

# GFAR MEMBERSHIP VALIDATION AND MAPPING EXERCISE REPORT



The Global Forum on Agricultural  
Research and Innovation (GFAR)  
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## 1. Executive summary

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation (GFAR) is a unique global multi-stakeholder platform driven by 900+ Members, all of which are actors in agricultural Research and Innovation (R&I) from (currently) 13 constituencies. GFAR is the apex global forum for agrifood R&I institutions, including thematic networks. Thanks to its inclusive nature that incorporates all regions, GFAR captures a diversity of interests, capacities and perspectives contributing to one desired outcome: promoting an approach to agricultural R&I where small-scale producers (SSPs) are key actors and co-innovators meaningfully participating in priority setting and governance of R&I programs.

GFAR integrates the Regional Fora, the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), public and private organizations in the agrifood sector at global level to broker knowledge by connecting them with international Agricultural Research and Innovation institutions (ARIs) - such as FAO, IFAD and CGIAR - based on its Partnership Principles (PPs) and by facilitating and promoting Collective Actions (CAs) while supporting (co-)innovation with and for small-scale producers' (SSP) innovations.

Hence, the composition of the GFAR membership implies a great complexity that is considered in the present report. After a few years of "hibernation" GFAR conducted a validation process and mapping exercise of its membership in 2022 to make sure that all 661 members were still with GFAR. The present report presents the results of this validation and mapping exercise. Additionally, the report aims to advise GFAR's Steering Committee on how to engage with (future) members.

The report provides some background information, explaining why and how the members validation process was initiated and how it was structured. It then focuses on showcasing the current number of GFAR members while highlighting its regional distribution as well as scope (global / regional / national) and analysing and reassessing GFAR's constituency classification system.

The project was kicked off following GFAR's reboot in 2021 and aimed at consolidating the network overall. The first step consisted in validating both long-standing GFAR members and new applicants by abiding to well-defined criteria and guidelines established by the Secretariat. The validation thus focused on confirming applicants' contact details and online presence while also confirming that their vision/mission was aligned with GFAR's.

The second step focused on assessing how to best speed up and improve the enrolment and registration process. In this regard, the Secretariat worked on reviewing and harmonizing the membership database and classification system while revamping the online membership application form.

The third step, the mapping exercise, captured the precise distribution of members across the globe.

The report concludes with recommendations for GFAR's governing bodies based on the evidence of the validation and mapping exercise.

The validation process and mapping exercise will also serve as a basis for one of GFAR's new initiatives – i.e., setting up and launching a new membership engagement platform including Knowledge and Learning Hubs (KLHs).

## 2. Member's validation process

In addition to its long standing 661 members, GFAR has registered, during the past few years (approximately from January 2020 to December 2022), more than 200 interested organizations in joining the network, more specifically, 270 entities – as of December 2022 – that have contacted the Secretariat asking to become a member. Following its reboot in 2021, GFAR not only accepted new applicants but also validated and mapped existing members. A well-structured validation process was initiated, with the objective of being as inclusive as possible by welcoming the largest possible number of applicants. Throughout the validation process of the many applicants, the main focus was to confirm the correctness of the information received by the Secretariat and submitted through the online application form, i.e., the contact details and online information sources, such as social media presence and/or active websites. This first step allowed the Secretariat to further analyse the data collected and to check whether the candidates' mission and vision were in line with GFAR's.

Despite the Secretariat's efforts to welcome all applicants, 29 entities could not be validated because they did not meet GFAR's criteria and requirements:

- Providing the Secretariat with verified core information – e.g., focal point's contact information; online presence and level of activity; official documents and charters.
- Showcasing and sharing their mission/vision explaining how and why it aligns with GFAR's.
- Elaborating on their work and field of expertise while explaining how it impacts and relates to the agri-food sector as well as to innovation.

Almost all new applications met these criteria. Only 3,2% of the applications did not while 7,4% remain as pending, which implies that more information is required from the latter.

Following the validation process, the Secretariat divided applicants into three distinct groups based on the information received and the data gathered:

- To be accepted: applicants who have successfully filled in and submitted their forms and are simply waiting to receive the welcoming email.
- To be contacted for more information: applicants who, despite having successfully submitted their forms, are still missing information that needs to be validated.
- Unvalidated applications: applications that have not successfully passed the validation process. This is often due to a lack of information and/or connection with GFAR, its membership and its objectives.

The above-mentioned categories contribute to better understanding the validation process.

In a next step, GFAR aims to identify the level of activity (active or passive members) in order to give the appropriate access to GFAR's Knowledge and Learning Hubs.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The release of GFAR's Hivebrite platform aims to reconnect and strengthen its membership.

### 3. Results and immediate actions taken

The validation and mapping of GFAR's Membership highlighted some inefficiencies related to the use and management of data. These inefficiencies were immediately addressed as follows.

#### 3.1. Improving the application form

The application form represents the first contact point with potential members as well as the most important source of information. Therefore, it should be as accurate and comprehensive as possible. The Secretariat improved the following elements of the old application:

- Key fields were highlighted as mandatory to ensure applicants submit the required information.
- The application form was simplified overall by having certain sections automatically filled out when filling in mandatory fields.

As a result, information gaps and data errors were addressed while making the entire process quicker and more user-friendly.

#### 3.2. Harmonizing the membership database

While the application form had changed gradually over time, the data gathered were not harmonized. As a result, there were discrepancies between the data available for existing and new members. The information heterogeneity was also due to members not being able to access and update their information themselves.

Consequently, GFAR is preparing the launch a new engagement platform which will not only host a fully connected and up-to-date database but will allow members fully to update themselves their core information through their profile pages. The soon-to-be-launched platform will also include the Knowledge and Learning Hubs (KLHs) which will provide members with a space for knowledge sharing and learning, while spurring interaction and engagement.

Hence, while GFAR Secretariat has harmonized its database as much as possible – and continues to do so as new applications come in – members will be able to update their own data. This is a win-win for both the Secretariat and GFAR members: GFAR will have a homogenous and reliable database while members will be to use the database for networking purposes.

#### 3.3. Reviewing the regional set-up

GFAR's membership database was previously subdivided into 8 different regions: Sub-Saharan Africa; Southeast Asia & Pacific; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; West Asia and North Africa; Central Asia and Caucasus; North America; East Asia. This classification did however not align with the regions as represented by the Regional Fora.

To avoid data discrepancies, it was therefore decided to adapt the structure to the regions of the Regional Fora, with the addition of the North American region<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, the new structure looks as follows:

- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Asia & Pacific
- Europe
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- West Asia & North Africa
- Central Asia and Caucasus
- North America

### 3.4. Reaching out to and engaging with key actors

Based on the validation and mapping exercise, the outreach to new members will target specific groups of organizations that are part of GFAR's constituencies but not yet members, such as some NARS, but also women and youth organizations. The approach will try to be as effective and efficient as possible by setting up a well-structured mailing system that will reach as many potential members as possible. Following first contact, a one-on-one tailored approach will be implemented to better assist and support candidates who might require additional guidance and support.

### 3.5. Transferring data to the membership platform

With all GFAR members validated, the next step is to ensure the successful data migration to GFAR's new engagement platform.

The new platform, which includes the KLHs, will represent a safe space where GFAR's network can prosper and grow by having members actively engage and interact with each other. The platform will promote and facilitate discussions within GFAR's community to foster collaboration and gather feedback – a user-friendly tool through which GFAR can promote knowledge sharing as well as pass on know-how and best practices.

By launching the platform, GFAR will achieve one of its main objectives, which is to establish and maintain a fully connected and up-to-date database in its system while providing members with a free space for knowledge sharing through which they can actively engage and interact with each other. Nevertheless, data management will be an ongoing task for GFAR's Secretariat to perform including creating an offline directory as a back-up.

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<sup>2</sup> The global character of GFAR also includes the intrinsic representation of the North American region, although no Regional Forum is currently active in the region.

## 4. Mapping exercise

This mapping exercise was carried out after the membership validation process was completed.

By merging all previous and latest information, the Secretariat identified four main mapping areas of interest:

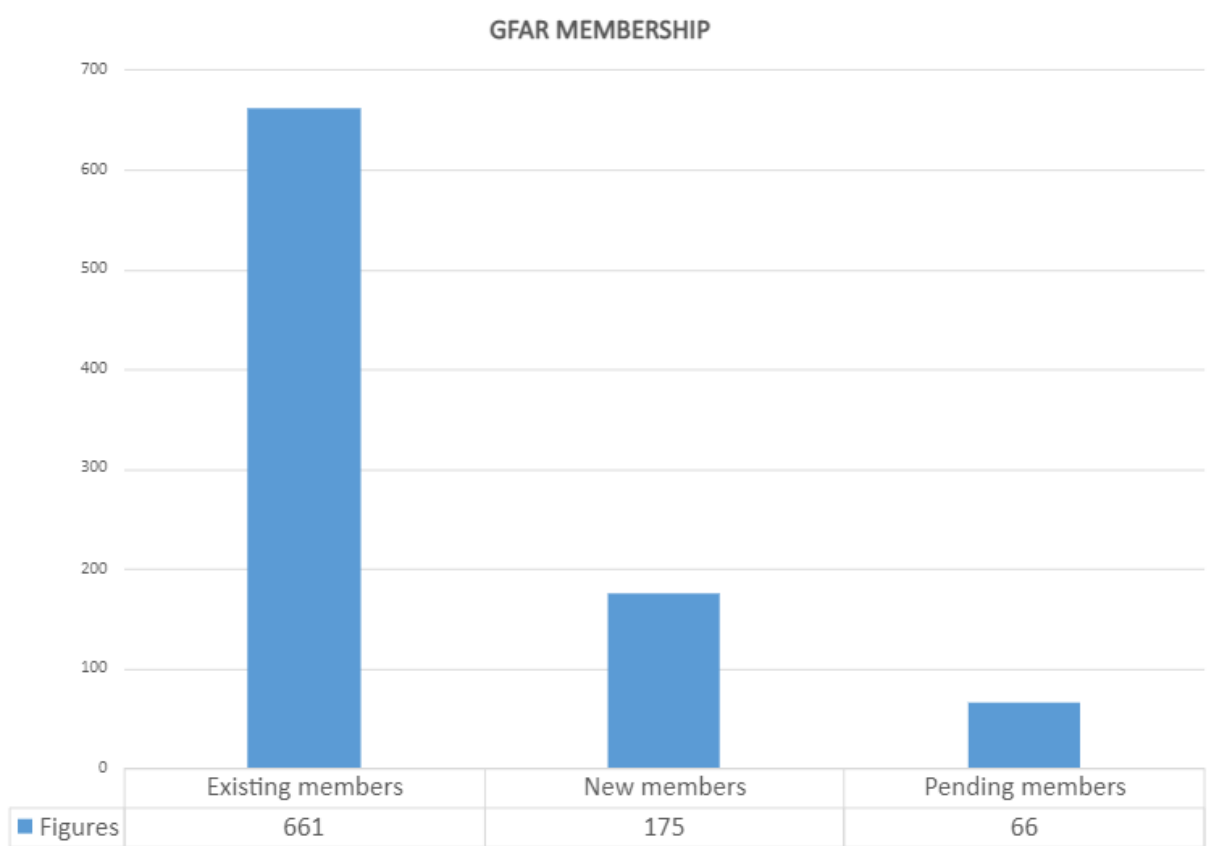
- Number of members (overall)
- Regional distribution
- Constituency representation
- Scope of action (global / regional / national)

The latter three categories are of great relevance for GFAR to better understand the composition of its membership.

### 4.1. Number of members

GFAR's membership consists of long standing, recently validated members and new applicants / candidates who still need to provide the Secretariat with mandatory core information.

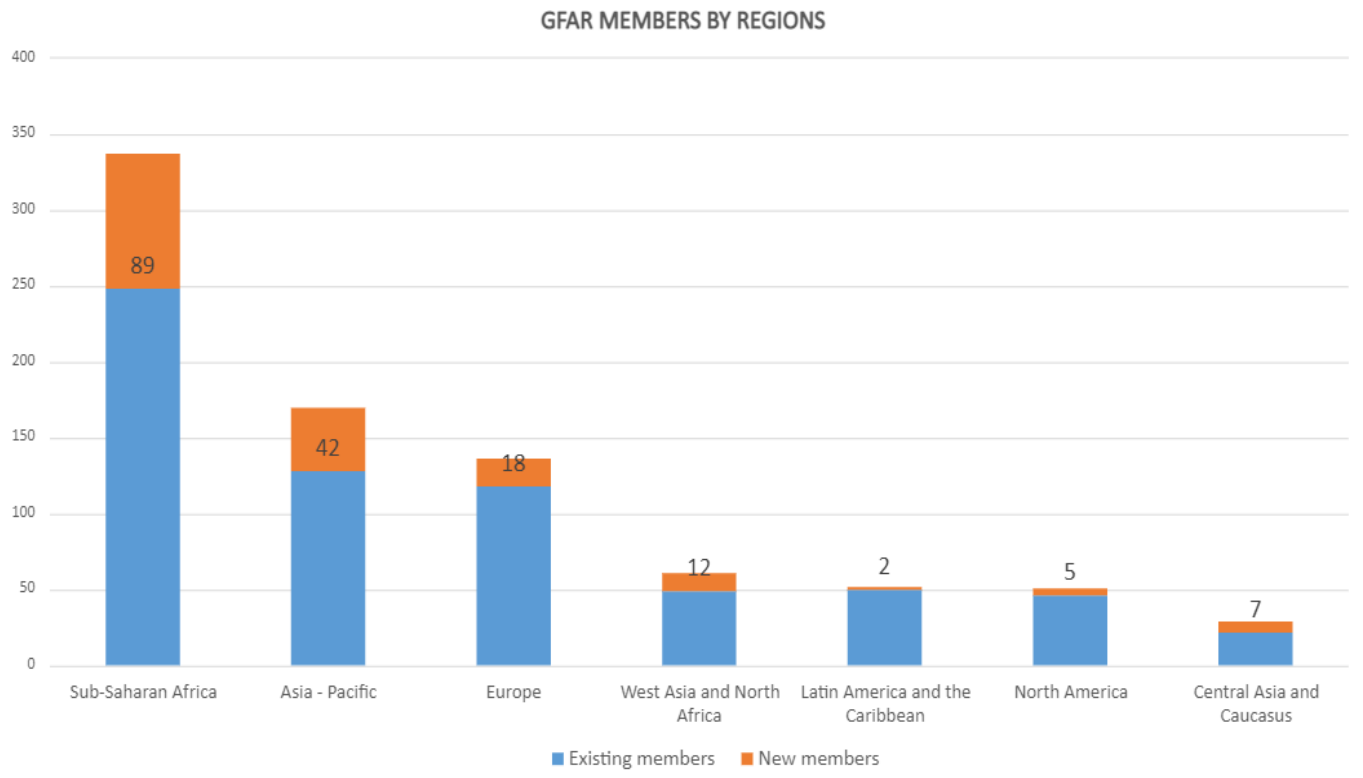
As shown in the following chart, GFAR's existing membership consisted of 661 members prior to the validation process that added a total amount of 175 new members. In addition to this, more than 66 applications are still being analysed, giving a potential membership of more than 900 members.



## 4.2. Regional distribution of GFAR members

As previously mentioned, GFAR’s new regional distribution comprises a total of 7 regions: Sub-Saharan Africa; Asia & Pacific; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; West Asia and North Africa; Central Asia and Caucasus; North America.

The regional classification of members refers to the region where their headquarters are located. In this sense, the regional chart does not necessarily imply where the members are currently operating, as this can cover multiple and distinct areas.



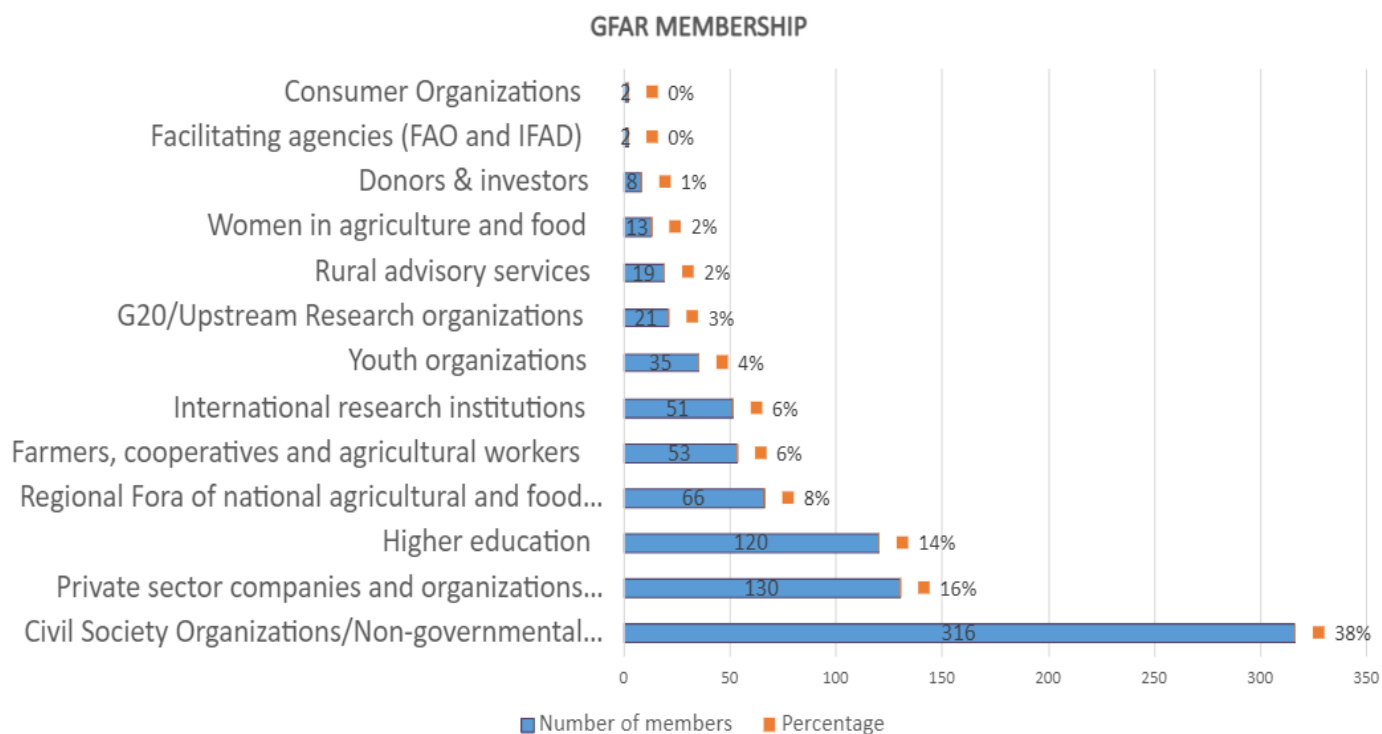
The table below shows that more than half of GFAR's members is based in two regions, Sub Saharan Africa and Asia & Pacific. It is also in these regions that most of GFAR's new members are coming from.



GFAR Region	Existing members	New members	Members 2023	% Increase	% GFAR total membership
Sub Saharan Africa	248	89	337	35,88%	40,3%
Asia & Pacific	128	42	170	32,81%	20,3%
Europe	118	18	136	15,25%	16,2%
West Asia and North Africa	49	12	61	24,48%	7,3%
North America	46	5	51	10,87%	6,1%
Latin America and the Caribbean	50	2	52	4%	6,2%
Central Asia and Caucasus	22	7	29	31,81%	3,4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 4.3. GFAR's constituencies

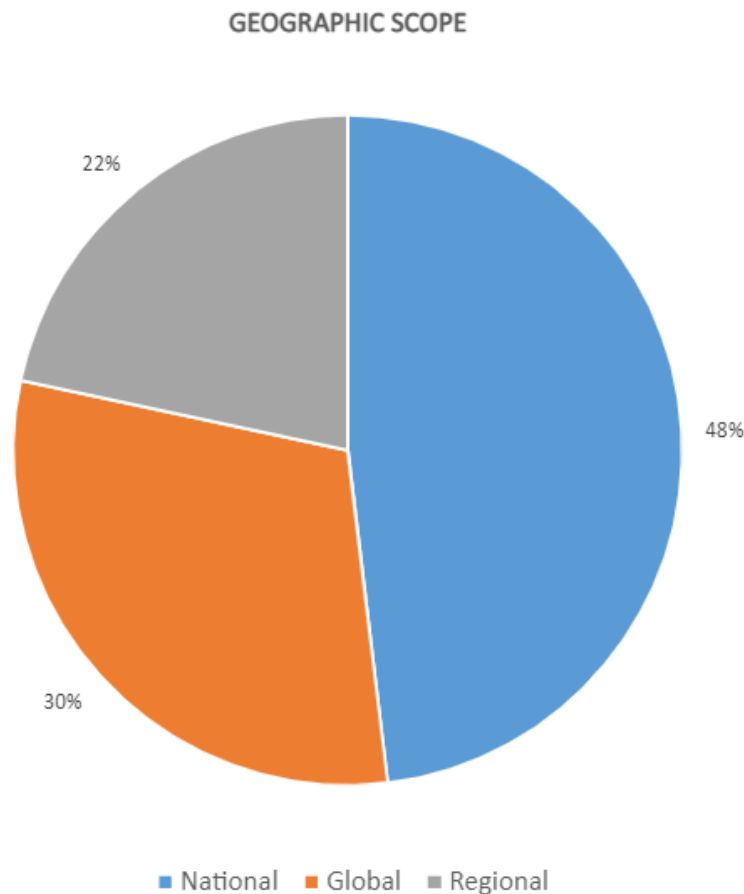
GFAR consists of 13 constituencies, all relevant for and interested in the transformation of the agrifood system. The graph below shows how GFAR's membership is spread across the current 13 constituencies.



It can be seen that almost half of the GFAR members are part of the constituency Civil Society Organizations / Non-governmental Organizations in agriculture, food & rural development while the constituency of consumer organizations currently has the smallest number of members. This is however not necessarily a problem as such since one global organization can represent many member organizations.

#### 4.4. Scope of action of GFAR members (global, regional, national)

The scope of GFAR's members' activities is mainly national (48%) while global and regional scope account for 52% as shown in the graph below. This does not contradict GFAR's global role because all GFAR members have been taken into account equally and there are of course many more national organizations than global organizations. On the contrary: the fact that GFAR members' activities take place at all levels / with global, regional, and national scope shows impressively that GFAR is successful in practicing a multilevel approach.



## 5. Recommendations for the governing bodies of GFAR

As the validation and mapping exercises have shown, GFAR's membership has increased substantively from 661 to 863, having added 175 new members. The following recommendations aim to highlight current issues that should be addressed to further improve the management of the membership database and the broad membership of GFAR.

### 5.1. Differentiating between members and partners

The validation of members process and the upcoming launch of GFAR's new membership engagement platform including KLHs raises the question of how to be able to identify and differentiate partners from members. To improve data management and efficiency, the Secretariat suggests - in line with GFAR's Engagement Principles - the following definitions:

- GFAR **members** are all the organizations that have joined / will join GFAR and who state that they are aligned with GFAR's Vision and Mission and share its purpose<sup>3</sup>.
- GFAR **partners** are organizations with which GFAR has formal agreements: co-facilitators, funding partners, partners in Collective Actions etc.).

### 5.2. Reviewing and updating constituencies' structure effectively

Following the membership validation and the data gathered, the Secretariat recommends reviewing and updating GFAR's constituencies as follows:

#### A. To be removed:

- *Facilitating Agencies*: FAO and IFAD are the only organizations in this category, which is not a constituency per se. It is therefore suggested to include both co-facilitating agencies in a new constituency "Governments / International Organisations".
- *G20/Upstream Research*: This constituency was created several years ago at a time when GFAR had strong linkages with the G20 and contributed to the language used in declarations about farmer needs and priorities to be captured as drivers for priority-setting in agricultural research for development (AR4D). This has changed since a while. Furthermore, distinguishing "upstream research", referring to research conducted in the G20 Global North countries as if it were separate from research conducted in the rest of the world, and especially in the Global South, could be seen as suggesting that the former is of higher quality, which would be a misleading and unintended connotation. It was therefore decided to merge this constituency with the "Research institutes" category.

#### A. To be renamed or readapted:

- *Donors & Investors into funding partners*: The change to "Funding partners" was agreed based on terminology currently in use by FAO and other International Organizations.

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<sup>3</sup> GFAR's Charter states that "to be recognized as members in the Global Forum, organizations should communicate their alignment with GFAR's vision and mission to the Secretariat and request to become GFAR Partners."

- *Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) into Other CSOs*: Given the overlap with other existing constituencies, the new constituency will focus only on organisations who are not covered by the other related constituencies, i.e., women, youth, farmers, and consumer organizations.

**B. To be newly created:**

- *Governments/International Organisations*: This constituency will be particularly relevant to GFAR since it contributes to identifying those governments that are interested in becoming partners, as well as those International Organizations that collaborate with and support GFAR's mission. For instance, the European Commission (EC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), etc.

By adopting the previous modifications, GFAR aims to improve and better organize its members in their constituencies as recommended by UNEP's Collaborative Framework for Food Systems Transformation in the report "Rethinking our food systems – a Guide for multi-stakeholder collaboration"<sup>4</sup>, which stresses the importance of proper representation and involvement of all stakeholders of the food system.

Another recommendation for GFAR's governing bodies is to have a dedicated constituency for National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS). This is all the more important in the follow-up to the "Bangkok Declaration" through which the Regional Fora established a Global NARS Consortium (GNC) and entrusted it to GFAR.

### 5.3. Global NARS Consortium

The Bangkok Declaration that was recently signed by all Regional Fora in GFAR which establishes a Global NARS Consortium (GNC) in GFAR (Bangkok, March 2023) provides the official definition of NARS: "NARS include all public and semi-public, stakeholders involved in research and development in a country, including National Agricultural Research Institutes, universities, and government laboratories<sup>5</sup>. Many analysts and institutions also include private, NGO and farmers' organization research units in a broader concept of NARS."

National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) have always been considered a key part of GFAR and will continue to be critical for the establishment of a GNC. They are currently included in the constituency *Regional Fora of national agricultural and food research and development institutions and regional government agencies*. In order to make sure that the GNC has full legitimacy it is important to have a dedicated NARS constituency which does not include other organisations. This will also help to see

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<sup>4</sup> Collaborative Framework for Food Systems Transformation. A multi-stakeholder pathway for sustainable food systems (June 3, 2019) <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/knowledge-centre/resources/collaborative-framework-food-systems-transformation-multi-stakeholder>

<sup>5</sup> GFAR Regional Fora to establish a Global NARS Consortium (GNC) in GFAR: <https://www.gfar.net/news/gfar-regional-fora-establish-global-nars-consortium-gnc-gfar>

which NARS are already part of GFAR's network and which ones should be targeted in its outreach activities as well as enrolment strategies.

#### 5.4. Individuals

As for individuals, there is no specific category, but it is recommended to also provide room for GFAR friends and supporters (e.g., a "Friends of GFAR" category).

#### 5.5. New structure of constituencies

Based on the above, the recommended new constituency structure would look as follows.

CONSTITUENCIES	
1	Regional Fora of NARS (TBD <sup>6</sup> )
2	Farmers organizations and cooperatives
3	Governments / International Organisations
4	Private sector
5	Youth organisations
6	Women organisations
7	Research institutes
8	Funding partners
9	Higher Education organisations
11	Rural Advisory Services
12	Consumer organisations
13	Other CSOs / ONGs

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<sup>6</sup> The title of this constituency is purely indicative and does not necessarily represent an endorsement of any kind.

## 6. Conclusion

GFAR has attracted many new members over the last years and continues receiving new applications on a daily basis. During the phase of “hibernation” applications were however left pending. After its reboot in 2021, GFAR's Secretariat:

1. validated all existing members and all new applications,
2. mapped GFAR's membership which corresponds to approximately 900 members
3. drafted recommendations to the Steering Committee

First, the validation process carefully screened and filtered potential members. It focused on validating the information submitted by applicants, being especially relevant the contact details and online information resources, such as social media presence and/or active websites, while also paying attention whether their vision/mission was aligned with GFAR's.

Second, the Secretariat immediately addressed certain issues that needed improvement such as the online membership application form and the regional set-up.

Third, the mapping exercise showed the precise distribution of members across the globe depending on their constituency, geographic distribution, and scope, as illustrated by the above charts and graphs. The data show that more than half of GFAR's members is based in two regions, Sub Saharan Africa and Asia & Pacific and that most of the new applications also stem from these regions.

Finally, the report recommends agreeing on a revised list of constituencies with the aim of better reflecting GFAR's current membership landscape.

In conclusion, the validation and mapping process has helped to ascertain GFAR of its membership, to expand its network and reach and to pave the way to GFAR's soon-to-be-launched online membership engagement platform including KLHs. The present paper also leads the way for GFAR to work closely with its members and partners to establish a more equally represented, balanced and representative global network. This will confer a higher level of legitimacy to GFAR as a “network of networks.”