

Foresight and Trade-off Implications for One CGIAR

Frequently Asked Questions

July 2020

Q1: What was the goal of the foresight and trade-off project?

A: In the context of the One CGIAR reform, ISDC provided foresight and trade-off implications and recommendations to CGIAR leadership for the development of the CGIAR 2030 Research Strategy. This is part of the ISDC's core mandate.

Q2: What are the five impact areas of One CGIAR?

A: One CGIAR focuses on five impact areas (for more information on the CGIAR's mission and impact areas, see [here](#)):

- nutrition and food security
- poverty reduction, livelihoods, and jobs
- gender equality, youth, and social inclusion
- climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction
- environmental health and biodiversity

Q3: What reports were commissioned by ISDC?

A: ISDC commissioned two foresight reviews that analyzed the five One CGIAR impact areas. The reviews were grouped by impact areas: (1) [societal](#) (nutrition, poverty, and gender) and (2) [environmental](#) (climate and environment). ISDC also commissioned a trade-off analysis [report](#).

Q4: What literature was reviewed in the foresight reports?

A: The foresight reviews used studies by external organizations that paid significant attention to agrifood systems (AFS) as well as all previous CGIAR-sponsored ISPC foresight studies. ISDC provided a list of 12 reports as a basis in the terms of reference that guided the reviews.

Q5: How did ISDC develop its reflections and recommendations?

At the ISDC semiannual (virtual) meeting in April 2020, the foresight reviews were presented, discussed, and refined. ISDC then built a consensus of draft reflections using the foresight reviews' findings and meeting discussions. The trade-off analysis report used the foresight reviews and ISDC consensus as input. Lastly, ISDC developed a consensus statement on critical questions and recommendations arising from the foresight and trade-off analyses reports.

Q6: Why are syntheses important for decision-makers?

Syntheses are productive and convenient tools for decision-makers for gaining multiple perspectives on often complex and vexing problems. In addition to providing succinct scientific insights, such syntheses can help in building trust and facilitate cooperation. While reaching full consensus is usually impossible, the process facilitates reaching agreement on steps and directions that must be taken to advance contentious issues.

Q7: How can foresight and trade-off analyses benefit research organizations, including CGIAR partners?

A: Foresight and trade-off analyses offer organizations an opportunity to better prepare for alternative futures through adaptive research strategy and management. A benefit of these analyses is the engagement of internal and external stakeholders in meaningful discussions about future disruptions, the need for the research, its desired impacts, and suitable indicators for monitoring and evaluating progress toward those shared goals. Effective foresight and trade-off analyses are iterative processes that engage stakeholders at international, national, and regional levels and all stages throughout AFS.

Q8: Why are the research gaps¹ identified in the foresight reviews significant?

A: One CGIAR research needs to align with and influence emerging trends in AFS. The gaps identified in the foresight reviews identified where additional research needs to be amplified across the impact areas. Whether the CGIAR attempts filling these research gaps internally or highlights these omissions for other research partners to address is a question of comparative advantage. This should be considered during the development of the new research strategy. Four key gaps included:

- Impact areas that are currently under-represented in foresight studies: gender, nutrition, and poverty
- Megatrend analyses that include shocks
- Governance and policy barriers insufficiently considered
- Adoption and adaptation pathways of technology and institutional innovations

Q9: Does the following [reflection](#) imply CGIAR should expand its portfolio despite limited resources? “Expanded attention to—and investment in—research concerning fruits, legumes (including pulses), nuts, and vegetables to broaden the System’s commodity composition.”

A: ISDC is not recommending that CGIAR reprioritize its resources towards those commodities; it may be preferable to engage with partners that have expertise in those commodities as the most effective approach to embrace a broader portfolio of crops that affect each of the five impact areas. CGIAR should stay alert to gaps within its global research portfolio and be aware of its unique organizational position and advantage in agricultural research for development (AR4D).

Q10: How can CGIAR use foresight and trade-off analyses for better adoption, adaptation, and diffusion of innovation?

A: While adoption of innovation is the ultimate goal of CGIAR’s research, foresight studies rarely take adoption and adaptation patterns fully into consideration. This can matter enormously to tracing out the likely pathways under different scenarios. One contribution ongoing foresight and trade-off analyses can make is to provide further insight into how key barriers to adoption, adaptation, and diffusion of AFS innovations may evolve over time and thus how CGIAR might most effectively prepare for prospective obstacles to scaling of effective innovations to boost impact. A necessary step in strategy development is to understand capacity barriers and people’s ability and willingness to embrace change at the local level so technology and innovation can be scaled to effective levels.

Q11: Should CGIAR invest in building foresight and trade-off analysis capacity?

¹ The scope of the foresight reviews did not include identifying why these gaps existed in the literature, nor does ISDC infer that the presence of such gaps in foresight work implies a misdirection in the five impact areas that CGIAR has identified as important. On the contrary, this indicates an opportunity for One CGIAR to exercise thought leadership in helping to fill these gaps.

A: CGIAR should use its foresight and trade-off capacity in-house and those of its partners, such as the CGIAR Foresight Community of Practice. Parsimonious capacity building should focus on targeted activities such as the collection of necessary, aggregable, and comparable data by CGIAR research projects. The analytical tools that could be used for data analysis will likely be developed mainly outside of CGIAR.

Q12: How should CGIAR leadership use the outcomes?

A: Leadership is encouraged to use foresight and tradeoff analysis outcomes in formulating an effective AR4D CGIAR 2030 Research Strategy that includes foresight and trade-off analyses as ongoing, iterative processes that engage key CGIAR stakeholders at local, national, and regional levels and represent all stages throughout AFS.

For additional information, visit the ISDC foresight and trade-off [project page](#).