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ACTION PLAN TO STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CGIAR AND FRANCE



PREAMBLE

Considering:

- The crucial need to implement the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the Paris Agreement on climate, all major multilateral commitments made by the international community in 2015,
- The shared goals of CGIAR and France to reduce poverty and gender inequality, to fight food insecurity and malnutrition, and to preserve natural resources and biodiversity, in the exacerbated context of climate change,
- CGIAR's role and expertise in these fields, as a global network and partnership for development research with a mission of "Ending hunger by 2030 – through science to transform food, land and water systems in a climate crisis",
- CGIAR System Council, at its 9th meeting on 13-14 November 2019, unanimously endorsed the recommendations of the System Reference Group for a unified and integrated "One CGIAR" to respond to the challenges of the 21st century,
- The roles and expertise in these fields of French research institutions, particularly the Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD), and the National Institute for Research on Agriculture, Food, and the Environment (INRAE),
- Montpellier's position as a renowned hub for agronomic research and training, in partnership with low and middle-income countries, reinforced by the presence of many foreign and international scientific laboratories and institutions, the creation of the Montpellier University of Excellence (MUSE) I-Site, and the support of Agropolis International,
- French stakeholders' expertise in engineering international multi-partner research projects and promoting and transferring results in the field,
- French teams' long-term partnerships with CGIAR, particularly the secondment of CIRAD and IRD researchers across the CGIAR System,
- France's decision to increase its contribution to official development assistance,
- France's involvement in European and international bodies and initiatives and French actions targeting European and international partner donors, particularly:
 - as a driver in the fight against climate change and a member of the Sahel Alliance,
 - France's investment in the European DeSIRA (Development-Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture) initiative,
 - and the contribution of the Agence française de développement (AFD) to the dedicated fund,
- The Agreement between the Government of the French Republic and CGIAR System Organization, previously named the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centres, regarding the headquarters of the CGIAR System Organization and its Privileges and Immunities on the French Territory, which was signed in Montpellier on 4 March 2013 and modified by way of an amendment in the form of an exchange of letters signed in Paris on 4 January 2017 and in Montpellier on 9 January 2017. The specification in this hosting agreement that this international organization's headquarters are in Montpellier and that it receives tax privileges and diplomatic immunities for it and its employees, as well as a social security agreement. The provision, free of charge, of these headquarters by the Occitania Region, which also financed their construction.

Also considering that:

- It is important that CGIAR be supported and profiled by its host country in terms of its visibility, and included in a network of French, European and international institutional, financial and scientific partnerships,
- It is important that the position of CGIAR be reinforced in its host country and within the Montpellier network of education and research organizations,
- It is important for CGIAR and France to develop a joint long-term strategy and strengthen their research and development cooperation in order to provide a concerted response to shared issues and maximize impact.

France and CGIAR undertake to implement an action plan with three components:

1. The development of ambitious partnership projects (backed by the Declaration of Cooperation and Reinforcement of Scientific Collaborations between French Establishments and the CGIAR System, hereinafter referred to as the "Scientific Collaboration Declaration"),
2. Soft diplomacy,
3. Financial and implementation support.

This action plan, which coordinates these three components, applies to three French ministries (the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs – MEAE, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation – MESRI, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food – MAA) and CGIAR, whose System Organization commits to maintaining and strengthening its Montpellier headquarters and enhancing its relationships with French organizations and ministries.

The central part of the action plan is Component 1, backed by the **Scientific Collaboration Declaration**, which applies to the relevant French research organizations and CGIAR. Components 2 and 3 concern institutional measures to support and promote Component 1.

1. DEVELOPMENT OF AMBITIOUS PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

This component includes both scientific and financial aspects. It is underpinned by the Scientific Collaboration Declaration, which reinforces all existing bilateral framework agreements between CGIAR and French organizations. The declaration identifies the three following priorities for collaboration: “agriculture and climate change”, “the agro-ecological transition” and “sustainable nutrition and food systems”. For each of these priorities, special emphasis will be placed on impact measurement. This declaration was signed by the heads of the relevant French research and higher education organization¹ and the Chair of the CGIAR System Management Board at the high-level meeting of the French Commission for International Agricultural Research (CRAI) on 22 March 2019.

CGIAR, its research centres and its research programmes, along with the French research organization signatories, supported by their supervisory ministries, will make efforts to jointly develop and lead ambitious partnership projects as part of a concerted and consolidated intervention framework.

These projects must:

- Involve institutions in low and middle-income countries, CGIAR Centres and French establishments,
- Align with one of the three priority themes: “agriculture and climate change”, “the agro-ecological transition” or “sustainable nutrition and food systems”,
- Respect France’s intervention priorities for development assistance.

Projects designed in this way would be able to mobilise French, European and international funding sources.

As such, the projects will have the following advantages:

- This partnership, which creates synergies between the competencies of French organizations, CGIAR Centres and national research systems in developing countries, will receive project support from France and support to leverage European and global funds.
- France’s experience in developing and coordinating European projects, in addition to its scientific expertise, will be leveraged.
- The mobilization of INRAE, in addition to CGIAR’s longstanding partners CIRAD and the IRD, will generate additional leverage through its meta-programmes and research programme projects on global issues.

The partnership between French organizations, CGIAR Centres and research centres in developing countries could involve other European scientific and academic partners, in order to widen the scope of some projects. Project engineering, closely linked to scientific work, will be an essential factor in the success of projects.

CGIAR’s System Management Office (SMO) in Montpellier will manage and support coordination and consistency between these projects as part of the organization’s overall programme.

The implementation of these ambitious projects will build on many existing collaboration arrangements, as mentioned in the [Scientific Collaboration Declaration](#), which will give them new impetus.

1. AGREENIUM (the French Agricultural, Veterinary and Forestry Institute), CIRAD, INRA, IRD, IRSTEA

2. SOFT DIPLOMACY

France will use its influence and advocacy efforts at international or European levels to promote CGIAR's scientific potential in the abovementioned fields, in the framework of its partnerships with French development research organizations and in accordance with French goals and priorities in agricultural and rural research and development. CGIAR and France will undertake discussions annually regarding the international events in which they wish to be involved to promote their collaboration.

France and CGIAR will partner together in, at minimum, one high-level international advocacy opportunity each year. This will be determined and agreed during the annual partnership coordination meeting.

3. FINANCIAL AND IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

France will step-up its support for CGIAR in three ways:

1. By co-financing research partnership projects in accordance with Component 1 of this action plan:
 - Either in the form of a contribution to Window 2 of the CGIAR trust fund, which is used to finance CGIAR's main research programmes,
 - Or, if applicable, through the AFD's contribution to Window 3 of the CGIAR trust fund, which finances more targeted projects, provided that the AFD's intervention conditions are met.²

In both cases, projects must comply with Component 1 of this action plan, and:

- Involve institutions in low- and middle-income countries, CGIAR Centres and French establishments,
 - Align with one of the three priority themes: "agriculture and climate change", "the agro-ecological transition" or "sustainable nutrition and food systems",
 - Respect France's intervention priorities.
2. By contributing to seed-funding to enable launching of partnership projects on one of the three themes. French organizations may receive grants for their scientists and their CGIAR counterparts to finance the organization, participation and promotion of workshops and exchanges by French research partner delegations to one or several CGIAR Centres with a view to sharing knowledge, strengthening cooperation and jointly developing the abovementioned projects so they can be submitted to donors and funding mechanisms.
 3. By providing a French research expert to the CGIAR's System Management Office (SMO) in Montpellier. This expert will support the analyses of international agronomic development research programmes, in order to help CGIAR develop its own programmes based on comparative advantages and possible alliances, particularly with France. They will maintain good relationships with French stakeholders and the network based in Montpellier. The terms of reference for this position will be defined by CGIAR in agreement with France, which will suggest several candidates to the organization for consideration. CGIAR will be responsible for the selection and evaluation of the performance of the French expert and send this evaluation to France once a year.

CGIAR and the French ministries and organizations will establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the implementation of this plan, which will be managed by the SMO and CRAI. A meeting schedule will be established on the basis of at least one meeting per year.

This action plan is valid for the 2020-2022 period, and may be renewed once by tacit agreement.

² The AFD's conditions: projects must be in one of France's priority regions (Africa, priority poor countries, countries eligible for AFD assistance) and preferably on a national scale, in which case they are led by a national institution in close collaboration with southern research partners, or possibly on a regional scale, for example as part of the European DeSIRA initiative.

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