

**Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
(CGIAR)**

**“The Challenge of Change: Decisions on Reform in the CGIAR”
by Ian Johnson, Chairman CGIAR**

***Chairman’s Opening Statement
Stakeholder Meeting
October 30, 2001***

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Annual General Meeting
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Introduction: Welcome

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen: Welcome to the first annual general meeting of the CGIAR. I welcome old friends, and new acquaintances, including observers. I hope we can soon welcome them as members. I welcome distinguished alumni and appreciate their interest. I extend special greetings to the WHO representative. His organization is formally represented at a CGIAR meeting for the first time. I look forward to a close working relationship between our two organizations. The agriculture and rural sector is pivotal to the health and well-being of poor people—we have a role to play in helping to address the underlining causes of ill health and I believe we should cooperate with WHO. I welcome representatives of all other international institutions, particularly our colleagues from the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department.

A New Approach

We are moving towards a businesslike way of doing business, with one meeting a year, shorter meetings than before, a sharp focus on key issues, and explicit provision for decision-making. Stakeholders will bring their experience and expertise to bear on the issues that confront us, and their wisdom will feed into the CGIAR Business Meeting where decisions will be made. Centers and their partners will have the opportunity to share with us the record of their work and its impact, through the Centers Forum. We also have an exhibit in the atrium of this building with the theme, "We Can Feed the World, and Keep it Green."

In keeping with the spirit of reform, I will not make the traditional "Chairman's Announcements." In its place we have:

- a new publication and CD-ROM entitled "Nourishing a Peaceful Earth: The CGIAR's Contribution," in support of the forthcoming food security and sustainable development summits;
- a special edition of the CGIAR Newsletter capturing the highlights of research at the Centers; and
- Research Highlights 2001 on the CGIAR web site.

However, I wish to report briefly on three developments. I have invited IFAD, a member of the CGIAR from 1979, to serve as a cosponsor, and IFAD has agreed. IFAD is a respected institution in global agricultural development, with a clearly defined international personality. IFAD stands ready and willing to intensify its collaboration with the CGIAR, and increase its support to CGIAR programs. This development will be on the agenda of the Business Meeting. The second development relates to the Interim Executive Council (IEC) report on change design and management, an issue to which I will return in a moment. The third development I will discuss under our second agenda item—so please be patient.

New Challenges

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have begun moving towards the goals of reform we adopted in Durban. The satisfaction we feel at our progress is overshadowed, however, by grief and concern over the events of September 11 in the US, and their aftermath. The evidence of slowing global economy was already emerging prior to the tragic events of Sept. 11. However, these trends can only be exacerbated by such events. It is clear from current projections by the World Bank that:

- Growth rates in poor countries will fall; and
- 10 million more people will potentially fall below the poverty line.

These expectations come on top of pre-September estimates that the international development goals adopted by major UN conferences in the 1990s and written into the UN Millennium Declaration last year might not be reached by the target year, 2015. There are, indeed, signs of progress, but many of the goals are not likely to be achieved without renewed and bold effort.

In the 1990s, the number of the world's hungry declined by an average of 6 million a year. FAO's recent report, the "State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001," says that at this rate of diminution it would take 60 years to reduce the number of the world's hungry to 400 million, the target for 2015 set by the 1996 World Food Summit. The number of malnourished children in the world is expected to drop gradually from 166 million in 1997 to 132 million, but the numbers in Africa are expected to rise by 18 percent. Primary school enrollments, globally, are far off track to meet the goal of universal primary education. Environmental issues such as biodiversity loss, climate change, deforestation, degradation and loss of soil, pollution from chemical pesticides, and water scarcity must also be addressed. Civil strife is a major catalyst of poverty and hunger, having already caused agricultural output losses to the value of \$4.3 billion per year in developing countries from 1970 to 1997. HIV/AIDS continues to take its toll. In all of these issues the agricultural and rural sector is central.

Clearly, the international community faces multiple challenges that will require multiple responses. The CGIAR is the world's premier producer of global public goods in agricultural research. We are relevant to the future. We do have a pivotal role.

The Role of the CGIAR

We must redouble our efforts to harness the best in agricultural science to meet the needs of the poor and protect the environment, because we know that agricultural transformation is the gateway to progress for the most of the world's poor.

The benefits of sustainable agricultural development cannot fully neutralize inappropriate policies, unfair trade practices, skewed social conditions, and other debilitating trends that hamper development. Without access to the benefits of thriving, sustainable agriculture, however, the likelihood of the poor being empowered to reach out to better lives will grow even more remote.

Sustainable agriculture is an indispensable component of any responsible attempt to increase economic growth and welfare. The agriculture sector, often representing a third of GDP, is essential if developing countries are to restore and improve economic growth. In many countries it is the engine of growth. Sustainable agriculture will not be developed, however, without substantial investment in agricultural research; the source of new knowledge that fuels new technologies. Agricultural research is our special niche within which we must work with a broad range of partners to ensure that sustainable agriculture fulfils its potential as an instrument of development. It must, of course, be accompanied by sensible domestic policies; real investment in rural infrastructure; and the tariff and non-tariff barriers of international agriculture trade must be adjusted to level the playing field. It is interesting to note that OECD subsidies are annually more than a 1000 times greater than investment in the CGIAR.

We have begun a program of reform at a time when agricultural research is challenged to contribute more. Our most effective response to the challenges of today and tomorrow is to pursue that course vigorously and unconditionally.

Four Pillars of Reform

At Durban, we asked the Interim Executive Council (IEC) to suggest how best we could move from decisions to action in constructing four pillars of reform:

- an Executive Council;
- Challenge Programs;
- a Science Council; and
- a System Office with an integrated communications strategy.

The IEC consulted widely, met three times, and produced an integrated proposal with twelve recommendations, based on reports from four task forces. The IEC recommendations and all documents connected with the reform program have been out for some time. I urge CGIAR members to immerse themselves in the substance of these documents, and assess the role of the proposed changes in preserving the effectiveness of CGIAR-supported research. I urge you, too, to undertake the kind of informal “corridor” and “coffee break” discussions during which the building blocks of consensus emerge. It is only by being fully engaged in this manner that CGIAR members will be ready to reach decisions on Thursday.

As the relevant documents have been out for quite some time, I will mention only some of the key features of each cluster of recommendations.

First: The IEC proposal is for a 20-member council, with both rotating and non-rotating members, selected to function as a microcosm of the stakeholder community. The council will be served by a program committee and a finance committee.

Second: The Challenge Programs proposed for consideration are “works in progress.” Challenge Programs offer opportunities to deepen our overall impact and to broaden our partnerships across the board. Their development requires careful consultations with stakeholders to ensure relevance, stewardship and ownership. They need to find a strategic fit in national, regional and/or global settings. I believe we need to pilot the preparation of a small number of small programs; keep them under review, and learn by doing; we need to move this agenda forward in a practical yet sympathetic manner. Failure by the CGIAR to move forward expeditiously and effectively on this front will create a strong sense of disenchantment among partners, potential partners, and traditional, and new investors.

Third: The proposed Science Council is to consist of eight members and the Chair, who will mobilize international science networks. The Science Council will be the guardian of the reformed System’s science quality and output. It is to be supported by a strong secretariat located at FAO.

Fourth: The IEC recommends the creation of a System Office composed of and integrating the activities carried out by the CGIAR Secretariat, Science Council Secretariat, entities providing common services to the Centers, and the Future Harvest Foundation. The System Office should serve the entire System and help it function in an integrated and responsive manner, implementing a compelling vision, mission and strategy.

These recommendations provide clear guidance, but are not directive. They combine substance with ideas on process, and can help us to undertake substantive reforms that will strengthen our decision-making capacity, increase the impact of the research carried out by the Centers we support, and enhance the effectiveness of the CGIAR.

Conclusion: Moving Forward

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The CGIAR is a remarkable organization with a record of achievement that is difficult to match, let alone surpass. Those very successes make change and reform all the more challenging. I therefore appreciate very much the spirit in which all of you are confronting the challenge of change.

We have for some time been thinking about, talking about, and writing about the tasks ahead of us. We must move forward, and we must do so knowing full well that we dare not miss this opportunity to move forward. We must act, or be prepared to live with the consequences of inaction.

Inaction or delay will place the CGIAR at risk, diminishing the worth of the dedicated scientists whose efforts we support. Even more serious, indecision will place at risk the future of millions whose lives we can help to improve.

So I urge the entire CGIAR community to approach the integrated IEC proposal with a due sense of urgency. We must leave this meeting on Thursday with decisions reached, future steps clearly outlined, and commitment to action firmly in place. There is no other responsible option.

Thank you.

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Let me now take up the third development to which I referred, by confirming what most of you know, that Per-Pinstrup Andersen, our friend and colleague, who will shortly deliver an overview of the World Food Situation, is this year's World Food Prize laureate. Per was honored for his "contribution to agricultural research, to food policy, and for uplifting the status of the poor and starving citizens of the world." This is a richly deserved award, and confirms our own assessment of Per as a thinker and doer of high quality and great effect, with a global reach. Per's leadership of IFPRI has been exemplary. His own example has inspired colleagues to give of their best. His contribution to international understanding of the policy issues that underpin agricultural research is a permanent legacy. I congratulate Per, personally and officially. Please join me in a round of applause.