

Strategic Field 1: Advocacy and Support for an Enabling Policy Environment

Towards Enabling Policies for the 'New Extensionist'

First East African Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services Policy Dialogue. 16–18 June, Entebbe, Uganda.

Strategic Field 2: Professionalisation of Rural Advisory Services

GFRAS Consortium on Extension Education and Training

Face-to-face meeting to continue developing the New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK). 29–30 January, Pretoria, South Africa.

Strategic Field 3: Knowledge Generation and Exchange

The publication of The 'New Extensionist' in Spanish proved to be crucial in setting up RAS Policy Dialogues at the country level. It provided the Country Fora with a guideline or framework to help them formulate the topics of their concern. The resulting policy dialogues were very enriching and productive.

*Maria Isabel Paredes,
RELASER Secretariat,
El Salvador*



2016

Advocacy and Leadership in Rural Advisory Services for Sustainable Development

The GFRAS Strategic Framework 2016–2025 was launched at the GFRAS Annual Meeting 2015. 14–17 September, Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan.

The 'New Extensionist': Roles, Strategies, and Capacities to Strengthen Extension and Advisory Services

This publication was translated into French, Georgian and Laotian. It is also available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic.

GFRAS Annual Meeting 2015: Global Good Practices in Rural Advisory Services

14–17 September, Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan.

RELASER Policy Dialogue Initiative

Based on the GFRAS position paper The 'New Extensionist' and following the example of AFAAS, the Latin American Network for Rural Advisory Services (RELASER) organised a series of seven national policy dialogues in South America. The initiative promoted the application of the ideas of The 'New Extensionist' at different levels and in localised contexts. This effort fed into discussions at the 7th RELASER Annual Meeting held in November 2016 in Nuevo Vallarta in Mexico.



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The most inspiring learning for me at this year's Annual Meeting is that the facilitation of value chain development, extensively carried out by non-governmental and public extension organisations in West African countries, is a big business opportunity for farmers that can be organised effectively and efficiently by private for-profit organisations.

Ismail M. Moumouni, Associate Professor, University of Parakou, Benin

2nd Annual Meeting of the **Mekong Extension Learning Alliance (MELA)**

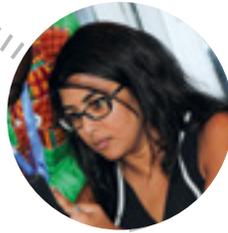
22–24 June, Yangon, Myanmar.

The **GFRAS Policy Compendium**, a resource collection on rural advisory policy, was updated and improved. It will be re-launched in 2017.

Social Media Policy Guidelines for Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

A publication of the GFRAS ICT4RAS Interest Group, based on a study "Social Media: Shaping the future of agricultural extension and advisory services", undertaken by the same group. February 2016

Inauguration of the **South Sudan Forum for Agricultural Advisory Service (SoSFAAS)**, an AFAAS Country Forum. 15 June, Juba, South Sudan.



Knowledge management complements the work of a RAS network in various ways. It is essential for meaningful sharing of information and experiences among members and key stakeholders, enables evidence based advocacy and supports the network's visibility. GFRAS and its partners have proven to be a great support in this regard.

Anju Mangal, Knowledge Management Officer at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community SPC, Fiji

Innovating Agricultural Extension in Malawi: Focus on Policy, Systems and Approaches. 2nd Extension Week of the Malawi Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (MaFAAS). 26–30 July, Lilongwe, Malawi.

The 'New Extensionist' and Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services Professionalisation at Global and Continental Level: Implications for Tanzania

An AFAAS Seminar. 19 July, Morogoro, Tanzania.

Asistencia técnica y extensión rural participativa en América Latina

(Participatory technical assistance and rural extension in Latin America)

A publication by FAO in collaboration with the Latin American Network for Rural Advisory Services RELASER. (July)

In the second half of 2016 the GFRAS Secretariat engaged with various stakeholders and partners (CIRAD, CFS, Digital Green, FAO, GDPRD, IFAD), to ensure the continuous implementation of the GFRAS Strategic Framework.

'New Extensionist' Training organised by the Caribbean Agricultural Extension Provider's Network (CAEPNet). 9–10 August, Trinidad.

The **Global Good Practices Initiative** aims to facilitate access to information and know-how on agricultural extension for a wide audience of practitioners. It does so by preparing GFRAS Good Practice Notes, which are descriptions of key concepts, approaches, and methods in an easy-to-understand format. They give an overview of the main aspects, best-fit considerations, and sources for further reading. In 2016, 9 new Notes were added to the existing 18 Notes. Find more at www.betterextension.org.

At the GFRAS Annual Meeting I discovered that rural entrepreneurship faces the same issues around the world. I particularly appreciated sharing my experience with extensionists and professionals from around the world. These discussions will help me improve my work and vice-versa, hopefully.



Yves Bitama Ada, Farmer and Agripreneur, Cameroon

Capacity Needs Assessment of Regional Networks
GFRAS developed a capacity needs assessment tool to strengthen the capacities of the regional and sub-regional networks as well as the country fora, and assessed seven networks. The results were presented and discussed at the GFRAS Annual Meeting in Cameroon.



Read more on back page, article #2

Increasing Importance of Country Fora

The Rural Advisory Services Country Fora (CF) are the building blocks of the GFRAS regional networks. They increasingly take on important roles in national policy processes as examples from Africa show.



Read more on back page, article #3

The long-awaited New Extensionist Learning Kit dream has become a reality. Through a participatory iterative process, we have developed 15 modules over the last two years. The journey has been exciting and the feedback received so far is encouraging. We have seen champions emerging who drive the New Extensionist agenda.

Hlami Ngwenya, International Development Consultant, South Africa



Supporting Smallholder Farmers in Asia and Pacific Islands Region through Strengthened Agricultural Advisory Services.

The Asia and Pacific Island Network for Rural Advisory Services received a substantial grant from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). An inception workshop was held to implement the three-year work plan. 7–8 September, Los Baños, Philippines.

Gender Mainstreaming in Value Chains

Workshop with representatives from the GIZ Green Innovation Centres in Africa. 29 Sep–2 Oct, Limbé, Cameroon. (Based on the gender module of the New Extensionist Learning Kit)

GFRAS Annual Meeting 2016: The Role of RAS for Inclusive Agripreneurship

Fostering entrepreneurship in agriculture is now widely recognised as a central concern by most actors involved in agricultural development. However, the links between RAS and agripreneurship have not been sufficiently explored to date. The 7th GFRAS Annual Meeting provided a space to do so. 3–6 October, Limbe, Cameroon.



Read more on back page, article #4

Presentation of **The 'New Extensionist'** to 220 people from more than 20 Nigerian universities. 2–5 November, Zaria, Nigeria.

Human Development and Local Knowledge, Pillars of the New Latin American Extensionism

Annual Meeting of the Latin American Network for Rural Advisory Services (RELASER). 24–26 November, Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico.

The New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK)

The GFRAS Consortium for Education and Training together with various partners developed 13 modules for teaching and self-learning the concepts and functional skills introduced in the GFRAS position paper, "The New Extensionist: Roles, Strategies and Capacities to Strengthen Extension and Advisory Services". After extensive testing, Six modules were published in 2016, the remaining will follow in 2017.



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How to Integrate Nutrition into Rural Advisory Services (RAS)?

There is a heightened awareness globally and within development institutions and governments of the need to better understand the links between agriculture and nutrition. Convinced that RAS can be a promising channel for improving nutrition in rural communities, the GFRAS Steering Committee decided to form a Nutrition Working Group.



Read more on back page, article #5

Regional Consultations on ICT for Agricultural Research and Extension in Central Asia and the Caucasus. 7–9 December, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

2017: Looking ahead

All the modules of the **New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK)** will be finalised and made available for download. Additionally an e-learning version will be produced.

It's hard not to hear about how food systems need to do a better job of supporting healthy eating to end malnutrition. Rural Advisory Services can make an important contribution to more nutritious food systems by bringing in the farmer's contexts and the ability to reach large numbers of them.

Edye Kuyper, Nutrition Advisor at Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services (INGENAES)



The GFRAS Annual Meeting 2017 will take place in Australia, hosted by the Australasia-Asia Pacific Extension Network (APEN).

The 3rd **AFAAS African Extension Week** will be held in South Africa.

The **Global Good Practice** series will be continued and further promoted.



Annual Report 2016

The Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) is about enhancing the performance of advisory services so that they can better serve farm families and rural producers, thus contributing to improved livelihoods in rural areas and sustainable rural development worldwide. Rural advisory services help to empower rural people and better integrate them into the agricultural innovation systems.

GFRAS reaches smallholder farmers via the regional rural advisory services networks, which are made up of national-level platforms, the country fora. The country fora include actors from all sectors engaged in rural advisory services, who work directly with smallholders. Country fora help prioritise national-level issues and formulate demands up to be taken to the regional and global levels.

Aside from the regional networks GFRAS, consist of individual persons, the so-called affiliates. Many more people than those listed below are continuously and diligently contributing to the success of GFRAS, many on a volunteer basis. GFRAS thanks you all for an exciting and fruitful year and looks forward to collaborating with you in 2017.

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Nutrition in RAS

Members: Bioversity/CGIAR Agriculture for Nutrition and Health, FAO, IFAD, INGENAES, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement Secretariat, UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN), World Food Programme

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Financial Report

GFRAS was supported in 2016 by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), and the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) through funding from the European Union (EU). The table below shows the income in 2016 by contributor. Note that the regional, sub-regional and country-level networks of GFRAS have additional funding partners that are not shown here. Unspent contributions were returned or rolled over into 2017.

Financial contributions realised in 2016

Contributor	Amount in USD
SDC	409 614
GIZ	349 631
USAID	339 912
EU/GFAR	85 377
CTA	74 978
Other	12 098
Rollover from 2015	78 693
	1 440 303

Expenses in 2016

Type	Amount in USD
Support to regions	144 391
Strategic Field 1: Advocacy and support for an enabling policy environment and appropriate investment in rural advisory services	357 789
Strategic Field 2: Professionalisation of rural advisory services	218 294
Strategic Field 3: Facilitation and enhancement of effective and continuous knowledge generation and exchange	66 965
Staff time	454 651
Management fees and overhead	155 229
Total	1 397 319
Net profit	42 954

Audit

The GFRAS accounting is integrated in the accounting of its host AGRIDEA and as such is submitted to a yearly audit. Further contributions are audited on request by some donors. The audit in 2015 was done by the Financial Administration of the Canton of Wallis, Switzerland. As the final audit report wasn't available at the printing date of this publication, the table with 2015 expenditures will be placed on the GFRAS website at www.g-fras.org when the report is released.

1 RELASER Policy Dialogues Initiative



At its Annual Meeting 2015, the Latin American Network for Rural Advisory Services (RELASER), introduced the Spanish translation of the GFRAS position paper The 'New Extensionist' and presented it to its country fora. Following the example of the African partner network, the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), the country fora (CF) in Latin America were asked to select from the 'New Extensionist' those areas that are most relevant and pressing in their national context and organise a policy dialogue within their countries. The process was coordinated by RELASER.

Seven country fora took part in the initiative and produced a wide variety of topics and recommendations based on their respective national contexts.

The CF Argentina talked about the importance of networks in rural extension and found that teaching the skills for building such networks at the individual and organisational level is missing from all trainings in rural advisory services. The CF Costa Rica discussed the linkages between research and extension and the implementation of an existing guideline for strengthening such linkages. It concluded that producer organisations need to be more involved and they agreed on further steps needed to be taken towards the implementation of the guideline.

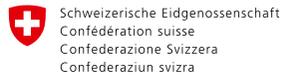
The CF Nicaragua debated the roles of the various stakeholders in the agricultural innovation system and how to broaden the stakeholder base. It set an example itself and organised two additional policy dialogues in other provinces to include more stakeholders.

The CF Mexico talked about the capacities and the profiles of extension professionals and found three areas that are missing in their context: strategic planning, stakeholder management and design of alternative development approaches.

The CF Chile focused on the role of extension for innovation and change, and ended by forming several working groups to further develop topics such as undergraduate training, developing extension systems in producer organisations or public policies for extension, among others. During their discussion, the role of experts in the facilitation of change processes and the methodologies and tools that they apply were highlighted as key elements.

The CF Uruguay examined the skills of extension professionals regarding a territorial approach and family farms. It identified several issues and elaborated

Supporting Partners



Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC



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The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



**The Global Forum on
Agricultural Research**



on a work plan to tackle these.

Lastly, the CF Colombia finally analysed different approaches and concepts on which a public policy for rural development can be based. It identified the territorial innovation system as most suited to the needs of the country and discussed how to take this forward.

The above are examples of the topics that were discussed at the various meetings. In conclusion RELASER organised a workshop in La Paz, Bolivia, on 12 April 2016 to gather all the involved CF to exchange their experiences with the policy dialogues. It found that the topics of training in the fields of soft and functional skills, developing a territorial approach, and linking the involvement of stakeholder to specific activities or a work plan, were common and important themes in all seven dialogues.

The RELASER Policy Dialogue Initiative contributes to the GFRAS Strategic Field 1 "Advocacy and support for an enabling policy environment and appropriate investment in RAS" by initiating contextualised discussions and consultations on the importance of RAS at regional and national levels.

2 Capacity Needs Assessment among Regional Networks and Country Fora

Regional and sub-regional networks and country fora play a crucial and relevant role in the operationalisation and implementation of GFRAS work and in strengthening and advocating RAS within their regions. To strengthen their capacities, GFRAS has been undertaking comprehensive capacity needs assessments with seven of its regional networks in 2016. The assessments covered the general functioning and institutional set-up of the networks, their capacities to advocate RAS, their knowledge management and ICT capacities, as well as their capacities to support the professionalisation of RAS within their regions and countries. The assessments tools were developed in a way that enable the networks to do the analysis themselves. They were presented, together with the first results, at the GFRAS Annual Meeting in Cameroon.

One of the networks assessed is the Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (PIRAS). Gibson Susumu, focal point of PIRAS and participatory extension officer at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community reports:



How did you experience the process of the assessment?

I especially liked the methodology used. It was an iterative process that allowed us to really distil the important areas relevant to the network and those that all could agree upon. Like this we were avoiding biases and ensured consistency.

What was the most surprising strength that came out in the assessment?

There was no particular strength showing up in the results. They showed that PIRAS is active in all areas (organisational and institutional functioning, advocacy, professionalisation of rural advisory services, knowledge management, and the use of information and communications technologies), but there is still room for improvement. Something we are very aware of.

And what was the most surprising gap?

A few gaps were identified around communications and advocacy. This is mainly due to the lack of a communications strategy and dedicated personnel to implement it, and to facilitate PIRAS functions in general. We are all working for PIRAS alongside our regular jobs.

How do you take the results forward, say for the coming two years?

PIRAS will be organising an annual meeting in July 2017 and we plan to discuss the results of the assessment and develop an implementation plan to address the identified areas that are in need of strengthening

The capacity needs assessments contribute to the GFRAS Strategic Field 2 "Professionalisation of RAS" by providing guidance for organisational efficiency and effectiveness of regional networks.

3 The Role of Country Fora in Policy Building in Africa

The number of Rural Advisory Services Country Fora (CF) is steadily increasing. The CFs are the building blocks of the GFRAS regional networks as they provide the means for translating the principles and goals of GFRAS into the specific national contexts. A CF aims to gather all major stakeholders in agriculture and rural development within a nation and hence provides a platform for exchange and discussions. At the same time the CFs are most competent at gathering the demands and needs identified by farmers and the rural population.



The combined expertise of a CF's members make them a valuable partner for policy makers. In Rwanda, the CF has been proactive in developing the ICT for Rwanda's Agriculture Strategic Plan, a guiding document for all ICT application in the agricultural sector. In addition, the CF is engaged in the elaboration of a national agricultural extension policy in close collaboration with AFAAS.

The Nigerian Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (NIFAAS) is pushing strongly for a 'stand-alone' Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services Policy instead of having it just as a section in the Agricultural Policy. With support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), NIFAAS has started a round of consultations with stakeholders not only from the national level but also from selected provinces of Nigeria. The resulting draft policy will then be submitted to the government for validation.

The Malawi Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (MaFAAS) has been advocating – since 2011 – for the review of the 2000 Malawi Agricultural Extension Policy. The main challenges that need to be addressed include, among others, the poor coordination among extension service providers, low levels of demand articulation by farmers and poor response to them by service providers, no policy direction on the recruitment and welfare of extension providers, and poor adaptation to emerging approaches, such as the use of ICT. After the Malawi Extension Week of 2016 the Ministry of Agriculture formed a task force and acknowledged the reports and outcomes of the past Malawi Extension Weeks as important sources of information for the formulation of a new agricultural extension policy.

The activities of Country Fora contribute to GFRAS Strategic Field 1 "Advocacy and support for an enabling policy environment and appropriate investment in RAS", by initiating contextualised discussions and consultations on the importance of RAS at regional and national levels.

4 7th GFRAS Annual Meeting: Role of Rural Advisory Services (RAS) for Inclusive Agripreneurship

Fostering entrepreneurship in agriculture is now widely recognised as a central concern by many actors involved in agricultural development. However, the links between RAS and agripreneurship have not been sufficiently explored to date. Participants of the 7th GFRAS Annual Meeting (3–6 October, Limbé, Cameroon) agreed that RAS can play a key role in supporting rural actors to become successful agripreneurs when equipped to do so. They provide access to important information, and can connect rural people to



entrepreneurs, relevant markets, and financial services. They can also provide training to farmers in relevant managerial capacities and other functional skills (as opposed to technical skills, see also GFRAS' The 'New Extensionist'). RAS can support actors' decision making processes and influence policies and regulations so as to create an enabling environment conducive to agripreneurship. It can also reduce difficulties for entrepreneurs and business in the sector, or contribute to helping people reflect on areas where societal values may impede entrepreneurship. Participants identified roles that RAS can and should play, and the capacities RAS need to fulfil these roles. A set of recommendations were developed for RAS and RAS-related stakeholders to strengthen inclusive agripreneurship.

An overarching conclusion from the debates at the Annual Meeting is that actors in the rural landscape need to adapt to a new context in which private sector operators and agripreneurs are important players in agricultural development. RAS then also need to adapt and encourage a new mind-set, which shifts the perception from project-oriented approaches towards more business-oriented approaches to agriculture, in which the importance of making a profit is recognised.

Continued efforts to strengthen the capacities of RAS actors are needed, particularly in the following areas:

- Strengthening internal capacities of organisations and institutions to respond to changing situations and emerging needs;
- Building appropriate structures, approaches, and methods for the provision of services to agripreneurs, potentially also comprising the development of fee-based RAS services;
- Strengthening functional skills and competencies of RAS providers, particularly with
- regard to value chain and business knowledge as well as management, and facilitation;
- Mobilising and negotiating with partners and buyers, along with the ability to broker business relationships.

A full summary of the GFRAS Annual Meeting 2016 can be found at <http://www.g-fras.org/en/annual-meeting-2016.html>

The Annual Meeting is the central instrument of GFRAS to provide spaces for knowledge exchange and learning. It constitutes a major activity within the GFRAS Strategic Field 3 "Facilitation and enhancement of effective and continuous knowledge generation and exchange".

5 How to Integrate Nutrition into Rural Advisory Services (RAS)

There is a heightened awareness globally and within development institutions and governments, of the need to better understand the links between agriculture and nutrition, and to decipher ways in which the agriculture sector can contribute to improved nutrition. Rural Advisory Services (RAS) are widely seen as a promising channel for improving nutrition in rural communities because of their ability to improve practices in rural households. The newly formed GFRAS Nutrition Working Group will engage relevant stakeholders and actors to bring the potential leverage of RAS in nutrition issues to their attention.



There are several good arguments that underpin the need to integrate nutrition into RAS including:

- **Established infrastructure:** In some countries, a RAS delivery system is already in place and it is just a matter of 'topping-up' their portfolio with simple nutrition activities and messages.
- **Reach:** Existing networks of extension agents already reach many people. Extension agents have direct and sometimes extensive links to farming communities in rural and remote areas.
- **Community trust:** Extension agents maintain regular contact and have established relationships with the people and the communities in which they work. It is much easier to introduce nutrition issues into communities with pre-existing relationships built on trust.
- **Cultural awareness:** Extension agents are often aware of the local social norms, cultures, and belief systems that accompany and contextualise food. Agents frequently hail from within the region where they work and therefore have intimate knowledge and understanding of the local context and conditions.
- **Understanding the context:** Familiarity with the conditions and context in which farmers work and associated limitations and opportunities, extension agents are more able to demonstrate empathy with the farmers. This is particularly true with regard to questions of food production and market access.

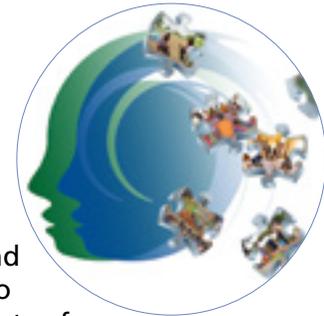
Thus, it's easy to see how extension workers can include nutrition-related activities and messages in their work, provided they are trained adequately. Adoption of more nutrition-sensitive agriculture takes more than just providing tools, technologies, and messages. If we want to see behaviour change, it is

important for RAS to understand farmers' decision-making processes and how these impact livelihoods, incomes, and nutrition outcomes.

The creation of a Nutrition Working Group in 2016 will contribute to the GFRAS Strategic Field 3: "Facilitation and enhancement of effective and continuous knowledge generation and exchange", by coordinating spaces to facilitate knowledge exchange and learning. Also see the Global Good Practice Notes 9: Integrating Nutrition into RAS, 25: Promoting Nutrition-sensitive Extension Advisory Services, and 26: Integrating Men into Nutrition.

6 The New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK)

The 'New Extensionist' is a global view of extension and rural advisory services (RAS) that reinvents and clearly articulates the role of RAS in the rapidly-changing rural context. It argues for an expanded role for RAS within agricultural innovation systems (AIS), and the development of new capacities at different levels to play this role. To facilitate an easier access to the concepts of the 'New Extensionist', GFRAS developed a set of learning and teaching materials.



The New Extensionist Learning Kit contains 13 modules designed for self-directed, face-to-face, or blended learning and can be a useful tool for (but not exclusively) individual extension field staff, managers, lecturers and non-governmental organisations, as well as other training institutions. The development process was designed and managed as an iterative journey of broad consultations, discussions, and feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, led by the GFRAS Consortium for Extension Education and Training.

List of the modules:

1. Introduction to the 'New Extensionist'
2. Extension Approaches and Tools
3. Agricultural Extension Programme Management
4. Professional Ethics
5. Adult Learning for Behavioural Change
6. Basic Knowledge Management and Extension

7. Introduction to Facilitation for Development
8. Community Mobilisation
9. Farmer Organisational (FO) Development
10. The Role of Extension in Value Chains
11. Agricultural Entrepreneurship
12. Gender in Extension and Advisory Services
13. Risk Management and Adaptation in Extension and Advisory Services

Two additional modules on “Evaluation of Extension Programmes” and “RAS Policy Advocacy” are also being developed.

One example: Module 12 – Gender in Extension and Advisory Services

To deliver on their mandates and contribute to positive change, extension workers need a well-developed understanding of, and the skills necessary to address critical issues around gender in rural livelihoods. Men and women, young and old, all play vital roles in rural livelihoods, but assumptions are often made about who does what and who makes the decisions. These aspects of gender and decision making are critical to targeting efforts and helping everyone involved in rural livelihoods and agriculture benefit from innovations and improved technologies.

This module on gender is designed to help users understand why these concepts are important in extension. Through it users will learn how to identify why different community members have different expectations from extension, and how you can begin addressing them. By understanding these different needs, users will be able to better match the best technologies to opportunities, deliver successful programmes, and avoid making the situation worse for anyone. This module will also help users improve in their role(s) in extension to better meet critical needs in rural livelihoods.

The New Extensionist Learning Kit contributes to the GFRAS Strategic Field 2 “Professionalisation of RAS” by strengthening the capacity of regional networks to support the professionalisation of activities within countries.

Impressum

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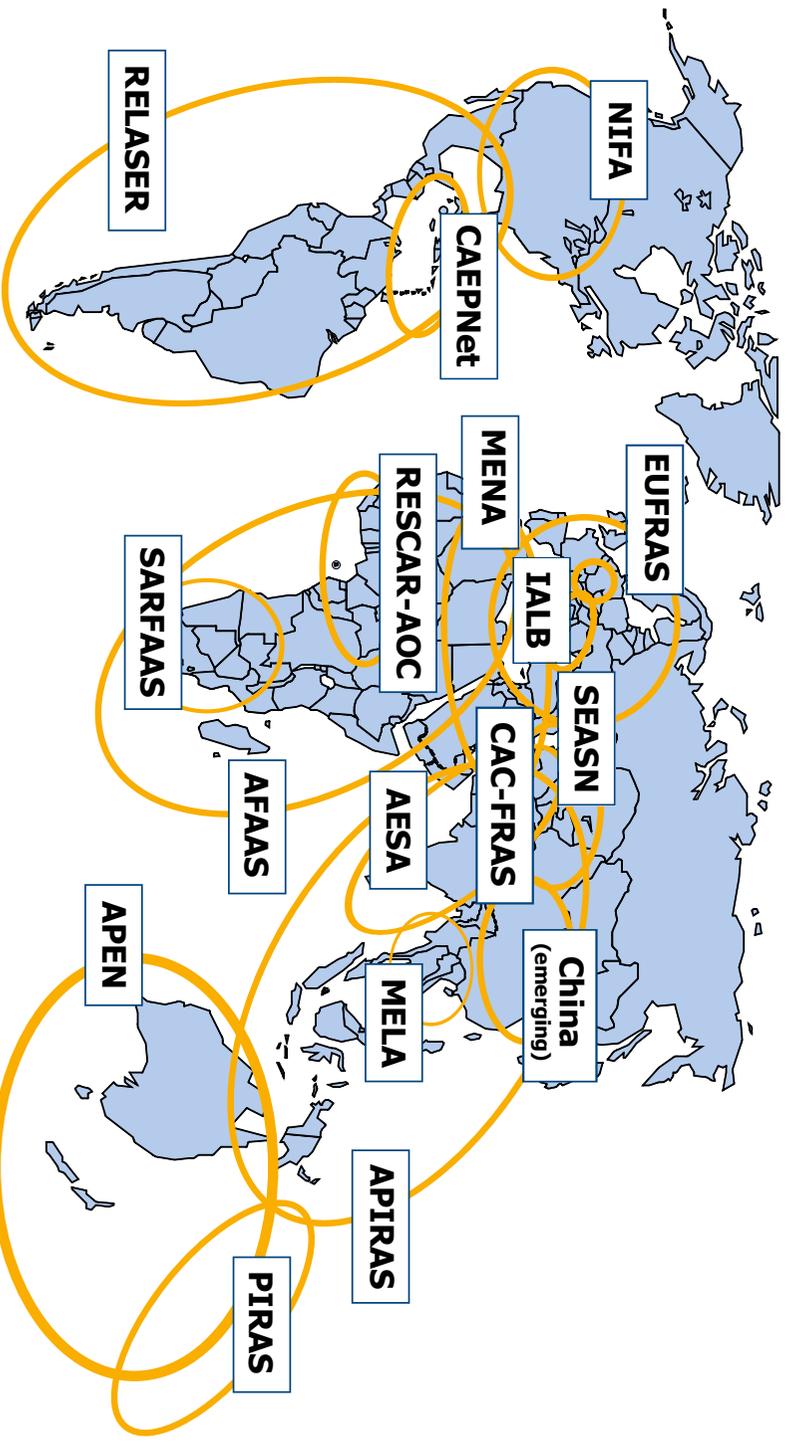
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