

## Chair's Summary<sup>1</sup>

### 20<sup>th</sup> CGIAR System Board Meeting 18 & 19 May 2021; Virtual

Colleagues,

As 2020 drew to a close we continued our momentum towards One CGIAR with the approval of CGIAR's 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, setting out the roadmap to deliver on a compelling new mission for CGIAR. At that time, we knew that a serious and considerable task lay ahead – namely, to develop a CGIAR Investment Plan for 2022-2024 to implement the first phase of that strategy.

We knew that the time available to do so was necessarily constrained, however on behalf of the System Board, I am delighted to share that through a first-rate example of cooperation and collaboration in the spirit of One CGIAR, that task has been achieved. The CGIAR Investment Plan 2022-2024 is a truly exceptional product in its depth and scope, and the work of the Investment Advisory Groups and Initiative Design Teams, led by the EMT, provides an exciting glimpse of what can be achieved by operating in this mode going forwards.

**The Board was unanimous in its approval of the CGIAR Investment Plan 2022-2024 and the concepts for 32 Initiatives to be taken forward for further development.** We were also supportive of the proposal arising recently from ongoing discussions, to add an Initiative on vegetables, noting strong Funder interest in this area as a key component of healthy and affordable diets.

The Investment Plan clearly demonstrates that it builds on the strong work of CGIAR's Centers and partners that has gone before, while also bringing in the new ideas and approaches framed in the Research & Innovation Strategy. As a product, it takes impact as its entry point - and the Board agreed that it is compelling and accessible to our existing and potential Funders. During our in-depth deliberations over two virtual sessions, Board members, our Funder observers and the ISDC Chair all shared insightful reflections on what will be required as the full proposals are elaborated in the coming months, including delivery of results on the ground and developing detailed metrics and KPIs to monitor progress as the Investment Plan is implemented.

The Board welcomed the three prospective incoming Science Group Directors for each of the Action Areas as guests during the meeting and heard from each of them on their vision for the Investment Plan and the transformation it will deliver. We were impressed not only by the thoughtfulness and rigor of the Initiatives under the Action Areas they will each lead, but also the passion conveyed on the potential of a true One CGIAR approach.

---

<sup>1</sup> Prepared pursuant to Article 9.2 of the [Rules of Procedure](#) of the CGIAR System Board.

As a Board, we also devoted considerable time to discussing the **impacts of COVID-19 on CGIAR's staff, and the measures being taken to provide support, including where these measures and capacity to deliver them can be augmented**. We held space for reflection for those sadly lost and who have suffered losses among family, friends, colleagues and their communities, as well as those undergoing difficulty and hardship as a result of the ongoing pandemic. We asked to be kept regularly apprised of the response activities (encouragement for staff to stay home and put their and their families' safety first, regular consultation with in-country leadership on evolving needs, coordination with other international organizations, vaccine awareness and solutions, staff counselling services, access to equipment and oxygen, delivering food to vulnerable staff and families, etc) and will continue to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of CGIAR's people is a top priority.

In other items of business, **the Board approved the Terms of Reference and membership for a common CGIAR Audit, Finance and Risk Committee ('AFRC')**, and following similar approvals by the Center/Alliance Boards in their recent meetings, the AFRC will take up its mandate from 1 June 2021. With 7 members drawn from experts across the relevant fields with rich experience across the System, the establishment of the AFRC represents another important step in harmonizing our efforts as part of unified governance to ensure effective oversight of finance, risk and internal controls within CGIAR.

The following pages record the decisions of the Board, actions agreed and summary points from our conversations.

As the implementation of the operational structure approved by the Board in January 2021 and endorsed by the System Council in March 2021 gathers pace, the Board also met in closed session with its Funder observers to reflect on how it can be ensured that leadership currently being appointed and recruited to key managerial roles can be empowered to deliver in their new roles. We were aligned that appropriate delegations of authority through the EMT to One CGIAR leadership – as envisaged under the SRG recommendations - are essential for those leaders to take the operational decisions required to deliver on the CGIAR Investment Plan 2022-2024 and its underpinning structure, and moreover that increased or even continued Funder support to CGIAR is contingent on this. We affirmed our commitment to collaborate with our Center/Alliance Board colleagues to achieve this and requested that a proposed strategy to put this in place be developed for the Board to review and discuss in the coming weeks, as well as the alignment in the governing bodies of One CGIAR.

Colleagues, the vision of One CGIAR is now becoming a tantalizing reality - and we concluded the meeting invigorated by the path to real impact that CGIAR's science can bring, as set out in the CGIAR Investment Plan 2022-2024. It is now incumbent on us all to keep looking forward and truly deliver on the operational reality to ensure that this great potential can be realized.

Sincerely  
Marco Ferroni  
Chair, CGIAR System Board

## Meeting Summary

1. The Chair welcomed participants to the meeting. A quorum was present.

**Decision: SB/M20/DP1:** The CGIAR System Board adopted the Agenda (as set out in meeting document SB20-01, Revision 1, issued on 15 May 2021).

2. The Secretary referred to the declarations of interest made on the agenda and noted that the standing register is available on Diligent Boards. Participants were reminded of their obligations under CGIAR's Code of Conduct for Governance Officials<sup>2</sup> including their continued responsibility to draw any actual or potential perceived conflict to the attention of the Chair should one arise during discussions.

### *Consent Agenda*

3. The following two decisions were approved as part of the Consent Agenda<sup>3</sup>, as provided for under Article 7.1 of the System Board's Rules of Procedure:

4. **Decision: SB/M20/DP2:** Pursuant to Article 8.2 c) of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the CGIAR System Board approved the CGIAR System Organization Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2020 (as set out in document SB20-06a).

5. **Decision: SB/M20/DP3:** Pursuant to Article 9.11 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the CGIAR System Board:
  - i. Disbanded the mandate and membership of the current Audit & Risk Committee of the CGIAR System Board at 31 May 2021;
  - ii. Adopted the terms of reference for the CGIAR Audit, Finance and Risk Committee, replacing the ARC's terms of reference;
  - iii. Appointed the following persons to serve as the inaugural members of the CGIAR Audit, Finance and Risk Committee from 1 June 2021 until the date indicated, or until their successor is appointed:
    - Chemutai Murgor (to 31 May 2024)
    - Clarissa van Heerden (to 31 May 2024)
    - Esteban Chong (to 31 August 2023)
    - Hilary Wild (to 31 August 2023)
    - Maurice Goddard (to 31 August 2023)
    - Nancy Andrews (to 31 August 2023)
    - Richard Golding (to 31 May 2024)

---

<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2020/11/CGIAR-Code-of-Conduct-Gov-Officials-Approved-03.11.20.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Hilary Wild, System Board voting member, did not participate in decision-making on the Terms of Reference and membership of the CGIAR Audit, Finance and Risk Committee by reason of being among the proposed membership.

## A. Agenda Item 2 – CGIAR 2022-24 Investment Plan and Initiatives

### *Key discussion areas*

6. The Managing Director, Research Delivery and Impact and Convener of the CGIAR Executive Management Team ('EMT') provided an overview of the CGIAR Investment Plan 2022-2024 (as set out in meeting document SB20-02) and the process of its development, noting that the process of development has been highly consultative and participatory, with Investment Advisory Groups helping to identify areas of work to develop for Initiatives, and Initiative Design Teams with balanced and diverse participation from teams within CGIAR as well as outside experts, stakeholders, Funder partners and others.
7. It was highlighted that some of the Initiative concepts build on years of thoughtful design work while others focus on relatively new ideas; as a consequence, they are at different levels of readiness and detail at this time. It was noted that as the development process evolved, it was identified that the notion of 'fast-tracking' had created unintended and inaccurate perceptions of prioritization, and reconfirmed that all Initiatives are of equal priority. It had also identified that up to two-thirds of Initiatives could be expected to launch from 1 January 2022, subject to System Council approval based on ISDC advice.
8. In discussions that followed, the System Board echoed strong appreciation for the CGIAR Investment Plan 2022-2024 and the 32 Initiatives and provided inputs to strengthen these for consideration as the Initiatives are further developed. These included:
  - a. Support for the addition of an Initiative on improving the accessibility and affordability of vegetables for consumers in low-income countries, with a demand and healthy diets lens, as encouraged by Funders;
  - b. That poverty reduction as an overarching impact could be brought out more prominently, with nutrition (as different from healthy diets) effectively integrated;
  - c. Political economy and governance issues as cross-cutting issues, related to but distinct from policy, are also important to consider;
  - d. That metrics at Initiative level, once developed in more detail, should link back clearly to the overall metrics set out in the Investment Plan;
  - e. Whether the level of investment is set at the right aspiration for areas such as digital transformation, noting that this underpins much of the work to transform food, land and water systems;
  - f. A question on the planned scope and scale of the opportunity identified around market intelligence;
  - g. The importance of addressing the energy nexus to ensure that a true 'farm to fork' inclusive approach is realized;
  - h. That a transdisciplinary approach, including how farmers and small-scale producers are represented in the partners identified, could be brought out more strongly;

- i. That it is important to consider how the next 3-year investment plan will follow, after the 2022-2024 plan, as part of the overall CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy;
  - j. That in addition to impacts, research outcomes and frontiers in knowledge should be identified and connected as the Initiatives are developed, so that the strong scientific credentials of CGIAR's work are well drawn out. The importance of attracting top scientific talent was emphasized, as well as of publications to demonstrate credibility of the scientific process;
  - k. The need for clear organization to ensure that connections and overlaps between the three Science Groups do not give rise to tensions between them;
  - l. That linkages to migration, as a key priority for Funders, would be important to consider as part of resource mobilization efforts for the Investment Plan;
  - m. That the evolution of the role of the Investment Advisory Groups towards a future oversight mechanism should be contemplated;
  - n. That while the Investment Plan is to be funded by pooled funding, it will be critical that bilateral funding is directly aligned to the Investment Plan to avoid fragmentation and achieve the desired impact;
  - o. Where additional clarity on allocations to impact areas could be provided as well as clearer statements on how some of the important legacy work, particularly in Systems Transformation and in Resilient Agri-food Systems will be accommodated;
  - p. To consider how partnerships beyond those explicitly recognized in the Investment Plan will be facilitated and operationalized, to connect to strong expertise and work taking place outside of CGIAR including national universities;
  - q. That in defining projected benefits it would be helpful to capture who we are expecting to be impacted by the transformations sought;
  - r. That communication around the Investment Plan to other stakeholders would benefit from capturing the narrative and passion of the leadership who will lead it; and
  - s. That it will be important for Funders to be clear on which Initiatives will be ready for funding decisions at which moments and on what level of information, with a suggestion made to propose 'packages' of funding options linked to known sources of funding.
9. The Managing Director, Global Engagement and Innovation, provided an update on progress towards ensuring that the proposed CGIAR Investment Plan 2022-2024 is fully funded, and by when Funder commitments are anticipated. It was highlighted that signals from Funders are strong, built on our delivery thus far of key One CGIAR milestones committed to under the System Reference Group recommendations.
10. The EMT Convener expressed appreciation for the rich feedback that would strengthen the Investment Plan and Initiatives as these are fully developed and presented, and confirmed that with the Board's guidance, the EMT would continue to reflect on where opportunities to adjust, refine and potentially consolidate proposals might lie. The key role of the Portfolio Performance Panel in regularly tracking the portfolio's implementation was highlighted, guided by robust metrics and complemented by the

advice of the Investment Advisory Groups - to ensure that opportunities are maximized, and risks managed.

### *Session outcomes*

11. Board members were invited to share specific comments on Initiatives with the EMT so that these can be considered by the Initiative Design Teams.
12. It was confirmed that presentation of the CGIAR Investment Plan 2022-2024 to the System Council would:
  - a. Incorporate a vegetable Initiative, reflecting a responsiveness to Funder demand and backed by strong Board endorsement and additional emphasis on migration, conflict and multi crop systems within the existing Initiatives; and
  - b. Highlight that the Initiatives remain at an early stage of development, and that there will be considerable scope to develop them going forward.
13. **Decision: SB/M20/DP4:** Pursuant to Article 8.1 kk of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the CGIAR System Board:
  - i. Approved the CGIAR Investment Plan 2022-2024 for submission to the System Council for approval of the strategic priorities set out therein, appreciating that further enhancement of the Investment Plan is intended over the forthcoming months; and
  - ii. Asked that all 33 Initiatives are taken to the next phase of development, and that a first subset of these, identified on the basis of readiness by the Executive Management Team, be presented as full proposals to the Board for decision at its Q4 2021 meeting, with the complement of proposals to be presented at subsequent meetings.

## **B. Agenda Item 3 – COVID-19 current situation and CGIAR's overall response**

### *Key discussion areas*

14. The Managing Director, Institutional Strategy and Systems provided an update on System-wide actions in progress and under development to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on CGIAR's staff, particularly in India informed by a recent call with India Country Office Heads.
15. Before opening discussions, the Chair led the Board in a moment of remembrance for the 7 staff who have been lost, those who have suffered losses among family, friends and colleagues and those who have suffered hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
16. Members shared reflections and, at the Chair's invitation, proposed additional practical measures for the COVID Global Response coordination team could consider, to ensure that the response is as effective as possible. These included:

- a. Outreach to contacts in Board members' own networks in affected countries or organizations with existing infrastructure from which CGIAR could potentially benefit;
  - b. Exploring possible institutional support to staff to meet basic needs for supplies where local lockdowns mean that access to food and provisions is difficult;
  - c. To explore sourcing of oxygen and medical advice/services (including vaccinations), acknowledging however that perceptions of privileged treatment beyond local reality brings potential reputational risk;
  - d. Ensuring that staff benefits for medical cover are applied equally to all employees; and
  - e. That interim capacity needs should be considered, acknowledging that an effective response puts additional demand on already stretched teams, with a view to institutionalizing response capacity by the end of 2021.
17. In response to a question raised on the different impacts of COVID-19 by gender, it was noted that there had been specific consideration given to ensuring that additional counselling services and resources provided were responsive to the additional impacts on women, including around topics such as domestic violence. It was confirmed that the counselling and outreach services offered had been taken up more by women than men, and that the differentiated uptake would continue to be monitored to ensure that the support provided meets staff needs.

### *Session outcome*

18. **Action Point SB/M20/AP1:** A letter from the System Board to all CGIAR staff will be prepared and sent, expressing the Board's support for CGIAR's people and its commitment to ensure that all efforts are made to provide assistance and support.
19. **Action Point SB/M20/AP2:** The Board requested a monthly update on the global COVID-19 situation and the work of the COVID Global Response Team.

### **C. Agenda Item 4 – Operating under Unified Governance**

20. All System Board voting and non-voting members, and on the decision of the Chair pursuant to Article 9.9 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the representatives of System Council voting members, the Executive Management Team, the System Board Secretary and staff of the Board and Council relations team participated in a closed (executive) session of the System Board.
21. Discussions focused on how it can be ensured that the leadership, including those currently being appointed and recruited to key managerial roles can be empowered to deliver on their new roles, and the outcome of the session is set out below.
22. Mindful of time constraints, it was proposed that the Board revisit in more depth the proposed approaches and practices to transform coordination and alignment in the

governing bodies of One CGIAR as set out in meeting document SB20-04a, in particular the organization of Center/Alliance Board meetings.

*Session outcome*

23. **Action Point SB/M20/AP3:** The Board requested that a proposed strategy to deliver on the required authorizing environment for One CGIAR be developed, and that a System Board meeting be convened in the coming weeks to review and discuss this.

**D. Agenda Item 8 – Closed Session**

24. All System Board voting members, and on the decision of the Chair pursuant to Article 9.9 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the System Board Secretary participated in a closed (executive) session of the System Board.
25. No decisions were taken in the closed session that have a material impact on the CGIAR System.
26. The Chair thanked Board members and closed the meeting.

## Appendix: List of participants

### Members

Voting members	
Marco Ferroni (Chair)	Lindiwe Sibanda
Alice Ruhweza	Neal Gutterson
Alyssa Jade McDonald-Baertl	Patrick Caron
Hilary Wild	Shenggen Fan
Ex-officio non-voting members	
Clarissa van Heerden	Independent Chair, Audit & Risk Committee
Elwyn Grainger-Jones	Managing Director, Institutional Strategy and Systems in capacity as Executive Director, CGIAR System Organization

### Active observers pursuant to Article 7.8 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization

Claudia Sadoff	Executive Management Team Convener and Managing Director, Research, Delivery and Impact
Kundhavi Kadiresan	Managing Director, Global Engagement and Innovation
Stephen Potter	Canada, Representative of System Council Voting Members
Wijnand van Ijssel	The Netherlands, Representative of System Council Voting Members
Frank Place	Research program leader from the CGIAR Portfolio
Holger Meinke	Chair, CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council

### Invited Guests pursuant to Article 7.9 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization

Allison Smith ( <i>Day 1 Only</i> )	Director, CGIAR System Advisory Services Shared Secretariat
-------------------------------------	---

### Invited Guests

<i>Incoming One CGIAR Science Group Directors</i>	
Barbara Wells ( <i>Item 2, Day 1 only</i> )	Global Director, Genetic Innovations
Jo Swinnen ( <i>Item 2 only</i> )	Global Director, Systems Transformation
Martin Kropff ( <i>Items 2 and 3 only</i> )	Global Director, Resilient Agri-Food Systems

### System Board Secretary

Karmen Bennett	Director, Board and Council Relations, CGIAR System Organization
----------------	--

### Content experts

Elise Perset	System Organization General Counsel & Director, Legal and Office Services
Sonja Vermeulen	Director, Programs, CGIAR System Organization
André Zandstra	Director, Funder and External Engagement, CGIAR System Organization
Madina Bazarova	Head, CGIAR System Internal Audit Function
Christine Larson-Luhila	Deputy Director, Board and Council Relations, CGIAR System Organization
Yorgos Solomos	Senior Advisor, Risk Management, CGIAR System Organization
Roland Sundstrom	Senior Advisor, Executive Director's Office, CGIAR System Organization

### Operational support

Olwen Cussen	Board and Council Relations Officer, CGIAR System Organization
Victoria Pezzi	Meetings & Events Coordinator, CGIAR System Organization