



First intercontinental meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services

The 16th Annual Meeting of the Neuchâtel Initiative.

November 3rd – 5th, 2010 in Chile

Executive Summary

First Intercontinental Meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services and the 16 Annual Meeting of the Neuchatel Initiative Viña del Mar, Chile, 3-5 November 2010

Context and objectives of the meeting

From November 2-5 2010 the First Intercontinental Meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) was held in Viña del Mar, Chile, hosted by the Latin-American Centre for Rural Development (RIMISP). The meeting's objectives were:

1. Networking and learning among rural advisory stakeholders fostered.
2. GFRAS long-term strategy framed and validated.
3. Toolkit for evaluating extension systems and programs validated.

For the first time since the creation of GFRAS in January 2010, affiliates from all regions met face-to-face and discussed the future of their forum. The meeting was a main step in validating GFRAS' activities and planning its future. For participants, learning and networking were of high importance; also, getting actively involved and reflecting on GFRAS and its activities such as the evaluation initiative were objective of several participants.

We thank all GFRAS' donors as well as EIARD and CTA who have financially supported 3 and 5 participants respectively to attend the meeting.

Main conclusions, recommendations and first outcomes of the meeting

The vast majority of participants were very satisfied or satisfied with the achievement of the three objectives and the program of the first intercontinental GFRAS meeting. During the meeting and through feedback reports, conclusions were made and recommendations given for each objective:

1. Networking and learning among rural advisory stakeholders

All regional groups consider networking as important to increase the quality of rural advisory services. Networks permit regional, sub-regional, and national extension fora to:

- Exchange knowledge, experiences, good practices, technology, and developments
- Enhance the promotion and advocacy of rural advisory services
- Bring regional needs and concerns into GFRAS
- Target resources and use synergies

During the meeting, working groups recommended that:

- Regional and national networks should be created or revitalised to influence policies
- Regional networks would develop a common agenda that brings together common needs and issues
- Regional networks would be represented in the GFRAS structure and that the start-up phase of their networks would be supported

At the time of the meeting, most regional RAS actors were not organised in networks; the meeting thus concentrated on exchange within regional working groups, allowing inter-regional exchange by discussion and presentation of group results. Regional groups also met in their spare time; but some participants wished for a more intense inter-regional exchange and a longer meeting. As a result of the meeting, several regional and sub-regional networks were newly created such as the Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services (APIRAS) network, the Latin-American and Caribbean forum, and an informal network in francophone Africa that will be linked to the existing African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS). An extension network in Central Asia and the Caucuses Region has also been initiated with GFRAS support. The Asia-Pacific and the Latin American and Caribbean regions joined Africa in being represented on the GFRAS steering committee.

2. GFRAS long-term strategy

Led by its secretariat, GFRAS is elaborating the strategy for its first phase (2011-2016). In general, participants agreed on the proposed GFRAS partners, outcomes, functions, and entry points. They recommended GFRAS to invest in the development and strengthening of institutional and professional capacities and to support regional networks through financial assistance and backstopping. The final version of the GFRAS strategy will be available in April 2011.

The presentation on the GFRAS strategy helped several participants to better understand GFRAS – a pre-condition to actively participate at the regional level and as an affiliate of the global forum.

3. Toolkit (guidance kit) for evaluating extension systems and programs

A guidance kit for evaluating rural advisory services is being elaborated and will be tested in 2011. Participants from all regions appreciated the elaboration of the guidance kit and are interested in testing it. Participants recommended that:

- The guidance kit should focus on specific aspects of evaluating extension (not just development projects) and be very practical
- GFRAS needs to set out a clear structure and guides on how to finance the testing, share of learning, and adapt / improve the guidance kit

4. Other conclusions, recommendations and first outcomes

Enhance the promotion and advocacy of rural advisory services: According to feedback reports, several participants are motivated by the GFRAS meeting to engage and

advocate for rural advisory services. They stated their determination to share experiences and new learning with stakeholders at the national level, thereby acting as important multipliers of GFRAS on all geographic levels.

Bring regional needs and concerns into GFRAS: For several participants, the intercontinental meeting was the first concrete link to GFRAS. Especially the few farmer representatives were happy to bring their voice into GFRAS.

Outlook

During the first intercontinental meeting of GFRAS, affiliates showed their motivation and engagement. By feeding learning and links back to their colleagues and partners, they are key multipliers with huge potential for GFRAS' future activities. Due to their better understanding on what GFRAS is and their improved organisation, regional networks and other stakeholder groups will be better able to articulate their needs and interest in GFRAS and develop GFRAS into a fully-functioning forum.

The creation of regional networks lets GFRAS also expect an intensified exchange within regions and sub-regions on rural advisory services. As opposed to the 2010 meeting in Chile, the GFRAS meeting in 2011 can thus concentrate on region-to-region exchange and thematic rather than process issues.

Annexes

Annex 1: Overall Agenda

Tuesday 02.11.2010	◆ Field Visit
Wednesday 03.11.2010	◆ Opening, program, welcome ◆ GFRAS long-term strategy ◆ Sharing of experiences from participants
Thursday 04.11.2010	◆ Networking ◆ Sharing of experiences from participants ◆ Information market
Friday 05.11.2010	◆ Evaluation toolkit ◆ Structure of GFRAS ◆ Agenda 2011 ◆ Closing of event

Annex 2: Presentations, list of participants and minutes

To see all presentations and pictures of the event, please follow this link:
http://www.rimisp.org/proyectos/index_proy.php?id_proyecto=261

Minutes, the list of participants and an evaluation of the meeting can be found at <http://www.g-fras.org/gfras-events>