



# Quality of Research for Development in the CGIAR Context



Independent  
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As CGIAR implements its 2020 reform, the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) can play an important role by helping to ensure that CGIAR research is of high quality and has a clear path to impact for development outcomes. The frame of reference described here, a revision of the 2017 Quality of Research for Development Framework (Qo4RD), was developed to help the System Organization design research strategies and programs, build new project-monitoring systems, and design performance management standards.

## FRAME OF REFERENCE

The QoR4D has four key elements that form the basis for a common frame of reference across the CGIAR:

- 1. Relevance** refers to the importance, significance, and usefulness of the research objectives, processes, and findings to the problem context and to society, taking into account CGIAR's comparative advantage. It incorporates strategic stakeholder engagement along the agricultural research for development (AR4D) continuum, original and socially relevant research aligned to national and regional priorities, the CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework (SRF), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also recognizes the importance of international public goods.
- 2. Scientific credibility** requires that research findings be robust and that sources of knowledge be dependable and sound. It includes a clear demonstration that data used are accurate, that the methods used to procure the data are fit for purpose, and that findings are clearly presented and logically interpreted. It recognizes the importance of good scientific practice, such as peer review.
- 3. Legitimacy** means that the research process is fair and ethical and perceived as such. This feature encompasses the ethical and fair representation of all involved (e.g., funders, research teams, collaborators, policy makers, farmers) and consideration of the interests and perspectives of intended users. It requires transparency, sound management of potential conflicts of interest, recognition of the responsibilities that go with public funding, genuine involvement of partners in co-design, and recognition of partners' contributions.
- 4. Effectiveness** means that research generates knowledge, products, and services that lead to innovations and provide solutions. It implies that research is designed, implemented, and positioned for use within a dynamic theory of change, with appropriate leadership, capacity development, research skills, and a supportive, enabling environment to translate knowledge into action and to help generate desired outcomes.

## USING THE FRAME OF REFERENCE

This integrated QoR4D frame of reference aims to bring coherence to the System and enhance the overall quality of AR4D within Centers, Programs, and Platforms. It helps focus attention on:

- how research strategies and specific research questions are developed and defined;
- how teams and the overall Center, Program, and Platform are organized to ensure that all the functions needed to translate research into intended outcomes and impact are performed;
- whether and how intended outcomes are being realized;
- aligning objective criteria for evaluation of the quality of research programs and the outputs and outcomes of research teams; and
- whether learning systems are in place and working to support ongoing reflection, lesson learning, and improvement.

Overall, this frame of reference is expected to be used as a tool to (1) better implement agreed-upon strategies within the CGIAR System, (2) foster a culture that enables the highest standard of research, and (3) give confidence to funding partners that there is a commitment to strengthening QoR4D in all aspects of CGIAR research.

## IMPLICATIONS

The implications for this integrated QoR4D frame of reference is its capacity to bring coherence and applicable commonality to the System and enhance the overall quality of AR4D within Centers, Programs, and Platforms. QoR4D will guide their strategies, research activities, definition and implementation of individual projects, and management of team and individual scientist performance. Successful implementation will require CGIAR to strongly commit to adopt QoR4D at all levels of management and governance and to share the lessons learned during its implementation.

## TECHNICAL NOTE FEATURES

- Background and context information
- Elaboration of the frame of reference
- Case studies for the frame of reference in a Program and Center context
- Table with criteria used to assess performance of individual researchers or small teams through a QoR4D lens
- Table with criteria used to assess performance of Programs through a QoR4D lens
- Implications of the frame of reference in the work of ISDC, independent evaluation functions, and at the level of the System Organization

Visit <https://cas.cgiar.org/publications/quality-research-development-cgiar-context-1> for more information.

