

CMAAE Newsletter

COLLABORATIVE MASTERS OF SCIENCE IN AGRICULTURAL AND APPLIED ECONOMICS ISSUE No. 16, June 2010

Dear Readers

We welcome you to our sixteenth electronic Newsletter and the first in the year 2010. We hope you have been enjoying reading our Newsletter. This is the first newsletter following the decision to integrate the CMAAE in AERC, since the timing of the African Agricultural Economics Education Network registration in Kenya remains uncertain. The program has made a commendable progress towards building capacity through agricultural and applied economics training which is fundamental in the fight against food insecurity as well as environmental degradation in Africa. This newsletter contains information about or related to CMAAE during the period of January-June 2010. In this period, the major activity of the program has been to organize Academic Board meetings in Nairobi. Besides, we are organizing and preparing for the third semester or the Shared Facility of Specialization and Electives (SFSE 2010) being hosted by the University of Pretoria, South Africa. This facility brings together CMAAE students from the six accredited universities and lecturers of the SFSE courses from within and outside the region. We hope that you will find this newsletter comprehensible, informative and interesting. Your feedback regarding the information contained here will be highly appreciated. Enjoy your reading.

Willis Kosura
CMAAE Program Director

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CMAAE to be incorporated in AERC

The CMAAE has been incorporated in AERC as a Program, from April 1 2010. This decision was made at the AERC Board Meeting in March, 2010, following the recommendation from the CMAAE Program Committee that the new AERC Strategic Plan (2010/11-2014/15) incorporates CMAAE plan, given the uncertainty of the timing of incorporation of the CMAAE organization in Kenya. This implies that the Program Executive Committee will be dissolved and its non donor members be incorporated in the AERC existing Training Sub-committee, while the donor members be observer members or full members of the AERC Board. The CMAAE Academic Board will be retained.

Sixth Cohort Admission and Collaboration with Strategic Partners

Five out of the six accredited CMAAE universities have begun admission process for the academic year 2010/11 for the sixth cohort students. This follows advertisements in all the accredited departments (those offering CMAAE core courses) in April, 2010. The secretariat is working with the Head of Departments (HoD) to ensure that the admission process is publicized as widely as possible to enable potential students to apply. We are glad to indicate that the program has continued to explore strategic partnership with leading Universities, research institutions and other international organizations with similar interests in the Eastern and Southern Africa region. The program is collaborating with World Food Program (WFP), DAAD and Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC). Just to mention FAC has agreed to offer partial support for thesis research and further efforts are being explored to incorporate CMAAE graduates into the FAC research network in Africa. Secretariat greatly appreciates the support from these organizations, and believes that their support will immensely contribute to the CMAAE ultimate goal.

Curriculum Review 2010

The Programme has finalized the selection of team leaders and members based on the various clusters for the commencement of the curriculum review. The selected consultants have been engaged and are currently carrying out the reviews for each of the specialization and elective courses. The output of this process will be subjected to an international peer review before a curriculum review meeting to be held in June 2010 in Nairobi to discuss the proposed curriculum with input of international peer reviewers. The approved revised curriculum is expected to be delivered in July/August, 2010 or thereabout. This will ensure that CMAAE program meets the international standards and become a world class. Before the delivery of the new curriculum, an instructor's workshop for the lecturers from mother universities teaching the core courses will be held to facilitate harmony in the curriculum delivery at the respective accredited departments.

Preparations for Shared Facility for Specialization and Electives (SFSE) 2010 Launch

The CMAAE Program is in its fifth year of implementation. SFSE 2010 is scheduled for the period August 8 to November 30, 2010 at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. In this regard, the program has selected lecturers that will be engaged to teach the specialization and elective courses during this period. At the same time, the program secretariat is involved in prior arrangements to ensure smooth running of this activity and various tasks include, facilitation of travel arrangements for both students and lecturers. The activities are visa application process, admission processing of the students to the University of Pretoria, ground logistics including accommodation, medical arrangements, lecture hall/room allocations for the lecturers and other related activities. All the arrangements are on-going to ensure that SFSE launch takes place as planned.

Grants Management Accounting and Campus Management Workshop

AERC training department conducted a workshop on Grant Management Accounting and Campus Management in April, 2010, in Nairobi, Kenya. The main objective of the workshop was to share ideas in resolving constraints in grant accounting and management, recommend appropriate ways to strengthen the grant accounting function in the Universities and to demonstrate a new AERC campus management system as a precursor to development of an e-learning facility for economists.

Five out of the six accredited departments were represented by the Heads of Departments of Agricultural Economics and the specific Accounting officers from the departments. The departments represented were:- University of Nairobi, Bunda College of Agriculture, University of Zimbabwe, Egerton University and Makerere University.



Participants at the Grants Management Accounting and Campus Management Workshop in Nairobi, April 2010

CMAAE Academic Board Meetings and LSMS Workshops

The academic board meeting was held on 29th March 2010 in at Olesereni, Hotel, in Nairobi. This meeting brought together all the heads of CMAAE participating departments from 16 Universities. The purpose of the meeting was to select lecturers to teach at the Shared Facility of Specialization and Electives (SFSE, 2010). The selection was successful and the secretariat is working on modalities of ensuring that SFSE, 2010 commence as planned. The board deliberated on the program's quality with respect to course content delivery and other implementation complementary.

The CMAAE in collaboration with the World Bank Institute (WBI) also conducted a second LSMS workshop held in Nairobi on February 23-27, 2010. The purpose of the workshop was an in-depth training in Living Standards Measurement Studies (LSMS) to enable effective collection, use and analysis of the data so collected under the project within the respective departments/countries.



Members at Academic Board Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in March 2010

Focus on African Agriculture

Is Cassava a Solution to Food insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Cassava is the second Africa's staple crop after maize and has potential of becoming a strategic crop due to its multipurpose characteristic. In Sub Saharan Africa (SSA), cassava has potential of becoming a major source of food to poor farmers since other crops has had challenges in recent years due to desertification and rising input prices. It is a good performer even in poor soils and the root can be left in the ground for up to 3 years as a reserve source of food.

Interestingly, it has been regarded by many as a potential 'golden bullet' in the world's fight against hunger due to its high carbohydrate content and ability to thrive without the use of expensive pesticides and fertilizers. Cassava is adaptable to different Agro-ecological zones and drought resistant thus thrives in harsh environmental and climatic conditions in the region. The shift in the world today from consumption of nontraditional to traditional crops as a result of health consciousness is likely to trigger demand for cassava products and eventually production, research and marketing. Unfortunately, cassava is yet to realize its full potential in a region that has for decades suffered from food insecurity and poverty and starvation.

During drought the leaves drop off, the plant is kept alive by its large roots, and when the rains come the leaves sprout again. The roots are very starchy with lower protein content compared with other tropical root crops, and the young cassava leaves are used in Africa as a good source of vitamins and protein. Because of its agricultural advantages and potential to feed rapidly increasing populations, cassava is increasingly becoming popular with farmers particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Also households under stress from HIV/AIDS are shifting from high-input to low-input farming systems that involve cassava.

In SSA over 80% of cassava is processed into cassava chips for flour making. Other cassava products include: cassava chapatti, cassava *gari*, cassava starch, cassava *Mandazi* and fresh cassava mainly used for direct household consumption. There exists enormous potential in cassava because processed cassava is also mixed with maize and/or wheat flours and the nutrients not only enrich the overall quality of the flour but also improve the livelihood, improve shelf life and higher retail value. Besides, cassava is also used for manufacture of animal feeds thus transformation from food crop to cash crop which could drive an economic boom in Sub Saharan Africa.

Despite being regarded as a 'poor man crop', cassava is a tremendous raw material for ethanol, bread, starch, pharmaceutical products and could essentially be the sole source of economic prosperity for the entire developing world. It has potential to promote cross border trade or exports, especially starch extracted from cassava for industrial uses in pharmaceuticals and paper industries. Apart from trade within the region, some of the export destinations for cassava starch produced in Eastern Africa are South Africa and Israel. To further increase the potential for cassava, such regional trade should not only be preserved but other markets should be exploited since this will lead to increased household incomes to farmers.

Table 1 show the national cassava production trend in selected countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 1: Cassava Production trends in Sub-Saharan Africa in Tonnes (2001-2008)

Year	Nigeria 000'	Ghana 000'	Tanzania 000'	Uganda 000'	Malawi 000'	Kenya 000'	Cameroon 000'
2001	44,582	9,650	4,336.4	5,265	3,491.2	626.7	2,100
2002	43,410	9,650	5,176.1	5,373	3,238.9	573.8	2,100
2003	45,721	9,638	3,962.0	5,450	2,832.1	426.4	2,100
2004	41,565	9,567	4,440.6	5,500	2,197.6	392.0	2,138.8
2005	38,845	9,738.8	5,539.2	5,576	2,532.1	546.6	2,092.7
2006	36,304	10,239	6,158.3	4,924	1,735.1	657.7	2,047.7
2007	34,120	9,731	6,600.0	4,973	1,540.2	466.4	2,003.6
2008	32,068	8,965	6,600.0	5,072	3,362	751.0	1,947.3

Source: FAOSTAT

It indicates that there has been a rise in production in all the countries since 2005 which may be attributed to realization of cassava's potential to improve income and food security of rural households.

Interestingly, cassava also has a high potential in the manufacture of bio-fuels thus it is not only production of *Jatropha* that should be promoted but also cassava, the 'magic' crop. Similar to other types of ethanol obtained from agricultural products, fermented ethanol from cassava can be used to substitute petrol in vehicles with standard engines and in vehicles whose engines have been adapted. This is however an opportunity that SSA is yet to exploit.

However, various challenges still exist which limit the ability to exploit the available opportunities in cassava. Pests and diseases like Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) and Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD) had led to as high as 100% crop losses. Although research is still ongoing, pests and diseases still remain a major problem for cassava farmers and other stakeholders. Other production constraints include lack of good quality planting materials, use of inferior and low yielding varieties, inadequate high yielding varieties, labor and land availability and deteriorating soil conditions, lack of credit facilities and farm inputs.

Currently, the whole cassava Value Chain is underdeveloped. The marketing potential of most of cassava products remains largely under exploited in Sub Saharan Africa. The rapid post-harvest losses of fresh cassava and labour intensive processing of dried cassava make it less preferred by most small-scale farmers. Although, many international organisations such as International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in collaboration with regional governments have made a lot of efforts in production and distribution of clean planting materials, more efforts are required to ensure increased adoption rates, processing and provision of market information.

There is farmer and consumer perception that cassava is an 'inferior food' which is meant for the poor thus refers to it as 'a poor man's crop/food'. Cassava is often associated with poverty resulting to minimal investment and consequently low production. In addition, most consumers and farmers perceive cassava as poisonous crop because of presence of cyanide which is poisonous to human. Consumption of cassava products containing large amounts of cyanide can cause acute intoxication that sometimes leads to death.

Unfavorable policy environment and lack of supportive government's policy have hindered growth in cassava production and marketing in the region. Agricultural policies in most countries are usually geared towards promoting of high valued crops at the expense of traditional food crops. It has always been taken as a food safety net with little efforts to promote it as a potential cash crop. Other major challenges facing cassava subsector include increased population pressure on land and competition from high valued crops especially horticultural crops, poor post harvest management, lack of markets or poor access to markets and market information; lack of processing technologies, poor weather conditions that have been worsened by climate change.

Many initiatives have targeted production, multiplication of clean planting materials and capacity building among small-scale farmers. These initiatives often neglect processing, value addition and marketing. Processed products have higher value and can profitably be used as raw material in many processing industries especially in animal feed and food and textile industry. This is a clear indication that little has been done in cassava marketing since the whole value chain is underdeveloped.

Conclusion

Currently, cassava is given the top priority due to its importance as a staple and food security crop. Promotion of cassava production and marketing will ensure adequate supply of food and raw materials and stimulate production for export in order to raise income and improve food security among rural households. In order to increase consumption of cassava products, it is important to introduce cassava into new regions and educate the people on production measures and correct methods of processing to remove cyanogens that discourage consumption and avert perception of cassava as a poisonous crop. This would help to control cyanogens which threaten human health. The regional governments through available cassava networks should promote cassava production with emphasis on processing/value addition, marketing accompanied with capacity building on the potential of the crop to improve income and food security in the region.

By Ochieng Justus, Research Assistant, African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)/CMAAE.

Student Corner



You will probably agree with me in stating that most of the developmental challenges that face Africa and other developing countries can be traced to lack of capacity among other factors. As a matter of fact, human capacity development is the single most resource that can be used to untangle these challenges. More specifically, growing localized professionalism in a discipline of agricultural economics is an initiative so vital to the development of Africa that we should all embrace.

African professionals will have a better understanding of Africa's development opportunities which will in turn transform and sustain the African economies. This, my fellow Africans is what CMAAE program has done for us. I learnt of the CMAAE program during my final undergraduate year at Egerton University. The Msc. curriculum is a thorough process that triggers one's mind and helps them to apply classical economic theorems to agricultural related aspects. Today, I have an opportunity to work for a fast growing consultancy firm based in Nairobi that I consider ideal for any professional agricultural economist. Since most of the projects that we handle are agricultural based, I feel that the knowledge and expertise gained from the CMAAE program have been vital. When on the job, I have been involved in several tasks where colleagues marvel at the level of critical thinking or the effectiveness of the approaches I recommend. I feel great and honoured every time this happens and this has made me not only to love my job but also to be more confident with myself. I believe that the rigorous training (in courses such as Institutional and behavioral economics, agricultural policy, international trade and policy, issues in agriculture e.t.c) that I went through has been a major boost not only to my personal successes but also in terms of developing a bright career.

I would therefore not hesitate to recommend this program to any individual wishing to develop his or her career in agricultural economics. At the same time, I am glad for the assistance extended by the CMAAE program secretariat. I wish also to call upon more donors and development partners to continue supporting similar initiatives that have stood in the gap.

By Maina Kariuki, Research Assistant, Agricoms Consultants Ltd, Nairobi, Kenya

Other Communications

Monitoring Visits to Departments

The program planned to visit all the six accredited departments receiving various types of grants from AERC. For period January – June, 2010, three out of the six departments have been visited with an aim of strengthening the capacity of the assigned staff. This is to ensure timely reporting of all grants and also provide guidance on issues raised. In March, 2010, CMAAE conducted visits to University of Nairobi, Bunda College of Agriculture and University of Zimbabwe.

Secretariat Staff Changes

Stacy Mwangala has recently occupied the new post of Program Assistant at the secretariat. Stacy was previously the Administrative Secretary in the Executive Office, AERC. Mr. Geoffrey Sikei who has been the Research Assistant with the program left in March 2010. Geoffrey has joined KIPPRA, Kenya as a Part time Consultant and full time Research Economist with Sower Solutions Ltd, a research organization. He would like to extend his heartfelt thanks to the AERC/CMAAE family. He can be contacted at goosikei@yahoo.com. Mr. Ochieng Justus takes over from Geoffrey. Justus holds a Masters of Science Degree in Agricultural and Applied Economics from Egerton University. He is part of the CMAAE third cohort of students who have completed the program. He can be contacted at Justus.ochieng@aercafrica.org. The Secretariat warmly welcomes Stacy and Justus to the program and looks forward towards their contributions.

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