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MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR

No. 02
Series of 2024

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES ON THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES RESOURCES, RESEARCH AND EXTENSION FOR DEVELOPMENT NETWORK (AFRREDN)

WHEREAS, Republic Act (RA) No. 8435, or the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) of 1997 aims to modernize the agriculture and fisheries (AF) sector to improve the living conditions of farmers and fisherfolk and increase their productivity and competitiveness towards a food and nutrition-secure Philippines;

WHEREAS, established under Executive Order (EO) No. 116, the Department of Agriculture (DA)-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR) is mandated to ensure that all agricultural research is coordinated and undertaken for maximum utility to agriculture;

WHEREAS, also established under EO No. 116, the DA-Agricultural Training Institute (DA-ATI), as the capacity builder, knowledge bank, and catalyst of the Philippine Agriculture and Fisheries extension system, is mandated to provide capacity building, extension support, technical assistance, and advisory services responsive to the real needs of the AF workforce;

WHEREAS, Rule 81.14.3 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of AFMA mandates the Department of Agriculture - Regional Integrated Agricultural Research Centers (DA-RIARCs), under the guidance of DA-BAR and DA-ATI, to develop and maintain a network of regional and provincial collaborators in undertaking the regional Research for Development and Extension (R4DE) programs;

WHEREAS, Administrative Order No. 5 Series of 2018 known as the "General Guidelines and Procedures for the Operation of the Regional Research and Development, Extension Network (RRDEN) for Agricultural and Fisheries," strengthens the regional R4DE priority setting and implementation of projects/program on AF sector;

WHEREAS, the DA Special Order (SO) No. 115, Series of 2002, and DA SO No. 558, Series of 2004, assigned the DA-ATI as the Focal Agency for the Major Final Output (MFO) on Extension Support, Education and Training Services (ESETS) and to establish horizontal and vertical linkages with other institutions directly or indirectly providing AF extension programs and services;

WHEREAS, a more unified and integrated AF R4DE system is necessary to ensure the proper generation, dissemination, and scaling of AF technologies and address the needs of farmers and fisherfolk in the country. Also, this is for the R4DE system to have a bigger impact and contribution to the modernization and industrialization of the Philippine AF sector. With this, initiatives are undertaken towards unifying DA-BAR's RRDEN and DA-ATT's Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Network (RAFEN) into the AFRREDN, also referred hereinafter as the "Network";

NOW THEREFORE, this Memorandum Circular is hereby issued for the guidance of all regional R4DE partner institutions on the institutionalization of the AFRREDN. This is to strengthen partnerships and collaborations, and harmonize programs and services with the recognition that research for development and agricultural extension are inevitably intertwined and should work together.

I. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The AFRREDN shall serve as the major partnership mechanism for AF R4DE stakeholders such as national government agencies, state colleges/universities, local government units (LGUs), and private institutions as well as the Farmers Cooperatives and Associations (FCAs). It shall provide an avenue of downstreaming critical and relevant policies and interventions from National R4DE institutions through stronger and direct collaborations between and among the AFRREDN members as necessitated by the local industry needs. This is in pursuit of delivering R4DE programs and services that are relevant, inclusive, well-coordinated, complemented, and effectively carried out.

Composed of various institutions and agencies, it shall serve as an avenue for the R4DE stakeholders to discuss issues and concerns relative to the R4DE system including the current and emerging innovations that could serve as a basis for policy development. It also shall organize and link different R4DE programs and services between and among relevant R4DE stakeholders to avoid duplications and overlaps of interventions, and maximize the limited resources for R4DE.

II. COMPOSITION, STRUCTURE, AND MEMBERSHIP

The AFRREDN shall be established at national and regional levels. A national AFRREDN shall be created to serve as the governing and policymaking body for the entire Network. There shall be regional AFRREDNs in all regions of the country to be coordinated and supervised by a national AFRREDN. The AFRREDN shall have the following operational structure:

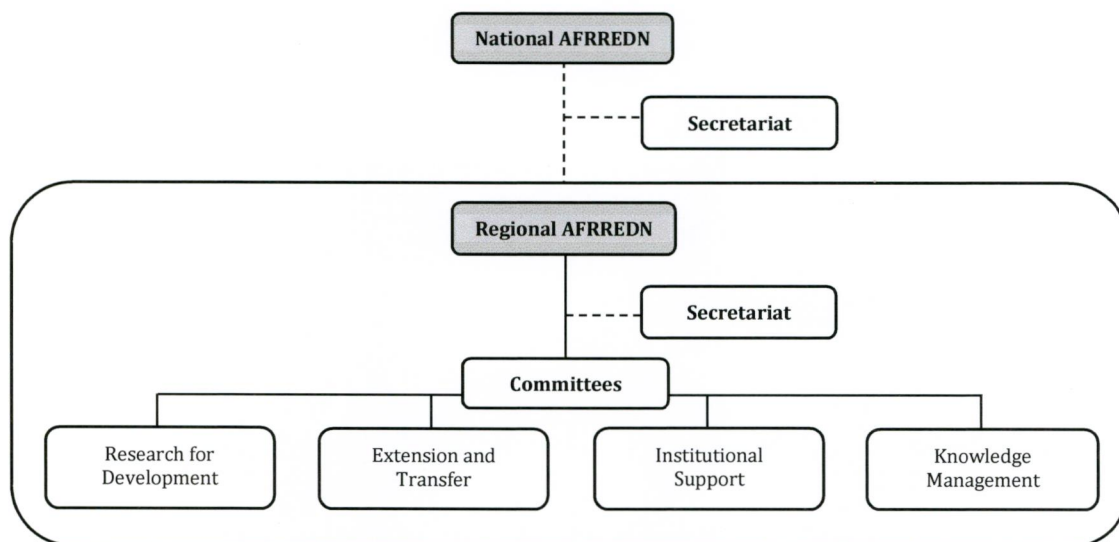


Figure 1. The operational structure of the AFRREDN

A. National AFRREDN

Chair: DA Undersecretary
(as designated by the Secretary)

Co-Chairs: DA-BAR Director
DA-ATI Director

Members: DA Bureaus and Attached Agencies with R4D&E Mandates
Philippine Association of Research Managers (PHILARM)
Philippine Extension and Advisory Services Network, Inc.
(PhilEASNet)

Secretariat: DA-BAR and DA-ATI Personnel

B. Regional AFRREDN

Chair: DA RFO Regional Executive Director (RED)

Alternate DA RFO Regional Technical Director (RTD)
Chairs: for Research and Regulations and DA RTD for Operations
(as designated by the RED)

Vice-Chairs: DA RFO Research Division Chief and
DA ATI-Regional Training Center (ATI-RTC) Director

Members: The following are the prospective regional AFRREDN members
to be considered:

DA-RFO Research Division, Field Operations Division (FOD), and
Research Outreach Station (RES)
State Universities and Colleges (SUCs)
Provincial/City/Municipal Local Government Units (LGUs)
Regional/Satellite/Branch Offices of other DA Agencies
Non-DA government agencies (e.g. DOST, DTI, NEDA-RDC)
ATI-accredited Private Extension Service Providers (ESPs)
Association of ATI-accredited Learning Sites for Agriculture (LSA)
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
Business enterprises and companies involved in R4DE
Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Council (RAFC)

Additional members may be included based on necessity and their potential to enhance the effectiveness of the regional network. In view of the unique dynamics and situation in each region, the Chair, in collaboration with the existing network members, shall determine, deliberate, and finalize the composition of official members. To recognize the previous initiatives of the DA-BAR's RRDEN and DA-ATI's RAFEN, the existing member agencies of each network shall automatically be part of the regional AFRREDN.

Secretariat: Personnel from the ATI-RTC and the DA-RFO's Research Division and the Field Operations Division.

The member institutions of AFRREDN are expected to:

- a. Designate a permanent and an alternate representative, preferably actively involved in their institution's R4DE functions, and who shall officially represent the institution in the various meetings and initiatives led by the Network;
- b. Actively support and participate in various major activities such as but not limited to the regional network policy setting, regional R4DE agenda setting, prioritization, formulation of regional plans and programs, preparation of proposals, implementation, M&E activities, and conduct of capability-building activities among others;
- c. Join and contribute as members to the different R4DE Committees of the Network based on their respective mandates and capacities; and
- d. Provide complementary human and physical resources (e.g. expertise, knowledge products, equipment, facilities, and experimental areas) for the conduct of collaborative R4DE initiatives of the Network.

Moreso, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) shall be signed among members to formalize the establishment and operationalization of the Network, signifying their commitment in performing any undertakings as agreed upon by the Network.

III. FUNCTIONS

The National AFRREDN

The National AFRREDN shall perform the following functions:

- a. Spearhead the development of policies, standards, mechanisms, and protocols to strengthen the operations of the Network and the AF R4DE system in general;
- b. Recommend strategies to facilitate transfer and scale up/out of proven/tested/ready research outputs into harmonized training modules, learning materials, and applicable extension modalities;
- c. Provide thrusts, directives, and recommendations for delivery of R4DE programs and services consistent with national R4DE thrust, directions, and policies as espoused in the Philippine Development Plan for FY 2023-2028, National Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization and Industrialization Plan (NAFMIP) 2021-2030, the Commodity Industry Roadmaps, the National Agriculture and Fisheries Research for Development Agenda and Programs (NAFRDEAP) 2023-2028, the Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Strategic Plan for FY 2023-2028, and other nationally published documents;
- d. Conduct periodic assessments of the regional AFRREDN's performance and accomplishments;
- e. Provide appropriate technical, administrative, and funding support to prioritized Network initiatives; and
- f. Provide technical support and guidance to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) for the establishment and operationalization of their own AFRREDN, as well as possible engagement with other Regional AFRREDNs near their jurisdiction.

The Regional AFRREDN

The Regional AFRREDN shall perform the following functions:

- a. Provide leadership and guidance on regional AF R4DE agenda setting and prioritization as well as the harmonization of R4DE programs and services implemented at the regions based on the national and regional plans including the Provincial Commodity Investment Plan (PCIP);
- b. Convene and discuss emerging issues and concerns and operational matters related to the R4DE system and recommend policy actions;
- c. Ensure that there are no duplications of R4DE programs, projects, and activities (PPAs) proposals from the member agencies for endorsement to any grant funding institutions;
- d. Identify and recommend AF R4DE capacity-building activities of member agencies and its possible facilitating agencies and collaborators;
- e. Organize a cadre of technical experts and trainers to help in the delivery of programs and services to the farmers and fisherfolk in their localities;

- f. Implement collaborative undertakings, including but not limited to technology transfer, promotion, and marketing activities prioritizing DA-supported/developed technologies as well as initiatives to generate external funding support;
- g. Provide relevant R4DE technical assistance and support to the LGUs, especially in the delivery of devolved AF services and initiatives under the Province-led Agriculture and Fisheries Extension System (PAFES); and
- h. Implement monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities, including the submission of periodic reports and updates to the National AFRREDN, to track the different AF R4DE interventions implemented by AFRREDN and its member agencies.

The AFRREDN Secretariat

The AFRREDN Secretariat at the national and regional levels respectively, shall serve as the overall support for all R4DE-related activities. It shall perform the following functions:

- a. Facilitate membership-related concerns (e.g. changing of representatives; participation to activities; cost/resource-sharing commitments);
- b. Respond to the technical, administrative, and financial matters of the Network;
- c. Facilitate communication and coordination among member agencies of the Network;
- d. Consolidate and package the periodic report of the network in coordination with the Committees;
- e. Provide process documentation services during meetings and other important gatherings and undertakings of the Network; and
- f. Lead the maintenance, operation, and optimum utilization of the AFRREDN Office.

The AFRREDN Committees

The AFRREDN, as reflected in Figure 1, shall have four (4) committees, in which heads shall be designated as Focals and Alternate Focals. The identification and assignment of Focals shall depend on the discussions and agreements of the different regional networks considering the extent of membership. The regional Chair shall formalize the designation of the Focals and members of each committee through the signing and issuance of a Special Order (SO). The committee members shall have the discretion to decide and strategize on how they can comply and take action given their respective functions and responsibilities.

The following are the committees and their respective focus areas:

1. Research for Development Committee (RDC) – focuses on determining research for development agenda and priorities, which includes co-identification, co-designing, and co-implementation of research for development of the region based on the needs of their local stakeholders and beneficiaries.

2. Extension and Transfer Committee (ETC) – focuses on enabling the transfer of technologies/knowledge through appropriate extension modalities and scaling processes for the adoption of next-users and end-users.
3. Institutional Development Support Committee (ISC) – focuses on identifying, providing or sourcing institutional support (e.g. training, facilities, equipment) to R4DE stakeholders and implementers.
4. Knowledge Management Committee (KMC) – focuses on the maintenance and updating of regional R4DE project repositories/databases, and the development of dissemination of relevant knowledge products to inform AF stakeholders about these projects.

Each committee shall perform the following functions:

- a. Lead the discussions and knowledge exchange related to their Committee's areas and priorities;
- b. Lead the preparation of plans, budgets, and proposals of initiatives related to the function of their Committees;
- c. Conduct committee meetings and the review, assessments, monitoring, and evaluation of the Network's initiatives related to their Committee;
- d. Provide technical assistance and support to other committees of the Network; and
- e. Prepare necessary periodic reports in coordination with the AFRREDN Secretariat.

IV. AREAS OF COOPERATION

The areas of cooperation are provided to guide the operation of the Network in the planning, prioritization, and implementation of initiatives to be undertaken. These include but are not limited to the following:

1. Knowledge Management;
2. Technology Incubation;
3. Scaling of Technologies;
4. Co-creation/Co-design of Technologies (Stakeholder Engagement);
5. Responsive Interventions (addressing emerging issues and concerns); and
6. Policy development.

V. OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

1. Aside from the national policy documents, the network shall align its initiatives with the regional and provincial roadmaps and plans of the Regional Development Council (RDC), LGUs, and other local stakeholders in the regions.
2. The AFRREDN shall develop a three (3) year development plan, which shall specify the list of programs, projects, and activities (PPAs) to be undertaken by the network based on the thrust and directions of the different AFE-related plans and programs as well as the identified needs and priorities of each region, particularly the different provinces in their jurisdiction. This plan shall serve as the basis for the PPAs to be included in the annual AFRREDN Work and Financial Plan (WFP).

3. The National AFRREDN shall hold regular meetings at least twice a year. Special meetings may also be conducted as the need arises. The meetings shall focus on the following:
 - discussion of planned initiatives to be implemented and/or updates of ongoing initiatives of the Network, or from each member agency;
 - presentation of proposed projects for funding, and the collaborative actions to be undertaken between and/or among member agencies; and
 - sharing of ideas and exchange of information related to current policy directions, emerging trends, opportunities, as well as issues and concerns on the region's AF sector.
4. The AFRREDN shall conduct periodic performance assessments and M&E of initiatives conducted vis-à-vis target outputs, objectives, and purpose of the network.

VI. FUNDING SUPPORT

1. The DA-RFO shall provide counterpart financial, human, and physical resources for the regional AFRREDN activities. Supplemental funds from the DA Banner Programs through the DA-RFOs can be allotted for the conduct of AFRREDN activities subject to the approval of the RED.
2. The expenses for the operations and selected major activities of the Network shall be supported through the funds of the DA-BAR and DA-ATI in accordance with the approved WFP and/or project proposal subject to the existing accounting and auditing rules.
3. Other expenses that may form part of regional network funds may be supported by member agencies and/or sponsored by other national/international institutions. This shall be highlighted in the AFRREDN MOU and the WFP.
4. The Network may likewise explore other funding opportunities and grants for the implementation of R4DE projects.

VII. SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDELINE

Separate guidelines may be issued by the DA-BAR and DA-ATI as well as the National and Regional AFRREDN to ensure the proper operationalization of the network and for the successful implementation of AFRREDN initiatives.

VIII. REPEALING AND SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

All other existing rules, circulars, procedures, practices, orders, or any part thereof that are inconsistent with this Memorandum Circular are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly. If any part or provision of the Memorandum Circular is declared unconstitutional or illegal, the other parts or provisions shall remain valid.

IX. EFFECTIVITY

This Memorandum Circular shall take effect immediately following the completion of its and filing with the Office of the National Administrative Register, UP Law Center, and publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper, or general circulation.

This shall supersede other issuances that are inconsistent herewith and shall remain in force unless reviewed and amended by the National AFRREDN every three (3) years, or as deemed necessary.

Done this 18th day of JANUARY 2024.


FRANCISCO P. TIU LAUREL, JR.
Secretary

Handwritten initials and date: "18 JAN 2024"



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