



CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR IMPACT STUDIES

Estimating the long-term, large-scale impacts of CGIAR research on development outcomes

Email expressions of interest to: Ira Vater (ira.vater@fao.org) no later than 9am CET, on Monday March 18, 2019.

For questions, contact Nancy Johnson (nancy.johnson@fao.org)

Background and context

The [Standing Panel on Impact Assessment \('SPIA'\)](#) is an external, impartial standing panel of experts in impact assessment that advises the CGIAR system. Part of SPIA's mandate is to expand and deepen evidence of impact of [CGIAR research investments](#).¹ To that end, SPIA is inviting expressions of interest (EoIs) for studies that measure the contribution to development outcomes of CGIAR-related technological, institutional or other innovations that have been in long-term use, ideally over large geographical scales.²

SPIA hopes to commission 4-6 large studies over the next 1-2 years. A second call for EoIs will be issued in September 2019 and, funds permitting, subsequent calls will follow in March and September 2020. Regardless of start date, all studies must be complete by the end of 2023. The budget of individual proposals should not exceed USD300,000. Studies that pool resources from different funding sources are eligible for consideration and such pooling is encouraged.

Study Scope

The studies to be funded here are considered "accountability-oriented" studies which means that they attempt to assess whether a past research investment actually contributed to the anticipated impacts. Impact assessments of this type target innovations that are (believed to be) widely diffused, and for which it is hence possible to study impacts at scale, as such providing the base to empirically test the global (or regional) public goods argument for CGIAR research.

While the call is open to innovations resulting from any type of CGIAR research investment, studies focusing on under-evaluated research areas, for example natural resource management, policies and institutions, farming systems involving livestock, fish or non-cereal crops, are especially encouraged.³

Studies focusing on different outcomes (economic, environmental, nutrition, gender and equity) and studies with sufficient statistical power to study heterogeneity (by sex, age, wealth, land holdings, ethnicity, ...) are encouraged.

What constitutes "long term" adoption and impact will vary depending on the innovation and context under study, however the key elements that we seek to capture in these studies are

1. that innovations have been in use long enough to be certain that what is being observed is not merely experimentation with agricultural research outputs but rather sustained adoption of them, and
2. that sufficient time has passed to allow for the consequences of adoption and use on development outcomes to be measurable, through both direct and indirect pathways.

¹ Specifically to provide evidence of impact on the CGIAR's system level outcomes (SLOs): reduced poverty, improved food and nutrition security for health, and improved natural resources systems and eco system services, as well as evidence of impacts on intermediate development outcomes (IDOs) including increased resilience, enhanced smallholder market access, increased income and employment, increased productivity, improved diets, improved food safety, improved human and animal health through better agricultural practices, enhanced natural capital, enhanced benefits from ecosystems goods and services, and more sustainable managed agroecosystems.

² Such innovations are distinct from those still in the pre- or early-adoption scale like those under field testing or in pilot studies and hence not validated by significant diffusion.

³ Under-evaluated means that few rigorous studies have been done relative to the size of the CGIAR investment in the research area ([Elven and Krishnan, 2018](#); SPIA, 2019).

While empirical validation of multiple pathways may not be possible for some study designs, theories of change should be articulated for all studies and documented where possible.

The call is open to studies that employ different types of empirical methods ([Gollin, Probst and Brower, 2018](#)). What is important is that the proposed approach is appropriate for the specific evaluation question, and that it rigorously and transparently addresses challenges associated with causal inference ([Stevenson, Macours and Gollin, 2018](#)).

This call explicitly seeks studies whose results cover or are representative of large geographical areas and/or large numbers of people.

Elements to be considered

EoIs should be max 4 pages⁴ and include

- Title and short (100 word) description
- Innovation to be assessed, links to CGIAR research and the existing evidence base regarding its impacts (including lab, pilot, or efficacy trial evidence)
- Documentation on existing diffusion of the technology, including reference to available data sources and an assessment of their potential usefulness for the analysis
- Outcomes to be measured, for which populations and/or geographical areas using which proposed indicators
- Proposed methods– including approach to causal inference
- Proposed data, including potential of combining different data sources (surveys, admin data, remote sensing, qualitative interviews, text analysis, ...)
- Study team
- Budget, from SPIA and from other sources (expected and/or secured) (total and request from SPIA)

Selection procedure

SPIA will review each EoI and invite promising study ideas to submit full proposals by April 15, 2019. EoIs that are not invited for full proposals in this round could be re-submitted in future rounds. Invitation to prepare a full proposal is no guarantee of funding. Where possible, SPIA will offer suggestions for strengthening proposals to ensure we receive the strongest possible set of full proposals.

EoIs will be scored according to the following set of criteria:

- Technical merit (20%)
- Feasibility (including availability of existing datasets and previous analyses) (20%)
- Innovativeness of proposed impact assessment questions (types of research, outcomes assessed) and research design (including scale) (20%)
- Relevance and quality of the research team, capacity and reputation of proposed grantee (20%)
- Cost effectiveness (10%)
- Other outstanding aspects of the proposal (10%)

⁴ Where the proposal builds on previous analysis, these can be added as references