



7th GFRAS Annual Meeting

The Role of Rural Advisory Services for Inclusive Agripreneurship

3 - 6 October 2016, Cameroon

Concept Note

Date, Venue, and Topic

The 7th Annual Meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services ([GFRAS](#)) will take place from **3 - 6 October 2016** in **Cameroon**, with side events on 3 and 7 October. The topic is **the Role of Rural Advisory Services (RAS) for Inclusive Agripreneurship**. It will be preceded by the Annual Meeting of the West and Central African Network for Rural Advisory Services (in French: le Réseau des Services de Conseil Agricole et Rural d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre, RESCAR-AOC), a GFRAS-GIZ workshop on the Role of RAS in Gender Mainstreaming in Value Chains, and accompanied by other relevant learning events. The meeting is organised by GFRAS in partnership with RESCAR-AOC, the African Forum of Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Cameroon.

Background and Rationale

Rural advisory services (RAS¹), also called extension services, are fundamental to support rural people to face existing and emerging challenges, and to improve their livelihoods. [GFRAS](#) was initiated in 2010 to provide advocacy and leadership on pluralistic and demand-driven rural advisory services for sustainable development. The forum includes networks representing RAS on regional, sub-regional, and national levels, and actors from all sectors and domains involved in RAS. The Annual Meeting is the central instrument for GFRAS to foster learning and exchange and to discuss and strengthen the functioning of GFRAS and its regional networks and national fora. The Annual Meeting contributes to all of its strategic fields:

1. Advocacy and support for an enabling policy environment and appropriate investment in rural advisory services
2. Professionalisation of rural advisory services
3. Facilitation and enhancement of effective and continuous knowledge generation and exchange

The GFRAS Annual Meeting has both a thematic component (focused on content) and a functional component (focused on network strengthening).

¹Rural advisory services, also called extension, are all the different activities that provide the information and services needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in rural settings to assist them in developing their own technical, organisational, and management skills and practices so as to improve their livelihoods and well-being. ([GFRAS Strategic Framework](#))

Meeting Objectives

The meeting objectives are to:

1. Provide a comprehensive understanding of inclusive agripreneurship and its relevance for food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable development, and identify factors that influence inclusive agripreneurship.
2. Discuss the role of RAS and their capacities needed on the individual, organisational, and system level to strengthen inclusive agripreneurship, and provide recommendations on how those capacities can be strengthened.
3. Discuss capacity needs and define ways forward needed in general to strengthen RAS networks and fora for them to become successful players in agricultural innovation systems in their regions.

Meeting Components

Thematic component – RAS for inclusive agripreneurship

Agriculture today faces many challenges, including globalisation and market liberalisation, food price crises, natural resource depletion, climate change, rapid urbanisation, changing production and consumption patterns, demographic changes, and so on. Many of these directly or indirectly lead to changing markets, and create both opportunities and risks for farmers, especially for smallholders, youth, and women. With a growing recognition of the important role of smallholder agriculture for economic growth and rural development in many countries, market-oriented agriculture appears more prominently on the agenda. Agripreneurship is key in this regard.

Agripreneurship refers to entrepreneurship in agriculture. Entrepreneurship is a concept that encompasses transforming an idea or vision into a “new business or new venture creation, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business” (Reynolds et al. 1999, cited by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor). But entrepreneurship, as opposed to self-employment, is also defined by the *spirit* of the entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are usually creative, take opportunities and accept risks, and can quickly change business strategies to adapt to changing environments. They are often innovators (Kahan, 2012). While usually being innovative and creative, farmers often lack experiences, access to services, people, or markets, and skills to have realistic chances to succeed as entrepreneurs (Wongtschowski et al. 2013). In addition, agripreneurs are influenced by external, systemic factors, such as economic and social barriers, policies, and regulations (Kahan 2012). While these constraints affect all farmers and especially all smallholders, women and youth are particularly affected.

Rural advisory services play a crucial role in supporting farmers to become successful agripreneurs. They provide important information and access to people, markets, and financial services and train the farmers in the required managerial and other functional skills. Rural advisory services can also influence policies and regulations to create an agripreneurship-friendly environment, reduce barriers, or change prevailing values in societies.

Structure of the content part

The GFRAS Annual Meeting will provide a unique opportunity to explore, exchange experiences, discuss, and give recommendations on the role of RAS for inclusive

agripreneurship. Plenary sessions will give an overview of the concepts, characteristics, and needs for inclusive agripreneurship. Participants will discuss and learn why agripreneurship is important, what constraints and opportunities rural people face with regard to agripreneurship, and what the role of RAS is, or should be.

Once the scene has been set, parallel sessions will be held for participants to discuss experiences and evidence on how effective RAS has been so far in promoting inclusive agripreneurship, and what capacities are needed on individual, organisational, and system level to improve and strengthen the role of RAS for inclusive agripreneurship.

The following three parallel sessions will be held:

1. Individual capacity needs of RAS to strengthen inclusive agripreneurship
 - a. What is the role of RAS providers in strengthening inclusive agripreneurship? How effective are they?
 - b. What capacities, especially skills and competencies, do RAS providers need to become more effective in their role and how can they be strengthened?
 - c. What are the opportunities and challenges that RAS providers face in this context and how can they be seized or overcome?
2. Organisational capacity needs of RAS to strengthen inclusive agripreneurship
 - a. What role can RAS organisations play, especially RAS networks and country fora, to enhance inclusive agripreneurship in their context? How effective are they?
 - b. What capacities do RAS organisations need to assume and become more effective in this role and how can they be strengthened?
 - c. What opportunities and challenges do RAS organisations face in this context and how can they be seized or overcome?
3. System-level capacity needs of RAS to strengthen inclusive agripreneurship
 - a. What is the role of enabling environments for RAS to enhance inclusive agripreneurship?
 - b. What settings are needed at a system-level to enable agripreneurship and strengthen the role of RAS in this?
 - c. What are the system-level opportunities and challenges for RAS to promote inclusive agripreneurship and how can they be seized and overcome?

Functional component – Strengthening general capacity needs of RAS networks

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 for RAS within their regions. The new GFRAS strategic framework and corresponding five-year operational plan place a strong focus on strengthening the capacities of the regional and sub-regional networks and country fora. Along these lines, GFRAS is undertaking comprehensive capacity needs assessments with many of its regional networks in the first three quarters of 2016. The assessments will cover the general functioning and institutional set-up of the networks, their capacities to advocate for RAS, their knowledge management and ICT capacities, as well as their capacities to support the professionalisation of RAS within their regions and countries. We will use the Annual Meeting to discuss and analyse results of these assessments, and draw general as well as context-specific lessons. The aim is for RAS networks to return to their regions with a roadmap and priorities to work on in order to strengthen their own network's functioning in 2017, with a special view on their role for inclusive

agripreneurship.

Structure of the functional component

Depending on the progress of the assessments, a first synthesis of the results will be presented in the plenary. Networks will then have the chance for a peer-to-peer learning session, where networks will coach each other based on their needs identified in the assessments. After that, the networks will have the time to convene within their network to discuss how they can realistically meet some of the identified needs and elaborate a realistic roadmap up to the Annual Meeting 2017.

Draft Agenda, Content Preparation, and Inputs by Participants

As usual, the 7th GFRAS Annual Meeting will be a participatory learning event, with many different kinds of sessions including keynotes, panel sessions, input presentations in plenary, group work, parallel workshops, short presentations, share fair, and field trips. Participants will be given a wide range of opportunities to provide inputs that will cover experiences, evidence, and practice. Inputs can take following forms:

- Input presentation in one of the parallel sessions
- Blog entry beforehand and short presentation during the meeting on your experience, story, or evidence of the role of RAS for inclusive agripreneurship
- A stand at the share fair
- Side events or trainings on 3 or 6 - 7 October (see below)

The discussions during the meeting will be preceded with a range of preparatory activities in which all interested can engage. They include:

- Material and resource collection, including newsfeed on the website
- A blog on stories and experiences on the role of RAS in agripreneurship
- The participatory content development of the GFRAS New Extensionist Learning Kit Module on Agripreneurship
- An in-depth e-discussion on the topic, based on some contents or tutorials from the Learning Kit Module

A draft agenda as well as requirements, application process and deadlines, and selection criteria for all inputs and preparatory activities can be found on the website (opening on 12 April 2016).

Participation and Registration

Online registration and the call for inputs will open on 12 April and close on 20 July 2016. Participants from all regions and working in RAS or in related fields are welcome at the 7th GFRAS Annual Meeting in 2016. We encourage stakeholders from different sectors – public, private, and civil society – to attend, including representatives of farmer organisations, private companies, research, education, development agencies, media, and others. In order to guarantee a participatory meeting with a focus on networking and exchange, the number of participants will be limited to approximately 150. In case of a high number of registrations, participants will be selected in a way that secures the best possible balance of regions, sub-regions, gender, sectors, and age. Limited funding will be available to sponsor 1 to 2

representatives per region to attend the meeting. There will be a registration fee of USD 100 for all participants, which can be paid online before the meeting, or in cash (USD) directly at the meeting. For more information on participation and registration please check the GFRAS website.

Budget and Funding

While the main funding for the event comes from GFRAS, we give the opportunity for organisations and institutions to co-fund the event. Information on sponsorship packages is available on the website. For more information please contact the GFRAS secretariat (annual-meeting@g-fras.org).

Logistics

Logistical information will be continuously updated on the Annual Meeting website.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Meeting

The meeting will be evaluated on the last day. Further, the results of the meeting will be monitored and assessed among the participants, working groups, and regional fora by the regular progress reports and annual reports.

Further Reading

Christoplos, I. 2008. Agricultural advisory services and the market. Natural Resource Perspectives 113. London: Overseas Development Institute. Available at: <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/1747.pdf>

Christoplos, I, Sandison, P, Chipeta, S. 2012. *Guide to Evaluating Rural Extension*. Lindau: GFRAS. Available: <http://www.g-fras.org/en/knowledge/gfras-publications/file/78-guide-to-extension-evaluation.html?start=20>

Heemserk, W., Davis, K. 2008. Farming as a Business and the Need for Local (Agri-)Business Development Services. In: World Bank. 2012. *Agricultural Innovation Systems: An Investment Sourcebook*. Washington, DC: The World Bank, pp. 204- 212. Available: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTARD/Resources/335807-1330620492317/9780821386842_ch3.pdf.

Kahan, D. 2012. *Entrepreneurship in farming*. Farm management extension guide 5. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Available: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3231e/i3231e.pdf>

Wongtschowski, M., Belt, J., Heemserk, W., Kahan, D. (eds). 2013. *The business of agricultural business services: Working with smallholders in Africa*. Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute; Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Arnhem: Agri-ProFocus. Available: http://www.kit.nl/sed/wp-content/uploads/publications/2080_the_business_of_agricultural_business_services.pdf

World Bank. 2012. *Agricultural Innovation Systems: An Investment Sourcebook*. Washington, DC: The World Bank. Available: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTARD/Resources/335807->

[1330620492317/9780821386842_ch3.pdf](#).

Find all further information on the [GFRAS Annual Meeting webpage](#).