

THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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EXTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEWS OF
THE INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTERS

"TERMS OF REFERENCE AND GUIDELINES"

Agenda Item 1 (c)

For Information

A revised version of the Terms of Reference and Guidelines for External Program Reviews was approved by TAC at its 31st meeting and subsequently adopted by the CGIAR at its meeting in November 1983.

In accordance with a proposal accepted by TAC (TAC 32) and endorsed by the CGIAR (November 1983) two additional points were included in the list of detailed items of inquiry. One refers to impact on women-specific occupations, the other to the Center's response to the previous review.

The approved version revised in the light of TAC's decision and the CGIAR's recommendation is now distributed for TAC Members' information.

This version will serve as the operational basis for all future External Program Reviews until such a time when a new revision may become necessary.

TAC SECRETARIAT

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

February 1984

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EXTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEWS OF
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A. TERMS OF REFERENCE ^{1/}

1. CHARGE

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) has charged its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with the conduct of External Program Reviews of the value and effectiveness of its International Centers. ^{2/}

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The major objective of such Reviews has been defined by TAC (in agreement with the Directors of the International Centers) and adopted by the CGIAR as follows:

"on behalf of the Consultative Group, to assess the content, quality, impact and value of the overall program of the Centers and to examine whether the operations being funded are being carried out in line with declared policies and to acceptable standards of excellence".

It is hoped that the Review will inter alia assist the International Centers themselves in planning their programs and ensuring the validity of the research priorities recognized by the Boards of the Centers.

3. DETAILED ITEMS OF ENQUIRY

In pursuance of the main objectives, defined above, the Review Panel is requested to give particular attention to the following aspects:

- (i) The mandate of the Center, its appropriateness, internal consistency and interpretation with respect to:
 - (a) the immediate and long-term needs for improved food supply and human welfare in developing countries;

^{1/} This version was approved by TAC at its 31st Meeting and adopted by the CGIAR in November 1983. It replaces all earlier versions.

^{2/} "Center" for the purpose of this document comprises the board, the director and staff of all CGIAR institutions, including Boards, Centers, Institutes, Programs and Services. The consultative process for External Program Reviews involves appropriate officials from Center management and/or Board as relevant to the issue in question. It is in such understanding that the term "Center" is used herein.

- (b) present and possible future areas of work.
- (ii) The relevance, scope and objectives of the present program and budget of the Center and its forward and long-term plans in relation to:
 - (a) its mandate, and criteria for the allocation of resources as defined by TAC;
 - (b) the ongoing activities of other international institutes and organizations, and of the relevant national institutes in cooperating countries and in others where the work of the institutes has bearing;
 - (c) the policy, strategy and procedures adopted by the Center in carrying out its mandate, and the mechanisms for their formulation;
 - (d) the Center's rationale for its present allocation of resources, its present and future overall size, and the composition and balance of the program in the fields of research, training, documentation, information exchange and related cooperative activities.
- (iii) The content and quality of the scientific and related work of the Center with particular reference to:
 - (a) the results of the Center's research, particularly that done since the last Review;
 - (b) the current and planned research and the role of the scientific disciplines therein;
 - (c) the information exchange and training programs, their methodologies, their specialization and decentralization, and the participation of the research staff therein;
 - (d) the adequacy of the research support and other facilities;
 - (e) the management of the scientific and financial resources of the Center and the coordination of its activities. 1/
- (iv) The impact and usefulness of the Center's activities in relation to:
 - (a) agricultural production and the equity of distribution of benefits from increased production;
 - (b) the potential impact on women-specific occupations, especially on diversification of employment opportunities, generation of additional income and reduction of drudgery;

1/ The Panel is not expected to institute a detailed management review which will be undertaken, usually concurrently, by a Panel especially commissioned by the CGIAR Secretariat for such purpose. The External Program Review Panel is expected to cooperate closely with the Management Review Panel.

- (c) its information exchange and training programs;
 - (d) cooperation with national research and development programs;
 - (e) cooperation with other international institutes and organizations.
- (v) The actions of the Center with respect to recommendations of the previous review as approved by TAC and the CGIAR.
 - (vi) Constraints on the Center's activities which may be hindering the achievement of its objectives and the implementation of its programs, and possible means of reducing or eliminating such constraints.
 - (vii) Specific questions which concerned members of the CGIAR, co-operating institutions, the Center's Director or its Board of Trustees, may request TAC to examine. 1/

4. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the early stages of a Center's development, the External Program Reviews must be devoted to assessing the scientific excellence of the Center, but with the passage of time, the scientific reputation of the Center becomes widely known and Panels are expected to give more attention to the outcome and impact of the Center's work and less to detailed comments on the research itself, which is reported elsewhere. Other aspects of paramount importance are the priorities within and between research programs, the balance among programs, the balance between headquarters and off-campus activities, and relationships with national programs.

5. REPORTING

On the basis of its review, the Panel will report to TAC its views on:

- (a) the Center's effectiveness and impact;
- (b) the relative importance of the various activities of the Center;
- (c) means of improving the efficiency of operations;
- (d) the need for any changes in the basic objectives or orientation of the Center's program elements; and,
- (e) proposals for overcoming any constraints.

The Review team should feel free to make any observations or recommendations it wishes, because the report is theirs alone. Equally, it should be clearly understood that the Panel cannot commit the CGIAR or TAC to any consequent action, and Centers should bear this in mind when considering implementation of the Panel's recommendations before the report has been discussed by TAC and the CGIAR.

1/ Questions relating to the Center under review will be collated and, when approved, will appear in this subsection.

B. GUIDELINES

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1.1 Purpose and Scope

The External Program Review is an independent evaluation of an International Agricultural Research Center (IARC) commissioned by TAC in response to a request from the CGIAR. The essential aim of the External Program Review should therefore be first, to meet the needs of the Group, and second, to advise the Center on scientific and technical aspects of its program. ^{1/}

The Review report should be prepared in such a way that it can assist CGIAR members to assess the effectiveness of the Center in fulfilling its mandate and therefore become part of the rationale for continuing support. It also provides the basis for decisions on continuation or change in Center or System priorities and strategies for support of agricultural research in developing countries.

1.2 Relation to TAC

As indicated in the Terms of Reference, the Program Review Panel's opinions and recommendations may not be shared by TAC which may choose not to endorse the Review report in whole or in part. In any event TAC will add its own comments and recommendations when submitting the report to the CGIAR.

1.3 Relation to the Center

The Center may agree or disagree with the Panel's opinions and recommendations, and should present its views to TAC and subsequently to the CGIAR.

1.4 Relation to the CGIAR

The CGIAR may accept or reject the advice and comments it receives and will make the final decisions respecting the acceptance and implementation of the Review report recommendations.

1.5 Periodicity

Program Reviews of a Center should be conducted every five to six years.

^{1/} The CGIAR Secretariat may commission an External Management Review in conjunction with each Program Review.

2. THE PREPARATORY PHASE

2.1 Preliminary Consultations with the Center

TAC preparations for the Review should start at least one year in advance by determining, in consultation with the Center, the timing of the Review, its duration, and potential candidates for Panel Chairman and members. Consultations are also required to determine the itinerary and the program of the Review Panel for both headquarters and visits to co-operative (field) projects. Agreement on the format, scope and content of staff presentations to the Panel must also be reached. Simultaneously, agreement with the CGIAR Secretariat and the Center must be reached on the timing of the Management Review so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

The timing should be arranged so as to allow the Panel to visit some of the Center's field experiments at an appropriate stage. In principle, a Review Panel should spend about two weeks at the Center's headquarters.

Visits to cooperative programs outside the host country should be organized for at least some of the Panel's members before the Panel assembles at headquarters. If at all possible, the Chairman of the Panel and one or more of its members should attend the meeting of the Board of Trustees and/or its Program Committee preceding the Review, and the preceding internal program review of the Center.

2.2 Terms of Reference and Related Questions

The standard Terms of Reference for External Program Reviews may be modified, at the request of CGIAR members, the Center and/or cooperating institutions, to take account of specific features and problems of the Center. Such modifications should, however, respect the general objectives and intent of the Review and must be approved by TAC. These Terms of Reference take into account the Management Review Terms of Reference and Guidelines.

All members of the CGIAR are notified of forthcoming External Program Reviews and invited to propose questions and/or identify issues specific to the Center for consideration by the Panel. The Center and CGIAR Secretariat should receive similar requests. The TAC Secretariat should review all relevant file material (e.g. TAC reports, Center's mandate, priorities, annual reports, long-term plans, etc.) to identify possible issues and questions of specific concern to TAC. The issues and questions identified by the various interests should be approved by TAC as part of the Terms of Reference and submitted to the Center. 1/

1/ Only questions and issues pertaining to specific or major aspects of the Center's work which are unlikely to be considered under the general Terms of Reference, will be included in the final list. Questions of a detailed technical nature will not be listed but passed separately to the Panel and the Center by the TAC Secretariat.

2.3 Selection of the Panel Chairman

In choosing a Panel leader, due consideration will be given to leadership qualities, understanding of the purpose and scope of CGIAR activities, and ability to organize and complete the Review and the report in a limited time. The Panel Chairman must be available for the subsequent presentations to TAC and the CGIAR. Preference may be given to former TAC members, former participants in an External Program Review or individuals who have been closely involved with the CGIAR System. In general, current TAC members should not be invited to lead an External Program Review, in order to avoid conflicts of interest. The final selection of the Panel Chairman is made by TAC after full consultation and agreement with the Center. The Panel Chairman should be selected as early as possible in order to be fully involved in the preparation phase and in the selection of the Panel.

2.4 Selection and Composition of the Review Panel

The size of the Panel will depend on the complexity of the program of the Center to be reviewed. The Panel should normally have at least four members plus the Panel Chairman, but for Centers with multiple crops or a broad range of activities, a Panel may have up to nine or ten people, including the Chairman in order to complete the Review in the limited time available.

In order to protect their independence, Panel members should not have a direct involvement in the formulation of the Center's current program or any strong personal ties with staff members of the Center. Panelists should not be members of the governing body of the Center under review or of any Center with which it has formal collaborative agreements. One or more persons from those developing countries which are involved with the Center's cooperative programs should also be included on the Panel. Such members should not, however, have been directly responsible for the formulation and implementation of these programs. Staff members from CGIAR donor or cosponsoring agencies may also be considered in their capacity as scientists or managers of R & D programs. All Panel members are selected and serve in their personal capacities. Not more than half of the Panel's members should be drawn from a list of names formally proposed by the Center.

The Panel should include some members with specialized technical expertise and others with generally broad experience in agricultural research in developing countries and/or in the socio-economic problems related to the regions/commodities of the Center's mandate. One or more members with experience in the management of multidisciplinary research programs is highly desirable on the Program Review Panel.

It is usual for a member of the TAC Secretariat to act as Secretary to the Panel for continuity, to provide the link with TAC and to facilitate passage of the Review through all its stages. A scientific advisor of the CGIAR Secretariat is normally present to assist the Panel.

Reviews of cooperative programs usually call for contacts between Panel members and government officials of the host and cooperating countries. It is highly desirable that at least one of the Panel members visiting these programs be fluent in the language of these countries.

The interest and availability of potential Panel members should first be ascertained by the TAC Secretariat. The proposed composition of the Panel should be established through joint consultation by the TAC Chairman, the Panel Chairman and the Center, and be mutually agreeable to TAC and the Center, but TAC is responsible for its final approval.

If a Management Review is to take place concurrently, it is important that the combined size of the two teams does not overburden the facilities of the Center with respect to logistics.

2.5 Documentation

The TAC Secretariat should provide the Panel Chairman and members with the following documents, at least four months before the start of the Review:

- (i) the Terms of Reference and Guidelines for External Program Reviews;
- (ii) the list of specific issues/questions to be addressed by the Panel;
- (iii) previous Quinquennial/External Program Review reports on the Center (if applicable);
- (iv) relevant extracts from TAC reports;
- (v) selected recent Quinquennial/External Program Review reports.

The TAC Secretariat may commission special preparatory studies for the assistance of the Panel when deemed appropriate.

The TAC Secretariat will also arrange for the following CGIAR documentation to be distributed (and to the Center where relevant):

- (i) the brochure on the CGIAR System;
- (ii) the report on the latest Review of the CGIAR;
- (iii) terms of reference and guidelines, documentation and membership of the Management Review team (where applicable).

The Center should provide the Panel Chairman and members with the following documents, at least three months before the start of the Review: 1/

- (i) the charter and other basic documents establishing the Center;
- (ii) a review of the interpretation of the mandate, as evolved by the Board of Trustees over the years;

1/ Wherever appropriate and feasible this documentation should be provided in a compiled and a condensed form, the full texts and other additional documents being made available to the Panel during the Review.

- (iii) a review of the actions taken by the Center on the recommendations of the preceding Quinquennial/External Program Review;
- (iv) an analysis of the main achievements, constraints and of the impact of the programs of the Center during the last five years; 1/
- (v) a statement of the present objectives, priorities and strategies of research, training, information exchange and related cooperative programs, with an explanation of their rationale in terms of food demands and other requirements in the countries served by the Center;
- (vi) a plan for the work of the Center during the next five years, with an indication of the successive steps of the research program, the results expected during those years and the volume of resources required for the main program components;
- (vii) the long-term plan for the Center, if different from (vi);
- (viii) the most recent Program and Budget documents;
- (ix) reports of major planning conferences, internal reviews, expert meetings, etc., which have had a major influence on the direction of specific programs of the Center;
- (x) agreements with other Centers and institutions which have major cooperative activities with the Center, together with information concerning the objectives and constitution of those activities;
- (xi) documents on the non-core projects of the Center, with particular reference to those chosen for Panel visits;
- (xii) any other documentation which the Center feels is important to distribute before the Review, e.g. reprints of published research papers and/or a list of publications.

3. THE PROGRAM OF THE REVIEW

3.1 Program Content

The overall program of the Review is determined early in the planning stages (see 2.1). Details of the program will be worked out between the Panel Chairman, the Center and others as appropriate once the Panel Chairman, specific questions and other matters are known. These details should be agreed upon at least two months before the start of the Review.

1/ This assessment may be carried out by the Center as a part of the internal review preceding the External Program Review. It should cover the output of the Center, e.g. improved technologies, new scientific advances, training, etc., and when feasible, make an attempt to provide a cost/benefit or other quantitative analysis of the Center's contributions to increased food production and research capacity in developing countries.

3.2 Program Schedules

Once program details are settled and two months before the start of the Review, the Panel Chairman - after appropriate consultation with Panel members - should arrange for the distribution to Panel members of the following documents:

- (i) the itinerary of field visits, and the detailed program of staff presentations and discussions at Center headquarters;
- (ii) a possible structure for the Review report, suggesting or assigning specific responsibilities to each Panel member;
- (iii) the report preparation deadlines to meet typing, discussion and presentation requirements.

In arranging the detailed schedule to accompany the program, several points need to be considered:

- (i) Sufficient time must be scheduled for closed Panel meetings to discuss findings. Regular evening meetings are usually needed for this purpose. Time also needs to be set aside for periodic interaction with the Management Review team in closed session.
- (ii) Despite the importance of these interactive Panel meetings, Panel members also require writing time. It is preferable that the Panel have its accommodations for meeting, eating and sleeping within easy reach of each other to facilitate work schedules. Long commuting between hotels and the Center, or the splitting of team members among widely separated living accommodations are to be avoided.
- (iii) The first draft of each chapter should be prepared for typing as quickly as possible after the substantive discussions. Of particular importance is the early identification of issues and questions which need to be further addressed and are likely to become part of the recommendations.
- (iv) Subsequent drafts of all chapters and the overall assessment of the Center should be in the hands of all Panel members well in advance of the oral presentation to the Center to facilitate agreement on the text and recommendations, and ensure adequate lead time for duplication and assembling of the report.
- (v) The report should be completed before the Panel leaves the Center and in a state suitable for TAC's consideration. Substantive changes to the report before its submission to TAC should be made only with the agreement of the whole Panel.

4. THE CONDUCT OF THE REVIEW

Responsibility for the detailed conduct of the Review lies with the Chairman of the Panel.

Members of the Panel are expected to arrive at the Center the day prior to the commencement of the Review. The Center Director will provide the Panel at that time with any late adjustment to the detailed program of presentations and other activities.

In order to ensure good working relationships with the Center during the course of a Review, the following points need to be kept in mind:

- (i) During the course of the Review, the Chairman of the Panel should keep the Center Director informed on the likely contents of the report and on the recommendations which the Panel expects to make.
- (ii) The draft report must be completed and agreed to by the Panel before the last day of the Review. As a courtesy, an advance copy of the report should be in the hands of the Director-General and the Board Chairman or his designate, before the oral presentation.
- (iii) Towards the end of the Review, the conclusions and recommendations of the Panel should be presented orally to the Center.
- (iv) Copies of the draft report should be left at the Center for study and comment.

When a Management Review is being undertaken concurrently with the External Program Review, it is expected that members of both Panels will normally follow the same program although separate reports may be prepared. It is essential that the two Panels have close interaction and keep each other informed of progress in order that the resulting reports do not inadvertently conflict with one another. It is assumed that all members of both Panels will be present at the oral presentations and will receive draft copies of both reports before leaving the Center.

5. COMPLETION OF THE PANEL'S REPORT AND SUBMISSION TO TAC

The draft report 1/ together with the recommendations and a summary of the conclusions, should be submitted to the next TAC meeting. 2/ The Center at the same time should provide for TAC its preliminary reactions to the Panel's recommendations. One purpose of this submission is to determine if the report fulfills the terms of reference of the Review. During discussion, TAC may identify gaps in the report or points which require clarification.

1/ The report should as far as possible, be written in plain language to facilitate the understanding of its non-technical readers.

2/ The Center Director and Board Chairman should be invited to attend the presentation of the report to TAC.

After this meeting, the Chairman of the Panel, with the Secretary, and the help of the Panel members as required, may wish to revise the draft, in the light of the comments from TAC and the Center. The revised draft should then be cleared with all Panel members and printed. Depending on the extent of the needed revision, the report may then be: (a) formally submitted to the CGIAR, or (b) returned to TAC for discussion at its next meeting.

Following discussion of the report and consideration of the response of the Center, TAC may endorse all or part of the report, but not change the contents. If the Management Review has been conducted at the same time as the Program Review, then both documents should be considered together by TAC. Formal written comments and recommendations should then be prepared by TAC for transmission with the report to the CGIAR.

The formal TAC commentary on the Review report should result from an analysis of the report in terms both of the Center itself and of implications for the Center's position within the CGIAR System. TAC should also take the results of the Management Review into account when preparing its commentary. Since Review Panels cannot be expected to make recommendations on such subject as areas to be reduced in the event of a shortage of funds or a major redirection of the work of a Center to conform to the overall priorities of the CGIAR, TAC must deal with such matters, either in commenting on Review reports or otherwise. Whether or not TAC endorses the substance of the report, the comments of TAC have a crucial role to play.

TAC's recommendations to the CGIAR concerning the Panel's report and its detailed comments on specific issues should take into account the views of both the Review Panel and Center. Where TAC does not endorse particular recommendations or makes alternative suggestions, its reasons for doing so should be stated.

An appropriate number of copies of the final draft should be sent to the Center with a request that a formal written response from the Board Chairman on behalf of the Center to both the report and the TAC commentary be received in time for the next CGIAR meeting.

6. SUBMISSION TO THE CGIAR AND FOLLOW-UP ACTION

The comments and recommendations of TAC on the Review Panel report should be presented to the CGIAR as a separate document in such a way as to facilitate the Group's consideration of the key points on which the Group's particular attention, guidance and/or position is invited, as indicated in Section 5 above. The Group should receive this document together with the reports of the External Program Review Panel, the External Management Review Panel (if applicable) and the comments of the Center.

The Group's comments and its position regarding the major recommendations of the Review and related issues should be recorded and

included in the final printed version of the External Program Review report. The final document, entitled "Report of the External Program Review of the ... (Center's name)", should therefore comprise the following elements:

- (i) Conclusions and recommendations of the CGIAR.
- (ii) Comments by the Center on the External Review report and the TAC commentary.
- (iii) Comments and recommendations by TAC on the External Review report.
- (iv) External Program Review report.

The above report should be formally referred to the Center through the Chairman of its Board, by the Chairman of the CGIAR. The Group and/or TAC may then request periodic reports on follow-up actions by the Center.

The External Program Review will then serve the Group and TAC as the major reference document of the Center during the following period and as the basic starting point for the next Review.