

**Meeting Summary**  
22<sup>nd</sup> System Council Meeting  
Penang, Malaysia, 4-5 June 2025

**Purpose:**

This document presents the draft formal meeting summary for the System Council's 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting ('SC22'), approved by the System Council on a no objection basis with effect from 4 September 2025 (Decision Reference SC/M22/EDP5).

It supplements the [SC22 Chair's Summary](#) (reissued 4 July 2025) that confirmed decisions taken and actions agreed during the meeting (as also reproduced in this full meeting summary for completeness).

Distribution notice: This document may be distributed without restriction.

## Introduction

This document presents a summary of the 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the System Council ('Council') held on 4-5 June 2025 in Penang, Malaysia. It follows the release of the SC22 Chair's Summary, issued 12 June 2025.

### By way of overview:

**Format:** The meeting was held in person with some virtual participation over two consecutive working days: Wednesday, 4 June and Thursday, 5 June 2025.

**Agenda items:** The meeting covered agenda items within 17 sessions set out in the table of contents on the following page.

**Decisions:** The Council took ten (10) decisions and agreed on nine (9) actions during its meeting, as initially recorded in the SC22 Chair's Summary and reproduced in sequence in this summary.

**Participants:** Annex 1 sets out a list of meeting participants.

**Basis of preparation:** Pursuant to Article 9.2(a) of the [System Council Rules of Procedure](#), the Secretariat shall not produce a verbatim record of proceedings. The following document therefore neither attributes interventions, nor reproduces direct quotes of any individual System Council member, active observer, or other invited guest.

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## Agenda Item 1: Meeting Opening

1. The CGIAR System Council Chair, Juergen Voegelé, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone attending the 22<sup>nd</sup> System Council Meeting in Penang, Malaysia, in person and extended a special welcome to all who joined the meeting virtually despite the time zone difference. A quorum was confirmed.
2. The Chair expressed the Council's gratitude to the meeting host, WorldFish, and commended the previous evening's celebration marking both the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Center's inception and 25 years since its headquarters moved to Penang. He called on Essam Mohammed, WorldFish's Director General, to give a few words of welcome.
3. Essam Mohammed expressed gratitude on behalf of WorldFish for the Council's selection of Penang, Malaysia, as the host for the 22<sup>nd</sup> System Council meeting. He encouraged participants to visit the city of Penang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and wished the members a productive meeting.
4. On behalf of the Council, the Chair extended appreciation to the Malaysian Government and welcomed the representative of the Secretary General of the Malaysian Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. The representative, Jazman Azi Bin Jamal Jamalludin, welcomed participants to Malaysia and wished them a successful meeting.
5. In his opening commentary, the Chair highlighted the global and organizational challenges facing CGIAR, emphasizing the importance of its mission in addressing hunger, nutrition, and sustainability. Noting the limited resources available globally, the Chair stressed the need for the CGIAR System to prioritize and speak with one voice. CGIAR should focus on prioritizing actions with the greatest impact with limited resources, ensuring that the System's efforts are scalable and truly benefit people, which will meet the rising expectations from governments in the face of competing demands on government expenditure. The Chair also commended the work done to date, but emphasized there is still more to be done.
6. The Chair then called for the nomination of the Co-Chair for the System Council 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting.
7. Decision Point — SC/M22/DP1: Appointment of Meeting Co-Chair  
The System Council appointed Prof. Wendy Umberger, System Council voting member representing Australia, as the non-voting Co-Chair for the 22<sup>nd</sup> System Council meeting, pursuant to Article 5.2 of the CGIAR System Framework.
8. The Chair, after confirmation of a quorum, called for adoption of the agenda.
9. The representative of the European Initiative for Agricultural Research and Development (EIARD) expressed their appreciation for CGIAR's progress in research and governance. He highlighted the importance of the ongoing reforms and endorsed the strategic focus of the agenda. Clarity on budget updates and funding impacts was requested, given the need for

continued discussion on financial sustainability and cost reductions.

10. The Chair encouraged all presenters, to the extent possible, to weave the points presented by EIARD into their presentations and requested that extra time be allocated for discussing the issues of financial sustainability and cost reductions. No conflicts of interest were declared, and the agenda was adopted.
11. Decision Point — SC/M22/DP2: Adoption of the Agenda  
The System Council adopted the Agenda for the 22<sup>nd</sup> System Council meeting, as issued on 21 May 2025.
12. The Chair acknowledged new Council members and first-time attendees. He welcomed them and encouraged them to share fresh ideas and alternate perspectives.

## Agenda Item 2: Reflections from the Integrated Partnership Board Chair

13. The Integrated Partnership Board (IPB) Chair was unable to attend in person to make her presentation, and she was instead represented by the IPB Vice Chair, who presented the activities and actions taken by the IPB since SC21 in December 2024. This was a highly transitional period, marked by a shift in the geopolitical and funding landscapes. This period also coincided with new challenges and transformations within CGIAR.
14. Established as a result of the CGIAR System Unified Governance Review, the IPB members serves as governors of both the integrated partnership and the System Organization, in line with the recently reviewed CGIAR System Charter. The IPB fosters a unified vision and strategy, upholds transparent and effective governance, ensures impactful research and innovation, and maintains adherence to governance principles across the organization.
15. In addition to the IPB Audit, Finance and Risk Committee (IPB AFRC), the IPB recently formed four additional committees, namely: i) Governance and People & Culture Committee; ii) Science Innovation, Impact and Partnership Committee; iii) Resource Mobilization, Private Sector Engagement, Communications and Advocacy Committee; and iv) Steering Committee.
16. The IPB Vice Chair outlined the following activities of the IPB since its last report to the Council:
  - a. Science and innovation portfolio: The IPB reviewed and monitored the science and innovation portfolio, including the intermediary report for the inception phase. The IPB Vice Chair reflected on the Science Week held in Nairobi in April.
  - b. Internal Audit plan: The IPB approved the 2025 internal audit plan for the integrated partnership and System Organization. To help establish better synergies between governance bodies, the IPB-AFRC and Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC) held a joint meeting in February.
  - c. Financial framework agreement: The IPB concurred with the CGIAR financial framework agreement, risk management, and internal control framework

- d. Governance Working Group: The IPB is co-chairing the Governance Working Group that will conduct a further review of the CGIAR System Framework and Charter of the CGIAR System Organization.
  - e. Oversight of the System Organization: The IPB recently reviewed and approved key organizational plans, key performance indicators, and policies, while also evaluating leadership performance and providing oversight on funding and resource mobilization strategies. Emphasis was placed on the need for adaptive management, cultural transformation, and the establishment of clear, multi-year objectives and key performance indicators.
  - f. Business Board: The IPB held four meetings during the period, three in person (Berlin, Montpellier, Nairobi) and one virtual. IPB members also participated in onboarding sessions to become well acquainted with their responsibilities. The IPB Vice Chair informed the Council of the departure of one IPB Member and of the upcoming IPB elections for Chair and Vice Chair, scheduled to take place before the end of November 2025.
17. The IPB Vice Chair reflected that having IPB Members also serve on Center Boards has enhanced cooperation and information sharing. This model can also be adapted in future, as required.

*Key discussion areas*

18. The Chair opened the floor for discussion, noting that the IPB has evolved in the past nine months, it has grown bigger and created additional committees, whilst seeking to be efficient and effective.
- a. A call was made for the need to strike the right balance between giving the strategic direction that management needs and micromanaging management. It was stressed that Management and the Global Leadership Team (GLT) should be allowed to make operational decisions.
  - b. On the Committees established by the IPB, a call was made to ensure there is no duplication with already existing System Council Committees, which requires a holistic view of all committees operating within the system, not just a focus on the IPB. A point was also made on the need to focus on issues rather than committees. Noting that a lot of discussion in the System was happening in silos.
  - c. The Board was recognized for rebuilding strong relationships and trust with the Center Directors General. The new leadership team now works together more cohesively—a notable achievement of the System's recent reforms.
  - d. On the relationship between the IPB and System Council Committees, reference was made to progress made in aligning the IPB-AFRC and AOC to avoid overlap and improving collaboration. However, it was stressed that more work is needed.
  - e. SC members highlighted the need for a clear, compelling narrative to promote CG's impact, especially in challenging fundraising times. With the suggestion to define three key reasons why investing in CGIAR is valuable, i.e., the System's contributions to climate, food security, or nutrition. This will allow the system's stakeholders to easily and confidently advocate for the organization.
  - f. The IPB was reminded that the SC expects it to be more resource-efficient in comparison to its predecessor System Board.

- g. Reminder to an action item agreed to during SC20, Brasilia, Brazil SC20-AP2<sup>1</sup> where the IPB was requested to provide an update on the implementation of the Risk & Oversight Plan (ROP), including a breakdown by Center. Highlighting the hold on funding by some funders until the assurance functions are fully operational.

19. The IPB Vice Chair addressed several points raised during the discussion. He noted that the IPB is actively working to clarify the boundary between governance and management. While each Center Board currently maintains its own committees to uphold Center independence, he suggested that, in the future, there may be opportunities to consolidate these committees within the broader partnership structure. Regarding the IPB Committees, he emphasized that they are intended to foster specialization and strengthen reporting—not to assume management responsibilities. He also agreed on the importance of defining a compelling value proposition for the CGIAR System, underscoring the role of partnership-driven science and system-wide impact, as highlighted during Science Week.

- 20. The System Council Chair noted that there remains significant overlap and redundancy between System structures and those of individual Centers, citing the example of over a hundred host country agreements within the CGIAR System. Addressing these inefficiencies should be a key focus of discussions.

### Agenda Item 3: Reflections of the Executive Managing Director (EMD)

- 21. The Executive Managing Director's (EMD's) presentation focused on "Building Resilience — catalyzing impact through uncertainty," and emphasized the need for CGIAR to adapt in a challenging global and funding environment by focusing on the CGIAR Science Portfolio
- 22. The EMD further noted that CGIAR is strengthening its management, accelerating resource mobilization, and planning for its long-term strategy. Recent efforts have focused on clarifying priorities, assessing impact, and using updated modelling to project benefits to 2030 and 2040.
- 23. CGIAR has achieved significant milestones, notably providing access to CGIAR technology to more than 20 million farmers, influencing over 200 policies aimed at advancing sustainability, and facilitating USD 3.3 billion in investments within the agricultural sector. The EMD indicated the importance of strengthened, System-wide impact reporting and announced the forthcoming release of a comprehensive, evidence-based report on recent portfolio outcomes.
- 24. The EMD, referencing the work of IFPRI's foresight and modelling group, shared data that show the highlights of CGIAR's innovation impact in Asia's rice sector, where the benefit:cost ratio has been estimated to shift from 7:1 to 115:1 - depending on the bundle

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<sup>1</sup> Action SC20-AP2, as recorded in the Meeting Summary of the 20th System Council meeting (Brasilia, Brazil, 12–13 June 2024), relates to the Risk and Oversight Integration Action Plan: The System Council, with a shared vision for the future of CGIAR as an integrated partnership, underscores the critical and urgent need for the integration of the following functions across the System: Internal Controls & Risk Management, Internal Audit, External Audit, and Ethics & Business Conduct. Integration of these functions is a key step that needs to be undertaken before the end of December 2024.

of technologies being used. She noted that CGIAR research is highly cited, with 46% more citations than average and triple the citation rate in policy documents. Responding to a Council member's request for a compelling narrative of the CGIAR, the EMD indicated that the difficulty was not finding the impact story to tell; the challenge was how to present a narrative that covers the whole agricultural sector, which is vast.

25. The EMD referenced efforts made to reintegrate the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), highlighting the importance of forestry and agroforestry to CGIAR's mission. She acknowledged the leadership role played by Germany and the support from Sweden.
26. Addressing concerns about funding cuts, the EMD presented figures that showed significantly reduced budgets across business and science management functions, while recognizing that governance costs remain high. Streamlining governance and other cost-saving measures are crucial to navigating current financial challenges.
27. The EMD also presented funding strategies under consideration, such as innovative co-financing, blended finance, and outreach to new donors, including the private sector and philanthropists. She requested that Council members open doors or provide leads to new funding within their government and/or constituency.
28. The EMD also indicated that during Science Week, CGIAR successfully brought together its global community and showcased CGIAR's innovation on a new platform. Noting that out of the 13,000 participants, 10% were CGIAR staff and 90% were partners, which highlights the organization's broad network and commitment to collaborative innovation
29. The EMD indicated her contentment that the Global Leadership Team (GLT) and the Global Science Team (GST) are coming into place. She also informed that the hiring of programs and accelerator leaders is ongoing. She emphasized that the success of the CGIAR System relies on engaged people and strong leadership teams.
30. The EMD stressed that the CGIAR System must be forward-looking. The System cannot continue as it has in the past; the world is undergoing enormous changes, and the needs of national systems have changed.

### *Key Discussion Areas*

31. The Co-Chair opened the floor for discussion.
  - a. A reflection was made on the importance of presenting CGIAR as a unified, diverse, and impactful global network. Noting that the consolidation of efforts and agreements would improve efficiency, coordination, and visibility. The System needs a compelling story that can be easily communicated to engage decision-makers and highlight the benefits for both people and the planet.
32. The Chair closed the session by appreciating the presentation for clear data on CGIAR's impact and beneficiaries, noting this transparency has been long-awaited. He cautioned, however, that while providing comprehensive information is valuable, it can complicate the



messaging, and he further emphasized the need for clear, targeted stories and examples outlining specific solutions, crops, and beneficiaries.

#### Agenda Item 4: 2025- 2030 Portfolio Inception Phase Update

33. CGIAR's Chief Scientist presented an update on the 2025-2030 Portfolio inception phase, with key points including:
- a. Inception phase overview: This process is based on the System Council decision [SC/M21/DP3] in 2024, which called on management to address feedback from the ISDC and IPB. She indicated that the goal was to complete the prioritization during the inception phase so that the next budget cycle can begin with a clear and well driven portfolio. The structured process is designed to ensure the success of the portfolio by addressing key design features, leadership, and management arrangements.
  - b. Changes to funding landscape: Changes in the CGIAR funding landscape have made the inception phase critical.
  - c. Communication: Regular meetings have been held with Council to update on progress.
  - d. Key features of the 2025-2030 Portfolio: For the first time, all projects spanning Windows 1, 2, 3, and bilateral funding have been mapped across Centers and areas, creating a unified portfolio. This new approach prioritizes research efforts to tackle the most pressing problems, ensuring that each program delivers high-impact solutions. The structure has been streamlined, reducing the previous 33 initiatives and 5 platforms to 8 science programs, 4 accelerators, and a dedicated scaling platform. In addition, a new six-year planning cycle has replaced shorter terms, fostering long-term stability and supporting effective collaboration across Centers, programs, and accelerators for sustainable impact.
34. The Practice Lead, Program Delivery, presented further details, including:
- a. Projected benefits and investment case: The Practice lead indicated that the portfolio presented the following benefits, using the model developed by the IFPRI team, working with the programs and accelerators:
    - i. Clear projected benefits for CGIAR up to 2030 and 2040 are being developed as part of a portfolio investment case to secure donor funding.
    - ii. Noting that these benefits are region-specific and comparing outcomes with and without CGIAR's interventions.
    - iii. The projections are anchored in updated theories of change and key performance indicators using a transparent modelling framework.
    - iv. He highlighted the limitations in presenting the projected benefits, using the model, for the Genebank benefits due to data limitations, especially on how the materials are used by third-party partners
  - b. Portfolio coherence and coordination:
    - i. The Portfolio design emphasizes coherence, avoiding isolated efforts by coordinating contributions across multiple programs and accelerators.
    - ii. The portfolio is supported by shared workplans, interconnected theories of change, and coordination mechanisms.
    - iii. Integrated two-way linkages between the programs and accelerators.

- c. Partnering approach:
    - i. Strategic partnering approaches to maximize mutual value and a pro-partnering culture.
    - ii. Early and frequent co-design with partners to identify problems and co-create solutions.
    - iii. An updated heat map highlighting focus and scope countries for programs and accelerators.
  - d. Alignment and reporting: The CGIAR Portfolio drives alignment, synergies, and coordination across all Centers and all sources of funding in three ways:
    - i. Dynamic mapping of Center-led and bilateral funded projects to the most relevant programs and accelerators.
    - ii. Minimum reporting standards for Window 3 and bilateral-funded work, improving visibility of results.
    - iii. Management structure fosters systematic linkages across Center and partnership work through the GLT and GST.
  - e. Comparative advantage assessment:
    - i. Programs and accelerators have systematically assessed their comparative advantage for delivering high-impact solutions.
    - ii. This assessment includes analysis of capabilities, potential third-party providers, and CGIAR's positioning (well, moderately, or weakly positioned).
  - f. Next steps:
    - i. Complete inception reports and materials for ISDC submission by the end of June.
    - ii. ISDC to review materials by the first half of August, followed by a management action plan and touch point call in September.
    - iii. Aim to transition from inception to five-year planning with clarity and confidence.
35. The Chief Scientist highlighted that the global science leadership team (GST), made up of Center and program leaders, works closely together to align strategies and support implementation. She also stressed that the Program and Accelerators' Directors would be based in the Centers to stay involved and better assist ongoing work.
36. The Interim Director, Policy Innovations, provided an update on adjustments made to the Policy Innovations Program, including:
- a. Unified program alignment: The team established a clear, shared vision through an "elevator pitch" and a central slide deck, ensuring all stakeholders align around three main impact pathways: setting policy agendas, responding to partner demands, and building sustainable capacity.
  - b. Annual focus topics: In 2025, the program emphasizes three cross-cutting themes: innovative subsidy policies, youth policies, and water policies, fostering collaboration and impact across areas of work.
  - c. Enhanced co-creation with partners: Co-creation and joint implementation with country-level partners were strengthened using tailored theory of change models, guiding policy hubs to drive food, land, and water system transformation.

37. The Interim Director, Capacity Sharing (CapSha), noted that CapSha refined its proposal during the inception phase by leveraging existing CGIAR knowledge and pilot projects, while engaging with partners through surveys and meetings to shape a co-created, demand-driven approach. This process emphasized shared ownership, flexible delivery models, and the inclusion of professional skills development for both CGIAR staff and national partners. The engagement activities clarified the Accelerator's role and broadened the capacity sharing concept to encompass joint design and accountability. They incorporated best practices for equitable collaboration and partnership frameworks, positioning the Accelerator for measurable impact.
38. The Interim Director, Scaling for Impact, highlighted its role in integrating and accelerating proven CGIAR innovations across the entire portfolio through strong collaboration with other science Programs and Accelerators. By working closely with bilateral projects and funding sources, the program ensures the effective utilization of resources, supports scaling activities, and fosters continuous and responsive engagement with stakeholders. He also described new, dedicated activities that enable ongoing, adaptive responses to stakeholder demands throughout each year. A notable development is the planned integration of the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) program, which will further strengthen CGIAR's capacity to facilitate and sustain long-term agricultural innovation at scale.
39. The Interim Director, Sustainable Farming, explained that the inception phase enabled valuable stakeholder engagement to identify challenges and solutions. The Program is moving toward a more integrated, multidisciplinary approach, leveraging CGIAR scientific data to develop AI-driven farm advisory services. This aims to enhance preparedness and rapid response to future agricultural shocks.
40. The Interim Director, Genebanks, detailed how they utilized the inception phase to clarify priorities, strengthen collaboration within CGIAR, and refine their strategy for global plant genetic resource conservation and stakeholder engagement.
41. The Advisor, Portfolio Performance Unit, previewed the Type 2 Report that will be released by the end of June 2025. This report on CGIAR's impacts during 2022-2024 draws on a robust evidence base, including over a thousand initiative outcomes and 125 impact studies, to assess the reach and effectiveness of agricultural innovations. Highlights include the use of 471 innovations in 62 countries, reaching more than 20 million farmers; the release of 788 new crop varieties (230 of which are biofortified); 201 policy changes; and \$3.3 billion in third-party investments aligned with CGIAR and Sustainable Development Goal objectives. The report emphasizes rigorous quality assurance, distinguishes initiative-reported outcomes from study findings, and presents results across global, regional, and impact area levels, demonstrating significant progress in scaling agricultural technologies and practices worldwide. The Chief Scientist added that this report highlights the importance of the portfolio design, its architecture, prioritization, and operationalization, in addition to the science itself.

### *Key Discussion Areas*

42. The Chair noted that this is the first time in CGIAR's history that the Council has been presented with aggregated information and data. However, the need to double down and push harder remains, because if the CGIAR System fails to collectively demonstrate its priorities and advantages, it risks losing relevance and funding. To underscore the loss of funding, the Chair shared information on the United States' formal withdrawal from the governance of CGIAR.
  
43. System Council Members expressed their support and appreciation for the work done by the GST and others in reaching the current stage of the Portfolio, praising the adaptive learning and continuous improvement within the System and updates provided between Council meetings. Other salient points included:
  - a. Impact of reduced funding on the 2025-2030 Portfolio: Acknowledging the reduction in funding and the resulting need to reduce the Portfolio budget, reducing work areas, and focusing resources to maximize impact and value for investment, a request was made for management to outline the upcoming strategic changes, including the basis for impact analysis, discontinued activities, eliminated or streamlined work areas, and a more focused approach to improve efficiency and address global needs.
  - b. Regional diversity: Diversity within regions should be considered; the current regional analysis may overlook important variations, so future iterations should include more detailed analyses.
  - c. Underrepresented regions and populations: The need to focus investments not only on numbers, but also on regions and populations that are often underrepresented was made, with emphasis on the importance of cross-program collaborations in areas like the Pacific region, particularly in times of limited funding.
  - d. Impact through partnerships: A call for CGIAR to expand its focus beyond co-design and co-creation, calling for the system to embrace co-implementation with key Partners. It was noted that strengthening cooperation remains vital for fulfilling the organization's mission, as international agricultural research partnerships are key to extending CGIAR's impact and effectiveness. Also, the value of moving beyond designing projects together to actively implementing them in partnership, thereby fostering deeper collaboration across teams and countries was reiterated.
  - e. Effective use of limited resources: Council Members recommended further prioritization to maximize sustainable impact and effectively reach vulnerable populations, based on proven evidence from previous portfolios. The Council requested full transparency on the budget breakdown by Centers and areas of work at the end of the inception phase. Members also emphasized the importance of ensuring that every dollar is allocated to critical and high-impact activities, particularly those addressing the needs of smallholder farmers, as this will be essential to maintaining the trust of investors and communities where CGIAR operates. The Chief Scientist indicated in her response the importance of prioritizing effectively and making difficult decisions to ensure every dollar is used wisely, particularly in the context of funding constraints.
  - f. Need to increase funding: The System must secure more funding to implement the Portfolio with a value-for-money approach, while retaining sight of its core mission and ensuring that underserved communities are prioritized.

- g. Genebanks: The importance of genebanks was raised, with appreciation for the unbundling of the genebanks from the Programs. CGIAR genebanks are a global public good that provide important research and breeding opportunities beyond the System; consequently, CGIAR Centers should view enabling access to genebanks for external researchers and farmers not as a responsibility but as a valuable development opportunity.
- h. Stakeholder collaborations: A request for the availability of ongoing opportunities for major developing countries' constituency partners to access and participate in the research portfolio, through the course of its six-year implementation, with potential for adjustments as needed. The possibility of Chinese scientists or other research groups joining the CGIAR Programs using their own funding, even after the CGIAR's budget has been allocated, especially if their research aligns with the CGIAR Portfolio.
- i. Management and operational mechanisms: Request for transparency and clear communication about the management and operational mechanisms of the CGIAR Portfolio, so that partners and other non-CGIAR scientists can easily understand how to collaborate and engage with each Program.
- j. Impactful corporate targets/indicators: Management was advised to identify impactful corporate targets, such as creating millions of agri-food jobs, that align with partners' goals and objectives. These goals will make the prioritization process easier. It was also noted that these targets could serve as both a management tool and a reporting tool. These indicators will also help make the case for maintaining or even increasing the current level of funding. Also highlighted was the need to reconsider the current results framework, which extends to 2030, and possibly update it to better reflect new developments.
- k. Comparative advantage: Reference was made to the need for CGIAR to clearly define and achieve consensus on its comparative advantage across all stakeholders. Without a unified understanding, it will be challenging to prioritize effectively and make difficult strategic decisions, which is essential in the current challenging environment. The Chief Scientist agreed, stating that the importance of identifying and leveraging CGIAR's unique strengths was discussed as vital for maintaining relevance and driving success.
- l. Integration of CIFOR-ICRAF's expertise: A call to see a strong and visible reflection of CIFOR-ICRAF's expertise in the relevant programs and funding streams of the CGIAR Portfolio. Germany offered to provide additional funding to support meaningful integration of these Centers.
- m. CapSha Accelerator: The CapSha Accelerator received recognition for its launch, along with a strong commitment to incorporate Germany's capacity-sharing initiatives with CGIAR Centers and German universities. Backed by three million euros in initial investment funding over three years, the program aims to establish a joint PhD and master's initiative by the end of the year.
- n. Elevator pitches: The importance of developing different elevator pitches that can be targeted to various end users.
- o. Gender equality: Integrating gender equality into research from the outset can drive innovation within CGIAR. The GST was encouraged to apply a gender lens in research planning and consider new approaches, recognizing the System's capacity to lead transformative change.
- p. Attribution in collaborative impact: The attribution of CGIAR's contributions toward shared goals is complex and challenging, especially when impacts are indirect;

however, it's a vital discussion to ensure that difficulties in measuring direct attribution don't limit ambition.

- q. Promoting South-South collaboration: Members called for an emphasis on fostering collaboration between CGIAR and the global South, i.e., Brazil, India, and China, particularly through South-South learning and leveraging available expertise to support other countries in the region. Recent successful examples include the launch of a platform for South-South learning in partnership with the International Center for Research in the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the Government of India, as well as the establishment of a global center of excellence on millets during the G20.
- r. Funding and partnership initiatives from Council Members: During their interventions, several Council members indicated specific funding lines and willingness to partner with CGIAR in implementing the 2025-2030 Portfolio:

Existing funding:

- i. Crop Trust, International Plant Treaty and International Center for Potatoes (CIP) hosting a crop diversity day in Lima Peru.
- ii. The World Bank is launching Mission AgriConnect to double agricultural support in Africa to \$9 billion annually, with a strong focus on job creation. Working with CGIAR, this could mean creating 50 million jobs in the agricultural sector.
- iii. Ireland, through its dedication to building climate-resilient, nutritious food systems, has pledged, at the Nutrition for Growth Summit, €250 million annually from 2026 for four years to combat hunger and malnutrition, viewing its partnership with CGIAR as essential to the country's effort in addressing this challenge.
- iv. Germany pledged financial support for the integration of CIFOR-ICRAF under the leadership and responsibility of the IPB.
- v. Germany is supporting capacity sharing initiatives with 3 million euros in funding over three years, aiming to launch a PhD, MSc-level program with CGIAR Centers and German universities.

Potential funding to be pursued:

- i. China indicated the possibility of Chinese researchers and major partners to be part of the implementation of the Portfolio during the implementation phase, using their own allocated funding.

44. Action Point: SC22-AP9 2025-2030 Portfolio Inception Phase Update<sup>2</sup>

In view of CGIAR's evolving operating environment and funding landscape, the System Council requested that Management's action plan in response to ISDC's targeted review of the 2025-2030 Program and Accelerator Inception Reports, and complete 2025 Plans of Results and Budgets, be presented to the System Council for endorsement, clearly setting out how the 2025-2030 Science and Innovation Portfolio has been adapted following its approval in December 2024

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<sup>2</sup> The action point was communicated to the System Council via email on Friday, 4 July 2025.

## Agenda Item 5: Funding CGIAR's Work in a Changing Fiscal Environment

45. The Director, Donor Relations and Business Development, observed that CGIAR is facing significant budget reductions, with cuts expected in 2025 and even greater reductions likely in 2026, especially following the United States' departure from the overseas development assistance space. CGIAR management is urgently seeking solutions to address these financial shortfalls through cost-saving measures and is seeking the support and perspective of the Council's funder members.
46. There are three funding scenarios for CGIAR:
- Immediate scenario: Focus on actions that can be taken now to address urgent funding gaps in CGIAR's portfolio and programs, such as finding ways to supplement current budgets and maintain key project baselines.
  - Short-term scenario: Encourage Council members and funders to champion CGIAR to new partners, tap into additional government programs, and build connections with philanthropies and other potential donors to diversify funding sources.
  - Medium-term scenario: Elevate agricultural research and innovation on global platforms—most notably by launching a CGIAR investment case at COP30—and sustain momentum around agricultural innovation to ensure CGIAR's long-term impact and full program financing.
47. The Chair highlighted the importance of using COP30 as an opportunity to build global partnerships around agricultural innovation and research. He emphasized collaborating across countries and sectors, particularly by engaging ministers and aligning agricultural subsidies and investments for greater impact. The Chair requested Council Members to share their funding prospects openly and called for collective action to address CGIAR's immediate, short-term, and medium-term financial needs.
48. Donors' funding prospects and suggestions:
- Need for innovative finance: Called for CGIAR to respond to funding challenges by exploring innovative financing options like co-investment and blended finance, leveraging existing networks and pursuing partnerships with new funders, highlighting opportunities to tap into climate- and health-related funding streams, and emphasizing the importance of demonstrating impact to attract investment.
  - Aligning CGIAR's narrative to new focus areas: While highlighting the challenges of maintaining funding amidst shifting budget restrictions and donor priorities. The need to align CGIAR's narrative with new focus areas like stability, health, and climate. European donors could coordinate and collaborate more closely in the lead-up to COP to ensure CGIAR is well-represented in collective statements and international discussions.
  - Leveraging diverse funding sources: The importance of leveraging diverse funding sources, such as climate and biodiversity finance, to advance CGIAR's mission of delivering tangible benefits for people and the planet was raised, with emphasis on the need for clear, outcome-driven narratives. A call was also made for creative approaches to resource mobilization, urging the use of all available funding streams to support CGIAR's work and ensure lasting results.

- d. Importance of a unified CGIAR: Strong support was expressed for a unified CGIAR, which will provide a central point for collaboration between CGIAR and the national and provincial agricultural research institutions. This centralized approach will enhance the impact and visibility of CGIAR's work, foster deeper engagement from partners, and provide compelling evidence to decision-makers for increasing contributions to CGIAR. Thus, leveraging CGIAR's unique strengths and fostering more effective partnerships.
- e. Appeal to different stakeholders' interests: It was pointed out that, in light of the shifting landscape of development assistance, the need for CGIAR to craft a narrative that appeals to both donor interests and partner country needs was made. Key priorities include addressing fragility, encouraging private sector investment, and supporting multilateralism, while also addressing the challenge of allocating resources to CGIAR for specific tasks while pursuing broader goals. The importance of better showcasing CGIAR's work with global funding bodies to maximize support and visibility was stressed.
- f. Need to rethink CGIAR's global role: With the ongoing challenges in maintaining development assistance budgets, the need to rethink CGIAR's global role amidst evolving issues like climate change, biodiversity, land degradation, food security, and health was pointed out. Highlighting the emergence of strong research organizations in the Global South, a proposal for a renewed multilateral collaboration that brings together CGIAR, Global North supporters, and Global South research institutions, positioning CGIAR as a central platform for cooperation. A call was made for ambition and inclusive partnership between North and South, leveraging diplomacy to build a forward-looking, integrated approach to address complex global challenges.
- g. Security policy argument: CGIAR should plan for possible reduced budgets, clarify its unique value, set priorities, and enhance efficiency. CGIAR is encouraged to secure its position in smaller overseas development assistance budgets by linking agriculture and food with national security, and to diversify funding sources, including repurposing public agricultural support. It was pointed out that security policy arguments and showcasing CGIAR's involvement with cutting-edge technologies, like AI, are effective ways to strengthen its case.
- h. Need to leverage innovation and AI: The importance of leveraging innovation and AI to enhance agricultural research and impact was emphasized. Highlighting the need to raise agriculture's role in national security and use this as a point to defend CGIAR's funding.
- i. Integration of CIFOR- ICRAF: Noting that sometimes countries' strict rules related to funding commitments make it imperative to have a strong narrative to justify continued investment in international agricultural research. Integration of CIFOR-ICRAF will also help raise CGIAR's profile with some donors.
- j. Repurposing subsidies: CGIAR could access climate finance more aggressively and explore repurposing subsidies to support national agricultural research. Upcoming international conferences and EU budget discussions are seen as opportunities to advocate for increased funding for food and nutrition.
- k. Communicating CGIAR's value to policymakers: The challenges in communicating CGIAR's value to policymakers, who see its work as niche, were highlighted. Calling for the need to communicate the linkage between CGIAR's research and global issues like



food market volatility, which impacts domestic stability, and advocating for better communication of CGIAR's broader relevance.

- i. Use of alternative budget lines: Highlighted the ongoing challenge of mobilizing more funds for CGIAR, suggesting the use of alternative budget lines, collaborations on emergency programs, and innovative financing methods such as first-loss investment funds. Citing an example of a successful partnership between Norway, USAID, and other investors supporting small-scale agricultural enterprises, noting that reducing investment risk can attract more private funding.
- m. Use of matching funds from countries with strong NARES: Proposed that countries with strong national agricultural research systems should consider matching their project funds with CGIAR to achieve shared goals and greater impact. This could include aligning projects with national commitments on climate change and biodiversity or focusing on issues like food security and water scarcity. A call for CGIAR to welcome flexible contributions from new partners and seek greater integration with global groups to support funding was made.
- n. Fostering partnerships with universities and the private sector: Fostering partnerships between CGIAR, universities, and the private sector was highlighted as a way to address the reduced funding the System faces. CGIAR is encouraged to pursue long-term research, seek innovative collaborations, and explore alternative funding options to maximize impact within these priority areas.
- o. Nutrition as a focus: The merger of health and food sectors in some donor countries was pointed out, with nutrition becoming a top priority due to the overlap of these two sectors. CGIAR can enhance its appeal to funders by directly addressing issues like conflict, migration, and fragility, and by improving its communication strategy that will connect emotionally and factually.
- p. Broader partnerships: It was mentioned that there are several potential new financing mechanisms for CGIAR, including engaging the private sector, exploring innovative finance events, and leveraging assets, policies, subsidies, and carbon markets to secure sustainable funding. Emphasis was placed on broadening partnerships and frameworks to support both CGIAR and the wider agriculture sector, considering the role of AI in financing, and ensuring that more relevant stakeholders, such as IFAD and others, are actively included in these conversations.
- q. Adaptability and clear Investment case: Highlighted how the discussion emphasized the volatility and uncertainty in financing for CGIAR, underscoring the need for adaptability and a clear investment case that links funding levels to specific outcomes. The possibility of using the donor countries' diplomatic network to amplify evidence-based policy messages was mentioned. To enhance the overall influence and sustainability of CGIAR in a changing global funding environment.
- r. Equitable cost sharing: The importance of equitable cost-sharing among partners supporting CGIAR, highlighting that maintaining support is difficult if all partners do not contribute fairly, primarily through core funding mechanisms, was highlighted. Noting that the global economic landscape has shifted, with emerging economies like Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and Indonesia now representing a much larger share of global GDP and research spending, a call was made for a new partnership model that reflects these changes and encourages greater contributions from these countries. The future of agricultural research and development should focus on digital and ag-tech innovations, with strong engagement from the private sector. Public-private

partnerships are essential for scaling impact and securing the sustainability of CGIAR's work.

49. The Director, Donor Relations and Business Development, thanked Council Members for their thoughtful and insightful comments and suggestions. He summarized the major takeaways from the discussion, emphasizing the need for adaptive strategies and innovative partnerships within CGIAR, highlighting the importance of leveraging trust fund investments, aligning efforts with global events like COP30, and growing the share of official development assistance. He also indicated there was a strong call to defend existing funding while exploring new programs, utilizing climate finance effectively, and engaging the private sector and philanthropy. He concluded that the conversation recognized the challenges ahead but underscored collective responsibility to champion CGIAR's mission and secure sustainable support for its initiatives.

### Agenda Item 6: Financing Working Groups Update

50. As an outcome of the Council's 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, action point SC/M21/AP4 requested that two Working Groups be formed to focus on innovative finance modalities and incentives for Portfolio funding.
51. The Director, Business Operations and Finance, gave a brief overview of the two working groups, which are tasked with incentivizing more portfolio funding and developing innovative finance strategies for CGIAR. Each group operates with a chair and co-chair and includes members from the IPB, System Council, and GLT to address these interconnected topics collaboratively.
52. The Working Group on Incentives for Portfolio Funding is currently focusing on:
  - a. Funding modalities: Reviewing the implementation and effectiveness of new funding modalities, especially changes related to Windows 1 and 2, to ensure balanced allocations.
  - b. Cost-sharing percentage review: Re-evaluating the cost-sharing percentage formula and distribution, particularly as Window 1 is currently covering a disproportionate share of System costs. A separate group, to include Finance Directors, will be formed to analyze and recommend adjustments.
  - c. Organizational efficiency: Increasing organizational efficiency through budget reductions and rebalancing cost recovery.
53. The Director, Resource Mobilization and Business Development, reported on recent work of the Working Group on Innovative Finance, including:
  - a. Reviewing Council seat allocation: Reviewing Council seat allocations and exploring ways to incentivize pooled funding, aiming for more balanced representation and funding streams.
  - b. Consulting with key stakeholders: Holding regular consultations and meetings with key stakeholders to address funding and efficiency challenges.
  - c. New funding models: Evaluating new funding models, focusing on mechanisms — both grant and non-grant — that can support large-scale investments for CGIAR, with a target of \$100 million or more.

- d. Pilot approaches: The group is piloting several funding approaches and seeking Council feedback on their inception report to guide future actions.

### *Key Discussion Areas*

- 54. Council members expressed their appreciation for this early progress of the Working Groups. Key reflections from the System Council members included:
  - a. A suggestion for more concise reports that are focused on key messages and recommendations would be helpful, with detailed documents available separately.
  - b. A request for emphasis to be placed on incentivizing multi-annual commitments to Window 1 to raise long-term funding. Noting the importance of pooled and predictable financing for CGIAR, highlighting the current budget constraints among funders, and the need for incentives to encourage quality, multi-annual contributions.
  - c. On the revision of the Council seat allocation, there was a call for scenario analysis and creative short-term thinking, noting that the Council needs to fully understand any potential implications to allow for an informed decision regarding future seat reconciliation. The Working Group was advised to consider giving greater weight to long-term commitments when analyzing Council representation and flexibility, particularly if new donors emerge.
  - d. A call for caution against profit-driven models that could detract from CGIAR's mission as a non-profit research organization, stressing the importance of aligning new funding mechanisms with poverty reduction and public goods objectives. Calls for a balance between innovative funding and preserving research integrity.
  - e. Council members highlighted that a strong, consolidated portfolio and trusted management are essential for attracting and improving funding. Maintaining clear and simple funding windows helps avoid confusion and supports effective donor engagement.
  - f. A call for a continued focus on identifying and implementing cost efficiencies within CGIAR, especially regarding System costs. Also highlighted was the importance of full cost recovery across CGIAR Centers, underscoring that understanding the current status of this process would also incentivize best practices across the System.
  - g. The need for a new narrative and a strategic reset for CGIAR, especially considering current funding challenges, was flagged. A suggestion was made to form a multi-stakeholder working group to develop this narrative to strengthen partnerships and clarify CGIAR's vision and mission.
  - h. Concern was raised about the fragmented nature of financial discussions and the absence of a comprehensive approach to financial decision-making for the coming years. It was suggested that future Council meetings should include a dedicated finance section to enable a thorough review and analysis of trade-offs across different areas.
  - i. A review of CGIAR's strategic assets may contribute to increased efficiency and should be prioritized. Mapping these strategic assets, identifying overlaps between Centers, exploring potential collaborations, and evaluating which assets should be dropped for cost savings.
  - j. To improve efficiency, it was suggested that, after the upcoming IPB honorarium study, steps should be taken to reduce governance costs, such as switching from pay-by-day to flat fees for governance members and setting clear boundaries to prevent oversight roles from overlapping with management.

- k. A suggestion to explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as bond issuance, is promising but requires careful planning, sustainable funding sources, and significant technical expertise.
- l. A call for the establishment of a unified, professionally managed commercial venture across CGIAR Centers was made, similar to university for-profit arms, which could generate additional revenue for research, provided clear separation from public good activities and appropriate legal frameworks are maintained.
- m. Council members expressed support for CGIAR's focus on global public goods, strengthening funding systems, and transparent governance reforms. A reemphasis on the need for inclusive representation, reforms that benefit underrepresented regions, and the exploration of innovative financing models that uphold CGIAR's mission was also made.
- n. Potential new collaborations with organizations such as the European Investment Bank and Chinese investment banks were suggested as vehicles for exploring innovative funding opportunities for CGIAR's future.
- o. The Chair reiterated the importance of finding new financing approaches for CGIAR, such as using profits from innovative activities to fund public goods. He emphasized that profits should be reinvested in the system, not distributed to shareholders, and encouraged creativity in developing these models rather than dismissing them based on past discussions.
- p. A Council member called for consideration of the pressures currently being faced by funders, while calling for concrete, innovative fundraising examples from CGIAR leadership, highlighting that the pressure to innovate should be focused on the System and not on existing funders. They called for practical ideas and models to support future funding efforts.
- q. The need to broaden CGIAR's membership was also raised through the question of whether CGIAR's integrated partnership should be limited to its current Centers or expanded to include more research organizations. A wider, more inclusive network could help attract new funders and reshape the landscape of agricultural research funding.
- r. The discussion closed with a call for a more proactive and positive approach within the Council, emphasizing collaboration, innovation, and seeking out new ideas rather than focusing on limitations and challenges.

55. [Action Point SC/M22/AP1 — Financing Working Groups Update](#)

The System Council requested that a report on the CGIAR Global Assets Study be provided to the System Council's 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting in December 2025.

## Agenda Item 7: Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation

56. The Chair acknowledged the progress made on risk and oversight within CGIAR over the past year, noting that – while further work remains – substantial advancements have been made. He emphasized the need for a world-class system to secure donor confidence and ensure organizational accountability. The Chair highlighted the collaborative effort required for this and underscored the organization's commitment to implementing robust mechanisms and policies to enhance transparency and efficiency.

57. The EMD highlighted the importance of timely and effective implementation of the Risk and Oversight Plan (ROP), emphasizing its significance for funders and management. She assured the Council that substantial progress is being made through collaborative leadership and expressed confidence that the current efforts would reassure stakeholders and support further funding.
58. The WorldFish Director General, Director Generals' representative to the System Council, informed the Council that the Integrated, Coordinated and Independent (ICI) Committee met all its deliverables for the quarter, resulting in a comprehensive package of improved policies. These new policy documents are a significant advancement, providing a solid foundation for ongoing refinement and improvement. In addition, the Terms of Reference for the integrated executive functions have been approved by the IPB, and recruitment is underway and expected to be completed by Quarter 3. External audit approaches are being harmonized, preparing for future unified auditing processes across Centers.
59. The Director, Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT and Co-Convener of the ICI forum, provided an overview of the key policies and frameworks of the ROP. The documents policies being presented for Council approval – the Risk Management Framework, Risk Appetite Statement, and Ethics and Business Conduct (EBC) Policies – collectively provide a robust foundation for integrated and effective risk management, internal controls, and ethical standards across the organization.
60. Most Center Boards have approved or are in the process of approving the new policy documents. Council will be further updated once all Center Boards have made their decisions.
61. Juan Lucas Restrepo, concluding the presentation, provided some key reflections and the next steps for the ROP.
  - a. Progress: The development and approval of the new policy package marks a substantial advancement in the organization's assurance framework and demonstrates the power of collaborative partnership.
  - b. Collaborative achievement: The process involved extensive input and engagement from various committees (IPB-AFRC, Center AFRC Chairs, and AOC), which was instrumental in enhancing the quality and comprehensiveness of the policies.
  - c. Enabling better management: The updated policies provide clearer processes and advice from the assurance partners to enable better risk management and foster greater transparency while ensuring individual privacy is protected.
  - d. Effort and commitment: The implementation required considerable dedication, with a significant amount of time invested by committee members to meet commitments and deadlines.
  - e. Next steps: With the policy package in place, the ICI Committee is preparing to shift focus to broader integration, coordination, and efficiency initiatives, supported by newly constituted functional area committees across the partnership.
62. The EMD highlighted the collaborative bottom-up approach used in the development of these policies and frameworks and reiterated the strong support from Centers and their respective Boards. The IPB, through the IPB-AFRC, will continue to monitor policy

implementation and provide regular updates to the Council. The EMD expressed her gratitude to the ICI leadership and others involved in the process, particularly the IPB-AFRC and AOC, whose input was instrumental to the process.

63. The AOC Chair acknowledged that significant progress has been made on the escalation framework and EBC policies. For the escalation framework, the AOC has continued to insist that the IP EBC Executive retains access to all complaints made through the whistleblowing channels and to the case tracking system across CGIAR, ensuring the escalation process is thorough and effective. She also cited the need for alignment between the ethics policies and the escalation framework. The AOC recommends that the Council approve the Risk Management Framework and Risk Appetite and conditionally approve the EBC policies so that they come into effect on approval of the Escalation Framework (and are first reviewed for consistency with the latter).

### *Key Discussion Areas*

64. Council members appreciated the steady, strong progress made to date on the ROP. Noting that the organization has moved from a patchwork of varied policies to a single, consistent set of standards that now applies across all Centers, ensuring best practices throughout.
65. Key reflections included:
  - a. Living documents: Council members stressed that the policies should remain “living documents”, with ongoing revision and refinement.
  - b. Need for safeguards and regulations: While recognizing the challenges of implementing the policies across diverse Centers, there is a need for updated timelines, clearer principles, safeguards, and regulations, particularly regarding employee protection and high-risk actions. A request was made for the inclusion of an explicit provision in the whistleblower policy for escalation when Center leadership is involved.
  - c. Better staffing for Internal Audit functions: Council members called for improved staffing levels of the internal audit functions.
  - d. Impacts on human rights: Concerns about the potential impacts on human rights, especially staff rights to free expression and protection of whistleblowers. To mitigate this, it was recommended that the policies should align with international standards, including safeguards against retaliation and clear guidelines on handling sexual misconduct.
  - e. Strategic view of System-wide risks: The importance of maintaining momentum on the ROP, particularly regarding the escalation framework and the management of high-impact risks. Stakeholders stressed the need for regular updates and clear processes for escalating significant risks to the Council, suggesting that a high-level risk register be shared to enhance transparency and strategic oversight
  - f. Improvement of the new policies: A request for specific examples of how the revised policies improve upon the old ones, with a focus on what changes to the policies made these more acceptable and approvable by the Centers.
  - g. Release of CGIAR funds: A Council member emphasized the importance of receiving official assurance that existing concerns around risk and ethics have been addressed before releasing funding, citing ongoing issues with data access and decision-making beyond the Center level. Looking ahead, it was stressed that the continued lack of

progress threatens future funding and that only Centers committing to shared integration will be eligible to receive funding.

- h. Clear governance and escalation pathways: The Escalation Framework will clarify mandates and decision-making authority, providing clear criteria for escalating issues and helping protect the partnership's reputation.
- i. Collaborative governance improvement: The ICI forum now provides a platform for ongoing, collective enhancement of governance practices, supporting system-wide transparency, accountability, and integrity.

66. In responding to the comments, suggestions, and questions raised, the EMD and ICI co-convenors thanked the Council for its support and patience. They clarified the timelines for the ROP process and underscored the importance of the Escalation Framework. Juan Lucas Restrepo added that the updated policies are designed to be more practical for Centers to adopt and implement, he highlighted the greater empowerment of the integrated function and improved access to information. He confirmed that the high-level strategic risks will be shared with the Council, including information on how the Integrated Partnership is responding to these risks. Stating that the conversation regarding the Escalation Framework is nearing completion, and efforts are being made to ensure responsibilities and information access are clear across all levels of the partnership. Speaking further on the revised policies, Essam Mohammed emphasized that new harmonized policies increase operational efficiency across Centers, making shared functions and processes easier.

67. The Chair acknowledged the significant progress in developing new integrated policies and frameworks, emphasizing the collective effort to achieve high standards rather than settling for compromises. While the journey has involved challenges and slowdowns, there is a consensus to continue refining the system and maintain a commitment to ongoing improvement.

68. Decision Point — SC/M22/DP3: Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation, Risk Management Framework and Risk Appetite

Pursuant to Article 6.2 p) of the CGIAR System Framework, and following concurrence of the Integrated Partnership Board, the System Council approved the following documents, which replace those policies approved on 10 November 2019:

- i. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Risk Management & Internal Controls Framework
- ii. CGIAR Integrated Partnership: Risk Appetite

69. Decision Point — SC/M22/DP4: Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation, Ethics and Business Conduct Policies

Pursuant to Article 6.2 p) of the CGIAR System Framework, and following concurrence of the Integrated Partnership Board, the System Council approved the following four policies, which replace those policies approved on 24 January 2023, to take effect on approval of the Ethics & Business Conduct Escalation Framework on the condition that they are reviewed for consistency with that Escalation Framework once approved:

- i. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Code of Ethics and Business Conduct for Personnel
- ii. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- iii. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Policy on Whistleblowing and Protection from Retaliation



- iv. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Policy on Protection Against Sexual Misconduct, Exploitation, Abuse, and Human Trafficking

70. Action Point SC/M22/AP2 — Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation, Strategic Risks

The System Council requested that the EMD's presentation to each System Council meeting include high-level reporting on CGIAR's strategic risks as they relate to the approved risk appetite.

71. Action Point SC/M22/AP3 — Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation, Status Update

The System Council requested that a written interim status report on implementation of the Risk and Oversight Plan be provided in Q1 and Q3 each year by the integrated assurance functions, to supplement the reporting by the IPB at each ordinary System Council meeting.

72. Action Point SC/M22/AP4 — Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation, Escalation Framework

The System Council requested that a target date for delivery and approvals of the Ethics & Business Conduct Escalation Framework be agreed and communicated following the planned call between the AOC Chair and AFRC Chairs on 16 June 2025, and noting the request for adequate review time of any drafts and final versions by the AOC.

## Agenda Item 8: Governance Updates

- 73. The CGIAR General Counsel provided an update on governance, including background on the amendments to the CGIAR System Framework, the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, and the development of an Internal Rules Framework, all of which are central to CGIAR's structure and governance.
- 74. Phase one of the amendments process established the IPB as CGIAR's main governing body and introduced cross-membership requirements between the IPB and Center boards to foster collaboration and oversight. The System Council now oversees the appointment and removal of IPB voting members. The Audit, Finance, and Risk Committee structure and terms of reference were amended to reinforce these integrated governance mechanisms.
- 75. Phase two of the amendments process will address unresolved issues like the Council's role in appointing and removing voting IPB members, as well as aligning language with the new ROP. Some concerns about the governance processes remain, particularly regarding the Council's involvement in policy development and the risks of requiring unanimous Center approval for all the partnership policy documents.
- 76. The development of an Internal Rules Framework requires timely amendments to the Charter and Framework, as these documents define the approval roles of the IPB and System Council regarding policy adoption. The General Legal Counsel explained the long delay in developing the Internal Rules Framework.
- 77. Information was provided on the reconstituted Governance Working Group, which will develop proposed changes with stakeholder consultation, aiming for draft governing documents for approval by the end of September, but allowing for longer-term follow-up if



needed.

78. The General Legal Counsel noted the importance of stakeholder input and flexibility, which are emphasized throughout the process.
79. The IPB Representative on the Governance Working Group informed of the group's commitment to ongoing improvement and a phased approach to implementing the new CGIAR governance model. He highlighted the importance of aligning various activities—such as strategic planning, structural adjustments, and a new resource mobilization while reorganizing the understanding of CGIAR's internal partnerships. He indicated the goal of the GWG is to provide answers on key issues by September and clarify challenges that will require further attention.

### *Key Discussion Areas*

80. Meeting participants expressed their appreciation for the presentation and its relevance to the CGIAR System.
  - a. Clarification was sought on the approval process, whether unanimous approval is needed from the governing bodies on issues.
  - b. The current absence of an Internal Rules Framework is a contributing factor to uncoordinated decision-making and inefficiencies, underscoring the urgent need to implement this document. Concern was expressed over the delays caused by repeated delegation to working groups, and a call for a more ambitious time and streamlined process to move the effort forward was made.
  - c. Also highlighted was the workload and necessary expertise burden placed on Council members through the multitude of ad hoc working groups, which is problematic, with a request to reconsider this approach to utilize specific expertise and resources better.
  - d. The technical and political dimensions of finalizing the Internal Rules Framework were cited. The technical work can be completed quickly, but building a broad political consensus is more complex and time-consuming. A suggestion for a two-step approach, to have the technical experts create a draft first, then present it to a smaller representative group for political review, thereby streamlining the process.
  - e. Responding to the comments and suggestions made, the General Counsel acknowledged the frustration over delays in finalizing the Internal Rules Framework, explaining that efforts were paused due to other governance priorities. She indicated that the document is nearly complete but requires full agreement from all Centers, as outlined in the Integration Framework Agreement. For amendments to the Framework and Charter, a two-thirds majority from the General Assembly of Centers is sufficient for approval.
  - f. The General Legal Counsel presented the composition and structure of the Governance Working Group as another way to achieve the technical and political aspects of the process. She indicated that the drafting team, made up mostly of internal experts from the System Organization and Centers, will handle the technical work on the Internal Rules Framework. However, political guidance and decisions are crucial, since technical solutions alone won't ensure success without broader political support.
  - g. Commenting also on the process, IPB Representative on the Governance Working Group highlighted that achieving political consensus may require additional steps

beyond technical solutions and that offering preliminary results earlier could help accelerate progress. The three-month timeline is considered reasonable to conclude the ongoing process.

- h. The Chair agreed to a two-step approach, calling for the rapid completion of the technical work so that discussions can move forward and consensus can be built. He also noted the need for a Council member to serve as a representative in the Governance Working Group, with the diplomatic skills to move the process forward. The Chair requested Wendy Umberger, Member for Australia, to join, and she accepted, while stressing the importance of adhering to the three-month timeline through the proposed two-step approach.

- 81. The Chair, in closing the session and the day's proceedings, acknowledged the clear appreciation for the constructive progress made thus far, with recognition that moving forward will require a multi-step process rather than relying on a single draft. The importance of quickly producing the necessary documents to enable the next stage of development was emphasized, along with a reflection on the day's productive discussions and acknowledgment that specific issues, such as finance, still require further attention.

## Day 2, Thursday, 5 June 2025

- 82. The Chair welcomed participants to day two of the meeting and gave a brief overview of the previous day's meeting. He called for messages from the previous day's discussion to inform and accelerate ongoing and future efforts.

## Agenda item 9: Report from the Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC)

- 83. The Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) Interim Chair presented an update on SIMEC activities, focusing on supporting future priorities and addressing budget challenges within CGIAR. SIMEC primarily advises the Council on the CGIAR's independent advisory bodies (Standing Panel for Impact Assessment, SPIA, Independent Science for Development Council, and Evaluation Function), facilitates their coordination with the Portfolio Performance Unit and Project Coordination Unit, and provides advice on strategic impact monitoring.
- 84. Recent SIMEC activities have included:
  - a. Providing feedback on the management response system evaluations, which were highlighted as an area for improvement in the 2019 MOPAN review of CGIAR.
  - b. Participation in ad hoc consultative groups to enhance engagement with evaluations throughout the process.
  - c. Collaboration with SPIA, particularly on designing return-on-investment evidence.
  - d. Ongoing recruitment for the ISDC Chair and Members, including interviews and selection panel meetings.
- 85. The SIMEC Interim Chair presented a decision request for the approval of the ISDC Advisor terms of reference, noting that this would allow the outgoing ISDC Chair to serve as an

advisor to the incoming Chair for a fixed period of three months, to smooth the transition and provide institutional knowledge given that there is no scheduled overlap between the outgoing and incoming Chairs.

86. Decision: SC22-DP5 – Independent Science for Development Council Senior Advisor Terms of Reference

The System Council approved the Terms of Reference for the current Chair of the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) to serve as Senior Advisor to the incoming ISDC Chair from 1 October 2025 through to 31 December 2025, to overlap with the beginning of the new Chair's tenure (which is planned to commence by 1 October 2025).

87. The SIMEC Interim Chair outlined the proposed review of the Advisory Bodies, as dictated by SIMEC's terms of reference and with the goal of presenting recommendations to the Council during its December 2025 meeting. The review will focus on:

- a. Assessing focus and functions to determine whether the advisory bodies are addressing the most relevant priorities for the organization.
- b. Evaluating efficiency and cost-effectiveness to examine if these services are being delivered in a timely and efficient manner, especially in the context of the overall funding cuts.
- c. Adapting to governance and strategic changes to consider whether adjustments are needed due to evolving governance structures and the role of the IPB, with an emphasis on prioritizing high-quality impact evidence for investment.

*Key Discussion Areas*

- a. Clarification was sought on whether the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) functions will be reviewed during the review process. The Interim Chair responded positively, reiterating that all three Advisory Bodies, plus their Secretariat, will be reviewed.
- b. A suggestion was made that the review should recommend adjustments or changes to improve efficiency and reduce costs across the Advisory Bodies.
- c. Also suggested as a key aspect of the review was the need to ensure that all the System components were working together to build a strong, high-level impact story for CGIAR stakeholders.
- d. The alignment of the SIMEC review with the broader reflections on governance cost and financial sustainability, which could include right-sizing and refocusing of the organization, was suggested.
- e. A suggestion for the review to examine other advisory bodies of the Council, to evaluate the efficiency and organization of these Council structures, such as the Assurance and Oversight Committee (AOC), noting the workload the AOC is tasked with handling.
- f. The Council was informed of a discussion between the IPB and the ISDC regarding efforts to coordinate their activities while acknowledging the different responsibilities of each body. It was noted that these collaborations may contribute to increased efficiency.

88. Responding to the suggestions and comments, the Interim Chair and a SIMEC member highlighted the following points:
- SIMEC's mandate does not extend to reviewing the AOC.
  - The review aims to be light-touch, rapid, and to deliver clear recommendations to the System Council at the December 2025 meeting, given budget and time restrictions.
  - Confirmation that the review will be conducted by SIMEC members, at no cost, without hiring external consultants to keep the review cost-effective.
  - There is a new IPB committee on Science, Innovation, Impact, and Partnership. A goal of the review will be to ensure that this committee is complementary and avoids duplication with both SIMEC and the Advisory Bodies.
  - Allusion to the Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, Impact Assessment and Foresight (MELIAF) presentation the day before, and emphasis on the MELIAF framework being used to connect monitoring, evaluation, learning, impact assessment, and foresight across the organization.
  - The overall focus of the review is on efficiency, avoiding duplication, and providing timely recommendations with the existing resources.
89. The Council Co-Chair and SIMEC Interim Chair further acknowledged and thanked all SIMEC members for their significant unpaid contributions, emphasizing that their dedication is an essential contribution to the Council's work.

### Agenda Item 10: Report from the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)

90. The SPIA Chair presented the SPIA report, with a focus on the return on investment (ROI) estimates for CGIAR's research. He also noted the request for approval of a new SPIA member. Key topics of the report included:
- Return on investment: SPIA, with SIMEC's approval, focused its ROI estimation on key agricultural innovations previously shared with SC during the February drop-in call, such as stress-tolerant crops, public-private scaling partnerships (including GIF Tilapia and livestock innovations from Ethiopia), and mechanization in South Asia. These showcase successes are a central part of the ongoing analysis, which involves collecting and validating data, documenting lessons learned, and aiming for transparent, bounded ROI estimates. Results are expected by the end of 2025.
  - SPIA three-year budget and workplan: This \$25+ million budget covers 2025-2027 and 80% has already been committed to research contracts, particularly for country studies and causal impact studies, which include country studies in Colombia, India, Uganda, and Vietnam. Competitive calls have been made for new impact study proposals across CGIAR's five impact areas.
  - Impact of CGIAR innovations: Recent SPIA webinars have highlighted the reach and impact of CGIAR innovations. The SPIA Chair indicated that these webinars had positive results and provided critical lessons for future strategies and funding prioritization.
  - Strengthening SPIA's internal capacity: SPIA aims for a lean and efficient panel of seven to eight members.
  - SPIA self-evaluation: Feedback from stakeholders on SPIA's work was obtained, and efforts are ongoing to make SPIA evidence more accessible and useful to decision-makers.

### *Key Discussion Areas*

91. The Council Chair opened the floor for comments and suggestions, which included:
  - a. Broad agreement on the importance of ROI analysis in demonstrating the impact and value of investments in CGIAR's research.
  - b. A call for SPIA to focus its work on the most pressing policy issues that decision makers need evidence-based information for. It was noted that the current ROI estimation by SPIA is an ex-post analysis—looking back to understand returns on past investments, not setting future priorities.
  - c. A call for SPIA to reflect on its diversity, given that seven of the current 10 members are from the United States or India.
  - d. Emphasis on the importance of aligning causal studies with urgent demands and the need to pay attention to the timing of the reports, noting that the evidence needs to be ready on time for use during major decision points, such as COP in early November 2025. SPIA indicated that this is an ongoing discussion within the Panel.
  - e. How SPIA captures and documents the “stories of change” was raised to reflect the broader impact of research better.
  - f. A question was raised about the selection criteria for the country studies.
  - g. Comments around the ongoing tension between the need for long-term, rigorous impact assessments by SPIA and the immediate demand for quick, practitioner-focused studies to support current narratives. While the Council has approved SPIA's work plan and funding for in-depth research, there's also an urgent call for timely evidence to inform decision-making. A suggestion was made for SIMEC to help in balancing these needs, ensuring that both thorough research and rapid assessments are available to support CGIAR's objectives.
  - h. A call for recognition of the importance of sharing both individual success stories and the broader impact of CGIAR on global food security and market stability. A suggestion for integrating global narratives, possibly using IFPRI's work, to strengthen the case for investment and highlight CGIAR's overall contribution, especially in the context of COP 30. It was also noted that a combination of different methods and evidence sources will help create a stronger, more compelling narrative for CGIAR's achievements and inform discussions moving forward.
  - i. The Council was reminded of CGIAR's work during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, where CGIAR and partners used emergency funding to quickly reach millions of smallholder farmers by working with local organizations and promoting innovative agricultural practices. Emphasis was placed on the importance of capturing the lessons from this collaborative approach, which successfully connected research and implementation in new ways.
  - j. The importance of recognizing and involving host countries more actively in strategic planning. The valuable contributions the host countries provide were also pointed out with a call for the need to integrate the host countries into future solutions.
  - k. SPIA's approach complements related work (e.g., by IFPRI) by focusing on specific, evidence-based impact rather than broad modelling.
  - l. Further clarification was provided by the interim SIMEC Chair, Alan Tollervey, regarding SPIA's work, which is responsible for generating evidence and not creating the narrative. He also pointed out that while valuable country studies exist, such as those on Ethiopia, which indicate the reach estimate, this information is not effectively used

in CGIAR's main message. He concluded by asking whose responsibility it was to turn detailed studies into impactful, digestible messages.

- m. A call for the urgency of distilling complex reports into clear, impactful messaging. There is openness about who should take on this task, as long as scientific rigor is maintained, with SPIA overseeing assumptions.

92. In closing the item, the Council Chair called for a systematic approach to impact evaluation. He thanked SPIA for their hard work and acknowledged the challenges faced in obtaining economic data. He encouraged SPIA to continue working with the Council to make meaningful progress.

93. Decision SC22-DP6 – Standing Panel on Impact Assessment Membership

The System Council appointed Dr. Shilpa Aggarwal as a member of the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment for an initial three-year term with effect from 1 September 2025.

### Agenda Item 11: Report from the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)

94. The ISDC Chair reminded Council members that ISDC is a trusted advisory body to the Council. The ISDC will soon conduct the formal review process of the Portfolio inception reports. In the meantime, the ISDC Chair:

- a. Expressed appreciation for the high level of engagement and willingness to collaborate shown by management and other stakeholders. Noticeable progress has been made since SC21, with feedback being taken seriously and a collective commitment to organizational success, despite funding challenges.
- b. Highlighted the need for the Council to agree on priorities based on comparative advantage, as the current funding structure limits management's ability to set portfolio-wide priorities.
- c. Recommended that all Portfolio programs and accelerators should consider incorporating innovative finance activities to help attract additional funding and strengthen research for development initiatives.
- d. Suggested clarifying and incorporating more direct impact indicators within CGIAR's control, rather than relying on broader, harder-to-measure outcomes. This would better demonstrate the organization's direct contributions and clearly link its work to impact. The ISDC Chair also questioned whether the current impact indicators are strong enough to guide research priorities, suggesting clearer links are needed between scientific work and its outcomes.
- e. Indicating the challenge of prioritization when the Portfolio is predetermined through some of the funding mechanisms, the ISDC Chair advised that CGIAR needs to consider the political factors alongside the outcomes and have a better understanding of the policy process.
- f. Emphasized the importance of showcasing CGIAR's distinctive strengths, such as its global convening ability and leadership in agricultural innovation. This is crucial for distinguishing CGIAR and strengthening its overall narrative.



95. The ISDC Chair updated the Council on the ISDC's ongoing work, including preparations for reviewing Portfolio inception reports using a refined framework and focusing on feasibility rather than detailed budget analysis. The review will also assess the integration of Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Impact Assessment (MELIA) and address previously identified gaps. The Chair outlined the review's timeline, with report submission expected by August 7, 2025, following a four-week evaluation and an in-person meeting to finalize findings in July.
96. The ISDC Chair demonstrated a new onboarding tool, ISDC 101, which was developed to assist with the onboarding of new ISDC members but may also be useful to Council members.
97. There were no comments from Council members. The Co-Chair thanked ISDC for its hard work and the value it adds to CGIAR.

### Agenda Item 12: Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion in CGIAR

98. The Director, Gender Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Culture, presented an update as follows:
  - a. CGIAR has expanded to 8,890 staff across 75 countries, representing 124 nationalities. In 2025, female representation in the GLT increased to 20% from 14% in 2024. Recent leadership hires reflect CGIAR's commitment to diversity. Across the System, in 2024, the percentage of women has increased from 36.8% to 38.1%.
  - b. CGIAR is placing strong emphasis on developing local talent and adopting inclusive hiring practices to attract exceptional candidates from within its operating regions. The organization has also seen a rise in the promotion rates of female staff, increasing from 43% to 47%, alongside a reduction in turnover among this group.
  - c. CGIAR staff wellbeing initiatives have shown increased participation. CGIAR plans to fully integrate gender, diversity, and inclusion into its operations, making equal opportunity and inclusion a core part of the organizational culture and every process.
  - d. CGIAR launched culture change workshops, piloted new leadership and performance management programs, and emphasized building core leadership skills for future challenges. CGIAR is implementing a holistic culture change by focusing on people, processes, and performance, aiming to align behaviors and organizational structures to support its mission. Key initiatives include culture change workshops, piloting a new performance management system across several Centers, and launching a 10-month leadership development program for 125 leaders. Emphasis is placed on building core and leadership competencies, fostering adaptability, and ensuring ongoing measurement and governance, with the goal of creating a sustainable, dynamic, and inclusive organizational culture.
  - e. CGIAR continues to prioritize engagement surveys, workforce data analysis, and focus on wellbeing and mental health, evolving its approach from gender, diversity, and inclusion to broader culture and engagement efforts. Additional initiatives are in the pipeline.
99. The Council Co-Chair praised the presentation and acknowledged the strides made by CGIAR in this area. Council members expressed general appreciation for the work done and

progress made. Some persistent challenges remain, and the Council is committed to supporting CGIAR's long-term efforts on gender, diversity, and inclusion. Other key reflections from Council members included:

- a. Gender equity in research was highlighted as a persistent challenge that requires attention.
- b. CGIAR should set clear targets for female representation in senior leadership roles by 2027.
- c. A request was made for continued updates with a focus on leadership diversity.
- d. The culture change and growth mindset within CGIAR has supported the organization through recent structural transitions. An assessment of how these changes are reflected in staff retention and productivity would be useful.
- e. Gender should be a central focus in CGIAR's culture and engagement frameworks, as the current diversity category is too broad and insufficiently focused on gender issues.
- f. The discussion highlighted significant efficiency gains achieved through collaborative efforts, such as offering nine inclusive leadership courses to over 400 participants at an average cost of just US \$35 per trainee.
- g. The importance of gender balance in leadership was acknowledged, highlighting that CGIAR currently has only one female Director General

### Agenda Item 13: Gender in CGIAR's Research.

100. The Chief Scientist presented her vision for gender in CGIAR's research, including:
  - a. While technical innovations are important, advancing gender equality requires addressing social and structural barriers, such as enabling women's access to technology and resources within their communities.
  - b. Gender inclusivity must form an integral part of scientific work and organizational culture, embedded in all activities and mindsets.
  - c. CGIAR needs to use specific performance indicators to track progress in gender equality, ensuring that efforts are actionable, measurable, and demonstrate real-world impact.
101. The Co-Chair expressed appreciation for the presentation and reiterated the need to move beyond technical fixes and embed gender and youth inclusion into research programs. Measurable outcomes and mandatory reporting will significantly shift how organizations prioritize and approach gender equality and inclusion.
102. Council members expressed their appreciation for the presentation. Key reflections included:
  - a. The Friends of Gender group expressed strong support for the collaboration between science programs and the gender Accelerator and called for the development of a strategy that will detail how science programs will achieve and report on gender, youth, and inclusion outcomes
  - b. An emphasis on how gender equality and inclusion should be central to CGIAR's research priorities and agenda setting from the start.
  - c. The need to track gender-related results across programs and ensure clear responsibility and accountability for these outcomes was emphasized. Additionally,



portfolio priorities, such as youth in agriculture, should be reflected in resource allocation and emerging program focus.

103. The EMD reminded the Council that gender is one of CGIAR's five impact areas. She reflected on the extent of the impact at the ground level, especially for women in rural areas, while highlighting the challenges of measuring real-world outcomes.
104. The Co-Chair acknowledged the valuable points raised in the discussion and expressed appreciation for the Chief Scientist's ongoing efforts. She also underscored the vital role of supportive men in achieving gender equality.
105. Action Item: SC22-AP5 – Gender in CGIAR's Research  
The System Council requested Management to set out clearly how the 2025-30 science and innovation Portfolio will define, monitor and report on, and drive performance and results towards its intended impacts and outcomes in CGIAR's Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion Impact Area in the context of the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, for information and discussion at its 23rd meeting.

#### Agenda Item 14: Report from the Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC):

106. On behalf of the Council, the Chair expressed his appreciation for the extra workload undertaken by the AOC. It has been a challenging but important and impactful year for assurance and oversight processes in CGIAR.
107. The AOC Chair provided an overview of the AOC's responsibilities and its work to date. The AOC currently supports the Council by providing oversight of assurance in internal audit, external audit, governance, internal controls, and risk management. The AOC also takes on additional tasks at the behest of the Council.
108. At the request of the Council, AOC was tasked with advising on updates to the Charter and Framework and has also invested significant effort in overseeing investigations related to the System Council Action Plan issued in September 2024, where the IPB-AFRC was conflicted
109. The AOC recognizes significant ongoing efforts to implement the ROP, stressing the need for consistency and timely action.
110. Significant progress has been made in risk management. However, the AOC raised concerns about staffing levels in the Internal Audit unit, which could affect assurance.
111. The AOC Chair expressed the Committee's appreciation for the strong collaboration with the IPB-AFRC, CGIAR Office of Ethics and Business Conduct, and System Council in implementing the System Council Action Plan and conducting investigations regarding the "45 red flags" whistleblower letter. The AOC regularly updates Council Voting Members on the progress of investigations and oversight tasks, with 11 out of 12 action plan items now closed. The one remaining item, concerning governance remuneration, is expected to be

addressed by mid-July through the Nominations Committee of the System Council (NCSC).

112. Regarding specific topics under its mandate, the AOC Chair updated that:
- a. There were significant delays in completing the 2024 internal audit plan and implementing management actions, mainly due to staff shortages and ongoing organizational transition. The AOC emphasizes the importance of properly staffing the internal audit function to ensure effective assurance.
  - b. The IPB-AFRC confirmed to the AOC that no qualified opinions were issued on the 2024 financial statements for each Center and the System Organization. The AOC Chair reiterated the role of AOC vis-à-vis the financial statements, as the Committee does not read the Centers' financial statements. In the event of a qualified opinion that presents possible System-wide risk, the AOC, in collaboration with the IPB-AFRC, could analyze the financial statements to understand the situation better.
  - c. The latest system-wide risk assessment defined 11 key risks across all Centers and the System Organization. Four 'highest priority' risks were identified:
    - i. Inability to establish a long-term funding strategy and model aligned with the integrated partnership's vision
    - ii. Failure to deliver a high-quality research portfolio
    - iii. Underdeveloped integrated partnership model
    - iv. Failure to deliver an effective governance
113. The AOC Chair presented the Committee's key priorities for the remainder of 2025, which include overseeing ethics and business conduct matters, ensuring completion of the System Council Action Plan, providing input on upcoming Charter and Framework revisions, overseeing implementation of the ROP and related Council recommendations, advising on the Advisory Bodies' business plans and budget, and supporting other Council activities as needed.
114. The AOC Chair presented two decision items for the Council, recognized the work of the Committee's Secretary, and expressed gratitude to her fellow AOC members for their collaborative effort over the last months.

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

115. Council members expressed their gratitude to the AOC for their work and dedication under short timelines. Specific points included:
- a. A suggestion that the terms of all System Council Committee Members be standardized to two, three-year terms, with exceptions for special cases.
  - b. A suggestion to review the Committee's name and consider "Oversight Assurance Committee" instead, to reflect its broader oversight.
  - c. The importance of clearly defining the responsibilities between the AOC and IPB-AFRC.
  - d. Clarification regarding AOC's role in Center audit reports and how this differs from the IPB-AFRC's mandate. The AOC Chair responded by indicating that the Committee reviews Center audit reports only when there is a qualified opinion, focusing on oversight and relying on the IPB-AFRC's detailed work. The AOC does not duplicate the IPB-AFRC's efforts but ensures proper follow-up and oversight of audit concerns.
  - e. Concerns were raised regarding the under-resourcing of critical internal audit

functions, and a call was made to the IPB to address these issues to maintain effective risk management and internal controls.

- f. An expression of frustration with the slow pace of implementing recommendations, noting the tendency within CGIAR to make exceptions for individual Centers. Members warned that their patience is running thin, urging greater collaboration and faster progress in implementing various recommendations.
- g. Recognizing the AOC's heavy workload and emphasizing the importance of their early involvement, a call was made for the AOC to have sufficient time to review and provide input on documents such as the new ethics policies.
- h. A request for clarity on the recruitment timelines for the new Integrated Partnership Executive positions, and a request for an update during the Council's December meeting.
- i. Noting that financial risks remain a critical concern, a suggestion for future Council meetings is that the EMD, in their presentation, should set out the critical and high risks and the mitigating measures taken.

116. The AOC Chair noted that, while the process has been hard and challenges remain, meaningful progress is being achieved. The core challenge stems from the balance between the independence of individual Centers and their collective responsibilities within the broader partnership, with the Council steadfast in its requirement for a robust process to escalate systemic issues. Notable improvements in CGIAR governance, the recruitment of highly qualified executives, and the establishment of clearer mandates are fostering trust and gradually shifting the equilibrium. As these central functions become more effective, Centers are increasingly willing to rely on them for critical processes.

117. The IPB Vice Chair described the process as a valuable learning experience, noting that progress has been made in building trust, establishing confidence, and clarifying rules, which sets a positive foundation for moving forward.

118. The EMD emphasized the need to be realistic regarding committee approval timelines and suggested reducing bureaucracy in the future. She highlighted progress on the escalation framework and the approval of executive roles, stressing the importance of having highly qualified individuals to build trust.

119. The Council Chair emphasized the ongoing commitment to achieving the highest standards of oversight. He acknowledged the significant progress made, while noting that important work remains. He noted that Council members largely feel that trust has been restored, though some gaps persist. Stressing the importance of swift action, he reminded all meeting participants that outstanding issues must be resolved promptly to protect the organization from potential risks. He expressed his gratitude to Council Members for their dedication and encouraged everyone to keep up the momentum on this topic.

120. Decision: SC22-DP7 – Assurance Oversight Committee Membership

Pursuant to the Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC)'s Terms of Reference, the System Council approved the extension of the term of Muriel Uzan as a member of the AOC to 30 June 2028, or until a successor is appointed.

121. Decision: SC22-DP8 – Assurance Oversight Committee Terms of Reference

The System Council approved the revised Terms of Reference for the Assurance Oversight Committee, as issued on 23 May 2025, conditional on the inclusion of a two-term limit for members (with allowable exceptions).

122. Action Item: SC22-AP6 – Assurance Oversight Committee

The System Council requested the Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC) to reflect on whether its current name best reflects its mandate and report back to the Council by 31 July 2025.

**Agenda Item: 15 Report from the Nominations Committee of the System Council**

123. The Nominations Committee of the System Council (NCSC) Co-Chair of the NCSC, presented updates, including:

- a. NCSC composition, which is comprised of 11 members (including one independent member). There is currently a vacancy for one member to be nominated by the Council.
- b. The NCSC initiated an honorarium benchmarking exercise in November 2024 using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The review also encompasses the travel policy to ensure a holistic evaluation, with the draft report scheduled for completion by the end of June and the final report expected by mid-July.
- c. Work is underway to develop and present to the Council for approval the key performance indicators against which the NCSC would evaluate the IPB with inputs from the General Assembly of Centers.
- d. The NCSC's responsibilities extend beyond presenting potential IPB nominees to Council for approval. The NCSC Co-Chair indicated that some of the Committee's work could be read as covering business continuity and compliance of the IPB.

*Key Discussion Areas*

124. Council Members thanked the NCSC for their efforts and the progress reported to date. Specific points included:

- a. A call for the ongoing honorarium benchmarking exercise to include Center Boards, as this will help to ensure consistency in honorarium levels and committee practices across the relevant bodies and equity across the system.
- b. Concerns about the current honorarium level of the IPB Chair, noting that the honorarium should reflect the non-executive nature of the position, especially given the upcoming elections for Chair and Vice-Chair positions in the IPB. It was suggested that the terms and conditions for the IPB Chair and Vice Chair should be clearly established before the election to avoid confusion.
- c. A concern that the NCSC lacks gender balance and a reminder about the importance of reflecting gender equality in all committees, and not just in the workplace.
- d. A query regarding the method of calculating the Board honoraria based on the number of days worked, rather than using a flat fee model. Variable payments blur the distinction between oversight and management, thereby making governance less effective.
- e. The need to review the structure and composition of the IPB, considering the number

of members and days committed (and associated costs).

- f. Clarification that IPB Members do not receive a second remuneration for their roles on Center Boards.

125. The NCSC Co-Chair reiterated the need for more precise and systematic terms of reference for Council standing committees. He proposed that the structure, size, and composition of the IPB should be reviewed regularly, ideally by an external, independent party.

126. Decision: SC22-DP9 – Nominations Committee of the System Council Membership

The System Council appointed Matthew Morell, CIMMYT Board Member and AFRC Chair, CIMMYT, and Laura Munro, System Council voting member for the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland, to serve on the Nominations Committee of the System Council pursuant to Article 8.3 of the CGIAR System Framework and paragraph 2.1.2 of the Terms of Reference of the Nominations Committee of the System Council.

127. Action Item: SC22-AP7 – Nominations Committee of the System Council

The System Council asked that it be recalled to all IPB members as part of the ongoing process to select the IPB Chair and Vice Chair, that honorarium arrangements for those roles are subject to the outcome of the honorarium review process led by the Nominations Committee of the System Council.

## Agenda Item 16: Approval of System Organization Annual Financial Statements

128. The Director, Business Operations and Finance, provided a brief background on the System Organization annual financial statements being presented for approval, including:

- a. The System Organization's annual financial statements were audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers, received an unqualified opinion, and were endorsed by the IPB- AFRC and IPB.
- b. Statements cover only System Organization funds (not Center-managed funds). CGIAR does not issue consolidated statements, but aggregated reports will be available online soon.
- c. The audit process includes preliminary and final reviews covering internal controls, IT, cyber security, and audit recommendations.
- d. All auditor recommendations from 2023 were addressed, and there are no outstanding recommendations for 2025, except for a few related to One CGIAR controls. The number of open audit recommendations fell from 29 in early 2024 to 8 in 2025.
- e. Internal controls have improved, with the accounting process now moved in-house and new staff hired for 2025.
- f. Revenues include special project funds and \$8 million for the One CGIAR transition. Expenses were reduced in 2024 due to delays in science and governance activities. The increase in cash during 2023-2025 was mainly due to a \$10 million grant from Google for digital/data projects, and funds were invested in low-risk bank deposits. Receivables from Centers were reduced after reconciliation; new contracts for SPIA increased advances, which will be liquidated after report submission.

### *Key Discussion Areas*

129. Council Members commended the Director for the presentation and for receiving an unqualified report, and raised points including:
- a. Clarification was sought regarding the approval process for the System Organization annual financial statements, noting that many Council Members may lack the skills required to analyze the document properly. There was a suggestion to expand the AOC's mandate to review the reports, but it was also noted that this responsibility should fall under the purview of the IPB, while the Council should focus on approving the budget. There was a consensus that the IPB should approve the System Organization's annual financial statements, and the IPB should share the information transparently with the Council. It was suggested that this agreed-upon change to the approval process of the System Organization's annual financial statements should be presented during the CGIAR Framework and Charter of the CGIAR System Organization.
  - b. The need to group the financial-related items in future agendas was raised, as this will bring about efficiency in meetings.
  - c. Concerns were raised about increased travel costs and the environmental impact. A suggestion was made for CGIAR to track both expenses and emissions, using different measures to achieve this, i.e., flying economy even for long-haul flights to reduce emissions and costs.
130. Decision: SC22-DP10 – System Organization Annual Financial Statements  
Pursuant to Article 6.2 k) of the CGIAR System Framework and following concurrence of the Integrated Partnership Board, the System Council approved the audited financial statements of the System Organization for FY2024.

### *Agenda Item 19: Other Business*

131. The Special Envoy from Mexico's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development expressed gratitude for the opportunity to host the upcoming System Council meeting in June 2026 and reaffirmed Mexico's longstanding support for CGIAR. He highlighted how hosting a CGIAR Center, as Mexico does with CIMMYT, opens doors to broader agricultural research and innovation from other Centers as well. In response, the Chair emphasized a new approach to engagement with host countries, suggesting that this could substantially strengthen relationships throughout CGIAR. The Chair further noted the importance of including all host countries—not only those where Centers are headquartered—and proposed continued dialogue, potentially through a dedicated meeting later in the year, to foster deeper collaboration across the CGIAR system.
132. The EMD reiterated the Chair's comments and highlighted the launch of a host country platform during Science Week, led by Mexico and Kenya, as an important step in uniting host countries and promoting collaboration. She noted that leaders from various Centers often discuss benefits from other CGIAR Centers with their governments, showing a shift toward a more unified, system-wide approach. This is a core part of the culture change, fostering greater collective value and cooperation across the entire CGIAR system.



133. It was suggested that the management team could create a comprehensive, country-specific package showcasing the full range of CGIAR's offerings, making its partnership benefits clear and accessible to all.
134. Management and IPB were requested to provide an update to the next System Council on how the budget reductions and potential retrenchments are affecting staffing, knowledge retention, and risk management across the Centers.
135. The Member for West Asia and North Africa, representing Türkiye, extended an invitation for Türkiye to host the Council meeting in December 2026. He emphasized the nation's rich agricultural diversity and its experience with international events. The Chair warmly thanked Türkiye for the proposal, highlighting the country's strengths not only in agricultural production but also in processing and value addition. The Chair noted that holding a System Council meeting in Türkiye would offer participants a valuable opportunity to learn from the country's innovations and expertise in agriculture.
136. Members considered the balance between physical and virtual meetings, and the potential to reduce overall travel by combining Council meetings with other events. The Chair expressed openness to discussing the frequency and format of meetings in the future, recognizing that it's an ongoing conversation in many organizations.
137. Departing Council members from Germany and the ISDC Chair were recognized for their outstanding contributions, thoughtful and action-oriented comments, and their dedication to CGIAR.
138. The Secretary reviewed the decisions and actions taken by the Council during the meeting. She also confirmed that the next Council meeting, SC23, will be hosted by the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi, on 10-11 December 2025.
139. The Chair expressed gratitude to all members and staff for their dedication and hard work during the Council meeting, emphasizing the importance of partnership, urgency, and collaboration to guide CGIAR through upcoming challenges. Appreciation was given to WorldFish, the Council Secretariat, and the entire team for their outstanding efforts in supporting and organizing the event. The meeting was formally adjourned.
140. Action Item: SC22-AP8 – Other Business  
The System Council took note of a request made relating to the approach for setting agendas for System Council meetings and asked that the Secretariat reflect on this, together with inputs provided via the survey on the meeting, and propose the future approach.



## Annex 1: Participants List

22 <sup>nd</sup> CGIAR System Council Meeting (SC22) Participants list		
<b>Meeting Leadership</b>	<b>Key:</b> ( <b>**</b> ) indicates that member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by the alternate ( <b>***</b> ) indicated that member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by another delegated representative ( <b>v</b> ) shows virtual participation of a participant	
<b>Chair: Juergen Voegelé</b> <b>Co-Chair: Wendy Umberger (Australia)</b>		
<b>System Council Voting Members</b> (listed alphabetically)	<b>Member representative</b>	<b>Member Alternate &amp; Other Delegation Members</b>
Australia	<b>Wendy Umberger</b>	<b>Alternate: Bosibori Bett</b>
Canada	<b>Tom Bui</b>	Other Delegate: Pierre Kadet
Crop Trust & IFAD	<b>Stefan Schmitz</b>	Other Delegates: Jaspreet Stamm (Crop Trust)
East Asia and Pacific	<b>Zhai Lin (China)</b>	Other Delegate: Jazman Azi Bin Jamal Jamalludin (Malaysia), Zhang Xinxuan (China)
European Commission	<b>Christophe Larose</b>	
Gates Foundation	<b>Martien van Nieuwkoop</b>	<b>Alternate: Ruben Echeverria</b> Other Delegate: Rinn Self
Germany	<b>Felicitas Röhrig</b>	Other Delegates: Sarah Schmidt, Joachim Langbein, Aliénor De Cuyper
India	<b>M.L. Jat (V) - Day 1 only</b>	
Latin America and Caribbean	<b>Pedro Machado (Brazil)</b>	
The Netherlands	<b>Timmo Gaasbeek (V)</b>	
Norway	<b>Daniel van Gilst</b>	
South Asia	<b>Mosharraf Molla (Bangladesh)</b>	
Sub-Saharan Africa	<b>Bello Abubakar Zaki** (Nigeria) (V)</b>	<b>Alternate: Eliud Kireger (Kenya)</b> Other Delegate: Carolyne Minayo (Kenya)
Sweden	<b>David Lymer**</b>	
Switzerland	<b>Manfred Kaufmann</b>	
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	<b>Laura Munro</b>	<b>Alternate: Alan Tollervey</b>
West Asia & North Africa	<b>Mustafa Altuğ Atalay (Türkiye)</b>	<b>Alternate: Mohammad Ali Ebrahimi (Iran)</b> Other Delegate : Didem Kökden, Ahmet Volkan Güngören (Türkiye)
The World Bank	<b>Renaud Seligmann</b>	<b>Alternate: Shobha Shetty</b> Other Delegate: Marianne Grosclaude (V)
<b>Temporary Voting Members</b>	<b>Member representative</b>	<b>Member Alternate &amp; Other Delegates</b>
Belgium	<b>Carol Durieux</b>	<b>Alternate: Boudewijn Vandenbossche (V)</b>
Denmark	<b>Hanne Carus (V)</b>	
Ireland	<b>Patrick McManus (V)</b>	Other Delegate: Isabella Rae (V)
UAE	<b>Fatema Almulla*</b>	Additional delegate: Kristofer Hamel; Ghaya Almusalli, Khalfan AlMatrooshi, Rodney Missen (Day 1 only)

## Meeting Summary: 22<sup>nd</sup> System Council Meeting

Non-voting Ex-officio members	Member	Other Delegates
CGIAR Integrated Partnership Board	Patrick Caron, IPB Vice Chair**	
CGIAR Executive Managing Director	Ismahane Elouafi	
CGIAR Center/Alliance Representative 2: Convener of the Center Directors General	Essam Mohammed	
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Selvaraju Ramasamy (V)	
Active Observers	Representative	Alternate & Other Delegates
Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation (GFAiR)	Ravi Khetarpal, Chair (V)	Katarina Spisiakova (Team Leader GFAiR Secretariat a.i.) (V)
CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)	Holger Meinke, Chair	Nompumelelo (Mpumi) Obokoh (Vice Chair), Erin Lentz (Member)
Secretary to the System Council		
Sylvia Oyinlola, Global Head, CGIAR System Council Support		
Invited Guests	Representative	
France (with voting rights)	Bernard Hubert	Alternate: Jean Albergel
Trustee of the CGIAR Trust Fund (World Bank)	Laurent Achi (Trustee)	
CGIAR Assurance Oversight Committee	Muriel Uzan (Chair)	
CGIAR Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)	Travis Lybbert (Chair) (V)	
Japan	Fujita Kotomi* (V)	Other delegates: Inoue Seisuke, Fujita Kaori, Ogawa Satsuki, Asaka Udagawa (V)
Mexico	V́ctor Manuel Villalobos Aŕmbula (Special Envoy)	
Session specific invitees		
Agenda item 4: 2025-2030 Portfolio Inception Phase update	Clemens Breisinger, Director, Policy Innovations (a.i); Tim Krupnik, Director, Scaling for Impact (a.i); Inga Jacobs-Mata, Deputy Director, Scaling for Impact; Charles Kleinermann, Director, Capacity Sharing (a.i); Oscar Ortiz, Director, Sustainable Farming (a.i); Vania Azevedo, Director, Genebanks (a.i); Frank Place, Team Lead, Joined-up MELIA; Amy Beaudreault, ISDC Lead (V)	
Agenda Item 7: Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation	Juan Lucas Restrepo, DG, Alliance of Bioersity & CIAT and ICI Committee Co-Convener (V)	
Agenda Item 8: Governance Updates	Dhesigen Naidoo, IPB Member and IPB’s representative on the Governance Working Group (V)	
Agenda item 10: Report from SPIA	Ricardo Labarta, Principal Scientist, SPIA (V)	
Agenda item 11: Report from the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)	Amy Beaudreault, ISDC Lead (V)	
Agenda item 12: Gender, Diversity and Inclusion in CGIAR	Lavanya Shrinagesh, Director, Gender equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Culture (V)	
Agenda item 13: Gender in CGIAR’s Research	Nicoline de Haan, Director, Gender Platform (a.i)	
Agenda item 15: Report from the Nominations Committee of the System Council	Andy Homer, Independent Member, Nominations Committee of the System Council (V)	
Additional participants	Name/Role/Organization	
SC Chair advisor	Jonathan Wadsworth, Agriculture Specialist, Agriculture and Food Global Practice	
CGIAR Global Leadership team (EMD and WorldFish DG show under ‘Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members’)	Sandra Milach, Chief Scientist	

## Meeting Summary: 22<sup>nd</sup> System Council Meeting

CGIAR Staff (attending all sessions)	Micheline Ayoub, Chief of Staff
	André Zandstra, Director, Resource Mobilization & Business Development
	Christine Larson-Luhila, IPB-AFRC Secretary (V) - <i>Day 1 only</i>
	Elbert Hidding, Head CGIAR Internal Audit Function a.i. (V)
	Elise Perset, General Counsel, Director Legal Services, CGIAR System Organization
	Luis Felipe Mendes, Director Business Operations and Finance
	Roland Sundstrom, Practice Lead, Program Delivery
Special Advisor to the CGIAR IPB Chair	Myra Wopereis (V)
CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES)	Allison Smith, Director (V)
Secretary of EIARD (European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development)	Nienke Beintema
CGIAR System Council Secretariat (in addition to the Secretary and event support)	Emma Quilligan, Senior Manager, System Council Support / SIMEC and AOC Secretary
<b>Event support</b>	
Olwen Cussen, Governance Advisor, CGIAR	
Victoria Pezzi, Meetings and Events Officer, CGIAR	
Vashna Singh, Meetings and Events, Consultant, CGIAR	