

Chair's Summary<sup>1</sup>  
22<sup>nd</sup> System Council meeting  
Penang, Malaysia, 4-5 June 2025

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

These are challenging times, for both the world and CGIAR. The news headlines remind us every day of the cuts in overseas development assistance as funding shifts toward defense, all while more people are living in fragile and conflict areas with increasing risks of food insecurity. We are not making enough progress to end hunger and the issues are becoming increasingly complex. Current trends in malnutrition, environmental unsustainability, and the vulnerability of communities must be reversed. What CGIAR stands for and does is more important than ever, and we know that CGIAR is capable of addressing these issues, even with fewer resources. But the System must step up, prioritize its activities, and speak with one voice. We no longer have the luxury of being fragmented.

Against this backdrop, CGIAR's System Council convened for its 22nd meeting in Penang, Malaysia, a country where food is so culturally important that friends commonly greet each other with "Sudak makan?" or "have you eaten"? We are grateful to our hosts, WorldFish, for their warm welcome, and congratulate them on their 50th anniversary. Considering their longstanding commitment to the mission of CGIAR in partnership with countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, Australia was elected to Co-Chair the meeting.

Since our last meeting in December 2024, there have been major geopolitical shifts and funding cuts. The suspension of USAID programs has caused some Centers' funding to drop by up to 40 percent. While we must now increase our focus on resource mobilization and explore innovative financing mechanisms and partnerships, we paused to reflect on the enormous contributions made by USAID and its System Council representatives in stewarding US taxpayers' money to deliver affordable healthy diets, reduce poverty, and enable greater social equality, while remaining within environmental boundaries. As funders, partners, and researchers, we now need to step up together to meet the current challenge and ensure that CGIAR's work is funded and implemented in a way that achieves maximum impact.

The instrument for that impact is CGIAR's 2025-2030 Research Portfolio, and the ongoing prioritization exercise will ensure that CGIAR is adapting to the shifting landscape by rationalizing the budget, leaning into CGIAR's comparative advantage, and engaging

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

partners. CGIAR's Chief Scientist presented a progress update on the inception phase of this new portfolio and funders appreciated the transparent approach being taken.

But doing the research is not enough, we need to tell a powerful, convincing narrative of what CGIAR is doing and why; a collective story that demonstrates strength in CGIAR's diversity. Through the work of CGIAR's Standing Panel on Impact Assessment and the Portfolio Performance Unit, System Council members are starting to receive data on CGIAR's combined impact that they need to help justify every dollar invested. And, while the question of attribution versus contribution is always complex, not being able to fully attribute impacts to CGIAR should not stop us from setting goals.

CGIAR and its stakeholders should be able to deliver an 'elevator pitch' based on high-level targets on food security, jobs, and environmental impacts, for example. We can use these stories to highlight the people who benefit from CGIAR's work: the women who have better livelihoods, the children who have more nutritious school meals, better learning outcomes, and more promising futures. The strong links between food security and national security need to be highlighted more, with CGIAR providing compelling narratives that funders can use to make convincing arguments on their domestic stage. In this new world, we need to shift the way we argue our case.

This evidence-based story of CGIAR's impact will form the bedrock that enables us to approach new funders with a more attractive and plausible investment proposition. We need to be creative and demonstrate how CGIAR's work is integral to achieving global goals in climate, health, and migration so that the System can better access funds in these other areas too. We also need to look at mobilizing increased investments for CGIAR funding through innovative financing models, as well as improving the incentives for funders to provide more pooled funding to CGIAR.

Of course, CGIAR's innovative science and strong impact stories must be underpinned by a world-class risk and oversight system. Since the Integrated Partnership Risk & Oversight Plan was approved at the previous System Council meeting, management has worked on integrating the internal controls and risk management, internal audit, and ethics and business conduct functions.

The System Council, for its part, approved the Integrated Partnership Risk Appetite and Risk Management & Internal Controls Framework. The work of the Council's Assurance Oversight Committee in ensuring that implementation of the Risk & Oversight Plan meets the high standards required by Funders and international best practices is much appreciated. System Council members were glad to hear that work on the proposed Escalation Framework is nearing completion, and the System Council was able to approve four important policies relating to ethics and business conduct with the proviso that they will be reviewed for consistency with the Escalation Framework once it is finalized.

Another clear takeaway from our meeting was the vital importance of partnerships, particularly in this era of shifting national priorities and reduced funds for international research. Within the System Council itself, we need to be open-minded and rethink the size

of our table and who sits at it. The private sector is not currently represented on the Council, and perhaps it is time for that to change. Discussions on potential opportunities to intensify and diversify our collaborations with national research academies in Brazil, China, and India were also welcomed, and the huge potential of South-South collaborations emphasized. We were pleased to be joined at this meeting by a representative of Malaysia's Secretary General, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and encouraged Malaysia, moving forward, to take an active role in Council deliberations as part of the East Asia and Pacific constituency, as they step into the Member role effective July 2025. Offers from the governments of Mexico and Türkiye to host System Council meetings in 2026 were also much appreciated.

It's clear that the ongoing financial constraints will require tough decisions. We've made huge progress, but we're not there yet; business as usual is not an option and the System will need to step up and work as a truly integrated partnership to increase both its impact and how we communicate that impact. Getting these impact stories right is a key component of ensuring the continued relevance of and funding for CGIAR.

CGIAR's history has been defined by a few key stories – the estimated 1 billion lives saved in South Asia through the introduction of high-yielding, disease-resistant wheat varieties in the 1970s, or the 20 million lives saved in sub-Saharan Africa by controlling cassava mealy bug at a cost of just \$20 million, for example. We now need to decide what we want our next story to be – what is our tagline that will enable us to seize the moment?

As we look towards the next System Council meeting hosted by the United Arab Emirates in December, I encourage all CGIAR staff, partners, and funders to remember our common purpose and work together – with urgency – to deliver on our goals and increase our impact.

Yours sincerely,

Juergen Voegelé, Ph.D.

Chair, System Council

## Appendix 1 – Decisions taken and Agreed positions and actions

### DECISIONS

#### **SC22-DP1 – Appointment of Meeting Co-Chair**

The System Council appointed Prof. Wendy UMBERGER, System Council voting member representing Australia, as the non-voting Co-Chair for the 22nd System Council meeting, pursuant to Article 5.2 of the CGIAR System Framework.

#### **SC22-DP2 – Adoption of the Agenda**

The System Council adopted the Agenda for the 22<sup>nd</sup> System Council meeting, as issued on 21 May 2025.

#### **SC22-DP3 – Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation, Risk Management Framework and Risk Appetite**

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

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

#### **SC22-DP4 – Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation, Ethics and Business Conduct Policies**

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

- i. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Code of Ethics and Business Conduct for Personnel
- ii. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- iii. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Policy on Whistleblowing and Protection from Retaliation
- iv. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Policy on Protection Against Sexual Misconduct, Exploitation, Abuse, and Human Trafficking

#### **SC22-DP5 – Independent Science for Development Council Senior Advisor Terms of Reference**

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

#### **SC22-DP6 – Standing Panel on Impact Assessment Membership**

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

#### **SC22-DP7 – Assurance Oversight Committee Membership**

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

#### **SC22-DP8 – Assurance Oversight Committee Terms of Reference**

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

#### **SC22-DP9 – Nominations Committee of the System Council Membership**

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

#### **SC22-DP10 – System Organization Annual Financial Statements**

Pursuant to Article 6.2 k) of the CGIAR System Framework and following concurrence of the Integrated Partnership Board, the System Council approved the audited financial statements of the System Organization for FY2024.

### **ACTIONS**

#### **SC22-AP1 – Financing Working Groups Update**

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

#### **SC22-AP2 – Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation, Strategic Risks**

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

#### **SC22-AP3 – Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation, Status Update**

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

#### **SC22-AP4 – Risk & Oversight Plan Implementation, Escalation Framework**

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

**SC22-AP5 – Gender in CGIAR's Research**

The System Council requested Management to set out clearly how the 2025--30 science and innovation Portfolio will define, monitor and report on, and drive performance and results towards its intended impacts and outcomes in CGIAR's Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion Impact Area in the context of the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, for information and discussion at its 23rd meeting.

**SC22-AP6 – Assurance Oversight Committee**

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

**SC22-AP7 – Nominations Committee of the System Council**

The System Council asked that it be recalled to all IPB members as part of the ongoing process to select the IPB Chair and Vice Chair that honorarium arrangements for those roles are subject to the outcome of the honorarium review process led by the Nominations Committee of the System Council.<sup>2</sup>

**SC22-AP8 – Other Business**

The System Council took note of a request made relating to the approach for setting agendas for System Council meetings and asked that the Secretariat reflect on this together with inputs provided via the survey on the meeting and propose the future approach.

**SC22-AP9 – 2025-2030 Portfolio Inception Phase Update**

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

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<sup>2</sup> Following SC22, the Secretariat consulted on this item and determined that this Action Point is addressed by existing text of the terms of reference for the Integrated Partnership Board (IPB) Chair and Vice Chair, as approved by the IPB on 5 June 2025, which state that "The expected time commitment and the honorarium for the [role] is determined by the System Council following recommendation from its Nominations Committee." Additionally, the TOR for the IPB Chair state that "The time commitment and the honorarium as referred to in the previous clause is periodically reviewed by the Nominations Committee of the System Council. When System Council approves changes to the time commitment and the honorarium, these will be binding...". In an email to IPB members on 9 June 2025, the IPB Secretary also noted that "Members are reminded that the Nominations Committee of the System Council is currently undertaking an honorarium benchmarking process. The impact on compensation and time commitment for the roles, if any, is not yet clear." This Action Point is therefore considered addressed.

## Appendix 2 - Participants

Meeting Leadership	<u><b>Key:</b></u> ( <b>'*</b> ) indicates that voting member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by the alternate ( <b>'**</b> ) indicates that voting member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by another delegated representative ( <b>(v)</b> ) indicates virtual participation	
<b>Chair: Juergen Voegele</b> <b>Co-Chair: Wendy Umberger (Australia)</b>		
System Council Voting Members (listed alphabetically)	Member representative	Member Alternates & Other Delegation Members
Australia	<b>Wendy Umberger</b>	<b>Alternate: Bosibori Bett</b>
Canada	<b>Tom Bui</b>	Other delegate: Pierre Kadet
Crop Trust & IFAD	<b>Stefan Schmitz</b>	Other delegate: Jaspreet Stamm (Crop Trust)
East Asia & Pacific	<b>Zhai Lin (China)</b>	Other delegates: Jazman Azi Bin Jamal Jamalludin (Malaysia), Zhang Xinxuan (China)
European Commission	<b>Christophe Larose</b>	
Gates Foundation	<b>Martien van Nieuwkoop</b>	<b>Alternate: Ruben Echeverria</b> Other delegate: Rinn Self
Germany	<b>Felicitas Röhrig*</b>	Other delegates: Sarah Schmidt, Joachim Langbein, Aliénor De Cuypère
India	<b>M.L. Jat (V)</b> (day 1 only)	
Latin America and Caribbean	<b>Pedro Machado (Brazil)</b>	
The Netherlands	<b>Timmo Gaasbeek (V)</b>	
Norway	<b>Daniel van Gilst</b>	
South Asia	<b>Mosharraf Molla (Bangladesh)</b>	
Sub-Saharan Africa	<b>Bello Abubakar Zaki** (Nigeria) (V)</b>	<b>Alternate: Eliud Kireger (Kenya)</b> Other delegate: Carolyne Minayo (Kenya)
Sweden	<b>David Lymer**</b>	
Switzerland	<b>Manfred Kaufmann</b>	
United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland	<b>Laura Munro</b>	<b>Alternate: Alan Tollervey</b>
West Asia & North Africa	<b>Mustafa Altuğ Atalay (Türkiye)</b>	<b>Alternate: Mohammad Ali Ebrahimi (Iran)</b> Other delegates: Didem Kökden, Ahmet Volkan Güngören (Türkiye)
The World Bank	<b>Renaud Seligmann</b>	<b>Alternate: Shoba Shetty</b> Other delegate: Marianne Grosclaude (V)

*Note: The USA advised that with effect from 3 June 2025 it is not able to fulfill its membership of the System Council and its Committees*

Temporary Voting Members	Member	Alternate & Other Delegates
Belgium	<b>Carol Durieux</b>	<b>Alternate: Boudewijn Vandenbossche (V)</b>
Denmark	<b>Hanne Carus (V)</b>	
Ireland	<b>Patrick McManus (V)</b>	<b>Alternate: Isabella Rae (V)</b>
United Arab Emirates	<b>Fatema Almulla*</b>	Other delegates: Rodney Missen (Day 1 only), Kristofer Hamel Ghaya Almusalli, Khalfan AlMatrooshi,

Non-voting Ex-officio members	Member	Other Delegates
CGIAR Integrated Partnership Board	<b>Patrick Caron (IPB Vice Chair)**</b>	
CGIAR Executive Managing Director	<b>Ismahane Elouafi</b>	
Center/Alliance Representative 2: Convener of the Center Directors General	<b>Essam Mohammed</b>	
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	<b>Selvaraju Ramasamy (V)</b>	

Active Observers	Representative	Alternate & Other Delegates
Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAiR)	<b>Ravi Khetarpal (Chair) (V)</b>	Other delegate: Katarina Spisiakova (Team Leader GFAiR Secretariat a.i.) (V)
CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)	<b>Holger Meinke (Chair)</b>	Other delegates: Nompumelelo Obokoh (Vice-Chair), Erin Lentz (Member)

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

Apologies	Representative	Alternate
African Development Bank	Martine Fregene	Innocent Musabyimana
Center/Alliance Representative 1: Convener of the Center Board Chairs	Roel Merckx	

Invited Guests	Representative	Alternate
France (with voting rights)	<b>Bernard Hubert</b>	<b>Alternate: Jean Albergel</b>
Japan	<b>Fujita Kotomi* (V)</b>	Other delegates: Inoue Seisuke, Fujita Kaori, Ogawa Satsuki, Asaka Udagawa (V)
Mexico	<b>Víctor Manuel Villalobos Arámbula (Special Envoy)</b>	
CGIAR Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC)	<b>Muriel Uzan (Chair)</b>	
CGIAR Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)	<b>Travis Lybbert (Chair) (V)</b>	
Trustee of the CGIAR Trust Fund (World Bank)	<b>Laurent Achi (Trustee)</b>	



Session specific invitees	
Agenda item 4	Clemens Breisinger, Director, Policy Innovations (a.i.) (V)
	Tim Krupnik, Director, Scaling for Impact (a.i.) (V)
	Inga Jacobs-Mata, Deputy Director, Scaling for Impact (a.i.) (V)
	Charles Kleinermann, Director, Capacity Sharing (a.i.) (V)
	Oscar Ortiz, Director, Sustainable Farming (a.i.) (V)
	Vania Azevedo, Director, Genebanks (a.i.) (V)
	Frank Place, Team Lead, Joined-up MELIA (V)
	Amy Beaudreault, Lead, ISDC Secretariat (V)
Agenda item 7	Juan Lucas Restrepo, DG, Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT and ICI Committee Co-Convener (V)
Agenda item 8	Dhesigen Naidoo, IPB Member and IPB's representative on the Governance Working Group (V)
Agenda item 10	Ricardo Labarta, Principal Scientist, SPIA (V)
Agenda item 11	Amy Beaudreault, Lead, ISDC Secretariat (V)
Agenda item 12	Lavanya Shrinagesh, Director, Gender Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Culture (V)
Agenda item 13	Nicoline de Haan, Director, Gender Platform
Agenda item 15	Andy Homer, Independent Member, Nominations Committee of the System Council (V)

Additional participants	Name/Role/Organization
System Council Chair Adviser	Jonathan Wadsworth, Agriculture Specialist, Agriculture and Food Global Practice, World Bank
Integrated Partnership Board Chair Adviser	Myra Wopereis (V)
CGIAR Global Leadership Team (additional to the EMD and WorldFish Director General)	Sandra Milach, Chief Scientist
CGIAR Staff (attending all sessions)	Micheline Ayoub, Chief of Staff
	Elise Perset, General Counsel and Director, Legal Services, CGIAR System Organization
	Elbert Hidding, Head CGIAR Internal Audit a.i. (V)
	Christine Larson-Luhila, Deputy Director, Governance and Institutional Risk; AFRC Secretary (Day One only) (V)
	Luis Felipe Mendes, Director, Business Operations and Finance
	Roland Sundstrom, Practice Lead, Program Delivery
	André Zandstra, Director, Resource Mobilization & Business Development
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 (V)
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