

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

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Table of Contents

1. List of Abbreviations	3
2. The world we are working in	4
3. Learning from the Past and Positioning for the Future	5
4. Strategic Plan	14
5. Activity Plan	16
Strategic Field 1: Advocacy	16
Strategic Field 2: Professionalisation	17
Strategic Field 3: Knowledge generation and sharing	17
Strategic Field 4: Network Strengthening	18
6. Budget	19
7. Implementation arrangements	23
8. Risks and Risk Management	25
9. Monitoring and Evaluation	27
10. Annexes	33

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

1. List of Abbreviations

AGRIDEA	The Centre for Agricultural Advisory and Extension Services
AIS	Agricultural Innovation Systems
AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems
CC	Communication Coordinator
ES	Executive Secretary
GCU	Global Coordination Unit
CR	Country Representatives
GA	General Assembly
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FiBL	Research Institute of Organic Agriculture
KM	Knowledge Management
LMP	Last-Mile Project
LR	Local Representatives
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
NELK	New Extensionist Learning Kit
OP	Operational Plan
PM	Programme Manager
RAS	Rural Advisory Services
RDA	Korean Rural Development Administration
RC	Regional Coordinators
SC	Steering Committee

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFS	Sustainable Food Systems
YPARD	Young Professionals for Agricultural Development

2. The world we are working in

The current global food system is under ever-growing pressure. Increasing strains on water and land use, loss of biodiversity, accelerating changing climate, rapidly spreading pests and diseases have made farmers' lives increasingly insecure and challenging. The current COVID19 pandemic has put renewed focus on the importance of resilient food systems. And in building such the critical role of women in global food production and youth in transforming systems should not be forgotten. Increasing investment in agriculture-related research resulting in the development of environmental-friendly practices, new breeds and agronomic technologies, does not sufficiently translate into increased productivity, waste management and sustainability. This is due to the challenge that 70% of all agriculture-related research results never reach the end-user. The missing link is not so much 'lack of technologies' as it is the 'lack of ability to get knowledge technologies to the users in a useful and affordable format'. Increased investment in youth driven innovations in extension and rural advisory services seems to be an appropriate answer to the challenges agriculture and food systems are facing. Especially if this investment is gender sensitive and acknowledge the key role of women in production and well as food safety and security.

In the first half of the 21st century, mankind must produce enough safe and nutritious food in a sustainable way to sustain a population which is expected to rise to 9.7 billion by 2050. In pursuing this goal, we also must address the SDGs. Enhancing knowledge transfer throughout the agri-food system will be key. New approaches and solutions are desperately needed, and GFRAS is uniquely positioned as the global network on extension and rural advisory services.

Today, around 85% of youth live in developing countries, places where agriculture is still the backbone of the economy, the largest employer and the main source of income for most poor people, and especially women. The picture is changing, rapid urbanisation leads to a decline in the rural population, especially with young males moving to cities in order to seek jobs and better livelihood opportunities. Inability to find these in the urban slums often leads to a second migration-wave towards more prosperous countries. Those who stay in the rural areas are predominantly women and they face a variety of challenges, such as lack of skills to move

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

beyond basic production, underemployment, unattractive working conditions, unattractive living conditions and lack of access to assets, collateral and credit, preventing them from improving their livelihood. There are currently few prospects and opportunities even for resourceful, creative and innovative young people to find long-term and sustainable solutions in the agricultural sector.

While most young people in developing countries desire to find occupation outside farming, there are still significant numbers of highly dedicated youth that need support in their pursuit of an agriculture-based livelihood. For most people, farming equals poverty, hard work and backward living. But it does not have to be that way since there are agricultural systems that can lead to a prosperous life (e.g. urban agriculture, horticulture, intensive livestock rearing, high-value cropping, on-farm processing and value addition).

The current COVID-19 crisis magnified existing inequalities at the global and local levels. The people with access to less resilience mechanisms, such as the poor, women and youth groups are hardest hit, risking the loss, within a few months, of decades of improvement in poverty alleviation. The pandemic hit a world largely unprepared, resulting in that the counter measurements that governments put in place are unprecedentedly severe. The lockdown of most societies threatens food security and livelihoods of millions of peoples. The COVID-19 outbreak and its effects on societies and the global economy will without a doubt affect everyone, including GFRAS and its work for the coming years. This crisis proves the fact that we can plan for but not predict the future. GFRAS will in its current work and in this Operational Plan try to ensure that we capture the lessons to be learned from the current crisis so we can use it to develop and strengthen the ability of rural advisory services to better serve the agri-food sector. In any disaster extension officers are front line staff having a vital role of communicating and assisting the rural communities before, during and after the crises.

3. Learning from the Past and Positioning for the Future

Learning from the past

Over the past five years, GFRAS as a global network has undertaken numerous activities and initiatives in order to further its agenda in providing leadership in pluralistic and demand-driven RAS for sustainable agricultural development. As confirmed by an independent external assessment of the Operational Plan 2016-2020 conducted in 2019, GFRAS has increasingly been capable of providing a global voice for RAS and raised its profile as a vital component of the Agricultural Innovation System (AIS). Through a participatory bottom-up process, GFRAS developed the New Extension Learning Kit (NELK) and has been rolling it out via training and

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

curriculum development for universities and vocational training in agriculture around the globe. GFRAS constituency has with this initiative made an important contribution to professionalisation in RAS benefitting small-holder farmers around the globe.

With the IFAD-supported Last-Mile Programme (LMP) launched in 2019, GFRAS has also channelled its ambition of strengthening RAS delivery at local level in order to enhance access of smallholder farmers to extension services and innovation. In all RAS systems the challenge is to get the information flow to function at the last mile. It is here the actual knowledge exchange happens between advisors and farmers, but it is also here the marginal cost of extension is highest. The GFRAS-established Country Fora plays a crucial role as functional coordinating network of RAS stakeholders at the national level, in securing gender balance and promoting the youth involvement in agriculture. Country Fora serve as a focal point for policy dialogue and as a one-stop-shop for agricultural services. The aim of LMP is to strengthen the Country Fora in these functions. An important component of the Programme is the establishment of public-private partnerships for RAS delivery where relevant and feasible. It is also directing attention and sources to capacity building at local level, especially regarding partnership building, programme management and fund mobilisation. The GFRAS Regional Networks provide the direct support to the Country Fora in going through this strengthening process while the GFRAS Secretariat has a coordinating role. The programme initially planned for a six year period (2019 - 2024), has been started in eight countries spread over three continents and is expected to be expanded with additional funding from various sources.

GFRAS also generated and shared a considerable number of knowledge products including training materials, good practices notes, issue papers, and a compendium on policy dialogue, all of these have been developed with vital inputs and verification from rural advisors operating in the field. This has helped to establish GFRAS as one of the most prominent global voices on RAS.

In fostering pluralistic and demand-driven RAS, GFRAS also faced several challenges. The very restricted funds going into evolving extension systems is perhaps its most notable, as well as the difficulty to find scalable cost-efficient and effective RAS models and the inadequate capacity to secure a rigid assessment of achievements. Despite being a member-based network, GFRAS acquired minimal funds through its members, which means it has to secure funding through other channels.

In the first five years after its establishment in 2010, GFRAS secured core funding by development partners, largely because of the importance on the international development agenda following the food prices crisis of 2008. After 2015, priorities of the development partners shifted away from agriculture, while most partners remain increasingly reluctant to

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

provide core funding as they are challenged with a growing demand for clear and fast impact at field level. As a result, GFRAS experiences a progressive constraint in mobilising resources to fund its operations. To compensate for lower core funding, GFRAS actively engaged in the implementation of development projects on request of donor agencies. A major challenge in this funding model is the condition of co-funding contribution by the implementing agencies, which is hard to provide for networks like GFRAS.

The 2019 external assessment of GFRAS concludes in general terms, that affiliated members, as well as partners, acknowledge the role GFRAS has played and the results it has achieved in fostering pluralistic demand-driven RAS. This is also highlighted in the description of achievements in specific cases (see annexe). Systematic assessment of achievements and a robust body of evidence is not available, however. Over the past five years, GFRAS has undertaken occasional studies and inquiries to assess its achievements; it also made efforts to develop a system for monitoring, evaluation and learning which unfortunately has not been rolled out systematically. As a result, it is difficult to demonstrate the importance of RAS in agricultural development and the role of GFRAS in this respect. It also deprives GFRAS of learning opportunities and management advice. The assessment also emphasised the strength of GFRAS' principle of subsidiarity, where the local level is working on context specific and thematic matters, while the global level focuses on the strategic direction and more generic topics. The regional networks act as bridging these two levels. This interplay between Regional Networks and global secretariat is also crucial for fund mobilisation. As part of the 2019 external assessment of GFRAS the leveraging capacity at regional level of having a core funded global secretariat was estimated to be in the magnitude of 4,8 million CHF for the period 2016 - 2019, with 3.5 million CHF in direct funding and an estimated 1,3 million CHF worth of in-kind contributions and unpaid inputs from volunteers. In the same period GFRAS global secretariat leveraged 2.4 million CHF in addition to the 2 million CHF provided by SDC. That means that during the execution of its last operational plan (2016 - 2020) GFRAS was able to leverage 3.5 CHF for each CHF provided by SDC.

Over the past five years, YPARD as a global network has confirmed its central positioning as the global youth voice and action mechanism in the agricultural development arena. It developed mentorship programmes to support young professionals, with special focus on gender in collaboration with African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) to build their career in the agricultural sector. It also shaped the meaningful participation of young professionals in agriculture-related discussions, policies and governance structures such as the Youth in Landscapes Initiative, and its leadership role in the TAP capacity development Expert group and the Youth Alliance for Zero hunger. It furthermore developed capacity building initiatives for young farmers in Africa and carried through research about the realities, aspirations and challenges for young professionals in agriculture. YPARD is highly recognized by

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

key stakeholders and partners on a global level. Furthermore, it has been saluted for the increasing active leadership and engagement of YPARD's country chapters. YPARD has kept its high level of participative multi-stakeholders and multi-disciplinary dynamics both within its membership and broader network, as highlighted by the external review of 2017. Key flagship activities and achievements are presented in the annexe.

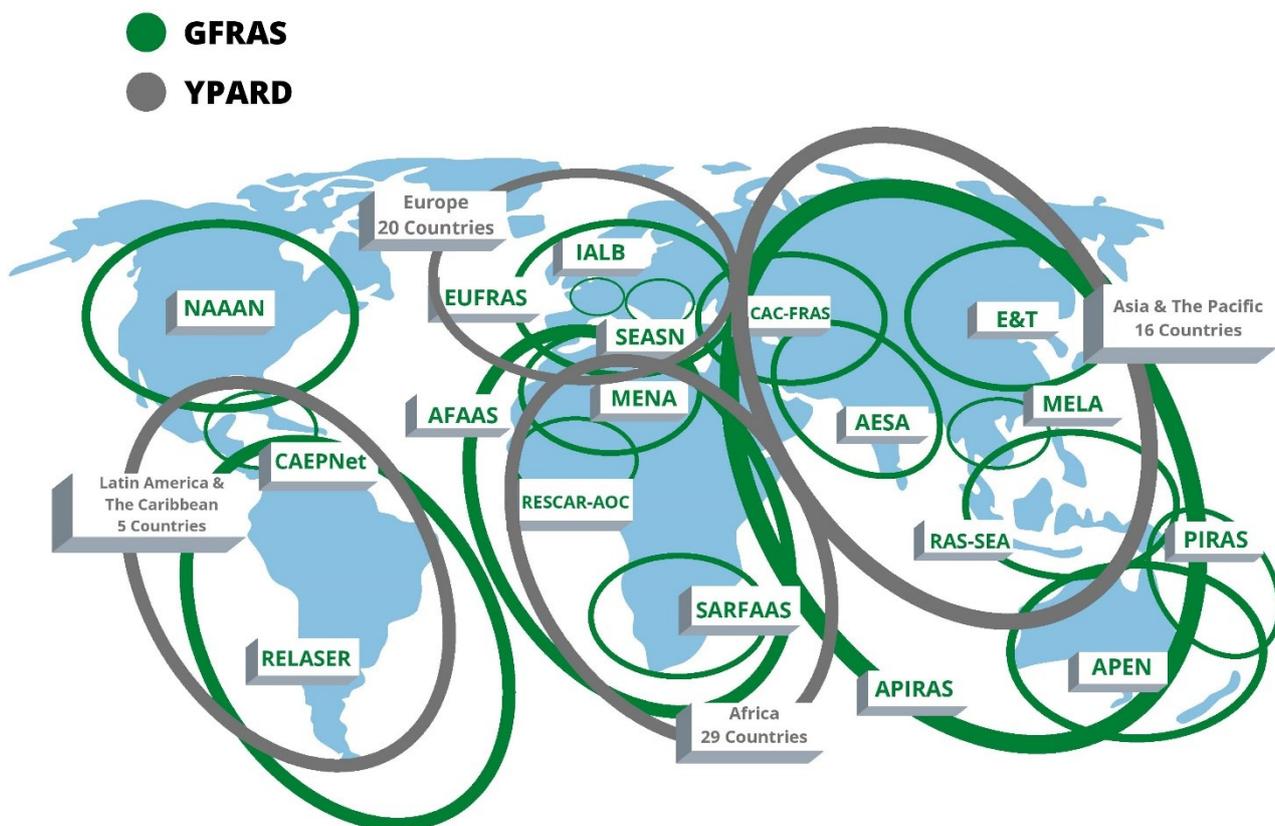
In the first five years after its establishment in 2005, YPARD was functioning with limited human resources and funding. Its key focus was on building strong partnerships in the global agricultural development arena. From 2010, activities escalated with the relocation of the global coordination unit to FAO, new and additional staff members, more global activities, better internal consolidation and coordination of a team of focal points at global, national and regional levels. Over the years YPARD has been able to fundraise for specific projects and mobilize partners' co-funding and in-kind contributions. In 2019, it secured around 200,000 USD for programmes from key partners because of the SDC core funding, the latter amounting to 27% of its total financing. YPARD was nonetheless limited in securing some contracts and being creative in its fundraising approaches. Moreover, it spent massive amount of time dealing with UN bureaucracy.

Increasingly, Youth and gender is high on the sustainable development agenda, but the demand for funding is also very competitive and beyond the agricultural arena. YPARD's main challenge remained the inability to fundraise efficiently and to diversify its funding through its global hosting organisation (FAO)'s administrative and financial structure. This hampered heavily the potential for expanding concrete global actions and securing the sustainability of the network. In addition, YPARD's Global Coordination Unit experienced a repeated turnover of staff between 2017 and 2019, which amplified the challenges.

Despite these constraints YPARD is recognized as a vibrant community that is successful in staying true to its mission and vision of engaging and empowering young leaders to shape sustainable food systems, together with a strong network of multiple and multi-disciplinary partners.

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Regional, sub-regional networks, and country representation, as of May 2020



The map of their various networks clearly shows that both YPARD and GFRAS have a genuine global coverage. However, as impressive as it looks the stage of maturity of these regional and sub regional networks varies greatly. Within GFRAS the strong ones are AESA, AFAAS, EUFRAS, IALB, and RELASER. They are some of the older ones and they all operate with some degree of employed staff. ASEA his run by the director of their hosting institution CRISP and is very strong in knowledge management and publications. The biggest in terms of secretariat is by far AFAAS that covers all of Africa. It was initiated in 2004 with a few member states and has since 2011 been given a continental mandate by the African Union. As a CAADP pillar 4 institution AFAAS was for some years privileged with lavish funding from a Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) administered by the World Bank. Secure funding over several years enabled AFAAS to develop the Country Fora concept that has subsequently been adapted by the entire GFRAS network and forms a corner stone in GFRAS country centred 'The Last Mile Programme' (LMP). After the termination of the MDTF AFAAS went into a critical cash flow problem that GFRAS was able to bridge, thereby virtually saving AFAAS. This is a good example of the synergies between local, regional and global level within GFRAS. IALB will celebrate its 60 years anniversary next year and is by far the oldest and most well-established of the networks covering German speaking

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Europe. IALB has developed an online certified training tool called 'Certificate for European Consultants in Rural Areas' (CECRA) that operates on a commercial basis. EUFRAS is a child of IALB but is now the big brother that brings CECRA and other IALB innovations to the entire RAS network in Europe. EUFRAS has also been able to attract a lot of EU Horizon 2020 projects, e.g. On E-Extension. RELASER has a looser structure with a few part-time staff placed in different countries on the continent, still they are able to gain momentum in organizing RAS providers, participated in the policy dialogue and establishing Country Fora in several countries. On the other end of the spectrum are networks like MENA, APIRAS, SARFAAS and NAAAN that so far have little funding, no staff and few activities. Still they are different: MENA is dormant, APIRAS has no secretariat and no institutional anchoring, while SARFAAS and NAAAN are newly established and gaining momentum. Especially NAAAN is on the move and very interested in working on RAS tools in disaster management as well as on the youth agenda given the age challenge in the USA agricultural sector. Then there is a middle group like CAC-FRAS, RESCAR-AOC and E&T that to a large degree are run by a single champion which makes them vulnerable. In this group RESCAR has been very active in capacity building of national RAS providers through training events using the GFRAS NELK concept, especially in Francophone Africa. Networks under YPARD similarly differ in outreach and resources, the ones in Europe and Africa being relatively strong and the one in the Americas being weak. The revitalised joint global secretariat will continue to support the regional hubs in their institutional and individual capacity building to facilitate their ability to enhance performance and impact at country level.

Positioning for the future

Both GFRAS and YPARD are finding themselves in many ways at a crossroads. For GFRAS, its funding basis has shifted, the secretariat staffing has been completely renewed, it has become a legal association in 2019, and its global secretariat will move to a new hosting institution in Switzerland by 2021.

Given the challenges in securing core funding for its rapidly expanding activities, YPARD committed to making key progress related to its financial and operational sustainability. To this end it planned to examine its hosting situation and identifying new arrangements that could enable the growth and sustainability of the network as well as by diversifying YPARD's financial portfolio and strengthening capacities of regional hubs and countries to engage in independent fundraising efforts. YPARD will keep nurturing its relationship with Rome-based agencies while also benefitting from GFRAS' senior leadership expertise in ambitious fundraising and impact delivery on the ground.

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

YPARD will continually position itself as a global network that frames the direction of debates, initiatives and innovations at the intersection of sustainable agri-food systems and young professionals/youth engagement with a special focus on gender. In so doing, YPARD will engage in global actions that highlight the relevance of this goal. YPARD successfully shared stories from the ground about the impact of its work. It needs however to strengthen the systemic assessment of achievements in order to show key compelling impact better, learn about youth-in-agriculture realities, needs and aspirations, and adapt action accordingly. This is fundamental for YPARD to be truly accountable to its supporters and its constituents and ensure members' ownership and authorship, as a community.

It also aligns with YPARD's necessity to increase both context and culturally specific activities and impact on national and regional levels and global activities that relate well to YPARD community. Future activities will target gender sensitive transformative policy change for youth empowerment on the ground, strengthening capacities to enhance youth engagement in sustainable agri-food systems and knowledge sharing and in-depth exchanges about emerging innovations in sustainable agri-food systems

As to its networks, YPARD needs to strengthen its membership base and activities in Latin America and expand its reach to the North America region. Strengthening the membership base is in line with a request from the community to strengthen network engagement across YPARD operational levels, including strengthening support for country chapters and reviving inactive ones.

This very dynamic work environment brought GFRAS and YPARD together in a strategic partnership taking shape in the present joint Operational Plan mustering the adaptability and creativity needed for success.

The decision to venture into a strategic partnership between YPARD and GFRAS is based on a wish to strengthen the global secretariats of both institutions, on the recognition, by GFRAS, of the increased importance of gender balanced youth engagement in agriculture, and on YPARD's need to find a new hosting arrangement. This new strategic partnership will capitalise on a stronger global secretariat and synergies to create new opportunities through the involvement of youth in policy dialogue, capacity strengthening of young people, and on generating and sharing knowledge and advice about effective youth involvement. Young people want to see action on the climate change agenda, they want to have a more environmentally friendly agriculture and they want to see more equity in the world. All these agendas are in sync with GFRAS' objective to promote sustainable agriculture in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The momentum and drive the YPARD constituency represents, coupled with the

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

diverse experience within the GFRAS constituency will enable both networks to enhance their impact.

As a strategic move, YPARD and GFRAS will change host institution at the start of the next operational period. AGRIDEA, the current host of GFRAS, closed its international department resulting in diminished opportunities for synergies. YPARD's hosting arrangement at GFAR in FAO increasingly posed operational challenges when responding to the network's need for agility. Starting in January 2021, YPARD and GFRAS will establish a joint secretariat hosted by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in Frick, Switzerland. FiBL was competitively chosen because it brings to the table a strong culture of interdisciplinary system approaches as well as novel ideas on sustainable farming, which are relevant to our joint strategy and appealing to our members. Moreover, FiBL has a significant international project portfolio. In the new hosting arrangement FiBL will not only provide office space and some administrative services but, most importantly, strong opportunities for synergies. On short-term basis GFRAS and YPARD will assist FiBL in project implementation where our networks add competitive advantages. In the medium-term joint project proposals will be developed either as response to calls for proposals or as proactive portfolio strengthening we will seek funding for. Interested FiBL staff is also expected to become active members of YPARD and GFRAS Communities of Practice and Working groups and vice versa.

In the wake of COVID-19, both organisations currently pursue opportunities provided by the progressive digitalisation in agriculture. This effort will be expanded in the new Operational Plan. The objectives are to create innovative opportunities for youth and especially women engagement and employment, to facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge, to build capacities of RAS providers, and to maximise the potential of agricultural digitalisation to be in dialogue with more farmers in a cost-effective manner.

Building on the IFAD-supported initiative of strengthening RAS delivery at national and local levels, the Last Mile Programme (2019-2024), GFRAS will further invest in efforts to establish functional networks of RAS stakeholders at the national level that serve as a focal point for policy dialogue and as a one-stop-shop for agricultural services. Capitalising on the achievements of the New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK) for the professionalization of RAS providers, GFRAS will develop additional packages for building the capacity for demand-driven RAS delivery. Additionally, it will harness the capacities of the network in establishing partnerships, in particular those between public and private actors. Regarding knowledge management, GFRAS will progressively focus on sharing and exchanging of knowledge produced within the networks or by its partners. In this sense, it will propagate the use of ICT tools.

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

The aim of YPARD's work on advocacy and policy dialogue is to continue to be a key influencer in the strategic direction of youth engagement in sustainable food systems. In doing so, YPARD will maintain its recognition as a key youth-in-food-systems organisation, influencing policies and activities related to young people and food systems value chain. For professionalization, YPARD will leverage its experience in developing and promoting youth-centric gender sensitive capacity development strategies and programs, like the mentorship toolkit and pilot projects to advance access to capacity building resources and opportunities for the network. This includes reinforcing the potentials of regional hubs and national chapters to run their own skills development initiatives. A central knowledge management strategy in YPARD for the coming years is the rejuvenation of the website's information and communications activities and functionalities such as a robust membership database. This will facilitate strong community interaction and engagement in the network.

In response to the challenges both organisations experienced in systematically assessing the effects of their activities and the achievement of its objectives, GFRAS and YPARD will invest in setting up and running an effective and simplified monitoring, evaluation and learning system (MEL) to assess the impact of their activities and provide evidence of the effect on the roles that RAS and youth play in agricultural development.

Agriculture's impact on climate change and biodiversity is also a key focus area of both YPARD and GFRAS. Agriculture practices that jeopardise agricultural production by negatively affecting the ecosystem, as well as the dualistic relationship of agriculture and climate change are putting food supply and farmer income at risk and are areas that need increased attention. RAS needs to be more sensitive to these mega-trends that often are aggravated by the seasonal exit of men for migrant work, leaving women with limited means and a heavy-burden of ensuring food security and household income. Evolving towards more environmentally and climate neutral agricultural systems requires behavioural changes among farmers and their advisors. Both small-scale farming and commercial farming's role in securing the Sustainable Development Goals is vital. Knowledge on both traditional and intensive production of healthy and nutritious food, as well as on environment-friendly production systems and more fair trade is crucial for achieving the Agenda 2030.

For all the above, GFRAS and YPARD are building a two-pronged partnership strategy. This strategy is aiming at establishing a notable position in the Agricultural Innovation System (AIS)¹ with stronger links to institutions and companies that lead innovation initiatives. It is also seeking to work directly private and public sectors partners that are capable and willing to cover the costs of services provided by the networks. In view of the global nature of several of the

¹ Previously referred to as Agricultural Knowledge and Information System (AKIS)

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

trends and challenges mentioned above, and in recognition that the SDGs can only be achieved through global efforts, GFRAS will reposition itself more explicitly as a global network. In this Operational Plan, YPARD and GFRAS will therefore actively strengthen collaboration with networks and partners in economically advanced regions like Europe, Northern America and Australia.

Very importantly, the ability of GFRAS and YPARD to secure resources is a prerequisite for implementing this Operational Plan according to the directions highlighted above. A cornerstone in this joint effort is a fund mobilisation strategy aiming at both broaden and deepen our funding base. Broaden by diversifying sources of funding to, apart from the traditional development partners, also include private companies, governments, revenue generating services, volunteer programs, crowdfunding, and a like. Deepening by building fund mobilisation capacity throughout the entire networks from national over regional to global level. Instrumental for this strategy is continued support from SDC that secures the foundation for both networks on which they built their capacity to leverage additional resources to create jobs and better livelihoods for small scale farmers with a special focus on women and youth.

4. Strategic Plan

Introduction

GFRAS is a global network that contributes to impact at the farmer and value chain level with the objective of facilitating sustainable development to achieve the SDGs. GFRAS implements its global strategy through its global network of regional and sub-regional Rural Advisory Service (RAS) networks with support and facilitation from its global secretariat based in Switzerland. GFRAS activities and actions are very much focused on the RAS providers' need for knowledge, their request for capacity building and the aspiration for helping farming communities especially with regard to young and female farmers. GFRAS measures its success by its ability to produce impact at the national level, in most countries through a Country Fora that coordinates and supports RAS providers at the local level.

YPARD was launched in 2006 to serve as a medium for young professionals in agricultural development to connect, exchange perspectives, voice their views and develop themselves into better agricultural development professionals. *YPARD is an international movement by Young Professionals FOR Young Professionals for Agricultural Development.* The rationale to establish YPARD was motivated by the need for creating a gender balanced next generation of agricultural leaders, thinkers, and entrepreneurs and address critical development issues and

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

to create greater access to resources for young food system leaders.

Vision and Mission Statements

This Operational Plan is built on a common vision and mission for both GFRAS and YPARD given that both global networks work towards advancing agri-food systems that ensure sustainable livelihoods through supporting specific actors. More specifically, YPARD and GFRAS seek to ensure that young people and rural advisory services respectively, fully contribute towards innovative agri-food systems. The joint mission is to enable and empower specific actors especially women in contributing to the envisaged sustainable agri-food systems. In this respect, YPARD targets young agricultural leaders whereas GFRAS picks out actors related to demand-driven RAS delivery. Through our collaboration, we will utilize network and institutional synergies to work on the empowerment of and the enabling environment for these envisaged actors.

Strategic Planning Processes

Given that both GFRAS and YPARD are global networks, the strategic framework that guides the overall direction and this joint Operational Plan were developed through participatory consultative processes.

GFRAS conducted consultations in 2015 to set its direction until 2025. This Operational Plan represents the second five-year plan under the current strategic framework. Similarly, through a consultation process in 2020, YPARD identified that the aims, objectives and visions outlined in the strategic plan for 2018-2021 remain relevant and should be pursued towards 2025.

For this Operational Plan, GFRAS secretariat called for contributions from the regional networks in terms of potential activities within the strategic framework of the organization. The feedback was clustered thematically under four strategic fields. In a similar fashion, the key actions and activities outlined in the YPARD strategic plan were also clustered under the same four strategic fields, in order to achieve a unifying framework for the OP.

These four strategic fields are:

- Advocacy: Advocating support for an enabling policy environment and appropriate investment in RAS and young professionals' contributions to sustainable food systems;
- Professionalisation: Professionalisation of RAS and enhanced access to capacity development opportunities for YPs;
- Knowledge management: Facilitation and enhancement of effective and continuous

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

knowledge generation and exchange;

- Network management: Building functional and financially sustainable networks.

The list of activities proposed by the networks and clustered under the four strategic fields was then shared with the entire community of YPARD and GFRAS through a survey. In the survey, respondents were requested to set priorities amongst the proposed activities. The priorities are reflected in the Activity Plan below.

5. Activity Plan

Finally, guided by the joint vision and mission, building on the assets of both organisations, and responding to future trends and challenges, key activities for the next five-year period have been identified and assessed. Through the consultative process described above, GFRAS and YPARD engaged their constituencies in developing this Operational Plan.

The plan below presents the various activity clusters, organised according to the key strategic fields of GFRAS and YPARD, articulated as to how they support the overall goals of both organisations. This structure allows for the networks and country fora/chapters to add new activities to the clusters throughout the years, as their plans are adapted, and when additional funding becomes available. The activity clusters are listed according to diminishing priority expressed by the constituencies.

Strategic Field 1: Advocacy

Aim: Increased recognition of RAS and of the role of Youth in gender sensitive policies and investments

Activity clusters:

- Networks have the capacities for policy dialogue and advocacy
 - Building capacities and providing frameworks, guidelines, and opportunities to engage in platforms to promote women, youth and extension.
- Networks are known to and partnership activities with strategic and financial partners are developed
 - Identifying and engaging with (new) partners to address issues of common interest and strengthening its position as the first point of contact for RAS/Youth engagement. Enhancing efforts to diversify funding sources and awareness geared towards extension and youth initiatives.
- Policymakers and financial partners are informed about the relevance of gender sensitive RAS and youth engagement in the agricultural sector

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

- Collaborative efforts (i.e. policy engagement at national, regional and global level, economic assessment studies, ambassador programmes) to promote the value of gender sensitive extension and youth engagement alongside political, financial, and social spheres.
- Networks of GFRAS & YPARD are actively engaged in policy formulation
 - Engaging and contributing to the development and enhancement of gender sensitive extension and youth-related policies, with the aim to increase impact and the achievement of GFRAS and YPARD goals.

Strategic Field 2: Professionalisation

Aim: Strengthened gender sensitive RAS and Youth performances in agri-food systems

Activity clusters:

- RAS providers and Young Professionals have access to capacity building opportunities
 - Continuing to promote trainings and hold webinars on professionalisation initiatives (esp. NELK and youth engagement), promote, and diversifying methods of capacity building (webinars, mentorship, exchange programmes).
- Decision makers in agricultural policies and development programmes (national, regional) recognise the importance of competent RAS providers and Young Professionals and the need for a better gender balance
 - Emphasizing need for professionalization, providing evidence of the importance of professionalization and as well as recommendations for professionalization systems.
- Capacity building initiatives established for RAS and Youth engagement stakeholders (border partners of RAS providers and Young Professionals) based on existing training programmes (NELK, Youth strategy)
 - Developing new training packages (NELK modules on new topics, NELK for RAS managers, Youth strategies for organisation development).
- Professional quality of RAS delivery assured (certification of operators)
 - Supporting national governments in setting standards and regulation of RAS operation and in certifying RAS providers

Strategic Field 3: Knowledge generation and sharing

Aim: Enhanced Learning in both RAS and Youth Engagement with special focus on women

Activity clusters:

- Establish/Strengthen the role of networks in A(K)IS knowledge sharing

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

- Engaging in discussions related to AKIS, demonstrating its efficiency through published materials, and promoting the system through the networks.
- Facilitate knowledge peer exchange
 - Enhancing and promoting opportunities for knowledge sharing amongst the networks and their members, promoting in-depth exchanges.
- Knowledge for practitioners produced and shared through various channels
- Continuing to promote knowledge management and communication initiatives to exchange knowledge and information across networks and amongst their constituencies, strengthening and systematising efforts at the global and local levels
- Knowledge about relevance of gender sensitive RAS and Youth in contemporary issues and future trends in agriculture is produced and shared
 - Systematically generating knowledge products to consolidate and promote GFRAS and YPARD roles in society.
- Guidance for effective Knowledge Management established and shared among the networks
 - Holding consultations on efficiency of employed methods, developing best practice manuals, continuing to review and providing systemic recommendations based on global and local demands.

Strategic Field 4: Network Strengthening

Aim: Enhanced networks structure, skills and capacities

Activity clusters:

- Networks have increased/secured financial and human resources
 - Developing global and regional strategies for funding of the networks and their activities, exploring alternative funding sources, developing volunteering programmes.
- Networks have increased knowledge and skills
 - Enhancing efforts for overall capacity building at all levels, in order to increase skills at the network levels, according to needs identified and with attention to under privileged groups.
- Operational plan achievements are assessed, and lessons learnt are drawn
 - Developing M&E systems and assessing network engagement and performance in order to better respond to needs and produce evidence on results.
- Networks have an appropriate set-up

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

- Mapping skills offers amongst constituency, producing guidelines and promoting engagement of working groups and advisory groups.
- Strategizing on overall network engagement and management, as well as with partner and hosting institutions.
- Developing a comprehensive strategy for establishment and strengthening of country chapters/fora in order to further decentralise activities and ensure that all countries have a voice and a strong engagement in global discussions.

6. Budget

The overall budget of this Operational Plan covering the period 2021 - 2025 is presented below (Table 1). And specified for the proposed SDC support (Table 2) with the expected flow of funding illustrated in Table 3. Table 4 presents the various sources of funding to accommodate the total budget. It reflects a strategic move towards diversifying the funding source of both GFRAS and YPARD to make their financial situation more robust. In this regard, the requested CHF 3.9 million from SDC are of vital importance. The additional 11.1 million Swiss Francs listed in Table 1 and Table 4, to be mobilised by the entire networks of GFRAS and YPARD, will only be possible to leverage if SDC is willing to provide the financial stability required to run the networks and the joint global secretariat. The minimum cost of running the joint global secretariat of GFRAS and YPARD is estimated at 4.9 million CHF for this OP period, as illustrated in Table 5. It is about CHF 1 million a year of which 75 % is directed towards salaries and hosting fees. Secretariat staff time is mainly used to facilitate, coordinate and support the four strategic areas of the two networks. Out of the CHF 4.9 million to run the secretariat 2.9 M will be allocated from the SDC support. This is to ensure toward the host FiBL that sufficient funds are available for staffing the secretariat. It is also in recognition that most of the funding provided by development partners for projects have to include a co-funding of up to 20 %, which means that without core funds it is not possible to afford to implement projects on behalf of the donor agencies. This is why GFRAS and YPARD aim at leveraging, during the course of the upcoming Operational Plan, about CHF 5 million from other sources than the traditional development partners, with the private sector, national governments and public institutions being the most important new groups of business partners.

Meeting the ambitious goal of mobilising CHF 15 million as well as finding a business model that can secure the operation of the global joint secretariat without relying so heavily on SDC remains the two biggest challenges within this Operational Plan.

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Table 1. Allocation of total Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025 budget (CHF)

Category	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	5-year period
Management (Global Secretariat)	207 500	237 500	215 000	211 250	178 750	1 050 000
Network strengthening	535 625	758 125	716 250	558 438	454 063	3 022 500
Advocacy	265 625	418 125	511 250	568 438	574 063	2 337 500
Professionalisation	565 625	1 048 125	1 361 250	1 333 438	1 204 063	5 512 500
Knowledge generation & sharing	380 625	593 125	741 250	698 438	664 063	3 077 500
Total	1 955 000	3 055 000	3 545 000	3 370 000	3 075 000	15 000 000

Table 2. Allocation of SDC part of total Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025 budget (CHF)

Category	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	5-year period
Management (Global Secretariat)	146 875	131 875	103 125	95 625	72 500	550 000
Network strengthening	150 156	148 906	117 344	101 719	84 375	602 500
Advocacy	175 156	183 906	202 344	196 719	179 375	937 500
Professionalisation	210 156	188 906	147 344	141 719	99 375	787 500
Knowledge generation & sharing	225 156	253 906	247 344	176 719	119 375	1 022 500
Total	907 500	907 500	817 500	712 500	555 000	3 900 000

Table 3. Fund flow over 5-year (2021 -20205) period (1000 CHF)

Category	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	5-year period
SDC fund allocation	920	900	820	710	550	3 900
Other sources of funding	1 035	2 155	2 725	2 660	2 520	11 100

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Table 4. Fundraising strategy for Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025 (CHF million)

Partner	Total funding	Management Global secretariat	Activities			
			Network strengthening	Advocacy	Professionalisation	Knowledge generation & sharing
Secured funding						
IFAD LMP	1.7	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Expected funding						
SDC	3.9	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.0
RDA (via FAO)	0.4		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Planned funding						
Donor projects	3.0	0.1	0.4	0.4	1.3	0.8
Foundation projects	1.9	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.9	0.3
Private sector	1.8		0.2	0.2	1.2	0.2
Governments	0.9		0.1	0.1	0.5	0.2
Paid services	0.5	0.1			0.3	0.1
Volunteer work & crowd funding	0.8		0.8			
Membership fees	0.1		0.1			
Total	15.0	1.1	3.0	2.3	5.5	3.1

Comments to Table 4:

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Donor projects can be competitive calls for proposals or agreements with donors. This group includes both bilateral and multilateral donors. Collaboration with the private sector and governments, as well as paid services and crowdfunding, are all new business areas that need to be developed at global, regional and local levels.

As illustrated in the budget, it is expected that professionalisation is the strategic field where funds from non-SDC partners can be more easily mobilized, followed by knowledge generation and advocacy. Resources for networking are most likely to be possible to mobilise for YPARD as this is one of their core services and competences.

Table 5. Draft budget for running the global joint secretariat of YPARD/GFRAS (2021 -2025)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Costs (CHF)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<i>Staff</i>	<i>GFRAS ES</i>	<i>850,000</i>	
	<i>YPARD Director</i>	<i>700,000</i>	
	<i>Programme Manager</i>	<i>600,000</i>	<i>80% workload</i>
	<i>Communication Coordinator</i>	<i>650,000</i>	
	<i>Network Coordinator</i>	<i>400,000</i>	<i>Based in Prague</i>
	<i>Accountant</i>	<i>400,000</i>	<i>50% workload</i>
	<i>Sub total</i>	<i>3,600,000</i>	
<i>Governance</i>	<i>Face to face meetings: YPARD Steering Committee, GFRAS Board and General Assembly</i>	<i>270,000</i>	<i>36,000 per year for GFRAS due to big GA 18,000 per year for YPARD</i>
<i>Auditing</i>	<i>Annual audit of GFRAS-YPARD accounts</i>	<i>70,000</i>	
<i>Running costs</i>	<i>Insurances, communication, licences etc</i>	<i>60,000</i>	
<i>Monitoring</i>	<i>Technical support, meetings,</i>	<i>350,000</i>	
<i>Evaluation</i>	<i>Consultancies, meetings</i>	<i>170,000</i>	
<i>Hosting costs</i>	<i>Administration, financial management, legal matters</i>	<i>400,000</i>	
<i>Total</i>		<i>4,900,000</i>	

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Comments to Table 5:

Funds leveraged during the course of the Operational Plan are primarily earmarked for regional and national activities. The global secretariat will only hire additional staff if required for management of additional projects administered at global level and provided financing is secured.

7. Implementation arrangements

GFRAS-YPARD Collaboration

Setting off the collaboration between GFRAS and YPARD, the implementation of the Operational Plan requires arrangements that are explained below. In essence, the secretariat will manage to roll out the Operational Plan with oversight of the governing bodies of both networks. To this end, YPARD and GFRAS will operate with a joint global secretariat, whereas networks at regional and national of both organisations will operate as separate entities at the start in 2021 and progressively join forces where relevant and feasible. A lot of synergies and collaboration at local, national and regional level is expected to evolve over time as a result of the strategic partnership between YPARD and GFRAS. Having acquired legal status as an association, GFRAS will officially host YPARD who up to now has no legal status as an organisation.

Role and Responsibility of the Joint Global Secretariat

The main function of the joint global secretariat of GFRAS and YPARD is to provide leadership, guidance, facilitation and brokering for their respective networks. It is to take over where the jurisdiction and capacity of the regional networks and hubs end and assist them in leveraging important agendas to the global level. This role includes capturing the innovations, experience and ideas from the regional and national levels, processing these through aggregation, conceptualisation or further development, and thereafter disseminating them back to the entire network.

The secretariat responds to the demands and interests of its respective constituencies and at the same time functions as an information centre, relaying news to and sharing information among the network members. It identifies and engages with new strategic partners and designs

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

and accompanies initiatives for new products and services. For programmes jointly carried by several regional and national networks, the joint global secretariat assures management towards key partners and funders. With regard to the focus of the Operational Plan on sustainability, the joint secretariat has a central role in the mobilisation of funds and diversification of its sources. It leads the dialogue with the potential financial partner (development agencies, foundations, private sector) with support from well-connected and influential network members, assists working groups in formulating partnership programmes and developing concept notes for competitive calls, develops and tests out new modalities (e.g.: crowdfunding) and supports capacity building in partnership building, fundraising and competitive proposal writing throughout the network.

Staffing of the Joint Secretariat

While GFRAS and YPARD will remain two separate networks at regional and national level and towards external parties, it will operate the global secretariat as one united team. Each member of the team will have specific assignments, but no one will be entirely assigned to YPARD or GFRAS duties. In compliance with the YPARD rule of age threshold, the staff members predominantly working with YPARD related activities will be under 40 years of age.

The proposed staffing enables the joint secretariat to operate within the budget envelope of secured funding from IFAD and SDC for the entire period of this Operational Plan (2021 - 2025). Having the secretariat funded is a prerequisite for leveraging additional funds for activities at regional and national level. Initially earmarking the funds from SDC to run the secretariat is a deliberate strategy to secure staff employment and to honour the cash flow buffer requirement of the host institution. Of course, as stipulated in the budget in chapter 6, YPARD and GFRAS expect to leverage significant funds additional to the secured fund.

Hosting

The joint global secretariat of GFRAS and YPARD is expected to be hosted at Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in Frick, Switzerland. GFRAS Association will be the employer of the secretariat staff while FiBL will provide all the administrative services, such as payment of salaries, work and travel insurances, reporting to Swiss authorities, accounting, travel booking. FiBL will also provide GFRAS Association with a cash flow buffer to secure that the secretariat is operational.

In this hosting arrangement GFRAS Association will remain an independent organisation. FiBL will be assigned an *ex officio* seat at the GFRAS Board, likely to be occupied by the Head of Department of International Cooperation, who is also a member of the Board of directors at FiBL and responsible for the coordination and management of projects in the field of research

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

for development and development cooperation. This will ensure that GFRAS and FiBL remain in close and constant contact for developing synergies and jointly engaging in international projects

8. Risks and Risk Management

The enthusiasm of many affiliated members of both networks has resulted in this ambitious Operational Plan. Although we consider that the targeted achievements are realistic, we are fully aware that internal forces, as well as external factors, may jeopardize the successful implementation of this plan. COVID19 is expected to affect implementation at least in 2021. The table below presents what we see as major risks and measures to be taken for mitigation.

<i>Risk (1 - 4 signals from lowest to highest)</i>	<i>Importance of risk (1-4)</i>	<i>Probability of risk (1-4)</i>	<i>Mitigation measures</i>
RAS no longer top priority of stakeholders in the agricultural sector	4	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revisit the targeting of stakeholders to provide services to enhance communication about the vital importance of RAS for development of the agricultural sector
GFRAS and YPARD have insufficient success in fund mobilisation (< 10 M)	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthen capacities of networks to mobilise funds ● Prioritise activities in Operational Plan to be funded ● Conduct a mid-term assessment of fund mobilisation opportunities and achievements and adapt Operational Plan accordingly

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Networks (GFRAS, YPARD) are not motivated to increase their voluntary contribution to carry out the activities in the OP	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support in each of the networks the capacities for strategic management to ensure collaborative work, and effective use of scarce resources ● Identifying and communicating the values of getting involved
Conflicting interests within the network	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assessment to what degree involvement in network activities give purpose and meaning to members and partners ● Use of participatory approaches to identifying focus areas of operation ● Open to adapting processes and actions to the interest of the community
Achieving successful collaboration between YPARD and GFRAS	4	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Robust discussions including face-to-face meetings are held to critically assess pros and cons and associated mitigation strategies ● Involving both network in building the collaboration ● Both networks are encouraged to explore collaboration at other levels ● Promoting synergies while recognising peculiarities that exists in each organisation
Potential change in priorities of global funding mechanisms (e.g. COVID-19 and its effect on	4	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on developing and advocating for digitalization to reduce physical exposure in the field ● The budget is viewed as an adaptable one and will be

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

RAS/fundraising for our OP)			<p>reviewed to cater for new realities (e.g. IFAD LMP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure capacity to leverage additional fund, funding to secure secretariat staffing is earmarked
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9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Results Framework

The Monitoring and Evaluation process of the Operational Plan is designed on the basis of a Results Framework (Table 6 below) which reflects the cause and effect relationship between the results envisaged or needed for achieving the objectives of the Plan. Key element in this framework is that better and more responsive gender sensitive advisory services and engaged youth especially women for innovation in sustainable food systems (Development Objective) will lead to the improved livelihood for family-based agro-entrepreneurs.

Table 6: Logframe - Results Framework Operational Plan 2021-2025

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention			
Impact (Overall Goal)	Proposed outcome indicators for SDC	Proposed Targets OP2125	Assumptions & Risk
RAS providers and Young Professionals contribute to sustainable food systems for all men, women and youth in rural areas, through innovation and enhanced young professional's engagement	<p>Number (n) GFRAS partners (funding of secretariat and/or GFRAS activities)</p> <p>Budget volume (cumulative) for GFRAS regional networks</p> <p>Budget volume (cumulative) for GFRAS Country Fora</p> <p>Number (n) YPARD partners (funding of secretariat and/or YPARD activities)</p>	<p>Baseline: 5 Target: 15</p> <p>Baseline: 2 Mio Target: 4 Mio</p> <p>Baseline: 1 Mio Target: 6 Mio</p> <p>Baseline: 5 Target: 10</p>	<p>Assumptions: That despite the effect of the COVID pandemic on local and global economy resources will still be available to support the SDG's and sustainable agriculture.</p> <p>Risk: If the global interest in supporting smallholder agriculture remains</p>

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention			
	Budget volume (cumulative) for YPARD regional hubs	Baseline: 0.5 Mio Target: 3 Mio	low, it might be difficult to raise sufficient funding to secure impact on the ground.

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Outcomes	Proposed indicators for SDC	Proposed Targets OP2125	(Ass & Ri)
<p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Increased recognition of RAS and Youth in gender sensitive policies (and investments) related to agriculture</p> <p>(strategic field “Advocacy”)</p>	<p>Number (n) of revised agricultural related policies that promote pluralistic demand-driven RAS, and/or (women and) youth engagement being passed in targeted countries (selected countries: n = 10)</p> <p>Trends of government & private investments in RAS (selected countries: n = 10)</p> <p>Trends of government & private investments in youth empowerment programs (e.g. education and employment) (selected countries: n = 10)</p> <p>Number (n) of key SFS events co-designed by YPARD</p> <p>Number (n) of key SFS events that include the participation of YPARD members</p> <p>Number (n) of key SFS events/platforms where YPARD actively shape the event processes and outcomes</p>	<p>Baseline: - in 4 countries Target: positive in 7 countries</p> <p>Baseline: - in 4 countries Target: positive in 7 countries</p> <p>Baseline: - in 4 countries Target: positive in 7 countries</p> <p>Baseline: 2/yr Target: 5/yr</p> <p>Baseline: 40/yr Target: 80/yr</p> <p>Baseline: 5/yr Target: 15/yr</p>	<p>Assumptions:</p> <p>Awareness of the importance of agriculture and the role of RAS and youth, national governments and private sector establish favourable policies and eventually increase investment</p> <p>Young professionals remain motivated to take part in international debates</p> <p>Risk:</p> <p>Changes in official policies does not lead to any enforcement of these and therefore no actual changes.</p> <p>While youth and gender remain high on the official ODA agenda, it seems not high on national agendas and policies.</p>

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Outcomes	Proposed indicators for SDC	Proposed Targets OP2125	(Ass & Ri)
<p>Outcome 2</p> <p>Strengthened performance of RAS providers and Professional Youth in contributing to sustainable food systems (strategic field “Professionalisation”)</p>	<p>Number (n) of Country Fora where (xx% of the affiliated) RAS providers integrate (gender and youth sensitive) E-Extension in their service offer</p> <p>Number (n) of countries demonstrating training and education standards for RAS providers, based on GFRAS principles of demand-driven, youth and gender sensitive approach</p> <p>Number (n) of RAS providers obtaining a NELK certificate (men/women/youth)</p> <p>Number (n) of youth supported by the YPARD mentoring program (men/women)</p> <p>Number (n) of Task Forces focusing on key thematic areas in the SFS in YPARD</p>	<p>Baseline: 0 Target: 30</p> <p>Baseline: 10 Target: 25</p> <p>Baseline: 100 Target: 1000</p> <p>Baseline: 100 Target: 1,400</p> <p>Baseline: 3 Target: 10</p>	<p>Assumptions:</p> <p>Strengthening institutions and individual’s capacity leads to detectable positive changes in performance</p> <p>Risk:</p> <p>Enhanced capacity of individuals and institutions is not utilised due to lack of an enabling environment</p>
<p>Outcome 3</p> <p>Enhanced learning about RAS and Youth engagement (strategic field “Knowledge generation and exchange”)</p>	<p>Number (n) of GFRAS website views per year</p> <p>Number (n) of YPARD website views per year</p> <p>Number (n) of GFRAS document down-loads per year</p> <p>Number (n) of new knowledge products on RAS from GFRAS</p> <p>Number (n) of new knowledge products (policy briefs and position papers) on emerging youth-related issues in SFS from YPARD</p>	<p>Baseline: 225,000 Target: 350,000</p> <p>Baseline: 380,000 Target: 500,000</p> <p>Baseline: 10,00 Target: 30,000</p> <p>Baseline: - Target: 100</p> <p>Baseline:10 Target: 50</p>	<p>Assumptions:</p> <p>Increased use of knowledge products and website hits is an indicator of provision of updated and relevant information</p> <p>Risk:</p> <p>That knowledge provide becomes obsolete</p>

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Outcomes	Proposed indicators for SDC	Proposed Targets OP2125	(Ass & Ri)
<p>Outcome 4</p> <p>Networks are functional and financially sustainable</p>	<p>Number (n) of countries with active RAS Country Fora</p> <p>Number (n) of CF at maturity stage 3</p> <p>Number (n) of CF generating income to operate a secretariat</p> <p>Average number (n) of CF having private sector stakeholders among its members</p> <p>Number (n) of CF and Country Chapters with active youth and gender policy</p> <p>Number (n) of Country Chapters with nationally funded activities</p> <p>Number (n) of fundraising proposals jointly developed and submitted by GCU, RCU and Country Chapters</p> <p>Number (n) of organised incidences of knowledge sharing between the GCU, RCU and Country Chapters</p> <p>Number (n) of webinar series done to share experiences among YPARD team on key areas including fundraising, running a mentorship/coaching program on the ground, project management.</p>	<p>Baseline: 50 Target: 75</p> <p>Baseline: 10 Target: 30</p> <p>Baseline: 10 Target: 20</p> <p>Baseline: 2 Target: 5</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Target: 30</p> <p>Baseline: 5 Target: 25</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Target: 3/yr</p> <p>Baseline: 1/yr Target: 3/yr</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Target: 3/yr</p>	<p>Assumptions:</p> <p>The champions that drives these networks remains dedicated to the networks agenda and are willing to continue to support them through voluntary work</p> <p>Well-equipped GCU</p> <p>Hosting arrangements with Regional chapters providing an enabling working environment</p> <p>Members motivated to support the network dynamics at the national level</p> <p>Risk:</p> <p>Changes in policy agendas and strategies of public and private sector partners reduce their willingness to support network strengthening</p>

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

Monitoring Processes

The monitoring activities of the Operational Plan 2021-2025 will include an assessment of all achievements (Development Objective, Outcomes, Outputs) at the start and at the end of the Plan through a Baseline assessment in 2021 and an End-line assessment in 2025. Each year the achievements of the Outputs will be monitored in a regular annual monitoring effort. GFRAS has an existing Monitoring and Evaluation tool that needs to be adjusted to fit the Operational Plan 2021-2025, this will be done in 2020 so GFRAS is ready to launch its baseline assessment in 2021.

Since the GFRAS-related activities of the Operational Plan are not directly dealing with family agro-entrepreneurs and activities are relatively thinly spread over a large number of countries, no systematic assessment at the Impact level will be undertaken. When and where possible case studies illustrating impact at the level of family agro-entrepreneurs will be conducted.

The networks at national and (sub-)regional level are key actors for gathering data, either through self-assessments, collection of information in operational documents or by holding surveys among affiliated members. The (sub-) regional networks will support the national networks (CF) to undertake monitoring activities and provide assistance. They also will aggregate the data of the various CF into data sets at the regional level. At the same time, they oversee that the monitoring process is carried out according to the time and methods set at the global level and ensure the validity and quality of the data collected. At the global level, the joint secretariat will have a similar role in undertaking the M&E process for global activities and by supporting the regional networks in undertaking the M&E process, overseeing this process and aggregating these data and reporting to the GFRAS constituency and partners.

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

10. Annexes

GFRAS Network and Its Impact

Some Examples – per Strategic Field

The stories below are part of an ongoing initiative on collecting “Impact Stories” related to GFRAS, its networks, and activities. The finalised document will be available in July 2020.

Professionalisation and stronger performance of RAS

Businesses and other institutions around the world are increasingly using the term ‘professionalisation’ to describe their levels of service provision. While some professions, for example medicine and engineering, have been well known and recognised through standard qualifications for many years, others – including RAS – have only recently begun to aspire to a high level of professionalisation. GFRAS supports a range of activities and tools to promote inter-regional learning and information exchange with a specific focus on training, talent and career development, performance incentives, certification and registration, mentoring and standards.

The GFRAS **New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK)** supports professionalisation by providing a learning resource designed for agricultural extension field staff, managers, lecturers, non-governmental organisations and training institutions. It was developed through an iterative journey involving discussions with and feedback from a broad group of stakeholders. By providing the kit, GFRAS aims to promote a more holistic view of RAS as a key driver of innovation through building capacities at individual, organisational and systems levels.

Reform of university curricula – India

From its original focus on increasing yields through technology transfer, India’s extension system has more recently embraced a more decentralised, participatory and demand-driven approach, recognising RAS as a critical factor in promoting rural development. However, the extension curriculum currently practised in the country’s universities has failed to keep pace

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

with the new challenges faced by farmers, new scientific advances, new capacities required among extension personnel, and new trends in the job market. Although attempts have been made to revise the curricula, little change has been accomplished, creating a mismatch between university training and the needs of extension, a lack of appropriate skills, irrelevant research and poor documentation of good practices.

GFRAS has supported the reform process by working with partners to revise the national curriculum. The process began when GFRAS provided funding to its regional network Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESAs) to conduct an evaluation study and host a results workshop. AESA invited key stakeholders from the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Agriculture tasked with improving the skills of extension officers and managers. The workshop demonstrated NELK and the participants formulated a plan to bring key universities on board. The resulting consortium, which comprised 29 universities, AESA, MANAGE and GFRAS, then developed a revised curriculum for degree courses in agriculture and extension. The curriculum was approved by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), which recommended it was introduced for the 2020 academic year.

The NELK modules are also being used as the basis for ICAR-sponsored training for extension scientists working in agricultural universities. Meanwhile, universities in Nepal and Sri Lanka are starting to look at reforming their university curricula in line with the Indian model and based on NELK. Further workshops are planned for 2021 to cement the partnership between AESA and MANAGE, with plans to add new courses and design capacity-building activities for the key university staff responsible for implementing the new curricula.

Additional highlights

- New views on the value of extension as a driver of innovation have been incorporated in many RAS programmes in Chile thanks to the efforts of the national forum of the Latin American Network for Rural Extension Services (RELASER), a GFRAS regional network.
- The GFRAS Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESAs) network has prepared a manual on good practices in extension research and evaluation as a hands-on reference to guide young researchers, research students and field agents in selecting appropriate methods of research and evaluation. AESA has also conducted capacity needs assessment, with

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

improved methods for evaluation of extension activities being adopted in several partners' capacity-development programmes.

- The University of Africa in Zambia has incorporated NELK into a new teaching programme.
- The University of the Free State in South Africa has accredited the modules of NELK and now uses them as the basis for short learning courses for extension agents.
- NELK is being used by RAS in Latin America.
- Some of NELK modules have been translated into Arabic by a GFRAS stakeholder. The translated units are now being used in courses provided by Alexandria University. Students and staff have approached Egypt's Ministry of Agriculture to fund a full translation of the manual.

Advocacy and support for an enabling policy environment

For extension actors to be effective, they need an enabling policy environment and appropriate and reliable investment. In this strategic field, GFRAS aims to strengthen the visibility and influence of RAS in policy and investment decisions. By working through appropriate regulatory frameworks, we aim to ensure fair competition and promote collaboration among the different providers of extension and advisory services. The goal is to increase recognition of the importance of RAS in all agricultural policies and investments.

Influencing a change in the national extension system – Peru

Peru launched the National Programme for Innovation in Fisheries and Aquaculture (PNIPA) to revitalise its fisheries and aquaculture sectors. This US\$120 million initiative aimed to improve the sustainability of industrial and artisanal fishing, while also increasing the productivity and diversity of Peru's aquaculture. Funding from the World Bank, secured in January 2017, supported measures to boost aquaculture exports and create jobs.

PNIPA is governed through its formal National Competitiveness and Productivity Policy, which has established nine objectives associated with the development of physical resources, human

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

capacity, and market and institutional efficiency. These include strategies to create an enabling environment for innovation, education, a productive business environment, reliable institutions, and sustainable natural resource management. Many of these aspects depend on having efficient RAS.

Key opinion-leaders and decision-makers involved in designing this project have engaged with GFRAS and RELASER over several years and have incorporated the concept of agricultural innovation systems in the overarching policy guiding the programme. RELASER supported consultation and input during the formulation stages, with the head of the programme sharing ideas and knowledge with other stakeholders within RELASER and GFRAS. As it is such an influential project, these ideas and training initiatives have influenced a change in approach by additional organisations throughout the country.

Additional highlights

- The Uganda Ministry of Agriculture invited GFRAS to assist in drawing up a national policy on agricultural extension. Ministry recognition of the GFRAS Uganda country forum (UFAAS) as a credible authority was the key to establishing this partnership.
- GFRAS actors in Cameroon successfully lobbied the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to attend the GFRAS 2016 annual meeting. Since then, the ministry has raised the profile of RAS nationally, with the country forum (CAMFAAS) being invited to provide input to the national agricultural extension and RAS policy. CAMFAAS is now considered to be a key stakeholder in decision-making on agriculture and value-chain promotion projects in Cameroon.
- Members of the European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services (EUFRAS) have been working closely with the European Commission for more than four years to develop a new innovation model and inform policy on agricultural and rural development. The new policy will emphasise consultation as a key driver of education and research, and as a prerequisite for European Union agricultural development funding.

Effective knowledge exchange and a stronger network

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

GFRAS responds to the needs of RAS stakeholders for peer-to-peer information exchange and opportunities for learning within the agricultural innovation system. Our knowledge activities include building capacity to generate, source, share, adapt and use evidence, lessons learned from experience, scientific and local knowledge, and information updates.

We have generated a considerable number of knowledge products. We have published a set of 30 Global Good Practice Notes, which provide a collection of theoretical and practical know-how on extension, with experiences gathered in an easily accessible and usable form as a public good. This collection is continually updated and expanded. In addition to these and NELK, GFRAS publications include issues papers on topics of current concern (e.g. gender and youth), a continually updated policy compendium, and a library on the links between agriculture and nutrition. Member networks also produce a wide range of publications.

Developing an appropriate career pathway in agriculture – Australia

Australia's Great Barrier Reef is the largest living structure on Earth. The ecosystem supports a rich biodiversity, but is facing numerous challenges to its survival, including climate change, ocean acidification and pollution. Runoff of sediment, nitrates and pesticides from farms in the catchment area is a key issue, but farmers currently lack an effective agricultural extension service, instead receiving conflicting information from multiple sources. In response to the need for better advice on more sustainable options, the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce initiated a project to improve the delivery of extension services through better coordination of actors and a clearer career pathway for extension professionals.

The key strategy was to build experience and support networking through a work placement programme. This will attract new trainees and ensure continuity of service in the years ahead. The trainees undergo year-long work placements in suitable host organisations, where they receive mentoring from experienced advisers and relevant technical training. They are also given opportunities to widen their personal networks. The GFRAS regional network Australia–Pacific Extension Network (APEN) is a key mentoring partner. APEN helps link the trainees with experienced extension professionals and it provides networking opportunities through an annual conference and other face-to-face and online events. APEN also provides social learning on the need to understand the attitudes and behaviours of farmers to enhance uptake of more sustainable farming practices.

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

The programme has proven to provide an effective pathway for people coming into the industry to develop their skills. Participants acknowledge the value of building a support network of industry partners, education providers and other professionals through APEN. The network helps ensure the graduates are equipped with the skills and knowledge required to be an effective extension adviser.

Additional highlights

- Inviting university professors from North Africa to GFRAS annual meetings has prompted many of them to update their ideas about RAS and adopt a networking approach to accessing and sharing knowledge. This has helped them to look at their local challenges in a different way and try approaches that have been used successfully by their colleagues in other countries.
- AESA has become a knowledge hub for the region through publishing Facebook posts, blogs and meeting notes. The network now has a steady supply of contributors, with students and professionals referring to AESA information to advance their learning and sharing processes.
- Chile has a vibrant GFRAS country forum with a broad stakeholder base. It has established close collaboration with RELASER to define the competencies required for specific extension programmes, based on sharing knowledge from other countries and regions.
- The Philippines government is in the process of formulating legislation to guide national policy, standards and funding for RAS through an extension bill. This includes setting qualification standards and establishing a clear career path for extension employees.
- The Central Asia and the Caucasus Forum for Rural Advisory Services (CAC-FRAS) has launched an annual competition to identify the best RAS, extension agents, farmers' organisations, and individual contributions to RAS. The idea is to promote awareness and competition, improve overall standards and increase investment in RAS in the region.
- The European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services (EUFRAS) has established a certificate of competence for European agricultural advice consultants to improve professional skills.

Joint Operational Plan 2021 -2025

YPARD Achievements

Examples from the field

Key flagship activities and achievements over the last 5 years (with references)

1. Leadership and mentorship program

YPARD launched [a mentorship toolkit](#) in 2018. It shows impactful examples of [Peer-to-peer mentoring](#). Some on-ground mentorship projects/pilots were successfully done in [Nepal, Nigeria, and India](#)

2. Young professionals' meaningful participation in agriculture-related discussions, policies and governance structures at different levels. Among many examples of initiatives under YPARD's leadership, we highlight the following:

- YPARD co-established the [Youth in Landscapes initiative](#) around the GLF – Global Landscapes Forum and was a key actor in the three editions of the GCARD – Global Consortium for Agricultural Research and Development.
- YPARD holds key leadership roles in platforms including the GFAR board, [FAO's Tropical Agriculture Platform Capacity Development Expert Group](#), [EFARD](#) management team and the [Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger \(Youth Council for the Rome based UN agencies\)](#).
- Youth delegations and representatives take key role on national level: for instance, to boost governmental agricultural-business strategies in [Kenya](#), women and youth inclusive value-chain development in [Ukraine](#), giving young farmers a voice in [Serbia](#), and so many more.

3. Developing and promoting capacity building and young farmer initiatives: Examples include 2 workshops for young African farmers to strengthen the capacities of youth farmers in sustainable agriculture, enhance rural and urban linkages and contribute to urban food systems in [EAST AFRICA](#) and [WEST AFRICA](#).

4. Key research on Young Professionals' realities and aspirations, needed skills and support. Flagship research over YPARD's existence include a Research on the [skills needed by the 21st century youth in agriculture](#), published in 2012, and a research on the [realities, aspirations and challenges of youth in rural drylands](#), in 2016. The [YPARD mentoring program](#) was also built upon deep-dive research.

The YPARD annual reports (e.g., [2018](#), [2017](#) and [2016](#)) highlight more examples of achievements.