



The Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016

Linking Private Sector with African Universities in Agribusiness Innovations Plenary on Agribusiness, Innovation, and Engaging Universities with Private Sector

Concept Note

Introduction & Background

The centrality of Agriculture to the development efforts in Africa was underscored in 2003 as African leaders agreed to implement continent wide the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) as a framework for development. One of the pillars of the of CAADP is on “agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption”, which aims to achieve accelerated gains in puroductivity. More specifically, CAADP envisaged that achieving such accelerated productivity gains will require: (a) an enhanced rate of adoption of the most promising available technologies, to support the immediate expansion of African production through the more efficient linking of research and extension systems to producers; (b) technology delivery systems that rapidly bring innovations to farmers and agribusinesses, thereby making increased adoption possible, notably through the appropriate use of new information and communication technologies; (c) renewing the ability of agricultural research systems to efficiently and effectively generate and adapt new knowledge and technologies, including biotechnology, to Africa, which are needed to increase output and productivity while conserving the environment; and (d) mechanisms that reduce the costs and risks of adopting new technologies. In this we see the key role of universities and private sector as a pathway of adotpion and scaling out of agribusiness innovations.

Universities in Africa have traditionally been structured to remain relatively isolated from the populations they serve. Universities train and the research they conduct has been challenged as not responding to the needs of consumers of university products and most curricula are supply rather than demand driven.

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Therefore, higher education requires a much closer engagement with the private sector to enhance its significance to society and transform away from the traditional role of universities in Africa. Engagement of higher education with the private sector will be critical for a number of reasons:

1. The private sector is increasingly the primary employer of African graduates, as employment opportunities in the public sector shrinks;
2. Future employment opportunities should target the private sector;
3. The Private sector presents an opportunity for diversifying funding sources for higher education and strengthening its relevance including by providing greater role for experiential learning through for example, internships in student training, apprenticeship and mentorship;
4. The Youth bulge in Africa is a potential driver for economic growth in Africa, but only if graduates will have the entrepreneurial skills to harness opportunities for income generation and can drive growth. Private sector engagement will enhance universities' capacity to meet these needs; and,
5. Private Sector brings investments, creates jobs, markets, and operates value chains.

In a nutshell, universities need to be better positioned to produce graduates and conduct research that is relevant in addressing the dynamic challenges facing the agricultural sector. Specifically there is an urgent need to create a new generation of innovation-oriented agricultural graduates that efficiently bring together agricultural research, training, commercialization, and extension. This justifies the need for linkages between universities and private sector for purpose of increased adoption, scaling out and scaling up of agribusiness innovations in Africa.

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is an association of 60 African Universities who recognize the largely unfulfilled role that universities can play to support development in Africa. One of the RUFORUM 'modus operandi' is to strengthen agricultural development by

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engaging University actors along the whole value chain, including sister organizations and the private sector in mutually beneficial research and training to accelerate delivery of agricultural science-based innovations.

Purpose of the plenary

The purpose of the plenary is to provide a platform for engagement of private sector, industry with African universities in the agribusiness innovations sub-sector

Objectives of the plenary

The specific objectives of the plenary are;

1. To foster linkages between the private sector, industry in agribusiness innovations and Africa Universities
2. To provide a platform for sharing experiences and lessons on linkage of private sector to African universities
3. To map out pathways for enhanced private sector engagement with African Universities
4. To gather momentum and commitment of private sector, industry and African Universities to engage each other
5. Develop a mechanism for engagement of private sector with African Universities in agribusiness innovations

Approach and Methodology

The plenary session will be delivered through a panel discussion and response to questions from the plenary participants. Leading private sector actors will be invited to participate in the session. This will be followed by a panel of 10 young innovators who will show case their innovations, enterprises and business concepts and propositions.

Outputs

This plenary will generate the following outputs:

- A mechanism for strengthening partnerships and collaboration between universities, private sector institutions and policy makers for piloting
- Documentation of experiences and lessons on linkage of private sector to African universities

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- A roadmap and pathways for enhanced private sector engagement with African Universities
- A commitment from private sector, industry and African universities to engage with each other

Venue and Participants

The venue is the Century City Conference Centre, Cape Town, South Africa. This plenary will bring together a diverse group of private sector players, educators, program managers, agriculture experts, policy makers, graduate students, and media.

Date: Wednesday 19th October, 2016

Time: 0830-1015

Contact

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Programme

Wednesday 19 October 2016 , 0830-1015		
Session Moderator: Ms. Judith Francis, CTA and Member of RUFORUM International Advisory Panel		
Rapporteur: Mr. Henry Massa Makuma, RUFORUM Secretariat and Prof. Godwin Mchau, University of Venda		
MAIN THEME	Linking Universities with the Private Sector for Agribusiness Innovations	
Time	Activity	Responsible/Speaker
0840-0900	Keynote Address: New Directions in Development and Assistance Partnerships	Dr. Jon Lomoy, Director General, NORAD
0900-0915	Plenary Discussion	
0915-1015	Panel: The Private Sector, Knowledge Generation and Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr. Fred Robertson – Agribusiness 2. Ms. Sizwe Nxasana, Chief Executive Officer, FirstRand Ltd 3. Ms. Gloria Serobe, Executive Director, Women’s Investment Portfolio Holdings (WIPHOLD) 4. Dr. Michael Jordaan, Chairperson Wines of South Africa 5. Dr. Helen Gichohi, Chief Executive Officer, Equity Group Foundation
1015-1040	Plenary Discussion	Session moderator
1040-1110	HEALTH BREAK and POSTERS/ EXHIBITIONS VIEWING (Meeting Room D and Hall way)	All

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