



From: The Secretariat

July 20, 1995

**Report of the Eighth Meeting  
of the CGIAR Oversight Committee**

The CGIAR Oversight Committee held its eighth meeting in Nairobi, Kenya on May 21 and 25, 1995. The Committee reviewed follow-up to the Lucerne Meeting, partnership with NARS, center governance, Food Security Summit, some due diligence matters, and its priorities and operations. The conclusions reached by the Committee on these matters are summarized in the attached report.

The Oversight Committee plans to hold its ninth meeting in Washington, D.C. in October in conjunction with the 1995 International Centers' Week.

**Distribution:**

CGIAR Members  
Center Board Chairs  
Center Directors  
TAC Chair, Members, Secretariat

# Report of the Eighth Meeting of the CGIAR Oversight Committee

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21 and 25 May, 1995  
Nairobi, Kenya

The CGIAR Oversight Committee (OC) held its eighth meeting at the Grand Regency Hotel on May 21 (half day) and May 25 (half day) in conjunction with the Mid-Term Meeting of the CGIAR held May 22-26, 1995. Participating in the meeting were: Paul Egger (Chair), Henri Carsalade, Robert Herdt, John Lewis, and Selcuk Ozgediz (Secretary). Vir Chopra and Johan Holmberg sent their regrets.

The agenda consisted of the following items:

1. Follow-up of the decisions taken at the Ministerial-Level Meeting held in Lucerne
2. Partnership with NARS
3. Center governance
4. Due diligence matters
5. Food Security Summit
6. Future priorities of the OC
7. Internal matters

The OC also interacted with the CGIAR Executive Secretary Alexander von der Osten on possible locations for the 1996 CGIAR Mid-Term Meeting, and with the Committee of Board Chairs on center governance matters.

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## 1. Follow-up of the Decisions taken at the Ministerial-Level Meeting Held in Lucerne

Following the Lucerne meeting the Oversight Committee reflected on the advances made in implementing the renewal program. It applauded the decisive leadership shown by Chairman Ismail Serageldin in envisioning and guiding the process.

The Committee's comments on some specific aspects of the renewal program adopted at Lucerne are noted below. Comments on the CGIAR's

partnership with NARS are covered under Item 2.

Eastern Europe and Countries of the Former Soviet Union. The OC discussed options for implementing the Lucerne declaration on this subject, where the CGIAR is encouraged to initiate research in this region "only when a clear program of work where the CGIAR has a distinctive comparative advantage has been established, and a minimum level of separate and additional funding has been secured."

The Committee identified two possible approaches. One is a pragmatic

approach based on windows of opportunity; the other is a strategic approach based on careful assessment of needs, options, and priorities. The OC considers that while the centers and the system should always be alert to emerging opportunities, there is a need to have a strategic look at the collaboration in this region.

The OC suggests that, under the guidance of TAC, the centers and interested donors should study the region's research needs and priorities, and opportunities for collaboration with the CGIAR, and suggest priorities of a possible future program of work, for discussion by the CGIAR. Such a paper would also be a useful input to the next TAC study on CGIAR priorities and strategies.

CGIAR-NGO Linkages. The OC strongly supports the objective of improving the CGIAR's dialogue with the NGO community. In this regard it commends Chairman Serageldin for his efforts to consult with wide ranging groups of NGOs in Washington, Paris, The Hague, Rome, Nairobi, and Addis Ababa. It also welcomed the Chairman's interactions with the CGIAR's Heads of Delegation during MTM95 on this topic.

The Lucerne Action Program encourages the CGIAR to convene a committee of NGOs as a means of improving dialogue between the CGIAR and the NGO community. The OC supports the idea to convene a group of NGO representatives which should be asked to suggest to the CGIAR appropriate means and procedures for future consultation with the NGOs.

Definition of Systemwide Programs and Initiatives. The Committee noted that the CGIAR is going through a transition from a center-based program structure towards one that also incorporates several cross-center programs and initiatives, many of which include partner institutions from

the North and the South. It noted concern among some Centers Boards on program authority and responsibility. It observed that the system is experiencing some difficulty in clearly defining the objectives and content of these programs (in the context of the vision and research agenda of the system), as well as the management and coordination mechanisms that are appropriate.

This difficulty is being faced in part because the CGIAR has limited experience with financing and implementing systemwide programs. It is also because the transition the system is going through requires the centers to play new, different, and sometimes unaccustomed roles—such as *convenor, facilitator, catalyst, and coordinator*. This points to a possible need to strengthen the centers' capacities to play such roles (e.g., through training.)

The OC also saw a need for TAC to play a more active leadership role in defining systemwide programs. TAC ought to provide the CGIAR with guidance on the prioritization of strategic research areas and the development of Systemwide Programs and Inter-Center Initiatives. TAC should also challenge the Consultative Group, the centers, and the broader community on the needs for specific programs. The next TAC study on CGIAR priorities and strategies shall be a vehicle to analyze and present global needs and opportunities for programs.

Impact Assessment. The OC is pleased with the rapid progress made since the Lucerne meeting in identifying alternative ways of strengthening the CGIAR's impact assessment capacity.

## 2. Partnership with NARS

The OC welcomed the CGIAR consultations with NARS organized, among others, by IFAD and TAC. It recognized that global and regional fora could become

key instruments for consultation between national, regional, and international actors. For these to become effective, however, greater ownership of the consultation process is necessary at the country and regional level. Also, the purposes of such consultations need to be defined more clearly. In particular, there is strong need to distinguish among consultations which aim at:

- exchange of views among actors;
- joint planning and priority setting at the regional or global level; and,
- arranging collaborative undertakings.

There is equally strong need to define roles of various actors in the organization of global and regional fora. As it is imperative to have regional ownership of such consultations, principal regional and national actors, including NGOs, should be involved with both the conceptualization and organization of these events.

This means a sharing of leadership or convener roles in the organization of global and regional consultations. In this regard the OC considers that different organizations may have a comparative advantage to play convener roles depending on the purposes of the consultation.

The OC regards the greatest challenge in this area to be in linking consultations at the national, regional and global level to priority setting efforts at these different levels. The CGIAR should take advantage of the opportunity to try new modes of consultation with NARS in connection with the system-level priority setting exercise being initiated by TAC.

### 3. Center Governance

The OC plans to bring before the CGIAR, in cooperation with the Committee of Board Chairs (CBC) and the Secretariat, a paper updating the CGIAR's policies regarding the role, responsibilities and accountability of center boards. The OC also plans to have a set of guidelines prepared on board operations, which update existing materials and can serve as reference tools for center boards.

The Secretariat has engaged the National Center for Nonprofit Boards (NCNB) in Washington, D.C. to assist in this area. A draft policy paper prepared by NCNB entitled "The Role, Responsibilities and Accountability of Center Boards of Trustees in the CGIAR" was forwarded to the CBC and discussed by the OC. On behalf of the OC, Messrs. Egger, Herdt and Ozgediz met with the CBC to consult on this and other matters of mutual concern. This consultation endorsed the following:

1. The Secretariat should continue with the preparation of policy and guideline documents in cooperation with NCNB.
2. The draft policy paper should be forwarded to the CGIAR for discussion at the 1996 Mid-Term Meeting, following prior review by the OC and CBC. The paper should include both general principles for CGIAR board operation as well as specific CGIAR policies (e.g., on donor representatives serving on boards, length of term, CGIAR nominees on center boards, etc.)
3. The guidelines prepared should incorporate exemplary center practices. They should be put in final form by MTM96, following their review by the CBC and OC.

These should focus primarily on the following topics:

- creating a well-balanced board;
- selecting and evaluating a center director;
- the role of the board chair;
- effective board committees; and,
- board self assessment.

#### 4. Due Diligence Matters

The OC discussed a number of center and system management issues under this heading.

Search Process for TAC Executive Secretary. The OC was briefed about and carefully analyzed the search process. It noted that the process has not yet been concluded. The Committee was assured that any delays in appointment will not jeopardize TAC's operations as measures have been taken by the Cosponsor to enable the TAC Secretariat carry out its responsibilities fully during the interim.

Number of CGIAR Committees. The OC noted concerns expressed by some members of the CGIAR about the recent increases in the number of CGIAR committees and task forces and whether this is leading to a situation of "system overload."

After studying the situation the OC concluded that shifting CGIAR's workload to smaller groups allowed various stakeholders to participate more actively in the conduct of the CGIAR's business, helped the Group's decision making, and improved the overall effectiveness of the Group. This mode of operation is particularly pertinent now because the Group's size has increased as a result of the renewal effort.

In the OC's judgment, there is little overlap in the present governance arrangements of the CGIAR, through its standing committees. The work of the ad

hoc committees and task forces has been essential and productive. And the planned committees on linkages with NGOs and the private sector are needed for broadening partnerships. Thus, the OC does not regard the committee structure of the CGIAR as a case of "system overload."

What is needed, however, is periodic updating of information about the terms of reference, membership, and procedures of the existing committees and sharing this with the CGIAR community. The OC has asked the Secretariat to produce such a paper for reference by the CGIAR community.

Parallel Sessions at CGIAR Meetings. The OC sees continuing merit in devoting part of the CGIAR meetings to parallel sessions of CGIAR committees to discuss specific substantive points on the agenda. However, further experimentation is necessary to (1) foster attendance and lively debates in committee meetings, and (2) avoid sharp conflicts between the schedules of ad hoc and standing committee meetings. The OC plans to monitor progress in this area in the coming meetings.

System Review. The OC discussed the need and opportunity for a system review of the CGIAR. It agreed that, as a principle, the CGIAR should have periodic external reviews of the system.

The Committee noted that the CGIAR has gone through a rigorous examination over the last few years, where panels, committees, and working groups have analyzed several aspects of the system. These included the system's vision, research agenda, governance, financing, and internal structure. Some major adjustments have been made in the structure of the center system (such as the merger of ILCA and ILRAD into ILRI, and the administration of INIBAP's program through IPGRI.) Other changes are being

introduced as a part of the renewal program.

The OC considers that it may be counterproductive to mount a system review while the CGIAR is undergoing reform. The Committee shall keep a watching brief on the reform process and its impact on the system and periodically revisit the question of the timeliness of a system review.

CIS Procedures. At the request of the Chair of the Candidate Information Service (CIS) Panel, the OC examined the CIS policy of not registering persons over a certain age who have had no prior involvement with the CGIAR. The OC considers the current policy appropriate.

ICLARM. The OC reviewed recent developments in ICLARM. It was pleased with the progress ICLARM made in strengthening its governance and leadership capacity. Regarding the offer of research facilities by the Government of Egypt, the Committee concurred with the cautious approach being followed by the ICLARM Board.

## 5. Food Security Summit

The Committee was pleased to note that preparations for FAO's Food Security Summit have considerably advanced. It urges that the CGIAR, as a system, should make a contribution to the Summit. There are several recent or ongoing CGIAR initiatives which can form the basis of a CGIAR submission to the Summit (e.g., the IFPRI 2020 initiative; the work of the CGIAR task forces on sustainability and ecoregional approaches to research, and the CGIAR Committee on Genetic Resources; the vision study; the new TAC study on priorities and strategies; and the CGIAR's research agenda). Given the richness and diversity of these sources, there may be a need to form an appropriate

systemwide mechanism for compiling a CGIAR view for submission to the Summit.

The Committee suggests that Chairman Serageldin contact the Director General of FAO about the role the CGIAR could play in the Summit.

## 6. Future Priorities of the OC

The Oversight Committee is an instrument of the Consultative Group. As such, the Committee's work program and priorities are defined by the concerns of the Group. The Committee, therefore, welcomes suggestions about its future work program.

The OC proposes to maintain, over the next year, the high priority that had been assigned to two areas:

- strengthening partnership with NARS; and,
- system structure and governance.

The first of these will require a long-term sustained effort. The CGIAR has taken some positive initial steps, but these are mostly of an exploratory nature. The Committee sees a strong need in monitoring the system's progress in this area, including progress in assisting NARS to improve their interaction with their own constituencies.

The second is an area where the Oversight Committee plays a continuous oversight role. The CGIAR's current approach to adjustment of the system is a piecemeal one, based on stripe reviews and other sequential examinations of aspects of the system. The OC sees a need to assess the outcome of the recent structural changes, before the system decides to initiate similar structural changes. Also, a system review might provide a better strategic context to analysis of structural alternatives than the piecemeal approach.

The OC plans to solicit, in a systematic fashion, the views of the CGIAR community on its own work program priorities, as was done when the Committee was established two years ago.

## 7. Internal Matters

Chairmanship. The Committee re-elected Paul Egger as Chairman for a third year for 1995-96. The Chairman to succeed Egger for 1996-97 will be identified as Chair-designate prior to MTM96. [The Chair's (and members') terms start at the conclusion of a CGIAR Mid-Term Meeting.]

Departing Members. The Committee extended its appreciation to departing members Vir Chopra (in absentia) and Henri Carsalade for their valuable contributions to the inaugural Committee. Henri Carsalade provided an exit statement, including suggestions for improvement of OC operations, for which the OC is grateful. A similar exit statement will be sought from Vir Chopra.

Briefing of New Members. The Committee asked its Secretary to provide a full set of briefing materials to the new Committee members being appointed by the CGIAR. [The CGIAR subsequently appointed Messrs. Manuel Lantin

(Philippines) and Cyrus Ndiritu (Kenya) as the new members of the Committee.]

Assessment of the Committee's Role and Operations. The Committee agreed to conduct both a self assessment and external assessment of its role and performance. The self assessment will be conducted with the aid of a checklist. The external assessment will involve seeking the views of the Committee's constituency about the OC's past performance and the priorities of its future work program.

The Committee adopted the following assessment schedule:

- A checklist for self assessment will be prepared, an internal survey will be conducted using the checklist, and results discussed at the 9th meeting.
- A questionnaire survey will be conducted of the OC's constituency about the past performance and future priorities of the Committee. Results will be discussed at the 10th meeting.
- A work program for the next two years will be prepared at the 10th meeting.