

Evalveerimine 2010 Application EV2 Estonian Research Institute of Agriculture, Biosciences and Environment

Expert's opinion: The volume and level of R&D activities in comparison to international criteria.

Subcriteria for evaluation	Evaluation	Comments
The research and development in the field being evaluated is characterized by a sufficient volume of financing taking into account the particularities of the field of research and the profile of the institution.	Positive	Good range of funding in area not always attracting big funding. The projects are not large - their average value is 1.59m EEK, and there are 66 of them. However, the funding is for very basic studies.
Research and development at the institution is characterized by contemporary and innovative range of topics for research.	Negative	There is a mix of basic and applied research; the former including biotechnology and disease control, crop modelling and agrohydrology; and the latter focusing on conservation, disease, yield analysis. There is also a core development activity (decision support, pesticide testing) and an extension (dissemination) role. Thus there is a mix that may seem traditional, but that reflects the necessity to support agriculture. This is not always consistent with producing quality science as is evidenced in the outputs.
The institution has international cooperation projects in the field being evaluated and/or participates in various international cooperation networks.	Positive	There has been a growth in international collaboration since the restructuring in 2007, and there has also been collaborative and successful EC funding application (notably the 13m EEK FLAVOURE project). There are several other projects with Baltic, Nordic or pan-European linkages, and collaborative use of equipment in laboratories in other Baltic states.
Experts' summary assessment	Negative	Whilst reasonably funded, the research approaches are not of international quality. This is primarily because of the prime role of the institution in providing advice for the agricultural community.

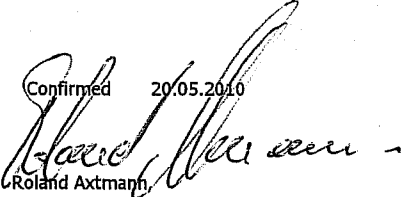
Expert's opinion: R&D infrastructure (working premises and auxiliary facilities).

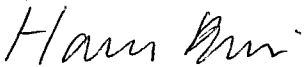
Subcriteria for evaluation	Evaluation	Comments
The institution's research groups in the field being evaluated have at their disposal the necessary working and auxiliary facilities (premises).	Negative	Existing laboratory space provision is moderate at about 10m ² per capita, although there is additional space in the form of storage facilities etc that could be adapted. It is stated "Taking into consideration the very modest investments in ERIA's research infrastructure for years, it has become one of the most crucial tasks to enhance its infrastructure." There is accordingly an ongoing process of necessary refurbishment and renewal; the molecular-microbiology laboratory was renovated in 2009, and it is planned to upgrade the biotechnology-based laboratory in 2010. Much of this is enhancement of equipment, however, rather than building new space.
The working facilities (premises) at the disposal of the institution's research groups in the field being evaluated are modern and fit for purpose.	Negative	The facilities are quite adequate for their agricultural duties but are unlikely to provide the infrastructure required for the advancement of science in this discipline.
The institution's research groups in the field being evaluated have at their disposal, in the case of experimental themes, the necessary equipment and instruments.	Negative	Inadequate scientific equipment due to poor investment over the last 15 years.
The equipment and instruments at the disposal of the institution's research groups in the field being evaluated are, in the case of the experimental themes, modern and fit for purpose.	Negative	The equipment they have is very out of date. Some new equipment has been bought but is not yet installed or able to cover their general deficiencies.
The institution's research groups in the field being evaluated have access to databases, specialized literature and other research infrastructures.	Positive	ERIA has a good specialist library, and has access to wider scientific literature databases through the electronic library services of the University of Tallinn or Tallinn University of Technology.
Experts' summary assessment	Negative	Limited outdated equipment and housing does not provide an adequate basis for 21st century agricultural research.

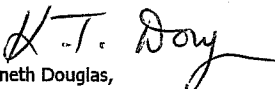
Expert's opinion: Qualification of researchers in comparison to international criteria.


Subcriteria for evaluation	Evaluation	Comments
A sufficient number of research staff are employed at the institution taking into account the volume and particularities of the R&D activities of the institution and the field being evaluated.	Negative	More, younger staff are required to adequately investigate the range of the institutes remit.
A sufficient number of the research staff have a recognized academic degree corresponding to Estonian legislative acts.	Positive	Not a strength, but adequate.
Doctoral dissertations have been successfully supervised in the last five years.	Negative	Two staff defences over a 5 year period is a poor record.
Research staff in the field being evaluated have received sufficient national or international honours and/or awards.	Positive	Reasonable for their field.
Research staff have published per researcher in the last 5 years a sufficient number of articles in international journals or peer-reviewed research monographs taking into account the particularities of the field of research being evaluated.	Negative	Only 10 international grade papers in 5 years. Far too many book chapters and very few conference contributions. These are very poor outputs. It is apparent that their role in the agricultural community means that many of their outputs are only ever local in interest.
Research staff have filed applications for patents or for plant variety rights certificates in the name of the institution in the last 5 years.	Negative	Very few.
Experts' summary assessment	Negative	The staff are trying to reach international standard but do not have the background (nor facilities) to achieve these goals. As an agricultural institution, they do not reach the level one would expect of a university institution.
Subcriteria for evaluation	Evaluation	Comments
Final assessment	Negative	It is clear that the funding and direction of this institute cannot reach university levels of quality given its current structure and staffing. The institute provides a valuable role for agriculture but needs help to reach international levels of research excellence. The assessment panel felt that the staff were keen to advance their research profile and they would benefit enormously from stronger links with quality university departments and research groups.

Confirmed 20.05.2010


 Roland Axtmann,
 Chairperson of the evaluation committee;
 spokesperson of the subcommittee „Culture and Society“


 Hans Brix,
 Spokesperson of the subcommittee
 „Biosciences and Environmental Sciences“


 Kenneth Douglas,
 spokesperson of the subcommittee „Health“


 Eric Gregoire,
 spokesperson of the Subcommittee
 „Natural Sciences and Engineering“