for further consideration.**

Acknowledgements and Next Steps

OC believes that Review has consulted fully and widely. It is now important to narrow down the options and ideas into a comprehensive, strategic vision and framework that will increase the impact, efficiency, and influence of the CGIAR on the reduction of poverty and improving food security, through leadership, partnerships, policy dialogue, capacity building and networks. We must all resist the temptation to special pleading and lobbying. It is now time to write. To ensure adequate time to consider the report and to formulate recommendations and an action plan, can we please have the report by the end of September?

Edited version of Andrew Bennett draft
shared with the Review Panel on May 24, 1998

CGIAR Secretariat
June 18, 1998