

MTM99 Parallel Session II: External Review of ILRI

27 May 1999

Chair: Bongiwe Njobe-Mbuli

Rapporteur: Teresa Fogelberg

Secretary: Pammi Sachdeva

Purpose

The External Review report (EPMR) of ILRI was considered in parallel session II on Thursday May 27 by an Ad-hoc Committee of interested CGIAR Members and other participants. The Committee's report is submitted **for information** and discussion to the CGIAR.

Process

Participants had received the First EPMR report of ILRI, along with the response of the Center to the review report, the TAC commentary, and the transmittal letter forwarding the report to the CGIAR Chair (ref. Doc. No. SDR/TAC:IAR/99/3).

About 80 participants attended the meeting, and the discussion was lengthy, rich and extensive. It was based on a presentation of the review report's conclusions and recommendations by the Panel Chair (Samuel Jutzi), response by Center representatives (Neville Clarke, Board Chair, and Hank Fitzhugh, Director General), and comments by Don Winkelmann, TAC Chair. The Panel Chair, Center representatives, and TAC Chair responded to comments and questions. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Session Chair summarized the conclusions and recommendations of the Ad-hoc Committee.

Comments and Issues

The Ad-hoc Committee greatly appreciated the review Panels' constructively critical, clear, and penetrating assessment of ILRI's accomplishments and progress since the Center was founded in 1995. It also commended ILRI's Board and Management for having successfully integrated the former ILCA and ILRAD into a unified Center--ILRI--that is now well positioned to contribute significantly to the CGIAR's global research agenda in livestock research. Rather than summarizing the extensive discussion that took place in parallel session II, the Committee's main comments and suggestions on key aspects are summarized below.

1. Vision, Strategy and Priorities. The Ad-hoc Committee was pleased that in response to the review report the Center has initiated a strategic planning process. This will help ILRI respond to the rapid changes taking place in the global research environment and the opportunities now offered by significant advances in science, particularly animal and human genomics, and biotechnology. The redefining of ILRI's long-term vision and strategy will enable it to re-position its contribution to international research and policy making in livestock and related areas. It should then assess the implications of the new strategy on the Center's research program, particularly its balance and focus; re-examine the relative emphasis on Africa and Asia; and strengthen the link between strategy, priorities, and resource allocation. The Committee is pleased that ILRI is planning to do this in close collaboration with various stakeholders, both external partners and its own staff.
2. Research Focus and Quality. ILRI's strategic research on animal health is very promising, and deserves adequate financial support; but there is need for re-examining the

relevance and feasibility of vaccine development for trypanosomosis. The Center's research on production systems and animal nutrition, the integrated ruminant nutrition management program proposed by the Panel, and the Center's research on system science and policy have large potential benefits as well. These and other ILRI programs need to focus more sharply on areas of high comparative advantage, and on programs that address the needs of marginal farmers. The research focus should be determined in the context of current trends in livestock research and development, should utilize cutting-edge knowledge of natural resources management research, and should more clearly address the Center's goals of food security and poverty alleviation. ILRI's research would also benefit from greater inputs from non-economics social scientists, both on ILRI staff and in its partner institutions. The Ad-hoc Committee notes that the Center is planning to give greater attention to issues of research quality, critical mass, and impact; as well to the cost-effectiveness of research undertaken at ILRI's campus in Ethiopia, as recommended by the review Panel.

3. Institutional Governance, Leadership and Restructuring. The Committee noted the Panel's concerns and recommendations on these important topics, including Board-Management relations. It was satisfied that ILRI Board and Management are responding promptly to the EPMR Panel's recommendations on various aspects of institutional governance, leadership, Board-Management relations, and organizational structure. It expects that the research program structure will be adjusted further once the new strategy has been determined.

4. Partnerships, and role in the System-wide Livestock Program. The Ad-hoc Committee is pleased that ILRI has developed a number of constructive partnerships with advanced research institutes in developed countries and with the NARS of many developing countries. Its role as convener of the System-wide Livestock Program is also very important, but has at times been problematic. This needs to be addressed. The Committee also noted that this program has suffered from insufficient funding. It considers it important that the program be fully funded; and that the Center seek full recovery of an adequate level of overhead costs, not only for the SLP but also for other restricted-funded projects at ILRI.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Ad-hoc Committee:

- **Thanked** the Panel for an outstanding report that is comprehensive, analytical, constructively critical, and strategic.
- **Endorsed** most of the Panel's recommendations, and TAC's comments.
- **Commended** the preliminary response by the Center Board and Management to the review report, and the follow-up actions being taken, particularly with respect to strategic planning for the next 10 years---which will help address questions of program priorities, focus and balance, as well as issues of allocation of resources to different regions and research thrusts.
- **Suggested** that ILRI Management increase its communication with CGIAR members on the results of studies on such issues as the feasibility of vaccine development for trypanosomosis, production systems research with a market-orientation, and biotechnology, IPR, bio-safety and bio-ethics; and that the Center arrive at more specific answers to strategic and program questions on the basis of an intensive dialogue with various key actors engaged in livestock research and development.
- **Recommended** that by October 1999 ILRI's Board and Management prepare a brief but substantive report on progress in implementing the recommendations of the EPMR Panel and the Ad-hoc Committee; and make it available for information to CGIAR members attending ICW99.
- **Encouraged** CGIAR investors to continue to strongly support ILRI's work in livestock research.
- **Suggested** that lessons be drawn for the CGIAR system from ILRI's experience in two areas:
 - the consolidation of ILCA and ILRAD into one Center (ILRI); and
 - Board-Management relations, including the use of "Joint Board-Management Ad-Hoc Committees" on strategic and high-priority issues facing the Center.