
**Agricultural Research for Africa's Development:
Strengthening Innovation Capacity, Adaptiveness
& Responsiveness for Improved Livelihoods
The 3rd RUFORUM Biennial Conference,
24th – 28th September 2012**

DATES: 24-28 September, 2012

**VENUE: Imperial Resort Beach Hotel
Entebbe, Uganda**

**LAUNCH OF THE INITIATIVE OF THE AFRICAN
TERTIARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION (TAE)
INNOVATION LEARNING PLATFORM**

BIENNIAL CONFERENCE THEME	Agricultural Research for Africa's Development: Strengthening Innovation Capacity, Adaptiveness & Responsiveness for Improved Livelihoods
SIDE EVENT TITLE	LAUNCH OF THE INITIATIVE OF THE AFRICAN TERTIARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION (TAE) INNOVATION LEARNING PLATFORM, Friday 28 September, 2012
RELATED CONFERENCE DATES/ HALL	28 September, morning session, Hall to be determined
BACKGROUND	<p>The importance of addressing capacity gaps to enable Africa to achieve its 6% sustainable growth in agriculture has been widely articulated within Africa and explicitly addressed in the Communique from the Ministerial Conference on Higher Education in Agriculture in Africa (CHEA, Kampala, 18th November 2010). The need to invest in a radical transformation of the tertiary agricultural education (TAE) system to ensure that they can meet these needs has been highlighted in the Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP) and has resulted, through a series of workshops and discussions, in the development of TEAM-Africa – the Tertiary Education for Agriculture Mechanism in Africa.</p> <p>This Mechanism has been established to facilitate the integration of TAE into CAADP processes and plans, to catalyze change in TAE institutions to produce graduates able to identify, analyze, and resolve real-world problems, and to mobilize and harmonize investments to achieve the critical mass needed to meet these needs. The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) and the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAPE) will be key implementing partners – with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) being a key facilitating partner of TEAM-Africa.</p> <p>Several meetings addressing academic experts, Development Partners (DPs) and African TAE-leaders were organised, the first one in Ås, Norway in October 2011, at which the 'TAE Partnership' was launched. A follow-up meeting to the one in Ås was held in Wageningen, in March 2012. This meeting in Wageningen brought together an ever-wider group of academic institutions, networks and DPs from Europe, the US and Africa. One of the main purposes of this 2nd TAE Partnership workshop was to provide an opportunity for development partners and African stakeholders to share experiences and discuss lessons learned from past and current</p>

programs of support to TAE in Africa. A concrete list of action points in the near- and medium-term future was developed.

One of the priority actions agreed upon is “Tell the exciting stories of transformations that have already started in African TAE” for which the leadership was assigned to Wageningen UR, to be executed with RUFORUM and ANAFE, under the umbrella of TEAM-Africa.

The reason to put this activity in the list of priority actions is that African TAE institutions and Development Partners have been working for years on innovations in TAE institutions. Although good progress has been made, these efforts are often fragmented, are using different approaches and do not inform each other. The support to TAE innovation can be more effective if knowledge and experiences are shared between stakeholders involved in these change processes (to avoid re-inventing the wheel). This is why a learning platform is vital:

- to get a better overview of programmes and initiatives in relation to TAE within regions/countries.
- to bring together the different approaches, tools and lessons learnt under one learning and collaborating platform, accessible to all involved in similar work.

The initiative of development of the learning platform has been taken up by the regional organisations RUFORUM, FARA and ANAFE and the northern partners WU, CDI, KIT, and ICRA in the Netherlands. To be effective, other partners are now requested to join this initiative. The foundation and relevancy of this initiative is that it will create a learning and sharing space for the TEAM-Africa and CAADP initiatives, as well as for other external donor-funded initiatives in TAE.

- It is a feedback mechanism to the TEAM-Africa. With the discussion possibilities, sharing information and documentation, learning from implemented projects, all this analysis and feedback will inform the TEAM-Africa CAADP initiative providing concrete involvement of stakeholders.
- The platform will generate input to contribute to the TEAM-Africa process. Through the learning events and discussions, concrete ideas and strategies will be shaped. This will facilitate translating the WHAT into the HOW.

It is realised that a number of learning platforms from TAE (regional) organisations exists already. A short analysis of these platforms shows that these learning platforms are more generic platforms, providing a wealth of information, sharing results of capacity building projects, including sometimes lessons learned on, especially, “what to do” to strengthen the TAE capacity. The interactive possibilities of the existing learning platforms for in depth discussions are not utilised to

its full potential.

The new platform will have as main focus the lessons learned on “how” to strengthen the TAE capacity, what are the best approaches and methods to be used in certain settings. It will bring together the practitioners of TAE capacity building projects to learn on what worked well and what can be improved and will allow comparative analyses between approaches used in different countries.

As such, the proposed new platform is complementary to the established learning platforms. It will build on the existing platforms by bringing together, in a mutual learning endeavour, the practitioners active in the existing learning platforms.

Learning Platform Objectives

The overall objective is to create a learning space for those directly involved in TAE capacity development. The immediate users and contributors will be TAE practitioners such as staff of TAE institutes and development professionals.

The lessons learned from TAE capacity development projects will be shared through the web-based platform with other important stakeholders like national and international policymakers, funding organisations, and to the wider higher education development sector.

Main instruments

The learning platform will use two main instruments for the joint learning:

- workshops for joint learning, reflection and comparative analysis will be organised to feed into the knowledgebase of the platform.
- Structured discussions through the web-based platform on specific topics (see below). The interaction through the web-based platform will also be used to prepare the workshops for joint learning, and discuss the results of the workshops with other practitioners.

The “learning space” will thus not be limited to just an online interaction, but will be nourished by face-to-face activities.

Key Platform Features

The key platform features can be put into three categories; Joint learning, Resources and Networking. All three categories will be organised along – for example - the following topic-lines, how to:

- Develop curricula relevant to the labour market needs (private/governmental/NGO);
- Organise stakeholders' involvement in education (courses, practical work, internships, thesis work);
- Introduce new ways of teaching and learning in the education system of TAE institutes (e.g. competence-based learning, problem-oriented learning);
- Make the research more relevant for agricultural development (e.g. system thinking, interdisciplinarity, participatory approaches, action research);
- Manage change processes at TAE institutions;
- Enhance a learning environment within TAE institutions;
- Ensure the quality of the education provided;
- Monitor and evaluate capacity building projects and how to assess the impact after the projects are concluded.

Joint learning

- Sharing of good practices and lessons learnt from project experiences at multiple levels; planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Sharing tools, methods, learning resources, there-by promoting collective learning.
- Reflections on specific work experiences to uncover new understanding through workgroups/discussion boards.
- Contribution of ideas, experiences and trends analysis.
- Partners can use the learning network to establish specific groups to identify trends, issues and opportunities of global and/or regional importance.

Resources

- Links to TAE initiatives in the world, list of key organizations engaged in TAE (country-wise) and their projects.
- Links to portals and university websites on curriculum development, learning theories, teaching practice, etc. and on the other focus areas (topics) within TAE.
- Important publications on institutional change management, development of higher education in agriculture.
- Funding opportunities through posted calls for proposals.

Networking

- Possibility to add profiles of participants/organisations and how they contribute to TAE
- Identification of new initiatives within the partnership, events of value to platform users.
- Showcasing of activities carried out by the platform members and within the TEAM-Africa partnership.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES	<p>The purpose of the side event is to evaluate and then officially launch the idea of developing the learning platform. The side event will identify the approach to build such platform and involve other TAE institutions and other partners in the learning platform. The side event aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sensitize and engage African TAE institutions and Development Partners in the development of the learning platform; 2. To present and discuss a first design of the web-based learning platform taking a few priority topic lines as a starting point; 3. To link the new learning platform to be developed with existing learning platforms and with projects/activities that could give input to the priority topic lines; 4. Identify partners to be involved from the start of the platform development;
EXPECTED OUTPUTS/ OUTCOMES	<p>The key outputs of the session shall include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Commitment of the African TAE institutions, Regional Organisations and Development Partners to jointly develop the learning platform; ii. Recommendations for the outline of the web-based platform; iii. Identification of cases and key partners to start developing the learning platform; iv. Recommendations for the work plan for the short and medium term.
APPROACH AND ACTIVITIES	<p>The session will commence with a short summary of the different activities organised in the past which resulted in the priority action as described above. Two presentations will form the basis for discussion. The first presentation will present the general ideas and objectives of the learning platform. The second presentation will deal with the first design of the web-based learning platform. The presentations will be followed by discussions on the idea and design of the learning platform, linkages with existing activities and projects that may give input to the discussions around the priority topics, and the way forward to achieve the outcomes envisaged.</p>
IMPACT AND BENEFICIARIES	<p>The learning platform is expected to strongly enhance coordinated sharing and learning on how to improve tertiary agricultural education in Africa, especially around the topic lines mentioned. It is expected to bring such sharing and learning to a higher level by working with jointly developed frameworks for analysis. Also the learning platform ensures better access to relevant documentation around those topic lines and improved collaboration of various</p>

partners due to better networking. This is expected to positively impact (programmes on) change processes towards improvement of TAE, both in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases because :

- Emerging practices can be shared in a more structured and transparent way, avoiding re-inventing the wheel, making better use of good practice and building a more solid capacity base of what works in context.

The beneficiaries are the stakeholders involved in innovations in TAE, such as lecturers, management of TAE institutes, donors, national policy makers, development partners, and individuals.

Graduates of TAE are important beneficiaries, being able to contribute more effectively to the agricultural sector in Africa with their newly acquired competencies. Their improved driving force behind the African economies ultimately impacts on poverty reduction within the continent.

LOCATION

Imperial Resort Beach Hotel, Entebbe, Kampala, XXX Hall

CONVENERS

As part of the overall RUFORUM Biennial conference, the side event is convened by CDI, KIT, and ICRA, in collaboration with RUFORUM and ANAFE.



PROGRAMME

Time	Activity	Chair: To be determined
10h00-10h15	Overview of As and Wageningen workshops and priority action.	Hamidou Boly, TEAM-Africa
10h15-10h30	Objectives and purpose of learning platform	Roos Wemmenhove, KIT
10h30-10h45	Design & functioning of web-based learning platform	Wouter Hijweege, CDI
10h45-12h00	Plenary discussions and recommendations on the platform, the engagement of partners in on- and offline platform development around priority topics, and the way forward	Moses Osiru, RUFORUM