

Consortium Management Response to Maize external review

The Consortium commends the review panel for the quality of the report, and the insights it provides into the MAIZE research program. MAIZE is led by CIMMYT and brings together the research activities of CIMMYT and IITA. Initially approved for a three-year period beginning in mid-2011, a 6-month extension was awarded until the end of 2014, to synchronize the funding cycle for all CRPs and a further extension was approved for 2015–2016.

Overall, the Evaluation Team concluded that *“MAIZE is progressing well and it represents a promising program that is already delivering results”*.

The review concludes that:

- MAIZE adds value compared with the previous center-based approach to crop research, and warrants continuation beyond the 2015-2016 extension phase.
- For the most part MAIZE is a coherent program with a strong comparative advantage in the global setting, largely due to the unique genetic resources held in trust by the two centers
- The long established partnerships of CIMMYT and IITA and their presence in and agreements with countries hosting research in the developing regions targeted.

Recommendations from IEA

The evaluation team makes 11 recommendations, 8 of which are fully accepted by the Maize CRP team and 3 of which are partially accepted.

The three partially accepted recommendations are considered below:

Recommendation 2 (Relevance): *MAIZE should review its priorities in Flagship Projects 4 and 5 where it has less comparative advantage and where smallholders already have a certain access to appropriate technology. This needs to be considered in the light of the large proportion of W3 funding. In particular, MAIZE needs to consider reducing efforts in final product (hybrid) delivery where the private sector is strong. MAIZE should also consider reducing investments in the non-germplasm components of FP5 areas of aflatoxin and postharvest storage research where other agencies have greater comparative advantage.*

This recommendation underscores the growing importance of the private sector and the need to take a more strategic view of the role of the maize CRP to magnify areas of comparative advantage. A more strategic view of comparative advantage should emphasize the inclusion of smallholders, in particular women producers, and their organizations **as private sector actors**. Indeed the evaluation team correctly point out that comparative advantage is a

“dynamic term” that needs to be constantly reviewed, reinforcing the need for the Maize CRP to be agile and dynamic in outlook and action. **The Consortium will play close attention to this topic when reviewing pre-proposals and also mechanisms that support and stimulate Public Private Partnerships that are now major priorities for key donor agencies.**

Recommendation 3 (Relevance): *MAIZE should establish pro-active research and monitoring capability to provide foresight on emerging issues in diseases and to support environmental characterization.*

The need for robust foresight analysis is essential to target and access the appropriate resources and is not a short-term issue but needs to be built into long-term programmatic planning. The CB is fully supportive of this recommendation and would seek to ensure that appropriate foresight activities were built into a future Maize Agri-food program.

Recommendation 6 (Effectiveness): *MAIZE should institute management measures to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in management of staff and research activities over the long term. These measures should include: 1) processes for engaging and motivating staff in delivery oriented research through mentoring, training, and cross disciplinary and cross-institutional lateral learning; 2) protocols for data collection and management; 3) streamlined processes for linking exploratory science and research outputs through multiple stages to intermediate products and final products delivered by MAIZE, and; 4) integration of project implementation to program objectives over medium- and long-term through innovation platforms and long-term field trials.*

The need to convert existing data into knowledge is of great potential, particularly with respect to CGIAR field data and is reflected in the Expressions of Interest issued in the second call guidance documentation. In addition the need to create a balanced portfolio was emphasized by the MTR where discovery science needs to be managed alongside translational product development. The CB supports this recommendation and would encourage the Maize CRP to fully embrace the opportunities reflected in this specific recommendation.

In regard to those recommendations that are accepted in full, the Consortium believes it important to reiterate in particular the recommendation on leadership of the MAIZE CRP, as follows:

Recommendation 11 (Impact and Sustainability): *CIMMYT and IITA should agree on the establishment of a single global maize program in the CGIAR that integrates efforts of the two centers. This MAIZE program should be led by a director.*

The Consortium considers it imperative that the governance arrangements for the new maize agri-food program are aligned with the IEA governance review, and the levels of responsibility assigned to the CRP Director clearly defined.

In conclusion the Consortium accepts and supports all the recommendations of the evaluation team and agrees that they should be taken into account during the development of the Maize Agri-Food System next generation CRP.