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**Fund Council Comments on CRP 1.2 Proposal (Revised 11/15/11)**

(Working Document - For Discussion Only)

*Document presented for Agenda Item 10:  
CRP 1.2 Proposal - Humidtropics*

Submitted by:  
Fund Council

## FC Members' Comments on CRP1.2 Proposal: Humidtropics

FC Member	Comments
Australia	<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>The program aims to reduce the poverty status and improve ecosystem integrity in the humid and sub-humid tropics in Africa, Asia and Latin America. There are three objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) increased economic and social returns for poor and vulnerable people from enhanced agricultural productivity;</li> <li>(ii) improved biological and ecological integrity of natural resources;</li> <li>(iii) improved institutional effectiveness in supporting the poor and vulnerable people.</li> </ul> <p>The program's R4D strategy emphasizes the integration of sustainable natural resource management (NRM)-based production technologies, trees and livestock into production systems as well as institutional and policy innovations at farm, landscape, water shed, national and global levels. An innovation systems approach based on achieving sustainable livelihoods for the poor will be used, involving many partners along the value chain with the poor themselves participating at chosen Action Sites (AS) in eight Action Areas (AA) selected based on contrasting positions on the poverty x natural resource integrity axes.</p> <p>The program will comprise three strategic research themes (SRTs): situation and priority analysis; integrated systems improvement blending three sub-themes, namely improving institutional effectiveness, systems productivity and natural resources integrity and; global synthesis. AS teams provide a "R4D platform" for diagnosing, planning, learning, implementing and may increasingly function as a channel for research outputs from other CRPs for vetting, piloting and scaling up and out.</p> <p>Considerable effort has been made to assemble information on climatic variables, poverty, population density and farming systems in order to characterize the AA on which the CRP will focus and this is to be applauded. The participatory integrated systems R4D framework proposed seems somewhat academic, confusing and ambitious. Its relation to earlier frameworks like farming systems research and extension and integrated agricultural and rural development needs to be clarified. The CRP will select off-the-shelf outputs from other CRP research for trial/demonstration or piloting in selected AS. As with the SSA Challenge Program, it is not clear to what extent the interventions that succeed at the AS benchmarks will be replicable at scale without the same levels of investment in understanding systems and adaptive research cum development activities as at the selected AS benchmarks. Hence the IPG spillover attributes are doubtful and the</p>

	<p>probability of success low with CRP 1.2.</p> <p>The outputs from CRP 1.2 are only described in generic terms as “robust methods”, “strategies”, “options”, “approaches” etc. and the activities proposed will not be known until the AS are in place, which could be years away. Impact assessment will be a challenging exercise with this CRP, as there are many actors and we are dealing with integrated systems. This means attribution will be difficult, as will the specification of counterfactuals. The precise outcome and impact indicators to be used are yet to be developed and will presumably be a part of the participatory M &amp; E approaches that will be employed. In the meantime emphasis will be placed on measuring process indicators and milestones, but even specification of these must await inception workshops.</p> <p>As with CRP 1.1 on Dryland Systems, CRP 1.2 is strong on diagnosis and but weak on defining precisely what interventions will be researched. While it is acknowledged CRP 1.2 is dealing with complex agro-system dynamics in humid/sub-humid areas, this would seem to make it imperative to narrow down a feasible set of researchable strategic questions, the answers to which will make a difference. Perhaps it would be prudent to approve funding for 1-2 years for the completion of the inception workshops, followed by submission of a more definitive revised proposal that addresses these issues and other specific comments below.</p> <p><b>Specific Comments (In no particular order)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategic priorities, issues and drivers of change in the AA of the humid tropics in Table 3 and the accompanying text, represent a convincing rationale for the CRP. However a myriad of crops, trees, practices and options are described and it is difficult to envisage how the CRP will define a feasible set for the research agenda. Apparently the situation and priority analysis in SRT 1 will involve an extensive diagnostic phase at the selected AS, involving participatory methods with the poor and other value chain partners to narrow things down to ensure the agenda is demand-driven. However this will involve years of work as existing bilateral projects also have 2-3 years to be completed. It is not clear what the relationship will be between SRT 1 and SRT 2.1 (improving institutional effectiveness) , SRT 2.2 (systems productivity) and SRT 2.3 (natural resources integrity) in the meantime or in the longer term, as in Appendix 2 the latter three sub-themes contain quite specific priorities and interventions based on past and ongoing research and development experiences apparently. These are varied and quite location-specific with doubtful IPG attributes.</li> <li>• Table 3 emphasizes closing yield gaps as the primary technology priority, along with diversification and value adding. To integrate technologies, institutions and policies modeling of various types will be employed and</li> </ul>
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	<p>trade-offs among productivity, reduced poverty and natural resource integrity arrayed for decision makers. Yet Table 3 has some quite clear individual strategic priorities defined already e.g. land tenure reform, rotational savings, equitable access to land etc. Hence it is not clear how the integration modeling will in fact be used when conclusions have in many instances already been made on innovations in technology, policy and institutions. Indeed the priorities in Table 3 appear more like a series of location-specific adaptive research cum extension programs, along with developmental consultancies than a strategic research for development agenda with clear IPGs. It is not at all clear what the added value will be of the integrated systems improvement via modeling that is to be the primary point of departure in the CRP. Indeed the discussion on pp. 20-32 and 51-74 of this aspect seems excessively academic and does not seem to relate to the agendas described in Table 3 and Appendix 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposal mentions the limited outcomes from earlier eco-regional approaches in humid/sub-humid regions of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which would not seem to instill confidence in CRP 1.2. CRP 1.2 has many features in common with the eco-regional approach and the proponents maintain it will succeed as long as it has sufficient resources that were lacking in the eco-regional programs. The impacts from CRP 1.2 would need to be markedly better than the eco-regional approaches to justify the substantial investments requested. The major impacts from the latter in SSA are listed as (p.15): developing procedures for selecting sites with stakeholders, methods for choosing villages and methods for diagnosing and understanding farming systems. These are process-based outputs rather than impacts and are hardly ground-breaking.</li> <li>• It is claimed the Humidtropics Conceptual R4D Framework in the proposal will succeed where other approaches have failed. Integration and innovation systems will replace component research and the linear model. However the paradigm is confusing and has contradictions, as illustrated on p.25: “The unit of analysis in Humidtropics shifts from the poor and vulnerable people as decision making unit (sic) to the options provided in the Action Site. Agency of both the poor and vulnerable individuals and the individuals and organizations making interventions by providing technologies, innovations, etc. to the actions sites involve advocacy and decision making processes (sic). These systems are highly dynamic, but often also fragile and vulnerable. More resilience to unwanted change is important. People, make decisions, not the analytical constructs such as household and service provider ..... The approach taken by Humidtropics allows us to better understand what options need to be available in the Action Sites to improve the lives of the poor and vulnerable depending on them. It will help to design interventions that can tweak the supportive systems, technologies and innovations to widen choices available to the poor and vulnerable....”. There are many</li> </ul>
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	<p>unanswered questions before one can understand precisely what is being proposed: Are the Action Sites (AS) to be benchmark farms, villages, communities, landscapes, regions? Will they be the focus of on-farm trials of options, or demonstrations of promising technologies from on-station research? Will they be researcher- managed or farmer-managed trials/demonstrations? On what scale will they be conducted? Will there be subsidies provided to farmers to engage in the trials/demonstrations and minimize risks? How will service providers be engaged? How will the framework differ from earlier farming systems research and extension approaches in sub-Saharan Africa starting in the 1970s? How will the framework relate to the integrated agricultural and rural development programs in South Asia in the 1960s and 1970s? These had mixed success. Indeed the participatory modeling methodology proposed (Figure 11, p.54) contains elements of these two approaches, such as goal programming and multi-criteria decision-making. Also how will modeling be used in the participatory farmer-first demand-driven approach being espoused here?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The situation analyses on pp.25-32 provide a good diagnosis of problems in three contrasting target systems. However what is missing is the identification of researchable issues that derive from the diagnoses and delineation of a prioritized feasible set which can form the basis of a strategic research agenda for CRP 1.2. Instead the participatory integrated systems R4D framework proposed will select off the shelf outputs from other research for trial/demonstration/ piloting in AS. However these will be quite location-specific. It is not clear to what extent they will be replicable elsewhere without the same high level of R4D input as used in the AS. Indeed the SSA CP has been endeavoring to assess this issue and elements of it will apparently be incorporated into CRP 1.2. The IPG attributes in the proposal are listed (p.33) to be publications, pre-extension material and solutions to biotic and abiotic stresses. Impact is to occur by sharing scalable research outcomes that become inputs to development partners. It would appear such large-scale spillovers are most unlikely from what seems to be very location-specific R4D.</li> <li>• Novel institutional mechanisms will be developed to link smallholders to markets, financial institutions, natural resource management opportunities etc. (pp. 57-60). Alternatives will be co-developed with partners and assessed by trial and error to see which work best in different contexts and scales. It is recognized that no one size will fit all and hence experimental methods will not be used. Instead they will monitor and learn. All this begs the questions of funding for such trials and separating the effects of required subsidies from the institutional innovations per se. Again the SSA CP is addressing such issues and until it is completed maybe one should hasten more slowly on this aspect.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outputs from CRP 1.2 are only described (pp.59-60) in generic terms as “robust methods”, “strategies”, “options”, “approaches” etc. and the activities proposed will not be known until the AS are in place, which could be years away.</li> <li>• Among the possible activities is piloting technologies at systems level (p.63). Again it is not clear at what scale the “systems level” is and more importantly how it differs from past technology piloting efforts. There are several other questions that also require answers such as: Will there be controls? How will subsidy effects be separated from innovation effects? Will they be farmer or researcher managed pilots? Etc.</li> <li>• In contrast to the other SRTs, SRT 2.3 on Natural Resource Integrity does include some meaningful and explicit research outputs and activities (see 5.7.3 and 5.7.4) along with some clear examples that illustrate there is some scope for strategic research on this theme.</li> <li>• Impact assessment will be a challenging exercise with this CRP, as there are many actors and we are dealing with integrated systems. This means attribution will be difficult, as will the specification of counterfactuals. Although it is planned to use frontier econometric approaches such as propensity score matching, difference in differences etc., to assess the outcomes and impacts of interventions (p. 109), these require careful experimental designs from the outset and astute management of the trials, as the SSA CP has discovered, and the proposal is not convincing on this score. Indeed earlier in the proposal it was indicated that controls would not be used and without them use of the proposed frontier methods is moot. The precise outcome and impact indicators to be used are yet to be developed and will presumably be a part of the participatory M &amp; E approaches that will be used. Table 16 has a list of impact indicators that are only generic and indeed are really activities or outputs rather than impacts as the CGIAR defines them e.g. “frameworks”, “models”, “methods”. “learning cycles assessed”, “partnerships developed”. In the meantime emphasis will be placed on measuring process indicators and milestones (p.109) “.... that will capture changes in livelihood and innovation systems that will best facilitate an understanding of pathways out of poverty.”</li> <li>• Impact pathways are presented too generically at this stage. For example, where are the people in Fig 4 (p32); who are the next users of research; who are the end users of research? All the strategic research themes (SRT1-3) can have impact; not just SRT3 on global synthesis. The distinction between research outputs and research outcomes is unclear in the document.</li> <li>• The budget discussion indicates a 5% charge will be made to cover CRP management, but calculating from the actual budget we note this charge is only 1.8%. This should be clarified. Also there is no provision for a</li> </ul>
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	<p>contribution to system overheads that we understood all CRPs should include. Institutional overhead of 15.6% has been charged and this is less than many other CRPs. Again the CB needs to review all these charges across CRPs to ensure consistency, transparency and cost-effectiveness.</p>
<b>IDRC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program objectives “<i>reducing poverty status and improving ecosystem integrity in the humid and sub-humid tropics</i>” is clearly in line with both the mandate and priorities of AFS and of the CGIAR. Given the systemic, territorial approach to food production by both programs, information exchanges between the two should be encouraged.</li> <li>• The program is innovative in the sense that it departs from a thematic or technological approach to agriculture and food production to an approach that integrate methods, tools, models, applications and decision support systems to address poverty and agricultural production at a territorial level.</li> <li>• The program will look at development, identification and promotion of technologies, best practices and knowledge to improve food production but within the context of efficient and sustainable production systems (environmentally, socially, economically and culturally).</li> <li>• The rationale for the proposed work is well presented and solidly rooted in existing approaches to rural development and agriculture. The proposal clearly makes the link with past project/experiences and discusses how its territorial/systemic approach will help to address limitations/challenges of previous commodity or technology oriented work.</li> <li>• Given that resource scarcity is less of a constraint than resource degradation in humid and sub-humid tropics, program intends to focus on sustainable intensification (increasing systems productivity for the benefits of the rural poor while preserving the resource base).</li> <li>• The objectives of the program are therefore very comprehensive but relatively vague and ambitious. This is the challenge of trying to cover all dimensions of the system in one program (environmental sustainability, agricultural productivity, economic and social returns, and institutional capacity to support poor and vulnerable people).</li> <li>• The methodology to implement the program remains underdeveloped and it is difficult to visualize exactly how the program will be implemented. What do they intend to do (in term of research activities). Methodological tools and potential activities remain vague.</li> <li>• The list of outputs and milestones provides interesting information on the type of outputs to be generated but the approach limits the detail that might be included.</li> <li>• Gender will be a central component of the program ... The section</li> </ul>

	<p>discussing the rationale for mainstreaming social and gender throughout the program is brief but well presented. The program intends to design specific Gender guidelines and build on existing resources such as WOCAN.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General principles for Monitoring and Evaluation are good but indicators remain fairly vague and methodologies sketchy... (long list of outputs/outcomes/activities and indicators but very vague)</li> <li>• Budget is quite high.... Mainly salaries and budget for partners/collaborators. If research expenses are only included in “operating expenses,” it would only account to 20 % of the budget, but this is small considering the size of the budget. Are Icipe, AVRDC and FARA CGIAR partners? If not, should they be under partners/ collaborators?</li> </ul>
<b>EIARD</b>	<p>EIARD is convinced of the need to support ‘system’ research and innovation in the rural areas of the humid tropics and of the role that the CGIAR can play in this effort. EIARD supports the justification for this programme, as presented in chapter 3 of the proposal, and appreciates the adoption of an integrated systems approach. EIARD also welcomes the attempt to learn from the Sub-Saharan Challenge Program (SSA-CP).</p> <p><b>However, EIARD considers that in its present version, the proposal for CRP 1.2 does not contain the information required to convince donors to invest in CRP 1.2. EIARD supports the assessment of the ISPC that the proposal should be resubmitted after substantial revision (Category 3).</b></p> <p><b>Among the points identified by the ISPC as requiring further attention, EIARD insist in particular on the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The proponents need to strengthen the case for this CRP. This does not mean to make the proposal longer as it already contains a lot of description of regions and systems. While this is very informative, it does not provide sufficient specificities on what will be done, i.e. what the research questions will be that the CGIAR will address, and how will the research undertaken effectively contribute to address the different system challenges identified.</li> <li>- CRP 1.2 appears to be mostly focused on existing research and on the ‘business-as-usual’ research of the Lead Centre. It does not convincingly demonstrate commitment to a reformed CGIAR system, with genuine cross-Centre and external partners collaboration and with development results as the key objectives.</li> <li>- The proposal fails to convince that it will make a difference for the people of the humid tropics, that it will have an impact on the 4 System</li> </ul>



	<p>Level Objectives of the CGIAR. It does not clearly outline what needs to be achieved and what is going to be achieved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impact pathways are insufficiently clear and non specific. Mentioning very broad issues like migration or price of internationally traded commodities, which are beyond the reach of the CGIAR, does not reassure the readers that the proponent have a clear vision of their expected impact. EIARD strongly agrees with the ISPC comment that <i>“there is a preponderance of space and thought devoted to the networks, frameworks and approaches, rather than the outcomes required to achieve change for people living in poverty in the target Action Sites.”</i></li> <li>- Regarding geographic priorities, EIARD would welcome further justification for the dominant focus on humid lowlands as opposed to humid tropical highlands.</li> <li>- EIARD welcomes the examples of possible cross linkages with other CRPs, and the table provided is very useful. However, it is not clear how these collaborations will work in practice as the current proposal does not integrate clearly issues such as climate change, deforestation, agroforestry or nutrition.</li> <li>- EIARD commends the inclusion of community-based cooperation but the section on proposed partnerships requires clarification on the basis for engagement of the different partners (including farmer organisations, NGOs, extension workers, and the private sector).</li> </ul>
<b>GFAR</b>	<p><b>General</b></p> <p>GFAR welcomes the approach taken which builds on existing actions and sites, rather than new, which is not necessarily a weakness provided that new dimensions are added overtime. The innovation systems thinking behind the proposal is strongly articulated and is very welcome. However, there seems to be a lack of clear impact pathways which has led to an over-focus on processes rather than concrete system actions in defined systems. We share the concern of ISPC that wider drivers such as consideration of climate change, deforestation etc are missing here.</p> <p>While the program is clearly building from the bottom-up, there is also a potential trap of being very concerned with process without so much focus on what the communities and concerned countries aspire to achieve. We agree with the ISPC assessment that there seems a lack of clarity on what development outcomes are actually desired through the work – and who they benefit and how these fit with national policy commitments and outcomes desired by the communities concerned.</p>

	<p>We feel that the proposal has not properly established interactions with a number of other programs and initiatives that are addressing similar or complementary issues in R&amp;D in the humid tropics. We recognize the collaboration established with CIALCA, but engaging in interactions with GFAR processes and regional fora, in particular FARA and sub-regional organizations operating in SSA would have helped to strengthen the CRP impact pathways in bringing into the R&amp;D continuum collaboration with other stakeholders and communities of practitioners that could play a major role in forging developmental outcomes.</p> <p>Partnerships take quite some time to develop and recognizing that the current CRP approval process give disappointingly little room for maneuvering in this area assuming that appropriate and strategic partnerships can be generated rapidly from the outset, we were tempted to suggest that CRP 1.2 could be ranked under category 2 by the FC with the understanding that the Program would have been tasked to make the necessary adjustments in this area during an inception phase. But finally we rally to ISPC position and suggest that the proposal needs so important improvements that it should be re-submitted after a strong revision (category 3)</p> <p><i>1. Transparent and equitable partnerships and significant involvement of national partners and national development in priority setting processes</i></p> <p>We welcome the basis used of building from regionally-defined objectives: CAADP, FORAGRO, APAARI etc. However there is a significant challenge in integrating coherent actions among diverse crop systems such as maize, forests and trees, cassava &amp; bananas etc Looking for win-wins between different development objectives e.g. p28 is an important dimension of the program. The focus on a shift to market based systems (p13) is profound and should itself be seen as a core challenge, yet the researchable issues around this do not yet seem well identified.</p> <p>The inclusion of social dimensions is welcomed (p.22), but there seems little reference to the potential of market oriented crops such as floriculture and beans, nor of land tenure issues and how they can affect productive and market opportunity and competing demands from systems such as estate crops, oilseeds or land purchase by other countries. Attracting youth into agriculture is also a major challenge and restoring the competitiveness of agriculture-based careers is important; the need for research on encouraging entrepreneurship is strong if rural livelihoods are to be sustained and valued.</p> <p>It is hard to see why gender is not regarded as a specific objective in needs addressed? The gender element's framing is weak, but the recognition of gender research need provided is stronger. Given the systems involved and</p>
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	<p>predominance of women farmers why not start from their needs?</p> <p><i>2. Linkages with Regional Fora and different GFAR constituency networks and relative allocation of resources between CGIAR centers and other CRP partners</i></p> <p>Generally there seems to be good linkages, in particular in regard to the SSA-CP and the themes identified through regional consultations elsewhere. The points made about the value of S-S learning are welcomed, yet this does not seem translated into much specific action within the proposal.</p> <p>There are already significant amounts of data from pilot sites in Africa under SSA-CP, so it is logical to build further onto those as the ISPC review suggested. The points made in p 18-19 are very valid.</p> <p>Resource allocation is hard to gauge, but the proportion of budget going to local partners seems low (around 16% of total) for a program based on participatory principles and extensive fieldwork.</p> <p><i>3. Likelihood of impact on the ground and support to other stakeholders capacity to take up necessary functions in delivering impacts</i></p> <p>We welcome extension of impact measures used beyond the straight economic terms. Starting with needs of the vulnerable rural poor is good, e.g. p31, but some further categorization of who exactly are being considered here in different frames would be helpful in addition to production system categories. Some may find it harder to access opportunity than others - what of the implications for rural employment of labor and challenges faced by those who rent land? Land use analyses are valid for study but don't seem to have been factored in beyond their recognition.</p> <p>It is harder to measure outcomes and impacts than with single crop focused work, but the measures used are taking on new forms, though the social dimension seems less developed.</p> <p>Why are humid tropics compounded here with sub-humid tropics? We agree with ISPC that this makes a very broad focus and makes it difficult to bring the program through to international coherence across the very diverse systems included.</p> <p>Given recent events on a number of the countries concerned, it seems strange that there is no mention made of conflict impacts on these systems and institutions, nor on the implications of rebuilding institutions in the new political environments concerned?</p> <p><i>4. Practical commitments and investments required of other partners engaged</i></p>
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Planning for a period required to establish operational R4D partnerships from the framework is welcome, though it seems strange that more of these are not already in place; 3 years sounds a long period over which to focus the program and build active partner commitments, given that many already exist around the pilot sites proposed. Partners described seem relevant and inclusion of both NGOs and private sector is welcomed, but if including, for example, supermarkets as drivers, one would expect them to be actively part of these processes.

Framing proposed work as initiatives that can form the basis of partnership and activities doesn't give confidence that the partnerships are yet matured and agreed to.

Given the focus, there seems remarkably little inclusion of farmer-developed innovations and how these can be upscaled: the prevailing model seems still strongly led by research derived from science, taken to the field in participatory processes with farmers, rather than also looking to incorporate local innovations.

There also seems little focus on innovative use of the programs own internal funding mechanisms to foster new forms of innovation directly driving co-creation of research outcomes between innovation from agricultural science and that from communities, such as has been pioneered in programs such as DURAS or via CIALS.

##### *5. Role of international public goods in adding specific value to national processes and capabilities*

For tree crops there is a major new initiative of the World Agroforestry Center and Mars Inc. that is not linked in here. Moreover, many perennial cash crops research institutions have established feedback mechanisms with research funded by levies and at least some measures of accountability to producers – where will that accountability be seen in these programs?

It seems strange to have weak links with CRP programs on cassava and maize and on forests – an apparent lack of joined-up thinking in the Consortium. The CRP is described as a real world laboratory for other CRP outputs, yet these cross-links do not seem well developed.

This raises a wider question of how many separately managed CRPs are really needed? What is the optimum for coherence and efficiency of scale and synergies? There seems to be a wider confusion in the system as a whole here in fostering programs that overlap thematically and don't yet seem to have made necessary cross-connections.

	<p>For the program's governance – if the research is bottom-up why not make more use of bottom-up governance? At present there seems a prevailing assumption that international research leads national systems and what will be local-scale research actions.</p> <p><i>6. Responsibilities and accountabilities to other partners/ beneficiaries</i></p> <p>The scenarios approach portrayed has some value in distinguishing development challenges but should also have allowed the proposers to select where they can focus for best outcomes. At present this rather open-ended list assumes little pre-selection of where the program is likely to have most impact, despite strong pointers from existing work e.g. in the SSA-CP. The R4D impact pathways described are good philosophically, but seem to lack bite with real linkage to implementing partners in each level.</p> <p>The program places the CGIAR centers in a particular niche, strongly integrated with its partners in the practical work, yet seems to still keep very tight centralized control in the proposed governance. It would have been more innovative to have given more management input to the partners and end-users concerned.</p> <p>The principles developed for behavioral change are relevant, though the links to practical steps seem rather weak.</p> <p>Capacity development still seems focused only on production research, rather than skills required for opportunities in post-harvest innovation and value addition, or new approaches to knowledge sharing, scaling up and fostering small enterprise.</p>
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