

# **CGIAR Policy for Independent External Evaluation**



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## 1. Status of the Policy

1. This policy for independent evaluation in the CGIAR comes into immediate and full effect as of February 1, 2012 by decision of the CGIAR Fund Council. The Policy addresses the independent external evaluation of the CGIAR as a whole and of its ongoing and completed policies, programs and institutional entities, in particular the CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs). In their entirety the provisions of the Policy are referred to as the **CGIAR Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA)**.
2. The Policy is supported by a set of Evaluation Standards and a series of current Guidance Notes, issued by the Head – IEA, following full consultation with all pertinent stakeholders, in particular CRP management<sup>1</sup>. These standards and guidance provide the details, modalities and common operating frameworks and standards for implementation of the Policy in the CGIAR.
3. Adjustment to, or review of, aspects of the Policy may be requested at any time by the Fund Council, the Consortium Board and/or the Head of the IEA and flexible adjustment will be essential in the light of implementation experience. The Policy will be subject to formal review at the latest, immediately following the next evaluation of the CGIAR as a whole. Final decisions on any changes to the Policy will be made by the Fund Council following consultation with the Consortium.

## 2. Context for the Policy

4. The new CGIAR has a complex and uniquely networked architecture of partnerships with multiple components and its own culture, which has no equivalent in international development organizations. This architecture includes a Consortium aimed at coherence, and collective strategic effort by 14 fully autonomous research centers and one inter-governmental research organization; a Fund which, responding to the intents of the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action, aims to achieve strategic harmonisation in financing by international donors for the CGIAR; and a number of institutional structures intended to facilitate and support efficiency and effectiveness across all partnerships, including the IEA and the Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC).
5. There is a long history of evaluation in the CGIAR, with the main lead taken by the former Science Council which organized the independent external review of CGIAR supported Centers and the work of the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA). Individual Centers and donors commissioned reviews and evaluations, and a periodic independent review of the CGIAR as a whole was undertaken approximately every six years. The last of the independent reviews completed in 2008 contributed to the development of the present institutional structure of the CGIAR.
6. The CGIAR Evaluation Policy was developed for consideration and approval of the Fund Council, following intensive consultations across the CGIAR as a whole, including with the CGIAR supported Centers and representatives of the Global Forum for Agricultural Research. It reflects the principles of the OECD-DAC evaluation network, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and a study of the policies of many of the international organizations which have been adjudged by their peers to reflect good practice in evaluation. Attention has been given to the specific characteristics of agricultural research for development and the architecture of the CGIAR. The Policy has been thoroughly reviewed by an expert reference panel of specialists.

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<sup>1</sup> To be made available as interim drafts pending appointment of the Head IEA

## 3. Principles of Independent External Evaluation in the CGIAR

### 3.1 *Definition and Purpose of Evaluation*<sup>2</sup>

7. **For the purposes of this Policy for Independent External Evaluation**, evaluation is considered to be the independent, systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program, institution, policy or modality, its design, implementation and results. It determines the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, quality, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.
8. The CGIAR Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) will provide quality independent, external evaluation in a system which is coherent and adequately comprehensive in its coverage. It is designed to support the CGIAR in becoming more effective in pursuit of its objectives. These have been defined in four System Level Outcomes to which the system contributes as elaborated in the CGIAR Strategic Results Framework: the reduction of poverty; improving food security; improving nutrition and health; and the sustainable management of natural resources. Thus, the CGIAR is ultimately accountable to the peoples of developing countries, in particular agricultural producers, the food insecure, malnourished and environment threatened. Evaluation will play its part in providing accountability, support to decision making and lessons for improved and more cost-effective benefits from research, taking into account the causal pathways from research activities and outputs to the contribution made to the achievement of outcomes and impacts for ultimate beneficiaries.
9. All institutional elements of the CGIAR and the programs funded by the Fund Council may be subject to independent evaluation. Evaluation's functions in accountability, learning and support to decision making will reinforce mutual accountability, coherence, efficiency and transparency throughout the CGIAR. They will help underpin a results-based culture, i.e. a culture in which the output-to-ultimate impact pathways are thought through, drive the research, and are periodically monitored and updated. Independent evaluation will be designed to provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into decision making.
10. **Ex-post Development Impact Assessment** forms an integral part of the inputs for independent external evaluation and is addressed by this Policy, including the institutional relationship with the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA).
11. There are **other important forms of assessment** for the CGIAR, which are complementary to evaluation and provide inputs to it. They are covered by separate but related policies and are not the subject of this independent evaluation Policy. They will however be made full use of for IEA evaluation and not replicated. These include:
  - a) **Research Program and Project Appraisal:** An overall *ex ante* assessment (evaluation) of the relevance, feasibility and potential for impact and sustainability of a development intervention prior to a decision on funding, major program definition or adjustment (formalised for CRPs through the Consortium, ISPC and Fund Council). The program and project documents, in particular those for CRPs, are a fundamental starting point for independent external evaluation;

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted to the specifics of the CGIAR from the Glossary of the OECD- Development Assistance Committee Evaluation Network and the Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, United Nations Evaluation Group, April 2005

- b) **Performance monitoring:** A continuous or periodic process of collecting and analyzing data to compare how well a project, program, or policy is being implemented against expected results (a normal responsibility of line-management, formalised at the CGIAR system level in the common reporting framework). Monitoring will provide basic information for evaluation and the requirements of evaluation should be taken into account when developing indicators and data collection for monitoring. The relationship of monitoring policy, standards and criteria to this Policy is key, and it is essential to avoid duplication of effort;
- c) **Internal evaluative studies and reviews** (including peer reviews, adoption studies and socio-economic research integrated with agro-biological research) undertaken by CRPs and Centers as part of their internal lesson learning and management and often built into the research model. These will be an essential source of data for evaluations falling within this Policy, but are not themselves directly covered by the provisions of this Policy and the resulting standards; and
- d) **Audit:** Financial and management audit in the CGIAR provide accountability to management at the level of the Center Boards, Consortium and Fund Council on finances and assets and also provide elements of oversight in human resources and business efficiency.

### ***3.2 Evaluation will be Professional, Conforming to Internationally Accepted Standards and Pursuing Good Practice***

- 12. Evaluation will be in conformity with internationally recognised standards, in particular those developed for evaluation of Global and Regional Partnership Programs, the OECD-DAC evaluation network and the United Nations Evaluation Group. This Policy reflects those standards which are elaborated in the IEA Evaluation Standards and the Guidance Notes.
- 13. Evaluations will give particular attention to questions of the comparative advantage of the CGIAR and the CGIAR reforms in efficiently contributing to the achievement of development results, with attention to value for money. The emphasis of each evaluation will vary depending on its purpose reflected in the main evaluation questions. However, all evaluations of CRPs as a whole and of the CGIAR as a whole, will also maintain a holistic perspective, examining the:
  - a) Clarity, relevance and priority of the objectives, in terms of the ultimate benefits to be realised, the importance of the CGIAR contribution to these objectives, and where possible the opportunity costs, both at the time the program actions were conceived and at the time of the evaluation, including the continued uniqueness of the research output. Attention will be given to the coherence of the planned and actual research for development outputs and intended outcomes with the CGIAR Strategic Results Framework and system-level outcomes and the CGIAR's comparative advantages as well as the extent to which the objectives correspond to national priorities in the target countries;
  - b) Original and continued validity of the links in the intended impact pathway(s) (also called theory of change or logic model), whereby CGIAR outputs will deliver development and/or environmental benefits. This will address both the actual and potential achievements, but also whether the necessary mechanisms and partnerships are in place or are likely to be in place. The analysis of assumptions and risks will further address the probabilities of the partnerships and conditions for achieving ultimate impact being in place;

- c) Adequacy of the integration of ethical and equity considerations ( poverty, gender, cultural, generational and environmental) in the research design, theory of change and program management and implementation;
  - d) Efficiency and effectiveness of institutional, governance, oversight and managerial arrangements, including responsiveness to changing circumstances, management of risk and the adjustment of resource inputs as necessary. In the networked matrix arrangements of the CGIAR, particular attention will be given to the coherence of both planning and implementation;
  - e) Quality of research and the efficiency with which research outputs are produced (quality and quantity);
  - f) Mutual accountability and responsibility, including resource availability in line with forecasts and budget, the responsibility exercised by all parties in the provision of resources and the extent to which donors and partners fulfil their commitments and work to facilitate impact; and
  - g) Progress and continued potential for contribution to outcomes and ultimate development impacts (foreseen and unforeseen, positive and negative); and
  - h) Potential for and actual sustainability and multiplier effects of impacts, with the results of impact assessment studies being incorporated in evaluation.
14. Evaluations are required to produce actionable recommendations and draw attention to any findings and lessons from the evaluation which are believed by the evaluators to have relevance beyond the area of work under evaluation.

### ***3.3 Quality Management will be Applied to Evaluation and Facilitated through a Community of Practice***

15. At the base of the IEA system of evaluation are evaluations commissioned by the CRPs and Centers. The quality and usefulness of higher levels of evaluation rests on this base which provides the essential building blocks for the central CRP and system-wide evaluations managed under the direct authority of the IEA Head. The CGIAR therefore takes the planning and quality management of CRP and Center managed independent evaluations very seriously. The IEA is an integrated system, with quality from the base to the apex underpinned through:
- a) A common set of evaluation standards and practices for independent evaluation;
  - b) An holistic evaluation planning process to assure evaluation adds up to an integrated whole with a minimum of duplication (see paragraph 51);
  - c) A Community of Practice open to membership by all those in the CGIAR, having significant evaluation responsibilities as part of their job descriptions. This Community of Practice is facilitated and supported by the IEA office with an input from the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA). Through networking of evaluators in CRPs and Centers it can provide mutual support to managers in the conduct of evaluations, including in locating suitable evaluators and developing terms of reference. The Community of Practice will also provide a framework for developing a common understanding of evaluation standards, for exchange of experience and for bringing in evaluation experience from outside the CGIAR;
  - d) Quality assessment, including a small independent external virtual panel, will be put in place for an *ex post* check on the quality of evaluations commissioned directly by the IEA office;
  - e) Provision as part of the CRP evaluation planning process for the IEA Head to verify adequacy of sample coverage and arrangements for independent evaluations in CRPs commissioned by CRP

management which will provide the main information base for the evaluation of the CRP as a whole;

- f) Evaluations of CRPs as a whole and of the CGIAR system as a whole will assess the quality and, where found necessary, verify evaluation material from lower level evaluations and complete gaps in the independent data coverage. The independent evaluations of CRPs as a whole will assess and report on performance of monitoring and of evaluation arrangements for the CRP, including the quality of independent evaluations commissioned by the CRP. The evaluation of the CGIAR as a whole will report on this for the CGIAR system; and
- g) Dissemination of evaluation findings, learning and recommendations, with full and timely electronic publication of independent evaluations and management responses.

### ***3.4 Evaluation will Serve Clearly Defined Target Audiences***

16. The IEA Head reports directly to the Fund Council and is responsive to the Consortium through regular consultations. For each evaluation the levels of decision makers to be primarily served by that evaluation will be identified and evaluations will be designed to be responsive to the issues of major stakeholders. These may include, depending on the level of evaluation and the stage of the program implementation:
  - a) The Fund Council and the Consortium Board;
  - b) Center Directors-General, Senior CRP management and Boards;
  - c) The ISPC for gaining knowledge from evaluation of importance to its work and defining issues it has identified of importance for evaluation;
  - d) Research managers;
  - e) Research partners and the immediate national and international users and partners in delivery of CGIAR research outputs;
  - f) Donors and partner country governments; and
  - g) Representatives of end-users (farmers, etc.).
17. Evaluations will implement adequate modalities for consultation and engagement with the intended target audiences, including where appropriate and feasible representatives of end and intermediate users of evaluation outputs. This consultation process will facilitate stakeholders, in particular immediate decision makers, identifying issues that they would wish to be examined by evaluation, both in formulating the IEA evaluation program of work and in evaluation terms of reference.
18. Where there is major donor funding outside Windows 1 and 2 and/or direct partner involvement in CRP component or CRPs as a whole and the donor is not prepared to accept the independent CRP evaluation as satisfying its needs, the possibility of joint evaluation will be considered. This will facilitate efficiency and promote acceptance of findings and recommendations and their follow-up by all parties. It is not considered the optimum solution however, which is that major donors would be consulted on terms of reference but accept CGIAR independent external evaluation (see also work planning, below – paragraph 53).
19. Major stakeholders, in particular management and significant partners, will have the possibility for comment and to provide information at all stages of evaluation, including draft recommendations, while evaluation teams retain final and full decision on all aspects of their findings conclusions and recommendations, subject to the evaluation meeting the Evaluation Standards. Reporting on the extent of consultation and engagement with stakeholders is mandatory in evaluations covered by this Policy.

20. Evaluation products will be tailored to meet the needs of each target audience as appropriate, including seminars and briefings, popular summaries and high level executive extracts for particular audiences. Recommendations will concentrate on priority issues, and be precise and actionable.

### ***3.5 Evaluation Will Take Account of the Special Characteristics of Agricultural Research for Development in the CGIAR***

21. The CGIAR produces public goods in the form of research outputs. The CRPs have a responsibility to examine the viability and facilitate the potential impact pathway(s) (theory of change) for how these outputs will result in development outcomes and impacts. Evaluations will give particular attention to this and to consideration of the scientific quality of the research, its uniqueness and other ongoing and completed research in the area of investigation. The comparative advantage of the CGIAR in the research will receive attention. Characteristics of research for development in the CGIAR will be taken fully into account in evaluation, including:
- a) From delivery of a research output (public good) by the CGIAR to the final development impact, there is generally an especially long duration and complex line of causality, often with multiple lines of change;
  - b) Partnerships are of critical importance and new models of partnership both for research and for achievement of development results utilising research outputs are being developed in the CRPs. This includes the heavy reliance on partners and intermediaries for further research and development to fit the CGIAR output to specific contexts, incorporate the outputs in other work, and then modify, transfer and multiply application, before contributing to significant local development benefits. The contribution of national and international partners will also be evaluated including the extent of their active commitment;
  - c) Comparative advantage of the CGIAR in research and the quality of that research will receive particular attention, including such features as the extent to which the research will produce public goods which are both at the cutting edge and of wide application, and the extent to which such research is most cost-effectively carried out by the CGIAR and is unlikely to be carried out by others who would assure its wide public availability. The value added of the structures and institutions of the CGIAR in promoting productive and efficient research will also be examined;
  - d) There is often potential to contribute to more than one System Level Outcome, in terms of poverty, nutrition, environment and overall economic development. This requires multiple impact pathways to be analysed in the theory of change;
  - e) Due to dependence upon the annual cycle of seasons, research and innovation findings, especially in natural resources, may be subject to seasonal variations and may also take a longer time to produce results;
  - f) All research is an inherently a creative, risky and unpredictable activity, generating some serendipitous discoveries as well as frequent failures to achieve the hoped for research result. Effective research management often requires deviation from the original implementation plan; learning from 'failure' and adjusting, or even cancelling, to seize opportunities and make the most effective use of limited resources. Evaluations will always ask whether research programs delivered the originally planned research outputs, and investigate the reasons, but overall judgements on research success will be nuanced, encouraging essential risk-taking and innovation. Evaluation will also ask if failure was documented and publicised as this is an essential contribution to knowledge;



avoids repetition of unproductive lines of research and skewed results of systemic research reviews; and

- g) Research is highly specialised and arrangements for individual evaluations will ensure that the science and science managements is represented in the expertise of members in the evaluation team and well covered in the scientific reference and peer review panels. These panels will be an important support to core evaluation teams, including the scientist members of those teams, who cannot normally themselves, reflect all the necessary science expertise, or undertake a full review of the science. Evaluation team leaders, who must have expertise in evaluation will also, be expected to have a strong understanding of science for development.

### ***3.6 Evaluation will Serve Mutual Accountability in the CGIAR System and Between Partners and Beneficiaries***

22. In the spirit of mutual accountability, each entity within the system is accountable to the others and, as defined in the CGIAR Strategic Results Framework, accountable to the ultimate beneficiaries (for the CGIAR's contribution in the reduction of poverty; improving food security; improving nutrition and health; and the sustainable management of natural resources). The performance of all institutional entities within the system will be subject to evaluation within a reasonable cycle, including the boards and offices of the Consortium, Fund Council, ISPC, and the Independent Evaluation Arrangement itself. But mutual accountability goes beyond this, not only holding the Centers/CRPs and Consortium responsible for their efficiency, results orientation and impacts but also the other partners of the system:

- a) **Donors and Partners** in the CGIAR are not just responsible for assuring predictable and timely funding and other inputs in the case of donors, or providing advice to the CGIAR, in the case of other stakeholders. They also have a major responsibility to contribute in taking the CGIAR intermediate research outputs and translating these into development impacts for beneficiaries at national level. While there needs to be realism on how much donors can facilitate this process, they will be held accountable for their behaviour in this regard through evaluation. Evaluations will specifically examine donor behaviour in seeking additional bilateral evaluations, reviews, monitoring and reporting, and their willingness to work to assure that their needs can be met through the common CGIAR systems, and make recommendations for improvement as appropriate.
- b) **The Fund Council, Consortium, ISPC** and their respective offices are not only accountable for the exercise of their functions and how these contribute to the achievement of CGIAR objectives, but also their behaviour in promoting the reform agenda, making desired efficiency gains, duplicating any functions and for their transparency and responsiveness. They are also responsible for promoting a culture of results management and the use and learning from evaluations in the CGIAR, including through the direct and indirect incentives they provide to researchers. Evaluations of these CGIAR entities will examine these issues.
- c) **The IEA** is responsible for seeking to ensure the most efficient, responsive and useful evaluation system in line with international standards and good practice and also avoiding duplication of effort.

### ***3.7 Managers in the CGIAR will Reinforce Evaluation Relevance, Follow-up, Knowledge Management and Learning***

23. High priority is attached to the use made of evaluation for decision making and in longer-term feedback to institutional and research program improvement by management, governance and all stakeholders and partners:
- a) Planning for evaluation will begin from the outset of programs and be periodically updated during the research program to help ensure that evaluation is timely and relevant;
  - b) The consultation of CGIAR managers, researchers and partners, and representatives of beneficiaries as appropriate and feasible, both before the evaluation in preparing terms of reference and during the evaluation process, will contribute to awareness of issues and potential solutions and areas for improvement;
  - c) For each of the evaluations directly covered by this IEA evaluation policy, there is a formal requirement for a management response to the evaluation's findings and recommendations and reporting after a suitable interval on the implementation of agreed follow-up; and
  - d) To facilitate the dissemination of evaluation learning, the IEA will work closely with all partners, in particular the ISPC and the CGIAR Cross-Center Institutional Learning and Change Initiative (ILAC), deriving and publicising generalised lessons from evaluation and making them widely available.

### ***3.8 Evaluation will be Independent, Ethical and Transparent***

24. The independence of evaluation will ensure the confidence of all parties that evaluation will be objective, impartial, unafraid to raise critical issues and professional and ethical in its approach and depth of analysis. Measures to ensure this will include:
- a) The evaluation processes of the IEA will be subject to peer review as part of the periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of evaluation in the CGIAR which will take place at no less frequency than the evaluation of the CGIAR as a whole (every 6 -7 years);
  - b) The Head and staff of the IEA will be selected and have terms of reference and institutional arrangements designed to ensure independence, professionalism and a responsible ethical approach to evaluation. Measures will include independent competitive selection, with the appointment of the IEA Head being for a fixed term;
  - c) Evaluation teams will normally be entirely external with identification and declaration of any conflicts of interest, balancing perspectives and backgrounds in the team and not using people on core evaluation teams directly associated with any aspect of the program under evaluation. Subject to the evaluation meeting the Evaluation Standards, independent evaluation teams will have the final responsibility for their evaluation reports and recommendations;
  - d) Selection criteria for evaluation staff and evaluation teams will place the highest weight on professional competence, in particular in evaluation and in science (see paragraph 21g);
  - e) Evaluations will themselves consider questions of ethics in research; and
  - f) In addition to following a consultative process with stakeholders, all essential elements of evaluation will be fully publicly available in a timely manner on the internet, including: the IEA evaluation workplan; evaluation terms of reference; evaluation reports; management responses and follow-up reports and the comments of other stakeholders.

### ***3.9 Evaluation will be Equity, Gender and Culture Sensitive***

25. There will be analysis of the equity considerations of poverty, gender, cultural and age differentiated issues in assessing the conduct, relevance and potentials for and actual development impacts from research. Evaluation teams will aim to be geographically and gender balanced (requirements which must be balanced with specific technical expertise).

### ***3.10 Evaluation will be Efficient***

26. The evaluation system will strive for efficiency in terms of direct and indirect costs of time and money. It will interface with other elements of the oversight, management and learning systems without unnecessary duplications, costs or redundancy. The consolidated evaluation work plan (section 6.1) aims to facilitate this. Studies by CRPs, Centers and other entities of the system (including the ISPC, donors and audit) which cover elements of evaluation will be drawn on rather than duplicated.

27. A common CRP Monitoring System will provide annually consolidated evidence on CRP programmatic performance and institutional health.

## **4. Coverage of Independent Evaluation**

28. The performance of all entities and modalities within the CGIAR system will be subject to evaluation within a reasonable cycle, including the CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs), the Consortium Board, the Fund Council, Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC), and the Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) itself.

### ***4.1 CGIAR System-wide Evaluation***

29. A fully independent CGIAR system-wide evaluation will take place once every six to seven years to provide overall accountability on the system, its value added and lessons for the strengthening of the relevance and impact of the CGIAR system's work and its institutional effectiveness.

- a) Each system-wide evaluation will cover all aspects of the CGIAR, and will require the evaluation team to examine major current and emerging issues and the continuing relevance and value added of the CGIAR, its objectives, outputs, modalities and institutional framework in achieving development impacts in the priority areas of research for development. The evaluation will assess the coherence and relevance of the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) and the CRPs as well as the institutional efficiency and perceived overall usefulness of the CGIAR to users and partners and the potential for impacts. It should help to: satisfy the overall needs for accountability on the performance of the system; provide an input for Fund Council and management decisions on levels of funding and their distribution across programs; and findings and recommendations for improving system effectiveness. It is at this level that the mutual accountability and synergies of all elements of the system, including how donors and partners exercise their responsibilities will be most thoroughly analysed, as will the relationships to partners and users of CGIAR research results;
- b) The evaluation will be focused for maximum utility. The major issues to be included in each comprehensive evaluation, will be identified through a wide ranging consultation process, facilitated by the IEA Head. Terms of reference and the process for selection of the evaluation team

proposed by the IEA Head will be subject to approval by the FC, following consultation with the Consortium Board;

- c) To the maximum extent possible, the system-wide evaluation will be based on a meta-analysis (i.e. drawing for its analysis primarily on the more detailed levels of evaluation specified below in this Policy), but there will be sufficient flexibility of funding to allow the evaluation team to extend the evidence base, to examine specific important issues and to fill information gaps. This may include comparison with entities outside the CGIAR where relevant, for example to examine institutional structures and research efficiency questions.
- d) Management: The Head of IEA will propose the terms of reference and the criteria and process for selection of the evaluation team. Following their approval by the Fund Council, she/he will have full responsibility for the independent management of the evaluation, within budget. The evaluation team will have full and final responsibility for the evaluation report subject to meeting evaluation quality standards; the IEA Head will be responsible for quality assurance with the assistance of a virtual independent external panel;
- e) The management response and follow-up implementation to the report of the evaluation will be formulated by the Consortium and other responsible CGIAR entities. The final consolidated management response to the evaluation will be considered by and confirmed by the Fund Council.

#### ***4.2 Evaluation of CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs)***

30. All CRPs are subject to evaluation by independent teams commissioned by the IEA. The evaluations will remain comprehensive while being focused on identified issues. They will not only examine the CRP but its institutional context and relation to other CRPs.

- a) Timing of CRP evaluations will be flexible, but in general geared to critical decision making, such as on future expansion, cancellation, extension, adjustment, restructuring, consolidation with other CRPs and new funding. The evaluation will be used mainly by senior managers, the Consortium Board, and the Fund Council. Although the main determinant of when decisions take place cannot be evaluation requirements, the workload at all levels of the system, including those of the Fund Council, for considering evaluations and of CRPs needs to be reasonable and staggered (an indicative workload is the evaluation of some three CRPs per year, enabling all CRPs to be covered on a six year cycle). In addition to the full CRP evaluation, the Lead Center of CRP, Fund Council or Consortium may request a mid-term evaluation to address specific issues.
- b) The full evaluations of each CRP will permit a focus on any current major issues or questions identified through consultation with the various parties to the CRP. It will be primarily based on meta-analysis of evaluative information from CRPs (see section 4.3), including systematic annual qualitative and quantitative evidence about CRP performance that is documented in regular monitoring reports issued by CRPs/Consortium.
- c) In formulating the terms of reference for the evaluation of the CRP as a whole, the IEA Head will verify the adequacy of the available evaluative information base, in particular the independent evaluations commissioned by CRP management. Any necessary additional preparatory independent evaluation studies will then be commissioned by the IEA prior to the overall evaluation of the CRP as a whole.
- d) CRP evaluations will not only examine the quality and relevance of CRP research itself but its institutional context and relation to other CRPs. This will include examining the effectiveness and efficiency of the institutional structure and management systems of the CRP in incentivising the production of high quality research with practical impacts.

- e) Management: The Head IEA has full responsibility for the terms of reference, management and commissioning of the evaluations of CRPs as a whole in line with the Fund Council approved workplan. The evaluation teams have full and final responsibility for their evaluation reports subject to meeting the Evaluation Standards. The IEA Head is responsible for quality assurance with the assistance of a virtual independent external panel.
- f) The management response and follow-up implementation report to each evaluation is the responsibility of the CRP management/lead Center and is either endorsed by or accompanied by the comments of the Consortium Board in the presentation to the Fund Council.

### ***4.3 Evaluation Within CRPs – the Building Blocks for Overall CRP Evaluation***

31. The overall independent external evaluation of CRPs on a three to five year cycle is based to the maximum extent possible on a meta-analysis of independently verified evaluative evidence from the CRPs, including annual monitoring measures of CRPs. It should be noted however, that internal CGIAR evaluation in the past has been found by many observers, including the recent system wide review<sup>3</sup>, to be of mixed quality and not always extensively used:
- a) Making maximum possible use of other evaluative, peer review, monitoring and audit information, etc. which has been generated for the CRP, independent evaluations of the CRP commissioned by CRP management will provide the base for the evaluation of the CRP as a whole. The coverage of these evaluations will be agreed between the CRP management and the IEA Head as part of the evaluation planning process and the evaluations included in the CGIAR consolidated evaluation workplan. The CRP dialogue with the IEA Head will also help to ensure that the timing and coverage of individual evaluations best serve the decision making and lesson learning needs at the level of researchers, research managers and partners. All CRP led evaluations should follow CGIAR Evaluation Standards as a means for quality management. The evaluations should also meet the needs of any donors who continue to require evaluation information on their specific project contributions. The work plan of independent external evaluations may be adjusted during implementation, in the light of developments and needs.
  - b) The evaluations will be expected to employ representative quantitative and qualitative sampling, ensuring adequate independent evaluation base data for the evaluation of the totality of the CRP as a whole (see IEA Evaluation Standards). The criteria for coverage of individual evaluations could include, for example: objective, geographical area, type of technology.
  - c) A reliable CRP monitoring system will be critical for measuring CRP progress towards the achievement of planned outputs and outcomes, thereby serve as a vital data base for any evaluation.
  - d) Management: The evaluations are commissioned by CRP management/Lead Center and designed in conformity with CGIAR Evaluation Standards. The evaluation teams have full and final responsibility for their evaluation reports.
  - e) The management response to each evaluation is the responsibility of the CRP management/lead Center and is considered by the relevant Lead Center Board or external CRP Committee as appropriate.

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<sup>3</sup> *Bringing Together the Best of Science and Development* – Independent Review of the CGIAR System, Technical Report, CGIAR, Washington DC, November 2008

32. Evaluation Community of Practice: The establishment of an evaluation community of practice will assist capacity building for evaluation in the CRPs and Centers and facilitate mutual support (see paragraph 15).

#### ***4.4 Central Scientific Services and Gene Banks***

33. All Centers operate some central services, such as analyses, genotyping, biometrics and GIS, and some of these provide services to external users, partners and other CGIAR supported Centers. Similar considerations apply to gene banks. Some elements of these services, and certainly gene banks, provide direct development benefits as well as internal services. Through the consolidated evaluation workplanning process, the IEA Head will facilitate and then monitor that adequate evaluation of the utility, efficiency and management of such services takes place. Analyses will be on a frequency to feed into the overall evaluation of the CGIAR. Evaluation will be achieved drawing on a mix of:
- a) System-wide comparative evaluation commissioned by the IEA which may provide valuable insights for efficiency savings and system improvements;
  - b) Center managed evaluations as part of the Center management reviews (section 4.5); and
  - c) Ad-hoc evaluations or reviews by the IEA and/or the Internal Auditing Unit, if found essential.

#### ***4.5 The Place of Center Management Reviews***

34. Centers are independent entities and their Boards and management can commission whatever reviews they consider necessary. However, in the present matrix structure for research based on the CRPs, in which many Centers have placed most of their work, a total review Center by Center would be duplicative. It would also risk refocusing substantive accountability on Centers rather the CRPs and undermine the CGIAR reform.
35. Whether a Center continues overall reviews or not, there is a need for periodic management review covering such aspects as financial, human resource and physical asset management and the overall performance of management and Governance (Center Boards). The Consortium Board ensures that these take place and may commission them independently, if it finds this necessary. The product of such reviews will be a valuable input for the comprehensive system-wide evaluation of the CGIAR.

#### ***4.6 Evaluation of other Institutions of the CGIAR System (FC, Consortium, ISPC-SPIA, IEA)***

36. For periodic system-wide evaluation, the main building blocks of the effectiveness of research for development are addressed through the evaluation of the CRPs. This is not the case for evaluation of the institutions of the system, which do not directly provide research for development services. Center review requirements are considered above. The other institutions of the system will be evaluated in a series of evaluations commissioned by the IEA office. These will bring in management consultancy expertise as well as that of evaluation and will address the efficiency and the adequacy of the services they provide, including their incremental value and consideration of alternative means of provision. Undertaken over a period leading up to the System-wide evaluation, these evaluations are among the essential building-blocks for that evaluation.
37. The evaluation of the IEA will be undertaken by the independent evaluation office of an international organization or by the OECD-DAC evaluation network commissioned by the Fund Council, following consultation with the Consortium. Other evaluations will be the responsibility of the Head IEA.

## ***4.7 Evaluations on Specific Questions, Issues and Themes***

38. There is a place for demand driven evaluation of specific questions (e.g. intellectual property, partnerships or to provide foresight on the capacity of the CGIAR to contribute in an area of emerging importance) and the CGIAR has had a program of reviews of past experience of cross-cutting issues (in particular 'Stripe reviews' by the former Science Council). It is essential for such issue or thematic evaluations to have clear target audiences, and thus readership and potential for follow-up, which has not always been the case in the past. Such evaluations will therefore, be carried out very selectively. Any such evaluations will be agreed by the Fund Council as part of the rolling evaluation work plan and identified through a process of evaluation agenda setting which has input from the Fund Council, and also from the Consortium reflecting widespread demand from the Fund Council, CRPs, Centers and their Boards. A division of work and areas for collaboration will be developed between the IEA and the Independent Audit Unit for any evaluation of institutional, managerial and process areas.

## ***4.8 Impact Assessment***

39. All evaluations will assess the progress towards, and potential for, impact at the level of ultimate development benefits. In doing this they will draw on not only an analysis of the viability and progress on the impact pathway(s), but evidence from impact assessments of that, or more probably, similar work.
40. However, especially in agriculture, the actual sustainable development impact cannot generally be assessed until many years after an intervention is completed. The time-horizon of assessment of actual, as distinct from potential, impacts means that it cannot usually be utilised for immediate decision making on programs and it may become an evaluation of yesterday's program. This notwithstanding, ex-post impact assessment is valuable for learning what categories of action, under what conditions have the greatest impact potential. If the same types of action are being continued in a CRP and in the CGIAR as a whole, there will be valuable lessons on the likelihoods and modalities of impact. It is also valuable for demonstrating the historical benefits (track record) of the CGIAR and demonstrating whether or not there has been a return on investment.
41. *Ex post* impact assessment is the responsibility of the CRPs. The Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) supports this methodologically and for particular studies. The work of SPIA will be closely coordinated with that of the IEA (see paragraph 48) and ex post impact assessment will concentrate on major types of work being continued in the CGIAR today and be balanced and representative in its coverage, representing the System Level Outcomes of the Strategy and Results Framework and the structure of CRPs.

## **5. Mandate and Institutional Arrangements for the IEA**

42. Championship of the independent evaluation function in the CGIAR is provided by the independent Head IEA. The IEA Head reports directly to the Fund Council, and is required to consult closely with the Consortium, without prejudice to the independence of the IEA or the final authority of the Fund Council. The Head IEA has full access to both the Fund Council and Consortium Board and is fully independent in the exercise of her/his evaluation functions. In addition to individual evaluation reports and their findings and recommendations, she/he is required to bring to the attention of the CGIAR

system governance, including the Fund Council and Consortium Board, any wider issues for the CGIAR emerging from evaluations. Vehicles for this include the biennial IEA evaluation report (paragraph 54).

43. IEA: The first priority of the IEA office, largely through commissioning, is to undertake the evaluation of the CGIAR as a whole and the evaluation of CRPs. Mandated functions of the IEA Head include, but are not restricted to:

- a) Developing and promoting in full independence, and in consultation with the Consortium and its member Centers and other CGIAR institutions and partners, for submission to the Fund Council for its approval and/or action:
  - The rolling evaluation workplan and budget;
  - Terms of reference for the periodic evaluation of the CGIAR system as a whole; and
  - Modifications as required from time to time in the comprehensive CGIAR Evaluation Policy;
  - The Biennial Evaluation Report.
  
- b) Timely management and implementation of the CGIAR Evaluation Policy and workplan within budget:
  - Maintaining detailed standards and guidance for independent evaluation;
  - Undertaking, largely by commissioning independent consultants, the agreed evaluation program of the IEA, including that of the CRPs;
  - Drawing together from evaluations wider judgements for CGIAR value added and lessons for the future in the wider research and development context and reporting on them in the Biennial Evaluation Report;
  - Facilitating the institutionalisation and operation of the system for follow-up of IEA evaluations in cooperation with all CGIAR institutions and partners;
  
- c) Leadership in evaluation and evaluation knowledge management in the CGIAR - undertaking:
  - Evaluation capacity building and facilitation of a community of evaluation practice within the CGIAR system, also drawing on the CGIAR Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA);
  - Close liaison with SPIA to integrate ex post impact assessment in evaluation and its integration with the evaluation workplan;
  - Developing and managing the maintenance of a central evaluation data base with public access;
  - Liaison with the Consortium and its member Centers to facilitate the complementarity between independent evaluation and Center/CRP evaluative studies, monitoring and performance reporting, etc. which provide essential data for evaluation;
  - Input of evaluation knowledge to the CGIAR knowledge management and learning systems, and liaising closely on knowledge management and learning with the Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC), the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), the CGIAR Institutional Learning and Change Initiative (ILAC) and GFAR; and
  - Representing the CGIAR externally on evaluation matters, identifying valuable innovative evaluation practice within the CGIAR and bringing external good evaluation practice into the CGIAR.



44. The Head of the CGIAR IEA will have global name recognition in agricultural research evaluation field, and generally in evaluation. She/he will be appointed for a term of four years (including the probation period) with the possibility of renewal for a maximum of a further four years. The incumbent may not take up any other post, consultancy or Board membership in the CGIAR system for at least two years after leaving the post of Head of IEA.
45. Appointment of the Head IEA will be widely advertised and will be through an open competitive process. The selection panel will have balanced representation from the CGIAR, including the Consortium and will include senior evaluation expertise.
46. **IEA staff:** The Head of IEA is responsible for the appointment and management of IEA staff. In staff selection, she/he will be required to demonstrate that an open and competitive process was followed and that for senior staff, she/he was assisted by an ad hoc independent external panel, including evaluation expertise and a knowledge of agricultural research. Performance review of staff will also reflect good practice.
47. Recruitment and management of evaluation staff throughout the CGIAR system should also reflect good international practice (see Evaluation Standards).
48. **Consideration of Development Impact and the Role of SPIA:** All evaluations will consider the potential and actual sustainable development impact as appropriate. The evaluation team will examine the impact pathway, its viability and assumptions, and potential for impacts. SPIA will provide from its studies and those of the Centers, actual impact evidence of the CRP or similar research carried out in the past for CRP evaluations and the evaluation of the CGIAR as a whole. If additional impact assessments are required as a preparatory input for the evaluation, these will be commissioned through SPIA by the IEA office. The impact assessment work through SPIA will be integrated with that for evaluation through consultation with SPIA on the rolling evaluation work plan and in development of the SPIA work plan. The draft evaluation work plan and that of SPIA will be considered together at the same time by the Fund Council and by the Consortium Board in its comments to the Fund Council.
49. **Managers** at all levels are expected to promote a culture of learning from evaluation and facilitate the work of evaluation teams, including identifying key stakeholders who should be consulted and facilitating access to stakeholders, including partners and beneficiaries as requested, and assuring evaluation teams will have full and prompt access to all information pertinent to their terms of reference.
50. **All IEA evaluations will be undertaken by independent evaluation teams.** The evaluation team leader has final responsibility for all findings and recommendations, subject to adherence to CGIAR Evaluation Standards.

## **6. IEA Workplanning, Reporting and Budgeting**

### ***6.1 Integrated Evaluation Planning***

51. The planning processes and resultant rolling evaluation workplan will help to ensure transparency on evaluation and that:

- a) Evaluation is responding to immediate needs of major stakeholders, in particular, the Fund Council, Consortium and managers;
- b) There is consultation with beneficiary representatives on meeting their overall needs from evaluation in the CGIAR;
- c) Decentralized evaluation serves the needs of managers and users and provides a representative sample basis for the evaluation of each CRP as a whole;
- d) Ex post impact assessment coordinated by SPIA can most effectively contribute to the evaluation of CRPs and the system wide evaluation of the CGIAR;
- e) The evaluation demands on the time of scientists, managers and partners are distributed evenly and do not impose an undue burden; and
- f) There is overall efficiency in the use of evaluation resources and accountability for evaluation outputs.

52. **Planning for evaluation in the CRPs** begins with development of the CRP proposal and of any project proposals. These will ensure that evaluation is timely and budgeted (taking into account the fact that it is not possible to foresee all the specific evaluation studies at the initial planning stage). It will also integrate any specific needs of donors, partners or beneficiaries. The plan will aim to ensure that the necessary information base for evaluation will be available, integrating this to the extent efficient with management reporting and monitoring systems<sup>4</sup>.

53. **A biennial rolling unified work plan** for independent evaluation will be developed by the Head-IEA in full consultation with all entities of the CGIAR system and with donors, partners and beneficiary representatives. It will specify the dates, responsibilities and approximate timing for evaluations. The multi-year time horizon of the plan will provide an overall framework and allow scheduling and prioritisation of evaluation requirements, while the rolling nature of the plan will provide flexibility and responsiveness to evolving needs with provision for changes where required. The plan will be fully aligned with the budgetary provisions for evaluation. It will be approved by the Fund Council, taking into account the comments of the Consortium.

54. **Integrating the evaluation needs of Donors:** While recognising the prerogative of donors to separately evaluate their funding of CGIAR programs outside Windows 1 and 2, this is not desirable and most donors have committed to move towards the use of central CGIAR systems including evaluation. In the interests of efficiency and the maximum usefulness of evaluations, donors' evaluation requirements will be integrated to the maximum extent possible with evaluation of the CRP, and any separate donor evaluations will be drawn on as much as possible for CRP evaluations. Managers will work for this at the time of negotiating projects with donors and in decisions on the evaluation work plan. Modalities will vary from consultation on terms of reference to full integration, with a strong preference for full integration. As previously noted evaluations of CRPs and the CGIAR system will examine donor behaviour in this regard.

## ***6.2 Biennial IEA Evaluation Report***

55. A public biennial report will be produced by the Head IEA on evaluation in the CGIAR for the information of the Consortium Board and Fund Council. It will report progress on delivery of the

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<sup>4</sup> Some of the current CRPs do not have fully developed evaluation or monitoring plans and their development is an early priority.

evaluation work plan and will include periodic assessments of the quality and usefulness of evaluation processes in evaluations commissioned by the Head IEA and the Centers/CRPs, and of evaluation follow-up and learning. It will synthesise overall findings and lessons from evaluation and provide summaries of evaluations. Through this document, the wider implications for the CGIAR of the growing body of evaluation evidence will be drawn and brought to the attention of the system, including the Fund Council and Consortium Board.

### ***6.3 IEA Budgeting***

56. The Fund Council will ensure that the work program of the IEA fulfils the commitments of this Policy and is fully funded. The target and ceiling budget to be progressively achieved for the central IEA evaluation budget will be in the order of one percent of CGIAR Windows 1 and 2. It is considered that significant expenditure in excess of that figure is not currently justified by the absorptive capacity for independent evaluation but significant under-expenditure would not permit an adequate evaluation program on the lines defined in the Policy and would be out of line with international practice for evaluation of complex programs, including those for research or complex institutions. The IEA budget covers all IEA central functions, including evaluation of CRPs as a whole, the overall evaluation of the CGIAR and facilitation of the Community of Practice. Setting a target in this way helps to ensure the independence of evaluation and reduce the work of annual budget definition.
57. CRP managements will ensure that a minimum of one percent of total expenditure is budgeted and available for conduct of evaluation within the CRP commissioned by CRP management, including preparatory and impact studies.
58. Centers will ensure that for the review and evaluation of gene banks, central scientific services, etc. a minimum of one percent of the total expenditure for those areas is budgeted and available.