

Management Action Plan in response to the CGIAR Independent Science For Development Council’s reviews of 2025—30 Program and Accelerator Inception Reports

This document sets out a Management Action Plan in response to the CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council’s reviews of the Program and Accelerator Inception Reports and relevant supporting materials. The Action Plan is submitted for endorsement by the CGIAR Integrated Partnership Board and CGIAR System Council.

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Executive Summary

This document sets out a Management Action Plan in response to the CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council's (ISDC) reviews of CGIAR's 2025—30 Program and Accelerator Inception Reports and relevant supporting materials.

The Action Plan follows the CGIAR Integrated Partnership Board's (IPB) concurrence with and the CGIAR System Council's approval of the Programs and Accelerators that make up CGIAR's 2025—30 Portfolio; as well as the Council's request to ISDC to carry out a targeted review of the Program and Accelerator Inception Reports and complete Plans of Results and Budgets (PORB) by Q3 2025. In addition, the Action Plan responds to the System Council's request to set out how the Portfolio has been adapted following its approval in December 2024.

The Action Plan covers (i) responses to ISDC's overarching commentary and (ii) responses to Program- and Accelerator-specific reviews.

Overall, at the Portfolio and Partnership levels, Management welcomes ISDC's careful review, comments, and recommendations – noting the overarching conclusion “that the Portfolio should now be supported and implemented”¹. Management recognizes a continued need to align CGIAR's Strategy, Portfolio Narrative, and Performance and Results Management Framework to the evolving Portfolio. It appreciates ISDC's reflections on strengthening metrics and hypotheses; ensuring flexibility in times of funding constraints; and enhancing risk management.

Looking forward, the Action Plan sets out concrete steps to address these comments and recommendations through, *inter alia*, a review CGIAR's 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy in the context of CGIAR's broader, strategic direction; Management's Proposed W1/2 Budget for 2026—27 underpinned by robust prioritization and updates to key elements of the 2025—30 Portfolio Narrative; operationalization of CGIAR's 2025—30 Technical Reporting Arrangement; as well as the launch of the Integrated Partnership Risk and Internal Controls function.

At the Program and Accelerator level, Management provides a comprehensive response to relevant findings and recommendations, with time-bound actions where additional work is needed to address key areas for improvement. Management appreciates ISDC's focus on Portfolio cohesion and coherence, CGIAR's comparative advantage within the Food Frontiers and Security Science Program, and the interface between the Multifunctional Landscapes and Sustainable Farming Science Programs. Associated comments and recommendations are addressed at Portfolio as well as Program/ Accelerator levels.

Section 9 of the document reflects on how the Portfolio has evolved through the Inception Phase, particularly in response to the sharp decline in funds available to CGIAR science and innovations from 2024 to 2025.

¹ ISDC Review of 2025-2030 Research and Innovation Inception Reports ([link](#))

1. Introduction

1. The CGIAR System Council, at its 21st meeting in Berlin, Germany on 11—12 December 2024, “(i) [a]pproved the Program and Accelerator proposals that make up CGIAR’s 2025—30 science and innovation Portfolio [...]; and (ii) [r]equested that the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) carry out a targeted review of the Program and Accelerator Inception Reports and complete Plans of Work/ Results and Budgets, no later than Q3 2025, and advise the Council on the extent to which the latter address the areas for improvement identified in ISDC’s November 2024 reviews of the Program and Accelerator proposals and Portfolio Narrative”². The System Council’s decision followed the concurrence of the CGIAR Integrated Partnership Board (IPB) at its second meeting on 25 November 2024³.
2. Following IPB concurrence and System Council approval, a Portfolio Inception Phase took place during the first half of 2025 to (i) allow the Programs and Accelerators to complete key, outstanding design features; (ii) address the recommendations, guidance, and feedback provided by ISDC⁴, the System Council, and the IPB on the individual Program and Accelerator proposals as well as the overarching Portfolio Narrative⁵; and (iii) ensure the effective operationalization of the new Portfolio alongside final technical reporting on and closure of CGIAR’s 2022—24 Research Initiatives and Impact Area Platforms.
3. At its 22nd meeting in Penang, Malaysia on 4—5 June 2025, following its review of Management’s update on the Inception Phase⁶, the System Council "requested that Management's Action Plan in response to ISDC's targeted review [...] be presented to the System Council for endorsement, clearly setting out how the 2025—30 science and innovation Portfolio has been adapted following its approval in December 2024."⁷
4. The outcomes of the Portfolio Inception Phase were captured in Program/ Accelerator Inception Reports, complete 2025 Program and Accelerator Plans of Results and Budgets (PORB), as well as other supporting materials, and submitted to ISDC on 30 June 2025⁸. Following receipt of ISDC’s reviews on 6 August 2025⁹, this document sets out a draft Management Action Plan in response to the relevant findings and recommendations. The document is structured in two parts, consistent with the underlying ISDC reviews: (i) responses to ISDC’s overarching commentary (sections 2—10) and (ii) responses to Program- and Accelerator-specific reviews (Annex I).

² Chair’s Summary, 21st System Council meeting Berlin, Germany, 11—12 December 2024 ([link](#))

³ Meeting Summary of 2nd CGIAR Integrated Partnership Board Meeting (IPB-002), 25 November 2024, (Virtual) ([link](#))

⁴ SC21-05d: ISDC Review of 2025-2030 Research & Innovation Portfolio Proposals ([link](#)); SC21-05e: ISDC Feedback on CGIAR Portfolio Narrative 2025-2030 ([link](#))

⁵ [CGIAR Research Portfolio 2025–2030 - CGIAR](#)

⁶ SC22-04: Update on the Inception Phase for CGIAR’s 2025-2030 science and innovation Portfolio ([link](#))

⁷ Chair’s Summary, 22nd System Council meeting Penang, Malaysia, 4—5 June 2025 ([link](#))

⁸ Program and Accelerator Inception Reports and supporting materials can be accessed here: ([link](#))

⁹ ISDC Review of 2025-2030 Research and Innovation Inception Reports ([link](#))

2. Revisiting CGIAR's 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy

5. In its overarching reflections, ISDC recommends updating CGIAR's 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy¹⁰, 2025—30 Portfolio Narrative¹¹, and Portfolio design diagram¹² to reflect the evolving Portfolio. Specifically, ISDC notes that the 2025—30 Portfolio of Programs and Accelerators departs from the Strategy's structure of three Action Areas, Research Initiatives, and Impact Area Platforms; whereas the Portfolio Narrative should reflect evolving priorities and place greater emphasis on Portfolio coherence, interdependencies, and the managing funding uncertainties.
6. Management welcomes ISDC's recommendations to review and update the Strategy, Portfolio Narrative, and design diagram, and takes note of ISDC's view that its recommendation to update the Strategy "does not contradict previous support for continued Portfolio implementation"¹³. Specifically, such an exercise presents an opportunity to, *inter alia*:
 - a. look beyond the 2030 time frame of the current Research and Innovation Strategy and update CGIAR's longer-term impact ambitions accordingly;
 - b. better anchor CGIAR's science and innovation offer in emerging opportunities and challenges, including those identified in ISDC's work on megatrends¹⁴;
 - c. reflect profound changes in CGIAR's funding landscape;
 - d. capture the comparative and absolute advantages that CGIAR holds as a Partnership, and its value proposition in an increasingly competitive operating environment;
 - e. better articulate the external and internal coherence and interdependencies across the Portfolio, including across different sources of funding;
 - f. address trade-offs and prioritization; and
 - g. update and strengthen CGIAR's 2030 Performance and Results Management Framework building on progress towards a more integrated monitoring, evaluation, learning, impact assessment, and foresight (MELIAF) framework.
7. To take this forward, Management will engage with the IPB – as the approver of CGIAR's Strategy and Results Framework – and the CGIAR Global Leadership Team (GLT) on the timeline and modalities for reviewing the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy in the context of CGIAR's broader, Partnership-wide strategic direction; with a view to presenting intended next steps at the 23rd meeting of the System Council in December 2025 (SC23). Notwithstanding the rapid changes in CGIAR's external environment and the need for agility and adaptive management, a long-term Strategy review will require a robust, transparent, and inclusive co-creation process across a broad and diverse range of internal and external

¹⁰ ([link](#))

¹¹ ([link](#))

¹² See Figure 2 in ISDC Review of 2025-2030 Research and Innovation Inception Reports ([link](#))

¹³ Ibid., p. 4

¹⁴ Responding to Evolving Megatrends ([link](#))

stakeholders. It will be critical to ensure adequate time, resources, and buy-in from key CGIAR constituencies in support of such a review.

8. In addition, Management will review and update key elements of the Portfolio Narrative – including the Portfolio design diagram – in support of its proposed, CGIAR Trust Fund Windows 1 and 2 (W1/2) Budget for 2026—27.

Time-bound Management Actions:

- Proposed next steps for reviewing CGIAR’s 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy in the context of CGIAR’s broader, Partnership-wide strategic direction **(by Q4 2025)**
- Updates to key elements of the 2025—30 Portfolio Narrative, including the Portfolio design diagram **(by November 2025)**

3. Research questions and metrics

9. Looking across the 13 Inception Reports, ISDC notes a continued tension between research and development. Specifically, it calls out frequent references to intended, future development outcomes without an accompanying, clear articulation of rigorous research that will facilitate such outcomes. In addition, while Programs and Accelerators provide more details on research approaches, methods, and activities in response to past feedback; many still lack testable hypotheses. Related to the above, ISDC points to a heavy reliance on quantitative, output-oriented metrics, such as numbers of producers and consumers reached, and cautions against conflating reach and impact. It recommends a more balanced and transparent approach to mixed-methods impact assessment that better combines quantitative and qualitative data.
10. Management welcomes these reflections and recommendations. Several processes will contribute towards enhanced metrics, impact assessment, as well as learning and accountability across the Portfolio:
 - a. Program/ Accelerator hypotheses and accompanying research questions – along with other key elements of their theories of change (ToC) and MELIA Plans – will be reviewed and strengthened in Q4 2025 the context of 2026 planning, informed by upcoming Evaluability Assessments and in line with CGIAR’s 2025—30 Technical Reporting Arrangement as well as ongoing work towards a MELIAF Framework.
 - b. To address limitations in output metrics, Management is currently updating Program/ Accelerator PORB templates and the underlying Performance and Results Management System (PRMS) to facilitate stronger accountability against SMART* key performance indicators (KPI) by CGIAR Center, year, and W1/2 funds invested – with KPIs prioritized based on their relevance

and impact potential. (*specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound)

- c. Building on the steps above, the TRA provides for improved target-setting, evidence collection, and reporting at different levels:
- i. *Program/Accelerator-level output and outcome targets:* Each Program and Accelerator sets and reports annually against output and outcome targets. Program and Accelerator target quality and coherence will be reviewed and optimized.
 - ii. *Portfolio-level outcome targets (geographic & thematic reporting):* Portfolio-level outcome targets will be developed for specific geographies and impact pathways. The Annual Portfolio Narrative will incorporate reporting on these geographic and thematic targets.
 - iii. *Portfolio-level Impact Area targets:* Targeted studies will explore the actualized or anticipated impact contributions of the CGIAR Portfolio against CGIAR Impact Area targets for a given geography, impact pathway, timespan, and spend. The Technical Reporting Arrangement provides for annual reporting against these Impact Area targets, as well as a comprehensive a Triennial Portfolio Outcome and Impact Report due in 2028.
- b. Finally, a more strategic and more coherent approach will address longstanding weaknesses in impact assessment. Over the past decades, CGIAR has relied on a largely bottom-up approach to impact assessment, which has not produced sufficient quantity or quality of evidence against CGIAR impact indicators. SPIA fills some of this gap, but its country studies will likely not be able to address most indicators at a sufficient frequency. Individual projects have taken on board the need to evidence short- to medium-term outcomes and have reported hundreds of such cases. Still, there is a significant drop-off in the number of studies of impacts, primarily due to the time lag to realization. The time lag means that impacts are mainly the results of older research and not new Programs/ Accelerators, and therefore of less interest from an accountability perspective. To address these gaps, a 2025—30 Impact Assessment Plan will ensure that impact assessment efforts are focused on the most relevant types of impact in the most relevant geographies in view of CGIAR’s Strategy, Portfolio, and evidence needs. The Plan will also drive coherence across the Portfolio as a whole, as well as with SPIA.

Time-bound Management Actions:

- Program/ Accelerator hypotheses and accompanying research questions reviewed and strengthened in the context of 2026 Planning **(by Q4 2025)**

- Programs’/ Accelerators’ 2026 PORBs define SMART key performance indicators (KPI) by Center, year, and W1/2 funds invested **(by Q1 2026)**
- A 2025 Impact Assessment Plan guides a more strategic and more coherent approach to impact assessment across the Portfolio; with clarity on resourcing and the division of roles and responsibilities across different impact assessment providers (including SPIA) **(by 2026)**

4. Budgeting during funding uncertainty

11. Reflecting on recent changes in CGIAR’s funding landscape, ISDC recommends that the Portfolio remain flexible in times of funding uncertainty while recognizing that funding reductions do not need to result in fundamental restructuring. Instead, it suggests a modular structure that allows Programs and Accelerators to contract and expand without losing their core focus, as well as a consistent emphasis on co-design, -creation, and collaboration to ensure that available funds best leverage partners’ unique strengths and comparative advantages.
12. As described in the November 2024 Portfolio Narrative¹⁵, the June 2025 update on the Inception Phase¹⁶, and the Inception Reports¹⁷; prioritization and comparative advantage analysis are at the core of the 2025—30 Portfolio. Drawing on progress and lessons from the Portfolio Inception Phase, Management continues to strengthen its approaches to prioritization and comparative advantage analysis at the Portfolio and Program/ Accelerator levels. These processes will anchor future W1/2 Budget proposals and Program/ Accelerator PORBs, guiding the allocation of available resources and efforts to mobilize additional resources. Prioritization and comparative advantage analysis will contribute to a dynamic understanding of what work, where, and with whom holds the greatest potential to contribute to CGIAR’s impact ambitions – thus leaving Management better placed to navigate funding changes while maintaining a consistent focus on CGIAR’s Strategy.
13. Alongside prioritization and comparative advantage analysis, scenario-based planning and budgeting, as well as systematic adaptive management remain core features of how CGIAR manages its shared science and innovation Portfolio. W1/2 Budgets and Program/ Accelerator PORBs will continue to span different, evidence-based funding scenarios. Annual cycles of planning, monitoring, reporting, reflection, and adaptation – combined with built-in flexibility in design and agile management – ensure that Programs and Accelerators identify and respond to emerging opportunities and challenges in a timely and effective manner. This includes the ability to scale down or pause activities in response to funding pressures.
14. Beyond the management of the Programs and Accelerators, CGIAR continues to diversify its revenue sources and seek operational efficiencies to maximize the

¹⁵ ([link](#))

¹⁶ ([link](#))

¹⁷ ([link](#))

flow of funds to impactful science and innovations. In August, CGIAR submitted its first formal funding proposal to the Green Climate Fund, for Côte d'Ivoire at US\$40m over five years – aligned with CGIAR's broader efforts to address key climate adaptation mitigation challenges for rice, cassava, and yam value chains in Africa. The System Organization has continued to streamline its structure and operations with a 26% budget reduction from 2024 to 2025.

Time-bound Management Actions:

- Proposed W1/2 Budget for 2026—27 and Programs' and Accelerators' 2026 PORBs are grounded in prioritization and comparative advantage analysis and set out across multiple evidence-based funding scenarios **(by November—December 2025)**
- Programs' / Accelerators' annual technical reporting will be accompanied by systematic reflection and adaptive management **(starting in 2026)**

5. Continuous risk assessment

15. ISDC's reviews recognize efforts to strengthen Program and Accelerator risk assessment but note that the depth and quality of risk analyses vary across the Inception Reports. Specifically, ISDC recommends clearer assessment of risk likelihood as well as more detailed mitigation planning with more frequent updates. It suggests consideration of additional risks, including misalignment with evolving policy environments, stakeholder engagement challenges, and potential failures of training.
16. Management recognizes these areas for improvement and is committed to further strengthening risk management across the Portfolio. This includes a concerted effort to enhance relevant knowledge and skills across Programs and Accelerators through targeted training. This will contribute towards more consistent risk identification, assessment, and mitigation planning throughout Programs' and Accelerators' planning and adaptive management processes, and thus more robust first-line risk management. These efforts will be backstopped by a new second-line, Integrated Partnership Risk and Internal Controls function that provides Portfolio- and Partnership-wide oversight, advice, and monitoring.

Time-bound Management Actions:

- First risk training modules to Program and Accelerator teams rolled out **(by the first half of 2026)**, with annual refresher sessions to follow
- Integrated Partnership Risk and Internal Controls function launched **(by end-2025)**
- Portfolio-wide risk reviews integrated into planning and reporting cycles starting **(from 2026)**

6. Reflecting on Food Frontiers and Security

17. In its overarching commentary, ISDC notes that it finds little evidence of comparative advantage and technical know-how in CGIAR for the Food Frontiers and Security Science Program (hereafter 'Frontiers'), particularly in Area of Work (AoW) 2: Fragile and Conflict-affected Food Systems. While recognizing the underlying political imperative for the work, and that the Program represents an exciting future-looking subject for CGIAR, ISDC flags an unclear comparative advantage and lack of expertise, and notes that several of the Program's other AoWs appear underfunded. The review suggests integrating the frontiers topic into other Programs and Accelerators; expanding potential areas of research under the frontiers concept; and a greater emphasis on frontiers in a future, revised Strategy.
18. Management thanks ISDC for its comments. The feedback has been valuable in guiding a review of the current and potential future role of Frontiers in the broader science and innovation Portfolio.
19. Management agrees on the need to better articulate the opportunities for Frontiers to meaningfully contribute to both the Portfolio and broader global food systems discourse, noting that the coming years will be critical in framing the post-2030 global development agenda. The context is sobering: more than 2/3 of the world's extreme poor will live in fragile and conflict-affected situations by 2030, nearly 70% of the global population will reside in cities by 2050, and 65 million people in 57 small island states already face intensifying climate and environmental pressures. These trends speak to the increasing future relevance of these food systems for CGIAR – and the value of a program that explicitly ensures that CGIAR's science is forward-looking. They demand bold, forward-looking science, as reflected in CGIAR leadership's, the IPB's, and the System Council's decisions to pursue deliberate programming for these systems – with the largest concentration of Funders' W2 earmarks being in fragile and conflict-affected food systems (FCAS), where robust partnerships and substantial work are on-going (e.g., in Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mozambique, Mali, etc). While the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and other international organizations continue to have a critical role in conflict-affected systems, CGIAR brings critical scientific expertise to rebuild product pipelines, value chains, and address food, land, and water systems challenges in conflict and post-conflict settings.
20. Specifically in FCAS, CGIAR faces a strategic choice: prepare for enhanced engagement through systematic capacity development; or accept marginal roles in an increasingly important operational domain where agricultural research and conflict prevention intersect with growing urgency. The 2025—30 Portfolio and Frontiers Program mark a move towards the former.
21. In response to the feedback received, Management will work to sharpen the Program's focus; explore opportunities to advance research on the suggested, additional frontier themes (bioconversion, circular economy, food sovereignty,

etc.); increase visibility of partnerships in and expertise on fragile and conflict-affected settings; utilize AoW1 to build further linkages across frontier food systems; and ensure that these efforts are clearly communicated both within and beyond CGIAR.

Time-bound Management Actions: Please refer to Management's responses to ISDC's Program-specific review in Annex I.

7. Revisiting Multifunctional Landscapes and Sustainable Farming

22. ISDC previously recommended merging the Multifunctional Landscapes and Sustainable Farming Science Programs to enable synergies and comparisons; arguing that it would position CGIAR to lead in generating evidence-based solutions tailored to diverse contexts. Having reviewed the Inception Reports and supporting materials for the two Programs, ISDC remains of the view that the justification for separating the two Programs is weak from a scientific and systems perspective. ISDC recognizes that there may be strong political imperatives to keep the two Programs separate and – if that is the case – recommends more focused and deliberate coordination tied to specific milestones.
23. Management notes with appreciation ISDC's comments and recommendations for positioning CGIAR to lead on scientific evidence for sustainable farming and multifunctional landscapes. On balance, Management maintains that CGIAR's 2025—30 Portfolio, partnerships, and impact contributions will be best served by two distinct but complementary Programs.
24. The Programs address interconnected but distinct elements of food, land, and water systems; at different scales; and using different approaches. Sustainable Farming focuses on addressing constraints at the farm level drawing on a range of disciplines, including soil science, water management, crop pests and diseases, adaptive management, and cropping systems. This requires the management of complex farm systems, and the development of holistic management solutions. The Program will be best served by maintaining this focus for effective research management and to enable the requisite granularity of its deliverables.
25. In contrast, Multifunctional Landscapes is primarily focused on the broader, sustainable land and water management across scales with a view to ensuring that a single area serves multiple purposes – including but not limited to agriculture, forestry, and recreation. This requires a clear understanding and optimization of production, restoration, and conservation objectives. The Program targets agroecology, nature-positive, regenerative, restorative, and other relevant solutions to develop contextualized decision-support systems to harness different co-benefits across farm-landscape scales.
26. Despite their differing scopes, the two Programs will develop coordinated plans to collaborate on challenges that require integrated solutions across farm and landscape levels. An example of this will be integrated water management

covering water catchment decisions that influence the solutions that could be applicable at farm level. The Programs' 2026 PORB will include specific, collaborative mechanisms to co-invest in and co-implement shared deliverables.

Time-bound Management Actions: Please refer to Management's responses to ISDC's Program-specific reviews in Annex I.

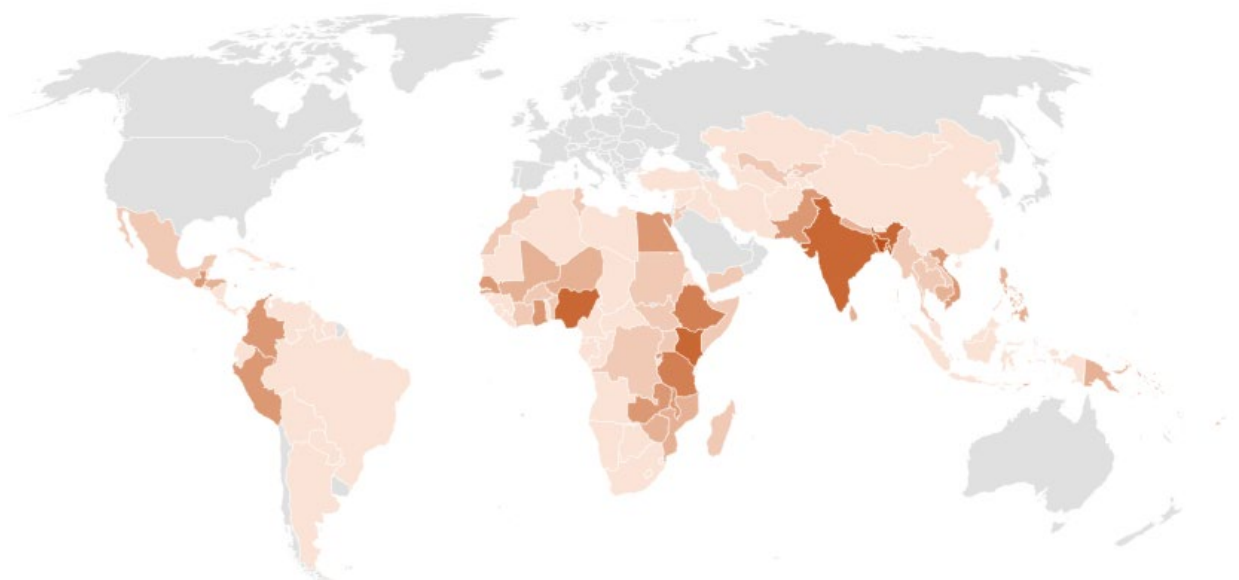
8. Portfolio cohesion and coherence

27. ISDC's overarching commentary reflects on Portfolio cohesion and coherence. It notes that Programs/ Accelerators articulate collaboration and cross-Portfolio linkages in their Inception Reports, but that the depth and coverage of those linkages is uneven and some key connections appear to be missing.
28. Management welcomes ISDC's observations and agrees that there is room for improvement in terms of how cross-Portfolio cohesion, coherence, and linkages are identified, articulated, and operationalized. Stepping back, it is worth recalling the progress already achieved:
- c. a streamlined Portfolio that takes CGIAR from 32 Research Initiatives and five Impact Area Platforms to just 8 Science Programs, a Scaling for Impact Program, and four Accelerators; thus significantly facilitating cross-Portfolio collaboration and reducing associated transaction costs;
 - d. an 'all of CGIAR' Portfolio that brings together all of CGIAR's work across all Centers and all sources and types of funding; thereby substantially raising the ambition for cohesion and coherence from a third of CGIAR's work to all of it; and
 - e. an integrated, Portfolio management structure that convenes science leadership from across all CGIAR Centers and all Programs and Accelerators both at the Portfolio level (through the CGIAR Global Science Team) and the Program/ Accelerator level (through inclusive Leadership Teams with Center representation).
29. Underpinned by these changes – and notwithstanding some key gaps – nearly all Programs and Accelerators are today reciprocally linked with nearly all other Programs and Accelerators, with those linkages reflected in updated 2025 PORBs¹⁸. Looking forward Management will continue to review and strengthen these linkages in future PORBs, with linked deliverables guided by prioritization. In addition, planning and adaptive management processes will explore key, emerging themes and areas of focus that are relevant to multiple Programs and Accelerators.

¹⁸ Programs' and Accelerators' updated 2025 PORBs can be found here: [link](#)

30. Similarly, while the Programs and Accelerators have distinct scopes and priorities, their geographic priorities overlap, offering significant opportunities for co-location of work, coherent partnerships, and synergies at the country and site levels (Figure 2). In-country collaboration will be further strengthened through country-level ToCs.

Figure 1: ‘Heat map’ of countries in scope/ in focus of Programs/ Accelerators



31. In addition to updating key elements of the 2025—30 Portfolio narrative to strengthen the articulation of Portfolio cohesion and coherence (see Section 2 above), Management will continue to focus on cross-Portfolio linkages in the development of Programs’ and Accelerators’ 2030 PORBs by end-2025.

Time-bound Management Actions: Please refer to Management’s responses to ISDC’s Program-specific reviews in Annex I.

9. An evolving Portfolio

32. In December 2024, the System Council approved a six-year Portfolio of 9 Programs and 4 Accelerators¹⁹. Consistent with that mandate, the Portfolio Inception Phase has focused on ensuring that each Program and Accelerator completes its core, outstanding design elements; is effectively operationalized; and that System Council, IPB, and ISDC feedback is addressed. Thus, more than the shape of the Portfolio as a whole, the Inception Phase has contributed to changes primarily at the Program/ Accelerator level; albeit guided by Portfolio-wide processes, templates, tools, and shared resources²⁰.

¹⁹ Chair’s Summary, 21st System Council meeting Berlin, Germany, 11—12 December 2024 ([link](#))

²⁰ Please refer to Management’s Update on the Portfolio Inception Phase for an overview ([link](#))

33. Across the Portfolio as a whole, the sharp decline in funds available to CGIAR science and innovations from 2024 to 2025 has resulted in a major contraction of the Portfolio compared with expectations during the design phase. For W1/2 alone, funding towards the Programs and Accelerators is currently expected to fall 24% below the Baseline Scenario of the W1/2 Budget approved by the CGIAR System Council in December 2024 (from US\$288.7m to US\$219.6m); and 29% below actual spend on CGIAR's Research Initiatives and Impact Area Platforms in 2024 (US\$311.2m).
34. As a result of Funders' W2 earmarks to Programs/ Accelerators and – in some cases – specific Areas of Work (AoW), as well as Management decision-making on the allocation of unearmarked W1 funds (e.g. to meet core commitments to Genebanks and funding Accelerators at minimum viable levels); these reductions are not distributed evenly across or within Programs and Accelerators. In most cases, Programs' and Accelerators' updated, June 2025 PORBs mark a reduction of about 30% in expected W1/2 funds compared with approved, December 2024 budget envelopes (see Table 1). With the updated, 2025 W1/2 funding expectations completed in June following extensive Funder engagement, adjustments to Programs' and Accelerators' 2025 funding envelopes have also had to accommodate actual expenditures and commitments from the start of the year.

Table 1: Status of 2025 W1/2 funding as of 5 September 2025 (all indicative figures net of CSP and risk)²¹

Program/ Accelerator	Baseline Scenario ("Baseline") (mUS\$)	Latest, indicative W2 ("W2") (mUS\$)	Latest W1 & carryover ("W1") (mUS\$)	W2 + W1 (mUS\$)	(W2 + W1) / Baseline (%)	(W2 + W1) – Baseline (mUS\$)
Better Diets and Nutrition	21.5	15.1	0.03	15.1	70%	-6.5
Breeding for Tomorrow	51.8	20.7	15.2	35.9	69%	-15.9
Capacity Sharing	1.9	0.7	1.5	2.2	117%	0.3
Climate Action	18.1	8.6	4.1	12.7	70%	-5.4
Digital Transformation ²²	4.7	3.9	2.8	6.6	141%	1.9
Food Frontiers and Security	12.6	6.6	2.3	8.9	71%	-3.7
Gender Equality and Inclusion	12.0	3.7	4.8	8.5	71%	-3.5
Genebanks	26.5	8.8	17.7	26.5	100%	0.0
Multifunctional Landscapes	18.7	18.8	0.00	18.8	101%	0.1
Policy Innovations	20.0	7.3	6.7	14.0	70%	-6.0
Scaling for Impact	36.4	15.8	9.6	25.3	70%	-11.0
Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Foods	28.4	3.1	16.7	19.8	70%	-8.6
Sustainable Farming	36.0	12.9	12.2	25.1	70%	-10.9
Total	288.7	126.0	93.6	219.6	76%	-69.1

²¹ The CGIAR Financing Plan Dashboard provides additional details on 2025 W1/2 funds by Funder and Program/ Accelerator: [link](#)

²² Most of the funding towards the Digital Transformation Accelerator is earmarked towards a single AoW over a three-year period. Hence, the Accelerator has been granted access its 2025 Surge Scenario envelope to launch other core, cross-Portfolio functions at a minimum viable level.

35. Within Programs and Accelerators, knowledge-driven prioritization and comparative advantage analysis – in combination with Funders’ W2 earmarks to specific AoWs – have guided significant funding adjustments compared with preliminary work plans and budgets approved in February 2025. Across the 66 AoWs set out in the 13 System Council-approved Program and Accelerator Proposals, 7 (11%) are expected to receive more funding than anticipated in February, 23 (35%) are reduced by up to 25%, 30 (45%) are reduced by between 25% and 50%, and 6 by more than 50%.

Table 2: W1/2 funding changes by AoW during the Portfolio Inception Phase

Number of Areas of Work	W1/2 funding change from February to June 2025
7	> 0%
23	-25% <= 0%
30	-50% <= -25%
6	< -50%

36. Programs and Accelerators have also used the Inception Phase to identify and align on ways to further focus their work and streamline their internal structures. Given existing 2025 Funder earmarks to AoWs, top-level changes to Program/ Accelerator structures will be effective from January 2026. For example, the Sustainable Farming Science Program will transition from eight to five AoWs, and the Multifunctional Landscapes Science Program will move from seven to five. At lower levels, the Scaling for Impact Program will focus activities under its largest AoW (2) on a small number of prioritized Flagships; while nearly all Programs and Accelerators have taken steps to consolidate activities and investments to fewer high-level outputs.
37. Prioritization in the context of reduced funding has also triggered efforts to focus on fewer, high-priority geographies. Six Programs used prioritization to narrow down their intended lists of targeted countries as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Evolution of geographic prioritization during the Portfolio Inception Phase

Program	No. of countries targeted in Sept 2024 Proposal	No. of countries targeted in June 2025 Inception Report
Better Diets and Nutrition	21	15
Food Frontiers and Security	75	29
Multifunctional Landscapes	16	11
Policy Innovations	37	15
Scaling for Impact	47	32
Sust. Animal and Aquatic Foods	23	17

38. Ultimately, the 2025—30 Portfolio aims to maximize Programs' and Accelerators' contributions to impact in line with CGIAR's Strategy. During the Inception Phase, Programs and Accelerators updated their ToCs, results frameworks, and MELIA Plans; and Portfolio-level impact contributions were projected based on Programs' and Accelerators' updated, intended 2030 outcomes as presented to the System Council at its 22nd meeting in June²³. Building on further refinement of those 2030 targets for different, potential levels of funding; future W1/2 Budgets and associated funding scenarios will be linked to projected benefits at the Portfolio level. This will also allow CGIAR to articulate the implications of any future funding changes on its ability to reach intended Portfolio- and Partnership-wide impact ambitions.
39. Looking forward, the Portfolio will continue to evolve in response to emerging opportunities and needs, performance, and lessons learned. As noted above, Management will update key elements of the 2025—30 Portfolio Narrative in response to ISDC's feedback and to further reflect recent developments. In addition, prioritization at the Portfolio and Program/ Accelerator levels will guide upcoming W1/2 Budget proposals and associated allocations of funds by Program and Accelerator.

²³ See June 2025 presentation on the Portfolio Inception Phase ([link](#))

10. Timeline of next steps

40. Table 4 summarizes key, upcoming milestones consistent with the time-bound Management Actions identified above.

Table 4: Key, upcoming milestones

10 September	System Council, IPB, and ISDC touch points: presentation of ISDC's reviews of the Program and Accelerator Inception Reports and relevant supporting materials, and a draft Management Action Plan in response to those reviews
12 September	Intended final Management Action Plan circulated for IPB review and endorsement
27—29 September	6 th meeting of the IPB: decision moment on Management Action Plan
October	Management Action Plan circulated for System Council endorsement
November	Proposed W1/2 Budget for 2026—27 circulated for IPB concurrence followed by System Council approval • W1/2 funding scenarios informed by Funder outreach in September—October • For each funding scenario, proposed allocation of funds by Program/ Accelerator guided by prioritization and comparative advantage analysis • Underpinned by an update of key elements of the 2025—30 Portfolio Narrative
21—22 November	7 th meeting of the IPB: decision moment on proposed, W1/2 Budget for 2026—27
10—11 December	23 rd meeting of the System Council: decision moment on proposed, W1/2 Budget for 2026—27
December	Subject to System Council approval of the W1/2 Budget for 2026—27; 2026 Program/ Accelerator PORBs approved by EMD • Internal allocations of W1/2 funds under applicable scenarios guided by prioritization and comparative advantage analysis • SMART KPIs by Center, year, and W1/2 funds invested • Relevant Program-/ Accelerator-level recommendations addressed (e.g. cross-Portfolio linkages)

Annex I: Responding to ISDC's feedback on the Programs and Accelerators

1. [Better Diets and Nutrition](#)
2. [Breeding for Tomorrow](#)
3. [Capacity Sharing](#)
4. [Climate Action](#)
5. [Digital Transformation](#)
6. [Food Frontiers and Security](#)
7. [Gender Equality and Inclusion](#)
8. [Genebanks](#)
9. [Multifunctional Landscapes](#)
10. [Policy Innovations](#)
11. [Scaling for Impact](#)
12. [Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Foods](#)
13. [Sustainable Farming](#)

1. Better Diets and Nutrition

ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
<u>Actionable Recommendation i</u> The Program aims to achieve population-level dietary changes in several countries by 2030. A question that arises is whether there is sufficient time to undertake the research, convince local policymakers with results, scale up, and shift the dial on diets by 2030. A further question is whether there is sufficient integrative work across AoWs in various countries to achieve these country-level impacts.	This is a salient point, especially set against the current funding climate. The Program targets are based on past and existing investments. The ToC captures the logical steps needed to achieve the intended change in population-level diets. Research has been ongoing in most of the BDN target countries, providing a conducive environment (being one of the criteria for target country selection to enable BDN research building upon previous achievements in, for example, Agriculture for Nutrition & Health (A4NH), Sustainable Healthy Diets through Food Systems Transformation (SHiFT) and Fruits & Vegetables for Sustainable and Healthy Deits (FRESH). In addition, not all countries will require all activities (i.e. AoWs), for example, in cases when specific activities or specific pathway have been already implemented by previous programs or by other actors. BDN will complement this work and avoid re-doing activities and will actively seek partnerships to avoid duplication of efforts. Nonetheless, while we recognize that our targets are ambitious, we note they should be considered conditional on maintaining the current funding environment, particularly for countries to implement changes suggested by research; if it deteriorates further, we may have to adjust our targets based on the level of that deterioration. However, for now, we are confident we will be able to see expected changes in population-level diets in our target countries. Development of country-level ToCs including assumptions, MELIA studies addressing these, examine existing data on dietary changes in target areas coupled with national datasets to provide a better insight into potential changes	The Program, led by the MELIA Focal Point, will develop country-level TOC.	Q2 2026
		The Program, led by the MELIA Focal Point, will conduct specific MELIA studies in countries.	Q4 2026
		The Program will conduct foresight analysis of changes in targets that can be expected. These include coupling existing studies to assess dietary changes within target areas coupled with national datasets where possible.	Q4 2026
		The Program will plan a “pause and reflect” session on the need to adjust set targets.	Q4 2026

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
	in the targets, will provide management and stakeholders with the needed information to adjust targets and activities in the target countries or to confirm what was planned at the beginning. In the annual 'pause and reflect' moment, specific attention will be given to evaluate and adjust the targets if needed.		
<u>Actionable Recommendation ii</u> More reflection is needed on how research over 2022-24 has informed the direction of the work agenda described here. The link to the 2024 technical Reports is acknowledged, however these are numerous and do not enable direct, succinct justification for the work envisaged here. Perhaps this reflects space limitations, but nevertheless, there was probably scope to do a bit more thoughtful linking between past work and current plans. Related to this, a clear description of how previous evaluations and impact assessments during the 2022-24 period have informed the work agenda would have been helpful. It appears that this information was not available in time for the evaluation team's inputs into evaluability.	The point is well-taken. We indeed did feel constrained by the template itself. Our 2025 workplan has some specific deliverables that will be able to address these concerns. We will take responsibility for ensuring that in all these outputs, an explicit statement about how the previous work informed the current Program is included. For example, these specific outputs include but are not limited to two (virtual) seminars describing what has been learned from AoW1 research in Ethiopia and Vietnam, two briefs synthesizing the knowledge generated by CGIAR Research Initiatives on (1) diets, (2) consumers, and (3) food environment during 2022-2024, and a brief summarizing the country engagement strategy applied in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Vietnam and how this has helped countries with the design and implementation of their national action plans for food systems transformation. In addition, we will explain this on the Better Diets and Nutrition microsite in simple terms for a general audience. With regards to the point on previous evaluations and impact assessments from 2022-24, none of the incoming Initiatives or Platform in our Program completed <i>program</i> evaluations during that first three-year cycle. Due to the early end of the Initiatives and Platform, most could not commission independent assessments. Some started evaluations, which will be ready in 2026 during the first three-year cycle.	The Program will conduct two hybrid (or virtual) seminars synthesizing previous CGIAR-generated evidence on consumer behavior/drivers of food choice and on food environments and the way forward in BDN synthesizing CGIAR-generated evidence from Ethiopia and Vietnam on consumers and food environments.	Q4 2025
		The Program will finalize two briefs synthesizing CGIAR-generated evidence on diets, consumers and food environment.	Q4 2025
		The Program will finalize one brief synthesizing research on finance innovations and research gaps.	Q4 2025
		The Program will finalize one brief synthesizing the lessons learned, strengths and weaknesses of engagement activities with Fruits & Vegetables stakeholders in Benin, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania.	Q4 2025
		The Program will conduct a review of pathways for uptake of	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
		biofortified crops and health-enhancing staples.	
		Add a section to the microsite explaining to a general audience how Better Diets and Nutrition was informed by the results from the 2022-2024 Portfolio.	Q4 2026
		The Program will conduct two hybrid (or virtual) seminars highlighting what we have learned from the end-to-end approach in Tanzania and Sri Lanka, and the country engagement in Ethiopia, Vietnam and Bangladesh, and ways forward.	Q4 2026
		The Program will finalize two briefs describing country engagement strategy in AoW1/SHiFT and AoW3/FRESH countries, and a synthesis brief on how these can be merged into a single country engagement strategy for BDN.	Q4 2026

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
<u>Actionable Recommendation iii</u> In this challenging funding environment, the Program team may also benefit from developing a strategy for what work area or geography can be reduced or rationalized if there is a future constraint to funding. While prioritization to arrive at the current agenda has been described in detail, it is not clear what the plan may look like if there is a need for further prioritization (although it is understood that no researcher would wish to overtly set out what could be cut if push came to shove!).	Thank you for this recommendation. We agree with the importance of navigating this challenging funding environment. The entire Program Leadership Team will be actively engaged in the upcoming prioritization process being led by the Global Science Team. This process will allow us, as a Program, to prioritize funds by AoW and geography in each business cycle for different funding scenarios.	Program-level prioritization reflected in 2026 PORB, showing priorities for different funding scenarios.	Q4 2025
<u>Actionable Recommendation iv</u> The comparative advantage analysis (CA) would benefit from a more complete consideration of who else is capable of delivering various streams of work—currently the analysis is very partial and focused largely on a limited/selective set of institutions, many of which the Program is already working with.	Thank you. The Program completed its comparative advantage analysis based on a mix of existing partners, potential partners, and competitors. To provide something readable, we decided to use only one example of each party type. Looking forward, for the Program’s 2026 PORB and prioritization process, we will complete a more granular analysis against potential providers of specific work in potential high-priority countries.	The Program’s 2026 PORB and prioritization process will include a more granular comparative advantage analysis against potential providers of specific work in potential high-priority countries.	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
<u>Actionable Recommendation v</u> As noted in our comments in the earlier round of reviews, further clarity is needed on the distinctiveness of AoW 3 compared to AoWs 1 and 2, which are focused on consumers/food environments/markets aspects that are also part of the end-to-end approach of AoW 3. Also, given the complexity and cost of AoW 3, clarity is needed on implementation of AoW 3 in several countries concurrently (and justification for this current approach), and whether instead there is scope to harmonize and save resources, for example via cross-country learning.	Thank you for this comment. We recognize the internal structure and logic of the Program requires further review and improvement. The Program Leadership Team will consult with key stakeholders in Q4 2025 and reflect on lessons learned to date with a view to putting forward actionable improvements from 2026.	The Program Leadership Team, with input from key stakeholders and drawing on lessons learned, examines different options for framing (or restructuring) the Program with a view to putting forward actionable improvements with effect from 2026	Q4 2025

2. Breeding for Tomorrow

ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Clarify cross-Program linkages with Better Diets and Nutrition [note, links with Climate Action and Sustainable Farming are elucidated in a response below]—key connections are currently implicit, scattered across documents or hidden in target product profiles (TPPs), limiting strategic coherence of the main Report.	Target product profiles (TPP's) are the entry points where nutrition targets are defined, based on nutrition challenges identified in market segments. Better Diets and Nutrition's Theory of Change explicitly incorporates this link by contributing to the definition of nutrition challenges in market segments. E.g., AoW4 on <i>Biofortified Staples</i>' HLO3 "<i>Framework for embedding nutrition into breeding pipelines and processes</i>" will develop a concrete framework for ensuring expertise on nutrition and health from the Better Diets and Nutrition Program is involved in setting nutrition targets, captured in TPP's. Operationally, during Product Advancement and Planning Meetings (PAPM) where TPP's are revised and when product advancement decisions are made, social scientists from Better Diets and Nutrition are present, informing and influencing these decisions to ensure the research links between the two Programs are fostered. As noted in the Inception Report this is in addition to the Breeding for Tomorrow-Better Diets and Nutrition Taskforce, that collaborates with Harvest Plus to develop a joint research agenda on healthy and nutritionally enhanced crops.	1. Share/report the composition of recent product design team (PDT) meetings that include nutrition scientists to demonstrate their contribution to national and regional breeding priorities. 2. Publish the protocol for product design team meetings and product advancement and planning meetings where the role of nutrition scientists is defined and the linkage with 'Better Diets and Nutrition' is explicit. 3. Report and share (a) the number of TPP's containing nutritional traits and (b) the number of released products in 2022, 2023 and 2024 containing improved nutritional traits with the Breeding for Tomorrow-Better Diets and Nutrition taskforce.	1. Q3 2025 2. Q4 2025 3. Q3 2025
Enhance inclusion of farmers as partners—actively engage farmer organizations, including cooperatives, throughout breeding and delivery.	Farmer organizations (and individual farmers) are currently part of the transdisciplinary approach to product design. They are part of Product Design Teams— who define national and regional breeding priorities, identify and define market segments, and develop the TPP for each market segment. In cases where value chains are governed by mid-stream actors such as processors (e.g., in rice and cassava), product design also involves these stakeholders. Accelerated Breeding's on farm verification (OFV) is firmly being established as a critical stage in variety evaluation prior to registration and release. OFV methods, including TRICOT, rely entirely on a large number of individual farmer	1. Report/provide the composition of recent PDTs highlighting the inclusion of farmer representatives. 2. Share the protocol for conducting product advancement and planning meetings that explicitly include a role for farmer groups/representatives. 3. Share the protocol for OFV (particularly Tricot) where the role	1. Q3 2025 and ongoing 2. Q4 2025 3. Q3 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
	evaluations and feedback on variety performance that guides variety advancement into the registration and release process. In AoW1 on Market Intelligence, novel tools (e.g., IGA , VPCT) have been developed to directly involve farmers in the co-design of future varieties. These methods will be further developed and scaled to enhance inclusion of farmers and other value chain actors (e.g., processors) as equal partners in co-design.	of farmers (feedback, ranking etc.) is highlighted.	
Clarify inclusivity strategy—articulate how market-oriented approaches will serve vulnerable populations. Ensure alignment between stated priorities like food security and poverty alleviation and the currently low emphasis on social inclusion. The Inception Report emphasizes a strong focus on markets and high-impact opportunities, but it remains unclear HOW this approach will avoid promoting variety dominance that could undermine system diversity and resilience. How does the program not double work done by the private sector?	Firstly, AoW 1 Market Intelligence is broader than just economic “market orientation”. Market intelligence covers a broad set of indicators and intelligence that steer breeding pipelines to a diverse set of impacts across the five Impact Areas. For example, GloMIP features 58 indicators for <i>Gender Equality, Youth and Social Inclusion</i>. A judicious use of these indicators at the market segment level enables the Program to identify and prioritize market segments that have high impact opportunities in the dimension of social inclusion. Secondly, the term <i>market-driven</i> can be understood to encompass any exchange between farmers and other seed system actors that supply quality planting materials of improved varieties to farmers. Those “markets” may include formal commercial markets, or village-based enterprises, or women’s farmer organizations, or neighbor-to-neighbor seed exchanges, or other types of exchanges that are determined by the crop, its reproductive biology, the country, and the context. Breeding for Tomorrow’s key role is ensuring that these exchange mechanisms are linked to breeding programs (and vice versa) to ensure that (a) new genetic materials are reaching farmers, (b) that farmers’ preferences are reaching breeding programs, and (c) policies, regulations, services, and institutions are enabling these exchanges. Finally, the Program has a well-articulated strategy for gender inclusion (developed by its predecessor, the Genetic Innovation Science Group) and continues to test real-world solutions to	We believe we already cover these points broadly in our current work and approach to breeding. Looking forward, the Program’s 2026 PORB process will ensure that product pipelines operationalize the strategy on gender inclusion through concrete deliverables. Beyond that, the Program will continue with the current approach and methods for ensuring inclusivity, prioritization of work and crops using the broad definitions of market intelligence and market-driven, and prioritization of market segments where the private sector’s breeding efforts are absent.	Q3 2025 and ongoing

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
	reach marginalized, vulnerable, and poor communities through a large number of project, activities, and experiments, many of which are documented and analyzed in recent special issues here https://www.sciencedirect.com/special-issue/10C8F3ZM34T and https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/oaga/50/4. Future planning will ensure that the product pipelines operationalize this strategy and associated actions on gender. Regarding reaching marginalized, vulnerable, and poor communities, or addressing gaps left by private breeding companies with an approach that targets market- and an impact-driven strategy – we respectfully assume that the reviewer has not understood that marginalized, vulnerable, and poor communities and those not supported by private breeding companies are our target market. So, when the Program refers to targeting market- and an impact-driven strategy, we are focused on these end-users. We create impact by breeding for both subsistence farmers AND for farmers that hope to sell surplus produce. This is clear from our Theory of Change (greater food security and increased nutrition and increased income opportunities).		
Continue to refine the ToC —address incomplete outcome linkages.	The incoming MELIA focal Point is working on this to finalize the TOC.	Finalized TOC with complete outcome links.	Q3 2025
Expand the risk framework —include risks like climate shocks, political instability, mobility constraints, and potential loss of momentum/ capacity from prior investments + reduced funding.	We agree - there are real funding risks, particularly with the absence of USAID and the onflow of governments reducing or diverting their ODA. Breeding for Tomorrow and CGIAR will need to turn toward innovative ways of creating and expressing our impact and value to elicit new funding opportunities. Other risks, including climate shocks and political instability, should be included in the risk register.	1. The Program's Communications Lead to refine its communications strategy to emphasize the Program's value proposition towards funders. 2. Revisit external risks in the risk register, add and include mitigation strategies.	1. Q4 2025 2. Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Advance participatory MELIA —embed learning and feedback loops with stronger local stakeholder input.	The new MELIA focal Point works also with the Sustainable Farming Program and is refining the MELIA strategy to align with other Programs and to better knit the MEL component of AoWs to reinforce feedback loops (for example, the On-Farm-Verification trials informing product design and advancement).	1. MELIA lead to develop the MELIA strategy including highlighting feedback loops.	Q3 2025
Weakness 1. Performance and resilience of “improved varieties” depend not only on genetics but also on sustainable crop management and functional system diversity. Yet, the B4T Inception Report and ToC lack explicit links to “Sustainable Farming” or “Climate Action” Programs.	Consider our response to the Program’s linkage to Better Diets and Nutrition (see above). Agronomists and climate scientists are included in Product Design Teams (setting breeding priorities) and product advancement and planning meetings (where varieties are advanced in breeding pipelines). These scientists are often from the Sustainable Farming and Climate Action Programs and ensure agronomy and climate change considerations are mainstreamed in breeding priority setting and advancement. Agronomists and climate scientists are also invited to contribute to the On Farm Verification methodology and protocol setting discussions to ensure that On Farm Verification (e.g., TRICOT) methods are robust and inclusive of agronomic and climate adaptation/mitigation priorities. Moreover, links to Sustainable Farming are being strengthened through alignment of priority countries and testing Breeding for Tomorrow’s new varieties in Sustainable Farming’s Sustainable Cropping Systems trials starting in 2026. Discussions have been held with Climate Action leadership to identify opportunities for interaction and alignment. In October 2025, the two Programs will review and discuss: 1. How Breeding for Tomorrow breeds and tests crops for future environments. 2. What farming systems and products will be required in the future to reduce GHG emissions and add more carbon to soils.	1. Provide the composition of recent PDTs to highlight the role and inclusion of agronomists and climate scientists. 2. Publish the process and protocol for product advancement and planning meetings highlighting the inclusion and role of agronomists and climate scientists. 3. Invite agronomists and climate scientists to review and contribute to protocols and methods to scale up On Farm Verification as a key stage gate in variety evaluation. 4. Include explicit links to these two Programs in the ToC. 5. Host a meeting with Climate Action Program to develop and align on interactions, expectations and deliverables between programs 6. Review inclusion of Breeding for Tomorrow’s products in Sustainable Farming’s field trials.	1. Q3 2025 and ongoing 2. Q4 2025 3. Q4 2025 4. Q3 2025 5. Q4 2025 6. Q1 2026 and thereafter
B4T’s success appears highly dependent on	“Farmer-led seed cooperatives” are important partners. They are <u>implicit</u> in the mention of SMEs and farmers’ organizations in	Depending on the scale, scope, and mandate of farmer-led seed	Q1 2026 (and each subsequent year as

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
scaling partners. While small-medium enterprises (SMEs) and NGOs are named, farmer-led seed cooperatives are barely mentioned. It would also help address the key research questions such as: “How can bottlenecks between variety development and seed systems be overcome to improve smallholders’ access to seed?” and “What extent of value proposition is needed to motivate adoption?”. This gap in partnership limits B4T’s potential for inclusive outcomes.	the Inception Report, especially where they play a role in driving the adoption of improved varieties and varietal turnover. We chose not to provide an exhaustive list of every type of organizational partner because the nomenclature varies from country to country and because of space constraints in the Inception Report. But a more comprehensive listing and analysis of partner types and partnership mechanisms is outlined in the Program’s 2025 Plan of Results and Budget.	cooperatives, their involvement in the Program as scaling partners will range from (a) including them in regional crop breeding networks; (b) including them in PDT meetings for specific crop x region networks where they are important; or (c) including them in capacity building activities on seed production technologies, delivery, scaling, etc.	part of annual review and reflect period).
Given the goal of complementing private sector efforts, a critical question to consider is whether maize should remain a CGIAR priority under constrained funding. Should maize still be prioritized given the fact that 1) private sector engagement is strong for maize, 2) maize-based production systems are	The Program believes maize should be included because private breeding sectors are strong in upper middle and high income countries while Breeding for Tomorrow focuses on smallholder needs in low and lower-middle income countries; as part of its comparative advantage analysis and resource allocation models, the Program accounts for the role of the private sector and strong NARES in maize (and other crops such as rice or potato), ensuring we do not duplicate work done by these actors; the Program also accounts for countries’ priorities (for 40 out of 47 African countries surveyed by the African Seed Trade Association, maize is among the top four priority crops); crops are part of a diet and farmers often grow maize as a component of <i>their</i> farming and livelihood system.	Review priority crops and associated market segments by country.	Q1 2026 (and each subsequent year as part of annual review and reflect period).

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
neither very resilient nor nutritious?			
Innovations such as digital seed platforms, machine learning, and rapid breeding methods are well-aligned with optimizing product development, their direct link to driving uptake and maximizing impact remains ambiguous. Moreover, the effectiveness of the Program could be significantly strengthened by positioning farmers not only as beneficiaries, but as equitable partners throughout the breeding and scaling processes.	Optimizing product development is one component of Breeding for Tomorrow's work – its link to uptake and impact maximization is elucidated through faster and better targeted variety development, which allows for scaling to impact in a faster and more honed way. It is important to optimize both CGIAR and National Partners' product development to foster cutting edge science and ensure product release evolves and is constantly well aligned to changing conditions within market segments. The Program agrees that farmers should be considered equitable partners. Farmers are already considered a key component of multidisciplinary Product Design Teams (PDTs) that establish breeding priorities and decide on variety advancement (see prior responses). Moreover, the Program's efforts to scale up On Farm Verification (OFV) is intentional in involving many farmers in variety evaluation under farmer managed conditions and using farmer feedback to make the critical decisions on which products/varieties to advance into registration trials and ultimately release. The same applies to the delivery aspects of the Program. Farmers are already considered a key component of Breeding for Tomorrow's delivery and scaling strategies. Their involvement is meant to be expanded and amplified by innovations in a range of new and novel mechanisms such as digital seed networks, seed traceability tools, etc.	1. Share/ report on the composition of PDTs to highlight the role of farmers in establishing breeding priorities. 2. Share OFV protocols and methodology clearly articulating how farmers evaluate varieties and provide feedback that: a. Informs variety advancement b. provides additional insights that can be incorporated into the identification of market segments and TPP development. These protocols are available from the 1000Farms Network. The CG-NARES collaborative model clearly highlights the importance of OFV as a key stage in product development and this diagram/model can be provided immediately.	1. Q3 2025 and ongoing 2. Q3 2025
Inclusive Delivery (AoW 3), heavily depends on the effectiveness of scaling partners, but it is largely unclear how this efficiency	It is well understood that gaps in partnerships may limit Breeding for Tomorrow's potential for inclusive outcomes. As such, we agree that the Program needs to address key research questions such as: "How can bottlenecks between variety development and seed systems be overcome to improve smallholders' access to seed?" and "What extent of value proposition is needed to	Share partner assessment process (note: cannot publicly share the improvement plans because of privacy concerns).	Q3 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
will be actively strengthened.	motivate adoption?” This is central to the research-for-development agenda set forth under AoW3 (Inclusive Delivery), in AoW5 (Enable), and across the Program. The Inclusive Delivery and Enable AoWs have updated the partner assessment process in Q2 2025 to include an evaluation of seed systems’ capacity. Capacity gaps identified in the seed systems assessment are now included in the crosscutting partner improvement/modernization plan. These improvement plans are being shared with regional crop networks so that key recommendations can be included in current and future project renewals and proposal development.		
The low aggregate score of just 5 out of 100 for the Gender, Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion (GEYSI) Impact Area gives the impression that social inclusion has not been strongly prioritized in the overall strategy. At the same time, high priority is given to food security and poverty alleviation.	We completely agree that gender equality, youth, and social inclusion (GEYSI) are important components of breeding’s impact and go hand in hand with enhancing food security and poverty alleviation. The designation of an aggregate score of five in the prioritization exercise does not preclude our commitment to GEYSI, as product conceptualization and TPP design always include gender experts and these processes, as a basic criterion, must be gender intentional. Data collected from OFV trials will be gender disaggregated to ensure unique gender perspectives are included in product advancement decisions. The score of five reflects the <i>relative</i> potential of the Breeding for Tomorrow Program to impact gender equality relative to the other Impact Areas that the Program will more concretely ameliorate. It does not mean we do not consider it as a priority and include it as a foundational aspect of our work, but that we understand that relative to other impact areas and other Programs within the Portfolio, our ability to shift the dial is more limited.	Highlight the gender intentional aspects, processes, and tools of the Program’s work (product conceptualization, TPP design, product advancement meetings, GloMIP indicators, etc.). See also above on product pipeline-specific gender actions in 2026 PORBs.	Q4 2025
To strengthen long-term relevance, a stronger foresight lens beyond 2035 is recommended, including explicit collaboration	We agree with this comment. The aspects on Better Diets and Nutrition, Sustainable Farming, Climate Action Programs and the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator have been previously addressed.	The linkage between Breeding for Tomorrow and Better Diets and Nutrition, which has been embedded in both Program’s Theory of Change, will be used as proof-of-concept and	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
between Market Intelligence and CGIAR's Better Diets and Nutrition and Climate Action, Sustainable Farming and Gender Equality and Inclusion Programs.	Strengthening foresight capacity is being done by Market Intelligence (also establishing strong linkages with the Policy Innovation Program) and is a strategic priority outlined by the Program's management. Market Intelligence is currently investing in advanced modelling approaches (economic, pest, disease, climate, environment) to project the current database of market segments to the future (2030-2050) and develop forward-looking indicators of market intelligence.	a meeting will be held with the Directors of Climate Action, Sustainable Farming and Gender Equality and Inclusion to propose concrete activities for collaboration and changes to the Theory of Change where appropriate.	

3. Capacity Sharing

ISDC feedback/ recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
The Inception Report demonstrates strong foundations in co-design, stakeholder engagement, and comparative advantage analysis. This inclusive and iterative design process has identified areas of strength and identified user needs where the Accelerator can drive impact. Its integration within the CGIAR scientific ecosystem is a clear strength, offering opportunities to co-develop tailored learning tools and scale outcomes through strategic partnerships. Stakeholder engagement throughout the design process is a clear strength and serves as proof of concept for further co-design, with mechanisms like planned Communities of Practice and SSTC analysis contributing to legitimacy and trust.	Many thanks for this comprehensive and very positive feedback.	N/A	N/A
Recommendation 1: Explicitly align AoWs, ToC, and MELIA indicators with CGIAR's Impact Areas and SDGs. <i>This reflects the broader ISDC feedback that the causal pathways linking activities of the Capacity Sharing Accelerator to CGIAR Impact Areas and SDGs remain generic.</i>	We partly agree with this recommendation in that our ToC indeed has generic causal links from our single 2030 outcome to Impact Areas and SDGs. We note however, that our ToC links activities, outputs, intermediary outcomes and our 2030 outcome in an explicit and detailed manner. The reason for generic causal linkages beyond our 2030 outcome is not due to an oversight but reflects the very nature of the Capacity Sharing Accelerator. As a crosscutting support mechanism, the Capacity Sharing Accelerator strengthens all forms of capacity development in Science Programs (SPs), Centers, and the other Accelerators, as described in detail in our ToC and Inception Report.	As part of the EA process, further explain and clarify how the 2030 outcome of the Capacity Sharing Accelerator makes an indirect contribution to all system-level impact areas and the related SDGs.	Q4 2025

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	Across the projects implemented by these entities, different forms, types and levels of capacity development are ubiquitous and essential for achieving their respective outcomes, related CGIAR impact areas, and SDGs. The Capacity Sharing Accelerator hence acts as “oil in the machinery” of CGIAR’s comprehensive and diverse capacity development efforts. Because of this, the Capacity Sharing Accelerator links to all impact areas and SDGs rather than to only a few selected ones. These linkages are many and diverse, essentially reflecting all the ways capacity development in CGIAR projects can contribute to the respective project- and system-level goals. We therefore do not consider it feasible to describe these linkages in detail, nor do we consider it appropriate to only select a single (or a few) impact areas or SDGs. Instead, we consider it more informative to describe in detail how the Capacity Sharing Accelerator supports better capacity development practices in the CGIAR and then to make the well-funded assumption that better capacity development in SPs, Centers and the other Accelerators will contribute to strengthened development impacts (impact areas and SDGs). Ultimately, we chose this way deliberately also to avoid any risk of double counting.		
Recommendation 2: Clarify how research questions i) link to actual capacity development and ii) how that will be prioritized and measured.	We agree with this recommendation. 1. Regarding the first part, we will explain more clearly how our research (defined by our 4 research questions), taken together, leads to our 2030 outcome of improved capacity development across the entire CGIAR. 2. Regarding the second part, we note that the Capacity Sharing Accelerator focuses on supporting Programs, Centers and other Accelerators with their own capacity development efforts. As such, the prioritization and measurement of these efforts is primarily the responsibility of these entities. That said, our work in the Capacity Sharing Innovation Lab (AoW1) will produce good practice guidance both on prioritization and measurement of the	We will refine these two points as part of the Evaluability Assessment process	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback/ recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
	different forms of capacity development implemented by these entities. The South-South and Triangular cooperation (AoW3) will also involve prioritization of efforts based on stakeholder needs and interests.		
Recommendation 3: Clarify the Marketplace's function, delivery (and business) model, and feedback mechanisms. <i>This reflects broader ISDC feedback that the role, function, and sustainability of the Capacity Sharing Marketplace are not clearly enough defined, creating doubts about its long-term viability.</i>	We agree with this recommendation. We see the Marketplace not only as a repository but as a living platform for knowledge exchange, matchmaking, and co-creation, designed to support Capacity Sharing's broader objectives of strengthening research capacity and partnerships in CGIAR and NARS. To enhance its role and sustainability, we will: 1. Clarify the business model: AoW2 will prepare a short note outlining the Marketplace's core functions (knowledge curation, matchmaking, analytics/insights), primary user groups (CGIAR staff, partners, donors, external researchers), and delivery approach. 2. Position the Marketplace as a critical system tool by explicitly linking it to CGIAR priorities and platforms on capacity sharing, innovation scaling, and partnership management. 3. Ensure sustainability through low-cost maintenance and shared ownership: costs are minimal once operational, covered by Capacity Sharing resources in this phase, and after 2030 either by a very low user fee for selected external users or by central/SO resources. 4. Enhance functionality to drive uptake by embedding user feedback loops, usage analytics, and targeted outreach so that the Marketplace evolves with user needs. 5. Explore partnerships with external platforms (regional hubs, funders, universities) to increase visibility, enable interoperability, and strengthen shared ownership.	1. Draft and circulate a short "Marketplace business model" note clarifying core functions, users, delivery approach, and sustainability options 2. Define and integrate user feedback and usage analytics mechanisms into the Marketplace platform 3. Pilot outreach with selected CGIAR teams and partners to test Marketplace functionality and gather feedback 4. Explore long-term hosting and funding options (e.g., SO resourcing, small external user fee) 5. Identify potential external partnerships for interoperability and shared ownership (e.g., regional platforms, universities)	Q4 2025 Q2 2026 Q3 2026 Q4 2026 2027

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ISDC feedback/ recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Recommendation 4: Enhance MELIA by defining i) baselines and ii) including impact-oriented metrics. <i>This also links to recommendation 1 and the related ISDC feedback.</i>	We respectfully disagree with this recommendation. While we fully recognize the importance of impact-oriented metrics, our literature review shows that no established approaches currently exist that quantitatively link capacity development to broader development impacts. However, we agree that this is an important gap and an area that warrants further work. We will therefore explore incorporating this into the Accelerator's AoW1 by researching methodologies and metrics that can capture the contribution of capacity strengthening to long-term outcomes and impacts.	N/A	N/A
Recommendation 5: Better articulate the use of the CA and SSTC analyses to inform AoWs priorities, resource allocation, and tool development.	We agree with this recommendation. The CA and SSTC analyses are not stand-alone studies but integral inputs that shape priorities, resource allocation, and tool development. They map national gaps, strengths, and complementarities, helping AoWs focus Capacity Sharing support where it can be most catalytic. They guide the allocation of resources toward the most strategic opportunities, ensuring demand-driven, system-level impact. And they inform the design and refinement of tools (e.g., the Marketplace) so these respond to real system needs.	1. Establish a process to regularly integrate CA and SSTC findings into AoW work planning, resource allocation, and tool design. 2. Track and document how CA/SSTC evidence informs AoW priorities, decisions, and monitoring.	First integration: with next AoW annual workplan (Q1 2026). Ongoing: annual updates thereafter.
Recommendation 6: Mutual learning principles need stronger articulation (avoid one-directional framing)	We agree. The Accelerator emphasizes multi-directional learning. Guidance materials will be explicitly designed to support mutual capacity development, rather than one-directional knowledge transfer. The multidirectionality will be reflected in the Accelerator's pilots in AoW1 and 3.	1. Further strengthen AoW design documents to highlight multi-directional learning pathways. 2. Ensure all guidance materials explicitly encourage multi-directional capacity exchange. 3. Roll-out pilots	2026 2026-30 2026-30 2026-30

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ISDC feedback/ recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
		4. Include examples of mutual learning in CoP	
Recommendation 7: Costing allocations are reasonable but need greater transparency and flexibility; risk of double-counting between research projects and Accelerator funding	Applies only in cases where the Accelerator works directly with capacity strengthening activities led by Centers/Science Programs. In those cases, we will make sure that funding is strictly additional and accounted for separately.	Develop a table linking each AoW deliverable to specific funding sources. Establish monitoring to prevent double-counting with existing research project budgets.	Ahead of FY2026 budgeting cycle.
Recommendation 8: Overarching goal of “transforming capacity development” considered overambitious given current scope and resources.	We remain ambitious. We will initially start by mainstreaming Capacity Sharing in a number of Science Programs. By 2030, we will have a good innovation package around processes on how to do Capacity Sharing properly. The CGIAR will have adopted the package by 2030, and further adoption outside CGIAR is expected as well.	N/A	N/A

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4. Climate Action

ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Research problem and approach			
“A remaining weakness—shared with the earlier proposal—is that the Inception Report remains vague on specific knowledge gaps, both regarding research and effective implementation.” (p. 22)	This comment is well received. We will specify the knowledge gaps that the AoWs are addressing, supported by relevant evidence from literature (from CGIAR and non-CGIAR sources). For example, literature substantiating knowledge gaps includes Soanes et al 2021 ; Westoby et al., 2021 ; Coger et al. 2022 ; Rahman et al. 2023 ; Petesch et al., 2024 for AoW3. In addition, Chiriac et al. 2023 , Oginyiola et al. 2021 , Adhikhari and Chalkasra et al. 2021 , Wollenberg et al. 2025 , and Dinesh et al. 2018 justify the overall focus and framing of AoW5 in linking science to policy and finance with an inclusion lens.	Specify the knowledge gaps in research and effective implementation that the Program addresses during the 2026/7 planning process	Q4 2025
“The research questions are generic and global. These questions must be downscaled to reflect nuances of particular regions and countries, including a thorough and fine-grained understanding of the multiple causes for vulnerability.” (p. 28)	The second phase of the Program’s prioritization will involve specifying focal countries, which will inform the localization of the research questions.	Localize research questions after confirming country priorities through the prioritization process	Q4 2025
MELIA / ToC			
Integrate the major risk framework results (section 9) and explicit articulation of assumptions, at least within the narrative ToC. (p. 22)	We acknowledge that risks were not captured in both the ToC diagram and narrative. However, assumptions were clearly presented in the ToC diagram but not explicitly reflected in the ToC narrative due to the word limitation of the inception report.	We will review the risk framework and embed relevant risks in the ToC and consider them in subsequent revisions of the ToC and results framework.	Q2 2026
“In some instances, the projected impacts seem overly ambitious (e.g., on page 5). It is important to base these projections on previous experiences and clearly articulate the likely impact pathways. More modest projections would be more credible.” (p. 22)	We note this concern. The original proposal outlined the evidence base supporting the first set of targets. These were updated and will be further refined after the ongoing prioritization process clarifies specific impact pathways and country focus.	Update the impacts justification and evidence following the prioritization exercise.	Q1 2026

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
“The MELIA action plan...lacks mechanisms, rights, and responsibilities for governance and accountability across partners (both within the CGIAR and beyond). This is essential to achieve adaptive management in a complex Program engaging numerous partners across a range of spatial scales. This requires urgent attention from Program leadership.” (p. 22)	We agree with this recommendation. While some structural constraints exist at the CGIAR level, we will strengthen the MELIA action plan by embedding clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability frameworks for CGIAR and external partners. Improved prioritization, planning, and tracking frameworks will reinforce adaptive management by ensuring accountability is linked to evidence of progress.	Update the MELIA action plan to include governance structures and decision-making responsibilities for CGIAR and partners; clear accountability mechanisms tied to Program key performance indicators (KPIs); strengthened prioritization, planning, and tracking frameworks to ensure accountability is based on measurable progress	Q2 2026
Identify plans and budgets for establishing MELIA baselines and counterfactuals. (p. 22)	This is limited by the budget reduction in 2025; however, we are exploring collaboration with bilateral projects to conduct baseline studies for activities that align with W3/bilateral projects.	Allocate budgets to establish MELIA baselines and counterfactuals in the 2026/7 Plan of Results and Budget (PORB)	Q4 2025
Gender Equality, Youth and Social Inclusion (GEYSI)			
“It would be good to see gender and social inclusion (i.e., youth and indigenous groups) authentically mainstreamed at the Program level.” (p. 25)	Gender and social inclusion are embedded in each AoW. HLO 1.2 examines root causes of vulnerability among different social groups. AoW2 will mainstream gender-sensitive and human-centered design in its innovations. Social inclusion (especially of Indigenous groups) is embedded in locally led adaptation processes in AoW3. HLO 4.5 explicitly focuses on increasing women and youth’s agency in mitigation action. HLO 5.5 explores how carbon markets can better support smallholder men and women farmers and ensure equitable benefit sharing. To support implementation, we will collaborate with the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator on mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in the program. We will also learn from AoW3’s review of gender-aware locally led adaptation approaches across the Portfolio.	Identify joint activities with the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator to continue mainstreaming GEYSI in the Program	Q2 2026

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Co-design			
“It is not clear what scope there is for non-CGIAR partners to influence overall Program priorities and activities or for them to bring their own complementary capacities to bear on the collaborative effort (i.e., making existing comparative advantage work).” (p. 23)	The prioritization process will provide clarity on priority countries, and national partnership engagement plans will be established with partners to strengthen co-design across the program and with local partners. Also refer to the response below to a related comment in AoW3 on engagement with local partners.	Finalize list of priority countries as an output of the prioritization process Establish national partnership engagement plans with partners to strengthen co-design across the program and with local partners	Q3 2025 (priority countries) Q2 2026 (engagement plans)
“The Inception Report budget is silent on what resources, if any, would be allocated to potential partners to engage in collaboration with this Program.” (p. 23)	Data on funding allocations to partners will be included in the Plan of Results and Budget for 2026.	Update the PORB for 2026 to present funding allocations to partners	Q4 2025
Prioritization			
“Could the Program be structured more flexibly to accommodate potential funding shortfalls? Is it feasible to conduct separate prioritization for mitigation and vulnerability/adaptation?... Should research efforts aim to achieve both the mitigation and adaptation objectives simultaneously?” (p. 21)	Prioritization decisions must consider both the distinct criteria for mitigation and adaptation, and the interconnectivity between them to avoid trade-offs and maximize co-benefits. Significant funding shortfalls would clearly require substantial prioritization. At that level of reduction, proportional cuts across all AoWs would not be expected. Research efforts should be designed to deliver on both adaptation and mitigation objectives simultaneously, given the urgency of both issues. However, not all interventions will generate dual outcomes. In such cases, research will target either adaptation or mitigation explicitly, while ensuring that potential trade-offs are assessed and avoided.	Develop a prioritization framework for contingencies that applies differentiated criteria to adaptation and mitigation, while supporting identification of mitigation-adaptation synergistic actions.	Q4 2025
“Finally, although it may be too early to expect completed analyses, there seems to be no response to the proposal reviewers’ earlier suggestion that the Program could benefit from more specific ex-ante appraisals as basis for prioritization of activities and solutions.” (p. 22)	In the short term, the Program will prioritize geographies based on ex-ante appraisals of emissions and climate risk/adaptation indicators. AoW1’s scope includes ex-ante analyses to estimate the efficacies of adaptation and mitigation actions in various contexts. In the medium-term, the Climate	Confirm country priorities based on ex-ante appraisals Incorporate insights from AoW1 ex-ante appraisals in future priority setting	Q3 2025 Q3 2026

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
	Action Program can learn from AoW1's insights to inform future prioritization of activities and solutions.		

5. Digital Transformation Accelerator

ISDC recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
A key change that was made was the addition of intermediate outcomes to help bridge the gap between outputs and outcomes. While these are helpful, there remains a concerning disjunct between all the outcomes and the Impact Areas. For example, one outcome of AoW 1 is a functional partnership between Digital Transformation Accelerator and other stakeholders to co-create digital innovation. This outcome is relevant and should be effective, but then the massive assumption is that this leads to 600 million less foodborne illnesses, 1 billion less zoonotic diseases, and affordable and healthy diets for 3 billion people per annum. How can such numbers be credibly validated? Would the overall credibility of the Accelerator be enhanced without such ambit claims?	Thank you for the feedback. To clarify, the AoW is not claiming to directly achieve the global impact figures cited. These numbers reflect broader goals that CGIAR and its partners aim to contribute to. Our outcomes—like building partnerships for digital innovation—are intended to support these ambitions. The metrics signal intent, not attribution, and we recognize that reaching such impacts requires collective action across many actors and systems.	N/A	N/A
The ToC aims for ethical and inclusive use of AI and other digital outputs from the accelerator but is transactional rather than intentional. As written, the theories of change assume that ethical and inclusive outcomes will be an emergent property; yet the modus operandi of the Accelerator is ultimately the development of digital products, databases, training of staff, etc. There	As authors allude, generating purely digital outputs designed for ethical and inclusive outcomes don't automatically translate into desired impact. The Digital Transformation Accelerator's proponents are aware that inclusive and ethical digital transformation requires social, institutional, and cultural enablers as well. To this end, activities under AoWs 2 and 4 will strategically aim to address this issue: AoW 2 (Action Lab) will further develop CGIAR's Multi-Dimensional Inclusivity Index (MDII) to benchmark on the inclusivity of digital innovation products and provide recommendations to improve them.	- Promote the use of Multi-Dimensional Inclusivity Index across digital innovation ecosystem partners. - Launch and operationalize CGIAR's Digital Transformation Accelerator Center of	Q1 2026

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ISDC recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
are no assurances that the technology generated will be used ethically, nor that the training will be inclusive.	- AoW 4 (Enabling Environment) precisely aims to develop knowledge products, frameworks, policies as well as nurture and capacitate community of CGIAR researchers and practitioners who can bring the dimensions of Human Centered Design (HCD), responsible AI and inclusive digital innovation into the digital innovation processes across centers and partners. - Digital Transformation Accelerator's AoW 4 will create and operationalize a CGIAR Digital Transformation Center of Excellence (COE). This COE will focus on themes like responsible AI, Human Centered Design (HCD), ethical digital transformation. The COEs will not only focus on research but explore ways to bring these concepts to life through pan CGIAR community building as well as targeted trainings. - AoW 4 will also focus on learning outcome-based trainings to ensure that the capacity development efforts lead to real impact in terms of inclusive and ethical digital outcomes.	Excellence.(COE) which focusses on HCD, Responsible AI and inclusive digital transformation 3. Ensure that all trainings by the Digital Transformation Accelerator are learning outcomes based and measured accordingly	
Of the total \$6.63M the Digital Transformation Accelerator will receive in 2025, \$3.57M will be used to support AI development in UAE (as the \$3.57M was derived from the UAE government). Does this mean that nearly half of CGIAR's activities will focus on collaborative AI with and for the UAE? How does this reconcile with the funding priorities in Latin America, Africa and South Asia? Does the UAE injection of funding prohibit CGIAR staff using that funding/and those AI outputs for the benefit of high priority Digital Transformation Accelerator outcomes? This is important and needs to be clarified in the Digital Transformation Accelerator.	While it is true that UAE has earmarked \$3.57 M to Digital Transformation Accelerator as W2, this funding does not restrict the Digital Transformation Accelerator from developing any digital tools or products that could be used outside of UAE at all. Rather, it is quite the opposite. UAE intends to work with the Digital Transformation Accelerator and co-create AI-powered products that could be of use by CGIAR and partners and catalyze inclusive digital transformation of the agrifood systems in the global South, including Africa, Asia and Latin America. Beyond the cash grant, UAE will also be offering in-kind support in the form of technology development, software development, compute resource. The UAE cash grant provided to the Digital Transformation Accelerator will be used to cover staff time and resources within CGIAR deemed necessary in co-developing digital products. For instance, one product that the Digital Transformation Accelerator and UAE are co-creating is a product called AgriLLM which is analogous to a chatbot trained to be aware of agriculture jargon and ontologies. The AgriLLM is being built by UAE but all the training data (e.g., research papers, Q & A pairs, etc.) needed to build this tool are being collected by all CGIAR Centers based on their research primarily focusing on supporting smallholder farmers in the global South. The Digital Transformation Accelerator is providing funding to Centers from UAE's earmark to cover their time and resources to expand the corpus.	N/A	N/A

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ISDC recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
The MELIA quantitative indicators have significantly improved and are now specific, measurable, realistic and time bound (SMART) but require further details on the methods proposed. This would ensure that engagement is meaningful and impactful, not just engagement for the sake of enumeration.	This is noted. We will continue to revisit our indicators and try to incorporate changes to ensure that MELIA is not an enumeration exercise but the KPIs are genuinely lead indicators of impact at work	Review KPIs and incorporate changes to ensure that MELIA indicators are more impact oriented	Q1 2026
A key issue with all digital products is maintenance and legacy. When the Digital Transformation Accelerator concludes, how will digital products be maintained?	This is a great question. To start with the Digital Transformation Accelerator aspires to only co-develop products that potentially could have demand well beyond the Digital Transformation Accelerator. That way, we can ensure that demand for digital products from partners will keep digital products sufficiently funded. Also, AoW 4 of the Digital Transformation Accelerator envisions to help Centers develop digital strategies to deal with issues of maintenance and legacy.	1. Digital strategies being developed should offer some guidance on issues of maintenance 2. Digital Transformation Accelerator to prioritize products with potential to live beyond life of the Digital Transformation Accelerator	Q1 2026
In some AoWs, the cart is put before the horse. Machine learning and AI have become the primary focus, when in fact the proponents intend the focus on inter-/disciplinary problems. For example, AoW 2 (Action Lab) should first focus on innovation in agrifood systems via other Programs (e.g., improving crop resilience to extreme weather events, using seasonal climate forecasts to predict drought etc.) but as written it sounds like the primary focus is AI-powered analytics. The Digital Transformation	We agree with the observation and are indeed working towards use of AI and digital to bring newer innovations to solve a pressing problem. In fact, the basis of this strategic decision is our consultations with other SPs and stakeholders. The Digital Transformation Accelerator has convened various stakeholder engagement events throughout the pre-inception and inception phases, including an online workshop where all other SPs were invited and asked to articulate their demand from the Digital Transformation Accelerator, the in-person inception workshop that invited other SPs to participate and provide feedback, and the Science Week Side Event that also had good representation from partners and SPs. Through these engagements, we learned that digital innovations happen across the Portfolio at multiple levels and scales, and it would not be practical nor strategic that the Digital Transformation Accelerator to be involved at all places. At the same time, it was clear that all SPs were eager to leverage the rapid development in AI	Ensure that the Digital Transformation Accelerator prioritizes those outputs and activities which are interdisciplinary and have a clear demand. Incorporate this tenet into the ways in which the Digital Transformation Accelerator priorities and executes its various activities/projects	Q4 2025

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ISDC recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Accelerator proponents need to be careful that the digital and AI purview does not become all consuming. As an accelerator, Digital Transformation needs to be able to support other inter/disciplinary research aimed at addressing applied agricultural problems in resilience, prosperity, inclusivity, sustainable development etc. Some disciplinary examples for AoW 2 (action lab) and other AoWs would be useful in this regard.	technology to accelerate advancing research and innovation. This is where AoW 2 will be primarily focusing on. To quote some examples, AoW 2 is collaborating with B4T to create AI based product meant to improve crop phenotyping. Similarly, AoW 2 is collaborating with Genebanks to deploy a new AI based tool to improve identification of accessions to suit breeder's requirements. Of course, however, this does not mean AI will be the only focus area of AoW 2. Other rather conventional digital innovation approaches will also be supported when there are clear demands from SPs for solving problems.		
Youth and women' are mentioned many times in the research approach (which is good) but the way in which these demographics will be engaged remains unclear. It is also worth remembering that diversity is much more than gender and age— it is marginalized producers, region, background, ethnicity, religion, production system and many other facets. Having quantitative assessments based only on women and youth overlooks the largest part of diversity: the impact indicators could be broadened to reflect this and some further thought put into how the Digital Transformation Accelerator will ensure that outputs are ultimately ethical (and remain so) and engagement is inclusive.	This is noted. The Digital Transformation Accelerator has strong collaboration with the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator, and we have already identified common outputs which are essential to ensure that digital innovations are inclusive as well as ethical. We intend to address this issue in a systematic and holistic way. Based on this feedback, we will take due care to ensure that we don't limit our interpretation of inclusion only to gender and youth but also to include marginalized groups and communities. We will also explore if this broader interpretation of inclusion can be reflected in our MELIA indicators.	Incorporate a broader interpretation of inclusion in MELIA indicators	Q3 2025
The three key achievements of 2022-24 are said to relate to weak information systems, bridging the	Yes, all the outputs from Digital Innovation initiative comply with FAIR principle and can be accessed in CGSpace. The degree of FAIR compliance is automatically assessed by CGIAR's PRMS Reporting System and accessible	N/A	N/A

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ISDC recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
digital divide and improving digital literacy skills. Are the outputs from this work findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable (FAIR)? How was this assessed?	through CGIAR Results Dashboard . Please visit Digital Innovation's output collection and review the Initiative's final progress report .		
How the tech companies and non-profit organizations were engaged (Google, Microsoft) (2) How stakeholder feedback was prioritized. E.g. the UAE Government pledged \$17M of in-kind support for the Digital Transformation Accelerator. Did this mean that their views were prioritized over stakeholders who did or will not contribute any cash or in-kind? (3) How competing/conflicting views were managed in AoW prioritization, and	The Digital Transformation Accelerator engaged with tech companies as well as key stakeholders during its writing days. In fact, the final design of the Digital Transformation Accelerator and its four AoWs was based on extensive consultation with tech companies, not for profits, partners etc. The prioritization and scoping of the Digital Transformation Accelerator was based on collaborative and participatory process involving all the Centers. Though UAE stepped in as a substantial designated donor for the Digital Transformation Accelerator, the Digital Transformation Accelerator team has always ensured parity when it comes to prioritization. We have created a partnership with UAE that is based on a framework underpinned on CGIAR's principles and ethos. Competing/conflicting views were managed based on mutual discussions and collective decisions.	N/A	N/A
It would be useful to clarify in the Inception Report where the target countries were derived from. There seems to be only two countries in Africa in scope (Senegal and Kenya)?	The target countries in the inception report were derived based on knowledge driven prioritization as well as the CG's ability in the identified regions to deliver on these priorities. In Africa, the proponents have identified Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique as well beyond Senegal and Kenya.	N/A	N/A
There are several HLOs where CGIAR is only weakly positioned (0.5 score in attachment) and which may be better outsourced. For example, innovations for enabling FAIR data ecosystems (HLO 1) and AI-powered products to accelerate research and innovation (HLO 2) would conceivably be better done by tech companies. Why not partner with them and reserve CGIAR efforts for those HLOs in which their	Yes, the Digital Transformation Accelerator is indeed working with partners in those areas where tech companies have a clear advantage. To quote an example, the Digital Transformation Accelerator is collaborating with UAE's AI71 which is a specialist tech company developing AI tools and platforms. Similarly, the Digital Transformation Accelerator's AoW 1 is engaging with Amazon Web Services and Databricks to build digital data sharing platform called Fairgrounds.	N/A	N/A

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ISDC recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
CA is higher? This includes HLO 1, 2, 3, 6 and 9. In some cases, if CGIAR puts limited resources into these HLOs and assuming they are also being conducted by others, this might not be the best use of limited funding.			
Many of the budgeted items are for CGIAR supporting other Programs. While this is laudable, it is difficult to reconcile this with the previous point (the large quantum of funding derived from the UAE government). As well, it would help to clarify if the “Digital Transformation Accelerator support” of other Programs means that Digital Transformation Accelerator has staff that will create/lead/collaborate/advise work in other Program (e.g., “Digital Transformation Accelerator will support B4T in using AI-powered phenotyping to accelerate trait discovery and breeding cycles”).	DTA working model is based on delivering use cases. We intend to identify use cases in consultation with other science programs and work in a co-funding of resources mode. In this context, the Digital Transformation Accelerator staff will be working to co-create products that support other science programs.	N/A	N/A

6. Food Frontiers and Security

ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Theme 1. Frontiers Program alignment with, and integration in, the CGIAR 2025-30 Strategy <i>Reviewers acknowledged the forward-looking ambition of the Food Frontiers and Security Program and recognized its potential to address emerging global challenges. Comments suggested it is not yet fully aligned with CGIAR's current Strategy, capabilities, and comparative advantage.</i>	We thank ISDC for the comprehensive feedback and acknowledge that the Inception Report may have underemphasized the extent to which the Food Frontiers and Security Science Program (hereon 'the Program') aligns with CGIAR's 2025—2030 Strategy. This response has been framed to address the ISDC's concerns in a nuanced way that merges the historical perspective with the future-focused lens of the Program. Consider, for example, the work in Fragile and Conflict Affected Settings (FCAS); a traditional space for CGIAR since inception, as evidenced by Norman Borlaug's 1970 Nobel Peace Prize for high-yield wheat that prevented mass famine. The Program must nevertheless strengthen its strategic narrative, ensuring clearer integration within the 2025—2030 Strategy and better articulation of how it contributes to CGIAR's stated desire to align with shifting global realities. By 2030, over 60% of the world's extreme poor will live in FCAS, and by 2050, nearly 70% of the global population will reside in cities. Meanwhile, 65 million people in 57 small island states face intensifying climate and environmental pressures. These realities demand bold, forward-looking science; the CGIAR Portfolio would arguably be incomplete without deliberate programming for these systems. In summary, we believe the Program is a natural platform within the Portfolio for generating evidence to support CGIAR's critical role in shaping the global development agenda to 2050; serving to strengthen CGIAR's Strategy, rather than depart from it.	The Program leadership will work with the Systems Organization to strengthen the position of the Frontiers scope and narrative to shape a clearer Strategic integration to 2030	Q4 2025
		The Program and AoW1 Leadership will develop a strategy to shape a more clearly frontiers-oriented Area of Work (AoW) 1 as a Portfolio level Critical Capability (See Theme 4 below)	Q1 2026
Theme 2. Comparative advantage and technical know-how. <i>Reviewers expressed concern at the limited evidence of CGIAR's comparative advantage and technical expertise in AoW2 (FCAS). The case for CGIAR's role in this area was found unconvincing, and the Inception</i>	In the context of AoW2, we believe CGIAR's comparative advantage is specifically highlighted through the ability to deliver rigorous, demand-driven, science-based food systems solutions <i>under conditions of crisis</i>. Whilst there is vast evidence of this, important historical examples include a nearly two-decade partnership with the World Food Program (WFP); post-genocide restoration of Rwanda's national seed systems; Afghanistan's post-war agricultural rehabilitation; coastal management support to countries affected by the 2004 Tsunami; and support to Solomon Islands' food security during the 1999-2003 ethnic violence. More recent examples include the suite of	System-wide consultancy to strengthen CGIAR's fragility and conflict portfolio, overseen by Andrew Clayton (FCDO Secondee). Its purpose is to embed conflict sensitivity, conflict	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
<i>Report offers only a superficial reflection on the challenges of scaling in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, raising questions about the suitability of a food systems approach as the guiding framework.</i>	integrated resilience programming to link food security, livelihoods, and peacebuilding across the Sahel, and the recent body of work in the 2023—24 Fragility, Conflict, and Migration Initiative. Looking forward, AoW2 - as it evolves to 2030 – will be further stimulated to think creatively and holistically on ways in which CGIAR can better assist FCAS governments, development actors, and communities in the face of a changing climate. It is well known that the inter-drought periods are becoming shorter; the traditional processes for resilience and information gathering, both during – and between – conflicts are becoming less reliable; and the inherent drivers of conflict are becoming more difficult to predict and contain. Traditional approaches for Early Warning Systems (EWS) and other foresight methods to prevent and respond to humanitarian crises, particularly those resulting from - and exacerbated by - severe climate change, are becoming increasingly redundant, meaning that improvements to traditional ways of thinking about humanitarian efforts is required, as noted by CGIAR EMD in late 2024: <i>“In the coming years, I think CGIAR research will increasingly focus on fragile and conflict-affected food systems, due to their unique vulnerabilities and growing populations, and the growing number of conflicts—human-made or climate-made. This will require really targeted innovation and context-specific science.”</i> Importantly, AoW2 is not attempting to displace, replicate, or substitute the inherent capabilities of humanitarian and/or government actor-networks in FCAS. Instead, AoW2 works with partners – at their request – to provide the tools, analytical methodologies, and policy/programming support to strengthen their critical analysis capabilities for on-ground interventions, thus aiming to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of aid responses. At its core, AoW2’s role is to respond to CGIAR partner demands for co-designed research and analytics that are practical, implementable, and easily communicated to the intended next and end-users in the humanitarian space. Linked to this, we also appreciate and fully agree with the ISDC comments that FCAS presents specific challenges associated with scaling. This is	prevention, and peacebuilding systematically across CGIAR’s research, reflecting the reality that conflict is now the primary driver of food insecurity	
		Bi-weekly policy seminar series ‘ <i>Fragility to Stability</i> ’ to convene partners and CGIAR scientists to discuss food systems challenges in FCAS settings	Q3 2025
		Peer-reviewed article that highlights CGIAR’s historical support for humanitarian actions	Q2 2026
		Series of ‘town hall’ engagements with FCAS partners to further understand and articulate their research questions and inform 2026—2027 workplans	Q2 2026

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
	another reason why AoW2 operates through collaborative partnerships to “co-create solutions” (WFP Chief Economist, late 2024) and “(bring) analytical capacity and credibility to the humanitarian interventions” (UNHCR Special Advisor on Climate Action, late 2024). Importantly, the demand for CGIAR science to be applied to FCAS settings is also reflected in donor allocations, where various earmarks from the UK, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Japan emphasize the value of CGIAR analytics by FCAS partners. AoW2 does not seek to dismiss specialized analytical frameworks but rather complement them with a food systems approach that is particularly suited to addressing food insecurity as both a driver, and direct consequence, of climate change and conflict. This holistic perspective allows CGIAR to explore new actors, policies, markets, and technologies that can support recovery and resilience, enabling the Program to maintain flexibility and curiosity whilst exploring new ways of thinking around resilience, climate adaptation and food security in FCAS.		
Theme 3. Program and AoW level funding. <i>The review suggested that AoWs within the Frontiers Program appear to be underfunded compared to other reviewed Programs and that this funding disparity poses a risk of potentially reducing it to a symbolic initiative rather than a fully functional one. It was proposed that limited financial resources could impede meaningful progress toward the Program’s overarching goals.</i>	The Program’s W1/W2 allocation for 2025 was below planned levels and the Program team is managing this within a larger context of changing funding landscapes at the Center-level, for example, through closer integration with bilateral projects. It is important to note that earmarked W2 allocations to the Program indicated strong demand, and the current W1/W2 funding circumstances do not mean that the Program is unable to deliver. While it is true that some AoWs currently operate with modest funding, they are already producing meaningful outputs that serve as critical proof-of-concept initiatives scalable to other locations. Importantly, these AoWs are not passive placeholders—they are active hubs of leadership, innovation, and engagement. They provide a foundation around which targeted fundraising can be mobilized and are already attracting interest from bilateral donors and other partners. By delivering results even at smaller scales, they validate the approach, build momentum, and strengthen social capital with our on-ground partners for future investment. While higher investment would accelerate progress, the current AoWs are already fulfilling a vital strategic role through laying the groundwork for broader	The Program Leadership will continue to support and shape the CGIAR Portfolio prioritization and W1/W2 resource allocation processes for 2026 and beyond	Q4 2025
		Engagement with W3/ bilateral funding options	Ongoing

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
	operationalization and scaling, and positioning Frontiers for long-term growth and impact.		
Theme 4. Frontiers conceptualizing and future foods lab (AoW1). <i>The reviewers considered Frontiers as a promising and forward-looking theme that CGIAR can be well-positioned to lead. Its scope could meaningfully be expanded beyond conflict zones to include emerging shocks, vulnerabilities, and technologies—such as climate-driven shifts in food production, artificial micro-climates, and waste-to-food innovations. More importantly, ISDC emphasized the need for interdisciplinary research to clarify what “frontiers” truly mean, including their costs, justice implications, and contributions to food security, rather than focusing solely on technological development.</i>	We thank the ISDC for these suggestions and confirm that the recent CGIAR Global Science Team (GST) exercise to design and submit Portfolio-level Critical Capabilities has resulted in ongoing/additional discussions and thought into the types of new research that could be covered under the Program.	The management team will continue to sensitize the Program within the broader CGIAR ecosystem	Q4 2025
	As a result, AoW1 has now been framed as a <i>Learning and Innovation Brokerage Center for Frontiers Food Systems</i>, providing a mechanism for linking evidence, practice, and global discourse for AoWs 2—4. These 3 frontiers (FCAS, cities and islands) are bound by underlying commonalities poised to shape the normative conditions of the Anthropocene; for example, increasingly vulnerable populations, extreme climate impacts, unpredictable market and supply chains, high youth unemployment, and rapid degradation of traditional knowledge systems that underpin resilience.	Series of dedicated roundtable discussions on the types of new research suggested by ISDC, and how to better mainstream these emergent technologies into existing AoWs	Q2 2026
	At its core, the AoW1 center aims to (i) synthesize and consolidate evidence across contexts to inform global knowledge, (ii) apply foresight to anticipate emerging risks and opportunities, (iii) convene stakeholders in a collaborative space for learning, innovation and matchmaking across frontier food systems, (iv) broker partnerships across CGIAR, governments, private sector, and civil society, and (v) backstop policy and program design to enable transformative innovations to reach scale. These unique capabilities place CGIAR as <i>the</i> trusted voice on global food and nutrition action in preparation for – and contribution to – the post-2030 global development agenda. In summary, the food systems challenges in FCAS (AoW2), cities (AoW3) and islands (AoW4); and the spill-over effects of the multitude of social, cultural, economic, and political challenges that such settings epitomize; represent some of the most urgent threats to food security and resilience globally. Taken together, the Frontiers portfolio underscores CGIAR’s unique contribution to futures thinking, particularly as donors, governments, and communities turn their attention to the post-SDG global development agenda from 2030 onwards.	Nature Perspective paper to help frame the vision/mission of the program for the public domain (already in development)	Q4 2026 (in press)

7. Gender Equality and Inclusion

ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Research questions and research design clarity: Reviewers noted that while the report presents contextually relevant research and good alignment of intended research themes with the three impact pathways, as well as offers a structured approach to the Accelerator’s research agenda and policy uptake, research questions and research design that underpin the impact pathways and AoWs are not adequately articulated. They recommend explaining the research questions and clearly articulating the rationale for the selected research activities rooted in science, especially focusing on AoW Solutions.	The Accelerator acknowledges the ISDC concern and accepts the recommendation. We note that the research design of AoW Solutions is indeed rooted in science. It grounded in the UNFSS gender framework (Njuki 2021), which looks at gender inequalities along the axis of individual and systematic barriers vs formal and informal barriers. This is elaborated on in the Accelerator full design document (p.16). Our interpretation of the inception report template was that it complements, rather than replaces, the original full design document and that it would be read alongside it. Therefore, we did not elaborate on the conceptual framework in the inception report.	Clarify research questions: revise research questions to more clearly explain the rationale of for the selected research activities. Clarify scientific underpinning for the intended research outputs: write and share with ISCD a document that explains the conceptual frameworks in which the Sub-AoWs are rooted.	Q4 2025
Prioritization and costing: Reviewers noted that the prioritization exercise conducted by the Accelerator reflects a thoughtful and nuanced approach which provided a solid foundation for making realistic strategic decisions. Additionally, they noted that the focus has expanded rather than condensed and they recommend developing contingency strategies to ensure that any future funding shortfalls do not disrupt Accelerator activities or how various activities would be prioritized. Reviewers also commented	The Accelerator partially agrees with the comments and the recommendation. The leadership team has been working on resource mobilization and secured a fixed percentage allocation of the CGIAR W1/W2 funding to the Accelerator from 2026 onwards. The team is also exploring W3 funding opportunities and has recently submitted a proposal to GIZ to fund the social inclusion research. It would be good to get clarity on the comment that the focus has expanded and what the reviewers used as a baseline. Additionally, countries where the Accelerator would engage are all listed in the results framework. They are not listed in the prioritization template, but they are mentioned in other templates attached to the inception report.	Next step in prioritization: complete the next step of the prioritization exercise as per the System Office guidance (“Within Program/Accelerator prioritization phase”).	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
that it was not clear what countries the Accelerator would engage in.			
TOC and linear impact pathways: Reviewers noted that while the TOC presents clear and mutually reinforcing pathways, articulates contextually grounded outputs and outcomes that allows for adaptation to evolving circumstances, and creates a cohesive structure, it does not clearly articulate causal pathways, and lacks detail on mechanisms that will be used to scale up innovations and promote gender-responsive solutions. The reviewers also note a linear visual representation of the TOC as its weakness. They recommend reworking the TOC to incorporate non-linear pathways leading toward Impact Areas.	The Accelerator acknowledges the concern and will revise the TOC to elaborate more on causal pathways and uptake mechanisms. It is worth noting that the GENDER Impact Platform conducted research on evidence uptake pathways that also inform the Accelerator's approach. Regarding the graphic representation of the TOC, the Accelerator used the CGIAR-wide tool as instructed by the System Office/Project Coordination Unit. We do have a non-linear graphic developed based on the original full design document, and it will be updated based on the latest TOC revision.	Strengthen TOC narrative: revise the TOC narrative to strengthen the causal linkages among different HLOs and elaborate on mechanisms that will be used to scale up developed solutions. Design a non-linear graphic: update the TOC graphic based on the revised TOC, if accepted by the Systems Office.	Q4 2025
Result statements and indicators: Reviewers highlighted the comprehensive MELIA plan as one of the key strengths of the inception report, although they noted that result statements are too wordy which obscures clarity. They recommend simplifying the result statements. They also noted that outcome 2.3 lacks indicators and proposed developing qualitative indicators if quantitative are not feasible.	The Accelerator partially agrees with the comments. We believe that the short result definitions add sufficient clarity to the full statements. We agree that long statements are quite wordy, but there was a deliberate decision to follow a formula for HLOs = [What "thing"/output is being produced] on [what theme] with [output partners] and/or for [output users] to achieve [what objectives] in [regions], based on [evidence gap/already generated evidence/already piloted innovations]; and similarly for outcomes = [who] uses [what output] to [do what]. The team will further revisit the long statements to simplify and improve clarity where possible while maintaining the formula. Related to the indicators, the outcome 2.3 indeed has no quantitative indicators, but the Accelerator had developed qualitative indicators for this outcome as well as for outcome 2.1. It is possible that the reviewers did not see them in the results framework due to either an oversight or a system error while extracting the spreadsheet from the TOC board.	Simplify result statements: edit the long result statements to improve clarity.	Q3 2025

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Comparative advantage analysis and research partnerships: Reviewers noted that the comparative advantage analysis is vague and is not grounded in a comprehensive review of social inclusion, youth and equity research globally. They also noted that it is not clear how the Accelerator uses it for its benefit. They recommended redoing the comparative advantage analysis and thinking through research partnerships more critically beyond non-academic organizations to explore other academic institutions globally.	The Accelerator acknowledges the concern, and the team will redo the comparative advantage analysis to elaborate on claims made in the current template. The Accelerator also welcomes concrete examples from ISDC on academic institutions globally that work in areas that CGIAR is currently not strong in (e.g. youth). The CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform had previously issued calls for proposals for youth related research and received poor response.	Undertake a comprehensive comparative advantage analysis: develop a comprehensive comparative advantage analysis report, that also includes analysis of the work of other organizations in areas of youth and social inclusion in FLWS.	Q1 2026
Risk management: Reviewers identified this as the weakest aspect of the inception report. They noted that the risks mentioned in the analysis are not the most pertinent ones and suggested what they deemed as more relevant ones. For example, they noted that CGIAR losing its gender focus and gender expertise are not critical enough to be included in a risk management exercise. They instead urged the Accelerator to consider the current geopolitical developments that signal potential instability as a more relevant risk. Reviewers also highlighted the weakness of the mitigation strategies.	Thank you for this feedback. The Accelerator level risks and associated mitigation measures will be reviewed in the context of the 2026 planning and adaptive management process, recognizing that some of the risks proposed by reviewers may need to be addressed at higher levels (Portfolio, Partnership).	Review the risk management framework in the context of the Accelerator's 2026 planning and adaptive management processes and consider including additional risks.	Q4 2025
Portfolio Cohesion and Coherency: Policy Innovations and Gender, Equity, and Inclusion Inception Reports are less clearly articulated in regard to portfolio cohesion	The Accelerator adopts a cross-portfolio and inclusive approach to ensure coordinated action across programs, notably but not limited to, Multifunctional landscapes, Policy Innovation, Sustainable Agriculture and Aquaculture Farming, Sustainable Farming and Scaling for Impact. This	The Accelerator's 2026 2026 PORB sets out SMART KPIs for all Centers; and works with	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
and coherency though they appear to have appropriate approaches in place.	involves working collaboratively to co-develop clear gender and inclusion strategies that align with broader programmatic goals. Through the prioritization process, the Accelerator identifies key geographies where joint efforts can be focused, enabling targeted engagement and resource alignment. In these priority areas, the Accelerator partners with other programs to ensure that gender and inclusion considerations are embedded from the outset. A cornerstone of this approach is co-design with local partners, which strengthens geographic coordination and ensures that interventions are contextually relevant and locally owned. This collaborative model fosters cohesion across programs, enhances impact, and reinforces the commitment to inclusive development outcomes. Looking forward, the Accelerator's 2026 planning process will ensure that all Centers have a stake in its 2026 PORB in the form of specific, SMART KPIs and associated W1/2 investments; and that all other Programs' and Accelerators' PORBs reflect the Accelerator's contributions.	all other Programs and Accelerators to ensure that its contributions are reflected in their 2026 PORBs.	

8. Genebanks

ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
1. Actionable recommendations The challenges associated with the existing funding model should be addressed and a viable funding strategy devised to ensure sustainability and expansion of these assets.	Project-based funding for routine genebank operations - essential to keep germplasm collections alive and available for global distribution - has historically proven unsustainable. This led to the development of an endowment-based funding strategy for collections that meet certain KPIs (“Performance Targets”) based on recognized international standards for plants genebanks. The Crop Trust, established as the “funding arm” of the Plant Treaty, was created to raise and manage such an endowment. Its initial mandate was to support the routine operations of KPI-compliant international collections such as those held by CGIAR, with the longer-term goal of extending funding to other Article 15 collections meeting Performance Targets. To date, however, the Crop Trust’s Endowment Fund has not reached its initial \$500 million target, which was considered the minimum required to cover routine operations of international (CGIAR) collections. Any alternative CGIAR-specific funding model would, in practice, also need to be endowment-based, thus placing it in direct competition with the Crop Trust Endowment for essentially the same group of funders. The way forward is to continue joint fundraising efforts with the Crop Trust to expand its Endowment Fund, while firmly ensuring that the majority of proceeds are allocated to their intended purpose: supporting KPI-compliant international collections. At the same time, the continuation of the ringfence mechanism established by the CGIAR and approved by the SC is the most efficient way forward to assure that the CGIAR commitment with the International Community through the Commission on Genetic Resources and the Plant Treaty is accomplished.	Continue having monthly coordination meetings between the Genebank Accelerator Director and the Crop Trust Director of Programs to coordinate ongoing joint efforts	Ongoing
2. Actionable recommendations To provide strong evidence in support of increased funding, we recommend that reporting includes concise summaries of progress toward meeting performance targets tracked through the Online Reporting Tool (ORT) as well as key findings and	The Online Reporting Tool (ORT) already contains information on progress toward meeting Performance Targets for each collection conserved by CGIAR genebanks. To enhance usability, the ORT could be modified to aggregate data across individual collections for quick reference. This modification should ideally be coordinated closely with the Crop Trust, which requires genebanks to report the same data through a separate system (‘PRT’) in a different format. Findings from genebank reviews are routinely published	For the 2026 technical reports, modify and harmonize the CGIAR’s ORT and the Crop Trust’s PRT reporting platforms to enable genebanks	Q4 2026

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
resulting actions from internal and external audits and reviews to provide concrete indicators of how core processes and procedures are becoming more efficient and effective over time.	here, the link also provides the annual summaries of achievements of genebanks against KPIs: https://genebanks.cgiar.org/genebanks	to submit a single report to both parties. This report should capture both progress toward Performance Targets for individual collections and include aggregated data across all CGIAR collections.	
3. Actionable recommendations Concrete action should be taken in response to the valid observation that, rather than solely refining already efficient processes, greater cost-efficiencies could be achieved by enhancing transparency around Center chargebacks, minimizing non-attributable research support costs charged as direct expenses, and empowering genebank managers with full budgetary control and staff management. This would enable and incentivize rationalization and more strategic resource allocation. Shared services among genebanks should also be considered.	CGIAR genebanks operate under institutional rules on chargebacks, research support costs, and country-specific labor regulations that influence staff management. Providing genebank managers with full budgetary authority and staff-management autonomy would require a system-wide agreement between the System Office and Center administrations. Many essential genebank services (such as viability and seed-health testing) depend on the availability of viable seeds, which are difficult to move across borders due to phytosanitary restrictions, making centralized service provision unfeasible. By contrast, activities that do not involve seed movement lend themselves more readily to crosscutting, shared-service arrangements and are already coordinated at the system level. Examples include DNA sequencing through CIMMYT's SAGA genotyping facility and IT collaborations, such as CIAT's IT team and Bioversity's bioinformatics group, which support adoption of the GRIN-Global Community Edition and the GIGWA databases across Centers, respectively. Moreover, based on CGIAR Cost Principles and Indirect Cost Guidelines , Centers apply transparent, documented full cost recovery policies approved by their Boards to allocate costs to projects. Research support rates are reviewed annually using professionally defined methodologies and set out clearly in Centers' finance manuals. Centers internal controls frameworks and financial transactions are subject to annual external audit, with results disclosed in the audited Financial Statements for full transparency.	N/A	N/A

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4. Actionable recommendations Finally, efforts to strengthen partnerships and build capacity should be supported by clear, measurable performance indicators—such as the number of national or local genebanks that achieve recognized international standards, or the number that establish long-term partnerships with the Crop Trust independently. As currently described, the approach risks implying ongoing dependence on CGIAR support, rather than fostering the autonomy and self-reliance necessary for sustainable local development.	We do agree that clear indicators are needed. Considering that most of the genebanks we work with, in low-income countries are significantly far from reaching international standards, we need effective indicators to measure progress and this includes the implementation of as many Quality Management System elements as possible, such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), regeneration, improvement of infrastructure, staff trained, accessions safety duplicated and/or available for distribution, among others. Long-term Partnership Agreement (LPA) with the Crop Trust is not a reality for NARS at this point since the focus is on Article 15 Genebanks and currently the endowment fund is not enough even for these priority genebanks. We do have as a goal the self-sustainability of the genebanks we support, but we do foresee the continued interaction through mutual support and continued CoPs since this is the basis of a strong global system of plant genetic resources. We are currently working on a MELIA study to assess NARS partner implementation of best practices acquired during CGIAR Genebanks trainings. The study will provide a deeper understanding of the results generated and will help define clear indicators	Conduct the planned MELIA study focusing on key NARS partners in different regions including establishing indicators.	Q3 2026
5. Weakness 1. In the context of overall reductions in CGIAR funding, effective prioritization requires making clear, strategic choices about which activities must continue to fulfill the core mandate of “conserving and making available crop diversity through a globally coordinated system of international genebanks.” This implies an explicit and transparent focus on sustaining the essential functions covered by AoW 1 (Biodiversity Conservation), AoW 3 (Genetic Resources Policy), and AoW 4 (Germplasm Health). It is important that this prioritization strategy be	Agreed. AoW1, 3 and 4 are non-negotiable priorities of the Genebanks and this is why we did not conduct any prioritization work on them, but only on AoW2 and AoW5 considering scenarios of budget reduction or surge. The approval of the ringfence mechanism by the System Council has been a clear communication and agreement with donors which have supported protecting these core critical operations of the Genebanks Accelerator since the time of the Platform. Conducting a prioritization exercise on AoW 1, 3, and 4 would inherently mean ranking them and therefore giving priority to one rather than another. The critical capabilities exercise being developed provides insight into the non-negotiables that highlights the Genebanks comparative advantages and services provided to the CGIAR and partners, adding value to the Genebanks from the perspective of donors. Moreover, the prioritization exercise as devised by the CGIAR simply could not reflect the array of activities of genebanks, for example, forcing the regional specificity per HLO which does not apply to us.	N/A	N/A

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
clearly communicated to donors to ensure alignment and understanding.			
6. Weakness 2. External support to national genebank systems should be designed with the explicit objective of strengthening their internal capacities and processes to achieve and maintain international standards. This includes empowering them to operate autonomously and to independently secure external funding—such as establishing long-term partnerships with the Crop Trust and other international donors. Additionally, limited geographic expansion remains a concern: budget constraints prevented the planned integration of CIFOR-ICRAF and WorldVeg genebanks and delayed activities in high-potential regions such as South and Southeast Asia, thereby narrowing both regional reach and crop diversity coverage.	As mentioned in item 4, the capacity sharing is focused on building up NARS capacity to operate independently, without dependence on the CGIAR or any other partner. It does minimize, however, the importance of continued interaction and mutual support, what must be a continued action that will continue strengthening the Global System. The continued share of capacities and building of knowledge and more efficient processes is a way towards building a strong Global System. One of the needs identified during the co-development of the Genebanks Accelerator was support to NARS to improve proposal writing and this is being tackled as part of the capacity sharing activities under AoW5 among other topics. We will continue fundraising and engaging with donor to try filling the regional gaps.	Bespoke communications and Director's activities for fundraising purposes in order to expand Regional Scope	Ongoing
7. Weakness 3. While some CGIAR breeding programs currently collaborate directly with the genebanks, there remains a notable lack of formal alliances and consortia with a broader range of public and private stakeholders to support comprehensive phenotypic and genotypic characterization of core collections across crop species.	We are working on focused fundraising for Genebanks research that goes beyond routine operations, and this includes cryopreservation, molecular and phenotypic characterization and use of digital tools to better make use of the millions of data points that genebanks have already produced through bilateral programs, both morphological and molecular. We do recognize the need to generate more critical data linked to users' interests, but we must also acknowledge that the data already available must be better assessed. Draft of concept notes for fundraising on different areas of research is ongoing and interaction with potential donors is also already ongoing with Digital Transformation Accelerator and Abhu Dhabi hub for Genebanks AI product.	Continued fundraising in different levels (accelerator director and genebank heads)	Ongoing

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This activity is key to ensuring genebanks, continue to play a catalytic or coordinating role in advancing such initiatives and facilitate wide-scale availability and uptake of valuable genetic diversity.			
8. Section 1.3 of the Report... This research is both innovative and necessary, addressing global biodiversity loss and climate change challenges. However, the road map and methodology about how it can be achieved are completely missing, and therefore it is hard to evaluate the pertinence, quality, and scientific rigor of this proposal. In addition, milestones and KPIs are needed to measure the efficient use and allocation of resources. Even though the genebanks have specific standard targets, the current reduction of funding should be an alert to allocate resources to innovation and research with the clear intention of making the process more cost-efficient, high-throughput, and accurate.	Section 1.3 of the inception report addresses the research questions in AoW 2. Pooled funding will be used to conduct the MELIA study “Systematic Review and Comparative Analysis of the Use of Germplasm and Associated Data Sourced from CGIAR Genebanks” (see item 12). A Genebanks AI product has been elaborated in collaboration with Digital Transformation and is under development. The planned study and ongoing work including the AI product can drive fundraising plans particularly because AoW 2 is not part of the core funding. Ongoing activities, such as the development of subsets based on traits of interest, are published in Genesys and reported yearly by all genebanks.	Conduct the planned MELIA study “Systematic Review and Comparative Analysis of the Use of Germplasm and Associated Data Sourced from CGIAR Genebanks”	Q3 2026
9. ... improvements to processes, methods, and protocols would still benefit from systematic co-design with both internal and external experts. Engaging experts could open opportunities to explore the more efficient use of inputs, development of high-throughput screening protocols,	Both internal and external experts have been involved in the cross-Center communities of practices (CoP) working on improving the efficiency and quality of routine operations for many years (e.g. seed processing and storage, use of Videometer for image-based seed phenotyping, cryopreservation of clonal crops, high-throughput viability testing, use of RFID chips for seed-lot tracking, etc.). The involvement of external experts, however, declined in 2025 because of funding constraints. A study is planned to review the Seed Quality Management (SQM) Community of Practice and	Conduct the planned M&E study to review the Seed Quality Management (SQM) Community of Practice and Quality Management System (QMS) including the	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
greater automation and shared services. Such innovation has the potential to deliver substantial cost savings by streamlining workflows, reducing operational waste, and enhancing overall efficiency—contributing to financial sustainability without compromising quality or compliance. Unfortunately, these opportunities for cost-saving innovations and their integration into routine operations are not clearly detailed in the proposal.	Quality Management System (QMS) including the contribution to the improvement of genebank operations	contribution to the improvement of genebank operations	
10. Overall, CA supports balanced resource allocation and demonstrates openness to expand collaboration by mentioning the potential for partnerships, e.g., with large breeding companies or NARES but does not take this further in terms of relative capacity of partners or specifically identify any partners, this should be strengthened by deeper risk mapping and clearer plans to address gaps identified during the analysis. Furthermore, it does not seem to align with ToC tables and narrative, which envisage strategic partnerships across several areas contributing to HLO including AoWs 1, 2, 4 and 5.	The CA is more focused on genebank activities, which is the core responsibility of the CGIAR Genebanks and also in building up the global system. Collaboration with private sector on potential research for high throughput characterization can become a goal of our fundraising strategy and can be developed. It is important to bear in mind that engaging with one country or company to deeply sequence the entire genebanks have been proven to be a risk to the CGIAR reputation, since we conserve public goods and should not benefit one entity only. Meaning that this topic needs to be taken carefully. CA related to genotyping is covered in the ToC. CA exercise was done to identify partners that could undertake the HLO, while ToC and narrative identified partners that could contribute to HLOs.	Continued fundraising at different levels (accelerator director and genebank heads) and building collaboration with partners	Ongoing
11. AoW 1: While the objective of achieving “greater efficiency and effectiveness” is well stated, the specific methods to reach this goal	Some fundamental approaches to improving the efficiency and quality of routine operations - such as the implementation of cryopreservation and state-of-the-art databases - are reflected in the kind of HLOs and the communities of practice (CoPs) described in the proposal. Other	Conduct annual workplans for HLO 1.1.2 and HLO 1.1.4 as planned	Q4 2025

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and the metrics by which success will be measured remain unclear. Clarifying the tools, process improvements, or technological interventions planned, along with concrete indicators, would strengthen this component.	approaches, particularly those related to seed quality management, are more diverse and include dormancy-breaking protocols, seed longevity optimization, sequential viability testing, and the use of multispectral imaging platforms for seed phenotyping. These are described in detail in the annual workplans, with the next plan due by the end of 2025.		
12. AoW 2: Establishing a robust baseline of current user engagement is essential to identify gaps and track progress. For example, the distribution of 300,000 germplasm samples to 123 countries is a valuable benchmark; it would be useful to define whether the aim is to maintain, increase, or diversify these figures and by what proportion over time.	The planned MEL study “A Systematic Review and Comparative Analysis of the Use of Germplasm and Associated Data Sourced from CGIAR Genebanks” will generate evidence on how germplasm and related information have been used and eventually cited. This analysis will help identify gaps in uptake and inform strategies to enhance both reach and impact. In parallel, baseline data on requestors will be collected. Differentiating between <i>new</i> and <i>recurrent</i> users will provide important insights into user diversification and sustained engagement. The initial baseline is envisioned for 2026, but efforts will be made to compile data for 2025 and, where feasible, retrospectively for earlier years.	Conduct the planned MEL study “A Systematic Review and Comparative Analysis of the Use of Germplasm and Associated Data Sourced from CGIAR Genebanks”	Q3 026
13. AoW 3: CGIAR’s active role in policy negotiation and implementation remains critical for both internal compliance and external influence, and it is important to further articulate how these efforts will be coordinated and measured.	The role of AoW 3 to coordinate CGIAR’s engagement in international genetic resources policy negotiations has a long history and is recognized across CGIAR. To increase the visibility and effectiveness of its coordinating role, AoW 3 will further increase the frequency of its interactions with the DG of the Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT to take advantage of his role as the convenor, in the General Assembly, of the Directors General of the eleven CGIAR Centers that have signed Article 15 agreements with the Plant Treaty’s Governing Body. As the Article 15 Center convenor, Juan Lucas Restrepo reaches out to the other DGs on behalf of AoW 3, with requests for inputs to CGIAR reports to international bodies, updates prepared by AoW concerning negotiating processes, and requests for feedback on proposed CGIAR advocacy strategies and positions. In addition, AoW 3 will also regularly update and engage with the CGIAR Chief Scientist with respect to CGIAR engagement in international negotiations, and in highlighting the need for CGIAR to adopt policies and best practices to be in compliance with evolving international norms and ethical standards related to accessing, using and	1. AoW 3 will provide regular reports to and coordinate virtual meetings with Article 15 DGs, DDG-Rs, Chief Scientific Officer, SO – Legal, B4T leadership (and of course, Genebank Accelerator MT and genebank managers).	1.Ongoing, rolling basis

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
	sharing genetic resources and related information. Following recommendations from the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Services (IAES) of the Genebank Platform, AoW 3 is stimulating the formation of 3-4 member groups in each of the 11 CGIAR Centers with Article 15 agreements. The core three members will come from each Center's genebank, breeding program, and office of the Intellectual Property Focal Point. These small groups will form a nucleus of interest/awareness in each Center for responding to GR policy related issues. AoW 3 will coordinate regular meetings, webinars and information sessions for these small groups, to boost their capacity individually, and to promote their working together as part of a larger CGIAR GR Policy Network. AoW 3 will continue to report on GR policy outcomes – at international and national levels, and within CGIAR – through annual reporting with the Genebank Accelerator's Online Reporting Tool and PRMS.	2. Formation of small GR Policy teams in each Article 15 Center. 3. Regular activities to engage small groups 4. Formation of CGIAR Expert Group on DSI Management (in coordination with Chief Scientist and DGs) 5. Continue to provide the 40 hour on-line course 'GR Policies for Agricultural Research Scientists' for both scientists within CGIAR and for NARS partners.	2. Q4 2025 3. Ongoing rolling basis 4. Q4 2025 5. Ongoing rolling basis

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
		6. Continue to provide 'CGIAR GR Policy Helpdesk' 7. Continue annual reporting on policy outcomes -- from institutional to international levels – using tools and methods provided by the System Office	6. Ongoing rolling basis 7. Yearly
14. AoW 4: The ambition to “identify, develop, and mainstream effective, advanced phytosanitation and diagnostics technologies” would benefit from more detailed plans, including which pathogens will be prioritized, which external experts or institutions will be engaged, the potential for internal CG specialization and ‘buying in’ versus ‘in house’ development of techniques and an analysis of the expected benefits and return on investment to justify these efforts.	Technology development is responsive to evolving phytosanitary threats in the countries/regions where Genebanks are distributing from and to, and inadequacies of existing methods. GHUs shall promptly develop new technologies or adapt existing methods, balancing method performance (stability, robustness, accuracy) with efficiency, for the intended application. Prioritization and decision-making are done at a local level, in a risk-based manner, responding to emerging pest risks, demand from CGIAR SPs/As and partners, with inputs on pest status from NPPOs/RPPOs and the plant health global scientific community. GHUs engage primarily with NPPOs, who are the demand partners, while innovating partners are identified in a case-by-case manner. This approach gives GHUs the flexibility and capacity to be responsive while delivering with quality standards and international compliance. GHUs fill a gap in the global south, supporting the NPPOs and plant health laboratories with increased capacity, innovation, and high competence, contributing to the objectives of FAO-IPPC and CBD Target 6 to limit the transboundary spread and management of invasive pests.	GHUs in CGIAR continue to document changes/upgrades to protocols with justification operate under a quality management system (QMS) including a risk management component following relevant clauses in ISO 34000:2018, ISO/IEC 17025:2017. QMS advances are reported in the PRMS	Ongoing rolling basis

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
		and published in CG space.	
15. AoW 5: The thoughtfully articulated commitment to strengthening national genebanks, especially in the global South should be supported by a clear and measurable strategy. This could include targets such as the number of national genebanks achieving recognized international standards, those securing sustainable core funding, or those establishing long-term partnerships with the Crop Trust or other international donors. It would also be valuable to consider how to transition from external support to building genuine local capacity and resilience, thus avoiding dependence and fostering sustainable development.	One of the outcomes of the AGM (Annual Genebanks Meeting) is defining the basis for a consolidated strategy to strengthen the Global System. By interacting with partners in different regions of the world each year we identify clear demands and priorities directly from the partners. Our engagement with partners is a direct response to their demands. Also, the mapping done by the Crop Trust, used to identify critical countries with which they will collaborate and support through grants like BOLD, end up having direct action from the CGIAR Genebanks since we usually provide hands-on trainings. The implementation of the CoPs has been a move towards building genuine capacities, assuring continued interactions and co-learning and development, going beyond short trainings and no follow ups on implementation and shared knowledge, experiences and responsibilities, as hosting safety copies, support in training more partners, collaborate on science and innovation.	1. Conduct the planned MELIA study “Assessing the Implementation of Best Practices by NARS Partners” to better understand effectiveness of past trainings and help define the new activities 2. AGM in Lima will allow a new round of interaction with partners and will help define the best strategy for strengthening the global system moving forward	1. Q3 2026 2. Q4 2025
16. There is little mention of gender and social inclusion other than a statement of being primarily achieved through its broad user engagement strategy (AoW 2) and capacity strengthening (AoW 5), aiming to	While the primary mandate of CGIAR Genebanks is the <i>ex-situ</i> conservation of crop diversity, issues of gender and social inclusion are central to how this mandate is operationalized. Women, youth, and marginalized groups are intrinsic to the user communities that benefit from genebank services and are reached through genebank distributions, user engagement efforts (AoW2), training (AoW5) and through bilateral projects that the genebanks implement.	N/A	N/A

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
benefit diverse stakeholders including national genebanks, breeders, and farmers. However, explicit inclusion of youth, Indigenous Peoples, or marginalized groups beyond gender is limited. The Report states “Nevertheless, this remains a secondary priority to the Genebanks,” which is disappointing.	For example, repatriation efforts directly target indigenous peoples and farming communities who have historically safeguarded agrobiodiversity, ensuring that their access to lost landraces is restored ¹ . These efforts are complemented by policy engagement, training programs, and benefit-sharing schemes that promote equitable participation and strengthen the capacity of underrepresented groups to influence and benefit from conservation and use strategies. Similarly, dynamic, complementary conservation strategies such as partnerships with community seedbanks & custodian networks, and participatory evaluation of diversity explicitly engage youth and women as custodians and innovators, strengthening their roles in in situ crop conservation.		
The goal of prioritization is to determine which activities will continue to receive support and which should not be definitively funded or executed. The challenges associated with the existing funding model should be addressed and a viable funding strategy devised to ensure sustainability and expansion of these assets.	Funding strategy-related issues have been addressed as part of the first ISDC recommendation.	N/A	N/A
17. The risks labelled "Operational disruptions from management changes" and "Unrest and emergencies impacting genebank operations" lack corresponding Actions/ Controls for risk management. It remains unclear whether this omission is due to oversight or the absence of viable alternatives for addressing these risks... The risk register should be revised to disaggregate the five high-	Each genebank maintains its own risk registry and corresponding mitigation plan. However, these registries have not yet been consolidated at the Genebank Accelerator level to identify the most critical risks across all genebanks.	Consolidate Center-level risk management plans into a system-wide registry and mitigation framework to strengthen genebank risk management across the system.	Q4 2026

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level risks and include robust mitigation actions for all.			
18. ... it is not clear whether efficiency savings were considered for operational work in AoW1	The operational work in AoW1 was designed and budgeted based on a detailed costing study of all genebanks conducted nearly a decade ago. While 2025 costs were partially adjusted for inflation compared to the original costing study, efficiency gains have been required to offset the portion of inflation not accounted for.	N/A	N/A
19. Among the 10 CGIAR genebanks, only half have achieved international standards for availability, safety, duplication, documentation, and quality management. Notably, even significant genebanks for major crops like potato, corn, and wheat fall short of these standards. Considering the costs and efforts required to attain and maintain such benchmarks, it is prudent to reassess whether this endeavor is truly worthwhile. The Crops Trust's longstanding partnership contributes only 30 percent of the core budget. There are several exemplary genebanks that excel in managing key species such as Solanaceae, Cucurbitaceae, Alliaceae, and Compositae, successfully distributing high-quality seeds worldwide without the challenges of meeting such stringent targets.	Achieving performance targets - especially those related to germplasm availability and Quality Management Systems (QMS) – can be complex. For instance, before an accession can be counted as “ <i>available for immediate distribution</i> ”, the newly regenerated seed lot should be tested for dozens of pathogens. In addition, genebanks often maintain more than 1,000 pages of Standard Operating Procedures, sometimes in two languages, all of which require annual updates. It is important to note that the current limitation on Crop Trust funding for CGIAR genebanks is not so much the number of collections that have met the Performance Targets. Rather, the constraint lies in the size of the Crop Trust’s Endowment Fund, which remains insufficient to cover the routine operations of all CGIAR collections that have achieved these targets. Currently, ICRISAT has reached the targets, ILRI, ICARDA, CIMMYT and CIP are in line for a new technical review to confirm that they have reached the targets for their collections. However, there are currently not enough funds to support those genebanks. Even for collections that do receive support, the Endowment Fund usually provides the majority - but not the entirety - of the funding required to sustain their routine operations. Moreover, the performance targets are based on international standards and are part of our commitment to the International Community through the Plant Treaty. Independent of the Crop Trust funding, this is a responsibility of the CGIAR Genebanks	Convene a meeting with the Crop Trust to review and, if necessary, update (a) the definition of “ <i>available for immediate distribution</i> ” under the availability Performance Target, and (b) the Quality Management System components that consume the most staff time.	Q4 2025

9. Multifunctional Landscapes

ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Relevance 1: Make emphasis on establishing demonstration areas within landscapes to showcase results to diverse stakeholders and clearly compare business-as-usual approaches with improved systems within the multifunctional landscape target areas. (p. 15/16 and 29) Weakness 3. Research Focus: Insufficient detail on the landscapes/ biomes that will be the focus of work in Areas of Work (AoW) 1 and 2. Explain types and rationale for the choices.	This is a good suggestion. We will establish demonstration areas (“Living Labs”), learning from the experience of the Agroecology Initiative. We are also conducting a review of global experiences to draw lessons on identifying, establishing, and managing Living Labs that demonstrate MFL solutions and their impacts. Major Biomes/ ecosystems are identified: Mekong; Central India; Eastern–Southern Africa (highland–lowland–rift valley); the Guinea Forest–Savanna and Sudano–Sahelian continuum; the Amazon; and (Potential) the Maghreb region. Landscapes will be selected after prioritization.	With the results of the prioritization exercise and the confirmed Program Director, the Multifunctional Landscape Science Program’s (hereafter ‘Program’) target areas for 2026—2030 will be confirmed considering the major biomes/ ecosystems already identified	Q4 2025
Scientific credibility (MELIA plan / risks): The plan would benefit from specific timelines and rotation across AoWs to focus on different work packages, with evidence from AoW 6 feeding in to inform management decisions (p.15).	AoWs will start implementation in the with different degrees of intensity based on the identified stakeholder priorities following the Vision-to-Action process. AoW6 will provide frameworks and tools to all AoWs by end-2025 and start to generate evidence in 2027. The results will be used as feedback for adaptive management.	Program Management Unit (PMU) to develop a timeline and visuals to communicate AoWs’ causal logic, synergies, and trade-offs. Revisit AoW budget allocations, including AoW6, in the next cycle	AoWs’ logic Q4 2025; Budget revisit Q1 2026
Legitimacy (Comparative Advantage [CA]): Further work is needed to identify new partners for innovation, delivery, and scaling. (p.16) Effectiveness (CA): It is recommended that further CA analysis is conducted to identify the capacity among potential partners to deliver High-Level Outputs (HLO). (p.29) Further CA analysis should be conducted to identify the relative strengths and capabilities of existing and new partners to deliver outcomes. (p.30)	We have mentioned the new partners who will be engaged across different levels of the Program (pages 11-12 of the Inception Report). CA analyses will be revised to further ‘screen’ partners who can join the Program ‘consortium’.	PMU to lead further CA exercise to map new partners who will engage across the ‘Program value chain’	Q4 2026

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Effectiveness (performance assessment indicators). Emphasis should be placed on developing a comprehensive set of tools, indicators, context-specific assessment frameworks, and Digital Twin landscapes to ensure evidence-based decision-making for landscape stakeholders. (p.16)	Agreed and in line with AoW plan. The use of Digital Twin Landscapes will be continuous with emphasis in 2026.	AoW6 to finalize the work started on assessment frameworks	Q4 2025
Weakness 1. Limited Specificity on Risk Mitigation Feasibility: Lack of detailed explanations on the practical feasibility and implementation of specific mitigation actions for new research areas. Give more emphasis on engagement with multinationals and corporations, private sector (agri-food, tech) to mitigate the risk of failure when aid is reduced (p. 15, 29, 30) and that directly connects smallholders with the market and eliminate profit taking by middlemen. (p.30)	Agreed to provide explanation on the feasibility of implementing mitigation actions for new research areas. The Program PMU and AoW7 will continuously help engagement with global, regional, multinationals and corporations to enhance partnership and funding support. This includes engaging with countries and regional economic communities for the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund and the Green Climate Fund, as well as collaboration with financing institutions, such as development banks (e.g., The World Bank, The African Development Bank) as well as the private sector. AoW 3 will address rural entrepreneurship and Aow4 will address potential disconnects between smallholders and the market.	Draft report on role of collaborations with tech corporations that may be able to provide solutions that directly connect smallholders with the market and eliminate profit-taking by middlemen	Q1 2026
Weakness 2. Bias Mitigation: An explicit budget allocation to promote fledgling organizations that are locally managed would be a way to promote new partnerships rather than continuing the dominance of multinational agencies.	Agreed. Localization of investments for local partners will be pursued in 2026—2030, supported by an improved CA exercise. Some local partnerships have been established, and more will emerge through the engagement process in countries as well as the development of stronger markets for diverse portfolios of products within Living Labs with continuous evaluation. Local partners will weigh in as they are the close custodians of multifunctional landscapes and solutions.	Program to finalize its partner engagement strategy noting that bias is avoided and CA is used	Q4 2025
Demand-Driven / stakeholder engagement Emphasize engagement with partners across different regions. A table listing these workshops with participating organizations and geographic spread would have helped clarify this.	Agreed – See response under Weakness 2 and partnerships table in annex . During the inception phase, Centers had virtual or presential bilateral meetings and field visits with 61 partners in all target countries. Agreements were signed with 39 partners for 2025 at a total value of US\$2.9m. A broad range of partners have been engaged: 3 farmer associations, 8 governments (5 national and 3 subnational), 12 NARS, 26 NGOs (7 local, 9 national, 5 international), 8 universities. Tabulated information about workshops, events, etc.	PMU to finalize partner engagement table	Q4 2025

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	for each region detailing organizations will be prepared as part of the MELIA plan.		
Comparative advantage: Missed opportunity: Engagement of the USAID Feed the Future labs about integration of AI into agriculture. Insufficient risk assessments and mitigation strategies related to these new areas of research. (p. 31/32)	Agreed.	Review lessons learnt on integrating AI in agriculture. Continuously assess the risk of using AI to integrate, bundle, tailor and contextualize solutions and provide mitigation strategies	Q4 2025
TOC: More emphasis on the scaling of local benefits beyond the living landscapes; Roles and responsibilities of partners should be more clearly identified to assist Program management.	The scaling process has already started through the International Network of Living Landscapes (INALL) and for countries where solutions have already moved towards larger scales (e.g. of Agroecology policies in Kenya and Peru). The AoW7 workplan includes an expansion of INALL. For partnerships, see reply under Legitimacy.	Include scaling strategy and action plan into the partnership strategy that is under development	Q4 2025
AoW 1: Solutions and Innovations. Make it explicit that demonstration areas will be created to provide empirical data to quantify ecosystem restoration and food production gains along with a specific goal of bringing policy makers to observe these demonstration areas is recommended. Comparisons with business as usual and awareness of innovations from sustainable farming and climate action through cross-Program linkages are also important to indicate at the demonstration sites. (p.33)	Agreed. The Living Labs will test integrated solutions from plots to landscapes, using empirical data to assess ecosystem service gains in near real-time. Evidence will rely on with–without or before–after designs, with baselines where control sites are absent. MSc and PhD students will trial innovations on farms and stations, feeding results in bundled solutions for farmers and stakeholders. Policy makers and other actors will be invited to observe, linking research to planning, reporting, and carbon credit negotiations. We will engage more proactively with the Programs on Climate Action, Sustainable Farming and Animal and Aquatic Foods on shared data ecosystems in shared locations.	Produce a document on how AoW1 provides empirical data to quantify socio-ecological gains (in collaboration with AoW6) of solution bundles. Cross-Program seminar on shared data eco-systems	Q4 2025
AoW 2: Landscape Planning and Governance Balance policy focus with corporate engagement to ensure heavy-handed regulation does not stifle the creation of business models that promote ecosystem-sensitive food production systems. (p.33)	Agreed. The strong interaction between AoWs 2, 3 and 4 will allow the development of incentive mechanisms and business models that are coherent, supportive of, and supported by targeted policy-level changes.	AoWs 2, 3, and 4 to co-develop framework/plan	Q1 2026

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AoW 3: Markets and Business Models A greater focus on creating financial mechanisms that benefit smallholder production systems is recommended so that regulation does not stifle innovation.	Agreed. The theory of change (ToC) of this AoW includes a focus on co-designed financial services or products based on assessments of financial ecosystems, promising innovative options, and partnership agreements for each landscape, with operational guidelines and a toolbox.	AoW3 to develop a framework and business plan that benefit smallholder production systems	Q1 2026
AoW 4: Institutions and Policies The AoW assumes that Program partners can effectively engage with motivated decision-makers who will actively participate in promoting supportive policy processes. (p.33)	Yes, the AoW works on this assumption with a strong emphasis on capacity building for policy makers to achieve coherent and coordinated policies that respond to multiple stakeholders' specific needs. As a mitigation strategy, we will ensure that our scientists participate in technical working groups and engage with policy makers to improve enabling environment.	PMU to include risk of partners not able to engage with motivated decision-makers	Q4 2025
AoW 5: Gender Equality, Social Inclusion and Fairness. Incentives for behavioral change; Make AoW crosscutting. (p.33)	The Program will reduce the number of AoWs from 7 to 5. The proposal under discussion with AoW leads and the Leadership Team is to: 1. Make AoW 5 crosscutting with clear HLOs related to GEYSI and behavioral change included in the other AoWs. 2. Distribute activities and HLOs of AoW 4 on Institutions and Policies into AoWs 2, 7, and 3. The Program will collaborate with the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator and the Policy Innovations program to share lessons and experiences.	AoW5 to produce a brief on behavioral change approaches. Final decision on AoWs (standalone or crosscutting) to be taken before the end of 2025	Q4 2025
AoW 6: Performance Assessment and Evidence Generation. It is recommended that the AoW is expanded significantly. Greater integration with the tech leaders that are listed as collaborators would benefit the AoW as these organizations will allow the evidence to be widely distributed and integrated into decision making. (p.33)	Agreed. We can expand this AoW (linking with other AoWs and MELIA). Linkages between the different AoWs will be articulated to assess whether the targets of the different AoWs are achieved, in close collaboration with MELIA (generation of evidence of outcomes and impacts of the Program). AoW7 will disseminate evidence to decision-makers at regional and global levels. AoWs 7 and 6, and MELIA will collaborate for effective integration of assessment frameworks and assessment results.	PMU to organize internal workshop, on cross-AoW performance assessment and evidence generation which will lead to the development of an articulation framework and visual that will ensure consistent implementation	Q4 2025
AoW 7: Global Engagement and Learning. It is recommended that this AoW is merged with AoW 6 as the evidence that is generated will be the foundation of	AoW7 focuses on partnerships, knowledge management, policy engagement, and sustainable finance. It prioritizes challenges & opportunities; promotes knowledge sharing across Living Labs and through a CGIAR community of practice; connects local evidence to	AoW7 to finalize production of engagement and advocacy strategy	Q4 2025

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distributing the learnings of the Program. (p.33)	regional/global policy (Rio Conventions); and fosters global engagement for landscape multifunctionality. We thus maintain AoW7 as a standalone AoW. See response under AoW 5 for plans to reduce the number of AoWs from 7 to 5.		
Social inclusion outside of gender (Youth, indigenous peoples): It is unclear how they will be directly engaged. (p.34)	Participatory action research involving all landscape actors including women, youth, indigenous people and local communities among others will be achieved through land use plans, governance, organizational or institutional innovations, and business models that address barriers and visions of marginalized people in each MFL as stated in the results framework. The how-to is addressed in the ALL toolkit .	GEYSI team to produce a plan on how the Program considers social inclusion (including women, youth, indigenous peoples, and local communities)	Q4 2025
Prioritization: 1. Further prioritization by HLO and region. 2. Incorporate food system corporations as an alternative to government funding. 3. Better inclusion of Nature-Positive Solutions' activities. 4. A more structured approach to integrate different funding streams for overall coherence. 5. Address identified funding gaps (nutrition-specific outcomes, scalable financial models, policy coherence; digital tools for monitoring)	1. 'Regional Prioritization' was conducted using a knowledge-based approach; Country and site-level prioritization is yet to be conducted. See also response under Relevance 1. 2. See response under Weakness 1. 3. Nature Positive Solutions activities are integrated in the Results Framework (OP 1.1. farm-level productivity, resilience and sustainability within landscapes; 1.3. management of common pool resources; 1.2.4. protected area management with local livelihood benefits.). These solutions have been included in an inventory of AoW1. 4. We will engage private corporations, philanthropies etc. as alternative sources of funding. The Program and AoW7 are developing a strategy on how such engagement will be done and different funding streams integrated. 5. Agreed.	1. Prioritization to be finalized 2. Report to be drafted 3. No action required 4/5. AoW7 engagement strategy to be developed, including funding gaps and possible strategies	Q4 2025
Risk: Specific details on how each action will be executed are not exhaustively provided. (...) The Report does not specifically detail dedicated risk categories for human/animal health within its framework. Also consider: Loss of key staff or non-delivery by partners. (p.35)	We will elaborate on how each risk mitigation action will be executed. We will also provide dedicated risk categories for human/animal health within the Program framework.	N/A	Q4 2025
MELIA:	1. MELIA will not depend solely on AoW6 evidence but will complement it. It has its own indicators and tools to track	N/A	N/A

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- Again, it is recommended that more resources are provided to AoW6 to ensure MELIA can respond to change. (p.35) - The cadence and focus of the Pause and Reflect workshops should be made clearer. - Direct engagement with Nature Positive business solutions is lacking. (p.36)	- impact, while also drawing on AoW6 results when useful. We support allocating adequate resources to AoW6. See reply under Scientific credibility (MELIA plan/ risks). - Annual pause-and-reflect workshops will be held at both country and program levels. Program Learning Reviews will follow these workshops and annual reporting to provide feedback for adaptive management. - For Nature Positive, see point number three under Prioritization above.		
Additional comments: The Report did not elaborate clearly on roles and responsibilities of the different participants or exactly what activities will be done where. Much will depend on the availability and demands of W3 funds. Such reliance may fragment the work and negatively affect planned strategic outcomes. It is desirable to be clear how W3 funds align to W1/2 activities and link partners to tasks, providing details of cross linkages, reporting and communication structures. Hopefully this will be done in the implementation phase.	We will carry out a detailed mapping of who does what during the implementation phase. See also reply under relevance 1. Detailed PORBs will be developed to align Program W1/W2 budget and W3 allocations linking partners to tasks. Linkages and reporting plans will also be developed. While we acknowledge the alignment of W3 may create fragmentation, it can also produce findings that are relevant to the SP although in a different location.	PMU to finalize partnership strategy	Q4 2025

10. Policy Innovation

ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
How will the relative effectiveness of alternative bundles and how that effectiveness varies based on agroecosystem, policy, or other contexts be established to guide the policy guidance? The Report is thin on identifying the relevant social science research agenda intended to guide agenda setting and policy guidance.	The program will establish the relative effectiveness of alternative policy bundles and how they vary across contexts through a multi-faceted and systems-oriented social science research approach. Ex-ante Impact Assessments and Modeling: The program will use foresight analysis, scenario modeling, and ex-ante impact assessments to evaluate the potential effectiveness of different policy bundles before they are implemented. This allows for the simulation of various outcomes based on different contexts (e.g., agroecosystems, market conditions, or climate shocks). Systems-Level and Context-Specific Analysis: Our approach moves beyond sectoral silos to analyze the trade-offs and synergies of policy bundles across interconnected systems (e.g., food and water security, climate resilience, and livelihoods). The program's commitment to demand-led research ensures that these analyses are grounded in specific national and regional contexts, allowing us to account for variations across different agroecosystems and institutional settings. The program will feature a robust social science research agenda that is central to guiding both agenda setting and policy guidance. For example, policy feasibility and political economy research: A key focus is to understand "what can be done" by analyzing institutional capacity, political economy dynamics, and stakeholder coalitions. This research agenda uses political analysis and institutional diagnostics to identify entry points for reform and ensure policies are politically feasible and context appropriate. Cross-Country Research and Comparative Analysis: The program will utilize mixed-methods approaches for a cross-country research agenda. This will advance the science in key areas such as innovative subsidies, effective solutions for the water, energy, food, and environment (WEFE) nexus, and transformative policies related to youth and jobs.	We will ensure that the detailed social science research agenda, including the specific methodologies for analyzing policy effectiveness and the core hypotheses for each Area of Work, are more explicitly documented in the revised Program Theory of Change, Plan of Results and Budget (PORB). This commitment will be further evidenced in subsequent Annual Technical Reports, which will showcase the results and progress of this research.	Q3 2025
Country office outputs are not international, much less global, public goods.	While individual country-level outputs are context-specific, they are intentionally designed to be aligned with the program's three overarching, program-wide research priorities: innovative subsidies, effective solutions for the water, energy, food, and environment (WEFE) nexus, and transformative policies related to youth and jobs. By deliberately bundling these individual country outputs and their findings for cross-country learning, the program creates a	We will add a specific, new section to the 2025 Plan of Results and Budget (PORB) and include public good achievements in future Annual Technical Reports. The new text	Q3 2025

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	higher-level body of knowledge that constitutes a global public good. This approach synthesizes local insights into broader, actionable evidence for the international policy community. Recent examples of this include a special issue in the journal Food Policy, led by the Policy Innovations Program (started under the National Policies and Strategies Initiative) on "Fertilizer, soil health, and economic shocks" synthesizes recent evidence research from multiple countries to generate global-level insights. In addition, the program does undertake global analysis and develops tools that address policy issues affecting global, regional and national food, land and water systems. Area of Work 1, for example, produces global outlook reports that synthesize CGIAR's collective insights on climate change impacts, agricultural R&D priorities, etc. The modeling assets used for this analysis are international public goods, as evidence by widespread demand from partners.	will provide a detailed framework outlining how individual country-level policy outputs—currently "scattered"—are systematically bundled and synthesized to generate global public goods. We will also revise the Theory of Change to highlight the impact pathway for these program-wide research priorities. This would demonstrate the coherence of the Program and how each Area of Work contributes towards these priorities. For example, we will explicitly show how research on innovative subsidies across multiple countries is aggregated to produce comprehensive, cross-country analyses that are published in international journals, such as the special issue on "Fertilizer Policies" in Food Policy. This will provide a clear line of sight, with evidence, showing how local, demand-driven research is transformed into a global public good.	
The sole focus is government partners. The "policy dialogue series"	We agree that the document may have unintentionally under-emphasized the role of other crucial partners in food systems transformation. While government institutions are the primary focus as policy decision-makers, the program's	We will address the feedback by providing a more explicit and	Q3 2025

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seems a rather light-touch way of engaging civil society and the private sector, which must engage in food systems transformation. The implicit idea that governments call all the shots is incredible. This is especially a problem for AoW 2.	approach is broader and includes private sector and civil society. We actively work with a wide array of partners, each playing a specific role. For instance, think tanks and universities are vital for our institutional capacity sharing efforts. The private sector's role is particularly strong under Area of Work 2 (Market-led Transformation) and Area of Work 3 (Institutions and governance), which examines the role of market actors, including multinational corporations. Civil society organizations are critical partners, especially in Area of Work 6 (Youth and Jobs) and with water associations under Area of Work 4. Ultimately, the program's main focus remains on government institutions because they are formal policy decision-makers, and this prioritization is especially critical with shrinking CGIAR funding. However, our engagement with other partners is strategic and designed to inform and influence these key policy processes.	comprehensive overview of the program's partnerships. While government institutions remain our primary focus as policy decision-makers, we will clarify how the program strategically engages with other critical partners. The 2025 Plan of Results and Budget (PORB) and subsequent Annual Technical Reports will include dedicated text that documents our work with think tanks, universities, the private sector, and civil society organizations. These will also be part of the Program ToC and linked to show their importance in achieving our outputs and outcomes. This will provide clear evidence of our multi-stakeholder approach, ensuring that our robust collaborations are transparent and formally reported.	
The Report is quite thin on clearly defining research problems, testable hypotheses, theories in need of development or testing, etc.	We agree that the report could be more explicit in detailing the research problems and testable hypotheses that underpin the program's work. The following are examples of the core hypotheses that drive each Area of Work. For Area of Work 1, the central hypothesis is that better investment prioritization, informed by rigorous analysis, can lead to more effective and sustainable development outcomes, and that public and private investment priorities and outcomes shift as countries and regions undergo agrifood system transformation. Area of Work 2 hypothesizes that the application of evidence-based and context-specific policies can create more efficient and equitable markets, thereby improving food systems. For Area of Work 3, the research	We will address this feedback by ensuring that the program's research agenda is explicitly defined in future documentation. The 2025 Plan of Results and Budget (PORB) and subsequent Annual Technical Reports will include new text that underscores plans and achievements in addressing	Q3 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
	addresses the fundamental problem that inefficient solutions and governance challenges are significant barriers to food system transformation. Area of Work 4 operates on the hypothesis that a nexus approach—integrating water, food, energy, and land—can achieve win-win solutions that benefit economic, social, and environmental goals simultaneously. Area of Work 5 analyzes the science-policy gap with the core assumption that intentional improvements from both the policy-making and research sides can help to close this critical divide. Finally, Area of Work 6, the Policy knowledge brokering hub is a new area of work which aims to integrate policy research capabilities of the entire CGIAR by translating, synthesizing, and packaging key knowledge for external policy audiences with an all-CGIAR primary focus on poverty, inequality, employment and livelihoods (PIEL).	core research problems, testable hypotheses, and theories guiding our work. Within the program, we have already planned to revise the ToC to make explicit the underpinning hypothesis for each AoW and better align research questions to address them. This action will provide clear evidence demonstrating how each Area of Work is underpinned by a rigorous, well-defined research framework.	
Missing is response on poor articulation of Portfolio Cohesion and Coherency.	The Policy Innovation Science Program is working with most Science Programs across the CGIAR portfolio. The following examples show some of our portfolio-level collaborations: Foresight and Prioritization (Area of Work 1) works with Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Foods (SAAF), Better Diets and Nutrition, Breeding for Tomorrow, Genebanks, Sustainable Farming, and Food Frontiers and Security on country investment prioritization and risk assessment studies and the 2026 Global Outlook Report. Market-led Food Systems Transformation (Area of Work 2) collaborates with Better Diets and Nutrition and Gender Equality and Inclusion on studies around social protection and on the role of certification and information on market performance for nutrient-rich foods. Governance and Political Economy (Area of Work 3)’s work on governance models and political economy frameworks and institutional innovations will be led by Policy Science Program but backstopped by Scaling for Impact, Climate Action, Food Frontiers and Security, Better Diets and Nutrition and Multifunctional Landscapes. Area of Work 3 also has continuing work on policy coherence with Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Foods and Capacity Sharing. WEFE Nexus (Area of Work 4) collaborates extensively with other Science	N/A	N/A

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	Programs like Climate Action for climate data to support nexus models and Scaling for Impact for scaling of socio-technical nexus bundles. With Sustainable Farming, Multifunctional Landscapes and Capacity Sharing the Program works on joint development of frameworks and best practices on institutions and landscapes. Country Strategy and Engagement (Area of Work 5) has active collaborations with Scaling for Impact, Food Frontiers and Security, Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Foods and Sustainable Farming through the Country Policy Hub which serves as the go-to place for CGIAR policy advice at the country level. AoW 5 also collaborates with Capacity Sharing on innovative capacity sharing approaches with regional and national partners. The Policy Knowledge Brokering Hub (Area of Work 6) is working on crosscutting studies synthesizing the evidence for global CGIAR positioning on priority policy issues, collaborating with Gender Equality and Inclusion, Breeding for Tomorrow and Genebanks. Also, with Breeding for Tomorrow and Genebanks and Area of Work 1 and 5 on creating a repository of models, methods and tools. All this information is elaborated in the PORB under Cross-Program collaboration.		

11. Scaling for Impact

ISDC recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
(1) Realism in Ambition, Risk, and Resource Use: Reviewers noted that while the Program's vision is strong, its ambition may exceed current timelines and funding. They recommended refining the ToC and AoWs for realism, deepening systemic and country-level risk analysis, and aligning delivery plans with lower-than-expected 2025 budgets to strengthen feasibility.	The Scaling for Impact (S4I) Program acknowledges the reviewers' concern and provides three responses. (1) During inception, the Theory of Change (ToC) was revised to consolidate High Level Outputs (HLOs; 5.1/5.4 and 4.1/4.2) and pause HLO 1.3 until 2026, ensuring focus on a smaller set of priority outcomes. Scaling Flagships are being designed to concentrate resources on a few high-potential pathways and a reduced number of HLOs in Area of Work (AoW) 2, improving scaling focus and coherence across AoWs rather than fragmenting them. The Program's 2030 targets are grounded in diffusion-of-innovation theory and historical adoption evidence, with major gains expected from 2027 onward as foundational investments mature. These targets will be revisited in Q4 2025, drawing not only on MELIA data from the first year but also on evidence from inception-period stakeholder consultations, providing a stronger empirical basis for recalibration. Targets will then be formally reset, if required, during Q4 of 2025 and the Q1 2026 Pause and Reflect period when CGIAR's Portfolio Performance Unit permits updates to MELIA frameworks. (2) On budgeting, Section 7 of the Inception Report clarifies that in 2025 Interim Directors and Transitional AoW teams had limited authority to steer allocations. In 2025, 80% of funds were distributed directly to Centers, granting their budget holders discretion over AoWs and HLOs they supported. However, the planned 20% flexible budget—intended to address underfunded priorities—never materialized. This limited alignment with the revised ToC resulted in key priorities being underfunded. The Program is responding through strengthened coordination with Centers and targeted W3 resource mobilization, with tighter alignment expected from 2026 when permanent leadership will hold greater budgetary authority. (3) Finally, consistent with Section 9 of the Risk Management framework, the Program will revise its approach in Q3 2025 to emphasize funding risks—diversifying sources, reducing reliance on W1/2, and aligning budgets with priorities—while recalibrating 2030 targets based on available resources, MELIA evidence, stakeholder consultations, and guidance from the advisory committee.	(1A) Finalize Theory of Change revisions: Complete Scaling Flagship designs with cross-AoW linkages and update the Theory of Change to reflect the Flagship structure, streamlined HLOs, and improved delivery sequencing.	Q4 2025
		(1B) Strengthen risk management: Revise the Program's Risk Management framework to incorporate systemic and country-level analysis, with explicit mitigation measures for budgeting, target setting, and delivery risks.	Q4 2025
		(1C) Evidence-based recalibration of targets: Integrate 2025 MELIA and performance data and stakeholder guidance into the Pause and Reflect process, adjust 2030 impact targets where needed, and reaffirm co-reporting with other Science Programs in the 2026 Plan of Work and Budget.	Q4 2025 and Q1 2026
(2) Governance & Organizational Clarity: Reviewers noted that	The Program appreciates the reviewers' recommendation to clarify governance and does so below by discussing transitional arrangements in 2025, decision-making protocols and leadership structures, and streamlined structures for 2026	(2A) Appoint permanent Program Director and finalize 2026 governance model:	Q3 and Q4 2025

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ISDC recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
while roles and responsibilities are outlined, the Inception Report could further strengthen clarity on governance and ensure representation of all CGIAR Centers. They encouraged clearer definition of the Program's organizational structure—both to clarify its role within CGIAR and to facilitate coordination and resource alignment across Programs, Accelerators, Centers, and bilaterals.	and beyond. (1) As set out in the Inception Report, 2025 is a transitional year bridging the 2022–2024 and 2025–2030 CGIAR Portfolios. The S4I transitional leadership team includes an Interim Director, Deputy, AoW leads and co-leads (AoW 1: 1 lead, 2 co-leads; AoW 2: 1 lead, 4 co-leads; AoWs 3–5: 1 lead, 2 co-leads each), and a Center Delegate Group established in July 2025. Delegates and focal points from all CGIAR Centers involved in the Program contribute to planning, budgeting, and performance oversight, ensuring W1/2 activities align with W3 and bilateral resources. A permanent Program Director will be appointed by Q3 2025, after which Interim roles will conclude. From 2026, each AoW will be led by one competitively selected individual, with transitional roles ending, in line with CGIAR governance policies. (2) Decision-making follows consensus wherever possible; where consensus is not achieved, the Program Director decides at the leadership level and AoW leads within their Areas. All AoW leads and Center Delegates / focal points meet weekly, supported by a Program Manager who maintains records, while AoW teams meet weekly to sustain alignment between governance and delivery. (3) From 2026 forward, governance will comprise a permanent Program Director, one AoW lead per Area, and the Center Delegate Group, supported by an external advisory committee of global scaling experts. (4) Program leadership also maintains continuous dialogue with complementary Programs to support joint work planning and co-reporting of results. Wherever possible, staff are placed in both the Scaling Program and other Programs to action joint workplans and maximize synergies. These arrangements reinforce complementarity, avoid duplication, and ensure effective coordination across CGIAR.	Replace interim structure, confirm AoW leads, and continue the Center Delegate and focal point group.	
		(2B) Establish external advisory committee: Comprised of global scaling experts, the committee will provide strategic input and support resource mobilization	Q4 2025
		(2C) Publish updated governance structure: Clarify roles of Program Director, AoW leads, and Center Delegates as part of the 2026 operational plan.	Q1 2026
(3) Program Structure & Comparative Advantage: Reviewers noted that restructuring AoW 2 into Scaling Flagships could enhance impact but risks fragmenting the Program if linkages to other initiatives and partnerships are not clearly defined. They also found the comparative	Reviewers expressed concern that restructuring AoW 2 into Flagships could fragment the Program and that the comparative advantage (CA) analysis was too generic. In practice, the Flagship model is being developed precisely to address the lack of coherence seen in 2025, when many Centers continued legacy research activities from the 2022–2024 Portfolio rather than tightly focused scaling efforts. Flagships will be embedded in AoW 2, the Program's largest Area of Work in 2025, and from 2026 forward will concentrate budgets and workplans on the highest-priority scaling opportunities, guided by comparative advantage insights that identify where CGIAR offers the strongest value relative to other scaling actors. (1) Each Flagship will be anchored in a Grand Challenge, with 'Solution Scaling Tracks' serving as pipelines of innovations to be scaled under	(3A) Finalize Flagship design and selection criteria: Complete a competitive, facilitated process to prioritize innovations for Flagship Solution Scaling Tracks. Ensure benchmarking and CA insights guide selection. Integrate rollout with AoW 1, 3, 4, and 5 to ensure internal coherence.	Q4 2025
		(3B) Publish prioritized Flagship portfolio: Announce a focused	Q1 2026

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ISDC recommendation	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
advantage analysis slightly generic, with limited benchmarking and little evidence of influence on resource allocation or partnerships. A more targeted analysis is needed to substantiate structural choices and guide resource alignment.	each topic. These tracks will focus on evidence-based innovation bundles that respond to stakeholder demand and specific scaling opportunities. A facilitated and competitive process will finalize selection by end-2025, with 10–20 initial tracks rolled out in 2026. The shift toward Flagships and a clearer focus on high-potential innovations for scaling was informed by inputs from the 2025 regional workshops and partner dialogues, ensuring that co-creation activities shaped both the thematic focus and early prioritization. While these dialogues did not generate significant stakeholder input on the structure of other AoWs, stakeholders did provide input on specific innovations that helped inform the Flagship concept and design. (2) To ensure integration, each Flagship will support at least one CGIAR Science Program, transitioning research outputs into validated scaling pathways, with cross-linkages to AoWs 1, 3, 4 and 5. (3) CA analysis, drawing on a database of 4,000 partners, benchmarked CGIAR’s capacity against alternative providers and informed the Program’s decision to broaden collaboration to humanitarian agencies, development banks, youth networks, among others. We invite review of the CA analysis appendix table in the Inception Report, which lists selected actors. The findings are guiding partnership refinement and resource allocation within Flagships, ensuring 2026 funds target areas of CGIAR’s strongest CA and flow to partners where CA is weaker.	set of initial Solution Scaling Tracks as pipelines of innovations to be scaled under each Flagship. Share alignment with Science Programs for co-reporting.	
		(3C) Launch initial Flagship rollout and strengthen delivery capacity: Begin phased rollout of Solution Scaling Tracks in 2026 under Grand Challenge themes. Source delivery-oriented CGIAR staff focused on scaling; where gaps remain, engage external consultants or partners.	Q1–Q2 2026
(4) MELIA & Learning Systems: Reviewers welcomed a stronger MELIA framework but noted limited engagement with the Evaluability Assessment team, unclear use of feedback, and insufficient assurance that internal and external evaluations will inform learning.	The Evaluability Assessment (EA) process began before submission of the Inception Report, which already included a MELIA Plan, Results Framework, and Theory of Change. IAES provided the draft EA review to S4I on 13 July 2025, after Inception Reports were completed, which did not allow sufficient time to incorporate recommendations by the 9 July deadline. CGIAR’s Portfolio Performance and Portfolio Coordination units then issued a waiver for all Programs and Accelerators and revised the final Inception Report template to remove the EA recommendations section. Since then, S4I has met repeatedly with the EA team and submitted a formal response. Many recommendations are already integrated into the MELIA Plan and Results Framework; pending items include (1) environmental health indicators and (2) clarified evaluation learning questions. Once IAES issues the final EA report, S4I will revise MELIA plans to ensure full alignment with EA findings and ISDC expectations. Going forward, MELIA will integrate EA recommendations, ensuring rigorous tracking and adaptive use of results.	(4A) Integrate EA findings into MELIA: Revise the MELIA Plan and Results Framework with EA recommendations, environmental health indicators, and clarified learning questions.	Q4 2025–Q1 2026
		(4B) Institutionalize continuous learning: Regularly update MELIA with EA findings and internal/external lessons to strengthen tracking and adaptive management.	Q1 2026 onward

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(5) Social Inclusion: Reviewers asked for clarification of targets. They advised clarifying beneficiary categories (women, youth, marginalized groups) and enhancing emphasis on risk and ethical considerations in scaling processes.	Reviewers requested clarification on inclusion targets and group definitions. (1) The ≥30% target applies to people accessing agricultural, market, nutrition, and climate solutions and jobs created; the 50% target applies to consumers with healthier diets. Both align with the program's ToC, with 2030 targets to be recalibrated in Q4 2025–Q1 2026. (2) S4I has defined the target beneficiary categories clearly as requested by the reviewers. MELIA will disaggregate data where feasible and guide AoW teams, while recognizing CGIAR's intermediary role in canalizing scaling processes through partnerships limits direct influence. (3) S4I is adopting ethics principles aligned with the CGIAR Ethics Framework and has developed an ethics statement for all Centers and staff, ensuring women, youth, and marginalized groups are addressed using responsible scaling principles to the greatest extent possible from 2026 forward.	(5A) Clarify and update inclusion targets: Reconfirm Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (GESI) targets in MELIA framework, recalibrate 2030 targets using 2025 MELIA evidence.	Q4 2025–Q1 2026
		(5B) Institutionalize ethics and risk awareness: Conduct all-staff workshop to raise ethics awareness and embed responsible scaling principles in Flagship Solution Track design, selection, and scaling.	Q1–Q2 2026

12. Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Foods

ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion comments including: Developing targeted metrics for youth empowerment in the MELIA system While gender is robustly addressed, youth and indigenous group integration lacks specificity (Section 6) with a very low level of support from W3 funding. However, the treatment of youth engagement, while mentioned across multiple components, lacks the depth of gender analysis. Specific youth-focused indicators are absent from the MELIA framework, and the Report misses opportunities to highlight intergenerational knowledge transfer in pastoral or fishing communities. The ethical considerations of working with marginalized groups are appropriately noted, though institutional review processes for sensitive studies could be more thoroughly described. Future Program design should incorporate frameworks for assessing intersectionality and ensuring cultural appropriateness.	The budget constraints of AoW5 do not allow us to broaden its research and intervention topics and team expertise; therefore, our main entry point is the gender component to which we will add ‘age’ as an intersectional factor. Consequently, for youth, we will not be able to achieve the same depth of analysis that we will achieve for gender. Ad hoc youth studies will be conducted to build on previous work which was, however, limited. We will coordinate with the MELIA team to ensure that some youth metrics are included. Also, we will coordinate with the MELIA team on the utilization of women’s empowerment metrics which we have developed (WELI, WEFI, WELBI etc.) and systematically apply them within AoW5 to assess changes associated with its interventions. Institutional review policies for ethics apply across all AoW and will therefore be dealt with at Science Program level through the Centers and local institutions governing ethical approvals.	1. Coordinate with MELIA team on inclusion of youth and empowerment metrics 2. Highlight in the Plan of Results and Budget (PORB) the youth studies we plan to undertake	Q4 2025
PRIORITIZATION comments including: Uneven geographic, social, thematic and budget coverage: Despite high prioritization scores for South Asia and LAC, these regions are underfunded. ...[P]roviding transparent justification for regional budget distributions However, the concentration of CGIAR infrastructure and capability in East Africa may unintentionally	The Program will explore potential in these regions to transform animal and aquatic food systems, including considering our comparative advantage, moving forward. Engagement (presuming potential) will take a phased process, building on our initial work and expanding the focus and geographic coverage over time; whilst we responsibly exit other work.	During the inception workshop and management visits to South Asia and LAC, scoping discussions will take place around opportunities for co-investment to increase the Program’s presence in these geographies, with local stakeholders.	Q2 2026

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have the effect of reinforcing historical investment patterns. The substantial underfunding of South Asia relative to its prioritization score raises questions about allocation criteria that aren't fully answered in the budget justification.			
RISKS comments including: Risk mitigation strategies for partnerships, staffing capability and gaps in delivery are insufficiently detailed. Recommend creating detailed contingency protocols for climate-related disruptions. A flow-on risk from reduced funding is the challenge in maintaining and recruiting high caliber capability, which should be identified in the risk framework. Epidemic preparedness strategies benefit from CGIAR's long experience in disease surveillance, though specific cross-border coordination protocols would strengthen this further. Climate change impacts are acknowledged, but the mitigation actions could be more operational. For instance, predefined triggers for activating alternative dissemination channels during droughts. The treatment of social risks like policy reversals on inclusion is somewhat generic and would benefit from country-specific contingency planning. Overall, the framework would be enhanced by clear risk ownership assignments and regular review schedules.	Additional risks for Insufficient Data, Low Private Sector Investment, Compromised Data Security, and Talent Retention were prepared and submitted; however, the Inception Report template only allowed the top 5 risks by Current Risk Level for inclusion. The full risk register included risk ownership assignments and review schedules.	No additional action needed – will follow the risk review schedule and ownership assignments as submitted in the full risk register.	Q4 2025
SCALING comments include: Recommend articulating clearer private-sector engagement strategies for scaling. Private sector partners are engaged for scaling potential, though the Report could specify more	Engagement with private sector will begin at co-design stage to ensure that our research responds to their business challenges and innovations are designed to align their business goals with project goal of wider innovation adoption and inclusion. The testing and evaluation of innovations will also be undertaken in collaboration with them (or within	Work with the Scaling for Impact program to engage early with the private sector and appropriately design, test, package and promote successful	Q3 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
concrete mechanisms for sustaining these partnerships beyond project cycles	their business contexts) to enhance chances that successful innovations are automatically absorbed and adapted by respective private sector actors. Beyond proofing innovations with private sector actors, the Program will work with the Scaling for Impact program to package successful innovations with private sector actors, including through development of measures for wider application of co-developed innovations.	innovations with private sector actors.	
THEORY OF CHANGE / MELIA comments including: Underdeveloped Program-level ToC: While AoW-level ToCs are detailed and evaluable, the overarching Program-level ToC lacks clarity in causal pathways, scaling logic, and assumptions. This weakens coherence and hampers evaluation across AoWs. One area for improvement is the visualization of feedback loops in the ToC diagrams, as the current linear presentation underrepresents the Program's adaptive management approach. The connection between Digital and Data Solutions (AoW 6) and gender equity outcomes also requires more explicit elaboration in the narrative. However, the relatively small allocation for outcome evidence generation (e.g., just 0.7 percent in Climate and Environment) raises questions about study rigor. The learning component could be strengthened by more systematic documentation of failed interventions alongside successes. The Program would also benefit from articulating how MEL findings will directly inform the overall and AoW ToC, budget reallocations and strategy adjustments in defined governance cycles.	The program-level ToC shows how the AoW level outcomes feed into the Program-level ToC. The compilation of evidence at different levels will therefore allow the Program ToC to be evaluated. As mentioned in Section 5 of the ISDC comments, the nesting of AoW ToCs and Program level ToC supports the pathway between outputs and outcomes. We look forward to interactions with the Evaluability Assessment team to strengthen our ToCs. The current format of the ToC does not include the needed feedback loops, as progress on outcomes will guide new sets of outputs and engagement mechanisms. This is a limitation shared by other P/As and we hope that the format will be improved at the next iteration. We will review the outcome evidence plans of the different AoWs to ensure high study rigor. The pause and reflect period will be the opportunity to interrogate MEL findings and adjust plans accordingly. Well noted, this needs more discussion	1. Interaction with evaluability assessment team 2. Work with the MELIA team at SO on the visualization aspect. We will work with the AoW6 and AoW5 on the links between gender equity outcomes and the AoW6 work. 3. Review outcome evidence plans with AoW teams.	Q2 2026

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
The emphasis on adaptive management is a key strength. However, this would benefit from further operational clarity, particularly on how evidence from MELIA, country-level learning, and partner feedback will be systematically integrated into Programmatic decision-making. The annual reflection mechanisms provide robust feedback loops but could be enhanced by real-time digital platforms for continuous stakeholder input.			
FUNDS DISTRIBUTION comments including: The balance of funding appears to be too heavily weighted to outputs vs outcomes, particularly in Productivity+ and Climate and Environment. [T]he minimal support for Digital Solutions and Gender work indicates potential misalignment with Program priorities... Productivity + has funding of 85 percent allocated to outputs and 15 percent to outcomes while Climate and Environment has >99 percent allocated to outputs and <1 percent to outcomes, which seems to be out of balance with what is needed. The decision to protect high-priority activities during budget reductions demonstrates good adaptive management, but the criteria for these determinations could be more transparently documented. [T]he minimal funding for Digital Solutions (3 percent) seems incongruent with the AoW's crosscutting importance.	The allocation towards outputs in Productivity+ (85%) and Climate and Environment (>99%) reflects the program's strong emphasis on building foundational innovations, particularly in this first year of implementation. In 2025, it is strategic to focus investments on generating high-quality outputs, such as genetic lines, digital tools, and emission tracking systems, which are prerequisites for achieving outcomes in subsequent years. We acknowledge the need to ensure better balance and will adjust over time as innovations mature. The relatively small allocation to Data and Digital Solutions (3%) and Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion (GYSI) (6%) is primarily a result of their Cross-Cutting roles across AoWs, as some of their contributions are embedded within other AoWs (e.g., digital tools within Productivity+, and gender integration in breeding and health work). We are actively working to increase visibility and funding for Digital Solutions and GYSI Areas of Work moving	1. Adjust 2026 budgets to ensure greater outcome-level investments in Productivity+ and Climate AoWs, where appropriate. 2. Increase funding and visibility Data and Digital Solutions and GYSI AoWs in the 2026 budget. 3. Include costing rationale and 1–2 budget sensitivity scenarios in the 2026 PORB submission, if deemed appropriate by the System Organization.	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
More explicit costing assumptions and sensitivity analysis would further strengthen the financial planning.	forward. The criteria for protecting high-priority activities during budget reductions were based on a multi-dimensional prioritization framework (Section 5), including regional and thematic prioritization scores, demand from national stakeholders, strength of existing partnerships, maturity and scalability of ongoing innovation pipelines. We acknowledge that these criteria could have been more explicitly presented and will ensure greater transparency in future iterations of the PORB and budget documents. We recognize the importance of transparent costing and have used standardized costing templates across Centers to ensure consistency. However, we agree that more explicit documentation of assumptions and scenario-based sensitivity analyses (e.g., reduced donor contributions, regional shocks) would enhance robustness. This will be addressed in the 2026 planning process.		
COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE comments including: Comparative advantage analysis needs sharpening: Although extensive, the comparative advantage section lacks a synthesis of CGIAR's unique value proposition in delivering enduring outcomes and impacts relative to key actors. However, the strategy for building local partner capacity in weaker areas could be more detailed, particularly regarding south-south learning exchanges. The 80% moderate efficiency rating of partners suggests significant opportunities for	We acknowledge the need to more clearly articulate our unique value proposition relative to other actors and to expand strategies for strengthening local partner capacity, particularly through structured south-south learning.	We will revise the comparative advantage narrative to better reflect CGIAR's distinct contribution and will develop a partner strengthening plan, including south-south exchange mechanisms and improvement of collaboration opportunities.	Q2 2026

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
strengthening collaboration frameworks that could be further explored.			
RESEARCH TRADE-OFFS comments, including: [T]he Report could more explicitly articulate trade-offs between intensification goals and environmental sustainability, particularly regarding water resource use in integrated aquaculture systems.	The reviewer is correct that significant trade-offs between intensification goals and environmental sustainability – or between different dimensions of environmental sustainability; or environmental sustainability and equity goals – may exist. These will need to be identified and managed through close collaboration between AoW1 “Productivity+” and AoW2 “Climate and the Environment”. This is captured in the first two research questions of AoW2: 1. How do AAF systems influence climate and environmental sustainability, and what reciprocal impacts do climate and environmental changes have on the productivity, resilience, water, land, and biodiversity impacts of these food systems? and 2. What new climate-adapted innovations can be developed and implemented to optimize the use and restoration of water, soil, and land resources, enhance livelihoods, and reduce climate impacts [...]? As for the comment regarding integrated aquaculture systems in particular, for the systems that we are working with, water use efficiency is generally improved through integration so it is unclear what specific trade-off would need to be managed here.	Enable closer collaboration between AoW1 and AoW2 through co-design of Productivity+ innovations, monitoring of environmental impacts, and co-location of activities.	Q4 2025 and Q4 2026
DIGITAL INNOVATIONS comments include: The reliance on digital innovations across AoWs—especially for monitoring, scaling, and decision-making—necessitates a stronger capacity development strategy for national partners.	Within AoW6, we fully recognize that reliance on digital innovations must go hand-in-hand with capacity development and digital literacy, as these remain critical factors preventing effective scaling and risking exclusion of certain user groups. Strengthening the skills and readiness of national	We will ensure that digital innovations go hand-in-hand with capacity development and digital literacy	Q4 2025

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	partners and end-users is therefore not an add-on but an integral part of our strategy. To operationalize this, we will conduct a system-level screening of existing data and digital solutions and capabilities, identifying strengths, gaps, and areas where digital ecosystems require reinforcement. This diagnostic process will be followed by the co-development of a desired future state, carried out through multistakeholder processes, and aligned with both national partners' goals and national policy priorities. By embedding these steps in AoW6, we ensure that digital innovations in the Program are not only technically robust but also inclusive, context-relevant, and scalable, supporting national ownership and sustainable use in decision-making and monitoring systems.		
STAKEHOLDERS comments including: Targeted dissemination strategies and early engagement with multilateral stakeholders such as FAO, WHO, and AfDB could increase visibility and uptake of these public goods beyond CGIAR's traditional partners.	Agreed	Develop a multilateral stakeholder engagement strategy for the Program and ensure sufficient resources for implementation.	Q2 2026
W3-BILATERALS comments including: In particular, the low level of funding from W 3 (1 percent) for GYS is a concern and requires addressing as the Program is implemented.	We acknowledge the concern regarding low W3 funding for GYSI and recognize it reflects timing and integration issues rather than lack of priority. GYSI activities are embedded across multiple AoWs, and we are working to better capture this in future budgets while actively mobilizing additional W3 and bilateral support. A dedicated investment case and strengthened collaboration with the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator will be developed to increase visibility and funding.	Develop an investment case, deepen collaboration with the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator, and regularly monitor funding trends to guide strategic adjustments to mobilize additional W3 resources for GYSI AoW.	Q4 2026
LINKAGES TO OTHER SP/As comments including:	We agree that linkages with the Scaling for Impact, Climate Action, and Policy Innovations Programs	1. Initiate joint planning sessions, aligning	Q4 2026

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The linkages between SAAF and other CGIAR Programs (e.g., Scaling, Climate Action, and Policy) are acknowledged but underdeveloped. Future work should aim to create joint outputs, shared MELIA indicators, and integrated delivery mechanisms to optimize synergies.	require further development to unlock the full value of synergies. Several early-stage conversations and collaborative intent are in place (e.g., co-location of pilots with scaling for Impact), but operational mechanisms for joint outputs, shared MELIA frameworks, and integrated delivery pathways are not yet fully established. This will be a priority in the 2026 planning process, particularly as the Program innovations mature and require broader systems integration for scaling and policy influence. Moreover, the Program and the Sustainable Farming Science Programs operate in overlapping priority geographies, particularly in East and Southern Africa and South Asia, enabling coordinated implementation, shared delivery platforms, and integrated country strategies. The Program's Aquatic Foods and Livestock workstreams complement Sustainable Farming's focus on sustainable land-based farming systems, allowing joint action on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, climate adaptation, and integrated production systems.	MELIA indicators, and co-developing at least two shared outputs with Scaling for Impact by the end of 2025. 2. The Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Food and the Sustainable Farming Science Programs will work toward harmonized MELIA frameworks, particularly around productivity, climate resilience, gender inclusion, and systems-level impact indicators, to facilitate cross-program learning and aggregated reporting 3. Participation in system-wide platforms will also support integration and the exchange of best practices across programs and accelerators.	

13. Sustainable Farming

ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
Page 54: The transition to the reconverted Areas of Work (AoW) will allow for better alignment of the revised criteria. However, the transition from eight to five AoWs involves a fundamental conceptual change, shifting from a disciplinary to an integrative approach. The risk analysis does not address this issue. It is highly recommended to give serious and explicit consideration to the procedural procedures for the transition. Therefore, it is essential to focus on reformulation indicators to achieve integrated agronomic innovations at scale.	The transition from eight AoW to five has been discussed extensively thanks to the facilitation of Dalberg Advisors – hired directly by the Gates Foundation to support the Sustainable Farming Science Program (hereafter ‘Program’) team in the reorientation of its AoWs. This consultation took place between May and July 2025. Additionally, the updated Program proposal will be shared with a group of external experts to receive feedback. Implementing multidisciplinary work towards more integrated agronomic innovations presents several challenges and risks.	Share the updated proposal with the description of the new AoWs with a selected group of external experts to receive feedback.	Q4 2025
		Add to the risk management strategy a risk related to challenges of implementing multidisciplinary and system-oriented work towards more integrated agronomic and farm innovations.	Q4 2025
Pages 54 and 55: Weakness 1. The research approach lacks an explanation of the type of research needed to achieve the intended results. The value proposition is based on a collaborative, innovative, and data-driven design approach that impacts diverse communities and has explicit, measurable objectives to benefit smallholder farmers, however in this point, the integration with local actors is marginally analyzed, which could be of concern since most work is intended to be co-created and -developed with local actors (especially male and female farmers). The Report shows a well-defined action plan; however, only the actions are presented, but the methods used are not precisely detailed, showing only a few ISDC Review of 2025-30 Proposals, examples of success. Additionally, the proposed reduction in co-creation activities is a crucial aspect. Given the current state of most agricultural systems and the criticism	Since the Program is evolving from eight disciplinary AoWs to five more integrated ones, the type of research needed for the new AoWs was not ready at the time of elaborating the Inception Report. However, more explanation about the type of research needed for each of the new AoWs will be included in the updated proposal and 2026 work plan. For the new 2026—30 plan, the use of co-creation methods will be specified and implemented through partnership platforms.	Include more explanation on the type of research needed in the description of the new AoWs as part of the updated SFP proposal and 2026 work plan.	Q4 2025
		Include in the description of relevant AoWs the use of co-creation and gender-responsive methodologies for the development of solutions connected to partnership platforms.	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
faced by high-level science, prioritizing co-creation should be a key focus for every Program, as it is for the CGIAR's new vision.			
Page 55: Weakness 2. The transition from disciplinary AoWs to more integrative and result-oriented areas is not yet fully mature. The process is halfway between the original disciplinary and results-driven areas, although it is expected to consolidate in the short term. The proposed change will necessitate modifications to the theory of change (ToC), results framework, and performance indicators, which have not been explicitly addressed in the Report. The proposed change is highly valued; however, it will require re-evaluating all the dimensions proposed for this Report.	An updated version of the Program ToC, results framework and performance indicators is under development and will be completed by October 2025. These elements will be informed by an updated prioritization exercise also to be completed in October.	Update the Program ToC, plan of results and budget (PORB) and indicators (aligned with the CGIAR overall impact indicators related to the five impact areas), and list of concrete deliverables for each of the new AoW at least for 2026 and 2027. The current MELIA plan will be updated to accommodate the modifications.	Q4 2025
Page 55: Weakness 3. The risk framework lacks some dimensions. There is no risk assessment of the planned actions, understanding that some outcomes require the involvement of multiple stakeholders to scale and generate impact. The reported risk framework remains at the institutional level. It could be supplemented by considering the potential impacts of the proposed actions on various communities and the environment, referring to the risks that scaling a technology or transferring it to another location may pose, with uncertain outcomes that could limit its adoption. A major concern for the team is the impact of the limited budget on the synergies planned.	It is correct that the approach to working with partnership platforms, with the participation of several partners, has its own risks, related to willingness and responsiveness of partners, as well as difficulties in extrapolating results from one context to another. Therefore, the work will need to be refocused to be in fewer locations where more robust results could be obtained.	Add to the risk management strategy a risk related to the dependence on readiness and engagement of partners in the co-creation platforms to generate results, and the impact of a reduced budget in the work with partners, particularly for scaling purposes.	Q4 2025
Page 57, rationale: For the next phase, all AoWs are expected to specify performance indicators, to monitor delivery of high-level outputs (HLO) and progress towards outcomes, not included in the Inception Report.	The Program ToC will be updated, including performance indicators, HLOs, and outcomes for each of the new AoWs and the Program as a whole. This will consider the results of the updated prioritization and inform the 2026-2027 work plans.	Update Program ToC, HLO, outcomes and indicators (aligned with the CGIAR overall impact indicators) to inform 2026 -2027 work plans.	Q4 2025

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ISDC feedback	Management comments	Management actions	Due by
		Develop AoW ToCs with HLOS and Outcomes with related indicators.	
Page 57, 6. Research design. Rationale: The risks and ethics of working with under-represented groups, local communities and gender vision are not explained throughout the proposal. To ensure that solutions are tailored to specific contexts, participatory co-creation methods need to integrate the perspective of as many actors as possible.	Several of the new AoWs will include the use and validation of participatory co-creation methods, including gender- and youth-oriented approaches. For example, the new AoW3 – “Delivering Integrated Solutions to Systemic Farm Binding Constraints” – will make use of participatory co-creation and system-oriented research methods towards including farmers, particularly woman and youth, perspectives in the development of the solutions. These methods will be implemented through partnership platforms. Further, the new AoW5 will collaborate with the Digital Transformation Accelerator to test and apply tools like its Multi-Dimensional Inclusivity Index (MDII) to assure responsible, ethical, and equitable interventions and application of technologies.	Include in the narrative and planning of relevant new AoWs the validation and use of participatory co-creation and system-oriented research methods for the development of solutions, along with tools and methodologies to assure that best practices and criteria for inclusivity, ethics, and responsible interventions are being followed for digital and non-digital technologies.	Q4 2025
Page 58: Rationale: The knowledge-driven prioritization exercise was guided by AI and refined for HLOs. Prioritization was performed for the original AoWs. Therefore, an iteration can be conducted for the proposed new AoWs. The approach of AoW intersection is very insightful and will be useful for the proposed redesign, as many HLOs show interdependence and require a more flexible framework.	The updated prioritization process will consider the new AoWs and their HLOs to define priority geographic locations, constraints, research topics, deliverables, partner contributions and investment needs. This will be specified in the updated SFP proposal and 2026—2027 Plan of Results and Budget (PORB).	Prioritize investments per AoW, geographies, constraints/topics, partner roles and specific deliverables for the 2026-2027 PORB.	Q4 2025
Page 58, rationale: The prioritization analysis is appropriate considering partners' priorities and innovation. An example of this is the prioritization of Climate Adaptation as a CGIAR Impact Area and as	During the development of the SFP 2026 PORB, specific collaborative activities with the Climate Action, Breeding for Tomorrow, Policy Innovations, and Better Diets and Nutrition	Include specific collaborative activities between the Program and Climate Action in the 2026 PORB.	Q4 2025

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a window of opportunity that can reflect the AoWs alignment with high-profile global goals and external demand, particularly in climate responses, however, no mention is provided about the overlapping with the Climate Action Program, although both might work in the same geographic areas.	Programs, and other relevant Programs and Accelerators (case of Gender) will be included. The SFP new AoW 2 named “Enabling preparedness and rapid response to emerging shocks” will be the docking point for the collaboration with the Climate Action Program, whereas the new AoW 3 named “Delivering Integrated Solutions to Systemic Farm Binding Constraints” will be the docking point for interactions with Breeding for Tomorrow.		