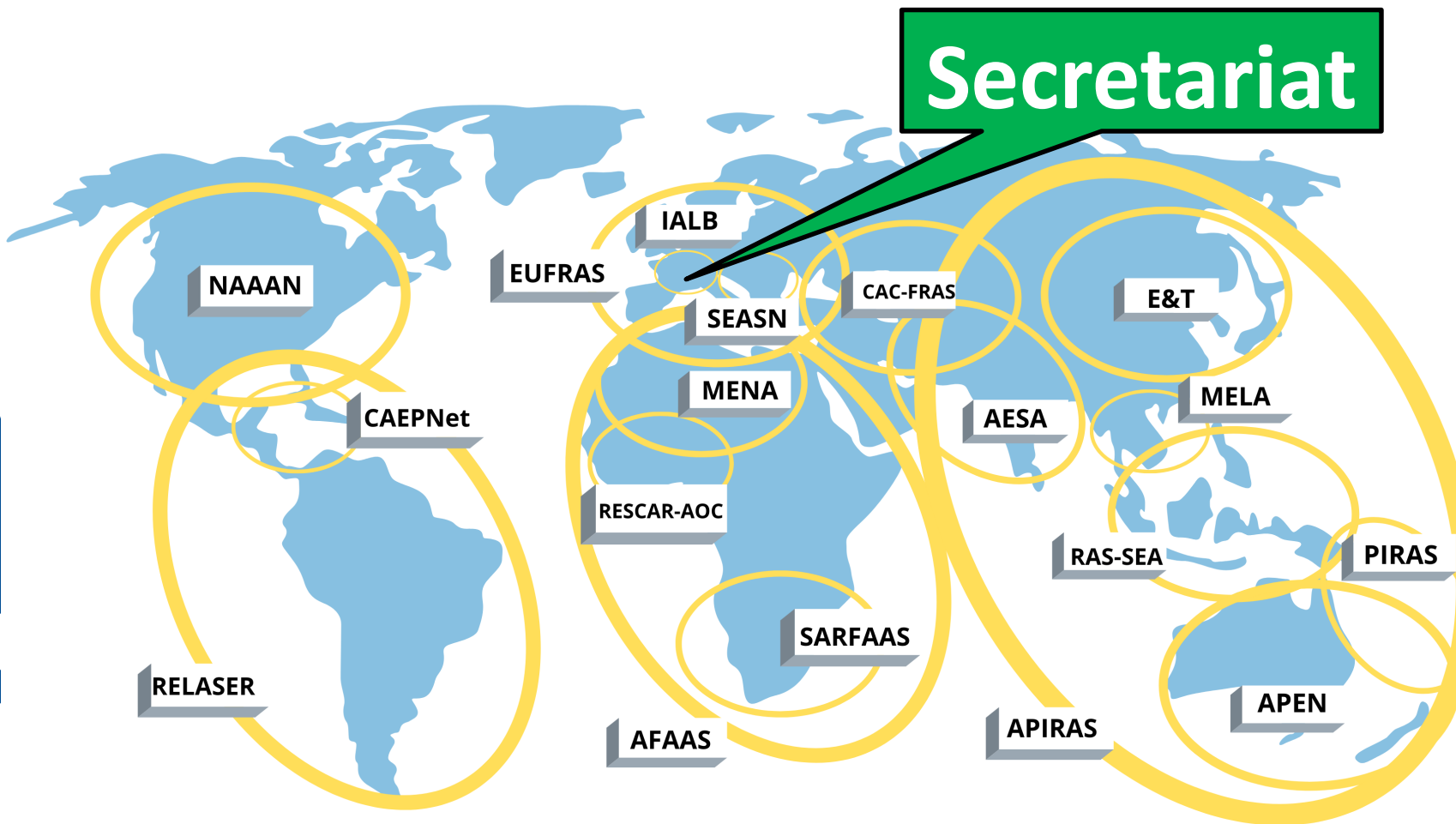


Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS)

Global Network



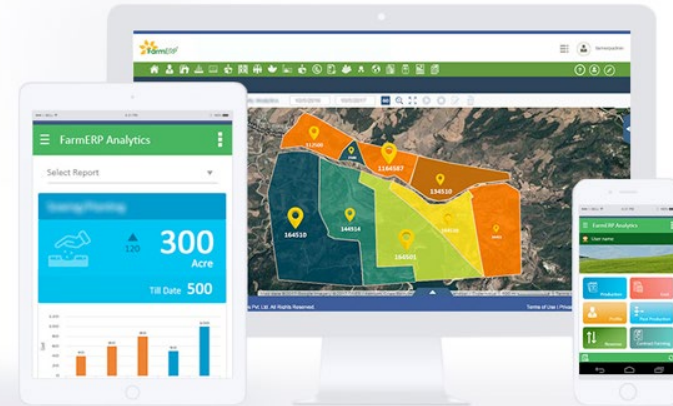
Global Challenge on meeting the SDG's for Agricultural Extension

Two important numbers

- According to FAO only 25 % of world farmers are regularly in contact with professional advisors
- According to GFAR only 30 % of agricultural research findings reaches the farmers

Crises bring changes

Covid-19 rapid shift to e-Extension



Definition of e-Extension

The use of electronic technologies to enhance and complement traditional extension approaches (such as written and face-to-face) so as to enable change.

Can be used for:

- Information dissemination
- Knowledge sharing
- Advisory services

Synchronous and asynchronous e-Extension tools

Characteristics of physical and online meetings

	Location of participants	Time of participation
Physical event	Same	Same
Online synchronous	Different	Same
Online asynchronous	Different	Different

Synchronous and asynchronous e-Extension tools

Synchronous tools

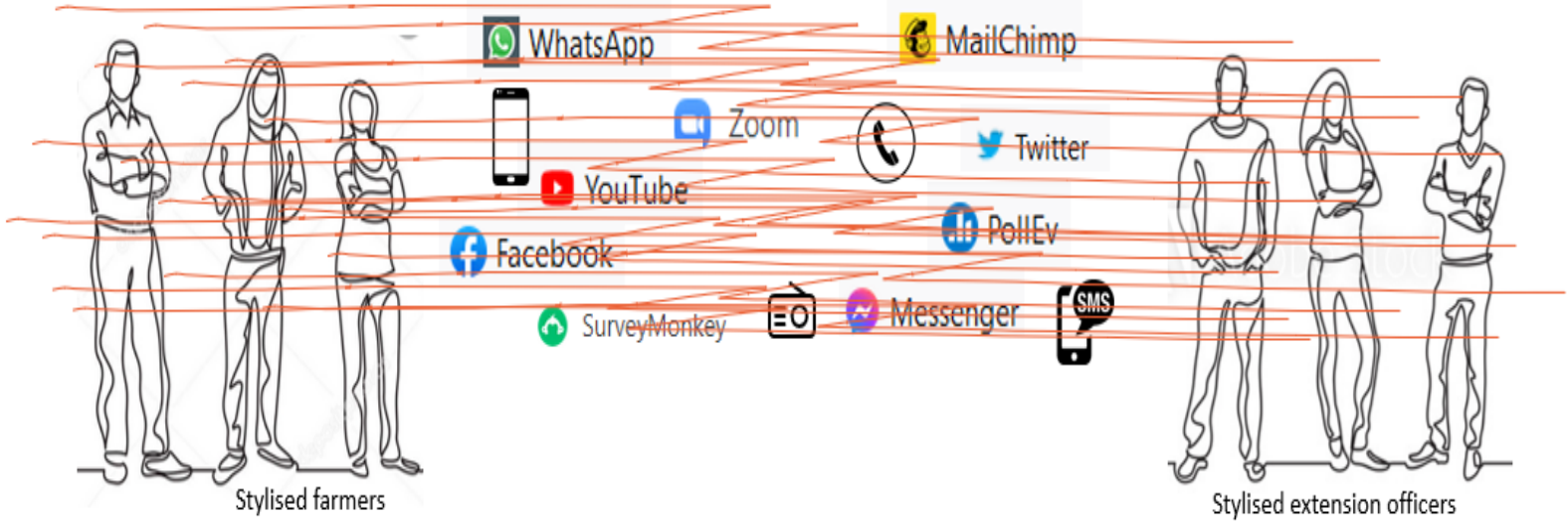
1. Telephone
2. Radio
3. Web meetings
4. Online polling

Synchronous and asynchronous e-Extension tools

Asynchronous tools

1. Social media
2. Direct messaging
3. Mobile apps
4. Short videos
5. Podcasts
6. Blogs
7. Online document collaboration
8. Online surveys
9. eBulletins

What application tool to choose



Advantages and disadvantages of e-extension

Advantages

- Allowed extension officers to continue engaging with our clients without needing to be physically present.
- Using webinars and video calls, we are still meeting with them face-to-face.
- Massive savings on time and resources.
- Surveys
- Many of the e-extension tools are relatively cheap to use, as they are low cost or free.

Advantages and disadvantages of e-extension

Advantages

- Benefited from spending more time at home improving life balance (farmers/advisors).
- A survey of extension professionals (James 2015) using webinars
 - 80% found they could better engage with their clients
 - 78% indicated that webinars enabled them to be more innovative
 - 75% indicated more responsive to their clients' needs

Advantages and disadvantages of e-extension

Disadvantages

- Very steep learning curve for both advisors and farmers.
- The digital divide:
 - Older farmers
 - Poor farmers
 - Remote farmers
 - Lack of appropriate hardware and/ or bandwidth
- Technology phobia

Advantages and disadvantages of e-extension

Disadvantages

- Difficult to built trust – especially with new relationships
- Difficult to read the participants - subtle non-verbal cues of body language are much more difficult to detect
- Keeping a clearly defined working time
 - Always available
 - Zoom fatigue
 - Social isolation

Advantages and disadvantages of e-extension - institutional

Advantages

- Able to service more client per day.
- Staff more available and flexible for quick interaction and advice.
- Massive savings on travel time and transport.
- Many of the e-extension tools are relatively cheap to buy and use - low-cost alternative.

Advantages and disadvantages of e-extension - institutional

Disadvantages

- During Covid-19 there has been limited possibility for staff training and upgrading.
- The digital divide has left a significant proportion of the clients without any service.
- For commercial companies it has been difficult to price tag online services.
- Difficult to monitor staff when working from home.
- Might lead to stress and burn out of staff.

Concluding remarks

Go digital or go out of business

- Be brave
- Have an open mindset
- Practice – try and error
- Team up with others
- Keep updated
- Secure a good work-life balance

e-Extension – systemic level

Question for discussion

- What if a developing country decided to transform its national extension system to an e-extension system
 - Massive savings on vehicles, travel time, per diem and a like
 - Invested e-infrasctructure with call centers and local knowledge workers
 - **Would it reach more farmers with better service?**

Thank you

