

## **GLOBAL-RAIS PROJECT FUNDED BY EC / DG Research (INCODEV Accompanying Measures)**

### **Proposal abstract**

In Agricultural Research for Development (ARD), initiatives have been undertaken by the various stakeholders to launch information and communication systems. The Sub-Regional and Regional Fora of the NARS (National Agricultural Systems) have launched Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS), and GFAR has also launched its website *EGFAR* ([www.egfar.org](http://www.egfar.org)). To achieve consistency, two general objectives can be formulated:

- To co-build a shared strategic agenda in information and communication management related to ARD, at the Regional and Global level;
- To launch *EGFAR* as a portal for ARD enhancing a transparent access to the RAIS information resources.

These objectives will be achieved through a) electronic discussions and e-mail conferences, b) support missions executed by an advanced RAIS manager, c) four regional workshops and an inter-regional workshop.

The following outputs are expected:

- A shared vision and a related strategic agenda on activities to be developed at the regional (RAIS) and at the global level (*EGFAR*);
- Mechanisms, standards and tools for enhancing networking between RAIS and *EGFAR*. Co-operation will benefit both parties.

### **Description**

GLOBAL.RAIS intends to launch regional technical workshops in the less advanced regions to support their related Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS). These regions are a) Near East and North Africa, b) Asia Pacific, c) Africa, d) Central Asia and Caucasus. They will be prepared by electronic discussions and e-mail conferences, and by a support through a technical mission assumed by a manager of an advanced RAIS and/or the *EGFAR* manager. After these four workshops an inter-regional workshop will be held, involving all the RAIS stakeholders.

These activities will be developed in close relationship with FAO, hosting GFAR, and in particular with the WAICENT Outreach Programme, with which previous co-operations have been built.

- *Electronic discussions and e-mail Conferences*

Inter-regional e-mail discussions will be launched between and among RAIS regarding a) their information strategy, b) the critical issues they face, c) their ongoing activities and projects, e) identification of opportunities. E-mail conferences will be specifically undertaken for specific technical problems to be collectively solved.

- *Support Missions and Regional Workshops*

Technical support missions will take in charge the various aspects of the management of RAIS and will help to design the activities to be developed at the regional and global level.

The four regional workshops would have about 8 to 12 participants. The main expected outputs, beyond the crosscutting of human resources, is to define a plan of work for each RAIS, both pragmatic and consistent with the other RAIS.

- *An inter-regional Workshop*

The following outputs of such an inter-regional consultation are expected:

- shared vision on activities to be developed at the regional level and to be developed at the global level (*EGFAR*);
- mechanism for enhancing networking between RAIS and *EGFAR* such as a webring to access to decentralised web information resources;
- identification through a comparative advantage analysis of a RAIS as a leader for a specific component of an ICM issue of common interest for other RAIS;
- *Post-Workshop Activities*

The outputs of these participatory processes will be disseminated at a worldwide level through the *EGFAR* website and those of the various RAIS. They also will be used to monitor the ICM activities.

## Objectives

Stakeholders in Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) have undertaken several initiatives to develop information and communication systems. The Sub-Regional and Regional Fora of the NARS have launched Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS), and GFAR has launched its website *EGFAR*. The project GLOBAL.RAIS offers consistency, economies of scale and the means to develop compatible systems so that regional and global information systems can work together. The two general objectives are:

- **To co-build a strategic agenda in Information and Communication Management related to ARD, at the Regional and Global level.**  
Four specific objectives are proposed:
  - To achieve a priority setting exercise for all the RAIS;
  - To define common tools to promote exchanges of information;
  - To encourage the RAIS offering comparative advantages to lead activities;
  - To promote exchanges of experiences.
- **To launch *EGFAR* as a portal for ARD enhancing a transparent access to the RAIS information resources.** Two specific objectives are proposed:
  - To launch with all the RAIS stakeholders an *EGFAR* webring;
  - To provide a multihost database search engine on the *EGFAR* gateway.

## Milestones and expected results

- *Electronic discussions*

A “state of the art” for each RAIS

- *Support Missions and Regional Workshops*

A plan of work for each RAIS, consistent with the other RAIS and *EGFAR*.

- *Inter-regional Workshop*

Are expected:

- Shared vision on activities to be developed at the regional level and to be developed at the global level (*EGFAR*);
- Mechanism for enhancing networking between RAIS and *EGFAR*;
- Identification of a RAIS as a leader for a specific component of an ICM issue of common interest for other RAIS.

These outputs will be disseminated on Internet.

## **Description of the research work**

### **SECTION B1 : TITLE PAGE**

#### **PROPOSAL FULL TITLE**

**GLOBAL ALLIANCE of the Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS).  
(GLOBAL.RAIS)**

#### **REGIONS**

ACP (Africa, Caribbean Pacific), ALA (Asia, Latin America), and Mediterranean Countries

#### **RESEARCH AREAS**

INCO 1999-1.4

### **1. SECTION B2 : OBJECTIVES**

#### **The problem**

In the area of Agricultural Research for Development (ARD), the various stakeholders involved both at the national level, NARS (National Agricultural Research Systems), and at the regional level, the Regional or Sub-Regional Fora (RF/SRF) very clearly expressed the need, in their regional priority setting exercise, to strengthen their Regional Agricultural Information System, RAIS. Existing RAIS are: INFOTEC in Latin America and the Caribbean; APAARIS in the Asia/Pacific region; AARINENA-RAIS in the WANA region; and EIARD-Infosys in Europe. Two sub-regional projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, CORAF/WECARD and ASARECA, are also being developed with the support of the European Union. In developing these information systems they have provided the evidence that they are able to pursue their tasks in Information and Communication Management (ICM) in order to strengthen their research capacities. However, these information systems are not at the same level of development and each has a varying wealth of content. For example INFOSYS, the product of the European Initiative in ARD (EIARD) and with the support of EC funding, has matured into a comprehensive and effective source of information for a wide range of end-users, while no initiative has been taken in Central Asia and Caucasus.

At the same time, the Global Forum on Agricultural Research was launching his website, EGFAR, as a communication plat-form that would enhance dialogue between all the stakeholders of the GFAR initiative: National Agricultural Research Institutions of the South, Advanced Research Institutions of the North, Farmers Associations, NGOs, private sector, donors and NARS. The EGFAR plat-form and its participatory approach facilitates the involvement of all the stakeholders in ARD. For example, the private sectors' initiatives in agribusiness and biotechnology. The methodology is based on a participatory approach and a collective learning process in information management, allowing the various partners to evolve from an alliance to a real consortium.

The main goal of GLOBAL.RAIS then, is to bring consistency to these initiatives at several levels in order to achieve economies of scale and synergism. To maintain consistency and achieve synergy in Internet based information systems one must ensure compatibility with other systems so as to allow smooth exchange of data and information at a global level. To

achieve this, the principles of decentralisation and subsidiarity must be followed so as to involve all stakeholders proactively in the new Knowledge Society.

Within this main goal, two general objectives can be forwarded:

- To co-build a strategic agenda in ICM related to ARD, at the Regional and Global level;
- To launch *EGFAR* as a portal for ARD enhancing access to the RAIS web information resources.

### **General Objective 1 (To co-build a shared strategic agenda in ICM related to ARD, at the Regional and Global level), and related specific objectives**

To achieve compatibility as well as economies of scale and synergism four (4) specific objectives can be formulated:

- To conduct a priority setting exercise for all the RAIS within a global vision while maintaining specific approaches and complementarity;
- To define common tools and standards in order to promote and facilitate exchanges of software and information, as well as backstopping activities between all the RAIS;
- To encourage the RAIS offering comparative advantages to lead the development of systems and methodology that are of common interest to the other stakeholders;
- To promote the exchange of experience, human resources with specific skills, and crosscutting activities between all the stakeholders of the RAIS.

The specific set of expected outputs is to build a strategic agenda and related plan of work, exchange of software, acknowledgement of standards and common tools related to information management. The key expected output however, is to build a community including all RAIS stakeholders thus enabling a Knowledge Society.

### **General Objective 2 (To launch *EGFAR* as a portal for ARD enhancing access to the RAIS web information resources) and related specific objectives**

GFAR has no comparative advantage to manage a centralised database on any topic (directories of researchers, research networks or institutional information, document repositories or bibliographic information, etc.). But GFAR should play a facilitating role to support RAIS in the design and management of their own information systems. GFAR should stress compatibility and keep at the global level the specific responsibility to launch, through its own portal, a gateway function that would allow access to the web resources of the various RAIS. A global agreement with all stakeholders who share this vision must be launched to allow the operationalization of this proposal. To achieve this Internet based technology and decentralised information management system two specific objectives are forwarded:

- To launch with all the RAIS stakeholders an *EGFAR* webring;
- To implement a multihost databases search engine on the *EGFAR* gateway.

The webring will be a formal agreement between all the RAIS willing to share the resources of the various databases they manage. The multihost database search engine will be more than a metaengine allowing access to webpages of a selected subset of websites in that it will allow access to the actual contents of the databases hosted by these websites. This implies a high level of technical compatibility that can be achieved through crosscutting of experiences and the technical meetings and workshops at both the regional and the global level. Electronic discussions and e-mail conferences will precede these meetings so as to ensure continuous dialogue throughout the project punctuated by concrete outcomes from workshops.

## SECTION B3 : CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research, launched in 1996, aims to be a neutral and transparent stakeholder-led-platform allowing all the stakeholders involved in Agricultural Research for Development to:

- Share information and communicate in a more effective way;
- Discuss global and often controversial issues, acknowledging that possible differences of opinions do not preclude the enormous potential for co-operation;
- Launch and build research partnerships through the design and implementation of Global Programmes;
- Provide access to institutional support, in particular for the developing country NARS.

GLOBAL.RAIS will strengthen both the information and communication system of *EGFAR* and *EGFARs'* relationships with the various RAIS. As a global plat-form of communication, *EGFAR* aims to promote RTD co-operation internationally, and more specifically to promote scientific co-operation in ARD between Europe and ACP, ALA, and Mediterranean countries. *GFAR* and its specific communication tool *EGFAR* play a facilitating role to launch a global research system in ARD through emerging Global Partnership Programmes of research (GPPs). Some GPPs are now well established, such as the programme on direct sowing, mulch based systems and conservation agriculture (DMC) led by CIMMYT and CIRAD, or PROLINNOVA, promoting local innovation. Very recently, 9-10<sup>th</sup> of October 2001, a technical workshop on methodologies, organisation and management of Global Partnership Programmes was held in Rome, with the support of IFAD. GLOBAL.RAIS and *EGFAR* are potential tools for supporting the implementation of programmes and projects conceived during the workshop.

Ensuring co-ordination with other programmes of research allows ARD research in the South to adapt to globalisation. It is also concrete way to make the most of research by strengthening the policy management capacity and to promote the institutional development of southern research institutions, allowing them a shared scientific excellence with European Institutions within a wider international framework.

## SECTION B4 : DESCRIPTION OF THE MEASURE

### General description of the measure

GLOBAL.RAIS intends to launch regional technical workshops in the less advanced regions to support the related RAIS. These regions are a) Near East and North Africa, b) Asia Pacific, c) Central Asia and Caucasus and, d) Africa. These technical workshops will be prepared by electronic discussions and e-mail conferences, and with support provided through a technical mission assumed by a manager of an advanced RAIS and/or the *EGFAR* manager in order to prepare the regional workshop.

After these four workshops an inter-regional workshop will be held, involving all the RAIS stakeholders. Continuous virtual dialogue will ensure the collaboration necessary for a successful project.

### Detailed activities and dissemination of deliverables

The following proposed activities will be undertaken as facilitating activities for the various RAIS. They will be developed in close relationships with FAO, which hosts *GFAR*, and in

particular with the WAICENT Outreach Programme, with which previous co-operations have already been built.

- *Pre-consultation discussions and e-mail Conferences*

Inter-regional e-mail discussions between and among RAIS regarding a) their information strategy, b) the critical issues they face, c) their ongoing activities and projects and, e) identification of crosscutting opportunities will precede support missions and regional workshops. Further discussion will expand on the specific questions and agenda to be addressed by the process. An e-mail conference will be undertaken for any specific technical problems to be collectively solved or addressed prior to the regional workshops.

- *Support Missions and Regional Workshops*

The workshops will be organised by the support missions, and the ToRs for each prepared in the preceding e-discussions. This technical support will be responsible for the various aspects of management of RAIS and will help to design the functional activities to be developed at the regional and global level.

Such workshops (held for the less advanced regions (4): Africa, WANA, CAC and Asia and Pacific) would be attended by between 8 and 12 participants. The two main expected outputs of these four regional workshops, beyond those of cross-cutting human resources and skills, are to define a plan of work for each RAIS, both pragmatic and consistent with the other RAIS, and to build a concept of the evolution and status of the RAIS project since the first RAIS meeting held during the May 2000 Dresden Conference.

- *An inter-regional Workshop*

This inter-regional workshop would be held after the regional workshops. The following outputs of such an inter-regional consultation are expected:

- shared vision on activities to be developed at the regional and global (*EGFAR*) levels;
- mechanism for enhancing networking between RAIS and *EGFAR* such as a webring to access to decentralised web information resources;
- building up of cost-sharing mechanisms and building up of thematic consortia;
- identification through a comparative advantage analysis of a RAIS that could act as a leader for a specific component of an ICM issue of common interest for other RAIS;
- proposals for enhanced interactions between national, regional and global level.

- *Post-Workshop Activities*

1. The outputs of these participatory processes (strategic agenda, standards to manage information, technical recommendations) will be disseminated at a worldwide level through the communication channels of *EGFAR* and those of the various RAIS, mainly on Internet. Statistical data on the number and quality of people attending to the workshops, on the hits on the various websites, on the number of electronic discussions and on the partnership agreements will be monitored to enable a quantitative assessment of GLOBAL.RAIS. Special highlights of the outputs related to the ICM management will be used for regional and global meetings related to research topics in ARD, in which ICM is regularly a critical issue and a topic of discussions.

### Provisional timetable

calendar activities	1 <sup>st</sup> trimester	2 <sup>nd</sup> trimester	3 <sup>rd</sup> trimester	4 <sup>th</sup> trimester
regional support mission	Near East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific	Central Asia and Caucasus, Africa		
regional workshop		Near East and North Africa,	Central Asia and Caucasus,	

		Asia and Pacific	Africa	
inter-regional workshop				Hosted in FAO Rome, Italy.

## **PART C**

### **Policies, partners and impact**

#### **SECTION C1 : TITLE PAGE**

##### **PROPOSAL FULL TITLE**

**GLOBAL ALLIANCE of the Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS). (GLOBAL.RAIS)**

##### **REGIONS**

ACP (Africa, Caribbean Pacific), ALA (Asia, Latin America), and Mediterranean Countries

##### **RESEARCH AREAS**

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#### **SECTION C2 : COMMUNITY ADDED VALUE AND CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES**

The sets of previously described activities, which will be undertaken during the GLOBAL.RAIS project, will lead to the strengthening of the RAIS of all the Regional and Sub-Regional Fora (RF/SRF). This in turn will contribute to the building of a regional community of research in ARD. The RF/SRF in question are:

- AARINENA in the Western Asia and North Africa Region,
- APAARI for Asia and Pacific,
- FARA in Africa,
- FORAGRO for Latin America and the Caribbean countries,
- And the Agricultural Research Forum of the CAC region.

The RAIS will become a communication plat-form at the regional level and will offer an interactive space for dialogue between all the regional and sub-regional stakeholders: Agricultural Research Institutions, NGOs, Farmers Associations and the private sector.

GFAR, as a multistakeholder led initiative at the global level, also offers the possibility of a promoting inter-regional dialogue and co-operation. With the recent decision of the European Commission to organise the new (6<sup>th</sup>) Framework Programme around the emergence and strengthening of an “European Research Area”, the European Forum in Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD), in close co-operation with EIARD, has decided to seek inputs from southern regional Fora (RF/SRF) through the GFAR pathway, in addition to the mobilisation of the European National Fora for this exercise. This is a concrete output of dialogues, launched and followed-up by GFAR, between the stakeholders in ARD at the local and global levels. The encouragement and facilitation of dialogues involving the EU stakeholders at various levels – from the local to the global– is a real added value brought by GFAR.

## SECTION C3 : **BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON PROPOSER**

In October 1996, key players in agricultural research around the world joined forces in a dynamic initiative: the Global Forum on Agricultural research, or GFAR. GFAR was founded by representatives of the National Agricultural Research Systems in developing countries (NARS), Advanced Research Institutions (ARIS), Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), farmers' organisations, universities, the private sector, International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) and the donor community.

GFAR is managed by a Steering Committee that works in close collaboration with a donor support group. Both are assisted by a secretariat hosted by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, Italy.

**The GFAR Steering committee** has 13 members representing the seven categories of stakeholders:

- Regional Fora of the NARS from the South (5 seats): Asia Pacific, Central Asia and Caucasus, Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa and West Asia and North Africa;
- Advanced research institutions and universities involved in co-operation with NARS ( 3 seats): Europe, North America and Australia;
- International Agricultural Research Centres (1 seat);
- NGO community ( 1 seat);
- Farmers' organisations ( 1 seat);
- Donor Community ( 1 seat).

The Chairperson is from a southern NARS and the Vice-Chairperson from another category of stakeholder so that the Steering Committee is represented by two different groups of stakeholders.

**The GFAR donor support Group** (GFAR DSG) under the leadership of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), mobilises the international donor community in support of the GFAR Initiative.

**The GFAR Secretariat** facilitates the day-to-day operations of the Forum. It acts as the implementation body for the GFAR core activities and plays a catalytic role for projects carried out within the GFAR framework. The Secretariat acts as a broker, encouraging and facilitating strategic alliances and research partnerships. It also assists ongoing policy dialogue on issues of global importance, promoting the participation of a broad array of agricultural research stakeholders. Finally, the Secretariat supports the strengthening of NARS as key components of a global agricultural research system. The GFAR Secretariat is headed by an Executive Secretary and composed of three senior officers and three APOs. The Steering Committee and the donor support group meet twice annually, in conjunction with the CGIAR events and the GFAR plenary meeting convenes once every three years.

**The GFAR budget** is approximately \$US 300,000 for the Secretariat and roughly the same amount for its operations. One of the basic financial principles of GFAR is “cost sharing”, with each partner contributing to the GFAR programmes according to their resources.

**A GLOBAL.RAIS Steering Committee** will be launched in order to manage and monitor the project GLOBAL.RAIS. This steering committee will be composed of: a) one representative of each RAIS, nominated by the Chairperson of each Regional Forum ( five seats); b) one representative of a key player in agricultural information management at the

global level from the Waicent Outreach programme of FAO and, c) the EGFAR manager. The GLOBAL.RAIS Steering Committee will conduct most of its activities electronically.

## SECTION C4 : PROJECT MANAGEMENT

### General rules of management

The GFAR Secretariat is hosted by FAO, but has an independent bank account. GFAR follows the international rules of the United Nations for its financial management. From the perspective of clarity and transparency this provides a comparative advantage as there are no rules and procedures unique to the GFAR Secretariat. All that is related to the hiring of consultants, the payment of travels, daily subsistence allowance (DSA) or travel expense claims (TEC) are well established within the FAO procedures which clarifies and facilitates the granting of finances from donors.

### Decision making structure and communication flow

The project will be led and financially managed by the GFAR Secretariat. The EGFAR manager will chair the project steering committee involving the RAIS managers and a representative of the WAICENT Outreach programme of FAO. Decisions will be made through electronic discussions and critical issues of global interest will be discussed in electronic conferences. As a direct output of the *Dresden 2000-GFAR Conference*, the representatives of the Regional Agricultural Information Systems who attended made the decision to block the domain [prais.org](http://prais.org) in order to launch a dedicated space for discussions. This domain will be used for the activities of the project steering committee, as an acknowledgement of this RAIS initiative.

### Justification of the budget estimate

The budget has been constructed considering three different types of costs: a) personnel cost related to the involvement of the EGFAR manager during the project cycle on a *pro-parte temporis* basis, b) costs related to the hiring of RAIS consultants to support the management of other RAIS and, c) the costs of launching the four (4) regional meetings and one (1) inter-regional meeting. The two last items include travel and subsistence costs for the various stakeholders involved in these activities. The travel budget has been designed to ensure sufficient participation of the partners thus allowing good co-operation and effective workshops.

Costs are based on FAO/UN rates and their related rules: each regional workshop is estimated to cost 17,500 €, the inter-regional workshop is estimated to cost 25,000 € and the cost for mobilising specific expertise is estimated to be 25,000 €.

The EGFAR manager is considered a P-5 on the grid applied to FAO professional personnel. The gross salary is evaluated at 120,000 €. During the full duration of the project, estimated to be one year, half of the manager's time will be spent on managing the project, launching the ongoing activities and following-up on the programme of work.

The various costs are summarised in the following table.

Regions	Activities	Regional and inter-regional workshops	Hiring of expertise and support missions	Personnel costs of GFAR Secretariat and (+) overhead costs
Near East and North Africa		17,500 €	5,000 €	
Asia Pacific		17,500 €	5,000 €	
Africa		17,500 €	5,000 €	
Latin America and the Caribbean			5,000 €	
Central Asia and Caucasus		17,500 €	5,000 €	
Inter-regional level		25,000 €		
Total per activities		95,000 €	25,000 €	60,000 € + 5,000 €
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>185,000 €</b>		
<b>P.M. Requested Contribution from the Community = 125,000 € ( 67 % )</b>				

## SECTION C 5 : ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROSPECTS

The international community in ARD is facing an increasingly complex challenge of feeding the world-wide growing population, while assuring an equitable development and a sustainable management of natural resources. The environmental and socio-economic deterioration that many developing countries are facing poses an unprecedented challenge of mobilising and applying the potential capacity of scientific progress.

This is the core of the international role of Community research towards which the E.U. should play a significant role by sharing its experiences in research networking.

In achieving the proposed project three strategic impacts are foreseen:

- Firstly, **education and human resource development**, which continue to be the main limiting factors in most developing countries, will lead to the building of pools of knowledge relevant to the regions and their e-learning process;
- Secondly, development and strengthening of a **knowledge generation capacity** through research (R&D capacity), especially in the case of agriculture and natural resources management, where site specific research is required to adapt technological development processes to particular socio-economic environments or local constraints;
- Thirdly, development or **strengthening of innovation capacities** that requires not only effective extension services but also more farmer involvement to ensure a process of social appropriation of knowledge. This can be only achieved through a people oriented effort involving a multistakeholder led platform such as the one that GFAR is able to foster, thus enhancing participatory approaches.

A new paradigm for ARD is progressively emerging in which a diversified range of research partnerships are being built. The main challenge that remains is to develop a general framework that can facilitate economies of scale, strategic alliances and joint ventures between the various actors involved at all levels: local, national, sub-regional, regional and global. Such a framework can provide benefits to both non E.U. partners and E.U. actors in the field of ARD. In launching a communication platform, facilitating cross-cutting activities,

and enhancing shared ICM activities between the RAIS of the various RF/SRF, the E.U. will contribute to the co-building of a research agenda that would lead to a Global Research System in ARD.

**SECTION C6 : NO ANNEX**