6th GFRAS Annual Meeting

Global Good Practices in Rural Advisory Services

14 - 17 September 2015, Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan

Professionalisation of RAS: Challenges and Ways Forward

Summary of Parallel Workshop[1]

Three presentations were made each followed by an interactive question and answer sessions. The first presentation (by Isabel Martinez Castillo) gave an overview of the RELASER study of skills gap and these have been addressed. Some key messages from this presentation were:

- Many RAS scored high on technical skill, but low on functional skills
- Many people provide advisory services, but do not have qualifications
- There is no extension program in many institutions of higher learning
- Based on the study results, RELASER is embarking on the process of engaging the universities to include extension as a program

The second presentation (Fanie Terblanche), gave a South African experience on the professionalisation of RAS. Some key messages from this presentation were:

- The Government of South Africa (SA) now recognises extension science as a field of practice
- SA has since put a legal system in place for registration and certification of RAS professionals taking into account the different levels
- The certification process was a response to the demand from the National Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and RAS professionalisation is no longer an option, but a legislated and a legal mandatory requirement
- Getting the government buy in and support was important to attain the speed
- Quality assurance of training is important for any professionalisation and registration
- This was a dream that has come to reality for the South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE)

The third presentation (by Tom Kelly) provided a regional perspective of RAS professionalisation and certification process spearheaded by the European Forum for Rural Services (EUFRAS). Some key messages from this presentation are:

- Regional certification process across different countries
- The process is led by an association of private consultants

Overall key messages

After the three presentations, the participants engaged in an intense discussion guided by the following questions:

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[1] Compiled by Hlami Ngwenya

Based on the three presentations and your own experiences, what are the emerging **major challenges** in professionalisation of RAS?	What are the **opportunities** for the professionalisation of RAS?	What are the **best-fit considerations** on how challenges related to skills gaps and professionalisation of RAS can be addressed?	What can **GFRAS** do?	What role can **YOU (individual or institution)** play to advocate for the professionalisation of RAS?l
- Lack of education programmes at university level - Lack of extension qualifications at a professional level - Neglect of extension by many education institutions - Training institutions marginalize Extension as a programme Lack of legislative framework and certification bodies - Lacking well-defined policy for extension - Boundaries + limits of standards - Absent certification bodies - Absence of simple workable scheme for professionalization (certification schemes) - lacking foundation to build in in many countries	- Professionalisation as an area of focus for the next GFRAS – 10 year strategy - Work with global and regional forum - Recognition of profession (status) - Career development opportunities - Farmers better organized-better connected ??? - Finding best fit Advocacy - Agriculture, food security are higher on global agenda (Government, WB, CAADP) - The food security challenge that keeps ext on global agenda - Consider professionalization as a	- Criteria: Workability ; Affordability; Sustainability;Positive results - National profile of extension system - Identify key competencies in local context - Follow demand driven process - Get the voice of extension officers = Participatory - Same continuum for assessment of gaps in skills and professionalization - Keep regional fora active - Managing expectations e.g. reward system - Learning opportunities (via networking, foras) - Evaluation: qualitative and quantitative matrix	- Provide a system (develop; implement) - Experience sharing - Support experience exchange (exchange visits, share information) - Exchange experiences - Share inform and expertise - Consider Establishing international certification committee - Quality assurance - Academic reviews to profession - GFRAS consortium to consider a process of international certificiation - Engage with other global and regional university forum for inclusion of extension in programs	- Influence uni curriculum - Help establish mid career ext training programs in colleges - Advocacy - CF to engage with national universities to in NE in Current programmes - Strategies and action plans for ext - Put ambituous targets - Cooperation sharing - Find best fit (reasons, context) - farmers needs based - Plantwise CABI take part in discussions and share expr with plant doctors (in 33 countries)? - Help establish Professional schemes

Many people doing extension without extension qualifications - lacking broad range of skills in extension, to a large extent NOT professionals - Lack of expertise in extension at the ministry level - Extension officer profile hot to link to profession - Connection + coordination of institutions - Lack of reward systems - Interest+ motivation of individuals - Time+ workload	part of one health movement - Modernization e.g.ICT - Where ext projects exist, more focus on the need for proff-on - Success stories from other countries (e.g. South Africa and EUFRAS) - To learn from other professions, countries, services - Interest of key stakeholders - Capacities and willingness of individuals and organizations to engage - Existing RAS regional Networks and country fora		- Identify common needs (Together with reg foras identify common needs - Documentation (of GGP and methods) - Consider ongoing learning kit for qualification - CF should hammer more on extension professionalization	