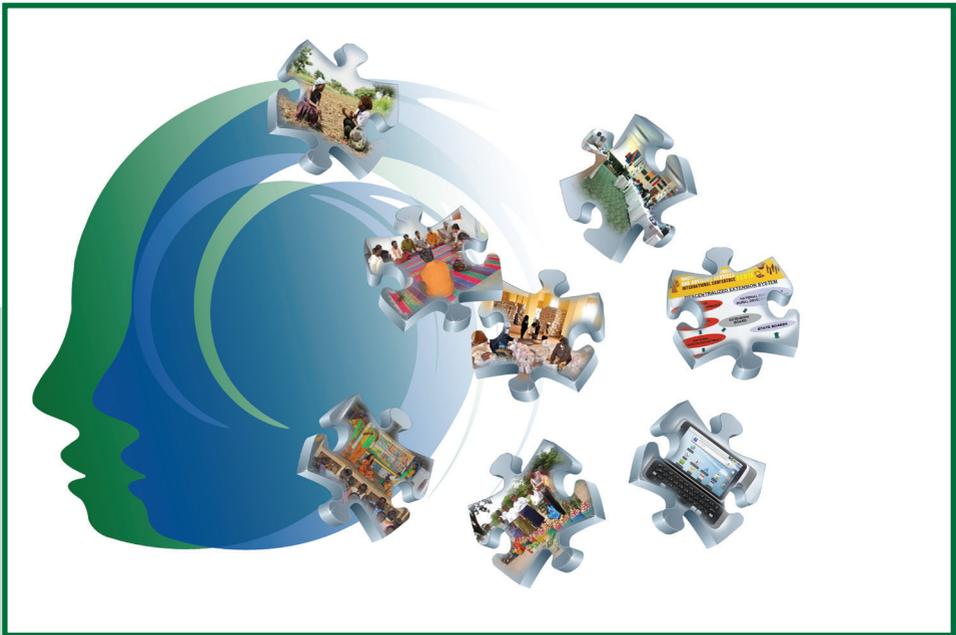




global forum for rural advisory services
forum mondial pour le conseil rural
foro global para los servicios de asesoría rural

Developing Capacity for Evaluation of Rural Extension and Advisory Services



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In 2012 GFRAS developed the “New Extensionist” document, which details the role that extension plays in an agricultural innovation system, and the strategies and capacities needed (at individual, organisational, and system level) <http://www.g-fras.org/en/activities/the-new-extensionist.html>. Based on this document the GFRAS Consortium on Extension Education and Training emerged to promote the New Extensionist, mainly through training, curricula review, and research on extension.

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1. Before you begin

1.1 General instruction

This module should be used in conjunction with the workbook provided. As you read through the module, you will find different visual features that are designed to help you navigate the document.



Figure 1: Icons used to highlight important information throughout the manual

The module makes use of keywords (difficult or technical words that are important for you to understand). To ensure that you receive the full benefit from the module, keywords will be marked the first time they occur and defined in a box containing the keywords symbol. Make sure that you read the definition of any words that you are unsure about.

1.2 Activities

Each session in the module will contain various types of activities to help you become knowledgeable and competent. The module contains three types of activities:

A **pre-assessment** is to be completed before reading through the module overview and introduction, and a **post-assessment** is to be completed once the entire module has been covered. This will measure the degree to which your knowledge has improved by completing the module.

Each session contains one or more **session activities** to be completed, in the workbook, where indicated in the module. These activities measure your ability to recall and apply theoretical knowledge.

At the end of each study unit a **summative assessment** needs to be completed. These assessments are longer than the session activities and will test your knowledge on all the work within the study unit.

1.3 Assessment instructions

Keep the following in mind before doing any of the assessments:

- All assessments are to be completed in the provided workbook.
- The manual contains all relevant information you will need to complete the questions, if additional information is needed, such as the use of online sources, facilities will be made available.
- Work through the activities in a study unit and make sure that you can answer all the questions before attempting the summative assessment. If you find that you are not certain of any part of the training material, repeat that section until you feel confident.
- The summative assessment must be done under the supervision of your trainer at the end of your learning period.

Developing Capacity for Evaluation of Rural Extension and Advisory Services

Module outcomes

After completing this module, you will be able to:

1. Explain the concept of rural advisory services (RAS):
 - Explain the role of RAS in the **agricultural** innovation system; and
 - Explain the principles of modern RAS.
2. Describe what monitoring and evaluation is about, what the differences are, and how these complement each other:
 - Describe the roles that M&E can play in RAS in accountability, the documentation of the value of RAS, and improving policies and practices of RAS; and
 - Describe the main challenges of modern RAS and the characteristics for M&E of RAS interventions.

Module overview

In this module you will first learn about rural advisory services (RAS) in agricultural **innovation** systems (AIS) and the basics of monitoring and evaluating RAS in order to understand the role of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in RAS and its basic principles and uses. You will also learn how M&E can be used to improve the policies and practices of RAS, what the current main global challenges are, and finally what this means for the M&E of RAS **interventions** such as reform processes, developing RAS organisations, or delivering a particular RAS service.

After completing the module, you will be able to enable, implement, and use M&E for documentation, **accountability**, and internal learning in RAS systems and organisations, as well as for particular RAS interventions.



Agriculture: The study and practice of farming and cultivation and ways to improve them.

Innovation: The process of generation, diffusion, adaptation and use of knowledge.

Intervention: The process of changing the way something works in order to improve it towards a particular goal.

Accountability: When people have a responsibility to do something and there is a process to make sure they fulfil their responsibilities.

Module introduction

Farmers and other actors in rural development today need better access to information, knowledge, and advice to:

- Increase **sustainable** food production;
- Ensure **food security**;
- Increase **resilience** to climatic change; and
- Reduce poverty in rural households.

Farmers must also link with other actors in the agri-food markets. This means that access to relevant and effective RAS is crucial for farmers.

Central to RAS efforts is making agricultural production and knowledge of farmers “better, relevant, and effective”.

Appropriate M&E are in principle important tools both to understand the value of RAS, but also to improve the performance of the systems, organisations, and practices.

So far, evaluations of RAS have not adequately supported learning and **capacity** building in RAS organisations and among other **stakeholders** with an interest in more effective RAS. There is a strong need for RAS stakeholders to develop their capacities and skills in M&E to improve accountability among users, governments, and other **financiers**. There is also a strong need to facilitate learning from M&E for stakeholders to improve their performance and practices.

In 2012, GFRAS produced the Guide to Evaluating Rural Extension. The purpose of this document was to support those involved in extension evaluation to conduct more complete, thorough, reliable, and useful evaluations. The guide supports readers in building understanding of different types of extension evaluation, to make decisions on what methods are most appropriate for their circumstances and to access further sources of theoretical and practical information.

To find the Guide to Evaluating Rural Extension, go to <http://www.g-fras.org/en/knowledge/gfras-publications.html?download=78:guide-to-extension-evaluation>



The guide provides detailed and targeted learning opportunities for different stakeholder groups within the RAS community. The objective is to contribute to strengthening the work of GFRAS towards building capacity for monitoring and evaluating RAS initiatives in its network. Another objective is to improve the capacity so that the evaluation can be used to improve extension systems and make **policy** and investment decisions.

Sustainable: Can continue to perform or be produced at a certain level given the resources it uses up.



Food security: When there is enough food for a group of people.

Resilience: The ability to recover after the performance or quality of something was diminished.

Capacity: The ability to do something.

Stakeholder: Someone who has a concern or interest in a project or organisation in terms of an investment or other forms.

Financier: Someone who provides funds for a project or organisation or manages these funds.

Policy: A set of principles and rules aimed at affecting the way a system, programme, or organisation is run.

Study unit 1: Introduction to RAS evaluation

Study unit outcomes

After completing this study unit, you should be able to:

- Define the concept of RAS;
- Explain the structure and functions of AIS with multiple actors and the possible or ideal roles of RAS in the AIS; and
- Describe the principles of modern RAS systems or interventions.

Study unit overview

In this study unit, you will be introduced to RAS, its roles in the AIS, and the principles for modern RAS as seen from the perspective of GFRAS and its networks. RAS encompasses a number of stakeholders who have to work together to achieve the goals of the programmes that fall under it. The direct stakeholders in RAS are:

- Policy and decision makers;
- RAS managers;
- M&E personnel in RAS institutions;
- M&E experts and evaluators of RAS;
- Farmer organisations; and
- **End users** of RAS, who may be agricultural producers, rural households, or other actors in the value chain that use the RAS services.

End user:



Someone outside of the production chain who actually uses the product or service.

More indirect stakeholders are extension educators and researchers dealing with RAS. You will focus on direct stakeholders.

Public



sector: The government and related sections of society where public funds are used.

Vendor: An organisation that provides a product or service.

Cooperative: An organisation that is jointly owned by members and has a common commercial purpose.

Private sector: The section of society that consists of businesses and other organisations that are run on non-public money.

Agri-business: Businesses involved in agriculture.

Brokerage: When the selling or buying of assets is facilitated.

Study unit introduction

The concept of RAS, which is also called agricultural extension, has undergone many changes over time. For many years, extension was understood as **public sector** agricultural services that transferred new technologies to farmers in a one-way communication manner. The GFRAS definition of RAS is much broader, however. According to GFRAS, RAS encompasses very different kinds of services provided by a wide range of actors such as public extension, input **vendors**, processing companies, **cooperatives**, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), farmer organisations, media, and individual advisors.

RAS work with farmers and other stakeholders in the rural economy. They provide rural people with the skills and knowledge they need to improve their livelihoods and well-being. RAS gives out information about technologies, markets, inputs, and financial matters. They also help farmers to develop their agricultural, management, and marketing skills. Moreover, modern RAS promote interaction among farmers and other rural actors, the **private sector**, research institutes, education institutions, and governments. They can, for example, assist farmers with improving their market access, dealing with changing patterns of risk, and protecting the environment.

RAS therefore include services mainly, but not exclusively, within four areas:

- Knowledge, technology, and information sharing;
- Advice related to management of farms, organisations, and **agri-businesses**;
- Strengthening of farmer-based organisations; and
- Facilitation and **brokerage** in rural areas and value chains.

Table 1.1 provides an overview of the broad range of services to farmers that are seen as RAS.

Table 1.1: RAS farmer services in various areas

Area	Examples of services
Knowledge, technology, and information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminating information and sharing of knowledge • On-farm testing and practical application of new technologies and practices • Promoting learning and innovations • Linking farmers to research and innovation institutions • Supporting implementation of government policies and programmes • Nutrition education, natural resource management practices, and so on
Advice related to the management of farms, organisations, and agri-business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on how to reach markets • Development of business management skills • Support to institutional development • Legal and fiscal advice
Strengthening of farmer-based organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting development of informal and formal farmer organisations and their empowerment • Facilitating demand formulation • Legal and financial advice

Area	Examples of services
Facilitation and brokerage in rural areas and value chains	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brokering collaboration among actors of the innovation system and along the value chain• Linking farmers and their organisations to institutions offering training and education• Facilitating links between farmers, farmer organisations, and public and private sectors• Facilitating access to rural services such as credit, insurance, phytosanitary, and certification• Resolving conflicts over natural resources

Phyosanitary: Relating to food safety of plants in terms of international trade.



Certification: The act of issuing a certificate for something so that it is officially recognised in specific respects.

Session 1.1: RAS in the agricultural innovation system

Session outcomes

After completing this session, you should be able to:

- Explain the innovation system and processes of RAS; and
- Describe the role of RAS in the AIS.

Introduction

According to the World Bank, innovation is the process by which individuals or organisations master and implement the design and production of goods and services that are new to them to respond to upcoming challenges and opportunities.

Innovation happens throughout the agricultural sector. The major areas it takes place in are:

- **Agricultural production:** These are technological innovations that work at the **primary production** level such as innovations in farming systems, crops or varieties, soil management, inputs or equipment;
- **Agribusiness:** These are about turning raw material into market-ready innovative products and include processing and value-adding; and
- **Knowledge and information systems:** These assist farmers to respond more effectively to particular challenges and opportunities.

Primary production: The level of production where raw materials are produced and which can be used at higher levels to produce more complex products. For example, wheat is grown at the primary production level and is then used to make other products like cereal.



The different areas interrelate. For instance, new innovative agricultural products often require not only innovation in the processing industry but also innovation in the farming systems in the primary production. Moreover, for farmers to adapt, this may require innovation in the information systems between industry and farmers.

Innovation is vital to agricultural development because it enables agricultural producers to adapt rapidly to changing conditions and to respond readily when opportunities arise. An effective innovation system is therefore crucial for development of agriculture today. It is particularly crucial for farmers to be able to adapt, as the environmental, climatic as well as market conditions are rapidly changing, are more variable, and less predictable than ever before. Today more than ever before, farmers need to be able to adapt production systems to other factors (such as lack of security and breakdown of institutions in areas afflicted by conflict).

The innovation systems in developing countries have major barriers due to a lack of innovative capacity, the absence of, or weak policies, and the inability to coordinate between actors.

Innovation system

An innovation system is a network of organisations, enterprises, and individuals focused on bringing new products, production systems, processes, and forms of organisations into economic use, together with the institutions and policies that affect their behaviour and performance.

Agricultural innovations typically happen through dynamic interaction among a number of actors involved in growing, researching, processing, packaging, distributing, and consuming agricultural products. Figure 1 shows the many actors that can be involved in the AIS. The figure shows a generic scheme of stakeholders, systems, and other elements involved in agricultural innovation and how they are linked to each other.

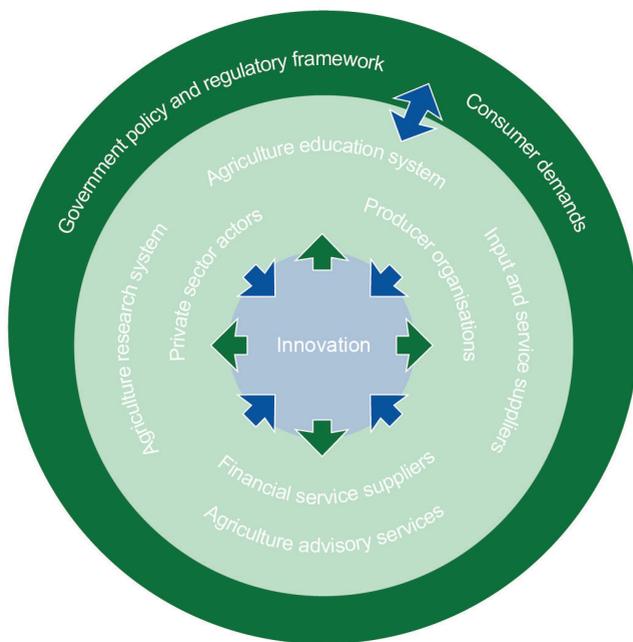


Figure 1: A generic agricultural innovation system

To facilitate innovation, it is important that the actors can link, collaborate, and make alliances across the system. Because this process involves many actors, there is a need for facilitation of alliances, coordination, and partnerships.

Moreover, the relations need to be nurtured and provided with favourable conditions for establishment and development.

Innovation processes

There are many different types of innovation processes. Often they happen more or less spontaneously outside a formal collaboration framework. Innovation processes cannot be viewed only as a process of technology generation from research to be disseminated to farmers. Neither are they always market-driven; for example, innovation processes may aim to adapt to

adverse climatic conditions or violent conflict. Often they require collaboration between several of the actors in the system (for example, private companies in agri-business, researchers, RAS organisations, and farmers).

However, functional networks and links between the actors are important and RAS can have an important role in mediating these. Capacity is needed by all actors – private sector, farmers, farmer organisations, RAS, research, policymakers, and so on. Different types of capacity are needed too: individual, organisational, and system capacity.

The roles of RAS in the AIS

It is important that the RAS system and RAS agents are well-integrated in the AIS. Figure 2 shows a simplified innovation process from the identification of a new opportunity or challenge, through the process of technology or solution generation, testing, and assessment to adoption of the innovative solution or technology, to practice. The figure shows different contributions that RAS can make to the process. RAS can play an important role in identification and **mediation** of collaboration, for example, between farmers, private companies, and research. RAS can contribute by conducting or participating in applied research or testing of innovations with farmers.

Mediation:



The process of producing agreement between two things or parties.

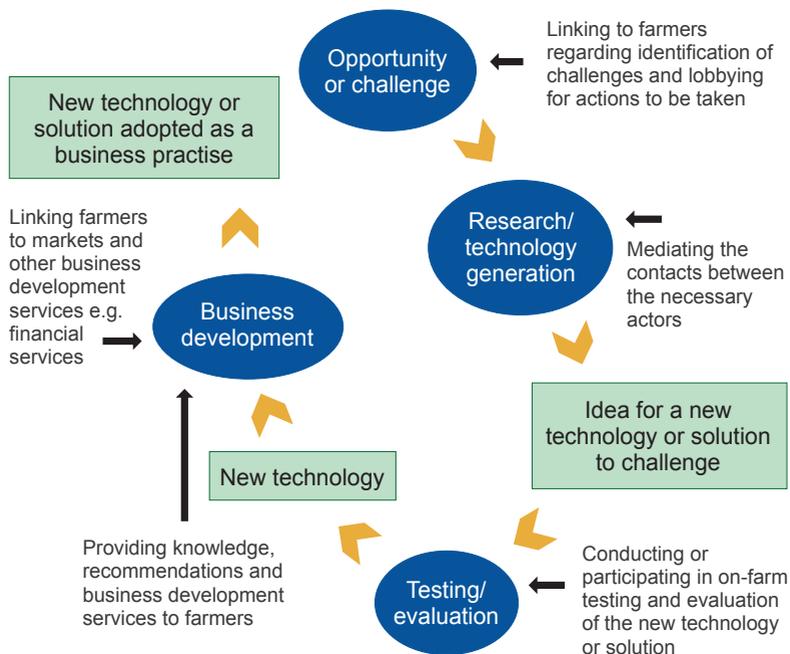


Figure 2: Important RAS contributions in agricultural innovation processes

After this the role of RAS is provision of the recommendations, knowledge, and business development services (BDS) that enable farmers to adopt the new technology or solution. BDS can include facilitating links to markets and other services such as financial services when required. Moreover, RAS can play a critical role in facilitating the feedback on the performance of the solutions tested by farmers and the modifications they make when applying solutions.

 Complete Activity 1.1 in your workbook.

Session 1.2: Principles of modern RAS systems and interventions

Session outcomes

After completing this session, you should be able to:

- Discuss the five principles of RAS.

Introduction

There are many different structures and approaches for RAS around the world, which are based on a number of principles. Based on analyses of past experiences and global practices, GFRAS has found that five principles in particular are needed to make RAS systems and interventions relevant and effective in contributing to rural development all over the world. These are:

- Focusing on best-fit approaches;
- Embracing **pluralism**;
- Increasing accountability to rural clients;
- Human resource development; and
- Sustainability.

Each of these principles are discussed in the following sections.

Focusing on best-fit approaches

RAS today has to operate amidst rapid and unpredictable changes in the physical, policy, and organisational environments. It is therefore inappropriate to use rigid one-size-fits-all approaches to RAS. The principle of best-fit acknowledges that for RAS to be relevant and effective in all the different circumstances, solutions and practices need to be based on local conditions including

Pluralism:



When there are different options of agents involved in providing RAS.

governance structures, capacity, organisation, management, and methods of providing RAS. RAS must be flexible enough to deal with current and future rural development issues and crisis moulding approaches that can fit unique situations.

Governance:



The system of rules, practises and processes that rules and monitors an organisation.

Embracing pluralism

The reality of RAS today is that there are many different types of RAS providers, as well as approaches. Embracing this pluralism in provision of services provides an opportunity to capitalise on the diverse competencies that these have in order to reach different types of clients.

Providers may be actors such as:

- Public RAS institutions;
- Civil society organisations;
- Farmer-based organisations;
- Private RAS providers; and
- Private agri-business enterprises.

The challenge related to pluralism is to ensure coordination of such providers, making sure that all categories of clients, including vulnerable sections of the farming communities, have access to relevant and effective RAS.

Figure 3 shows the variety of actors that can be involved in the RAS.

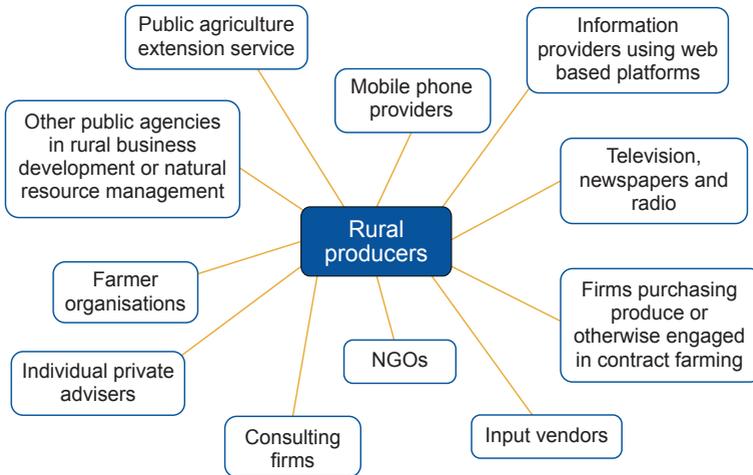


Figure 3: RAS providers

Increasing accountability to rural clients

To ensure relevance and effectiveness of the RAS, RAS work should be driven by demand from the users so that the services respond to demand by users and the service providers are accountable to the users. There are different ways that service providers can be held accountable for the quantity and quality of the services they provide. One way is by involvement and empowerment of farmers through farmer organisations. It can also be through decentralising the responsibility and decision making regarding the services to entities that the farmers have influence on. Moreover, financing mechanisms (such as public financing directly to farmers or their organisations to pay for the services and or farmers' own financial contributions to the services) can empower farmers in terms of decision making regarding the content of services, and thus make the service providers accountable to the farmers for the quality of the services.

The current efforts on capacity building in M&E is aiming at a situation where M&E actively contributes to increase the accountability to the rural clients.

Human resource development

Human resource development is crucial for RAS to be able to address the challenges and the rapid changes facing rural development today. Development of human resources is required at several levels: farmer level, RAS agents, and education/training institution level. Agricultural education and empowerment for farmers are important components in efforts to enhance their capacity to demand and use RAS for improving and making their livelihood more resilient. The principle of human resource development of the stakeholders is strongly linked to sustainability because continuous human resource development is a **precondition** for stakeholders to adapt to changing conditions, as well as in establishing and maintaining ownership.



Precondition:

A requirement that must be met before something can proceed or be possible. For example, a precondition to owning part of a company is putting up money.

Adaptability:

The ease with which something can change or adjust in response to new conditions.

Sustainability

Sustainability of RAS has different aspects, but mainly depends on three factors:

- **Adaptability** to change;
- Clear and strong ownership; and
- Sustainable and reliable financing.

Each of these factors are discussed below.

Adaptability to change

It is important for RAS programmes to be adaptable as local conditions such as weather, institutional structures, security, policies, markets and so on may affect how they are structured and how they are carried out. This means that the RAS must remain relevant and continue to function, even when the climate, markets, and policies change. This requires institutional capacity to analyse change such as weather forecasts and policy and market research, as well as mechanisms to respond to change.

Clear and strong ownership

This includes ownership at the levels of users, field level RAS providers, RAS management, policy decision makers, and funding agencies. Ownership is when stakeholders take responsibility for development and survival of the institutions as well as for the adoption and integration of approaches and results.

Embedded:

Existing within or between something, for example, an outgrower scheme that provides advisory services.



Sustainable and reliable financing

For RAS to be sustainable they require a reliable flow of funds and financing mechanisms. This allows farmers, their organisations, or communities to take responsibility for the advisory services, identify their needs, develop priorities, and negotiate the services they want from a variety of qualified service

providers that are accountable to the clientele. This can be through a variety of means such as:

- Financial participation by the users:
 - Direct payment for services by the users;
 - Indirect payment through membership fees; and
 - Indirect payment through production levies, taxes, and so on;

- Public funds channelled through the users or their organisations to pay for services; and
- Service provision by producer-owned organisations.

The traditional financing of extension services by governments or by private companies financing services regarding their own product lines (also called **embedded** services) can be viewed partly as sustainable. However, both models may lack the elements of empowerment and ownership by the farmers.



Complete Activity 1.2 in your workbook.

Concluding remarks

In this module, you have learnt that RAS encompasses very different kinds of services provided by a wide range of actors such as public extension, input vendors, processing companies, cooperatives, NGOs, farmer organisations, media, and individual advisors. RAS work with farmers and other stakeholders in the rural economy, giving them the skills and knowledge they need to improve their livelihoods and well-being. Therefore, RAS is important for innovation and development in the agricultural system. You also learnt that five principles in particular are needed to make RAS systems and interventions relevant and effective in contributing to rural development all over the world. These principles are best-fit approaches, pluralism, accountability, human resources, and sustainability.



Complete the summative assessment in your workbook.

Study unit 2: Defining, monitoring and evaluation

Study unit outcomes

After completing this study unit, you should be able to:

- Describe the basic principles of results-based management (RBM); and
- Explain the differences between monitoring and evaluation and how they interlink.

Study unit overview

In this study unit you will learn the basic principles of results-based management (RBM) and the roles that monitoring and evaluation plays in this. You will also have an in-depth knowledge to carry out RBM and M&E as part of RBM and understand the significance of M&E for RAS.

Study unit introduction

Planning, monitoring and evaluation must take place to ensure that interventions and efforts in RAS produce bring about the desired results. RBM is a way to ensure this. It is thus important for you to learn about the importance of M&E practices as well as the particular characteristics that are relevant to RAS interventions.

Session 2.1: Basic principles of RBM

Session outcomes

After completing this session, you should be able to:

- Describe what RBM is and its basic principles;
- Explain the monitoring and evaluation of RBM; and
- Discuss the links between planning, monitoring and evaluation of RBM.

Introduction

If you want to document and check that your work or interventions on RAS produce results in terms of intended changes, you must plan, monitor and evaluate the implementation. Doing so allows your organisation to learn from good and bad experiences on the way and apply these lessons in a systematic and consistent manner. This is essentially what RBM is about. RBM has two purposes:

- To provide a tool for learning and improving the performance of an organisation or programme; and
- To provide a reliable tool for accountability to the stakeholders.

Definition

The definition of RBM according to United Nations Development Group (UNDG) is:

RBM is a management strategy by which all actors, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of results, ensure that their processes, products, and services contribute to achievement of desired results (outputs, outcomes, and higher-level goals or impact). The actors in turn use information as evidence on actual results to inform decision making on the design, resourcing, and

delivery of programmes and activities as well as for accountability and reporting.

RBM involves a process consisting of three basic steps:

- **Planning:** Designing and planning the intervention and defining the intended results. It starts with setting the vision and designing the intervention according to the vision and mission, resources available, and intended results (outputs, outcomes and impact);
- **Monitoring:** When implementation starts, monitoring is the tool to continuously track the results, reflect on them and make management decisions and adjustments; and
- **Evaluation:** Evaluation provides evidence and captures lessons learned on how the intervention performs in producing the intended results.

Figure 4 illustrates the RBM process, including these three steps.

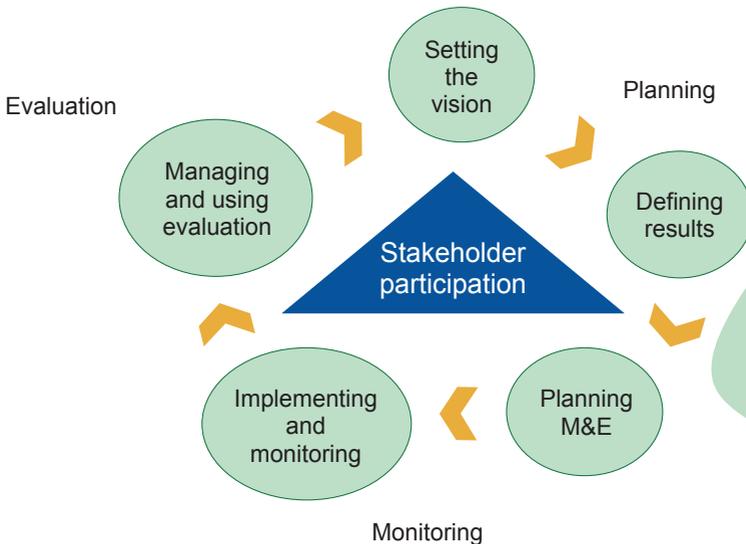


Figure 4: The RBM process

Defining results

Firstly, the goals of the intervention must be defined. What results should be achieved? Results of the intervention are the changes that come from the intervention. The changes can be intended or unintended, positive or negative. Only the intended changes are discussed.

There are three types of results:

- Outputs;
- Outcomes; and
- Impact.

Outputs

The immediate and concrete results of the intervention, products or services provided. In RAS this can be training courses, conferences, workshops, meetings, publications, and facilities such as laboratories, offices, libraries, and so on.

Outcomes

The medium-term changes in knowledge, behaviour, attitudes, and relations. In RAS this can mean increased knowledge of the agricultural markets, improved management, and links to market actors or collective action by groups of farmers.

Impact

Long-term, lasting changes in conditions and situations of the end-users. This can be economically, socially or other but can also relate to more broad changes in society, for example, empowerment of women farmers.

Defining the intended results is an essential part of the strategic planning of any intervention. The more stakeholders are involved in this process, the better are the chances that the results will be relevant and that there will be ownership for the processes and results among the stakeholders.

Many RAS interventions suffer from results frameworks that are overly optimistic about what provision of RAS can actually achieve and in terms of contributing to overall national goals such as poverty alleviation. It is crucial that the results are realistic and relate well to the available inputs. Inputs can be resources such as funds, human resources and activities. Also, it is important to consider that there may be other factors in the agricultural sector such as market, policy or climatic conditions that may either limit or improve the results.

The basis for results-based design of an intervention is to develop a realistic programme theory of change (ToC). A ToC is essentially a description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. The programme ToC describes the causal connection between the inputs, activities and the results that you want.

The ToC can be developed by programme staff, by an external evaluator, by programme designers, or collaboratively with stakeholders. The more you involve the stakeholders at the field level in defining results and in developing the programme ToC, the better are the chances that the theory comes closer to reality of what can be done within the timeframe and with the available resources.

The diagrams used to describe a programme ToC (most commonly the log frame models) can be drawn in different ways. Sometimes they are shown as a series of boxes (inputs > processes > outputs > outcomes > impacts), sometimes they are shown in a table, sometimes they are shown as a series of results, with activities occurring alongside them rather than just at the start.

Figure 5 shows an example of a programme theory of change for an RAS intervention.

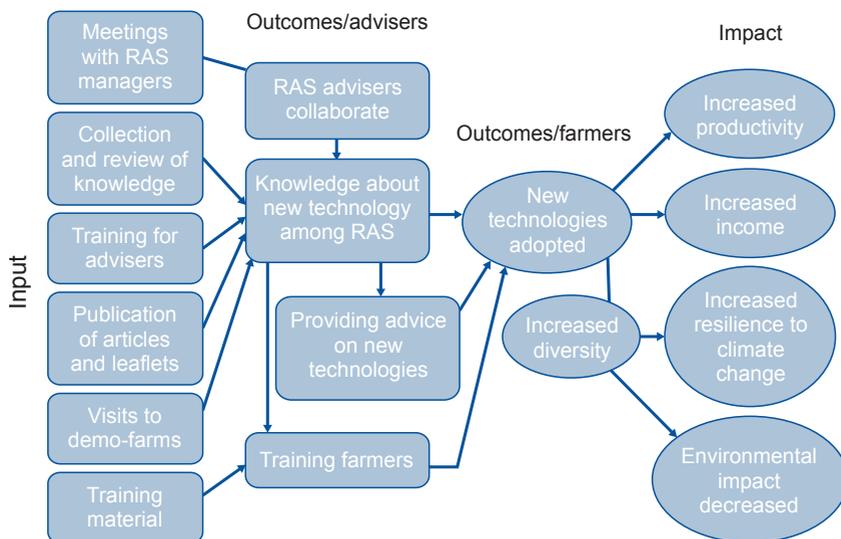


Figure 5: Programme theory of change for RAS intervention

It is important to be aware that the above way of visualising the ToC shows the change pathway as linear. In reality, this is rarely the case in RAS interventions, which focus on capacity development and behavioural changes, and which are influenced by a number of factors. Moreover, feedback loops are critical for informing project implementers on how to modify interventions so that they are more effective. Also, in a pluralistic system, the intervention will likely be associated with sources of information and advice in the broader AIS.

In this process, it is important to discuss and list the assumptions on which the success of the ToC depends.

When the intended results are defined and agreed upon among the stakeholders, then you must determine how to view and measure results. This means defining the indicators and how to measure these.

When defining the indicators it is important that they are SMART:

- Specific;
- Measurable;
- Attainable;
- Relevant; and
- Time-bound.

When the intervention is designed, planned, and the results and result indicators are defined, it is important to establish a baseline. A baseline simply means a description of the current situation with regard to the intended changes. This requires data collection on the outcome indicators before the start of the intervention. A baseline will provide the necessary background for monitoring and evaluating the changes during and after implementation.

Monitoring in RBM

RBM is a continuous process of collecting and analysing information to compare how well an intervention is being implemented against the intended results.

Monitoring answers the question: Is the intervention doing things right?



While the design and planning of an intervention must involve stakeholders, monitoring is a management responsibility. It should nevertheless engage stakeholders. Data on the results agreed upon during the planning and design phase are routinely and systematically collected. This enables management of the process of moving towards results, learning through reflection on the progress or lack of progress, and making corrections of practices or plans where needed.

Monitoring is also a tool for reporting on progress, as part of transparency and accountability to all stakeholders.

RBM differs from more traditional management monitoring by not only monitoring the intervention's activities and outputs.

RBM encourages organisations to focus on outcomes and impact, even in the day-to-day monitoring (see Figure 6). Because management monitoring goes beyond the activities and outputs, it increases the chances of actually learning from experiences: you see what works and what does not and can thus adjust the practices during implementation. It is then possible to improve the performance and increase the chances of impacting on people's lives as intended.

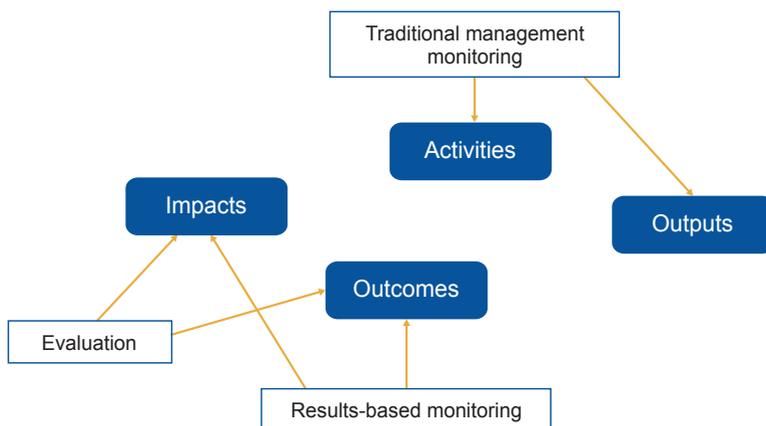


Figure 6: Monitoring and evaluation in results frameworks

Monitoring can be more than producing information about the performance of RAS. If participatory monitoring methods are applied (where the stakeholders themselves define the issues for monitoring, collect and analyse the data, and take action as a result of what they learn through this process) it can generate ownership and learning among all the actors engaged in the intervention. Because they all become part of the process and its results.

Evaluation

The roles of monitoring and evaluation are complementary. Monitoring data is usually a pre-condition for good evaluations. Evaluations are often criticised for not having a sufficient evidence base. This is often due to absence of monitoring data.

When an evaluation is started, it is usually too late to reconstruct what has happened if such data have not been collected during implementation.

While monitoring is the continuous process of collecting and analysing information, evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of a given system or intervention, whether this is still ongoing or completed. Evaluations answer the question: is the intervention doing the right things?

The evaluation collects and analyses information in a structured process. It may assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of a given intervention. The evaluation will confirm or reject project expectations (programme theory of change).

There are five criteria for assessment in an evaluation:

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the objectives and practices of the intervention are consistent with the target group's priorities and the recipient and investor's policies;
- **Effectiveness:** A measure of the extent to which the intervention has achieved or is achieving its intended results (outputs and outcomes);
- **Efficiency:** A measure of how economical inputs are converted into outputs;
- **Impact:** The long-term changes in the lives of the rural people (for example, farmers) as they perceive them at the time of evaluation to which the intervention has contributed. Changes can be positive or negative, intended or unintended; and
- **Sustainability:** The likelihood that the positive results of the intervention will continue long after the external assistance ends.

Evaluations can be undertaken at different stages of implementation. Often, it is done mid-way in the implementation to adjust strategies and optimise the results, and at the end of the intervention to learn from the experiences and document the results. Evaluations are often used for decision making with regard to future policies and investments.

There are different types of evaluation:

- Mid-term evaluation of results: Assessment of an on-going intervention with a view to improve practices;
- End-of-project evaluation: Assessment of a completed intervention with lessons learned and recommendations for future interventions; and
- Impact studies: Comprehensive measurements of long-term effects on income, poverty, food security, and so on. Have knowledge, behaviour and attitudes changed? This will often be undertaken after the intervention is completed.

When results-based planning and monitoring are applied there is a good basis for conducting credible and useful evaluations. It is clear what results the intervention is aimed at, and the monitoring data together with a baseline provide a good basis for assessment of the effectiveness – the changes that have resulted from the intervention. But the evaluation also needs to collect more information for the assessment. For example, it is important that unintended and perhaps even negative changes resulting from the intervention are identified.

Figure 7 shows a simplified model of the evaluation process.

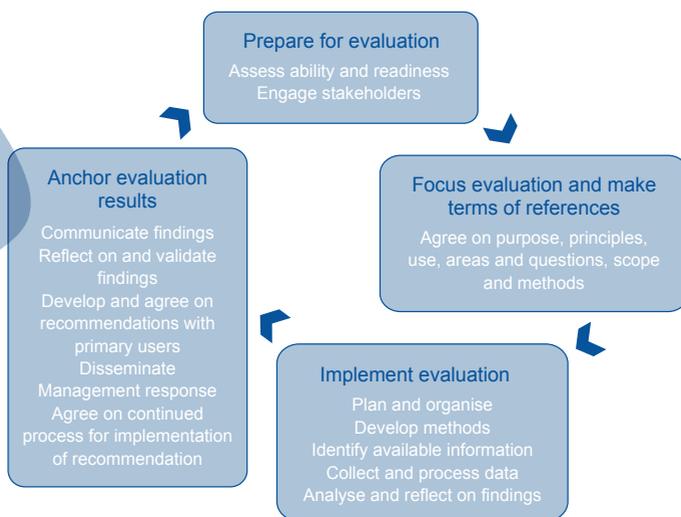


Figure 7: Evaluation process

The preparation for an evaluation is crucial to ensure that the evaluation is useful. The purpose and intended use must be clear. It is important that all the relevant stakeholders are involved in the process, from defining the purpose and use to providing information and views, as well as validating findings and discussing the recommendations and how to implement these.

Evaluation can be conducted by internal or external actors. The choice often relates to the purpose of the evaluation. If the purpose is mostly related to internal organisational learning, it may be ideal to have people from within the organisation conduct the evaluation, as this may create a more trusting and open dialogue than with external evaluators.

On the other hand, if there is a purpose of accountability related to the evaluation, the evaluation should be conducted by external evaluators who can make independent analyses and therefore an unbiased assessment of the performance. Often the purpose of an evaluation is mixed, so the external evaluators must be independent for the purpose of accountability. In this case, it is important that the external evaluators apply methods that create trust and facilitate an open and respectful atmosphere around the evaluation process, where all stakeholders are involved and heard.

Putting the evaluation results to good use is perhaps one of the most important parts of the process, which unfortunately often receives too little attention. The result can be that evaluations are conducted and costs encountered without being of use to the stakeholders. For the evaluation to be brought into use, the key stakeholders need to reflect on and validate the findings and agree on the recommendations, just as they need to agree on the process for implementation of the recommendations.

There are several different approaches and methods that can be used for evaluating RAS interventions. The choices of these relate to factors such as the nature of the intervention, the purpose of the evaluation and its future use.

Links between planning, monitoring, and evaluation

Good planning in a results-based framework, combined with effective monitoring and evaluation following the same principles, provides a valuable basis for enhancing performance of the RAS interventions. These are therefore closely interlinked:

- With proper planning and clear definition of intended results, it is clear what to monitor;
- With results-based planning, the basis for evaluation is strong – you know what to look for;
- With careful monitoring, the data necessary for evaluation are collected; and
- Monitoring and evaluation will often lead to changes in the programme planning. This means further changing or modifying intended results and modifying data collection for monitoring.

Monitoring is necessary, but not sufficient for evaluation. This is because evaluation uses additional new data and different frameworks for analysis.



Complete Activity 2.1 in your workbook.

Session 2.2: The roles that M&E can play in RAS

Session outcomes

After completing this session, you should be able to:

- Describe the different roles and purposes of M&E;
- Explain what M&E can be used for and how different stakeholders have different ways of using M&E; and
- Describe how the different purposes influence the M&E practices.

Introduction

During earlier work, in preparing and developing the GFRAS guide to evaluating rural extension, it was found that many of the RAS evaluations undertaken so far have not sufficiently supported learning in RAS organisations. RAS interventions do not have a good reputation for using evidence to enhance accountability and effectiveness. Generally, RAS stakeholders lack a “culture” of learning and improving services or interventions based on good and bad experiences. This may be a result of the lack of accountability of RAS institutions towards users as well as policymakers and financiers. Many RAS institutions do not have M&E units or capacities. This situation may be particularly noticeable in public sector RAS institutions, but can also be found among other types of institutions such as farmer organisations, national NGOs, and private agri-businesses.

This section therefore introduces the roles that M&E can play for RAS, how M&E can be used to fulfil these roles and what it means for M&E practices.

The different roles and purposes of M&E

There are a large number of stakeholders involved in and using M&E in RAS. They include:

- RAS agencies and other service providers:
 - Management;
 - Staff; and
 - Governance bodies.
- Ministries of agriculture (and perhaps environment, rural development, science/technology, private sector development);
- Farmer organisations:
 - Management;
 - Staff;
 - Governance bodies; and
 - Members.
- Other civil society groups;
- Private agribusiness companies;
- Aid agencies (including donors); and
- Farmers/users.

These stakeholders all have different roles and interests related to M&E that need to be considered and included. Depending on the type of intervention (RAS system, project/programme involving RAS or RAS organisation) M&E can play at least three roles:

- Provide accountability;
- Support policymakers and RAS managers with evidence on how best to structure and invest in RAS; and
- Support internal and external learning on how to improve the performance of RAS.

The following describes how these different purposes can be supported through the M&E processes.

Providing accountability

M&E has an important role to play in holding actors accountable in doing a proper job. M&E can establish how well an intervention is performing: Does it achieve the results it was set out to

achieve? Is it effective? Does it meet the required standards? Does it provide services that are valuable to the users?

It is a common practice in development cooperation to view accountability to be primarily towards donors. However, RBM actually offers the opportunity to improve the systems, their performance, and value to the users. For this to be fully used, the M&E systems must establish accountability more broadly among stakeholders. In RAS, accountability works several ways, as shown in Figure 8.

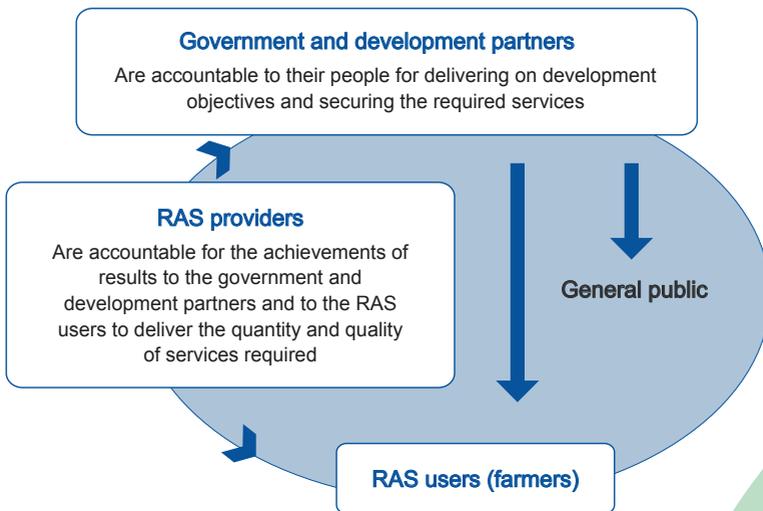


Figure 8: Accountability in RAS

Governments and development partners, who may provide funds for RAS development and operation, are in principle accountable to their people (taxpayers) for delivering on the development objectives and ensuring that farmers have access to the required services.

RAS providers, including public servants, are accountable to the funders (governments and or development partners) for the achievements of the results. In demand-driven service systems RAS providers are, at the same time, supposed to be accountable

to the RAS users (farmers) for delivering the quantity and quality of services that are required. The last, the so-called "downward accountability" towards farmers, is rarely practised.

However, as the principles of GFRAS state, accountability towards the users must be increased to increase relevance, effectiveness, and the probability for creating impact at the farmer level. It is therefore important to find ways for this to happen in demand-driven RAS systems.

Several approaches, methodologies, institutional setups, and governance systems are in play worldwide to address the need for increased accountability towards the users of the services, the farmers. They include participatory RAS methods, decentralisation, and alternative service providers. The latter can, for example, be farmer-based organisations or producer cooperatives, where farmers are involved in governance. Moreover, innovative financing mechanisms that provide funding to the farmers to purchase their own services will increase accountability.

The next important step will be to develop M&E systems that include and involve the service users in such a way that the M&E can contribute to increasing the accountability to the users.

This will mean involving the services users in all steps of the RBM process from planning and setting the goals and indicators to providing information such as changes in production and income. The service users will also have the satisfaction of receiving and validating monitoring reports and being involved in validating findings and recommendations from evaluations. The results of such involvement will be that the service users can hold their service providers accountable and demand that the agencies act on the findings and recommendation to correct the identified weaknesses.

Providing evidence to structure and invest in RAS

When the RBM M&E system is used in the RAS intervention, and when this is well planned and implemented, the M&E data can provide relevant and credible documentation of what has been done and what the outcomes have been. The M&E will then not only provide information on the performance, but will also analyse data that can give insight into why some things have worked and others not. It is important for policymakers that the M&E provides credible evidence and clarifies if and how RAS plays its role in AIS more generally. This also means that the M&E provides documentation that can be used to inform decision makers regarding future policies and funding options for the development of RAS and as a tool for the broader development goals related to the agricultural sector.

Supporting learning on how to improve the performance of RAS

The aim of the RBM approach is for the implementation of the processes to lead to greater opportunities for continuous learning from experience, which can provide for adjustment and decision making along the way of the implementation through feedback mechanisms. The ideal feedback loops within and between results based monitoring and evaluation. The results based monitoring provides information used for reflection among stakeholders, thereby creating the learning required to adjust the implementation actions. This is a continuous process during implementation of the intervention. The monitoring also contributes with information to the evaluation, which are undertaken from time to time and mostly by external actors, but contribute as well to a feedback loop of reflection and learning that will contribute to new planning of the intervention or to planning of a whole new intervention.

Figure 9 shows the feedback loops used in supporting internal and external learning how to improve the RAS.

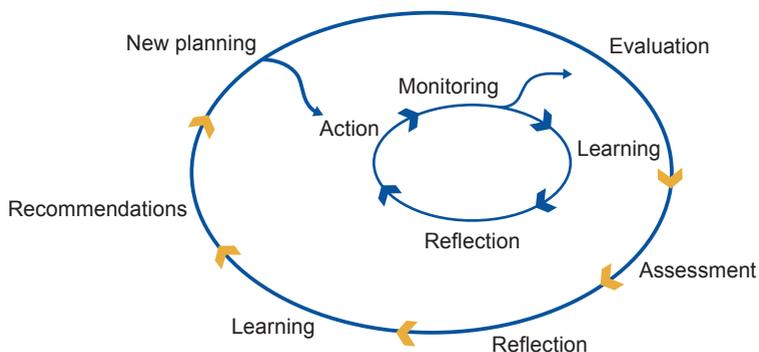


Figure 9: RAS feedback loops

In principle, if the key stakeholders are appropriately involved in the processes, then the RAS interventions will be more responsive to the changing environment in which they operate. Ideally, the M&E responds both to the learning needs within RAS organisations and to those with broader interests in the AIS. For example, it would be a great advantage if researchers or agri-businesses could learn from RAS M&E to what extent their research outputs or business services (for example, inputs or equipment) are relevant and beneficial to farmers.

However, this requires that the organisations involved in the interventions orientate themselves towards learning and establish mechanisms for learning and adjustment in the operations.

Mechanisms for learning can include:

- Participative approaches for data collection;
- Regular meetings for reflections on monitoring data, for example, workshops or retreats for taking stock and analysing results;
- Biannual or annual meetings with all stakeholders to review the performance of the intervention;
- Electronic systems to facilitate knowledge sharing and exchange;

- Installing and developing a learning “culture” where it is allowed and accepted to share mistakes and failures; and
- Participation in RAS networks and communities of practice for sharing of experiences and seeking advice for ongoing challenges from peers and experts. This can, for example, happen in the RAS country forums and is practised by the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services.



Complete Activity 2.2 in your workbook.

Session 2.3: What is special about M&E for RAS?

Session outcomes

After completing this session, you should be able to:

- Describe the main challenges of RAS globally and be able to identify the particular challenges related to your own RAS system, organisation or interventions;
- Identify the factors to monitor or evaluate in a particular system or intervention; and
- Explain how the challenges of modern RAS, complexity of functions, multiple actors, and non-linear impact paths affect the choices of approaches and methods in M&E.

Introduction

RAS interventions are all different. They can exist at different levels, intervening in developing RAS systems through reform processes or developing RAS organisations or just delivery of one particular service. This session makes a brief and general introduction to what is particular about M&E for RAS interventions of any kind.

The main challenges of modern RAS

Different RAS systems, organisations, and interventions are driven by a mixture of goals. Farmers, governments, private agri-enterprises, researchers, and others in the broader rural development community may all have their different priorities and interests related to RAS. The interventions are implemented in a range of policy, social, and economic contexts. This means that different RAS systems, organisations, and interventions face different challenges depending on the particular context and goals.

An important challenge is to ensure that RAS plays its required roles in the AIS. RAS must establish, strengthen and maintain the institutional relationships with all the relevant actors in the AIS. It is crucial that M&E tracks the efforts to overcome the barriers and how the interventions manage the relationships and how they contribute.

Other challenges that are common to many RAS interventions are related to the five key principles of GFRAS already discussed:

- Focusing on best-fit approaches;
- Embracing pluralism;
- Increasing accountability to rural clients;
- Developing human resources; and
- Ensuring sustainability.

Many RAS interventions will therefore strive to create changes in some of these areas. The focus of the different interventions will differ depending on the particular context. Some interventions may strive mainly to create change in terms of human resource capacity, while others may focus on sustainability, and so forth. In the RBM this will naturally influence the prioritisation and definition of the intended results and therefore help in deciding what the monitoring and evaluation will focus on.

The factors to monitor and or evaluate

There are a number of factors that must be monitored and evaluated to improve an RAS intervention. These are:

- Best-fit approaches;
- Pluralism;
- Accountability;
- Assessing human resources; and
- Sustainability.

Each of these factors are discussed in detail below.

Best-fit approaches

Focusing on best-fit practices and approaches is primarily a matter of making the design based on good analyses of the conditions under which the intervention takes place and, if possible, what has been learned from earlier experiences.

The role of monitoring and evaluation is to track and assess whether the applied approach and methodologies actually fit the purpose as intended. A common concern is whether the intervention actually manages in reaching the intended clients (the target group) and to what extent these clients are satisfied and benefit from the RAS services as intended.

There are several challenges related to this that cut across different interventions. Generally, you can see that RAS services have a bias towards reaching wealthier male farmers. Many services focus on primary production and have challenges in being adequately oriented to market. This may be despite intentions that may exist, to provide equal access to services by men and women farmers, in reaching vulnerable farmers to improve their livelihoods and increase resilience of the households and facilitating access for these farmers to favourable markets.

This confirms that there is a lot to improve in terms of matching the intentions and practices.

Gender equality

Currently, there are serious inequalities in men and women's access to RAS, along with inequalities to and control of assets, information, organisations (RAS organisations as well as farmer organisations) and markets.

Sustainable change towards gender equality is realised when both men and women can contribute, give feedback and generate new knowledge. Equal opportunities for men and women to RAS is an important precondition for increasing productivity and food production in smallholder farming. At the same time, this will

provide great opportunities for achieving other important goals of supporting vulnerable livelihoods and reducing poverty and malnutrition.

The challenge in achieving sustainable change towards gender equality in RAS involves confronting and addressing both structural inequalities in society, as well as the gender biases inside the RAS organisations. This means removing barriers preventing women from participating by applying approaches and methodologies that are suited to reach women as well as men and by considering women's needs for equal participation in employment policies, the institutional structure and governance of the services. Examples of areas of change in approach and practice that the intervention would need to address are:

- Strengthening the ownership by women and control within the RAS organisations;
- Increasing the number of women professionals in RAS; and
- Using gender-sensitive approaches and practices in service delivery.

Examples of issues for M&E and possible indicators are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Possible M&E issues of gender equality and outcomes

Possible M&E questions	Possible outcome indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do both women and men have access to/participate in RAS? • Does the intervention strengthen women’s ownership and control within the rural organisations? • Does the intervention respond to and or confront key constraints for women’s agricultural activities? • Does the intervention address cultural restrictions and issues of workload for women to participate in and access RAS? • Does the RAS content respond to strategic agricultural needs of men and women farmers? • Are there sufficient numbers of women RAS agents with appropriate skills to serve female clients? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of men and women participating in/accessing/using RAS • Number of women represented in governance bodies and leadership positions • Changes in key constraints for women such as land ownership • Cultural restrictions such as change of meeting place addressed • Time series analysis of gendered workload before and after the intervention • Women farmers indicating changes in their ability to participate • Women farmers indicating satisfaction and benefits from the RAS • Numbers and proportion of female staff at different levels of the RAS organisation

The same principles apply to assessing equal access to RAS by other marginalised groups such as youth or ethnical minority groups.

Wealth

Best-fit in terms of wealth of clients must relate to the intended results of the intervention. Many RAS development interventions have an overall goal of contributing to poverty reduction through providing opportunities and knowledge to small-scale farmers and vulnerable groups in rural communities. However, despite these intentions, the fact is often that the majority of participants are farmers belonging to wealth groups above average in their communities and that these stand the best chances for benefiting from the services. Monitoring and evaluation can disclose such mismatch and provide analyses of the causes.

However, some interventions have a stronger focus on market orientation or increasing national food security than poverty reduction and household food security. In this case, some measure of wealth bias is more acceptable and benefits the purpose.

Incentive:



A benefit you gain from doing something.

Apart from structural inequalities in access to markets, capital, and land, the question of which wealth groups benefit from RAS is related to the content of the services, as well as the procedures, **incentives**, and attitudes of the RAS providers. The content needs to match the conditions that the intended group of farmers have for production and for managing market and climate risks. This can be conditions such as:

- Ownership of productive assets such as land and livestock;
- Income (on-farm and off-farm);
- Market orientation and access to markets;
- Access to financial services; and
- Education level.

Examples of issues for M&E and possible indicators to track are shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Possible M&E issues of wealth and outcomes

Possible M&E questions	Possible outcome indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who uses RAS – which wealth groups do they belong to? • Who benefits from RAS? • If the intervention aims to particularly target poor and vulnerable groups, are there procedures to take the views and needs of these clients into account? • Are the promoted technologies appropriate and accessible for the targeted producers? • Does the intervention take the level of risk that the target producers are able to deal with into account? • Does the intervention take the accessible market options for the target group into account? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participating farmers from different wealth groups • Number of farmers from different wealth groups represented in RAS governance bodies • Perception of benefit from RAS by farmers from different wealth groups • Existence of procedures and incentives for RAS agents to reach the target group • Adoption and adaptation of promoted technologies by different wealth groups • Investment costs of using different technologies • Comparison of risks of different options in relation to household incomes

By using some of the suggested indicators, it may be possible to analyse and assess reasons for matches and or mismatches between the RAS practices and the intended target groups in terms of wealth.

Market orientation

Traditionally, RAS has tended to focus on primary production aspects of farmers' needs for information, knowledge, and skills. At the same time, it is increasingly evident that access to markets is an important factor for successful RAS. Farmers' demand for market-related information and the demand for RAS increase when the included services become oriented towards the markets.

RAS can play important roles in helping farmers to access markets through providing access to information about opportunities, prices, and risks. They can provide information about market requirements of quality and quantity as well as production advice related to the requirements. It is therefore important that the intervention relates well to the value chains and responds to existing knowledge gaps and weaknesses. It is also important that it provides the kind of services that enhance the effectiveness of participation by farmers in the value chains. The main challenge for many RAS providers is to obtain the necessary competencies and facilities to provide this type of services.

Examples of issues for M&E and possible indicators for tracking results on market orientation are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Possible M&E issues of market orientation and outcomes

Possible M&E issues	Possible outcome indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How big a proportion of the clients' produce is marketed? • How does the content of the RAS respond to market opportunities for the clients? • Are there services that facilitate access to markets for the clients? • How strong are the market relations of the client? • Do the clients receive advice through market channels? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased proportion of client's produce marketed • Changes in products based on market opportunities • Relation between market demand and RAS priorities • Existence of services to facilitate access to markets, for example, market analyses and information • Increased numbers and types of relations with market actors such as contracts or other market agreements • Increased sources of advice on markets • Client perception of benefits from the market relations • Client satisfaction of market-oriented RAS

Depending on exactly where in the AIS the RAS intervention is placed, some of the above issues may be beyond the capacity of RAS to influence, or are areas where RAS can only make a modest contribution. For example, in remote areas where lack of infrastructure limits the access of market actors or where strong cartels make the market situation unfavourable to small scale farmers.

Best-fit also involves the approaches and methods that the intervention applies for delivering the RAS. When reflecting on the monitoring data and analysing the evaluation findings, it is important to assess the **suitability** of the methods used to support the goals and objectives of the intervention towards the intended service users (target group). At the same time, it is important to assess whether the RAS providers have the right capacity and skills to master the chosen methodologies appropriately.



Suitability:

How appropriate something is for a specific requirement.

Pluralism

It is a reality today that farmers receive their information and knowledge from a broad range of actors. This is visualised in Figure 3. Any intervention in RAS needs to acknowledge and deal with this.

One challenge related to pluralism in RAS systems is to coordinate the different RAS providers, ensuring that all categories of clients, including vulnerable sections of the farming communities, have access to relevant and effective RAS. This means acknowledging and supporting different roles of different providers without crowding out relevant service providers through unfair financial support.

The other challenge is for RAS to play its roles in the innovation system. M&E should be used to track and assess how effectively the intervention contributes to strengthening knowledge sharing and developing new ideas. This will involve monitoring throughout the pluralistic network of organisations, enterprises, research institutions and individuals that work on innovating new production methods, processes and or market opportunities, particularly how well the intervention contributes to putting these in practice on farms.

It is important to recognise that most innovations benefiting small-scale male and female farmers may not be new technologies, but can just as well be new ways of adapting to market demand and changing **agro-ecological** conditions.

Table 2.4 shows the issues for M&E and possible outcome indicators related to embracing pluralism, and particularly to the contribution in the innovation system.



Agro-ecological:
Referring to ecological process that take place in agricultural production systems.

Table 2.4: Possible M&E issues of pluralism and outcomes

Issues for M&E	Possible outcome indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the intervention create opportunities for a range of service providers to engage in RAS? • Which RAS providers meet the needs and demands of different groups of farmers? • Does the intervention ensure a fair playing field – or does it crowd out some RAS providers? • Does the intervention contribute to cooperation in the innovation system? • Does the intervention facilitate innovation uptake? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers and types of RAS providers engaged in the intervention • Increased collaboration and networking between the RAS providers in the agricultural sector • Increased collaboration between RAS and other innovation system actors • Adoption levels of innovations • Farmers’ perceptions of benefiting from the innovations

Accountability

It is a principle of GFRAS to promote RAS systems and approaches that increase accountability to the users – the producers or other clientele. This is to improve both the relevance and effectiveness of the services to the clientele. However, this is not yet a common feature in RAS. RAS is often part of power structures that can block accountability. For RAS to contribute to increased accountability there must be changes in the institutional setup and procedures for delivery of the services. In particular, it needs to be accompanied by changes in the financing mechanisms.

It is a challenge for RAS to embrace these principles fully in practice. There are serious limitations, particularly for resource-poor farmers, to hold their service providers accountable. Small-scale farmers often lack capacity to articulate their demands, and if they are not well-organised, their negotiation power is weak. A condition for increased accountability is therefore that farmers are organised and that the organisations have capacity to assess their needs, set priorities, and formulate and negotiate their demands for services. There must be mechanisms for assessing the relevance and quality of the received services as well.

Efforts to increase accountability to the farmers can be monitored and evaluated using questions and indicators such as those listed in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: M&E issues of accountability and possible outcome indicators

Issues for M&E on accountability	Possible outcome indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the services responding to the demands by farmers for content and quality? • What are the methods used for increasing participation and stimulating client demand? • How do the RAS providers make their services known to the clients? • Are there financial mechanisms that ensure accountability? • Does the intervention have strategies for building the competencies that are required to meet the demand? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers perceive the services as responding to their demands • Procedures in place that incorporate the demands from farmers • Farmers represented in governance of the services • Farmers know the available RAS providers • Procedures for incorporating feedback from farmers to work plans on an ongoing basis • Strategies in place for matching the competencies of RAS providers with demands from farmers

Assessing human resources

As mentioned earlier, the market and environmental conditions for the agricultural sector have changed a lot over the last decades and continue to change rapidly. Moreover, there are huge and rapid changes in the institutional and policy environment surrounding knowledge in agriculture. This means that there are huge demands on the RAS systems and organisations to change so that it is more:

- Responsive to change;
- Demand-driven; and
- Market-oriented.

This in turn requires building new competencies of RAS organisations, managers, specialists and field staff to meet the new challenges. New skills are required to take on new roles. It is extremely challenging for the organisations to respond and upgrade the human resources at the speed that is required. Thus, one critical capacity is the capacity to adapt to change.

For RAS interventions to achieve the intended results, it is extremely important that they have access to the human resources with the skills and capabilities required to do so. The competencies of the human resources must correspond the roles and functions that the interventions are taking on.

GFRAS has identified 12 core competencies for RAS agents to better balance the competencies between technical and functional competencies. They are:

- Extension approaches and tools;
- Extension programme management;
- Professional ethics;
- Adult learning and behaviour change;
- Communication for innovation;
- Facilitation for development;
- Community mobilisation;
- Farmer institutional development;
- Value chain extension;
- Agricultural entrepreneurship;
- Gender and youth issues in agricultural extension and rural development; and
- Adaptation to change.

Not all agents need all these competencies to support their organisations or interventions. But it is important to assess the requirements and gaps in relation to the functions and roles that are intended for the intervention as defined in the theory of change. Monitoring and evaluation needs to track the progress of

the strategies for building the missing competencies and capacities. In some cases, it may also be a matter of assessing the feasibility of the theory of change.

It is important to remember that the demands and needs for competencies will continue to change over time. An RAS intervention therefore needs to consider how the tracking of needed competencies and strategies for developing these can be a continuous process. This means that monitoring must be able to track changes in needed competencies and feed this information to facilities such as training and educational institutions that can respond to this.

There are a number of possible issues for M&E and outcome indicators for assessing human resources. These are shown in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Possible issues of human resources and outcomes

Possible issues for M&E	Possible outcome indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills and competencies do the implementation of the intervention require, and are there human resources available to match the requirements? • What are the gaps in skills and competencies? • What are the strategies to address the gaps? • How effectively are the strategies in addressing the gaps? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required skills and competencies developed as planned • Staff perception of having the required skills to perform their functions • Developed skills and competencies match client demands and priorities • Relationships with relevant training and educational institutions

To assess the feasibility of the theory of change, ask yourself: is it realistic given the available human resources?



Sustainability

Sustainability is always difficult to monitor and evaluate. Many drastic changes can happen to a system; in particular, to the institutional, policy, and economic environments. In response, systems either adapt or fall apart. The changes are often unpredictable and the assessment of the robustness of the system to survive unforeseen changes will always, to some extent, be based on subjective judgement. GFRAS has recently seen RAS reform processes collapse as they have lost national policy support due to unforeseen political changes or breakdown of extension systems due to armed conflict (for example, the breakdown of agricultural extension in Syria).

The president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, dissolved the National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS) in 2014, citing non-performance and mismanagement of funds. This is an illustration of how difficult it can be to sustain RAS.



As mentioned previously, the sustainability of RAS will particularly depend on three factors:

- Adaptability to changes;
- Ownership; and
- Financial sustainability.

The adaptability of RAS interventions to changes should be monitored and evaluated based on the existence and effectiveness of institutional structures and capacities that can analyse, change, and provide valid recommendations such as policy, economy, and market research or weather forecasts. This must include established mechanisms for responding to the changes.

Monitoring and evaluating ownership can assess the level of ownership with the different stakeholders, whether it is by the RAS providers or the rural communities. Assessing ownership means assessing the engagement in and integration of approaches, advice, and results at the different levels: users,

field level RAS providers, RAS management, policy decisions, and funding agencies. It also requires the assessment of the development of attitudes and behaviour related to taking responsibility for decision making and success of the system.

Financial sustainability is particularly challenging to monitor and evaluate, as reliability of funding from governments and or development agencies and even the private sector can be unpredictable. However, the best possible indicator is coherence with the overall development policies and strategies as well as a good reputation for the documentation of valid results. Experience, however, shows that in the case of politically changed agendas, what is policy coherence today may be something completely different tomorrow.

A high degree of self-financing obviously adds a lot to sustainability. That is why RAS organisations such as producer cooperatives or private companies delivering RAS embedded in contracts or out-grower schemes are often the most sustainable in financial terms.

Table 2.7 lists the M&E issues related to sustainability and the indicators of possible outcomes.

Table 2.7: M&E issues of sustainability and possible outcome indicators

Possible issues for M&E	Possible outcome indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions include mechanisms to analyse change • Collaboration and mechanisms for responding to changes • Ownership exhibited at level of users • Ownership exhibited at level of field level agents • Ownership exhibited at level of management • Ownership exhibited at level of policy and funding • How reliable is the financing of the intervention? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with units/facilities for weather forecasts, policy, and market research • Number of analyses carried out • Examples of responses to changes based on above research • Users participating in decision making • Users adopting and adapting advice and promoted technologies • Promoted approaches and methodologies are applied • New approaches integrated into management systems and evaluation of staff performance • Coherence of RAS policies and approaches with overall development policy • RAS intervention produces valid and satisfactory results • Level of self-financing • Willingness of farmers to contribute to payment for services • Political commitment to the intervention expressed and demonstrated by financial sources

Monitoring and evaluating impact

The above sections have mostly discussed monitoring and evaluation of outcomes of RAS, which are changes that can credibly be attributed to the RAS interventions. As you have previously learnt, impacts are often long-term effects. As previously mentioned, impact studies are therefore mostly undertaken post-project, either in the last part of the intervention or after it has been completed.

For many reasons, however, it can be valuable to monitor changes in impact factors such as, for example, incomes, production, productivity, food security, nutritional status, environmental impact from agriculture, or empowerment. Such information and tracking of changes can be extremely valuable for RAS planning as well as for policy decisions and advocacy regarding policy development. Some interventions can make very good use of such monitoring.

There are, however, considerable costs related to monitoring impact factors in a manner that generates credible information. Moreover, it may be difficult to attribute changes (positive or negative) directly to RAS because RAS operate in open systems, where a multitude of factors such as policy environment, regulation, markets, prices, infrastructure, and social and cultural norms influence the impact on the desired results.

For an impact evaluation of RAS, it will therefore often be most realistic to investigate stakeholders' perception of its contributions to impact. In this case it is important to be aware of the different biases that different stakeholders hold in their perceptions.

How RAS challenges affect M&E methods and approaches

The main challenge of monitoring and evaluating RAS is the complexity of the systems in which the RAS operate:

- The multitude of actors in the RAS and even in the AIS systems that often overlap in contributions to the results or may have conflicting roles and interests;

- The non-linear impact paths for knowledge and capacity building systems, where the intended changes often happen at different paces, with some requiring feedback loops with further or combined activities to actually happen; and
- The fact that it operates in open systems makes attribution very challenging. This means that other external factors can affect the results chain, such as changing policies, market changes, volatility of prices, insecurity, conflicts, macroeconomic changes, and so on.

The complexity should not be a factor to hide behind to avoid effective results management. On the contrary, it should be the role of the RBM and its M&E to unpack the complexity. This must be done by applying methods that suit the purpose as defined by the primary users, the stakeholders, and the kinds of changes that the intervention wants to achieve.

The last part, setting the goals of the changes that the intervention should achieve, is often a major challenge. There are several myths around what RAS can actually achieve, which often lead to over optimistic and unrealistic expectations of what to expect from an intervention that provides information to farmers. Such expectations can come from financiers of the services, which put some pressure on the implementers, or they can come directly from RAS providers overly eager to “sell” their intervention to donors or convince policymakers of the importance of RAS. It is therefore very important that the intended results are developed in an approach where stakeholders from field levels have a strong voice.

Suitable methods explore relationships and capacities within networks and multi-stakeholder perspectives.

The website: www.betterevaluation.org is a platform that provides useful methods and tools for different kinds of M&E and can assist you in choosing what will be useful in a particular case.



Examples of approaches increasingly used in M&E that seek to explore outcomes such as institutional relations and capacities are discussed below.

Outcome mapping

Can be used to identify RAS contribution to changes in behaviour and relationships between different actors and organisations, rather than monitoring and evaluating a programme's "tangible" products (such as increased productivity).

Theory of change evaluation

When a programme theory is developed during the planning stages of the intervention, the evaluation will review the programme theory and revise or elaborate it if necessary. The evaluation will seek to establish not only the results but also the precise link between activities and the achievement of the long-term goals (outcomes and impact).

Most significant change

Collects and assesses stories by stakeholders about the changes of most significance to them. The technique is used for both monitoring and evaluating purposes and helps focus stakeholders on impact.

Appreciative enquiry

A related set of methods for monitoring and evaluating interventions that is well suited for organisational learning purpose. It focuses on what worked, why and how in order to take these best practices forward by building consensus for change among the participants in the M&E.

Rapid appraisal of agricultural knowledge systems (RAAKS)

A **methodology** designed to:

- Explore the networks and relationships between stakeholders within the innovation system;
- Examine problems from multiple and alternative perspectives; and
- Promote joint learning.



Methodology:

A set of methods used in a specific way to study something or perform an activity.

Goal-free evaluation

A less common approach that may in some cases suit extension goals. It evaluates the effect-in-practice of the intervention on clients, irrespective of the intervention's planned results.

Development evaluation

An approach particularly oriented to evaluating an intervention's ability to design for and respond to a volatile context and emerging needs. It may be appropriate for M&E with a strong learning focus and a commitment to on-going development, where the monitor/evaluator is involved throughout the life of an intervention.



Complete Activity 2.3 in your workbook.

Concluding remarks

In this study unit you have learnt that RBM is a management strategy by which all actors, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of results, ensure that their processes, products, and services contribute to achievement of desired results (outputs, outcomes, and higher-level goals or impact). RBM involves three basic steps: planning, monitoring and evaluation. You also learnt that it is important to define results of RBM by using outcomes, outputs, and impact. RBM involves monitoring: a continuous process of collecting and analysing information to compare how well an intervention is being implemented against the intended results. Remember that monitoring is a management responsibility even though it involves stakeholders.

Monitoring works together with evaluation which is the systematic and objective assessment of a given system or intervention. It determines whether an intervention is relevant, effective, efficient, impactful, and sustainable. It is important for you to monitor and evaluate the following factors to improve an RAS intervention: best-fit approaches, pluralism, accountability, human resources, and sustainability.



Complete the summative assessment in your workbook.

Glossary

Definitions

Word	Definition
Accountability	When people have a responsibility to something and there is a process to make sure they fulfil their responsibilities.
Adaptability	The ease with which something can change or adjust in response to new conditions.
Agri-business	Businesses involved in agriculture.
Agriculture	The study and practice of farming and cultivation and ways to improve them.
Brokerage	When the selling or buying of assets is arranged.
Capacity	The ability to do something.
Certification	The act of issuing a certificate for something so that it is officially recognised in specific respects.
Cooperative	An organisation that is jointly owned.
Embedded	Existing within or between something.
Innovation	The process of making changes that improve a system.
Intervention	The process of changing the way something works in order to improve it towards a particular goal.
Financier	Someone who provide funds for a project or organisation or manages these funds for an organisation.

Word	Definition
Food security	When there is enough food for a group of people.
Mediation	The process of producing agreement between two things or parties.
Phytosanitary	Relating to plants in terms of international trade.
Policy	A set of principles and rules aimed at affecting the way a system, programme or organisation is run.
Precondition	A requirement that must be met before something can proceed or be possible.
Private sector	The section of society that consists of businesses and other organisations that are run on non-public money.
Public sector	The government and related sections of society where public funds are used.
Resilience	The ability to recover after the performance or quality of something was diminished.
Stakeholder	Someone who has a concern or interest in a project or organisation in terms of an investment or other forms.
Suitability	How appropriate something is for a specific requirement.
Sustainable	Can continue to perform or be produced given the resources it uses up.
Vendor	An organisation that provides a product or service.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
AIS	Agricultural innovation systems
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RAAKS	Rapid appraisal of agricultural knowledge systems
RAS	Rural advisory services
RBM	Results-based management
UNDG	United Nations Development Group

Resources

The following resources were used in writing this manual:

- GFRAS (2010). Five Key Areas for Mobilising the Potential of Rural Advisory Services. GFRAS Brief.
- The World Bank (2006). Enhancing agricultural Innovation: How to go beyond the Strengthening of Research Systems. World Bank, Washington, DC.
- United Nations Development Group (2011). Result-Based Management Handbook. United Nations Development Group.
- UNDP (2009). Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results.
- GFRAS Guide to Evaluating Rural Extension (2012)
- Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services; 2015; Producer Organisations in Rural Advisory Services; Evidence and Experiences; Position Paper February 2015; GFRAS
- The World Bank (2012). Agricultural Innovation Systems: An Investment Sourcebook. The World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Christoplos et al. (2012). Guide to evaluating rural extension; GFRAS
- OECD/DAC (2010). Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management
 - Martin, A. and Essie Apenteng (2011). Review of literature on Evaluation, Methods Relevant to Extension.
 - GFRAS and Pound, B. et al. (2011). Meta-Evaluation of Extension Evaluation. GFRAS.
 - Davis, K. (2015). The New Extensionist: Core Competencies for Individuals. GFRAS Brief 3.
 - Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
 - <http://www.statehouse.go.ug/media/news/2014/05/26/president-directs-cabinet-dissolve-naads-over-non-performance>

Other modules of the New Extensionist modules are:

1. Introduction to the New Extensionist
2. Extension Methods and Tools
3. Extension Programme Management
4. Professional Ethics
5. Adult Education for Behavioural Change
6. Knowledge Management for RAS
7. Introduction to Facilitation for Development
8. Community Mobilisation
9. Farmer Organisational Development
10. The Role of Extension in Supporting Value Chains
11. Agricultural Entrepreneurship
12. Gender in Extension and Advisory Services
13. Risk Mitigation and Adaptation

Other related modules developed by GFRAS are on:

- **Evaluation of Extension Programmes**
- Policy Advocacy for RAS