



Key Points Summary for GFAR Steering Committee members to share with their constituency

Summary of the SC meeting

During a dynamic two-day meeting on 8-9 February, members of the renewed GFAR Steering Committee (SC) met together at the GFAR host organization, FAO in Rome, to set the agenda for this unique global forum on agri-food research and innovation, towards helping to meet the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). GFAR has undergone a major transformation and now brings together a vibrant and fast-growing community of self-declared Partners in GFAR (presently 433 Partner organizations), who recognize that these complex challenges can only be met through working together for success. GFAR is a global network for action and the Steering Committee now comprises 34 elected representatives, from across 13 sectors involved in agricultural research and innovation at international, regional and local levels: farmers and agricultural workers, civil society organizations, private sector, women organizations, youth organizations, international public research, regional fora of public agricultural research and policy bodies, advanced research institutions/G20, rural advisory services, higher education, donor/investment, consumer organizations and GFAR's facilitating UN agencies.

Through the meeting, SC members agreed the key areas of focus to be addressed in their next GFAR Medium-Term-Plan and set out ideas and alternatives on the forms of partnership and means of communication needed for collective action and advocacy in these focal areas. The SC addressed the following needs, using highly participatory processes:

Creating the GFAR community

This first meeting of the newly formed GFAR Steering Committee introduced both new and renewed members and the vast constituencies they represent in this network of networks. Preliminary events facilitated interaction and engagement among the new and renewed SC members and demonstrated the rich diversity of the GFAR community and the opportunities that this brings. Meeting sessions helped build a common understanding of GFAR's role and purpose towards meeting the SDGs, and how each SC member can best mobilize their respective constituencies, with others, into their desired GFAR collective actions. The importance of the SC's role was well expressed by the members, e.g.:

- *GFAR is the mechanism to join efforts and build bridges, for research and communities to work together.* Ren Wang, FAO
- *GFAR offers a fantastic platform for multi-sectoral solutions to complex problems.* Shantanu Mathur, IFAD
- *The impact the EC is looking for is not in terms of increasing productivity, but in terms of how research and innovation translate into less poverty, less hunger.* Roberto Aparicio-Martin, EC
- *Research in itself cannot achieve the development outcomes set by the SDGs. The same for extension or any other sector alone. Teaming up with other constituencies they can change the whole equation, influence policies, and achieve real impact.* Juan Lucas Restrepo, GFAR Chair

Learning from past and current experiences

By discussing and learning from the challenges encountered in previous networked actions, through different group work activities, the Committee recognized that the SDG challenges could not be

addressed by any one constituency alone and that ingredients for success included ownership of a common purpose, inspiring champions, clear and integrated implementation pathways to demonstrable impacts, mutual recognition and integrated resourcing of each involved constituency, and equitable partnership valuing all required sectors. This process helped SC members clearly identify their roles and responsibilities in fostering the community of GFAR partners as a global action network, based on the new Charter and Partners' Assembly, the current MTP and the planning processes of GCARD3. These elements and comments will be compiled by the Secretariat in the upcoming three months as a draft GFAR Partnership Strategy to be agreed by the SC.

The frame for our collective actions as GFAR

Based on the challenges determined through the GCARD3 process and the need to deliver towards the SDGs, the SC identified the following GFAR key focus areas in 2018-2021. These are key constraints to greater impact from agricultural research and innovation around the world and all require collective action for success:

1. **Enable and empower sustainable rural communities:** Poor communities have little say in their own future, nor the innovations needed to get there. Communities need to be able to determine their own futures, through tools such as foresight, farmers' rights advocacy and capacity development, and to drive and 'own' the research, innovation, policies and support needed to achieve their desired sustainable futures.
2. **Increasing knowledge flow for development impact:** Innovation systems operate as complex webs, yet links between their elements are often fragmented and disconnected. Multi-stakeholder research and innovation platforms must be fostered at different levels, to create more effective and equitable systems, capable of collectively generating, accessing and using the knowledge and resources required for successfully meeting the SDGs.
3. **Supporting transformative learning and youth leadership development:** Neither formal nor informal education are as yet meeting the needs of youth facing global challenges. Comprehensive transformative learning and leadership development schemes are needed, to develop not only academic skills, but also intellectual, spiritual and emotional development, to inspire and equip our youth with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet their aspirations, access resources and mobilize themselves to create sustainable rural development.
4. **Changing value systems and metrics to deliver the SDGs:** "Agricultural Productivity" has long been the core driver of agricultural research and innovation. However, the SDGs set out much wider development objectives and indicators, all impacted by, or on, agriculture and food systems. Meeting these requires re-thinking the values and metrics for agri-food innovation, and demonstrating delivery towards SDG social, environmental and economic impacts.
5. **Enabling sustainable rural enterprise:** Agriculture is often seen as unattractive and in decline and there is a global exodus of rural youth. Sustainable rural enterprise development can address this challenge through using agriculture and food innovation, new developments such as ICTs, value-added linkages to consumers/markets, and supportive policies and inputs, to create new rural enterprise opportunities, particularly for resource-poor women and youth.

SC members recognized that within this frame, there is tremendous opportunity for a wide range of new and existing networked actions towards specific SDG outcomes. The Members set out initial ideas for their actions within each area of focus. These will be further elaborated through input from GFAR Partners in the coming weeks to shape proposed collective actions as the draft GFAR Medium Term Plan 2018-2021.

Getting the messages out

As the Committee representing and mobilizing diverse constituencies, the Steering Committee explored how best to communicate and promote their collective actions as GFAR, while also celebrating their own identities and roles.

JL Restrepo, GFAR Chair: *"GFAR should be publicly recognized and we should all be proud to label our actions as GFAR collective actions, and to present them as such to potential partners and donors"*

Communication needs were identified through discussion in 5 sub-groups, who recommended:

- SC members need to communicate within and among GFAR constituencies, share the changes in GFAR, promote collective actions, and engage potential partners in GFAR.
- Actions towards GFAR's aims need to be widely shared, including by SC members as advocates
- Steering Committee Members will identify and make use of existing communication tools in their constituencies, and tools provided through the Secretariat, and assess progress in getting the messages out
- Members volunteered to establish specific spaces in their own websites to spread GFAR news and some may issue quarterly newsletters on GFAR activities and actions
- The GFAR website will be revamped to reflect the discussed changes and needs of the SC members and as a common repository to track collective actions and their impacts in each area
- Members suggested introducing a common e-mail address e.g. @gfar.net
- Respective communication roles of the Steering Committee, Partner constituencies, Secretariat, EXCO and any sub-committees need to be better framed
- The Secretariat is requested to provide timely, regular updates, fact sheets and create platforms for communication e.g. video conference, webinar space and/or demand-driven basic training.

The Secretariat will distil these inputs and will prepare a draft communication strategy in three weeks, for review and approval by the SC, together with the partnership strategy. This strategy will cover both how constituencies communicate within themselves and how they can raise awareness of their collective actions with others, as GFAR.

Governance and next steps

The GFAR Chair, Juan Lucas Restrepo, confirmed his intention to step down, due to an anticipated change of role. The Committee unanimously appointed Shantanu Mathur, IFAD, as interim Vice-Chair. The composition of the Executive Committee (EXCO) will remain as stands. ToRs for the Chair and Vice-Chair will be advertised openly and EXCO will lead the process to identify potential lead candidates, the names of which will be informed to Partners on a no-substantive-objection basis, before final decision by the Steering Committee.

As next steps, it was agreed that GFAR Secretariat will prepare the below listed documents for the SC, who will in turn discuss with their constituencies, particularly to identify potential collective actions for the MTP, and provide input to the Secretariat for their final compilation, in preparation for the SC meeting scheduled for May 2017:

- Key messages to share with constituencies (this document)
- Report on the SC meeting and potential collective actions identified during the meeting towards the agreed focus themes
- Draft Partnership Strategy and Draft Communication Strategy
- Selection Process for Chair and Vice Chair including ToRs and draft announcement

Invitations/proposed venues for the next SC meeting are welcomed from SC members.