

Mobilizing and Strengthening Capacities of Universities to Foster Innovations Responsive to Farming Communities in Africa – The RUFORUM Approach

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**CTA / WUR Inception Workshop on Mainstreaming Tertiary Education in
ACP ARD Policy Processes: Increasing Food Supply and Reducing Hunger**

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Presentation Outline

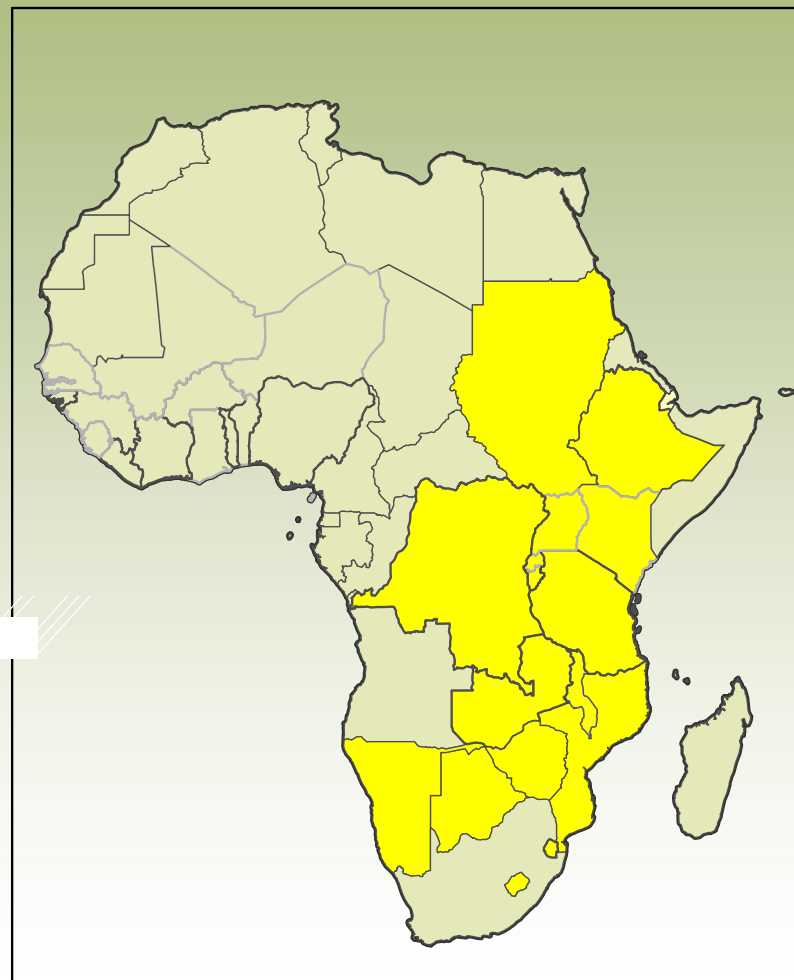
- **Genesis of RUFORUM**
- **Who we are, Where we operate**
- **RUFORUM Strategic Goals**
- **Brief on actions towards enhancing food and nutrition security**
- **RUFORUM Vision**

Genesis of RUFORUM

- **RUFORUM: Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture**
- **RUFORUM** was founded in 2005 by African Vice Chancellors to:
 - Foster integration of African Universities into the national and regional agricultural innovation systems
 - Provide a platform for training quality graduates to support development processes in Africa, especially CAADP
 - Rationalize resource use and enhance economies of scale and scope; and,
 - Provide a platform for networking, resource mobilization and advocacy for TAE in Africa

Who We Are, Where We Operate

- Consortium of **29** Universities in **17** countries of **ECSA** region
- Regional Secretariat housed at **Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda**
- African owned; aligned to regional and national frameworks (**AU, NEPAD, CAADP, etc**)
- Mandate from **COMESA** to oversee graduate training and networks of specialization



RUFORUM Strategic Goals

- Train a critical mass of MSc and PhD graduates who are responsive to stakeholder needs and development goals;
- Develop collaborative research and training facilities that achieve economies of scope and scale;
- Increase the participation and voice of women in research, production and marketing;
- Improve adaptive capacities of universities to produce high quality training, research and outreach services;
- Increase the use of technology to support effective, learning and sharing of knowledge;
- Mainstream new approaches within university teaching/research that have impact across the agricultural sector's full value chain;
- Create a dynamic regional platform for policy advocacy, coordination, and resource mobilization for advanced learning/doing

Brief on Collaborative Actions in Agricultural Research and Training towards Enhancing Food and Nutrition Security



Key Actions

RUFORUM's key actions towards increasing food and nutrition security include:

- 1. The Community Action Research Projects (CARP)**
- 2. The Regional PhD and MSc Programmes**
- 3. The Graduate Research Grants**
- 4. Brokerage of Strategic Partnerships and Networking**
- 5. Skill Enhancement Short courses for Staff and Students**

Community Action Research Projects (CARPs)

- Competitive Grant of US\$. 300,000 for Senior Researchers in Member Universities
- Designed to encourage universities to develop **partnerships** and invest in sustained action research **over time (at least 3 yrs) within a particular community or** in a selected commodity along the full value chain
- Focus on linking **action research lessons & experiential learning into curriculum** and enhancing relevance of graduate training to development challenges
- Each project trains 1 PhD and 2 MSc students

Community Action Research Projects (CARPs) (cont'd)

- Example of on-going CARP
 - University of Malawi, Dowa & Mchinji community, NEPAD PAF, BIOFISA Project

Project: Fish farming for improved income and food security of small scale farmers

- *Production, Disease, Processing, Marketing, etc*

Regional Training Programmes

What they are responding to: **Regionally articulated agenda through stakeholder engagement;**

- The need to enhance capacity for training and research that targets **improving food and nutrition security**, and **access to knowledge**
- The need to **strengthen** the teaching and research capacity of **member universities** in order improve the quality of graduates and research

Regional Training Programmes (cont'd)



MSc

- MSc Research Methods
- MSc Agricultural Information and Communication Management
- Plant Breeding and Seed systems

PhD

- Dryland Resource Management
- Plant Breeding and Biotechnology
- Aquaculture and Fisheries
- Agricultural and Resource Economics
- Soil and Water Management
- Agricultural and Rural Innovation

To be launched 2013/14

- Food Science and Nutrition



Graduate Research Grants

- **Small Competitive Research Grants for academic staff in member universities - \$. 60,000**
- **Research under each grant is implemented through training of 2 MSc students**
- **Currently over 50 active GRGs on-going**

Small grant impacts: The Case of Soybean in Zimbabwe

- **University of Zimbabwe introduced and popularized soybean (nutritious legume; good commercial potential; enhances soil fertility).**

Outcomes:

- **20 MSc students trained and over 30,000 farmers empowered in 6 years**
- **Contributed to relevant research addressing real problems**
- **Reduction in malnutrition in under 5's**
- **Savings on Nitrogen fertilizer costs**
- **Attraction of other donor funds**
- **Linkages with private sector, NGOS**



“The University of Zimbabwe is now coordinating the Zimbabwe Grain Legume and Oil Program that links research, training and outreach

Strategic Partnerships & networking

- Rely on existing extensive network that brings together over 15,000 faculty and non-academic experts – **for joint actions, learning**
- Continue to build strategic alliances with key partners (**AGRINATURA, SUPAGRO, ICRA, WUR, KIT, AU, NEPAD, AGRA, FARA, AAU, RECs, COMESA, EAC, IGADD, ASARECA, SADC, ANAFE, IUCEA, CGIAR, APLU, AIAU, CTA, IFS, etc**)
- Partnerships and Linkages with research institutions critical for improving quality of training
- The RUFORUM Biennial Conference – **peer review, learning, networking, discussion forum**

A background image showing a collage of diverse people, including a man and a woman, looking forward. The image is slightly faded and serves as a backdrop for the title.

Skill enhancement Courses

- **The courses target specific skill gaps commonly identified among staff and graduate students e.g.:**
 - **Communicating science to non-science audience**
 - **Proposal and Technical writing**
 - **Scientific data management**
 - **Personal Mastery and Soft Skills**

Aim: Enhance effectiveness of the staff and students

RUFORUM Vision

“ A Vibrant Agricultural Sector linked to African Universities that can produce high-performing graduates and high quality research responsive to the demands of Africa’s farmers for innovations, and able to generate sustainable livelihoods and national economic development”



Training the next generation of Scientists for Africa: Passionate and confident graduates

