

Subject: **Consortium Board approval letter CRP 3.5 “GRAIN LEGUMES– Leveraging legumes to combat poverty, hunger, malnutrition and environmental degradation”**

Date: September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011

---

Dear Inger,

The Consortium Board (CB) of the CGIAR has the pleasure to submit to the Fund Council, for its consideration and approval, the CGIAR Research Programme (CRP) 3.5, entitled “GRAIN LEGUMES– Leveraging legumes to combat poverty, hunger, malnutrition and environmental degradation.”

This CRP has identified the grain legumes crops - groundnut, soybean, chickpea, cowpea, common bean, pigeonpea, lentil, and faba bean - most widely grown by poor smallholder farmers in five priority regions - South and Southeast Asia, West and Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central and West Asia and North Africa. Only the low-income and food deficit countries will be targeted within the five Regions. The work proposed focuses on improving productivity, nutritional value, and profitability of these crops.

This is fully aligned with the SRF and its emphasis on the poor and vulnerable. If successful, the programme will achieve a 20% increase in the yields of these grain legumes on at least 20% of the planted area in the five targeted regions, benefiting approximately 300 million people in smallholder farm households by 2020, particularly women. The cumulative benefits of increased food production and nitrogen fertilizer saved are estimated at US\$ 3 billion by 2020.

Within the CGIAR portfolio of CRPs, this CRP focuses on improving the livelihoods of very vulnerable people that grow grain legumes for both food and cash. Grain legumes make vital contributions to the human diet because their amino acid profiles complement those of cereals, and they provide essential micronutrients; they will continue to be most important source of proteins to the poorest consumers who cannot afford to include meat and dairy products in their diet. Grain legumes improve soil fertility through biological nitrogen fixation, by breaking pest, disease and weed cycles and by extending protective land cover.

The first version of this CRP proposal was reviewed by four external reviewers (including one on Gender), chosen for their international scientific standing and knowledge of the subject matter, as well as a thorough examination by the CB. The CB provided comments and recommendations for improvements on a subsequent submission. The CB acknowledges the effort made by CRP 3.5 proponents in this revised version to address all the comments provided.

CRP partners have been working independently on grain legumes for decades. It is expected that by bringing these partners together in this CRP and coordinating activities within a clear and unified conceptual and operational framework, significant efficiency gains will result. Important learnings will emerge from sharing expertise across crops, regions and partnerships. Many lessons can be drawn from partners’ experience with each crop that can apply to other crops, concerning for instance production systems, technological innovations, collective action to create value chains, opportunities for novel products and markets to name but a few. Partners will also share specialized, costly facilities and expertise for different activities and in different regions. All partners have a track record of achieved impacts in grain legume production systems. This CRP will provide a mechanism for generating added value through integrating these strengths. Scientists will work across centre

and institutional boundaries, focusing on the common characteristics and constraints of these crops to improve efficiencies and complementarities through crosscutting activities. The research synergies thus created are expected to result in significant impacts on the ground.

Following comments from the CB, the proponents have strengthened the justification section, including data on area, yield, and value of crops across regions and systems. Ex-ante impacts relevant to the four system level outcomes are estimated. The contribution of grain legumes to the nutritional needs of the poor is better presented and discussed.

The relative importance of legumes in different farming systems/regions has now been assessed, at the request of the CB. This led to the elimination of six legume crops from the original set of crops proposed and to organizing the work through six interrelated strategic objectives. These objectives are clear and follow a logical sequence from conservation and utilization of genetic resources, crop improvement, sustainable crop and pest management, efficient seed production systems, enhancing grain legumes value chain benefits to partnerships, capacities and knowledge sharing. Each strategic objective is now described in terms of its rationale, lessons learned from past experiences, priority-setting, impact pathway, key partners, gender strategy, innovations and outputs and milestones. The CB appreciates the clarity of the text and the attention to interactions among the strategic objectives. The CB had questioned the authors about thematic overlaps with CRP 4. This has been satisfactorily addressed by the proponents in specifying areas of interventions and further elaborating the linkages and collaborations with CRP 4. The CB considers that the strategic coherence and clarity of objectives are now satisfactory.

CRP 3.5 has a clear delivery focus and its targeting shows plausible impacts. The CB had asked the proponents to explain their priorities and quantify expected impacts. The proponents have now provided priorities at regional, system and crop level and impact pathways for each strategic objective, using a transparent and sound approach. The proponents have added an appendix which details the ex ante analyses they undertook to arrive at this quantification. It will thus be straightforward to assess progress of the CRP vis-à-vis the milestones and expected outputs. Impact pathway sections have been included for each strategic objective, to make these pathways more concrete. The CB is satisfied that these various changes have improved the robustness of the proposal.

The quality of science of CRP 3.5 can now be better assessed since the proponents have added a description of research methodologies for each output, as requested by the CB. These require additional details but the CB recognizes that it is not possible in a proposal of this length and with this number of crops to detail all research methods and hypotheses. The CB is satisfied with these improvements and accepts that specific research methods will be identified when the operational plan of the CRP is developed.

The gender mainstreaming in this proposal is appreciated by the CB. There are specific gender-related research questions for each strategic objective. The proponents will develop a full-fledged gender strategy within the first 6 months of its inception, within the guidelines the CB has provided to all the CRPs, and in alignment with the gender strategy the CB is designing

Effective partnerships and new partnership practices will be essential for achieving the research outputs and development outcomes and impacts of this CRP. The partnership strategy of CRP 3.5 is described in a section which explains the types and roles of partners, including networks, at Strategic Objective and Output levels (Table 6.1). The CB appreciates the inclusion of new partners.

Concerning governance and management, the CB had recommended that the chair of the Steering Committee be selected on a rotating basis. Indeed, it considers that it is not a good management practice to have a permanent chair in a global partnership programme of this kind. The proponents are suggesting that the Steering Committee will be initially chaired by the Lead Centre and during the third year of the CRP, the SC will determine how to select future chair. Since the Consortium is commissioning a consultancy on the governance mechanisms of all the CRPs, the Board considers it is more efficient to wait for the results of this consultancy and then ask the proponents to align the mechanisms in this CRP on these results.

The initial 3-year budget of CRP 3.5 appears to be reasonable and defensible. The CB particularly notes and appreciates that the Generation Challenge Programme is not requesting funding from windows 1 and 2, and is planning to use dedicated bilateral funds, in keeping with its transition strategy. The proponents provide in the updated proposal, upon request from the CB to justify the sums requested, additional narrative on the budget elements, especially personnel and partnership costs, capital and indirect costs. The budget line items are those used across all CRPs.

The CB confirms the importance and relevance of this CRP in the current CGIAR reform process. Designing effective means of delivering more productive and more profitable grain legume technologies to vulnerable groups in areas where needs are the greatest will contribute to the attainment of the four CGIAR system level outcomes. The CB considers that the revised proposal for CRP 3.5 meets the jointly designed criteria for approval of CRPs and has the potential to achieve important and necessary impacts on the livelihoods of poor people.

With my best regards on behalf of the CGIAR Consortium Board,

Carlos Pérez del Castillo