



# The Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016

## Building the Next Generation of Scientists for Africa to Deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals

A CGIAR-Universities-NARIs-RECs-Private Sector Partnership to Build Human Research Capacity to Meet the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa

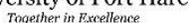
### Concept Note

#### Background

The need to enhance impact of agricultural research and development activities in Africa requires a new approach to old problems, or a ‘business unusual’. Where returns to investment in Africa and other parts of the world have been shown to be significant, there has not been adequate impact on reducing poverty in the poorer parts of the world. This is mirrored in the reality that sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is the only region in the world where per capita food production has decreased since 1970. Thus, almost 50% of the populations in SSA survive on less than one US Dollar (\$1) a day, reflecting the highest levels of poverty in the world. At the same time, there are new challenges, such as the impact of climate change on production, particularly rain-fed production; rural –urban migration and a multitude accompanying challenges; globalization; among others that need to be contended with.

Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D) is a paradigm that has evolved in response to the poor dissemination and adoption of outputs arising from technology generation. The approach takes cognizance of the need to overhaul technology transfer mechanisms, particularly linear dissemination approaches, which did not involve clients and end-users in technology generation and adoption. It is clear that for various reasons, scientific gains from research are not being adequately captured and put to use by end-users, particularly farmers. One reason for this is the weakness in the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) to better identify and respond directly to the challenges of small scale farmers, in a way that leads to enhanced incomes and livelihoods over

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time. NARS themselves are constrained by lack of skills and human resources, inadequate infrastructure and investments. Other NARS, such as Rwanda, Burundi etc. who have both recently come out of conflict, are also too small in population and funding capacity to be able to develop strong in-house capacity in the suite of areas that is required to support farmers. Regional cross country approaches could potentially provide solutions for these countries.

A recent capacity assessment (ASTI, 2011) recognized that many countries—particularly those in francophone West Africa, which are threatened by extremely fragile funding systems—face fundamental capacity and investment challenges. Overall capacity has deteriorated and many NARS employ a large proportion of BSc holders. The starting point would be to build a new ‘cadre’ of rural development practitioners that possess skills to enable the identification of farmer problems, to undertake on-farm research and be able to support the transfer of knowledge and skills to rural farmers while working in-situ. Knowledge needs to be generated that responds directly to the needs of smallholder farmers along the entire value chains that empowers them to enhance productivity, reduce post-harvest losses and link more effectively with markets both local, national and regional.

Universities are being challenged to recreate themselves for development relevance and to produce graduates, with capacity to respond to changing development paradigms, including emerging challenges of climate change and global warming, competition between food demands and bio-fuels, understanding and responding to market dynamics, drivers and shocks, among others. The challenge, therefore, is how to re-tool existing human and other resources, including institutional cultures, to be able to train graduates to facilitate transformation of SSA nations. Strengthening agricultural capacity at MSc and PhD level for undertaking ‘business unusual’ using participatory approaches with client and market orientation is thus a much needed intervention. Universities require new partnerships, particularly with other NARS players and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) to enhance the quality of graduate students. Such an approach would ensure that outputs

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could be generated immediately, while enhancing the capacity available for deployment, both within the CGIAR, NARS and development workforce.

The CGIAR, one of the larger players in the research sector in Africa, was created in the 1970s to respond to famine in the World poorest countries by providing investments in research to develop new high yielding varieties. The CGIAR works closely with national agricultural research systems<sup>1</sup> (NARS) and other actors in ensuring the greater effectiveness of its work within the various countries in which it operates. Over the years it has evolved significantly, but its core mission remains primarily the same: to end hunger completely by 2030. The CGIAR can play a large role in bolstering scientific capacity within the NARS across Africa to enhance knowledge output through use of advanced tools and its utility for intended clients and partners. Such a partnership between Universities, NARS, the CGIAR, and the private sector would support the achievement of CGIAR and global objectives. For example, under the CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Cereals led by ICRISAT and ICARDA, a series of internship programs were implemented to enable graduate students to be attached to CGIAR centers and benefit from the facilities and expertise of the CGIAR and its scientists. Secondly, there is need to enhance the integration between the different players to support value chain approaches, and linkages to markets. Non-traditional players in research, such as governments, through regional economic communities, and the emerging private sector need to be engaged more systematically to enhance outcomes in the region. According to the CGIAR, *'the objectives of a renewed and expanded research effort must therefore include not merely higher yields from improved varieties and practices, but also greater emphasis on new themes such as climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive agriculture, faster adoption of new technologies, higher profitability from the small farm and food processing sectors, better opportunities for women and marginalized'*.

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<sup>1</sup> NARS here refers to all stakeholders that undertake research including national agricultural research institutes, universities, government authorities, such as commodity control commission, the private sector etc.

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### Objectives of the side Event

The overall objective is to develop human scientific capacity of African NARS through enhanced collaboration between universities, SROs, NARS, and RECs for improved quality training of graduates that respond to the needs of farmers and national governments. Specifically, the side event will explore opportunities for development of a strategy/ mechanism for enhancing partnership between universities, NARS and the CGIAR to build human resource capacity for African NARS.

### Approach and Methodology

A one day side –event will be held during the RUFORUM Biennial Conference 17-21 October, 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa. Participants will be from Universities, NARS, Sub-Regional Organisations, and the CGIAR centres with presence in Africa. The participants will represent a skills and multi-disciplinary mix from various countries covering the several African regions including representatives from various stakeholder groups (Agro-industry, Non-governmental organisations, development partners, universities, policy makers, regional agricultural networks etc.). A facilitator will be tasked to guide the meeting towards achievement of objectives subsequent to key background and informant presentations. The conference design will be outcome focused and all activities will focus on attainment of outputs. Opportunity will be provided for discussions, both in plenary and groups.

### Key outputs

The key aim of the conference is to develop a mechanism to enhance partnerships between universities and the CGIAR, NARIs, the private sector and RECs in Africa to support human scientific capacity building in Africa. Thus, the key outputs of the meeting will be:

1. Innovative approaches and methods to strengthen human scientific capacity building for participatory technology development and transfer in Africa identified;
2. New Partnerships between RUFORUM and other Higher Education Networks, SROs and the CGIAR created;
3. RECs engagement in supporting Human capacity building in Africa;

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4. A funding strategy to support internships for graduate students in CGIAR centres in Africa;
5. University training, research and outreach programs selected to enhance collaboration between CGIAR and NARS partners.

**The Conference  
Convener**

The meeting and the overall Biennial Conference will be convened by RUFORUM. RUFORUM has a wealth of experience in management of projects and related events and is well placed to manage this Conference. RUFORUM is a consortium of 60 universities in Africa. RUFORUM will bring to the partnership its experience in facilitating staff and student mobility in the region, including supporting universities in the region to mobilize funding for mobility of over 500 postgraduate students through the European Union Intra-ACP and other funding windows, particularly for universities with weak academic programs. RUFORUM has supported creation and nurturing of over 10 regional graduate programs and the training of over 370 PhD and 1,700 MSc students. RUFORUM has experience in strengthening grassroots orientation and inter-disciplinarity of university research and training and linking African Universities to policy.

**Venue and  
Participants**

**Venue:** Century City Conference Centre, Hall A, Cape Town, South Africa

**Date & Time:** Wednesday 19 October, 2016, 1430-1730

**Side Event Organizer  
and Contact**

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)

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## Side Event Programme

Time	Activity	Responsible
09:00-09:10	Welcome Remarks	Dr. Shadrack S. Moephuli, CEO & President, Agricultural Research Council (ARC), South Africa
09:10-09:30	Introductions and meeting objectives	Facilitator
09:30-09:45	Opening Remarks	Dr. David Bergvinson, Director General, ICRISAT
09:45-10:00	Opening Speech	TBI
10:00-10:20	<b>Keynote Presentation:</b> Building sustainable human research capacity in Africa: recent trends and approaches	Speaker To be identified: 1. GFAR 2. CGIAR Secretariat 3. African Capacity Building Foundation 4. AGRINATURA
10:20-10:30	Discussions	
10:30-11:00	Health Break	Facilitator
11:00-12:30	Group activity: Opportunities for building capacity in Africa 1. Funding options 2. Local, national, regional and international frameworks for human, scientific capacity building 3. CGIAR 4. Training models	All participants
12:30-13:00	Group presentations	
13:00-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-14:20	Possible roles for Regional Economic Communities in strengthening scientific capacity building in Africa	RECS
14:20-14:30	Discussions	
14:30-15:30	Discussions on capacity building	All participants

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15:30-16:00	Health Break	
16:00-16:10	Remarks by RUFORUM	TBD
16:10-16:20	Closing Remarks	Head Capacity Building, ILRI
16:20-16:30	Closing Remarks	One of the VCs

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