FORWARD THINKING: BUILDING THE GLOBAL FORESIGHT HUB

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The world’s Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D) community recognizes the need for better foresight on the global challenges that lay ahead to shape how agricultural innovation and knowledge can best help to meet these. Through the 2010 Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD Roadmap), stakeholders from all sectors have requested that GFAR mobilizes actions to improve the prioritization and focus of agricultural research and create more relevant and effective innovation systems that are embedded in the needs of the societies that they serve.

The agricultural challenges ahead are diverse and complex; meeting future food and nutritional security needs directly interacts with economic, environmental and social implications. Many institutions are involved in forward thinking through a wide variety of approaches. However, the wider use and impact of their work has so far been bounded by the assumptions made in each and by insufficient integration of societal debates in policy making processes. In order to further forward thinking, GFAR is fostering three key activities, which interconnect to form the Global Foresight Hub.

The Global Foresight Hub will enable GFAR to fulfill its mandate as an open and inclusive catalyzing mechanism, linking Advanced Research institutes, CGIAR centers and international policy bodies and initiatives with national and regional Agricultural Research and Development Organizations including Farmer and Civil Society Organizations. It supports and integrates the following three sets of activities:

1. Stimulating forward thinking debates in agriculture and rural development, taking into account competing non-agricultural demands on human and natural resources, so as to identify common findings, controversies, and limits to the current knowledge with regard to shaping our future. For this, GFAR will organize an annual “Global AR4D Forward Thinking Platform as an inclusive venue for those engaged in strategic foresight to share results, compare methods, and discuss controversies arising from their field experiences.

2. Connecting Science and Society, to facilitate dialogue between scientists, policy makers and civil society, letting the voice of society, especially small farmers, be incorporated in shaping innovation. GFAR will facilitate regular “Policy Dialogue Platforms (PDP)” at global, regional and national levels. The results of the Forward Thinking Platform will be debated by representatives of civil society and policy makers who will be informed about the implications of their choices.

3. Building capacity of all stakeholders in forward thinking, while collectively adjusting the content of AR4D to the needs of society. GFAR will contribute to collective capacity building, region by region, starting with Sub-Saharan Africa, supporting a “Global Foresight Academy” that will develop the skills and capabilities of young professionals and support foresight activities on high-priority issues across GFAR constituencies.

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