



SCIENCE COUNCIL
CGIAR

Report of the
Sixth External Program
and Management
Review (EPMR) of the
International Crops Research
Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
(ICRISAT)

October 2009



SCIENCE COUNCIL

CGIAR

Report of the
Sixth External Program and
Management Review (EPMR) of
the International Crops
Research Institute for the
Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)

Review Panel: Kenneth G. Cassman (Chair)
Eric Danquah
Antonio J. Hall
Kenneth M. Menz
Maureen K. Robinson
Prosper Biabo

OCTOBER 2009

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Correct citation: CGIAR Science Council (2008) *Report of the Sixth External Program and Management Review of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)*. Rome, Italy: Science Council Secretariat.

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS:

- Extracts from the Summary Record of Proceedings of the Executive Council Meeting 2009 (ExCo16)
- Science Council Commentary
- ICRISAT Response to the Sixth ICRISAT EPMR
- Transmittal letter and Report of the Panel on the Sixth ICRISAT EPMR



Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

CGIAR Sixteenth Meeting of the Executive Council (ExCo16)¹

Agenda Item 3. Evaluation

3.a ICRISAT EPMR

Rudy Rabbinge (SC Chair) presented both the SC and CGIAR Secretariat commentaries on the EPMR report. He joined the review panel in congratulating the Board and management of ICRISAT for the major turnaround in various aspects of the Center's operation since the last review in 2003. The substantial growth in research funding was highlighted as one of ICRISAT's key achievements. Two of the most important issues raised were the need to strengthen strategic planning and research prioritization in the Center and to further improve the balance of research investments in Asia and Africa.

Although ICRISAT has accepted all the panel's recommendations, it was suggested that a more detailed action plan for their implementation would be useful.

Discussion:

- ICRISAT has a unique opportunity to promote private sector investment and partnership.
- NARS representatives in ExCo from both Asia and SSA expressed appreciation of ICRISAT's close collaboration with them and thanked the Center for its contribution, particularly to germplasm enhancement of crops important to both regions and to strengthening of research capacity at the country level.
- The need for ICRISAT to strongly re-invest in strategic planning was reiterated. The Center should retain those activities that are consistent and supportive of its plan and drop those that are not.
- Although the panel found the quality of ICRISAT's research to be at par with other CGIAR Centers, there appears to be a need to improve the monitoring of research quality. The SC Chair questioned the value added of the recent Center Commissioned External Reviews (CCERs) that the panel found to be weak in assessing both research quality and productivity.
- The Center's involvement in developing seed systems in some countries was recognized in the context of supporting the dissemination and adoption of improved varieties that it has developed. It is one of the key areas in the Center's work that private sector investment and collaboration should be encouraged.
- In response to some of the comments, Stein Bie, ICRISAT Board Chair, pointed out that the re-appointment of the current DG for a third term was made to ensure stability at the Center level while major changes in the System are being made. He also reaffirmed the Board's role in monitoring research quality and productivity in the Center.

¹ Extract from the Summary record of Proceedings of the 16th Session of the Executive Committee (ExCo16) Meeting, 4 - 5 June 2009

- William Dar, ICRISAT DG, pointed out that the balance of investments between Asia and Africa will be a key focus of the Center’s strategic planning exercise. He also informed ExCo that an implementation plan for EPMR recommendations is already being prepared.

ExCo Conclusion and Decision:

- *ExCo congratulated ICRISAT for a positive review and thanked the panel for its report and the Center for its response.*
- *ExCo endorsed the EPMR panel’s recommendations and Center response, and agreed that ICRISAT should develop and share a detailed plan to implement the recommendations.*

SCIENCE COUNCIL OF THE CGIAR

Science Council Commentary on the Sixth External Program and Management Review (EPMR) of the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)

15 April 2009

The Report of the Sixth EPMR of ICRISAT was discussed at the Eleventh Meeting of the Science Council (SC), held at CIP, Lima, Peru, in the presence of Panel Chair, Dr. Ken Cassman, the Chair of ICRISAT's Board of Trustees, Dr. Stein Bie, and the Director General of ICRISAT, Dr. William Dar. The SC thanked the Panel Chair and Members for the report, which in conclusion provides a very positive assessment of the Center.

The conclusions in the report summary describe a successful Center that, since the last EPMR, has turned around its financial resources and has established a sharpened African agenda through establishment of Western and Eastern Africa programs; staff morale is good, and management and leadership are sound and stable. Research quality is comparable to that of other CGIAR Centers. In the research programs (Global Themes) research has been relevant and productive and the Panel commends the high level of integration between the themes.

The 6th EPMR report presents 17 recommendations and a number of suggestions. There are 11 recommendations on strategic planning, research programs, quality, and partnerships and 6 on governance and management. The SC appreciates the clarity in which the report in its different sections took the recommendations of the 5th EPR and 5th EMR, completed 6 years ago, as the starting point to its analysis, and systematically made reference also to the recommendations in the relevant Center Commissioned External Reviews (CCERs). The Panel reports that ICRISAT, by and large, has implemented the recommendations of the previous reviews.

The SC is pleased that ICRISAT accepts all the 17 recommendations. However, the Center's response is very generic, and therefore the SC recommends that the Center Board adopt a more formal implementation plan including clear time frames and milestones that will allow tracking of progress. The plan should be made available to the CGIAR and in its Medium-Term Plans the Center should give updates on the implementation with particular attention to recommendations on strategic planning.

The following contains the SC's detailed commentary on the Panel's analysis and the findings in the report. The SC notes that the Panel's recommendations are based on in-depth analyses to be found in the body of the report, which form a useful context to the recommendations.

Balance between Asia and Africa

A major recommendation of the previous EPMR was for ICRISAT to engage more in Africa while reducing its efforts in the SAT in Asia. The report of the present EPMR shows that the shift of financial resources to SSA from 2003 to 2007 has been very modest (54% and 60% of resources in Africa for 2003 and 2007 respectively). Moreover IRS staff numbers in Africa are basically unchanged (37 to 36) and there seems to have been only limited training in Africa. In analyzing this balance of effort between SSA and Asia the Panel notes that while the intensity of poor is higher in the SSA, there are actually more poor in the SAT countries in Asia and that there are considerable opportunities for spillover from research in Asia to SSA (and *vice-versa*). This

analysis leads the Panel's to Recommendation 1: to *"continue enhance investment in personnel and infrastructure in SSA."* The SC strongly endorses this first component of the recommendation i.e. the strengthening of ICRISAT engagement in Africa. The SC thinks that a more careful analysis of the target beneficiaries of ICRISAT's work and more focused analysis of its impacts (or lack thereof) in Africa would suggest that much more should be invested in SSA than is currently the case. The Panel's analysis of the number of poor includes all poor, and in Asia the majority of the rural poor live in areas that have irrigated agriculture. Furthermore, Asia (India in particular) is much stronger than SSA in terms of accumulated research knowledge and research capacity.

The SC does not agree with the assumptions that seem to have led to the second part of Recommendation 1 (*and use the potential for spillover to SSA as one of the explicit criteria used in prioritization of strategic investments in research conducted at the Patancheru headquarters*), i.e. that there are considerable spillovers from investment in Asia to SSA. The Panel has used the spillover concept throughout the report, giving as examples the research on genomics and on phenotyping plant processes (such as root length) carried out at headquarters for cross-regional relevance. Such global research obviously has applications also in Africa. Evidence from previous impact assessments would have suggested that spillovers, especially direct technology transfer, from agroecological and germplasm enhancement research from Asia to SSA have been limited. Anecdotal evidence at ICRISAT over the long term is also likely to show that the considerable gains made in sorghum and millet research in Asia have not transferred to Africa (the Panel also alludes to such experience). The SC does not see the "new" potential for spillovers from Asian research to SSA—particularly in the areas that directly matter for Africa such as in crop and pest systems and in delivery mechanisms. If, in fact, spillovers are not obvious, research will have to be planned and carried out much more specifically for regionally relevant outcomes. There is an urgent need for strategic plan development and transparent priority setting across activities and regions between: a) the upstream research at headquarters that is relevant globally or done to address SSA needs directly, b) the breeding, agroecological and social science/policy research much of which needs to be region specific, and c) explicit identification of the type of research where spillover potential is not yet sufficiently well understood.

Recommendation 1 is accompanied by the conclusion that in order for ICRISAT to shift more focus to SSA and have more impact in SSA it does not have to move its headquarters from India. This is an acceptable premise but it requires concerted effort by ICRISAT to make investments for SSA, including capacity building. It also means that ICRISAT needs a more purposeful plan to implement Recommendation 10 to *"...de-emphasize current mature lines of work in Asia..."* than proposed by ICRISAT in its response, to include an operational plan for action and explicit targets.

Strategic planning

The remarkable financial turnaround has come at an apparent cost to the strategic direction of the Center. There is no formal mechanism for priority setting and no coherent plan fully owned by the staff. This has consequences not only in setting the direction but also in the marketing and acquisition of resources. The Panel notices significant weakness in ICRISAT's approach to strategic planning. The observations are four-fold: the lack of a thorough analytical framework in the Center's strategic documents; the development of a highly imprecise concept of IGNRM that has had limited value in strategic planning (although it may have helped enhance integration between research programs); a relative lack of clarity and details about the methods used for research prioritization that does not seem to draw from an analysis of the most important trends on the crops, resource base and capacity, or use suitable tools; and the lack of operational value in

ICRISAT's Medium-Term Plans that have been prepared more in response to the System's and SC's requirements than as an aid to implementation of a Center research strategy. Thus there is no plan owned by the staff and prepared for ICRISAT's needs that sets the direction and guides the acquisition of financial support. The SC strongly endorses recommendation 2 that calls for the development of a new strategic plan owned by the Center. The strategic plan should be accompanied by a business plan to guide implementation. The SC notes that several other recommendations also refer to strategic planning and priority setting. As has been the practice beginning in 2008, the SC suggests that it be given the opportunity to comment on the draft strategic plan.

Research Programs

The Panel reports that research in each of the Global Themes has been mostly relevant and productive. There are several references to a high level of integration among the themes and good interaction with strategically important partners. The Panel's assessment of ICRISAT's social science research (Global Theme of Institutions, markets, policy and impacts), reflects the conclusions about strategic planning: while the research has been very relevant for ICRISAT's mandate, there has been limited focus on activities that would help ICRISAT target its research strategically for maximal impact. The Panel's recommendation 4, to enhance activities on research prioritization, *research on* technology development and adaptation, and impact assessment, (text in italics added by SC) is therefore appropriate.

The analysis of the largest component of ICRISAT's mandate, crop improvement, is compounded into one Global Theme. In the Panel's discussion, however, the SC would have appreciated a more distinct analysis of each of the five main crops. The SC notices, that the Panel, in its assessment of the crop improvement and biotechnology themes, has relied to a large extent on a good quality CCER that covered nearly the same period as the EPMP and both of these themes. This may explain why the EPMP report has less detail on crop improvement. The Panel finds that crop improvement and biotechnology are well integrated and many of the outputs are jointly generated (for example analysis of genetic resources in the genebank, research on hybrid sorghum and millet and development hybrid pearl millet; and research on *Striga* control). An important recommendation is for ICRISAT to capitalize on the network of multi-locational trials by enhancing its expertise and capacity to conduct GxE analysis across locations. The Panel notes that in Asia ICRISAT is devolving a major part of its breeding activities to strong NARS and the private sector. The SC strongly supports the Panel's view that opportunities opening up from devolution of activities should be used for new strategic research with relevance, preferably, to Africa. Regarding biotechnology, the SC feels strongly that, rather than establishing biotechnology facilities for genotyping in the regions (Recommendation 8), emphasis should be put on increasing breeders' capacity to use comprehensive marker data generated elsewhere in order to fully realize the massive potential of MAS.

The report's analysis of ICRISAT's research in its agroecology theme is very useful, documenting advances in many areas of research, such as spatial analysis, systems modeling and research related to climate change. These areas represent new research where ICRISAT can deepen and broaden the work and further integrate it with the crops research. There are other areas where the Panel sees little potential for further advances that would justify ICRISAT involvement. The EPMP report presents convincing reasons for ICRISAT to strongly prioritize its future investments in this theme. The SC agrees with the Panel's assessment and subsequent recommendation (# 10) that ICRISAT should end its involvement in areas where it has limited

comparative advantage or where the technologies are mature enough to be devolved to national level for scaling up.

Impact

As with many other EPMRs, the Panel recommends a strengthening of the core social science in order to strengthen impact assessment, among other activities. The SC supports the Panels recommendations and observations, also made in the strategic planning context, that the Center needs better assessment of its research impacts, particularly in areas where impacts have not been yet documented but research is mature enough for uptake to have occurred. Impact assessment may help the Center gain visibility of research where it can make particularly useful contributions in the new CGIAR, especially in Africa. The SC also notes that a stripe study on social science research in the CGIAR is currently underway and will be reported to the SC in September. The SC anticipates recommendations and observations from that study that will have relevance also for individual CGIAR Centers.

Research quality

The Panel finds that the research quality at ICRISAT is comparable to that in other Centers and that it has competent research staff enthusiastic about their work. In its assessment the Panel used a range of metrics including staff merits, institutional publication records and citations, and, for graduate training, prolificacy of publishing from thesis research, which also reflects the quality of mentoring.

However, the Panel encourages better publications planning for increasing quality and impact of publications (rather than mere focus on quantity), and that this forward planning should be part of the Center's strategic orientation in areas of strength. Importantly, the Panel underscores the importance of quality of outputs and quality of the capacity building efforts in the strategic planning context.

The EPMR considered the CCERs useful for this review and systematically followed-up on the CCER recommendations that were considered the most valid. However, it also notes that the CCERs were not particularly helpful for synthesizing analysis of research quality. They did not go in any detail into research quality, in terms of collecting and analyzing the most common quality metrics and indicators; neither were they instructed to do so in the Terms of Reference.

An important analysis, relevant to quality is also reflected in the Panel's assessment of ICRISAT's culture where success and even surpassing expectations is always expected and there is little willingness to accept failure or engage in risky research. Although these observations did not translate into a recommendation, the SC finds the analysis very useful for ICRISAT to consider in approaching the recommended new strategic analysis, and for improving its research management.

In closing, the SC expresses its confidence that the EPMR report's recommendations, suggestions and constructive guidance will be helpful for ICRISAT in its continuous efforts to deliver research results that can contribute to the CGIAR's goals through improving dryland agriculture for the poor.

March 12, 2009

Dr. Rudy Rabbinge
Chair, Science Council
Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
Wageningen International
Costerweg 50
6701 BH, Wageningen
The Netherlands

Dear Rudy,

Under the coordination of the Science Council, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) recently concluded its Sixth External Program and Management Review (EPMR) with Ken Cassman as the Chair of the Panel. The EPMR panel concludes that "ICRISAT today is a thriving research institute with a unique capacity to address poverty alleviation, food security, and natural resource protection in the SAT."

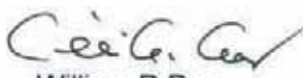
We would like to thank the Science Council for the very transparent and professional manner in which this exercise was conducted by the esteemed members of the panel. We also greatly appreciate the exemplary technical support given by Sirkka Immonen of the Science Council Secretariat.

The EPMR report is a very positive report that highlights the quality of research at par with other CGIAR Centers with significant research spillovers, recognizing the strengthened partnership with NARS, the novel approach to private sector linkages and commending the strong leadership and leadership continuity. The views expressed by the panel as well as its positive and favorable assessment of the Institute were discussed and appreciated at our recent Governing Board meeting.

Attached are ICRISAT's responses to the recommendations of the EPMR.

Best wishes,


Stein W Bie
Chair
ICRISAT Governing Board


William D Dar
Director General

Headquarters: Patancheru 502 324, Andhra Pradesh, India

Tel +91 40 30713071 Fax +91 40 30713074 +91 40 30713075 Email icrisat@cgiar.org

Liaison Office: CG Centers Block, NASC Complex, Dev Prakash Shastri Marg, New Delhi 110 012, India

Tel +91 11 32472306/32472307/32472308 Fax +91 11 25841294

ICRISAT-Bamako
BP 320
Bamako
Mali
Tel +223 2223375
Fax +223 2228683
Email icrisat-w-mali@cgiar.org

ICRISAT-Bulawayo
Matopos Research Station
PO Box 776
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
Tel +263 83 8311 to15
Fax +263 83 8253/8307
Email icrisatbw@cgiar.org

ICRISAT-Lilongwe
Chindizo Agricultural Research Station
PO Box 1088
Lilongwe, Malawi
Tel +265 1 707297/071067/067
Fax +265 1 707298
Email icrisat-malawi@cgiar.org

ICRISAT-Maputo
c/o IHAM, Av. da FPLM No 2698
Caixa Postal 1906
Maputo, Mozambique
Tel +258 21 461657
Fax +258 21 461581
Email icrisatmoz@pantira.com

ICRISAT-Nairobi
(Regional hub ESA)
PO Box 35083, Nairobi,
Kenya
Tel +254 20 7224550
Fax +254 20 7224001
Email icrisat-nairobi@cgiar.org

ICRISAT-Niamey
(Regional hub WCA)
BP 12404
Niamey, Niger (Via Paris)
Tel +227 20 722626, 20 722529
Fax +227 20 734329
Email icrisatn@cgiar.org

www.icrisat.org

Supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

ICRISAT RESPONSE TO EPMR RECOMMENDATIONS
6th ICRISAT External Program and Management Review
(EPMR)

Recommendations and Institutional Responses

Approved by the Governing Board
on 11 March 2009

Recommendation 1 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT continue to enhance investments in personnel and infrastructure in the SSA and use the potential for spillover to SSA as one of the explicit criteria used in prioritization of strategic investments in research conducted at the Patancheru headquarters.

Accepted

We will continue enhancing and expanding our investments in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). We will use potential spillovers to SSA, and vice versa, as an explicit criterion for prioritization of research conducted in Asia through strategic planning and priority setting.

Recommendation 2 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT take ownership of and celebrate the strategic planning and research prioritization process based on: (i) proactive engagement of staff, Board, stakeholders, partners, and donors; (ii) analysis and understanding of recent crop yield and production trends, and projected growth in production and demand for its mandate crops, (iii) scenario analyses that utilizes geospatial analysis, ecosystem and crop modeling, and an appropriate socioeconomic framework.

Accepted

Through a redesigned and revitalized strategic planning and priority setting process, the Governing Board and ICRISAT will effectively respond to the priorities of stakeholders for the sustainable development of semi-arid agriculture. Towards this, we will develop and implement a knowledge-based process that is inclusive, seeking inputs from key partners and stakeholders, more systematic and more explicit. This will build on our achievements, partnerships and comparative advantages in improving agricultural systems in the semi-arid tropics.

Recommendation 3 and Response

The Panel recommends a thorough analysis of past and likely future research spillovers between Africa and Asia to guide ICRISAT resource allocations between those two regions.

Accepted

We will expand our work on studying research spillovers to guide strategic planning and resource allocation across regions and programs with special focus on identifying common biophysical and socioeconomic conditions that enable the adaptation and sharing of innovations.

Recommendation 4 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT capitalize on its core social science strengths to enhance activities in three areas and their interactions:

- research prioritization and project planning (at all levels within the Center);
- technology development and adaptation; and
- impact assessment.

Accepted

We will continue harnessing our strengths in social science to improve research targeting, development, delivery and impacts. This will be institutionalized further as an integral part of our strategic research and planning process whereby insights gained from technology development and adaptation and impact assessment will be used as a guide.

Recommendation 5 and Response

The Panel recommends that GT-IMPI work on the development of hypotheses that determine the IPG potential of ICRISAT's downstream work on technology development, testing and adaptation.

Accepted

Using impact assessment and other tools, ICRISAT will identify lessons and testable hypotheses that offer new insights to facilitate scaling up of technologies. We will implement this through wider dialogues among scientists across research themes and locations and with partners, including donors to demonstrate that our impact-oriented downstream work leads to IPGs.

Recommendation 6 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT expand expertise and research capacity in advanced biometrics for analysis of germplasm performance across multi-location environments using data generated across the network of multi-environment trials conducted by the Center and its partners across the Asian and African SAT.

Accepted

In collaboration with strategic partners in both regions and with ARIs, we will enhance our biometrics capacity to capture the special opportunity available for ICRISAT to use multi-environment data, including genetic studies, in drawing lessons for future crop improvement research strategies.

Recommendation 7 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT scale up its activities in marker development through strategic partnerships and resource targeting to accelerate the generation of high density reference maps that facilitate gene tagging for MAS in the mandate crops.

Accepted

We will further enhance our efforts to produce genomic tools for our mandate crops by tapping available markers from our partners and developing new marker systems that are genome-wide and cost effective.

Recommendation 8 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT establish minimal biotechnology facilities in Bamako or Niamey to allow DNA extraction, low throughput PCR-based genotyping and direct access to the bioinformatics platform at headquarters.

Accepted

We will establish minimum facilities for DNA extraction in WCA and provide access by a critical mass of scientists in the region to genotyping services, bioinformatics platform, and training on how to use molecular data in crop breeding.

Recommendation 9 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT build a core team with expertise in systems analysis, crop modeling, climate analysis, geo-spatial analysis, and economics located in Africa as a center-wide resource for research, strategic planning and impact assessment, and to concentrate the efforts now dispersed across regions.

Accepted

In implementing this recommendation, ICRISAT will weigh the benefits of deploying such a core team at a single location in SSA against the need of retaining expertise in some of the recommended disciplines in various locations in the regions, and assemble the core team based on ICRISAT's current expertise and prioritized research issues.

Recommendation 10 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT move rapidly to de-emphasize current mature lines of work, particularly in GT-AE (e.g. watershed management in Asia, microdosing, Africa market gardens, dryland eco-farms), and work that can be performed by the NARS (e.g. jatropha, pongamia, chickpea in rice fallow systems) to free up resources needed for new initiatives.

Accepted

ICRISAT will adopt a nuanced approach in implementing this recommendation, guided by: (1) the availability and strengths of NARS and development-oriented partners, (2) need to provide technical support for such devolution, and (3) extent of remaining research issues for which ICRISAT has a comparative advantage.

Recommendation 11 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT reorganize the structure and oversight of training and capacity building, and develop output quality criteria, as well as explicit expectations for mentoring and supervising research scholars, research fellows, and interns by ICRISAT scientists.

Accepted

We will restructure and enhance the quality of our training and capacity building initiatives by developing performance and output indicators, fortifying consistency in selecting, mentoring and overseeing scholars and training participants and improving the mentoring capacity of our scientists. ICRISAT sees a particular need for an emphasis on SSA, and believes this should be a system-wide CGIAR priority.

Recommendation 12 and Response

The Panel recommends that the Board bring greater rigor to the assessment of its own performance, and emphasize, in the orientation for new members, the responsibility of the Board to sustain its independence and its effectiveness.

Accepted

Building on the present system, the Board is reassessing its current performance evaluation scheme to incorporate more rigor. The orientation of new members will underscore the critical importance of the Governing Board in effective governance and independence. In addition, the Board will continue to improve the rigor of its assessment of ICRISAT.

Recommendation 13 and Response

The panel recommends that ICRISAT create succinct documents that synthesize 5-year trends in financial performance, priority setting and performance to give the Board more efficient and transparent access to information critical to oversight.

Accepted

We will synthesize trends in ICRISAT's institutional performance and prepare relevant succinct documents to assist the Board's critical oversight.

Recommendation 14 and Response

The Panel recommends that the Board adopt a multi-source evaluation process for the Director General that is rigorous and balanced and that provides the Board with more inflected and diverse inputs to the process. In addition to senior staff, the Board and DG should annually agree on a list of partners, donors and peers to be asked to participate in the evaluation.

Accepted

To further strengthen the annual quantified and performance-based assessment of the Director General, the Board is adopting a more rigorous, balanced and multi-source evaluation scheme involving key partners, donors and peers.

Recommendation 15 and Response

The Panel recommends that training be provided to senior scientific and administrative staff about how to develop and manage large projects, and how to balance research and project management.

Accepted

Harnessing appropriate external and internal expertise and best practices, we will enhance the capacity of our senior scientific and administrative staff in developing and managing large projects.

Recommendation 16 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT's leadership clarify the role of PDMO in priority setting and send a clear signal about the drivers and determinants for establishing priorities for resource development.

Accepted

We will further clarify PDMO's role as recommended. Priority setting at ICRISAT will continue to be performed by its Research Committee (RC) vetted by Management and finally approved by the Governing Board. The PDMO plays a catalytic role in mobilizing resources.

Recommendation 17 and Response

The Panel recommends that ICRISAT must present ASP's mission, structure and relationship to research in a more transparent fashion and re-assess ASP, either to narrow the ventures it pursues, or, in the interests of minimizing risks to the Center's reputation, create a different structure with clearer boundaries between it and the Center.

Accepted

We will carefully assess ASP's mission, structure and function to further enhance its complementarity with ICRISAT's research and resource development, and to minimize risk.

16 February, 2009

Dr Rudy Rabbinge
Chair, Science Council
Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
Wageningen International
Costerweg 50
6701 BH, Wageningen
The Netherlands

Dr Ren Wang
Director
Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
The World Bank
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433, USA

Dear Drs Rabbinge and Wang,

On behalf of the Panel, I am pleased to transmit the Report of the Sixth External Program and Management Review (EPMR) of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). The Panel has reviewed ICRISAT's performance in the four broad areas of: i) mission, strategy and priorities; ii) quality and relevance of the science; iii) effectiveness and efficiency of management (including governance and finance); and iv) accomplishments and impacts. We have also addressed the list of strategic issues received from the Science Council.

The Panel finds ICRSIAT to be in the midst of a renewal after many years of retrenchment. It is a strong, well-funded research institute that has expanded its regional programs in SSA while also building strategic research capacity at its headquarters in Patancheru, India. The Center has strengthened its collaboration with the host country and also with NARS throughout the semi-arid tropics (SAT). Overall the Panel commends ICRISAT for a well-balanced and substantive research portfolio. Going forward the Panel recommends that ICRISAT give greater emphasis to strategic planning and research prioritization to help guide decisions about the regional balance in resource allocation and about where to position the institute's work across the research—development continuum.

The Center has enjoyed continuity and strong leadership during the past five years, and the Panel is pleased to note that staff morale is high. ICRISAT has made a substantial commitment to improving its governance and management, and building a prudent and sustainable financial framework. To build on these gains, ICRISAT must preserve the rigor and independence of the Board, assure that ICRISAT can attract and retain a talented and diverse research staff, and clarify the direction and purpose of the partnerships formed with the private sector through the Center's Agri-Science Park (ASP).

Our review was facilitated by ICRISAT's openness and strong support in terms of time, information, and facilities. We thank the ICRISAT Governing Board, management and staff, and the Center's stakeholders and peers for sharing their time and thoughts with us.

Finally, the Panel members join me in expressing our appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this review and learn about the exciting opportunities for agricultural development in the SAT. We also greatly appreciate the exemplary technical support given by Dr. Sirkka Immonen of Science Council Secretariat. Sirkka kept us on task and without her it would not have been possible to perform our review with the depth and quality required of a major EPMR.

We trust that our Report will help ICRISAT and its partners build on their successes of the past five years and contribute to the Center's goal of alleviating poverty and ensuring food security in the SAT. It is a mission of critical importance to both Africa and Asia, and also to the rest of the world. .

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Kenneth G. Cassman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kenneth G. Cassman

Panel Chair

Sixth External Program and Management Review of ICRISAT