



Meeting Summary
21st System Council meeting
Berlin, Germany, 11-12 December 2024

Purpose:

This document presents the formal meeting summary for the System Council's 21st meeting ('SC21'), as approved by the System Council on a no objection basis with effect from 14 May 2025 (Decision Reference SC/M21/EDP10).

It supplements the [SC21 Chair's Summary](#) (issued 18 December 2024) that confirmed decisions taken and agreed actions during the meeting.

Distribution notice: This document may be distributed without restriction.

Introduction

This document presents a summary of the 21st meeting of the System Council ('Council') held on 11-12 December 2024 in Berlin, Germany. It follows the release of the SC21 Chair's Summary (issued 18 December 2024).

By way of overview:

Format: The meeting was held in person with some virtual participation over two consecutive working days: Wednesday 11 December and Thursday 12 December 2024.

Agenda items: The meeting covered agenda items within 10 sessions set out in the table of contents on the following page.

Decisions: The Council took ten (10) decisions and agreed on five (5) actions during its meeting as initially recorded in the SC21 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 Council's Chair, Dr. Juergen Voegle, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants assembled at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and those attending virtually. He expressed gratitude to both BMZ and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) GmbH, who hosted the side events, for their exceptional hospitality.
2. The Chair offered framing reflections for the meeting, emphasizing CGIAR's critical role in addressing global challenges. He noted that shifting geopolitics and the mounting impacts of climate change, manifested in extreme weather events worldwide, would inevitably affect CGIAR's work. Given these increasing challenges, he stressed that CGIAR must step up, intensify agricultural research, and work collaboratively to be part of the solution. He urged CGIAR to accelerate its efforts, emphasizing that slowing down is not an option. If current trends continue, particularly with rising temperatures in the subcontinent and parts of Africa, the consequences will be severe. Scientific advances are not keeping pace and CGIAR must double down on research to reverse this trajectory and support adaptation. CGIAR's research is essential to meeting the urgent needs of communities facing climate impacts such as droughts, flooding, and heat stress. The Chair called for collective action with urgency and determination to address these escalating challenges.
3. The Chair addressed the competing demands on funding, noting that while significant resources are allocated to subsidies for industries like fossil fuels, agriculture, and fisheries, there is a need to ensure these funds drive productive and sustainable outcomes. He emphasized that repurposing subsidies to directly support farmers could improve nutrition, protect the environment, and strengthen farmer incomes — areas that have been neglected in the past. He urged Council members to champion agricultural research, given the urgency of the challenges and the increasing needs of the communities that CGIAR's research impacts. Redirecting subsidies to productive and sustainable outcomes would support farmers, improve nutrition, protect the environment, and strengthen farmer incomes. These areas, he noted, have often been overlooked in the past. He urged the Council to champion agricultural research as a clear and essential solution to these crises, stressing that the needs are evident and the urgency to act is greater than ever.
4. The Council Secretary confirmed quorum. The meeting proceeded with the nomination and approval of Mr. Jens Busma, System Council voting member representing Germany, as the non-voting Co-Chair.
5. Decision Point — SC/M21/DP1: Appointment of Meeting Co-Chair
The System Council appointed 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.
6. Co-Chair Jens Busma expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve and welcomed participants to Berlin for the meeting. He highlighted Germany's 50 years of partnership

with CGIAR in supporting international agricultural research and noted the evening's anniversary reception featuring State Secretary Jochen Flasbarth and the presentation of the first results from the CGIAR flagship report. Reflecting on a turbulent year, he emphasized the importance of the meeting's decisions in advancing CGIAR's integration, science, and innovation.

7. The Chair also welcomed India taking a voting member seat represented by Himanshu Pathak. He acknowledged this milestone and expressed appreciation for the member joining remotely while attending to important commitments in Delhi.
8. The Chair formally presented the provisional agenda. The agenda was adopted without amendments, and no declarations of interest were raised.
9. Decision Point — 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.
10. The Chair acknowledged the new members and invited guests joining the Council for the first time.

Agenda Item 2: Reflections from the Integrated Partnership Board Chair

11. The Chair invited Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, Chair of the Integrated Partnership Board (IPB), to share her reflections. He emphasized the importance of Council members learning about progress made over the past few months, challenges, and other key developments to provide a foundation for the Council's discussions.
12. The IPB Chair reflected on the evolution of the Board, from its inception in 2020 to the change of leadership in 2021 to the transition and establishment of the IPB on 1 October 2024. She commended the Council for appointing IPB members with diverse expertise, strong gender balance, and representation from 11 countries, with a majority from the Global South. She also noted that this was the first time the full Board had been invited to attend a Council meeting and encouraged Council members to engage with the IPB members present.
13. The IPB Chair acknowledged the intensive efforts of Board members to ensure business continuity during the period of transition from the System Board to IPB. These efforts included meetings to guide the final implementation of the Unified Governance Review recommendations; review and approval of amendments to the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization (Charter) and CGIAR System Framework (Framework); guidance of the Integrated Partnership Risk & Oversight Plan (ROP); and approval of the Terms of Reference for the IPB Chair and Vice-Chair. Additional efforts involved preparing the onboarding plan for incoming members and approving a diverse and balanced slate of candidates for the IPB Audit, Finance, and Risk Committee (IPB-AFRC).
14. The IPB Chair remarked on the time and effort the Board put into addressing the issues raised in the anonymous "45 Red Flags" letter. She also noted the advocacy engagements undertaken by Board members during this period. She commended the

dedication of System Board members, whose contributions ensured a seamless transition to the IPB.

15. Highlighting the diversity of scientific expertise among the IPB's 14 members, the IPB Chair emphasized the Board's in-depth review of the 2025-2030 Portfolio, which included a robust exchange with the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC). She conveyed the Board's support of the high-level principles for the Portfolio, including the six-year programming cycle, the inclusion of projects and activities beyond pooled funding, the smaller number of programs, and the inclusion of CIFOR/ICRAF (Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry) and WorldVeg (the World Vegetable Center) in codesigning the portfolio.
16. The IPB Chair relayed the Board's recommendation that the Council consider extending the Portfolio's inception phase to incorporate valuable feedback from management, the IPB, and the ISDC.
17. She relayed the IPB's request and recommendation that, in future, the ISDC formally serve as an advisory body to both the IPB and the System Council to reduce duplication, enhance integration, and ensure a more coordinated approach to overseeing the integrated Portfolio.
18. Additional Board feedback on the Portfolio emphasized the importance of validating and reporting on impact metrics, and the need to develop tools and instruments that accurately reflect commitments and targets, based on reliable data and evidence. The Board also recommended pursuing innovative partnership models, identifying and leveraging incentives for alignment between pooled and bilateral funding, unlocking operational efficiencies through improved communication, decision-making, and institutionalizing continuous assessment and learning. As indicated by the IPB Chair, CGIAR operates in a high-risk environment. Consequently, it should adopt proactive risk management and assessment tools while conducting frequent risk assessments. The Board also identified specific thematic and institutional areas that require attention.
19. The IPB Chair indicated that, after extensive discussions, the Board concurred with the submission and recommends the Council approve the Portfolio.
20. The IPB Chair summarized the IPB's early achievements. These included endorsing a shared vision and mission through the CGIAR 2030 Research & Innovation Strategy and contributing to shaping the 2025-2030 Science & Innovation Portfolio. The IPB actively supported integration efforts of the partnership, including the ICI Forum's efforts to define which functions should be integrated, coordinated, or remain independent. It also provided strategic guidance on the Integrated Partnership Risk & Oversight Plan, ensuring a coherent and system-wide approach to risk management. In parallel, the Board prioritized CGIAR's partnership and advocacy planning — recognizing that collaboration with global and regional stakeholders is essential for amplifying impact.
21. The IPB Chair highlighted that key priorities for the Board include:
 - a. Restoring trust in governance.
 - b. Establishment of additional IPB Committees.

- c. Simplification of CGIAR's governing instruments, (i.e., Charter and Framework).
 - d. Exploring the development of a single, streamlined document that consolidates the Charter and Framework to guide System governance.
 - e. Continued clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the IPB and Council.
22. The IPB Chair emphasized the Board's focus on mobilizing significant resources to ensure that CGIAR is equipped to drive innovation, systemic change, and meaningful impact.
23. The Council Chair thanked the IPB Chair for her comprehensive summary and underscored the importance of dedicating extended time for meaningful engagement between Council and IPB members. He highlighted the value of the upcoming two-hour moderated conversation as an opportunity to openly discuss roles, share perspectives, and address progress and challenges. This session, he explained, aims to build trust, enhance understanding, and clarify misconceptions, paving the way for stronger collaboration within CGIAR.

Agenda Item 3: Reflections from the Executive Managing Director

- 24. At the invitation of the Co-Chair, Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, Executive Managing Director (EMD), provided reflections on her first year in the role.
- 25. The EMD thanked Germany for hosting the Council meeting and for its 50 years of partnership with CGIAR, highlighting the significant contributions of German scientists and institutions to CGIAR's success.
- 26. Reflecting on her first year, the EMD acknowledged CGIAR's complexity and emphasized the need for integration to simplify processes, streamline operations, and allocate more resources to science for greater impact.
- 27. Highlighting CGIAR's vast diversity — spanning 10,000 staff across 80 countries — the EMD emphasized that this diversity is a source of strength and innovation, not a challenge to overcome. She stressed the importance of nurturing and respecting this diversity to unlock its full potential while also addressing unconscious biases that may hinder collaboration and decision-making. She called for greater trust in CGIAR's employees and emphasized that meaningful change is possible — but only when grounded in a deep respect for the organization's diversity.
- 28. Rebuilding trust and with external partners, particularly in the Global South, was addressed as a priority. The EMD noted efforts to address misconceptions, re-engage partners, and inject positive energy into the organization's relationships. She emphasized that these initiatives have increased CGIAR's visibility and enhanced confidence in the organization.
- 29. The EMD emphasized the importance of CGIAR's increased visibility to reinforce the critical role of food, land, and water systems in addressing global challenges and ensuring that they remain central to the global agenda. She highlighted the upcoming

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CGIAR Science Week, scheduled for 7-12 April 2025 at the UN Campus in Nairobi, marking an important milestone for the organization with the launch of the new 2025 - 2030 Science and Innovation Portfolio, underscoring CGIAR's commitment to science and innovation.

30. The EMD outlined integration across three key areas: programmatic, operational, and governance.
31. Turning to programmatic integration, the EMD described the 2025-2030 Portfolio as a key milestone. It consolidates bilateral projects with CGIAR's broader mission, aligning with local demands and realistic delivery capabilities. She emphasized the importance of diverse perspectives from all Centers and integrating "blue sky thinking" for innovation, while staying grounded in actionable goals. She highlighted the need for all Centers to contribute to the design process. Early in the EMD's tenure, she visited Centers, met with scientists, assessed capabilities and facilities, and engaged local stakeholders. She stressed the visits as a critical moment for CGIAR, affirming that the most strategic Portfolio could only emerge from collective contribution.
32. Operationally, the EMD outlined a new approach to achieve greater efficiency and align with desired outcomes. She noted that the System Organization has been simplified to reduce administrative costs and improve efficiency, ensuring it serves as an enabler of the Centers' functions. Administrative spending has now been reduced to below 2%, fully funded through the Cost Sharing Percentage (CSP). She also informed about the creation of the Global Science Team, which will strengthen how the portfolio is managed. The ICI Forum will determine what will be integrated, coordinated, or remain independent and will become a standing committee of the Global Leadership Team (GLT).
33. The EMD highlighted significant progress on governance integration, including the onboarding of the new IPB and IPB-AFRC, the adoption of amendments to the CGIAR Charter and Framework, and the development of the Risk and Oversight Plan (ROP). She also highlighted the 2025 budget, which reflects the adoption of recommendations from the Funding Modalities Reference Group after two years of work. She emphasized that efforts to improve governance and management are an ongoing process. The anonymous "45 Red Flags" letter was a turning point that underscored the urgency of strengthening governance while maintaining CGIAR's ability to deliver on its mission. She also called out the organization's heavy and layered approval processes as a significant challenge, noting that these often hinder efficiency and require simplification to ensure greater agility and cohesion. The EMD emphasized the need for an institutional strategy to ensure CGIAR remains fit for purpose and aligned to the research and innovation strategy. She called for this strategy to be collaboratively developed in 2025.
34. The EMD celebrated new and strengthened partnerships that are enabling greater scaling of research and providing critical support for CGIAR's strategies. She noted the commitment and re-commitment of partners to CGIAR's mission, emphasizing the importance of leveraging these alliances to drive innovation and impact.

35. Building on these strengthened partnerships, the EMD emphasized that CGIAR's operating budget must increase significantly to meet growing demands and noted the need to double down on efforts to secure funding. She acknowledged the projected 12% drop in overseas development assistance for 2025 and its impact on CGIAR's 2025 budget, stressing the urgency of resource mobilization. The EMD called on Council members to help fight for these funds and to clarify their investment commitments for 2025 and beyond. She expressed her hope that the System Council would serve as a "Council of solutions," supporting efforts to reduce reliance on overseas development assistance by encouraging broader engagement with foundations, institutions, and partners across borders.
36. Concluding her reflections optimistically, the EMD described the 2025–2030 Portfolio as a solution to many global mega challenges and expressed hope for both securing sufficient funding and addressing internal challenges. The Chair thanked the EMD for her insights.

Agenda Item 4: System Council and Integrated Partnership Board Discussion

37. The Chair opened the session by emphasizing its purpose to foster open dialogue on governance issues, focusing on clarifying roles and responsibilities and building a shared understanding of progress, challenges, and priorities within CGIAR. He underlined the importance of participants leaving with a clearer understanding of current gaps, areas needing attention, and shared priorities moving forward.
38. The Chair introduced session moderator Jürgen Hagmann, acknowledging his skills in facilitating dynamic and solution-focused discussions.
39. The facilitator welcomed participants and urged a positive and collaborative mindset for the session. He outlined the session format, which called for reflections on CGIAR governance history, identification of systemic challenges and actionable steps for alignment
40. The IPB Chair framed CGIAR's evolution throughout the decades as a shared journey, inviting reflection on SC22 participants' roles and contributions, while acknowledging varying levels of familiarity with CGIAR. She stressed the importance of adopting a forward-looking mindset, urging participants to embrace continuous learning, openness, and collaboration to shape the future together.
41. Participants reflected on CGIAR's long history, noting that while many Centers were established well before the 1990s, system-wide governance and programmatic integration began to evolve more substantially during that decade with the introduction of coordinated science programs. This evolution continued with the launch of CGIAR Challenge Programs in 2002.
42. The 2010 establishment of the Funders Forum and the CGIAR Fund introduced a more structured funding mechanism, supported by the Fund Office in Washington, DC, and the Consortium Office in Montpellier. This shift addressed inefficiencies in the

previously fragmented funding landscape, where donors often relied on ad hoc performance metrics.

43. Participants recalled that the launch of CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) in 2011 marked a critical step toward programmatic integration, aligning projects across Centers and enhancing collaboration. In 2016, the approval of the CGIAR System Framework and Charter formalized a unified governance structure, creating the System Organization and consolidating the System Management Office in Montpellier. These developments laid the foundation for deeper integration and streamlined operations.
44. Further reflections recalled the pivotal 2019 meeting in Chengdu, which endorsed recommendations from the System Reference Group to adopt a unified governance model. This “grand bargain” aimed to align Center mandates, streamline operations, and reduce inefficiencies caused by 15 independent Centers managing thousands of overlapping projects. Pre-Chengdu efforts — such as the announced mergers of Bioversity International with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), [and later CIFOR with ICRAF (completed in 2021)] — demonstrated the potential of operational alignment to reduce redundancy, improve efficiency, and enhance collaboration.
45. Reflecting on CGIAR’s overall integration journey, participants acknowledged its iterative nature, emphasizing the need for continuous adaptation to address emerging global challenges and meet evolving stakeholder expectations. While progress has been made, areas such as governance streamlining, project rationalization, and funding mechanisms require further attention to fully realize CGIAR’s vision. Participants celebrated achievements such as biofortification breakthroughs, climate research through Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), and partnerships with National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES), highlighting CGIAR’s ability to deliver transformative science and tackle global challenges. These successes were seen as critical for reinforcing the value of multilateral collaboration and inspiring stakeholder confidence.
46. The IPB Chair concluded by reinforcing the importance of trust, collaboration, and shared ownership in achieving meaningful integration. She stressed the need for continuous learning, constructive dialogue, and a balanced approach that celebrates successes while addressing challenges to ensure sustained progress.
47. Concluding the session, the Chair expressed appreciation for the candid and constructive discussions and acknowledged the progress made in advancing governance integration. He emphasized the importance of fostering collaboration and clarity between the Council and IPB. While recognizing the inherent complexity of CGIAR’s governance structure, he stressed the need for continued focus on clarifying roles, resolving remaining gray areas, and ensuring CGIAR remains fit for purpose in delivering impactful science. He called for sustained alignment, transparency, and collective effort to advance CGIAR’s mission, and underscored the importance of following through on identified priority areas, encouraging participants to propose actionable steps and report back on progress.

Agenda Item 5: 2025-2030 Science & Innovation Portfolio

48. The Chair introduced the session format, outlining a strategic overview by the EMD, followed by key findings from the ISDC External Review of the 2025–2030 Portfolio, and management's preliminary reflections and intended actions.
49. The EMD acknowledged the collaborative effort behind the 2025–2030 Portfolio, highlighting the pivotal contributions of Center Directors General (DGs) and CGIAR scientists. She welcomed the incoming Chief Scientist, who will oversee the Portfolio's implementation. The EMD described the new Portfolio as a milestone achievement — CGIAR's first fully programmatic integration — bringing all its work and funding streams into a cohesive framework.
50. Drawing on lessons from the 2022-2024 Portfolio, the EMD explained that the new "all-of-CGIAR" Portfolio leverages the collective work of all Centers and all funding sources, including bilateral contributions, to advance research and operational priorities. She emphasized that the simplified, streamlined structure consolidates 32 Research Initiatives and five Impact Area Platforms into eight Science Programs, one "Scaling for Impact Program," and three Accelerators, signaling a transformative, systems-focused approach.
51. The EMD outlined the inclusive and collaborative process used to design the Portfolio. This began with a January 2024 Portfolio Retreat, where leadership — including Center DGs and Deputy Directors General of Research (DDG-Rs), and the CEO of CIFOR-ICRAF — aligned on the "all-of-CGIAR" Portfolio vision. The EMD also highlighted the operational integration that occurred in parallel with the Portfolio development. She explained that previously untracked bilateral contributions will now be mapped to the overarching framework of eight Science Programs, Scaling for Impact Program, and three Accelerators, ensuring alignment with unified strategic priorities
52. The EMD provided insights into the strategic discussions that shaped the Portfolio, emphasizing its focus on transformative programs to help countries improve their food, land, and water systems. She noted that these discussions underscored the need for five interconnected Impact Areas:
 - a. Climate Adaptation & Mitigation
 - b. Environmental Health & Biodiversity
 - c. Gender Equality, Youth & Social Inclusion
 - d. Nutrition, Health & Food Security
 - e. Poverty Reduction, Livelihoods & Jobs
53. The EMD highlighted how the Science Programs, Scaling for Impact Program, and Accelerators work together while being implemented at the Center and country levels. Reflecting on the transition from the 2022–2024 Portfolio, the EMD emphasized the importance of ensuring continuity by building on the strategic relevance and gains of the Research Initiatives while addressing inefficiencies caused by their large number. She noted that further adjustments, such as the potential integration of the Genebanks into the "Breeding for Tomorrow Program," remain under discussion.

54. Concluding her remarks, the EMD summarized that the Science Programs reflect CGIAR's strengths, built jointly by scientists across Centers and regions. They will provide input into the Scaling for Impact Program, which goes beyond CGIAR's innovation and programs. The three Accelerators provide the means and ways for CGIAR to accelerate its impact. The EMD emphasized the importance of forging the right partnerships at national, regional, and global levels, noting that progress will be tracked and reported through the five impact areas.
55. The ISDC Chair introduced his colleagues present and encouraged Council members to engage with them. He expressed gratitude for the ISDC Secretariat's essential support, which enabled a rigorous review process involving 46 independent reviewers from 20 countries. He observed that the Portfolio's science program proposals were finalized before the Portfolio Narrative was available when, ideally, the Narrative should have guided proposal development and review.
56. The ISDC employed consensus-building, including a three-day meeting with ISDC members, and used rigorous methods to evaluate the quality of the research. Assessments were based on the ISDC's *Quality of Research for Development in the CGIAR Context* framework, which evaluates relevance, scientific credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness. The review also incorporated ISDC's comparative advantage analysis, extensive work on inclusive innovation (including CGIAR scientists' contributions to defining cutting-edge approaches), and insights from its work on megatrends.
57. The ISDC Chair, speaking on behalf of the ISDC, commended the new Portfolio structure as a significant step forward, describing it as sensible, manageable, and providing greater clarity in CGIAR's resource allocation. He emphasized its importance as a foundation for building the new science and innovation Portfolio. Before presenting the ISDC's collective assessment and highlighting areas needing attention, he stressed that their feedback was intended as constructive guidance to refine and enhance the Portfolio.
58. The ISDC Chair briefly revisited ISDC's assessment of the Portfolio, noting that reviewers struggled with the limited scientific detail available for review, a consequence of the high-level framing of the new Science Programs. He summarized key limitations identified by the ISDC reviewers:
 - a. The absence of budget scenarios made it difficult to assess priorities.
 - b. The lack of meaningful risk analysis and questions around the underlying assumptions of the Portfolio posed challenges for review. The inception phase will be critical for addressing these gaps.
 - c. The sequencing of the review process was not ideal. Proposal reviews were finalized before the narrative was made available to ISDC when, ideally, the process should have been reversed.
 - d. Lack of clarity on Portfolio funding, an issue raised multiple times.
 - e. The distinction between pooled and bilateral funding needs to be better documented, with clearer integration of funding modalities, including bilateral, pooled, and Window 3 funding. Additionally, clarity is needed on how CGIAR will manage these different funding streams and what levers the Chief Scientist will have to ensure alignment with overall research priorities.

- f. Further development of research ethics and risk management processes is needed to facilitate partnerships, particularly with advanced research institutions. A lack of clear ethics approval mechanisms could create barriers to collaboration.
- 59. The ISDC Chair underscored the critical importance of the inception phase in addressing these gaps. This phase, he emphasized, would allow for the refinement of budget scenarios, the development of comprehensive risk mitigation strategies, and the validation of key assumptions driving the Portfolio's structure. Successfully addressing these areas will strengthen the Portfolio's credibility and align it with CGIAR's strategic goals.
- 60. The ISDC Chair then provided ISDC's overarching comments on the Portfolio proposals:
 - a. ISDC felt that there should be more focus on science, as details of the actual research were lacking, limiting ISDC's assessment to the foundation of the enabling environment within which the research will be conducted. ISDC also noted that the proposal template was not ideal for the Accelerators as it was designed for the Science Program proposals. There needs to be more clarity on the role of the Accelerators and how they will fit in the overall portfolio.
 - b. Significant variations in the length and detail of the appendices complicated the review process, resulting in inconsistent use of the appendices by reviewers across proposals.
 - c. There was a missed opportunity to better leverage the achievements from the 2022–2024 Research Initiatives. Showcasing these outcomes would have strengthened the overall narrative of the Portfolio.
 - d. Stakeholder listening sessions, though valuable for engagement, do not equate to co-design. The ISDC Chair noted that management has acknowledged the importance of co-design, and steps to address this more comprehensively are expected during the inception phase.
 - e. Some proposals effectively analyzed comparative advantage using the provided template, realistically summarizing the strengths of Programs and Accelerators. However, others overstated CGIAR's strengths in their self-assessments. The ISDC recommended using an externally facilitated process for future comparative advantage analyses to reduce bias while maintaining independent perspectives.
 - f. Several gaps in coverage within and across the Portfolio were identified, including the Environmental Health & Biodiversity Impact Area and water systems research. The ISDC highlighted a risk that issues related to mixed systems (e.g., crop-livestock, silvopastoral) could fall between the cracks. The ISDC Chair indicated that trade-offs and synergies needed to be better highlighted. "
 - g. Youth were almost absent across 12 of the 13 proposals. The ISDC noted missed opportunities to promote broader social inclusion — particularly regarding youth, Indigenous groups, and Indigenous knowledge — and the need to reflect how these perspectives could inform the research portfolio and its engagement with key stakeholders.
 - h. The ISDC Chair called for a more deliberate cultural change within CGIAR by shifting from the traditional linear technology-driven approach to a more systems approach.
 - i. The ISDC Chair called for a focus on neglected crops. He noted that advancing work on orphan and opportunity crops will require increased emphasis on these within

the Breeding for Tomorrow Program and the Scaling for Impact Programs. He also highlighted the Portfolio's low emphasis on pulses, a group of crops critical to food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture.

- j. The ISDC Chair also pointed out that risk management was not prominent in the Portfolio, with the development of a risk management framework not occurring until the inception phase. ISDC Chair stressed that risk management is an essential component of a good portfolio, and the lack of such a framework affected the scoring of the individual programs and the accelerators.
 - k. The ISDC Chair also noted the need for appropriate attention to monitoring, evaluation, learning, and impact assessment (MELIA), with some proposals lacking details on how external evaluation findings will be incorporated while others wholly omitted the evaluation recommendations, which should be improved in the inception phase.
 - l. Finally, the ISDC Chair noted the absence of baseline data and key performance indicators and smart measures, which are required for good tracking of progress and for ensuring accountability.
61. The Council Chair invited the presentation of the Management response to the ISDC External Review of the 2025–2030 Portfolio.
62. On behalf of the GLT, Appolinaire Djikeng, ILRI DG, opened by acknowledging the collaborative effort behind the 2025-2030 Portfolio. He recognized the contributions of Dr. Jo Swinnen, IFPRI DG, and all the DGs, including those present at the meeting, for their collective leadership. He expressed deep appreciation for the dedication of CGIAR scientists, emphasizing their dual efforts in implementing the current Research Initiatives while simultaneously developing the new Portfolio under tight timelines. He also thanked the ISDC Chair for highlighting the importance of, and the missed opportunity to better leverage, the successes of the 2022–2024 Research Initiatives in the new proposals, noting that showcasing these achievements more effectively could have strengthened the Portfolio's narrative and demonstrated CGIAR's tangible progress.
63. Speaking on behalf of the CGIAR DGs, he expressed strong support for the 2025-2030 Portfolio, emphasizing its role in shaping CGIAR's narrative and reflecting its ambition toward 2030. While acknowledging it is not perfect, he welcomed feedback from the ISDC and IPB, noting that their insights will be instrumental in refining the Portfolio during the inception phase in 2025.
64. The ILRI DG highlighted the simplicity and coherence of the “8 + 1 + 3” Portfolio structure (eight Science Programs, one “Scaling for Impact Program,” and three Accelerators) as a compelling storytelling tool that connects CGIAR’s programmatic work to its five Impact Areas. He emphasized that integrating funding streams — Window 1, Window 2, Window 3, and bilateral contributions — into a unified narrative helps clarify CGIAR’s collective contributions and showcases the level of ambition underpinning the Portfolio. This integration addresses past challenges of demonstrating alignment across funding sources while underscoring CGIAR’s commitment to transformative impact.

65. The ILRI DG presented high-level management responses to select ISDC feedback:
- a. He noted that the Portfolio Narrative provides a preliminary framework for CGIAR's impact ambitions across its five Impact Areas. Using slides, he illustrated potential 2030 impacts, such as a 26% reduction in global hunger (182 million people) and lifting 31 million people out of extreme poverty. While these projections will be refined during the inception phase, they highlight CGIAR's transformative potential and commitment to measurable accountability. He also emphasized the need to clarify and strengthen underrepresented areas, including the Impact Areas, specific Accelerators, and research gaps identified by the ISDC.
 - b. He underscored co-design – with national program partners, private sector, and non-governmental organizations – as a foundational principle of the Portfolio, ensuring CGIAR's work remains demand-driven and aligned with partner needs. He highlighted initial listening sessions conducted in countries, which shaped interventions based on real-time priorities. He emphasized the trust and relationships built across countries and the importance of maintaining CGIAR's commitment to its partners. The listening sessions, he reiterated, are not a one-time effort but an ongoing process.
 - c. He addressed the role of megatrends in shaping the Portfolio, describing them as a wake-up call for CGIAR to assess its current position and long-term trajectory. He acknowledged that some assumptions will need further validation during the inception phase.
 - d. In response to ISDC's observation that some science components lacked sufficient detail for assessment, the ILRI DG emphasized that CGIAR and its partners will generate strong scientific contributions to fill identified gaps. While certain elements of the Portfolio may not yet fully demonstrate this, he underscored CGIAR's commitment to evaluating and refining its assumptions over time through an accountability framework linked to the five Impact Areas.
 - e. The ILRI DG also highlighted the need to strengthen thematic areas to ensure the Portfolio remains responsive and science-driven:
 - i. Water Systems: The ILRI DG highlighted the water system strategy developed by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) as a strong example of thematic coherence. He stressed the importance of integrating such strategies into CGIAR's work, focusing on areas such as climate-resilient infrastructure, integrated water management, and early warning systems. While acknowledging the time and resource constraints, he committed to pushing forward with implementation alongside ongoing initiatives.
 - ii. Environmental Health and Biodiversity: He reaffirmed CGIAR's commitment to this Impact Area, citing its prominence at platforms like the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Colombia, and emphasizing the need to move from visibility to action. The ILRI DG pledged to clarify and strengthen this area through intermediary scorecards to track progress and advance priorities such as multifunctional landscapes, sustainable farming, and climate action.
 - iii. Youth and Social Inclusion: The ILRI DG underscored the importance of advancing this area, pointing to progress on a background paper and a forthcoming position paper. These documents aim to improve consultation

mechanisms and actionable strategies. He highlighted steps such as strengthening partnerships with experienced stakeholders, capacity development, and addressing funding gaps to support youth inclusion efforts.

66. Adding to the ILRI DG's summary of management's response, Roland Sundstrom the Practice Lead for Program Delivery, spoke to the integration mechanisms, risk management, partnership engagement, mapping of the Window 3 and Bilateral projects to the Portfolio, management structure of the Portfolio and the inception phase of the Portfolio.
67. The Practice Lead outlined two interconnected mechanisms for integration and accountability:
 - a. Technical Reporting Arrangement (2025–2030): This mechanism builds on the Portfolio performance work for pooled funding and extends it to encompass all funding sources. It establishes a minimum data standard for Window 3 and bilaterally funded projects, ensuring consistent reporting on the Impact Areas each project contributes to, the partners involved, the location of activities, and associated costs. This data serves as a foundation for management-level discussions on aligning Window 3 and bilateral projects and programs with the overarching theories of change and high-level outcomes of CGIAR's new eight Science Programs, the "Scaling for Impact" Program, and three Accelerators.
 - b. Portfolio Management Arrangements: This mechanism provides a clear management structure with distinct lines of accountability. For Window 1 and 2 funding, accountability flows from the Council to the IPB to the EMD. For Window 3 and bilateral funding, accountability remains within the Centers. To ensure coordination and synergy across these funding streams, the management structure includes mechanisms such as the GLT, Global Science Team, and inclusive Program and Accelerator leadership teams. These mechanisms systematically foster alignment and collaboration across all levels. This approach establishes strong incentives for Centers, teams, and scientists to ensure their work with Window 3 and bilateral funding aligns with the larger Programs and Accelerators, reinforcing CGIAR's collective resource and strategic objectives.
68. On risk management, the Practice Lead emphasized that identifying, analyzing, and managing risks is a top priority as the Portfolio transitions into the Inception Phase and moves toward full implementation. He noted that significant work has already been done, both bottom-up and top-down, to ensure the Portfolio was designed in a risk-aware way. Key efforts include:
 - a. Key transition risks have been identified by the 2022–2024 Initiatives and Impact Area Platforms teams to inform the handover process.
 - b. A preliminary set of high-level risks from the new Portfolio's writing teams for each of the Programs and Accelerators.
 - c. A register of top CGIAR risks, from the Risk Community of Practice across all Centers, validated by leadership.
69. Drawing on all of that, he noted that these inputs have been synthesized into a Portfolio-level analysis of critical risks and mitigation measures as a starting point and

guide to the Program and Accelerator teams as a foundation for deeper risk analysis and management strategies to be developed during the inception phase.

70. He explained that management is currently in a preliminary 2025 work planning process to establish a clear starting point for the new year. This involves defining a clear spending plan for Window 1 and 2 funding to ensure continuity of essential work, particularly during the transition to the new Portfolio. This will be done through the Transition teams and interim leadership for programs and Accelerators are already in place.
71. Moving into 2025, the Practice Lead emphasized several critical processes that management is prioritizing in the early months of the year. While many activities are already underway, the focus will be on completing or advancing them to ensure clarity and effective operationalization of the Portfolio. These priorities include:
 - a. Advancing the competitive advantage analysis, with appreciation for ISDC's recommendation to explore external facilitation in the next phase, and completing the prioritization process, which is currently at step 5 of an 11-step framework.
 - b. Establishing clear partnership arrangements, in the spirit of co-design, delineating roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, and funding flows with partners at the core of effective Portfolio delivery.
 - c. Improving the mapping of Window 3 and bilateral funding, which would be considered when prioritizing the strategic use of Window 1 and 2 funding.
 - d. Strengthening risk management.
 - e. Expanding communication and engagement with partners, stakeholders, and funders.
 - f. Preparing critical outputs for Q2 2025, starting with comprehensive plans of results, work, and budgets for each Program and Accelerator that detail activities at the area of work at Center levels, accompanied by associated funding allocations.
 - g. Developing inception reports for each Program and Accelerator, summarizing progress across these key workstreams and presenting accountability matrices addressing feedback from ISDC, the IPB, and the System Council, which would require a review of the 2025 Window 2 budgets.
 - h. Putting monitoring, evaluation, learning, and impact assessment plans in place.
 - i. Preparing for Science Week in April 2025, where the portfolio, programs and accelerators will be presented with a key message that CGIAR is ready to implement and deliver this shared endeavor alongside partners.
72. The Practice Lead concluded by noting that underpinning all of this, CGIAR has already begun establishing longer-term, stable management arrangements for the Portfolio
73. The Council Chair acknowledged the Portfolio presentation and the team's review and responsiveness to comments received. He noted that the process is currently at step 5 of 11 — still not yet halfway — and emphasized that the Portfolio as presented remains a high-level document at this stage. While highlighting emerging consensus around the overall direction, he also drew attention to the tight timelines and broader implications of the process. He appreciated the team's candor in flagging these constraints and in setting clear expectations for the road ahead.

Key Discussion Areas

74. Council members thanked the German hosts for their hospitality and excellent arrangements, recognizing their contributions to a productive meeting. Council members expressed their appreciation for:
 - a. CGIAR leadership and writing teams for their rigorous efforts in creating a coherent and consolidated Portfolio under tight timelines.
 - b. The Portfolio's alignment with global goals such as food security, climate impacts, and digital transformation, in addition to its thematic scope, strategic focus, and alignment with agricultural transformation strategies.
 - c. The ISDC's thorough review as a guarantor of quality.
 - d. The focus on scaling initiatives and country-level investments.
 - e. The collaborative efforts of CGIAR Centers and their responsiveness to member feedback throughout the iterative review process.
75. Reflections on the overall Portfolio Structure included:
 - a. Members agreed that the 2025-2030 Portfolio structure is promising and shows CGIAR's relevance in a rapidly changing world. CGIAR's comparative advantage in the Portfolio is obvious.
 - b. CGIAR has many competitive advantages; however, the real core of the competitive advantage is around catalyzing agricultural productivity growth in key production systems that result in reductions in poverty, hunger, and undernutrition.
 - c. Highlighted areas needing improvement, including risk management, comparative advantage, leadership composition, partnership engagement, and lessons learned.
 - d. Acknowledged that research activity details and budget prioritization are in the early stages with expected gaps to be addressed during the inception phase, while highlighting the amount of work and material needed during the inception phase.
 - e. Emphasized the need for a theory of change to show how the Science Programs will contribute to the impact targets.
 - f. Emphasizing the points in the Portfolio on enhancing knowledge and building capacity in partner countries, highlighting ISDC's call for prioritization of co-design, fostering coherence and synergies in the implementation phase.
 - g. Support for the mainstreaming of nutrition in the Portfolio, with a call for attention to the global nutritional crisis — the triple burden of malnutrition, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight/obesity.
 - h. Advocated for mechanisms to prevent silos and ensure collaboration across Programs.
 - i. Emphasized the need for CGIAR to balance support for the poorest smallholders with contributing to global sustainability goals, including climate action. Stressed accessibility and affordability of innovations, and called for reflection during the inception phase to ensure both ends of this spectrum are addressed.
 - j. Called for a time-bound ISDC review after the inception phase with a detailed budget breakdown.
76. Council members' reflections on additional areas related to the Portfolio structure included:

Areas for Research Expansion

- q. Supported the ISDC's recommendations to
 - i. Expand research on opportunity crops, such as legumes and pulses, emphasizing their importance for marginalized communities, climate resilience, and household nutritional security.
 - ii. Mainstream water considerations across all Programs, particularly within the "Climate Action" Program, with attention to resource management, water storage, and nature-based approaches to advance climate adaptation and sustainable agriculture.
 - iii. Prioritize post-harvest technologies to reduce losses of cereals and grains, particularly in rural and impoverished areas, to enhance food security for vulnerable communities.

Prioritization

- r. Prioritization for impact at scale is the key that needs to permeate the narrative.
- s. Highlighted the need for a focused prioritization process to identify and target key global production systems, essential for securing future funding and delivering public goods throughout the Portfolio period.
- t. Called for completing the prioritization exercise during the inception phase, including a needs analysis to define the geographic focus for each Program and Accelerator. Advocated for clear objectives, actionable work plans, and a refined analysis of CGIAR's comparative advantage.
- u. Emphasized the importance of accountability mechanisms to drive results, particularly in fostering Accelerators and ensuring synergies across Programs. Urged leadership to champion ambitious, proven approaches and explore co-benefits across all Impact Areas.
- v. Stressed the need to showcase CGIAR's comparative advantage to effectively convince funders and policymakers.
- w. Highlighted the importance of setting clear priorities if funding falls short. Suggested streamlining research proposals to focus on targeted thematic areas for better alignment, clarity, and effectiveness.
- x. Underlined the urgent need for post-harvest technologies in rural and impoverished areas to reduce losses of cereals and grains. Encouraged prioritizing simple, effective solutions to enhance food security for vulnerable communities.
- y. Suggested aligning CGIAR's work with FAO's Science and Innovation Strategy and Strategic Framework 2022-2031 to leverage synergies and strengthen alignment with global priorities.

Coordination

- z. Emphasized the importance of clear coordination among Program leaders to manage intersections between Programs, avoid duplication, and ensure alignment during the inception phase.
- aa. Requested further details on the design and implementation of coordination efforts to enhance alignment and effectiveness.

Results and Impact

- bb. Praised the clarity of the Portfolio's 2030 impact ambitions, noting their value in attracting investment and informing policy support.
- cc. Stressed the importance of including attribution data alongside contribution metrics to enhance results reporting.

- dd. Highlighted the critical need to link thematic goals, outputs, and measurable impacts to strengthen the Portfolio's strategic narrative.
 - ee. Called for improving the quality of results reporting by strengthening the MELIA framework to deliver actionable insights. This included not only measuring outcomes but also informing adaptive strategies with tailored solutions for unique regional challenges. The framework would also support scaling efforts across diverse contexts while ensuring cross-program synergies that drive impact.
 - ff. Advocated for tailoring solutions to regional needs while fostering synergies across Programs to maximize impact.
 - gg. Stressed the importance of a results framework to clearly demonstrate the impact of CGIAR's Portfolio. Recommended starting from the existing "8 + 1 + 3" structure (eight Science Programs, one Scaling for Impact Program, and three Accelerators), and developing no more than two proxy indicators per program to illustrate CGIAR's global contribution.
 - hh. Raised concerns about poverty reduction metrics, emphasizing the need for consistent benchmarks and tangible measures to track progress effectively.
 - ii. Emphasized the importance of leadership in setting ambitious targets and achieving measurable results across all impact areas.
 - jj. Urged management to prioritize the impact compendium as a critical resource for securing funding and strengthening policy support.
 - kk. Called for a mindset shift in CGIAR's scaling approach to better tap into opportunities at the country level.
77. Council members' reflections on the Portfolio budget, investment, and partnerships included:
- Budget
- ll. Emphasized the importance of maintaining a balanced funding structure and transparency for Window 2 contributions.
 - mm. Called for detailed insights into each Center's roles, associated budgets, and overheads—both to ensure alignment across the Portfolio and to confirm that each Center's unique expertise is being appropriately resourced and leveraged.
 - nn. Supported ISDC involvement in addressing gaps and risks, recommending a targeted review in the budget plan.
 - oo. Highlighted the need for clear funding distinctions between Window 1 and Window 3 initiatives amid budget constraints.
 - pp. Stressed the need to set 2025 and early 2026 milestones and achieve early wins during implementation.
 - qq. Requested clarity on funding approvals, allocations, and the Council's role in setting targets. Emphasized the need for alignment between accountability and funding management, ensuring that program leaders have an approval function to support convergence between decision-making and financial oversight.
 - rr. Confirmation was sought on the level of authority that Program Leaders would have over funding decisions, with the view that accountability should align with the ability to manage the funding function—meaning they should be empowered to not only recommend but also approve allocations within their programs.
- Investment
- ss. Emphasized the need for a business case by shifting from a thematic focus to outputs and impact.

- tt. Recommended an ISDC review to ensure that Portfolio targets are measurable and aligned with CGIAR's core strengths, to help strengthen the investment case and increase funder confidence in expected results.
- uu. Emphasized prioritizing investments that leverage CGIAR's unique strengths, such as improving resilience, enhancing agricultural productivity, and advancing net-zero goals.
- vv. Emphasized the need for flexibility in investment decision-making and portfolio design to adapt to emerging opportunities and changing contexts.
- ww. Raised concerns about the economic challenges faced by Sub-Saharan Africa and emphasized the need for investment planning that reflects limited local resources, prioritizing affordability and accessibility of innovations.
- xx. Noted that certain targets, such as poverty reduction, may be better addressed in partnership with others, and recommended focusing investments where CGIAR offers the greatest comparative value and measurable return.
- yy. Stressed that since CGIAR is in the business of producing global public goods and to ensure the impact of these goods globally, it is important for CGIAR to engage in global forums where this discourse is taking place. The goal is not only to get the biggest traction in terms of sharing with the world what CGIAR does but also to attract attention and funding.

Partnership

- zz. Highlighted the need for the Portfolio to indicate how the private sector and the NARES will complement, partner, or compete with CGIAR while mentioning the successful partnership examples within the System.
 - aaa. Advocated expanding collaborations to include new strategic partners to strengthen integration and innovation.
 - bbb. Emphasized adopting a systems approach, incorporating co-learning, innovation, and multistakeholder processes to scale impact effectively.
 - ccc. Highlighted the pivotal role CGIAR could play in facilitating technology transfer, acting as a repository of advanced knowledge and expertise and disseminating it to countries in the Global South.
 - ddd. Called for CGIAR to be more active in being a convener for the agricultural research community worldwide and fulfil its objectives through partnerships.
 - eee. It is important for CGIAR programs, such as those under climate action, to partner with NARES, to leverage their knowledge, understand the context and infrastructure available in the geographies where programs are implemented.
78. Council members also provided specific reflections for the individual Portfolio science Programs and Accelerators for leadership to consider during the inception phase, including calling for keeping the Genebanks as an asset held in trust under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Plant Treaty). Members emphasized the importance of maintaining Genebanks as independent entities with ringfenced funding to meet Plant Treaty obligations, distinct from the new Portfolio's "Breeding for Tomorrow" Program. They highlighted Genebanks as critical global resources held in trust, benefiting researchers and farmers beyond CGIAR. Concerns were raised about the risks of merging Genebanks with the "Breeding for Tomorrow" Program, including operational challenges and inflated budgets, and members urged thorough analysis before decisions are made. Recommendations

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included granting the Genebanks full autonomy, aligning operations with treaty commitments, and exploring cost-saving opportunities through independent reviews.

79. Forestry and agroforestry are essential aspects of the transformation of the agri-food system . CGIAR is advised to prioritize its partnership with CIFOR-ICRAF, particularly within the Multifunctional Landscapes program. Question raised on the prospect of CIFOR-ICRAF in the portfolio after the signing of the governance documents. This is important for funders who have to decide whether to fund CIFOR-ICRAF through CGIAR or separately.

Session Outcomes

80. Management acknowledged the need to refine the Portfolio Narrative—particularly to clarify governance, funding mechanisms, and program integration. CGIAR leadership confirmed that an updated draft would be presented at the next Council meeting. A follow-up task force was also suggested to further consider outstanding issues, including approaches to strategic asset funding and the alignment of Window 2 allocations with program objectives.
81. [Decision Point — 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.
82. [Action Point 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.

Closed Session

83. The Council entered a closed session to receive and discuss the report of the Council's Assurance Oversight Committee to the System Council Action Plan. Pursuant to Article 4.3(b) and (d) of the Rules of Procedure of the System Council, the Chair clarified attendance rules noting that attendance was limited to voting members of the System Council and one alternate.

Opening of Day 2

84. The Chair opened the second day of the meeting by welcoming participants and reflecting on the achievements of Day 1:
 - a. He emphasized the value of the interactive discussions with IPB members, noting that these exchanges were well-received.
 - b. He highlighted the Council's endorsement of the overall direction of the 2025–2030 Portfolio, acknowledging that the ISDC would review the Portfolio again in Q3 2025 as part of an ongoing refinement process. He stressed the importance of achieving the granularity needed to make the case for funding.
 - c. He noted the Closed Session, where voting Council members reviewed the Assurance and Oversight Committee's (AOC) findings related to the 45 red flags raised. He requested that voting members review the circulated draft summary of the session and provide any comments, to allow the summary to be shared with the full System Council.
 - d. He commended the BMZ and GIZ hosts for the previous evening's reception celebrating 50 years of German cooperation with CGIAR, which featured an engaging panel discussion and a preview of the flagship report to be launched during CGIAR Science Week in Nairobi in April 2025.
85. The Co-Chair extended his welcome to participants for the second day of the System Council meeting and expressed appreciation on behalf of the State Secretary of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and GIZ for the robust attendance by all at the reception marking the 50th anniversary of German cooperation with CGIAR.

Spotlight: Global Leadership Team: Driving CGIAR's Integrated Partnership

86. The Co-Chair introduced the session, highlighting the tradition of spotlighting key achievements from CGIAR's work during Council meetings. He announced the first spotlight segment, titled "Driving CGIAR's Integrated Partnership," to be presented by Dr. Simeon Ehui, DG of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA).
87. Dr. Ehui presented on behalf of the GLT, sharing key messages and progress in advancing CGIAR's integrated partnership over the past year. This included fostering collaboration, inclusion, and trust through a bottom-up approach. It also included aligning Centers and funding under the 2025–2030 Portfolio with strengthened governance, risk management, and assurance frameworks. He highlighted the implementation of a robust risk and oversight approach to ensure accountability and transparency. He also emphasized efforts to streamline structures to improve operational efficiency and focus resources on impactful science and innovation.
88. Dr. Ehui highlighted that the GLT serves as the top management team of the Integrated Partnership. It includes the DGs of CGIAR Centers that are Parties to the Integrated Framework Agreement (IFA), the EMD (Chair), DEMD, and Chief Scientist. He emphasized that the GLT uses a consensus-driven decision-making process.

89. Dr. Ehui outlined recent GLT actions over the past three months, demonstrating its commitment to integration and impact:
 - a. Reviewed and provided guidance on the 2025–2030 programs, Accelerator proposals, and Portfolio narrative for submission to ISDC.
 - b. Developed a Risk and Oversight plan to strengthen governance and accountability.
 - c. Reviewed and endorsed the preliminary 2025 Window 1/Window 2 funding allocation, a topic still under discussion.
 - d. Assessed Portfolio management arrangements and selected Interim Directors and Deputy Directors for key areas of work.
90. Dr. Ehui also highlighted the work the GLT was doing on engagement with the Global South, he indicated that the Team has endorsed the next steps to operationalize the shared continental structure, strengthening partnerships and regional impact.
91. Dr. Ehui concluded by affirming that under the GLT's leadership, CGIAR is building trust, fostering shared ownership, and strengthening a collaborative culture. He said these efforts pave the way for a more integrated, inclusive, and impactful organization.

Key Discussion Areas

92. The Co-Chair invited brief reflections. One question addressed the GLT's role in influencing budget allocations, to which the EMD explained that the 2025 budget process aims to balance stability and flexibility within the new leadership structure. She added that future budgets would incorporate a more structured prioritization approach.
93. Dr. Ehui also clarified the term “productive competition”, by describing it as using competition to drive collaboration and mutual benefits.
94. Council Members observed the overuse of the term “integration” and emphasized the need for greater gender diversity within the GLT.
95. The Co-Chair thanked Simeon Ehui for his presentation.

Agenda Item 7: Planning 2025 Independent Advising and Evaluative Evidence for System Council

96. At the invitation of the Co-Chair, the Director of the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES) noted that the purpose of the session was to seek the Council's approval of the proposed triennial (2025–2027) workplan and budget for the Council's independent advisory bodies. She emphasized that the workplan was developed over seven months through extensive consultations, and she expressed gratitude to Council members for their engagement.
97. Highlights from the presentation included:
Snapshot of mandates and key objectives for 2025-2027: The IAES Director outlined the distinct functions of the independent bodies, delineating the roles of providing

independent advice and generating independent evaluative evidence, which make up its key objectives in the workplan.

- a. **ISDC:** ISDC objectives include conducting Portfolio assessments to provide evidence-based recommendations, generating science-for-development advice aligned with CGIAR goals, implementing a Science Forum to address key topics and build consensus, and offering advice based on direct Council requests, Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) demands, or identified needs. The ISDC's work is guided by the *Quality of Research for Development in the Context of CGIAR* framework.
- b. **SPIA (Standing Panel on Impact Assessment):** SPIA objectives include institutionalizing and scaling country-level data on CGIAR's reach, expanding and deepening evidence of the causal impacts of CGIAR research, and strengthening the use of evidence within CGIAR and among external stakeholders to inform decision-making. As part of its 2025-2027 workplan, SPIA will scale operations from 4 to 20 countries, reflecting a fivefold increase in country-level activities.
- c. **IAES Evaluation Function:** IAES Evaluation Function objectives include:
 - i. Producing independent and external process and performance evaluations.
 - ii. Providing evaluation guidance and serving as custodian of CGIAR's evaluation policy, including periodic reviews and proposed revisions for the Board and Council.
 - iii. Engaging with Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) processes and personnel, at both Center and System-wide levels, to enhance evaluation integration.
 - iv. Knowledge management, ensuring that dense evaluation reports are translated into targeted, accessible briefs and related materials for specific user groups and audiences.

Framing Approach for 2025-2027 Workplan

- d. **Multi-year evaluation plan:** The new portfolio is being prioritized and management has been consulted and provided concrete input to determine the best timing for mid-line evaluations, ensuring that evidence will be available at the right time for both management and governance bodies to make informed decisions.
- e. **Collaborative stakeholder engagement:** Developed through co-created guiding questions with stakeholders to articulate decision points and thereby align evaluation activity with organizational priorities and plan inclusively.

Three-year budget plan and uplift scenarios

- f. The base budget scenario, endorsed following SIMEC and AOC review, supports SPIA's expanded mandate, ISDC's Portfolio reviews, and the Evaluation Function objectives. Three budget scenarios were shared in the annex of the Council's background materials to support strategic planning and reflect foreseen funding constraints.
- g. The 2024 approved budget served as a baseline, with requested funds for 2025–2027 detailed in the slide, reflecting the advice by SIMEC and AOC to prioritize base budgets.
- h. Potential uplift scenarios, as outlined in the pre-reading materials, would enable expanded activities in future years. These include additional ISDC Science Forums, evaluation teams with broader expertise and regional representation, and an expanded SPIA presence across more countries.

Collaboration

- i. The IAES Director highlighted ongoing collaboration with SIMEC, AOC, and CGIAR management to ensure alignment, coherence, and effective implementation of the workplan.
- 98. At the Co-Chair's invitation, representatives from SIMEC and the AOC shared reflections on the consultation process for the workplan, budget proposal, and assurance review:
 - a. Council Member Alan Tollervey, Interim Chair of SIMEC, underscored the critical roles of ISDC, SPIA, and the IAES evaluation function in ensuring CGIAR's legitimacy, accountability, and evidence-based learning. He noted that the proposed budget had been reviewed and adjusted in response to System Council requests, and that SIMEC had recommended proceeding with the baseline scenario while retaining flexibility for future adjustments. He recalled that SPIA's budget, in particular, had already been approved by Council on three separate occasions. Alan Tollervey added that although these functions are essential, they should remain open to periodic review, especially in light of CGIAR's evolving governance structures. He referred to the [2019 MOPAN assessment](#), which had identified weaknesses in CGIAR's evaluation function at the time, as a reminder of the need for continued attention to strong evaluation practices.¹
 - b. The Interim Chair further emphasized that in considering any changes to the evaluation function, it must align with recognized international standards. He cautioned that while governance changes are underway, and future information needs will likely be shaped by the IPB, this should not lead to unbalanced shifts between supply and demand. Instead, the evaluation function must continue to uphold independence and best practice, even as it adapts to evolving priorities, particularly in a constrained budget environment.
 - c. Council Member Renaud Seligmann, speaking as an AOC member, reinforced the importance of robust data to demonstrate CGIAR's impact and justify continued investment. He emphasized the need to balance strategic investment in evaluation functions with fiscal discipline, stating that the current baseline budget struck a reasonable balance. He also stressed the importance of alignment across CGIAR's governance bodies to support effective and coherent operations.

Key Discussion Areas

- 99. Council members expressed appreciation for the presentation. Additional reflection themes included:

Governance and Prioritization

- a. Several members supported the need for periodic reviews of independent advisory bodies to ensure alignment with governance changes and emerging needs.
- b. Request for information on the criteria for selecting the countries for SPIA's country studies, emphasizing the usefulness of assessing CGIAR's impact in countries that do not host CGIAR Centers.

¹ From the MOPAN 2019 brief: "CGIAR's recently reformed evaluation function raises uncertainty," and 2015-2017 "quality evaluations were used by CRPs to inform programming but were less used by CGIAR's governing bodies, mainly due to a lack of alignment with decision-making needs and cycles."

Communication of Evidence

- c. Emphasis on the need for concise and actionable recommendations tailored to policymakers and donors.
- d. Suggestions included synthesizing key messages into three bullet points and leveraging partnerships with organizations like the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) group of the World Bank to build on shared strengths.

Budget and Resource Allocation

- e. Members endorsed the budgets but noted the importance of balancing resource allocation with donor constraints.
- f. Concerns were raised about reliance on Window 1 funding, with calls to explore alternative funding sources and ensure budget efficiency.

Evaluation and Impact

- g. A question was raised about whether midterm evaluations for the Accelerators were included in the workplan. The IAES Director later clarified (para. 100) that while midline evaluations for the new Portfolio are planned under the base budget, evaluations of the Accelerators would rely on uplift funding.
- h. A suggestion was made to review CGIAR's research governance systems, including research ethics, authorship and publication practices, quality assurance mechanisms, and alignment with principles of academic freedom.

Scaling and Capacity Building

- i. Members stressed the importance of evaluating scaling strategies and aligning them with impact assessment research.
- j. Building capacity among partners and NARES in impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis was encouraged.

Review of the Independent Functions

- k. Members also highlighted the need to reflect on the provision of independent advice and proposed a review by the System Council of the current work of the IAES and SIMEC in 2025. This review should be done with the support of independent external experts who will look at how the CGIAR System evaluation functions align with the new governance structure.

100. The IAES Director welcomed the Council's support and acknowledged calls for a review of the advisory bodies, confirming it is already part of IAES's terms of reference ([TOR](#), clause 9.1). She highlighted the availability of self-assessment data to inform such a review, noted that midline evaluations for the new Portfolio are planned under the base budget, and clarified that evaluations of Accelerators would depend on uplift funding. She also confirmed a system-wide partnership evaluation is planned for 2027 and expressed openness to further explore quality-of-science review approaches in collaboration with ISDC.
101. The SPIA Chair clarified that countries like Colombia and Peru were selected for SPIA studies due to the depth of CGIAR innovation uptake. He noted that these studies are led by strong external research teams and welcomed collaboration to help synthesize findings across SPIA's work. He also encouraged integrating impact assessment into program inception phases and underscored that scaling activities offer important opportunities for impact research.

102. The ISDC Chair emphasized the need to strengthen CGIAR's core scientific capacity, including by engaging local research institutions to support long-term capability development. He encouraged clearer and earlier guidance from the System Council to help ISDC plan effectively and deliver focused, high-quality scientific reviews. He also expressed openness to further discussions on how best to assess CGIAR's scientific infrastructure and processes.
103. The Co-Chair thanked the IAES Director for her presentation and contributions, emphasizing the importance of the advisory services' work in shaping CGIAR's impact.
104. The Chair reinforced the need for focused prioritization to reduce costs and maximize efficiency. He suggested narrowing evaluation scopes to key assurance points and proposed engaging Council members in a targeted discussion to distill high-level findings into a compelling narrative that underscores CGIAR's transformative impact. This collaborative effort would support advocacy and funding efforts while aligning with Council expectations.

Session Outcomes

105. [Decision 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 annex²; 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.

106. [Action Point 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.

107. [Action Point — 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

² As at 16 April 2025, ISDC supported by the secretariat in IAES, has identified potential savings and accommodated the Inception Report review process within its baseline budget. In the event upward revision is required, this would be revisited with AOC and SIMEC mid-year.

Council members to provide feedback on specific data that would be most useful to them.

Agenda Item 8: CGIAR Windows 1 & 2 Budget for 2025

108. The Chair invited the DEMD to provide a strategic overview of the proposed 2025 Windows 1 and 2 budget, followed by additional details from the Senior Director of Financial Planning and Analysis.
109. The DEMD emphasized that the 2025 budget results from extensive stakeholder collaboration, including donors, Centers, and System entities. Building on process enhancements introduced in 2024, the budget has been refined, comprehensively reviewed, and endorsed by both the IPB-AFRC and the IPB.
110. Reaffirming CGIAR's "North Star" goals for 2025, the DEMD outlined three key priorities:
 - a. Successfully concluding the current portfolio of research initiatives while launching the 2025–2030 Portfolio of Programs and Accelerators.
 - b. Strengthening partnerships and enhancing visibility to meet financial targets, including \$4 billion cumulatively by 2027 and \$2 billion annually by 2030.
 - c. Advancing operational excellence through effective governance and streamlined business functions.
111. The DEMD highlighted the strategic alignment of the budget with the Integrated Partnership governance framework and the new science and innovation Portfolio, noting:
 - a. Business functions will, for the first time since 2019, be fully funded by the CSP (of 2%) without additional Window 1 contributions.
 - b. Window 2 has been reintroduced to support designated Portfolio Programs and Accelerators, while Window 1 remains for untied and cross-cutting funding, in line with recommendations from the Financial Model Reference Group (FMRG).
 - c. The budget integrates innovations from 2024, including Baseline and Surge scenarios, revenue breakdowns, and a preview of 2026 revenues and expenses.
112. The Senior Director of Financial Planning and Analysis elaborated on complementary budget details:
 - a. Increased research funding is enabled by a 20% reduction in business functions, aligned to the CSP funding received. It also shows a reduction in science management due to the consolidation of the three Science Managing Directors' units into the Chief Scientist unit.
 - b. Governance budgets increased, reflecting higher allocations for the IPB, Council, and SPIA. A key highlight is the USD 6 million contribution announced by the Gates Foundation through 2028 to offset the increased costs associated with SPIA's expanded program. Additional donors have also expressed interest in supporting SPIA.
 - c. Enhanced transparency in the System Organization budget is achieved through its reorganization into four categories: "Science and Innovation Management," "Business Functions," "Governance and Independent Functions," and a new

“Special Projects” category for global initiatives like MELIA, digital programs, and flagship reports.

113. He concluded by presenting a snapshot of the Portfolio Programs and Accelerators budget, emphasizing substantial input from the GLT and interim Program Directors. He noted that detailed reviews of the budget would be conducted in Q1/Q2 2025 during the inception phase.

Key Discussion Areas

114. Council members expressed broad support for the budget, while raising several strategic and operational issues that require attention. Key reflections themes included:
 - a. Acknowledged the enhanced clarity, transparency, and fiscal restraint in the 2025 budget paper, calling it a significant improvement that fosters confidence in System leadership.
 - b. Welcomed the six-year program horizon and expressed enthusiasm for the science Programs and Accelerators, recognizing their potential to support co-funding efforts and enhance CGIAR’s global visibility, including participation in major events such as COPs.
 - c. Emphasized the need for full visibility of the total budget — including bilateral, Window 1, and Window 2 funding — to ensure alignment with the CGIAR strategy, Portfolio, and results framework, while helping identify funding gaps.
 - d. Called for greater transparency on overhead rates, policies, and responsibilities under the new Portfolio, with suggestions to centralize or tax overheads to ensure fair distribution of System costs.
 - e. Suggested that the Council and IPB jointly review governance-related budget lines outside the direct control of management to ensure expectations and resourcing are aligned.
 - f. Requested a clear, transparent process for tracking funder contributions to assess whether new earmarking rules are functioning effectively.
 - g. Reiterated that Window 1 should be treated as a strategic instrument, not a gap-filler, to support coherence across the Portfolio and enable strategic allocations.
 - h. Proposed exploring differentiated cost-sharing percentages (CSPs) across funding modalities to incentivize contributions to pooled funding, and treating the 50% designation cap in Window 2 as a long-term objective rather than a rigid constraint.
 - i. Highlighted the importance of maintaining nimbleness, including geographic targeting where appropriate, to attract politically or regionally motivated funding without compromising Portfolio coherence.
 - j. Encouraged incentivizing contributions to Window 1 and demonstrating the value of pooled funding while ensuring Window 1 does not disproportionately carry System operational costs.
 - k. Recognized the need for shared effort across funding windows in covering System functions, with some emphasizing that all modalities—Windows 1, 2, 3, and bilateral—should contribute fairly.
 - l. Requested improved visibility for Genebank budgets within the overall Portfolio, noting their unique role as System assets held in trust under the Treaty, and supported revisiting CSP adjustments to ensure sustainable funding.

- m. Called for realism in articulating the \$2 billion annual funding ambition, with some questioning its achievability without a clear fundraising strategy or new donors and requesting updates on engagement efforts.
- n. Welcomed the 11-step prioritization process and requested further details on how it shaped the budget and how program impacts will be refined during the inception phase.
- o. Expressed concern over the incomplete status of the Portfolio and its implications for timely disbursements, particularly under Window 2, and asked for clarity on the 2025 program designation process amid evolving program details.
- p. Advised ensuring visibility for Window 1 contributions in a way that does not fragment the System, while preserving the flexibility and creativity that underpin scientific innovation.
- q. Requested clarity on the evolving role of the Chief Scientist in shaping future budget allocations, including authority over Programs and Accelerators.
- r. Prioritized implementation of the Risk and Oversight Plan in 2025, questioning whether the modest budget increase is sufficient, and recommended safeguarding key investments in this area under any budget scenario.
- s. Welcomed Mexico's announcement of a new pledge to contribute to all three windows from 2025–2027, with the Chair noting this would enable full voting membership once formalized.
- t. Encouraged exploring innovative financing approaches, such as levies or results-based bonds, and called for a strong value proposition to support multi-year commitments from donors.

- 115. In management's response, the foundational principles of transparency, strategic alignment, and prioritization were reaffirmed as key to the budget process.
- 116. Management emphasized efforts to control costs within their authority, including reducing the business function budget below the CSP to ensure efficient resource use. They clarified that Governance and independent advisory functions, including IAES, SPIA, and ISDC, fall under Council control, allowing decisions on funding levels to be data-driven and independent of management's mandate. Additionally, management highlighted that Genebank funding is integrated within the framework, enabling targeted Window 2 contributions.
- 117. On the Liquidity and Stabilization Fund, management clarified its dual role: providing temporary cash flow support and enabling strategic initiatives, with usage governed by Council approval and subject to close monitoring to ensure accountability.
- 118. Management explained that overhead costs, averaging approximately 15% across Centers, are managed at the Center level rather than by the System Organization. These costs are subject to external audits, reported in Centers' financial statements, and published on the CGIAR dashboard, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- 119. Management described the authority and accountability chain for Window 1 and 2 funding—from the Council to the IPB, EMD, Chief Scientist, and Program/Accelerator leads, down to Centers. They emphasized inclusive decision-making through endorsement processes at each level. While noting that 2025 is a transitional year with

atypical sequencing of portfolio and budget approvals, management confirmed that future budgets would follow a bottom-up process. Area-of-work leads will work with Centers and their Boards to develop programmatic workplans and budgets based on defined priorities. These will be reviewed through a portfolio-level science prioritization process, with final Window 1 and 2 allocations decided by the Chief Scientist to ensure alignment, coherence, and accountability.

120. The EMD emphasized the urgency of securing new and diverse funding streams, positioning Window 1 and 2 as essential, high-quality funding critical to enabling innovation, high-priority research, and solutions to global challenges such as food insecurity, malnutrition, and climate change. She underscored that these streams should not be viewed as gap fillers but as foundational investments driving impactful research. She highlighted opportunities to engage private banks and institutions and committed to delivering measurable results to showcase CGIAR's unique value in addressing global challenges. Addressing funders and partners directly, she called for bold leadership and greater ambition. If agriculture is truly part of the solution to food insecurity, malnutrition, climate change, and biodiversity loss, then meaningful investment must follow. She concluded that the world needs more science — and more funding—than ever before.
121. The Chair concluded by emphasizing the critical need for creating compelling incentives and clear narratives to secure long-term commitments to CGIAR's funding streams. He underscored the importance of aligning governance, impactful results, and investment cases to resonate with donors and stakeholders in an increasingly competitive funding landscape.. While acknowledging that ideas like global taxes on aviation or shipping have been circulating for some time — and that dozens of groups are vying for the same limited resources — he encouraged a pragmatic path forward. He proposed forming a dedicated team, ideally including those with relevant experience in innovative financing, to work with management and develop actionable recommendations for consideration at the next Council meeting.

Session Outcomes

122. Decision Point — 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.

123. Action Point 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.

124. Action Point 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.

Agenda Item 6: Integrated Partnership Risk & Oversight Plan

125. The Co-Chair introduced the session on the Integrated Partnership Risk & Oversight Plan (ROP), providing context and outlining the development timeline, key milestones, and approval process. The AFRC endorsed and recommended the ROP to the IPB, which subsequently approved it and recommended it to the Council for final approval.
126. The DEMD presented the ROP, emphasizing its collaborative development through the ICI Forum with substantial input from Center DGs, Center senior management, the IPB-AFRC, and the AOC, noting that:
 - a. The ROP was generated through the ICI Forum, the mechanisms that brings together all the Center DGs and DEMD. He emphasized that the ROP as presented is owned by all DGs and Centers, considering the guidance received from the IPB-AFRC and AOC.
 - b. He concluded by indicating that if the SC approves the ROP, the ICI Forum will work on its implementation and the budget will be planned accordingly. He indicated that the model would continue to be refined and strengthened over time, considering the recommendations from IPB-AFRC and AOC.
127. Co-Convenors of the ICI Forum, Juan-Lucas Restrepo and Essam Mohammed, elaborated on the ROP's operational details:
 - a. Defining integration in the CGIAR context as a decentralized and democratic model that achieves harmonization of approaches, coordination in planning and delivery, information sharing, and timely escalation to the appropriate stakeholders, while preserving Center autonomy.
 - b. Noting that the ROP is an analytical framework for integration, with milestones and mechanisms to ensure transparency and alignment.
 - c. Budget adjustments for a global assurance model, with a phased approach and 2025 designated as a transition year to right-size costs.
 - d. Roles and responsibilities in the assurance functions with their respective reporting lines.
 - e. The Co-convenors also spoke to the common policies and procedures which are a key element of integration under the ROP.
128. Management noted that, while most Center boards had endorsed the ROP, five were still in the review process. The IPB approved the ROP on 13 November 2024, incorporating AFRC and AOC recommendations.

129. Council and AOC Member Renaud Seligmann noted that the AOC appreciated progress made in addressing systemic issues and emphasized the link between increased funding and strong assurance on accountability, efficiency, and integrity. The AOC also supported the recommendations and oversight role of the IPB-AFRC, and noted that, if well-resourced, the ROP would provide reasonable assurance on fund use. Key areas needing further attention include:
 - a. Ensuring full access for the Internal Audit Executive to data, information, and personnel.
 - b. Clarifying the AOC's role in providing independent assurance alongside the IPB-AFRC.
 - c. Aligning the Risk Appetite Framework with System Council expectations.
130. Council members raised several critical considerations, as they:
 - a. Called for clear accountability mechanisms and assurance that progress is being monitored, including a systematic escalation policy to address issues effectively.
 - b. Acknowledged the AOC's work and noted that the assurance system functioned as intended, citing the foresight AOC provided during SC21 in Brasília.
 - c. Emphasized the need for an updated crisis management procedure, underscored by the 45 red flags letter.
 - d. Stressed that implementation and compliance with the ROP will be crucial for future funding decisions.
 - e. Reinforced the importance of compliance.
 - f. Requested clarification on the operational mechanism of the Trust Fund Agreement clause allowing funding suspension for non-compliance, with assurance that the ROP will serve as the basis for this process.
 - g. Requested a written update on progress before the next Council meeting, ideally within six months, to track whether implementation is proceeding as planned.
131. In response, management reiterated its commitment to the ROP's implementation and outlined safeguards, including:
 - a. Assigning dedicated executive roles with clear reporting lines.
 - b. Regular updates to the Council on progress and emerging risks, with an openness to provide interim written updates between sessions.
 - c. Alignment of IPB-AFRC and AOC recommendations with implementation milestones.
 - d. Emphasizing the need for cultural change within the organization and greater cohesion across CGIAR.
 - e. Confirming that systems and structures are in place to address issues (e.g., the 45 red flags), though improvement is needed, and emphasizing the importance of respecting those structures while ensuring transparency and visibility at appropriate levels.

Session Outcome

132. Decision Point — 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.

Agenda Item 9: Report from the Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC)

133. The Chair introduced the AOC report and invited Mr. Renaud Seligmann, one of two Council representative members on the AOC, to present.
134. Mr. Seligmann outlined the AOC's role as a Standing Committee of the Council, providing assurances across internal audit, risk management, governance, and external audit functions, with a focus on enhancing oversight mechanisms and addressing system-wide governance challenges.
135. He highlighted recent responsibilities of the AOC, which included assessing the proposed Integrated Partnership ROP, reviewing the amendments to the Charter and Framework, and overseeing the Action Plan approved by the SC on September 5 that dealt with key issues stemming from the 45 red flags letter.
136. Mr. Seligmann provided an update on AOC's findings related to the Action Plan. He presented the ongoing efforts focused on the three remaining items: i) resolving the investigation into the dismissal of a senior scientist by CIMMYT through engagement with its Board of Trustees; ii) finalizing the investigation into the independence of the Ethics and Business Conduct function, which is nearing completion; and iii) the item related to the remuneration of governance officials. For item iii he indicated that this is under the aegis of the Nominations Committee of the System Council, which will oversee a benchmarking exercise and make recommendations to the System Council.
137. Mr. Seligmann spoke about the assurance functions related to internal and external audits, confirming that the Committee met with the acting Chief Audit Executive, as well as the heads of Ethics and Business Conduct and Risk, all of whom support the Risk and Oversight Plan (ROP). However, he raised concerns regarding the management action plan on internal audit recommendations. As of 30 October 2024, nearly 80% of action plans were overdue, with only 23% implemented. While acknowledging some reasons for these delays—many of which are being addressed through the ROP—he stressed that management must remain focused on completing these action plans.
138. He reaffirmed the AOC's strong support for the independence of the Chief Internal Audit Executive and Chief Ethics and Business Conduct Executive, emphasizing that these are critical functions that must be exercised with professionalism and autonomy. He noted that the AOC remains committed to upholding the integrity of these roles and supporting their effective operation across the partnership.
139. The AOC recommended working toward a single external audit firm for quality assurance purposes, recognizing the necessary steps for this to be achieved. Seligmann noted that while Centers and the System Organization are already audited by firms compliant with the International Federation of Accountants, a single firm would improve quality assurance and support integration efforts.

140. The AOC reviewed system-wide risk management and internal controls, particularly at the strategic risk level. The Committee intends to engage further on defining the organization's overall risk appetite, to advise the System Council on this matter. The AOC emphasized that the risk management function must be properly empowered and resourced to effectively identify, assess, and manage risks.
141. Seligmann also presented the AOC's 2025 priorities, which include overseeing the ROP's implementation in line with agreed recommendations from the IPB, IPB-AFRC, and AOC. Additionally, the AOC will contribute to the next iteration of amendments to the CGIAR Charter and Framework and plans to update its terms of reference in 2025.

Key Discussion Areas

142. Members expressed gratitude for the AOC's significant efforts and independent work during a challenging period, highlighting its critical role in strengthening oversight and addressing concerns raised in the 45 red flags letter. Council members emphasized the importance of supporting independent AOC members and ensuring they are appropriately compensated for the additional time and responsibilities undertaken — especially given that some AOC members adjusted their external professional commitments to meet CGIAR-related demands. It was suggested that this could be further addressed during the review of the Committee's terms of reference.
143. Members discussed the remaining unresolved issues from the red flags letter, emphasizing transparency, lessons learned, and clear protocols for governance crises. Renaud Seligmann highlighted the need to respect confidentiality in investigations to protect all parties, confirmed engagement with CIMMYT's Board as mandated, and emphasized progress. He assured members of a systematic, independent approach to resolving matters.
144. Members emphasized the critical importance of implementing the Risk and Oversight Plan to institutionalize improved governance practices, address systemic gaps, and ensure compliance. They noted that progress on the Action Plan is essential for maintaining donor confidence, avoiding inefficiencies, and mitigating future risks. The recommendation to transition to an integrated external audit was highlighted as a key step toward fostering a shared organizational culture and achieving greater efficiency through economies of scale. Members supported strengthening governance structures through updated terms of reference, formalized escalation protocols, and measured progress that upholds due process and quality.
145. Management and AOC representatives reaffirmed their commitment to addressing unresolved issues professionally and systematically, with the aim of concluding the remaining investigations by early 2025. Members welcomed closer collaboration between the AOC, IPB, and IPB-AFRC, and supported exploring a public communication to help address reputational concerns raised by the letter. The AOC emphasized the importance of embedding lessons learned into the implementation of the ROP and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency.

146. The Chair expressed gratitude to the AOC for its dedication and contributions during a challenging period, emphasizing that lessons learned should enhance CGIAR's ability to address future crises with confidence. He described the recent challenges as an inflection point for the system and highlighted the importance of collective action, forward-looking reforms, and strengthened partnerships to build a more robust and unified organization.

Session Outcome

147. [Decision Point— 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.

Agenda Item 10: Report from the Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC)

148. At the invitation of the Co-Chair, Alan Tollervey, Interim Chair of SIMEC, presented the committee's report.
149. Dr. Tollervey outlined SIMEC's role as a Standing Committee of the Council. He explained that SIMEC advises the Council on strategic matters related to CGIAR's independent advisory bodies — namely IAES, ISDC, and SPIA — and reviews and endorses their annual workplans and budgets. He noted SIMEC's ongoing role in coordinating MELIA efforts across CGIAR and collaborating with the AOC on assurance and reporting matters. He also confirmed SIMEC's endorsement of the proposed IAES annual workplan and budget, which were presented to and approved by the Council earlier in the day.
150. He highlighted SIMEC's responsibilities over the past six months, which included reviewing evaluations of the three Science Groups. Alan Tollervey explained that SIMEC worked closely with the Evaluation Function to shape the Science Group evaluations during a time of structural change in CGIAR. Given that the Science Groups were being phased out, SIMEC prioritized making the evaluations forward-looking and relevant to CGIAR's evolving agenda. In particular, the evaluations were designed to examine how Centers collaborated around major thematic areas — genetic innovation, system transformation, and agrifood systems — and to inform coordination and coherence in CGIAR's future Portfolio. The findings were shared during System Council learning sessions earlier in the year, focusing on aligning evaluations with strategic priorities to inform CGIAR's future direction.
151. Alan Tollervey reported that SIMEC's priority for 2025 will be to explore how MELIA can be more effectively integrated across CGIAR. This includes examining efforts within the Evaluation Function, SPIA, CGIAR Portfolio Performance Unit, and at the Center level. He highlighted an opportunity to bring the MELIA landscape together within a more coherent framework, ensuring a value-added perspective on monitoring, evaluation, learning, and impact assessment.

152. Alan Tollervey also reported on the ongoing recruitment process for ISDC members, as four positions, including the Chair, will become vacant by the end of 2025. Of 130 applications, six candidates representing diverse disciplines, regions, and genders have been shortlisted, with final selections expected in early 2025.
153. Alan Tollervey emphasized that SIMEC relies on volunteer members who represent Council voting member constituencies and bring skills and expertise in monitoring and evaluation. He encouraged the nomination of new members with experience in evidence-based strategic planning, research development, and familiarity with results frameworks. He noted that the Committee offers members the opportunity to engage with CGIAR's work from a technical, non-governance perspective.

Key Discussion Areas

154. Members expressed appreciation for the presentation. The IPB-AFRC Chair emphasized the critical role SIMEC can play within the broader assurance framework, considering the Risk and Oversight plan. She mentioned that it is part of combined assurance, particularly on the programmatic and science sides while calling for further discussion on this.
155. The Co-Chair thanked Alan Tollervey for the presentation and SIMEC for its work.

Agenda Item 11: Report from the Nominating Committee of the System Council (NCSC)

156. At the Co-Chair's invitation, the Nominating Committee of the System Council Co-Chair, Christophe Larose, provided a brief update. He reported changes in the committee's composition, including the nomination of Christina Rumbaitis del Rio to succeed the outgoing Co-Chair Helen Hambly, and the appointment of Santiago Ruiz Sánchez as Mexico's representative — noting both nominations were submitted to the Council for approval.
157. Mr. Larose recalled the committee's efforts in finalizing the slate of IPB nominees, approved by the Council in September 2024, following a staggered-term approach to ensure continuity and a balanced mix of expertise. He also highlighted ongoing work on benchmarking IPB honoraria, with a subcommittee drafting Terms of Reference for a consultancy-led benchmarking exercise and noted engagements with the AOC to address concerns raised about the nominations process. These discussions led to the identification of gaps in the process, with the NCSC taking steps to address them.
158. The Council Co-Chair thanked the NCSC Co-Chair for his presentation and acknowledged the NCSC's contributions.

Spotlight: More Than the Sum of the Parts: New Synergies for Transformation in CGIAR

159. The spotlight session, presented by Yvonne Pinto (IRRI DG) and Mark Smith (IWMI DG) showcased CGIAR's integration across Centers, programs, and partnerships to tackle global challenges in food, land, and water systems.
160. The IRRI DG presented an integrated reflection on CGIAR's programmatic and leadership efforts, emphasizing the shift from simple productivity gains to a holistic approach that combines productivity, environmental resilience, climate adaptation, and nutritional value in crops. She described this as a "sum of the parts" strategy, creating a compound proposition to address these interconnected challenges.
161. She underscored the importance of embracing complexity and integrating value chain approaches into agricultural transformation, leveraging natural capital and the environment to build more resilient food systems.
162. The IRRI DG emphasized the need for collaboration and agile approaches across Centers to tackle complex global challenges. She cited initiatives that leverage innovative technologies to enhance agricultural productivity, strengthen climate resilience, and support livelihoods.
163. She highlighted the need to combat malnutrition and address changing regional priorities. She discussed collaborative initiatives that deliver climate-resilient, nutrient-rich crops and improve soil health. She called for a new consensus on water systems and a focus on social protection and infrastructure.
164. The IRRI DG highlighted the evolving and diverse needs emerging across the global landscape, emphasizing that food systems transformation requires an integrated approach — bringing together land and water systems, value chain development, climate change adaptation, and the sustainable use of natural capital, while also embedding nutrition and health outcomes. She also pointed to two areas described as lying on the periphery of CGIAR's current operations but nonetheless critical to agricultural development: infrastructure for the agricultural sector and social protection mechanisms, particularly in the context of emergency food response within humanitarian settings.
165. The IWMI DG presented CGIAR's Water Systems Integration Roadmap, emphasizing the vital role of water across all CGIAR Centers and its unique position to address global water security challenges. The roadmap demonstrates CGIAR's ability to integrate expertise — from genetic research to large-scale basin management — creating synergies that enhance its impact on food, land, and water systems. This framework reflects CGIAR's commitment to leveraging untapped synergies and driving innovation and collaboration to address global challenges effectively.
166. The Co-Chair thanked both DGs for their impactful presentation, appreciating the showcase of CGIAR's core mission and achievements. He highlighted the impressive

impact figures presented and emphasized their relevance for fundraising and donor engagement, noting that this is precisely what decision-makers want to see.

Key Discussion Areas

167. Council members expressed appreciation for the presentation, highlighting its alignment with CGIAR's transformative potential. Key reflections included:
 - a. Recognized CGIAR's comparative advantage in addressing interconnected challenges and emphasized that collaboration with a broader range of partners - including NARES, traditional knowledge systems, private sector actors, regional organizations, and development finance institutions - could achieve even greater transformative outcomes.
 - b. Highlighted the need for stronger policy coherence at national levels, encouraging CGIAR to play a proactive role in fostering integration across ministries such as agriculture, health, and environment, while shaping national and international policies.
 - c. Raised questions on the scaling and adoption of established technologies and discussed how emerging incentives, such as carbon markets, low-carbon rice initiatives, and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), could accelerate farmer adoption.
 - d. Asked about opportunities for the Water Systems Integration Roadmap to align with existing funding mechanisms, such as Window 1 and Window 3, while emphasizing the importance of funder support for large-scale, integrated projects.
 - e. Underlined CGIAR's capacity to assist countries in meeting NDCs' commitments under the Paris Agreement, calling for the scaling of successful projects in India, Vietnam, and Africa.
 - f. Inquired about the staffing strategy to recruit and retain scientists with both domain expertise and systems-thinking skills. Recommended professional development programs to enhance these capabilities and ensure sustained impact.
 - g. Emphasized the role of nature-based solutions in achieving climate resilience and mitigation, while advocating for tracking nature-positive finance to meet global biodiversity goals.
 - h. Encouraged leveraging cross-regional learning.
 - i. Commended CGIAR's progress in integration efforts, acknowledging the transformative potential of systems-based approaches and the importance of sustaining momentum to address complex global challenges.
168. The Chair thanked participants for the productive and challenging discussions before departing for an urgent matter. Facilitation was transferred to the Co-Chair, with Renaud Seligmann assuming the Chair's responsibilities for the remainder of the meeting.

Agenda Item 12: Gender in CGIAR's Research

169. The session was introduced by the acting Chair, who invited the Director of the Gender Platform, Nicoline de Haan, to present the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator. The presentation highlighted CGIAR's commitment to advancing gender equality within

food systems through two core objectives: developing targeted solutions and driving systemic change. Key elements included:

- a. Developing Solutions: The Accelerator is designed to address structural barriers related to gender norms, voice, access to resources, and empowerment. A holistic approach ensures that all four dimensions are considered simultaneously to achieve sustainable impact.
- b. Youth and Social Inclusion: Youth engagement is recognized as a critical but distinct stream, with a plan to recruit a dedicated expert and develop a targeted funding strategy for youth-focused initiatives.
- c. Driving Systemic Change: The Accelerator works to embed gender considerations across CGIAR's policies, programs, and global engagements. A key component is translating research into policy impact through an evidence-based framework. Strengthening partnerships with international platforms and convening bodies — such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), is a priority to amplify gender-responsive strategies.
- d. Monitoring and Integration: The Accelerator is strengthening alignment with CGIAR science programs and external partners. Methods and indicators for gender-disaggregated data are being developed to track impact effectively.
- e. Next Steps: A planning meeting in January 2025 will finalize activities for the coming year, including continued engagement in global knowledge-sharing platforms such as an upcoming conference in Cape Town.

Key Discussion Areas

170. Participants welcomed the update and acknowledged CGIAR's progress in mainstreaming gender equality across research and operational frameworks. Key reflections included:
 - a. Support for aligning gender and youth initiatives with CGIAR's ongoing system-wide transformation efforts.
 - b. Emphasized the importance of robust metrics and evaluation frameworks to assess gender and youth outcomes within CGIAR's science programs.
 - c. Recommended that CGIAR deepen collaborations with external research institutions and leverage local knowledge systems to enhance the effectiveness of gender-focused interventions.
 - d. Encouraged CGIAR to lead a shift in the narrative about food systems transformation — emphasizing not only an integrated approach to changing systems but also more inclusive language, such as referring to "people in food systems" rather than just "farmers." This reframing was seen as a way to better reflect the diversity of roles and experiences within food systems and to support a more intersectional and gender-responsive approach.
171. Management reaffirmed CGIAR's commitment to gender equality as a strategic priority. The Director of the Gender Platform noted ongoing efforts to refine measurement approaches, strengthen integration within science programs, and build partnerships that sustain progress.

172. The acting Chair closed the session by indicating that systemic change doesn't happen against people's will. He emphasized the need to involve communities in the system change process, highlighting that gender and youth dimensions are important aspects of the process.

Agenda Item 13: Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion in CGIAR's Workplaces

173. The Co-Chair introduced the session, noting the importance of sequencing the two gender-focused presentations — one on gender in research and the other on gender, diversity, and inclusion (GDI) in CGIAR workplaces — to encourage coherence and complementarity in addressing GDI across both CGIAR's external work and internal culture.
174. The Director, Gender, Diversity, Inclusion, and Culture, Lavanya Shrinagesh, outlined CGIAR's progress, achievements, and next steps in advancing GDI. Key highlights included:

Achievements in the Current Action Plan

- a. Completion of 70 out of 71 activities in the GDI Action Plan (2022–2024).
- b. Launch of Advance Together, CGIAR's first allyship program, fostering an inclusive workplace culture.
- c. Workplace respect and inclusive leadership training delivered to approximately 23% of CGIAR staff, with plans to expand into a 10-month leadership development program.
- d. Implementation of CGIAR's first enterprise-wide engagement survey, integrating sentiment analysis and workforce representation data to inform targeted action plans.

Workforce Data and Trends

- e. Strong gender representation across CGIAR's workforce, with 43% of promotions awarded to women.
- f. Persistent challenges in operational support roles and stagnation in women's representation in senior research and management positions, despite CGIAR's commitment to maintaining a multicultural, multidimensional, and multidisciplinary workforce.

Future Focus (2025–2027)

- g. Embedding GDI principles into CGIAR's systems, including inclusive competencies in performance management and recruitment.
- h. Launching the GDI Index as a diagnostic tool to support Centers in setting Center-specific gender representation goals. The index will help track progress and drive targeted, incremental improvements, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach to a more nuanced strategy. Additionally, the focus on wellbeing will continue to expand.
- i. Expanding flexible workplace policies to meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce.
- j. Strengthening wellbeing initiatives as a core component of CGIAR's inclusion strategy.

175. The Director concluded by stressing the shift from awareness to implementation, ensuring that GDI principles are systematically embedded into CGIAR's culture and operations.

Key Discussion Areas

176. Participants expressed broad support for CGIAR's GDI initiatives, reflecting on progress made, areas for improvement, and next steps. Key reflections included:
- a. Praised the placement of the GDI function within CGIAR's leadership structure, emphasizing the importance of executive sponsorship in driving systemic change.
 - b. Expressed concern over the decline in female representation in senior leadership following organizational restructuring, and raised broader retention challenges, particularly among women. Requested clarification of the data, investigation into underlying causes, and a clear commitment to targeted actions and milestones in the next GDI Action Plan to address these gaps.
 - c. Urged CGIAR to strengthen gender representation at all levels, particularly in leadership and research roles, and called for concrete milestones and activities in the upcoming action plan.
 - d. Suggested better integration of GDI efforts into broader System-wide initiatives, including the ICI Forum, to ensure alignment with CGIAR's overall transformation strategy.
 - e. A comment was made encouraging CGIAR to lead by example and expand GDI efforts through external partnerships, noting agriculture's traditionally conservative nature — especially on gender — and the need to counter global reversals in diversity progress.
 - f. Asked about the gender balance within GDI leadership team and welcomed management's reaffirmation of its commitment to equity within these teams.
 - g. Acknowledged the importance of partnerships with Centers in achieving gender representation goals and supporting efforts to align recruitment, retention, and promotion practices with GDI principles.
 - h. Recognized that systemic change requires consistent, iterative efforts and flexibility to adapt when necessary, while welcoming the commitment to address gaps and incorporate lessons learned in the next phase of the GDI strategy.
177. The Director reaffirmed CGIAR's commitment to embedding diversity into its organizational culture and emphasized the importance of sustained, organization-wide efforts to drive meaningful change.
178. The Co-Chair concluded the session by thanking the Director, acknowledging progress made and the need for ongoing commitment to advancing GDI as a strategic priority for CGIAR.

Agenda Item 14: Strategic Assets

179. The acting Chair provided context for the session, emphasizing the Strategic Assets Study role in addressing sustainability challenges across CGIAR's operational footprint.

180. Ms. Gail Amare, Senior Director of Facilities Management, Security, and Administration, together with Mr. Albin Hubscher, Senior Project Advisor, presented key findings from Phase I and Phase II of the Strategic Asset Study. The presentation emphasized the implications for long-term financial planning and sustainability of CGIAR's infrastructure and operations. Key highlights included:

Study Objectives

- a. Assessing how to ensure the long-term sustainability of CGIAR's most strategic assets in the context of declining unrestricted funding and rising operational costs.
- b. Developing a comprehensive understanding of CGIAR's tangible and intangible assets, excluding endowment-supported Genebanks and human resources.

Phase I System-Level Insights

- c. Establishing a Global Asset Repository Dashboard, capturing over 3,000 assets across CGIAR's 13 Centers. The dashboard enables detailed analysis by type, location, utilization, condition, and alignment with CGIAR's 2030 Strategy.
- d. Quantifying an indicative annual shortfall of USD 70–80 million for asset maintenance, due to aging infrastructure, funder restrictions, inconsistent full cost recovery practices, and systemic underinvestment.

Phase II Investment Planning

- e. Identifying that approximately 25% of the most critical assets needed to support the 2025–2030 Portfolio require significant upgrades.
- f. Developing 18 high-priority investment cases totaling approximately USD 101 million to address essential infrastructure and operational gaps.

Immediate Priorities and Next Step

- g. Maximizing full-cost recovery and assessing opportunities for cross-Center efficiencies, such as consolidation, decommissioning, or shared asset use.
- h. Integrating true asset costs into program budgets by mid-2025, requiring trade-offs and prioritization.
- i. Exploring alternative funding models, including endowments, low-interest loans, and one-time donor investments.

Strategic Importance of the Study

- j. Aligning asset management with CGIAR's science and accountability frameworks.
- k. Laying the foundation for long-term financial sustainability while addressing gaps in unrestricted funding and donors' constraints in supporting asset maintenance.

Key Discussion Areas

181. The discussion underscored the power of integration across three key areas — accountability functions, science, and assets — highlighting how their alignment can drive efficiency and impact within CGIAR. The systemic importance of CGIAR's strategic assets and the need for innovative solutions to address funding and sustainability challenges were key themes. Reflections included:
- a. Emphasized the need to align asset management with CGIAR's science Programs and Accelerators, ensuring prioritization based on their contribution to CGIAR's strategic objectives.
 - b. Encouraged cross-Center collaboration and partnerships with external institutions to enhance asset utilization and operational efficiency.

- c. Highlighted the urgency of implementing full cost recovery practices consistently across centers while also exploring alternative funding mechanisms to secure sustainable investment in critical assets.
 - d. Suggested leveraging pooled investments and integrating unrestricted funds to support asset sustainability, given the long-term nature of asset-related financial commitments.
 - e. Raised concerns about asset maintenance and insurance challenges, particularly in regions prone to climate-related risks such as typhoons.
 - f. Stressed the need for a systematic evaluation of underutilized or redundant assets to identify opportunities for consolidation, decommissioning, or shared usage.
 - g. Recognized the value of the new asset repository and dashboard, encouraging CGIAR to maintain and expand these tools to strengthen data-driven decision-making and asset management strategies.
182. Management acknowledged the importance of full cost recovery practices while recognizing systemic barriers that prevent full recovery for certain asset categories. They reaffirmed their commitment to leveraging the asset repository as a tool for identifying efficiency gains and opportunities for cross-center collaboration. Plans were outlined to integrate asset costs into program budgets and work closely with science programs to ensure alignment with CGIAR's strategic priorities.
183. The EMD stressed the urgency of addressing the identified funding gaps and reiterated CGIAR's commitment to presenting actionable proposals at the next Council meeting.
184. The acting Chair thanked the presenters and their team for the comprehensive presentation and commended the progress made in addressing a long-standing challenge for CGIAR. The session closed with a call for sustained focus on integration, innovation, and collaboration to ensure the long-term sustainability of CGIAR's strategic assets.

Agenda Item 15: Other Business and Meeting Close

Consent Agenda

185. The acting Chair introduced the consent agenda items, which were presented by the Council Secretary.
186. According to Article 7.1(a) of the System Council's Rules of Procedure, which are for adoption as a package by the Council without discussion, the Council Secretary confirmed that no requests to remove any item from the consent agenda had been received by the relevant period, and thus the consent agenda was being put up for approval. The Council approved the items on the consent agenda without objection.

187. Decision Point — 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.

188. Decision Point — 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.

189. Decision Point — SC/M21/DP10 – Nominations Committee of the System Council

The System Council approved the appointment of Dr. Cristina Rumbaitis del Rio, Co-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.

Review of SC21 Council Decisions

190. The Council Secretary provided a detailed summary of key decisions and actions from the meeting, including:
 - a. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of Jens Busma as Co-Chair for this meeting.
 - b. Approval of the 2025-2030 Science and Innovation Portfolio, with a request for ISDC to conduct a targeted review of Inception Reports and Workplans/Budgets by Q3 2025.
 - c. Request for management to respond by February 2025 to feedback on the proposed governance and management of the Breeding for Tomorrow and Genebanks Science Program.
 - d. Approval of the Integrated Partnership Risk & Oversight Plan and endorsement of the IPB-AFRC and AOC implementation recommendations.
 - e. Approval of the consolidated 2025–2027 workplan and budget for ISDC, SPIA, and IAES; noting ISDC's review role and requesting Council approval if future asks exceed the budget uplift scenario.
 - f. Request for Terms of Reference (by end-Q1 2025) for a 2025 review of CGIAR's independent advisory functions, overseen by SIMEC with external experts.
 - g. Request for a two-hour SPIA session in January 2025 for findings presentation and feedback.
 - h. Approval of the 2025 Windows 1 & 2 Budget, including financial plan, unrestricted funding allocations, and System activity financing approach.
 - i. Request to form two working groups in Q1 2025 to explore (i) innovative finance modalities and (ii) incentives for Portfolio funding (Window 1 and Window 2), with updates and recommendations to come before the next regular Council meetings.
 - j. Request for additional budget information in February 2025 on internal audit and ethics/business conduct functions.
 - k. Endorsement of the AOC status update on the System Council Action Plan.
 - l. Approval of the Consent Agenda, including the amendments to the System Council Rules of Procedure, Terms of Reference for the System Council Chair, and approval of the appointment of Cristina Rumbaitis del Rio to serve on the NCSC.

Key Discussion Areas

191. The Following member reflections were provided:
- a. Genebanks: A member raised a concern about the absence of a specific reference to Genebanks in the decision on the 2025–2030 Science and Innovation Portfolio. Management confirmed they would consult with the IPB during its February 2025 meeting and provide an update to Council.
 - b. Internal Audit and Ethics: A request was made for further clarity on the scope and budget of internal audit and ethics functions. Management committed to providing an update to Council by mid-February, following the February 2025 IPB meeting.
 - c. Working Groups on Funding: The IPB Vice Chair recommended the IPB be explicitly involved in working groups on innovative finance and Portfolio incentives. It was agreed that the groups would report progress and present recommendations at future Council meetings.
 - d. Governance Clarity: A member emphasized the importance of clarifying governance roles and responsibilities. Management committed to providing an update at the next Council meeting.

Next System Council Meeting (SC22)

192. The Council Secretary confirmed the next scheduled meetings:
- e. 22nd Council Meeting (SC22): Week of 2 June 2025, hosted by WorldFish in Penang, Malaysia.
 - f. 23rd Council Meeting (SC23): Week of 8 December 2025, hosted by the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi.
193. The Special Envoy from Mexico formally invited the Council to hold a forthcoming meeting in Mexico City — an offer that was warmly welcomed by Council members.

Meeting Wrap-up and Close

194. The Co-Chair expressed gratitude for the collaboration and progress made during the meeting, acknowledging the professional and personal connections fostered among stakeholders. He noted anticipation for the next meetings in Malaysia and the UAE.
195. The acting Chair reiterated appreciation to BMZ and GIZ for hosting the meeting and recognized the efforts of CGIAR teams, including the Council Secretariat, in ensuring a successful session.
196. The EMD provided additional closing remarks, acknowledging the contributions of key leadership in resource mobilization and governance, reinforcing CGIAR's commitment to collaborative engagement and advancing its mission.
197. The meeting was closed.

Meeting Summary: 21st System Council Meeting

Annex 1: Participant List

| Meeting Leadership | | Key: |
|--|--|---|
| Chair: Juergen Voegele Co-Chair: Jens Busma (Germany) | | (<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 (v) indicates virtual participation |
| System Council Voting Members (listed alphabetically) | | Member representatives 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 |

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| Temporary Voting Members | Member | Alternate & Other Delegates |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Belgium | Carol Durieux | Alternate: Boudewijn Vandebosche |
| 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 |
| Agenda item 14 |
| Albin Hubscher, Project Advisor (v) |
| Louise Towers, Project Coordinator (v) |
| Colum Kelly, Consultant (v) |

Meeting Summary: 21st System Council Meeting

| 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 |

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|---|---|
| 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 |