RAS, food security and achieving the SDGs

• Agriculture is critical to FS and the livelihoods of some 500 million smallholder farmers, esp. rural women, youth and vulnerable people

• Agriculture is a key economic sector in many national economies, vital for inclusive growth and rural transformation

• Public ag. extension services historically disseminated new information, techniques and technologies, often from ag. research, to farmers

• This approach is not sufficient in the face of current global and regional challenges and extension & advisory services need to adapt
SDG 2

- SDG2 to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture explicitly recognises vital importance of effective RAS to achieving the SDGs, *viz.*:

  Goal 2.a *increase investment*, including through enhanced international cooperation, *in* rural infrastructure, *agricultural research and extension services*, *technology development*, and plant and livestock gene banks to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries...

- The importance of RAS to sustainable agricultural growth and development were also recognised by G20 and OECD Agriculture Ministers in 2016
Responding to development challenges affecting agriculture and rural livelihoods

Agricultural service providers need to support rural actors in the generation, adaptation and use of knowledge to face challenges in a rapidly changing context e.g.:

- Persistent poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition in many rural areas
- Uneven productivity
- Environmental degradation and climate change
- Globalised markets
- Urbanisation, and rural-urban dynamics
- Migration, especially youth out-migration
- Conflict and protracted crises
New approaches to extension: RAS

Solutions to these challenges require new forms of interaction, organisation and agreement between multiple actors – e.g. in RAS:

- include public, private and non-governmental actors
- encompass all the different activities that provide information and services needed and demanded by rural people and other actors in rural areas
- assist rural actors in developing their own technical, organisational and management skills and practices to improve their livelihoods
Contribution of RAS to achieving the SDGs

- Provide access to information and strengthen technical, managerial and organisational skills
- Reduce the vulnerability and enhance the voice and empowerment of the rural poor
- Couple technology transfer with other services related to credit, input and output markets
- Link farmers more effectively and responsively to domestic and international markets
- Promote good environmental stewardship
- Act as brokers and facilitators who strengthen innovation processes, connecting communities, research, markets, education
RAS as brokers and facilitators of innovation

The Agricultural Innovation System
How can ICTs support RAS?

- From mobile phones to internet, they facilitate information and knowledge exchange among all actors in innovation systems that have access to them.
- They can potentially reach more actors and provide a wider range of services in a way that is more:
  - timely
  - comprehensive
  - cost-effective
  - interactive
How can ICTs support RAS? (2)

- The use of ICTs in RAS can:
  - Offer **localised and customised information, adapted to rural users in a comprehensible format and appropriate language** (via farmer call centres, mobile apps, radio, TV)
  - Help to **create, document, store, retrieve, share, and manage information** (e.g. web portals, knowledge banks, etc.)
  - **Enable collaboration, sharing, and partnerships** (e.g. social media, discussion groups)
  - **Increase the voice of farmers** and rural people (through FOs, community radio, video, social media...)
  - **Facilitate capacity development** of smallholders, rural producers, extension professionals, and other actors in AIS (e.g. E-learning mechanisms, webinars)
Successful use of ICTs for sustainable agricultural development depends on:

- Inclusive approaches
- Relevant and reliable content
- Equitable user access to ICTs and ICT skills (e.g. smallholders, rural women, young people and the vulnerable)
- Locally relevant and demand driven services, information and tools
The Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services

- **Our vision** is for rural advisory services to effectively contribute to agricultural innovation systems for sustainable development
- **Our mission** is to provide advocacy and leadership on pluralistic and demand-driven rural advisory services for sustainable development
- **Addressing 3 levels of capacity development**: enabling environment; institutions & organisations; individuals
GFRAS: 16 Regional and sub-regional RAS networks – 35 fora
GFRAS Strategic Fields of Action

1. **Advocacy and support** for an enabling policy environment and appropriate investment in rural advisory services

2. **Professionalisation** of rural advisory services

3. **Facilitation and enhancement of effective and continuous knowledge generation and exchange**
Selected activities of GFRAS to foster exchange and innovation

- **GFRAS Annual Meetings:** Gathering of representatives from all sectors and regions to exchange and foster partnerships for ag. Innovation
- **Publications:** New Extensionist; ICT4RAS
- **Global Good Practices Initiative:** Short and freely accessible notes on RAS topics, e.g. on the use of ICTs in RAS; POs; etc.
- **GFRAS Working Groups, webinars, e-consultations:** e.g. on ICT4RAS, nutrition, policy, producer organisations, agripreneurship...
Contacts and further information

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