From: The Secretariat 

September 19, 1991


The report of an interim management review of ICARDA is attached for your consideration. Also attached are the draft response of ICARDA's Board and management, and the Executive Secretary's letter transmitting the review report.

The report is not formally scheduled for discussion under a separate agenda item at the International Centers Week. Instead, members are encouraged to raise questions, if any, at the time of ICARDA's center presentation to the CGIAR.

Attachments

Distribution

CGIAR Members
Center Board Chairmen
Center Directors
TAC Chairman
TAC Members
TAC Secretariat
September 19, 1991

Mr. Wilfried P. Thalwitz
Chairman of the Consultative Group on
International Agricultural Research
The World Bank
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433

Dear Mr. Thalwitz:

I am pleased to submit to you for consideration by the CGIAR the report of the Interim Management Review of ICARDA. This follow-up review was requested by the CGIAR during its discussion of ICARDA’s Second EMR at ICW88.

The panel finds ICARDA’s management to be greatly improved since 1988. The recommendations of the 1988 EMR have largely been implemented, thanks to concerted efforts of ICARDA’s Board, Director General, and senior management. The panel sees no need for ICARDA to send further monitoring reports to the CGIAR; and recommends that in light of the improvements made in center management, ICARDA shift its emphasis to research and the broadening of its funding base. It fully endorses ICARDA’s efforts to achieve full funding of its TAC-approved Medium-Term Plan.

The draft response from ICARDA’s Board and Management is also enclosed. In this, ICARDA accepts the panel’s report in its entirety, and intends to use the report’s conclusions and recommendations for making further improvements, as needed. In view of the positive report of the panel and the Center’s encouraging response to it, I recommend that the CGIAR endorse the recommendations of this Interim Management Review and commend ICARDA’s board and management for the significant improvements made in overall center management over the last three years. No further action by the CGIAR is envisaged at this point as ICARDA’s next regular external review is scheduled for 1993.

Given the report’s overall tone, there also appears to be no need for a full discussion by the CGIAR of this report and ICARDA’s draft response to it as a separate agenda item during the ICW. Members wishing to raise questions about or arising from the Interim Review will still have an opportunity to do so during the discussion of ICARDA’s presentation to the CGIAR.
Finally, the Group owes a debt of gratitude to Professor John Dillon, Chairman of ICARDA’s 1988 EMR panel, for revisiting the Center for the present review, and to Dr. Paramjit Sachdeva for serving on the interim review panel. They have provided a succinct yet comprehensive assessment of the progress made by ICARDA in implementing the 1988 EMR recommendations. Reflecting the review’s interim nature, the panel has presented its findings in the format of a long letter, which we welcome.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Alexander von der Osten
Executive Secretary

Enclosures
Dr Alexander von der Osten  
Executive Secretary  
CGIAR  
World Bank  
1818 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20433  
USA  

11 September, 1991  

Dear Dr von der Osten,  


The ICARDA staff, Management and Board were immensely gratified that it was possible for John Dillon, who had led the Center’s Second EMR Panel, to undertake our Mid-term Review and that he was so ably supported by Dr Pammi Sachdeva. This coincidence made it easier to gauge the advances made and their correspondence with the views of the earlier EMR, as well as their conformity with the overall orientations of ICARDA’s Strategy and the specifics of its MIF. We are also indebted to the Panel for their hard work, constructive approach, diligence in checking and ascertaining facts and the frequent briefings they gave on the progress of their mission.

The Panel’s Report has been broadly approving. ICARDA accepts it in its entirety and is prepared to confine its response to this simple statement. What we, therefore, propose to do, is not to challenge the Panel’s findings, but to highlight a few issues in order to clarify ICARDA’s perceptions.

If ICARDA has succeeded in making progress, it is because it took the good advice of the 1988 Panel seriously, studied its contents carefully, and did its best to implement it faithfully. As you know, we, like other sister IARCs, have been working under severe budgetary constraints – currently we are operating on a budget which is only 65% of that in our CG-approved MIF. Nevertheless, we have managed to adhere to the main provisions of both our Strategy and MIF. Naturally, a price had to be paid by slowing expansion both in the content and coverage of certain activities, in stretching implementation over a longer time horizon, and, not least, by careful financial control. Through such measures we have succeeded in maintaining an acceptable level of work and service.

Adjustments dictated by the austerity situation that we are going through underlie some of the weaknesses observed in certain areas. Both the Panel and ICARDA recognise that a legitimate divergence of views can arise in deciding on an optimal package. To cite one example, if the Center is called upon to give up a number of posts because of financial constraints, which are the posts to be cut?.
Such adjustments on the curtailment of activities will always be difficult and ICARDA attempts to make them in ways which maintain the effectiveness of its work. Without going over the record case by case, it would be worthwhile listing some of the considerations that had to be taken into account. At the basis of our decisions was the need to keep a reasonable balance between research and management; between and within programs and among disciplines; between Headquarters and the outreach; and between employment, recurrent and capital costs. Other considerations included urgency factors, the strength of support staff and opportunities for substitution. The difficulty of juggling these and other elements is evident and we doubt that there would be unanimity among those who undertake the task. Through participatory discussion and rigorous analysis, we maintain that, by and large, the Center has moved in the right direction.

We live in a rapidly changing world and in certain areas we might be caught one or two steps behind where we and our mentors would wish us to be. This requires us to constantly monitor our work and adjust it in the context of new situations. We consider the Panel’s Report as an important input in this process. As we have done before, we will study it to glean lessons from its insights and objective observations, fully convinced that it will assist in our continuous search for self-improvement.

While the Panel’s general approval is encouraging to us, we trust that it will also cement the CGIAR’s confidence in ICARDA and attract sustained support for the service which this Center has been effectively giving within and outside its immediate region.

Nasrat R Fadda
Director General

Enrico Porceddu
Chairman, BOT

NRF/hn

Mr. A. von der Osten  
Executive Secretary  
CGIAR Secretariat  
The World Bank  
1818 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20433  
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. von der Osten,

Report of Interim Management Review of ICARDA

By way of this letter, we are pleased to report the findings of our interim management review of ICARDA. This interim review was requested by the CGIAR during its discussion of ICARDA's Second External Management Review at ICW88. The interim review was initially scheduled for early 1991 but the Gulf War caused it to be delayed until September 1991.

As specified in your memorandum of December 17, 1990, "the primary purpose of the interim review is to assess ICARDA's progress in dealing with the recommendations of the 1988 EMR. Therefore, the team is not expected to conduct a comprehensive assessment of ICARDA's management effectiveness as in regular EMRs. Nevertheless, since the recommendations of the 1988 EMR are wide ranging and cover many areas, the panel should not refrain from making suggestions it feels to be important for the future effectiveness of the center, regardless of whether the 1988 EMR had specific recommendations in these areas." It is in this spirit that we conducted our review and, reflecting its interim nature, have preferred to present our findings by writing a letter rather than a formal report. Continuity has been assured by one of us having been a member of the 1988 EMR Panel.

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To carry out the review, we visited ICARDA HQ in Tel Hadya, Syria from September 1 to 11, 1991. As shown by the attached schedule of our visit, we visited all sections of ICARDA at Tel Hadya and spoke with staff at all levels. Anyone who wished to speak with us had the opportunity to do so. As well, we had the opportunity to speak with a variety of out-posted staff and others, including trainees, who were visiting Tel Hadya. The review was fully facilitated in good spirit by ICARDA Management who were totally open and provided all necessary documentation and logistical support, as well as ample opportunity for social interaction with a great number of staff and spouses. For all this we record our thanks most sincerely.

The 1988 EMR was strongly critical of ICARDA. Today, in our assessment, due in no small part to the contribution of the DG, ICARDA's management is greatly improved, indeed transformed. The progress detailed by ICARDA in its six-monthly reports monitoring progress of the implementation of the 1988 EMR recommendations is a reality. A few things remain to be done or could be improved upon but, overall, the recommendations of the 1988 EMR have been implemented. We see no need for further monitoring reports.

From February 1991, for the first time since 1983, ICARDA has in place a full top-management group which is professionally competent and works as a team. Compared to 1988, the Board recognizes its role and responsibility much better, Board-Management relations are excellent, policies and procedures are largely in place, Management manages, ad hocery has gone, the accounts are in proper order, timeliness prevails, the spirit of administration is service to research, international staff are far happier and the center is functioning well. Indicative of all this, as testified to us by staff and outsiders, was the calm competence and functional flexibility with which ICARDA's Management so superbly handled the crisis of the recent Gulf War.

As is apparent from the above, we give ICARDA high marks for the progress made in putting its house in order since the 1988 EMR. Our more detailed appraisal follows. It is presented in the sequence of the chapter headings of the 1988 EMR and ICARDA's response to that Report so as to facilitate cross reference. At the end, looking
ahead, we identify a few priority areas and suggestions for Board and Management consideration. Now that the 1988 EMR recommendations have largely been implemented, we believe that the center's attention can shift more clearly to future needs.

Organizational Culture

We commend the statement of values in ICARDA's Strategy document. Continued action is needed to convert intention to reality. In this area seemingly small things, such as interaction in the cafeteria and on the sporting arena, carry much weight. We were pleased to see such interaction developing and the beginnings of a functioning ICARDA-wide culture.

Legal Status and Governance

We have reviewed the formal documents on ICARDA's legal status but, for want of time, were not able to meet with relevant Government authorities. We accept that the letter from the Syrian Prime Minister's Office, though not legally phrased, provides an adequate basis for continued operation in Syria. After many years of understandable uncertainty, operations in Lebanon and Iran (the other two nations party to ICARDA's establishment) are now being strengthened and further developed. We commend Management's patience and measured response to the fluid situation that has prevailed in the Region.

Likewise, we commend the Board for taking steps to strengthen its performance, including:

- revision of its By-laws and the production of a Board Handbook.
- better arrangement of the Board's standing committees for program, audit, and nominations.
- better use of its Executive Committee and its reconstitution to include standing committee chairpersons.
- the recruitment of new members with experience in research management.
- a more thorough process of nomination to the Board.
- a better organization of members' terms and forward planning to mediate untoward cyclicity in rotation.
- the holding of a self-assessment workshop, facilitated by the CG secretariat, and the introduction of self-assessment as a regular agenda item at its annual meetings.
- a register of the Board's Resolutions.
- the introduction of assessment of the DG's performance as a regular agenda item at its annual meeting.
- the introduction at the end of the Board's formal business meeting of a presentation session at which the Board and Committee chairpersons present to staff a summary of the business covered at their meetings.

While we had no opportunity to see the Board in operation, we were able to review its minutes and meet with the Chairperson and four other members. Based on this review and our discussions with staff, it is clear that the Board has devoted considerable attention to policy issues - especially ICARDA's Strategy, Medium-Term Plan, personnel policies and the financial situation. However, it seems that performance in policy oversight and the contribution of some members could be further improved. Some ongoing consideration of the Board's size and of its standing committees - particularly the size of the Executive Committee - seems warranted. The Board should also consider the introduction of exit presentations by its retiring members. The center's Annual Report should be signed by the Chairperson of the Board as well as the DG.

Research Management

Our impression is that, due to the excellent leadership, dedication and scientific background of the DDG (Research), ICARDA's research effort is proceeding well.

The matrix structure and project-based budgeting system of research management recommended by the 1988 EMR has been accepted in principle by ICARDA. However, they have only been implemented in part. We do not see this as a problem - change has been made where feasible and appropriate, e.g. in
all Special Projects and in some Programs. Both concepts require substantial delegation of program and budgetary authority to lower levels of management and program scientists. The gradual approach taken appears appropriate.

While the DDG (Research) and the Program and Unit leaders have, in principle, the authority to manage their respective activities, in practice many decisions still remain centralized at the DG level. Despite the continued financial austerity that is needed, we believe further devolution of authority for program decisions is possible and needed. This will require some continuing adjustment in the management approaches of the DG and DDG (Research), and improvements in the management systems and skills at the Program and Unit leader levels.

In terms of the unity of research effort, we commend the structural change to bring the ADG (International Cooperation) under the DDG (Research). From discussions with staff from two outreach locations (Lebanon and Jordan) and Program leaders, it is clear that the new structure works well.

Relative to committees, we found the various center-wide user committees to be functioning better and to be viewed more appreciatively by staff than in 1988. Doubtless this is a reflection of the firmer and more transparent policy environment in which the committees now operate. However, perhaps reflecting their use as a safety-valve mechanism, there appears to be a tendency to use the user committees as substitutes for decisive action by responsible managers. The user committees should be sounding boards for establishing policies and guidelines, and for providing feedback. They should not be directly involved in routine decisions that are the prerogative of line management.

Our impression is that the center's Executive Committee (DG, 2 DDGs, and 2 ADGs) functions well via weekly meetings while the Management Committee (DG, 2 DDGs, Dir. of Admin., Dir. of Finance, 4 Program Leaders, and 4 Unit Heads) has not functioned so well - the situation should improve, however, as henceforth it is to follow a regular schedule of monthly meetings. The Training and Research Advisory Committee (TRAC) appears to
function well.

The monthly meeting of the Executive with senior (i.e. RA-II and above) staff under the chairmanship of the DG provides a good forum for two-way communication. Its potential could be further exploited in our view by addressing issues in advance of major policy decisions instead of primarily clarifying announced policies, and by greater receptivity to diverse opinions among staff.

We also see a strong need for such meetings of the Executive with other staff on an occasional basis. Obviously, because of the numbers involved, such meetings would need to be on a departmental or some such basis.

Relative to operational planning and monitoring, the formal processes for medium-term planning, annual programming and budgeting, and periodic reporting to Management, Board, and TAC are being followed. However, due to major shortfalls between approved and actual funding, the planning (as also in other CG centers) has become somewhat ritualistic. In addition, frequent adjustments in plans caused by funding constraints have tended to concentrate decision making in the person of the DG. To some extent this is both unavoidable and unfortunate. Monitoring of activities is regular, but monitoring of results and impact are more problematic. Given ICARDA's broad mandate, range of activities and partnership with NARS, no simple solution to this problem is possible.

**Operations Management**

We commend the Board and Management for establishing the post of DDG (Operations), and for their choice of the incumbent. His administrative experience and judgement have been extremely valuable in establishing systematic policies and streamlining operations. He also serves as Board Secretary. Although the 1988 EMR recommended a separate position of Assistant to the DG for services to the Board and donor relations, the present system is working well and we see no need for changing it. In the future, however, should the position of DDG (Operations) be phased out (as well might occur in a few years when the incumbent
retires and the Directors of Finance and Administration have fuller experience of ICARDA and the CG System), the sharing of responsibilities among the executive will need to be re-visited.

The position of ADG (Government Liaison) continues at Tel Hadya. Since 1990 it has been filled by a former host-country nominee on the Board. He has played a valuable role in further consolidating ICARDA's good relations with the Government of Syria and in expediting the center's business with relevant Government Departments.

Financial Management

Despite efforts by Management and Board, due to factors beyond the center's control, the core funding base remains largely unchanged. Some new possibilities, particularly from Gulf countries, are being actively pursued. In view of the generally constrained funding situation for the CGIAR as a whole, and for ICARDA in particular, a more vigorous effort - perhaps by the DG and a Board sub-committee for fund raising - might be useful (though in saying this we realize we run the risk of teaching mother to suck eggs). Special project funding has been easier to obtain, and is welcome so long as it continues to support the TAC-approved strategy and Medium-Term Plan.

We commend the Management and Board for keeping a close watch on the so-called Lebanese Window. After an appropriate stopping of this perfectly legal currency-exchange mechanism in early 1989, the Board approved its re-use again in mid-1990 to obtain Syrian Lira sufficient to cover non-salary expenditures inside Syria. This measure resulted in additional income to ICARDA equivalent to US$1.2 m in 1990.

ICARDA is rightly emphasizing cost control rather than cost accounting. The external auditors have annually reviewed the center's accounts and certified them as correct according to internationally accepted principles and standards.

The Finance Department produces regular financial and accounting reports for various levels of management. These provide relevant and useful data on a timely basis. However, ICARDA's management accounting system is presently
handicapped by an outdated central computer system and associated software. Recognizing this problem, Management has recently reviewed ICARDA's overall computing needs with the help of an external consultant and its own Computer Services Committee. We commend Management for its decision to introduce the much needed new system as speedily as possible.

The 1988 EMR suggested an imprest-account system be introduced for all outreach locations. This has been done and is reported to work very well.

Although we were not able to examine the center's internal control system in depth, we believe the external auditors and the Board's Audit Committee are taking due care in monitoring ICARDA's financial control system. In addition, the recently appointed internal auditor is planning to make periodic spot checks.

ICARDA overcame the backlog in registration of its fixed assets in 1990. This facilitated the center's introduction of depreciation accounting as required by a recent change to the accounting standards for non-profit organizations. Some minor problems of verification and checking remain but these are being followed up.

The relationship between the Purchasing and Supplies Department (PSD) and the Finance Department is good. Their liaison for inventory control appears satisfactory. However, shifting of the responsibility for customs clearance from PSD to the Government Liaison Office is currently under consideration. Should this change be made, we believe Management will need to monitor the efficacy of the new arrangement given the close functional links that, prima facie, appear to exist between the purchase, delivery, customs clearance, and receipt of items.

We discovered no problems of cash or investment management for which the center could be blamed. However, despite its having had several discussions on the topic, the ICARDA Board has still not formally promulgated an investment policy for the center. We suggest this be done as soon as possible. The policy statements of other CG centers would provide a guide.
A qualified internal auditor was appointed in January 1991 with responsibility for financial and operational auditing. He reports monthly and whenever necessary to the DG and quarterly to the Board's Audit Committee (which reviewed his audit plan for 1991). The internal auditor has helped identify some gaps in policies. However, thus far he has not undertaken any significant audit work per se. We suggest the Board identify an important concern — such as implementation of the personnel policies introduced in early 1989 — and, along with the DG, decide on the terms of reference for the internal auditor to undertake a clearly focused operational audit of key aspects of policy implementation. The task should, of course, be closely coordinated with the responsible managers, such as the DDG (Operations) or Director of Administration. In addition, periodic financial auditing should be undertaken as planned.

The Board established its Audit Committee in May 1988. The committee has met regularly since then. It maintains close contact with the center's external and internal auditors and has been responsive to the Board's concerns. Now that ICARDA's policies are largely systematized, the Audit Committee could begin to play a larger role in helping the Board discharge its oversight and monitoring functions.

Human Resource Management

We commend the Management and Board for having promulgated ICARDA's new personnel policies in January 1989. The DG and DDG (Operations) have provided the much needed leadership to overcome the problems of ad hocism in the personnel area identified by the 1988 EMR. ICARDA staff, we found, were generally appreciative of the manner in which the task was undertaken and the firmness with which some of the difficult issues have been resolved.

We were not able to undertake a comprehensive assessment of ICARDA's personnel policies. Time was too short. Our impression, however, is that although most of the policies in the 1989 manual appear sound and generally conform with the policies of other CG centers, a few aspects may need further refinement or adjustment in the light of the experience gained during the last two years or so. In particular, there may be scope within the
grievance procedures for some intermediate appeal mechanism (perhaps via an independent Grievances Committee) rather than the seemingly all-too-direct complainant/Head/DG mechanism currently in place.

Based on our discussions with a cross section of managers and staff (both international and regional), it appears that better communication of policy intent and substance (especially in the personnel area) is needed at all levels of the center. To alleviate present and potential misunderstandings and misgivings on policies and procedures, a concerted effort by Management is urgently needed. The DDG (Operations) and the Director of Administration, as well as Program Leaders and the Personnel Officer, should play a more active role in bridging this communication gap, not least so that the direct role and burden of the DG could be reduced.

Relative to job categories, new salary grades (each with several steps) were introduced for regional staff in January 1989 and revised in June 1990. These are periodically reviewed in comparison with the UNDP and other relevant organizations in Syria. Analogous comparative studies are also made periodically relative to international staff salaries and benefits which were also reviewed in 1990. ICARDA is committed to remaining a good employer - though not necessarily the most generous, given its present and likely financial constraints. We commend the Board and Management for keeping a close eye on the affordability of its salary and benefits packages while at the same time not sacrificing competitiveness in the international and regional labor markets in which ICARDA operates.

As well as a comparator-based study of regional staff salaries and benefits, the Director of Administration (DOA) is also currently undertaking a much needed center-wide job-equivalence study which is projected for completion in October 1991. This involves specification and analysis of the organization charts of all departments, programs, and units, as well as of updated descriptions of all jobs at ICARDA. Once the equivalence of various jobs has been established, it is expected that the present placement of individual staff members in jobs and their salary levels will be examined, and possible
anomalies will be rectified.

Although the various departments, programs and units have helped produce the updated organograms and job descriptions, the equivalence study is otherwise being undertaken by the DOA himself in addition to his many other duties. We suggest the staffing and time frame of the study be urgently reviewed so that the necessary resources for its expeditious completion are made available.

As it comes to fruition, the study will necessarily require the active participation of senior managers, program leaders, unit heads, the international and regional staff associations, the personnel office, and many individual scientists and other staff. To ensure that this participation is forthcoming, and to tackle the many difficult issues that will inevitably arise in implementation of such a comprehensive review, a steering committee composed of the DDG (Operations) (Chair), DDC (Research), DOA, and DOF is suggested. This committee could be served by the Personnel Officer as secretary, could report regularly to the DC, and could liaise, as needed, with the two staff associations. Periodic progress reports could also be presented to the Board's Executive Committee so that its guidance is obtained on important issues affecting the staff in general or specific categories in particular.

We commend Management for establishing and implementing the new pay scales according to sound principles of salary administration. By and large (but with the proviso that job-equivalence anomalies are still to be assessed), the new pay scales seem to have been implemented in an equitable and consistent manner. The Board has been involved in key policy decisions and has steered clear of involvement in individual cases. The process and the results are a welcome improvement over the pre-1988 years.

The 1988 EMR's strong recommendation to appoint an internationally recruited P-level human resources professional to head the Personnel Unit has not yet been implemented. In view of the facts that: (a) nearly two-thirds of ICARDA's budget is spent on staff; (b) a major study of personnel is underway; (c) the Personnel Unit is inadequately staffed to provide a comprehensive professional service to ICARDA's Management and staff; and (d)
many of the individual complaints brought to our attention could be the result of insufficient access, communication or understanding of center-wide issues, we believe Management's proposal to add a junior professional (as assistant to the Personnel Officer) would not adequately address ICARDA's present and future needs in the area of human resource management. Akin to the 1988 EMR, we strongly recommend that a P- or RAIII-level professional in human resource management be hired to head the Personnel Unit. This should, in our view, be treated as an urgent matter and should be implemented (if necessary) even at the cost of a P- or RAIII-level scientific position.

Some of the individual concerns brought to our attention by staff relate to the substance of the center's personnel policies. For example, the reduction of the retirement age from 65 to 60 years; the inflexible withdrawal rule of the savings scheme for regional staff; the introduction of long waiting periods or new barriers for promotion of regional staff; the hiring of daily labor for years without any great chance of their getting a regular-staff contract; and the perceived continual gradual erosion and consequent uncertainty of benefits for regional staff. Other issues relate to policy implementation, e.g. perceptions or allegations of inequities, inconsistencies in such matters as hiring, grading and salary determination, promotions and provision of training opportunities. A third category relates to perceived difficulties in getting individual grievances satisfactorily listened to or speedily adjudicated; the apparent lack of delegation for "routine" personnel decisions from the DG to functional managers; and the perceived "distance" between senior management and lower level staff. All too often we found regional staff to have a perception that Management's attitude was "If you don't like ICARDA, go elsewhere". Given the value of the center's investment in its staff, this perception needs correction.

We are unable to comment on the above issues in detail. Nor do we have any doubt that the situation has improved in many aspects since 1988. Nonetheless, we are concerned that the center's institutional mechanisms for anticipating and dealing with such issues appear to be rather weak. More effective and systematic communication, counselling and grievance resolution could help, as
could the wider sharing of responsibility for "people management". For this, line managers probably need to improve their skills in the human side of organization and management, and the Personnel Unit's functions and approach need to be widened. It is also in this context that we recommend a P- or RAIII-level professional be appointed as Personnel Manager.

The 1988 EMR also strongly recommended improvements in such matters as organization, manning tables, job classification and placement, contract duration, recruitment, transfers, appraisal, promotion, etc. We commend the ICARDA Board and Management for the progress made in many of these areas. However, as noted above, we believe that further improvements are needed. Policies and procedures in the personnel area have, in general, become more transparent, objective and systematic. Too, the flexibility that ICARDA's Management wishes to retain is understandable in the light of continuing funding shortfalls and uncertainties. Nevertheless, we believe a major task of further improving personnel practices still lies ahead. We hope that Management will continue its efforts in this important area.

ICARDA appears to have improved its housing policies and procedures, and the Housing Committee provides regular oversight over routine decisions. Despite these changes, further improvement appears warranted in such matters as locating suitable housing for international staff and negotiating reasonable contract terms. Although we would not expect immediate improvement to be possible in all these areas, continued attention by the DOA and the Housing Committee is clearly needed. Likewise, despite the introduction of new contract arrangements for the provision of air travel services, this area would still seem to need attention.

We commend the ICARDA and School Management for improvements made in the School's curriculum, facilities and financing. The School is now providing a full secondary education, is working toward full international accreditation, and is hopeful that its fee revenue will soon cover its operational costs. At the same time, the School is in urgent need of additional classroom and laboratory facilities. This is a problem which Management and the Board will need to address,
especially if lack of such additional facilities proves an impediment to full accreditation.

ICARDA also provides a small subsidy for a nursery for the pre-school children of Aleppo-based regional staff. This nursery is facing a major space and financial constraint. It was argued to us by a spokesperson for the nursery that ICARDA should give consideration to further assisting this facility. Apart from this matter, we encountered no other significant issues of a gender-related nature.

ICARDA has revised its earlier Vehicles policy and has effectively tightened its controls to prevent misuse. It has reviewed the 1988 EMR suggestion for a separate bus service for more senior staff and considers it infeasible on financial and other grounds. Although we have not gone into the details of the vehicle situation, we have no suggestions for change to the present policies.

We applaud ICARDA’s ongoing usage of management short-courses to improve the skills of senior managers. However, training in other specialized areas (such as computers or budgeting) is also needed, especially for lower levels of managers and for certain categories of staff (such as Unit heads, computer services staff, secretaries, etc.). We suggest ICARDA continue to invest in this work-related training because the long-term benefits of skill upgrading can often far exceed the immediate costs, not to mention the benefits achieved through enhanced institutional loyalty. Furthermore, a more systematic training and career development approach appears warranted, based on the preponing (i.e. prioritization - if the reader prefers American English) of training-needs assessments of individuals or staff categories. Such an approach will be facilitated by completion of the job-equivalence study currently underway.

General Administration

The Purchasing and Supplies Department (PSD) continues to provide services that are highly regarded by its users. Coordination with the Finance and the various Program departments appears good. Our only suggestion, noted earlier, is that
the movement of Customs clearance work out of PSD, should it occur, may need to be reconsidered if the change does not work well.

The reorganized Physical Plant Department (PPD) appears to be working well. We believe the regrouping of activities into three services - Workshops, Facilities Management, and Engineering Services - will lead to more efficient and cost-effective operations.

While ICARDA has taken some small steps in the safety-awareness area, it has not yet implemented a proper safety program. We reiterate the 1988 EMR recommendation that a qualified person be designated as safety officer with responsibility for the implementation of an active safety-awareness program.

ICARDA's clinic is capable of providing only first aid and the consultant doctor does not keep fixed hours at Tel Hadya. Thus far no serious emergency appears to have arisen to test the medical unit fully. Nonetheless, Management may wish to assess the adequacy of the unit for handling urgent cases should they arise.

The cafeteria at Tel Hadya is now functioning well - we received no complaints and numerous good reports on its operation.

The existing cleaning contract finishes this year. Bids for a new contract have been obtained. There were some hiccups in the bidding process but we understand the matter is now sorted out.

The trainee housing in Aleppo is reasonably good. However, when the facilities are full, trainees experience some crowding. We came across some lacunae in orientation and program follow-up for longer-term trainees. The Training Unit and DOA are aware of these problems and we have been assured of their rectification.

The School Committee still functions under ICARDA Management rather than as an autonomous board. The arrangement is reported to work reasonably well. The Committee is chaired by the DDG (Research) and the DOA and DOF are members. Administrative services are provided by ICARDA for keeping financial records and purchasing supplies and equipment. The School is obviously well run and
of excellent standard. We came across no major problems except, as noted earlier, the need for more space.

ICARDA has recently reviewed its insurance policies and coverage under a program of periodic review. We have no suggestions for improvement on this front.

Property disposal is governed by Syrian Government regulations. It remains a chronic problem. Apparently, not much obsolescent property has actually been disposed of in recent years. The ADG (Government Liaison) is making a concerted effort to effect a satisfactory solution.

Information Management

Formal reporting to Management and the Board is regular, timely, pertinent and useful. Communication among senior management is open and productive. Communication with the rest of the center is less efficient. A more systematic approach to nurturing open two-way communication is needed.

The Communication, Documentation and Information Services Unit (CODIS, formerly STIP) and its Advisory Committee (CODIAC) appear to be functioning reasonably well though some problems of overlapping responsibilities between the two were brought to our attention. A review of the publications committee structure is perhaps needed. Relative to publications by the center, two matters particularly impressed us. First, the success of the DDG (Research) in significantly improving the output of refereed journal articles from the center and, second, the excellent format and presentation of ICARDA's 1989 Annual Report.

It was pleasing to find that ICARDA has at last been able to install a fax. Although there is still difficulty in securing Government permission for linkage to CGNET and E-mail, it appears that the Government is becoming more responsive to ICARDA's communication and information processing needs as an international center for scientific research. The ADG (Government Liaison) is actively pursuing solutions to these problems. We are cautiously optimistic of their resolution.
The Computer Committee is chaired by the DDG (Operations) while the Computer Services Unit reports to the DDG (Research). This arrangement seems to work satisfactorily. A major review of ICARDA's computing environment and needs has recently been carried out, as noted earlier. We expect the situation will improve substantially in the next few years as Management proceeds with its planned upgrading of the center's computer capability with the introduction of new equipment, networking, etc. If this does not occur, ICARDA's performance will be greatly impeded.

The Computer Services Unit has been under severe stress for the past few years due to problems of staffing, lack of training opportunities in the face of rapid technological advance, leadership vacancies, and equipment and software obsolescence. The staff of the Unit feel besieged. Their morale at present is not high even though they continue to work hard under difficult circumstances. The Management is hoping for a turnaround in the near future when a new Unit head is appointed, new up-to-date equipment and software are purchased, and staffing is improved through new recruitment and the further training of existing staff. In our view this is a priority area for on-going staff training so as to ensure that the staff of the Computing Unit stay abreast of the fast-moving technological developments in their field. Individual scientists with their self-taught PC skills, while essential, are no substitute for computer professionals in the context of ICARDA. We urge continuing and substantive effort to ensure the efficacy of the Computer Unit.

Government security regulations continue to cause some delays in the installation of computer hardware and software. However, we are optimistic that the efforts of the ADG (Government Liaison) will lead to resolution of these difficulties. Relative to 1988 when it had only 15 or so PCs, the center now has 150 with more to come.

From our brief interaction with the center's Library, we gained the impression of an effective professional service. There were no complaints from staff about the Library.
Addressing Future Needs

ICARDA's Strategy and Medium-Term Plan run through 1994. The Medium-Term Plan is appropriately titled "Consolidation and Change". The initial years 1990-91 have been ones of consolidation of the substantial progress made since 1988. Now the time for preparing for future changes is approaching.

These changes, in response to evolving environmental conditions in all their relevant dimensions, necessarily involve a reassessment and rethinking of ICARDA's Strategy. In addition, and more immediately, the next External Program and Management Review is scheduled for August-September 1993. Concomitantly, the DG's present term of office ends in March 1993. These are all matters to which the Board is giving serious attention.

ICARDA's management structure, policies and operations are now in good shape. The problems of the past have largely been successfully overcome. Accordingly, relative to Management, it would seem appropriate for the emphasis to shift somewhat to concentration on the center's research and the broadening of its funding base.

In the intervening years before the 1993 External Review and the 1993-94 reformulation of ICARDA's Strategy, we expect the recently appointed Directors of Administration and Finance to have fully established themselves. Likewise, the new management systems and procedures will have been institutionalized. The DDG (Operations) role will be still crucial during the 1993 review period, after which it might be possible to reduce the administrative levels between the administrative directors (of Finance and Administration) and the DG.

Whatever the top management structure selected, we believe it important for at least one of the top managers (DG, DDGs, ADGs) to be from the WANA region. In this context we see it as fully appropriate that ICARDA's Board approves the appointment of all senior managers of Director-level and above. This provision of the center's personnel policies helps ensure that an appropriate mix of talent, experience and socio-cultural background is always present in the top management team.
In closing this lucubration, we are fully satisfied that, from a management perspective, ICARDA has achieved a remarkable turnaround in the past few years. We highly commend the Board and Management for their success and are confident that the few residual problems can be satisfactorily overcome. The WANA region needs ICARDA and ICARDA is well responding to that need. We fully endorse the center's efforts to achieve full funding of its TAC-approved Medium-Term Plan.

Yours sincerely,

John L. Dillon

Paramjit S. Sachdeva

attach.

cc: Dr. E. Porceddu, Chairperson, BOT.
    Dr. N.R. Fadda, DG.

JD:pd
Schedule of ICARDA Interim Management Review  
Dr. John Dillon and Dr. Pammi Sachdeva  
1-11 September 1991

Sunday 1 September  
19.00 Arrival Pullman Shahba Hotel

Monday 2 September  
07.00 Departure Hotel to Tel Hadya  
08.30-10.15 Meeting with Dr. N.Fadda, DG  
10.15-11.00 Meeting with Mr.J.Noisette, Dir.of Finance  
11.00-12.00 Meeting with Dr.Aart van Schoonhoven, DDG (Research)  
12.00-12.30 Meeting with Mr.J. McMahon, DDG (Ops)  
12.30-13.30 LUNCH  
13.30-15.30 Meeting with Mr.T.Duplock, Dir.of Admin.  
16.00 Departure Tel Hadya to Hotel  
19.30-21.30 DINNER (Dr.Fadda’s Residence)

Tuesday 3 September  
08.00 Departure Hotel to Tel Hadya  
08.30-10.30 Visit to Food Legume Program  
10.30-11.30 Visit to Genetic Resource Unit  
11.30-12.30 Meeting with Internal Auditor  
12.30-13.30 LUNCH  
13.30-15.30 Visit to Cereals Program  
15.30-17.00 Visit to Computer Section  
17.30 Departure Tel Hadya to Hotel

Wednesday 4 September  
08.00 Departure Hotel to Tel Hadya  
08.30-09.30 Meeting with Miss L.Rashed, Personnel Officer  
09.30-10.30 Visit to CODIS  
10.30-11.00 Visit to the Clinic  
11.00-13.00 Visit to Pasture, Forage & Livestock Program  
13.00-14.00 LUNCH (with Regional Staff Committee)  
14.00-14.30 Meeting with Terbol Staff  
14.30-15.15 Visit to Training Section  
15.30-17.30 Meeting with DG, DDGs, DoA, DoF  
17.30 Departure Tel Hadya to Hotel  
19.30-21.30 DINNER (Dr. Schoonhoven’s Residence)

Thursday 5 September  
08.00 Departure Hotel to Tel Hadya  
08.30-10.00 Visit to Purchasing and Supplies Department  
10.00-11.00 Visit to Station Operations  
Facilities Management Unit (with Mr Duplock)  
11.00-13.00 Visit to Farm Resource Management Program  
13.00-14.00 LUNCH (with Senior Staff Association)  
14.30-15.30 Visit to ICARDA International School  
15.30-16.30 Visit to Sports Club Facilities and meeting  
with Committee Members  
16.30-18.00 Visit to Trainees’ Apartments
Friday 6 September - Preparation of Report
19.30-21.30 DINNER (Mr. McMahon’s Residence)

Saturday 7 September - Preparation of Report
12.00-15.00 LUNCH (Dr. Nordblom’s Residence)

Sunday 8 September - Preparation of Report
19.30-21.30 BOT Reception (Dr. Fadda’s Residence)

Monday 9 September - Preparation of Report
10.30 Departure Hotel to Tel Hadya
11.00-11.30 Visit to Library
11.30-12.00 Meeting with Chairperson BOT, Dr. E. Porceddu
12.00-12.30 Meeting with Vice-Chairperson BOT, Dr. N. Demir
12.30-13.00 Meeting with BOT Member, Sir R. Kiley
13.00-14.00 LUNCH (with BOT Members)

Tuesday 10 September - Submission of Draft Report
10.00 Departure Hotel to Tel Hadya
11.00-12.30 Meeting with DG and BOT Members
12.30-13.30 LUNCH
13.30-14.30 Meeting with DDG (Ops) and DDG (Research)
19.30-21.30 RECEPTION (Dr. Fadda’s Residence)

Wednesday 11 September
08.00 Departure Hotel to Tel Hadya
10.00-12.00 Presentation of Report to Chairperson, Senior Board Members, ICARDA Management, Program Leaders and Unit Heads
12.30-14.00 LUNCH
15.00 Departure to Damascus
Accommodation at Meridien Hotel

Thursday 12 September
07.45 Departure Damascus to Frankfurt via LH 669