TOWARDS A GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SYSTEM  
- A SHARED VISION -

Advances in agricultural research and development, including major breakthroughs in the new areas of science, have significantly contributed to meeting the challenge of food and nutrition security, agricultural sustainability, production and productivity. However, at the dawn of the 21st century, the world still faces an increasingly complex challenge of feeding its growing population and of eradicating poverty, while assuring an equitable and sustainable use of its natural resources.

The representatives of the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), in developing and developed countries, the International Agricultural Research Centers (IARCs) of the CGIAR, the Advanced Research Institutes (ARIs), the Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), the Farmers’ Organizations, the private sector and the donor community, gathered in the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), believe that:

- food security, poverty eradication and natural resources management are not only of concern to developing countries but are critical global issues, given their impact on the well-being of all societies;
- addressing these issues is a prerequisite for assuring peaceful coexistence, the attainment of human rights and basic human development in the new century;
- there is a sense of urgency in tackling these challenges considering the rapid process of socio-economic and environmental deterioration taking place in many parts of the world, with its long-term and pervasive impacts;
- agriculture, rural development and the management of natural resources are not only economic activities, but strategic dimensions of contemporary societies that play important economic, social and environmental functions.

The GFAR stakeholders share a science-based vision of the future rooted in: (a) the appreciation of the role knowledge plays in the development of agriculture; (b) the conviction that knowledge generation and utilization is increasingly based on global research systems and networks; and (c) the belief that the new areas of science, such as biotechnology, natural resource management and information and communication technology (ICT), generate new opportunities if systematically applied to the solution of development problems. These new technologies represent a great potential but, at the same time, can lead to dangerous and uncontrolled trends and to widening technology gaps and social exclusion processes. As a consequence, their socio-economic and environmental impact has to be monitored and regulated.

The GFAR stakeholders envision the development of an agriculture which is:

- sustainable, equitable, gender sensitive, profitable and competitive, fulfilling its functions in the context of community-centered rural development;
- diversified in its structure to cope with heterogeneous agro-ecological and socio-economic environments, but in which the family farm continues to play an important role;
- deeply innovative, based on the use of knowledge, both modern and traditional.

This shared vision implies a progressive shift of paradigm for Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) towards a more “Knowledge-based Agriculture”.

Conscious of the need to create the conditions for harnessing the potential capacity generated by the advances in science to the increasing development needs and challenges, the GFAR stakeholders consider it indispensable to mobilize the world scientific community, through: (a) the adoption of this Global Shared Vision, (b) the endorsement of a common global strategic agenda; (c) the promotion of innovative and cost-effective research partnerships and strategic alliances among the main actors of ARD; and (d) the networking of stakeholders through ICT and the establishment of specialized agricultural knowledge and information systems. The GFAR stakeholders consider these four components are the building blocks of a Global Agricultural Research System that they commit themselves to build.