



Republic of Botswana



21st Annual
General Meeting
01-05 December 2025
Botswana



RUFORUM 21ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

CONCEPT NOTE Forum I

Resilient agri-food systems transformation



THEME

Positioning Africa's Universities and the Higher Education Sector to effectively impact development processes on the continent

Hosts:

The Government of Botswana and
RUFORUM member Universities in Botswana led by Botswana University of
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Venue:

Gaborone International Conference Center, Moremi 1, Gaborobe, Botswana

Date: 3RD December 2025

Time: 08.30-14.30 Central African Time (CAT)

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Background

Development stakeholders have increased their efforts and investments in food system transformation since the 2021 UN meeting on food systems, recognising their critical role in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda. Many externalities exacerbate existing weaknesses in Africa's agrifood systems particularly in rural and marginalized communities (FAO, 2023; IPCC, 2022). Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, and flooding reduce crop yields and livestock productivity, undermining food supply chains and local markets (AGRA, 2022). These disruptions have intensified food and nutrition insecurity and increased living costs for millions of African households, with women and youth in the informal agriculture sector particularly affected (UN Women, 2021).

To address these challenges, this forum focuses on building system-wide resilience through inclusive policies, climate-smart technologies, and institutional innovations. Integrated approaches are emphasized to protect agricultural productivity, promote income diversification, strengthen early warning systems, and ensure social safety nets for vulnerable populations (World Bank, 2021). Gender- and youth-responsive programming is crucial, as these groups are disproportionately impacted by shocks and are key agents of transformation in agri-food systems (CTA, 2019). By embedding resilience into agricultural development planning, countries can transition from reactive crisis responses to adaptive, anticipatory, and inclusive food systems transformation. Africa's agricultural sector is vital for economic growth, food security, and poverty alleviation, especially with Africa's population projected to reach approximately 2.5 billion by 2050, leading to a dramatic increase in food and feed demand (United Nations, 2022).

This forum brings together diverse stakeholders; including researchers, industry representatives, government officials, and NGOs; to tackle these pressing challenges and explore innovative solutions for enhancing productivity in food and feed production across Africa. Key areas of focus will include sustainable agricultural practices that improve crop yields while preserving natural resources and promoting biodiversity. Technological innovations, particularly in biotechnology, precision agriculture, and digital agriculture, will also be highlighted as means to enhance productivity. Furthermore, the role of government policies in supporting agricultural development and creating an enabling investment environment will be critically assessed, along with the importance of improving market access for

farmers and enhancing the efficiency of food and feed value chains. Advances in science, practice and policy will address the underlisted areas:

- 1. Securing yields under climate change:** Climate-smart agricultural practices that enhance productivity, enhance soils and nutrient management; improve water for production use; deploy novel and emerging strategies to manage new and resurgent biotic stresses; highly productive, and resilient plant and animal breeds and species.
- 2. Sustainable blue economy:** Sustainable aquaculture and marine management practices that enhance the environmental integrity of marine and freshwater ecosystems while simultaneously addressing food, nutrition, and income security in a land-efficient manner
- 3. Bioeconomy:** Circular bioeconomy in agriculture underpinned by sustainable and efficient management of renewable biological resources from agriculture, fisheries, and forestry that converts byproducts and waste into valuable bio-based products that deliver a closed-loop and low-carbon systems.
- 4. Early warning systems and risk management:** Community-based early warning systems, anticipatory action plans, and financial risk tools (e.g., weather-index insurance) to protect livelihoods.
- 5. Inclusion and diversity in agri-food systems transformation:** Gender- and youth-responsive approaches to climate adaptation, food systems transitions that leave no one behind by enhancing production and access to food, food waste reduction and healthy diet promotion; resource governance.

Objectives

This forum will serve as a platform to discuss the critical topic of achieving savings of up to US 17 billion by 2040 through the widespread implementation of resilient agriculture. It examines the connection between resilient agricultural production systems and transitions to green energy. This session will facilitate connections among researchers, professionals, and practitioners to foster new collaborations. The forum will facilitate thorough discussions on policy implications,

societal impacts, and ethical considerations arising from research, while also examining strategies for translating scientific findings into actionable policies for developmental impact.

Approach

The Forum will have a key note paper that will subsequently be discussed by selected research leaders. A facilitated panel discussion will be help to engage the wider audience and draw lessons from them, generating the forum message.

Expected outcomes

- Enhance knowledge sharing in resilient agri-food systems, fostering innovative solutions to tackle climate and economic challenges while promoting sustainable practices.
- Strengthen partnerships among researchers, policymakers, industry leaders, and farmers to encourage collaborative efforts in addressing vulnerabilities within agri-food systems.
- Inspire participants to engage in ongoing research, explore new avenues of study, and contribute to advancements that bolster resilience in agri-food systems.
- Support the formulation of policies that translate research insights into actionable practices, enhancing societal and environmental benefits in the face of shocks.
- Highlight the critical role of sustainability in food and feed production, ensuring long-term resilience against climate change and economic disruptions through collaborative initiatives.

Participants

Participants will include researchers, scientists, academics, development partners, policy makers and Government Officials, industry representatives, Non-Profit Organizations, professionals, and graduate students.

Organizers

The event is organized by RUFORUM, with support from the Government of Botswana and RUFORUM member universities in Botswana.

TUESDAY 3rd December, 2025

Venue: Tsodilo

Registration Link: https://ruforum-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/LTzF4_uOQQumyv9PQBoLw

Session Chair: Professor Samodimo Ngwako

Rapporteurs: Professor Julius Ochuodho, Dr Arfang Badji, BK Sebogisi

Time	Welcome Remarks from the Chair	
08:00-08:20	Arrival and Registration	RUFORUM
08:20-08:25	Welcome Remarks from the Chair	
08:25-08:40	Lead paper 1: Reshaping Africa's food and nutrition narrative: What are the priorities and what can we learn from other regions.	Prof. Lise Korsten, African Academy of Sciences/University of Pretoria, South Africa
08:40-08:55	Lead Paper 2: Securing Africa's agriculture against invasive and endemic biological threats.	Dr. Morris Akiri, Senior Regional Director for Africa, CABI
	Lead Discussants	
08:55-09:05	Securing yields under climate change: The role of climate-smart agricultural practices, novel technical and social innovations.	Dr. Sika Gbegbelegbe, IITA, Malawi
09:05-09:15	Sustainable blue economy: Sustainable aquaculture and marine management for environmental integrity, food, nutrition, and income security in a land-efficient manner	Prof Emmanuel Kaunda, LUANAR, Malawi
09:15-09:25	A path to self-sufficiency: Opportunities, lessons learned, and critical actions required; perspectives from AGRA.	Dr. Tilahun Amede, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Kenya
09:25-09:35	Inclusion and diversity: Practices that enhance production and access to food, reduce food waste and promote healthy diets and resource governance.	Dr. Michèle Mbo'o Tchouawou, AWARD-CGIAR, Kenya
09:35-09:50	Plenary discussions	

