

# **Association of International Agricultural Research Centers**

## **President/Chief Executive Officer Position Profile December 2011**

This profile provides information about the Association of International Agricultural Research Centers (AIARC) and the position of President/Chief Executive Officer. The profile is designed to assist individuals in assessing their interest in and qualifications for the position.

The search for the President/Chief Executive Officer of AIARC is being conducted by Association Strategies, Inc., 1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Applicants should submit a cover letter and resume to the Association Strategies, Inc., website: [www.assnstrategies.com/current\\_searches.php](http://www.assnstrategies.com/current_searches.php). To learn more about AIARC and the work of the international agricultural research centers, go to [www.aiarc.org](http://www.aiarc.org) and [www.cgiar.org](http://www.cgiar.org). The deadline for applications is February 15, 2012.

## **President/Chief Executive Officer Position Profile** **for the Association of International Agricultural Research Centers**

### **Profile Methodology**

The profile for the position of President/Chief Executive Officer of the Association of International Agricultural Research Centers (AIARC) was developed using organizational data; discussions with AIARC stakeholders and staff; and responses to an online survey of the leadership and staffs of the international agricultural research centers. The survey was conducted to identify and prioritize the skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications and qualities required and desired in a President/CEO. Information regarding programs and services, organizational and cultural factors, and challenges and opportunities for AIARC was also developed from the survey responses and discussions.

### **About the Organization**

AIARC is a nonprofit expatriate service center that serves as a third-party administrator for payroll, retirement, tax reporting and insurance services to 21 international agricultural research centers with staff in 78 countries. A 501(c)(3) organization, AIARC was founded in 1992 and is headquartered in Alexandria, VA.

AIARC was originally established by the 15 centers belonging to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a global partnership of organizations engaged in research for sustainable development with the funders of this work (i.e., developing and industrialized country governments, foundations, and international and regional organizations). Today, AIARC comprises a total of 21 international agricultural research centers – the 15 CGIAR members, and six non-CGIAR members. *[Refer to the addendum for a list of AIARC members and their locations.]*

AIARC handles total annual disbursements of approximately \$95 million for payroll, retirement plan contributions, insurance premiums, and other services for the centers' staff members. It serves as the administrator and fiduciary agent for more than \$300 million in pension fund assets for approximately 200 U.S. 403(b) participants (\$15.8 million in assets) and 2,000 offshore plan participants (\$280 million in assets). AIARC also administers and serves as the contracting agent for medical, life, long-term disability, and accidental death and dismemberment insurance for approximately 2,000 participants. The association is the paymaster and administrator for all payroll services, including those for foreign nationals and U.S. expatriates. Related services for U.S. expatriates include tax withholding and deposits, and W-2 and taxable benefits reporting. Altogether, AIARC provides services to an average of 1,860 participants each month.

AIARC's stated mission is to "facilitate and provide essential support for the successful operation and activities of the centers, operating as an integrated extension of the centers' administrative functions to provide consolidated services in a cost-effective manner." In this capacity, AIARC provides specialized staff support that would not otherwise be available to or economical for individual centers, given their remote locations. This arrangement contributes to reduced administrative costs and permits the individual centers to concentrate on their core mission, which is conducting research and activities toward the goal of feeding the world's poor.

AIARC's guiding principles are as follows:

- Our obligation, first and foremost, is to our member centers. Our role is to contribute to their success; this important responsibility will guide our action.
- We will strive to fulfill the highest ideals of service. We will respond to our members' needs in a courteous, efficient manner. We will keep in mind that AIARC was created by our members, is governed by them, and exists to serve them.
- Integrity and honesty will govern our every action.
- We will treat our members' information with the utmost confidentiality.
- We will constantly seek the most efficient and cost-effective methods to serve our membership and will reduce costs whenever possible.

The 21 centers range in size from 200 to 1,400 staff members, and each center is headed by an individual called the Director General. The activities and responsibilities of the centers focus on ensuring food security and safety; alleviating poverty; assisting local farmers in their respective countries; and providing policy briefings to the countries' governments. The centers' activities are funded primarily through multilateral and bilateral support from governments and through large-scale foundation support, including such prestigious organizations as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the John D. Rockefeller Foundation.

AIARC conducts an Annual General Meeting that is attended by the Directors General of the 21 centers and at which Board members are elected, new members are approved, and votes are taken on matters affecting the centers.

### *The Work of the Centers*

The members of AIARC are guided by a vision of reduced poverty and hunger, improved human health and nutrition, and greater ecosystem resilience, brought about through high-quality international agricultural research, partnership and leadership. Multiple crises – triggered by food and energy price volatility, economic turmoil and concern about global climate change – have opened a new era of challenge and opportunity for agriculture and natural resource management. The work of these centers is critical, and strong investment in agricultural science

at the national and international levels is essential for addressing these new and complex challenges. Their research delivers the innovations needed to achieve sustainable increases in agricultural productivity, benefitting the rural poor while conserving natural resources.

*AIARC Structure, Governance and Staff:* The President/CEO reports to an international Board of Directors; six of these Board members are affiliated with research centers, and one is an “external” director. The President/CEO serves as the eighth member of the Board, in an ex officio capacity but with voting rights. Five of the Board members are elected by affiliated (CGIAR) members, one is elected by non-affiliated members, and the external director is elected by both classes of members.

Under the direction of the President/CEO, the 11-member professional staff administers the programs, services and activities of the organization within a \$1.7 million annual operating budget, which is funded primarily from the per-employee administrative fee that each center pays. The staff also supports the work of the four-member Audit and Finance Committee.

In addition to the President/CEO, staff positions include a director of accounting (who serves in the role of deputy to the President/CEO), a controller, an accounting supervisor, six personnel coordinators, and an administrative coordinator. The staff is currently housed in rented office space but will be seeking new space in early 2013 when the current building is scheduled for demolition.

*Key External Interactions:* In addition to the AIARC Board of Directors and staff, the President/CEO works closely with the following individuals and entities:

- The Directors General, human resource personnel and financial/operations personnel of the 21 centers;
- Medex, the medical evacuation plan used by AIARC’s insurance plan vendor;
- Other vendors (e.g., risk management entities and insurance, healthcare and health plan providers); and
- Various advisors/consultants that support AIARC’s work.

The President/CEO also represents the interests of the centers to government officials, policy makers and CGIAR volunteers and personnel.

### **Organizational Culture**

Stakeholders consider the AIARC staff to be a highly valued cornerstone of the organization’s success. Staff members are described in positive terms as dedicated, professional, efficient, and responsive to the membership, with a strong sense of customer service and a reputation for

excellence and timely response. They are a harmonious, cohesive unit with the best interests of the member centers at heart. They are also a very culturally diverse group, representing nine foreign countries and the U.S.; and their tenure with AIARC ranges from a few months to 14 years.

Staff members enjoy a high level of mutual support internally and view their work as truly meaningful. They enjoy their relationship with the center personnel and believe that their work is valued and appreciated by the centers. They describe their working environment as one in which there are new challenges and variety in their work on a daily basis. For the most part, they feel that their respective workloads are manageable, and they suggest that the office and the organization might benefit from additional delegation of tasks and responsibilities by the President/CEO throughout the staff. To that end, they would welcome additional professional development opportunities and more extensive on-the-job training.

While the culture of each research center is somewhat unique, the centers share a common commitment to and focus on their mission; they describe one another as collaborative and supportive in nature. As a group, they take pride in their cultural diversity and strong work ethic, and they describe their working environments and relationships as collegial and relatively informal.

### **Quality of Services and Additional Opportunities/Challenges**

When asked what services AIARC is most effective in providing, stakeholders cite the sound and timely administration of all financial services for the centers' internationally recruited staff from more than 40 countries (including many U.S. citizens) and its guidance relative to payroll, insurance, medical and retirement benefits. AIARC recently launched a new website module for participants and employers through which participants are able to access their benefits information – view offshore retirement plan balances and beneficiary information; download retirement plan statements and pay statements; and view insurance coverage levels. Employers are also able to obtain monthly benefits accounting on-line. Center staffs cite these on-line tools as “a great improvement.” The AIARC staff noted that the technology platform and programs to administer the financial services will require a significant upgrade in the near future.

Also, AIARC recently undertook significant changes in its pension plan; ensuring a smooth transition to the new plan is a high priority, and the centers describe it as a “most welcome change.”

As is the case with any complex organization with a diverse membership, there are also areas in which the centers suggest that services could be expanded or strengthened. Some centers would welcome additional support from AIARC in educating center staffs about their retirement and

medical plans, given the technical and complex nature of benefits in general (for example, provide additional on-line training on or documentation about navigating the website module). Also, center leadership recognizes the challenge that AIARC faces in effectively providing these financial services to staff who may not take a sufficiently active role in understanding or personally monitoring their plans and/or retirement funds.

Centers note that the greatest challenge facing AIARC is simply continuing to manage the administration of all financial services in a volatile financial environment and world economic uncertainty. They also suggest that this provides an opportunity to seek investments and economies in service provision in order to lower administrative costs – e.g., capitalizing on the demand for shared services and reducing overhead.

Others suggest that the consideration be given to expansion of human resources services for and assistance to employees, particularly expansion of services to non-U.S. citizens. In this regard, some caution against a focus that is too U.S.-centric and encourage the organization to take a broader view of program and services to benefit a truly international clientele.

In summary, stakeholders suggest that the AIARC Board and President/CEO should continue to pursue the following business strategies and practices:

- Implementation of industry best practices;
- Improvements and efficiencies in internal processes and procedures;
- Continued improvement of on-line resources for centers;
- Expansion of services provided to centers;
- Greater emphasis on economies and efficiencies of service; and
- Expansion of opportunities for member networking and interaction.

### **President/CEO Position**

*Responsibilities:* The President/CEO is responsible for managing the professional staff and operations of AIARC; providing strategic leadership to assist the Board in formulating policy and setting direction for the association; and representing AIARC to the centers and external entities.

More specifically, the President/CEO will:

1. Engage and work in collaboration with the Board of Directors on matters of governance, mission, vision and strategy;
2. Hire, manage, develop and motivate a talented professional staff to implement AIARC activities and services;
3. Work closely with the staff, the Audit and Finance Committee and the Board to develop a balanced budget;

4. Effectively oversee and manage the operations of the association and its budget, and provide timely reports to the Board on all aspects of the association's management;
5. Maintain and manage the financial integrity of the organization, its funds and assets;
6. Ensure the timely implementation of all Board/association policies and procedures; and
7. Meet periodically with the Directors General, and other personnel as appropriate, of the centers.

*Education and Experience:* Candidates must have a minimum of 10 years of executive- or senior-level experience in financial management, accounting, and/or human resource administration (payroll, benefits, insurance) and at minimum a Bachelor's degree (a Master's degree is an asset). Certification as a Certified Public Accountant is highly desirable; in lieu of the CPA designation, candidates must possess the requisite financial acumen, skills and experience of such. Insight into the international legal and tax aspects associated with compensation packages for expatriate staff in developing countries is also an asset. Candidates must have permanent residency status in the U.S. (i.e., be in possession of a green card) and must be available to travel internationally three to five times per year.

The ideal candidate will demonstrate experience in or understanding of the following areas:

1. Design, management and administration of salary, retirement and insurance plans;
2. Accounting, financial and human resources administration;
3. Development of a strong and effective relationship with and support for a Board of Directors;
4. Management of nonprofit association governance issues and structures;
5. Development, management and motivation of a high-functioning professional staff;
6. Financial and business acumen to ensure short- and long-term stability of an organization's assets;
7. Domestic and international tax law and finance;
8. Development and implementation of strategic plans and initiatives, and identification and prioritization of short- and long-term organizational goals, needs and resources; and
9. Serving as an organizational spokesperson.

*Skills and Abilities:* The following skills and abilities are important to the candidate's success in the position of President/CEO:

1. Visionary leadership and foresight; the ability to recognize and capitalize on opportunities, and to identify challenges and the resources necessary to meet those challenges;
2. Keen attention to detail and accuracy pertaining to financial transactions and activities;
3. Ability to delegate effectively, as appropriate, taking into account the full range of responsibilities of the position and the skills and abilities of the staff;
4. Ability to build consensus among diverse constituencies and related organizations in order to further common goals and objectives and to leverage resources;
5. Building and maintaining strong alliances and partnerships with related organizations;

6. Strong written and oral communications skills, with the ability to deliver clear and effective messages to all stakeholders; and
7. Ability to foster a healthy organizational culture.

*Personal Characteristics and Behaviors:* The President/CEO will possess the following personal characteristics and behaviors:

1. Unquestioned honesty, integrity and ethics;
2. Strong attention to detail and accuracy;
3. Inclusivity, collaboration and collegiality; a team-builder and consensus-builder by nature;
4. An articulate, skilled communicator; a strong listener who actively invites input from a variety of areas;
5. Knowledgeable about and understanding of cultural diversity;
6. Strong customer-service orientation; responsiveness to the membership and staff;
7. Personal image that reflects positively on the association and the centers;
8. Effective and results-oriented in overseeing daily operations and implementing Board decisions;
9. Engaging, personable, accessible and approachable;
10. Cognizant and respectful of the appropriate role of the President/CEO relative to that of the Board and volunteer leaders; and
11. Demonstration of the ability to listen carefully to all constituencies and develop an understanding of their concerns, issues and needs.

### **Measures of Success**

The President/CEO's success in the position will be measured by demonstrated progress in the following areas:

1. Successful integration into the culture of the organization;
2. Maintenance of high standards of accuracy and service during the transition to new leadership;
3. Quality of relationships with and responsiveness to Board members, center leaders and staff, and related organizations;
4. Satisfaction of centers with essential services;
5. Initiation of a critical review of existing services, and exploration of expansion of services;
6. Stability, morale and continued exceptional performance of the professional staff; and
7. Continued stability of the organization in terms of membership and financial integrity.

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## **ADDENDUM**

### **Affiliated Members (CGIAR Centers)**

Africa Rice Center (WARDA), Cotonou, Benin  
Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), Cali, Colombia  
Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Bogor, Indonesia  
International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Mexico City, Mexico  
International Potato Center (CIP), Lima, Peru  
International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Aleppo,  
Syrian Arab Republic  
International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Patancheru,  
Andhra Pradesh, India  
International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, D.C., USA  
International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria  
International Livestock Research Institute ((ILRI), Nairobi, Kenya/Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Bioversity International, Maccarese, Rome, Italy  
International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Los Banos, Phillipines  
International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Battaramulla, Sri Lanka  
World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Nairobi, Kenya  
WorldFish Center, Penang, Malaysia

### **Non-Affiliated Members (Non-CGIAR Centers)**

African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), Nairobi, Kenya  
Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Nairobi, Kenya  
Center for Health and Population Research (ICDDR), Dhaka, Bangladesh  
International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), Muscle Shoals, Alabama, USA  
Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), Tokyo, Japan  
World Vegetable Center (AVRDC), Taiwan, Republic of China

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