



Theme: Operationalising Higher Agricultural Education and Research Ecosystems for Innovation, Industrialisation and Economic Development in Africa: A Call for Action

Venue: Mercure Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia

**CALL FOR ABSTRACTS FOR RUFORUM'S SECOND TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE
Thematic Area 3: Unlocking Inclusive and Broad-Based Economic Opportunity**

Background

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a network of 170 Universities in 40 African Countries, will hold its second Triennial Conference and the 20th Annual General Meeting (AGM) from 12th – 16th August 2024 at **Mercure Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia**. The theme for the second Triennial Conference is **“Operationalising Higher Agricultural Education and Research Ecosystems for Innovation, Industrialisation and Economic Development in Africa: A Call for Action”**. It is a response to the urgent call to action by African governments, development partners, private sector and citizenry to this crucial sector to generate inclusive and sustainable solutions for the continent’s urgent development needs.

The conference will enable education, research and agricultural ecosystem actors to showcase and present their key findings, lesson-share and inform each other on key actions required to harness science, technology and innovation for Africa’s development. Accordingly, the second Triennial Conference will involve scientific sessions that bring together a wide range of stakeholders and partners. The scientific sessions, which cover four thematic areas, will include oral and poster presentations as well as exhibitions. Various meeting types involving bilateral and multilateral partners will also be conducted to establish coalitions for leveraging Africa's and the global science community's capacity and science solutions for development.

The four thematic areas are as follows:

Thematic area 1: Educating Africa: Implementing Transformative Higher Agricultural Education to meet Africa’s Human Capital Needs

Thematic Area 2: Sustainably Growing the Economy and Feeding Africa

Thematic Area 3: Unlocking Inclusive and Broad-Based Economic Opportunity

Thematic Area 4: Economic Trends, Best -Practices, Policy-Practice and Futures

Thematic Area 3: Unlocking Inclusive and Broad-Based Economic Opportunity

Between 1990 and 2010 Africa’s economic growth was very slow compared to India and China¹. Recent studies however, show a positive effect of the CAADP on Africa’s agriculture that resulted in an 8.7% growth above rates experienced in the pre-CAADP period¹². Other drivers of positive changes in Africa’s economy were political stability, increased price of oil and metals,

¹ McKinsey Global Institute, Reimagining Economic growth in Africa, 2023





and subsequent rise in investment and consumer expenditure. The continent became more attractive to investments and experienced a rise in consumer spending. Projections show that spending by Africa's consumers and businesses already totals US\$4 trillion annually, and is growing rapidly. Household consumption is expected to grow at 3.8 % annually and is expected to reach US\$2.1 trillion by 2025¹¹. Building a strong industrial sector is pivotal for achieving long-term and sustainable development, resilience, and inclusive prosperity in Africa¹¹². This will produce more jobs, increase productivity as well as income, contributing to poverty reduction in different regions of the continent. Africa's growth will certainly be affected by major development disruptions such as the digital advances (AI, mobile money and the internet) and threats such as climate change among others.

Further, Agenda 2063 the continent's blue print aspires to achieve inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development. The Agenda 2063 Second Decade Strategy (2024-2034) aims to, "reduce poverty to 20%; inequality by 15%; and the proportion of the population who suffer from hunger to at most 5%". This presents policy aimed at creating broad-based development and equal opportunity for Africa's citizens. However, this requires bold policies, investments, reforms among others. Indeed, the "future-of-work" opportunities for Africa is and will be affected by global trends as well as local contexts. Africa's working-age population is estimated to be growing at 3% per annum and will generate approximately 450 million young people ready to work by 2035. In job creation, Africa must increase the proportion of formal waged employees above what it currently has where most workers are [informally employed](#)¹¹. Micro, and Small and Medium Enterprises have a role to play deriving from a thriving agrifood sector, to serve the growing urban consumer populations in Africa and beyond. The RUFORUM Secretariat in partnership with the host country Namibia and the Local Organising Committee now invites abstracts for the Second Triennial Conference under this theme. In this thematic area, research, review and opinions papers will focus on the following areas:

Sub-theme 3a: Inclusive resourcing for equitable economic growth:

- a) Access to resources for production:
 1. Financial inclusion: Microfinance, Fintechs and supporting excluded communities and populations.
 2. Agricultural input subsidies: Lessons learnt and options for the future.
 3. Access to technologies- Lessons learnt and options for the future.
 - Formal and informal seed and technology supply systems.
 - Post stress seed systems (emergency seed).
- b) Gender, diversity and inclusion:
 - Closing the gender gap in agriculture practice and enterprise.
 - Access to land, water and other physical resources for production (land tenure systems -access, usage, control).

² Abreha, Kaleb G., et al., Industrialization in sub-Saharan Africa: Seizing opportunities in global value chains, Africa Development Forum and World Bank, 2016.



Sub-theme 3b : Wealth and Youth Employment :

- a) Agri-entrepreneurship and agriculture de-revived jobs: Initiatives, opportunities, prospects and lessons learnt from past and ongoing actions.
- b) Feeding Africa's urbanising population: The changing peri-urban and urban food systems and their opportunities for young people through service provision, value added-processing and new foods.
- c) Unlocking entrepreneurship in innovation: Digitization, and emerging technologies to facilitate best environment for entrepreneurship.

Guidelines for Abstract Submission

1. Abstracts must be submitted via an online platform through the [link](#) no later than **31st March 2024** (Email submissions will not be accepted).
2. A clear and concise abstract of **no more than 2100** Characters with spaces excluding the title, authors' details and key words. Please do not include figures or tables.
3. Abstracts must be submitted with the following structure when writing: background, objectives, methods, results, conclusions/implications, and keywords.
4. On submission, indicate whether for oral or poster (The selections committee may suggest otherwise upon review of the content of the abstract)
5. Accepted abstracts will be informed to submit a full short paper which will be published in either the RUFORUM Working Document Series <https://repository.ruforum.org/> or the African Journal of Rural Development <https://afjrd.org/index.php/jos> once approved by peer reviewers. Sample papers can be accessed at <https://shorturl.at/ICHPX>.
6. You may submit more than one abstract. However, presenters who are accepted for oral presentations will be permitted to give only one oral presentation. Additional accepted abstracts will therefore be posters only.
7. Poster size should be as follows: Height: 118.9 cm, Width: 84.1 cm ([link or sample poster](#))
8. All papers will be subjected to peer review and plagiarism checks before publication.

Enquiries should be submitted to triennial@ruforum.org with a copy to acheikhyoussef@unam.na