Enhancing Capacities for Integrating Food and Feed Crops to Improve Livelihoods and Resilience to Climate Change in Upper East Region of Ghana

Agriculture is undoubtedly influenced by weather and climate. In Africa, most farmers rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture for their farming activities. However, changes in climatic conditions coupled with high rate of soil degradation, are negatively affecting crop yields and causing scarcity of feeds for livestock. This sometimes results in hunger and death of animals.

Lack of feeds for livestock during dry seasons is very prevalent in the Upper East region of Ghana. The region, whose population is predominantly dominated by smallholder farmers, usually suffers from unreliable rainfall. The soil is also degraded and poor in fertility as a result of traditional farming activities. These challenges have contributed to poor crop harvest, and less feeds for livestock, resulting in poor nutrition for both humans and domestic animals.

Addressing the situation requires the need to integrate farmers’ traditional knowledge with innovative scientific techniques. In line with this, the United Nations University Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA), with support from Brazil-Africa Agricultural Innovation Marketplace (Embrapa), is implementing a two-year project in five villages in the Upper East region of Ghana. The project, which has already started this year, will be ending in 2016.

This project is entitled “Integrating Food and Feed Crops to Improve Livelihoods and Resilience to Climate Change in Upper East Region of Ghana”. It aims to develop, evaluate and adapt integrated technology options that combine food and feed crops in the same field, in order to improve water, soil and nutrient use efficiencies, and increase productivity. It is being implemented in partnership with farmers in selected communities in Tongo in the Talensi District of the region.

The practice of the integrated system is expected to enhance food and feed production for humans and domestic animals, so as to improve livelihoods. The project is also expected to increase animal manure for farmers’ use to improve degraded fields, and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
Transforming Africa’s Economy through Inclusive Green Growth Strategies

Many African leaders believe that African economies need fundamental changes in structure as well as in drivers of growth and prosperity. A green economy offers an opportunity to inspire this transition. In an exclusive interview with Dr. Calvin Ateawamba, Green Economy Fellow at UNU-INRA, he emphasised the need for Africa to take advantage of the many green growth opportunities on the continent to transform its economy.

Dr. Ateawamba proposed a three stage green economy transformation agenda for Africa. The first stage, he indicated, requires development of energy infrastructure to tap into the vast potential of renewable energy sources such as hydro, solar and wind that abound on the continent. Secondly, he noted the need to encourage the development of the manufacturing and building sectors to help transform the continent’s economy.

Thirdly, Dr. Ateawamba observed that the first-two phases of green transformation will eventually result in increase in urbanization and high demand for mobility and waste production, hence the need for improvement in transportation and waste management infrastructure, to address the challenges.

Embodying on these economic transformation drives, according to Dr. Ateawamba, will improve the relative contribution of the manufacturing sector to GDP, diversify the sources of employment opportunities, reallocate resources from less productive to more productive sectors and create a modern industrial and services economy towards the development of the African continent.

UNU-INRA Participates in Green Jobs Conference

UNU-INRA, as a member of Green Jobs Assessment Institutions Network (GAINS), which is being led by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), participated in the 2nd International Conference, organised by GAINS-ILO in Geneva, from the 14th -16th April, 2015. The conference was under the theme “Developing a Green Jobs Assessment Training Package”. The Institute was represented by Dr. Elias T. Ayuk, UNU-INRA Director and Dr. Calvin Ateawamba, Green Economy Fellow.

The UNU-INRA Director took part in a panel discussion entitled “Measuring what Matters”, which focused on providing insights into the relevance and progress made on measuring the labour market implications of the transition towards a low carbon and green economy including climate change implications. Issues bordering on capacity needs for researchers and policy makers at the national level were discussed during the session.

Dr. Ayuk’s contribution to the discussion centred on challenges facing countries and research institutions in building capacities for research to make such research policy relevant. In his remarks, he observed that the linkage between research and policy is non-linear, emphasising the need for frequent consultation between researchers and policy makers. He noted that the major challenge facing research institutions has to do with lack of capacity to engage in this consultative process. Dissemination of research findings, using appropriate communication tools and channels, according to Dr. Ayuk, is another major challenge facing research institutions.

He recommended improvement in the skills of researchers to be able to identify and undertake not only policy-relevant research but also to best position themselves to address emerging issues or second generation problems.

In linking research to policy in the areas of low carbon, resource-use efficiency and green economy, Dr. Ayuk stressed on the urgent need for capacities to be built in these areas, as some concepts are fairly new to policy makers.
UNU- INRA to Partner with ITC-ILO to Organize Green Economy Training in Africa

UNU-INRA will be partnering with the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation (ITC-ILO) of the UN, to organise two green economy training workshops on “Green Entrepreneurships” and “Resource Efficiency and Cleaner Production” in Africa.

Explaining the importance of the upcoming training programmes, Dr. Calvin Atewamba, Green Economy Fellow at UNU-INRA, emphasised the need to enhance the capacity of African researchers and policy makers on green growth research and strategies in order to facilitate the continent’s transition towards a Green Economy. He added that the training programmes will improve the understanding of researchers and policy makers on the implications of Africa’s transition towards resource-efficient, low emission and climate-resilient economies on the labour markets.

The programmes are expected to be held in Accra, Ghana before the end of 2015.

NEWS FROM OUR OPERATING UNITS

UNU Senior Vice-Rector Visits UNU-INRA Unit in Zambia

A Senior Vice-Rector, of the United Nations University (UNU), Professor Kazuhiko Takeuchi led a three-member delegation from the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) to pay a working visit on the UNU-INRA Operating Unit (OU) at the University of Zambia. The purpose of the visit was to assess the Global Leadership Training Programme (GLTP) in Africa, which is an initiative of UNU-IAS that aims at training global leaders who can contribute to solving various challenges in Africa.

UNU-INRA’s Operating Unit in Namibia hosted the 2nd African Research Discovery Camp under the Regional Graduate Network in Oceanography (RGNO) programme. The camp is a research-based training on the sustainable use and management of marine ecosystems. This year’s Camp, which was held from 3rd May to 4th June, had 14 selected students coming from eight different countries, researchers from Sam Nujoma Marine and Coastal Resources Research Centre, Namibia, as well as instructors and lecturers from Namibia, South Africa, Switzerland, Chile, Germany and the USA. The participants exchanged research ideas and carried out actual oceanographic research at sea using RV Mirabilis. The RV Mirabilis is a deep-sea fisheries and multidisciplinary research vessel that belong to the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources of the Republic of Namibia.

The GLPT is a practical training programme through which Japanese graduate students undertake internship programmes at UNU partner universities and research institutions in Africa. The programme is currently being run at various universities and research institutions in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Zambia.

The meeting also discussed other areas of collaboration with the UNU-INRA OU in Zambia and the University of Zambia, in general. The UNU-INRA Operating Unit in Zambia is located at the Mineral Resources Unit of the School of Mines at the University of Zambia in Lusaka.

2nd African Research Discovery Camp Held in Namibia

The RGNO African Research Discovery Camp series is part of the Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research’s cross-national capacity building initiative, and it is supported by a grant from the Agouron Institute and an equipment grant from the Swiss | i-research & training institute. Additional contributions in kind came from the University of Namibia as the host institution, ETH Zurich, University of Minnesota and the Namibian Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources.
Four Researchers End their Sabbatical Programme at UNU-INRA

Four researchers have successfully completed their research sabbatical programme at UNU-INRA. The researchers, one visiting scholar and three PhD interns ended their programme with public seminars to disseminate findings from their studies with key stakeholders.

Two of the researchers, Mr. Samuel Arsène Ntyam Mendo and Mr. Aboua Angui Christian Dorgelès Kevin were based at the UNU-INRA operating units in Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire, respectively. Mr. Ntyam Mendo’s project investigated environmental friendly strategies to combat taro leaf epidemic in Cameroon. Mr. Dorgelès Kevin’s study analysed resource use efficiency and profitability of fish farms in southeast Côte d’Ivoire.

The other two researchers, Dr. Felix O. Takim, a visiting scholar, who is a lecturer at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria, and Mr. Shiferaw Mitiku Tebeka, a PhD candidate at the Kerala Agricultural University, India, did their sabbatical programme at the UNU-INRA head office in Ghana. Dr. Takim’s research project assessed the performance of drought tolerant maize genotypes and identified the best genotypes for suitable sites. Mr. Tebeka’s project on the other hand, examined the potential of the fishery sector in mitigating unemployment and poverty in Africa.

The UNU-INRA Visiting Scholars and PhD Interns Programme select researchers on a competitive basis to spend three to four months at the Institute’s headquarters in Accra or at its operating units in Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Namibia, Senegal and Zambia. These researchers undertake research on key issues affecting natural resources management in Africa and provide relevant policy guidance to promote sustainable development in the African continent.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Event: Research & Academic Seminars
Date: 5th August & 20th August, 2015
Venue: UNU-INRA Office, Accra

Location: Second Floor, International House,
Annie Jiagge Road,
University of Ghana, Legon,
Accra, Ghana
Address: Private Mail Bag, KIA, Accra, Ghana
Email: inra@unu.edu
Tel: +233 302 500396
Website: www.inra.unu.edu

About UNU-INRA

UNU-INRA enhances the capacity of African researchers to conduct research on natural resources management issues to inform policy formulation and implementation.

Although UNU-INRA is an institute of the United Nations University (UNU) system, it was an African concept developed by some committed top African scientists. Its establishment is supported by the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments of the African Union (AU). On this strong political and moral support, UNU-INRA was established in 1986.

UNU-INRA appreciates the continued contributions from the Governments of Ghana and Zambia to its endowment fund. The Institute is also grateful to the following organisations for the funding support to carry out specific projects:

Sparkle is a quarterly newsletter of UNU-INRA.
It is an acronym for Sustainability through Partnership in Africa where Resources are optimally utilized using Knowledge that is holistic, Leadership that is inclusive and Economy that is green.