Global Donor Platform for Rural Development

ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2026

Mutual Benefits:
Unpacking the Strategic Return on Investment Potential from Agrifood Systems

CONCEPT NOTE

2 December 2026 – Hybrid event in Dublin, Ireland

An Associated Presidency Event under Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026

1. Background

The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD, or "the Platform") is a network of more than 40 bilateral and multilateral donors, international financial institutions and foundations that share a common vision on the role of agriculture and rural development in reducing global poverty and combating hunger and malnutrition. The Platform is committed to achieving increased and more effective development for agriculture and rural development through evidence-based advocacy, knowledge sharing, and strategic influencing.

Every year, the Platform holds its Annual General Assembly (AGA), an event that provides members, partners and invited guests with an open space to debate emerging topics in agriculture and rural development. AGA participants benefit from the core services of the Donor Platform: knowledge sharing, strategic influencing, and networking on key development issues and strategic directions that affect lives in rural spaces.

Building on the 2025 AGA on *"Investing in the Future of Agrifood Systems: New directions for development finance"*, the 2026 AGA shifts the focus from the changing architecture of development finance to the strategic return (ROI) potential of agrifood systems. It will examine the returns generated by investments in agrifood systems, for whom they are realized, over what time horizon, and how donors can communicate that investment case more effectively to finance ministries, parliaments and the broader public.

2. Rationale for the 2026 AGA Theme

Agrifood systems are central to some of the most pressing development challenges and opportunities of the coming decade. Well-targeted investments can simultaneously contribute to poverty reduction, food security and nutrition, employment and economic opportunity, climate resilience and stability, while generating wider economic and strategic benefits for partner and donor countries alike. These benefits are particularly important for smallholder farmers, women and young people, who are central to inclusive and resilient agrifood systems.

At the same time, the geopolitical and fiscal environment for development cooperation has shifted profoundly. Official Development Assistance (ODA) is under sustained pressure, public scrutiny of external spending has intensified, and donor governments face competing domestic and international priorities. In this context, there is both a need and an opportunity to articulate more clearly the multidimensional returns generated by investment in agrifood systems, and to demonstrate why these investments remain strategically important in a changing landscape.

The GDPRD's White Paper *"Financing Agrifood Systems for People, Planet and Prosperity",* launched at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) in Seville in June 2025, made the case for a substantial increase in investments to transform agrifood systems, highlighting that the market opportunities unlocked by a transformed agrifood system could amount to US$4.5 trillion annually, against estimated costs of inaction of roughly US$12 trillion annually.

To take this agenda forward, the Platform Board established a dedicated Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of donors, IFIs and technical experts to analyse the multidimensional ROI potential of agrifood systems – spanning economic, fiscal, strategic and social returns, while explicitly considering the cost of inaction. This work will culminate in an ROI Framing Paper, to be launched at the 2026 AGA, designed to strengthen the value-for-money narrative for agrifood systems and inform partners' positioning around key global policy processes. The timing is critical given the process to select a new UN Secretary-General and the Rome Based agency dynamics for renewal of the leadership in 2027.

The 2026 AGA will build directly on this work, providing a platform to unpack what "mutual benefit" and strategic ROI mean in practice for donor and partner countries alike, moving the conversation beyond narrow technical ROI metrics towards a broader economic, fiscal, strategic and social case for investing in resilient agrifood systems. Hosted by Ireland during its EU Council Presidency, the AGA will also contribute to GDPRD reflections during key policy processes over the coming years as we approach the 2030 timeline. The AGA will also provide a timely opportunity to mark the International Year of the Woman Farmer, highlighting the economic and social returns from investing in women farmers and entrepreneurs and the role of women in driving productive, inclusive and resilient agrifood systems. It is crucial to follow on the momentum of the theme of the 2026 ECOSOC and the High-Level Political Forum on "transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions" including for agrifood systems under stress due to climate shocks, economic/trade turmoil and conflicts across the various geographical areas.

3. AGA topics and objectives

This year's AGA will be an informative and participatory event, bringing together a wider circle of actors – including finance ministries and IFIs, representatives from partner countries, the private sector and foundations, civil society, and youth and women-led organizations as we celebrate the International Year of Woman Farmer – reflecting the cross-cutting nature of today's agrifood systems challenges.

Specifically, the AGA will seek to:

1. Unpack the multidimensional case for **agrifood systems as high-return investments** – spanning economic and productivity returns, fiscal and macroeconomic impacts, strategic and geopolitical returns (peace and stability, migration, trade, security), and social and environmental returns (nutrition, gender, climate resilience).
2. Strengthen the evidence base on "mutual interests" – including trade, exports, capital mobilization, and geopolitical and security returns – **to help all key players make a more complete and compelling case** to Presidents/PM, finance ministries, national parliaments and the public.
3. Present and validate the emerging findings of the GDPRD ROI Framing Paper with partners.
4. Identify **priority investment areas, value chains and financing instruments** that offer high transformational returns, and the conditions under which limited domestic resources and subsidies generate genuine additionality.
5. Integrate insights from the Platform's thematic work on land governance and rural youth employment into the broader ROI agenda.
6. Develop **coherent messaging** ahead of key policy moments, including IDA/IFAD replenishment discussions, the G7 Food Systems Working Group, FfD follow-up processes, the Africa Food Systems Forum, and the financial cycles of the GDPRD members.

4. Organizational Arrangements

The AGA will be held on 2 December 2026 in Dublin, Ireland, hosted by the Government of Ireland, as an Associated Presidency Event under Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026. Members of the Platform, its Board, representatives from Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), and other key partners will be invited. Participants will include donors, governments, international organizations, financial institutions, agribusinesses, civil society and farmers' organizations, with attention to youth and women's voices.

The GDPRD Secretariat will organize the AGA under the leadership of the Platform Board, which will contribute to the event's design and organization. This includes mobilizing participants and speakers, reviewing background documents to facilitate dialogue, and identifying authoritative individuals as possible speakers and panellists.

The format will combine high-level plenary discussions, expert presentations and thematic dialogues to maximize engagement.

3. Provisional Agenda

Wednesday 2 December 2026	
Morning	**Welcome and Opening**
	Keynote Address
	Scene Setting
	High-Level Panel Discussion
	Women as Investors, Producers and Drivers of Agrifood Transformation A special session to mark the 2026 International Year of the Woman Farmer
Afternoon	**Thematic Session** Organized by the Thematic Working Groups on Rural Youth Employment and the Global Donor Working Group on Land *(combined or separate sessions – TBC)*
	Panel Discussion
	Forward Look: Positioning Agrifood ROI in 2027 and beyond
	Closing Session

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