

**Management response to the external
evaluation on:**

**“Managing the CCAFS Theme by Region
matrix for international public goods
and development outcomes”**

May 2014

Developed CCAFS Program Management Committee

**Approved by CCAFS Independent Science Panel on 21
May 2014**

Background

A review was undertaken by Andrew Ash (CSIRO) to examine how the CCAFS Theme by Region matrix was being managed to deliver on International Public Goods (IPGs) and development outcomes. As the review notes there is an additional matrix to be managed: that involving the 15 CGIAR Centers delivering activities in the Themes and Regions. Given time limitations, this review focused on the South Asia region so there was little opportunity for cross-region comparison.

The review had many positive remarks (Box 1), but these will not be the focus of this management response. Here the focus is on how the recommendations from the evaluation will be dealt with.

Box 1: A selection of positive remarks from the executive summary

- “CCAFS has embraced this reform process in structure, function and the necessary behaviours and leadership to make it effective”
- “CCAFS has a highly effective leadership team that makes decisions in a transparent way”
- “effective governance, management and reporting systems that make it possible to efficiently monitor the progress to achieving milestones and outcomes”
- “good appreciation that a top-down “one-size fits all” from Themes to regions is not appropriate though some concepts can be applied universally e.g. Climate Smart Villages”
- “good balance of activities at local, national, regional and global scales”
- “Amongst these challenges, successful initiatives are emerging such as climate analogues, which are assisting not just in providing a way of exploring new options, but also as a mechanism for cross-region integration”
- “About two-thirds of the Annual Outcomes have good linkages to Theme level Outcomes and System Level Outcomes”.
- “A new website was launched in July 2013 and it provides a highly effective and open platform for accessing outputs from CCAFS”
- “Journal publications produced by CCAFS are of a high quality and are collaborative”
- “CCAFS has put together an impressive research program that effectively embraces the matrix organization”

Recommendation 1:

Recognise the growing importance and role of Regions in the Theme x Region x Center matrix by:

- Elevating of the role of Regions and regional needs in the framing of both science and outcomes as CCAFS moves into Phase 2 and as the CGIAR moves to Intermediate Development Outcomes¹*
- Continue to strengthen and grow activities such as Climate Smart Villages as a means of achieving full integration of Themes and Centers at a regional scale*
- Develop ways of more explicitly communicating and reporting achievements and outcomes at a Regional scale, such as annual reports.*

¹ At the time the evaluator wrote the review, the current phase of work (“Phase 1”) was going to move into Phase 2. Now we know there will be an Extension Phase before Phase 2. The desired actions will be pursued in the Extension Phase.

Response:

Part (a) of this recommendation is being addressed in the CCAFS Extension Phase. The new Flagships defined in the Extension Phase provide an improved mechanism for ensuring that regional science priorities linked to intended outcomes at the regional level are reflected in allocations to Centers. In Phase 1, Centers were in the driving seat as to where they allocated resources (within the context of global priorities). In the Extension Phase, Centers have had to write concept notes that reflected regional priorities, and their final proposals have to be accepted by Regional Program Leaders. Impact pathway development is now largely driven by regional teams.

Part (b) of this recommendation is addressed by (i) ensuring that Regional Program Leaders have the resources to ensure integration, (ii) ensuring that Regional Program Leaders give attention to cross-Flagship activities, and (iii) by building a portfolio of Center activities that is more integrated. For (i), in the Extension Phase, Regional Program Leaders will be allocated a budget that is near 60% greater than that of Flagship Leaders, a major shift from Phase 1 where the budget allocations were similar (proposed Regional Program Leader budgets are about \$1.9 million per region). For (ii), Regional Program Leaders will institute and/or strengthen two key areas of cross-flagship activity: (1) climate-smart villages; (2) national and regional learning platforms for science-policy outcomes. These two areas both fall within the CCAFS strategy on linking knowledge and action across private, public and NGO sectors. These activities, being largely driven by stakeholder needs, mean that Flagship boundaries become less important and the knowledge that matters is brought together into integrated solutions. For (iii), Centers are building activities that are linked to other activities in the region, irrespective of what Flagship the activities are addressing (in Phase 1 it was a case of constantly urging Centers to link their Center-defined activities with other activities, but the links remained relatively poor, whereas in the Extension Phase all activities are being planned from the outset as linked regional activities, with an overarching regional impact pathway).

Part (c) of this recommendation will be addressed by Regional Program Leaders taking a lead in annual reporting, providing Regional Program Reports that will then be synthesized into the global report, and by leading on some elements of the global report, notably those related to integrating knowledge to action activities at regional level.

Recommendation 2:

Increased effort should be invested by the CCAFS management team in developing increased Window 3/Bilateral investment in CCAFS by working closely with Centers and donors. This will require developing a strong value proposition as to the long term benefits of investment in adaptation and mitigation.

Response:

The evaluator notes that the current organizational design model that empowers and encourages Centers to attain Window 3/Bilateral funding may or may not have strong alignment to the strategies of CRPs and may act as a disincentive to much closer alignment of Center activities and CRPs. The reviewer proposes that greater attention be placed by the CCAFS management team working with Centers and (bilateral) donors to ensure alignment. Given the diverse fund-raising efforts by multiple players in Centers it will be exceptionally hard for CCAFS management to work more closely with Centers on fund-raising. It seems more appropriate to work with Centers to ensure that all Contact Points are clear about the

CCAFS strategy, to ensure that only aligned bilateral projects are accepted into CCAFS, and to provide incentives to ensure alignment between strategy and fund-raising. To this end, CCAFS management will discuss the issue of Window 3/Bilateral funding with Center Contact Points, focusing on (a) reasons why Bilateral funding to CCAFS remains relatively low, (b) and the need to raise funds that meet the objectives of the strategy. In addition, in allocating performance budgets to Centers, the base budget of a Center is used in the performance calculation. Thus it is in the interest of the Centers to grow the base budgets through bilateral funds, but the PMC will ensure that only bilaterals that fit with the CCAFS strategy can be included in the CRP.

Recommendation 3:

- (a) *Develop a clear process for resourcing and accountability of activities between Centers (and other non-Center partners) and the CCAFS management team but in a way that fosters joint ownership and collaboration rather than it becoming a transactional purchaser/provider model.*
- (b) *Provide adequate resources to Themes and Regional Program Leaders to nurture the collaboration and engagement between Centers and the CCAFS management team.*

Response:

The reviewer points to the need to put in place measures to continue to build the relationships between Regional Program Leaders and Centers and between Themes and Centers, so that the relationship does not become one of purchaser/provider. CCAFS management will do this through:

- Ensuring close linkage between Centers and Flagship/Regions in on-going program development and delivery. In Phase 1 of CCAFS, contact between Centers and Themes/Regions was largely through Contact Points, but in the Extension Phase the Principal Investigators of activities will be in direct contact with Flagship and/or Regional Leaders.²
- Facilitating an exciting annual science meeting, and topic-specific meetings for Regions or Flagships, where discussion around non-administrative issues is fostered.
- Maintaining reasonable budgets for Flagship and Regional Leaders to nurture exciting integrative activities amongst participants.

Recommendation 4:

Put in place a set of targeted incentives and capacity building initiatives to achieve increased cross-Center involvement in CCAFS activities.

Response:

CCAFS Management will continue to monitor the degree to which cross-Center activities are taking place (through, for example, monitoring cross-Center products as one of its performance management indicators). Funds will be set aside each year for a high-profile cross-center activity or product. Greater cross-Center activity is likely to be fostered through the changes made for the Extension Phase, whereby activities being put in place by Centers involve a high degree of collaborative planning amongst different program participants.

² Current thinking at the Consortium Office is that Themes will become Flagships and thus Theme Leaders will become Flagship Leaders. The new terminology is used in the response to the evaluator.

Recommendation 5:

Establish a monitoring and evaluation activity to capture longitudinally the depth and breadth of external partnerships, how they evolve through time, and the influence on decision-making in CCAFS and the external partners.

Response:

CGIAR has instituted a survey to assess the depth and breadth of partnerships for all of the CRPs on a longitudinal basis. Therefore, CCAFS will not implement an additional tool. However, CCAFS recognises the importance of evaluating its impact on key policy processes at global levels (e.g. UNFCCC and its subsidiaries such as IPCC and SBSTA; Committee on Food Security deliberations on climate-related issues; NEPAD/CAADP programs on climate and agriculture) and at national levels (e.g. National Adaptation Plans; Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions). CCAFS will assess its influence on decision-making in these processes via commissioned impact studies as outlined in the CCAFS reporting structure for Flagships, Regions and Centers.

Recommendation 6:

- (a) *Provide opportunities at PMC meetings, or if required dedicated meetings, to engage in more strategic discussions on cross-Theme synergies and for these to be reflected in cross-Theme activities.*
- (b) *Include overt reporting of cross-Theme synergies, outputs and incipient outcomes in Annual Reports and Milestones.*

Response:

CCAFS will task the secretary to the PMC to ensure that there is at least one agenda item on each PMC meeting that examines a cross-Flagship issue (proposed agenda items for the year will be developed at the start of each year). These would be expected to lead to concrete activities and outputs. Cross-Flagship synergies should especially be taking place within the Regional Programs. The annual reporting form for Regional Program Leaders will be altered to capture cross-Flagship synergies within each region.

Recommendation 7:

Develop clear plans with associated implementation strategies for undertaking participatory research at local scales in the future that offer the rigour associated with focused effort at a manageable number of sites but builds in approaches for scale out to achieve wider impact.

Response:

The evaluator points to a number of challenges and questions within Regional Programs, most notably: how to achieve increasing investment in Climate-Smart Villages (CSVs) from Centers; how to scale out CSVs to achieve wider impact that is measurable at sub-national and national scales, yet maintain the rigour and effort in existing CSVs; how to exploit new opportunities at local scale that don't lend themselves to operating within the concept of CSVs. CCAFS will, in the Extension Phase, develop stronger local to regional impact pathways and associated implementation strategies. These will be a core guiding tool in resourcing activities at the regional level. Thus CSVs will be resourced as appropriate but with the recognition that to achieve specific outcomes other opportunities at local scale that don't lend themselves to the CSV concept will also be resourced.

Recommendation 8:

Clearly articulate the role, if any, for working with vulnerable commercial scale farmers and have this strategy visible in business plans.

Response:

The CGIAR's mandate and Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) focus on reducing rural poverty and hunger, hence poor farmers are the starting point for CCAFS' work. However, CCAFS is set up to explore alternative development pathways through its modeling of future scenarios that consider more industrialized food production and through its research on transformational adaptation, which in extreme cases involves smallholders moving out of agriculture. CCAFS also works with larger producers for certain research questions, such as those related to mitigation and commodity crop drivers of deforestation. At its meeting in Rome in October 2013, the CCAFS Independent Science Panel directed CCAFS to emphasize 'farmers vulnerable to climate change' as CCAFS beneficiaries, recognizing that these will predominantly be smallholders but will also include the wider farming community. CCAFS will make this strategy visible in business plans.

Recommendation 9:

Develop approaches to more explicitly link outcomes from local scale research activities to national scale policies.

Response:

Regional Program Leaders will be tasked with making a more explicit link between local site work and national level policy processes. This will be captured in the next version of impact pathways being developed for the Extension Phase.

Recommendation 10:

For effective application of global models at local scales, increased effort should be placed on activities that connect the down-scaled climate models, crop models and their application to local scale farming systems and their social and economic dynamics.

Response:

The scenario building activity in the five CCAFS regions, which involves the development of quantitative scenarios, includes an explicit effort to link local household and farming systems models with the socio-economic drivers as played out in the different regional scenarios. In this way, the regional scenarios are providing a set of different contexts at the broad scale, allowing local adaptation, mitigation and risk management options to be evaluated under a range of plausible futures that are relevant for each region. This work is making use of the considerable quantity of household-level data collected at all the CCAFS core sites. We envisage iterations between the different scales (regional to local, and local to regional) so that different options can be evaluated for their private as well as social costs and benefits, in the search for adaptation, mitigation and risk management options that provide robust benefits across a range of scenarios. We accept the recommendation, but note that increased effort is already being made: 2014 is seeing considerable work in this area, involving as it does eight CGIAR Centers and several universities, as well as the CSIRO.

Recommendation 11:

Increased effort should be invested in developing a coherent structure that links Milestones, Annual Outcomes and higher level, longer term outcomes (IDOs). A key aspect of this should be development of an approach to Impact Pathways that is consistent across Themes and

Regions. This Impact Pathways approach should be developed in a way that facilitates close integration between Annual and Intermediate Development Outcomes.

Response:

A process has been put in place to develop consistent impact pathways across the whole program, for implementation in the Extension Phase.

Recommendation 12:

Increased effort should be directed to the Theme Outcome areas that are currently progressing slowly and at risk of not achieving their planned outcomes by 2015-16. In particular, areas relevant to the System Level Outcome on food security, with an emphasis on wider system aspects of food security, should receive some focus.

Response:

During the remainder of Phase 1, additional effort will be placed on achieving outcomes, especially in those areas where progress has been slow. In the Extension Phase, alignment on achieving outcomes will be much greater, given the new process whereby project participants jointly define regional impact pathways and work towards a common objective.

Recommendation 13:

Invest more effort in producing cross-cutting, synthesis reports and policy briefs given the strong external interest in these products. This will require identifying research activities that lend themselves to these synthesis publications and may provide additional benefit as a stimulant for cross-Theme interactions.

Response:

The evaluator notes that the most downloaded publications are strongly dominated by those that synthesise CCAFS work across Themes and across Regions. To step up efforts in addition to the current products of the Coordinating Unit, once a year the CCAFS Program Management Committee will identify key cross-cutting products for production and dissemination that year, and assign production responsibilities among the staff of the Coordinating Unit, Flagships and Regions.

Recommendation 14:

CCAFS should develop a plan to lift publication rates in ISI journals. This will require a mix of measures ranging from performance indicators to short term incentives to longer term capacity building in Centers and done in a way that doesn't compromise a focus on achieving outcomes.

Response:

The evaluator demonstrates that CCAFS compares poorly in relation to other CRPs in the production of journal articles. The CCAFS management team suggest three possible, not mutually-exclusive reasons: poor reporting by Centers; long lead times in publication by a relatively new area of research for CGIAR; much effort placed on partnership engagement and outcome fostering relative to producing peer-reviewed publications. CCAFS will urge Centers to do a better job of reporting and will reassess the situation after the 2014 annual report. In addition a detailed bibliometric analysis will be conducted in the first half of 2014. It is noted that in the 2013 annual report (i.e. the year after the evaluator's study), publication was up 25% for ISI journals.

Recommendation 15:

CCAFS should maintain its investment in a diversity of IPGs as a means of influencing decision-making and achieving desired outcomes and impacts.

Response:

The evaluator notes that CCAFS produces a wide variety of IPGs (Reports, Working Papers, Models, Data, Journal articles). CCAFS will maintain its current strategy of having a diverse portfolio of IPGs, backed up by a website and dissemination strategy.