



## ANNOUNCEMENT

### Regional Conference on Rural Advisory Services (RAS) in Central Asia and the Caucasus

**17-21 November 2014, Bishkek / Issyk Kul, Kyrgyz Republic**

Dear Sir, dear Madam, dear colleagues

With this letter, we would like to inform you that the Regional Conference on Rural Advisory Services in Central Asia announced earlier, will take place on 17-21 November 2014 in Bishkek / Issyk Kul region in Kyrgyzstan. The shift of the date was necessary because on the originally planned dates in September some key stakeholders would not have been available.

You find the objectives and a preliminary program on the following pages. We would appreciate if you share this announcement with other possibly interested persons.

If you would like to participate, please fill out the attached registration form and return to [a.tashmatov@cgiar.org](mailto:a.tashmatov@cgiar.org) or [eka.rdconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:eka.rdconsulting@gmail.com) latest by 31 August 2014.

If you would like to take part in the country RAS mapping or in the organisation of the event, let us know. If you already earlier expressed your interest in this, we will contact you in any case.

Feel free to address any questions you may have to the above addresses.

With best regards

Dr. Alisher Tashmatov  
Executive Secretary, CACAARI

Elisabeth Katz  
Temporary Focal Person for GFRAS in Central Asia



## Regional Conference on Rural Advisory Services (RAS) in Central Asia and the Caucasus

**17-21 November 2014, Bishkek / Issyk Kul, Kyrgyz Republic**

### Introduction

Poor linkages between researchers, advisory services systems, farmers, especially women farmers, private sector stakeholders and policy makers are a common issue in the countries in the Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) region. The unsystematic level of interaction undermines the ability of farmers to access and introduce innovative technologies and practices on their farms, and thus deprives them of innovation-based opportunities to improve their productivity, profitability and their livelihoods. In view of this challenge, CACAARI (Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutes) and CAC-FRAS (Central Asia and the Caucasus Forum for Rural Advisory Services), a still informal regional platform of GFRAS (Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services), have decided to join efforts and undertake joint actions towards strengthening Rural Advisory Service Systems in the region. The goals are to learn from each other, develop common approaches, and coordinate efforts to strengthen agricultural innovation systems in the region.

From 17 to 21 November 2014, CACAARI and CAC-FRAS, in collaboration with GFAR (Global Forum on Agricultural Research), MEAS (Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services), ICARDA (International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas), IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute) and other partners, will organise a joint Regional Conference on Rural Advisory Services in the Bishkek region of the Kyrgyz Republic.

### Objectives

The objectives of the joint Regional Conference on Rural Advisory Services are the following:

Concerning Rural Advisory Services:

- Establish a common understanding on status, strengths and weaknesses of the rural advisory services systems in the CAC region by sharing and discussing the results of a mapping of the RAS systems in the different countries, and prepare the ground for a comprehensive assessment of the rural advisory service systems in the CAC region.<sup>1</sup>
- Share evidence of the effectiveness and importance of rural advisory services through the presentation of a number of case studies.

---

<sup>1</sup> The mapping will be conducted in collaboration with MEAS (Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services; project of USAID and University of Illinois), IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute) and possibly other interested stakeholders. The preliminary mapping is planned to be followed by comprehensive assessments of RAS systems in the participating countries in 2015.

- Discuss models of government policies and support for rural advisory service systems and their advantages and disadvantages in different frame conditions, and provide recommendations to the governments in the region.

Concerning CACAARI:

- Define foresight mechanisms for agricultural development in the CAC region.
- Agree on regional actions towards the implementation of the GCARD Roadmap based on national reviews and a joint synthesis.
- Present and discuss results of CACAARI governance review and decide on ways forward.

Concerning CAC-FRAS:

- Determine the future form of CAC-FRAS.
- Agree on actions leading up to the global GFRAS Annual Meeting 2015, which will take place in the Kyrgyz Republic.

## Participants

Advisory service professionals, government policy makers concerned with advisory services, representatives of national agricultural research systems, other professionals in agricultural innovation systems, and clients of advisory services from the region, are the core target participants. In addition, participants from GFRAS, GFAR and international organisations (e.g. CGIAR Research Programs in the region, FAO, IFPRI) dealing with rural advisory services will be attracted.

## Preparation and organisation

1. An organisational committee of interested and motivated RAS stakeholders in the region will take the responsibility for the contents and the methodology of the conference, and provide guidance to the management and logistics team. Two facilitators, most probably from the region, will be part of this committee.
2. A management and logistics team comprising the Rural Advisory Services (RAS) in Kyrgyzstan and the CACAARI secretariat in Tashkent will take the lead in the practical organisation of the conference.
3. Country teams of 3-4 RAS professionals in each country will conduct basic mapping of the advisory service systems in their countries and prepare a presentation of the findings at the conference.

## Financing

It is expected that the majority of the participants will finance their participation themselves. Sponsoring for a limited number of participants is available.

## Preliminary program

Topics	Comments
<b>Day 0: 17 November 2014</b>	
Arrival of participants	
Opening, goals, mutual introduction	Evening

<b>Day 1: 18 November 2014</b>	
Overview concerning the status of advisory services in the region	Plenary presentation
Current status of advisory service landscape in the countries of the region	Market place presentations of the results of the mapping exercise by country teams
Evidence of advisory service effectiveness on productivity and income of farmers	Presentation of case studies
Conclusions on the effectiveness of advisory services and the frame conditions for this effectiveness	Group work and plenary discussions
Gender issues in Agricultural Innovation Systems	Optional evening session (after dinner)
<b>DAY 2: 19 November 2014</b>	
Field visits – advisory services in Kyrgyzstan	Examples of advisory service organisations Visits to advisory service client farmers
Review of insights from the field visits	Group presentations and plenary discussion
How to make better use of ICTs in Agricultural Innovation Systems? E.g. database with agricultural information	Optional evening session (after dinner)
<b>DAY 3: 20 November 2014</b>	
Comparison of government role in advisory service provision in the region	Work in country groups, presentations and plenary discussion
Examples of government roles concerning advisory services from around the world	Presentation by an international advisory service specialist (t.b.d.)
Presentation on conclusions concerning advisory service policies from the 5 <sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of GFRAS in Argentina	Alisher Tashmatov (CACAARI)
Panel discussion on public-private partnerships and other models of government role for advisory services	Selected participating government officials and AS professionals, invited politicians
Discussion, conclusions and recommendations on effective government roles and policies concerning advisory services	Group work and plenary discussion
Joint dinner party	
<b>DAY 4: 21 November 2014</b>	
Parallel sessions:	
<b>A) CAC-FRAS</b> Discuss future organisational form of CAC-FRAS Plan steps and actions in preparation for global GFRAS meeting 2015	Specific CAC-FRAS participants
<b>B) CACAARI</b> Foresight action program Pre-GCARD-3 face-to-face discussions CACAARI governance review	Specific CACAARI participants
Ways to address advisory service issues in CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs on Dryland Systems and on Policy Institutions and Markets)	Research stakeholders with contributions by selected advisory service specialists
Joint wrap-up session	