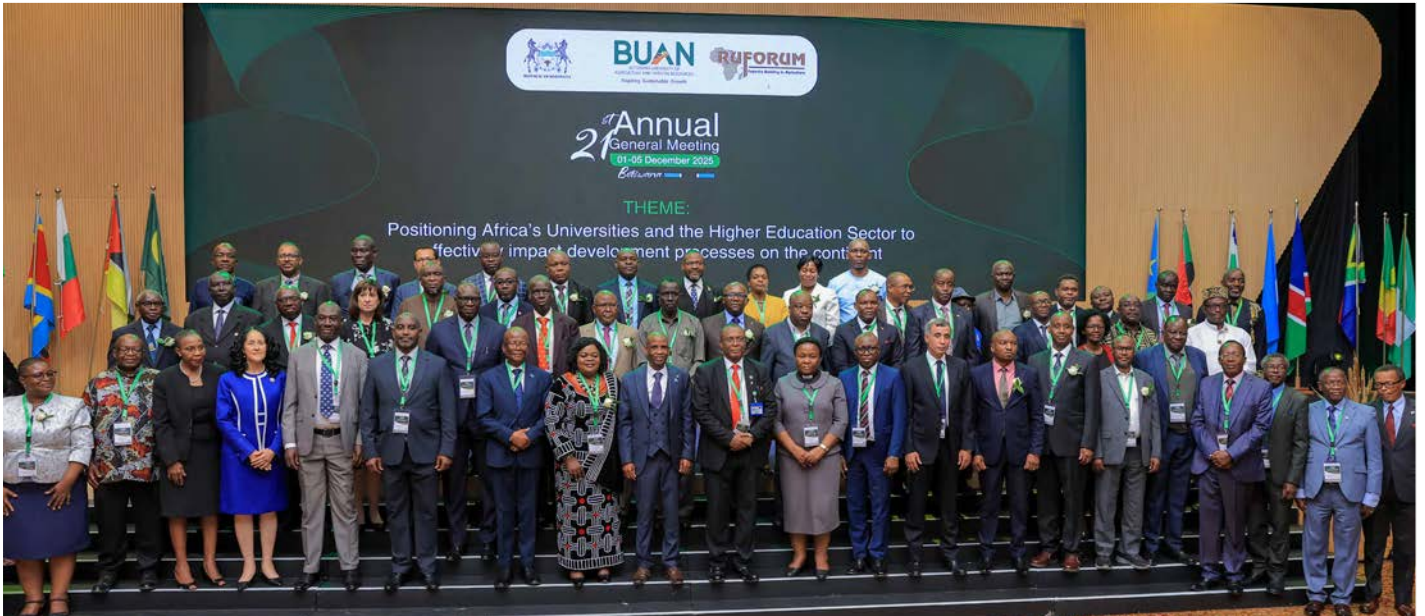


NEWSLETTER

VOL 1 ISSUE 1 | DECEMBER 2025

This brief highlights key events from the 21st RUFORUM Annual General Meeting in Botswana



Positioning Africa's Universities and the Higher Education Sector to effectively impact development processes on the continent

TOP NEWS



04 Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony

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Editorial from the Executive Secretary



Dear esteemed reader,

Dumelang! I bring you warm greetings from the RUFORUM Secretariat.

It was an immense honour to welcome continental and global educators, scholars, partners, governments, private sector and researchers to the 21st Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) Annual General Meeting (AGM) under the theme, Positioning Africa's Universities and the Higher Education Sector to effectively impact development processes on the continent.

The conference successfully galvanized collective consensus among Higher Education stakeholders in attendance, along with our partners to respond to the clarion call for accelerating delivery of Agenda 2063, the Africa we want.

As the Africa Higher Education Sector, it is our duty to ensure that the path to achieving the continent's development priorities materializes. Our continent is home to the world's youngest population, it has 60% of the land remaining to increase arable agriculture, it is home to one of the functional lungs of the world, The Congo Basin, and it has diversified agrifood systems that can secure our collective posterity. Yet, the continent remains plagued by slow progress, but carries a host of opportunities. It is therefore our duty to secure the present and future, through our commitment to harnessing the best of science, technology, innovation and strategic partnerships to secure our shared progress and development.

For Agriculture, the sector that is home to 60% of our people, it has never been more pertinent than now to make structural advancements and illustrate how higher education and agricultural research sectors have a leading role to play. The Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (STYIP) of Agenda 2063, presents seven major investment clusters or "Moonshots" for catalyzing economic growth. Moon shot six particularly aims to produce empowered and more productive citizenry. That is our responsibility.

Our work in agriculture is framed by the 2025 Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) Kampala Declaration, that focuses on building resilient agri-food systems. The Kampala declaration calls upon universities and relatedly, the agriculture and allied sectors to proactively design, accelerate and deliver at scale the required human capital, as well as knowledge products and services for development.

Moonshot six (6) further targets a fivefold (10%) increase in Africa's contribution to global scientific research output, with at least 50% of the research output translated into innovations and increased

production and productivity. It also aims to produce 100,000 PhDs over a decade in an effort to address the limited ratio of scientist per million of development population our continent has. These development targets require that we reenergize our work as scientists, educators and development practitioners. Resources always being limited, means that we should focus on prioritization, strategic shared investments, and deliberate efforts to leave no one behind. That was the spirit of the 2025 AGM!

Over the course of history, education has always been the foundation for growth. The words of the Ancient Roman Philosopher Seneca regarding education are relevant for us, “ Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity.” Our role therefore is clear, Africa Needs You and Me to underpin its development. We must create that prosperity for Africa by:

- a. Turning the tide by implementing inclusive and relevant education and research for development actions that produce work ready workforce and development solutions.
- b. Produce evidence to inform and support policy

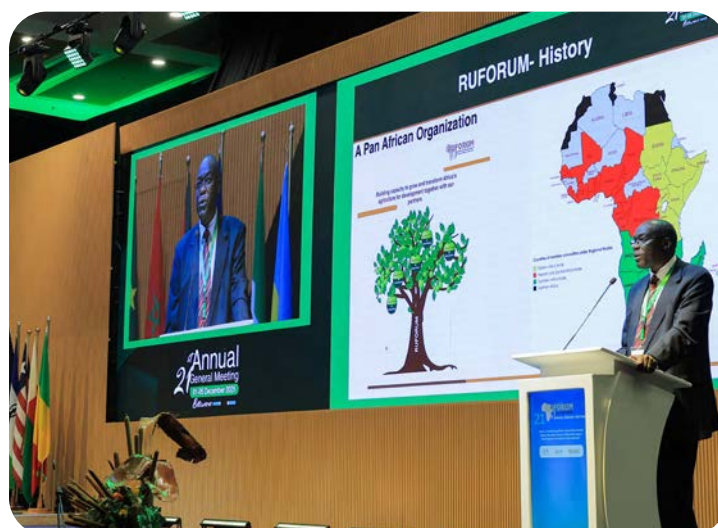
- c. Leverage partnerships because as our people say “if you want to go far walk together.” To our partners therefore, we seek your support and cooperation to deliver on the promise of Africa and the world.

Following the successful outcomes from the AGM and the roadmap forged ahead, which can be further read in the newsletter, I take this opportunity to thank the Government, and People of Botswana for graciously hosting the 21st RUFORUM AGM in Gaborone. I extend my appreciation to the National host, under the leadership of the Ministry of Higher Education, who together with the Vice Chancellor of Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources and supported by RUFORUM Member Universities Vice Chancellors in Botswana as well as the multi-partner Local Organization Committees made the conference a tremendous success.

Professor Patrick Okori

“

Africa needs you and me to underpin its development”.





Universities urged to deepen collaboration for agricultural transformation at 21st RUFORUM AGM

The AGM was officially opened on behalf of the President of the Republic of Botswana, Advocate Duma Boko, by Honourable Prince Maele, Minister of Higher Education. He challenged African universities to broaden partnerships, lead innovation, tackle youth unemployment, and respond decisively to climate change. He emphasized that universities must position themselves as front-runners in providing solutions and driving transformation across the continent.

African universities have been called upon to strengthen collaboration, innovation, and partnerships to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable development across the

continent. This message strongly resonated during key addresses at the 21st Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) Annual General Meeting (AGM) hosted in Botswana.



Welcoming delegates, the Vice Chancellor of the Botswana

University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN), Professor Ketlhatlogile Mosepele, reaffirmed the central role of African universities in strengthening food systems and driving inclusive development. He emphasized the need to connect institutions to amplify impact, while highlighting the critical contributions of women and youth in agriculture, in line with the Africa–Kampala Declaration.

Professor Mosepele outlined BUAN's transition towards a fourth-generation university model that integrates research intensity, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and community engagement. He cited the Safflower Project in

Boteti as a practical example of impact-driven innovation, where 50 women, many survivors of gender-based violence, have been empowered through agricultural innovation with support from RUFORUM and BUAN. He concluded by reaffirming BUAN's commitment to RUFORUM's mission and Africa's agricultural development agenda.



Delivering remarks on behalf of RUFORUM, Professor Patrick Okori, the Executive Secretary of RUFORUM, highlighted education as a shared asset that must be leveraged through partnerships to build prosperity. He stressed the importance of collaboration, capacity sharing, and strengthened cooperation among member universities in driving Africa's development. Linking the AGM theme to Agenda 2063, he underscored Africa's vast potential, home to

65% of the world's arable land and a youthful population and called for renewed investment in quality education, innovation, and science and technology.



Professor Theresia Nkuo-Akenji, RUFORUM Board Chair and Vice Chancellor of the University of Bamenda, echoed the importance of collaboration, noting the growing impact of research and community engagement across the network. While celebrating achievements, she acknowledged persistent challenges such as land constraints and climate change, urging innovators to work together, share knowledge, and support one another to address these issues. She thanked the Government and people of Botswana for their warm hospitality and support.



Representing the Government of Botswana, Professor Richard Tabulawa, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Higher Education, welcomed participants and commended RUFORUM for selecting Botswana as the host country. He noted that the AGM strongly aligns with Botswana's Vision 2036, particularly its goal of building a knowledge-based economy. He highlighted strategic priorities including infrastructure development, graduate employability, financial sustainability, and capacity building, while underscoring the role of institutions such as Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN), Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) and Bukalasa agricultural college (BAC) in advancing national development.



“ Botswana reaffirms its commitment to higher education and innovation”

**Professor Richard Tabulawa,
Permanent Secretary at Botswana's Ministry of Higher Education**

Reflections from the Annual General Meeting



The 21st RUFORUM Annual General Meeting convened in Gaborone, Botswana, provided a timely platform for reflection, strategic dialogue, and renewed commitment to repositioning Africa's universities as engines of transformation. Guided by the theme "Positioning Africa's Universities and Higher Education Sector to Effectively Impact Development Processes on the continent," the AGM brought together university leaders, policymakers, researchers, partners and industry actors to examine the role of higher education in shaping the continent's agri-food systems transformation to meet the aspirations of Agenda 2063 for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

A total of 1,142 participants; from 50 countries; 37% of whom were women attended the AGM. This included 820 international delegates and 322 nationals from Botswana. Among the participants were Ministers responsible for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation; over 87 Vice Chancellors and Deputy Vice Chancellors; 96 Principals and Deans; as well as development partners and other higher education stakeholders.

The AGM sought to:

1. Strengthen collaborations that enhance university capacity and maximize contributions to national, continental, and global development agendas.
2. Explore opportunities to build the science, technology, and innovation capabilities of RUFORUM member universities.
3. Identify pathways for achieving the Agenda 2063 Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (STYIP) target of 100,000 PhDs.
4. Promote mechanisms for shared capacity in training the next generation of leaders in agri-food systems transformation.

The Pre-AGM plenary sessions predominantly focused on capacity within the SADC region and specifically Botswana in areas of scholarly writing, resource mobilization and data science and management. But most importantly a trail blazing hackathon and the RUFORUM Investor summit targeting youth entrepreneurs, who were exposed to business principles and the art of investment.

The AGM reaffirmed the conviction that Africa's future depends on the strength, vision, and agility of its higher education institutions.

Reflections

Beyond Dialogue: Charting a Collective Path for Transformative Higher Agricultural Education in Africa

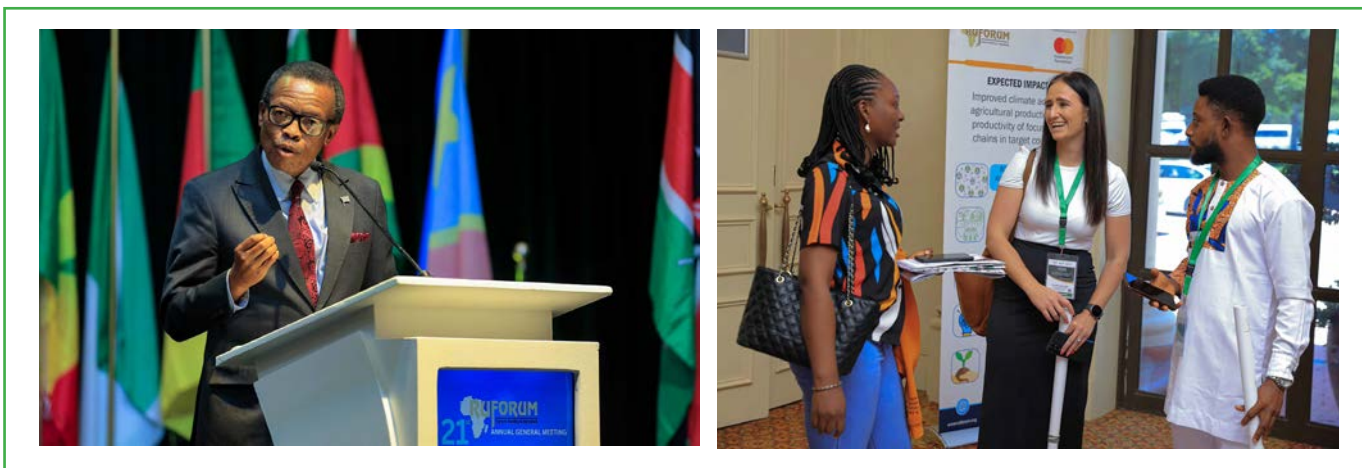


innovative teaching. It finds that while pockets of innovation exist, systemic challenges, fragmented partnerships, underfunding, skills mismatches, and weak research translation, limit progress. The preferred way forward is a “Coordinated Continental Transformation Model”. Key recommendations include institutionalizing multi-sectoral partnerships, operationalizing sub-regional hubs, scaling transformative education models and leveraging technology for systemic efficiency. Achieving this requires moving from pilot projects to system-wide reform, driven by strong leadership and a collective commitment to positioning African universities as engines of sustainable development and global competitiveness.

Africa stands at a pivotal moment. With the world’s youngest population and an urgent need to build knowledge-based economies, its universities are central to the continent’s future. However, a persistent gap between graduate

skills and labour market demands hinders this development. This brief synthesizes outcomes from the 21st RUFORUM Annual General Meeting (AGM) and its high-level dialogues on partnerships, quality assurance, and

LINK: [READ MORE](#)



Reflecting on the path to Resilient Agri-Food Systems in Africa: Strengthening agricultural extension delivery in Africa



Agriculture remains the backbone of most African economies, employing more than half of the continent’s labour force and supporting the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people. Yet agricultural productivity across Africa remains significantly below global averages, limiting the

continent’s ability to achieve food security, reduce rural poverty, and build resilient agri-food systems. One of the most critical constraints is the limited effectiveness of agricultural extension and advisory services, which are responsible for translating research and innovations into practical

technologies adopted by farmers. Weak linkages between research institutions, extension systems, and farming communities continue to slow the adoption of improved agricultural practices and climate-resilient technologies. Universities and regional academic networks such as the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) have an increasingly important role in strengthening these linkages by integrating research, education, innovation, and community engagement. This briefing note highlights key challenges in extension delivery and outlines strategic actions for governments and development partners to invest in integrated, scalable extension systems that strengthen innovation uptake, improve climate resilience, and promote inclusive agricultural transformation across Africa.

LINK: [READ MORE](#)



Transforming African Universities and TVET Systems for youth skills, entrepreneurship, and inclusive development



Africa’s rapidly growing youth population presents both a historic opportunity and a significant policy challenge. By 2050, the continent is projected to account for nearly one-quarter of the global workforce, making investments in skills development essential for economic transformation and social stability. However, existing education and training systems—particularly

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education—remain insufficiently aligned with labour market demands, technological change, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Initiatives such as the Transforming African Agricultural Universities to Meaningfully Contribute to Africa’s Growth and Development (TAGDev 2.0) programme and

its daughter platforms such as the Agri-food Systems and Entrepreneurship Centers (ASECs) and the Innovation Transfer Partners (ITP) model demonstrate promising approaches to address these gaps. These initiatives strengthen partnerships between universities, TVET institutions, and industry to expand practical training, mentorship, entrepreneurship development, and innovation scaling. Despite these advances, systemic challenges persist, including outdated curricula, weak institutional capacity, fragmented governance frameworks, limited industry engagement, and inadequate inclusion of marginalized populations. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated reforms that modernize curricula, strengthen university-TVET-industry collaboration, promote lifelong learning, and expand innovation ecosystems across Africa.

[LINK: READ MORE](#)



Gender and Inclusion: Pathways to empowering marginalized groups in African Higher Agricultural Education



Women remain underrepresented in leadership, while marginalized populations face systemic barriers to access and success.

Key recommendations include institutionalize gender, inclusion, and safeguarding (GIS) frameworks across governance and operations, embed Young Women-Centric Design (YWCD) approaches and mentorship pathways, expand access for refugees, IDPs, and PWDs through bridging programs, blended learning, and recognition of prior learning, establish a continental Community of Practice (CoP) to share knowledge, coordinate interventions, and scale impact, strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive learning using disaggregated data.

African Higher Agricultural Education Institutions (HAEIs) are critical for shaping resilient food systems, advancing rural livelihoods, and developing Africa’s future leaders. Yet, persistent

gender disparities, limited inclusion of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and persons with disabilities (PWDs), and weak safeguarding systems constrain their transformative potential.

LINK: [READ MORE](#)



Emerging digital technologies: Emphasising on adaptability and ethical use for teaching and learning



The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is characterized by emerging technologies that include, Artificial Intelligence (AI), data science among other technologies. Such technologies are providing unparalleled changes and opportunities for African agriculture, education, and innovation systems. African higher agricultural education ought to harness the emerging digital

technologies to drive sustainable development, promote food security and equip the graduates with 21st century skills to optimize inputs, reduce post-harvest losses, and increase resilience to climate and market shocks (World Bank, 2023; FAO and ITU, 2024) to name a few. Despite the potential opportunities that these emerging technologies offer for educational innovation and access, Africa continues

to face challenges in scaling deployment due to limited digital infrastructure, human capacity, inadequate regulatory frameworks, equity and ethical issues relating to data sovereignty and algorithmic bias (OECD, 2022). This briefing note is a synthesis of outcomes and recommendations for intentional technology integration in university education as agreed during the 21st RUFORUM Annual General Meeting (AGM) and its high-level continental dialogue on Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and Emerging Technologies: Transforming Africa Agriculture, Education, and Innovation Systems. The convening recommended concerted policy actions and solutions by African governments and institutions to foster flexible, inclusive, and responsible integration of digital technology into agricultural teaching, learning, research and development towards future-ready agriculture graduates.

LINK: [READ MORE](#)



Messages from Vice Chancellors from RUFORUM Member Universities

Vice Chancellors of RUFORUM member universities reflected on the 21st AGM in contributing to a shared commitment to translating higher agriculture education, innovation and research into actions for Africa’s agriculture transformation and development.



Professor Ketlhatlogile Mosepele

Vice Chancellor, Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Botswana



In collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN), is honoured to co-host the forthcoming RUFORUM Annual General Meeting in Botswana, convened under the theme “Positioning African Universities and the Higher Education Sector to Effectively Impact the Development Process on the Continent.” Botswana looks forward to welcoming participants to this distinguished forum, which serves as a critical platform for advancing a resilient, knowledge-driven, and prosperous Africa”



We are working to empower young people with relevant skills,

foster inclusive education, promote agripreneurship, and strengthen innovative ecosystems that drive sustainable development in our communities. This aligns with our mission “to provide high quality education and training in Science, Agriculture and Technology that promotes innovation, leadership, and sustainable development.”



Professor Thomas Kimeli Cheruiyot,
Vice Chancellor, University of Eldoret, Kenya



Professor Macpherson Mallewa
Vice Chancellor, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Malawi



As KUHeS we are looking forward to an interaction of likeminded people whose aim is to advance science education in Africa. RUFORUM presents an opportunity for us to harness the collective wisdom of other universities and partners. It is through such a gathering that we can position KUHeS as well as other Africa’s higher education sectors to drive impactful development across the continent, shaping a brighter future for generations to come.”



We owe it to the communities and the world to send out ethical, competent and creative graduates ready to catalyze socio-economic transformation.”



Professor Patrick Edrin Kyamanya
Vice Chancellor, Uganda Martyrs University, Uganda



Our partnership with RUFORUM strengthens our commitment to empowering the next generation of problem-solvers and agri-tech innovators, who will transform our food systems, drive sustainable development, and ensure shared prosperity across the continent. Together, we are cultivating knowledge, nurturing talent, and building capacity for a thriving and food-secure Africa.”

Professor Njenga Munene
Vice Chancellor, Zetech University, Kenya



Professor Olusola B. Kehinde
Vice Chancellor, Federal
University of Agriculture,
Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Nigeria



At FUNAAB, we share RUFORUM’s commitment to strengthening the role of universities as engines of development through research, innovation, and transformative partnerships. We believe that higher education institutions must transcend traditional academic boundaries to become proactive drivers of socio-economic growth, food security, and technological advancement in Africa.

This AGM provides yet another opportunity for reflection, collaboration, and renewed commitment towards shaping a robust higher education ecosystem that is responsive to Africa’s developmental challenges and opportunities. FUNAAB remains proud to be an active member of RUFORUM and would continue to contribute meaningfully to its mission of building a prosperous and self-sustaining Africa through knowledge, innovation, and inclusive education.

Professor Florence Mutambanengwe
Executive Director for Research, Innovation and
Industrialisation, University of Zimbabwe



Agriculture remains the lifeline of Nigeria’s socio-economic future and a pillar of stability for Africa’s development. RUFORUM’s strategic partnership with universities leads the transformation of our agricultural systems through research and innovation—ensuring food security, empowering communities, and shaping a resilient continent for generations to come.”



Professor Owunari Abraham Georgewill,
Vice-Chancellor, University of Port Harcourt,
Nigeria



For us, this forum is critical. It is about aligning our teaching and research directly with continental goals. We are here to share how we are generating the skilled graduates and innovations, such as in climate-resilient practices needed to transform Zimbabwe’s agri-food systems and support our own Vision 2030”



Exhibitions, Posters and Recognition Awards Ceremony



RUFORUM member universities, alongside partners and a diverse range of stakeholders from Botswana and across Africa, are showcasing groundbreaking, research-driven innovations transforming agriculture, energy, and rural livelihoods. These innovations highlight the critical role of science, technology, and higher education in addressing the continent's most pressing development challenges.

The solutions contribute to advancing climate resilience, strengthening food and nutrition security, and promoting value addition across agricultural value chains. Importantly, they create opportunities for youth and women, while supporting vulnerable communities to build more sustainable and resilient livelihoods. Together, these efforts underscore the power of collaboration among universities, governments, the private sector, and development partners in driving inclusive, scalable, and sustainable development across Africa.

RUFORUM celebrated excellence and innovation through its 2025 Awards at the 21st RUFORUM Annual General Meeting, with a strong focus on achievements in Botswana. The awards recognized outstanding contributions, honoring individuals and teams shaping the future of agriculture, research, and development in Africa.

The awardees included young and emerging scientists namely; Vepika Kandjou, Hesekia Garekae, Marang Msupiemang, and Kelebogile Madumane

respectively who were recognized for their cutting-edge research addressing critical challenges in food systems, climate change, and sustainable development. The awards also celebrated model farmers (Toy Katjiova, Lenkamile Ditholego, and Thamiso Magowe) who are successfully applying research innovations to improve productivity, resilience, and livelihoods within their communities.

In addition, the AGM recognized excellence in knowledge sharing and innovation by awarding the

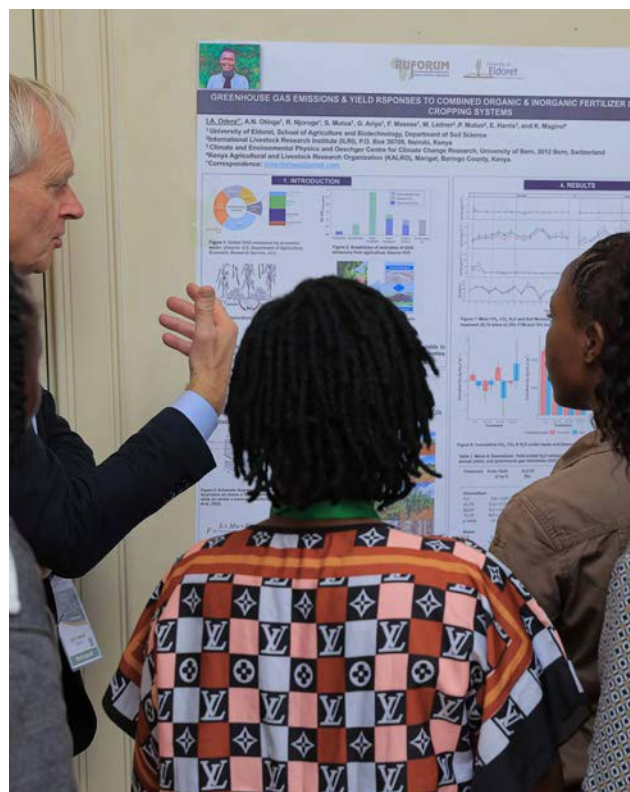
top three exhibitors, including Fush-Fush (Baobab Value Chain), Zam'munda Online Marketing App (University of Malawi, CRAFS FiT-Hub), Great Zimbabwe University (Millet Value Chain), and Makerere University Regional Center for Crop Improvement (Millet Value Chain). The best three poster presenters were Apio Deborah (UEM), Maureen Kuboka (UEM), and Realebora Gaorekwe (UNISA) who were recognized for effectively communicating research and development outcomes.

Climate Hackathon Challenge winners included Binary Thoughts PTY LTD, MKNT Solutions, and Passage Greens who were honored for their

innovative and practical solutions to climate-related challenges, demonstrating the power of youth-driven innovation.

Photo Highlights

Exhibitions and Posters



Awards: Institutional and Individual Recognition



Looking Ahead

RUFORUM AGM 2026- Zambia



Theme:

Translating higher agriculture education, innovation and research into actions for Africa's agriculture transformation and development

Host & Co-Organisers




The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) will host its 22nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) from 30 November to 4 December 2026 in Zambia.

Building on commitments made during the 21st AGM in Gaborone, Botswana in 2025, where African universities pledged to strengthen their role in advancing science, innovation, and transformative higher education, the 2026 AGM will further catalyze efforts to align university systems with Africa's development priorities.

The key themes for this year's AGM include:

Human capital development – Equipping graduates with skills and competencies for the labour market and the future world of work.

Resilient and inclusive agri-food systems – Enhancing agricultural productivity, wealth creation, and livelihoods for young people and agrarian communities.

Universities as engines of innovation – Translating research into businesses and jobs through incubation, industry partnerships, and enabling policies. Transformative teaching and learning

– Promoting learner-centered, experiential, and technology-enabled education.

The AGM will be held under the overarching theme: ***“Translating higher agricultural education, innovation, and research into action for Africa's agricultural transformation and development.”***

The meeting will convene universities, governments, and private sector stakeholders to share lessons, assess progress, and promote scalable solutions for building relevant human capital and driving Africa's agricultural transformation.

Acknowledgement

- o Government of Botswana
- o Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- o Botswana International University of Science and Technology
- o University of Botswana
- o Partners, Sponsors, and Organising Committees

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