Meeting Objectives

The meeting aimed to build a Community of Practice by bringing together members of the newly formed MEL CoP for the first time face-to-face in order to develop further a common understanding in preparation for the full proposal writing process. This includes the following sub-objectives:

- Understand and influence final Full Proposal guidance from an ME&L perspective
- Develop a common understanding of the phase 2 results-based management (RBM) approach and agree on how to implement specific components:
  - How to monitor progress towards sub-Intermediate Development Outcomes (sub-IDOs) and the System-Level Outcomes (SLOs) targets at CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) and portfolio/system levels
- Agree on purpose, work plan, how to organise and resource needs of our ME&L CoP

Key Achievements

- Introduction of the proposed elements of a CGIAR Results-Based Management (RBM) framework for CRP phase II and identification of improvements to the framework building on the experience of CRPs
- Identification of generic lessons learned based on four RBM trials (RTB, CCAFS, GRISP, and Humid Tropics):
  - There are opportunities and challenges when working with national systems (NARS) and using national level data. Some governments and partners were willing and able to commit to taking on monitoring responsibilities. Different national data collection systems make comparability difficult
  - Generally, the time and resources required for the trials ended up being higher than anticipated. There is a need for strong commitment from senior management to see these processes through
  - In particular, working in multi-stakeholder partnerships takes more time than anticipated, including internal coordination between different centres / projects and with external partners
  - There are challenges in communication and data management – often different indicators are used at programme level and it takes time to agree on and then aggregate data
  - Developing a common ‘logic’ across a cluster of projects is challenging. Agreeing on an overall framework and certain measurements on e.g. a quarterly basis, and then decentralising data collection, has worked well (‘hands-off’ approach)
  - Harmonised platforms that enable scientists or research assistants to directly enter data at ‘primary’ level can be useful and enables aggregation
- There are concerns about the time frame of RBM as there is a disparity between the ongoing research and the outcomes being assessed (which may well be the result of previous research)
- It is important to ensure that RBM is indeed about adaptive management and that the information generated is actually used

- Receipt of an update from the Fund Council meeting, including information regarding the need for greater transparency about results at different stages (outputs, outcomes and impact) and to raise our game in terms of articulating what the CGIAR delivers and how the CGIAR does it
  - MEL CoP can contribute to these needs, especially with the implementation of a strong CGIAR RBM framework

- Introduction of a value for money (V4M) approach for the CRP Portfolio 2017-2022 by the Consortium Office, asking ‘How to make sense of a large investment in a portfolio of projects in agricultural research?’ - MEL CoP members recommended that this approach be used with care

- Key dimensions of performance were identified at the Flagship and Clusters of Activity levels, including: science quality, research outputs, research outcomes, research/development demand/relevance, cost efficiency, adaptive learning capacity, partnership management and development outcomes, and coherence in portfolio

- Identification of specific work packages for the MEL CoP to address the challenges and opportunities and make use of the combined strengths and energy of the CoP members
  - **Group A**: What does the MEL CoP want to see in the full proposal guidance notes? – making specific suggestions on how to improve it, including templates.
  - **Group B**: Write high-level 2 pagers on CGIAR ME&L framework and principles / criteria for performance assessment of CRPs
  - **Group C**: Develop a process and milestones on how to develop outcomes (sub IDO level) monitoring system at CRP / system level
  - **Group D**: What are the elements that need to be addressed at various organisational levels (centre, CRP, overall system?) in order to create the enabling environment for RBM to work?

- Governance structures were developed for the newly created MEL CoP, including development of terms of reference setting out scope, membership, leadership (two co-chairs), logistics, communication and frequency of meetings. Two co-chairs were voted: Philippe Ellul from Consortium Office and Michelle Guertin from CIMMYT/MAIZE/WHEAT.

- Comments on the guidance for Full Proposal were prepared during the workshop and shared with the Consortium Office and CRP Leaders, including specific recommendations for the performance indicator matrix and the results-based management sections of the proposals