



GFAR

**GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
FORUM MONDIAL DE LA RECHERCHE AGRICOLE
FORO GLOBAL DE INVESTIGACION AGROPECUARIA**

**Concept Note
For a GFAR Secretariat Led Initiative in ACP Countries
(Africa, Caribbean and Pacific)**

**Strengthening the Participation of Farmers' Organisations and of NGOs in
the Global Agenda of Agricultural Research for Development**

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1. Summary

This paper presents the initiative that GFAR has been developing with NGOs and Farmer's Organisations (FOs) to strengthen their constituencies and to ensure their effective participation in regional and global Agricultural Research for Development (ARD). Its basic premise is that effective participation in ARD at any level requires more than simply providing a seat to a given constituency in a collegial decision-making body at the regional or global level- it requires both the strengthening of the stakeholder constituencies and the development of a multi-level system that can ensure a close interaction between the local/national, regional/sub-regional and global levels. The close and reciprocal interaction between these three levels is the foundation of the development of a Global ARD Agenda.

This initiative proposes a plan of action to strengthen civil society constituencies by improving communication within and between them as well as strengthening their participation at the national, regional and global levels by supporting workshops and establishing collaborative programmes. The activities of this proposal are open to all of civil society, including NGOs and FOs. The objective of this document is to mobilise support for this initiative and associated activities.

2. Context and Rationale

In recent years national governments have reduced their investment and activities in the agricultural and public sectors. This has paved the way for an enhanced and extensive civil society involvement in activities previously carried out by these sectors, such as delivering social services, promoting grass-roots development, and preventing environmental degradation. It has also resulted in the upsurge of civil society organisations, associations and federations whose capacity to engage people at the grassroots level has increased, particularly through NGOs and FOs, and who are playing an important role in the production of public goods and services at the national, regional and global levels.

Given the important role that these civil society actors are playing, it is important to ensure their effective participation in ARD at the national (NARS), regional (RF/SRF) and global levels. This was one of the basic purposes for which the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) was established in 1996.

2.1. Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs)

NGOs are playing a fundamental role in natural resource management, supporting local innovations, agricultural extension and development, education, and providing health services. They are also increasingly building networks and consortia around thematic and/or geographic relationships to increase their impact through the exchange of ideas and information; to mobilise support; and to gain further visibility by speaking with a unified voice.

NGOs can be broadly categorised as operational or advocacy organisations, both of which play key and complementary roles in ARD. Operational NGOs provide a direct service to improve agricultural practices and increase rural well-being in specific locations; members work directly in rural communities, conduct research with farmers, and provide extension services. They exist at local, national and international levels. Advocacy NGOs work to influence agricultural policies, priorities, and strategies. Most lobby on issues concerning trade, markets, farmer representation in decision-making bodies, and intellectual property rights. Increasingly, advocacy NGOs are calling for a fundamental change in the practice of ARD, e.g. for a more sustainable, farmer-centred research, for improved farmer-scientist collaboration, and for the consideration of gender issues in agricultural research. This category of NGO usually operates at national and international levels.

The active presence of both groups of NGOs at the community and international levels makes them important partners in any ARD initiative and thus the strengthening of this constituency is fundamental to the advancement of ARD.

2.2. Farmers' Organisations (FOs)

Farmers' Organisations are "groups of rural producers coming together to found organisations, based on the principle of free membership, to pursue specific common interests of their members-developing technical and economic activities that benefit their members and maintaining relations with partners operating in their economic and institutional environment¹". FOs play a key role in knowledge generation and utilisation, and are the main actors responsible for assuring that research results are translated into production methods or natural resource management practices. FOs are increasingly federalising at the national, regional and international level, around commodity, market, community, and agricultural issues. FOs and NGOs often work together in advancing their interests.

As farmers are both clients and originators of research, it is important that the global ARD system respond to their needs. Just as important is the recognition that farmers are also researchers and

¹ Hussein, Karim, 2000. *"Farmers' organisations and agricultural technology: institutions that give farmers a voice"*. Overseas Development Institute, Portland House, Stag Place, London SW1E 5DP

innovators who have always developed means of addressing problems on the farm, and from whom researchers can also learn. Despite this link between farmers and research, FOs remain an untapped resource in global agricultural research. FOs however, are the backbone of agriculture and as such their contributions to and participation in ARD are fundamental. Furthermore, the strong relationship between NGOs and FOs indicates that their capacity to contribute to ARD, and to initiate and enter research partnerships with other civil organisations such as agricultural universities, must be increased concurrently so as to achieve an effective civil society contribution to a global ARD agenda.

2.3. Role of GFAR and Recommendations of First GFAR External Review

GFAR provides a common meeting place in which all stakeholder constituencies in ARD can participate and bring together their comparative advantages in the research and development process. As such, one of the mandates given to GFAR is precisely to facilitate the strengthening of stakeholder constituencies to ensure equal participation and involvement in various opportunities in ARD. The First GFAR External Review highlighted the importance of this function:

“A key responsibility of the GFAR Secretariat is to assist stakeholders to further develop their constituencies. This is especially true for farmers’ 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.”

The GFAR External Review recommended that both these stakeholder constituencies continue to receive special assistance so as to strengthen their representation in GFAR.

3. Objectives and Main Lines of Action

The GFAR Secretariat has been working with NGOs and FOs to develop a strategy with two objectives:

(a) to strengthen the participatory and representational mechanisms within each constituency, including their information management capacity to communicate the main issues that are being debated in regional and global ARD and to foster the development of their own strategic agendas); and

(b) to strengthen the participation of each constituency in the decision-making mechanisms of ARD at the national, regional and global levels.

This proposed initiative is structured around three issues that GFAR has been discussing with NGOs and FOs since before the GFAR-2000 Dresden Conference: (a) civil society constituency development and strengthening; (b) CSO participation at national and regional levels; and (c) CSO participation at the global level. These three levels complement and reinforce each other.

The philosophy of GFAR is to work through established stakeholder organisations instead of creating new and parallel structures. During the last two years, the main GFAR contacts for farmers are the *International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)*, and *Via Campesina*. IFAP is constituted by national organisations representing family farmers around the world and they have general consultative status with the United Nations. Via Campesina is a co-ordinating body that brings together organisations of landless peasants, small-scale farmers, agricultural workers and indigenous people. In the case of NGOs, GFAR is working closely with the *CGIAR NGO Committee (NGOC)* since, to date, there is no global representation for NGOs. Civil society organizations however, are establishing an *International Alliance on Agricultural Research for Development (IAARD)*, an

informal alliance or network of organizations who agreed to adhere to such a system and who agreed to work together to harmonize civil society position in various debates in international ARD². GFAR is closely following this initiative and once formally established, it will endeavour to forge partnerships with them on areas identified by both. These are the organisations with which GFAR is currently working; GFAR aims to expand its alliances with civil society through further activities with them, particularly through this proposed programme.

3.1 Constituency Development

An important general objective when strengthening constituencies is to support the development of each one's identity as a stakeholder in the global ARD community. This strengthens their capacity to contribute to the global agenda by debating and influencing policy, participating in priority setting, and proposing projects that can be undertaken by several stakeholders. Developing an identity requires that each constituency:

- a) develop Vision Statements to provide a coherent framework for action;
- b) develop a Strategic Agenda of policy and institutional issues related to agricultural research and technological development appropriate for each level (national to regional) within each region;
- c) strengthen their capacity to access and manage information through EGFAR, their own website development projects, and through collaborative efforts between EGFAR and their website development projects (this uses the web to facilitate dialogue among the members of each constituency to discuss policy options and to develop common visions and positions with respect to key ARD issues- a very important component of constituency development);
- d) develop sustainable partnerships and alliances within their constituency so as to establish a coherent identity as a stakeholder, speak with a collective voice, and facilitate the development of equal and effective relationships with other stakeholders such as agricultural institutes and universities.

Collectively undertaken, these activities will build a strong commitment both within and for civil society to participate in and contribute to ARD. All require an awareness of what the key ARD issues are and their implications for each constituency, which is an objective of this initiative.

3.2. Strengthening Participation at the National and Regional Level

A second dimension of constituency development is to strengthen participation in setting ARD agendas at the national, regional/sub-regional and global levels. In many developing countries, the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) model of ARD is evolving into a National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) model, which is a network of systemic relationships that emerge among the various actors of ARD in a country: NARIs, extension services, universities, NGOs, FOs, community organisations. National Fora are simultaneously emerging as spaces established for dialogue among the stakeholders to develop common perceptions and to set national agendas. NARS and National Fora are two sides of the same coin and are central to national agriculture and development. The integration of stakeholders into both, particularly FOs and NGOs who play a key role in agricultural production, research, and development, and the capacity of CSOs to

² This Alliance is envisioned to be formally launched in April this year. Among others, IAARD will serve as a "clearinghouse" mechanism in terms of civil society representation to various inter-stakeholder initiatives such as GFAR. IAARD will nominate and identify which civil society organization (CSO), be it an NGO, farmers' organization or a university, will serve as a "focal point" to certain theme or inter-stakeholder body such as GFAR.

contribute and participate actively and effectively in each, is important for both civil society and for national agricultural interests.

NARS have also established fora at the regional/sub-regional level, (the Regional/Sub-regional Fora, or RF/SRF) into which FOs, NGOs, universities and the private sector are beginning to be integrated. GFAR is supporting the initiatives to include CSOs in these fora by taking three steps: (a) identifying regional focal points for NGOs and FOs; (b) facilitating the integration of NGOs and farmers' representatives in the RF/SRF Executive Committees; and (c) "opening-up" regional priority-setting exercises in several regions to all stakeholders.

3.3. Strengthening Participation in Global ARD

Participation in Global ARD requires strong CSOs and sound national and regional ARD networks so as to ensure that representatives who sit on global collegial bodies have a mechanism by which they can effectively communicate with and thus represent their constituency. This section analyses the strengthening of the participation of constituencies in global ARD through two mechanisms: the GFAR Steering Committee (GFAR-SC) and the CGIAR Executive Council (ExCo). Strengthening the ability of NGOs and FOs to participate in these two ARD mechanisms also strengthens their ability to work with other global networks and structures.

a) Participation in the GFAR Steering Committee

The GFAR Steering Committee³ (GFAR-SC) is developing strategic agendas on ARD policy and institutional issues which are being discussed at the national level (NARS and National Fora), the regional/sub-regional level (RF/SRF), and the global level (GFAR-SC). The GFAR-SC functions as an "apex committee" of a system of deliberative bodies that brings together all stakeholders of ARD, including NARS, IARCs, ARIs, NGOs, Farmers' Organizations, Business and Industry, and donors, from all levels. Key strategic issues are discussed at all three levels, as well as the community/local level where one finds the end-users and the beneficiaries of agricultural research. Equal participation by NGOs and FOs is fundamental to the principles of the GFAR-SC and to its activities.

b) Participation in the CGIAR Executive Council (ExCo)

In AGM-2001 the CGIAR established a 21-member Executive Council (ExCo) whose members are GFAR, NGOs, the private sector, members of the CG from the North and the South, and co-sponsors. In the first meeting of the ExCo three important questions were raised. Firstly, how to strengthen the participation of farmers in ARD; secondly, how to improve representation among NGOs; and thirdly, how to strengthen and broaden the dialogue with civil society institutions in general. Given that GFAR has a specific mandate with respect to these issues, the GFAR Secretariat was formally requested at the ExCo AGM 01 to tackle these questions with the respective stakeholder constituencies⁴.

GFAR believes that the key issue to effectively involve civil society in both the GFAR-SC and the CGIAR ExCo is to support and recognise the need to strengthen constituencies through activities that

³ The *GFAR Steering Committee* meets twice a year, in both closed and open sessions where stakeholders are encouraged to participate. Furthermore, the GFAR-SC operates through sub-committees constituted at the level of specific constituencies, such as the *NARS Steering Committee* which is a sub-committee of the GFAR-SC.

⁴ Summary Record of Proceedings and Decisions. CGIAR Annual General Meeting 2001, October 30-01 November 2001, Washington DC.

develop coherence within CSOs, and that facilitate and support their participation in ARD activities. This proposal presents the initiative that GFAR has developed to fulfil its mandate and mission and to support the CGIAR in theirs.

4. Project Activities

The project activities are organised under the headings of the three main lines of action outlined above. These lines of action are structured as such to facilitate profiling and strengthening of their constituency-based networks so that they can come together at the sub- regional, regional and interregional/global levels as a single and unified stakeholder group. This necessitates building Strategic Visions and Action Plans, managing and disseminating information, as well as establishing equitable partnerships.

Hereunder are a general description of the activities that can be implemented under this programme that will be coordinated and managed by the GFAR Secretariat. Of particular note are the proposals to carry out technical workshops and inter-regional workshops such as those meant to explore various ecological approaches to farming across agro-ecosystems. Likewise, a "block fund" will be allocated which can be used by CSOs, in collaboration with other regional ARD stakeholders, in implementing activities identified in these workshops. This will not only provide a source of funds, funnelled through GFAR, for projects to support CSO initiatives, but will also provide an incentive for civil society to develop and propose projects of their own accord, reflecting both their needs and the CSO principles of people-centred research. It should be clear however, that these funds will serve only as "start up" funds and that further resources will have to be mobilised separately. The provision of start up funds is not meant to insinuate that GFAR is a donor but rather a "facilitator" that assists the realisation of identified activities.

4.1 Civil Society Constituency Development

Civil society constituency development will first require regional studies in the five GFAR regions as well as Africa (there is a CSO call for co-operation at the continental level) to profile CSOs in terms of the extent of their activities and actions, and their established networks and mechanisms of communication and consultation. This profile will include a review of past studies so as to avoid duplication. These studies will be conducted by the Civil Society constituencies themselves, and GFAR will simply play a coordinating role. Secondly, e-conferences will be held to discuss the outputs of the study, to draft a framework for CSO cooperation and to determine whether there is a need for a regional CSO workshop. Thirdly, if necessary, sub- regional and regional workshops will be held to improve the regional CSO network and to validate key ARD issues/ revisit the regional priority setting exercises from a CSO perspective. These (sub)regional workshops can be organized within the framework of a related regional activity not only to maximize the presence and participation of other CSOs and to contain expenses but more importantly, to link it to other on-going activities in the region. Such was the case in Asia where regional NGOs and GFAR co-sponsor a sub-workshop to discuss issues, priorities and strategies for agricultural research and extension within the context of "Asian Regional CSO Conference on World food Summit +5" held Thailand in August 2001.⁵ Other outputs would include identifying mechanisms to enhance CSO interactions; a Strategic Vision and Plan of Action for the future; revisiting regional focal points; presentation of success stories/ case studies of CSO initiatives; and development of project proposals that are consistent with this programme to be funded by the "block fund" mentioned above.

⁵ Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC), August 2001. "Towards Building Asian NGO Consensus on Agricultural Research, Extension and Farmer Linkages: Issues, Priorities and Strategies." Workshop Proceedings. Bangkok, Thailand.

4.2 Strengthening Participation at the National and Regional Level

Strengthening participation at the national and regional levels has three main aspects to its activities. Firstly, to support CSO participation in already existing RF/SRF by establishing CSO seats on the Executive Boards, and to support their participation in meetings. Secondly, to ensure the effectiveness of this representation a feedback communication system will be developed, such as support to Information and Communication Management for internet communication (for e.g. e-conferences and web sites), as well as newsletters, and Rural Radio. Thirdly, the capacity of CSOs for effective participation will be enhanced by co-sponsoring technical workshops whose outputs would be to transmit technical and scientific information to farmers and NGOs so that they have the capacity to address topics such as Natural Resource Management and biotechnology from an informed perspective. This will not only increase the number of possible partnerships but also increase CSO capacity to establish equal partnerships with universities, research institutes and scientists and highlight the contribution that farmers can make to the research process. An important aspect of this is providing FOs and NGOs the funds to buy into and support their own proposals for collaborative projects. Another activity can be to scale-up successful initiatives such as the case in Latin America where 11 NGOs from eight Latin American countries joined together to create CLADES (*Consortio Latinoamericano sobre Agroecología y Desarrollo*- the Latin American Consortium on Agroecology and Development). The central objective of the Consortium is the development and diffusion of technological options for peasants based on agroecological approach and training of professionals and technicians associated with institutions committed to sustainable agriculture.⁶

4.3 Strengthening Participation at the Global Level

Strengthening participation at the global level consists primarily of interregional workshops to bring together the outcomes of the regional workshops, identify commonalities and strengthen interregional relationships. Specific outputs could be CSO Global Partnership Programme proposals and the creation of Pools of Knowledge through the sharing, gathering and documentation of information and experiences. Secondly, Collaborative Programmes between GFAR and CSOs including IFAP, via Campesina, the International Alliance for Agricultural Research for Development (IAARD) and other partners will be concretised and financially supported. Thirdly, funds for this line of action would be allocated to the CSO webpages on EGFAR so as to create an open platform for discussion, a backstopping mechanism and general management of the site at the GFAR Secretariat.

Funds would also be created to support both a full-time Project Co-ordinator and the functioning of the basic metabolism of the GFAR Secretariat. This will ensure effective and efficient coordination activities by the GFAR Secretariat to support a project of this scope. The project is projected to last three years.

⁶ Yurjevic, Andres, et. al. 2000. *“The Latin American Consortium on Agroecology and Development (CLADES): A Successful NGO-led Partnership to promote Agroecological Research, Training and Information Exchange in Latin America.”* A Case Study presented in GFAR 2000 Conference, Dresden, Germany.

5.1 Plan of Work and Budget

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	BUDGET (in €)			
		Y1	Y2	Y3	Total
<p>Line of Action 1: Civil Society Constituency Development</p> <p>1.1. Regional studies of Civil Society Organizations (CSO)</p>	<p>1.1.1 CSO Regional Profile to include policy advocacy NGOs from operational/research-oriented NGOs, and Farmers Organizations (FOs) engaged in research</p> <p>1.1.2 Database of Operational CSOs in the region</p> <p>1.1.3 Analysis of the extent and degree of interaction among CSOs themselves and with other ARD actors/stakeholders</p>	65,000	45,000		100,000
1.2 Electronic conferences	<p>1.2.1 Facilitated interaction by exchanging ideas on how CSOs in each region can better coordinate with each other at the constituency level and at the sub-regional/regional level</p> <p>1.2.2 Draft Framework for Cooperation among CSOs in each region</p> <p>1.2.3 Agreement to hold (or not) Regional Meeting/Workshop and concrete proposal on how to organize it (including content and structure)</p>	10,000	10,000		20,000
<p>1.3 (Sub) regional workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 sub-regional workshops in Africa - 1 regional W/S each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Caribbean and Pacific -Africa - dissemination of successful case studies and development of CSO project proposals - Support to “scaling out” CSO impact in the region 	<p>1.3.1 Regional CSO Focal Points (person or organization) identified</p> <p>1.3.2 Key ARD research priorities revisited (or validated/ identified)</p> <p>1.3.3 Mechanism for an enhanced interaction among regional CSOs and with other regional ARD stakeholders identified/ proposed/set-up (e.g. established Network of Regional CSOs in ARD)</p> <p>1.3.4 Workplan/Action Steps towards enhanced CSO participation in the regional ARD process</p> <p>1.3.5 Support for CSO Projects</p> <p>1.3.6 Additional CSO contacts initially not involved (or only marginally involved) in the regional (or global) ARD process</p>	<p>60,000 20,000/ subregion</p> <p>50,000 Caribbean</p> <p>25,000</p>	<p>40,000 Africa</p> <p>50,000 Pacific</p> <p>120,000</p> <p>25,000</p>	<p>35,000</p> <p>180,000 25,000</p>	<p>100,000</p> <p>100,000</p> <p>70,000</p> <p>300,000 20,000/CSO group/ region</p> <p>75,000</p>
<p>Line of Action 2: Strengthening Participation at National and Regional Level</p> <p>2.1 Support to CSO participation in Sub-Regional and Regional Fora (SRF/RF) Meetings</p>	<p>2.1.1 CSO Representatives (seat) in RF/SRF Executive Boards</p> <p>2.1.2 CSO concerns elevated, discussed and</p>	40,000	40,000	40,000	120,000

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	BUDGET (in €)			
		Y1	Y2	Y3	Total
	addressed at the subregional and regional levels				
2.2 Support to CSO-led Information and Communication Management (ICM) in the region	2.2.1 Regional CSO websites hosting e-conferences, etc 2.2.2 Newsletter, Rural Radios (if and when feasible/applicable)	45,000	45,000	45,000	135,000
2.3 Technical workshops and seminars on ARD issues to strengthen CSO capacity for strategic thinking	2.3.1 Understanding of technical issues among farmers, NGOs and scientists 2.3.2 Collaborative projects between CSOs and research centers (e.g. farmer-scientist joint research activity)	35,000 60,000	35,000 60,000	35,000 60,000	105,000 180,000
Line of Action 3: Strengthening Participation in Global ARD					
3.1 Support to participation in GFAR meetings	3.1.1 CSO concerns are elevated, discussed and addressed at the global level 3.1.2 Facilitated interaction among CSOs and other ARD stakeholders at the global level	30,000	30,000	30,000	90,000
3.2 Support to inter-regional exchange	3.2.1 Global Partnership Programme among regional CSOs	50,000	100,000	100,000	150,000
3.3 Support to the development of Collaborative Programmes with: -NGOs -FOs -other CSOs e.g. Via Campesina, IFAP, IAARD	3.3.1 Well-defined Collaborative Programme with targeted outputs identified	40,000 40,000 40,000	130,000 130,000 100,000	130,000 130,000 100,000	300,000 300,000 240,000
3.4 Support to EGFAR	3.4.1 CSO Stakeholder website maintenance	50,000	50,000	50,000	150,000
4. Project Coordination, Management and Administration					
4.1 Support for coordination activities by GFAR Secretariat (e.g., Project Coordinator , etc)		100,000	100,000	100,000	300,000
4.2 Publications, etc.		20,000	20,000	20,000	60,000
	Total	795,000	1200,000	1115,000	3005,000