

Perspectives on CIMMYT's Future



A Summary of External
Stakeholder Consultations Conducted for
Strategic Planning at CIMMYT



CIMMYT_{MR}

INTERNATIONAL MAIZE AND WHEAT IMPROVEMENT CENTER

CIMMYT® (www.cimmyt.org) is an internationally funded, nonprofit, scientific research, training, and development organization. CIMMYT acts as a catalyst and leader in a global maize and wheat innovation network that serves the resource-poor in developing countries. Drawing on strong science and effective partnerships, we create, share, and use knowledge and technology to increase food security, improve the productivity and profitability of farming systems, and sustain natural resources. CIMMYT is one of 16 food and environmental organizations known as the Future Harvest Centers (www.futureharvest.org). Located around the world, the Future Harvest Centers conduct research in partnership with farmers, scientists, and policymakers to help alleviate poverty and increase food security while protecting natural resources. The centers are supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) (www.cgiar.org), whose members include nearly 60 countries, private foundations, and regional and international organizations. Financial support for CIMMYT's research agenda also comes from many other sources, including foundations, development banks, and public and private agencies.

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Correct citation: CIMMYT. 2004. *Perspectives on CIMMYT's Future: A Summary of External Stakeholder Consultations Conducted for Strategic Planning at CIMMYT*. Mexico, DF: CIMMYT.

Abstract: As part of the strategic planning process initiated in July 2002, CIMMYT commissioned the Meridian Institute to conduct an extensive consultation with more than 170 stakeholders worldwide, representing national agricultural research services, CGIAR Centers, advanced research institutes, the private sector, donor agencies, and representatives of farmer groups. The interviews elicited highly divergent opinions and valuable insights into how others perceive CIMMYT and its future. Overall, the consultations revealed that CIMMYT's products and activities are greatly appreciated and serve an apparent need. There was concurrence that CIMMYT has a comparative advantage in many arenas—human resources and networks, breeding expertise and germplasm collections, and research and training programs—and that it should increase its collaborative efforts and ensure greater access to its products. Most of all, the stakeholders believed that for CIMMYT to survive and continue its history as a highly successful organization, it should move beyond discussion of new strategies and take decisive action toward real change.

ISBN: 970-648-108-7

AGROVOC descriptors: Agricultural development; Development plans; Planning; Research institutions; Strength; Right of access; Trends; Partnerships; Structural policies; Private sector; Farmers associations; Genetic resources; Plant breeding; Plant production; Agricultural research; CGIAR; Developing countries

AGRIS category codes: E14 Development Economics and Policies; A50 Agricultural Research

Dewey decimal classification: 658.57

Printed in Mexico.

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Perspectives on CIMMYT's Future

A Summary of the External Stakeholder Consultation Conducted for Strategic Planning at CIMMYT

Purpose of the Consultation

CIMMYT initiated strategic planning in July 2002 to (1) examine the continuing relevance of the Center's mission, (2) define how CIMMYT should position itself to meet the needs for agricultural knowledge and technology over the next 10-15 years, and (3) determine the most appropriate organizational structure and operating modalities to deliver CIMMYT's products and services effectively and efficiently.

To ensure that the planning process would be inclusive and benefit from the perspectives and expertise of a wide range of organizations, CIMMYT sponsored an extensive consultation with more than 170 stakeholders worldwide. CIMMYT requested that the Meridian Institute facilitate the consultation to encourage open discussion and preserve respondents' confidentiality. From late 2002 through early 2003, colleagues from important constituencies provided information through interviews

and written surveys: national agricultural research services (NARS), advanced research institutes (ARIs), CGIAR Centers, the private sector, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and representatives of farmer groups (Figures 1 and 2).

As one might expect, the interviews elicited highly divergent opinions about some issues, but the consultation provided a spectrum of valuable insights into how others perceived CIMMYT and its future. To preserve confidentiality, the full report will not be published, but the following summary encapsulates the major lessons that CIMMYT took to heart in developing its strategy (CIMMYT 2004b). The summary covers several broad themes: global trends that will affect CIMMYT's operating environment; CIMMYT's strengths and weaknesses; and recommendations related to CIMMYT's future activities, its partnerships and networks, organizational structure, and resource mobilization.

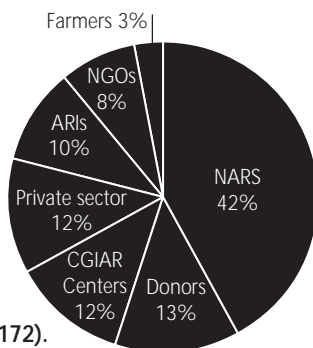


Figure 1. External stakeholders by organization (n = 172).

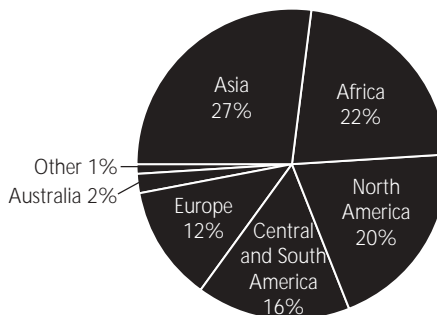


Figure 2. External stakeholders by region (n = 172).

Global Trends

Virtually all of the influential global trends for agricultural research and development covered in the analysis that CIMMYT conducted (CIMMYT 2004a) prior to developing its strategy were identified by CIMMYT's stakeholders: globalization and trade liberalization, persistence of poverty and a growing gap between rich and poor, population growth and urbanization, HIV/AIDS, water scarcity, climate change, declining soil fertility, the need to protect biodiversity, the continued need to attain food security, the need for high-quality varieties and continued exchange of germplasm, rapid advances in agricultural biotechnology, privatization of agricultural research, the changing capacity and role of national research systems, and the decline in public funding for agricultural research.

ALL OF THE INFLUENTIAL
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CIMMYT CONDUCTED PRIOR
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CIMMYT'S STAKEHOLDERS
AS WELL.

CIMMYT's Strengths

The strengths listed most often by CIMMYT's stakeholders represent an inventory of our current comparative advantage: CIMMYT's human resources and networks, its breeding expertise and collections of genetic resources, its research and training programs, its history and reputation, and its honesty, credibility, and mission.

All stakeholder groups cited the talent, dedication, and experience of CIMMYT's past and present staff. These staff are viewed as indispensable to CIMMYT's achievements, although some stakeholders cautioned that CIMMYT's human capital could erode quickly through reliance on special funding and other financial challenges.

Stakeholders also viewed CIMMYT as playing an essential coordinating role in a rich network of organizations and professionals that transcends geopolitical boundaries, gives agriculturalists in less developed countries access to colleagues in more developed countries, and is unusually vertical in its membership, ranging from farmers to Ministers of Agriculture. Stakeholders observed that few organizations in agricultural research could claim an equally extensive network. The key question that emerges is how CIMMYT will leverage its network to the fullest in light of changing opportunities and challenges.

CIMMYT's breeding expertise—the strong plant breeding skills of CIMMYT staff—and its collections of genetic resources are also viewed as key strengths. Nearly all national research system stakeholders regard plant breeding as an important function of CIMMYT, and many advocated greater integration of biotechnology and conventional plant breeding. Others advocated greater synergy between breeding and crop management and systems research. Stakeholders outside the national research systems disagreed about whether CIMMYT's plant breeding expertise should support limited plant-breeding capacity in developing nations or be devolved entirely to the private sector and national research programs.

The unparalleled richness, diversity, and potential of the genetic resources in CIMMYT's care have been the “creative

basis” for plant breeding at CIMMYT, but stakeholders felt that these collections are an under-used resource.

CIMMYT's research and training programs are regarded as strengths largely by stakeholders from national research systems. CIMMYT's training programs are a key factor in increasing the capacity of national research programs, a forum for sharing questions and ideas, a key investment in CIMMYT's network, and an important conduit for feedback and information. Many felt that the importance of CIMMYT's training programs is not fully realized within CIMMYT.

Stakeholders believed that CIMMYT's recognized success in combating hunger through the development of new crop varieties and crop management systems affords it a great deal of leverage in forming partnerships, recruiting new talent, and, more importantly, setting the tone for agricultural research and development in many developing countries. Many stakeholders cautioned that CIMMYT's history and reputation are an important, but not permanent, source of capital, which CIMMYT should regard as a strategic resource.

CIMMYT's mission is regarded as a strength among representatives of national research systems, who believe that the mission gives CIMMYT important standing in the world and that there will be a need for such an organization for many, many years. Many respondents called CIMMYT an “honest broker” in agricultural research and technology transfer. The perception that CIMMYT's work is less politicized than that of other players has provided a great deal of comfort for partners at all levels. This honesty allows CIMMYT to create collaboration and understanding where other entities, acting alone, could or would not. Because of the perception of honesty, information coming from CIMMYT is viewed as highly credible. Interviewees who cited this strength are very concerned that this role not be lost. They claim that if CIMMYT's interactions with the outside world become highly politicized, the poor farmers of the world will not be served by another entity.

CIMMYT's Weaknesses

CIMMYT's most frequently cited weaknesses are challenges that we must respond to in charting our course for the future: CIMMYT is hampered by funding constraints, is slow to respond to change, is a poor collaborator, has gradually moved away from its mission and research focus, is spread too thinly and has a limited presence on the ground, lacks systems thinking, and is subject to the high transactions costs of the CGIAR System.

Funding was CIMMYT's most frequently cited weakness, mentioned by stakeholders from all constituencies except the donor group. Declining funding for agricultural research and the increasing dependence on special project funds limit CIMMYT's ability to fulfill its mission and create the risk that CIMMYT's portfolio of projects and partnerships will reflect its donors' agendas, not CIMMYT's or its partners'. Funding challenges will erode CIMMYT's capacity to attract talented scientists and consequently its scientific reputation. Donors regarded funding challenges as a reality across the CGIAR and not a problem particular to CIMMYT.

Advanced research institutes perceive CIMMYT as slow to adapt to new circumstances, including intellectual property issues, the debate over biotechnology in developing countries, and important environmental changes (such as climate change and the looming global water crisis). One stakeholder, summarizing the views of many, said that CIMMYT "lacks a strategic global outlook." Many stakeholders observed that CIMMYT cannot rest on its past accomplishments; others felt that CIMMYT is not doing enough to advertise its recent scientific successes to the larger world or to invest in its own reputation through strategic partnerships.

Stakeholders outside of national research systems (from the CGIAR, private sector, ARI, and donor constituencies, but not NGOs or farmers) felt that CIMMYT could be more thorough and proactive in partnering, especially when it is expected to play a leadership role. Some stakeholders experienced a lack of attention to the interpersonal relationships that can define institutional relationships. Insufficient time and attention were devoted to collaborative efforts, to gaps in the technology development and delivery chain, and to building human capacity in the countries where some projects operate. Stakeholders from the national research systems advocated that CIMMYT act less unilaterally, engage in more substantive and frequent joint planning and project evaluation, and give them (and farmers) a greater role in CIMMYT's regional strategies.

Many interviewees, especially among donors and CGIAR stakeholders, felt that CIMMYT had gradually moved away from its mission and that its research focus had changed. This perception was explained in several ways: as a weakness of the CGIAR System in general; as a result of depending on special project funding; as a movement away from meeting the needs of the poor and towards meeting academic standards of excellence; as a preference for basic over applied science; and as a move away from its core competence in the development and dissemination of new varieties.

CIMMYT is perceived as trying to accomplish too much with too few staff, with limited success or over too little time. Opinions about the ability of over-committed staff to nurture the quality of partnerships have been described above. Over-committed staff may also affect CIMMYT's ability to respond to change and to stay focused on the mission.

CIMMYT's insufficient on-the-ground presence was mentioned most frequently by NGOs as a weakness. The key message is that CIMMYT needs to work closely with a variety of organizations that can complement its activities on the ground. To do so, CIMMYT needs a greater regional presence to identify, develop, and maintain effective partnerships. CIMMYT cannot afford to be isolated from the regions where it is most needed.

Several groups of stakeholders regarded a lack of holistic thinking as an important weakness in CIMMYT's approach to developing and delivering new agricultural technology. "Holistic thinking" meant different things, such as more integrated crop production packages that include new varieties, resource management, and methodological frameworks for assessing socioeconomic impacts; projects that include greater attention to socioeconomic aspects of poverty (access to markets, access to inputs, gender issues); or a systems approach that focuses on all aspects of sustainable agriculture, particularly for farmers in marginal environments. In general, there was concern that CIMMYT scientists are not encouraged to see agricultural technology from a systems point of view. CIMMYT's history and culture have not positioned it to anticipate the need for interdisciplinary thinking. Staff are largely recruited as specialists, with highly focused training.

External stakeholders in many groups, most notably donors, expressed concern that mission of CIMMYT and other CGIAR Centers is compromised by the large overhead burden imposed by the CGIAR System, a burden that the CGIAR reform process must address.

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Recommendations on Products and Programs

Stakeholders' specific suggestions for CIMMYT's products and programs are described below. Some stakeholders focused on broad, global issues, while others focused more on regional and local needs. As a result, opinions diverged with respect to the relative importance of CIMMYT's products and the need to focus more on basic or applied research. Most stakeholders regarded improved germplasm as a high-priority product. Several stakeholders from the various groups suggested that CIMMYT work with partners, including farmers, to identify and prioritize needs for research and products.

Stakeholders from all types of organizations and regions agree that strategic germplasm improvement is a strength of CIMMYT and that improved germplasm is a core product. Respondents were divided about the appropriate balance of upstream versus downstream research, however. Some advocated that CIMMYT should focus more on work of direct benefit to farmers (e.g., seed distribution, development of local seed companies, and adaptive, farmer participatory research) and rely more on the private sector and ARIs for upstream research. Others, concerned that large private companies are investing less in upstream research, contended that CIMMYT should focus on upstream research and that national programs and local research should conduct downstream research, where viable.

There was also considerable disagreement among stakeholders regarding how CIMMYT should prioritize activities between marginal and favorable (especially irrigated) environments. A few respondents from ARIs and the private sector commented extensively on this issue. They contended that CIMMYT should focus on maize in marginal environments because subsistence farmers, particularly in Africa, are highly dependent on maize production across large, marginal geographic regions that are likely to be disregarded by the private sector for some time to come. Several respondents suggested a continued focus on wheat production in irrigated environments as a means of feeding a growing urban population in the

developing world. Others suggested that CIMMYT should turn its attention to marginal wheat production areas, because current technologies and subsidies can be used to stimulate wheat production in irrigated environments.

A particular concern among Central Asian and South American stakeholders was to protect agricultural biodiversity. Central Asian stakeholders appeared to be concerned about biodiversity because the region is considered a center of origin for wheat. South American stakeholders seemed concerned to access diverse germplasm for local breeding programs. Some felt that CIMMYT has an important role in characterizing and evaluating germplasm and making greater use of genomics to catalog its genetic resources. An individual from the private sector suggested that a private company might be willing to fund a detailed investigation of the genetic resources in CIMMYT's genebank.

Many stakeholders from national research systems, especially in Africa and Asia, as well as other stakeholders, mentioned that improved germplasm is a high-priority product. They emphasized the need to develop and deliver germplasm that yields well, has high grain quality, and resists biotic and abiotic stresses, including drought, pests, *Striga* in Africa, soils with little nitrogen, and stresses resulting from climate change. Stakeholders in Central Asia suggested that CIMMYT work with partners to combine local wheat varieties and CIMMYT varieties in breeding programs. Several stakeholders in Africa, but also some in other regions, mentioned quality protein maize as an important product and suggested that its adoption by smallholder farmers should be stimulated.

Many stakeholders advocated that CIMMYT keep track of rapid developments in biotechnology to maintain its scientific pedigree. Stakeholders from national research systems looked to CIMMYT to facilitate access to the tools of biotechnology and other areas of new science, provide training in applications of new science, and transfer

technology to developing countries. Several stakeholders in developing countries suggested that poor people would use biotechnology products if they presented a clear benefit. Even NGOs that many consider ardent opponents of biotechnology and genetic engineering indicated that it is important for CIMMYT to remain engaged in the biotechnology arena. Other stakeholders advocated the integration of biotechnology and conventional breeding within CIMMYT.

Donor agencies, ARIs, and private companies indicated that CIMMYT cannot compete with investments by the private sector and ARIs in biotechnology research and development. Many respondents recommended that CIMMYT focus on activities in biotechnology for which it has a comparative advantage and pursue partnerships more proactively with the private sector and ARIs. It was suggested that CIMMYT organize a centralized unit of negotiators specializing in brokering and leveraging deals. Scientists working on adapting and improving technologies obtained by this brokering unit could be based at ARIs and private companies rather than CIMMYT. This strategy would provide CIMMYT in-kind support and access to the latest technologies and information. Another possibility was to post CIMMYT scientists to biotechnology laboratories established jointly with other institutions (e.g., private companies) in developing countries. Again, the idea was that these laboratories would house CIMMYT scientists with scientists from national programs, industry, other CGIAR Centers, and other research institutions. Interviewees pointed specifically to the hope that biotechnology would be helpful in addressing problems that many have viewed as intractable, especially problems in Africa, and they suggested moving CIMMYT's biotechnology research to Africa.

Several stakeholders indicated that CIMMYT could play an important role in conducting research and providing information on cropping systems and other agricultural methods to address the constraints of poor farmers related

to infertile soils and lack of water. They suggested that CIMMYT look at the interactions between crops and their impact on soil and water systems. Several advised CIMMYT to learn from its success with the Rice-Wheat Consortium for the Indo-Gangetic Plains. Stakeholders also mentioned that CIMMYT has an important role in developing other agricultural practices that preserve natural resources. For instance, stakeholders in South and Central Asia mentioned reduced tillage and bed planting, and stakeholders in South America specifically mentioned conservation agriculture and reduced tillage as technologies that can greatly benefit and are affordable to poor farmers.

Some stakeholders emphasized the need for greater social science capability to understand how global markets and agricultural policies affected the livelihoods of the poor. Socioeconomic aspects of poverty, such as poor access to markets and the feminization of agriculture, should be integrated into CIMMYT's projects. Some stakeholders in donor organizations, ARIs, and national research systems suggested that social scientists within CIMMYT have an important role in determining the return on investment in CIMMYT's products and activities. Many questioned whether these capabilities were best developed by CIMMYT itself or attained through new or enhanced partnerships with other institutions.

Several stakeholders across categories and regions suggested that CIMMYT should increase efforts to build capacity in developing country institutions. Some felt that training should enable developing countries to conduct breeding, extension, seed distribution, and other downstream activities and free CIMMYT to focus increasingly on upstream research. CIMMYT's strategy to build capacity should focus on providing information and knowledge, developing research methods appropriate to the circumstances of developing countries, and coordinating research networks in target regions.

Intellectual Property Rights and Related Concerns

A number of other issues arose in the course of the interviews and the survey. Participants urged CIMMYT to play a leadership role on the issue of public-sector research and intellectual property rights. Many feared that the growing effects of intellectual property rights on CIMMYT's freedom to operate would affect CIMMYT's ability to conduct cutting-edge science, especially in biotechnology. They cautioned that CIMMYT must become more sophisticated with respect to intellectual property, investing more resources in this area.

Partners from national research systems, NGOs, and private companies in developing countries held diverse opinions on intellectual property. Many felt that CIMMYT should ensure the free availability and exchange of genetic resources, including improved germplasm. Many also suggested that CIMMYT should protect its materials and inventions, but it should differentiate among partners and their objectives (e.g., charging companies from industrialized countries a fee for its products but making them available free of charge to projects that benefit the poor). Other considerations CIMMYT should take into account included the protection of farmers' rights, the need to provide incentives for small seed companies in developing countries, and the need to protect inventions of developing country partners.

Several stakeholders, especially from national research systems and NGOs, suggested that CIMMYT commands the respect of high-level decision makers and should help local organizations engage decision makers to increase political support for public agricultural research and extension.

PARTNERS FROM NATIONAL RESEARCH SYSTEMS, NGOS, AND PRIVATE COMPANIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HELD DIVERSE OPINIONS ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY.

Concerns about Partnerships

As noted earlier, partnerships were emphasized by many respondents as an important means for CIMMYT to cope with declining resources. Stakeholders from diverse groups suggested that CIMMYT can be more effective if it develops partnership networks that consist of organizations that can offer a package of strengths and products to address problems in a systematic and sustainable manner. These networks could develop long-, medium-, and short-term strategic objectives to focus their efforts and should increase CIMMYT's impact on the ground.

To effectively develop and maintain partnerships and partnership networks, CIMMYT may have to consider changes to its organizational structure and management. Several stakeholders, especially from national research systems and NGOs in developing countries, suggested that CIMMYT establish more regional offices with more staff.

CIMMYT faces the challenge of adapting to changing capabilities of partners in developing countries, particularly the changing capacity of national research organizations. Stakeholders from within and outside national research systems noted that research capacity and circumstances differ greatly by country and region, but that many national research systems are coping with the effects of declining funding, including the difficulty of attracting young scientists.

Partnering with the public sector. All respondents from national research systems expressed appreciation for CIMMYT's work. Many look to CIMMYT as a key organization that can help enhance their capacity. Representatives of national research services (and some

other) stakeholders suggested the following strategies for CIMMYT to enhance the effectiveness of partnerships:

- Increase the number of face-to-face meetings and organize joint workshops
- Facilitate coordination between national and regional organizations (CIMMYT is uniquely positioned to get national and regional organizations to collaborate more effectively)
- Develop national and regional partnership networks with shared responsibilities
- Place CIMMYT staff in national research services
- Provide more information, possibly demonstration projects, on CIMMYT and CGIAR products and successes
- Establish regional offices in more countries
- Provide funding, grants and/or awards for national research projects and staff
- Make (reprints of) CIMMYT scientific papers and publications more widely available
- Develop effective information sharing and dissemination tools using the Internet

A few stakeholders noted that CIMMYT would be well served by increasing its reliance on scientists in developing countries. These local scientists are directly familiar with local problems, conditions, resources, and partners. To assist CIMMYT in keeping track of new developments in science and to help determine research priorities, a few stakeholders suggested that CIMMYT create a science advisory council that includes partners from developing countries.

Private companies, international and indigenous.

Most stakeholders viewed private companies as (potential) partners for CIMMYT. They also felt that CIMMYT has much to offer the private sector, especially access to germplasm, scientific knowledge, and a truly global perspective on applied agricultural research. Stakeholders differentiated between private companies from industrialized countries, and smaller, local seed companies in developing countries. With regards to the former category, stakeholders held diverging views on whether CIMMYT should partner with these organizations. Some stakeholders thought CIMMYT could greatly benefit from strategic partnerships with these companies, for instance by seeking access to advanced technologies or by relying on private-sector breeding programs. Others felt that the costs of public-private partnerships were far too high, for instance in terms of transaction costs of working out intellectual property arrangements, or in terms of the costs to society of privatizing public goods.

Regarding private seed companies in developing countries, stakeholders from all regions felt that such companies are potentially important partners for CIMMYT, especially when it comes to developing and commercializing improved varieties and hybrids. Seed companies in developing countries have local research and extension networks in place that can help bring new products and information (sales representatives often provide information about “best farming methods”) to farmers. Some stakeholders in Africa suggested that, where there is no functioning seed distribution system in place, CIMMYT should become involved in the creation of indigenous seed companies. CIMMYT’s role could be to provide these companies with hybrid lines free of charge. Some stakeholders also see a need for CIMMYT training of company scientific staff. Most stakeholders from developing countries suggested that the role of local private seed companies in research, seed distribution, and extension would increase in the years to come. However,

most of them, including some representatives from private seed companies, indicated that the private sector would only serve those farmers that can pay, at least to some extent, for higher quality inputs. They felt that the public sector would continue to play a role in serving the poorest people.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs).

Various individuals pointed out that several NGOs and CBOs have a strong presence and very effective networks in developing countries, especially in rural areas. Some NGOs are working with farmers on agricultural experiments to discover and demonstrate how different farming methods and inputs may improve productivity; CIMMYT should explore opportunities for partnerships with such organizations. One stakeholder suggested that CIMMYT might stimulate retired agricultural scientists to set up NGOs focused on accelerating technology adoption by poor farmers. However, several stakeholders also indicated that CIMMYT should consider the mission and objectives of NGOs, as well as the ramifications of its own decisions regarding science and technology (for instance, decisions regarding the use of genetic modification, or research into “ecological agriculture”), as it explores the development of partnerships with NGOs.

Farmers and farmer organizations. Many stakeholders thought that CIMMYT should become more responsive to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries, farmers in particular. They suggested that partnerships with farmer organizations would help to identify those needs, but these organizations could also serve as extension networks to get information and products to farmers. Most interviewees did not think CIMMYT should devote resources to working with individual farmers, but that partnership with organizations that represent the interests of poor farmers is a positive step towards more effectively identifying and responding to priority needs. The farmer

organizations shared many of the views of national researchers regarding joint priority setting and project/program development and implementation.

Other CGIAR Centers. Several prominent stakeholders suggested that the CGIAR System is too fragmented and competitive. They suggested that CIMMYT should work more closely with other CG Centers, especially those that perform similar activities. These comments were made in the context of collaboration at the organizational level, as well as between outreach staff of different CGIAR Centers. Most stakeholders who commented on this issue thought that the current atmosphere of competition was causing considerable inefficiencies and led to concerns about the viability of the system. Some suggested that CIMMYT should take it a few steps further than just improved collaboration in the CGIAR System, and suggested that CIMMYT should consolidate with other germplasm improvement centers. Another stakeholder suggested that the system should learn from national experiences of close collaboration between public-sector institutions (e.g., the National Institutes of Health in the USA, which work closely with US universities).

International organizations and bilateral and multilateral donors. A few interviewees indicated that CIMMYT and the CGIAR should coordinate their activities with international organizations, including FAO and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and others working on plant genetic resources. Also, several stakeholders from very different perspectives (donor, ARI, and on-the-ground NGO) suggested that multilateral and bilateral donor organizations have great capacity in planning on-the-ground projects and have outreach networks in developing countries. They suggested that CIMMYT should consider these organizations as potential partners.

Other opportunities for new or strengthened partnerships identified by the stakeholders included universities (in particular universities in South America and Southern Africa), as well as private research institutions in South America. One stakeholder from sub-Saharan Africa indicated that religious organizations are playing a greater role in addressing problems in rural communities.

Issues Concerning CIMMYT's Organizational Structure

Stakeholders mentioned several issues regarding CIMMYT's structure and management systems. Many, including donors and NGOs, suggested that CIMMYT had become too bureaucratic and should be much leaner. Associated with increased bureaucracy is the contention that decision-making in CIMMYT has become too top-down. Many stakeholders, including donors, companies, national researchers, and NGOs, also suggested that CIMMYT should strengthen its presence in the regions it targets, and should, for instance, only maintain a small, administrative core. A large number of interviewees—individuals very familiar with CIMMYT's structure—questioned the current “stovepipe” management configuration.

Why house maize and wheat research in the same center? Several stakeholders questioned whether it was appropriate for maize and wheat to be housed within the same institution. Interviewees, for example, pointed to similarities between wheat and rice and wondered whether these two crops should be consolidated within a single institution. Other interviewees indicated that advances in science, especially biotechnology, made developments in one crop equally relevant to multiple crops. Thus, some stakeholders advocated for consolidation with other Centers in the CGIAR System. The Center named most often was IRRI, but numerous other Centers were also mentioned. Consolidation could create greater efficiencies, so that discoveries and lessons learned in one crop could easily be applied to other species and systems. Other stakeholders recommended greater communication and collaboration, not actual

consolidation. One stakeholder specifically suggested moving away from the notion of a maize and wheat “Institution.” Greater emphasis and focus should be placed on cropping “systems” such as rice-wheat systems (the interviewee noted the success of the Rice-Wheat Consortium).

Decentralization. Some interviewees specifically suggested that greater decentralization of CIMMYT's breeding programs would result in better products for farmers. They argue that decentralized programs are more likely to build on locally adapted germplasm and take local farmers' preferences into account; interviewees pointed specifically to CIMMYT's work in maize in Africa. Such approaches emphasize the importance of partnerships, at multiple levels, including product delivery to resource-poor farmers.

Stovepipes and matrices. Interviewees more familiar with the inner workings of CIMMYT suggested that the current “Program Stovepipes” were inhibiting innovation and creating inefficiencies. Specifically, interviewees mentioned poor communication among Program Directors and program staff. Most notably, people pointed to poor integration of the Biotechnology Program with the Maize and Wheat Programs. A few stakeholders urged better sharing of staff across programs. For example, a private-sector stakeholder noted that in his/her company, pathologists work on multiple crops. These stakeholders encouraged more of a matrix management approach, which they believed would bring greater resource efficiency.

Opportunities for Future Resource Mobilization

CIMMYT faces a serious challenge as it attempts to adapt to reductions in funding and budget shortfalls. Stakeholders mentioned multiple seemingly interrelated causes for these budget shortfalls. Many stakeholders expect a continued decline in public financing for agricultural research and a resulting increase in competition for funding. These stakeholders mentioned that changing donor policies tended to favor short-term outcomes of projects, which detract from the long time horizons needed to develop and evaluate new crop strains. Stakeholders, including representatives of bilateral donor agencies, suggested that more donor institutions are becoming interested in using challenge grants to fund research and projects. Some stakeholders felt that donor-driven competition was probably a contributing factor to the lack of cooperation and coordination within and among CIMMYT's programs.

Despite their rather pessimistic outlook about the future of public funding for agricultural research and the strong advice that CIMMYT should become a more efficient organization, stakeholders see several opportunities for CIMMYT to improve its funding structure and adopt strategies that increase the likelihood of sustained financing of its operations. A few interviewees thought that better marketing and collaboration with organizations that can speak on behalf of CIMMYT would be one answer. Others thought CIMMYT should mount an aggressive education program for its donors, many of whom are far removed from the realities of providing crop production technologies to farmers in marginal environments. These voices suggested that CIMMYT take it upon itself to inform donors of the importance of long-term funding commitments required to feed the world's poor.

Increased funding for development assistance. Several interviewees indicated that funding for development assistance and poverty alleviation in general seems to be increasing; agricultural extension and agricultural training are also high on the agenda of some private foundations. Stakeholders interpreted the implications of this shifting focus for CIMMYT in slightly different ways. Some recommended that CIMMYT should try to better understand donor needs and help donor organizations better understand how CIMMYT's mission and work are relevant to addressing those needs. Other stakeholders, however, suggested that CIMMYT should not chase funding and have its agenda determined by donor priorities, but instead should focus on the priority needs of poor people. They suggested that if CIMMYT does a good job of identifying priority needs in developing countries, and communicates these effectively to donors, it will influence donor priorities and funding will follow.

Several stakeholders suggested that influencing and responding to donor priorities will require that CIMMYT work differently not only with donor agencies but also with CIMMYT's partners. Several stakeholders in donor organizations mentioned that decision-makers in their organizations do not fully understand what CIMMYT does and how it contributes to fulfilling donor objectives. There seems to be a communication issue that can be addressed through, for instance, promoting regular interactions and relationship-building with donor organization staff focused on understanding donor objectives. Also, clear communication about how CIMMYT activities support donor objectives, as well as establishing and enhancing relationships with donor organization staff who influence priority setting in their organizations would help. These relationships can grow into true partnerships that support CIMMYT's activities.

A few stakeholders suggested that CIMMYT should internalize the philosophy of focusing on mission and results by organizing around specific outcomes, instead of crops. They suggested that this would improve its communication with donors, because it relates activities directly to the types of impacts donors are interested in.

Earmarked funding. Several interviewees predicted that donors would increasingly channel funding through institutions in developing countries. They suggested that CIMMYT should explore the possibility of working with donors and partners/clients in developing countries to build upstream agricultural research into projects, and have part of the funding earmarked for these research activities. Many national research service representatives suggested that CIMMYT and its partners collaborate on proposal development, which could offer new methods for securing funding.

Alternative institutional funding sources. Interviewees from donor agencies and ARIs suggested that innovative approaches to collaboration might offer access to new sources of funding, such as funding from agencies that are not usually involved in funding research and projects targeted to developing countries. Agricultural, health, environmental, and other agencies might be interested in sponsoring research conducted through a national institution that collaborates with CIMMYT. Other potential new sources of funding that interviewees mentioned were: charitable foundations of international agricultural companies; bilateral donors, especially through partnerships with their field staff; the Global Environment Fund; the Millennium Challenge Account in the USA; benefit concerts; the private sector, especially for hybrid breeding; overhead charges added to project funding; and challenge grants. With regard to challenge grants, those interviewees that commented on them suggested that they have the potential to bring in additional donors, increase CIMMYT's responsiveness to local needs, improve

impact measurement, and enhance collaboration with new and existing partners. They strongly encouraged CIMMYT to participate in challenge grants.

In-kind support. Several stakeholders strongly suggested that CIMMYT should take advantage of opportunities to obtain in-kind support such as the use of highly advanced laboratories and equipment and access to specialized expertise at these interviewees' public-sector ARIs and private companies. These individuals specifically mentioned that CIMMYT's limited resources make it very difficult to develop and maintain state-of-the-art capacity in biotechnology research. Strategic collaboration with ARIs and/or private companies may provide CIMMYT with access to this capacity (labs, technology, and knowledge). CIMMYT should explore what it has to offer in return. For instance, some ARIs mentioned that insufficient efforts are being made to apply their research, and they might need CIMMYT's help and expertise in breeding to develop products that benefit farmers and consumers.

Fee-for-service or licensing arrangements. Stakeholders were divided about the question of whether CIMMYT should make a profit on its germplasm collection. Some stakeholders felt that the germplasm bank is a "treasure," which CIMMYT should be able to use to its financial benefit, for instance by licensing germplasm to developed country institutions or companies for a fee and/or royalty sharing arrangement. These stakeholders suggested that such arrangements could be structured to allow CIMMYT to continue to make germplasm freely available to developing countries. They also suggested that, in order to make this work, CIMMYT needs to be innovative, and should establish very clear policies regarding material transfer, intellectual property protection, and royalty sharing. Other stakeholders, however, were adamant that germplasm should remain in the public domain.

Several stakeholders from private seed companies and national research services in different regions suggested that CIMMYT might consider selling products such as seed, training programs, and consulting services to generate income. Another suggested that biotechnology products might be sold to private companies. Several national research representatives also suggested that the countries and national and regional organizations that benefit from CIMMYT's products might be willing to make financial contributions.

Developing an endowment fund to finance core activities. Several stakeholders, in reflecting on CIMMYT's strengths, suggested that there may be benefactors (including philanthropists, private companies, and charitable foundations) who might be interested in helping CIMMYT establish an endowment, or establish separate endowments for wheat and maize depending on donor interests, to provide unrestricted funding for parts of the research agenda. A few stakeholders also encouraged CIMMYT to monitor and, if possible, participate in the discussions regarding implementation of the financial provisions under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources.

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Conclusions from the Stakeholder Consultation

The Meridian Institute report closes with the following observations:

After reviewing the feedback provided by CIMMYT's partners in developing and transitional countries, it is obvious that CIMMYT's products and activities are greatly appreciated and serve an apparent need. There seems to be a general call for greater collaboration and greater access to CIMMYT's products. However, ideas worldwide are changing with regards to the role of international agricultural research centers, and many stakeholders reflected that "real change" is necessary for CIMMYT to survive and continue its history as a highly successful organization. They would like to see CIMMYT take this opportunity to move beyond discussion of new strategies and take the actions necessary to remain relevant and successful in a changing world.

Many of the insights expressed by CIMMYT's stakeholders were included in the development of its new strategy, such as the recommendation to decentralize research and to move towards a more consultative and interdisciplinary research approach. Interested readers are invited to consult CIMMYT's strategy for details (2004b).

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STAKEHOLDERS REFLECTED THAT "REAL CHANGE" IS NECESSARY FOR CIMMYT TO SURVIVE AND CONTINUE ITS HISTORY AS A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATION.

ISBN: 970-648-108-7



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