

Message for Madrid

All road maps lead to Rome



H(a)LF a Loaf Finally, in Madrid, a High-Level Forum considers Governance *but the G-8 proposal for a Global Partnership could be disastrous*

Issue: The main (and much-needed) goal of the Madrid High-Level meeting is to reorganize the intergovernmental management of food and agriculture. At the last food crisis in 1974, OECD states savaged the UN's unified system and carved it into four warring factions. In the midst of today's food crisis, the four remain underfunded, weakly governed and dismayingly competitive. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the biggest "loner" in the crowd, the World Food Program (WFP), are all either suffering from harsh external reviews or major program reorganization. Complicating the problem, UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon's High-Level Taskforce on the food crisis sees Madrid as an opportunity to segue into the secretariat for the G-8's proposed Global Partnership for Food and Agriculture. This top-down Partnership would substantially weaken G-77 policy influence in UN food fora by constructing an amorphous "compact" dominated by major governments, agribusiness, mega foundations, and multilateral food and financial institutions with just enough CSOs to mute protests against the presence of Monsanto and Gates. Also in Madrid, at the invitation of the Spanish premier, Jeffrey Sachs will be pedalling his proposal for a new vertical fund to draw down corporate and foundation money.

Fora: Madrid could be a surprisingly important step along the High-Level road to a new governance system. Till now, governments' response to the food crisis hasn't lacked fora but it has lacked governance. The High Level Forum in Rome last June moved onto the HLF on Aid-Effectiveness in Ghana last September, then to the HL food portion of the General Assembly and back to FAO's High level ministerial conference in November. Any keen food-watchers who don't have chronic nosebleeds by now will still have to soldier on to another High-Level session at FAO in November – accompanied, possibly, by a World Food summit involving Barack Obama and/or a still larger Madrid gathering next year. As the HLFs thunder on, the CGIAR is massively restructuring its 15 independent institutes into a single legal entity which will likely be headquartered in Rome. Meanwhile, IFAD is looking for a new president after a heartening 60% increase in funding and the WFP seems more enamoured with the World Bank than with its sister agencies in Rome.

Policy: The G-8's Global Partnership is bad governance and smacks of the desperate creation of the utterly-useless World Food Council in the 1974 food crisis. The WFC was finally euthanized in the early 90s. Instead of hastily cobbling together something new, Madrid should look at the four main agencies (FAO, CGIAR, IFAD, WFP) and get them working together. Trying to reorganize these institutions one by one is like trying to teach an elephant to dance one foot at a time. Before inventing a new organization, Madrid must make three decisions: (1) agree to an immediate meta-evaluation of the four organizations; (2) agree to coordinate the regular meetings of the four governing bodies to jointly review the meta-evaluation; and (3) agree to restructure the regular biennial FAO Regional Conferences to allow governments, the four agencies and other concerned parties – most especially, organizations of small farmers, fishers, livestock-keepers and indigenous peoples – to make proposals for the overhaul of the UN's "failed estates." To stimulate debate, the six charts in this brief report propose merging the CGIAR with FAO into a new Food and Agriculture Conference and bring IFAD and WFP along with the merged FAO/CGIAR together in a New Roman Forum for Food, Agriculture and Rural Development. We hope our draft proposal is sufficiently detailed and adequately incomplete to stir the ire of every interest group and launch a reorganization of our crippled infrastructure.

Toward A New Roman Forum

For Food, Agriculture and Rural Development

The Food and Agriculture System...in Pieces:

ETC Communiqué No. 101 is the third in a series of reports over the past 12 months on the governance crisis afflicting the world's major food and agriculture institutions. In January 2008, ETC Group published Communiqué No. 97: ["Food's Failed Estates = Paris's Hot Cuisine, Food Sovereignty – à la Cartel?"](#) in an attempt to draw governments' attention to the governance crisis afflicting all of the major food and agriculture agencies even as the food emergency broke around them. We revisited the food emergency – and ongoing organizational conundrum – after the high-level meeting in Rome at the beginning of June in a translator entitled ["Ciao FAO: Another 'Failure-as-Usual' Food Summit"](#). In the absence of decisive intergovernmental action on "Food's Failed Estates," ETC Group offers the following proposal in order to stimulate public debate. (*Note: While ETC Group believes that its proposals merit serious study, beyond the general proposal to bring the four agencies together within the UN system and to strengthen the participation of "peasant" organizations, we have no commitment to the details outlined in the six charts below.*) We start with a quick overview of the current status of the major institutional actors.

"Peasants" or "Producers"?

ETC Group is using the term "peasant" when referring to small farmers, small livestock-keepers, artisanal fishers and indigenous peoples rather than the more conventional term "producers." Producer implies an unacceptably narrow industrial or market orientation. Although in some cultures peasant is used pejoratively, it demands a broader perspective including community, land and environment.

IFAD: The International Fund for Agricultural Development is still somewhat recovering from a harsh Independent External Evaluation (IEE), carried out in 2005, which found its programme performance wanting and its efforts to reach the rural poor waning. Since then, IFAD has bounced back and is working hard to improve its effectiveness. Notably, IFAD has established a Farmers' Forum, which wins praise from small-scale farmers' organizations. In the end, IFAD – although much smaller than it could be – is respected by donors and beneficiaries. Although the global South would prefer a more democratic voting structure at IFAD, decision-making around loans and grants come with special problems. ETC Group believes that the fund should be merged into a New Roman Forum as the International Facility for Food, Agriculture and Rural Development (IFFARD).

**"About half of IFAD projects do not represent a good use of resources invested and only 45 per cent of the sample was rated as having a 'high' or 'substantial' level of efficiency."
– Independent External Evaluation, IFAD, September 2005.**

WFP: Meanwhile, the World Food Programme – whose staff and structure wax and wane on the whim of food aid contributions and emergencies – has undergone turbulent times exacerbated by the largely unanticipated food emergency. The WFP continues to have an ambiguous governance relationship with the UN New York and with the FAO. This historic problem has hampered inter-

agency cooperation for decades and encouraged “mandate-creep” among all of the institutional actors as they try to assert their role in high-visibility emergencies. At some subliminal level, it must be hard for the WFP not to clap its hands gleefully in the face of the rapidly-rising demand for food aid and emergency services. However, the WFP still has fundamental governance issues. The WFP’s most recent action plan calls for it to shift beyond food security to “food assistance.” This move increased potential for programme/financial conflict with the FAO. Some observers see this as a “mandate grab” at a time of FAO weakness. As much as the CGIAR sees all food and agriculture problems as a matter of science, the WFP is likely to see agriculture and rural development as requiring food assistance. ETC Group believes that the WFP should be merged into a New Roman Forum and that the emergency monitoring functions now in the FAO should be placed under a strengthened World Food Security Programme (WFSP).

FAO: The FAO underwent a massive Independent External Evaluation that ended in 2007 with a damning critique of its governance structure, management culture and programme performance. Three committees of member nations are at work trying to reform the organization. A special meeting of the FAO Conference was held in November last year to discuss the implementation of these reforms.

“...A third distinction relates to staff at the most senior levels of the Organization reporting to the Director-General, who also have the greatest contact with the Governing Bodies. As a group, respondents in this category scored highest (along with the Forestry and Sustainable Development Departments) in support for major (and urgent) organizational culture change. At the same time, however, in answer to the question of whether they thought that genuine organizational change could be achieved, they expressed the greatest scepticism.”
– *The FAO Independent External Evaluation, July 2007.*¹

Like the WFP, FAO must, in some way, be relieved by all the media attention and intergovernmental furor arising from the food emergency. With some truth, FAO is telling everybody that they told them so. At its highest levels, FAO hopes that the reform focus of member governments will blow over and that – at least for political reasons – new money may come its way.

Several Northern donors are rushing to warn FAO that it is not off the hook yet. Reforms are still urgently needed, they insist, and governments may still pull their money from FAO (and their membership) if strong action isn’t taken. OECD politicians, after all, are savvy enough to reckon that they can gain more political credit for their money – at home and abroad – by putting it into high-profile bilateral initiatives.

FAO is, undoubtedly, in a mess. In large measure, that mess was created by OECD countries back in the 1970s and confirmed by agricultural development aid fatigue in the ‘80s. Today, FAO’s most attractive feature is that its budget is decided on a “one nation—one vote” basis. Secondly, it is clearly the normative body for food and agricultural issues. ETC Group believes that a New Roman Forum must also operate on a one nation—one vote basis regarding the programme and budget for the basic infrastructure of FAO, IFAD and WFP. This would not preclude voluntary financial contributions to any of these organizations over and above their core budgets. In one sense, FAO would be enlarged to become the New Roman Forum. In another

¹FAO: The Challenge of Renewal. An Independent External Evaluation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) WORKING DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION Submitted to the Board Committee for the Independent External Evaluation of the FAO (CC-IEE), July 2007.

sense, most of the normative functions now residing in FAO would move to a Food and Agriculture Conference (FAC) under the Forum.

CGIAR: It is hugely embarrassing for the half-billion-dollar CG network that it failed to anticipate the gathering food emergency of 2008 and it is scrambling now to catch up to the calamity. It is especially irksome to CGIAR's funders that its \$47 million flagship, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington – charged with tracking food trends and trade – failed to warn governments of the impending crisis. That all this evolved while the CGIAR is undergoing a numbingly perennial, change-management process – as well as a meta-evaluation – adds to the humiliation.

“The CGIAR cannot continue as it is, being more about process than results. The current Center-orientated governance structure is leading to a ‘tragedy of the commons’, in that each is looking at its own objectives rather than the bigger, global picture. A loss of Center autonomy may not be popular but it is essential...”
– *Marco Ferroni, Executive Director, Syngenta Foundation, September 6th, 2008.*

When the CG met informally at its International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Banos, Philippines last September, it had at least three contradictory governance and financial proposals on the table. There is a growing consensus among CGIAR's 60-odd donors that the CG's 15 centres are a gang of “unherdable cats.”

On one level, it is hard to understand the sense of concern in the CG system. Budgets have boomed from around \$350 million a few years ago to almost \$500 million today. Yet, some centres teeter on the brink of bankruptcy, some top scientists are leaving and there is a sense of inevitable decline. Core funding in the CG system has dropped from two-thirds of budgets to about one-third over the last 20 years and many scientists are demoralized by the amount of time they spend chasing money, writing reports and laying off technical support. It is arduous to run a lab and make long-term scientific decisions based on short-term funding.

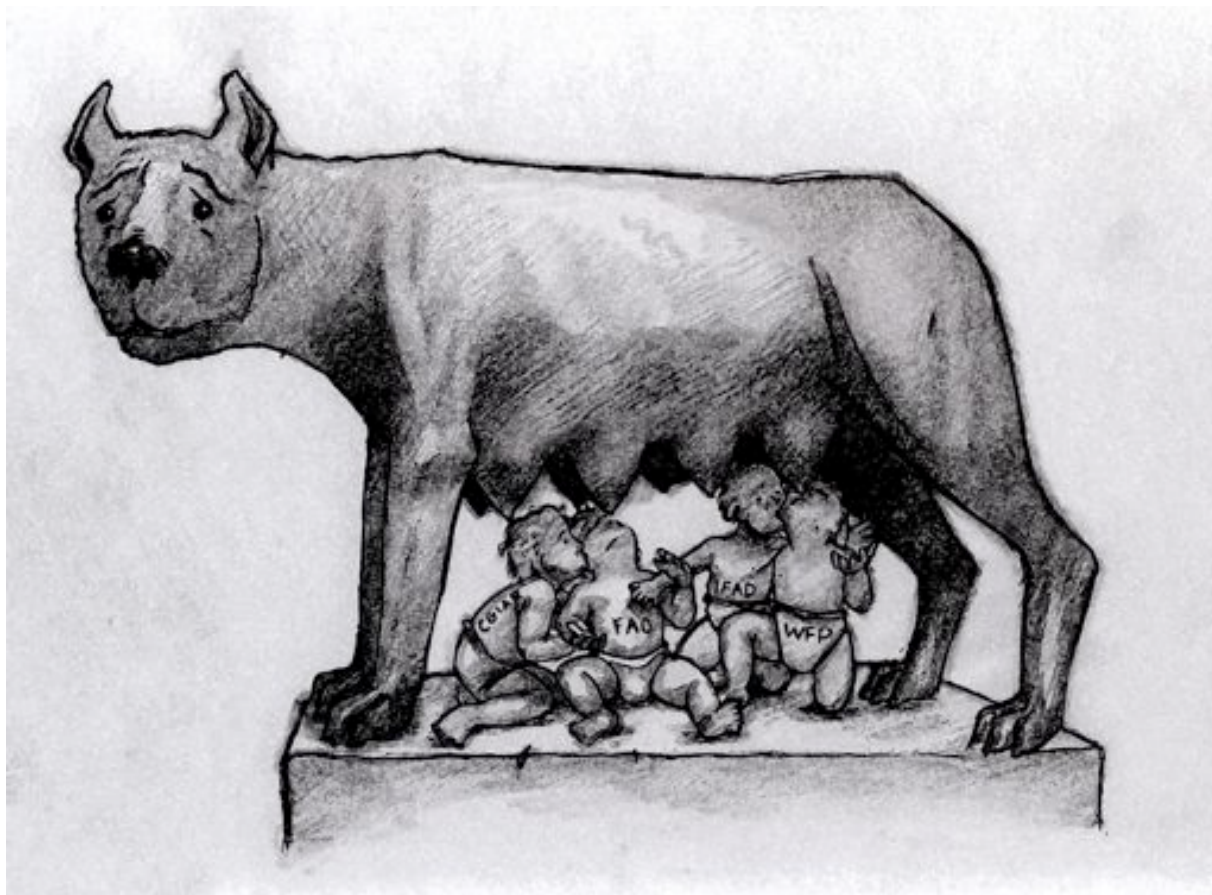
“It was surprising to hear them admit to one another that they had missed the warning signs of the impending food crisis. The donor governments were mad and the Centres were blushing. Still, they all seemed worn out and fed up with the whole never-ending change process.”
– *Ditdit Pellegrina, SEARICE Executive Director, commenting on the CGIAR change management meeting September 7th, 2008.*

However, the CG's gloom may be relaxing in anticipation of increased bilateral funding for agricultural research as a result of the crisis. Like FAO, many in CGIAR hope that all the distrust will just blow over as the crisis unfolds. The North's alarm over spreading poultry and plant diseases has also increased their sense of security.

In their annual meeting in Mozambique last December, CGIAR adopted a new structure which will place all 15 research centers under a single legal entity with a Board of Directors and CEO. Confusingly, each center will retain its own board and Director-General. More confusingly, the donors are will now organize into a single body that will establish long-term challenge programs. The CG centers (singly, collectively, and/or with other partners) will bid for these challenge programs. Privately, donors and centers recognize that this new structure will probably whittle down the number of institutes from 15 to 10 or 12 fairly quickly. While there is general agreement that this is necessary, the donors actually just didn't have the stomach to do the job

themselves.

One obvious option for CG restructuring was never discussed . CGIAR should join the UN System. ETC Group believes that CGIAR should merge with FAO into the new Food and Agriculture Conference (FAC) under a New Roman Forum. In this way, CGIAR's core budget would be secured by mandatory UN contributions, the UN flag would secure its activities and its research would be more relevant to poverty alleviation.



Movable Pieces in the Chess Game:

Any efforts to change any one of the four institutions will be met with strong resistance. Each organization has its passionate defenders. It is only when the four institutions are examined together that negotiators could accept real change. Of the four institutions, however, only FAO and CGIAR have obviously movable (or discardable) pieces. Of the four, only FAO operates on the basis of the one nation—one vote principle (nobody knows how CGIAR decides!). This, together with its technical assistance and some specialty programmes, has earned FAO reasonable support from governments in the global South. There is a deep reluctance to accept any changes at FAO that might weaken its normative function or dilute its funding. Simultaneously, Northern donors have an almost Pavlovian hostility toward FAO that will not easily be overcome. The reality is that the world needs an intergovernmental forum for food and agriculture.

The CG needs international legitimacy. FAO can offer it. The CG needs a governance

environment that will allow it to make major structural changes in terms of the number and size of centres. FAO can provide the means to do this. At the moment, bilateral aid agencies get little credit for the \$500 million they give the CGIAR. Through FAO, the reorientation of CG funds to collective regional initiatives could win political points.

In many ways, CGIAR is already a “Rome-based” organization:

- FAO is a co-sponsor of CGIAR;
- CGIAR’s Science Council is hosted at FAO;
- The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) (the abused foundling from an earlier CG renewal process) has its secretariat at FAO;
- CGIAR’s 11 international gene banks are under the policy auspices of FAO, as well as its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
- CGIAR’s crop germplasm exchange is governed by the FAO Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources in Rome;
- Bioversity International [formerly IPGRI, formerly IBPGR (posted at FAO with FAO staff) formerly the FAO Crop Ecology Unit] is headquartered in Rome and routinely represents the CGIAR in FAO meetings;
- The Global Crop Diversity Trust, which is becoming a major funder of the CGIAR and other gene banks, is housed at FAO and the Trust’s staffers are technically FAO employees.

Bringing the CGIAR together with FAO into a new Food and Agriculture Conference also makes sense. CGIAR has often been accused of being a hammer in search of nails. Critics say (accurately) that CGIAR lacks context. The centres seem to believe that every problem has a scientific solution. A close relationship to a new FAC would give the CG centres context. The big agricultural centres would relate to the agricultural division of the present-day FAO. Livestock, fish and forestry centres have a natural alignment with counterpart departments in FAO. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) could join with the FAO’s economic and social division to give the world a much-enhanced capacity in a critical area. Bioversity International already spends half its life in FAO meetings and the CGIAR’s 11 gene banks sorely need legal protection that can be afforded by FAO.

CGIAR scientists would be concerned, of course, that political decisions would replace scientific decisions in developing research programmes. CGIAR collectively – and its 15 centres individually – already make programme decisions based on funder interests. If core budget could be protected under a New Roman Forum, programme planning could become less political. Although exposure to “context” would be healthy, the CG’s donors will probably appreciate the possibility of regionalizing the work of the group. Ultimately, research grant proposals should originate from a regional body, led by national governments, peasants’ organizations and scientific institutes in the region. The CG must move from “big box” science to take on more of an animation role stimulating regional cooperation. Small staff units from the existing centres could be shifted to Rome to strengthen the overall capacity of the new FAC. The remaining scientific staff could move to the New Roman Forum’s regional headquarters around the world, working as a team to encourage scientific development.

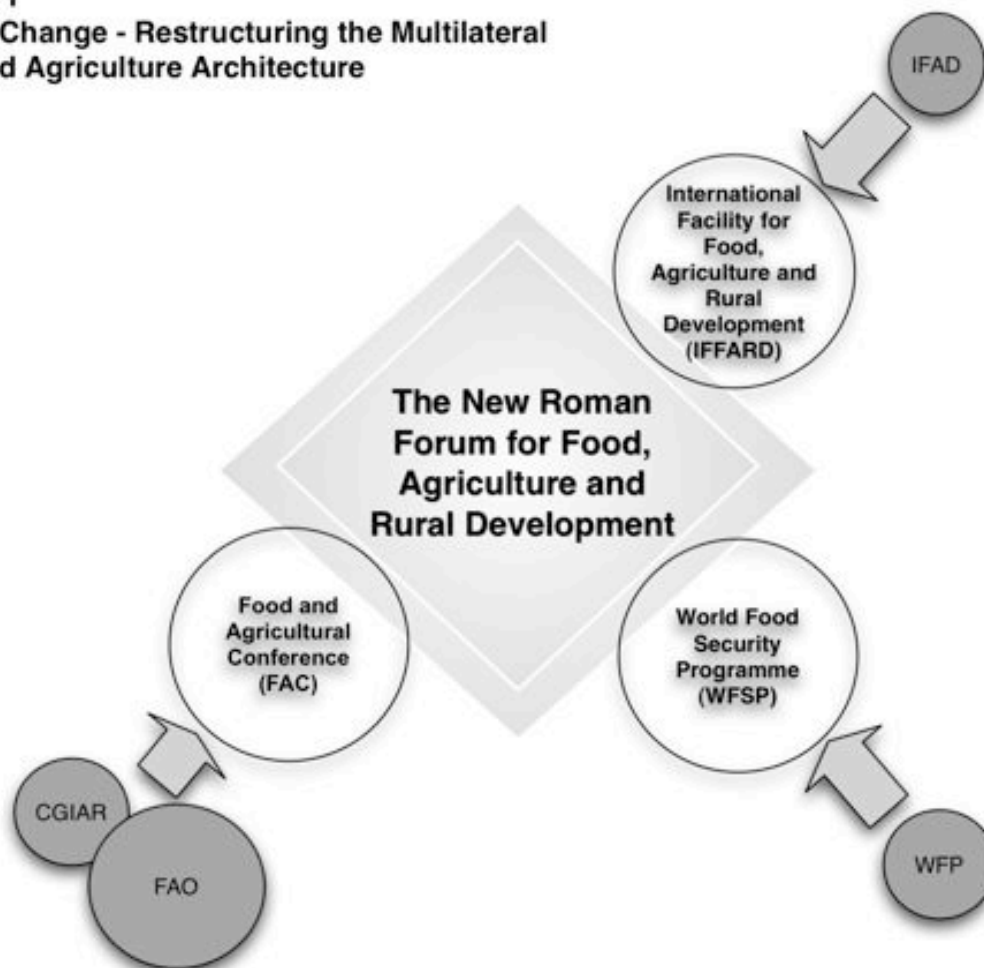
Those familiar with the CGIAR and its personnel realize that the coming together of FAO and CGIAR would not be anybody’s coup. CG staff would bring the FAC substance and increase government confidence in FAC activities.

Figure 1 (below) describes the convergence of FAO and CGIAR with IFAD and the WFP into a New Roman Forum based in Rome, with a single governing body and with a secretariat led by an under secretary-general of the United Nations. As part of this restructuring, CGIAR would join with FAO in a larger Food and Agricultural Conference, headed by a director-general reporting to the under secretary-general.

Piecing together the New Roman Forum (figure 1):

The Assembly of Member Governments of the New Roman Forum for Food, Agriculture and Rural Development would accept responsibility for the roles now played by the governing bodies of the membership of FAO, IFAD and the WFP. Initially, the assembly would meet annually until the reorganization is completed. After that, it would probably meet every two years. An executive board elected on a regional basis by the full membership of the Governing Body would meet on a semi-annual basis.

**FIGURE 1
Regime Change - Restructuring the Multilateral
Food and Agriculture Architecture**



Each of the three restructured organizations would have smaller executive boards with regionally-elected government representatives. The executive board of the Forum and of its three subsidiary bodies would have members from just six regions. The North American region would

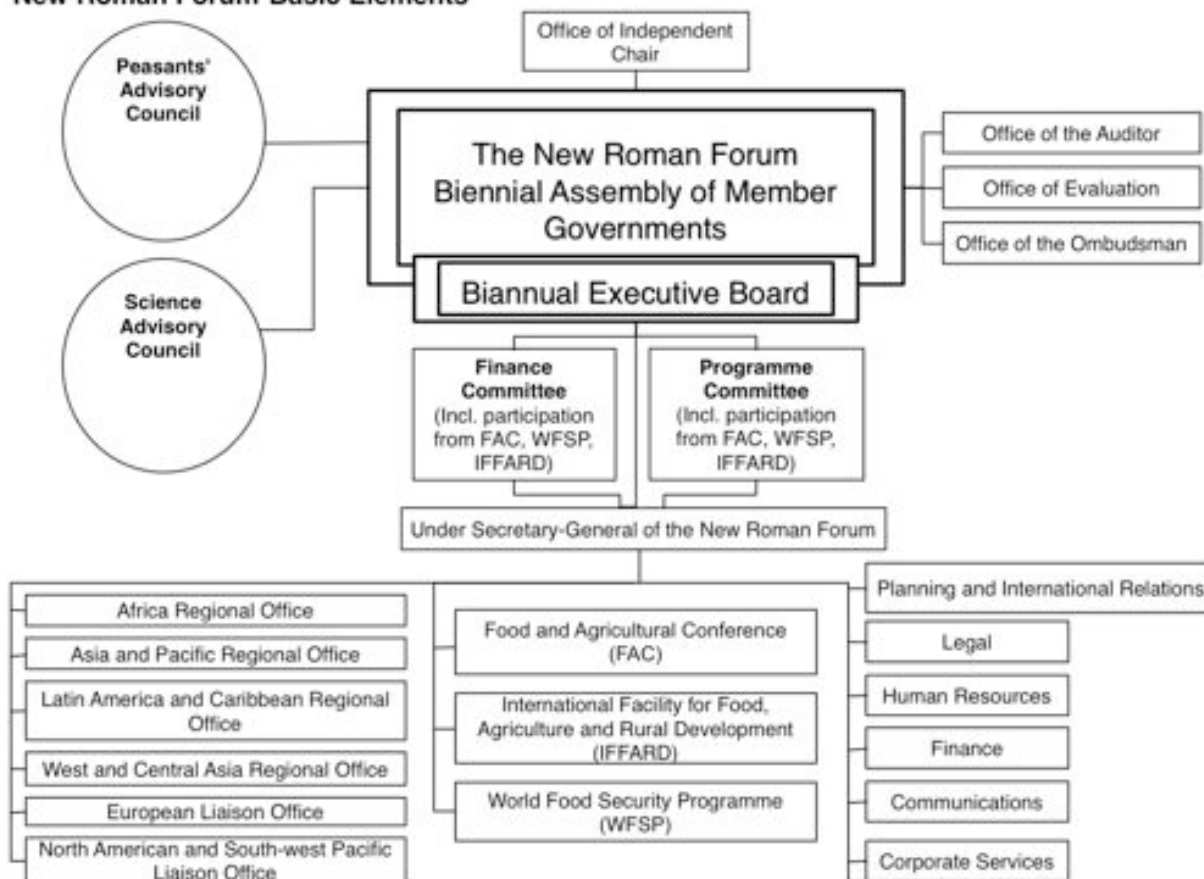
merge with OECD states in the south-west Pacific to form one region. The New Roman Forum would exercise central control over regional and national offices as well as most corporate services. The mergers should substantially reduce governance time and costs as well as operational costs, while improving coordination and programme efficiency. Mandate-creep and inter-agency competition could be eliminated.

Pieces of the New Roman Forum (figure 2):

An Independent Chair, supported by a small secretariat, would lead the assembly and executive board of the New Roman Forum.

Two major advisory assemblies would have direct, active, non-voting representation in the Assembly of Member Governments, Executive Board and Programme Committee.

**FIGURE 2
New Roman Forum-Basic Elements**



The Peasants’ Advisory Council would bring formal UN recognition to the central importance of small peasant producers for the food system. Most of the world's (estimated) 450 million farms are nurtured by peasant families producing the (approximately) 85% of the world’s food supply that is both grown and consumed within close proximity. Because the overwhelming majority of the world’s food has limited contact with the global market economy and because this is the food that is most important to poor people, the active participation of peasants’ organizations in the policies and programmes of the New Roman Forum is essential. The creation

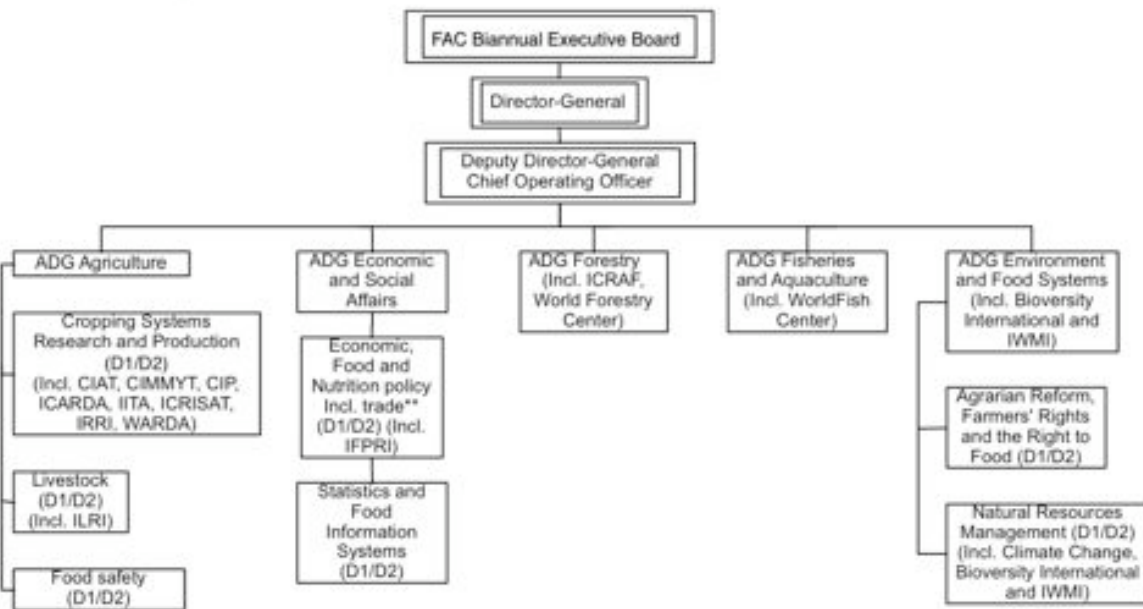
of the Peasants' Advisory Council affirms the poverty alleviation mandate of the Forum and the central role of small producers in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and beyond.

The Peasants' Council would include self-selected representatives of small farmers, fishers and livestock-keepers' organizations, as well as indigenous peoples' organizations on a global and regional basis.

In figure 3 (below), the regional conference structure of the new Forum shows the role of the CGIAR's 15 institutes and also portrays regionally-based Peasants' Advisory Committees with a direct connection to both the biennial ministerial conference and the regions' bi-annual programme committees.

The Science Advisory Council would bring together nominated individuals from a wide range of scientific fields (including social and natural sciences) both from indigenous and institutional orientations. The Science Council would be modelled after the experience of the International Agricultural Assessment for Science and Technology for Development sponsored by the World Bank and FAO, and supported by governments and the CGIAR. The council would also take over the functions now being carried out by the CGIAR Science Council. As with the Peasants' Advisory Committees, subsets of the Science Council would operate at the regional level and have a direct input into the biennial ministerial conferences, as well as the biannual Programme Committee.

**FIGURE 3
FAC-Food and Agricultural Conference**



Committees: The (ultimately) biennial Assembly of Member Governments (on the basis of one nation—one vote) would be supported by a Finance Committee and a Programme Committee made up of regionally-elected representatives. These two committees would also have oversight over the policy, financial and programme operations of the subsidiary bodies (FAC, IFFARD, WFSP).

Each of the three subsidiary agencies, however, would have its own executive board composed of member countries elected on a regional basis. These bodies would also provide the secretariat and meeting space for any intergovernmental bodies, commissions or committees necessary to manage specific treaties or agreements directly relevant to that agency.

Secretariat: The under secretary-general would serve as Chief Executive Officer and as Chair of a management committee that would include the director-generals of the three subsidiary agencies. Director-generals would be appointed by the under secretary-general in consultation with the executive board of the agency involved.

Services: The New Roman Forum would centralize several functions now duplicated at FAO, IFAD, WFP and CGIAR. At the highest level, these include the Office of the Independent Auditor, the Office of Evaluation, and the Ombudsman. Administration regarding legal affairs, headquarters agreement, buildings, equipment, insurance, medical and social services, pensions and human resources management would be centralized. Most outreach initiatives related to interpretation, translation, publication and media would also be centralized.

Geographic representation (figure 4): The Forum would have four regional offices (Africa, Asia and the Pacific region, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as West and Central Asia) and two liaison offices (Europe and North America/south-west Pacific). As necessary, the Forum could also establish sub-regional offices and country offices. All of the subsidiary agencies of the Forum would work through these offices. This would amount to a major improvement in inter-agency coordination and efficiency. (The implications for the restructured CGIAR are significant and are described in figures 3 and 4.)

Under the New Roman Forum, the biennial regional conferences of FAO would cease to be largely ceremonial and would become major policy and programme meetings that would give direction to the regional activities of the Forum.

FAC – Food and Agriculture Conference (figure 3):

The FAC would continue FAO's role as the lead normative agency dealing with intergovernmental negotiations on all issues related to food and agriculture, data analysis and statistical services, socio-economic policy and research, and manage science and technology research and services.

FAO's current biennial sectoral committees (agriculture, fisheries, forestry, etc.) would be reviewed and possibly abolished. The Executive Board of the FAC could recommend the convening of special intergovernmental meetings on specific issues for the consideration of the New Roman Forum's Programme Committee. The Governing Bodies of most food and agricultural committees would operate through the FAC.

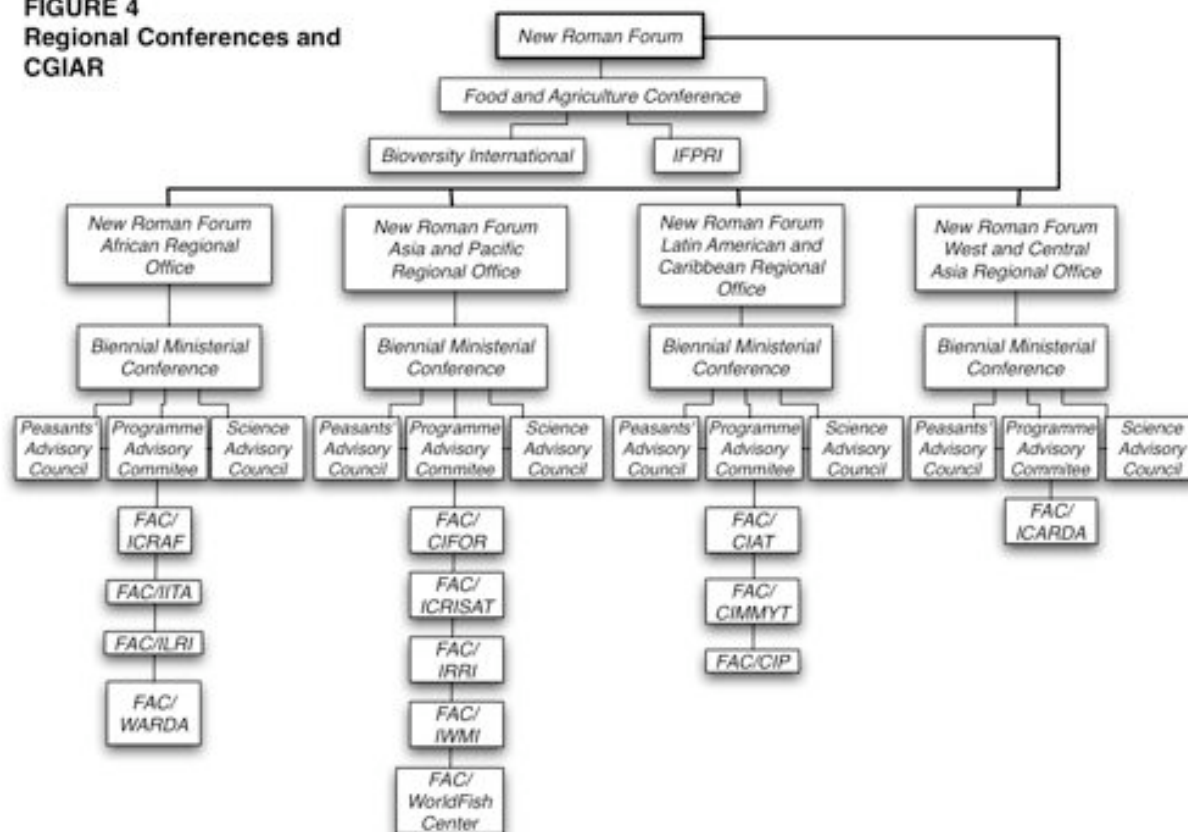
Effectively, the new FAC would manage the normative functions of an intergovernmental body dealing with food and agriculture. Some financial technical aspects of the old FAO would be transferred to the new IFFARD and all emergency activities would be surrendered to the food security mechanism (WFSP).

Within the FAC, there are five departments each led by an assistant director-general. Under each department there are units led by a director-level (either D1 or D2) officer. ETC's proposal would re-establish a department for "environment and natural resources," which would include two

units. One unit would address a range of critical issues including follow-through to the FAO's agrarian reform conference, Food Sovereignty, the Right to Food and Farmers' Rights (as each is incorporated in different FAO Treaty's or initiatives). The second unit would focus on environmental and natural resource management concerns including the agricultural response to climate change, the control of genetic resources for food and agriculture, and other special initiatives related to agro-ecological practices. Bioversity International and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) would have elements merged into this unit.

CGIAR restructured (figure 4):

FIGURE 4
Regional Conferences and
CGIAR



FAC would take on the responsibility for science and technology policy and programme. The 15 institutes of the CGIAR would be placed, as appropriate, under the agriculture, fisheries, forestry, economic and environment departments of the new organization. Assuming that the regional and sub-regional structures of the forum would be strengthened over the old FAO, this reorganization of the CGIAR institutions include the creation of regional science committees that would advise the regional programme committees in guiding scientific activities. The critical change here is to ensure that science and technology work remains within the context of the wider work in food and agriculture. Governmental and other contributions to the science and technology activities (beyond core budget support) would remain voluntary.

Over the next five years, the CGIAR should divest itself of its 15 campuses. These campuses should be surrendered to regional or national public science institutions. Centre staff should be replaced by relatively small teams (20–40 professionals) that would operate out of regional Forum offices. The purpose of the science teams would be to stimulate the development of

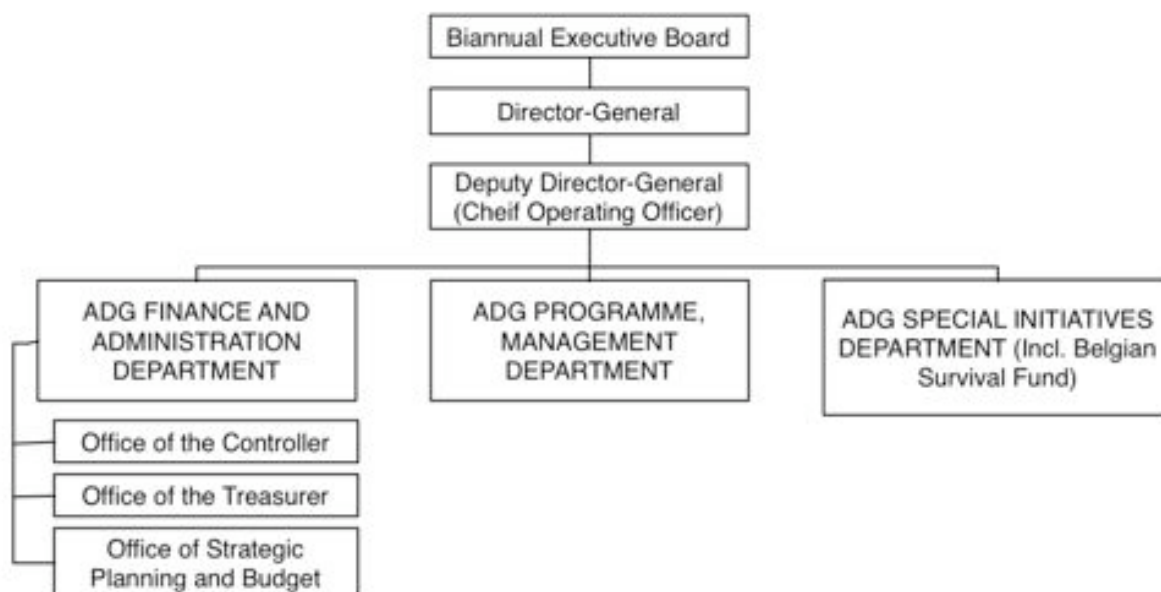
regional research strategies and to work with the Forum’s Science Advisory Council and others to attract financial support for regional programmes. A wide range of partners within the region could undertake the actual scientific activity.

Partnerships/contracts could be made with other institutions outside the region as deemed necessary. There could also be inter-regional initiatives on shared scientific tasks.

IFFARD – The International Facility for Food, Agriculture and Rural Development (figure 5):

In broad terms, the IFFARD will be the UN’s financial facility for food and agriculture and other International Financial Institutions (IFIs) should strive to work through it, as much as possible. The Facility’s grants and loans should be determined as they now are at IFAD. Some technical services and investment facilities now held at FAO might be moved to IFAD. It may also be appropriate to move some special trusts from the old FAO to the new IFFARD. The IFFARD may require some specialist in-house legal services.

**FIGURE 5
IFFARD-International Facility for Food, Agricultural and Rural Development**



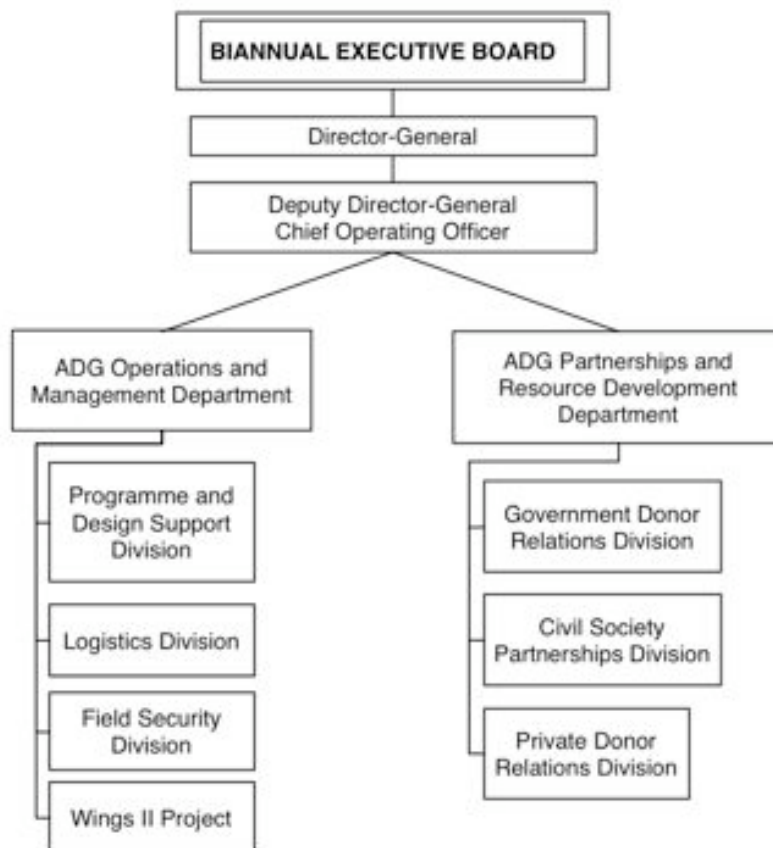
As with the other institutions, the committees of IFFARD’s Governing Body would review finance and programme aspects of the fund, but the decision-making processes for grants and loans would remain, essentially as they are today, under IFAD.

WFSP – The World Food Security Programme (figure 6):

The WFSP would take over some emergency functions from the former FAO and expand its responsibilities to include preparedness and emergency response to problems in food production (including the spread of plant and animal diseases), food safety and food distribution (food aid) under the governance mandate of the FAC. However, WFSP’s role would be strictly related to

preparedness/management services and not social or scientific policy or development. The WFSP may require some internal audit and limited in-house legal services. Note that both the Facility and the Food Programme – as IFAD and WFP – had a heavy commitment to regional and sub-regional infrastructure, which will now be borne by the Forum on behalf of all three parties.

FIGURE 6
WFSP - WORLD FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME



Peace among the pieces?

Member governments of FAO, CGIAR, WFP and/or IFAD cannot claim to be fulfilling their responsibilities if they do not consider the possibility of merging some or all of the four agencies into one coherent, multilateral institution for food and agriculture. In the end, there may be good reasons to reject this option but it is irresponsible not to consider it. This structural proposal – and others – should be considered in an open and transparent process involving three steps. Each of the four agencies, at their next meeting, should endorse these steps.

1. Jointly conduct a meta-evaluation of the four agencies. This evaluation should be completed within six months and should include recommendations as to the future structure of the agencies.
2. Convene a joint meeting of the appropriate governing body of each of the four agencies within four months of the completion of the meta-evaluation.

3. Restructure the FAO's next series of biennial regional conferences in order to allow the full and equal participation of all four agencies for an in-depth and inclusive discussion of the meta-evaluation and its recommendations for the region.

These three recommendations are both quick and inexpensive. Dissenting governments should explain why they would not accept them... and why they accept inefficiencies in the \$4.3 billion spent annually on the multilateral food and agriculture system.

ETC Group is an international civil society organization based in Canada. We are dedicated to the conservation and sustainable advancement of cultural and ecological diversity and human rights. ETC Group supports socially responsible development of technologies useful to the poor and marginalized and we address international governance issues affecting the international community. We also monitor the ownership and control of technologies and the consolidation of corporate power.

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