



Date: 10 April 2015

Location: Hyderabad, India

5th Meeting Independent Steering Committee

In attendance:

No.	Name	Institution	CRP-DS Position
1	Harry Palmier	GFAR	ISC Chair
2	Barron Orr	University of Arizona	ISC Member
3	Jeffrey Herrick	USDA-ARS Jornada Experimental Range	ISC Member
4	Mohammed Badraoui	INRA-Morocco	ISC Member
5	Ram Krishna Bhatt	CAZRI	ISC Member
6	Tony Simons	ICRAF (via teleconference call)	ISC Member
7	Peter Carberry	ICRISAT	Acting ISC Member attended on behalf of David Bervingson
8	Richard Thomas	Dryland Systems	ISC Ex-Officio Member Director of CGIAR Research Program (CRP) on Dryland Systems
9	Mahmoud Solh	ICARDA	ISC Ex-Officio Member
10	Margret Thalwitz	ICARDA, Board of Trustees	ISC Ex-Officio Member

Apologies:

No.	Name	Institution	CRP-DS Position
1	Bernard Hubert	CIRAD	ISC Member
2	Coen Ritsema	Wageningen University	ISC Member
3	Aboubakar Njoya	CORAF/WECARD	ISC Member

Observers:

No.	Name	Institution	CRP-DS/Position
1	Doug Merrey	CCEE	CCEE Team Leader
2	Judit Szonyi	CCEE	CCEE Member
3	Ross McLeod	CCEE	CCEE Member
4	Fergus Sinclair (via teleconference)	ICRAF	Scientist
5	Paul Vlek	ICARDA	ICARDA Center Coordinator
6	Anthony Whitbread	ICRISAT	ICRISAT Center Coordinator
7	Jan De Leeuw	ICRAF	ICRAF Center Coordinator
8	Tana Lala-Pritchard	Dryland Systems	Communications Program Coordinator
9	Enrico Bonaiuti	Dryland Systems	Research Program Coordinator
10	Sara Jani	Dryland Systems	Program Administrator
11	Rima Dabbagh	Dryland Systems	Finance Program Coordinator



Announcements

- Three new members have been appointed to the Independent Steering Committee (ISC). They are: Jeffrey Herrick from the USDA-ARS Jornada Experimental Range, Barron Orr from the University of Arizona and Coen Ritsema from Wageningen University.
- The ISC has still one vacant place still to fill.
- Harry Palmier from GFAR is elected the new ISC Chair replacing the outgoing chair Dr. Mahmoud Solh, ICARDA DG.
- Ram Krishna Bhatt became the new CAZRI Director General (DG) replacing the former CAZRI DG Murari Mohan Roy (March 2015) in the ISC.

Agenda Points

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Welcome & introducing new members.
- 1.2. Approval of Agenda.
- 1.3. Review of the 4th ISC minutes action points (annex1).

Discussion: Participants introduced themselves and welcomed the newly appointed Independent Steering Committee (ISC) members. The Chair noted that the new ISC members who represent non-CG centers/institutions would help diversify the ISC composition and enable this body to be more independent than before. Apologies were delivered on behalf of three ISC members who were not able to attend. The meeting agenda was approved with one additional point added for CRP Director to provide a brief update on the S&I meeting held earlier in the week. The CRP Director provided a short brief on key messages and outcomes of the Science and Implementation (S&I) Meeting that took place on April 6th-9th with interest for the ISC and impact on the future of the Dryland Systems program.

A review of all action points from the 4th ISC meeting minutes followed. It was agreed that a review of the [ISC Terms of Reference](#) (ToR) was necessary given its new composition. In addition, the ISC requested to review the member names and [approve the ToRs of the Task Force \(TF\)](#) that has already started work and [produced its first document on Mission Critical Research Areas](#) (MCRA) for Dryland Systems.

The Research Program Coordinator brought to the attention of the ISC the fact that Dryland Systems has accomplished a full review of all W3/Bilateral projects¹ mapped to the program and submitted its [Plan of Work and Budget \(POWB\) 2015](#) to the Consortium. However, the POWB2015 will have to be revised and updated given the latest budget cut of 19% announced at the end of March 2015.

1. Action points:

- ⇒ ISC to revise/approve ToRs within one week (17th April 2015) on a non-objection basis.
- ⇒ ISC to revise/approve member names and ToRs of Task Force (TF) within one week (17th April 2015) on a non-objection basis.
- ⇒ PMU to submit the updated POWB2015 following the recently announced 19% budget cut.

¹ [Bioversity](#), [CIAT](#), [ICARDA](#), [ICRAF](#), [ICRISAT](#), [ILRI](#), [IWMI](#).



2. Governance

2.1 Review of the ISC ToR approved by the former ISC.

2.2 Election of Chair

2.3 Review of program bodies and key positions approved by the former ISC.

Discussion: Following [audit recommendations](#), ISPC comments, and as agreed with the CGIAR Consortium (minutes of Meeting in Montpellier 29/08/2014) the ISC composition has changed to include new members from non-CG centres. This will ensure greater independence of this body and reduce the potential conflict of interest for members associated with lead and/or partner centres. The three (3) new members were selected on their expertise in drylands, as well as the crosscutting, interdisciplinary experience they bring. One position the ISC remains vacant and Dryland Systems is looking for a qualified female candidate to take up this position. It was noted the ISC would also benefit from better representation from a geographical region point of view, such as Latin America, South Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa. In this regard, it was agreed the ISC and the Dryland Systems RMC should consider with outmost priority qualified nominations that can satisfy, where possible, the gender and regional representation requirement. Several names were proposed and the CRP Director will collect and share CVs of proposed nominations for review and approval by ISC via email.

Harry Palmier from GFAR was elected new ISC Chair and assumed Chair responsibilities with immediate effect. The Chair emphasized the powerful role of dialogue, partnerships and communications in this process. The Chair noted he was happy that he shared similar views with the CRP Director and looked forward to working closely with him to mobilize support and resources for Dryland Systems, starting with advocacy work with donors at the Fund Council meeting in Bogor (April 27-29,2015)

The Research Program Coordinator announced that a new document on [Governance and Management](#) is available that explains the different program structures, including Job Descriptions (JD) for key program positions and Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the various working groups. These positions and structures will be re- adjusted when the current region-based flagships change to Agricultural Livelihood Systems (ALS).

Three (3) new ToRs have been added to describe the role of recent working groups established on Communications and Knowledge Sharing, Systems Modelling and Capacity Development. These working groups are generally made up of partner centres' representatives and work together to develop strategies, provide guidance and/or conduct specific research. Each working group has drafted and developed their own ToRs and/or makes decisions on budgets allocated to them. The CRP Director invited ISC members to review the Governance and Management document and send comments for approval within one week.

1. The **Working Group on Systems Analysis** should continue its efforts to engage with actors within and beyond the CGIAR system in order to make the most of what is out there in terms of systems research. In terms of other CRPs, PIM and CCAFS currently have the lead on modelling. The systems CRPs have a special role to play; once we have developed a comprehensive systems perspective this can be presented as the specific niche/added value of Dryland Systems.
2. Visibility of Dryland Systems' work is important. **Communications and knowledge sharing** remain a crucial issue to be addressed collectively by all the centres participating in the program in order to showcase the value of Dryland Systems research. The Communications Program Coordinator noted that although the Working Group on Communication and Knowledge Sharing has been established, a major impediment to

implementing successful communications remains the issue of structuring the communications budget from a result-based management perspective. This approach will help provide critical resources to communications staff at centre and flagship level in order to produce robust professional communications and ensure better accountability for communications of research outputs. She drew attention to the fact that although the Program issued a specific recommendation last year to centres to dedicate 8% of their research budget to communications, it remains unclear if and how the centres have actually implemented this recommendation. On the other hand, communications staff were not part of the planning and budgeting process that took place at each center at the end of 2014, nor did they know what, if any resources were made available to them to deliver communications products and activities for Dryland Systems. Dryland Systems is now part of the Knowledge Management and Communications for CRPs ([KMC4CRPs](#)) initiative.

3. **Capacity Development** should be strongly seen as an investment for the future, and in this regard, moving forward the Program should think about putting an appropriate amount of resources to implement its CD strategy beyond just trainings.
4. CRPs had to produce a number of strategies and guidelines due to **lack of or insufficient guidance from the CGIAR**. In many respects, CRPs have shaped and produced tools and policy documents in order to deal with the realities in the ground. Economies of scale should be considered so that CRPs are not burdened with producing individual strategies and documents, but instead apply and interpret CGIAR /CRP-wide principles and guidelines. The ISC noted that Director Generals (DG) of partner centres should seek to influence this issue at the highest level of the CGIAR so that CGIAR-wide Communities of Practice (CoPs) on gender, communications, capacity development, system analysis and so forth are utilized more effectively to maximise the research-in-development impact, leverage the experience of all CRPs and provide common tools and strategies to streamline and harmonize CRP implementation.
5. The Chair stated that this is obviously part of the wider discussion about the future of the Consortium and the extent to which it is serving the centres and the CRPs. It was also noted that Dryland Systems' main governance documents must state/evoke at the very beginning the wider CGIAR principles /strategies that are applied and/or reflected to ensure compliance in a proactive fashion.
6. The CRP Director provided a brief explanation of the CRP Organogram for the new ISC members. In addition, he explained the purpose and composition of the **Task Force (TF)**, which was recently established to help the program prepare for the second call for proposals. The TF was a requirement put forward by the Consortium Board following the Extension Proposal submission. Although originally the TF was meant to be an **Independent** Task Force (ITF) with no CG-centre representatives, the Program asked the Fund Council to consider a mixed composition of the TF with independent members and members representing the CRP/CG centres. The reason for doing this relates to the fact that the program felt a truly *independent* Task Force would be too far removed from the current challenges facing the Program, and as such it would not be able to address these issues effectively without the considerable input of people and scientists who are proactively involved in the program's Science and Implementation meetings and are helping to sharpen the quality and focus of the Program's approach to scientific systems research. It was noted that to avoid any potential confusion or criticism in the future, the name of Task Force (TF) must be applied consistently in all program documentation and communication, instead of *Independent* Task Force.
7. The TF met for the first time at the University of Leeds, UK in [March 2015](#). The first output of the TF was a document on Mission Critical Research Areas (MCRA) that was already submitted and will be presented – by the Chair of TF - at the Fund Council

Meeting at end of April 2015 in Bogor, Indonesia. The Fund Council is convening to discuss why and how drylands should continue to be part of the CGIAR research portfolio. The CRP Director has also been invited to attend this meeting and respond to the mission critical research areas.

8. The CRP Director noted that one member of the TF, Katherine Snyder has not been able to commit any time yet and therefore will look to replace her with an equally qualified candidate that can commit time to the TF.
9. Some ISC members noted the overwhelming amount of documents to be approved without having much time to review the documents prior to the ISC meeting. In order to enable better preparation and ensure more productive ISC meetings, it was agreed the PMU should share by email the set of program documents requiring review and approval by the ISC at least 2 weeks prior to the ISC meeting. In addition, the PMU will provide a cover email with clear instructions on actions required by the ISC (review, approval, etc.) for each document.
10. Tony Simons, DG of ICRAF who is currently leading the initiative of CG centres to influence the process on the future CRP portfolio was able to join the meeting virtually for a limited period of time and made the following points for the attention of the ISC:

- a. The ISC must try and define what success looks like for the Dryland Systems program at different benchmark periods (e.g. within 12 months, 5 years, etc...).
- b. If it is not happening already, current and future Dryland Systems activities should be mapped to the new Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and the new SLOs/IDOs
- c. Whether the existing Dryland Systems CRP survives in its current form or not, the CRP Director (Richard Thomas), ICARDA DG (Mahmoud Solh) and ICARDA Board of Trustees (Margret Thalwitz) have legacy obligations, and as such must consider how CRP funds will be used in the next 12 months. Some scenario planning has to take place with regards to the CRP legacy and responsibilities for capturing, documenting and storing intellectual property assets and promoting Program achievements.
- d. We can anticipate that the **benchmarks against which the Fund Council will evaluate** different CRPs against one another are based on MOPAN evaluation metrics for multilateral programs and can be summarized as follows: Science, Partnerships, Governance and Contribution to Impact. Now is the time to deliberate on how we sell success, re-orient ourselves and proudly communicate Program strengths and achievements.
- e. From the CG centres' perspective, several DGs are currently discussing and strategizing on the merits of getting the Fund Council to agree on a **generic typology of CRPs** as follows: 1) Commodities; 2) Place based work (systems); 3) Natural Resource Management and 4) Global Themes. To this extent, several DGs met in London to discuss how this typology would work, look at the current budget to build the future CRP portfolio and dispel fears of radical changes amongst CRP and partner centres staff. The point of the London meeting was to get alignment/agreement on the things that are wanted amongst all the centres. The understanding that emerged from this meeting was that the real influence lies with the CRP flagships. Centres will likely focus on leading Flagships as opposed to CRPs.

It is likely that from the current 15 CRPs with 5-6 flagships each (or about 90 flagships in total), the new constellation of CRPs flagships will look like the following: 60 flagships will remain intact; 20 will be merged, 10 will be discontinued and 20 new flagships will be established. The ICRAF DG clarified that there is yet no written document to capture the strategic approach being



discussed amongst the DGs. A questionnaire is being circulated and the information collected through it will be used to shape current thinking. Once a document is put together, the ICRAF DG will share it with the ISC. During May 11-13 2015, there will be a meeting of DGs and Board Chairs to discuss the different options for the future CRPs portfolio. CRP directors are not invited to participate because of perceived conflict of interest. The intention was that they would be collectively represented by Bas Bouman to get CRPs buy-in to the process.

Several ISC members acknowledged the valuable input from ICRAF's DG to the ISC meeting and noted the following points in the ensuing discussion:

The ICARDA DG announced that in the past few weeks, discussions have taken place with regards to merging the current Dryland Systems (led by ICARDA) with Dryland Cereals and Legume and Grains (both led by ICRISAT) due to the high compatibility inherent in these three CRPs. Both ICRISAT and ICARDA see merit to this proposal and we going to present for comments to ISC. The ISPC has left it to the centres to come up with the a viable CRP portfolio, and in this regard, what's important is that we come up with viable proposal that does not simply merge CRPs on paper, but enables concrete and efficient implementation in the ground.

However, the ISC noted strongly that CRPs, particularly system ones like the Dryland Systems, may not have fair representation at the meeting of DGs and Board Chairs on May 11-13. The ISC agreed to draft a letter addressed to the Consortium Board to request appropriate representation of CRPs at this meeting through four CRPs Directors each leading different types of CRPs (Commodities, Systems, NRM, and Themes) and lobby for the participation of Dryland Systems CRP Director to represent the system CRPs.

The Chair noted that the membership of the current Consortium Board has changed completely; the new members are seeking real change and are interested in adding real value, and as such they may be amenable to such a request.

The ICARDA Board of Trustees representative noted that the issue of the current CRP legacy is important to address no matter how we move forward. The CRP Director added that the latest conclusions from the S&I meeting will help address a number of points relating to the sharpening of the science focus; the rearrangement of program flagships by Agricultural Livelihood Systems (ALS) and the mapping of activities according to the new SRF's SLOs and IDOs.

2. Action points:

- ⇒ New ISC to have one week to review the ToRs included in the [Governance and Management document](#). Following revisions the TORs will be accepted on a no objection basis.
- ⇒ Chair to nominate a replacement for his role in Dryland System's CD Working Group.
- ⇒ CRP Director to collect ISC nominations and circulate CVs of qualified female (where possible) candidates for current ISC vacancy.
- ⇒ CRP Director to circulate CVs of TF members and qualified female (where possible) to replace Katherine Snyder, who has not been able to commit time to the TF so far.
- ⇒ PMU to circulate ISC meeting documents via email at least two weeks in advance with clear cover page/email indicating actions required by the ISC (review, approval, etc).
- ⇒ PMU to review key governance/strategy documents in order to ensure alignment with the wider CGIAR principles /strategies.
- ⇒ PMU to ensure the correct name of Task Force (TF) is applied instead of *Independent* Task Force in all Program documents.



⇒ ISC to write to the Consortium Board requesting participation of CRP Director to the May meeting. Fergus Sinclair will check with Tony Simmons on this and report back to CRP Director and ISC members.

3. Reporting

- 3.1 Presentation of 2014 Annual report and Discussion
- 3.2 Summary of the 4th RMC meeting Research Priorities

The CRP Director informed the ISC that despite the significant challenge of putting the program's annual report together from a variety of flagship (5) and centres reports (9) in a short timeframe, the [Dryland Systems 2014 Annual Report](#) was submitted on March 10th. The Program Management Unit (PMU) efforts in this regard focused on weaving a "systems approach" narrative to tie together all the reported activities and program accomplishments in order to address criticism of previous annual reports of being too atomised, region-focused or centre-centric. Comments have also been sent to the Consortium regarding the inappropriateness of some of the indicators in relation to system-CRPs.

The Research Program Coordinator noted that in the [second call](#), all CRPs will also be required to submit a semi-annual report at the end of the first 6 months.

The Communications Program Coordinator added that the 2014 annual report that was submitted to the Consortium is currently being repackaged into an annual report publication highlighting accomplishments and success stories with catchy visuals in order to target donors and non-scientific audiences. This was welcomed by the ISC as a good communication approach. Several of the ISC members noted that this year's annual report was a definite improvement on previous annual reports, and noted the importance of being strategic in selecting the right stories of impact and success to attract donor and stakeholders' attention.

Looking forward to the next year and the program legacy issues, several ISC members commented on the need to **strengthen and increase communications to ensure greater visibility of the program and its results**. Given the complexity of systems research, it may take a while for the impact of program activities to materialize. In the meantime, communications should focus on highlighting the catalysing nature of the program in bringing a variety of partners, stakeholders and projects together to demonstrate potential impact in the long run. We need to work closely with local institutions, as they are our primary partners; they are the ones who can scale our research and also convince their internal constituencies of the value of our research, and in turn influence development agencies and donors on our behalf.

On the other hand, Dryland Systems scientists at all centres should focus more on analysing the data and information that is already there and **write papers that showcase the systems perspective and build on previous experience and work**. Time is really short to start new activities and therefore, the focus should be on getting the scientists to write more papers that capture the unique approach of Dryland Systems research. As a system-CRP, Dryland Systems has a distinctive comparative advantage in this regard. To address system constraints, we really need to move to away from specific pilot areas and develop large trials and comparative analysis, and use our strategic partnerships to accelerate impact and generate critical results. We must showcase the linkages of our research outputs to SLOs/IDOs by mobilizing scientists to work together across centres and beyond their own cliques. Although we are primarily a research organization, our results will still be judged against development outcomes. In addition, our scientists must reach out to the national innovation platforms to hear what they want, to address



the major issues they have and consider the type of expertise/scenarios of support we can offer them as a program.

To address the issues raised in this regard, the CRP Director sought the endorsement of the ISC to re-activate the write-shops fund, which was eliminated due to the recent budget cut. Some ISC members noted that instead of organizing big write-shop events, these funds should be used to involve small groups of scientists (maximum 10 people) who get the systems work and are prepared to produce quick tangible results.

Other points raised by ISC members include:

1. Centres need to be strategic in accepting bilateral funds for projects that fit with the overall systems research approach of Dryland Systems. There is no need to tie the program to certain bilateral donors who are interested in supporting research that is incompatible with the overall goals of the program and partner centres.
2. Program funds should be better allocated to support research in the field and avoid high and unnecessary transaction costs associated mostly with travel to meetings. This is the real tragedy of the current CGIAR reform and centres and the program must exercise utmost care in reducing transaction costs where possible.
3. Development agency budgets are often a fraction of the research budget allocated by national governments. The shift in focus from research to development has left the Fund Council with a vacuum in its budget pipeline that does not account for this potential source of funds. Members of the ISC agreed they should make a point to the Fund Council to engage more with science ministries in order to capture government research funds, so that the dependence on development agencies to fund research can be reduced.
4. The CRP must take stock of international public goods and articles that have been already produced and work to promote them through more communications and advocacy. The example of a recent important article on systems/food security was mentioned as a means of illustrating the need to be conscious of what is already in place and ensure follow up.
5. Fergus Sinclair of ICRAF mentioned that work on an Inventory of Options had already started with papers due to be issued by June 2016. This was mentioned as an example of a low hanging fruit to capitalize on in order to promote Dryland Systems work and achievements in the next 12 months.
6. Dryland Systems must emphasise its comparative advantage to the Consortium and donors, in terms of having a vast global network in place, connected directly to many national and regional partners, whose capacities are being built on systems research. As such, the Dryland Systems network can be used as a primary channel for absorb both research and development assistance. In this regard, more investment will be required in communications over the next 12-24 months in order to flesh out stories of impact and put these messages across.

The CRP Director briefed the ISC on the latest proceedings of the 4th RMC meeting held on 5 April 2015. The key messages that emerged from that meeting were also reflected in the discussions that took place during the 2nd annual S&I meeting held from 6-9 April 2015.

3. Action points:

- ⇒ CRP Director to re-activate write-shops funds in order for Dryland Systems scientists to produce research papers from a systems perspective building on data that has been already collected as well as previous work.

⇒ ISC to make a point to the Fund Council to engage more with science ministries at national level in order to capture national government research funds, so that dependence on development agencies to fund research is reduced.

4. Budget Allocation

4.1 Review of budget allocation (coordination and research)

The Finance Program Coordinator presented the updated budget figures following the most recent budget cut of 19 % overall. She illustrated how the cut had been applied across the program affecting the Overarching Program and Centre's research budgets and provided clarification on questions raised by ISC members. Several ISC members noted the need to present budget information in a more detailed fashion in order to avoid confusion or undue criticism as to how the money is being spent.

Some of the ISC recommendations include:

1. We need to clarify how the funds are being used via a better categorization of budget items.
2. We need to better define what coordination means, because we may send the wrong message that the large amount going to Coordination gives the impression to top-heaviness. We must define how much of that coordination work is actually research support work.
3. Standard practice suggests that when the coordination is done within the scientific communities, it should be called research support, and when administrators do it, should be called coordination. It's important to present clearly how much of the CRP funds are going to science/research, how much to management and administration, and how much is allocated to transfer/scaling up. For example, the funds used up by the S&I meeting fall under the Director's Office. If we follow what other research institutions do when it comes to budget language, this would be classified as research support and would therefore increase the percentage allocated to research.
4. The **research-support budget allocation** to centres (partnerships externally with other players, actors, etc) should be tracked and presented as percentage of investment going to non-CGIAR partners. For example, the training budget is usually kept with the centres, but this is actually a part of the budget that is going to non-CG partners. ICARDA last year had over 1000 trainees from non-CG partners. We need to capture how and where this money is being allocated and dispensed through the partner centres. The Chair noted that a better presentation of the budget capturing funds channelled to non-CG partners (through trainings and other means) is not only important from a financial point of view, but also an excellent way for the CRP to demonstrate how national and local stakeholders are involved and how partnerships are built. This could be a major selling point for the future of the CRP if we could demonstrate how the program is adding value to partner activities. It will also resonate well with donors and the Fund Council.

The Finance Program Coordinator clarified that this was something that we could now report because in the past the centres were not submitting this kind of information. In 2014 the budget allocated to non-CGIAR partners was 12%. The Research Program Coordinator added that the new [Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning \(MEL\)](#) Platform will now enable tracking of all program partners, of the activities planned and budgeted with them, and generating reports of different kinds, including partner's in-kind and cash contributions.

5. We need to capture and demonstrate how much money the CRP is generating/leveraging from non-DS/CG partners in order to show our research work is in high demand.

6. The mapping of bilateral projects can be problematic because sometimes those projects are not necessarily aligned with the systems perspective work that is funded through W1/W2. Progress is being made to apply better mapping criteria consistently by all partner centres; but this will take time. Dryland Systems is in a strong position to connect research and development. ICRAF's Fergus Sinclair announced that we have received the contract for the IFAD grant. This is a bilateral grant to the CRP involving 4 centres. The contract is worth 6-7 million USD and connected to 110 million investments in Kenya (via FAO) and a Dutch government project in 5 countries in Africa. The CRP Director pointed out that this is exactly the kind of project we want to develop from now on in terms of using the CRP to leverage partnerships and funds for greater impact. Another example is that of LandPKS, which works to scale out technologies without diluting the research effort.
7. We need to take a closer look at W1/W2 donors and use this information to manage our messaging and targeting.
8. We should also seek to demonstrate alignment with national agencies and look at what the CRP is contributing in this regard.

4.2 Contingency Fund

The Contingency Fund was established following previous ISC recommendation; an initial suggestion from ICRAF DG was to put aside 1 million US\$. The program was forced to cancel a lot of synthesis (writeshop) activities due to the most recent budget cut. The program is also cutting costs associated with the CCEE by going for a light evaluation option, since the process has lost its main objective because we already had an audit. Savings are also being made in regards to the TF, which was initially budgeted for 2 million US\$. The initially envisioned role of the TF is questionable considering the current context of moving into a new portfolio of CRPs.

Another idea for saving money was to cut down the number of face-to-face meetings for the ISC. However, considering the major changes that are due to take place in the next 6 months with regards to the CGIAR reform process and second call for CRP proposals, the ISC decided it was best to meet in person. At a later stage, the ISC will consider virtual meetings.

The ISC noted the following advice regarding question by Research Program Coordinator on establishing an appropriate Contingency Fund so as to avoid the laborious tasks of partner centres having to revise their POWB2015 with each new budget cut:

1. The 5 % in contingency funds is very conservative; ISC advised increases where possible;
2. ISC advised to put at least 0.5 million USD aside in order to take care of program partnerships;
3. The Consistency Fund should also take into consideration potential transaction costs associated with the new CRP portfolio to be announced in May 2015.
4. ISC advised that the Contingency Fund should not be disbursed all at once in order to give the Program Director the flexibility to deal with expected and unexpected budget issues affecting program implementation.

Comments to Revised budget presentation by Finance Program Coordinator

The Finance Program Coordinator presented a revised budget presentation to which the ISC provided the following comments:

1. CRP Director does not have much say or budget flexibility to move funds across when a Flagship is overspent or underspent, as usually those funds are absorbed by the partner centres.
2. Although the coordination budget is equitable spread amongst all flagships, this may present vulnerabilities in terms of those flagships that may be conducting more activities



- than others. These noted budget vulnerabilities are a case in point for reducing the number of actions sites and move towards flagships by ALS.
3. Centres should be asked to provide detailed the information for how they allocate money to research, to partners, to coordination, to communication, to gender, to capacity development, and so forth.
 4. On the subject of the Communication budget, the Communications Program Coordinator clarified for the ISC members that despite the CRP's recommendation to centres to allocate 8% of the research budget to communications, it's not clear if and how the partner centres have actually done this. Communications departments at partner centres receive an annual lump sum amount with no specific break down of funds/resources to be allocated to the CRP. This presents a huge impediment to successful implementation of communications and accountability.
 5. Overheads charged by partner centres are built into the budget, therefore the research budget may be even less.
 6. The ICARDA DG noted that centres have had difficulties in establishing stable funds. The ISC should be aware of the issues – national partners complain that they have high unmet expectations (budget cuts have undermined partnerships).
 7. The CRP Director noted that PMU will try to retroactively put the POWB2015 into the new framework of ALS flagships to unearth further vulnerabilities and better prepare to manage them. This will not be easy considering we don't know what's happening until the new CRP portfolio is announced in May 2015.

The Budget was approved with modifications.

4. Action points:

- ⇒ Finance Program Coordinator to generate different ways/tables to look at the budget based on ISC recommendations.

5. Second Call and CGIAR Portfolio

5.1 Second Call Process and SRF

5.2 Positioning CRP-DS in the CGIAR portofolio

The CRP Director described the [process](#), timeline and requirements of the second call for CRP proposal, highlighting various elements included in the draft Consortium document issued to that end. He also presented several potential options for clustering/merging CRPs that are currently being discussed, highlighting the related advantages and disadvantages.

Discussion: The ICARDA DG noted that Meridian was the consulting firm that proposed the clustering with efficiencies of three systems CRPs, which can work, but it may end up being business as usual. The merging of Dryland Systems with Dryland Cereals and Grains & Legumes makes better sense because these commodities are already part of the system and holistic systems integration would be easier. This is a merger that makes practical sense. Only the relevant legumes will be included and we are also talking to other partners such as IITA, CIAT, etc.)

ICARDA and ICRISAT are currently discussing this and agree this is the far better option. Dryland Cereals are already on board. A third major partner would be ILRI because livestock is extremely important in drylands. ICRAF is in favour of a merger that is technically possible and will reduce the number of CRP involvement. Preliminary discussions with ILRI DG were also positive. The ICARDA DG invited comments from the ISC regarding the favoured option, summarized as follows:

1. A merger between Dryland Systems, Dryland Cereals, and Grains Legumes would be basically perceived as ICARDA and ICRISAT. Dryland trees and livestock must be included



to ensure the systems perspective. The new CRP could be called Dryland Systems and Commodities.

2. All aspects of the value chain should be comprehensively embedded in the new Drylands CRP.
3. Current CRP directors should be involved in the destiny of the new CRPs as they can bring in valuable logical considerations from their experience and their technical and management perspective. Instead of one CRP representative, there should be 4 representatives, one for each type of CRP (Commodities, Systems, NRM, and Themes) to ensure balanced representation at the Fund Council at the Fund Council meeting. The ISC will issue an independent statement to that effect.
4. The ISC will issue a statement, independently from the DGs, in support of the best option for merging Dryland Systems with other CRPs.

5. Action points:

- ⇒ ISC to send the Fund Council a written plea to ensure better CRP Directors representation during its deliberations on the new CRP portfolio. As follow up, this request was denied after correspondence with Tony Simons.
- ⇒ ISC to issue a statement, independent of the center DGs, in support of the most viable and sensible option for merging Dryland Systems with other CRPs

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 CCEE Overview

6.2 MEL platform

Discussion: Doug Merrey Team Leader of the CCEE team presented an overview of the CCEE implementation plan and timeline. The CCEE team met with the TF in Leeds, UK, the PMU in Jordan and attended the S&I meeting held from 6-9 April. During this time, the CCEE team held four group sessions with S&I meetings participants to collect feedback. He emphasised that the CCEE is meant to be a constructive evaluation for Dryland Systems to draw out lessons learned and recommendations that will help inform the second call for proposals. During May, the CCEE will be conducting field visits in action sites in Asia and Africa, which have been selected on the basis of ALS representation and funding. By evaluation standards, the CCEE represents a light evaluation because the program had an audit quite recently. The CCEE will comment on the previous audit of Dryland Systems.

The inception CCEE evaluation report will be available by the end of April 2015 (confirmed and available), while the draft final CCEE evaluation report will be presented in late July 2015 for review. For the report to be credible and objective a reference group should be established. ICARDA DG emphasised the importance of the CCEE and the fact that ICARDA/ Dryland Systems had major difference with the first audit and the premises on which it was delivered under ISAC. Since the new CRP Director Richard Thomas joined there have been significant improvements in in governance and documentation of process. It would be appropriate for the CCEE to capture this progress to help the program move forward since the last audit.

The ISC decided to establish the CCEE Reference Group with the representation from the RMC, since they know the program and its research activities. Five members will be selected from the suggestion mentioned below.

1. Richard Thomas, CRP Director
2. Enrico Bonaiuti, CRP Research Program Coordinator
3. Jan de Leeuw, ICRAF / Center Coordinator
4. Anthony Whitbread, ICRISAT/ Center Coordinator



5. Paul Vlek, ICARDA / Center Coordinator
6. Lance Robinson, ILRI / Scientist
7. Polly Ericksen , ILRI / Center Coordinator

The Research Program Coordinator presented the [Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning \(MEL\) Platform](#) launched by the program in December 2014. The platform is designed to capture program results at various levels, as well as a host of other information relating to bilateral projects, donors, partners and so forth. On the other hand, the platform is designed to reduce reporting burden for the scientists and provide timely information for results-based management and program/activity adjustment. The platform will also help simplify the process of preparing the workplan by replacing the traditional excel/word based work and budget planning with online-templates that are simple and easy to complete. It was also planned that partners would be provided with tablets to conduct field surveys and automatically upload field data on the MEL platform. However, this activity has been suspended for the time being due to the recent budget cut.

Several other CRPs have shown an interest in adopting the MEL platform that was developed by Dryland Systems. The program is discussing with several other CRP Directors the possibility of Making the MEL platform available to them free of charge and customizing it to fit specific CRP needs.

ISC members were very impressed with the MEL platform and recommended that it be brought to the attention of the Consortium Office to see whether they would like to adopt it on a wider scale for all CRPs. The Chair noted that the MEL platform is yet another example of a results-based management tool that should have been developed by the Consortium. Dryland Systems in this regard is leading the way ahead of the Consortium and other CRPs. This is a very positive CRP achievement from both a governance and management perspective.

The ISC members requested that the MEL platform is also used to collect success stories like the reporting tool used by CCAFS.

With regards to the discussion on CRP indicators, ISC Member Margaret Thalwitz requested the Research Program Coordinator to provide a list of proposed indicators deemed better suited for a system-CRP in comparison to the list of 34 indicators required by the Consortium.

6. Action points:

- ⇒ PMU to finalize the 5 members for the CCEE reference group.
- ⇒ To bring MEL platform to the attention of the Consortium Office and/or CEO for possible large scale adoption at CG/CRP level.
- ⇒ Research Program Coordinator to provide a list of [34 indicators from Consortium](#) and the ones PMU thinks are better suitable to Dryland Systems or a Systems-CRP.
- ⇒ Communication Program Coordinator to create a story template to be inserted in the MEL platform in order to capture the success stories.

7. Partnership and New Initiatives

Discussion: The CRP Director updated the ISC on the active participation of Dryland Systems in several strategic global events that took place during the first 2015 quarter, namely:



- (1) the [International Conference on Integrated Systems for Sustainable Intensification in Smallholder Agriculture](#) in Ibadan Nigeria, in collaboration with the two other systems CRPs (Humidtropics and AAS);
- (2) the [UNCCD 3rd Scientific conference](#), where the CRP Director delivered a key note speech and whose key message for adopting a systems approach was reverberated in the final UNCCD Conference report. Dryland Systems also organized a side event on the subject of Capacity to Innovate; an exhibition booth was made available through all conference proceedings and several Dryland Systems scientists' moderated and presented in conference panels.
- (3) Participation at the Global Soils Week was unfortunately cancelled due to the recent budget cut;

The upcoming 5th International Symposium on Framing Systems Design to be held in Montpellier in September 2015 will be utilised to link up with other CRPs.

The ISC Chair noted added that Dryland Systems must take the necessary precautions to properly engage with the GCARD process. Donors are insisting on having evidence of the formal manner in which CRPs engage and reflect that in the CRP proposal. The GCARD 3 process will involve about 150-200 participants and will provide opportunities to engage and discuss with national partners. The CGIAR Council approved a relatively limited budget for the process leading to the event and the event itself. It was reminded that part of the cost of national and regional consultations/dialogues should be paid out of existing CRPs budgets since, engaging with partners into dialogue for identifying priorities (or aligning with them) should be part of their normal activities. The Fund Council was not ready to pay again for this aspect of the GCARD process which should have been already factored into CRPs' budgets. The ISC Chair expressed concern over this issue, as the current Dryland Systems budget makes no provisions for the costs of engagement in the GCARD process.

Dryland Systems needs to demonstrate it is demand-driven and in this regard, we must be proactive and not wait for the CGAIR Council to tell us what to do. The CRP Director noted that flagships are being asked to report on their consultative meetings with partners; researchers are also already representing the program in such consultative processes. However, this process has affected the way partners perceive the CGAIR as not a reliable/credible partner.

7. Action points:

⇒ To find a way to explicitly indicate in the CRP budget, the funds allocated/utilized for partner consultations and/or GCARD process.

8. Fund Council Meeting

The CRP Director provided an overview of the upcoming [Fund Council Meeting](#) due to take place on 28-29 April 2015 in Bogor, Indonesia. FC members have requested a specific session on drylands (as opposed to the CRP Drylands) session in order to better understand on-going research and discuss priority research areas. The following people have been invited to present in this session:

1. **Maggie Gill** (ISPC): Describing the SRF and how it should focus CGIAR research in
2. **Wayne Powell** (CO): Presenting current cross-CRP CGIAR activities on dryland areas;
3. **Lindsey Stringer** (Univ. Leeds, Dryland Systems/Task Force): Sharing the Task Force's findings on mission critical research areas of dryland research. The TF paper produced to this end has already been submitted to the Consortium.



The CRP Director, Richard Thomas has been allotted 15 minutes to provide a response on mission critical research areas by the Dryland Systems CRP in the context of the CRP extension 2015-16. This is an opportunity for Dryland Systems to make its case to the Fund Council and perhaps even recover some additional funds. The CRP Director has already approached the other presenters in order to align a coherent message across all the presentation to lobby the FC in support of research for drylands. Wayne Powell has responded positively and also liaised with Maggie Gill. The CRP Director will rely on RMC and ISC members to help him identify success stories and fine-tuning his key message in the responses presentation to the Fund Council.

8. Action points:

⇒ RMC and ISC members to assist CRP director identifying success stories and in fine-tuning key message of his presentation to Fund Council.

9. Brief of Program Documents

9.1 Brief on partnership mobilization

9.2 Bilateral Project Portfolio Analysis

9.3 Capacity Development Strategy

Discussion: The Communications Program Coordinator briefed the ISC on the key partnership requirements articulated in the latest draft document [CGIAR Research Programs Second Call Guidance for Pre-Proposals](#). The CRP pre-proposals are required to indicate the key CRP strategic partners and what their role in the CRP, while the full proposal must include a partnership strategy that includes the following elements:

1. Partnerships at the discovery proof of concept and pilot level (if relevant) and scaling-up phase.
2. Engagement and dialogue with stakeholders (starting with the GCARD3 process). The pre-proposal should document whether and what (national) consultations have taken place; how the
3. Alignment with regional initiatives [such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP)].
4. Engagement with the private sector.
5. Development of partnerships based on key factors that can contribute to their success.
6. Typology of partners involved in research and management / governance.
7. Appropriate resourcing of partnerships.

The ISC members were asked to comment and suggest additional elements that would help the CRP deliver a solid partnership strategy. Their comments are summarized as follows:

1. When drafting the strategy, we should not lose sight of the fact that partnerships are about relationships and that effort must be put to facilitate interactions between scientists, farmers and partners in the ground.
2. The CRP must position itself clearly in terms of the research work it wants to do so that it can choose its research and funding partners strategically.
3. There is a need to overcome the negative perceptions of partners regarding the CGIAR/Centres not delivering on their promises (due to budget cuts). We can do this by being open and clear with the partners' about the current funding difficulties so that we can establish reasonable expectations. The matrix-type arrangement for delivering CRP activities by ALS-based flagships that was discussed during the S&I meeting should help in identifying gaps in resources and budgets and make better decisions on partnerships.
4. A suitable mechanism for implementing the partnerships strategy must be identified with clear deliverables by each phase of the program.



Given his considerable experience in the subject, the ISC Chair agreed to provide his input to the process of drafting the CRP pre-proposal section on partnerships and eventually the full partnerships strategy. The CRP Director will also nominate key RMC or ISC members who can contribute their valuable experience and knowledge of partners in the field in this regard. This however can only take place once the new CRP portfolio has been announced in May 2015 and the Consortium provides clear guidance as to who (which centres) will be leading the proposal development.

9.2 Bilateral Project Portfolio Analysis

The Research Program Coordinator gave an overview of bilateral projects mapped to the CRP in 2015, as well as their contribution to SLOs/IDOs. Most bilateral funds are currently focused on the WAS and ESA flagships. Some centres are not mapping projects at all. Regions such as CA will not have enough W3/Bilateral project mapped in 2016 and 2017. Instead of just mapping, there is a need to ensure (qualitatively) that bilateral projects are indeed part of the systems research work of the CRP. ISC comments to the CRP assessment of the bilateral projects portfolio included:

1. It's clear the program is donor-driven; donors are generally channelling money to Africa while drylands research is more needed in the other regions where donors are investing less.
2. There is a clear need for develop a strategy to target donors and convince them to fund regions where donor money is not flowing.
3. We have to be careful in keeping the balance between doing research and development since donors are now more interested in development.
4. We should look to include the kind of bilateral development projects that encompass a component for research and capacity building.

9.3 Capacity Development Strategy

The ISC commented that the [CD strategy](#) could be improved by including an introduction/executive summary section at the beginning of the document, explaining explicitly the answer to the questions: Capacity Development for who, how, and for what? Concern was expressed that the CD Strategy is written entirely from the internal CG perspective.

Although the document was found to be generally strong strategically speaking, it was deemed necessary to highlight its core messages at the beginning of the document vis-à-vis its main target audiences and beneficiaries. The other issue related to the lack of budget figures attached to the CD action plan. The Research Program Coordinator noted that some money has been allocated to the CD Working Group, however that money is very limited (given the current situation of several budget cuts suffered) and discussion are on-going as to how we can leverage partnerships in this regard.

The CRP is also continually reinforcing the message to Centres and researchers to earmark specific budget lines for CD, gender, communications, because they are not doing this. ICARDA DG noted that a key challenges relates to the fact that although we have good CD fund for target countries, unfortunately these funds are earmarked and therefore cannot be moved across to other areas.

Several ISC members noted the CRP and partner centres should be careful not to raise expectations to partners in terms of support for infrastructure development as a way of building capacity; The CRP can join forced with partners to lobby donors for funding in this regard, while it can offer to provide its research expertise, mentoring and training.



9. Action points:

- ⇒ CRP Director to propose people (from RMC and ISC) with strong knowledge of partners to contribute to pre-proposal section on partnerships (3 pages) after May 2015.
- ⇒ ISC to review guidelines on mapping bilateral projects.
- ⇒ PMU to revise the CD strategy based on ISC comments and review the executive summary in order to identify who, how, and for what the strategy is drafted.

10. Other Business

Discussion: The ISC Chair asked each participant and observer to share their views on how the meeting went and conduct a brief self-assessment of the discussions that took place. Participants agreed the discussions were very constructive and that they appreciated the openness and the frankness that each issue had been addressed. The ISC and other observers noted the tireless work and commitment of the CRP Director and his new team in making excellent progress in light of tremendous pressure.

The ISC discussed on the best options and decided to hold its next meeting in Istanbul, Turkey on Sunday, 25 October 2015. The venue was selected to minimize travel time and visa issues for participants to the meetings. The other reason was to take advantage of the fact that many donors and stakeholders will be attending the UNCCD Conference of Parties (COP) meeting in Turkey during this time.

10. Action points:

- ⇒ PMU to make the necessary arrangements for the next ISC meeting scheduled to take place in Turkey, on Sunday, 25 October 2015 following the Conference of Parties (COP) meeting.

Next meeting scheduled:

Sunday, 25 October 2015 in Turkey

Minutes taken by: Tana Lala-Prichard, Rima Dabbagh and Enrico Bonaiuti.

Document approved by: Harry Palmier