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The role of Agricultural Innovation Systems in Central Asia and Caucasus countries and China towards more sustainable food security and nutrition

This online discussion is initiated by [the Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions \(CACAARI\)](#) in close collaboration with the [Northwest Agriculture & Forest University \(NAFU\)](#) in China and supported by [FAO's Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia](#) (FSN Forum in ECA).

The purpose of this cross-regional online discussion is to offer stakeholders an opportunity to share their experience, knowledge and regional good practices on strengthening Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) in the Central Asia and Caucasus (CAC) countries and China.

The poor linkages among farmers, especially women farmers, the public sector, the private sector, policy makers, and academia are a common problem in the CAC countries and China. Many farmers in the CAC countries and China are encountering difficulties in accessing advanced knowledge and information on agricultural technologies and emerging markets. This deprives them of innovation-based opportunities to improve their productivity, profitability and their livelihoods.

To tackle these problems many countries have established Rural Advisory Service (RAS) Systems, which however, substantially differ from country to country and are still not playing a big enough role in assisting farmers for increasing productivity and profitability. In some countries RAS systems are largely a government domain or are being donor-driven, while in others they include participation of the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Notwithstanding these differences, most countries are facing the common challenge to make the RAS system more efficient and sustainable.

Considering such challenges, [CACAARI](#) in 2012 adopted [the Regional Strategy](#) for transforming and strengthening agricultural research and innovation systems. The strategy advocates an integrated approach towards more sustainable food and nutrition by strengthening cooperation among various stakeholders of Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) such as research institutions, rural advisory services, academia, input providers, farmers, government organizations, in order to facilitate actions for development along agricultural food chains.

AIS could help enhancing participatory agricultural research and extension systems by strengthening linkages to farmers and other actors of the agricultural sector. This is considered an important factor for connecting farmers in CAC countries and China and providing opportunities for better access to markets and income diversification that ultimately will benefit food security and better nutrition.

The main objective of this online-discussion is a wider inclusion of stakeholders into a constructive dialogue for contributing to: a) identifying challenges, opportunities and collective actions towards strengthening AIS; b) identifying roles of various stakeholders; c) gathering insights and views on

consistent actions needed to enhance the capacities of existing regional platforms to promote communication and collaborations on agricultural innovations ; (d) promoting regional cooperation (through initiatives such as “[One Road One Belt](#)”) for improved policies to enhance market liberalization, environment sustainability, and regional development.

This discussion is open to everyone interested in the subject; and we are inviting experts from the governments, civil society organizations, private sector, research and education organizations to take part in a constructive dialogue on opportunities and challenges for AIS contributing to sustainable food security and better nutrition in CAC countries and China.

We would like to propose discussing the following issues:

- What are the **major challenges** faced by Agricultural Innovation Systems in CAC countries and China to increase their role in improving food security and nutrition?
- What should be the **priority areas** for Agricultural Innovation Systems to effectively support farmers in for improving their livelihood?
- What kind of **actions** are needed to enhance agricultural research extension services and make them conducive to ensuring food security and improving nutrition?
- What is the current and what should be the future **role of** agricultural research and education organizations (academia) in the RAS systems? What should the partnership modalities be between academia and other stakeholders such as public organizations, farmer organizations and rural communities? What are the existing innovative institutions? And what are the major constraints?

The outcomes of the online-discussions will feed into face-to-face consultation on the Roadmap to enhance RAS system in CAC countries and China to be organized as a side event at the [6th Annual Meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services \(GRAS\)](#).

We wish to thank you in advance for participating in this discussion. We do believe that your participation and comments will prove to be very valuable and that both you and your organization will benefit from the e-interaction with other experts regionally and globally.

We look forward to an interesting and rich discussion!

Respectfully Yours,

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