



EU-ACP EDULINK II

Networking for Academic Excellence in Agriculture and Food Security

**2016 - Joint Stakeholders' Conference
of the ACP-EU Co-operation Programmes**



Networking for Academic Excellence in Agriculture and Food Security

- Project Leader: Wits Siyakhana Initiative, (Wits)
 - Partner 1: Centre for Health Education and Appropriate Health Technologies (CESTAS)
 - Partner 2: Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI)
 - Partner 3: Lilongwe university of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR)
 - Partner 4: University of Namibia UNAM
- Location: Southern Africa
- Sector: Agriculture & Food Security
- Keywords: Food security, food systems, production, gender, inter-institutional networking, capacity building, leadership cultivation

<p>Specific objectives</p>	<p>To foster capacity building and inter-institutional networking amongst the HEIs at both management and academic levels</p>
<p>Results achieved Main deliverables</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developed and currently offering a 6-month online pilot course in food security and food systems. ○ Accredited as a Certificate of Attendance; ○ Wits, UNAM and LUANAR contributed to a report exploring women in agriculture and women’s access to higher education- ○ Findings could advocate for improved support for and opportunities for women farmers and that will promote the exchange of knowledge and experience for women.
<p>Target Groups Final Beneficiaries (type and number)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 30+ academics from the three partners are completing the online course resulting in capacity building ○ The fostering of leadership for 60+ women from academia, government and NGOs have benefited from our numerous publicity events that have focused on women in agriculture



Outcomes

- Greater awareness & research interest in systemic drivers of FS & impacts on agriculture
- Research & teaching network to enhance knowledge of vulnerabilities & build resilience
- Developed capabilities for food security monitoring among 27 researchers in 3 HEIs
- Grown researchers' capabilities to inform food systems governance



- Grown researchers' capabilities to inform food systems governance
- Developed a trans-disciplinary research network preparing concrete curriculum and research proposals
- Cultivated a network of stakeholders and identified opportunities for systemic adaptation



European Union



International Institute for
Agriculture and Fisheries

Module I



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Agriculture and Food Security I

The NAEAFS online course is structured in four modules, each of which consists of several themes. Each theme will consist of two notional hours of study. There are a total of 24 themes, which means approximately 48 hours of study. There will be additional interaction time via online forums and possibly conferencing.

Unit 1: The Online Learning Environment and Integral Learning

Unit 2: Food Security Definitions and Concepts

Unit 3: Global and Local Status of Food Security

Unit 4: Gender and Food Security

Unit 5: Food Culture, Identity and Agency

Unit 6: The Rural-Urban Food Nexus

Unit 7: Global Sustainability Challenges and Food Security

Certificate



Negotiating complex HEI environments

- HEI partner's institutional settings are unique and procedures can differ
- Accreditation procedures are lengthy and convoluted
- Mistrust & inexperience towards E-Learning from academics
- Senior-level institutional discontinuities
- Over-stretched academic staff difficult to participate
- Course development and implementation delayed

Therefore:

- Plan over longer time-frames
- Allocate more resources towards internal communication and relationship management

Growing collaboration

- Establish rapport through meetings, skypechats and email.
- Set clear ToRs and contracts with partners
- Regular communication concerning project goals, strategy and progress.
- Involve course participants by appealing to personal food security backgrounds and interest in the course

But:

- Language and tone of emails has led to misunderstandings - more regular meetings
- Infrastructural & technical challenges inhibit communication
- plan for tech person for training and support in each team

Overcoming technology and skills gaps

- E-learning relies on Information & Communication Technology, reliable infrastructure and technical skills
- Fundamental infrastructure is lacking especially in Malawi and to a lesser extent Namibia
- Academic staff are often in remote agricultural and rural spaces without internet
- Some staff have weak ICT and e-learning skills

Strategies:

- Provision of laptops and budget for connectivity and data
- Customisation of course content for off-line access
- Remote support and mentoring for platform access
- Flexible timeframes



Challenges and Opportunities in the food security

- Inadequate understanding of systemic drivers of FiS
 - > opportunities to enhance knowledge and theory of change
- Food system vulnerabilities to global change -
 - > opportunities to enhance adaptive capacity
- Poor food security monitoring
 - > opportunities to grow capabilities for better data gathering and analysis

- Weak food systems governance and inadequate leadership
-> to inform stronger food systems governance and develop leadership
- Fragmented research engagement with FS and agriculture -> opportunities to strengthen trans-disciplinary research networks
- Emphasis on agricultural and technological "solutions" -> opportunities to promote systemic, multi-stakeholder approaches



Sustainability of results

- Developing concrete proposals for curriculum review to include FS & agriculture
- Encouraging the development of networks with common interests
- Disseminating research funding opportunities using the NAEAFS network
- Developing research partnership proposals



- Cultivating research partnerships on relevant projects
- Adapting NAEAFS online course to Wits MOOC
- Offering selected course units and modules to government officials and NGO partners

Conclusion

- Productive and sustainable partnership
- Relevant and innovative online course huge potential upscaling to Competence and Master's level as well as for wider audiences
- The reports on women are pertinent, significant and have practical relevance
- Publicity via events, press releases and publications have created much interest among students, government officials and NGOs