



Independent
Science and
Partnership
Council

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Documenting the impact of under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research

Email expressions of interest to: Tim Kelley (timothy.kelley@fao.org) cc-ed to Ira Vater (ira.vater@fao.org) no later than 11.59pm CET, Friday 7th August 2015

Background

The CGIAR Independent Science and Partnership Council's Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) is inviting expressions of interest (Eoi) for *ex post* impact assessments (IAs) of under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research. Topics for IAs may cover the full range perceived 'under-evaluated areas of CG research', which includes **irrigation & water management, livestock, agroforestry, biodiversity, policy and social science and natural resource management (NRM)**. SPIA is particularly interested in IA proposals examining past CGIAR research outputs in these domains for which there are claims, or evidence – anecdotal or otherwise – of significant outcomes but which are not yet well substantiated. Cases where there is good potential for measuring impacts of more recent innovations will also be considered.

Researchers from CGIAR Centers as well as academic institutions are invited to submit an **Eoi by 7th August 2015**. These should be no more than 5 pages in length and adhere to the submission guidelines outlined below. Eois will be reviewed by end of August/early September, and a subset of Eois will then be requested to submit **full proposals by 16th October 2015**. Final selection decisions will be made in late November. While Eois and proposals should clearly demonstrate links to CGIAR research outputs, CGIAR scientists do not necessarily need to be a part of the IA team, though such collaborations are encouraged. The lead entity can be a CGIAR Center, a university/research institute, or an NGO.

SPIA hopes to fund 3 to 5 impact assessment studies with values of \$100,000 - \$200,000 USD each. While studies may run beyond June 2017, SPIA funding must be utilized before this period. We will give preference to proposals that provide co-financing to the study.

Questions on this call may be directed to timothy.kelley@fao.org.

Rationale for the call

There is currently a dearth of evidence of impact of CGIAR research outputs in major areas of CGIAR investment, spanning research domains such as irrigation and water management, livestock management, agroforestry, biodiversity, social science & policy and NRM. Indeed, the vast majority of the CGIAR studies that have attempted to document the impact of agricultural research have focused on crop germplasm improvement. One of the objectives of SPIA's [Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR \(SIAC\) program](#) is to address the gap in evidence on outcomes and impacts of these under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research.

For example, CGIAR has invested an estimated \$800 million USD in irrigation and water management research over the past 25 years (Merrey, 2014). The total value of investments in policy-oriented research (since the inception of the CGIAR) was estimated in 2006 to be \$800 million USD, and as high as \$2.5 billion USD if one used a broader definition of policy research (Raitzer and Ryan, 2008). Despite these major investments here, and across a number of other research domains, there have been relatively few studies that have attempted to assess the impact of this investment or to quantify the benefits derived in these areas. The need for greater attention to *ex post* IA in at least one under-evaluated area of CGIAR research is borne out by a recent study commissioned by SPIA examining the documented impact of CGIAR investments in irrigation and water management. Among other findings, [the review](#) confirmed that the CGIAR has substantially underinvested in economic, social, and environmental IAs. At the same time, the review identified a number of promising water management programs and projects linked to past CGIAR research on irrigation and water management that merited serious consideration for undertaking future impact assessments on. The report also highlighted the need for methodological innovation, i.e. developing credible, rigorous approaches in IAs and documenting more than simply the economic impacts of water management research i.e. documenting social and environmental impacts.

However, there remains a significant demand from key stakeholders for evidence of impact of these investments, despite challenges such as the lack of baseline data, or the difficulties of contribution / attribution analyses which make impact assessments in these research domains particularly difficult to tackle.

This call for proposals aims to address the evidence gap by encouraging new, high-quality IAs in under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research that rigorously apply existing methods, or that offer new approaches (possibly brought from other fields of applied research) that can help improve the quality of the evidence base.

Scope of the call

Successful studies will document the adoption and the direct impacts of CGIAR research (e.g. reduced water usage for irrigation or improved yield), and where possible, poverty, social and environmental impacts of these innovations. Proposals that go beyond economic impacts, and address the significant gap in evidence on poverty, social and environmental impacts will be given priority. Data on environmental impacts is particularly important as many of the under-evaluated research innovations fall in the NRM domain, and the CGIAR would like to be able to document and claim impacts related to the CGIAR System-Level Outcome on improved natural resource systems and ecosystem services.

Higher priority will be given to those IAs that document the impact(s) of widely-disseminated research innovations. The [review of water management research IAs](#) identified a number of promising programs and projects for future impact assessments (e.g. Zero Tillage, Challenge Program on Water and Food, Asian large-scale irrigation), and SPIA expects researchers submitting proposals on water management research to use this review to guide choice of research topics.

SPIA will also consider IAs of more recent innovations that have not been widely-adopted (pre- or early stage adoption), and the research team should make an explicit case for why an IA of the innovation is appropriate at this point in time and how it will add to the body of evidence in the future.

It is recognized that the breadth of innovation areas (policies and institutions, technologies, management practices); the adoption domain (geographic spread, stage in adoption cycle etc.); and indicators of impact (economic, environmental, poverty, social etc.) will require a combination of strategies and IA methodological approaches as the context warrants. SPIA is looking for appropriateness in choice of research design and methods, rather than simply methodological novelty or a narrowly defined 'gold standard'. Some of the most relevant and important contributions of the CGIAR in the water management research domain has been in shifting the way stakeholders think about management of this resource (e.g. water accounting, and map of water supply and demand). Such International Public Goods (IPGs) may have had substantial influence, but not yet have translated into on-the-ground impacts.

EoIs and proposals should identify, where appropriate, existing sources of data that the IA will draw upon.

Submission guidelines

The application procedure is organised as a two-stage process. In the first stage, we solicit expressions of interest (EoI) that should be sent in electronic format by **11.59 pm CET, Friday 7th August 2015** to Tim Kelley, (timothy.kelley@fao.org) with a copy to Ira Vater (ira.vater@fao.org).

Expressions of interest must **not exceed 5 pages** in length and should contain the following information:

- Title of the proposed study
- CGIAR output under assessment, and its link to specific CGIAR/NARS research effort
- Adoption domain, if relevant
- Research questions for assessment
- Methodological approach to be used, including sample size calculations
- Impact indicators that will be documented
- Brief information on partnerships, including any with the CGIAR Center/CRP that developed the research output
- Estimate of the budget and timeframe, including additional funding commitments
- Names and institutional affiliations of researchers

Selection procedure

SPIA will review each EoI and provide feedback by **end of August/early September 2015**. The feedback will either: invite a full proposal; reject the proposed idea; or offer suggestions for modifying the proposal so that it would be considered further.

EoIs will be scored according to the following set of criteria:

- Technical merit and feasibility (30%)
- Relevance of research questions (to objectives of the call) and appropriateness of design/methodology (30%)
- Relevance and quality of the research team (including CGIAR), capacity and reputation of proposed grantee (20%)
- Cost effectiveness, availability of co-financing (10%)
- Other aspects of the proposal (10%)