

EVALUATION BRIEF

CRP on Policies, Institutions and Markets

June 2015



Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement



Background and Context

The CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets (PIM) is one of the 15 CRPs which aim to address cross-cutting issues in agricultural development across the globe. Initiated in January 2012, PIM supports evidence-based research to help improve public policies and expenditures for pro-poor, sustainable agricultural growth in developing countries. It is the CRP with the greatest focus on social science research to achieve the four CGIAR System-Level Outcomes (SLOs) established by the 2011 Strategy and Results Framework (SRF): reducing rural poverty; improving food security; improving nutrition and health; and sustainable management of natural resources. Based in IFPRI, PIM now involves the second largest number of participating Centers (12) after the Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security program (CCAFS).

Evaluation Methodology

PIM was reviewed according to criteria consistent with the Evaluation Policy and Standards of the CGIAR, covering relevance, quality of science, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation was primarily a formative evaluation with some summative aspects: the formative part reviewed the organization of the program, relevance of its flagships, plausibility of their impact pathways for achieving their respective IDOs, relevance of individual activities in relation to these IDOs and impact pathways, as well as the progress in implementing the program's gender strategy and approach to partnerships. The summative part reviewed the scientific quality of PIM-related outputs, and the outcomes and impacts of selected legacy research activities that began prior to the establishment of PIM.

The evaluation based its findings, conclusions and recommendations on multiple data collection methods and analysis, and the triangulation of evidence collected from different sources, including: desk review of key program documents and relevant assessments; electronic surveys and interviews of over 300 CGIAR staff and external partners; bibliometric analysis of PIM publications, and portfolio analysis of PIM-supported research activities. In addition, a four-person expert panel focused on global agricultural modeling conducted in-depth reviews of three legacy streams of modeling work at IFPRI.

Main Findings and Conclusions

Overall, the evaluation concludes that PIM has added sufficient value to the CGIAR's research on policies, institutions, and markets to warrant the continuation of a CRP like PIM in the second round of CRPs, starting in 2017. The evaluation also concludes that IFPRI should continue to host the PIM Management Unit, as IFPRI is the only CGIAR Center that has a principal focus on social science research, the largest concentration of social scientists in the System, and the strongest research infrastructure and quality assurance systems to support high quality social science research.

The CGIAR has a strong comparative advantage in conducting social science research at the intersection of food security, poverty, and sustainable agriculture. There are few organizations that have a similar combination, range, and quality of agricultural modeling systems at their disposal as IFPRI, and therefore PIM. Engaging most of the social scientists across the CGIAR System has created an intellectual critical mass to pursue cutting-edge science. Inter-Center collaboration is (a) strengthening the impact pathways of PIM research by engaging Centers that are closer to the users of the research; (b) bringing together discovery and delivery-type researchers to address development challenges in a more complete way; (c) deepening country-level partnerships that have greater potential for more immediate development outcomes; (d) enabling researchers in the commodity-based Centers to work on important socio-economic issues that are broader than the commodities covered by their Centers; and (e) helping to raise the scientific quality of social science and policy research in the participating Centers.

Research outcomes

PIM is conducting evidence-based research that aims to influence public policies from the local to the global level. Notable research outcomes include the international trade team support to developing countries in the Doha Round of WTO trade negotiations as well as the CGE modeling team contribution to improving national agricultural policies in a number of African countries in the context of the African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program. In addition, the technology adoption, value chain, and natural resource property activities have contributed to a variety of local-level outcomes through improving agricultural extension, upgrading value chains for less well known commodities produced by low-income rural households, and improving the management of community-held natural resources.

The outcomes of the global foresight activities are less easy to attribute since many are joint with other contributors and only visible over the long term. The foresight team has also been undertaking a thorough restructuring and enhancing of the IMPACT model, which forms the anchor for this work.

Quality of science

The quality of science in PIM is highly variable. The program is doing well on the relevance of scientific topics and quality assurance mechanisms. It is doing less well in relation to minimum standards of scientific productivity and impact. PIM has also not provided sufficient support for research on the science-policy interface. More robust findings in this area would help provide scientific evidence to inform the development of more detailed and effective impact pathways.

Gender

PIM has benefitted from the strong reputation that IFPRI has built up over the years in addressing gender issues, producing notable positive outcomes adopted by their public and private development partners. However, some areas of PIM's work need to increase their level of attention to gender issues, and putting in place an effective program-wide system to monitor the progress of PIM's own activities with respect to gender is still work in progress.

Recommendations

Constitutional-Level Recommendations:

requiring the involvement of the IFPRI Board of Trustees, the Consortium, and CGIAR Fund Council:

- 1.** CGIAR Research Program like PIM on policies, institutions and markets should **continue in the second round of CRPs**, starting in 2017;
- 2.** IFPRI should **continue to host the management unit of PIM**, and the IFPRI Board of Trustees should put in place a conflict of interest policy to identify and manage transparently the institutional conflicts of interest that arise from the multiple roles that IFPRI plays in PIM;
- 3.** PIM should **put in place an Independent Steering Committee** in accordance with the recent (January 2015) agreement between the Fund Council and the Consortium regarding CRP governance structures for the next generation of CRPs. The Steering Committee should comprise representatives of the participating Centers as well as independent members that would have greater than their numerical say in the allocation of W1-2 resources. The IFPRI Board of Trustees should delegate programmatic responsibility to the Steering Committee while retaining the fiduciary responsibility for ensuring that the W1-2 funds are used for their intended purposes;
- 4.** CGIAR Fund Council and the Consortium should jointly **commission a study on the problems that the Centers are facing in sustaining research infrastructures** under the CGIAR Reform.

Strategic-Level Recommendations:

requiring the involvement of the Independent Steering Committee:

- 5.** PIM Management Unit should put in place a **consolidated, programmatic perspective of PIM activities** to improve program

management, monitoring, reporting, and oversight, as opposed to the current financial management perspective in which a single research activity supported by more than one donor, or one donor over several years, shows up as several different activities. This should also contain information on all the sources of funds that are supporting each activity;

- 6.** PIM should continue to **accommodate both upstream, discovery-type research and downstream, delivery-type research in a complementary fashion**, without applying processes or criteria that unfairly disadvantage either type of research in the allocation of its W1-2 resources. This would also involve better information on the types of research being proposed at the project approval stage;

- 7.** PIM should **support a vibrant and innovative research program on the interface between science and policy** that explores the conditions under which moving from scientific evidence to policy implementation becomes plausible. This would likely be a set of cross-cutting activities;

- 8.** PIM should support more opportunities for intellectual exchange and a greater diversity of scholarly disciplines to **expand the choice of research topics, designs, and methods towards longer-term, multi-locational data collection and analysis** that can help answer fundamental scientific questions in relation to poverty reduction, food security, and sustainable natural resource management;

- 9.** PIM and its flagships should **adopt a more strategic approach to collaborating with other CRPs**, including co-funding joint activities, that draws upon the strengths of PIM and the other CRPs to contribute to their respective IDOs;

- 10.** PIM should **formulate an explicit capacity strengthening strategy** to be implemented in conjunction with its Lead Center, including expanding research on capacity strengthening and putting in place a better tracking system for its capacity strengthening work.

Operational-Level Recommendations: requiring the involvement of PIM Management Unit, Flagship Leaders, Focal Points, and principal investigators:

11. Leaders of the **three major modeling teams in IFPRI should explore possible synergies** in their work and broaden their communities of practice to engage their clients and other modelers in reviews of model analyses;

12. PIM should strongly **support the new regional hubs that are being pilot-tested** during the extension phase to facilitate more engagement with local partners and to provide a forum for bi-directional knowledge and information sharing;

13. PIM should make a **greater effort to bring about more inter-Center collaboration in international trade research**, while also

recognizing that this may require some in-depth training of existing staff, or different hiring practices by the commodity Centers;

14. **Flagships 1 and 4 should increase their attention to gender issues**, building on the innovative ways in which some of their activities are already addressing gender issues, and by greater sharing of existing methodologies and data among Centers and flagships;

15. PIM should **complete its plans to put in place a monitoring system to track the level of attention to gender issues and to validate the claims** that the activity proposals and progress reports make in relation to gender.

Management Response

CRP management thanked the evaluation team and the Independent Evaluation Arrangement for conscientious and professional implementation of the review. The CRP management response stated full agreement with twelve of the recommendations of the evaluation, with partial agreement with the remaining three, and listed a number of short and long-term actions currently being undertaken by the CRP to address the evaluation findings and recommendations. As part of the CRP management response, a matrix was included detailing the response to each individual recommendation.

CRP management partially agreed with recommendation 13 relating to inter-Center collaborative research on international trade issues, indicating that they would explore and address this area further in the second phase of the CRP. CRP management also partially agreed with the Recommendations 2 and 3 in regards to PIM governance and management, by requesting clarity and guidance from CGIAR Consortium on both conflict of interest policies applicable across CRPs, as well as guidance on CRP governance structure for the second phase of CRP implementation.

Further Information

Visit the IEA website for evaluation outputs and information (team profiles, TORs, Inception Report, Final Evaluation Report, and Annexes) as well as the CRP Management Response:

<http://iea.cgiar.org/evaluation/crp-evaluation-policies-institutes-and-markets-pim>