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**IFPRI's** *first*  
*10*  
*years*

**Curtis Farrar**

INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

**IFPRI's** *first 10 years*

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## Foreword

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**A**t the time of IFPRI's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I asked Curt Farrar to undertake a history of the Institute. This has turned out to be a considerable task. Although the project is not yet complete, I thought it would be useful to make some of the content available as work on the whole continues. Therefore, a number of chapters will be appearing in a series of discussion papers on impact assessment that is being published by the Director General's Office.

The first chapter of the history, covering the period from the conception of IFPRI in the early 1970s to its full integration into the CGIAR, does not fit the impact assessment model. It does, however, contain insights of value to current IFPRI board members, staff, supporters, and collaborators. It therefore seemed appropriate to publish it as a separate booklet and to make it broadly available, especially to those who will be helping us celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Even those who were affiliated with IFPRI through much of this period will find here information we did not know or have forgotten that helps explain IFPRI as it is today.

February 2000

Per Pinstrup-Andersen  
Director General

## **The Genesis of a New Institute**

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**T**he International Food Policy Research Institute was incorporated in the District of Columbia on March 5, 1975, and opened for business on August 15 of the same year. Although the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) agreed in late 1979 to support IFPRI financially, at which point the Institute was already making a name for itself in the broader development community, it was not until the end of 1984 that IFPRI would find itself securely settled in the framework of that unique donor organization.

The story begins well before 1975. While the detailed proposal for what became IFPRI was not made until 1974, IFPRI's roots, and arguments about its purposes and function, reach back a full decade earlier. The problem of dealing with global food policy issues was a matter of concern, and even of controversy, both before and during the discussions that led to the creation of the CGIAR in 1971 and in its early, formative years. Aside from a general unease among some foreign aid managers at mixing social science with what they perceived as the more robust and less controversial activities of physical science, the principal issues were whether there was need for an additional source of analysis of global food trends given that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) were already engaged in this work; the appropriateness of having an institute possibly influenced by the market interests of the United States, Canada, and Australia studying the food trade policies of Europe, and the appropriate location of such an institute, with Rome, Washington, and a developing country as the principal contenders. These controversies were not resolved at the founding of IFPRI. Nor did they disappear when the CGIAR added IFPRI to the

research centers it sponsored in 1980. Most of the original issues were put to rest in 1984, with the first external review of IFPRI, the point at which this paper concludes, when the CGIAR finally recognized IFPRI as belonging firmly to the system. Some of the same questions still found echoes at meetings of the CGIAR and its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) as late as the mid-1990s.

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### *Three Arguments for International Food Policy Research*

**I**n the late 1960s and early 1970s concern about the danger of world food shortages and discussions about the need for agricultural research led to the founding of the CGIAR as a donor organization to provide reliable funding for international agricultural research centers devoted to the interests of developing countries. That period saw persistent food crises in South Asia, drought-induced famines in Africa, and unexpected shortages in overall world supply. Although biological research to improve productivity was the overwhelming priority in these discussions, many participants also saw a critical role for social science. Proponents of policy-oriented social science research put forth three principal arguments to justify a significant investment of resources in international level research.

First was the technological argument, based on the need to create the conditions under which farmers would use the new agricultural technologies to increase food production in the developing world, thus reducing the growing need for imported food that the poorer countries could not afford. The success in Asia in the late 1960s of the modern varieties of wheat and rice, which had blossomed from the research of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and its predecessor programs, proved that this approach could work. There was, however, a risk that governments would fail to encourage the application of more productive agricultural technologies because of other priorities such as import substitution, industry-led development, or constraining policies and procedures under which food production and

distribution took place. It was necessary, therefore, to find ways to promote effective policies that would nurture creation and use of more productive food technology in the developing world. Centers supported by the CGIAR to do research on commodities or ecological zones would be expected to study the social and economic obstacles to farmers' use of improved technologies. IRRI and CIMMYT were already doing so. But the range of such studies would be limited to specific commodities and production systems. Broader questions, such as price, trade, credit, tax, and public investment policies, and mechanisms for the distribution of agricultural inputs and output, needed to be addressed to ensure that new technologies could be effective.

Second, the rural development argument was founded on the belief that development specialists needed to better understand the whole process of rural and agricultural development. This understanding could best be achieved by a wide range of social and economic research, particularly at the village level and extending beyond policy issues as such and also beyond the food sector. In the absence of such understanding, efforts to improve the food situation by, say, improving technology or freeing markets would be likely to fail because of unforeseen interactions with other aspects of the economy. This approach had links to the ideas of community development, or integrated rural development, which saw a resurgence in the early 1970s. The flow of thinking along this line is described in Krueger, Michalopoulos, and Ruttan (1989, 18, 172–176).

Third, the international argument was based on a perceived need for better understanding of the evolution of the world food situation and its implications for developing countries. With so much uncertainty and controversy over the world's supply of food, and over who or what was to blame for food problems, it was critical to have a continuous and objective assessment of what supply and demand were likely to be, when trouble might strike, and which countries were most likely to be affected. The food shocks of 1972 and 1974 surprised experts and responsible officials alike. The perception that the world was actually close to running out of food generated a strongly felt need for information about both the short-range and long-range status of food



stocks and trade flows and for better systems to improve the chances of the world's managing its food supply effectively under conditions of scarcity. Existing mechanisms had been found wanting and needed to be strengthened, supplemented, or replaced. The oil crisis of 1973 generated concern that chemical fertilizers, a critical element of the Green Revolution, would become scarce, high priced, and difficult for developing countries to obtain. Not only stocks of food, but also supplies and distribution of agricultural inputs, it seemed, urgently needed monitoring and international management.

The technology theme, as it bears on the genesis of IFPRI, had its roots in agricultural development in India in the 1960s, and particularly the experiences of Sir John Crawford, an Australian economist, adviser to the World Bank, and chancellor of the Australian National University, and David Hopper, a member of the Ford Foundation staff in New Delhi. Both of these men would later play multiple important roles in establishing IFPRI. Sir John was founding director of the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Economics in 1945 and a life-long champion of high-quality policy research. Sir John led, and Hopper participated in, a study of the Indian agricultural sector as part of a World Bank appraisal of Indian development in the mid-1960s directed by Bernard Bell. Food production in India was relatively stagnant in the face of increasing population pressure. Recurrent weather-related production crises in that country had played a strong part in engendering pessimism about the future of food supplies not only for South Asia, but for the rest of the developing world as well. Sir John saw policies that would enable India to take advantage of the new cereal technologies then coming on line as the only sensible strategy for averting the looming crisis.

The new high-yielding rice and wheat varieties were input intensive, and steps to encourage their use raised conflicts with the two principal approaches to food policy current in India. One of these was labor-intensive, low-input agriculture, associated with integrated community development and land reform, which was strongly represented in Indian political thought and had been pushed by agencies providing technical assistance to South Asia over the previous decade, including the Ford Foundation.

The other, predominant among the finance and planning agencies of the Indian government, opposed investment in agriculture in favor of development of import-substituting industrial capacity. Food aid, which had recently become a large factor in the Indian economy, not only provided commodities to mitigate the food scarcity caused by the unfavorable long-term trends and vagaries in the weather, but also generated budget resources that could be used in pursuit of industrialization. It was therefore convenient to allow foreign donors of food to handle shortfalls in total supply rather than use scarce resources to raise production to needed levels (Hopper 1987, 160–161). In the second half of the 1960s, however, the Indian government became antagonistic to the use of food aid by the United States as a means of forcing policy changes. India thus had an incentive to raise production and reduce U.S. influence on Indian economic policy.

The Indian government, favored at the time by several outstanding leaders who well understood what was at stake, undertook the policy changes needed to facilitate the initial steps of the Green Revolution. Hopper has described the supporting roles of Crawford, other foreign advisers, and foreign aid agencies (Hopper 1987, 158–172). The experience confirmed Sir John's belief, expressed in a lecture delivered in Australia in 1974, that "research alone will achieve little unless it is part of a coordinated national policy dealing with all other aspects of the food problem, such as the supply of fertilizers and other inputs, irrigation, credit, price incentives, land reforms and off-farm programs" (as summarized in Evans and Miller 1987, 175).

Recognition of the essential role of policy in raising food production through technology improvement did not, however, lead easily to a charter for an international center performing research on food policy. The policy issues associated with diffusion of improved technology were considered country or location specific, because of physical as well as social and economic factors. Moreover, national government decisions on those issues would be highly political, and thus difficult for an outside agency to address, even if that agency could legitimately claim objectivity. To be sure, there would be value in research on the overall policy framework and in making international

comparisons, topics that could be studied at the international level. Some of the initiatives proposed in the framework of the technology theme saw value in the creation of an international research center, but generally those approaching the topic from this viewpoint laid greater stress on strengthening the policy orientation of social scientists working in the international centers doing biological and ecological research, enhancing the capacity of researchers in developing countries, and establishing regional networks to link both groups together.

Advocates of the rural development concept saw it as an appropriate focus for an international institution. At the same time, this approach shared many of the problems of the technology argument in dealing with controversial and location-specific issues. Unlike the other two arguments, this one was identified strongly with the FAO. An effort made within FAO to develop a proposal for an internal or affiliated institution to embody this broad concept ultimately failed. Sufficient resources were not forthcoming, suggesting a lack of donor confidence in the capacity of the FAO to manage such an enterprise. The World Bank also had an extensive rural development program beginning early in the 1970s.

The international argument, which surfaced in the early 1970s, did justify the possibility of a new international research institution. Neither policymakers and policy analysts in individual developing countries nor social scientists in research centers working on specific commodities were well placed to deal with broad issues among countries, nor did they have easy access to data about such matters as international food stocks and trading patterns. Developing countries were seriously affected by what was happening to world food supplies and lacked the information and analysis to deal constructively with these issues. There was thus an obvious role for some international entity, free from political control, to appraise the food-related activities of international organizations and national governments from a developing-country perspective and provide those countries with information on which to base sensible policy decisions.

The international argument was also controversial, however. It seemed to encroach on the responsibilities of existing international

bodies, particularly the FAO. There was no groundswell of support from developing countries for the idea of a new international research institute concerned with food policy issues. Probably most important, however, it was potentially embarrassing to developed-country governments who regarded their food policies as their own business and matters of high national priority. This was particularly true for European governments involved in the Common Agricultural Policy, a set of protective measures intended to raise incomes in their agricultural sectors. With its evident Australian, Canadian, and U.S.-based support, the proposed international research institute may well have appeared to the Europeans to be a stalking-horse for their agricultural competitors and critics.

These themes received some attention in the series of meetings in 1969 and 1970 that led to the creation of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research in 1971. Discussions of socioeconomic and policy research continued with little result in the first years of the CGIAR. At first, the technology and rural development approaches were dominant. The international concept emerged with the threat of global food scarcity in the 1970s. The TAC set up to advise the CGIAR, with Sir John as chairman and David Hopper as a member, placed the topic on its agenda several times. In conjunction with the CGIAR's annual meeting in 1973, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored a Socio-Economic Research Seminar, at which Sir John summed up the discussion. There was considerable agreement at the seminar that food policy issues needed attention beyond what could be done by existing centers, but the idea of a separate institute for this purpose failed to gather general support. There was a conspicuous lack of agreement on what to do, and considerable skepticism was expressed.

There was strong interest in a food policy initiative, however, among a few key players: the two American foundations, Ford and Rockefeller, and the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC). (Hopper was president of the IDRC, and Crawford was a member of the IDRC board.) Other donors, including the World Bank and USAID, were sympathetic. The FAO was interested in playing a central role.

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*From an Idea to an Institute*

When TAC met in February 1974, things began to move. TAC had before it the report of the USAID seminar, which conveyed strong interest in social science research, even though it was short on concrete proposals. There was also follow-up work commissioned by the Ford Foundation from Oris V. Wells, a former deputy director general of the FAO, containing specific institutional proposals, but only for the function of collecting and analyzing more accurate short-term international food intelligence (Wells 1974). FAO contributed a paper entitled *The Possibilities of International Assistance to Developing Countries in Research on Social and Economic Problems of Agricultural and Rural Development*. TAC learned that FAO Director General Boerma—himself an economist—had proposed establishing a “more or less autonomous” research entity working closely with FAO to study the workings of the development process in relation to agriculture. An FAO working group had been set up to investigate the possibility and make proposals.

TAC responded by setting up a small internal committee to study the issue. This step was initiated by the TAC chairman, Sir John Crawford, who chaired the subcommittee himself. The members were David Hopper, Vernon Ruttan, who had recently become president of the Agricultural Development Council, and Peter Oram, executive secretary of TAC.

At the next TAC meeting in June 1974, David Hopper, speaking for the subcommittee, proposed the creation of a “World Food Policy Institute” with independent funding and governance. The subcommittee suggested that the institute’s headquarters be in Rome to permit close association with the FAO. Half of the subcommittee document was devoted to analysis of devices for achieving such an association without compromising independence. The FAO is quoted as supporting the proposal, provided that the new institute would not duplicate the planned FAO early warning system on world food supplies and that an annual report on the world food situation, perceived as duplicating a regular FAO report, would be dropped. The likelihood of financial support from the IDRC and the Ford Foundation was mentioned. Rockefeller joined the

list of prospective supporters later. TAC approved the proposal, though not unanimously, with the changes requested by FAO.

The responsibilities of the institute, as proposed by TAC for the approval of the CGIAR, would be research on world food policy and “dissemination of the results of this research to as wide a public as possible, but primarily to national and international agencies concerned with higher agricultural policy decisions” (TAC Subcommittee on World Food Policy 1974, 3). “Technical assistance should not form any part of its duties . . . and training should be confined to seminars, workshops and the ‘in-service’ work of a small number of associate research scholars from developing countries” (p. 4).

Three main research tasks were suggested:

1. To keep the current global food and agricultural situation under independent surveillance. . . .
2. To examine selected major food and agricultural policy and trade problems, particularly those involving sensitive relationships between and among countries. . . .
3. To identify and research emerging and future problems of global concern likely to have an important bearing on food production and utilization (including competition between supplies for food and feed) in the longer term.

A major objective of these studies would be to indicate the actions needed in the next few years to gear up for better resource allocation and management and to improve productivity and food availability in the long run (p. 4).

The approach TAC took to the institute is essentially a development of the international argument. The idea of broad research on the development of agriculture and the rural sector—the rural development concept—was explicitly ruled out as too large to be addressed by a single, small institution and better left to other agencies. The technology concept, though included in general terms, was not spelled out in the subcommittee report. The only specific mention of technology was related to assessing its impact. Relationships with other CGIAR centers were not discussed.

The report suggested that the proposed institute could avoid duplicating the work of other agencies, such as FAO and the World Bank, “by focusing its effort particularly on the analysis of controversial or politically sensitive issues, where the freedom of action or expression of other agencies dependent on government support might be inhibited” (p. 3). It is not hard to guess that this phrase, which was emphasized in both oral and written presentations, set off alarms in the halls of some CGIAR donor countries.

TAC’s recommendation was put to the CGIAR and considered at both formal and informal meetings over the ensuing months. Opposition came principally from the European donors, in sufficient numbers to make clear that no favorable consensus was possible. Opponents expressed doubt that such a small institute (only 12 professional staff members were planned) could make a significant contribution in a complex field, given that other organizations were already active. They suggested that a decision should await the results of the World Food Conference, scheduled for the end of 1974. “Not voiced at the meeting, but suspected to be in the minds of the relevant donors, was reluctance to expose the agricultural policies of industrial countries—as well as those of the European Economic Community—to critical review and comment by a CGIAR body,” according to Warren Baum, chairman of the CGIAR (Baum 1986, 127). Representatives of some donor agencies who had fought successfully to persuade their doubtful colleagues to support biological research may have been leery of trying to add support for soft social science research. It would be several more years before the emphasis on good development policies became fashionable in the development assistance community.

At the conclusion of the second formal CGIAR discussion in October 1974, participants concluded that

the Group should take no further action at this time; that it would understand that the “private” sponsors might wish to consider what action to take with respect to the proposal in the light of the World Food Conference; that the Group would like to be kept informed on the thinking of the “private” sponsors; in the event that they should decide to establish a center that the Group would wish to establish an effective communications link with it; and that recognizing it to be a pioneering activity,

the Group would be prepared to reconsider the question of sponsorship at some future date (CGIAR Secretariat 1974, 5).

The World Food Conference, held only a few weeks later, identified inadequate food production in developing countries and flaws in the international commodity markets as the culprits of the food crisis. It proposed an international system of managing food trade and oriented itself with the technological optimists, who thought that food needs could be overcome with improved technology and investment. Even though concerns about population growth, environmental degradation, and limits to growth were prominent at the time, the conference avoided hard trade-off issues, particularly between the environment and future food production. The conference made organizational and process recommendations, leading to the creation of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Food Council, and the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programs, among other organizations. It welcomed the FAO's decision to monitor the food situation more closely and added specific recommendations, such as eradication of the tsetse fly. Little was said in formal conference documents about national policy issues, although a great deal was said in the corridors (Weiss and Jordan 1976, 139–142; World Food Council 1984; Reutlinger and Castillo 1994).

The lack of action at the World Food Conference and the negative response of the CGIAR threw the initiative back to the three organizations already committed to the idea, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the International Development Research Centre. Having already agreed to fund a CGIAR policy research endeavor for its first five years, the three institutions decided to go ahead independently. FAO had made no progress with its plan to establish a rural development policy research structure. Before the end of 1974, the three institutions decided to create IFPRI with a pledge of support for five years. Although it was not formally recorded, all of those involved assumed that IFPRI would ultimately be accepted by the CGIAR. IDRC, the principal donor, provided three shares against one share each from the other two foundations. Once the institute started work, it was accorded associate status with the CGIAR, a form of relationship intended to promote communications between IFPRI and the system (Baum 1986, 117–118).



## The Young IFPRI

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The Ford and Rockefeller Foundations and the IDRC were able to create a center for food policy research that looked quite different from the one that might have emerged from normal CGIAR processes. Had the CGIAR decided to create IFPRI, it would have selected an implementing agent to perform the task, probably one of the foundations, and established a task force of interested donors to provide support and guidance. The CGIAR itself would have reviewed progress at each of its meetings and made course corrections. The most obvious fruit of independent action was that IFPRI was created in a few weeks in Washington, D.C.—where the foundations really wanted to have it all along—as a District of Columbia tax-exempt corporation, rather than in Rome as either a freestanding international organization or an entity under the FAO umbrella. Negotiations over appropriate status with the FAO and the Italian Government might have taken years. Moreover, the initial mandate was simpler and more flexible than what would have resulted from negotiations among a group of donors with differing views of what should be done. The program of work soon became quite different from that envisioned in the TAC proposal. Had CGIAR sponsorship been achieved, Sir John Crawford, as TAC chairman, would have had to maintain an arm’s-length relationship, but instead he became chairman of the initial board of trustees and played a strong role in shaping the fledgling institution.

The early IFPRI Board was a remarkable group (see box). The sponsoring organizations were represented by people who had given years of thought to the role of a food policy research institute. Half of the trustees were from developing countries, a balance still maintained at IFPRI. These trustees combined policy practice in international organizations or

governments with excellent academic qualifications. There were strong members from Europe and one eminent and policy-oriented biological scientist from another center. As the first director, the Board selected Dale E. Hathaway, a U.S. citizen who had been a professor at Michigan State University and a member of the Ford Foundation staff. A specialist in agricultural trade economics, Hathaway was no newcomer to the issues he was about to face. IFPRI files contain a short paper he contributed to internal Ford Foundation consideration of a food policy research initiative as early as 1970 (Hathaway 1970). He was detailed by the Ford Foundation to the secretariat of the World Food Conference and thereafter served as project officer for the food policy initiative on behalf of all three founding institutions.

At its second meeting on May 5, 1975, the first meeting devoted to program substance, the IFPRI Board of Trustees approved a prospectus prepared by Hathaway (Hathaway 1975). This document provides a convenient vehicle for considering IFPRI as it appeared to its founders and first managers.

In the prospectus, Hathaway described three methods for dealing with the grim food problems identified at the World Food Conference:

1. An increased rate of growth in food production in developing countries
2. Increased commercial imports of food by food-deficit developing countries
3. Greater concessionary food aid to some developing countries

All three approaches were likely to be followed, and each would involve significant policy decisions by governments and international organizations. National and international policies would have major impacts on the success or failure of each of the three.

Developing countries were short on the relevant technical skills. FAO and USDA were substantially improving the quality and frequency of their reports on the world food situation but were constrained because of their natures and the review requirements imposed by governments. Both might also have conflicts between their

## **IFPRI Board of Trustees 1975-76**

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**Source:** Based on IFPRI (1978, inside cover). Nationality is shown in parentheses when it is different from country of residence.

reporting responsibilities and their action responsibilities. Therefore, an independent institute that conducted research and policy analysis on key issues related to food production, trade, and related matters could add significantly to the information available to national decisionmakers and to international organizations.

The objectives of the Institute were:

1. using all available sources of information, to provide an objective analysis of the current and prospective world food situation and the implications of this analysis for policymakers giving special emphasis to the needs of developing countries;
2. to identify major opportunities for expanding world food production, giving emphasis to development actions and policies best suited to reducing constraints on production, and to establishing a framework for the sustained use of the agricultural production capacities which exist in low income nations;
3. to determine and publicize those actions which could be undertaken, and those policies which could be adopted by governments, regional and international agencies, to effect a continued increase in the quantity of and quality of food supplies available to all people—through enhanced food production, wider trade opportunities, and improved efficiency and equity in food distribution (Hathaway 1975, 5–6).

These objectives served as a sort of mandate for IFPRI until 1979. To achieve them, according to the prospectus, the Institute would perform two closely related functions: (1) research, to be performed by multidisciplinary teams, where possible in collaboration with other national and international organizations including CGIAR centers; and (2) current analysis and information, drawing on the work of the research staff and other organizations to present information on selected key issues related to current and prospective conditions and their policy implications.

The prospectus identified a number of potential areas of concentration from which selections would be made for the research, analysis, and information programs. Several, but not all, of these areas did

become major areas of IFPRI research. Several areas that later became important for IFPRI were not mentioned. The suggested areas of concentration fell into three main groups.

1. The interaction between new technology and policies
  - The effects of alternative economic policies on the adoption of new technologies and the impact of new technologies on income distribution and employment. This first topic has been an important focus of IFPRI research.
  - Investments required to support new technologies and how to finance those investments. This topic was the subject of an early IFPRI research report considering global needs but has been little addressed since then.
  - Identification of appropriate technologies to be addressed by research institutions in the light of current or prospective factor prices. This suggestion has not been prominent in IFPRI research.
  - The effect of new technologies on the comparative advantage of different areas, and the likely resulting trade and adjustment patterns. At the international level, this issue was subsumed in work on analysis of food trends, in which the impact of new technologies was taken as one factor affecting comparative advantage. Within countries, it can be seen as an element of research on production, equity, and sustainability.
2. Major options and opportunities for expanding agricultural production in developing countries
  - Costs of alternative methods of expanding production, such as the choice between investments in rainfed and irrigated systems, and alternative cropping systems, including the assessment of the potential of major regions. This is as close as the list comes to proposing research on the management of natural resources. The topic as stated has been addressed through comparative analysis of various crops

and cropping systems, with a particular focus in recent years on the relative returns to investment in high- versus low-potential areas.

- Competition and complementarity between livestock production and food production. This topic has played an important role in IFPRI research, particularly in relation to the competition between feed and food uses of cereal production.
- Investment, research, and pricing policies needed to achieve potential increases in production. This is a question repeatedly addressed by IFPRI, most recently in the 2020 Vision initiative.
- The effect of inflation on different strategies for expanding food policy. This issue seemed important in the face of sharply rising oil prices in the mid-1970s but has not subsequently attracted the Institute's attention.

### 3. World food production, trade, and consumption

- Current and prospective food production and distribution, including key inputs, and the policy implications of these analyses. This was the first area of major research activity for IFPRI and has remained part of the research program. A second issue concerning the adequacy of world food stocks was effectively merged with the first.
- The effects of food aid on consumption and production, and policies to mitigate adverse effects. This topic has been a long-term part of the IFPRI research program, although the emphasis was more on positive aspects of food aid than on mitigation of potential negative effects.
- The effects of agricultural and related policies of developed countries on the world food situation and especially on developing countries. This has been an active area for IFPRI research and a subject of controversy concerning IFPRI's appropriate role.

- Trade barriers and practices that adversely affect production and consumption in developing countries. This point partly overlaps with the previous one but also foreshadows the work of the Trade Program on the bias against agriculture, a major IFPRI activity.
- Potential for expanding developing-country exports. IFPRI has done a modest amount of research on this topic.
- Improvement of statistics related to the world food situation. This has received little attention from IFPRI over the years.

In discussing the types of skills that the Institute would need to address these issues, the prospectus said that the first two groups would require interaction with scientists knowledgeable about agricultural production. It raised the possibility that production expertise might be needed on the staff.

Although much policy research was recognized as being location specific, the prospectus did not propose overseas postings of Institute staff. Instead, IFPRI would hire researchers from developing countries to participate in IFPRI research for up to three years and then return to their home institutions. This, together with collaboration with national institutions, would provide needed local interaction and help engage decisionmakers in the outcome of research. Training would also be conducted by participation of developing-country scholars in multidisciplinary policy research.

The Institute was expected to have a relatively small staff. There was provision for 5 or 6 long-term senior staff (with contracts of three years or more), 12 short-term professionals of varying seniority, a support staff of 10, and a budget of \$5 million over five years.

Of the three possible themes for a food policy research institute described earlier (technology, rural development, and international), the first and the third are fully reflected in the three objectives of the prospectus. The rural development theme, represented most strongly in later IFPRI research by work on linkages between agricultural and



economic development and by research on food consumption and nutrition, was not in the prospectus at all. The international theme is clearly present, as it was in the earlier report of the TAC subcommittee. The technology theme, on the other hand, is much more evident in the planned research program than it was in the subcommittee's report. For instance, the grant document received from IDRC, the principal donor, said in part that IFPRI would work "to identify major opportunities for expanding world food production with particular emphasis on the development actions and policies best suited to remove present constraints to production and to establish the framework for the sustained use of the potential agricultural capacities existing in low-income nations" (quoted in TAC 1985, 5). With strong encouragement from IDRC, IFPRI was thus already moving significantly away from the approach of the 1974 TAC proposal.

## **Entry into the CGIAR System**

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In September 1978, three years after IFPRI opened its doors, the sponsoring foundations requested that the CGIAR consider supporting the Institute. The sponsors argued that IFPRI's performance to date demonstrated the value of continuing, but IFPRI's resource demands had grown beyond the capacity of the three to meet them. It seems unlikely that the three had ever abandoned the goal of securing CGIAR support for their creation. It is a standard foundation practice to start enterprises in the expectation that they will become self-supporting or get help elsewhere. The reaction of the CGIAR was still mixed, but the tone of the preliminary discussion was generally favorable. TAC was asked for its recommendation and sent a team headed by Professor Carl Thomsen of Denmark, a TAC member, to make a review of IFPRI.

TAC itself had changed considerably since the initial proposal for a food policy research institute in 1974, and all of the principal TAC actors on the IFPRI issue were new. Ralph Cummings, previously the Ford Foundation representative in India and first director general of ICRISAT, had replaced Sir John Crawford as TAC chairman. Crawford was still chairman of the IFPRI Board. He was replaced in this role by Samar S. Sen of India in mid-1979. Hopper and Ruttan were no longer TAC members. Peter Oram had moved from FAO, where he had been executive secretary of TAC, to IFPRI in 1976 and was now deputy director.

The Thomsen mission was more broadly representative of CGIAR membership than the TAC subcommittee that made the 1974 proposal. That group had members from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom,

and the United States. Headed by a Dane, the TAC mission of 1979 included members from Chile, India, and the United States. Philippe Mahler, executive secretary of TAC, a French national, played an important role as secretary to the mission and principal drafter of the report.

When it visited Washington in January 1979, the TAC mission found an active institute, headed by John Mellor, who had been in place for a little more than a year. Hathaway, having gotten IFPRI well started on the track laid out in the prospectus of 1975, left early in 1977 to become assistant secretary for international relations and commodity programs in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mellor, a Cornell University professor who specialized in the role of agriculture in economic growth, particularly with reference to South Asia, had recently been serving as chief economist at USAID. He took over as IFPRI's director in September 1977. Mellor was to lead IFPRI for 13 years and is widely credited with establishing the Institute's strong research program and excellent reputation.

In 1979 IFPRI had four active programs: Trends Analysis, Production and Investments, Food Consumption and Distribution, and Trade and Food Security. IFPRI had published a large volume of research in a relatively short period, assembled a competent and widely representative staff, and, perhaps most important, had not gotten into any trouble on sensitive issues.

By the time Thomsen and his team arrived, IFPRI had undertaken, and in some cases completed, substantial work on

- trends in food production and consumption and their implications;
- measures to ensure food security at the international level;
- estimates of investments needed to close the gap between food production and consumption in developing countries;
- criteria for allocation of resources to research, generally and in Nigeria, and an appraisal for the CGIAR of training needs of national systems of research and extension;

- exploration of the interactions between agricultural growth and the rest of the economy, with a particular focus on income and employment effects among the poor; and
- studies of food price and subsidy issues as they affected the poor in Bangladesh, Brazil, and India.

The Thomsen report and TAC's recommendations based on it contained some important conditions but were favorable to IFPRI. In October 1979, more than a year after the request from Ford, Rockefeller, and IDRC, the CGIAR formally agreed to accept responsibility for IFPRI beginning in 1980. The process was managed in such a way that acceptance in principle came relatively early, and final decisions on some contentious issues were made later, in stages. Some issues ended up being referred for continued consideration in TAC's annual review of program and budget submissions. Three issues, IFPRI's location, the role of trends and trade research, and the provision of services to international organizations deserve special attention:

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#### *IFPRI's Location*

**T**he question of IFPRI's location was the most contentious issue and the one that preoccupied internal discussion at the Institute. In contrast to the first TAC report, which suggested Rome, the Thomsen mission recommended that the board give serious consideration to a move from Washington to a developing country, to enable the staff to have a direct and continuous appreciation of the problems they were studying and to avoid undue influence by donors located in Washington. TAC strengthened the point in its own recommendation to the CGIAR by saying that the importance of such a transfer "justified a recommendation that the Consultative Group when granting its financial support to IFPRI should have a sufficient assurance from the Board that it would be actually effected and this as soon as possible" (quoted in TAC 1985, Annex V, 3). The CGIAR asked IFPRI to study this question but did not make moving a condition of support. In due course, after CGIAR financial support had begun, the Institute

produced a report that argued convincingly that no single location provided an adequate context for global food issues, that Washington was more convenient and efficient than other locations, and that it was not sensible to go to the trouble and expense of moving. The CGIAR as a whole went along, although there was enough dissent, both expressed and unexpressed, to keep the issue open for future reconsideration.

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### *IFPRI's Priorities*

**I**n recommending IFPRI to the CGIAR in 1979, TAC took a very different line about research priorities from the one it had followed in 1974. In the earlier proposal, the international theme dominated, but in 1979 TAC pushed the technological model and minimized the international one. TAC minced no words about where the priority should lie:

TAC recognized that the mandate of IFPRI in its present formulation was very broad and could be read and interpreted in many different ways. The way this mandate was translated in actual programs was of crucial importance in determining the degree of concurrence of objectives between the CGIAR and IFPRI. TAC recommended that, from the point of view of CGIAR support, the mandate of the Institute should give its principal emphasis to the problems of developing countries and that the central tasks in its program should be concerned with the linkages and interrelationships between the micro-level problems of the adoption of new technologies and the wider economic and socio-economic aspects of agricultural development. Thus the work on trends analysis and international food trade should be considered only as supporting activities to the main research program. The Committee also considered that more emphasis should be given to the collaboration with national institutes in developing countries and to the possibilities of useful interaction with the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) which was being created by the CGIAR at the time the Thomsen report was being written, and opened its doors in November 1979. The Committee therefore recommended that IFPRI re-examine its mandate in the light of the above considerations (quoted in TAC 1985, Annex V, 1-2).

Available documents do not fully explain the sharp change in the TAC view of IFPRI between 1974 and 1979, particularly with regard to trade. The argument for considering trends research in a supporting rather than a primary research role was quite explicit in the Thomsen report. Anxieties about the world food situation were still abundant, but 1978 was a year of strong improvement in production and stocks (FAO 1979, vi). International food data reporting and analysis had been significantly improved following the 1974 World Food Conference, reducing the level of international concern on that front. The mission saw this research as providing the context within which researchers at IFPRI could address national and international food policy. It would also be of value to international organizations with more direct responsibility in this field and provide a basis for identifying problems requiring attention. The recommendation was not for termination of trends research, simply for regarding it as outside of IFPRI's front line effort. The need to maintain a sensible distinction between the work done by FAO and that of IFPRI was very strongly put.

The mission report made no such proposal regarding trade, however, but came close to repeating the rationale for that research given by TAC in 1974 for an IFPRI role in this field:

Most problems of trade and food security are beyond the control of simple [sic, an obvious misprint for "single"] developing countries, being international in nature. Furthermore, these countries have little research capacity to analyze the problem and advance sound policy options for themselves. IFPRI has thus a clear-cut valuable role to play in this situation: its independent research, geared to provide alternative policy choices, directed particularly at the lower income countries and peoples, fills in a serious gap in research capability in the international scene (TAC 1979, 18).

The only criticisms in the report concerning trade research noted some lack of focus, which was identified with the need to avoid duplicating research by others. The mission suggested confining IFPRI's trade research to the area where international trade problems affect domestic production and consumption policies. The Institute should avoid spending too much time responding to requests from other agencies but should rather collaborate more closely with other CGIAR centers on these issues.

The suggestion to treat trade as supporting rather than central research seems to have come from TAC itself. It found some echoes among donors in the CGIAR. According to a transcript of CGIAR discussions on May 4, 1979, Suzanne Vervalcke, representing Belgium, said:

The issue of trade in this sector does, of course, have international, or trans-national, implications. In this respect we do have a number of reservations, or a number of questions. In particular, what would be the exact role of IFPRI in this problem? TAC itself, I believe, pointed out that there was a chance of perhaps a greater degree of overlapping with the international organizations responsible for trade matters.

Similar sentiments were expressed in the 1979 discussion by several of the donors that had opposed support to IFPRI in 1974.

Despite the strong position taken by TAC and several donors, IFPRI successfully fended off the recommendation to narrow the mandate on trends and trade. As part of the process of obtaining CGIAR support, IFPRI was required to submit a new statement of its mandate to reflect the narrowed focus identified by TAC and deal with certain other issues. When the proposed mandate statement was discussed by the CGIAR on November 1, 1979, TAC Chairman Ralph Cummings chided IFPRI for not conforming with TAC guidance and for failing to state clearly that its principal emphasis would be on problems of developing countries. IFPRI's central research task should be to study the linkages and interrelationships between the microlevel problems of the adoption of new technologies and the wider economic and socioeconomic aspects of agricultural development. Trends and trade, he said, should be viewed only as supporting activities. IFPRI was accordingly asked to make further revisions in its mandate.

The IFPRI response, provided in a letter to CGIAR Chairman Baum on March 28, 1980, declined to accept TAC's views. Board Chairman Sen said, in part:

The Board recognizes the need to reflect in the mandate the important relationship between IFPRI and the other members of the CGIAR system, and has amended the text . . . accordingly. Certain other changes have been made to highlight the fact that the Institute's main concern is

with policies leading to the alleviation of hunger and malnutrition in the poorer countries, and for purposes of clarification. . . .

At the same time the Board feels that because IFPRI is a policy research institute it has to deal with wide-ranging issues. To restrict its mandate too narrowly to micro-level research might so circumscribe IFPRI's work as to upset the needed balance between macro and micro approaches and to affect adversely the relevance and quality of the micro-level investigations themselves. Therefore, while IFPRI will remain selective in its activities, it must, in the Board's view remain involved in work on trends, trade, food aid, and food security. It is evident from the responses to IFPRI's research reports that there is considerable interest in the policy implications of such research, which is complementary to, but not duplicative of micro-level research.

The comments about microlevel research, which seem to overstate TAC's position, were prompted, in the memory of one board member, by concern that there was a tendency to wish to restrict IFPRI to the micro-level problems of the adoption of new technologies (Davidson 1996). Overall, however, Chairman Sen's letter was a straightforward rejection of TAC's demand on the narrowing of priorities. The discussion of this issue continued for the following several years in TAC's annual review of the IFPRI program submission, with only slightly different results and no significant impact on the content of IFPRI's work.

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*IFPRI's Services to  
International Organizations*

A third point in the Thomsen mission report to which TAC drew particular attention was the danger of IFPRI's spending too much of its time responding to requests for analysis from international organizations and implicitly from donors more generally. TAC feared that the Institute might become a service agency for donors, rather than performing research for developing countries. Under the rubric of "linkages to policy," IFPRI had called attention to its work for international development organizations as a means of showing the relevance of and demand for its product. It was too early to find examples of



impact in the behavior of developing countries. To prove that it had found an audience, the Institute cited the work it had done with a variety of international organizations including the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Wheat Council, the UN Protein-Calorie Advisory Group, FAO, and the Brandt Commission, as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture. TAC, itself named as a beneficiary of IFPRI input, found “a potential conflict between the role of IFPRI as a research organization and as a service organization. Many organizations, the CGIAR in particular, are likely to expect IFPRI to respond to their special needs and demands.” TAC urged IFPRI to define its relationships with international organizations in specific understandings and pursue those relationships through well-defined contracts. At the same meeting at which it recommended IFPRI to the CGIAR for support, TAC considered a draft priorities paper that acknowledged IFPRI contributions to the analysis of research priorities.

In addition to making these three main points, TAC invited IFPRI to pursue more actively its relationships with the CGIAR and with other international agricultural research centers (IARCs). “IFPRI could certainly be of great help to the CGIAR, TAC, and the IARCs in tackling some complex problems such as those of equity in distribution of research benefits and providing broader perspective analysis which could have an important bearing on the overall priorities for and approaches to international research” (quoted in TAC 1985, Annex V, 2). This advice, and other points raised by TAC, such as continued study of linkages between agriculture and overall development, closer working relationships with developing-country research organizations, and enhanced research on consumption issues, were readily accepted by the IFPRI Board.

## **Growth in the CGIAR**

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**T**he beginning of the CGIAR's support for IFPRI in 1980 marked the start of a period of major expansion for the Institute. From a total budget of less than \$1.7 million in 1979, contributed entirely by Ford, Rockefeller, and IDRC, annual expenditures grew to \$6.1 million in 1984. To unrestricted core contributions of \$4.3 million were added \$1.8 million in special project support. In the same period, senior research staff grew from 14 to 21. Less than \$0.4 million of the 1984 unrestricted core came from IFPRI's three original donors. IDRC and Rockefeller soon dropped this form of funding, in both cases reflecting changes in corporate policies, and substituted smaller amounts of project support. In the case of IDRC, a policy of using its resources primarily to support research by developing-country institutions ultimately reduced grants to IFPRI to a very low level. The Ford Foundation continued unrestricted core grants to IFPRI through 1998, supplemented by frequent project grants. As of 1999, in keeping with a general donor trend away from unrestricted support, Ford shifted to financing IFPRI activities in property rights and collective action. Warren Baum has reported that in the early 1980s, Ford and Rockefeller reduced their support to the CGIAR by the amount they had contributed to IFPRI, thus effectively transferring responsibility for IFPRI to others (Baum 1986, 65). So far as IFPRI was concerned, however, the original stalwarts were amply replaced. In 1984, IFPRI received unrestricted funds from Australia, China, Canada, France, Germany, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, India, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the World Bank.

IFPRI's four research programs remained generally as they were in 1979, with somewhat different titles. Most of the expansion of effort

took place in Food Production Policy and Development Strategy and in Food Consumption and Nutrition Strategy. The two other programs, Food Trends Analysis and International Food Trade and Food Security remained more or less at the same level as before. On the administrative front, IFPRI was able, as a CGIAR-sponsored activity, to obtain formal recognition of its international status by the U.S. Government in April 1982. The main practical benefit of this recognition was to free IFPRI staff who were not U.S. citizens or permanent residents from U.S. income tax and immigration restrictions.

As its program grew, IFPRI came under increasing pressure to make its research strategy more coherent. In June 1982, in response to urging from TAC and donors, the Institute published a document called *Looking Ahead: The Development Plan for the International Food Policy Institute* (IFPRI 1982). This statement framed the future in terms of six questions “expected to dominate food policy for at least the next decade.” The six are as follows, with brief comments:

1. *What food policy adjustments are needed in response to rapid growth in food import demand by developing countries?* This issue was posed primarily to the Food Trends Analysis Program. Most developing countries were expected to increase net imports of food staples, because of the linked impact of agricultural growth, overall economic growth, and rapid increases in food consumption. Increasing demand for feed by a growing livestock sector was foreseen as a major factor.
2. *What policies will allow technological change to play its central role in raising food production in developing countries?* The Production Policy and Development Strategy Program would be responsible for this work, with an almost doubled effort expected. Key topics were agricultural research policy (with ISNAR) and the critical inputs of fertilizer and water.
3. *What combination of farm producer incentives can achieve growth and equity simultaneously?* All four programs were involved, with a relatively stable effort over time.
4. *What relative weight should be given to alternative agricultural commodities in future production patterns?* Again all

four programs were involved. The Trends Program was charged with identifying the shifts taking place, but the weight of resources was planned to shift from Production to Trade in response to rapidly changing trade patterns.

5. *What policies are needed for technological change in agriculture to stimulate the growth in income and employment necessary to alleviate rural poverty?* All programs were involved; most of the resources would be managed by the Production Policy and Development Strategy Program. The research would cover the competition for investment resources between agriculture and other sectors, as well as the positive linkages between agricultural growth and economic development.
6. *How can food security be provided to the world's poorest people in the face of unequal distribution of income, fluctuating production, and high costs of storage?* Again all programs were involved. The Trade Program would maintain its focus on the international aspects of food security at the same level as before. A preponderant share of future resources, however, would go to Consumption, where they would be devoted to policies designed to protect the poor against fluctuations in income and food availability and against secular increases in food prices, and to ensure positive effects from new agricultural technologies. IFPRI planned to study the impact of a broad number of policies and programs on the nutritional status of the poor in selected countries, including a gender and household focus, and attempt to generalize the findings to provide policy advice internationally. (One can detect here early evidence of the concept behind the integrated multicountry research programs of the 1990s.)

Of the six questions, numbers 2, 5, and 6, representing technological and developmental issues, were singled out for two-thirds of the planned resources.

## **First External Reviews**

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**E**ach center in the CGIAR system is the subject of periodic external reviews covering program and management, usually conducted at five-year intervals. These reviews are the principal means the system uses to appraise the accomplishments and condition of the centers. The first external reviews of IFPRI's program and management took place in 1984. The external program review was prepared by a panel chaired by Lloyd T. Evans of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization in Australia, a plant scientist, who had several economists and an ecologist as colleagues on his panel (TAC 1985). The management review was chaired by another biological scientist with management experience, Michael Arnold, who was assisted by a management expert. While an important document in its own right, the management review is of less immediate concern to the aspects of IFPRI's history addressed in the present study (CGIAR 1984).

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### ***Findings of the First External Program Review***

**T**he TAC chairman was now Guy Camus, former director general of the French Office of Scientific and Technical Research Overseas (ORSTOM), who had been a TAC member at the time of the Thomsen mission. In transmitting the program review to the CGIAR, Camus noted that the review was more detailed than normal because TAC members agreed "that the exercise should bring to light all the elements necessary to dispel the ambiguities which have surrounded IFPRI since its entry into the CGIAR System." Camus expressed TAC's confidence that this goal had been attained (TAC 1985, vii).

Issues of research priorities needed to be addressed, as well as the location of IFPRI's headquarters. The breadth of IFPRI's mandate, and particularly the role of trends and trade research in that mandate, were issues on which TAC had taken different positions in 1974 and 1979. The Evans panel adopted yet a third position and persuaded TAC and the CGIAR to agree. The panel noted a shift in both the mandate and the work of IFPRI during the 10 years since it was founded "in response to changing perceptions of where the greatest need lay. Partly this shift had reflected improved understanding of the problems, partly a change in emphasis from world surveillance to better nutrition for the poor in developing countries, and partly changes in the complementary work of other institutions" (TAC 1985, 9). The panel explicitly agreed with the 1980 IFPRI mandate document in establishing the "precise objective of contributing to the reduction of hunger and malnutrition" and that this would require "analysis of underlying processes and extending beyond a narrowly defined food sector."

Research on food consumption and nutrition was found to be the program most clearly meeting the "precise objective" of the mandate. All of the programs were, however, on target, and trade research was "an essential component of the Institute's overall research in its own right." In stating its concurrence with this view, TAC explicitly reversed its own 1979 position that trade research should be a supporting activity only. Trends research should continue to serve the other programs and turn its major attention to improved systems for data collection in Africa. This was a fresh approach, reflecting changed times (TAC 1985, 21-43, 75-78).

Through the instrument of this external review and actions taken in response to it, the role of trade research as a central part of IFPRI's program was decided and has not been reopened to this writing. The status of trends research was put in a new framework but not fully resolved. The more general question of whether IFPRI was being selective and focused enough within its mandate was recognized to be a matter of circumstance and judgment, hence open to be revisited continuously in the future. The review dissected carefully and critically the six questions IFPRI propounded in 1982 as a framework for its future program and suggested that

the Institute discuss them further with a view to reformulation. In particular the panel objected to the omission of international coordination of trade and aid as a separate major issue.

The 1980 version of IFPRI's mandate, previously left in a sort of limbo, received endorsement. Through what must have been a clerical error, the version submitted to the CGIAR and TAC in 1979, rather than the revised 1980 version of the mandate, was provided to the program review panel, was cited and blessed in their report, and was used by IFPRI until 1994. There were several differences between the 1979 and 1980 mandate drafts, including a whole new paragraph, but the changes were of emphasis and presentation, not of substance. The fact that this slip was not noticed and corrected for more than 10 years may say something about the cost-benefit ratio of fine-tuning mandate documents.

IFPRI's headquarters location was another issue on which TAC had taken different positions in the past, suggesting first Rome and then a developing country. The 1984 review panel made a third choice in this case as well, recommending and securing TAC and CGIAR approval for IFPRI to remain in Washington "while recognizing that the issue is a complex one which merits on-going consideration by the Board as the nature of IFPRI's work continues to evolve" (TAC 1985, 73). Unlike the mandate question, this one did not disappear completely but was settled for all practical purposes for the medium term.

A further issue to which TAC had called particular attention in 1979 had been IFPRI's services to international development and financial organizations. By 1984 this problem had greatly diminished, as the prominence of such activity dropped sharply within a larger and more balanced IFPRI program. The review subsumed this question in a detailed discussion of IFPRI's clientele. While accepting the Institute's view that main clients should be policymakers in developing countries, the panel added policy analysts and researchers in those countries as almost equally important clients. The policy analysts and researchers were a scattered group, often lacking both training and experience, who were considered the major target for both IFPRI's research (as opposed to policy conclusions) and its institution-building activities performed largely as part of research collaboration. International financial and national donor

agencies were seen as intermediate clients and as legitimate targets of IFPRI research and appraisal. The report said:

Developing countries themselves see a very important role for IFPRI in enlarging the scope for policy dialogue between them and the major financial institutions such as the World Bank, and in independently analyzing the policies and conditionalities of these agencies. IFPRI should not act as advocate or apologist for developing countries, but should, through independent analysis, examine the complex, and often counter-intuitive, effects of aid policies and fashions. Such work could, at times, make IFPRI vulnerable in a way that other CGIAR centers are not, and may require considerable understanding from donors (TAC 1985, 75).

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***Recommendations of  
the First External Program Review***

**T**he review also made many other suggestions and recommendations. One significant proposal was to create a separate development strategies program, absorbing the work on linkages between the agricultural sector and economic growth, which was part of the Production Program, but also including intersectoral linkages more generally, structural and infrastructural constraints, and the effects of macroeconomic policies. The Institute responded by creating a separate, but more limited, Agricultural Growth Linkages Program, drawn from the steadily expanding activities of the Production Program.

The panel saw its proposal for more strategic research as a means of engaging all of the Institute's programs in addressing these broader problems. Along the same lines, it suggested some concentration of effort "in one or two locations where production, consumption, nutrition and trade aspects and interlinkages can be analyzed more comprehensively" (TAC 1985, 32). In the panel's view the need for strategy research and some country concentration was linked with its criticism of a perceived lack of breadth among IFPRI research staff. It found that not only were most of IFPRI's staff economists, but they were economists belonging to one part of their discipline, that is, the part emphasizing incentives and inputs. The panel suggested that the range of



expertise needed to be broadened by adding economists interested in political and economic power, interest groups, structures, and institutions, as well as senior talent in political science and social science. In response, the Board commented that this and a number of other suggestions involved additional resources at a time when IFPRI was struggling to keep the existing program funded.

Another proposal, consistent with the broad view the panel took of IFPRI's role, was that the director of IFPRI should give a report to the CGIAR every two years on the food and agriculture situation worldwide. This thought, which harked back to the original 1974 proposal for an annual IFPRI report on world food and agriculture, caused a ripple of concern among those particularly anxious to avoid competition between IFPRI and FAO. It was nevertheless implemented starting in 1984 and has continued ever since, challenging successive IFPRI leaders to find new and exciting material on the global level to present to the CGIAR at two-year intervals.

The review panel also urged IFPRI to increase its efforts to build up the capacity of developing-country institutions, though continuing to pursue this goal informally through research collaboration rather than through separate programs. It endorsed the ongoing shift in emphasis from Asia and Latin America toward Africa, where the most difficult food production problems were perceived to exist and research would be harder and more expensive. The panel and TAC encouraged IFPRI to continue to collaborate with other CGIAR centers, although there was recognition that the Institute did not have resources sufficient for active involvement with more than a few of its sister centers at any one time.

The program review panel effectively closed the door on what had been an ambiguous role for IFPRI in helping TAC to set system priorities. Recognizing that much of IFPRI's work would be relevant to the consideration of priorities by TAC, the panel pointed out that these priorities were fixed only in part on the basis of economic analysis. For IFPRI to become involved directly in the process could be a slippery slope that would lead to diversion of resources away from research of interest to developing countries. Moreover, a perception that IFPRI had any responsibility for resource allocations within the CGIAR would damage IFPRI's ability

to collaborate effectively with other centers. This recommendation was similar to one found in the Thomsen mission report of 1974. Nevertheless, there were occasions after 1985 when IFPRI did participate in defining priorities and long-term objectives for the CGIAR system.

## IFPRI at 10 Years

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The net result of the external review and its consideration by the CGIAR was to do what Guy Camus sought. The review diminished the ambiguity and uncertainty about IFPRI as a CGIAR center, not to the vanishing point but to a much more bearable level. Ten years after its creation, IFPRI was strongly engaged in the issue of what policies would encourage the application of new technologies to food production in the developing world. It was also strongly engaged in analysis of the world food situation in the medium and longer term from the point of view of the interests of developing countries. And it was studying selected issues of broader development interest, for example, in its growth linkages work and in food consumption and nutrition, but always in relation to food. IFPRI was, therefore, in some sense responding to all three of the themes—technological, developmental, and international—used to justify its creation. At the same time, the review challenged IFPRI to rethink some of its positions, a challenge that was both appropriate and welcome.

Many individuals made important contributions to bringing IFPRI to the well-established position it held in 1985, after 10 years of existence. Some of the names are mentioned here, but it is not possible to cite all of them. This paper should not close, however, without a brief appreciation of the role—more accurately, roles—played by Sir John Crawford in creating IFPRI. He was a forceful and early advocate, based on his personal experience in Australia, India, and elsewhere, of the importance of food policy research, and he had the professional standing to make himself heard. He exercised great influence among the development community's decisionmakers, bilateral, multilateral, and private, and was seen by developing-country leaders as one who

understood their needs. Sir John knew how to make processes work and how to lead, even on occasion to drive, colleagues toward effective action. He demonstrated this skill particularly in his relationship as chairman of the IFPRI Board of Trustees with the first two directors of the Institute and with the other members of the Board. He left a unique stamp on IFPRI, and it seems quite possible that without him, some of the battles that led to IFPRI's creation and survival might not have been won. Sir John's close association with IFPRI ended in 1979, just as it was joining the CGIAR system, and he died in October 1984.

## **Note on Sources**

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**I**n preparing this paper, I have consulted many individuals who were involved in the process of creating IFPRI, helped to guide it through its first decade or worked on the staff, dealt with the Institute on behalf of the CGIAR, or observed IFPRI closely from outside. It is on the judgment of these individuals that I have mainly relied for the context of the narrative and insights that are very hard to get from documents. Intermittently from 1974 onward I was involved myself, first as a representative of the U.S. government in the CGIAR and from late 1982 as executive secretary of the CGIAR. I played no role, however, in the discussions that lead to the admission of IFPRI for support by the CGIAR in 1978–79. I have not linked views given to me personally with any individuals. This seemed the most practical approach for achieving full and free interactions with a large number of people. I should like to thank particularly Raisuddin Ahmed, Eliseu Alves, Warren Baum, David Bell, Guy Camus, Dana Dalrymple, Ralph Kirby Davidson, Chris Delgado, Lowell Hardin, Dale Hathaway, Peter Hazell, David Hopper, Nurul Islam, Patricia Klosky, Alex McCalla, John Mellor, Peter Oram, Per Pinstrup-Andersen, Michel Petit, Barbara Rose, Mark Rosegrant, Alberto Valdés, and Ruth Zagorin.

A principal source in the written record has been the documents of the CGIAR itself, principally the verbatim and summary reports of CGIAR meetings, the detailed reports of TAC meetings, and files of supporting documents in each case, which are in the CGIAR Secretariat Library at the World Bank. Similarly, I have had access to the official files of IFPRI, including the minutes and supporting documentation for meetings of the Board of Trustees and its committees, and records and documentation for external program reviews. I have tried to make clear the sources for important facts without cluttering the text or the formal

bibliography with citations of documents that are not generally available to interested readers. I have listed in the bibliography some documents from IFPRI or CGIAR files that are the source of extensive quotations or where I thought that a specific citation might promote understanding. Many of these documents will shortly become available through the CGIAR web site at [www.cgiar.org](http://www.cgiar.org) in a collection of core documents being created by the CGIAR Secretariat.

Published sources, which are relatively few in this chapter, are cited in the normal manner, and listed in the bibliography. Among these, I would particularly recommend three. Those interested in learning more about that extraordinary person, Sir John Crawford, and his contributions to international agricultural research and other important causes should consult *Policy and Practice: Essays in Honour of Sir John Crawford* (Evans and Miller 1987). For the story of the CGIAR, the standard source, written with the understanding of an insider, is *Partners against Hunger* (Baum 1986). And for a more detailed, contemporary account of IFPRI's first 10 years, see *Report of the External Program Review of the International Food Policy Research Institute* (TAC 1985), one of the best-written bureaucratic documents I have read. This report also includes excerpts from some of the more important historical documents on which this paper is based.

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#### **About the Author**

After working for 11 years at the Asia Foundation and 19 years at the U.S. Agency for International Development, Curtis Farrar served as executive secretary of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research from 1982 to 1989 and director of administration and finance at IFPRI from 1991 to 1995. He is writing a history of IFPRI. This booklet is the first chapter of that work. Farrar graduated from Yale University and got his Ph.D. at the London School of Economics.