

Managing Innovation & Knowledge: Experiences from DFID's Crop Post-Harvest Research Programme



The CPHP Advisory Committee: A review 1995-2004

by John Coulter and Frank Almond

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This series aims to share experiences and practical lessons learned over a decade by the management team of the UK Department for International Development (DFID)'s Crop Post-Harvest Research Programme (CPHP). We hope they may be of interest for other managers of research, knowledge and competitive funds.

The birth of CPHP in 1995, joining nine other programmes, marked a new phase in a long history of DFID-funded natural resources research. A year later, following the privatisation of the Natural Resources Institute, management of the programmes was subcontracted to universities and consulting firms in the UK.

The CPHP never stands still. Managed by NR International, it has operated through regional offices since 1995. They are becoming increasingly established

as key players in their regions: as competent managers of competitive funds, sources of contacts and information, brokers of partnerships, and advocates of user-driven research and evidence-based policy-making.

The eleven-strong CPHP management team seeks to add value to the portfolio of research projects in each region through advocacy, institutional strengthening, knowledge management, support for networking, and training in proposal development and project management. It has pushed the scope of the research portfolio into new areas including food safety and nutrition and the institutional aspects of technological development.

These diverse management experiences – with their trials and errors – form the basis for this series. A frank reflection by the team and its key stakeholders, it asks: **What worked, what didn't, and why?**

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ASARECA	Association for the Strengthening of Agricultural Research in East and Central Africa
CFD	Country Framework Document (of CPHP)
CIRAD	Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement, France
CN	Concept Note
CPHP	Crop Post-Harvest Programme (of DFID, managed by NR International)
CRD	Central Research Department (of DFID)
DFID	UK Government Department for International Development
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
FTR	Final Technical Report
NARO	National agricultural research organisation
NRI	Natural Resources Institute, UK
NSI	National systems of innovation
ODA	UK Overseas Development Administration (now DFID)
OVI	Objectively verifiable indicator
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRRD	Former Natural Resources Research Department (of DFID)
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
PMF	Project Memorandum (form)
RNRRS	Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (of DFID)
RLD	Former Rural Livelihoods Department (of DFID)
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community

1 Introduction

In 1995, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), then the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), set out a 10-year strategy for research into renewable natural resources – the RNRRS – in a document commonly referred to as the ‘Yellow Brick’. Responsibility for the RNRRS lay with DFID’s Central Research Department (CRD) (then the Natural Resources Research Department, NRRD, and later the Rural Livelihoods Department, RLD). The Crop Post-Harvest Programme (CPHP) was one of the eleven programmes created under this strategy. In addition to the CPHP, Natural Resources International Ltd (at the time, part of the UK Natural Resources Institute, NRI) was awarded the management of the Crop Protection, Post-Harvest Fisheries, Forestry, Livestock Production and part of the Natural Resources Systems Programmes, as a result of a competitive tendering process. The management of the other programmes was awarded to a number of other UK research institutes and companies.

A feature of the management of these programmes was that each was to have a Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) to provide oversight, governance and specialist advisory inputs. The PAC would be an independent advisory body to the Programme Manager with no executive powers, and would meet about three times a year to review strategy and to comment upon project submissions (see Annex 1).

With the RNRRS drawing to a close¹, and with several arrangements in hand to review and evaluate various aspects of the research that the CPHP has commissioned over its nine-year lifetime, it was felt appropriate that the PAC itself should also be the subject of a review, feeding in to an overall assessment of the programme. This, for two main reasons: first, any activity that has pursued a purpose over nine years ought, as a matter of course, to be reviewed. Second, whilst the future shape of DFID-funded research is still (at the time of writing) to be fully resolved, the issues of governance, accountability, and quality control will always be of importance.

Whilst they may not be embodied in the form of a PAC in future, it is felt that the lessons learned by the CPHP PAC over its nine years of operation must be of importance to those planning the future management of research activities, and indeed to those involved in research policy and research programme management around the world. It is also hoped that this initiative might encourage other PACs to assess their contribution to their own programmes.

This review is, mostly, an informal self-assessment. It cannot claim to be rigorous, nor have a great deal of resources been expended in accomplishing it. It has been assembled by Dr John Coulter, who has been the Chair of the PAC throughout its nine years, and Frank Almond, who has also been a member of the PAC for its lifetime. In addition to reviewing the minutes and other records of the PAC, they have sought contributions from all the past members of the PAC, and have consulted with the PAC’s primary ‘clients’: namely the programme management (including the Regional Coordinators) and DFID.

The review starts by recounting some of the basic facts and figures relating to the PAC’s task, and looks at the role and remit of the PAC against the changing context of the CPHP over the years, particularly as management of the CPHP has devolved overseas. It then assesses the PAC’s contributions at the strategic and project levels; and goes on to examine a clutch of related issues, before summarising the key lessons. Throughout, PAC meetings are referred to for simplicity by

¹ During writing, an extension of all the RNRRS programmes of one year to March 2006 was announced by DFID.

their sequential number. The actual dates of the meetings and other key events are listed at Annex 3.

An inherent difficulty in conducting this review arises from the advisory nature of the PAC's role. As will be seen, advice has been sought and given on a wide range of matters at both strategic (programme) level and at the project level; and in many cases some form of 'audit trail' exists, through which the advice can be traced. However, the PAC has not been in a management position, and the records of its meetings are not 'Board Minutes' instructing the direction of an enterprise. Hence, there are questions of attribution that leave much of this review resting on anecdotal and 'soft' evidence; but there is no doubt in the writers' minds that the conclusions presented are firmly based.

2 Basic facts

Membership

As set out in the terms of reference for the PAC (see Annex 1), its membership has included the mandatory positions of an independent Chair, the programme manager, advisers on the environment, natural resource economics and social/ rural development, and (*ex-officio*) a DFID (then ODA) Natural Resources Lead Adviser. The programme has been able to draw additional members from other disciplines as needed, such as food safety, post-harvest technology, nutrition, partnerships, small enterprise development etc. Members have been appointed on a one-year renewable basis.

Within this framework, a number of balances have had to be struck. Continuity of experience and the need for fresh skills have both been important. In any event, natural turnover has created sufficient opportunities for new members to be brought in as required, and a good mixture of both longer and shorter serving members has given good continuity, without the 'formal' rules of service having to be rigorously invoked. Over the nine years, some 23 individuals have served on the PAC. Membership has always been approximately eight, plus the DFID Lead Adviser and programme manager; so on average the membership has 'turned over' about three times. However, there has been a strong core membership, with three-quarters of the members having served for over half of the programme's duration.

At one re-bidding stage (2002), DFID urged that, along with other overheads, the levels of PAC membership be examined with a view to keeping costs at a minimum. The firm conclusion of the programme was that a certain 'critical mass' was essential to the PAC's successful operation, and that the key specialist technical areas needed to be represented. This is especially relevant in the crop post-harvest area which, by its nature, has to embrace a particularly wide spread of disciplines. As a result, the membership levels remained unchanged. The programme management has found this invaluable; otherwise, they would have had to draw on a range of external specialists on an ad-hoc basis, and would have lost much of the continuity and institutional memory that long-term Committee members contribute.

As will be seen in the next section, the balance and focus of the CPHP has evolved over time; and in consequence different skills and experience have been needed on the PAC to reflect these needs. From time to time, the PAC has reviewed the appropriateness of its membership, and has deliberately sought new members to fill identified gaps. For example, at an early stage, it became evident that marketing, quality assurance, food safety and nutrition were weak areas; and appointments were made to rectify the situation. On a number of occasions, the PAC skills have been augmented by reference to external specialists - who either joined meetings or provided expert commentary on issues or proposals. For example, when a clutch of projects were commissioned relating to the issue of transport as a constraint in access to markets, a suitably qualified expert in appropriate transportation policy and technology was enlisted.

The PAC members have certainly been required to be well-versed in general development issues, and many of them have come with specific and intensive country experience. However, there has never been a deliberate policy to match programme priority countries with members' overseas experience - although fortunately there has always been good, direct experience on the PAC.

The PAC's advice has always been supplemented by regional advice on institutional and developmental issues. In the earlier days, the CPHP drew upon Production System Leaders from the UK-based staff of NRI. More recently, the appointment of locally-based Regional Coordinators to the programme has ensured coverage of country and regional-specific issues (of which more later).

However, it is worth noting that (with due regard to cost implications) the search for appropriate PAC members has never been limited to the UK. Two of the current members come from French and southern African organisations. They have brought fresh perspectives and experiences to bear on strategic discussions and the assessment of proposals, which the PAC and the programme management have appreciated greatly.

PAC members are appointed on the basis of their personal skills and experience, not for their institutional affiliations. The expectation set out in the terms of reference is that the PAC should act as an objective, impartial body without conflict of interest; and, in line with that, PAC members are debarred from being 'Lead Proposers' of applications. There has been a very small number of occasions, however, when a PAC member could have been construed as having an interest in or association with a project proposal. The policy adopted to deal with this situation has been to exclude the PAC member in question from attendance at any discussion of the proposal, and from notification of the conclusion until the appropriate time.

An entirely subjective feature of membership, but one that was strongly remarked on, is the ability of the Committee to work well at a personal level. Apart from the elusive concept of 'chemistry', this seems to be a question of professional respect and the absence of strong vested interests or professional competition amongst the members.

Meetings

During its nine years, the PAC has met on 35 occasions; mostly for one day and almost always in London; but occasionally over two days in order to have broader strategic discussions and when the project review load has been particularly high. Attendance levels have been uniformly very high, with full attendance on most occasions.

The regular calls for proposals has resulted in the need to review, firstly, the short Concept Notes (CNs) submitted by proposers, and then subsequently a smaller number of invited, much more comprehensive Project Memoranda (PMFs). To date, 246 Concept Notes and 153 Project Memoranda have been reviewed by the PAC (see Section 5). The PAC sees all Concept Notes and Project Memoranda submitted to the programme.

Other regular topics have included a review, each year, of the Annual Report at draft stages; and the commissioning of strategic issue papers. The manager uses PAC meetings to update the PAC on programme activities and plans.

There is widespread recognition that the style and effectiveness of the chairing of the PAC has been of great importance in such matters as obtaining balanced contributions, encouraging frank but constructive discussion, keeping vested interests out of the room, negotiating difficult issues, and handling heavy loads of project assessments.

Cost

A judgment of the effectiveness of the PAC has to be set against the costs of operating it. The direct costs of the PAC (venues, travel costs, honoraria) have totalled £184,000 over the period; averaging £20,500 per annum, and representing 0.77 % of the programme budget.

3 Role and remit

Terms of reference

The terms of reference for the PAC, as set out by DFID, are attached at Annex 1. At the headline level, they emphasise the role of the PAC as being to advise the Programme Manager on strategy and implementation, keeping in view the priority natural resource knowledge needs of the poor.

In practice, this has led to the PAC concerning itself with four broad clusters of issues:

- Strategic direction
- Project selection, specialist advice and project quality
- Partnership, collaboration and questions of uptake
- Arrangements for reporting, monitoring and evaluation

The interpretation of these terms of reference, and the weighting given to various issues, has been dependent upon the changing needs of the CPHP itself; and a brief account needs to be given of the evolution of the programme over the nine years.

The focus of the CPHP

At the 1st PAC meeting, it was stated that the focus of the CPHP “is to reduce post-harvest losses whilst increasing marketability of products and increasing equitable returns to farmers/processors”. Eight themes would underpin the programme:

- On-farm storage
- Post-harvest pest and disease control
- Agro-processing
- Quality assurance
- By-product utilisation
- Environmental control
- Marketing systems
- Marketing inputs and other services

It would have a commodity systems approach, and these would run through four ODA-defined production systems, themselves linked back to the earlier commodity focus:

- High potential (cereal and grain legumes)
- Peri-urban (horticulture and tree crops)
- Forest/agriculture interface (non-grain starch staples)
- Semi-arid (coarse grains and legumes)

For a time, the CPHP had Production System Leaders for each of these four areas, who kept a strategic oversight on a continuous basis, maintained cross-programme linkages, and were invited to attend PAC meetings to add their views to wider strategic debates.

Accordingly, in 1995, the programme opened with eight logical frameworks ('logframes'): two per production system. In 1999, these were simplified to four production system logframes.

The programme also opened with four initial core countries; Ghana, Tanzania, India and Bangladesh, owing a good deal to the pattern of inherited project activity. In time, this evolved into a regional approach involving West Africa, East Africa, southern Africa and South Asia, with a wider range of countries within each region, and an engagement with regional institutions, such as the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the Association for the Strengthening of Agricultural Research in East and Central Africa (ASARECA) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

The programme manager stated at the outset that links would be developed with other programmes, particularly Crop Protection, Livestock Production, Natural Resource Systems and Plant Sciences. The programme would strive to have an involvement with local institutions and their staff.

In its initial phases, the programme supported a number of inherited projects which were regarded as being at the adaptive end of the spectrum. The question facing the PAC was thus whether more strategic research was needed to redress the balance. Strategic research activities would be needed to generate peer-reviewed publications; but it was pointed out (at the ninth meeting) that there was no guidance from ODA on the balance between strategic and adaptive research.

The 1997 DFID White Paper placed an increased importance upon poverty focus and the need to demonstrate the linkages to impact upon the poor. This increased the CPHP's emphasis on the downstream delivery concerns. This was a shift in emphasis which was to accelerate further as the programme progressed through its ten-year cycle, with an increasing expectation that the latter phases would concentrate more upon the uptake of existing knowledge, rather than embarking on new and potentially long-term areas of strategic research (but certainly not to their complete exclusion).

At this time, the programme manager appointed a part-time Social Development Adviser to assist the programme to align itself with DFID's poverty focus and to incorporate the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach then advocated by DFID's RLD. The Concept Note and Project Memorandum forms and associated guidance notes, as well as the PAC proposal assessment forms, were revised to reflect a poverty focus. In 2001, the 'Risks and Assumptions' column of the logframe was updated.

In a two-step change (2001 and 2002), the programme purpose evolved to emphasise the need for institutional and organisational change. This was felt to be a key factor in achieving livelihood improvements in the long run; and also a more realistic target for the programme to aim at in its 10-year lifespan. The new purpose was also intended to create greater common ground between CPHP and DFID's bilateral programmes – a platform for potential synergies to develop. In 2002, at the programme output level, institutional development (or 'process') indicators were added to the existing list of 'product'-focussed indicators.

‘Partnerships for Innovation’

Over the years, a number of empirical observations and reflections about the role of research projects and pro-poor innovation culminated in a fundamental re-design of the manner in which the programme would be executed in its final three years. In summary, the programme wanted to move away from a ‘linear’ view of research, where academic research is commissioned prior to and largely separate from concerns about ‘dissemination of outputs leading to uptake’, to a more realistic view in which the users and providers of useful knowledge interact in often quite complex systems governed by institutional behaviour.

This ‘innovation systems’ approach, mainstreamed by the CPHP in 2002, is grounded in a growing body of study of national systems of innovation (NSI); in adopting it, CPHP was drawing on best practice from within and outside the programme; and it had been validated by a study of work undertaken by the CPHP in the South Asia regional portfolio.

Adopting a ‘systems’ approach to managing innovation carried a number of important implications for the programme. Firstly, the ensuing call asked for research proposals that not only had technical outputs², but which also would actively research the institutional systems within which the research would translate into innovation. Secondly, this approach positively required that the proposals be put together and managed by coalitions of (mainly local) partners, who would be the key stakeholders in the research outputs. Thirdly, there were implications for the way in which the PAC exercised its role within this changing context (of which more later).

For its closing phase, the programme felt it was appropriate to re-frame its work in regional terms, rather than production system terms, given the emphasis on promotion and impact at this stage in its cycle. This would allow regional, cross-regional – and, in some cases, cross-programme – opportunities for validation and promotion to be developed with appropriate coalitions of institutional partners. It therefore aggregated the four production system-oriented logframes into a single master logframe, and developed regional logframes which contribute to delivering the programme outputs in each of four regions.

Governance and devolution

The CPHP’s deliberate strategy of devolution was vital to its ability to implement a regionally-led, participative research strategy that interacted constantly with the innovation systems and institutions within countries. Over the 9 years, regional representation has become progressively more important to the functioning of the programme. At the outset, coordinators were appointed - sometimes part-time - to help with the facilitation and logistics of projects at a local level. This role has evolved to the stage where, in latter years, the four regional offices have been a central part of the management of the programme: developing regional strategies, identifying local research priority themes, encouraging the formation of local coalitions of partners, undertaking preliminary screening of projects, supporting project teams, and undertaking many other functions.

2 At this late stage in the RNRRS, DFID was encouraging projects that would build on, and more widely disseminate, existing research outputs. As such, ‘new science’ received less attention than research into institutional systems. The PAC agreed that the balance was appropriate for the call at that time, but not without some dissenting opinion. The PAC also urged that research into institutional systems should be as academically rigorous as science research.

There were management consequences of this decentralisation, not the subject of this review, which devolved several functions of programme management and budgetary control to the regional offices.

Changes were also required in the governance arrangements, particularly to the structure of project approvals (see Section 5). Local advisory bodies (of one sort or another) were set up in the focus regions to help the Regional Coordinators develop regional strategies and research priorities, and to undertake a preliminary screening of project proposals against these priorities. Care was taken to ensure that these local bodies did not assume the wider roles of the PAC; rather, they strengthened and complemented the PAC, which could then be confident that it had sound regional-level advice – an aspect that it was aware that could not be comprehensively covered by a UK-based body.

4 Contribution to strategy

What is strategy?

A study of the minutes reveals that every meeting has held discussions of a strategic nature, to a greater or lesser extent. Often, it has been part of the programme manager's update; at other times, there has been a specific agenda item on a strategic issue, frequently supported by commissioned papers. This is, at one level, evidence of the engagement of the PAC in strategic matters. It is reinforced by the observation that issues have been returned to at subsequent meetings, showing that advice has been actively incorporated into programme planning, and re-reviewed at the PAC.

Strategic discussions have covered a broad range of subjects, including the content of the calls for proposals, the geographic focus and the relationship of work to regional priorities, and the way in which specific issues should be explored within a research programme (for example, food safety or transport issues).

At one level, the programme has been shaped by the nature of the proposals submitted. A reactive approach is appropriate for a programme that is expected to be responsive to the needs of the poor, provided that the proposals themselves originate as a result of a process that accurately reflects those needs. The shift towards a regionally-driven focus for the programme has been, in large part, driven by that requirement.

However, the programme has to be seen as more than the sum of its constituent projects. The PAC's strategic concerns have been to ensure that:

- the projects that it has encouraged and eventually approved are representative of generic researchable constraints that have wide applicability to both (potentially) large numbers of people and in a range of geographic settings;
- that the overall pattern of research is complementary;
- and critical gaps in international knowledge are being addressed.

The PAC has reviewed the project database as a whole from time to time, looking at these questions of content and balance.

The calls that have been put out by the CPHP from time to time have been framed with advice from the PAC, who have also advised more generally on commissioning strategies.

Science content

Much discussion has taken place within the PAC on the preservation of an overview of science issues, particularly as they emerge from an international view of science outputs across the regions. This was a particular issue when the production systems focus was replaced by a regional focus. Whilst the regional focus was undoubtedly the correct response to a more needs-based approach, and to the delivery implications of the 'Partnerships for Innovation' strategy, there are questions left as to whether 'science' was downgraded as a result. There is no clear evidence one way or the other; but it is clear that attention needs to be given to the preservation of the scientific themes. There is a

feeling from PAC members that science issues have become relatively neglected; and that PAC has a particularly advantageous position to advise on these.

The perceived dilemma of whether to maintain the integrity of a UK science base or to develop local capacity has regularly surfaced. The general view of the PAC has been clear: that these are not mutually exclusive concepts; that the programme can and should make a useful and necessary contribution to building a competent local capacity; but that this would be hindered rather than helped by the absence of a strong UK science base with an international perspective (a matter rather out of their hands).

The change in focus of the programme from emphasis on research outputs to the need to consider, in addition, uptake and impact was strongly supported by the PAC.

Country and regional strategies

From the 1st meeting, a number of Country Framework Documents (CFDs) were commissioned by the CPHP from UK-based experts to guide the development of proposals in the focus countries. These were to be distributed to the UK science base and the institutions that had been invited to submit Concept Notes. The PAC made considerable comment on these documents and on their revisions at the 14th meeting. At the 23rd meeting six focus countries were reported to have updated CFDs.

In 2002, the CFDs were then superseded by CPHP Regional Strategies, prepared by the regional coordinators in consultation with regional stakeholders; again, these were comprehensively reviewed and debated by the PAC.

There was a period during which the relationship between the CPHP Regional Strategies and the overall programme strategy (and indeed the CFDs) was unclear; this was later resolved with the Regional Strategies and the UK office's work plan each delivering a part of the overall programme logframe. The CFDs were then discontinued.

The question of the role of regional strategies was discussed at the 31st meeting. It was observed that these contained much more than strategies for the region; but the projects submitted had a narrow focus on only a few crops.

How to monitor and evaluate CPHP

At the 7th meeting, the question of identifying broad themes for reviews was raised. At the 9th meeting, there was an opportunity to reflect on the performance of the programme over the past two years. The topics suggested by the Programme Manager were:

- A look at the current status of the programme: does the portfolio of projects meet the objectives of the purpose and the programme as a whole?
- Approval/monitoring of projects: no independent review had been commissioned to date to see if projects meet the objectives;
- Dissemination/ level of dissemination outputs – a need for improvement?

There was considerable criticism of the programme's Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs): they should be qualitative not quantitative, they should address the ten-year strategy and the problem with them was at the purpose level. At the subsequent PAC meeting, the programme manager reported that the logframes and the OVIs had been revised.

Strategic planning

At the 15th meeting, there was a discussion of the formulation of a strategic plan for the CPHP:

- the country focus (the role and funding of country coordinators, linkages with other programmes);
- needs identification (poverty focus, immediate and longer-term needs, modification of the production system purposes);
- programme administration (widening calls for Concept Notes, links with other sectors, more time for discussion of strategic issues by the PAC);
- uptake pathways (to be increased, methods of improving uptake to be assessed, boundaries between research and development should not be artificial).

The 16th meeting returned to the discussion on the strategy for the programme for 1999-2005. It emphasised the need to aim at a broad framework strategy, which would initially be produced for DFID but have a wider appeal to developing countries and institutions. The PAC felt there should be particular emphasis on poverty. Projects should be explicit about contributions to poverty alleviation, for which uptake is the key. The programme must emphasise knowledge that was appropriate to the poor; and the form in which knowledge was passed to end-users was critical. The major agenda that the programme intended to follow, the projects to be funded, and the outputs expected should be clearly defined. A balance between country focus and regional applicability should be kept in mind.

The 17th meeting considered a number of new areas of research including food safety, market liberalisation, world trade trends and organic farming. Relations with the private sector and how these would affect sustainability, particularly in the long term, were discussed. The challenges for the programme included:

- problems of access of poor producers in remote areas and poor consumers in urban areas;
- pressure of the urban labour market;
- demand in towns from rural supply areas.

Subsequent calls for proposals put more emphasis on access to market issues and commercialisation of crops in the peri-urban area.

Strategic issue papers

In 1999, shortly after the change of programme manager, a set of strategy papers were commissioned from external experts through a competitive tendering process. A number of strategic issues had been identified, through discussions between the PAC and the programme management, which were felt to be of direct relevance to current or emerging trends in the post-harvest sector, or to be of significant contextual significance. These formed the basis of the call. In all cases, the expert authors whom CPHP commissioned were asked to give a short but comprehensive appraisal of the issues

involved, summarising the state of knowledge, and to conclude with suggested key strategic implications for the CPHP.

Ten topics were originally commissioned:

- 1 Population, migration and rural diversification
- 2 World trade trends and the development of traditional food systems
- 3 The cash crop versus food crop debate
- 4 Promoting and protecting traditional food products
- 5 Micro-nutrient changes during food processing and storage
- 6 Women in post-harvest operations: reducing the drudgery
- 7 Genetically modified organisms and food security
- 8 Agricultural trade reforms
- 9 Safety in the food chain
- 10 Livestock feed

Six of these papers were successfully completed and eventually published; on the PAC's advice, they were also put on the CPHP UK website (17th meeting). Two were judged not to be of the quality required and of these one was re-commissioned and is in press; one other is in press; another is awaiting completion. These papers were intensively discussed by the PAC and have been used by the CPHP in a number of situations thereafter: in informing strategic debates at the PAC, assessing projects, shaping calls for proposals, contributing to the CPHP's Regional Strategies, and general dissemination.

In addition to this clutch of papers, there has been a number of *ad-hoc*, issue-specific, policy papers presented to the PAC on various occasions, including such topics as entrepreneurship, environment, gender, partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, NGOs, transport and markets. A full listing of the policy papers that the PAC worked with is given at Annex 4.

Institutions and partnerships

As originally envisaged, the programme's purpose was research; it would not support institutional strengthening *per se* (1st meeting), the argument being that this was the responsibility of ODA's country programmes. In the first call, the CPHP was required by ODA to contract projects through UK organisations; an advertisement was placed to encourage such organisations to apply for 'pre-qualification' prior to being invited to tender. This requirement was subsequently relaxed. In the 16th meeting, a change in DFID's thinking is recorded: that capacity-building in focus countries was essential for sustainability. The PAC noted that this would be country-specific, unlike the RNRSS science outputs which were meant to be of wider relevance.

In an early (3rd) meeting, the hope was expressed that there would be in-country steering groups or committees. These were set up at various times in Ghana, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Tanzania. By the 12th meeting, the minutes report that CPHP was considered ahead of other programmes by linking projects, forming steering groups and establishing links to the bilateral programmes. Three country coordinators were in position by the 14th meeting; and a fourth was appointed in East Africa by the 22nd. Their role would include a greater devolution of the central management functions. It was reported that the coordinators had shown a high level of inter-personal skills and that their role within the programme was growing; this role was a strategic one. The feeling of ownership was felt to be critical to the enthusiasm with which a new facility or technology is greeted and promoted in-country.

As part of the deliberate policy of shifting the balance of project management to local partners, a considerable amount of training was provided by the programme in the design of projects and logframes in order to build local capacity. This capacity-building was considered essential in order to 'level the playing field': achieving a balance between encouraging local participation whilst at the same time ensuring that project inputs (especially the technical ones) could be sourced in an open manner to ensure the best quality. The question was raised as to how a research programme could include all appropriate partners. It was decided that the best solution would be for the regional coordinators to keep a data base on local partners. On the other hand, the PAC also expressed concern that the 'balance of power' could swing too much in favour of regional planning and create the risk that the programme could lose its science focus and international impact.

The 26th meeting was given a summary of observations on partnerships; their diversity and their role were emphasised; as was the need for project identification, participatory process and uptake. It was also noted by a regional coordinator that relationships with the private sector were weak. In the 27th meeting, more funds were approved for overseas organisations; and the longer term planning for an exit strategy envisaged leaving behind networks with an improved capability to work in partnerships. However the term 'exit strategy' was regarded as too final; a 'transfer and development strategy' was thought to be a better description.

At the 28th meeting, it was proposed that, after an initial screening of selected Concept Notes, the successful ones would be developed by the project partners collectively.

The CPHP's new strategy for 2002-2005, 'Partnerships for Innovation', was discussed at a meeting of the PAC with the regional coordinators in 2002 (29th meeting). DFID seemed enthusiastic about the 'systems' approach; and it was suggested that there should be an attempt to make it more understandable to a wider audience. The regional coordinators would be given responsibility for identifying work areas, and management of a large proportion of the programme development budgets.

It was noted that the new strategy was intended to put emphasis on both technological and institutional innovation. A distinction was made between coalitions – which are short-term – and partnerships – which are long-term. It was stated that the newly-formed regional advisory bodies would provide the expertise and knowledge of regional issues; whereas the PAC had the advantage of being able to advise on governance, transparency, design, biometrics, environmental issues and a broad knowledge of the subject area. On one Concept Note, concern was expressed as to whether the particular managing partner could hold a coalition together (30th meeting).

There have been a number of references by the PAC to linkages with other programmes, such as health in relation to food safety, and HIV/AIDS because of the effect on labour and cropping patterns. At the 18th meeting, reproductive health, child health, clean water and environmental interventions were suggested. A suggestion in the 31st PAC meeting for linkages with CIRAD on a groundnut project was followed up with a visit by programme management to Montpellier, but not pursued further since the concept was judged to replicate existing technology.

5 Contribution to project quality

Concept notes

Concept Notes can arise from new calls, from unsolicited proposals, and as follow-on proposals from existing projects. Concept Notes are assessed by PAC members using a pro-forma questionnaire, completed in advance and used as a basis for discussion at the meetings. Originally, a ten-point score was awarded against each assessment criterion and an aggregate score derived; but this was later replaced by a simpler A/B/C rating:

- A Acceptable with no or minor modifications required
- B Proposal approved but with substantial modifications required
- C Rejected

Concept Notes have, on occasion, been referred to external reviewers for further specialist opinion, especially on areas (such as transport) not covered by the experience of the PAC members.

In all, 246 concept notes have been reviewed by the Committee to date. 153 projects have been recommended for proceeding to the Project Memorandum stage, reviewed, and approved. At the 3rd meeting of the PAC, for example, 43 concept notes were reviewed; 18 were rejected, 6 were referred for revision and 19 accepted for proceeding to the PMF stage.

Over the period, reasons for rejection of CNs have included:

- The Concept Note was too general and lacked focus
- Technically-focussed without being set in context
- The relevance and need was questionable
- Not well-presented
- Poor socio-economic considerations
- Impact unclear and questions over development relevance
- The Concept Note was more for technology transfer than research
- No linkages to the strategic thinking of the programme
- No evidence of demand for the technology, not clearly demand-led
- Previous literature and work ignored

Changes in project documentation

A new Concept Note form (revised to reflect DFID's new emphasis on achieving developmental impact) was introduced at the 24th meeting and the PAC was asked to comment on it.

At the 29th meeting, a further revision to the CN was discussed. It was stated that changes to the various forms had been made to harmonise the project cycle management process with the new strategy ('Partnerships for Innovation'). Also, a clearer distinction was now being made between the

purposes of the CN and PMF. The CN would ask proposers to justify and contextualise the problem being addressed and to identify the key stakeholders. By not asking for detailed activity plans at this stage, the PAC noted that it was more difficult to allow judgments to be made regarding the potential of the project to achieve its objectives. This had to await the PMF, which focused on work plans, budgets and project management structures and processes.

Invariably, the programme manager has consolidated the comments made by the PAC and used them as the basis for writing back to the project proposers in order to guide re-submissions. In this way, a direct link can be drawn between the PAC advice and project quality.

Project Memoranda

Project Memoranda have been reviewed in a similar manner; but given the smaller numbers, the greater detail, and the greater likelihood that the proposal would proceed, considerably more time has been spent by the PAC in assessing and discussing individual proposals. A similar format has been used for assessing PMFs as for CNs, leading to discussion and a classification into:

- A PMF acceptable as it stands or with minor adjustments
- B PMF needs some reworking, based on comments (and possibly re-discussion with PAC)
- C PMF rejected outright or needs to be completely restructured before re-submission

In the earlier years, when a large number of proposals were being screened, it was agreed that two PAC members should take the lead in reviewing each PMF; this was later revised, since when all PAC members have reviewed all PMFs.

Common comments on the PMFs have included:

- Lack of attention to the questions at the CN stage
- The costs and value for money
- Dissemination pathways were often unclear or unimaginative
- Coverage of environmental aspects needs improvement
- Need for more involvement of local collaborators
- Biometrics information poor e.g. in sampling
- Financial tables in many projects inadequate

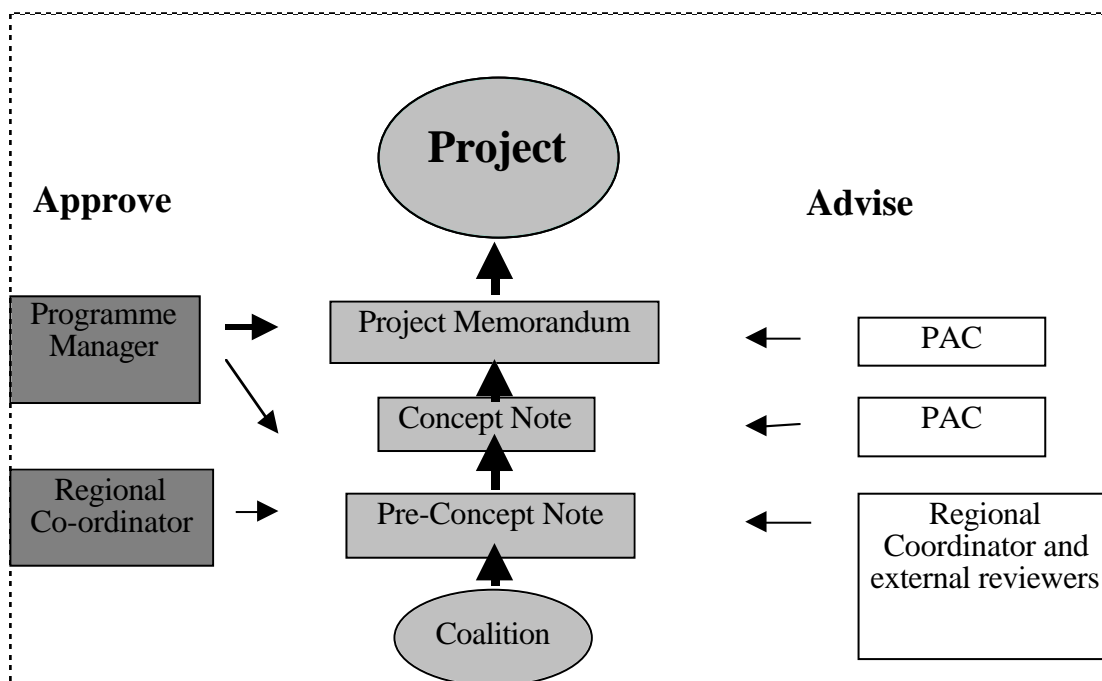
On a few occasions, project proposers have been invited to present their proposals and answer questions in person, but this has been in cases where a new branch of research was being discussed (e.g. ethical trade, or the functioning of national grain markets) or where complex technical issues needed to be understood by the PAC (as in the cassava transgenic work). It has not been adopted as general practice, since it is felt that the possibility of better project assessment would not outweigh the difficulties of dealing with questions of bias. A clearly laid-out, standardised and document-based process is felt to give the best basis for a transparent and equitable bidding system. This became apparent when the Programme deliberately opened up access to regionally-based project teams.

The devolution of certain CPHP management functions to Regional Offices has had many implications, not least for the project approval system. In the last call (2002), whilst the overall call laid out themes and priorities, it was left to the regional coordinators to interpret the call against the

respective Regional Strategy and the particular needs of the region. Practices differed from region to region, but participative needs identification was undertaken in all cases. This led to the generation of Concept Notes, which were reviewed (again, often using local panels) for strategic ‘fit’ at the local level before being passed on to the PAC.

The PAC’s advisory comments at the Concept Note stage, which had been passed on to proposers by the programme manager, were later re-visited by the PAC in order to assess whether they had been addressed. This is recorded in the project documentation, along with the assessment records, and provides direct evidence of the input of the PAC. The Programme Manager is required to include in the Annual Report to DFID an account of the PAC’s recommendations and action taken, and to justify any deviation from the PAC’s advice.

Project Selection Process 2002



The nature of advisory inputs

There has been a general requirement that PAC members’ comments should be provided in a prior written submission, which would then be amplified and put to the test in discussion at the meetings. This has been a demanding discipline and, not surprisingly, standards have slipped from time to time; but the practice has showed that it is an effective way of obtaining and recording considered opinions, and of ensuring that the programme manager would end up with a clear consensus view from the PAC. PAC advice has always been presented as a ‘cabinet view’, and attributions of comments to individuals are not disclosed to outside parties.

The advice of the PAC is frequently more subtle than a ‘pass/fail’ approach to project rating, and the early demise of a points-rating system reflected that. In many cases, the essence of a worthwhile researchable topic has been recognised in a difficult project framework; and encouragement has been

given to the proposers to restructure the proposal – often by breaking it down into phases with intermediate milestone targets.

The programme management (at the UK and regional level) have found it useful when discussing project submissions with proposers to draw on the PAC advice, and to be able to cite the detailed and independent comments from the specialist members. In the words of one regional coordinator: “The PAC, being a completely independent body, increases the confidence of CPHP stakeholders in the project approval process. On our side, remaining outside the project selection process (at least CN and PMF) leaves us in a more neutral position. This is advantageous both for the sake of maintaining good networks with stakeholders and also because we are at times involved in supporting project development.”

6 Contribution to uptake, dissemination and evaluation

Uptake and impact

In its earliest discussions, the programme manager informed the PAC that the programme would avoid becoming involved in areas that were closer to technology transfer than research. It could not provide funding for uptake and would not monitor impact, which was not in its remit and for which it did not have funds. Nevertheless, the view of impact has changed over time and there have been several discussions in the PAC on how to define it, how to obtain verifiable evidence that it has been achieved, and how to link up with many people working on the issue. At the 9th meeting, the ODA Adviser stated that justification for the next phase of financing the project would need to demonstrate impact. The potential of the outputs to produce impact was important.

Following the publication of the 1997 White Paper on 'Eliminating Poverty' (discussed at the 12th meeting), it was suggested by the DFID Adviser that there would be less focus in the RNRRS on natural resources and more on the concept of livelihoods and the reduction of poverty, and that impact would be even more important. Thus an important question for projects was: What effect do they have on the poor? Researchers would have to focus on what was important for the poor and not only on the science. However, during the meeting, it was emphasised that outputs from research may take three to five years. The PAC advised that the programme should insist that the project deliver realistic outputs; uptake can take very much longer. OVIs were felt not to be a cost effective way for monitoring impact as they would not be meaningful until a lapse of, say, ten years.

At the 17th meeting, it was felt that the definitions of promotion and dissemination were not sufficiently clear; and the programme manager offered to seek clarification from DFID. It was agreed that work needed to be commissioned to identify promotional strategies for existing projects that are behind schedule in disseminating their results, and to ensure uptake.

Concern was expressed by DFID reviewers that the programme might go too far upstream. To this effect, the programme manager stated that more funds for dissemination might be available in the latter years of the programme (23rd meeting). It was recognised that there was a wealth of information but that it was not easily accessible. Information-sharing, the transfer of lessons learnt from one region to another and use of the web would contribute to this.

A direct outcome of these discussions has been an increased investment by the programme in communication, networking, advocacy, information-sharing (above and beyond what projects are doing) and knowledge management. The programme management is currently in discussion with DFID about long-term curatorship of this knowledge after the programme ends.

At the 29th meeting, there was a discussion on the impact of RNRRS programmes in which it was observed that DFID was looking for success stories, but that review information was only available on outputs and uptake. It was suggested that DFID should look at aggregation of impact rather than impact by individual programmes. The programme's knowledge management strategy would also have to contribute by providing stories of impact and by maximising the impact of past research through access to information. Research would have to show impact to receive further funding after 2005 (31st meeting). It was observed that the goal posts had changed from ten years ago, so there was

a concern that earlier projects might be regarded as a failure.

A discussion on translating innovations into economic growth and poverty reduction at the 32nd meeting emphasised that institutional arrangements were crucial for uptake of research. On the other hand, the capacity of many sub-Saharan African NAROs (National Agricultural Research Organisations) was noted to be diminishing.

The CPHP programme in India was observed to be unique in being involved with research policy aspects, and the coordinator was involved in new partnerships which were using research policy frameworks.

Evaluations and reviews

At the 15th meeting, an output-to-purpose review conducted by the CPHP's Impact Assessment Adviser was presented and discussed.

Prior to the launch of the final three-year phase of the programme, a broad review of the programme to date was commissioned from external consultants. It was designed by the Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser, with advice from the PAC from the 24th meeting onward. DFID, collaborating institutions, programme management, user organisations and regional coordinators were involved. The review team reported to the PAC at the 26th meeting and made 21 recommendations. This was a significant review, in that it provided support for the re-design of the last phase of the programme, based on the innovation systems approach, and implemented through local coalitions of partners.

Annual reports

Each year, the PAC has advised on the Annual Report to DFID. Whilst the precise pattern has varied over the years, advice has usually been sought at an early stage on the broad design and layout, and at a later stage on the final draft. In all cases, the comments by DFID on the previous year's report have been factored in to the next.

As well as providing inputs and comments, the PAC is effectively approving the report, and giving assurance that the programme is reporting faithfully to DFID. The PAC Chair provides an introductory foreword to the report.

For example, at the 21st meeting, the Programme Manager reported on DFID's response to the Annual Report: it supported the inclusion of such new areas as policy research and ethical trading, raised the need to identify why previous research did not lead to development impact, and applauded the work on uptake promotion. The 32nd meeting commented at length on the 2003 Annual Report. The PAC's inputs into the style and contents of the report were deemed useful by the programme management; and DFID had used the report to judge how well the programme was being managed.

Final Technical Reports (FTRs)

It was suggested that a scientific editor would work with the PAC to develop a strategy to optimise the outputs from a particular research project (7th meeting). ODA suggested having a staff member to formulate a view on project FTRs as a whole. The FTRs needed to be drawn together to publish impact of the Programme. The 16th meeting recorded that FTRs could be used more widely. In the

event, they have tended not to be, although occasionally a project has requested access to an FTR for reference.

Final Technical Reports (FTR) are customarily subject to expert external review, and on occasions, a PAC member has been used as the appropriate expert.

Each year, Project Completion Summary Sheets (for completed projects) as well as yearly progress reports (for ongoing projects) are presented in the CPHP's Annual Report to DFID; but apart from that route, there has been no formal process for the PAC to be informed of the outcome of the projects that they earlier approved. It is quite strongly felt that an opportunity has been missed to 'close the loop' and learn lessons.

Gender issues

It is recognised that post-harvest issues are significantly gender-oriented to women. It was suggested that CPHP link with the World Bank/Food and Agriculture Organisation Women in Development Programme (9th meeting). The 17th meeting suggested 'women in agriculture' as a new area of research because of the drudgery and the amount of time they spend on post-harvest activities. The transport projects are regarded as having the possibility of reducing drudgery for women, since transport (certainly in sub-Saharan Africa) is primarily a women's role.

Environmental issues

The PAC has a responsibility to ensure that environmental issues are given due consideration, with a mandatory member of the Committee being an environmental specialist. The general experience has been that crop post-harvest activities are essentially environmentally benign or neutral, unless very widespread uptake of a particular technology brings particular impacts. Nevertheless, some projects have had environmental aspects (such as waste utilisation, genetic manipulation, energy requirements) needing appraisal. A guidance paper was commissioned from the environmental specialist at an early stage; and, as a result of its recommendations, an environmental analysis became an obligatory part of project submissions across all the RNRRS programmes.

Communication and knowledge management

The CPHP's concerns with communication have extended from project-level means of disseminating outputs, through wider issues of sharing information and experiences across the programme, to supporting networks of interested parties. Communication has involved all forms of media: print (including local language), spoken word, broadcast media and web-based information provision and support to networking; as well as creating a face-to-face interaction. The programme has progressively developed a communication and knowledge management strategy to guide this aspect of its work, and, at all stages, advice from the PAC has been actively sought. Some PAC members, having specific and relevant experience of, say, website development or radio broadcasting, have been consulted individually. The programme has rated this advice as invaluable.

Policy influence

The relationship with DFID is generally rated highly by the PAC members. The presence of the Natural Resources Lead Adviser is felt to have been very helpful in providing an open and informative assessment of DFID policies and practices. It is less clear how well this has worked the other way around. It is felt that DFID could have made more of the opportunity to use the PAC as a source of policy advice. One view expressed is that the PAC might have benefited from a more formal link to DFID, enabling it to record views in addition to its advisory line through the programme manager. This view is often been couched in terms of a wish that the PAC could be proactive rather than reactive at a policy level.

Cross-programme activities

There is ample backing for the idea of cross-programme working, but the reality seems to have been that funding has not been available to support it; and, in the cases where proposals have been identified as suitable for cross-programme support, that the mismatch between programme priorities and countries of concentration has frustrated the prospect. With these structural problems, one PAC member has observed that the PAC is effectively powerless to promote cross-programme activities.

Similarly, despite good intentions, there has been little exchange of experience of the PAC mechanism at the Chair level. One notable exception has been the mobilisation of views (led by George Rothschild) on the 2003 DFID consultation on agricultural policy, and inputs to UK House of Commons Select Committees.

7 Summary lessons

Overall conclusion

The general conclusion drawn is that the CPHP PAC has performed a necessary and useful role during the lifetime of the programme, and that its advice and support to programme management has been both relevant and welcome. It has achieved this role effectively, making good use of the PAC members' time, and at a modest cost. Its effectiveness can be ascribed to having a clearly defined role, having a carefully selected membership, being advisory and strictly independent, having well-managed procedures and, not least, being carefully chaired and maintaining a good and sympathetic relationship to the programme and its staff. More opportunities could have been made to share lessons across programmes at a PAC level, to strengthen project lesson-learning through more systematic reporting back, and to have more structured links to DFID to improve policy debate.

Specific lessons

1 Relevance of a PAC

Broadly speaking, the PAC has concerned itself with, and has gained experience in, matters of: governance, strategic direction of scientific exploration, the formation of appropriate partnerships for research, project quality control, specialist scientific inputs, devolution of the management of research programmes and projects to regional and country levels, chains of accountability, and monitoring and evaluation. As a group, it has ensured that programme management has received independent and transparent advice on the Concept Notes and Project Memoranda, thus assuring the contractors of the fairness of the system. Whilst the precise organisational form of a PAC may not carry forward into future arrangements for the management of DFID research programmes, it is felt that the issues handled by the PAC will still be present, and will need to be managed in some way. It is concluded that these lessons learned are of relevance to the future design of research management practices.

2 Scope of membership

Membership of an oversight body needs to represent all of the key disciplines of relevance to the programme, and to be of sufficient 'critical mass' (in practice, of the order of five to ten members) in order for cross-disciplinary discussions to be meaningful. This seems to be of particular importance in the crop post-harvest area, which covers a large spread of disciplines.

3 Independence

The evidence suggests that the independence and objectivity of the PAC's advice has been an important factor for both the programme management and the project partners. A lesson here is that the members of a governance body should be viewed, in effect, as 'non-executive directors', and should not have affiliations likely to lead to conflicts of interest.

4 Relationships

Issues of 'chemistry' and the skill and experience of the Chair may be less tangible, but have been no less important to the effective operation of the PAC. A high level of continuity in

membership has aided this. There has been a good rapport throughout, between the programme management and the PAC, with a strong sense that the PAC is a committed supporter of the CPHP. Many of the members interviewed emphasised the importance of the strong leadership given by the Chair.

5 Cost

A clear conclusion is that programme advisory and oversight arrangements need not add a great cost burden. The CPHP PAC has, on average, added just 0.77% to research costs.

6 Governance role

The distinction between governance and management is an important one, and the clear maintenance of this distinction in the CPHP PAC has been beneficial. The PAC has a governance (oversight) role to ensure that the programme is maintaining the correct policy direction in relation to DFID goals, and to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure programme balance, evaluation, etc. The more managerial aspects, such as contributions to strategy and specialist inputs to projects, are *advisory* to the Programme Manager, who has the executive responsibility for decision-making, taking these and other considerations into account. The lesson here is that this careful distinction (between support and interference) needs to be reflected in the terms of reference, but is in practice dependent upon trust and personal skills. Expert and sensitive chairing have been important; and trust has built on, and in turn reinforced, a good relationship with the programme.

7 Monitoring of inputs

It is important to maintain an audit/paperwork trail of the strategic and advisory inputs made to the Programme Manager, so that the use and impact of the contributions can later be assessed.

8 Science strategy

The PAC has concerned itself with strategy a great deal. This has been a central part of its remit, and the strategic discussions and the guidance derived from them have been reportedly of significant value to the programme. At the outset, the CPHP was defined in terms of science-led clusters (production and commodity systems) with projects led by UK-based science organisations. The PAC's then predominantly science-based membership reflected this pattern. Over the lifetime of the programme, perspectives have changed. The 1997 DFID White Paper, marked the introduction of a more rigorous focus on the way in which research leads to benefits to the poor; and the programme's own experience led it to conclude that, in addition to the technical investigations, attention needed to be given to the systems by which science knowledge could be translated into innovations which in turn would deliver real benefits 'on the ground'. This was manifested in many ways; from the Partnerships for Innovation paradigm, through the regional devolution of programme management, to the composition of the PAC. There have always been active concerns in PAC discussions about 'balance'; and in particular whether the PAC is paying enough attention to the bigger picture in science terms. Specifically, discussions have highlighted the need to ensure that the overall pattern of research reflects international priorities, and that it is 'additive', in the sense that it fills genuine gaps and complements existing knowledge. There has also been concern that, whatever the balance of issues, a *scientific research approach* should not be neglected. These are, of course, the

defining concerns of what is ‘centrally’ researchable and what is of immediate local interest. This review found that there were strong and varied views on exactly how this balance should be struck, but no disagreement that this is a central role of an oversight body such as the PAC. The conclusions are that both a ‘science strategy’ and an ‘implementation systems strategy’ need to be considered; that questions of balance need to be continually in mind; and that the CPHP PAC has given very active consideration to these issues. The lesson is that more formal analytic tools would have been of use in guiding the PAC and in giving a more structured approach to these discussions.

9 Project approval

The later development of a three-stage project selection process by the programme in 2002 conferred several advantages. A local selection process in-country ensured strategic ‘fit’ against regional priorities; and the following two-stage selection process by the PAC could concentrate upon cross-regional issues of scientific coherence and complementarity, as well as balance across the regions.

10 Lesson-learning

This could have been more deliberately factored in. The fact that project Final Technical Reports have not been circulated to the PAC, for example, has hampered their ability to monitor the success of the programme. In retrospect, more opportunity should have been created for an exchange of experiences and lessons, between research programmes at a PAC-to-PAC level. The absence of this probably reflects a more general lack of contact at a programme-to-programme level.

11 Strategic advice

The PAC has given extensive and continuous inputs at a strategic level. Programme management acknowledged the importance of the PAC as a source of informed advice – the evidence is apparent in the minuted advice, and the follow-up actions reported.

12 Devolution

The PAC has reviewed and changed how its governance and advisory functions are discharged within the changing management context, as programme management has progressively devolved to Regional Offices and as the complementary role of the UK office has been adjusted.

13 Project quality

There is strong documentary evidence of the extent of specialist advice given to the programme management at all stages of the project cycle: from the design of calls, through the selection of Concept Notes to the assessment of Project Memoranda. The ‘paper trail’ is good, and advice has fed on to project managers, and is evident in the re-design and submission of proposals. The Committee’s contributions to the PMFs have been both technical and strategic, with country and technical knowledge and experience of development playing a role. The spread of disciplines in the PAC has been of considerable advantage in this, particularly in ensuring that the developmental, environmental, socio-economic, biometric and nutritional aspects have been given enough consideration. The PAC has also been of material

assistance in dealing with the very large numbers of project documents, particularly Concept Notes.

14 DFID relationship

The ODA/DFID Adviser has played a very important role in keeping the programme and the Committee up-to-date on DFID policy and strategy. The PAC constitutes a large body of specialist expertise, and there was some sense that not enough opportunity has been taken – by either the PAC or DFID being more proactive – to make use of that expertise in policy dialogue. A separate channel of communication would have helped, since there has been reluctance to use PAC meetings for wider debates on issues that might have ranged beyond the PAC’s immediate responsibilities, or which might have detracted from the DFID/Programme Manager relationship. Indeed, such a mechanism might have been useful at a cross-programme level. The PAC also felt that it could have been more proactive in building links with the other DFID programmes.

15 Annual reporting

The PAC has provided considerable input into the style and contents of the programme’s Annual Reports to DFID, and fulfilled an assurance function to DFID that the reports were accurate and comprehensive.

16 Impact

The difficult discussion of long-term impact on poverty arising from crop post-harvest research has regularly been a topic for the PAC. Not only have all the familiar issues of time-scale, attribution, and so on been discussed, but more specifically have the nature and role of the programme’s outputs. From the outset, there has been no doubt that the higher-level goal of the programme has been poverty alleviation. The initial assumption was that the programme delivered research outputs (which might validate and even achieve poverty impact at a project demonstration level), but that their wider uptake and impact was in the hands of others. The CPHP felt that its responsibility was to produce outputs that were in the **most appropriate and useful form** for intermediaries and end-users to apply. DFID’s more rigorous poverty focus following the 1997 White Paper, gave the CPHP a welcome mandate to extend research into what it had come to realise was a key constraint to the conversion of research knowledge into successful innovation: namely the institutional systems and transactions that govern uptake. Technical and social sciences had to be researched in tandem. This has been enshrined in changes to the programme master logframe, which re-casts programme outputs in terms of **successful delivery and mobilisation of knowledge** by the intermediary organisations and institutional systems that work with and for the poor. As a lesson, more feedback on reasons for success and failure in uptake, and any impact studies, would have helped increase the quality of project commissioning.

Annex 1 Terms of Reference

For DFID Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy Programme Advisory Committees

- 1 The Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) will advise the Programme Manager for the Crop Post-Harvest Programme on Programme Strategy taking an overview of the shape, direction and implementation of the Programme to meet its objectives, and address priority renewable natural resources knowledge needs of poor people.
- 2 The PAC is expected, *inter alia*, to provide the following support to the Programme Manager:
 - Review and advise on the strategic direction of the Programme through Programme development studies and other reports identifying demand-led research problems of specified groups of poor people in developing countries;
 - Advise Programme Manager on Programme structure and Project commissioning and selection procedures ensuring adherence to Programme objectives and planned Outputs;
 - Review concept notes and external appraisals of Project proposals to ensure they meet DFID departmental objectives and demand criteria (including poverty reduction objectives, the international development targets, adequate coverage of cross-cutting issues, broad range of institutions including those in developing countries, capacity building in-country, high technical quality and sufficient identification of promotion channels);
 - Advise on uptake channels and opportunities for packaging and promoting research products;
 - Where appropriate, review Project monitoring reports and Outputs, advising the Programme Manager on remedial action;
 - Advise on effective partnerships with target institutions in developing countries, and with the DFID bilateral Programmes and Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research as appropriate;
 - Advise on the scope for effective collaboration with other RNR research Programmes especially where there may be opportunity for packaging or jointly promoting the uptake of research products;
 - Advise the Programme Manager on the need to commission periodic independent reviews of Projects and other Programme activities; and
 - Review the annual Programme reports and endorse their content before submission to DFID's Rural Livelihoods Department (RLD).
- 3 The PAC is advisory and has no executive powers over the management of the Programme or selection of Projects.
- 4 PAC members should not submit concept notes or project memoranda where they are the Lead Proposer.

Membership of Programme Advisory Committee

- 5 The PAC will comprise not less than 50% representation external to the managing organisation and have as its core:
- Independent (permanent) Chairman, agreed by NRRD;
 - The Programme Manager;
 - DFID Lead Adviser;
 - Natural Resources Economist;
 - Social (rural) development specialist; and
 - Environmental specialist.

Secretariat

- 6 The PAC Secretariat will be provided by the Programme Manager. The Secretariat will circulate papers for appraisal, review or comment; establish PAC meeting agendas in consultation with the Chairman and take a formal record of each PAC meeting for circulation (on approval of the Chairman) to all members of the PAC and to RLD (Research Management Team).

Duties of Members

- 7 Members of the PAC are expected to attend all PAC meetings called by the PAC Secretariat. The number and frequency of PAC meetings will be established by the PAC Secretariat in consultation with the Chairman to suit the needs of the Programme. It is anticipated that there will be approximately three meetings per year with each meeting being of 1 to 2 days' duration.
- 8 All members of the PAC shall undertake the necessary preparation in advance of each of the PAC meetings and are required to provide objective and impartial advice to Programme management at all times.

(This version issued in November 2000 replaced the earlier version with very few changes).

Annex 2 PAC membership

Independent Chair	John Coulter	(1995-present)
DFID Lead Adviser	Sam Bickersteth	(1995-1996)
	Guy Poulter	(1996-1998)
	Jim Harvey	(1998-present)
NR Economist	Alex Duncan	(1995-1997)
	Jonathan Kydd	(1997-2002)
	Mandi Rukuni	(2002-present)
Social Development Adviser	Elizabeth Cromwell	(1995-1998)
	Karen Wilkin	(1998-1999)
	Monica Janowski	(2000-2002)
	Denis Sautier	(2002-present)
Environmental Adviser	Joanne Cockrane	(1995-1998)
	William Wint	(1998-present)
Programme Manager	Nigel Poulter	(1995-1998)
	Tim Donaldson	(1998-present)
Intermediate Technology/ Partnerships	Frank Almond	(1995-present)
Post-harvest Technology	Chris Haines	(1995-1999)
	George Breag	(1995-1997)
	Keith Thompson	(1995-1996)
	Peter Golob	(1999-present)
Food Safety	John Blanshard	(1995-1998)
	Geoff Campbell-Platt	(1998-present)
Nutrition	Jeya Henry	(1998-present)

Annex 3 Chronology

Meeting	Date	Main topics	Other events
1	Apr 1995 (2-day)	Programme themes, commodity systems approach, geographical focus, coordinating office in Ghana, role of the PAC	
2	Jun 1995	Country Framework Documents (drafted by specialists), pre-qualification of organisations	
3	Sep 1995	Review of CFDs, Concept Note assessment	
4	Dec 1995	Assessment of Project Memoranda	
5	Dec 1995	Assessment of Concept Notes	
6	Mar 1996	Review of Project Memoranda and Concept Notes	
7	June 1996	PAC role, reviews and FTRs, review of OVIs, PMFs	
8	Sep 1996	Review PAC membership and disciplines, strategy paper on entrepreneurial skills, Final Technical Reports, M&E, PMFs and CNs, programme development studies on commodities, gender issues	
9	Dec 1996 (2-day)	Review of first two years, strategic themes, production systems	
10	Apr 1997	CNS and PMFs, Annual Report, dissemination strategy, PAC membership	
11	Jun 1997	PMFs	ODA becomes DFID
12	Nov 1997	DFID White Paper, country programmes, CNs	DFID White Paper 'Eliminating Poverty' published
13	Feb 1998	PMFs, dissemination, Annual Report	

14	Jun 1998	Role of PAC, impact monitoring plans, CNs, dissemination	Change of CPHP Programme Manager
15	Sep 1998 (2-day)	New PAC members, presentations by in-country coordinators, Output-to-Purpose reviews, CNS	
16	Nov 1998	Strategy, capacity-building, call for CNs, review of CNs and PMFs	
17	Feb 1999 (2-day)	Programme strategy, partners, new areas of research, strategy papers, Annual Report, logframe revision, review of CNs and PMFs	
18	Apr 1999	Annual Report, ethical trading, review of CNs and PMFs	
19	Jun 1999 (2-day)	Review of PMFs and CNs	
20	Sep 1999 (2-day)	Review of PMFs, environment paper	
21	Jan 2000	Issues Papers, Annual Report, RNRRS award scheme, social science member of management team, review of CNs and PMFs	
22	Apr 2000	Annual Report, transport proposals, review of CNs and PMFs, RNRRS award scheme (W Africa, E Africa coordinators present)	
23	Sep 2000 (2-day)	Country Framework Documents, Partnerships Adviser, Starter Pack, next call for CNs	
24	Jan 2001	Revised CN form, review of CNs	
25	Apr 2001	Regional coordinators and partnerships, Annual Report, review of CNs, programme review	
26	Sep 2001 (2-day)	Presentation of programme review, innovation systems and coalitions, partnerships and institutions, regional news, DFID plans, review of CNs and PMFs	
27	Jan 2002	Review of CNs and PMFs	
28	Mar 2002	Single Programme logframe, role of PAC, Annual Report	

29	Jul 2002	Partnerships for Innovation strategy, impact evaluation	
30	Sep 2002	Review of CNs for final phase	
31	Dec 2002 (2-day)	Regional strategies, review of PMFs, export food markets	
32	Apr 2003	Evaluation of Partnerships for Innovation, M&E, Annual Report; CPHP-UK website	
33	Nov 2003	Knowledge management, M&E, transfer strategy, Issues Papers	
34	Mar 2004	DFID's new research strategy, Annual Report, PAC review, markets workshop	
35	Jun 2004 (2-day)	Partnerships for Innovation Evaluation, DFID evaluation, new DFID tender	DFID tender for management of CPHP 2005-2006

Annex 4 Policy papers

Listed here are policy papers which were commissioned by the programme with input from the PAC, or papers which were tabled for discussion by the PAC.

Issues Papers series

Issues Paper No 1: Wiggins, S; Otieno, OL; Proctor, S; Upton, M (Dec 2000) 'Population, migration and rural diversification: the implications for the crop post-harvest sector'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Issues Paper No 2: Poulton, C; Kydd, J; Haddock, J; Pierce, R (Dec 2000) 'Effect of world trade trends on the development of traditional food systems'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Issues Paper No 3: Poulton, C; Al-Hassan, R; Cadisch, G; Reddy, C; Smith, L (Jan 2001) 'The cash crop versus food crop debate'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Issues Paper No 4: Azam-Ali, SH; Battcock, MJ (Apr 2001) 'Promoting and protecting traditional food products'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Issues Paper No 5: Henry, CJK and Massey, D (Dec 2001) 'Micro-nutrient changes during food processing and storage'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Issues Paper No 6: Gordon, A; Swetman A; Albright, K (Jun 2002) 'Women in post-harvest operations: reducing the drudgery'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Issues Paper No 7: Kydd, J; Mansfield, J; Haddock, J; Ainsworth, C; Buckwell, A (forthcoming) 'Genetically modified organisms: will GM eliminate or exacerbate poverty?'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Issues Paper No 8: Graffham, AJ and Nyamandi, T (forthcoming) 'Food Safety: A key issue for sustainable development'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Others

Almond, F (2000) 'NGOs and natural resources research: A summary of lessons from the Partnerships Adviser'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Barnett, A (2004) 'From "research" to poverty-reducing "innovation": A policy brief from SRA Ltd'. Sussex Research Associates. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Biggs, S and Underwood, M (2001) 'Review of the Crop Post-Harvest Research Programme: Partnerships and innovation systems'. External review commissioned by the Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Kydd, J and Morrison, J (forthcoming) 'Potential impacts of agricultural trade reforms on farming sub sectors and consequences for the poor in CPHP focus countries'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Hall, A (2002) 'A coalitions approach to strengthening post-harvest innovation systems: A fresh perspective on managing research for poverty reduction'. Flier. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Hall, A and Andrews, J (undated) 'Constraints to the adoption of food processing technology: the role of entrepreneurial skills'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Marter, A (2002) 'Analysis of recent marketing research undertaken by the CPHP: An overview'. External review commissioned by the Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Marter, A (1999) 'Analysis of institutional issues in support of capacity-building in developing countries'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Ticehurst, D (1999) 'Developing Programme-level OVIs'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

Wint, W (1999) 'Environmental challenges and opportunities for the CPHP: First steps towards a strategic environmental assessment'. Crop Post-Harvest Programme.

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Photos by Keith Tomlins and Chris Martin

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About NR International

Owned by three leading British universities (Edinburgh, Greenwich and Imperial College, London), NR International works in collaboration with governments, development agencies, enterprise and civil societies to manage integrated development projects in the food and agriculture, rural development and environment sectors.

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Amongst our management portfolio are related projects, aimed at strengthening national and regional research capacity and information systems, including the *Strengthening of Livestock Services Project*, Pakistan, *Complementary Services for Agricultural Statistics and Policy Advisory Unit*, Kosovo, *Bhutan Renewable Natural Resources Extension Support Project*, *Agriculture/Livestock Research Support Programme II* in Kenya and *National Agricultural Support Services Programme*, Namibia – all funded by the European Commission.

Recently completed are the *Crop Production Survey Project*, Romania, *Regional Programme to Support Agricultural Research (ASARECA): Phase II* in Central & East Africa (European Commission) and the *Programme for the Modernisation of Agriculture Services* in Ecuador (World Bank).