



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

**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 20<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) from 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> 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:

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- Thematic area 1: Educating Africa: Implementing Transformative Higher Agricultural Education to meet Africa’s Human Capital Needs*
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- Thematic Area 2: Sustainably Growing the Economy and Feeding Africa*
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- Thematic Area 3: Unlocking Inclusive and Broad-Based Economic Opportunity
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- Thematic Area 4: Economic Trends, Best -Practices, Policy-Practice and Futures
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**Thematic Area 4: Economic Trends, Best -Practices, Policy-Practice and Futures**

African countries are extremely diverse in income status and present an uneven growth rates varying between 4 to 6%<sup>1</sup>. Despite these positive signs, Africa still faces challenges accounting for

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/overview>





only 2% of world trade and receiving only 3% of foreign direct investment<sup>2</sup>. The continent's renaissance in the 1990s, which saw the establishment of the Africa Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), as well as innovative continental efforts such as CAADP, doubled economic growth and created prospects. Endemic challenges such as climate change and several depressants of productivity as well as externalities continue to affect growth. Remarkably [Africa has made big strides after the COVID 19 pandemic](#). Whereas there are improvements in fiscal deficits, at 4.9% in 2023, significantly less than 6.9% in 2020 according to the [AfDB](#), an increase in debt distress across many countries in sub-Saharan Africa creates challenges, undermines investments and growth according to the International Monetary Fund<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, 11 African countries are projected to experience strong economic performance in 2024 according to AfDB and include: Niger (11.2%), Senegal (8.2%), Libya (7.9%), Rwanda (7.2%), Cote d'Ivoire (6.8%), Ethiopia (6.7%), Benin (6.4%), Djibouti (6.2%), Tanzania (6.1%), Togo (6%), and Uganda at 6%. In the growing economies, diversification of production and trade have unlocked business opportunities including agro-based industry<sup>4</sup>. This can translate into wealth and improved livelihoods for Africa's citizens people if the market forces balance.

The Africa's Continental Free Trade Area offers opportunities for easing access to regional markets and strengthening production chains, and helping domestic industries become more prepared for global trade<sup>5</sup>. Unfortunately, Africa still faces supply chain hurdles such as poor logistics, low levels of technology, fragmented markets, limited capital sources, and weak institutions and regulations<sup>6</sup>. Given the variations in economic growth trajectories as influenced by policy, investments, externalities and other factors, Africa can learn from the success and lagging economic stories to inform the required corrective measures both now and in the future. The RUFORUM Secretariat in partnership with the host country Namibia and the Local Organising Committee now invites abstracts for the Second Triennial Conference to be convened under this theme. In this thematic area, research, review and opinions papers will focus on the following areas:

**Sub theme 4a: Innovations for growing Africa's agriculture and related sectors:**

- a) Improving Africa's low agricultural total factor productivity: The status, trends and opportunities:
  - Accessing improved technologies: lesson learnt from the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) programme and similar initiatives.
- b) Technological Leapfrogging: Digitization, renewables and manufacture transition.
- c) Production at scale for a growing population and markets: Can smallholder agriculture grow and feed Africa: Evidence, roles and opportunity?

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<sup>2</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, Reimagining Economic growth in Africa, 2023

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/09/26/cf-how-to-avoid-a-debt-crisis-in-sub-saharan-africa>

<sup>4</sup> IMF *Regional Economic Outlook Africa*, April 2023,

[www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2023/04/14/regional-economic-outlook-for-sub-saharan-africa-april-2023](https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2023/04/14/regional-economic-outlook-for-sub-saharan-africa-april-2023).

<sup>5</sup> <https://unctad.org/publication/economic-development-africa-report-2023>

<sup>6</sup> Balma, Lacina et al. (2022) : Long-run impacts of the conflict in Ukraine on food security in Africa, Kiel Policy Brief, No. Ukraine Special 1, Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IfW Kiel), Kiel



#### **Sub theme 4b: Foresight and trend studies:**

- a) Reaping Africa's demographic dividend: Implications for education planning and investments:
  - Skilling the next generation; Policy frameworks, trends and implications.
- b) Making agriculture work for African economies: lessons learnt from CAADP and other frameworks.
- c) Policy and economic implications of climate risks and natural disasters.
  - The race to net zero economies: which way for Africa, are we preparing?
  - Natural disasters and economic growth in Africa.
  - Economic development imperatives for sustainable development.

#### **Sub theme 4c: Policies, planning and its implementation (underpinnings for the second decade of Africa's agenda 2063- (2024-2034):**

- a) People centred development:
  - Gender diversity and economic inclusion: The cost of exclusion to Africa and the policy imperatives for empowering of women.
  - Leveraging potentials of the youth for inclusive and green development in Africa.
- b) Economic resilience:
  - Harnessing the power of the private sector, including unleashing innovation and improving agrifood system functionality.
  - Trade opportunities: Our progress so far: opportunities and challenges for the full implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
  - Environmental economics and mitigating the adverse outcomes of frontier technologies.

#### **Guidelines for Abstract Submission**

1. Abstracts must be submitted via an online platform through the [link](#) no later than **31<sup>st</sup> 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://afjrdev.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](mailto:triennial@ruforum.org) with a copy to [acheikhoussef@unam.na](mailto:acheikhoussef@unam.na)