



MEMO

Date and Time Lausanne, 13.5.2015
Subject Minutes of the SFRAS Meeting
Originator Peter Schmidt
Recipients Participants

10:00	Opening & Programme	Peter Schmidt
10:05	Welcome	Ulrich Ryser, Director of Agridea
10:10	Rural Advisory Services in Switzerland: development, experiences and future. What can we learn for rural advisory services in a development context? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genesis of agricultural extension in Switzerland• Turning points in the evolution of RAS in Switzerland• Swiss agrarian policy and its influence on extension• The Swiss extension system today: roles and responsibilities• Outlook: importance and challenges	Ulrich Ryser, Director of Agridea / Anton Stöckli., Federal Office for Agriculture
11:10	Coffee Break	
11:30	“The Hanoi Statement on Rural Advisory Services Systems” <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A synthesis of the SDC Face-to-Face Workshop “Reaching the Millions”, 2 – 7 March 2015	Stefanie Kägi, HELLETAS Swiss Intercooperation
12:00	News from members <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please report about recent or forthcoming events, publications, projects, initiatives related to RAS	All
12:30	Light Lunch	Offered by Agridea (Thanks!)

Minutes

1. Opening and Programme

Peter Schmidt, HELLETAS Swiss Intercooperation welcomes the 18 participants and presents the day's programme.

2. RAS in Switzerland: What can we learn for RAS in a development context?

Ulrich Ryser, Director of Agridea and Anton Stöckli, Federal Office of Agriculture, jointly present the evolution of RAS in Switzerland. They reflect on the development of the RAS system over a period

of 60 years, on the demand on RAS, on the self-conception of the RAS providers and on the organisational structure (see picture below and the presentation of Anton Stöckli).

Thereby Agridea played a key role. Agridea was created in 1958 following a typical Swiss federal vision. While agricultural research was a central government affair the cantons preferred for extension a decentralised system. In the French speaking part of Switzerland it were farmer organisations that provided agricultural advice to farmers. In the German speaking part extension was generally linked to the agricultural vocational schools. In this situation the cantons decided to form Agridea to support the cantonal extension services. The federal administration was ready to bear 90% of the costs. Today Agridea is an association with 40 members (cantons, other organisations from the rural area); in three locations in the German, French and Italian speaking part of Switzerland, 150 employees, 19 Mio CHF annual turnover whereas 50% of the budget still stems from the federal administration. Nowadays Agridea is the hub to link agricultural research, extension and farmers. It does so through five products: 1) extension methods, 2) training for advisors, 3) provision of information (e.g. print products), 4) consulting and 5) platforms.



The two presenters draw the following learnings for RAS in a development context:

- RAS must follow the development of the context.
- Small farmers need public support, even in a country such as Switzerland.
- Payment for services changes the relation between farmers and advisors, e.g. with regard to expectations and performance.
- Different forms of organisations are possible even in one system.
- Existing organisational structures at times prevent the system to adapt to a changing context.
- Providing advice is a matter of persons, relations and trust.

The animated discussion turns around the following issues:

- Consequences of the structural adjustment process in agriculture on the extension system
- The balance between generalist advisors and specialist advisors
- The balance between publicly funded and private extension provision
- The role of Swiss agricultural policies (subsidies and sanctions) for the evolution of Swiss agriculture and their influence on the extension system
- The long-term evolution of the extension system (while in development cooperation changes are expected to happen within few years)
- The role of the private sector in agricultural extension in Switzerland.

The participants draw three main conclusions for agricultural extension systems in a development context:

1. Even in an industrialised country such as Switzerland agricultural extension is substantially **subsidised** and therefore funded from public funds (in particular for matters in the public interest).
2. Extension systems constantly **evolve**. Involved organisations need to adapt to the changing context.
3. Even in such a small country such as Switzerland there is not one extension system but a **diversity** of different systems with different organisational solutions to provide advice to the rural community.

3. The Hanoi Statement on Rural Advisory Services

Stefanie Kägi, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation presents the „The Hanoi Statement on Rural Advisory Service Systems: "Reaching the millions" with rural advisory services in a poverty oriented, ecological and sustainable way"; A synthesis of the SDC Face to Face Workshop on Rural Advisory Services (RAS) "Reaching the Millions", 2-7 March 2015, Hanoi, Vietnam, which was endorsed by 68 RAS experts and practitioners that participated at the "Reaching the Millions" workshop.

The Hanoi Statement and the underlying studies are available at:

<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Agriculture-and-Food-Security/focus-areas-overview/ras-and-agricultural-education>.

4. News from members

1. Monique Frey, Caritas: For the year of family farms Caritas has published articles in which they present ten family farms from around the world. The publications are available in print format at Caritas, e.g. "Portraits of Family Farms with berries. Bosnia and Herzegovina. Caritas Schweiz. National Union of Berry Producers in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
2. Robert Berlin, Syngenta Foundation: IFPRI and Syngenta are about to publish a book on the role of the private sector in agricultural extension. It will be available at:

<https://www.elsevier.com/books/knowledge-driven-development/babu/978-0-12-802231-3>

Robert is happy to share a copy with SFRAS members once the book is out in June / July 2015.

3. SDC / Helvetas:
 - a. The Hanoi statement and studies to capitalise experiences in SDC financed RAS projects are published here:
<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Agriculture-and-Food-Security/focusareas/Pages/RAS-and-agricultural-education.aspx#key>
4. Alexandra Carter, GFRAS:
 - a. Publication of a GFRAS paper on Producer Organisations: *Producer Organisations in Rural Advisory Services. Evidence and Experiences.*
<http://www.g-fras.org/en/knowledge/gfras-publications.html>
 - b. GFRAS Annual Meeting takes place from 14-18 September 2015 in Kyrgyzstan. Call for inputs and information about registration is available here:
<http://www.g-fras.org/en/events/gfras-events/annual-meeting-kyrgyzstan-2015.html>
 - c. Extended call for Global Good Practice Notes is ongoing. Information here:
<http://www.g-fras.org/en/ggp-home.html>

5. Next SFRAS meeting:

1. HEKS (Martin Schmid) offers to host the next SFRAS meeting
2. Location: HEKS office in Zurich
3. Timing: November 2015, Martin and Peter will open a doodle to set the date (November 5th or 12th, 2015)
4. Proposed topics:
 - a. Commodities and RAS: What does the growing commodity market and its production mean for RAS?
Comments of participants: M4P for RAS has already been discussed, this subject would focus on global commodity value chains
 - b. Result measurement in RAS
Comment of participants has already been discussed in earlier meetings

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- c. Strengthen voice of farmers in RAS / Human Rights Approach in RAS: What does it mean for RAS? What experiences do we have?
Feedback of participants: Positive, HEKS could provide expertise
 - d. How to organise farmers? What are other organisational forms than cooperatives?
Comments: Link with GFRAS position paper on Farmer Organisation
 - e. Linking RAS with other actors and business models around advisory services: Opportunities and experiences.
 - f. Reporting back from GFRAS annual meeting

22.05.2015 / PSC