

ISPC Assessment of the Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) CRP-II revised proposal (2017-2022)

ISPC CRP RATING¹: A

1. Summary

- A4NH combines an issues-focused research agenda with a commitment to be a system-wide service provider, a policy analysis leader and a collaborator with non-CGIAR entities. This combination gives A4NH strengths, but it also makes management of the delivery and assessment of the impact challenging.
- The CRP aims to assist 20 million farm households in at least 12 countries to adopt improved varieties, breeds or trees and/or improved management practices, help 150 million more people, in at least 14 countries to be without deficiencies of one or more of some essential micronutrients, and contribute to 10% fewer women of reproductive age consuming less than the adequate number of food groups in four countries².
- The proposal frames its objectives, research activities, and assessment of potential impact in terms of the grand challenge of sustaining human health in the face of climate change and natural resource limitations. Phase 2 plans to build on and strengthen A4NH's role as a global leader in shaping agricultural investments in ways that help alleviate undernutrition, and also outlines good contributions to food safety and fighting infectious disease.
- The rationale for this CRP is highly convincing, reflecting known gaps in policy-relevant science and is consistent with expressed demand in the literature and research needs globally. The proposal presents a coherent set of FPs that generally works well across the CRPs to support the AFS-CRPs in achieving results linked to the main nutrition and health development goals of national governments, donor agencies and the CGIAR.
- The TOC is coherent and consistent with the SRF and other global approaches linking agriculture through food systems to nutrition. A4NH demonstrates potential for enabling a System-wide response to demand by high level policy makers for rigorous empirical evidence. It offers a scientifically rigorous and strategically positioned plan to deliver measurable impacts.
- The leadership of A4NH is strong in experience, past management roles, ability and willingness to collaborate across sectors. A4NH's first phase resulted in a relatively large body of published research, much of which is cited in the Phase 2 proposal as evidence of relevance and as a foundation on which to build going forward.
- This is a coordinated set of proposed activities that relate to each other in ways that should achieve broad-based synergies. That said, it is an extremely ambitious agenda, requiring large resources. It will be very important to ensure a regular review of activities and measurable outputs from the outset.
- A4NH has embraced innovative and forward looking thinking in developing this CRP.

¹ A+: Outstanding - of the highest quality, at the forefront of research in the field (fully evolved, exceeds expectations; recommended unconditionally).

A: Excellent – high quality research and a strongly compelling proposal that is at an advanced stage of evolution as a CRP, with strong leadership which can be relied on to continue making improvements.

A-: Very good – a sound and compelling proposal displaying high quality research and drawing on established areas of strength, which could benefit from a more forward-looking vision.

B+: Good – a sound research proposal but one which is largely framed by 'business as usual' and is deficient in some key aspects of a CRP that can contribute to System-wide SLOs.

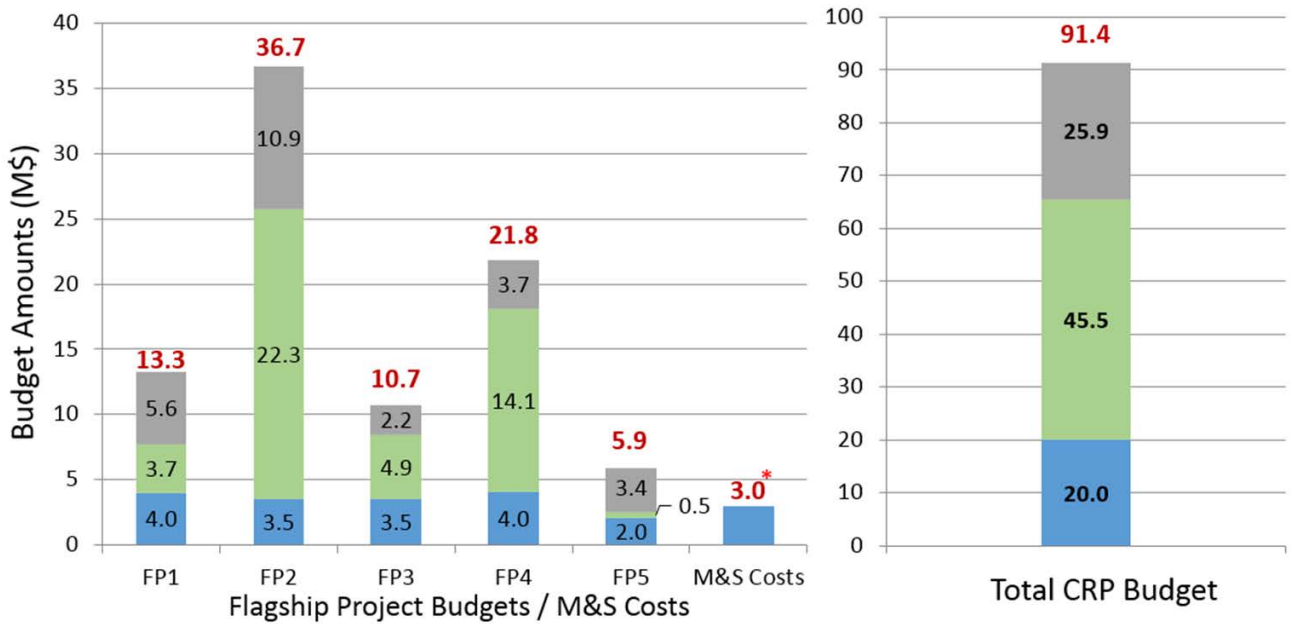
B: Fair – Elements of a sound proposal but has one or more serious flaws rendering it uncompetitive; not recommended without significant change.

C: Unsatisfactory – Does not make an effective case for the significance or quality of the proposed research.

² The CRP targets have not been independently verified.

**A4NH 2017 FP and CRP Budgets:
W1/W2 Amounts, W3/Bilateral Amounts & Shortfalls (US\$M)**

■ Projected 2017 W1/W2 Amounts ■ Secured 2017 W3/Bilateral Amounts
■ 2017 Budget Amounts not yet Secured *Figures in red are Total 2017 Budgets Needed*



* does not include bilaterally-funded M&S Costs in the amount of US\$1.3 M

Data Source: CGIAR System Management Office

2. Characterization of Flagships

FP	Main strengths	Weaknesses/Risks	Rating
<p>FP1: Food systems for healthier diets This FP focusses on a dynamic analysis of the transformation of food systems and diet transitions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A4NH is well positioned to offer intellectual leadership on the topic of food systems. • Focus on agenda of ‘improving diets’ is closely aligned with international research and policy agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of details provided on testable policy-relevant research hypotheses. • Limited attention to articulating how FP1 will have measurable nutrition impacts at scale or how much will be known about cost-effectiveness of policy prescriptions. • FP has not had time to fully develop its comparative advantage in using agricultural research funds in this space. 	Moderate
<p>FP2: Biofortification (BF) FP2 will strengthen its emphasis on mainstreaming BF into partners’ crop development work and shift its long-term focus to scale up BF, retaining a focus on evidence, knowledge production and sharing, monitoring and evaluation, and technical assistance to assure impact at scale.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-established comparative advantage. • Shift towards a focus on scaling out and mainstreaming of tools and approaches. • Strong leadership and track record together with high quality of science. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of the potential to develop cost-effective impacts at scale. 	Strong
<p>FP3: Food safety FP3 focusses on 1) risk-based pro-poor approaches enabling actors to meet important food safety demands; (2) market-based approaches that provide value chain actors with immediate incentives for behavior change; and (3) technologies that dramatically reduce the costs of ensuring food safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An important area of cross-disciplinary and cross-CGIAR work. Linking of work between the agriculture enterprise & human health. • IPs and TOC are well thought through, nicely articulated and well aligned with the IDO on improved food safety. • High quality scientific outputs & strong comparative advantage (good CGIAR partnerships). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient justification of the potential benefits. • Potential for any impactful gender-sensitive research in the mycotoxin – health space still needs to be articulated. 	Strong

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<p>FP4: Supporting Policies Programs and Enabling Action through Research (SPEAR)</p> <p>FP4 seeks to understand why the disconnect between agriculture and nutrition persists, and more importantly, how we can turn agriculture into a powerful lever for raising people’s health and nutritional status, while at the same time contributing to other outcomes, such as food security, income, equity, and sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential as an outreach activity that will influence country policy via networks and active engagement. • Strong track record of work in this area. • Work on gender is a strong component that has had global influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively weak comparative advantage as other groups continue to build a large evidence base on these matters. • Concerns remain about several partners’ ability to effectively take on leadership roles. 	Moderate
<p>FP5: Improving human health This FP aims to: 1. Understand and manage the gendered human health impacts (both risks and benefits) arising from intensification and changes in land-use; 2. Deliver gender-sensitive interventions targeted at livestock systems that improve health outcomes for zoonotic diseases with livestock reservoirs (with CRP on Livestock); and 3. Understand and manage interacting health and agriculture interventions, including AMR and insecticide resistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High novelty of the proposed science e.g., focus on how crop and livestock systems can be reservoirs and incubators of infectious disease that impact human health and nutrition. • Strong track record of work with other CG centres and good potential for cross-CRP collaboration. • Few other competent suppliers in this relatively new area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOC not fully developed. • Insufficient recognition of the importance of the enabling environment and potential sources of external risks. • Lack of articulation of the linkages between livestock and health and nutrition. 	Moderate

3. Assessment of CRP response to the ISPC major comments

Initial ISPC comment (16 June 2016)	CRP response/changes proposed (31 July)	ISPC assessment (14 September)
<p>1. Provide greater clarity on the researchable questions the CRP will focus on in relation to overweight and obesity and the comparative advantage of the CRP in addressing this complex and growing problem in low and middle income countries.</p>	<p>The cover note stresses that while undernutrition remains the focus of CGIAR research interests, overweight and obesity must also be taken into account. The proposal now argues that the entry point for A4NH's work in this domain will be FPs 1 and 4 on diet quality and policies that affect diet quality. Attention will be paid to both adequacy and moderation. A4NH intends to become a more significant player among many others trying to understand and shape the food environment.</p> <p>Specific researchable questions proposed include: a) how do changes in food systems lead to healthier diets, and what are optimal entry points?; b) how can innovations among SMEs protect nutrients in food during processing?; c) does information about healthier diets reach target beneficiaries, and do their knowledge changes lead to behavior changes?; d) how do food value chains contribute to improved nutrition?</p>	<p>Satisfactorily addressed.</p> <p>The Addendum provides significantly more detail than what appeared in the March proposal. The questions that will be addressed show that A4NH recognises the interconnections between under- and over-nutrition by weaving diet quality, moderation and value chain issues into their overall agenda.</p> <p>This approach is deemed adequately responsive, so long as research outputs clearly articulate the outcomes and policy implications in relation to the obesity/moderation questions.</p> <p>What has not yet been well addressed is the A4NH's comparative advantage in taking on such issues and the priority research foci for the CGIAR.</p>
<p>2. FP1 (Food Systems for Healthier Diets) should provide further details about the relevant research questions and methods to address them so that its potential contribution to CGIAR SLOs is clearer and more defensible... and, in particular, (a) provide greater specificity of the research agenda so a firm judgement could be made about its relevance and potential contribution to CGIAR SLOs; and (b) provide more details about the specific research and policy guidance agenda relating to obesity in low income settings.</p>	<p>A clearer articulation of the kinds of research that will be relevant to SLOs is given that includes questions focused on policy & technical support for achieving better diets: Which demand side innovations stimulate consumers to choose foods that make them healthier? What supply side innovations promote the affordability, availability and sustainability of nutrient-rich foods? How do value chain innovations influence the diet? Answers to these questions will help contribute to achieving IDOs related to improved diet and food safety, supportive of the main SLO on improved food and nutrition.</p>	<p>Satisfactorily addressed.</p> <p>Much more detail is now provided about the research questions and the potential for interactions with other CRPs.</p> <p>Greater attention to making outputs more specific and measurable is welcomed.</p> <p>Much of the W3 and bilateral funding has yet to be secured but this is an area into which the ISPC encouraged A4NH to move, and they have articulated their willingness to do so. Enough has been done to justify investment in this area; success will be judged on the team's</p>

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	<p>Example of ‘methods’ work: research to derive ‘validated metrics and tools’ for assessing diet quality and characterizing food systems in 4 focus countries. CoAs promise to study “challenges and opportunities for bringing new program related evidence...into policy discourse and action.” Thus more attention given to translating science into practice with SLO outcomes in mind.</p>	<p>ability to attract the level of funding necessary to undertake this stream of work.</p>
<p>3. A stronger justification of the CRP’s comparative advantage in some specific areas of work, e.g. WASH, malaria prevention and treatment, is needed or reconsideration in the agenda, depending on the strength of the justification.</p>	<p>According to A4NH, there was a misunderstanding due to poor communication. A4NH does not intend to “launch a whole new area of research involving WASH or the prevention and treatment of malaria”. Rather, it proposes to consider such factors on the drivers of poor nutrition. In some cases, this will involve experiments, but always as just one component of a larger multi-sectoral policy or intervention. In this sense, A4NH is responding to the evolving international research agenda which sees nutrition-sensitive confounders as a key part of understanding the drivers of dietary change and nutrition outcomes.</p>	<p>Partially addressed.</p> <p>The ISPC agrees that A4NH needs to take into account factors such as access to adequate sanitation in order to ensure maximum contribution to the delivery of SLO2. The key question is ‘what is the specific research in FP 4 that would be supported using W1&2 funds’? Specific parts of the narrative still raise concerns: “we will try to ensure that beneficiaries from agriculture interventions/programs/investments have access to all their minimum basic needs to live a healthy and productive and reproductive life. Appropriate access to water and sanitation services, hygiene knowledge, and access to health services to prevent and treat malaria are all essential inputs that are needed to protect health and ensure that gains in income and access to food, and information effectively lead to better diets, which in turn are used optimally by the body for growth, development, reproduction and health.”</p> <p>Access to water and services are more the responsibility of development funding than research. What research activities will be</p>

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		<p>funded could and should be stated more clearly.</p> <p>A sharper focus on potential trade-offs associated with increasing consumption of animal-sourced foods, fruits, and vegetables, especially adverse unintended consequences, seems more appropriate.</p>