

GFRAS 2026



GFRAS STRATEGY 2026–2035

Repositioning Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services for Systemic Impact



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) stand at a pivotal moment in the transformation of global agrifood systems. Climate change, digitalisation, market integration, demographic shifts, and geopolitical instability are reshaping the expectations placed on advisory systems. Extension is no longer viewed solely as a public service for technology transfer, but increasingly as critical system infrastructure connecting innovation, markets, policy, and farmers' lived realities.

At the same time, agrifood innovation systems face a persistent structural challenge. Despite growing investment in agricultural research, climate-smart technologies, and digital solutions, many innovations fail to reach sustained adoption and scale. ~~The global~~ evidence shows that effective advisory services are the bridge between invention and impact, enabling innovation to translate into real-world change. Yet, the enabling capacity of advisory services remains under documented and under utilised.

Advisory systems today operate within increasingly pluralistic ecosystems, involving public institutions, private firms, farmer organisations, civil society actors, and digital platforms. This diversity expands opportunities. The private sector is more innovative and to a large degree drives digitalisation initiatives, while farmers organisations and civil society actors respond directly to farmers needs. Pluralism creates the need for better coordination, quality assurance, and accountability. With strong systems stewardship at national level, there is increased credibility, coherence, and collective account of the effectiveness of advisory services across the ecosystem.

Within this evolving landscape, the **Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS)** plays a unique role as a global network of networks for extension and advisory systems. GFRAS is neither an implementing agency nor a technology provider. Its value lies in strengthening the systems that enable advisory services to perform effectively. Through its country fora, regional networks, and global secretariat, the GFRAS community convenes diverse actors, strengthens professional standards, supports evidence-based dialogue, and facilitates learning across regions.

This strategy reflects a deliberate shift in focus toward system stewardship and strategic leverage. It recognises the rising expectations placed on the pluralistic extension and advisory systems. The strategy emphasises prioritisation, role clarity, and strengthening the resilience of the GFRAS community. How it will be implemented is outlined separately in an operational plan.

VISION

Rural advisory services are recognised, resourced, and valued as essential infrastructure for inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems.

MISSION

The GFRAS community advances inclusive and resilient agrifood systems by strengthening agricultural extension and advisory services as professional, coordinated, and evidence-driven system infrastructure—connecting innovation, markets, policy, and practice through global stewardship and networked action.

STRATEGIC FIELDS OF ACTION

Capacity Development and Professionalisation

Strengthening advisory competencies and career pathways.

Advocacy and Strategic Dialogue

Strengthening policy environments and investment in AEAS.

Thought Leadership

Shaping global narratives and foresight on the role of advisory systems.

Network Strengthening and Strategic Partnerships

Reinforcing coordination and collective action across the GFRAS network.

Scaling Innovations for Impact

Positioning advisory services as the delivery infrastructure for innovation adaptation.

Knowledge and Information Management

Elevating practitioner knowledge into credible evidence and enabling inclusive knowledge flows.

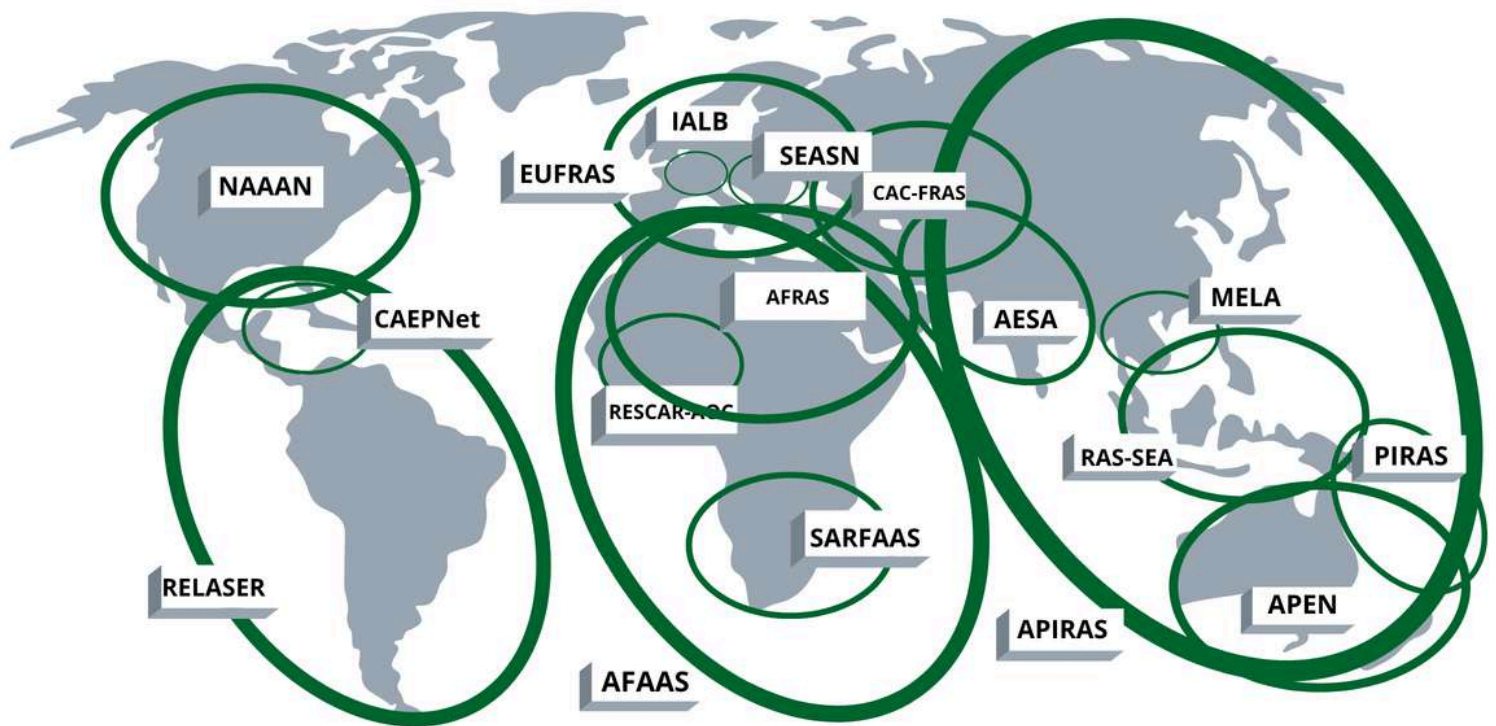


Fig 1. GFRAS Regional and Sub-Regional Networks

Abbreviations: Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESA); African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS); Arab Forum for Rural Advisory Services (AFRAS); Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN); Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (APIRAS); Central Asia and the Caucasus Forum for Rural Advisory Services (CAC-FRAS); Caribbean Agricultural Extension Advisors Network (CAEPNet); European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services (EUFRAS); *Internationale Akademie für ländliche Beratung* (IALB); Mekong Extension Learning Alliance (MELA); North American Agricultural Advisory Network (NAAAN); Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (PIRAS); Rural Advisory Services for Southeast Asia (RAS-SEA), *Red Latinoamericana de Servicios de Extensión Rural* (RELASER); *Réseau des services de conseil agricole et rural d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre* (RESCAR-AOC); Southern Africa Regional Forum on Agricultural Advisory Services (SARFAAS).

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) are operating in a period of profound transition. Across regions, agrifood systems are undergoing rapid structural change driven by climate volatility, technological disruption, demographic shifts, evolving markets, and geopolitical uncertainty. These forces are transforming how agricultural knowledge is generated, shared, and applied, and they are redefining the role of advisory systems within rural economies.

Historically, extension services were often designed within relatively stable production systems, where technological change was incremental and advisory mandates were clearly anchored in public institutions. In many contexts, extension functioned primarily as a public service focused on transferring technical knowledge to farmers and supporting productivity improvements.

Today, the environment in which advisory systems operate is far more dynamic and pluralistic in nature. Farmers and producers are increasingly embedded in complex value chains and exposed to fluctuating market conditions, climate risks, evolving regulatory standards, and rapidly advancing technologies. Advisory services are therefore expected to support a much broader set of functions: helping farmers manage risk, engage with markets, comply with standards, adopt digital tools, and navigate transitions toward more sustainable production systems.

This transformation is not occurring along a single dimension. Instead, it reflects the interaction of multiple global trends that together are reshaping both the demand for advisory services and the way they are delivered.

INTERCONNECTED DRIVERS OF CHANGE

One of the most visible drivers is **climate change and environmental stress**. Increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, water scarcity, soil degradation, and ecosystem pressures are altering production conditions across regions. Advisory services are therefore shifting from providing fixed technical recommendations toward supporting decision-making under uncertainty. Advisors increasingly act as facilitators of adaptation, helping producers interpret risk, experiment with new practices, and build resilience within changing agroecological systems.

At the same time, **digital transformation** is redefining how agricultural knowledge circulates. Digital platforms, remote sensing, data analytics, and artificial intelligence are expanding the reach and responsiveness of advisory services. These technologies offer significant potential to improve information flows and decision-making. However, they also raise new challenges around digital literacy, governance of data, and the risk of excluding producers who lack access to digital infrastructure.

Agrifood systems are also becoming more closely linked to **markets and value chains**. Farmers increasingly operate within commercial networks that require compliance with quality standards, traceability systems, and financial requirements. As a result, advisory services must bridge not only agronomic knowledge but also market intelligence, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial skills. This evolution expands the scope of advisory roles and requires new competencies among extension professionals.

These changes intersect with **broader demographic and social transitions**. Migration, urbanisation, and generational shifts are reshaping rural labour systems and altering the structure of agricultural communities. In many regions, rural youth are leaving agriculture, while in others new opportunities are emerging for younger generations to engage with agriculture through technology and entrepreneurship. Advisory systems increasingly support rural households not only in agricultural production but also in navigating livelihood transitions linked to migration and labour mobility.

Another emerging dimension is the increasing recognition of the **water–energy–food nexus**. In many regions, particularly those facing water scarcity, agricultural production is closely intertwined with water management and energy use. Advisory systems therefore play a growing role in helping farmers manage these interdependencies and adapt to resource constraints.

Together, these interconnected drivers are expanding both the expectations placed on advisory systems and the competencies required of advisory professionals. Extensionists are no longer only technical advisors; they are facilitators of learning, connectors between innovation and practice, and increasingly stewards of climate risk and rural resilience.

BRIDGING THE INNOVATION GAP

At the same time that agrifood systems are becoming more innovation-intensive, a persistent structural challenge remains: many agricultural innovations fail to translate into sustained adoption and large-scale impact.

Despite increasing global investment in agricultural research, digital technologies, and climate-smart solutions, promising innovations often remain confined to research institutions or pilot projects. This phenomenon is commonly described as the innovation “valley of death”, referring to the gap between the development of new solutions and their widespread adoption in real-world production systems.

The causes of this gap are rarely technical. Innovations frequently fail to scale because of weak public institutions and policy enforcement, insufficient trust between stakeholders, limited alignment with local realities, or lack of integration with markets and financial systems. Advisory services should not be positioned as actors that come “after the fact” to transfer technologies. Instead, they should be understood as integral components of the innovation system, actively involved in the co-creation, translating innovation into context specific practice, testing and adaptation alongside farmers and researchers and generate measurable economic, environmental, and social outcomes.

PLURALISM AND FRAGMENTATION IN ADVISORY ECOSYSTEMS

The environment in which advisory services operate has also become increasingly pluralistic. Today, advisory functions are performed by a diverse range of actors including public extension agencies, private advisory firms, farmer organisations, non-governmental organisations, agribusiness companies, and digital platforms.

This pluralism creates opportunities for innovation, flexibility, expanded reach and collective impact. However, it also requires better coordination, quality assurance, and accountability. Without mechanisms for collaboration and shared standards, fragmented advisory ecosystems can produce conflicting advice, duplication of efforts, and declining trust among producers and stakeholders.

Strengthening advisory systems therefore requires attention not only to individual programmes or technologies but also to the coherence and governance of the advisory ecosystem as a whole. The public sector plays an important role, adjusting policies to facilitate pluralism and in collaboration with the sector develop standards and control mechanism.

THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF GFRAS

Within this complex and evolving environment, the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) occupies a unique position. GFRAS functions as a global network of networks connecting advisory actors across countries, regions, and institutions.

Through its regional networks and their country fora, the GFRAS community brings together practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and development partners working across agricultural advisory systems. This structure enables the organisation to facilitate dialogue, support peer learning, and strengthen professional standards across diverse contexts.

It is a neutral platform capable of convening diverse actors and facilitating dialogue across institutional and ideological boundaries. This neutrality enables collaboration in areas where competing interests or fragmented mandates might otherwise prevent constructive engagement.

At a time when agrifood systems face accelerating change and increasing complexity, the need for such integrative platforms is growing. Strengthening advisory systems requires coordinated learning, shared standards, and the ability to translate practitioner knowledge into evidence that informs policy and investment decisions.

The strategy presented in this document responds to this evolving context by positioning GFRAS as a steward of system coherence within the global advisory ecosystem—supporting professionalisation, strengthening networks, and enabling advisory systems to contribute effectively to inclusive and sustainable agrifood transformation.



GFRAS VALUE PROPOSITION AND COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

Over the past decade, agricultural extension and advisory services have regained visibility within global agrifood discussions. Governments, farmers, research institutions, development partners, and private actors increasingly recognise that strengthening advisory systems is essential for translating innovation, climate investments, and agricultural research into tangible outcomes for farmers and rural communities.

Yet the global advisory landscape remains highly fragmented. Advisory functions are distributed across public extension systems, private-sector providers, farmer organisations, non-governmental organisations, research institutions, and digital platforms. While this diversity expands the reach and dynamism of advisory systems, it also creates risks of duplication, inconsistent quality standards, and fragmented learning across regions.

Addressing these challenges requires more than individual projects or institutional initiatives. It requires platforms that can support **coordination, learning, and professionalisation across the advisory ecosystem**. GFRAS was created to serve precisely this role.

A GLOBAL INTEGRATOR FOR ADVISORY SYSTEMS

GFRAS functions as a **global network of networks** connecting advisory actors across countries, regions, and institutional contexts. Through its regional networks and national country fora, the GFRAS community brings together public extension agencies, private advisory providers, farmer organisations, civil society actors, research institutions, and development partners working within agricultural knowledge and innovation systems.

GFRAS focuses on strengthening the systems that enable advisory services to perform effectively. Its work centres on facilitating dialogue, strengthening professional competencies, supporting knowledge exchange, and promoting evidence-based approaches to advisory system development.

In a landscape characterised by increasing complexity and institutional diversity, this system-level role has become increasingly important. By enabling collaboration across actors and regions, GFRAS contributes to stronger and more coherent advisory ecosystems capable of supporting innovation, climate resilience, and inclusive rural development.

CORE ELEMENTS OF GFRAS' COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

Neutrality and Credibility

GFRAS operates without commercial or institutional mandates that would privilege specific technologies, service providers, or development approaches. This neutrality enables the organisation to convene actors who might otherwise struggle to collaborate, facilitating dialogue across governments, research institutions, development partners, and private-sector stakeholders, providing a trusted space for dialogue.

Convening Power and Global Reach

Through its network-of-networks structure, GFRAS connects advisory actors operating at multiple levels of the agricultural knowledge and innovation system. Regional networks and country fora (also called National AKIS Platforms) provide locally grounded platforms for collaboration, while the global secretariat links these networks to international policy processes and knowledge exchanges. This architecture allows the organisation to facilitate cross-regional learning and collective reflection on shared challenges facing advisory systems.

Practitioner-Led Legitimacy

Regional networks and country fora bring together local organisations and individuals actively engaged in advisory service delivery and system development. This practitioner foundation ensures that global dialogue remains anchored in farm-based real-world experience. It enables GFRAS to elevate practitioner knowledge—often under-represented in international discussions—into broader policy and development debates.

Leadership in Professionalisation

Professionalisation of extension and advisory services has been a central theme of GFRAS work since its inception. Through initiatives such as the New Extensionist Learning Kit and related capacity-development efforts, the organisation has contributed to strengthening competencies, career pathways, and professional identity within advisory systems. GFRAS keeps working to explore pathways toward international certification for advisory professionals.

Bridging Global Agendas and Local Realities

Agri-food transformation agendas increasingly emphasise climate resilience, digital innovation, nutrition, and inclusive economic development. Translating these global priorities into practical action at the level of farmers and rural enterprises remains a major challenge. Through its network structure and practitioner engagement, GFRAS contributes to bridging this gap. The organisation facilitates dialogue between global policy processes and local advisory practice, helping ensure that international initiatives remain informed by field realities and that local actors can engage with emerging global agendas.

ENDURING CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE GFRAS COMMUNITY

Over the past decade, the GFRAS community has contributed to strengthening the global advisory landscape in several ways.

The organisation has played a role in maintaining the visibility of extension within national and international development debates, including discussions on agrifood system transformation and agricultural innovation. It has also contributed to strengthening connections among regional advisory networks, enabling peer exchange and collaborative learning across diverse contexts, thus breaking the isolation most advisors and advisory systems found themselves in.


In addition, GFRAS has provided platforms for dialogue among stakeholders that rarely engage directly with one another, including government agencies, development organisations, private-sector actors, and farmer organisations. Community feedback highlighted the importance of preserving this role as a neutral convening space for the advisory ecosystem.

Many of these contributions operate at the level of system development rather than project delivery. Their impact is reflected in strengthened networks, shared knowledge frameworks, and the growing recognition of advisory services as a central component of agricultural innovation systems.

As agrifood systems continue to evolve, the role of platforms that can support coordination, professionalisation, and system-level learning becomes increasingly important. The strategy outlined in this document builds on this foundation by reinforcing the role of GFRAS as a global steward of agricultural advisory systems.



STRATEGIC CHALLENGES, RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services operate within an environment characterised by growing expectations and increasing complexity. Governments, development partners, and private-sector actors are placing greater emphasis on the role of advisory systems in enabling agrifood transformation, climate adaptation, and inclusive economic development. At the same time, advisory systems must respond to rapidly evolving technological, environmental, and institutional conditions.

This environment presents both significant opportunities and structural challenges for the development of effective advisory ecosystems.

STRUCTURAL PRESSURES ON ADVISORY SYSTEMS

Across many countries, advisory systems face persistent structural constraints. Public extension services often operate with limited and diminishing resources. As a consequence, mandates for advisory functions are increasingly distributed across a wide range of actors. This pluralistic landscape can stimulate innovation and expand the reach of advisory services. However, it can also lead to fragmentation, duplication of efforts, and uneven quality of advisory provision. Without mechanisms for coordination and shared professional standards, advisory ecosystems may struggle to deliver consistent and reliable support to producers.

Another challenge concerns the evidence base for advisory services. While practitioners generate extensive experiential knowledge, this knowledge is often insufficiently documented and synthesised. As a result, policymakers and investors may lack clear evidence of the returns generated by advisory systems, even where their contributions to innovation adoption, resilience, and productivity are significant. This challenge is particularly relevant as governments and development partners increasingly demand measurable results and accountability for public and private investments in agrifood systems.

Advisory systems must also adapt to evolving expectations around professional competencies. As the role of extension expands beyond technical advice to include facilitation, market engagement, digital tools, and climate-risk management, advisory professionals require new skills and learning pathways. Strengthening the professional identity and competencies of extension actors is therefore a critical component of system development.

FINANCING AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Another important challenge relates to the financing of advisory systems. In many contexts, advisory functions depend heavily on short-term project funding or fragmented institutional mandates. This can limit continuity, weaken institutional learning, and reduce the ability of advisory systems to sustain long-term capacity development.

At the same time, significant new financing streams are emerging within global agrifood agendas, particularly in areas such as climate adaptation and sustainable food systems. Advisory systems need to be adequately integrated into these financing mechanisms.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVISORY SYSTEMS

Despite these challenges, the global environment for strengthening advisory systems is increasingly favourable. Recognition is growing that agrifood transformation depends not only on innovation and investment, but also on effective mechanisms for translating knowledge into practice.

Advisory services play a central role in this process. By connecting research institutions, producers, markets, and policymakers, advisory systems enable innovations to be adapted, adopted, and scaled across diverse agricultural contexts through co-creation of knowledge. They also support learning processes that help producers manage risk, respond to changing conditions, and improve the sustainability of agricultural production.

As agrifood systems become more complex and innovation-intensive, the demand for coordination, professionalisation, and system-level learning within advisory ecosystems is likely to increase.

Within this context, organisations capable of facilitating collaboration, strengthening professional standards, and supporting knowledge exchange across regions play a critical role. This is precisely GFRAS. There is no other organisation focusing solely on the agricultural advisory system.

The strategy presented in this document responds to this opportunity by focusing on the functions that the GFRAS community is uniquely positioned to perform: strengthening advisory networks, supporting professionalisation, facilitating knowledge exchange, and enabling dialogue across actors working within agricultural advisory systems.

STRATEGIC FIELDS (SF)

SF 1: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND PROFESSIONALISATION

Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) play a central role in supporting farmers and rural communities as they navigate increasingly complex agrifood systems. However, the expectations placed on advisory professionals are evolving rapidly. In addition to providing technical guidance on agricultural practices, advisors are increasingly expected to facilitate innovation processes, support climate adaptation, connect farmers with markets, interpret digital tools, and foster collaborative learning within rural communities.

Strengthening the professional competencies and institutional recognition of extension actors is therefore fundamental to the effectiveness of advisory systems. Well-trained and respected advisory professionals are essential for translating knowledge into practice, enabling innovation adoption, and supporting inclusive agrifood transformation.

For this reason, capacity development and professionalisation remain at the core of the GFRAS mandate and represent the highest strategic priority identified through community consultation during the development of this strategy.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The transformation of agrifood systems is expanding the range of competencies required from advisory professionals. Advisors increasingly operate at the intersection of multiple domains including climate resilience, market development, digital agriculture, and sustainable resource management.

This shift requires moving beyond traditional models of extension training toward more dynamic and continuous learning systems. Advisory professionals must develop competencies not only in technical agriculture but also in facilitation, systems thinking, entrepreneurship, and risk management.

At the same time, advisory services in many regions still struggle with limited career pathways, insufficient recognition, and uneven access to training opportunities. Strengthening the professional identity of extension actors is therefore critical for attracting and retaining talent within advisory systems.

GFRAS will strengthen capacity development and professionalisation through the following areas of action:

Strengthening Competency Frameworks

GFRAS will continue to support the development and refinement of competency frameworks that reflect the evolving role of advisory professionals. These frameworks will integrate competencies related to facilitation, innovation systems, climate resilience, and digital agriculture.

Expanding Learning Opportunities

Building on existing initiatives such as the New Extensionist Learning Kit, GFRAS will promote accessible learning resources and training opportunities for extension actors. These resources will support both formal and informal learning pathways across diverse regional contexts.

Promoting Leadership within Advisory Systems

GFRAS will support the development of leadership capabilities among advisory professionals and institutions. Strong leadership is essential for enabling advisory organisations to adapt to emerging challenges and drive innovation within agrifood systems.

Advancing Dialogue on Professional Recognition

The strategy will support dialogue within the global advisory community on pathways toward greater professional recognition of extension actors. This includes exploring the potential for regional and globally recognised competency standards and certification mechanisms.

Supporting the Evolution of Advisory Roles

GFRAS will encourage the evolution of advisory services toward more facilitative and systems-oriented roles, supporting advisors as connectors within agricultural knowledge and innovation systems.

Strengthening the capabilities and recognition of advisory professionals contributes directly to more effective agricultural innovation systems. Skilled advisors enhance the ability of farmers to innovate and adopt new technologies, respond to climate risks, and engage with evolving markets. Professionalised advisory systems also improve the credibility and trustworthiness of advisory services among producers, policymakers, and development partners. This credibility is essential for ensuring that advisory systems remain central actors in agrifood transformation efforts.

SF 2: ADVOCACY AND STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) play a critical role in enabling agrifood transformation by connecting innovation, policy, and practice. Advisory systems translate research into practical solutions, support farmers in adapting to changing environmental conditions, and facilitate learning processes that enable innovation to scale.

Despite this central role, advisory services often remain under-recognised in policy and investment frameworks related to agriculture, climate change, and rural development. In many contexts, extension systems operate with limited political visibility and insufficient long-term investment.

Strengthening the strategic positioning of advisory services within national and global policy agendas is therefore essential. Through advocacy and strategic dialogue, GFRAS contributes to ensuring that advisory systems are recognised, supported, and integrated into broader agrifood transformation strategies.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Global discussions on food systems, climate resilience, and sustainable agriculture are intensifying. Governments, international organisations, and development partners are increasingly investing in innovation, digital technologies, climate-smart agriculture, and sustainable food systems.

However, the mechanisms required to translate these investments into real-world impact are often overlooked. Research and technological solutions alone cannot transform agrifood systems unless they are effectively adopted, adapted, and sustained by farmers and rural communities.

Advisory services are central to this process. They act as bridges between knowledge and practice, helping producers innovate, interpret new technologies, navigate risks, and engage with evolving markets. Without stronger advocacy and recognition or visibility, advisory services risk remaining peripheral to these initiatives despite their importance for implementation.

At the same time, there is growing recognition that agrifood transformation requires more integrated and inclusive knowledge systems. Advisory services, which connect diverse actors across agricultural innovation systems, are well positioned to contribute to this integration. This evolving policy landscape creates an opportunity for GFRAS to strengthen its role as a platform for dialogue, evidence generation, and strategic engagement around advisory systems.

GFRAS will promote advocacy and strategic dialogue through the following areas of action:

Strengthening the Visibility of Advisory Systems

GFRAS will continue to elevate the role of extension and advisory services within global and regional discussions on agrifood transformation. This includes contributing to policy dialogues related to agricultural innovation, climate adaptation, food systems transformation, and rural development.

Facilitating Evidence-Informed Dialogue

GFRAS will support discussions among policymakers, development partners, and advisory actors that are grounded in evidence and practical experience. By synthesising lessons from advisory systems across regions, the organisation can help inform policy decisions and investment strategies.

Engaging with Global and Regional Initiatives

GFRAS will strengthen collaboration with international organisations, development agencies, and multi-stakeholder initiatives working on agrifood systems and agricultural innovation. These engagements will help ensure that advisory systems are integrated into broader transformation agendas.

Promoting Sustainable Investment in Advisory Systems

The strategy will support dialogue with national and local governments on sustainable financing models for advisory services. This includes exploring how advisory systems can be integrated into emerging funding mechanisms related to climate adaptation, rural development, and agricultural innovation.

Supporting Policy Learning across Regions

Through its network structure, GFRAS will facilitate exchange of policy experiences and advisory system reforms across countries and regions. This will enable governments and development partners to learn from successful approaches and adapt them to local contexts.

By strengthening advocacy and strategic dialogue, GFRAS contributes to creating policy environments that recognise advisory services as essential infrastructure for agrifood transformation. Stronger political recognition and sustained investment enable advisory systems to operate more effectively, strengthen institutional capacities, and expand their reach to diverse rural communities. Through its role as a neutral and practitioner-informed platform, GFRAS helps ensure that policy discussions remain connected to the realities of advisory practice and the needs of farmers and rural actors.

SF 3: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Agricultural advisory systems are evolving rapidly in response to technological innovation, climate pressures, changing markets, and shifting rural livelihoods. As these transformations unfold, there is an increasing need for collective reflection on the future role of extension and advisory services.

Thought leadership plays a critical role in helping the advisory community interpret emerging trends, identify new opportunities, and adapt institutional models accordingly. By facilitating dialogue, knowledge synthesis, and foresight, GFRAS contributes to shaping global understanding of how advisory systems can support inclusive and resilient agrifood systems.

Through this role, GFRAS strengthens the ability of advisory actors, policymakers, and development partners to anticipate change and respond strategically to evolving agrifood challenges.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The pace and complexity of change affecting agrifood systems are increasing. Climate change is altering production environments and increasing uncertainty for farmers. Digital technologies are transforming the way knowledge is generated, shared, and applied. At the same time, global discussions on food systems, sustainability, and rural development are expanding the expectations placed on agricultural advisory services.

These changes raise important questions about how advisory systems should evolve. What new competencies are required from advisors? How can digital technologies complement human advisory functions? How can advisory systems support transitions toward climate-resilient and sustainable production systems?

GFRAS acts in its role as a platform for exploring such questions. There is widespread recognition that advisory systems must evolve beyond traditional models of technology transfer towards approaches that emphasise facilitation, learning, and collaboration within agricultural innovation systems. However, many actors, especially public extension systems, are still stuck in the traditional models.



GFRAS will strengthen its thought leadership role through the following areas of action:

Facilitating Global Dialogue on the Future of Advisory Systems

GFRAS will convene discussions among advisory practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and development partners to explore emerging trends affecting extension and advisory services. These dialogues will support shared understanding of the evolving role of advisory systems in agrifood transformation.

Generating Foresight and Analysis

GFRAS will contribute to analysis and foresight on emerging challenges and opportunities for advisory systems. This includes exploring how global trends such as climate change, digitalisation, demographic shifts, and market transformations affect advisory functions.

Synthesising Knowledge and Experiences

GFRAS will support the synthesis of knowledge generated across advisory networks and initiatives. By bringing together experiences from diverse regions, the organisation can identify lessons and approaches that inform the development of advisory systems globally.

Promoting Innovation in Advisory Methodologies

The strategy will encourage experimentation and reflection on how to integrate and institutionalise new advisory approaches, including participatory learning methods, digital advisory models, and innovation facilitation within agricultural knowledge and innovation systems.

Exploring Emerging Technologies

GFRAS will facilitate dialogue on the implications of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and digital platforms, for the future of advisory services and rural knowledge systems.

Through thought leadership and foresight, GFRAS helps the global advisory community anticipate change and adapt to evolving agrifood landscapes. By connecting practitioners, researchers, and policymakers in structured dialogue, the organisation supports collective learning and enables advisory systems to evolve in response to new challenges and opportunities.

This role strengthens the capacity of advisory systems to remain relevant, innovative, and responsive as agrifood systems continue to transform.

SF 4: NETWORK STRENGTHENING AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

GFRAS is built upon a network-of-networks structure that connects advisory actors across countries, regions, and institutions. Through regional networks and national country fora, the GFRAS community provides platforms for collaboration, learning, and coordination among organisations involved in agricultural extension and advisory services.

Strong and well-functioning networks are essential for strengthening advisory systems. They create spaces for dialogue among diverse actors, facilitate exchange of knowledge and experience, and enable collective action in addressing shared challenges.

Strengthening these networks is therefore a core strategic function of GFRAS. By supporting the development and sustainability of regional networks and country fora, the organisation contributes to building more coherent and collaborative advisory ecosystems.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Agri-food systems are becoming increasingly complex and interconnected. Addressing challenges such as climate change, market volatility, soil degradation, water scarcity, and other resource constraints requires collaboration among a wide range of actors including public institutions, private-sector organisations, farmer organisations, research institutions, and civil-society groups.

Advisory systems operate at the intersection of these actors. Effective advisory services depend not only on the capacity of individual organisations but also on the strength of the networks that connect them.

The GFRAS community provides an important platform for this collaboration. Regional networks enable actors to address shared challenges within specific geographical contexts, while country fora bring together national stakeholders working across agricultural knowledge and innovation systems.

Ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of these networks is therefore essential for strengthening advisory systems globally.



GFRAS will strengthen networks and partnerships through the following areas of action:

Supporting Regional Networks and Country Fora

GFRAS will continue to support the development and sustainability of regional networks and national country fora as core components of the global advisory community. These platforms provide essential spaces for collaboration, learning, and coordination among advisory actors.

Strengthening Governance and Coordination within GFRAS

One of GFRAS community's core principles is **subsidiarity**. Clear roles and responsibilities within the network strengthen the ability of GFRAS to operate as a cohesive global platform.

Facilitating Collaboration across Sectors

GFRAS will encourage collaboration among actors working within agricultural knowledge and innovation systems, including advisory organisations, research institutions, development agencies, private-sector actors, and farmer organisations.

Promoting Cross-Regional Learning

The network structure of GFRAS enables the exchange of experiences across regions facing similar challenges. The organisation will facilitate opportunities for peer learning and knowledge sharing among regional networks and country fora.

Strengthening Strategic Partnerships

GFRAS will continue to develop partnerships especially with the private sector and with organisations and initiatives working on agricultural innovation, rural development, and agrifood system transformation. These partnerships expand opportunities for collaboration and strengthen the influence of the advisory community.

By strengthening networks and partnerships, GFRAS enhances the ability of advisory actors to collaborate, learn from one another, and respond collectively to emerging agrifood challenges. Strong networks support the development of more coherent advisory ecosystems in which diverse actors coordinate their efforts and share knowledge across institutional and geographic boundaries.

Through its network-of-networks structure, the GFRAS community enables agricultural advisory services to function as part of a connected global community, strengthening collective capacity to contribute to sustainable and inclusive agrifood systems.

SF 5: SCALING INNOVATIONS FOR IMPACT

Agricultural research and innovation continue to generate new technologies, practices, and approaches with the potential to improve productivity, sustainability, and resilience in agrifood systems. However, many promising innovations fail to reach scale or achieve lasting impact because they are not effectively adopted by farmers and rural communities.

Advisory services play a central role in the co-creation and bridging the gap between innovation development and practical application. Through their close engagement with farmers and local institutions, advisory professionals help translate knowledge into practice, facilitate experimentation, and support the adaptation of innovations to diverse local contexts.

Strengthening the role of advisory systems in scaling innovations is therefore an indispensable function to ensure that investments in agricultural research and development translate into tangible improvements in rural livelihoods and food systems.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The need to accelerate the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices is becoming increasingly urgent. Climate change, environmental degradation, and evolving market conditions are placing new pressures on farming systems worldwide.

At the same time, a growing number of innovations are emerging from agricultural research, private-sector initiatives, and development programmes. These innovations range from climate-resilient crop varieties and digital advisory tools to new farming practices and business models.

Yet the process of scaling innovations remains complex. Successful scaling requires more than simply disseminating information about new technologies. It involves understanding farmers' needs and constraints, facilitating learning processes, adapting innovations to local contexts, and creating enabling conditions for adoption.

Advisory services are uniquely positioned to support these processes. By working directly with farmers and rural communities, advisors help interpret innovations, provide feedback to research and development actors, and foster collaborative learning that supports sustainable adoption.

GFRAS will strengthen the role of advisory systems in scaling innovations through the following areas of action:

Promoting the Role of Advisory Services in Innovation Systems

GFRAS will highlight the importance of advisory actors within agricultural knowledge and innovation systems, emphasising their role in facilitating the adoption and adaptation of new technologies and practices.

Strengthening Collaboration between Research and Advisory Systems

GFRAS will encourage stronger linkages between research institutions, advisory services, and farmer organisations. These collaborations enable innovations to be developed and tested in ways that respond to farmers' realities.

Facilitating Learning of Scaling Approaches

GFRAS will support the exchange of experiences and lessons related to scaling agricultural innovations. By synthesising knowledge across regions, the organisation can help identify effective approaches for expanding the reach and impact of innovations.

Promoting Inclusive Scaling Processes

Advisory systems play a key role in ensuring that innovations reach diverse groups of farmers, including women, youth, and small-scale producers. GFRAS will encourage approaches that promote equitable access to innovations and advisory services.

Strengthening Feedback Loops in Innovation Systems

Advisory professionals act as important intermediaries between farmers and innovation developers. GFRAS will support mechanisms that strengthen feedback loops, enabling farmers' experiences and needs to inform research and development processes.

By strengthening the role of advisory services in scaling innovations, GFRAS contributes to more effective agricultural innovation systems.

Advisory actors help ensure that innovations are not only disseminated but also adapted, tested, and sustained within diverse farming contexts. This increases the likelihood that new technologies and practices generate meaningful improvements in productivity, resilience, and sustainability. Through its network and knowledge-sharing functions, GFRAS supports learning on how advisory systems can enable scaling processes that are both effective and inclusive.

SF 6: KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Agricultural advisory systems depend fundamentally on the effective generation, exchange, and application of knowledge. Advisors operate at the interface between research, policy, markets, and farmers, translating complex information into practical insights that support decision-making in dynamic agricultural environments.

Ensuring that knowledge flows effectively within advisory systems is therefore critical. This includes not only the dissemination of research findings and technical information, but also the sharing of farmers' challenges, experiences, lessons, and innovations generated by practitioners working in diverse contexts.

As a global network-of-networks, the GFRAS community is uniquely positioned to facilitate these knowledge flows. By strengthening knowledge and information management across its community, the organisation contributes to continuous learning and improvement within agricultural advisory systems.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The volume of information available to farmers and advisory professionals is increasing rapidly. Digital technologies, online platforms, and global research initiatives are producing unprecedented amounts of data and knowledge related to agriculture and rural development.

However, access to information alone does not automatically translate into improved agricultural practices or better decision-making. Knowledge must be interpreted, contextualised, and shared by farmers and to farmers in ways that are relevant to needs and local conditions.

Advisory systems play a key role in this process by acting as intermediaries within agricultural knowledge and innovation systems. Advisors help translate complex knowledge into practical guidance, facilitate peer learning among farmers, and provide feedback that informs research and policy processes.

At the same time, valuable knowledge generated by practitioners often remains under-documented and insufficiently shared across regions and institutions. Strengthening knowledge capitalisation and exchange across the GFRAS community is therefore essential for enabling advisory systems to adapt, innovate, and respond effectively to emerging agrifood challenges.

GFRAS will strengthen knowledge and information management through the following areas of action:

Facilitating Knowledge Exchange within the Advisory Community

GFRAS will provide platforms and opportunities for advisory actors to share experiences, lessons, and innovations. These exchanges strengthen collective learning across the global advisory ecosystem.

Documenting and Synthesising Practitioner Knowledge

GFRAS will support efforts to capture and synthesise experiences generated by advisory professionals working in diverse contexts. This includes identifying practices and approaches that can inform the development of advisory systems globally.

Promoting Inclusive and Accessible Knowledge Sharing

Recognising the diversity of the GFRAS community, the organisation will promote knowledge-sharing approaches that are inclusive, multilingual, and accessible to actors across regions.

Strengthening Digital Knowledge Platforms

GFRAS will continue to develop and maintain digital platforms that support knowledge exchange within the advisory community. These platforms enable advisors, networks, and partners to access resources and share experiences across geographic boundaries.

Supporting Evidence Generation on Advisory Systems

The strategy will encourage the development of evidence on the performance and impact of advisory systems, supporting informed decision-making among policymakers and development partners.

By strengthening knowledge and information management, GFRAS enhances the ability of advisory systems to learn from experience and adapt to changing conditions. Effective knowledge flows enable advisory actors to build on existing experiences, avoid duplication of efforts, and continuously improve the services they provide to farmers and rural communities.

Through its role as a global platform for knowledge exchange, GFRAS helps ensure that insights generated in one context can inform advisory system development across regions, strengthening the collective capacity of the global advisory community.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

The successful implementation of the GFRAS Strategy 2026–2035 will depend on sustained collaboration with farmers organisations, governments, the private sector, development partners, research institutions, and organisations working across agrifood systems. Resource mobilisation will therefore remain a key strategic priority for the organisation.

GFRAS will pursue a diversified resource mobilisation approach aligned with its role as a global platform for strengthening agricultural extension and advisory systems. This includes engagement with national stakeholders and international initiatives supporting agricultural innovation, climate resilience, and rural development.

In addition to financial contributions, partnerships with member organisations and strategic collaborators will continue to play an important role in supporting the activities of the GFRAS community. These collaborations contribute expertise, networks, and institutional resources that strengthen the collective capacity of the advisory ecosystem.

The strategy also seeks to strengthen the positioning of advisory systems within broader investment frameworks related to agrifood transformation. By demonstrating the value of advisory services in enabling innovation adoption, climate adaptation, and sustainable production systems, GFRAS contributes to strengthening the case for investment in advisory systems globally.

INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

As a global network-of-networks, the strength and sustainability of the GFRAS community depends on the active engagement of its community of regional networks, country fora, and partner organisations.

Strengthening the governance and operational capacities of the network will remain an important priority throughout the implementation of this strategy. Clear governance structures, transparent decision-making processes, and effective coordination across the network contribute to maintaining the credibility and legitimacy of the organisation.

The strategy also emphasises the importance of shared ownership among members of the GFRAS community. Regional networks, country fora, and partner organisations play a central role in advancing the strategic priorities outlined in this framework. By fostering collaboration, strengthening partnerships, and supporting the continued development of its global community, GFRAS aims to remain a resilient and effective platform for strengthening agricultural advisory systems.

GFRAS will also explore institutional arrangements that support long-term operational stability while preserving the neutrality and global character of the GFRAS platform.

LOOKING AHEAD

The challenges facing agriculture today require strong knowledge systems that connect innovation with practice. Investment into and innovation within agricultural advisory services systems is a prerequisite for behavioural changes at farm and value chain level that facilitate the desired food systems transformation.

The GFRAS Strategy 2026–2035 reflects the collective priorities of a global community committed to strengthening pluralistic, demand-driven, and market-oriented systems. Through its focus on capacity development, advocacy, thought leadership, network strengthening, innovation scaling, and knowledge exchange, GFRAS seeks to contribute to advisory systems that are more effective, inclusive, and responsive to emerging challenges.

As a global network-of-networks, the strength of GFRAS lies in the diversity and commitment of its members. Regional networks, country fora, partner organisations, and advisory professionals around the world are central to advancing this shared vision.

GFRAS is uniquely positioned to strengthen the global advisory systems' ability to deliver impact at scale. To what degree it will succeed in converting this new strategy into action, depends to a large degree on its partners and supporters. We are ready. Are you?



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