Independent
Advisory and
Evaluation
Service

CGIAR

Concept Note:
2024 Science Group Cluster Evaluations

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Purpose

The purpose of this concept note is to invite System Council views on the independent evaluation approach to meet steering, learning and accountability needs related to the current research portfolio. CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Services (IAES) has consulted the approach with the Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) (M28, M29) and with CGIAR's Managing Directors (5 April 2023). SIMEC guided IAES to use Science Group level evaluation. This concept note serves a triple purpose: being the basis for email consultation with other members of the CGIAR executive management team (i.e., beyond Science MDs) and System Board consultation, as well as a pre-read for the 19th System Council meeting.

1 Background and Summary

The Evaluation Function under CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Services executes the multi-year independent evaluation plan consistent with its mandate per the 2018 IAES Terms of Reference (ToR). The IAES' 2022–24 multi-year workplan (2021 Decision Reference SC/M14/DP4, 2023 plan re-confirmed in 2022) provides for the evaluation of ten initiatives in 2024.

The One CGIAR Technical Reporting Arrangement (TRA) (June 2022) establishes that the "*framework for annual adaptive management and 3-year assurance stage-gates will be informed by Annual Reports, annual adaptive management, and **independent evaluations.**" Independent evaluations are conducted in line with the CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy. See Annex A.

The IAES Director engaged SIMEC at its 28th meeting and thereafter the conceptualization towards the 2024 plan advanced. Two potential evaluation options for the 2024 independent and external evaluation cycle were presented to support the implementation and evolution of the CGIAR portfolio:

A: Science Groups: Clustered evaluations (definitions in Annex B) using Science Groups as the entry point
B: Initiatives: Evaluations, using purposive sampling across the CGIAR portfolio of 33 initiatives to identify 9 initiatives, 3 per each of the Science Groups (i.e., more aligned original multi-year plan).

SIMEC voiced a preference for option A. Further consultation with Science Group Managing Directors (SGMDs) reconfirmed a management preference for option A. Thus, considering the ongoing evolving status of the CGIAR portfolio, and to leverage opportunities for real-time learning, IAES has adapted the multi-year evaluation plan in 2024, to provide *Option A-the formative process evaluations of three Science Groups*. The evaluations will focus on learning from portfolio implementation through initiative inception (January 2022) to date. Option A is deemed most responsive and relevant to the anticipated portfolio status as of Q1-Q2 of 2024, according to IAES analysis, SIMEC advising, and SGMD consultation.

Aligned to the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework (2022), an independent external evaluation of three Science Groups in 2023 will support evidence-based steering, contribute to CGIARs' institutional learning, and facilitate initial accountability pertaining to the efficiency and effectiveness of the CGIAR portfolio. The exercise will also assist IAES and SIMEC to identify parameters and evaluative needs for the 2025-27 multi-year evaluation plan. The approach, methods and targeted users of the evaluation results will be further elaborated in a ToR document aligned to the Science Group-level evaluation objectives (ToR to be published by mid-January 2024).

2 Approach

The overarching purpose of the evaluation of three Science Groups aligns with the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework (2022): steering, learning and accountability. The objective of the three independent evaluations of the three Science Groups is to **inform decisions about how to enhance coherence and efficiency of implementation of the CGIAR portfolio in the subsequent three-year period.**

The recommended approach is guided by utilization-focused evaluation (UFE) and developmental evaluation[1] (DE) approaches. These approaches align with the status of the CGIAR portfolio, namely, after two years of implementation, a *developmental evaluation* approach guides adaptation in dynamic environments. The UFE and DE approach will be complemented by elements of *real-time evaluation (RTE)*, which stresses monitoring and real-time adjustment. RTE is adopted to ensure availability to CGIAR initiative proposal authors early-stage evaluative evidence to inform the development of their 2025-27 research proposals.

Given the nascent and evolving status of the CGIAR portfolio, 2024 formative evaluations supplied to align with the three-year assurance reporting cycle will be framed by targeted evaluation criteria (Evaluation Policy).[2] These are (1) relevance; (2) coherence; (3) effectiveness; (4) efficiency; and (5) quality of science (QoS) (see Table 1). Key evaluation questions will derive from five targeted criteria and will be elaborated in the   evaluation ToRs (for an example, see ToRs for Genebank Platform evaluation (2023) and ToRs for CRP reviews (2020)).

To address these five criteria, lines of inquiry will include comparative advantage and value addition, compliance to relevant CGIAR frameworks and policies (e.g., 2022 Engagement Framework for Partnerships & Advocacy – Toward Greater Impact and recommendations from the independent High-Level Advisory Panel Report on Partnerships[3]); and integrate cross-cutting themes (e.g., gender[4] and climate change); and linkages to the five impact areas and Platforms.

The evaluation approach will rest on mixed-methods and align to industry-wide good practices to focus on "timeliness and quick turnaround of emergent findings" and "learning-focused adaptive management in complex settings.". 🔗 The selection of methods will be guided by the following **key considerations:**

1. Cluster evaluations (definitions in Annex B) using Science Groups as the entry point: clustering Initiatives within Science Group, based around group-level ToC and criteria (Table 2). Clustered evaluations allow for a more strategic focus, consistent with the learning purpose of the evaluation, which would target identifying strategic issues, synergies, and external validity.
2. Use of evaluation guidelines developed in support of the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework and Policy, including Management Engagement and Response (guideline expected Q4 2023); 'Applying Quality of Research for Development Frame of Reference to Process and Performance Evaluations;' and Guidelines on Gender, Inclusion and Diversity (*beta* version roll-out expected Q1 2024).

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[1] *UFE* highlights planning and conduct of the evaluation in ways that enhance the likely utilization of both the findings and of the process itself to inform decisions and improve performance. *DE* helps an organization to provide real-time feedback and generate rapid learning to support the direction of the development of a program, and/or affirm the need for a change of course, so that the program stakeholders can implement new measures and actions as goals emerge and evolve (more detail is provided in Annex C).

[2] CGIAR Evaluation Policy, 2022 https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/publications/cgiar-evaluation-policy

[3] The independent High-Level Advisory Panel Report on "On Improving One CGIAR's Strategic Engagement with Partners" (2021-2022)

[4] (2023 SC Agenda item 9 on Gender in Research) and Genetic Innovation Gender Strategy (2023/05/Resource-Item9)

3. Sampling criteria (Table 2) would focus on case studies, deep dives, and would produce learning and knowledge management processes and products.
4. Delivering *three evaluations* with respective final reports and learning and information products both during and after evaluation completion.
5. Delivering a *summary synthesis report* based on the findings of the three Science Groups evaluations, focused on internal and external coherence, and efficiency and effectiveness.
6. Triangulating and assessing the recommendations and learning from the 2021 Synthesis, towards baselining accountability against 2030 Research Strategy.
7. Strategic sampling for field data collection sites to provide targeted evidence for each Science Groups, with participation of IAES/Evaluation (for more detail, see Team Composition).
8. Grounding in and incorporating advice and recommendations from the 2021 ISDC reviews of CGIAR portfolio and against learning and recommendations from the 2021 Synthesis, including specific Action Area briefs from:
   ✓ Action Area 1 Brief: Systems Transformation
   ✓ Action Area 2 Brief: Resilient Agrifood Systems
   ✓ Action Area 3 Brief: Genetic Innovations

Table 1. Suggested Evaluation Criteria for 2024 Evaluations of Science Groups[5]

Suggested Evaluation Criteria	
Relevance	The extent to which the intervention's objectives and design respond to the needs, policies, and priorities of users/clients and global, regional, and country partners/institutions, and continue to do so if circumstances change. Consistent with the Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D) framework, attention is given to the importance, significance, and usefulness of the work implemented in the problem context, associated with CGIAR's capacity to address the problems.
Coherence	The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country or a sector or within CGIAR, i.e., its overall fit. *Internal coherence* addresses the synergies and interlinkages between the intervention and other interventions carried out within CGIAR, and the consistency of the intervention with the relevant international norms and standards to which CGIAR adheres. *External coherence* considers the consistency of the intervention with other actors' interventions in the same context—that is, its complementarity, harmonization, and coordination with others, its value-added, and its avoidance of duplication of effort.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economical and timely way—that is, the overall use of resources. Economical refers to the conversion of inputs (funds, expertise, natural resources, time, etc.) into outputs, outcomes, and impacts in the most cost-effective way possible, compared with feasible alternatives in the context. Timely delivery is within the intended timeframe, or a timeframe reasonably adjusted to the demands of the evolving context. This criterion may include assessing operational efficiency (how well the intervention was managed).
Quality of Science	The QoS evaluative criterion pertains to scientific credibility and legitimacy. The definition of the criterion derives from the QoR4D frame of reference,

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[5] Apart from QoS evaluation criterion, extended guidance on other criteria is available under the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/

Suggested Evaluation Criteria
which records CGIAR's system-wide agreement on the nature and assessment of research quality. The QoR4D describes research quality according to four key elements: relevance, scientific credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness. Relevance and effectiveness are treated as separate evaluation criteria above.

2.1 Sampling Criteria and Assumptions under Consideration:

Consistent with the cluster evaluation method, and in each of the Science Groups, Table 2 presents suggested sampling criteria for clustering and deep-dives on initiatives or topics. Determining 'maturity level' would entail co-development with Science Group leaders, to enhance buy-in and contextualize learning and accountability.

Table 2. Suggested Sampling Criteria for Clustering and in-Depth Inquiry

Sampling Criteria
Maturity level (golden eggs, etc.)-based on the number of outputs & outcomes reported Y1-Y2
Geography (of countries targeted/involved in implementation)
Department (per One CGIAR organigram)
Center affiliation of initiative lead and co-lead
Weighted mapping to impact areas
Number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contributed to
Number of countries with implementation, with activities reported from Y1
Availability of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) focal point (as of the inception/initiative)
Level of funding: % age of requested/obtained by end of Y2023
Number of National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES) as delivery partners
Evaluability Assessment[6]
Number and subjects of an ongoing Impact Assessments, including by SPIA

The following **assumptions** would need to hold to assure efficiency of design and conduct of the three evaluations, and uptake of results and implementation of recommendations:

a) Availability of two years of quality-assured monitoring data (2022 and 2023) by 1 March 2024, and other standard monitoring and reporting information, e.g., two rounds of annual reports; documentation (details) from Pause/Reflect episodes per initiative; documentation of any Science Group-wide research, strategy or ToC reorganization (e.g., Science Group and initiative annual stage gating).
b) Aligned to the Evaluation Guidelines on Management Engagement and Response, availability of the individual Science Group leadership for launch and kick-off, and other key engagement points.

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[6] Under RAFS Science Group, towards internal coherence RIIs portfolio will build on learning from Evaluability Assessments of the 4 RIIs (Q3 2023-Q1 2024) and integrate self-assessment of the 2 RIIs remaining as per Evaluability Assessment TOR, endorsed by SIMEC in 9/2023.

c) Access to and use of Center-level data pertaining to initiatives (NB Q1 internal audits of initiatives envisaged in preliminary 2024 IA plans may be consulted as a potential data source if results are available during the data collection and analysis stage of the Science Group evaluations).

d) The continued presence of a qualified MEL professional per Science Group, qualified and empowered to engage at the key points throughout the evaluation design and implementation (see Annex D, from MER Evaluation Guidelines).

e) CGIAR Management via system-wide or Center lists, facilitates access to CGIAR-wide email coverage for online survey through multiple channels (e.g., broadcast email, internal staff newsletter, etc.).

f) Two Regional Integrated Initiatives (RII) (ESA and LAC) under Resilient Agrifood Systems (RAFS) Science Group will be guided in a facilitated application of the Evaluability Assessment (EA) framework by 28 February 2024, building on 2023 EAs, per SIMEC-endorsed ToR for EAs of the four RIIs in 2023.

g) Aligned to the Evaluation Guidelines on Management Engagement and Response (in consultation draft stage, expected release by December 2023), the Management Response development and endorsement processes in Q3 2024 would be coordinated by the assigned CGIAR business unit according to an MR procedure endorsed by management and agreed with SIMEC.

Aligned with mixed-methods approaches, complementing core performance and center-level data, other potential sources of evidence and data collection methods could include:

- Evidence generated through *inter alia* CGIAR-wide e-survey, key informant interview, focus group discussion, output review/validation.
- Sense-making of ToC and evidence, related workshops, leveraging initiative or Science Group-level meetings for efficiency and feasibility reasons.
- Relevant impact assessments/evaluations and/or scaling readiness evaluations and studies.

3 Timelines and Deliverables

Evaluation design will commence in Q4 2023, with development of the umbrella evaluation ToRs based on this concept note. Starting January, the evaluation coordinator (consultant) will engage to finalize ToRs for SIMEC endorsement, and subsequently support onboarding of the evaluation team and formal evaluation launch in February 2024. Provided that the quality-assured 2022 and 2023 monitoring data is available 1 March, the official data collection and analysis would proceed from 1 March-30 June, with delivery of the final reports in Q3 2024.

Box 1: Formal deliverables from the evaluative process for SIMEC endorsement
-ToR for the evaluation
- Three Science Group evaluation reports (MR required for each)

Complementing formal deliverables (Box 1) and aligned to the purpose of the evaluation, consistent with Product Development (see Figure 2 in Annex 3), IAES/Evaluation would integrate mechanisms for, and facilitate access to, evaluative knowledge in real-time in key strategic moments for funders, senior leadership team and portfolio implementers (managers/proposal authors). Targeted webinars and briefs, with preliminary and final reports (and associated knowledge products) will be furnished as soon as available, and often in draft form, towards validation of recommendations and Management Response. In particular:

- ✓ During the data collection and formulation of preliminary findings and conclusions (Q2), IAES and its Evaluation Function, evaluation coordinator and teams will conduct various informal learning sessions in an "opportunistic" engagement style, intended to openly share any valuable insights that can contribute to the development of proposals and the redesign of the CGIAR portfolio.
- ✓ Through IAES, the Evaluation Function will prioritize dynamic interaction with Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) members and make the evaluative evidence readily accessible to independent reviewers, with both the recording and draft reports being made available to them at an early stage for their use during portfolio and *ex ante* proposal reviews moderated by ISDC.
- ✓ Validated results of the three evaluations and one synthesis report will be available by end of Q2; and final evaluation and synthesis reports will be provided to SIMEC for endorsement by end of Q3 2024, for the delivery to System Council of reports with the Management Response through an in-person or a drop-in calls format by end of Q3 (see assumption G above).[7]

4 Team Composition

Under the technical oversight, management, and guidance of IAES and its Evaluation Function, the three evaluations will be conducted by three independent evaluation teams. The work of the three teams will be coordinated by an *evaluation coordinator*, who, under instruction from IAES/Evaluation Function, would finalize the overall evaluation approach, scope and methodology to facilitate and ensure harmonization and coherence across the three evaluation designs (to be elaborated in Inception reports), support integration of cross-cutting themes (up to four designated SMEs for prioritized topics) and, coordinate the internal peer reviews among SG evaluation teams; develop a synthesis report based on the three Science Groups evaluation reports and act as learning facilitator throughout the evaluation process. Selected from the IAES expert roster, each of the three Science Group evaluation teams will be led by an evaluation lead and they will coordinate the work of designated evaluation team members, including two subject-matter experts. The independent team leads will strategically leverage experts' expertise to address the evaluation objectives and respond to the evaluation questions. The evaluation coordinator will engage subject-matter experts on cross-cutting themes[8] for their inputs. As with team leads, the evaluation team members will be drawn from IAES's standing competitively recruited SME and evaluator roster, supported by analysts, with all team members complying with the IAES conflict of interest policy.

The IAES staff, particularly the Evaluation Function Lead and Senior Evaluation Manager, will assume an active role throughout this process. This includes providing *technical oversight* for the evaluation design, to facilitate strategic compliance of evaluation processes in line with multi-level Quality Assurance; and mitigate for interviewee fatigue during data collection, and facilitate use of secondary evidence, including from previous evaluations. Aided by the Knowledge Management Officer of the Evaluation function of IAES, its Lead and Senior Manager would be involved in disseminating evidence-based insights to CGIAR personnel, both during and after the evaluation process. This dissemination necessitates a substantial engagement between IAES's Evaluation Function and various CGIAR entities, including the Science Group, initiatives, and centers. This is in line with the IAES objective to support improved programming and operations by communicating evaluative evidence. As mandated by the CGIAR Evaluation policy, the

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[7] The adherence to the schedule implies coordination of MR processes by PPU, to align with their mandate, and the MER Guidelines.

[8] To be elaborated and validated during the evaluation TOR development, to address thematic and organizational priorities and ways of doing business outlined in the 2030 Research Strategy, i.e. Gender equality; and Climate Change as per OECD/DAC tagging in the CGIAR Results Dashboard.

Evaluation function prioritizes the use of evaluations, facilitates management response to independent evaluations and coordinates follow-up on the implementation of agreed actions. The IAES Director will provide Quality Assurance and oversight on the overall project. For methodological insights, IAES will continue to engage with an evaluation reference group to comment throughout the evaluative process. As the committee that oversees implementation of the multiyear evaluation plan, SIMEC will be requested to endorse overarching evaluation TORs (by mid-January 2024[9]) and final SG-level reports (by end of September 2024); the endorsed TORs and specific inception and evaluation reports, and all other products, will be placed in the public domain.

4.1 Deliverables and Knowledge Management

A tailored Knowledge Management (KM) plan will be developed to align with the purpose and objectives of the evaluation. The KM Officer from IAES/evaluation will design and ensure its implementation. During the evaluation process, the IAES Evaluation Function team will arrange and lead a series of learning sessions that will follow a participatory approach. These sessions, conducted either online or in-person, will engage evaluation teams and key stakeholders in discussions about early and preliminary findings. The sessions will adopt an informal format to promote a dynamic learning environment. To meet the purpose of the evaluation, the key assumption is the proactive engagement from management in inviting IAES/evaluation and evaluation teams to events, and engagements of their teams with the key evaluative products and processes. The following engagements milestone will be key to meet the stated purpose of the evaluations:

Type	Sample Activities
Formal	✓ Evaluation launch and three targeted kick-off sessions for each of the three Science Group evaluation with evaluation teams-in-person Science Group leaders and evaluation team leaders (preference for in-person where feasible) ✓ Validation (hybrid) ✓ Webinars and sessions will be offered with PCU/PPU coordinated engagements for Initiative Development Teams.[10]
Informal	✓ Mid-way engagements with Management, Senior Leadership Team, including Science Group leads and regional coordinators -online. ✓ Through IAES, the Evaluation Function will prioritize interaction with ISDC members and make the evaluative evidence readily accessible to independent reviewers, with both the recording and draft report made available to them at an early stage for their use.

The following key products would be developed, where formal engagements would align to the MER Evaluation Guidelines:

✓ **Evaluation ToR and inception reports**-see examples of the evaluations of Genebank Platform TORs (2023) and Big Data in Agriculture Platform Inception Report (2021)
✓ **Three evaluation reports[11]:** one for each Science Group, detailing methods, findings, conclusions, and recommendations; and a PowerPoint presentation based on the reports and geared towards use of evidence by key stakeholders, detailing the results for each evaluation. The Science Group-level recommendations will be evidence-based, relevant, focused, clearly formulated and actionable. See

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[9] This assumes sharing of the TORs with SIMEC by December 10th 2023, peer-reviewed by ERG members.
[10] Similar to IDT engagements https://sites.google.com/cgxchange.org/performance/planning-resources
[11] See CGIAR Guidelines on Final Evaluation Report.

example of [Gender Platform Evaluation](#) (2023) and twelve [CRP Evaluative reviews](#) (2020):

- o ***Presentation and Briefs:*** In consultation with IAES/Evaluation Function, the evaluation teams will be expected to produce a 2–3-page brief per Science Group
- o **Synthesis Report of the three Science Group evaluations:** Report will aggregate key findings, conclusions and recommendations across the three evaluation reports for the purpose of supporting organization-wide learning and steering. The recommendations would be evidence-based, relevant, focused, clearly formulated, and actionable. Recommendations will be prioritized and addressed to relevant stakeholders responsible for their implementation. (See example [Summary Report)](#). The summary report will be accompanied by a brief (see example from [Big Data and EiB Platform evaluations](#))

✓ **Concept note for MYEP 2025-27:** The evaluation learning will contribute to articulating the concept note towards development next multi-year evaluation plan (MYEP) of IAES for the forthcoming business cycle (2025-27) in 2024. There will be a continued focus on clustering, staggering, and aligning with CGIAR business and decision cycles. In accordance with the IAES ToR (3.4.a), the MYEP will be widely consulted across CGIAR and receive strategic guidance both from the System Council and the System Board.

5 Annex 1: Background and Context

The CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy (the 2030 Strategy) is delivered through 33 initiatives, which are distributed among three Science Groups: Systems Transformation, Resilient Agrifood Systems, and Genetic Innovation.[12] The 2030 Strategy identified five SDG-focused Impact Areas, each supported by a Platform through which CGIAR research and innovations aim to achieve "positive measurable benefits" and "transformative change.". The portfolio aims to achieve impact across CGIAR's five impact areas: 1) climate adaptation and mitigation; 2) environmental health and biodiversity; 3) gender equality, youth, and social inclusion; 4) nutrition, health, and food security; and 5) poverty reduction, livelihoods, and jobs. Five impact area Platforms are mapped under the Systems Transformation Science Group.[13] The Platforms are out of scope during the ST SG-level evaluation.

CGIAR's executive management team committed to CGIAR System Council to deliver "common performance management across all initiatives…and large non-pooled projects."[14] Subsequently, the System Council approved the Performance Results & Monitoring Framework 2022-2030 (PRMF) and the CGIAR Technical Reporting Arrangement[15] (TRA) (June 2022), see Figure 1. The TRA references that 'framework for annual adaptive management and three-year assurance stage-gates will be informed by Annual Reports, annual adaptive management, and independent evaluations." Independent evaluations will be conducted in line with the CGIAR Evaluation Framework and CGIAR Evaluation Policy.

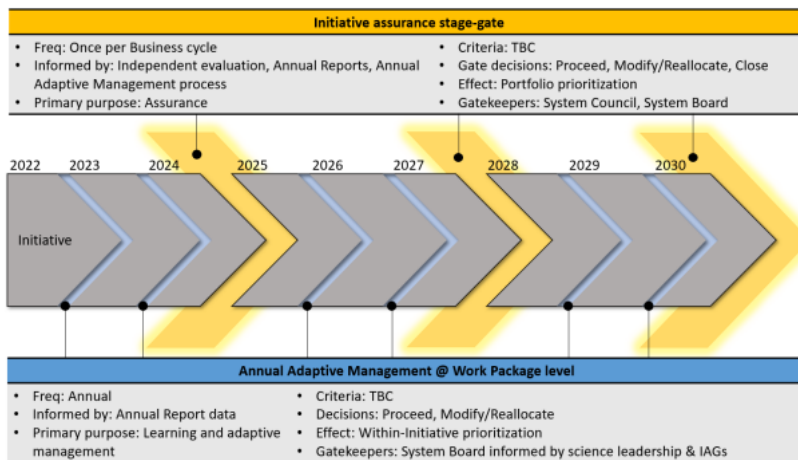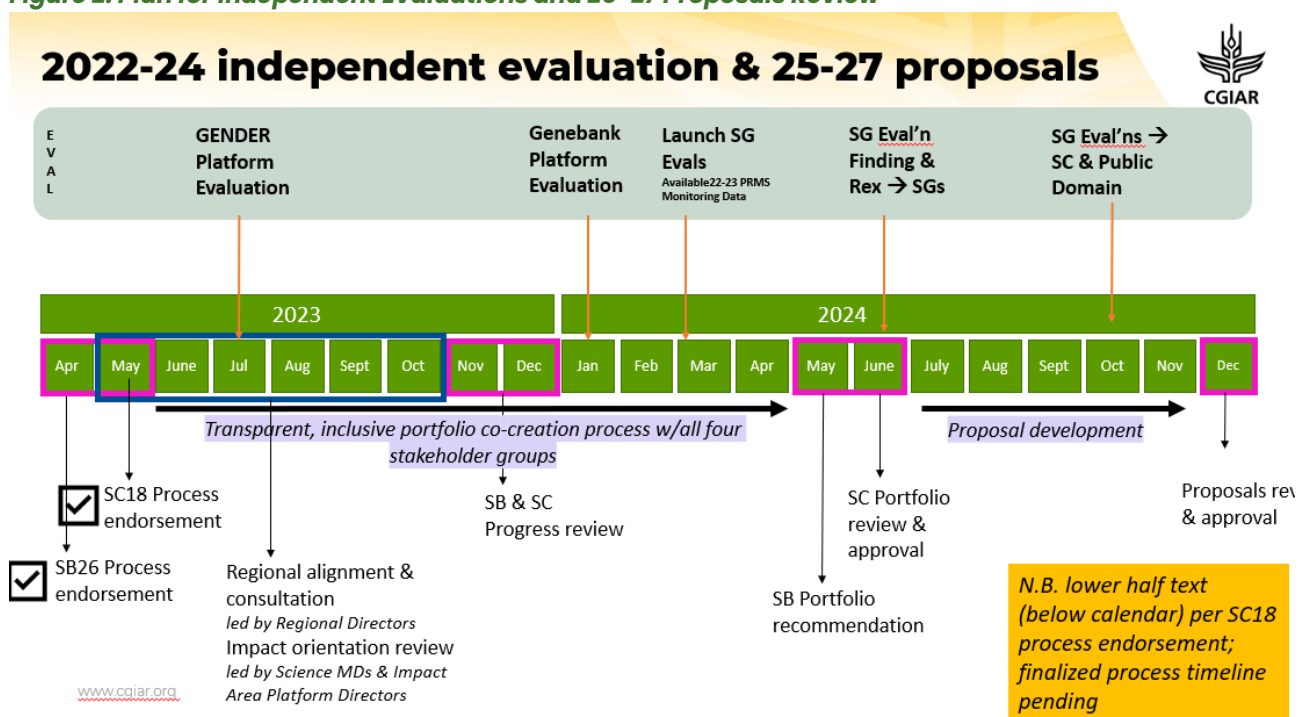### *Figure 1. Technical Reporting Arrangement (2022)*

Figure 9 The annual adaptive management process (blue) is combined with once per Business Cycle assurance stage-gates (yellow).

Figure 2. Plan for Independent Evaluations and 25–27 Proposals Review

6 Annex 2: Detail on Option B (provided for SIMEC in August 2023) - the Road not Taken

IAES deliberated two options with SIMEC and Science Group Managing Directors. For transparency, this Annex presents 'the road not taken.' Option B was described as **real-time evaluation**, focused heavily on monitoring and real-time adjustment. In option B, to identify the three initiatives per group, a sampling would include the participation of Science Group managing directors and the "challengers and champions" advising Science Groups. The process evaluation, using purposive sampling across the CGIAR portfolio of 33 initiatives, would identify nine initiatives-three per Group.

The following initiatives would be excluded from the sample:
- Six initiatives that are directly affiliated with platform evaluations conducted in 2021-23 (INIT01_Accelerated Breeding, INIT03_Genebanks, INIT04_Breeding Resources INIT06_Seed Equal, INIT26_Gender Equality, INIT25_Digital Innovation)
- Four RIIs, subject to EAs in 2023
- At least two with approval/launch date in/after Q4 of 2022

= 19 initiatives.

The remaining 10 initiatives were placed to conduct EAs, with light-touch guidance and quality assurance from IAES, in preparation for evaluation in out-years.

7 Annex 3: Key Evaluation-Related Definitions

A cluster evaluation is an envelope of evaluations of projects combined into a single evaluation based on results or strategic or thematic area or scope.[17] Cluster evaluations shed light on areas where, e.g., synergies, cooperation, information exchange and joint efforts, exist or should exist. The following special considerations are important in a cluster evaluation:

- funder requirements for specific information when choosing a clustered evaluation approach, i.e., consolidation, regions, themes.
- results in a single evaluation process, bearing less administrative costs and involving only one evaluation team, thus it may be more cost-effective and save resources.
- saves time on the part of the evaluation management and stakeholders, thus reducing evaluation fatigue.
- improving quality and generating strategic insights.
- Present thematic interrelation for a group of projects and components. i.e., Science Groups.
- the implementation status or maturity of projects or components is essential when considering a clustered evaluation.

Developmental evaluation refers to long-term, partnering relationships between evaluators and those engaged in innovative initiatives and development-focused programs. DE helps an organization to provide real-time feedback and generate rapid learning to support the direction of the development of a program, and/or affirm the need for a change of course, so that the program stakeholders can implement new measures and actions as goals emerge and evolve. A DE is characterized by the following: methodological flexibility eclecticism, and adaptability; systems thinking; balanced creative and critical thinking; high tolerance for ambiguity; open and agile; teamwork and people skills; and able to a facilitate rigorous evidence-based perspective.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation is an approach based on the principle that an evaluation should be judged on its usefulness to its intended users. Therefore, evaluations should be planned and conducted in ways that enhance the likely utilization of both the findings and of the process itself to inform decisions and improve performance. A UFE has two essential elements. Firstly, the primary intended users of the evaluation must be clearly identified and personally engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process to ensure that their primary intended uses can be identified. Secondly, evaluators must ensure that these intended uses of the evaluation by the primary intended users guide all other decisions that are made about the evaluation process. Rather than a focus on general and abstract users and uses, a UFE is focused on real and specific users and uses. The evaluator's job is not to make decisions independently of the intended users, but rather to facilitate decision making amongst the people who will use the findings of the evaluation.[18]

Real-time evaluation is designed to provide immediate (real time) feedback to those planning or implementing a project or program, so that they can make improvements. A RTE is an improvement-oriented review in which feedback is usually provided during the evaluation field work, rather than afterwards. Unlike most final ex-post evaluations, the process and products of an RTE are integrated within the program cycle. In the RTE, the emphasis is on immediate lesson-learning over impact evaluation or accountability.

Purposive sampling, more specifically *criterion sampling,* selects the cases likeliest to provide the most useful information to answer the evaluation questions. That selection is based on a desk review (e.g., who is identified in the desk review). The overarching criterion is: what cases (documents, organizations,

individuals, countries/projects) will address the evaluation questions and provide the most learning for the evaluation commissioners and funders.

Attribution: Program (process and performance) evaluations are often conducted under conditions in which data is appropriate for ascertaining or even systematically addressing the attribution questions, which are hard to come by. In the case of CGIAR, 'legacy' work has a strong footprint, through CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) or bilateral projects. Complementing the use of relevant approaches and methods, in these situations, the evaluator or members of the evaluation team may end up relying on their professional judgment.

Golden eggs are collective assets for One CGIAR. 19 Golden eggs can be defined as frameworks, approaches, tools together with their community of developers and users that show the value-added of the CGIAR Research Program.

Mature projects: the maturity of initiatives can be associated with inclusion/uptake of "golden eggs" and take into consideration if outcomes were reported in Y1, and the number of outputs reported in Y1, among other variables.

8 Annex 4: Core Points of Engagement and Tasks for a MEL Professional in an Evaluation

Evaluation phase	MEL focal point key tasks
Scoping/pre-planning	o Assemble relevant and reliable extant program documentation and data for the evaluation against the requested detailed list of required documentation. This will constitute the evaluation repository. o Provide access to a designated, secure SharePoint (SP) folder for the evaluation document upload, or upload to designated SP folder of IAES. o Review key evaluation questions.
Inception	o Participate in the EA; namely, provide the supporting documentation and reliable data. Complete the spreadsheet based on the condensed core parameters of the CGIAR guidelines on conducting an evaluability assessment (2022) and provide supporting documentation where necessary.[21] o Review the evaluation design matrix and comment on the methods/and data sources (e.g., Annex 2 in an IR from evaluation of Big Data Platform). o Co-facilitate engagement(s)/meetings, with evaluation team members. o Review the evaluation IR, developed based on the ToR, see above example for Big Data. o Review questionnaire for online survey. o Contribute to the review of the stakeholder analysis.

Inquiry/data collection & analysis	o Support/facilitate access to interviewees/key informants to answer questions from the evaluation team. o Serve as a key informant about the MEL system for an interview and respond to online survey.
Reporting / dissemination & use	o Participate in the validation of preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations. o Coordinate comments from the evaluand team on the draft evaluation report and any sub-studies, and ensure they are sent to IAES within the stipulated time. o Contribute to the development of the MR, e.g., from <u>Big Data</u> Platform Evaluation. o Monitor and report to the PPU and other stakeholders on implementation of MR.