



Reaffirming High Level Commitment to Higher Education in Agriculture in Africa: A Policy Dialogue Conference

CONCEPT NOTE

**Ministerial Conference on Higher Education in Agriculture in Africa (CHEA),
15th -19th November 2010, Kampala, Uganda**

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Background Agriculture is Africa's greatest industry and is recognized as the essential engine for economic development. However, all major studies have highlighted the urgent need to strengthen Africa's human and institutional capacity for agricultural innovation to fill in the gap of a large missing generation of African scientists.

A recent World Bank study concluded "African universities and other institutions of higher learning ultimately will be responsible for replenishing the stock of human capital in national research and extension services, and for providing the broader set of skills necessary to grow agriculture in the 21st century. However, they are ill prepared at present to train the continent's next generation of agricultural scientists, professionals, and technicians. The report concluded "...urgent action must be taken to restore the quality of graduate and postgraduate agricultural education in Africa."

The African Union through NEPAD has developed the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), as a framework to revitalize the agricultural sector. This is presently being implemented by the member governments to contribute to achieving 6% annual economic growth rate in the continent. CAADP Pillar four, for which the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) is the lead institution, focuses on strengthening agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption. Implementation of this and the other three pillars requires that the continent develops a strong science and technology capacity, both in terms of the infrastructure and human resource base.

Africa, as a continent, must therefore urgently respond to the human resource crisis by strengthening capacity and coordinating investments in Higher Education, especially Agricultural Tertiary Education. The participants at the FARA General Assembly Meeting held in June 2007 in Johannesburg, South Africa, called for a Ministerial Meeting to mobilise support and resources for Higher Education in science and agriculture. The Advisory Committee on S&T for ACP Agricultural and Rural Cooperation which is supported by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA), the World Bank,



African universities and several other international organizations and regional bodies have called for national governments to pay more attention to the crisis in professional education and increase investments.

In 2009, NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency (NPCA), FARA and CTA brought together several higher education institutions and their networks to deliberate on the roles and contribution of universities and tertiary institutions in the CAADP process and strategies to enable them respond to the challenges and needs of the African agricultural development agenda. With support from CTA, FARA and Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a follow-up meeting of Deans of Faculties of Agriculture from 37 African countries and representatives of European universities led by Agrinatura was organized in Mombasa, Kenya to identify key concrete actions to be undertaken by African Universities and their partners. Both meetings agreed to mobilise continent-wide policy support to re-engineer African universities for development relevance and international competitiveness. They also committed themselves to a number of structural reforms in order to better address the needs of the future and the requests of the economic stakeholders: management and governance reforms, redesign a number of curricula, establish closer partnerships with the stakeholders in the production and transformation sectors, and ensuring other stakeholders, especially policy makers are integral parts of this process.

In this regard, a regional meeting of African Ministers and senior officials responsible for Education, Agriculture, Science & Technology, Finance and Planning is being convened by Uganda Government and RUFORUM with the support of national, regional and international partners to discuss strengthening Higher Education in Agriculture, so that African Universities and other Education institutions can contribute more effectively to the CAADP process. The RUFORUM Vice Chancellors mandated RUFORUM to facilitate the meeting arrangements. The proposed ministerial conference aims to consolidate these recent developments by strengthening high level partnerships and policy support for re-engineering African Higher Education in Agriculture and Science.

Objectives

1. To mobilize high level political and development commitment for increasing investments in Capacity development, including higher education, science and innovations in Africa
2. To focus attention of persons with the authority and influence to make a difference on the urgent need to address the state of professional and tertiary agricultural education in Africa (including a review of progress in implementing the Dar-es-Salaam meeting of Ministers and the Cape Town Declaration of Ministers responsible for Science and Technology)
3. To highlight the capacity implications (including numbers of scientists and agricultural professionals) of the 6% CAADP growth target;
4. To agree on the priority actions needed by governments, universities and other actors for learning institutions to produce graduates who are fit for purpose in 21st century Africa including how to modernize the facilities, offer cost effective quality academic programmes that respond to the needs of countries and students and achieve excellence and professional satisfaction (both academic staff and students).
5. To consolidate the various NEPAD continental funding targets towards



science and capacity development (this includes the 1% GDP science investment; CAADP 10% allocations etc) and give appropriate guidance to national finance authorities;

6. To facilitate international networking to spur and sustain re-engineering of Higher Education Institutions in Africa.
7. To mobilize African universities to be more pro-active in engaging in Africa's development and in particular to make their due contribution to research and innovation

Approaches

1. Convene policy dialogue platforms involving Key Ministries involved in Higher Education, such as Ministries of Education, Agriculture, Science & Technology, Finance and Economic Planning, other development actors, international, regional and sub-regional bodies involved in Higher Education, Universities and others to share best practices, lessons and approaches.
2. Universities, learning institutions and their partners will share their vision of what would be possible if they could realize their full potential to produce graduates in science and agriculture who can respond to 21st century challenges, increase their relevance and contribution to Africa's development and determine requirements in terms of human, institutional, physical and financial resources. The presentations will give a practical picture of 'what could be' set against a background of the actual conditions under which the universities are functioning today.
3. Feed the deliberations from the policy dialogues (two day pre-Ministerial meetings) into the Ministerial Forum.
4. Background papers will be prepared and international media engaged to support CHEA communication.

Venue Dates

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Conveners

The Conference is being convened by Uganda Government and RUFORUM in partnership with FARA, Association of African Universities (AAU), CTA, FANRPAN (Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network), ATPS (African Technology Policy Network), ANAFE (African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education), Agrinatura (European Network of Universities and Agricultural Research Institutions), American Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) and the Danish Development Research Network (DDRN).

Target participants

Policy makers, especially Ministers responsible for Education, Agriculture, Science & Technology, Finance and Planning; Technical experts in the focus ministries; University Vice Chancellors and their Deans, University Networks, Development Partners/NGOs, regional and sub-regional networks.