

ISPC Commentary on the PIM Phase-II – Pre-proposal (2017-2022)

Summary

The CRP pre-proposal on Policies, Institutions, and Markets (PIM) has much to offer the CGIAR in terms of delivering on important System level sub-IDOs and IDOs. PIM's Phase 2 pre-proposal describes the overarching goals and pathways by which six Flagship Projects (FPs) aim to strengthen the evidentiary base for better policies, stronger institutions, and well-functioning markets. This builds on the largely successful efforts made under Phase 1 as confirmed by the recent IEA commissioned review. The ISPC considers PIM to be strong on many fronts: a highly relevant research agenda with clear impact pathway definition and presentation; modelling and analytical expertise across a number of disciplines and topics; a strong record of publications; impressive external partnerships; leadership in gender related issues and analysis; among others. These are discussed further in the narrative below.

The argument for a CRP like PIM is compelling, but there are some shortcomings that will require attention in the full proposal. Some of the weaknesses of this pre-proposal are identical to the concerns raised by the ISPC in its review of the PIM Extension proposal last year, as well as in earlier submissions. These relate to the need to: (i) engage in a more strategic effort to establish priorities and achieve greater focus, with particular attention to PIM's comparative advantage; (ii) define optimal linkages across and within FPs; (iii) end or substantially reduce some legacy projects and further consolidate the portfolio; (iv) better articulate theories of change (ToC) at the CRP and FP levels, and to describe assumptions underlying the ToC; and, (v) define more clearly PIM's linkages with other CRPs, as distinct from its partnerships with other CGIAR Centres within PIM, through impact pathway schematics.

The recent IEA evaluation concluded that "PIM has added sufficient value to the CGIAR's research on policies, institutions, and markets to warrant the continuation of a CRP like PIM in the second round of CRPs [and] that IFPRI should continue to host the PIM Management Unit." The ISPC generally concurs with this assessment, but also believes this CRP has the potential to go beyond adding 'sufficient' value, with much scope to reach higher and achieve more. As a research institution, the CGIAR has the unique opportunity of integrating social science research and biological-agronomic-environmental research in a coherent research portfolio to achieve its SLOs. It is essential that PIM and commodity-based CRPs coordinate better to achieve collaborations and complementarities. The ISPC believes that more can be done in this respect. It will require some shift of emphasis from PIM leadership to recognize that their comparative advantage lies in part in their relationship to the rest of the CGIAR, rather than as a standalone social science research program. PIM's impact will come in part from its own research but, also, from contributing to the success of other CRPs. The ISPC recognizes that in some respects, PIM is being called to resolve a shortcoming (outlined in the Social Science Stripe Review from a few years ago) in social science capacity and effectiveness in CGIAR Centers. But this deficiency also poses an opportunity for PIM to play a valuable role in contributing to other CRPs on topics such as value chains, seed systems, livelihoods, and priority setting.

Recommendation: The ISPC considers this pre-proposal **Satisfactory with adjustment**, and recommends inviting the proponents to submit a full proposal, taking into account the ISPC's

comments below and specifically addressing the following issues or providing a justification for the lack of change:

- Emphasize and outline a plan for engaging in a transparent and systematic exercise to establish its own priorities, with a goal of achieving greater strategic focus, and paying particular attention to comparative advantage
- Define a strategy for more effectively integrating social science and policy research across CRPs to maximize synergies, i.e., elaborate on how PIM will engage with and leverage efforts of other CRPs, particularly the AFS CRPs, to achieve System objectives.
- Show more clearly and present a more coherent rationale for the FP structure within the CRP and the value of linkages between CoAs within each FP;
- Articulate more clearly the ToC at the program and FP levels describing assumptions underlying the ToC and the assumptions and risks within each impact pathway.
- Reconsider specific aspects of the FPs, in terms of relevance, comparative advantage and linkages with other CRPs, and topics missing from the policy agenda, e.g., related to input and output (especially seed) markets, farm size dynamics.

[Score: B]

Overall analysis as an integral part of the CRP portfolio B

In many parts of the world, the policy and institutional environment impedes rather than enables agricultural growth and economic development, resulting in persistent poverty, hunger, and deterioration of natural resources. To address development constraints of this nature, PIM proposes a portfolio of studies aimed at strengthening the evidentiary base for better policies, stronger institutions, and well-functioning markets. Sub-Saharan Africa is the primary focus of PIM, with additional attention to South Asia, lagging areas of East Asia, and more modest engagement elsewhere. The key public goods targeted by PIM's research include high-quality publications, new tools and methods, open-access datasets, improved design of development programs, options for policy reforms, and proposals to strengthen institutions. The users of these public goods are expected to be researchers, development practitioners, funding agencies, governments at all levels, private sector firms, and the media.

The argument for a CRP like PIM is compelling. Research targeted toward key policy barriers or institutional bottlenecks at the national or regional level can achieve high leverage, since the number of people affected is large. Thus, a balanced CGIAR research portfolio should include a CRP such as this one with its clear focus on social science research targeting improved policies, institutions and markets. PIM provides leadership for this within CGIAR. The CRP is highly relevant to the mission of the CGIAR and is uniquely positioned to make a significant contribution to delivery at the CGIAR system level. While *grand challenges* are not explicitly mentioned in the pre-proposal, aside from a few casual references to climate change and "other" challenges, few would argue that the challenges related to overcoming poor policies and institutions are not in every sense of the word 'grand'. Nevertheless, more explicit reference to the grand challenges would be useful to see in the full proposal.

PIM's work is structured around the six interrelated FPs that reinforce the overall CGIAR portfolio and jointly contribute to the three CGIAR SLOs. The FPs have many excellent components, but the *added value* of these within and especially across the FPs is not always apparent. Several FPs seem like odd clusters of activities that do not have coherence; others seem well defined. Some omissions seem quite puzzling for this pre-proposal. There is hardly any reference to analysis of agricultural policies that have been widely debated in recent years, e.g., related to fertilizer subsidies, irrigation, seed systems and taxes. Subsidies in any

context are mentioned only a few times. “Inefficiencies” are mentioned only twice. There is little discussion of policy and regulatory issues that may arise as food systems change and mature in developing countries – except in the context of regulation relating to innovation and biotechnology. There is virtually no discussion of seed system policies, food safety, water management or land degradation (although the latter two are implicit in FP5). It seems that some of the most basic areas of policy analysis have dropped off PIM’s agenda – especially those having to do with input and output markets and the corresponding distortions.

One might also question the rationale for including certain components of the work within this CRP. FP1 is intended to provide services to the rest of the CGIAR through its foresight work, adoption analysis, and impact assessment, but it is not clear these tasks belong inside this CRP. These functions are needed in the CGIAR, but do they belong in PIM (or IFPRI)? Some of these functions can be performed with more independence outside this CRP, and this FP seems duplicative of work already taking place or intended to take place elsewhere in the System. At the same time, there are other PIM functions – such as data management and distribution – that fall outside the domain of any of its FPs. For example, there is no discussion of the management and dissemination of household survey data collected by PIM and its collaborators and there is very little discussion of policy dialog outside the CSSPs, which are little discussed in the proposal. CSSPs are a major and highly worthwhile activity undertaken within IFPRI, but the pre-proposal is almost silent on how these programs fit into the PIM portfolio. Their budget lines are included within PIM, but there is no discussion of how the CSSPs contribute to the strategic needs of PIM, nor of synergies with other PIM activities. The CSSPs are probably generating research questions and data of relevance to PIM and other CRPs, and this should be explained. The full proposal for PIM should address the relationship between the CSSPs and PIM’s research agenda.

Each FP section presents *Lessons learned* from the Phase I and how Phase II will address these, but this is very uneven across the FPs and often too general. The PIM full proposal would benefit markedly from more detailed references to work completed under Phase 1 and how Phase 2 builds on that previous effort. The ISPC review of the PIM extension proposal recommended more strategic effort was required for establishing priorities and achieving focus; greater movement towards ending some activities (legacy projects) and further consolidation; articulating better ToC at the program and FP levels, mapping impact pathways to the IDOs, describing assumptions underlying the ToC and the assumptions and risks within each impact pathway; and stronger linkages with other CRPs. The pre-proposal reflects some steps along these lines, but in general there seems to have been insufficient effort to respond to these and previous comments from the ISPC. The recent IEA review called for a more strategic approach to collaboration with other CRPs, such as joint funding (not evident in the pre-proposal); and the need for a capacity development strategy. For selected FPs, there is also a need for increased attention to gender. Capacity development strategy still requires attention.

Linkages with other CRPs should be strengthened in Phase II. Annex II presents a matrix of intended collaborations with other CRPs where expected contributions are listed for PIM and other CRPs. The integrative CRPs are identified as collaborators, but it is striking that the various agri-food system CRPs are not. While some information as to how PIM will work with other CRPs is provided under each FP, at the CRP level it is insufficient. The integration with other CRPs seems to fall primarily into only a few of the FPs: in particular, FP1, FP5 (very convincingly), and FP6. By contrast, the text on FP2 and FP3 seems to be written from an entirely different perspective. These FPs seem to have research agendas that are distinct from what the rest of the CRPs are doing, yet FP2 and FP3 deal with issues that arise in

almost every one of the AFS CRPs. In the full proposal, PIM should elaborate on linkages with the specific AFS CRPs. Important here is for the AFS CRPs to understand what they can obtain from collaboration with PIM. What is needed is not simply some cost-benefit analysis of innovations, but a far richer analysis of how behavior and institutions can induce or constrain technology adoption, and how in turn the adoption of innovations will change behavior and induce institutional changes.

PIM projects that approximately one-third of W1/W2 funds will be implemented through co-investment agreements with other CRPs. Further elaboration of co-investment and detailed joint work programs, designed collaboratively, must be presented in the full proposal.

Theory of Change and Impact Pathway B

PIM does not present an explicit ToC for the whole CRP. A ToC section (combined with impact pathway) is included under each FP, but there is not an explicit discussion of ToC. Some elements of the ToC are included in the section ‘Demand for this research – Who will use it and to do what’. The pre-proposal lists expected outcomes from each CoA only. Hence, PIM has not responded fully to the request for CRP- and FP-level ToCs, and thus it is not possible to judge their plausibility. A ToC would provide a consistent overall structure, map out how FPs complement each other and thus help prioritize the FPs, placing the six FPs as the impact pathways to achievement of the overarching CRP outcomes (instead of the Global/ National/ Program/ Methods impact pathways provided). This, in turn, would provide guidelines for the relative importance of the FPs in allocating the PIM budget across them.

PIM does address the challenge of improving its program-level impact pathway through Annex 1, which shows the expected contribution of PIM at the level of sub-IDOs through the six FPs. In Fig. 2, PIM also shows its four primary impact pathways. Risks and assumptions are also addressed there. The impact pathway is feasible and aligned with SRF IDOs and sub-IDOs.

It is striking to see no explicit discussion of PIM’s work having impact through improved targeting or delivery of results from the CGIAR as a whole. In the section that addresses PIM’s impact pathways (pp. 11-12), there seems to be little or no emphasis on a support role within the CGIAR. The text of the pre-proposal suggests that PIM sees itself as a supplier of tools, methods and analysis to other CRPs, and perhaps as a convenor of communities of practice, but not really as a partner, with the notable exception of FP5.

Cross-cutting themes

PIM presents a good summary of its *gender* research. The pre-proposal notes that there is gender research within each FP, but FP6 integrates gender research across the FPs. Lessons learned from Phase 1 are described. In Phase 2, new emphasis will be placed on the joint nature of men’s and women’s actions in securing their livelihoods, while recognizing the importance of individual agency - a positive development. This will require development of new tools and analytical approaches. Gender is now explicitly mentioned, and ways and means of building a more explicit gender dimension into FP1 and FP4 (as per the IEA review) are discussed. There is no mention of *youth* at the CRP level, which may need to be addressed in the full proposal.

PIM has two clusters that address the *enabling environment*. Firstly in FP1, CoA 1.3 looks at the enabling environment for adoption of technology and secondly in FP3, CoA 3.1 addresses the enabling environment for value chains. Over and above that explicit recognition, the overarching thrust of this CRP is to examine specific policies, institutions and market issues that bear on the ‘enabling environment’.

In response to the recent IEA evaluation, PIM's *capacity development* strategy is being further elaborated jointly with IFPRI to draw lessons from a recent external evaluation of past capacity development work. PIM will focus on four of the nine components of the CGIAR CapDev Framework. Each FP has a section on how it will integrate capacity development into the planned activities. PIM's efforts around capacity development seem to focus on training people and organizations in tools developed within PIM, rather than on broader upgrading of individual skills or institutional capacity.

Budget

PIM proposes a budget of US \$110 million in 2017, increasing gradually to US\$125 million in 2022, for a total of US\$695 million over the six years. This seems reasonable given that this is the only dedicated social science CRP and it covers a broad range of activities. The proposed amount for 2017 is 15% higher than the actual projected expenses of PIM for 2015 (US\$95 million). The growth of the program seems justifiable given the projected trends in the sectoral composition of development finance, rising concerns about employment and job creation, and risks of higher food prices. The balance across FPs is perhaps skewed slightly by the very large bilateral component of funding in the CSSPs, which fall into FP2. By contrast, FP3 and FP4 seem heavily dependent on W1/W2 funds, relative to the rest of the portfolio.

The budget is constructed with the assumption that US\$40 million will be available to PIM through W1/W2 in 2017 and US\$70 million mobilized through bilateral/W3 grants. The 2017 budget (Table 2) is unevenly distributed across FPs; some FPs have an implied budget for the six-year period above the maximum indicated in the 'Guidance for the pre-proposals' document. PIM leadership believes the amounts are warranted by the agenda to be addressed. For instance, the size of FP1 is justified by the increase in demand for the foresight work, reflected in the high amount of bilateral/W3 funding projected to be available for this work, and the expansion of each of the FP's three clusters compared to Phase 1. Both FP1 and FP3 host well-developed communities of practice, and these will continue to grow.

Governance and management A

The current Science and Policy Advisory Panel will be replaced by an *Independent Science Council* (ISC) comprised of 8–11 eminent scientists and policy advisers, mostly from outside CGIAR and representing relevant constituencies as recommended by the IEA G&M review. The PIM Director reports to the IFPRI Director General (DG), and through him/her to the IFPRI Board, which retains responsibility for performance of the program. The Program Director manages the Program Management Unit (PMU) and chairs the *Management Committee*. The MC will be comprised of FP leaders, selected representatives of participating Centers, and others. The MC will assist the Director in developing the work program, overseeing its implementation, assuring adequate monitoring and evaluation, implementing the partnerships strategy, and raising funds.

FP and CoA leaders will be selected prior to the launch of Phase 2 using relevant criteria. PIM's current FP and CoA leaders have led the process of developing the pre-proposal, and their CVs are attached in Annex VI. FP leaders have both a scientific oversight and a management role. The track record of the *Leadership Team* is impressive. It includes mostly members from IFPRI but also from other CGIAR centres, ARIs and universities. This is a formidable team of economists and social scientists. FP TORs for the positions have been developed.

PIM does not seem to have a *partnership strategy* although it is cognizant of the need to consider the strategic fit and relevance of partners. Effective partnerships are essential for

PIM's research to be of high quality and generate outcomes. PIM lists an impressive array of partners. PIM intends to strengthen its linkages with the other CRPs and selectively deepen engagement with a limited number of external strategic partners. Strategic partners will share in management of PIM research, provide expertise and connections with clients, and assist in mobilizing funding. The named partners for each flagship seem appropriate for the planned activities. The ARIs involved are leaders in their fields.

FP1: *Technological Innovation and Sustainable Intensification* [Score: B]

FP1 brings together IFPRI's longstanding activities in foresight modelling, documenting research investment at the national level, and a relatively new body of work on agricultural adoption. In Phase 2 the tools for quantitative foresight modelling will be broadened to address additional quantitative outcomes (e.g., nutrition and poverty in addition to the present focus on hunger and resource use). All three CoAs bring value to the CGIAR, but it is not entirely clear that they all belong within PIM or that they have a comparative advantage in all respects. The strategic foresight work and modelling represent an international public good. IFPRI/PIM's models are widely used and cited, and there is a clear ToC for this work. CoA2 provides a useful focus on innovation systems; this is important work although it is not always clear where the demand comes from for some elements of the cluster (e.g., ASTI). Technology adoption is an issue of obvious relevance to the CGIAR, although PIM's comparative advantage in this area isn't obvious. An alternative approach would be for PIM to play a minor supporting role with respect to other CRPs, rather than defining it as a CoA within PIM.

The scientific quality in this FP is generally high. The modelling work has taken heavy criticism from outsiders, largely because of its opacity and a tendency for users of the models to downplay the sensitivity of the model results to deeply embedded structural assumptions. There has been little effort to validate the models by comparing past predictions to realized outcomes. Because of the reliance on these models, and because of the criticism, it would seem important at some stage to test the models in this fashion.

The comparative advantage of PIM in these three CoAs is varied. There are no obvious alternative providers for the modelling activities – PIM is providing modelling at a level of detail that other providers do not have. But there are other institutional models, e.g. the GTAP program, based in a university. Questions have been raised elsewhere about whether the foresight work and modelling work would be better housed under ISPC or a different system entity, rather than within one of the CRPs. A specific question arises with ASTI, which does not seem like an obvious component of the CGIAR research portfolio. Nevertheless, it is a valuable activity generating a clear and well-defined IPG at modest cost, and it is not clear where else it should be housed. CoA3 focuses on adoption and impact, presumably looking at cross-cutting issues in partnership with other CRPs. On the adoption side, there are external entities such as ATAI and 3ie that are addressing many of the same questions about constraints to adoption with far more resources and rigor. It is not clear what role this cluster intends to perform, other than helping to develop a community of practice and enhancing internal coordination and quality—which would indeed be useful. This is true as well with respect to the proposed impact assessment work. Impact work is carried out by most or all other CRPs, as well as by SPIA and a large number of external researchers. 'Is this a key role for PIM?' seems a relevant question.

Gender issues are not addressed in depth in this FP nor is there much discussion of the extent to which the ToC for this FP is dependent on an enabling environment in which modelling results are translated into policy. This FP accounts for a significant fraction of PIM's budget (26%), although much of the work is bilaterally funded.

FP2: Inclusive Growth and Rural Transformation. [Score: C]

Understanding the complexities of economic transformation and particularly the implications for job creation for young men and women, is the topic of FP2. In Phase 2, the work on national policy will focus more explicitly on jobs, especially for rural young people, and work on the political economy of the policy process will be expanded in response to recommendations of the IEA, ISPC and the PIM Science Policy and Advisory Panel.

The issues around inclusive growth and transformation are at the heart of the challenges faced by the CGIAR. This FP has defined the topic in a narrow fashion that makes use of its existing skills but perhaps fails to address a broader set of challenges. FP2 has three CoAs: CoA1: job creation programs and inclusive growth; CoA2: expenditure tracking and prioritization for public sector organizations; and CoA3: political economy of the policy process. A number of key issues around inclusive growth seem to be absent: to name a few, issues around farm size and land distribution, remoteness and the economics of investment in marginal areas, inclusiveness of employment in large-scale farming and agri-processing, and contract farming and its ability to meet the livelihood needs of smallholders. It is not clear that the omission of these issues reflects a strategic choice, i.e., relevance for the CGIAR, as opposed to an agenda based on funding opportunities or current expertise inside PIM. (An exception is the welcome addition of a political economy portfolio, which clearly responds to a need that has been identified.) *The full proposal should flesh out how CoA1 will cover the landscape more strategically. Currently, this FP agenda seems poorly developed, lumping together without explanation a wide range of topics of interest to the CGIAR. The CSSPs are never mentioned in the context of the strategic coherence of the CRP portfolio.* It is disturbing to see that there does not seem to be much attempt to build strategically on questions and issues that arise in the CSSPs. If there is no feedback from the CSSPs into the CRP or the FP, then they should probably be moved to another institutional location.

In terms of linkages, FP2 needs to reach out more to other CRPs. This FP seems to have a research agenda that is distinct from what the rest of the CRPs are doing, yet FP2 deals with issues that arise in almost every other CRP. The document says little about potential collaboration with other CRPs, even in the section (pp. 36-37) that is intended to describe these synergies – in spite of the fact that the issues of inclusive growth and rural transformation are at the heart of almost every other CRP. To the extent that collaboration is discussed, it is envisioned as a one-way flow, with no real sense that PIM hopes to learn from other CRPs or to define its research questions in relation to issues arising in the field. Indeed, the text of the document says at this point, “... [A] number of AFS CRPs have expressed intent to examine rural-urban linkages. PIM encourages these CRPs to explore tools available within PIM, especially the country-specific SAMs and CGE models, before they invest in alternatives.” This does not come across as a serious effort to engage in mutually beneficial collaborative work.

In general, the science quality here is likely to be strong, although there is little detail about methods and approaches which makes it hard to assess. In the case of the new program on political economy, this is perhaps understandable; but in the case of CoA1, it is surprising that there is so little information on the proposed methods. For CoA2, there are some reservations about the use of SAM/CGE approaches to thinking about the prioritization of public investments. The results of this analysis will be heavily dependent on the assumptions that are made.

The comparative advantage of PIM with respect to compiling SPEED indicators on national government spending is not clear. This is a useful function but not an obvious PIM priority in terms of an overall CGIAR portfolio. Work on prioritizing public investment veers somewhat

close to consulting work. It would make more sense to focus on developing the tools for this analysis and then making them available to other organizations for implementation in specific countries. The work in CoA1 is difficult to assess from a comparative advantage perspective as there is little detail included about the methods. ***There are many other providers of analysis on employment issues in developing countries, especially when it comes to impact evaluation of different employment interventions, infrastructure investments, job training, etc. such as J-PAL, 3ie, the World Bank, and many university-based researchers. If this is the focus of the cluster, PIM should explain its comparative advantage in the full proposal.***

With respect to cross-cutting issues, without more detail and without budgetary information, it is difficult to tell how much emphasis is intended. Yet there is surprisingly little about gender in this FP on “inclusive growth,” and there is not much about capacity building. However, the FP does take seriously the policy process, which is a key issue in the enabling environment.

It is also difficult to comment on the budgetary allocation to the CSSPs. The information provided does not make clear how much of the FP budget is taken up by these programs, nor is it apparent whether they cover their indirect costs or whether they are implicitly subsidized through W1/W2 funding. Because this is obviously a very large FP in terms of funding (> 30%), more detail will be necessary. CoA3 is new, and it is hard to assess its budgetary needs. CoA2 is a known quantity, and its budget needs ought to be well estimated. ***Given the lack of specificity about the activities in CoA1, it is hard to assess value for money. More detail in the full proposal will be essential in assessing this.***

FP3: Inclusive and Efficient Value Chains [Score: C]

FP3 addresses the changing international, regional, and local contexts for performance of agricultural markets, including the role of transnational companies, the incorporation of poor producers into complex and demanding modern marketing arrangements, and the growing demand for processed products in low-income countries. PIM claims that its comparative advantage lies in looking across the AFS portfolio to answer questions relevant to several commodities. This would indeed be a valuable role, but it is not altogether clear that the FP has positioned itself to do that.

Whereas other CRPs are primarily interested in the inclusiveness of value chains at a micro level – trying to understand domestic markets and the barriers to smallholder participation in activities that would increase their incomes – this FP instead focuses on a macro and international view of global value chains. ***The ISPC sees deficiencies in how the CoAs are presented. A stronger rationale is needed in the full proposal.*** Trade work under CoA1 is about measuring agricultural distortions and implicit taxation, combined with modelling of how these distortions affect outcomes. There is arguably less interest in this topic today than previously, since discussions of agricultural trade now have an institutional home in the WTO (which was not true during the peak era of this activity). CoA2 is defined in vague terms, aiming to “identify priority interventions to strengthen value chains, and rigorously test these interventions, for example, through randomized controlled trials and other state-of-the-art impact evaluation methods.” There are no specific hypotheses to be tested or key questions offered. Without a sense of the kind of interventions to be considered, it is difficult to judge this work and its fit within the overall CRP portfolio. CoA3 seeks to identify “best-bet options for scaling innovations.” This too is vague and hard to assess, but seems to verge very close to development implementation. There is not enough information to judge it effectively.

The science quality for CoA1 is moderate. To some extent it seems to draw on an old and problematic method for defining implicit taxation of producers. This method tends to conflate

transport and transaction costs and quality differences with actual policy distortions, whereas the literature in more recent years has grown less confident in the notion that the Law of One Price should hold in all cases. The science quality for CoA2 seems likely to be high, in the sense that RCTs and quasi-experimental methods are seen as high-quality social science. However, it is hard to see how a small portfolio of RCTs can easily succeed in “identifying leverage points,” since it will be possible only to consider a few possible options in any given setting. How will the portfolio of RCTs will be chosen? It is possible that even if the individual studies are of high quality, they can combine to produce a portfolio that is poorly suited to answer the key research questions. It is not possible to assess the quality of the science in CoA3 since the methods are unclear.

Comparative advantage is perhaps high for CoA1, but is probably low for CoA2 because there are a lot of other providers of RCTs. It is difficult to judge PIM’s comparative advantage in CoA3 without more detail.

From the above it is clear there are serious concerns with this FP. The research agenda seems weak or vague and it has not yet engaged with similar FPs from other CRPs. Like FP2, this FP has a research agenda that appears distinct from what the rest of the CRPs are doing. Most CRPs are concerned with finding ways to integrate smallholders into domestic value chains that link farmers to processors and a growing class of urban consumers. FP3 appears to be focused almost entirely on global value chains, and its methods will be drawn overwhelmingly from trade models and macro models. Gender, capacity building, and enabling environments receive very little substantive attention in this FP. ***To make this a more viable activity for the CGIAR, PIM must seriously engage with other CRP social scientists in collaborative research on value chains and the corresponding small and medium enterprise sector.*** Value chain analysis elsewhere in the CGIAR is focused on understanding the opportunities for value addition to increase the incomes and well-being of women and the poor. As presented, there is little here to support those CRPs that are primarily focused on domestic value chains. In spite of that, the pre-proposal seeks US \$20 million annually. One could imagine a budget that is perhaps a small percentage of that, but the current allocation seems excessive. ***This FP hopes to mobilize US\$7m from other CRPs; the full proposal will need to make the case that these funds are more productively spent in PIM than in other CRPs.***

FP4: Social Protection Strategies and Programs [Score: B]

FP4 seeks to understand how best to design programs in countries with sharp fiscal trade-offs between assistance to the vulnerable and investment in growth. In Phase 2, work on social protection and financial inclusion will examine bundling of products and services to explore implications for effectiveness. This is an extraordinarily high quality research portfolio with a track record of major and positive policy influence. At the same time, it is not clear that this subject area forms an obvious element of the CRP portfolio or indeed of the broader CGIAR portfolio. Social protection schemes are undoubtedly important for reducing poverty, but they do not have an obvious link to agricultural science or agricultural research. A key issue to consider is whether the mission of the CGIAR is to improve the well-being of the world’s poor and/or rural poor (as distinct from an explicit agricultural emphasis). The rural poor may be more effectively targeted with social protection programs than with agricultural technologies, and it may be that effective social protection plays an important role in the livelihood strategies of the rural poor. A topic that may deserve more attention here is the extent to which social protection strategies allow for better uptake of technology by poor farmers or easier out-migration. This is mentioned in the section introduction but not given

further attention. However, it seems like a potentially useful area for research and exploration.

Thus, comparative advantage of the CGIAR is at issue here. The pre-proposal does present a compelling case based on past work and current expertise, but there are now many other providers of this work, including university-based researchers and other development organizations. This is particularly true of the work on financial inclusion, which is a huge area of research outside the CGIAR. One might be more sympathetic to this work if the FP were able better to connect it to issues of more central concern to the CGIAR, such as technology choice and input use; or rural-urban population movements; or food demand and consumption patterns; or nutrition. A question that needs to be addressed is what this FP can produce that would not be produced by other researchers.

This FP has direct relationships to issues of gender, and it has done a very effective job in the past of considering (and altering) the enabling environment. More effort is needed in being a bit more explicit about the enabling environment and in developing a more thoughtful capacity strengthening strategy.

The budget is quite modest compared to other areas of the CRP (less than 10% of total).

FP5: *Governance of Natural Resources* [Score: A]

FP5 addresses the policy and institutional foundations for improved management of natural resources, whether held in common or privately. This is a compelling area of CGIAR and PIM engagement. Many CRPs deal with problems related to resource management, and the issues of tenure security and resource management seem very similar whether the underlying resource is land, water, or fisheries. IFPRI has a long history of work on this topic (e.g., CAPRI), and this FP seems like a continuation and extension of this effort. A key issue is the extent to which this FP will interact with other CRPs, but the lengthy and serious discussion of this on pp. 57-62 is encouraging. The development of analytic tools and policy lessons that are relevant for different CRPs will be of considerable value.

The work appears to be of high scientific quality. The research involves detailed place-based research, with lessons to be drawn from cases of both success and failure. In focusing on governance of natural resources, the FP should consider using comprehensive approaches that explicitly consider the competition for resources between agriculture and other economic sectors.

With respect to PIM's comparative advantage, there are many other organizations working on related areas, including university-based research teams, but it is not obvious that any institution could broadly cover the range of agricultural resources as this FP does. In that sense, there does not appear to be a logical alternative provider of the research.

Cross-cutting issues are dealt with effectively. Women's access to resources under different modes of governance is a key issue and is addressed in the pre-proposal. Capacity building is also addressed directly, and the enabling environment is at the heart of the FP.

There is a modest budget allocation for this FP, \$15m in 2017 (less than 15% of the total).

FP6: *Gender Equity and Agricultural Development* [Score: A]

FP6 will design tools and methods for broader application, establish priorities within PIM's gender research agenda, and draw together separate research strands to clarify implications for agricultural productivity. It will contribute principally to the cross-cutting IDO 'Equity and inclusion achieved', but, importantly, is expected to have indirect effects on many other IDOs contributing to the SLOs. For example, past research finds that reducing gender gaps

increases productivity and improves diets for poor and vulnerable people. Analyses also highlight linkages between women's empowerment and increased productivity and food security. In Phase 2, this FP will examine the complexity of joint decision-making by men and women and implications for outcomes.

This is an important dimension of CGIAR research and comparative advantage. Women and youth play a key role in all aspects of the CGIAR SLOs and research portfolio. CGIAR research has been path breaking in the dimension of gender and youth. The youth perspective is adequately balanced between girls and boys, with male youth requiring new attention in the perspective of inclusiveness. There is a bit of a contradiction in placing the issue of agricultural productivity within CoA1 when it is clearly a cross-cutting research issue that belongs to all FPs. Focusing on data and research methods specific to the gender perspective is an appropriate component of this FP in CoA2.

Scientific quality in PIM/IFPRI has been at par with work in the field in the best research institutions. The CGIAR has both great need for this research, and strong comparative advantage in conducting it, deriving from the technical strength of staff working on the topics, the ability of the program to take an integrative view across FPs and CRPs, and the quality of partnerships.

This FP focuses explicitly on two major cross-cutting issues in the CGIAR – gender and youth. More could be said about how the enabling environment is factored into this FP. Of the US \$20m allocated to gender research in 2017, US \$5m is under this FP, US \$4m of which is co-investment through sharing of work within the platform on gender research. This seems to be a reasonable budget.