

## For Information

Issued: 21 May 2025

### Multi-Year Evaluation Plan Progress Update, May 2025

#### Purpose

This pre-read provides a progress update on the 2025 activities under the multi-year evaluation plan (MYEP) ([2025-27 work plan for CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service \(IAES\) \(SC/M21/DP5\)](#)).

| MYEP 2025 objective | Deliverable                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| 1                   | <p>a. <b>Review of CGIAR Management Response (MR) System to Independent Evaluations.</b> Pursuant to Article 6.1 t of the CGIAR System Framework, the System Council endorsed the MR System Review Report and Annexes (Decision No.: M21-EDP9, dated 18 April 2025). The Report with annexes <a href="#">[LINK]</a>, and <a href="#">Management Response</a> are now publicly available.</p> <p>b. <b>Partnerships: Summaries of Learning on CGIAR's Ways of Working 2021-2024.</b> Report <a href="#">[LINK]</a>.</p> <p>c. Status update for System Council of Evaluability Assessments of the 2025-30 Portfolio is attached. Reference also approved TORs <a href="#">[LINK]</a>.</p> |
| 2                   | <b>Social Network Analysis for Evaluating Development Interventions: Methods Note</b> <a href="#">[LINK]</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 3                   | <b>Summary of Learning on Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment (MELIA) 2021-2024</b> <a href="#">[LINK]</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

#### Approach and Methods

The products have been developed in a consultative manner with internal and external peer reviews to ensure technical validity and rigor. IAES has issued all the materials into the public domain for availability of evaluative and learning evidence and tools to all stakeholders.

#### Action Requested

The System Council is requested to read and reflect on the 2025 update and invited to send inquiries to [IAES-Evaluation@cgiar.org](mailto:IAES-Evaluation@cgiar.org) or with the IAES director.

**Distribution notice:** The documents may be shared without restriction.

Prepared by: CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service, Evaluation Function.

## ANNEX: Evaluability Assessment Team Status Update (May 2025)

*Framing: Aligned to the [Terms of Reference \(ToRs\)](#), the Evaluability Assessment (EA) is currently in its scoping phase for CGIAR's 13 Science Programs and Accelerators (P/As). This update highlights the activities to date, provides early insights, and outlines next steps in the EA process.*

### 1) Core activities completed through May:

- **MELIA-related Needs Assessment** ([link](#)): The needs assessment was jointly conducted with CGIAR's Project Coordination Unit (PCU) to identify specific MELIA-related needs in support of the P/As during the inception phase and to inform the development of the [EA ToRs](#). The survey was sent to interim directors and deputy directors, and MEL(IA) and Areas of Work (AoWs) leads of [CGIAR Portfolio 2025-30](#). The needs assessment survey ran from 7-24 February 2025, resulting in 19 responses (out of 48). A high and positive response rate provided important insight into the perceived needs of P/As in accordance with each of the [EA Framework](#) domains. Key findings include:
  - Support to define intervention logic is the highest area of pertinence and need.
  - P/As are interested in receiving support on MEL plans, theories of change (ToC) and lists of indicators.
  - There is interest to participate in the EA exercise, with a request for clear guidance and communication from the EA team.
- **CGIAR Science Week (7-12 April 2025) in Kenya:** Two EA team members represented the Evaluation Function (EF) at the Science Week.
  - **Side event on EAs:** A designated side event, [Assessing the Evaluability of CGIAR's 2025-30 Portfolio](#), was co-organized on 9 April with PCU. Opening and keynote remarks were delivered by IAES Director Allison Grove Smith, Director General of IRRI Yvonne Pinto, and [ISDC](#) Chair Holger Meinke, who emphasized the EA's role in strengthening evaluation readiness and research quality. Approximately 25 participants from CGIAR, the Kenyan government, NGOs and academic institutions, including students, participated in a facilitated discussion about EAs: raising awareness about their purpose, and value-add in supporting learning and adaptation for [CGIAR's 2025-30 Portfolio](#).
  - **Bilateral meetings with P/As:** The EA team met with ten of the 13 P/As<sup>1</sup> to clarify EA objectives and build trust, which are essential for EA success. In each meeting, three to four P/A representatives participated, including interim directors and/or deputies, AoW leads, and MEL focal points.
- **Input into Performance and Results Management (PRMS) workshop and Meetings with P/As:** Four additional hybrid meetings (combining virtual and in-person participation) were held in Rome during the PPU-organized PRMS workshop from 28-30 April 2025. The EF lead and EA team lead met with MELIA focal points from three P/As<sup>2</sup> who did not participate in Science Week. The PRMS workshop built on EF's work (the [2023 Advisory Report on PRMS](#), jointly conducted with Internal Audit) and referenced 2025 activities. The EF lead presented the assessment of

<sup>1</sup> Breeding for Tomorrow Program, Climate Action Program, Food Frontiers and Security Program, Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator, Policy Innovations Program, Scaling for Impact Program, Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Foods Program and Sustainable Farming Program, Capacity Sharing and Genebanks Accelerators,

<sup>2</sup> Multifunctional Landscapes, Better Diets and Nutrition, Gender Equality and Inclusion, and Climate Action Programs.

implementing recommendations from the PRMS study, and key learnings from the new [MEL\(IA\) summary study](#). Designated sessions on the Results Dashboard, ToC module and reporting quality assurance established a trajectory for a comprehensive EA process.

## 2) Early insights and observations

The above engagements will be instrumental for the smooth implementation of the EA exercise. Below are early insights from the EA process to date.

### A: General thematic observations, emerging evidence and learnings include:

- **Continued relevance of recommendations from the EA of the Regional Integrated Initiatives ([Synthesis Report](#)) and MELIA study:**<sup>3</sup> The following conclusions and recommendations appear valid for the new CGIAR Portfolio: a) over-focus of work packages in the nested logical frameworks, with limited reference to assessing their contribution to system-level change, and lacking depth and evidence in assumptions behind ToCs; and b) lack of clarity on how the evaluand relates to scope of control and influence of the P/A. Planned regular updates were not fully aligned to incoming funding reductions.
- **Uneven progress among P/As:** P/As with a strong legacy were more advanced on ToC development, than newer P/As – who faced challenges, i.e. with defining indicators.
- **Wide variance in level and type of resourcing MELIA across the P/As:** Investment in MEL staff varies significantly: from part-time staff time assignment at 13% to Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff, and part-time consultants.
- **A revised reporting into PRMS welcomed by Accelerators:** Most Accelerators welcome the PRMS revision, calling for stronger reporting support. Previously, Platforms faced challenges in reporting due to their intrinsic cross-cutting nature.
- **Emphasis on clear outcomes for a sound and realistic MELIA framework:** Funders' demand for results are increasing, with diminishing budgets. P/A teams have called for a balanced focus on relevant, and evidence-based outcomes with meeting high and diverse expectations.
- **Indicator identification and setting targets:** One Program expressed concerns about setting program-level impact targets, mainly due to the lack of baselines at program level and the continued focus of impact studies primarily at innovation level. Defining the right impact indicators and linking them to impact pathways has been challenging, especially in complex systems and non-technological areas, i.e. governance and policy.
- **Narrow focus of scaling efforts:** The focus on scaling of impact cuts across P/As on potential scalable innovations. It seems to be limited to a portion of the overall impact landscape, largely under the Breeding for Tomorrow program (see [Genetic Innovation Science Group Evaluation](#)).

### B: Process learning includes:

- **Greater familiarity and openness to collaboration:** Face-to-face meetings fostered connections and clarified the supportive, non-judgmental nature of the EA process. P/As responded positively and showed openness to continued collaboration.
- **Clarification on roles and processes between EF, PCU and ISDC:** Highlighting the requirement in the Inception Report (IR) template to address early advisory from

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<sup>3</sup> Tracked in PPU's [MR Tracker](#)

EA process on Domains A (program logic/ToC) and B (MELIA systems) helped position the EA process *vis-à-vis* a review of the IRs by ISDC, and follow-up processes. Participation of the PCU representative in EA team meetings with the P/As clarified PCU's role and underscored both timeline and coordination by PCU and EF.

- **Timeliness and value of EA implementation during the design phase:** EAs in the design phase provide extra support, as expressed by the P/As, given their tight deadlines and ambitious programs ([link](#)). Appreciation for timing of the EA exercise during this phase was evident among the P/As, specifically for supporting the development of IRs, which are due to ISDC in June.
- **Mainstream Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) across CGIAR:** Enhancing a strategic, cross-center approach to mainstream M&E across the CGIAR system appears warranted for new P/As, i.e. through MEL communities of practice (CoP). Fragmented roles across centers were flagged to undermine evaluative learning.
- **Dynamics around indicator development:** Empowering new and younger MELIA staff may help innovate and challenge certain approaches, particularly around the focus on quantitative indicators, which are preferred by some actors.

**C: Next Steps:** In alignment with the [EA ToRs](#), the EA process is on track with the next steps summarized below:

| 2025                     | Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>May</b>               | Remaining virtual meeting with the Digital Transformation Accelerator.<br><br><b>On and around 23 May</b> , EA team will review drafts of ToCs and MELIA plans. <b>2-3 pages of feedback and recommendations</b> will be provided as a 'light touch' application of <b>Domains A and B</b> for P/As' inclusion into IRs. <sup>4</sup> (IRs due to Chief Scientist <u>by 2 June</u> and ISDC <u>by 30 June</u> .) |
| <b>June</b>              | <b>Week of 9 June</b> , EA team will present progress to the <b>ad hoc EA Consultative Group</b> (comprising representatives of ISDC, SIMEC, management, internal audit, Integrated Partnership Board, and IAES's Evaluation Reference Group).<br><br><b>30 June, Presentation</b> of EA results on Domains A and B and general insights to ISDC reviewers, reflecting on recommendations to Appendix 2 of IRs.  |
| <b>July</b>              | <b>31 July</b> , Develop and finalize <b>13 EA Inception Notes</b> (five pages each) with a tailored work plan for implementation of the EA Framework. These will be sent to each of the P/As.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>August-October</b>    | <b>August-October:</b> Data collection phase.<br><br><b>31 October: 13 EA Reports</b> , one for each P/As.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>November-December</b> | <b>25 November 2025:</b> Submission of the Synthesis EA Report to System Council 23, following SIMEC endorsement. Tentative: presentation for System Council.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

<sup>4</sup> As of 15 May, the EA team has received materials from two SPs, and more are anticipated around 23 May.