Press Release

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RUFORUM Celebrates Outstanding Champions for Agricultural Transformation in Africa

29th August, 2015

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is pleased to announce the outstanding champions for Agricultural Transformation in Africa. The 2015/2016 awards winners were presented and honoured during the closing ceremony of the RUFORUM’s 11th Annual General Meeting held in Windhoek, Namibia, 27-29 August 2015.

Once every two years since 2009; following a decision made by the RUFORUM board of Trustees, RUFORUM recognizes professionals in African Universities who are dedicated to strengthening higher education in Africa, in terms of university leadership and management, teaching and carrying out research focused on improving rural livelihoods in Africa.
At this meeting, RUFORUM handed out a total of eight awards in three categories namely (3) Impact Research and Science in Sub-Saharan Africa (IMPRESSA), (2) Recognition awards for contribution in the field of Higher Education, (1) Outstanding emerging researcher, and (2) Outstanding model Farmers. These champions have made a contribution towards strengthening the agricultural sector through exemplary leadership, management, teaching, quality problem-solving research, and innovations to improve the rural livelihoods in Africa.

This year’s overall Award winner for IMPRESSA is Professor Olive Mwihaki Mugenda – the Vice Chancellor for Kenyatta University, Kenya – recognized for her exemplary leadership in university management & institutional building. The runner ups for the IMPRESSA Award are Professor Agnes Wakesho Mwang’ombe – the Principal of the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences at the University of Nairobi, Kenya – recognized for her excellence in capacity building, networking and mentoring young professionals; and Professor Umezuruike Linus Opara – a Distinguished Research Professor at Stellenbosch University and the DST-National Research Foundation South African Chair in Post-Harvest Technology – recognized for his excellence in research and building Africa’s human capacity. These add to the 2009 and 2011 IMPRESSA award winners making a total of 9 IMPRESSA distinguished members of academic staff in the network acknowledged since 2009.

RUFORUM also celebrated (2) Outstanding scientists for their contribution to Scientific Advancement in Namibia - Dr Komeine Natanga and Ms Isabella Ueutele, and (3) outstanding emerging researchers from the University of Namibia as a way of encouraging them to be more proactive in searching for solutions to the problems that are daunting African farmers. Billy Chisenga was recognised for his research on improved Pearl millet varieties, Haikukutu Lavinia recognised for her research on genetic markers associated with tick resistance in cattle breeds in Namibia and Shaningwa Etuna recognised for her research on fermentation and quality of pearl millet (Mahangu flour).

In his statement, the Chairperson of the RUFORUM Board Professor Levi Nyagura, reflected upon the past 11 years RUFORUM’s intensified efforts to ensure its research and training was directed at addressing the needs of smallholder farmers, and linking with rural communities. She congratulated this year’s outstanding champions and urged them to continue being the beacon bearers in the constant quest for Africa’s food security, safety, and wealth creation.

RUFORUM strives to contribute to the wellbeing of small scale farmers and the economic development of countries throughout the sub-Saharan Africa by training of high quality, relevant graduates fit for Africa’s agriculture transformation and rural development. RUFORUM contribution is also made through the production and dissemination of demand-driven, development oriented research that is defined and applied through participatory processes linking researchers, farmers, and policy makers.
Notes to editors

Higher education for Africa*

- Africa needs to produce future leaders who will promote better governance and management in all sectors, and facilitate innovative solutions to society’s problems.
- Universities are best placed to provide the trained labour force needed as the drive for knowledge-based economies takes hold on the continent through producing more PhDs and more ‘industry-ready’ graduates.
- Postgraduate enrolment both in master’s and PhD programmes in Africa rose from 6.9 per cent of the total enrolment in 1997 to 9.3 per cent by 2014 as a result of educational reforms.

* Source: Sci Dev Net. Article: Making higher education work for Africa: Facts and figures by Irene Friesenhahn.

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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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