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DIRECTOR GENERAL

CIAT Expert Panel on Improving the Process of Community-Based Natural Resource Management Research

Terms of Reference

June 2001

Background

CIAT's mission is 'to reduce hunger and poverty in the tropics through collaborative research that improves agricultural productivity and natural resources management'. Its strategic plan calls for integrated germplasm development and natural resource management (NRM)

Sustainable rural livelihoods constitute the core of CIAT's vision for the future. This vision can not be achieved through a single means: higher crop yields alone are not enough; reduced soil erosion alone is not enough; more effective transfer of new technology alone is not enough. Improved livelihoods for the poor come through the deployment of their diverse assets in different sectors and for rural people this means non-farm as well as farm. Although improvements in agriculture alone can not achieve sustainable livelihoods for the rural poor, agriculture is central to the livelihoods of most of the world's rural poor and most of the world's poor are rural. CIAT's niche in achieving sustainable rural livelihoods consists of helping to attain three critical conditions:

- Competitive Agriculture
- Agro ecosystem Health
- Social Capital for Rural Innovation

Driven by the vision of sustainable rural livelihoods derived from its mission, CIAT will deploy its research competencies to produce knowledge and technology that contribute to achieving agricultural competitiveness, agro-ecosystems health and social capital for rural innovation. To achieve this, research managers must promote research which capitalise on CIAT's strengths but be demand driven. It must be global in outlook but with regional emphasis in Latin America and the Caribbean. It must be innovative but achieve practical outcomes.

This is difficult but not impossible. The African bean project was viewed by the 2000 External and Programme Management Review (EPMR) as exemplary in fostering interdisciplinary science.

While CIAT's strength is its breadth of interest, maintaining focus remains a constant challenge. A tension exists between desirable and feasible goals, that is, between the need to *expand* research towards a complete definition of the problem and the need to *focus* on outcomes that are achievable. In this respect, the NRM program of developing community-based decision support has a particularly difficult task and while recognising the capacity that CIAT has already developed in NRM around competencies such as social science, soil science and GIS, the 2000 EPMR also

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recommended CIAT sharpened its focus in this areas In particular it recommended that CIAT clarify the linkage between site based NRM research and its impact

Five factors obstruct a clear view

- a) The need to define a common objective, which complies with the perceptions of both scientists farmers and policy-makers
- b) The difficulties in coping with the uncertainty which arise when switching between scales and locations
- c) The difficulties of combining reductionist concepts (which underpin many of the CG centers prior successes) with the realities of moving towards community-based research
- d) The difficulties of defining a clear entry point for this research and
- e) Rapid changes in information technology which enable previously unforeseen potential to deliver to communities
- f) The need for such research to be cumulative
- g) The challenge of integrating knowledge from the many disciplines that are needed to tackle the complex issues related to NRM

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1 Objectives

- Provide guidance to CIAT management on the future requirements for community based based decision support with respect to the overall strategy of CIAT
- Advise CIAT of the current capacity and needs in this area, taking into account the balance between strategic and tactical research
- Advise CIAT managers of the suitability of current organizational structures to provide strong leadership and prevent fragmentation of research effort

2 Intended Benefits & Impact

- Clear guidance to CIAT managers and project managers on the current positioning of community-based NRM research and decision support Such guidance should advise with respect to the research portfolio of CIAT, and its relative capacity to deliver
- Specific questions CIAT would like to answer include
 - What kind of conceptual framework is needed to acquire a cumulative research process from its programme of community based research?
 - What monitoring and evaluation methods could it use to assess the effectiveness of its participatory approach?
 - What principles can be drawn out of the community based research to improve CIAT s ability to design future research in this area
 - What are CIAT s best bet options in this area given its special advantages What should it use as entry points?
 - How can CIAT position its community based NRM research in relation to broader strategic requirements?
 - What is needed to integrate the knowledge from the diverse disciplines that are necessary to tackle the complex issues related to NRM

3 Activities & Outputs

- Review background information about CIAT including its draft strategic plan recent reviews and project descriptions in relevant areas
- Form a consultancy team (Expert Panel) to gather information
- Consult a reduced number of CIAT project managers and scientists to ascertain a more detailed view of work at a range of scales and locations
- Analyze the range of activities, directions and needs
- Advise CIAT management through a team report

4 Deliverables

- A short (< 12 pp) report to the CIAT Board of Trustees comprising an executive summary brief recommendations and more detailed justifications to be enacted by the Director of Research NRM This report should enable the Board to visualise the future function and scope of research into community based decision support It should enable the Research Director NRM to plan congruent activities in this area

5 Terms and Conditions

- Period
23rd-25th June 2001
- Remuneration
Per diem of USD 400
- Travel and accommodation
Accommodation and economy air travel to and from Cali will be provided by CIAT
- Coordination of activities
Activities will be coordinated by Andres Palau, assistant to Director of Research Natural Resources
- Insurance
Panel members should ensure that their own travel insurance covers them for the duration of this work
- Budget Code
MFT92
- Secretarial support
Secretarial support will be provided to the panel to arrange meetings and prepare the final report

6 Background Information to be provided

Draft Strategic Plan

Annual reports of Projects in NRM Program for the year 2000

Year 2000 EPMR Review

Suggested Websites

<http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/>

http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/projects/bar_sn1.htm

http://www.spatial.info.org/shtml/init_csi.shtml

Land Discovery” Training and Tools for Decision Support to Stakeholder Watershed Resource Management