

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

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Future Meetings: Report of Working Group

The attached paper was prepared by the Working Group on Future Meetings and is for discussion at International Centers Week on Friday, October 30 under Agenda Item 22.

Distribution:

CGIAR Members  
Center Board Chairpersons  
Center Directors  
TAC Chairman  
TAC Members  
TAC Secretariat

Future Meetings Working Group  
Report to the CGIAR  
ICW 1987

Origin and Composition of the Working Group

At the Montpellier meeting in May 1987, the Group accepted a proposal made during the discussion of the agenda item: Future Meetings, that the donors set up a working group to discuss the size, length, frequency, format and substance of future meetings of the Consultative Group. Accordingly, on Monday, October 26 a working group, constituted by the following, held its first meeting:

Dr. Chris Bonte-Friedheim (Cosponsor, FAO)

Dr. Nyle Brady (USA)

Dr. Ross Gray (representing the Center Directors)

Mr. R. Manning (Australia - host of 1989 CGIAR May meeting)

Dr. Alexander McCalla (representing TAC)

Mr. Stephen McGaughey (IDB)

Mr. Nicholas Mumba (Fixed Term Representative, Zambia)

Dr. William Tossell (representing the Chairpersons of the Boards of Trustees)

Mr. H. Wessels (Netherlands - host of 1990 CGIAR May meeting)

Dr. Hubert Zandstra (IDRC)

Ms. Doreen Calvo, CGIAR Secretariat, acted as secretary to the working group.

Objective

The working group defined its objective as the formulation of proposals for CGIAR meetings that would make more effective use of the resources (mainly time and money) of the donors, centers, host governments and secretariats. These proposals would be brought to the full meeting of the Consultative Group on Friday, October 30 during discussion of the agenda item: Future Meetings. After this discussion, the CG secretariat would be asked to prepare a paper for final review and adoption at the Berlin meeting of the Group in May 1988. Meetings after that date would follow the model approved by the Group in Berlin.

Chairperson of the Working Group

Dr. Hubert Zandstra, IDRC, was elected chairperson of the working group and was asked to prepare with Ms. D. Calvo a proposal reflecting the working group's discussion.

### Issues

The background papers used by the working group were the Future Meetings paper (document ICW/87/22), the verbatim of the discussions of future meetings at the Montpellier and ICW 86 meetings, and information on previous May meetings prepared by the secretariat. The working group soon reached a consensus about the main issues for which proposals should be formulated, as follows:

- i) the need for two meetings each year;
- ii) the presence of center directors and staff, TAC and board chairmen at both the May and ICW meetings of the Group;
- iii) the scheduling of TAC, center directors', board chairmen, fixed term representatives, and SPAAR<sup>1</sup>/ meetings prior to ICW and the effect on the length of ICW of these meetings;
- iv) the current procedure by which many agenda items are discussed by the whole Group without opportunities of prior consultation among donors;
- v) the host government presentations to the Group at the May meetings; and
- vi) the scheduling of donor support group meetings of the associated international agricultural research centers at CGIAR meetings.

### Recommendations

The working group reached the following conclusions and decided to bring these as recommendations to the Group for discussion under the Future Meetings agenda item on Friday, October 30th.

#### 1. Frequency of Meetings

However much it might be regretted, the need for two meetings a year is established, though the option of cancelling the May meeting should remain if ever warranted. The main justification for the two meetings is that otherwise the donors would be forced to authorize the Chairman of the Group and possibly even the CG secretariat to assume responsibility for decision-making in the long interval between meetings, or there would be a need for some form of consultation by mail or phone in between which could be cumbersome and inconclusive, leading to a need for interpretation of the returns.

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Note: <sup>1</sup>/ Although recognized as being entirely independent from the CGIAR, SPAAR draws on the same donor representatives.

## 2. Size of Meetings

i) The working group identified the possibility of distinguishing between agenda items as either system-wide or center specific. The system-wide issues should be the primary focus of the May meeting of the Group and the center-specific, whenever possible, of ICW. To the extent possible, the objective is to limit the May meeting to attendance by donors, the chairpersons of the Board Chairs and the Directors General, the Chairman of TAC, and other center representatives who may be the specific focus of the Group's consideration at this meeting.

ii) The host government presentation at the May meeting should be designed for the maximum interaction between the international agricultural research centers and the scientific and donor community in the host country. The objective should be as much to expose the work of the international agricultural research centers to the national scientific and donor community as to expose the capability of the national scientific community to contribute to the CGIAR. The program, however, should be narrowly based to involve only carefully selected center staff who would be most relevant to the work and interests of the particular host country and who would spend a minimum amount of time at the meeting, handling both the scientific presentation and the related press and public relations activities. Host governments may find it useful to open a discussion about center participation in the host government presentation with the Chairman of the Directors General, as much as two years in advance of the meeting.

## 3. Length of Meetings

The working group considered the present system of scheduling meetings of TAC, center directors, board chairmen, fixed term representatives, and SPAAR prior to ICW, but has no recommendation to make that would shorten the total time required by donors to attend these meetings and the CGIAR meetings proper. The group endorsed, however, the statement by the TAC Chairman-elect that he would review the time requirements for TAC meetings once experience had been developed on the new medium-term budget and external review processes. Similarly, the working group considered but did not reach a conclusion on the appropriateness of scheduling two or more center presentations concurrently to the Group at ICW. In general, though, the working group tended to favor the current system by which only six or seven of the CGIAR centers make presentations to the Group at ICW.

#### 4. Format and Substance of Meetings

i) Since its inception, the Group has discussed all agenda items in the committee of the whole. The "uniform scatter" of opinions that often occurs during these discussions, hampers the Group's decision-making capability. The working group suggested that its own experience could prove valuable in considering whether a change to the establishment of working groups for selected agenda items might not lead to a better distillation of the essence of the problems to be resolved. Furthermore, the Group might be able to reach decisions at one rather than several meetings. The additional objective of some shortening of the discussion might also be attained.

ii) The working group considered the appropriateness of including topical, generic presentations on agricultural research issues of interest to the Group as a regular item on the Group's agenda. The working group decided that these presentations should be structured to address system-wide concerns and should primarily be a conduit for presentation of cross-sectional research topics or stripe analysis of research activities by the international agricultural research centers to the Group.

#### 5. The Associated International Agricultural Research Centers

The working group agreed that the existence of these centers affects all the above issues related to the CGIAR meetings. These associated centers (a term first used by the TAC) exist because of the interest of many donors to the CGIAR, and many collaborate increasingly with CGIAR Centers. The working group, therefore, recommended that a separate working group consisting of the heads of the donor support groups for these centers, should meet to consider the relationship of the associated international agricultural research centers to the CGIAR. The issues clearly go beyond the scheduling of coincident meetings with the CGIAR, so that the committee could be asked to consider the relationship with the CGIAR on a continuing basis.