



# Empowering Smallholder Farmers' Data Use and Rights

A Collective Action within Key Focus Area (KFA) 1: *Empowering Farmers at the Center of Innovation*



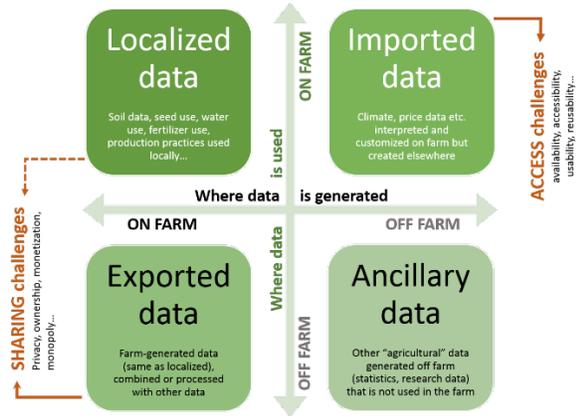
Data for and from farmers has become a growth area, driving expectations and investments in big data, blockchain technology, precision agriculture and e-extension. Investing in **data-driven agriculture is expected to increase agricultural production and productivity, help adapt to or mitigate the effects of climate change, bring about more economic and efficient use of natural resources, reduce risk and improve resilience in farming, and make agri-food market chains much more efficient.** Ultimately, it will contribute to worldwide food and nutrition security.

However, developing-country smallholder farmers are not harnessing the power of data and must overcome challenges and risks to ensure that digital investments benefit them. For the smallholders, the two main challenges are, first, to **gain access** to relevant data and services provided by others and, second, to make sure that any data they **share** does not actually weaken their positions.

There is a recognized need to solve the gaps that currently prevent data from benefiting the world's poor, particularly ensuring smallholder farmers access to agricultural data and creating more equitable systems that truly reconnect science, information and society. We also need to strengthen the recognition of farmers as the central actors and innovators themselves, generators of valuable agricultural knowledge and holders of intellectual property rights, not just recipients of other's information and data.

There are many inter-linked issues in the data value chain that affect the ability of farmers, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, to access, use and harness the benefit of data and data-driven technologies. There are policy issues, technical data access issues, ethical and legal issues as well as issues related to the capacity to find and use the data on the part of the resource-poor farmers and communities or their advisers and data intermediaries.

Of all these issues, the **ethical and legal aspects related to farmers' accessing and using available data and sharing their own data** are now seen as key to empowering farmers through regulations, agreements and an enabling policy environment. Partners in GFAR have expressed their strong interest in acting together on such issues and are taking the first steps towards a **Collective Action on Farmers' Data Use and Rights.** [Read more →](#)



### What we will do together

The objective of this Collective Action is to explore the main challenges and opportunities of harnessing open data for the benefit of farmers, particularly resource poor farmers and communities; recommend strategies and priority areas of intervention at the legal / policy level to ensure farmers' access and use of data and protect their rights; and then act on these recommendations.

Elements and steps of a large scale Collective Action on farmers' data use and rights will result from participatory discussions with Partners in GFAR and experts, particularly in the fields of law, human rights, data sharing, access and benefit-sharing.

### Actions Proposed

The first step in this participatory process will be an International Expert Consultation on Ethical, Legal and Policy Aspects of Open Data Affecting Farmers. The expected outcome of this meeting is an agreed investable and actionable plan with clear commitment from partners to implement a self-sustaining Collective Action on Farmers' Data Use and Rights.

Key actions will be:

- Identify existing gaps, from a policy, legal and ethical perspective, related to accessing and using data, as they apply to resource poor farmers and communities
- Empower farmers with knowledge of their

rights as users of open data and providers of data and traditional knowledge

- Build capacities and increase awareness between different stakeholders on farmers' data use and rights
- Improve the international, national and local governance of farmers' data rights

### Expected outcomes

- Inter-institutional cooperation, including for the joint development and empowerment of trust organizations, e.g. around farmers' aggregations.
- Community protocols developed regulating access to farmers' data and enhancing the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of farmers' data and knowledge
- Improvement/development of national and international frameworks ensuring and protecting farmers' data rights
- Increased awareness of all relevant actors of farmers' rights to use and provide agricultural data and knowledge



You are invited to join the Global Open Data or Agriculture and Nutrition initiative (GODAN), the Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (CTA), the World Farmers' Organization (WFO), and the German Federal Office of Agriculture and Food (BLE) in GFAR's Collective Action *"Acting on Farmers' Data Rights"*

For more information, contact GFAR Secretariat at [GFAR-Secretariat@fao.org](mailto:GFAR-Secretariat@fao.org) or write to: [Valeria.Pesce@fao.org](mailto:Valeria.Pesce@fao.org)