

Minutes of virtual meeting of the WLE Independent Steering Committee (ISC), 30 October 2019

Present

Ann Tutwiler (Chair)
Brent Swallow
Claudia Sadoff
Diane Holdorf
Izabella Koziell
Jo Puri
Sasha Koo-Oshima

Observers/ Presenters

Annika Brouwer, FOLU/SystemIQ
Emma Greatrix (minutes)
Julia Compton (Head of Secretariat, Commission on SAI (CSAI))
Rebecca Blevins (Princeton in Asia Fellow supporting CSAI secretariat)

1. Introduction

Ann Tutwiler opened the meeting by introducing Annika Brouwer of FOLU and underlining the importance of the emerging WLE Commission on Sustainable Agricultural Intensification (CSAI) given the range of initiatives, which are looking at similar areas.

2. WLE Highlights since June 2019

Izabella Koziell noted a few key areas of progress since the ISC meeting in June 2019, including

- 2018 Annual report signed off, including eight reported outcomes
- Confirmed additional funding of \$2m from SIDA
- Completion of the evaluation on WLE's contribution to outcomes in Ghana and Sri Lanka on resource reuse and recycling, and good progress on the second evaluation of outcomes on soil and water in Ethiopia
- Lots of successes in communications, including improvement support to several events

3. Commission on Sustainable Agriculture Intensification

Since June, the future Head of the Commission Secretariat has been hired: Julia Compton will start work full time 18 November. Two interns and one Princeton in Asia Fellow were taken on in August to support the Commission. There have already been considerable communications efforts around the Commission, including an [Op-Ed Blog in the Scientific American](#), and involvement in [the Global Resilience Partnership's](#) 'Building a Resilience Future' event before UN Climate Action Summit, where the Commission featured in [headline key messages](#). A range of individual consultations has also been held with internal and external experts.

Further to discussions on scope and focus in the June ISC meeting, the budget for the Commission has been updated, with the amount needed estimated as \$1.5m, over 2.5 years. This includes the staff, with

the precise staffing structure to be agreed. This budget is built around the expectation that researchers will contribute to the Commission on a pro bono basis, in line with the modalities of other Commissions such as EAT Lancet, so providing sufficient incentives (eg a prestigious journal) will be important.

Julia Compton presented a few points for consideration and discussion by the ISC. Three broad objectives were agreed:

- Change in Knowledge, Attitudes and/or Practice, of a specified target audience (tbd) with credible logical link to increased SAI.
- Raised profile for WLE/IWMI/CGIAR on sustainable food and agriculture systems, with specified groups (e.g. Funders, Regional stakeholders)
- A CGIAR-branded and 'owned' Commission, insofar as possible

The ISC agreed that working towards a CGIAR branded Commission is highly preferable. In the past, such initiatives have been branded by the individual Center and/or CRP, and only indirectly as CGIAR. Moving towards CGIAR branding is very timely given the proposed transition towards 'OneCGIAR'. To take the first steps, a more thorough cross-CGIAR consultation will help build ownership. However, the ISC also agreed that the Commission will incorporate a much broader body of research work, both CGIAR research and research from outside CGIAR.

Action: Izabella and Julia will follow up with Ann and Claudia about getting formal CGIAR status.

Much of the Secretariat's work to date has focussed on context, with a view to identifying the most appropriate scope for the Commission, whilst adding value to what has already been done whilst also attracting wider interest and investment. Over 50 current initiatives and networks have been identified, with at least 26 major global reports produced in the last three years on matters related to sustainable food systems and agriculture. The ISC noted that amongst these, few have focussed on social equity - this could be part of the focus of the SAI Commission. Innovation and pathways to uptake are other areas which are relatively under-studied. Farming is a very varied and decentralized "sector", and policies and trade-offs are very context specific, so a global report needs to find a balance between broad principles and making useful practical points.

A series of proposed Commission Principles were discussed:

1. Clear target audience and theory of change, guiding report focus and selection of Commissioners
2. High quality evidence base, publishable report/paper
3. Headline-worthy results, including courting some controversy
4. Build on work already done, link to other initiatives
5. Integrate climate and nutrition perspectives
6. Integrate social equity perspective, in context of rural transformation
7. Cross-CGIAR 'ownership' (bottom up and to extent possible)
8. Commissioners from or dominated by Global South (cf. other global panels)
9. Main focus on agricultural production, but with a value chain perspective
10. Focus on *family farms, worldwide* (link to [UN Decade of Family Farming](#))

Points made by the ISC:

- General agreement on Global South leadership and perspective and that we should also focus on ensuring we have the right gender balance (point 8)
- General agreement that a focus on equity is important (point 6). One caution was that data on equity outcomes is generally a bit thin in the literature on SAI (land and NR tenure are exceptions)
- Agree main focus on production (point 9), but value chains should be replaced by Food Systems.
- Family farms (point 10) is too narrow a focus, given the importance of social equity. However, we can still try to link into the UN Decade of Action.
- A theory of change is important (point 1) but it should not be set in stone, as the review may lead to different pathways
- The Commission needs to consider trade-offs for decision makers (while recognizing that these can be very context specific) and could consider a decision framework as one approach.

Four options on focus and scope were discussed:

1. Update on major constraints to uptake of SAI innovations by family farmers – how has the world changed in 20 years.
2. Focus on specific value chains important for family farms.
3. Investment required for a selection of best bet new ‘disruptive’ innovations to feed through to changes on family farms.
4. Compare current global investment in innovation/R&D and extension/uptake vs requirements for transformative change in SAI. This could be structured around a healthy plate of food and/or value chains.

Of these, option 4 had most support in the ISC, noting that there is an assumption that the requirements for transformative change have been well covered in multiple reports produced over the last three years. This is seen as potentially a good role for the Commissioners – to put forward their ‘Global South’ vision based on critiquing previous global recommendations for transformative change (e.g. the EAT-Lancet ‘plates’) and balancing equity and sustainability considerations. It could also stir up interest (and controversy) at an early stage. It was noted that Option 4 could potentially fit well with Just Rural Transitions, being complementary workstream to the other JRT workstreams on policies and investments. Option 3 also generated some interest, but it was mentioned that this question could be included under Option 4.

The ISC requested a more specific plan around option 4 for discussion by the ISC before the end of the year. This will include cross-CGIAR consultations to challenge and improve the thinking as well as to generate interest and buy-in. It is essential that the focus of the Commission is identified, as soon as possible, as a pre-requisite to the appointment of Commissioners.

Action: Develop focus for the Commission, based around the focus outlined in option 4, and set date for ISC meeting to discuss (Julia, by December).

It was suggested that early product(s) from the Commission should be timed to be promoted at the Global Food Summit in 2021 (between July and Sept 2021 – dates to be confirmed).

4. Dates of future ISC meetings

There are now three virtual meetings planned for the ISC in the coming months, followed by an in-person meeting next year. ISC members who may not have completed the date surveys, are requested to please do so.

1. December 2019: Focus on scope of Commission. Date to be agreed. **Action: WLE to set up meeting**
2. 15 or 16 January 2020: Plan of Work and Budget review, for move to approval by IWMI Board. **Action: WLE to confirm final date and time**
3. 6, 7 or 8 April 2020: Annual Report 2019 review, for move to approval by IWMI Board. **Action: WLE ISC members to complete date survey.**
4. 18-20 May 2020: Proposed week of in-person meeting. **Action: WLE to confirm final dates and location**