

# CGIAR

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## Mid-Term Meeting 1999 May 24 - 28 Beijing, China

<h3>The Third System Review: From Proposals to Practice</h3>
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### System Review Follow-up: Consultative Council Propositions on Governance

The Consultative Council, meeting in Brussels on January 27-28, requested the Chairman, TAC, IAEG, as well as the Genetic Resources Policy Committee to prepare a number of reports on governance-related issues, as follow-up to System Review recommendations. The table below indicates the status of each report by agenda sub-item.

<i>Agenda sub-item</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Documentation</i>
3(d) i	Consultative Council propositions on governance	See MTM/99/05
3(d) iii	Consultative Council propositions on the CGIAR's decision-making structure	Chairman's proposal attached
3(d) v	Consultative Council propositions on committees:	
	-- proposal by TAC on future role, composition	TAC paper attached
	-- proposal by TAC and IAEG on integration arrangements	Joint TAC/IAEG paper attached
	-- proposal by GRPC on its future composition and TOR	GRPC paper attached
	-- Global Forum	GFAR to report at MTM
3(d) vi	Proposal by TAC on streamlining evaluation processes	TAC paper attached
	Proposition on human resource services	See MTM/99/05

## **System Review Follow-up: Consultative Council's Proposition on Facilitating Decision-Making in the CGIAR**

### **CHAIRMAN'S PROPOSAL ON COMPOSITION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL**

The CGIAR Consultative Council established at ICW98 met in Brussels on January 27-28. In its recommendations on facilitating decision-making, the Council proposed that a Consultative Council be established as a permanent feature of the CGIAR system; and requested the CGIAR Chairman to propose the Council's composition and terms of reference for discussion at MTM99. The Chairman's proposal follows, for consideration under Agenda Item 3(d) iii.

#### ***1. Context***

Sharply focused and effective decision-making has been a goal of the CGIAR since its inception, when the creation of an Executive Committee was proposed, but did not materialize. Several other prospects have been considered in recent years, and innovations introduced.

One such recent development was the creation at ICW98 of a Consultative Council to examine issues arising from recommendations of the third CGIAR System Review (SR) that required further study and elaboration. It represented an effort by the CGIAR to entrust an entity that is a microcosm of the system with the responsibility of clarifying issues, reviewing options, reaffirming fundamentals, defining specifics for action and, thereby, helping to facilitate decision-making by the Group as a whole.

A summary report (MTM/99/05) of the work of the council was distributed to CGIAR members in February. The council has proposed that a Consultative Council, akin to the entity created at ICW98, should be established as a permanent feature of the system's decision-making process.

#### **The Record**

Past efforts by the CGIAR to create an appropriate mechanism by which to enhance decision-making without eroding core principles and traditions included the following:

- CGIAR chairmen periodically convened *ad hoc* groups of members, representatives of standing committees and, more recently, of partnership committees, to review important issues and frame action points for consideration by the Group.
- A Finance Committee (FC) and an Oversight Committee (OC) were established at MTM93, on the recommendation of a working group (chair: Robert Herdt) set up at MTM92 to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the CGIAR's deliberation and decision-making processes, and to develop options for improving these processes. The OC and FC operate as sub-committees of the CGIAR. They do not exercise decision-making authority, and they report directly to the Group.
- The Group decided at MTM94 that the OC and FC could combine as a Steering Committee. The committees have met together several times although, generally, not as a formal Steering Committee.
- A seven-member working group (chair: Klaus Winkel) on governance, established as part of the CGIAR renewal program, recommended the establishment of a permanent CGIAR Bureau, consisting of heads of standing committees and cosponsors, meeting under the chairmanship of the CGIAR chair, to consult on major issues that require attention between the normal CGIAR meetings. The proposal was adopted but not implemented.
- Technical questions, external reviews, and issue-specific reports have been referred to small working groups meeting in parallel sessions at MTMs and ICWs, in order to sharpen the focus of discussion, and cope with an expanding agenda. Generally, working groups reach closure on the topics discussed, and inform the Group in plenary of the action taken. However, the decision of the working group may be reviewed in plenary if the Group or some members ask for such a discussion.

## SR Recommendation and Follow-up

The third System Review recommended the establishment of a central board with access to funds, power to act on behalf of the CGIAR, and a chief executive. The board was expected to assume the functions of several existing committees, such as the Cosponsor group, FC, and OC.

Discussion of SR recommendations demonstrated that members did not wish to delegate decision-making authority down to a smaller group, and that centers were not willing to delegate up any of their authority, but that both were amenable to have a smaller group take responsibility for facilitating decision-making.

The convergence of several developments has created the need for the CGIAR to establish such a small group as a permanent entity, rather than to continue working through *ad hoc* arrangements.

Expansion of the Group has enhanced its sense of universality, and enabled it to develop as a genuine South-North enterprise, with greater openness, and participation of a range of partners in policy discussions. The character and quality of discussion have therefore been substantially transformed. At the same time, however, with the consequent increase of the numbers attending Group meetings, opportunities for decisions to be based on discussions in depth of specific issues have become limited.

These developments have occurred during a period when a range of key issues—from trends in support for ODA through the impact of international conventions on the research at the centers to the ramifications of proprietary science—press upon the system. They add to the system's ever-increasing agenda, while requiring decision-making that is focused and far-sighted.

Moreover, current decision-making arrangements do not provide for the full benefits of the system's expertise and experience to be brought to bear on decision-making. The centers and their boards, in particular, are not adequately represented or involved in the process. A vital element is thus missing.

The proposed Consultative Council is meant to respond to these shortcomings without, however, challenging or destroying the organizational principles of the CGIAR.

### 2. Propositions

In relation to SR recommendations 13, 15, and 24—all covering decision-making in the CGIAR—the Council has submitted the following propositions for consideration by the Group at MTM99:

- Maintain decision-making by consensus,
- Do *not* reconstitute the CGIAR as a legal entity,
- Establish a Consultative Council, similar to the *ad hoc* council set up by the Group at ICW98, as a permanent feature of the CGIAR decision-making process,
- Make better use of the pool of talent on center boards and at the centers in CGIAR decision-making, through the composition of the proposed Consultative Council.

### 3. Terms of Reference

The responsibility of the proposed Consultative Council will be:

*To serve as a facilitator by reviewing issues periodically, distilling the issues into a format that will sharpen discussion and decisions, and enable the Group to go directly to the core of the issues, thus making full productive use of its time at plenary meetings.*

To fulfil this responsibility, the Council will be expected to:

- Meet periodically, e.g. immediately before CGIAR meetings or as circumstances require and, at other times, communicate electronically to the fullest extent possible,
- Review issues for discussion at CGIAR meetings, and craft propositions for further discussion and decision by the Group,

- Commission special studies, as necessary, and report to the Group on the significance of the issues examined, with suggested action points for consideration by the Group,
- Serve as a 'sounding body' that will advise the Group and the CGIAR Chairman on major issues and trends that are relevant to the CGIAR mission,
- Assist in integrating the work of CGIAR committees,
- Ensure that the viewpoint of all constituencies of the system are taken into account in decision making, and
- Facilitate clarity of communication among the various components of the CGIAR system.

The Council will be supported by the CGIAR Secretariat, the principal service unit of the CGIAR.

The FC and OC will continue to function as sub-committees of the Group, while maintaining a close working relationship with the Consultative Council.

#### 4. *Composition*

The composition of the Consultative Council will be based on the following principles:

- Balanced representation, with provision for regular rotation,
- Inclusion of major constituencies, e.g. the centers, CGIAR standing committees, partnership committees, and
- Recognition of donor effort.

It is therefore proposed that the Council should consist of the categories and numbers illustrated below, under the chairmanship of the CGIAR chair. Member representatives of the council will be elected by the constituencies in caucus i.e. following the same procedure by which the Finance Committee membership is currently selected. Each member constituency will decide on a pattern of rotation.

The chair of each major CGIAR standing committee and partnership committee (including any that are established during or after MTM99) will serve as an *ex-officio* member of the council. The CBC and CDC will each be represented, *ex-officio*, by the committee chair and another committee member. The need to ensure inclusiveness might make for a somewhat large council but, inevitably, not all members will attend all meetings. Maintaining balanced and equitable representation is, however, essential.

#### **Proposed Composition of the Consultative Council**

Constituencies	Numbers in Constituency	Council Members from Constituency
<i>Membership Constituencies</i>		
<b>Cosponsors</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Largest Contributors</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Other OECD Bilaterals</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Southern and Transition Economies by Region (LAC, SA, EAP, WANA, AFR, ECA)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>International and Regional Organizations and Foundations</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Ex-Officio Constituencies</i>		
<b>FC</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>OC</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TAC<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>10 - 14</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> IAEG is not listed, because the Consultative Council has proposed that "IAEG should be integrated with TAC."

Constituencies	Numbers in Constituency	Council Members from Constituency
<b>GRPC</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CBC</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CDC</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>NGOC<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PSC<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>
Total Council Membership		<b>29</b>

**5. Next Steps**

- Discussion and decisions at MTM99.
- If the proposal to establish a Consultative Council is adopted—formation of the Council at MTM99, followed by an informal inaugural meeting in Beijing.

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<sup>2</sup> If the Group adopts the proposal of the Consultative Council for establishing a Science Partnership Committee, membership in the three committees is likely to be 8-8-8.

## **Organization of TAC (System Review Recommendation 18) <sup>3</sup>**

### **TAC'S FUTURE COMPOSITION, ROLE, WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND EFFECTIVENESS**

TAC has been a major instrument of the CGIAR since its inception. In his 1986 history of the System Warren Baum describes TAC's role over the years to 1985, noting that the terms of reference expanded over time, and that the number of members and their areas of expertise changed as the CGIAR's portfolio changed. Such changes continued, but at a notably slower pace, as the System reshaped its portfolio from 1985 onwards.

In what follows TAC responds to the Consultative Council's late January request that TAC prepare for the Group a proposal outlining its future role, its working arrangements or *modus operandi*, and its composition. Each of those considerations is the subject of one of the following sections. In preparing this view of its strategy TAC assumed that the goals of the CGIAR--alleviating poverty and protecting natural resources to assure sustainable food security--remain in place.

#### **TAC's Current Terms of Reference**

The CGIAR's expectations about TAC's role have changed little over the past decade. Formally, as defined in a working document distributed by the CGIAR Secretariat in 1996 (Committees and Units of the CGIAR Roles, Responsibilities, and Procedures), TAC has five major functions. These had changed little since Baum's 1986 description (compare the following list with Baum, pp. 213-216.). All aim at improving the quality of decision making within the CGIAR, especially for decisions about the content and implementation of the Research Agenda. The five are to:

1. monitor the changes in the global context which have implications for the CGIAR;
2. recommend medium- and long-term strategies and priorities;
3. evaluate the quality and relevance of the centres' research and research-related programmes, and monitor compliance with approved plans and CGIAR priorities;
4. recommend annual Systemwide resource allocations to the CGIAR-supported programmes and centres;
5. address across-centre and System issues.

In pursuing these functions TAC is largely responsible for identifying the System's Research Agenda and for recommending the balance among its constituent elements.

*Monitoring the Global Context* – This function focuses on environments external to the CGIAR, where changes will have potentially important consequences for the CGIAR, but over which the CGIAR has minimal influence. In the 1997 Priorities and Strategies Paper five such environments were identified: sciences relevant to CG goals, the state of other research systems, the long-term demand for and likely supply of CG-related products, the primary concerns of CGIAR Members, and the support for development assistance. By now, it is clear that another must be added, that encompassing the institutional and regulatory environment and its various manifestations in national and international regulations affecting access to genetic resources.

Because the external environment frames the context for CGIAR decision making, its monitoring remains vital to such decision making and TAC is well placed for the task. To improve its capacities, TAC is adding new sources of information and counsel (see section on Proposed *Modus Operandi*). TAC believes that the six arenas identified are the external environments currently of most consequence to the CGIAR and notes that the influence of still others will be reflected within the six. As well, but under a different rubric, TAC must also be concerned with environments over which the CGIAR does exercise influence, for example, the state, locus, and level of poverty and the state of natural resources.

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<sup>3</sup> Summary Report of the CGIAR Consultative Council Meeting, January 27-28, 1999 Brussels

Strategies and Priorities – The System requires an orderly framework for setting priorities and deriving consistent resource allocations. Since the beginning TAC has been specifically responsible for priority setting related to the programmatic issues of the agreed Agenda. TAC then derives the resource allocations (see below) implied and recommends these to the Finance Committee, which deals with financing that Agenda. Through the course of the past five years the goals of the System have been made more precise, the relationships among them have been clarified, and a more transparent framework for priority setting has been achieved. For the future, expected improvements in mapping the locus and level of poverty, a better understanding about the causes of poverty and its influence on the environment, more precise information on the location of production systems and about the factors affecting the state of natural resources, along with the implementation of all of the elements of the recently endorsed logical framework, will further improve priority setting and resource allocations.

Clearly priorities and strategies interact strongly. With priorities describing what should be done and strategies describing how it should be done, TAC deals with strategies at the System level. For a current example at a general level, TAC is now encouraging a stronger interest in production ecology as a way to simultaneously pursue poverty alleviation and protection for natural resources. Interaction with other levels is manifested in the Priorities and Strategies Paper. There, for example, following on the priority for germplasm improvement, TAC advocates more attention to doing that through broadening the germplasm base. How that job is to be done TAC believes is best decided by the centres. TAC is well placed to assess strategies at the System level.

Related to priorities and strategies is the need to identify gaps and recommend initiatives to fill them. Baum noted (p.215) that by 1985 most of the major gaps had been filled and that funding constraints had limited the possibilities of considering important new activities. Notwithstanding the funding constraints, new sectors and commodities were added to the System's portfolio since Baum wrote. The 1997 Priorities and Strategies Paper did not identify gaps in the sense of voids, but did advocate rebalancing among activities. In any case, in the future an awareness of the need to seek out gaps, both in the sense of opportunities through new activities and through rebalancing among existing activities, must remain an important part of priority setting.

Again, then, TAC sees strategies and priorities at the System level as continuing functions of considerable importance to the System and sees itself as uniquely well placed to provide these services to the Group.

Assessing Centre Science – Because so much time elapses between inputs of research resources and the discernible impact of their products, the System needs a timely way to reassure itself about the likely consequences of its investments in centre science. An important indicator is the quality and relevance of the science being practised. This is not to say that good, even excellent, science is a guarantee of significant impact, rather it is to say that science poorly done is much less likely to be effective than science well done. One of TAC's critical functions is that of assuring the Group about the quality and relevance of centre science. (In this case relevance has to do with the choice of the scientific tools and quality has to do with their effective application. Relevance can also be applied to the state of being consistent with the aims of the CGIAR. This, too, is an important consideration, but it is one that is assessed via management and governance rather than through science per se.) This has long been one of the critical functions of the TAC. Its importance has strong implications for TAC's composition; given the breadth of the System's science, a smaller TAC would not have the requisite insights or contacts to assure effective reviews nor to interpret their conclusions.

As with the earlier functions, this is a capacity that the System cannot do without. It is one that TAC is well placed to fulfil, and it interacts with priority setting. TAC does, however, see ways to improve the execution and discusses the theme in a note on streamlining evaluation.

Recommending Resource Allocations and Monitoring Compliance – Following its work on priorities TAC recommends a pattern of resource allocations that is consistent. This provides the System with an orderly decision-making framework for relating the latter to the former. Clearly such a framework is critically important to the efficient pursuit of the System's goals. TAC's recommendations go to the Group via the Finance Committee.

In monitoring plans proposed by the centres for their consistency with priorities, TAC is concerned with the long term, near term, and annual planning and budgeting process of each centre. Through the course of the past few years the elements of this process have been better focused and simplified through medium-term plans that rest on strategic plans and underlie annual budgets. (While we expect continued improvements, e.g., through greater participation by the TAC Secretariat, major gains have been made.) TAC's principal concern in this area is programmatic. The CGIAR Secretariat focuses on the implications for financial considerations. At this time, the process features periodic attention to fixing priorities, strategies, strategic plans, and resource allocations, last done in 1997, followed by annual reviews focused on the following year and a three-year medium-term plan. TAC's annual role is to certify that plans either conform with those endorsed earlier or that deviations are explained in terms consistent with the System's goals.

Again, then, TAC sees its counsel on resource allocations along with periodic monitoring of the congruence between endorsed plans and near-term proposals as a continuing function of considerable importance to the System. Clearly, this concern with resource allocations is intimately related to that dealing with priorities and strategies and the monitoring function aims at maintaining the integrity of the framework.

Cross-Centre and Systemwide Issues – Closely related to priority setting and assessing science are cross-centre and Systemwide issues. In large measure these emerge because of latent complementarities among centres which, in turn, offer efficiencies through combining efforts. Discovering and encouraging these opportunities should be seen as an integral part of the priority setting/resource allocation process. Moreover, assessing the quality and relevance of the work being undertaken in cross-centre programmes is closely related to assessing the work of centres themselves. Finally, while recognizing that cross-centre and Systemwide work have some characteristics different from centre work, a recognition also evident in the recommendations of the System Review Panel report, they are but another form of partnership and partnerships are common arrangements for centres. Given these considerations, TAC does not see the treatment of such work as a function separate from the other four functions.

While each of the above functions remains vital, their relative importance varies from time to time, depending on the needs of the System. For example, from 1995 to 1997, following the Lucerne Meeting, the System saw a revision of priorities as its most urgent need and TAC responded with a new priorities and strategies paper. To buttress that effort and encouraged by the needs of the centres, TAC then joined the CGIAR Secretariat in developing improved and more transparent procedures for planning and budgeting, leading recently to a logical framework, with more transparent reporting on projects and their milestones in the immediate offing. Also recently, but restrained by the need to respond to such events as the System Review Panel's report, TAC has begun to focus on the elements that will shape the CGIAR's portfolio in 2010. So, while TAC's functions have changed little over the past decade, the balance among them changes from time to time with the System's needs. (See below for remarks on the need to rebalance priorities.)

Conclusions – In brief, TAC recommends that, with one exception, it continue to be responsible for the functions it has performed in the past. TAC believes, however, that the five functions listed earlier should be re-arranged and streamlined to three: namely,

1. reviewing strategic considerations within the external environment;
2. assuring the quality and relevance of centre science; and
3. developing priorities for programmes, recommending resource allocations to the Finance Committee, and monitoring centre implementation through budgets and plans.

All of these functions interact. The realization of each contributes to more effective decision making by the Group and by the centres. Finally, the responsibility for assuring effective analysis of impact, a function of TAC in the past, is not discussed here pending the outcome of the recommendation to further integrate the IAEG and TAC. Whatever emerges, it is important that there be secure links in communication with those who execute this function.

Before turning to TAC's modus operandi, it must be observed that, just as these functions are important to the CGIAR, they are also important to decision making in each of the centres. The

review process, especially the EPMRs, assesses centre commitment to each function and how effectively each is carried out in the normal course of events. There is more on this theme in the discussion of evaluation.

### **TAC's Proposed Modus Operandi**

Historically TAC has relied on three sources of expertise in executing its work: TAC Members, Secretariat staff, and consultants. The three will continue to be important, but there is every evidence that the relative importance of the third will continue to increase. This is largely a consequence of the rapid pace of science and research and of its consequence in increasing specialization. How does TAC see its future working arrangements?

*TAC's Infrastructure* – TAC's composition will be discussed in the following section. What is important for this section is that the TAC now has two standing committees, one dealing with reviews of all kinds and the second dealing with issues pertaining to priorities and strategies. All TAC Members serve on one of the standing committees. Reviews are treated in a separate paper aimed at 'streamlining' evaluations. Beyond that, for special pieces of work, e.g. connecting TAC with emerging work on the locus, level, and determinants of poverty and preparing an interim report on global climate change, a TAC Member with relevant specialized expertise is named to lead the effort.

The TAC Secretariat has long been a source of expertise for the TAC and for the System. The Secretariat's functions are to provide logistical and administrative support for TAC activities, including reviews of various kinds, and to provide technical and scientific support to various kinds of studies. By mid-1999, the TAC Secretariat will include an executive secretary, two ranking professionals with expertise in economics and in biological science (with emphasis on plant breeding and biotechnology), two supporting consultants working in Rome, and four administrative and logistical support staff. TAC expects to maintain this cadre for the near future, reducing the Rome-based consultants once the new staff has become familiar with operations. In any case, given fixed budgets, it is clear that a larger permanent staff implies constraints on consultants and vice versa.

*Working with Consultants* – Consultants have been widely used by TAC, indeed the first TAC meeting resulted in the appointment of a panel of consultants to make field visits in conjunction with the admission of ICRISAT to the CGIAR. Virtually all of TAC's special studies have employed consultants, e.g., that on Marginal Lands, on NARS, on biotechnology and on intellectual property rights. Beyond that, the specialized pieces referred to above will at times involve inputs from consultants. Too, in conjunction with the CGIAR Secretariat and, in future, with IAEG, the Standing Committee on External Reviews (SCOER) names the members of the EPMRs and these, in effect, serve as consultants to TAC. What differentiates the current approach somewhat from that of the past is the greater emphasis given now to the presence of a TAC Member on such studies. Indeed, in the future, it is expected that a TAC Member serve as an observer in EPMRs. Finally, it should be noted that, at times, TAC draws expertise from centres on a consulting basis.

*A New Approach* – While there are several examples of TAC sponsorship of conferences or workshops focused on a theme of importance (recent examples include a short workshop on land degradation and several sessions on developing a logical framework for the System, where most parts of the System were involved along with consultants), TAC will introduce this year an approach whose purpose is to foster better access to experts (or visionaries, to use an expression much in evidence in the SRP report) in several of the major environments with which the CGIAR must be concerned. Three dimensions of those environments are important: what is 'driving' the environment, what is likely to happen within it, and what are the implications for the CGIAR. TAC sees advantage in adding specialized experts to its own contribution to the System's understanding of the first two and sees itself and others within the System as responsible for the third, with the last principally reflected in strategic and medium-term plans. TAC believes that this approach will go far towards keeping the System in touch with the important dimensions of its external environment as well as offering promising new insights into environments the System seeks to influence.

At this time TAC envisions five sets of experts, say three in each set. At each TAC meeting one set of experts/visionaries will talk with TAC in open session about their area of expertise over the next, say, five to ten years. (The sets currently on TAC's list focus on likely developments in: molecular biology and biotechnology relevant to germplasm, the science related to production ecology, national

and international regulations with consequences for IPR, information and communications, and understanding of the factors influencing poverty. Other environments will be assessed, as in the past, through special studies.) TAC believes that the prestige of the CGIAR will ensure that leading figures can be attracted to such a role, itself considerably less demanding than that for TAC Members. Moreover, TAC believes that many of the CGIAR family will want to attend such sessions. Over the course of two or three years at the rate of one session per TAC meeting, each of the major external environments can be treated, assisting the CGIAR to stay abreast of developments critical to its planning. Over time the issues of consequence and the roster of experts will evolve.

Rebalancing Priorities – Since 1998 the System has been operating from the priorities and strategies paper endorsed by the Group in 1997. It features a three-year planning horizon for medium-term plans with an annual extension of one year; this year TAC reviewed plans for 2000-2002. TAC opined in the 1997 discussion of the MTP for 1998-2000 that, so long as the amount of real support for the System stayed within about 5% of 1997 support, that proportionate changes in allocations among undertakings and commodities would be acceptable. Projections of funding and inflation strongly suggest that real resources available will soon differ by more than 5% from the 1997 level. This consideration alone implies that the priorities and resource allocations should be rebalanced in the near future, for effect in, say, 2001. Added inducements are changes in other parts of the external environments, especially the growing presence of the private sector in dimensions of tropical and sub-tropical agriculture and the accelerating pace of changes in science.

At this time, and with a 2010 horizon in mind, it appears that the rebalancing could lead to some quite significant shifts in the CGIAR portfolio. These developments have added impetus to the work of the Standing Committee on Priorities and Strategies on the 2010 portfolio. While TAC Members and the TAC Secretariat will be heavily involved, there will be advantage in bringing others into the effort.

Finally, it is important to reaffirm that TAC interacts in varying degrees with all of the Committees of the CGIAR. There is every evidence that the future will hold more such interaction.

Concluding Remarks – Much of this discussion has focused on working arrangements pertaining to strategic assessment of the external environment, planning, and priority setting. Discussion about monitoring the quality and relevance of science is in the TAC paper on ‘streamlining’ evaluations. A remaining topic pertains to impact assessment. If the Group decides to fully integrate TAC and the IAEG, a Standing Committee on Impact Assessment will be established within TAC. If not, then the working arrangements in this arena will be in the hands of the IAEG. (See also the papers on ‘streamlining’ evaluations and on IAEG/TAC relationships.)

TAC recommends that the Group endorse the role of specialized experts for additional insights into various environments of central importance to CGIAR decision making and, more generally, acknowledge the importance of consultants to the implementation to its work.

### **TAC’s Proposed Composition**

Today’s TAC – Initially the TAC numbered seven members, but this was soon expanded to 12, and by 1985 had increased to 15. Today’s TAC numbers but 10, largely a consequence of postponing the selection of new members until after the SRP report and its review by the Group. Three criteria have been important in selecting members: excellence in science, a balance between north and south and across regions, and a balance across disciplines or specialities. Earlier there was an effort to have each of the major disciplines in agriculture represented, but, given the expanding breadth of the System and the ever-increasing specialization within relevant disciplines, the aim now is to have expertise in four categories of research. Each of the three criteria is critical to fulfilling the Committee’s duties. Beyond that, experience with research management is important (seven of 10 current members have such experience) because of the perspective it brings to dealing with TAC’s functions.

The SRP Report – The SRP spoke about a TAC made up of three “visionaries”. TAC Members recognize the need for a reliable way to assess or appraise the future, presumably the motivation for “visionaries”. The Committee believes, however, that its plan for a panel of such experts contributing to a larger TAC, itself capable of handling the remaining functions, is preferred to a small TAC

focused on the strategic issues of the future with a number of panels to look after the remaining functions.

Of course, TAC's terms of reference could be reduced to strategic considerations pertaining to the external environment, but, then, another committee or two would have to be constituted to take care of priorities/resource allocations and quality/relevance of science. TAC believes that the System should not implement this solution. Three considerations justify TAC's conclusion. The first is that the "three visionaries solution" would not adequately provide the expertise to cover the important dimensions of the external environment; moreover, change in those dimensions needs periodic but not continuous monitoring. Second is that placing the strongly interacting functions in more entities or panels would add notably to transaction costs and the numbers involved would have to be similar in size to the current TAC. Third is that, if the smaller TAC relied on ad hoc panels to undertake the review and priority functions, such panels would be unlikely to accumulate the perspective that so enhances the capacity to orient and interpret reviews and to frame priorities.

*The Consultative Council* – The Consultative Council recommended between 10 and 14 members, exclusive of the Chair, and, given that the number will vary from time to time as a consequence of, e.g., unforeseen resignations, that 12, exclusive of the chair, should be the desired size. TAC is in accord with that suggestion and notes that anything less, even the current 10, is really not adequate to satisfy the Group's current needs. Moreover, a much smaller number would make impossible the desired geographic and disciplinary representation. Numbers, however, represent but one dimension of the human resource inventory; time spent with TAC in a given year and the experience accumulated over the years are others. TAC proposes to discuss these themes at greater length with the Cosponsors.

*Concluding Remarks* – A suitable distribution of members across space would have six from the north (with two or three from Europe, one or two from North America, two or three from Asia and Australia) and six from the south (with one or two each from Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa, and one from the WANA region). Across fields of expertise, TAC favours three or four each from molecular biology/biotechnology, germplasm improvement and closely related work, natural resource management issues, and social science concerns. Other kinds of expertise could be important--e.g. related to information management and intellectual property--but TAC will probably not be large enough to accommodate even two in each area, and so believes that, for the near term, themes emerging in these areas can be better handled on an ad hoc basis with specialist panels of sufficient size to ensure that relevant views are represented.

TAC currently has 10 members, pending the Group's response to the SRP's report. TAC recommends that the Group endorse 12 as the desired number with the distribution described in the preceding paragraph.

## **Conclusions**

Given their critical importance to the System and the degree of interdependence among them, TAC recommends that its major concerns stay essentially as they are, with a judgement about impact evaluation pending the decision about the relationship between IAEG and TAC. TAC further recommends that these concerns be grouped into three rather than five functions--one dealing with the external environment, a second with science, and the third with programming. The modus operandi proposed reflects some changes, in particular a continuing increase in the relative importance of consultants and the initiation of specialized panels of experts to contribute to a better understanding of the likely evolution of important dimensions of the System's important environments. Finally, it is recommended that the size of TAC be set at a desired level of 12 with the criteria for selection as they are now.

## **FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IAEG AND TAC:**

### **A Statement and Proposal to the CGIAR from TAC and the IAEG**

Two of the System Review Panel's (SRP's) Recommendations, R14f and R18d, pertain directly to the relationship between IAEG and TAC. The Consultative Council (CC) followed up at its Brussels meeting with its own recommendation concerning the linkages. The sections that follow (1) review the SRP recommendations and recall the evolution of the two entities in the context of the System's need for impact evaluation, (2) provide an assessment of the possible reasoning leading up to the recommendations; and (3) conclude with a brief description of two alternative approaches to integrating the work of the two entities for the Group's consideration.

#### **Background**

In the SRP's report, Recommendation 14f comments on the orientation of the work of the IAEG and concludes with the phrase "perhaps located within TAC". Recommendation 18d holds that "The IAEG should cease to exist in its current form. The central body should establish an impact unit in cooperation with TAC. This unit may be incorporated within TAC." The two recommendations are consistent in expressing the idea of the integration of the IAEG and TAC.

The Consultative Council proposed that, as an interim measure, IAEG should be integrated as a specialized panel of TAC with the IAEG chair as an *ex-officio* member of TAC. Along with that, the Council encouraged the two to work out arrangements without prejudging the future development of either. These two pieces of counsel come together best if whatever integration occurs is simple enough that it does not require changes in either entity that would predetermine its future course.

#### **Evolution of the Evaluation and Impact Assessment Functions in the CGIAR**

*Ex-post* impact evaluation is only one of the areas that traditionally has been included in evaluation in the CGIAR System. As well, there are EPMRs, thematic (stripe) reviews, *ex-ante* assessments in direct support of priority setting, and monitoring budgets and plans. Indeed, given that evaluation aims at improving background information for decision making, any activity involving decisions should include evaluation. The current division of labour in the CGIAR has TAC responsible for assessing the external environment important to the CGIAR, for assessing the quality and relevance of science--whether through EPMRs or stripe reviews--and for the reviews associated with priority setting and monitoring budgets and planning. (See "Committees and Units of the CGIAR; Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures" CGIAR Secretariat, 1996, and "TAC's Proposed Role, Modus Operandi and Composition", TAC, April 99.) Meanwhile, the IAEG is responsible for System level *ex-post* impact evaluation and, as a necessary part of that, contributing to fostering evaluation capacity in the centres.

The focus in this paper is specifically on the linkages between TAC and IAEG functions. In the present section we look at the evolution of the *ex-post* impact evaluation activity in the System and the thinking that led to the establishment of the IAEG and eventually to the SRP and CC recommendations.

Early on, TAC was assigned the task of reviewing the impact of individual centres through its external reviews. (The 1996 CGIAR Secretariat document "Committees and Units of the CGIAR: Roles, Responsibilities, and Procedures" describes the functions of TAC, and the section on reviews, under EPMRs, notes "...and impact of each centre, and..."). Through the years each external review has commented on the availability of impact studies and on the mechanisms that the centre had in place for evaluating impact. (The most recent examples are in the ILRI and ICLARM reviews.)

Historically, TAC had not considered itself responsible for the development and application of impact evaluation techniques or for training in their use. Through the years, there was a rising concern within the Group about the shortage of impact studies, about the difficulty of comparing the results of such assessments from one centre or one set of outputs to another, and about System level reports of impact. While a number of the centres were developing good capacity in impact evaluation and produced some solid evaluations of their own work, there was a feeling among some of the Group that more coordinated and independent impact evaluation activity was needed in the System. The

need included cost effective and credible studies of impacts, comparability among studies, and easier access to training in best practices. Thus, after the Lucerne meeting a panel was formed to recommend an impact assessment approach to the Group.

### **Major Considerations Leading to the Establishment of the IAEG**

Support quickly emerged for investing more in impact evaluation and in building the capacity needed to objectively analyse such evaluations coming out of the centres as well as for dealing with impact at the System level. That support carried forward to the idea of a designated group of experts who would: stimulate such study, ensure effective presentation of the results, orient such work to meet the Group's needs, provide backstopping skills on System level impact, and facilitate training. What remained was the question of where such a capacity should be located, whether in a free standing entity, in the TAC or in the CGIAR Secretariat. Three considerations might have played important roles in the decision reached in 1995:

(a) Independence and credibility concerns. Common practice in other institutions is independence of impact assessment to assure objectivity, e.g., the Operations Evaluation Department in the World Bank that reports directly to the Governors of the Bank. At the time of the discussions in the CGIAR System, it was thought that housing the capacity within TAC would raise doubts about credibility because TAC might be seen to favour studies or orientations of studies that would be more consistent with its earlier decisions about priorities and its recommendations about resource allocations and MTPs.

(b) The desire to have *ex-post* evaluation feed appropriately into priority setting. It was recognized that impact assessment has a role to play in providing information for priority setting, a central function of TAC. Consequently, it was recognized that some form of linkage between priority setting and impact evaluation functions must be assured.

(c) The desire to avoid overlaps of administrative and logistical functions and to keep a sense of bureaucratic neatness. There was concern that the costs of operating two secretariats would, while adding to output, also add costs.

As it turned out, in its 1995 decision to establish the IAEG, the Group emphasized the advantages of an independent impact evaluation group, with the expectation that it would work with TAC in terms of making linkages to priority setting and to impact assessment concerns in the EPMRs.

### **Considerations in the SRP Recommendation to integrate the IAEG and TAC**

The IAEG had been in place about three years when the System Review took place. The Review Panel assessed IAEG progress and performance, its links with centres and with TAC in the context of the broader evaluation needs in the System. As mentioned above, the SRP concluded that “the IAEG should cease to exist in its current form. The central body should establish an impact unit in cooperation with TAC. This unit may be incorporated within TAC.”

The SRP report did not include the analysis that led to the recommendation. Four considerations might have influenced the SRP. These follow with our comments.

Perceptions that there is inadequate interaction between IAEG and TAC. Some part of that perception is not consistent with the exchanges that have occurred. Indeed, in March 1999 the TAC and IAEG jointly sponsored a workshop on the implementation of the logical framework. Moreover, TAC had ensured a role for the IAEG as the logical framework was developed. For the IAEG, there was a special concern about how the format should take into account issues related to impact assessment through the inclusion of appropriate indicators at various stages in the hierarchy from outputs through to final goals. As for the input from impact assessment to priority setting, the TAC has not significantly rebalanced priorities since 1997, but will develop a new view of priorities in the near future, when IAEG's work will be heavily utilized. Related to assessment of impact in the course of EPMRs, IAEG has made available to TAC all relevant IAEG materials. The point here is that little has been missed in the past because of the independence of the IAEG from TAC, but in the future, as priorities are rebalanced, more interaction will be required.

The IAEG was slow in getting started. The low level of input from the IAEG to the TAC activities was related partly to the fact that the initial years of activity of the IAEG were devoted mainly to understanding what was going on in the way of impact assessment in the System, deciding on its mode of operation and on its activities, and getting organized for its own studies. Towards the middle of 1998, the initial activities were completed and the IAEG moved full scale into actual assessment work. It now has a full complement of activities on-going, as indicated in its report to MTM99. Thus, if there was an earlier perception that impact assessment activity in the System could be speeded up through integration of IAEG and TAC, this would appear to be less relevant now.

Less concern with the independence now. Regardless of what the SRP thinking on independence of impact assessment activity may have been, the Panel obviously felt comfortable with a closer link between ex post impact assessment functions and the other functions of TAC. However, the SRP recommendation was not clear on this point, since it did not specify the nature of the integration of TAC and the IAEG. In fact, as will become evident below in the description of the two approaches to integration, it is possible to have a specialized impact assessment panel or other unit within TAC that still maintains the key requirements for independence and arm's length operations where they are needed.

Administrative efficiency and cost considerations. The SRP obviously was concerned with ways to increase the efficiency of operation of the entire System, including the functions of groups such as TAC and the IAEG. While the SRP did recognize the potential links between the quality of services and their costs, it was concerned with the opportunities for increasing efficiency. One of those concerns related to the potential cost savings from linking the IAEG activities more closely with those of TAC. The existence of such cost savings obviously is an empirical question that can be verified. There are differences of opinion on how much such cost savings could be under the two alternative integration models described below, but, in any case, such savings appear to be small.

### **Alternative Approaches to Integration**

TAC and the IAEG each looked at the SRP and CC recommendations for integration. Each arrived at conclusions concerning the implied intent of the SRP and CC recommendations, the relative importance of the four concerns described above and what appears to best fit the CGIAR's current needs. Since the conclusions were somewhat different, two approaches consistent with the recommendation to the Group, are presented. (The two are compared in Table 1 in terms of their main similarities and differences.)

What are the major considerations differentiating the two approaches? The TAC approach envisions a TAC Standing Committee on Impact Evaluation (SCOIE) within TAC that would be different from other TAC standing committees (there are two) in that its Chair would be recommended directly by the Co-sponsors (Chairs of other Standing Committees are appointed by the TAC Chair). Initially, remaining current IAEG members would become TAC members-- increasing the size of TAC--where they would serve on SCOIE. As their terms expire, TAC numbers would decline and SCOIE members, except for the Chair, would be drawn from remaining TAC members. Simultaneously, reliance on consultants for the specialized needs of impact evaluation and SCOIE would increase, guided by the SCOIE Chair. One Secretariat would provide support, but responsibilities would be defined so that a specialist or specialists would serve the needs of SCOIE and be responsible to its Chair.

The IAEG approach envisions a specialized panel within TAC that functionally would be the same as the existing IAEG, except for the direct links that would be created with TAC through cross membership, joint planning activities, linked secretariats and possibly linked meetings. The cross membership would consist of the chair of the specialized panel being an ex officio member of TAC and the chair of TAC's SCOPAS possibly being an *ex-officio* member of the specialized panel. (The same arrangements could probably be made with the current structure.) There would be two secretariats working together, sharing facilities and relying on the same logistical support (travel, purchasing, etc.), but reporting to the respective chairs of TAC and the Panel.

A major difference between the two approaches is that, in the TAC Standing Committee case, all functions would be side by side under the TAC Chair and Secretariat, while in the Independent TAC Panel case, those responsible for impact evaluation would be independent of, but communicating with, those responsible for TAC's current functions. Some argue the need for separation on principle and point to agencies like the World Bank where, when there is a clear moral hazard, evaluation of projects and project management are separate in order to ensure objectivity and unbiased evaluation. Others argue that there is little probability of a bias being introduced into impact evaluation in order to protect earlier TAC decisions concerning priorities and budgets (frequently called "moral hazard"). The logic is that the evaluation is directly focused on actions several steps removed from the actions of TAC; hence, the danger of bias is slight or non-existent. TAC and the IAEG both believe that there is little danger of TAC imposing biases in *ex-post* evaluation work. Even so, there is the possibility that some would perceive the need for separation.

A second difference relates to control over budgets and activities. In the Independent TAC Panel case, the Panel would have control over its budget and programmes of work, subject to approval by the Co-sponsors, while in the TAC Standing Committee case, a consolidated budget and work plan, including impact assessment, would be prepared by TAC for presentation to the Co-sponsors. In the latter case, impact assessment would have competed with other TAC activities as the programme and budget were formed. Given that the two options will, in any case, be facing the same amount of limited funds, which of the two leads to the most efficient use of funds available to the CGIAR depends on which structure best matches priorities with funding.

A related consideration is cost of operation. The cost of each option would be roughly the same initially, but might ultimately be lower for the TAC Standing Committee case, as the current IAEG members rotated off and were not replaced. Costs of professional expertise would remain roughly the same as savings from fewer TAC members would be offset by added spending for more consultants. Even so, given the heavier reliance on consultants in the TAC Standing Committee approach, professional expertise could be specifically selected for the tasks at hand. For administrative and logistical costs, over any longer period of time--during which the talents of the individuals managing the two Secretariats could be expected to balance out--the combined approach might be expected to be less costly than the two-Secretariat approach. The cost advantage, therefore, seems to favour the TAC Standing Committee approach, but it is not clear by how much. Too, the Standing Committee approach does simplify the CGIAR's organogram.

The two situations are similar in the sense of reporting to the Group. In the Independent TAC Panel case, it is the Chair of that body who would report to the Group, with commentary from TAC, while in the TAC Standing Committee case it could be either the Chair of TAC or the Chair of the Committee reporting to the Group. A question here is whether a standing committee chair would get the same hearing and have the same visibility with the Group and elsewhere as would an independent panel chair.

Finally, there is the question of access to expertise in evaluation. In the case of the Panel, its three members would be chosen because of expertise in evaluation and consultants would be a possibility. In the case of the Standing Committee option, the Chair of SCOIE would be chosen because of expertise in evaluation and there would be heavier reliance on long- and short-term consultants. Three questions emerge. Will one or the other approach better promote the strengthening of an evaluation culture within the CGIAR? Will the two approaches differ in terms of the quality of expertise available to the CGIAR, the one offering a stronger affiliation and greater visibility and the other offering greater flexibility? Given roughly similar access to expertise, would differences in continuity favour one approach over the other?

In reviewing the Independent TAC Panel approach it is evident that it is much like the current approach. Its significant difference is that the Chair of the Panel is an *ex-officio* member of TAC, favouring communication with TAC as compared with the current situation. Communication could be further enhanced were a TAC member, say the Chair of the Standing Committee on Priorities and Strategies, made an *ex-officio* member of the Panel.

## Conclusions

In considering options consistent with SRP and CC recommendations, the IAEG emphasizes the importance of an independent impact evaluation function and the visibility of that function, hence favours the Independent TAC Panel approach. The IAEG recognizes the importance of the interactions between impact and priorities and believes that the needed communication can be achieved through the presence of the Independent Panel Chair on TAC as an *ex-officio* member, with the potential for the chair of TAC's Standing Committee on Priorities and Strategies becoming an *ex-officio* member of the Independent Panel.

TAC emphasizes the absence of "moral hazard" or conflict of interest, that cost savings could be important (perhaps financially and certainly in terms of perceptions about the System's concerns for efficiency), that closer communication will be more important in the near future than in the past, and TAC's preference for a structure favouring common priority setting across all relevant activities. TAC, therefore, favours the TAC Standing Committee approach.

The IAEG and TAC believe that both options meet the spirit of the SRP proposal and combine to recommend that the Co-sponsors and the Group give the issue the consideration it merits and make an appropriate decision for the System.

Table 1. Two Options for TAC-IAEG Integration

OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS	TAC STANDING COMMITTEE (TSC)	INDEPENDENT TAC PANEL (ITP)
Selection of Members and Access to Secretariat	All TSC members are TAC members; Chair recommended by Co-sponsors; Would rely more on consultants for evaluation expertise; One secretariat with specialized evaluation expertise available.	Members recommended by Co-sponsors for their evaluation expertise; Chair would be a member of TAC. Additional TAC membership on ITP would be possible; but with majority of ITP members being directly recommended by Co-sponsors; Two distinct but integrated secretariats.
Planning and Selection of Themes	As in the other standing committees of TAC, decisions concerning activities, themes, etc., would be decided by TAC on the basis of the recommendations of the TSC. There could be cross memberships on both TAC's SCOPAS and SCOER. Studies done by consultants	The ITP would address any theme that it and CG Members deem important, given, of course, appropriate consultation with the rest of TAC, CG Secretariat, the Group; Joint planning activities would exist to ensure responsiveness to the other needs of TAC related to evaluations for planning purposes; and external reviews.
Reporting and Diffusion of Results	Results of TSC activities would first be discussed with TAC to develop a TAC statement, as in the case of the other standing committees. Results could be presented to the Group by either the TAC chair or the chair of the TSC.	In order to ensure independence, the final decisions on what is said, how it is said, and where it is said would be in the hands of the ITP. Thus, there would be direct reporting to the Group with TAC commentary attached if so desired by TAC at large.
Access to Resources	TAC would present a consolidated budget and work plan, including impact assessment.	The ITP would present a separate budget for approval by the Co-sponsors; Mutually agreed upon guidelines for budget submissions to the co-sponsors would help to coordinate ITP and TAC budget requests.

## **CGIAR Genetic Resources Policy Committee**

### **proposed new**

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COMPOSITION**

### **Introduction**

The Genetic Resources Policy Committee (GRPC) was established at International Centres Week, 1994, with the objectives of keeping CGIAR members and Centres abreast of developments in genetic resources policy and advising them on necessary action. The Consultative Council, at its meeting in Brussels in January 1999, considered that there was still a need for such a committee and recommended to the CGIAR that it be retained. However, it was felt that the terms of reference of the GRPC and its composition needed to be re-examined. The Director General of IPGRI was requested to review these matters, in consultation with the GRPC and other stakeholders, and to recommend any changes needed for the consideration of the CGIAR at the Mid-term Meeting, Beijing, May 1999.

The terms of reference and composition presented below have been developed in response to the request of the Consultative Council. They are based on the experience of the past four years as well as on feedback from many stakeholders.

There is broad agreement among stakeholders that the GRPC should continue to have general oversight responsibility for policy, focusing on political, legal and ethical aspects of genetic resources at the system level. The Committee would thus continue to recommend the broad policy framework within which individual Centres and the System-wide Genetic Resources Programme (SGRP) operate. The SGRP will provide technical advice and backstopping to the GRPC. It was widely agreed that specific responsibility for oversight and governance of the SGRP's strategy, programme and management should be vested in the Board of Trustees of IPGRI, the SGRP's Convening Centre. It is proposed that the Director General of IPGRI serve as an *ex-officio* member of the Committee. The Director General is the Programme Leader of SGRP and an *ex-officio* member of both the IPGRI Board of Trustees and the GRPC and thus would help to ensure the necessary liaison between these groups.

Given the sensitivity and significance of many of the issues the GRPC is likely to consider, it is widely, although not unanimously, felt that the Committee should include representatives of the major CGIAR stakeholder groups.

### **Proposed Terms of Reference**

The GRPC will report to the CGIAR as a whole on policy issues relating to genetic resources. In carrying out its duties, the Committee will consult with appropriate CGIAR Committees and stakeholder groups as needed.

In particular the GRPC will:

- 1) monitor and analyze policy developments concerning genetic resources, focusing on political, legal and ethical issues, at the national level and in relevant international fora, and will recommend appropriate policy positions and action to the CGIAR.
- 2) monitor and analyze policy, legal and ethical developments within the CGIAR relating to genetic resources and will recommend action as necessary;
- 3) monitor the implementation of the agreements that placed the CGIAR germplasm collections within the International Network of *Ex Situ* Collections, under the auspices of FAO. Where necessary, the Committee will also assist in the interpretation of the agreements and propose any necessary changes;
- 4) keep developments in intellectual property protection under review and will advise the CGIAR on the further modification and implementation of its IPR guiding principles and related policies.

### **Proposed Composition**

Chair – to be appointed by the Chair of the CGIAR

FAO Representative (appointed by FAO)

NGO representative (appointed by the CGIAR Chair on advice of the NGO Committee)

Private Sector representative (appointed by the CGIAR Chair on advice of the Private Sector Committee)

NARS representative (appointed by the NARS Secretariat)

TAC member (appointed by TAC)

Board Chair (appointed by CBC)

2 Centre Directors (appointed by CDC)

Director General of IPGRI (Secretary to the Committee)

## **Evaluation Processes (System Review Recommendation 14) <sup>4</sup>**

### **IMPROVING EVALUATION AND REVIEW PROCESSES**

#### **Background <sup>5</sup>**

The System Review Panel (SRP), in Chapter 14 of its report and in its Recommendation 14 (R14), laid out ideas about how the CGIAR's review processes could be made more efficient. The theme was taken up by the Consultative Council, which asked the TAC to address the various issues. TAC, the CGIAR Secretariat, and the IAEG developed the discussion that follows after some interaction with Centres and Members. It identifies opportunities for improving the System's review processes, building on innovations that have been reshaping those processes over the past three years and others that are now being introduced. Much of this recent change responds effectively to the concerns of the SRP, the Members, and the Centres. The effect of these innovations and of others to come has been to provide more valuable information on Centres' performance and impact. Improved review processes will, in turn, lead to more investment in this function and hence to better decision making within the CGIAR.

*The Recommendations:* The SRP's R14 contained six sub-recommendations. The first described the need to "establish a task force, including TAC and Centre Directors, for improving the efficiency of the evaluation processes". The second sub-recommendation counsels a reduction in the scope and duration of the EPMRs to one week while the third recommends major review workshops as an improvement to the review process, especially through reducing the amount of time in EPMRs and CCERs. The fourth and fifth sub-recommendations relate to compensation to Centres for reviews of projects on restricted funding and to greater attention to reviews of Board governance. The sixth pertains to the IAEG and the need for evaluations of impact. Additional material is found in Chapter 14 of the SRP Report.

For purposes of the present discussion, it is useful to relate the various terms being used--assessments, evaluations, and reviews--to particular activities. While the professional literature tends to use evaluation as a generic term including assessments and reviews, that has not been the case in the CGIAR. For the convenience of the CGIAR reader, therefore, we have adopted the following convention for this report: evaluation applies to estimating impact; review applies to treatments of current practice and opportunities for improvement; assessments apply to longer-term forecasts. To cover the three, we use the term, 'studies'.

Returning to the SRP in more general terms, its report recognized that the System needs three main perspectives: (1) evaluation of past activities and their impacts to help justify use of resources and to make better decisions for future allocations of resources; (2) monitoring and review of on-going activities to help guide and make changes in a given planning period; and (3) assessment of what is likely to happen in the external environment to help guide planning and decisions for the future.

In setting forth its Recommendation 14 to streamline evaluation processes, the SRP confirmed that all three perspectives are needed and did not recommend that any of the current studies be eliminated. Rather, the SRP suggested that there might be ways to streamline the studies and to bring them together more synergistically. In what follows, we have assumed that there is a rough satisfaction with the output of the current processes, except for concerns noted below, and have emphasized, but not exclusively, the cost side of the current approach.

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<sup>4</sup> Summary Report of the CGIAR Consultative Council Meeting, January 27-28, 1999 Brussels

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that several commentaries on the System's approaches to reviews and evaluation are available. Among the most recent are TAC/CGIAR Secretariat, 1994, "Designing the New CGIAR Review Process"; TAC/CGIAR Secretariat, 1995, "Improving the Quality and Consistency of the CGIAR's External Centre Reviews", Doc. ICW/95/11; and Anderson and Dalrymple, March 1999, "The World Bank, The Grant Program, and the CGIAR, A Retrospective Review", Chapter 4, World Bank OED Working Paper Series No. 1, March 1999.

The discussion focuses first on opportunities for improving the efficiency of assessments, evaluations, and reviews--including direct consideration of some SRP sub-recommendations, progress on various fronts, and innovations being introduced--followed by conclusions for the Group's consideration.

### **Opportunities for Efficiencies**

Members and Centres are the most important clients for System-level assessments, evaluations, and reviews. Investment in such studies could be reduced dramatically, perhaps to zero, were the information not regarded as valuable. That value imposes a constraint on how much 'streamlining' is desirable. Nonetheless, the System is best served by thinking in terms of making studies more efficient--i.e. by producing more useful information for the same or lower cost--an aim that will be the underlying theme of this discussion. It is essential to recognize that the value of such studies is a function of how much is invested in them by Members and Centres. Against this background and set of assumptions, the discussion which follows looks at how the direct output of reviews can be maintained or increased while reducing their direct and indirect costs (e.g., such unaccounted Centre costs as staff time).

While valuing their output, in the past both Members and Centres have expressed concerns about the studies discussed here. Centre concerns have focused on the number of reviews, their direct and indirect costs, and their consistency from one to the next. On the number of reviews, those required by the System have increased little over the last decade while those required by Members have increased with the heightened importance of restricted funding. Members have stressed the issues of the timeliness of reviews, of the need for emphasis on strategic considerations, and of attention to Centre complaints. Even so, it is generally agreed that high quality, timely, independent examinations of Centres' science, Management, and governance are indispensable components of a healthy CGIAR. Moreover, most Members are convinced of the importance of fostering an evaluation/review culture within the CGIAR, in particular within the Centres. We respond to all of these concerns and, we believe, to those of the SRP in the analysis that follows.

Total annual costs of studies mandated by the System (budgets for IAEG and the portion of CGIAR Secretariat and TAC allocated to such studies, Centre direct costs and an equal amount for indirect costs) are estimated to be less than one percent of the CGIAR's annual budget. Is that too high? Not when compared with what others invest--the World Bank spends on the order of 1.5% of its administrative budget on evaluation--but too high if there are ways to gain efficiencies.

Seven major types of assessments, evaluations, and reviews are currently undertaken on behalf of the System:

- impact evaluations;
- external programme and management reviews (EPMRs);
- stripe reviews;
- Systemwide reviews;
- special topic reviews;
- annual and medium-term plan and budget reviews; and
- assessments of the external environment.

All aim at improving the quality of decision making in the System. As well, some have accountability as an additional motivating consideration and most offer the possibility for learning through feedback on performance. Our emphasis here is on the contribution to decision making.

*Impact Evaluation:* While the SRP had little to say in Recommendation 14 about impact evaluation, the TAC/IAEG paper, "Future Relationships Between IAEG and TAC" spells out some considerations in the evolution of IAEG and its work. Summarising, one challenge is to expand the scope of impact assessment at the Centre level, to make it more useful by improving comparability from one Centre or undertaking to another, and to make it more cost effective through the identification and diffusion of best practices. Related to this, Members require more evaluation at the System level, in turn heightening the need for more comparability among Centre impact studies. It is clear that most impact evaluation must be done by Centres and the latter are dedicating ever-increasing energies to the task. As is evident here, IAEG's role at the Centre level is that of facilitator.

Among its current efforts, IAEG is working on 'best practice' approaches. It has found that available methodologies are inadequate for most evaluations not directly associated with productivity increasing outputs--e.g., such as outputs for natural resource sustainability and for capacity strengthening--and that this limits the scope of evaluations by Centres. This is not a new problem and developing such methodologies is a challenge not only for the CGIAR, but for many others as well; IAEG is interacting with many specialists, including those from Centres. On another front, IAEG is sponsoring a poverty-impact initiative spearheaded by IFPRI which, it is believed, will help increase effectiveness in evaluations of the impact of CGIAR outputs directly on poverty alleviation. In a different vein, and in the immediate future, IAEG believes that the introduction of the logframe approach will make it easier to set up impact evaluation guidelines and criteria within Centres and thus contribute to an evaluation culture.

Certainly IAEG's efforts will lead to lower costs and to better output from evaluation. Simultaneously, improvements will lead to more such studies, as both the disposition to produce them and the demand for them increases. It seems likely, then, that total costs for impact evaluation will actually increase while the cost per unit of useful information for decision making will decrease.

EPMRs: These are the most costly of the reviews, up to \$300,000 of direct costs per review with perhaps an equal amount in Centre indirect costs plus the added costs of relevant portions of the CGIAR Secretariat and TAC budgets. Most of the effort is directed to assessing the relevance and quality of Centre science, i.e., is the right science being used and is it being done well? As currently conducted, the reviews require a good deal of time, but few of those experienced with the process believe that, with the current paradigm and given the complexity of Centre work and its geographic scope, significant reductions in time could be achieved without significant reductions in utility. It is these reviews on which the SRP focused most of its attention.

The process followed in EPMRs is well known to the Group and the reviews, on balance, have been of good quality and their results have been quite useful. Nonetheless, there are challenges of various kinds. The joint CGIAR Secretariat/TAC paper submitted to the Group at ICW95 addressed most of these and steps have been taken to implement solutions to the more important issues. In some cases, good progress has been made and concerns are abating. This seems to be the case in those parts of the reviews that deal with finance, governance, and management, where, since 1996, the similarity among Centres in these areas has made it possible to think in terms of drawing reviewers from a small cadre of knowledgeable specialists. Each has accumulated experience across several Centres, and is familiar with CGIAR requirements and standards, contributing to more consistency from one review to the next. As well, the EPMRs include members with experience in the management of research, complementing the skills of panelists who are management specialists. Where the strategy has been followed (not in all recent reviews), the results have improved over those of past practice. We believe that these changes coupled with the opportunities through CCERs (discussed below) and the implementation of the logframe will reduce notably the concern for consistency related to the EPMRs.

Progress towards efficiencies has been more difficult in that part of the reviews focused on science. Indeed, without a change in the evaluation paradigm, that effort is destined to be made more difficult, costly, and disruptive by the increasing complexity of Centre science with its trend toward greater specialization. Two other themes are pertinent here. One is that the trend encourages more attention to the importance of strengthening an evaluation culture within Centres. The second is that the trend makes it ever less likely that Centre Boards and Management will have, within their own ranks, the experience to adequately assess Centre science.

The 1995 TAC/CGIAR Secretariat paper noted these concerns and advocated the use of Centre commissioned external reviews (CCERs) as an approach that could help Boards and Management in the exercise of their functions, contribute to strengthening an evaluation culture, and could, under defined conditions, substitute for much of what is currently being done through EPMRs. The CGIAR Secretariat and TAC remain convinced of the efficacy of the approach. We note that it is frequently utilized by other research institutions. We believe that, under defined conditions, such reviews could satisfy the Group's needs so as to reduce the EPMR requirements for science to those of a review of the process, much like the review of financial audits. This is not, however, an argument for reduced costs. Direct costs to Centres, while reoriented, would change little, and indirect costs, specifically staff

time in reviews and associated disruptions, would be more favourably compensated through internal learning and new access to partnerships. In addition, of course, there are the advantages noted earlier.

Many, perhaps most, Centres have used some form of Centre-managed reviews. Especially over the past two years EPMR panels have examined such reviews and have found few that comply with the established criteria (those endorsed at ICW95 and reaffirmed in a 1998 TAC note); hence there have been few cases in which panels can stipulate that the science of a particular programme needs no further review by the EPMR. Clearly, not all Centre-managed reviews useful to Centres will aim at the questions that bear directly on the relevance and quality of science, nor should they. Most emphasize the planning of research rather than the research activity itself. They contribute, then, to that part of the EPMRs dealing with management and governance, but only marginally to the part dealing with science.

If the recent progress with CCERs has been less than satisfactory, what about the future with its greater complexity? First, note that Centres have had little time to adjust to the criteria set out at ICW95. We believe many are doing so now. Second, EPMR panels need to see more clearly how to bring the CCERs into their work. Newly framed procedures for TAC's Standing Committee on External Reviews (SCOER) and a newly staffed TAC Secretariat will contribute much to that. As for motivating the Centres, pragmatic considerations will be important. With the right incentives, and Members can play a pivotal role here, we believe that CCERs will come to dominate the review of science, with the attendant gains described earlier.

Beyond CCERs, EPMRs can be streamlined to some degree by increasing communication through electronic means, perhaps rebalancing the weight given to the various phases of the reviews, encouraging the development of strategic plans that can replace some of the work done by review panels, reassessing the extent to which other reviews--including those directed by Members--can be incorporated in the EPMR process, and implementing the logframe. TAC's SCOER will be looking into these options in upcoming reviews.

As for the SRP's recommendation that week-long sessions with specialists should replace major portions of the EPMRs, TAC is not convinced that such sessions could serve the CGIAR's review requirements as well as would effective CCERs or, indeed, as well as do the current EPMRs. As the SRP says, however, they could well lead to more useful interaction among Centre specialists and to more partnerships with the outside experts, thereby increasing efficiency in other dimensions. TAC proposes to assess Centre interest in such events. Should such sessions develop, the experience would provide the basis for assessing their potential for replacing major portions of the EPMRs. As for the recommendation that EPMRs be reduced to one week, in the absence of fuller use of CCERs--even extending their use to finance, governance, and management--or a notable reduction in what Members require to satisfy their decision making and due diligence needs, the suggestion simply runs counter to experience.

In brief, an expanded role for CCERs along with the other elements noted above is envisioned. With that, EPMRs can be more narrowly focused, with emphasis on audits of the processes underway at the Centre level, permitting more attention to the strategic issues that relate Centre work to the System's goals. The great advantage of emphasizing CCERs is that, especially in the future with its promise of greater complexity, the quality and timeliness of evaluation results can be maintained and improved, with gains to Member and Centre decision making while enhancing an evaluation culture.

Stripe Reviews: These are undertaken after discussion within TAC and with Members and Centres. The SRP did not indicate that it found opportunities for increased efficiency here. Even so, TAC aims to add to their utility and believes that a continuing attention to the terms of reference, the selection of consultants, and reliance on synergies through relevant Centre CCERs and other reviews will be advantageous. A stripe review is underway at this time on the ecoregional approach to research, especially as it relates to the Systemwide Programmes employing such an approach. (Rather than a review of each of the SWPs featuring the approach, it is a review of the approach itself--hence a stripe review--as practised by a sub-set of all of the programmes with such work.)

Systemwide Programme Reviews: Only one such review has been undertaken, so the SRP's concerns for streamlining have little to do with the experience on SWPs. That first review, of the Systemwide

Genetic Resources Programme (SGRP), was recently concluded to good effect with a five-person team and TAC is working with SGRP to move forward some of its recommendations.

Systemwide reviews, whether thematic or geographic, provide essential additional insights into the health of the System's science, beyond those obtained from Centre-level reviews. Part of the earlier proposals for improving efficiency also applies to them. But TAC sees an important opportunity at the interface between these 'horizontal' reviews and 'vertical' reviews like the EPMRs. In most cases, planning for these reviews is carried out well ahead of their initiation. This encourages efforts to explore how far the objectives of the Systemwide reviews and the Centre reviews can be combined, duplication of effort avoided, and resources saved. Thus, for example, the upcoming EPMRs of CIAT and CIP could build on information already available from those Centres from two Systemwide reviews (one now underway on programmes with an ecoregional approach and the other on CGIAR activities in LAC) which will have immediately preceded the two EPMRs.

Special Reviews: The review panels dealing with Biotechnology and Intellectual Property Rights are examples of the power of special topic reviews. There is little evidence that the SRP was concerned about streamlining these reviews. The ideas for improving Stripe Reviews are applicable here, especially those resting on synergies. Again, a constructive integration of the results from other reviews will add to efficiency.

Monitoring Annual and Mid-Term Plans: Recent changes, initiated by the CGIAR Secretariat and TAC in 1996 and continuing through 1999, have notably simplified the annual and medium-term planning and budgeting processes, reducing the workload of all those involved by focusing on that information thought to be critically important to Member and Group decision making while meeting programmatic and fiduciary needs. In such reviews, the CGIAR Secretariat concentrates on the financial implications of Centre plans for the System, individually and aggregated across all Centres. TAC, meanwhile, monitors the research agendas proposed through such plans to assure their congruence with agendas endorsed by the Group. Where individual Centres propose important programmatic changes, TAC assesses the justifications offered for their consistency with System goals. Finally, TAC brings to the attention of the Finance Committee and the Group the degree of congruency between Centre plans in the aggregate with what the Group had endorsed earlier. We believe, and think the Centres concur, that there is little room for further efficiencies in this arena, but, of course, we remain sensitive to Centre suggestions about ways to improve the process.

Assessing the External Environment: This is a crucial step in decision making, as changes in environments over which the CGIAR has little influence can have singularly important implications for CGIAR priority setting. This theme is covered in some detail in TAC's paper on its future role. Suffice it to say here that, in the 1997 CGIAR Priorities and Strategies paper, TAC identified five such environments, has work underway to reaffirm or modify the five, and has framed a plan for expeditiously staying abreast of changes in such environments.

On the last, and briefly (see TAC's paper on *TAC's Proposed Role, Modus Operandi and Composition*) TAC will introduce this year an approach whose purpose is to foster broader access to experts (or visionaries, to use an expression much in evidence in the SRP report) in each of the major environments with which the CGIAR must be concerned, some of which are external to the System. Three aspects of those environments are important: what is 'driving' the environment, what is likely to happen within it, and what are the implications for the CGIAR. TAC sees advantage in adding specialized experts to its own contribution to the System's understanding of the first two and sees itself and others within the System as responsible for the third. The last, then, will be principally reflected in strategic and medium-term plans. TAC believes that this approach will go far towards keeping the System in touch with the important dimensions of its external environment as well as offering promising new insights into environments the System seeks to influence. As TAC and the System acquire experience with this approach, gains in efficiency can be expected.

Member Commissioned Reviews: Finally, while not System-mandated reviews, consideration should be given to reviews commissioned by individual Members and focused on projects financed through restricted funding. Given the rising proportion of CGIAR financing of a restricted nature, it is likely that this class of reviews will rise in importance. Virtually no attention has yet been paid to how the Members' project reviews might be worked effectively into the overall review process. One possible reason is that their use might compromise the traditional criterion of independence. Nevertheless,

given their growing presence, the use of this information merits careful attention. Doing so would require some changes in the timing and modus operandi of EPMRs, but the gains might well be worthwhile. TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat will explore the idea on a trial basis. In any case, TAC and the CGIAR Secretariat remain convinced that such reviews should be fully funded.

### Concluding Remarks

The previous discussion has examined the work on System-level assessment, evaluation, and reviews. Except for CCERs and (briefly) reviews in conjunction with restricted funding, such studies done by Centres for their own purposes are not treated. The discussion assumes that System-level needs are largely being fulfilled by the output of the current processes, but with some concern about the scope of impact evaluation and the assessment of the external environment along with a major emphasis on efficiency.

Strategies for making such studies more efficient were emphasized. Most of these relate to EPMRs, especially to the part related to the relevance and quality of science, and feature CCERs as vehicles for improving reviews and for furthering the effort to develop an evaluation culture within the CGIAR. It was noted that, in the absence of a change in paradigm, the growing complexity of science will make reviews even more difficult in the future. Again, effective CCERs were identified as the way forward. Broadly speaking, much has been done over the past three years to make more effective the finance, governance, and management portion of EPMRs. Other steps remain to be taken, including more emphasis on synergies among reviews and, importantly, a new approach to assessing environments of major importance to the System. Comments on these improvements were included in the discussion.

List of recommended actions for the Group:

1. Set up a review and evaluation task force--led by TAC with members drawn from TAC, IAEG, CGIAR Secretariat, CBC, CDC, and Members of the Group--for a period of three years to identify and monitor the effect of innovations aimed at improving the efficiency of the overall process of review and evaluation. [Largely R 14(a) of the SRP report.]
2. Reaffirmation by the Group of the desirability of strengthening the evaluation culture within the CGIAR.
3. Endorse renewed efforts by the Centres to ensure that CCERs meet EPMR requirements as closely as possible, and by TAC and EPMR panels to ensure that CCER results are incorporated into EPMRs as fully as possible.

Meanwhile, the CGIAR Secretariat, IAEG, and TAC will:

1. introduce in 1999, in conjunction with TAC 77, a panel of experts to assess likely changes in one of the major environments identified by TAC;
2. seek out the potential synergies thought to be present among reviews and implement actions to realize their potential;
3. pursue the other avenues discussed above that seem to offer the possibility of making the review and evaluation process more efficient;
4. subject to a favourable response from Centres, organize and assess the value of an inter-centre workshop before ICW 2000 [a portion of SRP report R.14(c)];
5. explore, on a trial basis, the possibility of incorporating special project reviews conducted by Members into the overall review process.

In conclusion, this paper has largely endorsed SRP Recommendation 14(a) and fully endorsed 14(d). Recommendation 14(c) has been partially endorsed subject to the concurrence of the Centres.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Recommendation 14(f) has been treated in the paper on Future Relationship between IAEG and TAC.