



Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS)

Operating Guidelines

Version 1

Approved by GFRAS SC on 25 April 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

The GFRAS operating guidelines provide additional information and details to information found in the charter and other memoranda of understanding, letters of agreement, and contracts. The operating guidelines are less formal and can be amended from time to time with the approval of the GFRAS steering committee (SC). They are approved by the SC.

2. GOVERNANCE AND STATUS

2.1. STEERING COMMITTEE

Functions of the Steering Committee

- The steering committee is responsible for reporting on GFRAS progress, consulting with affiliates from the different regions, and obtaining feedback on strategic directions during the annual meeting.

Membership in the Steering Committee

The steering committee consists of up to twelve members as follows:

- Six seats for regional representatives, such as representatives of rural advisory services (RAS) networks and/or farmers' organisations.
- Six seats for relevant institutions or stakeholder groups at the global level and/or from different sectors (these can include the private sector, research, international and/or United Nations organizations concerned with agriculture, and non-governmental organisations, amongst others).
- One seat of the latter six is for the host (ex officio).
- Global/sectoral SC members are selected by nominations from the standing SC. If a member steps down from a global organisation seat, they can be replaced from within that same organisation.
- Regional RAS networks, with capacity, should select representatives from amongst their affiliates in accordance with international norms of transparency, inclusiveness, and representativeness
- If a SC member changes his/her job/organization, the member is no longer a part of the SC.

The SC does not provide a seat for every sector or interest group; rather, it is composed on a practical rather than political basis, of organisations who can contribute to the vision and mission. It has to be noted that once one becomes a member of GFRAS SC, he/she will not be allowed to compete for GFRAS consultancies.

Steering Committee Meetings and Operations

There shall be two SC meetings per annum and the meeting venue determined at the most cost-effective location. The following are some of the guidelines for the SC meetings:

- Steering committee members attend SC meetings at their own cost, unless approved by the chair to be supported on a case-by-case basis.
- Sitting fees (daily payment for participating in the steering committee meetings) are not allowed for SC members.
- SC members may be involved in working groups and other tasks of GFRAS, but their time will not be compensated.

- GFRAS SC will conduct self-evaluations every 1-2 years (see Supplement 2).

2.2. AFFILIATION AND MEMBERSHIP

Definitions of affiliates and members are included in the GFRAS Charter.

Regional RAS Members

Regional RAS networks are the main members of GFRAS. A regional network is a group of people from a particular geographical region that have agreed to participate in GFRAS and to fulfil the expectations detailed below. See Table 1 in Supplement 3 for more information.

What Does GFRAS Offer to Regional Networks?

There are a number of benefits that GFRAS offers to RN, among which are;

- A platform, voice, and arena for discussion at the global level through the working groups, annual meeting, and other events
- Opportunity for exchange with other regions through the annual and regional meetings
- Backstopping on network building and organisational development
- Initial start-up support where necessary and on approved areas that dovetail with the GFRAS work plan
- Web and blog space on demand
- Support to seek funding
- Annual meeting invitation
- Access to GFRAS materials
- Membership in GFRAS
- Representation in the GFRAS steering committee where appropriate

What Does GFRAS Expect from Regional Networks?

- Adhere to the policies and principles of extension outlined in GFRAS recommended documents
- Strengthen the RAS activities in their region
- Organize the experience sharing in their region
- Support the national and sub-regional networks
- Inform GFRAS on issues in the region
- Informal representation of RAS in the region
- Exchange with other regions
- Comment on GFRAS products
- M&E of GFRAS in the region
- Regular reporting and communication
- Joint work plans with other members of GFRAS
- Representation in the GFRAS steering committee where appropriate
- Representation at the GFRAS annual meeting
- Reporting on the region at the steering committee and GFRAS annual meeting
- Distribution of information among the network
- Seeking a broad and pluralistic platform for the network in the region

2.3. ANNUAL MEETING

GFRAS holds an annual meeting for its members and affiliates in the AAS community. The annual meeting is the central GFRAS event for experience exchange and to discuss strategic directions. The annual meeting is guided as follows:

- Participation is open to all affiliates and members at own costs.
- As much as possible, the venue of the meeting will be rotated between regions
- A certain budget allocated to support southern affiliates to attend based on certain criteria determined by the organising committee.
- Details on how to host a GFRAS annual meeting are included in Supplement 4.

3. MANAGEMENT

GFRAS has no legal status and as such requires a host. Hosts must be able to provide administrative support including financial management and human resource systems. More information is included in separate documents: the hosting offer and the letter of agreement between the host, secretariat, and steering committee of GFRAS.

3.1. SECRETARIAT

The secretariat consists of several professional staff, and can be supported by the host, consultants, special advisors, interns, and temporary staff. The secretariat has a lean staffing, and they work to support work and activities conducted by members, working groups, and consultants.

- The secretariat is responsible for administration of GFRAS funds with support from the host under mechanisms agreed upon by the host, donor, and secretariat
- The Secretariat is headed by an Executive Secretary, whose position is an international-level.
- Host organisation and donor rules and regulations guide the administration and management of funds and other reporting by the secretariat.

Due to the leanness of the secretariat, and to benefit from a wider pool of professionals and expertise, the secretariat delegates much of its work to consultants and the working groups.

3.2. CONSULTANTS

GFRAS uses consultants to conduct some activities and projects. Some of the rules in consultancy work;

- The process to hire consultants involves the writing of a terms of reference (TOR) by the secretariat or working group, which is sent to selected individuals, organisations, and/or posted on the GFRAS web site and distribution list.
- Consultants then make an offer which is judged by the secretariat and/or working group. Offers are judged by technical quality, value for money, relevant, adherence to the TOR, and qualifications of the individual. A contract is then made with the consultant.
- As long as the activity and budget is approved by the steering committee through the work plan approval process, the SC does not need to approve consultancies. However, the SC members may comment on terms of reference for consultants.

- Tenders over 100,000 USD must be publicly tendered with a transparent process of selection.
- Travel and Reimbursement Guidelines make up Supplement 1 to the Operating Guidelines.
- In general, GFRAS uses principles of cost-sharing, economy flight tickets, and avoiding the wastage of funds and time.
- Receipts are required for all transactions.

3.3. WORKING GROUPS

GFRAS working groups are composed of a group of GFRAS affiliates or members actively working around a thematic topic, usually across regions and organisations. They are formed on a demand-driven basis and with the direction of the GFRAS steering committee. Working group members show a keen interest to regularly participate in the implementation and development of the GFRAS strategy and organisational development around their topic

How do GFRAS Working Groups Operate? What are Key Elements?

GFRAS working groups have a small core of people (5-10) who exchange over email and face-to-face on a topic to gain a common understanding, develop a concept note, prioritise an issue, engage with regions on that topic, and/or develop a product. Working groups often function as an advisory group to a consultant who is paid by GFRAS or a collaborating organisation to develop a product. Results of the working groups are often shared at the GFRAS [Annual Meeting](#) and other relevant events in order to validate and promote the results. Working group members/institutions will be recognised in the product.

Duties of the working groups include

- Making time available to respond to requests and provide inputs on specific content issues from the secretariat, consultants, or regional networks;
- Developing strategies, outreach, and deliverables on thematic issues;
- Providing inputs into discussions and strategy development at global, regional and national level;
- Making links to the regions or to specific interest groups and working closely with regional affiliates and members; and
- Implementing time-bound activities.

For more information, see the GFRAS [Charter](#) and Supplement 5 in this document.

How to become part of a GFRAS Working Group?

To become part of a GFRAS working group, please contact GFRAS at info@g-fras.org with information about why you want to join and what you and your organisation will contribute to the group.

Supplement 1: Travel and Reimbursement Guidelines for Participating in Events (internal or external)

The GFRAS secretariat can fund 1) GFRAS staff and consultants working under a contract, 2) GFRAS affiliates and steering committee members to represent GFRAS at key external events without contracts, and 3) affiliates or other key individuals as participants at GFRAS events. The "Guidelines for GFRAS Affiliates Funded to Participate in Events" define procedures, rights, and duties of these categories of GFRAS-funded participants. They are a supplement to the GFRAS Operating Guidelines.

The following criteria apply to support travel using GFRAS funds:

- Does it clearly fit in a GFRAS function?
 - Voice in global policy dialogues and enabling environment for investment
 - Evidence-based approaches and policies
 - Interaction and networking for capacity strengthening
- Does it involve a priority partner for GFRAS? (priority target stakeholder groups are defined in the long-term strategic framework)
- Does it add value for GFRAS (e.g. creation of new links to stakeholder groups that are weakly represented in GFRAS; potential future contributions to GFRAS work plan and activities)?
- Does it integrate and strengthen advisory stakeholders?

1. GFRAS staff and consultants working under a contract (category 1)

- The GFRAS secretariat staff and consultants who are contracted by GFRAS to fulfil specific terms of reference can agree with the GFRAS executive secretary to attend meetings in order to reach expected results.
- Reimbursement for working time is defined in the contract. Personal expenditures are covered by salaries and fees. Consequently, no pocket money is paid to GFRAS staff and consultants working under a contract
- Expenditures are reimbursed upon receipt and according to guidelines stated in this document.

2. Participants funded on GFRAS secretariat demand (category 2)

- The GFRAS secretariat can ask a GFRAS affiliate (including Steering Committee members) to represent GFRAS at a key external event. To obtain funding, the affiliate (funded participant) must be an expert in the event's topic and/or be geographically close to the event venue.
- The funded participants are reimbursed on costs according to this document.
- Expenditures are reimbursed upon receipt and according to guidelines stated in this document.

3. Participants applying for funding to attend GFRAS events (GFRAS annual meeting and other co-sponsored events) (category 3)

- GFRAS can decide to give financial support to affiliates who wish to participate in events (co-)organized by GFRAS. Funding is only provided if the financial situation allows it.
- The option to be financially supported is advertised to all targeted GFRAS affiliates in updates, the concept note or the registration form of an event, or on the GFRAS website. A deadline for application is indicated.

- Application for funding entails a description of the motivation and indication of co-funding ability.
- The GFRAS secretariat selects the funded participants according to selection criteria: motivation, relation of applicant to RAS, diversity of funded participants in regions, sectors, and gender, value added for GFRAS (e.g. creation of new links to stakeholder groups that are weakly represented in GFRAS; potential future contributions to GFRAS work plan and activities).
- A letter of agreement gives details on funding conditions and refers to this document as an integral part. Affiliates who sign the letter of agreement have the right to be reimbursed for approved expenditures.
- Funded participants who sign the letter of agreement are obliged to attend the event. If they withdraw from their commitment without major reasons (such as sickness confirmed by a doctor), they compensate GFRAS for all incurred expenditures.
- Whenever possible, GFRAS pays directly for services needed by the funded participants. Expenditures that are made by the funded participants are reimbursed upon receipt.

4. *Travel and reimbursement guidelines*

- All categories of GFRAS-funded participants travel economy class by the most economic route; upgrades within economy class ("economy-plus", exit row seating) that entail extra costs will not be covered.
- GFRAS reimburses for receipted costs that are not directly paid by the GFRAS secretariat as stated in the contract, letter of agreement or in e-mails.
- GFRAS covers costs of e-tickets, travelling in destination country to/from events, food and drinks, accommodation during the event, and registration fee for the event. Rates for accommodation, food and drinks are defined in section 7.
- Additionally, GFRAS covers costs of pocket money and health insurance (upon demand) of participants applying for funding (category 3). Rates for pocket money are defined in section 7. Pocket money of GFRAS staff and consultants (category 1) are covered by their salary/ fees defined in the contract.
- Phone calls for business matters, laundry, and printing of posters and promotional material is reimbursed for GFRAS secretariat staff only.
- GFRAS covers costs of accommodation during travelling for a minimal stop of 4 hours at nights (between 0am and 6am) and of 7 hours at days (between 6am and 12pm) food during travelling is covered by the airline. If the airline provides no food, funded participants are reimbursed for food upon receipt. Food during stops is reimbursed upon receipt if stops are at least between 7am and 10am for breakfast, between 12pm and 2pm for lunch, and between 7pm and 10pm for dinner. Travelling time and stops start and ends with the arrival and departure time of airplanes. Snacks and other expenditures during stops that are shorter or on a different time than defined are covered by pocket money or personally.
- GFRAS-funded participants personally cover the following costs: printing of posters and promotional material, mini-bar consumptions, laundry, phone-calls, and other items not mentioned in this document.
- For financial reporting, participants applying for funding (category 3) must glue their receipts on different sheets for expenditures on 1) accommodation and food, 2) travelling, 3) other expenditures before handing them in. GFRAS staff and consultants working under a contract (category 1) and participants representing GFRAS (category 2) send a financial report listing all expenditures to the GFRAS secretariat, accompanied by continuously numbered receipts.
- Funded participants will be reimbursed by GFRAS for their costs within 30 days after submitting of approved receipts

5. Reporting

- Funded participants report to the GFRAS secretariat within five days after the event on outputs and expected results on outcome level. Six months after the event, funded participants to GFRAS events report on actual outcomes of the event.

6. GFRAS rates

- GFRAS allowances correspond to the UN per diem rates, a practice used by many international organisations (<http://apps.who.int/bfi/tsy/PerDiem.aspx>). Rates represent a cost-ceiling. Funded participants are reimbursed on effective costs that do not exceed the cost-ceiling and are stated on the receipt. The rates comprise:
 - Accommodation: 50%
 - Breakfast: 7.5%
 - Lunch: 17.5%
 - Dinner: 17.5%
 - Pocket-money: 7.5% (only category 3)
- Whenever possible, GFRAS secretariat pays directly for services needed by the funded participants. The GFRAS secretariat is free to decide on the standard and costs of these services.

Supplement 2. Self-Evaluation of GFRAS Steering Committee Member Performance

March 2010 – March 2012

How the SC rates (1)				
Characteristics of the SC	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)
<i>Select the box on right that describes your opinion regarding the statements below</i>				
1. The SC has the right mix of expertise.				
2. The SC represented or brought out effectively all the issues that needed to be addressed.				
3. The SC functioned well as a deliberative body.				
4. The division of labour and responsibility among SC, working groups, and secretariat was clear.				
5. There was evidence of an effective working relationship between the SC and the Executive and Staff.				
6. The members of the SC demonstrated understanding of the mission of GFRAS and how that mission is pursued by GFRAS activities.				
7. The SC has a feeling of social ease and rapport with staff.				
8. Decisions on policy were made only after full consideration by all parties concerned with the decision.				
Suggestions/Comments:				

Self-Evaluation of GFRAS SC Member Performance

March 2010 – March 2012

An individual GFRAS SC Member's perspective (2)					
Characteristics	Very Poor (A)	Fair (B)	Good (C)	Very good (D)	None/ not appl. (-)
<i>Select the box on right that describes your opinion regarding the statements below</i>					
9. The SC leadership (chair, co-chair) functions...					
10. The use GFRAS has made of me for representational functions (e.g. contacts with officials or to represent GFRAS in a meeting) has been...					
11. The use GFRAS has made of my technical skills and experience has been...					
12. The SC use of my skills is...					
13. The results of my participation in the SC and/or on committees/working groups has been...					
Comments/Suggestions:					

Self Evaluation of GFRAS SC Member Performance

March 2010 – March 2012

Individual activities on behalf of GFRAS (3)		
Since the last meeting of the SC, I have participated in the following activities related to GFRAS	Yes	No
14. Representing GFRAS in international, regional, and/or national fora		
15. Explaining GFRAS to donors or other stakeholders		
16. Helping facilitate the work of the GFRAS secretariat		
17. Help GFRAS generate special project in collaboration with my country or institute		
18. Organized special meetings for GFRAS in my organization or country.		
19. Provided names and contacts to Executive Secretary or Chairperson of the SC suggesting useful areas of collaboration or follow-up.		
20. Provided comments on GFRAS Strategy		
21. Provided comments on GFRAS Work Plan		
22. Provided comments on GFRAS management documents		
23. Provided comments on GFRAS products		
Comments or Suggestions:		

Supplement 3. Regional Members, Working Groups, and Steering Committee Information

Table 1. Regional Members and Contact Points

Member	Region	Main Contact Point
African Network for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS)	Africa	Silim Nahdy*
Réseau des Services de Conseil Agricole et Rural des Pays Francophones d’Afrique de l’Ouest et du Centre (RESCAR-AOC)	Africa – Francophone West and Central	Patrice Djamen
Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (APIRAS)	Asia	Virginia Cardenas*
Central Asia and Caucasus Countries (CACC) Network for RAS	Central Asia	Ainagul Nasyrova
Pacific Islands Extension Network (PIEN)	Pacific	Stephen Hazelman
	South Asia	
	Near East	
Internationale Akademie land und hauswirtschaftlicher Beraterinnen und Berater (International Academy for Agricultural Advisory Services and Home Economics)	Europe – German-speaking countries	Erich Waldmeier
	Europe- Chambers of Agriculture	Michael Kuegler
	North America	APLU
Latin America Network for Rural Extension Services (RELASER)	Latin America (and Caribbean)	Francisco Aguirre*
	Caribbean	Wayne Ganpat

Working Group on Evaluation

Lead: Ian Christoplos, senior content advisor to the GFRAS secretariat, ian@glemdev.com

Members: Ian Christoplos, Sanne Chipeta ([Knowledge Centre for Agriculture](#)), Riikka Rajalahti ([World Bank](#)), Magdalena Blum ([FAO](#)), Pierre Labarthe ([INRA](#)), Brent Simpson ([MEAS](#))

Partners: Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services ([MEAS](#)); Natural Resources Institute ([NRI](#))

Activities and outputs

1. GFRAS [guide](#) to extension evaluation
2. [Meta-evaluation](#) of extension evaluations
3. [Review](#) of literature on evaluation methods relevant to extension

Description

The GFRAS evaluation working group was formed by a group of people interested in the topic of extension evaluation. They mainly operate as a reference group for the development of the GFRAS [Guide](#) to Extension Evaluation. Some members have operated as

a Help Desk type of support for those using the Guide. They continue to backstop GFRAS evaluation efforts, especially those using the Guide.

Working group on Capacity Strengthening Formed

Lead: Francisco Aguirre, RELASER, faguirre@rimisp.org

Members: Francisco Aguirre ([RELASER](#)), Virginia Cardenas ([APIRAS](#)), Ian Christoplos ([Glemminge Development Research](#)), Magdalena Blum ([FAO](#))

Description

Capacity strengthening is a major issue in all regions of the world for rural advisory services. Capacity strengthening was started as a working group led by the Latin American regional network for rural extension (RELASER), with support from the Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (APIRAS).

Activities and outputs

1. Background paper: framework for capacity strengthening in extension
2. Position paper for the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development ([GCARD](#)) 2012 event entitled "The New Extensionist." The document will explain why foresight in agricultural and rural development must recognize the changing role of extension and rural advisory services and the new capacities needed: Capabilities needed at individual level; how the new extensionist functions within changing organisations and institutional structures; what partnerships does the new extensionist need to function effectively in the agricultural innovation system; and recommendations.

Working Group on Gender Equality in Rural Advisory Services Formed

Lead: Sanne Chipeta, GFRAS steering committee, (sac@vfl.dk)

Members: To be decided

Description

The gender working group is for committed, interested people who want to see better gender equality in rural advisory services. They will work together to promote recognition of the need for gender equality in rural advisory services and better knowledge about policies and practises to achieve this.

Activities and outputs

- Identification of interested and committed working group members and possible partner institutions
- Establish the group and plan the way forward in detail
- Identification of priority questions and issues to be addressed
- Investigation of current knowledge and gaps of evidence
- Development of a concept note to address the gaps

GFRAS SC Members, Inception Phase (January 2010 – June 2011)

- Silim Nahdy, AFAAS (Chair)
- Magdalena Blum, FAO (Co-chair as of November 2010)
- Ajit Maru, GFAR (replaced by Raj Paroda, AAPARI, 2011)
- David Nielson World Bank (replaced by Riikka Rajalahti November 2010)
- Ian Christoplos, GDR
- Sanne Chipeta, DAAS
- Pierre-André Cordey, SDC
- Daniel Roduner, Agridea (replaced by Peter Reinhard, March 2011, who will be replaced by Juergen Roth, July 2012)
- Francisco Aguirre, Rimisp (joined in November 2010)
- Virginia Cardenas, UPLB (joined in November 2010)

Supplement 4. Hosting a GFRAS Annual Meeting

What is the GFRAS Annual Meeting?

The [GFRAS Annual Meeting](#) is the central instrument to foster exchange on rural advisory services (RAS) between stakeholders and across regions, and to discuss GFRAS strategic directions and functioning. The GFRAS Annual Meeting contributes to all three [GFRAS functions](#), but mainly to functions 1 (providing a voice within global policy dialogues) and 3 (strengthening actors and fora in RAS).

The GFRAS secretariat, guided by an organising committee, organises the GFRAS Annual meeting in collaboration with GFRAS members. Logistical support is provided by the host of the GFRAS Annual Meeting. Past hosts of the meeting were [RELASER](#) (2010, Chile), [AFAAS](#) (2011, Kenya), and [APIRAS](#) (2012, the Philippines).

Who can host the GFRAS Annual Meeting

In addition to regional and sub-regional RAS fora, GFRAS invites all interested networks and organisations to apply to host the GFRAS Annual Meeting. The [GFRAS steering committee](#) selects the host based on the following criteria (in order of relevance):

- Willingness and demand of the potential host of the GFRAS Annual Meeting
- Capacity of the potential host in regards to human resources and logistical, administrative, and financial experience
- Strategic opportunities to promote RAS and GFRAS, e.g. by reaching to a new segment of affiliates, strengthening partnerships with new organisations, and strengthening regional and sub-regional RAS networks
- Rotation of the GFRAS Annual Meeting between regions and countries to allow global attendance
- Role of the potential host in RAS, agriculture innovation systems, and rural development
- Security aspects for participants and political stability of the host country
- Rotation of the GFRAS Annual Meeting between sectors (public, private, civil society) and actors related to RAS (production, research, education, and others)
- Opportunity for GFRAS to gain synergies with other events related to rural advisory services (RAS)
- Cost and logistical considerations

The host does not need to fulfil all of the listed criteria.

What is involved in hosting a GFRAS Annual Meeting?

The host of the GFRAS Annual Meeting gives support and is responsible for organising key logistical and administrative aspects, including:

- Managing the registration process (online registration facilitated by GFRAS secretariat)
- Organising venue, equipment, and interpretation (if relevant)
- Preparing information material, promotional materials, and bags
- Supporting sponsored participants (booking flight and accommodation, paying out reimbursements, etc.)
- Organising the field trip (if relevant)
- Recording the meeting through minutes, photos, and video if demanded
- Managing finances (budgeting, contracting and paying service providers, financial reporting)

What support is offered by the GFRAS secretariat?

The GFRAS secretariat coordinates the overall organisation of the GFRAS Annual Meeting. It supports the host with:

- Guidelines, checklists, sample letters, and timelines for past meetings
- Promotion of the meeting through the web site and GFRAS Update
- Set up of online registration facilities
- Financial support for the event

How to apply as host of the GFRAS Annual Meeting

Fora and organisations who would like to host the GFRAS Annual Meeting are invited to send a short (2 page) letter to the GFRAS secretariat (info@g-fras.org), explaining their motivation and ideas to host the GFRAS Annual Meeting and indicating their logistical capacity and experience in organising international events with sponsored participants. The letter should address the criteria mentioned above, include the rationale for the host and location, potential additional local partners, and potential synergies. It should be accompanied by the CV of the responsible contact person of the host organisation/fora.

Traditionally, the host of the GFRAS Annual Meeting is selected one year in advance and announced at the previous GFRAS Annual Meeting. We ask you therefore to send your application letter to GFRAS 14 months before the GFRAS Annual Meeting you intend to host (e.g. 31 July 2012 for GFRAS Annual Meeting 2013).

You will be informed about the decision of the GFRAS steering committee one year in advance. The collaboration will be based on a contract between the host and the GFRAS secretariat, which will be signed at least six months before the meeting.

In case GFRAS has to select between several good applications, those fora and organisations who are not selected for the coming year can be considered as host of the GFRAS Annual Meeting in coming years or linked to regional RAS fora as host of their meetings.