



## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS, COMMENTS, AND ACTION ITEMS

### INTRODUCTION

The Independent Steering Committee (ISC), the CGIAR Research Program (CRP) on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) Planning and Management Committee (PMC), the A4NH Program Management Unit (PMU), with resource persons from the A4NH community met on November 13-14, 2019, at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) headquarters in Washington, D.C. for their third annual meeting as an ISC. The newest ISC members whose three-year terms officially began in 2019 – Emorn Udomkesmalee and Pierre Ferrari – joined the meeting. A list of participants can be found at the end of this summary. Robert Paarlberg chaired the meeting.

The purpose of the ISC is to propose strategic direction to the CRP, including priority setting, which includes review of A4NH proposals to the CGIAR, as required; annually review and provide written recommendations to the A4NH Director and IFPRI Board of Trustees and Director General on the performance of A4NH overall and its flagship research programs, including their plans and budget for the subsequent year; review the external evaluation plan of A4NH and the individual external evaluations undertaken and provide comments for the IFPRI Board of Trustees and the A4NH management response to evaluation recommendations; and provide advice to the A4NH Director and PMC on partnerships and stakeholder perspectives and needs.

### MEETING OBJECTIVES

- To review A4NH's progress in 2019 and provide recommendations on the performance of A4NH overall and each of its five flagship research programs.
- To review the plans outlined and resources allocated for 2020 and provide strategic guidance for A4NH overall and for each of its five flagships.
- To review A4NH's revised external evaluation plan for 2020-2021.
- To provide advice to the A4NH Director on the proposed way to assess the country coordination and engagement model in A4NH's five focus countries.

At the beginning is a list of the main issues raised by the ISC and the actions A4NH proposes to take in response. After that is a summary of the ISC's recommendations and key comments with the decisions reached during the meeting at the end.

## MAIN AREAS OF ISC CONCERN AND A4NH PLAN FOR ACTION

Topic	Plan for Action	Timeline <i>Responsibility</i>
A4NH contribution to transition to new CGIAR research modalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop more detailed plans aligned to the 2-page discussion brief prepared for the ISC and IFPRI BoT.</li> </ul>	<b>Mid-January 2020</b> <i>A4NH Director and PMC</i>
Consolidation and outreach of food system results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proceed with plans on food systems outreach as described (Food System Resource Center, Food System Idea Exchange) and add additional outreach events.</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b> <i>Members of FP1 management team, A4NH Senior Communication Specialist, A4NH Director</i>
Country Coordination and Engagement (CCE) Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement actions proposed by PMC and agreed by ISC and report progress to ISC in next year's meeting.</li> </ul>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting (dates tbc)</b> <i>A4NH Director with focus country teams</i>
ISC advice on A4NH transition to 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule calls with ISC to update on CGIAR change and seek their advice</li> </ul>	<b>Quarterly in 2020</b> <i>A4NH Director</i>

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

In 2017, A4NH introduced a new way of reporting to the ISC, which it continued in this year's meeting. A slide deck served as A4NH's full report on 2019 achievements and 2020 plans. It was sent to the ISC members to review before the meeting. The agenda was structured so that for each flagship, the ISC could provide strategic comments and clarify issues on the report. As was requested at last year's meeting, this year's report included an accompanying Word document with more notes and full citations of referenced publications to provide more detail to the ISC members. As was requested in the 2018 meeting, A4NH provided flagship-level information on partnerships with national institutions in the five focus countries. The report along with all meeting materials are archived on A4NH's internal communications platform, TeamSpace, [here](#) (password required to login).

The ISC provided the following recommendations and comments to the A4NH Director. Beyond these were comments and suggestions made to flagship leaders (not recorded here in the meeting report but shared internally) that will be addressed as they develop their 2020 workplans.

## A4NH CONTRIBUTIONS TO TRANSITION TO ONE CGIAR RESEARCH MODALITIES

The ISC Chair stated that its members had been surprised to learn, just prior to this meeting, that A4NH was now scheduled to be terminated on December 31, 2021. The reasons for the termination given by CGIAR leadership were not convincing to most ISC members, and the costs of this termination, in terms of partnerships ended, research programs disrupted, and the talented researchers that might be lost were of concern. The task at hand was seen as one of damage control and ensuring a survival and safe transition of valuable A4NH research activities to new institutional settings after 2021.

The ISC reviewed the *A4NH through 2021* brief developed by the A4NH Director and included in the meeting materials. They agreed with what was proposed to guide A4NH's contribution both to agriculture, nutrition and health (ANH) research for development and for contributing to the transition process to new research modalities in the One CGIAR change process. Overall, they felt that A4NH developed a valuable pathway for addressing new equity and health challenges through agriculture that added value to the CGIAR research portfolio. They noted several assets developed or supported by A4NH that would be invaluable to CGIAR in future. These included food systems assessment and analytical tools, indicators and results; the impact-oriented HarvestPlus biofortification program; risk-based approaches to food safety and its integration into food system transformation; a rigorous program and policy approach to equity and

nutrition in people and places left behind; tools, indicators, and frameworks for gender and nutrition and widespread use of them by countries and implementing partners; and models for One Health cooperation on global challenges, particularly the development of a CGIAR Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Hub. The ISC also felt there were many lessons to be carried forward on how A4NH has managed a multi-institution, multi-focus, and multi-country research partnership.

#### Management Response

The PMC appreciated these observations and encouragement from the ISC. The most immediate action for the PMC will be to develop more detailed actions that are aligned to the 2-page discussion brief that was included in the meeting materials. The A4NH Director will schedule quarterly calls with the ISC in 2020 to keep the members updated on changes and how A4NH is responding and positioning its research for post-2021.

## CATALYZING THE WORK ON FOOD SYSTEMS

The food systems approach to ensuring healthier diets that A4NH launched in Phase II is proving valuable. The ISC suggested that the approach needs to be refined. It needs to move beyond an inclusive slogan to an analytic tool (or set of tools) that can be used within countries. The ISC recommended that the flagship team expand its work with more conventional agricultural researchers to demonstrate the influences that a food demand-led approach might bring to their work. The flagship's collaboration with those at the country level who would be likely users of food system and dietary evidence seems to be gaining traction in both Ethiopia and Vietnam. They suggested that the flagship team prioritize making more presentations to research communities that are not as heavily invested in the food systems thinking as A4NH. The IFPRI lunchtime policy seminar, on November 14, was one example of such an activity of which the ISC would like to see more of.

One area that the ISC noted seems to be under-emphasized or missing from A4NH's approach to food system thinking is macroeconomic policy analysis. Such a lens does not fit squarely with the framework from the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), which A4NH has adapted to communicate its own food systems approach. The present sectoral approach to food systems thinking in many countries does not cover macroeconomic impacts, including income effects, on nutrition. If governments ignore or neglect macroeconomic policies, the results will inevitably be detrimental to food security, nutrition security, and public health. There are members of A4NH's target audience that will notice the lack of macroeconomic policy research in the food systems work and this could affect our credibility. Similarly, more collaboration with the climate change community would help to identify emerging trends that will alter food systems and affect diets.

The ISC was enthusiastic about the online Food Systems Resource Center that will be launched in January 2020. They encouraged A4NH to continue to advertise and broadcast what its researchers have to offer around food systems approaches and they could see how the Resource Center will support that goal. They also recommended that A4NH pursue opportunities, like the short videos and animations, to communicate concepts and results. They encouraged A4NH to include interactive components that provide feedback loops so users can share with A4NH their own food systems research and challenges.

#### Management Response

In 2019, the food systems team made several academic presentations in a variety of fora and reached wider audiences such as FAO and IFAD and participated in events like the World Economic Forum. At the country-level, there were follow-up stakeholder workshops in all four focus countries, which provided useful feedback on how to refine approaches and tools. There was not enough time in this year's meeting to highlight all those opportunities or the work on platforms for healthier diets in the focus countries. A4NH will consider ways to present this information to the ISC in a clearer way in next year's meeting.

The PMC appreciated the comments on the need for more macroeconomic policy research as it relates to food systems. There is some ongoing work led by Devesh Roy in Bangladesh and India, which was not highlighted during the meeting. There are also opportunities A4NH should pursue with researchers in the CRP on Policies, Institutions, and Markets (PIM) who have ongoing research on these topics. Some of this is ongoing, including work led by Chris Béné (CIAT) on the political economy of food transformation, which received financial support from PIM. Some completed work will be added to the Food Systems Resource Center. Devesh will explore opportunities with PIM and report on progress in next year's meeting.

The interactive suggestions will be taken into consideration as A4NH finalizes the beta version of the Food Systems Resource Center by January 2020. There are some "clickable features" already planned to allow users to filter the information in a way that leads them to a geographical focus, for example. PMC agreed that online interaction with the audience might be useful, but there was some hesitancy in including such a feature because of the time it would require to moderate online feedback. A place for readers to leave comments will not be included in the beta version. The Food Systems Idea Exchange (the blog), like the Gender-Nutrition Idea Exchange, will include blog posts by A4NH researchers but also other food systems experts. This not only widens the audience but also provides a wider perspective from the global audience.

## COUNTRY AND COMMUNITY-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT

The ISC was keen to see documented country-level engagement and the documented research benefits that have come from these engagements. The ISC also recommended that A4NH expand its target audience beyond implementers to the communities themselves (e.g., farmers, mothers, etc.) and promote more of its work to them. The goal should be to conduct research that's reliably informed by face-to-face encounters with the local community who will have to own the interventions.

### Management Response

The PMC agreed with the ISC that it needs to be more systematic about documenting country-level engagement. One possibility would be for A4NH, through the country coordinators in the five focus countries, to synthesize what all flagships have contributed to food systems thinking and application of approaches in the five focus countries into a report. This would include what issues are important within those countries and how A4NH research could (or could not) address those. The timing should coincide with the CGIAR change process, so the PMC will discuss this further and make a decision before the second quarter of 2020. This action will also position A4NH programs highly on the agenda of those to be implemented under One CGIAR.

A4NH is a research for development program dedicated to generating and sharing evidence on interventions and innovations that could have measurable impacts on all forms of malnutrition and health with a distinct set of actors along its respective impact pathways. For example, there is a strong effort in all flagships to build partnerships with implementers who act as brokers between researchers and the communities. Researchers rely on implementers – NGOs delivering nutrition-sensitive agricultural interventions or agricultural extension workers promoting technologies and providing training, as an example – to inform research so it is relevant to communities that will benefit from better programs, improved technologies, and improved knowledge, attitudes, and practices. The most well-known example from A4NH is IFPRI's collaboration with Helen Keller International around the homestead food production program model and its adaptations (e.g., [2017 seminar](#) or this [blog post](#) from Helen Keller International). In other cases, flagships may be building partnerships with governments and national institutes in the design and dissemination of policy or program research and research products. A recent example from A4NH is the collaboration with the Ethiopian Public Health Institute and other Ethiopian partners around the development of food-based dietary guidelines. In 2019, the Government of Ethiopia adopted this initiative as a flagship project, which requires the Ethiopian Public Health Institute to provide progress updates to Parliament every three months. Documenting activities and/or progress in focus counties will outline the utilization/integration/adoption of results into country systems including policies and strategies.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FP1 AND FP4

The ISC has expressed concerns that the approaches and methods being applied and promoted around food and nutrition policy in Flagship 1 (Food Systems for Healthier Diets) and Flagship 4 (Supporting Policies Programs and Enabling Action through Research) were not coordinated or, in some cases, compatible. The ISC has also expressed concern about not seeing enough joint projects between the flagships, e.g., on issues of improving the diets of young children or adolescents. As part of the meeting materials, A4NH provided the ISC with a PPT on recent work along the policy pathway from each flagship. Each team presented FP1 and FP4 individual work and joint activities. The ISC recognized that the two flagships have sufficiently different methods for analyzing food and nutrition policy and that co-designing projects would be difficult. They thanked A4NH for providing clarity on this issue.

### Management Response

None.

## HARVESTPLUS

The ISC recognized HarvestPlus as a valuable asset that needs an active role in the future CGIAR. HarvestPlus has experience in developing a global program that can monitor and evaluate progress on successfully breeding micronutrient-rich crops and delivering them to farmers. The ISC encouraged A4NH, IFPRI, and CGIAR to actively support the role of HarvestPlus in ensuring that target levels for micronutrients were priorities in multi-trait crop breeding under the Crops to End Hunger initiative and that there is a CGIAR-wide systematic process for monitoring and evaluating impacts of biofortification as it is gradually mainstreamed into food crop breeding and delivery.

## BROADER COMMENTS

In addition to these specific areas raised by the ISC at the end of the meeting, they also provided observations about A4NH's relationships with the private sector, the audience for our research, and opportunities to promote A4NH research at upcoming global events in nutrition.

### Management Response

Next year, A4NH will prepare a summary on A4NH relationships and activities with the private sector as part of the meeting materials for the ISC meeting and time in the agenda to discuss this with the ISC.

The PMC recognizes that the audience for a research for development program, like A4NH, is wide-reaching and has many levels. In next year's materials, A4NH will prepare a summary of products by target audience for the ISC to illustrate how we approach this as an overall program and through the five flagships.

Several members of the A4NH community (~20) will be attending the Micronutrient Forum Fifth Global Conference in Bangkok, March 23-27, and will have roles as session chairs and presenters. The PMU will reach out to the Micronutrient Forum chair on options where A4NH can have a unified, formal presence to promote its work. At different points, members of the A4NH community have been invited in discussions around Nutrition for Growth, but this has tapered off. There seems to be less focus on commitments around research than in past years. The PMC will explore options through its links with DFID and the Global Panel.

## DECISIONS

The ISC reviewed and gave their approval on the following:

- 2020 budget as presented;
- Revised external evaluation plan for the remainder of Phase II (2020-2021); and

- Modified plan for assessing the Country Coordination and Engagement (CCE) Unit as described in the memo included in the meeting materials.

## ISC ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES IN 2019-2020

Activity	Timeline
Approve 2020 Plan of Work and Budget (POWB) <i>Flagship Leaders will provide a brief commentary on how ISC comments will be incorporated into their annual planning. This response will accompany the POWB.</i>	December 16-20, 2019
Virtual calls with A4NH Director to discuss progress in CGIAR overall and A4NH research, in particular (not mandatory for ISC)	Quarterly, time/date tbc
ISC 4 <sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting (this will likely be the ISC's last meeting)	October or November 2020 (dates tbc) IFPRI HQ, Washington, D.C.

*Note: The PMC will hold its bi-annual face-to-face meeting in Addis Ababa in April 2020 and in the past the ISC members were invited to join this meeting as observers and opportunities were provided for them to interact with local partners. Given the likely focus of the 2020 meeting will be on preparing for post-2021 research partnerships, rather than A4NH program review and planning, the PMC does not plan to invite ISC members to join.*

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