



24th CGIAR System Council Meeting
10–11 June 2026, Antalya, Türkiye

Agenda Item 11	Update from the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES) Evaluation Function
Distribution notice:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> May be distributed without restriction <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted to Members and Active Observers <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted to Voting Members only
Issue date:	27 May 2026
Purpose:	<input type="checkbox"/> For consent agenda/information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For discussion <input type="checkbox"/> For discussion and decision <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
Requested action:	Discussion
Executive summary:	<p>Aligned with the Advisory Bodies' plan (latest revision: SC-M23-DP9), the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES) Evaluation Function advanced several major priorities during the first half of 2026.</p> <p>These centered on portfolio evaluability and midline evaluation planning; establishing Center External Reviews (CERs) as a core pillar of the workplan, including the pilot and inaugural review with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI); and advancing the country-level evaluation pilot taking place in Kenya.</p> <p>The first semester also saw the endorsement and publication of two System Council commissioned evaluative engagements (SC-M23-EDP3; SC-M23-EDP5). Key deliverables are hyperlinked below, and the attached midyear update provides a progress report.</p>
Draft decision point:	N/A
Supporting materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAES Evaluation Mid-year Update This document contains hyperlinks to first-semester deliverables, listed below for ease of reference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Publication of Portfolio Evaluability Assessment Synthesis and Management Response (SC-M23-EDP3) ○ Associated newly released Domain G—Cost-effectiveness and Efficiency: Key Lessons from the 2025 Evaluability Assessment of CGIAR Portfolio ○ Publication of Culture & Engagement Independent Review and Management Response (SC-M23-EDP5) ○ Strengthening the System-Wide Architecture for Data Quality Assurance to Support Evaluability: Synthesis Note ○ Evaluation of Scaling Efforts in CGIAR: Technical Note • Presentation slides to be shared following the presentation
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IAES 2026 Mid-Year Update: Evaluation Function

26 May 2026

Summary

The Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES) *Evaluation Function* advanced several major priorities during the first half of 2026, centered on portfolio evaluability, mid-line evaluation planning, Center External Reviews (CERs), and a country-level evaluation pilot. System Council endorsed the Evaluability Assessment (EA) Synthesis for the 2025–2030 Research Portfolio, with management committing actions to strengthen evaluability across CGIAR's portfolio. Building on the EAs, IAES initiated consultations on the Mid-line Portfolio Evaluation (MLPE) design through a Roadmap outlining evaluation design options, timelines, and resource scenarios.

Significant progress was made on the pilot CER, including review panel deployment, stakeholder consultations, and completion of analysis ahead of final reporting in July 2026. Strategic engagement with CGIAR's Integrated Partnership Board (IPB) and its Global Leadership Team (GLT) is bolstering an authorizing environment for CERs, demonstrating system demand, and agreement with the review framework. IAES also advanced the Kenya Country Evaluation pilot, finalizing the evaluation design, and preparing for fieldwork in July. Additional achievements included endorsement of the Culture and Engagement (C&E) Independent Review, conducted in partnership with Internal Audit; publication of technical guidance on evaluating the scaling efforts of CGIAR; strengthened engagement with monitoring, evaluation, learning, impact assessment and foresight (MELIAF) initiatives; implementing Strategic Impact Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) review recommendations for Advisory Bodies (2025), including the evaluation workstream of IAES; and, coordination on management response to independent evaluation tracking and response action prioritization processes.

Portfolio Evaluation

Evaluability Assessment Results: Synthesis Report and Management Response

A foundational principle in CGIAR evaluation practice is evaluability, defined in the CGIAR Evaluation Framework (2022) as "*the extent to which an intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion.*" Within the 2025–2030 Research Portfolio, all 13 Programs and Accelerators were subject to EAs. The [Synthesis Report](#), published in the first quarter of 2026, consolidated cross-Portfolio findings into four system-level recommendations. The Management Response, coordinated by the Chief Scientist's Office, was transmitted on 2 February 2026. Management fully agreed with two recommendations and partially agreed with the other two, committing to a set of actions over 2026–2027. System Council endorsed the Synthesis (decision reference SC/M23/EDP3).

Building the Plan for the Mid-Line Portfolio Evaluation (MLPE): Roadmap

The EA Synthesis provides the diagnostic baseline supporting the design of the MLPE under the rolling, System Council-endorsed Multi-Year Evaluation Plan (MYEP; SC/M21/DP5, with adaptations SC/M23/DP9). A Roadmap for stakeholder consultation sets out six evaluation design options, based on differentiated depth, two-layer architecture, clustering approaches, and evaluation readiness. The design options are placed alongside selection criteria, indicative milestones (i.e., preparation through mid-2027, evaluation implementation from July 2027, validated evaluation reports for endorsement March 2028), and resource scenarios. IAES uses the Roadmap for consultations; these are underway. Through the end of May 2026, with IPB, CGIAR management, the Internal Audit Executive and IAES's Evaluation Reference Group were consulted; consultation will follow in June with other Advisory Bodies, CGIAR's Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) community, and SIMEC at its 37th meeting.

Center External Review

From January to May 2026, the CER pillar in the evaluation plan advanced along two principal tracks: implementation of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) CER as a pilot; and, engagements with GLT and IPB, toward collective agreement on the review framework and a shared review calendar of all centers.

IAES progressed the IWMI review through deployment of an expert panel. IWMI completed its self-assessment report on 27 February after a seven-week preparation period. IAES provided regular updates to a Steering Forum and the IWMI Board Task Force overseeing the review. The panel reviewed the self-assessment, completed data collection and analysis, and visited IWMI headquarters, where it held a validation meeting with IWMI management on 15 May. The panel and IAES will refine recommendations with the IWMI Board Task Force on 25

May. The Panel Chair will present findings to the IWMI Board on 4 June, with the final report due to the IWMI Board on 22 June with a broader release planned for July, including submission to the System Council.

In CER engagement overall, i.e. application to all Centers, IAES provided the IPB with reports at its 8th and 9th meetings, including updates on discussions with CGIAR Directors General regarding the reinstatement of external reviews. The CER ad hoc Consultative Group, convened by IAES, held its first meeting on 01 April to discuss the overarching Terms of Reference. Participants included the acting IPB Chair, Executive Managing Director, Internal Audit Executive, Independent Science for Development Council Chair, and IWMI Director General, as well as several representatives of SIMEC. IAES briefed the GLT and engaged the Directors General through discussions at GLT’s March and April meetings. GLT members broadly embraced the review framework and intent of the exercise, and several Directors General indicated tentative CER timing, pending Center Board confirmation.

Lessons from the pilot and consultations will inform finalization of generic Terms of Reference, CER guidance, and the CGIAR master calendar in 3rd quarter. IAES continues discussion with up to two Centers for reviews beginning in the 4th quarter. However, ICARDA review has been delayed due to geopolitical developments from early 2026.

Country Evaluation: Kenya Pilot

The [Concept Note](#) for the Kenya Country Evaluation Pilot has been finalized, addressing feedback from SIMEC and IAES’s Evaluation Reference Group. IAES reflected substantive observations in the design and [Terms of Reference](#).

The ad hoc Consultative Group, convened by IAES, held its first meeting on 28 April 2026, bringing together representatives of IPB, CGIAR’s regional representation in Africa, Internal Audit, Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation, Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), Evaluation Reference Group, and the MELIAF Kenya Activator. Discussions centered on the evaluation scope, questions, methods, and stakeholder engagement. A second convening of the Group is foreseen at a later stage of the evaluation cycle, in conjunction with recommendation refinement.

The case study selection process reached its final stage. Drawing on the innovation inventory compiled under the SPIA stocktaking exercise, four case candidates were shortlisted. Following further consultation and readiness assessment, the confirmed case is biofortified high-iron bean varieties, an innovation led jointly by the Alliance of Bioversity-CIAT and IFPRI, which offers a sufficiently mature scaling pathway and a traceable lifecycle to support the objectives of the evaluation.

The independent evaluation team, comprising a Team Lead and two Subject Matter Experts, is being assembled from the IAES roster. In parallel, the bibliometric analysis has been commissioned to a third party (Science-Metrix, Elsevier). Looking ahead, the inception phase will begin in June. Data collection in Kenya is planned for the second week of July 2026. The presentation of results is foreseen in September during CGIAR’s scaling week (22-24 September 2026 in Nairobi).

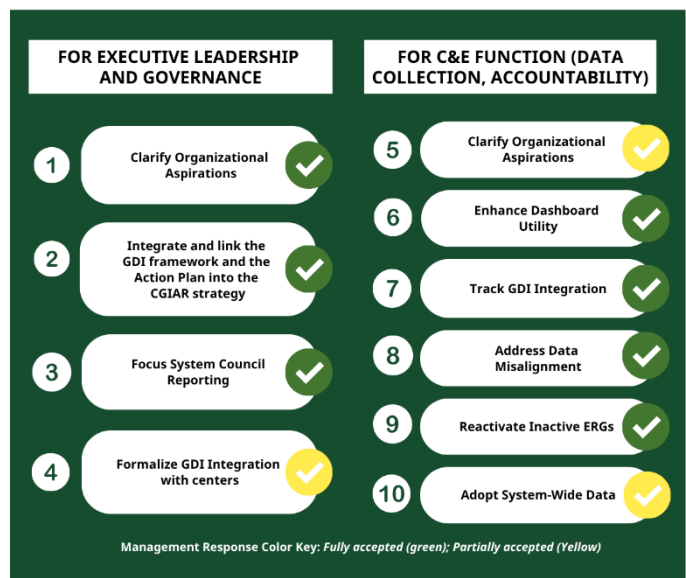
2026: Other Deliverables and Key Actions Year to Date

Corporate Evaluation: 2026 Endorsement of Culture and Engagement (C&E) Review

The [C&E Independent Review](#) was a joint assurance activity implemented with Internal Audit in 2025, with endorsement concluded in 2026 (first quarter). The review produced 10 recommendations, seven of which CGIAR management fully accepted. See the diagram at right.

Scaling Technical Note

IAES published a [Technical Note](#) on *Evaluation of Scaling Efforts in CGIAR* in the first quarter. Grounded in the CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy (2022), adapting OECD-DAC criteria to the scaling context, it organizes guiding questions around five evaluation criteria and ten scaling-specific principles, to guide future evaluations.



Evaluability Assessment Domain G: Learning Study

This [Technical Note](#) compiles the findings about EA Domain G, *Cost-effectiveness and Efficiency*, from CGIAR's 2025 Evaluability Assessments. It finds that while existing systems support operational efficiency, fragmented financial architectures and low MELIA–Finance integration limit cost-effectiveness evaluability. The note establishes a baseline for improving cost–result traceability, evaluative readiness, and future value-for-investment assessments. A learning-oriented piece, the study is a core annex to the Evaluability Assessment Synthesis.

Strengthening the System-Wide Architecture for Data Quality Assurance to Support Evaluability

This published [note](#) synthesizes data system case studies in four previous evaluative engagements (2023-2026), examining CGIAR's strategic ambition for system-wide evaluability against the current maturity of its data and evidence architecture. CGIAR has advanced toward more transparent and federated data systems. Yet, the note identifies recurring institutional constraints: governance, semantic interoperability, data provenance, and the utility of reporting systems for learning and Value for Money.

Evaluation Function and CGIAR's MELIAF

The active participation of Advisory Bodies in system-wide MELIAF activities has been urged, for instance, in the SIMEC review (2025). IAES participated in the 3-day February MELIAF Workstreams Coordination & Alignment Meeting, under the auspices of the MELIAF grant (supported by The Gates Foundation). The broad aim of the grant to which IAES is contributing is, "*gearing CGIAR for success by making MELIAF a driver of effective delivery and enhanced impact.*" Also during the semester, IAES proceeded with preparatory discussions with the 2026-appointed monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) Community of Practice (COP) *champion*, to discuss involvement in MEL COP forthcoming meetings (first scheduled: June 2026), identified as an important avenue to support CGIAR's evaluation practice and engage the MEL COP. The evaluation manager for country evaluation continued engagement with the Kenya *Activator*, including the Kenya Theory of Change (ToC) development; the *Activator* lead participated in the Kenya evaluation consultative group meeting. Such mutual participation boosts complementarity, while guardrails on independence of evaluation have been secured. IAES has continued its engagement on systems related to MELIAF data management pertinent to our independent evaluation mandate, including liaising with the Portfolio Performance Unit on investments to advance an end-to-end digital system for tracking management responses, as well as exploratory work on agentic AI to increase the efficiency of monitoring data preparation for external evaluation teams. IAES director and staff provided feedback to grant partner, *The Lexicon*, on taxonomy and the design of the evaluation workflow, an integral part of the grant.

Responding to the Recommendations of SIMEC Review of Advisory Bodies

IAES Evaluation Function made progress on SIMEC review recommendations between January and May. Certain recommendations related to CGIAR governance documents were tabled for second semester, following SIMEC and Governance staff guidance. The recommendation to reinstate center reviews has become a focal area and accounted for a high portion of the IAES director's level of effort, to conclude the pilot and foster discussions supportive of an authorizing environment. The elements of the recommendation to enhance relevance and utility have been progressed through: engagement of stakeholders in work planning (well documented MLPE consultation; institutionalization of ad hoc consultative groups); address data quality (data quality for evaluability synthesis, linked above), and support to MEL COP (engagement in MELIAF grant and sub-activity pertaining to MEL COP described above). Finally, continuing a practice of MYEP consultation and moving to projectized budgets will be a core feature of the 2027/2028 plan presentation to SIMEC and Assurance Oversight Committee.

July-December: Evaluation Function Priorities

Complete Evaluative Engagements

IWMI pilot CER and Kenya evaluation will be completed. The learning and adaptation process, drawing on lessons from the pilot CER and consultations, will allow IAES to complete standardized CER tools and instruments.

Finalizing Rolling Multi-Year Evaluation Plan (MYEP)

Actions will drive the submission to 25th meeting of System Council of the rolling MYEP under the auspices of consolidated Advisory Bodies' plans: conclude the planning of mid-line evaluations; establish CER calendar collaboratively with Directors General, as a priority; determine further country evaluation plans (from mid-2028).

Joint Assurance and MELIAF Activities

The assurance and advisory functions will hold a joint workshop in June 2026 to discuss complementary mandates and ways of working. A potential follow-up action might be the proposal of a side event on joint assurance for the 25th meeting of System Council. MELIAF collaboration will also continue to be a focus, including engagement through Kenya *Activator*, MEL COP, and MELIAF October Convening.

Annex: Statement on CGIAR's Uptake of Recommendations

Within CGIAR's Office of the Chief Scientist, the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) tracks management response actions (MRAs) to independent evaluations. In line with section 3.4.h of the [IAES TOR](#) and recommendation 1 of the [Review of CGIAR's Management Response System](#) (2025), the IAES Evaluation Function has been coordinating with PPU on its 2025 Prioritization Process for active MRAs.

Under the process, PPU reviewed 104 active MRAs from 11 past independent evaluations, advisory engagements, evaluability assessments, and the decadal CRP Evaluation Synthesis, conducted in the period 2021–2025. The process resulted in 38 MRAs classified as "completed" and 17 MRAs proposed to, and accepted by, management for "deprioritization."

IAES assessed on a case-by-case basis 17 proposed deprioritized MRAs and conducted a structured spot-check on a stratified random sample of 17 of the 38 completed MRAs (45% of the closed population).

IAES supports the 2025 Prioritization Process and the commitment to focus CGIAR's attention on the most strategically applicable Recommendations and MRAs. IAES congratulates management on the completion and closure of 37% of 104 pending MRAs, in addition to the 168 MRAs already closed in preceding years. IAES urged a deliberative, intent-based approach to prioritization, reserving deprioritization classification for cases where a recommendation's substantive intent is genuinely no longer applicable to CGIAR.

Future Plans

- Brief SIMEC on the IAES engagement and views (i.e., support of the periodic process, MRA closures, and observations regarding intent) and share with PPU case-level assessments for technical engagement, as applicable
- IAES has provided co-design support to the foreseen upgrade of the Management Response Action Tracker, to foster an end-to-end, integrated system. This is aligned with recommendations and planned management actions in [the Management Response System Review](#) (2025).



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