

GFAR Collective Action on Inclusive Digital Agriculture

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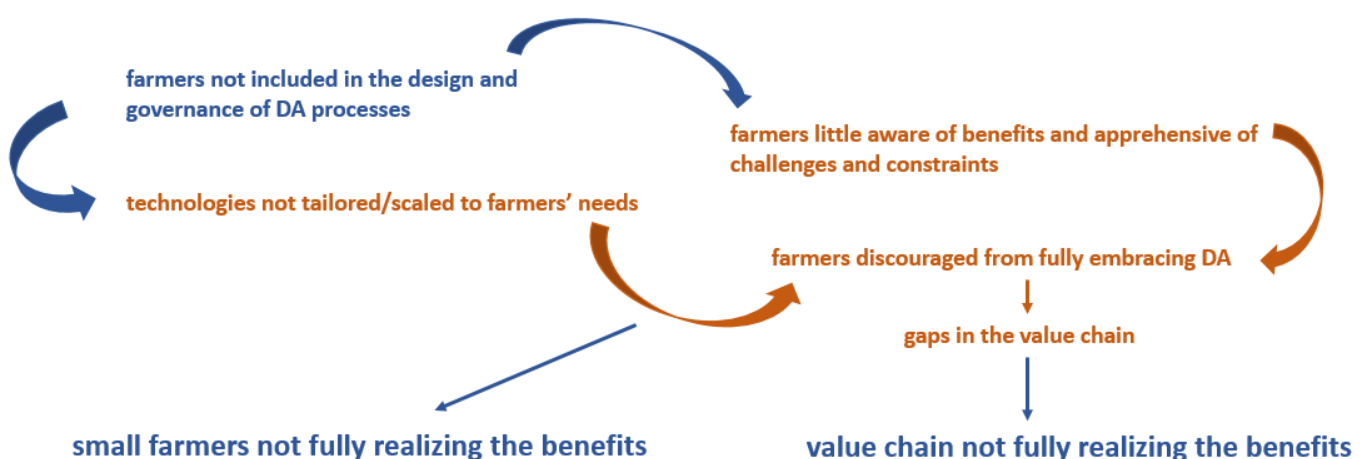
The issue

Digital Agriculture (DA) is expected to increase agricultural production, help adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change, bring about more efficient use of natural resources, reduce risk and improve resilience in farming, and make agri-food value chains much more efficient. However, digital solutions for these purposes have been demonstrated in advantaged and homogeneous contexts, primarily large-scale agriculture and research projects. Small-scale farmers, who produce between 35% (FAO) and 70% (GRAIN, ETC Group) of the world's food, either use them minimally or don't use them at all. Which means that not only are small farmers not harnessing the benefits of the ongoing and accelerating digital transformation, but that these solutions are not used diffusely enough to deliver at the scale that is needed.

On the one hand (farmers' perspective), only well-resourced farmers really thrive on advanced digital technologies, thus widening the rural divide and exacerbating already existing power imbalances; on the other hand (society's perspective), the promise of more sustainable production and that of transparent "farm to fork" systems rely on the assumption that all actors participate in the agricultural data value chain, and without convinced and informed participation of small-scale farmers these promises will never be realized.

The action

Partners in GFAR, and primarily the partners involved in this Collective Action (CA), recognize that the key driver towards the full realization of the benefits of the digital transformation of agriculture is the inclusion of small-scale producers in the design and governance of digital solutions, and in the negotiation of related data practices and business models.



The CA aims at empowering small-scale producers to co-develop good practices and negotiate business models that work for them, and at making all other actors in the DA value chain more open to new inclusive practices and business models.

The action takes a bottom-up staged approach, and can be conducted at different stages in different regions, harmonizing efforts and maintaining coordination through the **Inter-regional Task Force on Inclusive Digital Agriculture**. Typical phases in the staged approach, in which each phase builds on the participatory results of the previous one, are: a) surveys for a farmer-centric needs/concerns assessment; b) multi-stakeholder consultations for co-designing farmer-fair business models and best practices for digital transformation; c) capacity development tools and events; d) input for launching pilot implementations; e) advocacy for policies.

Expected results

The needs identified and the models and best practices devised during the Action will be the basis for capacity development, pilots and advocacy.

All findings and material produced or used in the Action as well as other relevant publicly available resources will be adapted and organized in an Online Resource Kit for Inclusive Digital Agriculture co-designed with the partners representing small-scale producers.

Outcomes

- Small-scale producers are empowered to develop business models and negotiate practices that make them benefit from DA.
- All actors in the DA value chain are more open to practices and business models that work for small producers.
- Thanks to a more farmer-fair DA value chain (technology, money, data, knowledge), farmers embrace DA technologies with full awareness of benefits and challenges, and capacities to negotiate.

Objective

Enabling farmers as key actors and co-innovators in the design, governance and benefit sharing of Digital

Agriculture technologies, data and infrastructures, as well as the promotion and support of pertinent policies and best practices, so that solutions are inclusive, context-specific and fit to help them increase productivity and income, reduce risk, use natural resources sustainably and mitigate/adapt to climate change.

Partners

The first phase was launched in August 2021 in Latin America and the Caribbean, led by the Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO) and in partnership with the Confederation of Family Producers Organizations of the Expanded Mercosur (COPROFAM), the Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) initiative, and the AgGateway consortium of digital agriculture solution providers.

A regional phase in Asia Pacific started in June 2022, coordinated by the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) in partnership with the Asian Farmers' Association (AFA).

In December 2021, an Inter-regional Task Force was established under the auspices of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and with participation from all the GFAR Regional Fora and regional members of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS).

Role of GFAR

GFAR facilitates the initiation of the partnership and the dialogue between the partners, establishes formal agreements when necessary, liaises with new potential partners, makes sure that the core values and priorities of GFAR are at the heart of the action, monitors the way the partnership works and the adherence to the partnership principles (primarily, that all partners benefit, that the agenda is set together, that responsibilities are negotiated and shared effectively, that there is mutual learning), and helps with monitoring evaluation and learning and resource mobilization.

Links & contacts

GFAR: <https://www.gfar.net> – gfar-secretariat@fao.org

Collective Action: <https://www.gfar.net/content/gfar-collective-action-inclusive-digital-transformation-agriculture>