THE INDEPENDENT SCIENCE AND PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL (ISPC)

Summary of the Work Plan and Budget from 2014 to 2016

JULY 2016
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE ISPC

The ISPC is tasked with providing independent advice and expertise which will enhance the relevance, effectiveness and quality of science in the CGIAR, as well as the impact and value for money of its research for development efforts.

The recently approved Framework document defines the ISPC as follows: “Independent Science and Partnership Council” or “ISPC” means a standing panel of experts appointed by the System Council to serve as an independent advisor to the System Council on science and research matters, including strategies for effective partnerships along the research for development continuum. ISPC is functionally independent from the System Organization and the organization hosting the ISPC Secretariat. The primary target audience for the ISPC is therefore the donors. By providing the donors with independent scientific advice the ISPC encourages and facilitates donor support for high quality, relevant and therefore effective agricultural research by the CGIAR Programs. Such research will contribute to the CGIAR System-level Outcomes, which will result in impacts that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

The new terms of reference for the ISPC (which will be an expansion of our current role) have yet to be approved by the System Council so in summarizing the role of the ISPC, we will use the format of the four pillars which we have used since the earlier reform.

Strategy and trends

The ISPC conducts strategic studies and trend analyses to inform the CGIAR on new trends and emerging issues in agricultural science and in the wider development environment (including types of, and approaches to, partnership) and to present opportunities that could inform prioritization of research and thus ought to be considered in adjusting the CGIAR’s research agenda. Results from these studies has helped steer the current CGIAR Research programs (CRPs) towards unexplored questions and new partnerships, or identify areas where new research programs or program components would be needed and feed into periodic revisions of the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF). Looking forward the ISPC is expected to play a greater facilitating role in getting System-wide agreement on Foresight and Prioritization.

Independent program review

The ISPC has played an important role in providing advice to the Fund Council on the scientific credibility and investment worthiness of program proposals, as well as aspects of CGIAR policy. The review of CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) started in 2010. The ISPC has contributed its independent feedback to the Fund Council on the science quality and relevance of proposed CRPs, the quality, rigor and validity of the underlying analysis/assumptions on which priorities and activities are proposed, and the potential for proposed activities to contribute towards CGIAR goals. There will be a continuing need to provide inputs to the development of performance indicators.
Mobilizing science and partnerships

The ISPC mobilizes science and enhances strategic partnerships through international dialogue on critical emerging issues and through cultivating partnerships between the CGIAR and collaborators worldwide. The biennial Science Forum aims to foster partnerships that best complement expertise of the CGIAR and its partners on research initiatives and emerging issues. It serves to provide a focal point at which CGIAR scientists, scientific communities largely external to the CGIAR, funders and key partners in terms of delivering development can meet to discuss novel research approaches and their relevance to the CGIAR. Looking forward ISPC advice will include consideration of strategies for effective partnerships along the research for development continuum.

Impact assessment

The Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) is a sub-group of the ISPC. SPIA’s mandate is to provide CGIAR members with timely, objective and credible information on the impacts at the system level of past CGIAR investments and outputs in terms of the CGIAR SLOs, to provide support to and complement the Centers in their ex post impact assessment activities, and to provide feedback to CGIAR priority setting and create synergies by developing links to ex ante assessment and overall planning, monitoring and evaluation functions in the CGIAR. SPIA currently manages a large program called Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR (SIAC) which encapsulates these objectives as well as capacity building and development of a community of practice in impact assessment.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS 2014-2016

2016

- Science Forum 2016 was held in April in Addis Ababa on the topic of “Agricultural research for rural prosperity: Rethinking the pathways” with a high level of participation by CGIAR scientists.
- Each of the 12 CRP full-proposals and 3 platform proposals were reviewed both by ISPC members and external experts commissioned by the ISPC. Commentaries on each CRP and platform and a commentary on the portfolio as a whole were presented to Science Leaders in Montpellier on 16 June.
- The Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR (SIAC) program held a workshop in Washington DC in March 2016 to which it invited donors and other major stakeholders to discuss how impact assessment can best be met at System level, based on SIAC results.

2015

- ISPC responded to a request to help broker engagement between the donor community and CGIAR scientists in the further development of the SRF.
A preliminary qualitative exercise to explore donor priorities between the sub-Intermediate Development Outcomes in the Strategy and Results Framework was conducted between June and August 2015.

Evaluation and analysis of the CGIAR research portfolio presented in the CRP pre-proposals was provided and guidance given on developing the full proposals (challenging the proposers to develop proposals which had coherence both within each CRP and as a system-wide portfolio).

Publication of a book: *Crop Improvement, Adoption and Impact of Improved Varieties in Food Crops in Sub-Saharan Africa* that greatly advanced our knowledge of varietal adoption and diffusion in SSA.

**2014**

- A strategic study of “Biotechnology in the CGIAR” was completed and a review workshop was held in Washington, DC in March 2014 and the report published.
- A strategic study on “Data, Metrics and Monitoring” was completed and published
- 15 CRP extension proposals were reviewed and a written perspective on the CRP portfolio was provided.
- As a follow-up to the 2013 Science Forum, ISPC Briefs on *Insights and recommendations from the Science Forum* as well as *An evaluation of the ISPC Science Fora* were published.
- The Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR (SIAC) program held a major workshop on poverty reduction at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis in July 2014.

**The ISPC modus operandi**

The Council operates as a Committee of a Chair and seven members including the Chair of the ISPC’s Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) as an ex officio member. The Chair and members were appointed by the Fund Council which also endorsed the Work Plan and Budget of the ISPC (roles which in future are the remit of the System Council). The Chair and Council members are appointed for fixed terms in their individual capacities. They contribute up to 50 days per year largely working virtually from their home base with two to three face to face business meetings of the Council per year, depending on workload. A full time Secretariat, hosted by the FAO in Rome, supports and manages the work of the Council.

2. **ISPC ANNUAL BUDGET BY SOURCE: 2014 - 2016**

The ISPC annual budget for the years 2014 to 2016 covered the cost of the ISPC Chair and Council members, the cost of the ISPC secretariat (professional and support staff as well as consultants), the cost of carrying out all four technical activities (as outlined in section 1 above), travel costs for Chair, Council and Secretariat, as well as the cost for meetings, communication (webhosting, website development, publications etc.) and miscellaneous expenses.

The budget breakdown by funding source and year is shown in the table here-below:
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CGIAR</th>
<th>FAO</th>
<th>Total per Year</th>
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1 US$ 263k and 2 US$ 240k were supplementary funds received from the Fund Office for the increased responsibility of ISPC in line with the implementation of Task Force recommendations.  
3 Fund balance of 2014 FAO budget, carried forward in 2015.

**2014.** ISPC Budget in 2014 was USD 3.731 million, of which USD 2.407 million came from CGIAR Funds (system costs) and USD 1.324 million from the FAO.

**2015.** The ISPC Budget for 2015 was USD 3.648 million, of which USD 2.298 million stemmed from CGIAR Funds (system costs) and USD 1.350 million from the FAO. In addition, USD 263 million was received from CGIAR Funds representing funding for the ISPC Task Force and immediate support to the strengthening of ISPC activities and USD 480 million was carried out from FAO funds from 2014, thus leading to a total budget of USD 4,391 million.

**2016.** The ISPC budget request for 2016 was USD 3.644 million, all of which was requested from CGIAR Funds, i.e., from system costs as the annual USD 1.350 million contribution from the FAO was no longer forthcoming as of 2016. Additionally, USD 263 million was received from CGIAR Funds to start the implementing the results of the ISPC Task Force, which had recommended strengthening aspects of the ISPC work and which have been incorporated into the draft Terms of Reference, giving a total 2016 budget of USD 3,884 million.