

Report on the fifth Meeting of the Swiss Forum on Rural Advisory Services (SFRAS)

Syngenta Foundation, Schwarzwaldallee 215, 4058 Basel
Monday, 19. November 2012, 13:30 – 16:45

Topic: The specific role of the private sector in pluralistic RAS systems

The Swiss Forum on Rural Advisory Services (SFRAS) is an informal group of experts from Swiss development, research, education and private sector organisations, who are all involved in Rural Advisory Services (RAS) in developing countries. This includes Swiss NGOs, academic institutions, private sector and other participants like GFRAS and SDC (the participant list is in the annex). The SFRAS “enables peer-exchange of information and ideas, dissemination of studies and publications and interaction with GFRAS.

After four SFRAS-meetings on mapping and sharing of different approaches in RAS, shaping of SFRAS (objectives, modalities, etc.), measuring impact of RAS activities and on RAS and M4P approach, this 5th meeting focused on the specific role of the private sector in pluralistic RAS systems.

More information on SFRAS and its earlier meetings can be found on the Agriculture + Food Security (A+FS) Network website of SDC:

http://www.sdc-foodsecurity.ch/en/Home/Focus_areas/Rural_advisory_services/SFRAS

Programme

| Time | Theme | Presenter |
|-------|--|--|
| 13.30 | Welcome Meeting overview and introduction | <i>Robert Berlin & Marylaure Crettaz</i> <i>Paul Castle, all participants</i> |
| 13.50 | Syngenta Foundation: extension conference Beijing 2012. | <i>Yuan Zhou</i> |
| 14.15 | A+FS Network: RAS/M4P synthesis of F2F and e-discussions | <i>Peter Schmidt</i> |
| 14.40 | Sustainable intensification of cocoa production in Western Africa. | <i>Bruce McKenzie</i> |
| 15.00 | Break | |
| 15.30 | Questionnaire on private agricultural extension: participant input | <i>Yuan Zhou</i> |
| 15.50 | Info Fair at poster stands - GFRAS annual assembly Manila, SFRAS members' news, etc. | <i>All</i> |
| 16.30 | Meeting summary and topic for next meeting | <i>SDC/SFSA</i> <i>All</i> |
| 16.45 | Closing | |

Extension conference Beijing 2012 on “the Role of the Private Sector and ICT in Agricultural Extension: Learnings and Trends from Asia” by Yuan Zhou of Syngenta Foundation

The goal of the conference in Beijing was to discuss what has and what has not worked in agricultural extension in Asia, and how to strengthen extension for sustainable agricultural intensification and enhanced farmers' participation in value chains. The conference showed that due to limited coverage of public extension work in parts of Asia, private sector steps in. The private sector provides mostly services related to input supply and output marketing. As the private sector covers mostly well accessed regions for rentability reasons, public extension services on the other side should, according to the Beijing Roundtable and the Syngenta Foundation, complement the offer and cover rural areas and smallholder farmers.

A pluralistic set of actors in given settings as well as their collaboration is needed to get extension right and to reach all categories of farmers. Other success factors of extension work are: farmers' participation, appropriate services and delivery models trust between service providers and farmers, value addition of the services to reach a win-win situation and mutual accountability.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is getting an increasingly importance in extension. ICT allows outreaching many farmers, and has the potential to revolutionize the linkages and transactions between farmers and service providers. Future development in ICT could allow breakdown generic messages to customised advice, integration of technologies and information towards location-based data and covering the whole supply chain. Although, it will be still important to have interactions with farmers, further use of ICT, in particular internet but also television and radio, is crucial to reach as many farmers as possible.

Syngenta Foundation introduced the initiative farmforce, which aims at including all actors of the value chain, as well as RAS-actors into one ICT-system. The goal is, besides others, to reduce transaction costs and time and increase traceability, efficiency and effectiveness to improve the exchange between the different actors.

Discussions came up if RAS functions better in centralized or decentralized structures. Syngenta Foundation had experience with de-centralized structures (e.g. in Indonesia), where regional agricultural departments have uneven resources and in many cases lack financial resources to carry out extension activities.. On the other hand, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation made better experience (in Vietnam) working with local governmental structures.

[Presentation by Yuan Zhou: The Role of the Private Sector and ICT in Agricultural Extension: Learnings and Trends from Asia >>](#)

More information: <http://www.syngentafoundation.org/index.cfm?pageID=734>

Synthesis paper of the joint e-discussion of the A+FS and e+i networks in June 2012

The paper is a synthesis of the joint e-discussion in June 2012 of the two thematic networks of SDC – A+FS and employment and income (e+i) – on RAS and Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P). It builds on a joint session of both networks in May 2012 during the face-to-face event of the A+FS network in Switzerland.

The e-discussion included more than 120 emails from 49 practitioners from around 18 countries. After the face-to-face, the e-discussion and the synthesis paper, it is now the hope for action, e.g. validation of guiding questions or having document learning.

[Presentation by Peter Schmidt: M4P and RAS - Synthesis of an e-discussion in June 2012 >>](#)

More information on the results can be obtained in the synthesis paper at: http://www.sdc-foodsecurity.ch/en/Home/Focus_areas/Rural_advisory_services

If you want to get member of the A+FS Network just write to gpfs@deza.admin.ch

Sustainable intensification of cocoa production in Western Africa – CAMCOA 300 programme, Syngenta

State involvement in RAS for the cocoa sector in Cameroon is very limited. In this context, Syngenta is implementing the CAMCOA 300 project. The goal is to increase yields of cocoa farmers from today's average 350 kg/ha to 1'000 kg/ha. To achieve that, Syngenta provides better inputs, pesticides - pest are responsible for high yield lost - improved cocoa varieties and provides improved access to credit for farmers. There are also on-farm demonstration sites. To upscale the programme, Syngenta is also interested in cooperation with NGOs and donor organisations.

The discussion highlighted different approaches: the Syngenta's approach of promoting advisory services while selling their own products and the Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation approach providing RAS through the premium received by organic production projects.

[Presentation by Bruce McKenzie: Sustainable Intensification of Cocoa Production through Partnerships >>](#)

Syngenta Foundation study on private agricultural extension: participant input

The role of private sector in extension work is often not well understood, although its position is gaining increasingly in importance. To get a better understanding of the role of and know the expectation towards the private sector in RAS, as well as to know where further research is needed; the Syngenta Foundation is planning a study on this topic and had sent a questionnaire to the SFRAS-members. The results of the questionnaire can be seen in the following PP-presentation:

[Survey on the private sector's role in RAS >>](#)

Info Fair at poster stands – GFRAS 3rd annual assembly in Manila

Dorothee Loetscher from [GFRAS](#) presented results of its 3rd annual meeting in Manila (25. – 29. September 2012) on “The Role of Rural Advisory Services in Agricultural Innovation Systems” (see poster attached). Main outputs of the meeting were:

- Participants elaborated a shared position on the role of RAS in AIS that highlight facilitation, fostering joint learning, alliance building, and empowerment and capacity strengthening of farmers, not neglecting technical tasks. In order to play this role, RAS need action from all AIS actors.
- Regional RAS networks used the space to exchange on experiences in results-oriented networking and discussed their future development. A range of activities are planned in 2013 on regional level.
- Participants from all over the world discussed ongoing and planned GFRAS activities.

In 2013, GFRAS focus will be on capacity strengthening in RAS, documenting good practices, evaluating RAS reform efforts, and developing a knowledge sharing platform on gender. Networking and experience sharing is an ongoing GFRAS activity that includes backstopping to existing or new regional networks. The 4th GFRAS Annual Meeting will take place on 23.-27. September in Germany. GFRAS will inform SFRAS on the selected topic. SFRAS intends to contribute with an own side-event.

[GFRAS Poster >>](#)

Other SFRAS members' information

- CDE publications :
 - o [Quand les greniers se remplissent](#) – Les bénéfices du partenariat entre la recherche agronomique, la vulgarisation agricole et des organisations paysannes au Mali
 - o [Mapping and Geoprocessing Tools in Support of Rural Advisory Systems](#)
- Swisscontact publication on the cocoa value chain:

[Cocoa Value Chain Development >>](#)

Next meeting of SFRAS

The next meeting of SFRAS will be hosted by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation in April 2013. The main objective of the meeting will be to prepare a common input for the 4th annual GFRAS-meeting, taking place in Bonn from the 23. – 27. September 2013.

HIRMI/21.12.2012

Annex: Participant List

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|-------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--|
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