



CRP Review 2020: Livestock



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The CGIAR CAS Secretariat is conducting independent reviews of the 12 CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs), including Livestock.

CRP Background

The goal of the Livestock CRP is to create a well-nourished, equitable, and environmentally healthy world through livestock research for development. It builds on the previous Livestock and Fish CRP aiming to increase the productivity of livestock agri-food systems in sustainable ways, making meat, milk, and eggs more available and affordable across the developing world. The CRP is carried out through five Flagship Programs (FPs): Livestock Genetics (FP1); Livestock Health (FP2); Livestock Feeds & Forages (FP3); Livestock & Environment (FP4); Livestock Livelihoods & Agri-food Systems (FP5), and through the cross-cutting themes of Gender and Capacity Development.

The Program brings together five core partners: The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), the International Center for Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

Livestock CRP Review

The Livestock CRP review was an opportunity to generate insights about quality of science (QoS), effectiveness, and future orientation, addressing three questions. It covers activities from 2017 to 2019 and was conducted from August to October 2020.

It applied a mixed-methods approach using both internal (CRP) and external sources (such as partners and next users). 15 journal articles and 11 technical publications were reviewed against quality of research for development (QoR4D) criteria. 175 peer-reviewed publications and chapters, involving 47 countries. 35 physical products and 10 communication products of various types (blogs, posters, newsletters, and flyers) were also assessed. Two Outcome and Impact Case Reports (OICRs) were selected for deep dives. A total of 48 individual interviews were conducted, plus two Focus Group Discussions: one with the five members of the Independent Steering Committee (ISC) and one with eight Junior Researchers.

Q1: To What Extent Does Livestock Deliver Quality of Science, Based on its 2017-2019 Work?

The Livestock CRP engages an appropriate range of skills. Achieving an appropriate level of staff and partner diversity has been challenging. Generally, the funding for the CRP is sufficient, except the hiatus in FP3 funding which threatened crucial long-term, longitudinal research. It produces a high volume of research outputs of mostly good, and some excellent, quality. Although some approaches are resource intensive, an in-depth review of a sample of 34 physical output products largely shows relevance to next-stage users. Most QoR4D elements necessary for scientific credibility and legitimacy are in place. Yet there exists inconsistent application (e.g., ethics) or need for better development (e.g., conduct, early career researcher support).

Photo: Cattle, Ethiopia. ILRI/Stevie Mann

Q2: What Outputs and Outcomes Have Been Achieved, and What is the Importance of Those Identified Results?

There has been a commendable shift toward more farmer-driven, inclusive, and systematic approaches in the more heavily science-focused FPs. All FPs can point to significant achievements notwithstanding delays and shifts in priorities. CRP and FP management have adapted to changing circumstances. Management is comparatively less effective in promoting cross-FP coordination and learning. The priority country programs are promising. OICRs have the potential to reveal long-term impact narratives of scientific and technical innovation (108), the deep dive shows that it is essential to ensure sufficient resources, both financial and human, to allow science to deliver on development objectives, i.e. more productive and equitable management of natural resources and reduced land degradation. The theories of change (ToCs) are of acceptable quality, but overly ambitious. Planning and reporting are not structured around outputs and outcomes as described in the ToCs, and the current suite of metrics fails to provide a coherent overview of progress.

Cross-cutting Themes

Integration of **gender** improved over time, with some strong achievements. **Youth** is a stated CRP priority, yet there is little evidence this is the case. Much **capacity development** activity was observed—27,542 people and three capacity development programs— but the degree to which this is impactful or strategic cannot be known in the context of a desk review. The CRP may have missed an opportunity to set the agenda on **climate change** by collating evidence from all the relevant FP outputs.

Q3: Future Orientation

All FPs made significant achievements. The inevitable pull to carry out new research needs to be counterbalanced by a push to build on the promising areas of CRP research and extrapolate lessons to inform the future direction of work. Insufficient resources for country-specific work and the limited time frame to address priority country programs, raise concerns that achieving impact through an integrated approach is unrealistic by the end of 2021.

Key Lessons

- A longer-term vision, better aligned with next- and end-user priorities and based on early

engagement, would ensure that the One CGIAR vision becomes a reality. This way, innovations are likely to be taken up, and tracking of the impact of applied innovations is easier.

- At an early stage, engagement and dialogue with in-country donors, and a more systematic approach to private sector engagement (e.g., discovery) might foster wider impact.
- Funding for priority areas must be secured over the long term, using a multi-annual perspective.
- Local anchoring through local science is key to success and sustainability. Clear and measurable targets for engagement and capacity building of national scientists are needed to create clear exit strategies.
- Future reviews would benefit from the collection of more data on the demographic profiles of staff and collaborations.

Recommendations for CGIAR

Clearly define “junior researcher,” set up programs to support and mentor underrepresented groups and develop a cadre to maximize the value of this group. If an appropriate balance of gender, age, and ethnicity among researchers and staff is a CGIAR aim, then data on these parameters should be collected and put in the public domain.

A consistent and well-understood research misconduct policy would address the potential for inappropriate behavior or abuse of power. CGIAR needs a systemwide approach to research ethics, with standard codes of conduct, and mandatory training for all research staff and managers.

The quality of technical publications and physical products and their impact could be improved by a more open, rigorous, systematic, and transparent peer-to-peer approach to review. A system to indicate how these products have been reviewed would demonstrate CGIAR’s commitment to quality control and continuous improvement.

More consideration needs to be given to learning, both through improved reporting systems and more independent impact assessments and evaluation studies.

The CGIAR role in the continuum from basic research to impact on smallholders on the ground needs clarity. A longer-term vision, better aligned with next- and end-user priorities, and a more multidisciplinary approach and broader spectrum of actors including the private sector is needed.

Read the full report: bit.ly/LIVESTOCK-CRP2020

