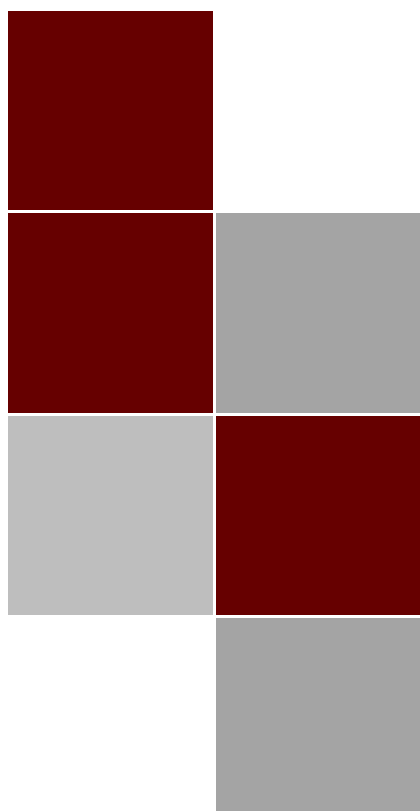




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# ILRI research publishing procedure 8: Engaging with media

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## Context

Interactions with (social) media and publication of sensitive or controversial results without proper planning can cause damage to ILRI's work and relations with partners.

These guidelines set out ways to minimize such risks and engage effectively with media. They provide a checklist to manage potentially sensitive or controversial results. Other guidelines address social media interactions and publication approval procedures.

## Policies

The ILRI PPM currently states:

*1.2.4 Staff members shall not, except with the prior approval of the director general or his/her designate, perform any one of the following acts, if such act relates to the purposes, activities or interests of ILRI:*

*(a) Issue statements to the press, radio or other media*

*(b) Accept speaking engagements*

*(c) Submit articles, books or other material for publication*

The ILRI Code of Conduct states that

*"...Official statements made on behalf of ILRI in public fora and statements made to the media should first be cleared by the office of the Director General whenever possible."*

## Media outreach

All ILRI staff have a responsibility to protect ILRI's 'brand'—and nothing protects that brand more than regular, accurate, research-based, open, transparent, accessible, timely, respective, responsible and responsive internal and external communications.

### General media interactions

Any staff member approached by a journalist for a public comment about ILRI or its research, and any staff member wanting to engage journalists in a public conversation or provide media with ILRI-generated information or material, must inform their program leader (and regional representative where that applies) and relevant deputy director general-research (DDG) as well as ILRI's team leader for Communications, Awareness and Advocacy and the assistant director general (ADG) and must forward to these any relevant correspondence.

### News releases

Any formal news release (e.g. embargoed news or news that carries the ILRI logo, whether alone or alongside other institutional logos) must be made available to the relevant program leader (and regional representative where that applies) and DDG as well as ILRI's team leader for Communications, Awareness and Advocacy and ADG for their inputs and must be approved by them before being released. All international news releases, whether released by ILRI alone or jointly with other institutions, must also be sent to and approved by ILRI's director general before being released.

## Public statements on sensitive or controversial issues

A potentially sensitive product or publication should also be signaled during its submission to the publishing review tool for review by program leaders. It will then be subject to extra attention by the DDG.

Ideally, however, news of any ILRI work, process, product or publication deemed by the researcher as being potentially sensitive or controversial among some publics will be identified much earlier, during research design and implementation and communication planning.

This information should be communicated to the relevant embedded communications officer, program leader, regional representative (where relevant) and DDG. Once a way forward for external communications has been agreed by this group, news of the approach agreed upon must be forwarded to the ILRI's team leader for Communications, Awareness and Advocacy, ADG and DG for their additional inputs and advice in how to handle the external communications.

The originators of the news must subsequently follow a series of steps that will be developed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that communications about this by ILRI and ILRI's clients, partners and donors are consistent, credible, substantive, clear and useful to all the stakeholders ILRI serves.

Public statements by staff on issues that could be sensitive, whether in the form of a formal news release or news conference or a blog article or a personal interview, must be approved by all of the above staff before being made.

Following these procedures need not be onerous (it can be achieved collegially in a series of emails and a few skype calls, for example) but are required to ensure that we do everything possible to protect ILRI's good reputation, credibility and the trust of our many partners and investors.

# Checklist on communicating sensitive results

When publishing or presenting scientific results that could be of a sensitive or controversial nature among some of our stakeholders, do the following:

1. Inform the relevant directors and CKM staff (see ILRI guidelines for specifics) spelling out the main results, their significance, and why the results may be sensitive
2. Set up a meeting with relevant staff (see ILRI guidelines for specifics) to initiate a communications, media and partnership engagement plans; these may be simple or elaborate, depending on the nature of the issue
3. Make a list of all ILRI staff and partners, donors, government officials and others who should be kept updated about the results and provide all their email contacts
4. Invite key stakeholders to a meeting to discuss the results long before the results are published (ideally, when the paper has been drafted and finalized but not yet submitted for publication)
5. Summarize the discussions at the above meeting and circulate them to all invitees (including those invited that did not come)
6. Ensure that the publication of the results is also circulated to all key stakeholders.
7. Work with CKM staff to produce ILRI research and public (blog/ media) publications that are scientifically accurate and 'policy useful' while remaining sensitive to concerns of our stakeholders
8. Ensure that these spin-off publications are also distributed to all key stakeholders.
9. If necessary, provide a vehicle for on-going discussion among stakeholders before, during or after publication of the results
10. If warranted, work with relevant CKM staff to compile lessons learned