

RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

December 15, 2019

1. Introduction

ICARDA is committed to the adherence to high ethical standards in its research and respect for the principles of integrity, excellence in research, safety and well-being and respect for persons and ecosystems.

This Policy is subservient to ICARDA's Code of Conduct Policy. This Research Ethics Policy elaborates on the Code of Conduct Policy with respect to (i) principles underpinning all research activities conducted by ICARDA, and (2) the standards to which researchers and staff involved in ICARDA research projects and activities are required to adhere.

2. Scope and definitions

This Policy applies to all Research conducted by Researchers.

'Ethics' means the systems of moral principles or values, principles of right or good behavior in relating to others, and the rules and norms of conduct binding together members of a profession.

'Identifiable biospecimen' is a biospecimen for which the identity of the subject is or may readily be ascertained by the Researcher or associated with the biospecimen.

'Intervention' includes both physical procedures by which information or biospecimens are gathered (*e.g.*, venipuncture) and manipulations of the subject or the subject's environment that are performed for Research purposes.

'Interaction' includes communication or interpersonal contact between the Researcher and the subject.

'Outreach' means any activity by a Researcher that supports taking innovations to scale and enhancing the capacity development of third parties with whom ICARDA has partnerships.

'Personal Data' means any information relating to any identified or identifiable natural person; an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to any identifier such as name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier, or to one or more factors specific to the physical, psychological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural, or social identity of that natural person.¹

¹ More information about what constitutes personal data can be found at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/what-personal-data_en and [45 CFR § 46.102\(e\)\(4\)](#).

‘Research’ means (i) any original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding, which may include a systematic study, including research for development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge², and (ii) Outreach.

‘Researcher’ means any person any individual engaged in research or outreach under the auspices of ICARDA or on behalf of or in association with ICARDA such as an independent contractor, consultant or collaborator (paid or unpaid); a research student; a visiting or emeritus member of staff; interns, and staff working or volunteering for another institution on an ICARDA-commissioned research project or program led by ICARDA. ICARDA employees that are Researchers include researchers (both internationally and nationally recruited), research officers, research support staff and post-doctoral scientists, among others.

‘Research participant’ means a living human individual who is the focus of Research or about whom a Researcher conducting Research (1) obtains information or biospecimens through Intervention or Interaction with the individual and uses, studies, or analyzes the information or biospecimens, or (2) obtains, uses, studies, analyzes, or generates Personal Data or Identifiable Biospecimens.³

3. Principles

The principles listed here elaborate on the provisions of that Policy for the purposes of ethical research.

ICARDA as an organization and its research staff are required to adhere to the following principles. These principles set out the rights, responsibilities and values relevant to research. Some principles might appear self-evident and there might be some overlap but the ethical principles require all researchers to consider the broader and long-term consequences of their work.

Any acts or omissions that are contrary to these principles may constitute misconduct pursuant to ICARDA’s Disciplinary Procedures. The Annex to this Policy provides illustrations of acts or omissions that may be contrary to this Policy.

INTEGRITY

Independence and Impartiality: ICARDA’s researchers must comply with all legal and ethical requirements relevant to their field of study. They will declare any potential or actual conflicts of interest that might jeopardize the integrity of the methodology or the outputs of research and, where necessary, take steps to resolve them.

Honesty: ICARDA will work to create and maintain a culture of research that fosters and supports honesty in research. Researchers will be honest in relation to their own research and that of others.

² Definition inspired in part by definitions for the term “research” as present in UK Research Assessment Exercise [UK Research Assessment Exercise 2008](#) (2008) and US Office for Human Research Protections guidance document [Engagement of Institutions in Human Subjects Research](#) (2008).

³ This defined term reflects the definition of the term “human subject” under [45 CFR § 46.102\(e\)\(1\)](#).

They will do their utmost to ensure the accuracy of data and results, acknowledge the contribution of others and neither engage in misconduct nor conceal it.

Accountability: ICARDA researchers will recognize that in and through their work they are ultimately accountable to the general public for their actions and will act accordingly. They will ensure that any research undertaken complies with any agreements, terms and conditions relating to the project, and allows for proper governance and transparency. Researchers will ensure that reporting results serve and do not compromise the initial goals and purpose of their research. Researchers will follow the requirements and guidance of any professional bodies in their field of research.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Competence: Researchers must strive to carry out research that is of relevance to their field of work and is of high quality with clear developmental and practical value. ICARDA provides adequate training and opportunities for development for its researchers and the research managers ensure that researchers under their supervision have the necessary resources to enable them to conduct research to the required standards. Research managers will ensure that the right competence is assigned to research activities. Researchers ensure that they have the necessary skills and resources to carry out research themselves or through collaboration with specialists in relevant fields. They will report and resolve any unmet needs that they identify.

Co-operation: ICARDA's researchers will promote the open exchange of ideas, research methods, data and results and their discussion, scrutiny and debate, subject to any considerations of confidentiality. This includes presenting to and sharing research results with research participants.

SAFETY AND WELL-BEING FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCHERS

Avoiding harm and contributing to well-being: ICARDA researchers will ensure the dignity, rights and safety of groups and individuals involved in research, including research participants, research staff and fellow researchers. Researchers will make sure that their research is not detrimental to well-being. This goes beyond strict obligations to include acts of kindness and compassion. They will report and address any concerns relating to the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of those involved in research.

RESPECT FOR PERSONS AND ECOSYSTEMS

Cultural sensitivity: ICARDA will be sensitive to the values and cultures of partner organizations in the countries where ICARDA has offices and research projects. Researchers will be sensitive to the values and cultures of the groups being studied, and how this may affect research participants' understanding of the purpose and nature of research. In particular, researchers need to take account of differences in culture, local behavior and norms, religious beliefs and practices, sexual orientation, gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity, and other social differences such as class, when planning studies and communicating findings. Ethical and political issues relating to disparities in wealth, power, and political-economic interests are taken into account in planning research projects. Researchers will not use offensive language or express arrogance towards the knowledge of their study population.

Respect for local knowledge: Researchers seek to integrate and respect views of third parties, including research participants, in the research design and implementation of activities. They recognize and support the efforts of indigenous groups and communities to produce, store and disseminate their own knowledge and conserve and improve genetic resources, especially women and marginalized groups and individuals, and do not assume the superiority of one knowledge system over another (e.g., scientific over indigenous).

Fair and equitable sharing. Researchers recognize the obligation, as enshrined in international treaties, to the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the Researcher's use of genetic material.

Voluntary participation: Research participants have the right to consent to participate, withdraw from, or refuse to take part in research. All research participants have the right to withdraw individual data collected from them at any point without fear of penalty. They will be informed by researchers about their rights. Participation in research will be free from external pressure. Information on the research that might affect their willingness to participate will not be withheld from research participants, except as provided for under the Human Research Protection Program and Institutional Review Board Policy and Procedure Manual on an exception basis.

Equitable participation. Researchers will ensure the selection of Research participants is equitable and not subject to any form of coercion or undue influence.

Openness: The project leaders will ensure that the researchers and research participants are fully informed about the purpose, methods, and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails, and any risks/benefits to them and others induced by the research.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Personal data, including photographs and films, will not be disclosed/published without participants' consent so that the confidentiality of research participants' data is respected.

Respect for ecosystems: Researchers will ensure that their research respects ecosystems, biodiversity and natural resources when designing and conducting research. Researchers will set up research protocols that will avoid or reduce potential harm to their study sites and studied ecosystems.

4. Obligations and Responsibilities

This section defines the obligations of all parties under this Policy.

ICARDA recognizes that the responsibility for ethical conduct first lies with individual researchers. However, the Center is responsible for creating a favorable working environment and organizational culture that promotes the respect for ethical research principles. In addition, the Center has an

obligation to provide adequate human, financial and institutional resources for researchers to comply with the principles.

Where a research funding body, through its contract with ICARDA, imposes its own research ethics policies and requirements on ICARDA and those introduce a higher standard of conduct, those policies and requirements shall take precedence over this Policy and ICARDA's Code of Conduct Policy.

Researchers must:

- conduct and communicate research in accordance with this Policy and ICARDA's Guidelines on Production and Dissemination of Information Products; and
- report instances of behavior by fellow ICARDA researchers that they reasonably believe constitute research misconduct, in accordance with ICARDA's Whistle-Blowing Policy. A lack of a Researcher's adherence to this Policy's Principles may constitute misconduct.

ICARDA must:

- Develop, and periodically review, procedures for:
 - Review and approval of proposed Research projects,
 - Reporting complaints relating to research projects,
 - Investigating and determining allegations of research misconduct,
 - Handling personal data relating to research participants, and
 - Retention and archiving of research data and results.
- Provide training and mentoring in research ethics to Researchers and managing research data and those involved in investigating research misconduct at ICARDA; and
- Adequately resource the implementation of this Policy and the Guidelines on Production and Dissemination of Information Products.

5. Implementation of research projects

RESEARCH DESIGN

When designing research projects, ICARDA researchers will ensure that:

- The proposed research addresses pertinent questions and is designed either to add to existing knowledge about the subject in question, to develop methods to research into it or to apply existing knowledge and methods in Outreach activities;
- The design of the study is appropriate for the questions being asked and addresses the most important potential sources of bias;

- All necessary skills and experience will be available to carry out the proposed research, in the proposed research team or through collaboration with specialists in relevant fields;
- Sufficient resources will be available to carry out the proposed research and that these resources meet all relevant standards;
- National ethical clearance has been obtained where the field work will be carried out, if this is required
- Any issues relating to the above are resolved as far as possible prior to the start of the research;
- To the extent the Research is animal research, the Research shall comply with the ten Fundamental Principles of the [Basel Declaration](#) of November 29, 2010; and
- To the extent the Research will include complex or sensitive Interaction or Intervention with any Research Participant, the Research shall comply, with the [Declaration of Helsinki](#) of October 2013 (to the extent the Declaration's statement can be applied to the Research in question).

ICARDA Researchers will review, with respect to the proposed research project, the potential risks to ICARDA, the research, the health, safety and well-being of researchers and research participants with the assistance of the Legal Counsel where required.

Where the design of a study has been approved under this Policy and procedures, the researchers will ensure that any subsequent alterations to the design are subject to appropriate review to determine that they will not compromise the integrity of the research.

ICARDA will set up systems to ensure that when there are risks that proposed research or results may be misused for purposes that are illegal or harmful, those risks are identified and addressed. ICARDA will make these systems known to researchers and provide guidance and support to researchers where such risks are identified.

Researchers will try to anticipate any risks that the proposed research might produce results that could be misused for purposes that are illegal or harmful. Researchers will report any risks to, and seek guidance from, the appropriate person(s) at ICARDA and take action to minimize those risks.

COLLABORATIVE WORKING

ICARDA's researchers will pay particular attention to additional legal and ethical requirements and other guidelines that may apply in the countries where ICARDA conducts research and shall seek guidance from the Legal Counsel and the relevant ICARDA country manager where required.

ICARDA will assist partner organizations to ensure the agreement of, and compliance with, common standards and procedures for the conduct of collaborative research, including the resolution of any issues or problems that might arise and the investigation of any allegations of misconduct in research if they occur.

Researchers will promote the meaningful involvement of all relevant parties, especially research participants, in the design and implementation of research, to foster the respect for local knowledge, ethics and culture.

Researchers will be aware of the standards and procedures for the conduct of research followed by any organizations involved in collaborative research that they are undertaking. They will also be aware of any contractual requirements involving partner organizations, seeking guidance and assistance where necessary and reporting any concerns or irregularities to the appropriate person(s) as soon as they become aware of them.

Researchers will try to anticipate any issues that might arise as a result of working collaboratively and agree jointly in advance how they might be addressed, communicating any decisions to all members of the research team. In particular, agreement will be sought on the specific roles of the researchers involved in the project and on issues relating to intellectual property, publication, and the attribution of authorship, recognizing that, subject to legal and ethical requirements, roles and contributions may change during the time span of the research.

REPORTING AND DISSEMINATING RESULTS

ICARDA's researchers will ensure the prompt publication and dissemination of research in accordance with ICARDA's Guidelines on Production and Dissemination of Information Products.

RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

The management of research data at ICARDA will follow the CGIAR Open Access and Data Management Policy, the CGIAR Open Access and Data Management Implementation Guidelines and the CGIAR Principles on the Management of Intellectual Assets.

Researchers shall ensure that research data is accompanied by appropriate metadata and associated documents for archiving. All research data shall be kept in a durable, indexed and retrievable form. Researchers shall ensure they take all necessary measures to store the data properly and protect securely against any loss, alterations or unauthorized disclosure. Researchers shall store all research data in accordance with the Guidelines on Production and Dissemination of Information Products.

Researchers shall ensure that fully informed consent for ICARDA to use their personal data is received from the Research participant(s) or their legal authorized representatives. Fully informed consent shall be documented in writing, either through signature or a written declaration from a Researcher, and witnessed, that verbal consent was received.

Personal data collected Research participants, including through the use of identifiable codes, shall be treated as confidential and shall not be published or made available to any third parties. Transfer of any such information to any third party shall require the prior, written, express and fully informed consent of individual(s) to share such information with that third party. When such consent is provided, such information may be shared by ICARDA with the third party, subject to ICARDA and that third party entering into a data sharing agreement. Such a data sharing agreement shall legally bind

the third party to use the personal data in a manner fully consistent with the consent that has been provided.

Aggregated, fully anonymized data shall not require the prior, the consent of the Research participants from whom it was collected.

SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS AND INTERNS

ICARDA will promote and maintain an environment for research of high ethical standard, learning and exchange of ideas.

ICARDA will provide sufficient resources for researchers to ensure supervision of students and interns in conditions that do not harm them or threaten their safety and that allow students and interns to build their skills and knowledge during the time of their internship.

Researchers will provide clear direction and supervision of students and interns, inform them of this Policy and related guidelines and procedures, and provide them with the necessary resources and training to comply with it.

Researchers shall not take on more students and interns than they can effectively supervise and coach.

6. Implementation and review of this Policy

This Policy is adopted by the ICARDA Board of Trustees on the date specified below the Policy's title.

The Director General shall establish a Research Ethics Committee, which shall review and consider for approval certain ICARDA Research proposals, procedures, protocols and Research outputs with a view to ensuring the compliance of these with this Policy.

This Policy shall be reviewed no less than every three years by the Director General or his or her designate. The outcome of that review will be reported to the Finance and Audit Committee. Any amendment to this Policy shall require the approval of the Board of Trustees.

Annex

Illustrations of potential misconduct

1. **Fabrication:** e.g., the creation of fictitious data, evidence, documentation or results and recording them.
2. **Falsification:** e.g., the manipulation or selection of data, evidence, results, imagery or documentation such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
3. **Misrepresentation:** This may include:
 - a) **Misrepresentation of data:** e.g., the undisclosed suppression of evidence or findings, or the deliberate or negligent presentation of a flawed interpretation of data;
 - b) **Misrepresentation of interests:** e.g., the failure to disclose the interests of the researcher or of the funder of the research;
 - c) **Misrepresentation** by the researcher of their qualifications or experience;
 - d) **Misrepresentation of involvement:** e.g., the inappropriate or unjustified claim by a researcher to authorship or attribution, or the denial of others' rights to authorship or attribution; and
 - e) **Misrepresentation of publication:** e.g., the undisclosed duplication of publication or undisclosed duplicate submission of works for publication, where this involves deception or the deliberate circumvention of publishers' or funders' policies.
4. **Plagiarism:** the misappropriation or use of the ideas, processes, results, words, other intellectual property or any other work (written or otherwise) of others without appropriate acknowledgement or permission.
5. **Mismanagement of research data/results:** the failure to ensure that research data, evidence and research results are preserved and accessible for a reasonable period after the completion of research, in accordance with ICARDA's data management policies and funders' requirements.
6. **Breach of duty of care:** This may occur where the researcher deliberately, recklessly or negligently:
 - a) Discloses improperly the identity of research participants, or information provided by research participants, without their consent or in breach of confidence. Particular care must be taken when conducting research involving human participants or privileged or personal data;
 - b) Places research participants and researchers at risk of harm, without their prior consent and without appropriate safeguards;
 - c) Induces physical or mental harm to research participants, research colleagues or partners through his/her behavior, e.g. obstructs others' research activities, or exercises undue mental pressure through moral harassment;

- d) Fails to take reasonable care to ensure the informed consent of research participants;
- e) Fails to observe legal, regulatory, contractual or ethical requirements, and obligations to research funders; or
- f) Conducts themselves improperly in the peer review of applications or publications: e.g. through the gross misrepresentation of the content of material; inadequate disclosure of limited competence; or the abuse of material provided in confidence for peer review.

Conduct or performance by a researcher that falls into at least one of the above categories will be research misconduct if it involves deliberate intent, negligence or recklessness. Research misconduct includes acts of omission as well as acts of commission. However, research misconduct does not include:

- Genuine academic disagreements, e.g. over research methodology; or
- Honest errors or mistakes, where no negligence, recklessness or deliberate intention is involved.

Researchers who detect errors or mistakes in their research are expected to make all reasonable efforts to rectify them, e.g., by publication of a correction or retraction. Deliberate failure to rectify research errors will be treated as misrepresentation.