

Report on the Meeting of the Swiss Forum on Rural Advisory Services

Nestlé Headquarters, 1 – Av. Nestlé 55 – 1800 Vevey

9 March 2011, 13:20-16:30

An increasing interest in Rural Advisory Services (RAS) can be observed again on the international development agenda, in the light of the global food crisis and climate change. Swiss actors have proven expertise and long experience to contribute to the dialogue and RAS activities. On that note, this meeting was part of a process initiated in April 2010, when Swiss experts of research and development organisations as well as representatives of the private sector met in Zollikofen to exchange their experiences and approaches in the provision of rural/agricultural advisory services in developing countries.

In this second meeting at Nestlé headquarters in Vevey, again 26 representatives from a wide field of institutions (see Annex) got together for an afternoon in order to:

- continue the thematic exchange on Rural Advisory Services among experts of Swiss research institutions, development organisations and the private sector active in the International Development;
- discuss the structure and content to be developed by the Swiss Forum on Rural Advisory Services, as an ongoing platform for exchange and learning.

Programme

12:15	Optional Sandwich Lunch, including some videos on Nestlé's activities in agricultural extension	Find videos on: http://www.nestle.com/CSV/Pages/CSV.aspx
13:20	Welcome and Opening by Hans Jöhr, Nestlé and Simon Zbinden, SDC	Presentation by Nestlé provided separately
13:30	Objectives and Programme of the meeting	
13:35	Introduction of participants and expectations	
13:45	Update from SDC on activities in the field of Rural Advisory Services (Simon Zbinden)	Presentation provided separately
14:00	Update from GFRAS incl. GFRAS Evaluation Initiative (Daniel Roduner)	Presentation provided separately
14:15	Presentation on the Farm Business Advisor Project in Cambodia awarded with the the 1st Nestlé Prize in Creating Shared Value 2010 (Urs Heierli)	Presentation provided separately
14:30	Update & news from all participants	
15:00	Content to be developed by Swiss Forum on Rural Advisory Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does such a forum need to offer, in order to attract your interest to participate?• Who is interested to contribute actively to which activities?• Deciding on next steps for 2011	See summary below
16:30	Closing by Hans Jöhr	

Discussion on the Swiss Forum on Rural Advisory Services (SFRAS)

The discussion in two groups focused on the question:

- **What** should the Swiss Forum on Rural Advisory Services (SFRAS) be doing and **how**, in order to create an **added value** for all participants?

In general, the participants clearly expressed their interest in the Swiss Forum on RAS and the wish to continue the process initiated in Zollikofen.

Key expectations on such a forum/platform were:

- to **exchange** and **learn** from each other, particularly on good practices and tools
- to have space for **networking**
- **advocacy** and **lobbying** on RAS in order to keep it high on the agenda in international cooperation

The forum should go for organizing **face-to-face meeting once or twice a year**. For communication between the meetings the setting up of an **online platform** and email group for sharing documents should be considered.

The interest was expressed to use this platform also for **mapping the expertise** of the different actors in the forum and to make this information available on a website.

Topics of interest that were mentioned several times were:

- Measuring impacts of RAS
- RAS and market issues
- Public Private Partnerships

Members of the forum have expertise in Rural Advisory Services in developing countries and are interested to exchange and network with other Swiss actors. They represent research, education, NGOs, governmental organisations and the private sector. There is no formal membership, the forum is open for interested people. The participants of this meeting are invited to get other potentially interested people or organisations on board and to invite them for the next meeting. There is a particular interest to increase the participation of actors from the French speaking part of Switzerland.

The groups discussed potential links with other existing networks, such as:

- **Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research (SFIAR)**: Research, Extension and Education as partners in the Rural Innovation Arena need to exchange and coordinate
- **Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS)**: GFRAS can offer a voice on the global level and should respond to demands from SFRAS
- SEVAL-EZA: Especially when talking about evaluation and measuring results, this group has a great expertise.

Next Steps

The group agreed on the following next steps:

- To have a next **thematic face-to-face meeting** in November 2011 hosted by Agridea.
- The topic of this event will be **measuring impact of RAS activities**. For the more detailed content of the meeting the members will be consulted in summer 2011.
- Until the next meeting **proposals of how to work together with SFIAR and GFRAS** will be elaborated by a working group (made up by SDC, SHL (host of SFIAR secretariat) and Agridea (host of GFRAS secretariat)).
- The SDC's A+RD network will follow-up possibilities for a **web platform for SFRAS**.
- For the time being, AGRIDEA, Corinne Sprecher, will act as focal point for requests towards SFRAS and for preparing the next meeting.