



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

## Joint Meta- Learning on Higher Agricultural Education to Enhance Relevance and Quality of Postgraduate Training in Africa

### Concept Note

#### Background & Introduction

Agriculture has been recognized for a long time as a key driver for economic development for various reasons. A large proportion of Africans (over 60% across the continent, and in some countries as high as 80%) derive employment from the agricultural sector. Secondly, agriculture contributes significantly to the national GDPs, averaging close to 30%. Thirdly, agriculture is largely practiced in rural areas by the poor with comparatively low yields and high postharvest losses. However, agricultural output remains low and performance poor. Reports have demonstrated that even where production has increased, increases have largely been from increased crop areas (Pinto *et al.*, 2014). Thus, a large number of Africans continue to go hungry and suffer from chronic malnutrition. In fact, Africa is the only continent where extreme poverty has actually increased in the last decade. At the same time, Africa’s young and currently rural population continues to grow at a fast pace, expected to more than double to reach 2.3 billion by 2050<sup>1</sup> highlighting the imperative to grow more food, from less land. Climate change, urbanization, globalization are all expected to present further significant challenges to agricultural production.

Higher education, science, technology and innovation have been identified as strategic areas at national and regional level on the continent for responding to agricultural challenges and for driving economic growth. As such, Africa has adopted the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA, 2024), the Science Agenda for Agriculture (S3A), and the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP, 2003) as blue prints for transformation and economic

<sup>1</sup> <http://populationpyramid.net/africa/2015/>, accessed on 20 October, 2014.

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development in the continent. However, the limited human capital and related skills and knowledge to support the implementation of these initiatives is grossly curtailing progress to achieve the development targets in the continent including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Higher agricultural education institutions have been challenged to transform themselves to respond to these challenges. The Higher education sector despite its many challenges provides the underpinning for building a science, technology and innovation sector. Universities maintain a large share of PhD qualified staff in many African countries, many holding over 50% of the national available proportion of PhDs qualified scientists for supporting both training and knowledge generation. Farmers desperately need improved technologies to adjust to new social, economic and climatic environments and the universities need to directly and fully respond to these challenges. In addition the quality and focus of training at universities and colleges of agriculture need to be transformed and enhanced to produce graduates who can effectively play critical roles in the transformation of African agriculture and other sectors.

Key challenges faced by universities are how to increase access and maintain quality, how to recruit and maintain quality staff and programs, how to enhance knowledge output, how to match graduates to the demands of the ever changing labor market, including the reduced opportunities for employment in the public sector, and increasing opportunities for private employment and innovation that call for entrepreneurship skills.

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is an association of 60 African Universities founded in 2004 by African Vice Chancellors to transform African Universities into knowledge institutions that contribute towards national development goals through the empowerment of graduates and small-scale farmers. RUFORUM mission is “to strengthen the capacities of Universities to foster innovations responsive to the demands of smallholder farmers and value chains through the training of high quality researchers, the output of impact-oriented research, and the maintenance of collaborative working relations among researchers, farmers, market actors, national agricultural

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research and advocacy institutions, and governments.” RUFORUM provides an effective platform for University support to smallholders by enabling the University community to contribute to the productivity of small-scale producers and the value chains that serve them. This platform also provides direct links into the national research and policy nexus. More specifically, the network aims to spread RUFORUM best practices through 1) building lessons into academic teaching, 2) working with partners in selected countries, including BMGF anchor countries to spread findings through their networks both geographically and along value chains and 3) taking on a visionary/advocacy role at the continental level.

### Learning from previous implementation and partnerships

Improving monitoring, evaluation and learning is critical for making gains in the higher education sector. In particular, the experiences from initiatives to strengthen higher education in Africa can be analyzed, synthesized and unpacked to provide strategies for design for current planners in the higher education sector. Universities themselves, but also Ministries of Education, national planning authorities, university management and other higher education stakeholders stand to benefit significantly from such lesson. African Universities can also benefit from partnerships with universities in Europe, for example through Agrinatura. European Universities have since independence been working in partnership with universities in Africa to support higher education objectives. Building stronger links with Europe for lesson learning and for guiding future direction is an important component of this work. Lessons from other parts of the world would also help in design and implementation of higher education initiatives in Africa.

### Examples of previous partnerships on higher education with Europe

In Europe, Agrinatura<sup>2</sup> undertook in 2011 a study commissioned by EIARD<sup>3</sup> that analysed the contribution of the EU and Member States on capacity

<sup>2</sup> Agrinatura is association of the major research and education stakeholders in Europe dealing with agricultural research and HE for development

<sup>3</sup> EIARD stands for the *European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development*. It brings together the Member States, the European Commission, Norway and Switzerland to better coordinate action (cf. [www.eiard.org](http://www.eiard.org)).

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building<sup>4</sup>. The conclusions underlined the need of capitalising the results of the past actions and to contribute to better coordination of the actions. This is the focus of this side event. There is need to build on lessons of the EDULINK I & II programme of the EC/ACP, and other European donor funded programmes with focus in Africa related to Higher Agricultural Education such as from NUFFIC, SIDA and DFID (i.e. the Strengthening Capacity for Agriculture Research for Agricultural Development- SCARDA). The Project will also highlight specific lessons from EDULINK funded projects in which RUFORUM and other partners have been participating. Such projects include six funded ACP EDULINK and S&T Projects as well as those being coordinated by the partner institutions such as: 1) *Catalysing Change at African Universities* (CCAU); *Strengthening University Capacity for promoting, facilitating and teaching rural innovation processes* (SUCAPRI); *Enhancing Research Capacity in Eastern and Southern Africa; and the Quality Assurance and Management Project* led by RUFORUM. 2) Other projects (funded by ACP-EU S&T) are the *Shifting from outreach to engagement: transforming universities current response to development challenges; Building the Capacity of African University Graduates to foster change through Agricultural Innovations* (Go4It); and the *Neglected and underutilised species project* (NUS). More recently, RUFORUM has engaged in various projects with EDULINK II including the *Establishing and Piloting Postgraduate Programmes for Supporting Agricultural Development in Post Conflict Countries of Central and Eastern Africa* (ADECEA) and the *Online Platforms Project*.

The side event also recognises that other partners from the around the globe are engaged in various higher education initiatives in Africa and these will be leveraged for lessons for Africa. These may include Australia, the United States, Canada and China.

**Objectives of the side Event**

This goal of the side event will be to inform future strategies for strengthening higher education in Africa by undertaking a Meta review of previous and current initiatives in higher agricultural education with focus at postgraduate level. Specifically, the objective will be to:

<sup>4</sup> *Capacity Development in Agricultural Research for Development*, Study by Ruud Ludemann, Marianne van Dorp, Annemarie Groot-Kormelinck and Tim Chancellor, Agrinatura – EIARD, January 2012. For more details see Policy brief attached separately.

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1. Review current and on-going higher agricultural education initiatives in Africa to Identify lessons and best practices
2. Map on-going interventions to identify synergies and gap areas for future interventions
3. Define recommendations to guide future initiatives that are aimed at strengthening agricultural higher education in Africa

### Approach and Methodology

A one day side event will be at the RUFORUM Biennial Conference in Cape Town, South Africa from 17-21 October. The Side event will take place on Thursday 20 October, 2016. Participants will be expected from European and African universities and other regions with experience in higher agricultural education innovation. The meeting will be opened by statements from RUFORUM, Agrinatura and Makerere University prior to official opening address from a representative from the Government of South Africa. Meeting objectives will be shared with the participants on behalf of the co-hosts by RUFORUM. Group work will be organised to review current and on-going higher agricultural education initiatives in Africa to Identify lessons and best practices, map on-going interventions to identify synergies and gap areas for future interventions and to define recommendations to guide future initiatives that are aimed at strengthening agricultural higher education in Africa.

### Venue and Participants

**Venue:** Century City Conference Centre, Hall A

**Date & Time:** Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016 from 1115-1300

### Side Event Organizers and Contact

RUFORUM, Agrinatura and Makerere University

### CO-ORGANISERS:





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