

NEWSLETTER

December 2023 Issue

INTRODUCTION

Happy to be back to business!

It is with great excitement that we are resuming with the regular release of our AGRODEP Newsletters. As already discussed with you on a few occasions of late, the team has been exploring the best avenues possible to revive the work of **AGRODEP** and get members closer than ever before.



Once again, thank you for your individual and collective commitments and contributions to making the conference the success it turned out to be.

From your evaluation of the overall conference, it is evident that you had a wide range of expectations. I am happy that these were met and surpassed. Bringing you together in Kigali for the March 2023 Annual AGRODEP Conference was, indeed, a critical milestone towards "normalizing" life after COVID-19. As it was our first gathering as the AGRODEP

family since the global pandemic struck, this year's meeting meant different things to people who were a part of it. Here is my take.

First, to see the excitement from you to come, once again together, to Kigali and be part of the conference alone was probably the best illustration of the feeling that you had been missing these special moments.

Throughout the proceedings, from where I stood, I could also feel that you were in communion. Humbly, we take pride in having facilitated such a reunion among those forming the crème de la crème of research and economic modelling in Africa.

Secondly, after a few years of rather limited activities, the theme of the conference offered the perfect taste of the timely combat we are all embarked on to fix our broken food systems across the continent. You will recall that the objectives of this conference were fourfold

and as follows: (i) Remobilize, strengthen and reconnect its members in their various networks, while helping them align their research interests with the most current and pressing development agendas to transform and build resilient food systems in Africa; (ii) Offer members an opportunity to share their research work and most recent productions through presentation and discussion of their latest findings. As such, members will present illustrative practices, innovative research as well as new developments relevant to Africa's food systems transformation agenda; (iii) Facilitate capacity assessment and provide networking opportunities to enable researchers to take a leading role in addressing strategic development issues facing Africa; and (iv) Offer current and prospective AGRODEP partners a platform to share their relevant ongoing work, as well as immediate opportunities of direct interest to AGRODEP members. From your evaluation of the conference, we seem to have collectively ticked all the boxes. **Thank you!**

Thirdly, judging from your proactiveness as members to follow through after submitting your respective papers to allow the review committee to go through them and send you feedback, you have, once again, demonstrated that you were truly committed to making AGRODEP Modeling Consortium the premier network it has been set up to become.

The conference was another milestone and provided a framework to set fresh targets and bring on board a few additional features that would hopefully improve the services and benefits you get from your membership. For instance, after carefully reviewing the findings of the evaluation you have taken on the conference while also considering some strategic dimensions of the consortium, as well as our internal brainstorming, from now on, we will be hosting the members' conference every two years. Doing so would give us enough time to develop attractive content and allow members to develop and submit solid papers. This also means the first Biennial AGRODEP Conference will be held in 2025. We anticipate that this new periodicity would also allow members reasonable time to digest the numerous knowledge pieces from their peers.

Finally, another novelty being considered for implementation is the AGRODEP Brown Bags sessions on a quarterly basis to allow members to engage around the thematic issues published in each quarterly release of the AGRODEP Working Paper Series (AWPS). Details of how to run the Brown Bags will be discussed with you in due course to collect your insights.

Have a nice read, and enjoy your festive season!

Yours truly,

Dr. Augustin Wambo Yamdjeu

Director, Knowledge Systems, AKADEMIYA2063
AGRODEP Co-Team Leader



Introducing the AGRODEP Working Papers Series

As you will recall, it was agreed that we would discuss internally at AKADEMIYA2063 the best way of capitalizing on your papers accepted for presentation at the conference. Several options were tabled, including pushing for peer-reviewed papers, technical papers, conference proceedings, AGRODEP Working Papers Series, etc. After looking at all the options, we are opting to launch the **AGRODEP Working Papers Series**; the papers accepted for presentation at this year's conference will be published in this new series. We plan to publish the manuscripts as working papers, with the understanding that, as an author, you will still be able to further develop and adapt them for a peer-reviewed publication as you wish. We are currently receiving submissions of their revised papers from members considering the comments and suggestions they received from their peers assigned to review their papers prior to the conference.

AGRODEP Brown Bag Sessions

As discussed with you, we are exploring the possibility of publishing a set of conference papers in the AGRODEP Working Paper Series each quarter of the year. For each release, we can organize a **Brow Bag Session** that brings together all AGRODEP members, and possibly one or two external lead topical experts.

Finalizing the Conference Papers for Publication

Our Senior Scientist from the AGRODEP Team has been engaging with you individually on the finalization of your paper following the reviewers' feedback and the comments/suggestions received during the conference. You were given some time to incorporate those news elements before re-submitting the paper. We are happy to report that the feedback so far has been rather encouraging. In a week or so to come, we will kick off the scientific editing of the revised papers collected.

Because we truly believe in the notion that this consortium is a members' business, we intend to approach a few among you for each conference to serve as scientific co-editors of the AWPS, to ensure there is limited risk of gross misrepresentation of facts in papers. Once the work of scientific editors is completed, a professional copyeditor will be brought in to help finalize the papers before their release in the series.

AGRODEP Indicative Calendar of Activities

We promised to share with you an indicative calendar of activities of the AGRODEP Modeling Consortium. The matrix includes key activities to be undertaken by and with AGRODEP members between two conferences. Because we want the content to be a co-creation, you will be invited to input the plan before it is finalized. As you will see in the calendar, we are making provision planning to resume with the publication of AGRODEP Newsletters. We will reach out to you on a needs basis for input. You are also welcome to suggest news worth sharing with the community.

Table: AGRODEP Biennial Calendar of Activities

	Key Activity	Main Tasks	Responsible	Timeline	Comments
1	New AGRODEP members' selection and induction	Selection of new members	A2063 and AGRODEP Technical Committee	Q2-Q3, 2023	Selection completed
		Induction of new members			
2	Institutionalization and Resourcing of the New AGRODEP Networks	Work planning	Individual networks	Q4, 2023	The immersion seminar was a success
		Network members' meetings and conference	Individual networks	Permanent	
		Resource mobilization	A2063	Permanent	
		Induction Seminar with new AGRODEP members	A2063	Q4, 2023	
3	Capacity Building and training workshops	Impact Evaluation	A2063 and KIT	TBD by networks	
		Value Chain Analysis	A2063		
		SPS	A2063		
		Climate Change	A2063		
		Trade and Regional Integration	A2063		
		Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA)	FAO and A2063	In the pipeline	
		Artificial Intelligence and Remote Sensing	A2063		
		AGRODEP Journalist Network	A2063		
4	AGRODEP Working Papers Series	Scientific editing	Members		
		Copyediting	Contractors		
		Release	A2063		
		Coordination	A2063		
5	AGRODEP Brown Bag Session	IT and technical support	A2063	Quarterly	
		Moderation	AGRODEP Members		
		Sourcing of external lead experts	A2063		
		Coordination	AGRODEP Members		

6	Policy Analysis and Advisory Services (PAAS)		A2063	Permanent	
7	Web-based AGRODEP Community of Practice Platform	Moderation	AGRODEP Team Leader / A2063	Permanent	
8	2025 Biennial AGRODEP Conference	Theme selection	AGRODEP members and A2063		
		Concept note preparation	AGRODEP members and A2063		
		Papers development	AGRODEP Members		
		Paper review	Scientific editing team		
		Conference budget and logistics	A2063		
		Conference evaluation and reporting	AGRODEP members and A2063		

Welcoming 51 New AGRODEP Members!

Back in May 2023, our team issued a public call to recruit prospective candidates who fulfil all the requirements to be selected and brought in as new members of AGRODEP. We are pleased to inform you that we recently completed our screening and evaluation of all the 272 applications received.

Of the 272 applicants, 40 were already members of AGRODEP, whose applications were mostly driven by their interest in one or more of the four new networks we also announced in the same call. After a thorough and rigorous evaluation of the applications, 51 applicants were selected to become new AGRODEP Members. On November 20, 2023, we organized an induction seminar to welcome and walk them through the AGRODEP ecosystem and what they can expect from this consortium while also engaging them on how their contribution could bring mutual benefits to the parties involved.

Impact Evaluation Training Using Panel Data

AGRODEP Modeling Consortium offers training courses and work opportunities to a network comprising about 300 hundred African researchers. Overall, the program facilitates the use of statistical, econometric, and economic modeling tools, promotes access to data sources, provides training, research grants, networking, and publication opportunities to its members, and supports collaboration between these and international researchers. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) of the Netherlands has agreed to support AKADEMIYA2063 in re-activating AGRODEP activities after the COVID crisis, starting from the re-activation of the Impact Evaluation network and its curriculum.

In 2019 and then again in 2021, KIT collected geo-referenced panel data on about 12,000 farm-households from 7 sub-Saharan countries on behalf of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and its PIATA program (Partnership for Inclusive Agricultural Transformation in Africa). However, neither KIT nor AGRA had until now managed to produce any research using such a rich and unique dataset, which has the potential to provide key insights on the factors that determined the resilience or vulnerability of sub-Saharan farm-households during the COVID crisis.



AKADEMIYA2063 accepted to organize this first AGRODEP training course together with KIT and AGRA, in order to bring together promising African researchers and produce collective and flagship publications based on the PIATA panel dataset, so as to inform the future strategy of AGRA moving forward.

Feedback from one trainee: "This was not a conventional training course, but a true learning experience for adult professionals. The separation between teacher and student, or between trainers and trainees, was rather blurred, and all training activities were geared towards one specific objective, to collectively produce evidence-based and policy-oriented research".

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