



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 virtually on October 27-28, 2020, for their fourth annual meeting as an ISC. Robert Paarlberg chaired the meeting. On the first day, the five flagships and the A4NH Director provided their annual report to the ISC. On the second day, for the first two hours outside representatives from the CGIAR System Organization, the United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the African Academy of Sciences, the CGIAR GENDER Platform, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), the African Development Bank; and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) joined the meeting as resource persons for a discussion around future plans for CGIAR research programs at the nexus of agriculture, nutrition, and health following the anticipated termination of A4NH at the end of 2021. A list of participants can be found at the end of this summary.

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 2020 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 2021 and provide strategic guidance for A4NH overall and for each of its five flagships.

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 followed by key comments with the decisions reached during the meeting.

MAIN AREAS OF ISC CONCERN AND A4NH PLAN FOR ACTION

Topic	Plan for Action	Timeline <i>Responsibility</i>
Integration of A4NH research - both ongoing and potential new directions – into One CGIAR plans and operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically assess potential for a One CGIAR nutrition and health platform 	November-December 2020 <i>A4NH Director with PMC member support</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare proposals for A4NH successor initiatives in the One CGIAR research portfolio 	Q1-Q2 2021 (anticipated) <i>A4NH research teams</i>
Review of A4NH focus country support and cross-country learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize strategic brief 	Late November 2020 <i>PMU (Amanda, Namukolo, John)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss ways to document cross-country learning in 2021 	November-December 2020 <i>A4NH Director with PMC (Flagship 1, in particular) and focus country teams</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 PPT slide deck served as A4NH’s full report on 2020 achievements and 2021 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. This report included an accompanying Word document with more notes and full citations of referenced publications to provide more detail to the ISC members. The report, along with all meeting materials, is archived on A4NH’s internal communications platform, TeamSpace, [here](#) (password required to login; access can be provided upon request).

The ISC noted that presentations from each of the flagships demonstrated the progress that has been made by A4NH in shaping a coherent program of research, policy analysis, and identification and testing of interventions (in some cases, at considerable scale). Expertise from A4NH Managing Partners outside CGIAR has been successfully integrated into the program, although inclusion of the private sector remains a work in progress. “Food systems thinking” is a significant feature of the A4NH effort, focused on dietary balance, consumer perspectives, and the food environments they confront. Specific research initiatives probe into and operationalize change at various points within food systems (e.g., access to and affordability of healthy diets, innovative farm management techniques that would improve human and animal health, policies that would leverage change and investment). Much of this work centers on four focus countries: Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Nigeria.

The ISC remains frustrated over the impending dissolution of A4NH, and over the few details available so far regarding the treatment nutrition and health issues that the ISC can expect in the One CGIAR of the future. Some ISC members specifically lament the limited incorporation of “food systems thinking” in development of the One CGIAR Research and Innovation Strategy for 2030 to date. The ISC encouraged A4NH leadership to continue showcasing the achievements of the CRP through its new strategic briefs and synthesis documents, to inform the shaping of this new One CGIAR Research Strategy in the weeks and months ahead.

The emergence of COVID-19 has underscored the need to expand understanding of the food safety and zoonotic disease problems that can emerge from wet markets and the necessity of sharing new evidence as quickly as possible. A4NH has facilitated such understanding in constituting a CGIAR COVID-19 Hub to

promote research and information exchange. The Hub is co-implemented by the CGIAR System Organization, and A4NH, including 3 A4NH Managing Partners – the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). The One Health perspective and integration into food systems thinking could not have happened had A4NH Flagships 3 (Food Safety) and 1 (Food Systems for Healthier Diets) and ILRI's leadership on animal diseases, also under Flagship 5 (Improving Human Health), not already laid the groundwork for such analysis.

The research team at A4NH has now emerged as an essential global resource, providing support to a Committee on World Food Security (CFS) working group on COVID-19 and food security, providing commentary on [wildlife markets](#) in German news outlets, and on food safety and pandemics in national media in Vietnam. A4NH researchers also contributed to a prominent ILRI-UNEP report, [Preventing the next pandemic : Zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission](#). The ISC was gratified to see A4NH responding so quickly with evidence-based research to inform policy and public health actions in the current crisis. It was also satisfying to learn that our Reach, Benefit, or Empower framework has been put to good use, shining greater light on the inequalities that exacerbate adverse impacts from the pandemic.

More broadly, the ISC noted the steady progress also being made along planned research paths. Flagship 1 is now generating a stream of new research products and training efforts on food systems and food system transformation at the national as well as the global level. Flagship 2 reports that 8.5 million households are now benefitting from biofortified crops. Flagship 3 reports gratifying progress in the commercialization of Aflasafe, with success in Gambia's commercial groundnut sector, in Kenya's food security project with maize, and Nigeria's commitments to promote large scale adoption of the technology. Flagship 4 continues to produce widely used evidence on impacts and impact pathways for nutrition-sensitive agricultural policies, and tools and methods for designing and adopting such policies. Engagement with key in-country stakeholders is a prominent aspect of this flagship. Flagship 5 remains the smallest of the five, and in retrospect it might have been in a stronger position if linked directly to Flagship 3. Yet Flagship 5 has now received a German grant to create a One Health Research, Education, and Outreach Centre in Africa (OHRECA), to be hosted at ILRI. Under the A4NH umbrella, ILRI has emerged as a growth node for work in food safety, zoonoses, and also anti-microbial resistance, a forward-looking agenda that will put CGIAR research at the center of future policy efforts in these areas.

Flagship 5 has a valuable research agenda on agriculture and health in partnership with LSHTM, but these collaborative efforts may struggle to find a new home after A4NH is terminated. The LSHTM researchers who were originally persuaded to participate in A4NH, in line with donor preferences, now face being abandoned under the CGIAR re-organization.

In the discussions on Day 2, A4NH looked to the external participants to share their thinking and expectations regarding a One CGIAR future starting in 2022. While one of the five "impact areas" for the One CGIAR is "nutrition," and there is an intent to "embrace a systems-transformation" approach for implementing the strategy, several external participants expressed concern that the complexity of a food systems approach made it difficult to find clear entry points for research and action. Some proposed that nutrition and health issues might be addressed through a CGIAR-wide "platform."

While the "gender platform" approach has had some positive outcomes, a number of ISC members believed that a relegation of nutrition and health issues to "platform" status would marginalize nutrition and health concerns rather than integrating them into CGIAR work. A4NH has preferred mainstreaming, as with the broader crop breeding efforts for biofortification envisioned by Flagship 2, and the A4NH efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change in collaboration with CCAFS. There is also a place for integration in the development of sustainable, diverse landscapes capable of supporting diverse, nutrient-rich diets, and the

formulation of policies, including trade and macroeconomic policies, that impact dietary health alongside economic and agricultural growth. The ISC advised A4NH leadership, in the year ahead, to advocate for mechanisms that would ensure mainstream status for nutrition and health issues within the organization’s research programs. Donors and other outsiders would find it curious, during the current pandemic and its associated food crisis, if the CGIAR were to downgrade the importance of nutrition and health and the relevance of agriculture in developing solutions to malnutrition and food security.

ISC members were also in strong agreement that under the new One CGIAR it will be important to continue working at the national level. Focus country teams and connections have been essential to the success of A4NH work within all of our research flagships, giving researchers an ability to design projects that resonate with the intended beneficiaries. Focus country partners also make strong champions for research programs when communicating with donors. Several ISC members commented that we should have been doing even more at the national level in recent years. The ISC believes this is an A4NH lesson the new One CGIAR should absorb.

On a positive note, the ISC was favorably impressed by the quantity and quality of research output A4NH maintained in 2020, despite travel restrictions, virtual working requirements, and the stress and uncertainty of what will happen to research programs and personnel after 2021. We attribute much of this to the strong example set within the CRP by John McDermott. Despite all that has happened in the past year, John has remained focused on opportunities rather than setbacks, and his team has another year of strong accomplishments to show for it.

DECISIONS

The ISC reviewed and gave their approval on the 2021 budget as presented.

ISC ANTICIPATED ENGAGEMENT IN 2020-2021

Activity	Timeline
Approve 2021 Plan of Work and Budget (POWB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jan 2021
Virtual calls with A4NH Director to discuss progress in CGIAR overall and A4NH research, in particular (not mandatory for ISC)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synthesis of lessons learned from the A4NH Country Coordination and Engagement (CCE) Unit 2021 POWB, including major, final A4NH Phase II deliverables and the unrealized or revised plans/targets from the Full Proposal Results from first round of evaluative studies and reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Late Nov/Early Dec 2020 Jan 2021 May/June 2021
ISC 5 th Annual Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dates and location TBD

Proposed plan for engagement was shared with the ISC in September 2020 and accepted. Here is the [link](#) to the description in TeamSpace (password required to login; access can be provided upon request).

INDEPENDENT STEERING COMMITTEE (ISC) MEMBERS

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<p>Joyce KINABO Professor of Human Nutrition Sokoine University of Agriculture Morogoro, Tanzania</p>	<p>John McDERMOTT <i>*ex officio member</i> Director, A4NH IFPRI Washington, D.C., U.S.A.</p>	<p>Robert PAARLBERG (ISC Chair) Adjunct Professor of Public Policy Harvard Kennedy School Massachusetts, U.S.A.</p>
<p>Emmy SIMMONS Former Assistant Administrator United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Washington, D.C., U.S.A.</p>	<p>Johan SWINNEN <i>*ex officio member</i> Director General IFPRI Washington, D.C., U.S.A.</p>	<p>Emorn UDOMKESMALEE Senior Advisor to and former Director Institute of Nutrition Mahidol University Bangkok, Thailand</p>

FLAGSHIP LEADERS

<p>Bernard BETT, Leader of Flagship 5 Senior Scientist ILRI Nairobi, Kenya</p>	<p>Ekin BIROL, Leader of Flagship 2 Director, Impact and Strategy HarvestPlus Washington, D.C., U.S.A.</p>	<p>Inge BROUWER, Leader of Flagship 1 Associate Professor, Department of Agrotechnology and Food Sciences WUR Wageningen, Netherlands</p>
<p>Hung NGUYEN, Leader of Flagship 3 Co-Leader Animal and Human Health Program ILRI Nairobi, Kenya</p>	<p>Deanna OLNEY, Leader of Flagship 4 Senior Research Fellow Poverty, Health and Nutrition Division IFPRI California, U.S.A.</p>	

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