



CGIAR Asset Study

Independent Assessment & Validation

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Summary Assessment and Validation Report

Scope of Work

This engagement is based on our proposal submitted to CGIAR in July 2024. Following a change request, the original scope was expanded to include independent assessment and validation from a third-party consultant, Albin Hubscher, as from August 2024 onwards. Our high-level scope of work includes the following key tasks:

Evaluation

Evaluate the methodology used in Phase II of the CGIAR Asset Study, including data collection methods, analytical procedures, reporting, evaluation and prioritization of investment proposals and Concept Notes. Assess the overall validity of these approaches.

- **Methodology** - A clear methodology was developed and employed in the CGIAR Asset Study Phase II, incorporating a well-documented structured approach which was widely communicated and included a “funnel methodology”. This methodology was designed to filter and prioritize assets in alignment with CGIAR’s research portfolio.
- **Data Collection Methods** - To ensure data accuracy and consistency, standardized data collection tools and templates were created, along with user guides and training sessions for all CGIAR Centers. Assets bundles were established from individual assets that support a specific task. These resources detailed the steps for documenting each asset bundle’s readiness, alignment, and potential financing needs.
- **Concept Notes** - Centers were asked to prioritize investment and financing needs (operational funding gap, upgrade, or new investment) of asset bundles essential to effectively and efficiently implement the new research agenda. Word/Excel Concept Note templates were developed and training provided to Centers to report the prioritized financing needs in standardized Concept Notes. Support was provided to Science Program leaders in reviewing and prioritizing these Concept Notes via an online survey and accompanying materials. Prioritization between Centers and science leaders were analysed to the extent possible. Some science leaders were not yet in a position to identify crucial assets.

Overall Validity

- **Methodology** - The structured methodology, combined with comprehensive data collection tools, templates, training, and guides, provided a well-defined process that Centers and Science Programs followed consistently. The adherence to these protocols across all stages indicates that the methodology was valid and effective in achieving the objectives of the CGIAR Asset Study for data collection, reporting, and prioritization of Concept Notes (high-level investment cases).
- **Data** - Data quality issues were observed, mainly due to the limited timeframe and competing priorities that Centers are confronted with. These issues included incomplete data entries, data entry errors, and inconsistencies. These issues are anticipated to be resolved in the ongoing Asset Study work. The data quality issues do not impact the overall reliability of information, on the analyses performed or validity of the Asset Study but might not yet provide a complete picture of crucial asset needs.

- **Limitations** - Centers are challenged identifying the most important asset bundles and funding needs since Science Programs and Accelerators are concurrently being developed. In addition, budgets for the Science Programs and Accelerators are not yet known.

Funding Requirements from Concept Notes

- Centers have outlined significant capital investment needs through a detailed asset review and Concept Notes, aiming to align their priorities with Science Programs and Accelerators.
- From over 3,000 individual assets, Centers consolidated these into 231 asset bundles, of which 155 were deemed important for implementing their portfolios. This analysis informed the potential creation of 65 investment cases requiring \$265 million.
- To focus efforts, Centers identified up to three investment cases per institution, resulting in 38 Concept Notes with high-level funding requirement totalling \$199 million. These funding requirements include \$139 million for upgrading existing assets, \$35 million for new investments, and \$25 million to address operational funding gaps.
- Further prioritization by Science Program leaders via an online survey determined that 30 of the 38 Concept Notes, valued at \$163 million, were critical to achieving program objectives. Of these, 18 concept notes (\$101 million) demonstrated strong alignment between Center and Science priorities, including \$62 million for upgrades, \$29 million for new investments, and \$10 million for closing funding gaps. The remaining 20 concept notes (\$98 million), while not as strongly aligned from the results of the survey, were still identified as important and requiring capital investment for the purpose of conducting research.
- The investment requirement are split approximately 68/32 between tangible assets and intangible assets. Intangible assets included several Concept Notes regarding data platforms and systems, reflecting the growing importance of digital innovation in research.
- Genebank and Genetic and Breeding Resources: These areas have significant upgrade requests, necessitating further validation with separate Genebank asset studies to ensure alignment with strategic priorities.

Key Pending Tasks for Asset Study Project Team:

- **Efficiencies:** The Asset Dashboard offers valuable insights to identifying duplications and areas for optimization, but further progress requires finalized Science Programs and Accelerators to guide decision-making.
- **Risks:** Concept notes highlight themes such as risk of impacting project success, sustainable funding, operational, regulatory, and inflation risks. These risks emphasize the importance of adopting comprehensive risk management frameworks to mitigate uncertainties.

Considerations:

- **Financial Estimates:** While current high-level estimates are sufficient for Phase II, more granular analyses are recommended for any potential capital investment that may transition from Concept Note, to planning and implementation.

Appendix 1 – Concept Notes Themes

Several themes were identified within Concept Notes with key themes summarized below:

Laboratory and Infrastructure Upgrades

Upgrades were identified in Concept Notes by Centers as essential for ensuring research facilities meet modern standards for safety, efficiency, and sustainability. Investments in laboratory and infrastructure modernization aim to reduce operational costs, improve productivity.

Digital and Data Transformation

A shared need identified in Concept Notes across Centers is digital transformation to enhance research capacity, improve data accessibility, and boost operational efficiency. Proposed investments target outdated systems, data fragmentation, and limited interoperability by realizing standardized, AI-ready platforms.

Green Transition

Many Concept Notes emphasize a Green Transition, with projects focused on upgrading outdated facilities, equipment, improving operational efficiency, cost reduction, carbon mitigation measures and incorporating sustainable technologies.

Research Farm Infrastructure

Modernized farm assets enhance research capacity and operational efficiency, helping researchers conduct advanced experiments and optimize resource use.

Partners, NARS / NARES

Several Concept Notes highlight collaborations that would promote mutual knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and adaptation of innovations to local needs. These alliances were referenced in Concept Notes that would not only expand CGIAR's reach but also strengthen systems in partner countries, deemed in Concept Notes as crucial for scaling impact.

Limitations

This Report has been prepared for CGIAR. The independent consultants assume no responsibility in respect of or arising out of or in connection with this report to parties other than the CGIAR.

The work on which the Independent Assessment & Validation of the Asset Study have been made was undertaken in the period July 2024 – November 2024 and should be considered in that context. The review was conducted by means of independent information and data analysis, together with internal consultation. We have relied on explanations given to us without having sought to validate these with independent sources in all cases. We have however, satisfied ourselves that explanations received are consistent with other information furnished.

In particular we must emphasise that the exercise conducted was not an audit and hence does not provide the same level of assurance as an audit. Our Review was limited in nature and may not necessarily disclose all significant matters relating to the Asset Study.

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