

## INNOVATION FUND

# Strengthening agricultural knowledge and the innovation ecosystem for inclusive rural transformation and livelihoods in Eastern Africa (AIRTEA)

### PROJECT CONSORTIUM



#### PROJECT COORDINATOR

Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Ghana



#### PARTNERS

Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), Uganda

East Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF), Kenya

### LOCATION



Eastern Africa: Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda

### PERIOD



February 2021 – January 2025

### TOTAL BUDGET



EUR 4,799.035

### EU FUNDING



EUR 4,079.180

### PROJECT CONTACT



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<https://faraafrica.org/2022/01/21/announcement-final-selection-of-acp-airtea-third-party-projects-to-be-funded-in-kenya-uganda-rwanda/>



## CHALLENGE

Africa's agriculture is largely sustained by smallholder farmers, half of whom are women. However, poor access to markets and information on supply and demand is preventing them from achieving reasonable profit margins. The expectation of low profits is discouraging young people from taking up agricultural activities and slowing down agricultural and rural development.

## FOCUS

The capacity of youth and women in multi-stakeholder innovation platforms (IPs) will be strengthened, allowing them to take advantage of technological solutions within national, regional and global food systems, with an emphasis on technology design, transfer and uptake. Coupled with the establishment of Agricultural Business Learning Alliances (ABLAs), with business development and mentorship services, these collaboration mechanisms will lead to improved profitability and employment opportunities along agricultural commodity value chains in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda.

## RATIONALE

The development and adoption of agricultural technologies have not yet led to the desired improvement in food security, job creation and rural livelihoods in Eastern Africa, and have

barely reached the marginalised rural population, especially youth and women.

The traditional linear approach to technology development and adoption with limited engagement between researchers and end-users hinders the desired application of research results.

Alternative approaches, such as Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D), that use multi-stakeholder IPs to ensure that research delivers an impact seem promising.

However, a vast majority of the agrarian African population remains disconnected from the relevant inclusive innovation ecosystem, making it more difficult to achieve sustainable livelihoods and rural transformation.

While on the production side small farmers lack information on innovation, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) lack the capacity and information to develop their businesses, on the support side universities and research centres lack the capacity to transfer knowledge to end-users, and policy-makers lack the information from the field that they need to make informed decisions.

Hence, there is a need to facilitate and broker multi-stakeholder partnerships among these groups to foster the co-creation and co-ownership of innovation, generate appropriate technologies, and increase their transfer and uptake, thereby enhancing rural livelihoods.

Building capacities in ICT and other emerging digital technologies that promote production efficiencies along commodity value chains will help make the agricultural sector more attractive to youth and women and resolve the systemic weaknesses faced by service providers.





**Mushroom processing plant in Ghana (2021)**

## METHOD

AIRTEA will bring about change at the crosscutting levels of policy development, knowledge transfer and capacity building of R&I value chain actors. By using an inclusive science-led and agribusiness-oriented approach, it promotes the institutionalisation of IPs and multi-stakeholder engagement in three neighbouring countries (Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda) that share a common interest in developing priority value chains.

AIRTEA provides financial support to multi-stakeholder partnerships that will execute inclusive innovation projects, selected through a call for proposals (see website for further details) along agricultural commodity value chains that:

- Create a conducive policy ecosystem for entrepreneurship to improve access to technology and finance for the co-creation of knowledge.
- Enhance advisory services to harness digital technologies and tools for scaling up agricultural technologies.
- Enhance market access, profitability and job creation.

AIRTEA establishes or strengthens existing IPs at the national level to facilitate capacity building and knowledge exchange, and to foster technology transfer along value chains through learning and policy dialogues. It also establishes ABLAs at national and regional levels to support business services and incubation and increase the innovation capacity of end-users.

AIRTEA provides technical support to multi-stakeholder partnerships by:

- mentoring their engagement of women, youth and individual smallholder farmers in the IPs;
- strengthening their capacities in the dissemination and use of innovations;
- co-designing training materials and technology delivery methods; and facilitating dialogues with smallholder farmers, the research community, agricultural extension services and policy-makers.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

### Impacts

Sustainable agrarian livelihood and rural transformation in Eastern Africa applying inclusive R&I.

### Outcomes

- Increased involvement of women and youth in linking multi-stakeholder IPs to practical solutions within national, regional and global food systems.
- Technologies, knowledge and innovations taken up by the stakeholders involved in ABLAs.
- Improved profitability and employment opportunities along agricultural commodity value chains.

### Outputs

- Multi-stakeholder IPs established and supported along commodity value chains.
- Strengthened entrepreneurial capacity of youth and women involved in multi-stakeholder IPs.
- ABLAs established and operational.
- Practical solutions (technologies, innovations, management practices) and related knowledge products developed and availed of by ABLAs along commodity value chains.
- Strengthened capacity of commodity value chain actors to scale up practical solutions.
- Collaborative partnerships established and strengthened between women, youth and other actors along the value chain within ABLAs.
- New services offered by business service providers along commodity value chains.

## PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

Synergies in the R&I ecosystem (private sector, technology transfer, R&I uptake)

## SECTOR

Agriculture (food systems)

## KEYWORDS

knowledge, innovation, incubation, capacity building, profitability, market opportunities, agribusiness learning, rural transformation, multi-partnerships



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**Woman fish farmer in Ghana (2021)**