Minutes of the 5th meeting of the Global Forum Steering Committee (GFAR-SC)

Beijing, 23 May 1999

General information about the meeting venue and organization.

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research Steering Committee (GFAR-SC) held its fifth meeting in Beijing on the 23rd of May 1999. The meeting was chaired by Dr. R. S. Paroda. In the morning, the meeting was open to a large range of observers with the objective to allow a broad interaction with the GFAR community members. The afternoon was devoted to decision process in a camera session.

The agenda of the open session was entirely devoted to a proactive discussion of the preparation of the global meeting that GFAR is convening in Dresden, Germany, on May 21-23, 2000 (in short GFAR-2000). The agenda of the closed session had two parts. The first part was relating to decisions to be taken on further steps of the GFAR-2000 process and the second part was dealing with regular GFAR business, that included three major topics, i.e. (1) a progress report of the GFAR Secretariat, (2) the development of EGFAR: follow-up to the Rome meeting, Bank position and perspectives; (3) a approval of the aggregate GFAR Program of Work 1999-2000, and a discussion of the financial requirements for both GFAR and NARS Secretariats in 1999 and 2000.

The open session was attended by 56 persons, comprising of 12 GFAR-SC members (out of 13, the EEC/CAC regional forum being not established yet) and of persons representing GFAR stakeholders from all regions as well as international organizations and the GFAR-2000 host country, Germany. This open session benefited from a “facilitator” provided by Germany.

During the closed session, CGIAR Chairman Dr. Ismaïl Serageldin visited the GFAR and had a very exciting and challenging discussion with the GFAR SC members along with three main topics that are:

- How GFAR can help building up a progressive consensus on issues relating to genetic management and biotechnology;
- How to fill the increasing gap that arises from difference in speed and magnitude of the evolutions in sciences and in field realities; and
- How to better coordinate GFAR-CGIAR efforts in future.
1 – Opening address.

The GFAR meeting was opened by GFAR Chairman Dr. R.S. Paroda. After having welcomed the participants who attended the meeting, he made a report of the progress made since the last meeting in Washington in October 1999 and emphasized the following points and major achievements:

- Appreciation to the facilitating agencies (FAO, World Bank, IFAD and ISNAR) as well as France and The Netherlands for their support critical for the completion of the implementation phase of GFAR initiative with the two secretariats now fully operational;

- Appreciation of improvement in the representation of GFAR constituencies, welcoming the new members: Mr. Leonardo Montemayor, President of Free Farmers Union in the Philippines and Vice-president of IFAP and Dr. Jorge Kondo who has recently been elected as President of FORAGRO (LAC), and alternates: Dr. Wim Van Vuure as alternate to the European ARIs’ representative.

- First GFAR management meeting convened by the Chairman in New Delhi, which led to some important decisions regarding the GFAR Program of Work and the preparation of GFAR-2000.

- Completion of the preparation of a comprehensive Program of Work for 1999 and 2000, with clear complementary responsibilities of the two secretariats for its implementation;

- Organization of an international consultation on “Information Initiatives in Agricultural Research” as recommended by the GFAR SC and, as a consequence, clarification on the role of EGFAR.

- Emergence of the European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development which met on 7 & 8 April 1999. The lessons drawn from this meeting will be helpful for the preparation of GFAR-2000.

- Important progress made in the preparation of GFAR-2000 at the level of regional fora as well as at the level of global stakeholders. The reports from the four regional fora as well as the presentations of position papers by the Private Sector and the Farmers’ Organization were welcome as remarkable indicators of such progress.

- Fruitful meeting in Bonn on April 13, 1999 between the preparatory committee of the GFAR-2000 host country and the GFAR and NARS Secretariats.

Dr. Paroda concluded his introductory words by thanking again Germany for its proposition to host GFAR-2000 and for its continuing and active support in the preparation of this event, including the provision of a facilitator for the current meeting.

**OPEN MEETING**

The open session was not intended to take any decision as that was stated by the chairman in its opening remarks but to provide an invaluable opportunity to a broad range of GGFAR
stakeholders to exchange their views and expectations on the GFAR-2000 event, and then to guide the GFAR SC in taking further decisions to its organization.

2 - Progress report on the status of preparation process of GFAR-2000

Alain Derevier, GFAR Executive Secretary, made a brief presentation of the status of preparation of GFAR-2000 since ICW98. He emphasized particularly:

- The important task carried out by the working group (WG/GFAR-2000) that was commissioned by the GFAR-SC in Washington to develop a first sketch for the meeting proposal whose results have been circulated in a document quoted “GFAR-2000/02”.

- The decisions regarding the preparation of GFAR-2000 taken during the first management meeting in New Delhi, the most important one being to develop a Global Shared Vision to be on the top of the agenda in Dresden.

- The work done at regional fora and global constituency levels (NGOs, Farmers’ Organizations and Private Sector) presented in different documents\(^1\) circulated before the meeting;

- The outcomes of the second meeting of the German preparatory committee (GPC) held in Bonn that was attended by Fernando Chaparro, NARS Executive Secretary and himself.

He summarized the points that have already reached a consensus as a result of these important contributions; they are:

* The development of a Global Shared Vision;
* The promotion of research partnerships in three scientific domains, i.e. Genetic Resources and Biotechnology, Natural Resources and Agro-ecology, and Commodity chains (as Non CG mandated Crops and neglected crops). The promotion of partnerships will comprise lessons from past experiences (case studies) and proposals for new research partnerships.
* A meeting that will last two and a half days with alternate plenary and parallel sessions, and a permanent poster exhibition.

3 - European Forum: main outcomes and lessons for GFAR-2000

Vice-Chairman Henri Rouille d’Orfeuil presented the main outcomes of the first meeting of the European Forum held on 7-8 April 1999 in Wageningen, The Netherlands. He indicated that the meeting was attended by 190 persons representing the 17 national delegations (the 15 EU members states plus Norway and Switzerland), the European commission and international invitees (FAO, World Bank, CGIAR and GFAR).

\(^1\) Support Provided by the NARS Secretariat to the Preparation of GFAR-2000, prepared by the NARS Secretariat;
- Proposals of the NGO Committee for the GFAR-2000 Meeting, prepared by NGOs’ constituency;
- Private Sector: a Proposed Plan of Action for its participation in GFAR, prepared by the private sector constituency;
- Farmers and the new concerns on biotechnology by GFAR.
All stakeholders were represented including Farmers’ Organizations and the Private Sector which were associated for the first time in Europe to that an initiative.

Some lessons useful to the preparation of GFAR-2000 were underlined such as the need for precise TORs for parallel groups, and clear guidelines for both the chair and the rapporteur. It was also noted that a caucus session which allows each constituency to comment on the draft recommendations proved very productive.

The draft of the European Forum recommendations was tabled although it was not yet approved by the European Forum Executive Committee.

The discussion that follows these two presentations aimed mainly at clarifying further process of preparation while no disagreement was expressed on the current status as it was made.

4 - Development of a Global Shared Vision on ARD (GSV)

This topic was briefly introduced by Alain Derevier, based on the discussion paper prepared by the GFAR Secretariat and circulated before the meeting, entitled “A Global Shared Vision on Agricultural Research for Development: Towards a Global Agricultural Research System”.

A lively discussion followed that presentation that raised many questions/suggestions that need to be paid attention either for the development of the vision or for its implementation. The main ones are as follows:

- Need for positioning agricultural sector in the global economy and to state that agricultural research is a key tool, but only a tool.
- To identify the type of agriculture and farming systems to be promoted in the context of GFAR (subsistence agriculture, family market-oriented agriculture).
- To focus on key strategic issues that qualify the role of a global agricultural system.
- In the context of globalization, to pay attention to new factors of importance on the international scene such as inequity, democracy, human rights or conflict resolution.

Another comment referred to “shared values” by GFAR members.

In conclusion, there was a strong agreement to go ahead with the development of a Shared Vision that should enlighten GFAR future action.

5 - Framework for the development of cost-effective partnerships

This topic was introduced by Fernando Chaparro, NARS Executive Secretary, who indicated what is expected to be collected and how it is proposed to do it. He made reference to the document prepared by the NARS Secretariat entitled “Support provided to the Preparation of GFAR-2000 by the NARS Secretariat” and summarized the preparatory work done at regional fora level in the past three months.

Again the presentation was followed by a lively discussion which helped to clarify what use would be made of the proposed case studies and how to collect them. There was an agreement on the fact that case studies should emphasize on “good practices” and lead to guidelines for improving future partnership implementation. Potential candidates were mentioned by participants.
Regarding the identification of new “cost-effective research partnerships”. It was suggested to consider only innovative; it was then agreed to now speak about innovative research partnerships, taking as granted that all partnership should be cost-effective as a pre-requisite.

Regarding the third domain (Commodity chain), it was clarified that this domain covers two different components. The first one relates to commodity chains of global importance when they have an impact on poverty eradication and management of natural resources (nominated earlier on as Non CG mandated crops). To that purpose, a concept note drafted by IPGRI was tabled for consideration.

The second component relates to what one called orphan or underutilized crops that could have an important impact on food security, more often at local or regional level, and could, in certain conditions, gain a significant share in specific market.

It was also proposed that a fourth scientific domain be considered relating to research on “policy management”.

Some good suggestions were made to evaluate the partnership quality in term of equality of partner participation in identification, scientific and financial management, and sharing the value added. Assessment of the impact was also considered as essential.

6 - Towards a Global Agricultural Knowledge System: creating an enabling framework for global co-operation

Fernando Chaparro introduced the topic by presenting the main recommendations of the GFAR consultation on ICTs organized in Rome by the end of March that reached a consensus on the need to develop an enabling framework to establish a Global Knowledge System on ARD. He emphasized that a few concrete actions have been identified to develop that framework with an agreement on the leading institution for each of them.

In the context of GFAR, these actions concern (1) the NARS Secretariat which has been asked to help the regional fora to develop a regional ICT strategy and to identify priority actions to be undertaken without delay, and (2) the GFAR Secretariat which has been requested to develop “observatory” and “forum” functions within the EGFAR project.

The last recommendation of the Rome meeting proposed that a progress report of the implementation of this set of recommendations be presented for discussed in Dresden.

CLOSED SESSION

The closed session was divided in two parts. The first part (items 7 to 10) was devoted to decisions to be taken on further steps for the preparation of GFAR-2000 and benefited from the German facilitator support which helps link with the morning consultation. The second part (items 11 to 13) related to regular business.

7 – Approval of the meeting objectives and outcomes.
There was a consensus to consider that the meeting objectives and the expected outputs that had been proposed in the document “GFAR-2000/02” are consistent with the expectations and suggestions expressed during the morning consultation and must be definitively adopted.

A broad discussion took place to reconsider the title, based on the comments made by NGOs. One of the concerns was related to the mention of “the context of globalization”. Several members indicated that they were not convinced that globalization is desirable for the achievements of development challenges and for ARD co-operation. However the discussion led to recognize that the globalization is a fact that has a major impact on the evolution of international co-operation in ARD. It was recalled that GFAR has been established, among other objectives, to maximize the new opportunities that globalization generates, and to insure that these opportunities be accessible to all stakeholders in ARD. Therefore it was agreed that GFAR should also identify negative impacts and act to reduce them.

Several options were considered, but it was finally decided to keep the initial title which reads as “Strengthening Partnerships in Agricultural Research for Development in the context of Globalization”.

8 – Development of GSV

The GFAR SC unanimously agreed on the need to develop a Global Shared Vision (GSV). However, there were different understanding of what GSV should be, what issues it should contain, which length and how to develop it.

Finally, it was decided to have a short Vision statement along with an “issue paper” that provides a framework to translate the Vision into Action. The GFAR SC commissioned the two Secretariats to established a first draft. Later on, the WG/GFAR-2000 (see below paragraph 8) which was reconfirmed in its mandate to help the two secretariats to co-ordinate further steps, commissioned Fernando Chaparro to produce a first draft to be circulated for comment to the WG/GFAR-2000 members, then to the GFAR constituencies.

9 – Establishment of the meeting agenda:

Sketching a meeting agenda was recognized as highly linked to the type of case studies and new partnership proposals still to be identified. With that consideration, the GFAR SC agreed on the overall “architecture” of the meeting as it was presented by Alain Derevier, but decided not to spend too much time by discussing prematurely the details. Thus, it commissioned again the working group established in Washington (WG/GFAR-2000) to assist the two Secretariats in going ahead with details regarding the development of meeting agenda, guidelines and modalities of submission for case studies and new research partnerships, and timeframe refinement.

The GFAR SC approved the approach to identify and implement a few global programs for Non CG mandated Crops that IPGRI have proposed in the discussion paper entitled “The establishment of Global Programs for Commodity Chains” that was tabled in the morning session. It then mandated IPGRI to go ahead on further steps and decided to review progress made in October 1999.

The GFAR SC commended the representative of the Private Sector, Mrs. Consuelo Madere, for the very interesting paper prepared and encouraged her to implement the proposed plan of action
without delay. It welcome the proposal of the Private Sector to post information on EGFAR, and encourage other stakeholders to consider to do it too (see below paragraph 12).

The WG/GFAR-2000 had a face-to-face meeting in Beijing on Tuesday, 25 May to agree on the framework for action and on the timeframe for further interaction and decision to be carried out electronically.

10 – Sketch for the budget of GFAR-2000

Alain Derevier presented a first sketch of a budget for GFAR-2000 for an amount of $330,000. In his presentation, he recalled that GFAR-2000 will be a joint venture between the host country which is supporting most of the meeting facility costs, based on the CGIAR MTM rules, the participants themselves who will have to support their own travel, hotel and subsistence cost, and GFAR will have to support the costs for publication and dissemination of the meeting documentation, travel costs related to the final preparation of the meeting, provisional support to some participants as well as administrative costs (other than those related to meeting facilities and translation as they are included in the host country “package”).

It was finally mentioned that a request for a contribution of $180,000 has been submitted to the CGIAR Finance Committee (that has confirmed its support later in the week). The GFAR SC approved this budget sketch, and decided that it should be submitted to the GFAR Support Group for funding.

GFAR Chairman Dr. R.S. Paroda had to leave for another meeting at that stage and asked the vice-Chairman Henri Rouille d’Orfeuil to chair the meeting.

11 – Progress report of the GFAR Secretariat

Due to the lack of time, it was decided to skip this item as the GFAR Secretariat progress report had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting and no particular question arose.

12 – Development of EGFAR

Alain Derevier informed the GFAR SC on the status of development of EGFAR, indicating that important improvements of the software have been achieved as well as a new home page feature. Henceforth, each GFAR constituency and the two Secretariats as well will be able to post specific information on EGFAR in a very efficient manner. The Private sector is considering to experiment such a communication soon.

He indicated that the pilot should be completed by October this year and proposed that a sufficient time be allocated for an on-line presentation at the next GFAR SC meeting in Washington. He also proposed to report in October on the implementation of the Rome recommendation that gave to EGFAR a leading role to develop the “observatory” and “forum” functions (as indicated above in paragraph 6).

Regarding the hosting of EGFAR, he informed the GFAR SC that the World Bank was not sure to be able to continue to host EGFAR in the long run, due to internal change. Then, he requested a mandate to consult with relevant institutions for options and proposed to report to the GFAR SC in October on this issue.
The GFAR SC approved the different propositions and gave a mandate to the GFAR Executive Secretary to undertake the necessary consultations accordingly.

13 – GFAR Program of Work and budget requirements for the two secretariats

Fernando Chaparro presented the integrated GFAR Program of Work that have been developed based on the recommendations that came out of the Delhi GFAR management meeting and on a broad consultation of regional fora and global stakeholders. The discussion turned around a clarification of the matrix annexed to the document tabled.

All members agreed that the matrix presentation is very useful in providing an excellent overview. It was however stressed, as that was already stated the day before during the NARS SC meeting, that it is more a framework within which GFAR should operate rather than a program of work. Thus, there is a need to translate it in an operational program, not only for the two secretariats but also for all GFAR stakeholders. Only activities which could be carried out and achieved considering the budget availability and timeframe should be mentioned with, if possible, an indication of the added value brought by GFAR.

Fernando Chaparro and Alain Derevier presented these figures for activities carried out under the respective responsibility of each secretariat. Existing gaps that currently exist for the year 2000 were then underlined. After a discussion, the GFAR SC agreed to submit the Program of Work 1999 and 2000 with the current financial requirements to the GFAR Support Group meeting to be held next Tuesday, 25 May 1999.

Vice-Chairman Henri Rouille d’Orfeuil closed the meeting on behalf of Chairman Dr. R.S. Paroda by thanking the participants for their active contribution to an efficient meeting.