

Update on progress
towards issuing a revised call for a program for drylands (GLDC)
Next steps for research from the former GLDC proposal

Purpose

This paper:

1. Recaps the process followed by the System Management Board and its Working Group on GLDC since the System Council's last meeting and relates the main points arising from its discussion in Rome at SMB5 (28-29 March 2017) and the virtual SMB6 held on 19 April 2017;
2. **Provides for System Council review, and strategic guidance where considered appropriate, of the text of a draft call for proposal for a CGIAR research program.**
3. Shares SMB considerations arising from the draft call for proposal: topics including the appropriate timetable for submission of the proposal and methods to support breeding programs of these and high priority CGIAR mandated crops are highlighted for further reflection. The latter relates to the *Critical Interim Research Initiative* document which is also tabled for consideration at this meeting (document SC4-05C).

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Prepared by: CGIAR System Management Office

Background

1. A proposal for a CGIAR Research Program (CRP) on Grain Legumes and Dryland Cereals (GLDC) was not included among the CGIAR programs and platforms endorsed by the System Management Board which then went forward for decision on the composition of the 2017 -2022 CGIAR Portfolio by the System Council in September 2016. Noting the importance of these crops to the overall goals of CGIAR and to the drylands areas the System Council at its September meeting noted:

“The Council is open to any suggestion from the System Management Board that will address the critical commodities, geographies and communities from within the GLDC proposal, particularly those with a focus on poor people; ...The Council makes no prescription on what may be submitted, with options including a CRP, a platform or any other potential approach), accepting that the former processes have not worked, and a “one size fits all” may not be appropriate in the complex settings in which such programs operate.”

[Extract from SC2 Meeting Summary (for fuller text see Annex 2)].

2. To address this issue, the System Management Board (SMB) convened a Working Group on GLDC under the Chairmanship of Eugene Terry in late 2016. The Working Group proposed that the subject matter for a future proposal should be considered by an independent expert panel whose terms of reference were aligned to the decision of the System Council.
3. A tentative schedule for the development and review of the proposal(s) was also proposed by the Working Group at that time (Annex 3), which would align potential endorsement of any proposal by the SC in late 2017, for initiation of CRP activities in early 2018. This however, was to be contingent on the findings and recommendations of the expert panel.
4. The SMB considered a long list of experts and identified Peter Matlon to be Chair of the expert panel. He was appointed in January of 2017 and, in conjunction with the Working Group chair, helped to identify other members of the expert panel. The expert panel was contracted in February 2017 and supported by the System Management Office. The panel provided their final report¹ on 26 March 2017 (document SC4-05B, which includes, amongst other things, details of the panel). The SMB discussed the report at SMB5 (28-29 March 2017, Rome) and considered issues arising (at SMB6 virtual meeting on 18 April 2017) after the expert panel chair had also provided a virtual presentation to an *ad hoc* meeting of funders on 30 March 2017.

¹ Interim versions of the report were shared with ICRISAT and the ISPC on two occasions, and with expected collaborating CGIAR stakeholders on one occasion.

A new call for a proposal for a potential CGIAR research program for GLDC

5. The SMB recommends going ahead with a call for a substantially revised proposal for a CGIAR research program to meet the needs of the drylands according to the *Report of Findings and Recommendations of the GLDC Expert Panel* (“The Matlon report”, 26 March 2017). On the basis of the Board’s discussions, the proposed call for a revised proposal on GLDC is provided in Annex 1, for System Council review, and strategic guidance where considered appropriate.
6. SMB deliberations and subsequent funder responses to the virtual presentation of the report’s findings have centered on the following key considerations:
 - a. the importance of the targeted crops to the mandate of the CGIAR in poverty alleviation, food security and farming system resilience of the dry areas.
 - b. that a single Agri-Food Systems Program approach was called for to utilize the strengths and comparative advantage of the CGIAR towards these goals.
 - c. the appropriateness for ICRISAT to lead a new, revised proposal development.
 - d. awareness that the lack of prioritization of crops, traits and the appropriate balance of research effort had plagued previous attempts at program formulation for the drylands – and that the panel’s suggestion of providing more sophisticated prioritization of needs and program design around key dryland mega-environments provided a way to overcome this.
 - e. awareness that the necessary prioritization required focusing the program on the needs of the tropical drylands (of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia)
 - f. acceptance of funder concerns that the proponents should identify in the proposal potential spill-over countries in the more temperate drylands.
 - g. that the program should be designed for a roughly similar sized effort (to the original draft of the proposal for GLDC²) in the first instance, and that any proposed extensions and adaptive research (potentially including countries in the WANA region) be considered for a later phase and then only with additional funding.
 - h. similarly, that following the panel recommendations, that the focus of a revised program would mean that CGIAR efforts on barley and common bean would fall outside the scope of the new CRP. Following the prioritization of crops to be included in the revised CRP that the SMB should engage separately with the System Council (i.e. not an ICRISAT responsibility), to consider means by which important CGIAR crop breeding programs for other crops could best be supported.
 - i. Noting, firstly, ISPC and funder concerns that a high quality and convincing proposal was required, and that this is considered more important than speed in proposal development; and, secondly, that the several dimensions of program prioritization and design urged by the panel (in which reaching

² The original draft proposal in 2016 estimated use of around USD 11.5 million W1-W2 funding.

out to appropriate specialist agencies and national programs is considered a critical component) would take time and resources to complete; then ICRISAT should be asked to identify how they will address these issues in the first instance (in a written response to the call). Depending upon their response, the SMB will set a timetable for proposal development, review and program implementation (i.e. envisages a potential alteration to the schedule provided in Annex 3).

7. The System Management Board seeks overall support from the System Council to pursue this approach, in the expectation that the proposal would include a call on a share of W1-W2 resources (as per other CRPs) if it meets the necessary standards.
8. Point h. above relates to the additional donor note for funding support for breeding programs for 2017 as part of this Agenda Item (document SC4-05C).

Annex 1 – The proposed call for a new Agri-food systems research program

Set out below is a draft of a possible call for a new proposal upon which System Council strategic guidance is sought:

- 1. The System Management Board calls for a submission, from ICRISAT and its partners, of a proposal for an Agri-food systems research program on dryland cereals and grain legumes for the enhanced productivity and resilience of selected dryland agro-ecologies of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.*
- 2. In preparing the proposal, ICRISAT and its partners should follow the guidance and recommendations included in the expert panel report on GLDC (the Matlon Report, 26 March 2017). Special attention should be given to the selection of mega-environments to be targeted by research, the thorough prioritization of crops and traits that can be adequately addressed by research in a five-year time frame, and to the contribution of national partners and specialist laboratories to the design of the proposal and to potential leadership of Flagships. The focus of research is to be on the tropical drylands of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, but the proposal should also provide a hierarchy of spillover countries in the temperate dryland regions for which the results of the program may be usefully extended in the future.*
- 3. The SMB notes the importance of there being sufficient time dedicated to program design and prioritization of crops and activities before submission of a high-quality proposal. Assuming a good baseline for work can be established, including the rationale for treating these crops together in the targeted systems and how this directs activities in a concrete fashion during subsequent years, further prioritization e.g. (crop x trait x environment) and ex ante return on research investment studies, may be included in the first-year plan of work.*
- 4. The format to be followed for the proposal is described in the 2017-2022 CGIAR Research Program Portfolio (CRP2) Final Guidance for Full Proposals (December 2015) and it should be submitted as a pdf.*
- 5. The schedule for proposal development is not fixed. Rather the SMB invites ICRISAT to consider how the substantial design and prioritization work identified in the Matlon Report will be carried out and on the balance between proposal design and activities of the program. ICRISAT will be requested, in two to three weeks after the call is made, to present a timetable for the development of a new high quality proposal. The SMB will then confirm the proposal development and review schedule.”*

Separately from this call, the SMB will engage with Funders on the best means to include funding of common bean and selected barley breeding improvement programs as part of the CGIAR research agenda.

Annex 2: Extract of the Meeting Summary from SC2 Mexico

Set out below are paragraphs 88 – 91 of the Meeting Summary from the 2nd System Council meeting, the full text of which is accessible at this link: http://www.cgiar.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Doc-3_SC2-10_SC-2ndMeetingSummary_Final.pdf

88. The Chair framed the item by confirming that the Council does not have before it a proposal to consider. Rather, that in recognition of the importance of the research questions that arise for the critical commodities, geographies and communities from the GLDC submission considered by the ISPC, there was an opportunity to discuss potential next steps.
89. A representative of the System Management Board confirmed that the Board retains a strong interest in putting forward a new proposal on the areas covered by the GLDC submission, for Council consideration as expeditiously as possible, accepting that there may need to be detailed reflection on what would be the most appropriate.
90. A number of Council members shared the observation that commodities, geographies and communities included were indeed critical for a comprehensive CGIAR research for development agenda. However, in expressing overall support for a proposal or proposals coming to the Council at an appropriate time, feedback from the Council included the following observations:
- a. The suggestion for there to be considered reflection on the overall coherence and strategy of collecting into the one proposal all of the commodities, geographies and communities contained in the earlier GLDC submission, with time now available to take a hard look at the issues and put in place the most appropriate model for providing key support;
 - b. The opportunity for any new submission to have some dimension which reflects the political concerns impacting many of the areas targeted by the former proposal, including the Sahel, as a particularly complex arid region;
 - c. Also the opportunity to build on discussions that have taken place on a preliminary basis with a view to putting together some form of proposal targeting the transformation of agri-food systems and food security for the MENA region; and
 - d. That in the timeframe being contemplated for a new submission or submissions, existing bilateral support mechanisms were in place to address concerns about a potential vulnerability of breeding programs should they have needed to have been stopped. In this context, a number of Council members indicated a willingness to join a 'friends of GLDC' conversation to consider setting up an informal mechanism to co-invest with others to

provide new funding for the stronger flagships for the intervening period. Australia, France, the West Asia and North Africa were amongst those that suggested interest in helping to find an interim mechanism to provide support.

91. The Chair summarized the Council's broad-ranging conversation as follows:
 - a. Strong appreciation of the System Management Board's contributions to the deliberations of the Council, including the Board's decision to not put forward the GLDC proposal, and to also not propose a fixed time to put up a new proposal;
 - b. The Council is open to any suggestion from the System Management Board that will address the critical commodities, geographies and communities from within the GLDC proposal, particularly those with a focus on poor people;
 - c. The Council makes no prescription on what may be submitted, with options including a CRP, a platform or any other potential approach), accepting that the former processes have not worked, and a "one size fits all" may not be appropriate in the complex settings in which such programs operate.

Annex 3 - Draft proposed timetable for development of a proposal(s):

1. Table 1 below sets out an indicative timetable as presented at SMB4 (17 December 2016), in advance of the SMB convening the Expert Panel to provide its recommendations.
2. Following discussions at the System Council, the SMB anticipates a further conversation with ICRISAT on the appropriate timing, with that conversation to be further informed by discussions also with the ISPC on their available timing.

Table 1				
Date Range	Description	Who leads	Who to consult	Who to approve?
Phase 1 – Scoping				
By end January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert Group TOR established, and Facilitator Identified 	Working Group	System Management Board ('Board')	Board
February 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert Group fully constituted and convened Expert Group scoping of a potential program, or potential programs, platforms or other initiatives 	Expert Group	Working Group; Board; Centers (including CRPs), Funders, CGIAR advisory bodies (incl. ISPC), other non-CGIAR external stakeholders	Expert Group
Phase 2 – Design				
From 1 March to 31 March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framing a call for proposal(s) Board input into framing work of Expert Group and overall endorsement of call for proposal(s) materials* Appraise System Council of call and timetable (<i>adhoc call – 30 March</i>) 	Expert Group		Expert Group and Board
7 April 2017	CGIAR System Organization launch of [targeted] call for proposal(s)	SMO	Working Group* (*31 March 2017 current end of service of the Working Group)	Board

Table 1				
Date Range	Description	Who leads	Who to consult	Who to approve?
Indicative Phase 3 – Writing (provided for illustrative purposes only)				
By end June 2017	1 st draft final proposals submitted for guidance	TBC	TBC	Head of drafting teams
During July 2017	Stakeholder input on draft final proposal(s)	Expert Group	Board	
1 st three weeks of August	Refining full proposal(s)	Drafting team(s)	TBC	
Indicative Phase 4 – Review and approval (provided for illustrative purposes only)				
Last week August – Mid-Sept 2017	Formal technical review of proposal(s)	ISPC (as directed by the System Council)	TBC	N/A
Last 2 weeks of September 2017	Revision of the proposal(s) and submission to the Board for final review	[Drafting team(s)]	TBC	TBC
By 10 October 2017	Final decision on the content of the Board submission of proposal(s) to System Council	TBC	As required	Board
During week of 6-10 November 2017	System Council deliberations and decision on proposal(s) and 2018 funding allocation	TBC	ISPC	System Council