

The SPIA Strategy (January 29, 2008)

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Vision

- The CGIAR is regarded as a leader in both the design and conduct of quality impact assessments across the whole spectrum of its agricultural research for development priorities that trace, measure and document impacts in terms of the CGIAR goals of enhanced food security, poverty alleviation and sustained natural resources.
- Investors in the CGIAR have added confidence from the cumulative body of credible evidence of impacts such that they are satisfied about the value of their past investments, leading to sustained and increasing levels of future investments.
- The centres of the CGIAR have institutionalised impact assessment such that *ex post* impact assessment is regarded as an essential part of prudent research management for accountability purposes and for linking to *ex ante* strategic planning.

Mandate

- To provide CGIAR Members with timely, objective, comprehensive, credible and digestible information on the whole spectrum of realised impacts from past CGIAR research investments and resultant outputs in terms of the CGIAR goals of enhanced food and nutrition security, poverty alleviation and enhanced natural resources.
- To work in partnership with the centres to enhance the rigor, quality, coverage, number and scope of ex post impact assessments and to catalyse the development and use of novel methodologies.
- To encourage and facilitate strategic feedback from ex post impact assessments in research planning at both the System and centre levels.

Tactics

To realise its vision and fulfil its mandate, SPIA will:

- Commission independent, peer-reviewed studies to: (i) advance methodologies, particularly in more difficult areas such as natural resource management, policy and biodiversity research and training/capacity building; both centres and ARIs will be encouraged to be involved in this component, (ii) synthesize available evidence from credible ex post impact assessments, and (iii) draw lessons for the future and identify best practices.
- Summarise and package the cumulative credible information on the impacts of centre and NARS research into easily digested publications and web-based vehicles as part of a communications strategy targeted at investors;
- Broaden the scope of ex post impact assessments beyond economic indicators and advancing further down the impact pathway toward indicators that reflect more closely impacts in terms of CGIAR goals of sustainable poverty alleviation, enhanced food and nutrition security, and enhanced natural resources. These will include pecuniary, non-

pecuniary, direct and indirect indicators, and their development will require collaboration with social scientists other than economists, biological/physical scientists and evaluation professionals, and implies a need to broaden the disciplinary composition of SPIA membership and increasingly involve ARIs as collaborators;

- Periodically monitor investor, centre and NARS demands for impact assessment information to ensure it is responding to felt needs;
- Retain its objectivity and independence while working closely with the centres in a professional peer relationship;
- Make ex post impact assessment more utilisation focused especially in research planning at both the System and centre levels by providing strategic feedback;
- Place special emphasis on the conduct of ex post impact assessments in areas where few studies have been undertaken, thereby closing gaps in coverage;
- Act as a clearing house to foster acceptable standards and best practices for impact assessment to enhance credibility;
- Encourage the development and exchange of globally available integrated databases among the centres and partners that will enhance the quality, scope and comparability of their ex post impact assessments.