



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the  
Netherlands



Ministry of Agriculture,  
Nature and Food Quality



## The NL-CGIAR Strategic Partnership; On the road to One CGIAR

Thursday February 20, 2020, The Hague, the Netherlands

In 2020 and 2021 CGIAR aims to reformulate itself as 'One CGIAR'. As the Netherlands is a partner to CGIAR and has signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2015, there is an opportunity to provide input in those developments to CGIAR. A Strategy Meeting was organized by the Food & Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP) and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (MoA) to start engaging Dutch stakeholders, such as experts and organizations with CGIAR partnerships, early in the process. Frans Verberne (F&BKP), Wijnand van IJssel (MoFA) and Martin Kropff (CGIAR - CIMMYT) presented their latest insights to provide the participants with a good overview of the current status of CGIAR and the ongoing developments. Subsequently NL-CGIAR stakeholders discussed the future strategy towards One CGIAR, not just from an organizational perspective but including content and approach of research. The meeting's analyses, comments and suggestions are valuable input into future developments of the NL-CGIAR strategic partnership.

### The process towards One CGIAR (Wijnand van IJssel; Martin Kropff)

Please use this link to download the [PowerPoint presentation](#).

The current state of the world's food system is highly troubled and to achieve SDG2 (Zero Hunger), efforts have to increase. CGIAR has and can continue to make a difference as it stands for excellent agricultural science for development and impact through partnerships. Yet in order to further increase its impact, organizational change is not a choice but a necessity. This concerns both the CGIAR set-up of 15 centers, and the CGIAR Research Program (CRP) structure as there remains a lack of internal coherence and a need for more pooled and harmonized funding. CGIAR does not want this transition to be completely lead by CGIAR. It welcomes inputs in the process from the Netherlands through the NL-CGIAR partnership.

In 2019 the 'Transition Reference Group' (TRG), known as the [System Reference Group](#) before the Chengdu Meeting, was set up by the CGIAR System Council to outline how CGIAR could become more effective. The TRG has developed five recommendations for the overhaul of CGIAR, which have been endorsed by the System Council on November 19, 2019. In the first months, recommendations 2 and 3a have taken priority in the reform process.

1. A Compelling Mission for One CGIAR
2. Unified Governance
3. Institutional Integration:
  - a. An integrated Operational Structure
  - b. One CGIAR Policies and Services
  - c. One CGIAR at Country and Regional Level
4. A New Research Modality
5. More, and Pooled, Funding

Since February 2020, and in parallel, attention has increased for the elaboration of a One CGIAR new research strategy and modality (recommendations 1 and 4). This is being discussed as the development of 'Big Lifts' as the organizational principle for One CGIAR to achieve its desired impact by 2030 in the five impact areas specified under recommendation 1. One aspect highlighted is the need for the Big Lifts to act as an innovation system and thus they should make use of a 'stage-gated approach', which can ensure that along the impact pathway only promising innovations are taken forward while the role of non-research partners will increase. The CGIAR System Management Office has proposed several principles that should be embedded in the Big Lifts: protect, de-risk, diversify and intensify. To make the Big Lifts even more inspirational for the One CGIAR community, Wijnand van IJssel proposed some



verbs to go along with the nouns for the previously TRG-defined five impact areas, and to specifically refer back to SDG2 targets, see Figure 1.

## One CGIAR Big Lift Inspiration Framework

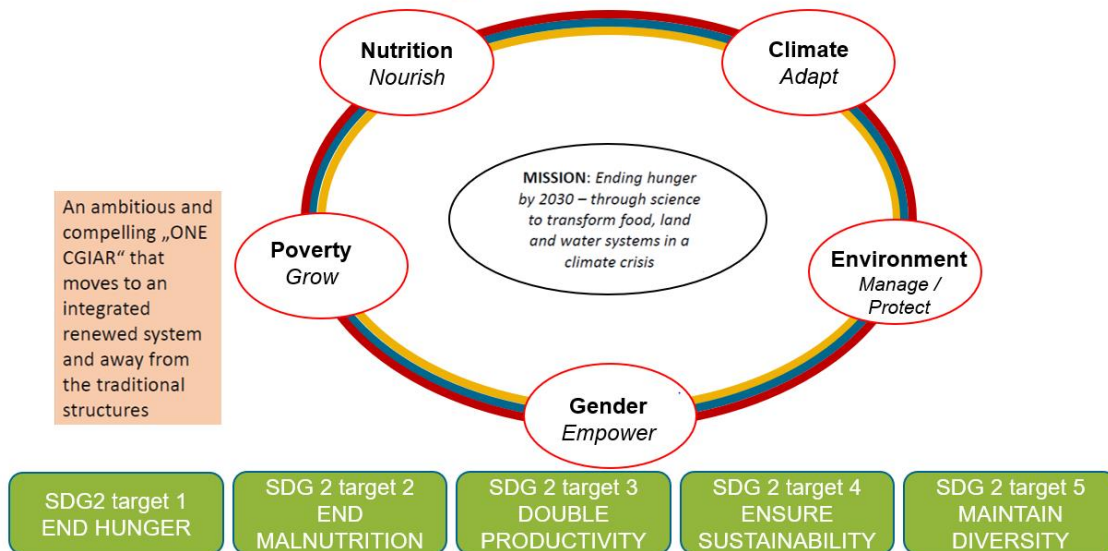


Figure 1. One CGIAR Big Lift framework as proposed by Wijnand van IJssel

For additional information about the transition towards One CGIAR and the Big Lift inspiration framework see the blog: [‘What’s next for CGIAR’](#) published on the F&BKP website.

Several pathways to provide input and feedback to CGIAR for the reorganization process have been identified. The Netherlands represents the System Council (funders) as observer on the CGIAR System Management Board and will become a member of the Research Transition Advisory Groups (TAG), dealing with recommendations 1 and 4. The Netherlands coordinates its contribution to TAGs with Sweden, Norway and Switzerland, which are like-minded in their approach and funding to CGIAR. An additional pathway may be through participation in the supporting teams for the TAGs. For example, Senior Experts active within CGIAR that are supported through the NL-CGIAR Strategic Partnership, might look for opportunities to contribute through participation in these support teams. Also, social media offer opportunities for all CGIAR stakeholders in the Netherlands to contribute to the debate.

Martin Kropff stated that “everybody in the room knows how complicated change is”. But that he feels a lot of energy for this transition. This change is not solely focused on the desires within CGIAR but is mostly based on what the world needs from CGIAR. He stressed that this complexity and the many stakeholders involved necessitates good communication throughout the process. Within this transition the Big Lifts, as they are replacing Window 1 and Window 2 funding mechanisms, there is a need to ensure a system approach and for maintaining of the strong elements of CGIAR. This means the Big Lifts should include all 5 impact areas. Martin Kropff highlighted the role the Netherlands can play in this transition was highlighted, as the process should not be fully led by CGIAR. He specifically mentioned where the Senior Expert positions that can play an important role.



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## Overview of input and feedback

During the discussions and breakout sessions, important topics and questions were raised around the developments of One CGIAR:

- The relations and partnerships of CGIAR with other organizations and stakeholders came up several times during the discussions, especially when looking at the embedding of CGIAR at the local/country level. Relevant partner organizations should be well informed and their interests should be taken along in the ongoing developments.
- It was mentioned that inclusion and social issues are currently insufficiently addressed by CGIAR.
- As there are currently no official structures yet for the formulation of the Big Lifts, there is a need to converge ongoing informal initiatives. This will be an important role for the Transition Consultation Forum (TCF), which has replaced the TRG and which is overseeing the implementation of all the changes, based on advice from TAGs.
- For the Big Lifts, it is thought important that they move beyond existing boundaries to put agricultural research in its context of urbanization. Equally, there should be space for high potential 'small lifts' to allow context specific initiatives and space for continuity and diversity.
- A stage-gated research structure should not only include upscaling promising research results, but also allow for and reward reporting on results that won't be followed through – a lot can be learned from what does not work or fly.
- Taking a food system perspective includes embedding links to all five elements as presented in One CGIAR's Big Lift framework (see Figure 1) in every Big Lift.
- Collaboration between CGIAR stakeholders within the Netherlands and internationally can make an important contribution to provide meaningful input to One CGIAR, specifically for the Big Lifts.

## Final reflections

The meeting successfully brought participants up to speed on the current One CGIAR developments, provided useful recommendations and created enthusiasm for participation in the process towards One CGIAR. To highlight a few:

- The inclusion agenda needs to be brought to the forefront.
- There is a need to better link development and research projects, for example through the stage-gated approach: Research in Development.
- The NL-CGIAR working group is considering setting up a sounding board of 'influencers' around One CGIAR to support the contributions of the Netherlands to the One CGIAR process.

The more detailed report of the subgroup and plenary discussions will be used by the NL-CGIAR Partnership working group when organizing follow-up activities.

As the meeting showed clear energy and opportunities to influence the transition to One CGIAR, the process should move from asking questions to rolling up of the sleeves and making One CGIAR work!