

The Future of the CGIAR

The early CGIAR (international agricultural research) centers played a key role in the Green Revolution, developing high yielding varieties of rice and wheat that responded well to the post-WWII decline in the price of nitrogen fertilizer. The resulting productivity growth of these and other crops staved off starvation by lowering food prices and raising incomes of small farmers and farm workers. The CGIAR research outputs made major contributions to post-WWII economic development. These successes led funding agencies to the mistaken conclusion that global food security was no longer an issue and by the late 20th century public sector funding in both developing and developed countries began a gradual decline.

The price spikes of the mid and late 2000s reminded the world that food security was not in fact assured. The expected population and income growth in developing countries and the realization that climate change would pose a growing threat to agricultural production caused donor agencies to review their support for agricultural research. They struck a bargain with the CGIAR institutions, promising (and ultimately delivering) a substantial increase in funding if the CGIAR would restructure itself to be more effective in a rapidly changing global agricultural environment. It is now generally accepted that the initial efforts at reform were less than successful and a second round of reform efforts is underway.

This track session, co-sponsored by the AAEA Latin American and Senior Sections, is organized as a panel discussion to provide an opportunity for attendees to learn about the recent history of the CGIAR, its attempts to reform, and the state of the latest reform efforts. The panel, moderated by Gerald Nelson, Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois and former senior research fellow at IFPRI, includes Karen Brooks, leader of one of the new CGIAR research programs, Prabhu Pingali, former director of economic research at one of the CGIAR centers, professor at Cornell and head of the newly created Tata-Cornell Agriculture and Nutrition Initiative, and Philip Pardey, Professor at the University of Minnesota and one of the leading thinkers in the economics of agricultural research investments. Although the final plans for CGIAR reform are still being developed, the panelists will be knowledgeable about the proposed alternatives and the prospects for future international agricultural research.

This session will be a great opportunity to look into the future of a major international agricultural research institution. The session will be held Monday afternoon, July 27, 1:00 PM in Sierra J at the Marriott Hotel.