

**TAC MEMBERS ONLY**

CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

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**FINALIZING EARLIER STUDIES**

*CGIAR Study on Commitments in Latin America and the Caribbean*  
*Draft for Discussion at TAC 76*

(Agenda Item 6)

TAC SECRETARIAT

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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## **CGIAR Commitments in Latin America and the Caribbean**

### **DRAFT for discussion at TAC76**

As a region, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has gone through momentous economic, institutional, political, and social changes since the event of the debt crisis in the early 1980s. These changes include a greater role for market forces, reduced state intervention in economic affairs, greater democratic representation, and the emergence of a set of new actors under the form of increasingly powerful corporate interests, corporatist organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGO), and grassroots organizations (GRO). There has also been rapid progress toward continental integration with implementation of numerous trade agreements and creation of new regional organizations and networks. While the region has been historically rich in human resources and institutions, there is concern that these assets may have eroded in the recent period. The region is also characterized by a great degree of unevenness both across nations and within each country, and it is likely that heterogeneity and inequality have increased over the last 20 years. Some countries have powerful NARIs and well integrated NARSs while others have very little domestic research capacity; some countries have a distribution of poverty with is principally urban while rural poverty remains dominant in others; and, within each country, some farmers are fully integrated in the market and the political economy, while others live at the margins of these institutions. Indeed, heterogeneity and inequality remain the hallmarks of the region, implying that any strategy for the CGIAR in LAC must take this aspect into consideration. Of immediate interest to the CGIAR, the changes that have characterized the region over the last 20 years have deeply redefined the actual or potential purposes of agricultural research, the ways in which it is organized, and the mechanisms through which it is funded. In general, however, institutional adjustments for public agricultural research have lagged behind economic and political transformations, causing concern for the future delivery of technological innovations and the distribution of benefits from these innovations.

To assess the role of the CGIAR in this new context, and identify opportunities for improving its ways of operating, TAC appointed a distinguished panel of experts headed by Dr. Lucio Rea (Argentina). The Panel was charged with the task of analyzing opportunities to enhance complementarities between the CGIAR and other actors in the region, assessing congruence in priorities among these actors, looking at coincidence in concerns and approaches for NRM, and looking at eventual competition and potential future substitutions in the tasks performed by IARC and NARS.

In complying with its mission, the Panel submitted a highly comprehensive report that gives an excellent characterization of the portfolio of CGIAR activities in LAC, the organization of agricultural research in the region, CGIAR and regional priorities for agricultural research and NRM, new institutional developments, and an identification of emerging and unresolved issues. The Panel should be commended for fulfilling its difficult mandate both professionally and imaginatively. To do this, the Panel engaged in extensive consultations across a representative set of countries. The results presented by the Panel consequently reflect a broad and balanced spectrum of interests and opinions in the region. While the report does not contain explicitly spelled out recommendations, TAC's reading of

the document allows to extract the following implicit or semi-explicit recommendations and suggestions.

## **1. Heterogeneous strategy in achieving complementarities (conclusions 1, 5, and 10)**

The Panel puts forward a vision of LAC whereby the region is increasingly urbanized, the poor are themselves largely urban (66% of the total), and the key to reducing poverty is indirectly through low and stable food prices. Focusing on the aggregate growth of agriculture is hence the main instrument for poverty reduction. Since many countries have strong public NARIs, even if often in a state of decline due to contraction of public budgets, and also strong private (corporate and non-profit) sectors that can participate to research activities, this vision implies that the CGIAR should move upstream toward research on germplasm conservation and management, biotechnology, GIS, and data management techniques, while NARS concentrate on more applied research. At the same time, the Panel recognizes that rural poverty remains large in poorer countries, and these countries typically have weak national programs, particularly if they are both poor and small. In this case, the Panel recommends that the CGIAR should increase its level of activity and seek closer participation with national programs, either directly or through sub-regional organizations. Hence, the recommendation is that, in both cases, the CGIAR should develop complementarities with NARS, but the nature of these complementarities will vary according to national context.

TAC very much agrees with this vision of the need for differentiated strategies according to country context. The role of the CGIAR should be more upstream in some countries than in others. The Panel does not, however, provide guidelines as to how this may be decided and monitored. LAC is rich in regional organizations (IICA, CATIE, CARDI) and regional networks (PROCI, FORAGRO) that can serve for the continuous assessment of opportunities to develop these complementarities. The CGIAR is actively involved with these institutions. Yet, their abilities to fulfill this task needs to be assessed. Of concern is to make sure that the weaker countries are fairly represented in these regional organizations and that institutions that can cooperate with the CGIAR are available in these countries. Of concern also is that these organizations that generally originated from a strong statist tradition fully capitalize on the potential contributions of the for-profit and NGO sectors. A monitoring system to assess how these organizations manage complementarities between IARCs and NARSs should be an integral component of the exercise.

## **2. Priority setting (conclusion 4)**

The Panel suggests that the CGIAR should increase and make more transparent participation of NARS to the definition of IARC regional priorities. It suggests that FORAGRO could be useful for this purpose.

There already is extensive consultation with local institutions in the setting of CGIAR priorities. Since there is a perception by LAC partners that it is insufficient, the suggestion is very important, calling on renewed efforts for transparent participatory priority setting. Again, country representation and differential ability to place claims on CGIAR resources should be carefully analyzed. A review of FORAGRO's usefulness for this purpose after a few years of operation should be deserved.

### **3. Partnerships and cooperation (conclusions 6 and 7)**

The Panel suggests that the CGIAR should develop joint proposals and carry out joint projects with NARS and that it should improve cooperation and coordination.

This is the main theme of the report and TAC is in full agreement. TAC is, however, concerned that the view of cooperation proposed by the Panel may be too narrow given the emerging realities of agricultural research. The Panel stresses that, in an era of increasing privatization of research and of proprietary claims over research results, collaboration between IARC, NARI, and private sector institutions is essential. Yet, it offers few recommendations as to how this could be pursued, perhaps because most agricultural in LAC, including biotechnology, is still done in the public sector and universities. TAC considers that this subject deserves urgent additional exploration. Partnerships need to be broadened and effective modalities to codify joint research need to be explored, particularly in the perspective of protecting the interests of poor farmers.

### **4. Privatization of technology (conclusion 8)**

The report notes that the CGIAR's mission is to produce international public goods while the NARS have been increasingly pressing for IPR over innovations. The recommendation is that "efforts be made to achieve a clear mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities between the CGIAR and the NARS (regarding IPR vs. public goods) in order to make science and technology available to help the poor while protecting IPRs of research partners".

As the Panel was working on its report, the CGIAR made progress in addressing the issue of public goods in a world of IPR. Hence, while priorities to establish IPR over innovations may be greater in NARS than in the CGIAR, both systems have to confront the same set of issues. Since the region is advancing rapidly on the road of IPR applied to biological innovations, and of joint ventures between public and private institutions for agricultural research, it should serve as laboratory for experimenting with contractual arrangements between public and private sector, and with different forms of managing IPR while serving the best interests of the poor in the region. TAC proposes to follow up on this issue by working with the relevant regional organizations, particularly FORAGRO and FONTAGRO, in monitoring experiments with alternative institutional designs to maximize benefits for the poor and the environment while taking full advantage of what IPR offer as additional instruments for this purpose.

### **5. Natural Resource Management (conclusions 9 and 15)**

The Panel observes that concern for NRM is high on the LAC political agenda, but that institutional arrangements and investments are lagging. This is in part attributed to current high interest rates that lower the present value of future gains and thus limit the scope for investments in NRM. The Panel, however, identifies a set of interventions that offer windows of opportunity as they are less directly affected by high interest rates such as reform of property rights, use of biotechnology, fiscal incentives, infrastructure policy, and capital extensive technologies. It recommends that the CGIAR "should continue to emphasize this field in anticipation of the emergence of a more appropriate economic and institutional context", and in forestry that "present actions and programs be maintained".

TAC recognizes that research and investment in the field of NRM have been lagging in much of LAC with the remarkable exception of Costa Rica, in part due to high interest rates but also due to political priorities and to social consciousness that give low priority to environmental issues. It should be expected that the CG has more than a stop-gap role to play, waiting for the tide to change. Successful consortia like CONDESAN for the Andes and the Central American Hillsides initiative indicate roads ahead. TAC expects that other initiatives of this type should be experimented with and scaled up in a systematic fashion. The role of the NARCs in a division of labor with NARS, and the long run sustainability and institutionalization of the initiatives needs to be explored. Indeed, insufficient clarity remains on this complex issue. The formulation of innovative proposals should be stimulated instead of waiting for a change in economic context and simply maintaining current actions and programs.

## 6. NARS involvement in rural poverty reduction (conclusion 11)

The Panel observes that (1) NARIs have focused on poverty in a roundabout fashion through their work on improving the productivity of staple crops, (2) NGOs have focused on the poorest, but their impact is limited by their size and the localized nature of their interventions, and (3) several countries have engaged in new approaches to rural development to attack rural poverty. It makes no specific recommendation on the role of the CGIAR in relation to these important issues.

TAC feels that this is a fundamental issue that needs more direct concern and more creative vision. If the CG works downstream in the poorer/smaller countries, it will need confront these issues directly. NARIs have indeed generally not had poverty high on their agendas, but win-win opportunities need to be explored. There exists also a broad scope for productive joint ventures with NGOs and with agencies involved in rural development programs. These NGOs and rural development initiatives need to be better integrated with the work of NARIs. CIMMYT and the university (Chapingo) made an important early impact on rural poverty through their direct association to rural development programs such as Plan Puebla. TAC suggests that a more proactive approach needs to be taken on this theme. The NARCs should explore ways of serving as platforms for the organization of broad inter-institutional efforts at using the instruments of technological and policy innovations for a more frontal attack on rural poverty.

## 7. Networking (conclusion 12)

The Panel provides a detailed description of the institutional richness of the region and the multiplicity of existing networks. It recommends that "given the existence of numerous cooperating mechanisms, efforts be made to streamline and prioritize their work. Bringing in new partners to proven, existing cooperating mechanisms could, in some cases, be more effective than creating new ones. Networks should also be linked downstream with NGOs and other organizations in order to enhance opportunities for development impact".

TAC agrees with this pragmatic recommendation. NGOs should, however, be full partners of these networks, not just be linked downstream for development impact. They, and the clientele they represent, need to be involved at all stages of research and development. The private sector also needs to be brought in as a full right partner since it will drive much of the research done in the future. The CGIAR could play an important pro-active role in

accelerating the participation of NGOs and private sector interests in regional networks and other cooperating mechanisms.

## **8. Biodiversity (conclusion 13)**

The Panel describes a number of institutional initiatives in support of the protection of bioresources. It suggests that "these actions are congruent with the CGIAR efforts in the region, which should be continued and, if possible, expanded."

The CGIAR participates to some of these initiatives such as CONDESAN, but these are yet far too limited to have a significant impact on the preservation of biodiversity. Complex issues of incentives for in-situ conservation of biodiversity and for the use of biotechnology in support of biodiversity need to be addressed. TAC is indeed looking for more proactive and more innovative ways of addressing the issue of biodiversity than simple continuation of past efforts.

## **9. Role of information (conclusion 14)**

The Panel notes that the timely circulation of information is fundamental on matters such as technical innovations, market intelligence, environmental impact, databases, etc. The CGIAR has had a role in assisting the circulation of information through "ecoregional" projects and programs. The team "recommends that the potential for closer cooperation between IARCs and the NARS in this area be given particular attention".

Indeed, serving as a platform for the interchange of information may become an increasingly important function for the CGIAR. For instance, the CGIAR may increasingly serve as repository for genomics information, as a link between NARS and the private sector, as a source of information on best practice for policy making and institutional development, and as a platform for negotiation in international agreements on issues that affect the welfare of the poor. Ways in which this can be done efficiently and cost effectively need to be explored.



## Lac Study

### Terms of Reference

1. Analyse opportunities for further complementarities between the CGIAR and other actors in the region, such as the NARS, ARIs, private sector, NGOs, and especially regional programs.
2. Assess complementarities between and among country, regional and IARC priorities.
3. Assess the concerns for biodiversity, land and water degradation within the region, how these can be matched with the CGIAR efforts in this area, and the extent to which CGIAR approaches are effective in meeting needs.
4. Analyse the extent to which CGIAR centres overburden NARS.
5. Analyse the extent to which strong NARS could substitute for IARC in some areas of work.

Recommended Actions at TAC Meeting  
Mexico, September 1998

- broaden the database to take account of the views of small NARS;
- establish how NARS and NARIs are addressing rural poverty and natural resource degradation, and the extent to which their agendas overlap those of the centres;
- analyse the role of NGOs in terms of research and interactions with NARS/IARCs;
- give additional attention to the extent of rural poverty and, in particular, its heavy incidence in some countries; and
- amplify points about the limited investment of NARIs in NRM research.



## LAC Study

### Recommendations

(Themes for which actions or programmes should be encouraged)

1. To develop a much more ambitious mode for collaboration among NARS and IARCs taking the form of full partnerships. Co-operation could be substantially more intense.
2. Increase the participation of NARS in the CGIAR priority setting mechanism.
3. To review, update and fine-tune the complementarities between CGIAR and other actors in LAC.
4. The CGIAR institutions should move upstream (basic research) while national institutions should concentrate on more applied work.
5. Achieve a mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities between the CGIAR and the NARS regarding IPR vs. IPG. To monitor experiments designed to maximize the benefits of the poor.
6. To emphasize the NRM issues in anticipation of the emergence of a more appropriate economic and institutional context, stimulating the formulation of innovative proposals.
7. Adopt a more proactive approach on the theme of rural poverty reduction.
8. CGIAR efforts in the area of Biodiversity in the region should be continued and, if possible, expanded.
9. To streamline and prioritize the work of the existing networks.
10. To organise "ecoregional" projects in the area of information.
11. To give particular attention to the potential for closer co-operation between IARCs and NARS in the area of information.

## LAC Study

### Possible actions to implement the recommended themes

1. (5.) Inventory of the complementarities in relevant themes for CGIAR mission (desk study):

Carry out a NARS inventory of projects, results, capacities etc

Set up a matrix with CGIAR-NARS items. The study will show complementarities, gaps and opportunities.

2. (2.+5) Management of complementarities: Co-operation and type of research):

Workshop for the analysis of the concepts and instruments.

- a) International Co-operation "state of the art" (concepts, instruments).
- b) Concepts, hypothesis and instruments of running projects in LAC. The case of CGIAR-NARS projects: results and constraints.
- c) The IARCs co-operation results
- d) The private sector case.
- e) The basic research/applied work distribution: pros and cons
- f) Building a new framework for future co-operation

3. (8.) The IPR vs. IPG issue. Building up the new exchange.

❖ Desk study on:

- a) experiments designed to maximise the benefits of the poor in the biotechnology/biodiversity interaction.
- b) proposed mechanism (regimes) for the multilaterally shared management of the genetic resources and the biotechnology.

❖ NARS-CGIAR Workshop:

Construction of a multilateral framework for future co-operation on this issue.

Potential role of FONTAGRO/FORAGRO/IICA...