

6th GFRAS Annual Meeting

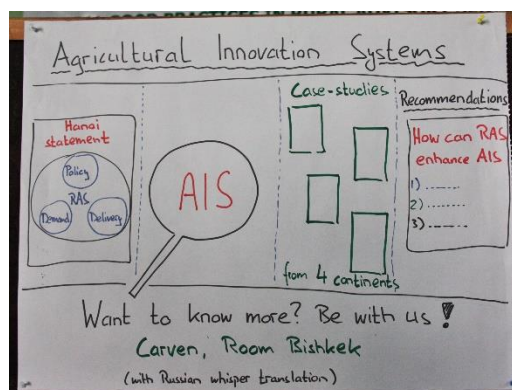
Global Good Practices in Rural Advisory Services

14 - 17 September 2015, Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan

The Role of RAS in Enhancing Agricultural Innovation Systems: Challenges and Ways Forward

Summary of the Parallel Workshop¹

A parallel workshop on the role of Rural Advisory Services (RAS) to enhance effective Agricultural Innovation System (AIS) was organised on 15 Sept 2015. The basis for the workshop was a Global Good Practice Note on Agricultural Innovation Systems, and the Hanoi statement² – a bundle of learnings that were elaborated in the frame of the “Reaching the Millions” learning event. Following these two inputs, a buzz group-work was organised to identify challenges that participants have experienced with regards to AIS. Four case studies from 4 continents – Vietnam (Asia), Honduras (Latin America), Burkino Faso (Africa) and EU (Europe) were presented as inspiration for discussions. Based on the presentations, case studies and participants own experiences, recommendations were made on how RAS can improve AIS.



Result of the buzz group work: Major challenges with regards to AIS are

1. Limited capacity of RAS actors to promote AIS (especially functional skills e.g. multi-stakeholder facilitation, networking etc.)
2. Limited mandate of the RAS actors to promote AIS
3. Different interest of different actors in AIS

Recommendations on how RAS can improve AIS

1. Improve the **capacity of RAS actors** for AIS
 - Not only on technical skills, but also requires functional skills on facilitating a multi stakeholder process
 - Capacity building of new “advisors” - education and adding in AIS in curriculum
 - Lifelong learning with improvements on what is already existing
 - Capacity building at all levels – individual and organisational
2. Build the **institutional capacity** by **broadening the mandates** of RAS actors
3. Develop **enabling environment** for AIS with public support for innovations
4. Use of **multi-stakeholder approaches** and platforms for AIS

¹ The output of this session was summarised by Rakesh Munankami and “elevator speech” presented by Edgars Linde.

² Outcome of the SDC f2f workshop “Reaching the Millions” that took place in Hanoi, in March 2015

5. **End-use orientation** focusing on the needs of farmers
6. Providing **incentives for innovations** e.g. free actors, advisors or innovation brokers are well paid if successful,
7. AIS actors should have **readiness to fail** – taking risks that could fail, as not all innovations are successful but failures lead to learning
8. RAS needs to be **embedded in the AIS** for it to generate innovations
9. Successful technology application should have **the “space” to move forward** on AIS. It should focus not only on “experimentation” dealing with technology but with a **wider framework**
10. A clear distinction between AIS and extension methods should be made

The participants agreed that capacity of the RAS actors should be improved for AIS, but capacity is not the **ONLY** factor to enhance AIS. RAS actors should be provided with incentives to facilitate the role as AIS brokers. Capacity should be built at individual level as well as in organisational level by broadening the mandate of organisations. Enabling environment should be created with public support for fostering innovations.