

## What does GFRAS do?

GFRAS provides a forum to bring together and promote interaction and learning among the diverse stakeholders involved in RAS. By working at different levels, GFRAS helps regional actors to present their perspectives in the global development arena, as well as providing a mechanism for global perspectives to reach the regional levels. This two-way flow strengthens the role of advisory services in agricultural development with the goal of reducing hunger and poverty. GFRAS allows RAS providers and other organisations with an interest in RAS to have a **voice**, to engage in dialogue, and to promote a supportive environment for investment in RAS. GFRAS supports studies and **evidence** on effective RAS approaches and policies. It also strengthens the **capacity** of RAS practitioners through networking.



More specifically, GFRAS does the following:

- Leads efforts to increase awareness of the value of RAS in promoting rural development, and the need to support it
- Convenes learning events and fosters exchange of information among RAS actors
- Promotes region-to-region sharing of experiences
- Enhances learning by publishing relevant studies, guides, reports, and briefs
- Improves stakeholders' access to knowledge and information
- Supports and energises capacity-strengthening efforts
- Develops and refines guidance on policies and approaches to improve RAS.

## GFRAS governance and support

GFRAS provides a platform for dialogue amongst its **members** (organisations actively involved in RAS development with GFRAS) and its broader constituency of **affiliates** (individuals who have registered an interest in GFRAS activities). It is guided by a **steering committee**, with members drawn from the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services network (APIRAS), Latin American Network for Rural Extension Services (RELASER), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Swiss Association for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas (Agridea), and the World Bank.

Several partners support GFRAS financially, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, European Commission, SDC, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Agridea hosts the GFRAS secretariat.

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## GFRAS: Making a difference by improving rural advisory services



International development institutions and investors increasingly recognise the essential role played by rural advisory services (RAS) in reducing hunger and poverty. Yet, until recently, they have failed to present a coherent and credible voice, with little representation in global or regional rural development forums. RAS providers are highly diverse and have limited access to information and advice regarding funding options and means to influence policy-making. They would therefore benefit greatly from more interaction, particularly through sharing their knowledge and experiences. It meets the need for a formal structure to promote RAS development in a proactive way. GFRAS evolved out of a series of global discussions among RAS stakeholders and opinion leaders (the Neuchâtel Initiative) over several years.

## What is GFRAS?

GFRAS is the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services. Our mission is to provide advocacy and leadership on pluralistic, demand-driven rural and agricultural advisory services within the global development agenda.

Our vision is to see rural advisory services effectively contributing to the sustainable reduction of hunger and poverty worldwide.

Our mission is to lead the way in promoting better rural and agricultural advisory services for the poor.

### GFRAS in action: The example of evaluation

One of the first priorities identified by GFRAS stakeholders was the need to improve RAS through more effective evaluation. They therefore developed the GFRAS Guide to Evaluating Rural Extension, which helps rural advisers and assessors to conduct more comprehensive, rigorous, credible, and useful evaluations. The Guide helps these practitioners to design the most appropriate evaluations for their circumstances and to access further sources of information. Various RAS programmes worldwide are currently using the GFRAS Guide, including the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension of the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago, the Ganja Agribusiness Association in Azerbaijan, Cairo University in Egypt, and the University of Benin.



## What are Rural Advisory Services?

RAS work with farmers and other important stakeholders in rural economies. They provide rural people with the skills and knowledge they need to improve their livelihoods and wellbeing. Traditionally, RAS disseminate information about technologies, markets, inputs, and financial matters; they also help farmers to develop their agricultural, management, and marketing skills. Modern RAS also promote interaction among farmers and other rural actors, the private sector, research institutes, education centres, and government. At the same time, they help actors to improve their market access, deal with changing patterns of risk, and protect the environment. RAS are also called extension or agricultural advisory services.

*Examples of RAS activities include:*

- Creating and supporting links between farmers' organisations and agricultural research programmes
- Supporting communities in setting up informal and formal rural organisations
- Providing training and advice for farmers and agribusinesses and helping them improve their links with the value chain.



## Who are the GFRAS stakeholders?

To achieve its vision and mission, GFRAS brings together two main stakeholder groups to help them develop more appropriate, sustainable, and effective policies, practices, and approaches:

- RAS community institutions from the public, private, and civil society sectors that provide RAS directly. GFRAS fosters leadership, particularly at the regional and national levels, as well as providing a forum within which stakeholders can come together and strengthen their individual, organisational, and institutional capabilities, particularly by learning from each other. Through GFRAS, these actors have a united voice and so greater influence on the development and streamlining of RAS approaches and policies.
- International development institutions involved in rural development. GFRAS helps these actors to work more effectively with RAS providers and thereby to improve their rural development initiatives. It also brings these actors together for stronger RAS advocacy.

