



Side Event

The Seventh African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference 2021

A Partnership Model to Enhance Strategic and Innovative Cooperation of Higher Education Institutions:

*The Experience of Egerton University, Center of Excellence in Sustainable Agriculture and
Agribusiness Management (CESAAM) and Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences*

Date: 7th December 2021

Time: 8:30-10:00 GMT+1

Venue: TBC, Blended (Link: <https://bit.ly/3gfpGXu>)

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Side Event Summary

The partnership between CESAAM—the Center of Excellence for Sustainable Agriculture and Agribusiness Management at Egerton University—and the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences is focused on higher education capacity development to address the food security challenge through innovation, research, and quality curriculum. This side event will show how a shared commitment to innovative, purposeful, and strategic partnership which led to improved pedagogy approaches, impactful research, and quality curriculum for agricultural and skills enhancement in Africa. We will also demonstrate the mutual benefits gained by contributors from East Africa and the USA, all who have benefited from this collaboration.

Background

Food insecurity and poverty remain the major challenge to Africa's development, affecting about 33% of its population. Among the key contributing factors to food insecurity are occurrence of frequent droughts, rampant crop and livestock diseases, poor infrastructure, poor policies, poor market access, high input costs, inadequate technical capacity, and limited technologies and innovations.

One key approach to address the above challenges is to build capacity along the agricultural value chain through strengthening of agricultural training, promotion, and up scaling of promising technologies. The partnership between CESAAM at Egerton University, Kenya and Virginia Tech College of Agriculture



and Life Sciences in USA is built to address the above issues. Egerton University has a long history of agricultural training and research, and is centrally placed within the region, to address agricultural and agribusiness capacity gaps of fragile and post conflict countries. The region has a few countries emerging from conflict that need to re-build their human capacity to address food insecurity and are key partners to CESAAM. The CESAAM regional partners include Universities of Burundi, Juba in South Sudan, Rwanda, Gulu in Uganda, Haramaya in Ethiopia, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University in Kenya, and Sokoine in Tanzania.

Virginia Tech CALS Global and CESAAM established this multifaceted partnership dating back over four years. Within the past three years, CESAAM and VT-CALS have jointly led three Africa region capacity-building programs (the Global Opportunity Initiative - GOI) in Kenya for early career faculty. Over 60 Virginia Tech, Egerton faculty, and other African collaborators (Gulu University, Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology, and University of Rwanda) have benefitted from this research capacity building initiative. Virginia Tech and Egerton faculty offered research analytics and effective scientific writing capacity-building workshops for over 100 students and faculty for a consortium of partners in Africa spanning over the 4 years of partnership. The collaboration further led to jointly advising graduate students, reviewed graduate degree programs at Egerton for international benchmarking and accreditation, and conducted exchange programs that have benefitted faculty from both institutions. Based on the GOI capacity building forums, VT-CALS and CESAAM have created several proposal development teams focusing on joint research and capacity building. A significant milestone of the successful VT-CALS and CESAAM partnership was the signing of a wider high-level cooperation framework between Virginia Tech and Egerton at the university level. This expanded relationship provides a framework for a multi-disciplinary approach to implementation of programs for mutual benefits and common good for advancement of humanity and skills enhancement. Through CESAAM, CALS Global has expanded its list of Africa collaborators to cover the University of Rwanda, Jaramogi University in Kenya, Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology in Tanzania, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), among other research institutions, industry players and individual smallholder farmers such as Hellen Waweru a star smallholder farmer in Kenya who has a clear vision of how to turn her small piece of land into a mixed agricultural enterprise to benefit her family.

Event Purpose: We will demonstrate how together we used innovative methods and a participatory approach for identifying research challenges, discovering bottlenecks to progress, and brainstorming solutions. This has allowed us to create a mutually beneficial partnership that is focused on creating positive impacts on food security and research quality in the region.

Event objectives: Our objective is to show how through collaboration, a lot can be achieved. We hope to elicit reaction from participants on why it is important to have regional, industry, and international partners. We will share our best practices, successes, and challenges faced during this collaboration. We also look forward to expanding this collaboration to cover other HEIs in Africa.

Event delivery approach: Presenters from CESAAM and Virginia Tech will jointly demonstrate how we used several tools, including challenge mapping, to break through barriers to collaboration. We also



propose to include a segment of graduate students or other direct beneficiaries to give an account of the outcomes of this collaboration.

Target audience: Our presentation is targeted toward anyone in the higher education and agricultural sectors who is interested in productive, successful, and results-oriented partnerships.

Expected outputs/outcomes: A productive dialogue about how to build and maintain successful and results-oriented higher education partnerships.

Event requirements: This will be a blended event (virtual & face to face).

Session Program

Moderator:

Time	Activity
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation by CESAAM Leadership
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation by VT-CALS Leadership
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joint commentary (CESAAM and VT-CALS) and question-answer session
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comments by partnership direct beneficiaries (student and faculty representatives)
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Q&A