



SUCAPRI

Strengthening
of university capacity
for promoting, facilitating
and teaching rural
innovation processes

Project Coordinator

Makerere University (UG)



Partners

Jomo Kenyatta University of
Agriculture and Technology (KE)
University of Nairobi (KE)
Egerton University (KE)
Kenyatta University (KE)
International centre for development
oriented research in Agriculture (NL)

Associates

National Agricultural Research
Organisation - NARO (UG)
Kenya Agricultural Research
Institute (KE)

Building capacities for innovating agriculture in East Africa

In a context where agricultural development remains one of best approaches to combating poverty, African universities should play a major role in innovation oriented agricultural research and development programmes. However, they are not sufficiently equipped for the complex outcomes expected from agricultural R&D teaching and research. The SUCAPRI project aims to address this issue by strengthening the capacity of five African universities to participate in decentralised national agricultural research systems, and to prepare professionals with the competencies needed to promote agricultural and rural innovation.

The “Strengthening of university capacity for promoting, facilitating and teaching rural innovation processes” (SUCAPRI) project will form a network of teaching and research staff in Makerere University in Uganda and four universities (Nairobi, Egerton, Kenyatta, and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology) in Kenya. The active interaction and sharing of knowledge between these universities and the International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture in the Netherlands will improve teaching practice and research in rural innovation processes.

Developing staff skills in rural innovation

Central to this effort will be a rural innovation learning cycle that will take place in the form of interactive workshops at the Kenyan universities. The purpose of this activity will be to establish a core team of change agents in each of the universities and to link these with other key stakeholders active in the field of rural innovation, who can then jointly learn, develop and promote agricultural innovation programmes both individually and collectively in real world situations.

This action-learning of rural innovation and development processes, coupled with experience gained through coaching and mentoring of collaborating stakeholders, will result in developing analytical, process and technical skills of university staff in rural innovation as well as a certain “professional ethos”. These skills will be subsequently applied to enhance teaching programmes, process facilitation of diverse stakeholders and research (especially interdisciplinary research between departments/faculties, and collaborative research with diverse stakeholders into complex rural development challenges).

Sharing expertise and establishing new teaching programmes

Following this, the trained staff at the Kenyan universities will facilitate the learning of others and review the structure and management procedures of agricultural curricula in their respective universities. They will also collaborate to develop and mentor a second learning cycle for agricultural professionals in Kenya.

Another key activity will be a series of workshops aimed at reviewing and restructuring undergraduate and postgraduate curricula of each participating university. The purpose of these hands-on workshops is to engage with other stakeholders, especially the main employers and development agencies, to identify key competences required in the various professions offered by the target faculties and centres of the partner universities. (...)





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(...) In accordance with this, rural innovation curricula will be redesigned and learning resource materials and modules developed. In addition, joint business plans will be designed to further familiarise potential employers with the new courses. In this way, SUCAPRI will establish close links between industry and universities, which is key to promoting rural innovation and development.

Fighting poverty in Eastern Africa

Students in agriculture, natural resource management and rural development will benefit from improved academic programmes and gain better managerial and technical skills. Coupled with the active engagement of outside stakeholders in redesigning curricula, this will result in enhanced competencies of agriculture professionals, who will be more adequately prepared for the workplace.

Furthermore, the SUCAPRI project will enhance management processes of the partner universities and enhance the capacity of the staff to conduct research in rural innovation and apply for funds for other capacity building projects related to agriculture. The capacity building resulting from the project will also add value to the government policies, institutional reforms and funding mechanisms already put in place by the governments of Uganda and Kenya.

Finally and most significantly, the SUCAPRI partners are confident that their project will contribute to improving the standard of living of the rural population in Uganda and Kenya (about half of whom currently live below the national poverty line), where agriculture and agribusiness are the primary sources of food and income. Their livelihoods will benefit from enhanced research and development services and will be better served by more able professional organisations and service providers.

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