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Strengthening Agri-Entrepreneurship and Community Engagement Training in East, West and North Africa (AgriENGAGE)

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Pwani University Team

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Total Budget: € 994,811.00

Project Duration: 3 years

Start Date: 15 Jan 2021

End Date: 14 Jan 2024

Collaborators

Coordinator: [Egerton University](#) – Kenya

Partners: [Pwani University](#), Kenya; [Gulu University](#), Uganda; [Uganda Martyrs University](#), Uganda; [Regional Universities Forum For Capacity Building In Agriculture \(Ruforum\)](#), Uganda; [University of Abomey-Calavi](#), Benin; [Université Nationale D'agriculture](#), Benin; [Mohammed VI Polytechnic University](#), Morocco; [Institut Agronomique Et Vétérinaire Hassan II](#), Morocco; [University of Pavia](#), Italy; [University of Copenhagen](#), Denmark

Background Information

Africa is in a job crisis, by 2022 the continent should create at least 122 million jobs. Sub-Saharan Africa anticipates to create some 54 million jobs by 2022 but the bulk of these jobs are expected to come from entrepreneurship and growth of small medium enterprises (SMEs). Agricultural sector in Africa offers many opportunities that can be harnessed to move a mass of people out of poverty but only if requisite investment is made to harness the opportunities that exist in the agricultural value chains.

AgriENGAGE: Strengthening Agri-entrepreneurship and Community Engagement Training in East, West and North Africa finds its relevance in the urgent need for agricultural growth and development, to enhance food and nutritional security in Sub-Saharan Africa. The development of the agricultural sector will lead to improved livelihoods of over 80% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa. Investments in agriculture over the years have focused on increasing productivity, but there is a recognition that productivity increase alone had not enabled many farmers to take full advantage of the opportunities and the youth were ‘escaping’ out of agriculture as it did not resonate with their aspirations. Accordingly, there is a shift in focus from productivity increase to agribusiness led farming.

Moreover, in the new agriculture private entrepreneurs, including many smallholders, are linking markets for agricultural commodities. Embracing market-oriented agriculture may help reduce poverty among smallholders in the world. This changing face of agriculture requires smallholder farmers to shift their focus to commercialization of agriculture and hence require special skills and competencies to adapt their farming systems, diversify their production, make efficient use of resources and respond to changes in the agricultural environment. Accordingly, universities that train personnel need to shift from emphasis on provision of technical agricultural production knowledge, to understanding of functioning of markets and how markets can work for the poor as well as linking different stakeholders along the value chain. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are struggling to meet the new demand for skills include in number of people trained, quality of training programmes, and relevancy of skills offered.

Kenya: Like other African countries youth unemployment is on the rise and is currently given at 26.2%. The challenge of HEIs, which are struggling with growing enrolment, is to produce skilled agricultural science graduates to transform agribusinesses and transit smallholder

agriculture to commercialization. Kenya's Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2017-2021 is focused at positioning youth at the forefront of agricultural growth and transformation.

Pwani University (PU): is located in Coastal Kenya. PU seeks to provide quality education, research, and outreach for the advancement of individual and society. Owing to its location in a historically marginalised part of the country, it has emerged as the region's provider of higher education. The university is young and student enrolment is growing, constraining available resources and quality of teaching. Thus, unique set of skills among university academics and students to maximize the potential of the university and demonstrate quality and impact teaching and learning process is required. AgriENGAGE collaboration on strengthening business and community engagement skills, and linkages with HEIs across Africa and Europe will support its focus for internationalisation.

Project Goal

AgriENGAGE aims at strengthening HEIs to provide excellent training programmes in Agri-entrepreneurship and Community Engagement responsive to evolving labour market demands to stimulating agricultural transformation and enhanced agricultural sector competitiveness.

The specific objectives of the project are:

1. Increasing the availability of updated Agri-entrepreneurial and Community Engagement Training programs;
2. Enhancing teaching competences related to business development services and community engagement in the partner universities' academic staff;
3. Training students skilled in demand driven agri-entrepreneurship, agribusiness development services and community engagement;
4. Enhancing collaboration between universities and industry.