

## 2<sup>nd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting

### November 13-14, 2011, Nairobi

### Minutes

#### Objectives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting

To develop participants' capacity for strengthening regional networks

1. To provide a platform for regional networks to share lessons learnt on networking and reflect on ways to commit members on sub-regional and national level as a way to ensure impact
2. To facilitate GRFAS affiliates to hold discussions on needs for inter-regional networking and identify actions to improve it
3. To share with participants the ongoing activities in the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services - GFRAS (evaluation, advocacy, capacity strengthening in Rural Advisory Services - RAS) and develop ways to contribute to them
4. To elaborate on the recommendations for the International [Conference](#) on Extension

#### Overall Agenda

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##### Sunday, 13 November: Regional networking – good practices

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- Opening (welcome, objectives, programme)
- Regional networking
- National and international programmes and projects on RAS

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##### Monday, 14 November: Current issues in RAS – thematic working groups

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- Introduction to GFRAS strategic framework
  - Evaluation
  - Advocacy
  - Capacity strengthening
  - Wrap up and closing
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#### Abbreviations

AFAAS	African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services
AIS	Agricultural Innovation System
APIRAS	Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
IALB	Internationale Akademie land- und hauswirtschaftlicher Beraterinnen und Berater (International Academy for Agricultural Advisory Services and Home Economics)

M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
RAS	Rural Advisory Services
RELASER	Red Latinoamericana para Servicios de Extensión Rural (Latin-American Network for Rural Extension)
RESCAR-AOC	Réseau des Services de Conseil Agricole et Rural d’Afrique de l’Ouest et du Centre (West- and Central African Network on Rural Advisory Services)

## Sunday, 13 November: Regional networking – good practices

### Opening

*Silim Nahdy*, chair of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services ([GFRAS](#)) and executive director of the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services ([AFAAS](#)) opened the 2<sup>nd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting. Silim emphasised the important role of rural advisory services (RAS) to meet global development challenges such as food security and climate change. Networking in GFRAS and in regional fora contributes considerably to strengthened RAS. Silim recognised the diversity of participants in regards to origin and professional background.

*Kristin Davis*, GFRAS executive secretary, welcomed participants to the 2<sup>nd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting. She pointed out the momentum of gathering almost 140 stakeholders from over 50 countries across the world. Kristin invited participants to feeding results of the discussions in the subsequent International Conference “[Innovations in Extension and Advisory Services](#)”, 15-18 November 2011 in Nairobi, and beyond. She expressed her gratitude to all actors supporting GFRAS and the regional and sub-regional RAS networks.

### Regional networking: good practice

#### Introduction

*Kristin Davis*, Executive Secretary of GFRAS, introduced the participants to GFRAS networking activities, which are based on GFRAS’ [strategic framework](#):

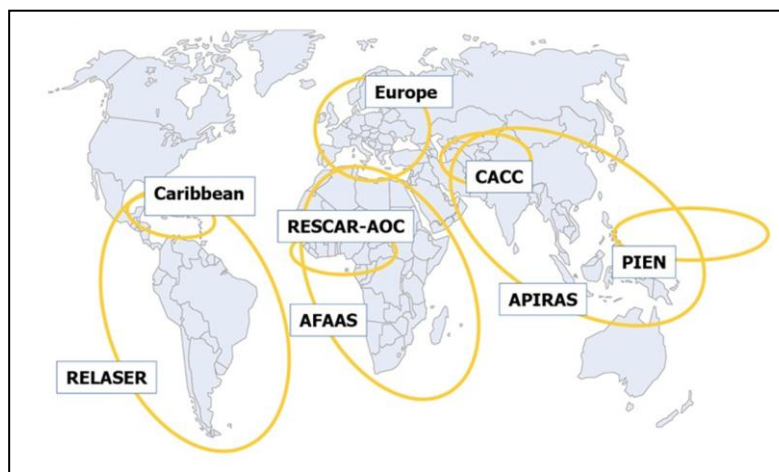
*GFRAS vision*: seeing rural advisory services effectively contributing to the sustainable reduction of hunger and poverty worldwide

*GFRAS mission*: providing advocacy and leadership on pluralistic, demand-driven RAS within the global development agenda.

*GFRAS functions*:

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

By strengthening networking, GFRAS – a forum consisting of affiliates and members – contributes to experience sharing, learning from good practices, encouragement, and finally strengthened capacities both on global and on regional level.



## Panel Discussion

During a moderated panel discussion, four representatives of RAS fora shared their experience and lessons learnt on networking: *Virginia R. Cardenas*, Asia-Pacific Islands RAS network ([APIRAS](#)), *Kristin Davis*, executive secretary of GFRAS, *Emilio Ruz*, Latin-American Network for Rural Extension ([RELASER](#)), and *Silim M. Nahdy*, African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services ([AFAAS](#)).

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting in 2010, significant achievements have been made in regards to networking in RAS. They include the formation and functioning of a new regional network in Asia, [APIRAS](#), and of sub-regional fora in francophone Africa (RESCAR-AOC) and the Caribbean. Those networks that were already in existence ([AFAAS](#), [RELASER](#), Central Asia and [Pacific Islands](#) sub-regional networks) have undergone consolidation, and the German-speaking European RAS Network, [IALB](#), was more closely linked to GFRAS. In Africa, new country fora were created at national level. As GFRAS members, regional and sub-regional fora have contributed to GFRAS activities and outputs such as the evaluation [guide](#), advocacy, and capacity strengthening.

The panellists agreed that networking is an opportunity to create change and improve the rural environment by influencing people's behaviour and political agendas and by creating exchange between producers, extension, education, and research. Networking creates important momentum that strongly encourages RAS actors in their work.

The inception of the young RAS fora was supported by the commitment of development partners, such as donor agencies, and the integration into the RAS community through GFRAS. Even though all RAS fora had a successful start, they also experienced challenges:

- Networking is time-intensive as it requires a high degree of participation, communication, and negotiation with partners in different time zones, as well as complicated logistics. As a consequence, reaching visible outputs in a short time can be challenging.
- Fundraising is difficult for new structures, but funds are necessary for implementing activities and dealing with logistic issues
- Bringing together diverse RAS stakeholders requires credibility and issues attractive to participants.

Experience of the panellists shows that several elements facilitate the creation and management of young RAS fora:

- Mobilising strong leaders: getting a core group of committed and knowledgeable "champions" to promote the forum's work
- Formulating a clear vision, mission, and objectives
- Initiating links and partnerships, which can also facilitate the access to seed-money
- Including diverse stakeholders in the fora by using participatory approaches and conducting broad consultations
- Supplementing external funding by local resources
- Ensuring an institutional commitment behind individual members

The creation of internal and external visibility is key to attract stakeholders and funds. Panellists advised the elaboration of quick products presented to a wide public by public launching, using a corporate identity, website, and other communication tools. In order to create awareness about the forum and to get active responses it is important to proactively contact potential partners and high-level stakeholders.

Panellists emphasised that diversity is not only a challenge but also a reality and opportunity. All RAS fora have to learn how to deal with diversity, gathering stakeholders with similar interests. In Africa, the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme ([CAADP](#)) is a unifying factor that facilitates the collaboration of different actors. For young RAS fora, it is helpful to create an overview on stakeholders by elaborating a matrix and database of contacts. Finally, working in a diverse field requires respect for different sectors and their ways of operating.

In order to make success persistent, fora need both clear structures and content activities. Their members should be connected around topics of interest, and activities should have concrete products that are well-communicated.



*Panel discussion*

Manuel Flury, [SDC](#), concluded the panel discussion by summarising and reflecting on the inputs. He pointed out that functioning networks are more than linked actors: A network that is contributing to long-term change relies rather on shared interest leading to horizontal exchange of knowledge and information than on hierarchies. In order to ensure ownership and a degree of independence, Manuel advised networks to strike a balance between internally-created finances (“hot money”) and externally-contributed funds (“cool money”). Finally, Manuel was impressed by the commitment of the presented networks and motivated participants to keep the momentum of the 2<sup>nd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting throughout the entire year.

**Group Work**

Participants from similar (sub-) regions discussed in groups new insights from the panel discussion and gave recommendations on how the fora can improve their networking activities:

Recommendations to regional networks	Recommendations to the GFRAS steering committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Link networks within the regions to better organise sub-regional patchworks</li> <li>▪ Strengthen capacity to build a critical mass of professionals who support RAS; strengthen capacities of capacity developers themselves</li> <li>▪ Create visible products: e.g. AFAAS-branded publications; project the image of APIRAS</li> <li>▪ Create (minimal) formal structures</li> <li>▪ Acknowledge diversity as an opportunity: diversity of policies, languages, stakeholder groups, etc. should be taken as a chance to learn from each other; avoid uniformity</li> <li>▪ Technical support to translate material on RAS to languages such as French</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen collaboration between networks: provide a global database of expertise, financing opportunities, regional networks, and other information; activate a virtual platform for inter-regional experience sharing; maintain the GFRAS annual meeting; create thematic groups among regions and promote north-south and south-south cooperation in order to link networks</li> <li>▪ Create connections and links between international development institutions (including technical and financial assistance, research) and regional networks</li> <li>▪ Support the development of (sub-) regional networks by facilitating extension</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Embrace the principle of subsidiarity</li> <li>▪ Galvanize action: fundraising for clearly identified outputs, capacity strengthened with purpose</li> </ul>	<p>summits and by capacity strengthening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitate access to information: consolidate the Worldwide Extension Study</li> <li>▪ Advocacy: provide a repository of arguments on the role and importance of RAS; mobilise and distribute funds for common advocacy interests</li> <li>▪ Support regional networks' visibility: increase visibility to financial partners, facilitate funding for translation, publicise documents such as the evaluation guide</li> </ul>
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## National and International Programmes and Projects on RAS

Participants from public, private, and civil society RAS, research, policy, and rural development in general presented their work during a poster exhibition. Participants had the opportunity to discuss directly with regional network focal points.

### Monday, 14 November: Current issues in RAS – thematic working groups

#### Introduction to GFRAS Strategic Framework

*Kristin Davis*, GFRAS secretariat, introduced the second day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting, which focused on current issues in RAS. Based on its three functions (see page 2), GFRAS members are gathered in working groups around three themes: advocacy, evaluation, and capacity strengthening. The 2<sup>nd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting gave GFRAS affiliates the opportunity to learn about and discuss these themes.

#### Evaluation

*Sanne Chipeta*, [Knowledge Centre for Agriculture](#), and *Ian Christoplos*, [Glemminge Development Research](#), presented activities of the [GFRAS working group on extension evaluation](#). In order to document the value of extension and foster learning, better monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is needed. This will lead to improved extension and more appropriate investment in RAS. In order to support stakeholders to choose the most appropriate approach and to conduct evaluations, GFRAS elaborated an [evaluation guide](#), which is partially based on a [literature review of extension evaluation methods](#) and a [meta evaluation of extension evaluations](#). The guide's purpose is to orient those involved in evaluations in the context of pluralistic and complex RAS as part of agricultural innovation systems (AIS), and does not serve as additional toolbox. Feedback on the guide showed that the user group was defined too broadly, additional guidance should deal with monitoring RAS, reference is needed to how-to manuals, and a set of potential impact indicators could be added. Furthermore, RAS capacity for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) needs to be strengthened as part of future efforts.

During a parallel session on evaluation, advocacy, and capacity strengthening, participants worked in regionally mixed groups on thematic recommendations for regional networks, GFRAS and inter-regional networking, and the [International Conference on Extension](#). Recommendations on evaluations are listed below.

Recommendations to regional networks	Recommendations to GFRAS and inter-regional networking	Recommendations to the International Conference on Extension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support the use of the evaluation guide: encourage pilot testing and feedback</li> <li>▪ Disseminate the guide: identify different user groups and create their awareness; create and maintain e-fora for exchange of experiences on extension and evaluation</li> <li>▪ Improve M&amp;E: document and share M&amp;E tools that are useful for practitioners; document and share good practices on M&amp;E; support capacity strengthening on M&amp;E at national level; advocate for new extension policies to integrate M&amp;E; encourage national fora to adopt frameworks on M&amp;E (as opposed to projects)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Finalise the evaluation guide: support regional events for feedback on the guide's utility and users' needs; add criteria, visuals, factsheets, and a decision tree for choosing methodologies</li> <li>▪ Support the use of the evaluation guide: mobilise funds for pilot testing at national level; provide a roster of experts on extension evaluation on the GFRAS website and link to M&amp;E learning tools</li> <li>▪ Disseminate the guide: elaborate a policy brief based on the guide; raise donors' awareness to commission evaluations; translate the guide according to regional needs</li> <li>▪ Improve M&amp;E: act as a knowledge broker (collecting, managing, and sharing relevant experience), add an annex on "who is who"; provide a menu of key questions to be chosen for different types of evaluations; identify gaps in existing M&amp;E frames; support regions in capacity strengthening on M&amp;E for extension workers and institutions; advocate for more resources for M&amp;E in RAS and for extension policies on which M&amp;E can build up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contribute to the dissemination of the evaluation guide</li> <li>▪ Mobilise funds for testing the guide through regional networks</li> <li>▪ Contribute to the improvement of the guide through M&amp;E, assessments, and project design</li> </ul>



Participants during group discussions



Participants during the poster exhibition (day 1)

## Advocacy

Stuart Coupe, [Practical Action](#), introduced participants to [evidence based policy advocacy](#) for [mobilising the potential of RAS](#). He indicated that changing policy environments is rarely a linear process and referred to the [ODI Rapid Framework's](#) spheres in which policy and research are related: external influences, political context, evidence, and links between the communities. Policy coalitions and currently valid policy arrangements, especially the allocation and division of resources, the rules of the game, and existing policy discourses were presented as important elements for policy advocacy. Stuart pointed to different notions of evidence by researchers and policy makers, which need to be considered in advocacy activities. He concluded that evidence is a necessary but not sufficient element of policy influencing. Changing a policy environment requires alliance and coalition building, which is a long term commitment, but also the ability to respond quickly to emerging opportunities. Stakeholder analysis and the elaboration of policy briefs sharpen approaches and strategies in advocacy work.

In the group work session, participants gave the following recommendations on policy influencing:

Recommendations to regional networks	Recommendations to GFRAS and inter-regional networking	Recommendations to the International Conference on Extension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collect and communicate evidence on functioning pluralistic RAS</li> <li>▪ Provide space for exchange on functioning pluralistic RAS at national level; establish and/or strengthen sub-regional and national fora</li> <li>▪ Inclusion: continue to develop a multi-stakeholder approach in regional fora</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commission evidence based material/studies</li> <li>▪ Facilitate a dialogue on pluralistic RAS at national and regional levels; ensure the representation of regional networks at international dialogues on extension and continue to support regional networks</li> <li>▪ Advocate for pluralism in RAS based on collected evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognize GRFAS as the legitimate global body to lobby for RAS</li> <li>▪ All conference participants to commit to advocate for increased investment in extension</li> </ul>

## Capacity Strengthening

Virginia Cardenas, [APIRAS](#), presented the GFRAS concept on [capacity strengthening](#). She contextualised RAS as part of AIS that supports innovation as broker between different

stakeholder groups. In order to create development and value, it was recognised that individuals, institutions, organisations, and networks need specific capacities. The [GFRAS working group](#) on capacity strengthening was created in 2011 and started a consultation to identify capacity needs. In 2012, capacity strengthening materials will be elaborated.

Participants recommended to the regional networks, the GFRAS steering committee and the International Conference on Extension the following:

Recommendations to regional networks	Recommendations to GFRAS and inter-regional networking	Recommendations to the International Conference on Extension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exchange knowledge and experience: organise exchange visits; establish e-based exchange platforms</li> <li>▪ Provide evidence: test and document innovative capacity strengthening approaches</li> <li>▪ Communicate effective capacity strengthening: document successful initiatives at pre- and in-service levels, systematic packaging and dissemination of good practices</li> <li>▪ Provide leadership: facilitate the development of a compelling vision for systemic capacity strengthening with performance indicators; identify a strategy for capacity strengthening on advocacy</li> <li>▪ Implement capacity strengthening: Identify the right coalition partners and lead trainers at national levels</li> <li>▪ Funding: Establish funds at national level for capacity strengthening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocate for the importance of capacity strengthening in RAS, enhanced investment in capacity strengthening, and a paradigm change towards systemic approaches to RAS education, using documented information</li> <li>▪ Exchange knowledge and experience: identify and share quality training and extension material; facilitate information sharing through cooperation and collaboration of regional networks; create a GFRAS blog for sharing experience and learning; identify and exchange information and contacts (facilitators) on capacity strengthening in RAS</li> <li>▪ Provide evidence: identify extension innovations for field testing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discuss and clarify the concept of innovation in agriculture</li> <li>▪ Recognize the importance of strengthening the capacity of capacity developers: endorse a declaration of the importance of improving education for RAS providers at pre-service and in-service levels</li> <li>▪ Identify needs and innovative approaches in capacity strengthening</li> <li>▪ Provide a strategic framework for implementing capacity strengthening programmes at all levels</li> </ul>

## Wrap up and Closing

### Wrap-up

Participants discussed their individual lessons from the 2<sup>nd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting. Randomly selected participants encouraged networks on global and regional level to continue their efforts, to keep their multi-stakeholder orientation, and to consider the recommendations from participants in their 2012 activities. Participants were motivated to actively promote RAS. They



formulated demand to access hard copies of the evaluation guide and to use it for implementation.

*Kristin Davis*, GFRAS secretariat, thanked participants, partners, and staff for their active participation and support. She promised to consider recommendations in the GFRAS work plan 2012 and encouraged participants to be proactive representatives of GFRAS at the International Conference on Extension. She emphasized that GFRAS is made out of its affiliates and members, so every participant can contribute to the success of GFRAS.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting 2012**

The [next GFRAS Annual Meeting](#) will be hosted by APIRAS. It will take place on 26-28 September 2012 in Asia. Participants of the 2<sup>nd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting proposed the following topics to be considered at the 3<sup>rd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting:

- Inclusive RAS: access to RAS, especially for women and youth; linking with mainstream extension services
- Extension in AIS: linking research and extension
- Systemic approach to pluralistic RAS: making pluralistic extension systems function; unleashing systemic blockages in capacity strengthening in RAS systems
- Financing RAS: mobilising financial and technical resources; low-cost approaches to capacity development for extension workers
- Traditional and modern tools: Traditional and modern knowledge integration in extension and knowledge sharing; enhancing RAS through the use of ICT/ICTs4RAS; virtual forums/social networks

### **Closing**

Magdalena Blum, Co-Chair of the GFRAS Steering Committee, closed the meeting by looking back to the 1<sup>st</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting. Within one year, GFRAS has been consolidated and regional networks emerged. This has changed the institutional landscape of extension worldwide and shows that RAS has emancipated by taking the future into their hands. Magdalena hopes this process continues based on demand and leading to products and impact for improved situations for the rural population. She asked the participants to take the spirit of the 2nd GFRAS annual meeting to their countries to strengthen networking at local and national level.

### **Annex**

Additional documents, including the list of participants, can be found at <http://www.g-fras.org/en/events/gfras-events>