The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)

First External Review

1. Main Report

Panel Members:
Abbas Kesseba, Tim Dottridge, and John Russell

Rome, October 2000
Acknowledgements

Panel members wish to thank all those who gave generously of their time, both in interviews and in responding to the questionnaire. Their inputs were informative, instructive and invaluable, thus providing key data for the study.

The panel would also like to acknowledge the strong support of the GFAR Secretariat in Rome: Fernando Chaparro, Christian Hoste, Arnoud Braun, Oliver Oliveros, Marie-Claude Brunet, Catherine Gaury and Maria Christina Esuperanzi - who provided all the information requested including the very extensive bibliography; responses to queries; help in tabulating the responses to questions 1 and 2 of the questionnaire and in developing some of the annex tabulations; and also much-appreciated secretarial support. The panel wishes to express its appreciation to Dr. Rodney Cooke of IFAD for helping shape the TOR. It also wishes to acknowledge the strong interaction with and the valuable institutional memory inputs received from Shantanu Mathur of IFAD. Finally, the panel wishes to thank Barbara Rae of IFAD for her patient and untiring efforts in editing this report.
Dear Dr. Paroda,

On behalf of the External Review Panel, I am pleased to submit to you the Report of the First External Review of GFAR, which was conducted during the period from May to September 2000, under my chairmanship. The Panel is grateful to the Steering Committee for initiating the review process at an early stage in GFAR life cycle, and expresses its appreciation to both IFAD and IDRC/CIDA for their foresight in sponsoring the review. The Panel wishes also to record its appreciation to Mr. Fernando Chaparro and his team in the GFAR secretariat for their support and excellent collaboration.

The Panel is pleased to note that the review found GFAR to be well administered, and its output have increased considerably over the last two years, both in terms of quality and quantity, and that its stakeholders have indicated high satisfaction with the GFAR’s secretariat work and services.

This being the First External Review of GFAR since its inception, the Panel did not have the advantage of earlier reviews for general comparison and tracking of change. Therefore, the Panel took a pragmatic approach, covering both the secretariat and the stakeholders of GFAR, recognizing the need for GFAR to be able to respond to current challenges while setting a firm foundation for its future.

The Panel underlines GFAR successful transformation from two separate secretariats for NARS and GFAR into a single secretariat located in Rome. The Panel has identified a set of recommendations to improve its management and governance structure, and consolidate its activities. In this context, the Panel’s view that GFAR’s current activities and outputs need to be linked more closely to its stakeholders activities and the evolutionary process undergoing at the Regional, Sub-regional and National levels. This will require close interaction and collaboration between the stakeholders to GFAR’s mission through improved organizational, priority setting, and resource allocation arrangements.

The overall picture emerging from the Panel’s review is that GFAR has made considerable progress and has grown from a novel concept to a potentially leading instrument that can foster International Agricultural Research system in the years to come. The Panel recommends, therefore the continued strong support to GFAR by all its stakeholders.

Sincerely Yours,

Abbas Kesseba
Panel Chair
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AARINENA</td>
<td>Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa</td>
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<td>AGP</td>
<td>Plant Production and Protection Division of FAO</td>
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<td>APAARI</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions</td>
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<td>APO</td>
<td>Associate Professional Officer</td>
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<td>ARI</td>
<td>Advanced Research Institute</td>
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<td>ASARECA</td>
<td>Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in East and Central Africa</td>
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<td>ASP</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>CABI</td>
<td>Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International</td>
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<td>CAC</td>
<td>Central Asia and the Caucasus Region</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
<td>Central Directors Committee of CGIAR</td>
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<td>CGIAR</td>
<td>Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research</td>
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<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIRAD</td>
<td>Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement/International Cooperation Centre on Agrarian Research for Development</td>
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<td>CORAF/WECARD</td>
<td>Conseil des responsables de la recherche agronomique africains/West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development</td>
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<td>Centre Technique de Coopération Agricole et Rurale/Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation of the EC</td>
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<td>Donor Support Group</td>
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<td>ECAPAPA</td>
<td>Eastern and Central African Programme for Agricultural Policy Analysis</td>
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<td>EFARD</td>
<td>European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development</td>
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<td>EGFAR</td>
<td>Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research</td>
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<td>EIARD</td>
<td>European Initiative on Agricultural Research for Development</td>
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<td>Environmentally Sustainable Development and Agricultural Research Unit of the World Bank</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
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<td>FORAGRO</td>
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<td>GARS</td>
<td>Global Agricultural Research System</td>
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<td>Library and Documentation Systems Division, FAO</td>
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<td>International Agricultural Research Centre</td>
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<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<td>ICW</td>
<td>International Centers Week of the CGIAR</td>
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<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre of Canada</td>
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<td>International Federation of Agricultural Producers</td>
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<td>International Plant Genetic Resources Institute</td>
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<td>International Rice Research Institute</td>
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<td>ISNAR</td>
<td>International Service for National Agricultural Research</td>
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<td>LAC</td>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean Region</td>
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<td>LDC</td>
<td>Less Developed Countries</td>
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<td>MTM</td>
<td>Mid-Term Meeting of the CGIAR</td>
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<td>National Agricultural Research Systems</td>
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<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>NRM</td>
<td>Natural Resource Management</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>PROCI</td>
<td>Cooperative Programme for Agricultural Research and Technology Transfer in Latin America and the Caribbean Region</td>
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<td>PROLINNOVA</td>
<td>Promoting Local Innovation Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>R/SRF</td>
<td>Regional/Sub-regional Fora</td>
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<td>RAIS</td>
<td>Regional Agricultural Information System</td>
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<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>REPA</td>
<td>Réseau d’expertise et des politiques agricoles</td>
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<td>SACCAR</td>
<td>Southern African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural Research</td>
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<td>SDC</td>
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<td>SICHTA</td>
<td>Integrated Agricultural Technology System in Central America</td>
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<td>Sub-Saharan Africa Region</td>
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<td>Technical Advisory Committee of the CGIAR</td>
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<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>USDA</td>
<td>United States Department of Agriculture</td>
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<td>World Agricultural Information Centre, FAO</td>
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<td>WANA</td>
<td>West Asia and North Africa Region</td>
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<td>WB</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
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PREFACE

Introduction to the Review

This report represents the first external review of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), undertaken by a panel of experts commissioned by the GFAR Steering Committee (GFAR-SC). The panel was requested to assess GFAR’s progress to date and make recommendations for future direction. The key recommendations are discussed in the Executive Summary, all are highlighted in bold in the main text and are listed in order of text appearance at the end of each section.

Background and Terms of Reference

GFAR was formally established in 1996. Initially there were two secretariats, both of which commenced operations in mid-1998, but as of June of this year the two have been merged into one single body. GFAR held its first plenary meeting in Dresden in May 2000. Prior to this meeting, the GFAR-SC and the Donor Support Group (DSG) had already agreed to commission an external assessment to review GFAR’s work programme, its governance and organisational structure. The Terms of Reference for the review are attached to this report as Annex 1. It was recognised from the outset that the review would provide an assessment of work in progress and recommendations for the future. The time available to the Panel and the resulting work modalities neither warranted, nor provided the opportunity for collecting adequate evidence globally for a full evaluation. The review panel has nevertheless used the available evidence, and sought the views of many stakeholders. While endeavouring not to get too buried in the details of what is a dynamic enterprise, it made a point of ensuring that all comments were the result of reference to available evidence and not merely based on its own personal assessment.

Conduct of the Review - Approach and Method

This review is a rapid assessment, and its core work was undertaken over a period of four weeks. The panel members worked together in Rome for two weeks in June, and separately thereafter, while keeping in regular contact with GFAR stakeholders throughout the undertaking.

GFAR brings together participants from seven diverse stakeholder groups. Throughout the review, the team was conscious of the need to consult with key persons from all of these groups, and to ensure at least partial regional coverage as well. The review was divided into three parts, as follows:

(i) **Review and analysis of documents.** Panel members reviewed a vast amount of written material including papers prepared for, or emanating from, GFAR 2000, Dresden, as well as other documents going back over the last four years, and records of all meetings associated with GFAR and its Secretariats.

(ii) **Meeting with GFAR stakeholders.** The reviewers met and discussed with a large number of GFAR stakeholders. One reviewer attended the GFAR 2000, Dresden meeting, in an observer capacity, and was therefore able to interact with some of the four hundred participants in attendance. The two other reviewers visited one regional

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1 The Panel comprised Abbas Kesseba, Tim Dottridge and John Russell. The review was co-sponsored by IFAD and IDRC/CIDA
2 GFAR 2000, Dresden
3 See bibliography
and one sub-regional NARS forum, respectively: (a) the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA), and (b) the West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development (WECARD/CORAF). They also had discussions - either in person or by telephone - with a large number of other persons involved with GFAR.4

(iii) Questionnaire. Early in June, the reviewers dispatched a questionnaire to 160 persons representing a broad range of constituencies covering the global agricultural research system. The questionnaire solicited opinions on the areas in which GFAR had been active, and on the usefulness of its work, as well as suggestions for future direction. There were 80 respondents (50%). The results have contributed to many of the observations made throughout, and are discussed in Annex 5, which has a copy of the questionnaire attached as an Appendix.

During the two-week period of work in Rome, the panel members had discussions with several senior officials from FAO, IFAD, TAC and IPGRI. They also met the Secretary General of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), the Chairman of the CGIAR Finance Committee and the representative of CIDA. Throughout the entire review process they were able to interact closely with the core team of the GFAR Secretariat: Fernando Chaparro and Christian Hoste, and their two APOs, Arnoud Braun and Oliver Oliveros. Two of the reviewers also met with Alain Derevier, former Executive Secretary of the GFAR Secretariat in Washington during the period June 1998 through July 2000 - prior to its merger with the NARS Secretariat in Rome. Most of the material reviewed is available on the website5 and a full list of the documentation is provided in the attached bibliography.

It is important to make a clear distinction between GFAR - a global process of consultation, information exchange and partnerships for development research, and the work of its now-merged Secretariat, which is to support this process of exchange and interaction. GFAR also hosts a triennial meeting of participants from each of its seven stakeholder groups. The meeting that led to the establishment of GFAR took place in Washington in 1996, presided over by the President of IFAD, whereas GFAR’s first plenary meeting was held this year in Dresden, and attended by just over 400 participants. The GFAR external review – which is the subject of this report - refers to material and experience emanating from that GFAR 2000 meeting in Dresden but it is not an evaluation of the meeting itself. That is already being taken care of in various forms by the Secretariat, so as to learn lessons for the next Forum, scheduled for 2003, and to build on the recommendations and debate when deciding on the short- and longer-term work programmes for GFAR as a whole and for its Secretariat.

The review panel has endeavoured to fulfil the Terms of Reference to the best of its ability, going beyond them in many instances. In trying to synthesise a great deal of material, as well as different views of the stakeholder groups, the panel is certain to have missed some important information and not done justice to other sources, especially since there was much to read, learn and digest in too little time. Moreover, considering the diverse audience to which the report is addressed, it is unlikely to satisfy everyone. Panel members hope, nevertheless, to have contributed usefully and creatively to the debate as to where GFAR - and its Secretariat, in particular - should focus its future direction.

4 See list of persons interviewed, Annex 12.
5 GFAR documents can be easily accessed on the web at www.e4gfar.org
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Concept of GFAR. The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) represents an innovative attempt to work towards a global system of agricultural research for development. Established in October 1996, GFAR seeks to bring together all interested parties in the discussion and implementation of a global agenda, based on national and regional perspectives. Its very existence marks a general recognition of the rapidly changing environment for agricultural research, requiring new ways of working and the involvement of additional stakeholders.

The GFAR 2000, Dresden meeting, held earlier this year, was attended by some four hundred representatives of the seven stakeholders constituencies involved: the national agricultural research systems (NARS) and their fora; international agricultural research centres (IARCs) and related CGIAR institutions; the donors; advanced research institutes (ARIs) of the developed countries; the private sector; non-government organisations; and farmer organisations. The participants discussed and endorsed a Plan of Action - the GFAR Business Plan – covering the next three-year period. The GFAR Secretariat has the task of facilitating the execution of this Plan by the stakeholders through their own work programmes, with the endorsement of the GFAR Steering Committee (GFAR-SC).

It was decided by the GFAR-SC to commission an external review of GFAR to assess progress to date and provide guidance for future direction, thus charting the way ahead over the coming decade. A Panel of experts reviewed the work-in-progress and provided a set of recommendations for consideration by the SC. The recommendations are discussed in full in the main report and the main findings of the panel are summarised in this text.

The review focused on the concept of GFAR; its organisational structure, governance and operating procedures; the roles of its stakeholders; approaches to developing a sustainable funding strategy; the Business Plan and priorities for future action. In an exercise of this nature, reviewers tend to focus mainly on the weaknesses identified and on suggestions for change. It must be stressed, therefore, that the Panel was impressed by how much has been accomplished by stakeholders and the Secretariat in working towards and refining the goals that lay behind the establishment of GFAR in 1996. A great deal has already been achieved, and many innovative ideas are emerging. The panel endorses the general lines of action and priorities that are being pursued, and considers that the next three years need to witness the consolidation and clearer definition of GFAR’s operating procedures, structure and governance. More importantly, the combined efforts of the stakeholders, assisted by the Secretariat, should be seen to deliver significant results in the field.

The Panel reaffirms that the stated principles of subsidiarity, participatory decision-making, complementarity of effort, adaptability, inclusiveness, openness, and deep commitment to a common purpose continue to be fundamental to all GFAR undertakings. It recommends that the mission statement wording ‘to mobilise the world scientific community’ be amended to read: ‘mobilise the stakeholders in agricultural research for development in their efforts to alleviate poverty, increase food security, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources.

It was agreed at the Dresden 2000 meeting that the Dresden Declaration should be regarded as a basis for ongoing discussion between and among all stakeholder groups. Stakeholders were invited to comment on this Declaration, and the farmer organisations and NGOs also produced Declarations of their own. These need to be further reviewed by the GFAR-SC, so as to identify differences and diversity of opinion, highlight consensus and ensure that all stakeholders share the view that GFAR is a worthy forum where all can express their views, debate and resolve priority issues in the field of

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6 While there are other important constituencies of critical concern to GFAR, such as policy-makers and civil society, the Panel reaffirms the decision of the GFAR-SC that no change will be made in the composition of the stakeholder constituencies for the present.
agricultural research for development. The Panel feels that this Vision Statement need only be revisited every nine years, or when changes occur requiring its amendment earlier than scheduled.

Whereas at present GFAR is a forum for discussing global ARD issues, in the long-term it may well evolve to become a platform for discussing all agricultural research in both developed and developing countries alike. Some of the responses to a questionnaire circulated by the panel during its review, indicated that this distinction between research in LDCs and developed countries will be less visible over time, as seems inevitable with the rapid pace of globalisation and pressing issues related to IPRs, GMOs, environmental international agreements and world trade. However, to help offset the increasing equity imbalance between North and South, the Panel considers that for the present GFAR should continue with its emphasis on agricultural research for development to serve the developing regions of the world.

The Role of the Stakeholders. One of GFAR’s key strengths is that it provides a common meeting place in which all seven stakeholder constituencies can participate, and bring together their comparative advantages in the research and development process. A Forum of this kind is the ideal platform for addressing issues of global concern, where the participation of a broad and very diverse set of actors is required. Whereas the Forum itself meets formally only every three years, its stakeholders carry out their programmes continuously in pursuit of their agreed aims, facilitated by the GFAR Secretariat and under the aegis of the GFAR-SC.

In facilitating the work of GFAR, the Secretariat will need to continue providing strong support to the NARS regional and subregional fora, as this is where almost all collaborative research activities take place. In several cases at present, NARS are simply the NARIs of the country or region concerned, although they are now broadening their base to better utilize their collective experience and include representatives of universities, the private sector, extension services, NGOs, and farmer organisations. There is also a tendency for NARS members in these R/SR fora to be mainly crop-oriented, often with parallel fora for livestock, forestry, fisheries and natural resources, which have to be integrated into the principal regional fora. The Panel strongly recommends that greater effort be made over the next three years to increase stakeholder participation in the NARS at national level and in their fora, and also to broaden the scope of agriculture and thus ensure that all the other sectors are fully integrated.

A key responsibility of the Secretariat is to assist stakeholders in further developing their constituencies. This is especially true for farmer organisations, in view of their relatively low voice in agricultural research decision making, and for NGOs – due to their large numbers and varied scope and goals. The Panel recommends, therefore, that both these stakeholder constituencies continue to receive special assistance so as to strengthen their representation in GFAR. The private sector also needs to be better integrated in GFAR activities. The Panel recommends that the Secretariat assist this sector by organising global/regional workshops on issues of improved public/private sector collaboration. The donors, as stakeholders, are already well coordinated through their Donor Support Group (DSG). It is evident, however, that some misunderstanding exists as to the respective roles of GFAR and the CGIAR. The Panel recommends that the Secretariat and the GFAR Chair meet formally with the Center Directors Committee each year. As for the ARIs, it is encouraging to note the good coordination of ARIs in Europe through the activities of EIARD and EFARD, as reflected in the way they assist R/SR fora. The Panel recommends that both the North American and Asia Pacific ARIs consolidate their support in like manner to Europe.

The key gathering at which all GFAR stakeholders come together is the triennial Plenary meeting, the first of which was held in Dresden earlier this year, in conjunction with the annual mid term meeting of the CGIAR. The Panel recommends that in future the plenary meeting be held independently of the CG meetings, and that it be hosted by each of the five regional fora, in turn.

Organisational Structure and Governance. Appropriately, a modest organisational structure has been set up at the global level, to oversee GFAR activities. This structure comprises a secretariat; a steering committee (SC) that meets twice yearly to set policy and agree programmes; a management
team to assist with implementation; a donor support group (DSG) to coordinate funding support; and four facilitating agencies to assist its operations. There appears to be consensus that the Secretariat remain a small unit, whose principal role is to facilitate the implementation of GFAR’s Business Plan – to be carried out by the different stakeholders, both individually and in collaboration. It is of vital importance that the Secretariat manages to support the four principal activities comprising the Plan. One of the questionnaire respondents put the matter very succinctly: “…the Secretariat must have sufficient capacity to be able to undertake a catalytic, facilitation and knowledge management role across a very broad range of themes, commodities, disciplines and regions”. He also added a rider, cautioning that it should not become an implementing agency. Bearing this in mind and in the light of the Secretariat’s currently-envisioned responsibilities, the Panel is firmly of the view that the two-person professional team (there were three people initially, before the merging of the secretariats), assisted by two APOs, is insufficient for it to operate effectively.

The Panel thus recommends that the Secretariat be staffed for the medium-term by a team of four professionals comprising: (i) an Executive Secretary; (ii) an ICT specialist responsible for EGFAR and the RAIS support programme; (iii) a senior professional engaged in providing support to the NARS and their fora; (iv) a senior professional responsible for working with the other stakeholders. The four staff should possess an appropriate mix of expertise to complement each other. The recruitment of the ICT specialist is extremely urgent as, ideally, a first rate professional in this field should have been put on the staff team long ago to help in the critical task of setting up EGFAR. An endeavour of this magnitude needs an authoritative focal point to collaborate with heads of other national and international ICT systems and networks, and strengthen the development of the R/SR fora RAIS. The Panel considers that a critical opportunity has been missed in not recognising the importance of filling such a post earlier and hopes that a donor will come forward immediately to fill the breach. The Panel is also of the view that the RAIS programme is critically important and fully warrants the posting of APOs specialised in ICT to all fora requiring assistance in this field, once the proposed ICT specialist has been recruited and provides further training.

In the praiseworthy attempt to get GFAR speedily off the ground, inadequate attention was given to institutionalising appropriate operating procedures. The Panel now recommends revisiting, updating and completing the GFAR chart approved in 1998, given its crucial importance in terms of providing guidance and direction to the Secretariat, and the Secretariat’s accountability to the SC. As part of a new directive, this clarification should also include terms of reference for the Chair and Vice Chair, and a clear indication of their roles on the Management Team. It is encouraging to note that a draft directive has now been prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with their Management Team. The Panel recommends that the text receive early debate and ratification by the GFAR-SC.

Other recommendations on structure and modalities of operation include: that the present system of membership of the GFAR-SC be maintained for another three years; that all GFAR’s stakeholder representatives be willing to accept the responsibility to continue developing their constituencies - including taking on an oversight function; and that the GFAR-SC and DSG review and approve the proposed communications policy and improved modalities of operation.

With regard to the facilitating agencies - IFAD, FAO, ISNAR and the WB - the Panel recommends that their functions be spelled out more explicitly and that these four agencies now become ex-officio members of the GFAR-SC, so that they can brief SC members on, and discuss, their continuing roles. The new Legal Agreement for hosting the Secretariat - to be signed shortly - should establish FAO’s contribution more clearly, so as to avoid any future misunderstanding. In general, the Panel commends the work of the facilitating agencies, and recommends that they continue their support for the next three years.

Although the Panel’s terms of reference did not require them to review the performance of the regional/subregional fora, it is clear that the latter’s central role within GFAR requires review. In this context, two members of the Panel visited a regional and sub-regional forum (one each) and have made a number of suggestions in the report, for consideration by the R/SR fora. These include the
suggestion that all R/SR fora would likely benefit from having a full-time Executive Secretary and that, similar to the Secretariat and its governing committees, all fora would be wise to review their operating procedures and ensure maximum transparency. While the Panel has stressed the advantages of favouring research activities at sub-regional level in particular, it wishes to emphasise its concurrence with the policy that each region decides what roles should be played at what level, and also determines the best way to organise itself within its own forum.

**Developing a Sustainable Funding Strategy.** The long-term goal here should be that the stakeholders fund all GFAR activities. This ideal is still a long way off, but should be kept in mind as a principle of shared ownership. For the moment, donor support will continue to be needed. The Secretariat may approach donors to ask for seed funds for specific areas, once these have been identified with the stakeholders. However, most, if not all, of such money would go directly to the stakeholders, as all are in agreement that the Secretariat should not become a funding/implementation agency, but remain a facilitating and matchmaking mechanism. It can also advise stakeholders on possible funding sources, as an “honest broker”; likewise, donors can be sensitised as to opportunities for participating in funding innovative research programmes.

The Secretariat requires funds for the four professional posts and for its operating costs. In the light of its discussions, and to provoke specific donor reaction, the Panel has suggested that these posts be funded by the CGIAR, FAO, IFAD and Italy (through its IFAD Trust Fund), and CIRAD, under existing or proposed agreements. APOs could be funded by other donors – just as the Netherlands are already doing. Similar arrangements are in place with the World Bank, IFAD, Italy and ISNAR. The Panel requests that these arrangements continue. In any event, the DSG will need to review their mechanisms for ensuring sustainable financial support to the Secretariat. The Panel proposes that this be done by the DSG developing a Sustainable Funding Strategy through an issues paper - to be tabled and discussed at their next meeting, and hopefully ratified and put in place by the meeting in May 2001.

**The Global Agenda and Business Plan.** The GFAR Business Plan has been developed around the global agenda’s four lines of action, agreed upon by the GFAR-SC and ratified at Dresden 2000. The Panel recommends that the Plan cover a six-year, medium-term timeframe, comprising two three-year segments, one of which rolls up ahead of each triennial plenary meeting, so that the completed three-year segment can be evaluated and assessed, and another three-year period added. The Plan should define the role each stakeholder will play in respect of the lines of action agreed upon, as well as the expected outputs and milestones to measure progress. The Plan will differ from the GFAR Secretariat’s Work Programme, which covers the same three-year periods and is designed to facilitate the Plan’s implementation, but will be prepared for three years at a time, only. The four lines of action, which are fully supported by the Panel, as they reflect priorities emanating from the R/SR fora or suggestions from other stakeholders that have been fully debated in the GFAR-SC, are as follows: setting a global vision; strengthening the NARS and their fora; improving knowledge and information systems; and, developing innovative research partnership mechanisms among the stakeholders around four main thematic research areas. These four thematic areas are genetic resource management and biotechnology; natural resource management and agroecology; commodity chains and underutilised plant species; policy management and institutional development.

The importance of strengthening R/SR fora has already been discussed as also the critical need to appoint an ICT specialist professional to the GFAR Secretariat. The whole ICT area is one where GFAR can add immense value, if correctly equipped to do so through EGFAR and through support to the RAIS. All NARS urgently need to be updated on the latest advances in ICT. It was clear from the visit to WECARD/CORAF that this is an essential exercise if we are to avoid creating a second-class category of GFAR members, ill-equipped to interact with their colleagues. The panel strongly recommends that donors continue to support the development of EGFAR and the RAIS to prevent such an eventuality occurring, and ensure that all NARS are in a position to fully participate in their fora and in international ARD networks, using the new ICT technologies.
Thematic proposals. With regard to the latter, the report contains recommended criteria for priority-setting and for the selection of cases on which the Secretariat should concentrate its efforts (para 3.26). The panel recommends that the Secretariat facilitate start-up of all thematic research proposals but merely keep a watching brief thereafter, monitoring successful partnerships through an agreed reporting system. It should not get directly involved again unless specifically requested to do so by the sub regional fora, or when issues emerge that need airing at the global level by commissioning a special study or hosting an appropriate workshop. The Secretariat has a particular role to play in assisting the global programmes identified under the Global Framework Programme. Such programmes should build on existing achievements and be based on ongoing activities. The Panel was impressed by the content of the thematic papers presented in Dresden, and by the efforts made by all R/SR fora and other stakeholders in tabling some 56 case studies of success stories and 46 proposed innovative partnerships - worthy of being analysed and reviewed next year, as is proposed under a technical assistance grant provided by IFAD.

In the above context, some of the Panel’s priority recommendations are as follows: GFAR should set up a review of genetic resource management and IPR issues in developing countries, and help strengthen regional and sub-regional fora so that they can support NARS in these areas. The Secretariat would assist its stakeholders in developing global programmes on a few commodity chains, based on the priorities expressed by the NARS regional fora; the sustainable promotion of some of the underutilised plant species is needed in order to contribute to economic development, people’s well-being, and the maintenance of genetic diversity and associated local knowledge. The Panel is especially concerned that relatively little policy management or analysis research is being carried out. It is vital that policy-makers become more sensitised to the high potential benefits likely to accrue from good research. The Panel thus recommends that the DSG give greater support to regional networks undertaking research on policy-related issues, and to relevant ARIs and IARCs so that they can better assist NARS in developing their own capacity to carry out such research - particularly by building up local university or government departments.

The whole institutional development agenda for ARD is a critical one. The Panel wishes to emphasise two additional, high potential research areas that need priority attention. First of all, and of critical importance to both farmer organisations and NGOs - as stated in their Declaration at Dresden - the Panel strongly recommends that more research be undertaken on how to effectively institutionalise truly participatory research/extension farmer linkages that makes research and extension programmes directly responsive to farmer demand. Any such proposals have to include the review of appropriate incentives to really transform present R&D systems into fully participatory farmer-demand-led initiatives, as the lack of such incentives continues to inhibit any meaningful change.

The Panel recommends that urgent attention be given to reviewing innovative ways of integrating national research programmes into sub regional research efforts in specific fields – just as is being attempted in PROCISUR and PROCIANDINO, and in the SADC Genebank initiative; and what was a key feature of the Nile Valley Research programme in the WANA region. There are enormous cost-saving potential and synergistic benefits to be gained from institutionalising shared sub-regional or even region-wide programmes between nations/states. This is one of the prime objectives underlying the whole rationale of establishing regional and sub-regional fora. Integrated research programmes of this nature need to be much more widely reviewed and their successes replicated.

The Panel feels that developments since the establishment of GFAR in 1996 confirm the validity of the GFAR concept. Although it is early yet for GFAR to prove its potential, the Panel endorses, in general, the scope and calibre of the work carried out by the now-merged secretariats and feels that GFAR stakeholders should continue to give it their full support and allow it to evolve.
Section 1. GFAR: BACKGROUND AND CONCEPT

A. Origin and purpose

1.01 The Global Forum on Agricultural Research, (GFAR), was established in October 1996 at a special session of the regular annual meeting of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), held in Washington, as part of their International Centres Week (ICW96). GFAR is a collective endeavour. Its purpose is to facilitate exchange of information, access to knowledge, cooperation, and research partnerships among a broad spectrum of stakeholders involved in agricultural research and sustainable development. It is important to point out that the GFAR 2000, Dresden meeting was the first time that all actors had come together to engage in constructive dialogue and to recognise what each one can contribute towards enhancing the effectiveness of international agricultural research. GFAR’s main purpose, therefore, is to mobilise all available international agricultural research resources to achieve agricultural development through a global agricultural-research-for-development system aimed at reducing poverty, achieving food security and ensuring sustainable natural resource management. Right from the start, GFAR placed particular emphasis on strengthening the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) of developing countries. These NARS have a fundamental role to play in the process, particularly through their emerging regional and sub-regional research fora.

1.02 GFAR now comprises seven groups of stakeholders: the regional and sub-regional fora of the developing country NARS, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, farmer organisations, advanced research institutes (ARIs) of North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific, the international agricultural research centres (IARCs) (mostly part of the CGIAR), and donors.

1.03 There was a confluence of events in the mid-90s context of the renewal of the CGIAR, which gave impetus to the creation of GFAR as a step towards a more open and integrated global agricultural research system. Principal among these was the fact that the private sector was playing an increasingly significant role in agricultural research, that it was making important discoveries in the application of science to agriculture and that partnerships between the public and private sectors were thought to hold great potential for contributing to agricultural development. This is particularly important as it has been estimated by ISNAR that the CGIAR commands only 4% of the total resources directed to agricultural research in the developing world. The GFAR mechanism was set up to provide opportunities for interaction among its seven stakeholders in respect of better prioritizing and utilising the remaining 96% of these resources (and indeed in contributing to the 4% through innovative partnerships between other stakeholders and CGIAR IARCs). Action was also required to meet developing country demands for a stronger and more equal say in setting global and regional agricultural research priorities and agenda. This was clearly expressed through a series of regional and inter-regional meetings supported by IFAD in 1995 and 1996 (Bibl. no. 85). There was also increasing recognition of the fact that agricultural research would be more effective through closer collaboration with an expanding range of players, including non-governmental and farmer organisations, as well as private-sector enterprise.

1.04 The thinking behind the launch of GFAR took into account other major features of the external context in addition to the advancing role of the private sector - the rapid pace and expanding agenda of globalisation and trade liberalisation, the decline in the level of public agricultural research funding, both from domestic and external (ODA) sources, the rapid
advances in science for agriculture, the changing structure of research organisation, and the developments in information and communication technologies.

1.05 These factors, and the need for dialogue and collaboration, are even more pronounced in 2000 than they were in 1996. GFAR is unique in its potential to draw together participants from many different perspectives and stakeholder groups - no other forum exists that can do so across the wide range of issues facing agricultural research. It is important for GFAR to build on its convening powers, and to strengthen its role as a neutral forum where all interested parties can exchange views and prepare the ground for collaboration and partnership. Also well known, at least by the group to whom this report is directed, are the critical needs that must be met by better and more effective agricultural research over the next 25 years. This issue was well-articulated in presentations by Dr. Ismaïl Serageldin and Dr. Martin Piñeiro at the GFAR meeting in Dresden (Bibl. no. 9).

1.06 The Panel is of the view that GFAR represents a worthwhile enterprise and a novel attempt to include all interested parties in the discussion and implementation of a global agenda based on national and regional perspectives. The original vision and goals of GFAR are still valid, and in general the Panel endorses both the scope and calibre of the work undertaken by its now-merged Secretariats. The GFAR experience has been fully active only since 1998, when the two Secretariats were set up – the GFAR Secretariat in June of that year and the NARS Secretariat in August. However, the NARS regional/sub regional fora had already been strengthened during 1995/6 to better undertake their regional co-ordinating roles, and are now in the fourth year of their development under the umbrella of GFAR.

“GFAR can serve as a larger forum on agricultural research. Its advantage is its open architecture system, where participants come from various sectors of the farming and fishing communities and agro-based industry; it does not impose restrictions on the type of participants nor the commodity focus. Perhaps the most important feature of GFAR is the strength of the NARS participation; the feeling that the forum is their forum” (comments by a NARS respondent to the questionnaire).

1.07 The GFAR enterprise is a relatively new one and therefore it is too early to evaluate its impact on the agricultural research system. Nevertheless, most of the stakeholders are positive about the process and its considerable potential. Existing evidence confirms this, and the Panel recommends that the process be encouraged to evolve under the leadership of the diverse stakeholders. The Secretariat is invited to review and take note of the experience of other global multi-stakeholder mechanisms - for example, that related to health research – and draw lessons learned to the attention of the GFAR-SC.

B. GFAR: Mission and Goals

1.08 At the meeting that launched GFAR, a Declaration and a Plan of Action (now termed the Business Plan) for Global Partnership in Agricultural Research was drawn up, setting out the principles and main directions for GFAR Action. The Declaration (Annex 5 and Bibl. no.7) indicated that collaboration and research partnerships should be governed by the principles of subsidiarity, participatory decision-making, complementarity of effort, adaptability, openness, and deep commitment to a common purpose. At present, GFAR’s mission is stated as being:

*to mobilise the world scientific community in their efforts to alleviate poverty, increase food security, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources.*
In order to address the broad community of stakeholders involved in GFAR, and the importance of linking with farmers and their organisations, the Panel recommends that the GFAR mission statement be amended to read:

_to mobilise the stakeholders in agricultural research for development in their efforts to alleviate poverty, increase food security, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources._ (Underlining indicates the proposed change).

1.09 GFAR’s specific objectives\(^7\) are to:

- Facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge, pertaining to crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and natural resource management research;
- Strengthen national agricultural research systems and their sub-regional and regional fora;
- 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, in a highly participatory manner with all beneficiaries;
- Facilitate the participation of all stakeholders in formulating a truly global framework for development-oriented agricultural research;
- Increase awareness among policy-makers and donors of the need for long-term commitment to, and investment in, agricultural research.

1.10 The Panel will be commenting in more detail on activities undertaken towards fulfilling each of these objectives (see Section 3, concerning the GFAR Business Plan). At this point, the Panel reaffirms that GFAR’s objectives should continue to form the basis for its work and that the stated principles of subsidiarity, participatory decision-making, complementarity of effort, adaptability, openness, and deep commitment to a common purpose, proposed in 1996, continue to be fundamental to all GFAR undertakings. The Panel also recommends commitment to the principle of inclusiveness, through which all potential actors and their interests and concerns become involved. This will require extensive effort on the part of GFAR stakeholders to reach out to their different constituencies.

1.11 Following its launch in 1996, GFAR explored four major themes considered to provide an appropriate platform for collaboration: biotechnology, genetic resource conservation and utilisation, ecoregional research, and public policy and institutional strengthening. (see Bibliography: “The CGIAR at 25: Into the Future”, (Bibl. no. 86) International Centers Week, 1996. Summary of Proceedings and Decisions, CGIAR, January 1997). These themes, and one addition - commodity chains – have been maintained as priorities for GFAR action. The Panel fully endorses the priorities set out in the four major research thematic areas and their place in the draft GFAR Business Plan (Plan of Action) developed at GFAR 2000, Dresden (see paras 3.01-4 and Annex 6).

C. Developing a Global Vision

1.12 A number of GFAR stakeholders decided that one of the foundations of a global framework for future action was a Global Vision for Agricultural Research. The Vision consists of a statement characterising the desired future state of international agricultural research for development. It defines key changes taking place within the environment which can create new opportunities for strategic action and their relevant challenges and constraints which can influence the process. The Vision needs to be shared among the seven

\(^7\) Derived from the 1996 Plan of Action for Global Partnership in Agricultural Research (Bibl. no. 86)
stakeholders, and consequently its preparation involved consultation at various levels to ensure its relevance to all. The development of such a vision started with a consultation attended by more than 50 members of GFAR during the CGIAR Mid-term Meeting in Beijing in May 1999. Based on this consultation and building on vision statements prepared by different regional fora and other stakeholder groups, a first draft of a Global Vision was prepared and circulated. The draft went through several iterations in a consultative process that was carried out over the twelve months preceding the GFAR-2000 meeting.

1.13 A draft text entitled “Dresden Declaration: Towards a Global System for Agricultural Research for Development” was proposed to participants at GFAR-2000, and was the subject of discussion in small groups (a maximum of 12 participants at each roundtable) with a mix of stakeholder representation in each group. Many of those who participated in the GFAR-2000 meeting reported that this was the best part of the meeting and represented what GFAR could do best - bring together a mix of stakeholders to examine their different perspectives on agricultural research for development and explore areas of agreement and/or discord. Forty-seven respondents (64%) to the panel’s questionnaire thought that building a Global or Regional Vision, and a Strategic Agenda as a policy framework for GFAR’s activities was “very important” and a further 20 (27%) thought it “important”. The strongest endorsement came from those in ARIs, NARS or IARCs.

1.14 It was realised that even more important than arriving at a common statement was the process that enabled all stakeholders to exchange views and thinking on strategic issues – felt to be at the heart of the GFAR experience (see para 1.17). The panel supports the following statement from the report of the GFAR 2000, Dresden meeting: "It was agreed that the Dresden Declaration should be regarded as a basis for ongoing discussion between and among all stakeholder groups. Stakeholders have been invited to comment on the Declaration. It was considered that these differences of opinion do not preclude the enormous potential for cooperation between stakeholders, and the positive attitude of all to see GFAR as a place where controversial issues can be discussed and analysed." This Vision Statement is to be revisited every nine years or when changes take place in the environment or new developments occur that influence the process.

D. The scope of the Global Forum

1.15 Given its characteristics as a forum for discussion of global issues relating to agricultural research for development, GFAR may, in the long-term, evolve to become a forum for discussing all agricultural research and development, without restriction in terms of the countries expected to benefit. Some persons interviewed indicated that the distinction between research for agriculture in developing countries and that in industrialised countries will less evident over time - due to the globalisation process and the increasing numbers of legally-binding international agreements in this field, especially Rio’s Agenda 21 and the Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, WTO, trade and phytosanitary regulations. It is interesting to note that at the most recent FORAGRO meeting, both USDA and the Canadian Ministry of Agriculture had active delegates present, whereas USAID, CIDA and IDRC were not represented at all. For the immediate future, however, the Panel recommends that GFAR emphasis should continue to be on Agricultural Research for Development in the developing regions of the world, usually defined as those regions and countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA) as recognised by the Development Assistance Committee of OECD, both in order to level the playing field between the North and South and to help strengthen the weaker NARS.

1.16 The panel further recommends that every effort be made to ensure that the broad scope of GFAR’s area of interest effectively extends beyond crop research, to include livestock, forestry, fisheries and natural resource management, and thus becomes a reality. Sometimes there is poor collaboration between each of these sub-sector
networks, but excellent opportunities exist to bring them together when they exist in a well-developed manner, such as in the Asia region, where APAARI has been exploring establishing an Pacific Regional Forum to bring in the Asian Livestock, Forestry and Fisheries network fora as a way of bringing all the natural resource sector together (Bibl. no. 91). All the sub-sectors come together on an equal basis, and this is something that should be borne in mind – particularly by members of the crop sub-sector, who tend to try to be the dominant group.

E. The role of GFAR in building consensus

1.17 When there are seven stakeholder groups, often with very different perspectives, the advantage of a process like that of GFAR is to bring them together to discuss areas of consensus or discord. This is the very essence of a Forum, where issues can be debated, differences recognised, and dialogue engaged in. Stakeholders may even end up achieving a greater degree of real consensus, without feeling that they had been obliged to compromise more than desired. **The panel recommends, therefore, that GFAR (and its Secretariat) acknowledge and clarify diversity rather than try to force consensus.** For GFAR meetings, or even stakeholder debates, the Secretariat should help stakeholders, when requested, to set the agenda and prepare issue papers (or do so on their behalf), with the aim of creating greater awareness and an informed basis for discussion and debate. **Debate should highlight areas of consensus or discord.** Where there is a convergence of views, it may be possible for stakeholders to identify areas for working together in research partnership; where there is discord, on the other hand, this may encourage continued reflection and discussion. The Secretariat should play a neutral facilitating role in allowing stakeholders to meet, discuss differences and, where possible, resolve them.

F. The nature of GFAR and the role of its Secretariat

1.18 During its work, the panel was reminded many times of the important distinction to be made between GFAR as a **global process of consultation, information exchange and partnerships for development research**, and the work of the **GFAR Secretariat**, which is to **support this process of exchange and interaction**. Almost all those interviewed (including respondents to the questionnaire), emphasised the role of the forum in promoting dialogue and exchange of information and experience. Many referred to the usefulness of the first real GFAR meeting in Dresden, and the range of actors that it brought together.

1.19 GFAR activities are, first and foremost, those undertaken by its stakeholders, and are not limited to the work carried out by the Secretariat. In discussing GFAR, the Panel noted some confusion between the activities undertaken by the seven stakeholders (constituting the Global Forum), and those of the Secretariat, which provides support and facilitation to the GFAR process. This distinction is an important one and one that should be maintained. In particular, **the Panel recommends that the Secretariat take care to differentiate between its own activities and those of the stakeholders, and ensure that such differentiation is maintained in its reporting.**

1.20 In the Panel’s view, GFAR (comprising the stakeholder groups as a whole) needs to have an Agenda, a Programme Structure, a Line of Action and Thematic Areas, constituted within a **Business Plan**. This provides the framework for action, and charts the course of action for most of the elements that received some endorsement at GFAR 2000. It is the role and responsibility of the Secretariat to facilitate the implementation of the business plan. Therefore, in most cases, the Secretariat work programme will have to be **highly selective** and should not be involved in all collaborative activities undertaken by stakeholders. The challenge for the Secretariat is to be seen as a **facilitator and not overly proactive**. However, particularly in the early years of GFAR, when the representatives of stakeholder
groups were still feeling their way, it has sometimes been necessary for the GFAR Secretariat to take the initiative. The Panel has made recommendations for further consideration by the GFAR-SC, regarding the activities its secretariat should be engaged in, and these are discussed in Section 2 below.

1.21 The Panel recommends that, in future, the Secretariat Work Programme should clearly indicate what the Secretariat is expected to deliver (log frame, milestones, and monitorable targets, etc.) under each item. This Work Programme will, of necessity, be more focused than the larger, overall programme of work outlined in GFAR’s Business Plan. With regard to the implementation of the Business Plan, it is encouraging to note that several stakeholder constituencies have now formed working groups, which facilitate action and liaison with the Secretariat (new GFAR Chart, Annex 2).

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARISED BELOW

1.06 The original vision and goals of GFAR are still valid, and in general the Panel endorses both the scope and calibre of the work undertaken by its now-merged Secretariats.

1.07 The Panel recommends that the process be encouraged to evolve under the leadership of the diverse stakeholders.

1.08 The panel recommends that the mission statement be amended to read: to mobilise the stakeholders in agricultural research for development in their efforts to alleviate poverty, increase food security, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources. (Underlining indicates the proposed change).

1.10 The panel reaffirms that GFAR’s objectives should continue to form the basis for its work and that the stated principles of subsidiarity, participatory decision-making, complementarity of effort, adaptability, openness, and deep commitment to a common purpose, proposed in 1996, continue to be fundamental to all GFAR undertakings. The Panel also recommends commitment to the principle of inclusiveness, through which all potential actors’ interests and concerns become involved.

1.11 The panel fully endorses these priorities, set out in the four major research thematic areas and their place in the draft GFAR Business Plan (Plan of Action) developed at Dresden-2000 (see paras 3.01-4 and Annex 6).

1.14 Dresden meeting: "It was agreed that the Dresden Declaration should be regarded as a basis for ongoing discussion between and among all stakeholder groups. Stakeholders have been invited to comment on the Declaration. It was considered that these differences of opinion do not preclude the enormous potential for cooperation between stakeholders and the positive attitude of all to see GFAR as a place where controversial issues can be discussed and analysed."

1.15 The Panel recommends that GFAR emphasis should continue to be on Agricultural Research for Development.

1.16 The panel further recommends that every effort be made to ensure that the broad scope of GFAR’s area of interest effectively extends beyond crop research, to include livestock, forestry, fisheries and natural resource management, and thus becomes a reality.
1.17 The panel recommends, therefore, that GFAR (and its Secretariat) acknowledge and clarify diversity rather than try to force consensus. For GFAR meetings, or even stakeholder debates, the Secretariat should help stakeholders, when requested, to set the agenda and prepare issue papers (or do so on their behalf), with the aim of creating greater awareness and an informed basis for discussion and debate. Debate should highlight areas of consensus or discord.

1.19 The panel recommends that the Secretariat take care to differentiate between its own activities and those of the stakeholders, and ensure that such differentiation is maintained in its reporting.

1.21 The Panel recommends that, in future, the Secretariat Work Programme should clearly indicate what the Secretariat is expected to deliver (log frame, milestones, and monitorable targets, etc.) under each item. This Work Programme will, of necessity, be more focused than the larger, overall programme of work outlined in GFAR’s Business Plan.

Section 2. GFAR’s Organisational Structure

A. The Seven Stakeholders of GFAR and its General Organizational Structure

2.01 One of GFAR’s key strengths is that it provides a meeting place where all seven stakeholders can interact, and where the respective comparative advantage of each can be brought together in the research and development process. Whereas the Forum itself meets only once every three years, its stakeholders carry out a programme that is continuously in pursuit of their agreed aims, facilitated by a central secretariat, and under the aegis of a steering committee. The seven stakeholders comprise: the NARS\(^8\) and their fora; the IARCs (mostly belonging to the CGIAR); the donors (both multi and bilateral, and also foundations); the advanced research institutes (ARIs) of the developed countries; the private sector; non-government organizations; and farmer organizations. While policy makers and Civil Society are other key constituencies with whom GFAR stakeholders have to interact, the Panel reaffirms the decision of the GFAR-SC that for the next three years no change should be made in the composition of the stakeholder constituencies. Moreover the GFAR Secretariat should remain neutral, and the debates reviewing the diverse views of different stakeholders should remain a key feature of GFAR consultations. Annex 3 contains a short description of each of the seven stakeholders, and recommendations on how to strengthen their participation in GFAR, which is briefly elaborated in the next four paragraphs.

2.02 A key responsibility of the GFAR Secretariat is to assist stakeholders to further develop their constituencies. This is especially true for farmer organisations, in view of their relative lack of a strong voice in agricultural research decision-making, and the need to redress this to make research much more demand-led, and also for NGOs in view of their large numbers and varied scope and goals, (see Annex 3 paras 9-11). The Panel recommends that special assistance continue to be given to farmer organisations and NGOs to strengthen their representation as key stakeholders in GFAR. To encourage their further enthusiastic participation in GFAR, the Panel also recommends that the GFAR-SC further review and debate the points raised in the NGOs’ and farmer organisations’ Declarations from GFAR 2000, Dresden.

\(^{8}\) The Panel always refers to NARS in their broadest sense, including representatives of NARIs, extension services, universities, NGOs, farmer organisations, and the private sector. Likewise, it sees ‘agriculture’ as encompassing crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and natural resources.
2.03 Ideally, the GFAR structure should be built on a strong NARS foundation, which, in turn, would be broadly based on the active involvement of the NARIs, Universities, NGOs, farmer organisations and the private sector, and whose structure would itself reflect representation building up from the grassroots level, through district, region or province, to the national level. One of GFAR’s prime objectives is to help build strong NARS which do not yet exist in most developing countries, but which GFAR will help to establish through the activities of its stakeholders, rather than through its Secretariat. The NARS and their fora are key stakeholders in GFAR, as almost all of the activities of GFAR will take place at regional, subregional, national or local level. For the next five years, the Panel reaffirms that major emphasis (by all GFAR stakeholders and the Secretariat) must continue to be placed on further strengthening the NARS and their regional/subregional fora, as was envisaged at the first GFAR meeting in October 1996. This is underway, but in need of further impetus (see paras 3.04-3.15).

2.04 The private sector comprises another stakeholder whose role in GFAR is still evolving. More public sector research, together with increased research from the private sector and better interaction between the two, would also be anticipated. Better harnessing of Private Sector research, (Annex 3 paras 7-8), to work (where feasible) in concert with the public sector is an important GFAR goal that has to be implemented at the global level, as well as at regional, subregional and national levels, where all the stakeholders have roles to play. In this context, the Panel recommends that the Secretariat assist the private sector by organising a workshop (jointly with them and other concerned stakeholders) on issues of improved public/private sector collaboration; and follows this up with holding regional workshops on this issue over the next three years, in a timetable drawn up with the concurrence of each region and in line with the priority each region gives to harnessing better public/private sector participation.

2.05 The Donors as stakeholders (Annex 3 para 6) are already well coordinated through the Donor Support Group. However, regarding the CGIAR stakeholder constituency, (Annex 3 para 3) it is evident that there is some misunderstanding in some quarters on the relative roles of GFAR and the CGIAR, and the Panel recommends that the GFAR Secretariat and the GFAR Chair meet formally each year with the Center Directors Committee, CDC. Regarding the ARIs, (Annex 3 paras 4-5), who have three representatives on the Board selected by continental area, it is encouraging to note the good coordination in Europe through the activities of EIARD and EFARD reflected in the way they assist R/SR fora. The Panel recommends that both the North American and the Asia Pacific ARIs consolidate their support in like manner to Europe, as they each have a representative on the GFAR-SC.

2.06 In order for GFAR to achieve its objectives, a very light organizational structure has been established at the global level, comprising: the Secretariat; the GFAR-SC; the informal GFAR Management Team; the GFAR donor support group (DSG); and the four GFAR ‘facilitating agencies’ (IFAD, FAO, the World Bank (WB) and ISNAR). The report will now review each of these institutional entities, and make recommendations for improvement.

B. The GFAR Secretariat

The GFAR and NARS Secretariats

2.07 In discussing the performance of the two Secretariats over their two-year life span (1998-2000), it should be noted that much of the first year, 1998-9, was spent on organisational issues, including the design of an appropriate and generally well-supported work plan. Thus, when activities commenced in the second year (1999-2000), the two
secretariats were already sharing the agenda and jointly organising the first fully-fledged GFAR triennial conference, held in Dresden in May 2000. Indeed, right from the outset the two secretariats shared the agenda in a pragmatic and changing manner, based on what proved to be most expedient at the time. This, no doubt, contributed to the early decision reached by the GFAR-SC to merge the two Secretariats. The Panel wishes to place on record the impressive breadth and calibre of the outputs of the Secretariats, well-illustrated by the success of the Dresden meeting, and by subsequent follow-up actions.

2.08 The **GFAR Secretariat** was formally established in June of 1998, located in the Environmentally Sustainable Development and Agricultural Research (ESDAR) unit of the World Bank. The Executive Secretary took up his post in August 1998, and began an energetic programme to implement the Secretariat’s mandate, which was principally to organise the triennial meeting of GFAR, the twice-yearly meetings of the Steering Committee and to develop the global research agenda, commissioning papers and organising consultations on priority issues. An additional task was that of launching the Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research (**E**GFAR), the global agricultural research information platform and gateway, and liaising with the NARS Secretariat on improving representation from the different stakeholders. Throughout its life under the aegis of the World Bank, the Secretariat was staffed by only one person, drawing on consultant support when required, as was the case in the setting up of **E**GFAR. However, less than a year later - by the MTM 1999 - the decision was taken to consider merging the two secretariats. This was ratified at ICW 1999, and agreement reached on a gradual transition. The merged secretariat would be housed at FAO headquarters in Rome, which was already hosting the NARS Secretariat.

2.09 The **NARS Secretariat** was established in August 1998, hosted by FAO. It greatly benefited from the fact that the former chairman of the NARS-SC, set up in August 1996, became its first Executive Secretary, and the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) seconded one of its experienced staff to occupy the other senior professional position. The prime role of the NARS Secretariat was to support regional and sub regional fora, thereby strengthening both, as well as their member-NARS. Its second key role was to promote innovative partnership mechanisms between stakeholders for the purpose of improved collaboration in agricultural research. The Secretariat also had to arrange meetings of the NARS-SC at ICWs and MTMs. Almost all of its other activities were in support of its prime role of strengthening NARS. This task has been carried out through: information exchange and training; developing action-oriented case-studies of partnerships and strategic alliances; improving information/knowledge systems; brokering partnerships - especially with regard to agricultural production on commodities outside the CGIAR mandate; improving technical aspects such as biotechnology and biosafety; and fostering the involvement of NGOs, farmer organisations and the private sector.

2.10 The **institutional responsibilities** of both Secretariats were to organise the six-monthly meetings of the GFAR and NARS SCs, as well as that of the GFAR DSG held during the period of CGIAR’s ICW and MTMs, and also the GFAR 2000 (triennial) meeting in Dresden. This they did very successfully for the ICW 98 and 99 and the MTM 99, aided by the then GFAR Secretariat’s close proximity to the CGIAR Secretariat (also hosted by the World Bank) which organises the MTM and ICW meetings. With regard to the first plenary meeting of GFAR held in Dresden in May 2000 and coinciding with the CGIAR’s MTM 2000, the merger of the two secretariats had already been decided upon and both shared the responsibility for organising GFAR 2000, which was generally acclaimed to have been very successful. The calibre of the keynote papers commissioned for each topic were also commended, although many criticised the tendency to have a second paper on each, also commissioned by the organisers, as this cut into the time available for discussion or for more independent papers from participants from the different stakeholder constituencies. While there are benefits to be gained from holding GFAR-SC meetings with MTMs and ICWs, the
Panel recommends that, in future, the triennial GFAR meeting be held independently of the CGIAR meetings, and that it be hosted by each of the regional fora, in turn. However, this recommendation needs to give careful consideration to the additional costs associated with hosting such meetings, as well as the time demands on its participants, many of whom attend the CG meetings also.

2.11 **Structure and Staffing.** There appears to be consensus that the GFAR Secretariat should remain a small unit, whose principal role is to facilitate the implementation of GFAR’s Business Plan. This task will be carried out principally by the stakeholders themselves. In this context, the Secretariat must have the ability to support the four principal activities contained in the plan, namely: developing a Vision and a global Business Plan; building innovative partnerships for R&D; strengthening sub-regional and regional fora; developing a knowledge system and mechanisms for sharing experiences - and, when requested, drawing up state-of-the-art issue papers and organising global dialogue on the current four principal themes: Management of Plant Genetic Resources and Biotechnology; National Resource Management and Eco-regional Research, Commodity Chains and Underutilised Plant Species, and Policy Management and Institutional Strengthening.

One questionnaire respondent from an IARC succinctly stated:

“In addition to the overriding importance of enhancing public awareness, GFAR has an invaluable role to play as an "honest broker", bringing together various constituencies around various research themes, and/or commodities of global importance...GFAR should not become an implementing agency or get itself in the position where various stakeholders begin to think of it as a donor agency.... However, it does need enough capacity to be able to effectively undertake a catalytic, facilitation and knowledge management role across a very broad range of themes, commodities, disciplines and regions.”

2.12 Bearing this in mind, and in the light of currently envisaged responsibilities, the Panel is of the view that the GFAR Secretariat team of three professionals (now reduced to two, after the merger of the two Secretariats), assisted by two APOs, is insufficient for it to operate effectively. This is particularly true in the light of the Panel's recommendation to appoint a first-rate professional ICT specialist as a major priority, not just to backstop EGFAR but to ensure that the group interacts effectively with all major global agricultural and natural resource networks, and provides leadership in developing the RAIS in each of the R/SR fora. The Panel recommends that the GFAR Secretariat be staffed for the medium-term by a team of four professionals comprising: (i) an Executive Secretary; (ii) an ICT specialist responsible for EGFAR and the RAIS support programme; (iii) a senior professional engaged in providing support to the NARS on a full-time basis, especially through their fora; and (iv) another senior professional (preferably with a background in agricultural economics and policy analysis) whose particular responsibility is that of working with the other constituencies. In any event, the four staff should work as a team and possess an appropriate mix of expertise to complement each other. While the ICT specialist should first and foremost be just that, preference should be given to a candidate with a scientific research background.

2.13 The Panel has also reviewed favourably the practice of having young professionals/APOs in the Secretariat, and recommends that donors provide such assistance to the regional and sub-regional fora also. The Panel is of the view that the ICT/EGFAR/RAIS programme is critically important and fully warrants the posting of a young professional, specialised in ICT, to all fora requiring assistance in this field. It also proposes that his/her first three months should be spent in training with the ICT specialist (and on GFAR approaches generally) at the Secretariat in Rome.
2.14 **Modalities of Operation.** It is vital that the majority - if not all – of the GFAR members reach a broad agreement regarding the activities to be undertaken in the name of GFAR. With this in mind, the Panel proposes some operational modalities for the GFAR-SC and Secretariat’s consideration:

a) The Secretariat should get involved in activities only where there is a clearly-demonstrated niche for involvement at GFAR level, and where it can demonstrate an expectation of added value. The GFAR-SC should work with the Secretariat to define criteria for its direct involvement and make use of these criteria in its consideration of the Secretariat’s work programme.

b) Where the Secretariat has a clear niche for facilitating a priority global agricultural research activity, donors should be willing to provide adequate funding for this area of operations.

c) The GFAR niche - with particular reference to partnerships - is defined as follows:

1. It is the responsibility of stakeholders - particularly the NARS sub-regional and regional fora, as they become more broad-based - to identify opportunities for partnerships and their potential;

2. The Secretariat can play a role in facilitating partnerships, by providing opportunities for stakeholders to discuss and consult each other and by removing barriers (sometimes of perception) to stakeholders working together. The Secretariat does not normally have research capacity or expertise in most of the areas to be covered, nor should it be expected to have. In terms of choice of area, both the stakeholders and the GFAR-SC must guide the Secretariat on where to focus its efforts. In some cases, it may use a stakeholder ad hoc committee to get guidance on particular issues. The GFAR-SC and the Management Team must help and provide coverage in judgement on involvement in controversial areas;

3. The Secretariat should also play a role in facilitating, at the global level, the discussion of issues that have been raised at the national or regional level, or within a particular stakeholder group, where this is deemed appropriate. The GFAR-SC should encourage stakeholder constituencies to bring up concerns and issues for the attention of the larger group of which GFAR is composed. GFAR has a particular role to play in enriching and influencing international debate on specific issues.

4. GFAR represents a platform where innovations can be identified, discussed, planned and reported on, particularly in terms of creative modalities for partnership or research funding. In general, it provides the opportunity for sharing information and ideas with respect to experiences on good practice, successes and failures. The Secretariat should monitor partnerships, and learn from evaluations undertaken by stakeholders, so that the emerging lessons can be provided in the form of advice in the formulation of future partnerships; and,

5. The Secretariat does not finance research. It can provide advice to stakeholders in identifying potential sources of funding for research, and may act as a broker, but it should be careful not to raise expectations that funding can be guaranteed. It may provide modest seed-money to stakeholders in the process of identifying

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9 See Section 3, para 3.30 for an example on Genetic Resources for Agriculture.
and elaborating global partnerships, but these funds are usually generated at regional or sub regional level, for partnerships at those levels.

2.15 Communication Policy. In a multi-stakeholder endeavour such as GFAR, it is essential to provide relevant and appropriate information to all stakeholders on the activities of the Secretariat, and of stakeholder groups - relevant in the sense of providing information on what they want to know, appropriate in the sense of desired quantity and format. Provision of information should include a proper basis for consultation, involvement and buy-in by stakeholders (and, of course, of oversight by the GFAR-SC members). There is a key role here for EGFAR and its ‘gateway function’ (see para 3.23 below). There is also an important place for direct communication from the Secretariat.

2.16 A number of persons informed the panel that they found the present communication policy led to their receiving too much material – usually in the form of long e-mails and electronic documents – and that this surpassed their ability to respond to, and sometimes even to keep up with, the material they were receiving. In some cases, they did not feel the need to receive such detailed information and would have preferred fewer and more summary communications.

2.17 Information overload may be a fact-of-life. The concern, however, in a stakeholder process, is that it can actually lead to the opposite of buy-in – in the sense that stakeholders feel they have lost control of the process they themselves are supposed to be leading. Whereas this sensation may have been at its strongest in the run-up to the GFAR 2000, Dresden conference, when an enormous amount of documentation was circulated for comment, the panel feels it does warrant the Secretariat's attention. Among other options, the Secretariat should identify, with the stakeholders, those who would prefer to receive regular information by e-mail, and those who wish to receive only quarterly updates, with the possibility of consulting the website. One solution, for instance, might be for the Secretariat to publish a quarterly newsletter on the main developments in which it is involved. Although an electronic version has already been proposed as part of EGFAR, the Secretariat should look at the cost of producing and mailing a hard copy to those who would prefer it. The newsletter should summarise main activities and also draw attention to new key documents that have been added to its website. The Panel recommends that Communication policy be reviewed both with the GFAR-SC and the DSG, to decide on the best means of keeping everyone adequately and appropriately informed.

C. Governance

2.18 The governance of the two Secretariats was entrusted to two Steering Committees (SCs) - the GFAR SC and the NARS SC. With respect to the latter, the Panel fully supports that the NARS-SC has now been converted into a sub-committee of the GFAR-SC, following the merger of the two secretariats, as it is essential that the NARS and their fora still have their own say in GFAR. The GFAR Donor Support Group (DSG) was established to bring together members of the international donor community, and is chaired by IFAD. Some special responsibilities were also given to the four facilitating agencies: FAO, IFAD, WB and ISNAR. Until now, the Secretariats have generally dealt with each of these four facilitating agencies on a one-to-one basis, in keeping with the terms of formal legal agreements or Memoranda of Understanding established with each. The Panel recommends that the functions of the facilitating agencies be spelled out more explicitly and further recommends that the facilitating agencies now become ex-officio members\(^{10}\) of the GFAR-SC; (as two are already stakeholder representatives, this means just two more in an ex-officio capacity). By their presence, the facilitating agencies can brief SC members

\(^{10}\) Ex officio members of the GFAR-SC, with voice but no vote.
on, and discuss, their continuing roles, and keep abreast of SC members’ views. It also avoids the need to set up another committee for them.

**The GFAR Steering Committee**

2.19 **Membership and representation.** The GFAR-SC was formally set up in May 1997 in Cairo, and the seven stakeholders were confirmed as constituents. Each of the four regional fora was given one representative (a fifth - CAC - has since been added). The ARIs were given three representatives, one each from Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific; and the other five stakeholders - donors, CGIAR, farmer organisations, NGOs and the private sector – were given one representative each. This constituency nominates each representative for a three-year period, with one alternate. It was agreed that there should be a transparent nominating process within each constituency and that the representative must guarantee that he/she will consult his/her constituents before each meeting and report back to them afterwards. A three-year period was given to legitimize the representational process within each constituency, and it was agreed not to alter the committee’s membership structure before the next GFAR triennial assembly, scheduled to take place three years later in Dresden (GFAR 2000, Dresden). While the Panel is of the view that, eventually, the entire membership should be regionally based, it is too early to make this change at present, particularly as the NARS and their fora are only now gradually broadening their own national systems beyond the NARIs. Likewise, there are still representational issues for NGOs, the private sector and farmer organisations, as well as that of ARIs in North America and Asia-Pacific. Progress has been very slow here, and mechanisms for consulting the organisations represented are frequently inadequate (or else not used effectively!). The Panel recommends that the present system of membership be maintained for another three years. During this time, a concerted effort will be made to remedy the present situation regarding setting targets to be reached progressively at the next two GFAR meetings – in October and in May. Following the GFAR May 2002 meeting, a review paper should be prepared and presented for debate at GFAR’s October 2002 meeting. This will facilitate tabling a resolution for consideration by the Global Forum in 2003.

2.20 The Panel also recommends that all persons selected by their stakeholder constituents to sit on the GFAR-SC, be willing to accept the responsibility to continue developing their group (constituency). They should also ensure that adequate information is fed back to all interested members of their groups (through modalities that are considered most convenient, including judicious use of e-mail at appropriate times). Furthermore, they should bring forward from their group issues of importance that need to be brought to the attention of the GFAR-SC. Each GFAR-SC member will also carry out an ‘oversight’ function on GFAR, on behalf of his constituency.

2.21 **GFAR Chart.** Given the urgent agenda items\(^1\) requiring the Steering Committee’s full attention during its initial years, less attention was given to the definition of the various roles within the GFAR-SC, such as that of Chair and Vice-Chair. However, the Panel now recommends revisiting, updating and completing the GFAR chart approved in 1998; given its crucial importance in terms of providing guidance and direction to the Secretariat, and the Secretariat’s accountability to the Committee. This clarification should also include the role of the Chair and Vice Chair, with specific terms of reference for each, including their roles in the GFAR Management Team, indicating the method and duration of the appointments, as well as that of all the other committee members and their alternates. The GFAR-SC should also be empowered to constitute subcommittees as and when it so desires. It is encouraging to note that the new GFAR

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\(^1\) For example, the definition of GFAR’s first programme of work, the strengthening of its different constituencies and the organization of the GFAR 2000, Dresden Conference.
Chart has already been prepared for discussion at the October GFAR-SC meeting, and the draft is included herewith in Annex 2.

The GFAR Management Team

2.22 While all policy matters are decided at the twice-yearly GFAR-SC meetings, the Chairman and Vice Chairman with the professional staff of the GFAR Secretariat have formed an informal Management Team to assist in the implementation of GFAR activities, and the Work Programme of the GFAR Secretariat. While these meetings have been minuted and have greatly assisted operational and forward planning activities, the Panel recommends that the responsibilities of the Management Team be formulated with very specific terms of reference, as is proposed in para 2.21 above, and now set out in Annex 2.

The GFAR Donor Support Group

2.23 The Donor Support Group (DSG) was set up in 1998 by a group of donors, chaired by IFAD, to help consolidate and guide the emerging Global Agricultural Research System (GARS), to better harness donor support for GFAR and to organise its representation in the GFAR-SC. The panel reaffirms the view that the DSG should remain voluntary, and be open to all donors actively supporting agricultural research activities of a regional or global nature. Pledging in the DSG should be limited to the three-year work programmes of the GFAR Secretariat and its NARS Subcommittee. All GFAR’s research activities will continue to be funded in a decentralised manner, through fostering linkage mechanisms for collaborative partnerships between stakeholders. The GFAR Secretariat should facilitate the process by being an ‘honest broker’ in those areas in which it has the comparative advantage to assist.

2.24 In order to advance GFAR’s institutionalisation process, it is important to develop a ‘Funding Strategy’. This idea has been discussed already in the GFAR-DSG. As part of the process, IFAD should play a more proactive role, in consultation with its partners in the donor community, in helping the secretariat develop a sustainable funding strategy for GFAR (this involves adequacy, sustainability and predictability for planning purposes). In order for a three-year work programme to be viable, as recommended in the previous para, it is very important for the donor community to be able to pledge support for the work programme’s time horizon. This is also a necessary requirement for FAO (which is hosting the GFAR Secretariat), since the organization cannot secure the functioning of the secretariat if the relevant funds are not available. Thus a funding strategy is required that corresponds to a programming cycle of a three-year work programme. The Panel recommends that the development of this funding strategy be seen as a priority activity for the DSG, to be discussed and put in train at their next meeting.

The Facilitating Agencies and the Hosting Organisation

2.25 The facilitating agencies are IFAD, The World Bank (WB), ISNAR, and FAO – which is now also playing the role of host to the GFAR Secretariat. Each of these agencies has played an effective role in the creation and establishment of GFAR over the years. IFAD has pioneered the GFAR concept right from the start and continued over the years to harness its evolution while mobilising donor support. The efforts and resources mobilised by IFAD are commendable, particularly as the Fund not only provided contributions from its own resources, but it also facilitated generous contributions from its Italian Government Trust Fund resources. The WB has also been very supportive to GFAR and has continued to fund the secretariat since its inception. ISNAR, with its prime mandate of supporting NARS, has played a key role in supporting the NARS secretariat right from its inception through to end-July 2000, by seconding one of its staff. FAO has played a key role in providing office space and facilities to house the NARS Secretariat, initially, and subsequently in making available these facilities for use by the now-merged Secretariat of GFAR.
2.26 The role played by the facilitating agencies was crucial to the successful establishment of GFAR. However, it is now even more important for these facilitating agencies to help GFAR during the coming years, to become a more sustainable institutional mechanism. IFAD, which played a key role in established the DSG and has served as chair since its inception, is needed now even more than before, to continue this important role. The Panel recommends that IFAD’s role be strengthened to broaden the donor support base, and to increase and continue donors’ financial contributions to GFAR. As IFAD will become an ex-officio member of the SC (if the recommendation regarding the facilitating agencies is accepted - see para 2.18), it will also be able to perform an oversight function on behalf of the donors, to ensure the effectiveness and value-added of the activities of the GFAR Secretariat, and to report to the DSG on the activities undertaken during the periods between DSG meetings. The Panel does not envisage the need for an Oversight Committee at this stage, but this might evolve from further experience of expanding activities within the GFAR Business Plan. Indeed, the Panel recommends that all stakeholder representatives in the SC carry out ‘Oversight’ activities for their constituency in the same way as IFAD will do for the donors.

2.27 The WB has been funding the GFAR Secretariat since its inception and is expected to continue to do so at the same level, now that the GFAR secretariat has been transferred to FAO. It will continue its role, through the DSG, of encouraging others to join in and make additional contributions as well. Moreover, ISNAR has been exposed to serious financial constraints that have forced its management to terminate its funding contributions to several activities, including its support to the NARS Secretariat. However, in order to demonstrate its commitment to GFAR, ISNAR has provided a financial - rather than in-kind – contribution albeit at a greatly reduced level, reflecting its present difficult financial situation.

2.28 FAO has provided support both in-kind and in cash, to the functioning of the NARS secretariat during the past two years. It is hoped that with the increased responsibilities of the GFAR secretariat, now located in FAO, this support can be increased in the near future and be reflected in the new Letter of Agreement presently under negotiation between GFAR and the host organisation. In the light of the process underway to strengthen GFAR, FAO is now considering the inclusion of the GFAR Secretariat in its Mid Term Plan (MTP) for the period 2002-2007. This will facilitate a budget contribution by FAO to GFAR, which had not been possible until now. The Panel endorses FAO’s inclusion of the GFAR Secretariat in the Mid-Term Plan, since it may facilitate the contribution in staff (person-year) which it recommends in para 2.34 below. This could become an important part of the sustainable funding strategy mentioned above.

2.29 The initial agreement signed between FAO and the Chairman of the GFAR-SC did not contain the necessary details regarding the support to be provided by FAO, which is essential for the functioning of the Secretariat within the Organization. However, at the time of the Panel review, interaction with FAO Senior Management was ongoing and attention was drawn to the need to prepare a new agreement taking into account the emerging experiences over the last two years and the new realities related to the merger of the two secretariats under the single GFAR umbrella. By the time the Panel began drafting this report, negotiations were already underway. One of the important questions to take into consideration is how to integrate those persons to be seconded (supported by the stakeholders) to the GFAR secretariat, since this is one of the ways through which GFAR operates. It is of the utmost importance to finalise these negotiations as soon as possible, reflecting the above considerations.

2.30 The Panel considers that the facilitating agencies have a unique role to play in GFAR, in promoting the establishment of links between their portfolio of activities in support
of agricultural research and those related to strengthening NARS, the RF and SRF, using the GFAR Secretariat as a facilitating instrument to identify opportunities for brokering links. All four Agencies are undertaking several activities in support of agricultural research for development, which should take into account the need to broaden NARS membership to include GFAR’s seven constituencies within the NARS structure, and to deepen their context by integrating the agricultural research agenda on crops and livestock with those of forestry, fisheries and natural resource management. These goals are achievable within the framework of the investment programmes designed by multilateral donors such as IFAD and the WB. FAO and ISNAR can play a significant role, with the assistance of GFAR, in preparing the necessary groundwork for the design teams to integrate these activities into the investment programmes of both IFAD and the WB. RF/SRF/NARS should also play an important role in facilitating the interface between the evolution of the NARIs and the NARS model, which would help in establishing closer links between research programmes and investment development projects.

2.31 The GFAR Secretariat has been linked to the Agricultural Research Division of FAO’s Department of Sustainable Development since the establishment of the NARS Secretariat in 1998. Through the FAO/GFAR Working Group, the NARS/GFAR Secretariat has developed several joint activities with SDRR, SDRE, GIL/WAICENT, AGP, and SIFAR. Nevertheless, the potential for developing stronger synergy and complementarity between GFAR activities and FAO programmes has only just begun to be explored. More attention should be devoted to extending the collaboration to FAO’s Forestry, Fisheries and Economic and Social Policy Departments. The Panel is of the opinion that the GFAR secretariat should be more forthcoming in forging relationships with the different research units within FAO. The Panel felt that since the Secretariat is located in FAO headquarters in Rome, there may well be several GFAR-relevant opportunities which have yet to be harnessed.

2.32 The Panel commends the work of the facilitating agencies as well as the host institution and recommends that they continue their support for the next three years. The new Legal Agreement for hosting the GFAR Secretariat should establish FAO’s contribution - in cash and in-kind - more clearly, so as to avoid any future misunderstanding. The Panel hopes that future discussions with ISNAR may result in an increase in its in cash and in-kind contribution, and strengthen working relationships. This would be of benefit to ISNAR and GFAR alike and should contribute significantly to the goals of both.

D. Funding and Sustainability: Providing a supportive environment for the Secretariat and funding stakeholder activities

2.33 The long-term goal should be to have GFAR activities funded by the stakeholders. This could probably be done through each NARS contributing to its sub-regional or regional forum. Otherwise, the sub-regional fora (in cases where these exist) could fund regional fora\(^{12}\), and the latter contribute to the Global Forum. This ideal is still a long way off, but it is important to bear in mind as a principle of shared ownership.

2.34 There is strong consensus that the GFAR Secretariat should probably not comprise more than four professional staff – if even that. For the time being, however, the panel feels that a full complement of four is necessary (see para. 2.12). This staffing structure would consist of an Executive Secretary, a professional with special responsibility for the NARS

\(^{12}\) See discussion in para 2.19 on the hypothesis that future representation will evolve to being entirely on a regional basis.
regional fora, a professional with special responsibility to work with other constituencies, and a professional with special competence in the area of ICTs (although improved use of new IC technology should permeate all GFAR activities). These staff would be assisted by two or three secretaries. **As one option, it is hoped that these four GFAR Secretariat posts can be funded (in cash or in kind) according to the panel’s recommendation:**

- that the CGIAR fund one professional, either through direct contribution, or by each IARC contributing $10k to fund the one post for strengthening the GFAR constituencies;
- that FAO fund one ITC professional, who would develop the EGFAR working closely with its WAICENT and at least one secretary;
- that Italy and IFAD continue to provide funding for the post of Executive Secretary as well as operational funds to enable the Secretariat to meet the requirements of its programme of work; and
- that the fourth position be filled by the secondment of a senior officer from an ARI or any other GFAR stakeholders, following the example of CIRAD, France, as of 1 August 2000. Moreover, RF/SRF and NARS, like the other constituencies, could, in due course, consider the secondment of staff for certain periods and for specific tasks, according to GFAR priorities.

Continued financial support for operations is also anticipated from the World Bank (see para 2.27) and ISNAR. In any event, what is essential is that the donors as a group, through the DSG, arrive at a coherent and sustainable funding strategy to keep the secretariat fully staffed professionally, and operationally effective.

2.35 The GFAR Secretariat may approach donors to request seed funds for specific programme areas identified in agreement with stakeholders, once it is clear that some see this as a priority. This will often mean that most of such money would go directly to the stakeholders concerned, as the GFAR Secretariat was never intended to provide an implementation mechanism, and the vast majority of all funding for operational research will be requested directly by the stakeholder partners involved.

2.36 The Secretariat can also provide advice to stakeholders as to possible sources of funding, and could play a broker role, but it will not usually be in a position to make scientific judgement about the soundness or priority of a funding proposal. Donors who are not currently funding a specific regional activity can be sensitised by the GFAR Secretariat to create awareness of the existing opportunities in a specific region. It is clear that a small but effective GFAR Secretariat is crucial at this time to better foster and facilitate the aims and objectives of GFAR.

**PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARISED BELOW**

2.01 The Panel reaffirms the decision of the GFAR-SC that for the next three years no change should be made in the composition of the stakeholder constituencies.

2.02 The Panel recommends that special assistance continue to be given to farmer organisations and NGOs to strengthen their representation as key stakeholders in GFAR.
2.02 The Panel also recommends that the GFAR-SC further review and debate the points raised in the NGOs’ and farmer organisations’ Declarations from Dresden 2000.

2.03 The Panel reaffirms that major emphasis (by all GFAR stakeholders and its Secretariat) must continue to be placed on further strengthening the NARS and their regional/sub regional fora.

2.04 The Panel recommends that the Secretariat assist the private sector by organising a workshop (jointly with them and other concerned stakeholders) on issues of improved public/private sector collaboration; and follows this up with holding regional workshops on this issue over the next three years, in a timetable drawn up with the concurrence of each region and in line with the priority each region gives to harnessing better public/private sector participation.

2.05 The Panel recommends that the GFAR Secretariat and the GFAR Chair meet formally each year with the Center Directors Committee (CDC).

2.05 The Panel recommends that both the North American and the Asia Pacific ARIs consolidate their support in like manner to Europe, as they each have a representative on the GFAR-SC.

2.10 The Panel recommends that, in future, the triennial GFAR meeting be held independently of the CGIAR meetings, and that it be hosted by each of the regional fora, in turn. However, this recommendation needs to give careful consideration to the additional costs associated with hosting such meetings, as well as the time demands on its participants, many of whom attend the CG meetings also.

2.12 The Panel recommends that the GFAR Secretariat be staffed for the medium-term by a team of four professionals comprising: (i) an Executive Secretary, (ii) an ICT specialist responsible for EGFAR and the RAIS support programme, (iii) a senior professional engaged in providing support to the NARS on a full-time basis, especially through their fora; and (iv) another senior professional (preferably with a background in agricultural economics and policy analysis) whose particular responsibility is that of working with the other constituencies. In any event, the four staff should work as a team and possess an appropriate mix of expertise to complement each other.

2.13 The Panel is of the view that the ICT/EGFAR/RAIS programme is critically important and fully warrants the posting of a young professional, specialised in ICT, to all fora requiring assistance in this field.

2.17 The Panel recommends that communication policy be reviewed, both with the GFAR-SC and the DSG, to decide on the best means of keeping everyone adequately and appropriately informed.

2.18 The Panel recommends that the functions of the facilitating agencies be spelled out more explicitly and further recommends that the facilitating agencies now become ex-officio members of the GFAR-SC; (as two are already stakeholder representatives, this means just two more in an ex-officio capacity).

2.19 The Panel recommends that the present system of membership be maintained for another three years. During this time, a concerted effort will be made to remedy
the present situation regarding setting targets to be reached progressively at the next two GFAR meetings – in October and in May.

2.20 The Panel also recommends that all persons selected by their stakeholder constituents to sit on the SC be willing to accept the responsibility to continue developing their group (constituency). They should also ensure that adequate information is fed back to all interested members of their groups (through modalities that are considered most convenient, including judicious use of e-mail at appropriate times). Furthermore, they should bring forward from their group issues of importance that need to be brought to the attention of the SC. Each GFAR-SC member will also carry out an ‘oversight’ function on GFAR, on behalf of his constituency.

2.21 The Panel now recommends revisiting, updating and completing the GFAR chart approved in 1998, given its crucial importance in terms of providing guidance and direction to the Secretariat, and the Secretariat's accountability to the Committee. This clarification should also include the role of the Chair and Vice Chair, with specific terms of reference for each, including their roles in the GFAR management team, indicating the method and duration of the appointments, as well as that of all the other committee members and their alternates. The GFAR-SC should also be empowered to constitute subcommittees as and when it so desires,

2.24 The Panel recommends that the development of this funding strategy be seen as a priority activity for the DSG, to be discussed and put in train at their next meeting.

2.26 The Panel recommends that IFAD’s role be strengthened to broaden the donor support base, and to increase and continue donors’ financial contributions to GFAR. As IFAD will become an ex-officio member of the SC (if the recommendation regarding the facilitating agencies is accepted – see para 2.16), it will also be able to perform an oversight function on behalf of the donors, to ensure the effectiveness and value-added of the activities of the Secretariat, and to report to the DSG on the activities undertaken during the periods between DSG meetings.

2.26 The Panel recommends that all stakeholder representatives in the SC carry out ‘Oversight’ activities for their constituency in the same way that IFAD will do for the donors.

2.28 The Panel endorses FAO’s inclusion of the GFAR Secretariat in the Mid-Term Plan, since it may facilitate the contribution in-staff (person-year) which it recommends in para 2.34 below. This could become an important part of the sustainable funding strategy mentioned above.

2.31 The Panel is of the opinion that the GFAR secretariat should be more forthcoming in forging relationships with the different research units within FAO. The Panel felt that since the Secretariat is located in FAO headquarters in Rome, there may well be several GFAR-relevant opportunities which have yet to be harnessed.

2.32 The Panel commends the work of the facilitating agencies as well as the host institution and recommends that they continue their support for the next three years. The new Legal Agreement for hosting the GFAR Secretariat should
establish FAO’s contribution - in cash and in-kind - more clearly, so as to avoid any future misunderstanding

2.34 It is hoped that these four GFAR Secretariat posts can be funded (in cash or in kind) according to the panel’s recommendation:

- that the CGIAR fund one professional, either through direct contribution, or by each IARC contributing $10k to fund the one post for strengthening the GFAR constituencies.

- that FAO fund one ITC professional, who would develop the EGFAR working closely with its WAICENT and at least one secretary.

- that Italy and IFAD continue to provide funding for the post of Executive Secretary as well as operational funds to enable the Secretariat to meet the requirements of its programme of work.

- that the fourth position be filled by the secondment of a senior officer from an ARI or any other GFAR stakeholders, following the example of CIRAD, France, as of 1 August 2000. Moreover, RF/SRF and NARS, like the other constituencies, could, in due course, consider the secondment of staff for certain periods and for specific tasks, according to GFAR priorities.

Section 3. GFAR’s Business Plan and Secretariat Work Programme

3.01 The GFAR Business Plan has been developed around the four lines of action agreed upon by its SC and ratified by the first plenary meeting of GFAR 2000. The Business Plan should define the role each stakeholder will play in respect of the lines of action agreed upon, as well as the expected output and the milestones to measure progress. As stated earlier, this distinctly differs from the GFAR Secretariat’s Programme of Work, which aims at facilitating the implementation of the Business Plan through partnership arrangements among the seven stakeholders. It is anticipated that the true horizon of a GFAR Business Plan will be two three-year rolling programmes. Every three years, coinciding with the plenary meeting, the previous three-year plan will be reviewed, the next three-year plan updated, and a further three-year plan developed to take the place of the one now completed. The GFAR Secretariat will have a three-year Work Programme divided into three annual plans with their separate budgets.

3.02 The four lines of action of the Business Plan identified at GFAR 2000, Dresden are:

- Setting a global vision and a global agenda: developing a vision statement and a global agenda on strategic issues in ARD;

- Strengthening, broadening and deepening the regional and sub-regional fora and thereby the NARS themselves;

- Improving global and regional/sub-regional knowledge systems through using the latest advances in information technology; and,

- Developing innovative research partnership mechanisms among all the stakeholders, around four main thematic research areas. This is also part of GFAR’s mandate, where appropriate, in addition to its key role of seeing that
priority agricultural research issues are debated and presented in an informed but neutral way. The four thematic research areas referred to have emerged from a consultative process as well as from priority research agenda and are as follows:

- Genetic resource management and biotechnology;
- Natural resource management and agroecology;
- Commodity chains and underutilised plant species; and
- Policy management and institutional development.

Added to the above four lines of action should be the role of advocacy played by the Secretariat in facilitating research partnerships. This role was mentioned in many of the early documents, and commented on as being very important by several respondents to the questionnaire. The Panel recommends that in the light of diminishing resources for agricultural research, particularly in the public sector, the Secretariat’s advocacy role be given a higher profile. This should be done in close collaboration with other stakeholders, especially the CGIAR and the Future Harvest initiative. Equally important and worthy of mention is its advisory role. In addition to setting up a global agricultural research agenda, commissioning state-of-the-art issue papers and providing a forum for reviewing priority global research issues also form part of the Secretariat’s key responsibilities.

3.03 The GFAR Business Plan was fully debated at GFAR 2000, Dresden. This broad approach, to which the Panel concurs, was considered appropriate as the forum meeting was the very first of its kind since GFAR had been instituted. The thirty-two working groups set up on the first day to discuss the proposed Global Vision and the Action Plan were one of the highlights of the forum, as they enabled all participants to have a say in the deliberations. The groups largely endorsed the content of the above lines of action, particularly with regard to the first three items of the consultation. The importance of the four thematic areas selected for focus was also generally endorsed. There was more criticism (often unfounded) over the very active role played by the Secretariat in facilitating joint action in the four areas, than over the intrinsic importance of the lines of action and themes to all GFAR stakeholders. Consequently, this would appear to be an area in which the panel feels remedial action is required, so as to ensure that the relevant stakeholders are effectively involved in each activity. It is imperative for the merged GFAR Secretariat to avoid any loss of credibility as a result of alienating any of its stakeholders. This is not always an easy task, particularly in a forum where there is a diversity of views, but where stakeholders need greater collaboration in areas of common interest. There is still much duplication of work among stakeholders, and failure by NARS to collaborate in programmes that each one tries to maintain individually, in spite of lacking the required critical mass of staff or the necessary funds to be operationally effective, leads to an inefficient use of resources. There are several most encouraging exceptions to this situation, however, and these need to be documented so that the improved institutional mechanisms and ‘best practices’ can be more widely replicated or adapted elsewhere, where relevant.

A. Strengthening Regional and Sub-regional Fora

3.04 The Panel confirms its view that strong sub-regional and regional fora are the *sine qua non* for building a strong global system of agricultural research for development. These fora must play a role in strengthening their member-NARS, in promoting research collaboration between them at the sub-regional and regional level, and in setting a sound basis for research collaboration with other parts of the global system, through the identification of regional priorities. The various fora ultimately depend on strong NARS. The Panel is of the view, however, that GFAR - and its secretariat - should focus on the regional and sub-regional associations, where the majority of its Business Plan activities will take place. There are four major reasons for this:
• According to GFAR’s guiding principles, one of which is subsidiarity, activities should take place at the lowest level at which they can operate effectively;

• There tends to be greater coherence, sharing of common problems and even more similarity between the agro-ecology and farming systems of neighbouring countries at sub-regional level, than is the case across a continental region;

• There are enormous advantages to be gained from sharing information gleaned from similar if not identical agro-ecological zones in neighbouring countries, and more importantly by collaborating in research programmes, especially when so many of the smaller countries lack a critical mass of staff in any one programme. By sharing a research agenda with neighbours, one can overcome this difficulty (para 3.48 below); and

• In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), there is a history of strong sub-regional agricultural research networks/fora: for example, SACCAR, ASARECA and WECARD/CORAF in SSA and the PROCIs and SICTA in LAC. Also, their newer regional organizations, FARA (in SSA) and FORAGRO (in LAC), have been set up as light organizations to represent their joint views more forcefully in global fora, and organize better collaboration and exchange of information across the whole region as well as inter-regionally.

3.05 The pattern of agricultural research cooperation is somewhat different in AARINENA in the West Asia and North African Region (WANA), and in APAARI in the Asia-Pacific Region. In these two cases, agricultural research collaboration and networks had been organized at the regional level long before GFAR came into existence (see Annex 8 on AARINENA), as indeed with most of the subregional fora in LAC and SSA regions. Nevertheless, both AARINENA and APAARI have now also divided their regions into sub-regions, from which many of the new research partnership programmes are emerging. In the case of AARINENA, there are five subregions: the Maghreb in North Africa, the Mashreq Fertile Crescent, the Nile Valley and the Red Sea, the Arabian Peninsula, and West Asia. In the case of APAARI there are four sub-regions: South Asia, North East Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific Islands. The new regional forum ‘Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC)’ is much smaller than the RFs for the other four regions, and its two sub-regions are reflected in its name. The Panel fully concurs with the policy adopted since the 1995/96 development of the NARS Action Plan, i.e. that it is up to each region to decide what roles should be played at the regional and sub-regional levels, as well as determining what is the best way for them to organize themselves. These arrangements could also vary over time, in the light of changing conditions.

3.06 There is almost universal agreement that one of GFAR’s prime responsibilities is to help build stronger NARS and NARS regional and sub regional fora. With regard to the latter, the Secretariat has a key role to play, as and when requested to do so, and by so doing it will indirectly strengthen NARS as well. The direct strengthening of NARS, however, is a task undertaken principally by the NARS themselves, working in concert with IARCs - especially ISNAR and ARIs, with support from donor programmes as well as those of NGOs and the private sector. The Secretariat has been requested by the R/SR fora to facilitate the exchange of successful experiences in NARS integration and management across regions. But the main task of the Secretariat is to provide support to the regional fora, particularly in a number of areas where strengthening is required. These areas were revisited and debated at an informal meeting between EIARD, ISNAR and the Secretariat in April 1999, and published in a paper by the NARS Secretariat (Bibl. no. 66). The proposals were then discussed further at the NARS-SC meetings - both at MTM99 in Beijing and at GFAR 2000, Dresden, as well as electronically and at other times of contact. These meetings identified the need to:
- keep abreast of advances in information technology, communications and knowledge systems;
- strengthen ownership and to be broader-based, both sectorally and with other stakeholders;
- improve governance;
- have a permanent secretariat and develop better management capacity;
- strengthen impact assessment and dissemination of results; and,
- consolidate institutional and financial sustainability.

3.07 ICT/ Knowledge systems. The R/SR fora and their NARS are fully cognizant of the need to keep abreast of advances in information and communication technology. It is important to have the appropriate hardware and training in the use of the software so as to communicate more rapidly and be able to access additional information relevant to their needs. Most of the stakeholders are assisting in this endeavour and GFAR certainly has a comparative advantage to act in this sphere. The NARS, NGOs and farmer organizations are deeply involved in setting up the RAIS; the donors in providing funds (EIARD, EC, USAID, DFID); and the IARCs and ARIs in facilitating access to their databases and in training (CTA, IDRC, CABI, CIRAD). In addition, the Secretariat is playing an important role in coordinating this operation. It is also engaged in setting up EGFAR as an information gateway and a forum at the global level, to ensure easier access to the large global networks, such as FAO’s WAICENT. However, in view of the critical importance of EGFAR to the R/SR fora, the Panel has two key recommendations to make: The first relates to the essential need to recruit, as soon as possible, a full-time professional to further develop EGFAR, and ensure that it relates well to other networks while not duplicating any of their activities. The second is to post well-qualified ICT specialist APOs to each of the RAIS (in agreement with them). Requests for assistance of this type have already been made. These APOs should, first of all, receive three months training under the ICT specialist at the Secretariat in Rome. Such training would equip them to help RAIS become effectively operational through electronic compatibility/ connectivity etc., and facilitate information exchange.

3.08 Ownership: broadening and deepening the partnership. The development of real stakeholders in ARD is of paramount importance and, as the April 99 report states (Bibl. no. 66), this requires the development of a proactive mentality and a sense of commitment and social responsibility. It also means that stakeholders must develop a clear awareness of their common interests, and the benefits to be gained from effective collaboration in order to achieve their common and agreed objectives with greater ease. With the dynamics of scientific progress and the rapid pace of institutional diversification in ARD, new actors are playing an important role with the NARS, ARIs and IARCs (the three traditional actors in this field), now being joined by the private sector, universities, NGOs and farmer organizations. Thus, NARS need to be more broadly based, to accommodate the different stakeholders. The Panel recommends that the regional and sub-regional fora consider reviewing their ability to speed up the process of broadening the range of stakeholders they are bringing together and include representatives from these sectors. It is encouraging to note that all R/SR fora have included this issue in their prospective forward plans. Ideally, this should be a reflection of a similar broadening at the NARS level.

13 For further details, see paras 3.16 to 3.24, below.
3.09 Sub-regional and regional fora should also expand their membership subsectorally (again, ideally, as a reflection of such developments at the national level) to embrace the broad, natural resource definition of ‘agricultural’ institutions which includes livestock, forestry, fisheries and natural resource management, on an equal footing with crop agriculture.

3.10 Permanent Secretariat and Management Capacity. In order to ensure long-term sustainability of regional fora, it is vital that these have a small but effective secretariat, preferably fully funded by its constituents, to strengthen the sense of ownership and commitment. From reviewing experience in the various fora, and in recognition of their critical importance, the Panel recommends that each R/SR forum consider having a permanent (not itinerant) secretariat, and a full-time Executive Secretary. Of course, each forum must make its own decision in this matter, but those that do not have a permanent secretariat might like to compare experience with those that do. The panel further stresses the need to strengthen the operational and management capacity of each forum secretariat. Moreover, further training is needed for both managers and their partners involved in managing networks as opposed to just research programmes. WECARD/CORAF's example of having an Executive Secretary, Scientific Programme Officer IT Specialist and a Publications Editor is a good one, and is facilitated by the generous secondment of staff from member-NARS - something which other fora may not be able to replicate. However, this indicates the level of commitment by NARS members to their forum in West and Central Africa (see Annex 9).

3.11 Improving governance. In order to broaden stakeholder representation in the fora, multi-player decision-making systems are needed to facilitate the active participation of the different stakeholders in the governance of their fora. The Panel recommends that there be a clear definition of tasks among the various staff, chairpersons and committees set up to manage each forum, based on competencies and responsibilities. In this manner, the development of an agreed and more specified Business Plan would greatly enhance transparency and accountability in general. Almost all fora have this form of management already, but again experience could be shared (although not all will have similar constitutions or working procedures). It is important to have clear terms of reference for the Chairperson and the Executive Secretary of each.

3.12 The representatives of the regional fora from the South in the GFAR-SC should continue to meet as a subcommittee, to consider issues of specific interest. Such meetings could usefully precede CG meetings, and they might invite NARS members of the CGIAR. They could then review and discuss CG documents and provide as coherent and helpful an input as possible to the CG meetings (just as the EIARD group does at present, in terms of European views). Up to now, some donors have provided funds through FAO to cover the cost of sending regional representatives (appointed politically by national ministers, under an FAO procedure) to attend CGIAR meetings. However, regional representation at these meetings is slowly being phased out in favour of fora representatives, who have also been representing their regions in CGIAR meetings since 1996. The Panel recommends that FAO consider making available to the GFAR Secretariat the funds originally provided to cover the cost of regional representation at these meetings. This would ensure more effective participation and representation of regional fora in the GFAR-SC.

3.13 Strengthening impact assessment and dissemination of results. This is something of vital importance, and assistance is already being provided to several fora and their NARS. For example, Purdue University in the US, is collaborating through a USAID programme in Mali, with both INSAH and WECARD/CORAF (see Annex 9). If there is interest on the part of R/SR fora, the Secretariat could also facilitate interaction with TAC and with other institutions working in this field.

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3.14 **Consolidating institutional and financial sustainability:** The regional fora need financial support to: pay for their operational expenses, undertake specific activities, i.e. commission papers, engage consultants etc; and provide access to competitive funds for promoting research for development partnerships among NARS, or between NARS and other stakeholders:

(i) The various fora should make efforts to raise funds in their own region. Ideally, such funds should come from the NARS themselves, to ensure ownership, but this is likely to be only partially feasible for the time being. The Secretariat should continue to help the various fora in presenting a case to the regional multilateral banks on the importance of providing core support to these associations, identifying funds for fora activities and enlisting their sponsorship to promote new mechanisms for funding partnership research. IDB is already assisting FONTAGRO, and the Asian Development Bank is considering helping to set up, and participate in, a similar fund for APAARI;

(ii) Donors should provide funds to strengthen the financial position of fora and partnership research within each sub-region. In most cases, these competitive endowment funds - for which the NARS and their partners can bid - should be provided directly to the regional/subregional fora. This is already under discussion in the case of ASARECA with support from the EC and USAID, and for WECARD/CORAF, again from the EC. As pointed out above, this endowment fund already exists in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), through FONTAGRO; and

(iii) One particular area of support to fora that donors should consider, in addition to financial assistance, is that of providing young professionals or Associate Professional Officers (APOs) through FAO or from any other bilateral mechanism, as is already the case with one APO staff member in APAARI. As discussed above, these are immediately required in the IT field, as soon as the IT specialist takes up his/her post in the Secretariat, to help train and backstop them.

3.15 Now that the two secretariats have been merged, the current secretariat must continue to designate staff and financial resources to the needs of the NARS regional and sub-regional fora. These fora should also identify the support they require in order to be strengthened, and the way in which the Secretariat can assist them. On the question of financing, it is likely that each forum requiring support will have to continue to make a direct request to donors, when the need occurs, and not expect the Secretariat to become involved.

B. **Improving Information and Knowledge Systems - EGFAR and RAIS**

3.16 Facilitating the exchange of information and knowledge has been one of GFAR’s objectives since its launch. This was a vital element of the 1996 Plan of Action for Global Partnership in Agricultural Research (Bibl. no. 83), and it is one of GFAR’s key lines of action today. Any system or initiative relating to information and communication must strengthen all stakeholders, particularly the NARS and their fora. It must avoid worsening the current inequitable access to information and take steps to bridge the gap by making information as widely accessible as possible. It must also ensure that NARS have access to the necessary I&C technology. A global system of information- and experience-sharing can make a critical contribution to improving the effectiveness of agricultural research, but it must be conceived in such a way that the “playing field is levelled” between stakeholders.

3.17 Responses to the review panel’s questionnaire and interviews with stakeholders indicate that information and knowledge dissemination continues to be seen as a priority for
GFAR action. However, they also caution against duplication in a field where there is already considerable activity:

_We need compatible systems for the exchange of technical and scientific information and documents. We also need an interchange of experience in institutional development (technology policies, national institutional models for R&D, public-private linkages, funding mechanisms, among other). (NARS/Regional Forum respondent)_

Should GFAR concentrate on building and servicing a truly global information system linking up with existing systems? Possibly, but only in cooperation with FAO and others. (Donor respondent)

3.18 Initial efforts to develop an “Electronic Global Forum for Agricultural Research” (EGFAR) were led by the GFAR Secretariat located in Washington, starting in 1997. The intention was to put all information on one global site, with stakeholders having “kiosks” to present their material. This work received some technical support from the World Bank, but only limited financial support from other donors. Progress was slow - although the initial target was to have the initiative operational in 1998. Subsequently, it was wisely decided to aim at a more decentralized system - an enabling framework for a global information system - and to contribute building blocks to that system. With the support of FAO and the World Bank, the GFAR Secretariat (at the time, the GFAR and NARS Secretariats) organised a consultation meeting in Rome in March 1999 (Bibl. no. 51) that brought together about 50 participants to discuss the vision for a Framework for a Global Agricultural R&D Information System, the role of each stakeholder or institution in its establishment and the steps necessary to ensure its success. Participants were also reminded that the CG external review had recommended that the CGIAR, FAO, World Bank, NARS, ARIs and NGOs should collaborate in developing an effective Global Knowledge System for Food Security.

3.19 In discussing the best way to establish a global framework, the Rome meeting recognised the fundamental importance of having a global system based on strong Regional/Sub regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS) or Networks (RAIN). Ultimately, these would be as strong as the National Agricultural Information Systems (NAIS) which are their essential constituents. The main databases are found at the national level, which is where most interaction with end-users takes place. The role of the regional system should be - in part – that of ensuring information-networking among national databases. Since the task would be enormous if the RAIS seek to cover all areas of information on the research being undertaken, together with the channelling of research results and information from agricultural research to those who need it, they (the RAIS) must prioritise in what areas they wish to concentrate their effort, based on regional priorities or regional networks.

3.20 Any discussion of a global framework or system would need to acknowledge the role of the World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT) at FAO in setting out and/or improving the existing normative framework for facilitating information flows on a standard basis, and also on WAICENT’s technical advice. FAO systems, such as CARIS and AGRIS, or their equivalents in some regions, have already helped to structure information exchange. An effective interface with information and knowledge generated by CGIAR and other stakeholders would also be necessary, and should take account of concrete projects on innovative aspects of the Global Knowledge Systems, such as those proposed by NGOs in the natural resource management field: InterDev, an information system aimed at capturing local knowledge (already at a pilot stage); Prolinnova, to systematise and understand innovations; and Policy Net, aimed at understanding its policy and institutional context (Bibl. no. 51). A diagram showing players in the Global Information System at national, regional and global levels is attached as Annex 7.

3.21 Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS). Regional/Sub-regional Fora are at different stages in reviewing the state of national information systems, existing
resources in their region, what their regional information strategy should be, and what support is required. They are also starting from very different situations, in terms of present resources. The GFAR/NARS secretariat has played a coordinating role in this process. It has provided some funding for consultants and meetings, and has contributed to the design of a conceptual framework for what the RAIS should cover and do. Furthermore, the secretariat has worked closely with regional/sub-regional fora and with FAO/WAICENT, CTA, CABI and CIRAD, in supporting the emerging regional systems (Bibl. nos. 54 to 61). RAIS are envisaged as a set of interrelated databases and information facilities available in each region, all of which participate in a regional strategy and share minimum standards. This should also include helping in the establishment or improvement of Web Pages for regional/sub regional fora. Each regional/sub-regional forum has a person/focal point responsible for the information area. This person can be a full-time professional (as in the case of WECARD/CORAF and of APAARI), a consultant (as in the case of AARINENA and of FORAGRO), or a young APO - which is also the case of APAARI. These persons held a meeting during GFAR-2000, at where they decided to establish an electronic discussion group to interact and exchange experiences on information issues. On the basis of this exchange of experience, they are proposing to create an Inter-regional Agricultural Information Partnership among RAIS, aimed at capacity building, information standardization, software development and expert systems development. It is very important that the regional/sub regional fora continue to exchange views and experience in this area, both at the level of information specialist and at that of research manager. The overall purpose requires a minimum common approach, resulting in compatibility between systems. At the same time, each region/sub region must feel able to move according to its own needs and at its own speed (subject, of course, to the availability of adequate funds to allow them to do so). This re-emphasises the need for the GFAR Secretariat to have a full-time professional IT specialist.

3.22 Well-functioning, appropriately designed RAIS are a critical component of a global information system. Donors will need to support capacity building and the needs of developing countries with respect to ICTs, otherwise there is a real danger that the existing gap will become larger in terms of access to information, and the consequent link to development. Access, input, and the use of information are all limited by the lack of trained personnel and inadequate systems. The panel recommends that donors continue to support the development of RAIS - including strengthening the capacity of persons involved and of the systems. In the short-term, adequately trained APOs should be assigned to help regional/sub regional fora. As suggested below, support to RAIS will also include strengthening the capacity of the GFAR Secretariat to provide coordination and backup. As one respondent pointed out:

The GFAR Secretariat is very active and has given good support and does reach out to the Sub-regions. The workshop on information was a very good contribution that has helped us in developing our strategy. The initiative to find funds to assist us in developing web pages is very useful. This type of support should continue. (A NARS/Sub regional Forum respondent)

3.23 **EFGAR - the Gateway and the Forum.** The GFAR Secretariat is in the process of developing the EFGAR gateway function and links to a set of interrelated web pages for interaction among stakeholders (Bibl. nos. 62 and 63). Within EFGAR, one essential element - the NARS Forum - will promote a learning process and a pool of knowledge on NARS management issues through interaction among interested parties, based on networking and on sharing experience (Bibl. nos. 64b and 64c). Nine subject areas have already been identified with NARS participants for discussion groups. Each will be coordinated by a lead NARS group that will be responsible for the initial discussion paper - e.g. *Research Funding Strategies in ARD* by EMBRAPA (Brazil); *Integration of NARS: From NARIs to NARS* by BAR (Philippines); *Management of Information and Knowledge Systems* by PCARRD
(Philippines); *S&T Trends and their Implications, by Campinas University and IICA (Costa Rica)*. This exchange will depend on technical support from the GFAR Secretariat and on some funding, if required. But the main dimension will be a learning process generated by a stakeholder-led initiative on Internet. In at least one instance, the NARS group has been asked to slow down the development of their module, since the Secretariat cannot offer adequate backup.

3.24 **GFAR Secretariat support to ICT.** Technical aspects of EGFAR and RAIS depend at present on the time devoted to this activity by the Secretariat, on the support of WAICENT staff, on consultants and on an APO working in the Secretariat. This is not adequate. WAICENT has indicated that it cannot dedicate more time to GFAR, as it is already stretched in terms of fulfilling its overall mandate in the area of agricultural information. It must also use its resources for key functions of global normative development. In spite of the valid work of the Secretariat and the role played by the APO, members of the review panel are convinced that at this crucial development stage, the information and communication area requires a senior ICT specialist in the Secretariat to provide support to RAIS and EGFAR. The lack of such a person (along with some financial resources) is hampering the development of EGFAR and RAIS. This person should work as a member of the GFAR team, in close association with WAICENT - so as to understand the work and requirements of both - but on the EGFAR and RAIS agenda. Collaboration with WAICENT could also focus on particular tasks. One such area of collaboration which was identified while the review panel was in Rome, relates to the information support that RAIS could provide to major rural development projects in a given region (i.e. interaction between ASARECA’s RAIN and FAO’s “Horn of Africa” Special Project). The role of the GFAR specialist would also require understanding and close liaison with other major actors in the knowledge and information field, such as the World Bank. The Panel’s preference (see paragraph 2.34 on funding GFAR’s activities) would be that this post be funded as part of FAO support to GFAR. In any case, however, it recommends that funding be provided for the recruitment of a senior ICT specialist for GFAR, for a three-year period, as soon as possible. Donors are being contacted for this purpose.

C. **Setting Priorities and Focusing in Facilitating Research Partnerships in GFAR**

3.25 Given the limited amount of available resources, some donors and stakeholders have raised the question of focus and priority setting. One way of focusing could be to limit GFAR action to only one or two of the four themes that have been chosen as priority areas. Nevertheless, both at GFAR 2000, Dresden and in the review panel’s subsequent consultation with stakeholders, there was clear interest in developing research partnerships in these four thematic areas. As GFAR is a stakeholder-led initiative, whatever it does will ultimately depend on the interest, commitment and capacity of the stakeholders concerned. Consequently, GFAR’s comparative advantage in carrying out a programme or activity is contingent on the comparative advantage of the interested stakeholders. It is therefore a question of mobilising the latter.

3.26 Although stakeholders are entirely free to develop whatever partnerships they judge to be important within the framework of the Global Forum, the Secretariat should concentrate its efforts on just a few strategic cases that are considered to be of high priority and high potential impact. Since the GFAR 2000, Dresden meeting, the Secretariat has been discussing this particular point with various stakeholders, and several ideas and criteria are emerging as a consensus on how to move in this direction. This is analysed in a recent document on the role of GFAR in strengthening research partnerships.\(^\text{14}\) A first step in this direction is that the Secretariat should concentrate most of its efforts on facilitating the

\(^{14}\) On this see GFAR Secretariat: *Some Thoughts on the Follow-up to Dresden 2000 on Research Partnerships*; Rome, GFAR, July 2000.
development of a few “Global and Regional R&D Framework Programmes”, and not on single collaborative projects, which are the responsibility of the interested stakeholders. But even here, the potential options emerging are quite numerous. The Panel recommends the following criteria for priority setting and for the selection of those cases on which the Secretariat should concentrate its efforts:

- The relevance of the concrete partnership or programme from the point of view of GFAR’s objectives, which are those of food security, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability.
- The existence of a lead stakeholder that can play an articulating role, working in close collaboration with other stakeholders of ARD (a core group of participating and committed institutions).
- The possibility of integrating into the programme both traditional and new players in agricultural research, in a multi-stakeholder initiative (i.e. NARS, IARCs, NGOs, ARIs, Farmers and the private sector).
- The identification of value-added through interaction and synergisms among the participating stakeholders.
- The possibility of an integrated approach covering not only research activities but also post-harvest and marketing development efforts, or the policy framework that conditions its effective impact.
- The opportunity of developing a coordination mechanism that facilitates concertation among stakeholders and donors in the development of the Global Framework Programme.

On the basis of these criteria it should be possible to identify a small portfolio of strategic Global and Regional R&D Framework Programmes in which the GFAR Secretariat could play a facilitating role during the next three years. This will also facilitate the evaluation of its performance and its contribution to the emergence of a Global Agricultural Research System.

D. Developing Innovative Partnership Proposals

3.27 The four thematic topics were chosen by the GFAR-SC from recommendations provided by representatives of the four fora (now five, with the Central Asia and Caucasus (CAC)), and with the agreement of the committee members representing the other stakeholders. The plant genetic resources and biotechnology theme is patently a key global research issue and is surrounded by dissension and much misinformation. GFAR and its Secretariat have a significant role to play here. The natural resource management and agroecology theme is also of great importance, both on global environmental and sustainable livelihood grounds; and the new thrust of Interdev, PROLINNOVA and Policy Net is a welcome new initiative developed largely by the NGO constituency (see para 3.36 below).

3.28 The commodity chain and underutilised plant species theme is another important one, but needs clearer definition, as there is a lack of clear understanding among many in the research community as to what is meant by a commodity chain. The policy management and institutional theme is a vital one, due to a dearth of good policy analysis in support of the need for reform, and often ineffective institutional performance. Such reform would provide the right incentives for relevant agricultural research that can have development impact and the urgent need to strengthen all research institutions and their ability to operate collaboratively and effectively in developing countries. In all these thematic areas, the Secretariat acts as a facilitator and has a role to play in bringing partnerships together. However, once partnerships are initiated, the Panel recommends that the Secretariat needs only to keep a watching brief, monitor successful partnerships in all these thematic fields through an agreed reporting system, and get directly involved only if requested to
do so by the regional or sub regional fora, or when issues emerge that need to be aired at the global level, by commissioning a special study or hosting an appropriate workshop.

Genetic Resources Management for Agriculture and Biotechnology

3.29 At the launch of GFAR in 1996, biotechnology and genetic resources conservation and utilization were identified as belonging to a high priority theme providing opportunities for collaboration between GFAR stakeholders. In the responses to the review panel’s questionnaire, 38 respondents (48%) felt that genetic resources management and biotechnology were “very important” for GFAR to be involved in and a further 23 (29%) felt they were “important”. Fifteen (19%) saw GFAR involvement as being “less important”, some adding the comment that they thought this was already a crowded field. Strongest endorsement came from the NARS respondents, although more than half of the respondents from ARIs, donors and the private sector also gave “very important” ratings. In terms of assessment of the GFAR process so far, 26 respondents (33%) rated it as being “very useful”, and a further 26 (33%) felt it was “useful”. Since these two components have their own specificity, comments will be made separately with regard to each one.

3.30 Genetic Resource Management for Agriculture. This area is clearly important for GFAR stakeholders since effective genetic resource policy is crucial for continued exchange and management of genetic resources and for the sharing of its benefits. There are divergent views on how to handle these issues, based on sharply differing interests and also on misinformation. Furthermore, it is an area in which the Global Plan of Action, approved in Leipzig in June 1996, may be of help in identifying and addressing this critical element of the global research agenda.

3.31 Given the interest expressed by a number of stakeholders, the GFAR-SC launched a specific initiative in this area in October of 1999. The objectives were to analyse the benefits of a multilateral system for access and benefit-sharing, to identify policy options for national access legislation, to contribute to policy capacity and awareness and to promote regional and global partnerships. As a result of the Steering Committee decision, the secretariat worked with an ad hoc group constituting those stakeholder representatives possessing the most knowledge in this area. There was considerable activity in the six or seven months preceding the Dresden-2000 meeting in Dresden. Two International Centres (IPGRI and IRRI) were involved, as were staff of the Inter-Governmental Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, hosted by FAO. Several GFAR members belonging to ARIs agreed to contribute issue papers. USAID funded the organisation of a workshop held at IRRI on the impact of PVP on rice germplasm, and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) provided $65,000 for a series of activities that led to the preparation of a concept and issues paper. Following intensive consultation among stakeholders, the concept paper, ten short papers (“micro papers”) on particular policy issues, and the text of a Dresden Declaration on Plant Genetic Resources, were ready for discussion at GFAR 2000, Dresden (Bibl. nos. 19 to 31).

3.32 Some elements of this initiative may provide a model for dealing with specific issues in the future - strong stakeholder involvement, the use of an ad hoc stakeholder group once the SC has approved the initiative, donor funding of specific activities, GFAR’s contribution to clarifying issues on which there is divergence, and an opportunity to move towards a better common understanding. It is not yet clear, however, how the Declaration (Bibl. no. 31) will be used, and whether GFAR stakeholders and GFAR 2000, Dresden participants will communicate the contents to their governments. The Panel suggests that the policy papers

15 This para is largely taken from Annex 4 re the questionnaire, which has similar analysis paragraphs on all the themes and lines of action, but none of the rest of these are included in the main text, so please refer to Annex 4 for them.
should be disseminated formally, although they can already be used in response to requests for information, and are available on the EGFAR website.

3.33 Just as in the case of other areas, the Secretariat should only get involved in GRM/IPR issues when a clear niche has been identified, as well as the relevant value-added for the stakeholders. In this context, the Panel is of the view that the GFAR-SC should set up a review of genetic resource management and IPR issues in developing countries, and strengthen regional and sub-regional fora so that they can support NARS in these areas. GFAR can also be active in creating awareness among policy-makers and legislators vis-à-vis the policy options open to their countries, and in strengthening research and policy management capacity on genetic resources in developing countries. Stakeholders will want to determine, through the GFAR-SC, the role to be played by the Secretariat in facilitating all of these matters.

3.34 **Biotechnology.** Biotechnology issues offer just as much opportunity for disagreement and controversy as those dealing with genetic resource management. The supporters promise more efficient breeding programmes for plants and animals and the creation of better diagnostic tools for animal and plant diseases. Others point to the risks posed by certain aspects of biotechnology - particularly with regard to genetically modified organisms and their possible negative effects on human/animal health and on the environment. When asked at the Dresden meeting for suggestions as to further thematic areas to be added to GFAR’s present concerns, several participants proposed that “biosafety” be explicitly added to biotechnology, rather than having it dealt with under the biotechnology label. Issues related to Intellectual Property Rights are just as critical for biotechnology as they are for genetic resource management.

3.35 Given the divergence of opinions in this field, it may prove to be an area in which GFAR’s role of providing a neutral platform for discussion and exchange of views can be useful (Annex 14). One proposal for research partnership, discussed in Dresden, dealt with “Developing a Common Vision for the Role of Biotechnology in Food and Agriculture”. This is now being implemented through a series of activities led by the CGIAR, several regional/sub-regional fora and FAO. Biotechnology is also an area in which the research capacity of developing countries is generally weak, where research requires an even larger investment than other areas of agricultural research, and where there are barriers to the information flow. GFAR stakeholders can collaborate in eliminating this latter constraint. FAO is currently organising an Electronic Forum on Biotechnology in Food and Agriculture, with the objective of providing “an open forum that will allow a wide range of parties, including governmental and non-governmental organisations, policy-makers and the general public, to discuss and exchange views and experience about specific issues concerning biotechnology in food and agriculture for developing countries.” At the GFAR 2000, Dresden meeting, there was discussion on several proposals for research collaboration involving GFAR stakeholders, such as setting up a global network on trait discovery in rice, and the global initiative for the improvement of livestock productivity through the control of trypanosomiasis. At present, GFAR’s private sector group is discussing, with the Secretariat, concrete steps to further develop the dialogue initiated at GFAR 2000, Dresden and to facilitate the development of global initiatives discussed there.

**Natural Resource Management and Agroecology**

3.36 This theme is of major importance, particularly since most of the available arable land is already under cultivation - much of it in marginal areas - or is becoming affected by degradation, erosion or salinity. In the AARINENA region, improved soil and water management is the overriding research issue. Traditional agricultural and NRM research has produced many excellent recommendations for physical and technical improvement, but in many cases insufficient attention has been given to the socio-economic and cultural setting,
or to ensuring beneficiary involvement as equal partners in a fully participatory manner. The approach put forward by a group of European NGOs and ARIs that met in Rambouillet in 1999 (Bibl. no. 36) recommended the setting up of Interdev, PROLINNOVA and Policy Net (Bibl. nos. 40 and 41). This promises to help reorient research/extension systems towards a more farmer-demand-led approach in the context of better conservation of our depleting natural resource base, and the development of more sustainable farming systems that will help address poverty alleviation and improve food security.

3.37 Importantly, this theme has made the NGO constituency better able to unite as a stakeholder in GFAR, although the large numbers of NGOs involved make it difficult to harness representation that all can endorse. Time is needed for this process to advance, and harnessing NGO initiatives around this NRM theme promises to strengthen NGO involvement at regional, sub-regional and national levels. A words of caution, however: NGOs must remember that much excellent research has gone before and is ongoing in this field. Consequently they should avoid alienating the other research stakeholders in IARCs, ARIs and donor groups with whom they need to collaborate in ensuring that a much more participatory approach is followed with farmers. This is particularly important in NRM themes where entire communities - and not just individual farmers - need to be involved.

3.38 The other comment, to be found in several questionnaire responses, relates to the potential danger of the Secretariat becoming overly involved in the development of these themes. As already stated, the Secretariat acts as a facilitator, and it has a role to play in bringing partnerships together. However, in the case of NRM, such partnerships will be largely at sub-regional level or below, where other stakeholders play the major role.

Commodity Chains and Underutilized Crops

3.39 **Commodity Chains.** During the development of the NARS Action Plan in 1995/6 (Bibl. no. 83) it was evident that while there was full agreement on the three main goals of the CGIAR system - improving food security, alleviating poverty and conserving the natural resource base - a fourth goal also existed, that of strengthening national economies, which meant paying more attention to many of the cash crops (fibers, beverages, rubber, oil palm, etc.) that were not part of the CG mandate. Furthermore, it was pointed out that all of these crops had important roles to play in alleviating poverty (through generating income and employment), improving security (by providing income to buy food), and in natural resource conservation. Many such crops are perennial tree crops that provide much better cover, especially on sloping land, to lessen or prevent soil erosion and land degradation. The whole question of the need for more research on non-CGIAR mandated crops was raised as an issue at all four regional fora meetings in 1995/6. (Bibl. no. 85).

3.40 For instance, many of the larger LDCs are already undertaking strong research in these commodities, often assisted by ARIs in the developed world. A classic case is cotton, where the francophone West African cotton-producing countries have had continuous support from CIRAD, and in most cases have well-established major production, marketing and processing entities in each country. Cotton has indeed been the engine of growth in these countries and contributed significantly to poverty alleviation and food security. In Mali Sud, when the cotton agency began paying village farmer groups to organize the marketing of their own cotton, the funds so-generated inspired effective village development, linked to the “Groupement Villageois” programme and supportive functional literacy and numeracy programmes. This can be contrasted with the lack of outside assistance for cotton production, coupled with disastrous parastatal processing industries in the former British colonies of East Africa, which has led to the demise of cotton production and processing there. The effectiveness of the commodity chain approach to research and development is well-demonstrated in this example, and it could be replicated in many cash crops, especially perennial tree crops such as coconut, coffee, tea, cocoa, oil palm and rubber – all of which lie
outside the mandate of the CGIAR system. Within the system, INIBAP - now subsumed under IPGRI - has well-demonstrated the effectiveness of this “filière” or commodity chain approach, in the area of Musa genetic improvement. In this case, a wide range of partners have been brought together from both the North and the South, including NGOs and farmer organizations; and now the private sector has expressed an interest in participating in this fully-global programme.

3.41 In defining the global programmes for these commodities, the concept of 'commodity chain' based on the French “filière” approach was put forward, and it is encouraging to note that a special unit under IPGRI/CIRAD was established at Montpellier to stimulate contacts between stakeholders on such global programmes. In view of the misunderstanding of the term ‘commodity chain’ in some circles, the Panel wishes to clearly restate the definition given in the discussion paper prepared for the GFAR-SC in May 1999 entitled "the Establishment of Global Programmes for Commodity Chains" (Bibl. no. 43). A commodity chain means that, for a given crop, research is not limited to the conventional agricultural components related to yield increases but that the crop is considered 'globally' in all aspects of a chain - from its production through its processing, to its consumption or use by consumers. This approach adds an important new dimension to the traditional agricultural research agenda, and implies the involvement of a full range of new partners, usually not involved in agricultural research. The Panel thus endorses the proposal that the GFAR Secretariat assist its stakeholders in developing global programmes initially on a few commodity chains, which will be jointly identified, based on the priorities expressed by the NARS regional fora (Bibl. no. 43).

3.42 The Panel further endorses the concept that global programmes should build on existing achievements and be based on ongoing activities. In sugarcane, for example, the International Society of Sugarcane Technologists (ISSCT) includes most of the public institutions, cooperatives and private concerns involved in any research affecting the industry, although research investment is mainly through the private sector. Cocoa, on the other hand, is an example of a commodity where very little collaboration has previously existed, but where the private sector has recently taken the initiative in developing of the International Sustainable Cocoa Programme (ISCP). This is a global initiative, which at present is very much biased towards the cocoa industry, with little representation from other stakeholders. At a recent meeting in Paris, it was agreed that efforts be made to broaden participation (Bibl. no. 46).

3.43 It is clear that the commodity chain approach can be applied equally well to food crops. Thus, it is encouraging to see much more attention being given to post harvest research, which was not traditionally a part of the CG centres’ mandate (with some notable exceptions, of course, such as CIP/potatoes). Here is an appropriate niche in which research by GFAR stakeholders can provide value added. It is also an area that has potential for more effective partnerships with the private sector, as is being demonstrated by the ROCAFREMI pearl millet network under the umbrella of the WECARD/CORAF sub-regional forum in West Africa (Annex 9).

3.44 Underutilized Crops. The role of underutilized plant species in the twenty first century has been well spelled out in a paper presented to the GFAR-SC meeting at ICW 1999 (Bibl. no. 44). The importance of many such species in subsistence agriculture and/or for income generation has been underestimated in the past. More attention should be given to the research and development of a number of these crops, for many good reasons related to agro-biodiversity, ecosystem stability, food security and nutrition, potential for value-added and new market opportunities. In most cases, this is likely to be based at a sub-regional or local level. As far as GFAR involvement is concerned, two of its guiding principles apply: that of subsidiarity, whereby activities should be implemented at the lowest possible level at which they can be efficiently executed, and that of additionality, whereby initiatives should
be promoted only where there is clear value to be gained from encouraging successful research and development partnerships.

3.45 **The Panel endorses the recommendations (of the paper on underutilized plant species) that the sustainable promotion of some of these underutilized crops is needed in order to contribute to economic development, people’s well-being, and the maintenance of genetic diversity and associated local knowledge.** A better understanding of the socio-economic mechanisms impeding a greater utilization of these locally important crops is also essential in order to strengthen their role in poverty alleviation. Several mechanisms exist, such as those fostered by GFAR, to ensure that lessons learned in one region can also benefit others. Moreover, the strengthening of the links among international stakeholders involved in the promotion of such underutilized species is indeed strategic to allow best use of capacities and promote synergism across regions. The Panel also affirms that the proposed creation of a Task Force - comprising IPGRI, the ICUC and FAO - to develop a strategic research plan for the utilization of these crops through sub regional and regional networks, as well as a global plan of action, is an appropriate way of moving forward.

**Strengthening Policy Management and Institutional Development**

3.46 **Policy Management.** It is vitally important to better sensitise policy-makers to the potential high returns from good quality research (which means producing good evidence from assessments of technology generation and impact). This applies to policy-makers in the Ministries of Finance and Planning, as well as in the sectoral ministries that exist in different countries to deal with agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, natural resources, the environment, rural development, and science and technology. Relatively, far too little research is carried out in the field of policy analysis: this is an essential area to be covered in order to convince policy makers that so many of their policies impact against agricultural development. In this context, excellent policy case studies have been carried out in Thailand and Costa Rica by the policy research group at the Universities of Gottingen and Hanover, under the sponsorship of a GTZ Policy Research Project (Bibl. nos. 99/100). These studies clearly indicated the unfortunate direct and indirect effects of current government policies that affected the uptake of IPM technologies, and made specific recommendations to redress the situation (Bibl. no. 101). At GFAR 2000, Dresden, (Bibl. no. 94), the working groups defined three particular issues on which policy review urgently needs to be carried out by stakeholders: the issue of competitiveness, a key area for analysis to assist policy formulation under globalisation; approaches and strategies to encourage private/public sector partnerships, (see para 2.04 above); and, policy research aimed at developing appropriate actions for the transformation of agricultural R&D organisations (para 3.46 below).

3.47 The Panel is encouraged that members of regional and sub regional fora identified such opportunities for partnerships in improving policy management, at the Dresden meeting. Many activities in this sphere are already ongoing, such as the West African Policy Analysis Network that is being established by farmer organisations in the WECARD/CORAF sub-region. In cooperation with IFPRI and the respective RF/SRF, interested stakeholders have agreed to work on inter-regional collaboration for the comparative analysis of policy options and policy instruments in key areas of ARD policy. Other good examples include the policy analysis networks of ECAPAPA in East and Southern Africa and the REPA one in West Africa, (see Annex 9). Under GFAR auspices it would also be useful, however, to ask the ARI stakeholders to put together a list of the many advanced research institutes well qualified in policy analysis in OECD countries, and encourage their participation in more North South networks and research partnerships. This could include, for example, ODI in UK, ZEF in Bonn, and the many Universities in the US and Canada (such as Michigan State, Texas A&M, Stanford, Cornell, McGill, and others). The aim would be to help develop partnership programmes on policy analysis to strengthen this aspect of the weaker but emerging NARS institutions, and try to develop centres of excellence in one or two NARS institutions in each
The Panel recommends that the DSG consider giving more support to regional networks undertaking research on policy-related issues, and to relevant ARIs and IARCs so that they can better assist NARS in developing their own capacity to carry out policy research - particularly by building up local university or government departments.

3.48 Institutional Development. The Panel was also pleased to note that some of the innovative partnership proposals put forward at GFAR 2000, Dresden were also institutional ones. These included one linking Farmer Movements for Sustainable Agriculture that brought together farmer organisations in East Asia and Central America in the community IPM field; and another that linked FOs in Uganda and the Philippines with NGOs linked to rural people and farmers in Europe to help strengthen these LDC institutions. The third topic of policy analysis mentioned in para 3.46 above on transforming R&D systems relates directly to two crucial institutional development topics: institutionalising effective research extension farmer linkages; and, how to effectively integrate national research programmes in certain fields across a subregion. The Panel strongly recommends that more research be carried out on how to effectively institutionalise truly participatory research/extension farmer linkages that makes research and extension programmes directly responsive to farmer demand, as was put forward in the farmer organisations and NGO Declarations. Any such proposals have to include reviewing appropriate incentives to really transform present R&D systems, as the lack of these has inhibited change in the past. The Panel also recommends that early attention be given to reviewing innovative ways of integrating national research programmes into subregional research efforts in specific fields, as is being attempted in PROCISUR and PROCIANDINO, and in the SADC Genebank, (report on GFAR–2000 Conference: Highlights and Follow up Action in Annex 13); and has been a key feature of the Nile Valley Research programme in AARINENA that initially started on faba bean research (Bibl., 102).

3.49 In conclusion, the Panel notes that there has been far too little policy management research carried out, and even less on critical institutional development that is impeding progress on obtaining more impact from research programmes, or from harnessing the huge potential benefits of institutionalising shared sub-regional or even region-wide programmes between nation states, that underlies the whole rationale of having regional and sub-regional fora. Here is an area where GFAR has the opportunity to add critical and highly beneficial value, and is an appropriate note on which to end this report!

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARISED BELOW

3.02 The Panel recommends that in the light of diminishing resources for agricultural research, particularly in the public sector, the Secretariat’s advocacy role be given a higher profile. This should be done in close collaboration with other stakeholders, especially the CGIAR and the Future Harvest initiative. Equally important and worthy of mention is its advisory role. In addition to setting up a global agricultural research agenda, the commissioning of state-of-the-art issue papers and the provision of a forum for reviewing priority global research issues also form part of the Secretariat’s key responsibilities.

3.04 The Panel is of the view that GFAR - and its secretariat - should focus on the regional and sub-regional associations, where the majority of its Business Plan activities will take place.
3.05 The Panel fully concurs with the policy adopted since the 1995/96 development of the NARS Action Plan, i.e. that it is up to each region to decide what roles should be played at the regional and sub-regional levels, as well as determining what is the best way for them to organize themselves.

3.07 The panel has two key recommendations to make: The first relates to the essential need to recruit, as soon as possible, a full-time professional to further develop EGFAR, and ensure that it relates well to other networks while not duplicating any of their activities. The second is to post well-qualified ICT specialist APOs to each of the RAIS (in agreement with them).

3.08 The Panel recommends that the regional and sub-regional fora consider reviewing their ability to speed up the process of broadening the range of stakeholders they are bringing together and include representatives from these sectors.

3.09 Sub-regional and regional fora should also expand their membership subsectorally (again, ideally, as a reflection of such developments at the national level) to embrace the broad, natural resource definition of ‘agricultural’ institutions which includes livestock, forestry, fisheries and natural resource management, on an equal footing with crop agriculture.

3.10 The Panel recommends that each R/SR forum consider having a permanent (not itinerant) secretariat, and a full-time Executive Secretary.

3.11 The Panel recommends that there be a clear definition of tasks among the various staff, chairpersons and committees set up to manage each forum, based on competencies and responsibilities.

3.12 The Panel recommends that FAO consider making available to the GFAR Secretariat the funds originally provided to cover the cost of regional representation at these meetings. This would ensure more effective participation and representation of regional fora in the SC.

3.22 The panel recommends that donors continue to support the development of RAIS – including strengthening the capacity of persons involved and of the systems,

3.26 The Panel recommends the following criteria for priority setting and for the selection of those cases on which the Secretariat should concentrate its efforts:

- The relevance of the concrete partnership or programme from the point of view of GFAR’s objectives, which are those of food security, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability.

- The existence of a lead stakeholder that can play an articulating role, working in close collaboration with other stakeholders of ARD (a core group of participating and committed institutions).

- The possibility of integrating into the programme both traditional and new players in agricultural research, in a multi-stakeholder initiative (i.e. NARS, IARCs, NGOs, ARIs, Farmers and the private sector).

- The identification of value-added through interaction and synergisms among the participating stakeholders.
- The possibility of an integrated approach covering not only research activities but also post-harvest and marketing development efforts, or the policy framework that conditions its effective impact.

- The opportunity of developing a coordination mechanism that facilitates concertation among stakeholders and donors in the development of the Global Framework Programme.

3.28 The panel recommends that for all thematic research proposals, the GFAR Secretariat should keep a watching brief, monitor successful partnerships in this field through an agreed reporting system, and get directly involved only if requested to do so by the sub regional for a, or when issues emerge that need to be aired at the global level, by commissioning a special study or hosting an appropriate workshop.

3.33 The Panel is of the view that GFAR should set up a review of genetic resource management and IPR issues in developing countries, and strengthen regional and sub-regional for a so that they can support NARS in these areas.

3.41 The Panel thus endorses the proposal that the GFAR Secretariat assist its stakeholders in developing global programmes, initially on a few commodity chains, which will be jointly identified, based on the priorities expressed by the NARS regional for a.

3.42 The Panel further endorses the concept that global programmes should build on existing achievements and be based on ongoing activities.

3.45 The Panel endorses the recommendations of the paper on underutilized plant species: that the sustainable promotion of some of these underutilized crops is needed in order to contribute to economic development, people’s well-being, and the maintenance of genetic diversity and associated local knowledge.

3.47 The Panel recommends that the DSG consider giving more support to regional networks undertaking research on policy-related issues, and to relevant ARIs and IARCs so that they can better assist NARS in developing their own capacity to carry out policy research – particularly by building up local university or government departments.

3.48 The Panel strongly recommends that more research be carried out on how to effectively institutionalise truly participatory research/extension farmer linkages that makes research and extension programmes directly responsive to farmer demand, as was put forward in the farmer organisations and NGO Declarations.

3.48 The Panel also recommends that early attention be given to reviewing innovative ways of integrating national research programmes into subregional research efforts in specific fields.