Global Forum on Agricultural Research

Terms of reference for the establishment of
the Global Forum Steering Committee Secretariat

a discussion paper for the GFSC meeting, Washington 29 October, 1997.

1. Background

The Global Forum for Agricultural Research has been established as a platform of consultation between all the partners concerned with agricultural research for development, as actors, users or financiers. It held its inaugural meeting last October in Washington at the time of ICW 96 and established an interim Steering Committee (GFSC) responsible for the continuation of the process.

That GFSC met for the first time in Cairo at the time of MTM 97 and agreed on its mandate, functions and composition for the coming 3 years. It decided to set up a permanent secretariat to assist in its mission and to implement agreed upon activities. WB/ESDAR has been asked to host this secretariat.

The GFSC also agreed on the request of the NARS Global Steering Committee to set up a distinct NARS/GSC secretariat to assist with the specific objective of that committee. It expressed its hope that a donor support group could be set up to support both GFSC and NARS secretariat activities. Two separate papers provide information on the decisions achieved so far for both the NARS secretariat and the Donor support group.

2. Goal and objectives

The overall goal of the GFSC secretariat is to provide support to the GFSC activities, including helping to implement the work programme and assisting in convening its various meetings, including the Global Forum meeting every three year.

The overall objective of the Global Forum is to create a platform for all the stakeholders of Agricultural Research for Development to debate the common issues of a global nature and to share experiences on successful partnerships for research.

Achieving that overall objectives requires activities related to (i) exchange of information; (ii) studies on specific topics; (iii) monitoring and evaluation of research partnerships and (iii) identification of new types of collaborative projects (partnerships).
This leads to the following specific objectives for the GFSC secretariat:

- to assist the GFSC in preparation and follow-up of its meetings.
- To help implement the GFSC work programme and to report on to the GFSC.
- to identify strategic issues of global importance on which there is not yet a consensus, and to organize the debate which could lead to such a consensus.
- To promote new types of partnerships.
- to liaise with other secretariats, which are mainly NARS/SC and CGIAR ones.

3. **Basic principles of a GFSC secretariat.**

- **Autonomy/accountability:** the GFSC secretariat is accountable to the GFSC and will be autonomous from its host agency in the implementation of decisions and policy options mandated by the GFSC, though it will follow administrative policies of the host agency.

- **Transparency/Information:** the GFSC should work in a transparent manner. It would make available to all GFAR members information on its activities and products (studies, workshop proceedings, etc...). EGFAR should be a tool to increase sharing and dissemination of information between the stakeholders. It should also promote the general objectives of the GFAR and the decisions of the GFSC.

- **Limited scope:** the GFSC should focus on the promotion of collaborative partnerships on global strategic issues where improvement is needed and should contribute to the development of a coherent framework for all types of partnerships by increasing transparency and effectiveness.

4. **Functions/status of the GFSC secretariat.**

In order to fulfill the above key objectives, the secretariat will undertake two types of activities.

i) The first one relates to institutional activities of managing the GF and GFSC agenda and of facilitating the funding of the work programme, as well as improving the exchange of information (e.g. implementation and management of EGFAR project presented at the Cairo meeting).

ii) The second type is of a technical nature and comprises studies (e.g. genetic resource management policy) , workshops ( e.g. new strategies of investment) and support to/participation in pilot collaborative projects (e.g. Pro Musa and Banana research Consortium).
5. **Modus operandi.**

The secretariat will have to implement a 3-year work programme to be approved by the GFSC. Every year, the ongoing work programme will be reviewed and amended, if needed, based on the report of activities to be prepared by the secretariat.

The work programme will comprise two types of activities.

a) **Institutional activities:**

* convening the two yearly meetings of the GFSC, at the time of ICW and MTM

* implementation of EGFAR system.

* preparation for the every 3-year Global Forum on Agricultural Research.

b) **Technical activities:**

* discussion platform through EGFAR and specific studies on agricultural research issues of global interest (e.g. sustainability issues, genetic resources policy, biotechnology, rural innovation processes.)

* monitoring of research partnerships and case analysis, in order to see what can be learnt. Action-research on cases deemed important to be studied in order to improve approach and methodology to develop enhanced joint research efforts.

* identification of/participation in pilot collaborative projects relating to new research partnerships and/or to new types of research funding such as the LAC Regional Fund for Agricultural Research and Technological Development, in order to draw lessons from and to share experiences gained with other regions.