



The GFAiR Charter

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Glossary

AARINEA	Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East & North Africa
ABC	Alliance Bioversity & CIAT
AFS	Agri-Food System
APAARI	Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
CA	Collective Action is a multi-stakeholder programme of work involving three or more partners from different constituencies and regions ideally with and for small-scale producers, women and youth.
CACAARI	Central Asian and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
EC	European Commission
EFARD	European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development
Engagement Principles	GFAR - Engagement Principles (2).pdf (gfair.network)
ES	Executive Secretary
ExCom	Executive Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FARA	Forum on Agricultural Research in Africa
FORAGRO	Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura
GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research (and Innovation) (until 31.1.2024)
GFAiR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation (since 1.2.2024)
GFAiR member	Any organization that aligns with GFAiR's vision, mission and principles and requests involvement in the Global Forum.
GFAiR partner	GFAiR members participating in a GFAiR Collective Action.
GNC	Global NARS Consortium
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MSP	Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships
NARS	National Agricultural Research System
PA	Partners Assembly
RF	Regional Fora on Agricultural Research and Innovation
R&I	Research & Innovations
SC	Steering Committee
ToC	A Theory of Change is a set of assumptions about how change can be triggered / produced in order to address problems or issues that affect individuals, groups and / or systems.
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations

Section I. Preamble

1. The The Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation (GFAiR) Charter describes the structure and functions of GFAiR.
2. The first Charter was approved by the GFAiR Steering Committee (SC) in 1998 and was subsequently revised in 2000 and 2006 and 2016. The present document is a substantive update based on the review of the 2017 Charter, undertaken by an SC sub-committee led by GFAiR's Vice-Chair, after GFAR transitioned to new hosting and funding on February 1, 2024, and its renaming from GFAR to GFAiR. As required by the previous Charter, it was proposed by GFAiR's SC for endorsement by GFAiR's Partners Assembly (PA) and was officially endorsed during the PA and SC meetings in Uzbekistan from October 21 to 25, 2024.
3. Any future amendments to the GFAiR Charter can be proposed by and endorsed by GFAiR's SC.
4. This document gives an updated and more consistent description of the vision, mission and principles of the GFAiR, its structure and governance, and its resourcing.
5. The Charter is not legally binding, nor does it impose any legal liability on the actors involved in GFAiR.

Section II. Background and Context

6. Recognizing the critical role of agricultural research in addressing development challenges, GFAiR was formally established in Washington in October 1996 as the Global Forum on Agricultural Research. Its mandate is to "mobilize all stakeholders involved in agricultural research for development and support their efforts to alleviate poverty, increase food security, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources." The formation of GFAiR was sponsored by key stakeholders in agricultural research for development, including the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR), and the World Bank.
7. Since February 1, 2024, GFAiR's Secretariat has been hosted by CGIAR / and Alliance of Bioversity International & CIAT (ABC).
8. GFAiR is a convening and catalytic mechanism for change, a virtual institution composed and driven by the members who make up GFAiR.

Section III. Vision, Mission and Principles

9. GFAiR vision statement:

GFAiR aims to make agri-food research and innovation systems more effective, responsive and equitable, towards achieving sustainable development outcomes.

10. GFAiR mission statement:

Members in GFAiR, at national, regional and international levels, advocate for and catalyze 'Collective Actions' that strengthen and transform agri-food research and innovation systems.

11. Guiding principles of GFAiR's mode of operation:

- **Collective Action** is the overarching principle guiding GFAiR's work. A Collective Action is a multi-stakeholder programme of work involving three or more partners from different constituencies and regions ideally with and for small-scale producers, women and youth. It also refers to the fact that GFAiR's members agree to commit and generate resources together.
- **Complementarity:** GFAiR strives to develop and strengthen the global agri-food research and innovation system by drawing on the value of the diversity and complementary strengths of all stakeholders involved.
- **Volunteerism:** GFAiR is an open and inclusive forum where partnership is voluntary and open to any members who wish to align with GFAiR's vision and mission. It operates based on the consensus and commitment of its members.
- **Subsidiarity:** The planning and management of GFAiR Collective Actions should occur at the most appropriate level for effective and efficient implementation. GFAiR partners may include local, national, regional, or global organizations, depending on which level is best suited for carrying out the action.

12. Seed funding may be required to initiate certain Collective Actions, recognizing that this approach relies on members committing to and collectively generating resources to support their joint efforts.

Section IV. GFAiR Structure and Governance

Membership and members' contributions

13. GFAiR serves as a convening and catalytic mechanism for change. It operates as a virtual organization with an open and inclusive nature, composed of and driven by networks, fora, and institutions from all stakeholder sectors involved in agricultural research, extension, education, and enterprise. These stakeholders include small-scale producer, consumer, research, multilateral and non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.
14. Membership in GFAiR is open to any organization that shares and supports GFAiR's vision, mission, and values. Members may include global, regional, national, or local organizations. Potential members must be representative of, and accountable to, their constituents and must be able to engage in GFAiR processes and actions.
15. Participation is voluntary and open to all institutions or recognized organizational units within an institution (e.g., a university department) that are concerned with the generation, access, and use of agricultural and agri-food knowledge, research, and innovation. Membership is self-selected based on an organization's interest and commitment to collaboration. To be recognized as a member of GFAiR, organizations must communicate their alignment with GFAiR's vision and mission to the GFAiR Secretariat and formally request membership, either via email or through the GFAiR website. The SC reserves the right to refuse or revoke membership.
16. There is no mandatory financial commitment for members, and this is a voluntary partnership, not a legally binding arrangement.
17. In order to secure GFAiR's independence GFAiR however requires funding and introduced a two-tier approach of paying and non-paying members. The main difference is that – apart from ex officio members – only members contributing financially have voting rights in the SC. The formula for financial contributions is set by the SC.

Constituencies

18. GFAiR aims to represent various constituencies with the regional fora on agricultural research and innovation (AARINENA, APAARI, CACAARI, EFARD, FARA and FORAGRO) being the original and main pillars of GFAiR.¹ Other constituencies include:

1. Six regional fora of national agricultural and food research and development institutions (AARINENA, APAARI, CACAARI, EFARD, FARA and FORAGRO)
2. International research institutions / associations
3. Farmers organizations / associations / networks (such as AgriCord)
4. Higher education organizations / associations (such as the Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences, GCHERA)
5. Private sector companies /associations
6. Rural advisory services / associations (including the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services, GFRAS)
7. Women in agriculture / associations (including UN WOMEN)
8. Youth in agriculture / associations (such as Young Professionals for Agricultural Development, YPARD)
9. Hosting agency (CGIAR / ABC)
10. International organizations (FAO, IFAD etc.)
11. Funding partners (such as the European Community's Directorate-General for International Partnerships)
12. Friends of GFAiR (individuals)

19. Rules and regulations regarding the roles, rights, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms are the responsibility of the individual member organizations.

GFAiR structure and governance

20. GFAiR has the following governing structure and bodies: SC, Executive Committee, Chair, Vice-Chair, Executive Secretary and Secretariat.

GFAiR SC

21. The SC provides strategic oversight and overall governance to GFAiR. It comprises approximately 20 members (six members from the six regional fora, 11 representatives from the other constituencies, plus future funding partners and friends of GFAiR, plus GFAiR's Chair, GFAiR's Vice Chair and GFAiR's Executive Secretary) nominated by the constituencies and approved by the SC. Most SC members represent their organizations *ex officio*. Other SC members normally serve for a three-year-term, which can be renewed once. The SC has the right to replace members based on their performance. Apart from *ex officio* members, only financially-contributing members have voting rights.

1 Fora are currently active in the following regions: Africa – Forum on Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA); Asia and Pacific – Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI); Central Asia and Caucasus – Central Asian and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (CACAARI); Europe – European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD); Latin America – Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (FORAGRO); and Near East and North Africa – Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East & North Africa (AARINENA).

22. Each SC member is accountable to his or her constituency and has an important liaison function with the constituency that he / she represents.
23. GFAiR SC members play a key role in developing GFAiR's capacity to strengthen the interaction between local / national, sub-regional / regional and global level. The interaction between these levels is essential for making GFAiR a dynamic and agile forum, engaging its members in dialogue on policy issues and facilitating their participation in Collective Actions.
24. The SC's role is strategic governance, with its main functions as follows:
- Catalyze partnerships for Collective Actions;
 - Oversee achievements and ensure transparent mutual accountability;
 - Ensure the continued legitimacy and accountability of members, ensuring they fulfill their rights and responsibilities in the strategic governance mechanism for Collective Action;
 - Elect the GFAiR Chair and Vice-Chair;
 - Nominate and ratify representatives for the GFAiR SC;
 - Bring collective advocacy and common commitment for GFAiR actions.
25. The SC meets annually in a hybrid way. GFAiR's Chair may convene additional meetings of the SC when required. The agendas of the meetings are prepared by the GFAiR Secretariat in consultation with SC members and as decided by the Chair. The draft agenda and documents to be tabled are circulated at least two weeks in advance to allow members sufficient time to consult their respective constituencies.
26. The SC strives to reach decisions by consensus. Where this is not possible, SC members will vote on decisions with a simple majority of members with voting rights. GFAiR's Secretariat drafts minutes of the SC meetings and circulates them among SC members for approval.

Executive Committee

27. The Executive Committee (ExCom) is composed of GFAiR's Chair, GFAiR's Vice-Chair, GFAiR's Executive Secretary, GFAiR's host and GFAiR's funder(s).
28. The main roles of the ExCom Committee are programmatic governance and executive governance although it also has a strategic role in between SC meetings. It oversees the work of the GFAiR Secretariat and is assisted by the GFAiR Secretariat in carrying out its tasks.
29. The main functions of the ExCom are as follows:

Strategic governance

- Promote GFAiR's vision, mission and principles;
- Facilitate the flow of information and the exchange of experience among stakeholders.

Programmatic governance

- Oversee GFAiR Collective Actions;
- Mobilize resources for GFAiR and GFAiR's work.

Executive governance

- Oversee GFAiR's work;
- Ensure that the Secretariat is staffed with competent persons that can contribute to the objectives of GFAiR.

30. The ExCom meets every second month. GFAiR's Chair may convene additional meetings when required. GFAiR's Secretariat drafts minutes of the ExCom meetings and circulates them among ExCom members for approval.

31. At the discretion of the Chair, some sessions of the ExCom may be in closed session.

Chair and Vice-Chair

32. The Chair and Vice-Chair of GFAiR are elected by the SC (or if timing is considered inappropriate by the SC, proposed by the ExCom, and then electronically endorsed by vote of the SC), following advertisement of the vacancies among GFAiR members. Potential candidates should be widely recognized as leaders and advocates, actively advancing agricultural or rural development within public, private or civil sectors at national / regional / global level, with demonstrated engagement with multiple stakeholders and a high profile in generating, supporting, transforming, adapting or using agricultural knowledge, research and innovation in support of development.

33. The Chair and Vice-Chair each serve for a three-year term renewable twice. The posts are unpaid, but an honorarium can be paid. The appointments of the Chair and Vice Chair may be staggered if required to enable continuity of GFAiR business.

34. The Chair will perform the following functions:

- Chair all meetings of the SC and ExCom, and other relevant meetings;
- Ensure that the ExCom is adequately addressing its various functions, as described in this Charter;
- Provide leadership to the SC in determining the policies under which the Executive Secretary operates the Secretariat;
- Oversee and advise the Executive Secretary and Secretariat on their work on behalf of the ExCom;
- Be concerned with both internal and external GFAiR matters. In internal matters, the Chairperson will interact closely with the Executive Secretary to monitor the development of GFAiR programmes.
- Externally, the Chair may represent GFAiR as appropriate, including in the governing bodies of the CGIAR;
- The Chair is also expected to assist the Executive Secretary in developing and maintaining relations with funding partners and all GFAiR constituencies.

35. The Vice-Chair will perform the following functions:

- Assist the Chair in his / her tasks and represent GFAiR at the Chair's request;
- Chair the ExCom when the Chair cannot be present;
- Undertake the special responsibilities assigned by the ExCom, or in the follow up of its decision, as appropriate.

Executive Secretary

36. The Executive Secretary of GFAiR is recruited through an open competitive process in accordance with the relevant terms and conditions of service applicable to CGIAR / ABC personnel; is employed by CGIAR / ABC, and is directly responsible to CGIAR / ABC for administrative purposes relating to the conduct of his / her duties.

37. The Executive Secretary serves for an initial period of three years, renewable in line with the host institution's rules and regulations based on the regular performance assessment of the host institution involving, for up to a maximum of nine years or as determined by the ExCom on behalf of the SC. The Executive Secretary is responsible for the efficient functioning of GFAiR's Secretariat and for coordinating the implementation of administrative, institutional and operational activities.

38. The Executive Secretary:

- Reports to the Chairperson on GFAiR matters and on the implementation of work and budget;
- Reports at an appropriate level within CGIAR / ABC on administrative and financial matters regarding the host institution;
- Acts as Secretary to all GFAiR committees.

39. The Executive Secretary should establish and / or maintain close contacts with the organizations represented in the ExCom.

GFAiR Secretariat

40. The GFAiR Secretariat provides technical support to the ExCom and to all stakeholders in their active involvement within the forum. It assists in the convening of the SC and ExCom meetings and other meetings and in the formulation of GFAiR's strategy, work and budget.

41. The GFAiR Secretariat is hosted by CGIAR / ABC offices in Montpellier and Rome, and is headed by an Executive Secretary, which has the support of a small team of professional and administrative staff recruited following the rules and regulations of the host organization. Since GFAiR's activities are primarily managed by its members as stakeholders, the Secretariat's role is to facilitate and assist stakeholders in executing the agreed collaborative activities.

42. The specific goals of the Secretariat are:

- To prepare the programmes of work and budget (as requested by funders);
- To develop a far-reaching, multi-channel system for the exchange of information among all GFAiR constituencies;
- To facilitate discussion on critical strategic issues and to contribute to the emergence of global agri-food research in development agenda.

43. The GFAiR Secretariat functions include the following:

- Manage the finances of the Secretariat, ensure compliance with audit, and prepare financial reports for approval of GFAiR's funders;
- Organize GFAiR's SC, ExCom and other meetings. Help the various constituencies to prepare, participate and make their contributions to these meetings;
- Utilize GFAiR Secretariat technical and financial resources, as available, to catalyze and facilitate multi-stakeholder Collective Actions among members from across agri-food innovation systems, through meetings, advocacy, capacity development and information exchange;
- Facilitate communication, interaction and knowledge sharing among GFAiR members, in particular through the GFAiR website and social media;
- Promote inter-regional linkages through improved information exchange (regular interregional meetings);

- Commission studies and organize surveys, workshops and meetings, when necessary, to facilitate discussion on strategic issues or to develop global, regional and national research and innovation agendas;
- Maintain an active contact with (potential) funders and assist in mobilizing implementing partnerships and catalytic financial resources;
- Assist all stakeholders in achieving their goals and objectives and to become active members of GFAiR.

Section V. Resourcing

44. There are three types of resources relevant to GFAiR's role: members' contributions, project funding, other resources including income generated by providing services (advisory services etc.), and private sector contributions.

45. GFAiR's overall philosophy and criteria towards support is the following: GFAiR may accept and freely allocate funds from a partner to support GFAiR and GFAiR's work when it does not compromise or appear to compromise GFAiR's independence and neutrality. GFAiR's due diligence regarding partners is directed towards the highest levels of compliance to honor sustainable businesses and to avoid green- and whitewashing. The financial support GFAiR requests and gratefully accepts from partners on behalf of GFAiR's mission is balanced in its structure to ensure GFAiR's independence and neutrality.

46. The GFAiR Secretariat is responsible for managing all income and expenditure and for the preparation of annual financial reports following the funders' and the host institution's rules and regulations.

47. GFAiR and its members have a responsibility to advocate for increased resourcing.



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