

18TH RUFORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Win-Win Collaboration for Academia and private sector in Africa's agri-food sector

Concept Note

Venue: University of Zimbabwe, Lecture Room F4

Date: 14th December 2022

Time: 08:30 – 13:30 CAT

Background

Research and training institutions and the for-profit private sector are actively engaged in growing Africa's agriculture and food sector as the engine for most African economies, based on their expertise and mandates. However, more often than not, the two complementary partners are operating in isolation or minimally interacting yet if the level of interaction between the two was higher, individual benefit for each and ultimately Africa's agri-food sector would be higher than it is now. Tremendous business opportunities exist in Africa's agriculture and food sector. Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, the President of the African Development Bank asserted that "the size of food and agriculture sector in Africa will rise to US\$1 trillion by 2030. Within Africa, the population is now 1.2 billion and will double to 2.5 billion by 2050. All these must eat and only through food and agribusiness can this be achieved," he said." What Africa does with food will determine the future of food, given that 65% of the arable land left to feed the world is here," Mr Adesina said. "Agriculture is the most important profession and business in the world."

Private sector plays a critical role in production, value addition, and distribution thus ensuring equitable access to food and agricultural products across the continent and globally. The private sector also has the inventory of practical problems affecting the agri-food sector, the linkage to consumers and producers, financial resources among other critical resources required for the growth of the agri-food sector. Academic and research institutions have a wealth of human and infrastructure capacity to conduct research develop knowledge and products that solve challenges affecting the agrifood sector. Science, technology and innovation is more critical than ever before because Africa's agri-food sector is faced with challenges of climate change impacts, pests and diseases, declining soil fertility, volatility in markets and changing lifestyles of consumers which require knowledge and technology-based adaptation for increased and sustainable profits. The increased pressure of agri-food system on the natural and social environment is demanding for more eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable agri-business such as green energy, low emission transport, biodegradable packaging etc. All these require intense scientific research and product development, expertise which research and training institutions have. However, because of the operational gap between private sector and research and training institutions, the rate at which African grown technologies are developed is slow. This leaves the private sector to import technologies at a higher cost hence increasing the cost of production and ultimate the price of products hence restricting the proportion of the population that can afford.

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The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a network of 160 universities in 40 African countries is volunteering to bridge the gap between academia and private sector as a mechanism to accelerate private sector led growth of Africa’s agri-food system. The overall objective of RUFORUM’s intervention is to enhance the growth of Africa’s agri-food sector to create jobs and economic growth by enhancing the deployment of science, technology and innovation for agri-food private sector growth. As part of its activities to realize this objective, RUFORUM organized a series of consultation meetings between the academia and private sector.

The last major consultation was held on 7th December 2021 as a hybrid event in Cotonou, Benin. Potential areas of cooperation between private sector and academia were proposed including but not limited to the following;

- a) Research and innovation for new products and markets
- b) Research and innovation for environmental, social and governance sustainability
- c) Joint training of the next generation of agri-food sector entrepreneurs and professionals
- d) Cooperate social responsibility delivery
- e) Short term consultancies

Areas (a) and (b) could be delivered through jointly commissioned Research and Development projects done by graduate students and faculty with clear terms and conditions for intellectual property management. (c), (d) and (e) and other collaborative activities will be implemented based on availability of resources with clear terms and conditions for the short-, medium- and long-term benefit of each partner.

To build on the momentum from the previous consultations and develop action moving forward, a physical academia-private sector event has been organized in Harare, Zimbabwe on Wednesday 14th December 2022 to concretely identify areas of collaboration. This event will convene a small group private sector and academia representatives to;

- a) Review and prioritise thematic areas of academia-private sector collaboration
- b) Agree on mechanisms for win-win collaboration between academia and private sector
- c) Propose pilot projects to experiment continental level partnership between academia and private sector

Approach to the meeting

The meeting shall be by invitation only to selected representatives of the private sector and academia to openly discuss details of the areas of collaboration. A background presentation on the potential benefit of academia-private sector collaboration for the growth of Africa’s agrifood sector will be made by RUFORUM. Based on this presentation and earlier preparations, the private sector and academia representatives will present their **expectations, value propositions** and **mechanisms for collaboration** in the partnership to jointly grow the agri-food sector. A plenary discussion will be held to jointly agree on the common areas of interest, prioritise actions for short, medium and long term, modalities of

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cooperation and pilot projects. An action plan will then be developed with a designation of a team from the academia, private sector and RUFORUM Secretariat to follow-up.

Draft programme

Moderator: Mr. Emmanuel Okalany, Technical Specialist for Development and Partnership, RUFORUM Secretariat

Rapporteur:

Time	Activity	Responsible person
8:30 – 9:00	Registration and introductions	
9:00 – 9:10	Welcome remarks from RUFORUM	Prof. Adipala Ekwamu
9:10 – 9:20	Background to the meeting: Benefits of Academia-private sector collaboration to the growth of Africa's agri-food sector	Mr. Emmanuel Okalany
9:20 – 9:40	The role of universities in growing Africa's nascent private sector	Mr. David Gonahasa, Chief Executive Officer Tripesa, Uganda
9:40 – 10:00	Contribution of universities to growth and sustainability of large-scale enterprises in Africa	Mr. Immanuel Mwilima, Chief Executive Officer, Namibia Meat Cooperation (MEATCO), Namibia
10:00 – 10:30	Open discussion on the presentations	Mr. Emmanuel Okalany
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee/Tea/Health Break	RUFORUM Secretariat/University of Zimbabwe
11:00 – 11:20	Private sector-academia cooperation in training, research & innovation, and enterprise growth	Prof. Nuno Escudeiro, Programme Coordinator, ATHENA University Network, Polytechnic Institute of Porto
11:20 – 12:20	Group discussions on the practical contribution of universities to MSME and large-scale firms' growth in Africa; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group 1: Contribution to SME growth (Value proposition of an organization like Ruform) 2. Group 2: Contribution to large cooperations growth (Value proposition of an organization like Ruform) 3. Group 3: What support is needed for academia to make large scale collaboration with the private sector work 	Group leaders
12:20 – 12:40	Plenary presentations from groups	Moderator/Group leaders
12:40 – 13:10	Development of action plan and next steps	Moderator
13:10 – 13:20	Closing remarks	RUFORUM Vice Chancellor

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