

Response to Comments of ISPC on CCAFS proposal¹

ISPC meeting in Rome, 3 March 2011

B. Campbell Program Director, based on discussion with Ruben Echeverria, DG of CIAT, Thomas Rosswall, Chair CCAFS Steering Committee, and the CCAFS Management Team.

Presented by Thomas Rosswall on behalf of CIAT.

Overview

The programme has been approved and we are eagerly waiting for the Fund Council to disburse funds. We can manage according to plans for another two months. This was confirmed by CIAT at the meeting in Hyderabad.

Let me remind you that CRP7 is based on the Challenge Programme with the same name that started in 2009 in partnership between CGIAR and the Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP).. Thus, we could have a flying start in the planning for CP7, but this also took time and resources away from the early implementation of the CP. However, on behalf of the CCAFS Steering Committee I can clearly state that we are extremely pleased with progress.

The Steering Committee will have its last meeting in Montpellier in April. The first meeting of the Independent Science Panel of the CRP will be at CIAT in November. Members of the ISP will be appointed by the CIASRT Board at its meeting in May. It is expected that five of the current six SC members will be reappointed to the ISP, there will be three additional persons from social sciences and the development community. The CIAT, one person representing the Centres and one representing ESSP will be ex officio.

It has been decided that the CCAFS Secretariat at the University of Copenhagen (KU) will become the coordinating unit of the new CRP. A review within 18 months will look at the efficiency of management. CIAT and KU have already established excellent working relationships.

CCAFS is also the only CRP with engagement of all 15 centres. This is a considerable strength. This also works well, since we could rely on Contact Points at all Centres appointed by their DGs for planning of the Challenge Programme and in preparation of the CGIAR report to COP15 in Copenhagen.

We thank the ISPC for their insightful comments and support. The comments will be useful in guiding program implementation. The comments will be discussed at the forthcoming Independent Science Panel (ISP) meeting and may result in some further changes in the implementation plans.

TOPICS TO BE DEALT WITH SOON BY THE CCAFS MANAGEMENT TEAM AND ISP

Realism of time frame for expected outputs

With dedicated Regional Facilitators in place, we do not see an issue with respect to the comment “the realism of the time frame for expected outputs given the geographic spread of place-based research”. There is close interaction between Theme Leaders and Regional Facilitators in the

¹ There have been some minor revisions to what was presented in Rome based on further discussion.

Management Team, and this process is already involving 9 Centres/Partners very closely. We recognise that bringing all the additional Centres into the strategic framework will be a challenge but this will be the focus of intense inter-Centre interaction in 2011, both at the global level and within regions.

That said, we have further reflected on the ISPC comment that moving to eight regions in the first three years may be “unrealistically ambitious”. This will be placed on the agenda of the forthcoming ISP meeting. We believe CCAFS has to be a global program, and that covering only three regions is not acceptable. Our initial response is that we need at least two further regions to make a global program, and so propose to add two more regions (rather than five regions as is in the current proposal). This will be discussed at the forthcoming ISP meeting.

Under-utilized crops and strategic directions

The ISPC suggests that work on under-utilized crops or wild plant species would seem to have a low probability of success and should only be minor part of the program’s portfolio. This issue will receive particular attention by the Management Team and the ISP, when it strategizes on the proposed workplans and the budget allocation amongst activities. The CRP management will consider the balance of priorities and critical strategic issues raised by the ISPC.

ISSUES TO BE CLARIFIED IN FUTURE DOCUMENTATION ABOUT CCAFS

Food security and definition of agriculture

We are somewhat taken aback by the comment “Surprising to find that none of the research or outcomes addresses the challenge of increasing food production”. We firmly believe this is one of the main thrusts of the program (e.g. enhanced breeding programs, technologies adopted that counter climate change), but if the ISPC don't see this in the proposal, then we will make sure the language in this regard is strengthened in documents describing the program.

The ISPC is concerned that the definition of agriculture excludes landless production systems (e.g. intensive livestock production) and forestry systems. This was not the intention, and the definition will be improved in documents describing the program.

Plausibility of impacts

As indicated in the proposal, the impact targets will be refined after 18 months, as the new tools for ex ante analysis emerge. The title of the section on impacts will be altered to reflect the concerns expressed by the ISPC that what is described is more a “theory of change”. In documents describing CCAFS partnerships and capacity building, further emphasis will be placed on how these are crucial for impact, and in fact how partnership choice and capacity building strategy are constantly being informed by what is needed to ensure impact.

ISSUES TO BE DEALT WITH IN PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Smart learning

We agree with the ISPC that adaptation, adjustment and learning during this early phase will be a major determinant of the ultimate impact. Much attention will be paid to smart learning, as indicated in the proposal.

Governance and management

The ISPC raises the question as to the degree the ISP will be independent given that it is appointed by the Lead Centre Board. Given the considerable legal, fiduciary and reputational risks that the Lead Centre has to take on in its role as the Lead Centre, we believe we should keep the proposed governance structure. The CIAT Board is very willing to delegate programmatic responsibility to the ISP and would only step in under exceptional circumstances when the above risks are too high. We are committed to an 18-month review of governance and management to evaluate how the proposed institutional arrangements are operating. As is suggested, we will make public the TOR of ISP and PMC and state how conflict of interest will be dealt with. We believe that the model we are following probably makes ISP the most independent it is possible to have. Of all the CRPs, CCAFS has the most independent ISP (or equivalent structure in other CRPs).

Comparative advantage

The ISPC urges CCAFS to focus on areas where the CGIAR has comparative advantage. This is the intention. They state that what defines the CGIAR comparative advantage is the science and expertise required to assess the impact of climate change on food production, and vice-versa, and in finding solutions that contribute to reduction of poverty and hunger while reducing GHG emissions in developing countries. We believe this is fully the intention of CCAFS. The partnership with ESSP is also crucial in making this a highly innovative programme building on the strengths of both partners.

Tools that identify areas supportive of agriculture

The ISPC urges CCAFS to develop tools to identify where climate change is predicted to increase vulnerability, and they stress that this must also take into account the identification of areas where conditions are supportive of agriculture. This will be done.

Adaptive capacity

The ISPC makes the point that “climate” is more than just temperature or rainfall, and that current models are highly simplistic. They suggest that the focus of research should be on generic principles and approaches that confer adaptation in terms of yield and yield stability, rather than specifying particular technologies that should be adopted. We recognise this point and will be focussing on “adaptive capacity”, providing farmers with the tools and information needed to adapt to climate change.

Partnership management

The ISPC notes that there are a large number of partners. We will pay considerable attention to partnership management in the implementation.

Business plan for program implementation

A wide range of implementation tools and procedures are already in use, so we don't believe that this will be a large amount of work.

Role of ISP

We agree that the CCAFS ISP must play a critical role in guiding initial program development and in laying the foundation for success.

ISSUES WE TEND TO DISAGREE WITH

We tend to disagree that Theme 1 is traditional CGIAR research, rather than starting from the challenge. For example, a key part of this Theme is the analogue method, whereby farmer site visits will be promoted to stimulate thinking about future climates (and thereby enhance adaptive capacity). To derive analogue sites requires advanced research by climate scientists working closely with agricultural scientists.

We recognise that perhaps the proposal is not focused enough on production and yield. However, given the considerable impacts that climate change is likely to bring, we also think it important to add an emphasis on the management for resilience to change.