



SYNTHESIS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM 15 CRP EVALUATIONS SUMMARY REPORT

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This Summary Report is the Executive Summary of „Synthesis and Lessons Learned from 15 CRP Evaluations“. The main report can be found on the IEA webpage.

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BACKGROUND

CGIAR is a global partnership that comprises 15 international Research Centers engaged in development-oriented research on agriculture and natural resources. Created in 1971, CGIAR became increasingly complex as it evolved over time, leading to many challenges such as the lack of a clear mission-oriented research focus, the proliferation of uncoordinated CGIAR entities and programs, and the growing dependence on bilateral funding, often with a strong focus on development at the expense of science. Starting in 2008, CGIAR underwent a major reform that aimed to address these challenges. A central element of the reform was the creation starting in 2011 of 15 CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs). Each of them is jointly managed by several CGIAR Centers, often with external partners as well. The CRPs were designed to integrate virtually the entire research portfolio of all Centers around one strategic framework that articulated CGIAR's overarching goals (also referred to as System-Level Outcomes): reduced rural poverty, improved food security, improved nutrition and health, and sustainably managed natural resources. The creation of CRPs was probably the most far-reaching and ambitious reform effort undertaken since the establishment of CGIAR.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE SYNTHESIS

In November 2013, the Fund Council of CGIAR decided that all current CRPs should undergo an evaluation prior to the preparation of full proposals for a second CRP funding period that will start in 2017. The Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) of CGIAR carried out ten CRP evaluations between 2013 and early 2016. In addition, IEA provided technical support and internal and external quality assurance to evaluations of the five remaining CRPs that were commissioned by the programs themselves. At the end of 2015, IEA decided to conduct a "Synthesis and Lessons Learned from 15 CRP Evaluations" – the subject of this report. The primary objective of this Review is to identify major patterns and emerging lessons from evaluation findings, focusing on selected topics, namely relevance and priority setting, quality of science, outcomes and impact, gender, partnerships and capacity development, governance and management, and the value added of the CRPs. The Review is not meant to be a detailed and comprehensive meta-analysis of the 15 CRP evaluations. The purpose is rather to identify lessons for the next phase of the CRPs.

The Review is based on the evaluation reports of the 15 CRPs. In some cases the Synthesis team also consulted primary data collected for the evaluations, such as researcher surveys and bibliometric data. In addition, CGIAR documents such as earlier reviews and strategic documents, provided contextual information. However, it was beyond the scope of the Review to analyse other CRP documents, or to collect other primary information to cover aspects that had not been addressed in the CRP evaluations.

RELEVANCE AND PRIORITY SETTING

The CRPs were developed within the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) of 2011. The SRF 2011 recognized the need to provide more specific guidance of overall System priorities as the basis for developing the CRP portfolio, but time and resources did not allow this. The SRF 2011 recommended a more in-depth analysis of priorities for the next round of CRPs and this is still in progress. The SRF 2016 lays out eight areas of research as "priorities" (SRF 2016, p. 4), but they are so generic that they provided little guidance either to choice of a CRP portfolio or the relative importance among CRPs within a portfolio.

Nonetheless, all evaluations concluded that CRPs align well with CGIAR SLOs. This alignment is being operationalized through a set of Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs) that have been developed to correspond to each System Level Outcome (SLO). The CRPs needed to develop their program-specific IDOs derived from their “Theories of Change” (ToCs).

At the CRP level, the evaluations found that some CRPs had developed more analytical approaches to priority setting, although there was little evidence that they influenced resource allocation. Demand-side approaches to assessing priorities were also evident in most CRPs, sometimes with considerable success according to the evaluations. Overall, legacy research and bilateral funding played a large role in CRP resource allocation. Several evaluations noted that such bilateral funding often drives CRPs toward development activities in which they do not have comparative advantage.

EMERGING LESSONS ON RELEVANCE AND PRIORITY SETTING

- Use of ToCs and IDOs has the potential to increase the relevance of CGIAR research by strategically focusing on outcomes and impact. However, identifying IDOs based on ToCs does not replace priority setting; it can only provide a starting point. This approach still needs to be combined with methods of priority setting to identify how funding is best allocated across and within the CRPs, taking into account aspects such as the comparative advantage of CGIAR and the role of research vis-à-vis other factors in reaching a particular IDO. CGIAR can draw on a rich experience in using quantitative and qualitative methods for priority setting, and new methods of bottom-up priority setting have been tested during the evaluation period, especially in the Systems CRPs. Still, the evaluations indicate that substantially more emphasis on priority setting is required, both at the System and the CRP level, if the CGIAR wants to realize its own goal to be at the forefront on how the international community should allocate resources for international agricultural research.
- At the System level (for future SRFs), the emerging lesson is that, even considering the long history and rich experience of CGIAR in using a wide variety of prioritization methods, the time and the resources required to develop a robust approach for setting priorities for IDOs should not be underestimated. The default to not setting priorities at the System level is the status quo in allocating funds across CRPs that represents an implicit set of priorities of the System.
- The need for efforts to define priorities within CRPs remains strong and efforts to respond to this need have still been evolving during the evaluation period, with variations across CRPs. The majority of evaluations recommended more rigorous and transparent priority setting mechanisms at the CRP level for allocating W1/W2 funding and tapping W3 and bilateral funds. New approaches to use bottom-up demand-side approaches have been applied, and the identification of IDOs has been an important step to ensure relevance. However, more analysis is required for priority setting within the CRPs to find the best strategies on how to meet the IDOs, especially with a view to important strategic questions and addressing research needs of poverty hot-spots.

Following a framework developed by IEA, quality of science was evaluated based on assessments of the quality of research inputs (staff, infrastructure), the appropriateness of research management processes, and the quality of research outputs (publications and other types of outputs).

RESEARCH INPUTS

The evaluations show that overall, the CRPs have been able to engage research leaders of adequate qualification and scientific standing to lead the wide range of CRP research activities at a globally competitive level. The CRPs are also home to highly productive world-class researchers in several fields of research. However, there is considerable variation in staff quality across CRPs, which partly reflects the traditional strengths and weaknesses of the participating Centers that had been documented in earlier reviews of the Centers. The evaluations also indicate that improving the disciplinary mix of their researchers remains a challenge, even though that was one of the expected benefits of creating CRPs. Likewise, there is still much to do to build sufficient research staff capacity in “non-traditional” research areas that the CRP portfolio aimed to strengthen within CGIAR, such as farming systems research and participatory research. The researcher surveys indicates that many CRPs could do better in terms of creating individual incentives for performance, in encouraging creative thinking, and in allowing for risk taking and learning from failure.

The quality of research infrastructure, another major input of research quality, is strongly influenced by previous investments by the Centers. Researchers in regions that were traditionally disadvantaged, especially in Sub-Saharan African, did not seem to benefit much from participation in the CRPs in terms of better research infrastructure. There are also serious concerns regarding the lack of long-term investment in research infrastructure even in areas where CGIAR had been strong in the past, given the funding structure (see below).

RESEARCH MANAGEMENT

Research management processes, especially those that aim to ensure quality of science, remained in the domain of the Centers rather than being managed at CRP level. Considerable differences continue to exist between Centers in this respect. The implications for the CRPs are not straightforward, since establishing additional processes for ensuring quality of science at the CRP level would lead to duplication of efforts. This is a typical challenge of matrix management that requires further consideration as the CRPs evolve. Harmonization of processes to ensure quality of science would be a promising approach. Further, the opportunities that the CRPs offer for generating globally relevant data sets and making them publicly available remains underexploited and several evaluations noted that data sharing across Centers remains a significant challenge.

RESEARCH OUTPUTS

Overall, the evaluations concluded that the CRPs have been able to produce outputs of a quality that is consistent with what can be expected from international agricultural research organizations. However, there is considerable variability in this respect. Many CRPs have been able to produce outstanding publications in specific areas, but these achievements were often due to a relatively small share

of exceptional researchers (as is the case in many research organizations). The publication analysis also indicates that collaboration with Advanced Agricultural Research Institutions (ARIs) seems essential for the CRPs to be able to stay at the research frontier in an increasingly competitive environment. Similarly to the analysis of staff qualifications, the publication analysis also indicates that (pre-existing) differences across CGIAR Centers regarding their visibility and impact in the international scientific literature have not been significantly reduced through the CRP approach of bringing different Centers together. There is no evidence yet of joint publications across Centers within a CRP in high-ranking journals, although it is probably too soon to see this effect. A matter of concern for several CRPs are the relatively high shares of articles in journals without impact factors or with low impact factors, as peer review remains one of the most important instruments in research to ensure quality of science.

Apart from publications, the CRPs produced other important outputs, especially technological innovations and institutional innovations. The CRP evaluations differed in the level of detail in which they assessed the quality of the non-published outputs, but the evidence suggests that their quality was overall also consistent with what can be expected from international agricultural research organizations.

EMERGING LESSONS ON QUALITY OF SCIENCE

- The evaluations show that the CRPs are research programs where world-class agricultural research is being conducted with a focus on CGIAR's overarching goals. Nevertheless, the variation in quality of science within and across CRPs indicates that to date CRPs have only been partly successful in using the potential of the new matrix management structure for combining the strengths of the participating Centers to boost the overall quality of science. CRPs may gain from harmonizing processes of quality control and performance management of research staff, which remains the authority of the Centers. Encouraging co-authorship across Centers and stronger individual incentives for performance could also be useful. Moreover, several CRPs would benefit from a better integration of social science research. All the CRPs would benefit from integrating a wider range of social sciences beyond economics in their disciplinary portfolio.
- CRPs also created the opportunity to share data across Centers and make comprehensive data sets publicly available - an important international public good, and a distinct comparative advantage of CGIAR. The evaluations indicate that more efforts are required to utilize this opportunity. Innovative approaches in some CRPs may serve as examples, but a stronger culture of data sharing across Centers is also needed.
- CRPs with comparatively high shares of publications in journals without an impact factor could derive insights from other CRPs on how to best address this challenge. Strategies may include setting clear goals for staff on different types of outputs; mentoring of junior scientists; and encouraging co-authorship of junior and senior scientists as well as collaboration with ARIs.

- CRPs that rely on expensive research infrastructure to be able to conduct research of high quality have largely benefitted from past investments of the Centers and from collaboration with ARIs. The evaluations indicate an urgent need to identify how sufficient investment in research infrastructure to ensure future quality of science can be ensured under the CRP funding system that does not adequately fund these types of investments.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The evaluations assessed the tools that the CRPs use to promote impact (formulating impact pathways and ToCs) as well as the evidence on impact.

IMPACT PATHWAYS AND TOCS

The evaluations and the researcher surveys clearly indicate that requesting each CRP to develop a ToC has forced CRPs to consider more carefully the processes for achieving impacts and resulted in a stronger impact orientation. However, the evaluations indicate that the direct translation of ToC - a tool developed for development projects - to the CRPs needs much more thought. While development projects are typically implemented in a specific region, CRPs are highly complex global research programs that include a wide range of different types of activities (from laboratory research and theoretical modelling to activities in farmers' fields). They target a large number of very diverse beneficiaries and typically they have rather diverse impact pathways (e.g., achieving impact directly through working with farmers and extension agents as well as indirectly through effects on food prices, advising policy-makers, influencing global debates and donors and changing development paradigms). The evaluations indicate that CRP ToCs also need to be more cognizant of the relevant literature. ToCs are essentially based on assumptions regarding the different causal links in an impact chain, and in order to meet the standards of a global research programs, these assumptions should be supported by the respective literature (e.g., the literature on technology adoption and agricultural innovation systems or the emerging field of implementation sciences).

Several evaluations also expressed serious concerns regarding current efforts of CGIAR to use the ToC/IDO approach as the basis for a results-based management (RBM) system. The complexity of the CRPs as global research programs (see above) and the inevitably uncertain nature of research limit the applicability of the RBM approaches. Concerns include unrealistic assumptions about the attributability of development outcome indicators to CRP research; underestimation of the resources required to adequately monitor the development outcome indicators across the entire portfolio; and heavy reporting requirements that may undermine staff morale.

IMPACT

Past impact assessments (IA) concentrated on the impact of genetic improvement of crop varieties and fish strains. These impact estimates have been, and still are, used by CGIAR as a major rationale to justify investment in the System as well as for learning. The evaluations indicate that in the Commodity CRPs,

CRPs, where this type of impact is most relevant, IA has lost momentum, as they reported only few major IA studies and no global assessment. A regional assessment of Sub-Saharan Africa found modest adoption of modern crop varieties since 1998, but a large share of those varieties could be attributed to the CGIAR. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are increasingly being used to establish early outcomes and provide a basis for learning and scaling up, e.g., in the cases of flood-tolerant rice and orange-fleshed sweet potato. Among the non-Commodity CRPs, IA efforts have been limited in most CRPs. Partly, this reflects difficulties of attributing outcomes and impact to the type of research products produced by the non-Commodity CRPs.

The evaluations generally rated the quality of IA favourably although often noting considerable variability. Methodological rigor has the potential to improve with the increasing availability of panel data sets and novel techniques such as RCTs to measure risk effects of technology use and DNA fingerprinting to verify varieties grown by farmers. Nonetheless, a recurring theme in the evaluations' recommendations is the need for CRPs to adopt a systematic and adequately funded approach to IA that would replace the present ad hoc processes that provide only very partial and sporadic coverage of CRP activities. The heavy investment in baseline data was also noted in several evaluations as not being sustainable.

EMERGING LESSONS ON OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

- The introduction of the ToC concept has led to a stronger results orientation of CGIAR. However, more efforts are required to adapt the ToC concept, which was originally designed for development projects, to the specific requirements of a highly complex international research program. The CRPs could make better use of their own research expertise to develop better ToCs, but this will require that CRP staff embraces the concept as part of their research endeavour, rather than considering it as just another requirement to be fulfilled to access funding.
- These lessons also apply to current efforts to develop a RBM System based on the ToC/IDO concept. The evolving RBM System for CRPs needs to be based on more realistic assumptions, in line with the evaluation literature, regarding attributability of outcomes to research effort, and regarding the number and type of indicators that can be credibly be monitored in large-scale complex research projects, and with reasonable resources. The focus could be placed on indicators that are most relevant for IA.
- The evaluations indicate that the development of a systematic approach to IA is still a work in progress. IA should be an ongoing activity that provides broad coverage of the major CRP research products and their impact on SLOs through IDOs at regular intervals of 5-10 years, supported by the allocation of a certain percentage of funds to IA.
- Non-commodity CRPs face major methodological challenges in IA as, given the state of the art, assessing impacts through IDOs on SLOs will be limited by attribution and measurement

problems. In many cases, outcomes will necessarily be assessed by tracking influence on national and local decision makers and a systematic program of IA would allow synthesis of results at a regional or global level.

- At the System level, the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) has played a critical role in quality control for IA, providing matching funds, creating a community of practice and promoting regional and global coverage. Considering the important role that credible state-of-the-art IA played in the past for justifying funding to the CGIAR, it is important to continue these efforts.

GENDER

The evaluations assessed the focus on gender in the CRPs by evaluating gender strategies, efforts to create an enabling environment for gender research, progress towards gender mainstreaming in research, and attention to gender in the workplace. The CGIAR Consortium-level Gender Strategy published in 2011 served as reference for the evaluations.

GENDER STRATEGIES


Overall, the evaluations found that requesting the CRPs to develop Gender Strategies has been an important step in mainstreaming gender throughout CGIAR. The evaluations suggest that CRP Gender Strategies could be more explicit about the approach (gender-responsive or gender-transformative) to be applied in the respective CRP. Moreover, more strategic thought could be given to the question of whether the respective CRP should have a dedicated gender component.

CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR GENDER RESEARCH

The evaluations suggest a mixed picture in creating an enabling environment for gender research. Available evidence suggests that not all CRPs reached the target set by the Consortium to allocate 10% of the funds to gender research. A variety of organizational structures have been created within the CRPs to support gender research, but it was too early to assess their effectiveness. The evaluations provide numerous examples of support to gender mainstreaming, especially regarding the development of tools and guidelines. It is clear from the evaluations that there are wide variations in efforts across CRPs, but no clear trends among groups of CRPs could be observed. The researcher surveys do indicate a need to pay more attention on how to get the buy-in of staff for gender mainstreaming, especially for male staff.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN RESEARCH

The evaluations note a trend towards increased collection of gender-disaggregated data, which has not yet been matched by investments in the rigorous analysis and use of these data or in more in-depth research on gender more generally. It also appears that qualitative research has played a less important role, which is not surprising considering the low representation of social science disciplines that specialize in qualitative research methods, such as sociologists and anthropologists. CGIAR has unique potential to



bring gender into the mainstream literature on agricultural development - an important impact pathway for the CRPs. Using this pathway requires innovative high-quality publications that demonstrate the importance of addressing gender issues in different fields of agricultural and natural resources research. To what extent CRPs are on the way to realizing this potential should be addressed in future gender-specific evaluations.

GENDER IN THE WORKPLACE

The overall picture that emerges from the evaluations is that, with some exceptions, the role of gender in the workplace - the second major pillar of the CGIAR Gender Strategy - has received less attention than the first pillar (mainstreaming gender in CRP research). Since the Centers have largely retained the authority over human resource management, leadership of the Centers may have a larger role to play than CRP leadership in changing this situation.

EMERGING LESSONS ON GENDER

- During the evaluation period, a range of efforts has been adopted to promote gender mainstreaming and improve the enabling environment for gender research throughout the CRPs. More attention could be paid to strategic questions, such as the adoption of a gender-responsive or a gender-transformative approach, and the potential merits or demerits of having a dedicated CRP component on gender research, in addition to mainstreaming gender throughout the CRP research portfolio.
- The evaluations also note progress in mainstreaming gender in actual research activities. The evaluations noted that more emphasis should be placed not only on collecting gender-disaggregated data, but also on analysing and using them, and on complementing quantitative with qualitative research approaches. This would allow CGIAR to bring gender into the mainstream of different branches of literature on agricultural development.
- More emphasis is required to adequately address gender in the workplace, the second pillar of the CGIAR Gender Strategy.

PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Partnerships and capacity development are closely linked since capacity development efforts typically involve and target specific categories of partners.

PARTNERSHIPS

CRPs were found to have a large number of partners, reaching up to 900 for a single CRP. Many evaluations found that the choice of partners was often based on legacy research and on seizing opportunities, rather than on a systematic and strategic selection process. Even in those cases where CRPs had developed an explicit strategy, the evaluations saw room for improvement, especially in terms of providing clear operational guidelines for the choice of partners within the overall ToC.

National research organizations remain as the most important type of partners for almost all CRPs, and these partners were found to be strongly positive about working with the CRPs. However, limitations were found regarding the nature of that involvement especially their role in influencing the research agenda. New partnerships that have been established with development organizations, and private sector organizations, including multi-national companies, play an increasing role as a partner of the CRPs especially in delivery.

ARIs remain critical for CRPs to stay at the research frontier. The evaluations highlighted the important role of these partnerships in accessing the most recent science and in enhancing the quality of science in CGIAR through collaborative research, co-authorship and joint supervision of graduate theses. Some of these partnerships are developing into important global networks. The evaluations note opportunities to deepen these partnerships in areas such as in genomics/phenomics and participatory research.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

CRPs engage in a wide range of capacity development activities, mostly targeting the national research and development partners. Several evaluations point out that these activities have not been guided by an explicit capacity development strategy, and tended to be rather ad hoc and focused on training with little attention to broader institutional development. However, there is a trend towards a more strategic approach due to the efforts of the CGIAR Capacity Development Community of Practice. One type of capacity development activity that was found to be widespread in several CRPs is training through extension activities, often involving tens of thousands of farmers under bilaterally-funded projects. The evaluations questioned the comparative advantage of CGIAR for such activities

EMERGING LESSONS ON PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- CRPs will benefit from developing explicit partnership strategies as well as capacity development strategies, which should be linked to each other and to the ToCs and Impact Pathways. To be of practical value, these strategies need to provide operational guidelines and criteria for selecting partners, and for prioritizing capacity development activities within the overall institutional context.
- The quality of partnerships with research partners in the South could be improved by engaging them more fully in the entire research process from research design to co-authored publications, and by addressing the power imbalances that may result from their role as subcontractors.
- Maintaining the long-standing and highly valuable partnerships with ARIs in core areas of CGIAR research is essential for CRPs, who can also benefit from developing new partnerships with internationally leading research groups for relatively new areas in the CRP portfolio.
- In view of the rising importance of private sector organizations as partners of the CRPs, it seems essential to develop and publicize private sector engagement policies with the aim to develop new impact pathways while at the same time managing reputational risks.

GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND FUNDING

The creation of CRPs as a major element of the CGIAR reform, greatly expanded a matrix management structure in CGIAR and changed the funding, at least for W1/W2, from Centers to CRPs. As might be expected, the evaluations found that these reforms created considerable challenges for governance, management and funding.

GOVERNANCE

Most CRPs changed their governance structures during the evaluation period, partly in response to Consortium Office – Fund Council instruction, itself based on a Review of CRP Governance and Management (referred to as RPGM) that was conducted during the evaluation period. RPGM recommended that all CRPs should have only one governance body with both advisory and oversight functions that includes Center representatives as well as independent experts and non-CGIAR partners. CRP evaluations show a mixed picture regarding the extent to which the recommended governance structure has been conducive to meeting the governance challenges inherent in the matrix management structure of the CRPs. A major challenge identified is the ability of the governing bodies to exercise a real oversight function instead of only an advisory function. Moreover, a trade-off was found in limiting the size of the governing body to enhance its effectiveness and ensuring its inclusiveness in terms of representation of participating Centers, independent experts, different types of partners, and representatives of target regions. Center representatives in governing bodies were found to face potential organizational conflicts of interest (balancing Center interests vis-à-vis CRP interests).

MANAGEMENT

Contrary to a RPGM recommendation, the evaluations found that most CRPs have maintained a management committee that has senior management representatives of the Centers as members, and exercises substantial governance functions in addition to management functions. Overall, the evaluations found this arrangement to be useful. Since essential dimensions of management, such as management of research staff and research processes, remain under the authority of the Centers, the participation of senior Center managers in the CRP Management Committees was found to facilitate the implementation of management decisions.

With few exceptions, the evaluations found that the authority of the CRP Director to be too limited, although a trend towards allocating more authority to the CRP Director was observed. The delegation of management authority to flagship leaders was generally seen to be positive (“distributed leadership”), but it was noted that flagship leaders generally have no management authority outside their home Centers. The evaluations indicated that the development of systems that provide appropriate management information to CRP managers remains a challenge for many CRPs. Even basic information, (e.g., on bilateral projects that are mapped into the CRPs), was often not available to CRP managers. The introduction of “One Corporate System” (OCS) was identified as a positive step toward a solution.

FUNDING AND ITS MANAGEMENT

The CGIAR reform introduced three funding windows for the CRPs¹. W1/W2 funds are important to the success of the CGIAR reforms, since the Consortium Office, upon approval of the Fund Council, can allocate W1 funds among CRPs to influence the overall direction of the research portfolio, and CRP managers can potentially allocate W1/W2 funds across Centers according to priorities and performance, and to incentivize collaboration across Centers participating in the CRP. During the evaluation period, the share of W1/ W2 funds of total expenditure dropped to less than 30% in 2015², and is projected to be 23% of a total indicative budget of USD 900 million for 2017³. At the same time, the share of W3 share of total CGIAR funds received (W1/2/3)⁴, increased from 17% in 2012 to 29% in 2014 and to around 47% in 2015. These trends mean that W1/W2 funds will have limited potential to exert real influence on the direction of the CRP portfolio.

The evaluations indicate that there was considerable variation in the approaches that CRP use to allocate W1/W2 funds. Only some CRPs funded cross-Center research activities of strategic relevance to the whole CRP. Formula-based allocation of funds based on legacy research was more common as it is the lower cost option and politically easier. Several evaluations recommended moving more funds to competitive processes now that the CRPs have achieved a certain level of maturity. Almost all the evaluations highlighted the uncertainty of W1/W2 funds from year to year, and even within years when budget cuts were announced well into the fiscal year, after commitments were already made. This mode of managing W1/W2 funds, as well as their declining share, has seriously undermined their value for funding strategically oriented long-term research. As several evaluations noted, W3 and bilateral funds are now not only the bulk of the funds, but are also considered the more stable ‘core’ of the CRPs.

EMERGING LESSONS ON GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND FUNDING

- The governance structures of CRPs were evolving during the evaluation period. Since all CRPs have moved to a single governance body (steering committee) that is supposed to have oversight as well as advisory functions, there is a need to ensure that this function can be effectively executed. At the same time, CRPs must try to ensure the inclusiveness of the steering committees, especially in terms of representatives from target regions. Since the “single body” governance structure is new for many CRPs, they must be monitored on whether bringing together the voices of independent experts, partners and participating Centers in one single governing body will actually work and benefit the CRPs more than previous arrangements.
- The evaluations suggest that CRPs benefit from having Management Committees in which senior managers of the Centers are included, and that have governance functions such as

1 Window 1 funds that can be allocated across CRPs, Window 2 funds that are allocated to specific to CRPs, and Window 3 funds that are allocated to specific Center.

2 Preliminary - CGIAR Financial Report 2015, issued 26 April 2016.

3 CGIAR Consortium (2015 a): 2017-2022: CGIAR Research Program Portfolio (CRP2): Final Guidance for Full Proposals. 19 December 2015.

4 This does not include bilateral funding.

strategic planning in addition to management functions. This finding raises, however, the question of whether senior Center managers should play a substantial role in both the steering committees and the management committees (as is currently the case), or whether Centers should be represented differently, in the Steering Committees, such as by members of their Boards of Trustees (BoT).


- The evaluations indicate that in most cases, CRP management could be improved by allocating more authority to the CRP Directors. Priority areas highlighted in the evaluations include the participation of CRP Directors in the performance assessment of staff members with management responsibilities in the CRP (such as flagship leaders), and involvement of CRP Directors in decisions to map bilateral projects into a CRP. The evaluations indicate also that systems to provide adequate management information need to be improved in most CRPs. OCS is expected to play a positive role in this regard.
- The review of the CRPs that were evaluated as successful as well as plausibility considerations suggest that a minimum share of W1/W2 funds in a CRP budget should be in the range of 30-35% if W1/W2 funds are to provide sufficient leverage to implement an integrative and collaborative research program across Centers. Hence, there is a need to revisit the compact between the donors and the Centers in order to rebuild commitment to the CGIAR reform agenda and ensure the success of the second phase of CRPs. On the one hand, the CRPs will have to articulate a compelling case for their priorities and potential impacts on the IDOs and SLOs and move away from formula funding to transparent mechanisms to allocated funds to the highest priorities and the best science, while at the same time demonstrating a willingness to close off legacy research that does not meet these criteria. On the other side, the donors have to reassert their commitment to providing funds in the most flexible way possible to the CRPs to implement such a program.

VALUE ADDED

VALUE ADDED

The evaluation reports and the researcher surveys broadly concluded that CRPs have added significant value, even though there are variation across CRPs. Among the Commodity-CRPs, it appears that added value was easier to realize for single commodity CRPs or for single commodities within multi-commodity programs. Interaction, learning and sharing of knowledge, germplasm and tools between scientists in different Centers has increased under many of the CRPs relative to the pre-reform situation. Several CRPs have included non-CGIAR core partners - research institutions from high-income countries with an international mandate - who play an important role in implementation.

The evaluations indicate that the development of CRP has facilitated integration around a strategic framework in several of the CRPs, especially those that used W1/W2 funding strategically rather than basing funding allocation on a formula. The evaluations all comment favourably on an emerging results culture in CRPs with much greater awareness and attention to getting beyond research outputs



to outcomes and impacts. The evaluations also provide evidence of synergies generated by combining complementary assets from different participating Centers. Likewise, efficiencies are also being realized through common protocols and tools, such as common data recording protocols.

The evaluations are uniformly in agreement that the potential value added of CRPs is much higher than what has been realized to date. A common finding is that two to four years is only sufficient to lay the basis for strong CRP partnerships across Centers, and that several more years are needed to continue to learn from experience and build trust in order to develop truly integrated programs.

CONSTRAINTS TO VALUE ADDED

The evaluations also document a range of constraints to value added. All evaluations commented on the increased transactions costs for CRP managers to coordinate and comply with CRP requirements for reporting, and for scientists in terms of additional planning and reporting. Staff surveys indicate widespread scepticism regarding the CRP's potential to streamline administrative procedures, and some evaluations note that relations between CRPs and the Consortium Office have often been undermined by poor communication, frequently shifting guidelines, and lack of trust. The uncertainty of W1/W2 funding indicated above added to the perceived instability

EMERGING LESSONS ON VALUE ADDED

To fully realize the potential value added, system stability is essential. CRPs were meant to run for ten years, subject to a mid-term evaluation. The CRPs that are making progress need to be assured of their continuity and the funds to implement their agreed research portfolio. Likewise, administrative procedures need to be harmonized and agreed on for the next several years.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In view of the findings of this synthesis of the 15 evaluations, one may ask whether, overall, the creation of the CRPs was a valuable reform approach for CGIAR. Taking into account the challenges inherent in introducing a system of matrix management across 15 legally independent centers, there are good reasons to consider the creation of the CRPs to be a valuable addition to the CGIAR System, especially if funding flexibility can be regained. The evaluations provide evidence of a substantial willingness to collaborate at all levels, from the leadership of the CRPs and the Centers to the scientists on the ground. However, the incentives to collaborate in a major reform effort of CGIAR were strongest at the beginning of the reform, where agriculture had just come back to the center stage of international development after decades of neglect. To maintain the reform momentum, it is important to maintain strong incentives for collaboration, including CRP funding, if the reform goal of the “CGIAR functioning as one institution” is to be achieved.

TEAM PROFILES



REGINA BIRNER has been the Chair of Social and Institutional Change in Agricultural Development at the University of Hohenheim (Germany) since 2010. She has more than 20 years of experience in development-oriented agricultural research and has led numerous research projects in Asia and Africa. From 2004 to 2010, she was the leader of IFPRI's Research Program on "Governance for Agricultural and Rural Development". In 2008 she served in the core author team of the World Development Report on "Agriculture for Development." Dr. Birner has acted as advisor to international organizations, including the World Bank, FAO and USAID and participated in various evaluations. Her research focuses on socio-economic issues in the context of agricultural development, including topics such as participatory research, institutions, knowledge and innovation, and gender. Dr. Birner has extensive experience in evaluation – she led and participated in major evaluations of major programs of FAO, World Bank and IFAD. Dr. Birner has a PhD in Socio-Economics of Agricultural Development from University of Göttingen.



DEREK BYERLEE is an Independent Researcher based on Washington DC. He is currently Visiting Scholar at Georgetown University, USA. In 1978 he joined the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), based in Mexico and South Asia, and spent the bulk of his career there, working as an economist and research manager. In 1994, he joined the World Bank where he worked as Lead Economist, Rural Strategy and Policy Adviser and Leader of Agricultural and Rural Development in the Ethiopia Country Office. He finished his career in the Bank by co-directing preparation of the Bank's flagship World Development Report 2008, the first on agriculture since 1982. Since leaving the World Bank, he has continued working with a number of international organizations with an emphasis on investment in agribusiness, large-scale farming and plantations, and intensification and land use. In 2009-12 he served as Chair of the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment of the CGIAR's Science Council. He was elected a Fellow of the American Association of Agricultural Economists in 2004. Dr. Byerlee has a PhD in Agricultural Economics from Oregon State University, USA.

