Background

“Transforming agriculture in Africa requires innovative scientific research, educational and training approaches. The education sector needs to be more connected to the new challenges facing rural communities and to build capacity of young people to be part of the transformation of the agricultural sector”

According to the report from the Expert Panel on a Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa: A productive, competitive and efficient food and agricultural sector in Africa remains essential for sustainable development as well as for economic and political stability. The effective engagement of Africa’s tertiary agricultural educational institutions in the national agricultural research systems and agricultural development frameworks such as CAADP\(^1\) is of fundamental importance. Strengthening capacities of people, institutions, processes and the necessary infrastructure is critical if we are to transform Africa’s agricultural sector.

African governments must make increased domestic investments towards agricultural transformation. CAADP will not achieve its aims and the FAAP\(^2\) will not be meaningfully implemented unless a strong pipeline of researchers, extensionists, trainers is supported for the required human and institutional capacities. There is no logic in planning agricultural development that is not sustained by the technical staff it necessitates.

There are a number of challenges that hinder the performance of agriculture in Africa: lack of lucid and conducive policies; poor incentives; poor access to input and output markets; predominant rain fed agriculture; inadequate agricultural research and development spending; heavily ruined and depleted soils; problematic land tenure systems; inadequate levels of mechanization; many pests, diseases and weeds; climate change and importantly, weak human and institutional capacities to champion and sustain the needed change processes.

Agricultural transformation requires systematic capacities at national and regional levels to address researchable issues and challenges. New age agricultural science leaders are needed to operate within the agricultural innovation system and champion solving problems, recognize opportunities and adopt forward looking perspectives.

The RUFORUM Network continues to be the voice for increased investments in tertiary agricultural education – in 2005 a Ministerial Conference was held in Kampala to stir African Ministers of Agriculture to support TAE. In 2010 the conference on Higher Education in Agriculture in Africa (CHEA) called for increased investments in higher education in agriculture in Africa and for such investments to be included as an integral

---

\(^1\) Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme

\(^2\) Framework for African Agricultural Productivity
agricultural development investment in CAADP Country Compacts and Medium Term Agricultural Productivity Programmes. In Kigali (2013) the meeting of Permanent Secretaries responsible for Agriculture and Education formally recognized RUFORUM as a Regional Higher Education and Research for Development Agency that works across the four Regional Economic Communities for spurring agricultural-led economic transformation for achieving national and regional sustainable development.

The 2014 RUFORUM Biennial Conference is the fourth in the series. The main objective of the conference is to provide a platform for agricultural research for development stakeholders in Africa and beyond to actively exchange findings and experiences, while at the same time learning lessons towards improving performance of the agricultural sector and ultimately people’s livelihoods. It coincides with the African Union Commission celebration of progress made over the last 10 years towards strengthening agricultural development to ensure Africa secures food and nutrition security. Thus the 2014 Biennial provides African universities and partners, especially research systems, development practitioners and global actors, to reflect on progress made over the years and to strategize on options to accelerate agricultural development in the continent. The Conference is expected to attract over 300 participants from within and outside Africa. The biennial conference is RUFORUM’s most comprehensive meeting for the diversity of stakeholders in agriculture. It is especially dedicated to graduate students and their supervisors, grantees in RUFORUM member universities and alumni. It is a platform for peer review, quality control, mentorship, networking and shared learning.

The 2014 biennial conference will purposely link stakeholders in agriculture to new products and trends, and will have a particular focus on strengthening partnership for higher education in agriculture. Of great significance is that the conference will a) provide opportunities for higher education institutions and networks, and indeed their partners, to show case their contribution to agricultural development in Africa, and b) expose young researchers to a professional gathering and will provide avenues for strengthening communication and publications while keeping them aware of current trends on the African continent. It will provide opportunities to seasoned scientists to mentor and guide the younger scientists through discussions and deliberations. It will also be an opportunity to create linkages between the diversity of stakeholders in agriculture. Provision will be made for 5-day exhibition by universities and partners, to allow them highlight their programmes and innovations. A field day will also be arranged to allow for exposure to practical field issues in Mozambique.

The overall theme for the conference is “Celebrating the Contribution of Universities and Partners to Africa’s Agricultural Development”, with each day focusing on:

1. How to build national capacities through networks & economies of scale
2. Enhancing regional collaboration and other science partnerships
3. Opportunities to leverage the massive potential of ICT in TAE and AR4D
4. Integrating higher agricultural education with NARIs and with extension

The conference will cover the following subthemes:

- Strengthening agricultural science research in universities
- Increasing access to higher education in agriculture
- Regional collaboration and Agricultural Science Partnerships
- Integration TAE with national agricultural systems and plans
- ICT for TAE and AR4D
Expected outputs and outcomes

The expected outputs from the conference include;

i. Key policy issues requiring attention of governments and their partners
ii. Synthesis of cutting edge research findings in agriculture
iii. High quality research papers
iv. Synthesis of issues and challenges in the agricultural sector
v. Conference proceedings as part of the RUFORUM working document series
vi. Database of African researchers and their partners

The expected outcomes as a result of the conference include;

i. Shared vision towards the role and importance of research for the development of Africa’s agricultural sector
ii. Shared understanding of the research gaps and challenges facing Africa
iii. Increased awareness of social benefits to target communities arising from university research and other products
iv. Strengthened communication skills among young scientists
v. Greater visibility and appreciation of the role played by universities in Africa’s development agenda.

Venue

The five day conference will be held at the Joaquim Chissano International Conference Centre in Maputo, Mozambique, from 21st to 25th July 2014. The meeting will be co-organized by RUFORUM Secretariat, Government of Mozambique (led by Eduardo Mondlane University and IIAM) and CCARDESA.

Logistics

**CONFERECE FEES**

Registration Fees: US$300 (includes conference bag, materials, cultural evening, access to all sessions, lunches and airport transfers)

Hotel Accommodation: TBC

Mozambique Visa: US$50 but may vary depending on nationality

Participants will also meet the costs of their dinners (at approximately $25 per dinner).

Call For Abstracts

31st March 2014

Important Dates

Conference Online Registration: 30th June 2014
Special sessions submission: 15th June 2014
Exhibitors registration: 4th July 2014
Extended Abstracts: 31st March 2014

Conference Organizing Team

**Team Members**

Ms Nodumo Dhlamini – Conference Coordinator; biennial@ruforum.org
Dr Paul Nampala –  p.nampala@ruforum.org