

RECEPTIVITY TO SOCIAL RESEARCH BY THE CGIAR†

By A. H. KASSAM‡

*School of Agriculture, Policy and Development, University of Reading, Earley Gate,
Reading RG6 6AT, Berkshire, United Kingdom*

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SUMMARY

This paper analyses the way the CGIAR system has incorporated social research in its agenda. Since 1995, the social science staff capacity in the CGIAR has decreased by 24 %, and the overall balance of social science research is still significantly tilted away from the core germplasm enhancement, production systems/natural resources management, and technology adoption work – the ‘bread and butter’ of technology generation and development effort – toward *ex-ante* and *ex-post* activities. Further, the bulk of the social science research has low social research content despite the significant expansion of the CGIAR initial goal of increasing the proverbial ‘pile of rice’ to poverty alleviation and sustainable food security. The paper concludes that a concerted effort is now required to mainstream social research in the CGIAR system, and this cannot occur without the full support of the CGIAR donors, the CGIAR senior managers, and the centre boards and executive staff.

INTRODUCTION

The CGIAR system is a large and complex multilayered organization comprising donors, centres and their research partners, and advisory bodies that promote and implement multidisciplinary agricultural research to produce international public goods consistent with its mission and goals. This structure of interconnected layers – from the political (donors) to the strategic (advisory bodies), to the operational (research centres), to the ultimate clients and beneficiaries (farmers) – is an institutional voluntary construct in which dialogue, field work, laboratory work and collective interdisciplinary collaboration generate and deliver research products, knowledge, technologies and policies.

Within this propitious context, one would expect social and cultural research on agriculture and farmers to be a ‘natural’ and that it should thrive unimpeded. However, the situation is not quite so. Many independent external reviews show that CGIAR’s receptivity to sustaining a critical mass of social research¹ capacity and programmes has been poor.

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‡ Corresponding author: kassamamir@aol.com

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the term ‘social research’ refers to research in sociological or anthropological disciplines, not to research in economics, without implying in any way that economics, for instance, or other related disciplines,

THE EARLY YEARS

During the 1970s and 1980s, CGIAR's technology-generation research principally aimed to increase the production of CGIAR-mandated food commodities, with success or impact at the farm level measured largely through the adoption of improved varieties of crops. The purpose of the accompanying social science research effort was to complement the biophysical effort to help increase the proverbial 'pile of rice' through improved production technologies. The social science research 'agenda' at each centre was defined and implemented mainly by production economists, working under the label of socio-economics but generating mainstream economics research. The emergence of CGIAR's interest in farming systems research took researchers closer to the ultimate clients – the farmers – and their production, livelihoods and community environments, but even in this sound orientation some biased scientists denied that anthropologists could make a contribution (Cernea and Guggenheim, 1985). Farming systems research soon led to more sophisticated village-based socio-economic studies, on-farm research, and research on common property resources management, particularly as off-station and regional research programmes expanded.

CGIAR research styles and approaches during the 1970s and part of the 1980s were mostly 'top down', and beneficiaries did not systematically identify needs and research planning or subsequently engage in technology research and development or, beyond, technology delivery and dissemination. Some centres began to appreciate more deeply the importance of direct beneficiary² participation and socio-cultural variables for CGIAR's technology research and development process (so-called R & D) only toward the latter part of the 1980s and the early 1990s. However, they generally lacked a deep and effective two-way engagement with the beneficiary communities – see Baum (1986)³ for a historical review of the CGIAR system, and Collinson and Platais (1992)⁴ for a review of the state of the art in social science research in the CGIAR at that time.

In the mid-1990s, the CGIAR formally incorporated poverty alleviation and sustainable food security into its goals and began orienting itself to become an

are not social disciplines as well (TAC, 2001). Sociological research aims to study the society or community and how individuals relate among themselves and organize their social existence and productive activities. Anthropological research aims to study human societies and individuals in the context of their cultures. Hence, rural sociology and social anthropology are two disciplines most relevant to scientific social research, sometimes called *socio-cultural* research. However, CGIAR scientists from other disciplines – economics, politics, management, geography, communications, law, statistics, and geographic information services – have also contributed in varying degrees to what we term here, as indicated above, 'social research' in the CGIAR.

²The term includes not only the ultimate beneficiaries but also other actors in the public and private sectors that may help enable or create the conditions for desired change.

³For example, in Baum (1986), socio-economics is mentioned only twice and rural sociology only once.

⁴For example, poverty alleviation is hardly mentioned by Collinson and Platais (1992) although some attention was paid to the topic of 'Users' Perspectives: Factoring Farmers' Needs into the Research Agenda'. According to Collinson and Platais (1992), the relationship between natural and social scientists was still evolving. Within the CGIAR, a number of centre programmes had promoted the use of social scientists that, according to a 1991 survey, comprised close to 15 % of the senior science staff, of whom the vast majority were economists: 'Promotion arose from a conviction that understanding the priorities, circumstances and decision-making processes of resource-poor farmers was vital to the development of innovative techniques attractive to them'.

output- and impact-driven system. The 1997 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) review of CGIAR priorities and strategies stated, *'The activities carried out by the CGIAR are undertaken in order to fulfil its mission: to contribute, through its research, to promoting sustainable agriculture for food security in developing countries; and its goals: to alleviate poverty and protect natural resources so as to achieve sustainable food security'* (TAC, 1997). This signalled a deep change in outlook and vision, not easy to accomplish. There was an increasing recognition of the importance of both the 'context' of farming, physical and socio-cultural, and of the variability and diversity of sociological factors, in fighting rural poverty through improved agricultural productivity.

The involvement of rural sociologists and social anthropologists from different backgrounds in social research, moving to the 'mainstream' of agricultural and social science research in the CGIAR, was signalled by the conceptualization and implementation of the two systemwide programmes in the mid-1990s: Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA) and Collective Action and Property Rights (CAPRi).⁵ PRGA, led by Jacqueline Ashby, focused on developing methods and organizational innovations for gender-sensitive participatory research on plant breeding and natural resources (e.g. PRGA, 1996, 1999, 2001). CAPRi, led by Ruth Meinzen-Dick, aimed to focus on collective action and property rights institutions as tools for empowering rural people in agricultural improvements and in natural resource use (e.g. CAPRi, 2002).

RECENT SOCIAL RESEARCH IN THE CGIAR

Excerpts about CGIAR social science research were extracted from the reports of the TAC-commissioned external reviews of the CGIAR centres and systemwide programmes since 1995 and compiled by Kassam *et al.* (2002).⁶ The brief overview presented here draws on the excerpts given in Kassam *et al.* (2002) and Kassam (2003). The Organizing Committee of the Social Research Conference⁷ called for a survey of social science staff capacity in CGIAR, and the results were posted on the conference website. The extracted information on social science research in CGIAR was sorted into eight domains of activities along the research-to-development (R-to-D) continuum: (i) from baseline characterization and ex-ante studies to research and research-related activities in the five CGIAR output categories; (ii) germplasm conservation; (iii) germplasm improvement; (iv) sustainable production systems and natural resources management; (v) policy analysis and management; (vi) enhancing national institutions; (vii) output-related activities of technology adoption and information dissemination; and (viii) *ex-post* impact assessment on

⁵Ideas underlying the importance of participatory research as well as of collective action and property rights began to take shape in the 1980s and early 1990s, when some centres conducted such research.

⁶The information was extracted from 16 TAC-commissioned external programme and management review reports of centres and from three external review reports of systemwide programmes.

⁷The Conference Organizing Committee comprised J. Ashby, M. M. Cernea, A. H. Kassam, and R. Meinzen-Dick.

outcomes (Kassam, 2003). The data were also broadly categorized as predominantly social,⁸ or predominantly economic,⁹ or a mixture of both, i.e. socio-economic.¹⁰

Policy analysis and management is the dominant area of the social science effort (21 % of the total CGIAR social science effort, of which 29 % is social research). The second most important social science effort is *ex-post* impact assessment (19 % and 32 %). The next set of social science activities that are at about equal level are characterization (14 % and 38 %), enhancing national institutions (12 % and 50 %), and technology adoption research and information dissemination (12 % and 29 %). Trailing behind are production systems and integrated natural resource management research (9 % and 54 %), germplasm improvement research (7 % and 70 %), and germplasm conservation (6 % and 67 %).

More than half of social science activities in germplasm conservation, germplasm improvement and production systems/natural resources management (NRM) are of a social research nature. However, these three domains receive the least amount of social science attention (22 % of the total effort). On the other hand, social science research dealing with characterization, policy analysis and management, enhancing national institutions, technology adoption and information dissemination, and *ex-post* impact assessment collectively account for 78 % of the total *social science* effort but it is mainly economic or socio-economic in content.

In the light of the above, the conclusion was that social science research and social research have unevenly permeated the CGIAR research agenda. The bulk of the *social science* research effort was being directed toward policy, *ex-post* impact measurements, and *ex-ante* characterization activities, which account for some 67 % of all social science research *per se*, although with relatively low social research content (Kassam, 2003). The rest of the social science effort was split among germplasm conservation, germplasm improvement, production systems/NRM, and technology adoption/information dissemination. Similar patterns reveal themselves with the distribution of *social* research efforts across the eight domains of activity in the CGIAR research cycle, although the social research content in germplasm enhancement and production systems/NRM domains appears to be greater than in the others. Thus, the overall balance of social science research was still significantly tilted away from the core germplasm enhancement, production systems/NRM, and technology adoption

⁸The 'S' category refers to either the social research activity itself or to the social research process used to undertake the research in which sociological and anthropological variables and issues are addressed in the context of CGIAR goals. These variables deal with farming patterns, traditional ownership, gender, equity, empowerment, common property resources management, and social structures and institutions – all of which are pertinent to the management and productivity of resources, who owns and controls them, who benefits from their use and who is accountable. These variables occur in activities related to indigenous knowledge, farming system and household characterization, *ex-ante* rural livelihood needs assessment, common property resources management, gender and participatory research.

⁹The 'E' category indicates activities in which the key variables are primarily related to economics: for instance, to the economics of production systems, input-output economic analyses, cost of water or other resources, economic rates of return studies, *ex-post* adoption assessments, and counterfactual economic analysis.

¹⁰The 'SE' category refers to social science activities that include both types of variables – social and economic – and are described under the broad term 'socio-economic', with no clear distinction in either category possible from the information given in the external review documents surveyed.

work – the ‘bread and butter’ of technology generation and development effort – toward *ex-ante* and *ex-post* activities.

The staff survey showed that there were 124 social scientists, including economists, in the CGIAR system out of a total of 958 researchers. This is 39 fewer than in 1995, when there were 163 social scientists out of 937 researchers (TAC, 1996), although the total number of scientists has increased by 21 (2 %) since 1995. This is a severe decrease of 24 % in total social science staff capacity. Social science staff members make up 13 % of the total but made up 17.4 % in 1995 (TAC, 1996) and close to 15 % in 1991 (Collinson and Platais, 1992).

VIEWS OF TAC AND EXTERNAL REVIEW PANELS ABOUT SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN THE CGIAR

How receptive the CGIAR system is to social research is a question that needs to be asked about all layers of the system, starting with the centres, their boards, and their executive and senior managements, including TAC itself (now Science Council) as one important institutional link of the CGIAR system, and other central units of the system. The history of TAC in that respect is significant. While it would be hard to say that at any point TAC explicitly denied the need for socio-cultural research, it is accurate to state that for a long time TAC did not proactively or effectively promote such research either. The historical examination of TAC documents (Kassam *et al.*, 2002) has not revealed a strong message to the centres to expand this kind of research, except perhaps the stripe review report of 1996 prepared by a team led by Alain de Janvry.

An important change, however, occurred after 1997 when, for the first time in TAC’s history, an experienced sociologist was appointed as a member (Michael M. Cernea, formerly rural sociology advisor of the World Bank’s Agricultural Department and then general senior advisor for social policies of the World Bank). For those watching from inside TAC, the difference was immediate and tangible, and it became obvious outside TAC as well throughout Cernea’s six-year tenure in TAC and the interim Science Council. Social research and the small community of social researchers working in the system gained a forceful voice in all deliberations of TAC about CGIAR strategies, centres, programmes, resource allocations and performance. That also became manifest in the setting-up of the external reviews of centres, in the terms of reference for such reviews, and in the composition of the teams appointed by TAC: sociologists and anthropologists started to be appointed almost regularly to external review panels. Explicit requirements were included for assessing the presence, quality, and relevance of social research in the centres. As a result, TAC and, afterwards, the interim Science Council helped produce a crop of external programme and management reviews that paid more attention than ever to this domain. These reviews examined unresolved issues and unaddressed areas in various centres. Based on external reviews now guided to examine the social research more closely, TAC and the interim Science Council regularly sent out clear messages to the entire system that

such research was indispensable. Interest in social research was clearly stronger and the argument for intensifying it gained weight (Kassam *et al.*, 2002).

It was a decisive moment when TAC was asked to prepare a new strategy for the CGIAR. TAC's new recognition and advocacy of the importance of social research was stated repeatedly in the new strategy document. This new emphasis on the social and cultural variables in agricultural research was highlighted also at the CGIAR Annual General Meeting 2000, which discussed and adopted the new 'vision and strategy' formulated by TAC. Today, the CGIAR has a formal strategy that legitimizes the intrinsic need and creates the institutional room for its centres to expand rather than reduce social research. It even explicitly defines some of the topical areas of priority for socio-cultural and behavioural research for sustainable agricultural development and poverty reduction. The ball was put squarely in the centres' court.

Based on the information about the TAC and external review panel recommendations (Kassam *et al.*, 2002), there were some 60 documented calls from TAC, the interim Science Council, and the external review panels to strengthen the centres' social science capacity (Kassam, 2003). Every centre was encouraged to strengthen its social science research, to address particular themes and overall staff numbers. Some 60 % of the time, TAC and the panels proposed strengthening the *social* component of social science research capacity, which appeared to be the best supported and staffed by the centre's managers; 30 % of the time, the *economics* component; and 10 % of the time, the *socio-economic* component. About 94 % of the time devoted to strengthening social research was for increasing social research capacity *per se* by adding staff members, because the few existing ones did not amount to a critical mass, and/or to improve the type of research work. All the time devoted to strengthening economic and socio-economic research capacity was aimed at improving the type of research work.

Despite the strong push by TAC and the external review panels for centres to strengthen their social science capacity, most have not been able to do so and remain understaffed, particularly in the sociological and anthropological disciplines, which have never sustained a critical mass. Such obvious weaknesses in social analysis for research on technological and social innovation, social policy, and institutional and organizational reform can only lead to missed opportunities as well as research of questionable relevance and poor quality.

THE 2000 CGIAR STRATEGY AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

In 2000, the CGIAR adopted the new vision and strategy elaborated by TAC (TAC, 2000) – 'A food-secure world for all'. The overall goal was defined as '*To reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition by sustainably increasing the productivity of resources in agriculture, forestry and fisheries*'. The CGIAR's mission was defined as 'To achieve sustainable food security and reduce poverty in developing countries through scientific research and research-related activities in the fields of agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, policy and natural resources management'.

Pointing to scientific opportunities in the social sciences, and specifically social research, TAC directly guided the new CGIAR strategy in developments in sociology, social geography, anthropology and economics seen as bearing directly upon the CGIAR research priorities:

'These include planning and priority setting, a better understanding of the decision-making process of individuals and groups in rural communities, bioeconomic modelling and the new institutional economics. Primarily, social science research in the CGIAR needs to focus more on: identifying the characteristics and needs of the ultimate clients/beneficiaries, i.e. poor farmers and urban food consumers; the institutional arrangements needed to foster social capital creation and activation; improved property rights and custodianship regimes and their management and distributional implications; the motivation behind poor farmers' cropping strategies; the factors of collective action in agricultural, forestry and fish production and marketing; and patterns of community or group resource management. The increased interest in social sciences is an important way of expanding knowledge-partnerships in the CGIAR. Research in sociology and anthropology should complement economic research in the CGIAR, and this socio-economic research must be linked better, both upstream and downstream, to that in the biological and physical sciences. The CGIAR social researchers also facilitate bringing into the system the new social research and knowledge on poverty worldwide that is needed by the CGIAR to determine its strategy, priorities and research agenda, and to assess its impact.'

The new CGIAR vision and strategy stresses:

'Additional socio-economic research by the CGIAR, in collaboration with others, should focus on the socio-cultural and agricultural dimensions of rural and urban poverty.'

TAC went further in justifying and specifying these strategic research directions in the CGIAR. The TAC strategy preparation document (Cernea and Kassam, 2002) argued that social research needs more explicit support in the CGIAR centres in order to reach the following objectives:

- Improve the socio-economic understanding of household and community behaviour by considering the heterogeneity of farming actors, their differential demands, and their potential for technological and institutional innovations.
- Clarify the extent and location of poverty, its causes, risks of further impoverishment, and resulting needs within the target populations and agro-ecosystems of each CGIAR centre.
- Integrate poverty mapping with farming systems mapping, spatially and with relation to markets, using geographic information services and other research tools, to increase the responsiveness of biophysical research to the locations of the poorest farmers and to the issues related to their cropping and farming systems.
- Intensify the study of efficient patterns of social organization for better use and sustainable management of key natural resources, water, soil and trees. Study collective action patterns, gender, and participation.
- Analyse policy-triggered constraining effects on productive rural populations, and research improved policy options and solutions.
- Improve the use of conceptual and methodological advances in social research to develop knowledge to fight the causes of poverty and lack of assets.

The CGIAR vision and strategy call for a socially oriented, pro-poor research agenda with a strengthened social research input. But the trend is in the opposite

direction, with social research capacity having decreased over recent years in most centres, and social science research, including social research, being of variable quality and relevance.

THE CGIAR SOCIAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

TAC repeatedly expressed disappointment that, despite strong encouragement – from TAC itself and the TAC-commissioned external reviews – to strengthen social research capacity and content, the centres did so unevenly and showed little progress (TAC, 2001). Consequently, TAC initiated¹¹ a systemwide Conference on Social Research in the CGIAR in September 2002 at CIAT, Cali, and occasioned a much-needed critical analysis of the ‘state of the art’ in the CGIAR’s social research. Following up on the conference, TAC (renamed in the meantime as the interim Science Council of the CGIAR) decided to commission a strategic ‘stripe review’ of social science research. Such a review across the system would aim to recommend priorities, strategies and scientific capacity in social science research, with particular attention to social research. The conference endorsed TAC’s proposal for a stripe study (Cernea and Kassam, 2002), and the new Science Council appointed in 2003–2004 is mandated to carry it out.

The 2002 conference made a detailed and documented collective analysis of social research as an important component of the CGIAR’s overall research agenda. The focus was on the status of social research in the system, capacity, issues, achievements, resources, weaknesses, difficulties, understanding and new tasks. The substance was provided by ‘centres’ papers’ containing an extensive analysis of these issues in centre after centre.

Major problems regarding the recent decline in the system’s capacity, depletion of intellectual capital, and decrease of social research staff below critical mass in several centres were highlighted in the papers and discussions. The conference debates confirmed and documented the critical signals given by TAC and the TAC-commissioned external reviews, again and again over several years, about the insufficient non-economics research in many centres, in sharp contrast to the increasing demand for social analysis.

The report on the Cali Conference to the interim Science Council distilled the main content, messages and recommendations (Cernea and Kassam, 2002). It was submitted to the CGIAR’s chair along with recommendations on how to address the dysfunctional situations highlighted at the conference, and how to build upon achievements and potentials in the CGIAR. It was emphasized that the CGIAR offers important comparative advantages for pioneering social research: such advantages are the continuous intra-centre and intra-system interaction between social researchers and biophysical researchers; the opportunities for immediate field-testing; the incentives for and legitimacy of applied research, more than in many other settings. Various models of integrating biophysical with social research are successfully practiced and encouraged. Interaction between economists and non-economics social

¹¹See details in the proposal submitted to the CGIAR Annual General Meeting 2001 (Cernea, 2001).

researchers proves most fertile when they work in the same centre. The 'socio-economic' label in itself does not add value and remains hollow unless skills and social and economics concepts are integrated. When social issues are addressed with quality social science, the results can make – and have made – an important difference in the centres' work. But the CGIAR system was found to be still far from using the guidance and opportunities provided by the vision and strategy adopted in 2000.

At the same time, however, the Science Council and CGIAR management learned from the conference about major problems and dysfunctional drawbacks in the state of, and resource allocation for, some research in the CGIAR system. Conference papers reported that the capacity for social research has severely declined in the last five years in several CGIAR centres. This erosion shows in the decrease in number of social researchers in several centres; in composition change, such as a decrease in PhD-level researchers and an increase in below-PhD-level researchers; disappearance, total or near total, of social researchers, other than economists, in several commodity or natural resources CGIAR centres – at best, prior staff are maintained. Some centres once known for their strong presence of social researchers (e.g. International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center [CIMMYT], which had four or five anthropologists and sociologists in the past, now has none, except for one 'human ecologist'); the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) have none, as well. The West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA), similarly, had none. The pseudo-remedy often proposed in such situations – making better use of existing resources – can hardly be done when such resources are sub-minimal or absent. Some centres, directors general, or directors of research, while paying lip service to the importance of social research, systematically deny it resources and use attrition as a means to replace anthropologists with economists, conveniently relabelled 'socio-economists', or with other professionals.

Regarding staffing, no single centre participating in the conference reported any increase in social researchers during the previous two years, notwithstanding the emphasis in the 2000 CGIAR strategy on poverty orientation, participation and other social variables in research. Several centres reported a worrisome drop 'below critical mass' level. This further diminishes the ability to influence intellectually the centres' agenda. Skill-mix impoverishment in centres discourages interdisciplinarity and partnerships.

The census of social researchers (economists and non-economists), carried out before the conference through centre directors general, TAC, and CIAT, revealed that the 'human capital' for social research is dominated by economists who make up over 60 % of the social science staff. For every three-and-a-half economists in the CGIAR, there is one sociologist or anthropologist. Some economists undoubtedly have a strong social orientation, but for the CGIAR as a specialized research system, this is not seen as a substitute for the trained theoretical and methodological professionalism required for scientific research. Some 27 % of the researchers listed by centres' management as social researchers and included in the survey turned out to be neither sociologists nor anthropologists nor economists. Yet they are considered participants in social research.

They only increase the appearance of social research but not its quality. Compared with 1995–1996, when the last TAC-commissioned stripe study of social science was conducted, there had been a massive drop of 24 % in social science staff numbers in the CGIAR while the total number of scientists had increased by 2.2 %. Economists from several centres (e.g. ICARDA, ILRI), attending the Cali conference, reported that they do not have sociological counterparts in their centres, and described and deplored the declining curve, nearing a zero curve, for non-economics researchers.

The conference identified the following six areas with major opportunities for social value-adding research that would contribute to implementing the 2000 CGIAR vision and strategy for substantive research:

- Sharpen the poverty perspective on social research in the CGIAR.
- Promote culturally informed methodologies in the CGIAR's biophysical, technological, and policy research.
- Study how innovation is done.
- Carry out more research on social organization patterns of farmers and institutional analysis, and promote institutional learning.
- Study how policy and power relations affect technology adoption by producers and produce social policy and strategy recommendations.
- Research the social impact of the CGIAR's outputs.

During the conference, considerable criticism replaced discussion on internal organizational difficulties faced by social researches in various centres and, more broadly, in the CGIAR system. Researchers' expectations are that, having endorsed the new CGIAR strategy, the donors, centre boards and directors general should proactively facilitate changes in the culture and skill-mix of the CGIAR governance and management bodies, to strengthen and sustain an intellectually robust social research capacity. The expectation at the 'grass-roots' is that the boards and senior managers must raise the status of social research in each centre, providing adequate funds for interdisciplinary social research based on centre policy and providing opportunities to social researchers for strategic research and resource mobilization. The mind-set in many CGIAR centres must be changed regarding farmers and cultural and behavioural factors in agricultural development. Values that do not support social research must be proactively altered. This requires that board membership include social researchers, and that social research be explicitly included in the development of research proposals from the very beginning, as well as in the peer review process, calling upon eminent social researchers.

The conference highlighted the large potential for integrating social research into the CGIAR agenda not only in the centre-based core programmes but also in systemwide and challenge programmes. These opportunities should be seized in every single case, and the system's commitment can best be demonstrated by visibly placing social research at the core of the programmes. For this to become a reality, each centre board and management must formulate a clear position regarding social research within the centre. This should include establishing and safeguarding the critical mass for social science research and social research competence, and managing an effective

balance between the service research function of social researchers and the longer-term social research topics.

In particular, there is a need for a more effective balance between economics and non-economics social scientists as recommended by virtually all TAC-commissioned external reviews since 1995, often without consistent follow-up from the reviewed centres. Social research must regain its prestige within the centre and be put in a position to deliver cutting-edge products. This concerns two professional groups within the centre: social scientists and non-social scientists doing social research. To ensure quality research, some training of non-social scientists in social science research methodology is indispensable and of high priority. Social researchers themselves must head this process of institutional learning and change. They should lead reflection groups on socio-cultural issues in agricultural research, networking between centres.

The conference most explicitly recommended that the CGIAR Science Council should commission a strategic stripe review of social research in the CGIAR system to deepen the critical analysis of priorities and assess centre by centre basis the potentials, needs and work patterns.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite its achievements, the CGIAR has not been successful in sustaining a critical mass of social research effort in all its centres. Given the recent negative trend in social research capacity in many centres, a systematic effort is needed to expand and implement a credible and sustainable social research agenda. Following upon the broad strategic framework for social science research in the 2000 CGIAR vision and strategy, a research culture and ethos in CGIAR must be fostered to broaden unambiguously the agenda for social research that directly pursues poverty reduction by increasing agricultural productivity and integrating biophysical and human sciences.

The CGIAR Conference on Social Research and its analytical assessments were a step toward mainstreaming social research, but this depends not only on social researchers: it depends largely on the CGIAR senior managers and on centres' managers and boards. Such mainstreaming is both a matter of mind-set change and of resource allocation. Action is now imperative. To begin with, the positive momentum generated by the conference needs to be followed up soon with a comprehensive Science Council stripe study of social science research, complemented by centre management analyses, to chart definite steps and actionable measures.

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