

## RUFORUM Celebrating 10 years as a Network and 22 years supporting Agricultural Higher Education

ISSN: 2073-9699

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 11

The Monthly Brief of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)

# Celebrating RUFORUM@10

### Reaping what you sow: agricultural partnerships are key



Above: Richard Powell, Communications Consultant, RUFORUM

The stereotype of the impoverished African smallholder farmer, two-fifths of which are female, has always struck me as a figure requiring deep sympathy in the face of the apparently onward march of monolithic agribusiness, where their needs are superseded by those of anonymous corporate self-interest.

But my ignorance of the actual and critical contribution of this group was addressed in 2012 when reading a small report from the UK-based Guardian newspaper.<sup>1</sup> The author of the piece stated that smallholder farmers account for 80% of food production in sub-Saharan Africa, and there is an increasing recognition among large private sector food retailers that they need to be nurtured to safeguard their future and protect their contribution – primarily raw materials – to the continent's and global needs. Part of this nurturing process entails mentoring in training and technology to increase agricultural production, achieved to an extent by effective partnerships

with higher educational institutes, enhancing the value chain to enable them to move from a subsistence existence to one making profit.

The importance of agriculture on the continent was recently reiterated by the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who at the Heads of States and Governments meeting of the AU Summit held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in June 2014 remarked in a newspaper opinion piece:

"Africa can and must be transformed from a continent reliant upon food imports to one that can feed itself and export a surplus to help feed a growing world population. This means new investments across the entire value chain – from the smallholder farmer to agro-processing facilities, and from railways, transport systems and storage to finance, trade and market infrastructure."<sup>2</sup>

At that meeting, held in the AU-declared Year of Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security, African leaders re-committed themselves to the principles and values of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and to bold new targets to be achieved by the year 2025, including: eliminating hunger and improving nutri-

*(Continued on page 2)*

Contact Us:

E-mail: [secretariat@ruforum.org](mailto:secretariat@ruforum.org);

Visit our Website: [www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org)

Follow us on Social Media



## RUFORUM Celebrating 10 years as a Network and 22 years supporting Agricultural Higher Education

tion; doubling agricultural productivity, reducing poverty by half through agriculture; creating job opportunities for Africa's youth and women through inclusive value-chain development; and improving the resilience of households.

Dr Dlamini-Zuma noted: "Accelerated growth (in agriculture) is essential if African citizens at all levels are to achieve the AU's aspiration of prosperity. Investments in agriculture will ensure much more than feeding two billion Africans by 2050, a crucial goal in its own right. It will also provide employment and generate economic growth – jobs and income – for Africa's citizens."

Indeed, according to the World Bank, agriculture is essential for sub-Saharan Africa's growth and for achieving the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015, employing as it does 65% of Africa's labour force and accounting for 32% of its gross domestic product.<sup>3</sup>

One of five means by which the World Bank contends that higher and sustained agricultural growth will be realised is improving agricultural policy and institutions. Whilst not stated explicitly, and as Dr Dlamini-Zuma noted, the issues involved are multi-factorial in nature and require multi-pronged, holistic planning to address them, one of those essential elements will be addressing the linkages between existing farmers and their needs and a mentored new generation of university educated agricultural researchers and teachers who can lead this agenda from within the continent.

At the 4th RUFORUM Biennial Conference, taking place from 21st-25th July in Maputo, Mozambique, where 10 years earlier the African Heads of States and Governments signed the CAADP, the endeavours and achievements of this new generation of agriculturally trained academics who are sensitive to and work effectively with the smallholder community will be discussed and celebrated. If Africa is to meet the demanding target agenda set by its leaders, it is imperative that it invests in this agricultural partnership, thereby sowing the seeds for future success.

### References

<sup>1</sup>Newsome M. Does the future of farming in Africa lie in the private sector? The Guardian 23 November, 2012. Source: [www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/nov/23/future-farming-africa-private-sector](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/nov/23/future-farming-africa-private-sector).

<sup>2</sup>Dlamini-Zuma N. Africa must be turned from a continent reliant upon food imports into one that can feed itself. The East African, 28 June-4 July, 2014: 15.

<sup>3</sup>The World Bank. Fact Sheet: The World Bank and Agriculture in Africa, 2014. Washington: The World Bank.

This is our ninth issue in a series of articles we are releasing as part of our 10 year anniversary. Download by clicking on the following issues to access the previous issues; [The Role of Networking and harnessing Innovations in Higher Agricultural Education](#) (eighth issue), [Tertiary education: a prerequisite to meet global challenges](#) (seventh issue) [Community Action Research Grants: Connecting Universities to Rural Producers](#) (sixth issue) [RUFORUM Small Competitive Grants; GRGs – Graduate Research Grants](#) (fifth issue), [RUFORUM Network: Changing Pedagogical Paradigms, Priorities, and Practice](#) (fourth issue), [Briefing note on the 4<sup>th</sup> biennial conference](#) (third issue), [RUFORUM's Developmental Roots](#) (second issue) and [RUFORUM@10](#) (first issue).

Contact Us:

E-mail: [secretariat@ruforum.org](mailto:secretariat@ruforum.org);

Visit our Website: [www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org)

Follow us on Social Media

