

Minutes of virtual meeting of the WLE Independent Steering Committee (ISC), 18 December 2019

Present

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

Observers/ Presenters

Julia Compton (Head of Secretariat, Commission on SAI (CSAI))

Apologies

Diane Holdorf

WLE Commission on Sustainable Agricultural Intensification (CSAI)

The topic of this meeting was the Commission on Sustainable Agricultural Intensification. The Secretariat had been asked to work up the idea of Research and Innovation for CSAI as a focus topic.

Julia presented a short paper 'Notes on CSAI' outlining a vision for composition of the Commission, potential questions to address (angles) and a list of key activities and products. The unique selling point of this Commission includes: Global South Commissioners; an 'Official Inquiry' type Approach (Commissioners define questions, then invite and consider expert evidence from others); and a focus on Promoting Innovation and Uptake for SAI. While various specific innovations are being suggested and/or are under development (WEF/McKinsey 2018), the Commission provides an opportunity to reflect on issues such as the overall thrust of global innovation in agriculture (and how sustainable it is), the experience with turning innovation into large scale change, the various approaches tried and recommended, whether the current institutions, policies and investment are likely to meet global challenges at the speed required, and important principles which should be followed in supporting innovation for SAI.

There was general agreement on the outline plan. The group had a rich discussion about the specifics. Some of the areas which were flagged for further thought by the Secretariat and Commissioners included: the importance of transformative change; going beyond technical innovations to include institutional and policy innovations; going beyond investment to the enabling environment for innovation; not only focusing on the new, but improving uptake and scaling of existing innovations; the need to consider the private sector and public-private linkages; behavioural (nudge) theory; including beverage as well as food crops; considering water tenure issues and use of marginal lands and poor soils; and how best to use case studies.

Julia also presented a draft short list of potential Commissioners. This was agreed by the group to be a 'good list', although a bit more work is needed for finalization. There are a few gaps, e.g. younger people familiar with the latest in digital innovation.