

6th GFRAS Annual Meeting

Strengthening RAS actors' collaboration, dialogue and advocacy on policy reform and action

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Organisers:	GFRAS and MEAS
Input providers:	Oladimeji Oladele, Austin More and Sthembile Mwamakamba,
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1. Background and objectives

In June 2015, GFRAS in partnership with the African Forum for Rural Advisory services (AFAAS) and Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) held a RAS policy dialogue for Eastern Africa. Scoping studies presented at this dialogue revealed that many countries in do not validated national agricultural extension policies. The realization triggered a need for strengthening capacities for RAS policy reviews.

The workshop was organised with the **objectives** to:

- Share experiences and build on lessons from RAS review processes in Africa and Asia and specifically from the Africa Policy dialogue and to define areas of action
- Discuss opportunities for strengthening the capacity of RAS actors to facilitate, engage in, and provide advocacy to policy review processes
- Discuss ways of strengthening the GFRAS policy working group

2. Proceedings highlights

The workshop was organised in a participatory manner that involved short input presentations from resource persons, each followed by an intensive discussion where participants shared own experiences and collectively generate ideas of how best to strengthen RAS actors for advocacy and dialogue on policy reform and action.

2.1 Status of RAS policies and participatory policy review processes

Input: Panel discussions by Oladimeji Oladele and Austen Moore

Through a facilitated panel discussion, Oladimeji Oladele presented key themes and lessons learned from an assessment of the status of RAS policy in Sub-Saharan Africa and the results of the RAS Policy Dialogue for Eastern Africa, while Austen Moore presented MEAS's policy review process and lessons learned from work in Liberia, Ghana, and Cambodia.

The highlight were:

- Few countries have dedicated RAS or extension policies. GFRAS work in Sub-Saharan Africa only showed 13 dedicated RAS policies, up from 6 in 2012.
- These led to discussion over whether RAS/extension needed a separate policy to be visible or if it could be placed better as a sub-policy under a larger agricultural policy.
- As a separate policy, questions remained about how RAS/extension ties in to other agricultural policies, whereas without a separate policy participants were concerned about whether RAS/extension receive sufficient political and financial support.

Participants’ experiences in policy review processes

Several discussion points /learnings emerged from the discussion with the participants. It became clear that all participants had interacted with RAS/extension policy (or lack thereof) in their work and in their countries/regions.

The highlights were:

- Participants reiterated the importance of making a case for the value of RAS/extension, both through data-driven means but also in the policy realm through appropriate advocacy.
- The importance of considering cross-sectoral linkages and non-traditional RAS actors when developing RAS and extension policy, both to make resulting policy most appropriate but also to generate “buy-in” to assist with institutionalization and implementation.

In your experiences, what is needed for working with RAS policy?	
<p><i>Empowerment and capacity building</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment of farmers to hold governments accountable • Capacity building in RAS policy processes • Capacity building in management • Strengthening capacity of RAS users to engage in policy processes 	<p><i>Monitoring & evaluation systems</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong monitoring and evaluation system with indicators that influence policy-makers • Measurable outcomes • Ways to demonstrate clear benefits to society and the economy • Evidences on return on investment in extension services to convince policy-makers
<p><i>Linking agriculture and other related policies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkages to other policies and policy environments • RAS policy should align with other policies • Need to clarify whether RAS is best as a stand-alone policy or part of larger agricultural policy • Recognize that agricultural and non-agricultural RAS exists and must be accounted for in planning and budgets when working at the national economic planning level • RAS policy must contribute to achieving global sustainability goals 	<p><i>Involvement of non-RAS actors in policy processes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve non-traditional RAS actors in the formulation and implementation of RAS policies and strategies • Include all potential stakeholders in the policy process • Engage all actors, especially end-users, in RAS policy process • Utilizing a bottom-up approach • Stakeholder-mapping has to be conducted • Stakeholder ownership
<p><i>Coordination</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAS policies and strategies at the highest level in Ministries of Agriculture covering all departments • Coordination of development actors working with Ministries of Agriculture • Define key functions and roles of extension 	

2.2 Strengthening RAS actors’ collaboration, dialogue, and advocacy on policy reform and action

Input: Presentation by Sthembile Mwamakamba (FANRPAN)

Sthembile Mwamakamba shared the FANRPAN’s experiences of strengthening capacity for collaboration, dialogue, and policy advocacy

Participants discussions

After the input presentation, the participants were engaged in discussions to respond to the following questions:

- What role can we (as GFRAS) play to Influence change in RAS policy processes
- What do we (as stakeholders) commit to do to engage and support RAS policy process?
- What are the areas where we need support?

Overall, the participants' appreciation for the role of advocacy was enhanced through the side event, and led to general agreement that policy review requires deliberate advocacy and institutionalization efforts to have needed impacts.

What role can we (as GFRAS) play to influence change in RAS policy processes?	
<p><i>Evidence and advocacy at national and regional levels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft messages on policy change • Advocate with member countries for the need of the RAS policy • Provide more evidence for policy decisions • Engage with EU on policy issues 	<p><i>M & E and Knowledge management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop learning material on extension M&E • Advocacy and capacity development and knowledge • Improve knowledge management related to policy and evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct study on current situation on policies in the European region • Debate in each state on RAS policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the FANRPAN process with RAS leaders to facilitate or stimulate them to action • Identify messengers and advocates

In the next year, what actions do we commit to do in our own capacities to engage and support the RAS policy processes?	
<p><i>Documentation and knowledge transfer</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document evidence from the ground on what works or doesn't with regards to RAS • Transfer knowledge and experiences to support the process 	<p><i>Policy advocacy and knowledge brokering</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry the message of RAS policies to different meetings to stakeholders • Serve as a broker to other RAS actors
<p><i>National policy dialogues</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct RAS policy dialogues in 5 countries of Latin America based on the New Extensionist 	<p><i>Strengthen national fora and establish policy working group</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create national policy working groups • Consolidate national RAS actors into forum
<p><i>RAS frameworks and tool (Gender sensitive)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop framework and tools • Support RAS with formulating gender-equitable RAS policies and strategies 	

What are the areas where we need support?	
<p><i>Tools for generating evidence and methodologies for policy advocacy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better tools for generating evidence for policy reform • Methodologies for policy advocacy 	<p><i>Coordination and harmonization</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective coordination of RAS and allocation of resources to improve livelihoods • Capacity harmonization on RAS policy from GFRAS
<p><i>More case studies needed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More case studies (synthesized) needed from GFRAS and regional networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects and programs to integrate the learning modules

2.3 Strengthening Policy Review Processes and Strategies:

In this session discussions were around experiences on strengthening policy review processes and strategies. The discussions revolved around the following 4 major questions:

- How can we strengthen policy creation/review preparation & background work?
- How can we strengthen policy creation/review events?
- How can we strengthen outputs of policy creation/review and sharing results/recommendations?
- How can we strengthen policy advocacy and mainstreaming implementation of policies?

Highlights were:

How can we strengthen policy creation/review preparation & background work?	
<p>Who to involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives of all stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government, civil society, private sector, end-users • Advocacy and targeted lobby • RAS actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presenting evidence (of what RAS can do) to policy-makers • Farmers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presenting evidence - Building capacity on policy review of existing framework 	<p>How to determine feasibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political, capacity (knowledge), time and resources, culture/social, political stability • Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HR to lead the process and stakeholders with capacity, financial resources for capacity building as well as the process • Contribute: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government budget or donors and stakeholders • Responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governments and stakeholders • Outputs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consultations with stakeholders - Capacity building - Needs assessments - Reports on recommendations on changes in policy • Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Buy-in” or ownership by stakeholders - Knowledge of strengths and weaknesses and gaps - Engagement of stakeholders - Changed procedures of decision-making
<p>How to determine status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governmental, donors, private investments - Current legislation - Institutional analysis • Interviews among RAS providers and users • National statistics/other monitoring data on production, food security, etc. • Informants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different segments of users (men, women, youth) - RAS providers - Consumers 	

How can we strengthen policy creation/review events?	
<p>Key organizations to include in policy events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Depends on who has research to share • Donors, governments, farmers, CSOs, producer organizations • Respective roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donors, Funding, Governments, Recipients of evidence, Policy-making, Implementers, Generators of political will, CSOs, Mobilization, Producer organizations, Make demands of RAS, Initiate change • Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donors, Funding, facilitation, Governments, Personnel, venue, background information, document stocktaking - CSOs, Funding, mobilization, networks, Producer organizations - Experiences, information, networks 	<p>Key stakeholders to include in policy events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Departments of extension, planning, finance, communication, gender, media, nutrition - Meteorological departments • Research/educations institutions • Farmers’ organizations • CSOs • Donors • Private sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Input suppliers, agro dealers • Non-RAS actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional leaders - Parliamentarians and local assemblies - Traders and market actors

<p>Maximizing participation at policy events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of background information • Announcement of event in good time • Support to participate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transport to venue, accommodation, etc. • Proper facilitation of the meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language, facilitation style, etc. • Make accommodations for gender <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliberately invite targeted gender-balanced audiences - Efforts to balance speakers/presenters - Topics must be engendered to mainstream gender into the policy context - Gender balance in small group activities - Timing of event must consider gender dimensions 	<p>Stimulating engagement during events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing personal experiences • Specialization of presenters • Make forum relevant to different disciplines • Equal chances/time for discussion • Discuss what is working well, what could work better • Safe environment for sharing
<p>Facilitation methods to promote equal engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal chances to speak • Knowledge cafes • Make everyone contribute • Fishbowl methods • Breakout group 	<p>Removing barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple languages • Time management • Conducive environments <p>Logistical support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External facilitators

<p>How can we strengthen outputs of policy creation/review and sharing results/recommendations?</p>	
<p>Key stakeholders to involve in the policy process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be grouped by roles of responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Output generators (farmers), Service providers (RAS, input suppliers, etc.), Policy-makers, Financiers, Consumers, Media • Addressing politically-sensitive recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carefully prepared personal letters to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy-makers, Parliament members, Specialists • Validating recommendations for feasibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inception event with national-level key stakeholders - Stakeholder consultations at different levels (public hearings) - Voting with video at meetings - Community consultations - Awareness campaigns via social media - Validation workshop at the national level • Platforms for sharing results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National RAS platform and Parliamentarian sub-committee • Key stakeholders who must receive policy recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finance Ministries and Ministers - Prime Ministers, Parliamentarians • Presenters of key recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GFRAS policy working groups, Media, RAS actors, Farmers' unions, Donors etc 	<p>Key outputs of policy events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports of the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defined priorities - Defined stakeholders/roles - Concrete recommendations - Policy briefs - Videos

<p>How can we strengthen policy advocacy and mainstreaming implementation of policies?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the very beginning the policy formulation process should be done in a participatory manner • Country fora should lead the coordination of RAS policy institutionalization • One of more specialists to guide organizational change • Link with others to form advocacy efforts • Need training for policy advocacy to be able to influence policies • Build capacity to convince policy-makers about extension and RAS policy

- Develop short messages (elevator speeches) to share with key RAS stakeholders and policy-makers
- Need to carry out studies to engage policy-makers in evidence-based policy creation/review
- Package messages to show benefits to politicians
- Provide evidence that can benefit politicians
- Country fora should decide about an advocacy plan and who should have responsibility for institutionalization

3. GFRAS Working Group, responsibilities, mode of work etc

The aim of this short part at the Policy Side Event was to revitalise the working group and jointly agree on a structure and way of functioning that actively engages its members and allows for everyone to take a proactive role. The discussions followed a three stage process of:

- Short history of GFRAS Policy Working Group (shared by Natalie Ernst)
- Structure and Principles of Working (Discussed with the participants)
- Next steps

3.1 Background I: Short history of GFRAS Policy Working Group

The GFRAS Policy Working Group was formed at request of GFRAS steering committee due to the high level of interest in this topic and with the following aims:

- Harmonise activities within policy making for extension and advisory services
- Link demands to resources within policy activities
- Make information and resources available

In 2011, at the GFRAS Annual Meeting and the subsequent [International Conference on Innovations in Extension and Advisory Services](#) in Nairobi, policy was recognised as a crucial and significant factor that influences the environment in which RAS providers act. The consequent [Nairobi Declaration](#) affirmed the need for a participative and coordinated development of clear extension policies, including quality assurance mechanisms. At the GFRAS Annual Meeting in 2013, a Side Event on Policy was held, which resulted in the creation of the working group, which held its first meeting in Pretoria in March 2013. In 2014, policy became the topic of the GFRAS Annual Meeting's content part. The policy compendium was launched and in the first semester of 2015, a first policy dialogue was held (in Eastern Africa).

After the deliberation, the group made the following **decisions**:

3.2 Decisions I: Structure and Principles of Working

The participants decided on the following structure of the policy working group:

- 3 main bodies:
 - A main coordinator as a strong focal point, who, in coordination with the GFRAS secretariat, leads the policy working group. Sithembile Ndema Mwamakamba volunteered and was accepted by the participants to take over this role.
 - A core group of members, who actively take actions forward and feed them back to the working group. The core group ideally comprises members from the GFRAS steering committee, at least one representative from each region, the GFRAS secretariat, and other interested organisations and parties.
 - An extended mailing list with passive members, who are regularly informed and/or asked for inputs as resource persons, but who bear no responsibilities in showing active engagement
- Principles of working:
 - Everyone interested shall be allowed to join the core group, proven they show interest and active engagement
 - The activities of the policy working group, its structure, and its way of working shall be guided by Terms of References
 - The policy working group will act based on a yearly work plan
 - At each GFRAS Annual Meeting a policy side event shall be held, where the working group shall report of its activities in the past years and elaborate the new work plan

3.3 Decisions II: Next steps

The following next steps were agreed upon:

Activity	Due date	Responsible Person	Comments/ related discussions
Develop draft ToR to send out to core group	5 October	Thembi, Natalie	The ToR shall comprise: all regulations on how the working group acts, structure and main bodies (including terms, how they are elected, etc.), reporting and M&E guidelines, budget, ways of communication, etc.
Core group to comment	23 October	Core group	Core group will be: participants that registered during the Policy Side Event, and the key members or people involved in former events and lists
Finalise ToR and send out communication	31 October	Thembi	The aim is to inform the whole mailing list of the new functioning, and to give everyone the chance to step in or out of the core group
Set priorities of activities for 2016	31 October	Thembi, Kristin, Natalie	This will be done through a) regional consultations (Natalie, Thembi), b) linking to the general GFRAS operational plan (Kristin).
Define Work Plan for 2016	15 December	Thembi, Natalie	4 key issues are already set: Active work on policy compendium and linking it to policy dialogues; continue the discussion on the inclusion of a policy advocacy module in the GFRAS New Extensionist Learning Kit. A Policy Side Event at the Annual Meeting 2016 is planned to report on activities.