

**DeSIRA funding in support of the activities and objectives
of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation (GFAR)**



Farmers control soil erosion

Background :

Most of the hungry people in the world live in rural areas and depend largely on traditional agriculture where climate change also poses serious challenges. World hunger is not decreasing and there is a need for a profound transformation of food systems. The lack of placing key actors, such as farmers, at the centre of the innovative process has often led to serious problems of scaling up and scaling out, or to innovations that did not necessarily improve the livelihoods of the rural poor or reduce the vulnerability of women, youth and other disadvantaged groups.

With increased threats of food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty and climate change, and existing inequalities around the world, there is a dire need to render these systems more responsive to small holder farmer needs. Agricultural research may significantly contribute to this challenge.

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation (GFAR) (www.gfar.net) is a multi-stakeholder network made up of roughly 600 self-identifying Partner organizations, which share the common vision of making agri-food research and innovation more effective, responsive and equitable, towards achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal outcomes. Partners in GFAR come from all around the world, and across all relevant sectors from public, private and civil society organizations and networks, as well as international organizations.

GFAR has been successful in promoting a number of global initiatives. Its support to international policy processes, such as its technical inputs to the agenda of the G20 and to the CGIAR work programme, and to strengthening coordination of multilateral systems has led to improved

governance of global agricultural research towards development goals. GFAR has engaged with FAO, IFPRI, CIRAD and others to support the Foresight4Food initiative, and working with FARA to establish the African Foresight Academy. Other engagements and contributions helped establish the EAT Forum. In partnership with ITPGRFA, CGRFA and others, GFAR has been actively engaged in issues of Farmers' rights and forgotten foods. It has worked on entrepreneurial training through support to the Young Agripreneurs Programme and reform to education curricula. And through financial and technical support has helped catalyse GFRAS growth and sustainability.

Objectives of the project:

Funding provided to GFAR through the "Development of Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture" (DeSIRA) initiative will support the following activities and objectives:

Output 1: Farmers and communities empowered at the center of innovation

- Provide platforms and opportunities for smallholder farmers (both men and women) to participate on equal terms with other actors in priority setting, data production, sharing and use.
- Mobilize rural communities, with special attention to most marginalized women and youth, to become drivers of agricultural research and innovation through farmer-participatory research, especially to better manage impacts of climate change;
- Provide engagement opportunities for male and female farmers - as key agents of change - to leverage local knowledge on areas such as forgotten foods in order to maximize the use and benefit of different sources of knowledge in addressing shared challenges.

Output 2: Knowledge and innovation turned into opportunity and enterprise

- Foster, and catalyze integrated approaches in the development of demand-driven innovation platforms, that respond to local, regional and global challenges such as climate change and lack of youth opportunity, and address gender inequalities;
- Generate practical actions and shared learning through innovation platforms that address challenges of smallholder farmers, with emphasis on women' economic empowerment and fostering youth as agri-preneurs into profitable new agribusinesses in production, processing and marketing.

Output 3: Institutional architecture and capacity of agricultural research and innovation organizations strengthened, learning improved and dialogue enabled among regions

- Fostering and advising on the reform, strategic planning, governance review and strengthening of regional agricultural research and innovation organizations, to reflect equitable engagement of stakeholders in their governance and operation;
- Invite and facilitate interregional dialogues among agricultural research and innovation organizations and individuals to foster knowledge and experience exchange, mutual learning, diagnosis and finding of solutions to shared concerns, taking into account the different needs and priorities of men and women, especially focused on knowledge exchange, capacity strengthening and partnerships for impact, and SDGs challenges including climate change, hunger and poverty, employability & gender integration.

- Use multi-stakeholder approaches to foster transformational learning and student leadership development in agricultural universities and colleges, engaging with farmers and enterprise, linking science to development.

Output 4: Knowledge management, policy advocacy, communication, impact-demonstration and investment in transformed agri-food innovation systems integrated and strengthened

- Improve access and exchange of knowledge, capitalization of experience, and learning among partners through regional knowledge hubs in key priority areas that also serve to inform agri-food research and innovation policies and practices
- Promote, advocate and facilitate for increased investment in agri-food innovation systems, addressing gender inequalities in the access to resources and services
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Output 5: DeSira funding will be a primary source of financing for the secretariat of GFAR supporting the staffing and resources to provide the above catalytic and collective actions.

The theory of change to achieve the objectives:

GFAR inspires and catalyzes new forms of multi-stakeholder dialogue, strategic partnerships and collective actions across extensive networks, helping to enable the transformation and strengthening of agri-food research and innovation for development systems and processes around the world. GFAR works through a bottom-up and development-centred approach, together addressing strategic challenges that no one organization can resolve alone.

GFAR's Theory of Change is that collective actions, advocacy, sharing of knowledge and capacity strengthening, catalyzed through the interaction of GFAR Partners in open and transparent multi-stakeholder processes, will trigger transformational change in research and innovation institutions. This will strengthen national, regional, and global pro-poor sustainable Agri-Food Research and Innovation Systems through innovation and learning processes becoming more effective, relevant, equitable and accountable.

GFAR has a recognized and respected role in promoting research and innovation for small farmers. Through our partnerships forum and in engagement with UN organizations, the CGIAR centres, civil society and NGOs, educational institution, agricultural research networks, and others we have been able to influence the policy related to research and innovation, and amplify the voice of the small farmer. While a relatively small player on the international scene GFAR has been able to engage in a wide range of issues as a neutral broker bringing several issues to wider attention bringing initiatives to fruition with minimal investment, and by catalyzing commitments and funding from a range of partners. These issues, covering farmers' rights, forgotten foods, youth entrepreneurship, etc., are addressed through what are called Collective Actions, effectively bringing a number of partners together to address issues and find solutions.

Main activities:

GFAR's work is directed to meeting the needs of small farmers research and innovation needs. We are looking at institutional change and responding to the needs and opportunities as they arise. Our work programme is driven by the partners within the GFAR network, which includes representatives

of civil society organizations, farmers and agricultural workers, facilitating agencies, international research, private sector, women's groups, consumers, financial institutions, higher education, national and regional research and policy organizations, rural advisory services, and youth associations. The GFAR Steering Committee agrees on the initiatives (Collective Actions) to be taken by the GFAR Secretariat in collaboration with the GFAR partners and others. There are no predefined "project" partners but the partners are identified based on interest in working on a particular topic that addressed the objectives of GFAR and towards meeting development goals.

GFAR will normally have a range of initiative that it will be working on. Under the current DeSIRA grant the GFAR Steering Committee has identified three Collective Actions priorities which are in progress. Others will follow as GFAR gets back up to speed. These are:

Forgotten Foods – GFAR will work with a number of partners to develop a Manifesto on Forgotten Foods along with a Global Plan of Action for its implementation. The Manifesto will provide a framework of shared values, operational principles and concrete strategies that helps smallholders localize actions and policies within their own communities and countries to rapidly accelerate the wider adoption of more biodiverse food systems. Partners engaged: a CG Center (the Alliance of Bioversity Intl. and CIAT), Crops for the Future, and the agricultural research for development fora/organizations FORAGRO, CACAARI, AARINENA, APAARI, FARA, all members of GFAR Steering Committee, and others.

Digital Transformation – Through the Collective Action "Empowering Farmers through Equitable Data Sharing", this initiative will address the capacities and skills to take advantage of digital tools in the agricultural sector, at all levels (farmers, technical staff as well as institutions). There is a real need for appropriate digital developments for different types of producers in different regions and a methodological framework to guide the development of technologies that do not enhance the profound inequities in the region. Potential partner to be engaged (initiative kicking off in January 2021): FORAGRO, WFO, GODAN and others.

Climate Change – Although a distinct activity has not yet been initiated in the area of climate change, it will be a major concern to be carried through all the GFAR initiatives. In this regard the potential of forgotten foods can address climate change through the use of naturally adapted crops that do not require expensive (and remotely sourced) inputs and can satisfy local food needs without transportation from distant markets. Digital transformation may allow farmers to produce more efficiently and adopt climate friendly practices and/or adaptations to climate change.

Organization :

The GFAR Secretariat of four staff members is hosted by FAO in Rome. Governance of GFAR is provided through the Partners Assembly, which is held at the time of GCARD (Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development). A GCARD meeting is due to be held in 2020/21 in cooperation with the CGIAR. The Steering Committee, a group of 34 representatives of the partners, provide strategic leadership and programmatic governance and meets at least once a year.

Implementing organizations :

There are no predefined "project" partners but the partners are identified based on interest in working on a particular topic that addressed the objectives of GFAR and towards meeting development goals. Typical partners include FAO, IFAD, CG Centers, the agricultural research for

development fora/organizations FORAGRO, CACAARI, AARINENA, APAARI, FARA, members of GFAR Steering Committee, local and national NGOs, universities, and donors. Activities are facilitated by the initiative and engagement of GFAR.

Partners of the project :

Both IFAD and FAO are facilitating agencies for GFAR.

Other main stakeholders :

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- International Fund for Agricultural Development
- CGIAR

Localisation :

Global

Funding and co-funding :

Euro 5 million is provided through DeSIRA for the funding of GFAR.

GFAR has in the past been able to leverage these funds to obtain co-funding of 200 percent for GFAR projects (Collective Actions) from implementing partners and other donors.

Duration :

48 months (2020-2023)

Logo UE + others