



Chair's Summary¹
21st System Council meeting
Berlin, Germany, 11-12 December 2024

Dear System Council Members, Active Observers, and Invited Guests,

Celebrating 50 years of successful partnership between the Federal Republic of Germany and CGIAR, the System Council convened in Berlin, a city that has evolved significantly in recent decades. We were reminded of the constantly changing scientific, environmental, and fiscal landscape that CGIAR operates in.

There is no doubt that this is a challenging time for CGIAR, with global geopolitics and climate change affecting everything we do. In the past two months alone, the Philippines has been hit by three typhoons that have had devastating impacts, including to our own research facilities at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). Science is not keeping pace with the problems; agricultural productivity increases are slowing, and resilience is diminishing. CGIAR is part of the solution – we need to accelerate, double down, and work better together to respond to climate change while alleviating hunger.

We must also address the elephant in the room when it comes to funding. We should no longer tolerate that agricultural research operates in an incredibly tight fiscal space while funds are spent on less productive endeavors. The case for investments in agriculture is clearer than ever – the needs are obvious, and the solutions available.

As a newly integrated partnership, CGIAR is evolving into an organization that can tackle these challenges head on. For the first time, the System Council convened together with the Integrated Partnership Board to build a dialogue on what the integrated governance arrangements mean, in practice, for how we operate. Interactive sessions enabled participants to develop a common understanding of where we came from and what we want to be. The System Council is committed to continuing this culture of integration and looks forward to further refinement of the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of CGIAR's governing bodies.

Programmatic integration is also advancing apace. For the first time, we have an “all of CGIAR” portfolio – developed collectively by all CGIAR Centers – that brings together CGIAR’s work regardless of funding source under an ambitious, six-year research plan. The structure has been radically simplified, from 32 Initiatives to 8 deeply connected programs and 3 accelerators that target all five of [CGIAR's impact areas](#) through a Scaling for Impact program. CGIAR’s Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) reported that 46 independent

¹ The Chair's Summary is prepared as an early record of key messages and decisions taken, in advance of the more detailed formal meeting summary that will be shared for System Council input and approval.

reviewers from 20 countries were engaged to undertake an intensive review of the proposals, plus the portfolio narrative. They concluded that the new portfolio is a great improvement and praised the shift towards a contemporary, systems approach, and impact-oriented research culture. While there is still important work to be done during the inception phase, through a 'learning by doing' approach, the System Council was happy to approve CGIAR's 2025-2030 Science and Innovation Portfolio.

Partners were a vital stakeholder in the Portfolio development process. Listening sessions were used to build relationships and trust, and this process will be amplified during the inception phase. Strong partnerships with other research organizations in the food and agriculture sector, national agricultural research systems, and the private sector are enabling CGIAR to better identify demand and scale existing technologies.

CGIAR needs to demonstrate its impact and comparative advantage, and the System Council commended the work of the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) in transforming rigorous analysis of CGIAR results into compelling narratives. Funders requested more granular and concise information to substantiate their investments and advocate for future and increased funding. CGIAR cannot rest on its history; it needs to show it is stepping up to face the challenges of the day.

Programmatic integration will drive operational integration. In 2024, CGIAR was compelled to take a hard look at its governance, reporting, and assurance systems. The "Integrated, Coordinated, leave Independent" (ICI) Forum developed a comprehensive Integrated Partnership Risk & Oversight Plan that responds to the critical and urgent need identified for the integration of internal controls and risk management, internal audit, external audit, and ethics and business conduct. The System Council approved the Plan and endorsed the recommendations made for its implementation by the Integrated Partnership Board Audit, Finance, and Risk Committee and the System Council's Assurance Oversight Committee. A closed session of System Council voting members was used to discuss the work of the Assurance Oversight Committee in addressing alleged breaches of governance and ethics.

Finally, we need to ensure that we have the funds to deliver the promised portfolio. In 2024, there was a 12% drop in overseas development assistance (ODA) worldwide, which will affect CGIAR in 2025. CGIAR must continue to diversify its funding sources and not only rely on ODA. We were delighted that the Government of Mexico announced, during the meeting, a renewed commitment and funding pledge to CGIAR, as well as an offer to host the System Council in Mexico City in 2026.

We also need to consider the incentives that Funders have for utilizing the various channels available for their investments in CGIAR and consider innovative financing mechanisms. The world spends trillions of dollars each year on subsidies, so the money is there. Repurposing subsidies is good for the farmer and good for the environment. System Council members approved CGIAR's 2025 financial plan and noted the importance of visibility and prioritization in budgeting so that Funders can make informed decisions.

The decisions and actions that we agreed are set out in full below, and a full meeting summary will be provided on a timely basis, in line with our Rules of Procedure

We look forward to visiting WorldFish in Penang, Malaysia, for the 22nd System Council meeting. And, following the historic declaration on food systems and climate action, championed by the United Arab Emirates and endorsed by 160 countries, the UAE has committed to working with CGIAR to achieve even greater impact and has pledged to host the 23rd System Council meeting.

In closing this Chair's summary, I wish to thank our German colleagues for being such excellent hosts and encourage all CGIAR stakeholders to continue stepping up their work to transform food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis.

Yours sincerely,

Juergen Voegele, Ph.D.

Chair, System Council

Appendix 1 – Decisions taken and Agreed positions and actions

DECISIONS

SC/M21/DP1 – Appointment of Meeting Co-Chair

The System Council appointed Mr. Jens Busma, System Council voting member representing Germany, as the non-voting Co-Chair for the 21st System Council meeting, pursuant to Article 5.2 of the CGIAR System Framework.

SC/M21/DP2 – Adoption of the Agenda

The System Council adopted the Agenda for the 21st System Council meeting, as issued on 27 November 2024.

SC/M21/DP3 – CGIAR's 2025-2030 Science and Innovation Portfolio

The System Council:

- i. Approved the Program and Accelerator proposals that make up CGIAR's 2025—30 Science and Innovation Portfolio pursuant to Article 6.2 p) and s) of the CGIAR System Framework and following concurrence of the Integrated Partnership Board; and
- ii. Requested that the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) carry out a targeted review of the Program and Accelerator Inception Reports and complete Plans of Work/ Results and Budgets, no later than Q3 2025, and advise the Council on the extent to which the latter address the areas for improvement identified in ISDC's November 2024 reviews of the Program and Accelerator proposals and Portfolio Narrative

SC/M21/DP4 – Integrated Partnership Risk & Oversight Plan

The System Council approved the Integrated Partnership Risk & Oversight Plan, pursuant to Article 6.2 h) of the CGIAR System Framework and endorsed the recommendations made for its implementation by the IPB-AFRC and the AOC.

SC/M21/DP5 – Planning 2025 independent advising and evaluative evidence for the System Council

The System Council:

- i. Approved the consolidated 2025-2027 workplan and budget of ISDC, SPIA and IAES pursuant to Article 6.2 g) of the CGIAR System Framework;
- ii. Noted that the ISDC's targeted review of the Program and Accelerator Inception Reports and complete Plans of Work/ Results and Budgets is anticipated to be accommodated in the ISDC uplift scenario shared in the annex; and
- iii. Requested that should any additional ask be made of ISDC, SPIA or IAES that results in the uplift scenario being exceeded, this be brought to the System Council for decision.

SC/M21/DP6 – CGIAR Windows 1 & 2 budget for 2025

The System Council:

- i. Approved the 2025 financial plan and allocation of unrestricted funding for CGIAR Research and other activities; and

ii. Approved the approach to financing the 2025 CGIAR System activities; pursuant to Articles 6.2 q) and s) of the CGIAR System Framework and following concurrence of the Integrated Partnership Board.

SC/M21/DP7 – Report from the Assurance Oversight Committee

Further to the System Council Action Plan issued on 10 September 2024, the System Council endorsed the status update report on the AOC's oversight of that Action Plan provided as a pre-read for the System Council's 21st meeting.

SC/M21/DP8 – System Council Rules of Procedure

The System Council approved amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the System Council, in the form dated 27 November 2024, pursuant to paragraph 14.4 of those Rules of Procedure.

SC/M21/DP9 – System Council Chair Terms of Reference

The System Council approved amendments to the Terms of Reference of the System Council Chair, in the form dated 27 November 2024, pursuant to Article 5.5 of the CGIAR System Framework.

SC/M21/DP10 – Nominations Committee of the System Council

The System Council approved the appointment of Dr. Cristina Rumbaitis del Rio, Vice-Chair, WorldFish Board of Trustees, 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.

ACTIONS AGREED

SC/M21/AP1 – CGIAR's 2025-2030 Science and Innovation Portfolio

The System Council requested that management consider the feedback provided by Council members on the intended governance and management arrangements for a Breeding for Tomorrow and Genebanks Science Program and provide a response by February 2025.

SC/M21/AP2 – Planning 2025 independent advising and evaluative evidence for the System Council

The System Council requested that Terms of Reference be developed by end-Q1 2025, for System Council consideration and approval, for a review of how CGIAR's independent advisory functions align with the new governance structure. Such a review should be conducted in 2025 under the oversight of SIMEC, with the support of independent external experts.

SC/M21/AP3 – Planning 2025 independent advising and evaluative evidence for the System Council

The System Council requested that the System Council Secretariat organize a two-hour meeting in January 2025 for SPIA to present a synopsis of their findings, and for System Council members to provide feedback on specific data that would be most useful to them.

SC/M21/AP4 – CGIAR Windows 1 & 2 budget for 2025

The System Council requested that two working groups be formed in Q1 2025, focusing on the following, and with diverse membership (including from the IPB and System Council) drawn from those with direct experience in the respective areas:

- i. Innovative finance modalities
- ii. Incentives for portfolio funding (Windows 1 & 2), including the role of cost sharing mechanisms

The Working Groups should work together collaboratively and would be asked to provide updates on progress and any recommendations for System Council decision in advance of the 2025 regular System Council meetings.

SC/M21/AP5 – CGIAR Windows 1 & 2 budget for 2025

The System Council requested that management provide additional information on the budgets for the internal audit and the ethics and business conduct functions in February 2025.

Appendix 2 - Participants

Meeting Leadership	Key: <i>(*')</i> indicates that voting member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by the alternate <i>(**')</i> indicates that voting member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by another delegated representative <i>(v)</i> indicates virtual participation	
System Council Voting Members (listed alphabetically)	Member representative	Member Alternates & Other Delegation Members
African Development Bank	Innocent Musabyimana	
Australia	Wendy Umberger	Alternate: Bosibori Bett
Canada	Flora Mak*	Other delegates: François Cloutier, Greg Hallen
Crop Trust & IFAD	Stefan Schmitz	Other delegates: Jaspreet Stamm (v on day two), Anne Clyne (day two only) (Crop Trust)
East Asia & Pacific	Ke Jin** (China)	Other delegates: Wenbo Liu, Zhai Lin (v) (China)
European Commission	Christophe Larose	
Gates Foundation	Martien van Nieuwkoop	Alternate: Ruben Echeverria Other delegates: Rinn Self
Germany	Jens Busma	Alternate: Felicitas Röhrig Other delegates: Sarah Schmidt, Joachim Langbein, Aliénor De Cuypère
India	Himanshu Pathak (v)	
Latin America and Caribbean	Pedro Machado (Brazil)	Other delegates: Lourdes Sofia Janampa Herrera (Peru) (V, day two only)
The Netherlands	Timmo Gaasbeek	Alternate: Wilma van Esch
Norway	Daniel van Gilst	
South Asia	Mohammad Saifullah** (Bangladesh)	
Sub-Saharan Africa	Garba Sharubutu (Nigeria)	Alternate: Eliud Kireger (Kenya) Other delegate: Carolyne Minayo (Kenya)
Sweden (attending SC21 as Active Observer)	AnnaKarin Norling (V)	
Switzerland	Manfred Kaufmann	Alternate: Corinne Demenge
United Kingdom	Laura Munro	Alternate: Alan Tollervey
United States of America	Rob Bertram	Alternate: Jerry Glover Other delegate: Gary Jahn
West Asia & North Africa	Fatih Özezdemir (Türkiye)	Alternate: Mohammad Ali Ebrahimi (Iran)
The World Bank	Renaud Seligmann	Alternate: Shoba Shetty Other delegate: Marianne Grosclaude

Temporary Voting Members	Member	Alternate & Other Delegates
Belgium	Carol Durieux	Alternate: Boudewijn Vandenbossche
Denmark	Hanne Carus	
Ireland	Patrick McManus	
United Arab Emirates	Fatema Almulla**	Alternate: Kristofer Hamel

Non-voting Ex-officio members	Member	Other Delegates
CGIAR Integrated Partnership Board	Lindiwe Majele Sibanda (Chair)	Patrick Caron (Vice-Chair)
CGIAR Executive Managing Director	Ismahane Elouafi	
Center/Alliance Representative 1: Convener of the Chairs of Center Boards of Trustees	Roel Merckx (v)	
Center/Alliance Representative 2: Convener of the Center Directors General	Mark Smith	
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Selvaraju Ramasamy	

Active Observers	Representative	Alternate & Other Delegates
Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAiR)	Romano De Vivo (Vice Chair)	Alternate: Hildegard Lingnau
CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)	Holger Meinke (Chair)	Other delegates: Nompumelelo (Mpumi) Obokoh (Vice-Chair), Lesley Torrence, Amy Beaudreault (v, item 5 only)

System Council Secretary
Sylvia Oyinlola, Global Head, CGIAR System Council Support

Invited Guests	Representative	
CGIAR Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)	Travis Lybbert (Chair)	Other delegates: Sujata Visaria, Monica Biradavolu, Jennifer Burney (all day one only)
France (with voting rights)	Bernard Hubert	Alternate: Jean Albergel
Japan	Kawakami Takayuki (v)	Alternate: Kosuke Minakuchi (v) Other delegate: Masa Iwanaga (v)
Mexico	Víctor Manuel Villalobos Arámbula (Special Envoy)	
Trustee of the CGIAR Trust Fund (World Bank)	Jane Mwebi (Trustee)	Other delegate: Kindia Laurent Achi

Session specific invitees	
Agenda item 13	Lavanya Shrinagesh, Director, Gender, Diversity, Inclusion, and Culture (v)
Agenda item 14	Gail Amare, Senior Director, Facilities Management, Security and Admin (v)
	Albin Hubscher, Project Advisor (v)
	Louise Towers, Project Coordinator (v)
	Colum Kelly, Consultant (v)

Additional participants	Name/Role/Organization
System Council Chair Adviser	Jonathan Wadsworth, Agriculture Specialist, Agriculture and Food Global Practice, World Bank
Integrated Partnership Board Members (additional to the Chair and Vice Chair)	Nick Austin
	Ramesh Chand (v)
	Rachel Chikwamba
	Shenggen Fan (V)
	Jessica Fanzo (v)
	Segenet Kelemu
	Mauricio Lopes (v)
	Celso Moretti (v)
	Dhesigen Naidoo
	Enrica Porcari
	Alice Ruhweza
Integrated Partnership Board Chair Adviser	Myra Wopereis
IPB & IPB-AFRC	Clarissa van Heerden, IPB Member & IPB-AFRC Chair
IPB-AFRC	Richard Golding, IPB-AFRC Member
CGIAR Global Leadership Team (additional to the Executive Managing Director)	Appolinaire Djikeng, Director General, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)
	Simeon Ehui, Director General, International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA)
	Bram Govaerts, Director General, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT)
	Guillaume Grosso, Deputy Executive Managing Director
	Simon Heck, Director General, International Potato Center (CIP)
	Sandra Milach, Incoming Chief Scientist (v, item 5 only)
	Essam Mohammed, Director General, WorldFish, Co-Chair of the ICI Forum
	Yvonne Pinto, Director General, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)
	Juan Lucas Restrepo, Director General, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Co-Chair of the ICI Forum
	Johan Swinnen, Director General, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
Global Leadership Team Facilitator	Juergen Hagmann
CGIAR staff	Micheline Ayoub, Chief of Staff
	Nicoline de Haan, Director, Gender Platform
	Elbert Hidding, Head CGIAR Internal Audit a.i. (v)
	Christine Larson-Luhila, Deputy Director, Governance and Institutional Risk; AFRC Secretary (v)
	Luis Felipe Mendes, Global Director Business Operations and Finance a.i.
	Michiel Roovers, Senior Director, Governance and Institutional Risk
	Roland Sundstrom, Practice Lead, Program Delivery
	André Zandstra, Director, Resource Mobilization & Business Development

Additional participants	Name/Role/Organization
CGIAR System Council Secretariat	Emma Quilligan, Senior Manager, System Council Support; AOC and SIMEC Secretary
CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES)	Allison Smith, Director, Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service
European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD) Secretary	Nienke Bientema

Event support
Olwen Cussen, Governance Advisor, CGIAR
Victoria Pezzi, Meeting and Events Officer, CGIAR
Vashna Singh, Meetings and Events Consultant, CGIAR