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	منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	联合国 粮食及 农业组织	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture	Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura
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International Rice Commission

Twenty-second Session

Rome, Italy, 29-30 November 2012

Progress Report on the work of the International Rice Commission

Executive Summary

This progress report has been prepared by the Secretariat in line with Rule II of the Rules of Procedure of the International Rice Commission (IRC). It provides a brief summary of the work of the IRC since its 21st Session in May 2006 and of the expenditures in support of the Commission in 2012.

Suggested action by the Commission:

This document has been prepared for information. The Commission is invited to note the information contained therein.

I. Introduction

1. This progress report has been prepared by the Secretariat in line with Rule II of the Rules of Procedure which states that the Agenda should include “*a progress report on the work of the Commission since its last regular session, including review of expenditures by the Organization in connection with work sponsored by the Commission*”.
2. The document provides a brief summary of the work of the International Rice Commission (IRC) since its 21st Session in May 2006. The document is divided into three Sections: Section 1 provides a brief summary of the outcome of the 21st Session of the IRC; Section 2 highlights the activities of the Secretariat from 2006 to date while Section 3 contains a brief summary of the expenditures in support of the work of the Commission in 2012.

II. The 21st Session of the Commission – May 2006

3. The 21st Session of the Commission was convened in Chiclayo, Peru in May 2006. The meeting included 91 participants but only 19 of the member countries of the Commission were represented¹. The meeting identified a total of 37, often very general, recommendations across a broad range of technical issues, to donors, member governments, national and international rice research institutes and non-governmental organizations. Of these, eight were identified as “*main recommendations*”, one of which (recommendation 8) was addressed to the Secretariat:

“The Secretariat of the Commission should organize a global Expert Consultation between the 21st (2006) and the 22nd (2010) Sessions, to review progress and identify sustainable strategies for up-scaling the transfer of rice integrated crop management systems for closing the yield gap, increasing profit, and reducing environmental degradation in rice production under different agro-socio-economic set-ups.”

III. Activities of the Secretariat since the 21st Session of the Commission

a) 2006-2009

4. The Expert Consultation referenced in recommendation 8 of the 21st Session of the Commission was not convened. The Secretariat was part of the organizing committee for a Conference on Sustainable Rice Production organized through the MEDRICE network and convened in Krasnodar, Russia in September 2006. The Secretariat also published Volume 56 of the IRC Newsletter in 2007 which included information on various rice related projects supported by FAO.
5. As a consequence of the declining participation in the sessions of the IRC² and changes in the scope and range of initiatives and programmes on rice at the international and regional levels an auto-evaluation of FAO’s work on rice including the Commission was undertaken in 2006. This included a comprehensive questionnaire sent to all member countries of which 15 replied (24% response rate). The respondents commented that the Commission was dominated by technology considerations, which were well dealt with elsewhere, and had failed to address policies. The report released in April 2006³ recommended *inter alia* that a discussion be initiated on what needed to be done to revive the work of the Commission, including its future orientation and mode of operation.
6. It was against this backdrop that the Independent External Evaluation (IEE)⁴ of FAO in 2007, made the following recommendation (3.10 b) in relation to the IRC:

¹ There are 62 member countries of the Commission

² 38 countries participated in the 18th session in 1994 while only 19 countries participated in the 21st session in 2006..

³ Auto-Evaluation of Programme Entity 212 P5 “*Support to Strategy Formulation and Promotion of Specific Action for Rice Development in Member Countries of the IRC*” April 2006

⁴ Report of the IEE of FAO C 2007/A.1-Rev.1 Paragraph 621

“... there are two CGIAR centres dealing exclusively with rice; trade aspects are addressed by an Inter-Governmental Commodity Group in FAO. The International Rice Commission should be wound up. If the CGIAR wishes some of its work may be continued under the CGIAR”

7. In response to the IEE recommendation the FAO Legal office advised that it was not possible for the IRC Secretariat or the FAO Secretariat to unilaterally close the IRC. Under Article XIII of its Constitution, the IRC shall be considered *"as terminated if and when the number of Members of the Commission drops below ten unless the remaining Members of the Commission unanimously decide otherwise"*. The management response did not comment directly on this recommendation and the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal (2008) did not address the termination of the IRC. The Director-General supported a proposal to terminate the IRC, subject to the procedural arrangements that would be necessary.

8. Following the recommendation of the IEE, the RC was assigned a low priority within FAO and the non-staff resources were reallocated starting in the 2008-2009 biennium. The P4 Technical officer responsible for the IRC retired in 2008. The terms of reference for the post were revised, retaining a reference to the IRC, but downgraded to the P3 level. The post was filled in January 2011.

9. In follow-up to the IEE recommendation the IRC Secretariat commissioned a working paper on the future of the IRC in 2009. The working paper took into account past assessments, written submissions from key international rice experts and stakeholders; information gathered from discussions with experts both within and outside FAO; and desktop research. It concluded that: i) the *status quo* of the IRC was not viable given the declining participation of members at meetings; the lack of mechanisms and resourcing to implement programmes and the plethora of other organizations, networks and bodies that more effectively deal with rice technologies and their adoption for development; ii) unless there was significant change the IRC should be wound up, in accordance with the IEE recommendation.

b) 2012

10. Following the invitation of the Government of France at the 21st Session of the IRC, the 22nd Session was scheduled to be convened in Montpellier, France, from 11 to 12 April 2012. The key objective of the meeting was to discuss the future of the Commission.

11. To ensure that member countries were aware of the importance of the meeting, a briefing on the IRC was convened for the FAO Permanent Representatives in Rome on 2 March 2012. The briefing was attended by 26 member countries and a representative of the European Commission. As of the last week of March, however, only 12 member countries had confirmed their participation in the 22nd Session. This very limited number of confirmations indicated that it would be very unlikely that the quorum (32 participants), necessary to take a decision on the future of the IRC, would be reached by the time of the meeting.

12. The IRC is to be convened at least every four years thus if a quorum was not reached in Montpellier the next regular session would not be expected to be convened before 2016. Concern was raised regarding the financial and political consequences of convening the IRC with insufficient attendance. In consultation with the Government of France, Chair of the 22nd Session of the IRC, it was decided to postpone the 22nd Session to November 2012 immediately prior to the FAO Council in Rome.

13. In order to take advantage of the preparations made with the Host Government for the 22nd Session of the Commission, a meeting of experts from member countries of the Commission on the possible future directions of the IRC was organized from 3 to 4 July in Montpellier France⁵. The Global Rice Roundtable was attended by 27 experts from 22 member countries of the IRC, representatives of the CGIAR Consortium and the Global Rice Science Partnership (GRISP) which is led by the CGIAR.

⁵ Global Rice Roundtable 3-4 July 2012 Montpellier France

14. The meeting considered a draft working paper on the Commission as well as the compilation of an initial set of responses to a questionnaire on its future that had been sent to all member countries. A total of nine responses to the questionnaire were received from member countries (15% response rate). The meeting concluded that if the IRC is to continue, then it must identify a clear set of issues and associated activities where its involvement would have added value in the light of the existing international and regional initiatives and programmes relevant to rice. The meeting identified a list of thematic or policy issues where a re-oriented IRC might have a role and mapped them against existing programmes and institutions currently working in these areas. This matrix would be further elaborated and made available to the 22nd Session of the IRC in November. It was also agreed that if the Commission were re-oriented there would need to be consistent and sufficient funding for its meetings and for its inter-sessional work. The report of the meeting was made available on the IRC website in three languages and sent to all Roundtable participants.

15. Following the Global Roundtable, the Secretariat developed a work plan to ensure that the preparations for the 22nd Session were carried out in a timely manner and in line with the Rules of Procedure of the Commission. This has included the preparation and dispatch of the notice of the meeting, the agenda and other meeting documents in the three official languages of the Commission.

16. A key element in the work plan was a briefing of the Permanent Representatives to FAO in October. The briefing was seen as critical in order to ensure that member countries were fully informed of the importance of the deliberations of the 22nd Session on the future of the IRC.

IV. Summary of Expenditures in 2012 in support of the work of the IRC

17. Staff resources dedicated to the Secretariat of the IRC are limited to a P3 officer post, who also has other responsibilities. From 2009 there have been no non-staff resources allocated in FAO's programme of work and budget to support the Commission.

18. In December 2011, at the end of the 2010-2011 biennium, a total of 150,000 USD were allocated, on a one time basis, by the Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP) from additional unplanned income to convene the 22nd Session of the IRC in 2012. The unexpected postponement of the 22nd Session to November necessitated that a further 130,000 USD be identified, resulting in an over-expenditure on the part AGP for 2012.

19. A summary of both the staff and non-staff expenditures in support of the IRC in 2012 is set out below:

Summary of Expenditures in 2012

Preparation and delivery of: Briefings of Permanent Representatives, Global Rice Roundtable and 22nd Session of the Commission.

Staff costs (USD):

P3 post – Secretary IRC (6 months)	79,914.00		
Other staff costs	109,473.50		
T		otal	189,387.50

Non-staff costs (USD):

Briefing, Permanent Representatives: March/October	17,000.00		
Global Rice Roundtable: 3-4 July, Montpellier	140,564.00		
22 nd Session IRC: 29-30 November	130,000.00		
S		ub-total	287,564.00

Staff + non-staff costs (USD):	Overall expenditure		476,951.50
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