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Assessment of the Impacts of Natural Resource Management Research in the CGIAR

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Abstract

During the past decade, research and development activities in natural resources management (NRM) has been intensified. Among the CGIAR Centres investments in NRM research have increased substantially both within the older commodity-oriented Centers and the newer resource management Centers. However, until recently there is lack of convincing evidence on the impact of NRM research that could justify the roughly 20 % of the CGIAR budget allocation for NRM.

The paper presents a synthesis of the results and summarises the lessons learned of an initiative undertaken by the CGIAR's Science Council's Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) to assess the impacts of past investments in natural resources management research (NRMR) in the CGIAR System. In total there were seven impact assessment case studies from the following CGIAR Centres: CIAT, CIFOR, CIMMYT, ICARDA, ICRAF, IWMI and WorldFish Center. The studies covered a range of geographical regions, with two projects in Sub Saharan Africa, one in North Africa, two in Asia and one projects with global coverage. The projects also include different types of NRM innovations including both micro and macro projects.

The paper analyses the case study results by assessing the rates of return to this type of research and comparing NRM to the more popular germplasm enhancement research. It can be shown that investment in NRM research is economical but seldom reaches the high rates of return found for breeding. An assessment of the kind of impacts usually not included in the rate of return of NRM research investments is provided. The paper also lays out the direction of expansion of existing methods to meet the needs of assessing the impacts of NRM research projects and identifies the new direction of methodologies to accommodate unique features of NRM research. Measures and indicators of impact and some basic issues arising from the nature of NRM research are discussed. Finally, some practical recommendations regarding the further conduct of NRM impact assessment are submitted.

Keywords: CGIAR, Impact Assessment, natural Resource Management, Rates of Return