



Agrinatura Strategy 2030

‘Let’s shape our future together’



President's Foreword

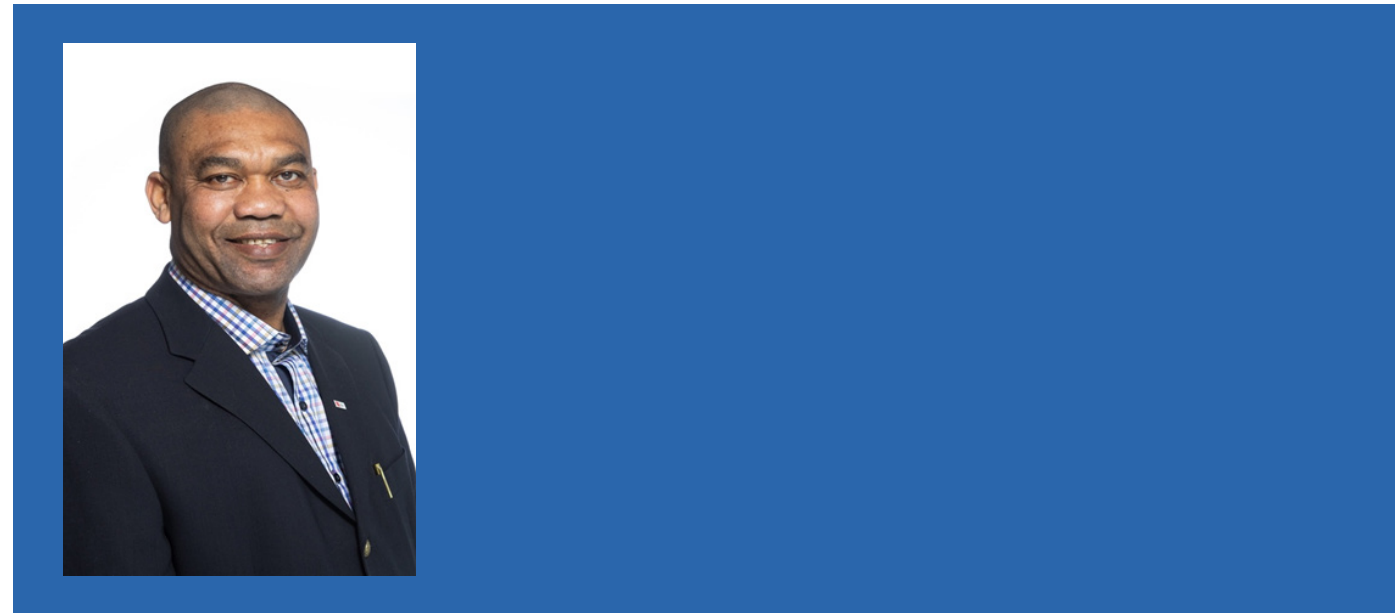
I am thrilled to present to you AGRINATURA's new strategic plan, a roadmap designed to guide us towards our shared vision for success. This strategic plan represents our collective vision for the future and outlines the concrete steps we will take to achieve our goals.

For the past 35 years, Agrinatura has worked to provide evidence-based research science - policy interface alternatives to stakeholders, partners and recipient countries of operation. Agrinatura operates in a challenging world, constantly shaped by political, economic, social, technological, cultural, and demographic changes. Agrinatura continues to be a hub for cutting-edge research and expertise.

In developing this strategic plan, we have drawn upon the insights and expertise of our diverse team, as well as input from our valued partners and stakeholders through a process of rigorous analysis and thoughtful deliberation. This plan identifies four key priority goals based on Agrinatura core values, which will drive Agrinatura forward in the years to come.

At the heart of this plan is our unwavering commitment to research excellence and our dedication to serving our stakeholders with integrity, creativity, and purpose. As we embark on this journey together, it is essential that we remain agile, collaborative, and focused on our core values on Agricultural Research for Development.

This plan is not merely a document to be filed away, but a living, dynamic strategic framework that will inform our decision-making, guide our actions, and inspire us to reach new heights of



success. It is a testament to our shared vision, our collective aspirations, and our unwavering commitment to research excellence and capacity building for future generations.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to the development of this plan. I am ever more convinced that our alliance, with its unique expertise and wealth of experience, is well positioned to lead and ensure a sustainable agri-food systems for all with a new management model to realize global food security and the wellbeing of all. I am excited to embark on this journey together as we work towards a future filled with possibility and promise for all.

Sincerely,

Dr Stephen Onakuse
Agrinatura President

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01

Introduction

There is a growing awareness among decision makers and ordinary citizens that there is an urgent need to address the critical global issues of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation; and at the same time produce sufficient healthy and nutritious food for a rapidly expanding population. These issues are complex and inter-related and require rigorous multi- and interdisciplinary research to identify appropriate solutions that will support green and equitable economic growth. The workforce of the future will need a different set of skills than in the past and higher education institutions have a crucial role to play in supporting innovation and the development of human capital.

At Agrinatura, we are a dynamic force in agricultural research and development, with over 35 years of dedication to sustainable practices. Our strength lies in a robust network of 35 leading universities and research institutes across 16 European countries. What sets us apart is our 'Team Europe' approach, uniting institutions to collectively address global challenges in agriculture. Based in Brussels, we strategically bridge research, dialogue, and impact, actively participating in high-level policy dialogues with influential partners like the European Union, the African Union, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and others.

We are not just an organisation; we're a catalyst for positive change, fostering innovation, knowledge exchange, and creating a lasting impact on the future of sustainable agriculture for development.

Agrinatura is a unique player in the European and Global landscape of organisations dedicated to agricultural research for development (ARD). It stands out as the only organisation that amalgamates all aspects of ARD under one roof, offering a unique platform for its members and serving as a multifaceted partner for organisations in Europe and the Global South.



This strategy charts the direction of Agrinatura from 2024 to 2030 and was developed with the full participation of member organisations. One of the inputs was a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Members considered that the major strengths of the alliance are:

- Collaboration. Membership of Agrinatura enables organisations to participate in collaborative projects and other activities, enhancing opportunities for knowledge sharing and capacity building. This collaboration creates the potential for greater impact than would result from operating independently.
- Networking. The extensive network of the alliance enables members to have access to valuable connections and resources.
- Evidence-based research. Agrinatura prioritizes evidence-based research to inform policy decisions, establishing credibility and relevance in the agricultural sector.

Two main weaknesses were acknowledged by members:

- Vision clarity. While Agrinatura has a clear vision, it was considered too general and lacking ambition and this could potentially limit its effectiveness.
- Ideological stance: It is not clear what type of agriculture Agrinatura stands for but an attempt to define this would be challenging and could alienate certain stakeholders. Embracing principles such as improving livelihoods and supporting sustainable agriculture may mitigate this risk.

Several opportunities were identified which would help to guide Agrinatura in its strategic planning:

- International agendas: It was suggested that Agrinatura can align its vision and activities with Agenda 2030 and the Green Deal to demonstrate commitment to Sustainable Development Goals and environmental initiatives.
- Influencing decision-making. Through its engagement with leading institutions and networks there is potential for Agrinatura to increase its influence within the European Institutions and with African stakeholders, thereby enhancing its visibility and impact.
- Priority topics: Agrinatura members have considerable expertise in priority topics such as food systems, climate change, agro-ecology, socio-economic development, and capacity building. This gives scope for Agrinatura to make meaningful contributions to these issues and establish itself as a leader in these areas.

Two main threats were identified which could affect Agrinatura's ability to achieve its goals:

- Restrictive focus. Focusing too narrowly on specific international agendas may limit Agrinatura's ability to address other important agricultural issues and adapt to changing priorities.
- Ideological polarization. Taking a strong ideological stance on agriculture may lead to polarization within the agricultural community and hinder collaboration and consensus-building efforts.

The SWOT analysis helped to inform the mission, values and goals of Agrinatura and these are outlined below.

Our mission

Agrinatura strives to be the foremost European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge for Development, bringing together leading universities and research institutes in partnerships across the world to deliver high quality education, research, skills and capacity sharing initiatives.

We stand for the role science and education have to play in the development of pathways for change and innovation to fuel transformation to inclusive and sustainable global food systems.

We aspire to be the go-to knowledge partner for evidence-based policy making on Agricultural Research for Development and to make an impactful contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In support of our mission Agrinatura member organisations mobilise a large number of specialists with complementary expertise in tropical and sub-tropical agriculture. This makes us a unique institution in Europe. Our members work in basic and applied sciences, often using inter-disciplinary approaches at the interface of food systems and related complex global challenges. These include, amongst other areas, climate change; public health; soil health; energy issues; resilient food production; resource security based on circularity; carbon sequestration in soil and biomass; biodiversity; the impact of deforestation; and the water-food-energy nexus.

Our vision

Our vision is a world where agriculture is not only a source of food and income, but also a catalyst for positive change. We believe that by working together in research, education, and innovation, we can create a sustainable future for all.

This vision statement reflects our firm belief that agriculture can act as a driver of transformative change in society as well as meeting the fundamental needs of people for healthy and nutritious food and enhancing their livelihoods.



Our values

Agrinatura's activities are guided by a set of principles and beliefs which are shared by our members.

These values are summarised as follows:

Collaboration and partnerships. A recognition that working with others is more effective than operating in isolation. This applies both to collaboration among members and with external partner organisations.

Impact on sustainable agriculture and people's lives. A shared commitment to actions which lead to beneficial impact on people's livelihoods, whilst fighting against injustice and respecting the environment.

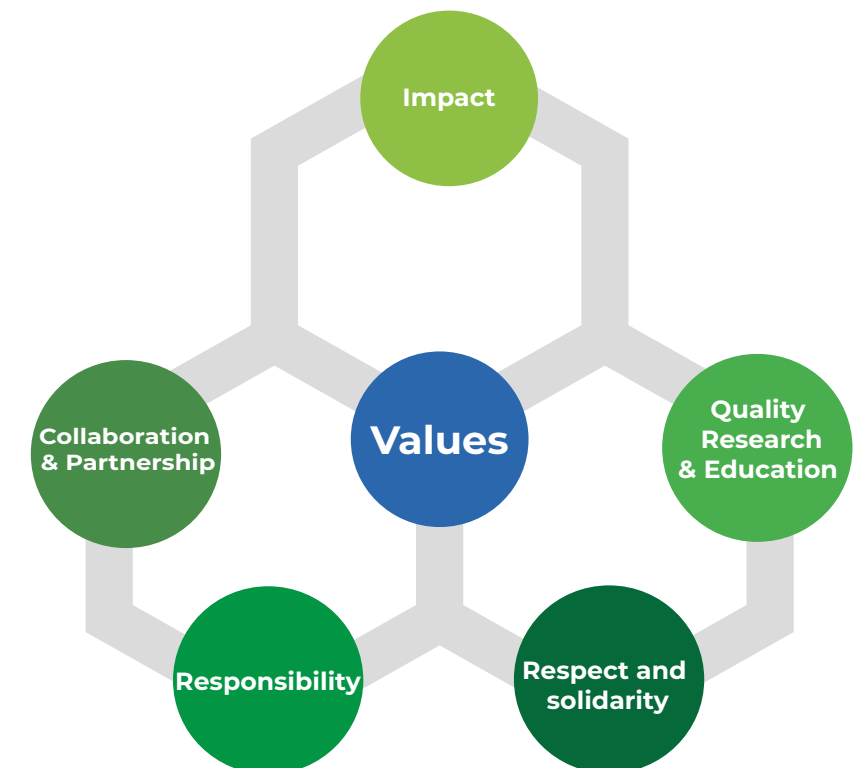
Evidence-based research, innovation and education. A common understanding that joint

activities should generate sound evidence that may be used to help design more relevant and effective programmes and policies.

Responsibility to society. An appreciation that activities should be demand-led and respond to the needs of society at large.

Respect and solidarity. An acknowledgement that relations between individuals and organisations should be governed by mutual respect and solidarity.

In addition, Agrinatura takes an ethical stance on who we work with and who we receive funding from. Due diligence is carried out on partners and funding agencies to ensure that our actions reflect our values and do not inadvertently contribute to negative outcomes.



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Goals and objective

We believe that our efforts in recent years have made a substantial contribution to global knowledge and delivered beneficial impact to rural communities. Notable recent achievements include:

Research: Collaboration with overseas partners to design, implement and evaluate demand-led, multi-stakeholder research and capacity strengthening initiatives in Lower and Middle Income Countries. The benefits and challenges of this approach have been carefully documented and communicated to different audiences.

Provision of research and consultancy services to the European Commission and other development agencies which have generated new methodological tools and evidence for policy and programme design, management and monitoring & evaluation. The issues covered include nutrition, value chain analysis for development and climate-relevant transformation of food systems.

Education and capacity development: Development of joint postgraduate programmes with universities in Africa and Asia, and the provision of other types of educational support. This has strengthened institutional capacity and helped to equip large numbers of students to

respond more effectively to emerging challenges in their working lives.

Knowledge sharing and policy influence: Agrinatura has advocated for the effective use of scientific evidence in decision-making and emphasised the critical role of education and capacity strengthening in societal development. Recent examples include position papers on 'The future of global food systems in relation to the EC's Farm to Fork Strategy' and 'Research and Innovation in Food Systems', a contribution to the dialogues which preceded the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021.

Our new strategy builds on our previous work and is designed to ensure that the outcomes of our activities reach more people and lead to greater impact. Below we set out the goals and objectives of the strategy. The diagram below illustrates how three of the goals intersect with, and feed into, the fourth goal on advocacy. The four goals collectively underpin the values, mission and vision of Agrinatura.

Strategic goals

Goal 1 Network and partnerships

Science – agricultural development operators interface: to develop, strengthen and encourage impactful alliances, partnerships, and networks between European research and development organisations and with stakeholders worldwide

Goal 3 Education

Science-capacity development interface: To organise, facilitate, and implement capacity sharing initiatives in education on sustainable agriculture for development

Goal 2 Knowledge partner for policy makers

Science to science interface: to provide support and advice as a research, innovation, and capacity sharing knowledge partner for evidence-based policy making and programming at European level and worldwide

Goal 4 Advocacy

Science-policy interface: to play a proactive policy advocacy role for agricultural research and education particularly at the European level



Goal 1

Network and partnerships

To develop, strengthen and encourage impactful alliances, partnerships, and networks between European research institutions and stakeholders worldwide by providing a platform for exchange and dissemination of research related to sustainable agricultural development.

Agrinatura will achieve this goal by:

- Utilising the diversity of our membership and partners to build collaborations addressing critical global issues related to sustainable agriculture, poverty reduction, and a green transition towards inclusive food systems.
- Facilitating strategic linkages between members and with partners worldwide towards achieving our vision and mission.
- Increasing our voice and impact through effective communication and the facilitation of knowledge exchange.
- Maintaining a vibrant and interactive community both online and through face-to-face events.

At Agrinatura we value collaborative, multi-disciplinary working as the key to solving complex global problems and we have a proven track record of creating successful consortia of Agrinatura members and partners from around the world. We will continue these efforts in the coming years by expanding our membership and strengthening our current partnerships as well as creating new strategic alliances to reflect the agenda of the day.

Agrinatura acts as a comprehensive knowledge-exchange platform for its members, facilitating the exchange of research findings, best

practices, and innovative approaches in ARD. We will deepen our commitment to promoting evidence-based decision-making by fostering collaboration among our members, other research institutions, and key stakeholders.

Beyond strengthened member collaboration Agrinatura provides a multifaceted platform for interactions with a broad spectrum of agricultural development actors including national governments, institutions at the European level, and international organisations. Researchers are able to connect with individuals they might not otherwise encounter, fostering

relationships that may lead to different types of joint activity. This opportunity to connect with influential actors at various levels fosters dialogue and facilitates collaboration on issues which have important policy implications. The platform enables members to speak with one voice in presenting and debating scientific evidence which is used by decision makers in shaping policies.

Agrinatura, as an organisation, actively participates in various networks and has strategic partnerships with influential organisations like Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD), FAO, and the African Union which highlight its commitment to collaborative efforts on a global scale. The organisation actively participates in the High-Level Policy Dialogue between the European Union and the African Union, contributing valuable insights alongside esteemed partners like FAO, EC, and UN.

Expected outcomes and impact

We expect to have an engaged and enlarged membership that actively contributes to our goals and further strengthens our voice; and an increased number of researchers who have gained recognition through participation in conferences and the publication of research. We will continue to nurture our valued long-term collaboration with our current partners, including RUFORUM, FARA, SEARCA and the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA). As development challenges change over time, we will also build new relationships, for instance in the context of the implementation of the EU Global Gateway strategy. These new partnerships will be characterised by a shared vision, a willingness to share knowledge and clear accountability. This approach will ensure that our activities remain relevant and deliver the desired outcomes.



Goal 2

Knowledge partner for policy makers

To provide support and advice as a knowledge partner (research, innovation, capacity sharing) for evidence-based policy making and programming at European level and worldwide

Agrinatura will achieve this goal by:

Generating and sharing rigorous scientific evidence on multi-dimensional and complex issues to donors, and providing assistance on priorities for future programming. Providing knowledge services for the development, implementation and evaluation of ARD programmes in the framework of the United Nations Agenda 2030.

Providing an arena of discussion to debate and identify strategic topics, issues and partnerships in the framework of the research activities of members.

Supporting the AU-EU dialogue by the provision of knowledge co-created in partnership with AU stakeholders.

Facilitating a dynamic scientific collaborations between members in order to feed debates with policy makers and other actors and increased the impact of our work.

In recent years, Agrinatura has been able to deploy its knowledge and expertise to address some important issues and global challenges of interest to development agencies. We have undertaken major research initiatives in inclusive value chain development, nutrition, food systems transformation, aspects of climate change and agroecology, and capacity strengthening.

Agrinatura members also have much to offer on a broader range of issues such as biodiversity,

aquatic systems and forestry. In the future, as well as responding to relevant funding opportunities which come through calls for proposals and specific commissions, Agrinatura will be proactive in designing initiatives which play to its strengths. This will enable us to broaden the scope of our work and at the same time diversify our sources of funding. We will establish thematic working groups which will identify the areas to be addressed and liaise with our partners to develop new initiatives. This will enable us to draw on the substantial research

and innovation expertise that exists within our member organisations. At the same time it will provide opportunities to our members to interact with scientists with similar interests and expand the reach of their activities.

The challenges which we address through our research are often complex and multi-dimensional. Solutions are not straightforward and may be contested. We recognise that we have a responsibility to communicate scientific evidence from our work to inform discussions on public policy. We will therefore place increased emphasis on knowledge exchange and the dissemination of thought pieces on emerging issues. We will also organise more events at which these issues are debated.

We will work with partners in Europe and Africa to support the AU-EU dialogue through our participation in the CEA-FIRST and StEPPFoS projects. In the CEA-FIRST project we will contribute to the update of the AU-EU Research and Innovation Roadmap and help to facilitate connections between the International Research Consortium on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture and the AU-EU high-level political dialogue. These actions will strengthen

the coordination of research and innovation in agrifood systems and provide guidance and support to the actors engaged in multi-stakeholder implementation activities. In the StEPPFoS project, which we co-lead with FARA, we will work to promote policy coherence and alignment in the agri-food sector at national and regional levels across the African Continent. We will also seek further opportunities to support the AU-EU Innovation Agenda; for example, by participating in a proposal to create a long-term AU-EU Innovation Platform.

Expected outcomes and impact

We aspire to be considered the preferred European knowledge partner on ARD by policy makers and implementers. By generating knowledge and acting as a key driver of processes to integrate science-based knowledge into policy we expect to make a positive impact towards the transformation to inclusive and sustainable food systems and improving people's lives. We will measure this impact through an evaluation of our initiatives and act on the findings to continually improve our performance.



Goal 3

Education and capacity building

To organise, facilitate, and implement capacity sharing initiatives in education on sustainable agriculture for development.

Agrinatura will achieve this goal by:

Developing joint educational Master and PhD programmes, including a mobility programme, through global partnerships programmes in the framework of the United Nations Agenda 2030.

Offering a range of training opportunities for Agrinatura members, staff and students through targeted courses and integration of capacity building components in Agrinatura contracts.

Promoting Agrinatura members' offer of professional short courses to partner organisations.

We will develop educational programmes which create synergy with our research initiatives and we expect this to engage a wider set of our members than those engaged in research projects. We will endeavour to make these programmes as attractive as possible to students by exposing them to different research environments that exist within our institutions. We have experience of facilitating this through previous programmes, such as the Agris Mundus masters programme in Agricultural Development and Management of Natural Resources.

We will continue to collaborate with our international partners to develop teaching and training programmes on issues of common interest. We will work with RUFORUM to design an inter-disciplinary doctoral programme on Food Systems Transformation. Students will explore the multiple dimensions of food systems and examine the various transformation pathways which are most appropriate for different situations. Experiential learning will be a key component of the programme so that students are able to combine theoretical concepts with knowledge gained from practical activities. As far as possible, we will involve

students in activities within the research projects we undertake.

Much of the research we conduct generates new knowledge which can be used to enrich curricula in university programmes. One example of this is the methodologies which have been developed in the EU-funded Value Chain Analysis for Development (VCA4D) project and the lessons learned from their application. The methodology enables detailed analyses of value chains to be done, taking into account the social, economic and environmental dimensions for inclusive and sustainable development.

Expected outcomes and impact

We envisage that Agrinatura will be widely recognised for providing relevant and well attended educational opportunities for students, members and partner organisations. Students in our teaching programmes will graduate with high scores and complete their studies within the required timeframes. They will emerge from their studies with a diverse set of skills that enable them to make a meaningful contribution to society.



Goal 4

Advocacy

To play a pro-active policy advocacy role for agricultural research and education particularly at the European level.

Agrinatura will achieve this goal by:

Striving to orient the European agricultural research and education agenda towards multi-stakeholder partnerships and inclusive approaches to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Providing expert advice to the EC in developing its future strategy, including ensuring the needs of developing countries are reflected.

Supporting the EU science-policy dialogue in the development and implementation of an efficient and effective framework that ensures the global commitment towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Advocating globally for systems of higher education which are responsive to sustainable agriculture and food systems and equip young people with the skills needed to support their transformation.

We will establish a working group which will provide guidance on advocacy activities. This will have similar objectives to the previous Agrinatura working group on advocacy which produced position papers on topical issues and coordinated the participation of researchers in policy dialogues and events.

The new working group will include staff from member organisations who have experience in advocacy and work on policy issues. An action

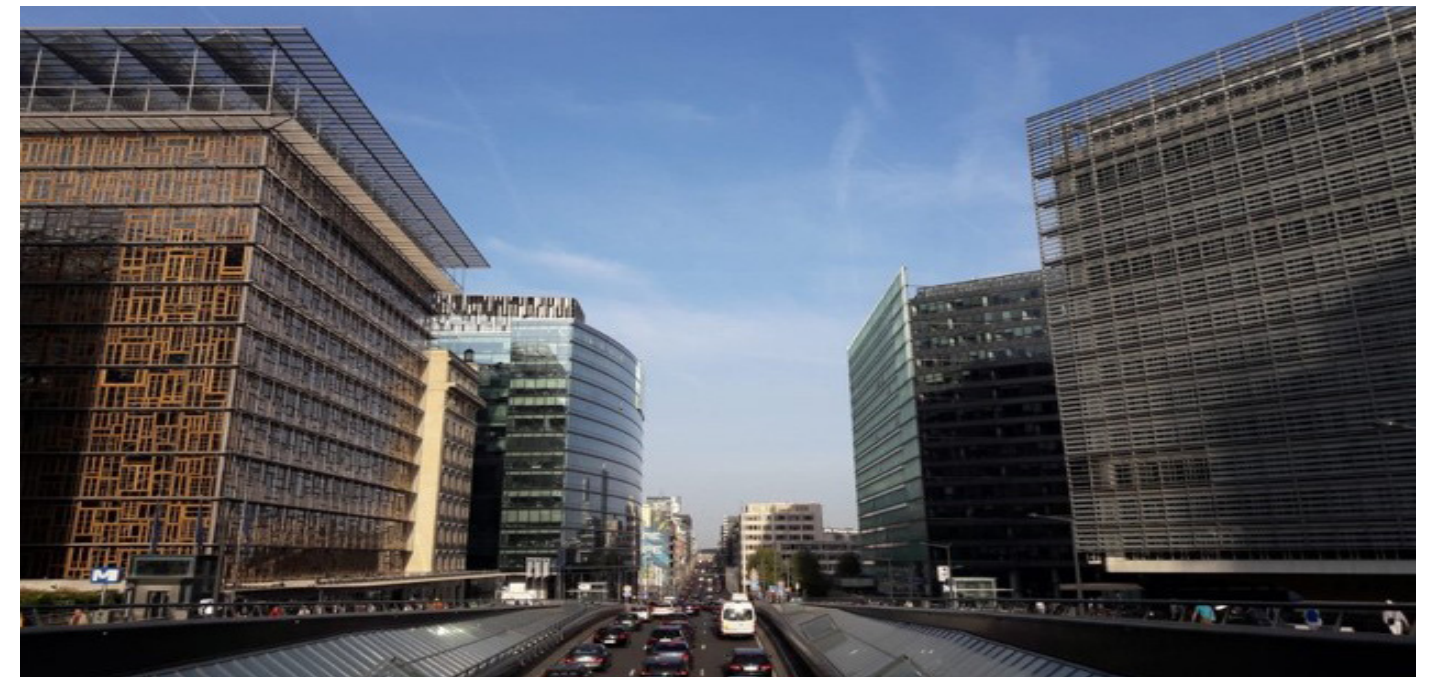
plan will be developed with a set of targets to achieve during the period of the strategy.

As well as conveying messages through policy briefs, blogs and other communication channels, we will organise events at which key issues will be debated. We aim to provide a neutral platform where scientific evidence will be examined and the implications for policy processes explored. We will draw on the substantial expertise that exists within our members and partner

organisations on themes of current interest and engage with decision makers who are seeking guidance on policy formulation. In particular, we will strengthen our interaction with the relevant Directorates-General in the European Commission and explore ways to engage with the European Parliament. We are committed to ensuring that European agricultural research and education agendas are supporting multi-stakeholder partnerships and inclusive approaches, and reflect the need of developing countries.

Expected outcomes and impact

By 2030 we envisage that Agrinatura is seen by members, partner organisations and the European Commission as a credible think tank which is making a positive contribution to policy formulation. We envisage that EC policies will be supportive of multi-stakeholder research and education systems which equip young people with the skills needed to contribute to sustainable agriculture and food systems transformation. Specific activities to support the delivery of the objectives and the successful achievement of the four goals will be elaborated in a workplan which complements this strategy document.



03

Strategic enablers

Enhancing governance mechanisms

To better enable us to deliver our goals we will make some changes to our organisational structure and the way we work. These changes will ensure that Agrinatura is fit for purpose to function effectively in a changing operational environment.

The Agrinatura Association is administered by a President and Vice-President who are elected for a four-year term by the General Assembly which meets annually. These two executive officers are ex officio members of a Board of Directors, also appointed by the General Assembly. A Secretary-General manages the daily functions of the Secretariat which is currently hosted by University College Cork. These include organising meetings, managing the association's operations, communications, administration, finances and human resources.

Agrinatura also has a European Economic Interest Group (EEIG) which is responsible for the development and oversight of contracts. The EEIG is managed by a Director with support from a Project Portfolio Officer and a part time Partnerships and Development advisor. A Management Advisory Committee provides guidance and contributes to strategy development.

The current organisational structure of Agrinatura has served the organisation well. However, there is scope to streamline it in order to increase the efficiency of our operations and enhance our visibility. An opportunity arises from a recent change in our legal status from an International Association, which imposed certain limitations, to an International NGO registered in Belgium.

We will retain our governance organs but we will centralise and strengthen our support services through a Secretariat located in Brussels. We will create new positions and hire Secretariat staff directly rather than through our members as is done at present. This will enhance our interactions with strategic partners, including the EC, and allow us to organise and participate in events more effectively. The strengthened Secretariat will serve as the central hub for nurturing our relationships with partners in Brussels.

The Secretariat will facilitate the establishment of the advocacy working group and thematic working groups which will identify and design new initiatives. These groups will consist of researchers with a common interest in specific topics. The potential to secure funded projects

will act as an incentive for researchers to participate in the groups. This will pave the way for a greater number of staff from member organisations to participate in Agrinatura activities. We envisage that the activities of the working groups will also involve knowledge exchange and the organisation of events such as workshops, webinars and conferences. The revised structure will facilitate our ambition to become a credible think tank which contributes to policy processes.

Mobilising resources

Agrinatura needs to secure financial resources to enable it to pursue its objectives. A proportion of the core costs of maintaining support functions are met through annual membership subscriptions. We will carry out a campaign to recruit new members and make a particular effort to increase our membership in countries which are currently not represented in the grouping.

External funding is required for the remaining costs and to finance staff inputs, travel and other expenses associated with research projects and other initiatives. In recent years we have been successful in attracting funding for large projects, largely through our strong relationship with the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships.

We recognise the need to diversify our sources of funding and we will be proactive in exploring relationships with development agencies. A dedicated member of staff in the Secretariat will be tasked with fulfilling this role. The new staff member will be able to draw on a recent analysis of prospective funding agencies which was done by an Agrinatura working group. One of the main findings from this analysis is that Foundations and private sector organisations now provide

a substantial proportion of the development funding in Agrinatura's areas of interest. We will explore the prospects for engaging with selected Foundations and private sector organisations, guided by our commitment to ensure that we uphold our values on ethics.

Communication

During the period of implementation of this Strategy we seek to portray Agrinatura as one brand and to increase the visibility of our work throughout the sector.

Agrinatura is committed to actively communicating with our members and we are always striving to maintain a strong level of engagement across the membership in order to strengthen our collective voice. Members regularly receive structured information on the latest calls, events, papers, and job advertisements in the field of agricultural research for development.

All members are invited to participate in the annual conference focusing on our activities and current issues in the field of ARD.

Throughout our activities Agrinatura produces a substantial amount of evidence-based research across the food systems interface, communicating this research in a clear and targeted way to stakeholders at all levels is an essential part of our work. This is achieved by utilising various tools such as policy briefs, publications, social networks, online and **face-to-face** events, with a special focus on activities in Brussels. We will move beyond events focused on our projects and look to organise more proactive events on a range of thematic events. This comprehensive approach will ensure Agrinatura's active participation in shaping policies and fostering collaborations.

Strengthening partnerships

In line with Agrinatura's values, the new initiatives will be developed in collaboration with strategic partners. Our approach to partnerships is shaped by our strong commitment to achieve beneficial impact from our work. We recognise that inter-disciplinary research addressing complex challenges requires collaboration between different types of organisations, each having an important role to play in delivering successful outcomes. Therefore, we will engage with development partners, other research and education institutions, extension services, private sector organisations, civil society groups, farmer organisations and others, depending on the nature of the work we are undertaking.

Our partnerships will reflect our geographical focus. Most of our current work is conducted with partners in Africa and this emphasis will continue. We will also explore opportunities for new partnerships in other regions such as South Asia where development needs remain high.

During the period of the strategy we will:

- Conduct a campaign to attract new members, with a special emphasis on countries in Europe which are not yet represented in the alliance.

- Prepare a partnership plan which builds on a recent analysis of prospective partners conducted by our members.
- Act as a reference education network and knowledge hub, providing support to the formulation and implementation of EU international partnerships such as Global Gateway initiatives.
- Deepen our existing engagement with organisations working to promote the interests of young people working in agriculture. In particular, we will aim to work more closely with the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development and the International Association of students in Agricultural and related Sciences.
- Explore ways to collaborate with the SCAR-ARCH Strategic Working Group in the European Union's Standing Committee on Agricultural Research with the aim of bringing the global aspect of food systems research more centrally into the research agenda.
- Monitor the progress of our activities with partner organisations and periodically review whether our partnerships are functioning effectively, taking corrective action when needed.



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