



SFRAS MEETING 30.3.2016, SWISSCONTACT, ZÜRICH

Programme:

Roles and capacities of farmer cooperatives in RAS

14:00	Welcome & Introduction	Peter Schmidt, HELNETAS
14:10	Introduction „Producer Organisations in Rural Advisory Services: Evidence and Experiences“. Insights from the GFRAS Position Paper, February 2015	Peter Schmidt, HELNETAS
14:30	The role of producer organisations and cooperatives in RAS – experiences from Caritas Projects in Bosnia and Kosovo	Erich Waldmeier
15:10	Break	
15:30	Public Private Partnership in Extension Services in Bangladesh	Khodeza Hossain, MRM- Manager of Katalyst, Swisscontact, Bangladesh
16.20	News from members Please report about recent or forthcoming events, publications, projects, initiatives related to RAS	All
16:50	Closing	Peter Schmidt

Participants: Markus Kupper (Swisscontact), Khodeza Hossain (Katalyst), Hans Schaltenbrand (HAFL), David Schwitter (World Vision), Anton Stöckli (BLW), Loredon Sorg (Biovision), Andreas Sicks (Biovision), Ersnt Bolliger (EB Consult), Natalie Ernst (GFRAS), Ulrich Ryser (Agridea), Felicitas Bachmann (CDE), Martin Schmid (HEKS), Samuel Bauer (Syngenta Foundation), Sarah Mader (Swissaid), Victoria Biedermann (Swisscontact), Erich Waldmeier (Consultant), Peter Schmidt (Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation)

Excused: Felix Fellmann, Monique Frey, Gian Nicolay, Paul Castle, Johann Züblin, Daniel Roduner

Welcome & Introduction

Markus Kupper, representing Swisscontact, the host organisation, opens the meeting. Peter Schmidt, introduces the programme and facilitates the introduction of the participants. The minutes of the last meeting are approved.

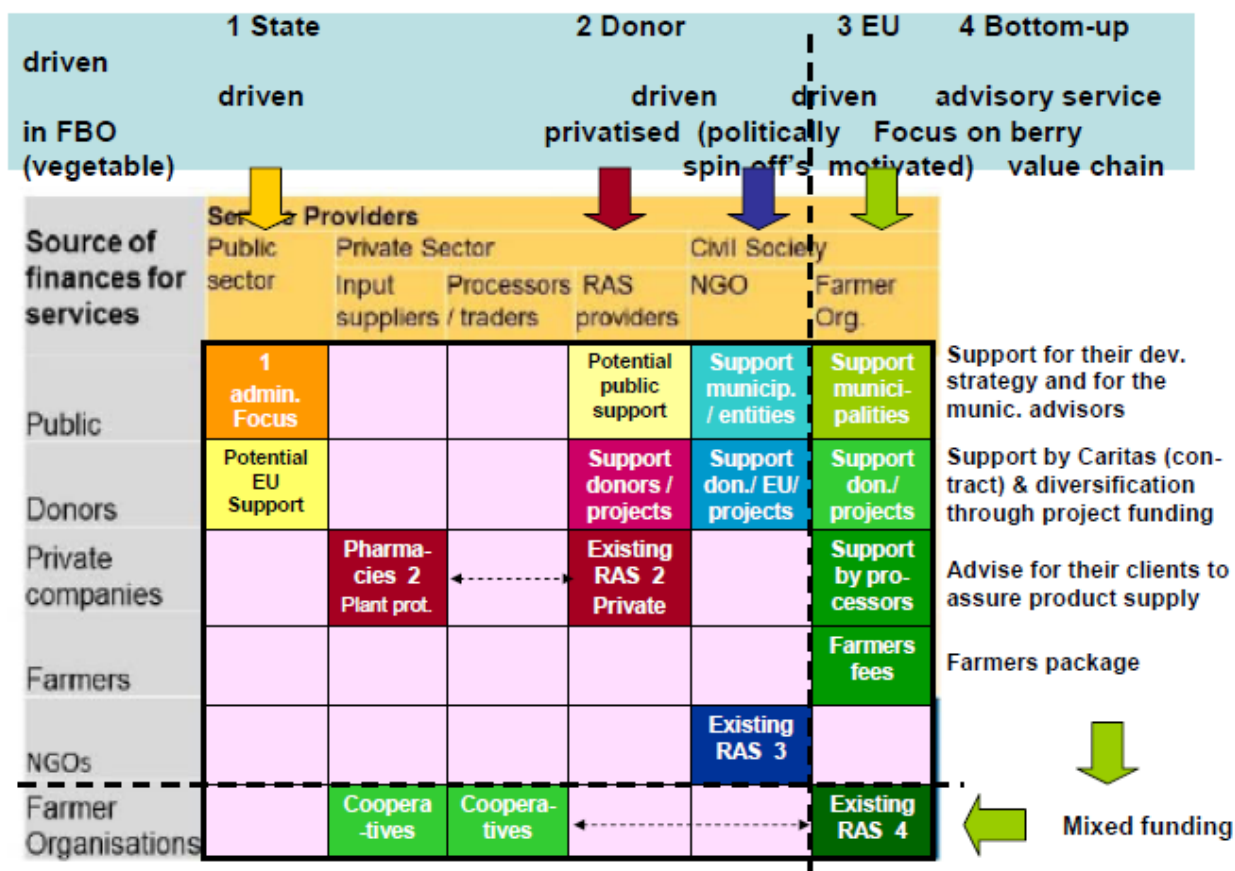
„Producer Organisations in Rural Advisory Services: Evidence and Experiences“. Insights from the GFRAS Position Paper, February 2015

Peter Schmidt introduces the topic by summarising the GFRAS Position Paper on “Producer Organisations in Rural Advisory Services.”

The presentation is attached respectively available.

The role of producer organisations and cooperatives in RAS – experiences from Caritas Projects in Bosnia and Kosovo

Erich Waldmeier illustrates the role of producer organisations in RAS at two examples from Bosnia and Kosovo. The presentation is attached respectively available. The matrix below illustrates the key-role of producer organisations in the provision of rural advisory services to producers in the berry value chain (marked in green).



The subsequent question and answer session covered the following topics:

Q: Scale?

A: 400 farmers for berries; 80% of all berry farmers are members of the association

Q: Leadership?

A: Bosnian project leader of Caritas plays (still) a crucial role; able to communicate and persuade; he is accepted as expert in the value chain. Q: how to assure sustainability? Municipalities play an increasingly important role. Sometimes still a problem to identify the right persons. Takes sometimes several years.

Q: Period of 10-12 years. Now only umbrella organisation established. Good example for long-term involvement. This now allows to create pressure for public funding. Similar experience in Nepal with social forestry, which managed to influence the legislation.

A: Agreed, Caritas provided this continuity. There are plenty of examples of short-term projects that failed.

Q: What is main advice provided by the Farmer Organisation?

A: Mainly technical, less on business planning. Technical advice is becoming more and more important, e.g. on pest management but also due to growing requirements for export to EU countries.

Q: Financing gap for advisory services provided by the Farmer Organisation is still around 50%.

A: Today RAS organisations are still applying for project funding. But in future municipalities and to a smaller extent processors and the central government will play a more important role in financing RAS.

Q: Training of future advisors?

A: Perceived as a challenge (see open question). Organisation founded for the region (see last SFRAS meeting minutes). Some interest at university level, but still low commitment.

Q: Plans of federation to go for other products?

A: At the moment the existing value chains are still demanding. From farmers point of view vegetables would complement nicely the berry value chain. Animal production was considered, too but rejected by Caritas since this value chain requires a high initial investment.

Q: How do advisors develop their knowledge?

A: Most important is the experience to work on the farm. There are scientists with special knowledge at the universities; the younger ones know English and can interact with the international community.

Q: Different types of advisory service providers. Are they co-existing or collaborating?

A: Caritas tries to address this by inviting all services providers for training. This is new. E.g. 40 advisors from different organisations attended. Interesting exchange took place.

Public Private Partnership in Extension Services in Bangladesh at the example of the Local Agri-business Network supported by Katalyst, Bangladesh

Khodeza Hossain, responsible for result measurement at the Katalyst project in Bangladesh, introduced the Local Agri-business Network. Through the collaboration between individual farmers, farmer groups, trade agents and their associations and public extensionists a large number of farmers can be reached. The principle approach are embedded services.

The presentation is attached respectively available in the links beneath.

Subsequent questions and answers touched on the following topics:

Q: Traders are very important in the model. What about processors?

A: not included, traders = retailers; they are in direct and day-to-day contact with the value chain actors. In the beginning only with input providers; since phase 3 also traders involved. Small farmers usually do not sell to processors, they sell to traders and these are connected to the processors. Because farms are really small and surplus sold is very small.

Q: Public Private Initiative Platforms: What is the incentive of traders to convene and fund the meetings?

A: Traders pay a membership fee to be member of the Trader Associations. Input companies e.g. Syngenta are also invited and sometimes provide funds because they sell their products through this channel. There is still scope for intensification of agriculture, improved inputs and seeds, e.g. IPM is a growing business. This creates the incentive for large companies but also retailers to invest in the platforms.

Q: Interest to sell inputs. Is advice sufficiently neutral?

A: In meetings extension workers take the lead. They are trusted. In certain cases input suppliers can showcase their products. Input companies can use the networks and platforms.

Q: Key problem in embedded services remains that they are linked to the sale of particular inputs.

A: The platforms offer direct access to the public extension workers.

A: Katalyst follows the Market System Development approach. Promoting certain product is not wrong as long as there is certain guidance by the public extension service.

Q: Does it not need a certain corruption control, e.g. to avoid that input suppliers pay the public extensionists?

A: The regional LAN coordinators and field officers control who is invited and the project supports transparency in farmer groups. A typical farmer group has 50 members. For training only selected farmers are invited. An impact assessment conducted in 2012 showed that the trainer farmers share what they have learned back home.

Q: Comparing the two inputs to today's SFRAS meeting: The scale that Katalyst reaches is impressive. What does it need that the Katalyst model sustains?

A: The main problem of the LAN model is its ownership. Model is not replicated by its own. Several input companies can use the same platform (therefore now interest to replicate). Sensemaker study conducted to understand systemic changes.

Q: Again comparing the two inputs. Compared to the Bosnia case the central government seems to be missing in the Bangladesh example. Would an umbrella organisation of trade associations be a possible solution to increase the pressure on the national public extension service?

A: Project works at central level, too. E.g. LAN model incorporated into national guidelines. This is actually the focus of the present third and last phase of Katalyst.

Q: Katalyst is an other example of a long-term commitment.

A: Yes. The assumption was that the government would start to replicate the LAN approach once once 40% of the districts are covered. Did not happen, even now not after 60% of districts are covered. But at local level sustainability largely reached.

Q: What are main problems with regard to the institutionalisation. Typical case.

A: Main constraints covered as mentioned. Other input companies have no ownership for the model. Extension officer is key person, but they are changing frequently. Their role in the LAN approach needs to be included into their job descriptions and into their training. Katalyst engages with national training institutions to include this into the curricula.

News from members

- *Anton Stöckli*, Federal Office for Agriculture
The joint [IALB/EUFRAS conference 2016](#) ("Innovation Support for a Diverse Agriculture") will take place in Limerick, Ireland, from June 19 to 23 and give an insight into how the Irish farmers and rural professionals are dealing with today's challenges and into the European advisory services in general. It offers rural professionals the opportunity to gain new knowledge, skills and perspectives. Registration closes May 20th. <http://www.eufas-ialb.org/>
- *Nathalie Ernst*, GFRAS: The GFRAS Annual Meeting will take place from October 3rd to 6th, 2016 in Cameroon. Theme: Role of RAS for inclusive Agriprenuership, web-site online from April 12th onwards.

- *Sarah Mader*, Swissaid: Swissaid and SDC will organise a next event on Ecological Farming in Africa on December 15th, 2016. Topic: farmer led extension. Sarah is interested in cases and speakers on this topic.
- *Peter Schmidt*, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation: The summary publication: Rural Advisory Services and International cooperation. How to reach large numbers of agricultural producers with rural advisory services – a compilation of articles with insights and innovations (Stefanie Kaegi and Peter Schmidt) is now available:
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Agriculture-and-Food-Security/focusareas/Documents/ras_capex_ebook_2016.pdf

Closing and next meeting

The next SFRAS meeting shall take place in November 2016, ideally on a Wednesday morning. SDC (Felix Fellmann) offered to host the meeting at SDC in Bern. Topics include:

- Learning Journey on Land Governance (SDC)
- Report from GFRAS annual meeting (GFRAS)
- Global Donor Meeting on Agriculture (SDC)
- Applications of the Hanoi Statement (SDC)
- 20 years work of SDC in agricultural development in Vietnam– an experience capitalisation (HAFL)

01.04.2016 / Peter Schmidt