

Decentralization process in the A+FS Network to improve the relevance of our work

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“Networking is not about just connecting people. It's about connecting people with people, people with ideas, and people with opportunities.”

Michele Jennae

Last year (2018), the A+FS Network released the [annual monitoring survey](#) to all members in order to understand what is appreciated and what can be improved in the Network. More than 25% of the A+FS members (<100 members) answered to the survey. A majority said that the Network improves their individual work, with participants stating that they still learn and improve their work mainly by reading *Shareweb*-posts and mails, and increasingly when they participate to thematic webinars. For most of them however, the network remains a **“take”** rather than a **“give and take”** network.

In addition, what came out of the consultation phase (essentially from SDC members of the network and their management) is that interactive events will only produce tangible added-value to SDC interventions if they focus on regional or country specific challenges. Therefore, during the past months, the A+FS focal point with the support from the A+FS core group ([see meeting documents](#)), have been working on this feedback and have been asking themselves the following questions:

- **As a global network, how can we ensure to share information that remains relevant at a more regional level?**
- **How to transform the Network from a “take” platform to a “give & take” platform, where participants actively exchange within Network?**
- **How can we offer tailor-made support for our local partners?**

As a consequence of the new decentralization strategy, the A+FS focal point team has developed new tools and approaches. Most of them are currently being implemented.



1. Tailor-made support all along the PCM cycle (EP, CP)

The Focal Point Team will propose its support to NPOs during the entire cycle of project management, which means support during the creation phase of a new credit proposal or when steering a program. However, for this support to be relevant, it is important that the focal point team is consulted early enough in the process (such as during the first stages of a new credit proposal/brainstorming phase). This would allow them to identify topical experts that could review a document.

For this tailor-made PCM support to function, we would like to ask for the support of the **core group members** and the **desk-officers**. Indeed, we believe they could play a major role by encouraging their NPOs to pro-actively contact the focal point team.



2. From webinars to tailor-made e-Workshops

Webinars are a great tool to offer knowledge to a community of practice that is spread around the globe. However, it remains a passive tool, leaving few spaces for interactions with the participants. Therefore, the focal point team decided to transform these webinars to “e-Workshops” where participants are asked to make an online-exercise, with the support of an expert. Two main e-workshops are under preparation.

The **first e-Workshop** will consist of a workshop on **Climate Resilient Agriculture**, which has been identified as a priority topic by many A+FS members. In preparation of the workshop, participants will apply [CEDRIG light](#) on a project or program in their portfolio that they want to render more climate resilient. During the workshop, an expert, will be able to go through one or two of the examples of CEDRIG light and comment how the participants carried out the exercise.

The **second e-Workshop** will require feedback by the regional divisions, in order to identify a challenge in the country or the region and to ask an expert to provide inputs on the topic. We hope these “**regional identified priority**” e-Workshops will allow us to answer as much as possible to the needs of all geographic divisions.



3. Promote NPO Peer reviews – YOU are the experts!

Would you like to travel to another country in the world to provide support and expertise to a colleague of yours? That is something we would like to promote in our community of practice, as we believe that **Face to Face (F2F)** exchanges are vital to maintain a sense of ‘community’ and that even though contexts are very different around the world, some approaches can be translated from A to B. To get inspired, please watch this [video-interview](#) with Jose Luis Pereira, an NPO in Bolivia, who travelled to Benin to support a colleague.



4. Participatory content generation for identified topics of interest

The participatory editing of new content for the sub-pages of the Shareweb is also part of a strategy to better involve members in the entire knowledge generation of the platform. Currently, there is a consultation process that is conducted in order to generate new content pages, on three topics identified as priority topics: **Climate Resilient Agriculture, Agroecology & Youth in Agriculture**

These new sub-pages are being worked on by the focal point team and will be soon published on the Shareweb. So, keep your eyes open and thanks again to those who commented the article!



5. SDC MAP to promote regional exchanges

On the homepage of the A+FS Shareweb, you will see that a [new map](#) has been added. The rationale behind the map is that you may want to know which programs take place in a country sharing similar vegetation/soil/rainfall conditions as yours. Therefore, rather than searching for a topic on the SDC project database, you can directly click on a country to see all related A+FS programs.

Finally, what are the next steps this year for the A+FS network?

Every two or three years, the A+FS networks tries to organize a global F2F meeting. This type of events is expensive and not very climate-friendly. However, last years' monitoring survey highlighted that many A+FS members appreciated to connect with other people, and therefore, organizing F2F meetings remains important. The focal point team is seeking to organize a F2F in 2020, nevertheless many points are still open for discussion. Concerning the topic, we have asked the A+FS members who participated to our [learning journey on Climate Resilient Agriculture](#) in March 2019, which topics would interest them for the next F2F. Three main topics were highlighted:

- A) *Transformation of Food systems*
- B) *Climate resilient agriculture*
- C) *Markets and urbanization*

What do you think? What are your desires concerning the topics to be discussed during the next A+FS F2F meeting? Your feedback is gold for us, as we cannot tackle a decentralization process without an increased involvement from your side. If you have any comments or ideas, please send them in English, French or Spanish to: melanie.surchat@eda.admin.ch. And otherwise, please consider taking the time to answer **this years' monitoring survey** that we will send you in a couple of weeks. We are really thankful to all of you who invest in making us a stronger network.

Your A+FS Focal point team

"Instead of better glasses, your network gives you better eyes."
Ronald Burt