

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research  
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Consultative Group Meeting

Mid-Year Meeting

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Montpellier, France

Attached is a copy of the TAC document "Promoting Collaboration between CGIAR Centers and Other Research Institutions".

This document will be presented at the Group's meeting in Montpellier, in May 1987.

Attachment

Distribution

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THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PROMOTING COLLABORATION BETWEEN CGIAR CENTERS AND OTHER  
RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

TAC SECRETARIAT  
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

March 1987

PROMOTING COLLABORATION BETWEEN CGIAR CENTERS AND OTHER  
RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

As the Boards and Managements of CGIAR Centers adjust their activities to meet changes in priorities, they will increasingly wish to develop aspects of research in which the Centers lack specific competence. For example, the gradual trend of moving upstream as NARS become stronger may mean that Centers will wish to incorporate into their programs more work on the use of recombinant DNA technology. Likewise, the greater priority accorded to sustainability of production systems might well mean that Centers whose main thrusts on commodities have so far been related to germplasm enhancement and plant breeding, will wish to strengthen their programs in those aspects of research that are related to the physical and biological environments in which the commodities are produced.

In these circumstances each Center will have to determine the most cost-effective ways of changing the balance of its activities. Depending on individual circumstances, the Center might decide to adjust its staffing in order to incorporate new expertise, or it might decide that the appropriate adjustment could best be made through collaborative or contract research.

TAC urges each Center to give very careful consideration to the staffing implications of its long-term strategic plan before arriving at decisions on this important issue. TAC's view is that in the future, as in the past, successful research will depend on an appropriate balance in the multidisciplinary approach. While collaboration with another institute might well rectify short-term deficiencies in a Center's own activities, it should not be used as a substitute for building up the optimum balance of staff needed to fulfill the Center's long-term plans.

General Principles

If, on balance, the Center decides that the deficiency could best be met through a collaborative or contractual arrangement with another institution, then TAC considers that the following general principles should apply, in particular to new and costly proposals:

- (i) the proposed collaboration should be in support of the CGIAR goal and priorities;
- (ii) the formal proposal for collaboration should be submitted by the Center, even when the initiative originates with a collaborating institution;
- (iii) the Center should seek to collaborate only with an institution that has an acknowledged comparative advantage in the desired area of research;

- (iv) the proposal should be based on sound principles and predicted to be cost-effective;
- (v) the implementation and progress of such collaborative activities should be monitored by TAC through existing or proposed mechanisms.

#### Funding of Collaborative Programs

In view of the importance of fostering closer collaboration between CGIAR Centers and other institutions, TAC considered whether or not special funding arrangements were desirable. The Committee recognized that several different mechanisms are already in place for funding such collaboration. These arrangements have been very successful and provide cost-effective ways of reinforcing Center research in important, but often highly-specialized, areas of work.

TAC recognizes that these funding arrangements are flexible and will continue to evolve. Mechanisms for monitoring and for ensuring accountability are also evolving. TAC proposes to keep the subject of arrangements for funding collaboration between CGIAR Centers and other institutions under review.

#### Collaboration with Non-CGIAR Centers

As a result of discussion of the TAC Review of Priorities and Strategies, the Group requested TAC to examine, specifically, the scope for greater collaboration between CGIAR Centers and existing non-CGIAR centers. In this context, non-CGIAR centers are defined as those autonomous research institutions that are international in character and work on problems related to the goal of the CGIAR. Institutions currently meeting these criteria include: AVRDC, IBSRAM, ICIPE, ICLARM, ICRAF, IFDC, IIMI and INIBAP.

TAC debated at some length whether or not there was a case for promoting special relationships between CGIAR and non-CGIAR centers, in preference to relationships with other institutions involved in specialized areas of research. After carefully considering all the implications, especially those relating to long-term strategies, TAC concluded that CGIAR Centers should always be free to enter into the specific collaborative arrangements they consider best for the desired purpose. The Committee further concluded that the general principles, already enunciated, should apply generally to collaborative arrangements, including those with non-CGIAR centers.

TAC would therefore encourage CGIAR Centers to explore **opportunities** for collaboration with non-CGIAR centers, but to evaluate **the predicted** benefits using the same criteria as for other institutions. The ultimate extent of collaborative arrangements between CGIAR Centers and non-CGIAR centers would then be related to the strengths of the latter in relation to other candidate institutions. For similar reasons, TAC considers that priorities for funding collaborative programs should be based solely on merit.