

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Core Group/Task Force for the Development of the GFRAS Strategic Framework (2026-2030)

1. Background

The Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) is renewing its strategic framework for 2026-2030. This framework will guide GFRAS in responding to the needs of its members, aligning with external opportunities and constraints, and strengthening its role within Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS). The renewal process will be participatory and inclusive, ensuring broad input from all relevant stakeholders.

2. Purpose of the Core Group/Task Force

The Core Group/Task Force is established to lead the development of the GFRAS Strategic Framework (2026-2030). Its members will:

- Provide expertise, insights, and recommendations for the strategic framework.
- Ensure a participatory approach by incorporating inputs from GFRAS members, affiliates, and external stakeholders.
- Support the methodological and analytical process, ensuring alignment with GFRAS' mission and vision.
- Guide the strategic development through structured discussions, analysis, and validation processes.

3. Composition

The Core Group/Task Force will be composed of:

- **Nine active GFRAS members**, representing:
 - 3 members from Country Fora/National Platforms
 - 3 members from (Sub-)Regional Networks
 - 3 members from Partner Organizations
- **Facilitator**: The GFRAS Secretariat will provide process facilitation, as well as support with documentation and backstopping, led by the focal point, Hlami Ngwenya.

4. Selection Criteria for Task Force Members

Candidates for the Core Group/Task Force should meet the following criteria, which each criteria weighing 20% in the final decision:

- **Professional Background**

- Demonstrated **involvement in extension and advisory services** (EAS) and food systems.
- Good understanding of **the fragmentation in advisory services delivery** and its implications.
- Experience working with **multi-stakeholder partnerships** in rural advisory services.
- **Financial and Strategic Management Experience**
 - Experience **acquiring, disbursing, or managing multi-partner funds** for extension and advisory services.
 - General knowledge of **funding mechanisms in extension** and opportunities for resource mobilization.
 - Ability to assess **budget constraints and financial sustainability** for advisory services.
- **Knowledge and Analytical Skills**
 - Experience contributing to **policy discussions on rural advisory services**.
 - Understanding of **regional and global trends** affecting agricultural knowledge systems.
 - Ability to contribute to **SWOT analysis and strategic planning** in the extension sector.
 - The Task Force members are expected to **bring their regional perspective** into the working group, to ensure the diversity of the GFRAS community is represented within the Task Force.
- **Commitment and Availability**
 - Willingness to dedicate time for **monthly online meetings** (2 hours per session, once a month, plus any communication or preparation work for the meeting).
 - Availability to participate in the **face-to-face writeshop** at the GFRAS Annual Meeting in Senegal (tentatively November 14-15, 2025). Costs will be covered by the GFRAS Global Secretariat, according to the GFRAS rules and regulations.
 - Commitment to **engage with the broader GFRAS community** through consultations, surveys, and discussions.
- **Collaboration and Communication**
 - Strong teamwork and **consensus-building skills**.
 - Experience engaging with diverse stakeholders, including **farmers, farmers' organizations, policymakers, donors, research institutions, and/or the private sector**.
 - Ability to communicate effectively in English (knowledge of additional languages is a plus).

5. Responsibilities of Members

Members of the Core Group/Task Force will:

- Attend **monthly online meetings** (approximately 2 hours per session).
- Participate in a **face-to-face writeshop** at the GFRAS Annual Meeting in Senegal (tentatively November 14-15, 2025).
- Provide input into different dimensions of the strategic framework, including:
 - **Customer perspective:** Understanding member needs and expectations.
 - **Financial perspective:** Evaluating funding opportunities and constraints.

- **Learning and growth perspective:** Assessing capacities within the GFRAS network.
- **Business process perspective:** Ensuring operational efficiency.
- Engage with the broader GFRAS community through consultations, surveys, and discussions.
- Review and validate draft versions of the strategic framework before its finalization.

6. Methodological Approach

The development of the strategic framework will be based on the **Balanced Scorecard approach**, analyzing four interrelated perspectives:

1. **Customer Perspective:** Demand assessment via online discussions, clustering, and validation in face-to-face meetings.
2. **Financial Perspective:** Budget analysis through literature reviews, past spending analysis, and donor consultations.
3. **Learning & Growth Perspective:** SWOT analysis to assess capacities in regional networks and working groups.
4. **Business Process Perspective:** SWOT analysis to evaluate organizational efficiency.

This and other operational elements in regards how the Task Force will function and carry out its activities will be decided by the group, once the first meeting kicks off, including how to engage the broader GFRAS community.

7. Duration & Commitment

- The Core Group/Task Force will be active from **2025 until the official launch of the Strategic Framework in 2026**.
- Members are expected to dedicate time for **monthly online meetings**, preparatory work, and the **in-person writeshop in 2025**.

8. Reporting & Accountability

- The Core Group/Task Force will report to the GFRAS Secretariat and Board.
- Regular updates will be shared with the broader GFRAS community through an online platform.

9. Application

- Interested members should submit an **Expression of Interest (EoI)** detailing how they see their contribution to the group, to ingrid.oliveira@g-fras.org, by 12 March 2025.

10. Ethical Considerations

Members are expected to:

- Act in the best interest of GFRAS and its stakeholders.
- Maintain transparency and integrity throughout the process.

- Respect confidentiality when handling sensitive information.

10. Selection Process

To ensure transparency, inclusivity, and credibility in the selection of the Task Force members, the following selection process will be implemented:

- A Selection Committee will be composed of five members, ensuring a balanced representation from different GFRAS constituencies. The committee will include: one GFRAS Secretariat representative, one Board Member, one Regional Network Representative, one Country Forum representative, and one Partner Organization representative. None of these representatives are allowed to apply to be part of the Strategy Task Force.
- Persons interested to volunteer for the selection committee are encouraged to send an email to carl.larsen@g-fras.org, and must work closely with the GFRAS network.
- If a conflict of interest is identified, the affected committee member must recuse themselves from evaluating the relevant application(s) or from participating in discussions and decisions related to the affected applicant(s).
- The Selection Committee will review all submitted applications using a standardized online scorecard. The scorecard will be based on the selection criteria outlined in Section 4, including professional background, financial and strategic management experience, knowledge and analytical skills, commitment and availability, and collaboration and communication abilities.
- Each committee member will independently score the applications to ensure objectivity and fairness.
- If the number of qualified applicants exceeds the available slots, the Selection Committee will convene to discuss the scores and reach a consensus-based decision. The final selection will be made based on the highest scores, ensuring regional, sectoral, and institutional diversity within the Task Force.
- Selected candidates will be notified privately, and the final list of Task Force members will be announced to the broader GFRAS community through appropriate communication channels.