

ExCo Recommendations on Generation Challenge Program¹

Comment from SC

P. Pinstруп-Andersen informed ExCo that SC recommends continuation of the Generation CP. It is important for the System to have a platform for work on genomic technologies of related crop species and this activity should be done as a CP. The Generation CP has established organizational structures and is on its way to achieving what it set out to do, but the SC is concerned that the CP may be moving beyond what is absolutely necessary in terms of organizational and governance structures. The CP has made good progress on establishing a platform for bioinformatics and the milestones for two subprograms are precise, quantitative and time-bound. Whether the CP is successful will depend on funding more than capability to do the work. The CP has built a high profile in scientific meetings and gone beyond traditional partners in the CGIAR, involving world leaders in the genomics field. SC is concerned that the CP is trying to be everything to everybody and should focus on the genomics platform and activities for genetic improvement. It should be recognized by all that drought tolerance is a worthy goal, but it is hard to achieve. The CP should be mindful of the balance between commissioned and competitive research. He reiterated the point of setting clear priorities and then determining whether to commission research or undertake competitive bidding. A more detailed commentary will be available based on SC's September 2004 meeting.

Comment from CGIAR Secretariat

F. Reifshneider noted that the CP is being carried out by a formidable consortium of 14 institutions. An interesting feature is that the CP is facilitating collaborative research *among* CGIAR Centers, an original goal of the CPs. The CP has attracted significant additional resources, especially from DFID. An unknown factor is whether this increase would have been forthcoming without the CP and just a traditional inter-Center research program. It is also important to note that the CP has mobilized significant in-kind contributions; it is estimated that in-kind contributions from partners to competitive grants represent about 50 percent of the total. The complexity of governance is an issue that needs to be tackled.

Comment from CP Coordinator

Bob Zeigler responded to the comments made. He agreed with the comments on governance and noted the complexity of the consortium involved, but also highlighted the resources and support received from the private sector. In terms of the competitive grants program, he agreed that it must be done carefully to avoid problems and retain focus, especially focus on the research program. He stated that the CP is part of the CGIAR System and in no way should undermine the strength of the Centers.

¹ Excerpt from Seventh Meeting of the CGIAR Executive Council (September 13-14, 2004) Summary Record of Proceedings, September 24, 2004.

Discussion:

- Members expressed support for the CP and recommended it for approval by the CGIAR; proponents of the CP were also commended for their work.
- The CP offers a unique platform in which to try new things and provides a valuable opportunity to move some private goods into the public domain.

ExCo Recommendations to the CGIAR:

- *ExCo recommended approval of the Generation CP beyond its inception phase.*