

IEA Comments on the second draft on the Options for CGIAR Governing Structures and Decision-Making

Draft of 12 March 2015

Main Comments

1. Structural and Functional Independence of the IEA

We note that, in all options, the IEA is maintained as an independent structure with a reporting line to the CGIAR governing body, be it the Fund or CGIAR Council. This is consistent with the analysis made in 2008 of the Reform and subsequently fully in line with the CGIAR evaluation policy approved by the FC and CB in 2012. It reflects good standard practices of structural and functional independence of an evaluation function, with direct reporting lines to the decision-making body.

2. Strengthening the Links IEA-ISPC

The Team notes several aspects of the current relationships between the IEA and the ISPC (including with SPIA). These links are primarily informal but have been systematic and include, among other things, engaging the ISPC (Executive Director and Secretariat) in briefing the IEA evaluation teams and, at final stage, in discussing preliminary findings as well as the systematic use of ISPC commentaries as inputs to program evaluations. The IEA and ISPC share a roster of scientific and subject matter experts. However, there is scope for strengthening IEA-ISPC relationships as explained below. This will be further explored in the upcoming ISPC-led Taskforce, of which IEA is a member

The Options Team rightly observes that the finalization process of an evaluation once the report is completed is cumbersome and not efficient, especially in the case of finalizing CRP evaluations. **This is where we think the ISPC could formally engage in facilitating the discussion of a program evaluation at the Fund Council meetings irrespective of EIAC's role.** If EIAC is maintained, we strongly recommend that the ISPC be represented in discussion about evaluation.

Other Specific comments

3. Continued Rationale for creating the IEA

The Team rightly refers to the reasons that have led to the creation of an independent evaluation unit. In addition to the reasons mentioned in the draft report (i.e. complying with internationally accepted evaluation practices), another important driver was the need for separating the advisory function of the Science Council from that of evaluating performance. The 2008 external review of the CGIAR concluded that the Science Council, which provided scientific and programmatic advice, could not be also responsible for evaluating performance arising from its advice. The review recommendation stated that: "The Science Council's role as evaluator is incompatible with its role as advisor and honest broker on scientific excellence. The two roles need to be separated." An independent evaluation unit was recommended. **This**

rationale is further underscored if, as suggested by the Options Team, the ISPC is empowered in its role of contributing to priority setting and the development of CRPs (para 254) and recommending budgets (para 79). We see that there are mechanisms, such as suggested above, that would strengthen the ISPC's role in the process from strategy formulation to priority setting to evaluation.

4. MTR suggestion: separating the different components of a program performance to different evaluations

The Team makes reference to the MTR, which postulated on the benefits of dividing the responsibility for CRP evaluations, so that governance and management would be the role of the IEA and quality of science the role of the ISPC. In the past CGIAR evaluations, the programmatic and organizational aspects of Center performance were integrated in a single evaluation. A one-off experiment of separating program and management evaluations in the ICRISAT EPR and EMR in 2003 led to return to the integrated evaluations. This is because programmatic performance is essentially dependent on the oversight and management of research performance. In CRPs, which are geared towards results-based management, this integration is even more important. Furthermore, separating science quality assessment from that of relevance and effectiveness of research prevents comprehensive assessment of the essentially inter-dependent components of research performance in programs focusing on research-for-development. We note that it would be appropriate to give consideration to the IEA's approach to program evaluation, including a framework for evaluating science quality, detailed in evaluation Inception Reports at www.iaa.cgiar.org.

5. Coordination with Donors Evaluation

The Team argues that one of the reasons for setting up a central evaluation unit was that it would reduce the number of donor-commissioned evaluations and reviews. While this is certainly an implicit long-term objective, it should be noted that no independent evaluation of centers or large programs took place between the last EPMP completed in 2009 and mid-2013 when the IEA received its first operational budget and was able to commission its first evaluations¹. Given the evaluation gap during these years, donors could be expected to continue commission their own evaluations. We would like to note that efforts to coordinate evaluation plans with some important donors have been successful – The EC agreed to drop some evaluations from their own evaluation plan following a joint planning meeting in early 2013. The IEA also coordinated with IFAD by being part of the Steering Committee of the evaluation of IFAD grants to the CGIAR (conducted over 2013/14). For each evaluation, all prior evaluations are an input, including Donors' evaluations and reviews. However, there is much scope for greater coordination with other donors, and this is certainly an important element for a cost-effective evaluation system in the CGIAR that the IEA should pursue more pro-actively.

¹ From April 2013, the IEA commissioned three evaluations including: (i) the evaluation of CRP "Forest, Trees and Agro-forestry"; (ii) the CRP governance and management Review and (iii) the Review of the Generation Challenge Program. The latter was entirely funded by the Program and in agreement with the EC in lieu of the EC's own evaluation due the same year.