

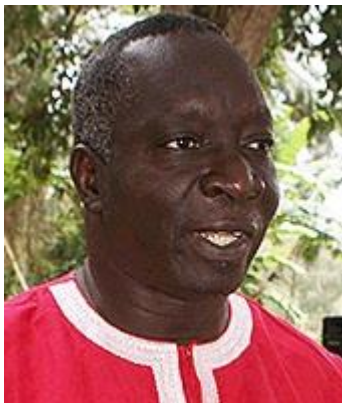
Press Release



For immediate release | 1 August, 2014

Transforming African tertiary agricultural education

1st August, 2014



“After 10 successful years influencing higher agricultural education in specific regions of Africa,” announced Professor Adipala Ekwamu, the Executive Secretary of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) at the conclusion of the organisation’s highly successful 4th biennial conference, held last week Maputo, Mozambique, “we now have a wonderful opportunity to not only influence its future direction strategically but also across the continent as a whole.”

The conference attracted nearly 700 participants from 45 countries, including H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Mrs Graca Machel, Member of the International Panel of Elders and Former Minister of Education, Mozambique, two AU Commissioners, ten Ministers, 34 Vice Chancellors, and university Principals and Deans, as well as many graduate students studying across the continent.

“The seniority of those attending the meeting,” Professor Ekwamu noted, “is testimony to not only how far RUFORUM has progressed over the last decade but how it is now seen as a critical partner in the advancement of agriculture on the continent.”

Key developments arising from the conference included: an offer by the AU Commission Chairperson to host a special session for African Heads of State and Government focused on higher education, science, technology and innovation; the official mandating of RUFORUM by the AU Commission to facilitate and coordinate higher education in agriculture in Africa and as a key implementing agency for the recently adopted Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa -2024; and the recommended transformation of RUFORUM into a continental organisation.

Notes to editors

*Agriculture in Africa**

- Agriculture is essential for sub-Saharan Africa’s growth and for achieving the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015.

- Agriculture employs 65 percent of Africa’s labour force and accounts for 32 percent of gross domestic product.
- Agricultural performance has improved since 2000, but growth is not yet fast enough. Agricultural GDP growth in sub Saharan Africa has accelerated from 2.3% per year in the 1980s to 3.8% per year from 2000 to 2005. Land and agricultural productivity must increase because African farm yields are among the lowest in the world.

* Source: The World Bank. *Fact Sheet: The World Bank and Agriculture in Africa*, 2014.

RUFORUM

RUFORUM is a dynamic regional network of 42 member universities operating in 19 countries that fosters collaboration, coordination, training and research amongst member universities. Its vision is to help build a vibrant agricultural sector. We help African universities produce high-performing graduates and high-quality research, responsive to the demands of African farmers for innovation to generate sustainable livelihoods and national economic development. To share our work, call +256-417-713-300, email j.apio@ruforum.org, or visit us online at ruforum.org or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ruforumnetwork.

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