

FINAL REPORT

I	The Name of the Institution to be evaluated	ICDPP 18/06/2012 – 19/06/2012
II	Evaluation Period	2007 – 2011
III	Members of the Team	
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INSTITUTE:

The ICDPP is a middle-sized research institution covering a rather wide range of studies, practical applications and services in the field of plant protection. The Institute also works on the influence of some abiotic factors (drought and salt tolerance) on plants, which is not very common in such type of research structures. In addition, the ICDPP hosts a group of Ornithology, which is even more unusual, though well explained by the main goals of the Institute.

This is a well performing research institution, in the frame of the Romanian agricultural science and R&D practice. The lack of centralized government financing has turned ICDPP into a research structure with a rather unusual behaviour, similar in its activities to an SME, where a lot of effort is invested in trying to obtain funds – just to keep the Institute running – from short-term research projects, contract-based applied research, professional services and other non-R&D activities. All this makes very difficult for the research personnel to focus on long-term, higher quality research lines. In addition, the staff has decreased to a critical minimum, to the point that some groups have not enough critical mass for some specific research topics. At the same time, the Institute has inherited the old-fashioned administrative system, with an awkward organization of research funds management – a common pool, distributed among all groups; a conservative system of human resources employment – permanent positions at all levels, instead of fixed-term contracts with performance-based extension; the lack of a dynamic system for PhD students' recruitment, training and defence, which leads to the inevitable increase of the average age of the staff and missing generations. At present, the average age is very close (a bit higher) to the Government recommendations but if the present system prevails, the situation will worsen very soon.

Considering its major weaknesses, the ICDPP needs to establish a system for encouraging the researchers to increase the quality of their research output, publishing in ISI journals, as well as to register international patents. A system for individual evaluation of the research personnel is also needed, which should be based mostly on **a)** the quality of scientific publications (ISI papers, impact factors, citation index, "h"-index); **b)** the acquisition of research grants and contracts; **c)** PhD students' supervision; **d)** patenting; although other activities could also be considered.

On the other hand, the Institute has a highly qualified research staff, good research infrastructure and equipment and human potential. It functions very satisfactory in the background of all Romanian agricultural science and practice. Many negative aspects of the evaluation are due to the non-reformed system of research management and legislation in Romania, from which this Institute has suffered somehow more than other more sizeable institutes. It would be very difficult to recover and fulfil some of the accreditation commission suggestions without national legislation changes. Nevertheless, other recommendations are feasible under the present-day conditions, and the ICDPP should try to find some solutions for increasing the quality of its R&D activities to a higher European level.

More specific measures, targets and recommendations to be met in a time of 2 years are given at the end of this report.

Team E1 - Useful organisms

R & D activity

The research in the team, as resulted from the self-evaluation report and the visit, is focused on the beneficial activities of different species of rhizobacteria, the mechanisms that govern the interactions among phytopathogens and the non-pathogenic useful bacterial strains and on the practical approach of alternative, biological methods to control plant diseases. The overall goal of these activities is aimed at preserving the environment by reducing/replacing the use of chemicals.

Human Resources

The team is composed of three working groups: Bacteriology, Entomopathogenic microorganisms and remote sensing. It is a young and dynamic team, composed of 6 researchers and three auxiliary staff. The working groups are led by three senior scientists. Members of the teams have relevant PhD and post-doc training abroad and can drive the future development of the institute. They have knowledge in plant microbiology, microbial ecology, environmental microbiology, molecular biology and agricultural sustainable methods. However, the existing young graduates and PhD students would benefit from longer training periods abroad to broaden their perspectives and help them build an international network. The average age of the team personnel is 41.

Infrastructures

The team is developing the activity in a newly refurbished and updated facility and has all the basic equipment to conduct the research. Modern molecular biology equipment has been purchased and the team members have been trained abroad to run it, although not at the full potential. A lack in the possibility to access relevant scientific literature is negatively affecting the performance of the team, and the institute.

Management and Research Activities

The team has a broad collaboration network with national and international R&D organisations, universities and private companies. Although their research activity is substantial, as resulted from the self-evaluation report, the team won only one national project (PN2 Capacities in 2008) and is preparing an international application. However, in terms of reported budget over the evaluation period, it is the second best performing team in the institute with a budget of approx. 7 mill RON. During the evaluation period, the team participated with scientific papers, oral presentations and/or posters at national and international symposiums and workshops. Dissemination of research results consisted also in field demonstrations, knowledge transfer and pre-extension trials. In terms of scientific production the publication record is very low; however the team is the best performer in the institute. The bacteriology group had four granted patents in the past four years and 12 patent applications at OSIM.

Development Plan

The developmental plans touches fundamental, applied and demonstrative research and is aimed at the continuation of previous research toward developing and transfer of new biological control methods to limit the damages caused by pests and diseases. A clear formulation of more specific tasks in terms of working hypotheses would be beneficial.

General Feedback

This is a team with good potential and with high perspective for further development and increasing of research and publication activities.

