

Consortium on Spatial Information (CSI): Stocktaking, strategic positioning and a new funding opportunity

The spatial components of the CGIAR research areas have grown exponentially in the last few years in line with the growing recognition of the importance of spatial information in CGIAR research activities. Where much of the CGIAR-generated geo-spatial information was, in the past, inaccessible or unavailable to the global research and development communities, the recent work of the CSI network, supported by the ICT-KM Program has provided a highly visible mechanism for promoting collegial information sharing, technical debate, and (formal and informal) data exchange. The CSI has also provided a single institutional entry point for donors wishing to promote and strengthen inter-CGIAR centre collaboration in the thematic areas of GIS, remote sensing and spatial analysis. For a quick update on some of the on-going activities of the CSI visit the web-site at <http://csi.cgiar.org>.

The success of the CSI community and most recently its development of metadata for key spatial datasets generated and held by individual Centers has had significant influence on the global geospatial data community. The ICT-KM Program's investment in the CSI metadata project has yielded significant results. An agreement has been reached with FAO – SDRN to join the CGIAR metadata search with FAO, WHO, UNEP, OCHA, and WFP. Currently, more than 15,000 geospatial metadata records originating in the CGIAR (including ICIMOD) are available through the CSI GeoNetwork node, with an additional 5,000 records accessible from the UN and the FAO. The work of the CSI group attracts over 7,000 unique web visitors a month.

The CSI is entering an exciting new phase. CSI members are taking stock of what the community has been able to achieve and how its effectiveness could be improved, including strategic opportunities for strengthening the ability of the CG system to serve its own growing needs and those of its development partners. It is supporting and reviewing an analysis by CH2M Hill (a US consulting company with considerable expertise in enterprise-based approaches to spatial data integration and application) and using this to develop specific proposals. The Gates Foundation, via its existing HarvestChoice grant, has already provided financial support for a meeting (hosted by the WorldAgforestry Center in Nairobi from April 21-23, 2008) of the CSI members. Based on that review a CSI-focused funding proposal will be prepared for consideration by the Bill and Belinda Gates Foundation.

Enrica Porcari, CIO for the CGIAR, has been a strong supporter of geo-spatial efforts and the CSI community since the beginning of her tenure. Enrica says *"Our investments have paid off and we have captured serious interest from a donor. This stocktaking comes at a crucial time so that as we move forward, we are clear on what we need and where we are heading with our geospatial strategy"*.

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Advancing Agriculture in Developing Countries through Knowledge and Innovation

The International Food Policy Research Institute's ISNAR Division held an international consultative conference in Addis Ababa at the Hilton Hotel April 7 – 9, 2008 on **"Advancing agriculture in developing countries through knowledge and innovation."** Scholars, policymakers, and practitioners from a wide range of sectors came together to exchange ideas and experiences (positive or negative) on how knowledge and innovation (technological, organizational, and institutional) are affecting agricultural advancement. The conference showcased innovative research in the field and provide a forum to identify further areas for research and cooperation.

The ICT-KM program is a sponsor of this event and delivered a paper to the conference and will be contributing a chapter in the resulting book on knowledge and innovation experiences for improving developing-country agriculture. The

book will show knowledge and innovation frameworks, applications, methods, and empirical research results.

ESA training meeting and workshop and wrap up meeting

At the end of 2007, the ICT-KM program entered into agreement with CIP to take leadership of a project for the Americas Centers (CIAT, CIMMYT, CIP and IFPRI) that focuses on enterprise security activities for these Centers. These activities have included improving the security of Centers network infrastructure; fortifying the CGIAR global network security by including analysis of the CGNET NOC; securing intellectual property, and training information systems security personnel.

One of the key components of this project is the **ESA training meeting and workshop and wrap up meeting** being held in Lima from 31 March through 11 April. Participating are two participants from each of CIAT, CIMMYT, IFPRI, plus guests from Bioversity, ICARDA, WorldAgroforestry and ILRI (total 10). This packed ten days will include a CISSP (Certified Information Security Systems Professional) certification preparatory course; a CEH (Certified Ethical Hacker) certification preparatory course; a ESA project review which also benefits from the guest participants in pulling together the threads of the ESA project with a similar global project (Enterprise Security and Business Continuity Project) that wrapped up in 2007.

Latest word from Anthony Collins, the ESA project manager is that the consensus view emerging from the meeting is that the ESA group will be forging ahead in stimulating the establishment of a base-line of agreed best practices on information systems security and standards for the CGIAR.

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