21st Steering Committee Meeting

Montevideo, Uruguay

31 July 2008 – 1 August 2008

Draft Minutes of the 20th GFAR Steering Committee Meeting
Minutes of the 20th GFAR Steering Committee Meeting held in Beijing, China on 30th November and 1st December 2007

1. The Final agenda of the meeting is included as Annex 1.

2. The List of Members who attended the Meeting is included as Annex 2.

3. Welcome remarks by the Chair

The Chairman of the GFAR Steering Committee (SC), Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, welcomed the participants to the meeting. Dr El-Beltagy traced how the GFAR retreat at Alexandria, Egypt had resulted in the GFAR Business Plan for 2007-2009. He emphasized that the World Development Report 2008 and the FAO Independent External Evaluation clearly offers unique opportunities for enhancing GFAR’s role in ARD. He called for all GFAR members to jointly to pursue a more proactive stance in resource mobilization for ARD and GFAR. He congratulated Dr. Isabel Alvarez for her new appointment as Director of the Natural Resources Research and Extension Division of FAO. He also welcomed Dr. Mark Holderness as the incoming GFAR Executive Secretary.

4. Adoption of meeting agenda

The agenda for the 20th GFAR Steering Committee was approved.

5. Approval of minutes of the 19th SC meeting

The minutes of the 19th GFAR Steering Committee were approved without any amendment and are included as Annex 3.

Approved I Hamdan, Seconded Isabel Alvarez.

6. Action points report on 19th GFAR SC by Executive Secretary

The Action Taken on GFAR Steering Committee Recommendations Report by the GFAR Secretariat was presented by Dr. Ajit Maru (Annex 4). He presented, through a table, action taken on Steering Committee recommendations since 2004.

The entire action taken report was well received by members. Dr. Raj Paroda requested improved communication between the GFAR Secretariat and Regional Fora. He queried why the GFAR Secretariat Financial Officer position had not been filled, despite clear direction by the GFAR Steering Committee in its 19th Meeting. He also expressed concern at the absence of senior CGIAR representation in the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee members also noted the absence of Dr. Papa Seck, CGIAR representative on the GFAR Steering Committee, Ms. Barbara Becker and the Private Sector representative in the meeting.

Marc Debois requested that those items where follow up was needed be highlighted and details of the follow up action included in the final copy of the report.
The Chair, Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, responded that in some cases action was delayed due to the GFAR Secretariat operating with reduced staff and due to cash flow issues. He also mentioned that he has been trying to improve interaction with the CGIAR Science Council Secretariat. He indicated there would be an opportunity to discuss GFAR and CGIAR relations with the CG Scoping Team during its scheduled meeting with GFAR Steering Committee members.

Linkages with the European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD) and the ERA-ARD programme were discussed. Members felt that while GFAR did play an active role there were many communication gaps between GFAR and the ERA-ARD initiative in Europe that should have been filled by EFARD. It was recognized that GFAR and its constituents were instrumental in the ERA-ARD process. Strengthening North-South and South-South linkages should now be a priority for the Secretariat.

Marc Debois highlighted that the EC is planning to provide support for all regional fora and their interaction via GFAR in 2008-2010.

7. Report of the Chair on GFAR Activities

The Chair presented his report on activities he took up on behalf of GFAR. This presentation is available as Annex 5. Dr El-Beltagy emphasized that GFAR’s role is not to manage projects but to be a key player in influencing the wider agenda of agricultural research for development, across all partners.

- It was suggested that GFAR should prepare an issues paper on Biotechnology and Biosafety.
- A linkage was desired between GFAR and the Science Council’s Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) as research impact was of prime importance to GFAR’s advocacy role.
- That GFAR should consider issues of knowledge sharing and innovation in agriculture, building from the Triennial Conference outcomes..

8. GFAR Secretariat Activity Report for 2007

Dr. Ajit Maru presented the report on GFAR activities (Annex 6). He indicated the shortage of staff and a difficult cash flow situation for the GFAR Secretariat that had together significantly constrained activities. Nonetheless, the GFAR Secretariat had not only provided financial support mechanisms for work between the Regional Fora, but also technical and operational support for various activities of the GFAR Stakeholders in delivering the global agenda. Members of the Steering Committee appreciated and commended the GFAR Secretariat’s activities in spite of the severe constraints it faced.

Dr Monty Jones emphasized the role of the Regional Fora in providing support to the global agenda and helping to draft relevant papers, recognizing that the Global Forum is for everybody and requires everyone to play a role.
Dr. Maru also clarified that in addition to a Report on the Triennial Conference, GFAR had produced 2 technical reports: one specifically for CIDA for the support it had provided to GFAR and the other on GFAR’s activities over the period 2004 – 2006. The latter had provided a basis for discussion in developing the business plan.


The GFAR Financial report for 2007 was presented by Dr. Ajit Maru (Annex 7). Dr. Raj Paroda queried why funds were not released for Regional Forum activities. Dr. Maru explained that due to cash flow problems and low reserves in the FAO account, FAO did not allow disbursement of funds to the Regional Forums. Funds for AARINENA, APAARI and FARA regional forum activities were provided by the DURAS project and there would have been accounting difficulties for final reimbursement if not disbursed through FAO. For FORAGRO and CACAARI, which were not included in the DURAS project, funds could be made available from the GFAR account with ICARDA and this was done in case of FORAGRO.

Dr. Adel El-Beltagy explained that the Management Team had examined the cash flow situation and FAO did not allow release of funds if there was insufficient balance in the Trust Fund. He also explained that the cash flow situation had arisen because donors did not reimburse or had not paid their commitments in time.

Marc Debois stated that the European Commission had committed 460,000 Euro to GFAR in 2007 and this should be available to GFAR within a few days before the end of 2007. GFAR could expect a further 400,000 Euro in 2008.

Dr. Al-Bakri proposed that the Secretariat require more staff to deliver the tasks it was undertaking, a view supported by Ron Bonnet.

Dr. Raj Paroda requested details of the travel expenditure reported for the GFAR Secretariat. He also wanted to know the status of the USD 900,000 reserve that was referenced in the financial report made in the 18th Steering Committee.

1. GFAR Secretariat to provide details of travel expenditure in 2007 to the next Management Committee.

2. GFAR Secretariat to provide a Status Report to the next Management Committee on the USD 900,000 reserve that was referenced in the financial report made in the 18th Steering Committee meeting.

3. Documentation on the role and value of GFAR over the last decade would be very useful to making the case for support. The Secretariat should develop this and discuss with the Steering Committee members to produce a strong document.
10. Report of the 3rd Meeting of the GFAR Programme Committee

Dr. Raj Paroda reported on the 3rd Meeting of the GFAR Programme Committee (Minutes are attached as Annex 8). The report included recommendations on priority programme areas for GFAR in 2008.

GFAR’s activities in Climate Change were discussed, including consensus building, collaboration with the CGIAR System at a global level and with the Science Council and links with FAO. A joint event on Climate Change with the CGIAR has been proposed by FAO.

GFAR endorsed the Biofuel initiative of APAARI. The main role for GFAR was to influence policy in this area.

A new Global Challenge Programme on High Value Crops was discussed. This includes a number of international centres and the Global Facilitation Unit on Under Utilized Species is a partner. GFAR stakeholders need to find constructive linkage with this and the other Global Challenge Programmes under preparation.

Dr. Enrique Alarcón suggested that there should be opportunity for the Regional Fora and other stakeholders to present to the Steering Committee. The presentations in the Programme Committee should be related to Programme activities but presentation in the Steering Committee should be at a more strategic level. He also asked the Forum to consider policy issues including socio-economic dimensions of research.

There was a discussion on Science & Technology indicators and it was suggested that GFAR should not look only at indicators of investment in agriculture science but also returns on investment.

1. After consideration, the Steering Committee endorsed the Program Committee report with minor amendments
2. FARA was requested to share the report on its detailed study on CGIAR System-wide initiatives in Africa
3. The perspectives from the Global Forum should be strongly put to the CGIAR Executive Committee and GFAR should seek more proactive participation in CGIAR Challenge programs.
4. GFAR should recommend to the CGIAR that all new Challenge Programs of the CGIAR should have Stakeholder Committees, as was already the case for the Generation Challenge program
5. GFAR should recommend strengthening of the ASTI project and GFAR’s networks should engage more with the monitoring and evaluation of impact from research, including the development of regional capacities where required. This is essential to demonstrating the value of agricultural research to the wider community.
6. GFAR should also seek to engage with the process of Monitoring and Evaluation of the CGIAR and its Institutes.
GFAR Programme of Work and Budget for 2008

Dr Holderness introduced the programme of work planned for 2008 (Annexes 9 a & b). Activities would be dependent upon new funding into the GFAR system, but were derived from the Business Plan and had been prioritized by the Programme Committee.

Foremost will be GFAR’s role as a mechanism for global advocacy on behalf of agricultural research and development for the poor. This will particularly address:

- Adaptation for climate change and the implications of biofuels. These are areas where scientific knowledge is limited but often crucial to enabling future productivity.
- The value and impact of investment in ARD and within this, develop capacities among regional bodies to obtain the data required to convince investors and policy makers of the central importance of research processes.

Inter-regional learning was considered a crucial role for the Global Forum. The value of GFAR in strengthening North-South and South-South learning was strongly endorsed. Each region felt they had much to benefit from the sharing of experiences, which could greatly reduce the transaction cost of developing new approaches. Specific areas of priority were:

- Comparing experiences in linking farmers to markets
- Promoting new institutional arrangements to bridge the gaps between local and scientific knowledge.

Technical support to existing global partnership programmes was endorsed. However, the Committee now seeks specific learning from these experiences and expects the partners concerned to both take forward the programmes into implementation and to report back to the Global Forum on their subsequent successes and failures.

GFAR’s unique role in helping to create appropriate institutions for the future was clearly recognized. In 2008 this includes:

- strengthening the regional fora by improving their interaction with civil society and
- strengthening the voices of women and the young in reshaping institutions and developing appropriate curricula and career paths (in particular via YPARD linkage).

Global research programmes: GFAR has a critical role in ensuring that multi-partner programmes are linked effectively to both the intended users of their scientific outputs and their intended beneficiaries in rural communities. In 2008 this will begin with a revival of stakeholder representation in the Generation Challenge Programme and linkage with new Challenge programmes currently being fostered by the CGIAR.

Partnership programmes will continue to be fostered among diverse institutions with common concerns, each addressing themes of agreed importance and linked to at least 2 regional fora. A stakeholder proposal to revitalize conservation agriculture partnerships was a first priority, together with other nascent programmes previously endorsed.

GFAR will seek improved ways of transforming knowledge from one form to another, to overcome the communication and trust barriers between science and society. In 2008 the ICM4ARD programme will focus first on the harmonization and cross-searchability of information databases on agricultural science (FAO, CABI, CGIAR etc).
All of these activities are considered of great importance by GFAR’s constituents at regional and national levels as they seek to increase the relevance and value of agricultural research to meet real development needs. The extent to which they can be addressed in 2008 will depend very much on the efforts of all partners to mobilize financial resources and enable actions.

The 2008 programme was approved for action in line with the Programme Committee-defined priorities and for delivery as and when necessary funds were secured.

Address by Director, CGIAR

Dr. Ren Wang, Director, CGIAR was invited to meet with the GFAR Steering Committee members. He indicated the importance of GFAR for the CGIAR and requested that the Global Forum support the CGIAR in building close partnership with all ARD stakeholders, especially Civil Society and via GFAR participation in the CGIAR Change Management process (particularly in soliciting input from the South and from CSOs). He emphasized that the CGIAR sought to serve the needs of the smallholder farmers and he requested GFAR’s assistance in enabling the CGIAR to link effectively with the Regional and Sub-Regional Fora.

To stimulate discussion, the GFAR Chair presented a slide that indicated GFAR’s interface with the CGIAR. The international agricultural research centres are an important constituent of the Global Forum and the Forum wishes to see strong international research efforts, targeted at areas where there is a clear value addition to the work of national systems and addressing areas explicitly demanded and prioritized by stakeholders in the regions concerned.

Meetings with Review Team and Scoping Team, CGIAR

Dr Peter Core and colleagues from the consultancy company engaged with the Scoping Team, supported by representatives of the CGIAR Secretariat (Namita Datta and Harry Palmier), gave a presentation that formed the basis of a discussion with the Steering Committee on the Change Scoping process. Dr Core highlighted that the Change Management Process was an open approach, in which all aspects would be open for consideration.

The SC responded with their views on the interrelationships between GFAR and the CGIAR. Concerns were expressed by many in the Committee about how the international system had worked in the past, but there was also a commitment to establishing a strong and relevant international system that truly added value in areas where international effort was required and in the development of national capabilities. The Chair, GFAR, made a presentation of GFAR’s linkages and expectations from the CGIAR. He also summarized these points, together with outcomes of discussions with the Review Team, as a powerpoint to the CGIAR Executive Council (Annex 10).

In a separate session, Dr Elizabeth McAllister (Review Team Chair), Prof Jeff Waage, Ken Watson, GK Chadha and Karin Perkins from the Review Team discussed the Independent Review of the CGIAR. Dr McAllister summarized the terms of reference, objectives, specific focus and processes of the External Review (Annex 11).
With the Review Team, the SC discussed the linkage between the CGIAR and GFAR and their perceptions of the CGIAR as a partner to their respective constituencies. These responses were summarized in a powerpoint presented by the Chair (attached as Annex 12)

**Concluding remarks from Chair and next SC meeting**
The Chair thanked all those present for a rich and healthy discussion. He commended the Secretariat for their work under very difficult circumstances and again called for all stakeholders in GFAR to play an active and constructive role in ensuring the future success of this vital mechanism, that brought together all of agricultural research for development, so that it could meet the challenges facing the world into the future.

The next **Steering Committee meeting** was proposed to be alongside the FORAGRO meeting in Montevideo, July 2008. Dates and location will be confirmed by the Chair after further discussion.