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*RTB Response to Comments on Extension
Proposal*

Submitted by:
CRP RTB

RTB Response to Comments on Extension Proposal

RTB Management Committee

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We appreciate the thorough and insightful comments provided by the CO and the ISPC on the RTB Extension Proposal. We are in agreement with most of the feedback. We note however a significant discrepancy between the Consortium Office feedback and that of the ISPC who recognize that we are taking a careful approach which captures the CGIAR comparative advantage with lessons for the CGIAR as a whole. We provide a response to each of the main points to address below.

In summary, we see the benefits of accelerating restructuring into flagships, and propose bringing this forward one year, in order to lay the foundations for the deeper changes. In this case, we will execute our POWB 2016 with the new structure. We strongly challenge the notion that RTB is of a comparable complexity to other CRPs mentioned in the CO commentary because unlike them, it includes core breeding and linked upstream research of four CGIAR centers with six crops, grown under a wide range of ecologies.

Summary of points to address from Consortium and ISPC and RTB response:

Program Structure:

- 1. The Science Team strongly recommends that restructuring into flagships take place during the first year of extension...Other CRPs working on no less complex issues have successfully restructured by now and RTB could benefit from their experience (e.g. CCAFS and PIM) (CO).***

Partially agree. We are in the midst of making a profound change to Results Based Management (RBM). This entails building theories of change with partners, and linking that with the preparation of business cases by RTB-flagship (CO-Cluster of Activity/n-2 level)¹ to plan investment for the second phase. This is a non-trivial task, given the complexity of our set of six crops, the diversity of stakeholders and shared mandates for banana and cassava. The framework (n-1, n-2) we shift to, has to be fit for purpose for RBM. Actually we must put the RBM framework in place before we can meaningfully set indicators and metrics. We could of course have quickly made a cosmetic change by rebaptising the current RTB themes as flagship projects but we chose a tougher route working with non-CGIAR partners on restructuring. Please refer to the first workshop report for the pilot with stakeholders of one of the RTB-flagships where we had the stakeholders take apart and reassemble our suggested impact pathway as they would like to see it; and then used this impact pathway to develop indicators for M&E. This was a big learning experience for both us and the other participants and we still have three more theory of change workshops with other RTB-flagships planned this year, which will help us shift to a framework which is fit for purpose.

¹RTB discovery/delivery/learning&support flagship groups = CO flagship projects = n-1 level

RTB flagships = CO Cluster of Activity = n-2 level

We will shift to CO terminology to ensure more coherent communication in the future.

We note that the ISPC endorsed our approach, commenting “In the shift to flagships, RTB is rightly trying to maintain focus of research effort. The CRP is not simply “bundling” activities into a flagship project, but rather it is building 27 flagship products, each with a business case, theory of change, and quantified indicators” and “This has the advantage of providing a transparent overview of what the CRP has determined to be inside and outside of its strategic domain. This is a careful approach which captures the CGIAR comparative advantage, and the ISPC believes that there are lessons to be learned from the way RTB has gone about trying to bring clarity and focus to the CRP”.

We agree that acceleration of the transition to the new flagship projects is desirable but we prefer to lay solid foundations for a comprehensive change across our portfolio. This entails simultaneously changing the planning framework, all the leadership positions, budget attribution and contracts, which are based on the program structure. It also requires changes in talent management to flow across center boundaries if RTB-flagship leaders are truly empowered to manage for results. And implementing RBM in a synchronized way with Humidtropics and others systems CRPs requires a cautious learning approach. For all these reasons, a rushed change could undermine progress to date. Our proposal is to bring forward implementation one year beginning with POWB 2016.

- 2. RTB plans to have significantly more delivery than discovery flagship projects. This may indicate an imbalance between short-term delivery and longer term discovery research. ...RTB should thus pay close attention to maintaining a balance of activities...(CO).**

Agree. We are paying close attention to maintain this balance. We suggest that simply counting the number of flagship projects by type is not the best way to assess the importance given to discovery. There will be three RTB-flagships (CO-“cluster of activities”) in the discovery flagship project, including “next generation breeding”, “game changing traits” and “in situ conservation”. This flagship project will cover perhaps 35% of RTB portfolio in terms of total investment across all funding windows and a significantly higher percentage of window 1 & 2 investment. Additionally the delivery flagship project also includes a significant research component especially during the piloting stage; so it is not all short-term delivery. Actually, complementary funding awarded with additional W1&2 funds in 2012 and 2013, primarily went to upstream research such that we perceive a weakness in the articulation with more downstream partners which we plan to correct in the extension phase by investing half of new funding in capacity strengthening which currently has little funding.

- 3. In addition to work on land races and crop wild relatives, work at the agroecosystem level on in situ management of RTB agrobiodiversity should be included for RTB’s results to better contribute to systems resilience (its last IDO) (CO).**

Agree. We organized a workshop on this in 2013, leading to the preparation of a project proposal linked to the discovery flagship project. We propose to implement this with incremental funding in 2014.

Phased workplan, budget:

- 4. Requested budget needs to be based upon the new flagship projects (CO).**

Partially agree. We can make the change but for POWB 2016

- 5. Based upon its new structure RTB can present a more specific phased workplan by flagship project with clearer deliverables for the 2-year extension. This will more clearly demonstrate the alignment of planned activities with RTB's IDOs...We request that RTB's POWB 2015 be prepared based on its new structure, as indicated above, by end of 2014 (CO).**

Partially agree. We can make the change but for POWB 2016

- 6. The ISPC believes that the workplan for the extension proposal would benefit from revision to focus on critical activities that contribute to IDOs (ISPC)**

Agree. The workplan included in the extension proposal only covers structural change and not science content. We recognize that this is a gap but given the space constraints, adequately representing plans for science in the extension proposal is highly problematic. We are currently preparing detailed descriptions for RTB-flagships and will include more detailed workplans focusing on science there.