

Subject: **Consortium Board approval letter for CRP 3.6 “Dryland Cereals – a Global Alliance for improving food security, nutrition and economic growth for the world’s most vulnerable poor”**

Date: August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011

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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) 3.6, entitled “Dryland Cereals – a Global Alliance for improving food security, nutrition and economic growth for the world’s most vulnerable poor” (“Dryland cereals” for now on).

This CRP focuses on four dryland cereals grown in marginal environment –barley, finger millet, pearl millet and sorghum- and by resource poor farmers. The work proposed is focused on the drylands of Asia and Africa, and on improving productivity and profitability of these four crops. This is fully aligned with the SRF and its emphasis on the poor and vulnerable. If successful, it will achieve a 15% increase in the yields of these cereals on at least 45 million hectares in Africa and Asia. This will require improved technologies reaching an additional 33 million farmers by 2020, of which women are a primary focus. The net additional income this will generate for these poor farmers, by 2020, is estimated at around \$1.5 billion.

Within the CGIAR portfolio of CRPs, this programme deals with improving the livelihoods of very vulnerable people in marginal dry environments. These four crops have substantial yield stability under adverse and variable environmental conditions and high levels of water and nutrient use efficiency. They are highly drought-tolerant and are also resistant to pests and diseases. Improving their productivity and profitability will contribute to increasing food security for the vulnerable farmers in the drylands (System level outcome 2), as well as to reducing rural poverty (System level outcome 1) for potentially the 650 million poor farmers living in these areas. It will also contribute to improving nutrition and health (System level outcome 3) since dryland cereals are an important source of nutritive food for farmers in the drylands.

The CB acknowledges the great effort made by CRP 3.6 proponents in this revised version to address the comments provided by the CB and those provided by the four external reviewers (including one on Gender) to the first submission, and a subsequent submission.

These cereals share common researchable issues concerning the nature of their tolerance to drought and low soil fertility, or their seed delivery systems for instance. The research challenge in this CRP lies in producing research breakthroughs by working across the four crops and thereby creating scientific synergies that have not been realized before. Scientists will work across centre and institutional boundaries, focusing on the common characteristics 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 conceptual framework of the CRP. They eliminated a minor cereal from the set of cereals considered and are organizing the work through six interrelated strategic objectives. These objectives are clear and follow a logical progression from targeting opportunities for technologies and their delivery to genetic diversity,

crop improvement, sustainable crop and pest management and seed systems to adding post-harvest value and enhancing market access. 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 considers that the strategic coherence and clarity of objectives are now very satisfactory.

CRP 3.6 has a clear delivery focus and its targeting shows plausibility of impacts. The CB had asked the proponents to define their priorities, regional boundaries and quantify expected impacts. The proponents have now provided impact pathways for each strategic objective, and the quantification of their milestones and outputs significantly increases the confidence of the reader in the plausibility of the impacts that are expected. 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. The proponents have written impact pathway sections 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 3.6 can now be better assessed since the proponents have added a description of research methods in appendix 4, for each expected output, at the request of the CB. The CB finds this additional text still somewhat general but understands 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 ambitious research outputs and development outcomes and impacts of this CRP. The partnership strategy of CRP 3.6 is described in a section which explains the types of partners that will be selected for each specific output. The CB considers that the thinking about the respective roles of different institutional partners reflected in table 9 should result in the systematic identification of the most appropriate partners for the CRP.

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 have not followed this recommendation. 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 3.6 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 cereal based technologies to vulnerable groups in the drylands will contribute to the attainment of three of the four CGIAR system level outcomes. The CB considers that the revised CRP 3.6 proposal 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 in the marginal dry zones.

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

Carlos Pérez del Castillo