

## 4<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting

### The Role of Private Sector and Producer Organisations in Rural Advisory Services

24-26 September 2013, Berlin, Germany

#### Minutes

##### Abbreviations

AESA	Agricultural Extension in South Asia
AFAAS	African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services
AIS	Agricultural Innovation System
APIRAS	Asia Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services
BMZ	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
CACC	Central Asia and Caucasus Countries
CAEPNet	Caribbean Extension Providers Network
CaFAN	Caribbean Farmers Network
CECRA	Certificate for European Consultants in Rural Areas
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
COMPACI	Competitive African Cotton Initiative
CORAF	Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Development Agricoles (West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development)
EUFRAS	European Forum for Farm and Rural Advisory Services
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBA	Farm Business Advisors
FFE	Farmer to Farmer Extension
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
GCARD	Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development
GDPRD	Global Donor Platform for Rural Development

GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (German Development Cooperation)
IALB	Internationale Akademie land- und hauswirtschaftlicher Beraterinnen und Berater (International Academy of Rural Advisors)
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Centre
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
INTA	Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (Argentine National Institute for Agricultural Technology)
KIT	Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (Royal Tropical Institute)
LAB	Agricultural Associations Brandenburg
MACS	Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists of the G20
NASFAM	National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PIRAS	Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services
RAS	Rural Advisory Services
RESCAR-AOC	Réseau de Services de Conseil Réseau des services de conseil agricole et rural d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre (West and Central African Network for Agricultural and Rural RAS)
RELASER	Red Latinoamericana para Servicios de Extensión Rural (Latin American Network for Agricultural Extension Services)
SAI	Sustainable Agriculture Initiative
SARAS	South African Rural Advisory Services
SFRAS	Swiss Forum for Rural Advisory Services
WFO	World Farmers' Organisation

## Objectives of the 4<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting

The objectives of the 4th GFRAS Annual Meeting were to:

- Understand and agree on the role of private sector and producer organisations in RAS
- Strengthen RAS networks in mobilising human and financial resources and planning and implementing networking
- Update participants on progress in GFRAS

## Participants

At the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), held on 24-26 September 2013 in Berlin, Germany, 160 participants from 62 different countries joined together. The breakdown of participants was as follows: From the regions, 30% international development partners, 23% Europe, 18% Asia, 16% Africa, 9% Latin America, 4% Caribbean Islands, 1% North America, 1% Pacific Islands. From sectors, 34% international development partners and network secretariats, 19% public rural advisory services (RAS) and national agricultural administration, 12% higher education, 9% private RAS, 9% research, 6% producer organisations, 6% civil society, 1% media, 4% others. Gender balance was 35% female and 65% male.

## Presentations

All presentations and other inputs can be found at <http://www.g-fras.org/en/events/gfras-events/annual-meeting-germany-2013.html>.

## Side Events

Before the meeting, a number of side-events took place on 23 September:

- RAS Country Fora (African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services ([AFAAS](#)) & Red Latinoamericana para Servicios de Extensión Rural ([RELASER](#)))
- Exchange of Ideas for a Practice-oriented Knowledge Platform on Good Practices in Agricultural Extension (Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit ([GIZ](#)) & [GFRAS](#))
- Innovation in Family Farming and Rural Advisory Services (Food Agriculture Organization of the United Nations ([FAO](#)))
- Founding Meeting of the European Forum for Farm and Rural Advisory Services ([EUFRAS](#)) (Internationale Akademie land- und hauswirtschaftlicher Beraterinnen und Berater ([IALB](#)))
- Embedded Services as Modality for Sustainable RAS (Swiss Forum for Rural Advisory Services ([SFRAS](#)))
- Spotlight on Education and Training in Extension and Advisory Services ([GFRAS Consortium on Extension Education and Training](#))
- Donors' Approaches to Rural Advisory Services – from Local Solutions to Impact at Scale (Global Donor Platform for Rural Development ([GDPRD](#)))

The GFRAS website links to the results and reports of the side events at: <http://www.gfras.org/en/events/gfras-events/annual-meeting-germany-2013.html>.

## Opening (24 September)

**Francisco Aguirre**, GFRAS chair, opened the 4<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting by inviting participants to contribute to mutual learning and networking. Rural development is back on the international agenda, an opportunity that GFRAS affiliates and members should use to foster change in RAS. As requested by participants of the 3<sup>rd</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting and by regional networks, the 4<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting was planned to discuss private sector and producer organisations RAS, strengthen RAS networks, and update on progress in GFRAS.

Francisco thanked the German hosts of the meeting, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and GIZ, for their generous financial and intellectual support, and the International Academy of Rural Advisors (IALB) for the intensive preparation of the field trips.

GFRAS was founded four years ago to see RAS effectively contributing to the sustainable reduction of hunger and poverty worldwide. It consists of two stakeholder groups, the RAS Community and the International Development Institutions, which are both represented in the GFRAS steering committee. The GFRAS mission – to provide advocacy and leadership on RAS within the global development agenda – is implemented through three functions:

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

**Stefan Schmitz**, head of Division Rural Development, Agriculture and Food security of BMZ, highlighted the importance of RAS in German cooperation's efforts for poverty alleviation. In 2013, the German government allocated 10% of its budget to rural development and food security. BMZ' agricultural development strategy is based on six action areas: 1) agricultural training, 2) agricultural policy advice and institution building, 3) professionalising smallholder farming, 4) agricultural financing, 5) resource management, environmental protection and irrigation farming, and 6) cooperation with national and international enterprises. Reviving RAS is crucial to foster innovation and sustainable agriculture. After a focus of agricultural growth on input, irrigation, and land expansion 50 years ago, innovation contributes today to 75% of global agricultural production growth. Population dynamics and urbanisation, accompanied by changes in diet represent an opportunity for producers to access new markets, value chains, and knowledge. Access to land, water, finance, and knowledge are thereby fundamental. GFRAS is requested to discuss issues related to knowledge, concepts, and principles; the role of ICTs; the use of network approaches; roles and inter-linkages of the state and the private

sector; and good practices in RAS. Stefan Schmitz wished participants good success in translating their commitments into reality.

**Edda Albers**, president of IALB, introduced participants to the German-speaking network. IALB associates around 700 members from several European, mainly German speaking, countries. It fosters information and experience exchange in the field of rural education and advisory services by organising meetings and seminars. As a contribution to the development of qualifications and competences, IALB created the Certificate for European Consultants in Rural Areas (CECRA). Need-tailored modules are integrated into a standardised competence development scheme.

Since 1961, the success of IALB has been based on trust and mutual support in finding solutions for shared problems. Due to its network and experience, IALB was asked to contribute with the organisation of the field trips to the 4<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting. On 23 September, EUFRAS was founded, which will enrich GFRAS as new partner in Europe.



## The Role of Private Sector and Producer Organisations in Rural Advisory Services (24, 25, and 26 September)

### Keynote

**Regina Birner**, University of Hohenheim, Germany, presented a typology of RAS. She differentiated between the 1) public sector, consisting of government and administration, 2) private sector, including agribusiness and farm households, and 3) third sector, comprising membership organisations, cooperatives, and non-profit non-governmental organisations (NGOs), all having specific goals and problems. The consideration of RAS as public good and merit good with unclear value, as well as the structure of the smallholder farm sector leading to high transaction costs and limited market power result in market failures in agricultural extension. They can explain the weak role producer organisations and private sector have played in RAS.

As possible solution, Regina referred to institutional arrangements for RAS, differentiating between service provision and financing, which can both be delivered by all three RAS types. Institutional arrangements include contracting out by the public sector as

Provision of the service	Financing of the service				
	Public sector	Private sector: Farmers	Private sector: Companies	Third sector: NGOs	Third sector: FBOs
Public sector	Public extension	Fee-for-service extension	Private or third sector contracting extension agents from public sector		
Private sector: Companies	Publicly financed contracts or subsidies to service providers from private or third sector	Privatized extension, farmers pay fees	Information provided with sale of inputs	Extension agents from private company hired by NGOs	FBO contracting extension agent from company
Third sector: Non-governmental organizations - NGOs		Extension agents hired by NGO, farmers pay fees		Extension agents hired by NGO, service provided free of charge	
Third sector: Farmer-based organizations (FBOs)		Extension agents hired by FBO, farmers pay fees		NGO financing extension agents who are employed by FBO	Extension agents hired by FBO, service free to members



financer, voucher-based systems, and embedded services. Opportunities were seen in producer organisations, new technologies, integrated contract farming, and alternative financing. Regina closed by pointing to the need for evidence-based solutions and the functioning of all three types of RAS.

## Panel Debate

Representatives from the Caribbean Farmers Network (CaFAN), Chilean Milk Consortium Consorcio Lechero, Syngenta Foundation, Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform, World Farmers Organisation (WFO)/ National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM), and Regina Birner debated on the role of private sector and producer organisations in RAS. The cases show that producer organisations engage in

- Farmer to farmer extension and sharing of information, knowledge, and practices by linking farmers
- Connecting farmers to other actors in the agricultural innovation system (AIS) thus creating access to services and advice
- Advocating for agriculture and producers
- Promoting farmers in value chains through the creation of innovation and business ideas, participation in processing and marketing, and advocacy
- Facilitating access to assets and tools such as information and communication technologies (ICT)

Panellists explained that including small-scale farmers in RAS requires the capacity to deal with a high number of weakly organised partners and low formal education level.



In regards to financing RAS, the reality of producer organisations showed the need for complementary strategies: Fees generated through membership contributions, input and output marketing margins, and contract arrangements cover a part of actual service costs. Private project funding and donor contributions remain critical. Private sector panellists warned against dependency from private project funding. Even if kick-start contributions in cash or kind can help to strengthen economic partners, the private sector should focus on investment rather than structural strengthening and empowerment. Public and donor funding can be unreliable, as producer organisations experienced after changes in governments or donors' geographic focus. Panellists concluded that financial independence is a crucial aspect of sustainability that needs to be achieved in the longer term. Public and donor funding remain crucial in the process of establishing financial mechanisms and for the provision of public goods.

Sustainability can reflect the strength of producer organisations, but focus should be on sustainability of farmers' livelihoods. Public challenges such as climate change are considered dramatic by many producers, but rarely addressed by private sector RAS.

All panellists attached importance to cooperation between different types of RAS. Differences in sectorial cultures, power imbalances, and the creation of scale by producer organisations were noted as main challenges.

## Parallel Sessions 1: Types of Private Sector and Producer Organisations RAS

**Christopher Garforth**, University of Reading, presented results from a case study on institutional arrangements related to the vanilla innovation system in Uganda. After a decline of vanilla production due to the nationalisation of the processing factory, a local business man set up the Uganda Vanilla Network, including an organised extension system to promote all functions along the value chain. Services were paid by the company and comprised:

- Setting-up and training of farmer zonal leaders
- Creating access to information on vanilla production
- Encouraging feedback from farmers to the company
- Arrangements for input, material, and credit supply
- Organising a marketing system and ensuring quality

As a consequence, the innovation system attracted private buyers, financial institutions, and the national extension programme, and led to the creation of producer organisations and donor-funded projects. Key drivers of the dynamic were community based structures providing core services, existing mechanisms for community based ownership and participation, multiple communication channels, innovative advisory methods, entrepreneurs with a business idea, a well-resourced and connected champion, a supportive policy environment for private sector, the availability of a market with attractive prices, and existing farmers' demands based on their need to improve livelihoods.

**Fabio Maria Santucci**, University of Perugia, explained the role of private sector and producer organisation RAS in Italy. He differentiated between private profit-oriented providers and output processors, specifically:

- Input and machinery dealers and firms, providing embedded extension and some personalised advice
- Increasingly organised free-lance agronomists providing advice against payment
- Publishing houses giving general technical and economic information
- Firms accredited by the regional governments for vocational training, funded by the European Union
- Profit oriented processors and traders with contact agreements for embedded services

In regards to producer organisations, Fabio mentioned:

- General Unions providing information, exchange, advice and support on farm management, subsidies, social aspects, and recording for environmental and management requirements
- Commodity associations facilitating relationships to industries and once managing subsidies
- Organisations related to geographically indicated products, facilitating grassroots activities
- Cooperatives and their associations, providing political representation and lobbying, cooperation with research, access to inputs and credits, processing and marketing, advice and training in regards to production planning, organisational aspects, management, and agricultural practices

Fabio concluded that information needs in a diversified, subsidised agriculture are enormous. They call for pluralistic RAS and networking. The comparative advantages of private sector RAS are regular budgets and clear targets.

**Oladimeji Idowu Oladale**, North West University South Africa, presented research results on the roles of farmer groups, NGOs, and input dealers in Nigeria and South Africa. As comparative advantages of farmer groups, the study identified the provision of:

- Linkages to input supply and marketing structures
- Access and exchange of information on production practices
- Involvement in government policy formulation processes and acting as a pressure group

NGOs mainly provide:

- Access to agricultural information and fairs
- Group formation
- Capacity development in regards to agricultural practices and social aspects
- Access to microcredit

Input dealer services include:

- Information and training in regards to inputs
- Facilitation of testing and farmer to farmer exchange
- Linkages to other farmers and different actors in the value chain and AIS

Oladimeji emphasised the relevance of farmers' involvement for information sharing. As areas for improvement, he identified the organisation, integration, coordination, and capacity strengthening of producer and private sector organisations.

As a **conclusion** of the parallel session, participants identified six different types of private sector and producer organisation RAS providers: Producer associations, private advisors, civil society organisations, cooperatives, input dealers and processing firms, and public-private partnerships.

	<b>Comparative advantages</b>	<b>Limitations</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>Private sector RAS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fast and quality RAS</li> <li>▪ Close to farmers, flexible approaches</li> <li>▪ More resources than other types</li> <li>▪ Global knowledge base</li> <li>▪ Capacity to facilitate competition</li> <li>▪ Open for innovation</li> <li>▪ Independent from governments, lower bureaucracy, and higher permanence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Driven by company interest and profit maximisation, marginalise farmer interests</li> <li>▪ Focus on commodities and cash crops</li> <li>▪ Partial advice, no provision of public good services</li> <li>▪ Risk of neglecting women and small-scale farmers</li> <li>▪ Due to size limited link to research</li> <li>▪ In some countries non-existent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adhere to corporate social responsibility principles through practice</li> <li>▪ Be transparent on what to offer</li> <li>▪ Include women in commercialisation</li> <li>▪ Apply an integrated farm management approach and team building</li> <li>▪ Consider environmental and social issues</li> <li>▪ Work within national policy frameworks</li> </ul>
<b>Producer organisations RAS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Capacity to tailor members' needs, easily demand-driven</li> <li>▪ High level of trust between advisor and farmer</li> <li>▪ Proximity to farmers</li> <li>▪ Unconditional, unbiased advice</li> <li>▪ Diversified functions, including marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High managerial and organisational requirements to less skilled volunteers</li> <li>▪ Slow processes</li> <li>▪ Limited information base and quality</li> <li>▪ Limited financial resources, donor driven</li> <li>▪ Risk of focusing on cash-crops and underrepresentation of women</li> <li>▪ Possible exclusion of social groups and minorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adhere to flexibility</li> <li>▪ Include women in commercialisation</li> <li>▪ Apply an integrated farm management approach and team building</li> <li>▪ Consider environmental and social issues</li> <li>▪ Work within national policy frameworks</li> </ul>

**Participants recommended to GFRAS as a network to:**

- Increase evidence and understanding of the private sector RAS, identify and disseminate good RAS practices
- Promote capacity strengthening of producer organisations and core competencies for all types of RAS
- Advocate for monitoring of RAS systems
- Work towards harmonised standards for advisory services
- Promote public-private partnerships
- Be present in policy debates and dialogue

## **Parallel Session 2: Mechanisms to Strengthen Producer Organisations' Roles and Capacities in RAS**

**Magdalena Blum**, FAO, emphasised the role of producer organisations in supply and demand of RAS. Demand-led extension based on exchange within and between producer organisations increases relevance and accountability of RAS, whereas pluralism raises the likelihood that RAS meets a diversity of demands. Mechanisms to organise the demand, and financial mechanisms to support the process of organising demand and to enable smallholders to pay for services, are required to strengthen producer organisations in their role as drivers of the demand side of RAS. Demand-led RAS entails a change in producers' attitude from receiving to proactively seeking advice, options to directly access information and knowledge, capacities to contribute to interactive knowledge exchange, and producer organisations' involvement in monitoring and evaluation. On the supply side, producer organisations can play a crucial role in representing farmers in extension and innovation systems, and as service providers.

RAS has the task to promote producer organisations in fulfilling their roles at the demand and supply side of extension. On the demand side, Magdalena identified capacity development, financial contributions, and access to information on who provides what services under what condition as key challenges. On the supply side, she pointed to the need to consider producer organisations as partners and clients instead of beneficiaries, to engage all farmers, to emphasise the brokerage role of RAS, and to design services that are lean, flexible, and multidisciplinary enough to respond to demands. Service providers need to have a marketing strategy and endorse transparency on what they can provide under what conditions.

**Jean-Pierre Busogoro**, Belgian Development Agency Rwanda, discussed the efficient use of Farmer Field Schools (FFS) as a participatory extension approach, which is based on non-formal adult education methods increasing the farmers' decision making skills. Groups of farmers are engaged in season-long discovery-based learning around a study plot. Learning has a focus on a specific topic and is guided by a curriculum that addresses locally identified challenges. The process is guided by a facilitator. Group dynamics play a crucial role. Farmers, extension providers, and researchers meet to create a good understanding of the production system in a participatory way, which guarantees demand orientation in RAS. The case of a Rwandan FFS illustrated the selection of FFS facilitators amongst the farmers' community, the training of the trainers, and the season-long learning process considering farmers' needs.

FFS are an appropriate approach for empowering and mobilising farmers and creating a forum that integrates research, extension, and farmers while promoting productivity increase, on-farm conservation of genetic resources, and availability of qualified RAS providers nearby.

**Steven Franzel**, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), presented lessons from Farmer to Farmer Extension (FFE), defined as "provision of training by farmers, to farmers, often through the creation of a structure of farmer trainers" and comprising a range of approaches and objectives. FFE is well-suited to smallholder farmers who learn most efficiently from peers, and to initiatives involving producer organisations. FFE is attractive for extension to increase outreach, reduce costs, and empower farmers, especially women. It can improve the accountability of extension systems to local communities as long as trainers are carefully selected and evaluated.

The motivation to become a farmer trainer is mainly based on altruism and interest in gaining knowledge, social status, networks, project benefits, and income. This corresponds to the motivation to remain a trainer, which has an increased focus on income and meeting demands. As constraints, Steven identified high expectation of benefits and drop out of trainers. He highlighted the importance of finding low cost ways of motivating farmer trainers. Cash payments are generally not necessary, not sustainable, and de-motivating for those not receiving them.

FFE can help to promote simple and low risk practices only. It is not appropriate for areas with low population density. Farmer trainers are a complement and not a substitute for paid extension staff, to which the farmer trainers need to be linked for updated information flow.

As a **conclusion** of the parallel session, participants highlighted the key role producer organisations can play and ways to strengthen them.



Roles of producer organisations RAS	Challenges of producer organisations RAS	Recommendations to producer organisations
<p><b>Demand side</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and synthesise the needs, demands, and solutions for farmers with diverse backgrounds and interests</li> <li>▪ Contribute to monitoring and evaluation of RAS services</li> <li>▪ Participate in advocacy and policy formulation</li> </ul> <p><b>Supply side</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitate access to information, knowledge, and resources</li> <li>▪ Provide a “bridge” or “table” for linkages and partnerships, mobilising farmers to implement RAS recommendations</li> <li>▪ Provide and co-finance RAS services to farmers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Demand side</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Capacity to understand demands and opportunities</li> <li>▪ Diversity: impossible to provide a common voice for all</li> <li>▪ Representation on global level</li> </ul> <p><b>Supply side</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Capacity to provide credible and quality services and facilitation</li> <li>▪ Availability of information</li> <li>▪ Financial means and sustainability</li> <li>▪ Inclusion of small-scale farmers, ethnic groups, languages, etc.</li> <li>▪ Geographic distance, low density areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen capacities in good governance, managing interests, facilitation and brokering, and partnership development</li> <li>▪ Improve governance, organisational stability, and federal level coordination</li> <li>▪ Increase partnerships and link farmers to other AIS actors, i.e. extension, governments, research, NGOs, etc.</li> <li>▪ Raise awareness on producer organisations’ roles in RAS</li> <li>▪ Improve demand assessments</li> <li>▪ Increase flexibility and demand-orientation</li> <li>▪ Improve packaging and dissemination of farmer-friendly products through innovative communication techniques (FFS, FFE, ICT, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Develop mechanisms for financial sustainability of RAS services (embedded services, co-funding, fee-for-services, donor support, etc.)</li> </ul>

**Participants recommended to GFRAS as a network to:**

- Foster producer organisations’ capacity at regional and local level
- Continue to do advocacy and awareness-raising at the global level
- Evaluate, document, and disseminate best fit practices
- Develop advisory methodologies and training guides that support producer organisations in their role as RAS providers
- Support and provide platforms for knowledge exchange at regional level and foster producer organisations’ inclusion

**Parallel Session 3: Sustainability and Cost-Effectiveness in Private Sector and Producer Organisations RAS**

**Stefan Kachelriess-Matthess**, GIZ/Competitive African Cotton Initiative (COMPACI), presented the cooperation of three commodity projects with private sector companies as a case of how the private sector’s capacities are strengthened to deliver quality services to contracted small-scale farm households. Stefan identified the following advantages of RAS provided by private value chain actors:

- Large scale outreach to farmers and qualified technical staff
- Very good knowledge of clients
- Provision of quality inputs and services
- Guaranteed marketing

There are a number of complementarities between the private and public sectors. As crucial contributions from the public sector, Stefan mentioned the provision of basic formal basic and technical education for staff, setting and guaranteeing an appropriate regulatory framework, and supporting producer organisations. The public sector can widen the often narrow focus of private sector on a core crop by adding services related to environmental and social issues and general good agricultural practices. Private sector services can help the public sector to better cope with limitations such as human and financial resources. Public-private RAS arrangements and their budgets should be based on a cost analysis of alternative extension models. Benchmarks and incentives for the performance of extension providers need to be defined and a clear exit strategy for donor support formulated.

**Michael Roberts**, iDE Cambodia, presented how private farm business advisors (FBA) filled the RAS market gap on water control, know-how, market information, and quality inputs in Cambodia. FBAs bundle technical advice with quality agricultural inputs into embedded services and profitable enterprise. They are linked as franchisees to a central franchisor with business contacts to input and credit suppliers and information sources. Thus, a providers' network exists to serve rural clients, of which 50% come from the poorest third of the population and 80% are women. FBAs' success depends on adaptation to local conditions and on professional training in ethical, relationship-based sales, leading to a pro-active and long-term attitude. As value added of the private sector embedded services, Michael mentioned:

- Market incentives
- Strong customer focus
- Mechanisms for long-term financial sustainability.

Michael concluded that pluralism in RAS guarantees the existence of multiple sources of information for the farmer's benefit. Public-private partnerships help to coordinate complementary services.

**Souvanthong Namvong**, Department of Agriculture Extension and Cooperatives, Laos, presented another case of strengthening RAS through partnerships. Due to their high potential to unblock key constraints in the Lao rice value chain, millers were selected as an entry point in a project lead by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Based on production agreements with producer organisations, rice millers have the role of:

- Organising farmers in groups and strengthening their capacities
- Providing production and post-harvest training
- Assessing input requirements and supplying inputs based on end market demands

Producer organisations' role is to:

- Share lessons and experiences among the group and with other farmers
- Distribute inputs within their group
- Organise collective selling to the millers

Public extension's role is to:

- Facilitate service provision to millers and producer organisations
- Deliver services on the request of millers and farmers
- Build networks of millers and farmers for sharing experiences and fostering trust
- Help in building an enabling environment
- Link millers and farmers to service such as finance, certification, and standardisation

As result of these measures, production, rice quality, and revenues rose. Namvong mentioned as success factors for a sustainable market-based RAS the selection of the private sector as a key entry point, openness and transparency of the selection process, trust-building amongst different value chain actors, and good collaboration between the public and private sector.

Participants **concluded** that sustainable and cost-effective RAS leading to an increase in smallholders' income should always include market elements, have beneficiaries pay for extension and products, and include incentives, pay-offs, and opportunities for trying out approaches and mechanisms. Three mechanisms for sustainable and cost-effective RAS were identified:

- Contract farming can protect farmers against debt. It requires organised farmers and a broker institution. Contract farming is not possible in a monopsonic situation where a number of farmers can only sell to a single buyer.
- Farmer Input Promotion Services are a business model for village-based advisors providing management and training and encouraging testing. Services are financed through companies and donor agencies. They focus on risk mitigation for specialised crop protection.
- Embedded RAS link advice to the supply of input or machines. The advice may be too strongly focussed on a product, leading to a neglect of macro issues

Private RAS provision can be publicly financed, which requires governments capacity to manage contracts. ICTs as an inexpensive user-paid tool with high outreach can support certain types of RAS.

<b>Recommendations in regards to sustainability and cost-effectiveness to <i>private sector</i></b>	<b>Recommendations in regards to sustainability and cost-effectiveness to <i>producer organisations</i></b>	<b>Recommendations in regards to sustainability and cost-effectiveness to <i>public sector</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Engage in clearly communicated public private partnerships with strategies for the public sector</li> <li>▪ Find robust business models to which the service is linked</li> <li>▪ Elaborate cost-effectiveness strategies to deliver RAS</li> <li>▪ Avoid using donor funds to crowd out private sector services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build on existing structure and local initiative</li> <li>▪ Strengthen business orientation and management capacities</li> <li>▪ Find robust business models to which the services are linked</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fund farmer fora as service providers for accountability and quality control</li> <li>▪ Budget for inclusiveness</li> <li>▪ Strengthen links to research and development initiatives</li> </ul>

#### **Participants recommended to GFRAS as a network to:**

- Strengthen farmer organisations to increase their bargaining power
- Strengthen regional RAS networks
- Do evidence-based advocacy for pluralistic RAS
- Advocate for extension policies

#### **Launch of the New Publication “The Business of Agricultural Business Services. Working with Smallholders in Africa”**

The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Agri-ProFocus, and FAO presented their new publication with a film clip available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNa1n94Ibhw>

#### **Share Fair on New Approaches, Issues of Interest, and GFRAS Activities**

A list of the share fair inputs and contacts of the presenters can be found at <http://www.g-fras.org/en/events/gfras-events/annual-meeting-germany-2013.html>

#### **Field Trips**

##### *Introduction*

Edda Albers, president of IALB, gave explanations on the pluralistic RAS system in Germany. All systems co-exist in Europe, in Germany, and even at the state level within Germany.

- State-based advisory services discuss, amongst others, questions of common interest. They are publicly financed and controlled, integrated into the agricultural administration, and offered to all farmers mostly for free. Staff capacity is developed through public training.
- Chambers of agriculture are self-governed member-based organisations owned by farmers. All farmers have access to the advice, which is liable to fees. Chambers of agriculture can be mandated by the state to undertake specific tasks. They are responsible to pay and train their advisors.

- Private company RAS are normally farmer-based. Producers are shareholders or members. They pay a fee for their membership and full cost for the services. The state does not support companies financially, but can mandate them for special projects.
- In addition, there are private advisory services, non-profit advisory associations, and third sector advisory services.

Three field trips were prepared by the privately-organised Agricultural Associations Brandenburg (LAB) Ltd, whereas the fourth field trip visited sites of the association Organic Farms North East. In all field trips, participants could see the effects of political transition from a co-operative agricultural system to market-based agriculture.



*Field trip 1: The role of private agricultural consulting in supporting value chains*

Participants of field trip 1 visited managers of farms that are actively involved in value chains. Participants learnt that LAB as a private RAS company has to invest in:

- Continuous learning and innovation
- Building trust of clients
- Remaining competitive in regards to price and quality
- Accountability to the producers' association
- Demand-led services

The visited farm enterprises considered LAB as a facilitator that helps in filling applications for availing subsidies, handling legal procedures, and building enterprise portfolios. They expect advice that leads to an optimal utilisation of resources, learning by doing, ability to adapt to contextual change, integration of processes in their enterprise, and re-designing of marketing strategies according to new situations.

Participants concluded that public advisory services are difficult to realise. In Brandenburg, private RAS have been well institutionalised within given frameworks. Farmers are willing to pay as long as services contribute to their profit maximisation. As requested services are multi-faceted, customised solutions are needed.

*Field trip 2: The role of service societies in extension presented on the example of the introduction of "precision farming method" on large mixed farms*

Field trip 2 focused on the advice to introduce precision farming on two farms that emerged out of former agricultural cooperatives and include functions such as production, warehousing, trading, fieldwork services, a restaurant, and a biogas plant. Diversification requires the co-existence of different, general and specialised advice. Obstacles to use RAS are farmers' budget constraints, scepticism towards change, bad experience or fear of losing control, and lack of tools and capacities to assess the effectiveness of a service. Participants heard about different types of private sector and producer organisation RAS:

- Specialised and certified private RAS providers delivering technological advice
- Business companies selling inputs and providing related services
- Farmers association and cooperatives lobbying and advocating for farmers
- Companies outsourcing parts of their production process to other enterprises

Farmer to farmer extension is limited. The government certifies and outsources RAS to private providers and monitors them through continued training and renewal of certification.

In order to function sustainably and cost-effectively, RAS in a privatised context must:

- Be demand-oriented, remain relevant and competitive, and deliver returns to investment
- Be diversified to cover different demands of clients
- Facilitate innovation
- Develop the capacity of younger farmers and professionals
- Strive for synergies and transparency with members

*Field trip 3: Extension and advice within the framework of agricultural extension, associations, and specialised consulting societies as well as by the private agricultural consulting for family farm structures*

Participants of field trip 3 visited two farm companies doing agricultural production, animal rearing, and managing a biogas plant. Discussions focused on the changes in RAS after the decline of the former German Democratic Republic and the role of producer organisations in the RAS system. They identified the following farmers' expectations of rural advisors:

- Experience
- Long-term vision
- Cost effective advice
- Political and economic sensitivity
- Thematically, advisors must assist with the application for subsidies and, especially during the economic transition phase, in dealing with legal and property issues

*Field trip 4: Berlin urban farming and free farming advice*

Field trip 4 concentrated on RAS in urban organic farming. Discussion focused on the development of a producer network and on services, organisation, and funding of RAS related to organic production and intercultural subsistence gardening. Participants collected the following lessons learnt:

- Urban farmers are selling services rather than products
- Links between farmers and end-users are much stronger in urban farming than in rural agriculture
- Teaching and training is a very important component of urban farming; urban producers must have a will to communicate with their clients and to work with children; they need skills to create close relationships with clients
- To enhance those skills, there is a need for special training programmes
- A producer organisation-based advisory system is in place but not serving all members; farmer-to-farmer information and knowledge exchange is key

## Functional Component: Network Strengthening (26 September)

### Keynote

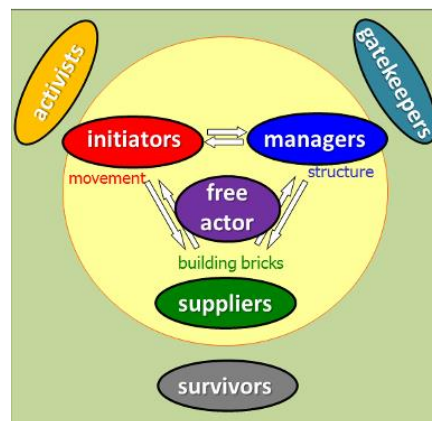
Eelke Wielinga, LINK Consult, shared ideas on how to make a network work. Based on cases, he emphasised that networking has been crucial to catalyses systems and innovation. He emphasised that a functional network has free actors, quality, management that differs from project management, and energy, avoiding that "warm" networks evolve into "cold" organisations.



Eelke pointed at the need to turn around the common linear idea of planning change, which starts in a "cold" organisation with a mission and ends with people, to a "warm" network process that starts with people, leading to their ambitions, connections, energy, and targets, resulting in a shared mission. People with ambition will make the flow of a network; structures provide the bedding.



He referred to tools and terminology to recognise patterns and options for network interventions. As an example, Eelke presented the triangle of co-creation that helps to understand complementary roles of initiators, bringing movement and leading to activities; network managers, giving structure and having a gatekeeper function; and network suppliers, building bricks and help a network to sustain. Free actors have an important coordination role. Eelke closed with the statement that with free actors and energy, many things become possible in a network.



## Network strengthening within GFRAS

Stephen Hazelman, Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services (PIRAS) network, presented how GFRAS is fostering networking as a contribution to peer to peer learning, capacity strengthening and experience exchange.

GFRAS consists of a number of regional and sub-regional fora around the world. In 2013, two regional RAS fora were launched, EUFRAS and the Caribbean Extension Providers Network (CAEPNet). In Africa, an Extension Week was held. Several countries in different regions have started to establish RAS fora on the national level.

In regards to GFRAS function 1, providing a voice, and function 2, providing evidence, affiliates met and exchanged on issues such as the roles and needed capacities of RAS in a rapidly-changing rural context, extension education and training, development of extension policies, gender equality, nutrition and extension, evaluation of reforms in extension systems, and global good practices in RAS. GFRAS provided a voice for RAS at a number of events.

In 2014, GFRAS plans to continue network activities in all regions and sub-regions and in thematic groups. GFRAS will continue engaging with actors in the AIS. A special focus will be put on bringing RAS into discussions at the Farmers' Forum in Rome.

Stephen invited participants of the 4<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting to engage in regional activities and thematic groups. The GFRAS website offers a message board, a roster of consultants, and directories of RAS providers and RAS training institutions.

## World Café on Network Strengthening

Based on the two presentations by Eelke and Stephen, participants exchanged their experiences on network development.



Participants identified a number of elements that lead to an energetic and functioning network:

**People** are at the centre of an energetic forum.

- *Diversity* in regards to backgrounds and roles makes a network vivid. It adds lateral thinking, perspectives and ideas. Neutral representation helps to sustain diversity.
- *Inclusiveness and confidence* facilitate the creation of energy in a network. The feeling of belonging to a wider community will release affiliates from perceiving their work as heavy burden. Integrative personalities play a crucial role.

- *Ownership* is the basis for a functioning network. It roots on identified needs and a shared vision and mission.
- *A stakeholder analysis* helps to identify complementary roles, resources, and interests, and ensures inclusiveness. People and institutions with influence on policy makers should get special consideration.

**Value added** is key for a network to attract affiliates and sustain.

- *Mutual learning* from members' contributions, including the systematisation of processes and results helps affiliates to develop and adapt to changing environments.
- Providing a *voice* is a common value of a forum.
- *Demand-oriented results* through shared action and creation of synergies contribute to a forum's legitimacy. Thematic sub-groups with specific goals contribute to the creation of added value. When realising activities, it is important to identify actors with appropriate competencies.

A **mission** that is shared by members and links the individual to the common interest gives a network energy.

- *Buy-in* is key to identify a shared mission that is relevant and in the interest of rural actors. A mission should reflect affiliates' common goals, strengths, commitments, challenges, and experience on the ground. Formal objectives and strategies should not hamper informal processes that energise networks.
- *Subsidiarity principles* should be respected in a mission.
- *Reviewing and updating* a mission leads to realism. This calls for the courage to be flexible and requires the capacity of analysing new challenges and trends as well as the network as a dynamic institution.

Different, freely chosen **roles** contribute to a functioning network. Both reflective and action-oriented characters are required. Leadership should alternate.

- *Free actors*: There is a need for personalities who engage in internal facilitation and foster the sharing and co-creation of knowledge and experience. Weaker actors need a mentor to contribute to inclusive and democratic processes.
- *Initiators, champions and pioneers* are needed on different geographic and thematic levels: They identify new approaches, trends, and problems, and recognise patterns and options for action. Initiators motivate and incentivise affiliates. They start and move processes and inform external actors. Thus they guarantee a network's strategic engagement and voice.
- *Managers* coordinate and prioritise ideas to channel energy to action and results. They clarify the network functions in order to increase its focus and ensure relevance and quality.
- *Suppliers* use their high social capital to identify and raise resources such as knowledge, capacity, energy, and funds. They identify appropriate techniques for capacity development and fundraising and make sure network activities align with donors' strategies. Suppliers act as spokespeople for a network, providing justification and competitive communication.

**Financial resources** support the use transfer of energy into results.

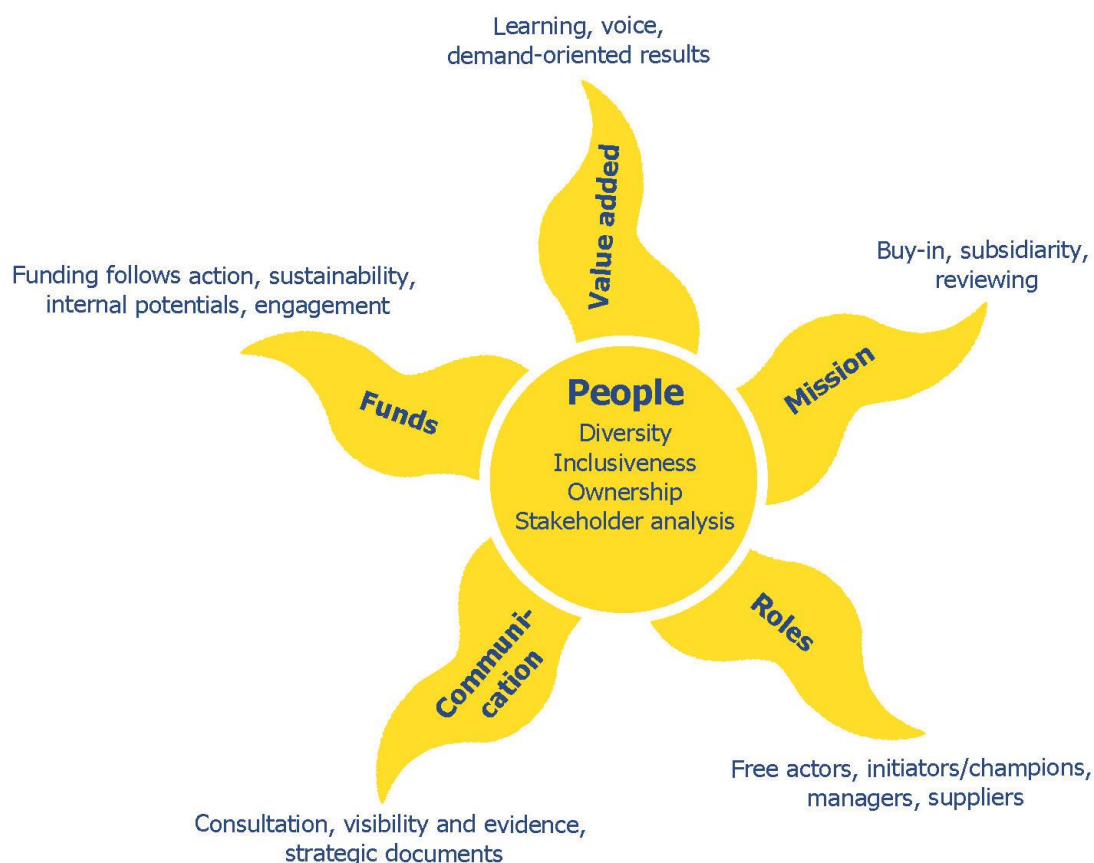
- *Funding follows action*: The network energy should focus on core activities and results. A user-driven energetic network that creates change will have visibility. It will appear convincing and useful for investors and donors. Too high of a focus on fundraising comprises the risk of driving a warm network into a cold organisation.
- *Sustainable financial strategy*: Diversification in funding increases networks' sustainability. A balance needs to be found between external contributions and members' engagement that allow a focus on the shared mission and goals. Starting with inexpensive or small activities helps to keep up the networks' momentum and appropriate development. Virtual networking based on social media therefore helps. Financial and fundraising issues need to be reflected in clearly formulated business models that include lobbying activities. It is important to handle funds in a transparent way that avoids conflict of interest.

- *Tap internal potential:* Energetic networks that add value to their members should be capable of mobilising internal funding and in-kind contributions such as human resources. As annual fees lead to high administrative costs, co-funding of network activities seems to be a more feasible approach.
- *Continuous engagement:* Linking and engaging governments and donors throughout the network process generates a longer-term commitment with mutual benefits. It helps networks to match proposals and fundraising activities towards investors' interest. Being informed about trends and connecting to global issues creates the capacity to catch windows of opportunity. Capable network members should be mobilised to interact with donors and illustrate the network's value added.

## Communication

- *Consultations* are essential to ensure inclusiveness, ownership and change. They help to identify demands and value added of a network. Simple and clear messages attract affiliates' contributions.
- *Visibility and evidence:* The relevance of a network needs to be clearly documented. Evidence on outputs and outcomes of networking should be presented in packages that attract interest.
- *Strategic documents* give a frame for communication. Concept notes and proposals need to include targeted and clear objectives and a realistic budget.

## Elements of an energetic network



## Conclusions on network strengthening in regional groups

Participants gathered in regional groups to reflect the sessions before and discuss action points for 2014.

<i>Southern Africa</i>		<i>East Africa</i>									
<p>As key insights of the day, participants recognised that in Southern Africa, there is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Abundant energy</li> <li>▪ A dysfunctional network</li> <li>▪ Opportunities to mobilise funds</li> </ul>		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Actions</th> <th>Activities</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Strengthen, share and communicate knowledge and experience</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish information networks</li> <li>▪ Harness the diversity of knowledge and resources</li> <li>▪ Organise workshops and seminars at national level</li> <li>▪ Package the right content for specific audience</li> <li>▪ Exploit potentials of ICTs</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strengthen country fora</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and mentor champions (free actors)</li> <li>▪ Review national agricultural extension investment plans and strategies</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Raise funds</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scan opportunities</li> <li>▪ Participate in regional, continental and global agendas</li> <li>▪ Facilitate the development of strategic plans at national, regional, continental and global level</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Actions	Activities	Strengthen, share and communicate knowledge and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish information networks</li> <li>▪ Harness the diversity of knowledge and resources</li> <li>▪ Organise workshops and seminars at national level</li> <li>▪ Package the right content for specific audience</li> <li>▪ Exploit potentials of ICTs</li> </ul>	Strengthen country fora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and mentor champions (free actors)</li> <li>▪ Review national agricultural extension investment plans and strategies</li> </ul>	Raise funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scan opportunities</li> <li>▪ Participate in regional, continental and global agendas</li> <li>▪ Facilitate the development of strategic plans at national, regional, continental and global level</li> </ul>
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### *West and Central Africa*

Actions:

- Reactivate the West and Central African Network for Agricultural and Rural RAS (RESCAR-AOC) by ensuring a common interest and creating the needed energy
- Be open for arising country fora and their strengthening
- Enlarge the core network facilitation group and disengage in formalism to continue networking
- Ask AFAAS to communicate in English and French
- Consider a convention on the collaboration between AFAAS, the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF), and RESCAR-AOC with the facilitation of GFRAS

### Central Asia and Caucasus

Actions	Activities
Organise the 2014 regional event in Kyrgyzstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a close working relation with the GFRAS secretariat</li> <li>Mobilise private and public RAS actors from all countries of Central Asia and Caucasus (CAC) as well as Turkey and Russia</li> </ul>
Create partnerships with development partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elaborate a joint network concept in an attractive package</li> <li>Identify and use diverse approaches to attract finances piece by piece</li> </ul>
Inform about GFRAS in Central Asia and Caucasus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarise results from the 4<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting and GFRAS activities</li> <li>Translate key GFRAS documents to Russian and other languages</li> </ul>

### South Asia

#### Actions:

- Create more awareness and interest by expanding the virtual network of the Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESAs) network and by participating in relevant meetings and conferences
- Organise the first face-to-face meeting of key RAS stakeholders in January 2014 in Kathmandu, Nepal
- Raise financial resources to implement priorities identified in collaboration with APIRAS and GFRAS

### South East Asia

#### Actions:

- Foster institutional membership on country level in the Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services (APIRAS) network
- Expand the APIRAS core group to new member countries
- Share information on APIRAS and GFRAS in country events and meetings
- Seek member contributions to update the APIRAS website

### Latin America

#### Actions:

- Elaborate guidelines on dealing with diversity
- Establish agreements on establishing a knowledge management system
- Promote internal capacity of innovation and adoption

### Caribbean Islands

Actions	Due date
Present CAEPNet to stakeholders at the Caribbean Week of Agriculture with the intention of expanding the network and especially attract farmers, the private sector and governments	October 2013
Develop a mailing list for future contract and for use on a website and other ICT facilities	December 2013
Execute an extension meeting on RAS	August 2014





### *Eastern Europe*

#### Actions:

- Establish a network of Western Balkans advisory services
- Define procedures to identify regional and thematic needs
- Organising a meeting to identify joint goals and present them at the Croatian Forum held in summer 2014 in Zagreb
- Stakeholders from Western Balkans participate in the Croatian Forum

### *Northern Europe*

#### Actions:

- Maintain and strengthen existing networks (e.g. the Balitic DEAL project advisory network) by attracting more stakeholders such as farmer organisations and policy makers
- Establish and functionalise EUFRAS by clearing its goals and functions according to members' professional interests
- Form operational groups for the implementation of European Innovation Partnership Project

### *Western Europe*

#### Actions:

- Understand the profiles and needs of members
- Collect and disseminate examples of good practices and value added by extension
- Give a voice to providers of advisory services

### *Global actors*

#### Actions:

- Keep the good work up: maintain open debates and publish easily digestible global and regional summaries
- Publish success stories from each regional network, including context explanations on what led to successes, what routes have been tried without success
- Identify, stimulate, and encourage groups around key global and regional issues

## **Wrap up and Outlook**

Wrap up and outlook presentations can be found under the respective sections on the parallel sessions (see green boxes), the field trips, and the conclusions on network strengthening in regional groups (see blue boxes).

**GFRAS steering committee members** appreciated the diversity of thematic discussions at the Annual Meeting, which widened the GFRAS view on issues, constraints, and perspectives in regards to the involvement of the private sector and producer organisations in RAS. Cooperation with the private sector and producers' organisations is highly relevant in GFRAS. The GFRAS Annual Meeting gave the right direction, which needs to be followed within GFRAS functions and actions. A change in mindset in regards to the conceptualisation of RAS and the relevance of good practices is a key lesson for steering committee members. Evidence needs strong consideration on global and regional level. Participants were invited to engage in thematic GFRAS initiatives that give substance to GFRAS through the generation of evidence and products.

**Kristin Davis**, GFRAS executive secretary, promised to consider recommendations and follow-up the GFRAS Annual Meeting throughout the implementation of the secretariat workplan. In order to give RAS a voice and to foster evidence and capacity on RAS, GFRAS plans, amongst others, to:

- Participate and contribute to the Farmers' Forum in early 2014 in Rome and other events
- Support (sub-) regional activities and their planned meetings
- Contribute to the next Global Conference on for Agricultural Research and Development in Africa
- Organise the 5<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting

Kristin thanked all involved parties for their successful efforts in putting the 4<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting in place. She gave special thanks to BMZ, GIZ, IALB, the moderator team and the GFRAS secretariat.

## Closing Remarks

The Annual Meeting was closed by Francisco Aguirre who thanked BMZ, GIZ, and IALB for their efficient and trustful cooperation with the GFRAS secretariat, which lead to a fruitful platform for exchange. He thanked all participants and the GFRAS steering committee for contributing to discussions aiming at an increased involvement of private sector and producer organisations in GFRAS and RAS.

Francisco announced that the 5<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting 2014 will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, hosted by the Argentine National Institute for Agricultural Technology (INTA), followed by the 6<sup>th</sup> GFRAS Annual Meeting in Central Asia. In the name of INTA and RELASER, Maria Auxiliadora Briones de Navas thanked for the trust given to INTA and expressed pleasure to be the host of the next GFRAS Annual Meeting. INTA commits itself to do everything possible to facilitate a well performing and successful meeting.