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Actions Taken to Address ISPC and FC 'Must-haves' for CRP 3.6

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Submitted by:
ISPC

Actions Taken to Address ISPC and FC ‘Must-haves’ for CRP 3.6 Dryland Cereals

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ISPC 1. Provide an improved analysis and presentation of the target populations who can realistically be expected to benefit from the CRP 3.6 research.

Data has been assembled and presented in Appendix 2 in new tables (Tables 4 and 5), which provides information for each region regarding area, production, productivity and target population details by country and crop. Using this data, we have selected a set of 17 Target Countries (see Table 4). The goal over the first three years of the CRP will be to focus the R4D efforts on these countries. We recognize that there are bilateral projects and R4D efforts currently underway in other countries in each region, and that these efforts must continue through the life of the existing projects. Our prior commitments make it essential that we ensure R4D progress in these countries, and that we sustain this existing work as the CRP increasingly shifts its focus to its target countries.

ISPC 2. Justify and prioritize better the proposed work plans on a crop-specific basis; pool research efforts in identified areas across two or more of the dryland cereals for greater efficiency.

To provide a better overview of the proposed work plans under each Strategic Objective, a new table (Table 6) has been included in the section on Strategic Objectives that indicates the priority activities for each SO output. These are presented by crop and/or across crops, to indicate across-crop synergies. These are our highest priority activities for the initial 3-year period of the CRP, and have been determined based on discussions with partners and analysis of trends and constraints during the development of the proposal. One role of the Research Management Team (RMT) will be to monitor progress and use the results produced, especially by SO 1, to evaluate whether and how priorities should be altered. Further refinement of each work plan will be done as one of our first steps once the CRP is approved for implementation.

ISPC 3. Reduce the scope of research in terms of crops and target areas when likely effectiveness of the research at scale cannot be demonstrated.

We believe that the four dryland cereals included in CRP 3.6 are extremely important to the poor in our target regions and countries, especially those living under extreme conditions. These cereals are often the only crops that such farmers can grow, and rural household food security rests almost exclusively on their production. To provide more clarity on the actual scope of the program, we have disaggregated target areas by country; this has the added benefit of revealing the CRP's alignment with similar country-based efforts by other major research and donor organizations. We have used an area of 0.5 M hectares as a threshold for selecting target countries. Some countries, such as Chad, have not been included even though they approach or exceed this area threshold, as we believe achieving meaningful progress in them will be difficult for the foreseeable future. We also recognize that more detail is needed regarding the potential for progress in Sudan and South Sudan, given the recent split of the country. SO 1 will focus during the first year on obtaining better data and detail regarding needs and opportunities in these countries. It will also develop better data for Nigeria, a country for which we believe the current figures are not accurate (though we expect that Nigeria will remain a target country).

ISPC 4. Do an analysis of current work to identify barriers to adoption and shifting to new areas of innovative research and approaches to overcome these barriers.

We have included additional analysis of the barriers to adoption and innovative approaches by region and crop in Appendix 2.

ISPC 5. Present new and innovative approaches to overcome constraints to adoption of the range of technologies by the poor and vulnerable, particularly in Africa, and to increase the likelihood of impacts on their livelihoods.

Based on the analysis of crop trends and barriers to adoption in Appendix 2 (in response to ISPC 4, above), we have enhanced the section on innovations to indicate how opportunities and strategies provided by CRP 3.6 will address priority constraints to adoption.

ISPC 6. Present realistic and research-specific impact pathways that carefully address the conditioning factors and incorporate feedback loops.

Revised impact pathways diagrams and associated text are included in the revised proposal. These now indicate feedback loops and factors and actors required for success along the pathway. We recognize that these remain at a high conceptual level; however, we feel that providing more detailed pathways and descriptions would require extensive effort as essentially each product/technology/innovation would need a separate and detailed pathway. We will devote time and effort to developing such details as the CRP is implemented, as these would best be developed with our many partners.

ISPC 7. Show better integration of CRP3.6 with CRP1.1 (Dryland Systems), as well as justification for their separate identities or merger; there needs to be a plan to monitor the impact pathways for CRP 3.6 cereals research drawing lessons from both CRPs.

We have included additional details regarding linkages and interactions between CRP 3.6 and CRP 1.1 in the section on Linkages with Other CRPs. We indicate several areas where the two CRPs will work together, both in priority setting and in R4D. Equally important, we indicate that CRP 3.6 will include representatives from CRP 1.1 in at least semi-annual RMT meetings. Given that ICARDA and ICRISAT are major players in both CRPs, ample opportunities for scientist interactions will occur within/between the Centers. We believe it is best to maintain the CRPs separately. CRP 1.1 is focused on systems research in a set of anchor regions, while CRP 3.6 will conduct research that produces solutions/products required to address constraints in these regions (and beyond). CRP 1.1 will be evaluating a number of crop production technologies across several crops (beyond those included under CRP 3.6); only a subset of these technologies will pertain to CRP 3.6. Clearly, CRP 1.1 will need to interact closely with almost all of the CRP 3s, not just CRP 3.6, and it is logical therefore to maintain them as separate but closely linked initiatives.

ISPC 8. Streamline the governance and management structure providing for independence in decision making, monitoring and evaluation: (i) structure and resource the Advisory Panel with formal oversight by the Lead Center Board; (ii) address redundancies in the Steering Committee and the Program Management Team; (iii) strengthen the role and authority of the CRP Director; and (iv) clarify and adequately resource the CRP management functions (including communications, resource mobilization, and program evaluation).

We have fully revised the proposed governance and management structure to address each of the above concerns. The Advisory Panel is designated as an independent R4D Advisory Committee that provides formal feedback to the Lead Center Governing Board and the RMT. Membership is defined in its Terms of Reference. A budget is provided to cover costs of meetings and communications. We removed the Steering Committee, and the CRP Director and the RMT now report to the Lead Center Director General, with the Lead Center Governing Board having responsibility for overall governance. The role and authority of the CRP Director has been strengthened, as indicated in the position's specific Terms of Reference. Details regarding the staffing of the Program Management Unit are provided. The budget (as shown in the Budget section) indicates the funds allocated for the Director, Program Management Unit, Strategic Objective Coordinators, and R4D Advisory Committee.

FC 1. Strengthen the case for this CRP at two levels - explaining why CGIAR and its partners must invest in dry land cereals and why they should invest through *a specific CRP* dedicated to these dry land cereals as opposed to integrating these activities in other CRPs.

We address these concerns in our responses to ISPC 'must haves' 1–4.

FC 2. Greater consideration should be given to the potential of local innovation to inspire novel research, and impact pathways should be significantly improved.

CRP 3.6 includes a number of R4D approaches that stimulate and draw upon local innovations, such as the farmer participatory varietal selection and farmer-based field schools. These provide excellent opportunities to capture ideas and innovations at the local community level, and incorporate them into R4D planning and implementation. These approaches are highlighted under the relevant SO both in the main proposal and in Appendix 4.

FC 3. Provide further attention to Monitoring and Evaluation system.

As indicated in the M&E section, we will fully adopt and abide by the results of the Consortium study on M&E for the CRPs once it has been completed and released later in 2012. We have used examples from other CRPs as a model to present an overall strategy and indicated the types of indicators that we believe would be useful in conducting effective M&E. Monitoring and evaluation will comprise a major role of the RMT, with help from the R4D Advisory Committee and additional external experts.

FC 4. Elaborate on the synergies and working interactions with other CRPs, in particular CRP 1.1, but also CRP 4 and CRP 7.

As indicated in our response to the ISPC 7 'must-have', we have enhanced the section on CRP linkages. We fully recognize the importance of strong interactions and have indicated what we believe are the critical areas requiring attention during initial implementation of the Program. CRP 3.6 will ensure that other key CRPs are invited to participate in at least semi-annual research planning meetings, and is willing to participate in other CRP meetings as requested.

FC 5. Elaborate on communicating results in different ways and specifically to women stakeholders.

Agricultural R4D communication is undergoing a transformation, one driven by the spread of high-speed Internet connectivity; the advent of digital media; the development of new tools, platforms and methodologies; and changes in the ways the world accesses and uses information. We have an opportunity to implement systems for the rapid, highly targeted and efficient transfer of research results, and transform them into practice and policy recommendations – while simultaneously capturing them in peer-reviewed journals and publications.

Yet a large number of smallholder farmers still do not benefit from the information and knowledge generated by research, in part because of poor agricultural extension systems and limited, uncoordinated international and national support for knowledge dissemination, but also because of the limited capacity of national programs to take full advantage of new information and communication technologies.

Effective communication by DRYLAND CEREALS partners will require careful study and deliberate implementation of agreed guidelines. Options for overcoming these obstacles in remote dryland areas are needed, and will be a primary output of Strategic Objective 5. A guiding principle for this work is that communications activities will be aligned with and promote all our strategic objectives; such activities do not comprise an end in themselves. Another guiding principle is that all partners should be communicating on behalf of the CRP, and in doing so view their own organizational and individual interests as secondary to those of the overall program.

The CRP Director will have general responsibility for communicating on behalf of DRYLAND CEREALS partners to a wide variety of audiences, and will help establish and monitor – in concert with the RMT – the Program’s communication action plan. Development and implementation of that plan will occur at all levels and be carried out by many of those involved in the R4D work, but regardless of their organizational affiliation, their communication efforts will rest on the strategic needs, interests and achievements of the CRP.

Communications work will be made an integral part of the R4D process, and not be just a by-product of it. DRYLAND CEREALS will invest in developing the communication skills of key individuals and partners – especially their ability to interact effectively with the media – and communications work will be periodically audited to ensure that resources are being spent wisely and for optimum impact.

Such communication tools and techniques as cell phone messaging about market prices, mobile Internet access, rural radio, video messaging/demonstrations, targeted leaflets and brochures, farmer field schools, and farmer visits and field days will be used to improve the flow of information to farmers, especially women farmers. Farmer participation in breeding and crop management research will also greatly facilitate familiarity with CRP 3.6 outputs.

FC 6. Further clarification and justification for the priorities and proposed budget allocations among SOs and the DCs are required.

We have provided a new table (Table 6) that outlines the overall work plans for each Strategic Objective. These form the basis for determining the required resources to reach the indicated outputs. Many of these are based, at least for the first 2-3 years, on on-going R4D funded by bilateral projects. We recognize that as the CRP is implemented, attention will be needed to identify future priorities and required budgets. These will be especially critical to drive future funding from bilateral sources. Such evaluations will be a major task of the RMT, with guidance from the R4D Advisory Committee. As is being done by the other CRPs being implemented, detailed work plans for each output with corresponding budgets will be developed for CRP 3.6 shortly after full approval. These will provide details and justification for each output and will be approved by the RMT on an annual basis.

FC 7. Focus more on the specific conditions of the targeted population (where and who live - the people for which an appropriate research program on dryland cereals can really make a difference).

As indicated in our responses to the ISPC 1-4 ‘must-haves’, we have included additional data and analyses by country for each crop. These data delineate our target populations and were used to identify a set of 17 target countries that comprise the major dryland cereal growing countries in which we believe significant progress is feasible.

FC 8. Present evidence of linkages with the Regional Fora and other constituencies and/or community of practitioners in the development of the proposal. There is no indication of relative allocation of resources between the CGIAR centers involved and partners.

Regional and sub-regional fora, NARES, NGOs and private sector partners were involved in the initial drafting of the CRP proposal. Workshops were conducted in each region to bring these partners together to identify the priorities and focus of the CRP. We have continued to seek inputs from many of these during the various versions over the past year. We have also taken advantage of numerous bilateral project meetings and workshops to discuss CRP 3.6 and to seek input into its objectives and proposed outputs.

We have indicated the budget that has been allocated for partners (e.g., see Table 17). All of these partners are included in the new Table 11 that indicates the roles for each partner. As the first-year budget has essentially already been determined based on existing bilateral projects, we will evaluate

the budget required by all partners as the CRP is implemented. Both the budgets and the performance of all partners is a critical M&E role of the RMT, with input from the R4D Advisory Committee.

FC 9. Provide information on formal commitment of other partners in the budget, beyond statements of expected contributions in kind and/or activities to be conducted

We have included an additional table in the Partnership section (Table 11) that indicates the partners and their roles by target country. Nearly all of the organizations we include here already have on-going working relationships with one or more on the key CRP partners through existing bilateral and other projects. During the development of the CRP, many of these partners were consulted either at CRP planning meetings and/or during research planning meetings of the bilateral projects. All of these partnerships involve agreements between the parties and indicate strong commitment to the projects. Our discussions with these partners have indicated that such a commitment would continue under the CRP since these bilateral projects will form the initial core of the Program. We will conduct one or more planning meetings involving all partners during the initial few months of CRP implementation.

FC 10. Explore linkage to CCAFS and to view the proposed research through a ‘climate smart agriculture’ lens

Dryland cereals are among the most adapted cereals for harsh environments, and CRP 7 will provide models of possible changes in dryland areas so that better targeting of crops and varieties can be achieved. DRYLAND CEREALS will provide crop parameters for use in improving crop models used in climate change predictions. Robust dryland cereal crops may also serve as a source of genetic tolerance to improve the resilience of other important cereals that must be enhanced in the face of climate change. We will certainly work closely with CCAFS, exploring options that will improve the climate readiness, not only of dryland cereals, but other major cereal crops as well.