Terms of Reference of CGIAR's
Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)

1   Context

1.1   The Standing Panel on Impact Assessment ('SPIA') is an external, impartial standing panel of experts in impact assessment subject matters appointed by the System Council and accountable to it. Within the context of the CGIAR System operating according to multi-year CGIAR Business Plans to increase coherence and alignment in CGIAR's delivery against its Strategy and Results Framework, SPIA is responsible for providing rigorous, evidence-based and independent strategic advice to the CGIAR System on (i) efficient and effective impact assessment methods and practices, including those measuring impacts beyond contributions to science and economic performance, and (ii) on innovative ways to improve knowledge and capacity on how research contributes to development outcomes.

1.2   Within this strategic context, the System Council has agreed that the following operational principles[1] guide the role and operations of the SPIA:

   a.   **Independence of advice**, being neither Funders nor implementers of CGIAR research programs and/or platforms and avoiding other potential conflicts of interest;
   b.   **Improved efficiency**, with a view to providing advice that maximizes CGIAR's impact while reducing overall costs;
   c.   **Improved communication**, such that various assessments and evaluation workstreams in the System are aligned with CGIAR Business Plan cycles;
   d.   **Improved and systematic linkage between science and development through innovation and effective partnerships**, such that innovation and partnerships are embedded in all aspects of CGIAR's advisory services;
   e.   **Higher ownership and improved coordination of the advice by the System itself**, such that the advice provided by the advisory services needs to be communicated to and formally discussed by the System Council on a regular basis.

1.3   These terms of reference shall be effective on 1 January 2019.

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[1] Outlined in 'The Future of CGIAR's Advisory Bodies SIMEC Thinkpiece' tabled at the 6th System Council meeting, 16-17 May 2018, Berlin, Germany, https://www.cgiar.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/SC6-05_SIMEC_ThinkPiece_SC-AdvisoryBodies.pdf

2   Key terms

CGIAR Business Plan is a 3-year implementation plan that provide a common planning framework to ensure better alignment in how CGIAR operates as a System, and successive 3-year plans are intended by the System to provide that alignment through to 2030.

CGIAR Research means the research carried out by the Centers and CGIAR System Partners in support of the CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework.[2]

CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service[3]) provides operational support as the secretariat for the Independent Science for Development Council ('ISDC') and the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment ('SPIA'), and implements CGIAR's multi-year evaluation plan as approved by the System Council. It operates according to its own Terms of Reference.

3   Mandate

3.1   Based on a clearly articulated strategy aligned to CGIAR's longer-run 2019-2030 work programming via successive multi-year CGIAR Business Plans, SPIA performs the following functions and fulfills its mandate under the overall oversight of the System Council.

3.2   **Expand and deepen evidence of impact of CGIAR research investments on CGIAR SRF outcomes and associated Sustainable Development Goals, through:**

   a.   Developing and testing new impact assessment methods (including mixed-method approaches beyond economic methods), pioneering new ways of gathering data for impact assessment, and designing standards and protocols for assessing impact of CGIAR research

   b.   Advising the CGIAR System on how data can be efficiently and effectively integrated into processes being developed to validate Sustainable Development Goal delivery.

   c.   Conducting or commissioning ex post research on the impact of technologies after they have been released and diffused, and as a form of ex ante work to look at what happens after research resources have been allocated but before the end products of the research are generated.

   d.   Conducting or commissioning synthesis studies to draw lessons from individual studies for System-level learning.

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[2] Definition from the CGIAR System Framework. CGIAR Research was defined this broadly to incorporate all the sources of funding for such research, whether from the CGIAR Trust Fund or bilateral.

[3] With effect from 20 July 2022, and following a decision of the CGIAR System Council (Decision Ref: SC/M16/DP5), any and all references to 'CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat' were amended to 'CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service' in this document. This change does not affect the substantive content or operational effect of the document.

e.   Reviewing proposed research Theories of Change to ensure that they will be supported by adequate monitoring and evaluation that will allow validation of those Theories of Change.

f.   As identified as necessary to support particular CGIAR Business Plan cycle needs, commissioning impact assessment studies to provide evidence for both accountability and learning as well as to support planning, recognizing that while SPIA will continue to have a role in providing external independent evidence on system-level impacts this task may change in terms of relative effort over time as Center and program capacity increases in this regard.

g.   Supporting a substantial improvement by the CGIAR System of a more robust body of impact assessment and evidence publications that are findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable ('FAIR').

3.3   Support CGIAR's strong commitment to embed a culture of impact assessment into the System, with particular effort focused on:

a.   Supporting Centers and programs to:
   i.   Build their own capacity for impact assessment;
   ii.   Identify strategic impact assessment opportunities and design strong studies;
   iii.   Understand and use robust and innovative impact assessment methods, approaches and findings for impact assessment; and
   iv.   Develop, adapt and/or use new methods, standards, protocols and best practices for data collection and management in the conduct of impact assessments, including for the improvement of accuracy and enhancing overall cost-efficiency.

b.   Facilitating establishment and maintenance of relationships between external impact assessment experts and CGIAR Centers and research programs aimed at driving up the quality and rigor of impact research.

3.4   Other functions

a.   SPIA is anticipated to play a role in ensuring a strong interaction with the other advisory services, so that advice and assessments on all levels and stages are considered in a coordinated manner for decision-making at appropriate milestones in the Business Plan cycles.

b.   At strategic opportunities, and when feasible to integrate into agreed work plans, the System Council may request SPIA to convene and/or broker strategic impact assessment discussions and international fora between outside experts and groups within the CGIAR System to facilitate relationship building, knowledge exchange and positioning of CGIAR in the global arena.

4 Members and appointment process

Membership

4.1 SPIA will consist of a core of three (3) standing members, one of whom serves as SPIA Chair. SPIA membership may be grown to a maximum of 3 additional special initiative members[4] to provide strategic guidance in the delivery of the SPIA workplan as necessary.

4.2 The role specification and key competencies desired for SPIA members, as well as those specific to the SPIA Chair, will be approved and reviewed periodically by the System Council to ensure that they represent the optimal guidance on capacities required.

4.3 SPIA standing members, including the Chair, will serve an initial three years, with the possibility of renewal up to three additional years without further extension. To the extent possible, membership terms will be staggered to ensure a gradual refreshing of members[5].

Appointment processes

4.4 **Chair -** The SPIA Chair is appointed by the System Council based upon a merit-based, open and competitive selection process that includes the following elements[6]:

a. A broad call for applications and nominations, including a visible public element as part of that call;

b. A nominations panel comprised of up to six (6) persons from the following groups and chaired by the SIMEC Chair or her/his delegate, which will review applications and nominations and make a final recommendation to the System Council:

   i. Up to two System Council members, one of whom shall be the SIMEC Chair or her/his delegate;
   ii. ISDC Chair;
   iii. One science leader involved in the delivery of research outputs in a development context;
   iv. One external person to CGIAR, who can bring relevant academic expertise and experience in impact assessment, including beyond science and economic performance
   v. One CGIAR System Organization representative with relevant experience.

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[4] This capacity is different to the role that would be played by staff/consultants retained to undertake the work required to deliver on workplan elements.

[5] Between 2019 and 2020, membership terms may be shorter than provisioned for in these terms of reference to facilitate an effective staggering mechanism.

[6] The SPIA Chair appointed on 1 October 2017 will continue to serve in her capacity for the full three-year term unless determined otherwise by the System Council.

4.5   The terms of reference and membership for the nominations panel will be approved by the System Council.

4.6   The search and nominations process will be undertaken according to the policies of the CGIAR System Organization and be managed by the System Management Office under the overall oversight of the nominations panel. For the avoidance of doubt, the CGIAR System Organization has no decision-making role in regard to the selection of SPIA members.

4.7   **Other SPIA Members:** The additional standing and special initiative members of SPIA will be identified by the SPIA Chair based on role specification, criteria and key competencies desired for SPIA members, as approved by the System Council, with those persons identified by the SPIA Chair, in consultation with SIMEC, being confirmed by the System Council.

5   Ethics and management of conflicts of interest

5.1   All SPIA members shall act in good faith in the interests of the CGIAR System[7].

5.2   All SPIA members shall comply with the SPIA Conflict of Interest Policy (which policy shall be consistent with any approved CGIAR policy on ethics and conflicts of interest) and abide by SPIA procedures for managing conflicts of interest.

5.3   SPIA may agree additional internal rules of procedure for itself that are consistent with these terms of reference and the operational policies of the CGIAR System Organization, which additional rules of procedure of SPIA shall be publicly disclosed by the CGIAR System Organization.

6   Engagement modalities

6.1   **Representative role of SPIA Chair**: The SPIA Chair represents SPIA in dealing with others, unless the SPIA Chair has specifically delegated another SPIA member, a member of CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service, or if relevant to the context, the ISDC Chair, to serve in the relevant capacity.

6.2   **Linkages and engagement with the System Council**: To facilitate linkage and engagement between SPIA and the System Council, the following modalities apply,

    a.   Relevant to a standing SPIA agenda item at least one meeting each year, and at both System Council meetings each year if confirmed by the System Council Chair, the SPIA Chair or her/his designated representative will be invited to provide the System Council with a presentation, report or other think-piece to guide System Council deliberations.

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[7] In line with Article 3.5 of the CGIAR System Framework

b. SIMEC is the key forum for preparatory conversations with SPIA on workflow design and the schedule of delivery to facilitate alignment with System Council workplans and priorities.

c. SPIA is encouraged to seek broader System Council inputs, with requests for System Council inputs being undertaken by the System Council Secretary at relevant intervals.

d. As independent publications and other outputs of SPIA studies or activities are available, SIMEC will be the forum for discussing think pieces prepared by SPIA to facilitate structured consideration and endorsement by the System Council on effective responses to such studies or advice, to strengthen decision making processes. If it is considered useful in strategic direction setting, this material will be provided to the System Management Board for formal consideration and response to the System Council.

6.3 **Engagement with SIMEC:** As determined by the SIMEC Chair relevant to agenda items, the SPIA Chair and other SPIA members as relevant may be invited to participate in the relevant agenda items.

6.4 **Engagement with the CGIAR System Management Board:** As determined by the System Management Board Chair relevant to agenda items, a representative of SPIA may be invited as a guest to System Management Board meetings. The SPIA Chair shall identify the appropriate representative having regard to the subject matter, noting that the representative may be the Head, Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service as relevant.

6.5 **Engagement with other advisory services:** The SPIA Chair will engage with other stakeholders as relevant to delivering on the System Council approved SPIA multi-year work plan and ensuring that impact assessment is appropriately integrated in the CGIAR Program Performance Management framework. The SPIA Chair will engage regularly with the ISDC Chair, including through the participation of the respective Chairs at the other body's key meetings, with SPIA having ex-officio membership of ISDC. In the normal course, the Head, Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service will play a key role in linking the SPIA Chair with other advisory services and other stakeholders.

6.6 **Engagement with CGIAR Centers and programs**: As part of implementation of its mandate, especially strengthening impact culture in CGIAR, opportunities for relevant engagement of SPIA with researchers and research managers in Centers, CGIAR research programs and platforms should be proactively explored in line with the System Council approved workplan and budget, and in conformity with the SPIA Conflict of Interest Policy.

7 SPIA operational support and budget

Operational support

7.1 The work of SPIA will be supported by CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service which will also be responsible for supporting the work of CGIAR's ISDC and providing operational support for the delivery of independent evaluations undertaken by external evaluators at the request of the System Council.

7.2 CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service will be located in Rome and will be hosted by and co-located with the CGIAR System Organization at a suitable location ensuring appropriate System Management Office presence. The CGIAR System Organization is responsible for providing appropriate office accommodation for the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service in a manner that ensures the day to day operational independence of the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service.

7.3 The terms of reference for CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service and the job description for its Head will be formally endorsed by the System Management Board as the legally responsible governing body of the CGIAR System Organization, following electronic approval by the System Council. Development of the terms of reference will be undertaken by SIMEC, based on consultations with the System Council members and other key stakeholders including the ISDC and SPIA Chairs.

Planning and budget

7.5 Recognizing the timescale required for technically sound planning, implementation and synthesis of rigorous impact assessments as well as for supporting a phased growth of Center and program capacity, SPIA's objectives will be organized around an impact assessment strategy spanning six years which will be approved by the System Council.

7.6 SPIA's work will be planned and implemented according to:

a. **A multi-year workplan and budget**: SPIA, with support from CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service, will direct the development of a multi-year workplan and budget with objectives and deliverables that are aligned to successive CGIAR Business Plan cycles using a template provided by the System Management Office for all System entities and the mandated functions described in these terms of reference. After a review by SIMEC for alignment with business planning cycles, the multi-year workplan and budget will be approved by the System Council as part of the multi-year consolidated budget and work plan for CGIAR System entities that is submitted to the System Council through the CGIAR System Organization according to the provisions of the CGIAR System Framework. For the avoidance of doubt, the System Organization does not determine the work plan or budget for SPIA and is not involved in oversight of implementation of the SPIA workplan or budget.

b.   **Annual planning:** On an annual basis, a review of the optimal allocation of agreed budget ceiling and scope of activities will be undertaken by SPIA in consultation with SIMEC and the System Council's Assurance Oversight Committee.

7.7   SPIA members are entitled to receive an honorarium for actual services provided, in addition to payment of travel expenses according to the policies of the CGIAR System Organization. The amount of honorarium will be determined in accordance with policies approved by the System Council and paid according to the policies of the CGIAR System Organization. Honorarium amounts will be included in the multi-year consolidated work plan and budget for the CGIAR System and its advisory bodies. Where institutional arrangements of an individual SPIA member may require it, the CGIAR System Organization is authorized to make payment of the value of the honorarium to an organization affiliated with a relevant SPIA member.

8   Periodically assessing SPIA performance

8.1   Every three years, with the assistance of SIMEC, the System Council will undertake a review of SPIA according to criteria agreed by the System Council. Such reviews will be overseen by SIMEC and informed by inputs received from System Council members, the ISDC Chair, the System Management Board members, and Center leadership and staff, including those responsible for leading CGIAR research programs and platforms.

8.2   The System Council Chair, on behalf of the System Council, will ensure that the SPIA Chair's performance is assessed at the end of year two of each three-year term in accordance with an assessment process that has been presented to the System Council for endorsement. Inputs from SIMEC members, the ISDC Chair, System Council members and elsewhere within or beyond the CGIAR System are anticipated to be included in the assessment process.

8.3   SPIA may undertake internal self-assessment processes more frequently and should welcome input from non-SPIA members into those processes. SPIA is invited to submit the outputs from any self-review processes into the periodic review contemplated in paragraph 8.1.