



# WORKING WITH GFAR

Engagement principles – Version 1

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*In this document we propose the use of “members” and “partners” as per the definitions below.  
“Members” as used in this document is a new term for GFAR.*

- GFAR **members** are all the organizations that have joined and will join the GFAR network over the years, thereby pledging that they “share in our purpose” and are “aligned with GFAR’s Vision and Mission”.
- GFAR **partners** are organizations with which GFAR has or seeks to have formal or informal agreements, with high commitment level and strong impact on GFAR’s work (primarily multi-stakeholder organizations part of the Agricultural Innovation Systems, with overlapping or complementary mandate to GFAR’s, or organizations that can implement part of GFAR’s work, but also funding bodies and facilitating agencies).

When GFAR members start to work actively and formally with each other and with GFAR joining efforts in Collective Actions, they are considered partners.

## 1. GENERAL MEMBERS' ENGAGEMENT

### Membership and representation

- GFAR is a virtual organization with an open and inclusive nature, composed and driven by networks, fora and institutions from all stakeholder groups involved in agri-food research and innovation (see the constituencies represented in GFAR).
- GFAR is open to all local, national, regional and global organizations from the above constituencies who share and support GFAR's vision, mission and values.
- Members participate in the GFAR governance through the representatives of their constituency and the relevant Regional Forum in the Steering Committee and through the Members' Assembly; the governance mechanisms are established in the GFAR Charter.
- All members' representatives in the GFAR governance are accountable to their wider constituencies for their actions in GFAR and have mutual accountability with other sectors.
- There is no mandatory financial commitment for members, and this is a voluntary membership, not a legally binding arrangement.

### Engagement

- Core operating principles:  
GFAR is a convening and catalytic mechanism for change, a global organization composed and driven by its members. It is not an implementing actor: it operates through voluntary commitment towards a shared vision and engages members in "Collective Actions" (CA, see section 2) following the principles of accountability, additionality, complementarity, subsidiarity and volunteerism<sup>1</sup>.

- **Accountability:** GFAR links research and innovation, from any source, with the users of their products. It provides a framework for holding researchers and service providers accountable to addressing needs and priorities as articulated by stakeholders, particularly those of resource-poor smallholder farmers and poor rural communities.
- **Additionality:** GFAR supports programmes and projects that aim specifically to add value to existing efforts and to what individual organizations can do on their own.

<sup>1</sup> The consistent application of the additionality, complementarity and subsidiarity principles would entail a clear mapping and the full knowledge of the agri-food ecosystem and related capacities and mandates of all actors: although efforts are being made to map such an ecosystem, results are sketchy, due to both different mapping perspectives and the diverse, multi-layered and ever-changing nature of the ecosystem. Therefore, such principles are considered and applied to the extent allowed by our knowledge and understanding of the ecosystem.

- **Complementarity:** GFAR strives to develop and strengthen the global agri-food research and innovation system by drawing on the value of the diversity and complementary strengths of all stakeholders involved.
- **Subsidiarity:** Planning and management of GFAR Collective Actions should take place at the most appropriate level at which they can be effectively and efficiently implemented, respecting and leveraging regional and local mandates and capacities.
- **Volunteerism:** GFAR is an open and inclusive forum, in which membership is voluntary, and which engages any member who wishes to align with GFAR's vision and mission.

- Steering Committee members should, with the support of the GFAR Secretariat, strive to connect with the constituency that they champion: they inform, involve, and strengthen the constituency.
- The Regional Fora (RF) are a special constituency: they are multi-stakeholder convenors like GFAR at the regional level. They are responsible for ensuring the engagement of all relevant stakeholder groups (the GFAR constituencies) in their region, with the special role of engaging, and supporting the inclusive transformation of, the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS).

Due to their special nature of embodying the regional dimension of GFAR, the Regional Fora are not regular members but Partners in GFAR.

- The role of SC members, both constituency and regional representatives, entails: seeking to organize and further develop or strengthen the constituency; ensuring that adequate information is fed back to the constituency; bring forward strategic issues in agri-food research and innovation, which are of interest to their constituencies, to the attention of the Steering Committee; Promote the involvement of his/her constituency in discussion of the strategic issues that are addressed by GFAR.
- Members engage in GFAR both directly and through their representative networks and fora. Direct engagement for disintermediated and networked sharing of knowledge and information is welcome and encouraged, while for engagement in actions, members are referred to their Regional Forum or constituency representative.

In particular, the Regional Fora are the privileged channel for national and local actors to engage with GFAR and vice versa.

The Regional Fora have a special engagement role in co-managing, together with the Secretariat, the GFAR Innovation Initiative<sup>2</sup> (GII) towards decentralization and local impact. The initiative will support national and local collective actions selected for their transformative potential and the grounding of existing Collective Actions.

*(These GII actions will follow the same approach as the Collective Actions at the local level)*

- **Members work together through Collective Actions, the overarching principle guiding GFAR's work.**
- When GFAR members start to work actively and formally with each other and with GFAR joining efforts in Collective Actions, they become reciprocal partners and partners in GFAR.
- GFAR promotes the Partnership Principles as a way of collaborating for all actors working with each other, especially in the Collective Actions.

### Partnership Principles in short

1. Objectives are determined together, and research questions/ideas/priorities, approaches and methods are identified jointly
2. Networks and communication platforms are set in a way to ensure transparent and easy access to information by all
3. Responsibilities are negotiated and shared effectively.
4. Joint activities promote mutual learning, also on shortcomings and failures.
5. Collective research capacities are enhanced
6. Profits and merits are pooled in an equitable manner.
7. Results are disseminated broadly and applied.
8. Outcomes are secured, and sustainability of the processes is granted.
9. Flexible application of the criteria to the context is required based on local context.

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<sup>2</sup> The GFAR Innovation Initiative (GII) aims to strengthen regional/sub-regional AR&I organizations with the reform of their governance, strategic planning and management of change, as well as support national and local actions selected for their transformative potential and the grounding of Collective Actions through small grants, contributing to decentralization and impact at the local level.

## Funding

- GFAR is not a funding body
- Based on availability of resources and prioritization of actions by the SC and Assembly, GFAR can allocate seed funds for Collective Actions and for the Innovation Initiative co-managed with the Regional Fora.
- GFAR supports joint resource mobilization with members based on concrete proposals, primarily in Collective Actions.
- The Steering Committee is mandated to make decisions on the allocation of resources to GFAR programs and members based on transparency and impartiality, recognizing and avoiding any conflicts of interest among Steering Committee members.

## Benefits and commitments

Participation in GFAR enables members to:

- Share their work, interests and visions with a world-wide community and join others in addressing what concerns them
- Shape and engage in Collective Actions for change, through the processes and governance of GFAR
- Influence agenda globally, on research and innovation in agriculture, food and rural development

Participation in GFAR creates avenues for:

- Access to global and regional knowledge as well as access to knowledge platforms, expert capacities and solutions, and funding opportunities
- Networking far beyond organizations' own access, reaching vertically and horizontally around the globe
- Inter-regional dialogues for mutual learning, collective identification of challenges and potential solutions
- South-South, South-North and triangular partnerships in action to improve, widen, and scale out the impact on the ground
- Equitable engagement of all agricultural actors at all levels, through demand-driven inclusive partnerships, empowered multi-stakeholder Collective Actions and national/local projects in the framework of existing Collective Actions through the Innovation Initiative.
- Recognition and wider regional and global visibility
- Solid collective advocacy and influencing of policy making to address urgent development needs

Members commit to:

- Realize and maintain their alignment with GFAR’s Vision and Mission, which they implicitly declare by joining GFAR
- Recognize the shared responsibility and accountability of GFAR members, who are mutually accountable for the performance of their Collective Actions
- Promote the value and image of GFAR in relevant environments and recognize the contribution of GFAR and partners to joint results
- Follow GFAR governance and accountability mechanisms for the performance of their Collective Actions

## 2. ENGAGEMENT IN COLLECTIVE ACTIONS

### Collective Action principles

- GFAR Collective Actions are an innovative partnership mechanism in which diverse members agree to partner and commit and generate resources to work together in complementary roles towards pro-poor change in agri-food systems
- CAs are initiated and co-created by three or more members, always including small-scale producers and with a particular focus on women and youth
- CAs address a recognized problem/demand/need that cannot be addressed by one organization alone and impacts on the inclusive and equitable transformation of agri-food systems
- CAs adopt a work plan and produce applicable, replicable, specific, measurable, attainable and time bound results
- Partners in a CA need to directly 'own' the agenda themselves and commit their own efforts and resources, supported by catalytic actions of the Secretariat where appropriate
- CAs follow the GFAR principles of complementarity, volunteerism, accountability and subsidiarity. These principles apply to CAs as follows:
  - Complementarity between the competitive edge of each partner as reflected in roles and responsibilities
  - Volunteerism: partners agree to commit their own resources
  - Downward accountability: CAs address needs of resource-poor farmers and poor rural communities and CA partners are accountable to them
  - Subsidiarity: the general principle that activities should be conducted at the level at which they can be effectively and efficiently implemented and where results need to be applied remains valid for Collective Actions. However, specifically:
    - Respecting and leveraging regional mandates, Collective Actions directly prioritized and seed-funded by GFAR are preferably conducted at the global or regional level, and act as learning laboratories at this level.
    - Actions at national and local level are implemented through projects in the framework of existing Collective Actions and funded through the Innovation Initiative co-managed with the Regional Fora.
- In CAs, partners agree to adopt, follow, and monitor adherence to the Partnership Principles.



## Operationalization and Funding

- Proposals for Collective Actions come out of dialogues enabled by GFAR knowledge hubs, events and platforms, where diverse actors identify shared concerns and potential solutions and recognize the benefits of working collectively.
- Priorities for collective actions are determined by the Members' Assembly, and in the interim by the Steering Committee that acts on its behalf. Priorities can also be set by funders as part of a program they have agreed to finance.
- CAs can be proposed to GFAR once at least three members agree on a Concept Note which proposes an action in line with all the principles above. Members can also propose new activities under an existing CA. In the proposal, members agree to commit and generate resources together.
- The GFAR Secretariat, in its role to assist the Steering Committee, provides advice and feedback to proponents and can pre-screen proposals according to all the criteria above.
- CAs are prioritized by GFAR Partners through the Steering Committee according to all the principles above and considering the topics that have been prioritized by the Members' Assembly and / or by funders. Proposals for additional activities under an existing CA can be prioritized directly by the GFAR Secretariat.
- The role of the GFAR Secretariat in CAs is that of catalyzing, facilitating and tracking the Actions, more specifically:
  - Facilitate and create synergies among the partners
  - Facilitate information exchange
  - Ensuring adherence to, and maintenance of, a core set of principles for collective action
  - Link the constituents to expertise that is relevant to the topics / issues, including the funders
  - Facilitate the framework for measuring and monitoring the outputs / outcomes of initiatives and draw lessons
- GFAR can provide catalytic funds to start the mobilization towards the Collective Actions, and seed funding to maintain efforts in the initial phase. However, GFAR is not a donor and does not guarantee such funding.
- GFAR may establish time windows and seed-funding ceilings for calls for Collective Action proposals, both for new topics and for new activities under an established Collective Action.
- Beyond possible ceilings, the amount of seed funding depends on available resources and on negotiations between partners, and between partners and GFAR, based on effort needed, effort contributed in kind, and resources committed by each partner.
- If prioritized by the Steering Committee, proposed actions can be recognized as GFAR Collective Actions even if seed funding is not needed or not available and partners agree to bring the Action forward.
- Projects at national or local level in the framework of existing Collective Actions can be funded in the context of the proposed Initiative on Mainstreaming Co-Innovation co-managed with the Regional Fora, through competitive selection and based on availability of resources.

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