Key players in agricultural research around the world are joining forces in a dynamic new initiative—the Global Forum on Agricultural Research, or GFAR. Relying on cost-effective partnerships and strategic alliances, GFAR aims to promote a Global System for Agricultural Research to reduce poverty, achieve food security, and conserve and manage biodiversity and natural resources.

GFAR was founded on 31 October 1996 by representatives of the developing-country national agricultural research systems (NARS), advanced research institutions (ARIs), regional and subregional organizations, universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), farmers’ organizations, the private sector, international agricultural research centres (IARCs), and the donor community. Their joint “Declaration and Plan of Action for Global Partnership in Agricultural Research” is reproduced in the following box.

Three basic premises lie behind GFAR’s work:

1. Science and knowledge are essential to the future of agricultural development in contemporary societies.
2. Today more than ever, the systematic creation of knowledge and its practical use depend on transnational research systems and networks.
3. Differences in the capacity to access and use improved technologies can lead to inequities between and within countries that can and should be avoided.

**Mission and goals**

GFAR’s mission is to mobilize the world scientific community in their efforts to alleviate poverty, increase food security, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources. Its goals are to:

- Facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge;
- Foster cost-effective, collaborative partnerships among the stakeholders of agricultural research and sustainable development;
- Promote the integration of NARS and enhance their capacity to produce and transfer technology that responds to users’ needs;
- Facilitate the participation of all stakeholders in formulating a truly global framework for development-oriented agricultural research;
- Increase awareness among policymakers and donors of the need for long-term commitment to, and investment in, agricultural research.
Declaration for Global Partnership in Agricultural Research

“We, the representatives of the national agricultural research systems, regional and subregional organizations, universities, advanced research institutions, non-governmental organizations, farmers’ organizations, the private sector, and international agricultural research centers, gathered in a Global Forum on Agricultural Research at the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, International Centers Week 1996:

Cognizant of the formidable challenges of the future, in particular the need:

• to alleviate poverty;
• to increase productivity and resource use efficiency to feed an expanding population; and
• to address environmental degradation, sustainably manage the natural resource base, and develop and implement more appropriate agricultural policies and sustainable technologies;

Aware that the world leaders are holding a summit to address the global challenge of ensuring food security;

Convinced that scientific and technological responses and sociocultural factors are essential elements in improving food and nutritional security, as well as more sustainable use of cropland, rangeland, aquatic, and forest resources;

Realizing that the national agricultural research systems are the cornerstones of the emerging global research system; and

Recognizing that current cooperative research arrangements need to be adjusted to meet challenges of unprecedented nature and magnitude:

Hereby affirm our strong commitment to contribute to the development of productive, sustainable, and equitable agriculture. We recognize the crucial role played by farmers, especially women, in agriculture and natural resources management. We agree to work in partnership with them toward their empowerment, building on their indigenous knowledge systems.

We fully recognize the immense value of collaboration and research partnership and urge that such collaboration be governed by the principles of subsidiarity, participatory decision-making, complementarity of efforts, adaptability, openness, and, above all, a deep sense of commitment to the common purpose. We agree to meet the challenges of the present and the future through an efficient, effective, and coherent global agricultural research system.

Adopted at the Global Forum on Agricultural Research, Washington, 31 October 1996
Program of Work and Budget

GFAR is concentrating on five high-priority areas:

- information and communication technologies;
- support to regional fora and NARS sub-regional groupings;
- genetic resource management, biotechnology and intellectual property rights;
- natural resource management and agro-ecology;
- international cooperation for agricultural research on commodities outside the CGIAR mandate.

The first two priorities are more institutional in nature as they are crucial to ensuring the full and equal participation of all GFAR stakeholders. The other three areas, unanimously recognized as critical, urgently need specific action programs based on new partnerships and strategic alliances.

Guiding principles

**Subsidiarity**
Programs and projects are planned and managed at the lowest level at which they can be effectively executed.

**Complementarity**
GFAR strives to develop a global agricultural research system by drawing on the complementary strengths of the stakeholders.

**Additionality**
GFAR supports programs and projects that aim specifically to add value to what each stakeholder can do on its own.

**Involvement of all stakeholders**
GFAR operates through its stakeholders and mobilizes all stakeholders in planning and executing its programs and activities.

**Partnership**
GFAR’s work program supports the evolution of the development-aid concept towards that of full partners with common interests collaborating for mutual benefits. The NARS of the developing countries along with their regional and subregional fora are the cornerstones of the global agricultural research system that GFAR aims to create.
Organization

GFAR operates through the steering committees of the GFAR and the NARS, working together with the GFAR support group.

The GFAR Steering Committee is supported by a secretariat in Washington DC, which is hosted by the World Bank’s RDV (Rural Development Department). The GFAR Secretariat consults with all GFAR stakeholders and monitors the transformation of the forum’s action plan into a detailed program of action.

The NARS Steering Committee, supported by a secretariat hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in Rome, works to strengthen the collective voice of developing-country NARS in setting and implementing a global agricultural research agenda. Technical support to the NARS secretariat is provided by the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR).

The GFAR support group, under the leadership of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), mobilizes the international community in support of the GFAR initiative.

The GFAR plenary meeting is convened once every three years. The two steering committees and the support group meet twice annually, in conjunction with the meetings of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

GFAR’s two secretariats facilitate the day-to-day operations of the forum. They act as implementation bodies for the GFAR core activities and play a catalytic and promotional role for projects carried out within the GFAR framework.

The secretariats act as brokers, encouraging and facilitating strategic alliances and research and institutional partnerships. They also assist an ongoing policy dialogue on issues of global importance, promoting the participation of a broad array of agricultural research stakeholders.

Finally, the secretariats support the strengthening of NARS as key components of a global agricultural research system.

For further information:

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<th>GFAR Secretariat</th>
<th>NARS Secretariat</th>
<th>GFAR Support Group</th>
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The GFAR Steering Committee

The 13-member Steering Committee is composed of representatives of the various stakeholders of the GFAR. Five of its members, nominated on a regional basis, are selected from the developing-country national agricultural research system (NARS). Three represent advanced research institutes and universities (ARIs), also nominated regionally. The following five have one delegate each: the donor community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), farmers’ organizations, the private sector, and those international agricultural research centres (IARCs) belonging to the CGIAR. The Steering Committee is to direct the forum program of action during the period between triennial meetings of the global forum. The Steering Committee also approves the yearly plan of action as well as the budget of the secretariat. It normally convenes twice yearly, while remaining in regular contact via the Internet.

The GFAR Secretariat

The GFAR Secretariat provides support to the Steering Committee. It assists in the convening of regular meetings, in the implementation of the plan of action, and in the preparation and organization of the regular triennial plenary meeting of the global forum.

Specific Goals

- **Communication.** To develop a far-reaching, multi-channel system for the exchange of information among all GFAR constituents.
- **Research.** To foster development of a global agricultural research system.
• **Dialogue.** To single out and to facilitate discussion of issues critical to the development of a global research agenda.

• **Partnership.** To build a healthy environment for improved research partnerships, essential for the achievement of a global research agenda.

### Functions

The GFAR secretariat assists the GFAR community in reaching these goals in various ways.

- It assists the GFAR steering committee in the development and implementation of a plan of action and in organizing regular meetings.
- It facilitates the preparation of the agenda for the triennial regular plenary session, and helps the various constituencies to prepare their contributions to the plenary.
- It commissions studies and organizes workshops and meetings necessary to the development of a global research agenda, as provided for in the plan of action.
- It facilitates communication among GFAR constituencies. If requested, it helps individual constituents to organize their internal communications, in particular through the development of an electronic global forum on agricultural research (EGFAR).
- It presents an annual plan of action and a budget to the Steering Committee for approval, and maintains contacts with donors.

### The NARS Steering Committee

The NARS Steering Committee (NARS-SC) is a subcommittee of the GFAR Steering Committee. It is composed of the chairpersons of the NARS regional fora on agricultural research (Asia and the Pacific; Latin America and the Caribbean; Sub-Saharan Africa; West Asia and North Africa; and, in future, Central Asia and the Caucasus).

### The NARS Secretariat

The NARS Secretariat provides support to the NARS-SC and its constituents—the NARS and their regional fora and sub-regional groupings. Its mission is to strengthen the collective voice of the NARS community in setting and implementing a global agricultural research agenda responsive to the priority objectives of poverty alleviation, food security, and sustainable use of natural resources.

### Specific goals

- To enhance, through subregional and regional fora, the capacity of NARS to generate and transfer, in a participatory manner, appropriate technologies that respond to users’ needs;
- To set priorities that better reflect the NARS’ views on the global research agenda;
- To strengthen partnerships among the NARS themselves, and between NARS and other stakeholders.
Functions of the Secretariat

The NARS Secretariat supports and assists the regional fora and subregional groupings. Its role is to:

- Translate the broad concept of NARS into an operational reality to increase the effectiveness of agricultural research at the national level
- Facilitate interregional and subregional linkages and information exchange, which contribute to strengthening NARS’ capacities to achieve their goals
- Facilitate deliberations and consultations leading to formulation of a joint position on issues of global, regional, and subregional interest, within the context of the global agricultural research agenda
- Collaborate in establishing priorities and developing research agendas at the national and subregional levels
- Establish mechanisms for systematic consultation among NARS regarding their key role in setting the CGIAR research agenda, and in their providing input useful to the forthcoming global agricultural research system
- Formulate and implement NARS–NARS cooperative research initiatives and act as an intermediary with such other partners as international agricultural research centres, institutes for advanced research, universities, and the private sector, in taking advantage of the best resources each offers

The NARS Secretariat also works with the international community to:

- maintain liaisons with the GF-SC Secretariat and with Secretariats of the CGIAR or the Global Forum to enhance synergies and improve the NARS’ access and contribution to the Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research (EGFAR)
- support the NARS-SC and the GF-SC in mobilizing resources, through the GFAR Support Group
- undertake and/or coordinate studies or activities which the NARS Steering Committee considers appropriate in promoting the development of GFAR.
Acronyms

AARINENA  Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa
APAARI  Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
ASARECA  Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
CORAF  Conférence des responsables de la recherche agronomique africains
FARA  Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (sub-Saharan)
FORAGRO  Foro Regional de Investigación y Desarrollo Tecnológico Agropecuario
IICA  Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura
RF  Regional Forum
PROCIANDINO  Programa Cooperativo de Investigación y Transferencia de Tecnología Agropecuaria para la Subregión Andina
PROCICARIBE  Program for Cooperation of Institutes of Agricultural Science and Technology in the Caribbean
PROCITROPICOS  Programa Cooperativo de Investigación y Transferencia de Tecnología para los Trópicos Suramericanos
PROCISUR  Programa Cooperativo para el Desarrollo Tecnológico Agropecuario del Cono Sur transferred to SICART
SACCAR  Southern African Centre for Co-operation in Agricultural & Natural Resources Research and Training
SICTA  Sistema de Integración Centroamericano de Tecnología Agrícola
The GFAR Support Group

The GFAR support group (GFAR-SG) provides financial, technical, and moral support to GFAR and helps to coordinate the donor community’s support of GFAR’s activities. Its specific goals are to:

- facilitate consultation among donors on GFAR-related issues to forge and strengthen consensus, synergies, and complementarity in agricultural research on every level—regional, subregional, national, and international;
- organize donor representation on and participation in the GFAR Steering Committee;
- support the activities of the GFAR and NARS Steering Committees, especially mechanisms for interaction and institutional arrangements that foster collaboration among NARS and the various components of the GFAR.

Guiding principles

Voluntary support. The support group is voluntary. It is open to all donors and other stakeholders who actively support agricultural research activities, whether global or regional. The GFAR work program covers a broad range of activities, and donors may selectively support those initiatives they consider most in accordance with their own objectives and policies.

Transparency. The support group works in a transparent manner. Information on its evolving policies and on the activities it supports is available to all stakeholders.

Pledging. Pledging of funds is limited to the GFAR and NARS steering committees, based on their approved plans of action. Funding for GFAR should remain distinct from support to CGIAR. The GFAR and CGIAR work programs are complementary.

Limited scope. Most research funding is decentralized. A primary aim of the GFAR Support Group is to facilitate linkages and information exchange and to build collaborative partnerships among the NARS at the regional, subregional, and global levels, and among all the GFAR constituencies. The Support Group may also contribute to developing a coherent framework for decentralized efforts, thereby increasing their transparency and effectiveness. With that aim it cooperates with existing “donor clubs” with either a geographical or a thematic focus.
GFAR Funding

Donors to GFAR as of 1 January 1999 are:

- Administration générale de la coopération au développement (AGCD), Belgium
- Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS), The Netherlands
- Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- France
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR)
- Italy
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Sweden
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland
- The World Bank