

# Report and Planning Discussion: CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service

**Allison Grove Smith**

Director, Independent Advisory and  
Evaluation Service

*CGIAR System Council 20th Meeting: Session 15  
13 June 2024*



# Request

- Obtain System Council views to assist planning independent advising and evaluation 2025-2027 (overarching questions and considerations)
- Seek feedback on knowledge management and communication channels



# What we will cover

## 1 Service Overview

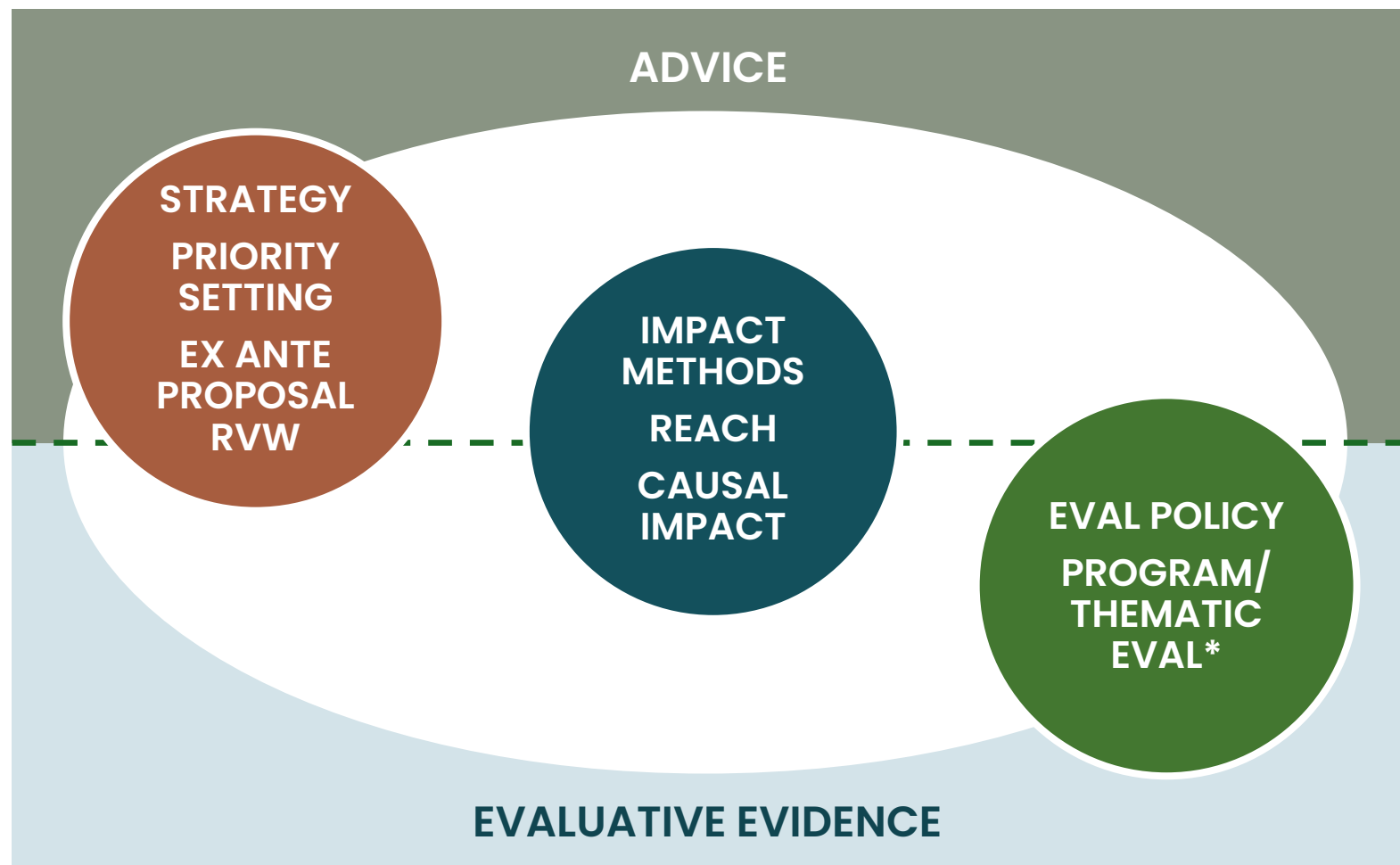
## 2 Reporting

## 3 Future Demands

## 4 Discussion

# What? One office supporting three distinct mandates

IAES is secretariat for **ISDC** and **SPIA**, and through its **EVAL** function implements CGIAR's multi-year, independent evaluation plan – **SUPPORTING 3 DISTINCT MANDATES**



\*OECD/DAC Criteria



# How? Five operating principles +

Three aims: **ACCESSIBILITY, RELEVANCE, TIMELINESS**

## Independence

Not Funders or implementers of CGIAR research.

## Efficiency

Provide advice that maximizes CGIAR's impact while reducing overall costs.

## Communication

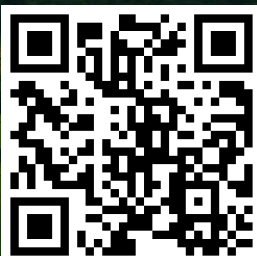
Align various assessments and evaluations with Business Plan cycles.

## Systematic Linkages

Link science & development, emphasize embedding innovation and effective partnerships.

## System Ownership

System Council receives and formally discusses this advice on a regular basis.



*Ref: ISDC, SPIA and IAES  
terms of reference*

# What we will cover

1 Service Overview

**2 Reporting**

3 Future Demands

4 Discussion

# Reporting – the long view



**No member of a crew is praised for the rugged individuality of their rowing.**

– attributed to Ralph  
Waldo Emerson



# Accessibility – Interpretation & communication

*\*Data from Jan 2021 – May 2024*

## Total newsletter subscribers

**+1,459** email subscribers

## Total growth in followers (LinkedIn and Twitter)

**+2,998** new followers



## Total social media impressions



**510,224** impressions

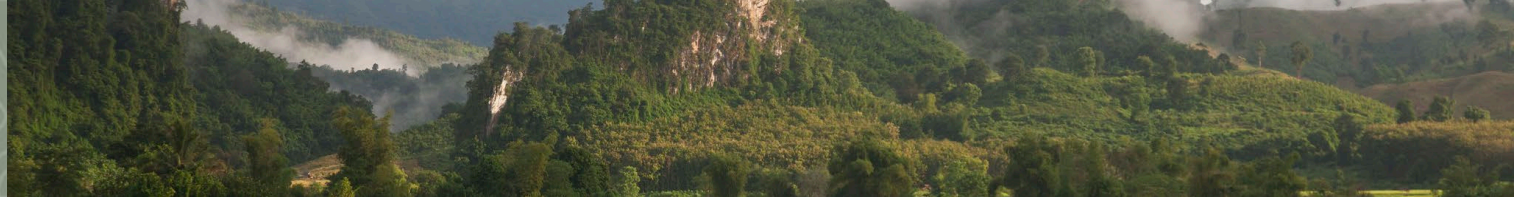
## Total engagements (Likes, Shares, Comments)

**23,762** engagements

## Blogs and publications published on [iaes.cgiar.org](https://iaes.cgiar.org)

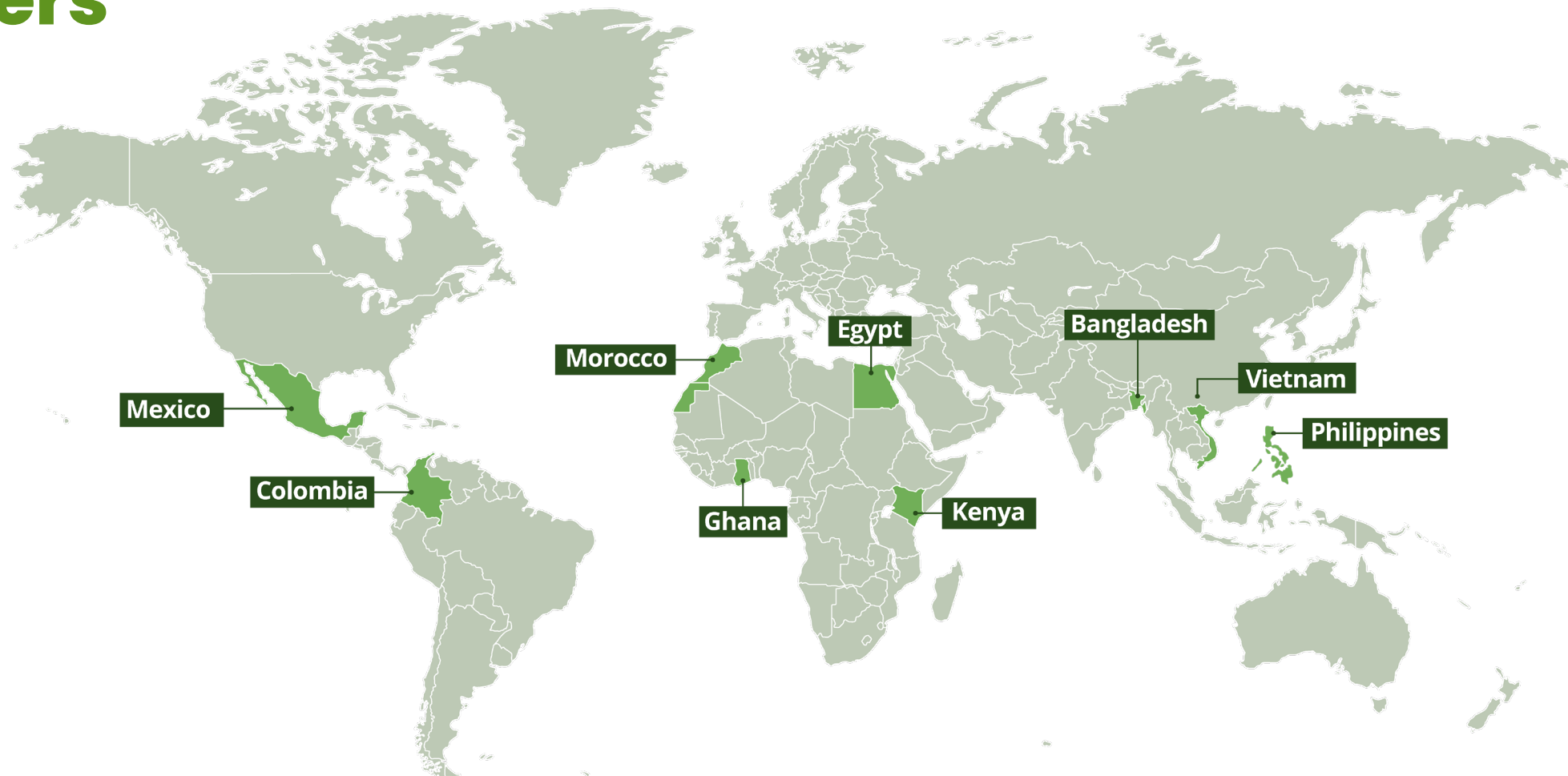
	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
 Blogs	18	16	19	12	65
 Blog views	15K	12K	25K	14K	66K

	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
 Publications	17	17	21	8	63
 Publication downloads	12K	6K	14K	7K	39K



# Accessibility – Meeting CGIAR and partners

**And Governance Bodies – “joint planning and sequencing so that consultations and decision making can be effective and transparent.” -- Recommendation 16 of the Morrow Sodali report**



# Relevance

CIMMYT is using impact studies to **inform scaling strategies** for climate adapted crops materials, reported by a CIMMYT Senior Scientist.

– *SPIA webinar 2024*

“QoR4D framework and indicators...are **informing the definition of the Mega Program full proposal template** and its different sections, which will help explaining better the proposed work and future deliverables.”

– *Senior Director, Crop Based Systems and CIP DDG*

“ISDC’s work on Comparative Advantage is very helpful to the System Board identifying areas where **CGIAR’s efforts are most crucial.**”

– *Board Vice Chair*

“The ISDC Megatrend report helped stress how crucial CGIAR’s work is in facilitating informed decision-making and contributing to policy formulation. It provided **guidance on the emerging issues that need immediate attention** in Portfolio 25.”

– *Senior Director for Transformative Strategies, IFPRI*

SPIA professional team is **interpreting null and negative results**, such as a blog re: understanding and applying limitations of using Model Farmers to lead to alternative strategies to increase the uptake of nutritious crops.

– *(blog Labarta, et al, 2023)*





# Relevance: Evaluation recommendations in use

"the Global Group incorporated this recommendation on centralized data management [from the Big Data Platform Evaluation] into the **development of CGIAR 2025–2030 Digital Transformation Strategy** ..." Data Program Lead and Digital and Data Global Director

GENDER Platform evaluation recommended to **hire a MEL professional**, "*Hiring an M&E professional has helped us improved our organization and monitoring mechanisms significantly*," Platform Director.

"*Recommendation # 4 is very good....through development of the results framework for ABI we really **challenged ourselves to ensure that the goals were specific, measurable, achievable**, relevant and time-bound.*" Former EiB Platform Director / Accelerated Breeding Initiative (ABI)

## Management Response To Independent Evaluation – Tracking Tool Data

Total Evals Recorded	6
Total Investment Evaluated	\$4.5B
Total Recommendations	178
Implementation Date of Eval	2021–24*
%age closed	25%
%age in process and on track	48%

*\*including 2021 Synthesis of 43 Evaluations*

### Next Steps:

- ✓ MR Review 2024 patterns, quality, progress
- ✓ Recommendation clustering and honing

### Source:





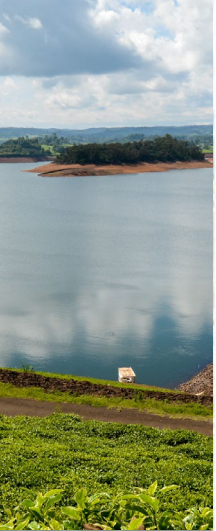
# Timeliness



Scan to explore the  
**2023 Annual  
Snapshot**

- ✓ Triennial consolidated planning with annual plan reconfirmation to support adaptive management.
- ✓ Prompt reporting published transparently in the public domain.
- ✓ Quarterly newsletter brings timely information on our work.
- ✓ Eval function -- Real-time and developmental evaluations, *ex ante* evaluability assessment.
- ✓ Support to SPIA Focal Points' network and through matchmaking for initiative to conduct impact studies.
- ✓ ISDC adaptive management – commissioned projects tailored to meet the moment.
- ✓ Early-stage reviews of, e.g., MELIA plans, Portfolio slides.
- ✓ Representation to new processes and convenings, i.e., leadership portfolio development retreat.





# Example: Accessible, relevant and timely response to portfolio evolution

## CA Analysis Note & Tool

Technical note complemented by 3-part podcast on **comparative advantage** (CA), with an actionable tool

## Megatrends

Discussion paper and supporting material on emerging and changing **megatrends**

## Impact Studies

Impact assessments from current **causal evidence and country reach studies** re: legacy innovations taken up in current portfolio

## Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluations, **clustered by Science Group**, focusing on OECD-DAC criteria coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency; and, Quality of Science

## Embedded Impact Assess't

Initiatives' **embedded impact assessment studies** advised by SPIA and/or through its matchmaking program, and reported in initiatives' own reports

## Reviews

ISDC independent reviews of the **portfolio narrative and a new round proposals**



# Reporting on efficiency and stewardship

## Efficiency

Provide advice that maximizes CGIAR's impact while reducing overall costs.

## Comparison of Total Budget %age "New Pooled Funding"

**2014-2017**  
**3,8%**








**2021-2024**  
**3,2%**

*2018, 2019 and 2020 outliers – massive office change + COVID;*

**CGIAR realized a savings of 2.65M dollars per year (in 2024 terms) in comparison to the budget requirement of the IAES predecessor\***

*\*FAO-hosted Independent Science and Partnership Council, including SPIA, and the Independent Evaluation Arrangement,*

# Reporting on progress against MOPAN KPI-8 2019 assessment: further to SIMEC discussion on evidence-driven decisions

MOPAN Indicator	Progress	Since 2019	Priorities emerging SIMEC Q1 2024
8.1 Independent evaluation function exists		<b>Evidence of progress</b>	Further discuss safeguards and future-proofing structural independence
8.2 Consistent, independent evaluation of results (coverage)		<b>Evidence of progress</b>	
8.3 Systems applied to ensure evaluation quality		<b>Progress is made , in some areas solid</b>	
8.4 Mandatory demonstration of the evidence base to design new interventions		<b>Evidence of progress</b>	
8.5 Poorly performing interventions proactively identified, tracked and addressed		<b>Little evidence of progress, or potential backsliding</b>	(i) Revisit center-level external review concept, and (ii) Analyze incentives, particularly related to Window 1
8.6 Clear accountability system ensures responses and follow-up to recommendations		<b>Progress is made , in some areas solid</b>	Process evaluation recommendations to support uptake, through clustering, grouping
8.7 Uptake of lessons learned and best practices from evaluations		<b>Progress is made , in some areas solid</b>	

# What we will cover

1 Service Overview

2 Reporting

**3 Future Demands**

4 Discussion



# Demand for independent workstreams in multilateral systems



Independent evaluative evidence is a norm in multilateral agencies; formats to meet performance evaluation demand varies by type of agency



The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) 2019 assessment of CGIAR underscored the importance of independent evaluation



The role of unbiased technical or science advisory is well established (e.g., the UN science advisory, GEF relies on the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, etc.)



Activities under the broad umbrella of independent assurance, be they ex ante review or ex post evaluation, bolster third line assurance to manage risk



# Framing around demand

**“Success depends on knowing what works.”** quoting Bill Gates, in When Will We Ever Learn? Improving Lives Through Impact Evaluation, 2006.

“Independent evaluations are the most **comprehensive and reliable way of evaluating a deliberative process**. They are particularly valuable for deliberative processes that last a significant amount of time” OECD, 2021

**“Organizations, like drivers can suffer from blind spots.** Independent evaluation can help provide a broader view.” Heider, C, 2014, former World Bank evaluation director

“Relevant and high-quality evaluation is an important tool **to track the progress, results and effectiveness** of international development programs.” USAID

“The case studies presented here also highlight a big gap in knowledge: most of them do not have a rigorous ex post assessment of their outcomes and performance, which would help countries **improve design and learn** from each other” Voegelé, 2023, on lessons from low-carbon policies

“Evaluation is **a key instrument for learning and accountability** and can provide a good basis for improving the implementation of development policy.” NORAD, 2018

“Independence adds value to all evaluation products and processes. It **protects the integrity of evaluation studies** by enhancing credibility and opening diverse perspectives on policies, programs, and projects.” African Development Bank, 2019



# Decisions – Overarching questions that independent advisory and evaluative activities help CGIAR to answer

Decision Type	Guiding Questions
<b>Investment</b>	Which are the best investment bets, and are they soundly designed?
<b>Accountability</b>	Has there been effective and efficient delivery against documented, adaptively managed plans?
<b>Learning</b>	What can CGIAR do better in its portfolio and organizational implementation?
<b>Assurance</b>	Are the evidence and processes used for decisions inclusive and sound?





# Examples for 2025–2027 planning

Decisions re:	Item	Frequency	Sources
<b>Investment</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Six Year w/ Midline Check</b>	<b>ISDC ex ante review Midline eval review</b>
<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Assessment of degree of delivery against indicators</b>	<b>Three Year (Investment Cycle)</b>	<b>Generate evaluative evidence in Impact Studies Evaluability Assessment with Programs</b>
<b>Learning</b>	<b>Thematic: 7 ways of working</b>	<b>Within cycle of thematic evaluations (~4–5 Y)</b>	<b>Learning syntheses and/or System Council- commissioned Accelerator evaluation</b>
<b>Assurance</b>	<b>Partnership Framework /Strategy</b>	<b>Within cycle of thematic evaluations (~4–5 Y)</b>	<b>ISDC commentary IAES external evaluation (advisory)</b>



Independent  
Advisory and  
Evaluation  
Service

# 2025– 2027 considerations

## Coordination

- Pooled + Bilateral
- Unified Governance
- MELIA continuum
- CG portfolio and business cycles timeframes

## Countries

- Evaluation in context – countries & regions
- Partnership – Quality of Research for Development Legitimacy element,

## Centers

- IFA responsive – a Service offering in an integrated partnership
- Bolster assurance through multiple entry points

# What we will cover

1 Service Overview

2 Reporting

3 Future Demands

**4 Discussion**



# Discussion



- Are the overarching questions relevant to the System Council's decisions?
- Are the channels we are using to communicate and share advice and evidence accessible and appropriate to the needs of the Council?
- Are there particular questions or topics that you would place at a relatively higher priority for independent evaluation and advising?
- Your steer on the considerations of coordination mechanisms with governing bodies and center-specific work





Independent  
Advisory and  
Evaluation  
Service

# Thank you



[www.linkedin.com/company/iaes-cgiar/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/iaes-cgiar/)



[@IAES\\_CGIAR](https://twitter.com/IAES_CGIAR)



[www.iaes.cgiar.org](http://www.iaes.cgiar.org)



Independent Advisory  
and Evaluation Service

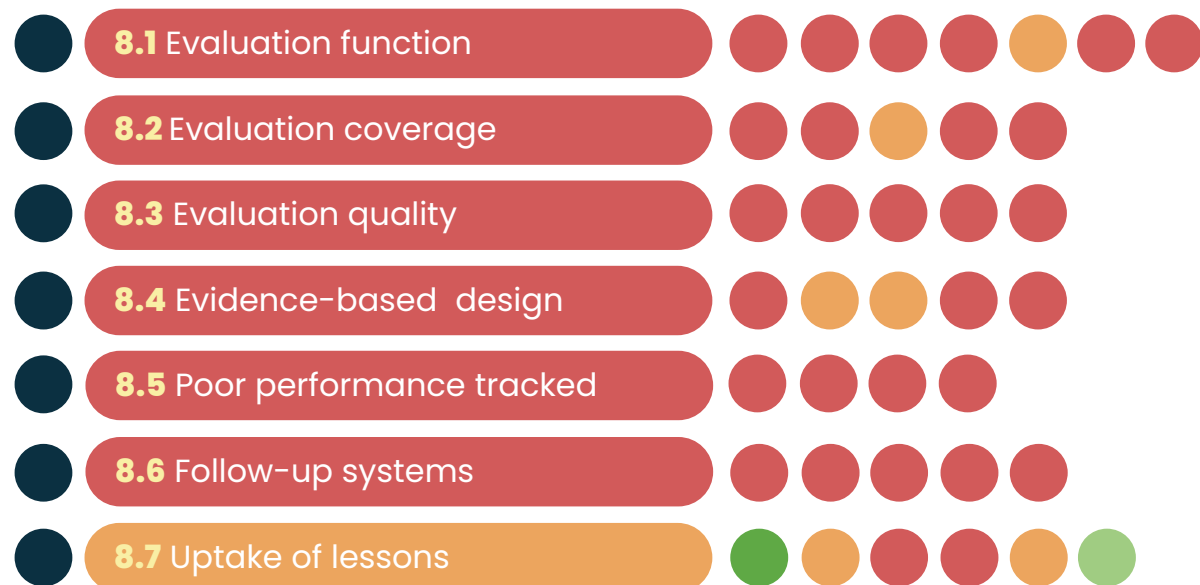


# MOPAN KPI 8: Evidence-based planning, the 2019 view



Independent  
Advisory and  
Evaluation  
Service

G. Smith/The Alliance










In 2019, the MOPAN review rated 29 of the 37 sub-indicators of CGIAR's performance on "**evidence-based planning**" at "highly unsatisfactory."

*"Overall, CGIAR's performance on evaluation is highly unsatisfactory, due to uncertainties around how the significantly reformed evaluation function will perform in practice, although uncertainty is expected to diminish once implementation begins"*



# MOPAN KPI-8 Evidence Driven Decisions: 2024 View

## Desk Review and SIMEC Discussion Around Progress Since 2019

MOPAN Indicator	Progress	Since 2019	Priorities emerging SIMEC Q1 2024
8.1 Independent evaluation function exists		<b>Evidence of progress</b>	Further discuss safeguards and future-proofing structural independence
8.2 Consistent, independent evaluation of results (coverage)		<b>Evidence of progress</b>	
8.3 Systems applied to ensure evaluation quality		<b>Progress is made , in some areas solid</b>	
8.4 Mandatory demonstration of the evidence base to design new interventions		<b>Evidence of progress</b>	
8.5 Poorly performing interventions proactively identified, tracked and addressed		<b>Little evidence of progress, or potential backsliding</b>	(i) Revisit center-level external review concept, and (ii) Analyze incentives, particularly related to Window 1
8.6 Clear accountability system ensures responses and follow-up to recommendations		<b>Progress is made , in some areas solid</b>	Process evaluation recommendations to support uptake, through clustering, grouping
8.7 Uptake of lessons learned and best practices from evaluations		<b>Progress is made , in some areas solid</b>	

# Considerations: Recommendations and Management Response (MR)

- Recommendations are granular and subdivided – to foster action, subsidiarity, and step-wise change
- MR to evaluation is an industry norm in multilateral development assistance
- In CGIAR, *Management Engagement and Response Guideline: Process and Performance Evaluations* complements CGIAR's recent MR Process Note
- MR process promotes the role of management to weigh tradeoffs and prioritize where to invest first
- MRs often are parlayed into resource mobilization asks



# MR Worked Example: Evaluability Assessment of RIIs

Foster specific, concrete changes, towards more evaluable projects.

Synthesis recommendations were divided between near-term and longer-term action.

In the near term, EA Synthesis provides nine recommendations for the design of evaluations of RIIs pertaining to i) Evaluation design ii) Foci for data collection and analysis.

In the longer term, the EA Synthesis provides nine recommendations, to be taken under consideration by CGIAR management for RII/scaling programs

(iii) developing robust yet efficient MEL plans,

(iv) improving Theories of Change, and

(v) making full use of the skills and capacities of MEL professionals.

1. The validation stage with Evaluand encourages fact-checking the basis of recommendations
2. Template and any further guidance on MR development is made available
3. The norm is Evaluand takes the first steps to develop a Management Response
4. Terms of Reference stipulate any special considerations for MR coverage



# 2024 Review of the Status of Implementation of Management Responses (MR): 2021–2024

## Framing

MOPAN preparatory activity; [Management Response tracking tool](#) (PPU, 2021); Management Engagement and Response: Process and Performance Evaluations in CGIAR ([pre-read to SC19](#)); Process Note

## General approach:

- MR status review to related evaluation recommendations embedded in Science Group Evaluations and Genebank Platform Eval
- Validity of MR tracking and content: qualitative and quantitative assessment

# The role of evaluation is to support and contribute to CGIAR's learning, accountability, assurance and investment decisions.

- What evaluations do most frequently is shine a light on areas that external evaluators discern as of greatest importance vis-a-vis CGIAR evaluation criteria, viz [OECD-DAC evaluation criteria](#) (e.g., effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coherence, etc.) + Quality of Science (as aligned with the Quality of Research for Development Frame of Reference).
  - On the query whether or not management would have implemented these actions irrespective of evaluation, in some cases that might be -- the voices of researchers, managers, partners, funders surely are an important facet in data collected for evaluation. Therefore, one may see recommendations that underscore what managers might have in mind, whenever those ideas bear out in a triangulated and validated evaluative method drawing on many sources of data and mixed methods analysis. Generally, as a practice, process and performance evaluations are not designed to have a shock and awe factor, and we seek to support constructive and step-wise change through our evaluations.
  - Based on the discussion with Board at M29, IAES will incorporate such query into a forthcoming review of the progress on the recommendations, scheduled within this business cycle.
  - In CGIAR, the recommendations to independent evaluations, management response and subsequent actions are tracked and reported as a facet of CGIAR's [Technical Reporting Arrangement](#). [A system exists](#), maintained by PPU as part of CGIAR's reporting architecture, that provides further granularity on the evaluation recommendations raised and addressed. Over the current business cycle, to date, 50% of recommendation implementation is reported as *on track*, and 25% of recommendations have been addressed. So, this system may offer granular information to the Governance Bodies on where and how the recommendations have moved the needle.

# **All CRP and Platform Evaluations – Learning Study on M&G**

- Despite the potential benefits, MELIA is not used effectively by management and governance throughout the CGIAR system. This is primarily due to weak ToCs, deficient performance indicators, insufficient budgets and skills, a lack of awareness of the benefits of a robust MELIA framework, competing CGIAR and funder M&E and reporting demands and complex reporting systems. However, even if these issues are rectified, the potential benefits of improved MELIA and reporting systems may not be fully realized unless a monitoring and evaluation for learning and adaptive management culture is imbued throughout the CGIAR system.
- Ongoing checking in SG Evaluations



# Science Group Evaluations 2024 – preliminary consolidated recommendations

## Relevance & Strategy

1. Define, document and strategically communicate '**System Transformation**' principles, **strategy and processes**
2. Develop **country strategies** to lay the ground for and strengthen CGIAR country-level coordination and partner engagement capacity
3. Operationalize and strategically tailor communication around Comparative Advantage to enhance internal coherence, **cross-center collaboration** → to avoid competition and help partners engage with CGIAR at different levels.

# Prelim Recommendations: Quality of Science

## Design and Inputs

4. Better integrate the Genetic Innovation SG initiatives with the Excellence in Agronomy and Plant Health initiatives, integration and continuous feedback loops / foster **climate change adaptation**
5. Build on new & important contributions by ST SG, i.e. work on consumer demand and **food environments**. **Avoid focus on narrow portion of value chain** (e.g. feedback from consumers, market intermediaries, seed co to breeders).
6. **Systematically consolidate learnings from 5 Impact Area Platforms** towards portfolio transition and integrate them into accelerators and MPs : -- Consider **extending platforms** to ensure smooth transition; develop **overarching frameworks** to address impact areas/SDGs; build on experiences and lessons learned from tagging initiatives by IA.

## QoS Management Processes and Outputs

7. Align system-wide **standards for a rigorous internal review** process for non-peer-reviewed knowledge products, and oversee the implementation of **research ethics policies** across the Mega Programs and Center-aligned bilateral projects.
8. Formalize and systematize the **PhD student experience** and enhance post-doc researcher contributions to the delivery of the research portfolio. Change from a 3-year to 6-year implementation cycle should facilitate the effectiveness and quality of the PhD experience
9. Continue building on strengthened **cross-center collaboration within disciplines**; strengthen **cross-disciplinary work**.

# Preliminary Recommendations: Partnerships

10. Enhance systematic inclusion of partners in the continuum of 2025–2030 portfolio design, implementation, scaling along the 2022 Partnership & Advocacy Framework:
- Consider partners as co-leads of MPs
  - Improve/Develop metrics on local partners' participation: e.g., amounts and percentage of research resources provided to local partners, and lead and co-authorship of outputs
  - Translate the listening session and SG evaluation results re Partnership into new CGIAR Partnership Strategy (/ revised Partnership and Engagement Framework)



# Prelim Recommendations: Governance & Management

11. Clarify, streamline, and communicate as soon as possible, both internally and externally, the **governance and management structures** of the new science arrangement
12. Operationalize CGIAR's **Integration Framework Agreement** (2022) financial/budgeting, human resources, and administrative implications
13. Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning (MEL) and Impact Assessments: • **Involve Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning professionals in all Theory of Change deliberations for Programs and Work Areas;** plan and budget to gather Program-level baselines (e.g., data from initiatives closing)
14. Budget for **roles of the country convener** (CC) and a MP country focal point, w/o Center allegiance
15. Systematically and thoroughly plan and budget transition of PRMS and other data systems from initiatives to MPs: improved budgeting and reporting would enable **linking results to funding**
16. Funding mechanisms: ensure stability and long-term funding, and timely communication about funding levels for smooth implementation, maintaining trust with staff and partners, and high-quality scientific outputs



## Terms of Reference: Science Groups Cluster Evaluation

December 2023

**Purpose** – to **promote learning and lessons**, and support evidence-based efforts by CGIAR to adapt the portfolio design to reach the ambition and vision of the 2030 Strategy.

The **key objectives** of the **3 evaluations** are:

- to provide **real-time feedback and recommendations** to contribute to CGIARs' institutional learning by those implementing and revising the CGIAR Portfolio.
- to facilitate **initial accountability** for, and **learning from**, the first two years of implementing the CGIAR Portfolio pertaining to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Portfolio.
- to assist IAES and SIMEC **to identify evaluative needs** for the 2025–27 multi-year evaluation plan (MYEP).
- **Reporting emerging evidence to Portfolio and Megaprogram writing teams, & drop-in call 3 June 2024**
- **Practical suggestions for Management Response**



# Synthesis of Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs (2021)



The Management Response to the 2021 Synthesis is available to [download here](#):



- In 2021, IAES issued a systematic synthesis of a decade of evaluations conducted during the CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs), era
- The objective was to bring together learning from a decade of experience with CRPs based on existing evaluative evidence. It reviewed lessons from the CRP experience to inform the development of future research programs of One CGIAR, unpacked in three Action Area specific briefs.
- The synthesis examined evidence from the two phases of CRP implementation: 2011–2016 and 2017–2019.
- Four key issues were addressed:
  - 1) patterns and trends between the two phases of CRPs related to the quality of science (QoS) and research for development, achievement of sustainable development outcomes, and management and governance;
  - 2) systemwide issues affecting CRP achievements;
  - 3) recommendations for the future orientation of CGIAR research and innovation; and
  - 4) key evidence gaps and needs for future evaluations.
- A narrative synthesis approach was used, employing secondary source data from 43 existing evaluations and reviews.
- Evaluation Team: M. Holderness, J. Howard, I. Jouini, D. Templeton, C. Iglesias, D. Molden and N. Maxted



# **Synthesis Conclusions: System-wide Factors That Have Strengthened or Weakened Achievement of CRP and System Results**

“CRP Funding and Its Implications

“Reality Check: Time, Resources, Skills, and  
Partnerships Required for Scaling Development  
Outcomes

“Inadequate Monitoring and Learning for  
Development Outcomes”



## Recommendations for One CGIAR pointed to\*

### Most recommendations remain relevant and timely in 2024, as CGIAR moves toward Megaprograms

1. Invest in preserving and taking forward valued elements developed through the CRPs: infrastructure, relationships, processes, tools, and innovations.
2. Prioritize partnership development and stakeholder engagement. Develop and implement a systemwide strategy for equitable engagement and effective communication with partners and stakeholders...
3. Focus much more on institutional capacity development, especially of national “boundary” partners.
4. Define CGIAR’s comparative advantage in the delivery of different elements of the ambitious 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy and its projected scale of funding...
5. Strengthen country and regional coordination structures to enable all CGIAR Centers and research initiatives to explore integrative solutions at local, landscape, and relevant subnational, national, and regional scales, ensuring coherent and responsive engagement
6. Operationalize a high-quality, common approach to research ethics and science quality and their measurement.
7. Maintain effective knowledge management to track processes and findings through successive phases of work and maintain public access to key CGIAR documents and research data.
8. Shift practices and evaluation away from seeking to attribute development impacts to CGIAR research and toward determining and valuing the essential contribution CGIAR is
9. Enhance determination of Quality of Science through bibliometric analyses and facilitate comparison across CRPs and new research initiatives by ...

\*truncated recommendation text



# Consulting 2025–27 Planning

- Overview of independent advisory and evaluation plans
- Multi-Year Evaluation Plan

*“Developing, ... a cost-effective multi-year evaluation work plan for approval by the System Council, taking into account ...strategic guidance from the System Council and the System Board in the preparation of the evaluation work plan.”*





# ISDC High Level 3-Year Plan



Commissioned studies and outputs related to ISDC's mandate to provide foresight and horizon scanning guidance to SC and CGIAR. Anticipated 1-2 studies per year, with topics in consultation with SIMEC and SC.



Science for Development Forum Series – Continuation of the Science Forum with flexibility to hold in conjunction with SC meetings or CGIAR Science Week. The Science Forum will continue to be an independent event that aligns with ISDC's ToR



- CGIAR support – In keeping with adaptive management and codesign principles, science for development advice will be provided for arising needs.
- Portfolio evolution advice – Anticipated portfolio evolution guidance and review of proposals (2027)



ISDC advisory products – Translational materials to make advice more accessible, including video or audio content, briefs, and infographics.



# SPIA High-Level 3-Y Plan

## 1. Country Studies – Towards evidence for 20 countries

Full country study of 8 countries + 12 stock takes

**2024–2027:**

- Transition to new operational model with subcontracts

Deliverable

- Dynamics of adoption / disadoption and scaling
- Full model in: Nigeria, India, and Colombia
- “Stock take only” in 12 countries + follow-up studies on impact and last-mile delivery questions

## 2. Causal Impact Assessment

### Scoping for learning and accountability studies

Identify and facilitate implementation

**Accountability studies:** Build on opportunities identified in country studies

**Learning studies:** SPIA identify opportunities for studies testing assumptions in Theories of Change or solutions to last-mile delivery problems

## 3. Use of Evidence

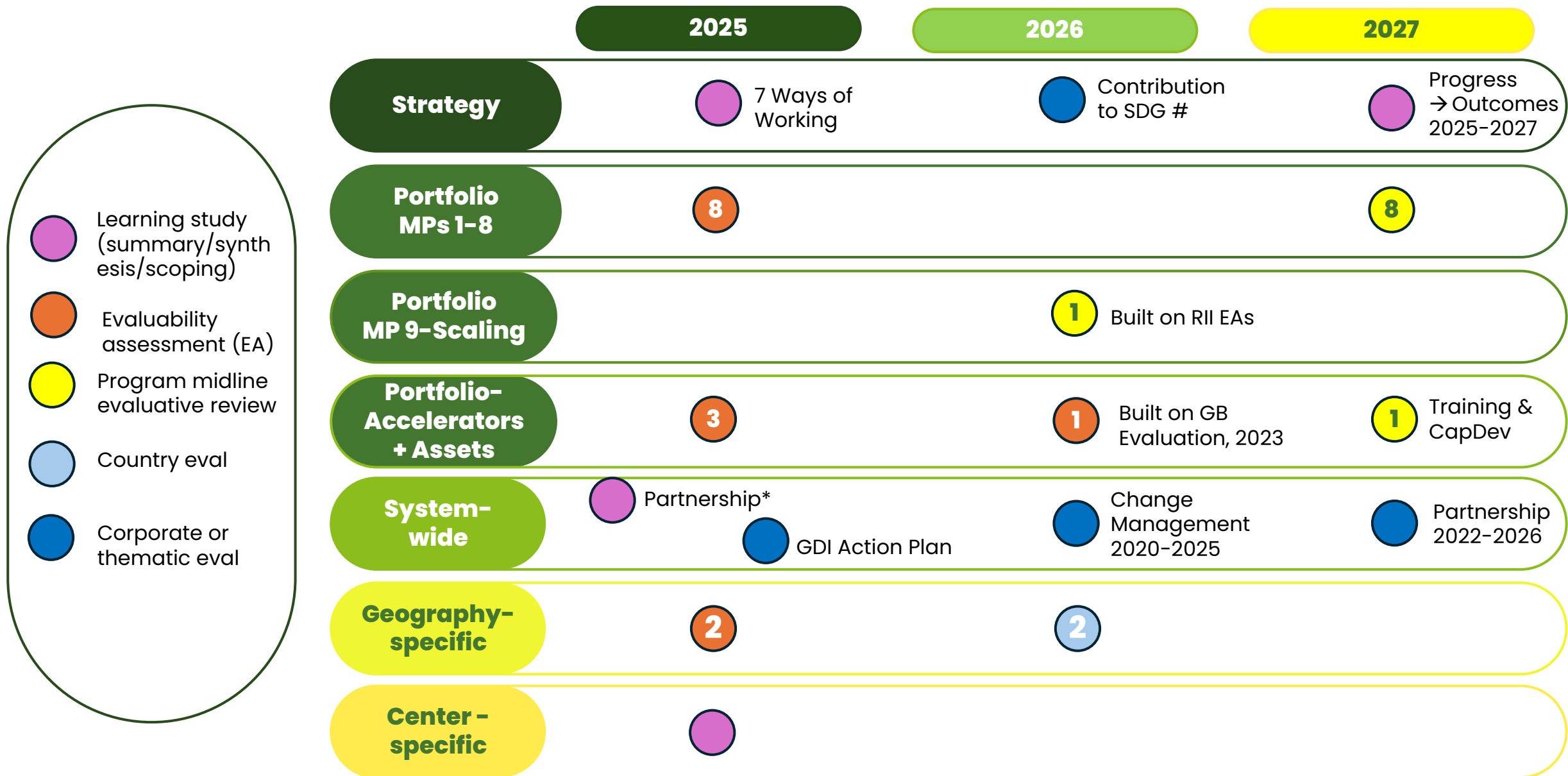
### Encourage the use of rigorous evidence

Lessons that can contribute to increased impact in the five CGIAR impact areas

**2024–2027:** Engage CGIAR leadership in promoting a learning agenda

**Deliverables:** Webinar series engaging science leaders focused on evidence use SPIA Center visits to increase dialogue with various CGIAR actors

# Building Up Multi-Year Evaluation Plan – process and performance eval







## Other Activities Germane to Decisions

Item	2025	2026	2027
CGIAR MELIA and MP MELIA plans	Review drafts associated with 5-Y Portfolio		
MOPAN readiness	Contribution to preparatory activities – topical Eval Learning Syntheses TBD		
ISDC effectiveness	TBD (SIMEC commissioned)		
IAES effectiveness		TBD (SIMEC commissioned)	
SPIA Mid-Term Evaluation			TBD (SIMEC commissioned)

**IAES TOR: Serving as a quality assurance mechanism for System-wide independent programs and other on-demand evaluations that are to be undertaken by externally commissioned evaluators.**

Ongoing discussions related to Multi-year evaluation plan:

- Strategic-level evaluative evidence, e.g., contributions to SDG
- Impact Platform from 2022-2024 – learning question
- Balance between self-commissioned and SC-commissioned evaluative activities (quality assurance/validation versus executing)
- How and when for a process evaluation on 7 ways of working

## System Charter

System Board “coordinates with Center Boards and CGIAR’s Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service to **periodically commission governance and management reviews of Centers** to complement the evaluations of the CGIAR Portfolio and submit such plans to the System Council for endorsement.

## System Framework

Article 6.1(dd) of the CGIAR System Framework provides for the System Council to **endorse plans coordinated by the System [Management] Board, with input from evaluation experts** engaged by CGIAR’s Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service, to periodically commission governance and management reviews of Centers to complement the evaluations of the CGIAR Portfolio

## Investment

Which are the best investment bets, and are they soundly designed?

Item	Frequency	Independent and External Sources Supported by IAES
<b>Strategy 2030 and its 5 Impact Areas</b>	<b>Decadal</b> (drafting new c 2029 – advisory inputs to be developed 2028)	ISDC review ISDC foresight and horizon scanning Programmatic and Thematic Syntheses (Impact Assessment and Evaluative Evidence)
<b>Portfolio (Umbrella)</b>	<b>Quintennial</b> w/ midterm check TBD	ISDC review
<b>Research and Innovation Portfolio – Mega-programs, Accelerators, and Assets</b>	Proposal/Project Document Evaluability Assessment, Midline Endline <b>2 x Triennial cycle</b>	ISDC ex ante review (2024) IAES Evaluability Assessment and mid/end-line evaluations; SPIA country reach and causal impact evidence ISDC foresight and horizon scanning



## Accountability

Has there been effective and efficient delivery against documented, adaptively managed plans?

Item	Frequency	Independent and External Sources Supported by IAES
<b>Portfolio Results/MELIA Frameworks quality</b>	<b>Triennial</b> Investment Cycle	SPIA and IAES contribute to CGIAR MELIA plan development (24-25)* *led by management
<b>Assessment of degree of delivery against indicators</b>	<b>Triennial</b> Investment Cycle	Generate evaluative evidence in Impact Studies/Evals Evaluations provide recommendations to which management is accountable for MR

## Learning

What can CGIAR do better in its portfolio and organizational implementation?

Item	Frequency	Independent and External Sources Supported by IAES
<b>MOPAN readiness</b>	<b>5–6 years</b> (last occurring 2019)	IAES contribute to preparatory activity* *led by CGIAR management
<b>Thematic: 7 ways of working</b>	Within cycle of thematic evaluations ( <b>~4–5 Y</b> )	System Council-commissioned evaluation and/or threaded into knowledge management/Learning plans using Evaluative evidence  <b>How is progress measured?</b>
<b>Health of functions and structures Of System Of Centers</b>	<b>Baseline, ongoing in outyears</b> (until revision) For center-level, IPB coordinated	IAES external evaluation Contributions to Board-commissioned actions vis-à-vis provisions in System Charter

## Assurance

Are the evidence and processes used for decisions inclusive and sound?

Item	Frequency	Independent and External Sources Supported by IAES
<b>Advisory function effectiveness</b>	<b>Triennial</b>	TBD (SIMEC commissioned)
<b>Gender Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan</b>	<b>Biennial</b>	IAES external evaluation (advisory)
<b>Engagement Framework for Partnership &amp; Advocacy, Partnership Strategy</b>	<b>Baseline (Y1)</b> <b>Ongoing in outyears</b> until revision (?)	ISDC commentary IAES external evaluation (advisory)
<b>Health of functions and structures Of System Of Centers*</b>	<b>Baseline</b> <b>Ongoing</b> until revision *For center-level, IPB coordinated	IAES external evaluation Contributions to Board-commissioned actions vis-à-vis provisions in System Charter



# Practices That We Implement To Engage And Consult



Photo: Neil Palmer / CIAT



## **System Council**

Active participation at System Council and its committee meetings, bringing relevant and timely content into the agenda



## **Science Leadership**

Targeted discussions with managing directors of Science Groups, Senior Scientists, Initiative Leads and teams (MELIA), typically approached separately by ISDC, SPIA and IAES staff dependent on the topic area



## **System Board**

ISDC chair active observer and IAES director observer status, and ISDC chair active observer status in a potential Science and Partnership System Board committee



## **Aligned Assurance and MELIA community**

IAES and SPIA professional team systematically interact and coordinate with, inter alia, CGIAR's aligned assurance community, MELIA professionals including PPU and PCU, and Impact Assessment Focal Points



## **Executive Managing Director**

Quarterly meetings of Executive Managing Director, IAES director, ISDC and SPIA chairs



Independent  
Advisory and  
Evaluation  
Service

## Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)

- Guide periodic pooled-funding proposal assessment processes and reviews
- Advise CGIAR's longer-term strategy through foresight and horizon scanning work
- Conduct, analytical work on priorities and trade-offs to advise on priority setting

## Evaluation Function in IAES

- Guide periodic pooled-funding proposal assessment processes and reviews
- Advise CGIAR's longer-term strategy through foresight and horizon scanning work
- Conduct, analytical work on priorities and trade-offs to advise on priority setting

## Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)

- Expand and deepen evidence of impact of CGIAR research investments on the five CGIAR impact areas
- Support CGIAR's strong commitment to embed impact assessment into the System

## Overview of Mandates

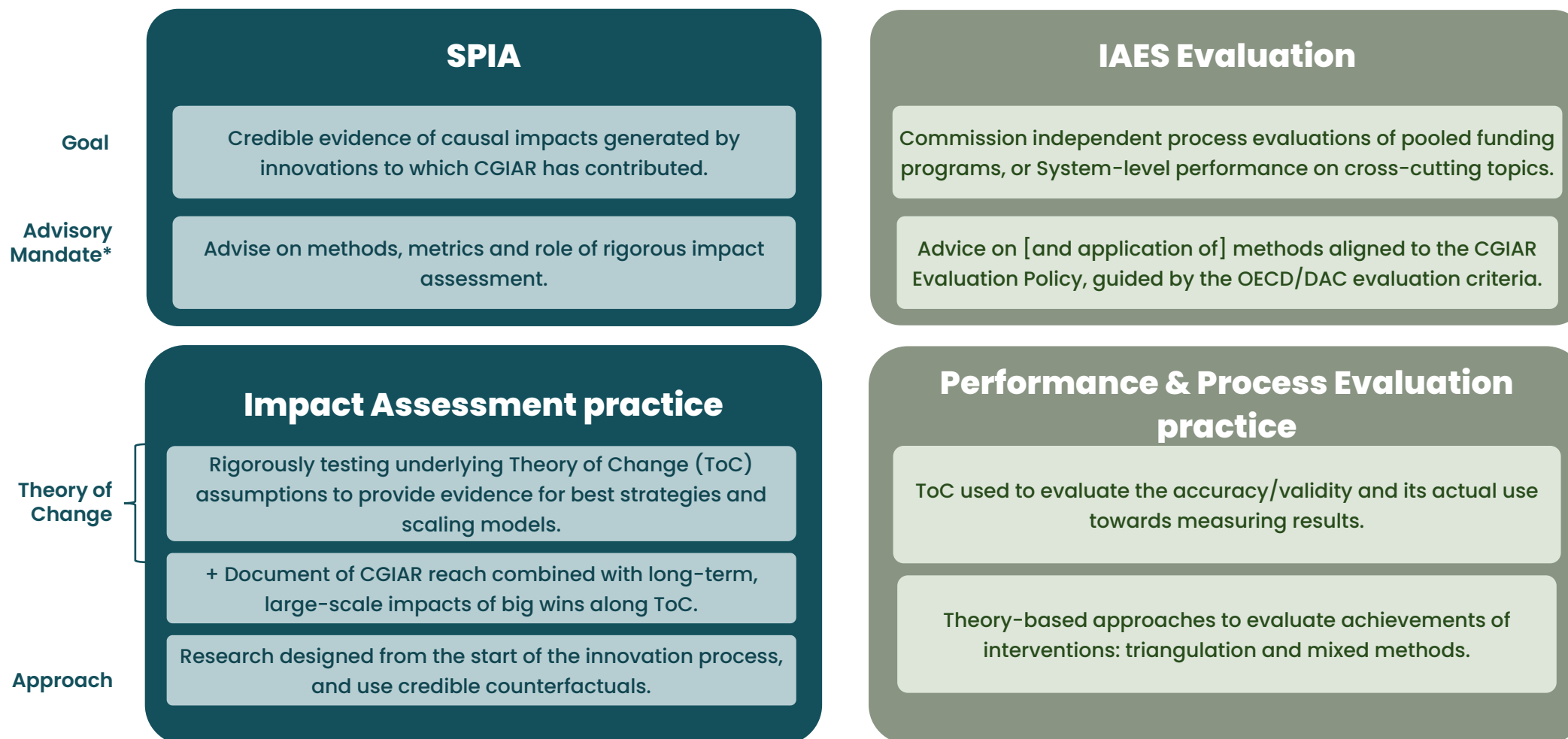
# Annex: Impact Assessment & Evaluation in CGIAR



Standing  
Panel on  
Impact  
Assessment



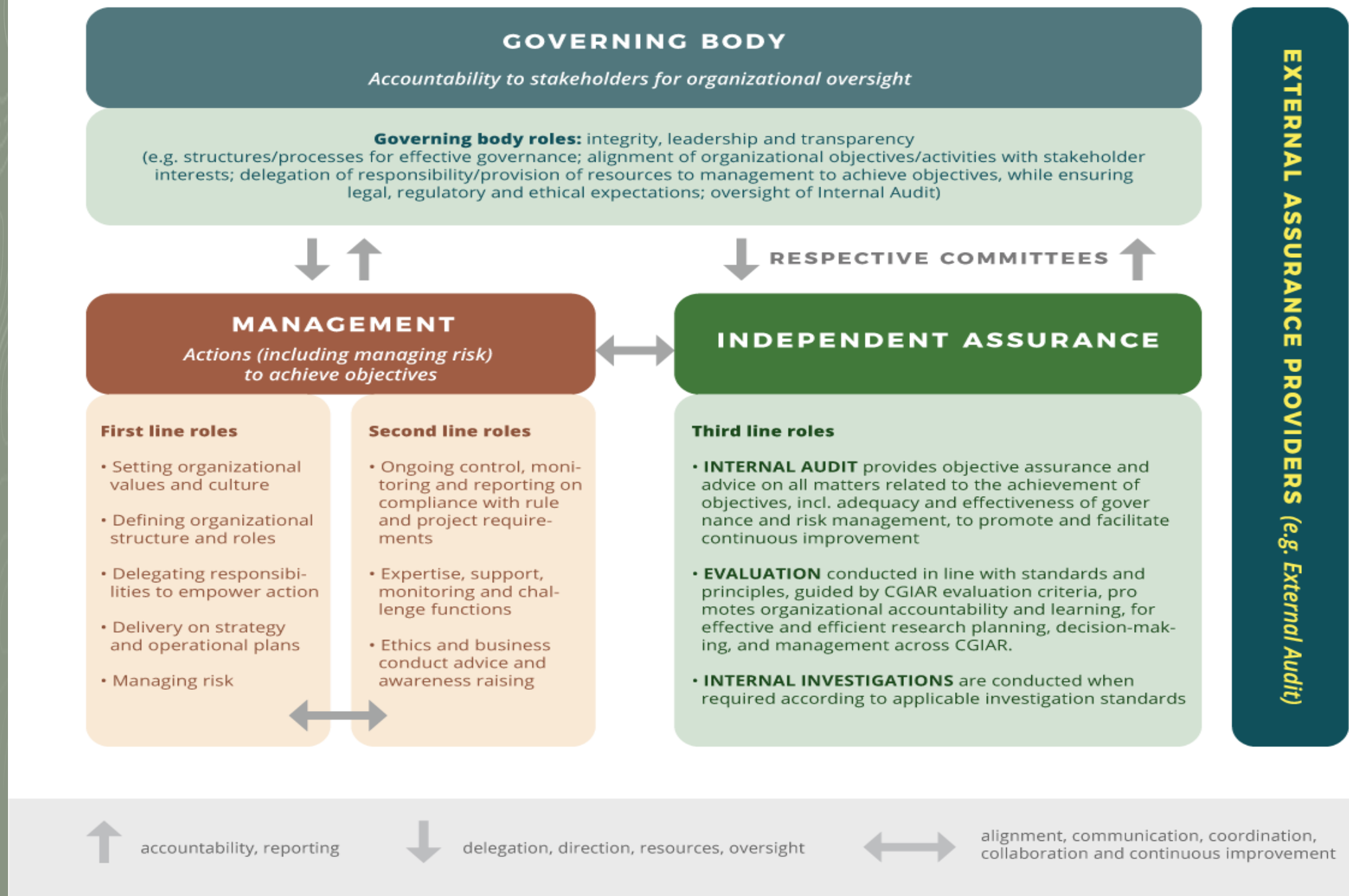
Independent  
Advisory and  
Evaluation  
Service



*\*terms of reference of SPIA and IAES elaborate full mandates*



# Third Line Assurance



# New SPIA Workplan 2023–2030

Photo: N. Palmer/The Alliance



## **SPIA Country studies of CGIAR reach at System level**

Robust independent evidence at the system level by expanding country studies longitudinally and geographically

Decentralized model through sub-contracts



## **Causal impact assessment**

Rigorous causal impact studies related to the five impact areas

- Support to impact assessment plans in Mega Programs
- Continued matchmaking support

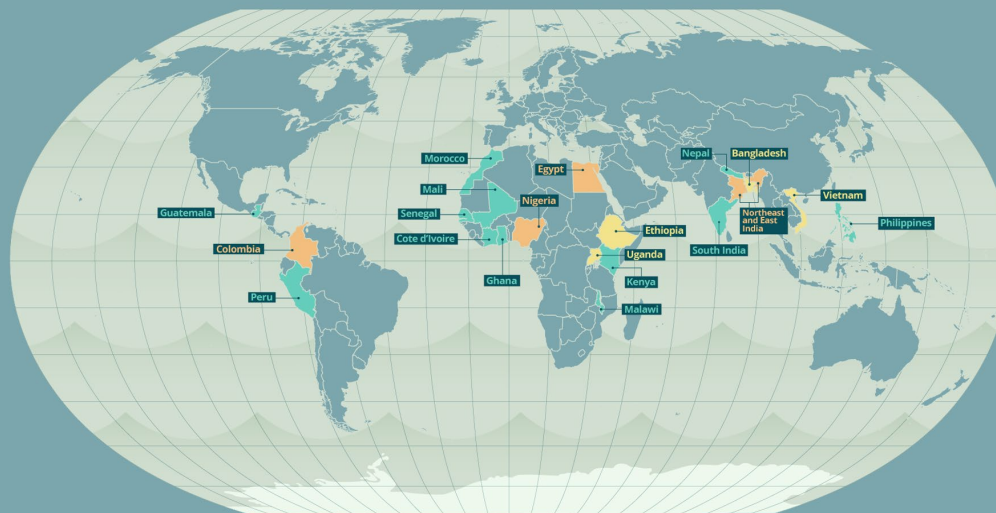


## **Use of rigorous evidence**

Strengthened approach for use of evidence by different stakeholder through a multi-tier approach

# SPIA High-Level 3-Y Plan

COUNTRY LEVEL STUDIES BY PHASE



Phase 1 Phase 2 Phase 3

## 1. Country studies

Towards evidence for 20 countries

Full country study of 8 countries + 12 stock takes

- 2024-2027:
  - Transition to new operational model with subcontracts
- Deliverables:
  - Dynamics of adoption / dis-adoption and scaling in: the existing four countries: Ethiopia, Uganda, Vietnam and Bangladesh
  - Full model in: Nigeria, India, Egypt and Colombia
  - “Stock take only” in 12 countries + follow-up studies on impact and last-mile delivery questions



## 2. Causal Impact Assessment

### Scoping for learning and accountability studies

Identify and facilitate implementation

**Accountability studies:** Build on opportunities identified in country studies Build on scaling efforts as part of CGIAR Initiatives or large-scale bilateral projects Follow-up studies to earlier causal impact studies

**Learning studies:** SPIA will engage with CGIAR researchers to identify opportunities for studies testing assumptions in Theories of Change or solutions to last-mile delivery problems

## 3. Use of Evidence

### Encourage the use of rigorous evidence

Lessons that can contribute to increased impact in the five CGIAR impact areas

**2024–2027:** Engage CGIAR leadership in promoting a learning agenda

- Learning from zero- and negative results
- Learning from dynamics of adoption and disadoption coming out of the country studies

**Deliverables:** Webinar series engaging science leaders focused on evidence use SPIA Center visits to increase dialogue with various CGIAR actors

# Evaluation : Foundation for 2025–2027 Plan



## 3 Science Group Evaluations– 2024

Cross-cutting topics, case studies and deep dives.

## 4 Evaluability Assessments of RIIs (2023–2024)

One staff member of IAES will be assigned as evaluation manager. They will be in charge of contracting and contractual arrangements, supervisions, facilitating access to information, quality assurance, guidance and knowledge management.

## 4 platform evaluations

Comprised of an **evaluation team leader**; three **SMEs** with strong expertise across digital capacity development, gender evidence and methods, and gender development; and finally will be supported by one **mid-level evaluation analyst** for data collection, analysis and knowledge management.

## CGIAR and Board–Commissioned Studies

IAES to offer validation on the status of implementing learning and recommendations, Partnerships, UGR, Pulse surveys.

## IAES Mandate → Evaluation Workstream

### TORs:

*Developing, in consultation with [CGIAR Centers, project and platform staff, and the System Organization], **a cost-effective multi-year evaluation plan** for approval by the System Council, taking into account current and future Center and CGIAR projects and/or platform evaluation frameworks, strategies and/or plans, and strategic guidance from the System Council and the System Board in the preparation of the evaluation work plan.*

## Framework and Charter



### Coverage

- Portfolio and the structures and functions of the System Organization



### Governance and Management

- Input from evaluation experts engaged by IAES to periodic, Board-commissioned governance and management reviews of Centers to complement the portfolio evaluations



# How We Work: Operating Principles

## Independence

### Independence

Neither Funders  
nor implementers  
of CGIAR research.

34

Countries represented



83

People  
Involved

14

Universities  
Involved

54%

Male

46%

Female



Roster of experts: 222(35%F 65%M)  
Competitively Selected  
Engagements Governed by IAES  
Conflict of Interest Policy

Ref: ISDC, SPIA and IAES terms of reference (2018)

# Who conducts independent and external evaluations?

- IAES maintains a competitively selected roster of some 200+ subject matter and evaluation experts.
  - Both Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) and the Evaluation function of IAES source experts from that roster for, e.g., ISDC-moderated reviews and System Council-commissioned independent evaluations.
  - In doing so, we comply with the IAES [conflict of interest policy](#).
  - All process and performance evaluations have the names of evaluators published on them. ISDC reviewers are published in a collective list *post factum* to preserve the integrity of the moderated proposal review.
  - Experts in ISDC-commissioned projects are listed in acknowledgements.
- Quality Assurance of evaluations includes
  - External peer review by additional subject matter experts from the roster
  - Internal review by IAES director and Evaluation Function Staff (evaluation managers)
  - Validation and penultimate version readings with the evaluand allow further space for factual corrections as a step towards integrity



# How We Work: Operating Principles

## Communication

### Communication

Align various assessments and evaluations with Business Plan cycles.

- ✓ Triennial planning with annual reconfirmation of plans

- ✓ Iteration of plans – w/ System

Council committees

- ✓ Annual reporting



 Scan to explore the  
2023 Annual Snapshot

- ✓ Newsletter subscribers

- ✓ Social followers (LinkedIn and Twitter)

- ✓ Blogs and publications on [iaes.org](https://iaes.org)

Ref: ISDC, SPIA and IAES terms of reference (2018)



# How We Work: Operating Principles

## Systematic Linkages

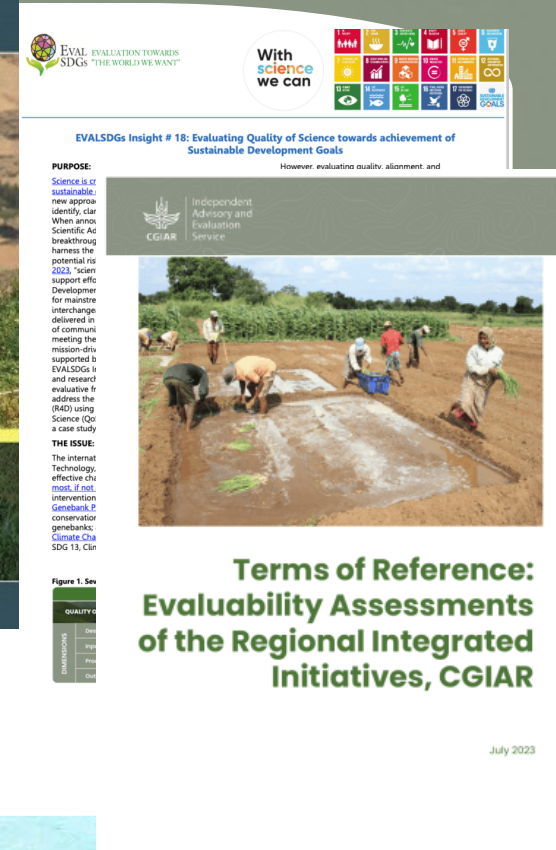
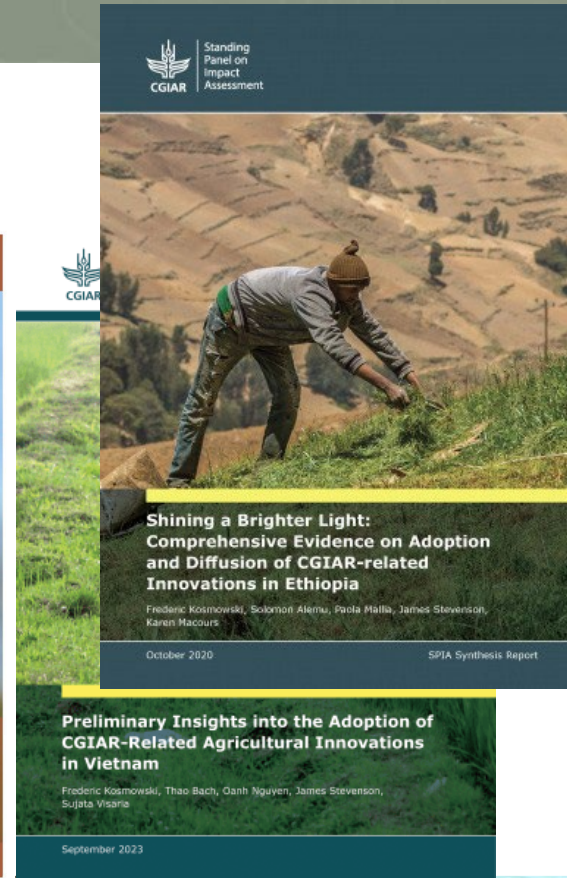
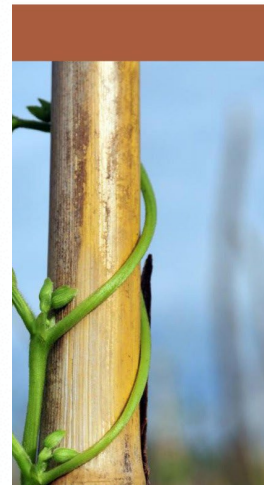
### Systematic Linkages

Link science and development, emphasize embedding innovation and effective partnerships.



### Responding to Evolving Megatrends

14 December 2023



Ref: ISDC, SPIA and IAES terms of reference (2018)



# How We Work: Operating Principles

## System Ownership



### **System Council**

Active participation at System Council and its committee meetings, bringing relevant and timely content into the agenda



### **System Board**

ISDC chair active observer and IAES director observer status, and ISDC chair active observer status in a potential Science and Partnership System Board committee



### **Executive Managing Director and Science Leadership**

Quarterly meetings of Executive Managing Director, IAES director, ISDC and SPIA chairs. Targeted discussions with managing directors of Science Groups, Senior Scientists, Initiative Leads and teams (MELIA), typically approached separately by ISDC, SPIA and IAES staff dependent on the topic area



### **Aligned Assurance and MELIA community**

IAES and SPIA professional team variously interact and coordinate with, e.g., CGIAR aligned assurance community, MELIA professionals including PPU and PCU, and Impact Assessment Focal Points

## **System Ownership**

System Council receives and formally discusses this advice on a regular basis.

## ISDC

- ISDC provided portfolio evolution advice portfolio document and proposal reviews in the 2022-2024 business cycle. ISDC compiled lessons from the 2021/2022 Research Initiative review of 33 proposals, implementing these in the 2024 review cycle representing an estimated 2.5 investment in pooled funds alone.
- ISDC guest edited a special issue on inclusive innovation in Agricultural Systems, inspired by CGIAR's 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, capping deliverables including briefs, technical notes, and symposia. N CGIAR staff published in the special issue.
- ISDC's literature review and discussions on megatrends led to a discussion paper outlining nine implications for CGIAR's research and innovation portfolio, used in planning for 2025-2030. The megatrends project has been cited extensively in the portfolio redesign.
- ISDC developed a technical note on comparative advantage analysis, also presented as podcasts and videos.

## SPIA

- SPIA synthesized causal impact evidence from its portfolio, presented at SPIAFEST, focusing on CGIAR's long-term impacts, externalities, and scaling strategies. SPIA will summarize evidence around N topics, and expects N participants.
- SPIA delivered reports on CGIAR innovations' reach in Uganda, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and dynamic evidence in Ethiopia. These reports were downloaded N times.
- Under a newly inaugurated 2024-2030 work plan, SPIA identified and contracted research consortia to track CGIAR innovations in key countries and initiated scoping in additional countries. SPIA is identifying up to 20 research consortia.
- In 2023, SPIA organized webinars and published guidelines on remote sensing for impact, and published reports on improved rice cultivar adoption in Bangladesh and Vietnam. There were over N participants in SPIA webinars.



## IAES- Evaluation

- The IAES Evaluation Function completed platform evaluations for Genebank, Gender, Big Data, and Excellence in Breeding, an investment of over 80M USD in 2020–2021 alone, and conducted evaluability assessments for Regional Integrated Initiatives. 43% of management planned actions related to recommendations in these evaluations are on tracked and 22% are completed.
- In 2024, the Evaluation Function led formative evaluations of three Science Groups, an investment of 750M in pooled funding, preparing recommendations for portfolio transition. Working in highly adaptive mode, the Science Group evaluation teams framed their recommendations and learning points to the newly and still emerging CGIAR 2025–2030 portfolio. Early learning was reported to proposal teams and System Council. Hundreds of partners and staff responded to survey and interviews, and 5 countries were visited to evaluate Science Groups in context.
- The Evaluation Function reviewed the implementation of Management Responses (2021–2023) and partnered with Internal Audit to improve the Performance Results Measurement System, towards advisory engagements to support assurance to governing bodies.
- As custodian's of CGIAR Evaluation Policy, in 2022 IAES presented System Council and System Board with a revised Evaluation Policy. In outyears, , IAES Evaluation Function developed new evaluation guidelines pertaining to Evaluability Assessment, Management Engagement, and Evaluation of Science for Development.

**ISDC, SPIA and IAES deliverables were presented at global fora, translated into multiple languages, and supported by visits to CGIAR centers and communication through a website, newsletter, and social media channels.**