

High-level review of CGIAR's Advisory Bodies

Results and recommendations from the System Council's Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC)

Purpose

This document sets out the findings of the Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee's (SIMEC's) review of CGIAR's Advisory Bodies, as requested by the System Council in July 2025 and as outlined in the Terms of Reference approved by the System Council in July 2025 [SC/M22/EDP3]. The review has benefitted from inputs from System Council, Integrated Partnership Board, and Global Leadership Team members, in addition to an in-person workshop with the Chairs of the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment and Independent Science for Development Council and the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service Director.

Action Requested

The System Council is requested to review and approve SIMEC's recommendations.

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

Prepared by: CGIAR's Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC)

Executive summary

1. In July 2025, the CGIAR System Council tasked its Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) with reviewing CGIAR's three Advisory Bodies – the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC), Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), and the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES) Evaluation Function – along with the IAES Secretariat. The goal was to ensure these bodies are fit for purpose in the context of declining funding, a drive for efficiency, and evolving governance structures. 2025 saw a 24% decline in funding of the CGIAR 2025-30 Research and Innovation Portfolio from the expected baseline, with further reductions expected, therefore cost-saving measures are required across all parts of CGIAR.
2. SIMEC's review included consultations with the Advisory Bodies, analysis of governance documents and budgets, and a stakeholder survey. Self-assessments were also conducted by ISDC, SPIA, and the Evaluation Function.
3. **The high-level review confirmed the ongoing need for independent advisory and evaluation functions within CGIAR but highlighted a demand for sharper focus, better coordination, and greater cost-efficiency in a period of financial constraint.** The recommendations aim to ensure that the Advisory Bodies remain credible, relevant, and impactful while adapting to the realities of reduced funding and evolving governance.
4. **Recommendations¹ for System Council approval:**

Cross-cutting recommendations

- i. **Maintain all functions as three independent entities, but narrow their scope:** All advisory and evaluation functions remain relevant, but their scope must be adapted to the evolving future CGIAR research activities and budget. SIMEC is not calling for major governance changes to these bodies at this time.
- ii. **Harness synergies:** Strengthen dialogue between the Advisory Bodies and the IPB's new committees (e.g. Science, Innovation, Impact and Partnership Committee) and System Organization units (e.g. Portfolio Performance Unit) to avoid duplication, maximize efficiencies, and strengthen synergies.
- iii. **Align with MELIA(F) Framework:** The Advisory Bodies' workplan, as presented by the IAES Secretariat, should be annually updated to align with progress being made by the overall MELIA(F) Framework program (being led by SO/PPU in coordination with IAES and Centers' M&E Community of Practice).

¹ Note that IAES has already started incorporating some of these recommendations as they revised their 2026/2027 budgets, which will be presented for System Council approval during SC23.

- iv. **Clarify budgeting:** Present budgets more explicitly to clarify the costs of outputs and improve cost efficiency.

SPIA-specific recommendations

- v. **Focus on country-level impact:** Prioritize rigorous, independent, quantitative, ex-post impact assessment at the country level, not just individual innovations.
- vi. **Reduce number of studies:** Pause all new studies not contracted as of September 2025; continue only with the 24 contracted studies.
- vii. **Funding for causal impact studies:** SIMEC affirms that SPIA should continue to implement rigorous, independent, quantitative, ex-post impact assessment of CGIAR research. However, given current budgetary constraints and pausing new studies, SIMEC recommends that SPIA explores opportunities within the country study program to strategically reallocate resources to causal impact assessments, including amending – or, where deemed necessary, suspending – existing contracts to embed impact evaluation components or reallocate resources to causal impact assessments.
- viii. **Improve coordination:** SIMEC recommends that an independent and rigorous programme of ex-post impact assessment be maintained and adequately funded by CGIAR. However, SIMEC recommends that SPIA's work be more closely integrated with the Portfolio Performance Unit, especially on costing data and technical reporting to generate cost/benefit analyses, while assuring SPIA's independence and credibility.
- ix. **Enhance communication:** Make outputs more audience-targeted and less academic.
- x. **Adjust budgets:** Reduce the budget by issuing fewer grants and adjusting personnel costs; avoid double-budgeting for program management.

ISDC-specific recommendations

- xi. **Enhance feedback and engagement:** Strengthen formal feedback mechanisms with the System Council and CGIAR Management.
- xii. **Reduce travel costs:** Adopt hybrid/virtual modalities and align meetings with major events.
- xiii. **Postpone megatrend update study:** Delay until later in the business cycle.

- xiv. **Focus on strategic assessments:** Prioritize periodic assessment of research programs and accelerators.

Evaluation Function-specific recommendations

- xiv. **Clarify roles and oversight:** Amend the Charter and reporting arrangements to clarify the evaluation function's role.
- xv. **Reinstate Center reviews:** Make these a core pillar of the work program.
- xvi. **Enhance relevance and utility:** Engage stakeholders in work planning, address data quality, and support the M&E Community of Practice.
- xvii. **Improve transparency:** Document work program consultations, scoping, staffing, and budgeting for priority setting.

1. Background

- 1.1. In the Terms of Reference approved in July 2025 (SC/M22/EDP3), the System Council charged its Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) with *"[delivering] recommendations for System Council approval at SC23 that bring the three Advisory Bodies – the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC), Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), and Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES) Evaluation Function – and the IAES Secretariat in line with the changed CGIAR context, i.e.*
 - i. *The progressive reduction in funding and the ongoing drive to cut non-research costs in CGIAR through efficiencies and cost savings.*
 - ii. *The pressing needs to generate new strong, credible, and compelling evidence through evaluation and ex-post impact assessment in the 2026-2030 period, ensuring that evidence is generated in the most cost-effective and efficient way.*
 - iii. *Changes to the governance structure that risk duplication of functions between the System Council, its committees and advisory bodies, and the Integrated Partnership Board (IPB) and its committees, and the work underway to develop a coherent and integrated MELIA(F) system across CGIAR. There is scope to ensure a joined-up integrated system to design and deliver advisory services while maintaining the independence needed to ensure rigor and credibility."*
- 1.2. The terms of reference of [ISDC](#), [SPIA](#), and [IAES](#) also call for a SIMEC-led review of these Advisory Bodies every three years.
- 1.3. Since the establishment of the current IAES Advisory Body structure in 2019, SIMEC has consistently worked with stakeholders of all three Advisory Bodies, plus the IAES

Secretariat, and continues to believe that, in principle, all functions are needed by CGIAR. This review therefore took a high-level approach considering the challenging CGIAR financial context (i.e. a 24% decline in Windows 1 and 2 2025 funding from the baseline scenario and further reductions expected in the following 2-3 years). Given such a significant reduction in research investments, all other non-research related CGIAR functions are also exploring ways of reducing their scope of work while maintaining key activities needed for the CGIAR System to function. We are aware that this comes not long after the Advisory Bodies' (and particularly SPIA's) budget was increased significantly at SC's request, before funding realities shifted dramatically.

Table 1. Advisory Bodies' budgets as approved by the System Council (USD 000s)

	2022 (approved)	2023 (approved)	2024 (approved)	2025 (approved)	2026 (requested) ²
SPIA	3,898	3,897	4,390 ³	7,058	6,402
ISDC	1,017	1,019	1,198	755	543
Evaluation	840	1,488	2,018	1,255	665
IAES Secretariat	1,906	2,057	2,110	2,117	1,681
Total	7,661	8,461	9,716	11,155⁴	9,291

Collectively, the Advisory Bodies and IAES Secretariat have consistently underspent its budget, though not always for reasons within its control.

- 1.4. During July-September 2025, SIMEC members consulted with the ISDC and SPIA Chairs, and the IAES Director and analyzed core governance documents, external assessments, budgets, and other literature. A stakeholder survey was sent to all members of the System Council and its committees, Integrated Partnership Board, and Global Leadership Team, though only 18 responses were received (12 from System Council, 2 from the Board, and 4 from the Global Leadership Team). Given the low response rate, SIMEC's recommendations are not fully anchored in the survey responses, but they did provide helpful input. ISDC, SPIA, and the Evaluation Function also conducted self-assessments and provided previous self-assessments. SIMEC members then met in-person to discuss their findings and recommendations and held feedback sessions on these with the IAES Director, ISDC Chair, and SPIA Chair.

- 1.5. Key challenges identified:

² SIMEC would like to acknowledge and appreciate these revised budget figures, which were adjusted down from the original submission following feedback from SIMEC and AOC.

³ Includes carryover of USD 750k and combines the SPIA former workplan/budget with the 2023-2030 approved budget.

⁴ Carryforward of 1.3 m USD applied in W1 budget, for a total of 12.5 m USD in 2025 total IAES, ISDC and SPIA.

- Unclear and inconsistent generation/incorporation of (sometimes changing) demand, engagement of stakeholders (including SIMEC) in the process of preparing work plans
- Sense of disconnect with Centers' demands for Advisory Body services and either overlaps or limited coordination with other relevant CGIAR bodies (ISDC with IPB, SPIA with PPU, Evaluation Function with Centers M&E Community of Practice)
- Apparent inadequate feedback loops for uptake and learning
- Current budget formats and mode of elaboration in Excel sheets make it difficult to determine the true cost of work
- Need to adjust Advisory Bodies' scope of work and costs implications to correlate with the ongoing significant budget reductions across CGIAR research activities

2. SPIA review

- 2.1. The current terms of reference for SPIA have been in effect since 12 May 2023 (SC/M18/DP3) with three pillars, as defined in the 2024-2030 workplan: 1) **Country studies** of CGIAR reach (defined as a measurement of the level of impact) at a System level; 2) **Causal impact assessments**; and 3) Use of **rigorous CGIAR impact evidence**. Most survey participants felt that they understood the role, objectives, and work of SPIA and 12 of 18 respondents agreed that SPIA is meeting its objectives.
- 2.2. Under the first pillar, SPIA proposes that *“System-level evidence of the reach of CGIAR innovations and policy influences in up to 20 countries can provide compelling evidence of CGIAR’s global footprint”* (see document [SC18-04](#), p.15). That means that, from the country/national agrifood system-level evidence, an aggregated calculation at CGIAR global level will be inferred from the 20 countries. As a second pillar, causal impact assessments, more specifically ‘accountability studies’, *“will provide SPIA with causal impact estimates of the set of innovations with high reach, with the objective of providing a new type of global calculation of returns to One CGIAR’s diversified portfolio by 2030”* (as above, p.12). On the third pillar, ‘Use of rigorous evidence’, *“Upcoming synthesis products will focus on lessons from the SPIA portfolio, with an eye on delivering on the mandate to provide evidence at the System level”* (as above, p.12).
- 2.3. The three pillars convert into the present four SPIA objectives (as above, p.36). For budget planning, respective activities are grouped under the objectives:
 - Institutionalizing and scaling country-level data on CGIAR reach
 - Expanding and deepening evidence of causal impacts of CGIAR research
 - Strengthening the use of rigorous impact evidence
 - Program management
- 2.4. In its self-assessment, SPIA emphasizes its unique role for CGIAR in providing independent and rigorous evidence. It sees its objectives as clearly defined and closely

aligned to CGIAR's mission, with no need for redefinitions, new objectives, or scaling back. SPIA sees slight potential for revision in the sense of "*more explicit links between the country studies and the impact evaluations*". In the chosen phrasing for Objective 2, there appears implicit a much narrower interpretation by SPIA of the kind of assessments to be done; there is no mention of 'system-level', rather focusing on specific impact pathways. In reference to the recent SPIA-commissioned evaluation of the 2019-24 workplan ([Johnson, 2025](#)), SPIA confirms effective delivery on objectives.

- 2.5. With respect to demand, SPIA acknowledges the still high importance which the System Council, as primary stakeholder, places on generating rigorous evidence on CGIAR's reach and impact. SPIA rates research leaders and management as other important stakeholders. **But SPIA, in its self-assessment, does not make direct reference to CGIAR portfolio management, to the Chief Scientist, and to the Portfolio Performance Unit.** SPIA rather notes a complementary role with PPU, whose focus it sees on routine monitoring. There is no reference in SPIA's self-assessment to the impact assessment plan developed for the new Portfolio 25-30, overseen by PPU. This creates the impression that SPIA's position neglects the need for coordination and collaboration with PPU. Nevertheless, regarding possible improvements in effectiveness, SPIA notes that 'stronger engagement with CGIAR science leaders would help maximize the uptake and impact of SPIA evidence'. That should include the Chief Scientist's office. According to the stakeholder survey, only 2 of 18 respondents agreed that SPIA provides good value for money, which is lower than the responses for ISDC and Evaluation. This corresponds with stronger doubts (in comparison to ISDC) regarding demand orientation, with only 8 of 18 respondents agreeing that SPIA's work is demand-driven.
- 2.6. The SPIA-commissioned recent assessment (Johnson, 2025) focused on program effectiveness and was able to confirm achievement of outcomes (related to CGIAR impact evidence and impact culture) and an overall high satisfaction with SPIA activities as well as support for continuation. However, response rates were low and the quantitative base for the assessment was rather weak. In their reflections on the assessment, SPIA acknowledged – among other things – the positive feedback related to capacity strengthening for impact assessment in the Centers, which was achieved by SPIA. They stressed their intentions to further extend communication and support to CGIAR researchers, e.g. by matchmaking with impact assessment researchers. The new Evidence Finder Tool (under development) will further provide better access to information and knowledge as well as data.
- 2.7. Views expressed in the stakeholder survey conducted for this SIMEC Review were consistent with previous assessments; some respondents believe SPIA is too academic and implementing very long-term work, while others propose that this type of work could be better connected to the Centers, System Organization, and the IPB's ongoing

work. Qualitative responses ranged from noting that SPIA's work is "characterized by scientific rigor, which makes their assessments very valuable and their findings reliable and defensible" and "the SPIA mandate could be expanded to fully include return on investment studies" to comments suggesting that SPIA's work could be more focused, that its independence "creates distance from the CGIAR portfolio", its approach "does not sufficiently capture the full CGIAR portfolio at the country level", and its findings are "contributing only little to understand the big picture of CGIAR impact." One respondent went as far as to say that impact assessment "should be a function for CGIAR itself" and that "SPIA should rather focus on assessing CGIAR approach to IA, the quality of IA within CGIAR, on advising for possible improvements, etc."

- 2.8. **SIMEC believes that SPIA should continue to implement rigorous, independent, quantitative, ex-post impact assessment of CGIAR (and partners) research. Furthermore, SIMEC confirms that Center-implemented impact assessments are very useful but not the same as System-level impact assessments conducted by an independent body.**
- 2.9. The SIMEC team observed that the original SPIA proposed 2026-28 workplan included a 'business as usual' scenario where \$26 million would be spent in country studies (\$15.7M), causal impact studies (\$6.5M), use of evidence (\$1.7M) and overall program management (\$1.6M). Based on the very positive self-assessment and most studies already contracted, it has been a challenge for SPIA to reduce the scope of work and seek efficiencies and complementarities with other Advisory Body activities. However, SIMEC appreciates the fact that during this review SPIA has anticipated forthcoming recommendations and reduced the planned budget for 2026-27 by 27%⁵, although no scenarios have been provided.
- 2.10. **SIMEC concurs with SPIA's proposal to "reduce the number of individual studies, focusing instead on those that are most relevant, feasible, and of highest quality. The trade-off would be fewer studies overall, but maintaining strong integration between evidence generation and its use ensures that SPIA's outputs remain influential for strategic decisions and resource prioritization." Such focus, among other things, could imply assessment of impact at the national agriculture and food system level, in addition to the impact of singular innovations at the individual and community level. SIMEC recommends further discussions with SPIA in early 2026 to elaborate the activities and any additional expertise required to fulfil this part of the agreed workplan and support CGIAR's business case.**

⁵ The revised 2026-2027 SPIA budget allocates \$9.1M to country studies, \$1.1M to causal impact studies, \$976k to use of evidence studies, and \$837k to overall program management.

- 2.11. Therefore, SIMEC suggests that SPIA concentrates its work on generating rigorous evidence of CGIAR impact at the country level by not just studying overall 'reach'⁶ of CGIAR research, nor looking for 'evidence on impact pathways', but by considering what is known today – after decades of CGIAR's work – on CGIAR reach and impact pathways at the country level. The current SPIA workplan includes 24 studies (7 full studies, 12 stocktakes, and 5 causal impact studies). We suggest that SPIA reduce the number of studies by prioritizing the assessment of impacts of CGIAR research at the country level and concentrating on a few studies where full impacts at agriculture and food system level can be analyzed. SIMEC suggests that SPIA prioritize these studies based on the available data, availability of national experts to collaborate, and other factors. As part of this, it should undertake improved communications efforts that are audience-targeted, less academic, and message-focused.
- 2.12. **SIMEC recommends that SPIA should pause all elements of its long-term workplan that have not already been contracted as of 1 September 2025.** The present budget plan foresees up to 17 new 'Learning, Accountability and Proof-of-concept studies'. SIMEC recommends postponing these new activities and, for now, continuing only with the 24 contracted studies. SPIA should also consider potential future adjustments, e.g. whether all 7 full studies should have a second, 3-year phase. Hence, SPIA should analyze how its budget can be lowered by issuing fewer grants and adjusting other budget components such as personnel and honoraria costs accordingly.
- 2.13. While independence and credibility need to be assured, SPIA should coordinate more closely with PPU. SPIA and PPU should work together to ensure that, where possible, costing data (i.e. the attribution of expenditures to outputs and outcomes) can be utilized to strengthen the argument on return on investment in CGIAR and facilitate respective future impact assessments (cost-benefit analysis), in addition to operationalizing the new Technical Reporting Arrangement.
- 2.14. SIMEC recommends that the IAES Secretariat avoids the apparent double-budgeting for Program Management personnel expenditures directly attributed to SPIA and IAES Secretariat/operations staff also attributed to SPIA.

3. ISDC review

- 3.1. In the stakeholder survey, most (16 of 18) respondents agreed that they understood ISDC's role, objectives, and work, while almost as many (13 of 18) respondents agreed that ISDC is meeting its objectives. About half of respondents (10 of 18) agreed that ISDC

⁶ Take note that SPIA in its studies applies a connotation of 'reach' as of 'adoption'.

provides good value for money, while 13 of 18 respondents agreed that its work is demand-driven.

- 3.2. ISDC's self-assessment stated that: *"ISDC's independence, diversity of experience, and commitment to foresight and research quality are widely recognized strengths that underpin the credibility of its work. System council members particularly value ISDC's review of the research portfolio, horizon scanning and comparative advantage analysis, which have had a clear influence on CGIAR's strategic direction. At the same time, ISDC's effectiveness is constrained by several challenges. The pathways through which its advice influences decisions are not always transparent, making it difficult to measure impact systematically. Stronger mechanisms for tracking uptake (i.e. how advice is used in SC decisions or technical notes by management) would be helpful."*
- 3.3. For future activities and priorities, ISDC mentions in its self-assessment that: *"ISDC should continue prioritizing foresight, horizon scanning, and quality of research assessments. Strengthening links between science, policy and practice; advising on scaling of innovations and supporting local research capacity could further increase ISDC's value."*
- 3.4. There are questions around how ISDC could best interact with CGIAR entities, management, research programs, and other governance bodies. Requests from the SC and management fall sometimes outside ISDCs mandate and demand from CGIAR management has grown.
- 3.5. ISDC has initiated valuable work on its own account (e.g. comparative advantage, Quality of Research for Development) beyond formal requests from SC, demonstrating the importance of balancing responsiveness with proactive contributions. However, a clearer articulation of SC's needs and expectations would strengthen ISDC's role. Stronger, more formalized feedback mechanisms from SC would assist ISDC in providing the most impactful recommendations.
- 3.6. ISDC's roles and responsibilities are clear, but some overlaps exist, particularly with the new IPB Science Sub-Committee. A functional working relationship and regular exchange needs to be established between ISDC and the new IPB Science Sub-Committee. ISDC was invited for full participation in the IPB Science-Sub Committee but, to maintain its independence, the ISDC Chair instead suggested participating as an active observer. To date, they have not been granted observer status, and there is very limited interaction between ISDC and the IPB Science Sub-Committee. **SIMEC recommends that the ISDC is represented on the IPB Science Sub-Committee and does not feel that this would undermine ISDC's independence.**
- 3.7. Limited direct engagement with scientists reduces insights into operational realities. ISDC's participation in and contribution to Center reviews would provide an opportunity

for co-learning and lead to a better understanding of the structure and content of various research portfolios. It would also enable better assessment of all research activities across the System and more direct engagement with researchers.

- 3.8. SIMEC considers the periodic assessment of research programs and accelerators by ISDC at strategic moments in the business cycle as the main priority for SC. SIMEC suggests a new mechanism for tracking uptake of the main ISDC recommendations of portfolio reviews. This element should be further elaborated by ISDC and SIMEC in 2026.
- 3.9. Some of the future focus areas suggested by ISDC (e.g. strengthening links between science, policy and practice; advising on scaling of innovations and supporting local research capacity) are closely related to ongoing work in science programs and accelerators and need triangulation with the respective programs and accelerators to make sure that products relate to demand and are not duplicating ongoing work. ISDC has also suggested an update of the megatrend study. **SIMEC is not convinced of the added value of such an update now and proposes to postpone it to a later stage (2027) to inform the mid-term review moment of the current business cycle in 2028.** The Quality of Research for Development and Comparative Analysis frameworks are key products for assurance of quality of CGIAR research. ISDC should focus on strengthening the capacity of science teams to use them, rather than further upgrades to the frameworks themselves.
- 3.10. To allow for more in-depth discussions on ISDC future priorities and program of work, more formalized feedback mechanisms between ISDC and SC (through SIMEC) and CGIAR Management (through the Chief Scientist) should be established. As an independent body, ISDC will continue to be able to initiate work on its own account, but we need to find the right balance of “governance body demand” and “ISDC observed needs”.
- 3.11. Currently, travel expenses consume close to 30% of the yearly ISDC budget. ISDC should adopt cost-saving measures to reduce the travel costs, e.g. through a combination of reducing costs of in-person meetings by aligning them with other major events and, where possible, adopting more hybrid and virtual work modalities.

4. Evaluation Function review

- 4.1. In the stakeholder survey, most (14 of 18) respondents agreed that they understood the Evaluation Function's role, objectives, and work, though only 11 of 18 respondents agreed that the Evaluation Function is meeting these objectives. Respondents were split on whether the Evaluation Function provides good value for money (5 agreed; 5 disagreed) and whether the Function is demand-driven (6 agreed; 7 disagreed or strongly disagreed).

- 4.2. **SIMEC recommends further clarification on the roles of the System Council, Integrated Partnership Board, and CGIAR Management in overseeing and utilizing independent evaluations for accountability and learning.** There is a lack of clarity in the Charter about the role of the independent evaluation function⁷, including reporting lines to ensure independence and effectiveness. What we found striking is the lack of attention in SC for the results of the evaluations and the follow-up to recommendations (the details are dealt with by SIMEC, there are drop in calls to discuss specific reports, there is a brief discussion in SC meetings, and it stops there). While SC delegates responsibility for engaging with the details of evaluations to SIMEC, SC retains a responsibility for discussion of evaluations and for holding management accountable regarding the follow-up to recommendations. We note with appreciation PPU's development of the [Evaluation & Management Response Actions Tracker](#), incorporating feedback from the Evaluation Function. Until recently, there seems to have been even less engagement of IPB with evaluation outcomes, and there is not yet a formal system in place yet for promoting such engagement.
- 4.3. **Timely delivery of the work program is undermined by shifts in political and portfolio priorities that could not be foreseen when the evaluations were planned, but there is a need to increase the relevance, timeliness, and value to decision-making of the evaluations.** SIMEC recognizes the critical role that engagement with CGIAR management plays in ensuring the design and delivery of an effective, efficient evaluation program. This should be balanced with the need to protect independence and avoid the risk of an external perception (by MOPAN, for example) of undue interference. While flexibility is needed to align the work program with evolving information needs, requests to adjust approved evaluation plans need to be conducted earlier than the present practice. In situations where the wider context introduces changes outside of the Evaluation Function's control, SIMEC encourages reflection on how evaluation findings and recommendations can be made more relevant in light of these changes. At the same time there is a need to address the lack of progress made on many performance areas identified by MOPAN, as signaled in the MOPAN light touch follow up presented to SIMEC in March 2024.
- 4.4. SIMEC endorses the incorporation of Center reviews, as set out the Advisory Bodies' triennial consolidated plan issued in 2024. **We believe that adding these reviews as a Core Pillar of the Work Program will help the Evaluation function improve perceived relevance and efficiency.** Stakeholders such as the SC, IPB, and GLT could play a more consistent and considered role in helping the function to prioritize other requested thematic reviews considering budget constraints. Transparent documentation of work program consultations, scoping decisions, staffing, and budgeting should underpin

⁷ As defined in the [IAES Terms of Reference](#).

priority setting processes with SC/SIMEC (and should form a record of account). While many challenges have been cited (changes in mid-stream, budget, staffing, timing), a fundamental question is whether the evaluation topic and scope is core to decision-making by CGIAR management (and secondarily to IPB and SC).

- 4.5. The SC should clarify and align the objectives of the Evaluation Function with accountability and learning needs. This can be achieved by: (i) amending relevant articles of the Charter; (ii) revisiting reporting arrangements (e.g. drop in calls versus more substantial sessions) and reporting lines to optimize information flow; and (iii) increasing oversight of the implementation of recommendations including by supporting an effective management tracking and reporting tool and holding management to account for poor performance.
- 4.6. The Evaluation Function should enhance the relevance and utility of its work program, including by: (i) engaging at system-level to promote an authorizing environment for Center Reviews, including by discussing proposed scope and methods. Proceed with Center Reviews if authorizing environment permits. Work closely with SC (via SIMEC), IPB, and Management to agree on other key thematic reviews based on evolving accountability and learning needs and considering budget constraints; (ii) Revising the Work Planning process including by formalizing engagement with key system stakeholders and making the priority setting process transparent; (iii) continuing to address data quality issues in partnership with PPU; and (iv) engage and support the M&E Community of Practice (50+ members)⁸ to position the Evaluation Function as a source of expertise that other CoP members can draw on when useful.

5. Cross-cutting recommendations

- 5.1. SIMEC finds that the Advisory Bodies' work is very relevant and should continue, albeit with a need to narrow down the scope of work given a lack of CGIAR funding to cover the original, ambitious workplan.
- 5.2. SIMEC is concerned that there may be overlap or duplication between the Advisory Bodies and the IPB's newly constituted committees (e.g. Science, Innovation, Impact and Partnership Committee). Hence, IPB and the Advisory Bodies should engage in constructive dialogue related to the Terms of Reference of such Committees to avoid any real or perceived duplication with the work of ISDC, SPIA, and the Evaluation Function. The IPB could use SPIA, ISDC, and Evaluation Function results to strengthen its forthcoming governance and managerial activities.

⁸ This should include, for example, the inclusion of the Evaluation Function in relevant institutionally-managed MELIA-related mailing lists.

- 5.3. Considering the current CGIAR MELIA(F) Framework program – funded by the Gates Foundation and led by PPU – the IAES Secretariat should consider an annual update of its workplan to explicitly align with the overall progress being made by the MELIA(F) program.
- 5.4. Possible entry points of change for greater effectiveness and cost-efficiency must be systematically identified, including through more explicit presentation of budget planning which would provide more clarity on costs of the advisory and evaluation outputs.