

A+FS Network Newsletter 12/2013

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Dear Agriculture & Food Security Network members

Please find below our autumn edition of the A+FS Newsletter. This Newsletter sets a focus on Rural Advisory Services and presents our latest news on food security and nutrition.

Simon Weidmann is our new person for the Newsletter. He will be happy to receive any comment and suggestion you might have. We very much appreciate all recommendations concerning this Newsletter and the functioning of the Network in general. Your feedbacks will help us to improve the Newsletter and to make learning more effective.

With Best Wishes

Felix Fellmann & Simon Weidmann

Feature

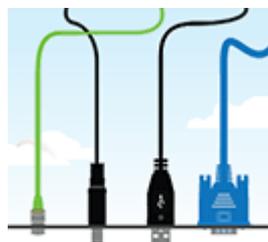
Rural Advisory Services

One of the first documented extension or advisory services was set up in China 2000 years ago, where practical knowledge and advice on subjects such as crop rotation and drainage was provided from officials to farmers (1).

Since that time a lot has changed and although advisory services are still mainly provided from person to person, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have changed the pace in this area. Relevant information can, for example, be transmitted through radio everywhere in almost no time. With cellular phones and the internet information is no longer flowing in one direction from the extensionist to the farmer. These technologies have made it possible for the farmer to interact with the extensionist in a dialogue.

(1) Trager, J. (1996) The Food Chronology, Aurum Press, London

Focus Area: Rural Advisory Services



ICT for Agriculture

The ICT4ag conference, longed for by many, and attended by over 400 coming from 65 countries took place early November in Kigali. **The combination of three streams "Emerging Innovations", "Strengthening Capacities", and "Enabling Environments" was a promise** for an eclectic mix of contributions as well as a balanced view on the real contribution of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to rural development.

Indeed, some conclusions were rather bleak: Success stories, in which ICTs play a clear and lasting role in

pushing agricultural development, are scarce. A lot of elaborated tools and schemes are being tested however, particularly with the mobile phone, whose accessibility in rural areas beats other tools by far. To truly reach farmers however, realistic approaches need to be tested first, voice messages and SMS for example, instead of complex internet-net based information platforms. And as the plenary on extension and advisory services hosted by the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) underlined: **The more complex the message, the more important the human factor in knowledge management.**

In other words, the contact between people cannot be replaced entirely by technology: This is a clear vote for all the services which cover the "last mile" and support and connect the smallholder to inputs, markets and agricultural knowledge. With regards to sustainability, one risk was mentioned repeatedly: The observed rush of development projects to reach the users (farmers) directly, bypassing organisations and institutions in place. There is no way around working on existing environments and on strengthening capacities if a new ICT tool is truly meant to make a lasting difference on the livelihood of smallholders.

[Summary of the GFRAS plenary session "ICT impact on farming" >>](#)



GFRAS Annual Meeting

The 4th Annual Meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) took place on 23-26 September in Berlin, Germany. A founding meeting of the European Forum of Farm and Rural Advisory Services (EUFRAS) took place.

Plenty of relevant material such as presentations slides, video recordings of the speeches and notes on different topics can be found on the [conferences website](#).

Focus Area: Postharvest Losses



PHM Subgroup Meeting in Addis

This first meeting of the Post Harvest Management (PHM) subgroup of the A+FS Network allowed the different project implementers and selected PHM experts to meet and exchange. At the technical level the discussion on the best option for hermetic storage was predominant – this of course linked to the concern on the use of fumigation chemicals with potentially adverse health effects that would not be necessary in hermetic storage conditions.

Other topics included the importance of a favourable policy and regulatory framework for the reduction of Post Harvest Loss. Only if farmers benefit economically or in terms of food security they will use improved PHM technologies! All presentations and discussions during the workshop as well as a detailed work plan of the PHM subgroup for 2014 are accessible on the [PHM Meeting Blog](#).

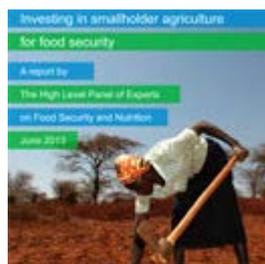
Global Programme Food Security



SDC on innovation in agriculture

How do we meet the challenges of growing population with agricultural research and Rural Advisory Services? "Innovation can occur at all stages of agricultural activity as a result of the interaction between different actors, for instance at the research stage or between farmers themselves, or among the wide network of players in-between that have come to be known as rural advisory services."

[The Global Brief – Innovation in Agriculture: An important tool for tackling poverty >>](#)



CSE on investing in smallholder agriculture

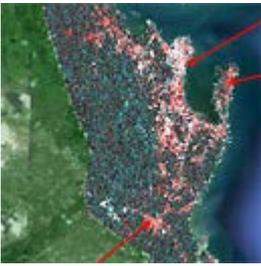
Built on information shared during summer 2013 on the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) report (see [Newsletter 09/2013](#)), we are pleased to share with you the recommendations endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) at its 40th session (7-11 October 2013). The first document explains the related context and process, the second contains the said recommendations (pages 5-8).

[Context and process >>](#)

[Report of the 40th session of the Committee on World Food Security >>](#)

[Website of the Committee on World Food Security >>](#)

RIICE project helps assess Haiyan damage



Remote sensing-based Information and Insurance for Crops in Emerging economies ("RIICE") is a public-private partnership aiming to reduce the vulnerability of rice smallholder farmers in low-income countries in Asia and beyond. Growth maps help stakeholders involved in rice production in better managing the risks.

RIICE has also proved to be quick in helping the mapping of flooded areas in the current Philippines situation (Haiyan). Most of all it has helped to analyse damage of rice fields.

[Preliminary technical information by RIICE on Haiyan damages >>](#)

[IRRI: Post-typhoon rice damage assessed in Philippines>>](#)

[Website of RIICE >>](#)

Regional Issues



Fishing | Fertilizer Trees | Aflotoxins

Working with the European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD), the SDC has financed 20 case studies on the impact of agricultural research in developing countries. Three of these have been turned into short films: on awarding fishing concessions to local fishing communities in Cambodia; on successful spread of fertilizer tree cultivation; and on natural methods to combat lethal fungal toxins (aflatoxins) in Africa.

[Three short films on projects supported by the SDC in Cambodia and Africa >>](#)

Who is Who?

Some of the A+FS Network members are probably familiar to you, others are not.

In order to give a face to the names on the members list, every Newsletter shortly presents some of the A+FS Networkers:



Ildjima Mallot Sanda

who lives in N'Djaména is an agronomist specialized in rural economy. She has 20 years' experience in rural development starting in 1993 at a USAID project for the reformation of agro-pastoral policy. After this Ildjima Mallot Sanda worked with the European Union (Rural Advisory & Gender) Handicap International (Socio-economic impact study of mines in Tchad), the African Development Bank (Cultural enemies in the member states of the Lake Chad Bassin Commission) and the World Bank (local development and community management of ecosystems). She has also been

inspector of the ministry of urban planning and national coordinator of the World Bank for local development.

Ildjima Mallot Sanda now works with the SDC as National Programme Officer and is in charge of the following topics: agriculture, food security and gender. For her, the Network is a forum where sharing technical knowledge and the exchange of experience and the promotion of appropriate technologies can enable small producers and especially vulnerable producers to ensure their food security.



Sovannarith Hem

who currently lives in Phnom Penh is a graduate in Agronomy and has a Master's degree in Business Administration. He is now working as National Programme Officer for Agriculture and Food Security for SDC Cambodia. He has 20 years experience working in food security, rice and vegetable production, rural and community development and agribusiness in Cambodia. He started as National Project Officer for UNICEF, followed by a mandate with the WFP. Later he worked as agribusiness Manager for an AusAID Project to develop the first rice seed company in Cambodia,

aimed to provide high quality marketable rice seeds. He has also worked for a CIDA supported Agriculture Marketing Information Project, aimed to support over 4000 small vegetable farmers to better access price information, improve their negotiation power, enhance quality of local vegetable products and to link them to buyers. Before working with the SDC he has worked as National Consultant for an ADB-GMS Project on effectiveness utilization of biomass for bioenergy.

His interest in and expectations towards the Network are to know, learn and share successful practical experience both at field and management levels on Agriculture and Food Security Programmes of SDC staff and partners in various countries. Also, he is looking forward to the face to face meeting (2-6 June 2014) where we will be able to talk and discuss with each other.

Further Information

[Gender Equality and Food Security—Women's Empowerment as a Tool against Hunger](#)

Asian Development Bank (Book)

[Wake up before it's too late](#)

UNCTAD Trade and Environment Review 2013

[The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2013](#)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

[Food Security Challenges in Asia](#)

Asian Development Bank (Working Paper)

[How to make failure a stepping stone to success](#)

IFAD Fail Fair

Upcoming Events

13 September - 1 December 2013, different places in Switzerland

Exposition on Food Waste

March 2014 (week 11/12), Biltine, Tchad

F2F régional du groupe thématique sécurité alimentaire et développement rural

Thèmes: 1. élevage pastoral; 2. chaîne de valeur; 3. maraîchage/irrigation; 4. Indicateurs/champs d'observation (préparation du F2F en Suisse); 5. GT SADR: planification activités 2014, valorisation travail Buco, draft stratégie SADR.

Thèmes transversales: structuration du monde rural, M4P, intégration du secteur privé

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2-6 June 2014, Thun, Switzerland

F2F Meeting of the A+ FS Network

save the date!

SDC Agriculture & Food Security Network
