



RUFORUM 21ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

CONCEPT NOTE

Universities as Strategic Hubs: Collaboration for Enhancing Food Systems Resilience in Protracted Crises



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:

Date: 27th November, 2025

Time: 08:30-17:00 CAT SAT

Contact: Gerrit-Jan van Uffelen (gerrit-jan.vanuffelen@wur.nl)

Background

More than half of African countries are currently experiencing protracted food crises (Global Report on Food Crises, 2025), with 20 out of 54 listed by the World Bank as Fragile and Conflict-Affected States. In these contexts, local food systems face compounded challenges from conflict, climate-induced weather extremes, and market failures. These are further exacerbated by poor governance, weak coordination, limited knowledge-sharing and education systems, and entrenched poverty factors that contribute to persistent food insecurity and malnutrition.

In response to this urgent situation, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Kampala Malabo/CAADP Declaration and Action Plan (2025–2035) emphasize the need to build resilient agri-food systems as a foundation for sustainable development. The Kampala Declaration specifically highlights the importance of addressing food systems within the broader context of crises affecting the continent. With global hunger increasingly concentrated in protracted crises most of which are in Africa, a dedicated and strategic approach is essential .

The African Union, through the Cairo Agenda and recent workshops to develop a ten-year Agricultural Research, Education and Extension (AREE) program, has called for targeted action to more effectively address protracted food crises. Strengthening food systems in fragile and conflict-affected settings requires tailored approaches that integrate humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts. These systems must also foster social cohesion and contribute to peace.

Central to this effort is a robust knowledge, learning, and capacity-building agenda. Knowledge institutions play a vital role in cultivating the human capital, research expertise, and leadership skills needed to support policy makers, programmers, and practitioners working on food systems resilience. This agenda must align with emerging policy frameworks, particularly CAADP, the AREE program, and the Committee on World Food Security's Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (CFS-FFA).

To address this gap, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), in collaboration with the Periperi-U Network of African Universities, Wageningen University & Research, and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre Knowledge Academy, is spearheading the development of a Comprehensive Education, Research, and Leadership Portfolio. This initiative aims to strengthen Africa's capacity to design, implement, and sustain resilient food systems in protracted crisis contexts, in alignment with CAADP's Kampala Declaration and the AREE initiative.

This work builds on and reinforces existing African and international efforts, including:

1. RUFORUM's contributions to agrifood systems innovation, inclusive transformation, and human capital development
2. Periperi-U's frameworks for community-based disaster risk management and integrated risk reduction
3. The Joint Regional Masters Programme on Disaster Risk Management and Food Systems Resilience led by Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia
4. South-South-North partnerships involving universities in the Horn of Africa, Wageningen University & Research, and Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences
5. The KAWRAL-Sahel initiative, founded by 13 institutions in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal
6. ADPC's expansion of training and education across Africa, leveraging its global expertise

This model of deep, equitable engagement is especially critical in Africa, where severe food crises coexist with immense potential in youth innovation, digital transformation, and agricultural development. Through intentional partnerships, universities are translating academic excellence into real-world solutions ensuring that research is relevant, technology is scalable, and education empowers future leaders. These multiplier effects are essential for building inclusive, adaptive, and resilient food systems across the continent.

Purpose of the Workshop

The overall aim of this workshop is exploring the need and opportunity to develop a South-South-North tripartite partnership to develop a dedicated education,

knowledge and leadership portfolio on Food Systems Resilience in protracted food crises to support FSR policy, programming and practice for improved outcomes, in particular food security & healthy diets.

The objectives of this workshop are to:

1. Discuss the rationale and need for the development of a dedicated portfolio of work by RUFORUM, Peri-U and KAWRAL-Sahel on food systems resilience in the context of protracted food crises and Africa's emerging policy framework on this.
2. Share experiences and models from Africa that link disaster risk management, resilience, and governance of food systems transformation in fragile and conflict affected areas.
3. Build consensus on the rationale, priorities, and structure of a continental education and research portfolio on food systems resilience.
4. Identify interest and synergies among universities, regional organizations, and donors to support knowledge development, learning and capacity building on food systems resilience in fragile and conflict affected settings.
5. Agree on the next steps and a potential partnership framework to establish a RUFORUM-led Africa Food Systems Resilience Knowledge and Learning Platform on Protracted Food Crises (2026 onward).

Expected outcomes

General outcomes:

1. A concept framework and draft roadmap for establishing the Africa Food Systems Resilience Portfolio / African Food Systems Resilience Fellowship
2. A summary communiqué highlighting commitments, key messages, and partnership opportunities – including potential donors.
3. Formation of a multi-partner Working Group (RUFORUM, Peri-U, WUR, ADPC, ...) to coordinate design and resource mobilization toward the portfolio launch at the 2026 ...

Specific outcomes

We may include a number of specific outcomes to increase relevance of the workshop in light with CAADP's focus on role of knowledge institutions and the role of youth in agrifood systems development. In particular:

1. How the initiative contributes to inclusiveness and creates the human resources to train up a new generation of young people to contribute to FSR.
2. Increase the appeal of obtaining an university degree, training or mid-career courses for graduates to obtain a job (including the need for competence based education and alignment of NARES to develop inclusive agrifood systems and entrepreneurship with a focus on youth.
3. How this creates investment opportunities for young people to engage in agrifood system development

Participants

The one-day workshop will bring together: representatives of RUFORUM management and Secretariat; representatives of the potential consortium partners in particular Peri-U, Wageningen University & Research and the ADPC Knowledge Academy network of Universities; RUFORUM partner universities from protracted food crises countries (in particular the Horn of Africa and the Sahel / West Africa,) and representatives of continental and regional bodies. The number of workshop participants is around 25-30 persons. Constituted by:

- RUFORUM secretariat and management, representatives of the Periperi-U network in Africa (Nico Elema), Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (Bill Ho), and Wageningen University & Research (Jennie van der Mheen and Gerrit-Jan van Uffelen).
- Representatives of continental or regional bodies (African Union, AUDA-NEPAD, IGAD, Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty).
- RUFORUM partner universities and Peri-U member universities and researchers in protracted food crises countries. If possible, a representative from KAWRAL-Sahel (this requires French translation throughout the day – as well as funding for flight, accommodation and visa.
- The National Convenors Food Systems Dialogues of Chad and South Sudan.

Workshop Organisation and flow

The day will be organized in the form of workshops that explore and seek common ground on:

1. Rationale and imperative - building Food Systems

- Resilience in Protracted Food Crises
2. **Policy frameworks & alignment** - CAADP and the Committee on World Food Security's Framework for Action for Food Security - and Nutrition in Protracted Crises
3. **Partner Portfolios & Innovation** – presenting current work portfolios and elucidating ideas on FSR
4. **South-South-North tripartite partnership** - cocreating ideas to develop a portfolio of work on FSR
5. **Pathway and stepping stones** - towards the creation of the partnership and a draft roadmap for portfolio development, supported by a committed multi-stakeholder working group.
6. **Lobby and advocacy statement** – to be used by RUFORUM to mobilizing support for the partnership and identify and engage with potential donors.

Organizers

RUFORUM Secretariat with support of the Periperi-U Network of Universities in Africa, Wageningen University & Research (WUR), and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), in collaboration with Mastercard Foundation, UNHCR, World University Services of Canada, ICRISAT,

Proposed Workshop Structure and Agenda

This one-day workshop will be held as a preconference event whose proceedings will be translated into a position paper and statement for engaging policy leaders, decision makers including Vice Chancellors and Deans, and development partners during the conference week itself.

TUESDAY 3rd December, 2025

Venue: Moremi 1 & 2

Registration Link: <https://ruforum-org.zoom.us/j/84399022629?pwd=OVCYa8McCUL7bs69I2InZae5hoKXQ2.1>

Session Moderator: Prof Egeru Anthony

Rapporteurs: Gerrit Jan

Time	Session	Lead/Presenter
08:30 – 08:45	Opening and Welcome Remarks – Framing the Resilience Imperative for Africa’s Food Systems	RUFORUM Executive Secretary
1. Rationale & imperative - building Food Systems Resilience in Protracted Food Crises		
8:45 – 9:30	Africa’s protracted food crises and the search for solutions (CFS Framework for Action)	Gerrit-Jan van Uffelen – reflecting on the CFS53 on protracted food crises – Committee on World Food Security
2. Policy frameworks & alignment – CAADP, AREE, and the Committee on World Food Security’s Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises		
09:30 – 10:15	The CAADP Kampala Declaration & Action Plan, AREE and what it means for knowledge organizations	AUDA-NEPAD? / Regional Policy Expert / Gerrit-Jan / Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty
3. Partner Portfolios & Innovation – presenting current work portfolios and elucidating ideas on FSR		
10:45 – 11:10	Peri-U introduction on DRM and the Joint Regional Masters	Dr Nico Elema (Network Director PERIPERI-U Disaster Risk Reduction, South Africa); Dr Mintesinot (Director IDRMFSS, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia).
11:10 – 11:35	REPRO HoA: knowledge agenda on food systems resilience	Sarah Cummins
11:35 – 12:00	REPRO South Sudan: local food systems dialogues; seed systems development and Farmer Agency for Rural Economies	National Convenor Food Systems Dialogues South Sudan (Dr John); Dr Tony Ngalamu.
12:00 – 12:30	KAWRAL Initiative in the Sahel research and training on ‘governance of FS transformation in fragile and conflict affected settings’– Ideas for Cross-Regional Collaboration on FSR	Presentation by the National Convenor Food Systems Dialogues Chad (virtual via the global Alliance Against hunger and Poverty) Presentation by the KAWRAL initiative
12:30-13:30	Health Break	
13:30 – 13:55	WUR and partner portfolio on FSR (in part E-courses food systems, finance, leadership AFSF, challenges-based learning, development of a masterclass	Jennie and Gerrit-Jan
13:55 – 14:20	ADPC – Knowledge Academy	Dr Bill Ho
4. South-South-tripartite partnership - cocreating ideas to develop a portfolio of work on FSR		

14:20 – 15:00	What elements of current work portfolios could be scaled within the south-south tripartite partnership and identification of missing components.	World café + debriefings
15:00-15:20	Health Break	
5. Pathway and stepping stones - towards the creation of the partnership		
15:20 – 16:00	Toward a Comprehensive Education, Research and Leadership Portfolio	Small group work and plenary
	Synthesis and Roadmap building the Africa Food Systems Resilience Knowledge and Learning Platform.	RUFORUM Secretariat, Peri-U, WUR
6. Lobby and advocacy statement – mobilizing support for the partnership and identification of potential donors.		
16:00 – 16:40	Closing Remarks and Next Steps - RUFORUM	RUFORUM Secretariat, Peri-U, WUR
16:40-17:00		RUFORUM Executive Secretary