



GFAR

GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
FORUM MONDIAL DE LA RECHERCHE AGRICOLE
FORO GLOBAL DE INVESTIGACION AGROPECUARIA

Strengthening the Participation of Farmers' Organisations and of NGOs in Global Agricultural Research for Development (ARD)

Rome, February 2002

1. Importance of Farmers' Organisations and NGOs in ARD

In recent decades there has been an upsurge of people grouping themselves to form organisations, associations, foundations and similar institutions to assist in delivering social services, promote grass-root economic development, prevent environmental degradation, protect civil rights and pursue other objectives which are traditionally addressed by governments. The "phenomenon" of this increase in civil society organisations is motivated by spontaneous grass-roots movements, through the actions of various public and private institutions and in certain cases they also emerge in response to a crisis situation. In most cases, an important objective pursued is that of "assisted self-reliance" or "participatory development" which stresses the need to "*empower people through knowledge*" to increase their capacity to cope with a changing environment and to improve their own well-being. This has led to the strengthening of Civil Society by increasing the capacity to engage people at the grassroots level through a variety of non-governmental organisations and farmers' organizations, both of which are playing an increasingly important role in the production of *public goods* at the national, the regional and the global levels. A key aspect in this process is the strengthening of *stakeholder constituencies*.

Given the important role these civil society actors are playing, it is very important to ensure their effective participation in agricultural research for development (ARD) not only at the national level (NARS), but also at the regional and global levels. This was one of the basic purposes for which the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) was established. This paper presents the approach that GFAR has been developing, in close dialogue and consultation with the stakeholders involved, for the strengthening of stakeholder constituencies and for their effective participation in regional and global ARD. The basic premise of this approach is that for an effective participation to develop, it is not only a question of providing a seat to a given constituency in a collegial decision-making body at the regional or the global levels. It requires the strengthening of the stakeholder constituencies in the first place, and it requires the development of a multi-level system that can assure a close interaction between the local/national, the regional/sub-regional and the global levels. It is the close and reciprocal interaction between these three levels that can effectively assure the development of a *Global ARD Community*. The *involvement of stakeholder constituencies* is also very different from the involvement of individual farmers in the field through *participatory research techniques*, which is something that IARCs and NARIs have been successfully doing for many years. This paper outlines the approach and the strategy that the GFAR Secretariat has been developing in the last three years, working in close collaboration with the representative bodies of the main stakeholders involved.

1.1. Non-Government Organisation (NGOs)

At every level, NGOs are linking with each other and coalescing into networks and consortia, sectorally and at the national and international levels. This is the case of agricultural research for development (ARD) where NGOs have continued to advocate the need for greater focus on farmer-led research and extension, sustainable farming systems, greater recognition of indigenous knowledge, and gender equity, among others.

NGOs in the ARD sector, as in most sectors, can be broadly categorised as (a) operational, and (b) advocacy. Operational NGOs are mainly oriented towards providing direct and concrete contribution to improve agricultural practices and to increase rural wellbeing in specific locations. Members are often those who work directly in communities in rural areas, conducting research with farmers, providing extension services, and facilitating role in rural communities. Operational NGOs have a range of programs, organisational structures, operational orientations, and areas of operation, both in terms of programs and geographical focus. They exist from local to international levels.

Advocacy NGOs, on the other hand, are those whose main orientation is to influence agricultural policies, priorities, and strategies. While most of them lobby on issues concerning trade and market, farmer representation in decision-making bodies and intellectual property rights (IPR), a number is also calling for a change in practice, e.g. in adopting new modes of communication and a more participatory approach, but also in the mentality and outlook with which research in agriculture should be conducted. They call for a more sustainable, farmer-centred research, for an improved farmer-scientist collaboration, and for the consideration of gender issues in agricultural research.

This category of NGO usually operates at national and international levels. While often working individually, advocacy NGOs are increasingly forming national and international alliances and networks that link groups with similar interests. They usually serve as “watchdogs” and as the “voice” of “marginalized groups” which would otherwise not be heard in social, economic, and political processes.

1.2. Farmers’ Organisations (FOs)

Given the central role farmers play in agricultural production, food security and natural resource management, they constitute one of the most important stakeholders of ARD. They play a key role in both knowledge generation and knowledge utilisation, and they are the main actors responsible for assuring that research results are translated into new production or natural resource management practices.

As farmers are both clients and originators of research, it is important that the global ARD system respond to their needs. Just as important is the recognition that farmers are also researchers and innovators who develop indigenous ways of addressing problems in the farm, and from whom researchers can also learn. Despite the apparent linkage between them and research, farmers and their organisations remain a relatively untapped resource in global agricultural research.

Farmers' Organisations (FOs) are often "groups of rural producers coming together to found organisations, based on the principle of free membership, to pursue specific common interests of their

members- developing technical and economic activities that benefit their members and maintaining relations with partners operating in their economic and institutional environment¹".

Like their NGO counterparts, FOs are increasingly aggregating into federations at the national, regional and international level. Often, FOs join forces with NGOs in advancing their interests. With all the changes taking place in the sector which directly affect small farmers however, there is an urgency to strengthen FOs and empower them so as to establish equal and effective partnerships with other stakeholders based on their own interests and needs. That is, their capacity to influence policy, participate in agricultural priority setting exercises, and to present proposals on policy, priorities and projects must be enhanced. Increased participation of farmers in research and extension makes agricultural services more relevant to the farmers and their livelihoods, thereby strengthening the backbone of the agricultural sector.

Groups such as NGOs and FOs however, are less able to support their own participation due to lack of resources and thus, should be assisted. Their capacity to undertake collaborative research activities with other stakeholders needs to be enhanced, and their capacity to access all available information on agricultural R&D improved, so that they can more effectively contribute to ARD. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including NGOs and FOs, are fundamental players in ARD and should be encouraged to actively take part in ARD activities. In addition, CSOs should also be able to directly engage in formal public sector dialogue towards influencing national and regional agricultural research priorities.

In the international ARD arena, NGOs and FOs are asking for: a research focus on low-external-input and ecologically-sound agriculture and NRM, including social, cultural, political and institutional dimensions and building on indigenous knowledge; a stronger regional organisation of agricultural research and development activities; inclusion of FOs and NGOs in research priority setting, planning, implementation, evaluation and impact assessment, foremost at subnational and national levels but also at regional and global levels, including the CGIAR; and representation of FOs and NGOs in the decision-making and policy-setting bodies of research organisations and programmes.

From "*An opening for genuine partnerships?*
The Global Forum on Agricultural Research from an NGO perspective"
by Ann Waters-Bayer, CGIAR NGO Committee co-Chair

1.3. Role of GFAR and Recommendations of First GFAR External Review

One of GFAR's key strengths is that it provides a common meeting place in which all seven stakeholder constituencies can participate, and bring together their comparative advantages in the research and development process. A Forum of this kind is the ideal platform for addressing issues of global concern, where the participation of a broad and very diverse set of actors is required.

¹ Hussein, Karim, 2000. "*Farmers' organisations and agricultural technology: institutions that give farmers a voice*". Overseas Development Institute, Portland House, Stag Place, London SW1E 5DP

In order to achieve its mandate and its mission, the *strengthening of stakeholder constituencies* is a very important function of GFAR. A fundamental element of its mandate then, is precisely to facilitate and to ensure the effective participation by all stakeholder constituencies in regional and global ARD. In fact, the First GFAR External Review clearly highlighted the importance of this function and made very clear recommendations with respect to it. The External Review points out that: “A key responsibility of the GFAR Secretariat is to assist stakeholders to further develop their constituencies. This is especially true for farmers’ organisations, in view of their relative lack of a strong voice in agricultural research decision-making, and the need to redress this to make research much more demand-led, and also for NGOs in view of their large numbers and varied scope and goals.” The GFAR External Review recommended that both these stakeholder constituencies continue to receive special assistance so as to strengthen their representation in GFAR.

In section 2 of this paper we will analyse the various activities that are being carried out to implement this recommendation, both in terms of strengthening these two constituencies as well as their participation in national, regional and global agricultural research.

1.4. CGIAR: AGM-2001 and participation in Executive Committee (ExCo)

During the recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) held last October 2001, CGIAR took the decision of integrating in the Executive Council (ExCo) representatives from GFAR, from civil society organizations (CSOs) and from the private sector, besides the other members that constitute the 21-members of the ExCo. Further, the ExCo was requested to examine the most appropriate means of strengthening and broadening dialogue with civil society institutions, including farmers’ organisations. GFAR was requested to support this process, since this is part of its mandate.

While NGOs welcome this process, they propose two additional steps. First of all, they point out that as small-scale farmers have become better organised in recent years, they should have a seat of their own instead of being represented by NGOs. Farmer organisations have their own interests that they should be expressing directly to the CGIAR. Secondly, they believe that the voice of farmers in the ExCo will have strength only if a farmer member is backed by a larger number of farmers who have insight into the workings of the CGIAR at global level; hence, they suggest the establishment of a Farmer Organisations Committee. This proposal for a Farmer Organisations Committee has the full support of the farmers themselves. IFAP made such a proposal at the GFAR meeting in Durban in May 2001, and again at the CGIAR AGM-2001. In section 2 an analysis will be made of the options that are available for strengthening the participation of both NGOs and farmers in global agricultural research.

With respect to the development of Challenge Programmes (CPs), it was reiterated that these should build on the foundation of bottom-up regional priority setting which CG Centres, TAC and GFAR have been pursuing. It was also decided that the development of a few of the proposed CPs should also provide for stakeholder involvement. CSOs have expressed that they will closely monitor the quality of the partnership in the CPs.

There was also a decision to transform the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) into a Science Council (SC). Members of the SC will include eminent scientists from the biological, physical and social sciences; and with experience in science policy and development. The NGOs and SFOs welcome this decision and called for a more explicit reference to the need for balanced representation of biological, physical and social sciences in the mix of expertise in the SC. Further, they called for the inclusion of people in the SC who recognise indigenous knowledge and farmer’s own research as legitimate science, people who recognise participatory research as a legitimate – indeed a necessary - form of research to stimulate learning processes and innovations that will truly benefit small farmers

and strengthen their capacities to conduct their own site-specific research and to adapt to changing conditions.

2. Three Levels for Articulating Participation by NGOs and FOs in ARD

On the basis of the considerations made in the first section of this report, the GFAR Secretariat has been working in close collaboration with all stakeholder constituencies in order to develop a strategy with two objectives in mind: (a) to strengthen the participatory and representational mechanisms within each constituency, as well as their information management capacity in order to have a clear perception of the main issues that are being debated in regional and global ARD and to develop their own vision and strategic agenda on these topics; and (b) to strengthen the participation of each constituency in the decision-making mechanisms of ARD at the national, regional and global levels. Since this paper is on “***Strengthening the Participation of Farmers’ Organisations and NGOs in Global ARD***”, this section will concentrate on the strategy and the mechanisms that are being developed with these two constituencies. But it should be pointed out that similar efforts are being carried out with NARS and ARIs through the strengthening of Regional/Sub-regional Fora in both the South and the North; and with the Business and Industry (private) sector through interaction with similar bodies that this sector has established at both the regional and global levels, including both transnational firms and the national private sector in developing countries. Other GFAR documents analyse the participation strategy being promoted in those other constituencies.

This analysis is structured around the three critical questions/issues the GFAR Secretariat has been discussing with both NGOs and Farmers’ Organisations, since before GFAR-2000: (1) constituency development and strengthening; (2) strengthen participation at the national and regional levels; and (3) strengthen participation at the global level. The three levels complement and reinforce each other. To analyse only the question of the participation in this or that global mechanism without addressing the other questions will miss some of the most important issues involved in effectively strengthening the participation of stakeholders in agricultural research.

It should also be pointed out that the activities described in this paper are being carried out as joint ventures with the global associations or federations of both farmers and NGOs. In the case of farmers, the GFAR Secretariat is working with the **International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)**, and with **Via Campesina** for the landless peasant and the very small-scale farmer. *IFAP* is constituted by national organisations representing family farmers around the world and they have general consultative status with the United Nations. *Via Campesina* is a coordinating body that brings together organisations of landless peasants, small-scale farmers, agricultural workers and indigenous people. In the case of NGOs there is no similar global mechanism, although NGOs have increasingly strong associations at both the national and regional levels. In the absence of such a mechanism, GFAR is working in close coordination with the *NGO Committee* established by the CGIAR (NGOC). The GFAR Secretariat is carrying out many joint efforts with this committee in the various activities described below. For example, civil society groups are setting up mechanisms to better coordinate civil society participation in international debates and discussions related to ARD, for e.g., the *International Alliance for Agricultural Research for Development (IAARD)* The GFAR Secretariat is following these initiatives with interest and will support them if there is sufficient interest among the respective constituency. Thus, in seeking to strengthen the constituencies of the various stakeholders, the philosophy of GFAR is to work through the organisations that the stakeholders themselves have established, not to create new and parallel ones. GFAR builds on what exists and seeks to strengthen it, working together with the respective constituency.

2.1 Constituency Development

Through the sharing of experiences and information among stakeholders, GFAR seeks to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to respond to the challenges generated by the new globalised context of agricultural research, and to take advantage of the opportunities generated by the deep changes taking place in this environment: changes in the science that underlies current agricultural production, such as the biological and the information and communication (ICT) revolutions; the increasing importance of proprietary technology with the Intellectual Property Rights considerations it generates and the emerging new normative framework related to key aspects of agricultural research (i.e. management of genetic resources, management of proprietary technologies and IPRs); and the deep changes in the organisation of research that the previous factors are generating (such as the re-thinking and integration of NARS to make them more effective and efficient). The importance of the issues involved, and the need to develop collaborative efforts to cope with them, has strengthened the emergence of a clear sense of purpose and of common perceptions around key ARD issues, while respecting diversity of opinion and of stakeholder positions with respect to these issues. This process is evidenced by the launching of multi-stakeholder regional priority setting exercises, GFAR Global Partnership Programmes (GPPs) and CGIAR Challenge Programmes (CPs). GFAR aims to ensure that its activities are conducted in an inclusive and innovative manner that reflects the evolving nature of ARD: *participation*, *dialogue* and *partnership* are the key words of the future.

In strengthening constituencies one of the challenges that is faced by each constituency is to establish an identity as a stakeholder in the global ARD community and to develop a capacity to contribute to the *global agenda* through influencing policy, participating in priority setting, and proposing projects that can be collectively undertaken by various stakeholders. In order to facilitate this process, the GFAR Secretariat has been supporting the following activities:

- a) Development of *Vision Statements* at the level of each constituency that can provide a coherent framework for action within each stakeholder, as well as a strong sense of purpose and of urgency that can be the basis for strong commitment.
- b) Development of a *Strategic Agenda* of policy and institutional issues related to agricultural research and technological development. This implies developing an awareness of what the key issues are and what are the implications for each constituency.
- c) Strengthening their *capacity to access and manage information* through EGFAR and through collaborative efforts between EGFAR and the website development projects of each constituency, so to take advantage of the web to facilitate dialogue among the members of each constituency in discussing these policy options and in developing common perceptions and common positions with respect to key ARD issues. This is a very important component of “*constituency development*”.
- d) Support the development of *sustainable partnerships and alliances within* each constituency so as to establish a coherent identity as a stakeholder, speak with a collective voice and facilitate the development of equal and effective relationships with other stakeholders.

A very interesting example of the collaboration the GFAR Secretariat is carrying out with each constituency to cover the above is the *IFAP/GFAR Collaborative Programme* that was presented and approved at the GFAR Steering Committee meeting of Durban in May 2001. This programme that is currently being carried out with IFAP is presented in Annex 1. A similar programme was proposed by the GFAR Secretariat to the *Via Campesina* Secretariat, in order to achieve the same objectives. As soon as *Via Campesina* replies a similar initiative will be developed with them. With both IFAP and *Via Campesina* the GFAR Secretariat has also been exploring ideas on how to develop a common farmers’ position on key issues in order to have a stronger voice in global ARD, based on joint efforts that IFAP and *Via Campesina* could undertake. This is a very promising possibility that will continue to be explored, as described in section 2.3 below.

In order to implement this programme of work a second important step has been taken. IFAP established a **Farmers Committee on Science and Technology** to serve as liaison between farmers and GFAR and to develop the IFAP/GFAR Collaborative Programme (see Annex 1). This committee has already met to discuss how to further develop and implement the above-mentioned programme. The next step that the GFAR Secretariat is discussing with the IFAP Secretariat is the evolution of this committee to become the focal point for farmers' participation in global ARD, including both GFAR and the CGIAR in this concept. We will come back to this point in section 2.3 below.

The same process is being carried out with NGOs. The GFAR Secretariat has been working in close collaboration with the NGO representatives in the GFAR-SC and with the NGOC, in efforts such as:

- a) development of an NGO Vision on the Role of ARD in Sustainable Development that was presented at GFAR-2000;²
- b) support to NGO meetings where different topics/issues of the strategic agenda on ARD have been discussed and developed;
- c) support to meetings to develop key proposals that NGOs have presented to the global ARD community, such as an approach to issues of "scaling-up" from successful community experiences, and key topics derived from the NGO's Vision of ARD such as conservation tillage (DMC) and other NRM-related issues;³
- d) systematisation of NGO experiences to facilitate the contribution they can make to regional priority setting processes.

In terms of improving and strengthening the *representational questions* within the NGO community, a very important step forward has been taken with the identification of **NGO Regional Focal Points** for participation in both regional and global events related to the construction of a global ARD community. These regional representatives are expected to address one of the "practical questions" that has been confronted by highly diversified and heterogeneous constituencies, which is that of the selection of NGO representatives that can validly represent all the constituency in a given region or sub-region. The NGO Regional Focal Points are now being integrated into the various mechanisms and workshops at the regional and sub-regional level. A similar practice is being developed with IFAP and Via Campesina for the regional/sub-regional representation of farmers. As pointed out above, the GFAR Secretariat is following closely the initiatives of establishing a global umbrella organisation to provide unity to the representation of NGOs at the global level. Close interaction is already being developed with the regional/sub-regional federations or associations that exist.

2.2. Strengthen participation at national and regional level:

Besides strengthening the constituencies of specific stakeholders through the strengthening of their capacity for strategic thinking, of their capacity to access and to manage information and knowledge,

² See "Towards a Pro-Poor NRM Strategy." NGO Committee. Washington, D.C., 22-23 October 1998.

³ See (a) INSPIRE-NRM: New mechanisms for strengthening partnerships in research and development of ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management. NGO Stakeholder Group. May 2001; (b) Finding common ground: Towards a global initiative on direct-sowing, mulch-based systems and conservation agriculture (DMC), October 2001; and (c) GOING TO SCALE: Can We Bring More Benefits to More People More Quickly? April 2000. IIRR, Philippines.

and of their deliberative and representational bodies, a second very important dimension that appears is that of how to strengthen their participation in setting the agenda at the national, the regional/sub-regional and the global levels. This section will make a quick reference to the ongoing process of integrating both farmers and NGOs into NARS and National Fora, at the national level, and into the Regional/Sub-regional Fora, at the regional level.

At the national level the evolution from the NARI model to the NARS model is taking place in many developing countries. Two complementary dimensions of this same process is that of the simultaneous emergence of *National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS)*, as the *systemic relationships* that emerge among the various actors of ARD in any given country (NARIs, extension services, universities, NGOs, FOs, community organizations), and the related concept of *National Fora* as the spaces that are established for dialogue among these same stakeholders in order to develop common perceptions and to set the national agenda. These two aspects are two sides of the same coin. In fact, several NARS have used the construction of National Fora and the establishment of competitive grants funding mechanisms, as two very powerful tools for the *integration of NARS*. Very interesting experiences are currently under development in the Philippines in the Asia/Pacific region, in Mali in the Sub-Saharan African region, and in Colombia in the Latin American and Caribbean region, to mention only three examples in very different places of the world. GFAR is facilitating the exchange of experiences among NARS in order to develop *learning networks* among them and among interested stakeholders. In all of these cases, one of the main questions that is being addressed is that of the integration of NGOs and of farmers in this process.

At the regional/sub-regional level, a very similar experience is being developed with the integration of Farmers' Organizations, NGOs, universities and the private sector into the Regional/Sub-regional Fora that have been established by NARS. Three important steps have been taken in this direction. The first one is the identification of *NGO Regional Focal Points* that was done in consultation between the GFAR Steering Committee and the NGOC. This is expected to solve the question of "selection and representation" that has been raised by some RF/SRFs. The same possibility is now being discussed with IFAP and with Via Campesina for farmers. The second step is the integration of NGO and of farmers' representatives in the Executive Committees of RF/SRF (not just the annual or biennial general assemblies), that has already taken place in some RF/SRFs (i.e. FORAGRO, CORAF/WECARD), but is still pending in other RF/SRFs. The third step has been the "opening-up" of the process of regional priority-setting in many regions, in which in this last year a clear effort has been done in the direction of integrating all stakeholders in these processes. Although this first step has been done more at a formal level and is still not based on a truly bottom-up approach, it has been an important step forward. Furthermore, interesting pilot projects, such as the Mesoamerica Project, have been developed by the RF/SRFs (in this case FORAGRO), showing their willingness to explore innovative ways of integrating NGOs and Farmers' Organizations, including the participatory approach that was suggested by *Via Campesina* at their *Guacimo Meeting* in August of 2001.

2.3. Strengthening Participation in Global ARD

With the globalization of agricultural research that has taken place in recent years, it is very important for all constituencies to develop a capacity to participate proactively in Global ARD. As pointed out in section 1, this capacity does not only depend on having a seat in a decision-making body at the global level. This capacity builds very much on the previous two levels in order for a person who sits in a collegial body to be able to *effectively "represent a constituency"*. Otherwise he/she will only be in a position to express a personal opinion, and will not be able to assure a *two-way flow of communication* between that collegial body and the constituency the person represents. This section

analyses the strengthening of the participation of constituencies in global ARD through two mechanisms: the GFAR Steering Committee (GFAR-SC) and the CGIAR Executive Council (ExCo).

a) Participation in the GFAR Steering Committee

Participation in the GFAR Steering Committee⁴ is the first of the two ways of participating in Global ARD. During the last three years the *GFAR Steering Committee (GFAR-SC)* has been developing a very active role in developing a strategic agenda on ARD policy and institutional issues, that are discussed at the national level (in NARS and National Fora), at the regional/sub-regional level (in the Regional/Sub-Regional Fora), and at the global level (the GFAR-SC). Thus this steering committee is not just a committee established at the global level. It is the “apex committee” of a system of deliberative bodies that bring together the stakeholders of ARD, including NARS, IARCs, ARIs, NGOs, Farmers’ Organizations, Business and Industry and donors at the various levels. *Key strategic issues* are discussed at all three levels, even reaching further below to the community/local level where one finds the end-users and the beneficiaries of agricultural research.

One of the important contributions of GFAR to the establishment of a *Global ARD Community* is that of insisting on the need to define “*globalization*” in terms of the capacity to assure a close and two-way interaction between the various levels involved, and effectively establishing a multi-level system that makes this interaction possible. Global issues are not only those that are important at the global level; rather they are those that have the capacity to make an impact locally and to mobilize and influence people locally, all over the world. They are global because they link the local to the global, in a two-way interaction. Global Programmes are strongly based on local/regional components, not only on global coordination. It is this very close and dynamic interaction between the local/national, the regional/sub-regional and the global, that constitutes a truly Global ARD Community. The latter is not only based in international organizational platforms.

Since the GFAR-2000 Conference that took place in Dresden, this system has been operating quite dynamically in this way. The two Dresden Declarations⁵, as well as the Global Vision, emerged from a bottom-up process that built on this intense interaction between the various levels, since the ideas were discussed in National Fora, in Regional/Sub-regional Fora, and in stakeholder constituencies around the world. In the year and a half since Dresden, the GFAR-SC has been working in close interaction with the Regional/Sub-regional (RF/SRF) and with constituency groups and/or committees, such as the ones mentioned for both farmers and NGOs in section 2.1, in developing a “Strategic Agenda” of policy and institutional issues of ARD that all stakeholders confront. These issues are increasingly discussed in the annual meetings of RF/SRF and of other constituencies.

It is interesting to point out that one of the main challenges that have been confronted in developing this system is that of defining in operational terms the functions and responsibilities of a *Steering Committee (SC) member*. This was one of the questions that were raised and discussed by the First GFAR External Review. The last two years have been a *learning process* among SC members that has led to a more operational definition of the responsibilities they have vis-à-vis their constituency,

⁴ **The *GFAR Steering Committee* meets twice a year, in both closed and open sessions where stakeholders are encouraged to participate. Furthermore, the GFAR-SC operates through sub-committees constituted at the level of specific constituencies, such as the *NARS Steering Committee* which is a sub-committee of the GFAR-SC.**

⁵ Dresden Declaration: Towards a Global System for Agricultural Research for Development; and Dresden Declaration on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

in order to effectively provide a *two-way flow of communication and debate*: keep their constituencies informed on the topics/issues being discussed in the GFAR-SC; look for fora to allow the members of their constituencies to discuss these issues and develop common perceptions among them (using the web and cyberspace interaction whenever possible); raise new issues that may come from their own constituencies; and provide a feedback to the GFAR-SC to make sure the constituency they represent is really making a contribution to shaping the global agenda. This is very different from the responsibilities of a Board member. And this type of responsibility can only be fulfilled if the other two levels (discussed in sections 2.1 and 2.2) work effectively. Otherwise it is impossible for a single person to really play this role. The Regional Representatives to the CGIAR, that previously existed, were facing this dilemma before the development of GFAR and of the Regional/Sub-regional Fora mechanisms.

b) Participation in the CGIAR Executive Council (ExCo)

In AGM-2001 the CGIAR took the decision to establish a 21-member *Executive Council (ExCo)*, in which GFAR, NGOs and the private sector were included, along with the other members of the CG from both the North and the South and the co-sponsors. Three important questions came up in the first meeting of the ExCo that took place at the end of AGM-2001. The first one is that of how to strengthen the participation of farmers in this process; the second one is that of how to improve the question of representation among NGOs; and the third one was that of how to strengthen and broaden the dialogue with civil society institutions in general. Given the fact that GFAR has a specific mandate with respect to these issues, it was requested to consult these questions with the respective stakeholder constituencies and to present a recommendation to the next meeting of the ExCo. As a follow-up to this the GFAR Secretariat has been in dialogue with the two constituencies involved in this consultation (farmers and NGOs) since November of last year, the results of which are presented in this report.

With respect to the first question, which is that of how to strengthen the participation of farmers in this process, the main ideas that have emerged are as follows. With respect to the participation of farmers in the ExCo three possible options have emerged. The first one is to establish one more seat in this committee to have a farmer representative. The second one is for the NGOs to share a seat with the farmers' organisations. The third one is to have GFAR represent farmers in the ExCo, on the basis of the work that is being done with farmers in strengthening their capacity as a constituency and in strengthening their participation in the national, the regional and the global levels, as described in this paper. Through the discussion of this paper it is hoped that a consensus will emerge.

For any of the above options to be effective however, it is extremely important to approach the question of stakeholder involvement through the integrated approach that is described in this paper. That is, strengthening stakeholders is not just a question of allowing membership in the ExCo. It is a question of supporting and recognising the importance of strengthening constituencies through activities such as the collaborative programmes that GFAR is developing with IFAP and with Via Campesina.⁶ As described in section 2.1, this led to the establishment of a **Farmers Science and Technology Committee**, for which the IFAP and GFAR Secretariats are exploring the possibility of converting into a *Global Farmers' Coordinating Committee* that can become the focal point for farmers participation in Global ARD, and including in this concept both the CGIAR and GFAR. Two practical questions have emerged in discussing this option. The first one is the financial support for

⁶ As previously pointed out, in the case of the latter the GFAR Secretariat has proposed to the President of *Via Campesina* to develop a programme similar to the one being developed with IFAP (see section 2.1 and Annex 1). On the basis of the reply that will be obtained this can be implemented right away.

this committee (similar to the one that NGOC receives). For this purpose, the GFAR Secretariat has presented a request for funding to both IDRC of Canada and the Netherlands, in order to be able to mobilize funds to support this process of strengthening stakeholder involvement. The Netherlands has responded positively and this proposal is being further developed.

The second practical question that emerges in the strengthening the participation of farmers is the integration of *Via Campesina (VC)* in this process. Here two important steps are being taken. *Via Campesina* members are being very actively integrated into the regional priority-setting process through the pilot project that was developed by FORAGRO for Mesoamerica, on the basis of the participatory approach that has been jointly developed by FORAGRO and by VC in their *Guacimo Meeting* in August 2001. FORAGRO is still waiting for a reply from donors. A similar pilot project is being discussed for West and Central Africa with CORAF/WECARD. The second step refers to the participation of *Via Campesina* in the Farmers' Committee that has been established with IFAP. Two options are being discussed with VC. One option is for VC to join in the establishment of a Global Farmers' Coordinating Committee that would be established in cooperation with IFAP and GFAR. This option would strengthen the "*voice of farmers*" in regional and global ARD, since they would be speaking with a single voice. Secondly, it would facilitate immensely the mobilization of funds from donors. The second option is to have a joint undertaking among *Via Campesina*, NGOs and other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the establishment of a global coordination mechanism that will bring together this increasingly important social sector. In fact, the effort of trying to put together an "*International Alliance for Agricultural Research for Development*" (IAARD) is exploring this option.

The second question raised is that of how to improve the representation among NGOs, given the diversity and heterogeneity of this constituency. As described in sections 2 and 2.1, NGOs have increasingly strong associations at both the national and the regional/sub-regional levels. At the global level the NGOC has provided an umbrella organization, while other associations (such as IAARD) are developing. But through this iterative process, NGOs are putting in place an operational system of consultation that covers the three levels analysed in this paper (the national, the regional and the global). Through this system NGOs are validly identifying their members in Regional/Sub-regional Fora (the NGO Regional Focal Points), in the GFAR Steering Committee and in the CGIAR ExCo. Although the system can be improved and is being improved, there is already a system in place that is growing stronger through a *learning process and a deepening process* that is taking place supported by the development of GFAR and of various relevant experiences.

The third question that was raised in the first meeting of the ExCo was that of how to strengthen and broaden the dialogue with civil society institutions in general. This paper provides many elements to answer this question by emphasizing the fact that for effective participation to develop, it is not only a question of providing a seat to a given constituency in a collegial decision-making body at the regional or the global levels. While this provides a signal that system is opening up to a broader stakeholder participation, it requires more than this. It requires the strengthening of the stakeholder constituencies in the first place, and it further requires the development of a multi-level system that can assure a close interaction between the local/national, the regional/sub-regional and the global levels, as described in the previous sections. It is the close and two-way interaction between these three levels that can effectively assure the development of a *Global ARD Community*.

For further information GFAR has prepared two analytical papers on the role of FOs and NGOs in ARD and GFAR's activities with them, and another paper briefly analyses the role of GFAR in facilitating the participation of NGOs and farmers in GFAR sponsored *Global Partnership Programmes (GPPs)* and in CGIAR sponsored *Challenge Programmes (CPs)*.



International Federation of Agricultural Producers

ANNEX 1 IFAP/GFAR Collaborative Programme

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) is a new stakeholder-led initiative that seeks to promote cost-effective partnerships and strategic alliances among the key players involved in agricultural research, and to provide a forum for the discussion of strategic issues among the stakeholders in this field with the objective of developing common perceptions that can facilitate co-operation and concerted actions. In this context, farmers constitute one of the main stakeholders of GFAR, given the central role they play in both technology generation and technology utilization in the agricultural sector. In order to facilitate the participation of farmers in the Global Forum and in the activities it promotes, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) recently established a *Farmers' Committee on Science and Technology*, that will function as a Support and Liaison Committee to GFAR.

As part of this process, the GFAR Secretariat has been discussing with IFAP a Programmatic Framework for strengthening the participation of farmers in the Global Forum, as a way of strengthening their capacity to respond to the challenges and opportunities that characterize the globalised and science-intensive environment of the 21st century. A similar understanding is being developed with Via Campesina and other regional farmers' associations. This Programmatic Framework is organised around four points. These are:

1. **Information and communications:** This first line of action is aimed at strengthening the capacity of farmers to use the Internet as a means of communication, and as a means of accessing research information and knowledge. This will be carried out through joint development of IFAP's website and of the Farmers' Master Web page on GFAR's website (called EGFAR), that is currently under development. This activity is complementary to other initiatives that farmers are carrying out in collaboration with different stakeholders and development agencies, such as IFAP's work with FAO in Vercon and in FarmNet, which brings information technology to farmers' organisations in developing countries.
2. **Development of a strategic agenda for agricultural research and development:** One of the key objectives of GFAR is to facilitate participation by all stakeholders in setting the global agricultural research agenda, and participation in discussions on strategic issues. The IFAP Support and Liaison Committee to GFAR (or Farmers' Committee on Science and Technology Issues) is a good vehicle for communicating farmers' views on such a strategic agenda. It is proposed to concentrate on a limited number of priorities which could include:

- a. *Biotechnology and Bio-safety issues.* This refers to both the impact of advances in biotechnology on farming, as well as the issue of bio-safety, risk assessment and decision-making in the area of GMOs. Here, a proposal is being considered for collaboration among farmers, the research community, NGOs, and the private sector through regional workshops on the topic “Risk assessment and decision making in the area of GMOs”.
 - b. *Advances in precision agriculture* and in other computer (ICT) applications to agricultural production.
 - c. *Intellectual property rights (IPR)* issues and the implications for farmers.
 - d. Participation in the discussions that are taking place on key topics of international agricultural research, such as the implementation of farmers rights and the LPOA.
3. **Strengthening Cooperation at the regional level:** One of the main dimensions of GFAR activities is at the regional level, through Regional/Sub-regional Fora (RF/SRF) It is therefore at this level that IFAP member organisations can have the most influence on research agendas. Given the interest that RF/SRF have on research priorities as a way of articulating regional cooperation around key development issues of common interest, as well as the decision of the CGIAR to use a bottom-up approach that builds on regional priorities, the regional agenda-setting process (regional priorities) has become very important. Thus a close interaction will be sought between the IFAP members in each region and the Regional/Sub-regional Fora. This implies inviting IFAP members to participate in representation of farmers in the meetings of RF/SRF, and NARS leaders from the RF/SRF will be invited to participate in the IFAP meetings in each region. In order to facilitate this interaction, information will be exchanged on the dates of the respective meetings. The dates of future RF/SRF meetings are being placed on the EGFAR website and IFAP members and regional associations are invited to consult this website in order to facilitate the participation of their members in those meetings. Information on regional meetings of IFAP will also be placed there.
4. **Research Partnerships:** GFAR is a forum to bring together different stakeholders involved in agricultural research, and to facilitate partnerships among them. These efforts have led to proposals for regional and global partnerships. In the case of the latter, it is important to facilitate the participation of farmers in the *Global Partnership Programmes (GPPs)* that GFAR has been promoting since the GFAR-2000 Conference. More recently, the CGIAR has been promoting the *Challenge Programmes (CPs)*, that have similarities and differences with the previous ones. The Farmers S&T Committee mentioned above can facilitate participation in emerging GPPs, such as:
- a. *Several existing global research programmes have been analysing the impact of global climate change on food production.* Given the importance of the topic, the various stakeholders of agriculture and rural development are considering the possibility of establishing a joint research endeavour, called the *Global Environmental Change and Food Systems initiative (GECaFS)*. Given the importance of the issue for farmers, the IFAP and GFAR secretariats are looking into the possibility of organising a discussion forum between farmers and scientists on this topic (through the Farmers’ S&T Committee).
 - b. *Participation by farmers in the Global Partnership Programmes (GPPs) being developed by interested stakeholders with the support of GFAR on:*
 - i. NRM issues, such as conservation tillage.
 - ii. Linking farmers to the market through post-harvest technologies, rural innovation and the development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs).
 - iii. Market commodity chains in key commodities of interest to developing countries.
 - iv. Management of local innovations and farmer-to-farmer interaction.
 - c. *Participation by farmers in the Challenge Programmes (CPs) the CGIAR is promoting.*