



GFAR

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

Participatory Retreat for the Development of the 2007-2009 GFAR Business Plan

Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Egypt, 29 March – 1 April 2007

Concept Note (As of 16 March 2007)

Background

1. Currently GFAR operations are based upon a 10-year Strategic Plan (SP) that guides the programs of the 3-year Rolling Business Plan (BP). In turn, the BP guides the preparation of the GFAR-Secretariat annual Work Plan and Budget, the selection of activities undertaken, budget allocation and staffing. The BP serves as a base for mobilizing the required financial resources for GFAR and its Secretariat. The SP and the BP are developed through consultations with GFAR stakeholders and partners. The inclusive consultative process takes between 12 and 18 months starting from the preparation of the GFAR Triennial Conference and ending with the approval of the BP by GFAR Steering Committee. The current SP is for 2004-2013 and the last BP covered the 2004-2006 period.

Lessons learnt from the previous BP and approach for the development of the 2007-2009 Business Plan

2. Given the rapid changes in the factors that affect GFAR's operations, a 10-year horizon for a SP is too long to address the new challenges for agricultural research for development (ARD) with the objective to advocate their mainstreaming in the global research agenda in a timely manner. It is therefore recommended that future SPs would be for 5 to 6 years each to guide 2 successive BPs. The next SP covering the period 2009-2013 or 2009-2014 would be developed during 2008 as a component of the 2007-2009 BP, with preparatory work initiated in the last quarter of 2007. Its development will take into consideration the recommendations of the recently completed Second GFAR External Review, the findings of GFAR 2006 Triennial Conference, the lessons learnt from the implementation of the 2004-2006 GFAR BP and the research programs of GFAR stakeholders (e.g. Northern and Southern NARSs, ARIs, IARCs and Private Sector).

3. Given the fact that the GFAR 2006 Triennial Conference could not take place before November 2006 and the related delay in finalizing the Second GFAR External Review, the development of the 2007-2009 BP normally foreseen during 2006 had to be postponed for the first half of 2007, with the expectation that the new Executive Secretary of GFAR would be on board in January 2007 and lead the preparatory work. The vacant Executive Secretary position had to be re-advertised in February 2007. As of 6 February, an Interim Executive Secretary was recruited to fill the position, vacant since 15 January 2007.

4. The implementation of GFAR BP for 2004-2006 did not internalize the concept of a rolling programme for mobilizing sufficient financial resources to ensure an adequate staffing level of the Secretariat and initiate new activities for 2007, as the first year of the new BP. As of 1 January 2007, the level of secured funding in the pipeline is critically low and new activities cannot be envisaged during 2007. The available resources (cash in hand as of 1 January 2007 and receivable by 31 December 2007) will at most cover the expenses of the 2007 Statutory meetings related to the governance function of GFAR, the salaries of one senior staff and one administrative assistant, until the end of the year and 4 months salary of the new

Executive Secretary from September to December 2007. A bulk of the available resources is in the form of restricted funding for the DURAS project and is still at the receivable stage.

5. Given the above circumstances and the urgency for having a base for resource mobilization for 2008 and beyond, the GFAR BP for 2007-2009 would be modest in coverage and scope and needs to be developed no later than 30 April 2007 for review and endorsement by the Donor Support Group in its June 2007 meeting.

6. The 2007-2009 BP would be responsive to the five long-term objectives of the current SP to the extent of their current relevance and congruency with the recommendations made by the Second External Review of GFAR. The type of programs to be included, their scope and their focus, would be guided by the outputs of the Delhi Conference and a realistic funding scenario. This BP would be revisited in 2009 in the light of 2009-2013 or 2009-2014 Strategic Plan and the revised document will become the rolling BP for the period from 2009-2011.

7. In addition to the completion of the carried-over activities funded in 2006, the work program for the second half of 2007 would focus on the identification and design of a few multi-year projects for presentation to lead donors for entry into their funding pipelines and financing during the last quarter of 2007 and/or early 2008. Upon confirmation of funding, the work program for 2008 would initiate the process of strengthening the human capacity of the GFAR-Secretariat through the recruitment of high-quality senior staff to backstop, monitor and report on the outcome of the financed projects implemented by relevant partner institutions. A similar process of developing a project pipeline for funding would be undertaken by GFAR in 2009 and continued beyond.

8. Based on the GFAR 2006 Triennial Conference outcomes and the Second External Review recommendation, it is proposed that the 2007-2009 BP and its activities would include four core programs, each focussing on one of the 4 following thrusts:

- Strategic thinking on and advocacy for future global and inter-regional agricultural research priorities (Core Program 1).
- Promotion of inclusive global and regional partnerships for collaborative research and innovation (Core Program 2).
- Mobilization and sharing of promising knowledge packages (Core Program 3).
- Strengthening and re-enforcing GFAR structure and governance as a cross cutting thrust .

9. The GFAR-Secretariat would have a strict facilitation role with a clear exit strategy for the programs and activities it advocates, while maintaining a modest backstopping, oversight and impact-monitoring role as required. The current function of pass-through money would be maintained only for the activities related to capacity building of the Regional Fora. In addition to the Executive Secretary, the core professional staff would be composed of 3 Senior Program Officers, each in charge of one of the Core Programs.

The Retreat and its agenda

10. The participatory retreat scheduled for 29 March - 1 April 2007 and hosted by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Egypt, is a critical milestone in the development process of the Business Plan. The retreat is targeting a maximum of 30 participants from representatives of all GFAR stakeholders' constituencies, such as the southern Regional Fora, northern Regional Fora, IARCs, NGOs, farmers' organizations, private sectors and donors. The retreat would alternate plenary and working group sessions. Each working group will include a resource person from the Secretariat. The output would be a shared draft consolidated summary of a BP with

a list of priority programs. Each core program will be developed by a working group and presented in the form of a brief concept note for each component, outlining its objective, expected outputs and activities, performance indicators, budget, potential lead donor(s) and implementation partners and timeline.

11. The following provisional agenda presents the themes to be covered by the plenary and working group sessions.

Retreat process steering group:

GFAR-Secretariat Mr Abdelmajid Slama, Mr Ajit Maru, Mr Nur Abdi, Mr Antonio Schiavone,
Mr Oliver Oliveros

Facilitator(s): Mr J. Hagmann

Participants: to be determined