

SAFGRAD MEETING ON FOOD GRAIN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH  
NETWORK STRATEGIC PLAN, OUAGADOUGOU,  
27 NOVEMBER - 1 DECEMBER 1989  
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DISBURSEMENT OF NETWORK FUNDS TO NARS  
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For the mandate crops of SAFGRAD (cowpea, maize, millet and sorghum), the International Agricultural Research Centres (IITA, ICRISAT and CIMMYT) receive core funding from the CGIAR donors to carry out research on these crops and, at the same time, to assist the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS). Thus IITA receives donor funding for maize and cowpea and ICRISAT for millet and sorghum research.

When crop commodity research networks were formally established during SAFGRAD II, agreements were signed directly between IITA and USAID as well as ICRISAT and USAID for funding of the following networks:

1. West and Central African Cowpea Network (IITA)
2. West and Central African Maize Network (IITA)
3. West and Central African Sorghum Network (ICRISAT)
4. Eastern Africa Sorghum/Millet Network (ICRISAT)

Thus in addition to the core funding provided to the two IARCs for the above crops, the funds which were earmarked for the networks and for strengthening national research programmes were also channelled to the IARCs. At the moment, any network funds for strengthening NARS are disbursed by the Network Coordinators who are almost already over-burdened with technical responsibilities.

Taking the case of IITA, funds are released from USAID Ouagadougou to IITA Ibadan in accordance with the agreement signed between IITA and USAID. IITA Ibadan then transfers funds periodically (by cheque) to the Maize and Cowpea Coordinators in Ouagadougou. The Coordinators, in turn, then send the various amounts approved by their Steering Committees to the different NARS.

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To avoid being involved with handling such funds, USAID was requested to assist by sending some of the funds through USAID offices in the various NARS capitals. This was tried by the various USAID country representatives who later refused to assume this additional responsibility. The funds are currently transferred by bank cheques through the Coordinators themselves or other channels. In the IITA system, advances are requested from USAID, disbursed and justified before the next tranche is released.

ICRISAT first uses its own capital to prefinance some of the network activities. The justification is later made to USAID/Ouagadougou which despatches the funds to ICRISAT headquarters in India. From there funds for the Eastern Africa Sorghum/Millet Network and the West and Central African Sorghum Network are then despatched to Nairobi and Bamako, respectively for disbursement to the deserving NARS. When the first instalment of funds has been despatched to a particular NARS, receipts and a statement of account, justifying how the funds were spent, must be received by the Network Coordinator before the next instalment is released.

Even with the situation as it is, SAFGRAD has continued to work and assist the Network Coordinators, particularly during certain critical moments of financial management. The SAFGRAD Accountant has, as a matter of routine, accompanied the IITA/SAFGRAD group during the biennial maize/cowpea workshops, to assist in the disbursement of funds during the workshop. This leaves the Coordinators the opportunity to concentrate on more technical workshop matters. The same practice was applied during the sorghum network Steering Committee meeting which took place on 14 - 17 November 1989 in Ouagadougou. The Network Coordinator, who is based in Bamako, requested and was given similar assistance by the SAFGRAD financial service which provided satisfactory financial management during the meeting.

The SCO has been funded by USAID to manage, among other activities, the four collaborative research networks. Its financial service is equipped to handle any financial issues relating not only to these four networks, but also to other SAFGRAD networks and activities. Its accounts are audited regularly, internally through the OAU system and externally by independent auditors. With such evidence, SAFGRAD should be given the opportunity to handle and disburse network funds to its member NARS.

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It should be emphasized that SAFGRAD has never experienced any difficulties in taking out funds from Burkina Faso for its conferences, workshops and other activities in its member countries. Although some problems have been encountered by SAFGRAD, ICRISAT and IITA in several recipient countries, solutions could be found to such cases on a country-to-country basis.

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