

Press Release



01 December 2023

RUFORUM Advances Regional Expansion with the Launching of the West Africa Node

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture [RUFORUM] took a significant step in its expansion strategy during the 19th Annual General Meeting [AGM] held in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Following the approval of the establishment of two regional nodes, one in Western Africa and one in Southern Africa by the 17th General Assembly held in 2021 in Cotonou, Benin and, in line with the RUFORUM constitution, the RUFORUM Secretariat officially launched the West Africa node during the recently concluded 19th AGM in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The move is seen as a strategic response to the network's growth, to reach 170 universities in 2023, compared to 10 universities at its onset in 2004. The Western Africa Node is set to be located in Benin, catering predominantly to Francophone countries of the RUFORUM Network, while extending support to other West African nations, regardless of the language.



Group photo after the Regional Node launching meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon

To translate this constitutional provision into action, discussions were initiated between RUFORUM and the Government of Benin, which favorably welcomed this initiative during the Council of Ministers, Session of Wednesday, May 11, 2022. The objective is to provide a legal framework for the establishment of the West Africa regional Node.

During the 19th Annual General Meeting, a dedicated side meeting was organized to discuss the operationalization of the West Africa regional node. The meeting, held on November 2, 2023, in Yaoundé, brought together key participants, including RUFORUM Executive Secretary Prof Patrick Okori and representatives from RUFORUM member universities in Benin (The University of Abomey Calavi, the National University of Agriculture, and the University of Parakou).

The primary objective of the meeting was to identify short to medium - term activities to lay the foundation for operationalizing the West Africa Node. Key outcomes included a consensus on several activities, such as the implementation of a national workshop in Benin to raise awareness of the node among local stakeholders and a regional workshop to extend awareness beyond Benin, to stakeholders in the Western and Central Africa region and harmonize their understanding of the node.

The meeting also highlighted RUFORUM's commitment to capacity building through partnerships. Joint meetings with partners in the North have been held to explore collaborations for resource mobilization and training initiatives. This includes efforts to co-develop and implement a training program, the Interdisciplinary & Transformative Education Modular System (ITEMS), in collaboration with the Wageningen University & Research [WUR] and the Agrifood 5 Alliance.

RUFORUM's advances in establishing regional nodes mark a pivotal moment in its mission to enhance agricultural education and research. The commitment to short-term and medium-term activities reflects a comprehensive approach to ensuring the successful operationalization of the Western Africa Node, with an emphasis on collaboration, awareness, and capacity building. More than 50 agricultural universities across 15 countries will be engaged.

Notes to Editors:

About RUFORUM:

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), is a consortium of 170 African universities operating in 40 countries on the continent. RUFORUM's mission is to 'strengthen the capacities of Universities to foster innovations responsive to demands of smallholder farmers through the training of high quality researchers, the output of impact oriented research and the maintenance of collaborative working relations among researchers, farmers, national agricultural research institutions'. Vice Chancellors established RUFORUM in 2004 with a Secretariat hosted at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. In 2014, RUFORUM signed a MoU with the African Union Commission to support implementation of the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024) Priority One on reducing poverty and ensuring food and nutrition security. Please visit www.ruforum.org for more information.

For additional information, see contact below.

Contacts:

Name: Evaline Acan Corporate Communications
and Advocacy Officer

Email:
communications@ruforum.org
