

Appointment of a new member to CGIAR's Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)

Purpose

In September 2025, the SIMEC Chair was informed that one of the new Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) Members, appointed by the System Council in March 2025, had decided to resign from the ISDC due to a possible conflict of interest between their work for the ISDC and potential contracted work with a CGIAR Center.

This document sets out the recommendation of the 2025 ISDC Member Nominations Panel, with accompanying background and rationale, for replacing this Member with a new Member of CGIAR's ISDC.

The document comprises:

- An overview of the process and recommendation
- Annex I - Biography of the proposed appointee
- Annex II – 2025 ISDC Member Nominations Panel membership
- Annex III - Further background and details on the ISDC member appointment process

Action Requested

Based on the recommendation of the 2025 ISDC Member Nominations Panel, the System Council is requested to review, and if thought appropriate, **approve** the decision as set out below.

Proposed Decision:

Pursuant to Article 6.2 g) of the CGIAR System Framework, the System Council **appoints** Dr. Glenn Fitzgerald as a Member of CGIAR's Independent Science for Development Council for a three-year term (subject to renewal) effective from 1 January 2026.

Special notice on 'Consent Agenda' status of this document

This item is presented to the System Council according to Article 7.1(a) of the System Council's Rules of Procedure, permitting a 'consent agenda' consisting of items that require formal System Council decision but are submitted as a group for adoption by the System Council without discussion.

Further to the Rules of Procedure, **should a System Council member or Active Observer wish to remove an individual item from the Consent Agenda, that request should be communicated to the Secretary of the System Council by close of business Paris time on Wednesday 3 December 2025.**

Document category: Working document of the System Council. There is no restriction on the circulation of this document.

Prepared by: The 2025 ISDC Member Nominations Panel (see Annex II) with support from the Nominations Panel Secretariat.

Overview of the process and recommendations

1. As required by the [Independent Science for Development Council \(ISDC\) Terms of Reference](#), applicants for vacancies on the ISDC are reviewed and considered by a nominations panel chaired by the Chair of the System Council's Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC).
2. Such a committee was formed in 2024¹ and reconstituted in 2025² for the purposes of identifying candidates for several Member vacancies and the ISDC Chair position, as well as compiling a long list of suitable candidates to be used for future appointment processes. As a result, three new ISDC members were approved by the System Council in March 2025, a new ISDC Chair was approved by the System Council in July 2025, and an additional new Member in early September 2025.
3. In late September 2025, the SIMEC Chair was informed that one of the new Members appointed in March 2025 had decided to resign from the ISDC due to a possible conflict of interest between their work for the ISDC and potential contracted work with a CGIAR Center.
4. The SIMEC Chair consulted with the ISDC Chair, Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service Director, and the ISDC Nominations Panel on how to identify a new ISDC Member in an efficient and equitable manner. Based on the current composition of the ISDC, the ISDC Chair advised that recruiting a Member with expertise in digital technologies would be preferable.
5. Previously, in mid-July 2025, the Nominations Panel interviewed five shortlisted candidates for ISDC Member, of whom four were deemed appointable. The Panel therefore proposed that the remaining three appointable candidates be assessed for their fit with the current ISDC membership and their expertise in digital technologies.
6. One candidate, Dr. Glenn Fitzgerald, was unanimously considered by the Panel to be both appointable and holding the necessary knowledge in digital technologies (with particular emphasis on climate-related digital technologies, see Annex I).
7. The Secretariat confirmed with Dr. Fitzgerald that he remains interested and available for the position, and three positive references were received.
8. **The Panel is confident that the recommended candidate, Dr. Glenn Fitzgerald, will bring valuable expertise to the ISDC and will complement the diverse range of disciplines and backgrounds of the existing members.**
9. This recommendation was endorsed by SIMEC on 19 November 2025.

¹ Decision Reference SC/M20/EDP5, with effect from 2 October 2024

² Decision Reference SC/M21/EDP8, with effect from 10 April 2025

Annex I: Biography (summarized from applicants' materials and publicly available information)

Dr. Glenn Fitzgerald	<p><u>Country of origin and current residence:</u> United States, Australia</p> <p><u>Current position(s):</u> Senior Research Scientist, Agriculture Victoria</p> <p><u>Qualifications:</u> Ph.D. Ecology (Agriculture), University of California, Davis, USA, 1998 M.S. Agronomy, University of California, Davis, USA, 1993 B.A. Plant Biology, University of California, Santa Cruz, USA, 1984</p>
<p>Dr. Fitzgerald has more than 30 years' experience applying digital agriculture/big data tools to crop agronomy and to adapting agricultural systems to climate change. He is interested in delivering evidence-based innovative science to improve food security under challenging environments.</p> <p>Dr. Fitzgerald is internationally renowned for his expertise in climate adaptation research to ensure future crop production, particularly in understanding the impacts of elevated CO₂, heat and frost to crops. He provides guidance and expert advice on digital agriculture project development to academia, government, and commercial sectors. He also regularly reviews papers and proposals, guides students with theses, and presents to diverse groups including students, farmers and community groups.</p> <p>Furthermore, Dr. Fitzgerald has led and been a member of projects that incorporate complex management, strategic thinking, and governance for innovative cropping, climate change and big data. This included co-leading a large, diverse international team from a variety of countries, ethnicities, ages and experience to understand the impacts of elevated CO₂ on crops to improve adaptation to future climate. Globally, this was the only field program of its kind in a semi-arid environment.</p>	

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Annex II: 2024-2025 ISDC Member Nominations Panel (appointed by the System Council)

The 2024-2025 ISDC Member Nominations Panel ('Panel') members, appointed by the System Council (SC/M20/EDP5 and SC/M21/EDP8), are listed below. The Panel was supported throughout the process by a Secretariat Team from the CGIAR System Organization.

System Council Members

- **Alan Tollervey** (Panel Chair), System Council Member, United Kingdom and interim Chair of the System Council's Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC)
- **Ravi Khetarpal**, System Council Active Observer, Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation and SIMEC Member

Science leaders appointed by the System Council Chair

- **Ylva Hillbur**, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Board Member, International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE)
- **Rachael McDonnell**, Deputy Director General – Research for Development, International Water Management Institute (IWMI)

People fully external to CGIAR

- **Mandefro Nigussie**, Chief Executive Officer, Agricultural Transformation Agency of Ethiopia
- **María Teresa Pino**, National Officer for International Cooperation, Institute of Agricultural Research Chile

Invited guest

- **Lesley Torrance**, current ISDC Chair

Annex III: Additional Background to the ISDC member recommendations

1. The [Terms of Reference](#) for CGIAR's Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC), include the following information on ISDC membership and appointment process:

Membership

- 4.1 *ISDC will consist of up to eight (8) standing members, which number can be reviewed by the System Council based on need and required expertise coverage, one of whom serves as ISDC Chair and one as Vice Chair. The role specification and key competencies desired for ISDC members, as well as those specific to the ISDC Chair and Vice Chair will be approved and reviewed periodically by the System Council to ensure that they represent the optimal guidance on capacities required.*
- 4.2 *ISDC members will serve an initial three years, with the possibility of renewal up to three additional years without further extension. To the extent possible, membership terms will be staggered to ensure a gradual refreshing of members.*

Appointment process

- 4.3 *ISDC members, including the ISDC Chair and Vice Chair, are appointed by the System Council based upon a merit-based, open and competitive selection process that includes the following elements:*
 - a. A broad call for applications and nominations, including a visible public element as part of that call;*
 - b. Review and consideration of applications and nominations by a nominations panel comprised of up to six (6) persons from the following groups as chaired by the SIMEC Chair:*
 - i. At least two System Council members appointed by the System Council Chair, one of whom shall be the SIMEC Chair or her/his delegate;*
 - ii. Two science leaders appointed by the System Council Chair, one involved in the delivery of research outputs in a development context and one other individual associated with major science bodies working across a range of disciplines; and*
 - iii. Two persons fully external to CGIAR, with a preference for at least one of those persons to be a highly experienced individual involved in innovation from a sector beyond agriculture. Terms of Reference: Independent Science for Development Council Page 8 of 11*
- 4.4 *The terms of reference for the nominations panel, including membership, will be approved by the System Council through electronic means. The membership of the nominations panel will be diverse and demonstrate CGIAR's strong commitment to ensuring gender equality in all facets of its work. The nominations panel will be permitted to seek the views of the Chair of the ISDC during the screening process for new ISDC members, but the ISDC Chair will not personally serve on the nominations panel.*

4.5 *The search and nominations process will be undertaken according to the administrative policies of the CGIAR System Organization and be managed by the System Management Office under the overall oversight of the nominations panel. For the avoidance of doubt, the CGIAR System Organization has no decision-making role in regard to the selection of ISDC members.*

2. Current ISDC roster

This table shows the current slate of ISDC members, their diversity, and expertise.

	Member	Role	Current term end date	Diversity & Expertise
1	Ingrid Fromm	Member	30 June 2028 (1 st term)	F; Honduras, Switzerland; Value chains
2	Magali Garcia	Member	30 June 2027 (2 nd term)	F; Bolivia; Agronomic engineer, land, and water resources
3	David Just	Member	31 December 2025 (1 st term)	M; USA; Agricultural economics
4	Erin Lentz	Member	31 March 2028 (1 st term)	F; USA; Food policy
5	Nompumelelo H. Obokoh	Vice Chair	30 June 2027 (2 nd term)	F; South Africa; Plant biotechnology
6	Bhavani Shankhar	Member (incoming)	31 December 2028 (1 st term)	M; UK, India; Agrifood systems, nutrition/health
7	Lesley Torrance	Chair	20 September 2028 (1 st term)	F; Scotland; Virology, plant pathology, crop science

3. Current and future expertise gaps identified by the ISDC Chair and Secretariat:

Essential expertise

- Crop and/or livestock systems OR crop and/or animal science (or related expertise e.g. plant and/or animal health, virology, epidemiology, plant physiology etc.)
- Food systems and value chains

Highly desirable expertise

- Digital technologies
- Biodiversity and/or sustainable natural resource management
- Applied climate science / climatology
- Seed systems
- Soil health and management