

## ***Rudy Rabbinge CGIAR Annual Report***

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The year 2007 was a very productive year for the Science Council. Two of the core tasks of the Council required much attention. Evaluation and monitoring was a major task. There were four external reviews of Centers (CIP, IITA, ILRI, IWMI) and two challenge programs (Harvest Plus, Water and food), plus the annual review of all Center and Challenge Program medium term plans. That caused a tremendous work load especially for the Science Council secretariat. The reports were well received at the Executive Council and the Annual General Meeting and it demonstrated how serious the CGIAR considers permanent reviewing and monitoring of the activities of the centers and their partners. The EPMP meta-review organized by the SC jointly with the CGIAR Secretariat came to a similar conclusion: external reviews are essential for the credibility of the System.

The second core activity of the Science Council, impact assessment, resulted in various reports that were discussed in the Executive Council and at AGM. The need for quality systems of impact measurement is in strong demand. A major output in 2007 was the publication of a book entitled "International Research on Natural Resource Management: Advances in Impact Assessment". It presents seven case studies detailing the assessment of impacts of some major NRM research projects undertaken by the CGIAR and examines some of the major methodological challenges, in addition to deriving lessons learnt. A synthesis report of a meeting held at ICRAF HQ on 'Advancing Impact Assessment of International Agricultural Research' was published in 2007. The meeting was jointly organized by the impact assessment focal points of the Centers and the Challenge Programs, and the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA). SPIA currently has several ongoing studies and embarking on some new initiatives where the centers are pivotal. A follow-up meeting is being organized and will be hosted by EMBRAPA in 2008.

The progress with the implementation of the CG prioritized competence areas resulted in a series of framework plans developed by the centers, guided and supported by the Science Council. That implementation shows the impact of the various projects and framework plans of CGIAR centers have for developmental goals. As this process continues, the Council will continue to make recommendations on how that impact may be increased and what partners and modes of operation are needed to be even more relevant.

The evolution of the CGIAR research and research agenda shows that in this seventh phase of development (see last CGIAR Annual Report for the description of the evolution of the research agenda) more and more collaboration with partners is needed. The Science Council is instrumental in the mobilization of scientists from the North and the South working in knowledge centers for example universities and in the private sector. It will help to upgrade the research and make it more relevant. The Science Council expects that in two years time many more active partnerships with

the private sector and universities will be visible and contribute to the relevance and impact of the CGIAR.

The Science Council sees it as its task/mandate to contribute to the updating of the mission of the CGIAR. The Science Council sees at 5 fields a change needed in the mission, and assumes that the reformulated mission may help to intensify the building of partnerships and strengthen the funding for the work of the centers. The consequences for governance may also be based on this reformulated mission.

1. The mission will be more focused on the role of Science and Technology in reaching the Millennium Development Goals in general and goal 1, 7 and 8 more specifically. That requires more specifics in the mission and not the indirect way it is addressed at this moment, therefore concrete development challenges have to be identified.
2. In its mode of operation the CG centers are oriented on concepts, methodologies and extended insights, not on ready products such as complete varieties. The Centers should work in programs oriented to specific development challenges.
3. The CGIAR centers play a role in addressing global challenges and issues by the stimulation, coordination, and implementation of global research programs. The CGIAR Centers have also a task as regional concentration points with eco-region specific expertise and experience, not provided by individual NARS. This provides the opportunity to help partners fine tune technological and socioeconomic interventions to the specific characteristics and variation of regions.
4. The Centers should continue to aim for excellence in research of all types with a clear orientation on the ultimate goals and the intention to contribute substantial developmentally-relevant impact. This culture of the CGIAR should remain visible at all times and we consider that the "contradiction" between upstream research or development is obsolete. All CGIAR research is oriented towards development in the long run.
5. The Centers function as nodes in a network in line with the development of third mode universities. That implies that a centralized hierarchical structure is not concurrent with this way of functioning. Authority and unifying concepts and approaches stimulate the coherence within the CGIAR. The Science Council has a major role to play in that continuous struggle for coherence and relevance.

By strengthening these five areas, we in the Science Council believe that the CGIAR will have a clearer systemwide vision focusing on priorities that respond to global developmental challenges as well as much stronger collaboration across Centers and improved research partnerships outside the System.