

# Final Report

# Evaluation of Partnerships in CGIAR

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Independent  
Evaluation  
Arrangement

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## ABBREVIATIONS

A4NH	CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture, Nutrition and Health
AAS	CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems
ARI	Advanced Research Institute
BeCA	Biosciences eastern and central Africa
BRAC	Building Resources Across Communities (Bangladesh)
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CCAFS	CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security
CIAT	Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical / International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIMMYT	Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo / International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center
CIP	Centro Internacional de la Papa / International Potato Center
CIRAD	French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development
COP	Community of Practice
CRP	CGIAR Research Program
CP	Challenge Program (CGIAR)
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (Australia)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EMBRAPA	Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FC	Fund Council (CGIAR)
FP	Flagship Project (CGIAR)
FTA	CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry
GACSA	Global Alliance on Climate-Smart Agriculture
GCARD	Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development
GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research
GRiSP	CGIAR Research Program on Global Rice Science Partnership
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Centre
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IEA	Independent Evaluation Arrangement (Rome) (CGIAR)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
ILAC	Institutional Learning and Change Initiative (CGIAR)
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
INRA	National Institute of Agricultural Research (France)
IPG	International public good
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
IRD	Institut de recherche pour le développement
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
ISPC	Independent Science and Partnership Council
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
JIRCAS	Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences
KALRO	Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute of the Netherlands
LSHTM	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine



L&F	CGIAR Research Program on Livestock and Fish
MAIZE	CGIAR Research Program on Maize
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Multi-Stakeholder Platform
NARS	National Agricultural Research System
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PIM	CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions and Markets
POWB	Program of Work and Budget (CGIAR)
RTB	CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SRF	Strategy and Results Framework (CGIAR)
STRASA	Stress-Tolerant Rice for Africa and South Asia (project)
SLO	System-Level Outcome (CGIAR)
SMB	System Management Board (CGIAR)
SMO	System Management Office
STRV	Scaling of Stress Tolerant Rice Variety (project)
TOC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WHEAT	CGIAR Research Program on Wheat
WLE	CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems
W1	Window 1 funding type (CGIAR)
W2	Window 2 funding type (CGIAR)
W3	Window 3 funding type (CGIAR)

# Executive summary

## Background

CGIAR has a long history of working in partnership, notably with host countries and international and national research organizations. The importance of partnerships both in modern science and for solving complex development problems has been emphasized in the successive reforms of 2001 and 2008. This trend has been influenced by recognition of the evolving architecture in agriculture research, including the increasing capacity of other research institutions, the growing strength of National Agricultural Research Systems in emerging economies, and the increasing role of the private sector.

The reform of 2008 centred on the implementation of research through large, multi-partner programs, the CGIAR Research Programs (CRP). Partnerships among Centers and with external organizations were considered essential for CGIAR to achieve its objectives as defined in the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF). Centers aligned their research in CRPs, and were expected to engage with a broader range of external partners than in the past and involve them in program planning, design and implementation. An enabling system was put in place that encompassed donors working in partnership through the Fund Council to provide long-term, reliable core and programmatic funding, as well as support systems, incentives and processes to facilitate the reform and enhance partnerships. This evaluation, organized by the Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA), represents a first comprehensive assessment of CGIAR's engagement in partnerships.

## Scope and methods

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the CGIAR reform of 2008 has been successful in strengthening partnerships and thereby advancing the achievement of CGIAR goals. The 2008 reform has not been static. CGIAR goals and the work program were revised between 2008 and 2016 as CGIAR went through two cycles of developing its SRF. The evaluation was conducted at a time when CGIAR was going through a governance transition in response to the 2013 Mid-term Review, and was selecting programs for implementation of the phase 2 CGIAR research portfolio. In that context, it was also important for the evaluation to look forward into phase 2.

The evaluation assessed the extent to which strategic partnerships in CGIAR have been strengthened and the System, including Center and CRPs, have responded to expectations of the reform. The focus was on partnerships for implementation of CGIAR's research agenda, with emphasis on external partnerships and the programmatic (Center and CRP) level. The evaluation did not assess individual Centers, CRPs or System-level entities, but considered the role that each part of the CGIAR System has played in partnerships, and the relationships between System and Center level with respect to partnerships.

The following definition of partnership was used: "*a recognized relationship between a CGIAR Center or CRP and another institution within or external to CGIAR, to jointly undertake activities that contribute to each institution's mandate*". This includes a wide variety of collaborative relationships, both "internal" partnerships between CGIAR institutions and "external" partnerships involving non-CGIAR institutions, but excludes collaborations that do not require institutional partnership arrangements.

The methodological framework was based on three key evaluation questions to address the strategic selection of partnerships, the enabling environment for partnerships, and the effectiveness of partnerships. Sub-questions under each key question guided an extensive search of published documents, the design of 147 interviews with stakeholders within and outside of CGIAR, and an electronic survey of CRP Flagship Project leaders. Six case studies were conducted to illustrate experiences from specific types of

partnership; research partnering, partnership for scaling and global multi-stakeholder platforms. To guide its focus, the evaluation conducted a survey of the partnership landscape in which CRPs and Centers were asked to provide information on partnerships they considered most critical to their operation.

## Main conclusions and findings

Since early 2000, partners have been seen increasingly as essential for complementing CGIAR's competence in fast evolving areas of science and for taking on CGIAR's research outputs for adapting them and scaling to generate impact on development goals. In this evolution, the reform started in 2008, marks a major milestone and has been influential at two levels; it has steered the System and its Centers towards greater collaboration and coordination in CRPs bringing Centers together to designing and implement the programs, and it has stimulated greater attention to the strategic role of partnerships along the impact pathways.

The reform has also led to greater involvement of partners in consultation about the SRF and program content, and in conduct of research. While this has largely been a result of the outcome-orientation of the CRPs that needed to be explicit about their geographic and country focus and subsequently partnerships needed for generating results and impact, it has also resulted from Centers' deliberate attempts to form strong partnerships with their collaborators.

There continues to be ambiguity in certain aspects of partnerships. While public-private partnerships have been emphasized in reform discourse, the System lacks agreement and strategy for how best engage with the private sector for enhancement of science and delivery in particular. Scaling of research is also an area where strategic direction is lacking, both in terms of the extent of CGIAR's direct involvement in delivery of technology, and the support needed for national partners to take over delivery and scaling effectively. The System governing bodies have a central responsibility to lead these discussions and provide the strategic guidance.

Funding to support partnerships and partners' work also requires attention. It was expected that the reform would reverse the trend of diminishing Window 1 and 2 funding (for which the evaluation uses the term "core funding") of CGIAR, but this has not been realized. Consequently CRPs have had a narrow margin to support and experiment with new or innovative partnerships. Fund-sharing between Centers and external partners has been less than was expected, and it has been affected negatively by budget cuts. The combination of uncertainties associated with funding represent a major constraint to partnering and hence to the delivery of CGIAR's objectives. Mechanisms are needed to reduce the unpredictability of core funding, its late delivery and the constraints imposed by annual budgeting. In addition, since it is not realistic to expect the CGIAR budget to fund all aspects of partnerships and scaling of results, more attention is needed by CGIAR and its partners to increase co-funding of activities and investments in agricultural research and development in the recipient countries.

The most effective CGIAR partnerships have allowed each partner to work to their comparative advantage. CGIAR research leaders and external partners weigh up the transactions costs of establishing partnerships against perceived or actual benefits. CGIAR's comparative advantage lies in a combination of two factors: presence in and knowledge of the many countries where it works, in some cases with long-term links to national institutions, and a reputation as a solid scientific partner - a world leader in some areas. With capacities and interest evolving fast, CGIAR and its partners need to continuously reflect on their respective comparative advantage. For sustainability of the research program, Centers must continue to be strong and credible partners, maintaining not only ground presence and infrastructure, but also scientific expertise in core areas, and they must collaborate with organizations that have strong capacity for scaling and their own sources of funding.



## Strategic selection of partnerships

While geographic location, funding and political reasons somewhat restrict CGIAR's freedom in its engagement in partnerships, Centers, and consequently CRPs, have been increasingly strategic in selecting partners. Centers have built on a long history of working with partners adding new partnerships according to need. CRPs have been influential in both increasing Centers' collaboration within the programs and positioning of external partnerships along the impact pathway.

The extent to which engagement in partnerships has been directed by explicit partnership strategies varies, and few documents amount to a comprehensive partnership strategy. This, the evaluation defined as a) clearly demonstrating an analysis of the partnership needs of the program based on the program objectives and Theory of Change, and b) suggesting a targeted approach to identifying and working with partners and partnership models to meet these needs.

The reform's emphasis on working with new external partners influenced the CRPs to become more explicit about their choices as the programs evolved. CRPs were requested in their proposals to include information on partnerships, and, compared to phase 1, the phase 2 documents had better strategic content on partnerships including a more detailed explanation of approaches to partnership. Apart from program proposals, some CRPs have developed partnership strategies or principles and several Centers have also documented their partnership strategy within their main Center strategy or occasionally as a separate document.

While many of the partnership strategies have good general content on the principles of engagement in partnerships and categories of partners, only a few suggest approaches for engaging with specific types of partner, for example the private sector. Little attention has been given to partnership models (structure and institutional arrangements that define a partnership) that may work best for particular needs. All strategies reflected an intention to broaden the partner base, working with new partners while at the same time maintaining existing strong relationships. There has been value in producing written strategies, as this process has required CGIAR research managers to communicate with each other and make their thinking explicit for external partners and donors.

### Partnerships along the impact pathway

An analysis of the partnership "landscape" through a sample of what CRPs and Centers considered critical partnerships showed deliberate positioning of partners along the CRPs' impact pathways, with a selection and diversity of partnerships that responds well to reform expectations. The partnership landscape shows a broad range of external partnerships, including new or differently constructed partnerships with advanced research institutes that bring strong research capacity. There is little specialization as over 80 percent of the partnerships were reported as contributing in more than one part of the impact pathway. More than half of the critical partnerships, in all the categories considered, have been established during the CRP period, including new engagement in different kinds of partnerships for scaling and a deliberate effort to involve more non-governmental organizations. These trends are positive and so is the continuation of many long-term partnerships. In the new governance structure, it will be important for the CRPs to maintain the degree of autonomy they have had and sufficient flexibility to innovate with partnerships to serve program needs.

### Partnerships with the private sector

In the reform, CGIAR recognized that it had to adapt to the changes in agricultural science and technology, where the private sector was rapidly becoming a major contributor to research and development. Partnership offers potential benefits to both sides; CGIAR has global reach and a mandate to work on poverty, while private companies have knowledge of and access to markets for technology, and in some cases also have specialized expertise and technology for research. Despite continuous dialogue

about public-private partnerships in CGIAR, the System has not yet formulated a position or strategy for engaging in public-private partnerships that would leverage its advantage as a public sector partner.

Strategy documents acknowledge the need to work more with the private sector. There has been progress, and partnerships with the private sector have increased since the CRPs began although engagement particularly with the large multinationals has been slow in most Centers. Differences in public and private interests, and the need to build expertise in Intellectual Property Rights and carry out risk assessments and due diligence, were identified as factors that had slowed progress. Administrative barriers are being addressed; however, while private sector engagements involve agreements that are best dealt with at Center level, further strategic actions at the System level, beyond the policy, are much needed.

### **Multi-stakeholder platforms**

Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSP) are a specific form of partnership involving alliances of diverse stakeholders, often with broad objectives for knowledge sharing and action and hence important for delivery of outcomes and impact. Over the past two decades there has been a rapid growth in CGIAR's involvement particularly in two kinds of MSPs: locally-based innovation platforms and global MSPs set up to address complex problems. During the reform period, there has been a shift from CRPs in phase 1 having engaged mainly with MSPs with a delivery focus on agricultural innovations (still the largest group of MSPs) to MSPs with a national system focus and, most recently, those that have a research focus or deal with global challenges. However, the strategic purpose of CGIAR's engagement with MSPs dealing with global challenges was not clear, beyond simply having a presence. Participation in global MSPs will likely continue to grow, which is justified for CGIAR to fulfil its mandate. However CGIAR must be strategic in selecting where and how it can best contribute and therefore, partnering in MSPs would merit further attention.

## **Enabling environment**

### **Partnership management**

At the System level, structures and systems have been put in place for implementing the reform changes that have also concerned partnerships. CRPs have been requested to demonstrate involvement of partners in program design, report on partnership achievements and, most recently, begin coordinating their activities at selected geographic sites together with partners. At operational level the requirements, particularly for reporting and accountability were seen as heavy, particularly by partners who have participated in program management. Relatively little has been done for incentivizing or providing guidance for external partnerships, which is a concern. Guidelines affecting the administration of partnerships could be further streamlined across the System.

Day-to-day support to partnerships in CRPs comes from the administrative structure and processes of Centers, particularly those leading CRPs. Working relationships between CRP leaders and Center partnership managers have generally been good. Risk management in particular has benefitted from due diligence processes put in place since the reform.

In several CRPs, partners have been included in program management, and management of research at thematic or Flagship Project level. This deliberate involvement of non-CGIAR partners in CRP management is very positive and appreciated by the partners themselves. Given the capacity and resources that several national partners in emerging economies now have and given their important role for generating impact, there is scope to include more partners from developing countries in a management role in CRPs.

In CRP documentation, including proposals, work plans and annual reports, partnerships are not well integrated to presentation about the research content, which makes both management and monitoring of the value and performance of partnerships difficult. Given that Theories of Change have become a central feature in program planning and implementation, partnerships should be seen and presented in relation to these Theories of Change in order to reconfirm their critical role and address challenges for their success.

## **Funding**

The funding situation has generated a great deal of dissatisfaction and tension. Core funding through Windows 1 and 2, which was expected to provide a solid funding base underpinning research programs and strategic engagement in partnerships, has not materialized at the level expected, and has also been unreliable. Although the research carried out in partnership does not depend much on core funding, the low level, annual nature, unreliability and late delivery of core funding have been damaging to partnerships. In particular, these trends have negatively affected competitive schemes, multi-year planning and experimenting on new partnerships, for which bilateral funding has seldom been available. Consequently, they have affected progress of research activities and also CGIAR's delivery on its own commitments, thereby affecting the Centers' reputation for reliability.

Experience from competitive grants has been good. These schemes have been used by several CRPs to manage programmatic integration by funding collaborative research of particular, strategic importance to the CRP. It is envisaged that the reform will allow using competitive grants also to fund strategic activities by partners. These schemes cannot be maintained as a CRP management tool without core funding.

Funding uncertainty has created a disincentive to commit a falling core budget to the costs of investing in new partnerships or experimenting with new partnership models, which has in some cases created tension between Center and CRP management. As a result of the cuts in core funding, bilateral funding has become more attractive and is increasingly sought. It underpins much of the work done with partners, and in this respect an increase in the bilateral budget is positive for partnerships despite less flexibility attached to this type of funding. In addition, bilateral donors place a particularly strong emphasis on delivery and impact within a relatively short period, and this has created tension between the objectives of conducting research of global relevance requiring long-term and continuing investments, and the delivery and impact objective of bilateral funding, that tends to push CGIAR into the development realm.

While the above problems are of great concern, there may also be opportunities from an increased bilateral budget, such as potential to partner more with private sector partners that bring their own funding and are motivated by market potential; the opportunity to re-examine financing models with traditional partners, and the potential for emerging economy donors to have a stronger role in co-financing research and scaling activities. Yet, there needs to be better analysis and innovative thinking on how bilateral funding can better serve strategic partnering and how co-financing of research and development by recipient country governments, private sector and others could be better stimulated and harnessed for supporting CGIAR's objectives.

## **Guidance and administrative support from CGIAR System level**

The Fund Council, which had considerable positional power to provide oversight and guidance on external partnerships, has consulted on a number of issues relating to partnerships. Apart from its major focus on building effective partnerships within CRPs, and general engagement of stakeholders, it has in its discussions focused particularly on engagement with the private sector and delivery of benefits, which requires engagement with delivery partners. However, it has not followed up on those discussions by

tasking any groups to generate further information or develop strategies or guidelines (the intellectual assets policy being the only concrete action for benefitting partnerships). Among the donors, there is a wide range of viewpoints, particularly concerning two important and connected aspects – funding and expectation of impact. With this divergence of views among its donors, Centers and CRPs have been receiving mixed messages.

### **Organizational learning**

Partnership is a cross-cutting issue affecting all Centers and CRPs, and as such could be expected to benefit from organizational learning across the CGIAR system. There has been both explicit learning (captured in documented strategies, workshop outputs and working papers) and tacit learning; some research managers have reflected deeply on partnerships, and the requirement to make partnership strategies explicit in CRP proposals has been a stimulus to learning at CRP management level. However, learning has mostly occurred at the level of individuals and in small working groups. The biannual Science Forum, organized by the ISPC, has provided a forum for science discussions among CGIAR and other research communities. Although a self-assessment of several Science Fora did not present evidence of concrete partnerships having yet resulted from these Fora, these events represent one opportunity to different research communities to engage and reflect. System-wide organizational reflection and learning about partnerships is clearly lacking. The System could do more to take advantage of existing arrangements and events to provide opportunities for reflection on partnership strategy and management, and to ensure that critical strategic reviews are widely discussed. The ISPC has the potential to play a stronger role in System-wide organizational learning, for example in conducting strategic reviews of selected partnership topics. Its recent report on partnerships, which focuses on MSPs, deserves more attention and follow-up.

### **Stakeholder engagement at System level**

GCARD was the main mechanism to facilitate stakeholder consultation in the reformed CGIAR, with a role to facilitate communication between stakeholder and CGIAR, stakeholders' engagement in setting CGIAR agenda and priorities, enhancement of partnerships and inputs from stakeholders to CGIAR decision-making.

The three successive GCARDs have provided opportunities for CGIAR scientists to interact with existing and potential external partners, and they have given external partners a forum to voice their expectations from international agricultural research and discuss CGIAR's strategic frameworks and portfolio development. However, the evaluation could not find evidence that GCARD's consultations had impacted on CGIAR program design, or that participation in GCARD has increased the connection of grass-root organizations with CGIAR research, or that the GCARD processes or events have been the source of new partnerships or resulted in stronger relationships with existing partners.

## **Partnerships in action**

### **Internal partnerships**

CGIAR research managers value the closer partnerships among Centers that have been forged in the CRPs. Closer partnerships among Centers, including integration of their work in CRPs and joint planning of programs can be directly attributed to the reform. Although this integration varies across CRPs, there has been good progress, particularly moving to phase 2.

The depth of integration might be judged on basis of joint outputs, but is not yet visible in publications,

where the number of jointly published articles in peer-reviewed journals has not increased since start of the CRPs. The clearest example of cross-Center collaboration is the enhanced synergy and interaction among the eleven Center genebanks in the CRP on genebank management (currently Genebank Platform). Crop research CRPs have also provided a mechanism to share resources.

While Centers have long benefitted from each other's presence through hosting arrangement at headquarters and country sites, when approaching donors and national partners, Centers still tend to act unilaterally. Country collaboration, a recent initiative, which apparently aims for closer alignment between CGIAR objectives and those of host governments in addressing higher-level SRF indicators, could offer an opportunity for more coordinated action by Centers.

### **External partnerships**

During the reform partners have become more involved in consultation, planning and management of research. Development of CRPs has involved consultations with a broad group of stakeholders, and in some cases partners have been involved in the development of program Theories of Change. External partners account for over 70 percent of members of oversight bodies of CRPs, and have the opportunity to influence strategic directions of the programs. The number of partners in research management (particularly in Flagship Projects) has increased, which is very positive. However, very few scientists from developing country partners are named as CRP senior researchers. The evaluation considers that a concerted effort should be made to involve developing country partners with capacity and resources more directly in research management, in order to avoid distance between developed and developing country partners.

### **Partnerships for generating outputs and impact**

CGIAR has produced a vast majority of its research outputs since 2008 in partnership with external partners. Analysis of published outputs showed that almost all research that is published in scientific journals is done in partnerships. The analysis also suggests that research partnerships are becoming stronger with institutions in the North but research with developing country partners alone has decreased. Research partnership with developed country partners has had a positive effect on the quality of the research, as judged by the impact factors of the journals where research has been published and the citation record on those joint publications.

CGIAR is totally dependent on partnerships for getting its research disseminated and scaled for development impact. Reporting on achievement from partnerships revealed a number of outputs and success in delivery that CRPs attribute to specific partnerships and activities during phase 1.

With the reform, the discourse on the impacts expected from CGIAR programs has been somewhat confused with an expectation for CGIAR to set and meet its outcome targets. While most stakeholders realize that last-mile delivery is outside CGIAR's core skills and comparative advantage, there is also strong pressure, particularly from bilateral donors, to demonstrate impact from CGIAR programs. The evaluation concurs that attention to impact from research is important, but expectations need to be realistic. The evaluation's case studies illustrated the importance of clear and early planning for delivery with different public and private partners engaging in different roles of the delivery network. It is not surprising that success stories where CGIAR has made good progress along the impact pathway from research to scaling have occurred where there is already some capacity to take up the research outputs. Many types of boundary partners are needed to be intermediaries for technologies developed by CGIAR and its partners to reach their intended users in large scales, while allowing CGIAR to remain focused on its comparative advantage as a research institution.



## Recommendations

The evaluation made six recommendations – the first three relate to strategic selection of partnerships, two relate to the enabling environment and one on partnerships in action.

### ◆ Recommendation 1.

**All CRPs should have a distinct partnership strategy and accompanying operational plan.**

Strategies should clearly align approaches to partnerships with research strategies and theories of change, and make clear the objectives for partner selection and engagement to strengthen research implementation, delivery and scaling of results. Operational plans should provide a basis for monitoring progress in development of partnerships. There is value in developing these documents because of the collective analysis it will require, and to build on what was described in the Phase 2 proposals and ensure it is actioned. Centers that have not recently updated their partnership strategies may find value in doing so. Documented strategies should reflect the internal relationships that Centers have in CRPs.

### ◆ Recommendation 2.

**Strategic reviews should be conducted of multi-stakeholder partnership models.**

In order to optimize CGIAR's involvement and investment of resources in multi-stakeholder platforms, System-level strategic reviews should be conducted of the types of partnerships in which CGIAR has invested heavily or where it expects to expand participation. Global MSPs dealing with environment, food security and nutrition are a priority for such a review. The aim of these reviews would be to draw lessons on the following:

- i. the objectives of CGIAR participation in this type of partnership
- ii. CGIAR's comparative advantage and role in these this type of multi-stakeholder platform;
- iii. resources and capacities involved; and
- iv. their potential to enhance program objectives, and to offer strategic guidance for future engagement.
- v. The evaluation sees this review as a follow-on exercise to the report on partnerships that has been published by the ISPC, and therefore something that it may be appropriate for the ISPC to undertake.

### ◆ Recommendation 3.

**A strategic analysis should be conducted at System level for guiding the development of public-private partnership.**

Given the importance attached to partnership with the private sector and the uneven progress that has so far been made, an analysis should be carried out at System level of the following aspects:

- i. a broad plan for engagement with multinationals and smaller companies to best fit the needs of the SRF; and
- ii. drawing on experience to date, principles of engaging with private sector organizations according to their size and global reach.

The strategy should acknowledge both CGIAR's comparative advantage as a public sector entity with field presence in developing countries, and any potential risks to reputation. The evaluation sees the strategy development process as a way of consolidating and expanding the thinking that has been done by CGIAR's governing bodies previously, and progressing towards implementable guidelines.

It may be necessary to implement practical measures to support the implementation of the strategy, such as support on due diligence processes to assess partners and advice to Centers from IPR specialists.

#### ◆ Recommendation 4.

**A position paper on funding should be prepared and used for influencing discussion and decisions on funding of partnerships.**

Given the growing contribution of bilateral funding to total CGIAR funding, the System Council should prepare guidance on how it expects CGIAR and Centers to contribute to supporting partnerships when funding is dominated by primarily bilateral projects, and how co-financing of research and development by partners and stakeholders can be best stimulated. This discussion should be linked to a reassessment of the scope of CGIAR's research portfolio and funding requirements relative to the SLOs.

At the same time, in order to minimize disruption to partnerships resulting from problems with funding, the System Council and System Organization should work together to a) reduce to the extent possible large fluctuations and late delivery of Window 1 and 2 funding, and b) attempt to find a way to provide funding with multi-annual budgets.

#### ◆ Recommendation 5.

**System-wide organizational learning on using partnerships to best effect should be enhanced.**

The System Management Board should oversee activities to enhance organizational learning about partnerships through the following activities, with support from central funding:

- i. taking advantage of opportunities offered by existing activities that bring scientists together across Centers and CRPs;
- ii. preparing periodic meta-synthesis report on partnerships from narrative information in the annual reports; and
- iii. in selected countries that are a focus for the country collaboration process, introducing mechanisms by which locally-based Centers and their partners can reflect and learn together about their partnerships

#### ◆ Recommendation 6.

**Emerging and developing country NARS with strong capacity should be more closely involved in research management in CRPs.**

In order to strengthen relationships with those emerging and developing country NARS who have strong research capacity, CRPs and Centers should increase their efforts to involve these institutions in planning and management of CRP research.

The evaluation recognises that the recommendation to increase developing country NARS involvement in research management will be challenging to implement. As well as commitment from CGIAR, it requires that the home organizations of the science leaders from NARS encompasses regional or global development issues, and are willing to express their interest in CGIAR through engagement with the CRP process and investment of resources. For this reason, only a small number of developing country partners are likely to be interested and qualified for direct involvement in research management.



# 1. Context

@ CGIAR

## Background to the evaluation

### Purpose

This evaluation of partnerships in CGIAR, organized by the Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA), represents a first comprehensive assessment of CGIAR's engagement in partnerships. It is a thematic evaluation cutting across the whole System. It follows from evaluations of all CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) recently completed in the first cycle of evaluations since CGIAR reform was launched in 2008.<sup>1</sup>

As CGIAR has gone through reforms, notably in 2001 and 2008, the importance of partnerships has been highlighted. In 2001 emphasis was on solving development problems through science in partnerships, while the 2008 reform sought to more fundamentally re-shape CGIAR. This included a more explicit conceptualization of CGIAR as a partnership, and making partnership more central to research planning and implementation. Furthermore, stakeholder groups had a range of expectations in relation to partnerships with the reformed CGIAR. These aspects of the reform are discussed in section 1.2.

The reform centered on the implementation of research through large, multi-partner programs, the CRPs. Partnership was one of the change components addressed in 2008 by reform working groups.<sup>2</sup> In redefining the role for the independent scientific advisory body, CGIAR included partnerships in the mandate of the body that became the Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC).

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<sup>1</sup> For synthesis see Birner, R. and Byerlee D. (2016): Synthesis and Lessons Learned from 15 CRP Evaluations. Rome, Italy: Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) of CGIAR. <http://iea.cgiar.org/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.cgiar.org/web-archives/www-cgiar-org-changemanagement-cm\\_partnerships\\_wg-html](http://www.cgiar.org/web-archives/www-cgiar-org-changemanagement-cm_partnerships_wg-html)

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the CGIAR reform has been successful in strengthening partnerships and thereby advancing the achievement of CGIAR goals. A number of satisfaction surveys have been conducted to gauge CGIAR's performance and reputation as a partner, but these have been limited in scope and depth. This evaluation was therefore tasked to take stock and learn lessons from the major changes since 2008.

The reform has not been static; there were revisions to CGIAR goals and the work program between 2008 and 2016 as CGIAR went through two cycles of developing its Strategy and Results Framework (SRF; first in 2011 second in 2015). The evaluation took place as CGIAR was going through a governance transition in response to the 2013 Mid-term Review and selection of programs for implementation of phase 2 CGIAR research portfolio. Both have implications for the context in which the evaluation was conducted. It was important for the evaluation to look forward into phase 2 as well as backwards using the decade before the reform as a reference point when appropriate. The development of conclusions and recommendations have a strong formative element.

The evaluation has:

- › Assessed the extent to which changes since 2008 responded to different expectations generated by the reform process and strengthened CGIAR's strategic partnerships.
- › Identified strengths and weaknesses of CGIAR partnering capability.
- › Reviewed changes that have occurred, acknowledging that while some changes can be attributed directly to the reform, there have also been other drivers.
- › Identified lessons learned and formulated conclusions and recommendations as the System transition into the next phase of the reform.

## Scope

Partnerships occur at many levels in CGIAR. The whole of CGIAR has been described as a partnership; donors work collectively in partnership; and research is implemented through partnerships within CGIAR and with external institutions. The emphasis in this evaluation is on partnerships for implementation of CGIAR's research agenda. The evaluation focused on the programmatic (Center and CRP) level, looking for patterns and examples. It did not assess individual Centers or CRPs or any of the System-level entities, but considered the role that each part of the System plays in partnerships, and the relationships between System and Center level with respect to partnerships.

The evaluation used the following definition of partnership: *"a recognized relationship between a CGIAR Center or CRP and another institution within or external to CGIAR, to jointly undertake activities that contribute to each institution's mandate"*.<sup>3</sup>

The evaluation included partnerships between CGIAR institutions, which are described as "internal" partnerships, as well as those with non-CGIAR institutions, described as "external" partnerships, which were the main focus of the evaluation. It included relationships of a contractual nature (where one partner pays and contracts another), provided that these also appeared to fulfil the criterion of contributing to the mandate of each institution involved, i.e. they were not purely service-provision transactions.

CGIAR engages in a very wide variety of collaborative activities, but not all of them require institutional partnership arrangements; partnership as defined here can be seen as encompassing a subset of the collaborative activities carried out by Centers. Some types of collaborative relationships that are

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from ILRI (2008): ILRI's partnership strategy and management system. Nairobi: ILRI (available at [https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/566/P%26C\\_strategy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/566/P%26C_strategy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)).

important for the work of CGIAR, but do not fit the definition of a partnership used here, were excluded from review by the evaluation. Purely contractual service-provision relationships, generally of a very short term nature, were excluded, as were occasional arrangements between individuals, such as joint PhD supervision not related to core program activities. So were the highly informal networks of researchers that exist mostly for the exchange of information, and ideas. The evaluation also excluded relationships where CGIAR has no direct role and the relationship is through another organization.

Given the great diversity of partnerships that exist in CGIAR, the evaluation focused on partnerships that were considered by Centers and CRPS to be most critical to their operation. It was not the remit of the evaluation to establish “best practices” but it looked for evidence and examples of good practice in partnership strategy (the purposeful choices of partners with whom to engage and partnership models for specific purposes), the enabling environment (principles, systems and processes that support partnerships), and the day-to-day management of partnerships. Details of the scope of the evaluation, and its approach and methodology are given in the Evaluation Inception Report<sup>4</sup> and summarized in Annex A. The evaluation questions are referenced and addressed in Chapters 2-4 where findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

## Partnerships and CGIAR reform

### History

CGIAR Centers have operated in partnership since they were established. The partnership profile of the Centers has evolved and become more complex as the mission and scope of CGIAR has expanded over time and as the nature of funding has changed. The nature of the Centers’ relationships with their partners has also changed over time as the partners have evolved.

There has been a long relationship between Centers and their host countries, which have provided the Centers their legal status to operate as international institutions, granting them the requisite privileges and immunities, and often land and facilities. Some working relationships between Centers and other organizations have spanned decades and taken many forms. These include relationships between Centers and international non-governmental organizations (NGO) that have included a range of activities including joint research projects, joint strategic thinking exercises, and membership of global platforms, as well as the relationship between Centers and the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) of host countries that has included applied research, and in some cases capacity building in NARS.

The intention to broaden partnerships has existed for a long time. In 1995 CGIAR initiated a number of activities related to external partnerships, notably the establishment of committees for private sector, NGOs and science partnerships (all three later closed) and the establishment of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR). Following these actions, the Third System Review in 1998 included the word “partnership” in the CGIAR mission statement.

The reform of 2001 introduced some of the elements that have become a feature of the present reform. It introduced Challenge Programs (CP), which represented a first effort to implement research in CGIAR through a programmatic approach where Centers worked together to take on global challenges in

4 [http://iea.cgiar.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/CGIAR-PART-Evaluation-IR\\_FINAL.pdf](http://iea.cgiar.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/CGIAR-PART-Evaluation-IR_FINAL.pdf)



cooperation with a wide range of partners<sup>5</sup>. The CPs were designed as large multi-partner programs that would attract multiyear funding and reduce transactions costs associated with smaller projects. The reform of 2001 also saw CGIAR beginning to work more with NGOs and the private sector, although there had previously been some progress in these areas.

The present reform had a major influence on CGIAR partnerships. At the same time, they have been influenced by the broad global trends that shaped the reform and continue to affect the way it is implemented. The trends are summarized in the following sections and provide context for the evaluation findings.

## Changes due to the reform

The CGIAR Independent Review 2008<sup>6</sup> commented that “although Centers have forged many high-value partnerships, most are short term and *ad hoc*” and suggested that CGIAR and Centers needed to take a more strategic approach to partnership. The reform put in place structural, strategic and operational changes that influenced partnerships at all levels. These changes are documented in the Integrated CGIAR Reform Proposal<sup>7</sup>, the minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2008<sup>8</sup> and the foundation document of the reform, Voices of Change.<sup>9</sup> The main changes related to partnerships were as follows:

- › CGIAR was defined as a global research for development partnership between the Consortium of CGIAR Centers and donors within the Fund Council (FC).
- › The entire research program was defined by an SRF, developed in close consultation with partners, and implemented through a portfolio of CGIAR research programs, in which Centers were jointly funded and required to work more closely together than in the past, achieving outcomes through internal and external partnerships.
- › The ISPC was established to provide advice on effective networking and partnerships for research, in addition to its science advisory role.
- › Engagement between CGIAR and partners was to be facilitated by GFAR, through the biennial Global Conference for Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD). GCARD was a formal mechanism to provide a forum for external partners to voice their perspectives, and to involve them in development of the SRF and the design of the research program.

As well as establishing formal structures through which the reform was implemented, reform documents also indicated expectations for CGIAR partnerships. The following expectations were described by donor representatives and other key informants interviewed for the evaluation, and are reflected in the minutes of FC and Consortium Board meetings.

5 The first three CPs launched in 2003-2004, Generation (GCP), Harvest Plus and Water and Food (CPWF), were chosen from proposals submitted by Centers. Two CPs were subsequently selected through a competitive process: Sub-Saharan Africa CP led by Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, launched in 2005, and CP for Climate change, Agriculture and Food Security (SSA-CP) jointly proposed by the Earth System Science Partnership and the CGIAR, launched in 2009. All the CPs were set up as long-term programs. GCP reached the end of its term in 2013, HarvestPlus became a Flagship Project of A4NH, CPWF was merged into WLE and CCAFS became a CRP. In transition to the CRPs, SSA-CP was not given further CGIAR funding but was bilaterally supported to complete essential activities. The CPs operated as consortia or alliances of partners. Their core teams (those that managed the CP, or major components of it, and may have had inputs into planning the program) included external partners.

6 [http://www.cgiar.org/www-archive/www.cgiar.org/pdf/agm08/agm08\\_independent\\_review\\_synthesis\\_report.pdf](http://www.cgiar.org/www-archive/www.cgiar.org/pdf/agm08/agm08_independent_review_synthesis_report.pdf)

7 [http://www.cgiar.org/www-archive/www.cgiar.org/pdf/agm08/agm08\\_reform\\_proposal.pdf](http://www.cgiar.org/www-archive/www.cgiar.org/pdf/agm08/agm08_reform_proposal.pdf)

8 [https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/4994/agm08\\_business\\_meeting\\_sop.pdf?sequence=1](https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/4994/agm08_business_meeting_sop.pdf?sequence=1)

9 [https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/5035/FINAL\\_from\\_Printer\\_Voices\\_for\\_Change.pdf?sequence=1](https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/5035/FINAL_from_Printer_Voices_for_Change.pdf?sequence=1)

- › Donors would work in partnership through the FC to provide solid, reliable and long-term core and programmatic funding. This was important to allow new partnerships to be established, including in unfamiliar areas of work. Bilateral funding, of three or four year duration and usually tied to a results-based, time-bound plan, often allows very limited time to establish new partnerships and modes of working and limited latitude to experiment with partnership models that may or may not succeed. The expectation of stable core funding also implied that there would be time and resources to test new models. CGIAR needed to find additional ways of working effectively with a larger number and wider range of partners, particularly but not only for delivery and scaling.
- › Support systems and processes would be put in place to implement the reform. While not specifically identified as contributing to partnerships, some of them (for example reporting of work and finance) had implications for the way partnerships would be managed.<sup>10</sup>
- › CGIAR would engage with new external partners and a broader range of them, in program planning, design and implementation. In order to generate impact in specific locations, it would need to build partnerships along impact pathways and strengthen particularly the relationship with private sector, public and non-governmental partners. In order to broaden its access to research expertise, it would need to work with new advanced research partners, particularly in subjects where CGIAR expertise was very limited (e.g. public health and human nutrition), where it had some expertise but not enough (e.g. climate change), or where non-CGIAR organizations provide the most advanced knowledge and technologies in traditional CGIAR domains (e.g. bioinformatics and genomics). As well as engaging with new partners, CGIAR was expected to work with them in new ways, including becoming increasingly involved in multi-stakeholder alliances related to international public goods (IPG). There was an expectation that external partners would become more strongly involved in planning and possibly in management of CGIAR research programs.
- › Capacity would be built in external partners, particularly NARS.<sup>11</sup>
- › Incentives, including funding, and processes to enhance partnerships were to be built at all levels of the System.
- › Funding would be shared between CGIAR Centers and their external partners.<sup>12</sup>

A revised CGIAR governance structure was put in place during 2016, and is summarized in Figure 1. Any changes resulting from the recommendations of this evaluation requiring System-level action would be implemented through the new structure.

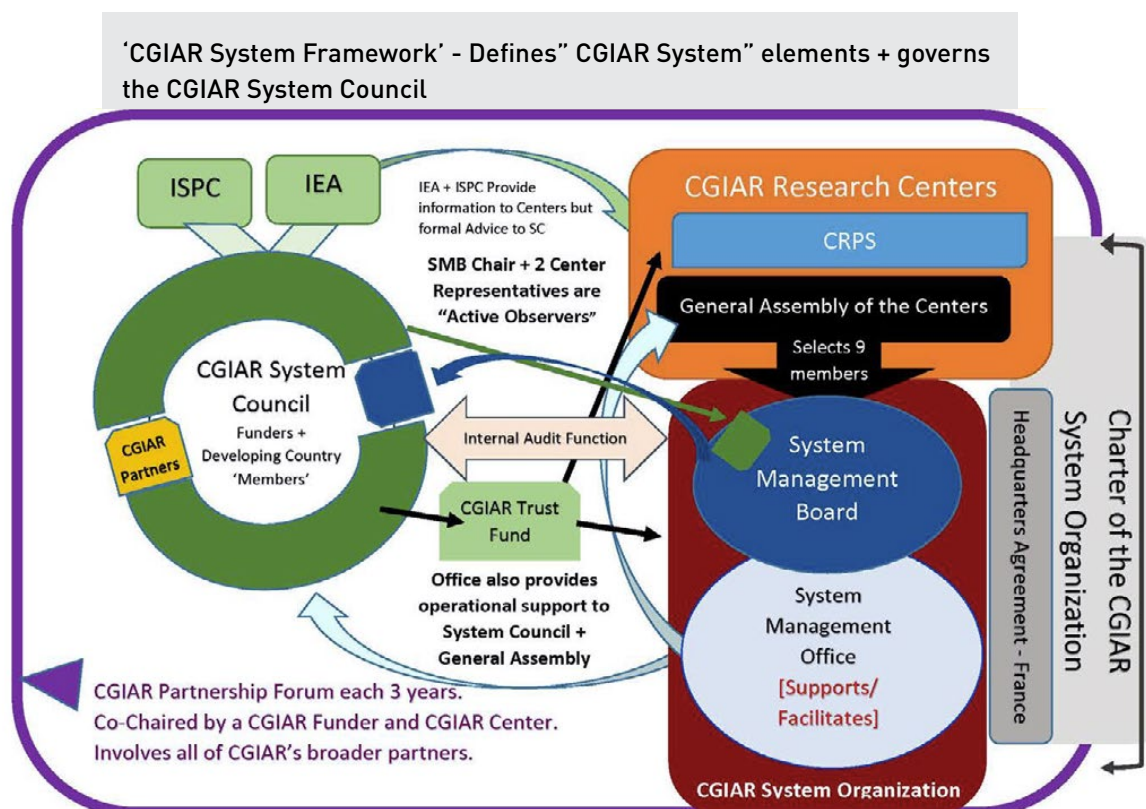
The following changes are important to note for partnerships:

- › Centers will be more directly engaged in coordination, as they will provide and appoint seven members of the System Management Board (SMB). The SMB replaces the Consortium Board, on which Centers had one representative. Potentially, the SMB could provide a route for senior managers of Centers to communicate with each other about partnership strategy and management.
- › The System Management Office (SMO) is represented as having more of a facilitation role than the Consortium Office (CO) (which it replaces) and this could change the role it envisages for itself in supporting the development of CGIAR partnerships.
- › The CGIAR partnership forum has the potential to use a different approach from that of GFAR/GCARD in facilitating engagement with external partners.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> SRF 2011 determined seven strategic functions for CGIAR, one of them: “Play a catalytic role in capacity building the area of AR4D”.

<sup>12</sup> CGIAR Change Steering Team (2008): A Revitalized CGIAR: A New Way Forward. The Integrated Reform Proposal: “Openness will be enhanced through provisions of a segment of program funding directed to open competition to actors outside of the CGIAR System”.

**Figure 1: Governance structure of CGIAR since mid-2016**


Source: IEA

## Global trends

With the reform, the SRF development process became the mechanism that reflects CGIAR's awareness of and response to global changes. The 2011 SRF identified new areas where CGIAR would need to develop competence through partnerships, in particular climate change, nutrition and health, and systems research. Development of the SRF drew on a number of global and regional analyses including the World Bank Development Report<sup>13</sup>, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, policy statements from G8 countries, and documentation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. During the period covered by the present evaluation, global developments and trends have affected the way the reform has been implemented and funded.

### Trends affecting funding

The global financial crisis of 2007-9 and a series of recessions that followed, the global food price crisis that occurred at the same time as the financial crisis, and a number of civil wars including the one that resulted in the relocation of ICARDA's headquarters, and most recently the refugee crisis, have all affected "traditional" CGIAR donors. They have been under pressure to reduce spending on aid or to justify more strongly what is spent in terms of development impact. Interviews held with donor representatives from OECD countries made clear the importance attached by their governments to demonstrating the development impact of funding to CGIAR. In addition, two types of new donor have emerged. The Bill and

13 World Bank (2008): World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development, Washington, DC.

Melinda Gates Foundation represents a major private funding source, and has chosen to channel funding through W3 and bilateral funds (see the case study on “Scaling of Stress Tolerant Rice Variety (STRV) Technology Through Partnerships” in Annex F). Mexico, Nigeria and the Philippines represent emerging economies, which have provided larger cash grants than in previous years, directed to specific programs rather than as core funding (see the Seeds of Discovery case study in Annex F).

### Trends affecting partnership choices

As mentioned above, the SRF reflects changes in global discourse and the global development agenda. These trends also affect the partnerships in which CGIAR must work.

- › Globally, there is increased recognition of what CGIAR terms “societal grand challenges” with respect to food and agriculture that require multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder partnerships to solve. It has become the norm for scientific teams addressing these global challenges to be multidisciplinary and be drawn from consortia of institutions. All of these factors imply the need for CGIAR to partner with organizations that have capacities in new fields.
- › The role of the private sector is evolving. There is growing importance of private sector research and development that is protected by Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). In the developing world, the private sector and markets increasingly drive agricultural development. This affects the nature of partnerships as well as the systems and procedures that must be put in place to construct and operate them.
- › The emphasis placed by the FC (and many donors individually) on “results-based management”, requiring that quite specific milestones be defined *ex ante*, has resulted in a growing expectation from external partners that partnerships will be contractualized.
- › In the past CGIAR has been the dominant player in agricultural research for development. However, since 2001 the need to engage external partners in fast-moving areas of science has been explicit in CGIAR policies, initially through the CPs and now through the CRPs. Increasingly there are more players contributing to agricultural research for development. They include private companies investing in countries where markets are developing, strong NARS (for example in China, India and Brazil) that are less dependent than formerly on partnership with CGIAR, universities and many advanced research institutes (ARIs). CIRAD, JIRCAS and IRD – important partners in CRPs – have global mandates for development-oriented research. CGIAR can no longer see itself as driving the research for development agenda - it is only one of many strong research partners.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> An example of this trend is rice research where CGIAR’s share of global publications has dropped from 5 percent in 2000 to 0.9 percent in 2014 as reported in the 2015 evaluation of GRiSP (<http://iea.cgiar.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/GRiSP-Evaluation-Volume-1Final.pdf>).





## 2. Strategic selection of partnerships

@ CGIAR

This Chapter addresses the evaluation question “to what extent have actions taken by the CGIAR since 2008 resulted in partnerships that are strategically selected and fit for purpose?”. The reform brought expectations of new partnerships implemented in the context of a restructured research program with new strategic directions. The evaluation team therefore examined the extent to which CRPs in particular, and also Centers, had developed deliberate strategies for choosing their partnerships to fit the objectives and the needs of the research program. It is possible to be highly strategic with only an implicit strategy, but an explicit strategy is important for communication within and outside the partnership and to record changes over time, and therefore the evaluation looked at the way partnership strategies had been documented and the extent to which documentation matched what had been articulated in interviews.

The team based its assessment on analysis of Centers’ and CRPs’ written and implicit partnership strategies, interviews with CRP leaders and Center partnership managers, a partnership landscaping survey conducted by the evaluation, and a survey of FP managers. All of the CRP leaders and Center partnership managers interviewed were able to articulate clearly the strategies that had guided their approach to partnerships and the factors that had affected their strategies. Documented information corresponded with the strategies articulated in interviews.

### Partnership strategies

The reform’s emphasis on working with external partners forced CRPs to be more strategic and explicit about their partnership choices. “Partnership strategy” is used here to mean a high-level plan that links choices of partner and types of partnerships to medium- and long-term objectives. The evaluation defined a comprehensive partnership strategy as one that described clearly and in some detail the reasons for selecting partners and partnership models; that a) clearly demonstrated an analysis of the



partnership needs of the program based on the program objectives and Theory of Change (TOC), and b) included a targeted approach to identifying and working with different types of partner and partnership model to meet these needs. CGIAR does not have complete freedom of choice in partners – some are dictated by politics, geographical location or funding source – but it has some latitude to be strategic. The evaluation looked for evidence that there had been a more deliberate selection of partners to fit the objectives of CGIAR redefined in the reform and specifically the needs of the work programs of the CRPs, thereby responding to the reform expectations about new partnerships. In its assessment of partnership strategies, the evaluation took into account the fact that most of research conducted by the Centers is mapped within the CRPs that themselves are partnership programs. As illustrated in Table 1, some Centers were involved in few CRPs while others were involved in ten or more.

## Evolution of strategies

While the CRP proposals can be considered as having included an implicit partnership strategy, the evaluation team did not find that the information provided added up to comprehensive partnership strategies. The reform’s emphasis on working with new external partners influenced the CRPs to become more explicit about their choices as they evolved.

**Table 1: Centers’ participation in phase 1 CRPs**

	TOTAL CRPS involved	DrySys	Humidtropics	AAS	PIM	Wheat	Maize	GRI SP	RTB	GrainLG	DryCER	L&F	A4NH	WLE	FTA	CCAFS	GeneB GeneB
CIFOR	2															LC	
AFRICARICE	3																
IRRI	3							LC									
IFPRI	4				LC								LC				
CIMMYT	5					LC	LC										
IWMI	6													LC			
WORLD FISH	6			LC													
CIP	8								LC								
ICRISAT	8									LC	LC						
ILRI	8											LC					
ICRAF	8																
ICARDA	9	LC															
IITA	9		LC														
Bioversity	10																LC
CIAT	12															LC	

**Source:** IEA, adapted from Synthesis review of lessons learned from CRP evaluations (2016)

In phase 2, the proposal documents required “a detailed partnership strategy”<sup>15</sup>—a more detailed explanation of approaches to partnership—although these still do not amount to a comprehensive strategy as defined above.

Many of the CRPs produced discrete partnership strategies after the CRP had started operating – in some cases three or four years afterwards – and after some of its main partnerships had been established. The evaluation found five CRPs with a purposely designed and documented strategy for partnerships, namely A4NH, GRI SP, L&F, WLE and CCAFS<sup>16</sup>. Of these, the L&F strategy in phase 1 covered only development partnerships (in phase 2, Livestock and FISH became separate CRPs). The strategies vary reflecting the

15 <http://www.cgiar.org/our-strategy/second-call-for-cgiar-research-programs/>

16 The CCAFS Strategy is called “Engagement and Communications Strategy” but also includes aspects of partnership.

particular focus of each CRP and their concept of partnership. For example, A4NH has a focus on value chain partnerships, CCAFS refers to media as a key partner, and many CRPs refer to donors as their key partners.

With Centers organizing under CRPs and bringing their own partners to them, there has not been the same pressure on Centers to document their partnership strategies, but many have chosen to do so, within their main Center strategy or more rarely as a separate document. The evaluation considered ten strategy documents available online. Most of them have been developed since the reform started and incorporate strategic aspects of partnerships in the strategy (examples are given in Box 1). There is evidence that partnerships have become a more explicit and prominent feature of Center strategy documents. For example, IWMI's current strategy includes partnerships as part of the operational implications of the overall strategy and presents "partnership and team work" as a core value. CIP emphasizes commitment to partnerships in its Strategy and Corporate Plan stating that it "reflects a renewed commitment to expanding our network(s) of partners within CGIAR—particularly with external government organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector partners—to continue to transform science-based solutions into tangible outcomes and impacts".

### Box 1: Examples of Centers incorporating partnerships in their strategy

- ▶ AfricaRice partners with IRRI, CIAT and three ARIs in the GRISP CRP, conceived as a global science partnership and led by IRRI, but AfricaRice was initiated as an association and has its strong obligations to the 26 African states that are its members. An important incremental change within its regional partnership strategy has been to try to work increasingly closely with Regional Economic Communities.
- ▶ IFPRI leads two CRPs, A4NH and PIM. Both have documented elements of their partnership strategy in annual reports, extension proposals and phase 2 proposals, and A4NH published a separate partnership strategy in 2015. IFPRI does not have a separate partnership strategy but includes partnerships as a specific element in its current Center strategy from 2013. There are common elements across the strategies of the Center and the two CRPs it leads, but each is also distinct and specific. IFPRI has made Center-level strategic choices about partnerships (for example the decision to initiate the Compact 2020 MSP) and opportunistic choices (for example, responding to requests from countries to work with their national institutions on policy issues). In both cases, the work undertaken can be mapped to CRPs, but has arisen from Center rather than CRP-specific decisions.
- ▶ CIMMYT does not have a separately documented partnership strategy for the Center, but the Strategic Plan 2017-2022 emphasizes that the Center contributes to the development objectives and has partnerships as one of the three pillars of success. The same general partnerships principles are applied to the Center and the two CRPs it leads (WHEAT and MAIZE). CIMMYT has also demonstrated an emergent strategy in the evolving relationship with its host government, Mexico, which has become a substantial bilateral donee, not only in kind, as has always been the case, but also in financing of research.
- ▶ Bioversity, which does not lead a CRP but contributes to ten, has paid considerable attention to its Center partnership strategy. Working on biodiversity and climate change and based in Italy, it must engage with a very wide spectrum of partners, but has some latitude in choosing countries in which to work. It carried out a major review of partnerships in 2013 and conducted an internal review of strategic partnerships in 2016. The 2013 review led to a strategic choice to reduce the number of countries in which Bioversity works, with the intention of limiting the total number of partners while maintaining a broad range of partnerships in each country. The results of the review have been incorporated into the Center's strategy.

The evaluation found separately documented partnership strategies for three Centers: ILRI, CIAT and ICRAF. ILRI published its Partnership Strategy and Management System in 2008, before becoming lead Center of the L&F CRP. CIAT's "Perspective on Partnerships in Research for Development" was published in 2012. It includes conditions for partnership with CIAT and also criteria for selection of partners. Three categories are defined, mission critical, region specific and technology focused. ICRAF's partnership strategy for 2013-2018 presents both a strategy and operational guidelines for implementing the strategy. It positions the Center as a small but important player in the global agroforestry area and recognizes the importance of informal scientist-to-scientist collaborations.

Documented partnership strategies have improved over time. However, few of those reviewed by the evaluation are comprehensive strategies, as defined above that clearly relate choices of partners and partnership models to program objectives. Several of them have good general content on the principles of engagement in partnerships, but few suggest approaches targeted to specific types of partners<sup>17</sup>.

Examples of good strategic content in partnership strategy documents include:

- › A4NH's explicit linking of partnership needs to the CRP's objectives and TOC<sup>18</sup>;
- › CCAFs' comprehensive identification of nine types of key partner and acknowledgement of the need to link national, regional and global partnerships;
- › WLE's identification of key types of partner at landscape, regional and global;<sup>19</sup>
- › ICRAF's identification of partnership challenges ;
- › CIAT's region-specific approach to partnerships– this is also reflected in the Center's overall strategy in the "progress through partnership" section.

Examples of good content on partnership principles include:

- › CCAFS' approaches to engagement and communication ;
- › A4NH's annex on partnership principles and practice;
- › WLE's intention to better define the role of partners in implementing the partnership strategy (WLE, 2014, p2), and it's analysis of partnerships with other CRPs ;
- › ICRAF's chapter on enduring partnerships ;
- › AfricaRice's table of the determinants of a successful partnership ;
- › ILRI's identification of three levels of partnerships, with a different approach to engaging with partners at each level.

In the view of the evaluation team, there has been value in producing written strategies, even though they are of variable quality. The process of producing strategies has required CGIAR research managers to communicate with each other about choices of partners (and to a lesser extent partnership models), and has also made their thinking explicit for external partners and donors. In the first phase of CRPs, the original program and extension proposals had little content on partnerships to indicate that there had

17 It is surprising that partnership strategy documents do not routinely cover approaches to specific types of partnership, because the concept of doing this has been in CGIAR's literature since at least 2004 and in the development literature for much longer. Bezanson et al. (2004): Table 1, provides a continuum of "intensity of partnership arrangement" based on one from an FAO report of 1994. Horton, D. Prain, G. and Thiele, G. (2009) note the importance of "developing a better understanding of diverse types of partnership" rather than focusing on "how best to "manage" partnerships between the system and other stakeholders."

18 A4NH (2015): Strategies for Transformative Partnerships. Updated August 2015 (available at <http://a4nh.cgiar.org/files/2014/03/A4NH-Partnership-Strategy-Updated-August-2015.pdf>).

19 WLE (2014): WLE Partnership Strategy: Extension phase (2014 – 2016).

been a systematic development of a partnership strategy. Moving into phase 2 there is an opportunity to remedy this situation. The program proposals provide a much better starting point than those from phase 1, several of the CRPs have developed their own distinct partnership strategies (as mentioned above), and there is a better understanding of the use of TOC thinking in agricultural research for development than was the case at the start of the reform.

## Partners and partnership models

A common feature of partnership strategies developed during the reform period is that they have given considerable thought to the types and categories of partner with which CRPs and Centers must work. Most strategies have grouped different types of partner. This is helpful for assessing whether CRPs and Centers are working with the right mixture of partners, and to consider how best to engage with different types of partners. For example CIAT, in its partnership strategy explicitly includes working with the private sector, as does IITA in its Center strategy.

Concerning research partners, the evaluation observed a shift from developing country partners to developed country partners in its assessment of joint publishing of research (see section 4.3). It could not establish how intentional the shift has been, or what has been driving this shift, but comparing 2012 and 2015 data, the change is significant.

All strategies examined by the evaluation reflect an intention to broaden the partner base, working with new partners while at the same time maintaining existing strong relationships. Some CRP strategies reflect the intention to find partners who could play a strong role in scaling (these are variously described as “boundary”, “development” or “delivery” partners; also “policy” partners) and the intention to work more with private sector partners, including large multinationals and smaller local organizations.

In several CRPs, partners have been included in program management, and management of research at thematic or Flagship Project (FP) level. For example, JIRCAS, CIRAD and IRD have been members in the GRISP (now RICE) Management Team since the program began. These institutions were included because they all have a global mandate on research for development. The evaluation considers the deliberate involvement of non-CGIAR partners in CRP management to be a positive development, and one that was appreciated by the strategic partners interviewed. The evaluation noted, however, that management teams have included hardly any partners from developing countries despite the strategic importance of those countries and notable capability they have in terms of resources (see Section 4.2.1 for further assessment).

Partnership models refer to the structure and institutional arrangements that define a partnership, including size, formality, governance and membership. The evaluation would have expected elaboration of partnership models in the CRP proposals and work plans and particularly in published partnership strategies, but found little. Only a few interviewees volunteered information about strategies for choosing partnership models, which led the evaluation to conclude that there has been less strategic thinking about models than about choice of partners.

In the last decade, CGIAR has become increasingly involved in different kinds of multi-stakeholder platforms (MSP), particularly innovation platforms and global MSPs (for the latter, see Section 2.5) but also other models. Innovation platforms were introduced to CGIAR particularly in the Sub-Saharan CP (2005-2010), and several CRPs still work with them, including MAIZE, RTB and two CRPs that were

closed after phase 1, namely Dryland Systems and Humidtropics.<sup>20</sup> Some CRPs are experimenting with what appear to be newer partnership models for CGIAR. Examples include the WLE's Focal Regions (with broad geographic focus), CCAFS's climate smart villages (to promote broad local participation) and L&F's dairy hubs (designed as a business organizational model). All CRPs participate in MSPs at regional and global level (see section 2.5). Also Centers have introduced new models such as IITA's "business incubation platforms" for working with the private sector in Africa and the agri-business platforms, through which ICRISAT engages with the private sector in India. The evaluation considers that there is scope to strengthen partnership strategies by assessing the effectiveness of different types of models in a research for development context.

## Grouping of Centers within CRPs

Given that the reform was aimed at giving CGIAR a new strategic direction through new structure and impact orientation, the evaluation team examined the first level for reorganizing partnerships, namely Centers within the CRPs. The Centers designed the CRPs, with IRRI, AfricaRice and CIAT being the first that started developing a rice partnership even before the programmatic structure in the reform was agreed. The 2011 SRF described this process as reconciling Center boundaries for optimizing research efficiency through elimination of overlaps and enhancement of synergies. In preparing CRP proposals, the Centers were guided by the Consortium Board to build "complementarities, synergies and collective action among Centres in line with the CGIAR reform process", and ensure that "strategic research planning is done collaboratively among Centres and partners".<sup>21</sup>

In several CRPs the design and the core CGIAR partnerships had a clear strategic basis. In commodity CRPs it was obvious that certain Centers had developed a CRP together integrating regional or regional and global mandates within one CRP. The CPs that were incorporated into CRPs, particularly Climate Change CP transforming into CCAFS, brought their own strategic partnership focus into the CRP. The policy CRP, combining IFPRI's research with small contributions from many other Centers, was designed around social science research, and the research support program on genebanks covered eleven Centers around very specific management activities. The strategic fit was least obvious in the systems CRPs, closed at the end of 2016, where Centers appear to have been "bundled together" (to quote one interviewee) based on an expressed interest in the research area without a clear strategic orientation (as judged by the ISPC in its program appraisal); Aquatic Agriculture Systems CRP was effectively a single Center CRP. Furthermore, the need to map all research into CRPs led to involving partnerships that served the purpose of projects but not necessarily the CRPs. Several CRP evaluations confirmed this indirectly in their observations concerning lack of prioritization and comparative advantage.

In the course of implementation, CRP leadership has in some cases (PIM and CCAFS) been able to influence strategic direction of the CRP through competitive processes of selecting Center projects. CGIAR portfolio in phase 2 reflects evolution also in the way Centers are engaged, and includes three platforms (Excellence in Breeding and Big Data, in addition to Genebank) that involve all Centers.

20 Very recent work has been published, involving all participating Centers of Humidtropics/RTB innovation platforms: Schut, M., Andersson, J.A., Dror, I., Kamanda, J., Sartas, M., Mur, R., Kassam, S., Brouwer, H., Stoian, D., Devaux, A., Velasco, C., Gramzow, A., Dubois, T., Flor, R.J., Gummert, M., Buizer, D., McDougall, C., Davis, K., Homann-Kee Tui, S., Lundy, M. (2017). Guidelines for Innovation Platforms in Agricultural Research for Development. Decision support for research, development and funding agencies on how to design, budget and implement impactful Innovation Platforms International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and Wageningen University (WUR) under the CGIAR Research Program on Roots Tubers (RTB). pp 78. June 2017.

21 The Process for Review and Approval of Mega Program Proposal.



## Partnerships along the impact pathway

### Partnership landscape

The results of choices made about partnerships are reflected in CGIAR’s “partnership landscape”. In order to establish such partnership landscape for CGIAR, the evaluation surveyed Centers and CRPs asking them to provide a list of up to 15 partnerships defined by themselves as “most critical for delivery of the CRP’s/Center’s mandate” and to position those partnerships along the impact pathway. The partnership landscape also helped the evaluation to understand the partnership context and the range of partners and partnership models, in which CGIAR engages (for an overview of the landscape survey see Annex D).

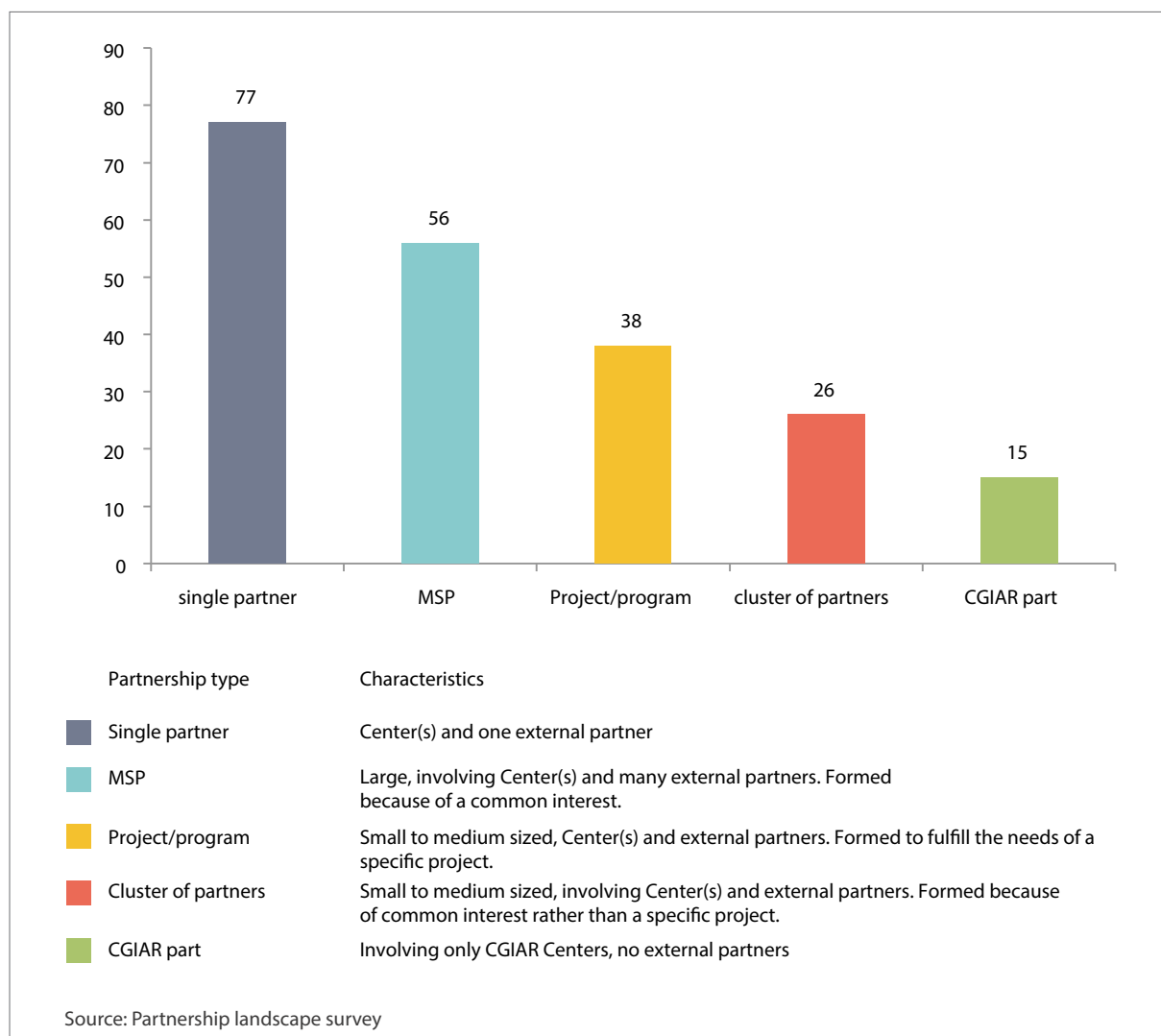
In addition to this survey, the evaluation used the survey of FP leaders and stakeholder interviews to assess the extent to which the reform and requirements of the research programs have influenced the choice of partners and partnership models. Considering the objectives of the reform, the evaluation assessed the purpose of partnerships along the impact pathway using some examples to illustrate evolution of partnership choices. Furthermore, the evaluation focused attention to engagement with private sector, and assessing selected partnership models, with special attention to large MSPs dealing with global issues.

The survey of critical partnerships resulted in a database of 212 partnerships. The CRPs were specifically asked to indicate the contribution of critical partnerships along their impact pathways. Three Centers (CIMMYT, IFPRI and IWMI)<sup>22</sup> also responded providing information concerning their partnerships outside those CRPs that they lead.

Figure 2 provides a simple grouping of critical partnerships into types established inductively by the evaluation. Purely internal partnerships were distinguished from those involving external partners, while the latter were grouped according to size and partnership arrangements. The majority of those listed involve external partners. Concerning internal partnerships, CRPs may have used different criteria in listing those that are critical, with only one CRP listing its own core partnership as a critical one, while others indicated in correspondence that they considered their core partnership to be critical but did not list it in their survey responses. Two CRPs identified another CRP as a critical partnership: CCAFS and WLE, and A4NH and L&F.

There was a relatively even distribution among single partner, small-to-medium size groups and large multi-stakeholder partnerships. Many of the single partner partnerships are with universities or research institutes, with which CGIAR has had a long and evolving relationship (33 percent are with NARS from developing and emerging economies), but they also include NGOs and private sector partners. Nearly all partnerships (90 percent) were described as involving some kind of formal arrangement (occasionally depending on state of funding), including contracts, Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), partner strategy agreements and documented governance and management structures.

<sup>22</sup> AfricaRice provided information at a stage when the evaluation had already completed its analysis of the partnership landscape. It is therefore reflected only in examples.

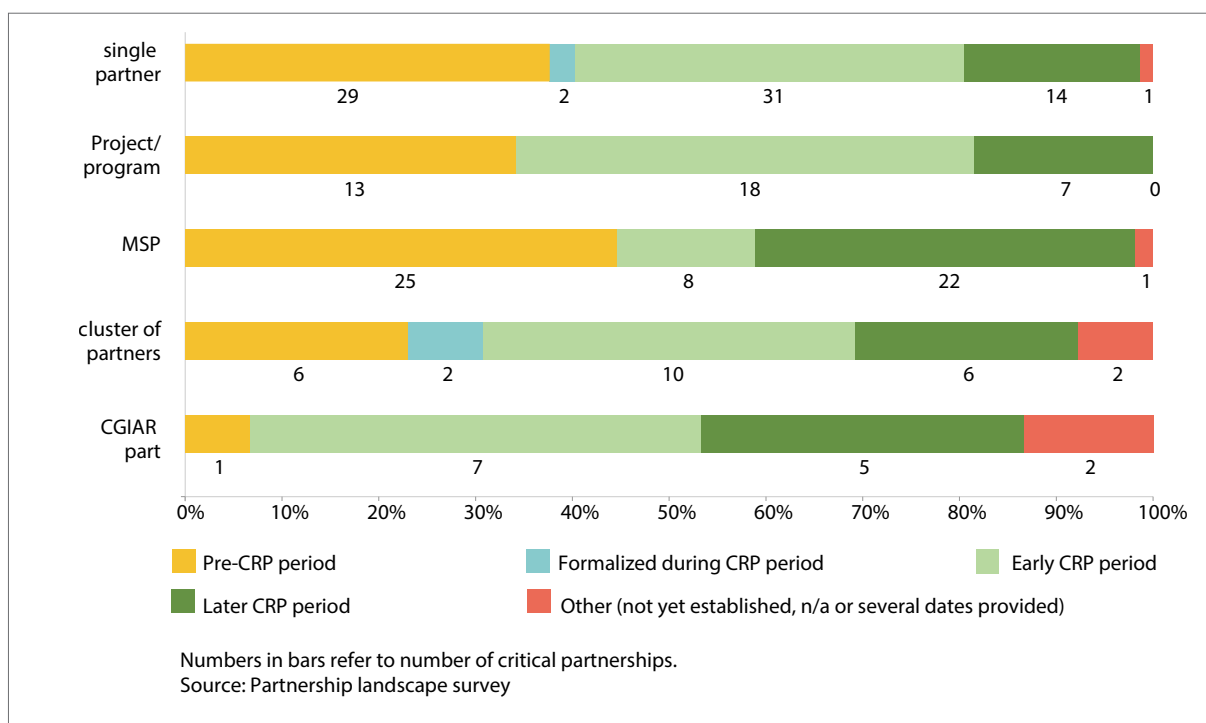
**Figure 2: Critical partnerships grouped by type**

The evaluation found that partnerships were spread along impact pathways (both those established before the CRP period and after), but with considerable overlap. CRPs were asked to locate each critical partnership in one or more of three parts of the impact pathway (upstream research, applied research/piloting, and scaling of research). Approximately 70 percent of the partnerships contributed to upstream research and over 80 percent to scaling of research – these two roles being at the opposite ends of the impact pathway. The large overlap in partnership purposes is noteworthy: 86 percent of partnerships contributed in more than one part of the impact pathway and nearly 90 percent of partnerships operate in the research to development interface, contributing to adaptive research or technology piloting. The evaluation considers that contribution in more than one part of the impact pathway is a positive feature that can reflect a multi-faceted partnership or the evolution of a partnership – it also highlights a point made by interviewees that some external partners prefer not to be classified solely as “research” or “development” partners as this may appear to diminish their contribution.

More than half of the partnerships, of all types, were established during the CRP period (on average 62 percent across different types of partnerships as shown in Figure 3). This does not necessarily mean that the reform alone has influenced the choices, but it has been the operating context, in which the

more recent partnerships have been established. Despite this evolution, many long-term partnerships continue to be important. Partnerships contributing to upstream research involve universities and ARIs, from developed and developing countries<sup>23</sup>, as can be expected, but also NARS and even NGOs – although rarely the latter. The few partnerships which only focused on scaling of research, were mostly MSPs. Partnerships with NARS from the South either target applied research and scaling or they are spread along the whole impact pathway.

**Figure 3: Critical partnerships grouped by time established (pre CRP or CRP)**



### Partnerships for upstream research

The CGIAR discourse around reform since early 2000 has highlighted the necessity of partnerships with ARIs, including universities, to strengthen the employment of modern research for solving development problems. The 2008 reform reconfirmed the need to engage with research partnerships essential to keep up with fast-moving science and identified the need to bring in new research skills to extend CGIAR research into areas where it had limited prior competence, such as climate change, nutrition and health and systems research. Partnerships with ARIs that were listed in the survey response or mentioned in interviews, included those that take place within research consortia (such as the engagement of WHEAT and other CRPs with the Biological Nitrification Inhibition Consortium led by JIRCAS) as well as relationships with individual partners that have been developed or strengthened during the reform period. The following examples of the latter illustrate engagement of partners in new research areas: nutrition and human health and gender research where CGIAR has limited prior experience and capacity.

- > A partnership between A4NH and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to expand the CRP’s work on public health and help it to connect with a network of potential public health

<sup>23</sup> The analysis of scientific publications (see Section 4.3.1 and Annex E), showed increase in co-author universities in the North from 171 to 223 and in the South from 121 to 151. However, in relative terms (total articles/number of universities), publishing with northern universities remained the same, while with southern universities it decreased.

partners. This partnership has also involved a capacity building initiative, setting up an agriculture, nutrition and health “academy”, initiated in 2016 by a meeting of 250 scientists.

- › A partnership between L&F and the Rollins Institute of Public Health at Emory University to access expertise on the relationship between livestock (and fish) and livelihoods, including human nutrition.
- › Partnerships of L&F and MAIZE with the Royal Tropical Institute of the Netherlands (KIT) on gender research, responding to the reform directive to mainstream gender. The partnership with L&F has had a strong capacity building component within CGIAR, as KIT has provided mentoring for scientists in the CRP.

While CGIAR has long-term competence and leadership in research on many minor or under-researched crops, new partnerships have also been established to advance research in new methods and for mutual interests. An example is a partnership between Grain Legumes, the University of California, Davis and the University of Saskatoon on genome sequencing of lentils.

- › The evaluation’s case study on “Partnerships for Research on Metabolomics at RTB” illustrates a CRP-initiated partnership aimed at producing advanced research outputs (see Annex F). The partnership is in one of RTB’s complementary projects supported by core funding. The objective of this project was methodological. Its aim was genotyping and phenotypic of a large number of crops under RTB, for generating breeding applications, and it had a specific component on metabolomics that has particular scientific importance. Thus, it arose from exploratory, risky science to application in breeding. There were 28 external partners, but a smaller number became closely engaged in the metabolomics component. The two main external partners were CIRAD, whose scientific contribution and weight was acknowledged by partners interviewed, and Royal Holloway University of London, invited because it is one of the leading institutes worldwide on metabolomics applied to plant genomics. Partners were divided in their opinion of the metabolomics component, which was considered by some as additional, expensive and risky, and by others a highly promising scientific approach. However the core funding was seen as important for allowing exploratory research, not possible in bilateral projects, to fill gaps in scientific knowledge.

The evaluation looked closely at new research partnerships because one of the expectations of the reform was that new partnerships would be formed to bring new research capacity into CGIAR programs. However it is also important to acknowledge valuable partnerships that pre-dated the reform and have continued under the CRPs. Long-standing critical partnerships from the evaluation’s survey include IFPRI’s partnerships with the Institute of Development Studies, Helen Keller International and BRAC (a development organization based in Bangladesh, Building Resources Across Communities, working in 11 countries), all of which have lasted more than a decade and have continued under A4NH. Also listed were several large partnerships contributing to both upstream and applied research, such as Fondo Latinoamericano para Arroz de Riego that began in the mid-1990s, listed by GRiSP, and the Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century that began in 2007, listed by RTB.

Among the 78 critical partnerships identified as making a strong contribution to upstream research, approximately 70 percent were established during the reform period. They included four consortia focusing on germplasm research or informatics, and partnerships with several universities.

## Partnerships for applied research and scaling

CGIAR managers and scientists are well aware of their need to work with partners in the applied research and scaling parts of impact pathways. In the survey of FP leaders conducted by the evaluation, where respondents were asked to give the most important reasons the FP works with partners, 38 of the 43 respondents to the question referred to delivery, scaling, sustainability of impact (the remainder gave very general answers).

Of the 174 critical partnerships identified as making a strong contribution either to applied research or scaling, about 60 percent had begun since the start of the CRP. Partnership members include many typically associated with delivery (international and national NGOs, small and large private companies and government extension agencies) as well as NARS and northern Universities, in a blend that varies by location and CRP. When only partnerships scored strongly for scaling are considered, the total number is lower (126) but the percentage established since the start of the CRPs remains the same.

The following examples indicate the range of applied research and scaling partnerships developed by the CRPs:

- › A partnership between A4NH and Kenya’s Zoonotic Disease Unit (a collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and the Ministry of Health). CGIAR has a long history of working with the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture, but this particular coalition is a more recent enterprise that aims to promote “One Health” approaches in Kenya for control of zoonotic diseases. Joint activities have included preparation of the Kenyan zoonotic diseases priority list, consultation on the management of MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome) coronavirus in Kenya, training of government staff on disease risk-mapping, and development of guidelines for control of brucellosis and anthrax that are expected to become part of the national strategy for zoonotic diseases control.
- › The FTA Knowledge for Forestry Gender Working group, involving CIFOR, PROFOR (a multi-donor program on forests managed by a team based at the World Bank) and International Union for Conservation of Nature, that is reported by the CRP to have been a useful mechanism for informing World Bank work on forestry, as well as linking with other organizations that influence forestry policy.
- › RTB’s BASICS project in Nigeria, in which IITA is working in partnership with the National Agricultural Seed Council, the National Root Crops and Research Institute, Catholic Relief Services, Context Global Development, and the Food and Environment Research Agency of the UK to develop a sustainable cassava seed value chain.
- › A longstanding partnership between IFPRI and World Vision, that was initiated under Harvest Plus CP and has continued as a partnership under A4NH, to research and promote biofortified crops.
- › The BMZ/GIZ scaling-out partnership proposed for phase 2 with seven CRPs. This was intended to provide human capacity in scaling through in-kind contribution of human resource by GIZ-BMZ.

Several additional partnerships are discussed in the next sections because they represent interesting models or as examples of engagement with the private sector. The fact that approximately 40 percent of critical applied research and scaling research and scaling partnerships pre-dated the CRPs is a reflection of the strong relationships that had already been established in some countries with NGOs and the private sector and continued under the CRPs. One example is the IFPRI/A4NH-BRAC partnership; another is the partnership between WorldFish and a cluster of feed companies in Bangladesh to work on distribution of fish feed, which continued in L&F.

The examples of longstanding research partnerships demonstrate that functional and well-managed partnerships often continue for many years, and may evolve from their original remit into new areas and ways of working. This has implications for selection of partnerships, since a new need may sometimes be met by reconfiguring an existing partnership. There are also implications for the process of developing new relationships - those that have the potential to evolve into long term partnerships merit investment of considerable time and effort at the start of the relationship.

The landscaping exercise showed that there are specific partnership models that appear to have been chosen to match research and scaling requirements. One example is AfricaRice that, within the GRiSP CRP, continues to work with Thematic Rice Task Forces through which the Center has built partnerships with NARS in its member countries. Currently there are six Task Forces where AfricaRice, national

scientists and delivery partners participated. They meet annually during the AfricaRice Science Week to review progress and set the research agenda. The GRiSP evaluation considered that the Task Forces provided an effective means of getting stakeholder input into the GRiSP agenda, “sometimes exerting a strong demand-side pressure”.

Several upstream research consortia have been mentioned above. The following partnerships that were identified as being only for scaling, were all MSPs:

- › Global Alliance on Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA)
- › Sustainable Rice Platform
- › Global Landscape Forum, Convener – CIFOR
- › Sorghum Hybrid Parents Research Consortium in Kenya

The evidence provided by the survey substantiates what was said in interviews, that although most programs have not had a well-defined strategy with regard to partnership models, they have been willing to work with a range of models to fit specific situations, and to experiment when necessary. The evaluation considers that, while the partnership landscape is work in progress and likely to continually evolve, CRPs have made a credible effort to ensure that their partnerships are spread along the impact pathway, responding to the research for delivery and impact orientation of reformed CGIAR.

## Partnerships with the private sector

### Rationale for public-private partnerships

In the reform, CGIAR recognized that it had to adapt to the changes in agricultural science and technology, where the private sector was rapidly becoming a major contributor to research and development.<sup>24</sup> The SRF 2011 considered CRPs as a vehicle for integration of public and private research. The FC discussed the importance of partnership with the private sector in several of its meetings and suggested that the rationale for and potential of public-private partnerships in CGIAR programs would need to be studied in more detail (see Section 3.1.1). Generally, however, the evaluation found little substance in the discussions, which it found to be at a generic level without differentiating large multinationals that are owners of some important intellectual assets and interested in global markets from small and medium-sized companies that operate mostly in delivery at national or regional scales.

Several donors interviewed highlighted collaboration with the private sector as important, with potential benefits for both sides, CGIAR brings to the partnership its global reach and mandate to work on poverty. Private companies bring knowledge of and access to markets for technology, and in some cases also have specialized expertise and technology for research.

In the strategy documents reviewed by the evaluation, Centers and CRPs acknowledge the need to work more with the private sector, although they do not go into detail about requirements for working with different types of private sector organizations. The private sector is explicitly mentioned in several Center strategies (AfricaRice, IFPRI, CIMMYT and CIP). It is often seen as important for delivery, as for example in the Africa Rice strategy: “Mobilizing co-investments and linking with development partners and the private sector to stimulate uptake of rice knowledge and technologies”.

24 CGIAR Change Steering Team (2008).



## Progress and constraints

From interviews, the evaluation came to the view that donors in particular felt that CGIAR could do better in partnering with the private sector, although risks were also mentioned. Some comments were made during interviews that highlighted the difference in public and private interests: “*the conversation is more difficult: we talk about science and they about profits*” and, with reference to CGIAR’s mandate to develop IPGs: “*the partner has hidden behind corporate social responsibility but was really looking for business opportunities*”.

Donors, Center partnership managers and CRP leaders emphasized that attention to IPR was central to working with the private sector. Agreement in 2013 on a System-level policy, the Intellectual Assets Principles, was therefore an important concrete achievement of the FC resulting from negotiation with the Centers.

Reviewing the data on partnerships, the evaluation found that there has been some progress in engagement with private sector organizations. The survey of critical partnerships showed that the percentage involving private sector partners increased over time, from 15 percent of partnerships established before the CRPs began, to 19 percent of those established early in the CRP period and 28 percent of those established later. Among single partner partnerships, the survey found four with private companies, and in partner clusters, five included private companies. All but one of these were recent - L&F’s partnership with private feed companies in Bangladesh represents a long-term partnership with WorldFish.

Partnership network analysis done by the Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) project for two CRPs (comparing 2013 and 2015 for RTB and looking at 2015 data for WHEAT) indicated that some new private sector partnerships had been formed by the CRPs. For RTB the data suggested that this was happening in all regions. However the IEA review of the Generation CP in 2014, noted that the private sector was poorly represented among partners, which by the review team was considered a deficiency to be addressed if the program “is to have paying clientele and greater impact”.<sup>25</sup>

Although the case study partnerships were not chosen with private sector involvement in mind, all but one of them (Partnerships for Research on Metabolomics at RTB) included private sector partners (see Annex F). Three of them illustrate close collaboration with the private sector:

- › ICRAF’s partnership with Unilever in the Novella partnership started in 2002. The partnership aims to establishing a sustainable supply of oil produced by the Allanblackia tree. Its current central goal is proving that Allanblackia can be successfully scaled-up at large volumes with attractive prices. Unilever encouraged the initial set of partners to enter into a collaborative effort in which a sustainable supply chain could be developed based on sourcing the oil from smallholder plantings. Unilever saw itself as developing a market for the finished products, but did not want to organize or control the supply chain, and hence its interest to promote a partnership approach.

The partner complement has changed over time but Unilever has remained a core partner, and collaboration among core partners has been formalized by contracts between Unilever and partners. As the project progresses through different stages, the partnerships are being reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that organizations with appropriate skills are involved in each activity. In addition to Unilever, the Novella partnership has involved local Allanblackia companies to implement local wild harvest supply chain, establish links to farmers and engage in planting. Key public sector partners, ICRAF, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Union for Ethical Biobased Trade bring in core technical competence and emphasis on public sector interests, such as fair trade standards.

<sup>25</sup> CGIAR-IEA (2014). Final External Review of the Generation Challenge Programme. Rome, Italy: Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) of CGIAR ([iea.cgiar.org](http://iea.cgiar.org)).

ICRAF sees the Novella partnership as an example of a successful public-private partnership, although the research is still going on. The first commercial product resulting from the partnership was Becel margarine launched by Unilever late 2014 in Sweden (see Section 4.3 for analysis of joint outputs). The evaluation considers the Allablackia case is a good example of long-term relationship with strong commitment from the core private sector partner. Allablackia research is now mapped to the FTA CRP, and in the survey the partnership was listed by FTA as one of its critical partnerships.

- › The “Seeds of Discovery” partnership was established in 2011 for characterizing the vast genetic diversity in CIMMYT’s wheat and maize collections and making information available as IPGs. The partnership is mapped to the WHEAT and MAIZE CRPs. The project aims at contributing to sustained productivity and production with emphasis on traits important for climate change, nutrient and energy use efficiency, disease resistance and grain quality. The private sector partners include biotechnology companies and small and medium seed companies. Private sector is involved in genotyping, bioinformatics and software development and phenotyping, together with advanced public sector research institutes, and in pre-breeding. Seed companies are motivated in the partnership for having direct and early access to the novel genetic diversity discovered for use in their own breeding programs for eventually enhancing commercial profitability. Mexican private agrifood sector is also involved, in the interest of making Mexican agriculture more science-based, which seems to have provided political support to the project.
- › The partnership “Stress-Tolerant Rice for Africa and South Asia” (STRASA) aims to develop and deliver rice varieties tolerant of abiotic stresses to farmers in less favourable environments. It is a partnership with GRiSP where IRRI and AfricaRice operate with a large number of collaborators specific for each country and including private sector partners. In South Asia the project covers primarily East India, Bangladesh and Nepal and involves nearly 700 partners, including private sector and both public and private seed companies. The evaluation focused on STRASA’s work in India, where small and medium private seed companies were brought in by the public sector and were attracted to the partnership anticipating a business opportunity.<sup>26</sup> They gradually became important partners in the seed multiplication and distribution system. Given the importance of the project to agriculture and rice production, the partnership also involved groups with a strong grass-roots presence; NGOs and civil society organizations (CSO). Private sector has not only contributed to the seed business but it is also generating awareness about new varieties. This network has made it possible to fast-track varietal release and quality seed multiplication and dissemination.

The STRASA case was also assessed in a study on CGIAR delivery commissioned by the FC.<sup>27</sup> The study found that “STRASA performed highly in its capacity to develop the right technology for the right population, effectively deliver the technology to farmers by partnering with actors with cost-effective capacity, and facilitated delivery implementation through effective coordination of partners”. The study reported that “STRASA has connected [farmers] with certified seed producers so that the smallholders themselves can eventually gain certification and be absorbed into formal private sector value chains. In this manner, STRASA has shown characteristics of the best ‘go-to-market’ thinking deployed by private and social enterprises to rapidly reach rural populations at scale.”<sup>28</sup>

All three of the above case studies illustrate CGIAR’s ability to build sustainable partnerships with the private sector, bringing together complementary expertise to achieve objectives relevant to each of the partners. In all three cases, there was strong interest in commitment from non-CGIAR partners, both

26 The case study did not explore the work done in Nepal and Bangladesh, but found indications that it had been less successful and was much less sustainable than that in India.

27 Dalberg Global Development Advisors (2014): Delivery at the CGIAR. Report for 7 May Fund Council meeting. Fund Council Working Document.

28 In contrast, a case presented in the study as an example of unsuccessful delivery was reported as having “struggled to forge supportive partnerships with critical stakeholders, such as private seed companies.”

private and public. In the two MSP case studies (presented in Section 2.5), perceptions about private sector involvement has been somewhat mixed, with some participants acknowledging the value of private sector participation and others questioning the agenda of large private companies. The overriding argument for large MSPs is that they have the potential to bring the private sector together with public research and NGOs and CSOs.

While the case studies provided some examples of collaborations with the private sector that are perceived as successful by the CGIAR partners, there are other

promising private sector partnerships, many involving small and medium-sized private sector organizations as well as larger nationally-based organizations. Examples include:

### **Africa**

- › Work in Africa by the MAIZE CRP with over 180 small and medium sized partners, credited by CRP management with making an important contribution to impact.
- › IITA's business incubation platform (see Section 4.2.2) was the result of a major strategic decision to concentrate on private sector partners and has apparently resulted in many enquiries from entrepreneurs, although a limited number of established partnerships.
- › L&F work with a small- and medium-scale milk processors and traders in Tanzania, with the aim of achieving results on the ground in a short time.
- › ILRI's partnership with Veterinarians Without Borders for capacity building of pork butchers in Uganda under L&F.

### **India**

- › ICRASAT's engagement with the private sector in India, taking advantage of a Corporate Social Responsibility law introduced in 2014 that required a minimum percentage of investment for companies about a certain size. ICRISAT emphasized that social responsibility can be an incentive for private companies to partner with CGIAR.
- › Bioversity's work in India on the use of millet in school lunch programs, in partnership with FAO and the Indian Agriculture, Health and Education ministries. Private companies are also included to produce new millet-based snack foods.
- › CCAFS work with the insurance sector in India to ensure that smallholder farmers have access to crop insurance.

### **Worldwide**

- › CIMMYT's establishment of a number of contracts with multinational seed companies.
- › IMWI's partnership with private companies in the Netherlands so that both IMWI and partners can access the sustainable water fund.

The evaluation found that when discussing problems in engaging with the private sector, most interviewees spontaneously focused on experiences with large companies. There was a widely-held view among donor interviewees that engagement with multinationals has been particularly slow. While CRP and Center managers were less pessimistic, several commented that progress had been slower than they would have wished, and that it had taken time for them to understand how to work with large companies. "Success stories" volunteered by CGIAR research managers often involved small and medium-sized private partners, including those listed above.

Reasons suggested in interviews for slow progress were the time taken to build expertise in IPR, develop confidentiality agreements and conduct risk analysis, and the need to carry out the necessary due diligence to ensure that mission focus was maintained and that the public reputation of Centers was not damaged

by association with large companies. There is also the issue of market priorities of large companies. As one private sector interviewee remarked “CGIAR has to have something to sell”, and the private sector will allow only limited time for proof of concept. CGIAR has to be able to cope with changes in market strategy of multinationals in developing countries; one CRP provided an example of a partnership that began very well, but stopped abruptly when the senior management in the multinational changed and the company was no longer interested in developing a market in Africa. MAIZE CRP reported to FC4 that its intention was to make maize research fully demand-driven, and it works in consultation with the private sector. Differences in the cultures of CGIAR and the private sector were also mentioned by CGIAR interviewees and external partners, notably related to the time taken for early negotiations – CGIAR tends to have protracted discussion processes, while private companies prefer to be brief.

According to a specialist consulted by the FC at its 10<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2013, the CGIAR needed to understand better what the private sector is looking for in order to enter into partnerships. He judged these partnerships to happen on an *ad hoc* basis unevenly among Centers. In addition to seeking clarity on IPR issues (which the policy has since then started to address), Centers needed “to develop a culture of incentivizing partnerships with the private sector so that they become more institutionalized within the System”. While these are valid general points, the information obtained from the evaluation’s interviews demonstrated that each new CGIAR public-private partnership has required a separate effort to develop a mutual understanding of the objectives of and possible risks to each partner.

The CO and some donors expressed frustration that they had tried to set up fora where scientists could meet private sector representatives – the ISPC has also done this at the Science Forum – and that these efforts had either not been appreciated or not produced the expected new partnerships. However, at the same time, research managers made the point that general gatherings can be seen as a waste of time, since they rarely result in concrete partnerships – there needs to be a specific area of interest and a strong likelihood of being able to find funding. While this issue relates to approaching any potential partner, interviewees noted that private sector partners were particularly insistent on not wasting time when determining whether there would be value in establishing a relationship.

Many of the administrative barriers are being addressed; the number of IPR lawyers within CGIAR has increased, and procedures and templates have been produced to assist scientists entering contracts. However, Centers that have moved slowly may need assistance from System level with their strategy and approaches to private sector partnership.

## Multi-stakeholder platforms

### Rationale for engagement

The SRF 2011 considered that “Multi-stakeholder platforms and alliances convened around major global issues are promising instruments for involving partners from the private sector, as well as others.”

The ISPC’s 2015 study<sup>29</sup> describes MSPs as follows: “a specific form of partnership [...]structured alliances of stakeholders from public, private and civil society sectors [...]. A key feature is the dissimilarity of partners. This is qualitatively and functionally different from research or business partnerships, where similar stakeholders pool together resources and action to address goals within their collective control.” MSPs can be formed for a variety of reasons, to address issues that range from defined problems to systemic challenges, but the ISPC’s review notes that “over the past two decades there has been an

29 ISPC (2015). Strategic study of good practice in AR4D partnership. Rome, Italy. CGIAR Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC), viii + 39pp + annex 49pp

explosive growth in collective action for international development, much of which has been based on establishing new global partnership organizations and initiatives [...] organized around development challenges rather than research problems”, to deal with complex problems that require collective action across a broad stakeholder base. Thus, while CGIAR has always participated in collaborations or partnerships involving groups of research institutions, increasingly it must participate in large MSPs convened in the international development community to address complex global problems enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

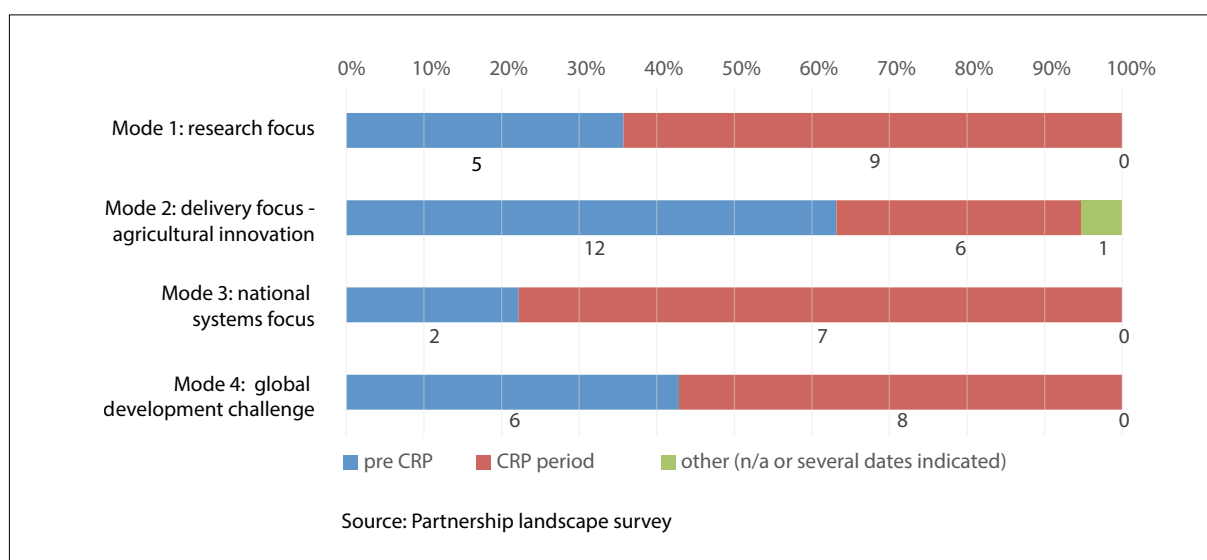
There is an enormous number and variety of MSPs, in which CGIAR could choose to engage, and its strategy must allow it to select those whose architecture and activities are best designed to link global policy and local action, and whose actions are informed by research evidence.

### Progress and constraints

The evaluation found considerable evolution in CGIAR’s engagement in MSPs. Although, they have not been the best forum for fruitful and outcome-oriented private sector collaboration, which has been better served by bilateral and medium-size partnerships serving specific CGIAR goals, they have been important for engagement with other stakeholders including NGOs, CSOs, governmental and intergovernmental organizations.

The ISPC’s 2015 report classifies MSPs into four types or “modes”, each with a different focus.<sup>30</sup> Data from the survey of critical partnerships suggests a shift during the CRP phase 1 from engaging mainly with MSPs dealing with a delivery focus on agricultural innovations (still the largest groups of MSPs) to MSPs with a national system focus and to new engagements with those that have a research focus or deal with global challenges (Figure 4, with MSP grouped by ISPC’s modes). The evaluation considers that it has been appropriate for CGIAR to continue to engage with all four modes since each relates to a different aspect of its mandate.

**Figure 4: MSPs presented by start of CGIAR involvement (pre CRP or CRP)**



30 *ibid.*

The evaluation found that there has been a determined effort to engage with MSPs. However it was not always evident from interviews or documented strategies precisely what were CGIAR's aims in engaging with MSPs, beyond simply having a presence. This was particularly true of MSPs dealing with global challenges, which are very different in character from those developed with specific research or development aims. They present particular challenges because of the complex problems they address and the broad spectrum of stakeholders that must necessarily participate in them, and so the evaluation explored the experience of CGIAR in working with this type of MSP.

Among the critical partnerships listed for the evaluation's survey there are 14 MSPs that work towards addressing global development challenges (Table 2). Twelve of them have a very broad mandate around a complex challenge, while two focus on contributions made by individual crops (cassava and rice) to food security. CGIAR is engaged in other global MSPs beyond those listed<sup>31</sup>.

**Table 2: Global MSPs named as critical partnerships by CRPs and Centers**

Partnership	Global challenge addressed	Listed by
Scaling Up Nutrition	Malnutrition	A4NH
Global Nutrition Report	Malnutrition	A4NH
Compact 2025	Food insecurity and malnutrition	IFPRI
Food Security Information Network	Food insecurity	IFPRI
Food Security Portal	Food insecurity and malnutrition	IFPRI
Global Hunger Index	Food insecurity	IFPRI
Global Alliance on Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA)	Climate change	CCAFS
Global Framework on Climate Services	Climate change	CCAFS
World Business Council on Sustainable Development initiative on Climate-Smart Agriculture	Climate change	CCAFS
International Treaty on PGRFA Secretariat	Biodiversity	CCAFS
Sustainable Rice Platform	Food insecurity (contribution of rice to resolving it)	RICE
Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century - GCP21	Food insecurity (contribution of cassava to resolving it)	RTB
Food, Energy, Environment and Water Network	Environmental sustainability, food insecurity	WLE
Global Landscape Forum, Convener – CIFOR	Environmental sustainability, food insecurity	WLE

**Source:** Evaluation survey, classification by evaluation team

The two MSPs included in the evaluation as case studies both address a complex global challenge.

- › The Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock has been able to attract quite a broad membership of public, private, non-government and CSOs. It has been important for CGIAR to have a presence in the Global Agenda and to influence the evolution of the partnership (it was a founder member and has been part of the management structure since the start), but at present it seems to be undecided about the role it should play and the level of input that will be necessary in the future. Interviews revealed that for

31 For example, The GRISP evaluation commended the CRP's engagement with regional partnerships and networks, which are all MSPs, for facilitating regional networking and for technology testing and delivery at country level. Some examples of these include: Fondo Latinoamericano para Arroz de Riego (also an example of public-private partnership), Support for Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops in Africa, Closing Rice Yield Gaps in Asia, and Consortium for Unfavorable Rice Environments.



CGIAR (ILRI), a motive to be engaged, helping to “grow the livestock investment pie”, represents both an altruistic and a self-interested agenda. The Global Agenda work program is not necessarily linked to the broader work programs of the members. A small but carefully targeted input from ILRI has kept CGIAR strategically engaged, but the contribution of CRPs to the knowledge products from the partnership has been limited and is almost invisible in the published outputs from the MSP (for example, L&F has been only loosely linked, and CCAFS’s input has been very little, although the areas addressed by the MSP are well aligned to their objectives). Some participants expressed impatience about slow progress towards concrete results.

If CGIAR wants to use this partnership to showcase research more strongly, or to demonstrate an intellectual lead in the global discourse on livestock and the SDGs, it will need to engage more comprehensively. The fact that the Global Agenda, like many broadly-constituted MSPs, is likely to be more successful in sharing knowledge than changing policy, need not be an impediment to CGIAR. On the contrary, it provides an ideal environment to display and discuss research findings on the role of livestock in delivering IPGs, in a forum where the livestock sector does not have to fight for space with other, more influential sectors. As the largest international livestock research organization with an SDG mandate, ILRI should be leading the way in defining what “sustainable” production means, and it could also be a conduit for making a clearer and more concrete link between the Global Agenda and all the CRPs that work on livestock-related issues (Livestock, A4NH and CCAFS).

- › CGIAR became heavily involved in GACSA when it was initiated, but has since reduced its level of engagement, as others have taken stronger roles in GCASA management and CCAFS has become involved in other MSPs. For CCAFS, there is a natural alignment between the work done by the CRP on climate-smart agriculture and the aims of GACSA. GACSA provides good opportunities to share CCAFS research findings with a wide audience. However, GACSA is not a stand-alone engagement. It fits seamlessly into CCAFS’ growing collaboration with the World Bank, attempts to make inputs into UNFCCC Conference of the Parties, and engagement with national governments. GACSA is a young alliance, and, due to its size and heterogeneity in terms of interests and objectives (as observed by the evaluation) and financial situation, its strength and sustainability are difficult to judge. The Knowledge group, in which CCAFS provided a co-chair until recently, is reported to be very active; this group is particularly relevant to CGIAR as its task is to facilitate dialogue and debate on climate-smart agriculture among the experts involved in GACSA. According to some individuals interviewed for this evaluation, GACSA is likely to become a very different kind of alliance if CGIAR withdraws; the future direction of the MSP would then depend on whether, for example, the Investment group takes on a stronger role and drives GACSA into a stronger action agenda. In the strategy meeting observed by the evaluation, collaboration on the ground between GACSA members was reported, including CCAFS engagement with CSOs on climate change in India. Interviewees informed the evaluation of commitment existing within action groups.

GACSA raises interesting questions about the nature of CGIAR participation in MSPs that deal with global issues such as climate change. CCAFS gradually reducing participation in this MSP may be an example of the choices that must be made by a CRP or Center about time devoted to fora that are inclusive of a very broad range of stakeholders, including CSOs, and offer an open space to share information, but have limited impact on global agreements and policies, compared to those that may be more effective at influencing policy but have more restricted membership and offer more limited opportunities to interact, particularly with NGOs and CSOs. It also illustrates the considerable effort that must be made by CGIAR when it is a main convener of a new MSP, rather than participating in one convened by others, or collaborating through smaller, more focused alliances, or using electronic portals to share information.

These two cases illustrated some similar features. These MSPs have little core funding, and members themselves have to dedicate resources (also in terms of time) or engage in fund raising. Uncertain funding has led uneven development of activities. Progress in the MSPs has been perceived as slow,

which is partly due to funding issues and partly because of the nature of developing and operating a global partnership<sup>32</sup>. The main benefits from CGIAR participation in these MSPs can be visibility in a global space, and an opportunity to present major scientific highlights to a very wide audience.<sup>33</sup> Given the broad mandate, strong engagement and commitment is needed for members to be heard and recognized. In both cases, this engagement has required effort from the respective CGIAR participants.

Given that many Centers and CRPs are engaged with more than one MSP addressing similar issues, potential trade-offs, conflicts and choices arise. The evaluation reviewed engagement in global MSPs by IFPRI, working on nutrition, and CCAFS, working on climate-smart agriculture (Box 2). In each case, they participate in a range of MSPs with different functions and likelihood of achieving different effects, requiring different levels of input, with expectation of different levels of return.

### Box 2: Examples of engagement with global MSPs

IFPRI lists four initiatives concerned with food insecurity as critical partnerships. They can be classified into three types.

- ▶ **Networking.** The Food Security Information Network is a loose information-sharing network hosted by FAO - under the definition of this evaluation it hardly qualifies as a partnership. IFPRI's input is very light.
- ▶ **Information sharing.** The Food Security Portal and Global Hunger Index provide organized online spaces to share published information and data. Both are hosted by IFPRI, which also provides scientific input.
- ▶ **Development action.** Compact 2025 is a recently initiated coalition of countries and development agencies facilitated by IFPRI that may become a channel for much of the Center's work towards development impact and will require all of the diplomatic and administrative inputs associated with any large coalition. IFPRI's input is likely to be considerable, with the hope of a large return in contributing to development impact.

CCAFS lists three MSPs related to climate change as critical partnerships. They can be classified into two types.

- ▶ **Information sharing.** Global Alliance on Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA) lists knowledge sharing and development action among its objectives but is operating primarily as a forum for sharing knowledge among a diverse group of stakeholders with an interest in CSA.
- ▶ **Development action.** The Global Framework on Climate Services is a UN-led initiative established in 2010. The World Business Council on Sustainable Development initiative on climate-smart agriculture is a recently established project of CCAFS and the World Bank under the umbrella of the World Business Council For Sustainable Development, a coalition of private sector organizations. Although very different, each of the MSPs has an action-focused agenda.

**Source:** Partnership landscape survey, websites of partnerships, case study on GACSA ( Annex F)

The evaluation learned through interviews that non-CGIAR partners who have the capacity to play leadership roles in large MSPs within a CGIAR context have at times been reluctant or unable to do so due to their narrow national mandates. At the same time, some CGIAR interviewees commented that they found it challenging to assess how much input should be made to global MSPs, particularly when a commodity-focused CRP or Center engages with an MSP addressing nutrition or climate change. The analysis done by the evaluation suggests that participation in global MSPs will continue to grow, and that this is an important strategic issue that would merit further attention.

32 A good reference on the challenges of running global MSPs is Bezanson, K.A. and Isenman, P. (2012): Governance of New Global Partnerships: Challenges, Weaknesses, and Lessons. CGD Policy Paper 014. Washington DC: Center for Global Development. (available at <http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1426627>).

33 On the GACSA website the evaluation team found a compendium and several practice briefs produced under the GACSA umbrella with contribution from IIRI and CCAFS, all with Center or CCAFS logos.

## Conclusions and recommendations

With respect to the strategic selection of partnerships, the reform has been influential at two levels; it has brought Centers together to design and implement the CRPs, and it has affected the evolution of partnerships with external organizations. Center partnerships within CRPs have evolved during the reform period to reflect better what each Center can contribute. CRPs initially included external partnerships that the participating Centers brought with the research that they mapped to the CRP. As the CRPs have been revised, partnerships have also evolved and the CRPs have been influential in this.

CGIAR has a long history of working with external partners, which has continued and broadened in scope during the reform. CGIAR has built on well-established partnerships and added new ones according to need. The reform has required more explicit consideration of engagement in partnerships, and the evaluation considers this to be positive.

Centers and CRPs have generally been more strategic in their choice of partnerships than before the reform. The partnership landscape shows deliberate positioning of partners along the CRPs' impact pathways. Development of TOCs has necessitated considering partners' roles. From its assessment of the partnerships that were presented by CRPs and Centers as the most critical, the evaluation concludes that the selection and diversity of partnerships respond well to the reform expectation to strengthen orientation of IPG research towards development results.

The current partnership landscape is a result of strategic and tactical choices made by research managers as well as external drivers influenced by global development trends. It shows a broad range of partnerships with non-CGIAR organizations and new or differently constructed partnerships with ARIs that bring strong research capacity. It demonstrates some new engagement in global MSPs and in partnerships for scaling, and there has been an effort to involve more NGOs. The evaluation found these trends to be positive. The presence of long-standing as well as new partnerships is a positive feature, as relationship-building with a new partner can require considerable investment of effort. Centers are well linked to universities, now even more than before, working through linkages between scientists, joint projects and consortia.

Concerning the private sector, CGIAR as a whole has not yet formulated a position or strategy for engaging in public-private partnerships that would leverage its advantage as a public sector partner. Large multinational companies have become a dominant player in crop research, germplasm improvement and the seed sector in many crops, and many companies deal with other technologies that CGIAR is also developing. Small and medium-sized companies are essential players in marketing and delivery in the agricultural sector. Yet, the evaluation found uneven progress in engaging with private sector partners, particularly the large multinationals. The evaluation considers that while private sector engagement involves agreements that are best dealt with at Center level, strategic actions at the System level are much needed.

The evaluation considers that CGIAR should make more effort to draw lessons from different partnership models, and thus to optimize its involvement, particularly in MSPs. Centers and CRPs have been willing to work within a range of models to fit specific situations, and to experiment when necessary. CGIAR would need to clarify the purpose and objectives set for different models and optimize its involvement. There would be value in conducting System-wide strategic reviews of the experiences of partnership models used, particularly for scaling purposes; an exercise that goes beyond what the evaluation could do.

All CRPs (as obliged) and some Centers have developed partnership strategies but they are still variable in comprehensiveness. Among the more fully elaborated partnerships strategies, the evaluation found good material about partnerships in the specific context of the respective Center or CRP. However, Centers that as institutions establish the relations with partners and manage partnerships, in many cases do not have partnership strategies. The process of developing a partnership strategy can be

as valuable as the strategy itself, and documenting the strategy helps internalizing it throughout the institution or program and with partners. It would be important to incorporate or align strategic planning of partnerships well with research strategies.

### ◆ Recommendation 1.

**All CRPs should have a distinct partnership strategy and accompanying operational plan.**

Strategies should clearly align approaches to partnerships with research strategies and theories of change, and make clear the objectives for partner selection and engagement to strengthen research implementation, delivery and scaling of results. Operational plans should provide a basis for monitoring progress in development of partnerships. There is value in developing these documents because of the collective analysis it will require, and to build on what was described in the Phase 2 proposals and ensure it is actioned. Centers that have not recently updated their partnership strategies may find value in doing so. Documented strategies should reflect the internal relationships that Centers have in CRPs.

### ◆ Recommendation 2.

**Strategic reviews should be conducted of multi-stakeholder partnership models.**

In order to optimize CGIAR's involvement and investment of resources in multi-stakeholder platforms, System-level strategic reviews should be conducted of the types of partnerships in which CGIAR has invested heavily or where it expects to expand participation. Global MSPs dealing with environment, food security and nutrition are a priority for such a review. The aim of these reviews would be to draw lessons on the following:

- i. the objectives of CGIAR participation in this type of partnership
- ii. CGIAR's comparative advantage and role in these this type of multi-stakeholder platform;
- iii. resources and capacities involved; and
- iv. their potential to enhance program objectives, and to offer strategic guidance for future engagement.

The evaluation sees this review as a follow-on exercise to the report on partnerships that has been published by the ISPC, and therefore something that it may be appropriate for the ISPC to undertake.

### ◆ Recommendation 3.

**A strategic analysis should be conducted at System level for guiding the development of public-private partnership.**

Given the importance attached to partnership with the private sector and the uneven progress that has so far been made, an analysis should be carried out at System level of the following aspects:

- i. a broad plan for engagement with multinationals and smaller companies to best fit the needs of the SRF; and
- ii. drawing on experience to date, principles of engaging with private sector organizations according to their size and global reach.

The strategy should acknowledge both CGIAR's comparative advantage as a public sector entity with field presence in developing countries, and any potential risks to reputation. The evaluation sees the strategy development process as a way of consolidating and expanding the thinking that has been done by CGIAR's governing bodies previously, and progressing towards implementable guidelines.

It may be necessary to implement practical measures to support the implementation of the strategy, such as support on due diligence processes to assess partners and advice to Centers from IPR specialists.





# 3. Enabling environment

This Chapter addresses the question “*To what extent do CGIAR systems facilitate good partnering and has this improved as a result of the reform?*” Partnerships were given major emphasis in the reform, which enforced a programmatic approach and systems for central management of partnership programs. The basis used by a few CRPs for allocation of core funding (W1/W2) through performance contracts further enforced the roles of partners, both internal and external, in research implementation. The evaluation reviewed the resources, systems, policies and procedures at Center and System level to assess the extent to which they have promoted or hampered partnerships.

The team based its assessment on interviews with CRP and Center managers, partners, and representatives of CGIAR’s governing bodies and the survey of FP managers. It reviewed meeting minutes and selected documentation from the CO and the ISPC. The team attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> GCARD meeting and reviewed GFAR’s role in CGIAR.

## Partnership management

Partnerships in CGIAR research programs rely on the practical day-to-day support that comes from the administrative structure and processes of Centers, particularly those of the lead Centers of CRPs, which have ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the CRPs. All formal partnership arrangements are administered through Centers, which also bear any financial and reputational risks associated with establishing new partnerships. Therefore the functionality of Center systems has a considerable influence on the smooth running or otherwise of partnerships, which in turn has implications on the level of effort required from scientists.



At the same time, there are central management systems applying to partnership management, with which Centers must comply. CRP standardized annual work planning (Program of Work and Budget) includes work to be carried out by participating Centers and external partners (although typically it does not attribute work by partner). Standardized annual reporting implicitly covers partner contributions to results and progress, and contains a section on partnership building activities and one on risk management where subcontractors may be specified. The Consortium has also attempted to put in place One Corporate System for coordinating financial, human resources and administrative policies and procedures, but this has not been adopted by all Centers. A more recent initiative for sharing common systems across CRPs is the Managing Agricultural Research for Learning and Outcomes, which is a planning and reporting tool currently being used by seven CRPs.<sup>34</sup>

The findings in the IEA's CRP evaluation reports reflect some tension in transitioning towards common and shared systems, particularly when it comes to performance reporting that is still required both at the System level and bilaterally to a large number of donors. The GRiSP evaluation report reflects some dissatisfaction by non-CGIAR core partners involved in program management that have in their own view been burdened with management tasks pertaining only to CGIAR Centers. However, as Centers and their partners are working together within CRPs, it has been important that the administrative processes associated with reporting, including financial reporting, are perceived as becoming harmonized, although slowly. Despite the transactions costs associated with the transition to common systems, the evaluation considers that the objective to harmonize administrative processes is positive and likely to facilitate partnership management and accountability.

At operational level, most Centers have a support office overseen by a senior manager that can provide advice about initiating new partnerships. Several of the Center partnership managers interviewed described actions taken during the reform period to improve support processes for establishing and managing partnerships. Examples included:

- › Development of partnership templates that are reviewed by the legal office, and introducing a due diligence process (ILRI)
- › Reviewing the role of the partnerships directorate development and changing it's name from Partnerships and Capacity Development to Partnerships for Delivery to reflect a new focus on delivery (IITA)
- › Initiating a task force to work on Letters of Agreement to identify strategic institutional policies by research area (Bioversity).
- › Development of a risk management strategy and database, in recognition of the growing complexity of partnership arrangement and the increased need to assess risk before entering into partnerships (ICRAF)
- › Introduction of a standing committee (including an IPR lawyer) to do due diligence on all independent partners (ICRISAT)
- › Development of a policy document on entering into partnerships with private sector, and increasing the level of due diligence for potential of risk to reputational capital (CIFOR).
- › Development of protocols and guidelines for working with private sector – an ongoing exercise (IMWI).

Interviews with CRP leaders, Center managers and partners revealed that engaging in partnerships and cultivating them is seen as a time-intensive and demanding process, which highlights the importance of adequate administrative and support systems. Some interviewees also commented that becoming more strategic about partnerships has positively affected management of those partnerships. Furthermore,

<sup>34</sup> <https://marlo.cgiar.org>

risk management concerning partnerships was highlighted in many interviews as an important factor and, as mentioned above, CRPs are annually reporting on this issue.

In some cases, the Center or CRP strategy is accompanied by operational guidelines for partnerships. IFPRI describes five actions relating to partnerships<sup>35</sup>, ILRI describes in detail the supporting management systems, A4NH includes tools for planning and management of partnerships and WLE is in the process of developing operational guidelines.

Some CRP and Center interviewees and their partners described actions they have taken to reduce the impact of CGIAR administration (and the additional burden of reporting to donors without a harmonized system for doing so) on external partners. The point is illustrated by the Seeds of Discovery project, one of the evaluation case studies.

- › The CIMMYT-based project involves 28 partners including ARIs and private companies. It is mostly bilaterally funded but mapped closely to the WHEAT and MAIZE CRPs, each of which contributes some core funding. The CIMMYT project managers have developed and adopted a number of systems and tools including a legal services unit, a standard logframe and milestone-based contract for all partnerships that is linked to reporting tools and systems that the CRPs use and those the Center uses in reporting to bilateral donors. While CIMMYT needs to deliver detailed quarterly reports to the bilateral donor, this cumbersome task is almost entirely transparent to the individual partners, who need only to produce relatively simple reports that are captured in a spreadsheet-based system. The system has been developed and improved continuously over the years.

The evaluation observed that the relationship between CRP leaders and the Center managers responsible for partnerships is generally good. Center reputation has also helped CRPs to bring in new partners. According to some interviews, funding can cause tension between Center and CRP management about directions to take; when funding is tight, Centers are reluctant to spend it on partners. While the CRP managers have limited authority to decide on partnerships, they have been influential in inducing partnerships.<sup>36</sup> However, one long term core partner commented that the lack of clarity (and sometimes tensions) in the relationship between Center and CRP is not helpful for the partner, who doesn't know with whom to negotiate. With the new SMB, Centers have a strong role in CGIAR governance. The evaluation considers it desirable for the CRP to maintain some autonomy and sufficient flexibility to innovate with partnerships to serve program needs.

The evaluation specifically assessed reporting on partnerships in annual reports to gauge ways partnerships are seen in CRPs as contributing to program implementation and progress. It reviewed the way partnerships were presented in the 2015 annual reports of seven CRPs chosen at random (see Table 3), and found useful features in all of them highlighted below. The ideal reporting on partnerships would combine:

- › The effortless inclusion of partners and partnerships in the chapters on technical achievements exemplified by the MAIZE report.
- › Information on delivery of results and impact through partnership as exemplified by CCAFS.
- › A short but detailed chapter on partnership strategy and any special efforts made to develop partnerships, as done in greatest detail by GRISP and WLE and to a lesser extent by FTA, L&F and Dryland Systems.
- › Information on challenges and risks, presented in some detail by GRISP and L&F and mentioned by Dryland Systems.

35 1. Reach out to new players such as the private sector, BRICS, Association of Southeast, 2. Assess the state of its partnerships to optimize the strategic planning of future partnerships, 3. Monitor and evaluate partnerships' activities, 4. Create a master partnership plan 5. Invest in food policy partnership research.

36 As shown, for example, by the partner networking analysis done by ILAC.

- › More detailed information on expenditure channeled through partnerships, which is very difficult to find in CRP and Center reports.
- › A stronger link between partnerships and the CRPs' TOCs with respect to the role of partnerships in creating change and impact. CCAFS, MAIZE and Dryland Systems all have elements of this but none of the reports fully develop the concept.

The way partnerships are presented in proposals and annual reports reflects insufficient detail to be useful in management and monitoring. Partner lists (that presumably derive from databases) contain very little detail beyond the name of the partner and a general typology. As minimum, a partner database should give the programs or projects, with which the partner is (or has been) associated, the position(s) along the impact pathway where the partnership operates, and the duration of the partnership. The stakeholder mapping survey conducted by the ILAC project for RTB initially, and across several CRPs in 2015, provided information about peer-to-peer collaboration that was used by the evaluation; however, an exercise of this kind would not be suitable for regular monitoring as it is extremely time consuming. Guidance to CRP development in phase 2 covered some of the issues mentioned here, as it was detailed in specifying information request about partnerships. The request included partners' role in the program and share of the budget, positioning of the partnership along the impact pathway, and engagement with the private sector specifically.

**Table 3. Reporting on partnerships in the latest annual report of seven randomly selected CRPs**

CRP (date of report)	Partnership strategy	Partnership-building activities	Partnership in reports of technical achievement	Risks, challenges, learning on partnerships	Data on partnerships
CCAFS (2015) <sup>1</sup>	No.	No.	Partners mentioned in most chapters, including some specific partnerships. Emphasis on delivery of impact through partnerships.*	No.	Link to list of partners. Expenditure on “collaborator costs”.
Dryland Systems (2014)	In “Partnerships” chapter.	In “Partnerships” chapter and under Capacity Development.	Innovation platforms mentioned several times. Partners in general mentioned several times but not much specific information.	In key messages from director.	Chart of partners by category. Expenditure on “collaborator costs”.
GRISP (2015)	In “Partnerships-building achievements” chapter and Annex on collaboration with other CRPs.	In “Partnerships-building achievements” chapter.	Partners mentioned in most chapters, including some specific partnerships.	In Lessons Learned chapter and in the Risk Framework.	List of partners in annex.
FTA (2015)	Limited information in “Partnerships” chapter.	Limited information in “Partnerships” chapter.	Very little specific mention of partners or partnerships.	No.	No (website lists five core partners).
L&F (2014)	Limited information in key messages but not in the main text.	In “Partnerships-building achievements” chapter.	Mentioned a few times in the text.	In Risk management chapter.	No.
MAIZE (2015)	No.	No.	Seamless inclusion of information on partners and partnership in most chapters. One chapter devoted to work through innovation platforms.	No.	No (list is available on website).
WLE (2015)	In “Partnerships-building achievements” chapter.	In “Partnerships-building achievements” chapter.	Partners mentioned in most chapters, including some specific partnerships.		No (website lists 12 core partners).

\* The CCAFS 2016 annual report, which was published after the comparative analysis for this table had been completed, strongly emphasises the role of partnerships in the CRP’s work and provides a number of examples.

**Source:** 2015 Annual report of each CRP, downloaded from websites

Linking of partnerships with the CRP TOCs the evaluation team found potentially very useful for monitoring partnerships and reporting on them (as has been attempted by CCAFS, MAIZE, and Dryland Systems). To make this easier, routine reports from research activities and field sites, and the databases into which their information is recorded, should be structured around the TOCs. The evaluation found that at least L&F has piloted this approach. As the subject of partnerships does not lend itself to a standard set of indicators, other methodologically systematic but flexible and context-specific ways can be developed for improving the way partnerships are monitored and reported and challenges addressed.

## Funding

Constraints to partnership related to funding, particularly core funding through W1/W2, were a recurring theme cited by almost all CGIAR interviewees and external partners. Some CGIAR research managers stated that resourcing (principally finance) was the main constraint they faced to developing and maintaining partnerships. Changes in CGIAR's funding landscape have reduced the reliability of core funding and increased dependence on bilateral funding, while CGIAR's annual budgeting system and late delivery of funding have been problematic for cash flow – all of these factors have adversely affected partnerships.

The evaluation looked at the effects on partnerships of trends in all kinds of CGIAR funding. It focused particularly on core funding in W1/W2, because this emerged immediately and strongly as a major concern to CGIAR interviewees and their partners, but also considered trends in bilateral funding and the bigger issue of co-financing research and development.<sup>37</sup>

### Funding trends and implications for partnerships

The evaluation found the following important trends in funding that have affected partnership.

Core funding through W1/W2, which was expected to provide a solid funding base underpinning research programs and partnerships, has not materialized. W1/W2 represent unrestricted funding to CRPs that has particular value to research managers as it provides opportunities to explore and develop new forms of partnership that may then form the basis for project activities carried out using more restricted CGIAR funding or partners' own funding. Despite the reform discourse and objectives to provide strong core funding, the first six years of CRP implementation have seen an overall decline in W1/W2 funding, starting with a sudden fund cut in 2014 after an initial increase in overall funding. Partnership problems associated with unreliable W1/W2 funding are elaborated in Section 3.2.2. There have also been problems arising from late delivery of the funds and annual budgeting, which are discussed in Section 3.2.3.

W3 and bilateral funding have become a growing proportion of the budget. Some traditional donors have favoured these forms of funding, both targeted at Centers, while others fund CGIAR through both W1/W2 and through bilateral projects in the field. The latter type of funding, initially seen as short-term, and as less dependable than W1/W2, is now considered by many CRP leaders to be an increasingly reliable funding source. However, bilateral donors often place a particularly strong emphasis on delivery and impact within a relatively short period. Some CRP evaluations commented on the discrepancy between objectives of those two kinds of funding alternatives, with core funding aimed at internationally relevant research that is considered CGIAR's comparative advantage, and bilateral funding often taking the CGIAR too far into the development realm, occasionally bypassing the institutions that would be better placed for national and local research and scaling.

<sup>37</sup> In SRF 2011 it was estimated that for having impact on poverty and hunger, investment in agricultural research for development in national and international public sector would need to be over 16 billion, against 1.6 billion by the CGIAR then considered as an achievable target.



The reform has also seen two types of new donors emerging. One is the private foundations that favour bilateral and W3 funding. Interviewees from foundations suggested that this funding route was a deliberate choice because it provided an opportunity to influence the use of funds. The second type of new donor is the emerging economies such as Mexico, Nigeria and the Philippines, which have provided larger cash grants than in previous years (many developing countries provided in-kind support to CGIAR in the form of land or facilities, but substantial cash grants are a new feature). These grants have tended to be bilateral and for specific programs, rather than core funding. Two of the case studies provided example of these trends. The Seeds of Discovery project received considerable bilateral funding from the Mexican government, and the STRASA project was initiated with major support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and was strongly supported by Indian government funding of field-level activities in South Asia. The growth of importance of these new sources of funding represents both an opportunity to obtain new operational funding for work with partners, and a challenge because of the bilateral nature of the funding.

Apart from CGIAR funding there are examples of co-investment. For example, in the beans network coordinated by CIAT (Pan-African Bean Research Alliance), World Bank funding is going directly to some NARS. Some CRP managers indicated that many NARS can now themselves fund their technical cooperation and some developing country governments are increasing their investments, not only in the CGIAR as mentioned above, but on national and even international agricultural research and development. Therefore, while the evaluation has focused its assessment on CGIAR funding, and particularly the effects that funding fluctuations have had on partnerships, it recognizes that broader funding environment that can support partnerships and development objectives.

## Problems associated with unreliable Window 1 and 2 Funding

One of the implicit expectations raised by the reform was reliable core funding at a consistent level over a long period, perhaps as much as ten years. This did not materialize. Many of the CRP evaluations highlighted the negative effects the unexpected cuts in 2014 and 2015 in W1/W2 funding had on research and partnership planning. Not only were funds cut by up to 20 percent, but this was done very suddenly and well into the year. IEA's synthesis report of CRP evaluations<sup>38</sup> states that "almost all the evaluations highlighted the uncertainty of W1/W2 funds from year to year, and even within year that undermined their value for funding long-term research [...]. Adding to this uncertainty, the evaluations took place as the CO was advising CRPs of significant budget cuts well into the fiscal year after funds had already been allocated and CRP commitments made. This uncertainty along with failure of the CGIAR donors to transition from bilateral to W1/W2 funding has undermined confidence in W1/W2 funds as the 'core funds' of the System." As a result of the cuts in core funding, bilateral funding has become more attractive and is increasingly sought; the report states: "[CRP] evaluations noted that W3/bilateral funds are now not only the bulk of the funds but the more stable 'core' of the CRPs".

W1/2 funding is currently only about 20 percent of the total, but it is still considered by CRP managers and Centers and their strategic partners to be important because it can be spent on most strategic activities linking bilaterally funded activities to a coherent whole, it allows flexibility, and (until recently) it was expected to be long-term compared to the three-year cycle that is now typical of bilateral projects. Although the cut represented less than 10 percent of total funding, the evaluation found that it had resulted in negative effect on partnerships.

### Effects on partners from reduction in ongoing activities

Unexpected drops in budget have led to reduction in the level of some field activities and attempts to do the same work with a reduced budget. For example, Dryland Systems reported in the 2014 annual

<sup>38</sup> Birner, R. and Byerlee D. (2016).

report that it had reduced the number of action sites in which it does field research from 23 to 13, suspending activities in West Asia and at one site in Central Asia. These changes had a financial impact on partners, including national partners, and were hard to explain to them. The evaluation was told by some interviewees that previously solid partnerships had experienced difficulties because of funding cuts. Reduction in staff, in one case loss of a CGIAR partnership co-ordinator, affected specific partnerships. One CRP leader noted that there had been a particularly strong effect from funding cuts on partners in developing countries involved in scaling activities, while another said that it is hard to sustain active engagement from NARS when CGIAR cannot commit assured funding to its own activities. One donor had observed that capacity building for partners had been reduced when funds were uncertain, and that some partners held back when they were uncertain about funding of activities in which they were involved.

Some CRPs took measures to limit the damage, continuing to fund partnership activities despite the cut – for example, the evaluation of WHEAT noted that the CRP’s management committee prioritized funding of competitive grant partners after the first cut, and L&F was reported as having protected its gender research.

Some strategic partners and CGIAR managers also described reputational effects resulting from CGIAR not being able to keep contractual agreements after frequent budget cuts, partners being treated in a manner perceived as unbalanced and partners losing trust when CGIAR was unable to deliver on its promises.

### **Effects on innovation in partnership**

One impact of declining and unreliable core funding is that it may limit the ability of CRPs to be innovative in their partnerships. The evaluation found both problems and opportunities, although it was too early to assess what the final effects will be.

A problem with unreliable core funding is that in the best of cases this type of funding has been used in positive and innovative ways to bring partners together, and constraints to it have produced detrimental effects on these schemes. Several CGIAR managers explained that they have used W1/W2 funding to develop new partnerships or experiment with new partnership models. Bilateral funding reduces the flexibility of what Centers can get involved in, and in addition, because it is project based and not always fully costed, this can make it difficult for CGIAR to provide the investment to build new partnerships. This is a particular issue when working with the least-resourced developing country partners.

An example of a detrimental effect has been the impact on the competitive grants operated by several CRPs. These have been used by CRP management to further programmatic integration by funding collaborative research of particular, strategic importance to the CRP<sup>39</sup>. While this funding was also in some cases open to external partners, one of its main functions was to capture synergies and complementarities across Centers. Two CRPs, CCAFS and PIM, introduced competitive elements to overall allocation of W1/W2 funding to Centers. The CRP evaluations commonly considered competitive grant schemes very useful. For example, GRiSP’s competitive grant scheme to fund “New Frontier” research, and RTB’s complementary projects were commended by the CRP evaluations as having fostered strong collaboration among partners and been strategically focused. Both evaluations emphasized the need to move away from formula funding (allocating W1/W2 funding to Center partners in historic proportions) to more competitive allocation of core funding. However, the GRiSP evaluation noted that the CRP could only do that if the decline in W1/W2 funding and the unreliable delivery were reversed. Drylands Cereals and Grain Legumes initially maintained their competitive grants in the face of budget cuts but were unable to sustain them in 2016. Not only has the decline in core funding affected these

<sup>39</sup> Competitive bidding was also used in the CPs, and in HarvestPlus the 2008 evaluation considered it a useful way to promote partnerships to help strengthen science.

competitive schemes, but restrictions in year-to-year carry over have prevented CRPs from ‘shielding’ money by putting it aside for the next year. With reduced availability of core funding compared to bilateral funding, CRP management will subsequently have less direct influence on the program agenda and partnerships.

A further example of a negative effect from core funding constraints has been the change in Centers’ attitudes towards new partnerships after the budget cuts, observed by some donors and CRP leaders. The evaluation was not able to fully assess the effect, but there appears to have been a drawing back by Centers from agreeing that core funding be spent on partners’ activities, which as mentioned above, has in some cases created tension between Center and CRP management<sup>40</sup>. There is also a disincentive to commit a falling core budget to the costs of investing in new partnerships or experimenting with new partnership models, and these things are harder to do with bilateral funding. A representative of a regional partner commented that budget uncertainty had resulted in a tendency to remain with “safe”, traditional partners (i.e. research organizations).

While the above problems are of great concern, there may also be opportunities from the increased bilateral budget. For example, a CRP leader noted that private sector partners could be attractive as they brought their own funding and were motivated by market potential rather than the funding provided by CGIAR. One large external partner suggested that it would need to rethink the financial model on which it works with CGIAR because co-financing of human resources has become harder to plan – currently this was seen as a constraint, but it also provides an opportunity for an in-depth review of an important partnership. Bilateral donors have been willing to fund applied research and scaling activities where Centers work with NGOs and the private sector, and there are examples (such as in the STRASA project in India) where a country donor has considerably co-financed scaling activities.

Because W1/2 funding has become unreliable, bilateral funding, which is “projectized”, has become more attractive and therefore may dominate setting of objectives as it provides reasonably secure funding for the entire life of the project.

## Problems due to annual core funding and its late delivery

Centers receive budget allocations annually and have limited options to carry forward unspent funds. Carrying forward was permitted in the early years of the CRPs but was later restricted; for example, the L&F CRP evaluation noted that “in 2014, unlike in earlier years, L&F was unexpectedly denied by the CO/FC the right to carry-over unspent funds from 2014 to 2015 – although this decision was later partly revoked to allow carry-over of funds that could be shown to have been committed and documented”. Some planning with partners must be done with a longer time horizon than a year – for example, universities partnering with CRPs who expect to involve PhD students or postdoctoral scientists in CRP research may need a guaranteed source of funding for several years. This problem is not insurmountable, but it requires some partners to find alternative sources of back-up funding. IEA’s synthesis report of CRP evaluations noted that “[W1/W2] funds are allocated one year at a time and it has been hard for the CRPs to make long-term commitments based on these funds.” One of the partners interviewed by the evaluation commented that most research funding in developed countries is based on a contract model with guaranteed deliverables over an agreed period of time, while for CGIAR core funding is agreed on an annual basis. On the side of CGIAR Centers, it was noted that uncertainty about W1/W2 funding limits their willingness to formalize partnerships through MOUs and contracts, since these represent a fiduciary risk when funding is not assured.

40 The CPs had independent governance and were designed to contribute to funding partners’ activities. For example, in 2013, its final year of operation, the Generation CP shifted about 40 percent of the budget to NARS to manage.

Some interviewees made the point that annual budgeting makes it difficult to manage the seasonal field research that CGIAR carries out with national partners, since agricultural cycles do not always correspond with annual administrative cycles, and as a result, it has often been necessary to be creative in order to synchronize budgets.

Although funding is agreed in advance, it may be received late in the year, meaning that Centers sometimes have to pre-finance, or delay field work and risk letting down their partners. The partners themselves often carry out their work (and must file all mandatory plans and reports) before receiving funding. Some partners need money up front in order to start field work, and the CGIAR System does not handle this well, resulting in delays that leave only a very narrow window of time in which to get work done. Interruption of research because of late funding can have long term effects. The CCAFS CRP evaluation noted that since research is done sequentially, inability to complete research activities influences subsequent research and the work programs of all of the partners involved. The evaluation case study project on an RTB complementary project (see section 2.3.2) revealed frustration about the very low level and late arrival of CRP funding.

The evaluation concludes that the combination of multiple uncertainties associated with funding represents a major constraint to partnering and thus to delivery of CGIAR's objectives. Evidence consistently suggests that uncertainty within a year and across years due to the funding cycle made it difficult to construct and deliver a program of work with partners.

## CGIAR System-level support

### Strategic oversight and guidance

The reform set up a two-pillar governance system separating “doers” (represented by the Consortium Board) from the “funders” (represented by the FC).<sup>41</sup> In its analysis, the evaluation drew from review of the Consortium Board and FC minutes, document review and interviews and triangulated evidence presented in other sections of the report, for example analysis of funding.

The evaluation explored Consortium Board and FC discussions, decisions and initiatives and the consistency of oversight on matters dealing with external partnerships. It also assessed matters related to partnerships that would require attention at the strategic governance level.

### Fund Council

The FC has considerable positional power, which it exercises by providing guidance on and oversight of external partnerships. It is the final arbiter on all decisions regarding CGIAR structure and strategy.

The FC approved the CRPs (including extension proposals and phase 2 program proposals), contributed to the development of and approved the SRF in 2011 and 2015, and acted on the 2013 Mid-term Review recommendations that led to the governance transition. In all of these cases, the FC has strongly steered the CGIAR System towards a partnership-based model for implementing a results-based strategy.

The FC and the Consortium (in which the Consortium Board had the responsibility to develop the CRPs, oversee their implementation and report on their performance to the FC, while the CO implemented the decisions of the Board) have consulted on a number of issues relating to partnerships, including the annual reporting framework, development of a System-level partnership strategy, and allocation of funds between CGIAR and partners. The two bodies described their mutual relationship as a partnership.

41 [http://www.cgiar.org/wwwarchive/www.cgiar.org/pdf/pub\\_cg\\_corp\\_folder\\_inserts\\_Change\\_10\\_09.pdf](http://www.cgiar.org/wwwarchive/www.cgiar.org/pdf/pub_cg_corp_folder_inserts_Change_10_09.pdf)

Reports of FC meetings reflect that partnership has been a subject of discussion throughout the reform. In the early stages, discussion related to roles within CGIAR and building effective partnerships within CRPs. The expectation was that the Consortium would deliver results based on effective partnerships and ensure that concrete stakeholder engagement during the development of the CRPs would lead to clearly defined and purposeful partnerships. The FC encouraged “mainstreaming” partnership development in all CRPs. In the phase 1 CRP approval, FC decided on a list of “Must Haves” combining its own comments with those of the ISPC. For partnerships, the FC raised many more concerns than the ISPC and included the following types of issues:

- › Developing partnership across many Centers (RTB, Humidtropics);
- › Specificity on selection of partners and partners’ role (Dryland Cereals, WLE, A4NH, Humidtropics);
- › Clarity about partnerships with specific partner types, such as regional fora (PIM, Dryland systems), research consortia (WHEAT) or private sector (A4NH, Humidtropics);
- › Adequacy and clarity of engagement with farmers organizations and delivery organizations (Grain legumes, Humidtropics)

Public-private partnerships have been discussed in several meetings. In general, the meeting minutes reflect dissatisfaction with the limited number of private sector partnerships in CGIAR, and the perceived importance of those partnerships. The FC saw much potential for public-private partnership, including with partners outside the agricultural sector, but also felt that the System had too little information about how public-private partnerships are comprised, how they work, and what models are available to leverage private sector investment to provide catalytic funding. The FC contemplated bringing experts together to think through the models and potential pilot projects that would generate the evidence to shift thinking, but has not yet done so.

The most concrete guidance provided by the CGIAR System on public-private partnerships has been the “CGIAR Principles on the Management of Intellectual Assets”, developed by the Consortium Board and endorsed by the FC in 2013. It governs management of intellectual assets (those of CGIAR and others) and use of IPR, explicitly in the context of development of IPGs and operating in partnerships. The FC considered the policy as essential for private sector partnership and noted that it would assist the CGIAR System in pursuing public-private partnerships that are critical to agricultural research for development. An evaluation of this policy is underway by the IEA.

In 2013-14, the FC discussed delivery through partnerships, having observed that, firstly, there was a need for stronger partnerships and greater work with more boundary partners; and secondly, shared responsibility with partners for delivery would imply that CGIAR needed to help leveraging greater awareness and investment in partner countries.

These discussions led to a study of delivery in CGIAR that this evaluation used for evaluative information and perspectives regarding development partnerships.<sup>42</sup> The evaluation considered these discussions and issues raised in the study report relevant for CGIAR’s mission and delivery focus. They reflected FC’s appreciation of the essential role that partners play in CGIAR’s success, particularly NARS, NGOs and the private sector. While the report was intended to be a “starting point for a larger conversation on the challenge of delivery within CGIAR”, it has not been followed by any concerted action.

The Mid-term Review (2014) commissioned by the FC made two recommendations regarding partnerships: *CGIAR should develop guidelines for identifying, establishing, managing, reviewing and*

42 FC members considered that the study had not sufficiently covered the role of the private sector, non-technology delivery and segmentation of boundary partners.

*optimizing partnerships; and CGIAR should scale-up partnerships capable of tackling mega challenges.* While the FC endorsed all recommendations in the report, it subsequently focused on the one on governance transition that was completed in 2016.

All of the above suggest that the FC has taken a strong interest in external partnerships throughout the reform and has been instrumental in approving decisions that have been positive for partnerships. However, the evaluation was concerned by the apparently wide range of viewpoints among donors whose representatives were interviewed, suggesting that it may be difficult for a donor council to act decisively on partnerships.

One cause for concern was the apparent diversity of opinion and approaches within the Council with respect to funding. Donors have directed their funding in very different ways, and there is no agreement on the extent to which CGIAR core funds should be channelled to partners, for instance through competitive grants. While the FC in its meetings was generally concerned that too little CGIAR funding goes to partners, it did not discuss the effects that funding fluctuations or restrictions (in case of W3 and bilateral) have on partnerships (see Section 3.2). The issue of co-financing has not been discussed although the FC (FC10) considered it important that CGIAR helps to leverage greater awareness and investment in partner countries. The FC was interested in understanding how much W3 funding is used for leveraging non-research resources for uptake and delivery, but did not follow up on this.<sup>43</sup> However, several comments made by FC members implied that they expected the CGIAR budget to cover the costs of dissemination.<sup>44</sup> Donors also raised the idea of developing guidelines for funding non-CGIAR partners (FC14), as it was considered fundamental to how partners engage with CRPs. In the second call, the instructions, approved by the FC, were detailed concerning money flows to partners in the different windows and the adequacy of that funding.

There are also apparent differences in the way that direct CGIAR involvement in scaling has been viewed, and by implication the working relationship that Centers have with external partners who facilitate delivery at scale. Particularly in connection with the selection and approval of phase 2 CRPs, donors put a lot of emphasis on delivery and impact with specific targets and timelines, but there has not been discussion of what this requires from partners and stakeholders, their complementary agendas, and – as mentioned above – how they fund their activities.

While there is agreement at the FC level that CGIAR's mandate is research, its donors are primarily aid donors. Collectively, and as stated by several individual donors, attention has shifted to produce "results on the ground" and yet, little attention has been given to co-financing the stakeholders' activities required for impacts to accrue. This is reflected in the FC's continued discussions about how much funding should go to partners. Sometimes there is divergence within the same donor agency. For instance, USAID provides research funding to the CGIAR and strongly supports a research agenda at the FC, but within its Feed the Future program, it funds development activities and exercises quite a high level of control, including the choice of partners.

It is a valid concern that CGIAR scientists should not replace the work of those partners and become delivery agents, but it needs to be recognized that working in partnership to promote scaling requires an investment – at times a considerable investment – in relationship-building, and sometimes capacity building of both CGIAR staff and partners. The level of CGIAR engagement to facilitate scaling is highly context-specific, as illustrated by the case study on stress tolerant rice, where in India the field program

43 FC10 (2013) about the Mid-term Review: "It was suggested that the MTR conduct an analysis of W3, to understand its role in leveraging non-research resources that are taking outputs of research, catalyzing partnerships, and moving them into farmers' hands."

44 FC4 (2011) about CRP proposals: "While partners are mentioned extensively, only 15% of the budget is allocated to partners. Given the strong role that partners will play in disseminating the outputs of the research, they need to be involved in the project design and be properly funded".



has been supported by State governments, and if IRRI withdrew it is likely that the supply chains established through the program would continue to function. In Nepal and Bangladesh, where there has not been equivalent government support, the delivery system is more fragile and much more dependent on IRRI's continued input.

### **Consortium Board and Office**

Consortium Board in its discussions has focused mostly on steering development of CRPs, including collective action among Centers and engagement in meaningful partnership. In its comments on the first set of proposals the Board called for purposeful engagement: "There is a need to state credible engagement modalities for groups of partners (acknowledging that capabilities vary among the NARS)."<sup>45</sup> National programs were emphasized in many of the Consortium Board's deliberations, and the need for partners to have ownership in the CRPs. The meeting minutes reflect the complementary roles of the Board and the Office, with the Chief Executive Officer reporting on activities by the Office.

The evaluation found limited evidence of oversight and guidance on partnerships from the Consortium (more was done on administrative systems, as discussed in the next section). There was certainly an intention to provide guidance. The Consortium launched a Stakeholder Partnership Perceptions survey in 2013 in connection with GCARD2 to explore three areas: accessibility; collaboration; and transparency. In addition, CGIAR governing bodies discussed a CGIAR-level partnership strategy as part of an Action Plan to address issues derived from the stakeholder survey, and to address the gap between CGIAR and stakeholders' perceptions of how CGIAR is working on partnerships. This was related to the FC's discussion about strategies for engaging with national systems, particularly the strong NARS in countries such as China, India, and Brazil. The Action Plan contained eight actions in total: develop a 2015-2017 Partnership Strategy, work with GFAR to create a CGIAR Partnership Working Group, produce CGIAR Guidelines for CRP Partnership, incorporate the CGIAR External Review of CRP Governance and Management, define 2015 CGIAR targets for improved Partnerships, focus on Capacity Building, and create an Online Platform for Stakeholder Input and Feedback. However, no strategy was developed, and the evaluation did not find evidence that the proposed actions had been completed. It is likely that this was a result of limited human resources within the Consortium, coupled with the need to focus on dealing with funding cuts.

The Consortium (together with ISPC) has contributed indirectly to guidance on partnerships by working with CRPs on use of the TOC approach, which requires consideration of the change process and the roles of external partners. TOC has been one of the topics discussed at the Science Leaders meetings organized by the CO. The evaluation noted that during the reform, TOCs documented by CRPs have increasingly included information about working with partners.

### **ISPC**

The evaluation's role was not to evaluate the ISPC, which is currently being evaluated by the IEA, but it has made some observations on past and potential contributions to partnerships issues at the System level.

The ISPC's role as a catalyst of partnerships with the global science community was defined when it was established.<sup>46</sup> The role was expanded from that of the ISPC's predecessor, the Science Council to include explicit responsibility for partnerships. The FC in one of its early meetings agreed that the ISPC's role is particularly in scientific partnerships. The Mid-term Review in 2013 marked a shift in this view about the ISPC's role by indicating that the ISPC should also advise and assess the quality of effective partnerships in the delivery of the CRPs.

<sup>45</sup> Consortium Board meeting minutes, May 2010.

<sup>46</sup> [https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/3715/6%20fc1\\_ispc\\_search%26selection\\_0.pdf?sequence=1](https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/3715/6%20fc1_ispc_search%26selection_0.pdf?sequence=1)

In addition to commenting on the partnership content of CRP proposals, the ISPC has also produced a good report on partnerships, with a focus on MSPs, which the evaluation team used as a reference.<sup>47</sup> Until now the report has received limited attention, and very few interviewees were aware of its content. ISPC is currently working with CSIRO on agri-food system innovation, including the role of broad collective action to develop systems solutions<sup>48</sup>.

The ISPC also convenes the biannual Science Forum that enables science discussions among CGIAR and the broader research community. These events have sought to cultivate exchange among communities that traditionally have not collaborated much; particularly between the agriculture and environment communities in Science Forum 2011, and agriculture and the nutrition and health research communities in Science Forum 2013. Additionally, the meetings have offered an opportunity for potential partners come together. However, the ISPC's self-assessment of several Science Fora did not present evidence of concrete partnerships or discussions on partnership strategy having yet resulted from these Fora.<sup>49</sup>

It seems likely that the ISPC's role in guidance on partnership strategy may expand in the future. Its own task force report recommended that the ISPC should expand its role on partnerships to develop a strategic vision on partnerships along the whole of the R4D continuum. Discussions by the FC about a system-level partnership strategy touched on the ISPC, and in 2015, the FC discussed a CGIAR-level partnership strategy that the ISPC would develop in consultation with GFAR. While this discussion has continued in the System Council, the ISPC's role has not yet been defined and its terms of reference for the future have not been confirmed.

## Administrative support

As well as implementing the Consortium Board's directions, the CO also had a co-ordinating role in the System and as such provided administrative support that affected both internal and external partnerships. In addition to its review of essential documents, the evaluation interviewed the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Advisor on Capacity Development and Partnerships. Initially, partnerships were under the remit of the CO Director of Staff. In 2014 the position of Senior Advisor was created, with a role that included raising CGIAR's profile in large international fora and alliances, facilitating Centers to engage with the right partners to achieve impact and helping Centers to explore partnerships in areas where they had not been strongly engaged.

Many of the activities carried out by the CO have related to internal partnerships; for example the One Corporate System (discussed in section 3.1), shared services and common planning and reporting frameworks. The latter processes were generally not particularly well regarded by Centers and CRPs, and one donor commented specifically on these tensions.

The CO managed the signing of some high-level MOU, for example with FAO, African Union Commission for CAADP process, National Natural Science Foundation-China, CIRAD, IRD, and the French Agreenium. CAADP had strong CGIAR engagement, particularly with IFPRI, and was closely observed by the CO. In addition to an MOU, the CGIAR-CAADP initiative included developing a Science Agenda for African Agriculture, and a mapping and alignment exercise organized by IFPRI with African partners and other CGIAR Centres. While these agreements do not affect the day-to-day management of partnerships, they can facilitate working with external partners by reducing the need for each side to carry out due diligence for each collaborative project.

47 ISPC (2015).

48 CSIRO/CGIAR Workshop report on Agri-food Systems Innovation: Pathways to Impact. December 2016.

49 [http://ispc.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/ISPC\\_Evaluation\\_SF.pdf](http://ispc.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/ISPC_Evaluation_SF.pdf)

The CO has supported a number of Communities of Practice (COP). The CGIAR Consortium Legal and IPR Network is most directly dealing with matters of relevance to partnerships. The Consortium facilitates this cooperation with Center legal and IPR experts, with the aim to support legal, partnership, stewardship and IPR issues, and implementation of the CGIAR’s intellectual assets policy. As part of this support, it launched cross-cutting webinar series focused on private sector engagement.

Other than IPR expertise, CRP and Center managers were not aware of much that has been done at System level to provide a supportive enabling environment for external partnerships. They also considered that there were few concrete actions that the CO (current System Management Office) needed or could be expected to take to provide administrative support to partnerships.

Some Center and CRP managers suggested that it would be helpful if guidelines relating to the administration of partnerships could be further streamlined across the System, for example those related to rates of pay and allowances for contracted organizations. This may be particularly important in countries where CGIAR efforts are concentrated and where country collaboration efforts are emphasized. The managers considered – and the evaluation concurs – that there is potential for confusion and perverse incentives if different Centers and CRPs offer different arrangements for the same national partners with regard to *per diem* and *honoraria* (which appears to be occurring in Ethiopia).

## Organizational learning

Partnership is a concern that cuts across all Centers and CRPs, and as such could be expected to benefit from organizational learning across the CGIAR System. The evaluation asked CGIAR interviewees about organizational learning on partnerships – how and where it occurs, where it might occur, and the kinds of activities that are useful to facilitate reflection and learning.

The evaluation found that there has been both explicit learning (captured in documented strategies, workshop outputs and working papers) and tacit learning (evident from interviews and from the team leader’s observation of a recent IEA workshop on TOC).

### Reflection and learning processes

CGIAR has produced quite a lot of relevant written material on partnerships since 2008. Two reports were broad in coverage; the 2008 Report of Working Group 2 (Partnerships) to the Change Steering Team of CGIAR and the 2009 literature review on partnerships commissioned by CIP<sup>50</sup>, which provided a solid starting point for reflection. ILAC’s 2010 paper from its “learning laboratory” highlighted some of the factors necessary for successful partnerships.<sup>51</sup> However, while the CPs were a major feature of the reform initiated in 2000 introducing the programmatic approach, there is no evidence that lessons from their implementation have been used at the System level in designing the subsequent reform and CRPs<sup>52</sup>.

The ISPC’s 2015 paper identified priorities for strengthening MSPs. The IEA’s synthesis report of CRP evaluations included a brief synopsis of emerging lessons on partnership.<sup>53</sup> The reflection and learning by some individual CRPs and Centers is captured in their partnership strategies (discussed in Section 2.1), such as those produced by CCAFS, A4NH, ILRI and ICRAF, which all include principles or guidelines for managing partnerships, developed on the basis of experience. CRP TOCs are beginning to reflect evidence

50 Horton et al. (2009).

51 ILAC (2010) Partnering in international agricultural research for development: lessons from the ILAC learning laboratory. ILAC Working Paper 10, 35 p.

52 The Working Group on Partnerships, set up for planning the Reform, reported that the acceptance of the CPs in the CGIAR community was mixed. While vast majority of participants considered these program effective, they were overall negatively viewed by Centers’ leadership.

53 Birner, R. and Byerlee D. (2016).

of learning about partnerships, although generally in less detail than the partnership strategy documents.

It was also evident from interviews and the survey of FP leaders that some research managers have reflected deeply on partnerships, and that the requirement to make partnership strategies explicit in CRP proposals has been a stimulus to learning.

Internal monitoring of partnership health was found to be mostly proactive; CRP leaders and Center partnership managers interviewed by the evaluation explained that they deal with partnership problems when these arise, but do not necessarily document what they have done or learned. These managers, some of them highly experienced and knowledgeable, told the evaluation that they hardly ever discuss partnership with each other. It has largely been left to CRP and Center management teams to do their own learning, with no process in place to build a common organizational knowledge base. Some donor interviewees pointed out that the System does not choose research managers or reward them based on their skill in managing partnerships.

There are examples of more systematic monitoring by individual CRPs, such as the pilot scheme by L&F to report against TOC and the section in the A4NH strategy document that describes how partnerships will be monitored and evaluated in phase 2, but these are not widespread and have not been widely discussed.

Although it is clear that there has been individual learning, the evaluation did not uncover any systematic processes for reflection and learning about partnerships in Centers or CRPs, or any processes for System-wide learning. Most of the learning about partnerships appears to have been localized and individual. The lack of organization-wide learning about partnerships is a concern, because it exposes CGIAR to the danger of losing important knowledge and having to re-learn it. Externalising knowledge and storing documents in electronic databases is important, but equally important, in the evaluation's view, is tacit-tacit knowledge transfer<sup>54</sup>.

### **Opportunities for learning and reflection**

There are existing mechanisms that might be harnessed for reflection and learning on partnerships. Science leaders' week, for example, could provide a good forum for informal sharing. This event has become an annual one hosted by the Consortium/System Management Office where all CRP leaders, and now also Centers' Deputy Directors General for Research, meet. It offers an opportunity for senior scientists to exchange information on a range of subjects, and in 2013 was dedicated to engagement with donors and external stakeholders.

There is also the potential for CRP and Center annual reports to provide more information on partnerships. However, at present there is very little requirement to report to governing bodies on the health of partnerships, and even where information on partnerships is included, it is unlikely that annual reports are read across CGIAR or contribute much to learning; their purpose has been reporting to the Consortium and in summary form to the donors with focus on achievement rather than learning.

COPs have been a vehicle for System-wide learning on other topics such as gender, capacity development, legal issues, data and knowledge management, and monitoring, evaluation and learning, but there is no COP specifically dealing with partnership. It is possible that the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning COP could be an appropriate forum. There have been few opportunities for the System as a whole to reflect on what it has learned about partnerships to ensure that it is shared and institutionalized.

<sup>54</sup> Horton et al. (2009) note "the knowledge loss that apparently occurred in 2008, when the group- working on the future of partnerships in the CGIAR apparently did not know about the work done by the CGIAR Organizational Change Program a decade earlier". They highlight the importance of converting tacit to explicit knowledge. The evaluation considers this to be important, hence the recommendation in Chapter 2 to fully document partnership strategies, but considers tacit-tacit exchange to be equally important.

CGIAR managers say they would value reviews and strategic advice on partnerships, although they do not know what kind of advice they need – an interesting reflection that the System is not entirely clear about partnerships. As discussed in Chapter 2, public-private partnerships and partnership aspects of delivery require System-level analysis and guidelines. The evaluation considers that there is a need for these types of strategic think pieces to be produced at the System level, and that they should be discussed in some suitable forum so that the information and guidance is used.

While recognizing that there is limited available time to devote to System-wide organizational learning about partnerships, nevertheless the evaluation considers that a more systematic effort is needed to ensure that useful lessons are not lost. Learning and reflection will be particularly important in countries that are the focus of Country collaboration efforts, which offer an excellent opportunity for organizational learning with partners about the principles and practices that work best in general and in local contexts. This is an area where the SMO and ISPC could both play important roles, working with Center and CRP managers responsible for partnership and with country-level CGIAR coordinators.

## Stakeholder engagement at System level

GCARD was the main mechanism to facilitate stakeholder consultation in the reformed CGIAR. Its role was to “provide an opportunity to engage stakeholders in SRF and [CRP] design, assist in open identification of demand-driven research opportunities and partnership development, and provide public visibility of CGIAR programs and development impact to its partners and users, such that the Consortium Board, Centers and FC will consider recommendations of the GCARD in their decision”.<sup>55</sup> It was also seen as a forum for gauging the perspectives and priorities of end-users of CGIAR’s research. GCARD was to be organized simultaneously with the Funders Forum, a broader platform for donors to engage than the FC, to ensure “feed-in of GCARD recommendations to the Forum”.

The evaluation looked at the GCARD process to assess the extent to which it has served these purposes stated in the reform foundational document. It also assessed whether the event and engagement around it were facilitating the formation of new partnerships among CGIAR and external stakeholders, particularly in the design of phase 2 CRPs.

Three successive GCARDs have provided opportunities for CGIAR scientists to interact with existing and potential external partners, and they have given external partners a forum to voice their expectations from international agricultural research. In its review of the FC meetings minutes, the evaluation found several references to GCARD and GFAR. After CGARD1, timed to elicit feed-back on the first SRF, and GCARD2, the FC was concerned about the high cost of the event and its unclear focus on and relevance to CGIAR. Subsequently, GCARD3 was organized jointly by GFAR and the Consortium, and under FC’s guidance, as a process with several regional consultations and a final conference event. GCARD3 was linked to development of and consultation about the CRPs. In FC13 discussions GFAR’s role in the development type partnerships was confirmed, but collaboration with the ISPC was suggested.

Members of IEA and the evaluation team leader attended GCARD3, sat as observers in plenary sessions, interviewed several CRP leaders who were attending the meeting, and talked informally with several non-CGIAR attendees. The impression that the evaluation gained from its attendance at GCARD3 was that, while it offered an opportunity for networking among those who attended, there was very little concrete connection between what is done by GCARD and the CGIAR research program. Reports were made on extensive regional consultations, but it was not evident how the findings were expected to impact on CGIAR program design; plenary presentations by young entrepreneurs were impressive but highlighted their independent efforts and not their partnership with Centers; the thematic session on “research to impact”

<sup>55</sup> CGIAR (2009): Voices of Change. The new CGIAR.

illustrated general issues but again did not appear to relate them to working in partnership with CGIAR.

Subsequent review of reports, interviews with donors, CGIAR managers and scientists and external partner representatives confirmed the initial impressions from GCARD3. There is certainly evidence of commitment to partnership by the organisers of GCARD, and evidence that participants see networking and partnership as important. A review of GCARDs 1 and 2<sup>56</sup> notes a commitment to “true and effective partnership” in GCARD 1 and “fifteen new commitments to partnership” arising from GCARD 2, while the report from GCARD 3<sup>57</sup> reported “development of partnerships” as one of the reasons given by 15 percent of participants for attending the meeting, and 62 percent of participants stated that they had made new connections (although the report does not mention whether these were new connections between CGIAR Centers and other organizations). However, the evaluation could not find any actual examples of partnerships that had developed or been strengthened as a result of GCARD processes.

A potential strength of GCARD is that it has been host to a number of NGOs and CSOs, some of whom expressed frustration that their voices are not otherwise heard by CGIAR or that partnerships with CGIAR have not gone well. In conversations with the evaluation team at GCARD3, some NGO and CSO representatives expressed appreciation of the opportunities for networking provided by a large gathering, as did the young scientists and young farmers who attended. However, NGO and CSO representatives gave no indication that participation in GCARD has increased their connection with CGIAR research, while the evaluation’s case studies demonstrated that they have other opportunities to engage with CGIAR scientists through other MSPs dealing with climate change, food security and livelihoods in which Centers participate.

The evaluation found nothing to indicate that the GCARD processes or events have been the source of new partnerships or resulted in stronger relationships with existing partners. The evaluation of the first GCARD meeting by participants scored it highly as a gathering for building partnerships, but the documents reviewed by the evaluation and people interviewed did not suggest that there have been tangible results in form of new partnerships or partner contacts. Research managers and donors interviewed by the evaluation team commented that while it is useful to bring people together, the outcomes of the GCARD engagements have tended to be generic, non-specific, and a “showcase” – there has not been anything unique about GCARD as a place to meet potential partners or a source of information on research priorities.

CGIAR has had a role in organizing GCARD events and it has featured on the agenda for presenting its strategy and programs to a very wide audience. The SRFs or CGIAR program portfolios, however, do not seem to have been influenced by the exchanges although there have likely been bilateral consultations concerning individual CRPs at design phase. The report from GCARD3 suggested that national and regional consultations may have been a useful precursor to site integration (now succeeded by country collaboration), but the evaluation was not in a position to assess the effect, and neither was it mentioned by the CRP leaders interviewed – on the contrary, some interviewees suggested that it would have been more useful to integrate with existing national processes. The FC discussions also reflected concern that the conferences were not providing stakeholder feed-back to CGIAR and the CRPs, echoed by the general perception (captured in external review of GCARD2) that CRPs were not adequately engaged with the NARS. It seems that GCARD has served its own purpose, the promotion of the GCARD RoadMap, which is only partially related to CGIAR’s strategy. The evaluation concluded that the GCARD process has had very little discernible effect on CGIAR partnerships. The decision in the governance transition to replace biennial GCARD with the CGIAR Partnership Forum co-organized by the CGIAR funders and Centers every three years, seems to reflect CGIAR’s desire to tie partners and stakeholder consultation more closely to its own strategy and organizational structure.

56 Cooke, R. (2009): A review of the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD): An analysis of the way forward.

57 ALINe (2016): GCARD3 Global Event: Assessment M&E Summary report; FC reports.



## Conclusions and recommendations

The management and administrative systems, funding, and System-level guidance are all aspects of an enabling environment that stimulate or hinder, influence and steer partnerships. At the System level the governing bodies and other System entities have focused on putting in place the structures and systems for implementing the reform change; that is, creating and guiding CRPs and developing mechanisms for reporting and accountability. At that level relatively little has been done for incentivizing or providing guidance for external partnerships. The evaluation found this a concern because, in setting up systems and processes for central management in CGIAR, requirements and challenges of external partnerships were not adequately taken into account. To address this, Centers and CRPs had to some extent developed buffers between partners and System administrative requirements. Limited attention to external partnerships also reflects a lack of sufficient appreciation that CGIAR cannot deliver outcomes alone, and scaling its results and generating impacts is highly dependent on partners and development stakeholders.

In Centers and CRPs, the enabling environment is generally good. Examples of administrative support, management practices and guidelines on practical, legal and policy matters illustrate the attention paid to day-to-day management of partnerships. The evaluation observed that processes at operational and System level are gradually coming together. However, there is a need to integrate partnerships better with research in planning, reporting, assessment and discussions about funding. This integration is evident in some CRPs' annual reporting, which the evaluation used to illustrate good practice. These included: reference to partnerships in reporting on technical achievements; including partnerships in discussions on challenges and risks and in presentation of budgeting and expenditures; explicit consideration of partnerships in discussion of TOCs.

While the FC has initiated discussion on important topics related to partnerships, notably the discussions relating to engagement with the private sector and partnering for delivery, it has not followed up on those discussion by tasking any groups to generate further information or develop strategies or guidelines. The evaluation found a lack of clarity about the responsibility that each System-level entity was expected to assume for guidance on System-level strategy. The evaluation also found that in two important and connected aspects – funding and expectation of impact – the FC gave the impression of being disjointed. This is due to very different perspectives among Council members on whether and how much CGIAR funding should go to partners, and what is CGIAR's rather than partners and stakeholders' role in the "last mile" for generating outcomes and impacts. These diverse views have led to Centers and CRPs receiving mixed messages.

The funding situation has generated a lot of dissatisfaction and tension. While the reform was expected to improve the level and sustainability of core funding, bilateral funding has become predominant accounting currently for about 80 percent of total funding. Although the research carried out in partnership does not depend much on core funding, the low level, annual nature, unreliability and late delivery of core funding have been damaging to partnerships. In particular, it has negatively affected competitive schemes (that were already limited), multi-year planning and CGIAR's delivery on its commitments, and the ability to experiment with new partnerships when bilateral or external funding were not available. There has been little analysis or innovative thinking of how bilateral funding can better serve strategic partnering and how co-financing of research and development by recipient country governments, private sector and others could be better stimulated and harnessed for supporting CGIAR's objectives. The evaluation considers that it is essential for the CGIAR governing bodies to address funding aspects of partnerships in a broad and holistic manner.

The evaluation found little evidence of System-wide organizational learning about partnerships, although there has been considerable learning by some individuals and small groups. The System could do more to take advantage of existing arrangements (such as Communities of Practice) and events (such as Science Leaders' week, Science Fora and annual CRP meetings) to provide opportunities for reflection on

partnership strategy and management. It also needs to ensure that responsibility is assigned to ensure that System-wide learning takes place.

#### ◆ Recommendation 4.

**A position paper on funding should be prepared and used for influencing discussion and decisions on funding of partnerships.**

Given the growing contribution of bilateral funding to total CGIAR funding, the System Council should prepare guidance on how it expects CGIAR and Centers to contribute to supporting partnerships when funding is dominated by primarily bilateral projects, and how co-financing of research and development by partners and stakeholders can be best stimulated. This discussion should be linked to a reassessment of the scope of CGIAR's research portfolio and funding requirements relative to the SLOs.

At the same time, in order to minimize disruption to partnerships resulting from problems with funding, the System Council and System Organization should work together to a) reduce to the extent possible large fluctuations and late delivery of Window 1 and 2 funding, and b) attempt to find a way to provide funding with multi-annual budgets.

#### ◆ Recommendation 5.

**System-wide organizational learning on using partnerships to best effect should be enhanced.**

The System Management Board should oversee activities to enhance organizational learning about partnerships through the following activities, with support from central funding:

- i. taking advantage of opportunities offered by existing activities that bring scientists together across Centers and CRPs;
- ii. preparing periodic meta-synthesis report on partnerships from narrative information in the annual reports; and
- iii. in selected countries that are a focus for the country collaboration process, introducing mechanisms by which locally-based Centers and their partners can reflect and learn together about their partnerships.



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## 4. Partnerships in action

This Chapter addresses the question “*To what extent are partnerships making CGIAR more effective in delivering on its agenda?*”. With the reform’s programmatic approach and outcome orientation, the role of partnerships along the impact pathway has been highlighted, and partners are expected to participate in program design, generation of outputs, and delivery and scaling where CGIAR is seen as not having comparative advantage. CGIAR’s agenda is expected to be aligned with national and regional agendas, with CGIAR working with its partners to facilitate more productive and sustainable agriculture through IPG research. While the evaluation’s main focus was on external partnerships, it also considered the effectiveness of internal partnerships.

In assessing the effectiveness of partnership, the team drew from interviews, its six case studies, and other evaluative studies, including the FC commissioned review on delivery.

### Internal partnerships

Several IEA evaluations reported that CRPs had resulted in closer relationships between Centers, resulting from the need to plan programs together, share funding and report jointly, although the implementation of FPs and management of research activities in country has mostly been Center-specific.

### Joint planning and integration

There is evidence of integration among Centers and joint planning of programs, although this varies across CRPs. For example, the WHEAT evaluation acknowledged major advances being made in the integration

of CIMMYT's and ICARDA's wheat research within one program. Testimony from a Board representative confirms that this is seen as major achievement. The MAIZE evaluation found similar progress towards integration. The GRISP evaluation reported that, although a good start had been made in establishing a global rice partnership, "the most urgent task is to integrate the IRRI and AfricaRice programs around a common rice science strategy in Eastern and Southern Africa." The RTB evaluation, while commending progress in integration in the key areas of research, concluded that more strategic allocation of core funding would further enhance integration. L&F could only establish the hoped-for synergy between livestock and fish research to a limited extent, and the CRP evaluation was unable to assess whether there would be a benefit in continuing with a combined program; it has split into two programs for phase 2. AAS did not enhance integration because engagement of other Centers apart from WorldFish was minimal and the few collaborative projects did not lead to an integrated research agenda. The Grain Legume evaluation found "little evidence of integration of programmes between Centers and almost no cross-Center authorship of publications, such as could have occurred with the integrated cross-center approaches to stress tolerance [...]". Likewise, the Dryland Cereals evaluation found little disciplinary integration.

The FP leaders surveyed provided positive feed-back on collaboration among CGIAR Centers that was directly attributed to the reform. However, several CRP evaluations and some of the donors interviewed by this evaluation noted that Centers had not fully taken on board the notion of acting as programs, with Centers tending to act unilaterally when approaching donors and national partners.

Interviews with CRP leaders indicated that in the phase 2 proposals the basis for Center partnership had been reviewed, and in some cases this had resulted in a reconfiguration of internal partners. One example was A4NH, whose proposal for the first phase was submitted on behalf of 11 participating Centers<sup>58</sup>, of which 7 had 95 percent of the W1/W2 funding<sup>59</sup> and were presumably expected to be the most active; the phase 2 proposal was submitted on behalf of a smaller group of seven "managing partners", consisting of five of the main Centers from Phase 1 and two external partners.<sup>60</sup> In interview the A4NH leader explained that the reconfiguration had resulted from rationalization of Center contributions.

The evaluation concluded that there has been good progress in achieving one of the intended effects to the reform, encouraging Centers to work more closely together to develop integrated programs. The country collaboration process, where several Centers in several CRPs will be operating in each country, will provide both an opportunity and a test for Centers to act in harmony, integrate their activities where appropriate and coordinate their interaction with national partners.

## Leveraging complementary assets

There have been some successful attempts to leverage assets to create comparative advantage, but this has not been free of challenges.

- › **Intellectual assets.** There have been good examples highlighted in CRP evaluations. PIM's FP1 on foresight modelling is one in which social science expertise from IFPRI and biological science expertise from 11 other Centers have been brought together for modelling exercises. Under WLE, expertise on water management was shared between IMWI and WorldFish. The FTA evaluation noted the importance of maintaining the distinct global expertise of three participating Centers (CIFOR, Bioversity and ICRAF) as part of CGIAR's comparative advantage, and resisting the temptation to work outside their areas of expertise.
- › Evaluations also commented on the lack of sharing. PIM's FP3 on technology adoption and sustainable

58 [http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/crp4proposal\\_final\\_oct06\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/crp4proposal_final_oct06_2011.pdf)

59 According to figures in the A4NH evaluation report

60 A4NH Proposal for Phase II 2017-2022, Submitted by IFPRI, March 2016

intensification did not achieve the same level of collaboration as FP1, although the issues related to technology and production are shared among many CRPs. AAS was criticised by its evaluation for failing to leverage technical expertise across Centers on issues central to aquatic-agriculture systems, which had affected its science quality.

- › One example illustrates the point that establishing collaboration must be done carefully to avoid transactions costs – collaboration between PIM and L&F was intended to allow IFPRI scientists to bring economics expertise to livestock problems, but the IEA evaluation of L&F found that, while there had been collaboration between the CRPs at two field sites, the principles for collaboration had not been clearly established; researchers in both CRPs shared concerns about insufficiently clear delineation of responsibilities.
- › **Joint publications:** One indicator of collaboration among centers relates to the number of joint publications (still a major output of CGIAR research). The evaluation's analysis of research publications found no increase in joint research publishing in peer reviewed journals. While the number of peer reviewed articles increased comparing 2012 and 2015 (see Box X), the percentage of articles with more than one Center among the authors remained the same, 14 percent. However, there was a slight increase in articles that included more than two Centers among authors (from 13 percent of joint authorship articles in 2012 to 20 percent in 2015). A recent analysis of publications in 200-2016 showed a steadily increasing trend in joint Center publishing, but confirmed the results here that the CRP process does not seem to have made a change as yet.<sup>61</sup>
- › **Genetic resources.** Collaboration and knowledge sharing of crop genetic resources is well established across CGIAR. The Genebanks research support program (in phase 2 Genebank Platform), managed by the Global Crop Diversity Trust was set up for the management and sustainable funding of the genetic resources collections held in 11 CGIAR center genebanks. According to the evaluation, the program has facilitated interaction and enhanced synergy among the 11 genebanks.<sup>62</sup> Crop research CRPs have also provided a mechanism to share resources. For example the GRiSP evaluation noted the positive effects of rice genetic products developed by IRRI being shared quickly with AfricaRice.
- › **Field sites.** Centers have long benefitted from each other's presence through hosting arrangements at headquarters and country sites. There has been an additional level of collaboration between some CRPs to leverage field presence – for example A4NH took advantage of L&F's field research hubs in Vietnam and Uganda, and in return provided access to food safety expertise.

Country collaboration may offer the opportunity to test the concept further in selected countries, if one Center in each country takes the lead in facilitating the interaction between all. Site integration, the precursor to country collaboration, was not sufficiently well advanced for the present evaluation to judge progress.

## Interaction and learning

The reform has provided an impetus for cross-Center and cross-discipline interaction and sharing - beyond what would normally have occurred through scientist networks - by creating the CRPs, insisting on gender mainstreaming, and requiring CRPs to use a TOC approach. Interaction and learning have taken place in annual CRP meetings, webinar sessions, cross-Center activities, particularly in field surveys and needs assessments, and the virtual spaces created by some CRPs. COPs have developed in many areas (see Section 3.3.3). Examples of interaction and learning on specific areas of research planning and implementation include:

<sup>61</sup> Personal communication, Jawoo Koo, IFPRI

<sup>62</sup> CGIAR-IEA (2017): Evaluation of CGIAR research support program for Managing and Sustaining Crop Collections. Rome, Italy: Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) of CGIAR <http://iea.cgiar.org/>.



- › Development of TOCs. CRPs have gradually improved their TOCs working collectively in developing them.
- › Work on value chains. The CRP evaluations of PIM, Humidtropics, A4NH and L&F noted that this topic had provided a good space for interaction<sup>63</sup>.
- › Work on scaling models. Several CRPs gained cross-discipline experience in the use of innovation platforms under Humidtropics, where experience on the use of innovation platforms was shared by eight Centers.
- › Working in COPs, taking gender as an example. Stimulated by the System-level strategy and performance targets for gender, and through the Gender COP, gender issues have been discussed and approaches to mainstreaming shared among all Centers. Royal Tropical Institute of the Netherlands is an external partner for more than one CRP. A cross-cutting gender research and coordination FP is included in the PIM CRP in phase 2.
- › The opportunity to share ideas across Centers and disciplines was generally welcomed by scientists interviewed, and young scientists in particular expressed their appreciation for the webinar format commonly used. Some scientists commented that they would like more CRP meeting time spent on reflecting and learning rather than discussing routine administrative matters.

The evaluation considers that during phase 1 relationships and mechanisms have been developed to cater for collaboration, and in many areas good progress has been made. In phase 2, Centers and CRPs need to build on this progress. The learning potential of program and research meetings can be maximized by ensuring that reflection gets priority and time.

## External partnerships

The 2013 Mid-term Review highlighted the need for CGIAR to increase donors' confidence that it has the strategic partnerships needed to deliver on agricultural research for transforming agriculture. In this section, the evaluation reports on its assessment of external partnerships in several areas of collaboration identifying, through examples, changes that have taken place in the reform.

### Planning and management

The reform raised the expectation that external partners would be more strongly involved in planning and management. The CRP proposal assessment in phase 1 and 2 included consideration of whether proposals adequately reflected stakeholder consultation. There were mixed perceptions among those interviewed whether the expectations have been met.

#### Consultation in planning

As discussed in section 3.3.5, GCARD was expected to be a key process to engage a broad group of external stakeholders in CGIAR's strategic planning in developing the SRF, but was generally not seen as an effective mechanism for incorporating stakeholder inputs to CGIAR planning.

In addition, development of CRPs has involved consultations with a broad group of stakeholders. The evaluation reviewed evidence in program proposals that in many cases referred to consultation at country and regional level and use of consultation for priority setting and contributing to the TOC. For example,

63 An ISPC commissioned analysis of value chains in original CRP proposals found considerable knowledge gaps in concepts and methodology. It found that only L&F had embedded the value chain approach throughout the plan, while PIM, RTB and A4NH had included it in parts of their plan. The analysis considered that these attempts provided considerable strengths for other CRPs' benefit, particularly in sharing methodologies and best approaches. [http://ispc.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/ISPC\\_WhitePaper\\_ValueChainsSeedSystems.pdf](http://ispc.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/ISPC_WhitePaper_ValueChainsSeedSystems.pdf).



CCAFS engaged partners in geographic priority setting and in development of the program's TOC, which can be a resource-heavy process, as the team learned from an IEA-led workshop on TOCs. FISH likewise used consultation for identification of hypothesis and barriers. In 2015 A4NH held regional consultations for feed-back on its impact pathway and TOC publishing all materials online.<sup>64</sup> Several CRPs solicited feed-back from stakeholders during phase 1. MAIZE, WHEAT and RTB reported on extensive online consultations among stakeholders for program planning and feed-back, and GRiSP on workshops and meetings held. MAIZE and WHEAT conducted extensive online consultation and survey among partners as input to planning. PIM develops its country research by planning with partners and clients. In phase 2 proposals, several CRPs referred to the site integration process having been used for consultation.

Several CRP evaluations commented on the limited knowledge that partners interviewed had about the CRP, rather than the Center they collaborate with, indicating that they may not have been involved in program consultations – or that the Center “brand”, after many years of collaboration, is stronger than that of the newer CRPs.

### Partners in management

Through their direct engagement in program-level and research management, external partners have contributed to planning. They include “strategic”, “core” or “managing” partners involved in FP planning and management. Nearly all CRPs had external partners in their program management teams. CIRAD and Wageningen University were both managing partners in four CRPs. Among the almost 30 external organizations that have played a role as core partners, very few are from developing countries, notably Indian Council of Agricultural Research, KALRO Food Crops Research Institute in Kenya, Indian Institute of Pulses Research and EMBRAPA of Brazil.<sup>65</sup>

Program Themes/FPs during phase 1 were managed mainly by Center staff. CCAFS, with its origins in a CP, has employed research managers from non-CGIAR institutes and its core staff have been hosted by Copenhagen University. This was commended by the CRP evaluation as it has “allowed the program to take an outward-looking approach to management of its human resource and bring in high calibre expertise”, which, according to the evaluation, has contributed to the program's comparative advantage and quality of science.

While some other CRPs (Dryland Cereals, Grain Legumes, Humidtropics and RTB) had research leaders from external partner organizations in phase 1, there are no systematic records about engagement of external partners in program planning and implementation in phase 1. In phase 2, CRPs were requested to attach information about staffing of management team and FP, and the proposals included lists of senior researchers. In ISPC's appraisal of phase 2 proposals, the strategic vision and competence of leaders was taken into account.

These records show a high level of involvement of external partners in managing FPs and Clusters of Activity, and as key research staff (Table 4). They also show high level of contribution across Centers in most of the CRPs (see Table 1 for phase 1). The evaluation team considers the high level of partner engagement in research as an indication of those partners having contributed also to the planning of the programs. However, the evaluation notes the very small number of developing country partners among CRP senior researchers. The notable exceptions are one joint Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences-ILRI appointment and the Center for People and Forests in Thailand in RTB. This is different from the experience of CPs; for example, in the final year of the Generation CP, half of the principal investigators were from NARS.

64 <http://a4nh.cgiar.org/2015/04/22/regional-health-consultations-underway/>

65 Not including AAS and Dryland Cereals that had very large steering or management groups and went through changes.

**Table 4. Engagement of scientists from non-CGIAR organizations in research management**

	A4NH	CCAFS	Fish	FTA	Livestock	MAIZE	PIM	RICE (GRiSP)	RTB	WHEAT	WLE (core partners)
CGIAR	6	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	4	2	11
non-CGIAR	3	2	3	4	0	2	5	3	1	3	2
of which developing	0	0	0		0	1	0	0	0	1	0

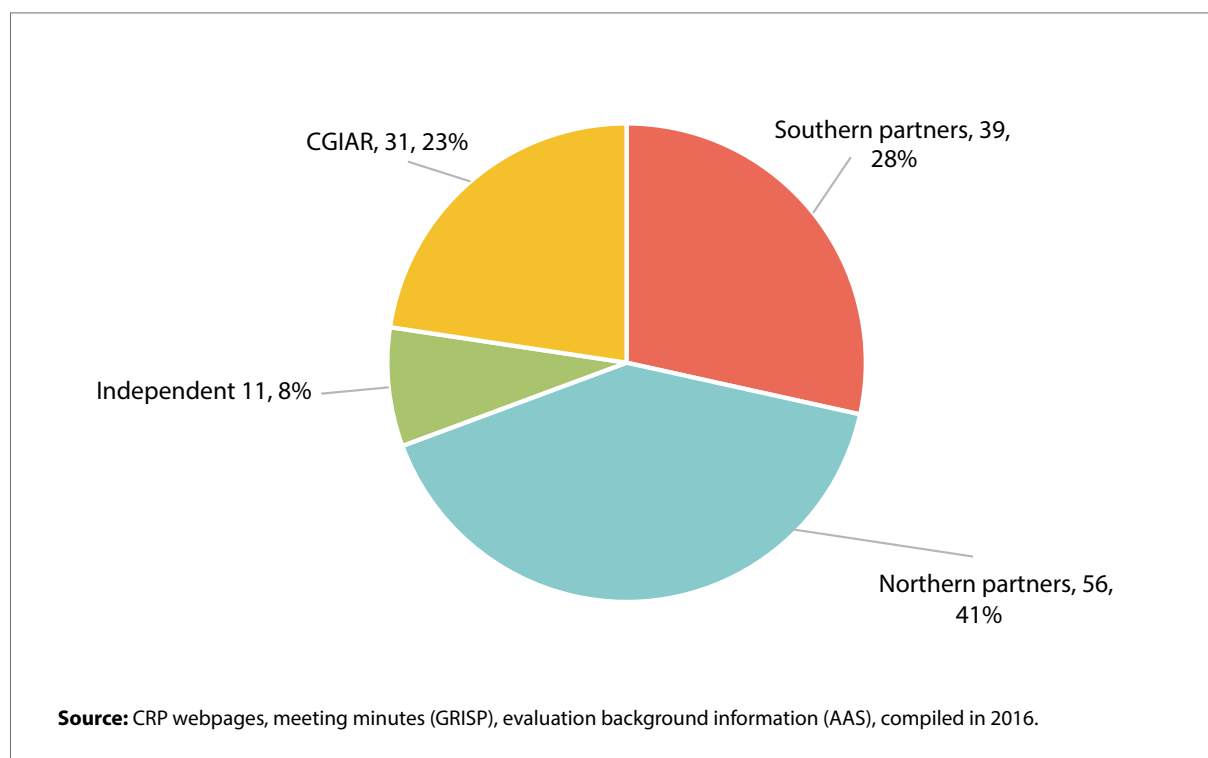
**Source:** IEA on basis of phase 2 CRP proposals.

Substantial core human and financial resources, science capacity and management experience are required of management partners, as well as willingness to bear the transactions costs of engaging in the planning process. Some partners interviewed for the evaluation, who have been involved in CGIAR programs in the past and become newly involved in planning for phase 2 CRPs, commented on the large investment of time that is required to review proposal documents and the level of detail required compared to other research grant application processes. They also mentioned the cash flow issues that can arise from year-to-year budgeting (see section 3.2), and the need to have other resources to bridge temporary funding gaps. Partners interviewed for the case study on “Partnerships for research on metabolomics at RTB” emphasized that this kind of partnership takes a lot of time to establish and depends on strong bonds between individuals. They also commented on the complex bureaucracy of CRP funding, and mentioned that the CRP and good leadership at CIAT had been helpful for organizing CGIAR’s work.

The transactions costs of establishing partnerships may explain why partners who are involved in CRP management and research implementation are nearly all from developed countries, mostly from universities and ARIs. While the closer engagement with external partners resulting from their role as management partners is positive, the predominance of developed country institutions in this role may have the undesirable effect of increasing the distance between developed and developing country partners. The evaluation found that CGIAR partnerships are strongly dependent on personal relations, and these are strengthened by the close contact that occurs between CGIAR managers and external managing partners. However, the NARS in some emerging economies have an increasing capacity for advanced science, as well as solid core funding. It would be advantageous for CGIAR to engage them more as core partners, given that these countries are not only beneficiaries of CGIAR research, but also contributors to national, regional and even international research for development. A model of NARS engagement could also be envisaged that seeks to discover and nurture developing country research and development leaders by involving them, as representatives of their national institutions, in elements of CRP management.

### Partners in governance

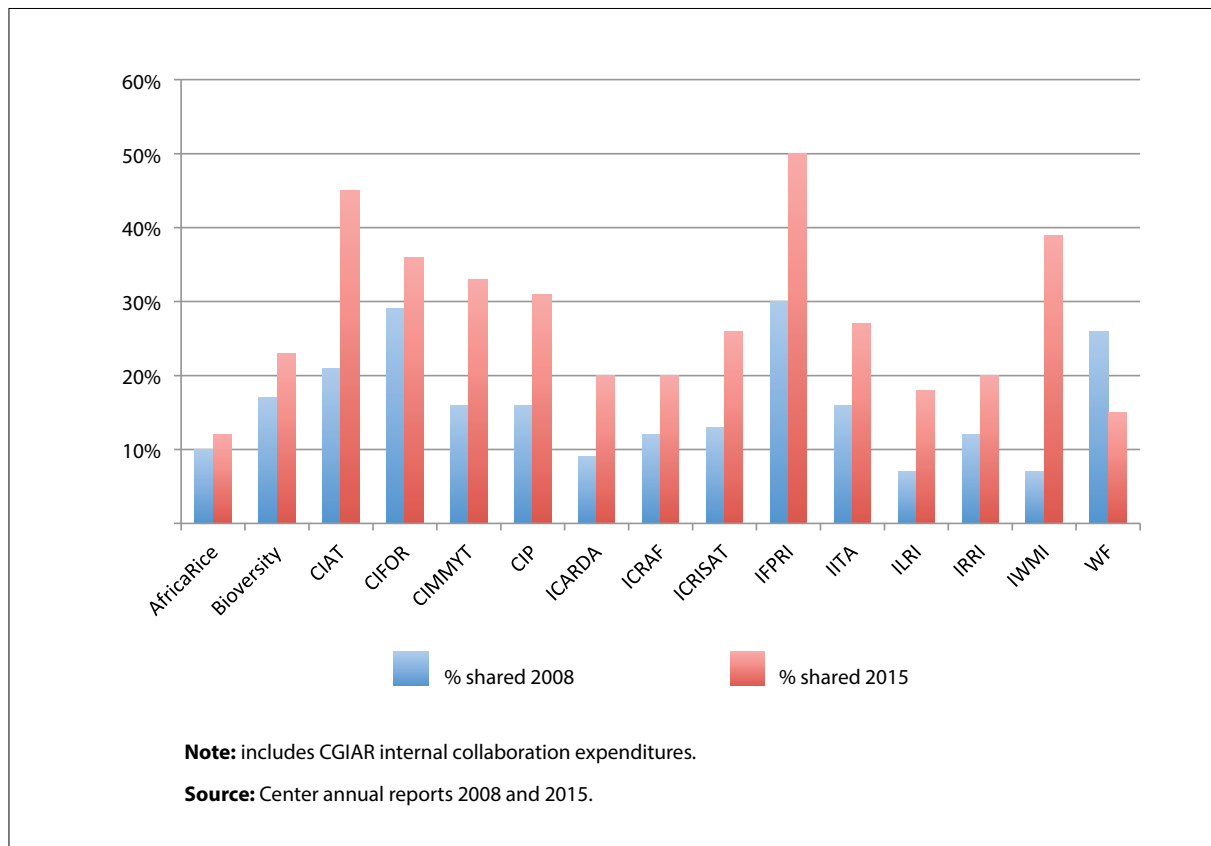
Each CRP has an oversight body (sometimes called science advisory or steering committee). Due to the requirements of independence, these bodies have broad membership outside of Centers participating in the CRP. The members have the opportunity to influence strategic directions of the programs. External partners were 73 percent of the membership in 2016, ranging from 50 percent to 100 percent in individual CRPs shown in (Figure 5). Southern partners were 28 percent of the total.

**Figure 5: Composition of CRP governance bodies**

## Fund sharing

The reform raised expectations both for capacity development of partners and directing part of the funding to them. Capacity building was not specifically covered by this evaluation as it is the subject of another IEA evaluation conducted at the same time. Regarding funding, it is not easy to make a definitive conclusion about fund sharing with partners, whether this means transfer of funds to be managed by partners or use of funds for activities carried out by partners. Each CRP proposal included a budget for partners, which ranged from 12 to 41 percent in phase 1 and 9 to 25 percent in phase 2, although the amounts were larger for phase 2 because the total CRP budgets were larger. Information on expenditure during the CRP period was available in the form of Center expenditure on collaboration.

As CRPs did not report consistently on fund-sharing, the evaluation looked at Center annual reports to get a sense of funds distribution. In 2008, 16 percent of total Center operating expenditure went to collaboration (including CGIAR and non-CGIAR), ranging from 7 to 30 percent by Center (Figure 6). In 2015 the expenditure was 28 percent of a larger total budget (Figures 6 and 7). Specific information for the expenditure on non-CGIAR collaborators was available only for 2015; however, in that year non-CGIAR collaborators received more than twice the total for all collaborators in 2008, and 15 percent of the total operating budget (Figure 7). This suggests that, overall, fund sharing increased.

**Figure 6. Percentage of total expenditures shared in 2008 and 2015**

However the data show substantial differences across Centers in 2015, with the percentage of budget shared with all types of collaborators ranging from 12 percent to 50 percent, and the percentage shared with non-CGIAR partners from 7 percent to 26 percent.

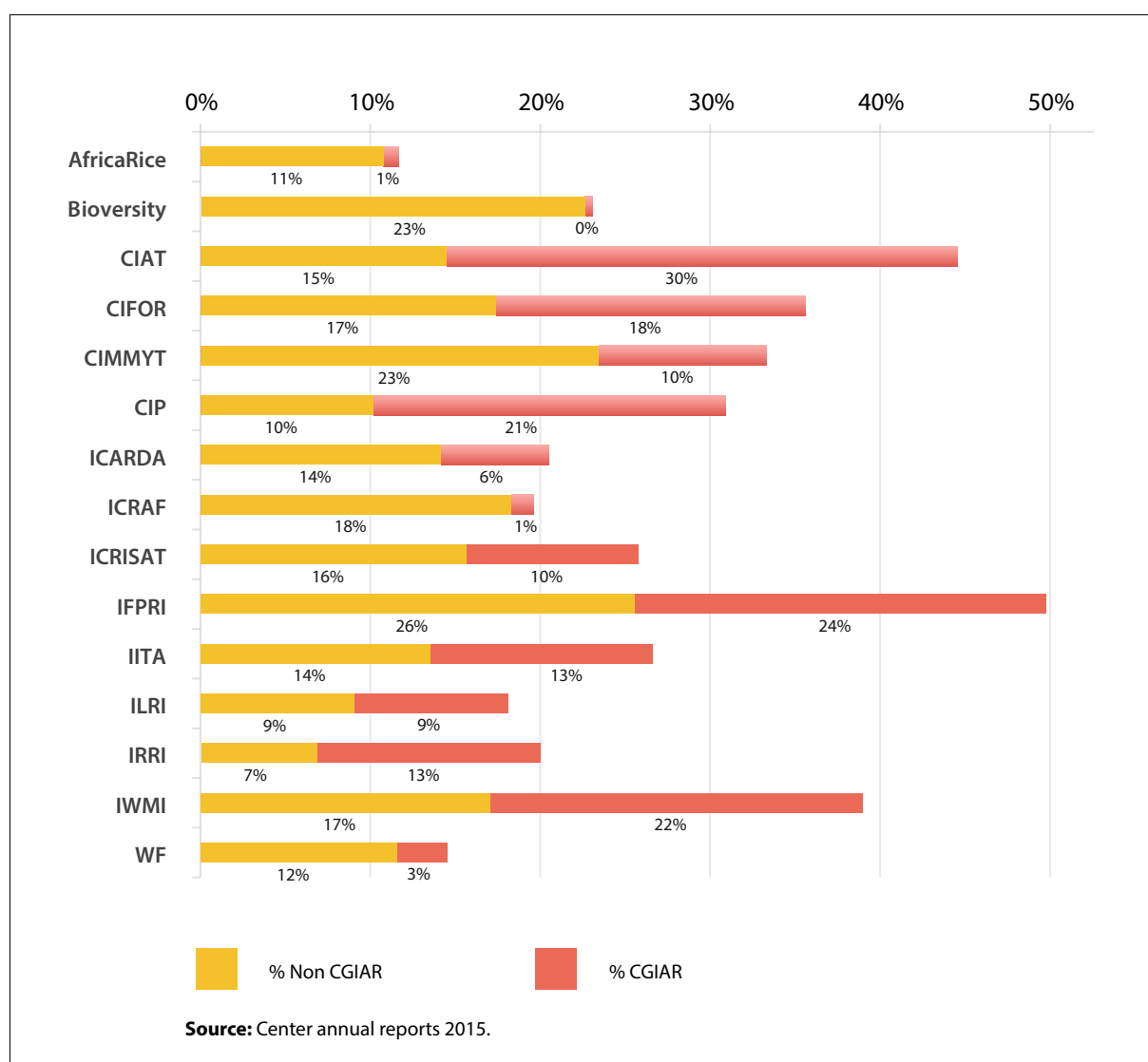
## Leveraging of physical assets

The evaluation found two types of physical asset-sharing between CGIAR and external partners; use of facilities within CGIAR Centers, and of partner facilities in joint project.

- › An example of joint Center facility is the “Biosciences eastern and central Africa” (BecA) hub, established on the ILRI campus in Nairobi in 2003 under an MOU between NEPAD and ILRI, to provide an African-based biosciences research platform and capacity building facility, which continues to operate as such. While it primarily acts as a host to non-CGIAR organizations, the facility has been used by research projects involving ILRI, CIAT and IITA.<sup>66</sup> The BecA Hub, with its state-of-the art facilities, could provide a platform to facilitate work of many Centers while also availing a training and research platform for NARS. It should be even more relevant and cost-effective under CRPs and country collaboration approaches. However, the facility is not always used to its full capacity because the bench fees (based on actual cost of running the facility) are beyond the means of most NARS institutions, except when they have specific project funding. BecA Management is working with some ARIs to use the spare capacity in collaborative projects, which also have substantial training content for African NARS.

66 <http://hub.africabiosciences.org>

**Figure 7. Center collaboration expenditures 2015, percentage of CGIAR and non-CGIAR collaboration expenditures**



There are practical limits to leveraging of CGIAR physical assets, particularly laboratory assets, across Centers, as physical research assets are expensive to establish and maintain. A more likely prospect for expansion is increased use of non-CGIAR research facilities, taking partners, where CGIAR benefits from the advanced technology of ARIs while partners take advantage of the physical location of Center facilities within developing countries.

### Communication processes

The evaluation considered communication as an essential component of good partnership. The importance of personal contact and individual professional relationships emerged from many of the interviews with CGIAR managers and their partners. The FP leaders indicated the direct contribution of communication to success or failure in partnerships, and also the challenges of communicating effectively throughout the life cycle of partnerships. The evaluation analyzed the findings at four stages of partnership.

- › **Exploration.** Research managers noted the importance of identifying concrete shared objectives early in the process of engagement. The CCAFS principles for effective AR4D programs also address partnerships and communication.<sup>67</sup> They emphasize the importance of identifying a limited number of “leverage points” within a complex challenge that are most likely to drive change. This has implications for the processes used to engage researchers and other stakeholders. CGIAR managers and their external partners have limited time to engage in speculative explorations. Several of them also expressed the point made in the CCAFS principles, that to the extent possible it is better for CGIAR to participate in the existing processes of external stakeholders (e.g. to prioritize what needs to be done) rather than creating parallel processes. All of these points suggest that there will be limited value in continuing to hold GCARD- type events of partners organized at a broad level unless these have specific pre-defined purposes and Centers come to them with specific objectives.
- › **Early engagement.** One point that emerged very strongly, particularly in relation to strategic partners, was the critical role of key individuals in external partner organizations in providing the communication within their own organizations necessary to ensure commitment through the intensive process of developing CRP proposals. Transactions costs at this stage were seen by strategic partner interviewees as particularly high, and as one external partner commented, many of those costs in partnering with CRPs are a direct result of donor requirements and regulations, rather than intrinsic to the partnership. The participatory process of writing CRP proposals, the length of the proposals, the number of reviews and revisions needed, and the level of detail required in budgeting, was very time-consuming compared to applications for some other types of research funding. The evaluation observed that even where a strategic partnership has developed from an already strong working relationship between a CGIAR scientist and a researcher in another organization, it can be important to establish communication activities and processes specifically for building the CRP partnership. For example, the Livestock CRP leader shared with the evaluation the results of a recent partnership assessment carried out by ILRI and strategic partner SLU, in which each clearly laid out their incentives and disincentives for partnering and modalities for partnering.

Some CGIAR managers emphasized the importance for all partners to be clear and realistic from the start about expectations for roles, responsibilities, funding, delivery and reporting. While this seems obvious, potential partners were reported often to have expectations about partnership with CGIAR that do not match reality (particularly but not solely related to funding), and do not appear to change in spite of attempts to explain the real situation. Interviewees also referred to cases where Centers have failed to do sufficient due diligence on a new partner’s ability to deliver written outputs and reports, have failed to plan the necessary capacity building and have then needed to provide support retrospectively.

The unease involved in communicating within clusters of partners with different professional and national cultures was mentioned by a few interviewed, and it has been noticeable since the reform, as new relationships have been required with NGOs and private sector partners. CGIAR was seen as most familiar in communicating among research peers. Two specific communication challenges were highlighted: failure by some donors to understand the time needed to establish relationships, and failure of CGIAR to include robust institutional milestones in program plans against which they can report. The CCAFS principles emphasized the need to link communications strategy tightly with the impact pathway.

- › **Maintaining partnerships.** One point that emerged as critically important to maintaining partnerships was the principle that each partner is able to sustain its mandate. The challenge for CGIAR to respect this principle is that it often holds the purse strings, which immediately sets up a power imbalance. This makes it doubly important that a communication process is put in place that allows potential problems arising from power imbalance to be acknowledged and dealt with. No Center or CRP has a formal

67 <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/67897/Ten%20principlesfinal.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>



reporting process for maintaining partnership health, but some managers reported that they try to use regular communication to ensure that problems are dealt with before they become unmanageable, which the evaluation considers a prerequisite for effectiveness<sup>68</sup>.

- › **Disengaging.** The evaluation learned that many CGIAR relationships with partners have had a long evolution, through a series of projects and programs. However, it was mentioned by interviewees that sometimes it is necessary to disengage from a partnership. This may be because the partnership has not delivered, has become too large and difficult to manage, or has fulfilled its term. Common CGIAR practice, which to the evaluation seems a pragmatic approach, is to allow the existing relationship to run its course and not to renew it. The second situation is when the research has progressed and the roles of partners need to evolve<sup>69</sup>; CGIAR may not have a comparative advantage to continue, but a measured disengagement is needed from working with a scaling partner. Such disengagement needs careful planning ahead, with reference to the TOC, and very good communication throughout the process.

## Comparative advantage

One factor necessary for effective CGIAR partnerships is the ability of each partner to contribute according to their comparative advantage. CRP leaders and external partners interviewed were clear that they weigh up the transactions costs of establishing partnerships against perceived or actual benefits. There are benefits that arise simply as a result of being in partnership – for example, the ability to apply jointly for funds, or the size of the combined human resource – and there are also clearly perceived benefits arising from each partner bringing its own strengths to the partnership.

Information from CGIAR research managers and their external partners indicates that CGIAR's own comparative advantage lies in a combination of two factors: presence in and knowledge of the many countries where it works, in some cases with long-term links to national institutions, and a reputation as a solid scientific partner (a world leader in some specialized areas). Testimony provided to the evaluation echoes the findings of the independent assessment of the perceptions of CGIAR Stakeholders conducted in 2012 by Globescan<sup>70</sup>, which rated CGIAR most strongly on global expertise and sector and regional knowledge.

External partners from research organizations cited as incentives for partnership: the ability to test varieties on many sites, CGIAR physical presence in developing countries, the ability to disseminate research findings quickly and on a global scale, encouragement by their government to work with international organizations, and their own visibility in large and prestigious projects. Other types of external partner cited: their confidence in the CGIAR scientists, the reputation of CGIAR giving credibility to science results, the possibility to “open doors”, CGIAR scientists' strong knowledge of local situations and sensitivities, the possibility to fund work that could otherwise not have been funded, the possibility to link research to policy development, and the global reach and poverty mandate of CGIAR.

These advantages have continued to outweigh the transactions costs of long planning processes and uneven funding, with the result that CGIAR has had no shortage of potential partners.

68 A useful reference is Caplan, K; Gomme, J; Mugabi, J and L. Stott. (2007): *Assessing Partnership Performance: Understanding the Drivers for Success..* While intended to guide formal evaluations of partnerships, it offers (in Table 3c) a set of qualitative indicators that could also be used more informally through discussion among partners to assess the health of their partnership.

69 See Feinstein, O. (2010): *Evaluation and development: the partnership dimension.* In UNICEF (2010): *From policies to results: Developing capacities for country monitoring and evaluation systems.* This reference states that “what matters is the sustainability of the results, made possible by partnerships, rather than the sustainability of the partnerships. In fact, it is generally considered good practice to incorporate some kind of “exit strategy” in partnerships

70 2012 CGIAR Stakeholder perceptions survey : update and highlights. CGIAR Consortium Office. April 22, 2013 [https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/2793/2012\\_CGIAR\\_Stakeholder\\_Perceptions\\_Survey-Update\\_and\\_Highlights-\\_April\\_22.pdf?sequence=4](https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/2793/2012_CGIAR_Stakeholder_Perceptions_Survey-Update_and_Highlights-_April_22.pdf?sequence=4)

CGIAR is expected to focus on IPG research maintaining excellence in research for development. For impact, it depends on working in effective partnerships with organizations whose comparative advantage lies in strong capacity for scaling, preferably with their own sources of funding.<sup>71</sup> Comparative advantage of external partners, from the CGIAR perspective, relates strongly to the capacity of a partner to do something CGIAR cannot, or the partner's institutional position. As discussed in Chapter 2, CRPs and Centers have become increasingly strategic in considering the types of partners with which they should work, and have partnered with many organizations whose capacities are complementary to those of CGIAR. When identifying individual partners, the assessment of their ability to deliver is an important consideration, based on reputation or CGIAR's previous experience.

As discussed in Chapter 2, some donors tend to push the CGIAR to do scaling and development itself, and this is a concern if it detracts from the ability to do research. According to the GRiSP evaluation, much of the CRP's work in a major program in Bangladesh is devoted to extension and technology delivery pushing the program further downstream to delivery than is CGIAR's comparative advantage. As is evident in some of the case studies, and from interviews with some donors and Center managers, some recipient countries have themselves funded CGIAR for technology delivery.

Positive examples were seen in the partnership between L&F and Heifer International, which has expertise in working with communities to strengthen dairy value chains; and in the STRASA partnership where the case study revealed division of duties among partners in seed multiplication and delivery and State and national support from India. In many developing countries, field-based organizations do not have access to resources, but the proposal to bring in GIZ as a partner for several phase 2 CRPs reflects a recognition of the issue. Involvement of GIZ as a strategic partner is also expected to deepen research-development interactions.

## Research outputs

CGIAR has produced a vast majority of its research outputs since 2008 in partnership with external partners. CGIAR interviewees were adamant that partnerships are necessary for research across all areas. The evaluation focused its assessment on published outputs, which are produced by all Centers and reported by CRPs and accessible from databases. Apart from published research results, germplasm constitutes another major output category in CGIAR, but the evaluation examined this only in its RTB case study, in which RTB leadership considered the work on metabolomics as one of the most important scientific accomplishments of the CRP so far. In breeding operations, the Centers are very autonomous in delivering material from early crossing populations and breeding stocks to elite lines ready for release as varieties by partners. The CRPs have been requested to report annually on achievement from partnerships. In a few cases outputs have been reported, but the reporting has so far been mostly on partnership agreements, co-funding, joint events and other joint activities. CRPs have also reported on mature results from longer-term partnerships, which are discussed in section 4.4.

While published research only partially reflects the volume of collaborative research and results from it, the evaluation was able to consider systematically only published outputs. It used an analysis of research publications done by IEA to identify changes in the patterns of publishing with partners over the duration of the CRPs. The publications analysis compared published research outputs in 2012 (assumed to represent mostly research from before the CRPs) and 2015 (assumed to represent mostly publications from CRP research).

The results (Box 6, for detail see Annex E) showed that the overall volume of research publishing has increased. Further, almost all CGIAR publications reflect research done in partnerships, and this has not

71 The SRF 2011 estimated that public agricultural R4D in developing countries would need to be ten times the investment in CGIAR for impact.

changed during the reform period.<sup>72</sup> However, co-publishing among Centers did not increase and was slightly below 14 percent in both years. The recent IFPRI study revealed that a major increase in joint Center publishing had occurred in 2000, before the CRPs, and there is a gradually rising trend. The effect of CRPs may become clearer in the next years.

Publishing with partners in developed economies (termed “northern partners”) has increased. While publications where authorship involved both northern and southern partners was at similar level (close to 30 percent of all publications), there was a 9.6 percent increase, a statistically significant change, in publications that involved only northern partners, while publishing with only southern partners diminished by 10 percent. Across all publications published in partnership, the most frequent partners with major increase in joint publishing were Wageningen University (8.6 percent of articles co-authored with partners), CIRAD, CSIRO, INRA and USDA (all with about 5 percent share), and publishing with IRD also increased.

Among “southern partners”, co-publishing has been most common with Indian institutions which has gone up from 22 percent to 33 percent. With Chinese institutions it has remained at a similar level but with Kenyan institutions, the third more prevalent country, co-publishing has dropped. In 2012, the share of Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences was nearly 8 percent of all articles, but it fell to less than 2 percent in 2015.

### Box 3: Publication in partnership

Author affiliations of almost 1300 journal articles published in 2012 and 2015 were analyzed, representing a random sample of approximately 50 percent of articles from Thomson Reuters Web of Science journal database.

- ▶ CGIAR researchers published mostly with partners (86 percent on average with no significant change).
- ▶ Publishing with only northern partners increased from 27 percent in 2012 to 36.6 percent in 2015.
- ▶ Publishing with only southern partners decreased from 29.8 percent in 2012 to 19.7 percent in 2015.
- ▶ Articles with both northern and southern co-authors were about 28 percent on average.
- ▶ Joint publishing among Center was 14 percent on average and there was no significant change.
- ▶ CGIAR researchers are middle authors in about 35 percent of articles that have more than two authors.
- ▶ In articles with only southern co-authors (more than two authors), CGIAR has more often a role as first, last or corresponding author than in partnerships that involve northern authors.
- ▶ The trend is towards higher-ranking journals in all kinds of authorships.
- ▶ Articles written in partnership where northern partners are involved are published in well-ranked journals more often than when northern partners are not involved.
- ▶ Articles written in partnership where northern partners are involved have been cited more than those not involving northern partners.

**Sources:** analysis by IEA using articles from Thomson Reuters Web of Science journal database

The publications analysis also looked at the position of authors in the author list. While the practice of listing authors varies by discipline and institutions, the results suggest that when CGIAR institutions publish with southern partners, they have a position as first, last or corresponding author more often than in partnership with northern authors (the difference was significant). Even in articles that have a mixture of authors CGIAR tends to be a “middle author”. In practice this might mean that in these cases, CGIAR scientists are not playing a leadership role in writing the articles, and possibly not in designing the research and taking lead responsibility for its implementation.

72 The recent analysis of 2000-2016 publications data by Koo, IFPRI, confirms this finding.

The results show that co-authored articles with northern institutions have appeared in higher ranking journals than articles that have no northern author.<sup>73</sup> This demonstrates that research has been targeted to well-ranked journals and it has been successful in getting published in those journals. There could be the following explanation for this. The topics and therefore journal targeting differ; articles written with northern partners or in authorship that involves northern partners may be on topics of higher international relevance and interest than when CGIAR is the sole author or publishes with southern partners only. The latter consequently may be of higher local or regional relevance. The results showed, however that also articles that had both northern and southern partners in the authorship appeared in well-ranked journals.

Similarly, the results showed that articles published jointly with northern authors had higher citations than when they were published by just CGIAR authors or with southern partners. The reasons may be similar to those for journal ranking; the topics that involve northern partners may be of greater international interest. However, the observations concerning both journal ranking and citations also suggest that partnerships with northern partners seem to increase the quality of the research, making the articles more likely to get into well-ranked journals and of subsequently being cited by others.

## Delivery for development impact

CGIAR is dependent on partnerships for getting its research disseminated and scaled for development impact, and it is clear that all impacts identified in CRP evaluations have resulted from partnerships. While, therefore, it is meaningless to consider impact without partnership, it does not necessarily follow that all partnerships are appropriate and sufficient to facilitate impact even when the research has high impact potential. Furthermore, the efficiency of delivery is likely to be influenced by the effectiveness of partnerships. With the reform, outcome targeting became geographically focused, and donors, according to interview feedback, are expecting evidence of impacts at national level. However, the discourse on impacts has also been somewhat confused with an expectation for CGIAR to set and meet its outcome targets. At the same time, most stakeholders realize that “research flow, scale and delivery go beyond CGIAR’s manageable interests” as expressed by a donor. While the CGIAR emphasizes shared responsibility for outcomes and impacts, there is agreement that last-mile delivery is outside CGIAR’s core skills, comparative advantage and competitiveness. There is need for innovative and effective partnerships, which allow the CGIAR to remain focused on its comparative advantage while working with those partners whose comparative advantage is in scaling and dealing with last-mile delivery issues.

The survey of FP leaders revealed unanimous appreciation of the necessity to engage with appropriate partners, such as those who are influential in development, funding and policy. From the feed-back is also became clear that partners are considered central to CRP impact pathways, particularly concerning scaling of results, and in complex settings. From the landscaping exercise, the evaluation concludes, that almost all MSPs have a delivery and scaling focus.

This evaluation looked at examples of how partnerships operate for delivery and scaling by drawing from two of its case studies that represent the delivery end partnerships, CRP annual reports and other evaluative information available on CGIAR delivery.

- › Within the STRASA partnership, seed multiplication is split among the various partners. The production and provision of breeder seed is the responsibility of National Research Institutes, such as ICAR in India. Foundation seed is produced by various institutions including research institutes, federal and State agriculture and extension departments, seed corporations and private seed companies. Production of certified seed is carried out by these same organizations and also by individuals and groups of farmers

<sup>73</sup> Using Web of Science journal categories, journals were grouped into two groups: those with average or lower impact factor within the category and those with higher than average impact factor.

after receiving training. There is also coordination of effort and linkage with programs supported by State or national governments. The case study found that the number of delivery partners for Stress Tolerant Rice Varieties in South Asia has increased ten times from 19 in 2007 to nearly 200 in 2016, facilitating outreach to a large number of farmers.

- › The STRASA partnership has been examined in other evaluative studies. The GRiSP evaluation concluded that “new models for seed multiplication and targeted delivery systems are effective and transferable.” It considered the results for Stress Tolerance Rice Varieties in South Asia impressive and on basis of STRASA and GRISP documents, reported that since 2010 some 11 million farmers and nearly 5 million hectares have been reached. The “Delivery at the CGIAR” report<sup>74</sup> in 2014 attributed the success of STRASA in delivery to the fact that the project created partnerships with the clear intention to carry out delivery activities. It also noted that early farmer participatory methods generated rapid feed-back channels for optimizing the technology package for broader launch.
- › The Allanblackia project has made progress on outputs and even on scaling. Industrially marketed products from Allanblackia produced by 10,000 rural people in Tanzania, Ghana and Nigeria were sold in supermarkets in 2014, and it is envisaged by the partnership that the number of producers will increase by a factor of ten by 2020. Research on domestication has yielded superior trees that bear fruit in relatively short time and regularly. Rural resource centres, managed by national agriculture institutes in the participating countries serve as diffusion hubs for new technologies, germplasm and knowledge, and in one country they also support private satellite nurseries in villages. Current efforts focus on the mass production of seedlings of selected, superior trees, and development of agroforestry systems for large-scale integration of Allanblackia with other crop production systems on farms. Local supply chains are in operation providing a link between harvesters and buyers. Despite these successes that are centrally dependent on CGIAR’s external partners, scaling – reaching yields of significant size – to satisfy market demand will take time and the feasibility of upscaling Allanblackia is still to be determined.
- › GRISP reported in its annual report for 2014: “[an] example of linking up with development programs is the World Bank-funded Agricultural Competitiveness Project in Vietnam, in which the CRP provides support to the development and delivery of improved rice management technologies that are integrated into the national ‘1 Must Do, 5 Reductions’ program. This project made it an essential prerequisite for farmer cooperatives to receive assistance for agricultural machinery and infrastructure to receive training on these improved practices. As a result, some 240,000 farmers implemented best practices over 300,000 ha.”

These examples illustrate that there are different challenges in delivery depending on the nature of the research outputs and complexity related to adoption and scaling. Although improved seed is a relatively simple intervention, the STRASA case demonstrates the importance of clear and early planning for delivery with different partners engaging in different roles of the delivery network, and with strong national support, including financial support. The Allanblackia project concerns a commodity, but also a complex challenge regarding the research, technology package development and marketing. The GRiSP example illustrates a case of government policy paving the way for introducing beneficial technologies. Other examples from annual reports include:

- › A4NH (HarvestPlus): together with partners (unspecified) delivery of iron beans to more than 1 million farming household;
- › L&F: partnership with Dow Agrosiences and Papalotla (Tropical seed) to introduce improved hybrid forage seed from Latin America to Africa;
- › L&F (WorldFish): with Merck Animal health to assess tilapia diseases in Egypt and Bangladesh and with Skretting Feeds and Aller Aqua for joint development of fish feeds and producers training;

74 Dalberg Global Development Advisors (2014).

- › RTB, Humidtropics and L&F: technology for turning waste cassava peel (20 percent of root weight) into high-quality cassava peel mash for livestock feed;
- › AAS and L&F: improved aquaculture technologies adopted by some 550,000 farmers.

From examining several delivery cases in CGIAR, the “Delivery at the CGIAR” study highlighted the importance of addressing gaps in delivery performance through early planning and resourcing for delivery through partners, on-farm trials (as in STRASA), and considering market dynamics where boundary partners (seed producers, agro-input dealers, or other intermediaries) are important for market trialing before commercialization or broad public dissemination. The study also concluded that most technology does not “sell itself”, and push is needed through promotion at farmer and community level in test scales and for feed-back.

Therefore, it is not surprising that success stories where CGIAR has made good progress along the impact pathway from research to scaling have occurred where there is already some capacity to take up the research outputs, or where there has been investment over many years in building capacity. Many types of boundary partners, including non-traditional one are needed to be intermediaries for CGIAR/NARS technologies for them to reach their intended users in large scales.

## Conclusions and recommendations

For the first phase of CRPs, Centers mapped nearly all their activities under one or more CRPs. In phase 2 adjustments have been made to the portfolio that in the evaluations view are likely to lead to even further integration. The evaluation concludes that the experiences with the programmatic approach have been generally positive and CGIAR managers value the closer partnerships that have been forged through the CRPs.

At the time of this evaluation, the site integration process had only started. The evaluation considers that it has good potential for coordination of operations and the use of assets, and partner engagement even when CRPs are not integrating their research at those sites, but it was too early to assess progress with coordination efforts.

Since the reform, and comparing phase 1 to phase 2, partners have become more involved in consultation, planning and management of research. Partners and stakeholders have been most directly involved in consultations about CRPs, and in some case partners have also been involved in developing program TOCs. The number of partners in program and particularly FP-level research management has increased, but very few developing country partners are involved. The evaluation’s analysis of publication outputs also suggests that research partnerships are becoming stronger with institutions in the North. The evaluation considers that a concerted effort should be made to involve developing country partners more directly in CRP management, in order to avoid distance between developed and developing country partners. The NARS in some emerging economies have an increasing capacity for advanced science and resources, and greater NARS involvement would also be desirable for the program’s outcome orientation and delivery planning.

There is scope to enhance communications with partners and stakeholder. The evaluation identified the following specific issues within the partnership life cycle:

- › The importance of identifying concrete shared objectives rather than only general interest.
- › The value of participating in existing national processes to the extent possible, rather than creating parallel processes.
- › The desirability of minimizing to the extent possible the transactions costs associated with CGIAR’s administrative processes, particularly related to planning and reporting, which affect strategic partners as well as CGIAR scientists.



- › The necessity, and difficulty of communicating clearly about expectations for roles, responsibilities, funding, delivery and reporting, in order to manage partner expectations as well as set a good foundation for partnerships.
- › The need to ensure that each partner is able to sustain its mandate, and to find ways to deal with power imbalances, by means of very regular communication.
- › The value of planning together for disengagement as research moves along the impact pathway.

The most effective partnerships have allowed each partner to work to their comparative advantage. The comparative advantage of Centers lies in their presence in and knowledge of the many countries where they work, combined with their reputation as solid scientific partners (world leaders in a few specialized areas). CGIAR must continue to be a strong and credible partner, maintaining not only ground presence and infrastructure, but also scientific expertise in core areas. This issue speaks to the entire sustainability of the research program and goes well beyond the mandate of this evaluation. However, comparative advantage is not static and it depends on partners evolving capacities and strengths. If CGIAR is expected to focus on being a strong research partner, it must collaborate with organizations that have strong capacity for scaling and their own sources of funding. This may increasingly include developing country governments and private sector.

The majority of research outputs since 2008 have been produced by partnerships with external partners. Publishing among Centers has not changed since the CRPs were established. The evaluation observed a clear shift to publishing more with partners from developed countries, but its analysis did not reveal the underpinning causes of this.

The importance of external partners in applied research and the delivery and scaling processes beyond CGIAR's involvement is well acknowledged. The specific steps of engagement and factors that lead to successful delivery have not been systematically documented, but there are many examples where partners have played specific roles in delivery and impact. Evidence suggests that early and clear planning for different partners engaging in different roles is essential, and that delivery and scaling depend on national support systems and investments.

#### ◆ **Recommendation 6.**

**Emerging and developing country NARS with strong capacity should be more closely involved in research management in CRPs.**

In order to strengthen relationships with those emerging and developing country NARS who have strong research capacity, CRPs and Centers should increase their efforts to involve these institutions in planning and management of CRP research.

The evaluation recognises that the recommendation to increase developing country NARS involvement in research management will be challenging to implement. As well as commitment from CGIAR, it requires that the home organizations of the science leaders from NARS encompasses regional or global development issues, and are willing to express their interest in CGIAR through engagement with the CRP process and investment of resources. For this reason, only a small number of developing country partners are likely to be interested and qualified for direct involvement in research management

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