Guidance note: Carrying out a country-level stocktake

CGIAR Standing Panel on Impact Assessment, Dec 2023

Purpose

This guidance note is intended for use by teams preparing an Expression of Interest (EoI) in response to SPIA’s December 2023 open call on country-level studies. The goal is to explain what we mean by a stocktake of CGIAR innovations – one of the core deliverables of each SPIA country-level study – and provide some insight into the methods and level of effort required to produce one. More detailed methodological guidance will be made available in mid-2024 to support those teams invited to develop full proposals.

Background

SPIA researcher Frederic Kosmowski – who led our first country-level study, on Ethiopia – developed the approach as a way of systematizing the information he was learning about CGIAR research efforts. The Ethiopian stocktake table can be found in the supplementary materials to that report. The goal of carrying out a stocktake is to try and establish the universe of CGIAR research efforts in the country over the past twenty years, and to record relevant information that helps us prioritize data collection for CGIAR-related innovations in the country.

Terminology

Innovation: A technology, practice, decision support tool, or policy/institutional design that required input from research for its design and/or promotion and is novel to its users.

CGIAR-related efforts for development and/or dissemination: Arguably the most difficult aspect of carrying out the stocktake – to understand exactly what was done by the research teams in the country in question. CGIAR has a complex structure. Most fundamentally, there are the research centers – these are the legal entities, and researchers working for CGIAR will have a primary affiliation with one of them.

The way research is organized and described within CGIAR has shifted over the past two decades. The CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) were implemented in two phases (approx. 2011 – 2016 and 2017 – 2021). The current portfolio includes research “Initiatives” and bilaterally funded projects. Understanding what is relevant to the country in question and, importantly, how the reality may have deviated from what was planned, will require interviews with CGIAR researchers and their partners in the national agricultural research system.

Observable feature: A clear and distinctive feature that allows the CGIAR-related innovation to be measured in a survey setting.

Policy contribution: Situation in which CGIAR-related research or activities have a plausible claim that they have contributed to new or improved policies, regulations or institutions (or their management).
Populating the stocktake

Stocktaking requires three overlapping stages: Desk-based, Interviews with stakeholders, Peer-review / consultation.

a. Sources for desk-based phase

Old Results Dashboard: Has information from 2018 onward, and has sections on Outcome-Impact Case Reports, Innovations and Policy

New Results Dashboard: Started in 2022. Results are measured by center.

CGIAR center-specific project dashboards: Usually the Center’s website will have a project list. Search or filter for the specific country.

Center’s Annual Reports: Can be found in centers’ websites. Keyword search the country.

Research Program (CRP) or Challenge program Annual Reports: Can be found in CGSpace or archive CRP websites

Open access M&E documents: IAES published Evaluation reports for each CRP (the annexes are particularly useful); Publications from Center’s M&E and impact assessment focal points or their counterparts in the past

MEL website (e.g. WorldFish is very active)

Scientific Publications: Combing through the Google scholar profiles of relevant CGIAR researchers

Social Media: Youtube, Linkedin, Twitter/X, Facebook (YouTube videos featuring CGIAR researchers often very informative)

Miscellaneous Project Documents: Will usually have very specific information on the activities carried out. Best to first establish that the specific project / research program is highly relevant. Also useful when activities were very complicated and therefore badly reported in the communication products for the wider public. Searchable on CGSpace.

Internal Documentation: CGIAR centers might have lists of their activities in a given year that are not published in a website. These can be well summarized and outline outcomes instead of just activities. They are rarely open access so will need to be shared by focal point within the center.

b. Interviews with stakeholders

Essential. Impact assessment focal points; country representatives; CGIAR and NARS scientists.

c. Peer-review / consultation

After a first draft is ready, we have found it very useful to have it shared in a workshop with stakeholders in the country – to check for gaps, check the accuracy of what has been recorded, and get a sense of prioritization for future data needs.