20TH STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
BEIJING, CHINA
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GFAR Secretariat report of activities
GFAR Secretariat Activity Report 2007

Introduction

The GFAR Secretariat during January to June 2007 focussed its attention on the task of developing and finalizing the GFAR Business Plan for 2007-2009. During the period, the Secretariat also conducted activities as per the interim plan of work approved by the 18th GFAR Steering Committee Meeting held at Washington in December 2006. A revised plan of work, based on the GFAR Business Plan 2007-2009, was proposed at the 19th GFAR Steering Committee Meeting held at Cairo in May, 2007.

The GFAR Secretariat faced considerable constraints both in staff and funds availability after June 2007. The Secretariat at Rome had only two full time professional staff and one temporary general staff after June 2007. One GFAR Staff posted at Montpellier is largely engaged in keeping the DURAS Competitive Grants scheme. The Secretariat’s ability to carry out activities according to the revised plan of work as approved by the 19th GFAR Steering Committee Meeting was to some extent curtailed due to reduced availability of funds. The reduced availability of funds were primarily due to lack of donor contributions, delayed or lack of payment by donors to their commitments, delayed reimbursements of payments and withdrawal of advanced funds under the DURAS program supported by MAEE, France.

The following is the report of the activities of the GFAR Secretariat for 2007.

A. Consensus-building and advocacy for action on agricultural research and innovation priorities

1. Regional ARD priorities revisited and updated in Central Asia and the Caucuses

A workshop for revisiting regional ARD priorities and updating them with participation of representatives of all ARD stakeholders from the 8 regional countries was organized with support from GFAR by CACAARI in March 2007. The GFAR Secretariat was represented at this workshop held at Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The regional priorities have been documented by CACAARI and have been circulated by CACAARI and GFAR Secretariat to all major stakeholders. They are also available with on EGFAR.

2. Expert Consultation to Review Progress of Agricultural Research Networks and Consortia in Asia Pacific Region

An expert consultation to review progress of agricultural research networks and consortia in Asia Pacific Region was organized by APAARI in October 2007 at ICRISAT, Hyderabad, India. The Secretariat presented GFAR activities especially those related the Global Partnership Projects with special reference to the ICM4ARD GPP. The draft proceedings of the Workshop is available.
3. **Follow up on GFAR 2006 Triennial Conference**

*Report of the GFAR 2006 Triennial Conference*

A preliminary report of the GFAR 2006 Triennial Conference was synthesized and disseminated to Conference participants electronically. Members of various stakeholder committees and groups as also donors were also sent printed copies of the report. The proceedings of the conference are printed and distributed.

*Finalization of the GFAR Triennial Business Plan 2007-2009*

The GFAR Secretariat organized a GFAR retreat with a representation of all GFAR Stakeholders at Bibliotheque Alexandrina, Alexandria, Egypt in March 2007. Following the suggestions made at the retreat, the Secretariat drafted the GFAR Business 2007-2009 Plan for approval by the GFAR Steering Committee. The GFAR Steering Committee while approving the Business plan at its 19th Meeting made certain suggestions and observations on the Business Plan. These suggestions and observations were incorporated and the GFAR Business Plan for 2007-2009 was finalized. This Business Plan has been widely circulated to all stakeholders including the Donor Support Group. The Business Plan is also available on EGFAR.

4. **Promoting the transformation of agricultural research, extension and education (AgREE)**

In an effort to jumpstart one of the initiatives identified under the new GFAR Business Plan, i.e., Promoting the transformation of agricultural research, extension and education (AgREE), the GFAR Secretariat actively participated in the development and writing of a proposal on Curriculum Development (CD) held last 18-19 September 2007. This CD initiative, labelled *Promoting participation and innovation in agriculture and natural resource management education (PROMOTED)*, is being developed as one of the sub-component of the PROLINNOVA initiative, one of the Global Partnerships Programme (GPP). It is therefore seen by the GFAR Secretariat as one concrete activity to advance the AgREE pillar of the new GFAR Business Plan. Spearheaded by the CIS - Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the CD proposal amounting to about 400,000 EUR was submitted to the European Commission’s EduLINK Programme on 02 October 2008. The result should be known by mid-2008.

Given the nature of the funding, only Higher Educational Institutes (recognized universities and polytechnics) from ACP countries (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) are eligible for funding. As such, GFAR is “only” considered as a Programme Associate and therefore will not be able to receive direct funding other than a limited travel and *per diem* costs of its representative in the CD initiative. This notwithstanding and given the strategic nature of this initiative, GFAR Secretariat will continue to be actively involved in this undertaking. Also, GFAR Secretariat will also be tapping on YPARD (Young Professionals Platform on ARD) on activities related to this initiative, a move very much welcomed by the young professionals.

5. **ERA-ARD**
The ERA-ARD Conference, which was held on 28 and 29 June 2007, brought together around 150 key stakeholders from the European Member States and Associated States, the European Commission and the regional and global ARD forums. Participants in the conference exchanged views and debated on several issues including:

- The ARD landscape for Europe in 2025
- Need for an ARD capacity in Europe in 2025
- How should the European ARD capacity evolve to meet its partners’ needs and enhance its contribution to MDGs?
- What could then be a shared vision for European ARD?

GFAR was represented by the Chair and Vice-Chair, GFAR at the ERA-ARD Meeting held at Brussels in June, 2007. The GFAR Secretariat was also represented at the meeting. ERA-ARD requested coordination by GFAR-Secretariat of the ERA-ARD Southern Reference Group, EFARD and global ARD community.

6. **EFARD Evaluation**

GFAR contributed to the evaluation of EFARD as also responded to the draft report of the evaluation.

**B. Promotion of global and regional partnerships for collaborative research and innovation:**

1. **Linking Farmers to Markets**

After indications from the GFAR Programme Committee, in December 2006 the Steering Committee approved the LFM GPP together with some suggestions. Among others the most important were: (i) funds should be assigned to each one the Regional Forum in equal amounts to document successful stories of linking farmers to markets, (ii) the composition of the original Interim Steering Committee (ISC) should be modified to include a regional representative from each one of the Regional Forum.

During 2007 the GFAR Secretariat has acted as member of the Interim Steering Committee for the GPP and has played a key role in facilitating all the activities that were carried out during the year:

i. Based on the discussion and recommendations from GFAR Programme Committee, communication was established with the Regional Fora, and the composition of the ISC was modified to include representatives form the regions.

ii. The first “Business Planning Meeting” of the new Interim Steering Committee for the GPP “Linking Farmers to Markets” was held at the FAO Headquarters in Rome, on June 4th, 5th and 6th, 2007. A detailed report of this meeting is available with Secretariat and on EGFAR. Among the most relevant achievements of this meeting are:
   - A framework for the preparation of a document containing the business plan for the next 10 years.
- The preparation of the terms of reference for the Regional Studies characterizing successful experiences on linking farmers to markets.
- A preliminary discussion for the preparation of proposals to be presented to donors.
- Definition of the activities to be conducted during the following six months.
- Agreed up on the overall key parameters to establish a long term (10 year) program for the execution of the GPP “Linking Farmers to Markets”, outlining the governance structure at the global and regional level, the roles and responsibilities and expectations.
- The definition of the steps to follow for creating a 5 year medium term plan, focusing on outlining the parameters for a large grant proposal, targeting a budget of 4-5 million dollars.
- A budget for expenditure of the seed funds provided by DFID through GFAR Secretariat, which included support to planning, regional studies, and mobilizing of funds to establish the Programme.

iii. Start up funds have been transferred to CIAT who is acting as the GPP Interim Secretariat
iv. The Interim Secretariat has signed Letters of Understanding with all the Regional Fora and has completed the transfer of funds, in order to initiate the documentation of success stories the first step for the implementation of the GPP.

2. FAO IEE Evaluation

GFAR contributed to the Independent External Evaluation of FAO. The Secretariat presented its comments on the draft report of the IEE of FAO. In the final report, the IEE of FAO has not explicitly mentioned the linkages between FAO and GFAR on issues related to global ARD.

3. DURAS Competitive Grants

A mid-term external review of the DURAS Project which focused mostly on the over-all project implementation as well as on CGS component was commissioned by the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE). Aimed at reviewing the strategic relevance and the coherence of the project’s objective and analyzing the collaboration that is taking place amongst the stakeholders involved and at examining the sustainability of the project itself, the review affirmed the relevance and novel approach adopted by DURAS and is seen as a potent means to promote multi-stakeholder partnership and to encourage innovation. It was recommended that the emerging results of and methodological approaches adopted by the 12 projects should be immediately valorized in order to support future participatory research programmes.

On 28 February – 02 March 2007, the 2nd DURAS Project Leader’s workshop was organized in Montpellier in order to take stock of the progress made and lessons learned so far. During this event, it was announced that the duration of the 12 projects will be extended, without
additional funding, until 30 March 2008. Key issues discussed include the following: enhancing communication and exchange across projects (e.g., use of videos, co-publication, etc.); involving small and medium agro-enterprises particularly in research projects that involves the whole filiere; mainstreaming innovative approaches being adopted in each of the 12 initiatives particularly in the regular activities of organizations involved in the project; using local knowledge as a take off point in doing research, including how can these traditional knowledge feed into research; enabling farmers to be better involved in research; ensuring project results accessible; research ownership and Intellectual Property (IP) management; and promoting synergy with other projects/initiatives and promoting research-development-education linkage.

Project site visits were carried out in order to see the projects “in action” as well as to look at the over-all project management and implementation. Some members of the Scientific Partnership Committee have been involved in this undertaking thus providing them an opportunity to witness first hand DURAS-funded projects which they have reviewed and selected.

In July 2007, a meeting between the DURAS Project Office and staff from the Research Into Use (RIU) Programme was held in Montpellier in order to explore areas for possible collaboration between the two initiatives. Among the agenda discussed include possible involvement and support of the RIU Programme to the planned DURAS Documentation Workshop to be held in early 2008 as well as the DURAS Project Closing Workshop in April 2008; DURAS Phase 2, RIU Innovation Challenge Competitive Grants as well as possible establishment of Learning Alliances on innovation systems. Follow-up needs to be made in order to identify more concretely possible RIU-DURAS collaboration.

The summer months of 2007 was spent mainly in concretizing ideas for the DURAS Documentation Workshops. Some 20 months after the launching of the 12 DURAS-funded initiatives, the implementation of the DURAS CGS has been a very insightful experience. It has afforded both the Project Office and the various stakeholders involved in the 12 projects a rich experience and handful of lessons learnt along the way. However, it is deemed that much still has to be done to increase the opportunities for learning from these experiences, as well as sharing the learning and building a wider body of knowledge on and further understanding and appreciation of involving various actors in the agricultural research and innovation process. There is still need to capture the dynamics involved in these multi-actor, inter-country/regional effort by further reflecting, examining and documenting what has happened involving the various stakeholders themselves involved in each of the projects. As such, two documentation workshops (one for the Anglophone projects and another one for the Francophone projects) are being organized. The objectives of this activity are to discuss and analyze project experience in detail to understand what has happened and to draw conclusions which will help generate new knowledge. The results will later be developed in a format chosen by the participants (e.g., article, video, etc.) and will be presented at the DURAS Project Closing Workshop in April 2008. A special publication will also be prepared containing all the articles about the lessons learned on each of the projects. This activity is to be carried out with additional funding support from MAEE-France and with technical and

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1 This will be the 3rd workshop involving all the 12 DURAS-funded projects. Aside from serving as venue where each project will present their research outputs, the event will also serve as an opportunity to promote exchange of experiences and lessons learned on the dynamics of partnership, local innovation and ARD as this will be an event open to other stakeholders. It will be held in April 2008 in one of the project sites.
financial support from the Centre for Information on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture (ILEIA), a Netherlands-based NGO promoting sustainable agriculture.

4. Participation and Support to the OASIS/ Proposed Challenge Program on Desertification

GFAR participated in a Stakeholder Workshop to develop a proposal for a Challenge Program on Desertification at Montpellier in September 2007. GFAR also supported participation of stakeholder representatives to the meeting. Details of finalized proposal are awaited.

C. Knowledge and Communication for Agricultural research and Innovation:

1. Regional training workshop on information systems for ARD organized by AARINENA

A regional training workshop on Information Systems for ARD organized by AARINENA with support from GFAR Secretariat was held at Cairo, Egypt in May 2007 to assist information managers in developing an information strategy for their organizations and in establishing new structures and procedures for effective information management. This workshop was also supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Egypt National Agricultural Research Information Centre (NARIC). The event was designed to build capacity among information specialists in the application of Information and Communication Management Systems (ICMS) for strengthening knowledge resources linkages in AARINENA member States as also to improve the information infrastructure in the Near East and North Africa region through introducing a "Near East Regional Agricultural Knowledge and Information Network, NERAKIN" developed by FAO. During the workshop two important projects were introduced to the participants: The first project was NERAKIN which was developed by the FAO/RNE. NERAKIN has several modules with Front end and Content Management System which allows the regional countries to build their information systems. The second project was the National Agricultural Research Information Management System (NARIMS) which was developed by the Central Lab for Agricultural Expert Systems (CLAES) through support by GFAR. The Egyptian case study on NARIMS was presented and the system demonstrated. A training session relevant to the Arabic AGRIS Application Profile (AP) for indexing and cataloguing and inserting the appropriate metadata was also held during the Workshop.

2. A Sensitization and Awareness Building Workshop on ICT/ICM in ARD organized by APAARI

A Sensitization and Awareness Building Workshop on ICT/ICM in ARD organized by APAARI for the Leaders and Senior Managers of member NARS in the Asia Pacific Region was organized by APAARI in collaboration and support from the GFAR Secretariat and PCAARD, was organized at PCAARD, Los Baos Philippines on 30th August 2007. During the Workshop it was also observed many NARS have initiated comprehensive ICT/ICM projects and programs in their organizations using state-of-the-art information technology. At the end of the workshop, participants were unanimous in recognizing the important role that ICT plays in linking researchers, farmers and markets.

The major recommendations of the workshop included:
• APARIS should continue to focus its activities on advocacy, capacity building and regional knowledge sharing through greater involvement of various NAIS of the region.
• To further strengthen linkages between APARIS and NAIS, NARS need to officially designate their ICT/ICM related units or departments as National Information Nodal Points (NINPs).
• New web technologies and tools should be adopted for cost effective updating of agricultural research information systems and regional information exchange.

To implement some of the above recommendations, APARIS team plans to undertake a major revision of APAARI website[^2] using newly available web technologies for a better content management system and linkages to other ARD web sites. The revised web site will also make it easier to directly upload information from decentralized input sources such as NINPs, spread across the Asia-Pacific Region and also globally.

3. **CAC.RAIS Steering Committee Meeting**

The CAC.RAIS Steering Committee Meeting was organized by CACAARI with support from GFAR in January 2007. The CAC.RAIS Steering Committee reviewed the status of ICM in the Central Asia and Caucuses and developed its work plan for 2007-2009. It also nominated its national nodal information points and representatives.

4. **FARA RAILS Workshop**

FARA organized a Workshop for RAILS at Accra in January, 2007. The GFAR Secretariat has offered technical support for FARA Website and further RAILS development.

5. **FORAGRO**

"Concepts, Policy Elements, and Regional Strategies for the Development of Institutional Innovation"[^3] is the title of a new publication released by IICA. The document presents the findings of a study of the trends and challenges in agricultural research in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), in terms of the way it is organized and its institutional architecture. The study for the document was carried out by FORAGRO with support from GFAR.

The subject of the study is also one of IICA’s Strategic Priorities, established in its 2006-2010 Medium Term Plan (Promoting the introduction of Technology and Innovation for the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Development). The general objective of this priority is to support the efforts of the member countries to modernize agriculture and enhance its contribution to economic, social and environmental development by promoting technological and institutional innovation policies and processes that will promote and facilitate the incorporation of new knowledge and technologies into agricultural production chains.

The study provides the bases for developing a conceptual framework for institutional innovations, with recommendations for cooperation agenda aimed at revamping the institutional architecture of national and regional agricultural research. To that end, the study outlines the institutional innovations needed to strengthen the national and regional systems of agricultural science, technology and innovation in the region.

Information is a key element in every process of research or innovation that takes place in the agricultural sector. In the institutions that promote these processes, managing technical information poses several challenges. These occur in a changing environment, marked by an exponential increase in the quantity of potentially important information and by continuous advances in information and communication technologies (ICT), among other factors. The challenges include the need to incorporate the information related objectives and activities explicitly within the planning and execution of all institutional processes and taking maximum advantage of the possibilities offered by available ICT, while providing support for processes of knowledge management. Information management (IM) takes place through a series of actions that involve: 1) defining objectives and priorities related to the area of the information, and 2) planning, facilitating and coordinating the necessary activities to reach these objectives.

The general objective of this project is to create awareness by building capacities for the incorporation of information within the planning and execution of institutional processes and for taking maximum advantage the possibilities that offer available ICT.

The target beneficiaries are a) decision makers of the agricultural research and technological innovation organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean, belonging to the Forum for the Americas on Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO); b) coordinators or managers of technical information and communication within these organizations.

The expected results of the project have been identified as follows:

- 100% of the beneficiaries of the project have received basic training on how to incorporate information within the planning and execution of institutional processes.
- 100% of the beneficiaries of the project are better able to take advantage of the possibilities offered by information and communication technologies (ICT), in support of processes of technical knowledge management.
- Formal mechanisms to share experiences in management of technical information among the agricultural research and technological innovation organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean have been developed.
- A permanent program for training in technical information management for agricultural research and technological innovation organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean is in place.
- The program for International Certification in Technical Information Management has been created.

6. 2nd Expert Consultation on International Information Systems for Agricultural Science and Technology (IISAST)

The 2nd Expert Consultation on International Information Systems for Agricultural Science and Technology (IISAST) was held on 23 – 24 September 2007 in FAO, Rome, and organized by seven organizations CGIAR, CTA, DFID (UK), FAO, GFAR, IAALD, MAE (France). Participants comprised approximately 60 experts working in networks and information systems in agricultural science and technology at international, regional and national levels. The objectives were to review progress since the 1st Consultation in 2005, to reassess the objectives of the IISAST initiative on and confirm commitment of the partners, to reassess the modalities of implementing the initiative, and to establish future priorities for and contributions to the initiative. The draft proceedings of the Expert Consultation are now available with GFAR Secretariat.
7. **EGFAR Taskforce meeting**

The 1st meeting of the EGFAR Taskforce was held in Rome in the forenoon on September 26\textsuperscript{th} 2007. The setting up of the Taskforce was planned under the ICM4ARD GPP Project Plan and its main terms of reference consist in guiding the development of EGFAR, the ARD Web Ring and ICT enabled agricultural information systems at global, regional and national levels through liaising with similar global taskforces and initiatives and coordinating with the IISAST initiative.

The presentations on EGFAR and on all the Regional Forums websites showed great progress in managing ARD information through web channels. Progress was also noted in the management of information on organizations, experts and projects at the regional, and in some cases also national, level.

The next challenge for the EGFAR Task Force is seen in defining and further developing the ARD Web Ring. The development of the Web Ring has been planned as one of the main activities of the ICM4ARD GPP and as a major role for GFAR. In this meeting, the Web Ring was defined as a network of ARD “gateways” and nodes through which information flows smoothly for global access.

In this view, the EGFAR Taskforce also has to contribute, through GFAR and in coordination with the IISAST initiative, to the development of the RAIS and NAIS especially in capacity development, integration through introduction and use of standards, guidelines, norms etc and appropriate governance structure that ensure equitable and fair access to ARD information globally. The role of the EGFAR Taskforce is not seen as a normalising role in a top-down approach, but rather as a facilitating role in harmonising policies and strategies through the exchange and promotion of best practices in information management and sharing among GFAR stakeholders and the ARD community at large.

The members of the Task Force felt that EGFAR should also be a “marketplace” for experience sharing, ICM related documentation, tools (and toolboxes) and applications for managing ARD information. Coordination with the IISAST initiative in this was recommended, as demand for a similar service also arose from the 2nd Expert Consultation held just before this Taskforce meeting.

8. **4th ICM4ARD Inter-Regional Consultation**

The 4th inter-regional consultation on Information and Communications Management for Agricultural Research for Development (ICM4ARD) was held in Rome in September 2007 during the e-Agriculture Week.

ICM4ARD is a GFAR Global Partnership Programme started in 2004 with the purpose of enabling “more equitable access to agricultural information globally for ARD stakeholders through improved ICM and more efficient use of ICT in National, Regional and Global agricultural information systems”

The ICM4ARD consultation was the occasion for a review of the project, which highlighted some major achievements, particularly as regards the strengthening or establishing of Steering Committees / Task Forces of all Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS), the development of their websites, the studies on the ICM status in the regions, the development
of toolkits for the National Information Systems (NAIS) and the re-engineering of EGFAR to contribute to development of an ARD Web ring. The review also stressed that there are areas where the targets have been slow to be realized, such as capacity development of NAIS managers, the development of distributed databases on Institutions, Experts, Projects and Project outputs, monitoring and evaluation, and attracting funds.

The discussion on future priorities focused mainly on: sensitisation of senior NARS leaders and policy makers; attraction of donor investment; improvements in monitoring and evaluation; and improvements in content generation and its management. It was recognized that in addition to ICM policy development at global, regional and national levels, the major focus needed to be on individual institutions having clear policy frameworks on how the outcomes of research and development activities are communicated to stakeholders and beneficiaries. It was recognised that all the partners active in the Task Forces of the IISAST initiative (including GFAR and Regional Forums) would be taking the lead in developing this framework as a tool for further advocacy and support to NARS, in the form of guidelines for development and implementation of ICM policies. The outputs would be advocated under the ICM4ARD GPP. These policies should look at issues in generating, processing and using more effectively information through ICT-enabled systems for ARD at the Institution and ARD Systems level.

9. **GFAR at Web2forDev Conference**

The Conference has been extensively covered on the web, through the publication of all presentations and several video recordings (all available on the [Web2forDev Conference website](http://www.web2fordev.net), and also, as might be expected, through Web 2.0 tools like the [Conference blog](http://blog.web2fordev.net/) and the photos published on [Flickr](http://www.flickr.com/photos/tags/web2fordev/).

Representatives from GFAR and the Regional Fora supported by GFAR attended several sessions of the Web2forDev - Participatory Web for Development” Conference held in Rome from September 25th to 27th 2007, during the e-Agriculture Week.

GFAR also made a presentation on “The EGFAR Web Space: Using Web 2.0 Technologies to Electronically Mimic GFAR” in the parallel session on “Shared Virtual Spaces for Remote Stakeholder Collaboration”. The presentation highlighted GFAR’s objectives of providing a communication platform and facilitating the flow of information and GFAR’s principles of subsidiarity, additionality and decentralisation are best implemented electronically through the use of an overall Web 2.0 approach and of some specific Web 2.0 technologies. The Web 2.0 technologies applied in EGFAR were described and also the major challenges faced in this approach were discussed in the presentation, challenges such as attracting participation and involving partners in information sharing.

10. **GFAR participation in the e-Agriculture Week**

From September 22nd to 29th the FAO headquarters in Rome hosted the [e-Agriculture Week](http://www.e-agriculture.org/102.html), a “week-long dialogue focusing on the use of information, communication, and associated technologies in sustainable agricultural development and food security”. The E-Agriculture Week was designed as part of the follow-up to the World Summit on the

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1 [http://www.web2fordev.net](http://www.web2fordev.net)
2 [http://blog.web2fordev.net/](http://blog.web2fordev.net/)
4 [http://www.e-agriculture.org/102.html](http://www.e-agriculture.org/102.html)
Information Society (WSIS), who identified e-Agriculture as a priority in its Plan of Action. It was organized by a number of international organizations, led by FAO.

GFAR participated in several events taking place during the e-Agriculture Week. In addition to the 2nd Expert Consultation on IISAST, the 4th inter-regional consultation on ICM4ARD, the EGFAR Taskforce and the Web2forDev Conference other important meetings in which GFAR participated were:

- **8th Agricultural Ontology Service (AOS) Workshop**: "7 years of AOS: Achievements and Next Steps", organised by FAO and held on 21-22 September, in which information and knowledge management experts in agriculture met to review ongoing developments of semantic standards and their application. GFAR presented a project that is under development in strict collaboration with FAO and with the support of other partners: the Agricultural Organizations Registry project for managing information on agricultural organizations in a distributed architecture using a central Registry. More on this project in the next issue of our Newsletter.

- **CGIAR: Global Public Goods - From Information and Knowledge to Food**, organised by CGIAR and held on 28 September, an open and inclusive meeting to help lay out new approaches for the CGIAR to provide its “information customers” worldwide with simple but enhanced access to the vast array of scientific data, information and knowledge generated by its research centers working with their national research partners.

- **Farmer-led documentation: Local knowledge sharing in an agricultural context**, organised by PROLINNOVA / ETC EcoCulture, IAALD and FAO and held on 28 September, an interactive exchange meeting, where organizations involved in agricultural development were invited to share their views on farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing, specifically on farmer led documentation.

- **E-Agriculture Task Force Meeting** which discussed the way forward in E-agriculture under the WSIS Initiative.

11. EGFAR

EGFAR in 2007 has been continuously enhancing its roles as a communications platform and as an information gateway. The overall approach and the technological issues have been further discussed and refined, also through documentation (technical documentation and brochures) and presentations at meetings and conferences (Web2forDev Conference, 25th September 2007 and EGFAR Taskforce Meeting, 26th September 2007).

- **EGFAR as an interactive stakeholder-led platform** has been enriched with two new tools:
  - the Open Site: a wiki-like section of the website completely managed by registered users, who can add and edit sections, sub/sections and articles; particularly, users can publish their own news and events in the “News and events” section of the Open Site and these news items will also appear in the What’s new page of EGFAR;
  - discussion Forums available from MyEGFAR in the “Community and Forums” page.

- **EGFAR as an information gateway** has been enriched with new functionalities:
  - in XML export of the GFAR organizations database: the reference DTD for the export is the Agricultural Organizations Application Profile (Ag Org AP); the export consists of static publicly available XML files for the moment, but a web

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service will be made available for harvesting information dynamically and in real time;
  o in addition to the basic RSS feeds of news and events, EGFAR now provides a specific RSS feed of events compliant to both the Event Application Profile\(^8\) and the RSS event extension (the RDF Event module\(^9\));
  o a dynamic RSS feed of the GFAR documents is now available, extended with Dublin Core metadata

- All the texts in the “About GFAR” and “GFAR in action” sections have been reviewed.
- A collaboration is starting with SIST (Système d’Information Scientifique et Technique\(^{10}\)) on a project for an implementation of the SIST “federated search” platform customised to the needs of the ARD Webring and easily interfaceable by all websites / systems in the Webring

### 12. MIS

- In the Webring section, the search on organizations databases now also queries (by country) the Wisard database and the Infosys database
- The Organizations Registry project is in its latest phase. This project adopts a distributed architecture which minimizes duplication in information storage and flow and improves quality of the information provided. In this architecture the data describing an organization are stored in a file as an XML description based on a specific metadata set, and access to these distributed files is facilitated by a central registry file.
  - The GFAR/FAO project document “Proposed Architecture and Workflow for Managing Decentralized Information on Organizations Using a Central Registry File”\(^{11}\) has been available for comments for months and some useful feedback has been received; a paper has also been presented at the Special Session on Agricultural Metadata & Semantics during the 2nd International Conference on Metadata and Semantics Research (MTSR'07) in Corfu, Greece, on October 11-12, 2007.
  - GFAR and FAO are actively working on the related applications: the web form for automatically creating and updating metadata in the agreed format (Organizations Application Profile) is ready; the Registry itself, to be hosted by GFAR, is being developed and will be ready by the end of the year, both as a publicly available XML file and as a web service for registering URLs
  - A number of organizations have already agreed to participate in the first phase of the project, to disseminate the information through their networks and to encourage participation among their network partners. Official partners in the projects are FAO, CGIAR, IAALD and Wageningen International. Most CG Centers have officially agreed to participate and among the other adhering organizations are: CABI, SIDALC, ILEIA, SADC and many other.
- GFAR is collaborating with FAO and Wageningen International on the exchange of information about Projects: an Application Profile is being developed and import/export procedure will soon be tested

\(^9\) http://web.resource.org/rss/1.0/modules/event/
\(^10\) http://www.sist-sciencesdev.net/index.php3?lang=en
\(^11\) http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/opensite/collabwebsite?contentId=1599
13. **Maintenance of EGFAR and GFAR Communication**

Routine activities to maintain EGFAR, the GFAR Electronic Repository and publish the GFAR Newsletter have continued.

**D. Strengthening the Institutional Capacities of GFAR and its Stakeholders.**

1. **Sub-Saharan NGO Consortium**

The GFAR Secretariat in collaboration with FARA continued to foster the further development and implementation of components of the work programme of the Sub-Saharan NGO Consortium. This will enable the Consortium to develop functional linkages that will enable strong research for development. SSA NGOC held its first biennial meeting during FARA General Assembly. In the meeting the SSA NGOC

i) Presented and discussed a biennial progress/activities report;

ii) Took stock of past experiences for lessons in learning and planning;

iii) Revisited its current long-term strategic document and medium-term business plan;

iv) Revisited the composition and mandate of its current management structure;

v) Enriched and contributed to FARA’s “Africa Agricultural Science Week” and. The General Assembly

2. **Asia Pacific NGO Consortium**

Following the brainstorming session at the APAARI AGM at New Delhi, India in November 2006, the GFAR Secretariat has been supporting ANGOC through APAARI to develop a road map for establishing Asian NGO Consortium (AP NGOC). A regional wide NGO consultation was scheduled to be held during the last quarter of the year during which the Asian Pacific NGO Consortium would have been launched. However, there has been delay in arriving at a consensus in the process of developing the consortium between ANGOC, which was leading the activity of forming the AP NGO Consortium and APAARI. Further, the release of earmarked funds for the development of the Consortium was withheld by FAO delaying further progress in the formation and launch of the Consortium.

3. **CACAARI NGO Consortium**

CACAARI had also expressed interest in the formation of a NGO Consortium similar to those of the Sub-Saharan Africa region and the Asia-Pacific region. A proposal to this effect is awaited by the Secretariat.

The activities to strengthen the participation of the NGO in ARD through GFAR have been severely constrained by lack of staff at the GFAR Secretariat and availability of funds to invest in this activity.

The GFAR Secretariat developed a terminal report of all GFAR activities in the triennium 2004 – 2006. This report was circulated electronically to all stakeholders and is also available in the GFAR Electronic Repository on EGFAR.


The GFAR Business plan for 2007-2009 was finalized by the GFAR Secretariat and distributed electronically and in printed form to all members of the GFAR Committees, major stakeholders and donors. The GFAR Business Plan 2007-2009 is also available in the GFAR Electronic Repository on EGFAR.

G. Response to GFAR External Evaluation

The GFAR Secretariat drafted a response to the 2nd GFAR External Evaluation. The report of the evaluation and the final response approved by the Steering Committee has been again circulated electronically to all members of the GFAR Committees, major stakeholders and donors. The report is also available in the GFAR Electronic Repository on EGFAR.

H. GFAR Annual Report for 2006

The GFAR Annual Report for 2006 is under final preparation through a consultant. The special theme paper on ICM for ARD has been received.

I. Recruitment of GFAR Executive Secretary

The GFAR Secretariat supported IFAD through secretarial support in the recruitment of the GFAR Executive Secretary. The process has been completed and a new GFAR Executive Secretary appointed.

L. Activities not completed

GFAR Stakeholder Committee of the Generation Challenge Programme (GCP)

This output was expected to be achieved through the activities of the GFAR Stakeholder Committee of the Generation Challenge Programme (GCP) of the CGIAR. The goal of this committee, constituted by the Secretariat, with funding from the European Commission, is to ‘facilitate the articulation, promotion and presentation of the views of various stakeholders to the GCP management and governance structures in order to contribute to the policies, strategies, research priorities, and program activities of the GCP’.

The Secretariat is in communication with the GCP Coordinators for progress on the Stakeholder Committee. Due to lack of funding progress has been slow.

Development of Project Proposals for presentation to Donors

The Development of Project proposals for presentation to Donors was expected to be taken up following the development of GFAR Business Plan for 2007-2009. However, due to shortage
of professional staff at the GFAR Secretariat and lack of funding support to hire consultants as envisaged has not allowed for the development of these project proposals.

Staffing of GFAR Secretariat

The recruitment of the Budget Assistant / G6 Secretary at the GFAR Secretariat will be taken up along with other personnel issues when the GFAR Executive Secretary assumes office.

Staffing of professional staff envisaged in the GFAR Business Plan has not been possible due to the financial situation of GFAR.