

28 September 2015

To members of the CGIAR Fund Council

ISPC assessment of the CRP pre-proposals and Expressions of Interest for Cross-cutting Co-ordination Platforms

The process

On 15 June 2015, the CGIAR Consortium Office released the *CGIAR Research Programs' Second Call: Guidance for Pre-Proposals*. This Call was to put the new CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework into practice, and was therefore subtitled *Companion to the 2016-2030 CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework*.

The Call invited pre-proposals for a second phase of 13 CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs), and Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for 4 Cross-cutting Coordination Platforms (CCPs), to be submitted by 17 August 2015. These were then reviewed by the Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC), which coordinated reviews by external reviewers, Council Members and ISPC Secretariat Staff.

The ISPC had agreed with the CO that they would score each CRP pre-proposal as one of four categories: A (Satisfactory), B (Satisfactory with adjustment), C (Major concerns), and D (Unsatisfactory). The ISPC scored the CRPs and EOIs on the basis that this was recommending that those in categories A and B should be invited to submit full proposals; those in category C should be invited to resubmit a revised pre-proposal; and those in category D should not proceed to the full proposal stage. The individual Flagship Projects (FPs) that comprise each CRP were also rated from A to D.

The ISPC was also asked to place all the EOIs for the four CCPs in categories A to D, and in addition, to consider whether they would be most effective as a Flagship Project within a CRP, or as a stand-alone CCP.

The ISPC reviews of the Phase 2 CRP pre-proposals build on its previous reviews of the Phase 1 CRP Extension proposals in 2014, and the

recommendations provided then. The findings and recommendations of completed and on-going IEA evaluations (through briefing notes and a verbal update provided by the Head of the IEA) were also considered and utilised.

The Phase 2 CRP (and CCP) pre-proposals were produced in just over two months, and included CRPs and CCPs at different stages of maturity: some were continuations of Phase 1, others were mergers of two or more Phase 1 CRPs, and some were new.

The primary objective of ISPC review of the pre-proposals was to provide advice to the Fund Council to assist it in making decisions on the best way forward for each pre-proposal. In providing this advice to the Fund Council, the ISPC commentaries are aiming for:

- The improvement of the full CRP and CCP proposals.
- A more effective and coherent research portfolio.
- More efficient use of resources.

The assessments are also being provided simultaneously to the Consortium Office as an input to deliberations by the Consortium Board on what to put forward to the Fund Council for consideration at its November meeting.

The findings

Collectively the 13 CRPs were comprised of 69 Flagship Projects. The attached table shows the scores assigned to the CRPs and each Flagship Project. Commentaries on each CRP are attached as separate files. The top 4 rows of the Table relate to our assessment of each CRP as a whole (overall first followed by 3 distinct criteria), the lower rows relate to the scores for each Flagship Project. The 4 Global Integrating CRPs appear in the first 4 columns and the 8 Agri-food Systems CRPs in the last 8 columns. A CRP on Genebanks was called for and submitted but the ISPC did not score it as the ISPC considered that it did not meet the minimum criteria for a CRP.

8 CRPs were scored as Satisfactory, with some adjustment, the ISPC considered that 4 (Water, Land and Ecosystems, Dryland Cereals and Legume Systems, Fish and Livestock) would benefit in the long-run from being resubmitted as pre-proposals.

16 Flagships were awarded the highest score (A) 34 were ranked (B) (requiring improvements to be included in the full proposals), 16 were ranked C (raising major concerns) and three were ranked D (rejected in this form, although some elements could be retained in other FPs).

It was noted that at least one Center has withdrawn from several CRPs to concentrate its inputs on a smaller number but there has not been time for a full analysis of such changes.

Alignment with the SRF

Every one of the 51 sub-IDOs is targeted by at least three Flagships and the most targeted ten sub-IDOs are targeted by 20-31 Flagships. The most targeted sub-IDOs are cross-cutting sub-IDOs relating to climate change, gender, policies and capacity development, and broad sub-IDOs such as 'increased livelihood opportunities.

Further details on the spread across the sub-IDOs will follow in a separate Portfolio commentary. A Briefing Note on initial impressions on the Portfolio is attached.

Budget requests

When compared with the projected 2016 budgets in the Extension Proposals, the funds requested for 2017 in the pre-proposals show:

- A total portfolio increase from USD 1.047 billion to USD 1.345 billion, or an increase of 28%;
- However, there is great variation between the CRPs;
- Dryland Cereals and Legumes show a decrease from USD 141m to USD 137m, despite absorbing parts of three Phase 1 CRPs, and CCAFS also shows a slight decrease;
- At the other extreme, Livestock shows a 290% increase from USD 43m to USD 125m, and Maize and Wheat also increase significantly;
- The other CRPs show more modest increases.

Overall Assessment

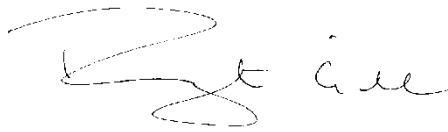
The time between the finalisation of the second CRP call and the submission date was only 2 months which was challenging for some of the CRP teams. There were very good signs of progress in a number of CRPs, with those with lower scores being those which were aiming for significant change. There was also much more consistency in presentation than for the Extension proposals.

The ISPC only had 6 weeks to review the very large amount of material submitted as pre-proposals and Eols. Thus, while a briefing document of ISPC assessment at the portfolio level has been prepared for the meeting

(requested by the DGs) scheduled for Tuesday 29 September, a fuller analysis at the portfolio level will be submitted for consideration at the November FC meeting.

As Chair of the ISPC I am very grateful to all members of Council and the Secretariat and to the expert reviewers who worked very hard to meet this deadline, also recognizing the intensive work which has been put in by all the writers of the pre-proposals and Eols.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marg Gill', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Margaret Gill

Chair of the ISPC

ISPC scores on individual CRPs

[illegible]

ISPC scores on individual Expressions of Interest

Gender	D*
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System-wide Genetic Resources Platform	C
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Capacity Development - ILRI	D
Capacity Development - IITA	D

Big Data & ICT- CIAT	A
Big Data & ICT- ICARDA	D
Big Data & ICT-ICRISAT	D
Big Data & ICT- IFPRI	A
Big Data & ICT ILRI_ICRAF	D

*Note the score relates to our perception of the lack of added value rather than the quality of the Eoi