

# Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS)

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# 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:

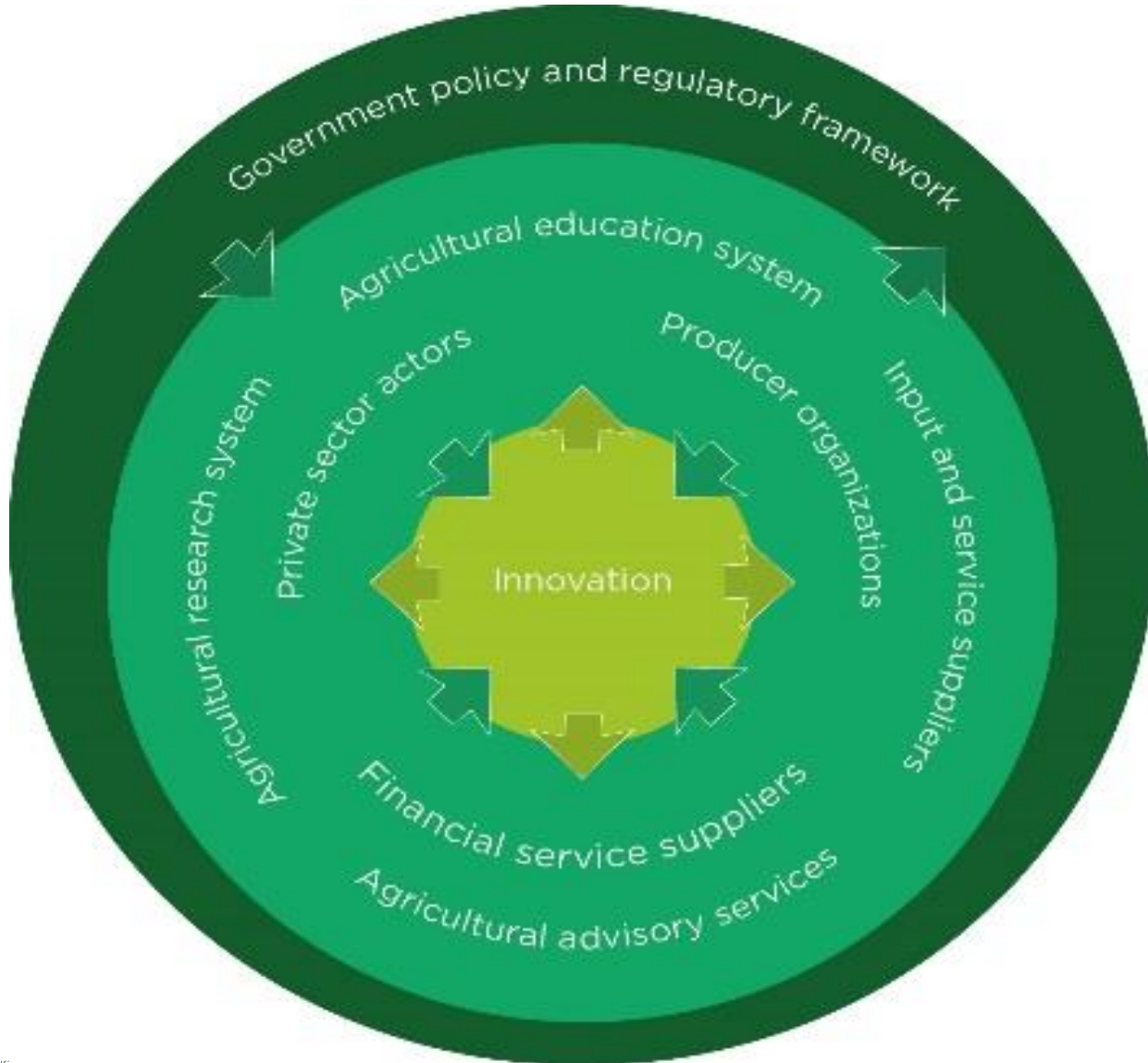
- include public, private and non-governmental actors
- encompass all the different activities that provide information and services needed and demanded by rural people and other actors in rural areas
- assist rural actors in developing their own technical, organisational and management skills and practices 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)

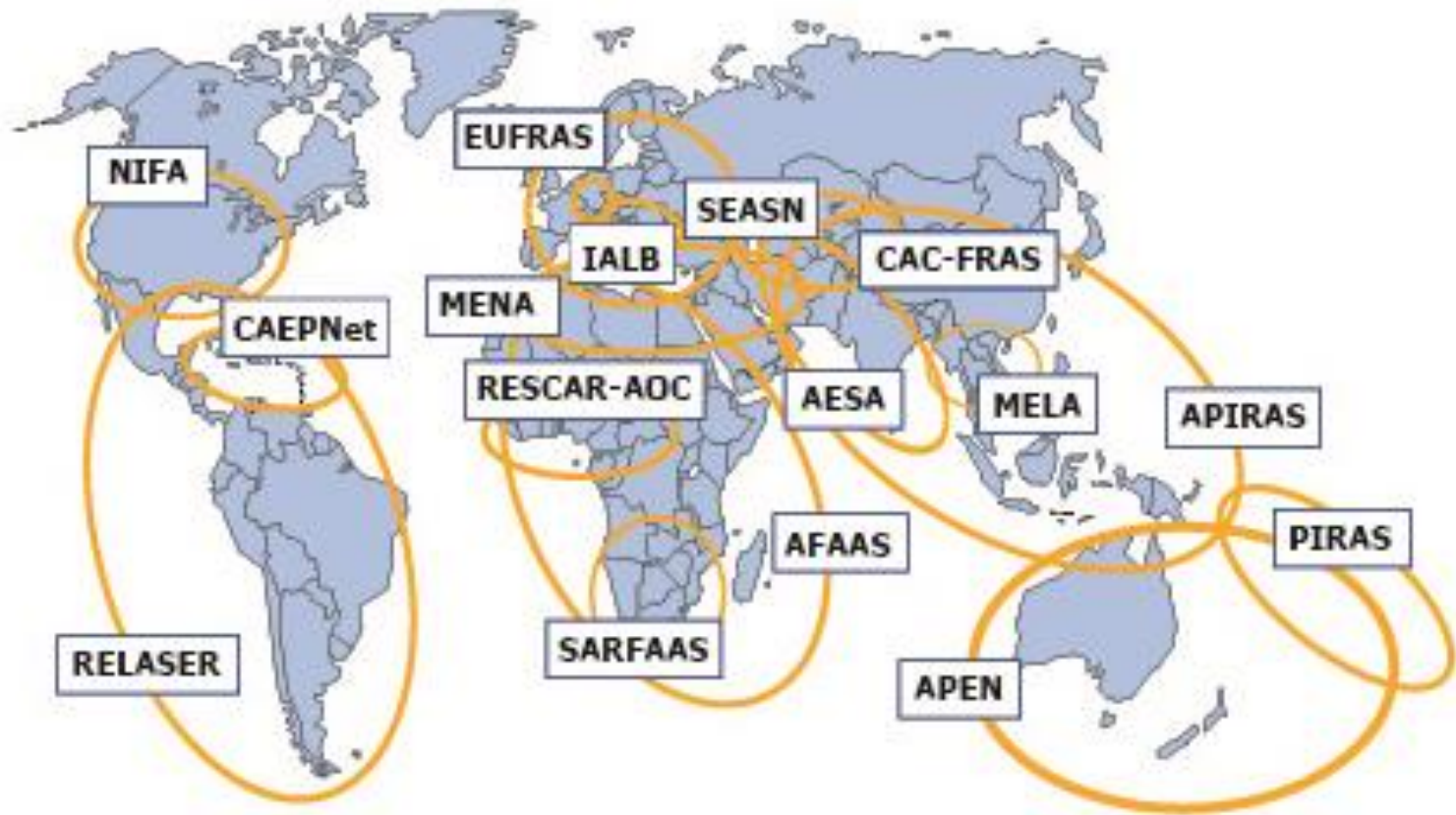
# Successful use of ICTs for sustainable agricultural development depends on:

- 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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*Sign up for the ICT4RAS mailing list!*

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