

External Review of the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF)

Response of CPWF to the Panel Report, 18 September 2007

Introduction

The CPWF thanks the members of the External Review Panel for the intensive efforts dedicated to understanding CPWF and for the analysis presented in their Report and the Recommendations it contains. The present document sets out the response of the CPWF to the Report. Given the volume of the Report we have not sought to comment on all issues raised, but rather have focused specifically on the Recommendations provided by the Panel. In doing so we are pleased to note that the CPWF agrees with much of what is recommended and has therefore focused most attention where there is a difference of opinion and/or where there is need for clarification or further analysis.

CPWF is pleased that the panel has specifically recognised many aspects that it considers give the program its identity and the commitment of its members, as exemplified in the following comments.

- “The Review Panel believes that the results witnessed thus far, and expected over the short- to medium-terms, justify the establishment of the CPWF. Based on the past performance, neither the CGIAR Centres nor its Programme partners could have achieved these developments individually. The Programme has made individual CGIAR Centres more aware of the water-food nexus, and is already showing some benefits because of its multi-institutional, multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral approaches.” (p. 6)
- “The Review Panel believes that after its recommendations are implemented both in the programmatic and governance-related areas, the CPWF can serve as a good model for greater interactions between national and international institutions and researchers. This is further likely to deliver implementable results in a cost-effective and timely manner.” (p. 6)
- “Many of the projects have already started to produce results which could be used by the different categories of “clients” ... Based on the few CPWF projects visited by the members of the Review Panel, it appears likely that the cumulative outputs of its projects in all probability will increase exponentially in the coming months and years.” (p. 46)
- “.. the CPWF has made important headway in avoiding research effort duplication through the collaboration it has ensured.” (p. 32)
- For NARES, the CPWF has provided an opportunity to be important, equal and sometimes leading partners in projects that affect their countries, thus helping south-driven research that is a policy of the CGIAR Science Council (p.29)
- “The CPWF, however, has a key comparative advantage vis-à-vis other internationally-supported research activities Because of the political constraints, sensitivities and technical and managerial complexities the support of the CPWF will undoubtedly enhance the research facilities and capabilities of national researchers and institutions, .. [who] also are likely to produce good results which may go a considerable way to meet the CPWF goals.” (p. 37)
- “These in-depth discussions were candid, and were conducted with a constructive and holistic spirit.” (p.17)

The following CPWF management comments follow the order and sections of the report.

2.1 Objectives

1. **Recommendation: To avoid the problems associated with an overly-broad specification of its objectives, the Panel recommends that future developments of the Programme be more closely specified to well defined areas of research activity as can be seen in the topics proposed for phase 2.**
2. **Recommendation: The Panel recommends that the focus of water productivity be broadened to include issues beyond “crop per drop”. Water could be considered to be one factor, but not necessarily the major factor, for food production and wealth creation.**

Agreed. In fact, as the panel comments, basin focal projects (BFPs) have been working to define the relationship between water, agriculture and livelihoods in specific basins. Thus, the understanding and definition on water productivity has moved beyond the simple, public-communication oriented, concept of ‘more crop per drop’ towards a more systemic understanding of water as a consumable resource that is, in some basins, increasingly scarce. Water is viewed not simply as a factor of production by individuals but as a resource that is distributed amongst many diverse groups of people within basins, who use it in a variety of ways to derive livelihood support. In many cases, water productivity is useful as a diagnostic of other limitations; in others, it may provide a robust measure of relative utility. The equivalent valuation in livestock, fisheries and aquatic ecosystems is more difficult, and is the subject of future investigation.

2.3 Relationships between CPWF and the CG Centres

3. **Recommendation: Thus, the Panel recommends that the CPWF should be maintained as a time-limited entity that precipitates greater levels of collaboration between the Centres and other research and development partners.**

Agreed. CPWF also agrees with the Panel that the comparative advantage of CPWF lies in its trans-disciplinary and trans-regional partnership with multiple institutions and in its emphasis on projects intended to lead from research towards development

4. **Recommendation: The Panel recommends that more collaboration should be a prerequisite for the continuation of many existing CPWF projects and for newly commissioned research work.**

Agreed, interpreting the Panel recommendation to refer to collaboration among projects, since there is already a high level of collaboration within each project. Where there are on-going contracts resulting from competitive selection, CPWF will continue assisting projects to identify opportunities for promoting collaboration, since contract agreements cannot be unilaterally altered. In some cases this will need to be supported with additional funding, as in existing project leader meetings, CPWF International Fora and travel grants to promote cross project interaction and sharing. For newly designed activities, a tighter conceptual framework, targeted calls for proposals and commissioned research will increase collaboration and synergy.

- 5. Recommendation: The Panel thus recommends that a specific budgetary allocation be made available for Theme Leaders to bid for the commissioning of specific linkage/integration research tasks.**

Agreed that linkage and integration needs more emphasis. In phase 2 this process will be redesigned and strengthened in two ways. Firstly, by organizing research around cross-theme topics led by teams, and a range of outputs including assessment of knowledge in each topic area, integration of CPWF projects into the context of knowledge from other sources, and designing and commissioning a series of dissemination outputs. Secondly, through “basin network research projects”, whose mandate will explicitly include specific networking and integration activities in each basin. In phase 1, the basin focal projects, which are only one-and-a-half years old, are developing a greater role in promoting linkages than the Panel appears to appreciate. Also in phase 1, theme leaders are already working, basin by basin, with basin coordinators and project leaders, to improve inter-project linkages.

2.4 International public good aspects

- 6. Recommendation: The Panel recommends that the Science Council should give stronger direction as to what constitutes IPGs, in terms of the continuum, which would assist in the definition of research objectives and the reinforcement of that delineation through the course of the Programme.**

Agreed. We believe that CPWF is helping build and understand the practice of producing IPGs in natural resources management research. We perceive, at present, that all development is local, and thus all research for development must work in contact with the local scale at many stages of project development, implementation and evaluation. It is the broad applicability of methods, knowledge, ideas, tools and technologies across parts of basins, countries and regions that makes them IPGs.

- 7. Recommendation: The Panel thus recommends that the potential for the CPWF involvement in forming public-private consortiums to enhance the international public goods aspect of research should be investigated.**

Agreed that this potential should be explored. We note that the Panel’s text objective to “Transform public good research findings into profit making development schemes.” might be appropriate in other programs for IPG such as production of seed of improved varieties, development of value-adding industries based on new crops, or marketing of diversification crops. In the CPWF agenda, there may also be opportunities for private-based services to advise on or invest in water or infrastructure management for food production. It is, however, harder to envision how profit-making schemes would be implemented for most CPWF research, for example on governance, environmental flows, fostering negotiation, and so on.

2.5 Focus of CPWF projects

- 8. Recommendation: The Panel recommends that the politics, law and economics of transboundary basin issues be research areas that are more vigorously pursued in the CPWF.**

Strongly agreed. CPWF is already taking action in this direction which is a priority in phase 2 plans. Political aspects of water and agricultural administration were emphasised in the priorities for the CPWF's second competitive call and in an innovative session on the political ecology of water was included in CPWF's International Forum on Water and Food. These build on the work of first call projects that include the political dimensions of water governance within the Mekong River basin, from local to basin scale (project 50), governance in African basins (project 47) and the political interactions between communities, government and non-government agencies in the Andes (projects 20 and 22). Additionally, political and legal issues are addressed explicitly by projects 42 on groundwater governance and 48 on river-linking.

9. **Recommendation: The Review Panel recommends a critical re-assessment of the Benchmark Basin concept, taking into account the evolving experience of the basin focal projects, as well as the current choice of the Benchmark Basins and with the assistance of experts external to the Programme Consortium. The Panel suggests a re-evaluation of how to work best within the basins. The new concept should mainly guide future project selection, but should allow for value creation from the current project portfolio. It may not be too late to do a basin analysis to better tie the projects together and identify priority areas of research which are likely to support achievements of the CPWF objectives the best. This, ideally, should have been carried out at the beginning of the Programme.**

CPWF accepts the general thrust of this recommendation and agrees that the practical application of the basin concept should continue to be reviewed. A detailed proposal for doing this will be developed for the next phase, building on the Phase 1 investment in basin focal projects, that involves ten different international project teams, to find out whether and how the concept of basin integration and function can inform research. CPWF will develop a much tighter framework that links CPWF projects better with each other, and better with other ongoing activities.

3.1 Knowledge generation

10. **Recommendation: The Panel recommends that the CPWF take steps to integrate environmental and social valuation exercises into projects in order to deepen their analytical component and to facilitate their ex post evaluation.**

Agreed. In fact "valuation of aquatic ecosystem goods and services" is one of the six focussed priorities for the on-going second competitive call and it is part of the focussed topics being developed for phase 2. It will not, however, generally be possible to implement this recommendation for other competitively selected projects in Phase 1 since their research agenda is already contracted.

3.2 Knowledge synthesis

11. **Recommendation: The Panel recommends that the CPWF should attempt to develop a proactive process, instead of the current passive process, to prepare its future synthesis reports.**

12. **Recommendation:** Hence, the Panel recommends that consideration should be given to produce a series of synthesis reports for specifically targeted issues and audience.

Both agreed.

3.3 Knowledge dissemination and application: Uptake of CPWF results

13. **Recommendation:** The Panel recommends that the CPWF builds into its partnership agreements the requirement for the national institutions to engage in application of research results to development. The Panel recommends that the CPWF builds a network of influential friends in a formal way.

Agreed. It is already a condition for selection of research proposals that specific links to development institutions be identified so as channel results in case of research success. Development of impact pathway analysis in all projects – now also a condition of submission for the second competitive call of Phase 1 – makes this more specific.

14. **Recommendation:** The Review Panel recommends that considerable attention now should be given to formulate and implement an overall uptake strategy.

Agreed completely that this is a high priority that, as the Panel also states, will require additional resources.

3.4 Assessment of publications and dissemination strategy

15. **Recommendation:** Thus, the Panel recommends that the CPWF should contact project leaders and make it very clear to them that all the publications, power point presentations, media releases, signboards at the project sites, etc., must include appropriate acknowledgement that they are part of the CPWF.

Strongly agreed. CPWF will provide guidance on how this is best done, and continue to strive to create an environment where participants in the program see the whole as bigger than their individual parts. CPWF contracts specify acknowledgement of the CPWF, with the standard logo where appropriate, and the advance clearance of publications. CPWF will prepare a standard acknowledgement and distribute it amongst project leaders along with other communications to help remind, encourage, and facilitate compliance.

16. **Recommendation:** The Panel recommends that the CPWF establishes a publication strategy across all aspects of its activities to develop and encourage researchers to target high impact international scientific journals, as well as publications read by policymakers, and in national or regional journals that are read extensively by water and food professionals. Publications in language other than English should be considered whenever necessary.

Agreed. Management also notes and agrees with the Panel's comments that, while publication in high impact journals is important, they are not the best medium of publication for many types of end-users of CPWF research findings.

3.5 Capacity building

- 17. Recommendation: The Panel recommends that this aspect** [authoritative syntheses of research results in specific subject matter areas for building up the knowledge base and capacity of professionals in water and food sectors all over the developing world] **be integrated effectively into the CPWF's overall capacity building strategy.**

Agreed. As the Panel states, additional resources will be required. CPWF is already developing theme based curricula - which collect case studies, research methods, research synthesis, and examples from across theme portfolios and across basins. The theme curricula are designed to be flexible, adaptable and transferable so that they may be used in both practical and academic settings, with the aim that others use them for capacity building of scientists from within and outside CPWF projects.

3.6 Evaluation

- 18. Recommendation: The Panel recommends that the CPWF establishes a new, realistic programme vision and mission statement and a set of internal programme objectives that have a strong causal link with programme activities, i.e. the objectives can be reached primarily by the programme alone. Standard results chain models should be applied to link programme activities to these objectives. The degree to which these objectives can be reached should be used as one measure of success for the CPWF, e.g., based on a classical logframe approach.**
- 19. The Panel recommends that the CPWF rearranges and adapts its current set of visionary objectives into a set of global development goals to which the CPWF aims to contribute. It should be made clear, e.g., by establishing causal chains linking the internal programme objectives to these overarching development goals, in what way additional CPWF activities facilitate or enable players external to the Challenge Programme to work towards these goals. Based on a clear description of these activities, a reliable indicator system should be developed to measure the programme performance in terms of facilitation and enabling.**

Both agreed, with the exception that there may be other, more suitable ways for the CPWF to measure success besides log-frames.

- 20. Recommendation: The Panel recommends the inclusion of an obligatory ex-post evaluation component, if possible through an external expert, as a standard requirement for projects. An appropriate portion of the project budget should be reserved for this purpose. This component should include a cost-benefit assessment.**

CPWF agrees with the need for ex-post evaluation and cost-benefit analysis, but not necessarily all done externally and possibly not for all projects. Application to all projects would imply a total additional budget of approximately USD 2 million for the CPWF for

all first phase projects (estimated at 4% of total project value for large projects). No project, including those presently under competitive evaluation, has yet been required to include this activity in its budget.

- 21. Recommendation:** The Panel recommends to the abandonment of the notion to measure development impact of the CPWF on a global level. Instead, the CPWF should implement regular ex-post evaluations on reaching internal programme goals as defined above. This standard approach should be complemented by the assessment of the CPWF activities in enabling and facilitating development impact on the basis of its internal programme goals.

Agreed.

4. Governance and management

- 22. Recommendation:** The Review Panel recommends that the voting policy for virtual CSC meetings be clarified by requiring active electronic voting by its members.

Agreed.

- 23. Recommendation:** The Review Panel recommends that the CSC increase the proportion of female CSC members up to 50% where this is feasible in terms of expertise and institutional representations whilst maintaining a balanced developing country representation.

Agreed in principle. In practice this will depend on the selection procedure.

For items 24 through 29.

The need to reform and improve the governance and management arrangements is acknowledged by the CSC and management. The suggestions in the report are a good starting point for discussions on reform and the CSC agrees with the broad direction of suggested change. The CSC does not, however, endorse or agree with the suggested governance arrangement, and will initiate a process outlined below to reform governance.. The CSC will debate the recommendations, and draw up best options..

The CSC believes that the solution lies in a staged consideration of key research goals, objectives and outcomes required, followed by adoption of the most appropriate governance and management structures to deliver the required outcomes. The CSC response is provided following the series of recommendations 24-29 below.

Step 1 recommendations:

- 24. Recommendation:** The Panel recommends that the CSC be chaired by an independent senior, well-established and well-respected professional without any institutional ties to the Challenge Programme. Apart from his/her independence, this person should have a long and successful track record as management leader

and as board chair and must be acquainted with the CPWF research and development issues.

Agreed.

25. **Recommendation:** the Panel recommends that the CSC sets up an Audit Committee, led by an independent chair that includes the Programme Coordinator, the programme manager and the IWMI audit board chair. The CSC audit committee should report directly to the CSC, or to the CSC Executive Committee. The chair of the audit committee should be a senior finance professional with considerable audit experience and at the same time have a good understanding of the CPWF or similar Programmes.

Agreed.

Step 2 recommendations:

26. **Recommendation:** the Panel recommends that the independent CSC chair in consultation with the IWMI Director General conducts the performance evaluation of the Programme Coordinator and determines the terms of his employment.
27. **Recommendation:** the Panel recommends that the Programme Coordinator is put in charge of the performance evaluation of the other CPWF Management Team members, of the Theme Leaders and of the Basin Coordinators, and shares this responsibility with the respective host institutions. The evaluation criteria should be based on the TOR for the respective position in the CPWF. In addition, the Programme Management Team should assume project leadership responsibilities for all CPWF projects in order to centralize responsibility and accountability for CPWF projects in the Management Team.
28. **Recommendation:** the Panel recommends that, under the leadership of the new CSC chair, an Executive Committee is formed, consisting of
- The new CSC chair
 - The chair of the CSC Audit Committee
 - 1 representative elected by the five Consortium CGIAR Centres
 - 1 representative elected by the 6 NARES and the one RBO Consortium members
 - 1 representative selected by the 4 ARI Consortium members
 - 1 representative selected by the 2 NGO Consortium members
 - 1 well-known international expert familiar with the management issues of some of the CPWF river basins and water-food interrelationships.
 - The Director General of IWMI or an IWMI board member as main host centre representative

Search and election of *independent* representatives for the stakeholder groups (i.e. not belonging to any institution in that group) should be encouraged and the selection should be opened up to the whole CSC if no representatives can be found in reasonable time.

The Executive Committee TOR should contain at least the mandate for strategy development, Evaluation and Auditing and the authority to take decisions on CPWF operational matters that exceed the authority of the CPWF Management Team. The four elected representatives should have the necessary expertise to provide valuable input according to this TOR.

The Executive Committee should meet virtually or in person with high frequency (e.g. every three months).

It should be understood that the IWMI representative is member of the Executive Committee as liaison to the host centre board and therefore has no formal vote.

The Panel recommends that, under the leadership of the new CSC chair, the roles of the current Expert Panel be reviewed and reassessed in terms of future needs of the CPWF. It may be necessary to reconstitute this panel as a “Scientific Advisory Panel” with members having very specific qualifications, expertise and time-commitment which will match the specific scientific requirements of the CPWF.

Step 3 recommendation:

29. Recommendation: The Panel suggests that, after these initial steps, the CPWF embark on a more thorough reform of its governance under the leadership of the new chair and the Executive Committee. The key elements of this reform could be:

- The evolution of the Executive Committee into a CPWF board with full programmatic and budgetary functions and related accountability.
- The evolution of the present CSC into a stakeholder council that elects the board members and advises the board. The in-person meeting frequency for the stakeholder council can be lowered to e.g. one meeting every two years.
- Opening up of the Consortium to further key stakeholders leading to representation of all relevant CPWF stakeholders on the stakeholder council. The current roles and responsibilities Consortium members should be adapted accordingly.

Partly agreed.

The CSC discussion brought out several issues concerning the proposed governance structure, with some members expressing the opinion that the structure is too independent of the CGIAR, the need for more representation of IWMI, that the structure could lead to more competition rather than collaboration, and importantly that there has not been enough consultation with the CPWF Steering Committee. In order to resolve these, a consultative process will be carried out as outlined below.

The CSC has agreed to the following process to implement reform:

A working group drawn from the CSC, together with the Program Coordinator, will prepare a revised phase 2 plan that covers programmatic and governance issues starting in early October. The working group will communicate with CSC members throughout the process to gain their input to discussions. Background documents will include the ER report, the draft plan for phase 2, and other stakeholder input. The plan will be sent for review in October and November. The working group will reconvene to revise the draft considering comments received. AGM is proposed as a venue to undertake the subsequent revision.

The full CSC will meet in-person in February 2008, to finalise and formally adopt the new plan, including the revised governance structure. This will be presented to the SC meeting in April 2008 for adoption by CGIAR. Thereafter, the next phase of the CPWF will commence with an improved framework for research, an appropriate governance structure, and efficient processes in place.

5. Resource mobilization and financial health

30. Recommendation: the Panel recommends that a clear and transparent financial policy is established that – as a minimum – clarifies pass-through and administrative fee levels and their applicability to different expenditure types, the handling of CPWF accrued interest, and amounts to be charged for hosting-related services.

Agreed, and this will be clarified as part of the second phase planning.

31. Recommendation: the Panel recommends that current financial reporting by IWMI for the Challenge Program is checked for accuracy and that a format is established that reflects better the disbursement categories of the CPWF, including a clear separation of programmatic and non-programmatic disbursements in line with CGIAR guidelines.

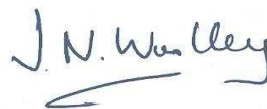
Agreed.

32. Recommendation: the Panel recommends that the CPWF and IWMI implement the recommendations of the CGIAR Internal Audit Unit that audited the CPWF in September 2006 with focus on the acceleration of availability of reliable financial information.

Agreed.



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**Annex to the response by CPWF to the report of the External Review
Panel, 18 September 2007.**

This Annex presents CPWF management concerns about some of the Panel's interpretations in parts of the text other than the recommendations. It is offered in the spirit of aiding future analysis and offering an alternative view so that those interpretations do not by default become part of the established record.

1. ***Response to panel text comments on the benchmark basin concept:*** (pp. 35-38). For brevity, the Panel's text is not repeated here; all the following opinions are those of CPWF management.

Basins give CPWF projects an identity as part of a network, not just a permitted location under Program rules. The Panel discussion gives the idea that the choice of basins is just a geographical limit on where projects may and may not be located, and that each CPWF project is only present in (part of) one basin. In contrast, management believes that one of CPWF's real strengths is cross-basin comparison and linkage for exchange of ideas. Sixteen of 34 large projects work in two or more basins, while the BFPs are set up, among other tasks, to compare basins. A few projects also go outside the CPWF benchmark basins to obtain the suitable research environment. The strategy of competitive calls requires proponents to identify the right basins (or areas within basins) to carry out their research. The CPWF Phase 2 plan contains two parallel strategies, one working on the most important issues for sub-basins and the other focussing on key cross-theme topics and choosing the best locations to do the research.

Whole basins are important to work on issues of scale and competing uses. Depending on the research topic, a large enough sub-basin is needed so that important downstream and cross-scale questions can be addressed, such as externalities of innovation, environmental flows, who gets the "saved water", to what extent water saved at the plot level is effectively made available for others at the basin level, downstream impacts of increasing crop water use in rainfed areas, how downstream users can influence upstream users, and so on. The required scale depends on the research topic and is not always apparent from the outset until interactions are understood; sometimes it will be more local, sometimes the whole basin. Choosing the whole basin as a common ground for all researchers provides a solution that does not have to be changed for each piece of research. It is not necessary that the CPWF generate impacts in all parts of a basin in order for a basin focus to be judged to have been a success.

CPWF does not develop management solutions for whole basins The CPWF does not propose to find the perfect water management proposal for whole basins. It fosters research innovations intended to make a contribution to development at local, meso- and basin- scales, and that are international public goods.

Transboundary basins and mega-basins. CPWF management agrees with the Panel's comments about the challenges caused by the size and complexities of the Indo-Gangetic system and the Nile. Some of the Panel's concerns about those basins also apply to other mega basins and transboundary basins, but some do not. The CPWF has, through the choice of large and controversial basins, encouraged researchers to work

together across boundaries for the first time, and it is often these small inroads that bring down larger barriers to transboundary agreements. If the CPWF is to achieve impact in a short time frame, it could be argued that it should work in such basins, where the majority of the world's poor are located. Through Phase 2 proposals to select focussed, representative sub-basins within the Indo-Gangetic and the Nile, the CPWF also shows its attempts to work meaningfully in mega-basins.

Science and well as politics Water allocation across countries depends on politics. However, increasing water productivity and making more water of better quality available downstream can be done through research regardless of water allocation treaties. As the Panel itself recommends (see item 8 in the main text), political processes can be influenced by research. CPWF project 50, for example, attempts to influence political processes by reporting the results of its research in the national press and building up the capacity of environmental journalists. Incidentally, an agreement on water sharing does exist for the Mekong – the ‘Procedures for the Maintenance of Flows in the Mainstream’ was signed by the MRC member states in June, 2006.

Restricted access to “sensitive” data. CPWF management acknowledges that there can be practical problems in obtaining data in transboundary basins. However, it is only in the IGB that the CPWF has encountered the problem of official secrets. In the both the Mekong and the Limpopo, for example, the CPWF has obtained virtually all basin-scale data from publicly-available sources data. When integrated and mapped, these data sets provide a compelling insight into basin level trends and problems and reveal opportunities for interventions.

Original selection of CPWF basins. CPWF management agrees that the selection of Benchmark Basins took place before rigorous analysis of the function of research within basins, indeed its own analyses show that many possible sets of basins could have been chosen given the criteria used. While it is true that detailed analysis of the function of basins was lacking at the time of selection and conceptualization of benchmark basins, this has been corrected by the commissioning of Basin Focal Projects. We agree that there is little reason to group the Indus with the Ganges, nor the larger GBM. The CSC has already discussed the possibility of concentrating on representative sub-basins in the Ganges, backed by data about the huge physical differences between Ganges and Indus.

2. ***Panel text comments:*** “A focus on water may lead to policies that lower the amount of water applied to achieve a given crop yield but only because other resources (such as capital or fertilizer) have been used as water substitutes. Such substitution may not be in the best interests of farmer livelihoods if the substitute resources are scarcer than water, potentially indicated by a higher cost per unit of output. (p. 26) “Part of that consideration would be the application of economic assessment tools to test the viability of resource use changes proposed under research projects. Such viability assessments would test if proposed changes actually generate improved farmer livelihoods and hence provide some indication of likely adoption rates.” (p. 27)

While a hypothetical focus on water alone might lead to the problems outlined in the Panel’s comment, the CPWF works on water, food and livelihoods; in our experience, virtually all CPWF research projects seek to identify the best mix of water and other agricultural inputs needed to optimise water productivity, food security and livelihoods,

by considering yields and economic analysis as well as water productivity. The optimal solution will depend on applying these research results to local circumstances. The costs of water vis-à-vis other farming inputs will always be relative depending on place and time. It is only when these relative costs are known that one can judge likely impacts on farming livelihoods.

3. **Panel text comment:** “Theme Leaders had no input to the initial project selection process of the first call. For the second call, their inputs were diluted through the inputs of the Advisory Group and then the Steering Committee. Hence Theme Leaders are being required to coordinate across a series of projects that they had minimal input in selecting.” (p. 33)

This is unfortunately true, but it is a direct result of the need to avoid conflict of interest, which is a major focus of the Panel’s report in Part III. Theme leaders had to be absent from the selection process since it is competitive among their home institutions and others. CPWF management will, however, seek to design future competition in such a way that theme leaders can be more closely involved in appropriate components of the selection process without conflict of interest. Theme leaders will also be more actively involved in the design of targeted calls for proposals, so that projects can fit together in a more integrated whole.

4. **Panel text comment:** “The Panel is concerned that sufficient awareness of the existence of CPWF funding amongst the international agricultural or water research community did not exist for the first call or second call. This means that the number of proposal that the CPWF received for the first call, and is likely to receive for the second call, has will be inadequate.” (p. 40)

CPWF agrees that more could be done to publicise calls and spread information about the CPWF among the international water research community, although much of that community is focussed on potable water and sanitation not on agricultural water. However, CPWF management questions the applicability of this comment to the agricultural research community. In the first competitive call, 350 valid concept notes were received with the participation of nearly 400 different institutions. Management believes that this demonstrates broad awareness of the CPWF.

5. **Panel text comment:** “The consideration of the papers put forward by the CPWF for review by the Panel also makes clear the difficulties associated with classifying projects into themes. This is not surprising since it is very difficult to classify interrelated topics into distinctive themes” (p. 40)

Half of the projects from the first call are cross-theme, some are even related to three or four themes. Assignment of a project to a particular principal theme is an administrative device so that a single theme leader has overall responsibility for each project. The listed papers were the recommendations of particular theme leaders, but each project itself may fit into more than one theme.

6. **Panel text comment:** “This point [the hypothesised arbitrary assignment to themes] is further exemplified by the inclusion of PN38 “Safeguarding Public Health Concerns, Livelihoods and Productivity in Wastewater Irrigated Urban and Peri-Urban Vegetable

Farming in Ghana” in Theme 4..... First, there appears to be little by way of catchment integration interest in the project so its position in Theme 4 is curious. Second, the project’s relevance to the wider CGIAR interests is questioned. Finally, the project provides an example of how what was an essentially IWMI field of interest has been folded into the CPWF to enable a continuation of the research.” (p. 40)

Since this project was not discussed with the Panel, CPWF management wishes to provide extra information here. The project was allocated to theme 4, rather than theme 1, because it studied water re-use in parts of the basin and because of the cross-sector implications in health and marketing. It was also selected because it built on previous research but took it much further; because it was led by a NARES – the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology -- not IWMI; and because it has broad capacity building objectives. Later CPWF facilitated a link to epidemiologists at the University of Copenhagen (project 51). The research, policy-making contacts and development implications have been very positive. We are unaware of any project where it could be claimed that CPWF projects just provide an opportunity to continue the research of its partners and we know many examples beyond this one where CPWF moved previous research of IWMI – and others – to a new level.

At the Panel’s request, the CPWF management team (CPMT) provided during the review, project by project, a simple tabular assessment of whether the research that CPWF conducts could equally well have been managed by IWMI, by other CGIAR centres, or by institutions outside the CGIAR. The CPMT conclusion was that at least 28 of 38 large research projects could only have been conducted to the present quality standards through the CPWF. Reasons varied according to the type of project: most of those led by expert centres in crop breeding and management would, without CPWF competitive requirements and guidance, have had insufficient emphasis on the interactions of plant, soil and water (which is still sometime deficient), and especially of downstream implications of changes on water use at the field scale. Those dealing with fisheries and livestock would most likely have omitted the interactions with irrigated or rainfed crops. In many of those dealing with water management or policy, CPWF’s major contribution was to encourage comparative research across several basins and/or scales which would not have been attempted in its absence. Even in some of the ten projects that could conceivably have been designed and implemented without the CPWF, it is likely that the impact of the research and capacity building is greater because of the opportunities for sharing of ideas that the CPWF offers, e.g., the CPWF International Forum and meetings of project researchers.

7. **Panel text comment:** “Climate change is the focus of some CPWF research projects.....The risk of future climate change should not be taken as a rationale for diverting the Programme’s focus away from the core research objectives of poverty alleviation under prevailing climatic conditions” (p. 41).

Management agrees with the conclusion of the comment, but is surprised that the Panel saw climate change as a focus of CPWF work. We are only aware of one project (number 53) where it is a focus, and even there the emphasis is on adaptation by poor farmers in two African basins.

8. **Panel text comment:** CPWF management disagrees with many of the comments about projects visited in the Mekong basin by one Panel member (pp. 41-2). Projects are questioned for having “such strong links with their parent centre” [IRRI]. Since IRRI or any other lead institution is responsible contractually for achieving the objectives of the projects it leads, “strong links” are a sign of responsible project leadership. This same paragraph includes the implication that getting fundamental results (e.g. from rice breeding) to function at higher basin scales and across basins is somehow “extension” and not IPG. In fact, different germplasm and management systems need to be developed for different environments, such as aerobic rice systems for the temperate environment of northern China, the tropical environment of the Philippines, the semi-arid tropics, and the highlands of Indo-China. The production limiting issues and socio-economic considerations also vary within and across basins. While the fundamental system (e.g. aerobic rice) is known, its adaptation in different regions requires research. In CPWF management’s experience, understanding how to make water interventions work at higher scales is IPG research and is exactly part of what the CPWF should be doing. Curiously, unmentioned, although it was the primary focus of the field visit by the reviewer, is project 10 on delta freshwater-saline systems that illustrates this point perfectly. In the Mekong (the project also works in the Ganges delta), it is achieving results right up to the provincial level because the diverse participating institutions have successfully carried out research for development at different scales.

Criticism of a lack of focus on outcomes (project 25, small grants 502 and 504) may be premature for research projects that have been operating for only one year; elsewhere we have described how all projects take part in impact pathway workshops. It is also surprising to know that small grant 502 was considered not to take sufficient account of financial viability since the lead institution (IDE) is renowned for achieving widespread practical adoption of drip-kits and other low-cost technologies for the poorest farmers. Finally, the comment on project 50 appears not to take into account the methodologies of action research.

9. **Panel text comment:** “The relative absence of water institutions and water professionals in many of the CPWF activities, an issue raised elsewhere in this report, could very well be a generic problem of this Programme. This aspect requires a specific analysis.” (p. 44)

It is true that many projects involve mainly or entirely agricultural institutions. Others, however, are led by water institutions, such as MPOWER, WaterNet, CSIRO–Land & Water, while the basin coordination institutions in the Mekong, Volta and Huang He are from the water sector. Additionally, several other projects, such as those on delta aquatic production systems (10), multiple-use water systems (28), payment for environmental services (22), and all the basin focal projects, show an innovative broad spectrum of institutional types, spanning both water and agriculture. CPWF will continue to seek greater involvement of institutions from the water sector.

10. **Panel text comment:** “...the scientific backgrounds of many of the reviewers of the projects during the selection process are not necessarily the most appropriate. Whereas they could be considered appropriate for reviewing the GEF-type of projects on international waters, many of them cannot be considered to have the necessary special



knowledge and experience to judge CPWF-type of projects. This is because the requirements and objective of GEF and CPWF are fundamentally different.”

During the first call, the CPWF consulted the GEF reviewer lists (the GEF STAP “Roster”), which yielded a minority of reviewers. Typically, the CPWF selects reviewers by priority research area – specialists with experience and background in the priority focus were selected to review concept notes and full proposals for the second call. The same is true for the evaluation of the BFP proposals.