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The International Trypanotolerance Centre (ITC)

Development of a Strategic Plan (2013-2023)

A Briefing Note

A. Background

In May 2009, ECOWAS Heads of States and Governments made an important and far reaching decision during their 10th Summit held in Yamoussoukro. The decision is to transform the International Trypanotolerance Centre (ITC) into a West African Regional Centre of Excellence for Livestock Research and Development. The decision necessitates a transformation of ITC in both form and function to: a) re-orient the ITC to enable it address high priority contemporary issues of importance to livestock research and development in the region; and b) reflect the ECOWAS configuration in its Governance structure. This briefing note provides a contextual basis for the strategic visioning and alignment of the new regional Centre (the 'NEW ITC') and provides a background for a planned Expert Consultation Workshop.

B. About ITC

The International Trypanotolerance Centre (ITC) is an autonomous, non-profit-making research institution, established by an act of Parliament of The Gambia in 1982. It was conceived to serve the West African region, particularly the sub-humid and humid zones, with the original main objective being research on the unique N'Dama cattle breed in its traditional habitat in West Africa. The current mission of ITC is to contribute to the efforts in increasing livestock productivity and utilization in the West African region through the optimal and sustainable exploitation of the genetic resistance of indigenous breeds of livestock for the welfare of human populations. ITC's strategic focus has been on improved livestock health, production and exploitation through the formulation, implementation and introduction of sustainable socio-economic and environmentally acceptable integrated technological packages at producer levels. Its main partners in the implementation of the R&D agenda are the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in the region. Over the years, ITC's R&D agenda has included: Disease risk assessment and disease control strategies; Crop-livestock integration, including feeding strategies; genetic improvement – pure-breeding and crossbreeding for improved production; and socio-economics and policy aspects of livestock production. Capacity building has traditionally been a key component of all ITC's programs.

In its short history ITC and its partners have generated considerable knowledge and technology packages relevant for the crop-livestock systems in the tsetse-infested humid and sub-humid zones. The Centre has made significant contributions to the generation of knowledge to improve understanding of the uniqueness of the hardy, environmentally well adapted and disease tolerant indigenous animal genetic resources of West Africa and how local communities can best manage and sustainably use them. In the process it set up a sizeable and perhaps the only N'Dama pure breed herd in West Africa and has disseminated these unique animal genetic resources to local communities as a contribution towards meeting their immediate food security needs and alleviating poverty, while at the same time preserving these genetic resources for future generations. The work of ITC has certainly helped place on the global radar, trypanotolerance trait in livestock and the value of livestock that possess the attribute.

C. The Problem

Livestock contributes 35% of GDP in sub-Saharan Africa. In West Africa, livestock, over 90% of which are endemic, contribute 44% to the agriculture GDP of the region. Hosting over 60 million head of cattle, 160 million sheep and goats and 400 million chickens, livestock is a critical component of the economies of the Sahel and West African nations. The region accounts for 25% of cattle, 33% of sheep and 40% of goats of the entire sub-Saharan Africa. This immense animal production potential is, however, still under-exploited: The region remains dependent on imports for animal products; imports of dairy products doubled between 1984 and 2004 from USD 224 million to USD 530 million. In addition to the loss of valuable revenue, these imports are detrimental to the development of local production chains, thereby exacerbating the region's dependency. Moreover, projections to 2030 show that although per capita consumption of livestock products in Africa will only increase modestly (meat by 40%, milk by 20% and eggs by 53%), total demand will more than double relative to 2000 (FAO, 2002). This rapid increase in demand is attributed to human population growth, rising incomes and rapid urbanization, with accompanying changes in preferences for foods of animal origin. This growth offers opportunities for improving the incomes and livelihoods of the livestock-dependent poor households, but these opportunities may not be realized if certain challenges are not addressed.

The mission of the New ITC as a regional livestock R&D Centre must be informed by an analysis of the most compelling challenges and opportunities for livestock development in West Africa. One of the most overriding contemporary issues of our time in the agricultural sector revolves around the strong and demonstrated interactions between biodiversity, climate change and the use of natural resources for improved livelihoods. This consideration has guided the decision to anchor the mission of the Centre around ***the sustainable use of West Africa's livestock resources***. Indigenous livestock populations that have evolved in diverse environments of West Africa – from the Sahel in the north to the humid coastal belt in the south - possess valuable traits such as disease resistance, adaptation to harsh environments, including heat tolerance and ability to utilize poor quality feeds. Loss of this globally significant genetic diversity has serious implications for local livelihoods where livestock is the mainstay of socio-economic life of people. Indeed, livestock remains a way of life and the livestock sector is the most promising sector for the employment of a large number of people in this region. At the global level, it is estimated that since the turn of the last century, some 16% of uniquely adapted livestock breeds have become extinct while 15% are rare and 32% are at risk of becoming extinct and the rate of extinction continues to accelerate.

D. Key trends

The Strategy of the New ITC needs to critically consider the key trends and drivers relevant for livestock R & D in the West African region, in Africa broadly and on the international scene. As alluded to above, the management of livestock resources in the face of a changing climate is an overarching consideration in defining the overall focus of the R&D agenda of the Centre. This focus speaks to the potential role of livestock in a generally hotter, drier continent balanced against their contribution to climate change through greenhouse gas production; the changing dynamics of animal diseases and the emergence and re-emergence of diseases, especially zoonoses. Other key trends and drivers include: the threat and opportunity represented by globalization; the latent potential of the *Livestock Revolution* for African livestock producers; market access challenges; renewed interest in agriculture as a tool for poverty reduction and economic development; the emergence of new players and institutional arrangements relevant to the sector; a shift in policy making to increasingly place poverty reduction at the centre of the development agenda; recognition of the constraints women face in livestock production; rapid developments in the fields of technologies, especially ICT, and the potential of biotechnology, especially for characterization, conservation and enhanced use of livestock resources; and the exposure of the poor to instability, natural disasters, diseases, conflicts and uncertainty about access to both resources and markets, often without recourse to adequate means to manage these risks.

While some of these trends emphasize need for diverse pool of genetic resources that provide a basket of options for the future, others speak to need for increased quantity of food and competitiveness in a market that is globalizing, and looking for product quality and food safety.

E. The New ITC: Designing strategic thrusts

Many West African (indeed almost all sub-Saharan African) countries lack technical, physical and financial resource capacity to develop AnGR conservation strategies and programs, both *in situ* and *ex-situ*. The need for a coordinated mechanism that will help marshal technical and financial resources to drive the livestock R&D agenda in West Africa cannot be overstated. This underscores the importance of the decision taken by the ECOWAS Heads of States and Governments to develop a regional Centre of Excellence that will help mobilize efforts at regional level and provide a point of entry for international partnerships and a platform for conducting regional public goods R&D that addresses the key livestock production challenges of the day. In developing its Strategy and Program under the new regional mandate, ITC will need to build on its years of experience in AnGR characterization and utilization in West Africa, but under an expanded geographical and programmatic mandate. The new ITC will need to carefully identify a strategic niche and establish an implementation platform that positions it to effectively leverage national, regional and international partnerships that it will need to deliver on the livestock agenda for a region endowed with rich livestock resources but which performs comparatively poorly relative to the rest of Africa. The Centre will also need to position itself to be able to give livestock R&D the profile it deserves at the ECOWAS level and beyond, and to develop high-impact regional initiatives, and help mobilize the required resources. The development of the strategy and its operationalization must take cognizance of other players and initiatives in the region and at the continental level. These include the CAADP framework as well as initiatives of the AU-IBAR. In addition, activities of, and collaborative opportunities with, other livestock Centres such as ILRI and CIRDES will need to be taken into full account. In identifying strategic priorities, the New ITC may wish to consider the extent to which it should get involved in three key pillars of AnGR: improved understanding through characterization; development of conservation (*in situ* and *ex situ*) strategies; and improved sustainable use.

F. Process for the development of the Strategic Plan

The proposed process aims consult stakeholders and experts to help define a strategy for the proposed Regional Livestock Centre (the 'New ITC'), including the program content and delivery mechanisms. The specific objectives of the process are:

- Identify key considerations (trends, drivers, opportunities, challenges, etc) that should define the direction and content of the Centre Program
- Identify strategic thematic areas and outline their broad contents
- Outline key operational dimensions required to deliver on the strategy
- Develop a strategic plan and share for wider stakeholders for further input

G. Draft Agenda outline for the expert consultation workshop

Session	Day 1 June 6, 2012	Day 2 June 7, 2012	Day 3 June 8, 2012
0830: Session I Chair: Dr Babou Jobe Acting Director General ITC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Welcome and opening remarks - <i>Ola Smith</i> ➤ Introductions, expectations, agenda and process - <i>Facilitator</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Day 1 Recap ➤ Emerging strategic thematic areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 2 Recap Group Report Back Final synthesis of thematic areas
1000	TEA/COFFEE		
1030: Session II Chair: Honourable Solomon Owens, Minister of Agriculture, The Gambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implementing the ECOWAP: a role for regional research centres: <i>Commissioner for Agriculture, ECOWAS</i> ➤ The new ITC: responding to development needs - <i>Minister of Agriculture, The Gambia</i> ➤ Scene-setting presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Background and context ○ Brief historical perspective of ITC – <i>Kwaku Agyemang</i> ○ Recent developments relevant for AnGR R&D – <i>Irene Hoffmann</i> ○ Institutional repositioning of ITC to deliver on an evolved agenda – <i>Adama Traore</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Emerging strategic thematic areas (continued) ➤ Criteria for prioritizing themes ➤ Identification of priority thematic areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Final synthesis of thematic areas (continued) ➤ A look at the vision and mission ➤ Operationalizing the plan (parallel working groups): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnership ○ Financing ○ Communication
1300	LUNCH		
1400: Session III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Analysis of trends, opportunities and challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Group work on content of priority thematic areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Operationalizing the plan: Key issues on structure, management and governance (Perspectives for consideration)
1600	TEA/COFFEE		
1615: Session IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Analysis of trends, opportunities and challenges (continued) ➤ Adjourn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Group work on content of priority thematic areas (continued) ➤ Adjourn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Next Steps ➤ Evaluation ➤ Closure