

Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services Strategic Framework 2016–2025

Advocacy and leadership in rural advisory services
for sustainable development



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Overview

This document¹ is targeted at the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) community: regional networks, working groups, funders, members, and affiliates. The document presents the strategic framework through which GFRAS aims to fulfil its vision and mission for the period 2016–2025. It explains why the forum was created and why a new strategy is needed (background and rationale), what GFRAS wants to achieve (vision and mission), and how this will be done (strategic fields of action). Annexes give information on the definitions of terms (Annex A), the history of GFRAS (Annex B), and the methodology used to develop the strategic framework (Annex C).

This strategic framework was produced through a series of demand assessments, electronic

consultations, discussions by the GFRAS steering committee, and expert input (see Annex C for more details). Using both agricultural innovation systems and capacity development frameworks, the document outlines strategic fields of action at three levels – the enabling environment, the institution/organisation, and the individual. Activities in each strategic field will strengthen the capacities of rural advisory services and achieve the GFRAS vision and mission. For each strategic field, there are expected high-level strategic outcomes (changes in behaviour) to which GFRAS will contribute.

As a global network, GFRAS contributes to impact at the farmer level through its regional and national networks. This strategic framework – which will be accompanied by a five-year operational plan and monitoring system – will help to plan and measure change, learning, and progress in extension and rural advisory services reform over the next ten years.

¹ This is a 'living' document, approved by the GFRAS steering committee on 11 September 2015, which can be further modified with their approval. It will be accompanied by the *GFRAS Five-Year Operational Plan 2016–2020*, which includes a monitoring and evaluation framework, annual workplans, and communications strategy; and the *GFRAS Operational Guidelines*.





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Rationale and background

In 2000 world governments agreed on the Millennium Development Goals, which expired in 2015. During the 2012 Rio+20 meeting, in which GFRAS participated, a main outcome was the agreement by United Nations member states to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).² The SDGs provide new goals, targets, and indicators to frame the national, regional, and global development agenda over the next 15 years.³

We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. We are committed to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner.

Article 2 of Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.1&Lang=E).

At the same time, other development partners such as the CGIAR Consortium, the Global Forum on Agricultural Research, the Global Donor Platform, and bilateral donors and foundations are working to reformulate their strategies to bring about transformation of the agricultural sector to contribute to poverty eradication and reduce food and nutrition insecurity through innovation and partnerships. The year 2015 is thus a good moment to revisit the GFRAS strategic framework.

As noted in the *GFRAS Long-term Strategic Framework 2011–2016*,⁴ agriculture is critical to the livelihoods of more than 500 million small-scale farmers and other rural actors.⁵

2 These include extension services, in particular Goal 2a (“Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries”), and Goals 1.4, 2, 5a, 6.4, 12.3, and 15.3.

3 <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/19/sustainable-development-goals-united-nations>

4 <http://www.g-fras.org/en/knowledge/documents/category/16-strategic-and-management-documents.html>

5 In this paper, the term *actors* refers to organisations and people (see Annex A).

Many challenges exist in agriculture and rural development today, including food price crises, natural resource depletion, changing and uncertain markets, environmental degradation, and climate change. Countries worldwide are affected, regardless of their social, economic, or political status. Additionally, in spite of national and international development efforts, there is still persistent rural poverty, and global nutrition challenges. Rural advisory services (Box 1) are fundamental to supporting people to deal with existing and new challenges, and to improve the livelihoods of rural people worldwide. They thereby play a critical role in the eradication of poverty and associated food and nutrition challenges. Despite under-resourcing, rural advisory services have shown significant and positive effects on knowledge, skills, income levels, technology adoption, crop and livestock yields, and productivity. Studies of rates of return to extension generally show high numbers (85 percent on average).⁶

Box 1. What are rural advisory services?

Rural advisory services, also called extension, are all the different activities that provide the information and services needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in rural settings. Rural advisory services assist them in developing their own technical, organisational, and management skills and practices, to improve their livelihoods and well-being.

Within systems of agricultural innovation, rural advisory services play a critical brokering role and provide feedback mechanisms between farmers’ organisations, agribusiness, non-governmental organisations, researchers, and the education sector, among others. However, advisory services need information, evidence, and reform to make them more relevant to, and engaged with, the clientele that they serve. Thus, since its inception, GFRAS has

6 Alston, J.M., Chan-Kang, C., Marra, M.C., Pardey, P.J. and Wyatt, T.J. 2000. *A meta-analysis of rates of return to agricultural R&D: ex pede herculum?* International Food Policy Research Report 113. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Box 2. How the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services impacts poor smallholder producers

GFRAS is about enhancing the performance of advisory services so that they can better serve farm families and rural producers, thus contributing to improved livelihoods in rural areas and the sustainable reduction of hunger and poverty. Rural advisory services help to empower farmers and better integrate them in systems of agricultural innovation. The GFRAS structure reaches smallholder farmers via the regional rural advisory services networks, which are made up of national-level platforms (see Figure 1). The national platforms include actors from all sectors working in rural advisory services, and work directly with smallholders. National platforms help prioritise national-level issues and formulate demands to be taken to the regional and global levels. Work through these levels is guided by a steering committee, which delegates operational functions to a secretariat. Thematic working groups, which cut across the regions, also contribute to GFRAS' work to reach smallholders.

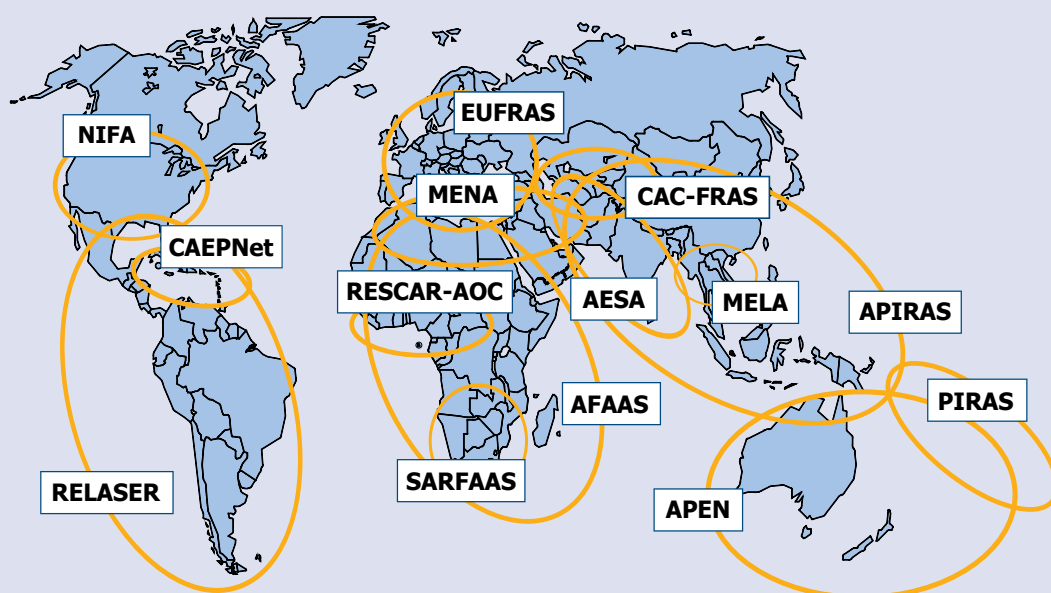


Figure 1. Regional networks of advisory services

Source: GFRAS.

Abbreviations: African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS); Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESA); Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (APIRAS); Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN); Caribbean Agricultural Extension Providers Network (CAEPNet); Central Asia and the Caucasus Forum for Rural Advisory Services (CAC-FRAS); European Forum for Farm and Rural Advisory Services (EUFRAS); Mekong Extension Learning Alliance (MELA); Middle East and North Africa Network (MENA); Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (PIRAS); *Red Latinoamericana de Servicios de Extensión Rural/Latin American Network on Rural Extension Services* (RELASER); *Réseau des services de conseil agricole et rural d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre/West and Central Africa Network of Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services* (RESCAR-AOC); Southern Africa Regional Forum on Agricultural Advisory Services (SARFAAS); United States National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

been continuously engaged in discussions with other agricultural development actors to see how advisory services can better play this brokering role and empower farmers to have better livelihoods.

A mid-term review⁷ of GFRAS in 2013 showed that the forum had played a key role in getting rural advisory services back on to the agenda of international development institutions, including large donors. However, there is a need for ongoing advocacy for rural advisory services, in part to counter the notion that they are mainly 'dissemination channels' for research, instead of a key agricultural innovation systems actor, well placed to link, broker, and support local-level innovation. Thus the innovation systems approach is a key element of the new strategy (see next section).

Over the past five years, GFRAS has been providing advocacy and evidence on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of pluralistic and demand-driven rural advisory services. The document *The Global Forum for Rural Agricultural Services: The first five years* provides more information on accomplishments during this period. Key elements include the position paper *The New Extensionist* (which plays a prominent role in this new strategy), the *Guide to Evaluating Rural Extension*, and the strengthening of regional and thematic extension networks and fora (see Box 3 and Annex B).

As GFRAS looks back, it is clear that while the advocacy and evidence functions are well underway, there is great need to work on the capacity of advisory services in the future. Thus the new strategy focuses on capacity strengthening outcomes at the individual, organisational, and system level (see next section).

Since its inception, GFRAS has been welcomed into the international development community⁸ as a key institution to promote rural advisory services. Many actors recognise the need for advisory services to bring about the impact and

Box 3. *The Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services: The first five years 2010–2015*

The first five years publication, available on the GFRAS website, highlights GFRAS' accomplishments over the past half-decade and provides a taste of what lies ahead as the international community defines the global sustainable development agenda that will succeed the Millennium Development Goals in 2015. Key activities and products include:

- network strengthening and peer exchange in 12 regions and 30 countries
- *Guide to Evaluating Rural Extension*
- *The 'New Extensionist': Roles, Strategies, and Capacities to Strengthen Extension and Advisory Services*
- five annual meetings, held in Chile, Kenya, the Philippines, Germany, and Argentina
- global good practices initiative at <http://www.betterextension.org>
- documents on gender equality and the role of producer organisations in rural advisory services
- participation in global events such as the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development, the Farmers' Forum, and the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

change necessary for smallholder farmers and other rural actors. Advisory services will be key to achieving the SDGs. GFRAS will support the engagement of regional and thematic advisory services networks and fora worldwide with their stakeholders, and with other sectors to address issues of:

- gender equality and engagement of women and youth in agriculture
- climate change and environmental sustainability
- entrepreneurship
- food and nutrition security.

This in turn will support the furtherance of the SDGs.

7 Mur, R., Wongtschowski, M., Kyazze, F. and Traore, A. 2013. *GFRAS mid-term review*. Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute.

8 GFRAS has been invited to represent advisory services at the Global Conferences on Agricultural Research for Development, Rio+20, the Committee for Food Security of the United Nations, the Global Donor Platform, and meetings of the CGIAR Consortium and other relevant development partners.



The strategic framework

The GFRAS strategic framework is rooted in its vision, mission, and guiding principles (Box 4), which are in turn derived from two theoretical frameworks: agricultural innovation systems (Figure 2) and capacity development (Figure 3). It will be implemented across three strategic **fields of action**. Each of these fields will work at three different **levels**, derived from the capacity development framework.

Conceptual frameworks

Agricultural innovation systems

The agricultural innovation systems framework provides insights into how innovation takes place through a network of inter-linked actors, the interaction between these actors, and the policies and institutions that govern their interactions. The framework helps to underline that innovations are not just

technical, but can also be related to social, institutional, and managerial processes. It also highlights the importance of the enabling environment and the links or relationships between actors.

Figure 2 shows that innovation is a process that takes place among a variety of actors (shown in the middle circle) within an innovation system. Through their exchange (indicated by the arrows), innovation (the centre circle) takes place. However, equally crucial parts of an agricultural innovation system are the policy environment, consumer demands, and the 'rules of the game' (shown as the outer, darker circle) that influence the interaction of these actors (the arrows here indicate the interaction between the actors and their wider environment).

Box 4. GFRAS: vision, mission, and guiding principles

Our **vision** is for rural advisory services to effectively contribute to agricultural innovation systems for sustainable development.

Our **mission** is to provide advocacy and leadership⁹ on pluralistic and demand-driven rural advisory services for sustainable development.

Our **guiding principles** define how and with whom GFRAS works. These principles are reflected in all activities and are the foundation on which the strategic framework is built.

- *Demand-driven and accountability:* GFRAS promotes advisory services that are driven by and accountable to the clientele of rural advisory services.
- *Pluralism and partnership:* Working with a wide range of actors in the innovation system strengthens the forum through synergies, and creates efficacy and joint ownership. GFRAS also facilitates harmonisation and coordination to synergise work from various actors.

- *Evidence-based approaches:* GFRAS focuses on evidence-based measures and approaches.
- *Subsidiarity:* Processes and initiatives are led by relevant lower-level actors and fora under GFRAS guidance and support, when needed.
- *Transparency:* GFRAS is governed and its activities implemented in a transparent and inclusive way, respecting the opinions and approaches of all actors involved. All created information is shared and in the public domain.
- *Alignment:* GFRAS' work is based on strategies aligned to wider efforts among international development institutions and their policies and programmes.
- *Monitoring, evaluation, and learning:* Enhanced learning is a core element of GFRAS, and it has a monitoring and evaluation framework for this purpose. It also works towards and promotes better monitoring, evaluation, and learning within all activities related to advisory services.

⁹ For definition see Annex A.

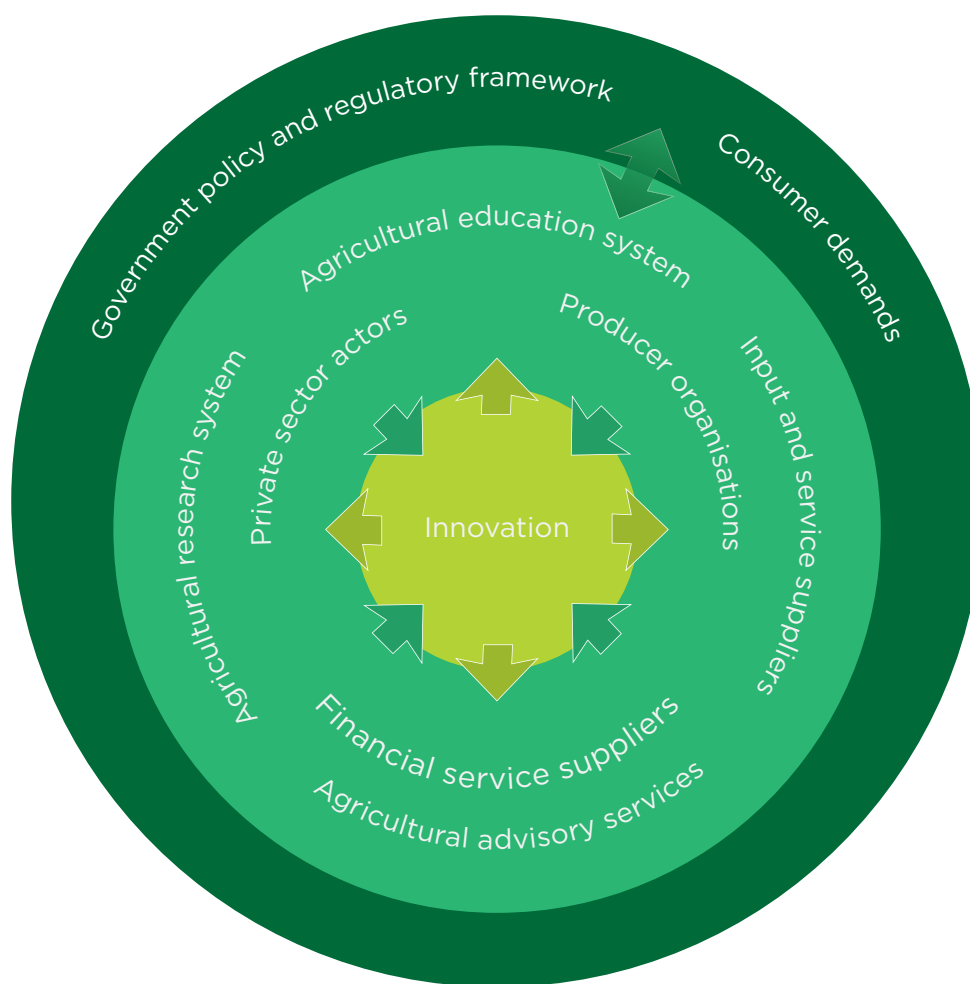


Figure 2. A system of agricultural innovation

Source: GFRAS.

Within this framework, all actors contribute to innovation. Rural advisory services play a critical linking role between actors, facilitating exchange and other interactions, providing critical information, and linking producers to inputs and markets. Thus the innovation systems approach forms a key part of the new strategic framework. Based on the framework, GFRAS will work towards better systems of rural advisory services by improving the policy environment. It will also focus on helping networks of rural advisory services and the actors involved in them to engage and interact more effectively with other key actors in agricultural innovation systems.

Capacity development

Capacity is a critical issue for rural advisory services. To fully achieve its mission, GFRAS

must take action to strengthen the capacities of advisory services. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) corporate strategy on capacity development (Figure 3) describes three levels of capacity development. GFRAS incorporated these levels into its document *The New Extensionist*,¹⁰ which envisages the new roles, functions, and reform strategies that rural advisory services will need in order to contribute to sustainable development.

¹⁰ Sulaiman, R. and Davis, K. 2012. *The 'new extensionist': roles, strategies, and capacities to strengthen extension and advisory services*. GFRAS Position Paper. Lindau: Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services. See <http://www.g-fras.org/en/activities/the-new-extensionist.html>

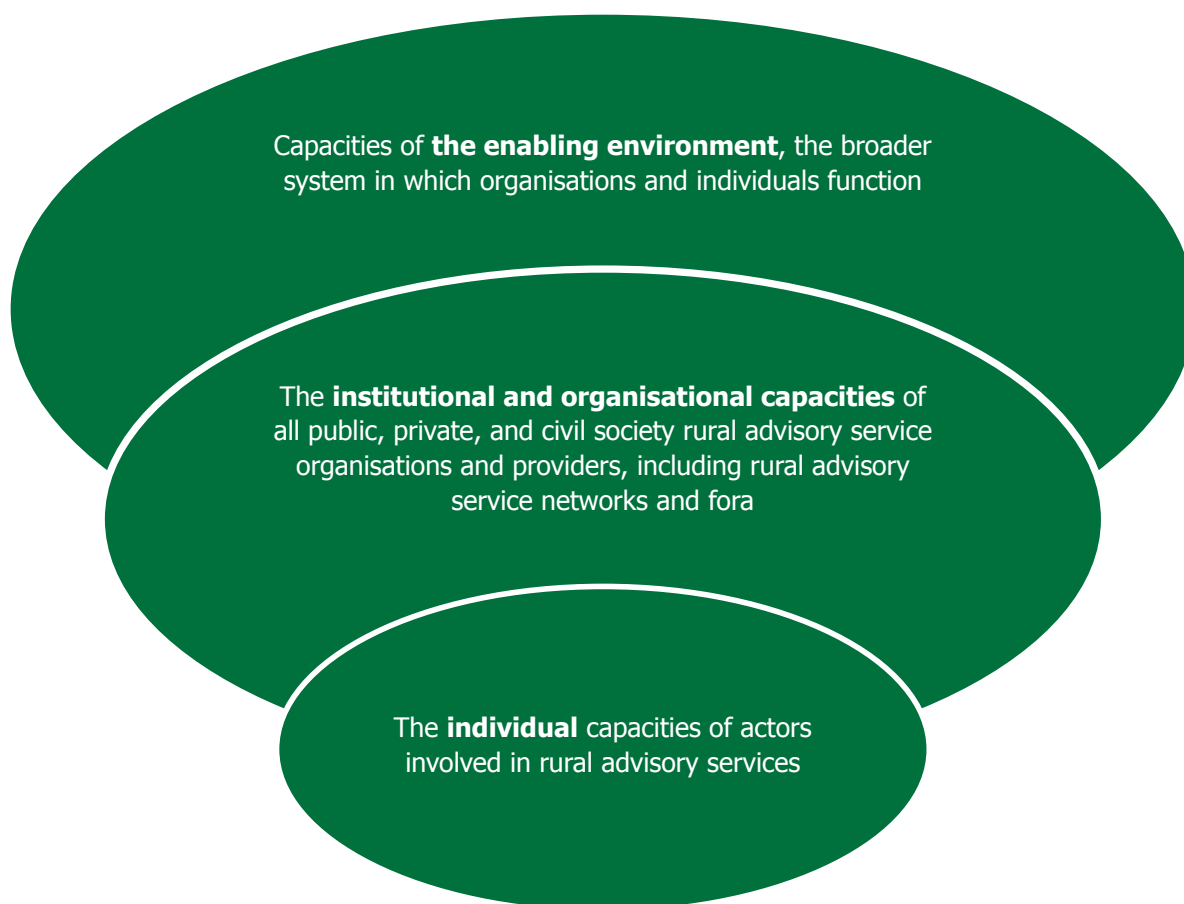


Figure 3. Levels of capacity development

Adapted from FAO. 2010. Corporate strategy on capacity development. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, p. 4.

Strategic fields of action

To achieve its mission and vision (Box 4), GFRAS focuses on the three strategic fields of action, discussed below. In doing so, it pursues outcomes (changes in behaviour) related to the enabling environment, institutions and organisations (focusing on regional networks as the core of the forum), and human resource development (individual capacities).

Strategic field 1: Advocacy and support for an enabling policy environment and appropriate investment in rural advisory services

Influencing the policy environment is crucial for extension actors to be effective. This field aims to strengthen the visibility and influence of rural advisory services in policies and

investments. The focus of this field is always in accordance with the GFRAS principles (Box 4). According to *The New Extensionist*, rural advisory services need “appropriate regulatory frameworks...to ensure fair competition, offer a level playing field, and enable collaboration among different extension and advisory service providers” (pp. 10–11). Whereas a great deal of advocacy and awareness-raising took place during the past five years, in the next ten-year strategic period, GFRAS will proactively work towards a more comprehensive and concrete inclusion and recognition of advisory services in policies and investments.

Goal, strategic field 1:

Increased recognition of rural advisory services in policies and investments

Strategic field 2: Professionalisation of rural advisory services

Rural advisory services actors and fora must be professional to perform effectively in agricultural innovation systems. Professionalisation not only includes possessing sufficient human capacity, but the appropriate institutionalisation of policies, strategies, approaches, and methods, and valorisation of these capacity-strengthening activities. Extension professionals require high-quality, pre-service, on-the-job training, and continuous professional development. Professionalisation of rural advisory services will lead to well-functioning and professional advisory service providers and fora, responsive to the needs and demands of male and female farmers, as well as youth; it will also mean that rural advisory services are recognised and visible in the agricultural innovation systems in which they act.

Goal, strategic field 2:

Strengthened performance of rural advisory services

Strategic field 3: Facilitation and enhancement of effective and continuous knowledge generation and exchange

This field responds to the expressed needs of stakeholders in rural advisory services for increased peer-to-peer information exchange with other relevant actors and enhanced learning within the agricultural innovation system. This function also includes strengthening capacity to generate, find, share, adapt, and use evidence, lessons learned from experience, scientific and local knowledge, and up-to-date information.

Goal, strategic field 3:

Enhanced learning in rural advisory services

Levels of capacity development

Level 1: Enabling environment

The performance of the extension and advisory services system is highly dependent upon conditions in the enabling environment, such as policy, legal, and economic frameworks; national public sector budget allocations and processes; incentives and social norms; the relevance given to rural advisory services by policy-makers,

investors, and funders; the level of exchange and sharing of knowledge and information within the agricultural innovation system in general, and rural advisory services systems in particular; market dynamics; and the availability of training institutions.

The focus for GFRAS in this component is the *system of pluralistic rural advisory services*, not the entire agricultural innovation system. The rural advisory services system is part of a larger enabling environment and agricultural development system.

Goal, level 1:

Strengthened enabling environment for rural advisory service networks and actors, so that they use their potential and effectively fulfil their roles in the agricultural innovation system

Level 2: Institutional and organisational capacities

Rural advisory service organisations and networks play a critical role within innovation systems. They contribute to shaping innovation processes, strengthen capacities of smallholders, broker relationships between actors, and help coordinate and organise endeavours within the rural advisory services system. In the past five years, GFRAS has facilitated the emergence and strengthening of extension and advisory services networks at the regional, sub-regional, and national levels. Now that regional networks are in place, the focus must be on developing and strengthening their organisational and institutional capacities so they can fully use their potential (see *The New Extensionist*, p. 11).

As explained in Box 2, GFRAS works with networks of regional advisory services and national extension fora to reach farmers. These networks and fora include actors from the public, private, and civil society sectors. The focus of the GFRAS strategic framework for the organisational and institutional capacity component is mainly on making regional advisory service networks¹¹ and their national fora more effective and efficient. To do this they

¹¹ We differentiate between rural advisory service *organisations* (such as a public or private extension companies) and rural advisory services *networks*, because they have different objectives, roles, structures, staff, and so forth.

must work within the enabling environment and the relevant policy frameworks. The regional networks take GFRAS endeavours to the ground through national fora, and scale up and out activities undertaken in the countries and regions of their geographical scope.

Goal, level 2:

Functionally strengthened regional networks of rural advisory services so that they are effective and provide support to their members

Level 3: Individual capacities

Rural advisory services today need individuals with adequate technical and functional skills, who also have a thorough understanding of the entire agricultural innovation system, the importance of exchange and linkages with its stakeholders, and the importance of evidence to support their work. For all this, they need appropriate and ongoing education and training through continuous professional development, informal education, on-the-job training, and formal educational and training institutions. They

need access to information, knowledge, and experience exchange. The GFRAS Consortium on Extension Education and Training¹² supports appropriate human resource development in advisory services.

Extension professionals furthermore need adequate incentives and defined career paths. This is true for field-level extension professionals, but also for programme managers and programme officers from public, private, and civil society organisations. While GFRAS acts on a global level, it cannot achieve its vision without individuals who are delivering good services to improve livelihoods of farmers, supported by effective organisations, networks, and processes.

Table 1 shows how these six goals relate to a set of specific outcomes to which GFRAS will contribute at the three levels of capacity development in each of the strategic fields.

Goal, level 3:

Appropriate and comprehensive human resources developed in rural advisory services



12 <http://www.g-fras.org/en/activities/consortium-on-education-and-training.html>

Table 1. Expected outcomes* by strategic fields and capacity development levels

Source: GFRAS

<p>Level of capacity development</p> <p>Strategic field</p>	<p>Level 1. Enabling environment</p> <p>Goal: Strengthened enabling environment for RAS[†] to use their potential and effectively fulfill their roles</p>	<p>Level 2. Institutions and organisations</p> <p>Goal: Functionally strengthened regional RAS networks</p>	<p>Level 3. Individuals</p> <p>Goal: Appropriate and comprehensive human resources developed in RAS</p>
<p>Strategic field 1. Advocacy and support for an enabling policy environment and appropriate investment in RAS</p> <p>Goal: Increased recognition of RAS in policies and investments</p>	<p>Increased visibility and coherent voice of RAS in rural development and agricultural discourses and frameworks, and at events</p>	<p>Actively engaged regional and thematic RAS networks that influence national and regional discussions of development and agriculture</p>	<p>RAS actors who influence policies and investments, due to increased support measures and better guidelines</p> <p>RAS professionals with enhanced skills, who are able to contribute to more effective agricultural innovation systems</p>
<p>Strategic field 2. Professionalisation of RAS</p> <p>Goal: Strengthened RAS performance</p>	<p>Increased recognition by policy-makers, donors, investors, and programme managers of the need for action towards professionalisation of RAS</p>	<p>Strengthened institutionalisation, governance, coordination, and financing structures for regional and thematic RAS networks</p> <p>Better guidance provided to RAS networks and fora for improving their performance and collaboration with other actors in agricultural innovation systems</p>	<p>Improved training, education, standards, and opportunities for RAS actors with incentives, certification, and career development mechanisms in place</p>
<p>Strategic field 3. Facilitation and enhancement of effective and continuous knowledge generation and exchange</p> <p>Goal: Enhanced learning in RAS</p>	<p>Agricultural innovation systems that support measures for improved access to high-quality information and knowledge on RAS</p>	<p>RAS networks and fora have a stronger brokering role in agricultural innovation systems, and a greater capacity for advocacy</p>	<p>RAS providers and clientele have more opportunities to access, share, and use information, knowledge, experience, and evidence on RAS approaches and methods</p>

* Note: These are strategic, high-level outcomes to which GFRAS will contribute. They are formulated comprehensively and will be simplified in the five-year operational plan.

[†] RAS: rural advisory services.



Annex A. Definitions of terms

Actor	Individual or organisation. Usually used in the context of agricultural innovation systems
Advocacy	Advocacy involves promoting, supporting, or defending something. An important aspect of advocacy for GFRAS is drawing attention to the strategic role of rural advisory services (RAS) in rural development more widely
Agricultural innovation systems	Networks of organisations, enterprises, and individuals operating in the agricultural sector focused on bringing new products, processes, and forms of organisation into economic use, together with the institutions and policies that affect their behaviour and performance
Capacity	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ¹³ defines 'capacity' as the "ability of people, organisations, and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully, and 'capacity development' as "the process whereby people, organisations, and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time"
Extension (also called rural advisory services)	All the different activities that provide the information and services needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in rural settings to assist them in developing their own technical, organisational, and management skills and practices, to improve their livelihoods and well-being
Innovation	Any new knowledge introduced into and utilised in an economic or social process ¹⁴
Leadership	A process whereby an [actor] influences a [others]...to achieve a common goal ¹⁵
New extensionist concept	Global view of extension and advisory services that reinvents and clearly articulates the role of extensionist in the rapidly changing rural context. It argues that this role should be expanded in agricultural innovation systems, and it demands the development of new capacities at different levels
Outcome	Change in behaviour
Rural advisory services (also called extension)	Rural advisory services, also called extension, are all the different activities that provide the information and services needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in rural settings to assist them in developing their own technical, organisational, and management skills and practices to improve their livelihoods and well-being
Sustainable development	Sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." ¹⁶ GFRAS uses this term to describe a development that strives towards "a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations" (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal)

13 OECD. 2006. *The challenge of capacity development: working towards good practice*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

14 OECD. 1997. *National innovation systems*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

15 Dubrin, A.J. 2007. *Leadership: research findings, practice and skills*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

16 World Commission on Environment and Development. 1987. *Our common future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 43.

Annex B. History of GFRAS

GFRAS began operations in 2010. It evolved out of a series of discussions at international meetings (primarily the annual meetings of the Neuchâtel Initiative) where the need for a formal structure to proactively promote the development of rural advisory services was recognised, and various options were considered.

The forum is thus the result of several years of demand from and consultation between stakeholders in rural advisory services worldwide, including the Neuchâtel Initiative. The Neuchâtel Initiative was an informal group of people interested in extension that met on an annual basis from 1995 to 2010 to discuss, exchange, and jointly reflect on issues of importance in the field. The initiative also developed publications focused on common understanding of current issues in rural extension.

While the Neuchâtel Initiative was originally composed of European stakeholders working internationally, in 2005 they started to work more closely with southern partners such as the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) and the African regional farmer organisations.

In 2009 several stakeholders from the Neuchâtel Initiative, AFAAS, and international development organisations came together to discuss the need for a global forum to provide a voice for rural advisory services at the global level, which was a big gap. This idea was presented to and validated by the annual Neuchâtel meeting in Assisi, Italy that year. The Forum was launched in early 2010. For more information, see Table B-1 and Box 3 (p. 7).

Table B-1. Key GFRAS accomplishments, activities, and publications 2010–2015

2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services and Latin American Network for Rural Extension Services networks launched ➤ Strategy and charter developed ➤ <i>Mobilizing the Potential of Rural and Agricultural Extension</i> ➤ Worldwide extension study and directory of extension providers on web ➤ Participation in Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD I, Montpellier) ➤ Brief No. 1: <i>5 Key Areas for Mobilising the Potential of RAS</i> ➤ <i>RAS Worldwide</i>
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Guide to Evaluation of Rural Extension</i> ➤ Agricultural Extension in South Asia network launched ➤ Participation in Rio+20 ➤ <i>Building Knowledge Systems in Agriculture</i>
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Participation in GCARD II, Uruguay ➤ Brief No. 2: <i>Gender Equality in RAS</i> ➤ <i>The 'New Extensionist': Roles, Strategies, and Capacities to Strengthen Extension and Advisory Services</i>
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Integrating Nutrition in Extension and Advisory Services</i> ➤ <i>About the Possible Role of Rural Advisory Services in Disability-inclusive Development</i> (with GIZ) ➤ Mid-term review ➤ Caribbean Agricultural Extension Providers Network and European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services launched
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ New Extensionist Learning Kit introductory module produced ➤ Agricultural Extension in South Asia network directory of providers produced ➤ Global good practices initiative launched
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 20 <i>Global Good Practice</i> notes ➤ <i>GFRAS Policy Compendium on Extension</i> ➤ Brief No. 3: <i>Core Competencies of Individuals</i> ➤ <i>Producer Organisations in Rural Advisory Services: Evidence and Experiences</i>

Annex C. Development process for the strategic framework 2016–2025

Approach and guiding principles

The strategic framework was elaborated in a participatory and transparent way that included online consultations, feedback rounds, and validation by various stakeholders. The GFRAS steering committee wanted the regional networks and other members and affiliates to have ownership and a strong voice, rather than to lead a process that was

biased towards the GFRAS secretariat or the forum's donors.

The approach was based on the idea of the balanced-scorecard,¹⁷ a well-known strategy tool, that analyses and matches four interrelated levels of an organisation: the customer perspective, the financial perspective, the learning and growth perspective, and the business process perspective (Figure C-1).

The customer perspective

- The needs, expectations, and satisfaction of the affected stakeholders – including all actors potentially affected by GFRAS' activities

The financial perspective

- Budget, and priorities of donors and funders

The learning and growth perspective

- The attitudes of networks to both individual and corporate self-improvement

The business process perspective

- The efficiency and feasibility of internal business processes

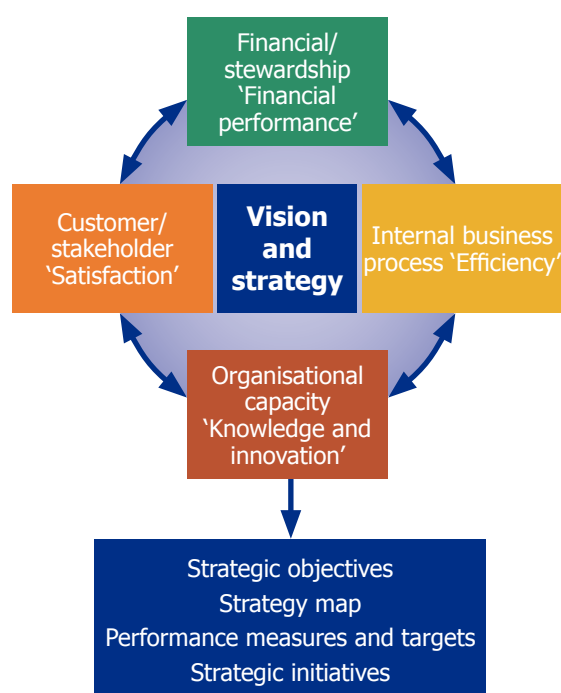


Figure C-1. Methodological approach for strategic framework development

Source: GFRAS.

Stakeholders involved

The following groups of stakeholders were involved in the process, each with different responsibilities and duties.

1. *Strategic guidance*: The GFRAS steering committee was the body providing main guidance on processes and content, and delegated operational activities to the core group.
2. *Operational core group*: The elaboration process of the strategic framework was guided and structured by a group consisting of the GFRAS secretariat members, a steering committee member, and an external strategic advisor. They elaborated tools and methods, defined approaches, and convened face-to-face and online meetings and exchanges.
3. *Group of regional and sector representatives*: A group of 20–30 regional and sector representatives was regularly

¹⁷ See <http://balancedscorecard.org/Resources/About-the-Balanced-Scorecard>

consulted to approve and validate steps and to provide insights from their regions and sectors.

to everyone interested to participate, to ensure a sound foundation and capture the most important needs and demands for the new strategic framework.

4. *Open community*: At several moments in the process, the discussion was open

Table C-1. Process and results of developing the GFRAS strategic framework 2016–2025

Step	Activity	Responsible group	Time frame	Results
1	Online discussions on needs and demands (with approximately 200 stakeholders from all regions and sectors)	Regional and sector representatives	December 2014 to January 2015	First open assessment on broad areas of concern of GFRAS affiliates and members
2	Open online demand assessment validation and discussion	Open community	January 2015	Results from step 1 discussed and validated; draft idea on vision, mission, and strategic fields
3	Analyse results of demand assessment	Core group	February 2015	First draft of strategy content ready for discussion at the GFRAS steering committee meeting
4	Discussion and workshop at the GFRAS steering committee meeting	Steering committee	1–2 March 2015	GFRAS vision, mission, strategic fields, and general outline of the strategic framework, as well as roadmap and further steps discussed and validated
5	Elaboration of draft outline, considering steps 1–4	Core group	March–May 2015	First draft of text of strategic framework ready for discussion by the steering committee
6	Review outline from a perspective of capacities and competencies	Steering committee	May–June 2015	A realistic outline of the strategic framework, considering available resources and competencies
6	Review of GFRAS' first five years	External expert	May–June 2015	An overview of processes and results at GFRAS in the past five years / an overview of what processes work well

Step	Activity	Responsible group	Time frame	Results
7	Financial analysis	Core group and selected regional and sector representatives	June 2015	Overview of financial situation and average numbers to match demands and content of strategic framework
8	Matching of steps 1–7 and finalising strategic framework	Steering committee	July–August 2015	Finalised strategic framework approved by steering committee
9	Approval and validation of strategic framework	Steering committee and open community (at 6th GFRAS Annual Meeting)	September 2015	Validated GFRAS strategic framework 2016–2025
10	Edit, lay out, and translate strategic framework; elaborate accompanying documents	Steering committee and core group	September–December 2015	Finalise strategic framework and accompanying documents
11	Publish and enact strategic framework		January 2016	Publish strategic framework and accompanying documents

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