



GFAR

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research

*Together we're shaping the future: Transforming agricultural research,
education, extension and enterprise for development*

29th GFAR Steering Committee

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CGIAR Consortium Office at Agropolis International

Montpellier, France

“Theory of Change – M&E ”

Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)

DRAFT Theory of Change (Firetail plc)

GFAR

GFAR is a unique Agricultural Multi-stakeholder Forum for change which works through mobilizing other actors to create transformative change in agricultural research, extension, education and enterprise globally. The GFAR Steering Committee through its Medium Term Plan distinguishes the role and responsibilities of the GFAR Secretariat (and the associated direct funding) in catalyzing key areas of change through mobilising comparative advantage and expertise from the institutions and networks brought together as part of the wider Global Forum.

GFAR Secretariat works to promote and influence impact through the actions of members of a wider network to change perceptions, behaviours and practices in systems of agricultural innovation by fostering the creation of mutual accountability between partners along pathways to impact, and striving for outcomes; **food security and nutrition, sustainable agricultural intensification and poverty reduction whilst conserving environmental resources.**

The principal changes required in agricultural innovation were articulated through GCARD regional dialogues in 2009-10, and summarized in the GCARD Roadmap. Turning the GCARD Roadmap into practice requires both individual and institutional commitments and shared principles into practice around the world, coordinating outcome-focused programmes on issues of major international concern.

It is widely acknowledged that measuring the impact of networked actors is not straightforward. GFAR is working with Firetail Ltd, to prepare a coherent theory of change and M&E framework for our work. As the first part of this, an extensive survey of stakeholders has now been completed, exploring public views on the themes addressed in the GFAR MTP in order to lay out the relationships between GFAR and other actors facilitating change in the Global Forum towards key outcomes.

GFAR provides a unique global forum, a catalyst for change, enabling expression of demand for research and innovation from all stakeholders in agricultural and rural development and facilitating collaboration, partnerships and sharing of objectives along the complex pathways from research through to development outcomes in particular for poor rural households.

The GFAR MTP now very clearly distinguishes the actions for which GFAR Secretariat and funding for which there is direct accountability. Building on this, are the actions from those of the partner institutions and fora responsible for delivering developmental change on the ground. GFAR funds and insights enable catalytic actions, influencing institutional agendas and encourage the voices of farmers and users of research in being party and influence in the design of innovative programmes towards large-scale change for themselves.

Theory of Change (TOC)

A. TOC Methodology

A theory of change is a set of assumptions about how change can be triggered/ produced in order to address problems or issues that affect individuals, groups, and/or systems. The TOC is a strategic planning method used to facilitate programme stakeholders' agreement on the type and breadth of social change that the programme aims to achieve. Thus it provides a specific and measurable description of social change, that in turn, will inform on-going decision-making and evaluation.

The GFAR theory of change defines the initiative's vision of success, the preconditions and conditions necessary for the vision to be achieved, the strategic levers required, the expected outcomes and a coded distribution of which sub-initiatives within GFAR will contribute the different elements. The TOC can then be used to identify the key indicators of change and the methods and approaches to measuring performance as part of an MLE framework and MLE operational plan moving forward.

The TOC presented here is an initial interpretation of this system through the eyes of stakeholders that are part of the system. This has been achieved through primary surveys undertaken (See **Annex 1** on the key results of the survey) on the key stakeholders but the job is far from complete and requires acceptance and adoption by all involved. The next steps of socializing the initial pathway of influence, requires endorsement by stakeholders at all levels in the system, and once they confirm the TOC, indicators and specific assumptions from both the GFAR Secretariat and other institutions that are key actors in the network will need to be articulated and agreed. Once the indicators are agreed, the MLE Operational Framework can be established to enable the impact of both GFAR Secretariat and of the wider network to be realized.

A clear definition of GFAR's TOC will allow the development of a global Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework. This global framework will be applied across all countries where partners are engaged in the implementation of a number of core functions that contribute to the Outcomes the Network is seeking to achieve. Very importantly there is likely to be variation between countries in terms of their context and starting points. The TOC presents the opportunity to measure the appropriate elements in different contextual settings of various combinations of the GFAR programmes.

Clearly the ability to measure change at a systems level, is a challenge particularly as change occurs at multiple levels, in multiple disciplines and can be perceptual, behavioural and practical. Outcome mapping is a useful technique applied to begin to understand how this kind of change happens and how different actors influence their own thinking, the thinking of others, and eventually changes in practices for the greater good. In addition systems change requires a negotiation with partners on which information they are best placed to collect and report on, to enable a picture of the system to be built. It is highly likely that these negotiations for data will be an integral part of the GFAR TOC.

There are a number of assumptions that the programme makes on the links between various members of the network towards influencing smallholder farmers who are the target group and indirect beneficiaries. These include the levels of literacy including technical literacy in the household, the level of access to information by members of the target group/indirect beneficiaries, the gender related household dynamics (communication between husband and wife or decision maker and non-decision-maker especially related to asset acquisition and the control of incomes accruing from agricultural work, the amount of on-farm work done by women of reproductive age and their time allocation), the ability or inability to act on the information due to other factors (inability to invest in the farm or disability, supply side constraints for access to inputs) and cultural factors which may include elements of trust in accessing services such extension services, mobile and

radio information services, financial bank accounts, insurance products and payment options that may be unfamiliar initially. This list may not represent all the factors that are important in governing the ability to act on information but many of these factors will be measured periodically from baseline to the end line of the project (and more reasonably by the partners within the network) to see if the project can establish whether the assumptions played out or not and how to potentially address challenges with any of them. These assumptions also condition the extent to which various outcomes can successfully be realised and will differ from context to context and from intervention to intervention.

Outcomes at the Global Level

The Global Forum – working through all its constituent parts - provides an opportunity to catalyse change, ensure that there is a clear articulation for demand driven research and innovation and more productive collaborative partnerships and shared objectives along a number of complex pathways encompassing multiple institutions particularly for the benefit of poor rural households.

Through **the Global Forum's work** – it will begin to drive the many strengthened and transformed Agricultural Research for Development networks to begin to impact on;

- **Food and Nutritional Security**
- **Sustainable agricultural intensification**
- **Poverty alleviation**
- Whilst **conserving environmental resources**.

The impact of these outcomes will be on predominantly poor rural households in multiple areas of the world including Sub Saharan Africa, South and South-East Asia, Latin America, Central Europe and Asia and the Pacific.

These outcomes are likely to be realized at later stages assuming the Global Forum's wider network is having the impact that it should be having and it would be important to understand that these outcomes are most unlikely to be realized within a limited timeframe of a few years.

The relationship between adopting agricultural technology and information and improved nutrition is complex and relies upon a series of assumptions of behaviours at the household level. For example, household literacy levels and household gender dynamics are likely to support or restrict the ability of women in that household to control the portion of harvest consumed directly and to receive the nutritionally sensitive information and act upon it. Those engaged in farming practices – which are often women – need to understand the longer-term effects of intensive farming and environmental resources etc.

Outcomes at the Network Level

The Global Forum will have much more control on a number of specific interventions that it drives within the wider network. Many of these will begin to be realised within a few years in specific capacities and it will be important for GFAR, in its operation, to ensure that it can track the Network Activities of multiple stakeholders engaged in initiatives it coordinates, as well as the outcomes sought from the partners directly (See D. Individual Organisational Outcomes).

The Network level Activities include;

1. Fostering dialogue
2. Establishing and agreeing priorities

3. Catalysing collective multi-stakeholder actions
4. Breaking down institutional barriers and
5. Stakeholders learning (from one another) and innovating together.

The outcomes sought include:

1. **Farmers and National Stakeholders empowered and informed to better negotiate their own agricultural futures**
2. **Equitable and effective demand-driven partnerships that transform agricultural research and innovation into meaningful impacts at scale.**
3. **Transformative investments stimulated to provide tangible opportunities for the worlds' poor**
4. **Collective initiatives fostered to improve capacity in AR4D**
5. **Agricultural research and knowledge is embedded into rural development agendas**
6. **Accountability, transformational change and development impacts in AR4D systems increased through greater and more transparent stakeholder involvements.**

These **outcomes are contributed to the GFAR Network** by a variety of different actors, stakeholders in the Global Forum and regional actors that work together towards development centred thinking, innovative knowledge access and transformation systems including institutional reorientation where necessary in an environment of improved governance.

Individual Organisational Outcomes

At the **level of individual partners**, the kinds of information individual institutions will be expected to contribute into the network in specific areas where GFAR Secretariat has a clear coordination role or in areas where GFAR Secretariat is directly funding initiatives may for example include;

1. **Proportion of new knowledge and practices adopted for agriculture**
2. **The proportionate increase in the quality and volume (yield) of agricultural produce**
3. **A measure of Increased agricultural incomes**
4. **Gender-differentiated measures beyond production such as household and child nutrition, value addition, loss reduction, labour & time reduction**
5. **Environmental benefits**

These would in combination result in:

6. **An increase in access and consumption of healthy foods and an increased consumption of diverse food groups in the household providing increased quantity and better quality, and more balanced dietary diversity at the household level**

Effective demand for enterprise driven services to the agriculture sector should lead to:

7. **Proven business models for providing technology, information or services affordably to smallholder farmers**
8. **Crowding in of new services into the market to support agricultural production, processing or value addition activities**
9. **Sustainable and commercially viable business models at scale and**
10. **Expansion of the market for improved inputs, input providers, supply chain solutions, transport, insurance products, mobile money options etc.**

Whilst the outcomes are influenced by household factors the extent to which the outcomes lead to impacts also includes the effect of the enabling environment or the context of each country and the types of interventions being carried out.

VISION: Food and nutritional security, sustainable agricultural intensification and poverty reduction whilst conserving environmental resources

Strengthened and Transformed AR4D

Outcome 1: farmers and national stakeholders empowered and informed to better negotiate their own agricultural futures

Outcome 2: Equitable and effective demand-driven partnerships that transform agricultural research and innovation into meaningful impacts at scale

Outcome 3: Transformative investments stimulated to provide tangible opportunities for the world's poor

Outcome 4: Collective initiatives fostered to improve capacity in AR4D

Outcome 5: Agricultural research and knowledge is embedded into rural development agendas

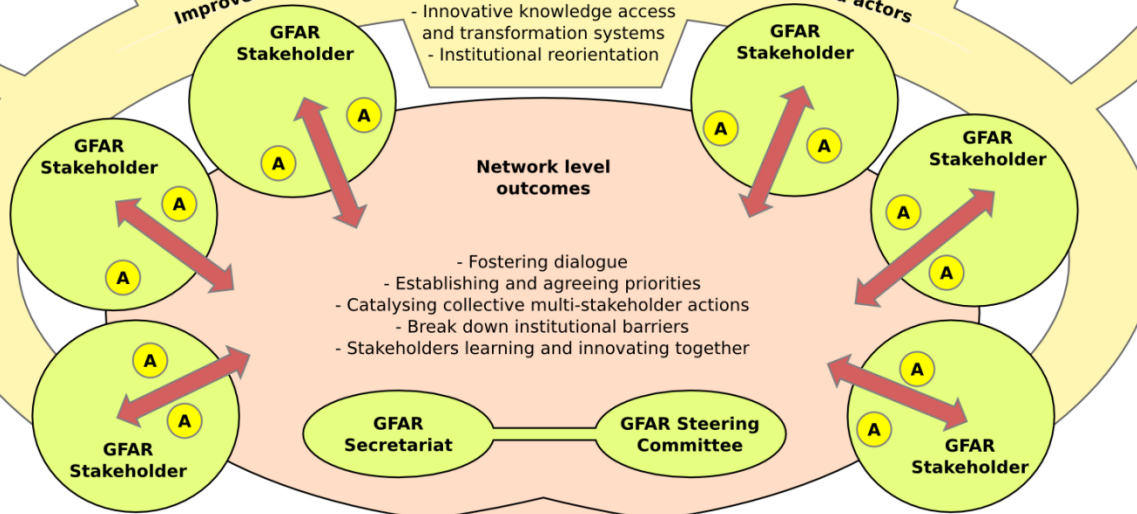
Outcome 6: Accountability, transformational change and development impacts in AR4D systems increased through greater and more transparent stakeholder involvement

Who is involved in GFAR:

GFAR brings together all sectors participating in agricultural research for development systems globally (also termed agricultural innovation systems). Reflecting this, our governance directly includes representatives of international institutions (FAO, CGIAR, IFAD), of Regional Fora of national research systems (AARINENA, APAARI, CACAARI, EFARD, FARA, & FORAGRO) and of international networks of other key stakeholders: International farmer's organizations, donor organizations (GDPRD network), NGO networks, private sector networks, education (GCHERA), advisory services (GFRAS) & youth (YPARD).

Improved governance and global orientation of AR4D institutions and actors

- Development-centred thinking
- Innovative knowledge access and transformation systems
- Institutional reorientation



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A = Individual actors

CORE FUNCTIONS

<p>Foresight & prioritization: Enable dialogue among all sectors to identify key current and future priorities in agricultural research, innovation and rural development and advocate for key needs to be addressed.</p>	<p>Partnership Help build effective and equitable partnerships among diverse actors to address the complex issues along innovation pathways to impacts</p>	<p>Capacities: Catalyze collective actions developing the capabilities and creating the transformative changes required in institutions to enable greater impacts for those they serve</p>	<p>Knowledge: Mobilize the access, availability and use of agricultural knowledge and technologies into development purposes.</p>
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GFAR Secretariat Core Function Activities and Outputs

Related to the Core Functions of the GFAR Secretariat there are a number of Functions by which it will hold itself and its partners accountable for based on its ability to create mindset shifts and new ways of working by and within its partners and their networks, which include;

1. **Foresight and prioritization** – Enabling dialogue among all sectors to identify key current and future priorities in agricultural research, innovation and rural development and advocate for key needs to be addressed.
2. **Partnership** – Help build effective partnerships among diverse actors to address the complex issues along innovation pathways to impacts.
3. **Capabilities** – Catalyse collective actions developing the capabilities and creating the transformative changes required in institutions to enable greater impacts for those they serve
4. **Knowledge** – Mobilise the access, availability and use of agricultural knowledge and technologies into development purposes.

From the primary survey undertaken, the emphasis that was made by respondents was

- That there should be more of a focus on ARD actors as well as institutions, as they have a major part to play and often do not feel included in GFAR, particularly as their focus is on their member institutions and fora
- That there should be more emphasis on measuring network level outcomes, getting those (and feeding back the results into network convening) will help strengthen institutional actors who can then create changes in their activities and approaches that result in higher level outcomes, some of which may not happen directly from the Forum itself
- That there should be an increased emphasis on creating change in network actor members, through activities rather than trying to carry out direct interventions in member institutions.
- The value of the TOC for the network is to achieve intermediate impact, by changes in ARD institutions and actors – which leads to improvements in a more transformed ARD system, which in turn leads to changes beyond those articulated by the Global Forum itself.

Next steps

1. The TOC presented here will require testing and greater socialisation with the GFAR Steering Committee (February 2014), GFAR Networked member institutions and partners and additional institutions in the network. They have to be in a position to agree it and own part of it in order to contribute information (data) to test its assumptions and its efficacy as a pathway for improvement.
2. Once this is done and the TOC refined as a result of this engagement, indicators that are appropriate and for which there is shared acceptance will be assigned to a number of different levels. Towards the Secretariat, the emphasis will be on Monitoring Milestones, Performance Management of the Secretariat, Outputs and some degree of influentially related outcomes. This will form the indicators that are included as part of the GFAR MEL framework, including suggestions for the most appropriate core of strong indicators of

progress that are relevant to the different partners in the different countries, and allow GFAR to monitor and evaluate its global effectiveness and impact.

3. The draft of this framework will be circulated for comments and refinements. A number of different constructions of the TOC will be necessary to delve deeper into the detail for each of the services and to identify the roles of different partners in data capture.
4. Comments will be reviewed and incorporated into the framework.
5. The framework will be translated into an operational plan for implementation in the 2014 operational plan, with appropriate methods and tools, data capture schedules and clear roles and responsibilities for all the partners, internal and some external to the Forum.
6. Finally data from secondary sources will be required, such as agricultural statistics on production values, per capital consumption and per capita energy consumption, global hunger, national and international poverty indices, agricultural production values and productivity scores for different commodities in different geographies, and extension individuals as well as the investment in R&D activities to provide context to the network generated changes in practice and perception. Where appropriate these sources of secondary information should complement the primary data.
7. Finally a designated and systematic timeline for action will be assigned within the MEL operational plan with clear reporting to coincide with reviews of progress of the MTP and other appropriate events.

All of these steps are critically necessary to build wider ownership of how we identify and track systems changes that are relevant at 30,000 feet as well as at grassroots levels. It is likely to be a valued effort in understanding how change at this scale of activities can happen and should refine the education of many Steering Group members on how to support this constructive change most effectively and inclusively.