

Brief Primer on Tools to Prioritize a Research and Innovation Portfolio in a Complex System Involving Multiple Decision Makers

Purpose

This *Brief Primer on Tools to Prioritize a Research and Innovation Portfolio in a Complex System Involving Multiple Decision Makers* equips System Council and CGIAR leadership with ISDC tools (2020-2025) to guide difficult funding and research allocation choices amid shrinking resources and expanding global challenges. It outlines methods to make prioritization transparent, consistent, and defensible, integrating both top-down and bottom-up perspectives.

Drawing on ISDC's previous publications, the Primer consolidates tools such as comparative and absolute advantage assessments, foresight and trade-off analyses, and systems-based boundary setting to help define where CGIAR can deliver the greatest impact across its five Impact Areas. ISDC is cognizant of the ongoing (2025) prioritization process led by CGIAR's Chief Scientist and has designed this primer to constructively supplement future efforts.

Action Requested

The System Council is requested to read and reflect on *Brief Primer on Tools to Prioritize a Research and Innovation Portfolio in a Complex System Involving Multiple Decision Makers* to discuss and ask questions during the ISDC Chair intervention at SC23.

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Brief Primer on Tools to Prioritize a Research and Innovation Portfolio in a Complex System Involving Multiple Decision Makers

November 2025

Executive summary

CGIAR faces difficult decisions in an era of diminishing resources and increasing global demand for science-based solutions in agriculture and food systems. In addition, it operates as an integrated partnership with multiple stakeholders and decision makers that bring differing and, at times, competing interests and demands. Although the CGIAR 2030 Strategy and its related results framework provide the umbrella for research priorities, the operating environment may contribute to the challenges of prioritizing within and across the 2025–2030 Research and Innovation Portfolio.

Within its Terms of Reference, the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) is tasked with advising System Council on science-related funding decisions. This primer is designed to inform CGIAR decision makers about tools available to support the allocation of scarce resources. ISDC is cognizant of the ongoing (2025) prioritization process led by CGIAR’s Chief Scientist and has designed this primer to constructively supplement future efforts.

ISDC acknowledges that many of the Areas of Work in the current Science Programs and Accelerators are relevant and important. However, given CGIAR’s finite resources and capabilities, strategic selectivity is essential to achieving meaningful outputs and outcomes. This primer is therefore a compendium of processes and tools prepared by ISDC and associated experts (2020–2025) to assist prioritization exercises and to aid transparency, comprehensiveness, and trade-offs in such work. It is intended to help formulate decisions that are well-informed, coherent, repeatable, and aligned with CGIAR’s mission.

To ensure alignment with system-wide goals, prioritization exercises should include a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches that engage all levels of the organization. A “top-down” approach will bring perspective across the Portfolio, considering its cohesion and examining for duplication, synergies, and complementarities. In a “bottom-up” approach prioritization can include reduction or suspension within Areas of Work and geographies, which provides perspective on what Science Programs and Accelerators view as their core or most promising Areas of Work.

While scientific excellence remains the cornerstone of ISDC’s assessment—serving as the primary criterion—effective prioritization must account for broader contextual influences. These are elaborated in the document, together with a range of tools that are available to support Portfolio prioritization. The list of tools compiled in this primer is not exhaustive; however, using a combination of these with others, such as stakeholder analysis, can help decision makers maintain a systems perspective:

- Strategy and system-wide theory of change
- Boundary setting (using CGIAR’s Strategy)
- Absolute and comparative advantages
- Impact Areas and impact indicators
- Foresight analyses
- Trade-off analyses

A systems perspective—one that acknowledges trade-offs, competing interests, and evolving priorities—is essential for aligning limited resources with strategic goals. It improves the rigor, transparency and legitimacy of the process, giving funders the necessary confidence that their resources are optimally deployed. As CGIAR navigates dynamic global challenges and a shifting funding landscape, deliberate and adaptive prioritization will be critical to maximizing impact and advancing its mission.

The note on prioritization that originally appeared in ISDC Review of 2025–2030 Research & Innovation Inception Reports in August 2025, dubbed “Moving Forward with Tough Decisions for System Council” is included as an Annex to this document.

Introduction

CGIAR faces difficult decisions in an era of diminishing resources and increasing global demand for science-based solutions in agriculture and food systems. Within its Terms of Reference (ToR), the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) is tasked with advising System Council (SC) on science-related funding decisions. This document is designed to inform CGIAR decision makers about tools available to support the allocation of scarce resources. ISDC is cognizant of the ongoing (2025) prioritization process led by CGIAR's Chief Scientist and has designed this primer to constructively supplement future efforts.

“Priority setting exercises, integrating both ex-post and ex-ante analyses, assist CGIAR, and especially the System Council, to discern the relevance, weighting and emphasis to be accorded to the range of proposed CGIAR research programs in order that those programs achieve strategic coherence and optimally advance the relevance and impact of CGIAR-generated research outputs. Such guidance also assists efficient and focused use of limited research financing invested in CGIAR, particularly in regard to shared science investments funded via Pooled and Designated Funding from the CGIAR Trust Fund.”

– ISDC ToR

Although the [CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework 2016-2030](#)¹ provides the umbrella for research priorities, CGIAR operates as an integrated partnership with multiple stakeholders and decision makers that bring differing and, at times, competing interests and demands. These differences contribute to the challenges of prioritizing within and across the *2025–2030 Research and Innovation Portfolio* (Portfolio).

Funders and investors in CGIAR's research must have confidence that their contributions are directed toward the CGIAR partnerships' highest strategic priorities, and they expect these priorities to align with their own. Achieving this requires transparency and full disclosure regarding how priorities are identified and how they align with CGIAR's [2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) (CGIAR Strategy).²

This primer is a compendium of processes and tools prepared by ISDC and associated experts (2020–2025) to assist CGIAR leadership in prioritization exercises and to aid transparency, comprehensiveness, and trade-offs in such work. It is intended to help formulate decisions that are well-informed, coherent, repeatable, and aligned with CGIAR's mission. Once agreed, SC can strengthen such prioritization efforts through increased flexibility of allocated funds (see Annex).

To be Cohesive, Prioritization Efforts Must be Comprehensive

The 13 Science Programs and Accelerators (SP/As) that comprise the Portfolio underwent a prioritization exercise in September/October 2025 to address the current budget availability (summarized in textbox).³ At the Portfolio level, the CGIAR Global Science Team (GST) and Global Leadership Team (GLT) aligned on a stepwise approach to prioritize and allocate unearmarked CGIAR Trust Fund Window 1 (W1) funds across Programs and Accelerators. At the Program/Accelerator level, each Program and Accelerator followed a structured and evidence-based prioritization process to guide planning and internal allocations of W1/2 resources for 2026.

¹ CGIAR System Organization. 2015. *CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework 2016-2030*. Montpellier, France: CGIAR System Organization. <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/items/049bff88-74ea-44bc-ab85-2736db4b22e3>.

² This assumes that the *2030 Research and Innovation Strategy* still reflects goals, mission, and vision of CGIAR, which is an important supplementary issue for discussion. CGIAR System Organization. 2021. *CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy: Transforming food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis*. Montpellier, France: CGIAR System Organization. <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/items/f5fb41f0-6ea8-4583-b96d-b72a3fc96187>.

³ This builds on efforts during the Inception Phase, as per [SC22-04](#); details published as SC23 pre-read, item SC23-04.

October 2025 Prioritization Process

- Drawing on the prioritization and comparative advantage analysis carried out during the Portfolio Inception Phase, each Program and Accelerator selected a small number of **impact area indicators** for the purpose of priority-setting for 2026 and beyond. Those indicators are aligned with CGIAR's five Impact Areas as set out in the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy.
- Then, using country-level, 2030 and 2040 projections for those selected impact indicators; Programs and Accelerators identified priority countries where they seek their intended impact contributions. That **geographic prioritization** considered countries' development needs associated with each impact indicator, the potential scale of impact that CGIAR can contribute to, as well as evidence of demand and the strength of the enabling environment.
- Finally, guided by the prioritized impact indicators; countries; additional, higher-level thematic priorities; as well as each Program's and Accelerator's theories of change and intended 2030 outcomes, the Centers were invited to propose specific, costed packages of deliverables to each Program and Accelerator **aligned with their comparative advantages**. The aim was to strike a balance between continuing delivery of the most promising innovations while taking on new work to maintain a healthy pipeline of future innovations as well as to allow a rapid response to emerging opportunities.

ISDC appreciates the current guidance provided on advancing prioritization across SP/As and recognizes that prioritization is an evolving and iterative process. We think strengthening objectivity in this process is important to enhance transparency, consistency, and the overall robustness of decision making. In this context, several of the tools outlined in this primer could contribute to making indicators—such as “development needs” and “demand”—less subjective and more quantifiable.

With additional funding shortfalls anticipated in 2026, further prioritization will be important to ensure that each SP/A contributes effectively to the five Impact Areas. Even in times of more available financial resources, prioritization should be built into ongoing processes for strategic decision making similar to trade-off analyses.

Early findings of a CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES) Evaluability Assessment report identified challenges in clarity in coordination and cohesion of SP/As.⁴ To ensure alignment with system-wide goals, prioritization exercises should include a “top-down” component. A top-down approach brings perspectives across the SP/As by considering the Portfolio's cohesion and examining the SP/As holistically for duplication, synergies, and complementarities.

Within SP/As, prioritization can include reduction or suspension within Areas of Work (AoWs) and reducing or ending presence in particular countries for all or some AoWs, which we refer to as a “bottom-up” approach. A bottom-up approach to prioritization provides perspective on what SP/As view as their core or most promising AoWs.

Therefore, to optimize contributions to the five Impact Areas, an iterative combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches that engage all levels of the organization will likely be most effective for CGIAR.

Multiple Possible Priorities

ISDC acknowledges that the current AoWs and the SP/As are all relevant and important. However, given CGIAR's finite resources and capabilities, strategic selectivity is essential to achieving meaningful and impactful outputs and outcomes. This necessitates making difficult but deliberate choices.

⁴ IAES Evaluation Evaluability Assessment Report. To be published online as SC23 pre-read.

A range of factors may inform prioritization decisions, including:

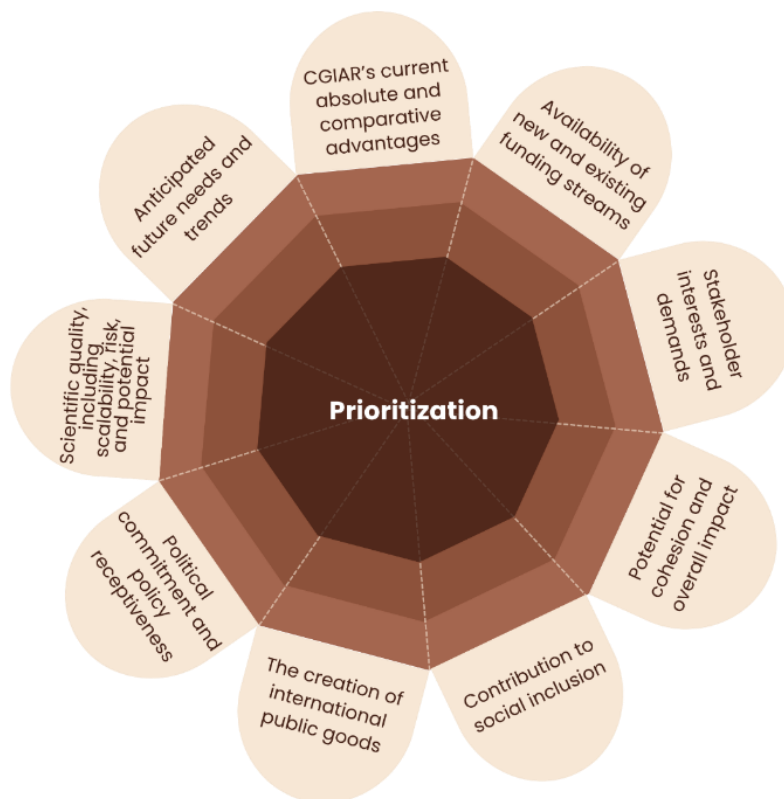
- CGIAR’s current absolute and comparative advantages;
- Anticipated future needs and trends;
- Availability of new and existing funding streams;
- Stakeholder interests and demands;
- Potential for cohesion and overall impact;
- Contribution to social inclusion;
- The creation of international public goods;
- Political commitment and policy receptiveness;
- Scientific quality, including scalability, risk, and potential impact.

While scientific excellence remains the cornerstone of ISDC’s assessment—serving as the primary criterion—effective prioritization must also account for these broader contextual influences.

Figure 1 shows some of the factors that can shape prioritization. One approach to prioritization is to select the SP/As and AoWs that are in the center of Figure 1. However, the considerations outlined in Figure 1 vary in significance. Some are mutually reinforcing while others may lead to trade-offs. The Portfolio has little control over some (e.g., tied Window 2 funding [earmarked funds for specific SP/As or AoWs]). Others, such as policy receptiveness to CGIAR research, influence the potential reach and impact of CGIAR science across the five Impact Areas.

Clarifying which priorities are emphasized or weighted more heavily as part of the Portfolio prioritization process will enhance transparency and support informed decision making. How management will weight priorities will change over time. Drawing on knowledge and perspectives of participants from across the integrated partnership can transparently inform the weighting process.

Figure 1: Prioritization Considerations



Using a Systems Perspective for Prioritization

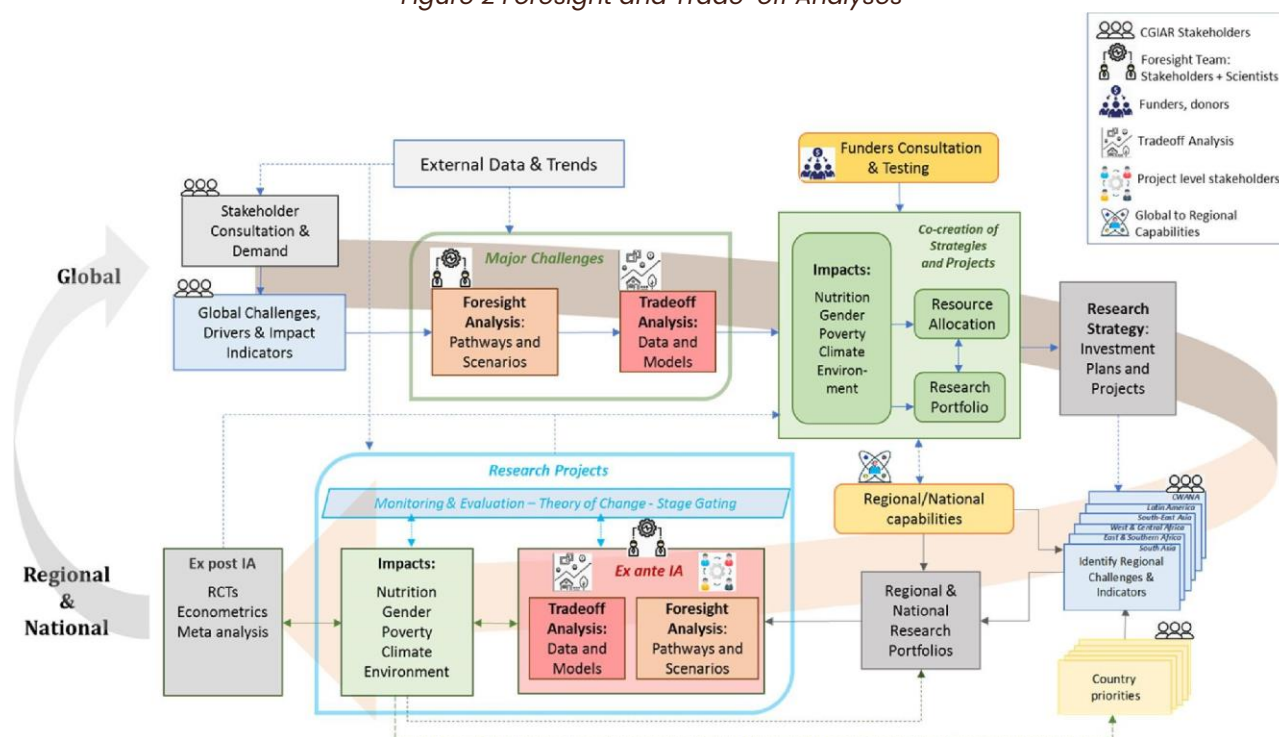
Just as CGIAR takes a systems perspective to develop its research priorities, a systems perspective to prioritization would reflect the existence of multiple, competing priorities and that trade-offs are inevitable. A system's perspective would further require decision makers to identify the boundaries of the Portfolio.

Such an approach recognizes the complexity and interlinkages across the Portfolio and recognizes that priority setting should not be entirely retrospective (e.g., based on highest performing past impact indicators), nor prospective (e.g., based on foresight analysis alone), underscoring that trade-offs across priorities are expected and must be managed.

In ISDC's commissioned report *Tradeoff Analysis of Agri-Food Systems for One CGIAR*,⁵ Antle and Valdivia (2020) argued that drawing on multiple tools, including trade-off analysis (TOA), foresight analysis (FA), and monitoring and evaluation of impact (ME) can support the evaluation of priorities and, therefore, priority setting.

Figure 2 depicted a research management strategy that showed how rigorous tools such as foresight and trade-off analyses can assist with priority setting at global, regional, and national levels. Other tools may also be useful. For example, in 2022 ISDC developed a *Technical Note*⁶ that explained how understanding comparative and absolute advantages can assist with priority setting within SP/As.

Figure 2 Foresight and Trade-off Analyses



⁵ Antle, J., Valdivia, R. 2020. *Tradeoff Analysis of Agri-Food Systems for One CGIAR*. Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/items/8f6104cf-a5d1-4466-af24-76ad1aa2c7de>.

⁶ Independent Science for Development Council. 2022. *Identifying and Using CGIAR's Comparative Advantage*. Rome: CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service. <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/items/aaa72e3e-3911-491c-9b98-864fd424266e>.

ISDC Tools to Support Prioritization

A range of tools ISDC explored is available to support Portfolio prioritization. The list of tools below is not exhaustive but using a combination of these and/or others (e.g., stakeholder analysis) can help decision makers maintain a systems perspective. However, the most effective mix of tools—and the relative importance of the insights they generate—will depend on how priorities are ranked and weighted within the Portfolio.

- Strategy and system-wide theory of change
- Boundary setting (using *CGIAR's Strategy*)
- Absolute and comparative advantages
- Impact Areas and impact indicators
- Foresight analyses
- Trade-off analyses

Strategy and System-wide Theory of Change

To serve as an effective tool for priority setting, decision makers may consider updating and aligning the foundational roadmap with current funding realities and political imperatives. Aligning activities with the organizational strategy (in this case the *CGIAR Strategy*) is essential. While a strategy should serve as the anchor for any organization and should be a living document, the current *CGIAR Strategy* has not been updated since its 2020 publication despite rapidly shifting global contexts. Clearly articulating CGIAR's overarching objectives for the next five to 10 years and identifying where the organization seeks to make the greatest impact would help determine which SP/As offer the most strategic value.

In parallel, SP/As can be assessed against a system-wide theory of change (ToC) identifying those that are less aligned or potentially duplicative. If the Portfolio-level ToC integrates impact indicators within the spheres of control and influence, there should be strong alignment between these indicators and the Impact Areas, providing a robust basis for prioritization.

CGIAR's Comparative and Absolute Advantages

While individual SP/As have refined their own comparative advantage analyses, a system-level assessment of CGIAR's overall comparative and absolute advantages remains incomplete.

As noted by ISDC (2022, p. 4), absolute advantage—defined as an organization's ability to produce a good or a service more efficiently than other entities—has yet to be clearly articulated. This gap is critical, as absolute advantage directly impacts and aids prioritization decisions.

In feedback provided during the original drafting of the *CGIAR Strategy*, ISDC recommended that CGIAR carefully assess how its comparative advantage aligns with broader development goals, such as influencing policy—an area that requires capabilities beyond those of a traditional research institution (2020, p. 2).⁷ This tension between research and development continues to shape internal debates and adds to the complexity of CGIAR's governance and mission.

⁷ Independent Science for Development Council. 2020. *ISDC Feedback for One CGIAR Draft Research Strategy*. Rome: CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service. <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/items/bf8d53ed-a8b2-4f2c-96f5-0ac2fbec0323>

Boundary Setting

Setting the boundary from a whole-of-systems perspective requires identifying what is “inside” and “outside” the system of interest. For example, in a value chain analysis, a system-perspective may consider actors from the farm gate to the market but may exclude consumers.

The CGIAR Portfolio could similarly set boundaries, for example by identifying (1) core constituency for its science or (2) core countries or regions. Examples include:

- Who is CGIAR best positioned to serve with its current resources?
 - Is it farmers who are already profitable?
 - Or is it farmers who could transition towards profitability with scientific innovations?
 - Or is it farmers with very limited resources?
- What countries or regions are CGIAR best suited to serve?
 - Should CGIAR work in areas with supportive partners, policy environments, and/or infrastructure (e.g., with strong NARES presence)?
 - Or work in areas that lack one or several of these supportive structures (and therefore may be in greater need)?
 - Or should CGIAR work in areas facing the greatest threats to production from climate change?
 - Or should CGIAR conduct research in or for conflict zones?

Identifying the boundaries of CGIAR’s research can assist in aligning its research to issues relevant within the boundaries.

Some areas will need to be protected, for example where CGIAR has an absolute or comparative advantage that produces high impact. Regular conversations on identifying how to move these research areas out of “protected” status (e.g., as a handover to other stakeholders) are needed, as are regular conversations on how much funding is needed for a research stream to remain viable.

Finally, just as the current *CGIAR Strategy* should be a living document, so should the Portfolio’s boundaries. Agricultural and food systems are in constant flux because of the interdependence across social and economic systems. Therefore, *flexibility is paramount*. As regional needs or political imperatives change, investment opportunities arise or vanish, breakthroughs occur. Hence, the boundaries within which CGIAR operates must change accordingly.

Impact Areas and Indicators

Antle and Valdivia (2020) argued that a crucial step to priority setting is to define success for the five Impact Areas. The CGIAR 2030 Global Targets highlight how research can translate into far reaching change and include indicators reflecting spheres of interest, which is often quite distant from Portfolio research. Aligning priorities to these success indicators may be less productive for priority setting because the Impact Areas’ indicators are at a high level and cannot provide insight into specific research areas.

Identifying cross-Portfolio indicators in the Portfolio’s sphere of control and sphere of influence could help link to the Global Targets to priority-setting efforts. Antle and Valdivia (2020) suggested that the impacts indicators should be parsimonious, that is *minimally sufficient*. This raises the question: are all the Impact Areas equally important for the current Portfolio within the Strategy or if they are ranked? This provides another lens for prioritization.

Foresight: Megatrends and Investing in Future Areas of Comparative Advantage

CGIAR should be commended for being adaptive during a time of rapid change that includes a global health pandemic, increased conflicts, seismic political shifts, rising food prices, organizational restructures, and changing demographics.

ISDC outlined these [megatrends](#)⁸ and others in 2023 and provided implications for the Portfolio. While comparative advantage offers a contemporaneous perspective on what to prioritize, megatrends analysis offers a way to determine what research activities should be wound down, due to decreasing future importance, and what should be ramped up (assuming other stakeholders are not already working on the topic).

However, relying on foresight work alone to prioritize may bias prioritization setting away from several CGIAR Impact Areas. As Antle and Valdivia (2020) noted in their trade-off analysis work, “A key finding of the foresight reports prepared for One CGIAR is that global-scale foresight studies do not adequately represent impacts in several of the One CGIAR priority areas—nutrition and food security; poverty reduction, livelihoods, and jobs; and, gender dimensions, youth, and social inclusion” (p. 44).

Trade-off Analyses

Antle and Valdivia (2020) explained that TOA is a multistep process. They described engaging with stakeholders to identify quantifiable impact indicators, and acceptable boundaries for each indicator, at the scales to be used in TOA. When quantitative indicators cannot be identified, qualitative indicators should be used. These indicators provide the basis for delivering measurable outcomes and impacts that should be made available to stakeholders in a web-based dashboard tool.

These impact indicators and boundaries, combined with modeling, are then used to carry out set-based TOA to identify, evaluate, and update over time the technology “funnel” in the stage-gated innovation system. A set-based TOA approach offers flexibility with several pathways with possible different outcomes that recognizes stakeholders’ preferences.

While an in-depth TOA would deploy modeling tools that incorporate a rich set of data, such an approach may not be feasible in the short term. Nonetheless, identifying core impact indicators across SP/As and monitoring them in a dashboard can aid research management and allow for a broader perspective across SP/As, which could assist in reviewing the Portfolio’s alignment with the SP/As

Looking Ahead

As the ongoing prioritization effort by the Chief Scientist clearly demonstrates, prioritizing CGIAR’s Portfolio in a complex system with multiple decision makers requires a structured yet flexible approach that integrates both bottom-up and top-down perspectives. Tools such as trade-off and foresight analyses, comparative and absolute advantage assessments, and systems-level boundary setting can support informed, transparent decisions.

A systems perspective—one that acknowledges trade-offs, competing interests, and evolving priorities—is essential for aligning limited resources with strategic goals. It improves the rigor, transparency and legitimacy of the process, giving funders the necessary confidence that their resources are optimally deployed. As CGIAR navigates dynamic global challenges and a shifting funding landscape, deliberate and adaptive prioritization will be critical to maximizing impact and advancing its mission.

⁸ Independent Science for Development Council. (2023). *Responding to Evolving Megatrends*. Rome: CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service. <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/items/b801bf98-5ae2-46c2-b2d0-275ff830b3b2>.

Annex 1: Moving Forward with Tough Decisions for SC

This originally appeared in *ISDC Review of 2025–2030 Research & Innovation Inception Reports* (7 August, 2025)

CGIAR is facing a significant financial reduction, with a 20 percent budget decrease in 2025 following the withdrawal of a major funder. As defense spending becomes an increasing priority for remaining funders, projections indicate a potential further 20 percent cut in 2026. This sharp and sustained decline in resources threatens to severely undermine the delivery and scope of the current Portfolio.

Tough choices lie ahead. As global demand for science-based solutions in agriculture and food systems grows, resources are shrinking. Multiple stakeholders bring diverse—sometimes conflicting—interests, expectations, and demands. This makes prioritization decisions increasingly difficult.

For years, CGIAR has circled around questions of prioritization—*what* gets prioritized, *who* leads and *decides*, and *how* it's done. But with mounting pressures and limited resources, that conversation is no longer theoretical.

When Strategy and Reality Don't Match

"If you don't know to which port you are sailing, no wind is favorable." (Seneca)

A strategy is more than a plan on paper. It is a dynamic roadmap that guides leaders in real time, drives future goals, and tells a compelling story that resonates with all stakeholders. For any system to function properly, be it a crop/livestock system, a food system or a supply chain, a clear strategy must be deeply integrated into the system. Hence, a revised *Strategy* would better align with CGIAR's mission, vision, and areas of absolute and comparative advantages to emerging funding pressures and global needs.

A patchwork of funder-driven priorities has turned today's Portfolio into everything related to food and agriculture. That breadth allows each funder to find their niche, but it weakens CGIAR's ability to deliver on its impact targets, which are global public goods. In a financially constrained environment, accommodating every request of every stakeholder is tempting but impossible. Any true process of prioritization demands that all stakeholders concede that not all their individual interests can be met. To best support CGIAR in achieving its objectives requires commitment to a funding structure of Window 1 pooled funding. This is an imperative for CGIAR survival.

The Funding Tug-of-War: Bilateral Funding in a Multilateral System

CGIAR's current funding structure is misaligned with its strategic ambitions and capabilities. Only around 30 percent of the budget flows through Windows 1 and 2, the pooled channels designed to support the Portfolio. Critically, Window 1, the sole source of unrestricted resources, remains severely underfunded. Funder preferences have been prioritized over CGIAR's ability to set its own strategic intent and maintain coherence.

The issue is structural. To remain responsive to their constituencies, funders prefer earmarked funding through Windows 2 and 3, aligning resources with national and political interests rather than gaps or most acute needs within the Portfolio. While strong alignment between funder priorities and CGIAR's strategic needs would be ideal, this is rarely achieved.

The funding misalignment forces CGIAR into a reactive posture. The result: unclear frameworks and fragmented Portfolio, diluted impact, and a governance model that diverges from best practices in multilateral institutions. If CGIAR is to fulfill its mission, funders and partner countries must commit to a funding model that empowers scientific excellence and strategic delivery more than political expediency. This will require compromises and alignment of funder constituents with CGIAR's strategic intent. The CGIAR

partnership, including SC, IPB, Center Boards, System Organization, and Center management, through a revised *Strategy*, could realign around priorities and a shared purpose.

Critical Questions for CGIAR

Window 1 funding is a force multiplier—amplifying impact, strengthening science, and delivering results for all. To move forward, ISDC encourages SC, IPB, and management to grapple with these hard questions:

- What mechanisms are needed to ensure funding decisions reflect both collective strategic priorities and scientific excellence? Are current funding mechanisms incentivizing collaboration or competition among Centers; what does that mean for System-wide coherence?
- Who benefits from pooled funding and is CGIAR capturing and communicating that value effectively?
- Is SC prioritizing volume or value in its approach to Window 1 funding; what does that say about CGIAR's strategic direction?
- What is the minimum viable level of pooled funding needed to sustain a high-impact research Portfolio; are we meeting it? What is the baseline investment required to maintain momentum for CGIAR's most critical research?
- How is CGIAR measuring the opportunity costs of Window 3 funding and are those trade-offs justified?
- What are the possible pathways for CGIAR to strategically channel innovative finance—from IFIs to climate funds—through the optimal Window to maximize impact?
- Is SC fully leveraging its standing committees, and do the relevant committees exist to establish multilateral strategic priorities?
- Are the *Strategy*, *Narrative*, and vision clear and strong enough to guide decisions on when to decline funding opportunities that may be counterproductive?
- What vision does CGIAR hold for its global impact beyond 2030, and how can Window 1 funding help realize it?
- How can CGIAR better communicate the value of pooled funding to external stakeholders; what narratives resonate most with funders?
- What lessons can be drawn from other global research partnerships or consortia in managing pooled funding and strategic alignment?
- How can CGIAR better integrate local and regional priorities into global funding strategies?

From Struggle to Strength

Strategic agility must replace static planning. Making full use of foresight, monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment data by actors like IPB, is essential to recalibrate priorities and ensure the Portfolio can evolve with global needs and resource realities. This might enable opportunities such as:

- Streamline and revise the current *Strategy*, *Narrative*, and mission to enhance coherence, visibility, and stakeholder engagement.
- Phase out low-impact projects to focus resources where they matter most.
- Identify handover opportunities with strategic partners to ensure continuity and efficiency.
- Consolidate Centers and Programs/Accelerators or recognize when their missions might have been fulfilled.

The path forward demands bold decisions. CGIAR must face the realities of shifting geopolitical landscapes, constrained resources, and rising challenges with courage and clarity. While all Windows support CGIAR's ability to drive impact, increased Window 1 funding would enable CGIAR to better prioritize for impact. Success will depend on strategic discipline, shared commitment, and a renewed focus on delivering what CGIAR does best: transformative, science-based solutions and convening for a food- and nutrition-secure future.