

18th RUFORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

Theme: Strengthening Africa's Agri-food Systems in the Post COVID-19 Era – Opportunities and Challenges

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

Date: Monday 12th December 2022

Time: 08:30 – 11:00 CAT

Venue: Diamond Lecture Theatre, University of Zimbabwe

Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/3yHFyvn>

Concept Note

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Background

The economy of several African countries has remained highly dependent on rain-fed Agriculture, and mainly conducted by small-holder farmers who are dominantly rural and poor. Increasing agricultural productivity and enhance quality of the Agri-food Systems value chains actors is one of the avenues to create wealth, and increase competition at both domestic and international markets. This call for investment in research and adoption of improved agricultural technologies and management practices stemming from an effective and efficient agricultural research system.

The design of such system on the African continent needs an overlay the farming systems and socio-cultural and policy environment, existing human and institutional capacity and level of investment in research, in addition to the layers of potential climate change projected impacts to the sector. The diversity of farming systems is at different levels of degradation that requires specific approaches and interventions for restoration. Past interventions have only yielded silos of success because of aforementioned factors and more so because of the policy environment. Despite progress observed in improving the policy environment across the continent, there is still need for incentive to attract more investment from the private sector, and to enable African countries take advantage of technologies developed elsewhere; at the same time, promote dialogue between decision makers and researchers. The overall agricultural R&D investment levels in most countries are well below the minimum target recommended by the African Union, and the national and sub-regional agricultural research organizations are weak and highly dependent on donor funding. On the other hand, national governments commitment and transparency on donor contributions have remained limited. New capacities and skill sets including for professionals,

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internal institutional management, and operating capacity levels at different spatial scale in the entire spectrum of the Agri-food Systems science, technology and innovation are required.

Collaboration at all levels is growing rapidly on the African continent and researchers from different institutions, countries and regions need to work together around specific research questions. Investment in operational Agri-food Systems networks and enhancing their synergies is one of the pre-requisite for building the required capacity to innovate the Agri-food Systems Science, Technology and Innovation processes. Such consortia are valuable as they offer interdisciplinary expertise and allow recruitment of researchers provides the necessary flexibility to adapt to a wide continuum of arising challenges. Building research networks is particularly important for the African continent is also paramount important because of its fragmented scientific community, small research groups, and scarce financing.

RUFORUM, in partnership with the African Crop Science Society and the Zimbabwean RUFORUM member universities, will convene a three-day scientific conference where scientists, academicians and students will present their work orally focusing on the application of biological, ecological and social knowledge for the development of resilient climate-smart Agri-food systems including sustainable livestock production and environmental and natural resources management for food and nutritional security and economic and social stability. Digital innovations, data management, intellectual property rights, economics, policy analysis, and education and research institutions-community engagement experiences will be highlighted.

Objective of the Scientific Conference

The Scientific Conference aims to bring together leading academicians, scientists, researchers and research scholars especially from the continent to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Agriculture and agricultural related sciences, and emerging development concerns with a focus on climate-smart innovations. It also provides an interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder platform for policy makers, researchers, practitioners, educators and students to present and discuss the most recent scientific knowledge, technological innovations, emerging trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted to strengthening Agri-food systems. As in previous RUFORUM Conferences, special provision will be made for graduate students to share their research findings and profile their research. Themes for the scientific sessions will cover eight thematic areas.

Expected outputs and outcomes

- Strengthened networking among members of the scientific community working in agriculture and related fields;
- Focus given to innovation in Agri-food and nutrition systems, climate-smart agriculture and climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- Improved presentation and communication skills for especially the graduate students;

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- Increased visibility of research and development outputs from Africa; and
- Improved methods for increasing the uptake of research results by other stakeholders

Programme

Moderator/Chair: Prof. Fanuel Tagwira, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology Development, Zimbabwe

Time	Activity
Session 1: Opening and Setting the Scene	
08:30 – 08:40	Welcome Remarks: Prof. Theresia Nkuo-Akenji, RUFORUM Board Chair and Vice Chancellor University of Bamenda, Cameroon
08:40 – 08:50	Remarks: Prof Luisa Santos, the President of the African Crop Science Society
08:50 – 09:05	Official Opening Address: Hon Minister. Prof. Amon Murwira of Higher Education, Science and Technology Development, Zimbabwe
09:05 – 09:25	Key Note Address: Dr. Patrick Okori, RUFORUM incoming Executive Secretary: Making agriculture work for Africa to respond to current and future development challenges: Lessons learnt after a decade of implementation of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)
09:25 – 09:40	Respondent: Prof. Brice Sinsin, Former Rector, University of Abomey Calavi, Benin: Key Agricultural research issues in the continent and needed actions
09:40 – 10:00	Discussion
Session 2: Panel Discussion on Transforming agri-food systems for improved productivity, human nutrition and environmental sustainability	
Session Moderator: Prof Linus Umezuruike Opara, Distinguished Professor & DST/NRF South African Research Chair in Postharvest Technology, Stellenbosch University, South Africa	
10:00 – 10:50	Panelist 1: Dr. Cliff Sibusiso Dlamini , Executive Director and Head of Mission, the Centre for Coordinating Agricultural Research for Development in Southern Africa (CCARDESA): Agricultural Research for Development to Intervene Effectively in Complex Systems under climate change condition and the Implications for Research Organizations
	Panelist 2: Dr Stephen Onakuse , President of AGRINATURA, University College Cork, Ireland: Linking agricultural research with the agribusiness community from a pro-poor perspective: The importance of human capital development
	Panelist 3: Prof Mac Mallewa , Vice Chancellor, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Malawi: Innovations to address Human Nutrition and Malnutrition: Link between Agriculture, Nutrition and Health
	Discussion

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10:50 – 11:00	Closing Remarks by the Sessions Chair
11:00 – 11:30	Health Break and Photographs
11:30 – 13:00	Tour of the Exhibitions and Posters
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 – 18:30	Parallel Scientific Sessions

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