

DDDR:IAR 74/15 Restricted
January 1974

CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Seventh Meeting, Rome, 4-8 February, 1974

EXPLANATORY NOTE TO THE PROPOSAL FOR THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A COOPERATIVE PROGRAMME FOR FIELD BEAN
RESEARCH IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ZONE

(Prepared by Dr. Luis Marciano C.)

(Agenda Item 5)

TAC SECRETARIAT
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
ROME 1974

COMMENTS ON BEANS *

Luis Marcano C.

As an explanatory note to the work that is already under consideration, in which I took active part, I would like to add the following commentary:

1) HOW DID THIS PROJECT COME INTO BEING

Some of the background is already described on pages 3 and 4 of the paper under consideration (TAC Document DDDR:IAR/73/32).

During the Seminar on Beans, held by the initiative of CIAT during the months of February and March, 1973, with the attendance of technicians from most countries of the Western Hemisphere, the possible interest in a regional cooperative program, in which all national, regional and international institutes in Tropical America would take part, was explored. From the comments made there, it is my opinion that it could be inferred that all present at the seminar were in agreement that such a program should be organized. They all approved with pleasure the idea that CIAT would take charge of basic works for genetic improvements and others, that would lead towards the determination of appropriate improved technologies. This work would allow the attainment of the greatest benefits from the improved genetic material that will, without doubt, be obtained.

It is my opinion, that during that seminar the desire was repeatedly expressed, directly or indirectly, that the program, in its projection to participating countries, should be organized in such a manner that it would allow them not only to collaborate in the actual field research, but also that technicians from all those countries would take part in the direction of these activities. These thoughts were explicitly expressed in the recommendation that the Central American Cooperative Program for the Improvement of Food Crops - PCCMCA - should be used as model. The idea of having a basic research program managed according to the regular procedures of CIAT was warmly supported. The participants also expressed the desire to be able to take part in the decisions of the cooperative activities of the National Institutions through a mechanism in which CIAT would not be the only guide.

* Frijol.

According to a decision taken at the time, it was requested that the Organizing Committee of the Seminar should appoint a working group that would draft a proposal for the project of what would be a regional cooperative program.

The members appointed to work in this group were Doctors Ricardo Bressano (Guatemala), Oswaldo Voysets (Perú) and Luis Marcano (Venezuela). It was also agreed that Dr. Eduardo Alvarez Luna, as President of the Seminar's Organizing Committee, should also participate in this group.

The working group met in Cali, Colombia, during the month of May, 1973. Expenses for this meeting were defrayed by CIAT from funds allocated from the Seminar itself. Dr. Charles Francis, who by that time had been appointed by CIAT as head of the department for the development of beans, cooperated with the group. As a starting point, the groups used a draft prepared by myself, that had been mailed ahead of time to each member of the Committee. On the initiative of the Seminar's Organizing Committee the project prepared by the working group was presented to the whole Committee, made up of some twenty representatives from different countries, including some technicians from CIAT. The Committee made their comments on the proposed project while maintaining the criterion that the project was the responsibility of the working group. None of the comments made suggested major changes to the original proposal presented for their consideration, that is basically, the same as submitted to TAC.

II) PROJECT BENEFITS

In my opinion, a project conceived under similar terms as the one being studied at the moment, fulfils some requirements that should be emphasized in this discussion.

- a) It allows the International Centers to concentrate all its efforts on the fundamental work of research, by not having to apply a considerable outreach effort to convince technicians or Institutes of other countries of the applicability of the work being done.
- b) It makes possible the involvement of National and Regional Institutes in a specific program, applying thus, one of the guiding principles for International Centers; that is, not to try to replace existing institutes but, on the contrary, to try to help in their improvement and development.
- c) Having the joint participation of International Centers and National Institutes in formal programs, on an equal basis, will tend to improve relations. In this way greater support from National Centers will be obtained than when relations between the two are carried on in such a manner that the International Center directs and the National Centers have to accept this direction as an indispensable condition to participation in programs. I am convinced that, at least in Latin America, institutional jealousy between National and International Centers and National and International Technicians, can result in a limited efficiency on the part of the International Centers. The best way to minimize this

problem, is the establishment of truly joint programs, in which technicians and National Centers have something to say on the decisions to be taken, and as a result, they share responsibilities in the actions to be taken.

- d) It is to be supposed that, when National Research Institutes actively participate in joint research programs, they will try harder to influence political decisions in their own countries. As we all know, these usually limit the actual application by farmers of any new techniques produced by International Centers.
- e) I believe that through truly cooperative programs, it will be easier to influence the improvement of National Research Organizations and to set up better programs and better conditions of service for their qualified technicians; in other words, they will become more efficient National Institutes.

III) WHY IICA WAS PROPOSED AS ADMINISTRATOR OF THE SECRETARIAT

- a) IICA is a regional organization for agricultural development in which all countries from the continent participate.
- b) This Institute has more than 30 years of existence, and for almost 20 years it has acted as Coordinator in the field of bean research in a regional cooperative program in Central America. It has had experience in the organization and management of other cooperative programs in the continent; however, the lack of adequate funds for the advancement of its programs has been a limiting factor.
- c) IICA has offices in most countries in Latin America; this would expedite any cooperative action.
- d) The Director General of IICA, as well as the Director General of CIAT have declared that if such a program as that submitted were to be approved by TAC and the Consultative Group, the Institutes represented by them would be most willing to cooperate.

My conclusion is that, in this case, we have an almost ideal opportunity and we should try to take advantage of it.

- There is an International Center of Agricultural Research with great capacity for research and for producing results; it is deeply involved and interested in the improvement of beans.
- There is a Regional Institute whose fundamental mission is to promulgate the development of National Institutes; it has experience in cooperative programs, and is also involved and interested in the improvement of beans.
- There is a Regional Institute for research on nutrition that is also interested in beans.

- There are National research programs in all Latin American countries which would benefit from a cooperative action and which are interested in associating themselves with a cooperative program on beans.

I believe that the impulse that TAC and the Consultative Group can give to this program, at such low cost as that proposed, would be of great utility and could result in a positive experience, later applicable to other crops and to other regions.