



African Association of Agricultural Economists Association Africaine des Agroéconomistes

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AAAE NEWS

In preparing for its 2016 Conference, AAAE has proposed to hold an Organized Symposium during the forthcoming IAAE Conference in Milan. This proposal has now been accepted onto the program for Milan. The Theme of the Symposium is "Using Smart Subsidies to Support Small Scale Farmers in Africa."

The Symposium will take the form of a Round Table discussion lead by presentations from our President, Dr. Augustine Langyintuo, Prof. Ferdi Meyer from the University of Pretoria as well as a further three (3) papers. The latter will be selected from among those submitted by members of AAAE.

To this end, we are calling for the submission of papers from Members of AAAE that address aspects of this topic. Successful papers will be presented during the Round Table and authors will be assisted to apply for part funding of their expenses from IAAE.

The deadline for submission of papers is Friday 5 June 2015. Papers MUST comply with all the requirements (<http://icae2015.org/?q=content/call-submission>) of those submitted to the IAAE Conference.

AAAE CONTACT DETAILS

Secretariat: Jeffers Miruka
AAAE
E-mail: info@aaae-africa.org
Tel: 254 (0)57 251 1300
Mobile: 254 (0)72 283 1531
Web. aaae-africa.org | afjare.org | icaaae.org

AAAE MEMBERS SPEAK

A survey was launched in June 2014 to assess AAAE members' views about services that AAAE provided and to solicit ideas for improvement. Out of 238 members that participated in the survey, 24% were female. 99% of the respondents were above the age of 25 years. 70% of the respondents were active members of the association and 97% wished to maintain their membership. Membership fees were deemed affordable by 57% of the respondents. There was however a general call for online registration of members to ease the process of registration. The need to increase women and youth participation in all conferences and association activities through increased sponsorships and mentoring programs for both women and the youth was also highlight.

Improving the Conference

| Suggestion | n | % |
|--|------------|------------|
| More accessible venues | 74 | 21.1 |
| Organised tours at conference | 59 | 16.8 |
| Use professional conference organizers | 53 | 15.1 |
| Earlier conference registrations | 53 | 15.1 |
| All of the above | 75 | 21.4 |
| Limited attendance of the conferences | 7 | 2.0 |
| Increase the number of sponsorships | 5 | 1.4 |
| Other suggestions | 25 | 7.1 |
| Total | 351 | 100 |

Feedback from the members showed that there is overall satisfaction with the services that are offered by the association and how it is managed (57%). However, there was a call to increase communication with members and other partners. There was also a call to improve and continue holding triennial and regional conferences but in more accessible venues. They also highlighted the need to start registration for conferences early and to engage services of professionals in conferences organization.

There is an overall satisfaction with the AfJARE journal (67%). However the members would like to see an increase in the number of editions per year and more papers per issue of the journal. 76% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the fund-raising activities of the association since its inception.

RUFORUM:

Building university capacity to contribute to agricultural development.

RUFORUM is a network organisation of African universities. It is owned by its member universities with the aim of facilitating university engagement in transforming the Agricultural Sector. The role of African universities is to build effective human capital to engage in research, policy, and service provision for both public and private sectors and to translate knowledge into innovations for sustained economic growth and food security. The focus is on small holder farmers since current economic development models for most African countries recognise that improvement of smallholder agriculture is the most efficient entry point for agricultural change. RUFORUM research contributes to expanding and improving the functionality of commodity value chains. Impact of research is achieved through enabling functional linkages with the private sector and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs). Through participating in field research programmes RUFORUM graduate students become the young agricultural scientists of tomorrow with the quality education, skills and commitment to drive change in the sector. Thus, RUFORUM enables its member universities to improve the profitability of small-holder farmers through creating a greater and better pool of talent to work on priority problems as well as producing new agricultural research for development.

Decades of under-investment in agricultural training and research in Sub-Saharan Africa have significantly slowed growth in the Sector. The continent's national agricultural research systems (NARS) are characterised by weak human and institutional capacities, along with an aging pool of well-qualified and experienced researchers. Even more challenging, the lack of attention to agricultural higher education has resulted in many cases of isolated education systems misaligned with market demands and not attuned to evolving needs across the value chain. For this reason RUFORUM was explicitly created to address these inadequacies. The programme puts agricultural tertiary education and training in sync with labour market requirements and links with other actors in the agricultural sector through platforms / forums and collaborative training and research.

Over the last 20 years of existence, RUFORUM achievements include the training of 212 PhD and 1 071 Master graduates. They are quickly snapped up by employers and make significant contributions to the agricultural sector in SSA. The network of 46 African universities in 22 countries is able to share best practices, and provides support to enable these universities to refocus their training curriculum to be responsive to the national priorities and needs. They are becoming higher education centres of excellence in agricultural sciences in Africa. A notable example is the continental recognition of Makerere University, a member of RUFORUM, as a luminary in cutting edge science in Plant breeding and Seed systems. This addresses directly the current critical capacity need for African scientists ability to develop improved crop varieties to serve the expanding seed systems of the continent.

RUFORUM helps African universities to show how they improve the lives and livelihoods of thousands of smallholder farmers through their research, outreach and relevant/adaptive training functions. RUFORUM initiatives have strengthened member universities outreach function through community action research programmes to bring agricultural innovation, technology generation and dissemination systems direct to communities. To leverage the benefits of collective action within both the regional and international perspectives, RUFORUM has supported networking among some 18 000 faculty and non-academic experts, and facilitated human capital exchanges among African universities. The network has built strategic connections with continental and global agricultural capacity development movements to achieve the higher ambition goal of "a vibrant agricultural sector linked to African universities that can produce high-performing graduates and high-quality research responsive to the demands of Africa's farmers for innovations and able to generate sustainable livelihoods and national economic development".

For more information visit our website at www.ruforum.org and blog at <http://blog.ruforum.org/> to see some of the Africa's transformative success stories that have touched real lives and improved the livelihoods of people across the social divide in the agricultural sector. You can also follow us on twitter @ruforumsec to keep up to date with the developments from the secretariat or contact; Charles Owuor, M&E officer RUFORUM, c.owuor@ruforum.org mail to: secretariat@ruforum.org

OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

Agricultural Economics Association of SA: Paper submission 12/06/2015 (<http://www.aeasa.org.za>)

International Association of Agricultural Economists: Conference 8-14/08/2015 (<http://www.iaae-aecon.org>)