



Consortium Board approval letter on CRP 3.1 “WHEAT: Global Alliance for Improving Food Security and the Livelihoods of the Resource-poor in the Developing World”

Date: 11 March 2011

Dear Inger,

The Consortium Board (CB) of the CGIAR has the pleasure to submit to the Fund Council (FC), for its consideration and approval, the CGIAR Research Program (CRP), entitled **“WHEAT: Global Alliance for Improving Food Security and the Livelihoods of the Resource-poor in the Developing World.”**

This proposal, submitted by CIMMYT (lead centre), ICARDA, BIOVERSITY, ICRISAT, IFPRI, ILRI, IRRI and IWMI, focuses on the creation of a global alliance for improving wheat productivity and profitability, in the context of climate change and of constraining natural resources (lower soil fertility, decreased water availability). This CRP constitutes a key element in the overall chain of impacts of the Strategy and Results Framework of the CGIAR. Improving wheat yields and the on-farm profitability of wheat production under currently worsening environmental conditions is of strategic importance for the livelihoods of the poor in many developing countries. In addition to its basic caloric value, it is the single most important source of plant protein in the human diet. However, gains in yield levels under farmers' conditions have been very low in the last decades.

The challenge in this CRP is to create a global alliance for wheat that brings together key partners to better address the challenge of increasing wheat yields while renewing and fortifying the crop's resistance to globally important pathogens and pests, enhancing its adaptation to heat-prone environments, and reducing its water, fertilizer, labor and fuel requirements. The proponents have consulted more than 200 institutions worldwide to design this proposal and the Board particularly appreciates the genuine effort at bringing together key partners to address this difficult challenge. We think that the proponents of this CRP have laid the ground for innovative breakthroughs in research for development.

This proposal has benefited from four iterations. The original submission to the CB, in May 2010 was reviewed by three external reviewers (including one on Gender), chosen for their international scientific reputation and knowledge of the subject matter, as well as a thorough examination by the CB. The CB provided comments and recommendations for improvement, in accordance with the common criteria established by the CB and the ISPC for approval of CRPs. Three more iterations followed, as the CB provided recommendations for improvement to three subsequent versions. The CB considers that this proposal has been strengthened in a satisfactory manner and that consultations with stakeholders have been strategic and thorough.

In terms of **strategic coherence and clarity of objectives**, the CB requested a clearer explanation of the rationale and objectives for the CRP and of the value addition of the work proposed, to better demonstrate that it was not simply a continuation of past work, with more partners and a higher budget. The proponents have clarified in a convincing manner that the challenges this CRP is addressing do necessitate the creation of a global alliance,



and cannot be resolved through a “business as usual” approach. The associated strategic initiatives and their objectives have also been articulated in a clearer and convincing manner.

While acknowledging that this issue would take some time to be fully discussed among relevant CRPs, the CB had asked the proponents to explain how overlaps and potential redundancy with other CRPs would be avoided and how scientific activities will be coordinated to create synergies and lead to the fulfillment of the objectives of WHEAT. In particular, the Board requested an explanation of how strategic initiatives 2 (sustainable wheat-base system) and 3 (nutrients and water-use efficiency) would interact with CRPs 1 and 5. The proponents responded by adding new text in the section on inter CRP linkages and boundaries, providing more details and a new figure (Figure 11) which depicts the current state of the discussions on boundaries with other CRPs. They have also provided more details of the linkages between WHEAT and CRPs 1 and 5 in their Table 5. The CB feels that its concerns have been addressed in a satisfactory manner. The issues of overlaps and synergies are now clearly discussed in the proposal, so they can be more effectively addressed once this CRP and the other ones start being implemented.

Concerning **delivery focus and plausibility of impact**, the CB had asked the proponents to clarify how improved technologies would contribute to the goal of stabilizing wheat prices. The CB acknowledges the improved information on the subject provided in this last version, including the wheat futures analysis. Likewise, following the advice given, this proposal contains a section on geographic targeting and estimates of targeted beneficiaries. The Consortium Board had also considered the pathways discussed to be too generic. The proponents have added text to explain that more specific impact pathways will be worked out as part of the operational plan for this CRP.

The CB highly regards the **quality of science** of WHEAT, which seeks to engage scientists and other stakeholders, using a variety of approaches ranging from the latest molecular and bio-informatics tools to well established research methods.

On the subject of **quality of research and development partners, and partnership management**, the CB had noted the long list of partners involved in the WHEAT CRP and asked for an explanation of how these were going to be organized and resources allocated to them, in order to secure the system-level outcomes. The Board also asked that the respective roles of the CGIAR partners for implementing this CRP be clarified, as well as the budget allocated to partners. The proponents have added new text that explains that the operational plan of this CRP will provide the necessary details of the partnerships. It is not possible, as long as the proposal is not approved, to enter into the detailed negotiations that will be required to specify many of the partnerships. The main mode of partnership will be through contracts, so detailed descriptions will be available indeed at the time of signing performance contracts. At this stage, there are already 68 formal and funded collaborative agreements that are included in this CRP. The role of the CGIAR centers involved in WHEAT is explained in a new paragraph on page 35, and the executive summary has been amended accordingly.



Regarding the **appropriateness and efficiency of CRP management**, the CB considered that the management structure presented in a previous version was overly pyramidal. The proponents have clarified in the amended proposal that 90% of the key decisions will be made by the teams of the strategic initiatives, in a decentralized manner. The CB appreciates the decentralized management and decision-making system proposed.

Concerning **clear accountability and financial soundness, and efficiency of governance**, the proponents, at the request of the CB, have changed the budget presentation and narrative in the updated proposal. Given current funding available to the CGIAR, two financing scenarios are presented: Scenario 1 "CGIAR Baseline 5%" and Scenario 2 "CGIAR Baseline 5% + New Management". The resource allocation in either scenario will depend on the availability of funding from the CGIAR Fund and considering the potential extra-income from bilateral funding and other (development) investors, being now sought by proponents and partners.

In submitting this proposal for the approval of the Fund Council, the CB would like to stress once more the importance and relevance of this CRP in the current CGIAR portfolio of CRPs. This CRP shows how Centers working together with a large number of external partners can catalyze innovation in research and development that could not have been catalyzed before the reform. We consider that this proposal has adequately responded to the comments and suggestions from the CB and those from the three external reviewers. It fulfills the common criteria developed by the CB and the ISPC, and as such, is a comprehensive and strategic work program to address the CGIAR vision.

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

Carlos Pérez del Castillo