BACKGROUND PAPER ON GFAR’S ROLE IN THE
CGIAR CHALLENGE PROGRAM
ON GENETIC RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
DEFINING THE ROLE OF GFAR IN THE CHALLENGE PROGRAMME ON GENETIC RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Unlocking Genetic Diversity for the Resource Poor

Background

During the Annual General Meeting in 2001 (AGM01), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) decided to accelerate, on a pilot and one-time only basis the preparation of up to three Challenge Programs (CPs) so that the System can explore ways of improving CP design and implementation. They are called Pilot Challenge Programs. The CGIAR also decided to initiate in 2002 the regular process for the design and development of challenge programs. They are called Regular Challenge Programs.

In the Change Design and Management Team (CDMT) report which proposed the establishment of the CGIAR Executive Council (ExCo) as well as the concept of CPs, GFAR has been identified as among the partners who can facilitate, as required, the development and implementation of these Challenge Programmes. GFAR and the Regional and Sub-regional Fora (RF/SRF) are expected to play a facilitating role in the idea generation, pre-proposal development, full proposal development and CP Implementation phase. As such, GFAR was nominated to sit in the CGIAR ExCo.

In mid-January 2002, the GFAR Secretariat was invited to participate in the Stakeholder Meeting of the Challenge Program on Unlocking Genetic Diversity in Crops for the Rural Poor. In this meeting, there was a strong endorsement from the participants that GFAR be invited as one a as a non-contributing, active members of the Programme Steering Committee (PSC). GFAR also participated in the recent Technical Planning Workshop and the Program Steering Committee of the CP held recently in Wageningen in August 2003 where it tried to echo views of its various stakeholders. It was also suggested that a GFAR Stakeholder Committee be established to advice the Programme Steering Committee of the CP and provide a feedback and consultative mechanism to the various ARD stakeholders. The operationalization of this proposed mechanism is yet to be detailed.

In this regard, this discussion paper is prepared to launch a discussion on the nature and extent of GFAR’s role in this process.

Some issues for discussion

1. **GFAR Representative to the PSC.** To date, GFAR seats as among the members of the Steering Committee of the CP on Genetic Resources. In the previous PSC meeting held in the Netherlands, GFAR was represented by its Executive Secretary. It should be noted, however, that GFAR representative to the PSC need not necessarily be the GFAR Secretariat. In fact, this representative may be from other stakeholder group mandated by the GFAR Steering Committee. One possibility is to delegate this role to a Regional or Sub-regional Fora (RF/SRF) which is located close to where the CP is housed. For example, if the CP on Genetic Resources is housed in CIMMYT Headquarters in Mexico, then FORAGRO can be requested to represent GFAR to the PSC of the CP on Genetic Resources. This GFAR representative to the PSC and will follow all the discussions related to the development and implementation of this CP, and will report back to GFAR-SC.

2. **GFAR Stakeholder Committee.** Within the context of the proposed establishment of GFAR Stakeholder Committee under the CP on Genetic Resources, there is a need to clarify the expectations of both the Challenge Programme and GFAR with regards to the functioning of the Committee. It is also important that GFAR discuss and define, as an inter-stakeholder group, to
what extent can and should GFAR get involved in this process. For example, does GFAR see itself as bringing other stakeholders in the discussion table with the proponents of CPs and facilitate the dialogue between them until at stage? How can GFAR take advantage of this opportunity so that it can facilitate a better stakeholder involvement in the CP process?

3. **Financial implications.** The operationalization of the proposed committee will obviously entail some financial implications, as it will have to constantly liaise and keep in touch with various stakeholders. Depending on the mandate and activities of this Committee, resources, e.g. between US$50,000 to US$ 100,000, may have to be earmarked by the CP for this purpose. Discussion on this issue will have to be launched and undertaken between GFAR and CP.

**Some proposed next steps**

It is proposed that initial discussion on the topic be held at the GFAR Steering Committee level. Following this, a small group may be constituted to study the issue further. Supported by the GFAR Secretariat, this working group will animate discussions, electronic or otherwise, amongst GFAR stakeholders, especially RF/SRF and the less vocal stakeholders and solicit their views and recommendations on how best GFAR can be engaged in this process (e.g., defining a framework for GFAR involvement in all CPs).

These steps obviously need be further defined and detailed. The key issue is the willingness to involve GFAR stakeholders and share the responsibility amongst them in ensuring that the CP on Genetic Resources will indeed respond to the challenges of the resource poor.
ANNEX 1

Possible role of GFAR in various stages of CP development

1. GFAR’s role as a neutral platform for this inter-stakeholder dialogue must be recognized by the lead CP proponents and the stakeholders as well. As a facilitator, GFAR is in a position to ensure the participation of as much ARD stakeholders as possible, and that the development of these CPs will be multi-stakeholder in nature.

2. GFAR can assist CP proponents in the organization and management of stakeholder consultation meetings and workshops and information dissemination; among others.

3. GFAR can also assert a more proactive role in protecting and advancing the interest of other “weaker” stakeholders (i.e., “protecting” “minor” stakeholders from being dominated by other stakeholders) so that the leadership in the development of the CPs is not transformed into sole ownership of the initiative.

4. GFAR may particularly look at crosscutting issues such as capacity building and IPR issues.

Table 1 indicates the role GFAR could play at various stages of the development and implementation of CPs.

Table 1: The role of GFAR in various stages of CP development

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<th>STAGE OF CP DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>ROLE OF GFAR</th>
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| CP Development          | • Participation/involvement in Stakeholder Consultation Meetings  
                          • Provide inputs by soliciting and synthesizing stakeholder suggestions and comments on the CP proposal  
                          • Feedback to stakeholders on the development of the CP |
| CP Implementation       | • Participation in Program Steering Committee  
                          • Articulating the concerns of less represented stakeholders and regions  
                          • Feedback to stakeholders on the status of implementation of the CP (mainly through GFAR-SC, NARS and stakeholder representatives)  
                          • Participating in specific CP components, particularly cross-cutting ones such as Capacity Building; fostering clear discussions on IPR issues, access to information and the like |
| CP Review               | • Assist in mobilizing stakeholder participation |

1 In its report to the CGIAR to be presented during the Stakeholders Meeting on 29 October 2003, GFAR Chair M. Roozitalab will urge current and future CPs to liaise with the GFAR Secretariat to jointly develop strategies to ensure a stronger role for GFAR in the development and implementation of Challenge Programmes.