

20 September 2017

ISPC Assessment of Flagship 5 (Livestock, livelihoods and agri-food Systems) of the CGIAR Research Program on Livestock Agri-Food Systems (2017-2022)

1. Summary

The objective of this FP is to ensure that the technologies and strategies developed by this CRP translate into positive impacts on the welfare of the resource poor, in particular women. In its September 2016 assessment, ISPC rated this FP as weak. While the potential for strategic relevance was seen as strong, the FP did not make a clear case for its research prioritization, its focus on smallholder producers, or the potential of outcomes and impacts from pilots to go to scale.

The ISPC rating of this FP's resubmission is strong. Prioritization is informed by a conceptual understanding of factors that drive livelihoods and well-being impacts, as well as a recognition of the integrative role that this FP plays within the CRP and for other CRPs. The FP team has provided more detail, with updated citations, about what they will do (e.g. section 2.5.1.4 and 2.5.1.6) and there are numerous references to other CRPs and to the other FPs in this CRP. There is also a critique of earlier work (section 2.5.1.5) which indicates a much more thoughtful approach and gives much more confidence that the FP team will be able to tackle the complexity in a way more likely to lead to success. A better explanation of the role that this FP plays in synthesising lessons and identifying gaps across the CRP, using W1/2, makes a strong case for its contribution to IPGs.

In terms of strategic relevance and theory of change, the FP team has reduced the focus on small-holders, recognizing that in some contexts it will make sense to engage with medium scale enterprises. The revised ToC explains more clearly how the CoAs in the FP relate to each other, in particular how lessons from CoAs 2-4 feed into priority setting (CoA1). FP outcome targets have been revised down, in line with ISPC commentary on the CRP as a whole. While the links between this FP and others have been better specified, how FPs work together to deliver and account for outcomes is not clear.

The science quality of the proposal was enhanced through a better articulation of the nature of complex systems and the challenges to achieving sustainable impact in such contexts. The overall argument for comparative advantage is strengthened. CoA3 (nutrition) highlights collaboration with A4NH, however the core capacity in the FP itself is limited. Strategic research partnerships are notably absent for CoA4 and could be a way for the CoA to strengthen capacity in key areas of such as value chains, markets and impact assessment. Cross cutting issues of gender, youth, capacity development, and climate change are well covered.

2. Assessment of CRP response to the ISPC major comments on the FP

Previous ISPC comments (14 Sep 2016)	CRP response/changes proposed	ISPC assessment
1. Unclear basis for prioritization of scientific research questions.	<p>"In the Rationale section 2.5.1.1 we have clarified how the interactive factors that drive livelihoods and well-being impacts (including nutrition and equity) lead to the key sets of research priorities which in turn define the 4 clusters of activities...</p> <p>We have also clarified how this flagship will work with the other</p>	<p>The revised FP demonstrates clear recognition of complex systems, scales and institutions involved, and what it would take for transformation to take hold from policy level down to the farm.</p> <p>Section 2.5.1.1 is much stronger. It provides more of a critique of what has worked and what still requires more work which provides more of a basis of evidence for the choice of research</p>

	flagships: by providing an integrative mechanism for technologies and strategies to be piloted and implemented among target livestock keepers and communities.”	questions. Details of what will be done in each Cluster is also much more focused and the proposed links with other Livestock FPs are clearer.
2. Generalizability of smallholder success story is questionable	“In a number of places in the text, we have changed the language to better reflect that fact that in many contexts, we also work with medium scale enterprises.”	The critique of earlier research by Livestock and Fish and the inclusion of references to medium scale livestock producers give more confidence that the research will contribute to the proposed outcomes. There are, however, still some weaknesses in the appreciation of how markets work, government regulations, and consumer demand (via prices). This is an area that still needs strengthening if an appropriate research agenda is to develop that seeks to impact entire agri-food systems.
3. Significant risk that research will deliver only localized outcomes and impacts.	The majority of the response describing what had changed was a defence of the original but with this specific mention: “We have made this” (how W1/2 funding will be used) “more clear in a number of places in the text, such as 2.5.1.1 under Lessons Learned, 2.5.1.3 on ToC, and 2.5.1.12.”	The revision clarified how the FP contributes to IPGs through synthesis and identification of lessons learned across CRP. The recognition of the imperfections of existing tools and a focus on strengthening these gives much more confidence that the team understands the complexity and has plans on how to address it.

3. Characterization of the Flagship

Main strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is now a critical assessment of the limitations of existing tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clarity how the FP will access sufficient expertise in a wide range of disciplines such as markets, policies, economics, and nutrition.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender issues are well covered in a substantive way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much mention of the private sector but a lack of detail both in what it funds and also of how the FP plans to partner with it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition of the complex pathways between livestock owners and nutrition 	