

GFAR ANNUAL REPORT

2015



The Global Forum on Agricultural Research

Future-Ready:
Meeting the Needs of a Sustainable World





WHAT IS GFAR?

THE GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (GFAR) IS THE WORLD'S AGRI-FOOD RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER TO TRANSFORM AND STRENGTHEN AGRICULTURE AND INNOVATION SYSTEMS AND INCREASE THEIR IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT.

Agricultural research and innovation can help bring about a better future: a world without poverty, hunger or malnutrition, and where natural resources are used sustainably. But to get research and innovation out of the laboratory and into the hands of farmers in the developing world, national agricultural innovation systems need to become much more efficient and effective.

GFAR was established in 1996 to mobilize the global scientific community, and all those with a stake in agriculture and rural development, to work together to transform Agricultural Research for Development through dialogue, and by building partnerships for action on critical issues. Today GFAR provides a unique global platform for research and innovation, encompassing all sectors, and bringing together public, private and producer partnerships that consider entire food value chains and their many stakeholders.

GFAR AIMS TO:

- Create the space for all those concerned with the role of knowledge and innovation in agriculture and agri-food to share information, define research priorities and to co-ordinate work programs.
- Build effective and equitable partnerships within the sector, locally, nationally, regionally and globally, to turn ideas into results and innovation into impact.
- Advocate for greater investment in human, institutional and financial capacities, so countries can lead and participate in their own agricultural development.
- Catalyze action, mobilizing resources to support practical actions that are delivered by our partners to the priorities set out in the GCARD Road Map for agricultural system change.
- Speak for the world's agricultural innovation community, bringing stakeholders' perspectives to global discussion and multilateral processes and giving voice to the people.
- Seek and share knowledge and technologies, ensuring that they are relevant, available and accessible to all stakeholders – especially to farmers who are themselves innovators, and whose knowledge and experience must also be counted.
- Focus on the future, by building the capacity of countries to think ahead and plan their own agricultural futures.
- Be accountable for our actions. Effective transformation needs clear reporting and accountability, using measures that are relevant to our farmer stakeholders, and approaches in which they can participate.



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The Year in Review

In 2015 the world came together to launch a new international development agenda, in the form of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Agricultural research and innovation will be critical in achieving these goals, and creating a world free from poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and environmental degradation. For the community that is the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), it has been a year of taking stock and building on our strengths in preparation for the challenges of the new development era.



Greater accountability to our own stakeholders was one of the drivers of the reform and renewal of GFAR's governance during the year. The GFAR Constituent Assembly, in August, resulted in a renewed vision and mission and a re-energized 'membership' of GFAR Partners committed to achieving a better future through agri-food research and innovation, as powerful tools for sustainable development. I look forward to the first Partners' Assembly in 2016 when we will finalize the changes to the Forum's charter and governance structure that will ensure we are ready to meet the challenges ahead.

During the year CGIAR - representing the international agricultural research and science system – developed its Strategy and Results Framework, drawing heavily on GFAR as the key mechanism for strategic consultation with partners. CGIAR's strategy will guide its work to 2030, and will contribute directly to achievement of the SDGs. Indeed, its three core goals are to reduce

poverty, improve food and nutrition security for health, and to improve natural resources and ecosystems. The strategy was the result of broad stakeholder consultation across the globe, led by the CGIAR Consortium and the GFAR Secretariat. The process of linking it to national systems was an important part of GCARD3 - the third Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development.

GCARD is a long-standing commitment of the Global Forum. It is a continuing, iterative reform process that aims to reshape national and international agricultural research for development systems so they better meet the needs of the world's resource-poor farmers. GCARD1, in 2010, resulted in the "Roadmap for Change" and GCARD2, in 2012, focused on capacity development needed to deliver change, weaving CGIAR programmes together with the collective actions of other partners. GCARD3 is a



Rwanda Agriculture Board Karama research station in Bugesera district. RAB is testing 80 germplasm accessions of Brachiaria grass and growing 10 hectares of Brachiaria Mulato II for seed multiplication and hay production.
Credit: Stephanie Malyon, International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)



A woman prepares to stock genetically improved farmed tilapia fingerlings in her pond, Bagerhat Sador, Bangladesh.
Credit: Md Masudur Rahaman/WorldFish.

global conversation, which began in 2015 and will run through until the end of 2016, about re-aligning research priorities with countries' own development needs and national processes, and cultivating the partnerships, investments and joined-up capacities required to get results.

In this initiative, and in many others that you will read about in this report, GFAR has been the catalyst for action and change among all those involved in generating, accessing, transforming and using agricultural and food knowledge in development. From grassroots foresight initiatives for farmers in the Himalayas, Indonesia and the Philippines, to developing a new strategic path for rural advisory services, the GFAR community is working to "future proof" agricultural and food systems through effective and equitable research and innovation, with a particular focus on benefiting rural women and youth who, themselves, are the future of agriculture.

I commend these initiatives to you and I extend my thanks and appreciation to all our partners for their commitment to both the future of agri-food

research and innovation and to GFAR. I also pay particular tribute to Hon. Prof. Ruth Oniang'o, as she retires from her role as GFAR Vice-Chair. Ruth has brought much energy and drive to the Global Forum and we will miss her presence and her valuable insights.

The Global Forum is more than the sum of its parts and its strength is its open and inclusive nature that brings together many thousands of people, institutions and actions around the world. Our work is based on one simple principle: together we can do more to strengthen and transform agri-food research and innovation systems than we can alone.

Juan Lucas Restrepo

*GFAR Steering Committee Chair
 President, Corpoica Colombia*

Highlights from 2015



Women shopping for fruit at Agadir's Suk Market in Morocco.
Credit: ©FAO/Alessandra Benedetti



OUR WORK: ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ACTION

GFAR: Reformed, Renewed and Ready

With a renewed role and purpose, robust governance, and a vision focussed firmly on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Forum is ready to meet the challenges of agri-food research and innovation in the developing world.

From August 24-26 2015, around 100 stakeholder representatives from all parts of the agricultural research and innovation sector and all regions of the world, took part in the 'Reform & Renewal' of the Global Forum at the Constituent Assembly in Bangkok. Executive Secretary Dr Mark Holderness described the meeting as a landmark event, instrumental in ensuring GFAR remains effective and relevant into the future. "As a collective movement for change in agricultural innovation systems, the Global Forum is critical to achieving sustainable agricultural development. The Assembly provided a resounding endorsement of the legitimacy of the Forum and its future direction."

The Global Forum was established in 1996, but agriculture today faces very different and complex challenges. Following an independent review, the

Strategic Governance Working Group (SGWG) led a strategic reflection on issues raised, including GFAR's role and purpose, the basis for collective action by stakeholders, new models of governance, and how to resource the actions of the Forum.

As a result of the GFAR Constituent Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand, GFAR now has a new governance structure, directly representative of the constituencies it serves. A new Partner Assembly, composed of global and regional partners, will be responsible for setting strategic direction, and will meet every three years as part of the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD). The first Partner Assembly, to be held in April 2016 as part of the GCARD3 Global Event, will pave the way for the election of a new broader-based Steering Committee, accountable to the partners of GFAR.

The Forum also has a renewed mission and vision, and guidelines for working together to take "Collective Action" to transform agri-food research and innovation systems. These guidelines will be included in a revised charter to support partners in their collaboration. This was a critical step, Dr Holderness explained. "We are a virtual organization: a worldwide network of agencies, institutions and groups from all sectors involved in agriculture and agri-food research, extension, education and enterprise. By engaging in Collective Actions we can achieve much more, combining our resources, knowledge and experience for best effect."

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Another outcome of the meeting was a renewed 'community of practice' that understands what the Forum is trying to achieve and that fully supports its objectives. "It's encouraging to see this very high level of endorsement, across the board, of the principles and approach, the role and value of the Forum... It really feels like GFAR has come of age," Dr Holderness said.

CIRAD – the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development – has been a strong

supporter of the Global Forum from the beginning, and was among the first to renew its commitment as a partner. Dr Patrick Caron, Director of Research and Strategy, said CIRAD was pleased to participate in the discussions on the Forum's future. "It was a very important moment in terms of reaffirming GFAR's Vision and Mission and gaining the commitment of partners to those."

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) also affirmed its commitment to GFAR. Dr David Shearer, General Manager Corporate, said the Assembly delivered useful outputs in terms of GFAR's role and purpose, collective action, governance and resourcing. "There also seemed to be strong endorsement and willingness for all partners to be engaged in the ongoing process to deliver what we all want to achieve – a world with less poverty and hunger where agriculture plays a central, impactful role. So, an excellent step forward on the path to reform – a path ACIAR will remain interested in staying involved in."

The GFAR Constituent Assembly was made possible through financial support from the European Commission and the support of FAO as host of the GFAR Secretariat. For information, visit the website: <http://www.gfar.net/about-us/constituent-assembly>

MEDIA STORIES

- ▶ [Together, We Are Shaping the Future of Agriculture](#)
- ▶ [Taking a Big Picture View of Capacity Development](#)
- ▶ [Shaping the Future of GFAR](#)
- ▶ [Redefining GFAR's Roles through Collective Action](#)
- ▶ [Constituent Assembly a "Landmark" Event](#)



OUR WORK: FORESIGHT FOR BETTER FUTURES

Greenfields Thinking

It has been said that the future cannot be predicted, but it can be created. In 2015, farmer organizations in Indonesia, the Philippines and North India got the opportunity to set out their own futures as part of a grassroots foresight initiative that aimed to make them “future-smart agents of change”.

Being able to engage in forward thinking, and to turn the knowledge generated into action, has been shown to determine the future, says GFAR’s Robin Bourgeois, who supervised the project. However farmers’ organizations and civil society organizations of less developed countries do not have the same capacities to engage in foresight work as international research and development organizations and national research centers. The Grassroots Foresight Initiative aimed to change that.

In North India, the project targeted the Kumaon and Garhwal administrative divisions in the Uttarakhand state, where farmers are struggling to cope with changing climactic conditions and other adverse circumstances. In Indonesia, the East Nusa Tenggara



Province was the focus, an area where there is conflict over access to forestland, and the culture of the local Boru people is under threat. In the Philippines, the towns of Balabac and Bataraza, in the southern part of Palawan Island, were selected. The SAMBILOG group, comprised of mainly indigenous people, is struggling to reclaim ancestral lands and waters from large corporations and local powers which control the area.

GRASSROOTS ACTION

The initiative began with a regional training workshop in Manila, to which the managing local organizations sent participants for training as facilitators of the local grassroots foresight work. They acquired practical knowledge and know-how about developing different future scenarios together before returning to their communities to facilitate workshops with local farmers. Back in the regions, some participants initially found the exercise difficult, but with the help of facilitators, each group produced a number of scenarios, before selecting their preferred future among these and identifying follow-up actions that would be required to achieve these futures in reality.

MEDIA STORIES

- ▶ [Collaborative Foresight: Finding Solutions to Youth Unemployment in East Africa Through Agriculture](#)
- ▶ [Training the Trainers: Participatory Prospective Analysis for Forest Tenure Analysis in Uganda](#)
- ▶ [Becoming the Change they Want to See: Asia and Pacific Youth in Agriculture](#)
- ▶ [The Sustainable Development Goals: Time to Think Outside the Boxes](#)

While it is still early days, the initiative is already starting to yield positive results. In East Nusa Tenggara province, for instance, forest authorities have reclassified the Boru forest area from state forest to community forest, providing the local community with more rights in forest management. In the Philippines, SAMBILOG has expanded its membership to include groups of farmers from El Nido, whose leaders had attended the grassroots foresight workshop. It has also started a cooperative on seaweed production and trading, with technical support from the local fisheries bureau.

“In both cases, the project helped boost the agency of local stakeholders,” Mrs. Sonali Bisht, from the Institute of Himalayan Environmental Research and Education reported. “Participants in the North India workshops found the scenario-building workshop very engaging and many said they had not experienced anything like it before.”

Dr Bourgeois is hoping that the project will gain momentum with farming groups. “Democratizing foresight from the grassroots level is not only possible but also essential if we want a future created by futures-literate, or future-smart, citizens rather than a future resulting from ignorance of the potential of the present.”

For more information about the Foresight for Better Futures work of GFAR, visit:

<http://www.gfar.net/our-work/foresight-better-futures-0>

A rice paddy in Barangay Can-Abay, in the Philippines.
Credit: ©FAO/James Belgrave / FAO



Sukhdev Vishwakarma and his daughter Meenu, both farm workers, use water pumped from a solar water pump in Jagadhri, India.

Credit: Prashanth Vishwanathan/IWMI



OUR WORK: PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT

Setting a Course for 2030

Collaboration and consultation are the hallmarks of the Global Forum. In 2015 GFAR brought together thousands of stakeholders across the world for a global conversation on the future of agri-food research and innovation, as part of the third Global Conference on Agriculture, Research and Development – better known as GCARD3.

A major focus of GFAR meetings in 2015 was the development of CGIAR's Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) which sets out outcomes and targets for its international science and research efforts to 2030. Working together with the many networks of GFAR partners around the world, CGIAR sought the opinions of

stakeholders across the sector, to ensure that the new strategy was robust as a practical plan for delivering greater development impacts from international agricultural research as a global public good.

Following an on-line consultation organized by GFAR, meetings were held in six countries over the course of 2015, to discuss how CGIAR could best add value to national systems, determine key research priorities, discuss investments required and build partnership, capacities and accountabilities with national agricultural systems. Participants also looked at how CGIAR and its next phase of research programs could better align with country priorities, as part of CGIAR Site Integration Initiative.

Regional consultations looked at the bigger picture – of how rural communities can shape a new agenda for agri-food innovation and provide opportunities for youth and what investment is needed at national and international levels.

It was vital that the consultations reflected a range of views from across the agri-food sector, CGIAR

Chief Executive Officer Dr Frank Rijsberman said. “The SRF is an important document for everyone involved with, and committed to, sustainable agricultural development. So it was gratifying to see a really diverse group of stakeholders represented at the meetings: universities, NGOs, research bodies, government agencies, intergovernmental organisations, knowledge networks, youth organisations, and even the media. Most came from outside of CGIAR, and this was where GFAR, as a diverse multi-stakeholder forum, was able to add value, promoting the meetings through its networks.” The GFAR Secretariat also worked with the CGIAR Consortium Office to analyze and share the results of the consultations.

In delivering on the SRF, CGIAR will focus on three goals: reduced poverty, improved food and nutrition security for health, and improved natural resources and ecosystem services. To reach these targets, CGIAR has eight research priorities: genetic improvement of crops, livestock, fish and trees; a focus on agricultural systems; growth that is inclusive of women and youth; policies and institutions; natural resources and ecosystem services; nutrition and health; climate-smart agriculture; and nurturing genetic diversity. CGIAR will concentrate its research where the majority of the world’s poor and hungry live, in Africa (over 50% of investments), Asia (about 30%) and poverty hotspots in Latin America (about 20%).

ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

In Implementing the SRF, Dr Rijsberman says it is essential that research continues to align not only with major development goals, but with national agricultural priorities in the countries where CGIAR works. “We will continue to develop site integration plans to bring together the work of CGIAR Centers and Programs in key countries, working closely with our partners to supply the best upstream research, as well as with governments, national research partners, non-governmental organizations and the local private sector.”

Frank Place, from CGIAR’s Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets (PIM) attended the

national consultation in Nigeria, Tanzania, and Ethiopia at the end of 2015, organized by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture and ILRI. He said the meeting was marked by high energy, constructive and honest discussions, and many good ideas for improving collaboration.

“Ever since I joined the system way back in 1992, CGIAR scientists have been collaborating across centers and with national organizations. But the higher level strategic planning and coordination of research in synergistic ways to contribute to national agricultural goals offers a new model for working in selected countries. Its achievement will require collective commitment and investment of time from CGIAR staff.

“It is also important to set feasible milestones and not create overly ambitious expectations. We are all interested in seeing country collaboration and site integration plans developed in a selected number of countries; but this will take time to move through the necessary steps and involve the necessary stakeholders... Fortunately, the successful consultations paved the way for the process to unfold and the CGIAR country teams have been empowered to take the next steps.”

For more information about CGIAR and its Strategic Results Framework and Research Programs, visit <http://www.cgiar.org/our-strategy/>

MEDIA STORIES

- ▶ [The Voice of Civil Society in Climate Smart Agriculture](#)
- ▶ [Coming in from the Cold on Climate-Smart Agriculture](#)
- ▶ [Norway’s Development Fund and GFAR: Safeguarding Farmers’ Rights](#)
- ▶ [International Community Approves Joint Capacity Building Programme on Farmers’ Rights](#)
- ▶ [The Power of Partnership – Interview with Patrick Caron](#)
- ▶ [As Agriculture Makes its Appearance in Paris, GFAR Partners Keep Focus on Farmers](#)



OUR WORK: TRANSFORMATIVE INVESTMENTS

Prolinnova Takes Stock

Prolinnova's vision is "A world where women and men farmers play decisive roles in agricultural research and development for sustainable livelihoods". The essence of sustainability is the capacity to adapt. In 2015, with the support of the GFAR Secretariat, Prolinnova undertook a comprehensive review of its activities to learn from its experiences and to build its strategy for the future.

The network has come a long way since its beginnings in 1999, when a few like-minded non-governmental organizations, assisted by GFAR and the French government, came together to discuss how to scale up participatory approaches based on local initiatives and to integrate them into mainstream institutions of agricultural research and development. The initiative was one of GFAR's Global Partnership Programmes and came to be known as Prolinnova (PROMoting Local INNOVation in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management).

The stocktake aimed to gather insights into Prolinnova's accomplishments internationally and also at country level in its promotion of local innovation approaches, its capacity building



A Kenyan farmer leads discussion at the East African Farmer Innovators' Fair.
Credit: Fabian Odiambo

and its mainstreaming and institutionalization of those approaches. The review, which covered the years 2003–13, also looked at the functioning of the Prolinnova network and partnership at local, national and international levels and at communication, governance, and monitoring and evaluation.

Mrs Chesha Wettasinha, a member of the Prolinnova International Support Team based at the Royal Tropical Institute in the Netherlands, said the review enabled the network to track Prolinnova’s progress and to lay the groundwork for the challenges that lie ahead. “Prolinnova has achieved many of its objectives over the decade and has undertaken a large number of activities given the limited financial resources available to it over the years. This is largely a result of how the network operates; as a decentralized partnership with country-level multistakeholder platforms determining their own agenda and exercising full ownership,” Mrs Wettasinha said.

The review found that the collaboration and partnership among the platform’s members had helped mobilize the resources needed to pursue the Prolinnova agenda, as well as small amounts of funding from a wide array of donors. It also created strong links and information flows from farmer-led action in experimentation and innovation on the ground to international policy dialogue. The report commended the personal commitment of many people to promoting farmer-led innovation and the network’s nurturing of this.

PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS

Performance highlights included the development of methodologies to strengthen farmer-led innovation in agriculture and natural resource management. Capacity building continues to be a high-need area, although many institutes of higher learning were teaching participatory innovation development. While some countries are making good progress in terms of mainstreaming, deeper and more sustainable integration of the approach into agricultural research and development policies,

MEDIA STORIES

- ▶ [The SAI Platform : Putting Sustainable Agriculture Centre-Stage](#)
- ▶ [Walls Must Fall for Agriculture to Become Sustainable](#)
- ▶ [Don’t Leave Us Behind!](#)
- ▶ [Investment on Agricultural Research Fails to Shine](#)
- ▶ [Virtual Farming in the Asia-Pacific](#)
- ▶ [“Research for Development Without an Uptake Pathway is Dead Research...”](#)

programmes and organisations is still needed. “This is the main agenda for the network in the years ahead,” Mrs Wettasinha said.

Find out more about Prolinnova by visiting:

<http://www.prolinnova.net/>



A woman farmer from Nepal discusses innovation with a researcher.

Credit: Ann Waters-Bayer



Dr. Abdallah Oihabi, FAO Chief Technical Advisor for the Date Production Programme, Namibia inspects ripe dates at the government farm.
Credit: M. Namundjebo/FAO



OUR WORK: CAPACITIES FOR CHANGE

Sparking Innovation in Rural Advisory Services

Learning and exchange through rural advisory services (RAS) provide the life-blood of innovation and are critical in addressing today's agriculture and rural development challenges. That was the key message for participants at the sixth annual meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) held in Kyrgyzstan in September.

Rural advisory services – also called extension or agricultural advisory services – are the different activities that make knowledge available, strengthen capacities, empower rural people, and promote innovations in the rural context. GFRAS aims

to enhance the performance of advisory services so that they can better serve farm families and rural producers, by advocating for effective services and strengthening international support for advisory service providers within global research and innovation. GFRAS was co-founded by the Global Forum which has supported GFRAS technically and with funding since it began, recognizing the under-investment in this vital sector.

GFRAS annual meetings provide an opportunity to foster exchange on rural advisory services between stakeholders and across regions, and to discuss GFRAS strategic direction and functioning. Its sixth annual meeting, themed, 'Global Good Practices in Rural Advisory Services', drew around 130 participants from 54 countries and 12 regional networks.

Executive Secretary Dr Kristin Davis said the event was just part of a continuous exchange of information, knowledge, and learning that aimed to spark innovation and invigorate the regional rural advisory services (RAS) networks to translate discussion into action. "The meeting

was very successful in highlighting how evaluating, documenting, and sharing experiences contribute to building capacities and improving practices. Most participants were aware of the important role networks play in offering a structure to enable the exchange of experiences. But by being asked to formulate practice-oriented recommendations, they were able to identify activities within their regional networks that they can integrate into 2016 activities. We hope to see initial results at the seventh GFRAS Annual Meeting in Cameroon in October 2016.”

REALITY CHECK

Another objective was for GFRAS to get a ‘reality check’ from those at field-level on its initiatives and core working topics, including gender, the professionalization of RAS, information and communications technology, community-based RAS, and the role of RAS in the agricultural innovation system. Each of the topics was discussed by about 30 participants, resulting in direct recommendations for GFRAS on how these activities could evolve. “Most recommendations reaffirmed GFRAS’ new strategic fields. They called for GFRAS to document evidence and provide guidelines and tools to support and improve the performance of RAS actors; to strengthen individual, organisational, and institutional structures; to continue advancements and innovations within the topics, and to advocate for a conducive environment

for the activities. Although the topics seem to be very distinct, the recommendations show that we can create and use synergies and engage partners to transform learning into practice.”

GFRAS’s new strategic framework was presented during the meeting. It includes a new vision and mission, and sets out three ‘strategic fields of action’ to achieve these: advocacy for RAS, professionalization of RAS, and knowledge generation and exchange. The framework – which will be accompanied by a five-year operational plan and monitoring system – will help with planning and measurement in extension and rural advisory services reform over the next 10 years. The presentation was well received by participants at the meeting. “We received a lot of positive response to, and validation of, the three strategic fields. The steering committee felt the participatory process had produced results that resonated with our network,” Dr Davis said.

“The meeting reinvigorated participants’ engagement and investment in their regions and thematic working groups. As all activities by GFRAS regions and working groups depend on the investment and capacities of each individual, strengthening their knowledge and resolve to create and share their experiences strengthens the network as a whole and - we hope - contributes to vibrant agricultural innovation systems in the long run.”

For more information about GFRAS and its new Strategic Framework, visit: www.g-fras.org



A rice farmer in the Chuchua, near Caranavi, Bolivia.
Credit: Neil Palmer, CIAT

MEDIA STORIES

- ▶ [Global Discussions on Agricultural Curricula: Where are Africa and South East Asia?](#)
- ▶ [GFRAS: Innovating Rural Advisory Services](#)
- ▶ [ICTs for a Sustainable Farming Future](#)
- ▶ [The Role of Young Professionals in Shaping Agricultural Education](#)
- ▶ [The Economics of Agricultural Information for Smallholder Farmers](#)



OUR WORK: RESEARCH IN SOCIETY

Young and Hungry for a Better Agricultural Future

Young people want to participate in the political life of their communities: they want a voice and they want to be heard. Moreover, they want to be part of a society that recognizes farming as a noble profession, something that has great public value.

As the Mediterranean Basin continues to experience significant social upheaval, delegates at the Congress of the South-North Mediterranean Dialogue, held in October at Milan EXPO2015, were left in no doubt as to the ambitions of the region's young people to play a part in its future. High levels of youth unemployment, and their exodus to cities are major issues for rural communities. Many young people want to return but are finding that the conditions there aren't attractive enough for them to resettle. Obstacles identified by those at the Youth Workshop during the Congress were a lack of access to land and finance, and to education, health, and social services. Young people also need an education system that meets their needs,



A young farmer in Ghor El Melh clearing a field after harvesting broccoli.
Credit: ©FAO/Giulio Napolitano / FAO

providing skills and training that responds to local and regional challenges and takes advantages of new opportunities such as information technologies. They need social support to develop alternative lifestyles and production systems that are adapted to each local context, and they need to be able to access the land, markets and financial resources required.

For Ana Huertas Francisco, a workshop participant, the most important message was that youth are ready to participate and to actively contribute to decision-making processes. They are qualified and willing to help implement projects that will support their communities. "We believe that repeating the same patterns of exclusion (that is, senior specialists being heard over more "inexperienced" youth) will not be able to respond creatively to the current challenges," she explained. "...The only way to keep young people connected to their homeland instead of leaving to find better opportunities elsewhere is to include them in dialogue, to better understand their perception of the situation and take on board their suggestions. The greatest innovation would therefore be a change of paradigm, where youth come to believe they matter and that their opinions and actions can influence their immediate reality."

The Milan Congress was organized by GFAR and the Fondation du Dialogue Sud-Nord Méditerranée, with supporting finance from the European Commission DG Neighbourhoods. Themed 'Rural Communities: No Longer Left Behind', it was the culmination of a series of sub-regional dialogues held in Vólos, Alexandria, Montpellier and Raba and, and was convened to explore the rejuvenation of rural communities in the MENA region (Mediterranean basin). More than 80 representatives from civil society, research organizations, regional networks, non government organizations, women's, youth and farmers groups came together for the meeting. Workshops were held on innovation in agriculture, natural resources and food security, rural investment, infrastructure and governance, opportunities for women, and opportunities for youth in employment and education. Discussions on the role of agricultural innovation in sustaining rural communities directly contributed to the GCARD3 process.

NEEDS-DRIVEN INNOVATION

A key theme running through discussions was the importance of creating opportunities for innovation and enterprise, centered on the needs of local rural communities and the changes they want to see. Dorra Fiani, President of Egypt's Knowledge Economy Foundation, was one of the participants in the Innovation Workshop. "For me, one of the strongest messages to come out of the session is the need to develop "bottom-up" policies for rural development, centered on effective needs assessment of each village, their traditions and capacity to develop autonomously when provided with appropriate support and funding."

Investment is urgently needed to build much-needed infrastructure in rural areas, to improve standards of living and attract further investment. Congress participants called for 'know-how' transfer, to enable the transition to innovative and more integrated rural models with a higher return on investments and the spread and use of new technologies. Access to, and governance of, financing should be improved through better information, simplification of procedures and less bureaucracy, and there should be greater transparency in monitoring results. Different levels of public-private partnership were required, with a focus on South-South local and regional integrated networks linking agriculture and industries in rural areas.

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Women make up most of the agricultural workforce, including in those parts of the region experiencing protracted crises. Participants at the workshop on rural women called for greater efforts to recognize their roles in agriculture, to overcome stereotypes and ensure more equitable access to land, resources and inputs. There needed to be a greater focus on promoting literacy and providing skills and training to help women access markets and jobs and opportunities for rural women to learn from successful women entrepreneurs.

For Salima Marzouki, from the Consortium of Farmers Organizations for Agriculture Research for Development in West Asia-North Africa Region, a more strategic approach

is needed for upskilling rural women. “There must be a local plan of action for promotion of rural women, aimed at enhancing women’s agricultural expertise, improving their quality of life and recognizing their role in the agricultural sector. This (requires) improving rural extension/advisory services and tailoring them to the specific needs of women.”

At the conclusion of the Milan Congress, delegates released a comprehensive Declaration outlining a number of key actions in the four areas of innovation, investment, women and youth, and urged the agricultural for development community to take action. GFAR Executive Secretary Mark Holderness said the Arab Spring has highlighted the need to act fast: rural poverty, drought, crop failure, and high food prices had triggered mass movements for major societal change. “We need to reconnect the culture in agriculture, to link to the values and drivers of rural communities and societies themselves, in order to achieve change that is valued, trusted, sustainable

and owned by communities,” Dr Holderness said.

More on the Congress and its outputs can be found on the GFAR website: <http://www.gfar.net/gcard/gcard3/events/gcard3-regional-consultation-middle-east-north-africa>

MEDIA STORIES

- ▶ [Women’s land rights unleash agricultural productivity and nutrition](#)
- ▶ [Promoting Women’s Enterprise Development in Egypt](#)
- ▶ [Territoires et population rurales en période de crise – perspective d’Afrique du Nord](#)
- ▶ [An avenue for the new generation to take up agricultural development](#)
- ▶ [Hunger and War: The New Global Challenge Generation Now – No Longer Left Behind](#)

Shamsa Kosar, a beneficiary of Takaful livestock insurance in Wajir, northern Kenya
Credit: International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)/Riccardo Gangale





Peter Casier leads a social media "bootcamp".
Credit: ©FAO/Giuseppe Carotenuto / FAO

Riding the Online Wave

Whether it's Facebook, Twitter, blogs or websites, online media are not only more pervasive in our private lives, but are also proving to be effective communications channels within the realm of agri-food research and innovation. In 2015, the GFAR Secretariat overhauled its online communications strategy to foster more dialogue across its network of partners to give their organizations, and the young professionals who work for them, an effective advocacy platform.

The Secretariat concentrated on three key areas: expanding the reach and efficacy of its online channels, as a service to its partners; building an active online community of professional communicators working for organizations in agricultural research, sustainable agriculture, and food security; and reviewing all of its social media channels.

Peter Casier, a seasoned online communications professional, came on board to manage the project. He believes online communication holds enormous promise in terms of advancing and working towards GFAR's goals. "As a Global Forum we need to bring the network alive by turning our communication platforms into places for discussion and exchange, for questions and feedback. The impact of events like GCARD3, for instance, need no longer be limited to the physical meetings themselves. We can start to build a momentum – online - way before and after the event, reaching many more people than would otherwise attend. Not only can we use social media tools to report from an event, we can involve the online public in onsite discussions in real time, and actively encourage participation."

At the same time, the Secretariat has focussed on building a strong collaborative network for the communicators in partner organisations and on ways to build its common communications capacity. One core part of the strategy is

to organize regular webinars on specific communications topics, stimulate active online discussions and provide regular opportunities to upskill young agricultural communicators in the use of social media platforms within a professional context.

As part of the GCARD3 consultation process, for example, Peter has put together special training programmes for communicators, held before and during the regional meetings. Known as social media "boot camps", they have proved immensely popular and have had a number of spin-off effects. For Bangkok boot camp participants Jim Leandro Cano and Dax Olfindo, for instance, the training enabled them to see the potential of such tools for research and extension. "We have 're-echoed' the training to the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquaculture, and Natural Resources with the help of Dr. Virginia Cardenas, who we also met in at the Bangkok social media boot camp. Now, we have two social media trainings in the pipeline, but this time, designed and facilitated by us, based on what we learned in Bangkok. Learning new things is great, but sharing what you have learned is awesome!"

The new communications strategy is already yielding great results. During this first year, 22 people were trained and mentored in one boot camp; three communications webinars were attended by more than 100 participants; and GFAR's online professional communicators' network now has 45 active members. The GFAR website was completely overhauled, making it much easier for partners to publish information. Thousands of regular returning visitors are now reading the revived blog. Each month, GFAR's Facebook and Twitter posts are viewed over 100,000 times.

Through 2016, the Forum Secretariat will continue to provide opportunities for communicators in its partner organizations to come together to share best practice and learn new skills – after all, that is what being part of the GFAR network is all about.

Financial Information 2015

Total income received in 2015 by the GFAR Secretariat (financial contributions received in 2015 plus cash carry-forward of USD 1,958,279 from 2014) was USD 2,740,371. Within this, the Government of Switzerland contributed USD 220,000 specifically in support of YPARD. In addition, senior staff were seconded to the Secretariat by IFAD and CIRAD/Government of France, to the equivalent value of USD 298,608.

A total of USD 2,595,098 was spent or committed in the year 2015. Administration and support services amounted to 9% of expenditure and GFAR's governance bodies a further 11%. The remainder of funds and professional staff costs were dedicated to catalyzing actions in the six thematic areas of the GFAR Medium Term Plan.

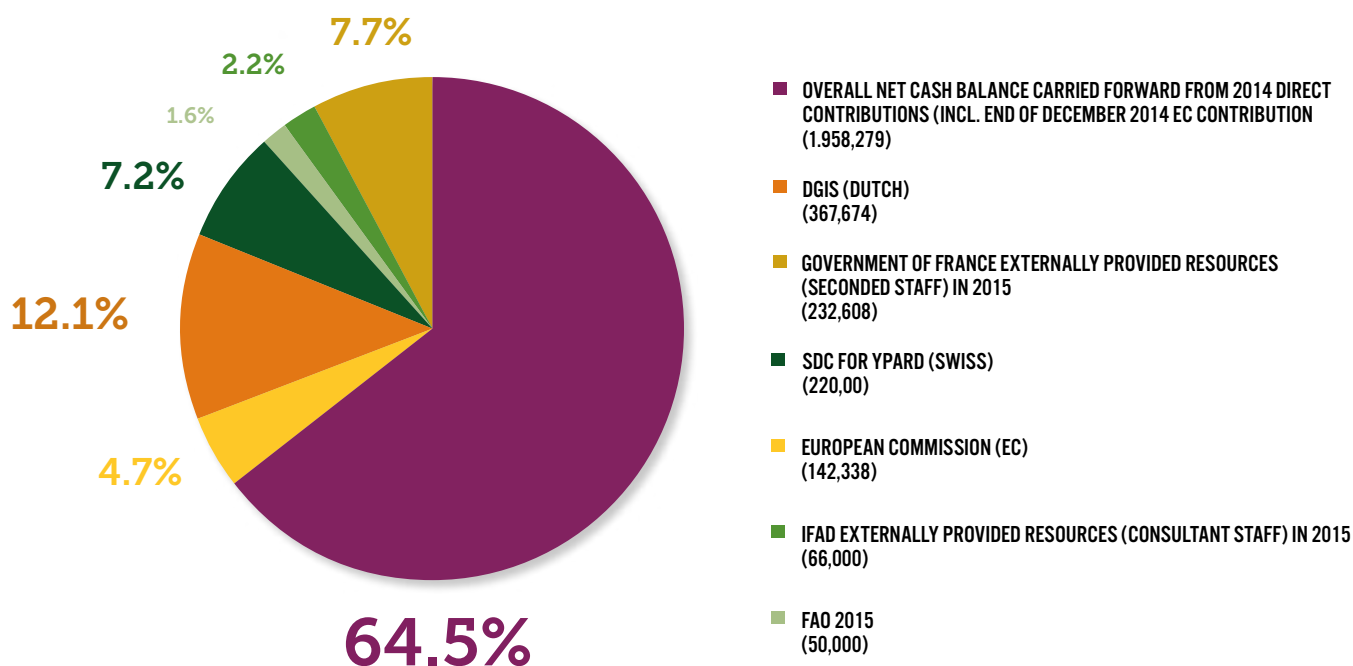
We are very grateful to all those who have provided financial support to activities of the Global Forum. In 2015, these were:

- European Commission (EC)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- DGIS (The Netherlands)
- Switzerland (SDC)
- Government of France (CIRAD)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

GFAR 2015 Assessed and Indirect Contributions Received (USD)

TOTAL ASSESSED AND INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2015

US\$ 3,036,899

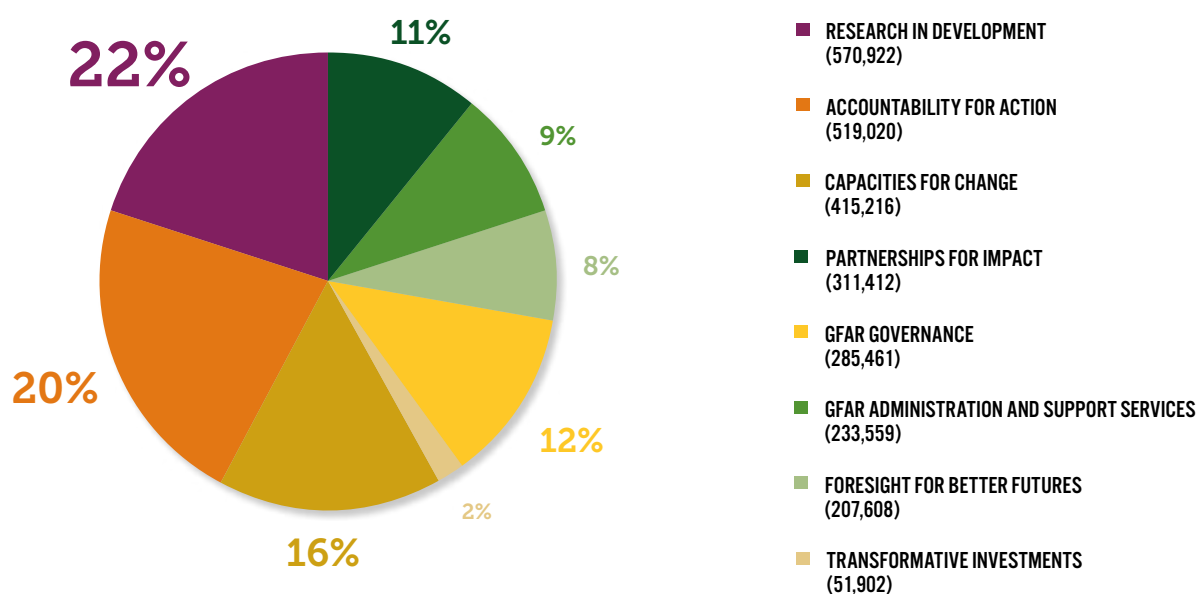


GFAR 2015

Expenditure
by Activity (USD)

TOTAL EXPENDITURES BY ACTIVITIES

US\$ 2,595,098*



Catalytic Investments in GFAR's Collective Actions

Financial support through GFAR forms a vital contribution to the success of GFAR's Collective Actions. GFAR's catalytic investments have enabled considerable leveraging of other resources by the Partners in GFAR, so that the Collective Actions implemented result

in benefits across all sectors of agricultural innovation. Data from Partners show that funds provided through GFAR have leveraged around twice as much as the funds provided (USD 951,098 leveraged from an investment of USD 480,062).

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	FUNDING PROVIDED THROUGH GFAR (USD)	ASSOCIATED FUNDING LEVERAGED BY GFAR PARTNER (USD)	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IN-KIND RESOURCES PROVIDED BY PARTNER (USD)	TOTAL RESOURCES LEVERAGED BY GFAR CATALYTIC INVESTMENT (USD)	AMOUNT ADDITIONALLY LEVERAGED (AS % OF INVESTMENT)
AARINENA	70,000	50,000	35,000	85,000	121%
APAARI (i)	35,000	180,000	20,000	200,000	571%
APAARI (ii)	56,000	141,208	45,000	192,508	344%
CACAARI	70,000	49,740	7,000	56,740	81%
GCHERA	69,962	36,000	48,500	84,500	120%
Prolinnova – ETC	70,000	70,350	0	70,350	101%
GFRAS	110,000	215,000	47,000	262,000	238%
Total	480,962	742,298	202,500	951,098	202,500

GFAR Leadership

GFAR Steering Committee

Juan Lucas Restrepo Ibiza (Chair)
Ruth Oniang'o (Vice Chair)

Mark Holderness (GFAR Executive Secretary)
Ex officio

The Forum's Steering Committee involves all relevant categories of stakeholders. These were represented in 2015 through:

- ▶ **Advisory Services** Kristin Davis (GFRAS)
- ▶ **Donor Support Group** Roberto Aparicio-Martin (EC)
- ▶ **Facilitating Agencies** Shantanu Mathur (IFAD)
Ren Wang (FAO)
- ▶ **Farmers' Organizations** Esther Penunia (AFA)
Evelyn Nguleka (WFO) (*alternate*)
John Kennelly (GCHERA)
- ▶ **Higher Education** Frank Rijsberman (CGIAR Consortium)
- ▶ **International Agricultural Research Centres**
- ▶ **NGOs** Sonali Bisht (INHERE)
- ▶ **Private Sector** Lucy Muchoki (PANAAC)
Ernesto Brovelli (SAI Platform) (*alternate*)
- ▶ **Regional Fora**
 - AARINENA Aziz Dargouth
Mohammad M. Ajlouni (*alternate*)
 - APAARI Anan Suwannarat
Raghunath Ghodake (*alternate*)
 - CACAARI Guram Aleksidze
Alisher Tashmatov (*alternate*)
 - EFARD Patrick Van Damme
Judith Ann Francis (*alternate*)
 - FARA Charity Kruger
Yemi Akinbamijo (*alternate*)
 - FORAGRO Mauricio Antonio Lopes (*until Nov 2015*)
Mr. Francisco Anglesio
Muhammad Ibrahim (*alternate*)
Courtney Paisley (YPARD)
- ▶ **Youth Organizations**

Executive Committee

The Global Forum's Executive Committee consists of the Chair and Vice-Chair of GFAR, the two members of the GFAR facilitating agencies (FAO and IFAD) who are members of the GFAR Steering Committee, the Chair of the Forum's Donor Support Group, and the Executive Secretary of the Global Forum who acts Ex-Officio as the Secretary of the Committee.

GFAR Secretariat

The Global Forum's Secretariat provides support to the Steering Committee and to all stakeholders as they work together in global, inter-regional and regional partnerships, helping them undertake joint action through the Forum. The GFAR Secretariat, located within the FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, is maintained as a low-cost unit to facilitate and catalyze these interactions and comprises an Executive Secretary, assisted by senior officers, consultants and administrative staff, some of whom are seconded to the Secretariat from different partner institutions.

GFAR Executive Secretary

Mark Holderness

GFAR Secretariat Staff

Robin Bourgeois (*Senior Foresight and Development Policies Expert*)
Fiona Chandler (*Programme Delivery Manager*)
Juanita Chaves Posada (*Farmers Rights Expert*)
Gianna de Cesare Metcalfe (*Senior Secretary*)
Jennie Dey De Pryck (*Gender Expert*)
Amelia Ochoa (*Communications Consultant*)
Ajit Maru (*Agricultural Research Officer*)
Piero Masciotta (*Finance Officer*)
Harry Palmier (*Senior Partnerships Expert*)
Valeria Pesce (*Information Management Specialist*)
Charles Plummer (*Administrative Officer*)
Thomas Price (*Senior Officer*)

Contact Information

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research
United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
Roma 00153, Italy

Tel: +39 06 5705 3413

Email: ghar-secretariat@fao.org

Website: www.ghar.net

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/
GlobalForumonAgriculturalResearch](http://www.facebook.com/GlobalForumonAgriculturalResearch)

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Credits

Cover photo:

Women dancing during a break from harvesting cabbages in Sorbeh community near Kabala Town in Koinadugu District in Northern Sierra Leone.

Credit ©Sebastian Liste/NOOR for FAO / FAO

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Fabio Timpanaro
www.fabiotimpanaro.com

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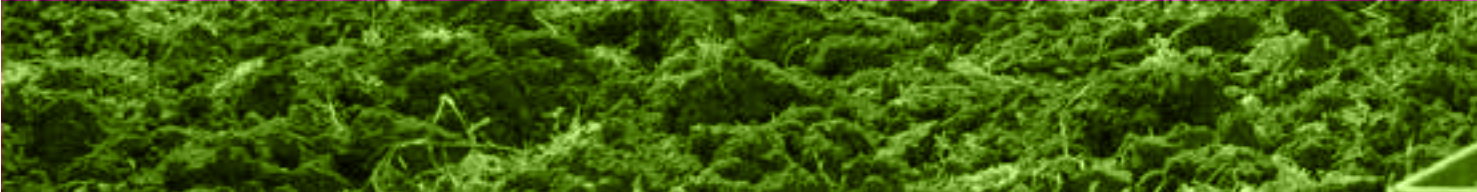
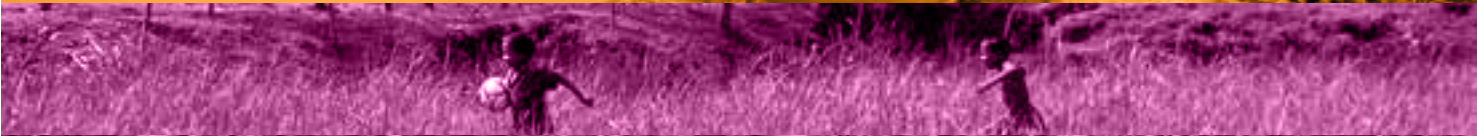
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Food and Agriculture Organization
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