



**Board for International Food & Agriculture Development (BIFAD)
Minutes of the 154th Meeting
“Global Food Prices and Policy Actions”**

June 17, 2008

National Press Club, 529 14th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. (13th Floor)

WELCOMING AND OPENING REMARKS (ROBERT EASTER, CHAIRMAN)

BIFAD Chair Robert Easter opened the 154th BIFAD meeting by emphasizing a focus on the issue of world food needs and the role that universities can play in meeting those needs. Board members present included Robert (Bob) Easter, H.H. Barlow, Allen Christensen, Timothy (Tim) Rabon, Keith W. Eckel, and William (Bill) DeLauder. He also introduced Kerry Bolognese (NASULGC), John Thomas (USAID/EGAT), and Ron Senykoff (USAID & BIFAD secretary).

PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

BIFAD Title XII Study Status Report (Deborah Rubin, Director, Cultural Practice, LLC)

Deborah Rubin presented her in-depth analysis of Title XII and BIFAD’s direction. She reviewed the history of Title XII; the current and recommended structure for administering Title XII activities; the types of and criteria for Title XII activities; and an explanation of what constitutes eligible and qualified universities. In providing a series of recommendations to BIFAD, she concluded by emphasizing that a common understanding of Title XII implementation would benefit both the university community and the USAID. She stressed the value of an agreement on the activities, and of creating a vibrant picture of agricultural activities.

Board discussion of this presentation related to incentives for doing Title XII work; addressing other eligible activities; the process for including universities on the roster; identifying faculty on the roster; building/sustaining university capacity for Title XII activities; and the level of mission awareness of Title XII activity. Others commented on the need for BIFAD staff; the criterion of BIFAD involvement to be considered Title XII; and the need to address both the short-term crisis as well as the long-term issues.

A draft resolution was read for accepting the report and its recommendations, and for moving forward on them. While the resolution was recognized as important, several commented on the need to be clearer in recommending specific actions with an immediate timeframe to the Administrator so that she will be clear on what to do. From the Administrator’s perspective, this should emphasize what the university community would bring in response to this food crisis. It was suggested that this be discussed at lunchtime that day so that BIFAD could leave the meeting committed to moving forward.

The Board commended Deborah Rubin for this work

BIFAD Conference of Deans: Universities in Partnership—Outcomes and Future, “Higher Education on a New Stage in Global Agricultural Development” (Robert Easter, Chairman, and Kerry Bolognese, Vice President, International Programs, NASULGC)

Bob Easter described the successful Conference of Deans held on April 30, 2008. One outcome of that conference is a White Paper to present to the USAID Administrator and both Presidential candidates. He outlined what is being considered for inclusion in the White Paper, which Deanna Bering is helping to organize.

Comments from those present included the recognition of Bob Easter’s role and leadership in this process; the lack of a mention of livestock in the paper; and the need for USAID to allow for a long-term strategy to move forward.

Food Prices: The What, Who, and How of Proposed Policy Actions (John Hoddinott, Deputy Division Director, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C.)

John Hoddinott introduced the work that IFPRI has been doing on the causes of the current food crisis and the appropriate policy actions to address the crisis. He reviewed the sources and features of price increases, the consequences, and proposed policy actions.

He then responded to Board members’ questions on the following: the cost to developing countries to respond to this crisis; subsidies; who is to pay for rural infrastructure and how is that to be implemented; how to accomplish innovative crop insurance programs that dealt with not only with weather, but with other issues as well; potential problems in freezing biofuel production; the fragility of lands; the use of a strategic grain reserve; and the Fed’s policies on pricing instabilities.

He also addressed others’ questions on the lead drivers used in IFPRI’s estimates; who are the “winners” with the high food prices who would be involved in the recommended “Resource mobilization to mitigate impact on the poor”; and implications of disaggregation between rural and urban areas.

BIFAD Directions for 2008 and 09—The “White Paper” Discussion --BIFAD’s Preliminary Recommendations to USAID

Board recommendations or comments on the White Paper included the following:

- They need to move this ahead as rapidly as possible.
- The Administrator requested recommendations regarding the food crisis; the actual presentation of this will be a face-to-face presentation .
- How does BIFAD move forward with both of the two separate conversations they are bringing to the Administrator’s attention (engaging US universities, and responding to the food crisis)?

- BIFAD needs to follow up and address the lack of response received on other recommendations
- Any meeting with the Administrator must have a clear concise message, given the short time that will be available.
- Ron Senykoff had envisioned inviting other Assistant Administrators from across the Bureau when BIFAD presents the White Paper.
- John Grayzel urged BIFAD to strengthen the White Paper with clear and concise active language and offered such a statement.

It was moved, seconded and passed, that BIFAD requests a face-to-face meeting with the Administrator with sufficient time to cover the issues that need to be addressed including the ones that the Administrator would like to address.

SWEARING IN NEW BIFAD MEMBER (JAMES KUNDER, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR, USAID)

After lunch, James Kunder, USAID Deputy Administrator thanked BIFAD for their work and swore in Keith Eckel as the newest Board member.

OPERATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES: BIFAD COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

CRSP Funding—Update (John Thomas, EGAT/AG Director, USAID)

John Thomas explained the earmark for CRSP funding and emphasized that they will stay in compliance. He described how the funding would be allocated, and how the planned ‘forward funding’ would work. He then responded to questions and comments from those present on the following:

- The CRSPs’ expectation that the additional money from the earmark could be used for additional programs;
- The use of the additional money for new CRSP activities, and the impact of having that funding now be considered forward funding;
- The use of forward funding to protect CRSPs from the potential of not having a budget next year, and from unpredictable future funding levels;
- The history of this additional funding earmark;
- The difficulty USAID had (even with the earmark) in raising the ceiling from \$2 million to BIFAD’s recommended \$3 million, and the Agency’s need to be strategic in doing so;
- USAID’s need to know that they are still putting the money into priority research;
- The budget for next year;
- The need for a broader assessment done for the Water CRSP, to ensure that there is broad based input into the assessment;
- The assessment for the Livestock CRSP;
- Budget implications for other programs run out of the Agriculture Office;

- The need to choose expertise from places like Utah State to do assessments so that USAID will get better information and greater acceptance of that information;
- The need for greater collaboration with the universities.

SPARE Committee Support to BIFAD—Update on SPARE Actions (Robert L. Paarlberg, Professor of Political Science, Wellesley College)

Bob Paarlberg presented six items from the SPARE meeting held on May 15th. He noted SPARE's willingness to help with the White Paper, and with implementing recommendations from Deborah Rubin's report. SPARE had also discussed the review of its charter, the CRSP LWA awards, the CRSP guidelines, and extensions of the IP and SANREM CRSPs. Some members of SPARE are hoping for a larger role in considering priorities for BIFAD, and suggested that having a one year work plan would provide clearer guidance on their role.

Bob Easter responded to each point, and requested that SPARE provide text for membership changes.

USAID's Horticulture CRSP-Progress on Design and RFA (Jeffery Lee, EGAT/AG Chief, Agribusiness & Markets Division, USAID; and George Wilson, EGAT/AG & Horticultural Professor, North Carolina State University)

Jeffery Lee reviewed comments on the first draft of the Horticulture CRSP concept paper that was presented at the last meeting. He described the 6 basic issues raised regarding the paper and USAID's response to those comments.

He then responded to comments on his presentation from those present, regarding the following issues:

- The ME's actual use of proposed organizations that were key to the award, and the need to be open and transparent in the selection process;
- The ceiling will be given in the RFA.
- A request for being generous in the ceiling, and avoiding fixed and limited ceilings.
- The assessment done for the GHA was outstanding and should be used as a model; USAID should seek that kind of input.
- This CRSP as not the single solution but part of the solution to the world food crisis; and the need to make sure that there is sufficient funding to achieve these ambitions.
- The importance of having a partner coming from the CGIARs.

Robert Easter commended Jeffery Lee and George Wilson on their work on this.

Open Discussion: Topics for Next Meeting

Given the upcoming retirement of John Thomas, the Board **passed a resolution recognizing in detail the hard work and contributions of John Thomas** and extending "its utmost

appreciation for all the outstanding work he has done over his career on behalf of the Title XII community, and the American people.”

Topics for the next meeting that were discussed included the following:

- The renewal of BIFAD Charter;
- Identification of what BIFAD has done for the Administrator and her response to that work;
- A comprehensive update on the long-term training program.
- An offer from the CRSPs to the Administrator, of what they can do at this time [related to the food crisis];
- Discussion around a new CRSP model as an effective model for how the university can contribute;
- The university community’s role in contributing to the current interest in impact evaluation;
- A possible work session the day before the Des Moines meeting, with a brief orientation on what members’ duties are and what are the expectations on them; and
- Invite private industry to the meeting to engage them at least as an observer, to get them aware of what BIFAD is trying to do.