# Board Meeting

## Participants

### Board Members

- **Camilla Fusato**, *European Commission*
- **Leonard Mizzi**, *European Commission (Co-Chair)*
- **Ammad Bahalim**, *Gates Foundation*
- **Fabrizio Moscatelli**, *Gates Foundation*
- **Jan Brix**, *Germany*
- **Ron Hartman**, *IFAD*
- **Mark Montgomery**, *Ireland*
- **Elisa Pettinati**, *Italy*
- **Federica de Gaetano**, *Italy*
- **Alessandra Roversi**, *Switzerland*
- **Thijs Woudstra**, *The Netherlands (Co-Chair)*

### GDPRD Secretariat

- **Maurizio Navarra**
- **Michelle Tang**
- **Monique Amar**
- **Sierra Berardelli**
- **Jim Woodhill**, *Senior Advisor*

## Agenda

| ISSUE | ITEM | DETAILS |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Welcome and Introduction | Co-Chairs |
| 2. | Upcoming directions for 2026-2027 | Co-Chairs/Secretariat |
| 3. | 2026 Annual General Assembly | Secretariat |
| 4. | 2026 Work Plan and Budget | Secretariat |
| 5. | AOB and closing | Co-Chairs |

# Key Highlights/Issues

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

- Leonard Mizzi (European Commission) and Thijs Woudstra (The Netherlands) chaired the call for the first time.
- Members acknowledged and thanked former co-Chairs Bruce Campbell (Switzerland) and Federica de Gaetano (Italy) for their leadership over the past two years.
- Alessandra Roversi participated for the first time, replacing Bruce Campbell as Board member for Switzerland.

## 2. Upcoming directions for 2026-2027

**PURPOSE OF SECTION:**

*To present revised strategic approach and proposed priority areas for 2026-2027 [Annex I].*

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- A draft 5-year Strategic Plan (2026-2030) was developed and refined through multiple iterations and consultations last year. However, as the geopolitical and fiscal landscape continued to shift rapidly, with evolving ODA trends, institutional reforms, and changing donor priorities, it became increasingly clear that a static multi-year plan that would include thematic priorities risked becoming outdated even before implementation.
- Given the high degree of uncertainty regarding how the global development architecture will evolve in the coming years, the Secretariat and co-Chairs proposed moving from a traditional 5-year framework to a shorter, more adaptive Strategy and Approach Paper. The new approach will articulate the Platform's mandate, value proposition, and operating principles, provide strategic clarity without locking the Platform into rigid multi-year thematic commitments, and allow for annual identification of priority areas to ensure agility and responsiveness.
- **The four priority areas for 2026**, which were shaped through consultations at the 2025 Senior Managers Meeting and the pre-AGA Board meeting, include:
    - **Return on investment (ROI) in agrifood systems**: strengthening the value-for-money narrative for agrifood investments, with particular attention to long-term development returns. This includes the development of a strategic framing product and targeted analysis to support improved donor allocation decisions.
    - **Policy linkages and multilateral engagement**: positioning agrifood systems within broader agendas (trade, climate, migration, security); facilitating targeted donor coordination ahead of key global policy moments (G7, G20, UN processes).
    - **Innovative and blended finance**: exploring what has worked and what has not in blending; advancing standardization and cross-donor collaboration; promoting greater transparency to strengthen the value-for-money case.
    - **Data and AI**: exploring AI applications in agrifood systems; supporting alignment on data standards and responsible AI principles; and facilitating practical exchanges and shared learning among donors.
    **[GDPRD Secretariat]**
- Board members are invited to volunteer as "champions" for specific priority areas to strengthen ownership and coordination in the Board. This could include shaping the work, mobilizing expertise and networks, and reporting on progress at Board meetings. **[The Netherlands]**

## Discussion and Q&A:

- **Return on Investment (ROI) in agrifood systems**
  - The ROI framing should articulate long-term transformational returns and address appropriate time horizons in the analysis. Short-term metrics often create perverse incentives, as agrifood systems require long-term structural transformation and sustained investment. *[Germany, IFAD, Ireland, Switzerland]*
  - The emerging work from CGIAR on cost-benefit analysis and ROI for public goods in agricultural research and innovation may be complementarity to this work. *[Ireland]*
  - As ROI will serve as the anchoring theme for 2026, the work should culminate in a substantive, external-facing product (e.g., ROI framing paper) to be launched mid-year. The product could provide guidance on priority investment areas and value chains and be strategically used around key global moments (e.g., Africa Food Systems Forum, IMF/World Bank Autumn meeting). *[European Commission]*

- **Policy linkages and multilateral engagement:**
  - It is essential to keep the multilateral agenda high during these challenging times. While coordination ahead of key global fora is important, the closed-door donor discussions should only be organized where they provide clear added value to all Board members. One initiative the Platform might consider examining is the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty. *[Germany]*
  - Fragmentation is increasing at both the global level, with a proliferation of global multi donor funds and initiatives in the context of limited resources, and at the country level, where partner governments are facing multiple, unaligned donor interventions that strain limited capacity. Strengthened donor coordination is needed to address this as well aligning interventions with national priorities. *[IFAD]*
  - The Platform can play a role in convening concrete discussions on where and how donors align around strategic investments and priorities. *[European Commission]*

- **Innovative and blended finance**
  - The question is increasingly not whether to use blended finance, but when, where, and at what public cost it generates genuine additionality. *[Germany]*
  - Ongoing processes (e.g., Shamba Centre ongoing consultation with DFIs, GAIN/FAO's Agrifood Systems Transformation Accelerator Initiative) should be leveraged to avoid duplication. *[Germany]*
  - Examining innovative financing instruments beyond what exists may be valuable. *[IFAD]*
  - There are now several funds in operation (e.g., FASA, Nutritious Food Financing Facility (N3F), Aceli, SNOOP), it may be useful to map them more clearly to understand their differences, added value, and how we can coordinate better. *[Switzerland]*
  - Other sectors, such as health, may offer lessons for agrifood blended finance, particularly regarding the role of development finance institutions (e.g., Cassa Depositi e Prestiti). *[Italy]*

- **Data and AI**
  - The priority area should be framed as 'Data and AI' to recognize that data quality is foundational to meaningful AI applications. *[Switzerland]*
  - Switzerland, together with the EU's Joint Research Centre and Rockefeller Foundation, plans to support research assessing which nutrition, health, and food security databases are most vulnerable to ODA cuts. *[Switzerland]*
  - Switzerland requested that the CFS organize a 2026 event on AI, focusing on ethical implications and governance in food security and nutrition. *[Switzerland]*

— Care should be taken to avoid producing outputs without operational relevance **[Gates Foundation]**.

• Inclusiveness (smallholders, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples) and climate are core dimensions of ROI and should be integrated across all 4 priority areas. **[IFAD]**

**Action Points:**

• The Secretariat to share the Strategy and Approach draft with the Board for written feedback and approval.

# 3. 2026 Annual General Assembly

**PURPOSE OF SECTION:**

*Jim Woodhill presented initial ideas for the next AGA.*

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

• The proposed theme for this year's AGA is "Mutual Benefits: Unpacking the Strategic Return on Investment Potential from Agrifood Systems", with a clear focus on value-for-money and the strategic return on investments (ROI) in agrifood systems, building on the momentum of the White Paper and 2025 AGA. The AGA could be held in December, in order to incorporate discussions on the outputs from various key events in 2026, as well as preparatory webinars and lead-in dialogues. **[Jim Woodhill]**

• Ireland is potentially interested in hosting the AGA alongside its EU Presidency, pending logistical confirmation. **[Ireland]**

• As in previous years, an AGA Prep committee will be established, composed of the Secretariat, the Co-chairs, and any other Board member volunteers. **[GDPRD Secretariat]**

**Action Points:**

• The Secretariat to develop the AGA concept note and date proposals by end of February/beginning of March.

• Board members to volunteer for the AGA prep committee.

# 4. 2026 Work Plan and Budget

**PURPOSE OF SECTION:**

*For Board members to provide feedback and approval of the Work Plan [Annex II], and for the Secretariat to present the 2025 budget contributions and expenditures, and the 2026 budget, for approval [Annex III].*

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

• The 2026 Work Plan has been developed to align the Platform's three core functions (strategic influencing, networking and convening, and knowledge sharing) with the four proposed priority areas. Each outcome area includes concrete outputs, indicators, and activities, to make the Work Plan concrete and measurable. This includes:

— Developing a high-level framing paper on ROI for food systems;
— Organizing donor roundtables;
— Holding closed-door donor discussions ahead of global fora;
— Hosting webinars and dialogues on AI and digitalization at both political and technical levels.

• The document also contains an initial calendar of Platform activities with the tentative timing

of outputs, and a list of ARD, food systems & nutrition-related events in 2026 *(included in Annex II)*.

• The Platform faced budget constraints in 2025 due to inflation and nonpayment of some membership fees. There is €70,000 in reserves from past years (due to reduced expenses during COVID) which could help offset budget gaps, as well as earmarked resources for the SDG2 Roadmap Working Group available.

• The 2026 budget forecast includes regular staff, consultancies, administrative, events and travel costs. It is developed on the expectation that all current Board Members renew and release fees for 2026. Due to the limited budget, the Secretariat will internalize relevant parts of the 2026 Work Plan implementation while outsourcing select advisory services to independent experts, when needed and when finance is available. *[GDPRD Secretariat]*

• Previous Board meetings (in 2025) have recognized that the Board membership fee has remained unchanged since 2003. While inflation has eroded its value, all Board members agreed that increasing the fee at this moment would be difficult given current budget pressures. Priority instead should focus on expanding membership (Norway, Spain, others) and re-engaging inactive members (France, UK). The Board is strongly encouraged to reflect on this and to engage with potential new Board members. *[GDPRD Secretariat, European Commission, The Netherlands]*

### Action Points:

• Additional feedback or comments on the draft 2026 Work Plan and budget are welcome.

• All Board members are encouraged to engage with potential new Board members. The Co-Chairs and Secretariat are available to support these efforts.

## 5. AOB and Closing

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

• The SDG 2 Roadmap TWG is discussing restructuring and rebranding, as the current framing on SDG 2 is increasingly misaligned with the group's focus and current geopolitical context. The Gates Foundation is moving toward higher-risk, innovation-oriented approaches, given its comparative advantage as a philanthropic grant maker and planned closure in 20 years. In this context, the revamped TWG (to be renamed) could focus on scaling, innovation, and finance, with the multilateral system's scaling role complemented by donors' innovation-oriented grants. The group would keep its original collaborative and informal format, as a space where members convene to exchange intelligence and coordinate alongside global policy fora. *[Gates Foundation]*

  – Elements of this proposal (i.e., coordination around governance and scaling) are very similar to the GDPRD work in general, so can tasks be divided? *[The Netherlands]*

  – This similarly raises the question of division of labour; several members are in both the TWG and the GDPRD Board, as well as other TWGs. How can this labour overlap be avoided? *[European Commission]*

    • The Board conversations would be at a higher level and more vision-oriented, and the TWG faster paced and nimbler. *[Gates Foundation]*

    • Historically, the SDG 2 TWG has involved some different representatives from the Board members and produced complementary insights, particularly in global data initiatives (i.e., Ceres2030, 50x2030). *[GDPRD Secretariat]*

• The GDPRD received a request from Heineken on donor engagement in private sector barley value chains in Nigeria. Building on a successful model developed in Ethiopia with partners

such as the Agricultural Transformation Agency, Heineken aims to scale local barley sourcing to strengthen supply chains and improve farmer livelihoods. The company is seeking donor support in Nigeria to expand production, increase farmer incomes, and reduce reliance on imported barley. The Secretariat will circulate the proposal; members interested in exploring collaboration (potentially via NGOs or local partners) are invited to review it. *[The Netherlands]*

- This type of initiative aligns with ongoing GDPRD discussions on ROI, scaling, and blended approaches. It will be critical to understand the Nigerian context relative to Ethiopia, and the potential relevance of the ECOWAS regional market. The proposal could feed into GDPRD 2026 outreach. *[European Commission]*
- The proposal aligns with an ongoing G7 initiative on linking small-scale farmers to international markets through private-sector value chains. South Africa's work on sub-regional value chain integration and cross-border trade could also be relevant. IFAD can circulate the proposal to relevant country teams for further consideration. *[IFAD]*