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SCIENCE COUNCIL

CGIAR CENTER AND CHALLENGE PROGRAM MEDIUM TERM PLANS 2010-2012
SC COMMENTARY AND CENTER & CHALLENGE PROGRAM RESPONSES

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OVERVIEW

Why MTPs and why review them in the transition to a new CGIAR?

The CGIAR is poised to move into a new direction guided and monitored through the Strategy and Results Framework and implemented through the Mega-programs. The building blocks for some, but not all of the Mega-programs, are the current MTP Projects of the Centers and CPs. A well-founded new CGIAR must be built on the best foundations. The SC's review of the Medium Term Plans (MTP) of the Centers and Challenge programs (CPs) in the transition aims at enhancing the building blocks for such a construct. The building blocks should represent coherent and innovative components of research that is highly relevant to the CGIAR goals and deserves to continue under the new arrangement.

The SC reviews the MTPs for programmatic content and relevance, for significant programmatic changes usually following EPMR recommendations and revision of strategic plans, for opportunities for synergies among Centers and CPs to improve efficiency, and for clarity in planning and setting targets for outputs and outcomes. The SC emphasizes that MTPs should be developed in line with the Center's and CP's mandate and strategic plan and should reflect the implementation of agreed EPMR recommendations.

The quality and utility of the MTPs

The quality of the MTPs continues to improve. Thus, starting from 2007, the SC identified MTPs (CIFOR, CIMMYT, ICARDA, IFPRI, ILRI, IRRI, IWMI, Generation CP, HarvestPlus CP, SSA-CP) that have described for the most part a relevant and coherent research agenda with sufficiently measurable and feasible outputs and output targets. Reviewing such MTPs was deemed necessary only periodically. In reporting on most of these Centers and CPs the SC mentions only significant changes from last year. For the others the SC provides a more detailed commentary. In so doing the SC has identified weaknesses or concerns in some of the MTPs that ought to be addressed by the Centers and CPs, whether they continue to implement their research agenda independently or whether parts of the agenda are transformed into Mega-programs. The comments on the need for further MTP assessment are based on an assumption that in the absence of completed Mega-program plans, Centers and CPs will continue their planning as currently done and will need to present their workplans to donors for funding in the form of a Center or CP MTP. The SC considers it likely that some advice regarding the current MTPs may be needed for guiding the planning and funding during the transition.

A few MTPs remain, in our opinion, either below par as a credible planning and monitoring tool, or contain sections of research of questionable relevance, or the research, as presented, does not contribute to a focused agenda. The commentaries on those MTPs focus on sections that are considered weak. In our opinion, unless the research is more carefully described, it will be difficult to judge how it can provide the quality building blocks needed for the new Mega-programs. Ultimately, however, the relevance to the Mega-programs can only be judged when there is more information about the nature and scope of the new programs.

There are other situations where MTP monitoring would still seem warranted. MTPs serve the

annual reporting on the implementation of EPMRs (CPER for CPs) until implementation has been completed. It is expected that the reporting is also reflected in changes in the project content and part of the SC's commentary has been to assess the extent of the implementation. Some Centers and CPs are in the process of implementing the external review recommendations, and monitoring progress is advisable. A few CPs have not had an in-depth MTP assessment since they were externally reviewed and begun a 2nd phase, and therefore their MTPs would warrant an assessment next year.

The SC's judgment of the need of monitoring of the MTPs next year is indicated at the end of the individual commentaries in the sections below.

Making the MTPs multi-functional

One strong driver for improving the quality of MTPs seems to be the multiple use of them as both an internal and an external planning and monitoring instrument. An increasing number of Centers now link their internal results-based management system to the MTPs. The preparation and submission of the MTPs was (for the second year) through an online software application "EasyMTP" (the local module) which was developed by the ICT-KM program in collaboration with the Centers. MTPs are no longer just "required documents", but they are compilations of planning data submitted to a central System level database (CGMap). There are multiple benefits from these online applications: internally the EasyMTP software facilitates the continuous process of planning, i.e. building on earlier MTPs, decentralization of the responsibility of planning, and linking the MTP data to the Center's internal project management systems. At the System level, CGMap allows analysis of collective components of research, which in the future is important for the Mega-programs. It also facilitates the use of the MTPs by the Centers and programs and, importantly, by external reviewers for monitoring of progress.

These developments that increasingly serve the System and its donors, in addition to serving the Centers, have transformed the MTPs from a bilateral document, that the SC needs to approve to initiate the CGIAR's funding cycle, to the System's planning platform. We hope that this transformation has removed any lingering sentiments that the MTPs are just an "added burden" and a "hoop" that the SC makes Centers jump through. In the transition towards the Strategy and Results Framework to guide all research planning in the CGIAR, it is of utmost importance that the component plans coming from Centers and programs are clear and informative. The components that remain in the new programs for implementing the SRF form the collective presentation of CGIAR's planned agenda and the basis for monitoring progress at different levels. Therefore the SC feels that medium-term planning needs to continue in the transition, and the transition needs to be facilitated by timely implementation of adjustments to the on-line submission process and CGMap to be compatible with the new CGIAR research implementation design.

SUMMARY

AFRICA RICE CENTER

The MTP shows a number of new strategic initiatives in response to the Center's recent EPMR. These are very appropriate. More comprehensive strategic planning will be needed to guide the focus, the formulation of outputs and delivery of outcomes through quality science as rice related activities are expanded in Africa. This will also guide the components of work that may move to a Mega-program. Collaboration with IRRI, important for the future of rice research in Africa, is

evolving in a positive way. It is also important that AfricaRice completes its implementation of the EPMR recommendations that are critical for the Center's research directions.

BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL

The MTP presents a continuation of the previous plan. The MTP presentation is very clear regarding changes from previous MTP, the IPG intent of research, and the intended activities to enhance outcome such as capacity strengthening and advocacy. Bioversity's projects on global germplasm conservation, use, valuation and policy issues and on the three commodities, *Musa*, cacao, and coconut its specifically targets are relevant and focused. The research on forestry species and other wild species is dispersed and opportunistic and needs to be more strategically focused. Research on enhancement, management and benefits of biodiversity in agriculture and forestry systems needs to be more clearly defined. The scope and focus of these activities could potentially expand over a huge area of topics. There is a need to define testable hypothesis for this research. The recent EPMR's analysis and recommendations are highly important in this regard. An assessment of Bioversity's MTP next year is warranted for monitoring the changes following from the EPMR.

CIAT

The MTP reflects some of the new strategic, and more Latin America focused directions that the Center published in early 2009 but the changes are not yet fully implemented. The MTP presents a continuation from former research but the portfolio has been re-structured. There are clear indications where some research is being phased out and where there is new or increased focus. The MTP describes the development of important partnerships/platforms, for instance in the Amazon Initiative and the Biotechnology platform for LAC. The future of the regional platform for integrated soil fertility management in Africa needs to be considered in the transition to the new CGIAR. It is important that CIAT's overall portfolio does not become too broad and there is a need to monitor the effect expanding activities in LAC will have in SSA and SE-Asia. Several changes are anticipated in the MTP but have not yet been implemented. In view of the Center's new strategic directions, and as there are questions of the breadth of the Center's research agenda including a major effort in SSA, the MTP should be reviewed again next year.

CIFOR

The MTP 2010-2012 is the second iteration following CIFOR's new strategic plan. It provides a good basis for planning and monitoring progress. Capacity building and the role of partnerships are very well articulated in the plan. CIFOR needs to be prominent in the global discussions on climate change but the Center needs to be cautious in this area. So much attention and funding is going to meeting short-term demands to support climate change negotiations that other longer-term research areas may be neglected. The MTP presents a suitable building block for the overall forestry agenda in the new CGIAR.

CIMMYT

The MTP presents a continuation of the Center's research agenda from the previous year. The most significant change is that CIMMYT is re-organizing its social science and environmental research in two new programs, a Socioeconomics Program and a Conservation Agriculture Program. The MTP provides a good basis for internal planning and monitoring.

CIP

CIP's MTP reflects a new Corporate Plan and move to a two-part strategy: focus on global issues and on large agroecological regions. The MTP is concise and suitable for internal planning and

monitoring. The presentation of the output-outcome planning is commendable. A significant change is that CIP's role in hosting three SWEPS (CONDESAN, Urban Harvest and GMP) is phased out. This change is helpful in consolidating the research agenda around the Center's mandate and comparative advantage. The Center undertakes research on the interphase of agriculture and health and nutrition; this requires careful consideration of strategic partners to undertake the health related work while CIP maintains a clear focus on its comparative strengths.

ICARDA

The MTP presents a continuation from the previous MTP with a good level of clarity and it is concise. The MTP, however, shows the same weaknesses in planning and content of the activities as were identified last year. Project 6 on diversification and sustainable intensification is a notable example. This component of the MTP is weak in terms of the coherence of the goals, research content (vs. down stream activities) and the scope and scale of output targets. There are some delays in ICARDA's implementation of the EPMR recommendations this needs to be monitored. The assessment of Project 6, particularly in the context of re-organizing research in Mega-programs and monitoring of the Center's implementation of the EPMR recommendations would be warranted next year.

ICRISAT

ICRISAT's MTP does not yet reflect the new strategic planning that was central to the EPMR recommendations. The proposed strategic planning and the EPMR implementation schedule (provided in the MTP) needs to be tightened and become more urgent because the new strategic plan must underpin the research planning and implementation of other EPMR recommendations. Next year there is need to monitor both the EPMR implementation and the changes that result in the research agenda following the strategic planning.

IFPRI

IFPRI's MTP portfolio is for the most part unchanged. The SC notes that there are new or planned programs ('Urban-Rural Linkages', 'Food and Water Safety', 'Rebuilding after Emergencies and Crises', 'Gender and Assets') that address issues also researched at other Centers and outside the CGIAR. These deserve attention in building the new Mega-programs so that the most strategic issues can be addressed in a coherent way building synergy among partners.

IITA

The MTP presents a continuation from the previous MTP on an agenda that is grounded on the R4D model. There are good details on partnerships, impact pathways and the IPG nature of the program outputs, but the logframes are too generic to provide a useful basis for monitoring. Outcome targets should be more clearly defined particularly given that the R4D model includes a mid-process assessment of initial outcomes and an explicit phase-out strategy for the Center. A new Strategic Plan is anticipated to be completed this year. More emphasis should be given to elaborating the plans for breeding procedures to ensure fertilizer responsiveness of the important food crops, and to fertilizer research in general. These are issues that were also raised in IITA's recent EPMR. The broader issue of addressing and coordinating IPM research in the new CGIAR deserves attention in relation to IITA leadership and in the transition to Mega-programs. The lack of clarity in the logframes and the anticipated completion of a new Strategic Plan that will influence the next MTP make assessment of the MTP warranted next year.

ILRI

The MTP presents a continuation from the previous MTP with modest updates. There is more

emphasis on the sustainable intensification of small-holder crop livestock systems, and enhancement of impact assessment. The latter will be important to the Center as it relies to a greater extent in promoting policy change in the sector on the basis of its study outputs. The MTP provides a good basis for internal planning and monitoring.

IRRI

This MTP confirms earlier directions resulting from the Center's strategic plan of 2007. There are new initiatives resulting from significant additional resources secured already this year. IRRI's EPMP, completed this year, endorsed the program directions including the major growth areas. The MTP provides a good basis for internal planning and monitoring.

IWMI

The MTP outlines IWMI's new vision, mission and new thematic areas as defined in the strategic plan from 2008. There is a new thematic structure with significant and appropriate shifts of emphasis in some areas, for example climate change, revitalizing irrigation and water quality. The arguments for prioritization and theme selection as well as for de-emphasizing some areas appear systematic and sound. The new theme 4 (Water and Society) strengthens social science research and capacity and reflects a response to the EPMP recommendations. Other improved aspects in this MTP include strengthening of ties with other CGIAR Centers this year, detailed impact pathways and innovative uptake strategies addressing earlier concerns. The MTP provides a good basis for internal planning and monitoring.

WORLD AGROFORESTRY CENTER (ICRAF)

The MTP builds on the previous one, reflecting the new strategic plan and introducing only minor modifications. There is a stronger research orientation and the development portfolio is diminished. With the exception of GRP4 (surveillance of land health) where the Center's comparative advantage is not clear, the program is in general appropriate. The Center projects a significant increase in funding from the 2008 level and needs to guard its focus with better prioritization (particularly GRP1) and further strengthening of the strategic research content including ambition in output targets. GRP5 needs to ensure strong linkage with the new climate change CP. ICRAF also needs to consider carefully its plan for partnerships and strategic capacity building of the intermediary agencies in order for its research products to reach the ultimate beneficiaries. Due to questions remaining on the Center's comparative advantage, capacity and partnerships in some areas of planned research, an assessment of the MTP next year would be warranted in the context of re-organizing research in the Mega-programs.

WORLDFISH CENTER

The MTP is an update of the previous one. It contains a good representation of the Center's thinking of the development challenges in its sector. WorldFish Center reports having implemented all EPMP recommendations. One response was for the Center to identify a few large scientific issues where achievements can be made in reasonable time frames. The Center should further demarcate the tangible outputs it will produce en route to outcome and impact, where purely policy outcomes are difficult to influence and document. There is also a need for the Center to secure greater and more stable strategic support for its six initiatives. The MTP lays out a good plan for moving forward in these areas.

CLIMATE CHANGE, AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY (CCAFS) CHALLENGE PROGRAM

The MTP is a “provisional” plan with limited detail, but it is good as a general strategic document. The project portfolio is relevant in general but there is a need for better focus through a good prioritization framework. Important issues that need to be addressed in further planning include: (i) Need to tackle the challenge to make a global science network effectively deliver products; the networks upon which the CCAFS is built have not achieved sufficient practical impact in the past; (ii) Need to develop pragmatism and impact culture expected from CGIAR programs; (iii) Need to add clarity on where the added value will come from for agricultural development; (iv) The comparative advantage of CGIAR Centers with their links to NARS needs to be given more emphasis; (v) Strategy and selection criteria for partnerships needs to be clear, including recognition of what has been done and is done by others; (vi) Building scientific and policy capacity will warrant emphasis. The CCAFS MTP next year will be the first complete plan and its assessment is warranted also in the context of re-organizing research in Mega-programs.

GENERATION CHALLENGE PROGRAM

This MTP is the first to fully plan the 2nd phase of the program and address the recommendations of the 2008 CPER and donor review. Increased focus through seven production lines is presented in the overview, but the logframes do not reflect the same focus. The CP needs to develop an effective means to monitor the progress towards delivery. Considering the extent of the on-going changes shown and alluded to in the MTP, the future uncertainty, and the questions regarding the CP’s focus and ability to respond fully to the CPER, it would be advisable to monitor the planning and implementation of this CP in its second and final phase to steer it toward a successful completion or its restructuring as a platform for a Mega-program.

HARVESTPLUS CHALLENGE PROGRAM

The program is shifting from discovery to development research. While there is large funding linked to a new initiative (Nutrition, Economic, Communication Support) the program is scaling down its Phase 2 projects and crops due to lack of funds to support these. Given these shifts, the mid-course extension from a 2 phase to a 3-phase program and the on-going implementation of the CPER recommendations, it would be advisable to monitor the planning and implementation of the CP (either as CP or as component of a Mega-program).

WATER AND FOOD CHALLENGE PROGRAM

The MTP is a six-month update on the previous MTP submitted in December 2008 that described the context, rationale and initial ideas for the CP’s second phase. There are areas that need further elaboration: (i) Specific type of research to address the research questions enumerated under each output of the projects; (ii) Specific hypotheses to be tested; (iii) Methods/approaches to be used; (iv) Partnerships strategy; (v) Specificity in output descriptions. Although these areas deserve attention in the future whether or not the program continues as a CP or is transformed to a component of a Mega-program, the SC does not see need for assessing the CP MTP next year.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CHALLENGE PROGRAM

The MTP is an update of the previous MTP and presents the plans till the end of the three-year implementation phase. This phase was scheduled for 2007-2009 but due to delays is coming to completion in 2010. Following the ExCo-endorsed CPER recommendations, an external review is needed to advise the System about possible expansion of the CP activities, or transfer of promising and viable work to other organizations or forthcoming Mega-programs; and to advise FARA and relevant partners on strategies for sustaining the institutional structure and

momentum likely created by the SSA-CP in case the activities do not continue under the future organization.

SC COMMENTARY

AFRICA RICE CENTER (AfricaRice)

AfricaRice's MTP 2010-2012 builds on its MTP re-shaped last year, which the SC considered as a cohesive MTP for rice research in Africa. The Center is working on a new Strategic Plan, and it has developed a number of new strategic initiatives around the 2007 EPMR recommendations, the new partnership with IRRI and new funding (Gates). This approach (i.e. implementing new initiatives before a developing a new strategy) is justified in light of the changes currently taking place in the CGIAR. More comprehensive strategic planning will be needed in the future to guide and focus the formulation of outputs and delivery of outcomes through quality science as rice related activities are expanded in Africa. The Center provides a detailed account of the implementation of the EPMR recommendations, which is broadly satisfactory, but it has not fully addressed two of the recommendations that are related to focus and are critical for the Center's research directions.¹ The full implementation of these two recommendations in particular warrants future monitoring.

The MTP contains 4 Projects, all of which are relevant to the CGIAR. The MTP provides good scientific rationale for each project, with clear planning for IPGs. The Center expects that the multi-country and multi-location approach to data collection adopted in most projects ensures that 1) results across countries and locations will be comparable and easily aggregated across countries; 2) findings and lessons learned from the studies can be generalized outside the study countries; and 3) that recommendations from the project can be scaled-up and out to appropriate recommendation domains. There are appropriate analyses of pathways, and AfricaRice has well developed partnerships and capacity strengthening activities to implement some of the research and to facilitate uptake. The MTP has a strong capacity strengthening component appropriate for Africa.

For Project 1, Genetic Diversity and Improvement, the plan presents a good integration of different approaches to crop improvement including conventional breeding, marker-assisted selection and utilizing farmer knowledge. The project has four main outputs: 1-enhanced genetic diversity generated; 2-improved and stable rice lines and varieties with good grain quality available; 3-enhanced knowledge of GxE interactions for abiotic and biotic stresses available; and 4-enhanced involvement of farmers in rice genetic resources development established. Much of the EPMR recommendations have been taken up in these activities. However, it is not apparent that the project in output 3 has yet embraced a structured GxE analysis to better define and target the breeding program. This is an important next step; the importance of GxE analysis is also emphasized by the recent IRRI EPMR.

Project 2, Sustainable Productivity Enhancement, covers crop and NRM research related to intensification and diversification and the protection of environmental services, and aims to move research from plot to systems level and to introduce more systems thinking in general. The

¹ Recommendation 4 and Recommendation 7 *"In order to improve the priority setting process, the Panel recommends that WARDA collect relevant background information, assign appropriate weights to the constraints identified, focusing only on a few major constraints of regional interest for each rice ecosystem, and better define homogeneous target areas (e.g. through stratification of the biophysical and socio-economic environments)."*

program is specifically focused on the rainfed and irrigated lowlands, because the greatest opportunities to boost rice production in sub-Saharan Africa are expected within these ecologies. This renewed focus on the main ecosystems and the integration from plot to system are welcome changes.

Project 3, Learning and Innovation Systems, has a large development dimension and incorporates capacity building and partnerships issues with research on development. This is highly appropriate and it encapsulates work on African seed systems from which IPGs can be derived. Consequently, the activities are now more balanced for local vs. IPG outputs. The proposed Rice Information Gateway for Africa (RIGA) is also a welcome addition and will be a key IPG for the long term. Knowledge on rice varieties, rice-growing ecosystems, actors, networks, institutions and policies will be embedded in the RIGA, and linked to IRRI's Rice Knowledge Bank, and will influence the wider research community and various actors in the rice sector, including policymakers and the private sector. Multi-country studies on partnerships, seed systems, rural learning and post-harvest systems have the potential to lead to new policy recommendations, ultimately leading to more socially-inclusive research themes of importance to the wider region.

Project 4, Policy and Impact Assessment, encapsulates the Center's policy and impact work. It previously focused to a large extent on local goods activities but the revised plan is more relevant for IPGs.

The MTP is somewhat weak in the planning of outputs and outcomes. Their clarity varies across the projects and there is some confusion as to what constitutes an outcome (e.g. increased knowledge, available technologies and tools; and partnership and networks are not appropriate as outcomes)

AfricaRice has a very effective partnering strategy with NARS in Africa, with ARIs, particularly in Europe, and with IRRI. The Inland Valley Consortium (IVC) is a platform for large collaborative projects on inland valley development in sub-Saharan Africa involving 12 countries in West Africa and regional and international partners, convened by the Africa Rice Center. In the past the SC has raised concerns about some of the activities of AfricaRice in the IVC—they appeared more appropriate to be undertaken by the NARS members of the IVC. The IVC has undergone strategic analysis and activities are repositioned with a much clearer case now made for the IVC as a platform used by a suite of appropriate partners (IARCs, ARI and NARS). The IVC outputs and outcomes remain, however, poorly defined. These need to be better defined in order to monitor progress. External assessment of AfricaRice's MTP is not warranted next year.

AFRICA RICE CENTER RESPONSE

AfricaRice agrees with the importance of full implementation of EPMP Recommendations 4 and 7. The ongoing drafting of our new strategic plan is backed by a rigorous priority setting process.

AfricaRice agrees with the observation on GxE analysis in Project 1. An important grant from the Government of Japan will allow establishing a systematic approach to G x E analysis, in collaboration with NARS across the continent and IRRI.

AfricaRice notes the concern of the SC and will improve the definition of outputs and outcomes.

BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL

The 2010-2012 MTP is essentially a continuation of the previous plan in the F-series project structure adopted two years ago. The Center has provided useful information on the status of implementation of its research agenda noting progress toward planned output targets in most projects. The changes in the planned activities and outputs from last year, e.g. in Projects F06 and F07, are clearly explained. The MTP provides a useful analysis of the expected IPGs from each of the projects and in general most projects are targeting IPGs. The MTP clearly outlines the activities in capacity strengthening and training and in advocacy and other tasks that enhance outcomes. As the 6th EPMR has only just been completed its recommendations have not yet been factored into the current MTP.

In its commentary last year, the SC noted the relevance, focus and clarity of the outputs in the projects which deal largely with global germplasm conservation, use and policy issues, notably projects F04 through F09. In the SC's view these projects are in the heartland of Bioversity's mission. Bioversity continues to be a world leader in their implementation. With some of these more clarity on the exact research or the nature of activities to be undertaken by Bioversity vis-à-vis its partners would strengthen the plans. Regarding Project F06 (on conservation and sustainable use of forests and other wild species), the SC agrees with the recent EPMR that the Project's focus and scope should be tightened, following clear rationale, strategy and prioritization of species. Project F10, which is very closely related to the broader biodiversity issues Bioversity has started to address, is very relevant and its results should inform the Center's work related to biodiversity enhancement and advocacy.

The research agenda in the projects F01 (on enhancing the contribution of agricultural and forest biodiversity to human wellbeing), F02 (on productivity, resilience and ecosystem services from community management of diversity in production systems), and F03 (on managing biodiversity to improve livelihoods in commodity crop-based systems) still seems diverse and diffuse.² The recent EPMR has endorsed Bioversity's move to address the broader values of biodiversity; i.e. understanding the role and contribution of biodiversity in agricultural systems to generating benefits such as health, nutrition and resilience. The Panel provided useful insights and recommendations to the Center to gain more focus in these research areas it considered important. Whatever the Center chooses to focus on, the SC thinks it should be selective and precise about the scope of its work in the very broad area of biodiversity relevant to agricultural and forest systems, making a clear distinction between the theoretical and empirical research (with testable hypotheses identified) it intends to undertake—clearly defining the partners' roles, and the related facilitation, advocacy and networking roles in which the Center engages. The Center should also clearly establish to what extent it intends to target biodiversity at systems level or non-crop biodiversity, if at all (and which particular systems or interactions are being researched), and to what extent the research is focused on crop diversity and the internal genetic diversity of crops, forest species or maybe livestock.

Consistent with a key recommendation in the 6th EPMR about the need for empirical research in relation to measuring the effects of agrobiodiversity, Bioversity is planning a three-country (Benin, Kenya, South Africa) empirical analysis in Project F01 to build evidence, i.e., test hypotheses, about the nutritional value of agrobiodiversity in these distinct ecosystems and food

² The rationale for putting the Institutional Learning and Change Initiative into Project F01, where its activities account for one of the projects three outputs, is not clear.

systems. The SC encourages this development and concurs that, depending on results, this could provide scientific evidence for establishing to what extent, and under what conditions, local agrobiodiversity contributes to dietary diversity, human health and household incomes, and inform policy accordingly.

It is not always clear how much primary research is going on, for example under F01 in the new, three-country study. Many of the statements imply major research investments. The reality may be that the project teams are learning from secondary sources and disseminating the information, but this should be made explicit. The MTP should identify Bioversity's specific role(s) and what is planned and where, to show that the Center is involved in those aspects of a research project where it has a comparative advantage, e.g., especially for Projects F01 and F02. While most of the outputs and output targets in the MTP are clearly defined, lack of measurability (due to generic descriptions) for some outputs and output targets in these two projects was evident.

The MTP presents an assumption that "most of the world's agricultural biodiversity is found in marginalized areas." This premise runs through much of the MTP. It is not clear whether the assumption refers to biodiverse systems (all agriculturally important organisms), crop diversity of genetic diversity within species, or all these levels of biodiversity. Another concern relates to the many tacit references in the MTP implying that diverse cropping systems are more productive and resilient than cropping systems that involve only a few crops or monocultures. In order to even test this as a hypothesis certain threshold levels need to be considered to establish a minimum level of diversity for sustaining system productivity and resilience (to shocks that also ought to be specifically determined). There are situations where monocultures are highly productive, e.g., intensively managed rice in the Indo-Gangetic Plains. Research is needed to determine under what circumstances higher levels of crop diversity are better than lower levels and which criteria are used for considering the benefits. It is a very important strategic issue for the CGIAR and an area where Bioversity and the World Agroforestry Center, who also refers to these issues in its MTP, could collaborate.

As the recent EPMR report emphasized, Bioversity's capacity for networking with other institutions is unique and constitutes an important comparative advantage. It works mostly through partners, and its added value comes from its ability to catalyze a diversity of dispersed research activities and bring these into the public domain. This mode of operation offers lessons for the Mega-programs. Because networking is so fundamental to Bioversity's operation, it is essential to understand the different roles and responsibilities of Bioversity and its partners in the context of their joint activities—a point made as well in the EPMR report. In the MTP the degree of specificity on partnerships provided for the outputs varies considerably across the projects. Two examples illustrate the point about variability: While Output 1 of F04 (*Musa* genetic resources effectively conserved and exchanged) has an excellent description of partners' roles in the description on p. 52

"Other CGIAR Centers develop standard guidelines for storage of clonal crops (CIP, CIAT, IITA) and molecular characterization (IITA). SWEPs contribute to a more effective Global System for the management of genetic resources (SGRP). NARS from 6 countries and 3 regions conduct field verification trials and collect new germplasm. Universities provide medium and long-term storage of *Musa* genetic resources (KULeuven), conduct virus pre-indexing and therapy (FUSAGx) and collect and duplicate unique germplasm (University of Kisangani). ARIs contribute their expertise in molecular characterization (CIRAD) and virus indexing (QDPI&F). The private sector contributes its expertise in molecular characterization (DARt)."

the description for Output 1 of F02 (p. 28-29) is inadequate.

"Two NARS, eight research organizations and two education institutes have a key role in collaborative

research with local institutions and communities to assess the amount and distribution of diversity managed by farmers for crop species and by forest dwellers for wild relatives of crops. The agricultural extension systems under the ministries and departments of agriculture and the environment, together with NGOs and community based organizations promote the adoption of diversity rich solutions to improve productivity.”

Notwithstanding the caveats elaborated above, the clarity and level of detail in this MTP, overall, make it a useful tool for the planning and monitoring of research and other activities of the Center. The SC is confident that the Center will address the issues about scope, focus and clarity of some of the projects in its response to the 6th EPMP. An assessment of Bioversity’s MTP next year is warranted for monitoring changes following from the EPMP and in the context of re-organizing research in Mega-programs.

BIOVERSITY RESPONSE

Bioversity is pleased to note that the SC considers that the clarity and level of detail in the 2010-2012 MTP make it a useful tool for the planning and monitoring of research and other activities of the Center. We are particularly pleased to learn that the SC agrees with the recent EPMP conclusion that Bioversity’s capacity for networking with other institutions is unique, and constitutes an important comparative advantage that offers lessons for the proposed Consortium Mega-programmes.

As in previous years, the SC considers the Projects that deal with global germplasm conservation, use and policy issues (Projects F04 to F09) are in the heartland of Bioversity’s mission, and that Bioversity continues to be a world leader in their implementation.

Whilst acknowledging the recent EPMP’s endorsement of Bioversity’s move to a broader agenda, the SC still considers the research agenda in Projects F01, F02 and F03 too diverse and diffuse. We are making efforts to further sharpen our focus, and to further clarify the roles of our partners and ourselves, in these Projects. As identified by the CGIAR System Review, the current funding mechanisms of the donors encourage dispersed, unconnected research activities, and therefore make it very difficult for Centers to develop a coherent, well-focused research agenda.

We also accept the SC recommendation to clearly establish when we are targeting biodiversity at the system level, between species or within species; and to what extent the research is focused on crops, forest species or livestock. Whilst the majority of our research focuses on within crop species diversity, we do also research the diversity of the other components of agricultural biodiversity, including trees, and policy research aspects of livestock, pollinators and soil micro-organisms.

The SC strongly agrees with the key recommendation of the 6th EPMP that Bioversity should build evidence to test the hypothesis that local agrobiodiversity contributes to dietary diversity, human health and household incomes. Relevant field work is already underway in a number of countries to collect such evidence.

The SC questions two important premises which it sees running through much of the MTP. The first is a perceived assumption that “most of the world’s agricultural biodiversity is found in marginalized areas”, and whether this biodiversity refers to biodiverse systems, crop diversity, genetic diversity within species, or all these levels of biodiversity. The so-called Vavilov centers of crop diversity are indeed located in the South and tend to be concentrated in “marginal” areas. Our research and that of others has shown that small-scale farmers in marginal areas do maintain high levels of inter- and intra-specific diversity for many different crops and animal breeds. The reasons not only have to do with the presence of biophysical stresses,

but also with the need to fulfill multiple livelihood requirements, in many cases in the absence of well-functioning markets and well-developed infrastructure.

The second premise relates to the “many tacit references implying that diverse cropping systems are more productive and resilient than cropping systems that involve only a few crops or monocultures”. We believe that there has been a misinterpretation by the SC on this issue. Bioversity does not think that diverse cropping systems are necessarily more productive than less diverse systems in all situations, although they would almost certainly be more resilient in the face of unpredictable conditions, such as the failure of rains or flooding or the introduction of new pests or diseases. However, in agriculturally marginal areas, an important objective of low resource farmers is to reduce the risk of crop failure, which would be catastrophic, rather than to maximize yield. More diverse cropping systems ensure that no matter what conditions prevail during a particular year, the farmer will be sure of some production. We fully agree with the SC that “research is needed to determine under what circumstances higher levels of crop diversity are better than lower levels and which criteria are used for considering the benefits”, and we hope to be able to expand our research beyond what we have underway already to further evaluate this question, as advised by the EPMR. This area of research does indeed address “a very important strategic issue for the CGIAR”. The suggestion that we could collaborate more with the World Agroforestry Centre is well taken.

A less strategic question raised by the SC refers to the location of the ILAC initiative in Project F01. Where best to locate an inter-Centre initiative, fully funded by restricted grants, is indeed not clear. We have located it under Project F01 since this is the Project where Bioversity’s expertise in economics is lodged, along with Bioversity’s own expertise in impact assessments.

We note that an assessment of Bioversity’s next MTP is warranted in order to monitor changes following the 6th EPMR, and in the context of re-organizing research under the proposed Mega-programs.

CIAT

In 2008, CIAT revised its strategic directions and indicated last year that the MTP for 2010 would be substantially revised and focused on strategic objectives essential for eco-efficient agriculture for Latin America and selected targets in Africa and South East Asia. Thus the new MTP is being built on a tri-partite strategy of three research areas: *Agrobiodiversity* – Providing affordable and nutritious food as well as pathways out of poverty by increasing the productivity of crops; *Tropical soils fertility management* – Overcoming one of small farmers’ greatest obstacles to sustained increases in agricultural production; *Latin America and the Caribbean* – Working with partners.

The MTP Project portfolio consists of 10 programs that represent by and large restructuring of CIAT’s previous MTP projects under the new research areas. There are signals for several changes (see below) but they are yet not all in place. At Project level there are only a few changes from the previous outcome lines. A new program on Decision Support and Policy Analysis (under LAC) takes on relevant research from the earlier projects on Agroecosystems Resilience and Linking Smallholder Farmers to Growth Markets; the tropical fruits research from the latter is continued in a new independent program. The 10 programs are very consistent with the CGIAR’s priorities. The changes in the MTP reflect CIAT’s response to several of the 6th EPMR recommendations that the Center reports to have fully implemented.

In order to gain strategic focus CIAT has deleted or is reducing many past activities, such as work on methods for farmer participatory research, and rural innovations. In NRM research focus will

be on integrated soil fertility management and ecosystem services leaving out several areas such as community-level watershed management and crop and ecosystem health. In crop improvement there is also increased focus through shift to the development of source materials (pre-breeding) for partner breeding programs and devolution of work on pests and diseases in some crops to NARS. These changes are still presented as work in progress. The SC considers CIAT is proceeding to the right direction, as the improved focus will strengthen the Center's ability to implement its strategy and better address CGIAR strategic priorities. This MTP provides a tool for resource mobilization such that CIAT can maintain focus on strategic issues.

Within programs these changes are reflected in fewer outputs and what appears to be a clearer focus for the remaining outputs. In general, the IPGs are clearly identified. The crop-oriented programs form a relevant, well-planned and well-focused part of the MTP that largely presents a continuum from the previous plan. The SC notes a significant increase in funding to the bean program in comparison with earlier projections (about 80% higher budget allocation in 2009 than estimated in the last MTP). This growth is not elaborated in the program plan. Last year the SC commended CIAT for the TSBF plans, particularly on soil fertility management. This quality has been maintained with more focus through targeting the main cropping-systems on one hand and impact zones on the other hand and thus building an effective platform in Africa. The project has added a specific agro-ecology zone in Latin America. The TSBF-2 will look, for example, at production system effects on ecosystem functioning reflecting CIAT's overall strategic emphasis on eco-efficiency and in the context of climate change. The targeting of the work on major systems in Africa and Latin America and on understanding processes should enhance spillovers across the systems.

The SC notes increased efforts on tropical fruits that makes sense as part of CIAT's restored attention on LAC and is reported to respond to regional demand. However, care is needed that this potentially very large topic with multiple demands for action on different aspects of different species does not lead to fragmentation of CIAT's efforts. Work on Musa (output target on screening plantain clones for resistance) should be done by Bioversity's Musa program.

CIAT proposes to intensify its research in decision support and policy analysis; there are four foci: climate change, ecosystem services, linking farmers to markets, and impact assessment. The Decision and Policy Analysis Program is yet a work in progress. It aims to combine some of the work from a Markets, Institutions and Livelihoods project (MTP 2008-2010) and the more recent Agroecosystems Resilience project and strengthen work on policy analysis. Work on climate change is new. Here there are plans to better define target environments for drought and thus set priorities in this research for LAC. Also there are plans to define likely pest and disease injuries under changing climate. These are strategically important outputs to better prioritize work on climate change in the LAC. In general, CIAT puts a lot of emphasis on climate change in several programs. As yet there is no mention of the Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security Challenge Program (CCAFS). The SC urges that both the CCAFS and CIAT ensure full collaboration as both begin their research agendas. Overall the Decision and Policy Analysis Program is a bit of a mixed bag and needs more development to focus on doable outputs of value for setting priorities for other projects in CIAT and for work in LAC and for policies in the region. The SC encourages CIAT to make effective use of the analysis from the upcoming report of the Social Science Review to ensure CIAT maximizes its comparative advantage in this area and remains focused on quality *ex ante* analysis for priority setting for the region and in policy development.

CIAT convenes two systemwide initiatives. The Participatory Research and Gender Analysis program (PRGA) will focus on just two outputs: 1) mainstreaming gender analysis and 2) enabling women to adapt to climate change. CIAT notes that there is still need for mainstreaming both participatory research and gender analysis in the system and describes its own recent actions and those of the Amazon initiative to strengthen gender analysis and include a gender component in research. The SC finds the PRGA's output 1 appropriately targeted and hopes that in the CGIAR transition the PRGA through its experience and networks can be helpful in assisting the CGIAR to bring gender issues appropriately into Mega-program design. However it is not yet clear what work is to be done specifically to address climate change; the work described is focused on participatory plant breeding (PPB) and it appears that that CIAT will lead a new alliance for PPB. Such efforts should be well aligned with the CGIAR forthcoming changes. The SC notes that there is no apparent effort to quantify the benefits from PPB which is a pity.

The MTP for the Amazon Initiative provides a detail listing of the potential IPG (a total of 17!) and a description of the proposed pathways for each of the planned outputs: *Fair, financially attractive market value chains for Amazon products, Enhanced benefits from forests for livelihoods and the environment, Adoption of sustainable land use systems in deforested and degraded area and Mitigation and adaptation to climate change.* This is as yet a small program (based on the financing of around 0.5m US\$) with potentially a larger agenda. The SC notes that the work planned (as written in the logframes) is more focused than in the previous years and urges the Initiative to maintain that focus in this initial phase.

Capacity building is addressed in all CIAT's programs, integrated into research outputs and shown in explicit output targets. These activities can indeed be considered as part priority activities rather than stand-alone as they are integrated into research targeted to specific priority goals. Such close integration of research and capacity building is also foreseen necessary in the future Mega-programs.

The logframes are clearly presented for monitoring progress, but there is some discrepancy between output descriptions and the content of work as illustrated in the logframe output targets (that are presented only till 2011). This may be due to the fact that the program and output descriptions predict several changes that will take place in the future. The impact pathway descriptions lack analysis of any constraining factors and present very theoretical scenarios for uptake and outcome. It is hoped that, in an interactive learning process, the incentives for change of practices in such areas as environmental services and adaptation and mitigation of climate change will be more carefully understood.

CIAT is advancing two initiatives on larger partnerships and platforms (Biotechnology Consortium for LAC, and regional platform for integrated soil fertility management in Africa), which are very appropriate and seem to fit well with the new multi-partner model of implementing research in the CGIAR. It is advisable to develop these programs (anticipated in 2010) as part of the Mega-program development to ensure full compatibility with the new structures. As several changes are anticipated in the MTP but not yet in place for implementation of the Center's new strategic directions, and as there are questions of the breadth of the Center's research agenda including a major effort in SSA, the MTP deserves attention next year.

CIAT RESPONSE

CIAT is pleased to receive positive and encouraging comments on the MTP. The Council rightly mentions that new strategic areas are well defined and that in some projects and outputs more definition is needed. CIAT agrees with such comments and confirms that the transition to the new strategy will take more than one MTP. CIAT would like to clarify a few concerns raised by the Science Council.

Decision Support and Policy Analysis (DAPA), referred as a 'mixed bag', is a true reflection on the MTP from a thematic perspective. Four outputs are proposed on quite diverse themes, however as stated in the introduction our approach is actually highly focused on spatial and economic analysis. The four themes came out of an extensive consultation process with relevant partners and hence the program is tailored towards serving the demands of other CIAT programs and key partners. DAPA's experience over the year has been very positive, with confirmed matching between the demands for policy analysis and the types of thematic areas we operate in. At the time of writing the MTP, Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security Challenge Program (CCAFS) was still being formed and hence no explicit link was made. CIAT is pleased to inform that DAPA's program leader Dr Andy Jarvis is one of the 8 authors of the Challenge Program proposal, and is currently shortlisted as a part-time theme leader on adapting to progressive change. CCAFS is indeed going to become a key partner for the climate change output of the DAPA program, and indeed other research areas of CIAT.

The overall statement about the PRGA is well received, especially in bringing gender issues into future Mega-Program design. However, CIAT reminds the SC that the Center as a host of the SWEP is complying with earlier wise SC and CGIAR advice and is closing down PRGA as of December 2009. At the same time, CIAT is building on almost two decades of participatory and gender related research experience and creating a new research program as of 2010 which will link with the proposed CGIAR Gender Platform. SC notes that 'there is no apparent effort to quantify the benefits from the Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB)'. This is not quite right and there are published documents that show PPB work and Impact Assessment efforts conducted by PRGA scientists or associated ones funded by the Program. In addition, there were small grants that top up ongoing activities in various Centers, including PPB. PRGA has not done its own PPB due to lack of funds- but also because there was not a mandate to do so.

The new Tropical Fruits Program, follows earlier SC advice on investing in high value product research, and is consolidating its strategy around disciplines for intervention rather than species. Nonetheless, criteria for selecting species are in place to justify impact for CIAT to intervene. In general, work on Musa is carried out in close collaboration with Bioversity. The Americas office of Bioversity is hosted by CIAT and CIAT has taken initiatives when Bioversity has no research laboratories to tackle certain topics and when CIAT felt there is a need to respond to local demand especially from the Colombian Government. There is no plan to focus on germplasm evaluation or characterization except when joint activities are carried out with Bioversity. Center scientists interact on a regular basis with MUSALAC, a network of research and development of plantain for LAC, and Bioversity to support smallholder producers.

CIAT thanks the SC for its advice on focusing the Amazon Initiative SWEP and is pleased to inform that it is currently undertaking a significant review of the content of the Program, given CIAT's renewed interests in eco-regional issues as well as the expected future transformation of most SWEPS into Center Programs or components of future MegaPrograms.

We are delighted that our future research planning will deserve the attention of the SC and look forward to receive as much comments as you are able to provide.

CIFOR

This MTP is the second following the new CIFOR strategy launched in 2008 which the SC commended for its credible response to current thinking on forest/livelihood/poverty issues. The project Portfolio consists of the same 6 projects as last year. The changes are related to management of the MTP projects through further consolidation and streamlining of the team functions. It is noteworthy that CIFOR has gone through major staff changes including recruitment of 15 new IRS. The Center reports having implemented nearly all the 2007 EPMR recommendations. The SC notes that gender and capacity building (CB) are extensively discussed in the MTP overview. The CB approaches are quite innovative and tailor-made for the specific opportunities and partnerships that CIFOR has. In most CB projects mentoring and training is linked to research. The SC finds the CIFOR MTP a very appropriate plan well suited for monitoring progress and endorses the MTP without further review.

CIMMYT

CIMMYT MTP for 2010-2012 presents the same project portfolio as the 2009-2011 MTP with some changes; re-organization of research on socio-economic and environmental issues in a new Socioeconomics Program and establishment of the Conservation Agriculture Program (CAP). Both programs have emerged from the former Impact Targeting and Assessment Unit. The imperative is to help the Centre better address the economic and environmental changes impacting on agriculture. The Socioeconomics Program will address socioeconomic and environmental issues associated with technology adaptation and adoption, and will build on previous work in agricultural economics and impacts assessment, value chains and policy issues. This program is expected to contribute to strategic planning to assist CIMMYT in fundraising and in profile-raising. The creation of the CAP program, which follows from the recommendation of a recent Maize and Wheat Systems CCER, reflects the importance of natural resource management in agriculture and the productivity gains to be made through improved practices for farming systems. The CAP draws on staff working on the Maize and Wheat Systems Project and it will be engaged in an initial 3-year mega-project Cereal System Initiatives for South Asia, led by IRRI and co-funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development. Changes since the 2009-2011 MTP are also reported in project 3 on Stress Tolerant Maize including the delayed development of transgenic drought tolerant CIMMYT germplasm due to slower than expected progress by the private sector transgenic trait provider. Overall, the 2010-2012 MTP presents a continuity of research agenda and provides a good basis for internal planning and monitoring.

CIP

CIP's MTP 2010-2012 continues the implementation of the CIP Vision. In 2009 CIP published a new Corporate Plan, which proposes a two-pronged research strategy to focus on several large agroecological regions and on more basic research with global implications. Due to the transition in the CGIAR, the implementation of the Corporate Plan is not yet reflected in any restructuring in the MTP and the portfolio remains the same as in the last MTP. This is sensible. The adjustments in the six MTP projects in activities and outputs for implementing the new Corporate Plan are very clearly identified in each project description and are reflected in output targets planned beyond 2010. CIP has provided a detailed accounting of the implementation of the 6th EPMR. Essentially all recommendations have now been implemented.

The six MTP projects are clearly presented. At output level, the specific target agroecological zones have been specified in some cases reflecting the new regional focus. A majority of activities are well-aligned with the CGIAR's priorities and the nature of the planned IPGs is clearly described. CIP undertakes a broad agenda on Agriculture and Human Health (Project 6). E.g. Outputs 1 seeks to map and inform linkages between agriculture intervention and health. This is new and under development. As in past commentaries about this project, the SC cautions on seeking the appropriate partners to provide the necessary health input in this research. Also output 3 aims at integrated health and agriculture strategies to reduce pesticide exposure risk and promote healthy and sustainable agriculture among farm families. The inclusion of horticultural systems and the work on diet practices and consumption system (in Central America) have the risk of taking the project further away from CIP's comparative advantage.

The logframes provide mostly clear and measurable output targets and there are appropriate activities to enhance likely outcomes. CIP has strengthened the complement of output targets by removing smaller milestones for internal monitoring only. There is a detailed elaboration of partner roles and appropriate partnership with NARS. CIP's efforts to identify outcome targets are very recommendable. The investments in development activities that continue to be fairly evenly spread across projects 4, 5 and 7 may be linked (not quite clear) to what is called outcome investment, efforts in seed programs being such an activity.

In past years CIP has presented the MTPs for the three Systemwide programs it has convened: CONDESAN, Urban Harvest and the Global Mountain Program. The future directions of these programs have received considerable discussion in previous SC commentaries and by the EPMR. A major change in this MTP follows from CIP Board's decision to phase out CIP's hosting role of the SWEPS. Two SWEPS, the Global Mountain Project and Urban Harvest, are closed or closing. The SC is pleased to note that CONDESAN will evolve into a new organizational entity, an independent Regional Consortium (the timing is not yet given). This is an important milestone. The SC endorses the sentiments of CIP "With this evolution of CONDESAN, we hope the CGIAR will see CONDESAN as a stronger partner, and a useful platform for the work of the international centers such as CIP and CIAT". These developments are in accord with the 5th EPMR recommendations and the SC's earlier comments. Overall, the MTP is concise and suitable for internal planning and monitoring.

CIP RESPONSE

CIP appreciates the positive review of our research program. We find the MTP provides a useful organizational and reporting document with which to manage our program. Our new Corporate Plan with the explicit recognition of Outcome investments will bring new challenges to research planning and reporting. We acknowledge the SC's continuing discomfort with the Agriculture and Human Health Project and assure the SC that the research undertaken in the project is central to the realization of our mission. The project brings a systems focus to the subject matter and is implemented in areas where potato and sweetpotato based cropping is important.

ICARDA

ICARDA's MTP remains essentially the same as last year with 100% of budget (estimated at 35.6m US\$ in 2010) allocated to system priorities. The Center has continued with the same project structure that was adopted in last year's MTP in response to EPMR recommendations and the Strategic Plan. The changes, mostly at output level, reflect reactions by ICARDA to the EPMR

and the strategic plan completed 2 years ago. Methods for small ruminant characterization, impact assessment of research on rust resistance and organization of new work on barley are highlighted. The MTP has some of the weaknesses highlighted by the SC previously; project 6 (Diversification and sustainable intensification) still appears the weakest proposing vague output targets and with an apparent lack of coherence in the overall goals; in some projects work, the Center continues involvement in seed multiplication, which clearly is a task for local organizations; several output targets on practices, policy strategies and other kinds of knowledge need the scope and scale better defined for monitoring purposes. On capacity building, the integration of graduate training in the research portfolio is exemplary. ICARDA reports progress on implementation of the EPMR recommendations. However, some recommendations are still under implementation despite past deadlines. This requires clarification. The assessment of Project 6, particularly in the context of re-organizing research in Mega-programs, and monitoring of the Center's implementation of the EPMR recommendations would be warranted next year.

ICARDA RESPONSE

We appreciate the Science Council's commentary on ICARDA's MTP2010-2012. In general we are in agreement with the commentary, but wish to make the following additional observations and response:

1. *With respect to the comments on ICARDA's involvement in seed multiplication: ICARDA's research on Seed Systems is incorporated into the crop projects (Projects 2, 3 and 4) in a logical value-chain approach to developing and disseminating improved germplasm. Seed systems research focuses on developing effective seed delivery mechanisms, in both the formal and informal sectors, to enhance the delivery, use, and impact of the outputs from ICARDA's plant breeding. As explained, for example under Output 6 of Project 2 on wheat: "the research agenda is to generate IPGs addressing seed system constraints and provide alternative solutions. It focuses on the following key areas: analysis of seed system constraints to improve the performance of the formal public sector, to increase the participation of the private sector, design alternative seed delivery systems, and applied research in seed science and technology".*

ICARDA is unique within the CGIAR in integrating this process into its delivery mechanism, so research results can be adopted at the farmers' field level, and hence contribute to improved livelihoods and increased national food production and security. The research is accompanied by training of partners, so the process becomes sustainable at the NARS level.

The only instance, in which ICARDA is explicitly involved in seed multiplication, is in the specific case of generating sufficient seed of lines resistant to Ug99 and assisting in accelerating seed multiplication by NARS.

2. *With respect to the comments on Project 6 on Diversification and Intensification of Sustainable Production Systems (DSIPS), this has been modified to reduce the individual elements and to increase focus. Hence it differs from last year's description, by providing a more logical description of key elements, reducing the plethora of elements previously presented. It is also noted that ICARDA has completed a Livestock Research Strategy, which was approved by the Center's Board in April 2009, and is in the process of developing a Horticultural Research Strategy, both of which will accomplish the indicated need for coherence and focus in overall goals and output targets.*
3. *ICARDA acknowledges that some of the EPMR recommendations are still under implementation and deadlines have been adjusted. Progress in implementing these recommendations is monitored regularly by our Board in their biannual meetings. Out of a total of 22 recommendations, four have not been fully implemented. The reasons are provided in the table in the MTP and relate mainly to problems in recruiting scientists with the profile required by the Center. We are hopeful that this*

process will be completed soon.

4. *We are open to a closer evaluation of the Project 6 (DSIPS), as indicated, and welcome engagement with the SC.*

ICRISAT

The 6th EPMR that was completed earlier in 2009 strongly recommended that ICRISAT develop a new Strategic Plan with transparent priority setting across activities and regions paying particular attention to the following: a) the upstream research at headquarters that is relevant globally or done to address SSA needs directly, b) the breeding, agroecological and social science/policy research much of which needs to be region specific, and c) explicit identification of the type of research where spillover potential is not yet sufficiently well understood. ICRISAT agreed to this recommendation but the new Strategic Plan is not foreseen until September 2010. As a result of this and the ongoing change process in the CGIAR with a development of a Strategy and Results Framework and a new Mega-program structure the Center has understandably not made many changes to the previous MTP, except updates. The MTP thus presents the same project portfolio as last year with one change: the Systemwide program *SSA Desert Margins Program* (ICRISAT MTP Project 8) has now been terminated.

The new MTP gives an informative account of terminated and new special projects that ICRISAT has been successful in obtaining funding for. While much of the new funding will go for social science research in Asia, including a major grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to study household and village economies in South Asia, the Center estimates that its allocation to Africa remains at 60% of the total resources. The SC, however, reiterates that there should be active targeting of new initiatives and funding to SSA, as stressed by the EPMR, and hopes that this can be achieved through the forthcoming priority setting including a focused analysis of impact (or lack thereof) in Africa. The major special projects listed mostly complement well the Center's core research in social science, crops and biotechnology. Regarding the work on multi-purpose sweet sorghum, the SC suggests that ICRISAT will address the EPMR Panel's observation of "the lack of careful analyses of trade-offs and optimization that are essential to guide the crop improvement and management efforts for sweet sorghum".

The SC found the research agenda in MTP 2009-2011 by and large focused and relevant. The Projects 1-6 were found to be good and likely to produce clear IPGs. These comments remain. In general the updated logframes for each of the projects provide sound outputs and output targets for planning and monitoring.

Previously the SC has raised some concerns about the relevance and IPG nature of some of the outputs and activities particularly in Projects 7-9; whether these were within the Center's comparative advantage and whether some research could be devolved to NARS. The EPMR recommended winding up or devolution of some activities (e.g. watershed management in Asia, microdosing, Africa market gardens, dryland eco-farms, jatropha, pongamia, chickpea in rice-fallows), and the SC recommends that ICRISAT rigorously pursue the implementation of the recommendations in its strategic planning and subsequent operational planning. Availability of project money for such work (for example new investments on watershed research in India) should not dictate the agenda and prevent the Center from responding to the EPMR recommendations.

ICRISAT provides a plan and a progress report for the implementation of the EPMP recommendations. The time lines for implementing the key recommendations related to strategic planning and priority setting are very relaxed; for example important analysis of past and likely future research spillovers between Africa and Asia will not be completed until 2013, which is too late to have impact on the strategic plan. And while the business plan is foreseen by early 2011, an MTP reflecting global and regional priorities is not planned until second half of 2012. The SC urges the Center to pace its strategic planning exercise with the changes in the CGIAR to have timely input to the latter process and to secure coherence of the Center planning with that of the CGIAR.

Reflecting the EPMP's description and analysis of ICRISAT's strategic planning, priority setting and project implementation, the SC also strongly suggests that the Center do away with what appears to be a mere reporting super-structure (current MTP projects) and bases its future plans on a true project management design which according to the EPMP is currently best represented by the Global Themes. Next year there is need to monitor both the EPMP implementation and the changes that result in the research agenda following the strategic planning and the review in general.

ICRISAT RESPONSE

ICRISAT appreciates the comments from the Science Council and the recognition that since the EPMP was not fully complete until after the MTP was submitted, and with the ongoing CGIAR change process, it was not appropriate to make major revisions in the MTP for 2010-2012. We agree with the SC comments, and they will be considered as the Center initiates its framework to develop a new Strategic Plan and Business Plan to 2020. We fully intend to harmonize our responses to the EPMP recommendations with the ICRISAT Strategic Planning process approved by ICRISAT's Governing Board at its recent meeting in Mali (September 2009). Many of the plans of action to address the EPMP recommendations have already been modified (especially in terms of the timeframe) to provide the needed inputs into the strategic planning discussions. The new Strategic and Business Plans will be presented to ICRISAT's Governing Board for approval at the September 2010 meeting.

We believe that the process outlined will result in a strategic plan for ICRISAT that maps out an appropriate and effective strategy for the institute to meet the challenges of rainfed farming systems in the semi-arid tropics of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. We look forward to inputs from all stakeholders in this process.

As part of the strategic planning process and attendant business plan development, we intend to develop an appropriate management structure that enables the Center to better manage Projects, including our participation in the proposed mega-programs. The research management structure is likely to reflect the realities of today's (and future) funding environment with an emphasis on larger, multi-disciplined, multi-institutional, complex projects. ICRISAT will implement its strategic plan at the beginning of 2011 with an appropriate project management structure that takes into account the current and future operational needs.

IFPRI

The MTP presents a continuum from the previous year with a few changes. Two new projects were approved by Senior Management and are now part of IFPRI's MTP project portfolio: 'Urban-Rural Linkages' and 'Food and Water Safety'. Two proposed projects that were also

identified last year will be undergoing *ex-ante* reviews prior to approval: 'Rebuilding after Emergencies and Crises' and 'Gender and Assets'. There are other Centers working on similar areas, and in the transition to Mega-programs it would be advised to consider how the most strategic issues where the CGIAR and IFPRI have comparative advantage will be addressed. A project that is concluding—"HIV/AIDs and Food Security"—helped launch the Regional Network on AIDS, Livelihoods, and Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa. Research on agriculture and health (including HIV/AIDS and multiple disease threats) will be continued under the framework of the Agriculture and Health Platform (involving CGIAR Centers and numerous health organization partners), coordinated by IFPRI. IFPRI plans to re-assess its strategy again in 2010 (last updated 2007).

IITA

IITA's MTP remains founded on 8 projects (seven Center projects and the IITA-convened systemwide program on Integrated Pest Management, IPM). The narrative describes how the project portfolio is based on the R4D model which sees development driven by society based on knowledge, quality of life, technologies, and environmental conditions, and research as a contributory tool. Thus IITA claims its R4D research program is demand-driven not supply-driven with the required research needs accessed from many partners including Advanced Research Institutes (ARIs) for more basic research.

As was the case last year, the MTP is easy to read and provides a good general overview of the IITA programs, but it is mostly too generic in descriptions of IPGs and output targets to be useful for internal monitoring of progress. The projects are conceptualized as a collection of outputs under a common theme. Although a new Strategic Plan 2011-2020 is anticipated to be completed in 2009, the MTP does not make reference to this new strategic plan, which is urgently needed to provide the framework for developing cohesive and focused programs that address the problems of integrated production systems.

There have been no major changes since the last MTP, except that the Center reports having addressed clarifications requested by the SC. However, three main comments/concerns raised by the SC last year (mostly in connection with EPMP recommendations) remain:

1. More research on fertilizer responsiveness and assessment of G x fertility interactions (specifically in Roots and Tubers and Cereal and Legume systems).
2. More research on fertilizer in general (one output target for cereals and legume systems has been identified for 2012)
3. More specificity in terms of commodities chosen for research under horticulture and tree crop systems.

The SC strongly suggests that IITA should clarify its plan, particularly regarding the first two issues in light of implementing the EPMP recommendations and elaborate the plan for breeding procedures to ensure fertilizer responsiveness of these important food crops.

The individual programs vary regarding the quality of their research planning and program content.

Program 1 (*Root and Tuber Systems*). The text is rather general in describing the overall strategy through the 5 outputs. Better articulation of where IITA's comparative advantages lie and what the Center does vs. the partners up and down the R4D continuum would strengthen the plan. In

this and other programs the strategy for current and new innovative IPM research should be more clearly formulated considering what partners, including the private sector can contribute. The output targets are improved from last year although still somewhat ambiguous, and they are substantial enough for a program of over 15m US\$ in 2010.

Program 2 (*Cereal and Legume Systems*) shows a reduction from nearly 12m US\$ in 2009 to 9m in 2010 which is not explained and does not seem to have affected the objectives and outputs. Overall, the plans are clear and proposed research is in line with the analysis of the key issues. The MTP gives no indication of the status or future plans of biotechnology research to transform cowpea for Africa (that was underway a few years ago). What is the future of a Bt cowpea; has this research been abandoned or have outputs already been achieved?

Program 3 (*Banana and plantain systems*) is well described regarding the understanding of the key problems and it covers an appropriate spectrum of activities. Genetic improvement is highlighted and more emphasis could be added on the crop management area. The output targets for 2010 are quantifiable and verifiable.

Program 4 (*Horticulture and Tree Systems*) Last year the SC commented on the discrepancy between the Project overview and the logframe regarding crops/crop systems being or to be addressed. In this MTP it appears that research on some of the crops earlier prioritized has not started or has been cancelled and the work focuses mainly on cocoa agroforestry systems and *Solanaceae* vegetables (with some work done on mango and coffee-systems). The output targets are mostly single options or guidelines that seem rather modest for the size (8m US\$ in 2010) of the program. The private sector would seem to have a good comparative advantage on some of the aspects but it is missing from the partnerships and has a very minor role in funding. There is obvious overlap in what ICRAF should be doing and therefore more strategic partnership and even delegation of activities to AVRDC, ICIPE or ICRAF would be advisable.

Program 5 (*Agrobiodiversity*). The narrative is very clear on work that is important. It is essential that the necessary funding be sustained for managing and researching the IITA collections. The IPG nature of the program is clear and the partnerships well elucidated. The output targets for 2010 are quantitative and verifiable.

Program 6 (*Agriculture and Health*). The project description implies research on food technology (e.g., product development, processing), food safety and health impact studies (e.g., health impact studies of reduced mycotoxins using/monitoring anthropometric indicators in vulnerable groups like children) where the SC does not see that IITA has comparative advantage. The logframe, however, presents output targets (one for each of the four output in 2010) that are appropriately selected and although somewhat limited in scope, sufficient for this relatively small program (2m US\$ a year). It is not clear what new research IITA is doing on aflatoxin as this area has a very long research history at the Center. The objective related to labor shortages and HIV/AIDS seems out of place in this portfolio and is not reflected in the outputs or the logframe.

Program 7 (*Opportunities and Threats*) content remains rather fuzzy and it is unclear how the analyses will feed into the new Strategic Plan of the Center yet to be finalized. In this program it will be important to link the work on climate change in the analysis of output 1 (*Identification of primary drivers of change*) to a collaborative arrangement with the new climate change CP. The rather vague output targets for 2010 promise only modest productivity from a program of

projected 3m US\$ in 2010.

The IPM MTP presents a rejuvenated program that aims to bring together the CGIAR-wide expertise in IPM. The agenda has been broadened significantly and new partners have been incorporated. It is to be noted that, given the amount of pre and post harvest losses, and the need to take the long view of pests and climate change, the bulk of the research required by the CGIAR portfolio needs to be done at Centers and programs. The SP-IPM should provide the necessary supra-structure for the work of the system in this area. Even then, the very small budget (only 336.000 US\$ available to date) does not allow much progress even for coordinating work on the output areas identified.

The MTP describes the impact pathways (that commendably identify the conditioning factors) and the IPG nature of the program outputs. Overall, the Center sees its contribution in IPGs from the meta-analysis of numerous (well selected) site findings. The MTP says little about these meta-studies, however. Also, given the clear introductory narrative of the R4D approach that is supposed to incorporate two critical elements absent in traditional models—a mid-process initial outcome and an explicit phase-out strategy for IITA—one would have expected more well-defined outcome targets in the log-frames of the projects. These remain remarkably generic and difficult to demonstrate or identify as achieved. The partnerships and the activities in which partners are involved are succinctly described. The Center's role in capacity building is not clear for any of the programs. The broader issue of addressing and coordinating IPM research in the new CGIAR deserves attention in relation to IITA leadership and in the transition to Mega-programs. The lack of clarity in the logframes and the anticipated completion of a new Strategic Plan that will influence the next MTP make assessment of the MTP warranted next year.

IITA RESPONSE

As in previous years, IITA appreciates the SC review of our MTP. We will consider the specific comments on each program in our revision for the 2011-2013 MTP.

We have one specific response for the advice for the Root and Tuber Systems Program. The need for strengthening agronomy/soil science in the Root and Tuber Systems Program is recognized and this will be addressed soon through staff recruitment. The importance of the subject is however already reflected in two output targets specified under Output 3, which are not recognized by the reviewer. With the limited knowledge on nutrient requirements and use in the tropical root and tuber systems, especially for yams, the studies specified under Output 3 on genetic variation for nutrient responsiveness and use efficiency are justified.

ILRI

ILRI presents an MTP which is modestly updated from the earlier MTP. Thus ILRI focuses its research program through the 4 themes and the Systemwide Livestock Program as in the previous MTP. The MTP reports on continuing progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the last EPMR, and the Center will conduct two CCERs in 2009 to help refine and enhance research approaches to the sustainable intensification of small-holder crop livestock systems, and in the area of impact assessment, respectively. The latter will be important to the Center as it relies to a greater extent in promoting policy change in the sector on the basis of its study outputs. The MTP narrative emphasizes the roles played by ILRI in CGIAR system-wide and ecoregional programs and in capacity building. The completion of the BecA facility

(expected to be in full operation in 2010) will be an integral part of ILRI's interactions with the east African regional research community. After the spike caused by additional funding for the establishment of the BecA facility, ILRI proposes a budget of 46.3m US\$ for 2010, rising to 50.4m US\$ in 2011 if submitted and planned project proposals are successful. This marks a significant increase in the Center activities.

IRRI

IRRI's MTP for 2010 - 2012 confirms earlier directions resulting from the implementation of its strategic plan in 2007. The Institute conducts research through seven programs (or MTP projects) that are the same as in the previous MTP. The MTP reports on the planned new initiatives that IRRI will undertake as a result of securing additional resources – the budget is expected to rise from 37.5m US\$ in 2008 to approximately 58.5m US\$ on 2009 (and remain at that level in 2010). The Science Council notes that the recent EPMR endorsed IRRI's program directions and encouraged management of this major growth. This endorsement provides the donors' confidence on the Center's strategy implementation plan and there is no need to scrutinize the MTP in the coming year or two when the Center is expected to implement the EPMR recommendations.

IWMI

IWMI's new strategic plan was approved in 2008, resulting in the need for a major revision of the MTP. The 2010-2012 MTP describes in brief the evolution of change that is occurring and defines the current context in which IWMI now works. The current focus addresses the key interlinked development challenges of water scarcity, food security and climate change. This MTP, therefore, outlines the new vision, mission and new thematic areas of the Centre as defined in the strategic plan.

IWMI is now organized around four themes that respond to key questions related to water availability and sustainable management in the context of the major development challenges. The four new themes are the MTP Projects: 1-*Water Availability and Access*; 2-*Productive Water Use*; 3-*Water Quality, Health and Environment*; and, 4-*Water and Society*. The new thematic structure represents a natural evolution from IWMI's past work, and should not be seen as a major shift in direction. Nevertheless, there have been significant shifts in emphasis in some areas. For example, climate change has risen to the forefront of IWMI's agenda in Theme 1, while issues of water productivity, multiple uses of water, trajectories of basin development—still integral to IWMI's research agenda—receive less emphasis. Revitalizing irrigation has returned as an area of focus given the importance of water for food security: IWMI will give priority to the institutional arrangements, management, infrastructure, and hydrologic impacts required for productive and sustainable irrigation. Water quality also takes on a key role in the strategy and is seen as an area for growth. Work on wetlands, however, is reduced in the current plan and ecological studies on wetlands will be phased out. Figure 3 (p. 15) shows the relationship between old and new MTP projects in a very useful way. While the SC is not in a position to critically analyze and comment on each and every shift in emphasis, in general, the arguments for emphasizing and de-emphasizing these critical areas seem appropriate.

The creation of the research Theme 4 is a direct response to a recommendation from the 2007 EPMR to place more explicit emphasis on social science research and is consistent with previous MTP commentaries emphasizing the need for deepening analysis of the political, social and

governance aspects of water management. The SC is pleased to note that with the establishment of this theme, the Center intends to strengthen its staff in the field of social science and economics.

Overall, the plan provides a more convincing account of the impact pathway, uptake strategies, monitoring and evaluation and impact assessment than earlier plans. SC commends the Center for being pro-active and innovative in this respect. The logframe planning horizon is shorter than normally (as agreed with Centers). Nevertheless, it is unclear why Theme 1 output targets are only given for 2009-10, while other theme logframes cover 2010-11.

The research IWMI is involved with is targeted at producing outputs, but in addition, IWMI has now set up a triple approach to the uptake of its research results. This includes building uptake strategies into projects, involving regional strategies to also continue with uptake after the life of the projects, and aligning corporate information and communications to support uptake strategies. This will target key uptake points, moving the results of research to first level outcomes of building awareness, knowledge and capacity with the aim of leading to adoption, improved water management, and ultimately more impact. This will address a concern that was highlighted in previous MTP commentaries which identified adoption and uptake as critical bottlenecks in the research to development pathway.

The six-element modules under each output impact pathway (research for solutions, research outputs, first level outcomes, adoption, improved water mgmt, and impact) are excellent, and, combined with the generic strategies for uptake, i.e., for the research output → first level outcomes, it further enhances the overall presentation and justification. At some stage, however, more specific uptake pathways should be enumerated. The specification of different beneficiaries (users of outputs vs. ultimate beneficiaries) is very useful.

IWMI's basis for prioritizing and selecting specific thematic work in each of the regions—regional problem definition, demand for IWMI's expertise in the region, and IWMI's ability to respond—appears systematic and sound. The identification of the many partners and specification of their respective research process, dissemination and financial supporting roles in each project is also very comprehensive.

The SC is pleased to see IWMI strengthening its ties with other CGIAR Centers this year, including with ICARDA in the Middle East and Central Asia and ICRISAT in India, and with IFPRI, ILRI and CPWF on relevant global thematic issues. Collaboration with IFPRI is particularly relevant for Theme 1 and 4. In conclusion, the MTP provides a good basis for internal planning and monitoring.

WORLD AGROFORESTRY CENTER (ICRAF)

The program activities reflected in the new MTP of the World Agroforestry Center have not changed substantially but have undergone some fine-tuning as a result of the formulation of the new strategic plan, the past EPMR and the SC commentary of last year. The portfolio includes the 6 Global Research Projects (GRPs) and the Alternatives to Slash and Burn (ASB) Systemwide Program. The Center reports that it enters into projects only after testing the proposal meets just 3 criteria of: salience (the global importance of the problem), credibility (capability to deliver), and legitimacy (the Center's comparative advantage relative to others). "Fundability" has justly been dropped as a criterion. ICRAF is in better financial health in 2009 with a slightly improved

core/restricted ratio than in 2008. The prospects for 2010 seem good. The Center is seeking to diminish its portfolio of strictly development activities. In general a delicate balance is found in the Center attaining the CGIAR's development goals and maintaining scientific objectivity. In the budget, 16 % of resources are directed to non-CGIAR priority activities.

GRP 1 deals with germplasm and seed systems. The spectrum of species that one could focus on is enormous and little is said about the process of narrowing down this spectrum. As a result, it is difficult to assess how relevant the work is and for whom. Emphasis seems to be on information compilation, capacity and dissemination rather than on research *per se*. For 2010 the output targets are more substantive, verifiable and appropriate for a project of 6.5m US\$ annually. The efforts to move agroforestry germplasm from Asia to Africa are welcome and important and this could extend to LAC.

GRP2 is productivity-oriented and works at the farm level and focuses on decision support systems for improved resilience through tree integration and improvement in nutrient and water efficiencies. The SC encourages ICRAF to strengthen the component of scientific investigation (related to intensifying productivity while adding resilience), which is in the realm of the Center. Also a better understanding is needed of constraints to adoption. The IPGs to be delivered by this program are deemed not to come from the individual farm experiences but from the scaling-up exercise. For Output 2 there are 2 very broad and continuous output targets (e.g. *Strategies on agroforestry- based soil fertility practices developed for smallholder farmers*; and *Impacts of agroforestry systems on nutrient balance, including water conservation and productivity assessed in Southern Africa and South Asia*) where the nature of the accomplishments is not clear.

GRP3 addresses marketing of agroforestry products with the goal of generating smallholder benefit from tree product and service value chains and strengthened marketing systems, by improved skills and access to markets and information. The plan presents the research questions intended to be applied at multiple sites, this providing comparative results and possible solutions that can be taken up in project implementation. Action research on small scale seed vendors may yield interesting results relevant for adoption. The output targets appear a bit thin for a budget of nearly 5m US\$ and several are very vague and difficult to verify (especially for output 2; for example: *Marketing strategies developed for selected natural products*).

Within the MTP portfolio, **GRP4** is the only program where the SC does not see a clear comparative advantage for ICRAF. It deals with surveillance of land health. The rationale for GRP4 appears to be that we don't know enough and we need better tools to assess land health. However, the direct link to agroforestry is largely artificial and the SC does not see much that is new and innovative added to what numerous other institutions have done. New IPGs are not evident. The most relevant work falls under Output 2 on land health risk assessment and targeting agroforestry interventions. The project would benefit from a state of the art review as it remains an odd mixture of emerging technologies in soil analysis and interpretation of geospatial data for prioritizing problem areas and areas for intervention. There are no obvious agents who could deliver the agroforestry interventions coming from this work; it does not seem realistic to expect that governments or even international agencies will do that. Social networks seem the most realistic delivery model (for example Landcare). The project costs have come down from over 3m US\$ to around 2.2m, but this change in budget allocation is not addressed in the GRP 4 narrative.

GRP5 covers the climate change agenda. The research hypotheses are well stated and address

important questions about the role of trees as diversification options to reduce risks, including those related to climate shocks. As with GRP3, research questions will vary between different farming systems, different cultures and different landscapes, thus providing opportunities for comparative studies and possible solutions that can be taken up in project implementation. These approaches provide a strong and valuable research framework for addressing the broader land management and livelihood questions that are the mandate of ICRAF and relevant for CGIAR priorities. The SC however doubts whether ICRAF has sufficient in-house capacity to carry out the very ambitious climate modeling work (an output target for 2010 of *Regional climate impact modeling improved*) and urges ICRAF link up with the new CP on climate change. There should also be strong links to the various REDD pilots proliferating over the tropics which ought to be natural clients for ICRAF's agroforestry technologies. Pathways to the ultimate postulated beneficiaries, small farmers, should be explored further. Some of the output targets from 2009 are delayed till 2010 and some, due to their long-term nature may become moving targets (e.g. *Trade-offs between alternative land uses that destroys forests in the context of RED*)

GRP 6, already the largest program in 2009 (at 7.5m US\$) now grows to 9.5m. It firmly establishes the new emphasis on landscape management, ecosystem services and the role of trees in multi-functional landscapes and addresses timely and perplexing questions on trade-off at different levels (goods and services, short to long term objectives; efficiency versus equity in sustainable development). The logic of the project is convincing and builds on considerable experience that was gained in two different earlier GRPs. The project retains 3 Outputs that address the 3 objectives related to the roles of trees in environmental services; incentives for pro-poor Agroforestry solutions; and relations between local and global drivers of land-use change. The project is likely to generate IPGs, although the project write-up could be improved in that aspect. It would be desirable to broaden the almost singular focus on carbon sequestration to other functions of agricultural systems. The CIFOR-ICRAF biodiversity platform is mentioned only in connection with this GRP, which hopefully is not a sign of insufficient funding to the platform work. Several output targets have been fully rolled over into 2010 without explanation (as is proposed similarly for some GRP5 output targets).

The ASB program remains much as last year and it is not a strong research portfolio; rather it builds on previous work to carry out analyses and development guidelines and recommended mechanisms and methods for implementation of policy decisions. There is a long tradition with sentinel sites but the ASB seems to be fading overall, with only a small proportion of its partnerships active. Some activities are more suited for a development agency, in providing direct backstopping for country or regional input into negotiations. The program is strongly orienting itself towards climate change and should coordinate its activities with the Climate Change CP (or maybe have its viable part merged with that CP?).

In general there is high demand for the kind of research results ICRAF proposes to deliver. Given that ICRAF's mandate is in the larger issues of land and resource management, it would seem vitally important that strong linkages are made, integral to impact pathways, with those policy-making and development bodies such as FAO where policy innovations can be considered as they need to be taken up across ministries (agriculture, planning, environment, etc.). Descriptions of these links are distinctly lacking throughout the MTP. On the other hand, capacity of the intermediate organizations needed for delivering the research results to the end users is a problem. ICRAF needs stronger analysis of how it can be more strategic in its capacity building (moving away from the traditional training, including of farmers) targeting also private small and medium-size enterprises. For GRPs 1 and 2 should enhance their strategic capacity

building component in view of devolving methods and activities to national researchers. This issue—that of a “missing link” between the research and user or policy interface—is very important so that the research results that are by and large appropriately described as IPGs also get to benefit the farmers.

Overall the ICRAF portfolio is improving and well presented. The Center is moving away from development activities (about 5 % of resources are stated to go to development activities) but there is still scope for better focus on research. The research orientation in the portfolio could be more clearly presented. Due to questions remaining on the Center’s comparative advantage, capacity and partnerships in some areas of planned research, an assessment of the MTP next year would be warranted in the context of re-organizing research in the Mega-programs.

ICRAF RESPONSE

The Science Council’s commentary contains some useful and well intentioned advice. In particular, comments on our need for better articulation of priority setting, being more explicit on impact pathways and explaining the evolving capacity building needs will help us reflect and improve our documentation and internal planning systems.

In addition, we look forward to continuing to engage with the Science Council to enhance their understanding of the few areas where we differ in perspective. This is perhaps most evident in better explaining our comparative advantage and innovative research in land health surveillance and its relationship to agroforestry.

We accept that ICRAF is not intending to specialize in climate change modeling, however, the agroforestry related capacity in our own recent hires in this area as well as new research partners (Michigan State University, Colorado State University, Tyndall Climate Change Centre, etc) should not be underestimated. Here the tree-related aspects are significant as we develop higher resolution scenarios of tree cover, agroforestry system water usage and tree intervention opportunities, and relate these to the global circulation models.

The perceptions of the ASB program changing its focus to climate change are accurate, although this is still in the context of its linkages to avoided deforestation and environmental service provision and not just climate change per se. The near tripling of ASB’s research funding also would not appear to indicate a fading phase.

WORLD FISH CENTER

The WorldFish Center presents an update to earlier MTPs based on the same Project Portfolio with six projects focused on fisheries and aquaculture. The MTP is well written and presents Center thinking on the development challenges (as they apply to these fields), the point of application of research (focusing on Africa and Asia and the Pacific), partnerships and impact pathways. An increasing trend is to try and exercise influence on policy processes for improved aquaculture and fisheries governance through the use of WorldFish and partner outputs and including a better understanding of policy processes. However, as the narrative admits, assessing and demonstrating direct impacts on the field through this strategy is harder. The Center reports that all the recommendations of the last EPMR have been implemented. Recommendation 3 of the EPMR asked the Center to embrace a limited number of key scientific issues “that could be achieved within a reasonable period of time”. The Center has identified these large issues but

some may be considered at the global or continental to be rolling targets. The Center is therefore encouraged to continue to demarcate the tangible outputs it will produce en route, especially if the final outcomes and impact rest on future national and regional policy adjustments beyond the control of the Center.

Each of the six projects tackles globally important issues and WorldFish traditionally leverages its contribution through partnerships (and these are relatively well outlined in the Plan). However the Center seems under funded to tackle such a large agenda. The Center has used a Board authorized draw down of reserves to increase staffing and address some new activities. This will not be repeated in 2010 and, so far, the new initiatives have not secured major new finances. The Center budget is projected to remain almost flat through the plan period. Also the structure of multi-partner approaches seems to be leading to piecemeal funding which may make strategic initiatives hard to manage and to sustain (e.g. in financial table 9, nearly 50 donors are listed as contributing/having contributed to the Markets and Trade project 2008-2010 for total sums of 1.7 to 2.2m US\$). The Water and Food CP is one of the largest restricted grant donors to WorldFish (predominantly to projects 3, 5 and 6). For the Center to make the expected contributions at sufficient scale and produce IPGs in both developing country aquaculture and to small scale fisheries in two different continents, the Center will need to secure greater and more stable strategic support for its 6 initiatives. The MTP lays out a good basis for moving forward in these different areas.

WORLDFISH CENTER RESPONSE

WorldFish thanks the SC for its commentary on the Center's MTP 2010-2012 and has no factual corrections to make.

We note the comments on the Center's increased focus on policy processes and rolling targets and the benefits of specifying tangible outputs to be produced en route. We agree with this and will work to specify and generate such tangible outputs on an annual basis. We are currently doing this through our annual planning process.

We also note the SC comments regarding the range of issues identified in the MTP's six projects and whether these can be addressed effectively with the limited funding available to the Center. We also agree with this concern and are working to address this through more targeted research and fund-raising to support this. These efforts will, of course, need to be integrated into the new approaches for funding research that are emerging from the CGIAR change process.

The Center is working to develop stronger partnerships with ARIs and NARS to increase the resources devoted to our research agenda. However, even with these increased partner resources, we envisage that there will need to be some adjustment in output targets and will clarify this over the course of 2010.

GENERATION CHALLENGE PROGRAM (GCP)

The Generation Challenge Program (GCP) is now in its sixth year, and the MTP 2010-2012 is the first MTP of the second phase of the CP following an EPMR and a donor review of the CP in 2008. A main recommendation of the EPMR was to focus; to prioritize the work on seven crop/traits product lines and then devote more than 50% of resources to development and delivery of them to clients. The MTP narrative reflects the changes planned to gain more focus. The seven product lines (Challenge Initiatives; implementation planned for 2010) have been

chosen along with two delivery platforms. Six of the Challenge Initiatives are on drought -- the main target of the GCP and will focus on the application of the molecular approaches for delivery in 2-3 target countries. The two delivery platforms—one for molecular breeding (Molecular Breeding Platform) and the other (Genetic Resource Support Service (GRSS) for the sharing of genetic resources are intended to facilitate the delivery of these GCP products to stakeholders beyond the life of the CP. The MTP provides a very good accounting of the achievements and of the changes necessitated because of the nature of the scientific process.

The MTP logframes don't convey the same focus as found in the narrative. In order to develop the new product lines seven more outputs are added under the SP3 program to make a total of 28 outputs in this Program alone. There are good reasons why some outputs will need to continue through 2010 in order to fill the current contract. The GCP also argues that the broader research agenda has been central in establishing the GCP partnership—a well-recognized product of the Phase 1. These needs and concerns notwithstanding the SC urges the GCP Management team to fully implement the key recommendation of the EPMR with respect to focusing on the proof of concept i.e. on developing an effective means to monitor the progress towards delivery of the seven product lines and on phasing out some of the present work (there are over 100 outputs in the current MTP!) in order to focus resources on the product lines. The SC would like to see the next MTP logframe clearly indicate these changes.

Changes have taken place in the governance and management structure changes and further improvements are still foreseen. CIMMYT review of its Host Agreement with GCP could have further implications for the GCP. The EC, the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and GCP's management team also plan to revamp and revitalize the GCP Stakeholder Committee (SHC). The SC notes that interactions between the GCP MT and the CGIAR scientists in charge of germplasm conservation is taking place and hopes that the "complex institutional discussions" can be resolved in the new CGIAR.

GCP reports delays in some of its outputs and activities. Reasons for these delays are multifaceted and range from administrative to technical and scientific. Towards the end of 2009, the management team will define impact indicators at both research theme and program level. Considering the extent of the on-going changes shown and alluded to in the MTP, the future uncertainty, and the questions regarding the CP's focus and ability to respond fully to the CPER, it would be advisable to monitor the planning and implementation of this CP in its second and final phase to steer it toward a successful completion or its restructuring as a platform for a Mega-program.

GENERATION CP RESPONSE

GCP first thanks the Science Council (SC) for their review of the MTP and insightful comments. Just like the SC, we are very much aware of the critical importance of focusing our research and having clear quantifiable outputs in the short term, and better defining our long-term objectives. The EPMR in 2008 provided relevant feedback on our current research strategy, and provided prescriptions to help increase the efficiency and focus of the Programme. We are grateful to the Science Council for the positive review, on the balance, of GCP.

For the purpose of clarity, major points raised by the Science Council will be addressed briefly below:

1 SC commentary: "The MTP logframes don't convey the same focus as found in the

narrative.”

GCP response

It is true that there is a discernible disconnect between the narrative and the logframes. In part, this is because the narrative more lucidly explains both where we are coming from, and also where we are going – and why – based on progress made in Phase I, as well as on reviews, lessons learnt and strategy implementation. The structure of the logframe, at this time of great transition within the Programme, does not however allow for such a lucid presentation and justification as does the narrative, carrying as it does elements from the past, the present and the future – all within the same logframe.

The Management Team is aware of this disconnect and discussed at length the merits – and demerits – of restructuring the logframe in the 2010–2012 MTP. While it was highly desirable to restructure the logframe to fully mirror the changes outlined in the narrative, the devil is in the details and the practicalities of how to achieve this goal, given the current transition that GCP is itself undergoing in implementing the EPMR recommendation to devote 50 percent of Programme resources on seven trait–crop combinations, now dubbed Challenge Initiatives (CIs), alongside contractual obligations for ongoing projects. At the time of submitting the MTP mid this year, we were still at the very early planning stages of the CIs. Therefore, for the purposes of the MTP, the MT at its meeting in early June resolved to retain the current Subprogram-based format in the logframe, and then review the format in early 2010. There was a pragmatic reason for this decision: currently, the Subprograms are still the administrative units of each and every GCP project, and since the logframe is also a project reporting, evaluation and monitoring tool, it was imperative that the logframe reflect how projects are managed within GCP at the current time.

2 SC commentary: “...the SC urges the GCP Management team to fully implement the key recommendation of the EPMR with respect to focusing on the proof of concept i.e. on developing an effective means to monitor the progress towards delivery of the seven product lines and on phasing out some of the present work (there are over 100 outputs in the current MTP!) in order to focus resources on the product lines. The SC would like to see the next MTP logframe clearly indicate these changes.”

GCP response

This commentary (No 2) also relates to project structure and the MTP, hence to the GCP response to SC commentary No 1 above. As explained, GCP’s project structure is under review and will be redesigned to harmonize it with change-related developments in the Programme. How to structure the projects – and hence how to structure the logframe – will become clearer as activities are linked up more in terms of the discovery–delivery pipeline, which will also see the logframe redefined and the number of Outputs reduced through clustering and phasing out. While the current project structure is based on Subprogram and funding mechanism, the new structure will be driven by the type of work undertaken, and not on how the work is funded.

Beginning 2009, all new activities are embedded in either the seven Challenge Initiatives, or in the two delivery platforms (the Molecular Breeding Platform – MBP – and the Genetic Resources Supply Services – GRSS). As part of monitoring progress towards delivery, a Product Delivery Coordinator (PDC) has been identified for each of the seven CIs. PDCs will oversee product delivery within each CI as a part-time responsibility and will report to the Product Delivery Leader (PDL), a new position filled at the end of the 3rd quarter of 2009. The main responsibility of the PDCs will be to manage and oversee the development (by early 2010) and implementation of the Delivery Plan within each CI, ensuring that impact indicators for each will be attained by 2013. The PDL will lead the design and implementation of all GCP activities related to product delivery.

3 SC commentary: “Considering the extent of the on-going changes shown and alluded to in the MTP, the future uncertainty, and the questions regarding the CP’s focus and ability to respond fully to the CPER, it would be advisable to monitor the planning and implementation of this CP in its second and final phase to steer it toward a successful completion or its restructuring as a platform for a Mega-program.”

Within a year the GCP has addressed and implemented most of the EPMR recommendations and the Management Team is quite proud of this achievement. It is true that our new research structure is not reflected in the logframe for the reasons outlined in points 1 and 2 above. The Management Team is working on commensurate Programme-level impact indicators and mechanisms to both monitor and measure performance, particularly at the Program’s close projected for 2014. In fact, the MT committed to the GCP Executive Board several months ago to formulate a draft transition plan by end 2009 for GCP. But considering the magnitude of changes projected in the CG reform, we postponed the development of our transition strategy, as it appeared pragmatic and prudent to take a stepwise approach and first confirm the re-orientation of the CG system, and then to formulate a concordant transition strategy for GCP.

Embedding GCP in a mega-programme was discussed during our last Board meeting that took place at the end of September. In the latest documents from the GC reform process, the mega-programme titled Crop germplasm conservation, enhancement and use appears to be a logical potential home. So the MT is considering this option as one of the suitable ways to ensure continuity in a strategic research area already promoted by GCP. In addition, being part of a horizontal cross-Center effort should also facilitate the sustainability of two delivery platforms above (MBP and GRSS).

CLIMATE CHANGE, AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY (CCAFS) CHALLENGE PROGRAM

As noted by the CCAFS-CP, the 2010-2012 MTP is “provisional” given that key management staff, including the director, have only just been - or soon will be - appointed. It is understandable then that much of the detail has not yet been sorted out. Notwithstanding, the MTP provides an elegant account of global challenges confronting agriculture, food security and natural resource management under scenarios of climate change and variability. As a general strategic document setting out the issues it is excellent. The spirit of the MTP is very much that of the global science networks (ESSP, Diversitas, etc.). These science driven initiatives have not been particularly effective in delivering products to CGIAR beneficiaries – they never set out to do this. If the CCAFS-CP could change this and link the upstream science of these initiatives to the more applied networks of the CGIAR it would be a huge advance.

The CCAFS clearly presents an opportunity for a new way of doing business for the CGIAR and can potentially be a strong hub for knowledge and innovation for climate change issues. However, there are several concerns. At present, the MTP retains too much of a blue-sky science culture: it lacks the pragmatism and impact culture that is expected in a CGIAR initiative. Indeed, impact pathways are expressed in somewhat general terms at this stage, e.g., for Project 1 “... CCAFS’ main impact pathway will be through direct and indirect engagement with global and regional climate policy processes, including the UNFCCC/SBSTA at the global level, and by influencing the key global and regional actors.” In the subsequent MTP, the program should explain ‘how’ this might be achieved. While the overall objectives of the CP are sound, the research plans are also expressed only in very general terms at this stage and thus it is not possible for the SC to evaluate them in any detail. The document is in reality more of a strategic

plan than a research plan.

The MTP lays out an array of six Projects that were outlined in the CP proposal. These are grouped into two sets.

Set 1: Diagnosis and developing the knowledge base: setting the research context and ex-ante analysis of trade-offs between improving livelihoods, food security and environmental benefits

- Project 1: Diagnosing vulnerability and analysing opportunities
- Project 2: Unlocking the potential of macro-level policies
- Project 3: Enhancing engagement and communication for decision-making

Set 2: Developing adaptation pathways and identifying mitigation options for agricultural and food systems in the face of climate change

- Project 4: Adaptation pathways based on managing current climate risk
- Project 5: Adaptation pathways under progressive climate change
- Project 6: Poverty alleviation through climate change mitigation

The project portfolio is relevant and comprehensive but the issue of focus within these general areas needs more work. A good framework for establishing priorities and allocating resources amongst them will be needed in the next plan. The proposed activities for each project seem appropriate with the planned outputs in the sense that they seek to capture the integration and synergy and thus highlight the added value of bringing these research providers together. The SC finds this extremely encouraging as a basis for the further formation and elaboration of activities of partners. Nevertheless, the CCAFS-CP at present seems to aspire to do too much, and there is little evidence in the MTP of an understanding of where the real breakthrough opportunities lie, i.e., where the value added will come from for agricultural development. The CP should get into a strategic planning and priority setting exercise as soon as possible.

The Project narratives provide a rationale and approach to implementation with a focus on the interaction, synergies and tradeoffs using the skill base of the two schools of research providers—the CGIAR & NARS partners and the global climate scientists. The Projects identify the key IPGs to be developed and, very generally, the types of partners likely to be involved. The CGIAR should have a significant comparative advantage through its established relationships with NARS and other delivery mechanisms which many of the ARIs working on climate change do not have. The ways in which this advantage might be exploited is not conveyed in the MTP, but it could and should be. Also, organizations such as IUCN and WWF have major initiatives with similar goals to the CCAFS-CP and similar levels of funding. They operate downstream in advocating change in policies and practices and could be powerful partners for the CCAFS-CP in delivering science to users. Yet the MTP makes no reference to any of these potential partners, and, although the CCAFS-CP relies extensively on partners, the MTP gives only superficial treatment of the nature of those partnerships. What is the process by which partners will be chosen, how many will they be, what will be the criteria for selecting them, and how will they be funded and assessed? The MTP also seems to ignore the large body of work that has already been done elsewhere, e.g., GLOWA, AMMA that have already invested heavily in Geoportal type tools.

It would be necessary to base the CCAFS-CP plan on what the CGIAR is already doing in this area and how all of this relates to the huge investments in climate change research that is being funded outside the CGIAR. There is need to show how the CCAFS-CP would play to the strengths and existing installed capacity of the CGIAR Centers; what the Centers' roles and respective comparative advantage will be. The SC commentary on earlier versions of the CP plan

highlighted this need. The CP may represent less than 20% of CGIAR research in this subject area, and perhaps less than 1% of global R&D in the mitigation and adaptation field related to natural resources and agriculture. It is a matter of urgency to define how the CCAFS-CP will contribute to or create a global “*knowledge and innovation (or adaptation) system*” (KIAS) for climate impacts on agriculture and natural resources. It seems unlikely that the CCAFS-CP can be a significant provider of frontier science in this area – other providers are far better resourced to do this. The comparative advantage of the CCAFS-CP, which is not really addressed in the plan, must surely lie in facilitating implementation of developing country institutions in KIAS. It is encouraging to learn that at least some of the regional and project leaders will be located in CGIAR centers and this suggests a role of the CCAFS-CP in bringing together the combined resources of the CGIAR and linking them to users / beneficiaries and to upstream frontier science – but this is not explicit in the MTP. Likewise, several other MTPs mention climate change work without reference to the CCAFS-CP. The inception conference will be of critical importance in establishing the right balance between the frontier scientists, the impact-oriented CGIAR scientists and practitioners.

At the level of generalization provided in the MTP, the log frames are perhaps of less value. The CCAFS-CP mentions that further elaboration on partnerships, more specific output targets and impact pathways will be provided after the initial planning phase. While this is understandable, the SC strongly suggests that particular attention be focused on identifying achievable output targets in an appropriate time frame. One critique of this “provisional” MTP is that the output targets are quite generic. These should be revised to a set of doable output targets even in the initial planning phase.³

Although both scientific and policy capacity building is addressed in the proposal (p. 22-23), it should perhaps receive even more emphasis given that the single biggest contribution that the CCAFS-CP might make may well be in building developing country capacity to address the challenges of climate change in agricultural and natural resources. Thus, one over-arching goal might be the creation of a climate change KIAS.

Work is to be conducted regionally but it is not clear what the scale of the regions will be: a region consisting of all of Africa, or sub-national scale, e.g., SE Ghana. Will the CCAFS-CP build upon existing eco-regional locations where the CGIAR has installed capacity – for instance the ASB field locations? The reference to 4-6 shared benchmark sites at the bottom of page 13 is good but needs a lot of expansion.

The SC recommends that (a) the CCAFS-CP begin implementing the CP based on the ‘provisional’ MTP and (b) the CCAFS-CP continue the process of refining (focusing) the MTP workplan for presentation and external review in 2010, i.e., the 2011-2013 MTP. The CCAFS MTP next year will be the first complete plan and its assessment is warranted also in the context of re-organizing research in Mega-programs.

CLIMATE CHANGE, AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY CP RESPONSE

We note the recognition by the Science Council that:

³ The SC particularly wishes to emphasize this need based on the experiences of other Challenge Programs that have gone through a very long planning and exploratory phase and where the mid term external reviews (CPEP) have virtually all pointed out the need to focus on a realistic set (feasible and measurable) of outputs. The CCAFS-CP has the opportunity to learn from that experience.

- (a) CCAFS-CP can make huge advances in linking the ESSP upstream science on climate change with the typical beneficiaries that the CGIAR targets;
- (b) CCAFS clearly presents an opportunity for a new way of doing business for the CGIAR;
- (c) CCAFS can potentially be a strong hub for knowledge and innovation for climate change issues;
- (d) CCAFS project portfolio is relevant and comprehensive.

As noted the MTP was produced before any staff were in place, so as soon as the six Theme Leaders and three Regional Facilitators are in place CCAFS-CP will undertake a strategic planning and priority setting exercise, that will address the concerns of the Science Council: (a) making the MTP more applied and less of a strategic document; (b) developing a framework for setting priorities so that focus can be on the areas where the real breakthrough opportunities lie; (c) demonstrating the role and comparative advantage of the CGIAR in CCAFS and how this advantage may be built on; (d) giving more attention to the nature of the CCAFS partnerships; and (e) giving more attention to capacity building in the MTP. While all these elements are part of our mind set, there has been no time yet to provide the details.

CCAFS is very cognizant of the past reviews on CPs and the need to remain focused on doable outputs and output targets; so that we can capitalize on the unique partnership between ESSP and CGIAR, and capitalize on the strengths and current investments of the CGIAR Centers. As the Science Council recognizes, the launch conference in early 2010 will be of critical importance in establishing the right balance between the frontier scientists, the more applied CGIAR scientists and practitioners. It is in this forum (and its lead up) that regional stakeholders will help clarify the scope of regional engagement and the nature of benchmark sites.

HARVEST PLUS CHALLENGE PROGRAM

The HarvestPlus CP entered its second phase in 2009, which sees a shift in emphasis from discovery to development research. In phase II the emphasis is on the development of specific biofortified products with specific nutrition objectives for target populations in target regions and countries. The project portfolio includes a new, 12th project on Nutrition, Economic, Communication Support. This project was instigated at the request of, and is funded by, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It aims to undertake nutritional and economic analyses for the BMGF's four Grand Challenge 9 biofortification projects. Project activities in the areas of nutrition, economics and communications were identified and agreed upon with the other teams contributing to these projects. The MTP elaborates eight outputs and corresponding impact pathways. The SC considers that this major involvement that will account for about 15% of the CP's total budget in 2010 fits well with the CP's mandate.

Other changes to the project portfolio are mainly in the identification of target countries for the release of specific biofortified products, with the exception of project 11 (*Pro-vitamin A Sweetpotato for Uganda and Mozambique*), which sees the first HarvestPlus-supported crop to enter the final stages of development and dissemination, and involves seed systems development, marketing, and the identification of factors that encourage consumer acceptance.

The MTP reports that due to funding constraints a number of projects will be scaled down during the course of the 2010-2012 MTP. These are: Pro-vitamin A Banana / Plantain; High Iron Lentil; High Iron Potato; High Iron Sorghum; and germplasm screening and pre-breeding activities in yam and cowpea. HarvestPlus will continue to focus on seven staple foods (rice, wheat, maize, cassava, sweetpotato, pearl millet and common beans) and three micronutrients (iron, zinc and vitamin A). These developments resonate with the SC's earlier comments for the CP to focus

primarily on Phase I crops (that with the exception of pearl millet are the crops listed above). However, the SC considers it important for HarvestPlus and its partners to phase out of postpone research on the other crops in such a way that past efforts are not wasted in loss of progress and results obtained so far.

The MTP's discussion of implementation of the 2007 CPER recommendations is not very clear of the extent to which the recommendations have been implemented. The account is more a discussion of work in progress. Given the shifts in project funding and implementation, the mid-course extension from a 2 phase to a 3-phase program and the on-going implementation of the CPER recommendations, it would be advisable to monitor the planning and implementation of the CP (either as CP or as component of a Mega-program).

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CHALLENGE PROGRAM (SSA CP)

This MTP describes the same significantly revised research program design that was presented in last year's MTP. It is an update with only minor adjustments due to changes in time lines for deliverable results. The Meta-analysis project added to the portfolio last year addresses the three central research questions for completing the three-year implementation phase of the CP: i) to provide empirical evidence of IAR4D being an effective research approach and the benefits it can deliver; a database of process and impact indicator variable for the innovation platforms (IP; 36 in total) established by the CP; and iii) Methods and tools for conducting social experiments in SSA. The meta-analysis project draws from the three Pilot Learning Site (PLS) projects and synthesizes their results and experiences. The PLS are expected to deliver on the other main areas of outputs: technological, institutional, policy and market innovations; methods for conducting IAR4D; and documented lessons from the development of IPs that by themselves are an output.

Following the CGIAR approval in 2006 of the recommendations of the CP external review, the SSA-CP's time line of operation was set for a 2007-2009 implementation phase to focus its activities on providing a proof of concept for the IAR4D, drawing appropriate lessons and delivering relevant IPGs from this work. There has been slower than expected progress (already foreseen last year) due to the delayed commencement in activities in 2007, some difficulties related to staff changes and availability of necessary expertise in 2008, and need to re-establish some IP teams after prolonged delays. The CP therefore is continuing its activities into 2010. The MTP reports that the design of an exit strategy has been completed in June 2009.

The SC proposes that, following the recommendation of the external review, the Council should commission another review for 2010 to assess the results of the SSA-CP's implementation phase, to advise the System about possible expansion of the CP activities, or transfer of promising and viable work to other organizations or forthcoming Mega-programs, and to advise FARA and relevant partners on strategies for sustaining the institutional structure and momentum likely created by the SSA-CP in case the activities do not continue under the current organization.

WATER AND FOOD CHALLENGE PROGRAM

The 2010-2012 MTP is a six-month update on the previous MTP, which described the context, rationale and initial ideas for implementing the CP's strategy for the second phase (2009-2013)⁴.

⁴ Note: due to the ending of the first phase of the CP in December 2008, the 2009-2011 MTP was not submitted to and reviewed by the Science Council until January, 2009.

This MTP describes the current status of the CPWF as the newly established Board discusses and approves plans for the second phase. There appear to be no major deviations from the previous plan (number and descriptions of the basin and cross basin projects remain the same) and therefore many of the comments of the SC in the 2009-2011 MTP Commentary apply to the current plan as well. This applies particularly to the positive developments with respect to having a stronger problem-focus, a more solid conceptual basis and greater coherence compared to earlier plans. The SC, however, suggested some areas for improvements which still need attention, e.g., in elaborating the specific type of research to be undertaken in addressing the many research questions enumerated under each output of the projects, the specific hypotheses to be tested, and the methods/approaches to be used. Recognizing the importance of getting the right research-society and research-policy interfaces established and having processes in place for this dialogue for truly effective impact-oriented research, the current plan would benefit from elaborating a partnership strategy/framework through which this broader constituency could effectively operate, i.e., one that explicitly acknowledges the roles of government agencies, NGOs and corporate actors. Finally, output descriptions need considerably more specificity if progress towards achieving these outputs is to be measured, i.e., going beyond simply “on institutions and governance”, “on scaling out”, “on coordination”, followed by a list of research questions. These comments notwithstanding, the SC does not consider external assessment of the CPWF MTP warranted next year.