GACSA Status Report
January – June 2017

Overview

The over 170-member Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA) is moving forward on all fronts. The Action Groups and Task Teams are advancing with ambitious plans, and GACSA’s communications have been upgraded and continue to leverage its larger audience through the deployment of the appropriate tools. GACSA made a significant breakthrough with engagement with the CSA Regional Alliances at the 2016 Annual Forum and has been working to build upon that success. Even in an environment of low funding, the Alliance is using creative methods to have GACSA represented at essential events across the world. This creativity and collaboration between members and the Facilitation Unit demonstrate the importance and value of the Alliance. GACSA is also looking forward to again showcasing its progress and ambition this year at the 2017 Annual Forum, demonstrating the singular value of the Alliance.

At the administrative level, GASCA continues to face some serious budget challenges. This is constraining a number of core functions, including operations of the Facilitation Unit. Sustained funding support is required to bring the staffing component of the Facilitation Unit to the desired optimal level.

Even with the new contributions that have been pledged to the Trust Fund by Ireland and the Netherlands, the funding state remains a challenge. To meet this challenge, GACSA has developed a resource mobilization strategy and is beginning to implement that strategy. As a part of this strategy, the GACSA Co-Chairs would like to ask all GACSA members to make in-kind or direct contributions to the GACSA Multi-Donor Trust Fund.
Achievements

Rapidly Increasing and Diverse Membership

The Alliance saw a stark increase in membership post-Annual Forum and that increase has meant that a more diverse set of stakeholders have joined and are now active in GACSA in various and complementary ways. Currently, GACSA has more than 170 members from across the agriculture value chain, providing a unique multi-stakeholder platform to catalyse the scaling up of locally adapted CSA practices across the globe. Through demonstrating GACSA’s clear value, the Alliance is committed to continue to expand membership in the Alliance – both in terms of numbers, but also in diversity from across the various sectors and disciplines, as well as in representation from across the different geo-political circumstances, ecosystems and national/continental boundaries. It is also expected that current engagements with Youth groups and Farmers’ organisations will bring in a growing number of farmers, practitioners, and youths. Membership development is now focusing on expanding towards specific stakeholders’ groups (e.g. youth, women, farmers) as well as specific regions (e.g. Asia).

Greatly Expanded Outreach and New Communication Methods

GACSA’s ability to reach out and communicate across the climate-smart world has been significantly enhanced. The new connections and contacts now available to GACSA and the Facilitation Unit mean that GACSA can communicate with an even larger and more diverse audience. GACSA is leveraging these new connections by producing a monthly GACSA newsletter and has launched a YouTube channel. The newsletter details the work of the Alliance and its members, and it is quite important in sharing GACSA and CSA messages. This Newsletter, developed in with participatory methods, is also a way for various members to share their experiences and progress in scaling up CSA. GACSA’s YouTube channel is now the largest repository of climate-smart agriculture videos. As technology has significantly enhanced the ability to disseminate CSA information, GACSA is aiming to act as broker, catalyst, and promoter for this type of information. The YouTube channel is one way GACSA is providing its members and the greater CSA community with this important service. At relatively low costs, these methods of communicating about CSA are major achievements. Another important fact about the GACSA newsletter is that it was first envisioned by the GACSA Member Engagement Team, then incorporated into the GACSA Communication Strategy, and is now produced by the Facilitation
Unit. This collaboration between members participating in an ad-hoc team and the Facilitation Unit demonstrates how the participatory GACSA model works. This model efficiently uses the talents and time of all members along with the GACSA Facilitation Unit’s professional abilities to further GACSA’s reach, and is a sign of healthiness for such an alliance. Other communication tools have also been deployed effectively throughout the reporting period. GACSA’s website is updated constantly with new CSA information and insights, and GACSA is currently working to hold at least one webinar per month to create a space where members can share and showcase, in an interactive way, their own experiences and insights on CSA.

Members Representing GACSA at Events

GACSA has managed to have widespread presence at various events. This has been largely possible through several members attending these events while also representing GACSA. Members have also managed GACSA-specific side events at various events around in the world. In this way, GACSA was able to be recently represented and presented at GreenBiz and CalCAN Climate Summit events this year. The Facilitation Unit used this model to cover other events such as the workshop “Meeting the needs of agriculture, food security and land use,” organized by FAO in Rome in May 2017. This model proved to be both efficient and effective, enabling a wide set of members (e.g. regional alliances, research institutions, countries) to represent GACSA and promote CSA at a wide range of events with different audiences (private-sector led events, UNFCCC events, etc.), thus improving impact at scale. It will be very important that GACSA is present during the UN Climate Week in New York in September 2017, at the CFS in Rome in October 2017, and at the COP23 in Bonn and CSA Conference in South Africa in November 2017. GACSA has also aimed to build further synergies with other initiatives. In 2017, GACSA has engaged with the FAO-led global water scarcity initiative and the land use initiative, and the NDC partnership.

Action Groups

The GACSA Action Groups (Investment, Enabling Environment, Knowledge) have also outlined ambitious plans for the year 2017. This work builds on the success and gains made in previous years. The Enabling Environment Action Group, after successfully delivering six country case studies on CSA, has defined a set of further case studies. This time, however, the case studies are not only country specific, but thematically focused–i.e. looking across stakeholder groups to highlight and showcase integrated experiences and lessons, including policy factors, in the efforts to scale up CSA. The Knowledge Action Group is continuing to develop documents on specific topics and, through public
webinars, organizing general problem-solving or lesson-sharing discussions on specific topics in response to expressed knowledge-information needs. The three Action Groups have also jointly worked to organise the workshop on metrics for CSA investments. This workshop is slated to take place during the Strategic Committee meeting in June 2017.

AgMIP is now the co-convener of the Knowledge Action Group with CIRAD, and WBCSD has taken over convening the Investment Action Group. USDA FAS continues convening the Enabling Environment Action Group.

Regional Engagements Moving Ahead

In line with GACSA’s work program with regional CSA alliances, GACSA supported the dialogue between the North America CSA Alliance and the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD) towards the development of a regional CSA work plan for North America, at GreenBiz 2017 (Phoenix, February 2017).

GACSA then fostered the dialogue between the ASEAN Climate Resilience Network (ASEAN-CRN, the regional CSA platform for the ASEAN region) and WBCSD towards the development of a regional CSA work plan for the ASEAN region and the reinforcement of the Public-Private Partnership initiated by ASEAN-CRN, at the Responsible Business Forum on Food & Agriculture (Jakarta, Indonesia, 13-15 March 2017).

This led to the participation of WBCSD and GACSA in the Workshop on Developing ASEAN Public-Private Partnership Framework for Technology Development in the Agriculture Sector (15 May 2017). Thanks to GACSA’s brokerage role, WBCSD offered to ASEAN Member States a collaboration proposal on “Inclusive Rice Landscapes”, focusing on rice value chains under a landscape approach in Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia, currently under discussion. This initiative is a concrete step in further engaging GACSA members into regional processes.

GACSA and WBCSD then participated in the Third Annual Meeting of the ASEAN Climate Resilience Network (16 May 2017). The event brought together representatives from ASEAN Ministries of Agriculture, focal points of the ATWGARD1 and development partners, to report on progress of the ASEAN-CRN Action Plan 2015-2017, and to develop the new Work Plan 2017-2020 as a contribution to the Strategic Plan of the ASEAN Food Agriculture and Forestry Cooperation

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1 ASEAN Technical Working Group on Agriculture and Research Development (ATWGARD).
Vision 2025. GACSA presented its achievements, way forward, and potential support to ASEAN Member States, which in return made several relevant requests for support. GACSA is currently working internally and with Action Groups to offer ASEAN-CRN a limited set of concrete collaborations / activities to be considered in their Work Plan 2017-2020, building on existing products and deliverables, to a short-term implementation.

GACSA provided support in organizing and delivering the Regional Food Security Conference for ASEAN (Hanoi, Vietnam, 22-23 March 2017), upon invitation of the Governments of Vietnam and the Netherlands. GACSA, jointly with the ASEAN-CRN, supported the organization of the Working Group on CSA. GACSA also participated in the High-Level events, pushing for recognition of the need for strengthening the regional CSA platform and building on synergies between national, regional, and international stakeholders.

GACSA also supported Climate KIC/CSA Booster to become a new member and to be recognized as the regional CSA hub for Europe, joining the growing family of regional CSA alliances, platforms, and networks. At last, a special newsletter dedicated to the regional CSA alliances, platforms, and networks has been edited and disseminated.

**Resource Mobilization for GACSA on the Starting Block**

GACSA Facilitation Unit and Finance Committee have worked to develop three complementary documents for fundraising purposes: a fundraising strategy, a 2-page description of GACSA for donors, and a 12-page GACSA Storytelling Document. Effective fundraising is about to begin.

**Task Teams**

Task Teams are set up through the decision of the Strategic Committee to undertake specific and often time-bound tasks and results. GACSA members volunteer to the various Task Teams. The following Task Teams are currently running: (i) The 2017 GACSA Annual Forum Planning Team, convened by Mr. Marc Sadler of the World Bank; (ii) The Member Engagement Team, convened by Mr. Ernie Shea of the North American Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance; and (iii) The Finance Ad Hoc Committee, convened by Mr. Maarten Degroot of Canada.

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2 e.g. Brunei / Indonesia / Malesia on knowledge exchange and capacity building, Cambodia on extension services, Malesia / Singapore / Thailand / Indonesia / Brunei on CSA practices, Malesia / Singapore to support national and regional CSA alliance, Brunei / Malesia on private sector involvement.
Management Issues

Streamlined Facilitation Unit

The streamlining of the Facilitation Unit into a flat structure of three professionals was completed in February 2017, due to budgetary constraints, focusing on the priorities and core functions approved by the Strategic Committee. The unit is dedicated to working efficiently and collaborating effectively to cover all the essential tasks that the Facilitation Unit must carry out.

The Human Resource division of the GACSA Facilitation Unit is fragile. The current makeup of the unit is being sustained by non-Trust Fund support. This somewhat masks the cost of supporting the Facilitation Unit. Without increased fundraising or other creative solutions, the Facilitation Unit will lose one of the three staff in August. Even though the Facilitation Unit has been able to keep its standards up so far, having only two members could degrade its capacity.

Other Donors to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund

After having received contributions to the Multi Donor Trust Fund by Ireland and the Netherlands at the end of 2016, GACSA is actively looking for more support and the GACSA Strategic Committee has instructed the GACSA Finance Committee to develop a Fundraising Strategy for GACSA to assist with resource mobilization efforts, which is now completed.

Transitional Budget is Lean, but Focused

The transitional budget for the Alliance envisions spending of USD $210,000 from the two GACSA trust funds in 2017. This includes USD $120,000 ear marked for the Annual Forum in 2017. Because GACSA did not ramp up fundraising efforts in 2016, the lean budget is warranted. GACSA has not scaled back its ambitions or mission, but rather has made efforts to find creative and cost-effective ways to deliver on identified priorities, such as resource mobilization, communications, and regional level engagement, thanks to the support of members and the Facilitation Unit.

Annual Forum to be an Important Showcase

GACSA Strategic Committee has reconstituted the Annual Forum Task Team (AFTT) to plan the next Annual Forum. The AFTT has identified the first week of October 2017 as the best time to develop the Annual Forum, and after having solicited members for an interest in hosting, it was decided that
FAO HQ will host the event for the third year. The Annual Forum Task Team is placing a significant amount of weight on organizing and staging the 2017 Annual Forum, which will demonstrate GACSA’s added-value, sustain the momentum, and leverage additional support.

**Collaboration between the Facilitation Unit and the Ad Hoc Working Teams Working Well**

In previous reports, a major management issue was the relationship between the Facilitation Unit and the ad hoc teams. Those management issues were dealt with through better lines of communication and better integration of the Facilitation Unit within those teams.