

Asia 2011-2015



CIAT Asia's research activities stretching back 30 years highlights significant research outcomes that have contributed to improve the livelihoods of many marginalized poor communities in the region. The current content and diversity of CIAT activities in Asia, the nature of its funding, and the major programmatic shifts within the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), provide an excellent opportunity to reconsider the future of CIAT research in Asia. The strategy is based on the assessment from the Center Commissioned External Review (CCER), consultations with partners in China, Vietnam, and Laos, and 6 months of internal discussion in CIAT.

The strategic framework endorsed by the CIAT Board of Trustees has three major components:

1. Focus research on **cassava** and on **forages** for livestock systems, seeking a direct involvement with three forthcoming CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs): Roots and Tubers, Livestock and Fish, and Climate Change.
2. Increase the profile of research activities in **tropical soil fertility** particularly on cassava and forage systems with a direct link with two other forthcoming CRPs: Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics and Water, Land and Ecosystems.

3. Strengthen the **research capacity** of CIAT and partners by achieving a critical mass of staff in the region, be they permanent, visiting, or seconded staff, by continuing to improve linkages with headquarters, and by refocusing staff management and funding approaches. With reallocation and hiring of new staff and exploration of new partnerships, the aim would be to achieve much stronger linkages with regional and national partners in emerging economies, such as Vietnam, Thailand, and China, which will translate into benefits for the region as a whole.

Cassava and forages research systems should remain at the center of the work of CIAT in Asia. Cassava work builds on impacts achieved from improved cassava production and resultant livelihood improvements and the future potential of cassava in the region. An initial focus on cassava pest and diseases and on improved cassava agronomy combined with greater use of the CIAT offices in Vietnam and China would be a good start. Ideally a CIAT staff should be based permanently in the CIAT office at the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS), in Haikou, China, or at least with a regular stream of short, medium, and longer-term visitors from other parts of CIAT Asia, from Cali, and through location of students. Significant results have resulted from the work on forages for improved livestock production systems. The future is bright for research on improving integrated farming systems in the humid tropics, especially with CIAT's expertise in tropical soil fertility and climate change.

Future CIAT Asia activities will rely much more on better linking with national research partners in the emerging economies of the region, such as Vietnam, China, and Thailand. Greater focus will be placed on strong partnerships with national and regional research organizations and networks and with key CGIAR partners so as to scale up research results. Increased partnerships with the strong national agricultural research systems (NARS) will increase research outcomes and allow continued and more applied work with the less strong NARS (e.g., Lao PDR, Cambodia, Burma), through continued direct partnerships and through promoting more South-South research cooperation. The presence of CIAT in the region for 3 decades will facilitate the development and maintenance of such linkages.

The way forward

Based on CIAT Asia's strengths, the potential for impact, and the future likelihood of potential partnership opportunities with NARS in the region, there is much that can be done and significant impacts to be realized by continuing to work in cassava and forages while adding climate change and soil fertility research to the portfolio, with the boundaries of latter two yet to be clearly defined in the context of CRPs.

Maintaining a good mix of applied research for development requires linking with partners who are interested and capable of doing both. To this extent, there is a need to refocus partnerships within CIAT Asia. More close partnerships are required with stronger NARS, who need to work for impact at the same time as having the staff and the interest to do more applied research in parallel with an interest in building the capacity of their staff and their institutions. In **Thailand**, CIAT has had excellent partnerships on applied research, especially for cassava, but also for forages, although after 3 decades of collaboration there may be a need to explore other partnerships, especially in the university system, while maintaining the strategic connections to the Department of Agriculture (DOA), the Department of Agricultural Extension (DOAE), and the Thai Tapioca Development Institute (TTDI). Although the collaboration with **Vietnam** and **China** has been shorter in time—compared with Thailand—it has been very effective to date. There is great interest in both countries in stronger research partnerships, particularly in cassava, forages, climate change, and soil fertility/natural resource management, and in Vietnam on linking farmers to markets, including potential funding for some joint activities.

Regarding linking better to partners in the right locations, a first step in 2011 would be to locate CIAT research staff with the Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VAAS) in Hanoi, Vietnam, and with CATAS in

Haikou, China, to establish more effective research collaboration, in excellent locations and facilities in which several areas of interest for CIAT are undertaken. These two locations would become small hubs for short and longer-term research visits from CIAT and other CGIAR Centers, as well as for graduates and postdocs. The current CIAT Office in Vientiane, Lao PDR, would continue to play a role, including linking with ILRI, IWMI, CIP, and other CGIAR Centers involved as future partners in the CGIAR Climate Change and Agriculture Systems for the Humid Tropics Programs.

In summary, CIAT Asia's future will be shaped by:

- Clearer **research focus and better alignment** with CIAT research programs as well as with the CRPs.
- A strong **cassava** research component related to the CGIAR Roots and Tuber Research Program, backstopped by CIAT headquarters, operating throughout the subregion but strongly connected with China and Vietnam.
- **Forage systems** research linked with the CGIAR Livestock and Fish and Humid Systems Research Programs well linked with ILRI and Asian partners.
- Research on adaptation to **climate change** and **soil fertility** related to the CRPs on Climate Change and Water, Land and Ecosystems, based in Vientiane, Lao PDR, with clear links to cassava and forage research.
- Well articulated research **partnerships** with strong and emerging NARS (China and Vietnam) and regional research networks (as well as CGIAR Centers) to facilitate research activities throughout the SE Asia region.

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