



Harnessing Forgotten Foods

for improved livelihoods

A Collective Action within Key Focus Area (KFA) 1 of GFAR's Medium Term Plan 2018-2021

“When crops that could contribute to better food, health and income are abandoned by communities, marginalized by agriculture, ignored by research and absent by consumers’ diets, the entire world loses”.
(Biodiversity International)

Smallholder farmers have the right to conserve, save, exchange and sell farm-saved crop genetic resources, including those from neglected and underutilized species. ‘Forgotten foods’ are derived from domesticated plant species that have been conserved and improved by farmers for centuries for their food and medicinal properties, but that are currently underutilized. They have been forgotten: their use has been reduced over time due to social perceptions of their value; lack of interest from research institutions; limited awareness of their value among consumers and challenges in establishing markets for their commercialization.

Forgotten foods have multiple uses and values. They can provide nutritious and healthy products for local communities and contribute to global food security, increase the generation of environmental services and improve communities’ livelihoods through additional

incomes derived from the commercialization of these traditional varieties.

What we will do together

The aim of this Collective Action is to empower and mobilize local communities, including disadvantaged and displaced farmers, particularly rural women, in the conservation and use of forgotten foods from currently underutilized crops, their roles in household and child nutrition, environmental resilience and in new and expanded market opportunities. It aims to directly empower farmers at the centre of these systems to better manage, sustain and benefit from biodiverse resources. This is particularly crucial in marginal and crisis situations, through access to knowledge and technical support, enabling participatory innovation for farmers and creation of required enabling environments.

One key challenge is that forgotten foods form only part of wider systems so their development requires integrated and territorial approaches and awareness of their value to enable impact



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and scale-out. Many innovation systems are geared instead to linear development and promotion of single crops, so a wholesale change of approach is required for success. Societal awareness is a major element. This requires consumer awareness and education, changed eating habits, connection to the cultural significance of forgotten foods. Alongside the curation of recipes, we need to encourage consumer awareness and creation of demand,

innovation in processing, value addition and packaging. Global progress on forgotten foods demands truly multi-disciplinary approaches that draw together the different demands, needs and issues around these foods and ingredients derived from them. Programmes tailored to specific landscapes and territories, and their communities, are where Collective Actions can best be focused.

The expected outputs to be generated through multi-stakeholder Collective Actions include:

- Gap analysis of the lack of information of farmers, including disadvantage and displaced farmers, particularly rural women, about forgotten foods and the genetic resources from which they derive
- Knowledge based and decision support toolkit, including apps, radio spots, capacity/training material, flyers, videos, etc. developed jointly with communities to support growth and market access for forgotten foods
- Promotion of participatory plant breeding activities to improve production of on-farm crop resources to support forgotten foods
- Mobilization of community awareness of the value and potential of forgotten foods and social-networked actions to develop incentives, effective scales and value in their use and development
- Development of appropriate technologies for processing, packaging and value addition of forgotten foods
- Fostering of consumer demand and awareness, and that of policy makers at different levels
- Metrics of productive systems to demonstrate real costs of production and value of forgotten foods vis-à-vis monoculture systems, in order to demonstrate to policy makers the value of investing in this sector
- Commercialization of forgotten foods through farmer collectives, out-grower schemes and other such measures for achieving market scale, considering their contribution to food security, health and nutrition and resilience to climate change
- Creation of incentives for smallholder farmers to improve the conservation and sustainable use of forgotten foods

You are invited to join the AIRCA, Crops for the Future (CFF), Global Action Plan for Agricultural Diversification (GAPAD), Palestinian Farmers Union, the World Rural Forum, the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), YPARD, G-20, the University of Nairobi, FARA and Barli Development Institute for Rural Women in GFAR's Collective Action *Harnessing Forgotten Foods for Improved Livelihoods.*

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