

Objectives of the project

The objective of GFAR is to make agrifood research and innovation systems more inclusive, sustainable, responsive and equitable towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by putting small scale farmers at the centre of research and innovation. The DeSIRA funding will support the following objectives of GFAR (i) to put farmers and communities empowered at the centre of innovation, (ii) to inter-connect and strengthen agri-food innovation systems through knowledge management, policy advocacy, communication, impact-demonstration, and (iii) to support the secretariat of GFAR through staffing and resources to provide the above catalytic and collective actions.



Farmers control farm erosion

Background

Most of the hungry people in the world live in rural areas and depend largely on traditional agriculture where climate change also poses serious challenges. World hunger is not decreasing and there is a need for a profound transformation of agri-food systems. The lack of placing key actors, such as farmers, and especially small-scale producers, at the centre of the innovative process has often led to serious problems of scaling up and scaling out, or to innovations that did not necessarily improve the livelihoods of the rural poor or reduce the vulnerability of women, youth and other disadvantaged groups.

With increased threats of food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty and climate change, and existing inequalities around the world, there is a dire need to render these systems more responsive to small holder farmer needs. Agricultural research may significantly contribute to this challenge.

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation (GFAR) (www.gfar.net) is a multi-stakeholder network made up of roughly 600 (as at January 2020) self-identifying member organizations, which share the common vision of making agri-food research and innovation more effective, responsive and equitable, towards achieving UN SDGs. GFAR's members come from all around the world, and across all relevant constituencies from farmers to civil society to research to the private sector, as well as international organizations.

GFAR has a recognized and respected role in promoting research and innovation with and for small-scale farmers. Through our partnerships forum and in engagement with UN organizations, the CGIAR (formerly the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) centres, civil society and NGOs, educational institution, agricultural research networks, and others we have been able to influence the policy related to research and innovation, and amplify the voice of the small farmer. While a relatively small player on the international scene GFAR has been able to engage in a wide range of issues as a neutral broker, bringing several issues to wider attention, bringing initiatives to fruition with minimal investment, and catalyzing commitments and funding from a range of partners.

GFAR has been successful in promoting a number of global initiatives. As at January 2020, its support to international policy processes, such as its technical inputs to the agenda of the G20 and to the CGIAR work programme, and to strengthening coordination of multilateral systems had led to

improved governance of global agricultural research towards development goals. GFAR had engaged with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agricole pour le Développement (CIRAD) and others to support the Foresight4Food initiative, and working with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) to establish the African Foresight Academy. Other engagements and contributions helped establish the EAT Forum. In partnership with ITPGRFA (International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture), CGRFA (Commission on Genetics for Food and Agriculture), and others, GFAR had been actively engaged in issues of Farmers' rights and forgotten foods. It worked on entrepreneurial training through support to the Young Agripreneurs Programme and reform to education curricula. And through financial and technical support it helped catalyse the growth and sustainability of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS).

The theory of change to achieve the objectives

GFAR's Theory of Change is that putting small-scale farmers at the centre through innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships will contribute to making agri-food Research and Innovation (R&I) systems more inclusive, transparent, accountable, efficient and resilient towards achieving the SDGs. Collective Actions, advocacy, sharing of knowledge and capacity strengthening, catalyzed through the interaction of GFAR Partners in open and transparent multi-stakeholder processes, will trigger transformational change in research and innovation institutions. This will strengthen national, regional, and global pro-poor sustainable Agri-Food Research and Innovation Systems through innovation and learning processes becoming more effective, relevant, equitable and accountable. GFAR works through a bottom-up and development-centered approach, together addressing strategic challenges that no one organization can resolve alone.



More concretely the project will deliver the following outputs:

Output 1: Farmers and communities empowered at the centre of innovation

- ✓ Mobilize farmer-participatory research to help family farmers better manage impacts from climate change;
- ✓ Provide engagement opportunities for male and female farmers - as key agents of change - to leverage local knowledge on areas such as forgotten foods, in order to maximize the use and benefit of different sources of knowledge in addressing shared challenges; i.e. climate change, and in providing effective solutions such as climate resistant crops;
- ✓ Provide platforms and engagement opportunities for smallholder farmers to participate on equal terms with other actors in the Digital Agriculture (DA) value chain and in related data production, sharing and use, including in the context of promotion and support of pertinent policies and practices;
- ✓ Facilitate the emergence and setup of new Collective Actions, in particular on climate-related challenges;
- ✓ Co-design and spearhead a set of Partnership Principles and promote them for endorsement as a common standard.

Output 2: Institutional architecture and capacity of agricultural research and innovation organizations strengthened, learning improved and dialogue enabled among regions

- ✓ Fostering and advising on the reform, strategic planning, governance review and strengthening of regional agricultural research and innovation organizations, to reflect equitable engagement of stakeholders in their governance and operation;



- ✓ Use multi-stakeholder approaches to foster transformational learning and student leadership development in agricultural universities and colleges, engaging with farmers and enterprise, linking science to development, addressing not only academic matters but also the wider personal development of students as societal leaders and innovative trans-disciplinary agriculturalists ;

Output 3: Knowledge management, policy advocacy, communication, impact-demonstration and investment in transformed agri-food innovation systems integrated and strengthened

- ✓ Improve access and exchange of knowledge, capitalization of experience, and learning among partners through regional knowledge hubs in key priority areas that also serve to inform agri-food research and innovation policies and practices; encourage communication among partners; provide platforms for virtual and face to face communication to exchange learning and experiences, advocate for harmonized policies, and explore potential partnerships on shared priority issues; strengthen GFAR's role as a unique network for knowledge exchange on priority issues ;
- ✓ Promote, advocate for and facilitate increased investment in agri-food innovation systems, addressing gender inequalities in the access to resources and services ;
- ✓ Joint activities with facilitating agencies, DeSIRA partners and other key global partners. This primarily includes activities within FAO, and especially with the Office of Innovation, to promote a culture of innovation and to leverage synergies in relevant projects.

Output 4: DeSira funding is a primary source of financing for the Secretariat of GFAR supporting the staffing and resources to provide the above catalytic and collective actions and to develop GFAR Strategy 2030 and its partnership and communication strategy, management of change mechanisms and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system.

Main activities

GFAR inspires and catalyzes new forms of multi-stakeholder dialogue, strategic partnerships and collective actions across extensive networks, helping to enable the transformation and strengthening of agri-food research and innovation for development systems and processes around the world.

Under the DeSIRA umbrella, GFAR is conducting a range of initiatives stemming from its vision and mission and building on mechanisms established by the GFAR governance and initiated before the current DeSIRA grant. These initiatives and mechanisms are primarily the Partnership Principles and the Collective Actions. Around these mechanisms, there are both activities and outputs.

Around the **Partnership Principles** (principles to assess the quality of multistakeholder partnerships leading to co-research and co-innovation), activities concern their discussion with key partners and their promotion as a common standard for evaluating ex-ante and ex-post collaborative research. They are being discussed with key partners, and they are used as a common ground to design and implement the Collective Actions.

Collective Actions are an innovative partnership mechanism: after topics have been identified in multi-stakeholder dialogues and prioritized by the Steering Committee, members (at least three, always including small-scale producers) join efforts and resources to initiate and co-manage a Collective Action that implements the Partnership Principles, facilitated and possibly seed-funded by GFAR.

Before the beginning of the project, the GFAR Steering Committee prioritized three topics proposed by the members for Collective Actions which are in progress, and other topics have been proposed and/or prioritized since. These are:



- ✓ **Forgotten Foods** – The Collective Action on Forgotten Foods (FF) aims at empowering small-scale farmers to be key actors in the governance of research to develop FF value chains and has produced a Global Manifesto along with a Global Plan of Action for its implementation. Partners engaged: a CG Center (the Alliance of Bioversity Intl. and CIAT), Crops for the Future, and at the regional level the agricultural research for development fora/organizations: Forum for the Americas on Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO), Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (CACAARI), Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA), Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), FARA, as well as farmers' organizations, and in particular in Asia the Asian Farmers' Association (AFA), and M S Swaminathan Research Foundation.
- ✓ **Digital Transformation** – The Collective Action on the Inclusive Digital Transformation of Agriculture aims at empowering small-scale farmers as key actors and co-innovators in the design and governance of digital solutions, through needs assessment exercises, identification of good practices and consultations leading to a Small-scale Farmers' Declaration on Inclusive Digital Agriculture. Partners engaged as of May 2023: FORAGRO, APAARI, AARINENA, Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition initiative (GODAN), family farmers associations like the (Confederacion de Organizaciones de Productores Familiares del Mercosur (COPROFAM), AFA, the Jordan Farmers' Union and others.
- ✓ **Climate Change** – Besides climate change being a cross-cutting theme across Collective Actions, in the third year of the project a new topic was proposed by the members and prioritized by the steering Committee: the link between land tenure rights and prevention of, and resilience to, climate-led disasters, which then became a Collective Action on "Mainstreaming land rights of the rural poor in the climate discourse". Partners engaged as of May 2023: Asian NGO Coalition for agrarian reform and rural development (ANGOC), The Land Portal foundation, and Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD).
- ✓ **Participatory research and family farming** – This Collective Action started in the third year of the project and aims at promoting participatory frameworks engaging family farmers as co-innovators in the entire research cycle. As for partners, GFAR ensures a wide representation of research centres (for instance PROMoting Local INNOVation (PROLINNOVA) AGRINOVIA, Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura (IICA), Alliance Bioversity-CIAT, PROCASUR, etc), while the World Rural Forum convenes family farmers' organizations.
- ✓ **Transformational learning and higher education transformation** – This Collective Action started in the fourth year of the project and aims at transforming formal higher education to match the new skills required for co-research and co-innovation processes. Partners engaged as of May 2023: EFARD (European Forum for Agricultural Research and Development), APAARI, Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA), Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), PROLINNOVA.

Two new topics have been identified in the last year of the project, based on interest from partners and especially the EU: **soil fertility and agroecology**, and the **follow-up on the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) national pathways**. Depending on the commitment of members and prioritization by the Steering Committee, new Collective Actions may be started on these topics.

In the last year of the project, under Output 2 GFAR's activities revolve around support to the Regional Fora and the configuration of the **Global NARS Consortium** to better represent and empower the



National Agricultural Research System (NARS): the Regional fora have agreed to establish the new entity within GFAR and design a roadmap by 2025.

In support of the GFAR members' engagement function, and to foster dialogue among members to identify priorities, a key area of activity in the last year is the design and configuration of the **Knowledge and Learning Hubs**, which will help engage, mobilize, inform and link diverse stakeholders promoting joint reflection, and have lessons learned synthesized, documented and communicated.

Results achieved to date (June 2023)

- ✓ The **reboot of GFAR** with the strengthening of its foundations (governance renewal, Theory of Change and other strategic documents, the design of a new membership platform including Knowledge and Learning Hubs, a new MEL system), the reviving of the relations with its key partners (regional and inter-regional exchanges with the Regional Fora (RF), participation in the CGIAR High Level Advisory Panel), the growing membership (900+) and the deployment of the Collective Action (CA) mechanism. This benefits the GFAR members and in general the agri-food Research & Innovation (R&I) systems that GFAR is supposed to "reconnect".
- ✓ The **partnerships** developed under the Collective Actions (CAs) and the direct and indirect **engagement of 65 organizations** from all regions in the implementation of GFAR's Collective Actions, of which **25** represent **small-scale producers** or poor rural people. Farmers' associations are among the key partners of all CAs, and one of them is leading a project stemming out of a CA. This engagement highly empowers these associations, as testified by them on different occasions.
- ✓ The **Partnership Principles**: a collaboratively agreed set of principles to assess the quality of multistakeholder partnerships leading to co-research and co-innovation. The main beneficiaries of this achievement are primarily research institutions (so far, the CGIAR is starting a trial application in selected projects) and farmers' associations, which are meant to become the custodians of the principles and to use them to make research accountable, but in general the accountability of R&I systems will benefit.
- ✓ The **Manifesto on Forgotten Foods**, resulting from a broad and intensive consultation process involving thousands of participants in different regions convened by the partners in the CA. The Manifesto covers shared values, operational principles and concrete strategies that help smallholders localize actions and policies within their own communities and countries to rapidly accelerate the wider adoption of more biodiverse food systems; it benefits agri-food systems on the whole, contributing to several SDGs, and especially small-scale producers whose views are strongly reflected in the recommendations.
- ✓ The outputs of the CA on Inclusive Digital Agriculture, from all the regional streams, are being shared through a common portal, called **INCLUDAS**: designed for low bandwidths, it is conceived to benefit both associations of small-scale producers and providers of digital solutions who want to cater for small farmers.
- ✓ The **Bangkok Declaration to establish a Global NARS Consortium** (GNC), signed by the heads of the six GFAR Regional Fora (AARINENA, APAARI, CACAARI, EFARD, FARA, and FORAGRO), benefits both the Regional Fora and the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), as the GNC will seek to strengthen their global voice, enhance their influence, and improve their resource base and capacities.
- ✓ Four **GFAR Talks** with subsequent think pieces on hot topics and three **webinars** on topics identified as priorities by the members: they benefit our members as resources for debate and

engagement and possibly conducive to CAs, as happened in one case.

Organisation

GFAR work programme is driven by the members within the GFAR network, which includes representatives of civil society organizations, farmers and agricultural workers, facilitating agencies, international research, private sector, women's groups, consumers, financial institutions, higher education, national and regional research and policy organizations, rural advisory services, and youth associations.

Governance of GFAR is provided through GFAR's governing bodies (Steering Committee, Executive Committee, Chair, Vice-Chair, Executive Secretary ...) as set out in GFAR's Charter.

The GFAR Steering Committee agrees on the initiatives (Collective Actions) to be taken by the GFAR Secretariat in collaboration with the GFAR partners and others. There are no predefined "project" partners, but the partners are identified based on interest in working on a particular topic that addressed the objectives of GFAR and towards meeting development goals.

The GFAR Secretariat is hosted by FAO in Rome.

Implementing organisation

Both the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and FAO are facilitating agencies for GFAR.

Partners of the project

There are no predefined "project" partners but the partners are identified based on interest in working on a particular topic that addressed the objectives of GFAR and towards meeting development goals. Typical partners include FAO, IFAD, CG Centers, the agricultural research for development fora/organizations FORAGRO, CACAARI, AARINENA, APAARI, FARA, members of GFAR Steering Committee, farmers' organizations, local and national NGOs, universities, and donors. Activities are facilitated by the initiative and engagement of GFAR.

Location

Head Quarter: Rome/Italy with activities at global level

Funding and co-funding

EU	€ 5,000,000
Total budget	€ 5,000,000

GFAR has in the past been able to leverage funds to obtain co-funding of 200 percent for GFAR projects (Collective Actions) from implementing partners and other donors.

Duration

48 months (2020-2023)

Website

www.gfar.net

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