RESEARCH PROGRAM ON Forests, Trees and Agroforestry

CGIAR

CGIAR Research Programme on Forests Trees and Agroforestry (FTA) 9th Meeting of the Independent Steering Committee (virtual)

Final Minutes

20 March 2018

Present: Anne-Marie Izac (AMI), ISC Chair, Yemi Katerere (YK), Florencia Montagnini (FM), Joyeeta Gupta (JG), Robert Nasi (RN), Rene Boot (RB), Stephan Weise (SW), Vincent Gitz (VG) FTA Director (D/FTA), Monika Kiczkajlo (FTA MSU – notes taking)

Summary

The purposes of the meeting were to discuss (i) an ISC recommendation to the CIFOR BoT regarding the selection of new ISC members and (ii) the FTA 2018 POWB and its proposed W1/W2 allocations based on priority-setting process.

Decisions

ISC9/D1: ISC unanimously recommends the following candidates for CIFOR BoT endorsement as the new ISC Members:

1. Linda Colette
2. Susan Braatz
3. Reconduction of Yemi Katerere, with his consent, until a candidate with suitable African expertise is identified though a targeted search.

ISC9/D2: ISC very much appreciated the transparent and inclusive process developed by FTA's leadership to prioritize the work of the Program and to strategically build W1/W2 allocations based on these priorities. The ISC fully supports the continuation of this process.

ISC9/D3: ISC unanimously endorsed the proposed W1/W2 allocations and their alignment with the activities planned in FTA's 2018 Program of Work and Budget (POWB) based on the new priority-setting process.

ISC9/D4: The priority setting process and the contingency planning are two extremely strategic and valuable investments and future POWBs should be based on these two processes. **ISC requested D/FTA to** prepare a short document for the ISC explaining the lessons learnt from the current exercise, for discussion at next ISC meeting.

The Chair opened the meeting welcoming the participants and introducing the agenda items. The meeting is the continuation of the teleconference held on 27 February 2018 when the most relevant collective level criteria for the selection of the new ISC members were agreed upon. Additionally, the ISC is to discuss and approve proposed allocations of W1/2 for 2018 as well as comment on FTA's 2018 POWB before it can be presented to CIFOR BoT. The last agenda item is a very introductory discussion on foresight. The agenda was approved.

Proposal for the new ISC independent members

During its 8th meeting, the FTA's ISC reached a consensus that amongst the collective criteria, the following were especially relevant given current challenges and opportunities for FTA: at least 2 female new members, international policy and development experience and significant African expertise.

The ISC Chair together with Director FTA and CIFOR HR assessed each of the eight shortlisted candidates against these three agreed criteria and made a proposal on the three names:

- Linda Colette
- Susan Braatz
- Reconduction of Yemi Katerere, with his consent, until a candidate with suitable African background is identified though a targeted search.

AMI explained the rationale for the proposal. The two new independent members proposed and Yemi bring to ISC:

- Strong international policy and development experience in connected fields important for FTA;
- Strong experience of science-policy interfaces, in different settings;
- Strong experience in forestry-agroforestry and land use issues, with international policy and development components;
- Expertise profiles that are complementary, with one profile very strong forestry and agroforestry profile with an important climate change component;
- One profile on important connected fields such as biodiversity and environment.

Given that among the eight shortlisted profiles there was no suitable candidate with African experience, Yemi who has vast experience in development and policy in the African context agreed to continue being an ISC member until an appropriate candidate is identified through a targeted search.

Taken together, the three candidates address very well the selection criteria endorsed by the ISC at its 8th meeting, namely:

- Two women, to bring the ISC to a composition of 4 women and 5 men;
- Policy and development expertise: strong mix, at international level, in different and complementary areas;
- Geographic dimension: significant pan-African expertise

AMI pointed out that the two new members bring two very complementary profiles in terms of the disciplinary areas (forestry, agroforestry and land-use on the one hand, with an additional climate change expertise, and environment/biodiversity on the other hand), and add diversity to the current membership.

Next AMI asked the ISC members for their reactions on the proposed candidates. All ISC members considered the suggested candidates an excellent choice and a very good outcome for FTA, also expressing their appreciation that Yemi will continue for probably at least another year.

RN observed that the search for YK's replacement should be conducted through FTA's African networks and with the support from YK.

RB asked D/FTA, who interviewed the two new candidates, about their motivation to serve as the ISC members. JG highlighted that being an ISC member requires considerable amount of time, often clashing with intense periods of work in academia.

VG responded that he checked the interest of the selected candidates in FTA and their motivation level with respect to actively participating in ISC. Both candidates have just recently retired, so their connections are still fresh and at the same time they have time and motivation to participate in the work of the ISC. Additionally, they are genuinely interested in the nature of what FTA does.

AMI summarized that the **ISC was unanimous in the recommendation of Linda Colette, Susan Braatz and Yemi Katerere (continuing) as the members of the ISC** and thanked Yemi for having agreed to continue serving as an ISC member until a suitable candidate will be identified.

FTA POWB 2018

AMI recalled that D/FTA introduced contingency planning in 2017 POWB, at ISC's request to allow FTA to deal with budget shortfalls in a more strategic manner. The contingency approach was approved by CIFOR BoT. D/FTA was also requested to develop a priority setting process for FTA and to start using the results of this process (the priorities identified) in FTA's 2018 POWB, including the W1/2 allocations. Such a process is an innovation from previous years.

She asked VG to briefly present the POWB 2018. VG explained that contingency planning and the 22 operational priorities were fully integrated in the preparations of the 2018 POWB. He noted that the MT followed a rigorous and transparent process, which strengthened programme-wide, collaborative approaches, while building on the existing FPs structure. Most priorities are led by one FP. Three priorities were identified as being particularly cross-cutting in the sense that they concerned all FPs: restoration, plantations and tree-crop commodities, and nutrition. These three will require a specific, program-wide approach for coordination. For each priority a separate program of work and budget was prepared that links each priority with a specific set of activities and deliverables undertaken by different FPs and CCTs.

The priority setting process allowed to clearly link W1/W2 allocations to key deliverables and to embed contingency planning with its three funding tiers in FTA's 2018 budget. An additional uplift tier was also created in order to attract bilateral or W3 funds beyond the FTA Finplan. The contingency plan and size of tiers is based on latest information from the SMO on actual 2018 portfolio funding, and on SMO's recommendation for cautious under-programming. Tier 1 and Tier 2 correspond to a situation of CGIAR overall funding at 80%. The FTA Finplan in 2018 is of USD 9.86m, to which USD 0.78m of 2017 program-level carry- overs is to be added. This brings the maximum available for FTA in 2018 at USD 10.66m. Contingency tiers for 2018 were defined at 5.00m (Tier 1), 3.62m (Tier 2) and 2.04m (Tier 3).

In preparing the POWB, priorities were first selected, the expected outputs within and the corresponding budget allocations second, following very strict guidelines. Full transparency and high level of collective scrutiny from the MT guaranteed that individual activities retained were sound vis-a-vis the criteria and their budget were not inflated. In some case this led to the

rejection of activities proposed, with request to the FPs to mature them in order to eventually propose them for a subsequent POWB.

AMI asked VG for a clarification whether and by which modalities the SMO is planning to send narrative POWB documents to donors. VG responded that in the forthcoming June 2018 meeting of CGIAR science leaders, the modalities of sharing the POWB details to the donors (including the fate of optional tables in the template) will be decided. The SMO confirmed that its intentions are to put the POWBs from CRPs and Platforms briefly on the web and provide a link in the portfolio document going to the SC. After a month the POWBs will be taken down.

AMI expressed her appreciation for the process put forward by D/FTA highlighting its transparency, inclusiveness and collective scrutiny. AMI stressed that the budget created in a bottom up manner and around priorities is a good and effective step forward, Next, AMI opened the floor for the questions.

JG asked what was excluded when determining the priorities.

VG elucidated that some priorities were regrouped and the list of submitted priorities was narrowed down. It led to a definition of some cross-cutting areas. He stressed that the process was not a competition, as all proposals from FPs and CCTs were quite in line with what was expected, thanks to the preparation work, clear criteria and clear guidelines that were well followed by the FPs during the submission process. The criteria and the eight guidelines enabled the alignment from the beginning. To concretely respond to JG he would have to consult again the list of areas of work which FTA MT decided were not of as high importance at the moment as the areas selected. Some details about these will be inserted in FTA's POWB narrative for the CGIAR SMO.

RB commented that he fully supports the process followed. The bottom up approach allows the ownership of the process by all, which he welcomes.

RB then asked D/FTA about the lessons learnt from the process, including what worked and what did not work. VG explained that in 2017 the FPs received equal allocations of W1-2 and then developed activities based upon these funds as a second step. In 2018, the MT first sorted out its work priorities, the supporting activities and outputs, and only then, as a consequence, the allocations were elaborated. VG will prepare a short document for the ISC explaining the lessons learnt for discussion at its next meeting.

Next, RB observed that it would be useful to involve end-users and donors in the priority-setting process. He also observed that communicating the list of 22 priorities would be a difficult exercise, a clustering of priorities to narrow down the final list may be possible. VG agreed that donors' involvement in the process would be important and FTA will aim for that next year.

SW thanked VG for developing such a systematic and transparent approach, adding that the discussion around priorities was important. SW observed that presenting the work of FTA taking as entry point the set of priorities and not the FPs may attract donors.

RN endorsed the POWB. He also flagged that FP leads have the tendency to criticize processes and to request going backwards if they feel that the end-result is not going in the direction they expect. RN emphasized that no abuse should be tolerated and that the ISC should fully support the process designed by D/FTA.

AMI stressed that the issue of transaction cost related to the implementation of the process is important and the ISC fully realizes that when D/FTA and senior FTA leadership were requested to prepare and implement a priority-setting and contingency process, this would imply substantial efforts and costs associated with it. The ISC will discuss during its June face-to-face meeting the lessons learnt so far and whether the process has, so far, been worth the transaction costs. However, any cost-benefit analysis of this process must be undertaken over longer time-frames than just one year, as this is an investment for the future of FTA. The work done this year should largely (i) ease the preparation of future POWBs, (ii) allow FTA to make strategic pre-emptive cuts in its activities if/when downturns in the budget occur, (iii) allow FTA to increase the focus of its work and its overall effectiveness in producing outcomes, including development outcomes. This, in turn, should attract new strategic partners as well as more donors' interest in supporting the Program.

VG highlighted that significant amount of effort dedicated this year to the priority setting process will decrease the future workload.

SW and AMI briefly commented on the draft narrative POWB document, with AMI noting that the final planning templates were only made available to FTA a few weeks ago. SW mentioned that FTA, despite having definitely improved its prioritization this year, should not give the impression that former POWBs and the FTA proposal was not already reflecting a set of priorities. AMI indicated that she would send additional comments in order for the D/FTA to finalize the document.

All ISC members endorsed the allocations proposed for operational priorities, partners and FPs, comprising the funding allocations into three contingency Tiers. The ISC thanked D/FTA and everyone involved in the process.

Foresight

AMI initiated the discussion on foresight by raising the issue of how FTA can be sufficiently flexible and able to adapt itself to changing demand. There are knowledge gaps, but also rapid changes in FTA's environment. A good foresight strategy would be a way for FTA to increase its resilience in its ability to adapt and respond to a changing environment and changing needs of end-users and donors in addition to political demands from the system.

JG observed that foresight is an important topic that will help FTA to adapt and survive, with an impact on what FTA will be able to do in the future. JG pointed out that there needs to be an emphasis on lobbying governments on the need to invest in public goods.

SW asked how FTA is going to approach this discussion, at what levels and with what data.

RN noted that FTA should distinguish between two different issues related to foresight. The first is adapting to changing donor environment, and this is the role that ISC and MT can play. The other issue of foresight is ex-ante impact evaluation.

SW mentioned that it would be useful to integrate ex-ante assessment works for the three cross- cutting priorities. RB supported the statements by RN and SW.

FM welcomed the idea to discuss foresight during the ISC face-to-face meeting next June.

AMI summarized that this very introductory discussion will be followed by a more informed discussion during the next ISC meeting, including reflecting on what kind of ex-ante analysis can be done to increase the flexibility and adaptability of FTA and what kind of partnerships are needed to support this effort in 'looking ahead'.

AOB

AMI thanked JG, who will step down from the ISC on 30 April 2018, for her precious contribution to ISC and whished her best.

This summary on inclusive finance was produced by Tropenbos International and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA). FTA is the world's largest research for development program to enhance the role of forests, trees and agroforestry in sustainable development and food security and to address climate change. CIFOR leads FTA in partnership with Bioversity International, CATIE, CIRAD, INBAR, ICRAF and TBI. FTA's work is supported by the CGIAR Trust Fund.