Inventorying of Technologies for Commercialisation under the UniBRAIN Initiative

The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), one of the key partners of UniBRAIN, had organised a workshop on linking agricultural research to Agricultural Innovation Incubator Consortia (AIICs). ASARECA’s major role in UniBRAIN is to link agricultural research to the three of the AIICs which fall in the geographical scope of ASARECA and they are:

1. The Afri Banana Products Ltd (ABP) - Uganda
2. The Consortium for Enhancing University responsiveness to Agribusiness Development (CURAD) – Uganda
3. Sorghum Value-Chain Development Consortium (SVCDC) – Kenya

Recently, ASARECA completed a study to inventorize incubatable technologies in the banana, coffee and sorghum value chains. The purpose of the two day workshop was to share the findings of the study and further sensitize research on how to work with the three incubators. In her opening remark, Dr. Fina Opio stated “If we want to move Africa out of poverty, then that must be from a commercialised agriculture and UniBRAIN can help in doing so”. The new Facility Coordinator of UniBRAIN, Mr. Alex Ariho, emphasized on how the workshop is fundamental in view of the UniBRAIN objectives as it highlighted the technologies from the national agricultural research which can be taken up by the agribusiness incubators. The workshop saw the participation of academic, private sector, and agricultural institutions from Uganda and Kenya.
The African Union Commissioner visits ABP Ltd, a UniBRAIN incubator of Uganda working on Banana value chain

Afri Banana Products (ABP) Ltd, a UniBRAIN Agribusiness Incubator nurturing business start-ups and SMEs on the banana value chain hosted Her Excellency Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, the Commissioner for Rural Economy & Agriculture of the African Union Commission on 09 August, 2013.

The Commissioner visited the banana juice production unit at Excel Hort Consult, an incubatee support Unit of ABP in Mbarara, South Western Uganda. She was impressed at how banana value addition can transform rural economy by fostering business and entrepreneurial skills of start-ups through incubation and therefore enhancing farmers’ incomes through job creation.

Owing to a short post-harvest shelf-life coupled with insufficient and poor quality transportation as well as storage facilities, leads to perishing of approximately 35-40% of this highly nutritious fruit before it reaches the consumer. A big percentage of bananas are wasted on farm, especially during bumper harvests. Further, banana prices during this season are unattractive to the extent that farmers prefer to leave their produce to rot on farm and turn as manure instead of selling them at give-away prices.

To deal with this issue, Incubatees at Excel Hort Consult are devising a way to add value to cooking bananas (matoke). With this innovation, the value added to a bunch of banana is approximately 28$ while a raw bunch of banana in the villages costs 6$.
Food Processing Business Incubation Centers to be set up in Angola and Ghana

With food processing gaining importance in Africa’s economic growth, the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) of ICRISAT is now facilitating the setting up of Food Processing Business Incubation Centers (FPBICs) in Angola and Ghana.

The initiative is part of the India Africa Forum Summit II (IAFS-II) under the auspices of India’s Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI). This bilateral project will establish state-of-the-art FPBICs with AIP-ICRISAT providing in-house training, hand-holding, mentoring and technical support to the staff deployed.

Under this initiative, Mr Aravazhi Selvaraj, Chief Operating Officer, Innovation and Partnership Program (IPP), AIP, along with Mr Suneel Kumar Arora, Deputy Secretary, MoFPI, joined the official Indian delegation led by Mr U Venkateswarlu, Joint Secretary of MoFPI, to Angola and Ghana on 4-11 September.

“The main focus of the FPBIC project is to help provide entrepreneurs with the technical know-how on the latest technologies and equipment used in food processing industries, and to provide scientific support in value addition processes and their know-how including infrastructure support for initiating and scaling-up their businesses,” explained Mr Aravazhi.

During the visit to Angola, the delegation along with Mr P Balachandran, Counsellor, Embassy of India in Angola, held extensive discussions with the Angolan Ministry of Agriculture and gave a detailed overview of the wide ranging initiatives in African countries under the IAFS-II.

In Ghana, the delegation held discussions with Dr N Karbo, Director, and Dr Emmanuel Adu, Deputy Director, CSIR-ARI (Counsel of Scientific and Industrial Research - Animal Research Institute), Dr Abdulai B Salifu, Director General, CSIR, and other senior officials.
Ghana’s Deputy Minister Dr Musheibu Mohammed-Alfa, Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation also briefed the delegation about the various initiatives being undertaken for the FPBIC program.

Under the technical guidance of ICRISAT, the delegation has identified a site in CSIR-ARI, Fakra, Ghana, to house the FPBIC. At the end of the visit, the delegation had discussions and interactions with Mr K Jeeva Sagar, the High Commissioner of India to Ghana, who assured full support and cooperation in implementing the project.

**Exploring agri-business opportunities for young entrepreneurs**

With the intention of promoting youth in agribusiness, the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) Program of AIP-ICRISAT organized a workshop on Agri-business opportunities for young entrepreneurs at Ratnapuri Institute of Technology, College of Polytechnic, Medak district, Andhra Pradesh on 6 September. The event was part of ICRISAT's partnership with the Vennela Educational Society (VES), in which AIP-ICRISAT will provide technical support in the production and cultivation of vegetables, hybrid pigeonpea seed, other crops, and dairy production for the Society's agriculture curriculum.

The workshop was intended to develop and expose the participants to farm production, capacity building, financial and marketing skills and value addition under the guidance of agricultural and agribusiness experts, so that they can develop their own agri-enterprises.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer, ICRISAT-ABI, explained how the partnership would help students in exploring agribusiness opportunities and in availing better employment prospects. He underlined the need to tap into existing and emerging agribusiness opportunities and link the youth to technology and funding avenues, so that they could promote farming as a business and learn how to use the partnership as a trading, agribusiness information and agribusiness link platform.

Among those who spoke during the workshop were Mr Suneel Vemu (Agribusiness Development Associate) and Mr Harshvardhan Mane (Seed Business Officer) of ICRISAT-ABI. The workshop was attended by Dr VRR Datla, Secretary, Vennela Educational Society, its staff and more than 60 students.
**ABI-ICRISAT mentors UniBRAIN AIICs – ABP & CURAD, Uganda**

As part of the handholding and mentoring activity for UniBRAIN Agribusiness Innovation Incubation Consortia (AIIC), SM Karuppanchetty, COO, ABI-ICRISAT and S Aravazhi, COO, INP-ICRISAT visited Afri Banana Products (ABP) Ltd & Consortium for Enhancing University Responsiveness to Agribusiness Development (CURAD) during 17-23 August 2013. The visit was made to mentor and guide their operations.

The team from ABI-ICRISAT met Dr George Bazirake, Director and Mr Joshua Atukunda, Business Manager from ABP; Dr William Kyanmuhangire, Associate Professor, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Mekerere University and the clients of the AIICs to discuss the working and the areas where mentoring is required.

These AIICs were guided on various aspects like implementation of business plan, policy guidelines & institutional mechanisms, human resource, infrastructure, performance targets, financial status, promotion & publicity, training, technology sourcing and others.

It was also opined that Kyambogo University’s support to ABP would be beneficial in increasing their business incubation service offerings and help them focus on productive incubation programs and product lines. It was recommended that ABP relocates their office to the university premises to enhance its incubatee engagement. It was also recommended to enrol them in tissue culture, briquetting and farming activities.

ABI-ICRISAT has proposed that CURAD have a student engagement oriented business, by giving them opportunity in farming, processing, engaging coffee vending franchisees or agribusiness marketing through *Earn while you Learn Program* (ELP) to strengthen their operations.

The ABI team also held meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture officials and the Indian High Commission to follow up with the implementation of a Food Processing Business Incubation Center (FPBIC) in Uganda as part of the Government of India initiative under the Indo-Africa Forum Summit II. Dr. Tushemereirwe, Director, National Agricultural Research Laboratories (NARL) and Dr. Nowakunda, Principal Investigator, FPBIC, have pledged full support from the government on the inter-governmental agreement and the fast-tracking of the project.

![SM Karuppanchetty in discussion with an entrepreneur from the Afri Banana Products Ltd, an AIIC of UniBRAIN](image)
News & Opportunities

Call for Proposals

Belmont Forum and Joint Programming Initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE-JPI) - International Opportunities Fund

The 2013 International Opportunities Fund is a joint funding call between the Belmont Forum and the Joint Programming Initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE-JPI). The current International Opportunities Fund is aimed at supporting research in the area of Food Security and Land Use Change.

**Deadline:** 30 September 2013 - [Click for more details >>]

Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) seeks applications for support of commodity development

The CFC provides financing to organizations and enterprises engaged in commodity value chains. The CFC's aim is to realize the potential of commodity production, processing, manufacturing, and trade for the benefit of the poor.

**Deadline:** 04 October 2013 - [Click here to read more >>]

World Bank – SIEF

The multi-donor trust fund, Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund (SIEF) supported by DFID and administered by the World Bank’s Human Development Network, promotes rigorous evidence-based decision making in development policies and programs designed to alleviate poverty.

**Deadline:** 01 November 2013 - [Click here to read more >>]

Africa Exclusive

Cultivate Africa’s Future (CultiAF) Fund

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation seeks proposals for agricultural research with the potential to increase the sustainable productivity of smallholder farmers in developing countries. With this call, the donor is looking for projects led by MSc and PhD scientists at national agricultural research institutions and universities in sub-Saharan Africa, working in collaboration with other researchers internationally (either within Africa or beyond the continent).

**Deadline:** 30 September 2013 - [Click for more details >>]
News & Opportunities

Agribusiness Education Fair: Making Tertiary Agricultural Education and Research more relevant to Business Development in Africa

World Agroforestry Centre, Nairobi, Kenya
October 10th-12th 2013

Rationale
As its contribution to bringing Tertiary Agricultural Education institution into the Public-Private Partnerships debate, the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE) has taken radical steps to actualize this philosophy. These include:

- Development of a strategy to engage Tertiary Agricultural Education with the private sector;
- A Tracer study that checked the linkage between quality of training and expectation of the private sector;
- Enhancement of private sector participation in curriculum development and reforms.

Objectives
The above actions have ushered a new era of focused interaction between Tertiary Agricultural Education institutions and the private sector. The overarching objective of the Agribusiness Education Fair is to:

- To establish a platform for commercializing prototype technologies developed by universities, research institutions and private sector groups;
- To improve Agribusiness teaching and research through stronger linkages between Training/research institutions and the Private sector.'

Key Activities
- Exhibition of research outputs or prototypes of commercializable technologies by universities, research and the private sector;
- Exhibition of private sector capacity in commercializing Agricultural innovations and products;
- Keynote presentations on topical issues relating to commercialization of technologies and how this feeds into the learning/training process;
- Presentation of key thematic areas in agribusiness Education and training relevant to private sector and industry;
- Discussions on practical ways for collaboration between training/research institutions and private sector.

Post-Fair Strategy
Discussions and ideas arising from the Fair will be distilled into practical recommendations from which effective strategies will be designed to improve Agribusiness education and training at tertiary level and the relationship between key players in agribusiness training and practice.

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