



RAFI COMMUNIQUE

RURAL ADVANCEMENT FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

May/June 2001

Issue # 70

In Search of *Common* Ground II CDMT - Can Dinosaurs Make Teammates?

It's either common ground or burial ground for international agricultural research. In trying to salvage public science, the CGIAR needs to participate in new alliances. The Global Challenge Programmes proposed by the Change Design Management Team (CDMT) attempt to turn the *Elgin Marbles* into the *Rolling Stones*. The only thing we know for sure is that they "just can't get no satisfaction".

Issue: Following an unhelpful external review in 1999, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) is trying to morph into a broader, more inclusive network that could assuage South governments and North donors, arrest its financial hemorrhaging, and re-assert its cutting-edge role in agricultural science. Denied *change-from-without*, however, *change-from-within*, as proposed in the CDMT report for its Mid-term Meeting in May 2001 (MTM/01/05), is half a move toward greater centralization and half smoke and mirrors about regional NARS involvement and new partnerships.

At Stake: In 1999, the CGIAR and its 16 Centres had a budget of \$349 million and 8,608 employees. Although tiny compared to the U.S. land grant college system or the French agricultural research establishment, the CGIAR remains the most influential science and science policy initiative for developing countries. If it fails to appease its critics, its funding and its people could be lost to international public science.

Policy considerations: Were the CGIAR to adopt a regional, geopolitical governance strategy over a 5-10 year period, it could create high caliber "scientist-animateur" units in each region totaling no more than 500 regular staff, costing about \$60 million per annum and making available roughly \$290 million a year for responsive regional and inter-regional projects and programmes. Combined with increased support for GFAR (especially at the regional level), the elimination of "Big Box" science could solve many longstanding governance and financial problems and do much to stimulate national and regional collaborations in agricultural research and development.

Fora: The Mid-term Meeting of the CGIAR takes place in Durban, South Africa, May 21-25. Decisions reached there will be revisited during International Centres' Week in Washington the last week of October. The repercussions from failure in Durban will reverberate at the Extra-ordinary Session of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) meeting in Rome June 24-30 when the Commission adopts an International Undertaking vital to the CG's survival. A misfire at Centres' Week could create sparks at the World Food Summit Five Years Later ("*Food Fifth*") in Rome November 5-9.

Table 1: Agricultural Revolutions in History

| Technology | Description |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Domestication | Crop (and livestock) domestication largely through the control of seed shattering through selection and breeding at many different locations around the world. |
| 2. Farming systems | Mayan and pre-Incan civilizations developed farming systems including terracing, agro-forestry, and artificial "islands" permitting 2-3 crops per year. Europeans devised feudal land tenure systems that allowed multiple cropping. |
| 3. Water management | In Asia, Africa, and South America, farming civilizations invented highly-efficient irrigation and water management technologies involving canals, tanks, and terraces, making possible as much as a seven-fold increase in production. |
| 4. Water mechanization | The Chinese invented hydraulic engineering and water wheels that increased yields and allowed the cropping of new land and the irrigation of old land. Other advanced irrigation machinery was invented in Islamic countries and eventually spread to Europe. |
| 6. New products | The Egyptians gathered new flora and fauna south along the Nile. The Assyrians searched the Fertile Crescent. The Chinese created combination zoos and herbaria for entertainment and research and gathered new species from the Philippines to East Africa. Islamic herbalists introduced a whole cornucopia of new African and East Asian crops into the Near East and Europeans brought home some of the world's highest-yielding crops from South and Central America. Africans adopted South American plants throughout the continent. Each period of collection led to massive food production increases. |
| 7. New Genetics | The rediscovery of Mendel's Laws in 1900 led to an explosion in plant breeding in Europe and North America including the development of hybrid maize. In time these advances also led to the recent biotechnological revolution in agriculture. |
| 8. External inputs | The theories of von Liebig on plant nutrition spun off the use of chemical fertilizers in agriculture. The commercialization of 2,4-D in 1945 symbolized a new era of pesticide inputs as the way to control pests. Together these two inputs reinforce the "Man conquers Nature" era of agricultural research. The use of chemicals spread rapidly everywhere, especially in the North. |
| 9. Green Revolution | The Japanese development of dwarf wheats capable of withstanding lodging even with heavy fertilizer inputs spurred the Green Revolution and the development of high-response semi-dwarf wheat and rice throughout the world. |
| 10. What Next? | Farmer-led food research and security |

1. Battleground:

The lessons (and abuses) of history

"It is possible to devise economic machinery which will bring the hunger of the world into effective contact with the skill of the farmer and the bounty of the soil. That is our task."¹

John Strachey, Minister of Food, United Kingdom, September 4, 1946

"A group of four young Americans assembled in the hills outside Mexico City. Their mission was to export the United States agricultural revolution to Mexico"²

Lester Brown

Today, British cabinet ministers and Lester Brown might both blush over these words. Nevertheless, John Strachey's speech to the FAO Conference does expose the world's thwarted hope for a farmer-led revolution in food security. Similarly, Lester Brown's reminiscences on the beginnings of CGIAR exposes how most Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) see the failure of the CG System and its Green Revolution. Is it possible – or even desirable – for CSOs and the CG to find common ground today?

It is not possible to discuss cooperation with the CGIAR without rehashing the Green Revolution and the System's science orientation. Some CSOs cling to the old debate because the analysis is a comfortable fit with present-day concerns about GM crops and globalization. If anything, agricultural history appears to be repeating itself. Other CSOs argue convincingly, that the fundamental error of the Green Revolution was to see "science as the solution" and that whatever else has changed - attitudes have not altered. Therefore, revisiting the socio-economic and scientific errors of the Green Revolution is a valid starting point for understanding the implications of CSO-CG collaboration today.

We largely agree, although, when we consider the specific issues and criticisms of the Green Revolution, it's hard to imagine that the current crop of scientists or the CG leadership would readily fall into *those* traps once again. Box 1 in this section summarizes the criticisms surrounding the Green Revolution's starting premises. Were civil society to take seriously the possibilities for partnership with the CG System today, what would be the new starting premises? How could we avoid repeating history?

Breaking Ground: The six points identified in the box are not so much errors of science as errors of context and of strategy. Only a radically different context and governance structure can prevent their repetition. The document prepared by the Change Design and Management Team (CDMT) for the CGIAR'S Mid-term Meeting is *successful* in describing a more cohesive and centralized management structure but it is *not successful* in addressing the science system's context nor in bringing support to NARS and regional science networks.

Table 2 (also in this section) attempts to summarize the ongoing debate over the scientific and socio-economic issues. It is possible to look at this table and envision additional issues that are being brought forward with the new focus on biotechnological tools and the CG's perceived need for industry partnerships.

Box 1: *Revisiting Revolution No. 9:*

Six Points on What Started Wrong

1. **Wrong beginnings:** Since no adequate benchmark studies preceded the Green Revolution in most affected countries, it is now impossible to assess the opportunity/cost of the Revolution or evaluate the potential of alternative research strategies. Nevertheless, there is a general feeling that despite an important increase in the productivity of some important crops, greater yields and other benefits could have been achieved if the emphasis had been placed on national agricultural research development and upon the development of livelihood system strategies;
2. **Wrong focus:** The CG emphasizes plant genetics over almost everything else. The broader picture of livelihood systems, soil management, the relevance of the incorrectly dubbed "wild" species for food security, the dynamics of integrated farming practices involving plants and animals, etc. etc., are lost from the view and undermined from the start.
3. **Wrong goals:** The understandable desire to increase grain yield blinded the System to other needs and led scientists to equate yield with nutrition; short-term gains with long-term stability; and yield improvement over farm improvement.
4. **Wrong time-frame:** The specialization strategy of the CG System focusing on single commodities and identifiable problems encourages "quick fix" technical solutions for the short term, undermining in many cases the sustainability in the long term.
5. **Wrong gender:** The CG System (and almost everyone else) began assuming that "men" and "farmers" were synonymous. For twenty years they have preached to (partially) the wrong gender. Now, recognizing the central role of women in food production, the-male-dominated research system is still slow to adjust its strategy.
6. **Wrong reflexes: Disneyland Development:** Caught in a world of changing (agricultural) fashions, the long term research system has responded by developing "theme park" programmes related to women, sustainable agriculture, nutrition, agro-forestry, markets, etc. The System can point donors and critics to at least one example of almost any kind of research initiative - while continuing on its traditional research agenda.

| Table 2: The Ongoing Debate | | |
|--|--|--|
| <i>First Critique:</i> | <i>...Belated Response:</i> | <i>...And Comeback:</i> |
| <p><u>Big Farmer Bias?</u> Fixed costs mean that large-scale farmers adopt HRVs faster than small- holders. Big farmers then gain unassailable market advantage that drives small farmers off the land.</p> | <p>But studies show that small-holders are catching up and their participation is roughly equal to that of large holders. Smallholders also sow a larger proportion of their land to HRVs than their big neighbors in order to equalize fixed costs.</p> | <p>But smallholders tend to be on less suitable lands (soil and slope) meaning that HRVs cannot perform as well.</p> |
| <p><u>High-Yielding for All?</u> HRVs are bred to need fertilizers and irrigation to increase yield.</p> | <p>No - HRVs equal or out-perform folkseeds under virtually all conditions. However, fertilizer bias may have been overdone.</p> | <p>But HRVs mine the soil if poor farmers cannot provide fertilizer or irrigation so yields are not sustainable.</p> |
| <p><u>Gender Bias?</u> No critique.</p> | <p>What's gender?</p> | <p>To the extent that HRVs lead to the capitalization and mechanization of traditionally women's tasks, women are marginalized.</p> |
| <p><u>Nutrition?</u> Emphasis on a handful of base crops has taken research away from poor people's crops that are often more nutritious.</p> | <p>IARCs have shifted from focus on wheat, rice, and maize to about 25 crops offering the world well over 90% of its food requirements.</p> | <p>But HRVs spread has taken land from home gardens and minor but key nutrient crops important to poor families.</p> |
| <p><u>Disease-Resistance?</u> HRVs rely heavily on pesticides rather than breeding to combat disease and pests.</p> | <p>Yes, but yield maintenance is now a major focus in breeding programs. CIAT and IITA have major successes to report that have been beneficial to small farmers.</p> | <p>But IARCs consistently over-estimate chemical requirements and have endangered farmers by recommending high use of class I and II chemicals that are most dangerous.</p> |
| <p><u>Vulnerable Groups?</u> HRVs push families into market economy forcing sales of food needed at home. Women and children tend to be the first to suffer.</p> | <p>Studies show that new surpluses on the farm reduce intra-family food competition helping pregnant and lactating women and infants more than anyone else.</p> | <p>There is growing evidence that folk varieties offered a wider range of nutrients than HRVs. Studies of benefits to vulnerable groups are weak. More information is needed.</p> |
| <p><u>Multi-Purpose Crops?</u> Folk varieties were bred to meet a multitude of needs not met by HRVs.</p> | <p>A larger more stable and less expensive food supply is most important to the poor.</p> | <p>Semi-dwarfs mean straw can no longer be used as fuel or for households. Some varieties take longer to cook meaning fuel requirement goes up and forests come down. Dung must be used for fuel rather than fertilizer. Special purpose</p> |

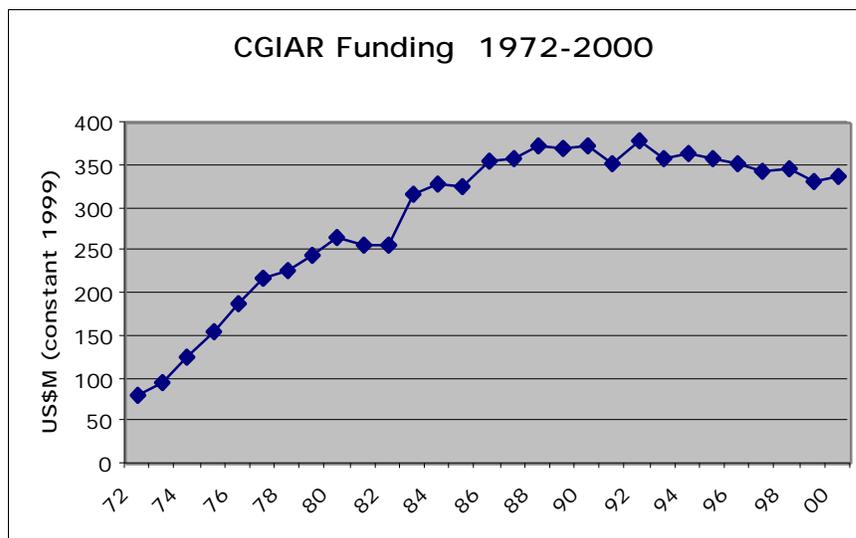
| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | | seeds for medicine, ceremony, or certain recipes are lost. |
| National Research? Green Revolution is an external input that truncates national research and perverts national priorities. | IARCs have trained well over 60 thousand scientists. ISNAR was created specifically to support national programs. NARS activity has expanded enormously. | But host countries often let IARCs do the work and both the type of and focus of research is biased by IARCs. NARS expansion was probably due to other factors. |

2. Common Cause?

It's "Groundhog Day" – If CSOs can't cast a shadow on the CGIAR, maybe we should be willing to consider a changed relationship

When one advocacy group was lobbying in Rome a decade ago, the editors of a much-respected British environmental journal asked if we would sign onto an open letter to FAO Director-General Edouard Saoma demanding that he resign. The letter blamed Saoma for the Green Revolution. We declined to sign.

A few days later in Washington, the staff of a leading national environmental organization demanded to know why the same advocacy organization wasn't signing onto the anti-FAO campaign. Had it gone soft on the Green Revolution, they chided?



Any campaign crediting FAO with the Green Revolution should apply to FAO for financial support. That the premiere UN agency charged with food and agriculture was deliberately excluded from the Green Revolution was – and remains – a source of rancor at FAO. When we pointed out to our colleagues that the Green Revolution was led by CGIAR, neither the British nor the American friends had any idea what we were talking about.

A couple of months later in Manila, we talked about the anti-Green Revolution campaign to Philippine farmers and environmentalists. We were all chuckling at the expense of our friends when one of the country's leading anti-IRRI activists asked us to estimate the share of the CG budget that comes from multinational corporations. The answer then (which would not be much different today) was "none". Our friends could not believe their ears.

Box 2: No one told them the revolution was over:

It wasn't CIP

2000: Nestled high in Bolivia's Altiplano, the small market town was hosting its first biodiversity and seed exchange fair. The key organizers were agronomists from the city who manned a research station in the town and traveled back and forth – two weeks in the field, one week back home.

Farmers caught onto the seed fair idea and, on the scheduled weekend, poured into the civic square to show off the diversity of their crops. The agronomists were impressed. Given the years they had devoted to the introduction of high-yielding potatoes there was much more diversity surviving than they could have expected. They had organized the fair out of desperation. Potato production had skyrocketed but input costs had also soared and market prices were collapsing. Farm families were being driven into the cities. As often as not, scientists on leave in the city met their old clients in the streets where they had once only found them in the fields. The agronomists knew they had a problem.

Late in the evening, the time came for the awards ceremony. The mayor and the agronomists stood under a large banner surrounded by the prizes. The banner read "Novartis" and the prizes were pesticide spray packs and Novartis pesticides. No masks or gloves. Some of the gringo observers couldn't hide their shock. Go to the Altiplano, find all the diversity that remains, and kill it.

But, it wasn't CIP (the International Potato Centre in Lima), it was a Bolivian CSO with a strong history in progressive social movements. The Bolivian group, in turn, is funded by – not Novartis but a leading European NGO advocates of sustainable agriculture.

Those wrapping themselves in the sanctity of Civil Society are also defending knuckle-dragging evangelical do gooders and urban armchair revolutionaries who make Norman Borlaug look like Wes Jackson or Bill Mollison. The leading proponents and implementers of the old discredited Green Revolution are often politically-progressive, scientifically-primitive NGO's who think that "sustainable agriculture" is all about post-harvest losses. Those of us lobbying stones at the CGIAR have done little to clean up our own act.

On the other side of the ledger, IARC directors-general still see CSO's as – at best – cheap conduits of research information or products and – more often – as rural rhetorists and political pollutants - the bitchy backseat drivers of agricultural biodiversity.

As the CGIAR digs urgently for its roots and struggles with structural adjustment, the case for revisiting the possibilities for common ground seem strong. As CSO's, we do not know how far and how well CG science is evolving. We do not understand the degree of political and policy flexibility that is possible within the CGIAR. The CGIAR, in turn, does not understand the multiple roles – in science and in policy – which CSO's can play. Our shared ignorances could be the basis for a new dialogue.

In the year 2001, it should be possible for all sides to agree that our old premises need updating. *Updating* does not necessarily mean *changing* conclusions. We would all benefit from a more current and realistic understanding of goals and activities. The CSO analysis of the CGIAR has remained frozen in the early 70's when the first (and best) critique of semi-dwarf seeds and Cold War agronomics came out.

The CGIAR is no longer the monolith of Cornell/Cambridge/Queensland techno-determinists that it used to be. Many of the new DG's in the CG are woven from a different cloth. Beyond doubt, the "progressives" in the CGIAR and the "sustainablists" among CSOs have more in common than they do with the conservatives in either camp.

The case for common ground: The arguments for common cause seem strong. We are both dedicated to ending hunger and achieving food security. We also share a common enemy – the corporate/country-driven demand for privatization and the diminution of public research in deference to corporate solutions. We share – to a degree that would shock many – a common vision of "sustainable agriculture" and a mutual antipathy for intellectual property monopoly. All this should be the basis for alliance.

The case against common ground: Because at least some of us have so much in common, there is a danger that we will overlook those things which not only make us different but can also divide us. These include...

- ❑ The CGIAR is limited to seeking scientific solutions, CSOs are not.
- ❑ As currently structured, the CGIAR has very high maintenance costs that consequently dictate accommodation to large donors including the United States Government, the World Bank, and other conservative backers from Japan, to the UK, and Australia. IARCs cannot risk alienating these donors.
- ❑ If science is the solution, then good relations with leading scientific institutions is important. Increasingly, this means good relations with the private sector. Most CSOs see the private sector's needs and demands as being counter to those of the poor.

Perhaps the most powerful argument for the CGIAR to have any interest in partnering with CSOs is because they need to still the voices of criticism in OECD capitols. As the chart (above) shows graphically, CG finances have been in trouble for many years. Donor discomfort with CG governance and with the heavy flow of aid funds away from NARS and toward Big IARC Boxes has to be countered by the Centres. CSO support – or silence (at least) is essential. At present, the potential for common ground is substantially constrained by these factors. First these differences need to be acknowledged. Second, we would argue that it is in the best interests of both the CGIAR and CSOs to temper the differences.

Since the World Food Summit of 1996, many CSO's have expressed their support for a farmer-led agenda for food security. Scientific research (by farmers and others) is seen to be an important part of this. The ground rules for the development of farmer-led food security might be described as six principles or laws as summarized below. If CGIAR scientists share these principles, there would seem to be a good basis for further discussion.

Of particular note is the sixth principle. The external institutions to which farm communities relate should be able to work within the same holistic ecosystem context that farmer's face. This does not mean that each institution has to work in every field, however it does suggest that agricultural research has to be extremely sensitive to this context in order to be useful. A major criticism of the CGIAR has been that it has no "context" – that science operates in the absence of awareness of the socio-economic and broad environmental forces faced by farmers.

Box 3: Revolution No. 10:

Six Laws for Farmer-led Food Security

1. There is no food security without secure farm communities. Therefore the Right to Food includes the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Farmers' Rights.
2. The more farm communities, the greater our collective food security.
3. Food security requires diversity – of cultures, of germplasm and species, of technologies, and of distribution systems.
4. Sustainable food security cannot be dependent upon external inputs – material or intellectual.
5. Farmers have the right to access the best possible materials and technologies and to choose to work with other researchers, as they deem appropriate.
6. Holistic approaches to food security within the farming community must be reciprocated by holistic national and international support strategies.

3. CDMT- Dinosaurs Lay Eggs

The Change Design Management Team may have a good idea – but it won't work

The CDMT report is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. Although the message is not spelled out, the underlying intent appears to be to:

- ❑ Centralize, strengthen, and streamline System wide management and governance;
- ❑ Create global (but biased toward regional) programme themes intended to force greater NARS, IARC, and other partnership activities.

If the move toward centralization and consolidation on the one hand were matched by at least an equal move toward regional empowerment on the other hand, the balance could be constructive. This is not the case. Effectively, the CDMT report concentrates power in Washington at the expense of the Consultative Group's pluralistic informality. It reduces multi-actor participation.

At the same time, the proposed Global Challenge Programmes (GCP) as written could lead to an unseemly IARC and inter-IARC scramble to rescue their core undesignated funding. Centres will "re-title" their old projects and cobble new partnerships into them in order to accommodate the latest themes. The GCP will in fact, redirect the availability of undesignated core funding away from the 16 IARCs, the political and fiscal incentive for IARCs to "capture" the GCPs will be overwhelming. In the absence of clear structural changes to the IARCs themselves, the GCP initiative will merely destabilize IARC finances without transferring power or value to regional and national NARS activities. In short, the CDMT strategy will likely backfire.

Switching theme parks: In essence, the GCP initiative – which is at the core of the CDMT report – proposes to switch one set of CG theme parks for another. But, unlike Disney theme parks, "Tomorrowland" is being imposed on the infrastructure for "Pioneerland". In the end, it may only be the management and organizational complexity that expands. The logic of the theme park shift says a great deal about the current dissatisfaction of donors with IARCs as they are but very little about where they want the System to go...

- ❑ MTM2001 may agree to launch between 2 and 4 GCPs within a year, but only 2 are even vaguely defined.
- ❑ Half of the CGIAR budget is to be shifted to GCPs within five years, but no one knows what those GCPs will be.
- ❑ As GCPs grow, a board might be created to manage them. There would then be a management structure (Executive Council, etc.) for non-GCP programmes and another structure for GCP programmes.

Table 3: The CGIAR's Changing GCP Theme Parks

| <i>Old GCP Themes</i> | <i>Actors</i> | <i>New GCP Themes</i> | <i>Actors</i> |
|---|---------------------------|--|----------------------|
| A global campaign to enhance the productivity of the world's most vital food crops | CIMMYT, IRRI, etc. | A global campaign to help the South's agriculture respond to climate change | IARCS. Others (god?) |
| A global campaign to improve livestock, especially for the poor in arid and semi-arid regions | ILRI | A global campaign for Sub-Saharan Africa | 16 IARCS plus others |
| A global campaign to improve neglected subsistence crops and farming systems vital to the world's poorest farmers | ICARDA, CIAT, IITA, etc. | A global campaign for sustainable agro-ecological development. | IARCS and CSOs? |
| A global campaign for the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity and natural resource management | IPGRI, IWMI, ICRAF, CIFOR | A global campaign for the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity and natural resource management | Oops. |
| ...and so on. | CGIAR | ...and what else? | GCP? |

The only certain message is that the CGIAR knows what it doesn't want. It doesn't want what it's got. It hasn't the courage to make the structural changes necessary to change what it has so it has opted to create bureaucracy in place of change. Making the IARCs morph their work into GCPs is a bit like turning the Elgin Marbles into the Rolling Stones... the only thing we all know for sure is that we "can't get no satisfaction".

Table 4 (below) offers a simplistic summary of the *language* of the CFMT text. It is sometimes instructive to consider the frequency of the use of certain key words and the absence of other key words. This is one tool in understanding the intent and direction of a proposal.

The bottom line is that even funding-led pressures to change will be thwarted unless there is a frontal initiative to restructure the IARCs. As long as the perceived core of the CGIAR is "Big Box" science, all changes will be only temporarily disruptive to the current power relationships.

| Table 4: The RAFI Translator – The language of the CDMT Report (MTM/01/05) | |
|---|----|
| Inclusiveness Index | |
| Farmer(s) | 3 |
| Government(s) | 3 |
| NGO(s) | 5 |
| NARS | 12 |
| Region(s)(al) | 41 |
| Center(s) | 96 |
| Ownership Index | |
| Invest(or)(ment) | 21 |
| Shareholder(s) | 30 |
| Stakeholder(s) | 52 |
| Private | 16 |
| Public | 17 |
| Client(s) | 3 |
| Donor(s) | 37 |
| Governance Style Index | |
| Collegial(ity) | 0 |
| Transparan(t)(cy) | 0 |
| Efficien(t)(cy) | 13 |
| Participay(e)(ory) | 13 |
| Central(ize) | 10 |
| Decentralize | 0 |
| Merge | 31 |
| Partner(s)(ship) | 46 |
| Director(s) | 23 |
| Trustee(s) | 0 |
| Emphasis Index | |
| Participatory Plant Breeding | 0 |
| Biotech(nology) | 0 |
| Patent(s) | 1 |
| Intellectual property | 3 |
| Poverty/Poor | 14 |

4. Common Ground?

Balancing cautious centralization with real regionalization

In its Occasional Paper “*In Search of Firmer Ground*”, RAFI discussed several restructuring scenarios and concluded that a major move toward regional control was the most workable option. Readers may wish to go to RAFI’s website (www.rafi.org) to review this document.

The idea of re-organizing the System along geopolitical lines is hardly original. Although CSO’s have been talking about the option since the beginning of the System wide External Review in 1997, others can claim a much earlier history. The notes below are not intended to draw conclusions so much as to stimulate serious consideration, by members and centers, of a dramatic but credible structural option. In order to encourage discussion, rough estimates of finance and personnel needs are offered. As does “hanging” (according to the English adage), putting a dollar figure beside a proposal “wonderfully concentrates the mind”. In doing so, however, we must stress that the estimates (based upon 1999 data) are crude and undoubtedly summarize many variables in ways in which further examination could find too simplistic.

“Stakeholders” versus “Steak-eaters”: It’s a small point – but not meaningless if the CGIAR is interested in forging new partnerships. For some years now, the CG has adopted the language of the private sector – talking about investors and clients, stakeholders and shareholders. Not only is this off-putting to civil society but it belies the fact that there are – or should be – real differences between the CGIAR as a public sector body – and “for profit” enterprise. It also reduces relationships to dollars and cents and, therefore, accepts the hierarchy of the biggest funders over the smallest NARS. If the CGIAR wants to remain an international public goods network, it should sound and act like one.

Cautious Centralization:

The general thrust of the CDMT can be supported *only if* real changes are made that regionalize the work of the System and strengthen the participation of NARS and other local actors. Specific recommendations follow...

Consultative Group: Every effort must be made to protect the present (though deteriorating) environment of collegial informality. This is one of the System’s greatest strengths and contributions to international governance and it should be defended.

Annual meeting: Once regional fora are fully operational, the CGIAR could cut back to a single annual meeting. The annual meeting should retain the flavour and scope of ICW but the venue should shift every year and move regularly between South and North in such a way as to give additional profile and strength to regional fora.

Executive council: The Oversight and Finance committees should be rolled into an Executive Council capable of meeting two to three times per year. At least one meeting each year should be in North America and one in Europe.

Advisory partnership council (APC): The existing partner committees should be restructured into an Advisory Partnership Council that would include individuals from civil society, private enterprise, advanced research institutes, etc. invited to comment upon all aspects of the CGIAR as they wish. While the council might be approached to advise on specific issues, the members would have a wide-ranging mandate to discuss policies and programmes. The small (10-20 members) council would meet once per year but could undertake specific initiatives in the interim.

Science advisory council (SAC): The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) should be changed to SAC where its members (10-15 persons meeting 2-3 times per year) should comment on long term as well as immediate science and science policy issues. SAC should retain a small independent secretariat.

Independent assessment functions: The direction and review of External Programme and Management evaluations should be led by SAC in consultation with the APC and the Executive Council.

Genetic Resources Policy Committee: This committee has been useful, but its work can be taken over in part by the Executive council, and in part by the Advisory Partnership Council and the SAC.

CGIAR Office: In tandem with the restructuring of IARCs and the formation of regional boards, the CGIAR should upgrade its Washington office to support regional and inter-regional collaboration and to work with CG members and partners.

GFAR - Global and Regional Fora on Agricultural Research and Development

The Global Forum was invented by the CGIAR in 1996 in order to broaden support for the System and to deflect governance criticism. Fears continue that GFAR will be used to build new (and expensive) empires or to strengthen FAO (where the secretariat now is) influence over CGIAR. Some of these concerns are based upon personalities and have no place in the long-term development of an improved governance structure.

For many NARS and for civil society, GFAR (always emphasizing its regional nodes) has three attractions:

- ❑ It offers multi-actor dialogue and debate that can unite science research with the wider dimensions of agricultural and rural development.
- ❑ It encourages focused regional fora capable of giving real voice to NARS and other national and regional actors on policies and programmes.
- ❑ It can become an informal (*de facto*) oversight mechanism for CGIAR, as well as for other global actors, in the style of the Consultative Group, without imposing UN rules or bureaucracy.

In other words, GFAR represents an *informal* transfer of *real* power. In de-emphasizing the role of GFAR (arguing that GFAR lies beyond its mandate), the CDMT report continues a trend seen before Dresden to marginalize the initiative.

This makes the CGIAR look indecisive and confused. It created GFAR five years ago and it is already wishing it had not. The clear message is that the World Bank and the CDC/CBC committees are afraid of greater regional influence.

We offer the following recommendations:

- ❑ MTM 2001 should either re-affirm its commitment to GFAR or propose it be shut down. Silence should be interpreted as extinction.
- ❑ If its mandate is re-affirmed, it should be expanded to become the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Development and it should be funded to meet every 2-3 years.
- ❑ All necessary steps should be taken to strengthen and stabilize multi-party regional fora that will meet every second year with the same format as the Global Forum.

Once again, there should be no direct linkage with the governance of the CGIAR. If GFAR is successful in becoming the dynamic forum it could be, its indirect influence over CGIAR governance and policies will be felt.

Real Regional Governance:

The core issue which must be addressed is the re-organization of the CGIAR away from an IARC-led system to one led by regional science consortia. Over the next 5-10 years, *all* IARCs should scale down (by staff attrition and restructuring into GCP-style projects) and the Centres themselves should be sold, rented, or donated to other national or regional science institutions. During the change process, the IARC boards should evolve into regional boards. Each region should continue to have a modest complement of “CGIAR” scientific and support staff who would act as science-animateurs provoking strategic research cooperation in each region. The funds saved in each region should continue to be available to the regional board to support long and short-term projects they consider vital. Based on competition, independent bodies or consortia could apply to undertake the projects on behalf of the region and supported by the science animation team. NARS, universities, CSO’s, and industry could participate. As needed, the region could outsource contracts to other regions, inter-regional initiatives, or to expertise in OECD states.

Major elements of the proposal are summarized below.

Regions: Subject to more careful analysis, there could be four regions (as generally identified by CGIAR) Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), West Asia North Africa (WANA), Asia-Pacific, and Latin America-Caribbean (LAC). FSU countries in transition could be included in WANA.

Current regional percentage formulae could also be the basis for further negotiation (see chart). In our view, however, WANA and LAC should increase somewhat while Asia should be slightly reduced.

This proposal does not rule out Sub-regional subcommittees (for Andean and tropical zones in Latin America, for example).

Regional Boards of Trustees: A board of approximately 30 members should be established in each region. This would actually reduce the total number of IARC trustees by about half. However, the boards should meet twice a year and have active programme committees. While travel costs would be reduced compared to the current IARC board system, the real governance costs (only 1% of IARC budgets on average) would remain about the same.

The boards should include NARS, farmers, civil society, and private sector interests within the region. Half of the board should come from outside the region to encourage donor confidence and inter-regional collaboration.

Inter-regional collaboration: Several existing IARC initiatives will be deemed by most parties to be too valuable to be disrupted. These initiatives will have 5-10 years to restructure themselves within one region and to build inter-regional support for their work. Ultimately, if the work is valuable and valued, contracts can be established between regions to ensure that the work progresses. Inter-regional collaboration is to be encouraged and not discouraged but the decision-making must be “bottom up” not “top down”.

Regional science-animateurs: Regional boards will manage teams of multi-disciplinary science-animateurs whose primary tasks will be to help the region identify, develop, and manage research programmes and projects. Roughly speaking, this approach will lead to a global reduction in CGIAR’s “international” staff from just over 900 in 1999 to less than 200 at the completion of the change. Support staff could be cut much more drastically (since there will be no “centers”) from almost 8,000 in 1999 to less than 400 in ten years (see chart). Since half of the entire CG budget goes to personnel, this will allow regions to use this money more flexibly to support national and regional activities (including salaries or services).

“Cutting-edge” science: Science-animateurs, more than ever, will need to be at the cutting edge of their disciplines. Every effort must be made to assure this through increased access to information and training, opportunities to take assisted sabbaticals and through special shared project initiatives. (“Cutting edge” should not be interpreted to assume any specific view of technology.)

Regional science advisory councils: Each region could establish its own small SAC to provide independent advice and to liaise with the global SAC. Given the somewhat reduced board costs, the regional SACs should not create an overall increase in governance costs.

Freeing up funding: At present, slightly less than \$100 million is spent by the CGIAR annually in “strengthening NARS” (the successes of this multi-year initiative seem to be “subtle”). Much of this money has been spent in Washington or The Hague with attendant office and personnel costs. In our view, the restructured CGIAR could result in a direct annual budget requirement of about \$60 million with a total staff of 500. Other than the relatively small funding necessary for the CGIAR office in Washington and the other centralized meeting and council expenses, most of this money would be spent within regions. The scenario could allow for a more flexible use of about \$290 million in the regions (see chart).

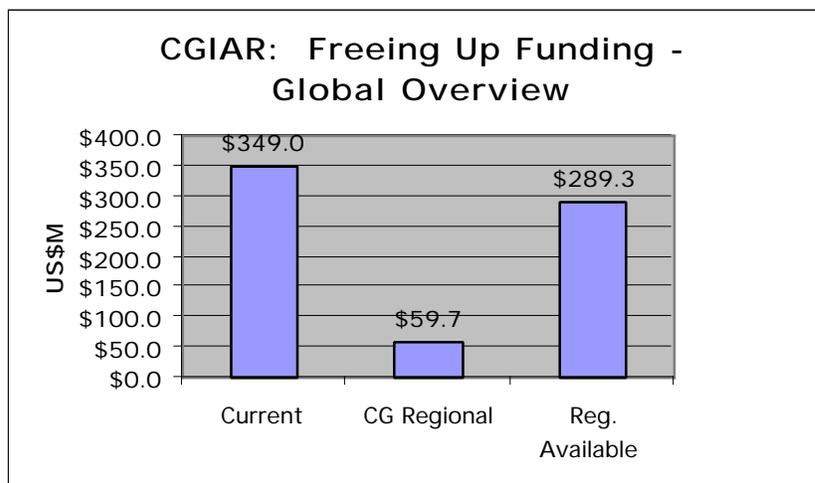
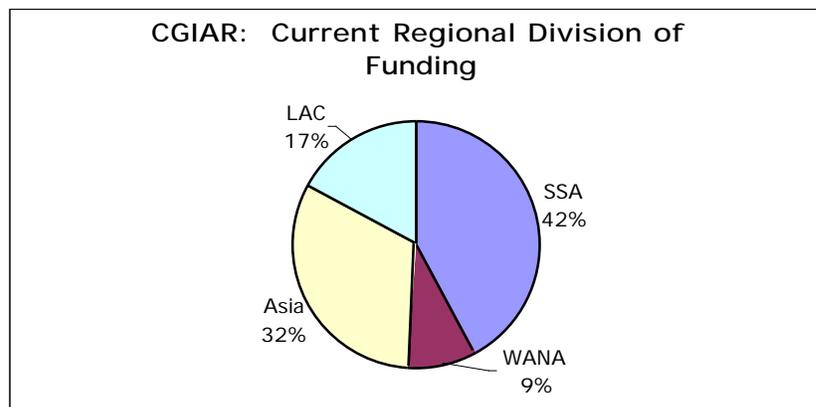
Global Services:

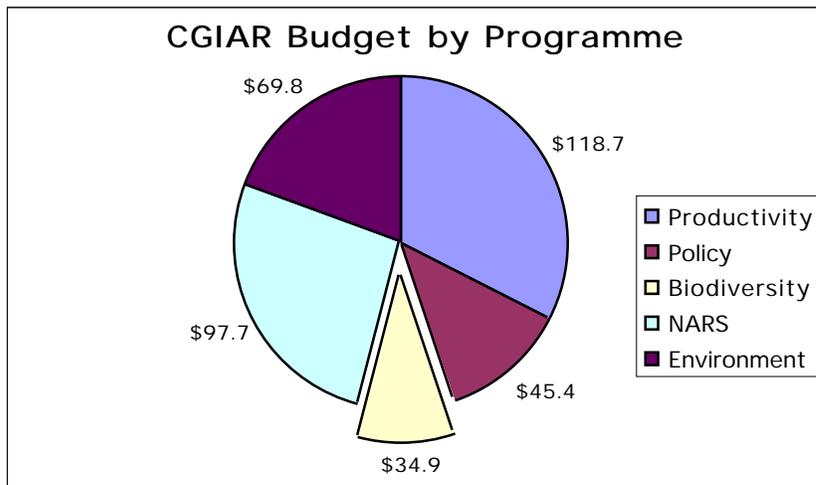
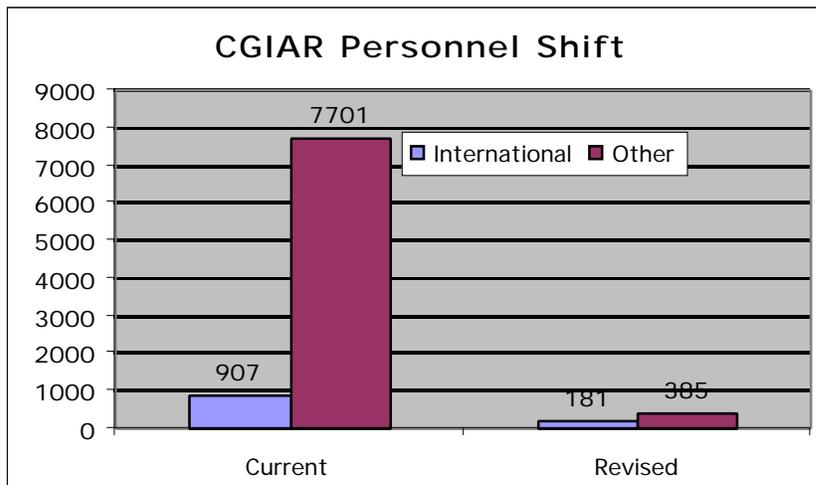
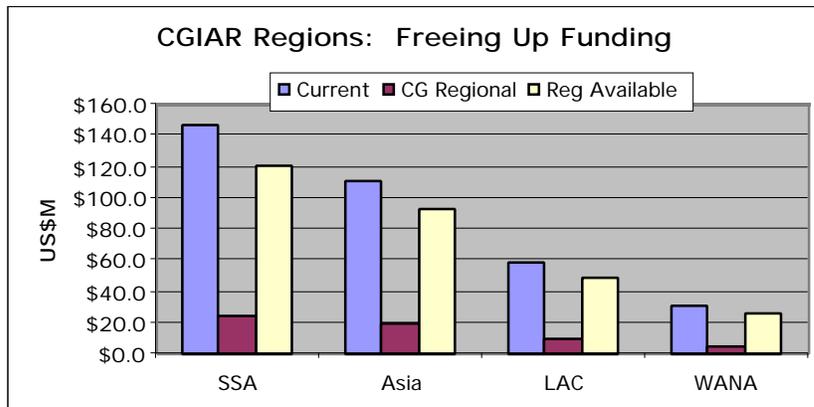
The CGIAR undertakes a number of functions that might not appear to be translatable to regional initiatives. These primarily (but not exclusively) mean:

- ❑ Policy research, and;
- ❑ Genetic resources management.

In principle, policy research should be moved to the regional level. As with crop and other research, regions can still decide to collaborate on larger activities if they wish. In general, however, the CGIAR should look more to its co-sponsors and advisory councils for global policy analysis.

The CGIAR's generally excellent work on genetic resources (gene banks, etc.) usually described as "conserving biodiversity" could quite possibly be supported through a global endowment initiative. Currently, about \$35 million per annum is spent in this area. If the International Undertaking is finalized as expected at FAO this year, then the endowment should be established and this sum should largely be transferred by donors to the endowment. The legal title to gene bank accessions and facilities should be transferred to the intergovernmental body established by the Undertaking. The CGIAR now (later, the regional boards) should be contracted by the Undertaking's governing body for the long-term management of the banks.





5. Grounds for objection:

The Six Stages of Denial:

1. It can't be done. You can't push a string.
2. You will throw the baby out with the bathwater.
3. Yes, but this is not the time...
4. But we provide a "global good".

5. Yes, but not this center and not at this time.
6. You're playing into the hands of our common enemies.

1. It can't be done. You can't push a string

...which is why we propose to pull it..

Objection: CG insiders sympathetic to the call for major structural change nevertheless argue that the “invisible IARChy” is too disheartened and discombobulated to manage fundamental restructuring. Equally to the point, the loose configuration of committees, countries, and centers is simply incapable of any decisive change that would be resisted by any significant faction of the Consultative Group. Only piecemeal transitions are possible.

Response: If this is true, it is a damning indictment of the CGIAR and those calling for fundamental restructuring could rest their case on this point alone. But there is an old political axiom that the insider is always wrong. Indeed, insiders are usually the least able to perceive the possibility of change regardless of their own views on the need for change.

2. You will throw the baby out with the bathwater

The hidden jewel theory of governance.

Objection: While many will agree that the patient is ill, some still maintain that radical surgery could turn the illness into a mortality. In tandem with this concern, some insist that CGIAR's institutes and programmes include a number of “gems” whose potential to benefit humanity far outweigh whatever shortcomings might exist. Great things are happening – or are about to happen – and structural disruptions could destroy their fruition.

Response: Without specifics, this is a dubious (and perennial) argument. If there are indeed “babies” or “gems” out there - and there had better be a few – they can be protected. First, any major structural transition should be implemented over a ten-year period. That should give the “baby” time aplenty to adapt. Second, CSO proposals call for greater flexibility in research activities – not less. Special initiatives should be accommodated.

3. Yes, but this is not the time...

...and the 'Times should not be a-changin'

Objection: The argument here is both generic and specific. It is always possible to argue that “now” is the worst of all possible times for a major change. Specifically, some can claim that having suffered through several years of demoralizing cutbacks and uncertainty, a major upheaval would be the last straw for the CG's best leaders and scientists. Others can also argue that major changes should not take place at a time when science, science policy, and scientific relationships (public/private) are in flux. It is best, they suggest, to weather the current storm of change and then make responsible structural decisions based upon the outcome.

Response: This is the storm than never ends. Anyone who thinks that there will be greater clarity in these three areas of concerns five or ten years from now than today is in need of gene therapy. The CSO proposal for major change is based upon good management, realistic politics, and sound science. It makes sense for any time and it increases institutional flexibility for the future as the importance of being “lean and green” grows.

4. But we provide a “global good”

The “all things to all people” theory of management.

Objection: Status quo defendants argue that many of the public “goods” created by IARCs have a universal value. Crops like wheat, maize, and rice are grown in every region. Services such as gene bank safety or food policy have broad applications. When you get right down to it some insist, most centers serve a global or (at least) multi-regional constituency. If this important work is taken into account, there is very little left to regionalize. The strategy would inevitably have to protect the big commodity interests. While it might strengthen some regional research interests it would also leave often “unsung” niche programmes that can be vital to marginalized farmers without a defender.

Response: If some IARCs offer goods that are important to more than one region, the other region(s) can contract with the host region for access to its services. The “science animation” format of the revised IARC structure should work to bring important niche research to light and be more successful at directing resources to such activities. After all, there will be more funding available for research.

5. Yes, but not this center now

The NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) approach to change.

Objection: Some argue that centers such as CIMMYT, IFPRI, and IPGRI are on a roll - that their center is doing very well - and that a massive restructuring plan could break up a winning combination of people and resources. “If it ain’t broken – don’t fix it”, as the Americans are fond of saying.

Response: There have been times in recent memory when CIMMYT and IBPGR (now IPGRI) were not held in high-esteem and those times could easily return. Over the past 30 years, almost every center has had its moment in the limelight and in the doghouse. The cycle will continue. It is entirely unacceptable and inappropriate to prevent changes that offer a long-term benefit for the system because the changes do not square with the short-term interests of a few centers or their senior management.

6. You’re playing into the hands of our common enemies

The Fifth Column theory of institutional warfare.

Objection: There is a theory that the World Bank and the USA want an exit strategy for their CGIAR funding and that a drastic structural adjustment could afford them the opportunity to reduce their financial support in the short-term and to withdraw in the not-so-long-term. The same theorists surmise that such changes could pave the way for the Gene Giants, or at least their smaller siblings, to move into the South and take over some of the CG’s role and funding. CSOs therefore, are dismantling public sector research to the advantage of the private sector.

Response: Neither the USA nor the World Bank needs CSOs as an excuse to pull back from the CGIAR. Those who see the seed industry readying itself to pounce into yam breeding are also the kind that hang out at McDonald’s waiting for Elvis Presley.

6. Common Sense:

Concluding comments

We support a renewed initiative by civil society organizations to understand the CGIAR and to consider practical opportunities for cooperation. In part, we take this position because we are convinced that without new progressive alliances the CGIAR will wither and be absorbed into the interests of the private sector. This, as we discussed in “In Search of *Higher* Ground” is not because the Gene Giants are anxious to take over the CGIAR but because the CG is *en route* to its markets in the South. Secondly, we support the concept of international public goods and constructive, responsive science in the interests of food security. The CGIAR is important.

If the CGIAR fails to change – to become more responsive to the South and to the direct involvement of farmers – it may partly be because of our own failures in civil society. As we have already discussed, the worst vestiges of the Green Revolution are probably found within civil society. The worst failures in communication could well be between advocacy CSOs and our fellow CSOs in agricultural extension services. If the CGIAR is prepared to take on major structural change to share power with the regions, then we should be prepared to work in civil society and with governments to ensure the direction of the science effort and to secure the necessary political and financial support needed to make regional systems work.

Engagement with the CGIAR could include the following initiatives:

- ❑ Willingness to contribute to the transition process as IARCs are transformed into regional services;
- ❑ Active involvement of new regionally designed activities;
- ❑ Specific initiatives to encourage governmental and nongovernmental donor support for the restructured CGIAR;

- ❑ Engagement with the media to present the potential of the reformed CGIAR;
- ❑ A plan of action to bring agricultural extension and other rural CSOs into more effective alliance with the new regional approach of the CGIAR;
- ❑ Support for regional policy research and analysis;
- ❑ Bridging support between GFAR and its various regional manifestations and the restructured CGIAR.

Whereas, in the past, civil society has been either lukewarm or negative in its relations with the CGIAR, we believe that the implementation of the kinds of structural changes proposed here would allow CSOs to make an energetic and highly constructive role in the CGIAR.

The Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) is a non-profit organization that analyzes new technologies regarding their social implications (<http://www.rafi.org>).



The German NGO Forum Environment and Development is an umbrella of 80 NGOs founded shortly after UNCED in 1992 to advocate for and raise public awareness on the Agenda 21 (<http://www.forumue.de>).

¹ "World Food Plan" *New York Times*, September 4, 1946 (as provided by the FAO Archives)

² Lester Brown, *Seeds of Change*, Praeger Publishers: New York, 1970, p.3.