

## 【Evaluations and Comments Sheet (Initiative-based FS)】

### - Proposal for Full Research Stage –

February 27, 2015

<b>Title of the Project</b>	<b>Lifeworlds of Sustainable Food Consumption and Production: Agrifood Systems in Transition</b>		
<b>Research Term</b>	<b>FS</b>	<b>Principal Investigator</b>	<b>MCGREEVY Steven Robert</b>
<p><b>General advice and comments of the PEC:</b></p> <p>Overall, the PEC was positive about the project’s approach and goals, but it overwhelmingly noted that it is extremely ambitious. Apart from the implications for the feasibility of the entire project, the wide range of activities also may make it hard to achieve an impact beyond certain small niches. Serious planning needs to take place during the pre-research phase to pare the activities down to a manageable set.</p> <p>The environmental dimension is largely implicit or assumed and needs to be worked out better.</p> <p>In striving for transdisciplinarity, attention should be given to the inclusion of non-scientists in the project organization (multiple forms of involvement can be considered).</p> <p>The PEC also considered at length the balance between the scientific aspects of the proposed work and its advocacy orientation. Opinions varied widely, but a fairly broadly shared view emerged that the type of science-based advocacy proposed is a valuable, new approach for RIHN.</p>			
<p><b>Reply</b></p> <p>The comments received from the PEC were helpful and welcomed. The discussion during the evaluation session was quite contested and the PEC’s recognition of a “science-based advocacy” approach as something valuable to RIHN is appreciated. The PEC identified areas pertaining to the project’s overall scope, stakeholder involvement, and general feasibility to improve upon.</p> <p><b><i>Broad and ambitious, need to pare down the activities to something manageable</i></b></p> <p>This project was evaluated in 2014 and judged to be too small, unable to justify the large budget, and that agricultural production would need to be included as part of the research agenda. Based on those comments, the project was re-envisioned in a way that incorporated production, broadened the scope to include more sites in Asia, and re-organized around providing “knowledge necessary for transition processes” (ie. context, visions, future scenario, and interventions). These changes may give the impression of ranging too far afield, making it</p>			

difficult to “achieve an impact beyond certain small niches.” Scaling back some of the broadness in this regard is warranted. However, project proposals that profess the need for enacting sustainable solutions (ie. RIHN projects) are ambitious by definition.

During the PR phase, the following options are being explored to tighten up research activities.

1) Site-based research from the consumption-side involves three sets of activities: foodshed mapping and food-related behavioral survey (context), the backcasting of alternative food consumption practices (visioning), and the action research workshop format for exploring ethical food consumption (intervention). In order to be successfully implemented, these activities will need to be closely coordinated and combining these activities into a single work package might connect the disparate pieces into something more cohesive.

2) Another option is to reduce the number of sites— for example, Thailand or Bhutan. Focusing solely on a single site within each country might also streamline the scope of the research.

3) A third, undesirable, option is to eliminate an entire research team. For example, the Food LCA team (collect and generate data on food chain environmental and social impacts and design a smartphone app to make the data available to the public) seems detached from some of the more action-research related activities, making it an easy target for exclusion. However, these activities are one of the few ways a discussion of the global food system (both its impacts and the actors that inhabit it) can take place in a way that might actually influence “big food” companies to change their practices. The PEC has asked that the project make an effort to engage with powerful food companies and the Food LCA app is a means to do that.

4) Finally, during the PR phase, the project will form an advisory board (six to eight members, meet twice a year) comprised mainly of well-connected academics, organizational leaders, and country specialists to offer their input on the research design and specific methodologies, and to facilitate the diffusion and impact of research outputs in society. An advisory board will also serve as a “coaching” body to assist the project leader directly.

#### ***Four field sites too random***

At the national level, the sites were chosen because they represent a variety of landscapes, diets, and food cultures. Additionally, each country represents a point along a socio-economic curve of development from highly developed (Japan), emerging economies (China, Thailand), and developing nations (Bhutan). Also, each nation is different from the extent to which mass consumption has prefigured societal norms and behavior— Japan has a preeminent consumer culture, China and Thailand are moving strongly in that direction, and until very recently, Bhutan had nothing remotely representative of a consumer culture.

At the more regional and local level, sites were chosen based on a number of factors including proximity to highly concentrated urban centers and history of agricultural development and culture. More practical considerations, such as the existence of research networks, also influenced the decision to include certain sites.

### ***Too broad beyond 5-year period***

The project is designed to extend its “lifespan” beyond the five-year funding period. Specifically, the project will facilitate the creation of both institutions (food policy councils), long-term policy plans (transitions frameworks derived from backcasting processes), and citizen-science oriented manuals and guidebooks to diffuse similar site-based projects widely throughout targeted counties.

### ***Environmental dimension largely implicit, missing***

The basis for this comment is confusing. Is sustainable consumption not seen as a viable area of environmental inquiry? Is it a call for the inclusion of more natural scientists or more non-social science methodologies?

Sustainable consumption and production research has evolved out the realization that in order for real sustainability to be achieved in societies around the world, the throughput of materials, resources, and energy surging through economies must be reduced significantly. It has tried to *highlight the implicitness* of environmental (and social) impacts in the everyday behaviors, products, and infrastructures that are taken-for-granted in modern day societies. The expertise of project members from soil science and agronomy, life-cycle assessment and clean production, and socio-ecological modeling will be combined with methodologies and perspectives from the social sciences to bring the environmental dimensions of our food consumption and production practices to light. In this context it is also relevant that within the Strategic Research Agenda for Future Earth, a key focal challenge focuses explicitly on sustainable consumption and production and the project identifies with at least eight of the 62 research priorities.

### ***More non-scientist involvement, contact with global food players***

This need is known internally and steps will be taken throughout the PR phase to make closer ties with non-scientists. For example, in Japan, we are now working closely with a network of environmental NPOs with interest in sustainable consumption issues and are solidifying ties with city and prefectural governments to partner on data collection and output creation. Food LCA efforts will require relationships with food processors and retailers— we are setting up meetings with some of these companies now. We hope to work through residential scientists in China, Thailand and Bhutan to create closer ties with non-scientists.

The possibility of creating a stakeholder forum or round-table is also being discussed. This body (or bodies) would facilitate dialogue about the project, the research design, and appropriate outputs.

### ***Lifeworld concept needs clarity***

A paper is being prepared to clarify the concept within the academic literature and highlight the specific perspective the project will take in defining lifeworlds as pedagogical medium for exploring socio-cultural change. The working title for the paper is “Lifeworlds as pedagogy for socio-cultural change: merging embodied praxis and meaning in everyday experience.”

