

RUFORUM WEBINAR SERIES-2020

Engaging African Universities in Advancing Agricultural and Food and Nutrition Security in Africa: Policy Perspective

Webinar 10 Synthesis Report

Introduction:

Agriculture, food and nutrition security remains a key concern in Africa yet it contributes significantly to employment, exports and on average a quarter of Gross Domestic Product especially in Sub-Saharan Africa economies. There is still rampant hunger in Africa and the continent spends on annual food imports, a bill of \$35 billion with projections of up to \$110 billion by 2025. This is compounded by existing challenges such as climate change, locust invasion, conflict and emerging crises such as COVID 19. Africa and Europe continue to face relatively similar challenges in the agri-food sector and this has shaped their partnership since the first Africa-Europe Summit in 2000 with emphasis on application of science, technology and innovation in the agriculture sector and related sectors. The focus on science, technology and innovation lies within the mandate of universities to train the human resource required to deliver on Africa's aspirations such as Agenda 2063, Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy (STISA-2024) among other frameworks. Universities are thus well placed to provide technical expertise in generating evidence for policy making, implementing and co-creating evidence from practice for improvement of future Africa-Europe partnership strategic frameworks, policies and programmes.

RUFORUM has been running Webinars during the COVID-19 lockdown period to galvanise dialogue on how different actors can engage with African Universities to explore response to existing and emerging development questions. Webinar 10 held on 7th September, 2020 focused on ***Engaging African Universities in Advancing Agricultural and Food and Nutrition Security in Africa: Policy Perspective***. This report covers points of action and emerging issues from the dialogue.

The Problem:

African universities have a critical role to play in the transformation of agriculture through the application of science, technology and innovation to contribute to the aspirations of the EU-Africa Partnership. Beyond the traditional role of providing human capital for the development, Universities are well placed to provide technical expertise in generating evidence for policy and improved implementation of development programmes. It is through research that new ideas, products, best practices and social constructs have emerged. Universities are harbingers of collaboration and networks between Africa and Europe to promote knowledge co-generation and utilization for improved livelihoods and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals targets. However, the convergence between research and policy is still tenuous. The interaction between universities and policy is not institutionalised and a more structured engagement is missing. In addition, Research Management Systems are weak and need to be strengthened to facilitate management, research agenda design, and synthesis at national level. A

coordinated continent-wide engagement of universities will make it easier to mobilise and generate contribution to continental thrusts and agendas. It further signals a concerted engagement that prepares both universities and research institutions to effectively and jointly deliver the aspirations of the EU-Africa partnership.

Webinar Objectives:

The Webinar on *Engaging African Universities in Advancing Agricultural and Food and Nutrition Security in Africa: Policy Perspective* brought together actors from the European Union, the African Union, Government Ministers and the academia to explore opportunities for coordinated engagement of African and European universities. Building on the existing EU-AU Policy Dialogue on the Sustainable Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security Roadmap, the webinar explored how best African Universities and their partners, including our European counterpart AGRINATURA, could best contribute to the proposed initiatives and the development and testing some of the needed interventions.

The Webinar was moderated by **Dr Godfrey Bahigwa**, Director of Agriculture, African Union Commission, Addis Ababa-Ethiopia. He also delivered remarks on behalf of **H.E Ambassador Josefa LC Sacko**, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA), African Union Commission, Addis Ababa-Ethiopia.

The presentations and discussions were given by:

1. H.E Thoko Didiza, Minister for Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Pretoria-South Africa
2. Hon. Jeanine Milly Cooper, Minister of Agriculture, Monrovia-Liberia
3. Dr Leonard Miizzi, Food Security Head of Unit, EU, Brussels-Belgium
4. Hon. Lobin Lowe, Minister of Agriculture, Lilongwe, Malawi
5. Prof. Hamadi Iddi Boga, The Principal Secretary, The Ministry of Agriculture, Nairobi, Kenya
6. Dr Patrick Okori, Principal Research and Country Representative, ICRISAT, Lilongwe-Malawi

RUFORUM Appeal by Prof Adipala Ekwamu -Executive Secretary

- Affirmed to the EC, AUC and African Member State, the commitment of RUFORUM and its Member Universities to participate in the EU-AU FNSSA and CAADP Implementation protocols and indeed in other related initiatives
- Recognised that the EU-AU Research and Innovation Partnership on Food, Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) provides opportunity for RUFORUM to learn from EU and Africa Member States on what is ongoing on ground and the proposed initiatives to devise means of how African Universities and their partners, including our European counterpart AGRINATURA, could best contribute to developing and testing some of the needed actions
- Affirmed the interest of African Universities to participate in DeSIRA and to support other EU-AU processes
- Appealed to EU Commission's Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DG-DEVCO) for greater support to Capacity Building and Research in Africa, giving particular attention to Women and Youth

- Requested African Union Commission to mobilize support for the five Continental Initiatives and other decisions agreed upon by African Ministers of Agriculture, Education, Science, Technology and Innovation during their meeting in Ghana in December 2019.

Dialogue and Discussion Points

The webinar generated dialogue and action points that have implications for RUFORUM and other academic and research agencies as they engage with the African Union, European Union, National Governments and other regional bodies.

1. **H.E Ambassador Josefa LC Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA), African Union Commission, Addis Ababa-Ethiopia in her remarks:**

Valued the contribution of universities to Africa's development and proud of the role in generating knowledge to address topical issues affecting African agriculture, Recognises the role played by universities in guiding governments and development partners on policy choices that guide public policy and investment decisions; and articulated the following potential areas of engagement with Universities in Africa and indeed the partner universities and research agencies towards the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme:

- i. Supporting Governments in the domestication of Malabo commitments in their National Investment Plans to attain the CAADP goals. Universities could be included in the drafting of technical background papers; design and conduct of thematic research; and drafting of national investment plans;
- ii. Participating in the biennial review processes of the implementation of CAADP. In this regard, Universities in Africa could help provide high level expertise, data collection and analysis, dissemination and convening country dialogue platforms to design actions based on challenges identified.

The request to AUC and EC to support African Universities through RUFORUM is pertinent to mobilise universities participation in the EU/AU partnership for Food and Nutrition Security.

It would therefore be ideal to integrate the input from the Webinar into the AUC Ministerial Meetings organised as part of the Africa-Europe partnership, the next in line taking place on September 28th 2020

2. **Dr Leonard Miizzi, the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG-DEVCO), gave a brief overview of the EC direction and the potential engagement with RUFORUM and Universities in Africa under the EU /AU partnership.**

The European Union proposed an ambitious transformative agenda to achieve sustainability: the **European Green Deal which includes** the first ever climate law for a climate-neutral EU by 2050 and the **Farm to Fork initiative on sustainable food systems**. The European Union proposed a new strategy with Africa which proposes to strengthen EU-Africa cooperation through partnerships in five key areas: green transition; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace and governance; migration and mobility. One of the 10 actions proposed specifically targets capacity-building and research: **“Rapidly enhance learning, knowledge and skills, research and innovation**

capacities, particularly for women and youth, protecting and improving social rights, and eradicating child labour”. The role of African universities in this context is clearly essential.

To effectively play their role, universities and research centres should develop and strengthen partnerships and networks with other key players including public services, farmers and community-based organisations, private sector if we want science and innovations to reach the ones who most need it

Need for commitment to value chain analysis and depart from commodity-based approach to farming, address inequity caused by COVID-19 which should be part of the recovery process. COVID-19 is a wake-up call that value chain could be shortened

Need to showcase successes and achievements across the African continent along the different components for example green and climate smart initiatives in soil and water management, soil carbon sequestration water. RUFORUM and its member universities, and the broad National Agricultural Research Systems need to package their innovations and best practices, and thereby convince policy makers and multilateral organisations of role of research in national, regional and continental development.

Africa should take leadership in developing its solutions starting first with appropriate policies, embed research across the value chains and address the needs of farmers. The young people should be given the right signals (value agriculture and avoid migration to urban areas)

To use the momentum generated from this Webinar, the proceedings should be presented to Africa-Europe Ministerial Meeting in September 2020, the Africa-Europe Summit 2020 and the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 (UNFSS-2021) starting with the Scientific Steering Committee (chaired by Joachim von Braun). This would require networking and feeding into the Advisory Committee- the Food Dialogues at the national level and the various fora that will be underway from Oct 2020 onwards.

Explore cooperation under this context and reach out to different EU country offices for initial discussions on country development priorities that would feed into the EU multi-year programming.

National Governments Engagement with Universities and outlook for future collaboration

Ministers presenting at the webinar unanimously agreed that African Governments should invest in universities and research institutions to establish facilities such as laboratories and ICT infrastructure that will enhance knowledge generation and capacity to utilise knowledge for development

- 3. H.E Thoko Didiza, Minister for Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Pretoria-South Africa and Chair of Specialised Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment**

The Agricultural Research Cooperation (ARC) partners with various Universities in South Africa collaborating in research, technology development, education and training and public awareness. For example, University of Free State and Durban University of Technology in Developing new food sources from neglected and underutilized crops; and measuring and demonstrating the impacts of investments in agricultural research and development on the agricultural sector with University of Limpopo, University of Fort Hare and University of Pretoria.

Acknowledged

- the need for a platform to work with universities where we can give input on how we can ensure FNSS for people of Africa.
- More effort needed in the engagement of the private sector and to get them involved as critical actors in the partnership for FNSSA
- Need to strengthen engagement of African Universities in Africa's development processes especially through the Networks such as RUFORUM in the EU-AU FNSSA, CAADP and in foresight studies to guide our future planning
- Support universities through national governments and partners such as EU to deliver on their mandates
- Bring to the attention of the EU-AU Ministers meeting in September 2020, EU-AU Summit in October 2020 and the AUC Specialized Technical Committee on Rural Development and Agriculture, the key issues and recommendations of the Webinar and that of the Africa's Ministers meeting held in Cape Coast Ghana in December 2019

4. Hon. Jeanine Milly Cooper, Minister of Agriculture, Monrovia-Liberia

Given the history, location, social economic conditions in Liberia, the Government of Liberia recognises the role of universities and has: fast tracked refurbishment of laboratories in universities; digitalized Agriculture; intensified collaboration with local institutions, scaling partnerships to run agri-hubs, building on natural resources, adapting to climate change and other challenges that face the FNSSA domain; Scientists to continue to provide scientific evidence along the value chains starting with the demand side rather than the supply side and

- Intensified its engagement with research institutions and universities, commends RUFORUM for building networks of specialization and the partnerships at regional and national level between universities and non-university actors
- Welcome investments through the European Union, the World Bank and the African Development Bank
- Counting on RUFORUM, the EU through team Europe approach to support private sector engagement in research and innovation involving universities

5. Prof. Hamadi Iddi Boga, The Principal Secretary, The Ministry of Agriculture, Nairobi, Kenya Shared experiences from Kenya and acknowledged the need for improved linkage between universities and policy makers. The response mechanism to COVID-19 and locusts invasion highlight

s the need to link universities and government ministries to support development programmes. Kenya has initiated processes for engaging universities in policy and national development frameworks. Acknowledging that:

- Resource allocation is a political negotiation and thus political institutions need to create an environment for science to thrive as a tool for implementation of policies
- RUFORUM should play an advocacy role for more investments in research at national and continental level
- Engagement with universities requires a consciousness and deliberate structures to integrate science and researchers in a deliberate way recognising that a lot needs to be done in this area
- Universities need to be vibrant and organise themselves to articulate what they can do to support governments
- Universities should challenge the orthodoxy not just observing the status quo and demonstrate through research and innovation that things can be done differently

6. Hon. Lobin Lowe, Minister of Agriculture, Lilongwe, Malawi

The Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS) implements the key activities to address climate change and other FNSSA challenges with support from universities. Examples include, Breeding for high yield and adaptability for all major crops; Development of improved area-specific agronomic recommendations and development of alternative soil fertility management technologies

Through capacity building programs, RUFORUM has played a key role in the development of higher agricultural education, research and the link between university and policy.

Areas for consideration

- Include RUFORUM as an umbrella organisation of African Universities in implementation of EU-AU Food and Nutrition Security Road Map including funding protocols
- Expand research support to address challenges confronting food and nutrition security issues including climate change, and management of trans-boundary livestock and crop pests and diseases
- Support establishment of Agricultural Science, Technology and Innovation Indicator Platform to track investments in Agricultural R&D in Africa
- Support towards skills development including in digital technologies to respond to emerging skills needs and advancement technology
- For African Union Commission to lobby the World Bank, African Development Bank, amongst others, to support implementation of the five continental initiatives agreed by African Ministers in December 2019 in Cape Coast Ghana including one on Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa, and increasing the pool of scientists in African universities and research institutions

7. Dr Patrick Okori, Principal Research and Country Representative, ICRISAT, Lilongwe-Malawi Discussant. In summary articulated

- i. A more holistic way of university engagement is required, there is need for structural engineering of the university-policy partnership to realise the aspirations

- ii. Policy review, learning with a clear mechanism of how the universities can play a role in national and continental development needs to be put forward, Universities, ministries and research organisations need to intensify collaboration among local institutions, and scale up partnerships to run agri-hubs, building on natural resources, adapting to climate change and other challenges that face the FNSSA domain.
- iii. National chapters and platforms should be strengthened or created where they do not exist in order to leverage expertise from universities and other institutions so as to effectively engage with policy makers and contribute to addressing FNSSA challenges.
- iv. Engage Ministries of Agriculture and related sectors on the need for ground breaking research including bio-surveillance, and one health. There is urgent need to involve universities in food systems and risk management research programmes and initiatives. National Governments should actively engage existing research centres in the design and implementation of national and regional FNSSA policies.
- v. Digitisation in agriculture will be and remains an important area of investment in African agriculture
- vi. The AUC ought to leverage on RUFORUM and its member Universities and other African institutions to inform the design of implementation frameworks for major growth agenda programmes in three broad areas:
 - i. Strengthening coordination and management of especially transboundary development issues;
 - ii. Intellectual input to inform design of policy and its implementation and where applicable country level review processes such as CAADP and other processes such as the FNSSA Roadmap
 - iii. Support research-to-deliver

Key Action Points

1. To use the momentum generated from this Webinar, the proceedings should be presented to Africa-Europe Ministerial Meeting in September 2020, the Africa-Europe Summit 2020 and the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 (UNFSS-2021) starting with the Scientific Steering Committee (chaired by Joachim von Braun). This would require networking and feeding into the Advisory Committee- the Food Dialogues at the national level and the various fora that will be underway from Oct 2020 onwards.
2. Explore cooperation under this context and reach out to different EU country offices for initial discussions on country development priorities that would feed into the EU multi-year programming.
3. Bring to the attention of the EU-AU Ministers meeting in September 2020, EU-AU Summit in October 2020 and the AUC Specialized Technical Committee on Rural Development and Agriculture, the key issues and recommendations of the Webinar and that of the Africa's Ministers meeting held in Cape Coast Ghana in December 2019 (*communiqué attached*)

RUFORUM Secretariat- 12 September, 2020