



The International Centre for
Underutilised Crops

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**Second meeting of ICUC Scientific Advisory Board
Washington, DC, 6 December 11 am – 5.30pm**

Present: Ruth Oniango (RO), NG Hegde (NGH), John Palmer (JRP), George Rothschild (GR –
Chair, arr 12.15pm), Hannah Jaenicke (HJ)

Absent: Frank Rijsberman (FR)

Agenda:

1. Welcome and introduction of SAB members
2. Review of agenda
3. Approval of minutes from last meeting
4. Feedback/actions from last meeting (all)
5. Report of ongoing activities (H. Jaenicke)
6. Feedback from ancillary meeting 5 December (G. Rothschild)
7. Future activities (G. Rothschild)
8. Any other business
9. Date and venue of next meeting

1. Welcome and introduction of SAB members

1.1 GR had to attend a conflicting CGIAR–AGM meeting in the morning and had asked NGH to chair the beginning of the SAB meeting.

1.2 This being the first meeting that JRP participated in, some time was spent in general introductions. JRP explained his background and prior involvement with ICUC activities as the Manager of DFID's Forestry Research Programme.

2. Review of agenda

2.1 The agenda was accepted. JRP raised a few issues for the role of ICUC to keep in mind and if not discussed earlier, to discuss under Any other business. (1) Are underutilised crops those with characteristics close to or far from major crops (definition, where is the cut-off point) ? (2) Should ICUC aim to generate new knowledge or should it concentrate on diverse packaging of existing knowledge? (3) Should ICUC concentrate on (agronomic) production or on (entrepreneurial) processing of Underutilised Crops ? Other strategic questions had been raised in correspondence with HJ on 08 May and 03 December 2006.

3. Approval of minutes from last meeting

3.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate reflection of the discussions held on 23 May in Nairobi. JRP mentioned that he had been contemplating a suitable candidate for the 5th member of the SAB. He had met with several people, including one involved in cocoa trading in the Caribbean and Central America, but he thought that they might be too disciplinary-specific for the ICUC/SAB. It was agreed to talk about this later in the next section.

4. Feedback/actions from last meeting

4.1 HJ had extracted the action points from the minutes of the last meeting and went through all of them. Some issues were pending, for some it was later decided that further follow-up was not worthwhile.

4.2 HJ to contact various scholarship schemes to explore possibilities to develop an ICUC scholarship programme

Further development of contacts with scholarship programmes had not progressed as expected. No feedback has been received from IFS Sweden despite repeated emailing. JRP informed the meeting that CIDA are supplying interns to the International Centre of the Forest Stewardship Council, and might be willing to support ICUC.

→ *HJ to follow up with CIDA*

4.3 HJ to contact Barry Tan at IWMI regarding the overheads

HJ had raised the issue but realised that re-negotiation of the contract between IWMI and ICUC is at present not feasible, so the issue was dropped.

4.4 HJ to redraft the MoU, if necessary with the input of a lawyer

Ditto

4.5 GR to consult with DFID about ICUC/IWMI arrangements

GR met with DFID at several occasions and learnt that DFID was unhappy with the way the arrangements for the transfer of ICUC from the UK to Sri Lanka had been made. However, there was agreement that nothing could be done at present and no further action was taken.

4.6 GR to provide RIRDC contacts to HJ who will establish dialogue

GR had provided contacts and HJ had written to RIRDC but not received any response. There was an earlier suggestion that the contacts may no longer be at RIRDC. As GR has retained good contacts and will travel to Australia in mid-2007, he will follow up on this issue. However, in the meantime, HJ should also search through the New Crops Conference CD received from Max Bourke for other useful contacts, especially for markets for new crops. HJ may plan to join GR in Australia for visits to key partners/donors there.

→ *GR and HJ to follow up with RIRDC and Australia visit; HJ to screen New Crops proceedings for useful contacts and follow up.*

4.7 *all SAB members to provide useful contacts to ICUC, and when meeting with a donor lobby on behalf of ICUC*

All SAB members are supportive of ICUC and will continue to lobby on its behalf in the future.

→ *all SAB members to continue to provide useful contacts to ICUC, and help promote ICUC when meeting with representatives of donor agencies and other relevant bodies.*

4.8 *GR as SAB Chair to write introductory letters or sign them jointly with HJ*

No letters were written during 2006 thus this activity was postponed.

4.9 *RO to lobby for a link with ICUC and a focus on crop diversity within Harvest Plus and its main funder, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*

RO had no opportunity for this lobby activity as she did not attend any of the 2006 Board Meetings of Harvest Plus due to the distance. However, the next meeting of the H+ Board will be in Brussels in June 2007 and she is planning to attend it. However she noted that 2007 is election year in Kenya so she will be very busy campaigning and not be available for many other activities during the year.

She suggested that B&M Gates Foundation is interested in nutritional issues, so it could be interested to look into selenium and zinc contents of UC. Mining companies are interested in specific indicator plants (natural accumulators of heavy metals and rare earth elements) and these could also be used for better nutrition (if edible). Maybe B&M Gates Foundation could be invited to fund a screening project.

RO also suggested that ICUC should be present at the FARA meeting in Johannesburg in June/July 2007 with a stand and consider the meeting of the African Society for Nutrition in Morocco, 9 May 2007 – ICUC should at least have handout material and possibly be present through sponsoring a participant. ICUC should prepare sets of posters to send to such meetings.

→ *HJ to screen CAB Abstracts for Se, Zn indicator plants and consider travelling to Seattle to discuss plans. JRP adds 22 Jan 07: "A search on www.cabdirect.org (needs username and password) and key words such as ACCUMULATOR, HYPERACCUMULATOR, METALS, PLANTS will bring up around 100 references since 1970. There seem to be hyper accumulator plants for over a dozen heavy metals."*

→ *HJ to prepare posters and ensure handouts are sent to relevant meetings.*

[→ *participation at FARA meeting is already planned*]

4.10 *HJ to inform African SROs about ICUC and its regional strategy*

HJ is in touch with FARA, and several of the FARA/SRO members were involved in the strategy consultation workshop in Nairobi; informing all SROs was left to GFU as they are closely linked with the GFAR structure. However, after the initial message, no follow up had

occurred. The strategy document by Jaenicke & Hoeschle-Zeledon is now being mailed out widely.

4.11 *NGH and HJ make contact and visit DFID India*

Both made a visit to Delhi-based donors in November. The most promising lead was with IDRC (HJ is preparing a concept idea). Other bi-lateral donors, such as DFID, supply poverty reduction budget support funds through the national system (Central and State Government Treasuries) and it is difficult for an organisation like ICUC to get funding directly from them. But it should be possible for ICUC partners, such as BAIF. NGH and HJ will follow up on this initial visit.

→ *HJ to maintain contact with India-based donors and plan a follow-up visit in 2007.*

4.12 *all SAB members to forward further suggestions for 5th SAB member to ICUC.*

Further to JRP's earlier statement, HJ reported that she had met with Adam Brett of Tropical Wholefoods in UK but felt that he was too busy and thus not an ideal candidate for the SAB. It was agreed that this is not an urgent issue, esp. in light of the future restructuring of GFU and ICUC during 2007.

5. Report of ongoing activities

5.1 HJ presented the key activities and main achievements of ICUC since the 1st SAB meeting in May. The key activity without doubt is the close collaboration with the GFU, culminating in the side event of 5 December at the CGIAR AGM during which the two units received very positive feedback and the encouragement to develop an alliance and a much broader platform. World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz visited the ICUC stand and the ICUC annual report was displayed on the Scriptoria stand.

During the last half-year, regional consultations took up most of the time budget. HJ asked for suggestions for titles and authors for position papers to follow the first (Dawson & Jaenicke) on biotechnology; see agenda item 7.2.

Projects

5.2 **Sri Lanka** – follow-on from FRP project R8399: a pilot project has been developed by Sampath Abeyrathne with local partners SEEDS and REN for business development support and micro-credit schemes for UC processors. Sampath had written a report on marketing activities as output of R8399 – the report was in press and HJ handed out pre-press copies. The importance of prior business experience was noted as an indicator of successful application of training in fruit processing.

5.3 Three interns had joined ICUC and carried out work in Sri Lanka. Ismael Barry (Maastricht University & KIT, self-funded) on value-chain analysis with rambutan, wood apple and beli. His reports are under review at present. Boris Hillmann (BMZ-funded) on germplasm pathways for jackfruit, annona and beli – he presented his work during German Tropentag in Bonn in October. Robert Kunz (BMZ-funded) on biological control of stem end rot in

rambutan and annona – he also presented his findings with a poster at Tropentag in Bonn. Robert was working in a collaborative activity with ITI which helped ICUC forge closer links with that institution.

RO mentioned that she would also be interested to receive an ICUC intern for the activities of her NGO Rural Outreach Program. → HJ to follow up.

5.4 India – currently, BAIF has assigned a MSc student to carry out a value-chain study with the species used for FRP project R8399 work: tamarind, jackfruit and amla. The project, complementing ICUC work in Sri Lanka, is expected to end in February 2007 and will feed into an overall decision guide for market access that GFU and ICUC are planning to develop (both institutions had this plan independently and will now work together for its completion).

5.5 JRP mentioned that the New Guyana Marketing Corporation had done studies on export markets to the Guyanese diaspora. This study concluded that the main characteristics of successful new foods are: be attractive to children, and have a long shelf life. These studies can be accessed through <http://www.newgmc.com/surveys.html>

5.6 Ghana – ICUC has developed a small pilot project to study the diversity of vegetables in peri-urban market gardens with IWMI-Ghana; what vegetables are grown where, why, how much is grown, and who benefits? Currently, interns are being sought for this work, and Ismael Barry will carry out some surveys in early 2007. In addition, ICUC is partnering in an IWMI-led proposal to the Water and Food CP also in Ghana on shallow groundwater use (shallow well irrigation for peri-urban agriculture). This project has passed the concept note review. If funded, this project would be complementary to the other work.

5.7 Mali – ICUC had had discussions with University of Hawaii at Manoa for work on biodiversity regeneration under improved water harvesting methods (together with IER Mali). However this project failed to get started, in part because U Hawaii had prepared a budget far beyond ICUC's means. Discussions with U Hawaii are ongoing and we are currently looking for funding sources.

5.8 Tanzania – ICUC and AVRDC are planning a project on the processing of indigenous vegetables, as an expansion of a German-funded multi-country project that AVRDC is leading. Terms of reference have been produced and been sent to BMZ to identify an intern. Ismael Barry will provide input in his new role as value chain consultant. RO said that rural seed producers could and would supply urban markets if the water supply for peri-urban agriculture was of adequate quality. She would develop a proposal on seed production and market chains.

Publications

5.9 SAB members had been given ICUC's key publications: Position Paper No 1 on Biotechnology; Strategic Framework; Annual Report; Research Report No 1 on marketing. HJ mentioned that she is planning to develop further position papers during 2007, on public private partnerships; on loss or gain of biodiversity upon utilising UC; on IPR.

5.10 The ICUC website had received ca 12,000 unique visitors by December 2006.

Information sharing activities

5.11 HJ reported on ICUC-News which has now just over 50 subscribers. She was unsure how useful this service was for readers but received considerable encouragement. The News has now been slightly re-structured to make it easier to navigate. SAB members requested to be subscribed.

[→ done 13 December]

5.12 Publications are mailed out by Sushilla Rajamanie upon request and a record is kept.

Other activities

5.13 HJ started and chairs a new working group on underutilised plants within the International Society for Horticultural Sciences structure. One of the main activities for a working group chair is to organise a scientific meeting. HJ is in discussion with AVRDC Tanzania for local organisation. The suggested date is early March 2008. Proceedings published in the in-house journal of ISHS - Acta Horticulturae - are expensive. Total cost is estimated at US\$ 250K, and so far IFAD has pledged US\$30K and GHI (GlobalHort) US\$25K. Additional funds are needed and will be requested from a variety of sources. Members suggested USAID, Syngenta Foundation (as this is the last phase of Andrew Bennett's tenure there) and IDRC. JRP asked whether the event organising company that might be used would also do the publicity. If not, HJ should consider engaging Burness Communications and SciDev.net for greater publicity pre- and post the event. GR will talk to David Dixon of SciDev.

5.14 In this context, members raised the recent information about a September 2007 conference on new crops issued by Nazmul Haq (CUC, University of Southampton). They felt that it was unfortunate that it had not been publicized earlier, but that it would not pose any problems to the planned ISHS conference in early 2008. It should also provide an opportunity for ICUC to get a higher profile. NGH had received an invitation and offer of sponsorship by Nazmul. He is planning to attend. GR said he would also like to attend and could do so easily coming from Kent.

5.15 New interns have started working with ICUC: Sivanthe Samarasinghe is following up on Ismael Barry's work, especially on the formation of a rambutan processor cooperative in Sri Lanka; Ivory Sun is developing links with Chinese organisations with the aim to develop a proposal for funding by a Chinese donor.

5.16 This section was completed by SAB members thanking HJ for her inputs and also expressly thanking Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon, Coordinator of the GFU, for the team effort in the promotion of underutilised crops.

6. Feedback from ancillary meeting 5 December

6.1 GR and HJ provided a briefing on the meeting which was entitled “Contributing to the CGIAR System Priorities. The future of underutilized plants research and development”. It had been organized by ICUC and GFU with the aim of discussing a suggested merger of the two institutions. The meeting – which coincided with about a dozen other competing lunch time events – had been attended by 30 participants from a variety of stakeholders. Most were positive about the idea of a merger and agreed on the need of a larger platform or programme. The minutes from that meeting are attached to this document as **Annex 1**.

6.2 SAB members discussed a variety of options and the offers of several key players (FAO, Bioversity, AVRDC, INBAR etc.) and agreed that there was need now for HJ and Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon to develop a good proposal, possibly for a broader consortium or alliance with more partners, rather than a ‘merger’ of just ICUC and GFU, in time for the DFID decisions on future budget allocations in March/April 2007. They suggested that probably a SWOT analysis of the two units, followed by an outcome mapping/partnership exercise would be helpful. They strongly recommended that ICUC and GFU hired an independent facilitator who could in a first round interview stakeholders by telephone or email, and then bring people together to a planning meeting, possibly in Rome. This should happen in January/February 2007. A senior person would be required, perhaps someone from IDRC who had recently done outcome mapping training for CPWF and IWMI. Outcomes could be mapped by themes, crops and/or methodologies. Examining these different dimensions should help to identify the niche for a future consortium.

→ HJ to ask CPWF and IWMI for suggestions. [CPWF suggestion is Boru Doughswaite (CIAT)]

7. Future activities

7.1 HJ presented the plans for the next year together with the suggested budget.

7.2 New activities apart from continuing activities as presented in section 5:

- Ismael Barry will return to Sri Lanka mid-January as value-chain consultant. In this capacity he will provide input to both the proposed Ghana and Tanzania activities.
- Develop three further Position Papers: Public-private partnerships, Biodiversity, Intellectual Property Rights. SAB members agreed with these topics and felt they would be useful products.
- Engage in a survey of national germplasm holdings for a selected number of UC. This would be an activity following on from the recent survey of CGIAR genebank holdings. Initial discussions with GFU have been held, but this idea needs to also be discussed with SGRP and others. SAB Members suggested to check the Millennium Seed Bank and Bioversity’s records prior to engaging in such a project; this could also be the initial activity of the consultant from which the scope of the project can be determined. [Note:

HJ was informed on 15 January 2007 that this activity is included in the activity plan for SGRP GPG Phase 2 for 2008 with accompanying financial support for GFU and ICUC]

7.3 HJ presented a list of concept notes and project proposals ICUC has been involved in developing. The list is attached as **Annex 2** to this document. The SAB remarked that all activities were very well in line with ICUC's mandate and broad goals of a) processing and marketing and b) studying the value of UC as risk buffer in sustainable land use. They expressed their confidence and hope that some of the proposed activities would be funded.

7.4 HJ then presented the suggested budget for 2007 which is attached as **Annex 3**. ICUC has made considerable savings in 2006, partly because of the co-financing of key activities by the GFU, and also because FRP has been providing funds for publication dissemination. In total, ca USD385,000 will be available for 2007, including still outstanding payments by DFID. This is sufficient for 12 months operations, thus the SAB agreed that HJ should request a 6-months no-cost extension from DFID [*→done 20 December, approved 2 January 2007*].

7.5 SAB members agreed that funds currently in the contingency line item (ca USD15,500) could be used for the proposal development for the new alliance, i.e. provide co-funding for a consultant/meeting and cover costs for necessary otherwise unplanned travel.

7.6 Members also suggested that HJ follow up with B&M Gates Foundation as elaborated under section 4. Nutrition and health are key factors and strong points for UC. HJ mentioned that Njabulo Nduli, FARA Chair and South African Ministry for Agriculture had approached her because she has been tasked to develop a campaign on nutrition and health in RSA. This is a good opportunity and should be followed up.

→ HJ to maintain contact with Njabulo

→ HJ to explore possibilities with Rockefeller and B&M Gates Foundation for a health and nutrition project.

8. Any other business

8.1 JRP said that the points he had earlier highlighted would be taken care of during the discussion on the mandate of the new alliance or consortium.

8.2 GR will know more details about DFID's spending plans in late January and will keep ICUC informed.

9. Date and venue of next meeting

9.1 Earlier on the suggestion had been made to hold the next meeting either in Sri Lanka, to allow SAB members to meet ICUC staff, or in India, to meet one of its key partners, BAIF. However Members agreed that it was best to keep the date and venue open for the time being, to be flexible with developments on the alliance. The meeting should take place

towards June and a useful 'hook' in form of another meeting should be identified to relieve the budget pressure from ICUC.

The second ICUC SAB meeting adjourned at 5.30pm