

Terms of Reference
Phase 2, Stripe Review of Social Science in the CGIAR
October 2008

Background

At SC08, September 2007, the Science Council (SC) proposed to undertake a Stripe review of the Social Science research in the CGIAR.¹ The reasons for and the main objective of the Social Science Stripe Review (SSSR) were laid out in a scoping paper.² The Executive Council in its 13th meeting approved the review plan as part of the SC's work plan for 2008-2009. The purpose of the social science stripe review is to provide an analysis of the capacity of Centers and Challenge Programs (CPs) to conduct social science research and of the quality and relevance of the social science research regarding its functions and products, and to make recommendations for improvement to enhance the delivery of relevant research results that effectively advance the CGIAR's goals.

The stripe review was planned in two parts. The first phase has been conducted as a desk study. It generated two interrelated outputs a) a background report on the current status of social sciences in the CGIAR³, and b) a normative framework describing a putative CGIAR social science research agenda against which the current capacity and relevance of CGIAR social science can be assessed.⁴ Despite limitations related to data (gaps in data; limited and inconsistent data on expenditures; difficulty of comparisons over time) some broad diagnostics emerged from the desk study:

- Over the past decade or two, the agenda for social science research in CGIAR has expanded considerably, beyond the adoption-impact assessment nexus to include such factors as impact of agricultural technology on poverty, livelihoods, equity, environment, gender and nutrition, in addition to the role of agricultural technology in the broad context of rural development, the role of policies, institutions and technology in natural resource management, and a growing portfolio of policy and management research
- The number of social scientists in the system seems to have increased, but trends are not clear due to changes in classification of staff, methods used to collect information

¹ "Social sciences" comprise those disciplines that apply scientific methods to the study of individual and collective human behavior and outcomes. This includes anthropology, economics, geography, law, political science, psychology, and sociology, as well as derivatives of those fields (e.g., agricultural economics, rural sociology) and social science-oriented branches of the biological sciences (e.g., community nutrition)

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[http://www.sciencecouncil.cgiar.org/fileadmin/user_upload/sciencecouncil/Monitoring_and Evaluation/Stripe Review scoping paper Dec 2007.pdf](http://www.sciencecouncil.cgiar.org/fileadmin/user_upload/sciencecouncil/Monitoring_and_Evaluation/Stripe_Review_scoping_paper_Dec_2007.pdf)

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[http://www.sciencecouncil.cgiar.org/fileadmin/user_upload/sciencecouncil/Monitoring_and Evaluation/SSR Phase 1 Background Report 21 Sep 08 CBB Version.pdf](http://www.sciencecouncil.cgiar.org/fileadmin/user_upload/sciencecouncil/Monitoring_and_Evaluation/SSR_Phase_1_Background_Report_21_Sep_08_CBB_Version.pdf)

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[http://www.sciencecouncil.cgiar.org/fileadmin/user_upload/sciencecouncil/Monitoring_and Evaluation/Normative Framework October 27 2008 final.pdf](http://www.sciencecouncil.cgiar.org/fileadmin/user_upload/sciencecouncil/Monitoring_and_Evaluation/Normative_Framework_October_27_2008_final.pdf)

on staff and blurring of disciplinary specifications. In 2007, 27% of scientists in the CGIAR were social scientists or otherwise conducting social science research.

- Credible estimates of expenditure on social science research were difficult to get but at the System's level expenditure to activities classified under *policy research* has increased in real terms since 1992 from less than 30 million to about 45 million in 2006 (1992 US\$).
- Among the social scientists economists are the largest disciplinary group (65%). The second largest group is comprised of staff with no formal social science training (16%) yet working on social science research topics. The numbers in the various non-economist social science disciplines (sociology, anthropology, geography, policy, law) are small (19% in total) and may fail to reach a critical mass.
- A large portion of activities is in policy research and surprisingly limited attention is given to technology development and adoption issues.
- Centers claim largest impact in influencing priority setting and in multidisciplinary work; less disciplinary impact.
- Compared to ARIs, the CGIAR social scientists are younger and relatively inexperienced (judging by year when highest degree was earned); there is a reasonable (by ARI standards) proportion of women.
- There are indications that increasing dependency on restricted funding may drive staffing patterns (including recruitment and retention) and may influence choice and quality of research.
- Partnerships cover a broad range of institutions but ARI seem less common.
- The publication output is variable and in general few are in high quality and high impact outlets. Even within the same journal, the Center publications are cited at substantially lower rates than other articles. There is a large portion in grey reports which have not undergone peer review.

In addition to these observations many recent Center commissioned external reviews (CCERs) and external program and management reviews (EPMRs)⁵ point to weaknesses in social science research capacity, productivity, research quality and the IPG nature of the products.

The 2nd output of the Phase 1 study – The Normative Framework –highlighted the comparative strengths of social science research of the CGIAR as:

- The Centers' location in developing countries facilitates highly contextualized, problem-driven research that is both more difficult and more costly to undertake from ARIs based in the more developed countries.
- A large cadre of highly-trained, internationally-recruited staff enables Centers and CPs to undertake more advanced and complex lines of research than many – but certainly not all – developing country NARES can tackle.
- The multidisciplinary nature of most Centers and CPs and the relatively low disciplinary boundaries within them make it relatively easier to organize diverse teams well-equipped to address inherently interdisciplinary challenges beyond the reach of more narrowly staffed research institutes or faculties.

⁵ Cited in the scoping paper and Phase 1 Background paper.

The paper also provided a framework of three key priority research areas for SS research, derived from the sources of CGIAR comparative advantage in social science research. Specific lines of research activities in each priority research area are identified in Appendix 1. These tentative findings and the normative framework are being used to guide the TOR of the main phase (Phase 2) of the review.

Terms of reference for the Main Phase (Phase 2)

1. The objectives of the Social Science Stripe Review are to provide a comprehensive assessment of the CGIAR's social science research agenda by assessing: i) the relevance of the social science research regarding its functions and products with focus on three key areas elaborated below; ii) the capacity and incentives in the CGIAR for conducting high quality research that can contribute to the CGIAR goals, and iii) the opportunities for improving the organization and partnership models for enhancing the impact of social science research. The review aims at suggesting new ways of thinking about how to improve social science research in the CGIAR System, contributing to a forward-looking design for social science research under the new integrated strategy and results framework emerging from the Change Management process.
2. The review should focus on the assessment, at System level, of the current quality, coverage, relevance and productivity of social science activities to CGIAR priority research, with a focus on three key areas social science research:
 - a. social science research support for productivity growth and poverty reduction via technological innovation. This focus area should include assessment of the social science contribution to rural livelihoods enhancement through natural resources management.
 - b. social science research support for productivity growth and poverty reduction via institutional innovation and policy analysis.
 - c. social science research for informing agricultural and rural development policy

The assessment will cover any social science disciplines that are involved in these key areas and, to the extent possible within the scope of the review, relevant linkages to other disciplines. It will require filling in essential information gaps from the phase 1 descriptive report through both new data collection from Centers and CPs, as well as visits to selected Centers and CPs. It should capture aspects of productivity and effectiveness through assessment of the quantity and quality of publications, quality of linkages among scientists within the Center, collaboration with advanced institutions and assessment of outcomes and impacts from the social scientists' work. It should explicitly address emergent research in innovation systems (and related topics) as well as more traditional lines of research. It should explicitly examine and assess the awareness and use of appropriate and state-of-the-art methods by System social scientists.

Furthermore the review should include:

- d. Comparison of social sciences research prioritization and management within the CGIAR against current global best practices, including: how the demand for social science research is derived and articulated at the System, Center and Program levels; research ethics for the protection of human subjects, management of meta-data, project and staff monitoring and evaluation, use of information and communications technologies for transnational project management, etc.
- e. Analysis of the organization, financing and staffing of the social sciences in support of CGIAR priority research, with an eye to disciplinary and skill mixes necessary to address emerging new challenges related to, for example, biofuels, climate change and genetically modified organisms. The recommendations of the Change Management and Independent Review processes already underway will need to be taken into consideration in this analysis.
- f. Explicit attention to collaboration between IFPRI and the other Centers, looking especially for ways of potentially generating greater synergies from the interface between the critical mass of social scientists at IFPRI, and the critical masses of natural scientists and small groups of social scientists at the other Centers and in light of the Change Management reforms.

3. The output of the review.

The output of the review is clear, doable recommendations based on the analyses in points 2a-f above, for strengthening social sciences activities in the CGIAR, paying specific attention to emergent priorities as well as current social science activities in which the System holds, or does not hold, comparative advantage globally in light of the current and prospective array of alternative suppliers. The recommendations should clearly identify the System's core competencies and appropriate boundaries for social science activities in the CGIAR.

4. Panel Membership

In consultation with the review panel Chair, two or three additional members will be selected by the SC to complete the review panel for phase 2. The new members will add disciplinary diversity to the panel and where possible a familiarity of the relevant issues at the local national level.

5. The Work plan

The Panel members will be recruited in November 2008. The panel will provide an interim report to SC 11 (March, 2009) and a DRAFT of the final report by July 15, 2009. An SC ad hoc team will provide a quality audit of the DRAFT report. The DRAFT will then be shared with the CGIAR Centers and CPs for factual commentary before being presented to SC11. The normative framework paper and the revised Phase 1 background report will be annexed to the main SSSR report.

Over the course of the nine months from November 2008 through July 2009, the panel will hold an initial virtual meeting, engaging through appropriate means with the Center and CP focal persons, to discuss the purpose and process of the review and to get the Center focal persons' input at an early stage, as well as commitments

to cooperation in the provision of essential data not generated during the phase I study. The panel – at least two of three members in each case – will visit at least four Centers/localities for at least two or three days each:

- 1) IFPRI, as the largest social science research Center and host of one of the first CPs (Harvest Plus). This should be the first Center visited and should be preceded by a day-long meeting of the full panel.
- 2) ILRI and ICRAF as hosts for visits to the Nairobi-based complex of Center s' research teams in Sub-Saharan Africa and, next to Washington, the largest geographic center of CGIAR SSR.
- 3) CIMMYT or IRRI as representative of a major commodity-focused Center.
- 4) IWMI, CIFOR and/or ICRISAT to address more issues more specific to natural resources management and ecoregional centers and to Asian concerns.

The panel will use surveys (to be coordinated by the SC Secretariat) and interviews to collect information from a range of personnel within the CGIAR and more broadly social scientists and research managers in ARIs, NARES and elsewhere as deemed necessary.

The review panel will be supported by the CGIAR Science Council Secretariat (with Sirkka Immonen as the point of contact for the review). The panel will work in close consultation with the SC Task Force that acts as a resource body to the review and provides SC oversight and with the focal persons designated by each Center and CP.

Appendix 1: Areas of CGIAR Comparative Advantage, Derivative Social Science Research Foci and Specific Lines of Research Activities

CGIAR Comparative Advantage	CGIAR Social Science Research Focus	Specific Lines of Research Activities
<p>Multidisciplinary research on agricultural productivity growth by, for and of the poor.</p> <p>Close interaction with stakeholders at local, national and global levels.</p> <p>Producer of significant new intellectual property in agricultural sciences.</p>	<p>Productivity growth, poverty reduction and sustainable NRM via technological innovation, in close collaboration with natural scientists.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems and farmer characterization work • Participatory plant breeding • Ex ante impact assessment for priority setting at project and program levels • Technology adoption studies to establish cross-sectional and inter-temporal patterns of uptake and adaptation of CGIAR innovations • Ex post impact assessment for evaluation and institutional learning • Natural resources management (NRM) for enhancing and sustaining productivity growth • Emergent research on innovation systems and impact pathways including innovations that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of global research system • Intellectual property rights management
<p>Close interaction with stakeholders at local, national and global levels.</p>	<p>Productivity growth poverty reduction and sustainable NRM through institutional innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation of market and non-market resource allocation mechanisms • Sociocultural constraints on and incentives for productivity-enhancing innovations • Collective action and property rights • Agricultural input and output distribution systems, including farmer-based organizations • The design and management of agricultural and NRM research institutions, whether around intellectual property rights, impact assessment methods, or related topics
<p>Unique combination of international-caliber technical expertise and its multinational nature.</p> <p>Widespread “honest broker” perception for policy guidance.</p>	<p>Productivity growth and poverty reduction and by directly informing agricultural and rural development policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy analysis related to international agricultural trade, domestic and regional agricultural input and output markets • Intellectual property rights and agricultural research policy, and the policies for the conservation of animal and plant genetic resources