



**Consortium Board approval letter for CRP 3.4 “Roots, tubers, and bananas for food security and income”**

Date: 25 April 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 Programme (CRP), entitled **“Roots, tubers, and bananas for food security and income”**.

This proposal, submitted by CIP (lead center), Bioversity, CIAT and IITA, focuses on staple crops that are vegetatively propagated and that constitute an important source of energy, food security and income for some 200 million farmers in countries with particularly low income per capita. These crops—banana, plantain, cassava, potato, sweet potato, yams, and other tropical and Andean root and tuber crops—are linked by common management aspects, and by the frequency with which women are involved in their production and postharvest use. They play a key role for building diversified crop and farming systems while reducing risks of food shortages and nutritional shortfalls. These crops are indeed well adapted to marginal environments and thus offer a good potential for food security and sustainable adaptation to climate change for difficult, marginal environments.

The CRP focuses on closing the yield gap for root, tuber and banana (RTB) crops, and doing so in a sustainable way that contributes to adaptation to climate change of the agricultural systems in which these crops are grown. The work presented in this proposal is well aligned with the Strategy and Results Framework and its strategic level outcomes. More resilient RTB-farming systems with increased productivity, food security and income for poor farmers will potentially benefit at least 180 million poor (84 million in Africa, 81 million in Asia, 16 million in Latin America and the Caribbean). Improved value chains and markets for RTB product will enhance food security and alleviate poverty, particularly in rural areas. Improved nutritional quality of new RTB cultivars plus production and postharvest improvements to reduce risk of nutritional shortfalls will lead to improved health, particularly for women and children. Last but not least, RTB cultivars that respond well to simple cultivation methods, with minimal soil preparation and low external input use may improve the sustainability of ecosystem services through reduced degradation.

The challenge in this CRP is to produce research breakthroughs by working across the crops concerned and thereby creating scientific synergies that have not been realized before. The approach proposed is truly innovative. 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 proponents provide a clear and convincing explanation of the value addition that will ensue from Bioversity International, CIAT, CIP, IITA working with their many partners across crops and regions. The CB appreciates that this is a departure from the manner in which scientists in the four Centres have been working until now. Section 3.1.3 “New Ways of Doing Business” explain how this will optimise outputs, outcomes and impacts.



The first version of this CRP proposal (September 2010) 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 appreciated the high quality of the first submission and its innovative approaches and it provided comments and recommendations for improvement, in accordance with the common agreed criteria established by the CB and the ISPC for approval of CRPs.

In terms of **strategic coherence and clarity of objectives**, the CB found that the proposal is very coherent and strategic. This CRP includes seven themes that reflect its strategy and a vision of partnership directly derived from its impact pathway. They deal with genetic resources, bred-germplasm, plant health, affordable high quality planting materials for farmers, ecologically robust RTB based cropping systems, participatory-value chains that add value through processing and linking markets to farmers, and partnerships that ensure impacts in the ground. The description of main activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts for each theme, by product line and crop is robust and convincing. The Board had asked for a better explanation of how priorities were going to be set, including the criteria for priority setting across the crops, regions, themes, and research activities. The Board also stressed that lessons from more than 35 years of research on these crops in the four Centers should be discussed.

The proponents revised the presentation of the programme portfolio (section 4) by adding a section on priority setting which clarifies the criteria and methods that will be used. They have also included a new Figure (4.7.3) and an explanatory Text Box (4.7.4). They also added a new sub-section (4.7.3) which describes how georeferenced database will be produced and used in cross-regional analyses. The proponents suggest a 12-month 4-phase priority-setting exercise for this CRP, which includes (1) plan and identify criteria; (2) analyze demands and needs; (3) assess crop and technology priorities, and (4) communicate results and adjust plans. As noted by the proponents, priority setting will be supported by participatory impact pathways analysis to build a theory of change with partners and form a basis for documenting outcomes and impacts. Stakeholders' involvement from the beginning will enhance planning impact-led research and will facilitate building alliances between actors.

Upon request from the CB, the proponents added a new section (1.3) about the lessons learned from the 35 years of CGIAR research on these crops. This section provides invaluable insights, which each of the seven Themes can build upon.

The CB finds these various amendments very convincing and satisfactory.

Concerning **delivery focus and plausibility of impact**, the CB appreciated the discussion of impact pathways. It found that the impact pathways for each of the CRP3.4 themes are well conceived, clearly articulated and plausible. The Board asked that the respective collaborative advantage and roles of partners in each impact pathways be specified. The new version of the proposal includes new tables on partnerships that show the roles of partners in each impact pathways, in each one of the themes. These tables address the Board's request.



Concerning **science quality**, the Board found the initial submission built on a robust and appropriate review of the literature and demonstrated rigor. The methods described appeared relevant and appropriate to the objectives of the Themes. The proponents were requested to provide a critical assessment of the methods proposed and a stronger socio-economic dimension of the work proposed under Theme 5 in particular, and elsewhere. The proponents have now provided a new section, for each Theme, which is a critical assessment of the methods proposed. They have also expanded their description of the socio-economic methods they will use, under Theme 1,2,3,5. The CB finds the critical assessment of methods is appropriate. The description of the socio-economic methods is still quite brief and the CB notes that it relies on rather traditional approaches.

The original CRP3.4 proposal mentioned an impressive array of partnerships and all of them appeared relevant. These partnerships should serve to increase the efficiency and impact of RTB research-for-development. Partnerships with public sector and civil society (including farmers) should also be strengthened, through novel and nontraditional partnerships with the private sector, to increase the rate of return in public research without compromising the pro-poor focus of CRP-RTB research. These partnerships will be designed to widen technology dissemination; create synergies between public and private capabilities; and generate income through corporate social responsibility (CSR) schemes, temporally or spatially ring-fenced exclusivity, and intellectual property mechanisms. Nonetheless, on the subject of **quality of research and development partners and partnership management**, the CB had requested an explanation of how crop specific research would be coordinated across the Center's partners. The proponents have now explained this satisfactorily by inserting new text and a supporting textbox (3.1.1) in three sub-sections (3.1.1.-3.1.3). The new explanations respond effectively to the Board's request, e.g. the updated proposal indicates the collaborative advantages and roles of partners in each theme.

Regarding the **appropriateness and efficiency of CRP management**, the CB found that the management and governance structure originally proposed were lean and should not create additional layers of management. However, it considered that the management structure presented in the first version needed to be more inclusive of the interests of non-CGIAR partners and it recommended that a Science Advisory Committee be considered. The proponents have now provided for the possibility that strategic non-CGIAR partners participate in the Steering Committee of the CRP, as long as their work meets some minimum conditions described in sub-section 5.3. They have also streamlined the management structure to include a Science Advisory Committee without increasing layers (section 5.4).

Concerning **accountability and financial soundness, and efficiency of governance**, the CB had asked for more details and justification of the requested budget, in line with priorities for this CRP. The updated budget tables and corresponding text provide details by product lines within each theme. Explanations on the relative weights of cost categories are also included. The proponents indicate that the proportion of funds to non-CGIAR partners will increase over time. The CB also recommended that the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) section of the proposal be clarified and expanded to provide more details. The proponents have provided new text in sections 5 and 6 that clarifies that M&E is a function of



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programme management and that impact assessment is a research activity intrinsic to the learning cycle in Theme 7. The CB finds these clarifications appropriate.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Gender Scoping Study commissioned by the Consortium Board regards CRP3.4 as one of “only five CRP proposals that has integrated gender in original and effective ways.” The updated proposal has strengthened this crosscutting element with additional text throughout.

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 reform process. The CB considers that this strong proposal makes a convincing case for why a focus on roots, tubers and bananas is called for in the reformed CGIAR. This proposal has adequately responded to the comments and suggestions from the CB and those from the four external reviewers. It fulfils the common criteria developed by the CB and the ISPC, and as such, is a comprehensive and strategic work programme to address the CGIAR vision.

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

Carlos Pérez del Castillo  
Consortium Board Chair