

18 August 2020



Mr. Daniel van Gilst
Senior Adviser
Department for Climate, Energy and Environment
Section for Environment and Food Security
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
Bygdøy allé 2, 0257 Oslo, Norway

Mr. Eric Witte
Senior International Affairs Specialist
Bureau for Resilience and Food Security
United States Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20523

Ms. Suzanne Steensen
Head of Secretariat
Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
2 Rue André-Pascal
75775 Paris CEDEX 16, France

Dear Mr. van Gilst, Mr. Witte and Ms. Steensen,

A One CGIAR response to the 2019 CGIAR MOPAN Assessment

On behalf of the CGIAR System¹ I would like to thank the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) members and Secretariat for conducting the 2019 assessment of CGIAR. Additionally, I express CGIAR's gratitude to Norway and the United States of America for serving as Institutional Leads.

CGIAR values the MOPAN review as a multi-partner assessment approach, bringing consistency to evaluating the effectiveness of multilateral organizations and facilitating organizational learning, development and strengthened impact in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. CGIAR is pleased that this first assessment reviewed our organizational systems, practices and behaviors, and results achieved from 2016 to mid-2019. We appreciate the flexibility in assessment approach with tailored evidence-gathering and analysis catering

¹ The [CGIAR System](#) comprises the CGIAR System Organization, Centers, Funders, System Council, advisory bodies and Research.

to CGIAR's unique organization and programs, resulting in an independent evidence-based snapshot of CGIAR as it was until mid-2019.

CGIAR also recognizes the professional, constructive and responsive collaboration experienced throughout the assessment process, and the tremendous efforts by the MOPAN team to understand the CGIAR System, recognizing that CGIAR is in many ways different from multi-laterals MOPAN typically works with. We are particularly grateful to MOPAN staff for the successful presentation of the findings of the MOPAN report at the [CGIAR System Council's 10th meeting in June 2020](#).

CGIAR welcomes the constructive and timely findings which clearly support and converge with the rationale for the organizational transformation into One CGIAR we are currently undergoing, further elaborated on below. It is important to note that since the assessment was conducted for the period 2016 to mid-2019, it does not cover the current transition to One CGIAR. However, the assessment identifies key strengths that we need to build on, as well as areas for improvement that the transition to One CGIAR intends to address. To be as comprehensive in our response as possible, the Appendix to this letter provides more detailed commentary, building on contributions from across the CGIAR System. A stock-take on progress in relation to the MOPAN assessment will be planned in 2021 with the CGIAR System Council as a follow-up to this response.

Specifically, in the area of ensuring a more transformative approach to gender, diversity and inclusion in CGIAR's research and operations, we recognize that substantial improvement is still required, notwithstanding CGIAR's depth of gender research over past years undertaken by a growing cadre of talented researchers. Important decisions taken in the latter part of 2019 to approve a new GENDER Platform (that commenced in early 2020), and agree our new Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Framework, are significant additional steps that more clearly set our commitments in these key areas. CGIAR's new [Executive Management Team](#), and soon to be announced Board, embody this commitment and will pave the way for bold ambitions and actions in 2021 and onward.

Again, CGIAR thanks Norway and the United States of America for championing the CGIAR 2019 MOPAN Assessment. We believe you will find the One CGIAR Response thoughtful, accurate and reflective of CGIAR's single mission of "Ending hunger by 2030 – through science to transform food, land and water systems in a climate crisis."



Dr. Marco Ferroni

Chair, CGIAR System Management Board &
Non-voting member of the CGIAR System Council

One CGIAR Commentary on CGIAR 2019 MOPAN Assessment

A transition to “One CGIAR”

MOPAN’s assessment comes at a time of profound change for CGIAR. In November 2019 – after the close of the assessment period – the CGIAR System Council unanimously endorsed the [recommendations](#) of the CGIAR [System Reference Group](#), calling for CGIAR to come together as a truly integrated “One CGIAR.”

One CGIAR is a dynamic reformulation of CGIAR’s partnerships, knowledge, assets, and global presence, aiming for greater integration in the face of the interdependent challenges facing today’s world. It comprises:

1. A sharper mission statement and impact focus to 2030, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals;
2. Unified governance under a “One CGIAR Common Board”;
3. Institutional integration, including more aligned management under an empowered Executive Management Team, common policies and services, and a unified country presence;
4. A new research modality; and
5. More, and pooled, funding.

The transition to One CGIAR is being implemented as a program of multiple interconnected workstreams supported by a Transition Program Management Unit.

In the near term, the focus of the transition is to put in place a unified governance and management structure under a One CGIAR Common Board and an empowered Executive Management Team by October 2020 to provide coordinated governance and leadership to the transition.

To launch a new research portfolio in 2022, a high-level 2030 Research Strategy will be presented for approval by the System Council at the end of 2020, followed by a three-year investment plan for 2022–24, and associated changes to CGIAR’s research and funding modalities.

Of the areas for improvement identified in MOPAN’s assessment, some have been explicitly identified as central to the rationale for One CGIAR, such as the challenges relating to CGIAR’s decision-making, governance structure, funding model, policies and services. Others, such as those relating to gender equality and women’s empowerment, and the evaluation function, will need to be kept in close focus with a view to seizing the opportunity for a step-change in performance amid the broader institutional transformation that is underway.

CGIAR areas of strength

We are particularly pleased with MOPAN's positive findings related to the following:

- CGIAR provides an invaluable international resource for the interface between agricultural research and innovation, with a clear understanding of global needs and demands.
- CGIAR provides a unique global public good that is responsive and relevant and delivers large-scale results as a solid scientific partner – and a world leader in some areas – providing extremely valuable intellectual assets, open access data, knowledge products and genetic resources to the international community.
- The CGIAR System is a well-trusted, diverse and flexible multi-layered partnership that is responsive to demand and the context of rapidly changing and emerging development challenges.
- CGIAR has deep-rooted and longstanding links in-country where CGIAR builds on complementarities of national partners.
- CGIAR has a coherent and strategic long-term vision, in which CGIAR Research Programs provide coverage and delivery.
- CGIAR infrastructure and assets, such as CGIAR's international genebanks, are central to world food and nutrition security.
- CGIAR is advancing key System-wide assurance mechanisms for increased operational and reporting transparency, including:
 - Coordinated programming and budgeting mechanisms;
 - Emphasis on performance management through results-based management; and
 - Open and accessible data and information through impact, finance, grant, and partnership reporting and dashboards.
- CGIAR contributes to mainstreaming the issues of environmental sustainability and climate adaptation, resilience and mitigation, recognizing that these cut across many CGIAR Research Programs.

The MOPAN assessment notes that some of the areas of strengths also present challenges. CGIAR would like to highlight our commitment to continuously improving and evolving, finding fit-for-purpose delivery mechanisms and adapting our ways of monitoring results, for enduring and strengthened relevance and capabilities of CGIAR, and ultimately delivering greater value to global development objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals.

CGIAR areas for improvement

The assessment provided useful insights into areas for improvement for CGIAR. While noting that some have already been or will be addressed through the transition to One CGIAR, considerations relating to three main areas of improvement as highlighted in the discussion during the System Council presentations in June 2020 are presented below:

Gender: CGIAR recognizes the importance of gender equality, and that more needs to be done to systematically and purposefully address gender inequality across our workplaces and in research programs.

For gender in the workplace, the [Framework for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion](#) (GDI Framework) in CGIAR's workplaces, and an accompanying two-year [Action Plan](#) (GDI Action Plan), were launched in January 2020. The GDI Framework acknowledges the compelling case for gender equity, diversity and inclusion, and their importance to delivering on CGIAR's critical mission. It confirms CGIAR's commitment to creating and sustaining diverse and inclusive work cultures and enabling workplaces. The GDI Action Plan is ambitious and substantial, containing key objectives and covering five principles: (i) staff diversity, (ii) inclusive workplaces, (iii) raising awareness and reducing bias, (iv) accountability and (v) partnership. Taken together, these two documents are important instruments to ensure accountability for measurable, time-bound progress. CGIAR's new cross-System GDI Function provides expert support, guidance, training and tools in support of achieving the shared vision on gender, diversity and inclusion.

For gender in research, *Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results* (GENDER) is [CGIAR's new Platform](#), collaboratively designed to provide for more visible and elevated gender equality research across and beyond CGIAR. It has an important focus on all CGIAR implementation channels (Centers, Programs, Platforms), and brings additional leadership on gender equality research by delivering evidence and outcomes across three modules: Evidence, Methods and Alliances. In addition, CGIAR recognizes that as the new 2030 Research Strategy and modalities are developed over the period 2020–2021, it will be important to ensure that gender equality research is also embedded in all research efforts, including those financed through bilateral sources, so that CGIAR's collective efforts are as transformative as they are intended to be. Ultimately, the GENDER Platform seeks to support leaders and decision-makers to break down the structural barriers that restrict women from participating in the urgently needed transformation of food systems.

Strong and transparent results focus, explicitly geared to function: The significant progress noted by MOPAN in increasing the harmonization and maturity of the CGIAR's results-based management systems and processes has advanced even further since the assessment.

CGIAR's common conceptual framework and results architecture now underpin the 2017, 2018 and 2019 CGIAR [Annual Performance Reports](#). Three years of quality-assessed system-level results data is now available from the [CGIAR results dashboard](#) for public use. The complete results dataset is freely available for download and further analysis directly from [Dataverse](#). The results dashboard is driven by [CLARISA](#) (CGIAR Level Agricultural Results Interoperable System Architecture), a web service that harmonizes data from across CGIAR, providing robust and comparable information to enhance accountability, learning, communications and contribution to impact.

One CGIAR will require even smarter use of results-based management data and systems to better understand and demonstrate contribution to impact and the value of One CGIAR Agricultural Research for Development investments.

We are making progress in 2020 by:

- Linking key results, grants and finance data into an integrated dashboard to better highlight CGIAR's geographic and thematic presence, and contribution to development impacts.
- Conducting an [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#) gap analysis to start the process of publishing CGIAR data via that initiative.
- Making CGIAR innovations available through [WIPO Green](#), the World Intellectual Property Organization's green technology marketplace.

We recognize that the use of performance data in the management of interventions can be improved. A key feature of One CGIAR projects will be the use of stage-gates to make informed resource allocation and performance management decisions. The design, delivery and use of stage-gates in One CGIAR will ensure that performance data will be effectively integrated into management decisions.

Evidence-based planning and programming applied:

Independence: Noting MOPAN's observation that a Head of Evaluation should report direct to a governing body, under the present lines of reporting and accountability:

- A [CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat](#) is responsible for implementation of CGIAR's multi-year evaluation work plan in a manner that ensures high quality independent evaluations inform decision making across CGIAR. The Advisory Services Shared Secretariat's terms of reference specify that its staff is operationally independent from the System Organization's management, including its operational and policy units and decision-making;
- The [CGIAR System Council](#), CGIAR's highest governing body, is the final decision maker on the multi-year evaluation plan, and can commission evaluations that the Shared Secretariat stewards independently, thus ensuring relevance to the System, quality and independence of the evaluation process and reports; and
- The [System Council's Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee](#) (SIMEC) provides the Advisory Services Shared Secretariat with strategic guidance and oversight on the development and execution of the CGIAR System's multi-year evaluation plan, and advises and makes recommendations related to the evaluation function for System Council approval. This further ensures the unencumbered but informed implementation of the evaluation function. SIMEC's role in the evaluation process is to engage with the Advisory Services Shared Secretariat on CGIAR Policy for Independent External Evaluation; to provide strategic guidance on the development and execution of the CGIAR System's multi-year evaluation plan; and review and endorse the final outcomes of the independent evaluations, as a step towards, but

not in place of, the System Council formal review and endorsement of those evaluations and ensuring uptake of the recommendations by CGIAR.

- Supporting behavioral independence, the Advisory Services Shared Secretariat maintains a roster of independent professional evaluation and subject matter experts, to bolster the independent perspectives of the evaluation practice.
- While the risks related to independence of the function are well noted and deserve ongoing assessment by the appropriate governing bodies, the current CGIAR structure may favor learning and uptake via the implicit feedback loops among the evaluation, science for development and impact assessment advisory functions.

Quality: To take into account CGIAR's new governance, management and research modalities, a revision to the CGIAR Evaluation Policy (2012) is needed. In developing this policy for approval by the CGIAR System Council, the CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat will look at functionality and formal requirements. The Policy will incorporate novel approaches for structuring evaluations, quality assurance (of centralized and decentralized evaluations), managing knowledge, and communicating results for uptake. Beyond tracking of whether recommendations are used, the vital self-assessment question for CGIAR is "how do recommendations from independent evaluations, when used, improve the overall CGIAR offering?" However, noting that the current structure and staffing composition were developed for a portfolio comprising 12 Programs and three Platforms, assurance of sustained capacity and planning for the independent evaluation of the full One CGIAR Project set requires further consideration.

Uptake: The CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat will employ a range of knowledge management, data availability, and planning practices to enhance uptake. It will also promote demand for and use of evaluations; and to the extent its mandate and resources allow, the Advisory Services Shared Secretariat will assume an active role building an evaluation culture in One CGIAR. Furthermore, through the One CGIAR Executive Management Team, mechanisms related to tracking and project design, which increase uptake of evidence for decision-making, are hoped to be implemented. The governance architecture of One CGIAR may encourage use of the CGIAR Results Dashboard or similar technology as a tracking tool and invite evaluands to report regularly on progress on implementing recommendations.

Learning from MOPAN KPI 8 will provide key information to formulate KPIs and monitor ongoing progress in the use of evidence for decision-making towards One CGIAR.

In summary and looking to the future

CGIAR welcomes the recognition that we are an invaluable resource for the interface between agricultural research and innovations delivering large-scale results.

CGIAR is appreciative of the positive and constructive findings which clearly support and align with the rationale for the historical organizational transition to One CGIAR currently underway.

The MOPAN Assessment, as an input to the active transition to One CGIAR, provides a good baseline against which to assess progress going forward, with specific focus in the follow up on gender, performance management and evaluation. The assessment provides insights that will strengthen the work and impact of the CGIAR System, and contributes to enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance of One CGIAR to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

As transition to One CGIAR progresses – with unified governance, aligned management, and a high-level 2030 Research Strategy in focus in 2020, followed by deeper institutional integration starting in 2021 – MOPAN’s findings will be used as a key input for ensuring that One CGIAR delivers on its intended outcomes.