

Catalyzing agricultural transformation in Africa: What are the institutional arrangements and partnerships needed to make it happen?

Report of the dialogue by the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) during the 4th EAFF Congress held 14th September, 2017 at Speke Resort Munyonyo, Kampala, Uganda

Introduction

Africa is on the threshold of a significant transformation. Over the last decade, the continent was home to six of the world's 10 fastest growing economies, and has been highlighted in foresight reports by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the outlook for the region remains bright. Strong growth in Africa's middle class is expected to continue on the back of better economic policy and governance, coupled with more business-friendly policies and improved demand for structural transformations in the Agricultural Sector which remains critical for sustainable development. The sustained increased in consumer spending, combined with population growth and rapid urbanization, means that today's markets offer better opportunities for African smallholder farmers if they can meet demands related to larger volumes, consistency of supply and quality/standards.

The East African Farmers Federation (EAFF) is a key stakeholder to RUFORUM. Both the EAFF and RUFORUM have in the past worked closely to design and implement joint undertakings. Through the PAEPARD Project, RUFORUM has had opportunity to capacitated EAFF and its subsidiaries at the grassroots levels. The engagements with EAFF has helped among others to strengthen demand articulation and ensure that Research Teams at RUFORUM member universities address relevant research questions and work with communities to develop appropriate agricultural technologies that are suited to context. Through the joint EAFF-RUFORUM engagements, many innovative approaches and strategies for promoting competitive business models in agricultural sector while addressing challenges of integrating small producers and processors in their different groupings of Farmer-based Organizations (FBOs) are being implemented and scaled up for adoption.

The RUFORUM Network appreciates the fact that participation in market-oriented can improve the livelihoods of many rural households through diversified nutrition, employment and enhanced incomes. The producers and consumers, smallholder farmers are key actors in the agricultural sector in Africa. Besides constituting a critical component of backwards and forward linkages to other economic sectors, their contribution to rural labour-force and food supply is essential to the transformation of the rural economy, especially at the lowest income levels of the society. The importances of the sector notwithstanding, there are numerous challenges in the efforts to promote growth incomes and bringing about commercialization in smallholders agriculture, through farmer organization (FBOs) of different forms.

The EAFF has made a commendable effort in bringing together the different FBOs. The strategic plans and activities of these different forms of FBOs that constitute the EAFF memberships demonstrate the fact that agriculture and farmers in sub-Saharan Africa more than the rest of the World, continues to face challenges that have hindered its capacity to spur economic growth. In addition to biotic constraints, resource poor farmers are also faced with inadequate information, lack of strong organized groups, low motivation, low literacy levels, lack of access to productive inputs, low technological know-how among others that stand as stumbling blocks to entering the cash economy.

Objectives

The challenges for smallholder farmers are numerous, they range from the provision of services to development of business skills to deal with new circumstances, and extremely difficult to address individually. This underpins the importance of partnerships in the agricultural sector and the academia remains a key partner in delivering the much needed human capital as well as knowledge co-creation to generate relevant research outputs.

As part of efforts to plan and implement undertakings among universities and FBOs in Africa RUFORUM considered the theme for the 4th EAFF Congress as critical. The theme of the Congress “Organizing Smallholder Farmers to Harness New Investments: Partnerships and Innovations to Enhance Value Chain Ownership, Productivity and Market Integration” was very timely for the RUFORUM Network and was in line with the current efforts related to mapping out and visioning the role of universities in the attainment of continental and global goals. In this agenda, RUFORUM is crafting a Vision 2030. The objectives of the dialogue included:

- (a) Reflect on a Vision for African Agriculture (in 2030) and the potential role of African universities and their partner in supporting the realisation of this vision
- (b) Formulate key strategies and actions relevant to the transformation processes of universities to meet the vision for African Agriculture in 2030, and,
- (c) Map out complementary actions that would need to be undertaken to achieve the vision, including the strategic partners and actors relevant in the transformation agenda.

Approach

The dialogue was held as a side-event and contribution to the 4th EAFF Congress, following a participatory approach. It was also a facilitator - led session to ensure participants are engaged and focused to deliver desired outputs. The subject of the dialogue was very broad and generated several ramifications and in order to focus the dialogue on the three strands, a panel

presentation was used. The facilitator(s) engaged the panelists to address the following structured questions and open up to plenary and/ or small group discussions.

Time	Main Question	Panelists
8:30 – 9:00 am	What are the key drivers and ingredients for Agricultural Transformation in Africa?	Dr. Silim Nahdy
9:00 – 9:30 am	What are the institutional arrangements (including policy frameworks) and partnerships need to actualize Agricultural Transformation in Africa?	Mr. Phillip Kiliro
9:30– 10:00 am	How should universities reposition themselves to effectively engage in the Agricultural Transformation Agenda in Africa?	Mr. Joseph Nkandu Ms. Nyirahabima Esperance

Session Outputs/Deliverables

1. A comprehensive report with aspirations of FBOs with respect to FBOs-Academia partnerships as part of promoting demand articulation;
2. Strengthened partnerships between FBOs and the RUFORUM/Universities Network in Africa that will always serve as a stringboard to mutual interactions

Meeting outcomes

The meeting commenced with introductory remarks from RUFORUM spearheaded by Dr. Solange, followed by self-introductions from all participants. However, after the self-introductions, there arose a linguistic dilemma where members requested that English, French and Swahili be utilized in the communications. This was a very big challenge given the limited timeframe for the parallel session (90 minutes). A resolution was later made whereby after a given presentation, a summarized interpretation was made in French and Swahili.

Presentation by the President, EAFF

He thanked RUFORUM for organizing the event and noted that the event is in tandem with the partnership existing with RUFORUM. He further informed the participants that farmers have a representation at the RUFORUM board in form of EAFF, a vital aspect for connecting the users of the technologies emerging from the universities and the universities generating the technologies.

The key drivers and ingredients for Agricultural Transformation in Africa?

To transform agriculture, several players are needed along the value chain and this huge network of players can be made to function only if the needs of the farmers are highly



considered. Therefore there is need for networking and partnership taking into consideration the value chain approach.

Policy frameworks for agricultural transformation already exist, and in order to influence the policies to function, there is need for the participation of the farmers. This ensures the functionality of the policies in order to transform the lives of the farmers in the East African region. This can further be enhanced by Farmers organizing themselves in groups in order to influence policies to ensure that agricultural interventions transform the lives of the small-scale farmers

The capacities to modernize agriculture in form of agricultural extension need to be in place if agriculture is to undergo transformation. These capacities include research and extension, while giving due consideration to the knowledge at the farmer's level.

Credit and insurance schemes need to consider agriculture, due to the various risks that are embedded in the agricultural sector

Farmers need to establish partnerships that will guarantee market access as well as a source of inputs that will guarantee the yield

How should universities reposition themselves to effectively engage in the Agricultural Transformation Agenda in Africa?

Universities need to invite farmer representatives in the curriculum development process due to the currently existing mismatch between the theoretical training delivered by the universities and the practical aspects needed in the field by the farmers and other actors along the agricultural value chain.

Agricultural institutions all over the world have a research component under their mandate, implying that these universities need to establish strong collaborations with the farmer organizations that are in close ties with the smallholders in order to address the key challenges facing the smallholders. The solutions to the various challenges need to be developed while considering the nature of the agro-ecological zone.

Currently there is a brain-drain of agricultural graduates through working in other sectors other than the agricultural sector. This calls for the universities to transform the mindset of the agricultural students by informing them that agriculture is a lucrative career. Additionally, the agricultural training in the universities needs to be realigned to attract a decent job and hence a decent pay.

The indigenous knowledge of the smallholders needs to be integrated into the current scientific research since the indigenous knowledge is of a durable nature. The smallholders undertake their own practical research on viable agricultural alternatives and therefore there is need to integrate the indigenous knowledge with the scientific knowledge.

Universities need to establish collaborations with other stakeholders including the public and private sector to check the rampant urbanization which negatively affects agriculture due to the tapping of fertile land for constructions yet his land is meant for agriculture



Universities have a big role to lead the agricultural transformation agenda in Africa because the research done at the universities can be a catalyst for enhanced agricultural production amongst the smallholders. Universities need to propose solutions to the challenges and issues facing the farmers and thereafter discuss the results with other institutions including NGOs, public and private organizations that work with the farmers to determine if the solutions are adequate. The universities thereafter need to distribute the results of the research to the various actors along the agricultural value chain. This is due to the fact that some universities undertake research and then shelve research results. Therefore the farmers need to inform the universities the problems they face to enable the universities determine if the problems can be solved.

Universities need to amplify and magnify the research findings to render them user friendly to the end-users due to the existence of language barrier amongst the smallholders. This can be ensured by devising an effective mechanism for disseminating the research findings to several actors along the agricultural value chain. This includes dissemination in several languages in addition to the usual English language to ensure a far-wide reach of the research findings.



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