

ISDC 2021 Progress

Purpose

This additional resource for SC12 illustrates key achievements of the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) since the beginning of 2021, with a focus on operationalization of the Quality of Research for Development frame of reference and Investment Advisory Group participation.

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Prepared by: CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat in consultation with ISDC.

ISDC 2021 Progress

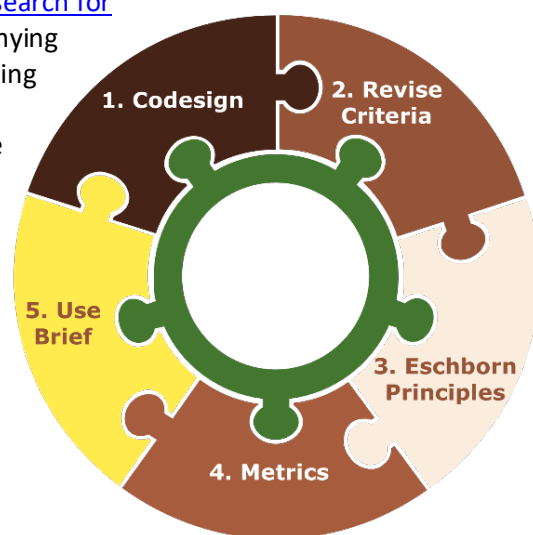
This pre-read for the twelfth meeting of System Council illustrates key achievements of the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) since January 2021.

Applying QoR4D in Assessment of Research Initiative Proposals

As mandated in the ISDC Terms of Reference cited below (clauses 3.6 and 3.7), ISDC provides guidance comprising:

- “analysis and advice on optimizing the CGIAR Portfolio as a whole
- efficient processes for calling for and assessing proposals, including the appropriate proposal assessment metrics as well as linkages between proposals to achieve the high-level outcomes of a call for proposals
- any updated guidance relevant to the quality and relevance at entry stage of proposals taking into account the quality of research for development frame of reference. . .”

In early 2020, ISDC published an updated version of the [Quality of Research for Development in the CGIAR](#) (QoR4D) frame of reference and accompanying QoR4D [Brief](#). In preparation to fulfill ISDC’s mandate related to assessing Research Initiative proposals, ISDC created criteria to operationalize QoR4D. From late 2020 into early 2021, ISDC invited comments of the Executive Management Team (EMT); Science Leaders; Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC); and System Council (SC) members in the codesign and review of the QoR4D operationalization. Operationalizing QoR4D references overtly the Eschborn Principles.¹ A forthcoming Brief—Quality of Research for Development in Practice for One CGIAR—will be offered as a tool for the CGIAR community when drafting Research Initiative proposals and used for the ISDC assessment of them. ISDC will socialize the “In Practice” Brief with Science Leaders and SC members in February and March 2021 meetings. ISDC then will solicit SIMEC endorsement of the approach.



ISDC Participation in Investment Advisory Groups

System Council foresaw the inclusion of ISDC members in Investment Advisory Groups (IAGs) through its recent decisions on IAG composition. The participation goals of ISDC include the following.

- Serve as a resource for System Council members participating in IAGs
- Offer independent scientific expertise and external accountability to System Council
- Provide guidance stemming from ISDC-related 2020 foresight and trade-off recommendations and 2020 external CRP evaluative reviews

ISDC chair Holger Meinke will serve as a resource person across IAGs to facilitate coordination within ISDC. Each ISDC member will have an alternate ISDC representative, to ensure consistency of presence in the meetings during a busy period in the academic year and many time zones involved. ISDC members will participate in their capacity as members of ISDC, not independent agents, meaning some IAG business may be vetted in confidence with other members of ISDC through the coordination mechanism alluded to above.

¹ The Eschborn Principles are an outcome of the CGIAR Big Lift Design Workshop that took place on February 5-7, 2020 in Eschborn, Germany.

ISDC Representation

Systems Transformation	Resilient Agri-Food Systems	Genetic Innovation
Nighisty Ghezae, Member	Suneetha Kadiyala, Member	Lesley Torrance, Member
Chris Barrett, Alternate	Andrew Ash, Alternate	Holger Meinke, Alternate

Preventing Conflict of Interests in IAGs

ISDC recognizes that member participation in IAGs might raise potential criticism. Its involvement in multiple stages of research design may create perceptions of real or potential conflict of interest. Therefore, guidelines on ISDC contribution to IAGs were developed that maintain ISDC's ability to provide an independent assessment of CGIAR Research Initiatives at the full proposal stage. Currently, this draft guidance is being circulated for feedback and will be posted on the Advisory Services [website](#).

Foresight and Trade-offs Work Published in *Q Open*

In early 2020, ISDC commissioned two foresight reviews focusing on the five societal and environmental One CGIAR impact areas and a trade-off report. These commissioned studies provided the necessary background for an ISDC consensus around reflections and recommendations to inform the drafting of the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy that will guide One CGIAR for the next decade.

To reach a global agricultural and food systems research and international development audience, *Q Open* invited the authors of the studies to publish in *Q Open*'s inaugural issue (open access). ISDC authored the introductory essay, the CGIAR Foresight Team co-leads presented a commentary, and the commissioned foresight reviews and trade-off report were adapted into articles for a global audience. *Q Open* was published in January 2021.



The screenshot shows the article page for "Foresight and trade-off analyses: Tools for science strategy development in agriculture and food systems research" in the journal *Q Open*, Volume 1, Issue 1, January 2021. The authors listed are Christopher B Barrett, Amy R Beaudreault, Holger Meinke, Andrew Ash, Nighisty Ghezae, Suneetha Kadiyala, Mandefro Nigussie, Allison Grove Smith, Lesley Torrance, and Author Notes. The article was published on 14 January 2021. The abstract states: "Foresight and trade-off analyses offer organizations such as CGIAR an opportunity to better prepare for alternative futures through adaptive research strategy and management. This essay introduces a set of papers that explore foresight and trade-off analyses within the context of the major reforms now occurring in the CGIAR. We tease out lessons not only for One CGIAR, but also for international development research organizations more broadly."

- **Introduction**
 - [Foresight and trade-off analyses: Tools for science strategy development in agriculture and food systems research](#)
- **Commentary**
 - [Commentary on foresight and trade-off analysis for agriculture and food systems](#)
- **Articles**
 - [Looking across diverse food system futures: Implications for climate change and the environment](#)
 - [Food and agriculture systems foresight study: Implications for gender, poverty, and nutrition](#)
 - [Trade-off analysis of agri-food systems for sustainable research and development](#)