



The Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016

Reviewing and Documenting Status and Trends in Agricultural Higher Education in Africa

Concept Note

Introduction & Background

Agriculture is Africa's most important economic sector. The sector supports the livelihoods of over 90 percent of Africa's population. It also provides employment for, on average, 60 percent of the economically active population, and 70 percent of the continent's poorest communities. Despite the potential of the agribusiness sector, inadequate attention has been paid to the sector. Agriculture coupled with agri-business have greater potential to address the employment crisis facing Africa in the face of a rapidly bulging population. Vibrant agricultural growth has a strong multiplier effect on economic growth economy-wide – and is one of the most effective factors in achieving poverty reduction. Despite this foreseeable benefits of agriculture, Africa's investment in agriculture is still limited in many aspects. For example, though agricultural spending in Africa has gradually increased over the last decade at 2.6% rate per annum, it is nonetheless lower when compared to Asia where it has more than doubled at annual growth rate of 4.1 percent. Further, labour productivity per worker engaged in agriculture is lower compared to other parts of the world. This indicates the sub-optimal production levels as well as limited returns on investment in the agricultural sector.

Increasing agricultural productivity and production including addressing agribusiness components and transitioning smallholder farmers in Africa to market-oriented and profitable agriculture requires investments in human capital development. Human capital development in Africa remains weak, limited by financial and infrastructure resources but further constrained by a lack of prioritization of agricultural sciences. Agriculture clearly has the potential to absorb the youth and offer opportunity for profitable employment along agricultural value chains and potential to include and improve agricultural practice by farmers and other actors.

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Investment in Higher education, on the other hand, has been shown to provide a 12% increase in GDP following a one year increase in the average tertiary education. As such, there is basis for enhancing human capital development in Africa. Well-informed farmers, ‘educated’ rather than learned farmers, as well as organised and aggregated farmers have greater potential to increase agricultural productivity in space and time, harness the benefits and business flows of the agricultural space expand their agricultural estates with a high ability to absorb and contain agricultural risks. These potentials are still marginally achieved especially in sub-Saharan Africa; particularly because schooling levels among African farmers is immensely low with ripple effects often passed to the next generations as parents are unable to similarly educate their children.

A critical challenge remains in Africa, how to achieve a desired progress of lifting smallholders farmers out of poverty yet they have minimum to no education. Secondly, how to further scale Africa’s agricultural horizon into the future as well as move African agriculture from subsistence to market orientation. Recent developments have indicated the need for a blended engagement approach to ensure that graduates have both technical and ability to support community development. This requires that higher education institutions shift their training approaches to enhance practical experience that includes work with farmers Further, there is increased attention paid to agriculture technical vocational education and training (ATVET) as one component of the educational value chain with greater impetus to deliver significant transformation benefits to both the farmers, the education system and governments. However, tapping this remains a challenge, in fact there is limited evidence from the African landscape where this has successfully been modelled and delivered commendable results in the recent past.

In the 2007 World Bank book “Cultivating knowledge and skills to grow African agriculture: a synthesis of an institutional, regional, and international review ”, key issues regarding formal agricultural education and training (AET) were raised. The book, which was published almost decade ago, provided a basis for engagement, discussion and investment in this sector. The book raises the fundamental abandonment of

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	<p>investment in AET by both governments and donors. Further, it was recognised that priorities for intervention in AET have largely remained unclear and thus the sector has often ‘fallen through the cracks’ due to the multi-sectoral nature of agricultural education. What appears to be emerging is the need for collaborative action that requires: (i) greater coherence to investment in Tertiary Agricultural Education (TAE) in Africa; (ii) increased financial and technical support as well as attention to TAE; (iii) innovative actions to ensure quality and relevance of the rapidly expanding higher education sector especially in sub-Saharan Africa; and (iv) well facilitated and guided reform and transformation of Africa’s TAE institutions to facilitate the transformation of agricultural education and make it relevant to farmers and national development.</p> <p>Considering that it is close to a decade since the World Bank book was published, it is necessary to further review updated within the TAE sector and document the current and future status to provide a more up-to-date analysis and opportunities for investment.. Accordingly, RUFORUM in partnership with The MasterCard Foundation and the World Bank have proposed the commencement of the book review. The understanding is that the revised book, shall be in position to provide evidence on how to achieve the espoused agricultural development and transformation agenda and horizon for Africa.</p>
<p>Purpose of the Side Event</p>	<p>The revised book would provide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An update emerging trends and patterns in agricultural tertiary education; 2. Opportunity for South-North and South-South collaboration to articulate a strategic vision for TAE capacity building in Africa; 3. Develop metrics and indicators for priority setting in Africa, investment matching in TAE and monitoring success of investment-returns on investment; 4. Provide evidence on the working and non-working TAE models that have been utilised with smallholder farmers and that that which requires further refinement for relevance to the sector;

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<p>Approach and Methodology</p>	<p>RUFORUM and the World Bank have agreed to explore working together as partners in the development of such a document. RUFORUM in partnership with The MasterCard Foundation have secured initial financing to move this process forward and the World Bank been invited to join in supporting this collaborative work as a third partner with both technical and financial support. Open discussion (Close session to invited persons only)</p> <p>The process to commence the implementation of updating the book (Cultivating Knowledge and Skills to Grow African Agriculture: A Synthesis of an Institutional, Regional, and International Review) has commenced. At the RUFORUM Biennial meeting 17th-21st October, 2016; a side event session focused on addressing and defining this process as part of commencing the publication planning will be undertaken.</p>
<p>Expected outcomes</p>	<p>This meeting will deliver the following outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. purpose and scope of the book review defined; 2. The agricultural space, including current and emerging trends, scanned; 3. Agree on Table of Contents for the Book; 4. Potential contributors identified; 5. road map with timeframes developed and agreed.
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