African Universities meet to strengthen agricultural research and training

Hon John Mutorwa, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry opening the Deans Meeting

Government of Namibia Minister, Hon John Mutorwa, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, hosted a meeting of over 50 African Vice Chancellors, 70 Principals and Deans, Policy makers and government representatives from over 24 African Countries to discuss the role of universities in feeding Africa. Africa’s population is expected to more than double to 2.4 billion by 2050. Food insecurity, poverty and hunger will become wider challenges unless critical interventions are undertaken.

The meeting was under the Umbrella of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building

in Agriculture (RUFORUM) and hosted by Professor Lazarus Hangula, Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia.

During the Closing Ceremony of RUFORUM’s Annual General Meeting on 29th August, 2015 at the Safari Court Hotel and Conference Center in Windhoek, Namibia, the Minister launched the new RUFORUM Strategic Business Plan (2015-2020).

The Ministers also launched three new demand driven postgraduate programs to address specifically Agriculture and food security issues in Burundi, DR Congo and Madagascar and a book on rural innovation entitled ‘the Dynamics of Rural Innovation’. The Book has been authored by the Royal Tropical Institute and Wageningen University in partnership with African Universities.

The Minister also recognize exemplary achievements by university leaders, senior and junior scientists, as well as farmers.

Notes to editors

The RUFORUM Strategic Business Plan (2015-2020) describes the strategies and approaches to be adopted by RUFORUM member universities to enhance postgraduate (MSc and PhD) education in Agriculture in Africa. The Plan highlights the importance of training local professionals in Africa and strategies to improve Government funding to African universities for research and training.

The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and Wageningen University’s Centre for Development Innovation (CDI) bring more than 30 years of experience working with partners in developing countries on agricultural innovation processes and social learning. The book ‘Dynamics of Rural Innovation’ capitalizes on these experiences and brings together both conceptual thinkers and practitioners in the writing process to articulate lessons. The book is targeted towards undergraduate (BSc) and masters (MSc) level students in Africa as well as development practitioners aspiring to use innovation systems thinking in their work.

The Book covers important background and concepts, the ‘how to’ of facilitating innovation, and the role of the broader context. The book is about the dynamics of rural innovation – how to work with changing nature of both the context and people involved in rural innovation processes and how to facilitate networks of stakeholders to stimulate innovation. The aim is to support agricultural and rural development professionals, especially young ones, as enablers and facilitators of stakeholder-led innovation. Inspirational stories illustrate how different people - from farmers to extension officers, business leaders, traders, NGO staff, and policy makers - have collaborated to make new and successful things happen.

The European Union supported ADECEA (EU-ACP- Edulink II) project focuses on strengthening Agricultural training capacity of these three post-conflict countries, and assist them develop higher education of quality that is relevant to the needs of the market. Currently, universities in the three countries are running the Licence (5 years undergraduate training) Master (3 years) Doctorate (4-6 years) system which, based on national aspirations, needs to be aligned to the new LMD system of 3-2-3 years to meet the international standards and facilitate integration of the trained professional at sub-regional (Eastern and Southern Africa) and international levels, especially Europe which has adapted the 3-2-3 LMD system.
RUFORUM
Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a dynamic regional network of 55 member universities operating in 22 countries that fosters collaboration, coordination, training and research amongst member universities. Its vision is to help build a vibrant agricultural sector. We help African universities produce high-performing graduates and high-quality research, responsive to the demands of African farmers for innovation to generate sustainable livelihoods and national economic development. To share our work, call +256-417-713-300, email communications@ruforum.org, or visit us online at www.ruforum.org or on our blog at http://blog.ruforum.org/

For additional information, photos and interviews with key delegates, contact Ms Joan Apio, Communications Publicity and Marketing Officer, below.

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