

3rd GFRAS Annual Meeting

The Role of Rural Advisory Services in Agricultural Innovation Systems

26-28 September 2012, Manila, Philippines

Announcement

The 3rd GFRAS Annual Meeting

The 3rd Annual Meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services ([GFRAS](#)) will take place on 26-28 September at [The Heritage Hotel](#), Manila, the Philippines, hosted by the Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services ([APIRAS](#)) Network. The meeting will contribute to thematic exchange on rural advisory services (RAS) and give participants the opportunity to discuss GFRAS strategic directions and functioning. Exchange and learning will take place in plenary and parallel sessions, group discussions, and a field trip (tentative date: 27 September).

Objectives of the meeting

The objectives of the 3rd GFRAS Annual Meeting are:

1. Understand and agree on the role of RAS in agricultural innovation systems (AIS)
2. Strengthen RAS networks for results-oriented activities
3. Update participants on progress in GFRAS

Expected participants

All interested participants from around the world are welcome to the 3rd GFRAS Annual Meeting in 2012. Participants are expected from public and private sector, civil society, farmer organisations, and other fields.

Main agenda items

The role of rural advisory services in agricultural innovation systems

In reaction to a changing political, social, and economic environment, RAS increasingly play a knowledge, service provision, and brokering role in AIS, helping actors such as farmer organisations, market players, research, and education to improve their activities and linkages. The 3rd GFRAS Annual Meeting will focus on how RAS contribute to success in AIS. Participants will discuss the importance of RAS, their role in the AIS, how this role can be adjusted to changing realities, capacities needed by individuals, organisations, and extension systems to perform this role, and which incentives and enabling environment are required.

RAS fora: Strengthening networking for results

GFRAS and regional RAS networks are engaged in exchange of experiences, creation of partnerships with AIS actors, and awareness raising on the importance of RAS. The RAS fora¹

¹ In addition to large regional RAS fora in [Africa](#), the [Asia and Pacific Islands](#), and the [Latin America](#) region, sub-regional networks exist in the Caribbean, Central Asia, German-speaking [Europe](#), francophone Africa, the [Pacific Islands](#), and South and West Asia. African RAS stakeholders are creating country fora at the national level.

will discuss how their networking and collaboration can strengthen the role of RAS in AIS and rural development. Cross-regional sharing of experience and lessons learnt will support RAS fora in their future activities.

Progress reporting on GFRAS activities

As the central GFRAS event for discussing strategic directions and functioning, the meeting will be a space for progress reporting and planning. Recommendations to GFRAS and regional RAS fora from the [2nd GFRAS Annual Meeting](#) in 2011 in Kenya and the [Nairobi Declaration](#) will be followed up. The GFRAS working groups and secretariat will present activities and results generated in 2012. Key documents will be validated.

New approaches and issues of interest in RAS

Participants will have the opportunity to share and discuss their own experience with peers during a share fair. This session will not focus on a specific theme, but rather help to identify new areas of interest and interaction. It will contribute to sharing of information and the creation of links and partnerships between participants. Find more information in the [call and guidelines for inputs](#).

Call for inputs by participants

Apart from group work on the role of RAS in AIS, participants have three opportunities to actively contribute to the 3rd GFRAS Annual Meeting:

- Input to the plenary on experience and lessons learnt on RAS role in AIS
- Contribution to the share fair on new approaches, projects, programmes, institutional and organisational arrangements, and policies in RAS
- Side events on regional and sub-regional RAS fora, on-going initiatives and other activities related to RAS

Requirements, selection process, and selection criteria for all inputs are described in detail in the [call and guidelines for inputs](#).

Registration and funding

- Registration will open on 18 May 2012. Participants can register online at <http://www.g-fras.org/en/registration-form> or by downloading the registration form from the GFRAS website.
- Registration closes on 10 June for funded participants, 25 July for self-funded participants
- Registration of inputs opens on 18 May and closes on 25 July

A limited number of participants will be financially supported to attend the 3rd GFRAS Annual Meeting. The organising committee will select sponsored participants.

Logistics

[Logistical pre-travel information](#) can be found in a separate document.

More about GFRAS

Rural advisory services (RAS), also called extension, are fundamental to supporting rural people to deal with existing and new challenges, and to improve their livelihoods. The Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services ([GFRAS](#)) was initiated in 2010 to provide advocacy and leadership on pluralistic, demand-driven rural advisory services. Fulfilment of this mission will result in RAS and AIS that more appropriately, effectively, and sustainably contribute to the reduction of hunger and poverty worldwide.

As a forum, GFRAS consists of a range of members and affiliates from all regions and sectors (public, private, civil society). The forum includes not only networks representing RAS on regional, sub-regional, and national level, but also actors from farmer (or producer) organisations, development agencies, research, education, media, and other institutions. The GFRAS central instrument to foster exchange on RAS between stakeholders and across regions and to discuss GFRAS strategic directions and functioning is its Annual Meeting. The GFRAS Annual Meeting contributes to all three GFRAS functions, but mainly to functions 1 and 3:

1. Providing a voice within global policy dialogues and promoting improved investment in RAS;
2. Supporting the development and synthesis of evidence-based approaches and policies for improving the effectiveness of RAS;
3. Strengthening actors and fora in RAS through facilitating interaction and networking.

Literature

Find more information on the role of RAS in AIS at:

- <http://www.afaas-africa.org/papers-download>
- <http://www.g-fras.org/en/knowledge/gfras-publications>
- <http://www.relaser.org/index.php/documentos>

Terms

Rural advisory services (RAS) are about strengthening capacities, empowering rural people, and promoting innovations. RAS support people to obtain skills and information, and to address challenges so as to improve their livelihoods and well-being.

Traditionally, RAS disseminate information about technologies, markets, inputs, and financial matters, and assist farmers to develop their agricultural and management skills. But modern RAS also broker interactions between farmers and other rural people, the private sector, research, education, and government. RAS also coach different actors to improve market access, deal with changing patterns of risk, and protect the environment.

An **agricultural innovation system** is defined as a set of interrelated agents, their interactions, and the institutions that condition their behaviour with regard to innovations in agriculture. An innovation is any new knowledge introduced into a social or economic process¹. It does not have to be new to the world but only to the user. Innovation comes from both within and outside of the community where these processes are applied.

¹ For more information see Spielman, D. 2005. Innovation system perspectives on developing-country agriculture: A critical Review. Washington, DC: IFPRI.