



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Policies,
Institutions,
and Markets

Led by IFPRI

The Role of Institutional Capacity Development in Africa's Agricultural Transformation

Organized Session Proposal (Dr. Frank Place: f.place@cgiar.org; Prof. T. S. Jayne
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Submitted by the CGIAR Program on Policies, Institutions, Markets (PIM)

BACKGROUND

African agricultural and food systems are changing rapidly. The region is witnessing increasingly globalized markets, rapid population growth, youth unemployment, climate change, and the rise of emergent medium scale African farmers. The skill requirements of successful farmers, agribusiness managers, workers in agrifood systems, and public sector managers are changing as new technologies come in, as the role of the private sector in agriculture grows rapidly, and as the transformation process takes off.

It is increasingly crucial for African agricultural research institutions to be in a position to anticipate these changes and respond pro-actively to them rather than be whip-sawed by them. The time has arrived for African governments to find ways to effectively build African universities, agricultural training colleges, vocational schools, crop research organizations, and policy analysis institutes, realizing that competent organizations cannot be achieved without highly effective, skilled and well-resourced staff. International private companies, international research organizations, and “northern” universities have important but increasingly redefined roles that support the development of competent African scientific institutions.

Capacity development needs of the past no longer fit current and future realities. As stated by the President of the African Development Bank, Dr. Akin Adesina, “African universities are unfortunately training young people for yesterday’s needs rather than tomorrow’s demands.”

In the face of these challenges, it is critical to take seriously the emerging capacity needs of African agricultural institutions, so that they are in a position to respond in home grown and locally supported ways. The *Association of African Agricultural Economists* has a leading role to play in guiding public discussion about the emerging and future capacity development needs associated with the changing African agriculture and food systems.

African universities are simply not training sufficient numbers of the required scientists and other technical experts to meaningfully support the changing national agriculture innovation and food systems. To put this into context, the continent currently only has around 82,000 agricultural scientists against an ideal number of 169,000 in 2023,¹ suggesting that the region needs to ramp up considerably the number produced and employed in meaningful jobs to meet this goal. And as governments expand their educational systems to accommodate the massive increase in demand for university education, maintaining quality of training has become a huge challenge. This challenge has been further exacerbated by the flight of national agricultural scientists who have migrated to more lucrative employment opportunities in the developed world or relatively prosperous economies within Africa, such as South Africa and Botswana. The ACBF report also highlights agricultural economics as one of the key professional skill areas for Agenda 2063. The number of agricultural economists will also need to grow and be gainfully employed on the continent. Is this on track? What needs to be done to alter the trajectory?

In addition to identifying the capacity needs and how to get there, there are short term urgent needs for the existing pool of agricultural research talent, including agricultural economists, to work more efficiently and effectively to support agri-food system transformation. Within the agricultural economics and policy professions, there are many active organizations including the national agricultural research institutes, universities and colleges, policy think tanks, government policy units, regional research associations and networks, policy units at regional economic commissions, continental consortium, continental and regional ReSAKSS entities and country offices of various international research organizations or universities. There is much good work produced, alongside valuable collaboration as well as healthy competition. However, a higher level strategic discussion to maximize synergies in the short run with a view for building capacity in the longer run has not taken place.

OBJECTIVE OF THE ORGANIZED SYMPOSIUM

The purpose of this side event is to explore the evolving capacity development challenges and ways of responding to these challenges within the context of rapid agri-food systems transformation in sub-Saharan Africa. The side event will disseminate high-level messages for continued targeted capacity building for the African governments and other stakeholders.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The main outcomes of the organized symposium will include:

- Increased understanding of how the demands in African agri-food systems are changing and how this is affecting the skill requirements demanded by agribusiness firms, farms,

¹ African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) (2016). African Union Agenda 2063: African Critical Technical Skills: Key Capacity Dimensions Needed for the First 10 Years of Agenda 2063. Harare: ACBF. The target was established using India as a reference.

and public sector managers and analysts; a deeper understanding of the needs in agricultural (including agricultural economics) research will be pursued.

- Toward an understanding of how African universities must adapt and upgrade their curricula to ensure that undergraduates, MS and PhD-level departments of agricultural economics, business management, and agricultural scientists provide the training that matches evolving demands in the workplace;
- Toward an understanding of how the existing pool of talent in agricultural and agricultural economics research can more effectively be utilized to support agri-food system transformation in the coming years; and
- A statement on capacity development requirements for African agriculture transformation included in the AGRF 2019 Accra Declaration.

PARTICIPANTS AND FORMAT

The organized symposium will provide a launchpad for future discussions around capacity development requirements for agricultural transformation and the role of African universities and policy analysis think tanks. The symposium features prominent representatives from a broad array of African and international capacity development organizations.

The format of the session will be as follows:

Setting the scene: The moderator will set the scene by briefly laying out key trends affecting the trajectories of agrifood system transformation in Africa, demonstrating how African governments and international partners will need to anticipate and pro-actively respond to these trends, and highlighting the implications for human and institutional capacity development requirements in Africa.

Keynote address: The Keynote speaker, Professor Kevin Urama of the African Development Bank, has broad experience on institutional capacity development in Africa. He will lay out a vision and strategy for agricultural transformation in the region, taking account of trends highlighted in the opening presentation.

Panel: The Moderator will convene a panel composed of distinguished African thought leaders, designed to highlight priority areas that stakeholders in capacity development for agriculture and food systems need to address.

Floor discussion: The opening speakers and panelists will provide plenty of grist for the moderated floor discussion to engage the audience and elicit more insights on the topic.

DRAFT PROGRAMME (90 minutes)

Moderator: Thom Jayne, University Foundation Professor, Michigan State University

10 min

Setting the Stage/Keynote Address

- Prof. Kevin Urama, Executive Director, African Development Institute, African Development Bank

35 min

Panel Discussion

- Prof. Njuguna Ndungu, Director, African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)
- Prof. Richard Mkandawire, Alliance for African Partnership (AAP)/Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Ms. Lulama Ndibongo Traub, Technical Director, RENAPRI
- Dr. Ousmane Badiane, Director, IFPRI, TBD
- Dr. Adebayo Aromolaran, Dean of Adekunle Ajasin University in Nigeria

35 min

Floor discussion

Moderator (Thom Jayne)

10 min

Closing remarks

Dr. Simeon Ehui, World Bank.
