



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

# **MEMBERSHIP STRATEGY**

**2024**

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## ABSTRACT

The paper outlines GFAR's membership strategy, which aims to bolster its role as the Global Forum for Agricultural Research and Innovation in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the goals set by the UN Food Systems Summit. The main goal of the strategy is to enhance member engagement and knowledge sharing within GFAR, fostering inclusivity and sustainability in global food systems.

Grounded in GFAR's core strategic documents, such as the [GFAR Charter](#), the [2018 External Evaluation, Engagement Principles](#), [Theory of Change](#), and [Membership Validation and Mapping Exercise Report](#), this strategy provides a comprehensive framework and specific guidelines to systematically strengthen members' contributions to GFAR's objectives. It seeks to attract and welcome a more diverse membership while elevating GFAR's international profile, ultimately working towards a more inclusive and transformative global AgriFood System (AFS from here).

The first section provides context by highlighting GFAR's mandate, which focuses on mobilizing stakeholders involved in agricultural research to alleviate poverty, enhance food security, and promote sustainable resource use. It underlines GFAR's Theory of Change, which emphasizes inclusivity, transparency, accountability, efficiency and resilience in agrifood systems, and how it is linked to the strategy.

The second section discusses GFAR's diverse membership, consisting of almost 1000 institutional members from 13 constituencies worldwide (i.e. an increase of 50% over two years). The goal is to achieve balanced representation across regions and stakeholder groups, emphasizing collaboration through Collective Actions and multistakeholder dialogues. Special attention is given to under-represented groups such as youth, women and small-scale producers.

The third section outlines the strategic objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the membership strategy, which include harnessing the diversity of actors in the AFS committed to GFAR's goals and increasing member engagement, impact and shared ownership. Specific objectives include more meaningful engagement, diversified membership, coordination around GFAR's Theory of Change, member-centred governance, members' leadership in research and innovation, and enhancing membership management and administration.

The final section presents the strategic framework, focusing on eight key elements to achieve the objectives: **(1) key targeting and outreach, (2) enrolment, (3) engagement, (4) knowledge and learning, (5) collective governance, (6) communications, (7) membership management, and (8) monitoring, evaluation and learning.** These elements aim to create a cycle of meaningful engagement, from reaching out to prospective members to their active participation in GFAR activities.

Key activities include targeted outreach to under-represented constituencies, a transparent enrolment process, improved communication with members, knowledge sharing through online hubs, fostering a learning culture, and developing data-driven capacities. The strategy also emphasizes collective governance, ensuring members play a role in shaping GFAR's strategic direction.

In summary, GFAR's membership strategy aims to strengthen engagement, increase diversity, and enhance the collective impact of its members in the pursuit of a more inclusive and sustainable global food system. Monitoring and evaluation efforts will be crucial to assess the strategy's effectiveness and ensure that GFAR remains a member-based organization fulfilling its mandate.

## 1. WHY A MEMBERSHIP STRATEGY?

To create an inclusive and transformative food system that meets the aspirations set out at the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021 and the UNFSS+2 stock-taking in 2023, all food systems stakeholders need to work together across sectors and disciplines, and throughout the world. As a Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation, GFAR contributes to achieving this goal.

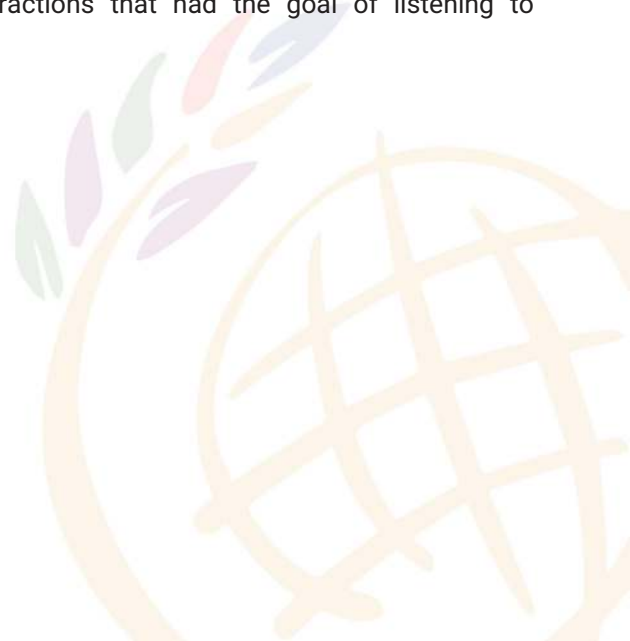
GFAR's mandate is "to mobilize all the stakeholders involved in agricultural research for development and support their efforts to alleviate poverty, increase food security and promote a more sustainable use of natural resources". GFAR's [Theory of Change](#) states that the Forum aims to contribute to "more inclusive, transparent, accountable, efficient and resilient agrifood systems towards achieving sustainable development goals".

GFAR has experienced a significant transformation. Initially consisting of 661 members, the network was rebooted in 2021, opening its doors to new members and systematically validating and mapping former ones. Notably, as a result of the comprehensive mapping exercise carried out by the Secretariat, over 200 organizations expressed interest in joining the network from 2020 to 2023. Thus, GFAR's diverse membership – approximately 1000 institutional members – from all around the world is currently grouped into [13 constituencies](#) that work in Agricultural and Food Systems (AFS) and rural transformation. At the heart of GFAR are its members. Members share GFAR's vision and mission, and work hand in hand with support from the GFAR Secretariat as catalyst. Connecting members among themselves and strengthening membership management and engagement are fundamental to spur GFAR's action and achieve its vision and mandate.

Together with [GFAR's Charter](#) and the [2018 External Evaluation](#), [GFAR's Theory of Change](#) gives explicit guidance on ways to strengthen membership engagement. These documents outline GFAR's core principles: inclusion; transparency; mutual accountability; trust; efficiency; resilience; agreed priorities; diversity of stakeholders – including small-scale producers, women and youth; participatory and partnership approaches; context-specific solutions; enhanced capabilities; sustainability; accessibility; and adoptability. They also highlight key activities and outputs: a membership platform; learning trajectories and Knowledge and Learning Hubs (KLHs); Collective Actions; multistakeholder dialogues; participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL); etc.

GFAR's membership strategy sets out to provide the tools for the deeper engagement and knowledge sharing of GFAR's members in the work and management of the Forum. **It builds on efforts that already exist, while providing a coherent rationale, strategic framework and specific guidelines to boost the way in which members contribute to GFAR objectives in a systematic way. This will further help to strengthen engagement in the Forum as well as attract and welcome more members**, so that GFAR thrives as a member-based organization and fulfils its mandate while raising its profile on an international level.

The present strategy builds upon key documents such as the [GFAR Charter](#), [the 2018 Independent Evaluation](#), the [GFAR Engagement Principles](#) and [Theory of Change](#). It has also benefited from inputs from GFAR's Secretariat team and a sample of GFAR members and six GFAR regional interactions that had the goal of listening to members across the different regions.



## 2. GFAR'S MEMBERS

GFAR's membership is heterogeneous in terms of its members' expertise, interests, background and functions. This enables GFAR members to play different roles. Embracing this heterogeneity is crucial for multistakeholder action.

To deepen and widen its membership, GFAR's Secretariat has successfully mapped out the membership following well structured criteria and a thorough validation process. [The Membership Validation and Mapping Exercise Report](#), showcases the current number of members while highlighting their regional distribution as well as scope (global/regional/national).

**GFAR has a two-category membership model:** As per GFAR's Engagement Principles<sup>1</sup> the first category comprises "members" and the second category comprises "partners". Within this framework, the membership is divided into 13 constituencies, all relevant for and interested in the transformation of the AFS. A **constituency** is defined as a specific group of stakeholders involved in contributing to the transformation of AFS. Such constituencies range from civil society, consumer organizations, facilitating agencies, rural advisory services, international research institutions and higher education to farmer associations, private sector bodies, donors and investors, regional fora, women, and youth organizations. Currently (as of December 2023) the number of members is touching 1000 and growing daily. GFAR is also planning on allowing individual experts to join and contribute directly through the [GFAR/GFAiR Hub](#) by creating a new category called "Friends of GFAR."

GFAR aims to achieve a balanced representation across regions and stakeholder groups while seeking to overcome institutional barriers as outlined by the [Membership Validation and Mapping Exercise Report](#), Members join forces for greater impact by catalyzing and supporting each other (for example through information exchange and learning opportunities) and the 13 constituencies do not work in isolation, rather, they work together through Collective Actions. GFAR members and other stakeholders exchange information; devise and implement new initiatives and Collective Actions; and engage in the collective governance of GFAR as a global forum. One recent example is as follows.

As agreed in Bangkok in March 2023, a Global NARS Consortium (GNC) is to be established within GFAR. Specifically, the [Bangkok Declaration](#) calls for joint efforts to strengthen and revitalize the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in a rapidly changing global context through the creation of GNC. On the global level, GNC serves as an umbrella body for six Regional Fora (RF) of research and innovation, which each represent the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in their regions. The GNC will seek to boost the global voice, enhance the influence, improve the resource base and capacities of NARS, and strengthen collaboration and linkages among stakeholders.

The GFAR Regional Fora agreed to operationalize the GNC in the coming year, leading to a global event to launch the GNC in June 2024. In cooperation with the RF, GFAR identifies, categorizes and onboards the NARS in the different regions as the foundation for the launch of the GNC at a global event in 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> [GFAR's Engagement Principles](#) define the two categories as follows:

- GFAR **members** are all the organizations that have joined and will join the GFAR network over the years, thereby pledging that they "share in our purpose" and are "aligned with GFAR's Vision and Mission".
- GFAR **partners** are organizations with which GFAR has or seeks to have formal or informal agreements, with high commitment level and strong impact on GFAR's work (primarily multistakeholder organizations part of the Agricultural Innovation Systems with overlapping or complementary mandates to GFAR's, or organizations that can implement part of GFAR's work, but also funding bodies and facilitating agencies). When GFAR members start to work actively and formally with each other and with GFAR joining efforts in Collective Actions, they are considered partners.

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### 3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The membership strategy for GFAR proposed in this paper has two overarching objectives:

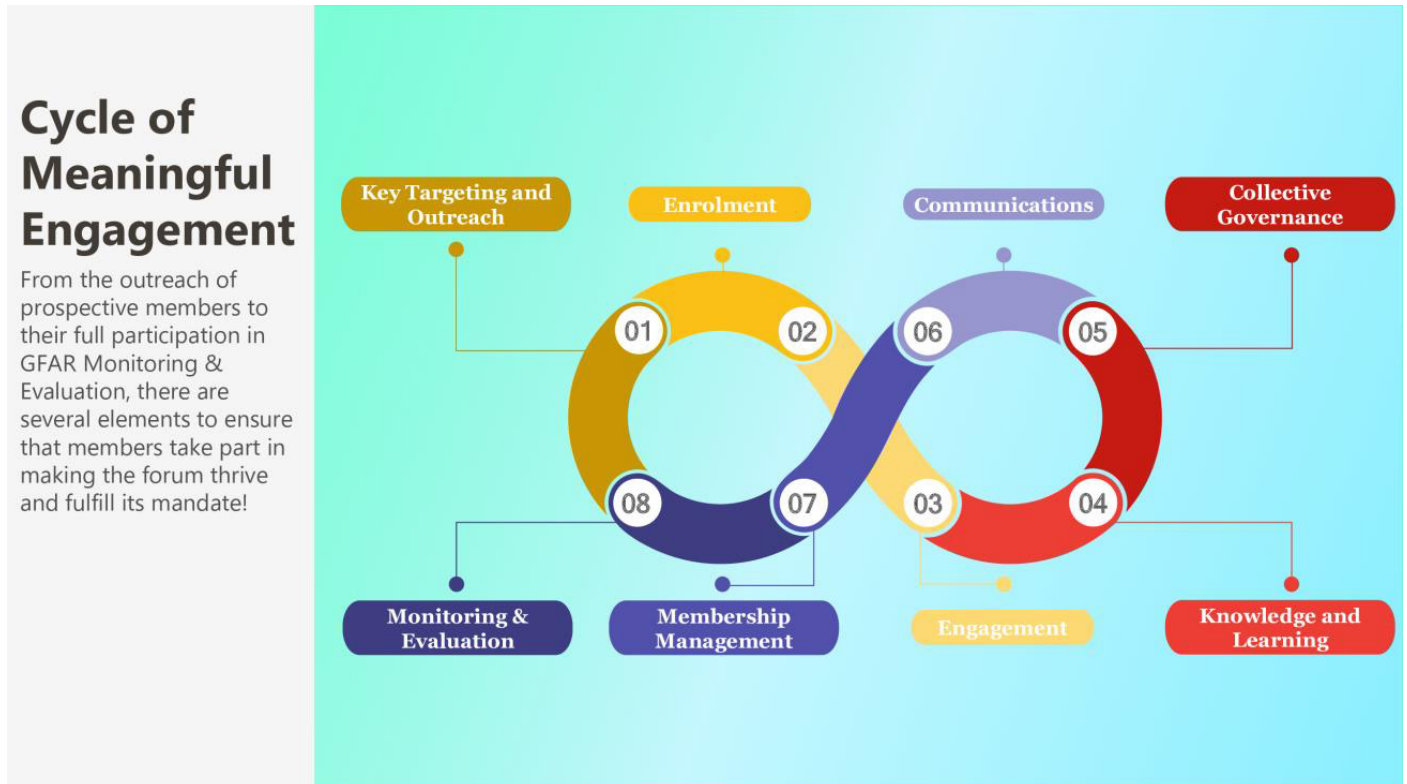
1. **Bring together the diversity** of actors in the AFS that are committed to GFAR's objectives and are concerned with the transformation of agricultural and food research and innovation systems to achieve more inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, and the Sustainable Development Goals. All members, in their diversity, can make a difference by contributing collectively to GFAR's governance, initiatives, knowledge sharing and learning, and to the strengthening of GFAR as a whole;
2. **Increase the engagement, the impact and the shared ownership** of GFAR members and of the Forum. GFAR is a unique, innovative and effective member-based organization that contributes to the transformation of food systems and that lives the principles of a transparent and coherent forum that nurtures a strong sense of community.

It also aims to achieve the following six membership-specific objectives:

- i. **Diversified membership** by welcoming and enrolling more members from under-represented constituencies especially NARS, small-scale producers, youth and women. SMART indicator: a 20% increase in the number of members representing diverse stakeholders within two years of implementing the strategy.
- ii. More **meaningful and participatory member engagement** through different means such as GFAR Knowledge and Learning Hubs (KLH) included in the [GFAR/GFAiR Hub](#) and Regional Interactions, GFAR Talks, and other topic-driven webinar series. SMART indicator: six Regional Interactions per year with an average participation of 50 members; 6 active KLH discussion groups with the goal of increasing user engagement by 30% in the first year (2024). This is measured through the number of active members, contributions to discussions, and knowledge-sharing activities.
- iii. Coordination and strategic **cohesion** of members around GFAR's Theory of Change. A SMART indicator is to be established according to a well defined benchmark as well as success rate measurement criteria.
- iv. GFAR's member-centred governance and mutual accountability between members fostered through the Governance Space included in GFAR's KLH. A SMART indicator is to be established according to a well defined benchmark as well as success rate measurement criteria.
- v. GFAR members' **leadership** in agrifood systems research and innovation in local, national, regional and global contexts. A SMART indicator is to be established according to a well defined benchmark as well as success rate measurement criteria.
- vi. Further developing GFAR's Secretariat's **membership management and administration** structure by migrating its membership database onto the new engagement platform (GFAR/GFAiR Hub) as well as the application, screening, and validation process for new members. A SMART indicator is to be established according to a well defined benchmark as well as success rate measurement criteria.

## 4. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

To achieve these objectives, GFAR's membership strategy focuses on **creating a cycle of meaningful engagement** (from outreach of prospective members to the impact of their Collective Actions), through eight key elements: **1. Key targeting and outreach; 2. Enrolment; 3. Engagement; 4. Knowledge and learning; 5. Collective governance; 6. Communications; 7. Membership management; 8. Monitoring, evaluation and learning.**



From targeting prospective members to their full participation in GFAR MEL, there are several elements to ensure that members take part in making the forum thrive and fulfil its mandate.

### I. Key targeting and outreach

Targeting and outreach activities need to be conducted as a first step to ensure meaningful membership engagement. This is done in accordance with the previous activities carried out and explained in the Membership Validation and Mapping Exercise Report; these highlighted the need to contact under-represented constituencies such as NARS, small-scale producers, women and youth organizations.

First contact is achieved by designing and implementing a well structured mailing system and campaign that targets the identified organizations. As a follow-up, a one-on-one tailored approach can be followed to better assist candidates who might require additional guidance and support.

Since October 2023 GFAR benefited from an additional outreach tool – its engagement platform (GFAR/GFAiR Hub). Being partially open to external people, the platform can feature, summarize and showcase GFAR's work, mission, vision and overall role in the AFS, thus attracting more potential candidates that are then facilitated by the harmonized membership administration structure included in the platform.

### II. Enrolment

It is also necessary to ensure that the composition of **GFAR's membership truly reflects its role as a multistakeholder global forum**. GFAR has a diverse membership in terms of overall numbers of members; age and gender; geographical area; constituency/stakeholder group and scope of work; members' shared vision and principles; and levels of

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engagement, as set out in its Charter. The enrolment strategy builds upon the Membership Validation and Mapping Exercise Report, thus following the well structured criteria established during the screening and validation process.

GFAR also aims to be as inclusive and welcoming as possible by developing and implementing initiatives that encourage participation from diverse stakeholders as well as establishing partnerships with regional and national agricultural research organizations/systems (NARS) to expand the network's reach and encourage cross-collaboration. GFAR's current regional distribution comprises seven regions: Sub-Saharan Africa; Asia & Pacific; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; West Asia and North Africa; Central Asia and Caucasus; North America. More than half of GFAR's members are based in two regions: Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia & Pacific. It is also these regions that most of GFAR's new members are from. Moreover, almost half of GFAR's members are part of the constituency of Civil Society Organizations/Non-governmental Organizations in agriculture, food & rural development, while the constituency of Consumer Organizations currently has the smallest number of members.

This shows just how much GFAR's outreach and targeting activities are key in ensuring a more balanced and at the same time heterogeneous membership, which needs to be complemented by an efficient enrolment plan. The latter can be measured and considered successful by the following SMART indicator: achieving a 20% increase in overall membership within two years. This is measured by the number of new members who have successfully joined GFAR during this period.

### III. Engagement

The genuine engagement of members in GFAR depends on GFAR's added value as an enabler of partnerships and Collective Actions, with the ambition to expand its activities that encourage members to join forces to achieve a more inclusive AFS transformation. Currently, member engagement is strengthened through different collective initiatives, such as: the Knowledge and Learning Hub included in the new and exciting GFAR/GFAiR Hub, GFAR Regional Interactions and interregional exchanges, but also GFAR Talks and other inclusive multistakeholder dialogues as well as GFAR's Collective Actions.

The GFAR/GFAiR Hub, through which members can connect, share, learn, decide and co-create, is a platform that has been designed following the recommendations of the *2018 External Evaluation*, and is made up of three main spaces:

- 1) the Knowledge and Learning Hubs which promote knowledge sharing while raising awareness;
- 2) the Action Space, a place for members to take action together through Collective Actions; and
- 3) the Governance Space, through which members take part in shaping GFAR's strategic direction.

The platform also includes a vast document repository and other key resources helping to keep members up to date with the latest initiatives and opportunities to get more closely involved with GFAR. Additionally, it enables networking activities and features different organizations thus granting them greater visibility.

GFAR's [Regional Interactions](#) as well as its interactive and topic-driven webinar series such as the quarterly [GFAR Talks series](#), are providing informed debates on issues of interest and priorities that relate to agrifood system transformation. Examples are the GFAR webinars organized at the request of the EC and Germany in January 2023 on [UNFSS National Pathways: Background, process and ways GFAR regional fora and members can contribute to work planned at country level in 2023](#) and in February 2023 on [Regional responses to challenges to soil fertility and sustainability](#). The first webinar attracted over 250 people from six continents, with over 90 people actively participating. The participants came from all GFAR constituencies and beyond, including: GFAR Regional Fora; national and regional research institutes; farmer and producer organizations; youth; national officials; selected international experts; and members of the GFAR Steering Committee and Secretariat. The second webinar attracted more than 360 participants from a wide range of countries, organizations and diverse stakeholders across six continents. Such webinars represent a valuable way of engaging with members on hot topics.

Previously, in 2022, GFAR embarked on an ambitious member engagement effort through six virtual Regional Interactions. Spanning January to September, these sessions gathered 107 members and were steered by the GFAR Secretariat, seeking intensified collaboration and strengthening understanding. Feedback was gathered through discussions and polls, and the findings were shared with attendees for feedback and approval.



GFAR Talks have consistently succeeded in mobilizing audience interest through the topical dialogues and debates, particularly during the engaging Q&A sessions.

The above-mentioned engagement activities contributed significantly to increasing members' participation rate and involvement and helped to identify eight elements for successful engagement.

1. **Building on lessons learned from GFAR's successful activities and areas identified for improvement** and developing engagement models and processes informed by these experiences.
2. **Enabling members to be in GFAR's driving seat, to feel heard, respected and trusted.** This includes making sure that they have opportunities to contribute to the forum through genuine consultations and feedback loops<sup>2</sup>, contributions to decision-making processes, concrete activities, and reporting processes based on trust.
3. **Facilitating member engagement through clear and transparent processes.** For example: by developing activities aligned with their priorities; by establishing clear and timely processes of engagement; by putting in place effective approaches to onboarding.
4. **Developing engagement opportunities tailored to the diversity of members and partners** to strengthen their engagement in GFAR. This ranges from local field- and country-level thematic activities, through regional and global campaigning and advocacy, to the facilitation of working groups and communities of practice at the global level by using both web-based and face-to-face meetings. We specifically address information gaps and digital divides that disproportionately affect the more marginalized and under-represented members.
5. **Implementing the strategy devised in the [GFAR Validation and Mapping Exercise Report](#) to mobilize inactive members and tailor "membership journeys" that will encourage members to be increasingly active** in the forum. This includes dynamic membership benefits such as tiered membership categories with progressive benefits and customized services for their unique needs. The current distinction between GFAR Partners and Members, where Partners have formal agreements with GFAR and actively join in Collective Actions with high commitment levels and strong impact on the forum's work, is the first step towards a more dynamic and structured membership corpus.
6. **Continuing to focus on the integration of youth, women, small-scale producers, and NARS** by designing activities that will encourage the spirit of collective action among members to thrive, based on the [GFAR Collective Action](#) approach and application of its [Partnership Principles](#). This also includes culturally sensitive and gender-inclusive initiatives that aim to address key issues such as gender and salary gaps.
7. **Applying the existing participatory, co-creative and collaborative approaches, spaces, methods and tools included in GFAR's new engagement platform (GFAiR Hub).** This supports effective information-sharing, networking capacities, co-creation, and implementation and the mobilization of resources and improved access to them.
8. **Identifying key opportunities to meet with members (both in-person and virtually), contributing to and attending relevant gatherings organized, wanted or fuelled by members** (e.g. the six Regional Interactions and the six ongoing discussion groups in the KLH).

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<sup>2</sup> A feedback loop here consists of asking members for feedback on their experience with GFAR and beyond and using this feedback to create better activities and strategy for GFAR. Ideally, we also close the loop by explicitly mentioning to them how their input actually made a change and contributed to GFAR's direction (e.g. "we heard you say this, and then, we followed up by ...").

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#### IV. Knowledge and learning

As stated in the *2018 Independent Evaluation*, GFAR was tasked to “organize knowledge hubs in key focus areas, documenting, connecting and reflecting upon the experiences and outcomes gained by partners through collective actions.” The Secretariat followed through, going beyond this recommendation by designing and establishing the GFAR/GFAiR Hub that includes the suggested knowledge and learning hubs (KLHs). The new engagement platform encompasses anything that partners are doing that contributes to capturing and sharing lessons learned in the context of GFAR. This certainly addresses the elements in the *Theory of Change* to “mobilize, inform and engage diverse stakeholders and to organize joint reflection, capturing synthesized, documented and communicated lessons learnt and the mapping of the innovation landscape”.

However, the work around knowledge and learning practices will go still further, including the following elements:

1. Building a strategic approach to **knowledge and learning** and developing collective intelligence, including **learning trajectories** and further identifying online and offline spaces, tools, and resources that **enhance the capacities of members and their work**. SMART Indicator: develop and launch at least two new learning trajectories by the end of 2024, with a 25% increase in member participation in online and offline learning spaces. Success will be measured by tracking enrolment figures and engagement levels
2. Creating **synergies with other networks of members and key partners** around the GFAR/GFAiR Hub and beyond. This includes fostering collaboration and expanding outreach by merging networks with key partners such as GFARS and the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD). SMART Indicator: establish at least two new collaborative initiatives with networks like GFRAS and YPARD by mid-2024, aiming for a 20% increase in joint activities. Measure the effectiveness through the number of collaborative events, projects and shared resources.
3. Organizing **discussion groups around common interests based on regions or thematic areas** while ensuring a **thorough onboarding process** for new members and a plan to retain and interact with them. Measure success by relying on the following SMART Indicator: the cumulative number of knowledge resources, e.g. publications, research papers, or best practices shared among GFAR members, targeting a 30% increase by the end of 2024.
4. Enabling **members to identify participatory patterns and procedures to facilitate collective GFAR decision-making, consultation and co-creation**, so that they establish their agency as GFAR members. This will be based on reflection and learning from their collective experience on innovation within and without GFAR. These enhanced participatory approaches would then apply to everything GFAR does: identifying and selecting Collective Actions; deciding on the mobilization and allocation of resources, conducting evaluations, etc.
5. Fostering a **learning culture** which will encourage processes that define and test new ways of working and implementing GFAR activities to promote more exchange as well as cohesion in the way that information, lessons learned and innovation are shared.
6. Creating a **data-driven culture and capacities** across the GFAR membership so that members can produce, analyze and respond to the data they curate, to strengthen their action, through and in synergy with the GFAR MEL workstream and possibly making use of AI?

#### V. Collective governance

To strengthen and improve the performance of GFAR as a member-based organization and the effectiveness of its governance structure, the membership strategy and the *Charter* are complementary to each other: the membership strategy will support the effective implementation and operationalization of the vision contained in the Charter, to build a transparent governance structure and process, as expressed in the GFAR *Theory of Change*. This includes:

1. Implementing the Charter and developing a **process that supports a collective governance model**, ensuring and maximizing the engagement of members as decision-makers in the strategic development and planning of GFAR. To facilitate the process GFAR will promote proactive advocacy and training by tracking successful instances of GFAR

influencing agricultural policies and offering training sessions for effective regional advocacy. A practical example is creating an “Advocacy Toolkit” tailored for NARS, empowering them to influence agricultural policies.

2. Building **virtual and/or physical spaces dedicated to governance, including an assembly and an online governance space** on the [GFAR/GFAiR Hub](#) and putting strong, **human-centred processes** in place (e.g. processes that are easy to understand, that facilitate member participation and ultimately enable them to craft norms and outputs that facilitate the engagement of members, in accordance with [GFAR's Engagement Principles](#)). This has been done through the Governance Space incorporated in the [GFAR/GFAiR Hub](#) – a place for GFAR members and a governance body to discuss any matter related to GFAR's strategic direction and organization.

The above certainly reflects what is stated in the [Charter](#), namely that “GFAR, the unique global forum on agrifood research and innovation and their role in development, aims to make agrifood research and innovation systems more effective, responsive to the needs of resource-poor farmers, and equitable, thereby making a substantial contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.”

## VI. Communication

GFAR's Communication Strategy involves a multipronged approach that includes using various channels to reach its target audiences and monitor 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.

The following six communications goals will be given special attention:

1. Improve GFAR's brand reputation through strategic communication and engagement efforts.
2. Increase visibility and awareness of GFAR's mission and activities among GFAR members and target audiences.
3. Build stronger engagement with key partners, members and stakeholders.
4. Improve the clarity and consistency of GFAR's messaging emphasizing GFAR's uniqueness.
5. Strengthen GFAR's digital presence and capabilities.
6. Enhance GFAR's thought leadership and influence in the global agriculture community.

## VII. Membership management

Building an effective membership administration system is necessary to increase the number of members while ensuring the quality of member engagement in the forum. Aligned with GFAR's vision and strategy, all members who want to be actively involved can engage, while GFAR recognizes and retains long-standing members and partners. This involves the following elements.

1. Addressing **membership registration and engagement requests** in an organized and efficient manner by implementing a transparent and streamlined application process while introducing orientation resources for new members.
2. Building an **ample member-related data management** system through the GFAR/GFAiR Hub, making sure its database is synchronized with GFAR's official website.
3. Designing dynamic **membership benefits** and introducing tiered membership categories with tailored benefits and services – e.g. provide NARS with access to exclusive and advanced agricultural databases that would aid their research endeavours.
4. Acknowledging **members' contributions** through awards, recognition ceremonies, and highlighting successful projects/stories, e.g., hosting a “NARS Innovation Awards” ceremony to celebrate groundbreaking research from NARS.

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5. Clearly defining **modalities for individuals** to join GFAR through the GFAR/GFAiR Hub by establishing a new category, i.e., “Friends of GFAR” (while noting that only organizations can officially be “members of GFAR”);
  6. **Re-evaluating membership models**, administrative processes, and the tools used periodically to assess their efficiency and adapt them as needed.

### VIII. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

**Assessing members’ needs and satisfaction, the impact of their engagement, and lessons learned while building mutual accountability** will enable GFAR “to walk the talk” of being a member-based Forum. These components are the backbone of the member-related monitoring and evaluation efforts, as **part of the broader GFAR MEL system** which involves:

1. **Undertaking thorough assessments of members’ needs, satisfaction benchmarking and surveys, impact evaluations of member engagement, and feedback loops.** This entails listening to members and learning from them as the premise for shaping GFAR’s strategic directions and tailoring engagement opportunities and journeys accordingly. GFAR needs to capitalize on the successes of its Collective Actions and learn from its errors.
2. Designing and implementing an **accountability mechanism**, through which members will be made accountable to each other, the Secretariat accountable to members, and members accountable to their own constituencies under the GFAR umbrella.

GFAR will devise practical participatory learning techniques, and adopt innovative, creative, and non-conventional ways of documenting, sharing and learning. GFAR has developed a MEL system capable of adapting to the various learning levels across the organization, including regional levels and Collective Actions. The MEL system also accommodates multiple reporting structures, especially when dealing with parallel projects funded by different partners. The MEL system will also offer learning facilitating and reporting at the level of subprojects, such as Collective Actions led by partners. GFAR’s Theory of Change will serve as the primary framework for learning and assessment, aligning with GFAR’s organizational and societal goals and values.



## 5. CONCLUSION

GFAR's membership strategy sets the direction for welcoming new members and for stronger engagement of members based on a more effective management of their membership. The membership strategy builds upon, puts in practical terms and complements GFAR'S key documents such as the [Charter](#), the [Engagement Principles](#) and [Theory of Change](#), the [2018 Independent Evaluation](#), the [GFAR Membership Validation and Mapping Exercise Report](#), as well as GFAR'S success stories and best practices.

It stresses the importance of paying careful attention to the processes and approaches established by the eight elements: the key targeting and outreach, enrolment, engagement of members, knowledge sharing and learning, collective governance, communications with members, membership management, and finally monitoring and evaluation.

The process of developing this membership strategy has contributed to a reflection on the roles of members in the governance of GFAR in a way that best fits GFAR's potential to live up to the expectations of a member-based organization established to achieve a common vision and mandate. This membership strategy was drafted to contribute to GFAR's work aimed at impacting agricultural and food research and innovation systems to achieve more inclusive, equitable and sustainable development (as the SDGs call for). This is done with a special focus on under-represented constituencies such as NARS and small-scale producers, youth and women.





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