

CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
SCIENCE COUNCIL

2nd SC Meeting, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, 6 – 10 September 2004

Standing Panel on Priorities and Strategies (SPPS)

**How Should the CGIAR Handle Ethical Challenges?
- Issues and Proposal for a Strategic Study**

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Extract from the End of Meeting Report from SC2

Agenda Item 3: Ethics and Science in the CGIAR

“Professor Peter Sandoe presented the report “How should the CGIAR Handle Ethical Challenges? – Issues and Proposal for a Strategic Study”, which he had prepared with Karsten Klint Jensen. The Council thanked Professor Sandoe for providing an enlightening study on ethics as they affect the CGIAR. The proposed recommendations for two future reports, one on Research Ethics and the CGIAR and the second on Ethics and the CGIAR Mission were welcomed. The Panel felt that the studies, particularly the first, were extremely important for the CGIAR by providing guidelines for ethical behavior, building on the existing Centre code of conduct. The SC believed that there was not only a need to highlight and unify approaches across Centres around common codes of conduct, but to bring codes in line with those used by other partner ARIs whose collaboration could well be prohibited should such codes not exist.

The Council decided to ask its Standing Panel on Priorities and Strategies (SPPS) to:

(i) prepare terms of reference for the proposed study to be undertaken as soon as feasible, and identify a suitable chairperson for the panel; and (ii) consider convening the second panel preferably before 2006 so as not to delay important outcomes for the CGIAR.”

How Should the CGIAR Handle Ethical Challenges? - Issues and Proposal for a Strategic Study¹

1. Aim and Structure of the Present Paper

The present paper has two aims. These were set out in a letter from Amir Kassam to Peter Sandøe dated 4 May 2004. They were: 1) to identify and assess issues of ethics that are relevant to the CGIAR; and 2) to propose a strategic study to be conducted by a panel of experts.

To achieve these aims the following steps have been taken:

- Section 2, “The definition of ethics”: What is meant by the evasive concept of *ethics* in the present context is clarified. Four different aspects of ethics, each of which is relevant to the CGIAR, are distinguished.
- Section 3, “Relevance of ethics for the CGIAR”: Increased interest in ethics is a general tendency. It is explained how the factors underlying this tendency apply to the CGIAR.
- Section 4, “Outline of substantive ethical issues which may be dealt with by the CGIAR”: The issues fall in four groups connected with: research ethics, benefiting poor people, protecting the environment, and respecting donors and partners.
- Section 5, “An overview of the academic ethical debate”: A brief overview of the different schools of ethical thought is provided. Two issues – food security and sustainability – are used to show how the academic debate may help to clarify what is at stake in an ethical discussion.
- Section 6, “Whose point of view?”: The academic debate serves to clarify and structure the ethical discussion, but it cannot, at the end of the day, determine standards of right and wrong. Any decision on standards must be based on the culture shared by the involved nations and organisations. How does this square with cultural relativity? A tentative answer is given to this difficult question.
- Section 7, “Initiatives within the field of ethics taken by the CGIAR, the FAO and others”: This overview should allow the present initiative to draw lessons from what has been done in the past.
- Section 8, “Most important issues for the CGIAR”: Here the principal ethical issues that ought to be dealt with by the CGIAR are described. These include research ethics, equity, and protection of nature.
- Section 9, “Proposal for a strategic study”: Here suggestions about objectives, scope, the composition of the panel and timeframe are made.

2. The Definition of Ethics

As humans we act, and what we do affects ourselves, other people, nature, and indeed what more generally we think of as sacred. Therefore, everything we do, in a way, has ethical significance. However, we also formulate norms and visions regarding how we ought to behave towards ourselves, towards other people, towards our God or gods, and towards

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nature. The development of these norms and visions is a central part of culture and civilisation. Traditionally, this development has taken place within religious movements and institutions. Often in history, ethical norms have been sanctioned by the state, and trespassing has been punished.

With the development of culture and the evolution of more liberal societies, ethical norms and visions have been subjected to philosophical scrutiny. Different schools of ethical thought have developed, e.g. utilitarianism, rights theories and virtue ethics. In modern times philosophers have also tried to analyse and understand the role and status of ethics; and here they have made comparisons with the main branches of science. It has been concluded that ethical questions about what we ought to do and how we ought to live can't be answered by means similar to those by which scientific questions are answered. However, philosophers disagree about the extent to which ethical questions can be the subject of rational discussion, and about the extent to which such discussions may lead to convergence on universally accepted ethical principles.

During the last century ethical norms have also been made the object of study within sociology, anthropology and other branches of social science. Whereas moral philosophers and other so-called ethicists typically study ethics with the aim of improving our ethical norms and our ethical thinking, social scientist want to describe and compare existing norms, and examine their role in human life.

On the basis of the above, it is possible to distinguish between four topics falling under the general heading "ethics":

- **The ethics of a person or a group of persons:** Values underlying how a person or group of persons treat themselves, others, the sacred and nature.
- **Stated ethical norms and visions:** Traditionally these norms and visions can be found in religious texts, but they may also be found in secular form in, e.g., ethical declarations. Ethical guidelines of organisations like the CGIAR belong to this latter category.
- **Critical ethics:** The attempt to understand, criticise, improve and systematize existing ethical values, norms and visions.
- **Empirical ethics:** The study by social science of the values that people live by, of their stated values, norms and visions, and of the role of these values, norms and visions in social groups and societies.

3. Relevance of Ethics for the CGIAR

Over the last three decades, the subject of ethics has attracted growing interest from corporations, governments and international organisations. This is not just because moral standards have been going up. Rather, this is in many ways a sign of crisis. This crisis is rooted in the following five factors. 1) The breakdown of traditional hierarchies and value systems that arrived in the Western world with the so-called youth revolution in the late sixties. 2) The decline in technological optimism and trust in science – something which makes it obvious that difficult priorities must be set when we try to solve the problems of this world. 3) Economic stagnation combined with increased international competition. This has made it especially clear to governments in the rich world that there is a limit to tax revenues and a need for priorities regarding the spending of taxpayers' money. 4) New scientific and technological developments, notably gene technology, creating ethical challenges, which are

not easily dealt with by existing values, norms and visions. 5) Growing awareness of environmental problems that call for new solutions and which challenge traditional anthropocentric ethical values, norms and visions. 6) Globalisation. We have become more aware of the fact that other people have different values and do not necessarily share our norms and visions; also, globalisation in itself creates new ethical challenges.

Each of these factors is clearly relevant to the situation of the CGIAR. 1) Since the establishment of the CGIAR, there has been a shift in the ethical values at play in the relation between rich and poor countries. On the one hand, the rich countries are required to treat the poor countries as equals who, in turn, are seen not just as recipients of help but as active agents determining their own future. On the other hand, demands are placed on poor countries, notably in the area of human rights. 2) The CGIAR system assumes that modern biological science can be used to improve agricultural productivity in the third world. In the aftermath of the green revolution, which in its own terms was a great success, growing scepticism about the solutions offered by agricultural science has developed. 3) Together with the decline in technological optimism, there has been a growing awareness of the fact that economic resources made available to fight poverty and malnutrition in the third world are bound to be limited. Since, at the same time, the problems seem to be growing, there is increasing awareness of the need to set priorities in helping the third world. 4) Gene technology is in many ways a potent and obvious tool with which to achieve the goals of the CGIAR system. However, in many parts of the Western world, and to some extent in the Third World also, there is a widespread scepticism about GM food. 5) Clearly, there may be conflicts between the short-term aim of providing food to the poor to prevent starvation and malnutrition and the long-term aim of preserving nature and the environment. To deal with this the CGIAR system has had, over time, to change its strategies. 6) Within the CGIAR system there is a growing awareness of the need both to respect the values and world views of different cultures and to abide by universal declarations regarding human rights, protection of biodiversity etc. It is also true that globalisation creates new problems: for example, food standards defined in the rich countries may have a serious impact on agricultural production in the poor countries.

Another reason why the CGIAR should focus on ethics is that CGIAR work depends heavily on voluntary collaboration from governments in donor countries, governments in the third world, farmers' organisations and NGOs and other organisations. Ethical arguments cannot force anyone to do things, but they surely have a role when it comes to motivation. All points just mentioned are alluded to in the report, *Ethics and the CGIAR*, from the Standing Committee on Priorities and Strategies (SCOPAS, SDR/iSC: IAR/02/15). This report serves as background for the present assignment to prepare a paper for the SC. The following is the concluding part of the background section of the report:

“Given the diversity of human cultures and value systems, the rapid advances in science and technology, the particular goals and focus of the CGIAR, it is important that the ethical values and principles that guides the CGIAR and the conduct of all its research are explicitly reflected upon and described. Ethical issues and integration of ethical consideration into CGIAR’s work apply not only to the development of GMOs but to a wide range of other aspects of the CGIAR research agenda such as genetic resources, water management, animal and fish production, forest management, the environment, the way research relevance and quality is sought and sustained, the manner by which research products and information are made accessible and shared, the relationships with partners, farming communities and other stakeholders...”

In this extract, it is pointed out that an important role of ethics for the CGIAR system is to *reflect upon and describe* ethical values and principles that are already at work. So the role of ethics is not exclusively to change values; it can also be to make underlying values transparent. This in turn may be important for both internal and external communication.

However, it is clear from the report that, within the field of ethics, the CGIAR system foresees not just clarification but also change. Thus, in the report it is suggested that a panel of experts should be set up “to help develop an ethical framework of policies and guiding principles of conduct for the CGIAR scientific activities, products and expected outcomes”.

In the report, the following terms of reference for the panel are suggested:

1. *Assess the present CGIAR policies and the policies and practices of the CGIAR Centres with regard to ethics.*
2. *Identify the issues in ethics that are relevant to the Mission, research activities, and partnerships of the CGIAR.*
3. *Develop principles of conduct to guide the Centres in the safe and ethical use of science, based on current principles and practices and emerging trends, and in the development and dissemination of its products.*
4. *Make recommendations on a possible future ethical framework of policies and guiding principles of conduct for the CGIAR scientific activities, products and expected outcomes which may form the basis for a Code of Ethics for the CGIAR-supported Centres. This should include advice on how the CGIAR System can continue to monitor developments in ethics and have in place mechanisms (including the necessary institutional strengths) to ensure that the ethical principles and practices of the Centres reflect current best practices and timely responses to emerging issues.*

In view particularly of points 3 and 4, it is clear that changes may be anticipated regarding both the principles and visions that form the basis of CGIAR activities *and* the mechanisms (such as the ethical review boards) that are set up to make sure that the centres act in accordance with the defined principles.

4. Outline of Substantive Ethical Issues which May Be Dealt With by CGIAR

The issues here fall into four broad groups: research ethics, benefiting poor people, protecting the environment and respecting donors and partners.

In research ethics, it is important for the CGIAR to safeguard the integrity of research. This will involve good scientific practice (avoidance of scientific dishonesty), principles governing research involving human research subjects (avoidance of misuse of research subjects in the name of science) and principles for research involving genetic resources (respect for ownership of genetic resources, the sharing of knowledge, and so on). Within research ethics, there are also a number of issues focusing on intellectual property (publication, patenting, and so on).

When it comes to benefiting poor people the main issue is equity – i.e. giving poor people access to a fair share of basic resources. It is an uncontroversial goal to prevent hunger, malnutrition and ill health, but setting priorities in the attainment of this goal may be

difficult. A number of other issues are of great importance here: respect for ownership of genetic resources, benefit-sharing, the distribution of political rights, empowerment – in general, allowing the poor a key role in solving their own problems and showing respect for different cultural and religious values.

Within the CGIAR, there is growing awareness of the ethical duty to protect nature and the environment. To treat future generations fairly, sustainable use of renewable resources is necessary, as is wise use of non-renewable resources. There is also growing awareness of the need to protect natural biodiversity – not only as potential resource but in its own right. This, of course, gives rise to a host of ethical questions about our duties towards nature. Finally, a number of ethical issues arise about the treatment of donors and partners. Those who contribute have a right to be treated with respect. This in turn gives rise to issues of accountability, transparency, donor involvement and respect for cultural and political values in donor countries.

Tools to deal with these highly complex issues can be found by examining key elements of the academic ethical debate.

5. An Overview of the Academic Ethical Debate

Outside the academic world, it is natural to meet ethics in the form of concerns and considerations that appear to enter with some force into the deliberations about how to act in a given situation. The concerns might be about hunger, poverty, exhaustion or destruction of natural resources, decreasing biodiversity etc. The considerations might be equity or fairness, increasing welfare, respect for rights, individual autonomy, democracy, protection of nature and sustainable development.

Academic ethics is mostly concerned with ethics in the sense of critically understanding, improving and systematizing ethical values, norms and visions. The critical nature of its methods and investigations leads to serious disagreement about its arguments and results. There is not even agreement as to what are the most fundamental questions.

Still, it is possible to describe certain schools of thought that have evolved over time as competing research programmes. An ethical theory, as such a programme is called, provides – at least in principle – a precise interpretation of the ethical concerns, and a determination of their relative weight in decision-making.

In modern times, the dominant task for ethical theories has been to answer the question: which act (or acts), in a range of alternatives, is (or are) *morally right* in a given situation? An ethical theory is, accordingly, a systematic account of all the relevant ethical considerations and a determination of how these considerations combine to form an overall judgement as to which act is right.

Theories of the right act are often divided into *teleological* (consequentialist) theories and *deontological* (non-teleological, non-consequentialist) theories. There is some disagreement about how this distinction precisely should be drawn, but we suggest the following rough definitions. Teleological theories claim that the right act is exclusively determined by considerations about the *good*, whereas deontological theories deny this claim. A teleological theory thus builds on or implies a theory of the good. A theory of the good tells us how to determine the relative value of outcomes (consequences) of an act.

Utilitarianism is the best-known teleological ethical theory. It claims that the right act is the act that maximises total welfare. Thus its underlying theory of the good claims that the best outcome is the outcome with the greatest total of welfare. This theory of good is *individualistic* – it claims that the overall good is an increasing function of what is good for individuals (individual welfare) and nothing else. Other teleological theories would allow for non-individualistic values, i.e. values or ideals whose fulfilment is considered good even though nobody thereby gets a better life. Equality, cultural integrity, the nation and autonomy are examples of such non-individualistic values. (Note, however, that these values also could be interpreted individualistically.)

Among individualistic theories, utilitarianism claims that only the *total* of welfare counts. Other individualistic teleological theories would claim that the *distribution* of welfare also counts. Thus, (individualistic) *egalitarians* claim that, for a given total of welfare, the more equally it is distributed the better; and *prioritarians* claim that benefiting people matters more, the worse off these people are.

Utilitarianism and other individualistic teleological theories must incorporate a theory of welfare: what makes one life better than another (gives it higher welfare)? Here several theories have been proposed. Most prominent are perfectionism (the good life consists in realising the essential aspects of human nature), hedonism (the good life consists in the greatest balance of pleasure over pain), preference satisfaction theory (the good life is the life preferred by the individual) and various religious theories (e.g. the good life consists in living in accordance with one's religion).

Teleological theories set up a common goal for all of us: maximising the good (however defined). Deontological theories claim that some ethical considerations work in another way. One example is side-constraint theory. This claims that certain specified acts are wrong. A side-constraint cannot be outweighed by considerations of the good. An example is the Kantian view that we should not use other persons exclusively as means in pursuit of our goals – not even in pursuit of the overall good (however defined).

Another class of deontological theories are *contractualist*. They claim, roughly, that the right act in a given set of circumstances is the act that rational and equal agents can agree on under certain more or less idealised conditions. Contractualist theorists differ as to what the relevant conditions are. Some theories attach weight to the idea that ethics should appeal to self-interest only. Others emphasise the idea that agreement should be unbiased and unforced. All involve an attempt to define conditions of agreement that ensure the right kind of impartiality.

An important, and in some ways separate, question here is concerned with how *states* ought to act. *Liberals* claim, roughly, that the state should be neutral between competing conceptions of the good life; it should not prescribe how citizens ought to live, as long as their way of life does not harm others. *Communitarians*, on the other hand, claim that the state ought to promote values inherent in the local, historically evolved community and its culture. The state, therefore, need not be neutral between competing conceptions of the good life.

A complication for ethical theories concerns uncertainty. If there is uncertainty about what exactly the outcome of an act will be, there will be a risk of unintended consequences. Ethical theories have disappointingly little to say about uncertainty. However, very roughly,

the teleological tradition would want to take probabilities into account when valuing acts with uncertain outcomes; the side-constraint tradition would like to maintain that a given *act* is either right or wrong, regardless of its possible unintended consequences; and the contractualist tradition would seek rational agreement about how to deal with the uncertainty in question.

Another task for ethical theories is to say which traits of character each of us ought to develop. These traits are often called *virtues*. Many ethical theorists consider this question a secondary one. They believe the answer should be derived from the answer to the primary question about the right act, and hence, in effect, that the virtues are the traits of character that lead a person to do the right act in any circumstances. However, quite a number of theorists – often drawing on classical or medieval traditions – argue that characterising the virtues is the fundamental task.

A final task is to answer the question, Who are, or what is, entitled to be taken into account in ethical deliberation? Traditionally, ethical theories have been anthropocentric. They have concentrated on human needs and interests. Even this claim raises difficult problems of demarcation. When does a human being come into being and when does it cease to exist? Are future generations entitled to be taken into account?

However, animal ethicists and environmental ethicists have challenged the anthropocentric view. One line of argument (*extensionism*) claims that the properties we would cite in explaining our moral concern for humans require us to care for sentient animals, and – some environmental ethicists claim – even plants, because sentient animals, or plants, share those properties. Another line of argument (often called *holism*) claims that anthropocentric ethics, as well as extensionism, represent an individualistic conception of nature. But if we reflect on the value of nature, we shall see that we are also obliged to value nature (i.e. ecosystems or landscapes) as interdependent wholes. A third line of argument (*deep ecology*) claims that if we reflect on ourselves and how we are intertwined with other life forms, we shall eventually develop a new understanding of “self” that involves recognising other life forms on equal terms as being part of our own flowering as beings.

From the perspective of an organisation like the CGIAR, a body committed to practical action, academic debate about subjects like food security, third world aid and the like may appear disappointingly abstract and removed from the real world. However, the importance of academic ethics does not lie in its no doubt rather artificial settings, but in the distinctions it draws, the questions it raises, and the conflicting lines of arguments it uncovers. These features provide useful tools for analysing the situation in which the CGIAR has to act. The goal of increasing food security and alleviating poverty is a case in point. Discussions of the ethical principles underlying this goal often take the “right to adequate food” as their point of departure. Since this right is part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is widely recognised, legally as well as politically. However, from an academic ethical perspective, the nature of the right to food is contestable.

It is common to distinguish between negative and positive rights. A positive right is a right that other others do certain things to the holder of the right, whereas a negative right is a right that others *do not* do certain things to the right-holder. Hence, a negative right implies that others have a duty to abstain from certain acts, and a positive right implies that others have a duty to provide certain things. In connection with food security, the right that others

refrain from taking food to which you are entitled is a negative right; the right that poor people with no access to food are provided with access is a positive right.

The libertarian tradition has argued that there is big difference between the status of negative and positive rights. Negative rights protect people against harmful acts of other individuals, organisations and governments to which they have not consented. This protection is a matter of respect for persons, i.e. not treating them exclusively as means in the pursuit of goals; and this respect should be backed up by legal sanctions. Governments are entitled to use force to keep a person from violating another's negative rights.

Positive rights, on the other hand, imply a duty that something (e.g. food) is provided for others. But who has this duty and how is it to be fulfilled? Suppose a government would use tax money to provide food for the poor. According to the libertarian tradition this would violate the taxpayer's negative right not to have others taking resources to which they are entitled away from them without their consent. The upshot is that positive rights (if they deserve that title at all) must be respected on a voluntary basis, not by the use of force.

Where could the duty to respect positive rights derive justification? One answer to this question is given by utilitarianism. Utilitarianism prescribes universal benevolence. It claims that the only right-making feature of an act is its tendency to promote the total sum of welfare in the universe. This implies a duty to use resources most efficiently with respect to the objective of maximising total welfare: each individual, organisation or government should allocate resources so as to produce most welfare. Given the diminishing marginal benefit of resources, they are most efficiently used when all beneficiaries derive the same marginal benefit from them. This will typically imply that rich people's resources are best transferred to poor people to the point where both parties derive the same marginal benefit.

As is apparent, the utilitarian objective of universal benevolence conflicts with the libertarian ideal of respect for persons. It may very well produce a higher total welfare to transfer resources from the rich to the poor by force; but that transfer would violate the rights of the rich. The utilitarian answer is that respecting people's rights involves a cost in the sense that people will be worse off than they might have been. One way to resolve this conflict is to involve rich people in the decision. If the utilitarian objective of universal benevolence is morally important, it should be possible to convince rich people of this and thereby gain their consent to that form of benevolence.

The utilitarian ideal of efficient use of resources with respect to welfare has also been criticised for being in conflict with the ideal of fairness. One line of thought (*prioritarianism*) claims that we have a duty to benefit the worse off simply because they are worse off and not just to the extent they derive a higher marginal benefit than others. Certain very badly off persons might be very costly to benefit. According to utilitarianism, it might therefore be inefficient to help them. However, in this line of thought, we have a duty to benefit the worse off, even though that might prove inefficient. Another line of thought (variants of *egalitarianism*) claims that fairness requires us to ensure that everybody has certain a minimum level of basic resources. This minimum might include the basis of self respect, the right to decide about one's own life and the right to participate in political decisions.

A third criticism of the utilitarian objective of universal benevolence is that it is too demanding. For instance, it appears to demand that people in the developed countries give up most of their wealth for the sake of the developing countries and future generations. Doing

that would seriously conflict with the possibility of pursuing one's own goals in life and thereby threaten the integrity of individuals. There are two sorts of utilitarian answer to this criticism. One is short: the fact that benevolence is demanding does not make it mistaken. The other involves a refinement of the utilitarian calculation: it is probably a psychological fact that, in practice, people are only able to provide help for others to a certain extent and still maintain a good life for themselves. Hence, if the demand for benevolence is unchecked, it risks being counterproductive. So efficiency is probably best achieved by modest demands: there are good utilitarian reasons to respect the integrity of donors' lives.

Another important concept for the CGIAR is that of *sustainability*. However, this widely used concept is seldom precisely defined, and its clarification involves making up one's mind about a range of difficult questions. A starting point is to define sustainable agricultural practice as a practice that can be continued in perpetuity. However, as economists would point out, the possibility of substitution of goods (for instance, due to technological development) makes it irrelevant to consider continuing the *same* practice in all future. But if we are to compare the sustainability of evolving practices, sustainability has to be measured on a more fundamental level.

Our Common Future suggested the measure that the present generation's need-satisfaction does not compromise the need-satisfaction of future generations. Some economists have tried to state this more precisely as the view that economic development should be constrained by the condition that natural resources do not *decrease* over time. However, in this form, the measure still raises several questions. First, at present we do not know what substitutions will be possible in the future. This uncertainty clearly affects the prescriptions that follow from the no-decrease measure of sustainability. Some authors distinguish between optimistic and pessimistic views on possibilities of substitution, the latter leading to stricter requirements than the former.

Secondly, on either reading this measure of sustainability implicitly assumes that each generation will contain the same number of people. But this assumption is extremely unlikely to be correct. However, if generations differ in size, it is not clear what conclusions we should draw concerning sustainability: should each generation have the same stock of natural resources, or should each individual have the same stock?

Thirdly, again on either reading the measure takes a rather rigid view of equality between generations. It might well be doubted that this rigid view is tenable. At the opposite extreme is the utilitarian measure of maximising the total of welfare of all generations. This allows for the case in which some generations get less than others if this will increase the overall total. A middle position would allow some trade offs between equality and overall total of welfare.

Fourthly, many environmental ethicists would protest that the ideal of sustainability builds on an anthropocentric view on nature: it directs us to protect nature merely because it provides natural resources for the satisfaction of human needs. But nature should not only be valued instrumentally as a resource for human welfare, the protest goes; it should also be valued for its own sake. Thus, for instance, certain areas should be left alone and allowed to develop flora and fauna on their own terms, instead of being used for human purposes.

The ideal of protecting natural diversity raises a similar problem. From an anthropocentric point of view, biological diversity is valuable because it represents a valuable

resource – for instance, for future developments in agriculture. But from an environmental ethicist's view, we should also value the evolved natural diversity for its own sake.

Let us conclude this section by summarising some important distinctions. Ethical considerations can be divided in two different types. One concerns the way in which we compare the outcomes of action. Should our objective be one of universal benevolence (utilitarian in nature), or should such benevolence be balanced by equality or fairness? Should it be strictly anthropocentric or should it also be concerned with nature for its own sake? The other type of ethical consideration introduces constraints on the pursuit of the first objective. These constraints include respect for persons and their right to autonomy, self-determination and political participation. These constraints demand that the overall objective is pursued only through acts that are acceptable in that they do not violate rights or other standards of conduct.

6. Whose Point of View?

Academic discussion of ethical issues may help to clarify ethical concerns and the kinds of priority and trade-off that have to be made within the CGIAR system. However, it cannot in itself create consensus about which ethical concerns are relevant, the relative importance of these concerns, or any other ethical issue that is relevant to the mission, research activities, and partnerships of the CGIAR. Individual moral philosophers subscribing to specific schools of ethical thought would be willing to set out answers to the questions over which consensus is desirable; but they would offer *different* answers, depending on their theoretical views, and so obviously this cannot be the right way to proceed in the face of the serious disagreements described above.

If academics cannot be relied upon to reach agreement over what is right or wrong, how will the experts who undertake the ethical review move towards any kind of consensus? One answer is that the experts should refer to the shared culture of those nations and organisations that are covered by the CGIAR. However, this answer seems to run into an objection from cultural relativism, which is that since ethics is based on culture, and since culture varies from place to place, there is no single, correct ethical perspective but a number of conflicting such perspectives, each connected with a cultural tradition.

Clearly different cultures do indeed have different values, but this objection involves two further ideas. 1) The values in different cultures define ethical perspectives that are in conflict with each other. 2) If different cultures define conflicting ethical perspectives, there is no way in which it is possible to find common global ethical standards. These ideas are intuitively plausible, but both can be questioned.

Regarding the first claim, it is certainly true that in India and in China and in the Christian, the Buddhist, the Islamic and the Jewish traditions, ethical thinking and ethical practice have developed in different ways. However, this is not to say that the world's great ethical traditions are in conflict. Of course, if one picks and chooses, it is easy to find examples of conflict. For example, the focus on individual autonomy in some forms of Christianity may be in conflict with more collective forms of thinking found in some forms of traditional Chinese philosophy. On the other hand, if one takes a closer look at the main ethical traditions, it soon becomes clear that *within* each there are tensions and conflicts that are as serious as those between the traditions. For example, within the Christian tradition one finds very hierarchical and highly egalitarian views about the duties and meritorious

characteristics of the individual person. If ethical thinking is pervaded with tension, as indeed it is, the lines of conflict are not necessarily to be drawn between different cultures.

Regarding the second claim, it is worth noticing that, in point of fact, some kind of system has evolved by means of which the world community is able to define ethical standards that are broadly viewed as binding on everyone. The system has grown out of international law and incorporates a number of conventions and declarations which are widely seen as having ethical significance. For example, after the Second World War, conventions about the use of human subjects in biomedical research grew out of the trials of leaders of the defeated Nazi regime. These are widely recognized as having ethical significance. Thus, today, a biomedical programme in which human subjects are involved upon without informed consent can be said to violate not only international law but also recognized ethical principles. Some may argue that this is just the power of the strongest in disguise. Strong, influential nations band together and impose international law on the rest of the world; and among the different parts of international law they pick and choose those that they wish to elevate to the status of ethical principles.

Three points deserve to be made about this view. First, in reality no nation is in a position to dictate the content of international law. The very Western nations that were instrumental in setting up the relevant systems of international law are themselves sometimes being hit by laws that they do not like. Second, what is the alternative? It is widely recognized that in the age of globalisation it is necessary to operate with a shared ethical vision and binding minimum ethical standards of conduct. There is no obvious alternative to the present system of trying to reach a common understanding through argument, with all its imperfections. Third, parts of international law protect religious and ethical differences. Likewise, the ethical framework of international collaboration ought to accept and respect cultural differences as far as this is compatible with key ethical principles and concerns.

In the specific case of the CGIAR, it can be said that the ethical codes defined within the UN system form a natural background against which ethical policies can be defined. However, it is also important that ethics is not reduced to a subdivision of international law. International law should be looked upon as an important source and a starting point for ethical reflection, but ethical arguments need to go beyond legal considerations.

7. Initiatives within the Field of Ethics Taken by the CGIAR, the FAO and Others

The CGIAR

The ethical initiatives taken so far by the CGIAR are described in the working document for the SCOPAS, *Ethics and the CGIAR* (March 2002) mentioned above. This document also serves as background to the present assignment to prepare a paper for the iSC.

CGIAR ethical initiatives have mainly focused on the conservation, use and enhancement of genetic resources. A workshop on *Ethics and Equity* in 1997 is documented in *Ethics and Equity in Conservation and Use of Genetic Resources for Sustainable Food Security*, CGIAR/IPGRI 1998. This workshop led to the formulation of the *CGIAR Statement of Ethical Principles Relating to Genetic Resources* in 1998, which declares:

“The CGIAR was founded on the ethical imperative of eliminating hunger and starvation, and has, since its inception, followed certain ethical principles. Increasing

food security and alleviating poverty have long been central to the System's science-based humanitarian mission.”

However, due to the growing complexity of the problems addressed by the CGIAR, and the expanding number of partners, there is an increasing need to bring the system's underlying ethical principles out in the open. The statement presents the main ethical principles under four headings:

- *Equity*
- *Trusteeship of Genetic Resources*
- *Respect, Responsibility, and Integrity in Science*
- *Social Benefits.*

One initiative that is not mentioned in the working document is the international conference on biotechnology and its potential impact on agriculture in developing countries held at the World Bank on October 21-22, 1999, and convened by the CGIAR and the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. The conference is documented in G.J. Persley and M.M. Lantin (eds.): *Agricultural Biotechnology and the Poor. An International Conference on Biotechnology*, CGIAR/The World Bank, 2000.

The FAO

Prompted by major changes in food and agriculture, the FAO in 1999 designated “Ethics in Food and Agriculture” as a Priority Area for Interdisciplinary Action. It established an internal Committee on Ethics in Food and Agriculture to guide its actions in this regard. In 2000 the Director-General of the FAO also established an independent Panel of Eminent Experts on Ethics in Food and Agriculture to advise him on pressing issues within this field.

The Panel of Eminent Experts held its first session in September 2000. A report of the session was published in 2001. According to its terms of reference, the Panel “shall reflect on and promote reflection on ethical issues arising from food production and consumption practices, and on agricultural development, including forestry and fisheries”. In particular, it “shall consider ethical issues relating to the interests of the present and future generations regarding the sustainable use of natural resources, the safeguarding of biodiversity and a balanced mix of traditional and modern technologies to increase food security and sustainable agriculture.” On the basis of these considerations, the Panel will promote an overall sense of international responsibility and seek to increase the awareness of these issues among the relevant actors.

The Panel notes that there are differences of opinion concerning ethical values, among them the difference between utilitarian and libertarian approaches, and the difference between assessment of consequences or outcomes and assessment of actions. It also notes that cultural differences may create differences of opinion. However, the Panel maintains, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides common ground as “one basic value framework that spans culture, religions and ideologies”. The Declaration is “a comprehensive package of concerns in which the separate rights are considered to be interdependent and indivisible”.

The Panel summarizes:

In sum, ethics requires people to go beyond self-interest and to care for one another. It requires people to care for the earth and to be prepared to share common resources. However, it must be taken into account that, in practice, these values can be conflicting. The respect for life is fundamental for ethics. Therefore, food and the guarantee of access to adequate supplies by everyone are among the top priorities in the hierarchy of human values.

Despite the fact that the right to food is recognised by the international community, more than 840 million people are chronically hungry. The root of this problem is not global lack of food, but rather a *lack of access* to food. This lack of access is due to poverty and is exacerbated by armed conflict and environmental degradation. The most urgent ethical task is therefore, the Panel concludes, to “assess activities relation to food and agriculture in the light of their actual and potential impact on the reduction of poverty, hunger and malnutrition”.

The Panel has set out an annotated list of observations and issues of concern:

- *The impact of human population growth and demographic shifts*
- *The impact of disease on food and agriculture*
- *Pressure on natural resources*
- *Gaps and differences*
- *Economic globalization requires cooperation in global governance.*

It has made the following list of types of advice and suggestions:

- *Ecosystem management*
- *Buffering the negative consequences of agricultural intensification*
- *Counteracting the negative consequences for agricultural research of the concentration of economic power*
- *Information and education.*

It has also endorsed the following list of guidelines for an equitable system based on ethical considerations:

- *Creating the mechanisms necessary to balance interests and resolve conflicts*
- *Supporting and encouraging broad stakeholder participation in policies, programmes and projects*
- *Designing incentives that will encourage individuals, communities and nations to engage in dialogue and, ultimately, to do what is ethical*
- *Ensuring the transparency of information and decision-making*
- *Fostering the use of integrated and empirical science and technology in the service of a more just and equitable food and agriculture system*
- *Encouraging cooperation and solidarity among institutions engaged in research and development, making it possible to take appropriate action more quickly*
- *Ensuring the incorporation of ethical considerations in all programmes, policies, standards and decisions, thereby contributing to improved human health and well-being and environmental protection.*
- *Developing codes of ethical conduct where they do not currently exist*

- *Periodically reviewing ethical commitments and determining whether or not they are appropriate on the basis of new knowledge and changes in circumstances.*

Finally, the Panel made a preliminary examination of issues relating to the use of biotechnology, including genetically modified organisms.

In 2001, the FAO launched its “FAO Ethics Series” with two publications: Volume 1: *Ethical Issues in Food and Agriculture*; and Volume 2: *Genetically Modified Organisms, Consumers, Food Safety and the Environment*. Drafts of these papers served as background material for the first session of the Panel of Eminent Experts.

Volume 1 addresses ethical questions as they relate to FAO’s mandate. Only rarely has the FAO reflected on ethical values, although they are embedded in the preamble to its Constitution. These underlying values are analysed as:

- *The value of food*
- *The value of enhanced well-being*
- *The value of human health*
- *The value of natural resources*
- *The value of nature.*

However, today ethical concerns are central to debates about the future world. This is the result of a number of profound changes to which the Panel of Eminent Experts have themselves alluded:

- *Human population growth and demographic shifts*
- *Pressure on natural resources*
- *Industrialization of agriculture*
- *Concentration of economic power*
- *Globalization*
- *Human-induced change*
- *New biotechnologies*
- *Informatics.*

Each of these changes “raises profound ethical questions that FAO must address in carrying out its mandated activities”. The issues are:

- *Bias against the poor*
- *Ineffective guardianship of the global commons*
- *An emerging global economy, but not a global society.*

The volume concludes with a number of suggestions as to how a more equitable and ethical food and agriculture system might be developed. These suggestions were in fact adopted by the Panel of Eminent Experts (see above).

Volume 2 seeks to analyse the ongoing GMO debate from an ethical perspective. The key issues that GMOs raise for ethical consideration are listed as:

- *Food safety*

- *Environmental impact*
- *Perceived risks and benefits*
- *Transparency*
- *Accountability*
- *Equity.*

The volume concludes by recommending that there be more opportunities for exchange of information and views among scientists, corporate representatives, policy-makers and the public at large.

In March 2002, the Panel of Eminent Experts held its second session. This was reported in 2003. At this session, “the Panel did not seek to adopt specific recommendations, but pursued a more detailed examination of key issues with a view to preparing a set of tentative guidelines at the third session”.

Also in 2002, there was an FAO Expert Consultation on *Food Safety: Science and Ethics*. This was reported in 2003. The Expert consultation was asked to:

- *[define] value judgements included in the risk analysis and make recommendations as appropriate;*
- *provide practical guidance for improving risk communication at national and international levels;*
- *make recommendations on food safety policy and procedures in the context of food aid situations; and*
- *make recommendations on food safety policy in relation to the “right to food”.*

The Expert Consultation made the following recommendations:

- *The ethical and value dimensions of food safety policy be explicitly addressed in order to have an informed and balanced discussion of these dimensions.*
- *Discussion and decision-making on these ethical and value dimensions be transparent for interested parties, participatory in design and characterized by good communication among all interested parties.*
- *In order to participate equitably in ethical and scientific discussions, the capacity of the involved or affected parties has to be built.*
- *The right to adequate food is the right to food that is safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable.*

Other Relevant Initiatives

Finally we should like to point out the interactive e-conference on *Global Business Ethics Standards* organized by the [World Bank Institute](http://www.worldbank.org/devforum/forum_ethics.html) and the Office of Business Ethics and Integrity in 2001. Proceedings can be viewed at: http://www.worldbank.org/devforum/forum_ethics.html.

Another final point concerns the fact that UNDP’s Human Development Report 2004: *Cultural Liberty in Today’s Diverse World* highlights the concept of cultural liberty.

8. The Most Important Issues for the CGIAR

Introduction

The ethical issues that confront the CGIAR can be divided into the following two types. (A) Efforts to define the goal of CGIAR activities. This includes both setting objectives and deciding how to make priorities and tradeoffs when it is not possible to do all the good and important things outlined in the objectives simultaneously. Discussions about equity, and to some extent discussion about sustainability, belong in this category. (B) Efforts to select the right *means* (i.e. acts and procedures) to achieve the goals set. Discussions about the protection of human subjects used in research belong in this category.

In what follows, the key ethical issues for the CGIAR will be presented under four headings: Research ethics (which clearly falls into B); Equity (A); Protecting nature (A and B); and Respect for donors and partners (B).

Research Ethics

Traditionally research has been viewed as something that by definition is pursued for the good of mankind. Science aims at finding the truth, which is a close relative to the good. However, a number of developments have undermined this common view of science.

1. Personal interests (e.g. regarding careers and success in science) may create incentives for scientists to engage in various forms of dishonesty such as fabricating data or stealing ideas from other scientists.
2. Increased dependence on external funding leads to growing competition between different groups. This might not only tempt scientists into various forms of scientific dishonesty but also tempt them to deliver results which are wanted by those who pay for the research, saying what is convenient rather than what is true.
3. In the process of creating scientific results human subjects may be used, e.g. in medical or nutritional experiments; and the results may be achieved at a cost to the health, well-being or integrity of those experimented on.
4. Natural (e.g. genetic) resources may be used as raw material in scientific inventions that benefit those who do the research and those who fund it without benefiting those who live in the areas where the resources were found.
5. More generally, those who engage in scientific discoveries may be rewarded through patents and other forms of intellectual property right, and this goes against the ideal of sharing knowledge which was central in traditional research.
6. The input to development made by modern science is increasingly seen as part and parcel of a controversial technological development – pesticides and gene technology are prominent examples of this.

It is important for the CGIAR to have policies, including in some cases various forms of institutional set-up, to deal with the issues listed above. In connection with 1 and 2, it is probably possible for the CGIAR to take over existing norms for handling scientific dishonesty and introduce requirements, for example, for peer review publication of all results produced within the system.

Regarding 3, it is important that the CGIAR has a clear policy on the use of human subjects in research. This policy will need to incorporate the requirement that research

involving the use of human subjects is approved by an independent ethics committee. There are different standards for this in different countries, and it is important that the CGIAR has a policy that is in compliance with the most stringent rules currently being enforced.

On the use of genetic resources within science, CGIAR also needs a clear policy that is in line with the wording and spirit of international conventions regarding the protection of biodiversity. The main view here is that nations where genetic resources are found must be involved and must have a share in any scientific benefits these resources are involved in creating.

Property rights serve as an important incentive for the development of new scientific ideas, but it remains vital that the poor people for whose sake the research is undertaken obtain benefits. A policy relating to 5 is needed to prevent personal greed, or the greed of institutions, from becoming the motive for research undertaken within the CGIAR.

Where the development and application of new controversial technologies is concerned, it is important for the CGIAR to have a policy of both precaution and dialogue. In connection with the latter, it should be recognised that the perspectives of non-experts need to be taken seriously when guidelines for the development of new technologies are being defined.

Equity

Within the CGIAR, discussion of the notion of equity must take as its point of departure the existing goal and mission of the CGIAR, cf. *A Food Secure World for All: Toward a New Vision and Strategy for the CGIAR*, TAC Secretariat, FAO 2000. This states the following strategic framework:

- Vision:* *A food secure world for all*
- Goal:* *To reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition by sustainably increasing the productivity of resources in agriculture, forestry and fisheries*
- Mission:* *To achieve sustainable food security and reduce poverty in developing countries through scientific research and research-related activities in the fields of agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, policy and natural resources management.*

The CGIAR system is thus committed to alleviating poverty and reducing hunger, and this commitment is clearly connected with some notion of equity or fairness. Commitment to an ethical objective like this raises problems of priorities. If sub-optimal acts as regards the goal are chosen, less good is achieved than might have been the case, and that could be a serious ethical problem. In order to choose the optimal policy, the goal needs to be clearly stated, and the relations between the goal and possible ways to achieve it need to be known.

The CGIAR's work has been based on the assumption that increased productivity within agriculture is central to the alleviation of present and future poverty. Over the years, the main impact of the CGIAR has been achieved largely through yield-enhancing germplasm improvement for the main food crops. However, this impact has been concentrated in areas where intensification of agricultural inputs has been feasible and the necessary political and socio-economic conditions were in place. Large regions, notably in South Asia and Sub-

Saharan Africa, have benefited much less from technological advances bringing about greater agricultural productivity.

This has recently led to a shift in the CGIAR priorities. The CGIAR now gives “highest priority to areas where the greatest numbers of poor live and where the severity of poverty is greatest, and where new technologies and policies will have maximum impact”. However, from an ethical point of view, this priority might be justified by two underlying objectives that are in conflict.

The impact of increased productivity is well documented. Thus, total cereal production in developing countries has increased threefold since 1961, primarily through yield increases. However, this benefit is reduced by the fact that, over the same period, the total population of developing countries has more than doubled.

Increased productivity clearly has a role to play in alleviating poverty, but it cannot stand alone. Due to population growth, the absolute number of poor people has increased, even though their proportion of world population has decreased. Also, benefits are distributed unequally, particularly in areas where land and income are unequally distributed and markets, government services and infrastructure are poorly developed; and in areas where agro-ecological conditions vary. Hence, to alleviate poverty complementary socio-economic interventions must be undertaken; this means that CGIAR must seek to cooperate with a range of other actors.

Given recognition of these facts, it could be argued that the strength of the CGIAR lies in its contributions to increased productivity, and that the ethical aim of the CGIAR should be to deploy its resources where they will have maximum impact. Maximum impact might be understood as maximal increase in total welfare – that would be a utilitarian interpretation.

Equally, it could be argued that this policy, once again, would be likely to benefit only some of the more favourably situated poor people, not the least advantaged; and that the ethical aim of the CGIAR should rather be to focus on the least advantaged poor people. ‘Maximum impact’ should be understood as relating to this latter objective, even though measures targeted at the poorest people might be more costly. A stronger focus on poverty also makes it more pressing to reflect on the balance between increased productivity and other poverty reducing measures.

Both of these arguments seem ethically important. But they are in conflict – they cannot both be optimally achieved. Striking a reasonable balance between them is a difficult task. Economic considerations are not neutral in this endeavour: the concept of economic efficiency does not take the fairness of initial endowments into account. Thus any choice of policy implies an implicit trade off between efficiency in increasing total welfare on the one hand and the demands of fairness or priority to the worse off on the other.

There has been, and will continue to be, an ongoing discussion in the CGIAR about which policy to pursue. Similarly, there has been, and will continue to be, an ongoing discussion about the relation between means and ends. There is good reason for the CGIAR to make the ethical components of these discussions explicit, to engage in ethical reflection on the correct goal to pursue, and to find ways of integrating such ethical reflection into the policy making process.

Another facet of equity concerns respect for the rights and autonomy of recipients the benefits of agricultural research. Worldwide, there is an increasing demand for empowerment that ensures that poor people gets involved in decisions about their own future. A related concern is respect for cultural diversity.

Letting the poor people have a say in setting the research agenda and the research process might improve performance, since they live with the problems to be solved and perhaps possess important knowledge about regional agro-ecological conditions. It is important for the CGIAR to state guidelines for the empowerment of recipients, and to develop and improve procedures for a respectful and mutual dialogue.

Protecting Nature

The CGIAR has so far taken a rather anthropocentric view on the protection of nature: the focus is on (poor) people, and nature should be protected for the sake of them by not using technologies in agriculture which, through negative effects on the environment, could endanger future production. Similarly, the protection of biodiversity is mainly understood as the protection of genetic resources for future agricultural production.

The CGIAR has good reasons for focusing on these considerations. It is important, however, to be aware that these priorities have been contested – by donor governments as well as NGOs. It is now common to believe that nature should be respected for its own sake. This pushes respect for wildlife, the protection of valuable non-cultivated areas, and the protection of biodiversity (species diversity), up the agenda.

Even on anthropocentric terms, the interpretation of sustainability is contested. Some would consider it a constraint on the satisfaction of the present generation's needs. Others would consider it part of the overall ethical goal: we have a duty to benefit not just the present generation (particularly the poor) but all generations. Within this understanding, the use of discounting is also a contested issue. While there might be economic reasons to discount the value of future commodities, it appears on the face of it unjustified to discount the welfare of future people. Clearly, these problems determine what requirements sustainability places on the present generation.

Since the CGIAR will necessarily have to enter into dialogue with other stakeholders on these questions, it is important that it starts reflecting on them. Eventually, this might lead to revision of policies concerning respect for nature and future generations.

Respect for Donors and Partners

Donors and partners are entitled to have many of their interests and requirements respected. Since the cooperation of donors and partners are necessary for the CGIAR if it is to achieve its goals, and since donors and partners act on a voluntary basis, it is simply a prudential imperative that their aspirations for the collaboration are satisfied.

Thus, it is necessary that the CGIAR acts in an accountable and transparent way, because on their side, donors and partners are obliged to act accountably and transparently towards their parliaments, tax payers, boards, and the like. Likewise, it is prudentially imperative to respect the values and wishes of donors and partners, and this is probably best done by involving them in decision-making.

It is our impression that the CGIAR is very well aware of these requirements, and that it has as a consequence already developed policies and procedures to deal with them. We therefore see few ethical issues in this area that need to be dealt with.

However, it might be advisable to organise ethical discussion of the costs of donor requirements, control measures etc. The problem is that very heavy demands in this area will draw resources away from the CGIAR's main goal: to alleviate poverty and hunger. Also, some requirements that make sense in the industrialized world might be counter-productive in the regions in which the CGIAR has to act because they cannot be met by poor farmers or very small businesses.

We fully recognize the legitimate rights of donors and partners. Still, there might be good ethical reasons for reflecting on ways to strike the right balance between respecting these rights and achieving the goal of alleviating poverty and hunger. If it is impossible for the CGIAR to start a debate like this, an independent group of experts might be encouraged to become involved.

9. Proposal for a Strategic Study

In this section we propose a strategic study conducted by a panel of experts. According to the assignment on which the present paper is based, such a proposal “should include the objective and scope of the study, the panel composition, the study process and time required by the panel chair and members”.

Objective and Scope of Study

It has been argued in the previous section that two kinds of subject ought to be studied: those concerned with defining the goals of the CGIAR and those concerned with choosing the best means to attain these goals. We suggest that the proposed study be divided into two parts, roughly following this division. The first part of the study, “Research Ethics and the CGIAR”, would focus on choosing the right means; the second part, “Ethics and the CGIAR Mission”, would focus on the goals themselves.

There are three reasons for dividing things up in this twofold manner. 1) The subjects and the kinds of instrument that are going to be recommended are very different: the study of research ethics mainly focuses on the internal process of doing research and may suggest instruments such as review boards. The study of the CGIAR mission, on the other hand, will focus on policy relating to development and is mainly going to provoke thought about a later revision of CGIAR policy. 2) It will be easier for the SC and the rest of CGIAR to take adequate action on the basis of the studies if the recommendations come in two separate packages, and if substantial interval of time, such as one year, separates the delivery of these. 3) The task of the panel will be more easily organised and managed if it is divided into parts.

Regarding content, the two parts of the study should deliver principles and guidelines concerning the matters listed below:

- *Research Ethics and the CGIAR*
 - General research ethics, including ways of dealing with scientific dishonesty, publication, authorship etc.

- The use of human subjects in research
 - The use of genetic resources, covering both research and later applications
 - Intellectual property rights concerning scientific inventions
 - Consultation and debate relating to controversial technologies.
- *Ethics and the CGIAR Mission*
 - Equity, how to balance size of impact against the focus on helping the very poor
 - Intergenerational justice, how to balance concern for the people living now and in the near future against concern for future generations
 - Nature protection, how to protect parts of nature that are production resources but may possess intrinsic value
 - Empowerment, how to develop capabilities, political rights, self esteem and initiative among the least privileged groups
 - Ends and means, how to evaluate the efficiency of means in the light of the above points.

Panel of Experts

In *Ethics and the CGIAR*, the following suggestion is made regarding the composition of the panel:

The Panel will be composed of a Chair and a Panel Convenor/Scientific Secretary, both of whom should have dealt with issues of ethics in scientific research. They should be complemented with two experts... The Panel may coopt other specialists from the global community of experts to assist in the assessment of specific areas of CGIAR's activities and/or to review the work of the Panel members as they prepare their contributions to the overall report.

We believe that it is a very good idea to have a small panel which, if necessary and on an *ad hoc* basis, can call for the assistance of other specialists. With a small panel it is, however, important to have the right mix of competences and personalities.

We suggest that the panel should combine the following three profiles: an academic ethicist (with a background in philosophy or theology); an expert in human rights, conventions on biodiversity and other relevant parts of international law; and an expert on poverty, third-world agriculture, food supply and/or other aspects of development. Besides this, each panel member should have a broad mind, plenty of common sense, and a willingness to engage in interdisciplinary discussion. The panel should include people from both the developed world and the developing world, and members of both sexes.

There is a compelling reason for having this mix of profiles. The academic ethicist should ensure that the panel makes full use of the intellectual resources found within ethical theory to describe dilemmas, visions, principles and guidelines in a clear and transparent manner. The expert within the field of international law should ensure that the panel takes relevant parts of international law as a starting point for reflection. Finally the expert on development should be able to bring to the attention of the panel to how things look from the point of view of those who, in very practical terms, work on development issues.

Persons of the kinds needed as panellists are likely to be very busy. It is therefore important that membership of the panel does not carry too big a work burden. This could be

achieved 1) by having a panel convenor/secretary who is well-qualified and able to work in an independent manner; 2) by having virtual meetings that limit the amount of travel panellists undertake; and 3) by defining clear priorities and a reasonable time schedule for the work of the panel.

Study Process and Time Required

We envisage the following schedule:

Study on Research Ethics: 12 months running through 2005

Study on Mission: 12 months running through 2006

Each study should conclude with a report to be delivered to the SC. It will be the responsibility of the SC to see that adequate action is taken on the basis of the study.