

Date: 11 October 2015

Location: Istanbul, Turkey

5th Meeting Research Management Committee

In attendance:

No.	Name	Institution	CRP-DS/Position
1	Richard Thomas	CRP-DS	CRP Director, RMC Chair, SC Ex Officio Member
2	Andrew Noble	ICARDA	Center Coordinator
3	Anthony M. Whitbread	ICRISAT	Center Coordinator - TF Internal Member
4	Mauricio Bellon	Bioversity	Center Coordinator - Gender focal point - Data Manager focal point
5	Mohinder Kadian	CIP	Center Coordinator- Representative
6	Jan de Leeuw	ICRAF	Center Coordinator - Center Focal Point for E&SA - TF Internal Member
7	Everisto Mapedza	IWMI	Center Coordinator - Gender focal point - Data Manager focal point - TF Internal Member
8	Antoine Kalinganire	ICRAF	WAS&DS - Flagship Project Coordinator
9	Hichem Ben Salem	ICARDA	NA&WA - Flagship Project Coordinator
10	Sikhalazo Dube	ILRI	E&SA - Flagship Project Coordinator
11	Theib Oweis	ICARDA	CA - Flagship Project Coordinator

Apologies:

No.	Name	Institution	CRP-DS/Position
1	Philippe Monneveux	CIP	Center Coordinator
2	Polly Ericksen	ILRI	Center Coordinator- Gender focal point
3	Shalander Kumar	ICRISAT	SA- Flagship Project Coordinator -Jodhpur, Barmer and Jaiselmer districts, Rajasthan (India)

Observers:

No.	Name	Institution	CRP-DS/Position
1	Enrico Bonaiuti	CRP-DS	Research Program Coordinator
2	Rima Dabbagh	CRP-DS	Finance Program Coordinator
3	Sara Jani	CRP-DS	Program Administrator
4	Tana Lala-Pritchard	CRP-DS	Communications Program Coordinator

Announcements

- Andrew Noble joined ICARDA as Deputy Director General for Research and now represents ICARDA in CRP-DS as Center Coordinator.

Agenda points

1. Introduction

1.1. Welcome & introduction.

Meeting Minutes

1.2. Approval of Agenda.

1.3. Review of the 4th RMC minutes action points

1.1 Summary: CRP Director welcomed all RMC members and introduced the newest member, Dr. Andrew Noble, who joined ICARDA as Deputy Director General for Research and will represent his centre in the RMC as Center Coordinator. The CRP Director provided a quick update on the DCLAS pre-proposal writing process and ISPC feedback on the need to significantly improve/rewrite the proposal. Due to decision to merge the three CRPs to form DCLAS in the next phase, the CRP Director noted that the RMC needs to discuss and agree on the role of the Task Force (TF) in 2016. One possibility outlined was to involve TF in the new CRP DCLAS proposal and/or synthesis or prioritization of drylands research (where and how to target/focus).

1.2 Summary: The 5th RMC agenda was approved. However, RMC members agreed to keep the option of skipping certain items in order address only the priority issues in light of the limited time available and number of items packed in the one-day meeting agenda.

1.3 Summary: All action points items from the 4th RMC meeting have been accomplished, with two exceptions: The Action point on revising the impact pathway has been partially implemented due to anticipated changes linked to merger of CRP-DS into DCLAS. The action point for PMU to put together partnerships and fundraising strategy for CRP-DS specifically was put on hold due to decision to merge with two other CRPs (Dryland Cereals and Grain Legumes) into the new phase II CRP on DCLAS and developing the DCLAS pre-proposal and full proposals, which includes requirement for partnerships. Therefore, all partnership and fundraising efforts must be oriented under the umbrella of DCLAS. The CRP Director was able to raise a significant amount of funds (close to 0.5 million Euros) from GIZ, but unfortunately those funds were lost due to lack of response from ICRAF that was supposed to lead the proposal writing effort to access those funds. This was a missed opportunity, but there is hope to apply again next year. The good news however is that from Jan 2016, GIZ has decided to transfer the management of the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative to CRP-DS. Another opportunity lies with the EAT group from Norway, which CRP Director met in New York during the 70th Summit of UNGA. Their work focuses on increasing food production and nutrition quality, so we need to find ways to engage them in the CRP work. The key message stemming from that meeting is that production systems in drylands must be diversified and modernized!

Fundraising will be critical for the continuation of current CRP activities, and more importantly DCLAS activities in the future as W1/W2 funds will continue to diminish. The CRP Director had a meeting with donors in Hague, where it became clear that the Dutch (currently a key W1/W2 donor to CRP-DS) are moving to the concept of tied-aid; that is enable Dutch companies to benefit from development aid. The Dutch are also very much interested in funding climate change proposals that involve the private sector; this is something to keep in mind for DCLAS. There are threats and opportunities to engaging the private sector for scaling out purposes, however more needs to be done to better understand private sector engagement in the CRPs in the future.

Another drastic budget cut is anticipated to take place within 2015, but no information is available yet as to how this will impact CRP activities. Fundraising efforts must be focused on W3/bilateral funds, which require the development of excellent concept notes for bilateral projects to target specific donors. Traditional donors are feeling disillusioned with the CGIAR, and as a result are moving funds always from W1/W2 and into W3/bilateral. New partnerships and donors must be sought out in addition to old ones in order to make up for the shortfall in funding.

The CRP Commissioned External Evaluation (CCEE) is about to be finalized and the final report will be available within October 2015. The CRP decided to cut some of the planned CCEE trips in order to save funds and as evaluation became irrelevant due to merger with the other two CRPs

Meeting Minutes

into DCLAS. Overall, we anticipate the CCEE evaluation to be fair, positive, and cognizant of the many improvements that have taken place in CRP-DS with the arrival of the new PMU team. Some RMC members expressed concern that CCEE recommendations are not compatible with the limited resources available to the CRP/centers.

Action points:

- ⇒ 1. PMU to share with RMC final CCEE report.
- ⇒ 2. PMU and RMC to draft management response to CCEE final report and recommendations

2. Governance

- 2.1. Change in Coordination
- 2.2 Change in CRP Structure

2.1 Summary: Two Key position changes have taken place since the last RMC meeting: Andrew Noble replaced Paul Vlek as ICARCA Center Coordinator and Lance Robinson replaces Mohamed Said Action Site Coordinator for the Marsabit, Yebello- East Shewa in the ESA region.

Considering the current uncertain budget environment and another budget cut likely to take place within 2015, CRP Director has written a letter to the board emphasize the need to maintain a viable CRP for drylands. Another budget cut will significantly cripple the program. We taken drastic actions and have already reduced activities and cut actions sites; a new budget cut will make it very hard to maintain key program staff. In the past, the Board has ignored CRP-DS letters of this kind. There are also some centres argue that low performers will have to be cut out, but PMU and CRP director are confident that with the many management and research work improvements that have taken place, we are in better footing to weather the storm than we were one year ago. Key facts related to current CRP-DS budget were presented by the CRP-DS Research Program Coordinator:

- Significant budget reduction imposed on CRPs during 2015, and CRP-DS in particular.
- Current available funds for coordination: 740,000 USD
- Last year of CRP should focus all available funds on research on the ground.
- Direct funding to site coordinators (in 2015 only in ESA) with a share of 20% (60,000 USD/288,000 USD).
- In anticipation of another budget cut and a worst-case scenario, the PMU has applied a 35% budget cut to the 2016 POWB (decreasing heavily funds allocated to the Overarching and eliminating field activities on the basis of objective criteria.
- This cut enables the CRP-DS to sit on a 3.5 million contingency, should the anticipated budget cut by the end of 2015 is not applied.

In order to save costs, the following proposition was discussed:

- CRP-DS has moved to global system flagships based on ALS, instead of regional silos
- The RMC to be made up of 8 Center Coordinators and CRP Director, thus removing the Flagship Coordinators since these roles are not longer relevant with shift to ALS-based flagship approach.
- RMC and SC will have no face-to-face meetings in 2016 and will conduct its business via video-conference.
- Center Coordinators from the 4 Major Center Partners (ICARDA, ICRISAT ICRAF and ILRI determined on the basis of research portfolio allocations/contribution inclusive of W1/W2/W3/Bilateral funds) will take leadership of system synthesis with direct linkages with their respective site coordinators.

- Allocate the 740,000 USD coordination fund originally distributed amongst 5 regional flagships (148,000 USD each) in the following manner: 150,000 for Major Centers and 30,000 to Minor Centres.
- Request the four major centers to provide a clear set of deliverables (synthesis reports, etc.) for the 150,000 USD allocated in coordination funds.

The CRP Director clarified that in order for coordination and synthesis work to be done properly in the last year of the CRP, Dryland System must be able to buy proper staff time from the big centers and the centers must make a full commitment to deliver and be accountable for the coordination funds received. Centers and PMU must work together to define clear expected deliverables for the coordination money allocated to them. RMC members proposed examples of such deliverable such as synthesis systems work in the form of a Special Issue (ICRISAT), writeshop and book on drylands and SDGs (ICRAF), and so forth to be considered as key CRP capitalization activities 2016.

CRP Director also briefed RMC members on the result of IAU audit, noting the positive report received. Last year, CRP-DS risked its own existence due to an earlier poor audit report. The program has turned the tide with the new IAU audit report, which notes that significant improvements made in the governance and management of the CRP. To this end, the PMU produced several governance and management documents that were reviewed by the IAU auditors. There are still some financial management issues (with the lead center but also others) in terms of handling PPAs, overheads, etc. There is still an issue in terms of monitoring performances under sub-contracts. These however are not CRP-specific issues and are linked to a general problem observed across the CGIAR/CG centers system with regards to lack of transparent processes and procedures in place. The positive IAU report will now be use to make a better case for funding and supporting CRP- DS.

2.2 Summary: During the last Fund Council Meeting, there was recognitions that CRP - DS has turned around and responded positively to all previous criticism. This is also evident in the ISPC comments to DCLAS pre-proposal. During the last Science and Implementation meetings that took place in April 2015 in India, a decision was taken to re-organize the CRP flagship structure by three groupings of major Agricultural Livelihood Systems (ALS) as opposed to region-based flagships structures. The rationale for this move was to strengthen the strategic focus of research activities, enable more inter-disciplinary collaboration across centers; reduce management/transaction costs and gain efficiencies. Some people/centers are not very comfortable with these changes, and have expressed concern over the futility of making the shift to ALS in view of 2016 being the last year of CRP-DS and changes anticipated with the DCLAS merger. The PMU and CRP Director have recognized these concerns, but note that these changes are necessary to signal the willingness of CRP-DS to make hard choices and adapt early and ahead of others to phase II donor requirements, as well as encourage centers to rise above their individual interest for conducting research in regions that are their comfort zone.

With regards to the DCLAS pre-proposal process, several RMC members expressed concern with regards to the future and identity of this new proposed CRP not being very clear. The fundamental issue with DCLAS is the lack of clarity as to it being a commodity-CRP or drylands CRP. This CRP identity issue must be clearly resolved. Some donors are ok with the commodity approach, and yet that also need to be informed and educated about the importance of moving away from commodity approach in order to create better opportunities for drylands through research and value chain development (example was brought by ICRISAT Center Coordinator regarding meeting with Gates Foundation on this subject). DCLAS proposed commodity work must be strategically embedded in system research/value chain development work in order to effectively respond to donor requirements for linking research to development.

The other concerns related to systems and livelihoods perspectives being shortchanged in DCLAS, and more general in the whole CRP portfolio. There is a danger that the CGIAR is paying lip service to 'the systems' approach. Although the CGIAR/CG centers do have some skills and capacities in systems work/research; the RMC recognized that a critical element to building those skills and capacities to conduct proper systems work in the next CRP portfolio (including DCLAS) will be to attract and engage external systems expertise. Employment and employability, and capacity of people in drylands are also critical concepts being currently empathized by donors due to the current global migrant crisis (mostly coming from poor conflict-ridden drylands), therefore these elements need to be carefully built into the livelihood research aspect of DCLAS.

Another discussion point raised related to developing/implementing a more analytics approach to engaging the private sector in DCLAS, in order to understand the diversity of the private sector, how and where to work with it, understand their incentives so that the research offer can be matched with private sector demands and incentives. For example, the private sector is acutely aware of the water issue (which is even more critical than climate change adaptation). Moreover, local markets are also very much neglected in research analysis, yet they have the greatest impact on local communities. In the future, the private sector local markets will be engines of economic growth and development and therefore we cannot afford to ignore them if research is to have the desired impact. Another critical actor to be engaged is also civil society.

Several RMC members expressed strong views with regards to the ALS not being reflected very much in the DCLAS pre-proposal, whereas ALS are what agriculture development is really about. On the other hand, the livestock element is missing in the DCLAS pre-proposal, despite ILRI being part of the pre-proposal writing team and lead of the DCLAS flagships.

It is worthwhile to use the last year of CRP-DS as a way to transition CRP-DS systems work and influence DCLAS to holistically adopt a system approach. It is clear that breeders are not very comfortable with systems work, but the ISPC comments are loud and clear that the systems approach is the way forward.

Action points:

- ⇒ 1. RMC to send letter to DCLAS with concerns. PMU will put together a draft and circulate to members for review and finalization.
- ⇒ 2. PMU and Finance Program Coordinator to revise current budget terminology so that Contingency Funds are appropriately called Committed Funds in order to avoid losing funds at the end of the year.
- ⇒ 3. PMU to share final IAU audit report with the RMC

3. Program Status

- 3.1. Six-Months reporting: scientific outputs generated during 2015 by each FC
- 3.2. PMU 6-months reporting
- 3.3 S&I Meeting and CCEE Recommendations

3.1 Summary: Presentations by each flagship coordinators were followed by separate discussions, as outlined below:

- Key RMC comments following presentation by NAWA focused mostly on ensuring the integration of systems approach work into the new CRP DCLAS; balancing the systems work with the commodity approach that is currently dominating DCLAS, not losing focus of the drylands, and

including livestock and trees. There's concern that dissenting voices (from ICARDA) in DCLAS are not being listened to. ICRAF representative noted that the introductory chapters in DCLAS lack vision and fail to take into account the complexities of having to manage a system- CRP made up of many partners and working on system, they are just about management. RMC members noted that ICRISAT, which is used to managing smaller and less complex CRPs must take into account the experience of Dryland Systems and put it to good use in DCLAS.

IWMI representative noted that solutions to shaping DCLAS as a strong and robust CRP must be proposed in response to the ISPC comments on the DCLAS pre-proposal. Bioversity's representative added that the Dryland Systems learning and knowledge synthesis must be build upon and reflected in DCLAS.

Several RMC members noted DCLAS should avoid tendencies to be defensive about the strongly worded ISPC comments. We need a new approach to failure, in terms of what we learn from it and how we move on, instead of disregarding the experience all together. After all, this is what research is all about, trying and failing, until one succeeds. The systems work is challenging, which is even more reason to ensure people who understand and have experience with systems work to be closely involved in designing the new DCLAS CRP. ICARDA representative expresses concern that 2 out of the 7 DCLAS flagships reflect systems thinking, and this has to be addressed. Over the past year, Dryland Systems has made remarkable progress in turning things around, and this experience has to be duly reflected in the new DCLAS CRP.

- Key RMC comments following ESA flagship presentation focused on recognition that the new ESA flagship coordinator has done a good job in pulling together a flagship that was once considered be pretty loose and intangible. Common budgeting with partners is key in this regard, noted the ESA flagship coordinator. However, the budget cuts make it difficult to go back and re-adjust activities with the partners. Discussion then followed on the best way in which decisions to fund certain research activities and not others must be made at IRT level, via consensus or via stronger responsibility/power given to the flagship coordinator.

It was acknowledged that the flagships leader should have a stronger say in terms of which research activities are funded by W1/W2 funds, provided they meet relevant criteria. The power should rest with the Flagship coordinator, while the action site coordinator should merely orchestrate the flagship vision.

Scientists should exercise care in providing all the necessary POWB2016 information required in the MEL platform, in order not to risk losing budget/support for strategic and quality research activities. The assumption is that once information is entered in the MEL platform, all issues have been discussed and agreed on at flagship level.

- Key RMC comments following CA flagship presentation focused on concerns raised with regards to the quality and quantity of scientific outputs coming out of this flagship. ICARDA DDG noted his concern that some CA activities double under both WLE and Dryland Systems. IWMI representative noted that there's a disjointed narrative about the rationale for fitting in certain CA work and collaboration under both these CRPs. Acknowledging the issue of the language barrier in this region, the Dryland Systems Director noted his concern about the quality of outputs from Central Asia, and the limited number of scientific papers in English. Salinity is an extremely important issue affecting this region, however there needs to be a consolidation around key themes to produce more, varied and quality papers. ICRAF representative noted that the CA is very insular and wondered if the RMC can help link the CA scientists to the wider scientific network in order to foster greater collaboration and get their results out. The CA flagship

coordinator noted that several publications are in the pipeline this year in order to make up for the limited number of publications last year, due to underreporting and or publication in the Russian language, making those inaccessible to the wider scientific community. ICARDA DDG/Research asserted that in 2015, the center must ensure clear evidence of progress and research outputs in this ICARDA-led flagship, and engage better with other CG partners (Bioversity, ICRAF) in this region.

- Key RMC comments following SA flagship presentation focused on the subject of Innovation Platforms (IPs). Several RMC members expressed doubt in terms of understanding the workings, the impact and effectiveness of IPs. Scientific literature on IPs is 30 years old, and its perhaps time to do a critical review of the IP approach to scaling out research. IPs have been heralded as the magic tool to solve the researcher's problem to making science relevant to development issues, but do we really know how effective this approach is. Perhaps this is a good opportunity to conduct a Dryland Systems synthesis activity on the effectiveness of IPs, next year.

3.2 Summary: The Finance Program Coordinator presented a 2015 semi-annual financial brief. Key comments following this presentation focused on the need to do a critical review of bilateral projects mapped to CRPs, to make sure they fit with the overall Dryland Systems vision, and also empowering the flagship coordinator to have a greater say in what gets mapped or not.

The Research program Coordinator delivered a brief presentation of the POWB2016 currently reflected in the MEL platform, which now enables the CRP to manage for results in a more transparent and accountable fashion, while avoiding double counting. However, flagship coordinators and scientists must ensure all relevant information and deliverables are uploaded in a timely fashion in the MEL platform in order to enable timely and quality management and reporting of all CRP deliverables and scientific outputs. The information collected through the MEL platform, is also useful in evaluation the performance of and deliverables by each scientist/centre/flagship. In addition, the qualitative remarks of PMU's Agricultural Livelihood System Expert must be taken on by flagship coordinators and applied/enforced with the relevant scientists. It was noted that the Consortium uses publications and data set as key deliverables/outputs to judge and evaluate the value for money on W1/W2 investments made through each CRPs. Dryland Systems has been and continues to be penalized not by the lack of scientific output per se, but the lack of proper attribution and acknowledgment of that scientific output to the CRP.

The PMU/Communications Program Coordinator has developed a number of guidance documents (Branding Guidelines, Acknowledgment Language, etc.) to ensure compliance in this regard; however, efforts in this regard are often met with either resistance and or negligence on the part of scientists and communications staff. This is a critical issue that must be addressed especially as 2015/2016 are important for establishing the Dryland Systems legacy in terms of its scientific contributions. Moreover, this may affect funding in 2016 and donor interest in drylands research during phase II CRPs.

3.3 Summary: Discussion point about S&I meeting was skipped as the subject is already clear to all participants and no new updates are required. Following presentation of key CCEE recommendations stemming from their final report, some RMC members commented that some of the recommendations may be difficult to implement as in the current climate of budget cuts it is likely we will not have the proper resources to implement them. There should be some prioritization as to which recommendations the CRP should focus on implementing. The CCEE Oversight Committee and PMU will provide a written response to the CCEE final report and recommendations. In the meantime, the CRP Director noted that CRP DS should be generally

Meeting Minutes

happy with the CCEE evaluation, as it is fairly positive and cognizant of the impressive efforts by the PMU/ Overarching Program to turn things around. Also the involvement of the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative has been a proactive step on the part of the CRP DS to bring in more social science analysis in certain aspects of systems research.

Action points:

- ⇒ 1. At planning level, the Flagship coordinator must be empowered to approve activities, not the side coordinator who must simply execute flagship vision. This should also be reflecting in the approval work flow in the MEL platform.
- ⇒ 2. RMC members (supported by PMU) to send out strong statement to their respective centre scientists ensure compliance with Dryland Systems branding/acknowledgment requirements for all their scientific and communications outputs, including bilateral projects.
- ⇒ 3. Flagship and centres coordinators must work to raise the awareness of scientists to ensure compliance with Dryland Systems branding/acknowledgment requirements for all their scientific and communications outputs.
- ⇒ 4. The CCEE Oversight Committee and PMU will provide a written response to the CCEE final report and recommendations.

4. 2016 Bilateral Portofolio

- 4.1. Centres portofolio - changes
- 4.2 ICRAF EU-IFAD project update and budget allocations

4.1 Summary: In the interest of time, participants decided not to discuss this point further as the picture of the changes were pretty clear to everyone

4.2 Summary: Since the ICRAF-led EU-IFAD project is a special case bilateral project, the Research Management Coordinator provided an overview of the budget issues regarding cover of the overheads gap created due to a series of budget cuts that have taken place this year for CRP DS. The first CRP budget cut was 50%, followed by a second cut of 19% and an anticipated third cut of 35% at the end of October. The current situation created by these cuts means that CRP DS cannot support the program in 2017 and ICRAF/Partners should rely on other W1/W2 funds from other CRPs to cover the overheads. The EU component of this project has financial implications on the CRP and overhead gaps on centres. Based on a gentlemen's agreement between ICARDA and ICRAF DGs, ICRAF must be paid for coordination of the project as soon as contract with the EU is signed and the EU overheads budget lines of this project must be distribute accordingly to each partners centre participating in the project. ICRISAT as lead center of DCLAS should ultimately decide whether the EU-IFAD project will be taken on and mapped to DCLAS.

The current funds available after all budget cuts for 2016 to cover the overhead costs associated with the EU-IFAD project are USD 182,547, with the direct cost share on the total being applied.

Discussion of this point focused on whether the issue of covering the overheads of the EU-IFAD project was a CRP or an ICRAF issue, and whether the current situation could be construed as a matter of the CRP actually subsidizing a specific bilateral project to the privilege of the four partner centres participating in the EU-IFAD project. This project presents a challenge in terms of ensuring full cost recovery for the centres because the EU/IFAD will not foot the bill of overheads. CRP Director, the Research Program Coordinator and ICRAF representative clarified the history leading to the EU-IFAD project agreement between the relevant DGs. Although the EU-IFAD proposal does not include in writing the USD 0.5 million commitment, there was gentlemen's agreement between DGs (ICRAF and ICARDA) that must be honoured. The idea behind this

initiative was to encourage and support collaboration between centres through the EU-IFAD project. The cost to partner centres that are not involved in the EU-IFAD project is very marginal, but it is still an issue that must be addressed in light of the current circumstances of CRP DS merging into DCLAS and closing its activities in 2016. However, ICRISAT needs to be made aware of this situation so they can decide whether the EU-IFAD project will be taken on and mapped to DCLAS in the future.

Action points:

- ⇒ PMU to organize videoconference with partners and ICRAF to clarify budget/overhead issue with regards to EU-IFAD project. Until then, the money for covering overhead will be set aside and allocated after a decision/agreement has been reached.
- ⇒ Anthony Whitbread/ICRISAT to share copy of meeting notes for launch of EU-IFAD project with PMU and the CRP Director.
- ⇒ DCLAS to confirm decision to include/map the EU-IFAD project in the next phase.

5. Plan of Work and Budget for 2016

- 5.1. Plan of Work and Budget for 2016
- 5.2. Strategic Initiatives: PHd/PostDocs and Synthesis Work
- 5.3 Linkages with DCLAS and other CRPs
- 5.4 CO budget reduction, implications for CRP-DS and possible use of the contingency fund

Discussion: in the interest of time, the points under this agenda items were covered under one major discussion, particularly as areas relating to budget cuts and linkages with DCLAS and other CRPs were already brought in earlier part of the meeting. In order to deal with anticipated budget cuts in 2016, this year the PMU developed and applied a number of criteria for selecting and funding the most strategic activities. For research activities, these criteria were:

- Relevance to ALS
- Quality of expected output and deliverables, as well as feasibility
- Systems research (e.g., crop system modelling, farm nutrient balance models, farm bio-economic modelling, coupled components models of land-use and ecosystem service changes (integrated with soil erosion, hydrological and/or climate models, multi-criteria decision models for trade-off analysis, and agent-based community landscape modelling).
- Inputs into systems research

Priority was given to systems research work that include:

- Synthesis of past work.
- Production of ISI publications as essential elements
- Research to better target interventions

In proposing closure of some the activities that were not deemed to be strategic, the PMU also conducted a analysis of value for money regarding money spent over the past 3 years and the number/quality of outputs, as well as the quality of reports submitted in the first 6 months of 2015, based on three elements:

- Money spent
- Quality of current deliverables
- Expected deliverables.

In the case of Communications, Gender and Capacity Development, partner centres were asked by the PMU to submit project proposals following specific requirements and template. The best proposals were selected on the basis of objective evaluation and proposed to RMC for approval.

Some RMC members noted some technical issues faced with the approval workflow in the MEL platform regarding outcomes that repeated over the life of a specific research activity that extends over one year. The Research Program Coordinator took note of these issues and will

Meeting Minutes

work to address them in order to help the scientists use the MEL more effectively for their planning, reporting, implementing and quality assurance purposes. However, it was agreed that the Centre Coordinators and Flagship Coordinator need to do more to encourage the scientist to take the process of planning and reporting in the MEL platform more seriously and input required information and supporting documents in a timely and qualitative fashion. Some good research activities may end up being penalized during the selection process if the scientists have not completed and submitted all the required information and supporting documents in the MEL platform, including clear links to publications that acknowledge CRP DS. Meanwhile, the Flagship coordinator has a responsibility to ensure a good and qualitative clustering of activities. However, this process has fleshed out an inherent conflict of interest faced by the flagship/centre coordinator, who must balance the need to “gain/lose” funds for flagship or to gain/lose funds for their home center.

In addition, failure to properly attribute and acknowledge scientific outputs (publications and other IPGs) by each of the centres to CRP DS, has damaged the reputation of the CRP in the past, as well as the centres who need to put in place better data and information management systems.

The plan of work and budget presented jointly by the CRP Research Management and Finance Coordinators was developed on a ‘worst case” scenario basis, in the event that the third anticipated 35% budget cut is announced and applied at the end of October 2015. The current uncertainties relating to the CRP financing plan for 2015-2016 make it very difficult to plan and budget, as well as strategic allocation of funds because it is not clear if the anticipated cut will apply to W1 or W2 funds. The budget cuts have also negatively impacted the motivation of scientists and partners to work with and contribute to CRP DS. A budget cut at W2 level would basically be detrimental to the viability of CRP activities. In the lucky event that the anticipated budget cut (35%) is not applied, then the RMC must work together to support strategic/synthesis research activities that will help capitalize the key outputs and scientific contributions of CRP DS. In such event, the IRTs at flagship level should be involved in reallocation of funds following an objective process of selecting strategic activities according to predefined criteria as proposed by the PMU; review panels should be established in each region and coordinated by the lead centre there to be based on proposals that are submitted (Follow example of CO proposals scored).

The CRP director noted that in 2016 we must look at developing synthesis products and bring people together. We must set clear targets and process in place for effectively delivering this within 2016. We have to increase the quality of our work, and must accept the reality that with the current level of funding, we cannot afford to keep everyone one – some staff will have to go. There were already some good synthesis ideas around the table, such as:

1. The ICRAF proposal for a writeshop/book on SDGs and Drylands.
2. The special issue idea from ICRISAT.
3. A critical assessment of IPs in drylands, with the potential involvement of IFPRI.
4. Bringing all the CGIAR people working on GIS to work together to do a show and tell, and a better coordination and capitalization of the innovative work that has already taken place (Such as the example of ICARDA’s GIS unit). In particular, ICRISAT and ICARDA could work to better integrate their GIS work in the run up to the new CRP DCLAS. CIAT has been awarded the coordination platform for big data, we do not know what their plans are, but ICARDA’s Head of GIS unit is very open and ready work with other centres. The CRP has also discussed with CIMMYT about potential linkages.

The message to take home from the RMC meeting is that the reality of budget cuts should be a wake up call for all partners to work together more effectively and strategically by focusing on priorities and cutting unnecessary costs.

Meeting Minutes

Action points:

- ⇒ 1. PMU to develop different finance scenarios and gather views within 10 days ahead of ISC meeting.
- ⇒ 2. Centre Coordinators to help PMU collect estimates at global level for synthesis workshops, and then redistribute the rest of money to flagships. PMU to develop and disseminate to Centre coordinators concept note template for proposals and budget on the above 3-4 ideas.
- ⇒ 3. RMC to send a clear message to Center Coordinators to ensure that data sets associated with reports and papers being produced, are of high quality and are captured and shared appropriately in the shared repository.

6. Updates on cross-cutting issues

6.1. Systems research: Overarching and analysis of three sites: Morocco, Mrsabit and Rajasthan. Presentation of the 5 FPs Impact Pathways

6.2. Gender and Youth

6.3. Communications: 2015 activities and 2016 planning, including brief on CGIAR Communications Task Force and KMC4CRPs Initiative

Discussion: In the interest of time, point 6.1 and 6.2 of the agenda were skipped. In her presentation to the RMC, the Communications Program Coordinator outlined the key communications achievements including a very successful annual report, increased website and social media statistics, higher CRP visibility through engagement at global policy events such the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference (March 2015), the 70th summit of the UNGA (September 2015) and the upcoming UNCCD COP12 in Ankara (November 2015). Also, a new video animation produced to bring greater visibility to dryland issues and the need to invest in drylands research and developed was screened for the first time at the RMC meeting. Despite good communications progress made over the past year in the face of many budget cuts and challenges, the key challenge of identifying and promoting good research outcome stories remains. This is largely due to communications often being considered an afterthought rather than an integral of the research process, as well as unclear responsibilities and lack of resources at centre level. Moreover, a critical issue is that of ensuring centres' compliance with Dryland Systems Branding and Acknowledgment Guidelines, which makes it very difficult to ensure appropriate attribution of scientific outputs (publications and stories of achievement) to the CRP. RMC members agreed communications is a critical factor in promoting the scientific achievements of CRP DS, as well as raising visibility of the program and its partner centres. To this end, the RMC members send a strong message to all CRP scientists, Flagship Coordinators, Centre Coordinator and Communication Specialist to ensure appropriate attribution and acknowledgment of scientific outputs (including publications and communications materials) to CRP Dryland Systems, and increase efforts in this regard during the 2015 annual reporting process.

Action points:

- ⇒ RMC to send strong message to all CRP scientists, Flagship Coordinators, Centre Coordinator and Communication Specialist to ensure appropriate attribution and acknowledgment of scientific outputs (including publications and communications materials) to CRP Dryland Systems.
- ⇒ PMU to disseminate clear annual report guidelines and template for collecting quality research outcome stories.
- ⇒ Centre coordinators to ensure submission of quality outcome/success stories as per PMU guidelines and 2015 annual report template and requirement.

8. Brief on Program Documents

Meeting Minutes

8.1. Task Force document presented to the Funds Council.
8.2 Brief of 2016 documents/strategic to be revised for DCLAS.

Discussion: These agenda items were skipped due to lack of time. The subject of the TF contributions and its future role was brought up and discussed during the earlier part of the meeting under point 3.

Action points: None

Next meeting scheduled: to be determined after budget allocation for 2016 is known (Video-conference)

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Material Distributed during the RMC:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1zIF7SGXMtJaVk4UjhORHNFS1U/view?usp=sharing>

CCEE Material Published on the website :

1. ToR and Invitation for Proposal: <http://drylandsystems.cgiar.org/content/invitation-proposal-external-evaluation>
2. Interim Report: http://drylandsystems.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/CCEE_InterimReport.pdf
3. Final Report: <http://drylandsystems.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/CCEE-report.pdf>
4. Final Report – Annexes: <http://drylandsystems.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/CCEE-report-annexes.pdf>
5. Management Response: http://drylandsystems.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/CCEE%20Management%20Response_Nov2015.pdf
6. Final validation report: <http://drylandsystems.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/CRP-DS-validation-report.pdf>