

Global Forum on Agricultural Research

MINUTES OF THE 3rd GFAR SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Brasilia, May 28, 1998 - 07:00 - 08:30

1. Introduction

The meeting was opened by Dr. Abdelmajid Slama, Chairman of the NARS Support Group (GFAR-SG), who welcomed all participants to the meeting. The meeting was attended by 35 persons from different organizations, mainly donor agencies. In his introduction, he reaffirmed that the GFAR-SG is an “open” group aiming at supporting GFAR morally, scientifically and financially. He expressed the hope that, by the end of the meeting, many more participants would join the group and that additional pledges would be made to fill the financial gap.

Fernando Chaparro started his presentation by summarizing the progress made by the GF-SC and the NARS-SC since the last meeting of the GFAR-SG in Rome (5-6 February 1998) and briefly presented the documents which were distributed. In his presentation of the GFAR “Programme of Work and Budget 1998 - 2000”, he re-emphasized the guiding principles of the GFAR, the “value-added” that the GFAR is expected to bring and the roles of the GFAR secretariats, first and foremost its “facilitating” role. He then explained the new structure of the budget which resulted from the recommendation made by the GF-SC in its meeting of May 24, 1998. He also summarized the pledges so far received from the members of the GFAR-SG, drawing attention to the financial gap which remains to be covered to secure the funds for this initial phase (1998 - 2000).

2. Discussion

The general discussion which followed raised issues and points for clarification which can be summarized as follows :

- Mode of operation of the secretariats to facilitate the linkages with the ARIs.
- Need to have tools (indicators) to measure the effectiveness of GFAR and its secretariats.
- Need to make more efforts to inform all stakeholders of the mission and activities of GFAR.
- Mode of operation of the activities related to NRM/agroecology.
- Need to clarify what is meant by “non-CG mandate crops” and the necessity to find a better terminology as the donors to the GFAR-SG are, so far, those of the CGIAR.

- Need for the secretariats to assist as much as possible the NARS to speak with a unified political voice in international negotiations on e.g. IPR, WTO, CBD.
- Importance of the second GFAR plenary meeting (May 2000) for taking stock of achievements under this initiative and for providing a platform for discussion of strategic issues of importance for global partnership. In order to prepare for this event, the issues have to be rapidly identified and a bottom-up consultative process launched to make sure that the NARS community, through its regional and sub-regional fora, would fully participate in the deliberations.

3. Potential support to gfar expressed by the participants

The Chairman invited the participants to express their views on the GFAR process and content and on how they could eventually support the implementation of the GFAR Programme of Work 1998 - 2000. The participants were unanimous in recognizing the major achievements accomplished since ICW97.

The following statements were made (in alphabetical order) :

FRANCE mentioned that they have supported GFAR from its inception and intend to continue beyond 1999, especially in supporting EGFAR. Some participants from NARS also indicated that France, through the secondment of a senior officer to the GF-SC secretariat, is a major contributor to GFAR.

GERMANY was also very pleased by the proposed Programme of Work and indicated that, whilst no commitment can be made at present, they will seek to identify funding for GFAR while preparing the next budget.

IDRC (CANADA) already supports EGFAR and will to continue to do so in 1999.

ITALY confirmed its strong interest in supporting the NARS secretariat and its activities. Discussions will take place in June 1998 with IFAD on a possible contribution from their Trust Fund with IFAD and US\$ 200,000 was mentioned as an indicative figure.

JAPAN is also supportive of GFAR and possibilities of in-kind support should be explored. Japan has also seconded a senior officer to WB/ESDAR who could also contribute to the GFAR programme of work.

SWITZERLAND took note of the significant progress made by GFAR and will study carefully possibilities to provide incremental support.

THE NETHERLANDS is also one of the founding members of the GFAR-SG and has already agreed to contribute to the NARS secretariat both in cash and in kind, through the support of an APO.

UNITED KINGDOM also highly appreciated the role played by the GFAR facilitators and expressed his moral support, indicating that financial support would have to come from other UK-based aid sources. He expressed his willingness to continue to be involved in the GFAR process and to assist in the identification of such sources.

USAID (USA) indicated that their support would be targeted to strengthening the NARS, the regional and sub-regional fora mainly through their regional bureaux. In this respect, it was recommended that the secretariats should approach directly the USAID regional bureaux as potential additional funding sources. In addition, in-kind support could also come from the US support through FAO and IFAD.

WORLD BANK mentioned its already agreed contribution of US\$ 200,000 for 1998 and 1999 with the approval of the CGIAR Finance Committee.

4. Conclusion

The Chairman also mentioned that the two secretariats would soon be in a position to prepare more detailed project proposals which would facilitate the task of the GFAR-SG members in mobilizing financial support from their respective institutions.

In his concluding remarks, Fernando Chaparro emphasized that the budget, as presented, did not include the “in-kind” contribution of the facilitating agencies, namely FAO, IFAD, ISNAR, WB/ESDAR, without which GFAR would have not taken off so rapidly. He also mentioned that one of the basic ideas of the GFAR was to mobilize “fresh funds” outside the CGIAR and that the secretariats will start immediately to explore new sources of funding.

Finally, Dr. Abdelmajid Slama, thanked all participants for having attended this meeting despite the early hour of the day, for their active participation in the discussion and for their constructive suggestions and commitment to assist GFAR.

The meeting was officially closed at 08:30.