

SDR/TAC.IAR/95/9

**CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND CGIAR SECRETARIAT**

**REPORT OF THE
FOURTH EXTERNAL PROGRAMME AND MANAGEMENT REVIEW
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE
(IITA)**

**TAC SECRETARIAT
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

April 1995

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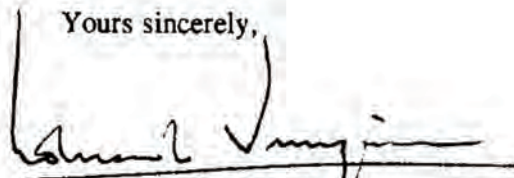
Dear Dr. Winkelmann and Mr. von der Osten,

It is with pleasure that I transmit to you the Report of the Fourth External Programme and Management Review Panel which was appointed to evaluate the accomplishments and prospects for the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). The Panel has reviewed, as requested, both the programme and management aspects of IITA's work.

The Panel has been fortunate in receiving help and support from many sources. We are grateful to IITA's Board, management and staff for giving us every assistance and enabling us to carry out our task smoothly and agreeably. We would like to thank the government officials and agricultural scientists who shared with us, in many parts of Africa, their perceptions of IITA and its activities. This is particularly true for those who extended their courtesies and kindness during the Panel's visits to Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Kenya and Uganda.

I would like to thank you for assembling an able and experienced team for the challenging task of conducting this Review. The Panel has worked remarkably well together, with dedication and commitment to the task. On behalf of myself and the Panel, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the excellent assistance and contributions made by Bill Carlson, Panel Consultant, and by the resource persons assigned to the IITA external review team: Amir Kassam (Panel Secretary), from the TAC Secretariat, and Pammi Sachdeva (Management Specialist), from the World Bank/CGIAR Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,



Eduardo Venezian, Chair
External Review Panel

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TAC SECRETARIAT

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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PREFACE

This is the Report of the External Review Panel appointed to review the programme and management of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). The Panel members and their backgrounds are listed in Appendix I.

The detailed Terms of Reference for this Fourth External Programme and Management Review of IITA (main phase in April 1995) are shown in Appendix II. The Panel's approach to the Review has been open, participatory, and forward-looking. In conducting the Review, the Panel has followed the general guidelines for the CGIAR review process.

The information on which the Panel based its assessments and conclusions was gathered in a number of ways. The Panel spent a week at IITA from 26 November to 1 December 1994 and three weeks in April 1995, in each case interviewing and meeting with the management and many members of the staff and some spouses. During the first visit the Panel received presentations from management and staff and interacted with the Board. During the main phase, the Panel received further presentations, and held informal briefing sessions with management on several occasions. The Panel Consultant on governance and finance visited IITA from 24 November to 4 December 1995, at which time all the Trustees were interviewed individually.

In groups or individually, the Panel members visited agricultural scientists, government officials and others knowledgeable about IITA's activities in Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Kenya and Uganda. The panel members also met with, in various locations, representatives of ICRAF, WARDA, CIP, ICIPE, ICRISAT, CIMMYT, ILRI and CIAT. A list of institutions and persons visited is shown in Appendix III.

In addition to the above country field visits, the Panel gathered information through several ways: a questionnaire sent to a wide cross-section of agricultural scientists, administrators and policy makers in countries of sub-Saharan Africa (the results are summarized in Appendix IV); responses to a letter sent to other CGIAR Centres, international organizations and advanced institutions collaborating with IITA; a survey of IITA international and national staff asking their views on programme and management issues; responses to a letter sent to all CGIAR members and regional representatives and discussions with agricultural scientists familiar with IITA in some industrialized countries. Finally, the Panel had access to a large array of documents and data made available by IITA. Additional documents were provided by the TAC and CGIAR Secretariats. A list of documents made available to the Panel is shown in Appendix V.

Altogether, we believe we were able to obtain sufficient information to enable us to respond with confidence to our terms of reference. We certainly do not claim to be fully informed on every aspect of IITA's work and circumstances. But we consider that we have sound evidence on which to base the analysis, conclusions and recommendations presented in this Report. We hope that the Report will be useful to TAC, to the CGIAR, and most of all to IITA itself.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IITA has made remarkable changes over the past five years. The Review Panel has found the Centre noticeably stronger both scientifically and managerially than it was at the time of the 1990 External Review. We believe IITA is now well positioned to catalyze further agricultural research in sub-Saharan Africa in its mandated responsibility. The Panel summarizes, hereunder, its main findings and recommendations which confirm IITA's performance and achievements and which could help to chart the Centre's strategic role in the region's future development.

Recent Evolution

The last External Review was conducted when the Centre was just in the second year of its 1989-93 Medium-Term Plan. In many respects the Institute was still in transition - it was the Centre's first MTP after it had formulated its 1989-2000 Strategic Plan. As can be seen in this Report, the Panel considers that, taken together, the recommendations of the last External Review were far-reaching, particularly since they further encouraged IITA's continuing efforts towards a leaner operating structure, greater organizational cohesiveness and further decentralization.

We have been impressed by the dedication and energy with which the Board, management and staff of IITA have responded to the recommendations of the last External Review. Although the results of some of the changes have not yet been fully realized, the Panel notes the considerable progress achieved. The Panel considers that IITA has benefitted significantly from these changes, which have been "incrementally" introduced.

Programmes

IITA currently has three research divisions: the Crop Improvement Division (CID), the Plant Health Management Division (PHMD) and the Resource and Crop Management Division (RCMD). For some of the mandate crops handled by CID, emphasis is shifting from the Humid Forest to the Moist Savanna Zone, notably in the case of cassava, maize and yam, because the crops are in reality moving in that direction and the potential for maize production, in particular, is greater in the moist savanna. The Panel is generally supportive of this shift in focus. However, the Panel believes that the scale of CID activity in the Humid Forest Zone is less than optimal, particularly in relation to cassava in Central Africa. The situation needs to be reviewed to see how this effort may be increased. The banana/plantain work is justifiably considered to be one of the conspicuous successes of IITA, displaying a good mix of innovative science and practical achievement. The Panel confidently expects that further advances will be made on the sound basis already established. Cowpea is pre-eminently a crop of the drier savanna, but some attention has been given to meeting the requirements listed in the MTP for the more humid cultivation zones. The Panel has drawn attention to its view that soybean is, at the present time, an under-researched crop at IITA.

The structural changes which have taken place in PHMD are viewed very positively by the Panel. There is now better communication among scientists sharing a

common discipline and an improved awareness of the advantages of interdivisional collaboration. At the Divisional headquarters in Cotonou, Benin, the cohesion and team spirit are very encouraging. PHMD has also retained sufficient flexibility to cope with unpredictable but urgent pest problems as they have arisen. The Division has a good balance of disciplines, except for a deficiency in phytopathology. As a centre of excellence for the development of IPM strategies for Africa, IITA is well placed, through the work in PHMD, to respond to future threats from pests and diseases to the food supply of resource-poor farmers.

It is disappointing to record that the period of review was not a happy one for the broad sweep of IITA's work now contained within the RCMD. Because of the complex nature of this activity, the demonstration of a tangible and transferrable product will always be more difficult. Problems of sustainability are addressed more evidently in this Division than in CID and PHMD, but the degree to which success can be attained is more constrained by political and macro-economic factors. In the recent past, the work of RCMD has clearly suffered from problems of leadership, high turnover of key staff and ensuing demoralization. Happily, the new leadership is instilling a spirit of teamwork and is formulating revised research programmes better suited to IITA's mandate.

The International Cooperation Division (ICD) is responsible for strengthening collaborative research and training activities between IITA and NARS. The Panel recognizes that the Institute's role in this area will remain important in the future and foresees a stronger institutional role for ICD both within IITA and with its external collaborators.

Governance and Management

IITA today is a significantly different institution - in many ways a reconstituted one - in terms of governance, structure, management style and research leadership.

The BoT is composed of well-qualified Trustees who are committed to the Institute and its mission. They have developed a sound structure of committees, and the goodwill, trust and mutual respect that currently exists between the BOT and management in IITA can be expected to provide a sound basis for working out any adjustments that may be needed in the future.

The Panel is impressed with the dynamic leadership and commitment shown by the Director General (DG). His informal and straightforward manner and approachability on research-related issues make him a popular research leader both with the BoT of IITA and with the scientists. The Panel saw considerable evidence of a culture of collegiality, of consultative processes and of bottom-up flows of ideas, fostered by the DG. IITA staff who met the Panel during the review process were appreciative of these changes and the DG deserves special recognition for the progress IITA has continued to make in implementing a difficult mandate in a complex institutional environment.

Most of the scientists at IITA are content with the new divisional groupings. There is much merit in grouping similar disciplines together, provided an effective "matrix" ensures

interdisciplinary collaboration and an agroecological focus. At present, such collaboration at IITA is patchy and is not assisted by the geographical separation of the heads of the three Divisions. For this reason, the informal working groups which have been established in a "bottom-up" manner are to be commended, that for *Striga* research being particularly noteworthy. The evolution of a system which fosters interdisciplinary research within the Centre is probably the greatest challenge in scientific management facing IITA over the next five years.

We have found IITA to be committed to the planned introduction of a project-based research management system. While we have recommended several measures for improving the recent initiatives, we have no reservations about the general thrust of the changes that have taken place or are planned in research management.

Despite the funding cuts over the past few years, IITA has further decentralized its operations and has made considerable progress in establishing stations in the Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda. Whereas the Centre has invested substantial effort in implementing its decentralization policy, the Panel believes that it must also strengthen its capacity in human resources management to meet the needs of its remarkably heterogeneous staff communities in different countries, particularly if it is to attract and retain quality international and national staff and realize their full potential. The Panel has made several proposals in this regard in order to improve further the Institutes' participatory culture and to ease the stress that can emanate from working and living within IITA's "artificial" campus environments.

Quality and Achievements

IITA has an extremely broad remit for much of its work and has to cope with the immense practical problems of deficient agricultural production in the region. The quality of scientific work at IITA is uneven, as might be expected in a wide-ranging research programme, but is mostly sound. Some activities, e.g., banana/plantain improvement, *Striga* research, and IPM strategies, are breaking new scientific ground and making a very practical contribution. The Panel concludes that, in general, IITA is well served by its research scientists and their support units, who are committed to make an impact, and it commends them for their dedication.

Historically, IITA has achieved its most conspicuous successes in two principal areas: biological control of major insect pests and genetic improvement of key crops in its mandate. These have resulted in the distribution throughout the region of planting material with better disease and pest resistance, improved yield potential with greater stability of performance over environments, and better quality of products for the end user.

The Panel is pleased to note the considerable and significant research contributions made by IITA since the last external review, and the demonstrated impact that IITA has had in some areas of its mandated responsibility. We note in particular IITA's recent success in banana research for which it received the King Baudouin Award in 1994. The Panel is also pleased to note that IITA is very well regarded by the research community in Africa,

especially with regard to its germplasm collections, its plant health management activities, and its leadership role in the emerging ecoregional initiatives.

Future of IITA

The Panel has concluded that IITA's relevance to agricultural development in Africa remains as valid today as it was when it was created in 1967. The Institute has a strategic, critical role in international agricultural research for its mandated crops and agroecological regions. IITA's research agenda reflects a balance between activities aiming at immediate and medium-term productivity gains, including postharvest research, and long-term sustainability of the agricultural resource base used for production. The Centre is aware that although it can play an important role in addressing issues of food security and sustainability, it is not the only actor. To be fully effective and to maximize its multiplier effect, it is critically important that IITA continues to strengthen its collaboration and strategic partnerships with NARS, and increasingly with NGOs and the emerging private sector, as well as with other IARCs and advanced research institutions. This is particularly important given IITA's primary focus on the small family farm which is so dominant in sub-Saharan Africa, and is necessary for addressing the twin issues of sustainable production and equity simultaneously.

IITA is likely to continue to operate in an environment where the general economic development prospects in the immediate and longer-term future are not very encouraging. This means that the non-agricultural sector would continue to be unable to provide gainful employment for the rapidly rising population. Thus, in the meantime, the onus will be on the agricultural sector to be one of the main contributors to economic growth, while national economies diversify and regional markets grow. In the coming years, as agriculture in the region begins to change, from the present "rough and ready" subsistence operation, towards more market-driven enterprise, IITA will face increasingly multifaceted challenges and opportunities arising from a mix of production expansion and intensification and related socioeconomic environments. The Panel considers the Centre to be well positioned to address, in collaboration with NARS and others, the future needs for improved technologies and knowledge to sustain the inevitable developmental change envisaged in agriculture and the rural space.

The CGIAR investment in IITA constitutes a unique asset for the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa. Given IITA's track record of scientific achievements and its unique position in the international agricultural research community, the Panel believes that IITA will continue to play a critical, strategic role in addressing the growing challenge of food security and sustainability as land-use expansion and intensification accelerates. IITA's "heyday" lies in the future and we believe that the Institute does not intend to be complacent as it moves forward into the next century - a century which will see Africa's population increase some fivefold before reaching a stable "plateau". Continued support for IITA's work would therefore be a wise policy for all those interested in the Institute's mandate areas and future achievements and impact.