



Fund

## **Fund Council**

**4<sup>th</sup> Meeting (FC4)—Montpellier, France**

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### **Consortium Board Approval Letter**

**(Working Document - For Discussion Only)**

*Document presented for Agenda Item 6:  
CRP 2 - Policies, Institutions and Markets*

*Submitted by:*  
Consortium Office



Subject: **Consortium Board approval letter on CRP 2 “Policies, Institutions, and markets for enabling agricultural incomes for the poor”**

Date: 3 March 2011

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Dear Inger,

The Consortium Board (CB) of the CGIAR has the pleasure to submit to the Fund Council (FC), for its consideration and approval, the CGIAR Research Programme (CRP), entitled **“Policies, Institutions, and markets for enabling agricultural incomes for the poor.”**

Agriculture has been under considerable adjustment pressure due to changing political, economic and institutional environments. Though such changes always carry significant threats to farms, they also offer new opportunities for farmers’ engagement. The proposal submitted by IFPRI (lead center), Bioversity International, CIAT, CIMMYT, CIP, ICARDA, ICRAF, ICRISAT, IITA, ILRI, IWMI, and WORLDFISH, fits well into this rapidly evolving world scenario and the proposed research programme is of key importance. The challenge of this CRP is to use the tool of promoting policy and institutional change to stimulate agriculture growth and reduce poverty and hunger in a sustainable environment.

The justification of the three focus areas (policies, institutions, and markets) of the CRP and approaches are convincing, and evidence on how the activities will achieve programme goals is well presented.

The submission by the proponents of the first version of a full CRP proposal dated 10 September, 2010, was the subject of three external reviews (including one on Gender), as well as a thorough examination by the CB. A number of comments and recommendations for its improvement were suggested to the proponents in accordance to the common agreed criteria established by the CB and the ISPC for approval of CRPs.

In terms of **strategic coherence and clarity of objectives**, the CB requested the proponents to demonstrate that the various research components on policies, institutions and markets were interwoven through a strategic frame that gives structure to the research activities and results in the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. Moreover, a clarification of what is on-going work and what is new work proposed, and an explanation of what are the priorities in this proposal was also requested on the understanding that these would go a long way to increase the strategic coherence of CRP 2. The proponents were also requested to suggest mechanisms for implementing linkages identified with other CRPs.

The proponents responded in this new version by adding a ‘strategic framework’ section. The description of the framework, as illustrated in a diagram, indicates that the three research themes in the proposal are needed.



The respondents have clarified for each sub-theme the question of what is new and what is on-going among the proposed research activities. They have addressed the question of priorities by adding a new section in the text under each research theme. They prioritize primarily in terms of production of international public goods (activities producing limited IPGs are a lower priority) and comparative advantage (activities covered by other research organization outside of the CGIAR are a lower priority). A budget shortfall would be addressed by cutting the lower priority activities, not by decreasing the number of places where research will be undertaken. The priority-setting process is subjective and flexible.

The proponents acknowledge that the linkages with other CRPs are complex and that further discussions are needed. They propose to call a planning meeting of the leaders of the policy component in all other CRPs, to delineate boundaries and agree on a modus operandi once the proposals of all CRPs are approved, or at least sufficiently developed that such a meeting will make sense. The CB considers that at this stage of development of CRPs, this proposal is a pragmatic manner to respond to the CB's suggestion.

With regards to **delivery focus and plausibility of impact**, a fundamental question that needed to be better addressed was raised by the CB. It regarded where CGIAR social science research should be directed: to answer important questions about the agricultural development process or prescribe and try to influence the policy making process by governments. Where was the CGIAR comparative advantage and where is the research likely to be more relevant?

In the new version of this CRP submitted on 2 February, 2011, the proponents have rectified the balance between policy research and policy advocacy to emphasize the former. They clarify that CRP 2 will focus on the research side of issues and will, through appropriate partnerships, provide their scientific results to partners specializing in policy advocacy (the equivalent of extension work for policy research). They will also rely on large-scale communications, through the media, to inform the public, which in turn should put pressure on policy-makers to act. This clarification responds very effectively to the CB recommendation.

With reference to the **quality of science** the research questions within each component reflected in the first version of this CRP, were already very good and relevant, and the research methods and approaches described were of high standards. The reliance on models that emphasise production and productivity was understandable, although the CB encourages the proponents to enlarge the scope of some of their modelling approaches to better address factors such as livelihoods, welfare or enhanced environmental services.

The proponents reacted in the new version by adding descriptions of other models that will be used in CRP2 (in addition to models of the benefits of productivity enhancement). These additional models focus on livelihoods, environmental services, welfare impacts and on tradeoffs among these (bioeconomic models). The descriptions of the models are fine and convincing.

On the subject of **quality of research and development partners, and partnership management**, the CB requested a more systematic description of the different roles and



responsibilities of partners. It also requested more information on capacity building and communications.

The appeal for different partners of working within CRP 2 has been clarified in the partnership section, in a very credible manner. The different roles and responsibilities of different partners are now described in the sub-themes. This is also done in a convincing manner.

The proponents have expanded the section on capacity building, and have provided more information on these activities as part of the description of the research themes. They have included a new section on their communications strategy.

Regarding the **appropriateness and efficiency of CRP management**, the CB considered that the management structure presented in the first version was simple and followed four of the five principles suggested by the CB (simplicity, one lead centre, a management committee with balanced representation, and an independent scientific advice). However, it was felt that the composition and role of each of its bodies were not well explained and there were several doubts regarding the management team composition and functions that needed to be clarified. The roles and responsibilities of the participating CGIAR centres involved in this CRP and possible partners or stakeholders needed to be clarified. The CB also reiterated its earlier suggestion, at the level of the concept note, of developing a dispute settlement mechanism in the management structure.

In the new version, the proponents have developed a conflict resolution mechanism. Moreover, they clarify the management and governance of the CRP. However, the management structure proposed continues to concentrate power with the lead centre and gives little management role to partners. This CRP is a partnership of 12 CGIAR Centers and a large range of external partners and the proposed management structure is not sufficiently broad. This weakness of the proposal was discussed with the lead center who acknowledged it and committed to prepare a more inclusive management structure which will be communicated by the time of the presentation of this proposal to the Fund Council. The CB is satisfied by this explanation and considers that this limitation does not detract from the quality of the proposal's substance and, as such, should not be an impediment for the CB approval of this CRP.

With regards to **clear accountability and financial soundness, and efficiency of governance**, the CB requested the proponents to describe in a new version, a monitoring and evaluation system. The CB also requested clarification on the criteria used to allocate the budget among the CGIAR partners and between the CGIAR partners and non-CGIAR partners.

The proponents have explained that 23% of the budget requested will be for partners' activities, and they show the share of the budget that each of the collaborating CGIAR centre will receive. Donors may require further budget justification for the amounts requested.



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The proponents have added a section on M&E and have re-written the objectives, indicators and impacts in the proposal to be more detailed. The proponents suggest holding a workshop on impact assessment for the CRP as soon as the proposal is approved. This workshop should allow them to specify indicators, milestones and to set up an appropriate M&E system.

The CB appreciates the efforts of the proponents in producing in this new version, an even stronger, more coherent and impactful proposal. This is the second proposal which is evaluated by the CB after its approval of the SRF. We are pleased to highlight that this CRP aligns very well with the guidelines and provisions of this document.

In submitting this proposal for the approval of the Fund Council, the CB would like to stress the importance and relevance of this CRP in the current CGIAR reform process. This CRP shows the way on how social science and policy research can best be organized within the CGIAR System by being better aligned around system-level outcomes.

We consider that this proposal has adequately responded to the comments and suggestions from the CB as well as from external reviewers. It fulfils the common criteria developed by the CB and the ISPC, and as such, is a comprehensive and strategic work programme to address the CGIAR vision.

With my best regards on behalf of the CGIAR Consortium Board,

Carlos Pérez del Castillo