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STELLENBOSCH, SOUTH AFRICA  
10 - 12 OCTOBER, 2018

Win more, lose less:

Capturing synergies between  
SDGs through agricultural research



# Way forward: some main points emerging around building blocks

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Highlight of some key points –  
not a comprehensive synthesis

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Does the discussion indicate the need  
to change essential elements of  
research design? YES

**Overall:**

**Synergies & Tradeoffs must be explicit part of strategy and research design – but not necessarily in each research activity**

## More specifically:

- **Theory of change and impact pathways:** Clear and explicit analysis of impacts across multiple objectives is needed in the design of research program theory of change and impact pathways. In some cases it is already there –others no.
- **Identifying the degree and nature of tradeoffs/synergies is an important research topic in and of itself**
- **Partnerships** – Need for rethinking partnership - TEEB agri-food for methods/tools; FAS for place-based partner to help develop and utilize research results
- **Build on what we have:** Need to learn from what's worked and what hasn't in terms of CGIAR and complex systems – and there is quite a lot that has worked.

## And has implications for Methods and Tools

- Modelling approaches in building ToC: Complex modelling will not necessarily give clearer indications of synergies and tradeoffs – in some cases more simple conceptual approaches could be better.
- Common framework can help: We should consider developing a common methodological framework to address synergies/tradeoffs. Possibly building on TEEB agri-food framework or WEF.
- Geography matters – and so does political economy – these should be explicitly considered in research design.

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Does the discussion indicate the need  
to change approaches to prioritization  
of activities? YES

- Explicit and well thought out analysis of potential impacts across multiple objectives in research proposal ToC and impact pathways should be a key criteria for prioritizing funding.
- System level foresight that explicitly considers tradeoffs should be a key part of prioritizing activities
- System level foresight built from local level efforts – should be key to prioritizing activities

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Does the discussion indicate the need  
to change how we measure progress  
and success? YES

We need to prioritize metrics – in recognition that they have varying importance across stakeholders and they are political

CGIAR should/should not align its measures of success with SDG indicators

- Should – because these are indicators that policy-makers in countries care about
- Shouldn't – because they are a result of a political process and not necessarily best indicators of success for AR4D

Incorporation of synergies and tradeoffs in research design could increase the number of outcomes you would have to measure.

- But you could develop composite indicators

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Does the discussion indicate the need to change how we demonstrate impact and respond to demand of our clients? YES !!

- Communication is big – perhaps needs a major rethink of what it means in the AR4D context – e.g. should be one third of research program activities and just not an add-on at the end.
- There is a major problem with communication of evidence to establish priorities. Often these are based on misperceptions.
- Need to shift from diagnosing problems to developing solutions to be policy relevant
- Knowledge translators are key to having policy impact. Most efficient to get this skill through partnerships and working through national systems of innovation.

- a. CGIAR 2030 strategy needs to be explicit in considering synergies and tradeoffs and overall implications for ToC – focussed on small set.**
- b. Development of CGIAR common conceptual framing and methods of synergies and trade-offs across key objectives (part of 2030 strategy development?)**
- c. Establishment of capacity building/tools to support integration of analysis of synergies/tradeoffs for CGIAR researchers**
- d. Ring fenced core funds, commissioned competitively to incentivize work on interactions**
- e. Develop CGIAR coordinated SDG synergy work program supported by group of development banks**

## Notable quotes:

***Strategic simplification – key for coping with complex systems***

***Climate change is like Brexit – the more you know the worse it gets***

***We only have 11 more harvests before we should meet the 2030 agenda***

## Science Forum Follow UP:

- 1) Report synthesizing results/discussions/recommendations
- 2) Short brief for policy-makers
- 3) Exploring options for publishing papers developed for and during conference
- 4) New collaborations/partnerships