

Report of the 20th Meeting of the CGIAR Oversight Committee

**Washington, D.C.
20-27th October 2000**

The CGIAR Oversight Committee (OC) held its 20th Meeting at the World Bank, Washington between 20-27th October 2000, in conjunction with the CGIAR's 2000 International Centers Week Meeting.

Participating in the meeting were: Andrew Bennett (Chair), Emmy Simmons, Ruth Haug, Gilles St Martin, Juan Restrepo, and Selçuk Özgediz (Secretary). The OC interacted with the Chairman, the Finance Committee, the Chairman of TAC, the Center Board Chairs and the Center Directors' Committee.

The OC agenda consisted of the following items:

- 1. Introduction*
- 2. CGIAR Vision, strategy and structure*
- 3. Retrospective Review of the System Review*
- 4. Due Diligence - Centers Governance*
- 5. Due Diligence - System Governance*
- 6. Membership and rotation*
- 7. Interactions with other Committees*
- 8. Any other business.*

The Chairman welcomed the Members of the Committee and noted that the membership of the OC is now:

- Andrew Bennett - Chair
- Bongiwe Njobe
- Ruth Haug
- Emmy Simmons
- Gilles St Martin
- Juan Restrepo
- Zhao Longyue

1. Introduction

The Chairman welcomed the members of the OC and noted that Bongiwe Njobe-Mbuli and Zhao Longyue would not be able to attend ICW2000. The agenda was adopted.

2. CGIAR Vision, Strategy and Structure

The OC discussed the conclusions and recommendations of the Sonning Synthesis Report of issues of “governance, organisation and structure”. They noted that they had discharged the mandate from the Members, to produce a synthesis report. They participated fully in the discussion of the report in plenary and in working groups at ICW.

The OC welcomes the openness and fullness of the discussions on governance, organisation and structure at ICW, these allowed all parts of the CGIAR to participate and contribute. It welcomes and supports the action agenda set out in the Chairman's paper “Charting the Future of the CGIAR: the next steps”. It emphasises the importance of a transparent process between ICW and MTM that engages all the major stakeholders in the “next steps” process. The OC stands ready to help in any way that it can.

The OC further emphasises the imperative of reaching clear decisions at MTM 2000. This would be greatly facilitated by the papers for the meeting issuing at least 3 weeks before the meeting e.g. by the end of April.

3. Retrospective Review of the System Review

The OC took delivery of the report they had commissioned, entitled - System-wide reviews in the CGIAR: Concepts, Options and Recommendations prepared by a 3 person Study Team led by Martin Pineiro. They discussed the conclusions and 15 recommendations set out in the report with Martin Pineiro.

The OC congratulated the Study Team on an excellent piece of work. It was well researched, concise and clearly written. By taking a broad view of the three System-wide Reviews and other reviews in the CGIAR, the team had been able to identify good practice and make some practical recommendation to guide future reviews in the CGIAR.

The main points were:

- The value of using expertise drawn from within and outside of the CGIAR in the Review teams.
- The need to have a more systematic and managed approach to reviews, with a designated focal point in the CGIAR to oversee the reviewing processes.
- The need for reviews to build on the lessons and conclusions of earlier reviews.
- The importance of having and sticking to clear terms of reference.
- To space system-wide reviews on a 6-8 year cycle
- The value of documenting the process, conclusions and actions of reviews to ensure lessons are learnt.

The Study Team recommended that the OC should take on the role of “oversight” of the reviewing process across the CGIAR.

The OC concluded that the report should be released to all the Members of the CGIAR during ICW2000. Its conclusions and recommendations would be a valuable input into the organisational change process associated with the 2010 Vision and Strategy.

In forwarding the report to the members the OC agreed to invite comments from the Members of the CGIAR and will subject to the views of the Members of the CGIAR will:

- Ask the CG Secretariat to compile a register of the reviews recently completed, currently underway and planned across the system, including donor reviews.
- Set up a site on the CGIAR web page where reviews and their terms and reference can be registered for all to see.
- Analyse the results of this register to identify gaps, overlaps and conflicts, with a view to providing guidance on opportunities for collaboration and better coverage of the system as a whole, without overloading the system.
- And, report regularly to the CGIAR.

4. Due Diligence--Centers

- **Identifying CGIAR nominees for Center Board Membership**

Given the current discussions on governance, organisation and structure, the OC agreed to return to this issue at their next meeting.

- **Orientation Programme for new board members**

The effective functioning of the Boards of the Centers is essential to the health and performance of the CGIAR. It is therefore important that new board members are offered an orientation programme to help them carry out their duties. The OC noted that the first course carried out after ICW 1999 have been well attended and well received. A second course for 9 to 10 new board members was planned to follow on from ICW 2000. It supports the proposal to place the training/orientation materials in electronic format on the 'web'.

- **CIFOR, ICRAF, ILRI and IITA - DG Succession**

The OC noted that the processes for identifying candidates for these critical posts are well underway - these processes are open and transparent but note with concern the shortage of women candidates for these important posts. The OC suggests that the search and selection committees should where ever possible spread its search for suitable candidates into a wider pool of expertise and experience in the fields of management and development.

- **EPMRs**

The OC congratulates CIAT on an excellent EPMR. It notes that EPMRs for IITA, CIP, ISNAR and IFPRI are being planned.

The OC discussed the 'value added' and handling of these EPMRs at MTMs and ICWs. It concluded that it was very important that the Members of the CGIAR had every opportunity to influence the terms of reference of these reviews and to see the conclusions and recommendations. It was also important that the Members continued to see the comments by TAC and the responses of the management and Boards of the Centers - however there was some doubt whether the discussions at MTM and ICW sessions added much value to the process. Given the advances in electronic communications and the enormous pressures on time at these meetings, the OC concluded that the discussion of the EPMRs be dropped from the agenda of MTM and ICW. However to ensure that the Members could check on progress with implementing the conclusions and recommendations it is suggested that regular progress reports be posted on the web.

- **WARDA**

The OC notes the difficulties currently faced by the staff at WARDA, **due to the political situation in Cote d'Ivoire**. The OC congratulates WARDA on their achievements in the development of NERICA rice and wishes to place on record its thanks to the staff of WARDA for their continuing commitment despite the difficulties they are facing.

- **Proposed IWMI and IBSRAM Merger**

While the OC fully understands the reasons why IBSRAM is keen to merge with IWMI, **but** it reminds the parties concerned that the merger process should **be transparent and subject to** the processes of due diligence and be endorsed by the Members of the CGIAR.

5. Due Diligence--System

- **CGIAR Chair succession**

The OC welcomes the new Chair - Ian Johnson - and looks forward to working with him as the CGIAR moves forward on the reform agenda.

The OC felt that the farewell seminar and ceremony in honour of Ismail Serageldin had been an excellent and very appropriate event. It looks forward to seeing the papers published.

- **Cosponsors**

The Cosponsors play an invaluable role in the providing the international status and legitimacy of the system. They will be particularly important in maintaining confidence in the system at times of change. They also contribute generously to the costs of the Secretariats.

The OC welcomes the statements made by the President of the World Bank and the representatives of UNDP and FAO that they remain committed to the CGIAR and to their roles as Cosponsors. However the OC notes their comments about their future capacity to continue to provide funding support for the central functions of the CGIAR at the current levels.

As the CGIAR moves forward with the reform agenda the role of the Cosponsors will need to be revisited. The possibility of adding to the number of Cosponsors who would be prepared to contribute to the costs of the Secretariats - such as other UN agencies, regional banks or Members - should be considered.

- **CGIAR - Director Succession**

The OC welcomes to announcement of the appointment of Dr. Francisco Reifschneider to be Director CGIAR and looks forward to working with him.

The OC wishes to place on record its thanks to Alexander von der Osten for all that he has done over the years for the CGAIR as Executive Secretary of TAC, Director General of ISNAR and Executive Secretary of the CGIAR Secretariat - it wishes him a long and happy retirement.

- **Review of Plant Breeding**

The OC noted that this review raised some important issues that merited discussion at ICW 2000. It is likely that the reviews of system-wide, multi-center and partnership programmes will continue to merit discussion in parallel sessions at the future meetings of the CGIAR. It welcomes the decision to make additional time available at ICW to discuss the conclusion of the review.

- **Funding issues**

The OC welcomes the work done on a Long Term Financing Strategy for the CGIAR. The OC found its interaction with Finance Committee on the issues of identifying and classifying 'indirect costs' in the CGIAR and on the management of liquidity, very informative. It looks forward to learning how the FC will take this work forward, in the light of the comments by many members of the CGIAR on the need to focus on improving the efficiency of the CGIAR by reducing transaction costs and overheads.

- **MTM 2001 and ICW2001 Agendas**

The OC notes the continuing difficulties in predicting how the meetings will develop and incorporating all business into the time available. It welcomes the constructive flexibility shown by the members in responding to these challenges. Given the decision to reduce the numbers of 'big' meetings it will be important to make increasing use of electronic systems to engage and consult with the members of the CGIAR on issues that arise between the meetings.

- **Global Forum for Agricultural Research**

The OC congratulates Dr Paroda and the GFAR on a positive external review of the work of the Forum. It notes the importance of developing and clarifying the partnership between CGIAR and the GFAR as part of the CGIAR reform agenda.

7. Membership and Rotation

The OC noted that it is now up to strength. Its current Chair will stand down at MTM 2001. It will agree who would be the next Chair and discuss the need for new members in Durban.

6. Interactions with other Committees

The OC interacted with the Finance Committee. The Chair of OC had several meetings with the Chairs of the Center Directors, Center Boards, TAC and Finance Committees and the Chairman over the **period** since MTM2000 on a wide range of issues.

7. Any Other Business

Draft by
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