



SCIENCE COUNCIL

CGIAR

Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program External Review

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THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS:

- Extracts from the Summary Record of Proceedings of the Annual General Meeting 2006 (AGM06)
- Science Council Commentary
- Transmittal Letter and FARA Response to the External Review
- Report of the External Review of the Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program (SSA CP)

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Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

CGIAR Annual General Meeting, 2006 (AGM06)¹

Agenda Item 3. Program Matters

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(b) Challenge Programs: SSA CP

At AGM04, the CGIAR approved in principle the implementation of the SSA CP for a five-year period subject to a successful assessment of its 18-month inception phase. The report of the external review has previously been discussed by the SC and ExCo provided recommendations to the CGIAR. The external review panel chair, Cyrus Ndiritu and FARA Executive Secretary Monty Jones, joined the discussion (the former through video conference). F. Reifschneider shared ExCo 11 recommendations on SSA CP with the CGIAR.

Discussion:

- FARA and the SSA CP management should seek necessary expertise to help implement the panel and ExCo recommendations. SC should play an advisory role in helping to identify this expertise.
- Members expressed support for the ExCo recommendations but noted that the SSA CP is a novel approach and it will take time to deliver the expected outcome.
- Some Members recommended that AGM give credit to SSA CP for the progress that has been made during the inception phase. They agreed that the SSA CP should be given more time to provide the “proof of concept” for the IAR4D approach and to produce research results in the form of international public goods.
- The evaluation of the skills gap within the program should not be only focused on M&E skills, but also encompass cutting-edge human sciences, as well as interdisciplinary, managerial and communication skills.

Decision:

- The CGIAR endorsed ExCo’s recommendations on SSA CP (below).
- Members recognize the progress that has been made by the CP during the inception phase.

ExCo 11 Conclusions and Recommendations to the CGIAR on SSA CP:

- ExCo recommends the CGIAR to request FARA to develop an action plan that addresses the concerns raised by ExCo members and the Science Council on the findings of the inception phase review. ExCo feels that the accountability and the ownership of the

¹ Extract from the Summary Record of Proceedings of Annual General Meeting, 6-7 December 2006.

program must remain with FARA, and that the measures that have been requested as part of the action plan are conducive to strengthening FARA's capacity to successfully implement SSA CP, and its future activities.

- Furthermore, as elements of the action plan, FARA is requested to:
 - a) present critical milestones for the three year post inception phase;
 - b) undertake an evaluation of its existing skills gap (with a special emphasis on methodologies and criteria to be used to evaluate the IAR4D concept), that needs to be filled by the most appropriate providers with a view to strengthening the present capacity. As critical elements of this capacity strengthening exercise FARA is requested to focus on M&E as well as on capacity building of regional partners involved in the implementation of activities;
 - c) adjust the financial proposal for years 2007-09 to reflect the scaling back of the activities to three pilot sites from the proposed nine; and
 - d) develop a research program that has clear cross-site linkages.

- ExCo also recommends to membership that the Science Council play an advisory role in helping FARA identify the type of expertise that is required to increase the capacity of the institution, as highlighted above.
- ExCo recommends that the CGIAR reviews progress achieved by SSA CP until December 2007 at AGM07 against the critical milestones and indicators that were requested as part of the action plan. In order to avoid burdening FARA with excessive reporting to the CGIAR, ExCo further recommends that the action plan is accepted as the SSA CP MTP for the period 2007-2009.
- Finally, ExCo recommends to the CGIAR that the action plan be presented to ExCo for review and approval, following pertinent inputs from the Science Council and the CGIAR Secretariat, if required.

**Science Council Commentary
on the External Review of the SSA CP Inception Phase**

September 2006

Summary

The SC thanks the External Review Panel for a comprehensive and clear report.² The basic findings of the Panel is that while the CP has not met the main milestones set for the Inception Phase, there is evidence of progress towards the milestones to support an extension in order to address the original research question of the CP, i.e. the testing of the benefits of an innovative platform—the IAR4D concept—in designing and implementing research at the interface of productivity, environment, policy and markets that would increase demonstrably the delivery of the benefits to the end users. Thus, the Panel recommended an extension of the CP for 3 years. It does, however, add a number of conditions, one of which is to remain focused at three sites, and that the program strengthens the research planning and design and implements a process to ensure systematic monitoring and evaluation to develop IPGs.

The SC agrees with the basic findings of the Panel. The SC adds some additional conditions to the Panel recommendations which are explained in detail below.

Background

The CP has completed an 18 month Inception Phase recommended by the SC in 2004. In the SC letter to the CGIAR in 2004, the SC noted that there was insufficient information about the research plans of the CP to make an informed judgment on the relevance and quality of the science. The SC recommended an Inception Phase of 18 months in order for the CP to: (i) develop the appropriate institutional arrangements; and (ii) begin substantive research on the “challenge” of the CP (i.e. the testing of the benefits of an innovative platform - the IAR4D concept - in designing and implementing research at the interface of productivity, environment, policy and markets that would increase demonstrably the delivery of the benefits to the end users. The SC proposed that the progress in the inception phase could be measured in terms of the new research priorities (based on the IAR4D approach) with appropriate expected outputs and means of measurement and the institutional arrangements (e.g. institutional innovations) needed to implement the main research phase of the CP.

The Panel was asked to review the CP at the end of the Inception Phase based on: (i) the progress made in the design of research and feasibility of conducting the research at the proposed sites; (ii) the knowledge gained for the institutional learning; and (iii) assessing the ‘added value’ from the new research approach to the design and implementation of IAR4D agenda.

² The SC apologizes for the poor video and telephone links during the 6th meeting of the Council which prevented a clear discussion among the Chair of the Panel, the SC and FARA. However, in addition to the telephone connection with the Executive Secretary of FARA and the Coordinator of the CP, the SC was able to interact with one panel member and had access to the presentation of the Executive Secretary of FARA.

Overall achievements of the milestones for the inception phase

In terms of meeting the milestones for the Inception Phase, the panel concluded that the CP had “put together an elaborate institutional structure and encouraged partners who often do not work together to enthusiastically embrace the new paradigm (IAR4D) and desire to collaborate on ‘business unusual’ to achieve sustainable agriculture development in Africa.” However the Panel noted the challenge remains to: (i) define a coherent research plan and establish program priorities; (ii) build strong support and participation by stakeholders; and (iii) develop the project proposal at the site level from which would emerge the proof of the IAR4D concept.

The SC notes from the Panel report that while there has been progress in establishing the partnership for the IAR4D, this in itself does not constitute an important outcome. More importantly, the Council believes that to date there still is not a coherent “research plan”³. The Council agrees with the panel report that there is yet no systematic implementation of the projects at the site level (PLS projects) and no monitoring to measure the outcome from the new approach. In other words the CP has not yet met the milestones set out at the beginning of the Inception Phase. In supporting the Panel recommendation to move to a research phase, the SC notes that it is critical that the CP has a research plan in place and that such a plan be included in the first MTP of the research phase (June 2007).

The Panel reports that sufficient progress has been made in some aspects such that the CP needs to continue for 3 more years in order to rigorously measure the benefits of the new IAR4D approach (the proof of concept). In the SC discussion there was a view that the initial time frame of 18 months was overly ambitious given the complexity of partners and the difficulties of communication of the new approach to all stakeholders. The panel’s view is that adequate structures are now in place at three (3) sites to provide the research analysis described above.

The SC believes that in defining research hypotheses it is imperative to develop a research design that can allow the research program to identify the effects of the different components of the IAR4D approach and do so in a scientific, statistically-based manner. The SC believes this to be important research about the ‘challenge’ of the CP (which from now on is a time period defined as the “Research Phase”). The SC acknowledges that although still far from complete, there has been progress toward the research objectives. Therefore, the SC agrees with the panel on the benefits of continuation and recommends the Research Phase to last until December 2009.

What would be achieved in a continuation?

The Panel has recommended that the CP focus on the research question—does the IAR4D concept work and can it generate deliverable IPGs/RPGs for the end users?

³ Defined to include: (i) a precise statement of the research problem; (ii) specific objectives and testable hypotheses; (iii) specific methods that will contribute to progress towards each specific objective; and (iv) a defined set of outputs showing progress towards the objective that are measurable and able to be evaluated.

The SC agrees with the Panel recommended focus and adds a further clarification to the main research question: Does the IAR4D framework deliver more benefits to the end user than conventional approaches (had the conventional R&D and extension approach had access to the same resources)? And, how sustainable and usable is the approach outside the test environment (i.e. issues of scaling out for broader impact)?

What is the scope of the research? What can the ‘innovation’ do and how to monitor progress and measure benefits?

The Panel noted that among the IAR4D practitioners (and CP team members) there is some confusion on what is meant by the focus of the CGIAR research on IPGs around the CGIAR system priorities (SP).⁴ The SC suggests that the main IPG of the SSA CP is the innovation platform for use across a wide range of conditions in Africa. In addition the properly targeted research on the interface of the processes driving productivity gains, efficient use of resources, the care of the environment and the policies and the markets to contribute IPGs through technical and policy options.

Thus, the sc fully endorses the recommendation by the Panel to focus research on these important IPGs. The SC also fully endorses the panel’s recommendation that the CP seek the missing expertise from outside sources, particularly ARIs.

The robustness of the IPGs will depend on the sampling across a transect in the Research Phase. The Panel has strongly recommended that the CP focus on three (3) sites that have been chosen to transect both ecosystems and institutional arrangements. The panel believes that any expansion at this stage is: (i) unlikely to improve the robustness of the research findings; and (ii) likely to dilute the research effort and jeopardize meeting the time frames above.

The SC agrees with the Panel on the importance on staying focused on the research agenda. The SC also recognizes how difficult it has been to create the institutional partnerships and to do the baseline work in the 3 sites that were included in the Inception Phase. In order to not diffuse the focus in the Research Phase and in order not to be faced with the costs in time and financial resources that would be required to invest with additional partnership building and related activities during the Research Phase (should the project expand to new sites), the SC believes that 3 sites are adequate to meet the research objectives.

The panel highlights that a critical component of this research agenda is the monitoring and measurement of outputs, outcomes and impact. Further because of the nature of the research, traditional M&E profiles might not be adequate. Also, it is the SC’s view that the ‘participatory feedback and reflection approaches’ that are important tools in the research design for innovation systems are of themselves unable to measure the real outcome of the approach.

⁴ From this the SC assumes that not all members are conversant with the hallmarks of a CP and with the System Priorities of the CGIAR. Briefly put a CP addresses a complex ‘challenge’ that will have a large impact on the CGIAR goals when focused on one or more of the CGIAR SPs; is time bound; engages a number of partners; and captures research from alternate suppliers to generate new knowledge with potential for wide applications. A requirement for the IPG nature of the research is it must have use and be robust across borders and across a wide range of conditions.

The SC therefore endorses the panel view on the need to seek outside expertise in developing the appropriate evaluation approaches (along with indicators to provide evidence for proof of concept) and in setting up the experimental “counter factual” needed to test the research hypothesis of the IAR4D approach. Specifically, the SC believes it is necessary that the research design is set up to be able to identify the effects of the institutional innovations (and its separate components) and to not confound the impacts of IAR4D with those of the effects of the financing. Further, the SC would like to see in detail the part of the research plan that addresses these evaluation concerns by having them explicitly addressed in the first MTP (June 2007).⁵

The Panel highlights the importance of capacity building at many levels in order to undertake the research about the innovation platform.

The SC agrees with this recommendation; it notes that this is a novel research program addressing a complex challenge and with the large number of players of different backgrounds, experiences and agendas, the CP requires investment in capacity to ensure success. At this stage of the research, this investment in capacity is another reason for not adding additional sites.

What makes the CP unique? What would be its exit and replication strategy?

The panel has noted that the CP must identify its comparative advantage and strategic role in relation to other players in agriculture R&D. This will lead to a clear formulation of activities that **add value**. The Panel believes that ‘business success’ for the CP can be achieved through the focus on the productivity, natural resources, policy, and markets and in a nimble innovative platform that can respond quickly to opportunities.

The SC endorses this view

The Panel has recommended that after 3 years a review of the CP is conducted to see if the IAR4D works and whether the CP merits continued endorsement. The Panel envisages that if the concept works, the approach can be replicated at many more sites. And for this the CP needs to design an exit strategy and a resourcing plan.

The SC agrees with this in part. The SC has recommended that the research phase ends by December 2009 with an answer (yes or no) to the question: does the new IAR4D concept improve delivery and have an impact? If the outcome to this challenge is positive, others more directly involved in development could scale out the results.

⁵ In considering the type of expertise that is needed, the Council recognizes the Program’s research is without question challenging. As such, and in the spirit of the CP, FARA is encouraged to draw on the world’s best experts in natural and social sciences. In particular, the fields of development economics and other social sciences have recently experienced a new wave of innovations in “evaluation” methodologies and research designs. New evaluation research designs and statistical methodologies would be helpful in assisting the CP test hypotheses and ultimately establish proof of concept. The methods are fully capable of being implemented in the field sites that have already been chosen, but plans need to be made at the very beginning of the research in order to take full advantage of the new evaluation approaches (since at times it will affect the design of the technical parts of the research).



**Prepared by FARA
August 2006**

FARA'S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE CGIAR SCIENCE COUNCIL REVIEW OF THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CHALLENGE PROGRAMME

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PREAMBLE

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) would like to express its gratitude to the CGIAR Science Council for assembling and supporting a high quality and dedicated Review Panel. We wish to reaffirm our high regard for the Science Council's vital contribution to upholding the quality of science in the Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme (SSA CP). We welcome this opportunity to respond to the Panel's report and look forward to continuous dialogue with the Science Council with a view to achieving our common goal which is the success of this Programme.

FARA wishes to thank the review Panel members for the effort they put into understanding a novel and complex programme and ably accomplishing the review within a very tight schedule. They skilfully prompted frank and open debates with stakeholders to elicit the information they needed. The constructive nature of their observations is greatly valued in our mutual endeavour to guide the Programme's evolution and improve its performance.

The SSA CP follows three guiding principles: (i) fostering solid partnerships among all relevant stakeholders across the value chain; (ii) continual learning that leads to greater understanding of the dynamics of complex systems; and (iii) the desirability of the integration of agrobiophysical and social sciences to generate international public goods (IPGs). SSA CP uses the integrated agricultural research for development (IAR4D) approach to address problems along the interfaces of four domains, namely: agricultural

productivity, sustainable natural resource management, efficient markets, and appropriate policies with supportive institutional structures. These elements would be managed to generate both development impacts and new knowledge.

The principal feature of our IAR4D approach is the opportunity-focused “innovation platform”. This platform involves joint participation of all relevant actors (including farmers, pastoralists, rural communities, researchers, extension agents, development specialists, traders and processors, policy makers, and consumers). It also includes institutional arrangements needed to facilitate effective, efficient, targeted research for development as well as uptake and dissemination of innovations that deliver the benefits demanded by end-users. A principal driver of the IAR4D and innovations platforms will be the impact pathway analysis. This analysis will enable assessment of outcomes and impacts for the projects and the programme, and the identification of stakeholder and partner groups that need to be engaged in the evolution of the challenge programme.

We are happy to note that the enthusiasm generated by the SSA CP within the agricultural research and development community in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is extremely high, and continues to grow. In Africa’s quest to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, recognises the SSA CP as one of the main vehicles for achieving Pillar 4 of its Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). This Pillar is concerned with agricultural science and technology generation and dissemination.

Our response to the panel’s recommendations is the result of consultations among SSA CP stakeholders who participated in the review exercise. It is structured according to recommendations of the panel.

RESPONSES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE PROGRAM

***Recommendation A:** The SSA CP should be allowed to continue for a three year period during which the proof of the IAR4D concept will be established and appropriate lessons learnt and IPGs shared. This implementation phase should occur only at the current three PLS and funding channelled to allow this continuation in a manner that avoids the possibility of fatigue and fragmentation of the newly formed and still delicate partnerships. At the end of the three years, the SC should commission another review to determine whether the IAR4D concept works and can generate deliverable IPGs/RPGs and whether the SSA CP should merit continued endorsement by the SC and CGIAR. Establishment of an exit strategy is necessary to determine future funding options. Once valuable lessons are learnt and the IAR4D concept proven, additional sites can be logically added and scaling up and out done.*

Response

We do understand the rationale for this recommendation, and see it as being largely in line with the ‘business unusual’ approach of the SSA CP. We recognise that IAR4D has not been adequately tested and widely applied in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are therefore some apprehension and cautionary concerns being raised in relation to the scale of initial operations. We see the Panel’s recommendation restricting the further expansion of project sites over a three year testing period in this light.

The recommendation mentions the requirement of ‘proof of concept’ on IAR4D to be established within a three year period, as a condition for the continuation and further expansion of the Programme. We are of the opinion that in the long run, proof of the IAR4D concept will be the achievement of the programme goal, i.e. improved rural livelihoods as a result of greater impact from agricultural research for development. Our view is that it will require significantly more than three years operating at three sites to be able to have such proof of concept. However, a three year period would enable certain operational and programme milestones and output targets to be attained, which could be used as the basis of any assessment. Therefore, we would like to engage in dialogue with the Science Council to reformulate the Programme’s output targets and related IPGs as outlined in the SC review recommendations.

With regard to the restriction of projects to the current three pilot learning sites (for 3 years), we agree in principle to the recommendation. At the same time, we call for flexibility to be built into the Programme so that based on its performance and lessons learned, decisions can be taken to expand to new sites, should this be found necessary before the end of three years. Such need for expansion can be developed in the context of the MTP and annual workplan of the CP. We would wish to refer to the fact that the SSA CP programme had received an endorsement to be implemented at 9 sites over a 5-year period. This however now needs to be scaled down during this first three year period.

With respect to an exit strategy for this Programme, FARA is working with African governments and development partners to increase support for the Programme in its current form and to ensure its sustainability.

Recommendation B: *The SSA CP PCU must now give serious attention to defining and consolidating key priority PLS projects so they can help provide proof that the IAR4D concept works. The PCU should review currently selected PLS projects and allow them to be integrated and consolidated to ensure they adequately address critical linkages between productivity, market, policy and NRM issues. Each PLT should provide joint project proposals that show specific and realistic outputs; have ways to test the IAR4D approach and include adequate M&E measurements. Traditional ex-ante M&E profiles may not be applicable in the innovation platforms. If necessary, missing skills and expertise should be co-opted or commissioned from among ARIs and other institutions. But this outsourcing must be weighed against resource availability and utilisation efficiency.*

Response

We welcome this recommendation. Consolidation and integration of the projects is ongoing as described in our medium term plan (MTP) for 2007-09. We are using several models to integrate projects within and across PLS; for example the Zimbabwe-Mozambique-Malawi (ZMM) PLS is in the process of consolidating its three projects into one project using value chains as the integrating factor. The consolidated project will be implemented at several sites within the PLS. The Lake Kivu PLS is consolidating its projects using the watershed approach. The Kano-Katsina-Maradi (KKM) PLS projects are located in three agro-ecological zones, but are based on common themes and common entry points which allow for cross-site comparisons.

At each PLS, efforts are ongoing to improve the rationalization, interaction and/or integration of projects, to have joint protocols and to craft appropriate methodologies for monitoring and evaluating the interactions, institutional change and innovation

platforms. We shall continue to refine the project proposals so that realistic deliverables that not only test the IAR4D approach but also result in regional and/or international public goods (RPG and IPG) are produced. Crosscutting projects will provide a further avenue for integration and comparison in this regard.

***Recommendation C:** Gained knowledge and experience from implementing the inception phase including preparing a joint MTP must be well documented and shared amongst partners and collaborators. Such knowledge should be reviewed to determine whether it constitutes IPGs/ RPGs and an effective method used to disseminate the same.*

Response

We agree with this recommendation. Several efforts for documenting lessons learnt are ongoing. Work is in progress to synthesise and report on all processes during the inception phase, including, selection and setting up of pilot learning sites, validation exercises, priority setting and establishment of innovation platforms. We believe that this will amount to IPG/RPG for the Programme. Among the forums where this information will be shared is the FARA General Assembly in June 2007, where a special side-event on the SSA CP will be launched. We also aim to publish this work in peer-reviewed journals (if possible) and in other documentation channels.

***Recommendation D:** Capacity building is critical to effective implementation of the SSA CP mandate. Once specific PLS projects are formulated, the PCU must work with its collaborators to determine the specific skills required and skill sources that need to be approached in order to enhance the capacity of various stakeholders to effectively implement their projects in a timely and efficient manner. Sourcing of skills must not be random and sometimes may be embedded within members of the various committees. Revealed inconsistencies among various stakeholders on what constitutes an “innovation platform” should be dealt with and a more practical approach used to bring everyone on the same page and to avoid further confusion.*

Response

We accept this recommendation. Capacity building is a major pillar of IAR4D, and a lot of work is required in this area. We recognize that, at this early stage in the process, and given the diversity of stakeholders and partners, a lot more effort is needed to ensure that there is common understanding of the fundamental concepts such as innovation platform, that make this CP a ‘business unusual’ proposition. Part of our capacity building activities will focus on bringing everyone on the same page of understanding. Additionally, we will organize specific capacity building activities on IAR4D approach, including areas such as systems approaches and analysis, landscape scale operations, cross-thematic interactions and participatory methods involving diverse stakeholder groups.

***Recommendation E:** A Competitive Grant System was used to select concept notes that led to development of the current approved PLS projects. This system has its limitation, especially within the IAR4D approach which emphasizes co-operation and team building. According to the SSA-CP, “the competitive grants process highlighted important lessons where IAR4D elements have either not been internalised by PLTs or are poorly understood, namely organisational and institutional change, capacity building, knowledge management, M&E, log-frames and project impacts on the environment and on gender. It was also clear from this exercise that the IARC-led proposals were far stronger than the NARS-led ones. Whereas this might not be surprising, it highlighted the need for change*

involving awareness raising, capacity building, and some affirmative action to ensure a more level playing field". This being the case, the review team recommends that future concept notes and project proposals be sought using a combination of CGS and commissioned research that allows for synergistic cooperation among bidders and a more consolidated project proposal that addresses all the valid issues. The CGS alone might be detrimental to the desired partnership building needed for the SSA CP development.

Response

We accept this recommendation. Whereas we have experienced a number of advantages with the CGS process, we have also experienced some downsides, as spelt out in the Panel's recommendation. With regard to work at the current project sites, we note that some discretionary funding will be necessary to bridge any gaps that may have resulted from the CGS process, and also to strengthen synergies across the different projects. The PCU would also be leading the development of a strategic document on how a joint CGS and Commissioned Research Grants could be organized for future project development.

***Recommendation F:** The SSA CP should critically identify its comparative advantage and strategic role vis a vis other stakeholders in the agricultural research and development process. This will allow a clear formulation of activities that complement rather than duplicate research. According to the MTP the SSA CP Strategy would be to work at the interfaces of productivity, markets, policy and natural resource management issues and be a leader, facilitator, advocate, capacity builder and knowledge synthesiser on these dynamic issues. To be effective in these roles, the SSA CP must be empowered to be flexible, network and respond promptly to new opportunities and cutting edge issues.*

Response

We agree with this recommendation. The unique feature of the SSA CP is that it focuses on the interfaces of agricultural productivity, sustainable natural resource management, efficient markets, and appropriate policies and supportive institutional structures. Present institutional arrangements do not address the problems on these interfaces. Most AR&D institutions in Africa are working on productivity of commodities or policies or markets or NRM. SSA CP is focussing on promoting organisational and institutional change that bridges the divide among all these elements, and between research and development. Innovation platforms are the drivers of this organisational and institutional change.

2. GOVERNANCE

***Recommendation A:** The direct management role, including staff and routine management issues of the SSA CP should be gradually devolved to the SSA CP Program Coordinator, who must work in consultation with the FARA Secretariat. This will relieve FARA secretariat of the implementation burden so that it can carry out the oversight role envisaged by the constitution of FARA in article 5.0 of the FARA constitution. Further it is suggested that the Program Steering Committee (PSC), be renamed Programme Advisory committee (PAC) since the steering role is mostly the function of the SSA CP leadership and FARA.*

Response

This recommendation creates an impression that there is currently duplication of function between the SSA CP Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) and FARA Secretariat. This is not the case. The day-to-day management of the programme is fully

under the responsibility and control of the PCU. FARA Secretariat provides overall oversight, as stipulated in the Programme's proposal. This is in line with the role of FARA⁶ as implementer of the SSA CP, as well as for other programmes, for both the CGIAR and the African Union (AU). FARA provides management oversight for all such programmes.

We are also of the opinion that the PSC should remain as currently constituted. The PSC is representative of the Programme's stakeholders and provides advice and direction to the Programme. There is an absolute need to retain the steering function of the PSC. Upon commencement of the implementation phase, the PCU will recommend to the FARA General Assembly, through the Executive Committee, the establishment of a small group of technical advisers that are skilled in the special needs of the various aspects of the Programme such as the implementation of IAR4D.

Recommendation B: *The SSA CP PCU must be given more authority to steer the direction in which programmes at the PLSs evolve. To this end, the PCU should develop a more efficient and interactive communication system between the various teams, taskforces and management committees. This will improve performance, monitoring and decision making, and reduce transaction costs throughout the CP. In addition the PCU should have discretionary funds to consolidate different PLS projects so these, where deemed necessary, can provide proof of the IAR4D concept and context.*

Response

We partially agree with this recommendation. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the direction in which programmes at the PLS evolve is primarily the responsibility of PLS management committees (MCs), within an agreed framework established by the CP at the level of the PSC. The Programme Coordinator is a member of management committees at the PLS and the FARA Secretariat levels. He therefore plays a key role in steering the direction of the Programme, through his participation in these committees.

The PCU and MCs have established mechanisms for integrating key elements within all the PLS and also for ensuring cross-PLS comparisons, synthesis and learning. These include joint PLS MTP and the cross-cutting projects as well as the engagement of service providers to support M&E, capacity building and impact assessment.

To improve interaction among the Programme's actors, the PCU is working with PSC to implement a recommendation of the EU review panel to hire an information and communication specialist. To improve communication among taskforce partners with limited access to communication facilities, notably NARS and local organisations, FARA is putting in place mechanisms to improve information sharing and communication through its regional agricultural information and learning systems (RAILS) programme.

⁶ FARA is the umbrella organization that brings together major stakeholders in agricultural research and development in Africa. Its constituency includes: national agricultural research systems, sub-regional research organisations, international agricultural research institutions, advanced research institutes, farmer associations, the private sector and development organisations involved in agricultural research and development in Africa.

3. PARTNERSHIP

Recommendation A: *The SSA CP has invested great resources to establish a diverse group of stakeholders and to energise their participation in the CP. But there remains a great institutional and disciplinary imbalance. Most current participants are from research institutions, particularly IARCs and NARS. This should not be allowed to skew research and project interests. The SSA CP must reach out to representatives from the private sector (PS), civil society (CS) and farmer association (FA), and engage them at project identification and prioritisation stage. Clearly, the success of scaling out and up is nested with these stakeholders. Current links, particularly with PS, CS and FA, are weak. The SSA CP may benefit from expertise of someone who understands Africa's and multinational PS, CS and FA, including their entry, participation requirements, expectations and incentives. In addition, more gender balance is needed within the CP. Many agricultural projects have failed in the past because of such gender insensitivity.*

Response

We agree with this recommendation on the need to proactively reach out to engage the private sector, civil society and farmer associations in the implementation of the CP. This indeed is the whole basis of the innovation platform approach, and we would argue that reasonable progress has been made thus far, in this regard.

The concept of innovation platforms aims to even out current institutional and disciplinary imbalances in programme participation. The evolution of this Programme from launch of the pilot learning team through validation, concept note and project proposal development to consolidation of the projects by taskforces has shown growth in participation by civil society groups (farmer associations and non government organisations) and the private sector. As we strengthen the innovation platforms, the participation of these groups and women's representation will increase and become more evident. For example, at the validation stage, special efforts were made to take gender into consideration both in the composition of the teams and in the design of methodologies that meet cultural sensitivities. Special efforts will be made at the implementation phase, to increase participation of women in decision making, in particular at the PSC and management committees. We shall continue to explore mechanisms to strengthen the involvement of the private sector and civil society groups within the context of the innovation platform.

Recommendation B: *A lucrative and untapped source of new skills, opportunities and innovations is Africans in the diaspora. Many of are well linked to public, private, civil and international institutions in developed countries, and provide new avenues of fund, technology and information to stimulate productivity growth in Africa. The SSA-CP should explore these linkages and start by commissioning a survey diaspora resources available "out there" that could be harnessed for "business unusual" investments in Africa. In effect the SSA-CP could create an innovative reversal of what has been termed as Brain Drain for Africa to Brain Gain.*

Response

We accept this recommendation. We wish to point out that this issue is being addressed within the framework of the AU and NEPAD. A number of Sub-Saharan Africa countries have also initiated programmes to link up with Africans in the diaspora and to explore possible collaboration and partnership that could be of benefit to Africa. The SSA-CP

would keep itself engaged with such processes and would take advantage of any opportunities that might emerge through such initiatives.

4. CLARITY FROM THE SC/CGIAR.

Recommendation A: The SC had recommended that the SSA-CP concentrate on “new knowledge creation” and “cutting-edge science”. This seems to have created confusion and apprehension among SSA-CP stakeholders about the kind of “science” they are expected to generate. Similar apprehension still existed during the review. The Panel recommends that the SC works closely with the SSA-CP leadership to clarify its expectations of the program. Further, the Panel suggests that proof that the IAR4D approach works and will deliver research outputs effectively to the African farmer and business community, and the shared knowledge from this experience, be considered as IPG. Subsequent delivery of RPGs and NPGs will be desirable additional outcomes.

Response

We welcome this recommendation. We would welcome and appreciate further deliberations with the SC to explore these critical cutting edge issues in relation to the SSA-CP goals and strategic directions, in the context of the overall CGIAR priorities.

CONCLUSION

This review by the SC is an important milestone for the SSA CP. We welcome its recommendations. The Programme will draw on them to re-focus its research agenda. We are thankful to the SC Secretariat for allowing FARA sufficient time to engage in consultative processes for eliciting feedback and consensus on a response to the review report. The large constituency of FARA stakeholders that are participating in this Programme are anxiously waiting for the go-ahead from the SC to embark on full implementation of the Programme.

ACRONYMS

ARI	Advanced Research Institute
AU	African Union
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
CGS	Competitive Grants System
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
IAR4D	Integrated Agricultural Research for Development
IARC	International Agricultural Research Centre
IPG	International Public Goods
KKM	Kano-Katsina-Maradi (Pilot Learning Site)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MTP	Medium Term Plan
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
PCU	Programme Coordination Unit
PLS	Pilot Learning Site
PSC	Programme Steering Committee
RPG	Regional Public Good
SC	Science Council
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSA CP	Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme
ZMM	Zimbabwe-Malawi-Mozambique (Pilot Learning Site)

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
Science Council and CGIAR Secretariat

**Report on
The External Review of the CGIAR
Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program (SSA CP)**

Prepared for the CGIAR Science Council

By

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Dr. Paul Vlek.

August 2006

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Acronyms

AHI	African Highlands Initiative
ARD	Agricultural Research for Development
ARIs	Advanced Research Institutions
ASARECA	Association for the Strengthening of Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
CAS-IP	Central Advisory Service on Intellectual Property
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
CGS	Competitive Grant System
CIAT	International Centre for Tropical Agriculture [Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical]
CN	Concept Note
CORAF	Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricole
CP	Challenge Program
CS	Civil Society
EOI	Expression Of Interest
EU	European Union
FA	Farmer Associations
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
Hq	Headquarter
IAR4D	Integrated Agricultural Research for Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
IP	Inception Phase
IPGs	International Public Goods
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
ISAR	Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Rwanda
KKM	Kano-Katsina-Maradi [Pilot Learning Site]
LI	Lead Institution
LK	Lake Kivu [Pilot Learning Site]
LPG	Local Public Goods
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MC	Management Committee
MTP	Medium-Term Plan
MV	Millennium Village
NARI	National Agricultural Research Institute
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organization
NARS	National Agricultural Research System
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non Government Organization
NPGs	National Public Goods
NRM	Natural Resources Management
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PC	Program Coordinator
PCU	Program Coordination Unit
PLS	Pilot Learning Site

PLT	Pilot Learning Team
PLT-MC	Pilot Learning Team-Management Committee
PS	Private Sector
PSC	Program Steering Committee
R&D	Research and development
RPG	Regional Public Goods
R4D	Research for Development
SADC/FANR	South African Development Community/Food Agriculture and Natural Resources
SARRNET	Southern Africa Root Crops Research Network
SC	Steering Committee
SRO	Sub-Regional Organization
SSA CP	Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program
TF	Taskforce
TOR	Terms of Reference
WECARD	West and Central African Council For Agricultural Research and Development
ZMM	Malawi-Mozambique-Zimbabwe [Pilot Learning Site]

Summary

Introduction

In September 2004, the Science Council (SC) of the CGIAR reviewed the Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program (SSA CP) and found that “at this stage in the evolution of the SSA CP, sufficient information is not yet available within the proposal, in terms of specific research plan and science to be applied for the SC to make a judgment on the relevance and quality of the science and therefore to justify an investment of US\$ 70M over the five-year plan.” The SC recommended, and the Executive Committee endorsed, an 18-month “inception phase”, a time in which the management of the SSA CP, which is embedded in the Secretariat of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), together with the Sub-Regional Organizations (SROs) would define specific research priorities and expected outputs, and put in place appropriate institutional structures. Much as there was agreement to fund the inception phase, it was agreed that the precondition for financing the implementation phase would be based on an SC commissioned review at the end of the first 18 months, hence the engagement of the current team of reviewers.

The Review Team was constituted in May 2006 and received its Terms of Reference (TOR) and composition of its membership in the course of that month. The agreement with the SC was to deliver a report of the review no later than July 15 based on documents provided to the team and personal interactions with the SSA CP and FARA executive staff at FARA Headquarters in Accra, Ghana and with the management teams and taskforce members at the three selected Pilot Learning Sites (PLSs). As the review process progressed the deadline for presenting the report was extended to July 21st 2006. This was followed by a series of consultations with FARA/SSA CP for “factual corrections” only. The report was finalized with consideration of the factual corrections.

The full review team comprised of Dr. Cyrus Ndiritu (Panel Chair), Dr. Daniel Karanja and Dr. Paul Vlek, and was accompanied by Ruben Echeverría (Executive Director, SC) when they visited FARA Headquarters. Then, the team split into two groups. One team visited the Kano-Katsina-Maradi (KKM) PLS and continued to the Lake Kivu (LK) PLS; the other team visited the Zimbabwe-Mozambique-Malawi (ZMM) PLS.

After the PLS visits, the full team re-assembled in Nairobi, Kenya on June 21, 2006 for a final consultation. The team reviewed the TOR, considered the briefing at the FARA Secretariat, and agreed on which ten questions posed by the SC in the TOR needed greater emphasis. The team acknowledged that since there were yet no specific research activities in the field, the 18-month inception phase of the SSA CP was too short to report on any scientific research results. It was, therefore, agreed that the focus would be on the process of consultation, conceptualization, partnership building and the resultant institutional arrangement and learning process. The aim would be to:

- Assess the IAR4D concept and the understanding of the concept across the sites and among partners;
- Evaluate the process of team-building, capacity-training and creating innovation platforms;
- Appreciate constraint analysis, validation procedures and the challenge facing partners;

- Assess the clarity of the CP to meet the challenge and likelihood of delivering Regional Public Goods (RPGs) and International Public Goods (IPGs) given the level of funding, institutional development and human resources at its disposal;
- Judge the exit strategy of the CP and the likelihood that the time-bound CP will be up and out-scaled as well as sustained.

Thus, the Panel team limited its fact-finding mission to briefings with the SSA CP Program Coordination Unit (PCU) and the management teams and taskforces of the various PLSs at each of the locations (KKM, LK and ZMM). Members of the team visited the PLSs and were exposed to in-depth and elaborate presentations mainly on building existing institutional frameworks, backed up by huge amounts of documentations. The project proposal and the June-2006 version of the MTP (handed-out during the review at FARA Hq) were the key documents deemed critical by the SC. However, extensive additional documentation, which was very helpful in answering some of the questions posed by the SC and the review team, was provided at each of the PLS sites.

The PLS briefings involved leaders and staff of the Lead Institutions (LIs) of the respective PLSs, chairpersons of the respective SROs (except ZMM) as well as the chairpersons of the PLS taskforces and their membership. This gave the Panel the opportunity to meet a broad spectrum of partners, including representatives of participating NARS, NGOs, farmer associations (FA) and the private sector (PS). Ample time was allowed to probe the PLS teams on the issues listed above and any further detailed questions derived from the TORs.

The ample documentation, excellent backstopping by the SC secretariat, FARA SSA CP staff, and frank debates with PLS teams allowed the review team to reach the conclusions and recommendations made in this report.

Conclusions

This review took place at the end of the inception phase (IP), after two preceding reviews: one sponsored by the EU and performed by Fabre *et al*: The EU review Panel comprised a core team of two members from the European Consortium for Agricultural Research in the Tropics (ECART): Pierre Fabre and Patrick van Damme and two representative of member states: John Sutherland (UK) and Enrico Baccioni (Italy) in September to November 2005 The other review by Jill Lenne performed in June 2006 was undertaken on behalf of the Facilitation and Mentoring (F&M) consortium of the SSA CP, and was mainly concerned with synthesizing lessons learned during the inception phase. The EU review took place earlier in the IP and focused on the CP design and the establishment of the organizational system and governance structures. The Lenné report was done at the end of the Inception phase and dealt more on concerns from the SSA CP related to clarity, expectations and consensus from the SC. Though done at different times, both reports agreed that good progress was made to fulfill the planned IP agenda of establishing the necessary institutional structure.

The current review is based on observations and concerns expressed in these prior reviews, extensive discussions with the SSA CP leadership teams, a review of massive literature generated by the SSA CP, and visits and further discussions at the PLSs with members of the PLTs and PLT-MCs. The team concurs that the SSA CP has put together an elaborate institutional structure and encouraged partners who often do not work together to

enthusiastically embrace the new paradigm, IAR4D, and desire to collaborate on “business unusual” to achieve sustainable agricultural development in Africa.

However, certain challenges remain with regard to better defining the CP program priorities, building strong support and participation by various stakeholders, especially the private sector and civil society; consolidation and coordination of currently planned PLS projects so that they would prove the IAR4D concept and provide better and systematic monitoring of impacts. In addition, the current organizational structure faces a great challenge of better and more effective communication to improve efficiency and reduce transaction costs related to decision making and program implementation.

In its own view, the SSA CP indicated that the *“The management milestones have been clearly defined in relation to scope of tasks and deadlines for tasks and decision points. However, the definition of qualitative management indicators and systematic methods to learn from setting up the program are clearly areas for improvement in this regard. The quality indicators were clear for “traditional” tasks such as evaluation of research proposals, but less so for the institutional development challenges. The development of performance indicators to measure institutional learning and organizational change in response to the way agricultural research is conducted over time will be an important function of the impact assessment team in the implementation phase”* and the review team would generally concur with that self assessment.

It was clear to the Panel that the coordination and management committees and PLS taskforces completely endorsed the IAR4D concept. However, even though the concept’s design and objectives were well articulated in the MTP, deeper discussions with the various groups revealed lack of consistency and understanding about the concept and how it will translate into tangible products with impact on Africa’s economic development. It also became clear that insufficient effort was spent on identifying means of implementing and testing the concept as well as identifying deliverable IPGs or even Regional Public Goods (RPGs). SSA CP leaders estimated it will take another 3-4 years to prove the concept. Given the concept framework, more work is needed to identify how the concept will be proven, how impacts will be measured (including establishing reference points or baselines) and how the various projects currently identified at the PLS level will be integrated to enable the proof of concept. It remains difficult to identify the strategic focus of the SSA CP within the research-development continuum as each PLS presented a long list of potential activities and interventions - from basic research to pure development activities.

The cornerstone of the IAR4D concept is its multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary participatory approach. One of the achievements of the inception phase and a clear strength of SSA CP and the IAR4D concept is the capacity to bring together different stakeholders - agricultural researchers, extension agents, traders, policy makers, agro-processors, other private sector agents, farmers, NGOs - groups that traditionally hardly ever work together, and have them focus their efforts towards alleviating a common problem in the community. Discussions and presentations made to the Review Panel showed clearly the challenge of getting a buy-in from everyone and achieving a balanced level of participation needed for a successful program. This entails a significantly high transaction cost, an issue that could greatly affect the level of performance. Consideration is needed on how to reduce the transaction time without reducing the program effectiveness. Smart networking using available technology and identifying strategic partners is one way to go. Thus, one needed institutional innovation is how to decide the critical mass of collaborators needed to bring the projects to a successful completion.

Significant work has been done identifying and creating institutional arrangements that promote buy-in by multiple stakeholders. But current coordination, management and implementing teams are heavily laden with researchers from NARS and IARCs, with very few farmers, NGO and private sector representation. If the latter are the primary beneficiaries and implementers of the ultimate outcomes, it is important that they are involved in decision-making right from the beginning rather than an attempt to co-opt them once the project is rolling or over. Also, missing is a clear gender balance - and this is odd since it is often claimed that women account for the bulk of agro-producers in Africa. The same applies to the balance within validation teams. Imbalanced representation skewed towards researchers will lead to an imbalanced agenda and “business as usual” way of doing research. Oversight intervention by the PCU in conjunction with the PLS- MCs should be able to rectify these anomalies.

The Panel review team finds sound basis, which includes the steady but additive progress made so far and the brevity of the inception phase, to recommend that the SSA CP be allowed to continue for a three-year “*proof of concept*” phase at the current three PLSs only, allowing the SSA CP to fall in step with the current MTP. The Panel also recommends that the SSA CP be reviewed at the end of these three years to determine whether the IAR4D concept works and if it merits continued endorsement by the SC and CGIAR.

More detailed recommendations and suggestions are listed below, under four major headings: Program, Governance, Partnership and Clarity from the SC/CGIAR.

Recommendations

1. Program

- a) The SSA CP should be allowed to continue for a three-year period during which the proof of the IAR4D concept will be established and appropriate lessons learnt and IPGs shared. This implementation phase should occur only at the current three PLSs, and adequate funding channeled to allow this continuation in a manner that avoids the possibility of fatigue and fragmentation of the newly formed and still delicate partnerships. At the end of the three years, the SC should commission another review to determine whether the IAR4D concept works and can generate deliverable IPGs/RPGs, and whether the SSA CP should merit continued endorsement by the SC and CGIAR. Establishment of an exit strategy is necessary to determine future funding options. Once valuable lessons are learnt and the IAR4D concept proven, additional sites then can be logically added and scaling-up and out done.
- b) The SSA CP PCU must now give serious attention to defining and consolidating key priority PLS projects so they can help provide proof that the IAR4D concept works. The PCU should review currently selected PLS projects and allow them to be integrated and consolidated to ensure they adequately address critical linkages between productivity, market, policy and natural resource management issues. Each PLT should provide joint project proposals that show specific and realistic outputs have ways to test the IAR4D approach and include adequate M&E measurements. Traditional ex-ante M/E profiles may not be applicable in the innovation platforms. If necessary, missing skills and expertise should be co-opted or commissioned from among ARIs and other institutions.

But this outsourcing must be weighed against resource availability and utilization efficiency.

- c) Gained knowledge and experience from implementing the inception phase, including preparing a joint MTP, must be well documented and shared amongst partners and collaborators. Such knowledge should be reviewed to determine whether it constitutes IPGs/RPGs, and an effective method used to disseminate the same.
- d) Capacity building is critical to effective implementation of the SSA CP mandate. Once specific PLS projects are formulated, the PCU must work with its collaborators to determine the specific skills required and skill sources that need to be approached in order to enhance the capacity of various stakeholders to effectively implement their projects in a timely and efficient manner. Sourcing of such skills must not be random, and sometimes may be embedded within members of the various committees. Revealed inconsistencies among various stakeholders on what constitutes an “innovation platform” should be dealt with and a more practical approach used to bring everyone on the same page to avoid further confusion.
- e) A Competitive Grant System was used to select concept notes that led to development of the current approved PLS projects. This system has its limitation, especially within the IAR4D approach which emphasizes co-operation and team building. According to the SSA CP, *“the competitive grants process highlighted important lessons where IAR4D elements have either not been internalized by PLTs or are poorly understood, namely organizational and institutional change, capacity building, knowledge management, M/E, log-frames and project impacts on the environment and on gender. It was also clear from this exercise that the IARC-led proposals were far stronger than the NARS-led ones. Whereas this might not be surprising, it highlighted the need for change involving awareness raising, capacity building, and some affirmative action to ensure a more level playing field”*. This being the case, the review team recommends that future concept notes and project proposals be sought using a combination of CGS and commissioned research that allows for synergistic cooperation among bidders and a more consolidated project proposal that addresses all the valid issues. The CGS alone might be detrimental to the desired partnership building needed for the SSA CP development.
- f) The SSA CP should critically identify its comparative advantage and strategic role vis-à-vis other stakeholders in the agricultural research and development process. This will allow a clear formulation of activities that complement rather than duplicate existing research activities. According to the MTP, the SSA CP strategy would be to work at the interphases of productivity, markets, policy and natural resource management issues, and be a leader, facilitator, advocate, capacity builder and knowledge synthesizer on these dynamic issues. To be effective in these roles, the SSA CP must be empowered to be flexible, network with others and respond promptly to new opportunities and cutting-edge issues.

2. Governance

- a) The direct management role, including staff and routine management issues, of the SSA CP should be gradually devolved to the SSA CP Program Co-ordinator, who must work in consultation with the FARA Secretariat. This will relieve FARA Secretariat the implementation burden so that it can carry out the oversight role envisaged in Article 5.0 of the FARA Constitution. Further, it is suggested that the Program Steering

Committee (PSC) be renamed the Program Advisory Committee (PAC), since the steering role is mostly the function of the SSA CP leadership and FARA.

- b) The SSA CP PCU must be given more authority to steer the direction in which programs at the PLSs evolve. To this end, the PCU should develop a more efficient and interactive communication system between the various teams, taskforces and management committees. This will improve performance, monitoring and decision-making, and reduce transaction costs throughout the CP. In addition, the PCU should have discretionary funds to consolidate different PLS projects so that these, where deemed necessary, can provide proof of the IAR4D concept and context.

3. Partnership

- a) The SSA CP has invested great resources to establish a diverse group of stakeholders and to energize their participation in the CP. But there remains a great institutional and disciplinary imbalance. Most current participants are from research institutions, particularly IARCs and NARs. This should not be allowed to skew research and project interests. The SSA CP must reach out to representatives from the private sector (PS), civil society (CS) and farmer association (FA), and engage them at project identification and prioritization stage. Clearly, the success of scaling out and up is nested with these stakeholders. Current links, particularly with PS, CS and FA, are weak. The SSA CP may benefit from expertise of someone who understands Africa's and multinational PS, CS and FA, including their entry, participation requirements, expectations and incentives. In addition, more gender balance is needed within the CP. Many agricultural projects have failed in the past because of such gender insensitivity.
- b) A lucrative and untapped source of new skills, opportunities and innovations is Africans in Diaspora. Many of these are well linked to public, private, civil and international institutions in developed countries, and provide new avenues of funds, technology and information to stimulate productivity growth in Africa. The SSA CP should explore these linkages and start by commissioning a survey of Diaspora resources available "out there" that can be harnessed for "business unusual" investments in Africa. In effect the SSA CP could create an innovative reversal of what has been termed as Brain Drain for Africa to Brain Gain.

4. Clarity from the SC/CGIAR

The SC had recommended that the SSA CP concentrate on "new knowledge creation" and "cutting-edge science". This seems to have created confusion and apprehension among SSA CP stakeholders about the kind of "science" they are expected to generate. Similar apprehension still existed during the review. The Panel recommends that the SC works closely with the SSA CP leadership to clarify its expectations of the program. Further, the Panel suggests that proof that the IAR4D approach works and will deliver research outputs effectively to the African farmer and business community, and the shared knowledge from this experience, be considered as an IPG. Subsequent delivery of RPGs and NPGs will be desirable additional outcome.

1 INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

In September 2004, the SC (SC) of the CGIAR reviewed the Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program (SSA CP) and found that “at this stage in the evolution of the SSA CP, sufficient information is not yet available within the proposal, in terms of specific research plan and science to be applied for the SC to make a judgment on the relevance and quality of the science and therefore to justify an investment of US\$ 70M over the five-year plan.”

The SC recommended, and the Executive Committee endorsed, an 18-month “inception phase”, a time in which the management of the SSA CP, which is embedded in Secretariat of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), would together with the Sub-Regional Organizations define specific research priorities and expected outputs, and put in place appropriate institutional structures. Much as there was agreement to fund the inception phase, it was agreed that the precondition for financing the implementation phase would be based on an SC commissioned review at the end of the first 18 months, hence the engagement of the current team of reviewers. The specific terms and conditions of the review Panel are given in Appendix 1 while the membership of the SSA CP review Panel is given in Appendix 2.

During the September 2004 SC meeting, the FARA Secretariat presented its approach as one that would embrace the concept of the Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D) arguing that this was a new research paradigm that would lead to a more productive, profitable and sustainable agriculture in Africa. The FARA contended that to overcome the challenges facing Africa’s agriculture, the IAR4D approach must pay attention to limiting factors common to African agriculture, including but not limited to, (i) the inability of African farmers to increase their farm productivity while facing new demands and opportunities; (ii) non-adoption of sustainable agricultural techniques; (iii) failure to create, identify and enter into competitive agricultural markets; and (iv) policy and tariff platforms that do not favor agricultural development in Africa.

The FARA/SSA CP management and partners, by their own admission, were critically aware that to handle these major and diverse issues, there was need for all stakeholders to work together and compliment each other’s efforts in order to make measurable progress and create people- and community-level impacts within the envisaged timeframe. Given this challenge, the IAR4D approach proposed by the SSA CP focused on four major critical objectives:

- To develop technologies for sustainably intensifying subsistence-oriented farming systems;
- To develop smallholder production systems that are compatible with sound natural resource management;
- To improve the accessibility and efficiency of markets for smallholder and pastoral products;
- To catalyze the formulation and adoption of policies that will encourage innovation to improve the livelihoods of smallholders and pastoralists.

During the introductory visits to the SSA CP Secretariat and the three PLSs, the review team was shown how various stakeholders worked together under IAR4D model, enhancing their partnerships for technology generation, dissemination and information sharing. The teams acknowledged that existing partnerships were inadequate as platforms for effective IAR4D and that there was need to redesign the co-operation models in a more innovative way. The teams used the term “business unusual” to suggest a new, exceptional way of creating institutional

linkages and partnerships, culminating in four major areas of adjustment if the IAR4D was to become a meaningful pathway for development:

- Promotion of organizational and institutional change to enable cross-disciplinary research and development and multi-institutional collaboration;
- Capacity building for project teams, farmers, and scientists in African institutions;
- Information and knowledge management (including documentation of new methodologies developed) to disseminate widely the findings of IAR4D work; and
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and a systemic approach to impact assessment to track Program progress towards overall goals, signal the need for mid-course adjustments, and document the returns on investment in IAR4D.

This was the basis for the SSA CP work during the inception phase and it was against this backdrop that the review team set to evaluate the activities and plans that the SSA CP developed during the inception phase.

2 REVIEW METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

It is rather unusual that the SC would commission a scientific review after only 18 months of a research program's existence. Though rather experienced in conducting scientific reviews, the review team was not without apprehension in taking on this task. The team was constituted in May 2006 and received its Terms of Reference and composition of its membership in the course of that month. The agreement with the SC was to deliver a report of the review no later than July 15 based on documents provided to the team and personal interactions at FARA headquarters with the SSA CP and other FARA professional staff" and in the three selected Pilot Learning Sites (PLSs) with the management teams and taskforce members.

The team agreed to a quickly-arranged field tour from June 14-22, 2006 but had considerable difficulties in agreeing on and handling the itinerary of the site visits on such a short notice. The plan was for the full team and Ruben Echeverría (Executive Director, SC) to visit FARA and IITA (the Lead Institution of Kano-Katsina-Maradi, (KKM) but visa problems kept the Chairperson, Cyrus Ndiritu, from attending the IITA leg of this tour. Subsequently the team split with Daniel Karanja and Paul Vlek visiting the Lake Kivu (LK) PLS accompanied by Freddie Kwesiga (the SSA CP coordinator based at the FARA office) while Cyrus Ndiritu visited the Zimbabwe-Mozambique-Malawi (ZMM) PLS in the company of Aggrey Agumya (see Appendix 3 for places and people visited).

After the PLS visits, the full team re-assembled in Nairobi on June 21, 2006 for a final exchange and consultation on recommendations. The team reviewed the TORs and, considering the briefing at the FARA secretariat initially, revisited the ten questions in the TORs, agreeing on which ones to place greater emphasis. The team recognized that the inception phase of the SSA CP, with 18 months duration and no particular scientific field work in progress, was too short to report on scientific results.

Thus, it was agreed that the central focus be on the process of consultation, partnership building and the resultant constitution of partnerships and learning process involved. The aim would be to:

- Assess the IAR4D concept and the understanding of the concept across the sites and partners within the sites;
- Evaluate the process of putting the teams together and have them trained to evolve into an innovation platform in order to fulfill the obligations in this partnership;
- Obtain an appreciation of constraint analysis, the validation procedures and the challenge that the partnerships set for themselves;
- Assess the clarity of the program designed to meet this challenge and the likelihood that the results will deliver Regional Public Goods (RPGs) and International Public Goods (IPGs) given the level of funding, institutional development and human resources available;
- Judge the exit strategy of the CP and the likelihood that the time-bound CP will find a way to be up and out-scaled and sustained.

As the SSA CP had no field work ongoing that could be evaluated, the Panel team limited its fact finding to briefings with the SSA CP's Program Coordination Unit (PCU), FARA secretariat, and the management committees and taskforces of the various PLSs at each of the locations (KKM, LK and ZMM). Members of the team visited the PLSs and were exposed to in-depth and

elaborate presentations backed up by the necessary documentation. The project proposal and the MTP (the June 2006 version handed-out at FARA HQ) were the key documents deemed critical by the SC. However, extensive additional documentation was provided at each of the PLS sites (see Appendix 4) and was indeed very helpful in answering some of the key questions posed by the SC as well as the review team. At two of the locations (LK and ZMM), team representatives were taken to visit the sites and collaborators selected for the upcoming SSA CP PLS activities.

The PLS briefings involved the leaders and staff of the Lead Institutions (LIs) of the respective PLSs, the Chairperson of the respective SRO (except ZMM), as well as the Chairperson of the PLS taskforces and their membership. This gave the Panel the opportunity to meet a broad spectrum of partners in the Innovation Platforms, including representatives of participating NARS, NGOs, farmer associations (FA) and the private sector (PS). Ample time was allowed to probe the PLS teams on the issues listed above and any further detailed questions derived from the TORs such as the innovative NRM entry points that were identified in the inception phase.

Given the ample documentation (Appendix 4), the excellent backstopping by the SC secretariat (Ruben Echeverría) as well as that of the FARA/SSA CP staff and, not the least, the frank and open debates in which the PLS teams were willing to engage, gave the evaluation team a sound basis to come to the necessary recommendation and suggestions that are formulated in this report.

3 PROGRESS MADE DURING THE INCEPTION PHASE (JAN 2005 - JUN 2006)

The inception phase covered the period January 2005-June 2006, a period of 18 months. Within this period, the SSA CP carried on its own program of work and coped with two reviews, one commissioned by the European Union (EU) in September-November 2005 (Fabre et al 2005) and a second one commissioned by the SSA CP in May-June 2006, just prior to the SC review. The second review was conducted through an analysis of relevant documents generated by SSA CP during the Inception Phase as well as relevant CGIAR documents, and an analysis of responses to a comprehensive questionnaire (Jill Lenné 2006).

The EU report came in early, soon after the initiation of the inception phase and therefore could not evaluate progress made but served to provide the validation of the SSA CP approach. The EU Panel observed that “the choice of Program design and R&D objectives which follow the IAR4D paradigm was pertinent and relevant to the development problems of Sub-Saharan Africa and more specifically the PLSs are [re]currently facing.” Its main focus was on small-scale farmers’ needs, their active involvement in problem definition and prioritization, and their representation at different management levels.

The report continued to say “that the project design clearly takes into account the comments and lessons learned from previous experiences in the sub-region and elsewhere. In this respect, the Panel can do nothing but give a positive evaluation of many different issues that it had to consider in relation with the SSA CP’s design and initial activities.”

However that same report provides a cautionary note emanating from its observation that “if one considers the size of this program, its ambition and the funds it has already been able to mobilize, the absence of a log-frame and the ill-defined phases is surprising. In the existing international strict accountability environment, it is surprising that the SSA CP concept has proved so convincing that donors have put aside their usual managing requirements [objectives clearly specified, logical framework and clear time-phases]”. Subsequent to those observations, FARA convened a series of planning meetings culminating in the re-adjusted and, in the Panel’s view still evolving, SSA CP MTP for 2007-2009. A detailed commentary of the MTP is provided in Section 4.

The internally generated review conducted by Jill Lenné was done at the end of the 18 months of the inception phase and the report’s findings were used to hone the current (June 2006) MTP. The report and the MTP profiled the progress made so far. The SC review Panel had the opportunity to confirm these milestones covered during the inception phase at the PLSs. The team concurred with the FARA report on the progress made during the inception phase, including that:

3.1 Governance and management structures established

The structures for governance and management of the Program are now in place and largely operational. These structures include:

- The **Program Steering Committee** (PSC) that is responsible for oversight of the Program has been constituted and has held three meetings during the inception phase: in June 2005 during the FARA general assembly in Entebbe, in August 2005 during the ZMM

inauguration the PSC visited the Zimbabwe-Malawi-Mozambique pilot learning site, and 15-16th March 2006 to review the interim MTP and provide inputs into the strategy document. The PSC has been able to oversee the formation of Governance structures at the sub-regional level, the sub-regional organizations or SROs (CORAF, ASARECA, and SADC), which have in turn been able to perform specific functions, particularly those related to project screening.

- The **Program Coordination Unit (PCU)**, responsible for operational management of the program, has been established.
- A **CGIAR lead institution** was appointed for each pilot learning site (PLS) to manage and account for funds, oversee research and progress of activities at the site, report progress and outcomes to the relevant sub regional organization and the Program Steering Committee. Lead institutions were appointed by SROs. IITA was selected as the lead institution for both the Kano-Katsina-Maradi (KKM) PLS in the CORAF/WECARD region and the Zimbabwe-Mozambique-Malawi (ZMM) PLS in the SADC region, while a CIAT/ISAR/AHI consortium was selected as the lead institution for the Lake Kivu (ASARECA region).
- **Pilot learning teams** have been constituted at each of the three PLSs, (March 2005 for KKM, and April 2005 for ZMM and LK) and are composed of representatives of all potentially relevant stakeholders in IAR4D in the site regions (ranging from 54 participants in ZMM, to 88 in Lake Kivu and 100 in KKM). These teams serve as proxies for the institutional constituency of the Challenge Program. In all cases each PLT met in 2005; stakeholders were informed of the purpose of the SSA CP.
- **Pilot learning team management committees (PLT-MCs)** have also been established in each PLS and are operational. The PLT-MCs are composed of 9-15 members representing the stakeholders and provide oversight to the activities in each of the PLSs. The formation of the PLT-MCs was a late addition and was not provided for in the CP proposal. The instruments (memoranda of agreement and letters of agreement) governing the relationships, roles and responsibilities between various CP institutions have been effected. The process of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and material transfer agreements are being developed in consultation with the CGIAR's Central Advisory Service on Intellectual Property (CAS-IP).

3.2 Site-level work plans and projects developed

The original work plan for the inception phase was developed by FARA stakeholders and shared with the SC in 2004, has been continuously adapted as the inception phase progressed. The principal activities carried out during the inception phase to develop PLS work plans included the following:

- **Identification/validation of entry points:** Validation exercises were conducted to identify the livelihood constraints across the PLSs with a view to drawing lessons and opportunities for their alleviation. Outputs of this validation exercises were aimed at putting emphasis on priority research themes and working relationships innovations.
- **Concept note workshop:** The Program adopted a competitive grant scheme (CGS) to select winners among competing PLT proposals and ensure quality. FARA convened a workshop in Nairobi from 10th to 12th October 2005 to develop a generic CN format and agree on the review process.
- **Development of PLS log-frames , calls for concept notes leading to proposal development and review:** The review process resulted in the approval of six CNs in the ZMM PLS, five CNs in the KKM PLS, and ten CNs in the Lake Kivu PLS, a success rate of 23% of the submitted CNs. The Panel of CN reviewers has further screened the 21 proposals submitted by the task forces from the 3 PLSs and selected 9 proposals as the winning bids , seven of

which are led by IARCs/civil society consortia and only three by NARS, but all of them under a partnership mode. In hindsight the CGS approach was probably not the best format as pointed out by the EU reviewers. This Panel concurs with that view (see section 4) but these are lessons in development.

There are many lessons accruing from this very strenuous process and it is the Panel's hope that the PCU will ensure that the perceived gaps will be patched as the final projects come on stream. Clearly the re-alignment of partnerships to incorporate ARIs, without burdening the SSA CP, and expansion of the private sector participation are important pre-requisites of a successful IAR4D paradigm. It is important though that even as these lessons are applied for projects fine tuning, "real" work must continue at the PLSs to avoid possibility of fatigue and fragmentation of the newly formed and still delicate partnerships.

However, as the Panel interacted with the PLTs, there seemed to be a preconceived plan to scale up the number of sites from three to nine PLSs. The Panel would like to recommend careful steps and suggest that expansion only happens after the initial three years of operation have provided proof of concept for the SSA CP IAR4D paradigm. The Panel also noted that there is need to intensify consultation at the taskforce and PLS levels, whether this be achieved by the revamping of the cross-cutting themes or otherwise remains a lesson in the innovation platforms.

4 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED MTP AND INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATIONS

The current SSA CP MTP seems to be an evolving document. The review team received a copy of the MTP (March 2006 version) from the SC. Two additional versions emerged by the time the Panel started its work in the field. Several other critical documents were delivered to the Panel in the field. Whereas it was evident the SSA CP coordinating team had been under great pressure to meet several SC deadlines, delays in submitting key documents and regular revisions while the Panel was in the field was strenuous to the Panel, since it denied the latter critical reading, review and assessment. However based on what was made available, the Panel made several comments based on the June 2006 MTP version (See excerpts in Appendix 5).

In general the MTP provides background and justification for the SSA CP Program, a list of 2005-06 achievements, and the IAR4D conceptual framework, a summary of Concept Notes, Log-Frames and selected projects for each of the three Pilot Learning Sites (PLS). It is clear that a lot of work has gone into identifying and expounding the critical components of IAR4D. The concept responds to a failure of “translating agricultural research outputs into scalable development impacts in Africa” and is based on extensive consultation and partnership between various stakeholders. Its aim is to work through “innovation platforms” that allow a more integrated research for development agenda and one that empowers stakeholders to jointly determine, design and conduct analysis, experiment and implement development strategies that integrate different technological, institutional and policy options that are scalable up and out.

The first 18 months - from January 2005 to June 2006 - constituted an inception phase focused on establishing governance and management structures; forming three PLS teams (management committees and taskforces); identifying and validating entry points or interventions in these learning sites; formulating IAR4D-based projects selected through a competitive grant system; and sharing learned lessons to hone future projects and advance the implementation of outcomes.

It was clear from the Panel review that there was no activity yet in the field. But various management committees and taskforces at the program and PLS level had been established and extensive consultations made, yielding concept notes, project selection and validation of entry points at the three PLS. Without implementation of these projects, it was hard to evaluate the efficacy of the IAR4D concept - whether it works any better than conventional approaches to research and development.

In spite of this, it was clear to the Panel that the coordination and management committees and PLS taskforces completely endorsed the IAR4D concept. The design and objectives of the SSA CP's IAR4D are well articulated in the MTP. Yet, deeper discussions with the various groups revealed lack of consistency and understanding of the concept and how it will translate into tangible products with impact on Africa's economic development. It was also hard to differentiate from the discussions and circulated documents what the “challenge” is and what the “program” is. It was equally difficult to identify the strategic focus of the SSA CP within the research-development continuum as each PLS listed a long list of potential activities and interventions - from basic research to pure development activities.

One of the achievements of the inception phase and clearly one of the strengths of SSA CP and IAR4D concept is the capacity to bring together different stakeholders - agricultural researchers,

extension agents, traders, policy makers, agro-processors, other private sector agents, farmers, NGOs - groups that traditionally hardly ever work together, and have them focus their efforts towards alleviating a common problem in the community.

Establishing governance and management structures that facilitate the assembly and consultation among these stakeholders was evidently a daunting task, usurping much of the strength of the CP coordinating team. Discussions and presentations made to the Review Panel showed clearly the challenge of getting buy-in from everyone and achieving a balanced level of participation needed for a successful program. This entails a significantly high transaction cost, an issue that could greatly affect the level of performance. One needed institutional innovation is how to decide the critical mass of collaborators needed to bring the projects to a successful completion.

Other key observations related to the MTP:

1. There is still a wide range of interpretations on what “innovation platform” means at the PLS level. Insufficient effort may have been spent identifying means of implementing the concept, identifying deliverable International Public Goods (IPGs) deciding how to prove the concept and measure impacts (including establishing reference points or baselines), how to integrate the various projects at the PLS level, and how to beef-up participation of NGOs and private sector. For this reason, it would be very important that proof of concept is first made at the initial sites, before replicating the CP effort to six additional PLS, as suggested in the MTP.
2. Significant work has been done identifying and creating institutional arrangements that promote buy-in by multiple stakeholders, and great enthusiasm shown by stakeholders on the IAR4D concept. But the 18 months inception duration was too short a time to test the paradigm. Also, significant transaction costs were incurred establishing various organizational structures and management committees for each PLS. Consideration is needed on how to reduce the transaction time without reducing the program effectiveness. Smart networking using available technology and identifying strategic partners is one way to go. There is no certainty that creating another layer of coordinators would help facilitate and track progress across the board.
3. Although the MTP clearly lays out the IAR4D concept, inadequate effort has been spent on identifying means of implementing and testing the concept as well as identifying deliverable IPGs or even Regional Public Goods (RPGs). Program leaders estimated it will take 3-4 years to prove the concept. Given the concept framework and step-wise implementation and reporting procedures, it is also clear that inadequate time was spent to identify how to prove the concept, how to measure impacts (including establishing reference points or baselines) and how to integrate the various projects at the PLS level.
4. The cornerstone of the IAR4D concept is its multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary participation. Unfortunately, current coordination, management and implementing teams are heavily laden with researchers from NARS and IARCs, with very few farmers, NGO and private sector representation. If the latter are the primary beneficiaries and implementers of the ultimate outcomes, it is important that they are involved in decision-making right from the beginning rather than an attempt to co-opt them once the project is rolling or over. Also, missing is a clear gender balance - and this is odd since it is often claimed that women account for the bulk of agro-producers in Africa. The same applies to the balance within validation teams. There is a danger that imbalanced representation skewed towards

researchers will lead to an imbalanced agenda and “business as usual” way of doing research. Oversight intervention by the PCU in conjunction with the PLS - MCs should be able to rectify these anomalies.

5. It was clear from the Panel review that there is a great need to manage expectations and differentiate intentions and interests of different stakeholders. Listening to presentations and discussing with members of various committees and institutions at the KKM, ZMM and LK sites, great promises and expectations of resource flows may have been made, skewing the interests of various partners towards what is in it for them. Expectations should not be raised above what is feasible given the timeline and resource limitations.
6. There is need for further fleshing-out of the IAR4D context and content, and make it practical. The goals and purpose are too broad; maybe dimming what the CP should strategically focus on and has comparative advantage in handling among all clearly important but broader economic development goals. Hence, most discussions of IAR4D are still at abstract level and as a result the concept notes, log frames and potential proposals expressed the same vagueness and lack of contextual clarity that is needed to sufficiently test the IAR4D framework. In all the PLSs, there was no clear cut idea of how to prioritize the more than 100 perceived strategic projects/ activities. Practical entry points - which are adequately time-bound and based on agreed-upon criteria, are needed. Better prior articulation would allow for a clearer identification and proof of specific “innovation platforms,” institutional and policy context, and deliverable IPGs/RPGs.
7. There is an apparent struggle for balance between what the “Challenge” and “Program” are, and what the “Research” and “Development” are. There should be a clear effort to identify the comparative advantage of CP/IAR4D’s platform and what ought to be the strategic activities at the PLS in the research-development continuum. At the moment, there is lack of in-depth analysis of what is researchable and likely to fall under CPs mandate and what could be a good and necessary development platform that is better or more efficiently implemented by other stakeholders, partners or institutions. It is critical to identify priority and strategic activities for the CP stakeholders and clarify the strategic role of the CP vis-à-vis other issues of strategic interest to individual stakeholders. The CP cannot be a development delivery vehicle but must choose strategic interventions that would otherwise not succeed if IAR4D was not applied, mostly the interphases between markets, policies, technologies and institutions.
8. A competitive grant system (CGS) was applied to identify viable proposals for each PLS. Out of the 90 responses only 9, three in each of the three PLS, were selected as a result of resource constraints for development to full proposals. It was evident from discussions that the CGS was not the best approach to use, especially if the Concept Note call was not very specific on what was needed to be achieved. The CGS tended to reduce co-operation amongst the very teams that were expected to work together. The result is that currently selected proposals may not have the depth and breadth to capture and test the IAR4D concept, and the log-frames remained non-specific as well. It may be wise to commission research to complement gaps left by the CGS and boost current capacity. Additionally, a second call and review of CNs - including some of those dropped earlier - may strengthen current proposals. A significant effort is needed to integrate existing projects so that they are approached holistically by all stakeholders (part of the IAR4D novelty) - sometimes from a watershed perspective (like in the LK PLS) or a market enhancement approach as presented by ZMM. Discussions at PLS level helped elevate some of the Panel’s understanding of what was envisaged by the PLTs but concern was expressed at the “business as usual” nature of

the listed IPGs and project selections. Earlier discussions at FARA headquarters had listed clearly that the goal of the SSA CP was to address the productivity-markets-policy-NRM interphases as the critical entry points, which is truly value-added and innovative and something that traditional or conventional NARS and IARCs program are unable to address.

9. Institutional Innovation and Capacity Building. The need for a paradigm shift in Africa's R&D is long overdue and the IAR4D concept is an attempt to respond to that need. The challenge of making the concept work in a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder premise is great. But that does not mean it cannot be done. Specific set of skills are needed by implementing partners and leaders hence the necessary but targeted capacity building. Some of these skills, including team-building efforts, are already identifiable products and outcomes whose worth as IPGs (or even National Public Goods (NPGs) or RPGs) should be considered. Novel approaches of engaging and utilizing expertise available in Diaspora, the choice of consultants and building of consortia should be explored and based on strategic expertise rather than just a need to build teams. This would help build up a clear Africa-context innovation platform that must be well tested and well documented.
10. Concern was expressed on the lack of linkages with the Advanced Research Institutes (ARIs), but the PLTs, while not discounting selective need based ARIs linkages, expressed their concern on the value for money and relevance of such "extreme end" linkages.
11. Monitoring and evaluation of the SSA CP is critical for effective learning and continual refining of the IAR4D concept. But it is not clear if the appropriate structures have been put in place, including measures that can be used to measure impact and act as benchmark from which to measure progress.
12. It is clear that the SSA CP received more funding than it needed for the inception phase since some substantial project funds remained unutilized. The Panel is of the opinion that these funds would be critical in the continued funding for another 3 years to allow a clear identification of priorities and implementation of several integrated projects that will test the IAR4D concept. Besides this, a clearer elaboration on how the different committees in different regions will continue to work together, cross-pollinate ideas as well as learn from each other is needed. The PCU suggested that this is the principal role of the cross-cutting projects but this is not particularly clear from the current MTP.

5 PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS, LESSONS LEARNT AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 Partnerships

One of the most striking features of the SSA CP is its ability to coalesce a diverse group of people and institutions at the local, regional and international level in an effort to implement a new mode of doing research and development business, the IAR4D, recognizes inherent weaknesses of current SSA R&D systems and strives to:

- Consider complex issues that cut across disciplines, institutions and sectors, and requiring collective action of multiple stakeholders;
- Recognize the necessity for an integrated approach to research that addresses interactions between production systems, markets, policies and natural resource management; and
- Forge new partnerships that involve all stakeholders in innovative platforms or value chains, including non-traditional partners often left out in conventional research arrangements -- such as smallholder peasant and women farmers as well as market drivers.

The motivation behind this institutional change, according to the SSA CP, is “to add value to and enhance the impact of ongoing agricultural research for development in SSA by transforming the ways sectors and institutions at all levels approach agricultural research...” and to counter the weaknesses of conventional approaches that negate the central roles of markets and policies while dealing with production systems and natural resource management issues.

Laying the foundations for and creating a new organizational structure and institutional arrangement for this new approach was one of the primary activities of the SSA CP in its 18-month inception phase. The questions that the SSA CP PSC and PCU should consider with regard to these partnerships are:

- Who are these partners, what do they bring to the table and what is their stake in the program (these may largely determine their motivation to participate)?
- What is the “glue” that bonds or ought to bond them together and how do you strengthen it?
- Is the SSA CP structure capable of efficiently and effectively facilitating and sustaining productive partner relations and interactions?

From the discussions and presentations at FARA headquarters and with the PLSs’ taskforces and management committees, the SSA CP has excelled in laying a strong foundational structure made up of prominent and respected institutions and people capable of positively transforming Africa’s agriculture. The idea of forging collaborations at local (PLS) levels between national and regional research institutes, locally-engaged CGIAR institutions, other advanced research organizations, local private sector, farmer associations, and non-governmental organizations is quite impressive. Each of these organizations brings a different perspective to the table.

The challenge, however, remains on three key factors: (1) how to ensure inclusion of the right, productive stakeholders; (2) how and when to engage them in the most productive manner, often at the outset or planning stage, before key decisions and priorities are set; and (3) how best to utilize their synergies and improve their capacity so they are on the same page with regard to IAR4D. It is true that most partners will participate if they perceive that there are tangible benefits accruing to them. This is hard to see when discussions are still at the goals and

objectives level - which is the current case with SSA CP. Until specific projects with specific goals and potential outcomes are clearly spelled out, it will be an uphill task involving the private sector, NGOs and farmer associations. These groups prefer working on practical on-ground activities with tangible benefits accruing to them, and not in theorizing solutions. However, there are individuals in the community, often national or regional association or chambers of commerce leaders, with broader perspectives and commitment to engage during the process of distilling down from goals and objectives to specific projects. Such individuals must be identified early and brought on board.

The Review Panel observed that most of the current membership of most SSA CP committees is skewed towards either NARS or IARCs. The danger of this imbalance is the tendency to maintain the status quo and apply “business as usual” models to complex problems that require a new way of conducting R&D. The representation at FARA headquarters and at the PLSs from the private sector, NGOs and farmer associations was quite thin. Yet, these are the primary beneficiary and implementers of research outcomes. Therefore, the Panel suggests that the PSC and PCU take a more proactive approach during the project consolidation phase to enlist appropriate additional private sector, NGO and farmer representatives. It should also be acknowledged that getting these diverse groups on board is one thing, making them participate actively is another thing. This is certainly one area that needs hard work, a constant check and strengthening, and should be included as part of the M&E assessment.

So far, according to the MTP, all governance and management structures of the CP are in place. They include:

- A Program Steering Committee(PSC) responsible for the overall oversight of the program;
- A Program Coordinating Unit, which runs day-to-day operations of the program;
- The CGIAR Lead Institutions appointed for each PLS to manage the funds, oversee research and report outcomes to respective SROs and FARA;
- The Pilot Learning Teams (PLTs) constituting representatives of all “potentially relevant” stakeholders. The current tally of 54 participants in ZMM, 88 participants in LK and 100 participants in KKM is reflective of the enthusiasm generated by the program;
- The PLT Management Committees (MCs) comprising 9-15 members representing key PLT organizations.

These coupled with the overall role of FARA, are many layers of decision-making. Serious efforts must be made to ensure the different committees work together efficiently and towards common goals, while at the same time checking to see that the elaborate structure of the program does not bog down quick decision-making and adjustment processes.

Successful IAR4D implementation will definitely require, besides a good solid and flexible structure, a clear, focused capacity building and training system that is objective and oriented towards achieving specific goals. At this time, without concrete projects in the field, it is hard to assess the impact or relevance of current training sessions. However, it is important to clearly identify areas of weaknesses for various committees or individuals that need to be strengthened and seek strong and proven sources of expertise to deliver such training, mentoring, etc. Some of the expertise might be embedded in the various participating institutions, which may consider this as part of their *pro bono* contribution to the overall SSA CP. But again, until clear PLS projects and activities are identified, it is hard to know what and how much capacity training is needed. Therefore, this is something that will have to be developed in tandem with specific project needs.

5.2 Lessons Learnt

The hardest aspect of implementing the IAR4D will be the “changing of the mindset of stakeholders,” to avoid tendencies to fall back to “business as usual” *modus operandi* and default institutional behavior. A continual effort is needed to transform conventional “business as usual” approaches to IAR4D “business unusual” approaches, and that is where strategic capacity building, training and mentoring comes in. During the Panel Review however, there was some evidence of “business as usual” elements particularly in regard to composition of teams as well as identification of potential IPGs and selection and implementation plans of PLS projects. The PSC and PCU need to work extra hard to identify these tendencies and counter them before they set in and affect program outputs in a way that causes irremediable damage. Part of this has to begin with the choice of interventions, which should be primarily (as discussed earlier) at the interphases of production, markets, policies and natural resource management.

The use of expressions of interest (EOI) as the institutional building blocks may have been flawed and attracted only a particular set of players, mainly research organizations. Additional, more proactive efforts are needed to ensure a broad spectrum of stakeholders (especially private sector, farmers associations and NGOs, as well as advanced research organizations) are involved in the CP, but more importantly that they are actively engaged and productive. A similar challenge applies to getting a good set of skills developers who are conversant with the new “business unusual” approach to R&D.

According to the MTP, the SSA CP has served as a good platform for promoting new partnerships among various stakeholders. However, it recognizes that there are specific capacity gaps among the stakeholders. Thus, additional and targeted mentoring and institutional capacity building is desired to bring stakeholders up to speed. There are also challenges related to cross-site communication and harmonization of activities so that learned lessons are synthesized and communicated better to all parties, forming basis for future training, information sharing and drawing up on potential IPGs and RPGs.

It was very clear to the Review Panel that the competitive grant system (CGS) used for concept note (CN) calls was a mismatch. While the intentions of the choice were very genuine, this should have been complemented with much targeted commissioned research. The reasons for this suggestion are elicited elsewhere in this report. The outcome is a set of nine proposals in three PLSs that are relatively weak in the very strength of the IAR4D approach, leveraging institutional synergies and expertise, and working at the margins of current research but centrally within the (PLS, value chain and innovative platform) interphases to enhance impact and competencies, catalyze innovative processes, synthesize and disseminate knowledge, and advocate appropriate policy shifts. Hopefully, the PSC and PCU will actively pursue the next round of PLS project determination and integration in a way that ensures current project selections are beefed up with existing or new expertise and content so they can be ably used to provide the necessary proof of concept and context for IAR4D.

It is also clear that the 18-months inception phase was too short to provide for such proof of concept and context, and to develop the kinds of stakeholder synergies and transparency that are required for team-building. In that regard, the current efforts of the SSA CP are certainly commendable. But the work is far from over. Building institutional structures and ensuring a solid set of stakeholders is just the starting point. Serious attention of the PSC and PCU must

now quickly turn towards the current list of selected PLS projects and implementing partners and hard questions asked on whether the potential outcomes of those projects will help verify the efficacy of the new approach, and if not, what necessary adjustments are needed. On its part, the SC must provide adequate flexibility to the SSA CP to shift course (if that is what is necessary) and make adjustments that will ensure delivery of its promises. Moreover, program flexibility is the hallmark of the IAR4D. The PSC/PCU must be willing to work with the PLTs and identify key priorities that will serve its purpose, and be willing to face and deal with the high initial expectations held by some stakeholders who might consider SSA CP a “cash-cow.”

Time pressure and shifting plans and procedures during the inception phase did not allow for careful analysis of needs and strengths of various stakeholders, crafting of a work program which identifies critical skills and skill deficits, and enables charting of a coordinated framework of engagement by various stakeholders. Hopefully, in the next six months as specific projects are identified and target outputs set, it will also be seen as important to clarify roles and responsibilities for various partners, as well as project on expected outcomes and beneficiaries, in order to minimize frustrations all around.

Jill Lenné (2006) highlights important additional challenges and lessons learned by the SSA CP, most of them related to the operational of the CP, definition of IPGs and expectations of the SC. According to the report, there was an overarching need to improve clarity and transparency at all levels of the CP process, with specific needs to refine the process with regard to greater efficiency, improved planning, less meetings (numerous meetings are time-consuming and expensive), more IAR4D training, reduced transaction costs, reduced expenses, improved communication and mainstreaming lessons learned across the PLS sites.

5.3 New Opportunities

The beauty of a new program or methodology is that it offers endless learning opportunities. The challenge is how to track such opportunities, document them adequately, share them broadly and incorporate positive changes as the process moves on. Already, the SSA CP has created many such opportunities. A lot of these have been documented in the many PCU and PLT reports, and questions linger on which of these can be extracted as shared learning and which already constitute tangible RPGs or IPGs.

Definitely, there is a lot to learn from establishing the many institutional structures already in place but the new opportunities in this process will emerge through a thorough institutional assessment of the structures, roles and responsibilities in an effort to improve productivity, efficiency and accountability while minimizing transactional costs. This will only happen once the structure becomes truly operational and implementable activities are on the ground. At that point, new institutional alignments may be needed to be established and old ones ceased. It is such flexibility of process and growth that will determine how truly dynamic the IAR4D is. Yet, to remain relevant over time and situations, such flexibility will have to be maintained throughout.

The very definition of the strategic purpose of the CP demands such flexibility (section 1.4.2. of the MTP):

- Research leader on processes, approaches and technologies;
- Catalyzer and facilitator of innovative processes and platforms;

- Knowledge manager and synthesizer, learning and sharing what is useful with key stakeholders;
- Capacity builder on IAR4D; and
- Lobbyist and advocate for alternative R&D approaches and policies.

These responsibilities mixed with the idea to work along interphases envisaged by IAR4D demands a paradigm shift in R&D beyond what current institutions deal with. The focus, therefore, cannot continue to be on developing new varieties and new animal breeds as identified during the Review. This challenge calls for the PCU to operate much more strategically and possess discretionary funds to respond quickly to felt needs and opportunities for intervention. One clear need is to energize additional groups of stakeholders - e.g. private sector and farmer associations - to participate in the CP, especially once clear target projects are identified and integrated within each PLS. New opportunities of engaging policy makers, ARIs, other private sector stakeholders, etc. will definitely emerge and may require orientation and basic training on IAR4D or other specific skill sets.

An important resource that many public institutions in African countries have never managed to tap is the untapped “latent” talent among Africans in the Diaspora. Since the SSA CP is thinking critically about doing “business unusual,” there is no better place to start than to scan available African skilled talent in developed countries that they can put to good use in the SSA CP. Much of this skill is already embedded in institutions that would love to engage and be useful to the SSA CP. Documenting such an array of talent and skills is a good starting point.

Lobbying and advocacy is what most NGOs and private sector do best. Such opportunities are scant in Africa, since there are no elaborate interaction mechanisms between public, private and non-governmental sectors. This is one area that the SSA CP could create new opportunities in, starting with what works for the specific PLS projects on an experimental basis in the next 3 years or so.

6 KEY OBSERVATIONS CRITICAL FOR THE SC

The SSA CP can be truly seen as a novel approach to conduct adaptive research in a trans-disciplinary and trans-boundary fashion. In the discussions at FARA HQ the approach was elaborated and the experimental nature of the methods clearly recognized. The team however recognized and emphasized the prime need for a clear methodology to be agreed upon by the research consortium in order to prove that the concept has merit in the African context.

The inception phase of this project has generated a great deal of enthusiasm for the CP and has brought together a unique set of partners that subscribe to the innovation platform. The process that the SSA CP took these teams through is impressive and has, in itself already generated benefits that may lead to long-term benefits.

The understanding of the intellectual leadership in the IAR4D approach to research and of the way it will have to be implemented is often at odds with the interpretation of the partners the Panel met at the Innovation Platforms of the PLSs. Even the research partners in these groupings appeared ambivalent, echoing the mantras of the IAR4D community, but often falling back into their disciplinary interests when the Panel probed for concrete examples of what would be done on the ground, despite the concentrated efforts to train the PLS teams in this approach. The ambivalence is also evident from the log-frames constructed by the teams. Even though the Project team leaders seemed to be able to “talk the talk”, the Panel had a guarded view as to whether they could also “walk the walk”.

The full project proposals submitted by the PLS as part of the competitive grant mechanism that the SSA CP adopted to elicit IAR4D proposals tended to be rather vague and excessively broad in their scope. As a result, none of the winning proposals provided a clear indication that the projects aimed to prove the concept or the context, and might thus degenerate in operational research projects or even small-scale rural development efforts. Even if the individual proposals do have some interesting entry points to generate wealth and protect the natural resource base, there appeared to be less than optimum effort so far to integrate these projects and seek synergies within or across the PLSs.

The IAR4D teams in the PLSs expressed some dissatisfaction with the competitive grant process once the TOR were painstakingly designed to elicit Concept Notes that would meet the IAR4D criteria. The approach may not have been the best choice as it pitted teams against each other and dispersed expertise, and the emerging projects by some accounts did not meet the expectations. The Panel also questions whether the skill sets of the partners that ended up as winners are fully adequate to cover the needs of the IAR4D projects. Part of this may be remedied by further integration of these projects and agreeing on some common research sites, thus expanding the partnership and integrating their sub-proposals. It may, however, be necessary to also commission some additional partners and projects to eliminate some obvious gaps and weak spots in the PLSs’ current proposals. A discretionary fund with the CP management unit would be helpful in this regard.

The integration and restructuring of the LK project, which has identified three different entry points in three agro-ecological zones within the singular PLS region would require some serious negotiating by the projects and partners. But this looks quite feasible and, during the tour with the teams, some convergence was already taking place. By combining the projects, the PLS will

come close to critical mass and may benefit from working on common themes and sharing of infrastructure. In the ZMM site, the PLS has opted for a multiplicity of sites and commodity-based programs two of which emphasize NRM-maize based systems and one, refreshingly, being a value chain based approach. The inter-project cooperation has not yet developed fully and the taskforce leaders admitted they had not had much time to meet and realign their cooperative pathways. In the KKM site, the PLS has opted for separation by agro-ecological zones but the NRM-based entry point appears somewhat similar in each project. With this kind of set up, synergy may be hard to obtain. The Panel has some doubt that the KKM set-up would be able to provide the critical funding or other resources at each site to fully implement the IAR4D approach.

In general, there seems to be a disconnection between the deliverables or outputs of the projects and the funding that is available for the projects (as also reflected in the MTP). Moreover, the outputs tend to have a traditional character such as new breeds or new varieties, outputs for which attribution to the SSA CP will be contested. In fact, the Panel was informed by the SSA CP PCU that the outputs would be at the interface of various partnerships, and that value addition would come from the analysis of the constraints to agricultural development and the institutions or technologies needed to overcome them. The Panel favors another round of negotiations between the PCU and the PLS management committees to re-orient the projects on those deliverables that the CGIAR and NARS have not been able to offer and integrate the projects so they can be effective and receive sufficient funding and institutional capacity.

During the field visits the Panel was exposed to the support the IAR4D approach is receiving from the SROs, NARS, NGOs and PS. There is a true sense of urgency to adopt this new approach among these institutions, a movement that may not wait for the research that the SC is endorsing to render its results. To some extent this movement may have been inspired by the SSA CP. The wisdom of this development is not for the Panel to judge, but the Panel does believe that the development and adoption of this new “paradigm” do not negate the need to conduct solid research on the validity and benefits of this concept in the various African contexts.

The Panel kept hearing the various PLSs refer to the fact that while the SC may not regard some of their innovations as likely to deliver IPGs; the PLSs would wish to be judged from the perspective of the African landscape, where even small incremental benefits to the farming community may take great institutional flexibility given the history of non-cooperation among various actors who are now coming together and also given that this approach may lead to greater Local and Regional Public Goods (LPGs and RPGs). The Panel was impressed with the private sector participation especially in conservation agriculture and soil recapitalization efforts in ZMM, but felt that the level of private sector, NGO and farmer associations’ participation in the LK and KKM PLSs could be improved. As implementers of the outcomes of research and policy interventions, it is critical to get a critical mass of these partners involved from the outset. However, the Panel realizes that without explicitly defined PLS-level projects, it is difficult to identify who needs to be specifically involved and at what stage of the process.

7 RESPONSE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

7.1 Issues

The SC in its deliberations on whether or not to accept the SSA CP expressed one major concern as it reviewed the materials and presentations of the SSA CP proposal submission, which it wished the Panel to address: Is the nature of the IAR4D CP such that it aims at uptake of existing technology (through the innovation platforms) or creation of knowledge and IPGs? The SC expressed concern on the risk of a predominance of local public goods compared to IPGs. In its decision to approve the funding of an inception phase of the SSA CP, the SC justified its action on the basis that the process of learning to establish effective partnerships that can generate international public goods is an IPG in itself if properly documented. The SC also considered the most likely public good to emerge from the IAR4D experiment to be the generalizable lessons that can be learned from the “local activities”.

The Panel concurs with this latter view, and was given the impression that this thinking was clearly considered at the level of the SSA CP PCU. At the conceptual stage, experienced proponents of the IAR4D approach clearly aimed for experimentation with the IAR4D approach at a few, carefully selected sites and de-emphasized the generation of traditional IPGs such as varieties or breeds or “silver-bullet” NRM technologies. However, at the PLS level the interpretation of the IPG concerns of the SC is different and often resulted in the listing of more traditional IPGs as outputs. Many of those appear either unrealistic given the short time frame or may not easily be attributable to the SSA CP as they may have been generated by partners irrespective of the SSA CP. On the ground in the PLSs, there is little evidence that they understand their undertaking in the SSA CP under the aegis of the SC as proof of concept studies. It is to be noted that the EU Evaluation Panel struggled with this issue and even questioned the wisdom for SC involvement in this process.

The SC commissioned Review Panel sees the involvement of the SC as legitimate in this CP, and recognizes the fact that the SC has a genuine role in providing benchmarks for expectations, through some clearly targeted projects; and by assessing the merits of this approach as a way to break the paradigm lock that has hampered agricultural development in Africa. The Panel agrees with the SC in that it is unavoidable and in fact necessary that local and regional public goods are generated in this CP since without these the merits or demerits of the approach cannot be documented. The challenge lies in identifying those public goods that are generated as a result of innovation platforms that would not have emerged without them. On the scale that these projects intend to operate, this calls for the development and implementation of rigorous monitoring, documentation and evaluation methods, a need also expressed by the PCU.

The Panel sees the SC involvement in this project to be strategic and time-bound, with the aim of providing the SROs and SSA CP with the necessary ammunition to launch and find the support for a full-scale program in Africa based on the IAR4D approach. This will also serve in building capacity within the SROs and their partners in the Innovation Platforms and will help further the value of IAR4D making the project proposals for local and international donor communities more relevant and as such legitimize the support to the long-term CP.

7.2 Responses

The SC formulated a rather overwhelming series of ten questions with detailed sub-questions which it wished to have the Panel address based on the original proposal, the MTP (which was updated on arrival at FARA HQ) the SSA CP strategy and field visits. The latter generated a wealth of additional documents, the most important of which were the project proposals on which the June 2006 MTP was based. Following is a more or less systematic catalogue of answers to the questions which then provide the basis for the overall assessment of the performance of the SSA CP as specified in the TORs.

1. As the SC approved an 18-months diagnostic phase, the SC queries whether the institutional learning process has been adequately documented. There seems to be no divergence of view on the “large scale experimental nature” of the institutional learning process. The Panel’s own observation however at both FARA HQ and at the PLS level was based on the unusual experience of developing the Innovation Platforms and the constraint analysis and verification process. Although varying in nature between the PLSs somewhat, it was felt that this was an enriching and unusual experience. All parties were keen to document this experience, and were in the process of doing so. Some documents of the individual activities were available. From the presentations at PLS level (for instance the PowerPoint presentation of the KKM region given at IITA), it was clear that the process is being documented in detail and can easily be put in print once the diagnostic phase has come to a conclusion. More problematic was development of objective criteria and indicators of the performance of the process. At FARA HQ the Panel was assured that the need for monitoring and evaluation was recognized and embedded in the cross-cutting theme on Monitoring and Evaluation and Impact assessment (M&E), which will be partly done by the PLS TFs and partly by an external agency based on some baseline surveys. The perceived need for M&E has trickled down to the PLSs, but seems more focused on project outputs than on the process itself. The inception phase has been too short and too rushed for these issues to have been carefully considered and properly addressed. It is suggested that the requirement for benchmarking of the IAR4D process based on verifiable indicators be made more explicit if this CP is to be continued.
2. With its provisional endorsement, the SC suggested that the diagnostic phase consider three sites and three contexts and concentrate on teambuilding and training resulting in a detailed log-frame with mile stones and indicators. The Panel found that the CP had followed this recommendation to a large extent. Team building and training was exemplary at the three sites and specific research plans were indeed developed. The three contexts were interpreted as entry points that were defined through the elaborate constraint analysis and verification process, keeping in mind the four-point IAR4D agenda put forward in the CP proposal. From these emerged the calls for concept notes (CNs). The CP opted for a competitive grant system, which pitted some of the partners who helped in formulating the CNs against each other while competing for the project. It is the Panels considered view that this may have done some damage to the institutional arrangement and eliminated some critical competencies from the projects selected. The partners the Panel met seemed to have the interest and commitment necessary for the project, but patience was running out on seeing tangible action on the ground. It is suggested that the CP-PCU be given some latitude to remedy the downsides of the competitive grant system in order to optimize the teams that enter the implementation phase.

3. In this question the SC addresses the dilemma of what the SSA CP is set up for. It gives a choice of being an experiment in institutional innovation in R for D or a means to define research needs and opportunities as well as recommendation domains to which the PLS results may apply. Though the SC concedes that part or both may be possible, the Panel sees that the two are not necessarily linked. Only by demonstrating that the novel Innovation Platforms are capable of defining (or rather finding) innovative solutions to local problems that can be extrapolated to a defined recommendation domain will the experiment be able to show that the approach has merit. However, ambiguity is pervasive in the proposed project design approach. Across-PLS, comparison is seen by most partners as a necessary part of the verification of the generalization of the IAR4D approach in SSA. But when the Panel probed the experimental approach within the PLS that would allow comparison of approaches, it became clear that the TF do not all subscribe to the unified experimental design of the projects. Thus, comparisons are foreseen with baselines (within sites) but not across the control sites. The TF members were however quite open to rectifying this in their projects. As concrete projects are yet to be designed, the SC in its possible extension of this CP should insist that methods included in the large scale experiments allow for the establishment of a dynamic baseline against which the IAR4D merits can be measured within and across the sites.
4. The Panel was given a report of the selection process of the Pilot Learning Sites. At some stage in the process the emerging regions were cross-checked with the Hunger Task Force and Inter-Academic Council reports. The priority sites turned out to coincide with some of the hunger hotspots defined in those reports. The Millennium Village (MV) project does not seem to have figured greatly in the PLS selection process. The Panel would suggest that the while lessons can be shared with others the CP should operationally stay clear of MV projects since the approach is very different and as such programs could seriously confound the experimental nature of the CP.
5. The answer to question 5 on the replicability of the IAR4D approach is a prime subject of the CP research agenda and a principal justification to conduct the work at the three sites. According to the FARA SSA CP-PCU, SROs, and TFs there was a general feeling that the question should be answerable in another three years of specific sites research and therefore the Panel does not concur with proposed site additions at the various PLSs and they should not be considered in these first three years of actual work.
6. The competitive grant system of soliciting project based on the call for concept notes (CNs) does not seem to have been satisfactory. The building of consortia for the submission of CNs caused the emergence of competitive groups that did much to undo the team building that had occurred during the analysis and verification process. Selection was done largely on the quality and innovativeness of the projects *per sé*, and not on synergies of the projects. Some of the partners who lost the bids may have had the key ingredients to make the winning proposals more effective. Also, the winning project teams within the PLSs have had little time nor incentive to work together and to create synergies and reduce costs. The team of independent expert validators apparently expressed some concern regarding the overall quality of the proposals. The lesson learned is that, if the concept is ever to be scaled out, alternative means of eliciting the best IAR4D research ideas in the targeted regions should be devised. It is suggested by the Panel that if the CP is continued the SSA CP-PCU be given some latitude and discretionary funds to forge project collaboration within the PLSs in order to enhance critical mass, close the research gaps and strengthen partnerships.

7. The SC wishes to know to what extent the projects that have been selected are calling upon existing NRM interventions and to what extent these are newly developed, as the latter would probably break the time frame of the CP experiment. The Panel addressed this issue extensively as it was concerned with the type of outputs that were identified in the current project log-frames (new varieties, new breeds, and new technologies). During the discussions it became clear that these outputs were largely addressing the SC concern that IPGs needed to be generated. Most projects recognize that the innovation of the IAR4D approach has to come from the institutional innovations and plan to draw largely on existing technology. None of the projects are very concrete in the actual project design and unless they have to go through one more iteration of site selection, integration and project design, they may end up implementing conventional or “business as usual” projects. The Panel considers the conception-Inception phase as work in progress and recommends that the winning projects be encouraged to quickly go through this necessary consolidation process before implementation of field work.⁷
8. The Panel visited the most security-risk prone PLS and traveled to the Rwanda/Uganda/DRC region. At the moment the region is calm and work would not be hindered. However, the Panel questions the wisdom of setting up three pilot areas for such a novel approach with teams that are on a steep learning curve, in three countries simultaneously with different entry points for each. The Panel would favor a phased approach in which the lessons learned in one PLS area are brought to bear on the next location, even if this might lead to some disappointments with the partners/countries that are asked to wait. Whether this suggestion applies to all PLSs equally will need to be considered by the PCU. As far as the Panel could discern, no explicit efforts were made to identify points of comparison among the sites and the Panel does not see how this could have been done under the competitive grant process. The Panel believes that if each PLS can demonstrate the merit of IAR4D in one or two locations, the proof of concept and context will be given and the scientific community can endorse the approach as scientifically sound. This would be an important IPG for Africa.
9. The Panel was given copies of the nine project proposals that won the competitive grant process by submitting highly formatted proposals. These are NOT work plans in the strict sense of the word. They lack specificity and reflect the objective of the proposal (to win the competition) and the rush in which they were completed. It is also clear that most of the teams struggled with the IAR4D concept, in part due to the uncertainty generated by the debate in the SC and attempted to satisfy both camps in their proposals. In fact, the design of specific work plans is now in order following the suggested consolidation process and site selection. The entry points are clear as are the research and development objectives. The teams are in place but the log-frames outputs are more like wish-lists and the time frames and budgets lack specificity. Most of the specificity will have to await the elaborated work plans, which should also address the issues of monitoring and evaluation, and assessing the validity of the IAR4D methodology for SSA.
10. The Program Coordinator as well as his assistant are in place and are competent. The complexity of the path chosen in this inception phase, and the many “chiefs” that have been created in the process have made it important that some authority be placed with the PCU,

⁷ A good example can be found in the Lake Kivu PLS, where the three projects have the following anchors: watershed design and management, integrated animal husbandry, and linking farmers to markets. During the discussion it became obvious that the watershed could be selected such that the other two components could be nested inside. Organic products in the prime areas might be drawing their nutrients from the dairy holders who would produce for the local market with medium quality land might produce the staples and fodder.

particularly now that specific work plans need to be articulated. While it is critical that the FARA maintains an oversight responsibility on behalf of the SC-CGIAR. The responsibility for the integrity and consistency of the overall program should be placed with someone who is full-time and dedicated to the projects, and this is clearly the SSA CP-PCU coordinator. At this point it seems that there are too many “cooks in the kitchen.” The Steering Committees (old name) are in place and have their Chairperson. Although these Chairpersons are highly recognized in the region and the respective SROs, they do not have a strong record in the IAR4D approach. This committee should be replaced with an Advisory Committee with capacity to provide direction in research for development, to reduce the possibility of stifling the PCU. The day-to-day operational structure of the project relies on Lead Institutions (LI) where dedicated and committed scientists with long records and distinction in their fields are struggling to remain a step ahead of the pack they are leading in the learning process. Despite some understandable apprehension by the LIs leadership, these centers seem to be willing to support the process. The inception phase has been largely successful in setting up the structures and the highly motivated teams in the field. This cannot be said for the cross-cutting theme projects that were identified rather late and suffered from the approach by which external expertise was solicited.

11. The diagnostics have been completed and credibly so. Problem identification has been done and verified and some limited prioritization done pro-actively. However, the development community and farmers tended to object to priority-setting as they see all the constraints as equally problematic and needing equal attention. Here again, the PCU and the projects must show leadership during the consolidation phase and when work plans are generated. Log frames and budgets have been developed but are not very helpful and will have to be redone with the work plans in order to instill specificity.
12. The time period of the inception phase of only 18 months is grossly inadequate to meet the demands placed on the CP and its partners by the SC. In part, this is due to the enormous expectation that have been created by the speculated size of the project in analogy to the other CPs that are already in operation. Some of these expectations have little to do with IAR4D and everything with the constraining working conditions in which the NARS and local partners find themselves. Some partners sense that the process of working through the SC is hindering their ability to tap additional resources that they perceive may be available out there. This situation is unfortunate and the Panel would urge FARA to develop a clear strategy with the SROs on how it plans to work within the SC framework, to what end and for how long. A clear CP exit strategy should be articulated with a smooth transition, if warranted, to adoption of the AR4D approach by the African Agricultural Development community. This should help so that all partners will be realistic in their expectations of what the CP can deliver for them.
13. The AR4D is an intriguing paradigm to help shift innovations from the laboratory to the practitioner. In the eyes of the review Panel the SSA CP has done the necessary homework to bring together the parties and establish the innovation platforms to conduct the research to prove the concept over the next three years. The *SC should clearly approve the continuation of an experimental phase of the CP to allow the proof of concept at the three pilot learning sites (PLS) before endorsing a scaling out of the CP to other sites.* A rigorous assessment of the validity of the concept should be undertaken in the third year of this experimental phase with benchmarks and indicators identified during the projects consolidation stage.
14. The Review Team encountered considerable confusion as to what IPGs should be expected from the SSA CP. Though it is recognized that considerable IPGs are being generated by the

partners in the innovative platform, the principle output of the CP is seen as the validation of the AR4D concept within the various African contexts. It is recommended that *the PLSs develop and agree on the methods and indicators by which the effectiveness and impact of the approach can be objectively measured.*

15. The process of construing and validating the constraints to increasing agricultural productivity in the PLS regions was participatory, innovative and rigorous. The emerging call for concept notes by the competitive grant process may not have elicited the most desirable coverage for addressing these constraints. *The SSA CP should rectify this in the experimental phase by distilling the scope of the projects to the minimum necessary to prove the concept and seek and commission complementary expertise where it is deemed lacking.*

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The SC commissioned review was a pre-planned and deliberative activity that was anticipated as a necessary step to be performed at the end of the inception phase (IP). This particular review was preceded by two other reviews one sponsored by the EU and performed by Fabre et al. in September to November 2005 and a second one that was commissioned by the SSA CP and performed by Jill Lenné in June 2006.

The EU review having taken place early into the Inception Phase, of what was scheduled as an innovative 5 year Program did not expect to evaluate consolidated programs and it therefore focused on issues of CP design and the establishment of systems and governance structures. That report highlighted the fact that there were only three technical activities, in the form of validation exercises to confirm entry points for the implementation phase. The Lenné report which came at the end of the Inception phase and just preceded the SC review, took advantage of reviewing the full range of activities performed during the inception phase.

The report by Lenné provided major insights in to the concerns of the SSA CP in terms of clarity, expectations and consensus from the SC in regard to the aggregated African Challenge program. Though performed at different times the reports generally agree that the progress made during the inception period generally fulfilled the planned agenda and that the SSA CP had made significant progress towards the achievement of the set goals.

The current review team made note of not only the documents coming out of the prior reviews but screened the SSA CP teams extensively, reviewing massive literature generated by SSA CP (see Appendix 4), visiting the PLSs and holding discussions with the PLT-MC. The conclusion from this rather intensive probing is that the SSA CP has in general covered a lot ground during the inception phase. In some measure the team validated the initial wisdom from the SC for providing for an IP. In its own view FARA has indicated that the *“The management milestones have been clearly defined in relation to scope of tasks and deadlines for tasks and decision points. However, the definition of qualitative management indicators and systematic methods to learn from setting up the program are clearly areas for improvement in this regard. The quality indicators were clear for “traditional” tasks such as evaluation of research proposals, but less so for the institutional development challenges. The development of performance indicators to measure institutional learning and organizational change in response to the way agricultural research is conducted over time will be an important function of the impact assessment team in the implementation phase” and the review team would generally concur with that self assessment”*. The review team is pleased to note that the SSA CP is making steady but additive progress and would recommend the SSA CP be allowed to go into the proof of concept phase for a period covering three years which would allow the SSA CP to fall in step with the presented MTP (See Appendix 5).

The review team however does recognize that there are some important and unresolved issues relating to the interpretation and integration of science based development program leading to difficulties in formulating a cohesive logframe with realistic milestones. Further the SSA CP needs to address the issue of information communication technology (ICT) strategy between and among the PLSs, if transaction costs are to be reduced in a meaningful, effective and efficient way. As noted by the EU review Panel *“these issues are recognized and acknowledged by the Program Co-ordinator however, and in keeping with the positive management style and approach, there is a high probability that they will be satisfactorily resolved”*.

Emanating from the multiplicity of consultations made, the review team has considered the various perspectives and has basically opted to provide what it considers as critical recommendations to the success of the SSA CP. These recommendations have been made under four major headings which relate to, the Program, Governance, Partnerships and Clarity from the SC/CGIAR. The rest more salient observations but more leaning towards operational adjustments are embedded in the main document.

8.1 Recommendations

Program related recommendations

- a) The SSA CP should be allowed to continue for a three-year period during which the proof of the IAR4D concept will be established and appropriate lessons learnt and IPGs shared. This implementation phase should occur only at the current three PLSs, and funding channeled to allow this continuation in a manner that avoids the possibility of fatigue and fragmentation of the newly formed and still delicate partnerships. At the end of the three years, the SC should commission another review to determine whether the IAR4D concept works and can generate deliverable IPGs/RPGs, and whether the SSA CP should merit continued endorsement by the SC and CGIAR. Establishment of an exit strategy is necessary to determine future funding options. Once valuable lessons are learnt and the IAR4D concept proven, additional sites can be logically added and scaling-up and out done.
- b) The SSA CP PCU must now give serious attention to defining and consolidating key priority PLS projects so they can help provide proof that the IAR4D concept works. The PCU should review currently selected PLS projects and allow them to be integrated and consolidated to ensure they adequately address critical linkages between productivity, market, policy and natural resource management issues. Each PLT should provide joint project proposals that show specific and realistic outputs, have ways to test the IAR4D approach and include adequate M&E measurements. Traditional ex-ante M/E profiles may not be applicable in the innovation platforms. If necessary, missing skills and expertise should be co-opted or commissioned from among ARIs and other institutions. But this outsourcing must be weighed against resource availability.
- c) Gained knowledge and experience from implementing the inception phase, including preparing a joint MTP, must be well documented and shared among partners and collaborators. Such knowledge should be reviewed to determine whether it constitutes IPGs/RPGs, and an effective method used to disseminate the same.
- d) Capacity building is critical to effective implementation of the SSA CP mandate. Once specific PLS projects are formulated, the PCU must work with its collaborators to determine the specific skills required and skill sources that need to be approached in order to enhance the capacity of various stakeholders to effectively implement their projects in a timely and efficient manner. Sourcing of such skills must not be random, and sometimes may be embedded within members of the various committees. Revealed inconsistencies among various stakeholders on what constitutes an “innovation platform” should be dealt with and a more practical approach used to bring everyone on the same page and to avoid further confusion.
- e) A Competitive Grant System was used to select concept notes that led to development of the current approved PLS projects. This system has its limitation, especially within the IAR4D approach which emphasizes co-operation and team building. According to

the SSA CP, “the competitive grants process highlighted important lessons where IAR4D elements have either not been internalized by PLTs or are poorly understood, namely organizational and institutional change, capacity building, knowledge management, M/E, log-frames and project impacts on the environment and on gender. It was also clear from this exercise that the IARC-led proposals were far stronger than the NARS-led ones. Whereas this might not be surprising, it highlighted the need for change involving awareness raising, capacity building, and some affirmative action to ensure a more level playing field”. This being the case, the review team recommends that future concept notes and project proposals be sought using a combination of CGS and commissioned research that allows for synergistic cooperation among bidders and a more consolidated project proposal that addresses all the valid issues. The CGS alone might be detrimental to the desired partnership building needed for the SSA CP development.

- f) The SSA CP should critically identify its comparative advantage and strategic role vis-à-vis other stakeholders in the agricultural research and development process. This will allow a clear formulation of activities that complement rather than duplicate research. According to the MTP, the SSA CP strategy would be to work at the interphases of productivity, markets, policy and natural resource management issues, and be a leader, facilitator, advocate, capacity builder and knowledge synthesizer on these dynamic issues. To be effective in these roles, the SSA CP must be empowered to be flexible, network and respond promptly to new opportunities and cutting-edge issues.

Governance related recommendations

- a) The direct management role, including staff and routine management issues, of the SSA CP should be gradually devolved to the SSA CP Program Co-ordinator, who must work in consultation with the FARA Secretariat. This will relieve FARA Secretariat of the implementation burden so that it can carry out the oversight role envisaged by the constitution of FARA in article 5.0 of its constitution. Further, it is suggested that the Program Steering Committee (PSC) be renamed Program Advisory Committee (PAC), since the steering role is mostly the function of the SSA CP leadership and FARA.
- b) The SSA CP PCU must be given more authority to steer the direction in which programs at the PLSs should evolve. To this end, it should design a more efficient and interactive communication system between the various teams, taskforces and management committees. This will improve performance, monitoring and decision-making within the CP. In addition, the PCU should have discretionary funds to consolidate different PLS projects so these can provide proof of the IAR4D concept and context.

Partnership related recommendations

- a) The SSA CP has invested great resources to establish a diverse group of stakeholders and to energize their participation in the CP. But there remains a great institutional and disciplinary imbalance among participants since most of them are from research institutions, particularly IARCs and NARs. This should not be allowed to skew research and project interests. The SSA CP must proactively reach out to more and appropriate private sector (PS), civil society (CS) and farmer association (FA) representatives and engage them at project identification and prioritization stage. Clearly, the success of scaling out and up is nested with such stakeholders. Current links, particularly with PS, CS and FA, are still weak. The SSA CP may benefit from expertise of someone who understands Africa’s and multinational PS, CS and FA, including their entry and participatory requirements, expectations and incentives. In addition, more gender

balance is needed within the CP. Many agricultural projects have failed in the past because of such gender insensitivity.

- b) A lucrative and untapped source of new skills, opportunities and innovations is Africans in Diaspora, many of who are well linked to public, private, civil and international institutions in developed countries. These can provide new avenues of funding, technology and information needed to stimulate productivity growth in Africa. The SSA CP should explore these linkages and possibly begin by commissioning a survey of what Diaspora resources are available “out there” that could be harnessed for “business unusual” acceleration of economic development in Africa.

Clarity from the SC/CGIAR

- a) The SC had recommended that the SSA CP concentrate on “new knowledge creation” and “cutting-edge science”. This seems to have created confusion and apprehension among SSA CP stakeholders about the kind of “science” they are expected to generate. Similar apprehension still existed during the review in discussions at different levels of the CP. The Panel recommends that the SC works closely with the SSA CP leadership to clarify its expectations of the program. The Panel suggests that proof that the IAR4D approach works and will deliver research outputs effectively to the African farmer and business community, and the shared knowledge from this experience, be considered as IPG. Subsequent delivery of RPGs and NPGs will be desirable additional outcomes.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The review Panel wishes to thank all those who assisted in one way or another during the review process. In particular the Panel is grateful to the Executive Director of the SC, Ruben Echeverría and his staff, for the excellent support provided to the Panel right through the mission. The Panel members are also very grateful to the FARA secretariat staff led by its executive Director, Dr. Monty Jones. The Sub-Saharan-Africa Challenge Program Staff were extremely co-operative all along and the Panel wishes to single out the excellent support provided by the SSA CP co-ordinator Dr Fred Kwesiga, and Dr Aggrey Agumya, the program officer SSA CP amongst others. This group of dedicated officers provided the Panel with archival and current information on the SSA CP. The team has been continuously responsive in providing updates on the SSA CP during the time when the review Panel was preparing the report.

The Panel members are indebted to the whole range of Pilot Learning Sites members who accommodated the tight Panel Program at the various sites and provided valuable insights into the process of partnership building and the innovations therein. The Panel wishes to give special thanks to the members of the private sector at all PLSs who generously gave of their valuable time and facilities to expose the Panel members to the co-operation mode at their own sites.

APPENDIX 1
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE CGIAR SUB-SAHARAN
AFRICA CHALLENGE PROGRAM (SSA CP)

The SSA CP has its headquarters in Accra, Ghana with a Secretariat based with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). The Science Council (SC) considered the Proposal for the SSA CP in September 2004. At that stage in the evolution of the CP, sufficient information was not yet available within the proposal, in terms of the specific research plans and science to be applied, for the SC to make a judgment on the relevance and quality of the proposal to meet the objectives of the CP. The SSA CP management have indicated that important science based outcomes of the CP will be novel approaches to institutional learning and the identification of researchable issues.

On the recommendation of the SC the first phase of the CP was designed to explore new approaches, to develop specific research objectives, as well as of institutional arrangements. Success in achieving outcomes would be a prerequisite for further Phase II implementation. Thus Phase I, which was expected to be completed within 18 months, would allow for the CP to define the research priorities and expected outputs of the Program and to explore and put in place the appropriate institutional arrangements. Funding for the novel diagnostic institutional learning phase (Phase I) was recommended on the understanding that the project would be reviewed by the SC after 18 months.

Background (as stated in the SSA CP proposal of September 2004)

The SSA CP is designed to address three constraints: (i) failure of agricultural markets, (ii) inappropriate policies, and (iii) natural resource degradation. The Program is based on the “Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D)” paradigm which is designed to foster synergies among disciplines and institutions, along with a renewed commitment to change at all levels (from farmers to national and international policy makers). IAR4D draws on Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM), which takes a systems approach to managing the interactions between soils, water, pests, and human interventions in agriculture but also encompasses the domains of policies and markets, and the effects that these have on the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of agriculture.

Taking these factors into account, the agenda of IAR4D proposed by the SSA CP focuses on four overall objectives:

1. To develop technologies for sustainably intensifying subsistence-oriented farming systems;
2. To develop smallholder production systems that are compatible with sound natural resource management;
3. To improve the accessibility and efficiency of markets for smallholder and pastoral products;
4. To catalyze the formulation and adoption of policies that will encourage innovation to improve the livelihoods of smallholders and pastoralists.

The broad scope of work inherent in the IAR4D approach requires four “support pillars” to foster internalization of the new way of doing business, and the “out-scaling” and “up-scaling” of program outcomes – out-scaling to neighboring villages or similar agro-ecosystems elsewhere on the continent, and up-scaling to connect with local, national and international governments and institutions and the private sector. The four support pillars of IAR4D are:

1. Promotion of organizational and institutional change to enable cross-disciplinary research and development and multi-institutional collaboration;
2. Capacity building for project teams, farmers, and scientists in African institutions;
3. Information and knowledge management (including documentation of new methodologies developed) to disseminate widely the findings of IAR4D work; and
4. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and a systemic approach to impact assessment, to track Program progress towards overall goals, signal the need for mid-course adjustments, and document the returns on investment in IAR4D.

For the first phase of the Program, Pilot Learning Sites (PLSs) have been selected by the Sub-regional Research Organizations (SROs), i.e. CORAF/WECARD, ASARECA, and SADC/FANR – one site per sub-region, each characterized by a different but complementary set of constraints to sustainable development. The three sites are the Kano-Katsina-Maradi (Niger and Nigeria) transect; the Lake Kivu area interface of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda; and a corridor that runs from northeast Zimbabwe through central Mozambique into southern Malawi.

For each site, Pilot Learning Teams (PLTs) were formed to address priority problems identified with the communities. These Teams were proposed to be comprised of members from a variety of scientific disciplines (biophysical and social) and from diverse institutions (e.g. national agricultural research institutes, universities, CGIAR Centers and advanced research institutes; extension agencies; nongovernmental, community-based, and farmers' organizations; and the private sector). It was suggested that the three initial PLTs will begin their work by continuing the participatory problem identification with farmers to further refine the problems and develop concept notes. The teams will pay particular attention to involving women agriculturalists who have frequently been marginalized in past development efforts. The diagnostic stage will lead to the identification of relevant "entry points" for research which will set the agenda for the work of the PLTs.

In addition, it was proposed that as challenges emerge: (i) task forces will be comprised of members of the PLT that together are best suited to address the particular problems and hypotheses; (ii) concept notes will be developed to address components that will have been incorporated on a single log frame that will set out how the PLT will address the four overall interacting SSA CP objectives, i.e. intensification, NRM, policies and markets. Budgets for the functioning of the PLT and the development of concept notes will require approval by the Program Steering Committee.

The SSA CP Program Coordination Unit will, through competitive tendering engage: (i) facilitation and mentoring services to support the Pilot Learning Teams from the outset to ensure that they work effectively across disciplinary and institutional boundaries and with their multiple constituents, and to foster broader changes in the institutional context; and (ii) the services of a professional impact assessment institution to set up and manage systematic program impact assessment that will provide assurance that the goals and objectives of the Program are being met and, where necessary, to facilitate timely corrective actions.

Governance and management structures will be limited at first to a minimal Program Steering Committee and a Program Coordinator with only basic staff support. The SROs will be resourced and relied upon to oversee and support the PLT in their respective sub-regions, with the Program Coordinator responsible for the facilitation and mentoring service and providing cross-team linkages for sharing experiences through methodology analysis and dissemination and information and knowledge management. The Program Coordination Unit will also provide a secretariat for the

reviews by the Program Steering Committee, SROs and the CGIAR SC. The Program Coordination Unit will require strengthening and occasional additional scientific capacity to assist the Steering Committee in assessing proposals and progress reports. This flexible Program governance and management structure will be capable of ensuring rigorous quality control and accountability.

Participation in the SSA CP will be open to all stakeholders in agricultural research for development in sub-Saharan Africa. Consistent with its mandate as the apex body for agricultural research in Africa, FARA will be responsible to them for the conduct of the SSA CP. This will ensure the involvement of the broad spectrum of institutions that comprise FARA, including in alphabetic order: advanced research institutions from the North and South; CGIAR centers; community-based organizations; farmer organizations; national agricultural research institutions; non-governmental organizations; private enterprise; sub-regional research organizations; and other players in the production-to-consumption chain.

Issues for the evaluation

The SC agreed in 2004 that within the new research paradigm described in the proposal - one which advocates working closely with farmers, local institutions and relevant partners at the field sites - specific priorities could not at that stage, prior to in-field diagnosis and stakeholder agreement on the priorities for change, be expected without compromising the bottom-up, participatory research process itself. **There was considerable discussion about the nature and objectives of the CP, in particular, whether it was aimed more at development through dissemination and uptake of existing knowledge via new types of partnerships, or aimed more at knowledge creation and generation of IPGs.** The SC felt strongly about the need for the latter and that the CP should focus on areas of CGIAR comparative advantage, including the generation of IPGs derived from research for sustainable poverty reduction. The SC noted that there was considerable risk that the IAR4D approach as proposed may focus more on local public goods than on IPGs. Hence, the SC urged the SSA CP to clearly explore the development of IPGs through the purposeful selection of sites that provide a transect in delivery variables (closeness to markets, infrastructure, institutional frameworks, social and economic conditions, etc.) so that generalizable lessons can be established from “local activities”.

Since an effective partnership is a necessary precondition, particularly in a Challenge Program of this nature, to achieve the scientific generation of outputs, the institutional learning from the formation of such partnership is a legitimate research activity of the CGIAR which can produce IPGs. In order to provide research leading to IPGs on institutional learning, the SSA CP was advised to seek research inputs from a partner skilled in research related to institutional development.

The summary budget for the first eighteen months (estimated at US\$ 4.8M) and the major activities timeline for the diagnostic phase, as submitted by FARA in response to the proposed 18-month diagnostic phase, are appended below and the documentation provided by FARA on 20 March 2006 is included as an annex to these terms of reference.⁸ The SC recommended that FARA make no financial commitment beyond the initial 18 months based on CGIAR funding.

Given the above mentioned background and issues related to the SC consideration of the original SSA CP proposal, the SC has identified the following questions to be addressed by the Review Panel:

⁸ SSA CP MTP for 2007-2010 and the SSA CP work plan for the transitional period of July to December 2006.

1. The SC recommended that the SSA CP be funded as an investment in research for a diagnostic phase of 18 months, namely a large scale experiment in institutional development for conducting more effective and efficient research, with the end objective being sustainable alleviation of rural poverty through the intermediate outcomes of NARS and CGIAR research, and development of a research system that effectively identifies and carries out research on the key needs in rural areas. If successful, the proposed CP represents a broadly applicable model for making research more relevant and effective in sustaining poverty alleviation through locally driven agricultural research. In this strict sense of the word, it could be regarded as an 'experimental activity' - testing whether this new research paradigm can successfully address major constraints in the development, dissemination and uptake of research results. Given the importance of the 'learning process' component during the inception phase of the SSA CP, have all CP activities be thoroughly documented and performance indicators well defined throughout? Deriving generalizable lessons from such indicators will be of key importance. Has special attention being given to identifying appropriate methods with respect to observing, measuring and learning from setting up the program?
2. It was also suggested by the SC that the diagnostic phase initiated in three sites with three different contexts, should initially focus on team building and training, be time-bound and as a result have a detailed logframe prepared with milestones, and indicators that can be monitored. Hence, the evaluation should focus on the institutional arrangements that have been put in place and specific research plans defined during the initial phase. The evaluation should then consider effectiveness in research problem articulation, priority-setting, definition of the specific research to be conducted, identification and longer-term commitment of the partners to be involved, and the planned outputs and outcomes specified.
3. Is the SSA CP being developed primarily as: (i) an experiment in institutional innovation in R for D or (ii) as a means of defining research needs and opportunities, including recommendation domains for which research at the selected pilot sites is relevant? While elements of both are possible, the design and conduct of the CP is critically dependent on the primary objective. The proposal calls for comparisons among the three chosen pilot sites, but one also requires comparisons within the sites with existing institutional arrangements. So if the former choice is being followed, what are the control treatments and baselines that will make assessment possible? If the SSA CP is being primarily developed for the second purpose, have the approaches taken in identifying the pilot sites maximized the chances that scaling up and out will generate the kinds of spill-overs essential in the production of IPGs?
4. Have the plans taken appropriate account of other recent reports and initiatives such as the Hunger Task Force Report (specifically regarding how better child nutrition contributes in driving agricultural research interventions to address poverty in SSA), Inter-Academy Council Report and the new Millennium Villages Program?
5. How replicable will be the IAR4D processes undertaken so far and planned in future? Do they represent a possible new paradigm of innovation systems?
6. Has the competitive grants concept notes process utilized by the SSA CP been successful in attracting sound research for development proposals?
7. It is important to know as early as possible what NRM interventions have been identified within the SSA CP activities. Are they the ones where there is some previous knowledge of processes and therefore there is a higher chance of being able to draw upon that knowledge? That will be important for the expected timetable of outcomes for the CP. Unless such an anchor is identified it will not be easy to fully understand how much is novel and/or how much is being captured from elsewhere.

8. The SC believed that there is merit in implementing the diagnostic phase at three sites rather than one but cautioned the proponents about the need to select the sites, and the areas within them, carefully, due to security risks. Have the points of comparison between the three sites been identified explicitly right from the start, and have appropriate means been put in place to make valid comparisons among sites? Have security risks affected the implementation of the initial phase of the Program?
9. Regarding the PLSs work-plans, which were targeted for delivery after completing the initial phase; do they include: identified site problems/development constraints; entry points; research and development objectives; activities and milestones timelines; and science/technology to be used; a logical framework, detailed budget, and the monitoring and evaluation process to be followed?
10. The SC requests the Panel to evaluate if: (i) the Program Coordinator, the Program Steering Committee, and the three PLTs are in place, trained, and operating; (ii) the IAR4D structure and teams are in place and operating; (iii) the diagnostic phase has been completed, with specific problems for research identified, specially the procedures for identifying the problems and the priority setting process for selecting research projects; (iv) log-frames have been completed, with outputs and milestones specified by problem area (to cover the expected problem areas in biological/agronomic/horticultural, economics, institutions, policy and marketing domains); (v) the coordination of project implementation and the timeframe for reaching the different sub-goals within projects (as well as - when do projects actually end) have been satisfactorily specified; (vi) the means of securing/following up about the research quality of the projects has been specified.

Terms of Reference

The external review Panel to evaluate progress and performance of the SSA CP after 18 months of activities will base its work on:

1. the original proposal for the Program (August 2004);
2. the Medium Term Plan submitted by the SSA CP (March 20, 2006);
3. draft SSA CP strategy and the Program first annual report; and
4. field visits and interaction with stakeholders.

The Panel will:

1. assess performance of the CP based on: the progress made on the design and implementation of the Program, technical matters (quality and relevance of science), and institutional matters, including feasibility of conducting research at the proposed sites;
2. evaluate the knowledge gained from the institutional learning and its contribution as an IPG particularly for SSA;
3. analyze how the new proposed approach adds value to the identification of the appropriate interventions;
4. respond to the “issues for the evaluation” detailed above.

The Panel

Given the nature of the Program as well as the identified pillars for the IAR4D paradigm the team will have expertise in natural resource management, capacity building, institutional change and rural economic development. The Panel will be composed of the following experts:

- **Dr. Cyrus Ndiritu** (Panel Chair), International Consultant, Nairobi, Kenya. Veterinary medicine, animal diseases, livestock, agricultural research management in sub-Saharan Africa;
- **Dr. Paul Vlek**, Professor ZEF, Germany. Agriculture development, agronomy, soil science, crop nutrition;
- **Dr. Daniel Karanja**, Sr. Fellow and Co-Chair, Capacity Building for Science and Technology, Partnership to Cut Hunger in Africa, Washington DC. Rural development, rural policy, impact assessment, agriculture economics.

Ruben G. Echeverría (SC Secretariat) will be Panel Secretary while Namita Datta (CGIAR Secretariat) will be resource person on governance issues.

Timeframe

The review will take place during May 15 – July 15 2006 (for a total of up to 20 working days for each Panel Member) and would include a visit to FARA Headquarters in Accra and visits to the Pilot Sites. The visits will help to assess progress and outcomes in the field at the site(s), as part of the review's overall assessment of the entire program, e.g. institutional arrangements, research teams, partners' perceptions, and quality and feasibility of the research proposed (log-frames, etc.) over the next phase.

The outcome of the review will be a brief (less than 50 pages) but detailed written Report (to be submitted to the SC by 15 July 2006) on the feasibility and possible means of continuing with the SSA CP.

The SC will discuss the Review's findings and make recommendations about the continuation of the CP to the Ex-Co of the CGIAR.

Schedule

May 10th: Panel is formalized (contract letters)
May 10 – June 5: Preparatory reading and virtual interaction
June 15 – June 24: visit to FARA HQ (Accra) and to 3 Pilot Sites
June 25 – July 14: draft Report
July 15 - submit Report to SC

APPENDIX 2
SSA CP EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL COMPOSITION
CGIAR SC Secretariat
11 May 2006

Name: NDIRITU, Cyrus Gathirua (KENYA) **Born: 1949**

Position: Private Consultant in Rural Developmental Studies

Expertise: Veterinary medicine, animal diseases, livestock, agricultural research, research organizations in sub-Saharan Africa.

Education: Ph.D. University of Nairobi (1978-82); M.Sc. in Veterinary Medicine, University of California, Davis (1975-76); Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (BVM), University of Nairobi (1970-74)

Experience: 2001 Feb/March consultant to review animal production and diseases research programs in Tanzania as an input to the World Bank mid-term review of the Tanzania Agricultural Research Project. August 2000 to February 2001 appointed Commissioner on International Research by the Danish Government for Development Related Research in Denmark to study research needs and make recommendations on research priorities and organizational framework. Director, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) (1989 until June 2000); 1999 Chairperson ASARECA Committee of Directors; 1990-: Board Chair of Kenya Veterinary Vaccine Production Institute (KEVEVAPI), and Board Member of Kenya Trypanosomiasis Research Institute (KETRI); 1990-: To review progress of the World Bank assigned Ethiopian Agricultural Research Project (EARP); 1990-91: Member of Administrative Council for the Small-Ruminant Collaborative Research Support Program (supported by the USAID); 1987-89: Director and Consultant with Agrivet Services Limited; 1980-87: Head of Research & Development Department in the Wellcome Disease Research & Clinical Programs; 1977-80: Lecturer in the University of Nairobi, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Clinical Studies; 1975-77: Part-time work in the Department of Medicine & Surgery, Davis, CA.; 1974: Assistant Lecturer, University of Nairobi.

Member of a number of professional societies, examples of which are:- Member of the Kenya Veterinary Association, Member of the Kenya Institute of Management, Member of the Federation of African Consultants (Kenya Chapter) and Member (Founder) Agri-Energy Round table. TAC Member from 1996-2000; Member of the CGIAR Oversight Committee in 1995; Chairperson of the NARS-CGIAR Committee (1994); appointed Board Member on CIMMYT (1996) and ISAAA (1995).

Name: KARANJA, Daniel D. (KENYA) **Born: 1960**

Expertise: Rural development, rural policy, Impact assessment

Education: PhD, Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University; 2003 Masters, Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University; 1990 BS, Agriculture, University of Nairobi, 1986

Experience: Current position since 2002 - Senior Fellow and Co-Chair, Capacity Building for Science and Technology, Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa, Washington, D.C.
2001-03: International Agriculture and Development Policy Analyst, Bread for the World Institute; 1998 Research Associate, Kenya Marketing and Policy Project (KAMPAP/MSU);

1986-95 Agricultural Research Economist, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI).

Research involvement: African Education Project; Project Leader, Kenya Maize Impact Study (received funding from Rockefeller Foundation and CIMMYT); Head, Economics Program, National Plant Breeding Research Centre; Taskforce Member, Kenya Cereals Strategic Research Plan; Counterpart Economist, GTZ Soya Bean project; Deputy Leader and Project Counterpart, KARI/CIMMYT/USAID Kenya Maize Database Project; Strategic Planning and Program Monitoring and Evaluation, ISNAR/KARI; Agricultural Policy Analysis, Egerton University/USAID/PAM Project; Technical advisor to Washington-based African ambassadors' Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

Experience working at national, regional and international levels on international agriculture and policy issues, including international trade, science and technology.

Extensive work and networking with smallholder farmers, extension agents, traders, bilateral/multilateral donors, scientists in NARS and CGIAR, public policy makers, private sector, U.S. and Africa NGOs and faith-based communities on Africa's agriculture and development technical and policy issues.

Consultancies for FAO, GTZ, USAID, UNEP.

Awards include Research Fellowship, Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa, (since 2003); Rockefeller Foundation's African Education Project; Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship Ph.D. Research Award; CIMMYT Dissertation Research Award; Thoman Fellowship on Hunger Alleviation, Michigan State University.

Author of numerous journal articles, book chapters and policy briefs.

Name: VLEK, Paul L.G

Born: 1948

Expertise: Chemistry, Mobility, and Availability of Molybdenum

Education: DEGREE SCHOOL LOCATION; MAJOR Ph.D. (1976), Colorado State Fort Collins, Soil Chemistry; University Colorado Plant Nutrition; M.S. (1972) State Agric. Wageningen Soil Chemistry; University The Netherlands Tropical Soils.

Experience: April 1998 to present Full professor and Director, Dept. of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Centre for Development Research (ZEF-Bonn) at the University of Bonn. ZEF-Bonn is a recently established (1997), federally funded multi-disciplinary research and teaching (Ph. D. level) institute concerning sustainable development issues. Member of the Faculty of Agriculture (Agricultural Chemistry) as well as the Faculty of Sciences (Geography). The Centre has an annual budget of US\$ 6M, 30% of which is core funding. (www.ZEF.de)

June 1990 to April 1998 Full Professor (C4) and Director, Institute of Agronomy in the Tropics, Georg-August-University, Goettingen, Germany. Taught courses in Tropical and Subtropical Agro-ecology and Food and Horticultural Crop Production, and led the institute with six permanent staff members and about 15 Ph.D. students employed in various collaborative projects overseas. The Institute addresses aspects of sustainable agriculture and natural resource management.

January 1997 to April 1998 Initiator and speaker of the Special Research Institute (SFB 1687) related to the "stability of the tropical rainforest margin", involving 20 colleagues from University of Göttingen and Kassel and 20 counterpart professors from the University of Bogor and Palu, Indonesia.

April 1994 to April 1995 Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, Georg-August-University. Rotational appointment. Responsible for 11 institutes and 4 experiment stations with 47 Full-Professor positions and 300 scientific and support staff members. Ultimate responsibility for research and teaching as well as administrative and financial management. The faculty also maintains a Centre for Tropical Agriculture and a Centre

for Agriculture and the Environment. In charge of developing a strategic plan "2000+" and restructuring of the school of Agriculture and preparation of the B. Sc. /M. Sc. curriculum. Term was cut short due to election into University senate.

August 1986 to June 1990 Director, International Fertilizer Development Centre, Africa. Established a new centre for fertilizer development to serve sub-Saharan Africa with Headquarters in Togo. Responsibilities included program development, fund raising, staffing, governmental liaison, and general administration and management. The Centre serves as a branch of IFDC and reached a budget of over US\$ 4M/year from 9 donors and 25 international staff members. Programs involve research, training and technical assistance covering all aspects of the fertilizer sector.

December 1983 to August 1986 Director, Agro-Economic Division. Developed, managed and periodically reviewed research programs in soil science, economics, sociology, related to fertilizers and food production. Plan, and supervise research projects developed on the basis of these programs. The Agro-Economic Division comprised a total of 23 Ph.D. staff members, located at various CGIAR centers and at Headquarters.

April 1982 to February 1983 Sabbatical leave. Spent 3 months each in South America, Africa, and Asia on a micronutrient study tour to assess the state of the art of micronutrient research in the tropics. A monograph on "Micronutrient Problems in Tropical Food-crop Production" has been published by Martinus Nijhoff, Publishers.

August 1976 to December 1983 Research Leader, Nitrogen Program, Agro-Economic Division, IFDC. In charge of developing a new program on the behavior of fertilizer nitrogen in tropical cropping systems. Major initial efforts were directed toward identifying loss mechanisms of N-fertilizers in soil, and nitrogen uptake by rice. Programs were developed with IRRI, ICRISAT, IITA, and ICARDA. Five Ph.D. staff members were involved in the project by April 1982 with financial support from USAID, UNDP, IFAD, and DGIS.

January 1976 to August 1979 Soil Scientist, Agro-Economic Division, IFDC. Responsible for initiating a research program on nitrogen fertilizers for rice. The program was involved in the Philippines (IRRI), Korea (IAS), and India (ICAR).

November 1972 to December 1975 Graduate Research Assistant, Colorado State University. Associated with the NSF-Rann "Molybdenum Project" of Colorado University and Colorado State University. Working on soil chemistry of molybdenum, studying the mode of fixation, rate of accumulation in soils, and availability to forage crops of molybdenum derived from molybdenum mine tailings.

April 1970 to December 1971 Graduate Research Assistant, State Agricultural University, Wageningen, The Netherlands. Associated with Acid Sulphate Soil Project financed by WOTRO (Dutch NSF). Studied the genesis of acid sulphate soils of the Bangkok Plain in Thailand with N. van Breemen.

September 1969 to April 1970 Research Assistant, State Agricultural University Wageningen, The Netherlands. Assisted in computerizing descriptive terminology for soil micro morphology. Supervisor J. Bouma.

APPENDIX 3

Locations Visited and People Met: A. The Lake Kivu (LK) Group Meeting:

	Name	Institution /Organization	Email address
	Uganda		
1	Okot Josephine	Victoria Seeds/Management Committee	jo-seed@infocom.co.ug
2	Freddie Kwesiga	SSA CP Coordinator	fkwesiga@fara-africa.org
3	Bekele Shiferaw	ICRISAT/Task Force 2	b.shiferaw@cgiar.org
4	Nuhu Hatibu	SWMnet –ASARECA	n.hatibu@cgiar.org
5	Martin N. Shem	ISAR/Task Force 1	martinshem@yahoo.com
6	Tukahirwa Joy	Nile Basin Initiative (NBI)-Kagera	jtukahirwa@yahoo.co.uk
7	Clesensio Tizikara	ASARECA-Competitive Grant Scheme	c.tizikara@asareca.org
8	Paul Vlek	Review Team SSA CP/University of Bonn	p.vlek@uni-bonn.de
9	Chebet Maikut	Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE)	chmaikut@yahoo.com
10	Dorothy Mukhebi	Regional Agricultural Information Network (RAIN)/ASARECA	d.mukhebi@asareca.org
11	Pascal Sanginga	CIAT/Task Force 3	p.sanginga@cgiar.org
12	Wilfred Mwangi	CIMMYT/Management Committee	w.mwangi@cgiar.org
13	Nteranya Sanginga	TSBF/CIAT	n.sanginga@cgiar.org
14	Daniel Karanja	Partnership to Cut Hunger & Poverty in Africa	karanjad@msu.edu
15	Emily Twinamasiko	NARO/Management Committee	etwinamasiko@naro.go.ug
16	Robin Buruchara	CIAT/Lead Institution	r.buruchara@cgiar.org
17	Roger Kirkby	CIAT/ Lead Institution	r.kirkby@cgiar.org
18	Kasele Idumbo	INERA/Management Committee	idumbo@yahoo.com
19	Msemakweli Leonard	Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA)	lmsemakweli@uca.co.ug
20	Joseph Mukiibi		
21	Abel Lufafa	Makerere University/Lead Institution	abe20luf@yahoo.com
	Rwanda		
	Sina Gerard,	Private Sector	
	Alexis Nkundayesu	Private Sector	
	DRC		
	Lunze Lubanga,	INERA	
	Sylvain Mapatano	DIOBASS	
	Elysee Mudwanga,	Private Sector	
	Cleon Mufunguzi,	Microfinance	
	Maheshe Hakiza,	NGO	

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B. The Kano-Katsina-Maradi (KKM) Group Meeting:

	Name	Institution	Role in SSA CP
1	Alphonse Emechebe	IITA-Kano	Lead Institution (LI) Coordinator
2	Braima James	IITA	Representative of LI on KKM PLT-MC
3	Arega Alene	IITA	Task force member Sudan Savannah (SS) project
4	Mohammad Badawi	IITA	Task force member for the SS project
5	Lawan Gwadabe		Member of PLT- MC representing Nigerian Farmers
6	Auwala Kawu	EEEEE	Taskforce Member SS project
7	Baffour Badu-Apraku	IITA-BBBB	Taskforce Member SS project
8	Nouri Maman	INRAN-Niger	Taskforce Member Sahel project
9	Daniel Karanja	Partnership to cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa	Review Panel Member
10	Uzo Mwokunye	Private	Chair, KKM PLT-MC
11	Paul Vlek	Department of Ecology and Resource Management (ZEF), University of Bonn	Review Panel Member, Ag. Chairman for the KKM leg of the field visit
12	Abu Mohammed Ataja	DDDD	Member of KKM PLT-MC representing Nigerian NARES
13	Chuks Ogbonnaya	CORAF/Dean Faculty of Science, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria	Member of KKM PLT-MC representing CORAF
14	Emmanuel Bennoah	Owusu-CORAF/CSIR-Ghana	Chair CORAF and Director General of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research of (CSIR), Ghana
15	Freddie Kwesiga	FARA	Coordinator of the SSA CP coordination unit
16	Ruben Echeverria	CGIAR Secretariat	Executive Director, CGIAR SC
17	Bagna Djibo	Plate forme Paysanne du Niger)	Member of KKM PLT-MC representing Nigerien Farmers
18	David Chikoye	IITA-Kano	Leader of Task force for SS Project
19	Robert Abaidoo	IITA-Ibadan	Task Force Member SS project
20	Aggrey Agumya	FARA	Program officer, SSA CP coordination unit
21	Mahaman Issaka	INRAN-Niger	Member of KKM PLT-MC representing Niger NARES
22	Abdoulaye Mando	IFDC	Leader of Task force for Northern Guinea Savannah (NGS) Project
23	Peter Hartman	IITA	Director General IITA

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C. The Zimbabwe-Mozambique-Malawi (ZMM) Group Meeting

NAME	ORGANISATION AND ADDRESS
Adipala Ekwamu	Regional Coordinator, RUFORUM Email: secretariat@ruforum.org or adipala@agric.mak.ac.ug
Agumnya Agrey	Program Officer, FARA Email: a.agumya@cgiar.org
Chivete Anesu Lavinia	Technician, R&D, HASTT - Zimbabwe Email: achivete@hastt.co.zw
Delve Robert	Senior Scientist, TSBF-CIAT, Zimbabwe Email: r.delve@cgiar.org
Grum Mikkel	Genetic Diversity Scientist, IPGRI Email: m.grum@cgiar.org
Joaquim Eduardo Aizequi Lameque	Head, Sussundenga Research Station, IIAM - Mozambique Email: eduardojoaquim@hotmail.com
Kumwenda Ian Namoni	Coordinator, MASIP Email: iankumwenda@yahoo.co.uk
Machiridza Onisai	Business Manager, Windmill (Pvt) Limited - Zimbabwe Email: machiridza@windmill.co.zw
Manyong Victor	Agricultural Economist, IITA Email: v.manyong@cgiar.org
Mapfumo Paul	Soil Scientist, University of Zimbabwe Email: pmapfumo@agric.uz.ac.zw
Mekuria Mulugetta	Senior Scientist, CIMMYT - Zimbabwe Email: m.mekuria@cgiar.org
Mharapara Isiah	Director, Agricultural Research Council - Zimbabwe mharapara@mango.zw
Mpeperekhi Sheunesu	Professor of Soil Science, University of Zimbabwe smpepe@agric.uz.ac.zw
Mucauro Otilia L.P.G.	Head, Directorate of Agriculture in Manica Province Email: otiliamucauro@yahoo.com.br
Rusike Joseph	SSA CP ZMM PLT Project Manager, IITA Email: j.rusike@cgiar.org
Siambi Moses	Country Representative, ICRISAT-Malawi Email: m.siambi@cgiar.org
Twomlow Steve	ICRISAT - Zimbabwe Email: s.twomlow@cgiar.org

APPENDIX 4
LIST OF DOCUMENTS AVAILED TO REVIEWERS OF THE SSA -CP

SSA CP Proposal

- SSA CP Proposal Volume 1
- SSA CP Proposal Volume 1 Annex
- SSA CP Proposal Volume 2 – Reference Materials
- Selection of SSA CP Pilot Learning Sites: A manuscript accepted for publication
- CGIAR SC comments on SSA CP Proposal

SSA CP Launch, January 2005

- Synthesis of the SSA CP Implementation Meeting, 13-14 January 2005

Calls for Expressions of Interest

- Call for Expression of Interest to participate in the initial IAR4D teams of the Sub Saharan Africa Challenge Program
- Call for Expressions of Interest to provide Impact Assessment Services to SSA CP
- Call for Expressions of Interest to provide Facilitation and Mentoring Services to PLT

Service Provider Proposals

- Proposal to carry out Facilitation and Mentoring Services to the SSA CP (**F&M consortium**)
- Proposal to carry out Impact Assessment Services for the SSA CP (**ECART**)
- Proposal to carry out Capacity Building for the SSA CP (**ICRA**)
- Proposal to coordinate Msc training for the SSA CP (**RUFORUM**)

Agreements

With donors (funding agreements)

- Agreement between FARA and DFID
 - Agreement between FARA and the World Bank
 - Agreement between FARA and the CGIAR
 - Agreement between FARA and the World Bank for the grant from the European Community
 - Agreement between FARA and the World Bank for the grant from the Government of Italy
- Agreements between FARA and Lead Institutions
- Agreement with CIAT as Lead Institution for ASARECA
 - Agreement with IITA as Lead Institution for CORAF
 - Agreement with IITA as Lead Institution for SADC
 - No cost extension agreement between FARA and IITA

Tripartite agreement between FARA, SROs and Lead Institutions

- Tripartite Agreement (FARA-ASARECA-CIAT)
- Tripartite Agreement (FARA-SADC-IITA)
- Tripartite Agreement (FARA-CORAF-IITA)

Agreement between FARA and Service Providers

- Agreement between FARA and the Natural Resources Institute Limited on behalf of the Facilitation and Mentoring Consortium
- Agreement between FARA and ECART on behalf of the Impact Assessment consortium

Validation Reports

- KKM PLS Validation Report
- Lake Kivu PLS Validation Report (English version)
- Lake Kivu PLS Validation Report (French version)

- ZMM PLS Validation Report
- Entry points for agricultural research and rural enterprise development around the Virunga Mountains of DR Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. A paper prepared from the Lake Kivu PLS validated report and presented at the African Crop Science Conference (Proceedings, Vol. 7. pp. 791-796)

Proceedings of PLT launch meetings

- Proceedings of PLT launch in KKM (English version)
- Proceedings of PLT launch in KKM (French version)
- Proceedings of PLT launch in Lake Kivu (English version)
- Proceedings of PLT launch in Lake Kivu (French version)
- Proceedings of PLT launch in ZMM (English version)

Minutes of Pilot Learning Team Management Committee meetings

KKM PLS

- Minutes of first KKM MC meeting
- Minutes of second KKM MC meeting
- Minutes of third KKM MC meeting
- Minutes of combined MC, LI, PCU and service providers' meeting

Lake Kivu PLS

- Minutes of preparatory meeting for the first Lake Kivu MC meeting
- Minutes of first Lake Kivu MC meeting
- Minutes of second Lake Kivu MC meeting
- Minutes of third Lake Kivu MC meeting

ZMM PLS

- Minutes of first ZMM MC meeting
- Minutes of second ZMM MC meeting
- Minutes of third ZMM MC meeting
- Minutes of fourth ZMM MC meeting

Minutes of the Program Steering Committee

- Minutes of the first PSC meeting, May 2005, Entebbe Uganda
- Minutes of Second PSC meeting, August 2005, Harare, Zimbabwe
- Minutes of third PSC meeting, March 2006, Accra, Ghana

Competitive Grants

Harmonization of Concept Notes (CNs)

- Proceedings of the CN harmonization workshop
- PowerPoint presentation delivered by Facilitator of the CN Harmonization workshop
- Notes taken by PCU at CN harmonization workshop

Calls for Concept Notes

- Call for Concept Notes from Kano-Katsina-Maradi (KKM) Pilot Learning Team
- Call for Concept Notes from Lake Kivu Pilot Learning Team
- Call for Concept Notes from Zimbabwe-Mozambique-Malawi (ZMM) Pilot Learning Team

List of the Concept Note and Proposal Review Team

List of Submitted Concept Notes

- List of concept Notes submitted by KKM Pilot Learning Team
- List of concept Notes submitted by Lake Kivu Pilot Learning Team
- List of concept Notes submitted by ZMM Pilot Learning Team

Evaluation of Concept Notes

- Evaluation of KKM PLT Concept Notes
- Evaluation of Lake Kivu PLT Concept Notes
- Evaluation of ZMM PLT Concept Notes

Recommendations by Concept Note Reviewers

- Recommendations to FARA
- Recommendations to Task forces

Submitted Project Proposals

- Project proposals submitted by KKM PLT
- Project proposals submitted by Lake Kivu PLT
- Project proposals submitted by ZMM PLT

Evaluation of Project Proposals

- Evaluation of KKM Proposals
- Evaluation of Lake Kivu Proposals
- Evaluation of ZMM Proposals

Cover letters to SROs on Proposal Review Results

- Cover letter to ASARECA
- Cover letter to SADC/FANR
- Cover letter to CORAF/WECARD

Medium Term Plans

- SSA CP MTP for 2006-2008
- Interim SSA CP-MTP for 2007-09 (submitted March 2006)
- Interim SSA CP-MTP 2007-09 Financial plan (submitted March 2006)
- SSA CP MTP for 2007-09 (submitted June 2006)
- SSA CP-MTP 2007-09 Financial plan (submitted June 2006)
- F&M Suggested Plan of Activities, Jan 2006- July 2006

SSA CP strategy

Draft SSA CP strategy (March 2006)

External Reviews

EC review

- (a) P. Fabre, P. van Damme, J. Sutherland & E. Bacioni, 2006, "Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program: Review of the Inception Phase," unpublished report, 91pp.

- Report on Evaluation of SSA CP Inception phase by the European Commission
- SSA CP European Commission Review: Trip report on tour of the ZMM PLS

CGIAR SC Review

- Letter to Chairman of the CGIAR SC regarding SC review of SSA CP
- SSA CP potential evaluation team
- Itinerary for SC Review Panel of SSA CP
- Terms of Reference for the external review of the SSA CP (English version)
- Terms of Reference for the external review of the SSA CP (French version)
- Letter to SSA CP Management Committee members concerning SC Review
- Letter to SSA CP Task forces concerning SC Review
- FARA response to ten questions posed by the SC review Panel in their TOR
- FARA response to questions by the SSA CP review Panel during field visits
- List of presentations delivered to the SC Panel reviewing the SSA CP
- List of participants in the SC review of the SSA CP

(b) Lenne J. 2006, "Lessons learned to date during the Inception Phase of the SSA CP, with particular emphasis on international public good (IPGs)", unpublished report, FARA, Accra 49pp.

Selected Power Point Presentations

- Report on progress with the SSA CP inception phase, August 2005, Harare
- Presentation of revised budget to EC review Panel
- SSA CP Presentation at CGIAR Annual General Meeting 2005, Marakesh, December 05
- SSA CP Presentation at the CGIAR Challenge Program day March 2006
- SSA CP presentation at FARA donors meeting, April 2006, London

Finance

- FARA funding status as 20th January 2006
- Revised budget submitted to the CGIAR AGM December 05
- SSA CP-MTP 2007-09 Financial plan
- IITA financial statement for ZMM PLS
- F&M Financial reports
- Impact Assessment financial reports
- Copy of telegraphic transfer of 50% budget to ECART for impact assessment
- Copy of telegraphic transfer of US\$ 100K to CIAT

Progress reports

Program-wide

- SSA CP Annual Report (January 2005 to February 2006)

PLS

- Lake Kivu PLS Annual Progress Report
- KKM PLS Annual Progress Report
- Report of the ZMM PLS winning task forces planning meeting, Chimoio, Mozambique
- ZMM PLS Progress report
- Report on the Mozambique in-country stakeholders' meeting
- Report on the Malawi in-country stakeholders' meeting
- Report on the Zimbabwe in-country stakeholders' meeting
- Summary report on ZMM in-country Stakeholder workshops

Service Providers

- First Quarterly Report of the F&M consortium
- Second Quarterly Report of the F&M consortium
- Third Quarterly Report of the F&M consortium
- First Impact Assessment Technical report (August 2005 to January 2006)
- Second Impact Assessment Technical Report (February to April 2006)

Lessons Learned

- Report on synthesis of lessons learned during the SSA CP inception phase

Draft Implementation Guidelines

- Research quality systems for the SSA CP
- A draft Integrated Program Implementation Plan for the SSA CP

PLS Log-frames

- Report on ZMM PLS log frame development workshop
- Report on KKM PLS log frame development workshop
- Report on Lake Kivu log frame development workshop.

List of institutions and individuals who responded to expressions of interest in PLT membership

- KKM PLT
- Lake Kivu PLT
- ZMM PLT

APPENDIX 5
DRAFT MTP logframe for the Program Coordinating Unit of the SSA CP, 2007-09 (June 2006)

Outputs	Output targets	Intended Users	Outcomes	Impacts
<p>Output 1. The IAR4D paradigm is validated.</p>	<p>2007 In the three initial Pilot Learning Sites, IAR4D and innovation systems approaches are implemented; methods and approaches for working through innovation platforms and value chains are articulated; multi-stakeholder participatory processes are functioning effectively; continual adaptive learning approach to project management is internalized in PLS teams</p> <p>Learning from initial three PLSs is incorporated into the selection and design of additional PLSs as the Challenge Program expands into new sites. CP knowledge management and sharing strategy is in place, fostering effective learning across PLSs and communicating findings to broader audiences</p> <p>2008 State of the art knowledge is generated and consolidated through CP cross-cutting projects concerning how to manage innovation process at landscape level and across value chains, and how to scale up and out the innovations emerging from the PLSs</p> <p>CP has expanded to its full size, incorporating learning and best practices derived from initial three PLSs into the operations of additional Pilot Learning Sites</p> <p>2009 IAR4D principles and practices are widely publicized among SROs, agricultural R&D institutions, NGOs, and policy makers in Sub-Saharan Africa, influencing strategies for agricultural research and development.</p> <p>Approaches to scaling out are tested: innovations generated in the "common sites" of the initial three PLS are disseminated and tested more broadly within the PLSs; mechanisms to identify specific extrapolation domains outside the PLSs are formulated and strategies developed to promote wider dissemination of innovations</p>	<p>Immediate stakeholders in PLS teams; farmer groups, NGOs, CBOs, agricultural R&D institutions, SROs, market agents, policy makers, international development community, donor agencies</p>	<p>Models for taking an innovation platform/value chain approach are clearly articulated and their value demonstrated.</p> <p>Strong partnerships within the PLSs lead to improved coordination and synergies among participating institutions.</p> <p>Knowledge is generated & tested for managing innovation processes at landscape level and across value chains, as well as for scaling out useful innovations beyond PLSs.</p> <p>IAR4D is widely understood and accepted throughout Sub-Saharan Africa as a valid paradigm for agricultural R&D.</p> <p>SSA CP is a global knowledge center on issues related to IAR4D.</p>	<p>Significant improvement in the design and delivery of agricultural R&D interventions and in the integration of relevant stakeholder groups, leading to greater productivity and sustainability of African agricultural systems.</p>
<p>Output 2. Technologies and innovations are generated and implemented that contribute to the sustainable</p>	<p>2007 Based on identification of key constraints and opportunities, site specific technological options are identified and adopted in the initial three PLSs</p> <p>2008 In the initial three PLSs, new appropriate technologies are developed and tested with PLS stakeholders, including integrated crop-livestock systems, INRM to improve system resilience, diversification of agricultural production into higher value crops, creation of enterprises that</p>	<p>Farmers, farmer organizations, NGOs, CBOs, agricultural R&D institutions, international development community</p>	<p>New technologies are developed that sustainably increase the productivity and resilience of farming systems.</p> <p>Knowledge is generated and tested for development</p>	<p>Improved nutrition and food security; increased farm household incomes and reduction in rural poverty; increased sustainability of natural resource use and greater resilience of</p>

<p>intensification of smallholder crop and livestock systems, linked to market demands <i>(productivity-sustainable NRM interface)</i></p>	<p>add value to primary produces, development of NR-based enterprises and provision of environmental services 2009 Understanding of the trade-offs between agricultural intensification and sustainable NRM developed for local contexts, as well as identification of conditions that foster sustainable intensification; landscape-level issues related to sustainable intensification identified and solutions developed. Preliminary demonstration of the impact of integrated soil, water, crop & livestock management innovations in initial three PLSs; strategy developed for scaling out of innovations within PLSs (Note: same output targets hold for new PLSs added in expansion phase, with a 1-2 year lag time depending on when additional PLSs come on line, and building on lessons learned in initial 3 PLSs)</p>	<p>of sustainable productivity enhancing technologies following and innovation systems approach.</p>	<p>agricultural production systems.</p>	
<p>Output 3. Market linkages that support sustainable intensification of agricultural production are strengthened <i>(interface of markets with productivity and sustainable NRM)</i></p>	<p>2007 Dimensions of relevant value chains in each of the three initial PLSs are fully documented, including the current functioning and performance of value chains and the identification of opportunities for new value-adding activities and enterprises within value chains. In the three initial PLSs, market information systems are developed and tested to guide farmer decision making concerning production choices. 2008 In the three initial PLSs, improved input supply and product marketing mechanisms are identified or developed, including strengthening of relationships to entrepreneurs and downstream market outlets across borders, in urban areas and globally. In initial three PLSs, capacity of farmer organizations and local entrepreneurs to interact with markets and market agents/forces is strengthened. 2009 In initial three PLSs, understanding of value chains and market signals leads to creation of new enterprises and value-adding activities, and shifts in farmer production choices. Alignment with markets leads to demonstrable positive impacts for farmers in three initial PLSs. (Note: same output targets hold for new PLSs added in expansion phase, with a 1-2 year lag time depending on when additional PLSs come on line, and building on lessons learned in initial 3 PLSs)</p>	<p>Farmers, farmer organizations, market agents and entrepreneurs, agricultural R&D institutions, international development community, policy makers</p>	<p>Integrated value chains are the axis for organizing agricultural production in PLSs. Market information systems align farmers' production decisions with market demands. Effective linkages exist between input suppliers, farmers, and market outlets. Stronger farmer organizations & entrepreneurial capacity permit capture of greater economic benefits at local levels. New production activities undertaken in the context of value chains.</p>	<p>Rural poverty reduced as farmers, farm households and local entrepreneurs realize economic benefits through improved market linkages. Improved nutrition and food security as more and better agricultural products reach markets.</p>
<p>Output 4. Policies and policy-making processes are developed & implemented that support sustainable intensification of</p>	<p>2007 In the three initial PLSs, policy constraints identified at local, national and international levels that affect adoption of practices to improve agricultural productivity and sustainability and market linkages. Improved policy options, relevant decision-makers, and decision-making processes identified. 2008/ 2009 Participatory decision-making and advocacy efforts undertaken to</p>	<p>Farmer organizations, local stakeholder groups and CBOs, entrepreneurs, policy makers at local, national and regional levels, agricultural</p>	<p>Understanding of policy constraints to adoption of IAR4D innovations. Innovative practices leading to development and implementation of improved policies;</p>	<p>Improvement in food security income and natural environment as result of increased impact of agriculture research and development brought about by a favorable policy</p>

<p>agriculture and effective market linkages (<i>interface between policy environment & productivity, sustainable NRM & markets</i>)</p>	<p>bring about policy changes at local and national levels (including strengthening ability of producer and other local stakeholder groups, CBOs, etc. to effectively articulate demands with policy-making bodies), to relax policy-related constraints identified in initial three PLSs (with benefits likely to occur beyond the specific PLSs as well).</p>	<p>R&D institutions, international development community</p>	<p>knowledge about how to influence the policy-making process generated. Changes in relationships between local stakeholders and policy-makers at local, national and regional levels.</p>	<p>environment.</p>
<p>Output 5. Institutional capacity and practices are strengthened to improve integration and support sustainable intensification of agriculture (<i>interface between institutional environment and productivity, sustainable NRM & markets</i>)</p>	<p>(Note: same output targets hold for new PLSs added in expansion phase, with a 1-2 year lag time depending on when additional PLSs come on line, and building on lessons learned in initial 3 PLSs)</p> <p>2007 Capacity development strategy formulated for initial three PLSs. Program of post-graduate exposure to IAR4D is developed and underway 2007/ 2008 Training provided to strengthen knowledge and skills of stakeholder groups in initial three PLSs regarding IAR4D principles and practices; facilitation and mentoring provided to PLTs, management committees and task forces in initial three PLSs to strengthen operational capacity and mainstream continual learning approach to project management and IAR4D (training, facilitation and mentoring for initial three PLSs may continue in 2009 but at a much reduced level) 2009 Required changes identified in the organization, management, culture, and incentive systems of agricultural R&D institutions (NARES, agricultural universities, agricultural ministries) acting in the initial three PLSs; organizational change management strategy developed; stakeholder commitment to change process fostered; change process initiated in institutions (this is a long-term process that will continue over the life of the Challenge Program) (Note: same output targets hold for new PLSs added in expansion phase, with a 1-2 year lag time depending on when additional PLSs come on line, and building on lessons learned in initial 3 PLSs) 2009 SSA CP interfaces with SROs and continental decision-making bodies to advocate for needed changes in the institutional environment related to agricultural research and development.</p>	<p>All program stakeholders</p>	<p>Improved capacity among stakeholders in PLSs to carry out IAR4D. Improved integration among PLS stakeholders. Institutional changes that promote user-driven processes of service delivery, and performance that delivers impact via improvements in the productivity and sustainability of the agricultural sector, generating benefits for Africa's poor farmers.</p>	<p>Improved performance of agricultural enterprises as a result of improved service delivery by agricultural (research and development) service providers</p>

