


# Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) - A Regional Centre of Excellence for Capacity building in Agriculture and Natural Sciences



## Background of LUANAR

When Malawi attained its independence in 1964, very few Malawian nationals had any training in agriculture, with most agricultural related management positions in Government and the private sector held by expatriate staff. To address this, the Government of Malawi decided to create a College specifically to train Malawians in the field of agriculture. Hence, the inception of Bunda College of Agriculture (BCA) which was one of the constituent Colleges of the University of Malawi. The College was established at the former Bunda Estate of about 1,000 hectares of prime agricultural land.

Initially BCA was administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and governed by a Council. On 26th November 1967, the College was launched as one of the constituent Colleges of the University of Malawi. Bunda College had a student population of 1800 students when it became part of Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), which was created by an Act of Parliament No.9 of 2011 and operationalized on 1st July 2012.



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## Growth of LUANAR

LUANAR has made tremendous achievements since its operation. The university has grown from one campus, Bunda, to four campuses namely: Bunda, Natural Resources College, City and Open and Distance Learning. The university has also grown in terms of staffing.



Currently, there are 193 academic members of staff of which 125 are males and 68 are females representing 65% and 35% respectively. Out of the 193 academic staff, 100 have PhDs representing 52%, 87 have Masters degree representing 45% and 6 have Bachelors degree representing 3%. Out of the 100 PhDs, 77 are males and 23 are females representing 77% and 23%, respectively. As of 2022 the University has 6 faculties and 14 academic departments with 9224 students, of whom 6331 are males and 2893 are females spread across four campuses. Overall, female students represent 31% of the total student population. LUANAR has and is delivering a number of regional Training Programmes and houses a number of Regional Centres of Excellences.

## **Delivering Agricultural and Natural Sciences Training and Capacity Building Programmes for the Region**

From as early as the 90s growth of Bunda College was premised on delivering regional training programmes and collaborative research to ensure national and regional influence on Agriculture and Natural Sciences.

a) Regional Diploma and Bachelor of Science in Aquaculture

In 1994, Bunda College was identified by SADC as the appropriate training institution for Aquaculture, and through support from the Iceland Development Agency (ICEIDA), by 1999, Bunda was able to train 109 students from the SADC region.

b) Regional Masters of Science Programme in Animal Science

In the early 1990s, Bunda College was assigned to run a Regional Master of Science in Animal Science programme under the SADC/GTZ programme where also Universities of Zimbabwe, University of Zambia and Sokoine University of Agriculture were assigned to provide Regional Masters in Economics, Crop Science and Soil Science, respectively. Through this programme, Bunda College trained many regional students especially from Zambia, Swaziland and Tanzania.

c) Regional Masters of Science in Aquaculture and Fisheries Science

The Regional Masters of Science in Aquaculture and Fisheries was launched in 2000 and by 2005 Bunda was able to train many MSc Students from Malawi, Zambia and Uganda.

d) Regional Collaborative Master of Science in Agricultural and Applied Economics (CMAAE)

Bunda College Agricultural Economics Department is one of the the 17 accredited departments in Eastern, Central and Southern African Countires that has been offering the Collaborative MSc Programme in Agricultural and Applied Economics. The College

has produced graduates with indepth knowledge and skills on agricultural transformation.

- e) Regional Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programme in Agriculture Economics and Aquaculture and Fisheries

In 2007, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) designated Bunda College as host of the two Regional PhD programmes, one in Agriculture Economics and the other in Aquaculture and Fisheries Science.

## LUANAR - A Host for Regional Centres

LUANAR/Bunda College has been a hub for regional Centres that have had national regional impact.

- a) Forum on Agricultural Resource Husbandry (FORUM)

Staff of Bunda College played critical role in establishment of the now RUFORUM as they were recipients of the Rockefeller Foundation funded projects under the Forum on Agricultural Resource Husbandry (FORUM). When FORUM closed down in 2003, RUFORUM was created in 2004 by the then 10 Vice Chancellors of Universities from Malawi, Kenya, Mozambique and Zimbabwe that were participating in FORUM. Starting with 10 Universities, RUFORUM has now expanded to 149 Universities.

- b) NEPAD SANBio Regional Fish Node

In 2006, Bunda College was designated as the Regional Centre for Fisheries and Aquatics (Fish Node) by the NEPAD Southern African Network on BioSciences (SANBio). Through this LUANAR has played a critical role in fostering the continental agenda through coordinating a think tank formulating the African Fisheries and Aquaculture Reform Strategy as well as increased investment in fisheries within the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)

- c) Host of World Bank Africa Centres of Excellence (ACE II)

- i) **Africa Centre of Excellence in Aquaculture and Fisheries Science (ACE-AquaFish)**

The transformation of Bunda College to the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) improved international students' enrolment and quality of postgraduate programmes through support of curricula reviews. This led to LUANAR being awarded through a competitive process one of the African Universities Higher Education Centres of Excellence-ACE AquaFish. The centre has seen a growing number of students being enrolled from Malawi and across Africa with Masters' students

totalling to 202 and PhD students to 31. Regional enrolments have vastly improved for PhD with 21 out of 31 total enrolments from other African countries. The average female student proportion has also grown from 4% to above 43%. In the four-year implementation of the project, AquaFish collaborated with RUFORUM to bring nine visiting senior scholars to the Centre. During their two-week stay, the scholars, among other things, delivered lectures to postgraduate students and conducted several seminars.

ii **Africa Centre of Excellence in Transformative Agriculture Commercialization and Entrepreneurship (TACE)**

The TACE which has been recently established will deliver on four key outcome areas that includes (1) developing national and regional experts at postgraduate level in engineering for food processing, agribusiness management and entrepreneurship; (2) enhance creative, integrative, and critical thinking skills in entrepreneurship and commercialization among students, academic staff and entrepreneurs (3) build and strengthen partnership and linkages among higher education institutions and with private sector at national, regional, and international levels; and (4) improve productivity and quality of agricultural produce and value-added products that meet domestic and export market standards.

iii **African Centre of Excellence in Agricultural Policy Analysis (APA)**

The APA has recently been established and will strengthen linkages among Universities in participating countries and regional agricultural sector needs. Specifically, APAt intends to enhance agri-food systems related education and training using trans-disciplinary approaches and applied research; to create or strengthen university linkages to the regional agricultural sector; and to establish or strengthen university partnership with private and public entities related to agri-food systems both within and outside the region.

## LUANARs IMPACT

The regional impact of LUANAR is seen not only in terms of human capacity but in sectoral transformation. For example, the growth of Aquaculture production in Ghana from about 8000 MT in 2010 to current approximately 60000 MT is attributable to the Aquaculture country strategy whose development LUANAR coordinated through NEPAD Pan African Fisheries Programme. The similarly skyrocketing growth of the same sector in Zambia is attributed to human capital development which LUANAR championed. With the mantra *“LUANAR for more impact”* it is anticipated that within the next 3-5 years LUANAR will contribute to



transformation of agriculture sector not only in Malawi but also in other countries to create vibrant industrialized commercial sector for increased formal jobs, raised income, and reduced food and nutrition insecurity all propelled by a vibrant agribusiness sector within the Agri-food systems.

### **About the Author**

*Prof. Emmanuel Kaunda is the Vice Chancellor of Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and the third winner of the prestigious RUFORUM IMPRESSA AWARD in 2013. He has contributed vastly in the field of aquaculture and fisheries science at national, regional and international levels. He is the Director of the Africa Centre of Excellence in Aquaculture and Fisheries Science (ACE-AquaFish) which has over the past four years recorded an increase in enrolment of postgraduate students (202 masters and 31 PhDs) enrolled from Malawi and the region. He was the first RUFORUM grantee of the Competitive Grant on Fish in 2004 and a Principal Investigator of the RUFORUM Community Action Research Programme (CARP) on Fish. Through his projects, he has strengthened the capacity of LUANAR through postgraduate and retooling training of academic staff. He holds a PhD from Rhodes University in South Africa, MSc in Biology (aquaculture) at Chancellor College in University of Malawi and BSc degree in agriculture from Bunda College in Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR).*

This is our thirty-second issue in a series of articles we are releasing as part of the RUFORUM Seventh Africa Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference Digests. More information about the conference is available at <https://www.ruforum.org/Triennial2021/>. Join the Conversation on Social Media using our Official hashtag #AfricaHEWeek2021.

