



# Empowering Rural Communities to shape their own futures

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

With the myriad challenges it currently grapples with, agriculture faces an uncertain future; one that is further complicated by the expected increase in extreme weather conditions and climate variability. Caught in the middle of these challenges are smallholder farmers and rural communities who produce a substantial proportion of the world's food.

For them to be able to better manage these challenges, farmers and rural communities need new and improved knowledge and technologies that can only come from agri-food research and innovation. However, for such products to be relevant and useful for farmers, they need to be well tailored to their needs – both present and emerging. Too many times, agricultural research and technologies are developed for farmers without understanding their real needs, nor taking into cognizance their view point and the multiple interacting challenges they face.

Often, this mismatch between what is being offered by agri-food research and innovations, and what is needed by farming communities,



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particularly the resource-poor, at a given point in time, leads to low adoption of ARD products; results in frustration or research fatigue on both sides, loss of vital resources, and contributes to the entrenchment of rural poverty. Thus, identifying effective participatory processes that can improve the inclusion of farming communities in the design and implementation of agricultural research and innovation processes, and enhance their ownership of the products from research, is important.

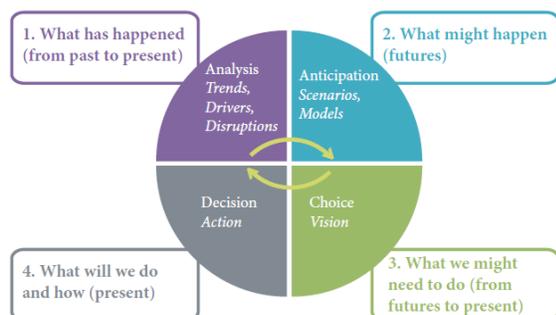
## Foresight for Better Futures

Participatory and grassroots foresight can provide the inclusive space required for the exchange of perspectives on what researchers and farmers consider as innovation needs, whatever the area, therefore enabling farmers to put across their most important needs and priorities, while helping researchers to better focus and validate their research ideas. More importantly, participatory foresight can help to explore the plausible futures for farmers that can result from the adoption of a new research or innovation and, hence enhance farmers' sense of ownership of the research products or innovations required to achieve those desired futures.

However, for farming communities to be able to use participatory foresight to engage agricultural researchers and innovators to better serve their own needs, they need

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greater capacity to understand and appropriately use foresight approaches to improve their own decision making.



### What we will do together

The Collective Action will focus on creating inclusive spaces, through foresight, for the co-development of research needs and priorities, with the aim of producing research and innovations that *truly address farmers' problems as they see them*. It will work to develop the capacity of farmers on the workings and use of participatory foresight processes. Ultimately, the Collective Action will aim to significantly improve the sustainability and optimization of agricultural research and innovation outputs.

Given the high interest in seeing better uptake of research products by many ARI4D stakeholders, this Collective Action is expected to bring together a diverse field of interested stakeholders, including farmers'

organizations, development donors, CSOs, rural advisory services, national and international research institutes and the private (agribusiness) sector.

Activities will be undertaken country by country, working with specific communities and their needs. These will be linked with programmes identifying investment needs in national agricultural research and innovation and supported and scaled out through regional mechanisms and fora.

As well as community level actions, GFAR facilitates many global linkages among all those concerned about the future of agriculture and its role in development – particularly farmers and their communities.

Through GCARD3, Partners in GFAR agreed to work together in a new alliance to link rural communities and outside expertise, establishing national and regional foresight platforms and capabilities that bring together farmers with research and innovation actors around the world, to develop and select preferred future scenarios. These platforms will stimulate creative thinking about a range of controversial and plausible futures and, integrating all stakeholders' perspectives, collectively plan, design and implement initiatives to change the present to shape/achieve the desired future.

You are invited to join FARA, AARINENA, CACAARI, APAARI, GCHERA, G-20 Donor Group, GFRAS, Palestinian Farmers Union, YPARD, national research institutes and private sector organisations in GFAR's Collective Action  
*Empowering Rural Communities to shape their own futures*

For more information, contact GFAR Secretariat at [GFAR-Secretariat@fao.org](mailto:GFAR-Secretariat@fao.org)