

Highlights
IITA Board Meeting
May 2015
Livingstone, Zambia

- Hosted by the Director and staff of the Southern Africa hub, the Board held its spring meeting in Livingstone, Zambia from May 4 to 6. The Board was joined by the IITA Deputy Directors and R4D Directors, the Director of Humidtropics, the Director of Finance and Head of Internal Audit. Also attending were Klaus Leisinger representing the Consortium Board, Elena Figus representing the CG Internal Audit Unit and Rosern Rwampororo, Team Leader of the Humidtropics Center Commissioned External Evaluation. Two Board members, John Pickett and Olusola Oyewole, sent regrets that they were unable to attend.
- On system level issues, the focus was on the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF), approved by the Consortium Board and the Fund Council, which provides the framework for the research done by the CGIAR, and is a key document for the CRP second phase to be implemented from 2017. The Board Chair reported that there is general desire on the part of the funders to reduce the number of CRPs. Centers for the most part are not in favor of abandoning the current CRPs so early in their existence, but recognize the high transaction costs of CRP operations. The Centres are meeting in mid-May to determine an optimum CRP portfolio looking at synergies and similarities as well as the SRF and the system level and intermediate level outcomes. On the outcome of the Fund Council decision related to system governance, the funders had decided to establish one system organization for the CGIAR with one system office to be located in Montpellier.
- The Board endorsed the following recommendations from a CIMMYT/IITA summit held in Rome in mid- February related to new governance arrangements for the Maize CRP in which IITA and CIMMYT are the only two centers. The meeting was attended by the IITA Board Chair, the DDG (R4), R4D Director, Southern Africa, Abebe Menkir, IITA Maize CRP Coordinator and their counter parts from CIMMYT. The understanding is that these agreements apply exclusively to the Maize CRP and only as long as the CRP is in existence.
 - The Independent Steering Committee (ISC) and the CRP Director will report to both the CIMMYT and IITA Program Committees.
 - The IITA Program Committee Chair could be an ex-officio member of the ISC and would attend CIMMYT Program Committee meetings
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 - Historical geographies/territories for CIMMYT and IITA are no longer relevant.
 - More joint writing of proposals
 - Joint fundraising (especially by DGs of CIMMYT and IITA)
 - Agreed flagship project and cluster of activities leaders
 - Humidtropics is to be invited to maize pre-proposal write shop.
- The Board congratulated the Director General on an excellent presentation that articulated IITA's plans for strengthening the Institute at a time of crisis in finance and governance in the CGIAR. The

presentation covered the key areas of IITA's alignment with the development targets and research priorities and emphasis of the Strategy and Results Framework and their implications for IITA as an institution and its strategic direction in the future. These directions are to: focus on African opportunities, sustainable intensification, agro-food systems and agribusiness; strengthen delivery through linking ARI and NARES; help to strengthen regional organizations, participatory R4D, the business incubation platform and youth in agri-business; and expand the concept to the IITA hubs in SSA. The major objectives for 2015-2016 are to take the total budget approach, not distinguishing between Window 1 and 2 and bilateral/Window 3, accelerate project execution, implement full cost recovery, lead the Humidtropics CRP, increase bilateral funding and increase delivery of its R4D products. The Board noted that, despite the challenges, IITA has not lost its focus and endorsed the leadership role IITA is playing in championing the role of youth in agriculture as it has the potential to make a significant contribution to food security in Africa.

- Reacting to the Director General's presentation, the Consortium Board member was impressed by the progress that IITA has made and urged IITA to tell its story more widely, emphasizing the activities it is engaged in to contribute to the System Level Outcomes of poverty and sustainable land use (SLU).
- The Board received an update on the businesses and operations of the Business Incubation Platform and noted the progress that has been made in the last year towards establishing the foundation for commercial advancement of IITA's breakthrough agricultural technologies and the legal framework in which it operates to bridge the links between research, extension and capacity building. It was very pleased to hear of demands for *aflasafe* from Kenya and Senegal and the proposed construction of production facilities in those two countries with requests for similar facilities in 14 new countries. It looks forward to similar progress with Nodumax and GoSeed in the future.
- The Institute received an unqualified audit opinion on the 2014 Audited Financial Statements. On the recommendation of the newly constituted Audit and Finance Committee, the Board adopted the Audited Financial Statements for 2014 and the operating cost budget for 2015 at \$142.2 M, revenue of \$143.083 m and an operating surplus of \$0.751 m, the Internal Audit Strategic Plan 2015-16 and Internal Audit Code of Ethics. It expressed concern that the External Auditors' recommendations related to IT from a year ago had not been implemented and requested management to ensure they are addressed by June 2015. At the same time, the Board asked for the development of an IT strategy for the Institute. The Audit & Finance Committee also reviewed an update of the activities undertaken by the Risk Management Committee and was pleased to note the progress to date and that the risk reporting system had also been extended to IITA's hub locations. It looks forward to receiving the next risk report that includes mitigation actions directly from the Risk Management Committee at the November meeting. The Board was also concerned that project execution was still below target resulting in the loss of revenue for the Institute and the ability to build its reserves. They were informed that this was mainly due to poor execution of a few bilateral projects. The Committee requested management to take the necessary measures to ensure that these projects receive priority attention and that the recommendations from the Project Execution Workshop are fully implemented. In addition, management should move ahead as soon as possible with the implementation of full cost recovery.

- Overall, the Board was very pleased with the financial management at IITA and recalled the significant progress the Institute has made since December 2011. It requested IITA management to look into the actions the Institute will have to put in place to build its reserves to an appropriate level, to consider the optimum level of reserves for IITA's current operations, and to prepare a paper for discussion at the next Board meeting.
- The incoming chair, Roel Merckx chaired the Program Committee. A major item on the agenda of the PC meeting was the Humidtropics CRP as the Board has been keen to learn more about the ongoing research in the CRP. The presentations covered the key research themes following an overview on systems research by the Humidtropics Director. Tim Robinson of ILRI presented on Strategic Research Theme 1—Systems Analysis and Global Synthesis, Bernard Vanlauwe on Strategic Research Theme 2—Integrated Systems Improvement, Cees Leuwis of Wageningen University on Strategic Research Theme 3—Upscaling and Institutional Innovation, and Ingrid Oborn of ICRAF presented ongoing activities from Mekong Action Area. The Board and the Program Committee has long been interested to get a better grasp of the activities of the CRP in order to be able to perform its governance function more effectively, and they thanked the speakers for the excellent presentations and the DDG (R4D) for the thoughtful organization. Some key takeaways from the discussion were the importance of making the connection to climate change more visible, integrating with the ongoing work on the key performance indicators, i.e. poverty and sustainable land use, and articulating the CRPs contribution to the IDOs as the Institute positions itself for the second CRP call.
- Overall the Program Committee was extremely pleased with the quality of the presentations and the information provided. One of its most striking observations was the integration of the social and natural sciences. They considered the presentations on the poverty and sustainable land use to be excellent and commended the staff for the progress and good start to measuring the impact on the numbers lifted out of poverty through the adoption of IITA technologies. They recommended continuing the effort and incorporating the multiple dimensions of poverty in the work. They recognized that the SLU indicator is a work in progress and commended the team for the partnerships established. The recommendation here was to continue the work that the team has started and to strive for simplification by amalgamating the various SLU related indicators.
- The PC welcomed the science updates presented by the four R4D directors. The presentations provided information about progress in breeding for drought tolerant maize and nutrient density, yam transformation and the genetic gains achieved with yams. They were pleased to learn about the adoption of the Biosafety protocols by the Government of Nigeria and advised IITA communicate widely on its GMO work and benefits when its GM products are approved and ready to be released. In the area of plant health the PC recommended that the institute strive to secure the intellectual property for the biocontrol of striga with *Fusarium oxysporum*. A highlight of the natural resource management presentation was the combination of agronomic as well as economic drivers as the basis for designing interventions. . The social science presentation gave an excellent and comprehensive analysis of the links between station yields and those in farmers' fields. It emphasized the importance of long-term engagement and continuous investments in dissemination/extension and it presented the main challenges to adoption related to policy, to

technology, mechanization and other factors. The PC concluded that the social science team should play a greater role in the Humidtropics CRP to understand and analyze the main drivers of adoption along the value chain.

- The Human Resources Committee commended management for its efforts on the compensation study, the staff satisfaction assessment, and the gender mainstreaming survey and were pleased with the follow up actions taken. As a way forward, the Committee recommended the development of human resource goals against which it can align its actions as well as monitor progress. The Committee was also very appreciative of the Human Resources Annual Report that provided the broad overview of the human resource activities in which the Institute has been engaged. The Board recommended that a major emphasis during 2015 should be placed on the training of project managers responsible for some of IITA's larger projects and explore organizations that can tailor the training specifically for IITA's needs.
- The Governance Committee endorsed the revisions to the Board of Trustees Policy Manual, the handbook by which the Board conducts its affairs. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Board collectively and individually, its rules of procedure and the policies that guide the Board and its members throughout their tenure on the Board. It also reviewed potential candidates to succeed Trustees whose tenure on the Board ends in 2015 and 2016 and decided on a rigorous process for selecting their successors. Lastly, it reviewed feedback from the Board self-evaluation conducted at the end of the November 2014. It was pleased to note the significant improvement in Board operations but also noted the areas that Trustees considered were in need of improvement.
- In closed session, the Chair on behalf of the Board, thanked the DG and the staff for an excellent meeting, with good presentations and discussions and read from a message that he had received from the Consortium Board member in attendance.
- As its last item of business the Board bade farewell to Jill Findeis who was attending the last meeting in her first term and had decided for health reasons not to be considered for a second term.