

## Cover Note

### ISDC 2022 Outcomes: Initiative Review Lessons, Inclusive Innovation, Comparative Advantage, and 2022 Science Forum

#### Purpose

This pre-read provides the Independent Science for Development Council's (ISDC's) 2022 outcomes for its four workstreams, which bolster CGIAR's Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D) frame of reference. The following two-page synthesis provides a glance at the workstreams' relationship to QoR4D and their objectives, outputs, and recommendations for CGIAR documented in pre-reads. Each workstream is at a different stage of completion; some of the SC17 pre-reads are consultation drafts whereas others are finished products. All three additional pre-reads can be found as separate links for SC17.

#### Action Requested

The System Council is requested to read and reflect on the documents. The information presented is intended to support System Council in making decisions and recommendations for the One CGIAR research portfolio and strategic planning. For the Technical Notes that are presented as consultation drafts focused on inclusive innovation and comparative advantage, ISDC invites SC members to share their reflections both via relevant sessions at SC17 or via email. Please review the consultation instructions below. ISDC will use comments collected during the consultation phase from multiple stakeholder groups in the preparation of the final Technical Notes. The final versions will be publicized through the IAES newsletter. Subscribe to the IAES newsletter [here](#).

#### *Transformation through Inclusive Innovation*

For reflections after SC17, please email [a.smith@cgiar.org](mailto:a.smith@cgiar.org) (cc [isdc@cgiar.org](mailto:isdc@cgiar.org)) through 11 November 2022.

#### *Identifying and Using CGIAR's Comparative Advantage*

For reflections after SC17, please email to [p.boulanger@cgiar.org](mailto:p.boulanger@cgiar.org) (cc [isdc@cgiar.org](mailto:isdc@cgiar.org)) through 11 November 2022.

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The Independent Science for Development Council's (ISDC's) 2022 workplan has four workstreams, which bolster CGIAR's Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D) frame of reference. This two-page synthesis provides a glance at the workstreams' relationship to QoR4D and their objectives, outputs, and recommendations for CGIAR documented in pre-reads. Each workstream is at a different stage of completion; some of the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of System Council (SC17) pre-reads are consultation drafts whereas others are finished products.

### Application of the Quality of Research for Development Framework to Initiative Reviews: Lessons Learned

To improve future ISDC external review of CGIAR proposals, ISDC conducted an *ex-post* analysis of the Initiative review process through a reviewer survey, CGIAR stakeholder consultations, examination of QoR4D reviewer scoring divergence, and Initiative Design Team (IDT) responses to ISDC reviews. The report details the analysis' recommendations grouped by: (1) QoR4D and its application to Initiatives, (2) insights for the design of the Initiative proposal template, and (3) areas for deeper consideration by IDTs and senior leadership in developing future proposals.

- For QoR4D and its future application, the 17 review criteria will be revised to improve clarity and remove any redundancy. ISDC designed the criteria to apply to Global Thematic and Regional Integrated Initiatives and learned through this analysis they were less well aligned to Initiatives that were service oriented or focused on underpinning technologies (e.g., Genebanks). In future, the 17 criteria will be modified so they also will be suitable for the assessment of proposals involving different goals. The QoR4D criteria have been revised to ensure comparative advantage and inclusive innovation prompt well considered responses by IDTs.
- For the Initiative proposal templates designed by CGIAR System Office, recommendations included adding a two-page summary that permits proponents to articulate the value proposition, approach, and projected impact in a more persuasive, narrative form. Reorganization of templates for a better "flow" with sufficient space to provide important process detail that currently is only located in appendix sections. Although the goal of keeping proposals short continues to be recommended, the right balance still needs to be continuously reviewed.
- To improve the development of future Initiatives, the analysis recommends that IDTs and senior leadership emphasize consultation and partnerships, comparative advantage, research justification and research questions, as well as the overall cohesion across the portfolio.

The consultations confirmed that the QoR4D criteria and the process used for the ISDC Initiative reviews were beneficial to System Council and assisted in its decision making. The lessons provided in this *ex-post* analysis will further improve Initiative review processes for independent assessments and will have implications if ISDC participates in future stage-gating of current Initiatives.

### Transformation through Inclusive Innovation

ISDC published in 2021 a [discussion brief](#) on innovation that highlighted opportunities to boost inclusivity through internal capacity building, strategic engagement in partnership networks, and results-based investment. Building on this earlier work, ISDC commissioned a literature review that resulted in a consultation draft for SC17 that delves into the significance of inclusive innovation for CGIAR at the level of the institution and at the level of programming. ISDC sees a near-term opportunity for CGIAR to enhance the relevance, scientific credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness (the four QoR4D elements) of research by more systematically integrating diverse stakeholder knowledge, insights, and leadership. Three overarching approaches are set out to stimulate new thinking and action among CGIAR decision-makers.

- ⇒ **Disrupt and rebuild.** Start right now to disrupt those assumptions that inhibit authentic participatory engagement. Then, rebuild by crafting new narratives that recognize and integrate stakeholder diversity and dynamism. By examining and defining its comparative advantage in demand-led integrative and transdisciplinary research, CGIAR can attract a broader range of experts to its research partnerships. More systematic assessment of inclusivity within current partnerships can reveal new collaboration strategies that invigorate transformative, equitable innovation.

- ⇒ **Test and measure.** Test institutional reforms that promote reflexivity and inclusive models for research teams and projects, grounded in well-informed theories of change. This will require developing the technical **and** the organizational competencies of all CGIAR staff. CGIAR can then experiment with new incentive structures that steer researchers toward analysis and communication of agrifood system trade-offs and encourage trust-based co-innovation that balances multiple stakeholder objectives. Over time, CGIAR's results measurement system can more fully embody a holistic, complexity-aware approach to assessing CGIAR's contributions to transformative innovation, including local innovation systems that have better-functioning networks, more robust infrastructure, and more empowered participants.
- ⇒ **Invest and deliver.** Bolster CGIAR's ability to dynamically invest based on measured results for how to better reach those who are being left behind in current and future agri-food system transitions. To deliver transformative impact in partnership with host governments and other agrifood system actors, CGIAR can model inclusive cocreation through pooled funding and adaptive programming.

## Identifying and Using CGIAR's Comparative Advantage

The QoR4D element of "relevance" calls for efforts to be associated with CGIAR's comparative advantage (CA). The ISDC Initiative proposal reviews found that the concept of CA was poorly understood, and the majority of Initiatives did not include a rigorous CA analysis. In response to a perceived need for guidance on identification and use of CA for CGIAR, ISDC developed a draft framework and illustrative examples to support CGIAR management and researchers define CA. The framework identifies the following four stages, that do not need to be conducted in this sequence. Some illustrative examples are in process and will be published after SC17.

- ✓ **Describing Desired Deliverables:** identifying the pieces that need to be brought together to achieve the development objectives. Deliverables must be sufficiently concrete that the inputs needed to produce them can be clearly identified.
- ✓ **Identifying Potential Partners:** finding other organizations that have the potential to produce some of those necessary deliverables. These may be known organizations currently active in the AR4D space, or organizations not yet active in these areas that nevertheless have the resources and characteristics necessary to produce a deliverable.
- ✓ **Assessing Relative Trade-offs:** using the best knowledge available, identify the relative costs of the key deliverables among the identified organizations, including CGIAR. Even if one organization is not as capable as another in an absolute sense, its differing relative strengths may justify a partnership.
- ✓ **Planning Partnerships, Refining Proposals:** reaching out to the identified potential partners, clearly establishing responsibilities within the project, and ensuring project resilience.

### Key Concepts

- A CA in one area implies a comparative disadvantage somewhere else.
- CA analysis must consider the capabilities of other organizations or entities in producing multiple types of outputs.
- CA analysis can and should be pursued at different levels of aggregation.
- The more different the organizations are in terms of their relative capabilities to produce different deliverables, the more they stand to gain from collaborating and specializing in their areas of CA.

## 2022 Science Forum: @FAO Science and Innovation Forum and @TropAg



This year brings back the idea of ISDC's Science Forum through two targeted events in October and November. The Science Forum is a series of events to mobilize science for development through international dialogue on critical issues in agricultural research. ISDC renewed its commitment to these science dialogues with a focus on innovation with symposiums from 2022 to 2024.

The first event in October is a virtual side event at the FAO Science and Innovation Forum 2022 that will discuss institutional innovation while the second event will take place in tandem with SC17 at TropAg in Brisbane

Australia and focus on inclusive innovation in international development. To maximize SC member feasibility to attend in 2024, the Science Forum will be held in tandem with the November SC meeting. Learn more at the dedicated [Science Forum](#) page.