



## **Module 1: Introduction to the New Extensionist**

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### **Summary**

#### **Module Overview**

Changes in context over the past decades have affected the way extension and advisory services (EAS) are organised and managed. These changes can be better understood by looking at the wider agricultural innovation system of which EAS is a key component. Extension services are shifting their focus and as an extension agent you are now required to strengthen your professional training with a range of knowledge and skills that support interaction with diverse actors, and to share information and knowledge. Advisory services that were dominated by public extension services are now growing more varied to include private actors such as agro-dealers, agribusiness services, financial services and NGOs (international and local) in addition to producer organisations and cooperatives. As an extension agent, you therefore need to understand this increasingly complex landscape, and build capacities to better serve rural producers, especially the smallholder farmers.

The Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) has elaborated the envisaged role of the “New Extensionist” and has identified the capacities required at the individual level. In this module you will be introduced to the changing context of the rural community and the implications of this on extension activities. This will be done in order to understand how the currently favoured agricultural innovation system came into being and to understand the individual roles of different types of extension advisory service providers and how they are linked. In the second half of the module, you will be introduced to the vision, mission and guiding principles of GFRAS that form the core of the organisation. In doing so you will be able to understand how the learning kit relates to you as a future extension professional and what is to come as you further your studies.

#### **Module Performance outcomes**

After completing this module, you will be able to:

1. Explain the reasons behind the need for EAS to develop better capacities, as elaborated in GFRAS’ call for the New Extensionist y
  - Be able to explain why and how your role as an extension agent has changed
2. Describe the capacities needed at different levels of EAS and particularly elaborate on the practical implication for field-level extension agents
  - Describe the additional knowledge and skills (or competencies) that will help improve your advisory services in the changed landscape

#### **Units**

##### **Unit I: Rationale for the New Extensionist**

- The trends observed in the rural sector with a focus on globalisation and the need for pluralism;
- The development of AIS to address the changing rural context;
- The types of EAS providers and their roles.

##### **Unit II: New Extensionist Capacities**

- The vision, mission and guiding principles of GFRAS that drive the New Extensionist movement;
- Different levels of strategic fields and capacity development and how they relate to one another; and
- The core competencies to be covered in this module and others of the learning kit.