

From the Science Council Chair

Now that we have agreement on the system priorities for CGIAR research for the next 10 years, we need to move to implementation. The consensus on an implementation process at AGM 2005 was an important step. The various stakeholder groups not only have a role to play in this process, their active participation is vital to the success of the effort. Without an appropriate strategy and follow-on action, the work to develop the System Priorities will be wasted.

The Science Council is ready to do its part. On the basis of the MTPs that will be prepared by the Centers and Challenge Programs, we will collaborate with the Centers and the Alliance to assess how close the current and proposed research activities and plans are to what is visualized in the system priorities, we will identify gaps as well as plans and activities that fall outside the System Priorities, we will assess where on the research-development continuum each priority should be, we will recommend adjustments in the research portfolio to be undertaken during the three-year adjustment period, and we will combine all of this into a strategic perspective for future direction for the CGIAR research program. We will work with the ad hoc Committee of ExCo that is being formed to facilitate the implementation of the strategy through appropriate organizational and funding arrangements.

To help assure that the most appropriate vehicles for research implementation are identified, we will review the objectives and content of—and experience with—existing System-wide and Inter-Center programs as well as current and proposed Challenge Programs and we will explore new modes of operation. A truly cohesive research program to achieve the goals of a particular system priority will require close collaboration across Centers and most likely with institutions and individuals outside the CGIAR as well. Such collaboration is needed throughout the research from initial planning to dissemination of results. We must make the whole bigger than the sum of its part. This means that center-specific research projects on a particular topic or priority are more likely to be effective in reducing poverty if they are guided by a common framework and goal, than if they are done in isolation from each other. The challenge is to get cohesion across Centers for each system priority at reasonable transaction costs, which would be compatible with Center sovereignty and funding structure. Experience with existing Challenge Programs and System-wide programs as well as experience from institutions outside the CGIAR provides a starting point for the deliberations.

Per Pinstrup-Andersen
February, 2006