



**A GFAR (GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL  
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION)**

# **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

**Rome, Italy, 2024**

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>1. SUMMARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS</b>	<b>4</b>
AUDIENCE	4
CHANNELS	4
CONTENT	4
BRANDING	4
CHALLENGES	4
<b>4. GOALS, MESSAGES AND TARGET AUDIENCES</b>	<b>5</b>
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	5
KEY MESSAGES	6
TARGET AUDIENCES	6
<i>GFAR's Steering Committee and Constituencies</i>	6
<i>Agricultural Research and Innovation stakeholders</i>	6
<i>Donors and funders</i>	7
<i>Media and the general public</i>	7
<b>5. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND KPIS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6. GFAR PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES IN COMMUNICATIONS</b>	<b>11</b>

---



## 1. SUMMARY

The strategy aims to improve communication with agricultural stakeholders – including GFAR partners, members, donors and funders, media, and the general public – to raise awareness about GFAR's mission, vision and initiatives.

GFAR's Communication Strategy involves a multi-pronged approach that includes using various channels to reach its target audiences and track its effectiveness, including media monitoring, website analytics, social media analytics, case studies and success stories, and regular reporting. While the Communications Strategy aims to target all relevant stakeholders, special attention (in terms of content, visibility and empowerment) is given to small-scale producers, in line with GFAR's vision and mission.

Further, the Communications Strategy seeks to utilize limited resources and meet challenges while capitalizing on opportunities to leverage technology and partnerships to enhance communication effectiveness.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The Communications Strategy for GFAR involves a comprehensive situational analysis, recognizing the diverse global audience comprising small-scale producers, researchers, policymakers, donors, and others in the agricultural research and innovation sphere. GFAR employs various channels – including social media platforms, its website, blogs, newsletters, and events – to disseminate tailored content.

Despite these strengths, GFAR faces challenges such as reaching dispersed audiences and overcoming information overload. The strategy outlines specific goals and objectives, including increasing visibility, building stronger relationships, improving messaging clarity, strengthening digital presence, and enhancing thought leadership. Key messages emphasize GFAR's role as a global network promoting collaboration, diversity and sustainable agriculture. Target audiences range from agricultural stakeholders to donors and the general public. The strategy employs a mix of channels, including websites, social media, email marketing, newsletters, press releases, webinars, conferences, publications, partnerships, and advocacy campaigns. The implementation plan involves content marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, event marketing, partnerships, collaborations, and video marketing. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms include media monitoring, website analytics, social media analytics, surveys, feedback forms, case studies, and success stories, all aligned with GFAR's [Partnership Principles](#).

The Communication Strategy, equipped with KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), will be regularly monitored to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in an ever-changing communications landscape.



### 3. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

GFAR's situational analysis highlights the characteristics of its audience, channels, content, branding and challenges.

#### Audience

GFAR's target audience is diverse and spread across the globe. It includes small-scale producers, researchers, policymakers, donors, and other actors involved in agricultural development and rural transformation. The audience has distinct levels of expertise and interests. Therefore, GFAR should tailor its communication to meet the different needs effectively.

#### Channels

GFAR uses various channels to communicate with its audience. Social media platforms such as X, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube are used to engage with the audience and share information about GFAR's activities, events and publications. The website serves as a focal point for all information related to GFAR, while the blog and newsletters provide updates on GFAR's campaigns, op-ed pieces and related issues. GFAR also organizes events, workshops and webinars to engage with its audience. Furthermore, the recently launched [GFAR/GFAiR Hub](#) will act as a complementary channel to GFAR communications to facilitate more active member engagement.

Moreover, GFAR recognizes the ever-changing landscape of digital communication and understands the importance of staying adaptable to emerging trends. As technology continues to advance, GFAR remains committed to leveraging innovative tools and platforms to connect with its audience more effectively. By embracing the potential of platforms like Instagram, GFAR aims to enhance its visibility and engagement with a wider spectrum of audiences, ensuring that its mission and initiatives reach diverse demographics.

#### Content

GFAR's communication content includes briefs, [GFAR Insight](#) papers, concept notes, reports, success stories, news updates, blogposts, brochures, PowerPoint presentations, and social media messages around key themes and issues in agricultural research and innovation. The content is tailored to the needs and interests of different audience segments and is available in different formats, including text, infographics and videos. GFAR also collaborates with members and partners to create joint blogposts, publications and reports.

#### Branding

GFAR has a strong brand identity that emphasizes collaboration, inclusivity and innovation. The branding is consistent across all communication channels, and the logo and colours are recognizable. GFAR's brand identity helps to build trust and recognition among its audiences. From February 2024, GFAR will roll out its modified logo and acronym: GFAiR. This is to include the 'i' for innovation in purple to symbolize GFAR's commitment to fairness and gender equality.

#### Challenges

GFAR's communication landscape faces several challenges. One of the significant challenges is reaching diverse and dispersed audiences, further compounded by the complexities of managing multiple languages. GFAR must find ways to reach and engage with different audience segments effectively. Another challenge is breaking through information overload. The audiences are bombarded with information, and GFAR must create compelling content that stands out. Ensuring the relevance and impact of the content is another challenge that GFAR must overcome. GFAR must continually evaluate its communication strategy to ensure that it meets its objectives and engages its audience effectively.

## 4. GOALS, MESSAGES AND TARGET AUDIENCES

### Goals and Objectives

#### Goal 1: Improve GFAR's brand reputation through strategic communication and engagement efforts.

- **Objective 1:** Monitor online and offline channels for brand mentions, ensuring prompt and positive responses that enhance overall sentiment.
- **Objective 2:** Establish partnerships with key influencers and thought leaders to amplify positive narratives about GFAR in the agricultural research and innovation sector.

#### Goal 2: Increase visibility and awareness of GFAR's mission and activities among GFAR members and target audiences.

- **Objective 1:** Increase the number of social media followers and engagement rates by 20% in the first year of implementing this strategy. This objective will be achieved by creating more engaging and relevant content for social media channels, implementing social media promotional campaigns, and partnering with influencers and thought leaders to amplify GFAR's messages.
- **Objective 2:** Secure at least one media placement per quarter in relevant publications and media outlets. This objective will be achieved by developing a media outreach plan that includes proactive pitching of story ideas and developing relationships with journalists and media outlets.

#### Goal 3: Build stronger engagement with key partners, members and stakeholders.

- **Objective 1:** Implement the Membership Strategy, which includes regular communication and collaboration with key partners and stakeholders. This objective will be achieved by identifying these key partners and stakeholders and implementing regular communication and collaboration activities such as joint events, webinars and workshops, and synergies arising from the GFAR/ GFAiR Hub.
- **Objective 2:** Increase attendance and participation in GFAR regular events through targeted outreach and promotion to relevant audiences. This objective will be achieved by identifying target audiences for each event, creating tailored promotional campaigns for each, and leveraging GFAR's network to reach out to relevant stakeholders.

#### Goal 4: Improve the clarity and consistency of GFAR's messaging to emphasize GFAR's uniqueness.

- **Objective 1:** Develop and implement a messaging framework that clearly communicates GFAR's mission, values and impact to target audiences while highlighting GFAR's unique role in the agriculture and food sector. This objective will be achieved by developing a messaging framework that is clear, concise and compelling, and integrating this framework into all communication activities.
- **Objective 2:** Use clear and concise language. When communicating with stakeholders, it is important to use language that is easy to understand and avoids technical jargon. This will help to ensure that the organization's message is clear and easily understood.
- **Objective 3:** Get feedback. GFAR should regularly seek feedback from its stakeholders and target audiences to ensure that its messaging is clear and effective.

#### Goal 5: Strengthen GFAR's digital presence and capabilities.

- **Objective 1:** Use GFAR's recently redesigned website to improve user experience and accessibility. This objective will be achieved by conducting a website audit to identify areas for improvement, creating a website plan that includes updated content, and continuously improving functionality and user experience.
- **Objective 2:** Increase the use of digital communications channels such as email marketing and webinars to engage with target audiences and promote GFAR's mission and activities. This objective will be achieved by making use of email newsletters, webinars, and other digital content that has been tailored to the needs and interests of the different target audiences.

#### Goal 6: Enhance GFAR's thought leadership and influence in the global agriculture community.

- **Objective 1:** Position GFAR as a thought leader in global agriculture and rural development by creating original content such as thought leadership pieces and success stories that showcase GFAR's impact and thought leadership in the agriculture sector.

---

## Key Messages

1. GFAR is a network of networks bringing together around a thousand institutional members from 13 constituencies (including small-scale producers, researchers, policymakers and civil society organizations) to collaborate in transforming agriculture and food systems for a more sustainable and equitable future.
2. GFAR recognizes the need for collaboration across sectors and disciplines, including policy, academia, private sector, and civil society, to create a more sustainable and equitable agrifood system (AFS).
3. As such GFAR values diversity and inclusion, providing a platform for different voices and perspectives to be heard, and seeking to create more equitable and inclusive agricultural systems.
4. GFAR builds partnerships based on GFAR's [Partnership Principles](#).
5. GFAR recognizes the key role of small-scale producers, rural communities, and other marginalized groups in driving agricultural innovation and development. It aims to promote their participation and empowerment in the transformation of the AFS.
6. GFAR is committed to promoting gender equality and empowering women in the AFS and aims to implement gender transformative approaches.
7. GFAR works to enhance the capacity of its members and partners, particularly in the Global South, to participate in and benefit from agricultural research and innovation, while fostering inclusive and equitable development.
8. GFAR supports evidence-based decision-making in agriculture and promotes the use of science, technology and innovation to address global food security challenges and achieve sustainable development.
9. As such GFAR is dedicated to promoting sustainable and agroecological agricultural practices that conserve natural resources, protect biodiversity, and mitigate climate change, working towards a more resilient and sustainable AFS for the future.
10. GFAR is committed to communicating and sharing knowledge and information about agricultural innovation and development, encouraging dialogue and learning among stakeholders to facilitate transformational change in agriculture and food systems especially through the [GFAR/GFAiR Hub](#).

## Target Audiences

GFAR's target audiences are diverse and include stakeholders from across the agricultural research and innovation system, spanning the globe and incorporating small-scale producers. A more in-depth analysis of their interests, priorities and their own target audiences can help us better define the messaging and approach to follow in communicating with them.

### GFAR's Steering Committee and Constituencies

GFAR's target audience encompasses the members of the Steering Committee, individuals committed to representing the concerns of [GFAR's 13 constituencies](#).

The Partners forming the Steering Committee are not solely representatives of their own interests. They have pledged to advocate for the concerns of their constituencies and actively engage with and mobilize them. Their direct accountability is to other GFAR Partners in their sectors for catalysing key Collective Actions to be taken forward with Partners in other sectors.

### Agricultural Research and Innovation stakeholders

GFAR's target audience includes GFAR's members and partners, small-scale producers, researchers, specialists, policymakers, private-sector actors and civil society organizations addressing challenges and opportunities in agricultural development, food security and rural livelihoods. These stakeholders may vary in terms of their geographic location, culture, language, and level of engagement with GFAR. GFAR facilitates cross-sector collaboration and innovation based on the Partnership Principles and via Collective Actions by providing relevant information, resources, and tools to improve the practices and productivity of our stakeholders and thus contribute to sustainable development.

### Donors and funders

GFAR also targets donors and funders who are interested in supporting agricultural research and innovation initiatives. These may include national and regional governments, multilateral organizations, private foundations, and philanthropists. GFAR aims to highlight its effectiveness, impact and innovative approaches to attract new funding and partnerships and to retain existing ones.

### Media and the general public

GFAR aims to raise awareness and understanding of agricultural research and innovation among a broader audience, including journalists, bloggers and social media users who cover agriculture and food issues. GFAR aims to engage with them through thought leadership and outreach, highlighting its achievements, results and impact.

Additionally, GFAR aims to reach out to the general public – particularly those who are interested in agriculture and food issues – to raise awareness of GFAR's work and to engage them in supporting the transition of the agrifood system.



## 5. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND KPIS

Organizations need to identify the most effective channels to reach their target audiences. This may include social media, websites, email, newsletters, events, and traditional media outlets. These are the channels GFAR Communications is using to roll out this strategy. Further, the Communication Strategy's performance of KPIs will contribute to GFAR's overall Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning workstream.

Channel	Rationale	Specific Activities	Key Performance Indicators
Website	GFAR's website will continue to be optimized to provide easy access to information for its diverse target audiences. This will include regularly updated content and an easy-to-navigate design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct keyword research and use search engine optimization (SEO) best practices to ensure that GFAR's content is discoverable by search engines and reaches a wider audience.</li> <li>• Use a mix of short-form and long-form content to cater to different reading preferences and increase engagement.</li> <li>• Incorporate multimedia elements such as images, videos and infographics to make the content more visually appealing and shareable.</li> <li>• Encourage user-generated content by soliciting feedback and comments from readers and incorporating them into future blog posts and content.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication metrics: number of news items, events and vacancies published.</li> <li>• User engagement: average monthly visits to the website.</li> <li>• Dwell time: time users spend actively engaging on website content.</li> </ul>
Social Media	GFAR will leverage its social media platforms, including X, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube, to engage with its target audiences and share relevant content. GFAR will use social media to amplify its key messages, share news and updates, and promote its events and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a social media content calendar to plan and schedule posts in advance and ensure a consistent presence on all platforms</li> <li>• Use social media analytics to track engagement metrics and adjust content strategies accordingly.</li> <li>• Create a branded hashtag to encourage user-generated content and track GFAR's social media reach and impact.</li> <li>• Use social media advertising to reach specific target audiences and increase brand awareness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follower growth rate per channel.</li> <li>• Audience engagement rate.</li> <li>• Social media mentions.</li> <li>• Hashtag performance.</li> </ul>
Social Media	GFAR will continue to use newsletters to provide in-depth updates on specific programs or initiatives, share stories and best practices, and highlight events. GFAR will tailor its newsletters to different audiences and include relevant information and news that are specific to their interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailor content to cater to specific newsletter audience segments by using analytics tools to understand the preferences and interests of different demographics, allowing GFAR to customize content accordingly.</li> <li>• Promote newsletter content on social media using appealing posts and snippets.</li> <li>• Regularly analyse performance metrics on Instagram and other platforms to gauge the effectiveness of different content types.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of newsletters.</li> <li>• Subscription rate.</li> <li>• Clicks and bounce rate.</li> </ul>



Channel	Rationale	Specific Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Press Releases</b>	GFAR will issue press releases to announce major initiatives, partnerships, and achievements, and share them with relevant media outlets. GFAR will author and share third-party press releases to respond to current events and raise awareness of critical issues related to global agricultural research and innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiently craft press releases in collaboration with key stakeholders within stipulated timelines.</li> <li>• Publish and promote the press releases across the organization's website and various social media platforms.</li> <li>• Where applicable, share press releases with pertinent journalists, editors and influencers specializing in agricultural, research and innovation topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of press releases.</li> </ul>
<b>Webinars</b>	GFAR will keep using webinars such as GFAR Talks and the regional and interregional interactions to share best practices, promote its work, provide training, and stimulate discussions on specific topics related to agricultural research and innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relay information about upcoming webinars to diverse audiences through concise and timely communications.</li> <li>• Develop uniform and engaging promotional materials for the webinars, ensuring consistency across all communication channels.</li> <li>• After each event, systematically gather participant data and integrate it into GFAR's audience databases.</li> <li>• Implement post-event communications and surveys to maintain engagement and gather valuable feedback from the audience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of promotional materials produced.</li> <li>• Number of registrants.</li> <li>• Number of participants.</li> </ul>
<b>Conferences and Events</b>	GFAR will continue to organize and participate in conferences and events to connect with its target audiences and share its work. GFAR will use international, regional and local conferences and events to highlight its Collective Actions and initiatives, connect with stakeholders and partners, and promote its work and mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key conferences at international, regional, and local levels that attract the target audience and align with GFAR's mission.</li> <li>• Develop compelling materials, presentations and visuals to effectively communicate GFAR's work and mission.</li> <li>• Promote GFAR's participation in upcoming conferences through pre-event communications on the website and social media channels.</li> <li>• Leverage social media platforms to provide real-time updates during conferences.</li> <li>• Collect contact information from interested parties during events for post-event communication.</li> <li>• Send follow-up materials, such as presentations, reports or additional resources, to maintain engagement with contacts made during the conference.</li> <li>• Use insights gained from each event to refine future strategies for conference and event engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of promotional materials produced.</li> <li>• Number of registrants.</li> <li>• Number of participants.</li> </ul>

Channel	Rationale	Specific Activities	Key Performance Indicators
Publications	GFAR will aim to produce and disseminate publications such as <a href="#">GFAR Insights</a> , research reports, policy briefs, think pieces and case studies to share knowledge and best practices with its target audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize a standardized template for publication to ensure brand guidelines are followed.</li> <li>• Ensure relevant partners and funders are correctly acknowledged.</li> <li>• Incorporate interactive elements within publications, such as hyperlinks, QR codes, or calls-to-action, to encourage further exploration and engagement.</li> <li>• Leverage various communication channels, including the GFAR website, social media, newsletters to promote publications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of publications designed.</li> <li>• Number of website downloads.</li> <li>• Number of promotional posts made on social media.</li> </ul>
Partnerships and Collaborations	GFAR will continue to leverage partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and networks to expand its reach and engage with new audiences. GFAR will work with partners to co-create content, share resources and knowledge, and reach new audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a structured approach to identify and evaluate potential partners and collaborations based on shared values and goals.</li> <li>• Develop mutually beneficial partnerships that leverage each partner's strengths and resources.</li> <li>• Use partnerships to increase awareness of GFAR's mission and initiatives and reach new audiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of social media toolkits sent to partner organizations.</li> <li>• Number of partner organization content published on GFAR website, blog site and social media channels.</li> </ul>



## 6. GFAR PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES IN COMMUNICATIONS

Incorporating GFAR's [Partnership Principles](#) into GFAR's Communications Strategy, as shown below, will facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing and positive impact in the agricultural research and innovation sector.

GFAR Partnership Principles	GFAR Communications Strategy Application
<p>All partnerships have the objective of contributing to the SDGs. The specific objectives are determined in a participatory manner by all key protagonists including prospective end-users, involving different knowledge systems and stakeholders, world views and interests. This refers to the initial phases of identification, appraisal and planning in order to ensure equity in cooperation and shared ownership from the beginning with regard to identification of research questions/ideas/priorities, approaches and methods. This includes: the design of participatory processes for the ethical identification of relevant stakeholders and prospective end-users and priority setting process. Discussion of different objectives and identification of added value of the partnership as well as expectations, with sufficient resources and time allocated to the process.</p>	<p><b>Collaborative Objective Setting:</b> GFAR's communications will prioritize involving members and partners in determining objectives, ideas and priorities. This will ensure that GFAR's communications efforts align with shared goals and effectively address stakeholders' needs and expectations.</p>
<p>Networks and communication platforms (also among different stakeholders) are set in a way to ensure transparent and easy access to information by all. This entails encouraging and allowing a free flow and exchange of the partners' specific types of knowledge (on financial, methodological, contextual, systemic, institutional and other relevant matters).</p>	<p><b>Transparent Communication Networks:</b> GFAR's communications will focus on establishing communication platforms that provide transparent and easy access to information for all stakeholders. GFAR's communications will strive to ensure that relevant data, research findings, updates and other information are readily available to support informed decision-making and active participation.</p>
<p>Responsibilities are negotiated and shared effectively. This entails distributing and allocating democratically duties and tasks within the partnership, compatible with the comparative advantages and with the competencies, preferences and social obligations of each partner. It involves also establishing patterns for decision-making, mutual accountability, resolving conflicts and defining internal TORs.</p>	<p><b>Shared Responsibilities:</b> GFAR will foster clear and open communication channels to coordinate and promote actions, allocate tasks and enhance collaboration. GFAR's communications will aim to ensure that members and partners understand their roles and actively contribute to achieving our collective objectives.</p>
<p>Joint activities promote mutual learning. The collaboration includes reflection not only on successful outcomes but also on shortcomings, failures and unachieved objectives. The challenge is to combine mutual learning processes with short-term accountability, creating adequate space and using appropriate tools for exchange and joint analysis, with a view to build a learning culture.</p>	<p><b>Mutual Learning through Joint Activities:</b> GFAR's communications will encourage open and honest communication channels that enable the sharing of experiences, successes, failures and lessons learned. This fosters a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within our collaborative initiatives.</p>

GFAR Partnership Principles	GFAR Communications Strategy Application
<p>Collective research capacities are enhanced. The partnership is structured to translate the personal knowledge acquired into broader sustainable capacities within the stakeholder institutions, which involves clarifying and making explicit the purposes of capacity development and strengthening through <i>inter alia</i> on-the-job training.</p>	<p><b>Enhancing Collective Research Capacities:</b> GFAR’s communications will prioritize knowledge exchange, collaboration, and coordination among members and partners through effective communication channels and the GFAR/GFAiR Hub. This will allow all involved to leverage each other’s expertise, resources, and experiences, leading to a vibrant research and innovation community.</p>
<p>Benefits and merits are shared in an equitable manner. Sound management of potential conflicting interests and claims. This means equal acknowledgement to all contributing actors and fair allocation to all partners of benefits, especially with regards to authorship, publications, etc. (also through MOUs).</p>	<p><b>Equitable Pooling of Profits and Merits:</b> GFAR will communicate clearly regarding any distribution of rewards, recognition and benefits, thereby fostering trust and maintaining positive relationships among members and partners.</p>
<p>Results are disseminated broadly in forms that encourage and allow application. This implies an effort in identifying potential users of results and involving them from the outset, entering into constant dialogue with them, and choosing different means of communication adapted to a variety of cultures and languages.</p>	<p><b>Broad Dissemination and Application of Results:</b> GFAR’s communications will aim to make research results accessible, understandable and actionable for all our audiences.</p>
<p>Outcomes are relevant, scientifically credible, secured and sustainability of the processes is sought. Both funding and human resources needed to continue and bring further the research as part of a collective strategy designed by all partners and not attributed to a single actor, creating dependency.</p>	<p><b>Securing Outcomes and Ensuring Sustainability:</b> GFAR’s communications will engage in ongoing efforts to maintain stakeholder engagement, secure necessary resources and support, and foster long-term partnerships.</p>
<p>Flexible application of the criteria to the context is required based on the awareness of the local innovation landscape, cultural, practical and political circumstances</p>	<p><b>Contextual Adaptability:</b> GFAR’s communications will recognize the importance of adapting our communication approaches to local contexts. It will consider cultural, social and linguistic factors to tailor messages and resonate with specific audiences. By doing so, we will enhance member engagement, understanding and participation in different regions and local settings.</p>

By incorporating these principles into its Communications Strategy, GFAR aims to foster effective communication, engagement and collaboration among members and partners, leading to impactful and sustainable agricultural research and innovation outcomes.







**GFAR - The Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation**  
c/o FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Roma (IT)  
[gfar-secretariat@fao.org](mailto:gfar-secretariat@fao.org)